

The Newsletter

February 2013



Santa arrives at Seir Kieran Carol Service

on Friday 21st December 2012

Clonenagh Group of Parishes

Annatrim, Borris-in-Ossory, Lacca, Mountrath, Roskelton, Seir Kieran.

Rector's Letter

Heading off on a ski trip some years ago proved to be a challenging experience. Sitting on an Austrian Airlines Boeing 737, my friend Leslie said, "You know we have to fly down a valley between mountains to land at Innsbruck?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah", I said, and went back to reading my newspaper (and there are pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, I thought).

The pilot announced that we were beginning our descent, "Cabin crew, ten minutes to landing". The Alps looked wonderful in bright winter sunshine. Innsbruck drew closer.

"Now look", said Leslie. I looked out of the window to the left; there were mountains to the side of us. I looked across the aisle to the window at the other side; there were mountains out that window as well.

We were in a jet airliner going at a great speed that was going down a mountain valley. Aren't airports supposed to be in wide, open spaces? Whose idea was it to put an airport here anyway? I feigned complete calmness and tranquillity, but there were other passengers as clearly surprised as I was, when we landed they started to clap the pilot!

Had I known, would I have flown there? If I hadn't I would have missed the opportunity of going to the beautiful place in which we stayed.

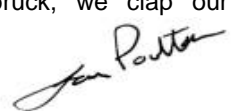
Fear of going into uncertain places is probably the main reason most people don't move on in their faith. It's easier to stay with what we know, to hold on to our faith as we received it when we were children, rather than to move on and try to

grow as Christians. But if we are never prepared to take what can seem like risks at the time, then we will never discover new things, we will never sense God in different ways.

Jesus called his disciples to take risks, to go where they felt uncertain, to go where they even felt frightened, only by following that call could they truly be the people Jesus wanted them to be.

Jesus doesn't call us to leave home and family, he doesn't call us to face violence and persecution, but I do think that he calls us to be more adventurous than we are. Reading the Bible, saying our prayers, can often be things that haven't changed since our childhood days, maybe they are even things that we haven't done since our childhood days.

Our Lent course this year has the title, 'This is our story: Journeys of faith.' It looks at people's own stories of where their faith has taken them. This Lent, let's have the courage to venture out into the uncertain, to open the Bible and see what it might be saying to us; to be still and listen to God. Who knows, we might be so surprised at where we arrive that, like the passengers at Innsbruck, we clap our hands with delight!



PS. Thank you to those who expressed concern regarding my health. Having had chest pains, I went for tests and an angiogram and the problem lies with a build up of cholesterol in the arteries. The answer lies with taking tablets - and not eating cakes, buns and biscuits!

Smiles

A young clergyman, fresh out of training, thought it would help him better understand the fears and temptations his future congregations faced if he first took a job as a policeman for several months. He passed the physical examination; then came the oral exam to test his ability to act quickly and wisely in an emergency. Among other questions he was asked, "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?"

He thought for a moment and then said, "I would pass an offering plate."

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The Sunday school teacher was carefully explaining the story of Elijah the Prophet and the false prophets of Baal. She explained how Elijah built the altar, put wood upon it, cut the cow in pieces, and laid it upon the altar. And then, how Elijah commanded the people of God to fill four barrels of water and pour it over the altar. He had them do this four times. "Now, said the teacher, "can anyone in the class tell me why the Lord would have Elijah pour water over the cow on the altar?"

A little girl in the back of the room started waving her hand, "I know! I know!" she said, "To make the gravy!"

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The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back

and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted, "My mummy looked back once, while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!"

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A Catholic priest and a Methodist minister from two local churches were standing by the side of the road, feverishly pounding a handmade sign into the ground with a large rock. The sign read: The End is Near! Turn Yourself Around Now Before It's Too Late!

As a car sped past them, the driver yelled, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!" A moment later, from around the curve they heard screeching tyres and a big splash. The pastor turned to the priest and asked thoughtfully: "Do you think the sign should just say 'Bridge Down'?"

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A nurse at a hospital received a call from an anxious woman. "I'm diabetic and I'm afraid I've had too much sugar today," she said.

"Are you light-headed?" my colleague asked.

"No," the caller answered, "I'm a brunette."

Parish Notes

Spring arrives: While Met Eireann regard 1st March as the first day of spring, there is good reason to regard Saint Brigid's Day, 1st February as the first day of the new season. The three months from November to January have the winter solstice at the middle and, by the beginning of February, there is a real sense of the days getting longer. Our prayer is that 2013 will bring a better spring and summer seasons than we experienced in 2012. An early spring, with mild and dry weather, would take off some of the pressure currently being felt by many in our community.

