

St. Mary of the Visitation Church, Killybegs.
CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2023



*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,

The Season of Advent has begun, lasting this year just three weeks, today being the Second Sunday of Advent, the focus being on the theme of the Light of Christ bursting into the darkness of our broken and wounded world. It's not easy to avoid getting sucked into the 'mad rush to Christmas'. It's not easy to stay focussed in the here-and-now of our journey with each other and with Christ, whose birthday we celebrate in two weeks' time. Our Carol Service, the first since 2019, was early this year: the Church was full last Thursday evening as the young people from Niall Mór N.S., Commons N.S., Fintra N.S. and St Catherine's Vocational School joined our Parish Choir and our Readers, in prayer, song and celebration. We are grateful to everyone concerned.

As I write these words on Sunday 10th December, the United States has vetoed a UN Security Council demand for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. It is beyond belief that the bombing targets in Gaza by the Israeli air force should be tolerated, not alone colluded with by the United States and others. What Hamas did on 7th October was barbaric. What's happening in Gaza now is beyond barbaric. The killing and injuring of innocent civilians are called 'collateral damage'. In stark terms, this unrelenting bombardment amounts to the slaughter of the innocents, the ferocity of the wounds inflicted on children, women and men never fails to shock us. We continue to pray that the Prince of Peace whose birth we celebrate at Christmas will, through the grace of God and the efforts of peacemakers, touch the hearts and minds of all involved so that Israeli inhumanity and Hamas' brutality may be curtailed. We pray that the collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza will cease and that peace may prevail.

Though the focus of the world has moved from Ukraine to Gaza, the people of Ukraine are facing another tough and lonely Christmas as the ongoing aggression of Russia remains unabated. We can play our part in being accepting of the people of Ukraine who are on our doorstep, offering them hospitality and support as best we can. It was heartening to see them participating in our Christmas Carol Service on Thursday evening.

As the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) concludes in Dubai, formulating strategies to tackle climate change and implementing them become more urgent. Pope Francis was unable to travel but the Catholic Church under Pope Francis has become a leading voice in the world for climate justice. Pope Francis' Encyclical on the future of the planet 'Laudato Si: Our Care for our Common Home', published in 2015, set the tone and was followed by 'Laudate Deum' on 4th October 2023, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, again reproaching wealthy nations that contribute the most to climate change while ignoring the plight of the poor whose vulnerability is greatest.

Pope Francis brings together his commitment to the poor with a love of God's creation based on the spirituality of St Francis. The tradition of the Christmas Tree is attributed to St Francis who believed that all trees should be lit up in thanksgiving for God's gift of creation and the tradition of the Christmas Crib is also attributed to him, a concrete symbol of our gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus Christ. We are installing in the porch of the Church a portrayal of St Francis of Assisi that came from Brazil and also a beautiful Italian wood carving of the nativity scene to help us keep this focus on an on-going basis.

The assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October was addressed by Fr Timothy Radcliffe, Dominican, who reflected how, today, God is bringing into existence a Church that is no longer European or even western, but eastern, southern, African and Asian. It is a Church in which women are taking responsibility, and young people, citizens in tomorrow's digital age, are taking Christianity into cultural frameworks bewildering to older generations. It wasn't just bishops who were present. Lay men and women, as well as religious, priests and deacons participated. Fr Radcliffe posed two questions to the Assembly; 'What is God doing?' and 'Do we accept God's gracious newness?'. As we are just slowly coming out of the Covid-experience, emotionally, liturgically and pastorally, these are questions we need to address as a faith community. The first step for many parishes has been the setting up a Pastoral Council. Perhaps this is a priority challenge for us in the coming year.

Our Catholic schools play a significant role in the life and faith of the parish community. We owe a great debt of gratitude to those in leadership roles and to all the staff for their invaluable contribution. We are grateful to all members of the Boards of Management of Niall Mór, Commons and Fintra National Schools who have just completed four years of service and to the Parents' Associations. We ask God's blessing on all members of the New Boards of Management who began a four year term of office on 1st December, their names being listed on page 6. Each school faces its own particular challenges and your support would be appreciated as the need arises.

In last year's Christmas Newsletter we paid tribute to the colossal contribution of the late Maeve Murray to the ministry of music in the parish from 1960-2022. The present Parish Choir continues to build on her solid foundations and we are grateful to them for their commitment, excellence and generosity. They meet weekly on Mondays at 7.15pm in the Church and new members are most welcome.

We are grateful to everyone who is involved or has been involved in the various ministries. We are conscious that we need more Ministers of the Eucharist and of the Word and Collectors.

We are grateful to the First Communion Parents' Liturgy Group who are coordinating with Parish-School-Home for the 'Grow in Love' celebrations. We would like to re-establish the Liturgy of the Word for Children at 11am Sunday Mass and please let us know if you are willing to help. Also, we hope to have the Altar Servers back in action in the near future.

