

SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER'S PARISH

Parish Bulletin for Christmas Day 2018



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CRIB

Nativity scenes have been a popular Advent and Christmas decoration for

centuries. Saint Francis of Assisi had a special devotion to the Child Jesus, and he is credited with creating the first nativity scene on Christmas Eve of the year 1223 at Greccio, a town sixty miles northeast of Rome. It is believed that he was first inspired by the idea after visiting the place of Christ's birth on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land - the humble stable in a Bethlehem cave. The following text was written by Saint Bonaventure's (1221-1274), a contemporary and follower of Saint Francis.

Saint Francis' mind went back to Bethlehem and he remembered the night when he had knelt in the Cave of the Nativity. What could he do so that these good people of the Rieti valley should be able to understand fully the beauty and mystery of Christ's birth? They were simple people, and to see with their own eyes the stable and the manger, and the gentle beasts, would help them to see the Christ-child.



He built a stable in the woods near his hermitage and he put a real manger in the stable and filled it with hay, and beside the manger he built a simple altar. He arranged that there should be a real ox and donkey there, and he asked the people to Mass at the hermitage on Christmas Eve. The people came, singing ancient carols. The youngest got there first, and the older people heard their excited cries of awe and joy: "Padre - there is a stable here. There is a manger for the bambino, and an ox and a donkey, a real ox and donkey! Come quickly!"

The wood became a Church and the stable the altar of the Church. They knelt with bowed heads on the carpet of moss and pine-needles. Those who had brought candles still held them between their hands and the flames showed the young faces, sunburnt and rosy, and the older ones lined and weather-beaten. Those who were nearest to the stable could see the manger and the gentle beasts, the priest vested, and Saint Francis as his deacon, but those who were too far away to see very much were not aware of any loss, for the great peace and joy of this holy night enclosed them all.

Saint Francis' recreation of that first Christmas night was so popular that soon every church in Italy had its own nativity scene. The devotion also spread to private homes,

and in modern times even to secular institutions, so much so that it's now impossible to imagine Christmas without a nativity scene to behold.



THANK YOU...

My thanks at this time to all who have helped to prepare for the Feast of Christmas and its Liturgy with their time, energy and commitment - the sacristans, church cleaners, our organists and 11am Mass choir, the crib builders, those who look after the altar linens and sacred vestments, the pass keepers, those who prepare our weekly worship leaflets, readers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, servers, flower arrangers and church decorators, and the Children's Liturgy group.

Moreover at this time of year I should like to thank the others who work in the background to ensure the smooth running of the parish, in particular those men and women who give generously of their time to work in the Xavier Centre and those men who work in the Grotto.

On a personal note, I should like to say a sincere thanks to all those who have sent me cards and gifts. I look forward to opening these on Christmas afternoon with my family.

I wish all our parishioners a Holy and Happy Christmas.

Father Francis McGachey

VISIT THE BETHLEHEM CAVE

The Bethlehem Shrine in the Grotto will be open all evening after the Vigil Mass until half an hour after the conclusion of the Midnight Mass, and all day on Christmas Day until 5pm. Each day of the Christmas Season it will be open from 10.30am until 3pm. I am sure you would enjoy a visit, especially those of you who have children. The Cave will be open each day between 10.30am and 3pm.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Candlelight Midnight Mass with choir 12 o'clock midnight

Tuesday 25th December - Day Mass of Christmas with choir 10.30am

NEW YEAR'S EVE

11.30pm a Candlelight Service of Thanksgiving for the old year, and to ask for God's blessing on the new year, with Night Prayer (Compline) and Benediction

NEW YEAR'S DAY - FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Tuesday 1st January Festal Holy Mass with choir 10.30am
After Mass today, bottles of Holy Water, blessed during Mass, will be distributed for you to take to bless your homes

CRIB OFFERINGS - will go as usual to St. Margaret's Adoption and Child Care Society.

THE WESTERN CALENDAR - Is on sale in the porch, price £3.20 each. In it you will find all the details and Mass times of every parish in Motherwell, Glasgow and Paisley dioceses, amongst many other things.

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC OBSERVER - Special Christmas edition on sale £2.00 each.

THANK YOU - The Processional Cross and Thurible that we use at our Masses today were given by a parishioner in memory deceased family members. We are sincerely grateful.

CHRISTMAS COLLECTION - Please support your parish's daily liturgical life and ministry by giving generously. Envelopes are available at the back of the Church. If you are a member of the Giftaid scheme, but do not use Giftaid envelopes, then please mark as 'Giftaid' and add your number or name on the envelope.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BISHOP TOAL

I recently enjoyed going on Pilgrimage to the Holy Land for the first time. One memorable

moment was the visit to Bethlehem, and in particular to the site of Jesus' birth, marked by the Basilica of the Nativity. There is certainly a sense of joy at being at the spot where Our Lord was born, and an opportunity to ponder the Mystery of the Incarnation, and to give thanks to God for the gift of his Son's birth, and the faith we have in the truth handed on to us by the evangelists, and the tradition of the Church. Imitating those who first gathered to greet the Infant King - Mary and Joseph, shepherds and wise men - a sense of wonder and humble adoration on my, or our, part seems to be a fitting response to God's love for us, made present in the child in the manger. Wherever we are in the world, the mystery of Bethlehem is recalled and comes alive each Christmas as we look into our own cribs, and celebrate our faith in the Birth of Our Lord and Saviour in the Church's Liturgy. Thank God we are free to do so, and we pray for those who are not, as they suffer persecution for their faith, like the Innocents of Bethlehem killed by Herod after Jesus was born.

