CATHOLIC GRANDPARENTS ASSOCIATION

Grandparents' Faith Café

From Addiction to Hope — How Families Recover

Tuesday 13 October 2026 · The Month of the Holy Rosary

Keynote Speaker: Jamie Mackey, Cuan Mhuire

Hosted by Marilyn Henry, CGA International Ministry Coordinator
with Catherine Wiley, CGA Founder

◆ ABOUT THIS GATHERING

The Grandparents' Faith Café met online on Tuesday 13 October 2026, in October, the month of the Holy Rosary. The theme, From Addiction to Hope: How Families Recover, was chosen because so many Grandparents had asked for it. Addiction is touching families everywhere, and Grandparents are very often the ones standing in the middle.

The keynote speaker was Jamie Mackey, a psychotherapist specializing in addiction at Cuan Mhuire in Bruree, County Limerick. Cuan Mhuire, Irish for “Mary's Harbor,” was founded by Sister Consilio Fitzgerald of the Sisters of Mercy in Athy, County Kildare, in 1966, and has grown into the largest provider of residential addiction treatment on the island of Ireland.

Marilyn Henry, CGA International Ministry Coordinator, hosted, with Catherine Wiley, Founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association.

> *Note on this text: this is a light edit of the meeting recording. The speakers' own words and phrasing have been kept. Out of respect for those who took part, and because of the very personal nature of this evening's subject, personal and family stories shared during the session are not included. Jamie's answers to the questions raised afterward are gathered here as “Further Reflections from Jamie.” Registered members can view the full recording in the members' area.*

◆ WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Marilyn Henry, CGA International Ministry Coordinator

To continue receiving our Faith Café notices, our newsletters and other CGA updates, please visit our website and register as a member of the CGA if you are not already a member. And invite your family and your friends to do that also.

Please remain muted unless you have a question, so that everybody around the world can actively participate. For anyone new to Zoom, you can adjust your view by using the View or Gallery button at the top of your screen; select full screen for the best view of the guest speakers and participants.

After the speakers have finished, we will have time for questions. If you would like to ask a question, please go to the Reactions button at the very bottom of your screen and select the little raised hand. We will try to get to as many questions as time allows. When you are called upon, please unmute yourself, ask your question briefly, and then mute yourself again. There is also a chat, and many of you have already found it. Thank you. We can use that throughout the Faith Café too.

Thank you for helping us to create a warm and welcoming Faith Café for everyone. Now we will begin, as we always do, with our Prayer for Grandparents.

◆ OPENING PRAYER

The Prayer for Grandparents was led by Marilyn Henry, with the whole gathering joining in, and Betty M. reading the second half.

Marilyn Henry

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus, you were born of the Virgin Mary, the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne. Look with love on Grandparents the world over. Protect them! They are a source of enrichment for families, for the Church and for all of society.

Support them! As they grow older, may they continue to be for their families strong pillars of Gospel faith, guardians of noble domestic ideals, living treasures of sound religious traditions. Make them teachers of wisdom and courage, that they may pass on to future generations the fruits of their mature human and spiritual experience.

Betty M.

Lord Jesus, help families and society to value the presence and role of Grandparents. May they never be ignored or excluded, but always encounter respect and love. Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed in all the years of life which you give them.

Mary, Mother of all the living, keep Grandparents constantly in your care, accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage, and by your prayers, grant that all families may one day be reunited in our heavenly homeland, where you await all humanity for the great embrace of life without end. Amen.

— The Prayer for Grandparents of Pope Benedict XVI

◆ WELCOME AND REFLECTION

Catherine Wiley, CGA Founder

Grandparents, newcomers and friends, welcome, everyone, wherever you are joining us from tonight, or this morning, or this afternoon.

October is the month of the Holy Rosary. So often, when we don't know what to say to God, we simply hold on to Our Lady's hand, and we keep going. Tonight, I want us to bring all our families and all our worries to her.

So many of you have asked us for this evening. You have asked us to talk about addiction, because addiction is touching your families. Drink, drugs, gambling, sex, money. A son, a daughter. Sometimes a Grandchild. And some of you are bringing up Grandchildren because of it. If that is you, you are not alone, and you have nothing to be ashamed of. Addiction can walk into any home, however beautiful, however faithful, however loving.

