



The
Connection

December 2023

A fresh start

~ new beginnings

Mass Times

St Nicholas' Church, Carrickfergus

Sunday 11.30 am

Tuesday 10.00 am

Wednesday 7.30 pm

Our Lady of Lourdes, Whitehead

Sunday 9.30 am

Wednesday 10.00 am

Eucharistic Adoration

St Nicholas' Church, Carrickfergus

Saturday 11.00 am to 12.00 noon

Weddings

By arrangement. Three months notice is required.

Sacrament of the Sick

Father Owens attends the sick and house-bound as announced in the parish Bulletin

Confessions

Carrickfergus: First Wednesday of the month, 6.00 pm to 6.45 pm.

Whitehead: Before Sunday AM Mass.

Baptisms

Whitehead: on the first Sunday of the month

Carrickfergus: on the second Sunday of the month. Please contact the parish office giving a minimum of one month's notice.



An Introduction from Father Peter Owens & Stephen Lavery

We are delighted to bring you the December 2023 edition of, 'The Connection', the magazine of the Parish of Carrickfergus & Whitehead. We pass on a word of sincere thanks to the parish Communications team and to all the contributors of the articles within this edition.

Much has happened both locally and internationally since the last edition in the Spring of 2023. Although it would be easy to focus only on the shocking and dramatic events on the world stage, we in our parish have much to celebrate.



As a faith community, by His grace, since the summer months and continuing throughout autumn and winter, we have made significant advances in bringing to fruition many aspects of our Parish Pastoral Plan which we launched in 2022. Many of the stories recounted in this edition attest to this fact and collectively affirm that our parish – even in the face of on-going significant challenges – has moved forward with a spring in our step and an ambition for a new beginning post COVID-19.

An Introduction from Father Peter Owens & Stephen Lavery

In this edition you will read how we have come together as both a social community and a worshipping congregation. Many aspects of our parish life that were put on hold as a consequence of the pandemic have returned to normal both in our liturgical and social interactions.

Here you will read encouraging articles on, for example, the re-introduction of the Children's Liturgy of the Word, the creation of a new Social & Entertainments team, and many other stories that will instil a sense of hope for the future during this Christmas season.

We give all praise and glory to God for the wonderful things He has done for us in our parish and we look forward in renewed hope for His continued blessings on us all.

We wish you and your family a blessed and peaceful Christmas.

*“For today in the city of David a Saviour has been born for you who is
Messiah and Lord” ~ Luke 2:11*

Parish Pastoral Council Members: -

Father Peter Owens (President)

Mario Loque

Stephen Lavery (Chairperson)

Mary McCormack

Bob Sweeney (Vice-Chairperson)

Tom Moore

Julie Elliot (Secretary)

Patrick Quinn

Marion Frampton

Petar Segó

Siobhán Gilmore

Paul Smith

Iliana Flores

Paddy Stewart



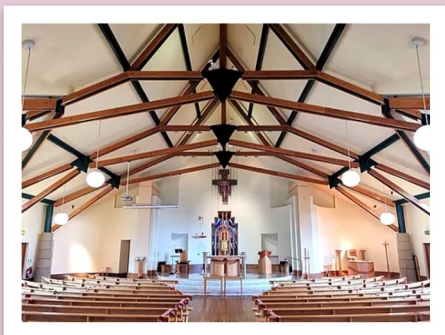
Farewell!

A friend of mine sent me an article a few months ago. It featured Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church in Harlow, Essex.

This was the parish church I grew up in. I was a mere babe in arms, so this was the parish that moulded me. This was the parish where I grew up with people with whom I went to school. This was the parish where I was drawn to music. This was the parish where I first experienced the love of a community and extended Christian family.



Nine parishes then featured in my life over the next three decades: Charlton Kings & Cambridge for school; Nottingham – University; Dunstable, Penrith, La Gomera, Tenerife, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Whitehouse before I arrived in Carrickfergus in July 2003.



The fact that I have stayed in Northern Ireland for almost 23 years is incredible. The fact I have stayed in this parish for 20 years is testament to a special place. This is the parish where I have forged friendships. This is the parish that has seen me through tough personal times. This is the parish that continued my musical journey. This is the parish where I got married.

This is the parish of love, which I have witnessed and experienced time and again.



As Jay and I move on to Warwickshire, we start a new chapter in our life together. Work might be the reason we are moving, but we are grounded in love and this parish gave witness to that. I will miss St Nick's – I still miss Our Lady of Fatima! But it is not the buildings, beautiful though they are, but the communities that have been so much a part of my life, that I carry in my heart always.

Anne Nagley (nee Hayes, aka 'the Flute'!)

