the areas in which various Irish surated. Unlike Murphys, Sullivans, or there are very few Ganleys in the , so I often wondered if I were really hy couldn't I find the name along with Irish collection?

n one of the several Carlow bookshop answer. The name was first igh," a division of a clan from and Leitrim. It mutated to Shanly and oly picking up the "e" upon arrival in ites.

n, my maternal grandfather's name, is likings as we had supposed on account avian sound. The same book revealed Anglicized version of "Benison," the slation of the Gaelic "Gildea," mean-

re time to pursue the Feeleys on my, but a woman from Donnegal tells me vs Feeleys from Sligo. So I really do it I can trace to Ireland.

ople in our group are on similar rootities. In fact it was Joe Keefe (whose "gentle," and he is) who clued me in in the book store.

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s stop, in the stores, everywhere, it people of Irish ancestry whom I know ester. There is Sister Margaretta stanus stop in Limerick; and Sister Jean nother walking in downtown Carlow, ping on a Sunday afternoon; and best dead ringer for Sister Wilma Joseph, odhran (an Irish drum) in the pub on ning.

lieve it," says one of our group. "It's here is one of my relatives!"

and the dead, the near and the far — hen or where I may meet them? In the ve been hearing, time and space mixes creating an expanded sense of reality, all surprised.

#### shment

Ild Celtic life be without it? The repetiolving back and forth around a theme, id returning once again; the enhancescription in stories, with grace notes in with whirls and swirls in the It is on the high crosses, in the metal Vational Museum, in the patterns of the the native Irish speech patterns.

ded of one of my favorite pastimes on a. I love to wander around the campsite, the variety of equipment that people om a simple one-person domed tent to all the trappings of civilization.

ates a similar opportunity for me. I can gs are done elsewhere — what the peopreakfast (porridge, broiled tomatoes, ausage, brown bread and marmalade), broach their work (ever so slowly, with inning around 9 or 10 a.m.), and the hey have (music, music, music!).

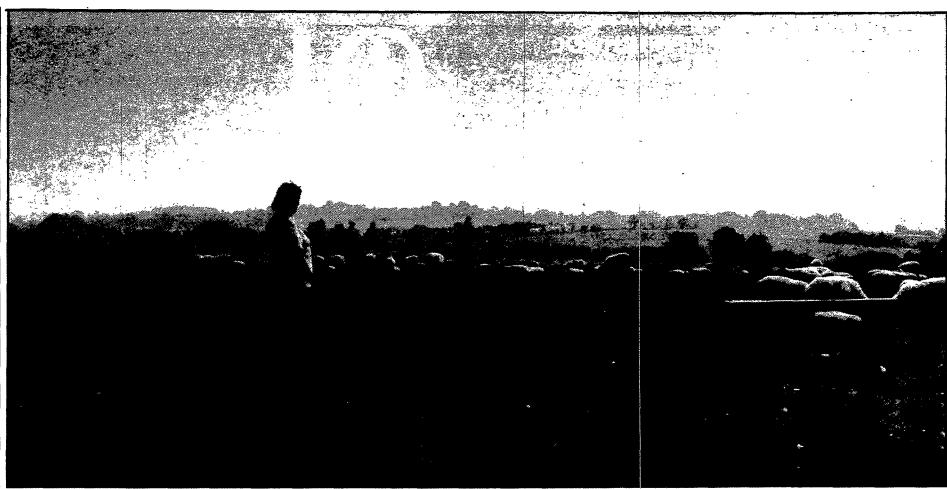
e pattern of one embellishment of the

evor. It is a kind of "illumination."

## tment

its tragic history, the endless rounds of neluding a bombing in Armagh that idyll of our trip — and the ongoing exe of its best sons and daughters (50,000 r) Ireland continues to charm and enitors. Is it the holy places or the ruins, or the high crosses, the castles or? Or is it the special way of being here that creates a heightened awareness of the land and people here. I suspect it is

ar to my experience as a high school aring end-of-the-year proctoring. Sitting at the desk, while the students ed seriously with their exam, I would the room, observing them without their. Soon each student began to shine, to bearably beautiful and vulnerable. I verwhelmed by a tenderness and love



Tour participant Jane Tobin stands on the Hill of Tara, the ancient place of the High Kings of Ireland. The group spent an afternoon on the hill, listening to stories about the kings.

that would often bring tears to my eyes.

Of course it did not last, but the recollection persisted, and I would try to remember that beauty amid the day-to-day work and frustrations of teaching.