I wonder, in our day growing up, how much addiction was simply never named. There were people we would call now, for want of a better word, functioning alcoholics. Life went on around them, and nobody spoke of it.

People say addiction runs in families, and so many of us have been blamed for it. You will be told it is from your side of the family, that it is your fault. I think we all hoped that it would die with us. We really couldn't imagine any other end. And yet so many of us now watch our Grandchildren, grown up, carrying the burden of an addicted parent who comes to them for help, for support, for money.

So how do we prepare our Grandchildren? What do we do when we see it, when we feel it coming? What do we do when we are caught in the middle, between our children and their children? I really hope and pray that Jamie can bring us some hope and comfort tonight.

Because when things go wrong, relationships are everything. Pick up the phone. Make the first move. However hard it gets, keep the door open and keep the bridge standing. Our Grandchildren need us to stand together, even when everything else has fallen apart.

And underneath it all, there is hope. Recovery is real. People do come home. Families do heal. And I will never, ever, ever stop praying, and I will never give up hope.

Now listen: tonight, you don't need to share anything personal. You are very, very welcome simply to listen. And remember, this is a safe and confidential place.

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So it is my great joy, my great privilege, and with great gratitude, that I welcome Jamie Mackey from Cuan Mhuire in Bruree, County Limerick. Cuan Mhuire has been a place of hope for people with addiction, and for their families, for many, many years, and we are so grateful to Sister Consilio Fitzgerald, to Sister Agnes, and to all of Cuan Mhuire for making tonight possible.

Jamie is a psychotherapist specializing in addiction, and has worked at Bruree for over four years. He began his working life as an electrical engineer, and left it for psychotherapy because he believed it was his calling, and that he could help. I know he is going to help us tonight to understand what addiction is, how it affects the whole family, how we can best support recovery, and how we can always, always have hope and keep the door open. Jamie, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Over to you.

◆ KEYNOTE: FROM ADDICTION TO HOPE

Jamie Mackey

Good morning, good evening, good night, everybody. I'm just looking at the different places popping up on the screen here. You're definitely an international audience tonight. As Catherine said, my name is Jamie Mackey. I'm a psychotherapist here in Cuan Mhuire, Bruree, in Limerick, and I work in the alcohol unit.

How Cuan Mhuire began

First of all, I'd like to explain a little bit about Cuan Mhuire: where it started, and who we are.

Sister Consilio Fitzgerald was a young nun working in St Vincent's Hospital in Athy, in County Kildare. It was also what they called a county home, which at the time would have been, I suppose, for poor people. And she noticed these men coming into the hospital. They would be given a night's lodging and a meal, but then they would have to move on the next day. They were called men of the road. Most of them had changed their names, because of the shame they felt around their addiction. And they were in perpetual motion, going from one town to the next.

So Sister Consilio decided she was going to do something about it. She was transferred from St Vincent's Hospital to the Mercy Convent in Athy, and she heard that there was going to be an AA meeting. Picture this: back in the sixties, a nun going to an AA meeting may have raised a couple of eyebrows. But she got permission. She met a man there called Paddy, who was actually a publican in Athy, and Paddy asked her if he could come and visit her at the convent. She said yes.

So Paddy would come up of an evening, and they would sit and have a chat. After a couple of weeks, Paddy asked if he could bring somebody else. Sister Consilio said yes. Then another person, and then another. This wasn't a large convent. But the Reverend Mother at the time must have been a bit of a visionary, because she

saw that a need was being met, and she gave Sister Consilio the use of an old dairy at the back of the convent. That is basically where Cuan Mhuire began.

Sister Consilio then went and bought a small farm just outside the town of Athy. Again, this is a young nun, we have to remember. She had six pounds in her pocket, and she borrowed six thousand pounds in 1966, from what must have been a very understanding bank manager. She bought the farm, and then they set about building Cuan Mhuire as we know it today. It was the residents who built Cuan Mhuire: people who were there suffering the disease of addiction. And that still goes on today. Residents bring certain skill sets in with them, and they gladly use them here to maintain the buildings and to construct new ones.

I don't think Sister Consilio could have envisioned where it would go from there. We have now become the largest provider of residential treatment on the island of Ireland. We have treatment facilities in Newry, in Northern Ireland, and in Galway, Athy, Limerick and Cork.