Parish Quiz Night

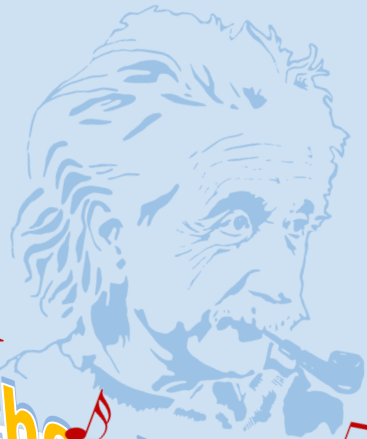
A great night was had by all at the Parish Quiz Night in Carrickfergus Golf Club on Saturday 4th November. We had anticipated around 50 people would turn up, but instead 115 came!

The staff quickly found extra tables and chairs and very soon all were seated. The quiz got underway with our Quizmaster, Robin Connor, asking the questions and his assistant Chris Chan keeping score. Very soon it was clear that every team wanted to win! I can honestly say that 'Mr Google' was not used once!



At 9.00 pm, Kris, the chef, performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes once again, and catered for all 115 for supper. This was thoroughly enjoyed by all and afterwards battle re-commenced!

It was neck and neck for the remainder of the rounds. Going into the last round, two teams could not be separated. After this last round, the winning team was one point ahead.



We are the Champions!



Two
Wooden
Spoons

Congratulations to the winning team of Teresa, Maeve, Karen and Raymond! Enjoy the Sauvignon Blanc and the Cabernet Sauvignon! Our wooden spoons were graciously received by Ash and Dilan, "Just what we needed!", Ash said.

Everyone is looking forward to the next quiz – to be arranged!

Davey Muir

A New Sign

If you notice this notice, you'll notice that this notice is not worth noticing!

About twenty years ago, I read the above notice and chuckled to myself at its humour and pointlessness. I never gave it another thought after that brief moment; not until years later when I was studying Marketing. Suddenly, the line popped back into my mind and it dawned on me just how clever, powerful and sublime the notice had been. How is it I could recall that notice after such a long time? I guess, because of its uniqueness and humour it had stayed with me all those years tucked away in the deepest recesses of my memory only to pop up, again, when my subconscious deemed it relevant and important to me. That experience taught me that we should never underestimate the subliminal power of advertising and marketing, nor should we forego the opportunity to leverage its power for doing good.

So, how can our parish make good use of advertising? As a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) we felt it important to make good use of the empty bill board located by the main entrance of St. Nicholas' Church. The bill board represents valuable advertising space which has been under-utilised in recent years.

The PPC set about designing a dual-purpose 'insert' for the unit: the front of the insert would advertise the Church's main Welcome message and the rear would be blank (re-useable) space for advertising bespoke events, as required.

As team we arrived at the final design shown in the image. We hope you like it and we look forward to posting many forth-coming events within it.



If you've visited St Nicholas' Church or passed-by its main entrance, recently ...

...you will have noticed that this notice is worth noticing!

THE PARISH BBQ

As you know, to recover from the separation caused by COVID-19, we recently set up a Social & Events team to re-establish parish connections. So far, it's proving pretty successful and our monthly teas after Mass are well attended and hopefully enjoyed by all.

Our first major event was a summer barbecue in August. It was a pleasure to see so many parishioners stay behind after Mass to join us. It was especially lovely to see lots of children coming along with their families. After several hours setting up and decorating the carpark, (which was a bit more complicated than anticipated, due to work on the main road requiring the electricity to be turned off!) the food was cooked and the tea was ready. Thankfully the workers had prioritised our area, restoring the power in time for the kettles!

Just as the doors opened for everyone to join us, the heavens decided to open too! Quite a baptism for our first event! But thankfully everyone took shelter and waited patiently for the rain to subside and we went on to have a lovely day. Great food was supplied by our barbecue chefs alongside traditional dishes from parishioners, all accompanied by music from Barleyhill, bouncy castles, face painting and glitter tattoos. Football and various games were also enjoyed by the children. A fun game of bingo was rescued by Kevin after his machine reset itself and called the same numbers twice. It really added to the good-natured confusion of the bingo players and the fun for everyone else!

Thank you to Father Owens for his generosity in funding the day and thanks to everyone who attended, bought ballots, played tombola and gave voluntary contributions. We look forward to our next event! We cannot promise good weather, though!

Patricia McKeown





Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

A

s with many other events, COVID-19 affected the annual Down and Connor Lourdes Pilgrimage. When I read about the pilgrimage in the weekly bulletin, I decided to go back to Lourdes. My sister-in-law, Finola, accompanied me. On 11th July 2023 we

set out from Belfast International Airport. We arrived in Lourdes, just in time for our evening meal in the Jeanne D'Arc Hotel. We were then allocated rooms and given a programme of all organised events for the following five days. The programme listed all events – a daily Mass, Blessing of the Sick, Stations of the Cross, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Universal Mass in the underground basilica and the Torchlight Procession.



