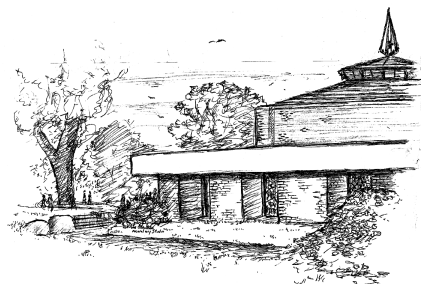


BALLINTEER PARISH NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2008

www.ballinteer.dublindiocese.ie e-mail: editor@ballinteer.dublindiocese.ie

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

When as Christians we celebrate Christmas we are very much in the presence of mystery. Birth is always a mystery that makes us aware of the wonder of life, of creation and of eternity. Every human child is eternal and is destined to influence the lives of its family of origin, of its extended family, indeed of humankind especially with whom he or she comes in contact.



At Christmas we celebrate Incarnation – the Word was made flesh and lived among us on earth. We celebrate the birth of a Saviour, Christ the Lord. God's Son was born as a human being like us. A great Light shines in the midst of human darkness. A child is born for us and is named Wonder Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. This is a hitherto unheard of thing, an utterly unexpected deed never to be surpassed, a most beautiful event where the radiance of the inner heart of God shines in our world – 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son' (John 3, 16). No wonder the angels sang 'Glory to God in the highest' (Luke 2, 14) and that the Shepherds went back from Bethlehem 'glorifying and praising God' (Luke 2, 20).

Christmas gives us an opportunity to reflect on the



wonder of our own being, our birth, our eternal destiny and our life story thus far; to celebrate and to give thanks as we remember all those near to us and dear to us, living and dead.



Over these days of preparation and celebration we are invited to treasure these things and ponder them in our hearts as Mary did. (cf. Luke 2, 19). As we do so we will be 'caught up', 'enraptured', 'grasped' by this wondrous mystery of God's love and allow ourselves to be inspired to make a return of love by embracing the mission in which we are called and sent by God to play our part in God's great activity of spreading love in the world in which we live. We must never underestimate the importance of our contribution. In the words of Cardinal Newman 'I have my mission. I may never

know it in this life but I will be told it in the next'.

We might also ponder these words of the poet John Betjeman:

*And is it true? And is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained- glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall
The Maker of the stars and sea
Became a Child ...on earth...for me*

*And is it true? For if it is,
No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells,
Can with this simple truth compare –
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today ...in Bread ...and Wine*

Preparing for Christmas

Christmas Carol Service

Sunday 14th December in Church at 3.00 pm.
All are welcome.

Penitential Rite

Marley Grange: Mon. 15th December, 8.00 pm
Meadowbrook: Wed. 17th December, 8.00 pm
Ballinteer: Fri. 19th December, 8.00 pm
Dundrum: Mon. 22nd December, 8.00 pm

Confessions in Ballinteer

Saturday 20th December:

After 9.30 am Mass and after 6 pm Vigil Mass

Wednesday 24th December:

10 am – 11 am and 3 pm – 4 pm

Report on Parish Assembly



All parishioners were invited to the first-ever Parish Assembly held in Our Lady's School Hall on Saturday 4th October 2008. In the event 110 participated, many of whom were previously not involved to any great degree in parish activities.

The participants divided into 11 working groups who first of all considered the positive aspects of the parish, the additional pastoral needs and what gifts, skills or interests they could offer.

The responses were extremely positive e.g. sense of community, openness of hardworking priests, physical environment, appreciation of opportunities for prayer and spiritual development, improvements to church building, availability of parish website, parish office, church notices and newsletter and vibrant parish life as exemplified by Parish Cells, Active Retirement Association, Mother and Toddler Group, Youth Group, St. John's GAA Club, etc.

Areas identified for action included:

- Youth
- Parish Centre
- Outreach to elderly, immigrants, new residents etc.
- Faith development and spirituality
- Young altar servers, funeral liturgy team, a church choir/music ministry, training of readers, ordained deacons

Forty one of those attending offered additional help in the following areas: Visitation (7), Youth Support (5), Parish Centre (3), Ecumenical (2), Family Ministry (2), Repository Shop (2), Liturgy (2), Readers (2), Altar Servers (2), Children's Ministry (2), Adult Choir (2), Minister of Eucharist (1), Legion of Mary (1), Music (1), Evangelisation (1), Adult Formation (1), Eucharistic Adoration (1), Counselling (1), Prayer Group (1), Finance (1), Walking Group (1).

