

*ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION CHURCH, KILLYBEGS.*  
*CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2020*



*Beannachtaí na Nollag agus na Bliana Úire oraibh uilig*

*Wishing you love and joy this Christmas and in the New Year*

**Dear Parishioners and Friends,**

*The year drawing to a close was a year like no other, at least for this present generation. During 2020 we have seen the virulent virus that is Covid-19 claim the lives of over 1.5 million people worldwide. There has been untold suffering, causing illness, death and isolation. Funeral rites were severely disrupted and grief continues to fester like an open wound.*

*Our everyday rituals of living and loving, which we so took for granted like the air we breathe, were dramatically adjusted. Covid restrictions impacted on every aspect of our lives and while restrictions are ongoing the imminent availability of a vaccine will enable us to live with the virus long-term. Christmas goodwill was unleashed upon the world during this past pandemic*

*year. So many put their lives on the frontline for the protection, safety and well-being of others. If we wondered where God was as the coronavirus descended upon our world with the vengeance of a nuclear missile, we discovered God with us in the efforts of humanity to save, protect and comfort itself. We discovered God within us, in faith renewed, in hope reignited and in love shared.*

*In a turbulent and unsettling year, when political and pastoral leadership faltered, the beacon of hope was Pope Francis. Initially there was the shock of the Pope all alone in an empty wet St Peter's Square at the end of March, speaking of the darkness enveloping the world. Then at Easter and during the following months, Pope Francis' deep discernment and his pastoral and spiritual guidance emerged. For him, the pandemic crisis was a threshold moment that could pave the way to a better world, discerning that God is with us above all in times of suffering and crisis, steering us in a new direction. While implementing far-reaching administrative, financial and pastoral reforms in the Vatican, he issued his third encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" on how we relate to one another as a global community and in more personal settings. He expresses the hope that our experience of the pandemic may lead us to a new sense of solidarity and togetherness, based on the dignity of each human person, a world which embraces and defends the vulnerable, a world in which our faith opens our hearts to the needs of others, like the Good Samaritan.*

*Like so many aspect of life, celebration of the sacraments and parish ministries were severely disrupted this year. While the church was closed for public worship, the team of three operated the live streaming of Mass: myself, Patricia our sacristan and Ann our parish secretary (and Johnny Paul was first sub). Sisters Roisín and Sara O'Donnell provided hymns and songs for the live-streamed Masses, resulting in a wonderful CD 'Then Sings My Soul' and we sing their praises endlessly. Our thanks also to Maeve Murray, Maeve McGowan, Daniel & Majella O'Donnell, Kelly McGinley, Lauren McHugh, Chloe McGinty & Jenna Curran for helping with singing and music and the Killybegs Parish Choir tape of 1995 was a great discovery. All who open and close the church, the 'sanitising team' and candle-keeper Maureen Cunningham do excellent work. Thanks to all concerned. And we are grateful for all the financial support received for the general administration of the parish and for the Restoration Fund, despite the difficult circumstances.*

*Christmas can be a lonely time for many families as the loss of a loved one during the year is sorely felt and many people will be far from home at Christmas-time. We keep them all in mind and in our prayers at this time. May the love and joy of Christ be with you and your family, be they at home or away from home, this Christmas and throughout the New Year.*

*Wishing you every blessing this Holy Season and throughout 2021*

***Fr Colm, 8th December 2020***

## CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS 2020

We are very happy that the church is open for public worship. We have to proceed with great care and make every effort to maximise protection and to minimise risk. It is important to keep 2 metres apart, continue with thorough handwashing, using hand sanitiser and, if you have symptoms, to stay at home and contact your GP.

**Please wear a face covering while attending church.**

Please consider each Mass during Christmas Week as a Christmas Mass and attend only once between Monday 21st December to Sunday 27th December. This will give everyone a chance to attend. Remember there is no obligation to attend Mass at all during this period. Live streaming is always available. Go to the parish website [killybegsparish.com](http://killybegsparish.com) and click on live webcam.

Under existing guidelines, our church can be divided into two zones, **Zone A** (St Catherine's side) and **Zone B** (Our Lady's side), each zone is independent and may accommodate **50 each**.

