

PARISH OF TERMONAMONGAN (AGHYARAN)

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SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 2020: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MARY, THE ARK OF GOD'S COVENANT (GOSPEL – ST LUKE 1:26-38)

Mary, our blessed Mother, is the focus of the Gospel on this fourth Sunday of Advent, when we hear St Luke's account of the Annunciation. God, through the angel Gabriel, gradually revealed to Mary, a humble young woman, her extraordinary mission in life, a unique role in God's plan for salvation as the mother of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. We are told that the angel's opening words to Mary were, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you." 'The Lord is with you' is an expression used in the Bible to greet those God has called to play a crucial role in His plan of salvation. Each time we attend Mass, the priest says to the congregation in the opening words of the Mass, "*The Lord be with you*". This highlights for us, as children of God, that each of us is called to a unique mission in building His kingdom. Mary is a model for us in faith: despite the enormity of God's plan for her, she was unwavering in her trust in and acceptance of His will for her. *Mary, Ark of the Covenant, pray for us.*

SUNDAY MASS THIS WEEKEND:

Vigil, Saturday 19th December 7.30pm

Sunday 20th December at 11.00am

WEEKDAY MASSES FOR THIS INCOMING WEEK

Tuesday 10.00am (No morning Mass or Adoration on Christmas Eve)

MASS NEXT WEEKEND – (26th December – to be confirmed depending on Government restrictions yet to be announced)

(AREA C) Saturday 7.30pm

The Laughts, Garvagh, McNally Park, Carnoughter, Carndreen, Dreenan,
Killeter and Meenamullan

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection which amounted to **£651**. and the Church Restoration Fund Collection totalled **£613**. Many thanks also for the donation of **£50** received this week for church funds. Envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House

ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICE: I invite you to join with me this **Tuesday night, (22nd December)**, on our parish webcam, at 7.00pm for our Advent Penitential Service, as part of our spiritual preparation for Christmas. During this Penitential Liturgy, you will have the opportunity to pray an Act of Perfect Contrition. I look forward to joining with as many of you as possible.

As you know, we are not in a position to facilitate the Sacrament of Confession at this time. However, if anyone feels they would like to receive the Sacrament, you can do so by individual prior arrangement with me. I will do my best to facilitate you.

THANK YOU: We are grateful to the children of **St Caireall's PS** who continue to help us in our Advent journey with their lovely prayers, drawings and thoughts for Advent, which are being posted each day on our parish Facebook Page

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS: A booklet with prayer resources suitable for the Season of Christmas, entitled *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, will be available at Christmas for you to pick up in the church, to facilitate prayer, scripture and reflection in your home, with family, or during quiet time in the church. In particular, you might like to pick one up for family members who are not able to come out to Mass. It will also be available online, on www.derrydiocese.org. I very much hope that it will be a helpful prayer resource for families this Christmas.

ST. DAVOG'S CLUB

Christmas Draw -The Big Christmas Club Members' Draw will take place in the club rooms tonight (Saturday) 19th December at 9pm sharp. A total of £7,000 will be paid out on the night with one lucky winner picking up the top prize of £3,000!! We urge draw members to make sure they are paid up before Saturday night.

Ladies: Aghyaran St Davog's Senior ladies are seeking to appoint a senior team manager. If interested in this post then contact club Secretary Gerard Byrne (07730 342520), Ann Marie Meehan (07590 848428), or Caroline Mc Hugh for more details.

CHRISTMAS MASS ANNOUNCEMENT

After the challenges of Lent and Easter I am very glad that we are able to have a congregation present at Mass this Christmas. As always, however, the safety and health of everyone continues to be paramount, and we must also work within the current guidelines from Public Health. In order to reduce the risk of spreading infection, we must adhere to the capacity limits of our individual churches.

As part of our risk assessment before reopening in July, we identified the number of 'spaces' in each Church. **A 'space' can accommodate up to three people from the same household or 'bubble'** so, for example, a family of five would require two spaces (i.e. a full pew in the church). Our capacity limit is 50 spaces.

The Christmas Mass schedule will be as follows

CHRISTMAS EVE	6.00pm and 7.30pm
CHRISTMAS DAY	9.00am and 11.00am

Many people have already booked their tickets for Christmas Mass. At the time of writing (Friday afternoon) there were only a few tickets left for the 9a.m. Mass on Christmas morning. These can be booked by telephoning the Parochial House (028 8167 1393). I will provide updates on availability via the Parish Facebook page. **Please do not come to the church unless you have booked a space and have received a ticket.** I would be grateful if you would pick up your tickets this weekend at Mass or by calling to the Parochial House in Castlederg on Monday between 11am and 6pm. As always, the Masses from Aghyaran will be live-streamed for the benefit of parishioners who are vulnerable, symptomatic or unable to book a space at Mass.

At the end of each of our Masses, the church will be thoroughly sanitised and ventilated. I deeply regret having to place these limits on our celebration, but I hope you will appreciate that the health and safety of parishioners is my guiding principle.

Christmas Masses will be shorter than normal this year, since we must minimise the amount of time people spend in the church. I encourage you, however, to return to the church, if you can, at a quieter time over the Christmas Season to pray at the Crib.

When we were exchanging greetings for Christmas and the New Year this time last year, none of us could have imagined the year that lay ahead. It has been, for all of us, in all age brackets, a year like none other! As 'church', in March this year, priests, parishioners and parishes everywhere had to adapt very quickly to becoming an 'online parish community', but I am proud that, in our parish, we have been a resilient faith community, united in spirit and acclimatising quickly to the ever-changing rules and restrictions. For all your help, co-operation and patience, I am most grateful.

Christmas, as we know, may not be celebrated with all its usual traditions and trimmings this year and, in our churches, we will celebrate Christmas in smaller units than normal; this will not take away, however, from the joy and true meaning of Christmas, the great celebration of the birth of the Christ Child.

I wish you all peace and joy this Christmas. Special Christmas blessings on all the children of our parish, especially the children who were born and baptised into our parish faith community this year. Special blessings too on the couples who were united in the Sacrament of Marriage in our parish this year.

To all who are carrying the cross of sickness this Christmas, at home, in hospital or in nursing care, may the blessings of the Christ Child be a source of strength and comfort to you. Blessings on all who care for the sick. I think especially of those who have cared for Covid-19 patients this year and all in the caring profession who comforted the sick in hospital and residents in care homes who were unable to have family visiting because of the pandemic.

To the families in our parish who have suffered bereavement this year, may our prayerful support be a comfort to you at this time. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

On a personal note, I wish to thank you most sincerely for your ongoing support and kindness to me, in so many different ways, not just at Christmas but throughout the year. It is much appreciated. I am grateful also to Fr Gilmore for his help, advice and encouragement.

We pray that brighter days are not too far away, but it is most important for all of us, in the meantime, to stay safe, create a safe environment for others and abide by the restrictions in place for our benefit. I look forward to journeying with you in faith in the coming year and to the day when the rules and restrictions in our churches, especially for our liturgies, can be safely lifted.

May the blessings of the Christ Child be upon you all.

Fr Paul