We also have what we call transition houses. When a resident completes the program, they can look to move on to a transition house. It is a house, but it still has a structure and a routine. It is a dry house, so there is no drink, drugs or gambling allowed, in the house or outside of it, and there is periodic testing. When they complete transition, which is six months, we then have step-down houses all around the country. A step-down house is where the person in recovery can basically restart their life: gain employment, maybe move on and rent their own apartment. But we provide that facility for them as well.

The ripple effect

We are the largest provider of residential treatment in Ireland, and at any one time we have a maximum of six hundred beds. Six hundred beds, and we are the largest provider in the country.

They say that around ten percent of the Western population is in some kind of active addiction: the addictions Catherine listed. The population here in Ireland is roughly five million. So that is five hundred thousand people who are going to sleep tonight in some form of active addiction. And for every one person in active addiction, five people are directly affected. They are people like you. Family members.

We call it the ripple effect. If you throw a stone into a pond, you get ripples. The people closest to the epicenter, to the person in addiction, are the first to be affected, and they get the biggest wave.

So we also provide support to the families. We have family days in our treatment facilities, and support groups set up in our transition houses in different locations around the country. There is no point in only the addict healing. Everybody has

been hurt, so everybody has to heal. There is no point in an addict going home, and the family not healing.

A lot of the time, a lot of the focus in the family has been put on the person in addiction. That may lead to their siblings feeling left out, feeling less important, because the focus of the family is on the addict.

Mary's Harbor

Cuan Mhuire actually means Mary's Harbor. When a boat is in trouble, when the sea gets too rough, it heads for a harbor. And that is exactly what Cuan Mhuire is. Maybe the seas of life have got a bit rough for people, but they can come to Cuan Mhuire.

Cuan Mhuire is wholly inclusive. We don't discriminate against anybody. Anybody who is suffering the disease of addiction is welcome here. Sometimes people come in, they do the treatment, and they relapse. Relapse is part of addiction. Without relapse there is no addiction, and without addiction there is no relapse. So they may come back a second time, but they are still welcome back. We are not here to pass judgment on them.

What addiction is

So, down to addiction. What is addiction? If we look at the DSM-5, addiction is a person's inability to cease a behavior or a process, even though it is causing them harm. That is what addiction is. The DSM-5 is the diagnostic manual used by medical practitioners, and addiction is listed there as a disease. And it is a disease.

The addict is not responsible for the disease. What they are responsible for is the treatment. It is a no-blame disease. And what I mean by that is this: when we are making our choices in life, what we want to be when we grow up, people say, I want to be a fireman, I want to be a policeman, I want to be an astronaut. Nobody puts their hand up and says, I want to be an addict. But it happens. It does happen.

And addiction is becoming more prevalent than it ever has been. Since I have been involved with Cuan Mhuire, and with other organizations before, the nature of addiction has changed. You very, very rarely now get somebody who is only an alcoholic. There are other substances involved as well, or gambling. Cocaine, spice, crack, heroin, ecstasy, molly, ketamine. The list just goes on and on. The nature of addiction has definitely changed in Ireland. The whole place is awash with cocaine. There is not a parish in the country where cocaine isn't.

So, again: we are the largest provider of residential treatment, and we only have six hundred beds. Based on a figure of five million, there are five hundred thousand people going to bed tonight in active addiction. For every one of them,

five people are directly affected. That is two and a half million. The latest figures, I would say, put ninety-seven percent of all crime in Ireland as addiction-related. So add another million. That is three and a half million people, out of a population of five million, going to bed tonight somehow affected by addiction.

That sounds fairly stark. And I'll be very honest with you: it is. It really is.

Our Lady will provide

We do family conferences here, where we sit our resident down with their family and ask the family: how has the addiction affected you personally? And some of the stories would absolutely break your heart. The resident isn't forced to listen, but it is good for them to hear it. And so many of those families are still there to support them, even with all the pain. The pain is palpable; you can nearly taste it in the air. Yet they are still there, supporting them financially, emotionally, mentally. The families are still there. And we are still here as well.

Sister Consilio and Sister Agnes: this whole organization is based on one thing and one thing only, and they keep saying it. Our Lady will provide. I don't know how they do it, but she does. Sister Consilio taking out that loan, with no hesitation: don't worry, Our Lady will provide. New staff members, things like that: Our Lady will provide. We say the Rosary every night here. Our Lady will provide; that's what we pray for. And not all the time, but I'd say ninety-nine percent of the time, Our Lady does provide.