Moira & Steve McCoy (Toome)

All pilgrims contributed towards a candle which was left burning at Lourdes for all our intentions. There was a special Mass celebrated in the grotto by our Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Donal McKeown, concelebrated by priests from the diocese and accompanied by the diocesan choir.

The Down and Connor youth were there to help the disabled pilgrims. There were two

choices for the Stations of the Cross – the 'low' stations, were on level ground on the banks of the River Gave and the 'high' stations were on the mountainside. These stations are depicted by life-sized bronze statues all the way to the top of the mountain. The terrain was very rough, but fortunately it didn't rain. The Stations were led by Father O'Laverty, accompanied by Bishop Donal McKeown. Going down the mountain was very steep and,



Mary McAllister & Down Youth Support

as I was flagging, Bishop Donal McKeown came to my rescue.

Bishop Donal McKeown and Father O'Laverty joined Finola and myself for a cooling drink of orange juice. We had a lot to talk about as Bishop Donal and I both came from Randalstown. His mother taught me in Moneynick Primary School, many years ago.



Bishop Donal McKeown

Finola and I spent a lot of time at the grotto where we left our petitions, lit candles for our families and friends. The 'Baths' in Lourdes have changed since COVID-19. Instead of being immersed in cold water, we entered a small cubicle where an assistant explained the new procedure. First, we made the sign of the Cross and silently prayed, then we 'cupped' our hands and she poured water which we used to wash our faces, then more water to wash our hands and finally more water which we drank as requested by Mary to Bernadette during the 9th apparition.



Finola Devlin at the Grotto

After the final Torchlight Procession of our pilgrimage, all pilgrims, able and disabled, filled the square in front of the Basilica for a concert. The guest artist was Andrea Bocelli accompanied by a violinist. He was given a rapturous reception when he appeared on the steps of the Basilica accompanied by his young granddaughter. He sang many hymns to Our Lady. A very moving experience!

The following morning, after breakfast and Mass, we left Lourdes for our return flight. We both enjoyed Lourdes and hope to return in 2024.

*I've travelled far, the land and the sea,
Beautiful places I happened to be,
One little town I'll never forget,
Is Lourdes, the village of St Bernadette.*

From Islandmagee to Ukraine

We are David and Ruth Greer from Islandmagee. Our desire to help those directly affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 started when I discovered that Russia had destroyed a large part of the Ukrainian satellite internet and phone infrastructure used by many of the government social departments and a great number of charities based in the remote areas of the country. This was technology I had worked with for 30+ years; and, finding myself with a lot of spare equipment in fully working condition, I immediately thought it would be of use to the charities carrying out humanitarian work in Ukraine. Getting it to where it was needed most would be a challenge, however. Many phone calls later and a lot of prayer support from our church in Woodlands, Carrickfergus, we came to the conclusion that we needed to go to Ukraine, ourselves, with the communications kit and as much humanitarian aid we could muster. We had no van but, through the power of prayer, a large van was donated to us for our journey. We were able to take not only the communication equipment but dry foods, baby supplies, winter clothing and boxes of much-needed medical supplies, as well: all freely donated to us by the kind people of Northern Ireland.



We also started a 'Go Fund Me' appeal to help with the expenses involved and we were totally amazed at the support we received (and still do) for this work. Our journey via Dublin, France, Germany, Poland & Slovakia took five days: approximately 2,000 driving miles across Europe.

From a safety and security perspective, it was decided that Ruth would not proceed to the frontline but would stop in Krakow where she found work with a local volunteer group supplying aid to Ukrainian women and children fleeing their homes. Ruth was able to organise and deliver much-needed food items, medication, baby food and bottled drinking water to the refugees. I proceeded onward to the frontlines.

The aid I had on board the van was taken by a local Ukrainian charity focused on locating missing persons—especially children—and it was given to local aid stations on the route from eastern Ukraine to safer areas close to bordering countries.

I had pre-arranged to meet with two Ukrainian volunteers and to spend time training them in the distribution, installation and commissioning of the satellite equipment. The training took place in the carpark of a small cafe on the border. In total, I had 9 systems with me (plus spares); three were installed immediately and the remaining systems taken to eastern Ukraine to assist in the tracking of missing persons and families.



Eighteen months later, we remain in contact with these charity groups and continue to learn about their ongoing work and the successes they are achieving.



Since our first trip in March 2022 we have made a further two trips with a 4th currently being planned, as we write. The last two trips have been focused mainly on providing medical supplies such as medical hardware, hospital consumables, wheelchairs, crutches, water filtration systems, water purification tablets, cooking stoves, clinical ultra scan units, morphine pumps, theatre air pumps, manual oxygen bags, bandages, dressings and tourniquets: these are a few of the many items donated and delivered personally to the Ukrainian charities.

