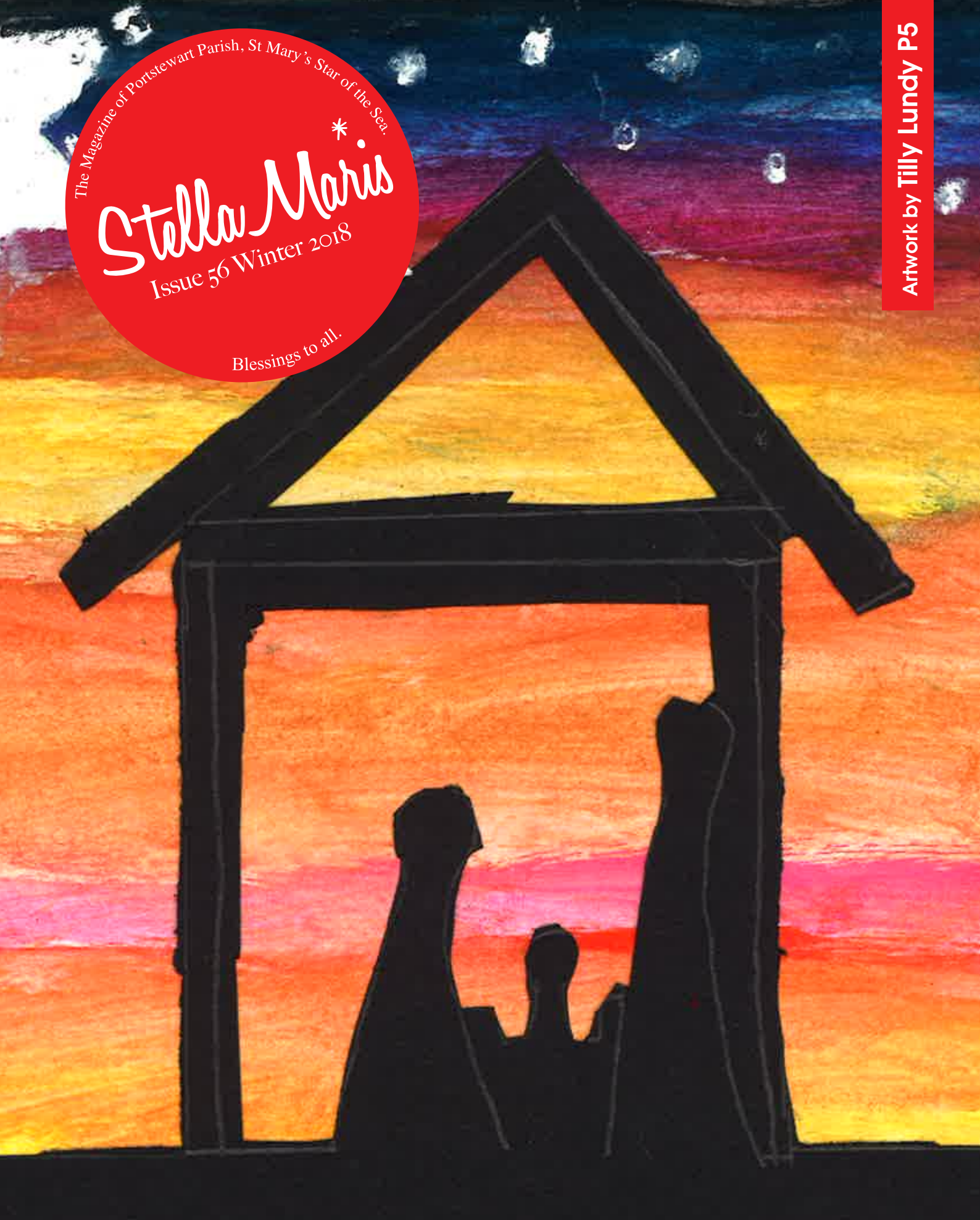


The Magazine of Portstewart Parish, St Mary's Star of the Sea.
Stella Maris
Issue 56 Winter 2018
Blessings to all.