Copies of a full report on the Assembly were handed out at weekend Masses on 1st/2nd November. It is available on the parish website: www.ballinteer.dublindiocese.ie or at the Parish Office.

If you would like to join any of our Parish Groups (list available on blue noticeboard at back of church and on website) please contact the Parish Office, Tel. 499 4203, Mon- Fri, 10 am to 12 noon.

Assembly Follow-up

The Parish Pastoral Council are actively pursuing an Action Plan to implement the priorities identified by the Assembly. Some ideas have already been taken on board. Others require more volunteers to put into effect and will take longer. In any event, parishioners will be kept informed on what is happening.

Ballinteer Active Retirement

Weekly club meetings in Ballinteer St. John's GAA Pavilion on Wednesdays at 10.15 am. New members, aged 55+, are always welcome. Last meeting before Christmas on 10th December. Resuming on Wednesday 7th January.

Lectio Divina

It will resume on Thursday 29th January at 8.00 pm in the Church Oratory.

"Life in the Spirit" Seminars

Monday, November 24th marked the closing night of the "Life in the Spirit" seminars which began in our Parish on October 8th and ran for seven consecutive Mondays, followed by a healing night on the 1st December. The turnout for each night was between seventy and eighty, surpassing all our expectations. We were blessed with excellent contributors who, in turn, inspired, informed and, at times, moved us with their personal stories - contributors like Fr. Pat Collins, John Waters, Anne Loughman, Fr. Eamon Cahill, Sr. Miriam Duggan and Dymphna Sheehan. On Monday 1st December we had Eddie Stone, bringing his healing ministry to the parish. The night started with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and rosary followed by Eddie praying with people before the Blessed Sacrament. This was followed by Mass at 9.00 pm after which Eddie continued his healing ministry. Confessions were available in the Oratory through the night and were very well attended. Prayers and hymn singing continued throughout the healing service. We estimate that between five and six hundred people attended. It was a wonderful night of prayer in our parish. Sincere thanks to all who attended over the eight weeks. Thanks to Fr. Behan for his support and encouragement and to Conor McGee and Kieran Farrell for providing the music. A special word of thanks to the many loyal volunteers without whose help such events could not take place.

New shrine for the Word

The recent Synod held in Rome was based on the theme of The Word and the importance of the Bible in the life of the Church, so it is timely that we have a new shrine in our church dedicated to giving the Word of God a place of honour.

A new stand has been erected in the place where the baptismal font used to be. This space has now become a shrine to the Word and it is in the form of an eagle with its wings outstretched, holding the Bible (The Word of God) on its back to signify the majesty and divine inspiration of what is found written in the Bible. The eagle is the symbol of St. John the Evangelist and of his Gospel. John's is the most mystical and spiritually uplifting of the four Gospels, contemplating God in the same way that the eagle was meant to be able to look unflinchingly into the eye of the sun. His Gospel, like the eagle, soars to great heights in contemplating the mystery of the Word made flesh. Thanks to Noel Hoare for this beautifully sculpted piece of granite which now holds a special place in our beautiful church.

Bereavement Support Group

1st and 3rd Mon. each month: 2pm - 3pm
2nd and 4th Wed. each month: 7pm - 8pm in the Church Conference Room by appointment through the Parish Office (Tel: 4994203).



Eucharistic Adoration in Oratory

Adoration hours are:
Tuesday - 10 am to 10 pm
Wednesday - 10 am to 1 pm
Thursday - 10 am to 1 pm
Friday - 10 am to 10 pm

All are welcome to come along and join in the adoration at any time.



Parish Website

www.ballinteer.dublindiocese.ie

The number of people accessing our website has greatly increased during the past year and thank you for doing so. We make every effort to keep the website up to date with all aspects of our parish but we cannot do it without your help.

As well as containing information about our parish community on the website you may also look up our 'Links' page which has information on our neighbouring parishes and over 40 links to some very interesting websites both in Ireland and abroad.

If you wish to have details of your Group, Club, Social event, etc. on the website for all to see, please send the information by e-mail or drop it into the Sacristy or Parish Office and remember the service is completely free.

E-mail address: editor@ballinteer.dublindiocese.ie or Jimmy Finlay, c/o The Sacristy.

Cancer Support

At the Parish Assembly, Kari Rosvall, 112 Ballinteer Close, said she would welcome people who have been affected by cancer into her home for a cup of tea and chat. She will host the first get together on Monday 26th January at 10.15 am and hopes to have it regularly on the last Monday of each month thereafter. Her telephone number is 01 296 1908. Thank you Kari for this generous offer.

