

St. Anthony's Parish, Belfast

PARISH PRIEST: Fr. Henry McCann (and Chaplain to the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald), 3 Willowfield Crescent, BT6 8HP.
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Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/stanthonvsbelfast>.

Website: www.saintanthony.co.uk

PUBLIC MASS TIMES—COVID-19 ERA (will be under assessment/review)

Saturday Evening at 6.30pm. (English Parish Mass)

Sunday Morning (in Polish): 9am, & 6:30pm. (English Parish Mass): 11.30am

Weekdays: (Mon Private 9:30am), Tues & Thurs at 9.30am. Fri at 7.00pm.

All English Masses on Facebook. Polish Weekday Masses: Tues & Thurs 7pm, Sat 9am

Confessions: By Arrangement. Baptisms: By Appointment

Local SVP Conference contact details: 028 90351561

<https://www.svp.ie/stbernadettebelfast>



4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT—YEAR C

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb. [Luke 1:39-45]*

Treasures spilling over, secrets pouring out in sheer delight.

The women hugging as the baby leaps for joy!

*Holy Spirit, fill us too. With yourself. Teach us to love. And let
us cry out in joy, since the Lord has come to be within us and
within all humankind. Let our spirits jump for joy!*

Anne Osdieck

WE REMEMBER OUR DECEASED LOVED-ONES

Recently Deceased: Pat McBrearty (father of Fr Stephen)

Anniversaries: James Murray, Patrick Joseph Greenan, Sally (Sarah) Watson, Peter Hughes, Mary Guinness, Robert & Mary Sheppard (Sun 19th Dec at 11:30am), Frances Donnelly, (Mon 20th December at 9:30am), Marie Matthews (Sun 26th Dec at 11:30am).

To arrange for anniversary masses please speak to Fr McCann

COLLECTIONS: Many thanks for your support. Weekly Collection £662.90. **DONATE Online Donate Button on Website**

We would appreciate that if you send in a cheque to pay for a number of different donations, that you itemise what amount should go to each collection. Also include all empty envelopes in the one envelope

Updated Diocesan Covid-Safe Measures for all Church based liturgies/activities. As well as the previous Measures, the following updates are to be followed, summarised, (issued 26th October 2021):

Social Distancing: a minimum of one metre social distancing between members of different households.

Face Coverings: The wearing of face coverings while entering, leaving and moving around a church is mandatory (except when exempted). Face coverings should be recommended throughout celebrations, even when seated. If there is congregational singing, face coverings must be worn.

Hand Sanitizers: Suitable hand sanitizers should continue to be provided at the entrances to Churches and other parish buildings.

Ventilation: Churches should be well ventilated during and after any gathering.

Movement around the Church: Parishes should retain any guidance/direction designed to allow social distancing.

Cleaning Routines: Parishes should maintain current regime of cleaning between liturgical services.

Holy Water Fonts, missalettes, newsletters etc.: For the time being, holy water fonts should remain empty. Missalettes and newsletters/bulletins should not be used unless they are single use and are retained by the user or disposed of after use.

Celebration of Mass: Parishes should continue to observe the principle of simplicity in the Liturgy for the time being, and note that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains suspended.

Choirs and liturgical music groups may recommence their ministry, and the number of members must be included in the safe maximum number determined in the risk assessment. Face coverings should be used and members observe 1 metre distancing. Choirs should sing at a reduced volume, and choose a repertoire that will not unnecessarily prolong the liturgy.

Entrance and recessional processions should be simple, confined to the celebrant, (deacon) and servers. There should be **no offertory procession and sign of peace remains suspended.** Those administering Holy Communion should continue to sanitize hands before and after distribution, to wear face coverings, and **communion in the hand should remain the norm,** or accommodation made for those who receive on the tongue, when hands should be sanitised immediately after each recipient.

(Full updated guidance can be found on the parish Facebook page and on the Parish Website)

Covid Variant Omicron and Christmas Celebrations. In a meeting with Faith Representatives Group with the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and the Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) this week, they advised that the risk of transmission of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 was at least 2.5 times higher than the Delta variant, making the risk of contagion significantly higher than before.

It had been agreed that at this stage there would not be expected any formal additional restrictions imposed on Churches over the Christmas period. However, the CMO and CSA made the following appeal to Church and faith communities over the Christmas Season:

A) Assess the risk of every activity you plan to undertake, bearing in mind that the risk of spread of infection from the Omicron variant is at least 2.5 times higher than any form of the virus heretofore.

B) Maximise the use of all established mitigations notably, Ventilation, Social Distancing and Wearing of Masks.

C) Minimise all activities which bring people together and which are not essential to the integrity of your worship and faith celebration of the Christmas season. They are not saying Masses and Services should be cancelled but anything beyond this should be carefully reviewed.

Considering the advice received, Bishop Noel writes: "I would ask you to please encourage anyone who is vulnerable to consider participating online in the Christmas liturgy. Also, I suggest you encourage families to set aside time in their festivities for such online participation."

With regards the risks of contagion in relation to the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, both to the priest and other members of the congregation, and given the fact that the virus stays in the air for several hours unless the ventilation is very effective, the bishop has considered and asks "that Parishes postpone these activities until the current situation has settled, in the new year. Unless there is grave necessity for an individual to celebrate the sacrament at this time, I would ask you to encourage the faithful to consider and avail of the 'Act of Perfect Contrition' previously proposed by Pope Francis." This resource is available in the Church porch, and a full explanation is available on the Parish of St Anthony, Belfast Facebook Page, and parish website

St Vincent de Paul Special Christmas Appeal Collection basket this weekend

Mary's Meals Christmas Hamper Raffle, tickets available this weekend.