Saint Brigid's Day: There will be Holy Communion to mark Saint Brigid's Day in Mountrath Church on Friday, 1st February at 8 pm.

Lent Services: Ash Wednesday this year is on Wednesday, 13th February. Our Lent services will, as usual, move around the six churches in our group. On Ash Wednesday, we will be in Mountrath at 8pm; then, on 20th February, in Annatrim; on 27th February, in Borris in Ossory; on Tuesday, 5th March, in Seir Kieran; on 13th March, in Roskelton; and on 20th March, in Seir Kieran. Except for the Saint Ciaran's Day service at Seir Kieran on 5th March, we shall again be using the Lent Course provided by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, but it will be considerably more cheerful than the gloominess of the similar course that we followed last year. Our congregations built up to over 40 in 2011, but last year's material prompted a steady decline. The theme this year is 'This is our story: Journeys of Faith' and

hopefully everyone who joined us week by week two years ago will reappear. If anyone would like to look at the course, it is available on the internet at: www.ctbi.org.uk/622

Third Sunday Service: We continue our series of afternoon service at Lacca Church on Sunday, 17th February at 4 pm. The service is followed by tea and chat and everyone is welcome. We got off to a good start to the new year with 29 people at the service on a bitterly cold afternoon on 20th January.

Christmas services: Thank you to everyone who came along to the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services and helped us to an aggregate attendance of four hundred. Lacca managed the biggest congregation with 97 being present at 9.30 pm on Christmas Eve.

Baptism: At Saint Peter's Church, Mountrath on Sunday, 30th December, Evan Rhys Williams was welcomed into the fellowship of Christ's Church through the sacrament of holy baptism.

Farmers' service: There was a disappointing attendance at our farmers' service on Sunday, 13th January - the congregation of 44 people was more than thirty down on the corresponding attendance last year, nevertheless, Fr Pat Hennessy preached an excellent sermon, speaking of how, in Jesus, God rolls up his sleeves and comes down to work with us and challenges us in our daily lives to roll up our sleeves and to work with Him.

School activities: The Parents' Association were busy in December. The Christmas Market at Clonagh National School was held on Saturday, 8th December and was again blessed by fair weather. On Friday, 28th December, the vintage tractor and car run from Coolrain saw an excellent turnout of over 80 vehicles. Thank you to all who worked so hard for the events, particularly to Joe Shirley for his work with the tractor run.



Confirmation: Candidates from our parish and Rathdowney parish will be confirmed on Sunday, 2nd June at Rathdowney. Those wishing to join the confirmation preparation group should contact the Rector.

Offerlane Offerings: With the reduction of investment income, we need to look at how we can have regular income in the parish in order to cover our the cost of our annual assessment of around €22,000. If we move from the present system of loose collections and an annual sustentation payment to the sort of stewardship system that has operated in some dioceses for fifty years.

We have around sixty adult subscribers. If each person was to give

€5 a week through a weekly envelope scheme that would give an income of €15,600. If we improved our system of recovering tax in giving, we might easily get a further €2,000-€3,000, bringing us to a total of around €18,000. Between sustentation payments and putting money on the plate, some subscribers are already giving more than €5 a week; if they continued that level of giving, we would be close to our target of covering the cost of our assessment, allowing us to use our investment income to cover the cost of necessary repair work.

Clonagh National School Enrolments For September 2013: Please contact the school on 0578732516 for a **Notice Of Intention To Apply Form** which should be returned to the school by Monday 11th February.

South Offaly Ploughing are holding their 17th annual ploughing match on Sunday 17th of February in Fivealley, Birr from 12pm. Many side attractions on the day including tug o war, vintage displays, horse ploughing & children's attractions. A great day out for all the family. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Mothers' Union & Young Wives January Meeting: At our meeting on Monday, 28th January, the Rector will talk about his visit to Rwanda and Burundi last month and will talk particularly about how Mothers' Union are making a difference in the lives of African communities.

February Meeting: At the meeting on Monday, 25th February we shall welcome Mrs Eileen Senior. Eileen will be speaking on craft ideas.

Church of Ireland News

Church of Ireland Statement on the Abortion Debate

Dr Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, and Mr Samuel Harper, Lay Honorary Secretary of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, made a submission to the Joint Committee on Health and Children as part of three days of public hearings on the implementation of the Government decision following the publication of the Expert Group Report into matters relating to A, B & C v. Ireland.

