

PARISH OF ARDSTRAW WEST AND CASTLEDERG

St Mary's, Dregish · St Patrick's, Castlederg · St Francis of Assisi, Drumnabey

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SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER 2020

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

GOSPEL: PREPARE A WAY FOR THE LORD (ST MARK 1:1-18)

Fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament, John the Baptist was the one sent as the messenger of God to announce the coming of the Messiah. We are told in St Mark's Gospel today that John appeared 'in the wilderness' preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

There may be times when we find ourselves in a 'wilderness' in our faith journey and, perhaps, based on what might be going on in our lives, we may feel lost, or even deserted by God. Advent, starting at the beginning of a new liturgical year, is a great opportunity for us to embark on a fresh journey that will get us back on a straight path of true discipleship. To do so, we ask God today for the grace and inner strength to respond positively to the call of John the Baptist to the people for repentance and conversion in heart and mind. We pray that our renewal will draw, not just ourselves, but others, out of the wilderness on to the path that leads to the everlasting Light of Christ.

SUNDAY MASSES THIS WEEKEND:

Vigil, Saturday, 6.00pm – live-streamed from St Patrick's, Castlederg
Sunday Morning, 11.00am – live-streamed from St Patrick's, Aghyaran

WEEKDAY MASSES THIS WEEK:

Vigil Mass for *Feast of the Immaculate Conception*:

Monday, 7.30pm, live-streamed from St Patrick's, Castlederg

Morning Mass for the Feast day:

Tuesday, 10.00am, live-streamed from St Patrick's, Aghyaran

Thursday, 10.00am live-streamed from Aghyaran, 10.00am livestreamed from Castlederg

Live-streaming: www.castledergparish.com or www.parishofaghyaranparish.com

Our churches will be open for private prayer this week, other than when Mass is being celebrated. Please feel free to come and pray or to light a candle. You are asked to use the hand sanitiser provided, when entering and leaving the church, and to wear a face covering if possible when in the church.

MASSES NEXT WEEKEND (12 / 13 DECEMBER)

It is very much hoped that our Churches will be open for public Mass again from next Sunday onwards. If this is the case, and we pray that it will, then the Masses will revert to the usual times and attendance will be as follows:

ST PATRICK'S, CASTLEDERG: Saturday 12 December: Vigil Mass 6.00pm, Sunday 13 December: 11.00am

PLEASE NOTE: *On a trial basis, attendance will be open to all the areas.* Parishioners should phone or email the Parochial House, between 11am & 2pm on Thursday or Friday, to book a place. Places will be filled on a first come, first served basis. If you are emailing, it is important that you include the number of people that hope to attend and, remember, a 'space' can hold up to three people.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, DRUMNABEY: Sunday 13 December – 12.30pm: Listymore Park, Oakland, Crewe, Garvetagh & Lisleen, Coolcreaghy

ST MARY'S, DREGISH: Sunday 13 December – 9.00am: Dunteague, Glassmullagh, Lisnacraight

CHRISTMAS MASSES

I am currently making provisional arrangements for Christmas Masses in the parish, bearing in mind, of course, that things can change very quickly, as you well know, and the best laid plans could fall apart at the last minute. However, I am proposing to have a Vigil and Morning Mass in both Dregish and Drumnabey. Attendance at these Masses will be by booking only, and it is my intention that, at our Masses in Dregish and Drumnabey next weekend and the following weekend, one of our stewards will take bookings and you will have an opportunity to book a slot for one of the Christmas Masses. Booking arrangements for Masses in Castlederg will be published next weekend.

As always, it is most important that people who are vulnerable or unwell, or anyone with any symptoms that might suggest Covid-19 infection, do not attend Mass. Also, those attending must wear a face mask when entering and leaving church and while in church. Attendance is restricted to parishioners, which includes the small number from neighbouring parishes who are regulars in our church. Everyone's safety and health is of paramount importance.

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection, which amounted to £1,115. Collection envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL collection: This year, in support the invaluable work done in our community by SVP, we have introduced an envelope to the parish envelope boxes to replace the annual 'church gate' collection. The envelope is in your envelope box for today, 6 December. You are asked to be as generous as you can towards this collection. Your financial support, particularly at this time of year, is very much appreciated.

THANK YOU to the SVP members in our parish for their ongoing good work in helping people in our community who are in need.

The helpline number for SVP locally is 028 7138 4488.

ADVENT BOOKLET – FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY PRAYER IN YOUR HOME: As you prepare for Christmas at home, I invite all our parishioners to pick up a free copy of the *Advent Booklet* – from the churches, or from Dinny McCrory's shop. This booklet contains many ideas for personal and family prayer during this holy season of Advent.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION – TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER: On this Feast Day (normally a Holy Day of Obligation), we celebrate the Conception of Mary who was, from the first instance of Her existence in the womb of Her mother Anne, by a singular grace, privilege and gift from God, preserved from all stain of original sin. This was to prepare Her to be Mother of Jesus, so that the Son of God would come into the world in an immaculate vessel. *Please note (overleaf) the Mass schedule for the Feast Day, which will be livestreamed.*

SYMBOLISM OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath draws us to focus on the advent (coming) of the Light of Christ into the world.

- ♦ **The wreath is made of evergreens, signifying everlasting life.**
- ♦ **The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolises the eternity of God, unending love, the immortality of the soul, and the promise of everlasting life in Christ.**
 - ♦ **Cones and berries can be used to decorate the wreath, and are symbolic of the fruits of salvation.**
 - ♦ **The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent:
(1. Hope, 2. Peace, 3. Joy and 4. Love).**
They are lit gradually - one each week - drawing us out of darkness into light.
This symbolises not only First Coming of Christ into the world, but His Second Coming at the end of history.
 - ♦ **Three candles are purple, the penitential colour used in Advent (and Lent).
One candle is rose; it is lit on the third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, (Gaudete meaning Rejoice), symbolising our joyful expectation of the imminent coming of the Light of Christ.**
 - ♦ **The white candle in the middle represents Christ, and is lit on Christmas Day.**

TODAY, 6 DECEMBER, IS THE FEAST DAY OF ST NICHOLAS, PATRON SAINT OF CHILDREN

*Loving God, we pray through the intercession of St Nicholas
that You will guide and protect our children. Keep them safe from all harm.
Help them grow to become loving disciples of Jesus in Your sight.
Give them strength to always mature into deeper faith I You,
and to keep alive joy in Your creation.
We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

St Nicholas, pray for us.

We are grateful to the children of St Patrick's PS for helping us all in our Advent journey with their lovely prayers, drawings and thoughts for Advent, which are being posted each day on our parish Facebook Page. In turn, we pray, through the intercession of St Nicholas, that God will bless all the children and keep them safe and free from harm.

NEXT SUNDAY, the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday), the Gospel we will listen to is John 1:6-8, 19-28: *John the Baptist points to the Light of Christ.* You can access the Readings on catholicbishops.ie/readings

I continue to be available during this week and, although I am not permitted to make routine house visits, I will be glad to visit the sick in case of emergency. In these circumstances, I will take every precaution to keep you and your family safe.