

When the Angel describes her as the 'favoured one', she is 'greatly troubled' since, in her humility, she considers herself as nothing before God, but she "listens, obeys within herself, and answers, 'I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'".

The mystery of this girl from Nazareth, who is in God's heart, is not alien to us. No, we are connected. Indeed, God turns His loving gaze upon every man and every woman. With both name and surname. His loving gaze falls upon every one of us. The apostle Paul affirms that God 'chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight'. We too have always been chosen by God to lead a holy life, free of sin.

Christmas is a Christian feast and its symbols are important references to the great mystery of the incarnation and birth of Jesus, which the liturgy constantly re-evokes. The Creator of the universe, by becoming a child, came among us to share our journey; He became small to enter the heart of man and renew it with His love. Let us prepare ourselves to welcome Him with faith. (Sources: Delia Smyth-Reflections for Christmas and Pope Francis' homily on this Gospel)

Fr. Michael Carey Adm

Mass Intentions for this coming week: St Colmcille's:

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| Mon 8.00am Health Intention | Fri 10.00am Christmas Mass Bouquet Cards |
| Mon 10.00am Maura Clancy
Paddy Scully | Sat 10.00 am Christmas Mass Bouquet Cards |
| Tues 8.00 am John Scahill | Sat 6.30pm Aileen O'Brien & dec members of
Deering & O'Brien families |
| Tues 10.00am Elizabeth Burke
Margaret Byrne | Sun 8.30 am |
| Wed 8.00am Kathleen & Patrick O'Reilly | Sun 10.00 am John Breen |
| Wed 10.00 am Teresa & Kit Barker | Sun 11.30am Dec members of Gerrard Family
Joseph, Mary, Tommy & Joey |
| Wed 6.30pm Christmas Mass Bouquet Cards | Sun 7.30pm Kathleen & Martin O'Loughlin |
| Christmas Day Christmas Mass Bouquet Cards | Raymond O'Loughlin & Catherine McNally |

Church of the Visitation Drynam The Visitation of the BVM
Mass Times for Drynam: Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri: 9.20am. Sun, 10.00am 11.00am
(Irish) & 12 noon

We now have several people expressing an interest in our new Baptism Team which will provide a better understanding of Baptism to the parents of the child being baptised. We will have an initial meeting in January to outline the purpose of a Baptism Team and the training and preparation required. Please contact Fr. Peter or a member of the Pastoral Team for more information. We would be delighted to explain what we have in mind.



RECENTLY DECEASED

Please remember in your prayers those who have died recently:
 Joseph Hurley Lusk (Formerly Chapel Lane)



Swords Folk Group: Come celebrate the first mass of Christmas in song with Swords Folk Group this Christmas Eve 6.30pm. Carols new and old.

Bethany Bereavement Support Group The next Meeting will be on the second Monday in January - 12th January 2015 at the usual time of 7.30pm in the Parochial House. There will be no Support Meeting on 29th December. We wish all the Bereaved of the Parish a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Fr. Michael Carey-8403378: Fr. Peter McCarron-8405948
 Parish Secretary: Colette Stokes - Parish Office, Seatown Road-8407277
 (Mon to Fri 9.15am-12.30pm & Tues-Thurs 2pm-4pm)
 Sacristan: Stephanie Byrne-8400547 (Mon -Sat 9.30am-10.30am)
 Website: www.swords-parish.com Email: stcolmcilleschurch@gmail.com



4th Sunday of Advent
Opening the door to the salvation of
Humankind



"Let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour"
Newsletter Sunday 21st December

This Thursday the 25th is Christmas Day, the day in which we celebrate our Saviour's birth. And for many Wednesday, Christmas Eve is a most wonderful day. Like me there will probably be some last minute preparations, but hopefully just a few. Many will go to the Christmas Eve Masses which are always wonderful occasions and hopefully very prayerful. Whatever we are doing on Christmas Eve and wherever we are we should grab a few moments of quiet and silently feast on the wonder of this Holy Night. If you can go outside and look up at the night sky (which hopefully will be clear and starry), so much the better, and ponder the mystery of what took place in Bethlehem 2014 years ago. The thoughts are always the same. How can it be? How could almighty God actually become man – one of us? Yet we dare to believe it. This is our faith. This is the divine exchange, Jesus humbling himself to share in our humanity in order that we might share in his divinity. We can only confess with the psalmist that 'such knowledge is beyond my understanding, a height to which my mind cannot attain' (ps.139:6).

This Sunday's Gospel from St. Luke takes us back to 9 months before this date, to the Annunciation. An event which turned the course of history: Mary's 'yes' to God which would make it possible for God to become man and, by assuming the same human nature that was overcome by Evil in the Garden of Eden, to overcome Evil himself. Because of one human life surrendered to God freely and simply, the door to the salvation of humankind will be opened. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in one of his homilies on today's Gospel, paints a picture of the whole human race kneeling in the valley of the shadow of death, begging Mary to say yes. "Answer, O virgin, answer speedily. Speak the word and receive the word, offer what is yours, conceive what is of God. Give what is temporal and embrace what is eternal....Behold the desired of all nations is outside knocking at your door. Arise, then run and open!"

Mary guides us as we journey towards the Nativity, because she teaches us how to experience the time of Advent, awaiting the Lord ... Who will come to us all together in the feast, but also to each one of us, in our hearts".