I think the faith that Sister Agnes and Sister Consilio have is absolutely remarkable. Being an engineer, I suppose I am more fact-based. It is an analytical mind. But the faith they have, to keep this place going, is absolutely remarkable.

You didn't cause it, and you can't cure it

So, the disease and the family. As Grandparents, as parents, we can internalize the issue. It's something that I did. It's something that I missed. What should I have done? What didn't I do? What families need to remember is this: you didn't cause the addiction, and you can't cure it. You cannot cure it.

What can happen with families is that they enable, and Catherine mentioned enabling behavior. Enabling behavior is any behavior by another that ensures the person in active addiction doesn't have to suffer the consequences of it. So the addiction is prolonged. It goes on, because their bills are being paid, they are being given money, their children are being taken care of. The addiction just persists, because they haven't suffered the consequences.

People say they have to hit rock bottom before they will seek help. Rock bottom is a myth. It is a fallacy. Every time you think you have hit rock bottom, there is a trap door underneath you, and you will fall further and further, until that final drop, and that is the one you won't even know about.

We have people in here of all ages: people in their seventies, and people in their early twenties. Addiction doesn't discriminate. We have people from nearly every county in the country, from all walks of life, from every social background. People with extremely good jobs, living in affluent areas, and people who have basically been living in a tent for the last two years.

Addiction strips a person of so much. They can't work. Their self-esteem is basically gone: low self-worth, low self-confidence, low self-efficacy. When they look in the mirror, they see a problem. What we try to show them here is that they are of value. There is a worth. So when they look in the mirror, they don't just see the problem; they also see the solution. We try to give them the skill sets they will need to maintain their recovery after they leave us, because they can't stay here forever. That is something they need to consider, along with their families.

Look at the pain

Addiction isn't a new phenomenon. It has been going on for years and years. Some of you may have grown up in an addictive household. But it is more open now. People are willing to talk about it a lot more.

There is a really good book called In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, by Gabor Maté. And he says: don't look at the addiction. Look at the pain. Because behind every addiction there is pain. Addiction is escapism. Escaping what? Escaping the reality of a person's life. Instead of working on it, they choose to escape it. And the mediums they use are the bottle, the bag and the bet: drink, drugs and gambling. Now I don't have to deal with the realities of my life; I can simply numb myself against them.

But when I wake up in the morning, the pain is still there. So what do I do? I double down. I go again. And the whole cycle starts to perpetuate itself. I'm on a hamster wheel now, and it just keeps going around and around until I step off. But then there is the fear of stepping off. What am I going to use as a crutch? I have become so used to the addiction that I am comfortable within it. Change is strange. I'm fearful of change. Until I come somewhere like Cuan Mhuire, where it is explained to me that change isn't a bad thing. Change is good. In order to have some kind of a positive life, I have to change.

A spiritual awakening

And there is the spiritual awakening. I have to awaken myself spiritually. Does anybody know who Bill and Bob were? They wrote the Big Book, the founding text of Alcoholics Anonymous. The story goes that it was sent to Carl Jung, and he sent it back and said: it won't work. There is no spiritual aspect to it. So they introduced God: a God of your understanding.

> *Editor's note: historically, Carl Jung's influence on Alcoholics Anonymous came through his earlier patient Rowland Hazard, and through a 1961 exchange of letters with Bill W. The Big Book was first published in 1939.*

I truly do believe that inside every single one of us we have a soul. We have a spirit. But some of these men are so damaged that they can't see that spiritual side. They can't live from a soul level. So we try to give them that back as well. We spend weeks with them discussing spirituality, whether that comes through organized religion or comes another way, as long as there is a spiritual awakening.

That, I think, is addiction: what it is, and the changing faces of it.

◆ FURTHER REFLECTIONS FROM JAMIE

The conversation that followed ran for more than an hour, with, as Marilyn said, more questions and comments in the chat than in all the years of the Faith Café. To protect the privacy of those who shared, the questions and stories themselves are not included here. What follows is Jamie's teaching in answer to them.

Spotting the signs in a young person

There are telltale signs: changes in behavior. Maybe that young person starts to isolate, spending a lot of time in their room by themselves. Their behavior becomes more erratic. Their focus is scattered. Maybe a straight-A student's grades start to slip, at a drastic rate. We can all have a good year and a bad year, but this is a downward decline. With substances, there will also always be physical signs, depending on what it is.

