

ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION CHURCH, KILLYBEGS.
CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2022



*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 look forward to Christmas this year with hope and joy, along with a greater sense of freedom. We were in the throes of the Covid pandemic for the last two Christmases. It took its toll and it hasn't gone away while every winter brings its own challenges to our health, wellbeing and safety. Another cause of concern is the rising cost of electricity as well as the increased cost of other essentials.

Christmas can be a lonely time and for many bereaved Creeslough families this Christmas and many Christmases to come will be difficult and challenging, following the terrible explosion on 7th October which claimed the lives of ten people. As with the Covid pandemic, the Creeslough disaster evoked much empathy and generosity from people throughout the country and across the world. A light shone in the darkness of tragedy. This is so often the case. While we face the raw reality of death, illness and destruction, we try to appreciate the rays of hope and love that emerge and point to a way forward.

For the people from Ukraine it will be a lonely, tough Christmas, facing the ongoing aggression of Russia. So many people of Ukraine are on our doorstep here in Killybegs, separated from family members this Christmas. We have a long history of forced emigration ourselves. We know the importance of acceptance, hospitality and support.

Doing something about the destruction of our planet is an ongoing global challenge so that the children of the future will have a world to live in. The 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) took place in Egypt in November with Pope Francis urging world leaders to make concrete decisions to tackle the climate crisis. We know that we all have to play our part in the fight against the destruction of the environment.

As I write these words, the quarter finals of the World Cup in Qatar have concluded and the football has taken centre stage. The choice of Qatar as a World Cup host was controversial because it was suspected to be the result of corruption. Also, their employment laws were harsh, bordering on slavery, homosexuality is criminalised (as it was in Britain until 1967 and in this country until 1993) and women do not have legal equality. With such a spotlight on Qatar, there are signs that observation of human rights are improving and harsh employment laws have been liberalised.

The Diocese of Raphoe launched a Pastoral Plan in 2022 in response to Pope Francis' call to the entire church to reflect on new ways of living the faith together, women and men actively participating in making the mission of Christ a reality in our world. On page 6 of this newsletter, you will find a proposal from the Pastoral Plan regarding the liturgy and parish structures. Another aspect of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan is the establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils. A number of meetings were held in Donegal town in recent months with this in mind, representatives from our own parish being in attendance. We will meet with them in the near future to plan a way forward.

The celebration of Confirmation and First Holy Communion took place during the year in small groups because of Pandemic concerns. There were three confirmation celebrations in March and three First Communion celebrations in May. In many ways this was a positive development with the focus being on the celebration of the sacrament itself, rather than the trappings that accompany the larger celebration. We hope that future celebrations will be conducted in a way that the young people and their families can engage even more in a prayerful and joyful celebration of faith. We are grateful to our three National Schools and their Boards of Management for their significant role in parish life.

The death of Maeve Murray in August was a huge loss not only for her family and friends but also for this parish community, having been involved in the Parish Choir as organist, singer and inspirational leader since 1960. We are very conscious of Maeve's massive contribution to the liturgy. She prepared thoroughly for each celebration, trying to ensure that the liturgical season, the Word of God and the hymns were in unison. It is the wish of the Choir that her voice will be heard singing O Holy Night this Christmas.

Regular ministries are gradually returning and we are grateful to everyone who is involved or has been involved in the various ministries. We are conscious that we need new members and as parish life resumes more fully more people may come forward to serve as Ministers of the Eucharist or Ministers of the Word or as Collectors. It's great to see the Parish Choir back again after Covid and it always welcomes new members, a choir practice taking place every Monday at 7.15pm in the church. We look forward to the Junior Choir being back again at Christmas as well as St Catherine's Vocational School Choir.

Ann O'Donnell, Parish Secretary and Patricia O'Boyle, Parish Sacristan, do extra-ordinary work throughout the year, far and beyond the call of duty. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. There is a regular and faithful number of people who open and close the church morning and evening throughout the year and their service is invaluable and greatly appreciated. Maureen Cunningham looks after the candles so diligently, Siobhan McBrearty keeps the

church in good shape, while Lawrence McGill looks after the outdoor grounds under the auspices of Killybegs Employment Project, while other members help with the Graveyard. The gardening skills of Brid Murphy are seen around the grounds of the church, parish office and parochial house with spectacular and colourful results. The Parish Finance Committee meets regularly while Michael Dorrian kindly oversees parish finances. We appreciate everyone's involvement. 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 7.