The Gospel of St. Luke, presents Mary, a girl from Galilee, a small village at the outskirts of the Roman Empire and remote even within Israel. However, although she was "a young girl from a faraway village", "the gaze of the Lord" rested upon her, "and He chose her as the mother of His Son. In the light of her maternity, Mary was preserved from original sin, from that fracture in the communion with God, with others and with creation, which deeply wounds every human being. But this fracture was healed in advance in the mother of He, Who came to free us from the slavery of sin. The Immaculate Conception is inscribed in God's design; it is the fruit of God's love, which saves the world". And the Virgin never strayed from that love; all her life, all her being is a 'yes' to that love, and a 'yes' to God. But it certainly was not easy for her!

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Antiphon – “Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel”



The Door of Faith

Children – I invite the children of the Parish to write a message, prayer, thank-you etc. to the Baby Jesus (*not Santa Claus*) on the ‘post-it’ notes and stick them on the wall surrounding the ‘door of faith’, which represents the ‘stable door’, behind which the Saviour of the World was born

Do This in Memory

I welcome the boys and girls and their families to the 6.30pm Vigil Mass and the 10.00am Sunday Mass as part of their Parish based preparation programme for the Sacrament of First Eucharist. I would also like to thank the parents who are part of the organising committee who met during the week to prepare these Masses.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not about a guilt-trip. Rather, it is about unburdening. The Lord invites us to receive from him ‘rest for our souls’ (Mt 11:29) so that he may set us free (Lk 4:18) that we may continue to seek to live ‘life to the full’ (Jn 10:10). Jesus is encountered in and through the Sacrament. The Advent/Christmas Reconciliation service takes place in **St. Colmcille’s on Monday 22nd December at 7.30pm**. Reconciliation Service in River Valley on Tuesday 23rd July at 7.30pm

Christmas Cards and Dues Envelopes

By now all houses in the Parish should have received their Christmas Cards and enclosed contents from the Parish. I sincerely thank those parishioners who delivered them. If you haven’t received any there are some available in the book rack of the Church.

Christmas Dues Envelopes

If you did not receive Christmas Dues envelope and would like to contribute to the Priests of the Parish, please take one from the book rack at the back of the Church

Mass Timetable Changes

Due to the ongoing shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Dublin, our Parish of Swords/Drynam will be re-organising its Mass times and schedules early in the New Year. Full details will be communicated in the New Year.

Happy Christmas

On behalf the Priests of the Parish, the Parish Sisters; the Parish Staff and the Parish Pastoral Council, I’d like to wish the parishioners of St. Colmcille’s, Swords and Our Lady of the Visitation, Drynam a joyful and Happy Christmas. May Christ Jesus dwell with you, keep you from all harm, and make you one in mind and heart, now and forever. Amen

A REFLECTIVE SENTENCE:What the Catholic Church believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ. – Catechism of the Catholic Church CCC 487

Christmas Mass Bouquets

Special Christmas Mass Bouquet cards are now available in the Sacristy and Parish Office of both churches. All Masses on Christmas Day and St. Stephens Day will be offered for the intentions of the donors of these cards. They cost €5per card and would make a ‘lovely stocking filler’ for your nearest and dearest.



Advent Wreath-week 4

4th CANDLE – (purple) **THE ANGEL CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF LOVE** – The angels announced the good news of a Saviour. God sent his only Son to earth to save us, because he loves us! “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*” (John 3:16-17)



5th CANDLE – (white) “**CHRIST CANDLE**” – The white candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! His birth was for his death, his death was for our birth! “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29)

JESSE TREE – week 4

This tree is named after David, the great king of Israel. The symbols represent the promises God made through the Old Testament concerning the birth of his only Son. Some of the most important promise were made to Jesses and his son David. They were promised that God’s only Son would be born in their family. Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent and we now add three more symbols to the Jesse tree in both our churches

Palm Tree - On Christmas night, the angels declared ‘Peace to all who enjoy God’s favour’. Jesus came to bring peace on earth, he is the prince of peace.

Peace - On Christmas night, the angels declared ‘Peace to all who enjoy God’s favour. Jesus came to bring peace on earth, he is the prince of peace.

Jesus-Chi-Ro symbol - Our final symbol represents Jesus, who came to be our Saviour and whose birthday we will celebrate on Tuesday. May He come into our lives and hearts once again this Christmas

Carol service

Last Sunday’s Carol Service was truly a wonderful occasion and a great crowd attended. Well done to all in the Choir who sang sublimely and especially the new members – hopefully the first Carol Service of many! All your rehearsals paid off! As always, a **special thank you** to Choir Director Anne McDonagh – all she asks of the Choir is that they “watch her”. Thank you to the Organist Orla McDonagh, who was excellent and soloist Helen Dignam who beautifully sang, ‘O Holy Night’. The Minister’s of the Word proclaimed God’s Word superbly and helped prepare all of us as we journey towards Christmas Finally many thanks to all who helped prepare for this wonderful afternoon- the Sacristan, the Parish Liturgy Group, who provided the very welcome mince pies and refreshment afterwards; God’s housekeepers and last but by no means least it was wonderful to see the boys and girls from our St. Colmcille’s Parish Schools participating and doing it so well! Thanks to all who attended – it was a very impressive turnout and up on last year

Parish Office The Parish Office will be closed for Christmas holidays from Monday Dec 22nd and will re-open on Monday 5th January. For urgent business please contact the Sacristan or Frs. Michael or Peter.
