

Christmas Message

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

THE WORD

Year A • 25 December 2022 • Colour: White • Psalter Week 1



For any of us to lose our hearing is a tragedy. It cuts us off from much of life. But imagine being a supremely gifted composer, a musical maestro – and losing the one faculty you need most of all for your work.

It's akin to a Formula 1 driver losing his eyesight or a brain surgeon whose hands begin to shake. Such was the catastrophe that befell the great German composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

Beethoven's hearing deteriorated in his 20s while still honing his craft. He had to abandon his promising career as a concert pianist. Over the years, he tried every manner of medical intervention, to no avail. As a silent world slowly enfolded him, he grew increasingly frustrated, irritable, and withdrawn. Eventually, stone deaf, he had to rely on what he called his 'mind's ear' when composing. Yet, despite this cruel twist of fate, this terrible life sentence, Beethoven was able to conjure music of exquisite beauty, transcendent harmonies that soared. He crafted compositions of unprecedented complexity and grandeur, sublime, immortal.

Though deaf, music remained for him a labour of joy. Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, his last symphony, first performed in 1824, ends with the *Ode to Joy*, a triumphant celebration of sisterhood and brotherhood that has become an anthem of European unity. It's a majestic choral masterpiece that does what it says on the tin – a hymn to joy unconfined, a fusion of heaven and earth. Imagine being able to write something so otherworldly when you're profoundly deaf.

For Christians, Christmas is the great season of our joy. We mark the birth 2,000 years ago of Jesus, *Emmanuel*, God with us, who, in his life, his message, his dying and rising, made our salvation possible. His birth is joy to the world, as the angels sing, joy unconfined. We celebrate God's labour of love that gave birth to joy.

Joy is an experience our battered world badly needs after the turbulent year we have endured.

There are many for whom this is the most painful time of the year – a time of sadness, loneliness, grief, loss.

We cry out for respite from drudgery and war, price rises and pandemics. Joy is something we need to experience and celebrate, and Christmas is the season of joy.

Pope Francis loves the word 'joy'. It's sprinkled throughout his preaching and writing. It's in the titles of his letters and encyclicals – the joy of the Gospel, the joy of love, rejoice and be glad. It's no surprise he loves that word because joy is the hallmark of our Christian faith.

Joy is the essence of this feast. The joy in knowing God is with us; the joy in knowing God has not forgotten us; the joy of families united, the joy of love shared. Christmas is an ode to joy. ■

REFLECT

So remember today what brings our Christmas joy. Jesus' humble birth has prepared a way for us to draw near to him. In our brokenness, our poverty, our weakness, our need, God comes to us. God's presence is healing, life-giving and renewing. We shout for joy, for we have been saved.

Feel that joy today. Let it seep into every molecule of your being. Let it envelop you. Invite it in, especially if you have lacked its fullness this year. Inhale it. Nurture it. Treasure it.

Share that joy. Gift it. It's something precious, priceless. Reach out to those you know who have found this year difficult, those who find this time of year difficult, those who are laid low by illness, financial worries, or separation or loss. By your words and actions, lift them. Carry them. Carry each other.

These festive days will pass. Post-Christmas blues will sweep in. We're all susceptible to them. But when normality returns, choose to continue to take refuge in God and rejoice. Because of Jesus' arrival 2,000 years ago, we can now experience the joy of God's presence forever. Joy unconfined.

A joy of which Beethoven's immortal music is but a tiny little foretaste. ■

PRAY

Ask the Lord to fill you with joy at his coming.

LEARN

Christmas tells us that God hasn't forgotten us. God has come among us, as one like us, to show us the way, to show us how to live, to offer us hope.

Love is the best Christmas present we could give or hope to receive.

DO

Jesus is *Emmanuel*, 'God-with-us'. Make a conscious effort to be aware of God's presence in our world today and every day.

SAY

"O come, O come, Emmanuel."

Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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25th December 2022

Nativity of The Lord

Weekend masses

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

Weekday masses

No masses 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th

Fri 30th 7:30pm Dromara
Mon 2nd 9:00am Leitrim 7:30pm Dechomet
Tue 3rd 9:00am Dromara
Wed 4th 7:30pm Leitrim

Feast of Epiphany

Thurs 5th 7:30pm Leitrim
Fri 6th 7:30pm Dromara

The sick and housebound will be attended in the week beginning 2nd January

There will not be a bulletin next weekend

I will be away 7th to 14th Jan

Collections	Dromara	Drumgooland
Parish	£428	£755
Finnis Hall	Whist £500, Hire £50	

Dromara Parish Council Meeting Mon 16th Jan 8pm

Recently deceased

John Leonard, Lairds Road, Drumadonald

Anniversaries

Dechomet

Sat 24th Daniel, Mary Rose and Martin
Matheson and Jack Murphy
John Greeran

Leitrim

Sat 24th Kathleen and Annie Cunningham
Mary Burns
Sat 31st Patricia O'Prey
Winnie McCrickard
Sinead Ward

Wed 4th Edward H and Rosaleen Ward
Sat 7th Patrick and Aidan McAnulty
Colette McMullan

Dromara

Sat 24th Mary Rice (Dree)
Fri 30th Christopher O'Hare

Fri 6th Dariush Mehrdash
Sun 8th Winnie and Jimmy McEvoy

Gargory

Sun 1st Archdeacon Liam Boyle
Peter and Una Gribben
Francis Cunningham

Dear Parishioners,

I received a letter from a person who stopped in one of our churches recently. He wrote in appreciation 'I noticed the door of the chapel open and for some reason I parked the car and entered, I was not catholic. I felt such peace and comfort in this beautiful building and observed the stain glassed windows... somehow I started to feel better and this incredible feeling of love, support and encouragement to live well. I left the chapel with a sense of peace... I believe that you all live in a very spiritual and incredibly peaceful and tranquil part of the world'.

How often have I rushed into any of the churches and rushed out, not noticing the beauty contained, the presence of people, the presence of God? How seldom do I slow down in order to become more aware of the peace and beauty of this world in which I am graced to live? This can be a time of great busyness for people, there can be so many expectations and demands that the idea of tranquility can be so alien. There is a deep need for peace, it may be an empty church, the top of a hill, a locked bathroom door, or a smile from a passerby, an honest 'how are you?'

To all who have invited me to find peace, to belong here, I am deeply grateful. It is my humble prayer that we discover moments of peace and these moments increase in number and depth.

This year there were 47 baptisms (15 Dromara, 32 Drumgooland), 15 marriages celebrated within the parishes and, sadly, 127 funerals. The journey of grief is a long one, many of you have known that pain.

Thank you to everyone who has enriched our parishes over the past year. To all of you for the financial support to the parishes and myself, a debt is owed. Please know the door is open to you and may God know that the door to our hearts are open to Him.

Fr Peter

Thanks We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped set up and serve tea/coffee, craft stall vendors, sell tickets and everyone who attended and donated traybakes and prizes to our recent Festive Coffee Morning and raffle in Finnis Hall on Sun 27th Nov. A fantastic £955 has been donated to Action Cancer and £870 raised for Dromara and Drumgooland Lourdes Fund. Many thanks from Patricia and Brian McKay and Dromara and Drumgooland Lourdes Committee we truly appreciate your kindness to these two charities this Christmas.