

ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH

ENNISKILLEN

LISBELLAW



Volume 1, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

December 2013

Our Third Edition of the Parish Newsletter comes out in time for Christmas. It's a special time of the year, the time when everyone tries to get home, the time when we connect back to our roots and the time when we deepen our sense of who we are. The memories get brought out. Family routines take over again. In its own way, this Newsletter connects with this time of year because it too feeds into our sense of who we are. It's a celebration of our roots in this parish. Most people remember what parish they come from. This Newsletter will help refresh our sense of our local parish.

The parish clergy team has changed a lot here over recent years (especially when it seemed to have stayed so much the same for many years). Fr Joe McVeigh, who is now an Assistant Priest in the Parish, shares his outlook on life in this Newsletter through his Advent Reflection. Fr

Raymond Donnelly, who is the new Curate in the Parish, also shares with us through his contribution. In this edition too, we read the words of young people of the Parish, describing their experience of being away on pilgrimage together this year. Pat and Joe Blake give us the gift of valuable memories, one of the key ways of building community. Ann O'Donnell's story is a reminder both of life's gifts and life's difficulties. Sometimes we forget that under the surface everyone has a story to tell. Christmas is a good time to bring those stories and memories to light. Memories are part of Christmas and are the key to who we are.

For me, three initiatives stand out in the last few months. The first is connected to receiving people into the Catholic Church. We have a new group in the parish, thanks in part to the volunteers who responded so generously, thanks in part to some members of the Parish Adult Faith Development Group, thanks in part to Fr David who helped to focus it. We have six people locally who are currently preparing to be received into the Catholic Church. The second initiative is connected to the South West Acute Hospital, our local hospital. Sister Monica Gallagher, a member of the Sisters of Mercy Community in Belmore Street, has been appointed as Catholic Chaplain there. She joins the priests of the parish - and indeed the whole staff of the hospital - in the pastoral work. The third initiative is the work connected with the Parish Census. You will certainly hear more about this over the coming months. For now, it's very helpful to the parish that the census is getting underway.

I would also like to say a big 'thank you' to all who support this year's parish draw, whether as subscriber or promoter. It's a valuable support to our parish. It's still not too late to join if you wish. Contact our parish office or bookshop if you would like to do so.



From Fr. David, Fr. Raymond, Mgr. Peter and Fr. Joe: a special prayer for God's blessing on you and your family at this time and throughout the coming year



I'm thankful to all those who contributed to the production of this Newsletter. In a parish of this size, these things do not (and should not) happen without the work and effort of a team of people. In my view, they have given us a wonderful gift for Christmas and the New Year 2014, nourishing our sense of identity and connecting us together with what's going on through this Newsletter. We owe them a debt of thanks.

May the light of the Bethlehem Star shine out for you this Christmas and remain throughout the coming year.



"Holiness doesn't mean doing extraordinary things, but doing ordinary things with love and faith."

Getting to know ...Father Raymond



As I pen this piece for our Newsletter, I realise that I have achieved the all important 'one hundred day' mark. Thank God I have made it this far - say a prayer that Monsignor Peter will keep me for at least another one hundred days!

I am a native of Monaghan, one of five sons to Colm and Maureen Donnelly. As a teenager, I did all the usual things - hanging out with friends, going to discos, going out with girls and generally enjoying life. As well, however, I always had an interest in matters of faith and the Church. Along with many of my friends, I was involved in the Legion of Mary - especially their social outreach projects to the elderly and vulnerable in society. I also had the experience of involvement in a youth prayer group in my home

parish, which lasted for most of my teenage years. It provided an opportunity for young people to pray together; to reflect on their faith and to question it.

To be honest, from time to time, some people did remark to me "*you'd make a lovely wee priest.*" Perhaps, I thought to myself - but less of the "*wee*"! Throughout my teenage years, I had a sense that God was calling me to the Priesthood. However, I always seemed to be coming up with a hundred and one excuses not to discern this calling. It was almost like St Augustine's procrastination when the Lord was calling him to conversion "*not today Lord, not today, tomorrow.*" Remarkably, my tomorrow soon became twelve years later, when I finally entered seminary formation.

