



Reflections on Today's Church

This is my fifth Christmas as a priest in Longford. Many changes have come about in that time; life continuously evolves in the parish. New initiatives are undertaken and, in other cases, circumstances dictate adjustments. That's the way of the world – nothing ever stays the same. Life around the Cathedral is much quieter now. People come to the presbytery for specific reasons – no longer the hum of people passing by heading for school, for the shops or dropping in to say a prayer and light a candle. But life has been very good to us all at our new home in St. Mel's College. Change is also suggested for the Irish Church in the new year. Despite the numbers in the pastoral team here at present and the over two thousand five hundred people who attend Mass at churches

in our parish each weekend, the future is very different. Quickly dwindling clergy and religious numbers will become very evident in a very short time. A lot less people will be coming to church too with every passing generation. Parishes have already begun to be clustered; dioceses are the next in line to be amalgamated. Profound change is on the way. In an evolving Church, and in a world that has never been more economically uncertain, it is the unchanging goodness, energy and enthusiasm of faithful people that best mirrors God's eternal love. May his Son bring you every grace and blessing in these weeks when we remember His coming into our world: He will provide. Happy Christmas to all of you in Longford and beyond!- **Fr. Padraig**



Fr. Padraig Kelliher and Colm Dardis of The Pastoral Council.

Parish Information

MASS TIMES

St. Mel's College Chapel

Weekdays:

8.00am, 10.00am

Advent/Lent/November/ December: 7.30pm

Cathedral Centre

Sundays: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 11.30am, 1.00pm

Holy Days

St. Patrick's Day & Christmas Day:

All Masses as per usual Sunday Schedule

Parish Churches

Shrold: 10.30am

Curry: 9.30am

Epiphany, Assumption, Immaculate Conception, All Saints: 7.30pm (vigil), 8.00am, 10.00am, 1.00pm, 7.30pm. (No Mass in Curry or Shrold)

BAPTISMS (4 weeks notice)

1st, 3rd, 5th Weekends: Sunday 1.45pm

2nd & 4th Weekends: Saturday 2.00pm

Book at Parish Office (043 3346465)

CONFESSIONS

Saturdays: 10.30-1pm, 6.30-7.30pm

Eve of Holy Days/First Fridays: 12.00-1.00pm, 7.00pm-8.00pm

Useful Contacts

St. Mel's Cathedral Presbytery: 043 3346465

Email: stmelcathedral@eircom.net

Primary Schools

St. Emer's

043 3341188

Gaelscoil an Longfoirt

043 3341360

St. Joseph's

043 3345700

St. Michael's

043 3345536

Melview

043 3346197

Stonepark

043 3346036

Secondary Schools

Scoil Mhuire

043 3346608

St. Mel's College

043 3346469

Templemichael College

043 3345424

St. Christopher's

043 3341769

ACCORD Marriage Support Service: Tel: 043 47222 (11.30am - 1.30pm)

Alcohol & Drugs Service: 043 3350988

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA):

Health Care Centre: Mon, Wed, Sat at 9.00pm

Family Centre: Tues & Fri 1pm, Sunday 11.30am

CURA: 090 6474272/1850 622626

Club '89: Family Centre, Tuesday, 2.30pm-4.30pm

Family Centre: 043 3346827

Longford Casualty: 043 3350142

Longford Gardaí: 0433346741 / 999

Longford Mental Health Services: 043 3346992

Money, Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS): 043 3347705

MIDOC: 1850 302702

Mullingar Hospital: 044 9340221

St. Joseph's Care Centre: 043 3346211

Samaritans: 090 6473133

Social Services: 043 3350114

SVP Thrift Shop: 043 3346074

Temperance Hall: 043 3349548

Christmas Greetings ...

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

We would like to take the opportunity to wish you and you families a very happy Christmas.

As 2011 draws to a close we are very aware that these are difficult times for many people with the recession affecting livelihoods and causing anxiety about the future.

The Gospel assures us that the very hairs of our head are counted – so precious and cherished are we to our God.

His call to us is not to be afraid. He is in control of all that goes on in our lives and since He cares for the sparrows in the sky and the flowers in the fields, He will certainly care for us.

This is a time to renew our trust in God and a time to be particularly caring of each other. So let us, this Christmas, ask the child Jesus to help us to be gentle, to be tender and loving with those around us and to all the people we meet.

Jesus, it is you who gives us hope. In the darkness of our world, your light has shone. Your coming in gentleness encourages us to hold out the hand of reconciliation, to help one another, to work for peace. We remember today the message of the angels; "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace."

We wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas, that you and your families will know God's closeness and care over the festive season.

With every good wish,

Parish Pastoral Team: Sr. Angela Clarkson, Deirdre Dalton, Colm Dardis, Tommy Dolan, Fr. Thomas Healy, Fr. Padraig Kelliher, Stefan Macko, Anita Mollaghan, Bernie Mulligan, Fr. Tom Murray, Teresa Neville, Theresa O'Shea, Fr. Brendan O'Sullivan, Colette Skelly, Christine Treacy, and Kevin Victory.



'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel'.

Isaiah 7:14

Meditation Group



The Mediation Group meet each Tuesday evening from 7.15 to 8.00 pm. Entrance through the front door of St. Mel's College. Beginners always welcome.

Parish Giving

Over recent weeks, new boxes of envelopes for the various Parish Collections have been distributed to the homes of our Parish.

We are very grateful to you for your continued generous support which enables us to sustain the life of the parish, maintain its buildings and meet the many expenses a parish of this size carries. Thank you to all who helped in the task of labelling and distributing boxes. We also thank our teams of counters.

In recent years we have been able to claim significant funds through the Tax Relief Scheme for Charities. Your use of the envelopes is greatly beneficial to us in the task of recording contributions which in turn enables us to claim this Tax Relief. Therefore we would encourage you to use the envelopes for your contributions.

It is also helpful to us if you write the amount of your contribution in the space provided. This year in order to minimise costs and workload, we have distributed boxes only to homes that we have a record of envelopes being returned from. We hope this will work our reasonably accurately; please understand that mistakes and omissions will inevitably happen. If you have not received your new envelopes by the end of December, extra boxes are available at The Presbytery. Thank you.

Busy Year for St. Christopher's School

St. Christopher's Special School had a disappointing start to the New Year as pipes burst in the school causing major damage to many rooms. Thankfully due to

lot of hard work we ensured that the pupils returned to school as planned following the Christmas break.

A number of pupils success-

fully participated in writing and art competitions during the year.

The school also partook in the Agri-Aware Incredible Edibles Garden Challenge 2011 and we received a Gold standard accreditation.

We have two pupils who received the sacrament of confession and First Holy Communion.

One pupil received a bronze President Award in June which is a National Award and a great achievement for the young person concerned.

Since starting the new school year in September we achieved first and second place in the special category of the Aisling Art Competition.

We have just begun a new program with the pupils and the Irish Therapy Dogs group. Tom and Tully join us weekly for a bonding session.

The planned school extension is making progress and it is hoped that planning permission will be obtained in the near future.

CASA TRIP TO LOURDES



Pictured above are some members of the Casa group who travelled to Lourdes earlier this year.



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