

*"No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child."*

# Ennis Parish Link

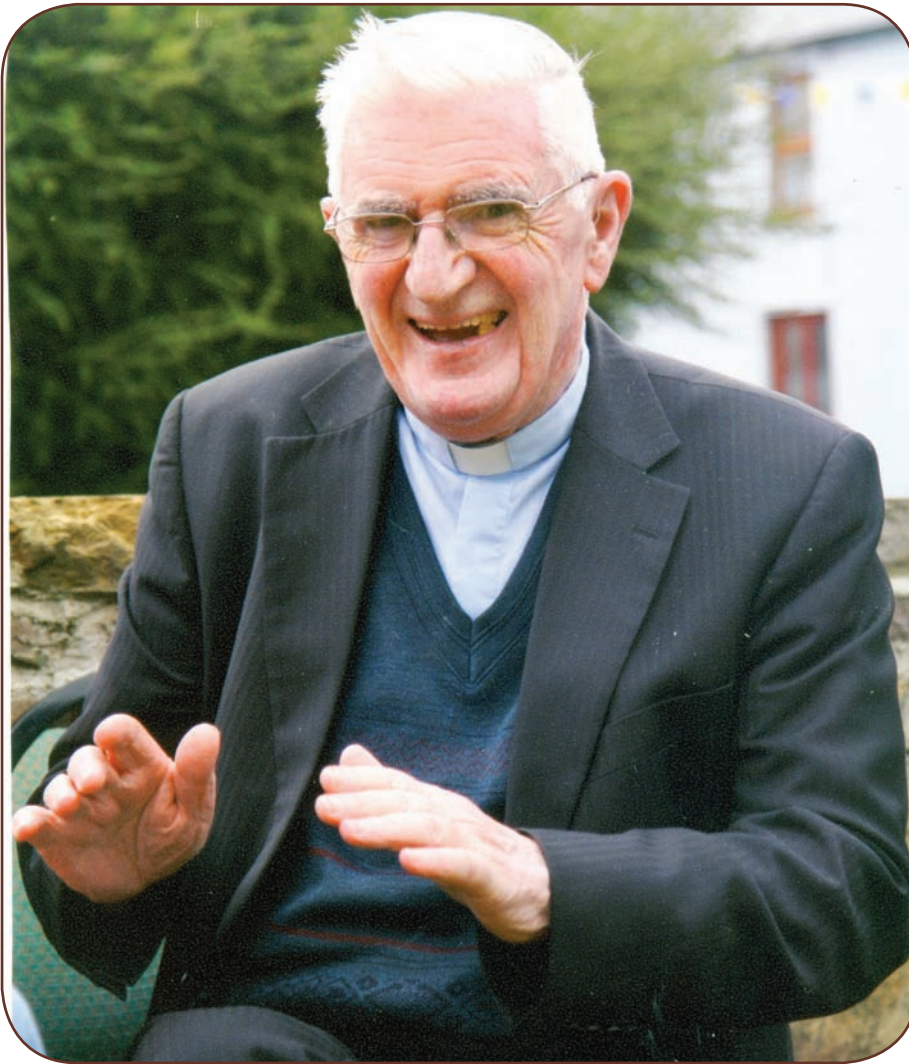
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Issue 52





## One of our very own



The days when having a priest in the family was common experience are fast disappearing in Ireland. Here, the nephew of a cleric says a fond farewell to his uncle – and to a way of life. Amid the clutter on the desk in my study at home – the stapler, the notebooks, the bills – is a priest's stole. A few weeks ago in Ireland my priest uncle Paddy O'Brien died. After the funeral my brother Ciaran asked me if there was something of Paddy's that I would like to bring back to London with me. I chose the stole. I wanted to have a memory of a time when our family had a priest of its own. In Ireland of the 1940s and 1950s the priesthood claimed many of its brightest and best young men. Richie, my Jesuit uncle, a Celtic Studies graduate, went – improbably – to convert China. After the 1949 revolution, he was evacuated to Hong Kong, and spent a lifetime teaching the sons of the colony's middle-classes. Another uncle, Brendan, who had an entrepreneur's dash about him, became a Holy Ghost Father. He was sent to Kenya, where he worked in parishes and schools, negotiating grants from the Government to