After training as a secondary teacher, I taught English and Religion for six years in Our Lady's Secondary School, Castleblayney. This was a truly fabulous experience and I have many fond memories of the students and teachers. Around 2007, I decided to contact the now Bishop Emeritus, Joseph Duffy, to make initial enquires about becoming a priest. In August 2008, he sent me to the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, where I began a five year programme of formation. I now realise that on the 22nd August 2008, I embarked on a journey of a lifetime - one which is still unfolding. During my time in Rome, I completed a degree in Theology at the Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, a Jesuit university located near the famous Trevi Fountain. Following this, I studied for the Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology. Studying in Rome was both a challenging and a rewarding experience. The diversity of languages and cultures, the myriad of religious from every corner of the world and the "*bella vita*" made it a truly international and faith enriching experience. Earlier this year, I had the great privilege of being a deacon to the now Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in the magnificent Sistine Chapel. A few months later, I served for Pope Francis on Good Friday in St Peter's Basilica - a nerve-wrecking, but truly unforgettable experience.

My time here in St Michael's Parish has been a source of immense personal joy and a tremendous opportunity for me, as I grow into priestly life. I am grateful to you the parishioners for your warm welcome and hospitality. I am inspired by your faith and the witness you give to gospel values in your daily lives. It is a challenge to live our baptismal call to follow Christ - and yet, you do so, admirably.

During the homily at my Ordination Mass, Bishop MacDaid spoke directly to me and said "*Give with joy and you will receive in even greater measure. Let the Word of God be your treasure and the teaching of the Church your guide... May the Lord bless and make fruitful your ministry.*"

The importance of being joyful in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ has stayed with me ever since. I look forward to getting to know you, the parishioners of St Michael's, as we strive together to celebrate the beautiful gift of faith with joy in our hearts.

May God bless you. Happy Christmas



Pope Francis Tweet: 9 December 2013

"If we see someone who needs help, do we stop? There is so much suffering and poverty, and a great need for good Samaritans."

The Gift of Life

“Not a day passes that I do not think about the donor family and the difficult decision that they took that night. I have been able to watch my family grow and succeed from their generosity: a gift that I can never forget.” Ann O’Donnell.



Conal and Ann O’Donnell

At this time of year we think of family, friends, faith and new life. One of our parishioners, Ann O’Donnell, has an inspirational life story about all four.

Ann O’Donnell and her husband Conal have lived in Enniskillen for 30 years, having made their way here from Ann’s home town of Newry. They have three children; Raymond, Catherine and Paula. Ann is one of a family of 10. Tragically her father died suddenly at the age of 41 when Ann was only 9 years old. Subsequently the whole family was screened for heart defects and it was discovered that they suffered from the heart condition Cardiomyopathy. Ann became a patient at the RVH, Belfast, at the age of 10. Within the next 6 years two of her brothers, Tony, aged 18, and 15-year old Brian, died from the same condition.

Throughout their lives, Ann and Conal have displayed a particular gift for working with young people and adults with special needs. In their early years, in Newry, they led a Diocesan group that prepared young people with special needs for the sacraments and, upon their arrival in Enniskillen, this work was brought to the attention of the parish team. Michael Hand approached Ann with a plan and, from this, Enniskillen Faith and Light was born.

Faith and Light brings people with special needs, their parents/carers and friends together for support, faith and celebration. Ann became the first coordinator in Enniskillen and 28 years later is still in the Core Group of one of the biggest and most successful groups in Ireland.

Ann has not been blessed with good health. In 1981 she had a pacemaker inserted and over the next ten years this was replaced twice. In 1994 she was sent to Newcastle’s Freeman Hospital for investigations into the possibility of a heart transplant. However, it was decided that she was not a good candidate at that time. She returned to Enniskillen and continued her life with her family and special friends.

Like many other families in our parish who have a sick parent, the rest of the family had to cope with the pressure and stresses that developed. Ann recalls clearly the support, dedicated care and love that she received from Conal and all her family and friends during those hard times. In April/May 1998 her health deteriorated significantly and her ability to do the simple things in life was greatly reduced. The following August, on her way to Mass, Ann became ill and was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital where she was told she had heart failure. She was transferred to Newcastle’s Freeman Hospital where, after a new pace maker had failed, her family was told that she had 3 to 9 months to live and that she would not be returning home. However she was now at the top of the transplant list.

On 1st October 1998 aged 43 Ann became the recipient of a new heart! The donor had died in the RVH, Belfast, and the heart was sent to Newcastle for Ann. (The lungs from the same donor were transplanted to the lady in the room next to Ann.)

