

PARISH OF ARDSTRAW WEST AND CASTLEDERG

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

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SUNDAY 28 MARCH 2021 – PALM SUNDAY

'HOSANNA! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD'

On Palm Sunday, the Church recalls the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem to accomplish the **Paschal Mystery**. The Paschal Mystery includes the **sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension** of Jesus into glory and the sending of the **Holy Spirit** on the disciples to continue the work Jesus began. Although in our liturgy these events are spread over a period of seven weeks, they are an indivisible single accomplishment of Jesus for all who are baptised into the Holy Trinity. We pray that the sacred events of the Easter Triduum will be a blessed and meaningful time for all of us and for our parish.

RE-OPENING OF OUR CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

Having given much thought and consideration to the best approach to the re-opening of the churches in our parish and, with assistance, having carried out a Risk Assessment, I have decided that, in the best interests of everyone's safety, the church will remain closed during the Holy Week ceremonies – Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The ceremonies on these three days will be celebrated in St Patrick's, Castlederg, and you can participate via the parish webcam.

Mass will be celebrated in all three churches on Easter Sunday, at the usual times, with limited congregation. Please see below the details about attendance.

I am very grateful to our stewards, in all three churches, for their support and their willingness to take up duty again, helping us all to comply with the necessary precautions and to keep safe while in church. I am also very grateful to those who have cleaned the churches in advance of opening and to those who are willing to make themselves available for cleaning after Masses. Thank you also to our sacristans for their assistance. It is only with the co-operation of one and all that we can keep our churches safe.

SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SUNDAY

MONDAY:

7.00pm: Penitential Service, followed by Mass at 7.30pm

THURSDAY:

Mass of the Lord's Supper: 7.30pm

FRIDAY:

The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 3.00pm. Stations of the Cross: 7.30pm
Please remember: Good Friday is a day of Fast and Abstinence

SATURDAY:

Easter Vigil: 8.00pm

The above ceremonies can be watched via the parish webcam, www.castledergparish.com

EASTER SUNDAY MASSES:

9.00am: Mass in St Mary's, Dregish:

Open to the Drumlegagh, Baronscourt, Letterbin, Envagh, Leglands, Tullymuck areas

11.00am: Mass in St Patrick's, Castlederg:

*Attendance at the 11.00am Mass is by booking only: please ring the parish office **on Tuesday or Wednesday** between **11.00am and 2.00pm** (816 71393) or email at any time, castledergparish@derrydiocese.org*

12.30pm Mass in St Francis of Assisi, Drumnabey:

Open to the Castlebane, Drumnabey Road, Scarvagherin, Goland, Drumnabey Park, Gamble Park areas

**Please note: Masses in all three churches can be viewed via the parish webcam:
www.castledergparish.com**

Weekday Masses in Aghyaran: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10.00am

Masses and Ceremonies in Aghyaran are livestreamed on www.parishofaghhyaran.com

PENITENTIAL SERVICE: Please join with me tomorrow night, Monday (29 March), on our parish webcam, at 7.00pm, (before 7.30pm Mass in St Patrick's, Castledearg) for our Lenten Penitential Service, as part of our spiritual preparation for Easter. During this liturgy, you will have the opportunity to pray an Act of Perfect Contrition. While we are not in a position to facilitate the Sacrament of Confession at this time, if anyone feels they would like to receive the Sacrament, you can do so by individual prior arrangement with me. I will do my best to facilitate you.

ST MARY'S, DREGISH, AND ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, DRUMNABEY: I am pleased to inform you that we have arranged through Church Services TV, the provider for the webcam in St Patrick's, Castledearg, for a facility to live-stream liturgies from the churches in Dregish and Drumnabey. This means that our Sunday Masses in both churches can now be viewed on the parish webcam: visit <http://www.castledeargparish.com/webcam.html> and click the 'mobile' button (only during Mass time). The facility should be particularly helpful to the areas whose turn it is not to attend the church and those who are housebound.