expand teacher training college places in the newly independent state. In another life he might have been a banker or an industrialist. But Paddy stayed at home and was ordained for the diocese of Killaloe. The Mass leaflet for his funeral briefly summarised his life: Maynooth....teaching staff of the diocesan boarding school....director of church music... parish priest...canon of the diocese. This was the formal story. He was a gifted organist and choirmaster and a more than passable cocktail bar pianist (he had a choir of friends, who called themselves 'The Non-Commitments'). Because our other clerical relatives were so far away, Paddy was the priest – and music-maker – that we knew as children and later as adults. He had an enormous lumbering Grundig tape-recorder on which he recorded our childhood voices, along with family message-tapes to our priest-relatives abroad. This was at a time when inter-continental calls were rare; these tapes are now a family sound archive which we prize. There is a 'micro-climate' of the priesthood, that aspect of the priest's life that faces

inwardly to his own family. Paddy was the priest who christened us, married us and heard our sad stories. He must have had the most complete sense of our family's complexities. He negotiated with great tact the order of service for an inter-faith marriage with my wife Suzie (who's Jewish) and me, before spiriting us off to a remote spots on the West Clare coast. We still remember the happiness of that day and the name of the beach: Poll na Sagart (lit. The bathing place of the priests).

I remember making my confession to him at the breakfast table on my wedding day. Then there was a family Mass at home to give me a 'send-off'. These Masses were part and parcel of our big family days (in this case it was because there would not be a Mass at our wedding later in the day in church). And it wasn't just on such days. Several months ago, I sat across the dining-room table from Paddy in our old family home in Clare. There were just two of us for Mass: I answered the responses and read the lessons. We remembered our dead and prayed for our living. The Canon was the Old Eucharistic Prayer II. (Paddy did not appreciate the new translations and I felt a charge of emotion when the old translation with its spare elegance was used at Mass on the evening his body was brought to the church). All my life I had taken this kitchen-closeness to the Eucharist for granted. I knew that morning that there would not be many more days like that one. What surprises me now is my intense sense of loss. I had not expected it. No more will this particular sacramental intimacy weave itself through our family rituals. No more will I pick up the phone to Paddy in the mid-evening to gossip, lament, confess, discharge. I cannot be alone in my loss. It was a common-place for Irish families like ours to have priest members (and, I imagine, for similar families throughout old Catholic Europe). But it was a particular world that made this possible. My grandparents were teachers (as were many priests' parents in mid twentieth century Ireland) and they encouraged their boys to value the priesthood. A 'vocation' was prized. In an inward-looking society, the priesthood was an outward-looking – even adventurous – possibility. That world is gone and we will not have priests. Or, in as far as we do, they will be distantly-glimpsed figures met, if at all, for a fleeting moment after Sunday Mass. The loss of that intimate connection with the Mass and the priesthood is my family's loss, certainly. But it may also be a significant loss for the broader church. If people do not meet priests, know them socially, know them in

their 'down-time', it is perhaps less likely that they will consider priesthood as an option for themselves. More likely, perhaps, family events that used to be marked sacramentally now may not be. The Irish poet Dennis O'Driscoll, who died at the beginning of this year, lamented the loss of the old rich symbols: His grace is no longer called for before meals: farmed fish multiply without His intercession. When we do mark events sacramentally, will we do it (when we do it) with formality – and a loss of domesticity? Catholicism is a religion of the hearth and for me it is its domesticity that makes it possible – and lovable. While I can appreciate high liturgy, I have been spoiled; no solemn Mass can ever come close to a charged moment across a kitchen table. We said goodbye to Paddy on a late autumn day. We wound our way through the country church-yard where he would be buried beside his predecessors in his East Clare parish. His fellow priests sang the Salve Regina. After the