The following Christmas Masses will be celebrated during Christmas Week:

**Monday 21st December: 10am**

**Tuesday 22nd December: 10am**

**Wednesday 23rd December: 7pm**

**Christmas Eve (Thursday): 6pm, 8pm, 10pm.**

**Christmas Day (Friday): 8am, 10am, 12 noon.**

**Saturday 26th December: 11am, 7pm.**

**Sunday 27th December: 9am, 11am.**



Please plan beforehand which Mass you wish to attend. Let us know by phone 0749731013 or email [info@killybegsparish.com](mailto:info@killybegsparish.com) your preferred day & time, including the number of family members attending. We will allocate you / your family a seat & confirm it in writing. If your first preference is not available, we will allocate the nearest available to you. In other words, attendance at Mass during Christmas week must be pre-arranged. This seems to be the fairest way to accommodate attendance at Christmas Masses.



## **SOME OF THE NEGATIVES**

More deaths / losing loved ones / not being with sick family  
Not being able to visit loved ones in hospital and nursing homes  
A deceased loved one brought straight to the graveyard, not admitted to the chapel  
Some family members not present at funeral / travel restrictions  
Missing wakes and funerals of family, friends & neighbours  
Not being able to attend Mass / No Choir  
Weddings & Baptisms postponed  
Sacraments of Confirmation & Communion postponed  
Delay to routine surgical operations and cancer treatment  
Some people attach stigma to having COVID  
No Holidays / No sunshine abroad  
No travel  
Mental health issues  
Anxiety / Stress  
Worry about catching / spreading the virus  
More tragic incidents of suicide and brutal killings  
Isolation / Loneliness / Helplessness / Lack of control  
No activities for the elderly: bingo / cards / dancing  
No activities for the young: sport / night clubs  
Self esteem / confidence deteriorates when off work  
Not inclined to exercise / eat properly  
No motivation  
Wearing masks  
On-line predators  
Become introverted when not meeting people  
Preoccupied with news and numbers relating to COVID  
Financial impact / Economy suffering / Worry will your business survive  
Permanent shift to online  
Less job opportunities / unemployment  
Lack of access to medical care / not attending doctors  
Loss of creativity / Boredom / Frustration  
Domestic violence  
Alcohol abuse / Drugs abuse  
E-Learning for students not as effective  
Remote working not as effective  
Grandparents/grandchildren living far apart  
Having COVID and its symptoms (severe tiredness, loss of taste & smell)  
Missing family occasions / missing social interaction  
Missing family / missing hugs / missing coffee with friends  
Missing shopping / missing freedom / missing smiles  
Missing dressing up / missing singing / missing trips out  
Missing music / missing work  
No sport on TV



## **SOME OF THE POSITIVES**

Appreciating what we have / gratitude for the simple things of life  
Better quality family time  
More meaningful conversation with family and friends, not just surface talk  
Getting to know each other better (not too busy to notice qualities in others)  
Time to look after sick family  
Appreciation for simple things  
Enjoying the quiet / time to be more reflective  
Less demands on time / slow down / less rushing about  
Time for self-care / time to seek and avail of help  
On-line Masses  
More personal celebration of Confirmation & Communion / less trappings  
Time to learn to drive  
Working from home / No sitting in traffic  
Enjoying grandchildren's cooking ventures  
Talking to others more / talking to neighbours /sense of connectedness continues  
More contact with family by phone  
Community spirit / huge outpouring of generosity  
A common connection with everyone worldwide  
People helping people  
Realising some things don't need to be done / Realising we don't need so much things  
Enjoying time off work  
Simplicity brings contentment  
Less COVID cases in lockdown  
Relearning skills e.g. cooking, hairdressing / Learning new skills  
Appreciation for family  
Appreciation for work  
Time to explore different things e.g. diets / Time to exercise  
Time to paint, decorate, attend to the garden and loads of odd jobs  
Time to reflect on climate change & caring for the environment /clear air almost tangible  
Time to use our gifts great creativity  
Time to listen to music / Smiling eyes  
Save money  
COVID payments  
Lower carbon footprint / Appreciating nature  
The world slowed down for a while  
Discovering local areas & many hidden gems / getting to know our own county and country  
Slower lifestyle  
Time for yourself  
Learning technology eg zoom, facetime  
A break from normal life  
Realizing the value of front line workers  
Vaccines are on the way  
No sport on TV!

## Christmas Gifts from the Parish Office

As well as Christmas items & Christmas cards, there is a range of religious goods of devotion available. Christmas Mass Bouquets are also available. In the spring we will have special items for Confirmation & First Communion.

## Money Matters

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who supports the parish financially, contributing to the general administration of the parish and contributing to the Restoration Fund.

