

PARISH OF ARDSTRAW WEST AND CASTLEDERG

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

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SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER 2020

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

GOSPEL: JOHN 1: 6-8, 19-28 - JOHN THE BAPTIST, A WITNESS TO SPEAK FOR THE LIGHT

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as *Gaudete Sunday*, *Gaudete* meaning *Rejoice!* Today we rejoice in the imminent celebration of the birth of the Christ Child, our Redeemer. We light the rose-coloured candle on our Advent wreath today, to symbolise our hope and joyful expectation. (*Gaudete Sunday* in Advent parallels *Laetare Sunday* in Lent). John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, is again the focus of today's Gospel passage. Sometimes described as the 'bridge' between the Old Testament and the New Testament, John's mission was to point us towards the coming of Christ our Light. John the Baptist was a faithful and loyal witness, unwavering in his faith in the coming Messiah. We are the witnesses of our time. We pray today that our faith will reflect that of John the Baptist and that, in the darkness of our lives, we will see the light of Christ in others and, through the joy of faith, be a beacon of hope to others, especially in their dark and uncertain times.

SUNDAY MASSES

Vigil, Saturday, 6.00pm

Sunday Morning, 11.00am, on the second and fourth Sundays of the month (13 & 27 December)

WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday, 7.30pm, Friday, 10.00am

All our Masses in Castlederg are live-streamed on our parish webcam: www.castledergparish.com

PLEASE NOTE: *On a trial basis, attendance at our Masses in Castlederg is 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. **Please note that the arrangements for booking Mass on the weekend after Christmas will be different and will be announced next weekend.**

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, DRUMNABEY: Sunday 20 December – 12.30pm: Castlebane, Drumnabey Road, Scarvagherin, Goland, Drumnabey Park, Gamble Park.

ST MARY'S, DREGISH: Sunday 20 December – 9.00am: Drumlegagh, Baronscourt, Letterbin, Envagh, Leglands, Tullymuck.

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection, which amounted to £1,885. Thank you also to all who contribute by Standing Order / online. In November, these amounted to £1,537. Appreciation also for your contributions to the Cemetery Sunday collection, which amounted to £1,000. Collection envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House.

THE NET: The December edition of The Net is now available online, on www.derrydiocese.org. As always, it features a wide variety of news, interesting and inspiring interviews, articles and photos from parishes across the diocese. You are invited to read The Net, on the diocesan website, at your convenience.

BAMBINELLI SUNDAY, BLESSING OF THE CHRIST CHILD

Gaudete Sunday has, for many years, been the day when the children of Rome bring the figurines of Baby Jesus from their family cribs to St Peter's Square to be blessed by the Pope during the Angelus. The Day, instituted by St Pope John Paul II during his Papacy, is affectionately known as 'Bambinelli Sunday'. Parishes around the world now join in the celebration, encouraging young children to make the connection between the Nativity set at home and the local church where they worship each weekend. This year, unfortunately, with things being as they are, we are unable to celebrate Bambinelli Sunday in the normal way. In your own home, therefore, a family member is invited to sprinkle Holy Water on the Baby Jesus figurine and on the other family members, and then say this prayer together as a family:

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent us your only Son, Jesus,
born of the Virgin Mary, to save us and lead us back to you. We pray that, with your blessing,
this image of Jesus might be a sign of your presence and love in our homes.

Open our hearts, that we might receive Jesus in joy, do always what he asks of us,
and see him in those who need our love. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your beloved Son,
who came to give peace to the world. You, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

You are invited to then wrap the Baby Jesus figurine in Christmas wrapping and place Him under your Christmas tree, to be opened on Christmas morning (by the youngest member of the family if there are children in the house), as the first gift of Christmas, and place the Baby Jesus in your crib with the rest of the Holy Family.

CHRISTMAS MASS ANNOUNCEMENT

After the challenges of Lent and Easter I am very glad that we are able to have a congregation present at Mass this Christmas. As always, however, the safety and health of everyone continues to be paramount, and we must also work within the current guidelines from Public Health. In order to reduce the risk of spreading infection, we must adhere to the capacity limits of our individual churches.

