

THE STORY OF 'O HOLY NIGHT'

Pierre Cappeau (1808-1877), who wrote the words, could hardly be described as a devout churchgoer. He was better known for his anti-clerical opinions, which he did not keep to himself, but he also had a reputation as a capable writer of verse. When his parish priest asked for the words of a Christmas carol, he obliged. He turned to a friend, Adolphe Adam (1803-1856), who obliged with the music. He is best known for his ballet *Giselle*, but he was not much more pious than Cappeau.

It quickly became popular and spread from parish to parish. When the religious background of the poet and composer were discovered, some bishops deemed it unfit for use because of what they considered its poor musical taste and the 'total absence of the spirit of religion'.

The ordinary people, however, felt that it echoed their feelings about Christmas and could not care less about the background of the composer and poet.

It is said that towards midnight on Christmas Eve 1871, during the war between Germany and France, a French soldier jumped out of his muddy trench. Standing without a weapon, he opened his mouth and sang the familiar words, "It is midnight Christians, that solemn hour when the Man-God came among us" (the opening words in French). A German followed suit with the German carol. The guns were silent for the rest of the day. Whatever about the bishops, 'O Holy Night' was here to stay. The first known recording was made by the great Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso, in 1916.

THE MEANING OF THE CAROL

The carol has three verses and the chorus "Fall on your knees". The first verse is:

"O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
it is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
till he appeared, and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."

While the poet may have not been a devout believer, he catches the hope for a darkened world that this child's birth brings, that cuts through our tiredness and doubt.

The second verse brings us, like the magi, to the stable of Bethlehem:

"Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,
with glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.
So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
here come the wise men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger,
in all our trials born to be our friend."

It assures us that this child's love will not desert us. In the final verse we are encouraged first of all to adore in this child the King of Heaven:

"He knows our need, To our weakness no stranger!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!"

Christmas is also a call to share Christ's love:

"Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;
chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
and in his name all oppression shall cease."

GOD'S WORD TODAY

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12, 14-16
Rom 16:25-27
Lk 1:26-38

The Annunciation scene has been depicted by many of the greatest painters in history. They usually show the angel as breaking in unexpectedly and unannounced to deliver a message to a beautiful young lady. Mary is often depicted busy spinning or reading, as though this moment was an unexpected interruption to her ordinary everyday life as the daughter of a peasant family in the small town of Nazareth. She is betrothed to a man named Joseph who is probably as young as she is. No doubt, the two of them are looking forward to beginning married life as their courtship had come to the point where their families had formally agreed to their engagement and were beginning to draw up the marriage agreement. The Gospel highlights Mary's whole-hearted and generous agreement to the unexpected complication her life will now take. Her child will be heir to David's throne, the one promised in the prophecy that forms our first reading today.

20 December 2020 – 4th Sunday of Advent Year B

Psalter Week 4

Stu()space

SERIES: SING ONCE, PRAY TWICE

Season colour: PURPLE

Hymns are an important part of Catholic worship. We will look at some of our familiar hymns. Musical versions are available on YouTube.



It was first sung at Christmas 1847 in a small town in the south of France. It has been recorded by singers like Enrico Caruso, Daniel O'Donnell, Perry Como, Bing Crosby and Leontine Price. For many, it is a special moment in the Christmas Mass when, perhaps in the silence after Holy Communion, the familiar opening notes of the organ give way to the voice inviting the congregation to "fall on your knees, o hear the angel voices".

Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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4th Sunday in Advent – 20th December 2020

Masses beginning Sat 19th Dec

Sat 6:00pm Dechomet & 7:30pm Leitrim
Sun 9:00am Gargory & 11:00am Dromara
Mon 9:00am Leitrim & 7:30pm Dechomet
Tues 9:00am Dromara
Wed 7:30pm Leitrim

Normal masses Sat 26th and Sun 27th Dec.

There will be no mass Mon 28th to Thur 31st Dec.
New Year's Day: Gargory 10am Dromara 11am

Face coverings

Since Dec 11th the government has made the wearing of face covering essential in churches.

This applies to all gatherings including weddings, funerals and baptisms.

When present for private prayer please wear one

Anniversary Masses

Leitrim

Sat 19th Cecila Murphy ; James Murray and
Deceased Family Members,
Legananny;

Patrick Smyth; Joe McCrickard

Wed 23rd Kathleen Cunningham; Mary Burns;
Brendan Cunningham

Sat 26th Winnie McCrickard; Patricia O'Prey

Dromara

Sun 20th Gerard and Mary McGrillen; Peter
and Eileen O'Hare and Deceased
Family Members

Sun 27th Mary and Bernard Rice, Dree

Dechomet Sat 26th John Greeran

Gargory Sun 27th Archdeacon Liam Boyle

Offerings w/e 13th Dec Dromara Drumgooland

Parish Offerings	£242	£810
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We welcome into Drumgooland Parish Méabh Doyle

I will be available for the Sacrament of Confession:

Mon 21st Dec Dechomet after 7:30pm mass

Tues 22nd Dec Dromara 7-7:30pm

Wed 23rd Dec Leitrim 6:30-7pm

Thurs 24th Dec Gargory 10-10:30am

I will be in the front seat. Please wear a face covering and keep a safe distance from anyone attending the sacrament.

