

Readers: Sat. 6.30 p.m. Padhraic Moran; 8.30 Colin Ahearne; 11.00 Aisling Bryan

Holy Day: Tues. 6.30 p.m. Sean Bryan; Wed. 8.30 a.m. Lizzy Keher; 11.00 a.m. Ailis Carey.

Eucharistic Ministers: 6.30 p.m. Breda Coady & Nellie Lynch; Bridie Metcalf, Paul Clarke & Kathleen Carroll.

Important dates in 2016: First Communion: Sunday 15 May. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, 10 February. Easter Sunday 27 March 2016.

Cemetery Masses as usual: Kilbride – last Friday of June, 8 p.m.; Coolagh – first Friday of July 8 p.m.; Newtown: last Friday of July 7.30 p.m..

Looking forward to a bright New Year: Many people are glad to have gotten through Christmas. At both religious and cultural levels Christmas is par excellence the feast of the family. For some families this can be a very challenging time especially if family relationships are under strain and children are caught in the middle. Agencies working with families tell us that family discord and tension often are often at their highest over Christmas period.

For priests Christmas is a very demanding time, and particularly so this year when Christmas ran immediately into a weekend. In Callan it meant nine Masses + a funeral in Kilkenny to attend + 3 christenings between 6p.m. on Thurs. (Christmas Eve) and 12.00 noon on Sunday. The problem that most priests find with Christmas is that they are already truly exhausted by the time Christmas Eve arrives with visitation of sick and housebound, nursing homes, hospitals in Kilkenny and Waterford, schools, BOM meetings for schools, home for elderly, funerals & other functions one is expected to attend. Twenty years ago Callan had 2 or 3 priests + 4 Friars + visiting to share out

these tasks; now there is only one priest and every Christmas adds another year to the calendar. The body clock does not stop. Memory isn't as sharp as it once was; last minute announcements or notices get mislaid or mixed up in Christmas mail. What was the norm 20 years ago is manifestly past tense today and what is perceived as the norm today will be past tense within five years from now unless miracles happen. This is the reality we must face.

Feast of Epiphany, Wed. Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>; Holy Day of Obligation: vigil Mass on Tuesday at 6.30 p.m.; Wed. 8.30 a.m.; 11.00 a.m.. Holy day Mass in Coolagh & Newtown subsumed into weekend Masses.

The spiritual meaning of Epiphany: This feast marks the coming of the Three Kings or Three Wise Men. In the Eastern Church this is celebrated as Christmas while in the West we often refer to it as "Little Christmas" or 'Nollaig na mBan'. The biblical story of the star leading the wise men is one that touches a chord and holds a profound message for people of every generation. Although they were 'wise men', left to their own innate wisdom they were unable to find where the Messiah had been born. The intrigue of King Herod didn't help either. There are still plenty of Herod figures about with their own vested interests. Ultimately they were forced to fall back on the priests and scribes who in turn had to consult the Scriptures to find out where the Messiah was to be born. In other words human wisdom can take us only so far along the journey of life; if we are to complete that journey we too must turn to that wisdom from on high which the Scriptures alone can supply. Human wisdom no matter how impressive it might appear at the time is less than perfect and will ultimately fail us. Maybe this explains what is happening in our broken world right now. Have we vested too much faith in man and too little in God?

Westcourt News: January Mass for the blessings canonisation of Blessed Edmund Rice will take place in Westcourt on Monday 4 January at 7.30 p.m.. Callan Active Retirement is hosting the Mass. All are welcome. Happy New Year to all. Br. Damien

New Year Greetings & word of thanks: I would like to wish all parishioners a very happy New Year and to thank you for your support over the course of the year. A special word of thanks to all who have already contributed to the Christmas Envelope Collection towards the support of priests, active and retired. You can still drop in your contribution to the basket at weekends or directly into the presbytery. We have an ever increasing number of older and retired priests and many already in nursing home care. Part of your contribution goes towards supporting them also. A word of thanks to all who have contributed towards the upkeep and running expenses of the parish. These overheads are increasing all the time. Our insurers Allianz has hiked our insurance premium this year, particularly for Coolagh and Newtown in a bid to recoup the cost of re-building Longford Cathedral. The premium for the parish church has remained much the same.

Prayer for the New Year: Lord, as I quench the lamp and close the door on the past year, may I find the words of gratitude to honour this passing time; the gift of your design. For all that's come and gone, for decisions right and wrong, for unsung songs, I offer words of thanks. For days when life had plenty, for nights when hearts were empty; for undiscovered plains, when all was ventured but nothing gained. Through struggle and through pain, may we learn to rise again. Now at this threshold time make our hearts refined to dream new dreams beyond our imagining. May we step into places where courage will take us beyond our limited spaces. May we never lose the courage to seek for a better world where no child will cry hungry, while another is bored with too much. Where war is remembered in hushed tones, a

memory of forgotten days. Where colour and creed can celebrate with pride in their different ways. And may your gentleness O Lord, exude from every heart. May this new year be a year of many blessings where new vision will transform the paralysed places of lonely hearts. Where we will discover the hidden beauty of each soul, all who cross our pathways and if we meet with sorrow may we find an inner light to guide us to the bright place in the company of friends and family, in the company of love. May each moment of every month unveil your abiding presence in beautiful surprises, reawakening the child within each one of us. Lord, bless all we hold so dear that you might guide our way at the birthing of the year. Liam Lawton

New Year Resolutions: At this time of year our attention invariably re-focuses on day-to-day health and life issues. Slimming classes will be crowded in the aftermath of the festive season and joggers will be everywhere to be seen. Some interesting statistics have been coming to light recently. Life expectancy levels are being pushed out – 78.3 years for a man and 83 years for a woman. Experts in the UK are telling us that if people followed a healthy lifestyle while still young one in four could live well until the age of 100 and some could even have a life expectancy of 120 years. At this time of year the experts recommend several basic steps aimed at improving health and longevity. Eat less. A calorie restricted diet can slow the ageing process and make people less prone to disease. Stay connected: Meet regularly with family, friends and neighbours who make you feel relaxed and happy. Isolation is a slow form of premature death. Exercise every day: Nothing can replace exercise. Walk whenever possible. Leave the car at home. Eat lots of fish: The omega fatty acids found in salmon, mackerel and trout is good for our overall health. Postpone retirement for later.