

*ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION CHURCH, KILLYBEGS.
CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2021*



*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

*Beannachtaí na Nollag agus na Bliana Úire oraibh uilig
Wishing you love, joy and hope this Christmas and in the New Year*



Dear Parishioners and Friends,

We didn't expect to be in the throes of covid this Christmas again after going into full lockdown at Christmas a year ago. The new strain of the coronavirus, Omicron, has created a new alert, and with daily covid cases over the 5000 mark, a return to certain restrictions begin today though not directly affecting public worship. As Omicron spreads across the globe, it brings a dire warning that no country will be safe from this deadly disease until it has been eliminated everywhere. And it won't be eliminated everywhere until and unless effective vaccination is available and availed of everywhere.

The pandemic continues to cause much upheaval in our lives and in our world. We're getting used to mask wearing, covid passports and social distancing. We were in lockdown for the first six months of the year. We mourned the loss of loved ones. Coping with illness and coping with loss brought its own pandemic trauma. Celebrating public Mass continues to entail a restriction in numbers as we respect social distancing. The live streaming of Mass has been a life-line for many, creating an online global community of worshippers. The table on page 5 makes interesting reading, giving the number of views from different countries during the past while. Baptisms and marriages had to be rearranged. The Celebration of Confirmation was postponed from early July to early September and First Holy Communion was celebrated in mid-September. Having those celebrations in small groups and with immediate family brought a different focus to the liturgy which was much appreciated. Indeed covid has forced us to rethink and alter our lives and our priorities.

Pope Francis has been the most significant and influential world leader this past year. He has just completed a five-day trip to Cyprus and Greece, highlighting the fearful plight of refugees and asylum-seekers. He described the Mediterranean, where thousands have died trying to make the crossing from North Africa to Europe as 'a grim cemetery without tombstones'. He spoke directly to migrants: 'I am here to see your faces and look into your eyes. Eyes full of fear and expectancy, eyes that have seen violence and poverty, eyes streaked by too many tears'. Pope Francis warned delegates attending the recent climate-change summit in Glasgow, COP 26: 'Time is running out' but that it wasn't too late for humanity to combat environmental destruction. His vision of the post-pandemic world is one in which people and nations look out for each other and speak up for those most in need.

Our celebration of Mass continues to be conducted with a view of keeping people safe and protected. Mask-wearing and social distancing are vital. Some people are slow to return to Mass in person and we respect their hesitancy.

I am grateful to Patricia O'Boyle, Parish Sacristan, and Ann O'Donnell, Parish Secretary, for their multi-tasking. Their work is invaluable. So many others help out and their contribution is greatly appreciated: those who open and close the church morning and evening, the sanitising and stewarding teams, church cleaners, Maureen Cunningham does excellent work looking after the candles on a daily basis and the Christmas Trees team is always at hand throughout the year. The Christmas Crib is assembled each year with great care and precision by Patrick, Betty and John Boyle. The Crib is a source of devotion and great admiration and we are very grateful to the Boyle family.

Regular ministries in the Church will return gradually, particularly Ministers of the Eucharist and Ministers of the Word. We hope to have a renewal of these two ministries in the New Year when it is opportune. Members of the Parish Choir and organist Maeve Murray will be present at the 6pm Christmas Eve Mass and the 12 noon Christmas Day Mass, all being well.

I am very grateful for the ongoing financial support for the general administration of the parish and for the Restoration Fund. There are a few more thoughts in this regard on page 6.

In the weeks leading to Christmas we renew some of our friendships through Christmas greetings. In some cases the last significant contact may have been a year ago. Remembering at Christmas helps to bring friendships to life again and to keep alive what is in fact a real blessing in our lives.

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 2022



Fr Colm, 7th December 2021



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS 2021

The church continues to be open for public worship. We are making every effort to maximise protection and to minimise risk. When in church please continue to:

- **Wear a mask**
- **Keep social distance**
- **Use hand sanitiser on entering and leaving**

Needless to say, if you have symptoms please stay at home and contact your GP.

- There are 9 Christmas Masses in all, from Thursday 23rd December to Sunday 26th December.
- There is no obligation to attend. If you are attending, please attend only once during this period so that everyone can attend in safety and comfort.
- Live streaming is always available. Go to the parish website killybegsparish.com and click on *Services Online...*

The Christmas Masses are as follows (there is no need to book):

Thursday 23rd December:	10am
Christmas Eve (Friday):	6pm, 8pm, 10pm.
Christmas Day (Saturday):	8am, 10am, 12 noon.
Sunday 26th December:	9am, 11am.



Live Streaming Views

Country	Sun 5/12	Sat 4/12	Fri 3/12	Thur 2/12	Tue 30/11	Mon 29/11	Sun 28/11	Sat 27/11	Thur 25/11	Mon 22/11	Sun 14/11
Canada				2							
Hungary	7	2	8	7	3	3	3	2	3	3	1
Ireland	251	234	100	120	96	183	195	211	220	266	217
Israel							1				
Malaysia							1				
Oman	5	4		3	2	1	2		5	1	4
UAE										1	1
Portugal							1				
Australia									4		
UK	58	42	28	37	26	17	58	43	34	26	73
US		6	5	1	3	7	4	9	4	5	4
Slovakia											4
Netherlands											1
Germany											1
Totals	321	288	141	170	130	211	265	265	270	302	306



The Bethlehem innkeeper at Christmas was probably the unluckiest man in history. He has the chance to shelter the Holy Family and he missed it. Worst of all it wasn't really his fault because after all the place was full. And yet in a million nativity plays he's blamed so much, though perhaps not so much blamed as pitied because the person who misses an opportunity is really to be pitied. It could happen that someone will come to us today. Yes, perhaps Christ will come to us in the guise of a family member, friend or neighbour needing a word of encouragement, or understanding. The innkeeper didn't know that Christ might be passing. We don't either, any day of our lives. So watch and pray, be on the look-out for Christ passing... today.