As part of our risk assessment before reopening in July, we identified the number of 'spaces' in each Church. **A 'space' can accommodate up to three people from the same household or 'bubble'** so, for example, a family of five would require two spaces (i.e. a full pew in the church). Our capacity limits are as follows:

St Patrick's, Castlederg 52 spaces; St Francis of Assisi, Drumnabey 35 spaces; St Mary's Dregish 27 spaces.

The Christmas Mass schedule will be as follows:

CASTLEDERG	DRUMNABEY	DREGISH
C H R I S T M A S E V E		
7.30pm and 9.00pm	6.00pm	5.00pm
C H R I S T M A S D A Y		
9.00am and 11.30am	9.00am	10.00am

Stewards will take bookings for Christmas Mass at the Masses in each of our churches this weekend and next weekend. One ticket will be allocated to each available 'space' (*remembering that a space holds up to three people*). You should only book a space in the church you usually attend. Please note that you cannot make a booking on behalf of another family or group and, if you have booked and realised you cannot attend, you should return your ticket to the Parish Office. This is important, both to ensure the fair allocation of spaces and to enable contact tracing information to be recorded accurately.

In addition to the bookings which will be taken at Masses, you may also email or telephone the Parochial House to request a space, on Monday or Tuesday 14/15 or 21/22 December, between 11am and 6pm. Email: castledergparish@derrydiocese.org, Tel 028 8167 1393. If emailing, you should indicate the church you attend and the Mass time that you prefer. However, it is advisable to make more than one choice of Mass time in case your first choice is unavailable. You should not come to the church unless you have a booked a space as, regrettably, we can only accommodate those who are on the contact tracing list. As always, the Masses from Castlederg will be live-streamed for the benefit of parishioners who are vulnerable, symptomatic or unable to book a space at Mass.

At the end of each of our Masses, the churches will be thoroughly sanitised and ventilated. I deeply regret deeply having to place these limits on our celebration, but I hope you will appreciate that the health and safety of parishioners is our guiding principle.

Christmas Masses will be shorter than normal this year, since we have to minimise the amount of time people spend in the church. I encourage you, however, to return to the church, if you can, at a quieter time over the Christmas Season to pray at the Crib. A booklet with prayer resources suitable for the Christmas Season (similar to that provided for November and Advent), entitled *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, will also be available at Christmas for you to pick up in our churches, to facilitate prayer, scripture and reflection in your home, with family, or during quiet time in the church.

ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICE: Since it is not possible for us to provide individual confession in preparation for Christmas, I invite you to take part in an Advent Penitential Service. This will be live-streamed from St Patrick's, Castlederg, next Monday, 21 December, at 7.00pm (before 7.30pm Mass).

The "O" Antiphons of Advent

In the Octave leading into the celebration of the Birth of our Lord, the "O" Antiphons shape the Church's liturgy (17-23 December). The "O" Antiphons are seven short verses, of ancient origin, said/sung on each of these days during Evening Prayer of the Church. They are also echoed in the verses of the Gospel Acclamation on these dates. In each Antiphon, Jesus is invoked by a different title, there is a reference to one of the Old Testament prophecies (taken mainly from the prophet Isaiah) and there is a plea for the Messiah to come. The seven "O's" are:

**O Wisdom ♦ O Adonai (Lord) ♦ O Root of Jesse ♦ O Key of David
O Rising Dawn ♦ O King ♦ O Emmanuel**

The "O" Antiphons are the inspiration for the hymn, '*O come, O come, Emmanuel*,' with which most of us are familiar. When we listen to the verses of the hymn, we will hear that each verse parallels one of the Antiphons.

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.

NEXT SUNDAY, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Gospel we will listen to is St Luke 1:26-38: *Mary, the Ark of God's Covenant*. You can access the Readings on catholicbishops.ie/readings

SVP helpline number: 028 7138 4488