final blessing, his coffin was lowered into the ground. In this part of Ireland it is still the custom to fill the grave before the mourners leave. My brothers and I each took a spade and emptied several shovelfuls of clay over the coffin. Afterwards I talked to the bishop. I told him (he would not have known) that I had once been a seminarian for that very diocese of Killaloe. I had left Maynooth, because I felt the priesthood was – precisely – wrong for me. Nonetheless at various times since the instinct for priesthood has tugged at me – and it tugged at me at that very moment. My response that day was emotional, not rational. I would still be wrong in the part. But I felt – and still feel - a great sadness, and not just for my uncle and for my own 'what ifs'. Of the fifty or so priests there that day, few can have been under sixty – and many were much older. They remain for now part of the good beating heart of Irish Catholicism. But they are a vanishing breed. I cannot step into the line to replace them.

But I fervently hoped that in the fading light of that October evening that others would, who in their ways would renew the informal kitchen Catholicism that nurtured me and to which I owe so much.

**Acknowledgement: 'One our very own', Written by Brendan McCarthy - published in The Tablet on 9th November 2013.**

## Friary Christmas Message

We Friars in Ennis are all "blow ins". Some like Brother Elzear, "blew in" over thirty years ago. Some, like Fr. Cletus have blown in and out of Ennis a few times over a number of years. Our novices, Brothers Damian, Richard and Ronan "blew in" in early September 2013. Being members of the Franciscan fraternity we have the privilege of sharing in the lives of the people of Ennis and further afield and inevitably the threads of our lives are woven into the stories of many, many people in Ennis and in the wider county. That is a great blessing for us as a fraternity. This year the "blow-ins" shared the joy and excitement of the whole county as the Senior and Under 21 hurling teams triumphed. On the Saturday of the replay I recall how eerily quiet the Friary Office was and the street outside, just before the match began, and the amazing sense of pride and celebration that followed that evening. It was a golden summer, one of those summers that will be woven into our memories for years to come. Events like Clare winning the Liam McCarthy Cup this year, and in such style, become part of our own individual stories. November 22nd this year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of President Kennedy. For decades people have said, "I remember where I was when I heard President Kennedy was shot". With the passage of time it's a memory fewer and fewer people share. For younger people the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 has had a similar impact; people remember

watching in disbelief as they witnessed something that would change history. The great events, those which bring us joy and those which shock us always make an impact, but inevitably they pass out of living memory and into the history books. Whether it's the day you heard about the Kennedy assassination, or the day Clare won the All Ireland, you simply "had to be there," to live through it. The one exception in history is the event of Jesus Christ. His birth is welcomed by people of every age and from everywhere. His life and His death have meaning for all people of all times. Jesus has never passed into history; no one comes too late to know Him or to share in His story, which is the Love Story of God for all humanity and all creation. Each Christmas Eve, we follow the "blow-ins" who find nowhere to shelter but a cave. We take our places around the crib to witness the most ordinary scene, the birth of a baby into a cold and unfriendly world. Few people noticed it when it happened two thousand years ago; but it will renew for us who have faith this Christmas. May the peace and joy of this Holy Season be with you and your family and loved ones and may you know God's love for you in the child born in Bethlehem, born for you and for me. On behalf of the Franciscan Community I thank you for your continued support for our life and ministry and in the words of St. Francis I wish you "Peace and all good" this Christmas and in the New Year.

Fr. Liam Kelly OFM, Guardian.





# New Ennis Facilities for Older People



Construction is progressing at great speed on the new facilities for older people, in lands donated by the Diocese of Killaloe, adjacent to Cahercalla Community Hospice and Hospital known as "Cuan an Chláir". The facilities include a day care facility for 60 people daily and 12 individual houses. The construction of the houses is funded by the Department of Environment. The new day care facility will be operated by Clarecare, who currently provide limited facilities in the Community Centre Chapel Lane for older people in the Ennis Area.

The new day care centre is being funded totally by voluntary donations. To date €750,000 has been raised through the generosity of community groups and individuals, leaving €600,000 to be raised.

The 12 houses at Cuan an Chláir will be allocated to a mix of married couples, single and widowed people. A future phase of development of the project will see the conversion of the old farm yard buildings, adjacent to the site, to provide a Cafe, meeting rooms, a garden and other appropriate facilities.