Funeral Liturgy Team

As a result of our deliberations on the Parish Assembly Day (4th October 2008), I intend to establish a Funeral Liturgy Team in our Parish early next year. The team will assist the priests of the parish with the preparation and celebration of funeral liturgies and will also be part of the Ministry of Consolation and support to the bereaved in the period around the death of a loved one.

This is a very special Ministry requiring great sensitivity, empathy and a capacity to be supportively present to those who are experiencing the pain of loss. I would like to invite any parishioner who feels interested in participating in this special Ministry and who believes that she/he possesses the requisite qualities needed for this work, to leave his/her name, address and telephone number with the Parish Office (Phone No. 499 4203) before the end of January.

Training will be provided as part of the preparation for this Ministry.

Richard Behan, PP

Faith & Light Ballinteer

Our December meeting, due to be held in the Conference Room on Sunday 14th December, will **not** take place. Instead the Ballinteer Group will be meeting with other Faith & Light Groups of the Eastern Region for a joint Christmas Party. Our next meeting in Ballinteer will be on Sunday 11th January in the Conference Room at 3.00 pm. As always, all families with a child with an intellectual disability are welcome to attend.

Happy Christmas to all and thank you for your generous support during the year.

Further information is available from the Community Co-ordinator, Marie, at 087 271 3265, or you can e-mail Jim on socallaigh52@hotmail.com.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto

On Monday 8th December the new Grotto at the Broadford entrance to the Church was blessed by Monsignor Dan O'Connor. The erection of the Grotto marks the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Lourdes. It was, therefore, most appropriate that the blessing of the Grotto took place on the feast of The Immaculate Conception.

The Grotto is dedicated to the memory of Fr. Michael Loftus who as curate in our mother parish of Dundrum was responsible for the Ballinteer area on its formation as a separate parish. Fr. Loftus oversaw the building of our Church and Schools. He also led the first parish pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The Grotto is also dedicated to the memory of all those deceased parishioners who organised and participated in pilgrimages from the parish to Lourdes, particularly Maurice O'Connor who, for several years, organised the pilgrimages.

Monsignor Dan O'Connor, recently appointed Parish Priest in Dun Laoghaire and Glasthule, is a native of Ballinteer Gardens. He fundraised for the building of our Church and was a close friend of Fr. Loftus.

Members of Fr. Loftus's family as well as friends were special guests at the blessing of the Grotto which followed 7.30 pm Mass and a procession from the Church. Memories of visits to Lourdes were rekindled with the singing of appropriate hymns.

The Grotto will be an oasis of peace for all those who will stop and pray. Not everyone can go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes but now we have our own shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes at which to pray.

Fr. Behan wishes to thank stonemason Bernard Mulligan and his assistant Derek for the high standard of their work, also those parishioners whose financial contributions have made it possible and all who assisted in any other way. Further donations to clear off the remaining amount outstanding, as well as to provide for the future maintenance of the Grotto, would be appreciated and may be left in the Sacristy or Parish Office addressed to Fr. Behan.

Trainee Parish Pastoral Workers in Ballinteer

Hannah Evans and Sean O'Rourke, two members of the first group of Diocesan Lay Parish Pastoral Workers, have been on part-time placement in our parish since September. So far they have helped with a range of parish activities including the Parish Assembly, the Music Ministry, Welcome Ministry, Life in the Spirit Seminars, Annual Mass of Remembrance of the Dead and meetings for parents on sacramental preparation of their children.

Hannah and Sean are very grateful for the warm welcome and support they have received from the priests and people of Ballinteer. They also feel the parish is providing them with a rich learning experience. They will remain with us until early January and then move to a second pastoral placement in the Diocese until May. We wish both of them every success as they continue their training for this new role in the Irish Church.

Parish Pilgrimage to Lourdes

A Parish Pilgrimage to Lourdes is being planned for August 2009. Further details in New Year.

Father Kizito S.J.

Father Kizito, who regularly celebrates the Wednesday evening Mass in our Church, will be visiting his family in Rwanda over Christmas, returning early in the New Year, please God. We wish him a safe journey and look forward to welcoming him back. We asked him to write a piece for our readers. This is what he wrote:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I would like to share with you what I am doing here in Ireland as student. But before I talk about my studies, let me introduce myself: Father Kizito (Christian name, Saint Kizito is martyr from Uganda, killed in late 19th century). My name is Niyoyita. Following our Rwandese culture we do not have family names. Everybody has his own name. I am Priest in the order of Jesuit Fathers from 1990. I am now 40 years old. I am student in Trinity College Dublin. I am doing PhD studies in ecumenics at Irish School of Ecumenics.