Artwork by Tilly Lundy P5



Inside this issue

Deacon Terry

Fab Fundraiser

Angels These Days

Here it is! The Christmas edition of the parish magazine is in your hands. As Parish Priest I feel



a great sense of gratitude to Patricia Farren who was the editor of the magazine for the past six years and to Bryan Rooney who once again has taken on the mantel. Patricia and Sean are people with a great interest in the parish community and what makes it tick. Patricia always knew who to ask to get an interesting slant on Portstewart happenings and her husband Sean continues to be a dedicated and creative member of our Parish Pastoral Council.

Bryan is a retired teacher of English in Dominican College and is happily married to Margaret. Bryan has a dark past when he was one of the young writers for D.C. Thomson of Dundee, publishers of such worthy tomes as The Dandy and The Beano. Maybe we'll get that story from him someday! Naturally, editors need something to edit, and I am also deeply grateful to all the contributors of photographs and articles, Adrian our graphic designer, as well as the people who deliver the Stella Maris to the home of every parishioner on our list. Extra copies are available from the parish office.

Christmas is a time for discovering that it is better to give than to receive. We are a gift to others all year round; gifting our time, our talents, and our treasure. Christ was born for us to show us and tell us that giving ourselves is the pathway to eternal life. "I have told you all this so that my joy may be in you" He said (John 15:11). Thank you to all in our parish who give themselves. A Happy Christmas is yours!

Fr Austin

A Happy Christmas to all our Readers

Firstly, Christmas joy and peace to all our readers from the magazine team. We have no doubt all of you had a very busy and challenging 2018. It was a year memorable for many things – faith highlights included Pope Francis' visit to Ireland and - closer to home - the ordination of the first Deacon from our own parish, Deacon Terry Butcher.

Of course, the passing of time always brings change and we have just recently lost a key member of our magazine personnel. Patricia Farren, who has been our Stella Maris editor for the last six years has decided to stand down and take a break from the pressure of printer's deadlines. The parish appreciates all you accomplished over the past few years, Patricia. Our readers will miss your valuable contributions – you always got the job done with flair and efficiency. The parish magazine is better because of your dedicated support and creative mind. We are confident that we can build on what you achieved because of your excellent example and leadership. May you and your family have a wonderful Christmas and a great New Year.

Finally, to all our fellow parishioners - we hope you will enjoy leafing through the pages of our latest issue – thanks for reading, and may 2019 be kind to you and yours as well.

The Editor

ST. MARY'S STAR OF THE SEA, PORTSTEWART CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2018

Wednesday 19 December	Dominican College Carol Service	7.30 pm
Friday 21 December	Reconciliation Service	7.30 pm
Monday 24 December Christmas Eve	Mass Carols Vigil Mass	9.30 am 8.30 pm 9.00 pm
Tuesday 25 December Christmas Day	Mass Mass	9.00 am 11.00 am
26 – 28 December	Mass	12.00 noon
Saturday 29 December	Mass Sunday Vigil Mass	12.00 noon 6.00 pm
Sunday 30 December	Mass Mass	9.00 am 11.00 am
Monday 31 December	Mass	12.00 noon
Tuesday 1 January	New Year's Day Mass for Peace Mass	12.00 noon
Sunday 6 January	Mass <i>Travelling Ecumenical Service starts at the Methodist Church</i>	9.00 am 11.30 am

Fab Fundraiser at Parish Centre

A Saturday Night Supper in aid of Friends of the Cancer Centre was held in our Parish Centre on the evening of 17th November.

Not only was it a very enjoyable and sociable evening for parishioners and non-parishioners alike, but almost £7000 was raised on the evening from ticket sales and the Prize Draw.

Mr Jim Kane received the cheque on behalf of the Friends of the Cancer Centre and talked about the positive impact the Centre had during his own cancer treatment.