Traveling provides this kind of perspective. Separate from the daily grinding concerns of the place, detached yet involved with the intensity of engagement that comes from the time limit of the visit, one sees the human goodness and beauty of the place. The virtues shine; the deficiencies are obscured.

## Rediscovering the heritage

Although this is my first visit to the country, I keep speaking about being "back" in Ireland. I have a sense of coming here to reclaim something that is mine.

Perhaps that sense comes from my sadness at not having received a true sense of ethnic identity from my parents, which they in turn had not received from their parents.

I cannot blame the teenagers who left home on the

five-day steerage ocean voyage, not knowing what to expect when they arrived in Boston. Then they worked so hard to become Americanized that what little notion of Irish heritage that remained for their grandchildren was based upon St. Patrick's Day celebrations, Pat and Mike jokes, and the Hollywood Ireland typified by John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara in *The Quiet Man*.

The true Irish heritage is so much more. I have come home with a reading list to last a lifetime, as well as a feeling of gratitude to a friend who pointed me toward exploring my roots.

At one time I was strongly interested in the Native American experience. I spent some time working on a reservation one summer, and I wanted to lend my skills to their causes. I felt a strong kinship with Native Americans and was interested in learning much more about their culture.

"You will find that they are probably tribal. Going back far enough, the experience of indigenous peoples is very much alike. Learn your own history."

Learning my own history has only served to increase my feeling of kinship with our Native Americans. Our histories follow the same pattern: forced relocations, eviction, loss of language, lack of the colonizer's respect for a sense of law based upon concept and context rather than precept, invalidation of oral traditions, destruction of the indigenous religious traditions, demonizing of the native spirituality. The same chapter headings could be used for the history of the Native Americans or the Native Irish.

But tradition has a life of its own, and like the flowers among the ruined castles, it emerges and resurges from time to time. I believe these two people's traditions ultimately will endure and remain a life force for human beings long after the forces of destruction and colonization are not even a footnote in the real history of the world.

As Sakini says at the conclusion of *Teahouse of* the August Moon, "Country that has been invaded many times soon master art of hiding things."

But we also know that all that is hidden will one day be revealed.

# Couple's ministry offers others 'storied' journeys

Beatrice Ganley, a Sister of St. Joseph of Rochester, is a former Nazareth Academy English teacher now working as a communications consultant. She is also a part-time faculty member of Nazareth College in Rochester.

A poet, essayist and frequent *Catholic Courier* contributor, Sister Ganley is active in social-justice issues and has traveled overseas several times.

"Irish Traditions and Sacred Stories" is one of four travel and learning experiences offered by Storyfest Journeys. The organization was founded four years ago by Robert Bela Wilhelm and Kelly Wilhelm.

Storyfest Journeys was born when — after several years as a university professor teaching sacraments, liturgy and comparative religion — Bob realized that he tended to use stories as a central way of explaining whatever he was

"Storytelling," he said, "was for me a basic tool for teaching theology. In liturgy, I used stories of the seasons; in sacraments, I used stories of faith; and in comparative religion, I used stories from the different cultures."

used stories from the different cultures."

His interest in travel and guiding tours goes back a long way. As a graduate student, Bob supported himself by doing weekend tours of Washington, D.C. Now he reflected, "What



A modern statue of people dancing is silhouetted against the sky at the Cashel. started as a temporary job to keep food on the table has come back to the way I do theology."

Bob's partner in the venture, his wife, Kelly, also finds the work to be a circling back to her experience as a graduate student. While she was completing her degree in therapeutic recreation at San Francisco State University, she worked with a group of retarded youths, guiding them

around the sights of San Francisco.

Both Bob and Kelly approach the work as a kind of ministry. "What is important," Bob said, "is flexibility so that people can discover what they need to discover. My reward is when someone has made a discovery about their own story, their own journey."

People participate in this seminar for a variety of reasons: to find family roots, to claim an ethnic heritage, for relaxation, to commemorate a passage in one's life, to celebrate an accomplishment or make a significant change in the direction of one's life.

Part of Kelly's involvement in the seminar is to interview the participants for her ongoing research into the various dimensions of the travel experience.

From the economic perspective, the travel industry is a risky one. Terrorism and changes in the world economy, among other factors, can have a negative impact upon the success of a tour, with all the preliminary effort having been expended and no monetary return for the business.

But both Bob and Kelly say the enterprise is worth the risks involved. "I've really found what I need to do in my life," Bob said.

Storyfest Journeys is based at 3901 Cathedral Avenue, 608, Washington, D.C. 20016, 202/364-6143.

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