

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>



FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

"Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

Mary and Joseph searched everywhere with their whole hearts, and with harrowing anxiety, for you, Jesus. And they found you.

Let us all find you wherever we search: in your Father's House, or in the faces of the poor,—in songs we sing together, in searching for answers to end all racial injustice, to find climate solutions; to look into the deep thoughts of others; and in poetry.

Let it all be prayer. Come to us, Lord Jesus,

Anne Osdieck

WE REMEMBER OUR DECEASED LOVED-ONES

Recently Deceased: Pat McBrearty (father of Fr Stephen), Mr Patrick Whyte, (brother of Fr Daniel)

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

COLLECTIONS: Many thanks for your support. Weekly Collection £505.05. 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.

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.

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 Colmcille's Alpha Course. 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-colmcilles.net/>

Sharing the Good News—December edition—Newsletter of the Irish Conference of Bishops available in the church porch.

Christmas Message 2021 from Bishop Noel Treanor

"...they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was." (Mt 2:9)

The Christmas Star then and now

The infancy narratives in St Luke's gospel (Lk 1:1-2:52) fascinate in so many ways. Whether child or adult, imagination is fired, life experiences are evoked, and faith is awakened or revived for many.

On that first Christmas in Bethlehem many journeys of faith came together in adoration of the Christ-child. Guided by the light of a star and discerning the path to follow, shepherds and wise men encountered God incarnate in a child. Falling to their knees in worship and prayer, a new light illuminated their minds and lives. As each arrived at the manger, 'heart spoke unto heart' as they encountered the human face of God and the divine face of humanity. This was a graced moment of divine revelation that would change their lives forever. Today, the light of that Christmas star beams into our lives, wherever we are on our own life's journey.

Mary and Joseph: parenting in uncertain times

For their part, Mary and Joseph had already made their journey to the town of Bethlehem. It was a journey marked by hardship and hope, abandonment and promise, desperation and providence. Indeed, many of us can see aspects of our own lives mirrored in their difficult journey.

Despite their fears and the uncertainty of their situation, Mary and Joseph opened their hearts to welcome this precious little infant into the world. Their humble cooperation with God's plan of salvation led to the most graced moment of human history, when the eternal God took on human flesh. The birth of this child brought joy and new hope into the world.

Still, Mary and Joseph had many more journeys to make together. They had to leave for Egypt to protect the Christ-child from the threat of suffering and death. They returned to Nazareth where they made themselves a home. They accompanied the child to the temple in Jerusalem. Each journey was fraught with hardship and adversity, yet each journey was also a moment of grace.

Journeying Together in faith on a Synodal Pathway

To enliven communities of faith in each diocese throughout the world, Pope Francis has invited us to undertake together a 'synodal pathway'. On that pathway, guided by the light of divine revelation, and in response in our time to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, we are invited to contribute to shaping our communities of faith as active centres of prayer and worship and as an outreach of God's loving care for all and especially to those in need and on the margins of life. Pope Francis describes this synodal approach as a way of living the Good News of the Gospel within the community of the Church for the good of humanity and society. As on that first Christmas morning, listening together to and reflecting upon the Word of God will enable us to focus on the reality of God's presence among us and to incarnate our faith in prayer and pastoral action.

Over this festive season, I encourage you to join our parish communities either in person or online and to pray for one another, for your families and friends. Let us continue to hold in prayer all health care workers and front-line staff as they selflessly and tirelessly continue to care for our sick throughout the Christmas season. May the blessings of the Christmas Season bring hope and joy into your hearts and homes and provide the light for your pathway throughout the New Year 2022.

+Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor

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.



KINSHIP AROUND THE KING

A year will soon have passed - and one in which we took greater pleasure in the most ordinary of things as they gradually opened to us: a wedding to dress up for, babies to welcome in baptism, First Communions and Confirmations to punctuate the stages of life and faith. Some things are changed forever in how we approach them, but life brims over and the family tree keeps growing - even in the face of death's visitation

to our families. We shared each other's joys and sorrows, for when one of us is blessed, the whole community receives the blessing. Our children, our resources, all we have, doesn't just belong to us as individuals - it belongs to all of us as a community. We are - in the deepest sense of the word - family. Maybe, in today's Gospel of the Finding in the Temple, we can reflect on what we have found in the inner sanctuary of our lives this past year.

Next Sunday's Readings



Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2.8-12

Psalms 147:12-15.19-20

Ephesians 1:3-6.15-18

John 1:1-18

It's been a limiting experience for stretches of 2020 and 2021, but Nelson Mandela - who knew all about physical limitations, having been in

prison for 28 years – said often that the gift of prison was to have that inner space to create within yourself the things you wanted most. In his case, what he wanted for his country: peace, reconciliation, harmony. His fellow South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu – who chaired South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission – would often say that we belong in ‘a bundle of life’, that humanity is all about our interconnectedness.

It is estimated that 11 million Americans resigned from their work since April 2021, for reasons far more complex than seeking job flexibility and better conditions; they are seeking what gives their life meaning and emotional support. Prolonged uncertainty has made people question their priorities – and that includes faith and practice.

One constant in a sea of change is family. I’ve met, over my life, people with all sorts of challenges who have often remarked that, in the end, they had their family and that was enough. Despite the twists and turns of our lives, sometimes with spectacular own goals, we have each other as kin, as family. In English we begin letters with ‘Dear Sir/Madam/Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.’, perhaps because we’re conditioned to think of people in terms of gender or status. In Irish we say, ‘A Chara’ (not just Revenue or Civil Service letters!) because interactions, even with strangers, are rooted on the basis of the common friendship of our shared humanity as members of the human family and, I hope, as reflections of the Holy Family. Something to find – or to find again – in our lives? ■

- Tom Cox



Reflection

When was the last time you were able to have a dinner or celebration with your family to foster togetherness?



Lesson

An indispensable element of family life is the ability to pray together.



Prayer

Lord, grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and all the families in the world.



This Week (27 Dec – 2 Jan)

- 27 M** ST JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST
- 28 I** The Holy Innocents, martyrs
- 29 W** St Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
- 30 I** St Egwin of Evesham, bishop
- 31 F** St Sylvester I, pope
- 1 S** MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
- 2 S** SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