So what do I do? How do I approach this? Just sit them down. What I like to use with families is the expression, I have noticed. It's not confrontational. I have noticed over the last month that you're spending a lot of time in your room by yourself. Is there anything you want to discuss? You have now given them a forum, a place where they can talk about what is going on with them. Maybe it isn't addiction; maybe it is something else. But you have provided that forum.

Is anyone born an addict?

There has been an argument going on since time immemorial: nature or nurture. Are people born addicts? Is there a genetic predisposition? I don't believe so. What I believe in is behaviorism: that we learn who we are. We learn from our primary caregivers first, our parents, and then our teachers, our peer group, society. Nobody is born an addict. It is learned behavior. So no, the next generation is not doomed.

Eating disorders and control

Most of the time an eating disorder is about control. What can I control? I can control what I put into my body. So why do I have this intense need for control? Maybe because I didn't have it before. The patterns we develop as children, we carry into adult life. We don't park them when we turn eighteen. If I grew up in an environment where I was fearful, then I frame the world as a dangerous place, and that can lead to further issues, like social anxiety. And how do I overcome it? With the bottle, the bag or the bet. But I'm not actually overcoming it. All I'm doing is masking it.

Cannabis today

Cannabis should be taken as seriously as anything else. Drugs have evolved. It isn't somebody having a smoke the way it once was. The strains now, like skunk, are extremely strong, and here in Ireland we see it laced with other substances, so you don't know what you are smoking. Heavy use can lead to extreme paranoia. And it stays in the body a lot longer than something like cocaine: it can still show up in a hair test three months later. Some people call it a gateway drug. I wouldn't. It is dangerous enough by itself.

When a Grandchild is drinking too much

You can't tell somebody what to do. You can't tell an addict to stop. What you do is bring them to the realization. Have you ever missed a day's work because of your drinking? Have you ever missed a day in college? Has it caused you any financial problems? You start highlighting these things for them by asking them the questions, because only they can answer them. There is absolutely no point in confronting them. People in addiction can be very accomplished at putting on the persona they believe you want to see. It is only by putting the question back to them that those masks get peeled back.

I remember asking a man in a day treatment center why he drank so much. Because of my worries, he said. What are you worried about? My finances. And what is causing the financial worries? My drinking. He looked at me and said, I never thought of that. But he had just said it himself.

So put it back on them. If they are drinking to escape, give them the forum and the support. Let them know there is nothing they can't discuss with you. But they have to understand, too, that there are limits to that support. There are certain things you will do, and certain things you won't.

Social media, gaming and the casino in your pocket

Social media can be an addiction. And everybody now has a smartphone, which is a casino in your pocket, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks of the year. With social media, especially for young girls, you never know

when somebody is going to click. Then come the nasty comments, and the person on the receiving end is deeply hurt. They may go to their parents and be told, it's nothing, don't worry. But they are worried. So where do they find relief? Maybe they turn to the bottle, the bag or the bet.

Gaming is definitely on the rise. Gaming is about creating a fantasy: I'm now a hero, I can go on a quest. The question to ask is, why do I need the fantasy? Why am I not outside playing catch with my father or my mother? We justify ourselves. I did it myself for a long time in engineering: look what I'm giving my children, a nice house, nice clothes, good schools. But what is the greatest gift you can give a child? Your time.

And Grandparents can help here. When you are with your Grandchildren, introduce them to the park, to the petting zoo, to things outside. They see the activity as enjoyable because they had a good time with their Grandparent, and then all of a sudden it's, Mom, Dad, can we go to the park?

How we treat

What we practice at Cuan Mhuire is humanism. We try to meet the individual where they are. We see everybody as unique, everybody as having potential. That's where we start. We are not here to pass judgment, and residents are encouraged not to talk about each other, because nobody can afford to throw stones here.

There are other models, like the Minnesota model, with shorter programs of perhaps twenty-eight days, where the resident is broken down for two weeks and then rebuilt over the following two. I understand the model, and I'm not saying it doesn't work. But if you haven't rebuilt that person by the time they leave, they can actually leave feeling worse than when they came in. And people can leave at any time; they are there voluntarily.