The quiet strength and faith of her mother, having lost her husband and sons and then being faced with her daughter’s illness, was a huge influence on Ann and had always been an inspiration to her. Sadly, her mum did not live to see her daughter post transplant but the support received from friends, neighbours and the family of Faith and Light gave Ann great strength and a real feeling of belonging and community.

Throughout her life Ann has had a strong devotion to St Therese, “The Little Flower”. When she was a child, there was a picture of St Therese in her home and Ann always prayed to her. While in hospital in September 1998 she received a number of prayers to St Therese from her aunt and cousin in Canada. She kept these in her locker by her hospital bed and recited them daily. At 1.00 a.m. on 1st October 1998 Ann’s successful transplant operation began: 1st October is the feast day of St Therese “The little Flower”.

Since then, though she has continued to visit the hospital in Newcastle every three months, Ann’s life with her family, friends and Faith and Light has been relatively normal.

Growing up in St Michael's Parish

Pat and Joe Blake were born in the 1930's in Church St., near the church where they were baptised.

At the age of four we went to Abbey Street School, an infant school for the children who lived in the west end of the town: those in the east attended the Convent National School. Abbey St. School was a grey, two storeyed building with a gable end facing onto the street. Inside a gateway was the door and an outside flight of stone steps leading to the upper room. There were three outside toilets: teachers, girls and boys. The upstairs room was for 'Babies' (Primary one) and in the downstairs room were the 'High Infants'. Each room had a black stove. The windows, with small diamond shaped panes, were high up and had wide sills. The nuns who taught there in our time were Sisters Antonia and Attracta, who was our father's cousin.



Joe and Pat Blake, with their sister, Marie, on their Confirmation Day

At the age of seven, we transferred to the Convent Primary School where we went into 'First Class Boys'. (There Pat was taught by Sister Concepta and Joe, when he 'graduated', by Sister Dominic.) These kindly nuns, tasked with preparing us for First Holy Communion, certainly passed on their faith and their love of the Blessed Sacrament. At this time, Confirmation was held every three years so we were both confirmed, by Bishop McKenna, on the same day, along with our older sister, Marie, even though Joe had only made his First Holy Communion one week beforehand.

After spending a year in the Convent National School, we attended the Presentation Brothers School, where the Clinton Centre now stands, until we were twelve when we were sent to a boarding school in Dublin, run by the Vincentian Order.

During our early childhood there were only two masses on Sunday mornings, at 8.00 and 11.30. Another Mass, at 10.00 a.m., was introduced when the troops arrived during the war. One of their chaplains, a Fr. Longley, asked families to invite a soldier for Christmas dinner. We had an Italian-American called Joey Caprera. Joey survived the war but was killed soon afterwards in a motor accident in Europe.

We boys all became altar servers when we turned eight. We then had to learn the Latin responses which we practised in school with the brothers and at home with our mother. Altar servers wore a black soutane and a white surplice: a Miss Muncey made ours. The priest had his back to the people for most of the time and the Masses were completely in Latin. Most people read the English version in their missals or said the rosary. Anyone receiving Holy Communion had to fast from the midnight before. On Christmas morning we served three Masses, one after the other, as was the tradition. On Sunday afternoons we would walk to the Graan for devotions, meeting our friends and enjoying chatting along the way.

When I (Pat) was eighteen I went to London to serve my time in a bar owned by an uncle and namesake of Paddy Gillen, (Church Street). He was a kindly man who employed others from around this area. On returning home to work in our bar in Enniskillen, I joined the Men's Fraternity. It met on Monday nights when Monsignor Gannon would 'give out' the rosary and preach a sermon before celebrating Benediction. I was in the St. Brigid's section whose prefects were Taw Love and, later, John Dooris. There was also a women's confraternity which met monthly, on a Tuesday.

Easter was a special time. During the forty days of Lent everything was sombre, including the priests' vestments. On Easter Sunday morning the church was decorated with flowers and candles and the purple cloths, which had covered the statues and crucifix from Passion Sunday, were taken away. Fr. Murphy's choir certainly brought a new awakening with the Latin hymns, especially the Gloria.

