

Parish Newsletter

Church of the Irish Martyrs,
Commemorative Edition

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Jn 16: 12-15

Message from Fr. Liam

I extend a warm welcome this weekend to Bishop Denis, as we celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the opening of the Church of the Irish Martyrs. It is an occasion to celebrate, recall recent memories and to look to the future with hope and faith.

A church building is very much the 'heartbeat' of any community, it is where new life is welcomed, where life is celebrated in its many milestones, and where, ultimately, life is commended to God at journey's end.

The church is always about people, more so than the physical building. The idea or concept envisioned for this Church by its architect, Eamon Hedderman, was to "present the church as a point along the route of life...

its interior layout representing the path of life from baptism, to the Word and to Eucharist. The Eucharist being the summit of our faith. The Church of the Irish

Martyrs achieves this, a space that enhances and welcomes the coming together of the community in prayer.

Where we 'come together and go in faith'.

We are proud of this Church. It is a wonderful legacy to the vision of its architect, to the late Fr. Moling Lennon **and** to the tireless effort and generosity of the people of Naas who financed and supported its completion.

To this very day, visitors to Ballycane often speak

glowingly about its beauty, its originality, the sense of welcome and inclusion. When presiding at Holy Mass or on other special occasions you feel a nearness to all who gather in prayer.

Wonderful to see how an original design and concept has managed so well to fulfil the vision and the dream.

For that reason it is very appropriate that we would celebrate a coming together in faith of the people of this parish on this happy day. This church as a place of prayer and worship to God instils within us a real sense of pride. I am grateful to so many who look after it and take care of this church with such attention especially our sacristan, John Waters and for many years Dolly Garvey, up until her retirement in 2020. This weekend I want to thank the Parish Pastoral Council, the Liturgy Group, the Parish Office staff and those who have volunteered and given of their time in preparation of today. All ensuring that the grounds, the church itself and the Liturgy we celebrate will be a fitting expression to God of our gratitude.

We have been through a difficult few years, and yet the goodness and generosity of the people of this parish has never waived thank you!

A final word of thanks to Bishop Denis, always a welcome face among us, his presence adds a sense of occasion and celebration to this lovely milestone.

Thank you Bishop Denis!

And so, to the next twenty-five years and beyond

Le cúnamh Dé!





Dolly Garvey

I started working in the Office in the Church of the Irish Martyrs shortly after it opened in 1997 and spent the next 20 years looking after the office and other areas of the Church, including being a sacristan for nearly two years.

I still have fond memories of so many of our parishioners who called for

Mass Cards and other requests for Masses and prayers and sometimes looking for a sympathetic ear. All life in the Parish came through our little office so there are happy and sad memories of that time. It is also with sadness that I remember the many Priests who came and went over those years, some like Fr. Moling and Fr. Jimmy who, unfortunately, are no longer with us.

Being such a beautiful Church, I did my best to ensure that it was always clean and that vestments and parish cloths were in pristine condition. Training the Altar Servers over those years gave me great pleasure as well.

From that time, I've seen many changes which have impacted on church life in Ballycane, so who knows what the future will hold for that little church I know and love so well.

Dolly, after years of service to the parish occupies a place of deep affection within the life of Ballycane. She continues to support the parish voluntarily when called upon, and for this we are most grateful.

Continued health and blessings, Dolly!



Sheila O'Connor

I attended meetings about the Church of the Irish Martyrs building and was delighted with its location. It is a unique building that I passed each day on my way to work in Naas hospital and I loved the fact that I would be able to drop in when it was completed.

I loved the blessing of the sick ceremony, which was held on a Saturday morning, it was very meaningful. I was one of the first groups commissioned as a Eucharist Minister in 1980, a role I continue to this day. I am also a member of the Liturgy Group.

Over the years each Christmas I have prepared 12 children to take part in a nativity scene at the Mass on Christmas Eve. It brings home the true meaning of Christmas.