Getting someone into treatment

They have to make that choice themselves. People come into treatment for different reasons. But if they are forced in by family, they start to resent that family. They are not there for themselves, and they won't put the effort into the program. All they are trying to do is get the family off their back, so they can maintain the behavior.

So you point things out: your addiction is affecting you in this way, it is affecting your children, it is affecting me. But we have to be careful how we deliver that message. You can't deliver it with a hammer. I keep repeating, keep pointing things out, until hopefully they get it. And especially for your children and your Grandchildren: they must know that there is somewhere they can come and talk about the problems they have, before those problems become greater.

When they won't listen

If they don't want to talk, I can't lock them in a room. Nothing will come between an addict and their fix, whatever the addiction. This is going to sound horrible, but they will walk over you to get what they want, until they come to the realization that it can no longer be about what I want; now it has to be about what I need. All I can do is keep repeating, and keep hoping. I can point out that this is damaging your health, your relationships with us, with your partner, with your children. That is all I can do.

Some families try a formal intervention, where loved ones gather and each explains how the addiction has affected them, with people waiting to bring the person straight to treatment. I haven't seen too many that have been successful. There is no point in forcing somebody, because they will resent you and leave.

I am painting a very bleak picture here. But what you need to remember is that people do get well, and people stay well. I see it every day. Last night we had an aftercare meeting in Limerick, and there were thirty-five people there who have come through this program and are still clean and sober. Just from the Limerick area. Tonight there is another thirty-five in Cork, another thirty-five in Galway. People do get well. And it is our support that gets them over the line.

Tough love, and the open door

People in addiction can play the pity game: poor me, poor me, poor me. But you are only a victim if you choose to be a victim. Ask them: you are choosing to be a victim; why? Ask the questions, ask them to explain, because now you are provoking thought. An addict can't be told. They have to come to the conclusion themselves.

Sometimes it is time for tough love. A father once told me, I could never see my son on the street; the street would kill him. And I had to say to him: his addiction will kill him for certain. If you show him some tough love, at least there is a bit of hope.

But I wouldn't slam the door shut. Explain that the door will be open once they get help. The first step is to admit that they are powerless over the addiction and that their lives have become unmanageable. If they can accept that there is a problem, that is a massive step.

Marilyn added a phrase that sums it up: the addiction is not their fault, but it is their responsibility. And Jamie agreed: the treatment is their responsibility.

Pregnancy and alcohol

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder comes from alcohol consumed during pregnancy. Whatever the mother puts into her body, the baby receives, and that can have serious neurological effects. Some interesting studies have also looked at women

who are pregnant while living with someone in active addiction: the constant state of stress and anxiety, and often a poorer diet, can take its toll on the baby too. Think about it: sitting at home wondering what state they'll come home in tonight, whether there will be a row, whether they'll wake the other children. That constant worry has its effect.

Leaving money to someone in active addiction

If the person is still in active addiction, leaving them money is like handing them a hand grenade. I know that may be tough to hear. Addiction is about a lack of control; the addiction is what is dictating the direction of their life. One option is some kind of trust, so that they receive only a set amount, so much a week or a month, and can't go absolutely mad with it. And try to get them into the best treatment you possibly can.

> *Jamie spoke as a therapist, not a legal adviser. Families considering a trust or similar arrangement should take advice from a solicitor or attorney in their own country.*

When the other children feel left out

Explain it to them. You didn't cause this, and you can't cure it, but you did your best. If one of your other children had the flu, you would focus your attention on the child who was ill. This child has the illness of addiction. Then explain to your other children: I didn't mean to ignore you, I didn't mean for you to feel second best. But as a mother, as a father, I felt this was necessary.

Support for families

Al-Anon is like AA for families. The person in addiction has AA, NA, GA, and the families have Al-Anon. Cuan Mhuire also runs its own family support groups. We had a family day last Sunday with about a hundred and thirty people, just for an hour: a little psychoeducation, and answering questions as best we can. There is a lot of hurt in those rooms, a lot of pain, and a lot of guilt. Parents internalize their children's issues: it was my fault. But nobody puts a gun to the back of an alcoholic's head and says, drink that. That's the choice they have made, and they need to be responsible for their choices.