Fr Ronan Drury 'Pass It On'

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 were €9,738.00. Even though there has been a 50% drop in the Restoration Income during the pandemic, we succeeded in maintaining full repayments until November 2021. From December 2021, the monthly repayment will be reduced to €5215.00, which means the restoration loan will be fully repaid in August 2022. This will be a tremendous achievement. We are grateful for your ongoing support.

The loan balance on 2nd December 2019 was: €268,114.63

The loan balance on 1st December 2020 was: €158,533.10

The loan balance on 1st December 2021 was: € 45,771.67

- *Weekly or monthly or annual* contributions are very much appreciated.
- 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.

Concluding Part of the Restoration Project

There are 3 other projects in the pipeline, two of which may be regarded as bringing the Restoration to its completion pertaining to external works:

1. *Maintenance of the Car Park*

2. *Landscaping* in chapel grounds in the area where the Millennium Cross is located. It's an ideal location for a Grotto to Our Lady. The sycamore trees in that area were a safety hazard and have been recycled.

3. *Repainting of the interior of the church:* this third project would mark the tenth anniversary of the Restoration.

This would involve continuing the Restoration Fund until December 2023 for everyone in a position to support it.

The original Restoration Fund will be formally closed August 2022.



Guidelines for Getting Married

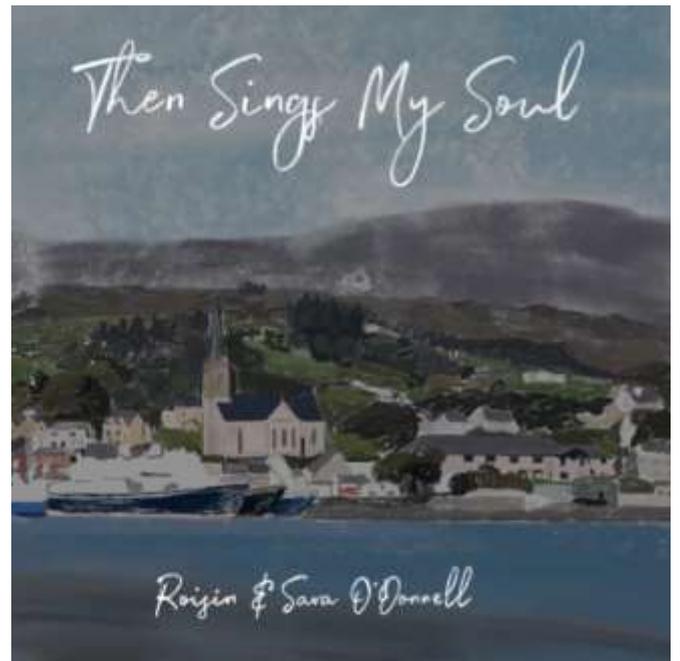
Each partner must complete the **Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form**.

The following documents are required to complete this form:

1. Baptismal Certificate and Confirmation Certificate
2. Pre-Marriage Course Certificate (Pre-Marriage Courses: www.accord.ie)
3. 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.
4. 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.

Presentation to Killybegs Community Hospital Patients' Comfort Fund



Sara & Roisín O'Donnell & Fr Colm presenting a cheque of €3,220.00 to Eileen Boyle, staff member of Killybegs Community Hospital, for the Patients' Comfort Fund.

The money was raised from sales of their CD 'Then Sings My Soul' which was recorded at the beginning of the pandemic lockdown, sponsored by the parish, containing hymns and songs which have been an invaluable resource for all our live-streamed Masses. The CD is available from the Parish Office €10.



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.

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 here, 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 and arrangements for the ceremony will be formalised from the Parish Office.

Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Raphoe

We have 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 & Pat McGee, The Glebe.

Dates for 2022

Sacrament of Confirmation: Saturday 26th March (10am, 11.30am & 1.00pm).

First Holy Communion: Saturday 14th May (10am, 11.30am & 1.00pm).

Mass at Lisnaclaya Scalan: Wednesday 1st June at 7.00pm

Graveyard Mass: Friday 29th July at 7.00pm

Blessing of the Fleet Mass: Saturday 30th July at 7.00pm

Mass at Croaghlin Mass Rock: Monday 15th August at 7.00pm

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

Weekdays: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday: 10.00am; Friday 7.00pm.

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 **Services Online...**

Marriages and Funerals can be recorded, on request, free of charge, and can also be downloaded from our site. Recordings may only be stored for one week.

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

Gluten-free Bread for Holy Communion is available at all Masses.

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

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

Website: killybegsparish.com

Parish Secretary: Ann O'Donnell: Tel: 087 6735139

Parish Priest: Fr. Colm Ó Gallchóir: Tel: 074 9731013 / 9731030

Parish Sacristan: Patricia O'Boyle.