Chef Extraordinaire, Peter Kerr, singlehandedly cooked for over 150

guests, with MC, Brendan McLarnon, presiding over the evening's events. A huge vote of thanks is due to both of them.

The fundraiser was the brainchild of Mary McKenna and Margaret Lynch, and together with Mary Kerr, Aileen Moore, Anne Morrison and Jill Mullan, the team organised an extremely successful event.

Many thanks also to the many helpers who transformed the Parish Hall in two hours, helped wait tables and stayed to clear up afterwards.



Habitat Hope Update

This year our Ulster University Habitat for Humanity team travelled to Malawi on the 4th of June 2018 for twelve days during which we were based in the southern region of Mulanje working as part of an Orphanage Project. We were warmly welcomed by the community and the team settled in well. We worked on two houses, which were almost completed and dedicated before we left.

The homeowners were two women, Diana and Cecilia. Diana is caring for her four grandchildren after the death of her daughter. Cecilia, just 18 years old, has twin boys and is also looking after her brother and sister after the death of their parents.

Their previous house was so poor it had to be demolished to build their new one and currently they were living with an aunt nearby. When we visited Diana's current house she was notably distressed as were many of the team but the transformation on the day of the

House Dedication was inspirational – smiles of hope all round!

The level of local poverty was striking and the fact we were based in a remote area emphasised the need for genuine community building. It was humbling to witness the hope Habitat brings and the resilience of people who seem to have so little and yet teach us so much about gratitude.

The team members were a privilege to work with and many have expressed a desire to stay involved with Habitat. The meaning of such an experience is suitably summed up in these words of personal reflection from one of the team:

“I will be forever thankful to Habitat for Humanity for giving me the chance to make a difference in these people's lives.”

Fr Raymond



Make a Wish, Father!

Habitat for Humanity stalwart, Fr Raymond, enjoyed a surprise celebration a few weeks ago as he reached a notable birthday milestone. Fr Raymond has been a vocal and energetic advocate of Habitat for many years and a huge asset to us all in the parish and far beyond. Many happy returns Fr Raymond from all of us.

Deacon Terry – My Journey

Ordination day on Sunday the 14th of October was an emotional day for me; the journey to that point, a spiritual rollercoaster. My mind was flooded with memories of my childhood, happy days of family occasions and this another that I would share with my family but potently aware of those who would be with us now only in spirit. I was very relaxed about the ceremony, which was a magnificent liturgy that took my breath away. I was filled with wonder and awe and became quite emotional at being blessed in such a manner. That day I felt and still feel very humbled by the love and grace that our God has bestowed on me and also by the wonderful welcome from my parish family and all who have wished me well. Being appointed to Portstewart parish is a very special privilege and the answer to so many people's prayers of support for which I thank you from my heart and soul.

I want to share a story with you a story on relationship which I also shared on the night of my installation to Portstewart. On September 8th I had a verbal comprehensive exam in Maynooth University. Four years of study in 30 minutes. Firstly, a Pastoral Theology presentation on the social concern of the Church, one of the eight subjects we studied in our academic course. The panel interjected questions making sure my words were coming from a place deeper than my lips. I had studied seven other topics, one from each of the other subjects; they would ask me questions on two. They chose Virtue from moral theology and Trinity from systematic theology.

A priest looked at me and said, "You are very brave to have chosen Trinity". I was not surprised because in my