Because of the special layout of the church, I love that we can see the choir, organist, and congregation at the same time. There is a lovely community spirit at all the ceremonies, and I find the church a place of solace.

In 2011, Fr Paul Dempsey and the Liturgy Group planned a walk of solidarity for people who suffered abuse. They were joined by parishioners on a walk from the Church. They stopped at the Famine Graveyard for prayers and then went on to the lakes. Lanterns were released there as a symbol for those who have suffered. People then walked back to the Church grounds where a tree was planted, and a plaque was erected which remains at the site.



John McEvoy

It was a lovely spring evening towards the end of April 1996. The week of the PuncHESTOWN Spring Racing Festival. Work on the building of the new church had just started. While driving home I noticed a pick-up truck parked on

the building site and someone was loading scaffolding planks into it. On entering the site and speaking with this person, I established that he had no connection whatsoever with the building of the Church!

In 2006, I was approached by the late Fr. Jimmy Doyle to see if I would be willing to volunteer in the evenings with the running of the Parish Centre. Who could turn down such a request from Fr. Jimmy? I have found the role of taking care of the groups in the church and in the centre down through the years both a fulfilling and a rewarding experience. I have come into contact with many wonderful people although sadly, some of them have gone to their eternal reward.

John is a wonderful friend and volunteer to Ballycane Church, thank you John!



Jo Coy

When the idea of building a new Church in Naas became a reality, a draw committee was formed to organise the fundraising effort. With hindsight it was a very brave step to take, but with our faith in the support and good will of the

parishioners, we managed to raise over one million pounds. Looking back, my fondest and most abiding memory is the support and good will of our draw committee and the many fine people from around the parish whose hard work and dedication to our fundraising efforts, has left a lasting memory with me. Many became good friends and still continue to support our current Parish Lotto. It is also sad that so many have gone to their eternal reward in the intervening years.

Every time I enter our beautiful Church of the Irish Martyrs, I remember all those lovely people past and present who made it all possible.



The Church of the Irish Martyrs

By Stan Hickey

Two major factors would dominate the developments which took place over the last fifty years in the Ballycane area. The first factor was that, even though they are located close to Naas East, the townlands of Ballycane, Craddockstown and Tipper were in the Parish of Eadestown and therefore the Archdiocese of Dublin. The diocesan boundary between the Dublin and Kildare & Leighlin dioceses in this area of the town was at the stream which formerly ran beside the Ballymore Road and along the boundary wall of the hospital and then under the road at the hospital gates.



The second major factor was the large number of housing projects around the town. Especially those which would eventually require a school and church at the east side of the town to cater for the expanding population.

By the mid-1970s the requirement for a school in Ballycane, and a church at a later date, became a necessity.

In 1975, agreement was reached that the area of Ballycane including Naas General Hospital would be transferred to the parish of Naas.

Fr. Joe Shorthall came to Naas in 1967 and as a consequence of the developments in Ballycane came to live in Lakelands and served as chaplain to the hospital. He also began the task of heading up the team which would provide a primary school for the area.

The Holy Child School at Ballycane was opened in 1980 with Patricia Kennelly as Principal. With great foresight, a large assembly hall was sanctioned. This was to become

the centre for the celebration of Sunday Liturgy for the whole district from 1982 to 1997 while the possibility of building a new church was being considered.

A 1987 report identified Ballycane as the best site because of its closeness to the new school and to the new link road joining the Craddockstown and Blessington Roads.

In 1989 Eamon Hedderman was appointed as architect for the new church.

Three public meetings were held in 1992 at which Fr. Seán Swayne, former curate in Naas and Eamon Hedderman outlined the concepts behind modern church design; to encourage maximum participation by the congregation in a welcoming assembly space.

On 27th September 1992, the Beatification by Pope John Paul II of the 17 Irish Martyrs took place in Rome with Fr. Moling Lennon in attendance.



In June 1993, plans went on public display and a fourth public meeting was held. In September, a 2.5 acre site was purchased from the UDC for £30,000.