On our second trip we drove a large cargo van full of aid. When we had completed our deliveries to four local hospitals and an army field hospital we donated the van to an army Chaplin group who put it to use delivering much-needed aid to local villages as well as taxiing villagers to and from medical appointments.

On our third trip (summer 2023) we took an ex-NHS ambulance to transport medical supplies and non-perishable foods. Once again when we were finished with the ambulance it was donated to a civilian volunteer group for the transfer of civilian casualties from the frontline villages to safer medical facilities.

Can I say in closing that for Ruth and myself it has been a challenge at times carrying out this work but a challenge that we could not have completed without the support of everyone who has helped in whatever way. Our sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone. God Bless.

David & Ruth Greer





Parish Christmas Dinner Dance

Glitz, Glitter and Glide!

When the Social and Events team was established, everyone wanted to celebrate the festive season. A Christmas dinner dance was suggested, unanimously accepted and planning commenced.

Where would we hold such an event? Would we get enough people interested? How much would we charge etc., etc., etc. However, far more important questions were being quietly mulled over, particularly by the ladies. What would be suitable to wear?

- * A hair appointment was essential.
- * A bit of sparkle had to be found in case that wee “black number” in the back of the wardrobe didn’t fit.



Three years of COVID-19 weren’t being allowed to dampen the spirit of glamour!

As a member of Carrickfergus Golf Club, Paul Smith secured the venue and after several visits the menu was arranged. Now for the difficult bit - the hard sell. It wasn’t such a daunting task and soon ninety people were signed up. Deposits were paid and rumours abounded of secret line dancing practices just in case!



As the date approached, the excitement increased. More and more people volunteered their help. A tombola was arranged by Mrs. Moira Rodgers and a lavish Christmas raffle was supported by both parishioners and local businesses.

A night to remember and a few sore feet from dancing too long. Sincere thanks to everyone for their support and we look forward to seeing you all again for our Saint Patrick’s night event. **Do not** put those dance shoes back in the cupboard.

Mary Muir



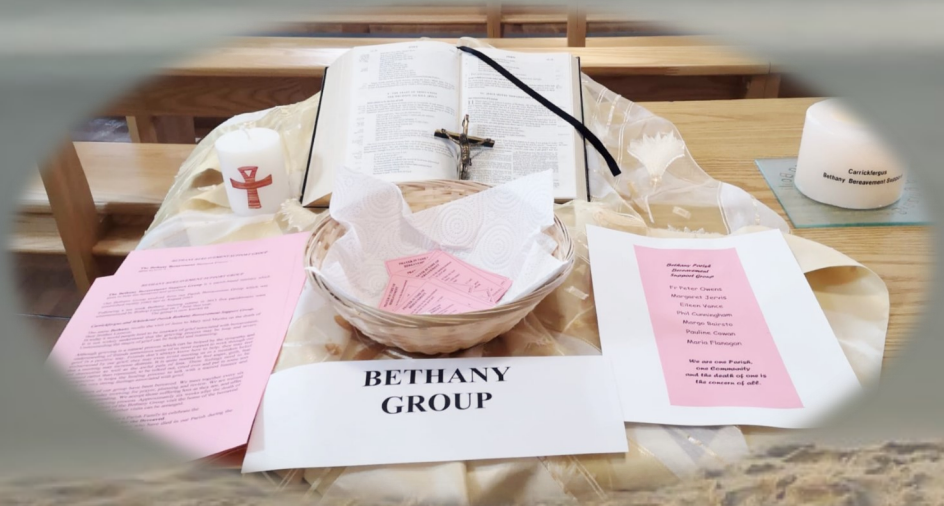
Twenty Years Service

The Bethany Bereavement Support Group is a parish-based ministry which aims to help those bereaved and grieving.

Our Bethany Group evolved from our Parish Bereavement Group which was established twenty years ago in August 2003.

Following a ten-week Bethany training course in 2013, five parishioners were commissioned by Bishop Farquhar on 1st June that year. The group is now known as Carrickfergus and Whitehead Parish Bethany Bereavement Support Group.

The name Bethany recalls the visit of Jesus to Mary and Martha on the death of their brother, Lazarus. In today's world people tend to be unaware of grief associated with bereavement. It is not widely understood that the grieving process may be long and severe. Understanding the stages of grief can be helpful and reassuring.



Although grieving is a natural process which can be helped by the sympathy and understanding of friends, sometimes some of us need support to work through our grief in a positive way. Friends don't always know how to help; they may feel embarrassed by our grief; they may even avoid meeting us in a mistaken belief that a meeting may increase distress. It is quite normal to feel anger, guilt, fear and depression as well as the awful pain of loss. These feelings need to be expressed rather than repressed, to be talked out, cried over and put in some sort of perspective. It helps the healing process to talk with a trained listener and to confront the very strong feelings associated with grief.

