Children Praying

By Aidan Ryan

I was a primary schoolboy- more years ago than I care to remember, when prayer was a formal repetitive ritual, quite often in a language beyond the comprehension of an eight year old. Mass was said in Latin, and at home the nightly Rosary ended with lengthy Trimmings. It was a test of endurance more than an exercise in inspiration. At school, we prayed daily for the success of the African Missions, and I lost count of the number of times I couldn’t make the price of a two-penny ice-cream coming from school because the teacher insisted on pupils putting a penny in the Mission box for the Black Babies. We used to wonder if they appreciated the sacrifice we made for them.

Against this background I was more hopeful than confident when asked to judge a Primary School Prayer writing competition. In an age of social media surely prayer is close to the bottom of their list of priorities. Or so I thought! Without exception, what I found in the entries was a wholehearted expression of exemplary Christian selflessness completely beyond what would be expected from children at their stage of development. Their personal hopes and ambitions were secondary to their concerns for their families, the homeless, those deprived or isolated, elderly relatives, in fact not a single self-centred aspiration. If the authors of these prayers are typical of the next generation of Irish adults, we have no need to fear- the best is yet to come!