Blood Donations Session

St Malachy's High School, Tues 22nd Dec, by appointment only. To book please call: 08085 534 653 between 10 & 4.30.

Charity Support

There are many people who have faced financial challenges over the past year.

Some people may like to support a charity but the usual collections have not been available.

The majority of charities will accept an online donation.

If anyone wishes to make a cash donation to SVdEP or Trócaire you can do so by putting it in an envelope and mark the charity on the outside of the envelope. Place the envelope with the church envelopes and it will be forwarded to your chosen charity.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve Dromara 7pm Leitrim 8pm
Gargory 9pm Dechomet 10pm

Christmas Morning Gargory 9am Leitrim 10am
Dromara 11am

The numbers who can attend are limited. The safe space of 2m distance must be held. The advice is to spend a limited time in a church so please do not come early to claim seats. It is clear that most people will have to watch online but I wish to have open churches with your help and cooperation.

This year we will **remember those who are living abroad** and all those family members at home that we were unable to meet up with this year.

The Committee of Peter Morgan's Cottage

wish everyone a Happy Christmas.

We hope the Christmas tree at the Cottage adds some cheer for this festive season and that we will see everyone in 2021.

Dromore Diocesan Historical Society

The Society's *Journal Seanchas Dhroim* Mor 2020 is on sale, price £10 or £15 to include p&p. Includes articles on Dr Patrick Donnelly, 1649-1719, Bishop of Dromore and Bard of Armagh; the Grinan Crosses, Clonlea Graveyard and the Mooney Family
Copies available from Fr Andrew McMahon, Tel. 028 406 62136 / 07973 854381, or email afmcmahon@hotmail.co.uk

Dear Parishioners,

I doubt if we will forget 2020. The first few months are a distance memory, there was an illness at the far side of the world, now we are living with it. The quick decision to close the churches on 13th March did catch me by surprise but it was the right one at the time. The talk of a few weeks, it became many months. Thank you to the parishioner who set up the YouTube streaming service, and supplied all the equipment. Whilst I can press the buttons, it is still beyond my skill to set up such a system. The response to it has been truly humbling, I know that some are unable to watch it, but for the majority it has created a sense of connection. The feedback helped me to live with my uncomfortableness of being online, coming into your homes.

When I saw images of churches re-opening in Italy with a few people sitting at the end of seats and wearing masks, I thought that will not work here. Once more I was wrong. Thank you to all who responded to the re-opening of the churches, those who helped people find seats, etc. The fact that the normal place that you sat was not necessarily available was one of the small challenges. Thank you to all those who have kept the churches clean. The sound I associate at the end of mass now is not the chatter of people as they leave but the swishing of the sanitising wipes. The mask is now part of life in and outside the church, not an easy adjustment but one that has protected so many.

The different way of life is not easy, it has been extremely challenging for many people. Those who are mostly confined to their homes have seen very few people, safe, but lonely. The expected joy of a wedding, to know that you have no choice, you cannot marry the person you love, that has been painful for many people. These couples still face pressure, do they gather a few together to celebrate or wait longer? New life came into families but baptisms were not allowed, fathers not able to be there at the birth. Grandparents have missed the holding of that new born. The support they wished to offer was often not something they could risk.

Yet the reality of 2020 has been the deaths and the funerals. The wake has gone, the support is not available, but safety has to come first. Those first few funerals, small numbers, was it safe to receive Eucharist ... to plan with people from a distance, to not set foot in the house. Please continue to hold the people who grieve in your prayers. Whilst we could not reach out a hand, we can join hands in prayer before God.

The issue of finance was there. People did not know if they would have work, some had little to no money coming in. The generosity of you has been amazing over these months. There will be a further report available next year but I thank you for the generosity to the parish and to myself. There are times when words are inadequate, this is one of those times. I have known your prayer, your good wishes, your concern, your generosity. You have held me in prayer before God, I try to do the same.

The challenging journey is far from over, there is hope but there is a reality of a virus that is ever present. May the choices we make be ones that help and protect. The invite is to pause and reflect.

This year there were 39 baptisms; 8 weddings and 23 funerals.

May Jesus, who is the Real Light, guide us as we finish 2020 and journey into another new beginning.

Fr Peter