All the members of our group have been bereaved. We meet together every six weeks on a Wednesday morning for prayer, planning and review. We are trained to listen with understanding. We accept those suffering loss as they are, and offer support through the grieving process. Approximately six weeks after the death of a parishioner two members of the Bethany Group visit the home of the bereaved. If requested by the bereaved, further visits can be arranged.

In December each year we come together as a Parish Family to celebrate the Mass for the Bereaved. This Eucharist is dedicated to all those who have died in our Parish during the year and for the intentions of all the bereaved.

Phil Cunningham



Bethany
Bereavement Support

If you would like to talk, we are here to listen: **028 93372449**

Whitehead Family Fun



On Friday 30th June 2023, a Family Fun Night was held in Lourdes Pastoral Centre - 10 years after the first such event had taken place in 2013.

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions had, of course, meant there had been a break in such gatherings, so it was wonderful to once again see the families of the Parish and their friends come together.

The evening was a great success, well attended by both ends of the Parish as well as the Whitehead community at large.

There were a number of fun activities to keep the little ones occupied including the ever popular bouncy castles, football and a range of both outdoor and indoor games. There was also face painting and glitter tattoos.

The BBQ and teas were very popular and the ice cream and tuck shop also went down a treat! As ever, the tombola had a constant queue of eager customers and the ballot was also very well supported.

This year, for a first, we were treated to some live music from 2 different groups from within the parish and their friends ('Barleyhill' & 'The Bank House Robbers'). This was an excellent addition to the format of the evening and was very much appreciated by all in attendance!

The evening culminated with several gripping games of bingo which were enjoyed by young and old alike! The event turned out to be a surprise financial success, making a profit of £500. The money was used to purchase some new gardening equipment for the Pastoral Centre, new water boilers for both Carrickfergus and Whitehead chapels as well as a pop up gazebo for use at parish events. Many thanks to all those who generously donated tombola and ballot prizes and supported the night through preparation, volunteering, attending or in any other way!

Anne Woods



Parish Group Open Days



One of the 5 themes in our Parish Pastoral Plan 2022 – 2025 is, 'Lay Participation'. The focus of the theme is for the Parish Pastoral Council to engage with our fellow parishioners as we seek to increase lay participation across all areas of parish life and avail of the many gifts and skills within our parish family. One of the actions in the Lay Participation theme of our Plan is to host an open day in the parish to showcase the range and depth of activities provided across the parish. To that end, it was agreed to host open days after the summer holiday period. The first Parish Open Day was held in Carrickfergus on Sunday 24th September 2023, followed by another in Whitehead on Sunday 8th October. Both events were very well supported and everyone enjoyed some light refreshments as they chatted and walked around the various displays.

Some parishioners volunteered to join a ministry or group on the day and others went off to think it over before being able to commit to something. If you have some spare time and would like to become involved in any of the ministries or groups, please contact a member of the Parish Pastoral Council in the first instance and they will be able to put you in touch with the relevant leader.

The various displays across the 2 days included: - Parish Pastoral Council, Safeguarding, Liturgy group (including Children's Liturgy), Eucharist, Ministry of the Word, Sacristy, Altar Serving, Offertory Procession, Finance, St. Nicholas' Primary School (including the PTA and Board of Governors), Music, Flowers, Cleaning, Lourdes Pastoral Centre, Bereavement, Cells, Baptism, Sacramental Preparation, Do This in Memory, Rosary, Bowling, Saint Vincent de Paul, Visitation, Hospitality, Parish Retreats, Foodbank, The Grounds, Communications (including the parish Web Site), Welcoming and the Parish Repository (shop).

Paddy Stewart & Patrick Quinn



Parish Retreat 2023

This year's overnight parish retreat took place at Drumalis, Larne, starting on Saturday 30th September with evening tea and finishing the following evening on Sunday 1st October after celebrating Mass earlier in the day. It was facilitated by the resident Sisters of The Cross and Passion, Sister Margaret Rose and Sister Anna, and more than capably assisted by Josephine and our very own Margaret (Webb). We were blessed with the weather that weekend and strolling through the beautiful grounds of Drumalis and breathing in the gorgeous scent of the rose garden was a real treat for the senses.



Those attending the retreat weren't just from our own Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead but also from several other parishes in the diocese and it was lovely to meet up with faces old and new. The main feeling of those gathered was of how nice it was to be able to get together again in communion this way after such a long time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sessions we attended offered not only times of prayer and reflection but of group discussions and sharing; amongst other topics, we touched on the Synod on Synodality as the first 'moment' of the Synod of Bishops was about to start - most of us felt how important it was for women to be allowed to become more involved in church ministries for the survival of the Church in the future.