experience, the Doctrinal theology on which our whole Christian Faith is built upon, is rarely discussed because it is theologically complex. And yet it is simply about relationship and there is one thing I have learned from my study, that I could never come to know God intellectually. For we can only come to know God through relationship with him! Information is not the same as transformation. However, it helps bring us to an understanding and prepare us to accept it. It is difficult to explain in words our own relationships, like marriage and family. Nobody really knows unless they are part of it and experience is the only way we can know the Blessed Trinity; through intimate relationship with God, because words are never enough! To experience God, we must look inside where he already dwells and invite Him into our hearts, our minds and our lives, where we can truly come to know Him. When we are told that we are made in the image of God there are so many comparisons we can use but the greatest of them all is that we need relationship. And that is what the Blessed Trinity is, a Divine relationship of eternal flowing love of two that becomes so great, that love has its own identity, making them three, but one through love. We all experience this, for we know love expands in families and friendships and communities that bind us together in a spiritual manner and make us one – making us the Body of Christ. God is all about relationships! Jesus teaches us to love one another as He loved us. This is our mission as a Christian community! The Bishop has presented all Deacons with a portfolio of work around our Ministry of Altar: assisting at mass, funerals and presiding at weddings and Baptisms. Word: proclaiming, preaching and teaching on the Gospel and Charity: service to the deprived in our communities, that we have to concentrate our efforts on over the next eighteen months. Each specifically tailored to the individual and their circumstance. The Permanent Diaconate ministry is fitted around any work and family commitments and does not receive a stipend. Through my experience in the SVDP I have become acutely aware of poverty in our community which is not only financial! And this is where Bishop Noel has asked me to do my main body of work in charitable service. Throughout Portstewart we have a higher than normal incidence of people who are lonely. Many are housebound due to sickness and various disabilities including mental health, mobility and age-related conditions who have no family or support network. Then there is a poverty of local amenities such as an advice centre, a Credit union or a drop in centre etc, that is accessible locally. It all seems to evolve around business structured for tourism. Yet as far as resources go, I believe we have all the necessary requirements especially a desire to make a difference and what is needed is effective leadership to coordinate efforts and make it happen. Leadership is not effective when it is left to one person to make decisions! We need a body of people who can commit a little time each week to a specific task and together we will make a great difference. If there is a will then there is always a way. As St Francis says, "If we do what is necessary then what's possible, we may suddenly find we have accomplished the impossible."

Precious Life

Never have I seen ordination to the Permanent Diaconate as a personal achievement; a feather in my cap so to speak. Rather, it has arisen from prayerful activities that brought me on a path that, I know God invited me to and traveled with me in relationship. We are all called to be Deacons in our own way and I want to persuade you not only to worship Christ but to follow and serve as he asks us to. This journey is only beginning, I hope to share more of my experiences and make many more with you through our time together as we put the Gospel into practice. As Christians we must all be prepared to take risks. Our faith is a beautiful mystery which, when we immerse ourselves in it reveals its secrets to our souls. I encourage you to dive in to the sea of God's love, where He will nurture and sustain and bless you.

Deacon Terry

If you would like more information on the Permanent Diaconate in Down and Connor go to:
www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Permanent-Diaconate-Information.pdf



On Saturday October 6th, a number of our parishioners attended the civil rights rally and march in Derry city to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the civil rights movement. I was there with our group which were not marching just under a civil rights banner, but under the Precious Life banner.

Our intention was to draw attention to the how Sinn Fein continue to completely ignore the need to include the civil rights of unborn children in their social outlook and ethos. We were told by march organisers that we had to remain at the back of the march - which we did.

As the bulk of those present marched past us, there were mixed reactions: confusion, bemusement, but most just ignored us. (Perhaps it's easier to do that then to try to justify the contradiction and injustice of championing civil rights for all when that "all" does not include the unborn.)

When we support the death penalty for any group we are undermining civil rights and without giving ammunition to others to one day justify perhaps our own state sanctioned murder.

We will continue to campaign for the rights of the unborn. Please join us in 2019.

Khadiga Hassouna

You can contact Precious Life at info@preciouslife.com or PO Box 425
Belfast
BT14YF
028 9027 8484



Outside the Chapel Gates

With Eugene Kelly

Oops!
Children's versions of favourite lines from Carols:
".... Sleep in heavenly peas";
"Joy to the world the Saviour rains";

What's in a number?

£1970 - the amount of money raised for SVP recently through the draw for the painting by Jenny Scharf. SVP thanks all those who purchased tickets to help those in our community who are in need, especially as Christmas is very nearly upon us. Congratulations to the winner Ryan Kelly seen here receiving his prize from yours truly.