If you wish to check out the progress of the Cuan an Chláir project, visit [www.ennisparish.com](http://www.ennisparish.com) and take a look at the gallery section for recently taken photographs of the construction phase.

**Photo: Presentation of Cheque for €10,000 from Ennis Lions Club to the Cuan Project.**



# Message from Poor Clares

With the dark nights and the bright Christmas lights, once again we re-visit the life-giving event and celebration of the Incarnation, when God comes humbly to dwell among us. Christmas reminds us that we are not alone, that God is with us on the journey through the world. Yes, we look for and to the Light of lights, who alone can bring us hope and true peace. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who has captured the world by his mercy, joy and compassion, reminds us with gospel simplicity:

*'that even we tonight, if we open our hearts  
may contemplate the miracle of light in the midst of darkness,  
the miracle of the strength of God in the midst of fragility,  
the miracle of supreme greatness in the midst of humbleness.'*

Children have that innate capacity to absorb this wonder, the magic (what we call 'mystery') ... and gaze upon the Lord of lords in the crib. We know too, that it is the crib of our hearts that God has come to seek out and make 'His dwelling place.' So in this beautiful season which 'engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love' since we have received the greatest gift our heart will ever receive - God's Son, Emmanuel! - we your Poor Clare sisters, aware of the warmth and certainty of God's love for each one of you, our dear friends, benefactors and good people of our parish and way beyond, pray blessings of deep peace and confidence during this festive season. May the new Year confirm for each one of you that Christmas is ever present. God has come to stay with us... Happy, happy be your Christmas.

Sr. Gabrielle



# Polish Christmas Message

*"The Saviour of the world has come down from heaven. Let us rejoice!  
This proclamation, filled with deep rejoicing,  
echoed in the night of Bethlehem.  
Today the Church renews it with unchanged joy:  
the Saviour is born for us!  
Come and stay with us, Lord!  
May the joy of your Nativity reach  
to the farthest ends of the universe!"*

John Paul II

Bóg zesłał na świat swego Syna, byśmy mogli wtulić się w Jego ramiona. Dziękujmy Bogu za Jego niepojętą, niezwykłą miłość. Dziękujmy Mu za przepiękny dar Bożego Narodzenia, za Świętą Miłość. Wtulmy się dziś z ufnością w ramiona Boga, który stał się dla nas człowiekiem. Chrystus pragnie narodzić się w naszych sercach. Chce, abyśmy w Nim znajdowali wypełnienie wszystkich naszych tęsknot i pragnień, które zwłaszcza na emigracji są naszym szczególnym doświadczeniem. Jako Wcielone Słowo rozumie On nasz ból i cierpienie wynikające z emigracyjnej rozłąki. Myślami powracamy do naszych domów rodzinnych, do Ojczyzny. Niech rodzinna atmosfera, której w szczególnie sposób doświadczamy w Wigilijny wieczór i w czasie Świąt Bożego Narodzenia, umacnia miłość, która ma moc przemieniać świat. Niech się spełnią również wszystkie życzenia wypowiedziane przy wigilijnym stole. Niech te święta będą okazją do bycia razem, wspólnego śpiewania kolęd, rozmowy, okazywania sobie wzajemnie przyjaźni i życzliwości. Życzę wszystkim Bożej miłości. Radosnych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia i szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!

Ks. Dariusz Płasek

God sent his Son into the world so that we can be held in his arms. So thank God for His incredible, extraordinary love. We thank Him for this wonderful Christmas gift of Sacred Love, we nestle today with confidence in the arms of God who became man for us. Christ wants to be born in our hearts to fulfill all our longings and desires that we feel when we are away from our homeland. As the Word Incarnate, He understands our homesickness, resulting from emigration, when our thoughts return to our homes in Poland. Let the family atmosphere, which we experience in a special way this Christmas season, strengthen in us God's love that has the power to change the world and may all our Christmas wishes at our Christmas Eve table be fulfilled. May this season be an opportunity for us to be together, singing carols, chatting, showing each other friendship and kindness.

