

The Newsletter

December 2013

Rector:

Canon Ian Poulton,
Clonenagh Rectory,
Portlaoise Road,
Mountrath.

Phone: 057-8732146

Diocesan Reader:

Mabel Peavoy,
Shannon Road,
Mountrath.
Phone: 057-8732331

Parish Archivist:

Vicky Knowles,
Clonin School,
Mountrath.
Phone: 057-8732846



Poinsettia

(*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Native to Mexico, the star-shaped leaf pattern is said to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem, giving us its common name: **Christmas Star**.

Clonenagh Group of Parishes

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

Rector's Letter

I remember a December day in the late Nineties, driving along a road in Co. Antrim feeling tired and jaded and listening to the BBC.

Christmas was approaching and I had no appetite for it. The season seemed to bring out the worst in people, including church people. Perhaps it was the season of Ebenezer Scrooge for some of them, but they would use it as an opportunity to moan about things. Moaning about things in the church generally meant moaning about the Rector – for who else could be responsible?

There was a Radio 4 programme on as I drove. It had that nice BBC atmosphere, the atmosphere of one of those radio programmes that come from a world where old bigots don't exist and whining church people are only to be found in the pages of novels by Anthony Trollope. It was a programme about the great spiritual writer Thomas Merton, and how he had entered monastic life during the season of Advent.

Advent for Thomas Merton was full of rich symbolism and imbued with deep meaning. I have no recall whatsoever of the Christmas services in the parish (perhaps a repression of unpleasant memories, I'm sure there was at least one row about something), but I do remember promising myself that I would try each year to find even a fragment of the meaning that Merton found in those dark December days.

Here's what he wrote about waiting and expectation in "Advent hope or delusion",

"The certainty of Christian hope lies beyond passion and beyond knowledge. Therefore we must sometimes expect our hope to come in conflict with darkness, desperation and ignorance. Therefore, too, we must remember that Christian optimism is not a perpetual sense of euphoria, an indefectible comfort in whose presence neither anguish nor tragedy can possibly exist. We must not strive to maintain a climate of optimism by the mere suppression of tragic realities. Christian optimism lies in a hope of victory that transcends all tragedy: a victory in which we pass beyond tragedy to glory with Christ crucified and risen".

Merton is saying that even in the bad days, there is hope; that being a Christian is not about expecting every day to be filled with joy and light, but about having confidence that at the end there is a sense and purpose in things. Even on the grotty days there is optimism because at the heart of the Christmas story there is the belief that our God is a down to earth God.

May we know the presence of Jesus, our down to earth God, in our lives this Christmas, and not just then, but every day.



Church of Ireland News

New Bishop of Meath and Kildare

On Saint Andrew's Day, Saturday, 30th November, the Reverend Patricia Storey will be consecrated as the new bishop of our neighbouring diocese of Meath and Kildare.

The bishop-elect told reporters, "I am both excited and daunted by this new adventure in our lives. I count it an enormous privilege to begin a new phase of my ministry with the people of Meath and Kildare, and I look forward to working with the team of clergy who are already there. I would sincerely ask for your prayers for myself and my family, who are the best family in the world!²

The Revd Pat Storey (53) has been Rector of St Augustine's, Londonderry (Derry and Raphoe) since 2004. She is married to the Revd Earl Storey and has two adult children, Carolyn and Luke, and a son-in-law Peter. Having grown up in Belfast and studied French and English at Trinity College, Dublin, she trained at the Church of Ireland Theological College and was ordained deacon in 1997 and priest in 1998. She served a Curacy in Ballymena (Connor) and was a Team Vicar in Glenavy (Connor) and a part-time Youth Worker Co-ordinator with the Church of Ireland Youth Department. Among Central Church participation, she is a member of the Standing Committee of the General Synod. The Revd Pat Storey becomes the first woman to be appointed a bishop in the Church of Ireland.

The consecration of the new bishop will, due course, be followed by enthronement in the diocesan cathedrals.

Philippines Appeal

Collections on behalf of the Church of Ireland appeal for the Philippines were made at all services on Sunday, 17th November and on 19th November the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal issued the following press release:

Bishops' Appeal is greatly encouraged by the response to the disaster in the Philippines by Church of Ireland parishes and individuals alike. Donations will continue to be collected in the coming weeks for immediate needs such as shelter, (tents and tarpaulin) food (rice, mung beans and salt), water (and water purification tablets) and hygiene kits (to prevent the further spread of disease) Once survival needs have been met, later funds will also be directed towards rebuilding homes and trauma counselling.