3 the number of parishioners who recently retired from Loreto College, Schira McGoldrick, Geraldine Doherty and Frank Scullion. Between them they have amassed over **100** years of dedication to the pupils of the College, many of whom are members of our parish

Congratulations to Terry Butcher who was recently one of **10** men who were ordained in the order of the Permanent Diaconate in St Peter's Cathedral. Terry will serve in his home parish here in Portstewart. We wish him and his wife Angela well in his ministry.

It has been **8** years since Eoghan Rua won the Derry championship giving them the right to represent their county in the Ulster Club Championship. Well done to the **2** Seans and all the senior panel.

On Saturday 17 November over **150** people attended a special supper in the parish centre to support The Friends of the Cancer Centre fund raising initiative. Congratulation to all those who were involved in this project. A cheque for **£6000** was handed over to Jim O'Kane to provide much needed support and assistance to those who have suffered from cancer or have been affected by it. The generosity of people in our parish never ceases to amaze me.

"Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the phone";
"While shepherds washed their socks by night".



Ryan receives his prize from Eugene Kelly



Jim O'Kane received a cheque for almost £7000 on behalf of the Friends of the Cancer Centre from Maria and Ellen.

Welcome into your Kingdom our departed relatives and friends

Patrick McAteer
John McLaughlin
Harry Moore
Alison O'Doherty
Danny O'Neill
Mary Wall
Anna Dorrian
Annie McKenna
Barney Fitzpatrick
Sammy Crerand
Laurence McElhill

Jim Donaghy
Teresa Stanley
Charlie Sweeney
Joseph Reynolds
Edelle McGlade
Yvonne McGowan
Greta Mullan
Robert Doherty
Patrick Kelly
Ann Smyth



Christmas Poems from St Colum's Primary School

The Best Time of Year

Christmas is the best time of year,
Full of snowmen, elves and red-nosed reindeer.
But it's important to take time to remember,
The miracle that happened on the 25th December.
That's the date baby Jesus was born,
To save us all on Christmas morn.

The shepherds were the first to hear the news,
From an angel, as they herded their rams and ewes.
They came to see the little boy,
A Son of God to fill their hearts with joy.

Far away, three Kings were following a star,
Their names were Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.
As the baby lay sleeping in the warm, cosy manger,
Those Kings - unknowingly - put his life in danger.
King Herod told them that they should go,
To find the baby and let him know.
In a dream, they were warned that it was a ploy,
And that Herod's plan was to harm the little boy.

Laura Dysart P.7

Christmas Time

Children hanging stockings with care,
For they know Santa will soon be there.
Leaving out cookies,
Pouring out milk,
Leaving out carrots,
For reindeer with coats of silk.

Children hurry off to bed,
With Christmas carols in their head.
As they sleep, little do they know,
Their garden will soon be a bed of snow.

In the morning they rush downstairs,
To find new slippers lying in pairs.
As they gather around the table,
They see Baby Jesus in the stable.

There's a donkey standing in the hay,
Wise men travelling from faraway.
They're on camels, not in a car.
Their only direction is by a star.
The new king sleeping in the manger
Didn't know Herod would put him in danger.

So, on the twenty-fifth of December,
Let's say a prayer for a king to remember.

Tess Mullan P.7.

Call Him Jesus

Four weeks today will be Christmas day,
We will spend it in our own special way.
We will wake up early and look under the tree,
Presents for everyone - especially me!

The tradition is, Mum and Dad get a cup of tea,
With shortbread, mince pies and lots more too.
Presents from granny and grandad -
My aunts and cousins too.

It's time for church - "Quick, quick, hurry!
We'll make it just in time - don't worry."
The church looks lovely; the tree is lit up,
We can't get a seat we have to stand up.
The choir starts singing, Mass has begun,
Father Austin tells the story of Mary's son.

