

When I was growing up in Belfast, there was a rite of passage in our family that the children went through once we were around the age of 8. At that point, we were deemed old enough and strong enough to go for a long walk with our Granda, Jimmy Webb. I remember my first big walk with him – from our house on the Glen Road to our cousins on the Shaw's Road. It was a fair dander, as we say in these parts; probably a few miles round trip. When I came home, I was so proud to have made it. I remember my Granda was also very pleased and smiled with pride as he told my parents how well I had walked the path.

Walking with Granda was to become a Sunday afternoon tradition as I grew from childhood into adolescence. We would visit relatives and friends. Usually, we would go to the cemetery on the way, to visit his wife, my granny, who had died many years before when they were both still young.

Looking back, I can see that this was such a privileged time. Having those hours with him listening to the stories of life in old Belfast and learning the old songs was a gift to me, that has borne fruit in my life. I can trace my love of walking, singing and telling stories right back to him. Although as I write this, I can hear my father's voice in my head reminding me that he wrote plays when he was a young man and that I should also give him some credit!

I remember something else about these walks with my grandfather. It is a body sensation as much as a memory. I remember that as we walked together, he would grip my shoulder firmly. When we came to a turn or to stop at a road crossing, his grip would tighten and guide me in the right direction. This grip was a constant feature of our walks together. I realise now how reassuring I had found this touch. It was a physical representation of a much deeper connection we shared. It was indicative of his love for me. An outward sign of his desire to protect and guide me. That one touch was many things. While I remember finding it reassuring at the time, it's only now as a middle-aged man that I can fully appreciate its importance. And not only do I

remember it today, but I also miss it.

These formative experiences of being loved and guided by my grandfather were also accompanied by his telling me of his work with the local Catholic Young Men's Society and Confraternity. In the way he lived his life, he showed me the image of the God he knew – one who walks the path with us, hand on our shoulder, guiding and protecting us.

WHAT GOD?

Over the years, I've had many different images of God. From the old, bearded man on a throne of my childhood years to the 'sin counter God' keeping watch on the door of heaven, making sure only a select few got in, that I held as true in my teenage years and beyond. I've had other images of God, too (What is your image of God? The image of God you have is the image of God you give to the world. I often think that those who spew hate and intolerance in the name of religion must have a very angry, punitive image of God). I have settled on the image of God that my Granda gave me all those years ago – the God of guidance and protection; the God of love.

I can look back over the landscape of my life and see examples of where I felt the gentle but firm hand of God guiding me. Many times I responded and went with the guidance of God. There have been other times I ignored that guiding hand and walked my own path. I can see that when I did, things didn't turn out so well.

Grandparents are so influential in shaping the new generation. By spending time with their grandchildren, sharing their wisdom and faith, they influence them in ways they may not themselves appreciate. Let us pray in thanksgiving for grandparents and the power they have to pass on an image of a God who loves, guides and protects everyone, young and old. Pray also that those who see God as angry or unloving, may they come to know the feel of a firm, loving hand on their shoulder; the hand of God, gently guiding them. ■

Stu()space

SERIES: GOD IN THE EVERYDAY

Season colour: GREEN

In this new series, **Jim Deeds** finds evidence of the divine in the ordinary and extraordinary events of every day.



LESSONS ON GOD FROM MY GRANDA

In the way he lived his life, my grandfather showed me the image of the God he knew – a God who walks with us, hand firmly on our shoulder, guiding and protecting us.



Today's readings

Is 5:4-7
Jm 2:1-5
Mt 7:31-37

GOD'S WORD TODAY

The man in the Gospel story must be lonely and isolated. He cannot hear and he cannot speak. For him communication is extremely limited. He is unable to communicate his own thoughts and feelings freely and with ease. By his words and touch, Jesus gifts him with all he needs for meaningful human communication. In some ways this man represents all Christian believers. We need Jesus to open our ears to God's life-giving Word, to really hear it and let it sink into our hearts so that it will transform our lives. We also need Jesus to gift us with courageous speech to proclaim our faith without fear or embarrassment.

Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – 5th September 2021

God's Word this month (taken from Reality magazine)

A transforming touch. Jesus has left the holy land of Israel and is travelling in Gentile territory. He has returned from Tyre via Sidon, which were two cities in Phoenicia (now part of modern Lebanon), and travels through non-Jewish territory known as the Decapolis. According to the Synoptic evangelists, the Decapolis was one of the few Gentile regions in which Jesus travelled and ministered.

It is on this trip through the Decapolis that he heals the man who has both a hearing and speech impediment. Mark gives the details about Jesus' travels in order to remind his readers (and us) that the man who is healed is a Gentile, as are those who bring him to Jesus. Jesus takes the man aside and performs a series of physical actions. He puts his fingers in the man's ears. He touches the man's tongue with his own spittle. Finally, speaking in Aramaic, he gives the command ephphata! ("be opened!").

To those witnessing Jesus' actions, it must seem like some kind of magic spell. But Jesus is no magician. Rather, he summons up God's power and uses his own authority to command the healing of the hearing and speech impediment.

The result of Jesus' actions is immediate. The man can speak clearly. The miracle is done in private and Jesus asks those who brought the man to him to keep it so. This again highlights Jesus' caution about over-enthusiastic responses to his miracles that miss the point of his mission.

If Jesus hopes they will listen to him, it is in vain. They are "absolutely overwhelmed" by the miracle and tell the story everywhere and acclaim that "he has done all things well; he made the deaf hear and the dumb speak." This text speaks of a time when Israel's Messiah would bring healing and freedom for God's people. Mark is proclaiming clearly that the time of the Messiah has arrived with Jesus who will offer healing and freedom not just to the Jewish people, but to Gentiles as well.

Collections

Parish	
Dromara	£370
Drumgooland	£1045

Congratulations to Davy McKay, Dree Hill and Mary McAleenan, old Bog Road, who have celebrated their 90th Birthdays recently.

We welcome into Dromara Parish Amber and Autumn Gallagher and into Drumgooland Parish Ronan McAleenan and Jack Smyth

Anniversary Masses

Dechomet

Sat 4th Mary Rooney (Dechomet)

Leitrim

Sat 4th Eugene O'Hare and Richard Duggan
John O'Hare, Dennis Mallon and Annie Grant

Sat 11th Eddie McAleenan
Patsy Malone

Dromara

Sun 5th Anne Mullan
Dan Hughes (Finnis) and Deceased Family Members

Fri 10th James MvAteer (MM)
Patrick McGrillen

Sun 12th Susan Darby, Joe McCann and Deceased Family Members

Leitrim Cleaners Fri 10th – Geraldine's Team

Drumgooland St Vincent de Paul

Are you experiencing difficulties and need a helping hand?

Contact us in confidence on 075 8644 7427

Weekend masses

Sat	6:00pm Dechomet
	7:30pm Leitrim
Sun	9:00am Gargory
	11:00am Dromara

Weekday masses

Mon	9:00am Leitrim
	7:30pm Dechomet
Tues	9:00am Dromara
Wed	7:30pm Leitrim
Fri	7:30pm Dromara

Gift Aid

Thank you to all the people who returned the Gift Aid updates or who signed Gift Aid forms for the first time. The generosity of you, the parishioners, has allowed the parishes to reclaim the tax paid on the donations made to the parishes. This year the claim submitted has been: Dromara £7,401; Drumgooland £15,947

Congratulations to all our young people who have completed their Pope John Paul II Award. I encourage all who registered for the Award in Sept 2019 to complete their Record Card and Reflection and forward to the Youth Director at: 39-41 The Mall, Newry, BT34 1AT or email: youthdirector@dromorediocese.org no later than Mon 6th Sept.

John Paul II Awards

There will be mass in St Michael's Church, Finnis on Sat 18th Sept at 11am to present this year's awards to parishioners of Dromara and Drumgooland