Several people have expressed, in particular, how much they got from Margaret's session with the bowls - an exercise so successful in helping people empty themselves of cares, stress and worry that many a bowl was nearly dropped as we totally relaxed! I'm amazed there weren't any breakages!



Personally, it was nice just to get away for a wee while from the constant hustle and bustle of working life and family demands and to have time to stop, take stock, be still and simply breathe in the presence of God. For my own spiritual development I would



love one day to have the time and means to attend a longer and possibly even silent retreat somewhere ...

Many thanks to Ruth Bates for co-ordinating our annual retreat and a special mention too must be made to Tommy Mone and Matt Monaghan who were the only men from all the parishes present to attend - I think Tommy was mightily relieved to see Matt appear at breakfast on the Sunday! To any gents in the parish reading this - perhaps you might consider attending the retreat yourself next year.

Ginny Murray

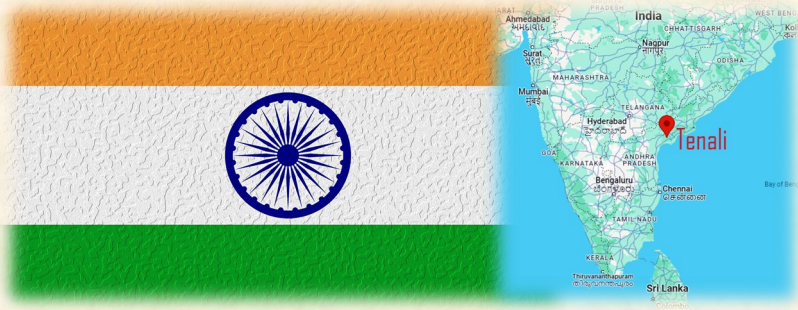


*"Come to me, all you who are
weary and burdened, and I will
give you rest."
~ Matthew: 11:28*

Tenali

It started with a routine phone call between Mary Boylan and her uncle, Father Martin Cushnan in India, ending with Mary stating, "We will come for you", and Father Martin replying that he always knew she would.

Three weeks later after days of preparation, visa applications, vaccinations and making travel arrangements, Mary Boylan along with Mary Kennedy and myself were finally at Belfast International Airport about to embark on a journey that would have a profound impact on all our lives. It was 15th September and the red eye flight from Belfast to Heathrow, an eleven-hour BA flight to the Indian city of Hyderabad followed



by an internal Air India flight to Vijayawada where three weary travellers met Father. Martin and Raviteja Mukkamala. It was to be another two-hour road trip, which scarred us for life, that finally ended at the Redemptorist Church and accommodation in Tenali.



The next morning, we attended the 8.30 am Sunday Mass. The Mass was concelebrated by Father Martin assisted by his Indian colleagues Father Vincent, Father Sleeva, Father Vejay and Father David. It was a spectacular occasion. Hundreds of people crowded into the beautifully decorated and colourful church with hundreds more gathering in the grounds listening to the service through the outdoor speaker system.

Tenali

As Father Martin walked slowly up the aisle of the church, the congregation showered him with marigold petals that created a deep colourful pathway to the altar. The service lasted over two hours, but such was the colour, music and outward joy of the people we were indeed sorry when it ended.



One of the lasting impressions was the large number of young people who were in attendance and how the celebration of the Mass was enhanced through their singing, reading and general youthful enthusiasm. That evening we were privileged to be invited to a youth service led by Father Sleeva and Father Martin. Again, it was the unbridled enthusiasm, joy and love of their faith that had no boundaries for this large gathering as they sang, prayed and enjoyed a buffet style meal of local delicacies.

Every day not only opened our eyes but our hearts to the

happiness of the Catholic faith shown by these people and the love, gratitude and reverence they bestowed upon Father Martin. He was stopped in the street by not only Christian people but also by Hindu and Muslim who asked for his blessing.

We attended the celebration of Mass with Father Martin in three of the outlying villages and the respect shown to him and for the faith he had introduced them to was boundless. Everywhere we went Martin was showered with flowers and draped in silk scarves. This continued in convents, schools and in people's homes.



Tenali

On our final afternoon, after five unforgettable days, we returned to Hyderabad where a surprise awaited Father Martin. In the Redemptorist house we were greeted by the first seven boys, and their families, who were taken off the streets and came under the care and protection of Martin in the 1960s. Martin wasn't just father in the pastoral or religious sense he was indeed a father, sometimes translated fondly as daddy, not only to these seven but to the hundreds, indeed thousands who came after them.