He was born in a manger on Christmas Day,
A baby King snuggled in the hay.
Guided by a shining star, the wise men came,
Bringing gifts for him, they asked his name.
"I will call him Jesus," they heard Mary say.
And that is why we celebrate Christmas day.

Erin Duffy P.7

A Christmas Acrostic

Christmas hugs and kisses,
Happy wonderful wishes.
Ringing bells and singing choirs,
Icicles galore and cosy fires.
Santa is coming on his sleigh,
Toys and goodies on their way.
Magical fun upon this day.
Angels tell the Christmas story
Shepherds hear of Jesus' glory.

Isla Pepin P.6

A Christmas Quiz

Test your knowledge of Christmas traditions and events in this Yuletide quiz. Answers should be left at the Sacristy or the Parochial House by Sunday 13th January 2019. (Please include your name and contact details). There will be a prize for the best two responses.

1. Who brings presents to children in Holland on 5th and 6th of December?
2. How many presents in total were given during the twelve days of Christmas?
3. Three of Rudolph's eight companions have names starting with the same letter of the alphabet - name them
4. In what year were Christmas cards first sent in the UK?
5. 'Here We Come A-wassailing' is a line from a traditional Christmas carol. What does 'a-wassailing' mean?
6. Who invented electric Christmas tree lights in 1882?
7. Which Christmas carol celebrates the Feast of St Stephen?
8. Which country sends the Christmas tree that stands in Trafalgar Square in London each year?
9. In which C S Lewis novel was it 'always winter but never Christmas'?
10. Who was visited by the Ghosts of Christmas past, present and future?
11. How many points has a snowflake?
12. In which country is Santa Claus known as Babbo Natale?
13. Which country issued the first Christmas stamps in 1898?
14. Which Christmas plant originates in Mexico?
15. Which US President banned Christmas trees from the White House at the beginning of the 1900s?
16. Which Christmas song was originally composed for Thanksgiving?
17. Which country serves Pan de Pascua at Christmas?
18. In which country did the tradition of decorating trees at Christmas begin?
19. What Christmas product was invented by Tom Smith, a sweet maker from London?
20. What year was the Queen's Christmas Speech first broadcast on TV?

*Tie-breaker: Using twelve words or less complete the following sentence:

Christmas is a wonderful time of year because.....

Derry Well Done! Eoghan Rua Clinch County Senior Title

There is no doubt what the highlight of the past season has been for Eoghan Rua. The club's senior footballers bridged the gap from 2010 to once again sit atop the pile in Derry as they won the county senior championship title to bring the coveted John McLaughlin Cup back to Pairc Eoghain Rua. The team then progressed to the Ulster championship race beating Castlerahan (Cavan) in the quarter-final before losing narrowly to Monaghan side Scotstown in the semi-final.

The season began with the successful defence of the Ulster senior football league to set the tone for a very good

year for the club. While there was no further joy on the championship front both the ladies' senior footballers and hurlers lost out narrowly in their respective Junior finals.

The club continues to provide a sporting outlet for hundreds of boys and girls from Under-8s through to Under-18s in football, hurling, camogie and ladies football. Our Under-16 and Under-14 footballers both won their respective Derry league titles, which bodes well for the future prospects of the club.

Indeed, our real success is the continued promotion and development

of Gaelic games providing opportunities for a healthy, balanced lifestyle for so many of our young people in this area. While doing that a number of our young players have gone on to represent the club at county level across all four codes.

In fact, we have now had senior players involved with Derry county teams at championship level in football, hurling, camogie and ladies football this season, reflecting superbly on the quality of all our coaches/managers in the club.

It has been another stellar season and we wish to thank everyone who has supported the club in any way.



Angels These Days!

I remember seeing a play some years ago by Dennis Potter called "Angels Are So Few" in which the lead character claims to be an angel, but his doubting neighbour points out his lack of wings, amongst other deficiencies. Eventually it turns out that he is not really an angel – at least not in the sense we might use the word. (Our word, angel, comes from Greek word *angelos*, meaning "messenger". The Hebrew word *mal'ak* has the same meaning.)