You have to find a good meeting, the same as with AA. You might try ten different meetings before you find one that is right for you. I think it is wonderful that, as Marilyn mentioned, so many Al-Anon meetings in the United States are held in parishes. Different areas, different cities, but they all have parishes. In Limerick there are over eighty AA, NA and GA meetings a week, and just two Al-Anon meetings.

Books Jamie recommended

Gabor Maté, a Hungarian-born physician who survived the Holocaust as a baby: In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts is one of a number of his books. And if you want

another really good one, Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning, also written by a Holocaust survivor. Two very, very good books. They give you an insight into the human psyche: what keeps us going? And that's hope. Where does that hope come from? I think hope is derived from our spirit.

Supporting Cuan Mhuire

Catherine invited anyone who wished, with no pressure whatsoever, to make a donation to Cuan Mhuire in thanks for Jamie's time. As Jamie said, with any addiction or mental health issue, finances are always a difficulty; there is so much more that could be done. Details are available from Cuan Mhuire at www.cuanmhuire.ie.

◆ CLOSING WORDS

Catherine Wiley

Jamie, thank you for your honesty and your wisdom and your compassion. You have painted the picture, but you have given us hope. There is always hope. And please say thank you to Sister Consilio, to Sister Agnes, and to Cuan Mhuire.

And to every Grandparent here who is carrying the pain of addiction: you are not alone. It is not your fault, and you can't fix it. But you can love. You can love without enabling. You can love with limits. Detaching with love is not walking away. It is trusting your child and your Grandchild to God.

> *If pain can be passed down through the generations, so can hope. And so can faith. And this is our vocation as Grandparents.*

When you go to bed tonight and say your prayers, please say a prayer for Jamie, for everybody who has touched his life and helped him, and for everybody he touches and helps. Pray for Sister Agnes, for Sister Consilio, for the Sisters of Mercy, and for everyone down through the ages who has persevered and helped. That way we can carry tonight with us, right up to going to bed and saying our prayers. We are blessed tonight, every one of us.

Our next Faith Café is on Tuesday 10 November, with Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, who leads the Irish Bishops' work on vocations. And remember, it is not just priests who have vocations. We have all got a vocation. Jamie has a vocation, you have a vocation, I have a vocation.

Marilyn Henry

And as someone reminded us in the chat: prayer is the most important thing we can do, and the Rosary, especially in this month of the Rosary, is our weapon.

CLOSING PRAYER

Marilyn Henry

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Loving and merciful God, we lift up to you all those whose lives are touched by addiction. Bring healing and hope to those who struggle. Give them courage to seek help, strength for the journey of recovery, and people who will walk beside them with compassion and love.

We pray especially for their families: for the Grandparents, parents, spouses, children and friends who carry worry, heartache, and sometimes helplessness. Give them wisdom, strength and peace.

Saint Monica, who prayed faithfully and patiently for your beloved son, Augustine, intercede for all families who are praying for someone they love. Help us never to lose hope in the power of prayer and the mercy of God. May every person affected by addiction know that they are loved, that hope remains, and that God is always near. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Monica, pray for us. Saint Augustine, pray for us. Our Lady, Comforter of the Afflicted, pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You didn't cause it, and you can't cure it. Addiction is a disease; the person is not responsible for the disease, but they are responsible for the treatment.
- Everybody has to heal. Addiction ripples outward. For every person in addiction, around five people are directly affected, and the whole family needs support, not only the person in treatment.
- Enabling prolongs addiction. Love with limits. Detaching with love is not walking away; it is trusting your child and your Grandchild to God.
- Rock bottom is a myth. There is always another trap door. Don't wait for it.
- Don't look at the addiction; look at the pain. Behind every addiction there is pain, and addiction is a way of escaping it.
- Ask, don't confront. “I have noticed…” opens a door that a lecture closes. Only they can answer the question.

- The greatest gift you can give a child is your time. Grandparents can show Grandchildren a life beyond the screen.
- People do get well, and people stay well. Recovery is real, and Our Lady will provide.

NEXT FAITH CAFÉ

Tuesday 10 November 2026, 7:30 pm UK and Ireland / 2:30 pm US Eastern.

Keepers of the Flame: Grandparents, Family and Vocations. Our keynote speaker will be Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, who chairs the Council for Vocations of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Register free at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/22Ly5fQcQRefp0fhtk0WBg

If you have any ideas, thoughts or problems, or if you need prayers, just drop us a line. And pray for each other.