The topic of my research is Religion as Reconciliation in Process. Postmodern Age and God. This topic is multi-disciplinary. This means that I am using at the same time theology, philosophy and sociology. I am trying to examine how postmodern man encounters God in religion and how faith in God is always a challenging life that invites us to reconcile with one another. From there I will examine how Rwandese people can overcome their ethnic conflict and hatred through faith in God. This topic is thematic. I do not have a particular author that I am studying. I am more interested in socio-cultural reality of religion. The religion I am dealing with is not only Roman Catholic, but all religions that are inspired by Judaeo-Christian tradition. I hope to finish my studies in two years to come, if God helps me.

Pray for me. Especially in these hard moments when I am remembering my sister Odette who died in August 2008 in Rwanda and who has left 4 children as orphans (my nephews). It is not easy to study when you know that in Rwanda your family needs you and has lost one of its members. I thank you for all you have been for me in Ballinteer Parish through Father Richard Behan and Canon Paddy Battelle, his predecessor.

God bless,

Father Kizito Niyoyita, S.J.

Parish Schools

The commitment ceremony for boys and girls preparing for confirmation in 2009 took place at 10.00 am Mass on Sunday 30th November. The enrolment ceremony for First Communicants will take place at 10.00 am Mass on Sunday 14th December.

Both boys' and girls' schools have vacancies in Junior Infants for the school year commencing September 2009. The girls' school will have two Junior Infant classes. Application forms available from the school secretaries.

The girls' school are busily working towards their fourth Green Flag from An Taisce, having previously been successful in 2004, 2006 and 2008.

The boys joined with 594,266 other children in Ireland and the U.K. on 27th November in an attempt to break a world record for the biggest Simultaneous Singalong. The song that all the children sang was a specially arranged version of Desree's song "You Gotta Be". The event was to fundraise for the ISPCC and Special Olympics.

Help Still Required!

- Fr. Richard is still looking for volunteers for an Altar Society as mentioned in last issue.
- Angela would like more help with the Children's Church at 10 o'clock Mass on Sundays.
- Hannah and Caroline want young Massgoers to join them in welcoming parishioners to Mass, initially 10 am and 11 am Masses on Sundays. This is a ministry which is not too time consuming for those involved and adds a dimension to our weekly celebration.

Stillness and the Mass



All the troubles in the world, said Blaise Pascal in the 17th century, come from the fact that we cannot sit still, alone, in a room. Nothing in all creation, said Meister Eckhart in the 14th century, is so like God as stillness. Earlier yet, God himself said in Psalm 46, "Be still and you will know that I am God". What are they all getting at - especially God? A simple thing and many things, things that only unfold as we practise the discipline of stillness.

When you become still - sitting comfortably straight, the weight off your feet, the weight of your hands lying on your lap, the weight of your whole body entrusted to your seat - things begin to happen. At first there is usually a delicious letting-go - of tension, of up-tightness, of having to hold yourself together. Then, since you are not used to relinquishing control, you may become restless, agitated, even a bit afraid. Settled again, you'll notice your senses begin to grow sensitive, especially your hearing. Sounds that are there all the time, but unnoticed by you, begin to become quite distinct - traffic, a distant voice, the little coughs and shuffles of the people around you. A world of sounds, and there you are in the centre of it, breathing calmly, beginning to delight in it all. If your mind is still jumpy, focus on a phrase of a prayer that repeats itself over and over within you, e.g. "God be merciful to me, a sinner".

If, before Mass, and as Mass progresses, you can create a pool of silence within yourself, the words of the Mass will drop into it like stones and send ripples and reverberations through your entire being. You will begin to hear them as never before. They will awaken your soul and draw from it a response that you never knew was in you.

Come a few minutes early for Mass and give yourself a chance to compose yourself and begin to grow still. Continue to practise the stillness as Mass goes on. Be still in your listening, your looking, your speaking, your standing, your sitting, your kneeling, your walking. Gradually, the words, the movements, the silences of the Mass will gather you and carry you into the heart of the action, into the heart of God. Then you will know what Mass is all about.

Fr. Richard Tobin CSsR

Parish Youth Project

Happy Christmas to everyone involved in our Project. Watch out for the Choir and Drama Group at the 6 pm family Mass on Christmas Eve.