On the feast of Corpus Christi or the Sunday nearest to it there was a procession in the Convent grounds. Fr. Murphy's choir stayed in the Convent chapel and the hymns were relayed by loudspeakers. The Blessed Sacrament was carried in the monstrance by the parish priest, accompanied by the curates and altar boys. A canopy over them was carried by men of the parish. All of the parish groups and schoolchildren were there and there was a lovely atmosphere.

The priests in the Parish during those years were Archdeacon Tierney, Fathers Dignam, Meighan, O'Daly, Duffy, McManus and Murphy and Monsignor Gannon – not all there at the same time. We remember with gratitude those priests who worked in this parish and have passed to their eternal reward.

Reflection on Advent

Fr. Joe McVeigh



Advent is a time of waiting and preparing. While the secular world is totally concerned with business and commerce, we are preparing to celebrate Christ's birth and second coming. We are waiting in joyful hope as we buy our gifts and do the other necessary shopping that is now so much associated with Christmas: we must not let this become the main preoccupation of the season. In the Gospel we are reminded by Jesus to stay awake - awake to the reality of suffering brothers and sisters in our world and in our own communities. One form of suffering that many people experience, often in silence, is loneliness.

Loneliness is a strange emotion. At any time, it can affect anybody - married or single, man or woman, young or old, whether you live in a large town or out in the country. It is not the same as being alone. Many who live alone may not experience loneliness at all - certainly not as severely as those who live with other people. We most often associate loneliness with those who have suffered the loss of a loved one - a wife who has lost a husband, a husband who has lost his wife, parents who suffer the loss of a child, or children who experience the loss of a parent. These are times when loneliness is felt most acutely. I know this from my own experience after the deaths of my mother and father and after the deaths of some close friends. Life is never the same again. It takes time to grieve and come to terms with the loss. It is then we appreciate the value of true friends and the value of the local community of faith. It is then that we appreciate the prayerful support of friends.

Christmas is often a time when the loss of loved ones is felt more deeply. I hope that this Advent and Christmas those who feel lonely will experience the support of the community and the prayers of all in our parish especially at our Masses throughout Advent and Christmas. And when you feel lonely you can remember that you are not alone; Jesus is always present with you and you could even drop into the Church to spend time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament where Jesus is present in a real and tangible way.

Pope Francis has urged us to reach out to those who may be hurting or isolated. If you notice somebody who might be lonely offer them a smile and a word of encouragement; perhaps even a hug! It could make their day or even change their lives. It will change your life as well. Blessings to all during Advent and Christmas!

You might say there are two kinds of loneliness-

- ◆ the loneliness of loss like death/separation
- ◆ loneliness caused by being treated as different and bullied or humiliated

We should accept that loneliness is at times part of the human condition. It is in that loneliness that we often find the strength from God to look forward, to keep going. Christ on the Cross cuts a lonely figure and he experienced a deep sense of loneliness and desolation. He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"



Even holy people like Mother Teresa experienced loneliness and doubts about the existence of God. These experiences helped to deepen her faith in the One who is always present with us - the One in whom we can trust and the One who loves us more than we will ever understand.

"The most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved."

Mother Teresa

Becoming a Catholic

Adults who have expressed a desire to become members of the Catholic Church are invited to follow a series of preparation steps. The Church gives this process of preparation the somewhat long and formal title of **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)**

During the preparation programme these adults are called 'candidates'. RCIA trained members, who accompany the candidates on their faith journey, are called 'faith companions'. Candidates may opt to have sponsors who will be available to give them extra time and support when requested.

The preparation steps include:

- ◆ welcoming,
- ◆ the nurturing of the growth in faith,
- ◆ developing a sincere moving of the heart and will towards God,
- ◆ reception into the Catholic Church and
- ◆ support from RCIA's personnel after reception.

RCIA Ministers have been active in the Parish for a number of years. Sincere thanks to all those who have so generously given of their time to this Ministry.

Another group of parishioners has been in training for RCIA ministering since June 2013. The training has included: listening to RCIA ministers as they shared their experiences of journeying as faith companions; developing their faith and spirituality through reflecting on the content of DVDs under the heading of 'Exploring the Catholic Church'; reading of books on faith and the essential study of the RCIA handbook for faith companions and sponsors.

The members of the group wish to thank Fr David, who was RCIA leader in his last parish in Wales, for providing them with the training resources mentioned above. These resources, in particular the DVDs, provided the trainees with a broader and deeper knowledge of faith, which was expressed in an easy and simple way.