Ann O'Donnell, Parish Secretary, and Patricia O'Boyle, Parish Sacristan, do excellent work throughout the year, far beyond the call of duty. Ann also looks after the Senior and Junior choirs. Sincere thanks to them and to the regular and faithful number of people who open and close the Church morning and evening throughout the year. It is greatly appreciated. Maureen Cunningham continues to look after the candles so diligently. Members of the Killybegs Employment Project help greatly, Siobhan McBrearty & Daiva Mingelaite tending to the interior of the Church, Lawrence McGill tending to the outdoor grounds and John Hegarty taking meticulous care of the graveyard. The gardening skills of Brid Murphy have once again resulted in colourful & spectacular results. The Parish Finance Committee meets on a regular basis. Our money counters continue their diligent work and is much appreciated. We are working with the Killybegs Women's Group in having a number of seats in the graveyard and the response has been very heartening. We are also laying new footpaths, new fencing & a footpath connecting the old and new graveyard. The Legion of Mary and St. Vincent de Paul continue their excellent work.

The Christmas Trees and the Christmas Crib feature prominently in our celebrations. The crib is assembled every year in a meticulous manner by Patrick, Betty & John Boyle, showing exceptional attention to detail. The Christmas Trees Team of Johnny, James, Hubert and Thomas live up to their usual high standards. We are grateful to all concerned.

In the weeks leading to Christmas we renew friendships in many ways. 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 2024

Fr Colm, Sunday 10th December 2023



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS 2023

Christmas Masses 2023

- ◆ Mass at 10am Monday 18th, Tuesday 19th & Thursday 21st December.
Confessions after each Mass.
- ◆ Mass Friday 22nd December: 10am & 7pm
- ◆ Mass Saturday 23rd December: 7pm
- ◆ **Sunday 24th December, Christmas Eve:**
 - 9am & 11am: Morning Masses
 - 6pm:** Christmas Eve Mass
(including First Communion Children & Junior Choir)
 - 8pm:** Christmas Eve Mass
(including Confirmation Candidates & St Catherine's Vocational School Choir)
 - 10pm:** Christmas Eve Mass (with Senior Choir)
- ◆ **Monday 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.

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



The Junior Choir, Christmas Eve 2022

*A little child, A shining star, A stable mule, The door ajar,
Yet in that place, so crude, forlorn, The Hope of all the world was born.*

Advent Service of Reconciliation

Monday 18th December 7.00pm

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

Children's Practices for Christmas

(for Christmas Eve Mass 6pm)

The First Communion Children and other 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 18th December at 4.30pm* (play parts will be decided)
- ◆ *Tuesday 19th December at 4.30pm* (dress rehearsal)



Boards of Management of Schools

Niall Mór N.S.

Fintra N.S.

Commons N.S.

Patron's Nominees

Fr Colm
Jimmy White

Fr Colm
Joan Greenlaw

Fr Colm
Ann Marie Bourke

Elected Parents:

Manus Boyle
Jacinta McHugh

Rachel O'Neill
Barry McGuinness

Eimear Quinn
Kieran Breslin

Principal Teacher: Eugene Mulligan

Emma McGinty

Joe Cannon

Elected Teacher: Geraldine Maguire

Majella McGinley

Emer Rose

Community Reps: Shona McClafferty

Niamh Kennedy

Brian Fleury

Martha Kobyluk

Ann O'Donnell

Bríd Murphy

Money Matters

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who supports the parish financially, contributing to the general administration, maintenance & restoration of the parish. The upkeep and maintenance of the parish, in terms of buildings, programmes and personnel, are carried out in a cost-efficient manner.

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 have any queries, please contact Fr Colm or Ann at the Parish Office: 074 9731013.

Pastoral Resolutions for 2024

- Establish a Parish Pastoral Council
- Seek volunteers for Children's Liturgy of the Word, Sundays 11am
- Introduce Altar Serving again
- Complete a number of projects in the Graveyard, including memorial seats, footpaths and new fencing
- Produce a booklet on the story of the Church with particular reference to its restoration 2011-2012
- Create a 'quiet outdoor space' to the right of the main Church door, featuring a bronze Celtic Cross, an outdoor compass and seating facing the harbour.
- Landscaping of Chapel grounds, including a Grotto to Our Lady.

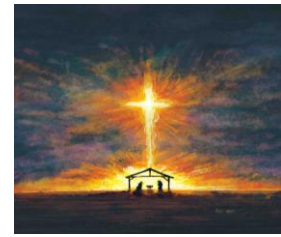


Christmas Carol Service in the Church, Thursday 7th December 2023

Christmas Gift Suggestions: *To your enemy, forgiveness.
To an opponent, tolerance.
To a friend, your heart.
To a customer, service.
To all, charity.
To every child, a good example.
To yourself, respect.*

Oren Arnold

*What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past,
Courage for the present,
Hope for the future.*



Sacrament of Confirmation: Sunday 25th February at 11.00am.
First Holy Communion: Saturday 11th May at 11.00am.
Mass at Meenahoohan Mass Rock: Wednesday 5th June at 7.00pm
Graveyard Mass: Friday 26th July at 7.00pm
Blessing of the Fleet Mass: Saturday 27th July at 7.00pm
Mass at Croaghlin Mass Rock: Thursday 15th August at 7.00pm

**Dates
for
2024**

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 is 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 other clergy to offer Mass for that intention

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: 10am; Friday: 10am or 7pm.

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 a short time..

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 Newsletter is posted on our website: ***killybegsparish.com***

The Parish Office, Killybegs, Co. Donegal, F94CY56

Hours of Opening: Monday to Friday 9.30am - 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.