BAPTISMS - September - November 2008

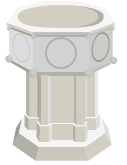
We welcome into our Christian Community:-

Abbie Frances Nolan
Zachary Luke Ryan
Emma Anita Barbara Carroll
Evan Jack Ward Molloy
Oisín Mark Heneghan
Wayne Liam Thomas Devitt O'Connor
Cerys Marie Pettigrew
Jodi Ryan
Liam O'Driscoll Flynn

Patrick James King
Grace Kate Mearns
Quinnlan Alexander O'Brien
Harry Ted Oghenevwairhe Ikolo
Jamie Kieran Brennan O'Malley
Evan Matthew Kavanagh
Ciarán Richard Bowen
Cillian Gabriel Bowen
Tony Stephen Jannece

Alex Gerard Butler
Hugo John Morrissey
Emily Jane De Marco
Jeremy Dara Dunne
Kate Una Peppard
Emma Charlotte Reddan
Harry Dominick Fredrick Doran

Congratulations to the proud parents.



DEATHS - September - November 2008

Lord, grant eternal rest to:-

Philip Flood, Marley View • Maurice Madden, Ballinteer Grove • Maeve Murray, Lynwood

Our sympathy and prayers are with their families, friends, relatives and neighbours.



Parish Cell Community

Our Cell Community was founded on the concept of 'The Acts of the Apostles' and is now more relevant in these times of great financial and employment uncertainty. We meet in homes in our parish every second Wednesday. We share praise and petition and there is a teaching on a chosen passage of sacred scripture. Most importantly, we can confidentially share our joys and our worries.

If you would like to join us you would be most welcome. We can be contacted on 085 778 8395 or check church notice boards or our parish website for more information.



Parish Walking Group

We meet at 11.00 am on Saturday mornings in Kilmashogue Wood car park and walk for approximately one and a half hours. A reasonable level of fitness is recommended. For more information please contact 01 494 1948.

Roof Fund

Up to December 2008 we have repaid €240,000 off the loan of €860,000 leaving a balance of €620,000. The total amount collected in the church door collections to date is: €188,646. We are very grateful to those who continue to subscribe so generously. Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

Altar Servers

At the Parish Assembly a parishioner undertook the task of recruiting new altar servers, mainly through the local schools. The response has been very good and we look forward to having young servers, boys and girls, at all weekend Masses soon.

Dues

At Christmas and Easter details of the church ceremonies are enclosed in envelopes with the quaint word 'Dues' in red print and are delivered to all the homes in the parish with the Parish Newsletter. Younger parishioners, in particular, may not be too clear on what this twice-yearly collection is for. We asked Fr. Richard. He said that the collection goes to a Diocesan Common Fund for the payment of priests' salaries and the care of retired and sick priests. It is, therefore, an important collection. Envelopes may be dropped in the collection baskets at Mass or in the box provided near the altar.

Church Repository Shop

Open after Saturday evening Mass, all Sunday morning Masses and after 9.30 am Masses, Mon-Fri until Christmas.

Keeping Christ in Christmas!

Candles • Cards • Calendars • Cribs
Sheds • Children's Books • Small Gifts

Parish Intercessory Prayer Team

Kay, Jennifer, Pat and Philip meet regularly to pray for the needs of all in our parish and for the particular needs of those who ask for prayer. They can be contacted on 087 667 7749.

Legion of Mary – Still going strong!

A Praesidium of the Legion of Mary meets on Tuesday nights at 8.00 pm in the Conference Room of the Church. The Legion started in Dublin in 1921. The founder, Servant of God, Frank Duff, held that, with enough faith in God and trust in Mary's mediation, Christ's followers could win the world for Him. The Legion is in virtually every country in the world now with 5 million active members, not to mention Auxiliaries. There are 6 Praesidia in Death Row prisons in the Philippines. The Servant of God, Alphie Lambe, spread the Legion extensively in South America for six years until his death from cancer at 26 years of age in 1959. Now a South American (from Brazil), Bernardo de Nardo, is a Legion envoy to Khazakstan. Many Legionaries give up a week or two of their holidays to go abroad to spread the Gospel. On the home front Legionaries do weekend projects where needed in parishes around the country. Why not come to one of our meetings; you can be sure of a warm welcome.

New Weekly Sunday Message

Since 2nd November a one-page Sunday Message has been made available to those attending Masses. It can be picked up at the entrances to the Church.

It also gives tips on what one might **Reflect on, Do, Say, Pray** and **Learn**. On the reverse side the Parish Notices for the week, including Mass Intentions, are shown. It thus complements the periodic Parish Newsletter and is worth taking home.



Happy Christmas and Prosperous 2009 to our readers



Date of Next Issue: Easter 2009