On 22nd September it was with mixed feelings that Mary Kennedy, Mary Boylan, Father Martin, and I boarded a BA flight going back to Heathrow and eventually Belfast. Spiritually we wanted to stay with the new friendships we had made in that rich tapestry of enthusiastic, happy Catholic faith where we could become part of a loving, caring and non-judgemental faith community but we had to return to our reality.

It should always be remembered that the lifework of Father Martin Cushnan started here in our parish and was supported by the generosity of the parishioners of Carrickfergus and Whitehead. The legacy of Father Martin still continues in schools, hospitals and facilities he has created under the supervision of one of his boys, Father Eddie, the Redemptorist Provincial for India. Father Martin is presently living in Clonard Monastery and welcomes all visitors.

Colin Boylan



Sleigh Bells Ring, Are You Listening?

"Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal side by side with him." ~ Rev. 3:1-6

As human beings we listen in various ways and silence in today's world can often be difficult to find. We listen in anticipation, with anxiety, in grief, with joy and with hope but what we must remember is that we are all God's children and He is always listening. He holds each of us in the palm of His hand.

I have always enjoyed listening to others; to storytelling, poetry readings, debates, discussions etc. - even a good Sunday homily. One particularly memorable listening session was in an English class many years ago in St. Nicholas' Secondary School when my class had a surprise visit from the late Father Gerry Patton. I had been reading some of Seamus Heaney's poetry and Father Patton asked for my anthology. I sat down and he read to the class. What a wonderful memory he created. Our shared love of Heaney would last a lifetime. May they both rest in peace and eternal joy.

However it is not always easy to listen and circumstances may cause us only to hear part of what is being said. This is especially true when tempers are raised. The most influential piece of advice I ever received in this respect was from my first Principal Teacher in West Belfast when she told us, *"Never let the sun set on your anger."* Talking and listening, being able to compromise, to realise and accept that you do not always have the answer and the humility to apologise are all steps we must take in life. They may not be easy ones but neither was the road to Calvary.

As we now listen and prepare for Christmas I am reminded of a quotation from the late Seamus Heaney, *"On Christmas Eve my father would tell us, 'He's on his way now, coming round Slieve Gallon, if you listen hard you'll hear the sleigh bells.', I remember climbing the beech tree at the end of our lane, listening through the frosty air."* May the magic of Christmas never be lost to us adults in our busy world and may He who is coming bring peace and joy to the poor, the homeless, those displaced by war, the old, the sick and the lonely.

Mary Muir.





Christmas Wishes



By pupils of St Nicholas' Primary School

Just a small sample of the many Christmas wishes expressed by some of the pupils of our school. A fuller display of all their heart-felt wishes is on display in St Nicholas' Chapel during the Christmas Season.

Come and see.

"I wish for Christmas for there to be no homeless people and for everyone to live a happy life."

Erin P5

"I wish that pet owners never abandon their pets even when they get old. I wish that ethnic minorities get treated the same as everyone else."

Caitlin P5

"I wish this Christmas that all the boys and girls in poor countries are able to have food and clean water."

Theo P6

"Most importantly for my Christmas wish, I want everybody to be happy!" ~ Olivia P6

"My Christmas wish is that I will get up and go downstairs with my family and open all the presents (one including a giant squish mallow, Christmas themed)." ~

Sofia P6



"I that everyone has a home to enjoy
Christmas with food and water and
everything that they need. I wish
for peace all over the world."

Daniel P5

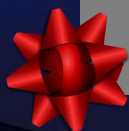


"My wish is to keep Christ in
Christmas."

Karolina P6

"I wish that the
environment would
be more healthy
and to have less
unrecyclable things."

Sofia P6



"Christmas is a time for
celebrating the birth of
Jesus, a time for peace, a
time for love and cheer"

Samuel P7



"This Christmas I hope to spend quality
time with my friends and family...." ~

Ruby P7



Children's Liturgy of the Word: Whitehead

The Children's Liturgy of the Word recommenced in Whitehead on 5th November 2023 during 9.30am Mass for the first time since pre-COVID-19. The Children's Liturgy of the Word allows our children to play an active part in the Mass, and to learn about God and the life of Jesus in a way that is age-appropriate and fun.



Children normally leave the congregation at the beginning of Mass, escorted by trained and vetted leaders, and return to the congregation to present their work as part of the Offertory Procession. All children of primary school age are welcome – just come along!

If you have any questions about Children's Liturgy of the Word in Whitehead, or you would like to volunteer to help with Children's Liturgy of the Word please contact Noleen on **07779990650**.

As I write this article we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. At this particular lesson the children learned about God as a Shepherd King and had fun sorting His sheep from the goats.

Noleen Dempster



Children's Liturgy of the Word: Carrickfergus

"But Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such." ~ Matthew 19:14

On Sunday, November 19th, the children at 11.30am Mass in Carrickfergus were invited to join Children's Liturgy of the Word for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Another welcome beginning!