SACRAMENTS OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION 2021: In a statement to the priests of the diocese this week, Bishop McKeown announced the deferment of First Holy Communion this year until September and indicated that **provisional** arrangements for Confirmation in June could proceed. Prior to the bishop's announcement, I had in fact just arranged sacramental dates for the children of St Patrick's PS.

In his statement, the bishop stated, *"I have no doubt that parishes, with their extensive COVID safety teams, stewards and sanitising policies and procedures are safe places for the celebration of First Communion and Confirmation. However, I am concerned about the parties and other socialising which, although completely disconnected from the celebration of the sacraments and the environs of the church, can and often do occur. It must also be recognised that such parties and socialising are a matter for the civil authorities and, indeed, are currently banned under civil COVID regulations; it is for the civil authorities to enforce civil laws. Having said that, I think that, as church, we should go the extra step to assist in protecting public health, by avoiding those situations which might with some regularity lead people to organise parties. Therefore, I have taken the difficult decision, after some consultation, that the celebrations of First Holy Communion are to be deferred until September 2021. I do not take this decision lightly, but I am conscious that we must do everything we can to ensure that life is protected in the midst of this pandemic, noting that there has been some upturn in case numbers locally in recent days. As regards the celebration of Confirmation, it is acceptable for parishes to make provisional arrangements for these in the month of June. However, I will review the situation in the middle of May."*

The date arranged with St Patrick's PS for Confirmation in our parish is Sunday 6 June, with two separate ceremonies. While we will keep this date in mind, please note Bishop McKeown's intention to review the situation in mid-May.

In acknowledging the disappointment for many parents and children, I fully endorse the decision Bishop McKeown has taken at this time, in the interests of everyone, protecting public health and safety.

WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS: Please note that the number permitted to attend remains unchanged at 25.

BAPTISMS: Only parents and godparents may attend (and siblings of the child being baptised).

MASS OF CHRISM will be celebrated by Bishop McKeown in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, on Holy Thursday morning at 10.00am. During this Mass the holy Oils used for Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick and Ordination are blessed and the priests of the diocese renew their Ordination promises. The Chrism Mass is the only Mass celebrated in our diocese on Holy Thursday morning. You are invited to join via webcam: www.steugenescathedral.com/webcam

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection which amounted to £1,650. Envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House.

ENVELOPE BOXES for the coming year (starting Sunday 11 April) are currently being distributed. The boxes for Dregish can be picked up at the back of the church. The boxes for Castledearg & Drumnabey are being distributed to the houses. The envelope boxes are part of a small pack that includes a St Joseph Prayer Card and a palm cross for each household, blessed on Palm Sunday. This year, as you know, has been proclaimed by Pope Francis as Year of St Joseph, guardian and protector of families. If anyone would like an envelope box for the first time, please let me know this week.

TROCAIRE COLLECTION: The Trocaire Lenten Boxes are normally returned during Holy Week. With the church closed for the Holy Week ceremonies and limited church gatherings, some parishioners may not be in a position to return their Trocaire box to the church. In these circumstances, the following are suggestions as to how you might return your Trocaire box:

- Leave it through the letterbox of the Parochial House
- Online banking (directly to Trocaire). Bank details are: Sorting Code: 93.80.92, Account No: 8822 7020.
- Send a cheque by post to Trocaire at 50-52 King Street, Belfast, BT1 6AD.
- There is a freephone number, 0800 912 1200, through which you can donate
- Donate online on the Trocaire website

For those who are returning their Trocaire box to the church or Parochial House, you are asked to include notes or cheques only, in so far as possible, for ease of counting in general and, in particular, to reduce the level of risk for the counters. Please note: cheques should be payable to Trocaire (not the parish). Thank you for your co-operation.

DIVINE MERCY NOVENA: Many people like to pray the Divine Mercy Novena for the nine days from Good Friday (2 April) until the first Saturday of Easter (10 April), leading into Divine Mercy Sunday (11 April). For those who would like to join in the Novena but do not have a copy of it, you can access it on: <https://divinemercury.life/the-divine-mercy-novena/>