Although the number of people affected change daily due to the destruction of communication channels and infrastructure, currently nearly one million people are homeless and 2.5 million people are in desperate need of food as livelihoods such as crops and boats for fishing were completely destroyed. A further 9.5 million have been affected with loss of water supplies, damaged properties and loss of loved ones.

Initial funds have been released through Christian Aid. Subsequent donations will be split between Christian Aid and Tearfund to expand the geographical areas and partners through which relief is being disseminated. Christian Aid's main focus areas are Iloilo and Baybay whilst Tearfund's main focus area is Samar.

Parish Notes

What was that census about?

Our aggregate total for the first Sunday in November, not counting people attending church a second time, was 138, but what did that prove? Many of us were mystified as to the point of the census. It is said that it is to assist planning for the future, as if the church were some company, or secular organisation. One Sunday, some months ago in Seir Kieran, there were about a dozen of us in church, and I shared a thought that had occurred to me that even if the rest of the church had disappeared, we would still be there and Jesus would still be alive and we would continue because it depends on him and not on the institution. Had the church in its early days held censuses and made human plans, it is hard to imagine that the Good News of Jesus would have travelled very far. Jesus says in Saint John Chapter 3 Verse 8, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit", yet instead of making space for the working of the Spirit, we try more and more to centralise and manage the

church, to the point that local church members feel they have no part in it. If we were to allow the Spirit freedom, it would mean re-building the church, from the local community upward, not from the bishops downward.

Congratulations to Offerlane:

The diocesan environmental awards were made at the diocesan synod in October and the installation of eco loos at Lacca and Annatrim impressed the judges. Mrs Jean Treacy received an award for Annatrim, made for its installation of an eco loo in the boiler house of the church when there were no possible conventional alternatives. The prize, a birch tree, has been planted in the south-east corner of the churchyard.

Christmas Market: Clonenagh Parish holds its annual Christmas Market in the Parochial Hall in Mountrath on Wednesday, 11th December at 7:30pm. There will be a great line up of stalls and we look forward to welcoming a big number of people for some great Christmas bargains.

Help is requested on Tuesday night at 8pm to get the hall ready.

Christmas Carols at Lacca: Friends and neighbours will be very welcome at Lacca Church at 4 pm on Sunday, 15th December as we gather at sunset to celebrate the coming of the Light of the World.

Nativity play: Clonenagh National School hold their Nativity Play in Mountrath Church on Sunday, 15th December at 7 pm. We have welcomed a large congregation at the Nativity Service in the past three years and look forward to again welcoming parents, friends and the wider community.

Community Carol services: We are holding a community carol services in Mountrath Church on Wednesday, 18th December, in Borris-in-Ossory on Thursday, 19th December and at Seir Kieran on Friday, 20th December at 8pm. Everyone will be very welcome.

Annatrim Carol service: Christmas carols at Annatrim Church will be on Sunday, 22nd December at 11 am. There was a good turnout for this service last year and we hope it will be repeated.

Christmas services begin at 7pm on Tuesday, 24th December

with Holy Communion at Seir Kieran. This is followed by Borris-in-Ossory at 8.15 pm and Lacca at 9.30 pm. On Christmas morning, we begin with Roskelton at 9.30 am and then have services at Annatrim at 10.30 am and Mountrath at 11.30 am.

Gideons Speaker: Sunday, 30th December is a fifth Sunday of the month and there will be a group service in Roskelton at 11 am at which we shall welcome Mr Sam Harper from the Gideons. No-one can claim there is much else happening at eleven o'clock on the Sunday after Christmas, so we hope there will be a good congregation.

Covenant Service: There will be covenant services, committing the coming year into God's hands in each church of the five churches in which there is worship on the first Sunday of the New Year, Sunday, 5th January 2013. We hope people will start the year as they mean to continue and will be present to make New Year spiritual resolutions.

Plough Sunday: We continue the old tradition of the Sunday after the Epiphany being observed as Plough Sunday, the day on

which there were prayers for the farming year. (Plough Sunday took its name from Plough Monday, the day when people traditionally returned to work after the Epiphany). Our service is on Sunday, 12th January at 7 pm.

Mountrath Mothers' Union will meet on Monday 25th November at 8pm for their annual auction evening in the Parochial Hall. Your support with this would be appreciated by all who benefit from the proceeds.

From the marriage registers: On 15th November 2013 at Laccac Church, Tina Chambers of Killanure and Peter Dooley of Camross

Engagement: Yvonne Kerr of Ballyfin recently became engaged to Anthony Payne of Auckland, New Zealand.