In April 1996, a tender of £1.5 million by Ellen Construction was accepted. On Walking Sunday the first sod was turned by Bishop Ryan and work on the site commenced. In July, the foundation stone was blessed and with fine weather, the roof was completed by the end of the year.

On 9th March 1997, the church was blessed and opened by Bishop Ryan. In attendance were many of the priests who had ministered here over the years. There was a guard of honour by the FCA at the opening. This was ten months after the contractor moved on site and ten years after Ballycane was pinpointed as the site for the town's second church.

A remarkable achievement, testament to the effort and support given so wholeheartedly by the parishioners, priests and religious of Naas.



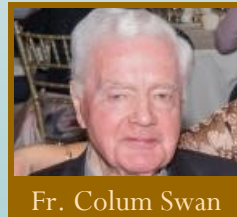
Baby Breen Sheridan, who was amongst the first babies baptised in Ballycane Church on 22nd March 1997 by Fr. Jimmy Doyle. Pictured here on his big day with his parents Elaine and Colin and grandparents Frank and Margaret Plant.



Mary French and Michael Coghlan were married on 28th July 1997 by Fr. Jimmy Doyle. Theirs was the first wedding to take place in the Church of the Irish Martyrs.



A youth and family gathering with Fr. Seán in the Day Chapel



Fr. Colum Swan



Remembering the c



'Before and After': some of the Liturgy Group at work behind the scenes during Holy Week 2022.



The Mercy Sisters pictured outside St. Helens: Brigida, Maureen, Anne and Bridie.



Bishop Denis pictured Linbh Íosa Principal, I one of his visits to t celebrate Confi



The late Fr. Moling Lennon pictured with his sleeves rolled up as he oversees the building project.



In Fr. Eddie and Fr. Jackie, we are truly blessed. Since their arrival to our parishes, Fr. Eddie in 2013 and Fr. Jackie in 2015, both men have fully immersed themselves into the life of our three parishes.



We deeply appreciate their generosity expressed in their service to the people of Naas, Sallins and Two Mile House. They are always on hand to assist on special occasions and, though retired, they continue to celebrate Mass on a weekly basis in our four churches. I know that their commitment, faithfulness and dedication is valued and much admired by ALL parishioners. For us, the Parish Team, they are wonderful colleagues to have always ready and willing to help out, and sometimes, their 'yes, no problem' attitude gets us out of a tight corner! Eddie and Jackie we hope and pray that you will continue to work alongside us for many years to come.

Continued health and blessings upon each of you!



Contribution of the Christian Brothers to our parish: Clement, Michael, PJ and John Paul, May 2021.



Pictured above are Apollo, Virginia, Mia, Theresa, Faith, Adrian, Krystal and Cherry gathered in Ballycane Church to rehearse for our Jubilee Mass.

*Serve the Lord
with all your heart.*

Matthew 22:37



...ed with Scoil
...rene Keogh, on
...he Church to
...rmation.



The Parish Team at their weekly meeting in Ballycane.

“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them: according to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.”

EXODUS 25:8–9

In the spring of 1997 the parishioners of Naas, and especially the residents of the estates in the Ballycane and Craddockstown areas, were introduced to their new church dedicated to the Irish Martyrs.

Its architect Mr Eamonn Hedderman who had a strong record of innovative design in church building had spoken during the planning stage of a building which would have some of the characteristics of a tent – a place of shelter, welcome and assembly. Whether that image translated into the solid brick building that emerged is a matter of individual perception but certainly the characteristics of welcome and gathering were appreciated by the parishioners from its opening day and have remained ever since attracting a loyal and consistent congregation.



The Polish community gathering with Fr. Piotr Jakubiak during Holy Week 2022.