Some of the guidelines for faith companions and sponsors:

- ◆ Praying regularly to the Holy Spirit for the candidate and for guidance.
- ◆ Staying with the candidate at his or her stage on the faith journey.
- ◆ Building up a relationship of respect, trust and confidentiality as the Good News is being shared.
- ◆ Respecting the candidates' right to free will.

You are asked to pray for the faith companions, sponsors and candidates who are currently travelling on their faith journeys.



A happy Martin Kelly, winner of the Grand Prize of £5,000 in this year's Parish Draw.

Other winners in the final draw of the year, which took place at the Parish dance in the Killyhevlín Hotel on Friday 4th October were:

Donna Maye: £3,000

Teresa Higgins: £1,000

C & B Maguire: £1,000

Seamus McCusker: £1,000

The monthly draws, for a total of £2,000 in prizes, takes place on the second Monday of each month.

Please let us know what you think of the Parish Newsletter by contacting the Parish Centre (parishcentre@st-michaels.net).

New Catholic Chaplain

Sr. Monica Gallagher, RSM, becomes a member of the SWAH Chaplaincy Team.

In a new initiative, Sr. Monica Gallagher, a member of the Sisters of Mercy Convent Community, Enniskillen, joined the South West Acute Hospital as a Catholic Chaplain in November. She joins the team of clergy chaplains there. This initiative was sought by Mgr Peter O'Reilly, PP, on behalf of the diocese through the Western Health and Social Care Trust. The support of Paula Cunningham, originally from Enniskillen, was signally instrumental in bringing this initiative to fruition. Sr. Monica will work with the Parish Hospital Ministry Group. She was asked a few questions for this edition of our Parish Newsletter:

Tell us a bit about yourself... I'm from Boho in the Parish of Botha, the second eldest in a family of ten. My mother, Kathleen, was the Post Mistress and my father, Jim, made cement blocks and had a small farm. Like any local Post Office, there were a lot of 'comings and goings'. My parents would have instilled in us a sense of respect for other people and their lives. I entered the Convent of Mercy here in Enniskillen in the Sixties. I worked in St Michael's College for a couple of years before being asked to train as a nurse. That training included various kinds of nursing, including psychiatry and midwifery. A good number of local families would know me from my years working as a midwife in the Erne Hospital Maternity Ward.

Describe your current role in the South West Acute

Hospital... A normal day for me will start with a look at the admissions and a brief visit to the wards to see where the urgent needs are. I aim to visit two wards in the morning and two in the afternoon. The staff know that I'm happy to stay and visit with anyone in as supportive a way as I can. I communicate with the priests of the parish in regard to visits they could make in their special role. I also check back with staff after each visit. For me, it's about being there in as supportive a way as I can. I see myself as someone working with staff, patients and relatives as a part of our new hospital team, offering professional support to the people there in times of stress and bad news.



Sr. Monica Gallagher, with Fanchea Treacy, a member of the Parish Hospital Ministry Group

St Michael's Parish

Rev. Monsignor Peter O'Reilly, PP

Telephone : 028 6632 2627

Email : pp@st-michaels.net

Rev. David Donnelly CC

Rev. Raymond Donnelly CC

Rev. Joseph McVeigh CC

Telephone : 028 6632 2075

Presbytery, 4 Darling Street,

Enniskillen, County Fermanagh

St Michaels Parish Centre

28 Church Street , Enniskillen

Open Monday to Friday: 10:30 – 2:30

Tel: 028 6632 2075

Email: parishcentre@michaels.net

www.st-michaels.net

What was your reaction to being asked to take it on? What's your reaction now?...

From the word go, I felt this was a marvellous opportunity, a great blessing. It gives me a new opportunity for caring for others. I am really looking forward to it and even though it has its tough moments, I feel even more energised by what I have the chance to do. I feel privileged to hear people talk so freely about life. I feel so privileged to be someone so trusted and welcomed.

Now that I've begun, I find it even more deeply satisfying than I had expected.

Parish Mission Statement

We are called by our baptism to be disciples of Jesus; to love God and our neighbour. We seek to live our lives as faithful witnesses to Gospel values and to spread the Good news in a joyful, simple way, bringing hope, healing and support to each other along life's journey. We are a worshipping Christ-centred Community. We value respect and promote the dignity of others. We embrace difference and diversity rejoicing in the unique giftedness of every human person