

Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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Fourth Sunday of Advent 24th December 2023

Christmas Masses

23rd & Sun 24th usual weekend masses

Christmas Eve

7pm Dechomet 7pm Gargory

8:15pm Leitrim 9:30pm Dromara

Christmas Day

9am Gargory 10am Leitrim

11am Dromara

Everyone is Welcome

There will be no weekday mass on 26th, 27th, 28th

Mass Fri 29th 7:30pm Dromara

30th & 31st usual weekend masses

Mass for New Year's Day

10am Leitrim & 11am Dromara

Tue 2nd 9am Dromara

Wed 3rd 7:30pm Leitrim

Feast of Epiphany (6th Jan)

Fri 5th 7:30pm Dromara

St 6th 10am Gargory

Masses as normal Sat evening & Sun morning

I will be away on holiday

Sat 6th Jan (afternoon) until Sat 13th Jan

There will be no Bulletin 31st Dec

ANNIVERSARIES

GARGORY

Sun 24th 9am John Gribben

Sun 31st Archdeacon Liam Boyle

Sun 7th Peter & Una Gribben

DECHOMET

Sun 24th 7pm John Greeran

Daniel, Mary Rose & Martin

Matheson & Jack Murphy

LEITRIM

Sat 23rd Brendan Cunningham

Sun 24th 8:15pm Kathleen & Annie Cunningham

Mary Burns

Mon 25th Barney & Loretta Owens

Sat 30th Patricia O'Prey

Winnie McCrickard

Wed 3rd Davy McAnulty

Sat 6th Bridie Madine

Edward & Rosaleen Ward

DROMARA

Sun 24th 9am Mary Rice (*Dree*)

Frank McKay (*Dree*)

Fri 29th Rosemary Kelly

Sun 31st Dariush Mehrtash

Terry, Betty & Rita Lawlor

Sun 7th Jimmy & Winnie McEvoy

Dear Parishioner,

When I reflect on 2023, the sense that there were no closures, or fear of closures, came to mind. It had dominated the previous years, but it appears as if we are learning to live with Covid, which still impacts on peoples lives. The sign of peace was restored for a period of time but there has been so many colds and flues spreading recently I have chosen not to use it during the winter. The churches are open for mass and private prayer, all are welcome. The invite to come, to belong, to pray, is there for all of us.

This year there have been a few capital projects undertaken. The new cemetery at Dromara is nearly complete. The church railings in Leitrim were painted and lights erected in the cemetery. The railings at Gargory will be painted next year and extra car parking created. Thank you for your patience, to all who have helped these projects come about and of course to all of you who contribute regularly and generously to the collections. Your generosity to the priest's collection and to the upkeep of the parish is greatly appreciated, thankfully both parishes have money in the bank.

On a personal note, I qualified for free travel this year. The reality is that I have spent a quarter of my life living in these parishes. I was asked why I did not have a celebration? I know that you would have celebrated it and would have given me gifts, the gift of your support, your trust and your prayer is an extraordinary gift, and it is the one that is most precious to me. Thank you for your goodness.

In 2023, 46 children were baptised (15 Dromara & 31 Drumgooland). There were five marriages celebrated in the parishes. Sadly, there were 22 funerals, some of whom were former parishioners. The journey of grief can often be painful and lonely. There may be a particular focus at Christmas, but it is a journey that is continual.

I do pray that you will know the light of Christ over these days and his closeness to you in the year ahead.

Fr Peter

Congratulations to Lorna Malone and William McCartan who were married recently

We welcome into Drumgooland Parish Erin Maeve Brennan, Rowen Isla Stewart and Shéa Colm O'Higgins

Sunday Message

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year B • 24 December 2023 • Colour: Violet • Psalter Week 4

TO SAY "YES"

LUKE 1:26-38



Today, with Christmas almost upon us, the liturgy focuses on Mary.