Resources by the Northern Pastoral Network for Christmas Booklet for use at home available in the Church porch. Also see <http://holysacramentparishbelfast.net/reflection-on-the-christmas-season/>

St Colmille's Alpha Course. You are invited to Alpha for a time of video presentations that will make you think – a place where you can be yourself, no pressure, no charge. An opportunity to explore life, faith & meaning in a friendly and informal setting. How? Via Zoom link. When? Begins on Tuesday 11th January 2022 @ 8.00pm. More information contact n.dunn@downandconnor.org. 07879 498131. See flyers in the church porch. see <https://st-columcilles.net/>

Advent Meditations with Joseph and Mary. The Living Church office are offering two online programmes following the footsteps of Joseph and Mary as they travel towards Bethlehem. The programme runs for 4 weeks and provides 1 hour of prayer and reflection with scripture and participants will receive an accompanying prayer journal to use each day at home. Advent meditations with Joseph begins on Thursday 25th November at 7pm. Advent meditations with Mary begins on Sunday 28th November at 7pm. If you would like to join please e-mail livingchurch@downandconnor.org indicating which programme you are interested in.

The Synod on Synodality: Preparing to listen

Pope Francis has affirmed that: "A synodal Church is a Church which listens. The faithful People, the Bishops, all listening to each other; and all listening to the Holy Spirit." Listening from a place of prayer is the foundation of our synodal process, and it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. As pilgrims on this synodal journey we recognise that no one person has the answer and that through authentic listening everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit. This week we pray that we will be a listening church, listening to the Holy Spirit prompting the Church to be attentive to the missionary dream of God's love reaching everyone and inspired by God's love that we reach out to care for all humanity. This week we invite you to pray: Come Holy Spirit,

Make our ears to hear, make our eyes to see, make our mouths to speak, make our hearts to seek, make our hands to reach out and touch the world with your love. Amen.

Times of Christmas Masses at St Anthony's

Christmas Eve (Fri 24th Dec): English 7pm Polish 11pm

Christmas Day (Sat 25th Dec): Polish 9am English 11:30am

Note—No Saturday Vigil Mass, but Sunday (26th December) Masses will be as normal.

**Wishing all our parishioners and visitors to St Anthony's
a Safe and Blessed Christmas, and Joy and Peace in the
commemoration of the Birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ!**

Parish Safeguarding. Can you please ensure that all Children and Vulnerable Adults are accompanied at all times when entering the Sacristy / Toilet facilities. If you have any queries regarding the Safeguarding Policy please contact a member of the Parish Safeguarding Committee. Many Thanks. Fr Henry McCann PP.



THE PRESENT GUEST

It's probably a commentary on our world that when you type the word 'visitation' in any search engine, you get directed to information on 'visitation rights' for separated parents, or more recently the cruel necessary reality of restricted 'visitation' of loved ones in nursing homes, during Covid-19. Now, that is something completely different to the Gospel scene of joy where Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. We each look forward to the

visitations we all will have soon with one another and with Christ in a special way at Christmas 2021. What in us is leaping for joy? How will it be - as our Taoiseach hoped for in December 2020 - a 'meaningful Christmas'. We think of those whose visits have been curtailed due to Covid-19: the sick, those in prison, family abroad. We rejoice that - as I write in September - this will be a memory this December. Maybe a more child-like wonder and keener appreciation for all we sacrificed will help a lot.

After all, the first person to ever recognise the Lord was an unborn

Next Sunday's Readings

1 Samuel 1:20-22.24-28

Psalms 83:2-3.5-6.9-10

1 John 3:1-2.21-24

Luke 2:41-52



baby - his cousin John the Baptist. The Feast of the Visitation reminds us of something beautiful: we must become like children to see God. Most of us are probably past our leaping prime - unlike John in Elizabeth's womb who 'leapt for joy' - and are not feeling very childlike. But we can at least invite Mary into our lives. Like the Nursery Rhyme puts it: 'everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go' - the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist would call him some years later.

Elizabeth and Mary had faith that this was no ordinary child Mary was bringing into the world: this was the Messiah. Elizabeth, a great woman of faith, praises Mary's faith. Great

things happen when people have faith. Among our most ordinary encounters and visitations, greatness is present. When we gather with our church family, and in our domestic families, Christ is present. Let us glimpse him better and make him more evident by how we live.

O God our deliverer,
you cast down the mighty,
and lift up those of no account.
As Elizabeth and Mary embraced
with songs of liberation,
so may we also be pregnant with
your Spirit,
and affirm one another in hope for
the world
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

- Tom Cox



Reflection

How can we offer our very lives as a sacrifice to God by doing his will daily?



Lesson

Mary, out of loving obedience, willingly allows God's will to be done in her.



Prayer

Lord Jesus, teach us to have a great love for your Father's will; to be like your own mother, Mary, the great model of faith and obedience. Her reply to the angel was: 'Let it be done to me in accordance with God's will.'



This Week (20-26 December)

- 20 M** St Eugene; St Fachanan, bishop
- 21 T** St Peter Canisius, priest and doctor
- 22 W** St Flavianus
- 23 T** St John of Kanty, priest
- 24 F** Ss Irminda and Adela
- 25 S** THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD
- 26 S** THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