The Christmas Trees and the Christmas Crib feature prominently in our celebrations. The crib is assembled every year in a meticulous manner by Patrick and Betty Boyle showing great attention to detail. Patrick took over from his uncle Charlie Boyle, whose birthday is on 19th December, a heavenly 100th birthday. The Christmas Trees Team of Johnny, James, Hubert and Seamus live up to their usual high standards and we are grateful to all concerned.

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, at home or away from home, this Christmas and throughout the New Year.

Wishing you every blessing this Holy Season and throughout 2023



Fr Colm, 11th December 2022



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS 2022

Christmas Masses 2022

◆ *Thursday 22nd December: 10am*

◆ *Friday 23rd December: 7pm*

◆ **Saturday 24th December, Christmas Eve:**

6pm: Christmas Eve Mass
(including First Communion Children & Junior Choir)

8pm: Christmas Eve Mass
(including Confirmation Candidates & St Catherine's Voc. School Choir)

10pm: Christmas Eve Mass (with Senior Choir)

◆ **Sunday 25th December, Christmas Day:**

9am: Christmas Day Mass

11am: Christmas Day Mass (with Senior Choir)

We should all try our best to keep everyone safe at Christmas.

If you experience any symptoms, it is better not to attend Mass.

You can watch it online.

We hope and pray that everyone stays safe this Christmas.

Live streaming is always available. Go to the parish website killybegsparish.com and click on *Services Online*.



Advent Service of Reconciliation

Monday 19th December 7.00pm



This service will follow the usual format except that after people have received individual absolution you may depart quietly, to maintain a measure of social distancing.

Children's Practices for Christmas (for Christmas Eve Mass 6pm)

The First Communion Children are invited to take part in the Christmas Play during the Christmas Eve Mass at 6pm.

There will be two practices in the Church (for them and the Junior Choir):

- ◆ Monday 19th December at 4.30pm (play parts will be decided)
- ◆ Tuesday 20th December at 4.30pm (dress rehearsal)



Diocese of Raphoe Pastoral Plan 2022:

'With the decline in the number of active priests in the Diocese it is important that we act now in order to create parish/deanery structures that are vibrant and sustainable into the future. Communities of faith are built around the celebration of the liturgies and so it is important that our liturgies continue to be celebrated in a meaningful way, ensuring the liturgy is not rushed and the priests are not over worked. This will mean the number of Masses we celebrate may have to be decreased in some parishes and new ways for parishes to work together will have to be found.'

MONEY MATTERS

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

Parish

- The upkeep and maintenance of the parish, in terms of buildings, programmes and personnel, are carried out in a cost-efficient manner.
- We are in the process of closing our bank accounts with the Ulster Bank and opening two new accounts with Permanent TSB.

1. Parish Account

2. Restoration and Maintenance Account

They have not been activated yet until some administrative procedures are completed. We will contact those who are paying by Direct Debit when all the details are finalised. The second account will be used for the restoration projects listed below.

- *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 to each household which has been in receipt of envelopes. 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.

Restoration

We are delighted to announce that the ten year bank loan of €950,000.00, obtained in October 2012 for the restoration of the church, has now been fully repaid. This is quite an achievement, thanks to your generosity and ongoing support.

We would like to mark this achievement in a number of ways:

- We are in the process of producing a booklet on the story of the church and its particular features and its restoration, which will be distributed to each household and freely available to everyone. It will also give details of all our fundraising activities and a full financial account of restoration costs and income.
- We are planning a feature to the right of the main church door in the grass area adjacent to the building (where the Crucifix used to be). It will be a quiet space involving a large bronze Celtic Cross, a large outdoor compass and two benches looking out to the harbour. We hope it will serve as a spiritual haven in its idyllic setting.
- We also plan to undertake landscaping in chapel grounds including a Grotto to Our Lady.

Dates for 2023

Sacrament of Confirmation: Thursday 23rd March at 6.00pm.

First Holy Communion: Saturday 13th May at 11.00am.

Mass at Carrickataggart Mass Rock: Wednesday 7th June at 7.00pm

Graveyard Mass: Friday 28th July at 7.00pm

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

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.

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.

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

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: 074 9731013 / 087 6735139

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

Parish Sacristan: Patricia O'Boyle.