The Word of the day was suitably adapted making it relevant to young children. In the Committee room of St Nicholas' Chapel, a simple altar was set up, the children were comfortably seated and the Gospel of the day was read. In this way the children learned to appreciate how Christ himself speaks to them.

Each week the children will remain with the leaders until after the Prayers of the Faithful when they will return to the main church for the Offertory

Procession where they will present their special

Bible and message board illustrating the work covered in that week's Gospel message.



Currently the leaders are volunteers who have a desire to help the children participate more fully in their faith. We are grateful to those helpers who have been security vetted and trained in safeguarding for their assistance. We look forward to more teenagers becoming involved

soon. Numbers attending are small at the moment but they will increase. Your prayers are appreciated as we build this community of young parishioners.

Elaine Hillen

The Derry 'Boys'



On a crisp, cold,
but dry,
Saturday
morning, 25

November 2023, the 'Boys' -
all holding 60+ travel passes—
headed for Derry in response
to the call for the men of
Ireland to come worship
before the Blessed Sacrament.

It certainly was a spirit-filled
day. Hundred's of men
congregated within St
Columba's Church to pray the
Rosary, attend the Sacrament
of Reconciliation, sing praise,
listen to personal faith
testimonies and to worship
the Lord in Exposition of the
Blessed Sacrament.

Throughout the proceedings,
there was a palpable sense of
the true presence of God.

Although we can't claim to have engaged in the same type of comic antics as our
infamous counter-parts, 'The Derry Girls', get up to, we had fun on a great day out and
we came away feeling truly blessed to have experienced such a divine occasion.

Jim Mullan

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the
will of God in Christ Jesus for you" ~ 1 Thess 5: 16-18

Calling 2000 men to Derry. All Ireland Men's Adoration 25th Nov 2023

- Date: 25th of Nov Long Tower Church St. Columba's Derry
- Time 2 pm to 5 pm
- Rosary is led by Dana who will lead the men to Sing Light the Fire at 2 pm. (please arrive before 2 pm!)
- Confessions are available throughout the Adoration.
- Vigil Mass of Christ the King at 6 pm
- Men's conference & talks in Thermacca Carmelite Centre Derry evening of 24th and Morning of 25th & after mass on 25th email menofstjosephireland@gmail.com for more details, limited Capacity
- Limited Accommodation available must be booked directly via termombaccaderry@gmail.com

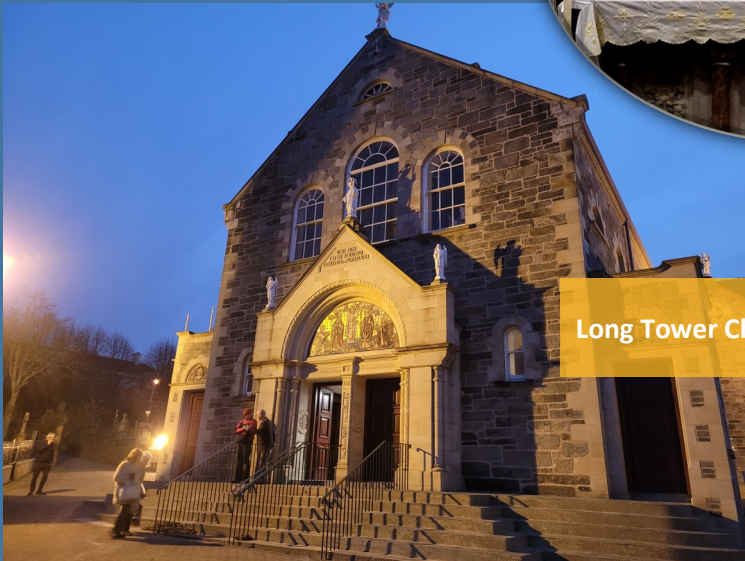
For more info email menofstjosephireland@gmail.com



'The Derry Boys', (from L—R) Jim Mullan, Stephen Lavery,
Matt Monaghan & Connell Lafferty answer the call.



Dana (singer) & Mickey Harte (Derry Gaelic Football Manager) lead 100s of men in praying the Joyful Mysteries of the most Holy Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament



Long Tower Church St Columba's, Derry

For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is
given. And leadership is placed upon his
shoulder. And his name shall be called:
wonderful Counsellor, mighty God, father of
the future age, Prince of Peace.
~ Isaiah 9: 6-7



The Parish of Carrickfergus & Whitehead

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Tel: (028) 9336 3269

Email: carrickfergus@downandconnor.org

Web: <https://www.carrickparish.org>

Parish Office Hours: 10.30am – 1.30pm Mon-Thurs.