Helpline: Are you going through difficult times, perhaps financially, perhaps on the farm, perhaps in business, perhaps in family life? Our diocese now has a confidential helpline where someone will offer a sympathetic ear and be able to offer helpful advice. Call 087-393 4529 for a friendly ear.

Subscriptions are now due, please contact the treasurer about same.

The branch would like to wish Season's Greetings to all for a Happy, Healthy, Peaceful Christmas as we remember those less fortunate than ourselves.

Thanks to all those who came along to McEvoy's Abbeyleix on November 19th for a most enjoyable meal and evening.

Leprosy Mission boxes should be returned to Olga Telford by December 5th.

Items for the Christmas 2013 - January 2014 Newsletter need to be with the editor by WEDNESDAY December 18th AT THE LATEST, so that the Newsletter can be assembled in time for the 4th Sunday, December 22nd .

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

Smiles

"Thanks very much for the beautiful jumper," said Charles, kissing his grandmother dutifully on the cheek. Exasperated Mother on Saint Stephen's Day: "William, why ever did you kick your little brother in the stomach?"

"Oh, there's nothing to thank me for," she murmured. "It was his own fault. He turned around."

"That's what I thought, but Mum said I had to." * * *

First man: "My wife doesn't know what she wants for Christmas."

The teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw pictures of their favourite Bible stories. She was puzzled by Kate's picture, which showed four people on an aeroplane. She asked her which story it was meant to represent. Second man: "You're lucky. Mine does!"

"The Flight to Egypt," was her reply. * * *

Pointing at each figure, the teacher ventured: "That must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. But who's the fourth person?" This Christmas, when your family gets together, remember: a certain friction between the generations is inevitable. After all, the young and the old have all the answers and those in between are stuck with all the questions.

"Oh," explained Kate happily, "that's Pontius - the pilot!" * * *

New Year's Eve is coming soon...

The grandson had just taken a photograph of his ancient grandmother who'd come to stay for Christmas and was celebrating her 99th birthday the same day. "Grannie, I sure hope I'm around next year to photograph you on your 100th birthday," he said. The bagpipes are the missing link between music and noise. - E K Kruger

The inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant asthmatic pig under his arm. Unfortunately, the man-made sound never equalled the purity of the sound achieved by the pig. - Alfred Hitchcock.

"Why not?" his grandmother shrugged. "You look healthy." Bring not a bagpipe to a man in trouble. - Jonathan Swift.

Services & Readings

December 2013						
First Sunday 1st	<i>Isaiah 2: 1-5 Psalm 122 Romans 13:11-14 Matthew 24:36-44</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Morning Prayer	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 10.30am Holy Communion	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion
Second Sunday 8th	<i>Isaiah 11: 1-10 Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19 Romans 15: 4-13 Matthew 3: 1-12</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Holy Communion	Annatrim 11.00am Holy Communion		Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer	
Third Sunday 15th	<i>Isaiah 35: 1-10 Psalm 146: 5-10 or Magnificat James 5: 7-10 Matthew 11: 2-11</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Holy Communion	Lacca 4.00pm Carol Service	Mountrath 7.00pm Clonagh NS Nativity Service
Fourth Sunday 22nd	<i>Isaiah 7: 10-16 Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19 Romans 1: 1-7 Matthew 1: 18-25</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Annatrim 11.00am Carol Service		Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion	
Christmas Eve 24th	<i>Isaiah 9: 2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2: 11-14 Luke 2: 1-20</i>	Seir Kieran 7.00pm Holy Communion	Borris-in-Ossory 8.15pm Holy Communion		Lacca 9.30pm Holy Communion	
Christmas Day 25th	<i>Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4 John 1: 1-14</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion	Annatrim 10.30am Holy Communion		Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion	
Fifth Sunday 29th	<i>Isaiah 63: 7-9 Psalm 148 Hebrews 2: 10-18 Matthew 2: 13-23</i>	Mountrath 9.00am Holy Communion			Roskelton 11.00am Group Service	

Parish Diary

November 25th.....Mothers' Union Annual Auction (*page 6*)
 5th Thursday.....Closing date for return of Leprosy Mission boxes (*page 6*)
 10th Tuesday.....Preparation for Parish Christmas Market (*page 4*)
 11th Wednesday....Parish Christmas Market (*page 4*)
 15th Sunday.....Clonagh National School Nativity Play (*page 5*)
18th Wednesday..Closing date for Christmas/January 2014 Newsletter items!