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MASS INTENTIONS:

ST. JOSEPH'S, RATHWIRE.

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

Christmas Eve Children's Mass 6pm Missa pro populo

Christmas Day 11:30am Missa pro populo

Sunday 11:30am *Feast of the Holy Family* Missa pro populo

ST. BRIGID'S, RAHARNEY.

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

Christmas Eve 9am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Mass 9pm Missa pro populo

Christmas Day 10am Missa pro populo

Saturday 6pm *Feast of the Holy Family* Missa pro populo (*Mass for the People of the Parish*)

Sunday 10am *Feast of the Holy Family* Missa pro populo

Mass St. Stephen's Day & Friday 'Feast of St. John' in the Camillians

Confessions: Fridays after Mass and Saturdays after the Vigil Mass

CONFESSIONS CHRISTMAS EVE
St. Joseph's Rathwire 10 – 10:45am
Cathedral of Christ the King Mullingar
12noon – 4pm

CHRISTMAS EVE
Midnight Mass with the Camillians



The windows on the Advent Calendar are all opened; the Jesse Tree is complete; the Cribs all set up; the countdown is almost over, everything is ready; school and work are paused for holidays; our thoughts are now with our families celebrating the gift of Life and remembering those with God in Heaven. Gathering to honour the nativity of Our Saviour let us give thanks to God and count our blessings! Christmas - a time of faith, hope and love! For most of us it is a happy time but in prayer we support those who have to cope with illness or other tough concerns. Know that God is with you - Emmanuel; Christ the Lord. A sincere word of thanks to the local St. Vincent de Paul Society and to all volunteers who so generously contribute to making Christmas a little less stressed and a lot happier for those most in need in our community. I also want to thank the many parishioners who assist with the pastoral, spiritual and financial needs of our parish, especially with looking after the churches, helping at the Masses, sharing in the work at the parish office, the parish grounds, the cemeteries and in the parish schools throughout the year. Special greetings to those home for Christmas and to new parishioners spending their first Christmas with us here in Rathwire, Killucan and Raharney. May the Light of Christ, also bring consolation for those mourning the death of loved ones since last Christmas. Assuring you of my prayers and wishing you and your families, peace and joy as you celebrate our Saviour's Birthday. Fr. Mark.



Setting up the Christmas crèche (crib) in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche (crib) helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts. In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46). We come to the cave/stable, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor.

The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat", Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod's threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all. The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives. "Life was made manifest" (1 Jn 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche (crib) allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ. God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Admirabile Signum* - on the meaning and importance of the Nativity Scene.



MASS OFFERTORY COLLECTION: ST. JOSEPH'S € 300.00 ST. BRIGID'S €345.00
PARISH DEVELOPMENT FUND (weekly envelopes): €502.50

RIP Jimmy Rooney, Grehanstown

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 Christmas Eve:* 9pm Michael Carey, Phil Tiffit & Mary Leech. *Minister of the Word:* Maureen O'Neill. *Christmas Day:* 10am Peter Fagan, Edward Fox & Martina Mockler. *Minister of the Word:* Criostoir O'Brien. *Next Weekend Ministers of Holy Communion:* 6pm Douglas Hynes & Mary Leech. 10am Molly Doyle, Clifford Naughton & Paul O' Looney. *Ministers of the Word:* 6pm Rebecca Smyth. 10am. Sally Coyne.
ST. JOSEPH'S *Ministers of Holy Communion Christmas Eve:* 6pm. 4 volunteers required at the sacristy beforehand. *Minister of the Word:* Marguerite McGauran *Christmas Day:* 11:30am Jimmy Garty, Barbara Gough & Johanna Farrell. *Minister of the Word:* Patricia Doyle. *Next Weekend Ministers of Holy Communion:* 11:30am Rose Mullen, Erica Hynes & Marie Leavy. *Minister of the Word:* Annette Farrell

All kindly check in at the sacristy before Mass

KILLUCAN S.V.P.
Tel: 086-0706571
Check out St. Vincent's Shop

CHILD SAFEGUARDING
See the church notice boards and diocesan website.

ACCORD
For Marriage Preparation Courses or for marriage and relationship counselling www.accord.ie

VOCATIONS CORNER
Ever think about becoming a priest for the Diocese of Meath? www.dioceseofmeath.ie/vocations