I wish everyone God's love. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.  
Fr. Dariusz Płasek



# Baby Crying



The scene is familiar. A baby is sleeping.  
His mother's worn out. It's been a hard day.  
A few hours before she was groaning and weeping,  
just a child, giving birth in the usual way.

The place doesn't matter, except it's not cosy  
the way that the prettiest Christmas cards say,  
with kings humbly kneeling, the stable all rosy,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Forget the carol constructed so neatly—  
the cattle are lowing, the baby awakes.  
Forget the Sundayschool singing so sweetly  
that little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

The baby is crying. The baby is human  
and the baby is God and he cries with the shock.  
He cries for the keys to his coming kingdom.  
He cries for the devil who first picked the lock.

He cries for the mother whose heart will be broken.  
He cries for the children that Herod will find.  
He cries for the father whose fears are unspoken  
but for ever will trouble his uncertain mind.

He cries for food in a land ploughed by famine.  
He cries for freedom behind a barred door.  
He cries for a judge who will come and examine  
the reasons for sin and the causes of war.

He cries for the rich, who on hearing him crying  
lean over and say There now, give us a smile!  
He cries for the camps full of refugees dying—  
his tears are the Congo, the Danube, the Nile.

He cries for all pharisees, each of them giving  
the reasons why sadly they have to refuse.  
He cries out for Lazarus, both dead and living.  
He cries for two thousand years of excuse

and our patience is thin as a sliver of glass  
as we fear this child's crying will never die down.  
It slithers through time as a snake slips through grass:  
he would cry us an ocean in which we would drown

except it subsides. The baby is quiet.  
The stillness returns to the Judaeen night.  
Whatever is coming he will not defy it  
for he came after all to put everything right.

He cries for the strength that he needs to prepare him  
to learn obedience in thirty long years.  
Good Friday will come. Death will not spare him:  
the world will at last be baptised with his tears

and his crying at night is his effort to waken  
the sleeping and dead whom he came to live through.  
He cries to the God who must leave him forsaken.  
He cries out to me. He cries out to you.

# Message from *Bishop Kieran*

Dear Parishioners,

Christmas has come around again and with the coming of this special time in the life of the Church I am delighted to send you and your families greetings and good wishes.

The past year has been a very special year for the Church - the election of Pope Francis has brought a new wave of enthusiasm to church life and a call to each one of us to proclaim the Joy of the Gospel through the witness of our lives.

The Year of Faith, now concluded, was marked in the Diocese by two significant events: a Symposium in March to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the 2nd Vatican Council and the Faith Gathering in September to celebrate our faith. My thanks to the parishioners of Ennis who contributed enormously to the success of both events and made those who attended from around the diocese very welcome.

At the Faith Gathering, the Diocesan Plan 2013-2020 was launched. This is the blueprint for our diocese for the coming years. I hope that you will share in the vision outlined in the plan and participate in its practical application.

As we gather with family and friends in different church communities over this Christmas please let us not forget those who may need our care and support at this time, it may be someone in the neighbourhood - look around your neighbourhood and reach out to that person who may need extra support and companionship at this time.

May each one experience the Joy of the Gospel and become agents of the Gospel Joy in our lives this Christmas and throughout 2014.

Seasons blessings to all parishioners at home in Ennis and to those who are far away this Christmas and New Year.

Le Beannachtaí an Linbh um Nollaig ar fad na hAthbhlíana.

Bishop Kieran, Christmas 2013



## *Zacheus and the Sycamore Tree*



In St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 19:4 we read "so he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus who was going to pass that way."

Sycamore Fig (its official name - *Ficus sycomorus*). Is known as the common Sycamore. This species of Maple is common in Ireland. There was, and hopefully still is, an ancient sycamore at Cloneivagh, County Laois on the main Limerick-Dublin Road, site of St. Fintan's Monastery.