Christians have honoured Mary from the Church's earliest days. So many feasts have been established in her honour, so many churches named for her, so many religious congregations called after her. We have given Mary many titles - Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Madonna, Queen of Heaven, Mother of Perpetual Help, Immaculate Conception - the list goes on - but there are other words to describe her too - teenage mother, believer, seeker, disciple, refugee, emigrant, visionary. Mary was no passive partner in God's plan. She had agency and she had grit, as much as it was possible for a young woman to have in her day.

Mary teaches us three lessons as we approach the nativity.

The first is about faith. Mary was human. She had doubts, she had questions. Her 'yes' was not an automatic, pre-programmed response, as today's Gospel tells us. She hesitated. She was confused. Later, as a mother, she worried about Jesus, what he was up to, the trouble he was getting himself into. She was on a constant learning curve, growing in her understanding of God's plan for her and for humanity, growing to be a steadfast disciple, growing in faith all the way to the foot of the cross. That's why she is our model of faith, first among the saints.

Like Mary, our faith is a work in progress. We have our doubts, disappointments and struggles. God's ways are not always clear to us. But that's okay because, like Mary, we are only human after all. As with Mary, we trust in God despite everything and seek to deepen our faith all our days.

Mary was human, which means we mustn't attempt to deify her. There is a danger that we exalt her so much we strip her of her humanity, make her like a God. Of course, she was graced and blessed in a uniquely singular way, but still she was human, just like us. That's essential to remember because it acknowledges her role in salvation history and it makes her more accessible. She is one of us.

Second, Mary was a prophet, a visionary, a social justice advocate. We sing her Magnificat so often its words can lose their potency. Mary talks about turning the world upside down, inverting the established power structure, knocking the mighty from their thrones, raising up the lowly, filling the starving with good things, sending the rich away empty. The woman who makes this prayer is no shrinking violet. She describes a whole new way of living and relating, a vision of the kingdom of God. The religious and political leaders of her time wouldn't have liked what she said. Today's titans of Wall Street and of Silicon Valley wouldn't like it either. Some politicians would denounce her as a dangerous leftie while also making some disparaging remark about uppity women.

Like mother, like son. Mary's vision echoes Jesus's address at the beginning of his public ministry: "I have come to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, a year of God's favour." And like mother, like son, our option must also be for a whole new way of living and relating, one that anticipates the kingdom of God.

Third, Mary reminds us of our call to give birth to Jesus. More than 1,500 years ago, in 431AD, the Church gave Mary the title of Theotókos, a Greek word meaning "God-bearer." In the West, this title was translated into Latin as Mater Dei or "Mother of God." As mother of Jesus, who is the incarnate Word of God, Mary is God-bearer, mother of God. She bore Jesus in her womb, birthed him, brought him into the world, and so she is Theotókos.

That same commission has been given to us. Like Mary, we must be Theotókos, God-bearer, in our time and place. Like Mary, we must respond to God's invitation to each of us to conceive, carry and birth Jesus in our lives. Like her, we must say: "May it be done to me according to your word." In other words, that, by the love I show, the compassion I display, the forgiveness I offer, the vision I promote, I will give birth to Christ, make God visible, this Christmas and all my days. ■

REFLECT

In the angel's visit to Mary, we can almost hear Mary thinking. She's startled, even afraid. Then as Gabriel speaks, she's puzzled. As she listens, questions occur to her, and she's curious. When Elizabeth is mentioned, she's reassured: this is something she can check out for herself. Then she decides to co-operate. She doesn't simply give in — she makes up her own mind: she will serve the Lord. And she does.

So here is how the disciple is to respond to God's word: you listen, you reflect, you ask questions, you match the word of the Lord that you hear with your own experience of life. Then you make your decision and God is with you, too. ■

PRAY

Christmas, the great feast of God-with-us, is almost here. Pray for a deeper awareness of God with you every day.

LEARN

Mary is not only Jesus' mother, she is also his first and best disciple.

DO

Mary's discipleship began when she accepted God's plan. Yet this could only come about because of her previous willingness to trust God in the course of her life. Her discipleship is not one of conversion but of consistency. Look at your life. How consistent is your "Yes" to God?

SAY

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."