Conversely, angels these days seem to be everywhere. I recently noticed an advert for Angel Healing while flicking through a magazine in the dentist's waiting room. For a fee – an "expert" was offering to put the reader in touch with an angel who could give them help and advice for almost any of life's problems. (I should say that I didn't respond – although some may think a visit to the dentist could be seen as a suitable occasion for summoning metaphysical aid...)

Similarly, a visit to the local jeweller's to buy a birthday gift for my daughter revealed that one line shoppers were being offered (amongst others) was a line of bejewelled accessories called "Angel Whisperers" with a promise of a bonus with the purchase, namely: "If you have lost your faith in them ...this is your personal Angel Whisperer to help them find you and let you trust in them again..."

Also, as we all know, one of the films that seems to be popular every Christmas is Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*. It tells the story of Clarence, the apprentice angel, earning his wings and helping Jimmy Stewart's earth-bound character, George, to see that his life has been worthwhile after all.

TV has explored the theme of angels interacting with human beings in the series "Highway to Heaven" back in the eighties and "Touched by an Angel" in slightly more recent times. We do seem to relish the idea of celestial beings intervening in our earthly lives.

For sure, the idea of angels seems to hold an abiding fascination for us. In the sixteenth century, the English poet, John Donne (eventually to be the Dean of St Paul's), drew on the contemporary belief that angels' bodies were composed of condensed air in his poem, "Aire and Angels" in order to convey his notion of their purity.

But why all this latter day harking on Angels? In biblical accounts of the first Christmas, angels have an important role, as in the annunciation to Mary, and the Angel appearing to the shepherds declaring, "Do not be afraid...for I bring news of great joy. In a manger you will find a baby wrapped in

swaddling clothes..."

It all made me wonder what the Catholic Church might have to say on the subject of angels. The following is taken from the catechism of the church:

"THE ANGELS

The existence of angels - a truth of faith

"The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls 'angels' is a truth of faith.

Who are they?

"As purely spiritual creatures, angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness."

St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature...with their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God."

It may be helpful or inspiring to think of angels as messengers who reveal God's truth to us in the scriptures, but is there a purpose to angels beyond that? In a recent essay on the 'Catholic Teachings on Angels' by Alex Brittain, the latter writes, "the purpose of the angels is to serve God, praise God, worship God and pray to God. In the process of serving God, they also protect us, pray for us, inspire us, encourage us and guide us during our journey on earth."

All right, that's a very comforting thought too, but where might we find angels today? It may seem unlikely that we will meet "purely spiritual creatures" in the course of our daily routines. However, I do think that if we are to encounter the angelic, we might look more closely at the examples of "earthly angels".

By "earthly angels", I mean that we should consider the many everyday acts of kindness and selflessness we witness amongst the people we encounter: the volunteers who staff foodbanks and homeless shelters; the charity fundraisers; the good neighbour who brings the groceries when the elderly person next door can't get to the shops by themselves; the friends and family members who lift our spirits when we feel worried, anxious or overwhelmed.

In the words and deeds of the loving, the kindly and the compassionate, we may find those messages from a God of love – so, perhaps angels are not so few after all. It may be as Luciano De Crescenzo, the Italian writer and philosopher, said, "We are each of us angels with only one wing and we can only fly by embracing each other."

Bryan Rooney



Weddings at Star of the Sea



Decla Rafferty & David Strange – married 30 July 2018



Deirdre Rainey & Kevin Ramsay – married 17 July 2018



Louise Mulvenna & Jim Barry-Jackson – married 29 September 2018



Maura McElhone & Sean Hayden – married 13 October 2018

Baptisms at Star of the Sea



Beth McCann – parents Andrew and Mary



Jack Lowery – parents Colm and Angela



Rui Odhran Nicholls - son of Eimear (Mullan) and Ritchie.



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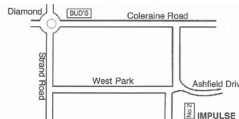
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