Following the hearing, Archbishop Jackson and Mr Harper said: 'We were grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's public hearings. The Church of Ireland opposes abortion but recognises that there are exceptional cases of strict and undeniable medical necessity. We believe the proposal to legislate and regulate in the area of abortion is overdue and welcome. Women and medical professionals need legal clarity to make informed decisions where the continuation of a pregnancy causes real and substantial risk to the life of the mother.' They continued: 'We expressed our appreciation of the open approach adopted by the Joint Committee in today's hearings and also, our commitment to the process of ongoing structured dialogue between the Churches and the State.'

The main points raised by Archbishop Jackson and Mr Harper are provided below in summary form. Both stated that this is an issue of exceptional human complexity and sensitivity and that the

Church of Ireland is a synodical Church which develops policy guided by the prayerful consideration and discussion of bishops, clergy and laity. Because of the limited time-scale involved in providing a written response the document presented at the hearing can only be considered a preliminary response.

The Church of Ireland emphasises the right to life and this includes the equal right to life of the mother and of the unborn child. The Church of Ireland further honours the natural human desire to celebrate and to protect new life.

The Church of Ireland opposes abortion but acknowledges that there are exceptional cases of 'strict and undeniable medical necessity' where it is and should be an option. There is a variety of opinion within the Church of Ireland on what constitutes 'exceptional cases' but agreement that it includes circumstances where the continuation of the pregnancy poses a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother.

In the context of the Church of Ireland's previous comments on abortion about the need for legal clarity, it is agreed that the position in the State at present is very unclear and unsatisfactory, and unfair to pregnant women and medical professionals who deserve to be able to make critical, clinical decisions in a secure and well regulated medical framework. Accordingly, the decision by the Government to seek to provide clarity on the issue is welcome.

It is agreed that where there is a strict and undeniable medical necessity requiring the ending of a pregnancy at a later stage, where possible, this should be done in a manner that preserves the life of the unborn, without compromising the life of the woman. This diagnosis should be made expeditiously and should be formally notified to the woman. This will require legislation as medical council guidelines on their own will not necessarily have this effect.

Special provision should be made for emergency situations where the continu-

ation of the pregnancy occasions a risk to the mother's life that is real, substantial and imminent. The clauses of the 1861 Act require amendment or repeal in the light of the present situation.

The Church has previously urged the Government to adopt a legislative and regulatory approach which will allow for easier alteration in the light of changes in medical science. Accordingly, the Government decision to do so is welcome.



Participants in the Clonenagh National School vintage car and tractor run on Friday 28th of December 2012

Services & Readings

February 2013

First Sunday 3rd	<i>Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-25</i> <i>Psalms 65</i> <i>Revelation 4</i> <i>Luke 8: 22-25</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Morning Prayer	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 10.30am Morning Prayer	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion
Second Sunday 10th	<i>Exodus 34: 29-35</i> <i>Psalms 99</i> <i>2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 4: 2</i> <i>Luke 9: 28-36, 37-43</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Holy Communion		Annatrim 11.00am Holy Communion		Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer
Third Sunday 17th	<i>Deuteronomy 26: 1-11</i> <i>Psalms 91: 1-2, 9-16</i> <i>Romans 10: 8b-13</i> <i>Luke 4: 1-13</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Holy Communion	Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 4.00pm Holy Communion
Fourth Sunday 24th	<i>Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18</i> <i>Psalms 27</i> <i>Philippians 3: 17 - 4: 1</i> <i>Luke 13: 31-35</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer		Annatrim 11.00am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion	

Parish Diary

January 28th.....Mothers' Union & Young Wives Meeting (*Page 5*)

11th Monday.....Closing date for Clonenagh N.S. Notice Of Intention forms (*Page 5*)

17th Sunday.....South Offaly Ploughing match (*Page 5*)

20th Wednesday...Closing date for March 2013 Newsletter items!

25th Monday.....Mothers' Union & Young Wives Meeting (*Page 5*)

Items for the March 2013 Newsletter need to be with the editor by WEDNESDAY February 20th AT THE LATEST, so that the Newsletter can be assembled in time for the 4th Sunday, February 24th.

PLEASE make your item as ready for publication as possible, and most importantly, please ensure that you spell names correctly.

Ideally, items should be submitted by e-mail to- newsletter@clonenagh.com

Otherwise to- Ivor Clegg, Cloncourse, Mountrath, Co. Laois. 057-8621277/087-2522162

This Newsletter and many older editions can be downloaded directly from

www.clonenagh.com

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