

Fr. Mark English P.P.  
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**MASS INTENTIONS:**

**ST. JOSEPH'S, RATHWIRE.**

**Sunday 11:30am** Helen Curristine MM; Paddy O'Connor; William & Celena Kane.

**Wednesday 9am**

**Friday 9am**

**Sunday 11:30am** Ned, Rose & Chris Glennon; Patrick, Margaret & Ollie Smyth.

**ST. BRIGID'S, RAHARNEY.**

**Saturday 6pm** Anna Marie Murphy; Edward McKeogh

**Sunday 10am** Theresa & Matt Mullen; Mary, Peter & dec. Mulkearns Family

**Tuesday 9am**

**Thursday 9am**

**Saturday 6pm** Arthur Swords. Fr. Liam Murtagh & dec. Priests of the Parish; Frank, Ann, Francis & Max McHugh

**Sunday 10am** Jim Lynch; Michael Lynam; Baby Noah Gilroy

*Confessions: Fridays after Mass and Saturdays after the Vigil Mass*

**15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

*GAUDETE SUNDAY*

*The Community of St. Camillus  
Tel: 044-9374115*

**COMMUNION CALLS  
FOR CHRISTMAS:**  
This Friday Fr. Mark  
will call to parishioners  
who are sick and  
housebound.

**ADVENT 2019**

*HOLY HOUR WITH CONFESSIONS*

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December 5 - 6pm in St. Brigid's Church, Raharney**

*Let's stop what we are doing for an hour and come, be reconciled with God and one another! Please encourage family and friends to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as we prepare for Christmas 2019*



**JESSE TREE**

Thanks to the children who took the time to make brilliant symbols for the Jesse Tress which has helped us all to understand better the family tree of Jesus. It is interesting to realise the background to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and to comprehend that his ancestors weren't so perfect but lived lives marked with sin and wrongdoing, no different to any of us or our families. Yet as God worked His divine plan through them, He continues to do so through us with his abundant grace and mercy. "Prepare you a way for the Lord".

**BABY JESUS IN THE CRIB**

As we bring the figure of the Baby Jesus from our family cribs for a blessing at our Masses this *Gaudete Sunday – Joyful Sunday* let us focus on the reality of how Jesus was born in a stable. As we do so let us count our blessings for the comforts we have in the place we call home! Let us also remember in our thoughts and prayers those who have no such comforts in so many parts of our world this Christmas 2018.

*"The Nativity Scene is the suggestive place where we contemplate Jesus, who having assumed our wretchedness, invites us to do likewise through our acts of mercy." Pope Francis*

On the First Sunday of Advent this year Pope Francie visited Greccio, Italy, the site of the first Crib.

There he signed his Apostolic Letter for all Catholics, **Admirabile Signum** on the meaning and importance of the Nativity Scene.

The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a presepe, from the Latin word praesepium, meaning "manger". Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food" (Sermon 189, Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the "Poor Man of Assisi" had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The Franciscan Sources describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire "to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay". At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present. This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery. Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, "everyone went home with joy". Full version [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

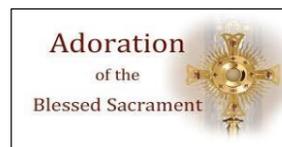
**ST. BRIGID'S CHURCH** Caroline & Helena are kindly assisting with the Christmas Day Mass and are looking for children to help with singing the carols. There will be a practice on Monday at 7:30pm so please join with us and adults may join in song too. It is important a parent or guardian of each child be present during the practice. Thanks. Contact 0872466624 to know more.



**MASS OFFERTORY COLLECTION: ST. JOSEPH'S € 290.00 ST. BRIGID'S €490.00**  
**PARISH DEVELOPMENT FUND (weekly envelopes): €587.50**



**RIP** Joe Mooney, Raharney.  
Pauline Cunningham, Riverstown.  
Margaret Browne, Athboy.  
Willie 'Mighty' Quinn, London.



**Adoration**  
of the  
Blessed Sacrament  
In St. Joseph's Tuesday 1pm-9pm.  
& St. Brigid's Wed. 6pm-10pm:  
*Special Diocesan intention of prayer  
for vocations and the family.*

**TO ASSIST NEXT WEEK**

**ST. BRIGID'S Ministers of Holy Communion:** 6pm. Douglas Hynes & Mary Leech. 10am. Declan weir, Noel & Marie Greville. Ministers of the Word: 6pm. Catherine Doyle. 10am. Liz Naughton.

**ST. JOSEPH'S Ministers of Holy Communion:** 11:30am. Maura McAulliffe, Mary Briody & Sharon Fitzpatrick. Minister of the Word: 11:30am Des Smyth.

**HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE** From 1-9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 follow in the Footsteps of Jesus and experience the sacred sites of the Gospel. The pilgrimage will begin in Tiberius/Galilee and the surrounding region where Jesus called His disciples and first proclaimed the Good News. Pilgrims will then continue to Jerusalem and take excursions to the wider district, including Bethlehem. Fr. Mark English will be Spiritual Director for this pilgrimage which is provided by Navan Travel. For more details on full itinerary, costs and booking contact 046-9068600; email: [info@travalue.ie](mailto:info@travalue.ie) or check out [www.travalue.ie](http://www.travalue.ie).

**GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS** Donations towards decorating the cribs and the cost of flowers would be much appreciated or indeed if you wish to leave in holly or any kind of fresh red flowers for arrangements please leave them at the church sacristies by Saturday morning. Thanks!



**COMMUNITY NOTES**  
**The Apostolic Works Society** wish to thank everyone who supported the recent Bingo Night and those who generously donated prizes.