The people of Bethlehem today continue to bear their trials as the Palestinians seek to protect their presence and their rights while the State of Israel imposes its control over them. To a visitor the restrictions they live under seem excessive and demoralising and make one wish that a just and lasting settlement may be found to allow Palestinians and Israelis to live harmoniously together. The Child Jesus was hailed as the "Prince of Peace" prophesied by Isaiah, and at Christmas we pray that peace may reign in his own land, and in the troubled countries close by.

In our country we pray for an attitude of peace and tranquillity, and for an acceptance of one another, whatever our nationality or creed. May we who celebrate our Saviour's birth reach out to our neighbours and help build up and protect his kingdom among us.

I ask God's blessing for you and your families as we honour and adore Jesus, the Word made Flesh and Son of God.

+ Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell



CALENDAR - The days of Christmas Week are known as *Octave of Christmas*. Like the greatest of all the Christian Feasts, Easter, Christmas is followed by eight days of solemn and joyous celebration which will end on January 1st with the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God. **St. Stephen** is honoured on **Wednesday**. Known as the 'Proto-Martyr', he was the first disciple of Our Lord to be martyred. **St. John the Apostle and Evangelist** is remembered on **Thursday**. Described by himself in his Gospel as the "beloved disciple" who rested on Our Lord's side during the Last Supper. The **Holy Innocents** - the children of Judea who were slaughtered at Herod's order in his search for the Christ-child - whose feast falls on **Friday**, are obviously connected in a special way to Our Lord's infancy. **Saturday** is the Feast of **St. Thomas Beckett (pictured)**. He was the Archbishop of Canterbury who was killed in 1170 by the King Henry II's men after the

king exclaimed “Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?” **Sunday**, this year, is the **Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth**.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

RECENTLY DEAD — Renee McLean, Kathleen McIlhatton, Tom O'Connor, John Gorman, Betty McMahon, Mary Josephine Weldon, Ann McKenna, James Kinsella, Rose McGill, Esther Fallon, Anne Griffin, Sophia Jaconelli, James Fagan, John Breen, Baby Foley, Sarah Rankin, Peter Shannon, Isobel Brady, Anne McKenna, May Woods, John Dobbin, Danny McIntyre, Antonio Diego Ferrevrinho, Mary McLean, Anna Law, Denis Clark (Leeds), Joe O'Neil, Thomas Rooney, Danny McIntyre, Harry Whyte, Eithne Kelly, Sr. Mary Bernard, James Whinnie, Mary Cleary, Mick and Cassie Doohan, Margaret McSherry, J. Meechan, James McGrady, A. Brennan, Marisa Patrucci, Mr Feeney, Ann Kirk, Sophia Jaconelli.