The Sycamore Fig is a strong growing wide spreading tree. It grows to 30 or 40 feet tall, with a short main stem and branches near the ground making it very easy to climb, for this reason Zacchaeus chose it. It is evergreen, frequently planted along roadsides, heart shaped fragrant leaves, fruit produced in cluster, like the common Fig, used as food in Palestine and Egypt, especially among the poor. The wood is soft and porous but very durable. It is frequently planted along roadsides to provide shade and has a long life. According to a legend Jesus, Mary and Joseph during their flight to Egypt rested under the shade of a Sycamore Fig.

Br. Sean McNamara.



# Bulletin Board



## ECUMENICAL CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 22nd December  
7pm Cathedral  
with  
Combined  
Parish Choirs.

## CONFIRMATION 2014

28th Feb	Scoil Chriost Rí
28th Feb	Gaelscoil
1st March	Holy Family
8th March	Ennis National
8th March	CBS & St. Anne's



## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Tuesday February 11th Mass of Healing and Anointing in St. Joseph's at 11am.

## TAIZÉ PILGRIMAGE 2014

Sun 6th July to Tues 15th July  
€465 all inclusive.  
Contact: Fr. Jerry Carey @ 086 2508444.



Taizé Prayer:

On 1st Thursday of each month at 7.45pm in Church of Our Lady, Roslevan.

## PARISH STATISTICS 2013

Baptisms:	231
Weddings:	33
<b>Confirmations:</b>	<b>220</b>
Deaths:	136

## CHRISTMAS MASSES

Cathedral of SS Peter & Paul  
Christmas Eve: 6.30pm Children's Mass.  
Christmas Eve: 9pm - Vigil Mass.  
Midnight Polish Community Mass.  
Christmas Day:  
9am; 10.30am & 12noon.  
10.30am Children's Mass: National School.  
Christmas Day: 3pm Polish Mass.  
St. Joseph's Church  
Christmas Eve: 5.30pm Children's Mass.  
Christmas Eve: 7pm - Vigil Mass  
Christmas Day: 8am; 10am & 11.30am.  
Cloughleigh Church  
Christmas Eve: 9pm - Vigil Mass.  
Christmas Day: 9.30am; 11am  
Friary  
Christmas Eve: 10pm Carols start 9.30pm.  
Christmas Day: 9.30am; 10.30am & 12noon  
Poor Clare Monastery  
Christmas Eve: 9pm - Vigil Mass  
Christmas Day: 7.45am

No Evening Mass Christmas Day in Ennis



## Sacrament Of Reconciliation The Cathedral

Confessions: 24th: 10.30am-1pm & 2pm-5.30pm.

### St. Joseph's

Confessions: 24th: 2pm - 4pm.

### The Friary

Confessions: 11am - 12.30pm; 3pm - 5.30pm  
Mon 23rd & Tues 24th  
11am - 1pm; 2pm - 5.30pm;

## Penitential Services

### Cathedral:

Monday 16th December at 7.30pm.  
(No evening Mass)

### Friary:

Tuesday 17th December 10.30am  
Wednesday 18th December 1.05pm.  
(instead of the usual 1.05pm Mass)  
No Confessions after Christmas until January 2nd.

## Daily Masses Christmas Week

### Cathedral:

12noon & 7.30pm Christmas week

### St. Joseph's:

11am: Christmas week

Cloughleigh: 9.30am (weekdays).

Friary: 10am Christmas week

Poor Clare Monastery:

8.30am (weekdays).



## PRAY OUT THE OLD YEAR PRAY IN THE NEW YEAR

### CATHEDRAL

31st December  
@ 11.30pm.

## FIRST HOLY COMMUNION 2014

26th April	Educate Together
10th May	Gaelscoil
10th May	Ennis National
17th May	CBS
17th May	Scoil Chriost Rí
17th May	Holy Family



## LENT & EASTER

Ash Wednesday	5th March
Easter Sunday	20th April

## DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE LOURDES 2014

Summer:

June 26th to July 1st.

Autumn:

October 7th to 12th.

Contact:

Fr. Tom Ryan at 061-364133.

## SAMARITANS

People can contact the Samaritans by phoning 1850 60 90 90, email jo@samaritans.org, write to Pat or Mary, Samaritans, Sunville, Kilrush Rd, Ennis.