



St. Mel's Cathedral Choir

St. Mel's Cathedral Choir, under the direction of organist Fintan Farrelly, sing at 11.30am Mass every Sunday. The choir rehearses on Thursday evenings at 8.30pm St. Mel's College Chapel with

extra rehearsals scheduled in preparation for major events. The Choir is currently looking for new members. If you would like to be part of our choir please contact any of our members.



Above is St. Mel's Cathedral Choir whose members are also part of the County Choir pictured here under the direction of Fintan Farrelly.



Parish Newsletter 2011

JANUARY

The first newsletter of the New Year carried a warm 'thank you' to all who supported the Christmas card initiative of Tieran Dolan and the students of St Mel's College which yielded €4,945 for the Cathedral restoration fund. There were notes of thanks also from S.V de.P. Trócaire and Bethany House for our generosity during the recent very harsh weather. Some special Masses too - on 23rd the African Mass, the children's Mass on the 30th and the New Year Holy Hour on the 29th. The annual Church Unity Service was held in the Methodist Church, Battery Road, with the sermon given by Bishop Ken Clarke of the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh.

FEBRUARY

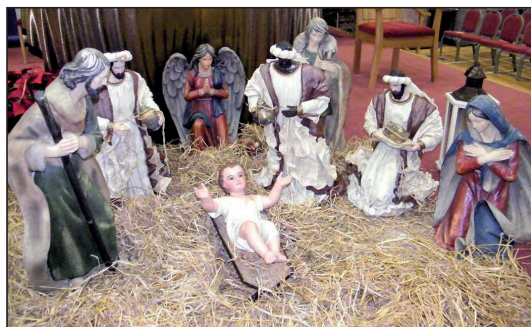
We marked the feast of Saint Mel, not only in our parish but throughout the diocese, on the 6th and there was a generous response to the cathedral Restoration Fund. On the 11th / 12th World day of the Sick there was an all-night vigil of prayer and a special Mass with Anointing of the Sick. The BRI support group met in Phoenix Centre to support those with acquired brain injury. The St Mel's Project Committee announced the appointment of architects Richard Hurley & Associates and Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners to design the restoration of the Cathedral. The Irish Blood Transfusion Service was in town and there was a six week bereavement course in The Family Centre.

MARCH

Lent began on the 9th with great crowds attending morning Mass in the Temperance Hall. There was Guided Prayer every Thursday and Eucharistic Adoration continued daily in the College Chapel, the meditation group met on Tuesdays and Longford Prayer group had a monthly Mass on Monday the 7th. *Accord* held a marriage preparation course and it was time for the Station Masses in the rural areas of our parish. There was a Pastoral Letter from the Irish Bishops 'Towards Healing and Renewal'. The Comboni Missionaries spoke at Sunday Masses seeking support and prayer for the Missions. On St Patrick's Day we wore the shamrock to Mass and enjoyed the parade in the town. The children of 6th class in our parish schools received the Sacrament of Confirmation. We remembered to put our clocks forward on the 27th and were invited to book early for the many pilgrimages planned next summer.

APRIL

The St Mel's Musical Society performance of *Cabaret* was a great success at Backstage. There was a special Jubilee mass on 2nd for all couples celebrating silver, golden and diamond wedding anniversaries. Catholic parishioners of African origin came together for their monthly mass in the College Chapel. A bus took parishioners to the Chrism Mass celebrated by Bishop Colm in Athlone on Holy



Nativity scenes at St. Mel's Cathedral Centre and St. Joseph's Care Centre.



Dramatisation of The Passion on Good Friday.

Thursday and the Holy week ceremonies once again brought great crowds to St Mel's Cathedral Centre. *Trócaire* thanked the parishioners and clergy for standing in solidarity with the world's poor during this Lent.

MAY

On the 1st May the Sisters of Mercy invited all to join in their celebration of the 150th anniversary of their arrival in Longford. Bishop Colm celebrated the Mass and the Sisters published a book with an extensive pictorial and written record of the past 150 years - a much treasured history of their many generous works of service here in our parish. On the parish website you can now take a virtual tour of the Cathedral and also view photos of the many special ceremonies and events in our parish. The presentation of awards to Pioneer Jubilarians took place on Sunday the 12th.

The Rosary was prayed each Sunday of the month at the Market Square. Longford Community Resources offered a 'staying safe' minor repair service for older persons who would like help with small repairs in their homes. It was a special month for children of the parish who received their First Holy Communion and we enjoyed with the whole of Ireland the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and then President Barack Obama A chairde, is féidir linn!