CHRISTMAS REMEMBRANCES — Peter Connelly, The Harvie Family, John, Margaret and Gerald Ferrie, Alex and Jane Smillie, Nicola Harvie, Jane Underwood, Ryan Sneddon, Mark Divers, Liam Currie, Trevor Horton, Patrick Naughton, James Naughton Sen. And Jnr., Winifred Naughton, Alex Graham, John McKeown, Thomas McKeown, Anna Cullen, Bernie Cullen, Mary Aiton, Theresa McIntyre, Paul McAllister, Mary Fearon, Mary and William Doherty, Barrett Family, Doherty Family, John Reilly, Burns Family, McGowan Family, Savage Family, Patrick Heffernan, Angela Heffernan, Heffernan Family, Ellen Quinn, William Quinn, Quinn Family, McAlpine Family, Margaret Johnston (née Connelly), Peggy Campbell, Joseph Wilson, Catherine Denholm, Thomas Deholm, James Denholm, John Carson, Sheila Denholm, Frank Roy, Martin Roy, Paul Todd, Edward and Hannah O'Neill, Elizabeth O'Neill, O'Neill Family, Frank and Margaret Roy, James, Esther and Mary Roy, Des and Margaret Annesley, Agnes Tyrrell, John Callaghan, John and Bridget McNally, Michael, Mary Therese, Michael and Sarah Keenan, Ann Clare Darcey (Keenan), William and Nettie Ahearn, Cathie Hughes, Theresa Hughes, Mary McGinn, William McGinn, John, Rose, Carolan and Kathleen Flynn, Rosemary Farrell, Alice O'Rourke, Kevin O'Rourke, Bartholomew and Ellen O'Rourke, O'Rourke Family, James and Alice Doherty, Doherty Family, James Patrick Brown, Bernard and Elizabeth Cullen, Joe and Margaret McCall, Patrick and Mary Ann Cullen, Pat and Dorothy Cullen, Norah and Martha Cullen, Joe McGurk, Alex Cullen, Theresa Henderson, Ellen White, Edward and Jean McGahan, Rachel McGahan, Marie McGahan Murray, John Murray, John and Sarah McGahan, Tommy and Sadie Teague, Margaret and Ellen McGahan, Mary and Joseph Sharkey, John and Eleanor Mallon, Jim and Liz Sharkey, MacKay Family, Dan McCann, James and John O'Neill, O'Neill Family, Anne Murphy, Fitzsimmons Family, McGahan Family, Hughes Family, Winnie McAteer, Margaret McAlavey, Elizabeth McCarron, Nan Wilson, May McIsaac, Elizabeth McAuley, Gibb Family, Patrick, Bridget and Sarah Skeffington, Owenie Martin, Owen and Mary Gallacher, Alicia Gallacher, Edward Gallacher jnr., John and Annie Hughes, Joseph and John Hughes, Peter and Margaret Kirley, Peter Kirley jnr., Gallacher Family, Hughes Family, Pat McCourt, Margaret Mary Rice, James Naughton jnr., Maurice McMonagle, McMonagle Family, John and Mary Doherty, Doherty Family, Catherine and Maureen Kelly, James Burns, Elaine Doak, Bill and Julia Perkins, Richard and Ellen Mullen, Margery Bicknell, Mary and Jimmy Kelly, James and Thérèse Boyle, Gerald, Anne and James Shannon, Willie Cogan, Liam Cogan, Lawrence Family, Brown Family, James Gribben, Luke Henderson, Gibbons Family, Rooney Family, Warrell Family, Jimmie Paterson, Michael McGarry, Margaret McGarry, McFarlane Family, Devine Family, John McFarlane, Ellen Cook, Jeannie Whyte, Cathy, Tracy, Charles Devine, Anna Therese Devine, Joseph Devine, Frank McMahon, John and Mary McShane, Rosemary and Ronald MacIntyre, Jim McShane, Hughie, Mary and Charles McShane, Frank, Agnes and Desmond McMahon, Jean Gallagher, McShane Family, McMahon Family, Welsh Family, Gallagher Family, Matthew and Annie Lees, Andrew and Margaret Lees, Andrew and Agnes Lees, Margaret Lees (W), Sean, Peter and Thomas Lees, Lees Family, Cathie Dobbin (J), Robert and Margaret Wilson, Wilson Family, William Wardrope sen., William Wardrope jnr., Jean Wardrope, Thomas, Pat and Christine Postlethwaite, Andrew and Margaret Lees, Margaret Lees (W), Andrew and Agnes Lees, Sean Lees, Lees Family, Sean Currie, Cathie Dobbins, Robert and Margaret Wilson, Wilson Family, Thomas, Pat and Christine Postlethwaite, Sandra Cogill, Pauline Shaw, Jean Wardrope, Billy Wardrope sen., Billy Wardrope jnr., Thomas Lees, Peter Lees, Wilson Family, Frank and Mary Masson, John and Patsy Campbell, Jack Thomas, John and Mary Thomas, Owen and Mary Donnelly, Paul and Ellen Flynn, John McKay, Michael Collins, Kenneth Hart, James and Amelia O'Donnell, James and Frances Collins, Cathie Hughes, Theresa Hughes, William and Mary McGinn, Hughes Family, McGinn Family, Anne Watters, Francis Watters, Catherine Watters, Watters Family, Emily and Jim MacKay, Karreen and Katrina Stuart, Bridget Donnelly, Jim Robb, Mary and Hugh Cullen, Joe Fletcher, Charles and Kate Cullen, Charles Cullen jnr., Casiday Family, Leonard Family, Leslie Family, Frank and Dora Murphy, Patrick Cairns sen., Patrick Cairns jnr., Elizabeth Cairns, Kathleen Cairns, Natalia Cairns, Agnes Denver, Grace and William Lennox, John and Bridget O'Neil, Gerry Lewis, Gerry Mitchell, Sharkey Family, Teresa Sharkey, Joseph, Annie and Kathleen Hughes, Michael and Gwyneth Clark, George and Susan Illgunas. Bernard and Catherine McCardie, Charles McCardie, Richard and Ellen Mullen, Richard and Cathie Mullen, Joseph Mullen, Jim and Mary Kelly, James

Burns, John Campbell, John O'Neill, Carol O'Neill, Pat Campbell, Patrick, Mary and John McNally, Patrick and Margaret Howley, John McCallum. Gerry Delaney, Charles Tobin, Hugh Reynolds, Giblin Family, Hodgson Family, Agnes, Gerald and John O'Riordan, Hugh McDermott, Michael and Mary Ryan, Rena and Tam Patton, Robert and Rose McDermott, Anne and Michael Jackson, Margaret Hart, James and Bridget McKenna, Patrick and Margaret Hart, James and Annie Christie, Ellen and Jim Imrie, Catherine Davidson, Clark Family, Lativy Family, Sue Begley, Peter McAleer sen., Peter McAleer jnr., Geraldine McAleer, Liam Currie, Kevin Galloway, Anne Marie Boyde, Gordon Stewart.