- The upkeep and maintenance of the parish, in terms of buildings, programmes and personnel, are carried out in a cost-efficient manner. The restoration work involved obtaining a 10 year bank loan in October 2012 of €950,000. Our current monthly repayments are €9,738.00  
The loan balance on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018 was: €375,599.00  
The loan balance on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 was: €268,114.63  
The loan balance on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 was: €158,533.10  
We are grateful for your ongoing support.
- *Weekly or monthly or annual* contributions are very much appreciated. A number of fundraising efforts are necessary during the year.
- Many people use the weekly envelopes for their contributions. We are delivering two sets of envelopes (Parish Envelopes and Restoration Envelopes) to each household which has been in receipt of envelopes. If you do not intend to use both, discard what you do not need.
- If you wish to receive a set of envelopes or if you have any queries, please contact Fr Colm or Ann at the Parish Office: 074 9731013.

## Guidelines for Getting Married

Each partner must complete the **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form**.

The following documents are required to complete this form:

1. Baptismal Certificate
2. Confirmation Certificate
3. Pre-Marriage Course Certificate. (Pre-Marriage Courses: [www.accord.ie](http://www.accord.ie))
4. Letter of Freedom (a declaration from a priest or a parent or sibling that you have never been married either civilly or religiously).  
*Both parties must be free to marry in the Catholic Church.*
5. Receipt of three month notification from the Civil Registrar of Marriages.  
Stranorlar Registrar: Marie Greene on 074 9191729 / 9191730  
Letterkenny Registrar: 074 9123771 / 9123772)

Fr Colm will gladly advise couples on the above.



A new CD with hymns & songs sung by Roisín & Sara O'Donnell.

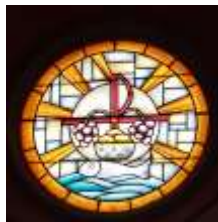
***A great Christmas Gift!***

*This CD originated during the 2020 pandemic lockdown and the hymns have been an invaluable resource for all our live-streamed Masses.*

**CD on sale in Parish Office & Curran's €10**

All proceeds to:

**Killybegs Community Hospital Patients' Comfort Fund**



### **Mass Intentions**

When you book a Mass or get a Mass Card, Fr Colm can let you know the date and time of the Mass if requested. The Saturday evening Mass in Killybegs may be offered for a number of intentions. It may be necessary to include a number of intentions in some of the other Masses as well.

When a particular Mass Intention is not offered at St Mary of the Visitation Church, the Mass Stipend is sent to the Missions or to some of the clergy in Raphoe Diocese for the Mass to be celebrated for the donor's intentions.

## **The Sacrament of Baptism:**

Parents may arrange the baptism of their child with Fr Colm or Ann in the Parish Office. In 'normal' times two members of the Parish Baptism Team would arrange to visit the family, one half-hour visit, to plan the ceremony. If a home visit doesn't suit, this can be done in the Parish Office. In these pandemic days, we communicate by phone/email/post.

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## **Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Raphoe**

St Mary's Parish in Killybegs has adopted the Diocese of Raphoe Policy Statement and everyone working with children in the parish is required to comply with it. The two Parish Safeguarding Representatives are: Kathleen O'Donnell, Fintra Rd and Pat McGee, The Glebe.

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## **Dates for 2021 (subject to covid regulations)**

**Sacrament of Confirmation:** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March.

**First Holy Communion:** Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May.

**Mass at Lisnaclaya Scalan:** Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 7.00pm

**Graveyard Mass:** Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July at 7.00pm

**Blessing of the Fleet Mass:** Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July at 7.00pm

**Mass at Croaghlin Mass Rock:** Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August at 7.00pm

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## **Sunday Masses: 7.00pm (Vigil), 9.00am & 11.00am.**

**Weekdays:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday, 10.00am.

*Weekday Masses subject to change. Consult weekly Newsletter.*

**Webcam:** All Masses & all Church Services from St Mary's are streamed live. Go to our website *killybegsparish.com* and click on *Live Webcamera* Marriages and Funerals can be recorded, on request, free of charge, and can also be downloaded from our site.

**Induction Loop** is available for hearing-aid users, switch to T position.

**Gluten-free Bread** for Holy Communion is available on request.

**Website:** The Parish Weekly Newsletter is posted every Saturday evening on our website: *killybegsparish.com*

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**The Parish Office** is located on church grounds, opposite main door of the church

**Hours of Opening:** Monday to Friday 9.15am - 2.45pm. **Tel:** 074 9731013

**Email:** [info@killybegsparish.com](mailto:info@killybegsparish.com)

**Website:** [killybegsparish.com](http://killybegsparish.com)

**Parish Secretary:** Ann O'Donnell

**Parish Priest:** Fr. Colm Ó Gallchóir: Tel: 074 9731013 (9731030)

**Parish Sacristan:** Patricia O'Boyle.