JUNE

Ten good men set off on 3rd from Longford on an 860 mile relay walk in aid of the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. A Norwegian choir joined the County Choir for a concert in aid of Longford Hospice. There was sadness at the passing of Sr. Calasctius former Matron of St Joseph's Hospital RIP. We offered prayers for all students sitting exams. On Saturday 25th at the vigil Mass we marked the Silver Jubilee of Fr Tom Healy's ordination to the priesthood and the people of the parish joined Fr Tom and his family for the Mass and refreshments afterwards. The Corpus Christi procession took place on 26th from Battery Road around Lisbrack and the Demesne. We began the long preparation for the Eucharistic Congress next year with special prayers. Every Sunday night rain or shine there is Bingo in aid of SVP in the Temperance Hall. Irish Girl Guides celebrated their centenary with an exhibition.

JULY

The Design Team continued working on many

aspects of the plans for the restoration of the Cathedral and hopes are high that it will be completed by the end of 2014. Meantime damage to the statues over the front facade will be repaired with the aid of a grant from the Heritage Council. The Eucharistic Congress Bell, the symbol of the International Eucharistic Congress of 2012, arrived in the parish on Friday afternoon the 22nd. It was welcomed by Bishop Colm, Rev Paul Maxwell, Methodist Church and Rev Canon David Catterall, Church of Ireland. Many families played host to the children visiting from Belarus organised by The Friends of the Children of Chernobyl.

AUGUST

Young people enjoyed the Clonmacnois Youth 2000 summer festival celebrating their Catholic Faith. And families gathered in the summer sun to enjoy a Family Day at Flancare Park in aid of St Mel's Restoration Reserve Fund. This was organised by Longford Town Football Club and the great feast of music and craic was enjoyed by young and old. Mid month brought Leaving Cert results and the back to school preparations. Cemetery Sunday brought extraordinary numbers to the annual Mass and blessing of the graves in Ballymacormack cemetery on the 22nd.

SEPTEMBER

The annual diocesan pilgrimage to Knock was led by Bishop Colm. Longford Social Services celebrated its 40th anniversary. The boys in blue - *Longford Slashers* brought home the Connolly Cup for the second year in a row. Our parish received a beautiful Book of the Gospels from Tullamore Parish to be used when the cathedral is restored. And with sadness we bade farewell to Fr Nigel Charles as he took up his new appointment in Killashee- Clondra. Farewell also to Fr Merlyn Kenny who goes to Carrick on Shannon, he will be missed for his many lovely stories woven into his Sunday sermons. And a warm welcome to Fr Tom Murray our new curate. On Sunday 18th thousands flocked to the Cathedral open-day to see for themselves the awful damage caused by the fire and to view the proposed designs for its restoration.

OCTOBER

'A Day for Life' was celebrated on the 2nd the theme was 'a call to solidarity and hope in difficult times'. The 'Rainbows' programme for

children who experienced loss commenced in the Family Centre. St Mel's choir appealed for new members as also did CASA whose work supports people with disabilities. While Saint Vincent de Paul offered assistance to those in need. There was a public Rosary every Sunday on the Market Square. And every Friday all were welcome for a cup of tea and chat after 10am Mass in the college chapel. People gave generously to the support of the missionaries on Mission Sunday. A time capsule was recovered from the statue of the Sacred Heart during restoration work on the front portico and it was sent to the national museum careful examination.

NOVEMBER

There were large attendances at special masses and prayers for the Holy Souls during this month including the annual bereavement ceremony on the 5th, the Rosary was prayed by the Legion of Mary every Sunday in the cemetery and the monthly Holy Hour 'a time to remember' on the 26th. Talks on the Gospel of Saint Mark were given by Sr Anna and Fr Padraig in the Pastoral Centre. The first signs of Christmas were sales of Tieran Dolan's special Christmas cards with proceeds going to the Cathedral restoration fund and preparation of 'Cathedral Echoes' a CD of reflective music and song by Fr Brendan and the Cathedral Folk Choir. The parish review committee invited community groups to submit their 'good news' for inclusion in this years review.

DECEMBER

The Advent wreath on the altar heralds the beginning of the new church year. A beautiful African mass was celebrated on the 3rd and on the 7th we had an all night vigil of *Prayer for Ireland*. Students from Scoil Mhuire and the College were very enthusiastic participants in a youth mass on Saturday 17th. The ceremony of Reconciliation in the church on the 17th and a real live crib in the grounds of the presbytery on the Sunday before Christmas together with a wonderful Carol Service by the County Choir in the Cathedral centre remind us of the real message of Christmas *peace and goodwill to all* at the end of another year.