In its twenty-five years the Church of the Irish Martyrs has seen all human life pass through its portals. There have been the happy occasions of first Holy Communions and Confirmations where the graces of the Sacrament are complemented by the joyous gatherings of extended families. There were sad times too when a funeral Mass was celebrated – the sadness of such liturgies being leavened by the brightness streaming in from the roof-light. And then there were the everyday liturgies of the Church calendar held within the embrace of the church’s oval pews – the Masses, the Missions, the Prayer Services, the Novenas in the day chapel, as well as people individually calling in for a quiet prayer in the tranquillity of the building.



At Easter and at Christmas the Liturgy Group along with John decorate the sanctuary with appropriate flowers, fabrics and shrines adding greatly to the celebratory characteristics of the feast. A much-anticipated service in Ballycane each Easter is the Taizé reflection on the night of Good Friday, itself the culmination of an ecumenical procession from the ancient St David’s church in the town centre – a gesture which links the oldest and the newest in terms of church building in the town of Naas.

Ancillary to the its main purpose as a sanctuary and place of worship are the meeting rooms presciently provided for in the planning stage of the church. They rapidly became the most sought-after pieces of real estate in the town with a diversity of groups seeking to rent them for their meetings and classes.



The church's environs, so well maintained, reinforce the architect's vision of an inviting space with the wide pathways converging on the spacious entrance porch intended to reinforce the sense of gathering for worship.

The building of a new Catholic Church was a rare phenomenon in the last decade of the 20th century at a time when affiliation to church liturgies was already in decline. It was a great act of faith by the pastors and people of the town who raised funds for years previously and who gave practical and moral support in a multitude of ways. Twenty-five years later that faith has been rewarded many times over with the Church of the Irish Martyrs established as a focus of spiritual gathering and community assembly among the growing estates on the eastern flank of the parish of Naas.

By *Liam Kenny*



In reflective prayer are Fr. Robert with the congregation on Holy Thursday 2022, (Day Chapel)



John Waters, Sacristan.

An occasion like a jubilee offers us an opportunity to acknowledge and express gratitude.

This weekend, we acknowledge the enormous contribution of John as sacristan to the Church of the Irish Martyrs.

John gives his heart and soul to this role in caring for the church, looking after the meeting rooms as well as the church grounds. His attention to detail, his organisation, the efficiency and pride he takes in keeping the church looking so well is appreciated by all. John is always so hospitable, welcoming and helpful. Every task completed, dare I say, to perfection. John, thank you! For looking after Ballycane and all of us with such care and dedication.



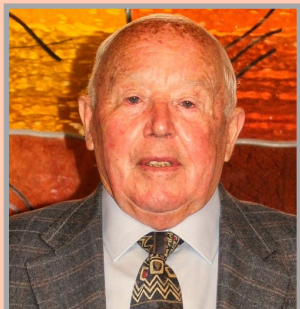
Nick Coy

Nick is yet another volunteer who gives of his time as a 'stand-in' sacristan. Covering weekends and providing holiday cover when John is taking a well-earned break.

Whenever he is on duty, the transfer of responsibility is always seamless until John is back in situ.

We appreciate his warmth, his kindness and co-operation which is always so supportive of the Parish Team and of Ballycane.

Nick has a great love for Ballycane Church and for many years served as a volunteer looking after the Centre Rooms. Nick for your continued volunteerism in Ballycane, we are deeply grateful. Thank you Nick!



Charlie Byrne

Charlie is a name and face closely associated with Ballycane.

Prior to the building of our beautiful Church, Charlie had the onerous task of

setting up the school each weekend as a centre for Mass. A task he co-ordinated for 14 years, working closely with the late Fr. Joe Shortall.

When the Church of the Irish Martyrs opened on 9th of March 1997, Charlie was appointed Sacristan by Fr. Moling, a position in which he served from 1997 - 2006.

Charlie recalls that when newly opened there was a steady stream of visitors from all over the country and beyond to see the newly constructed Church. Charlie assumed an unofficial role of 'Tour Guide'.

No better man considering his characteristic nature as a gentleman and a man of tremendous warmth.



The Lotto Committee: Seamus Morahan, Patricia Stokes, Marian Stapleton, Jo Coy and Grace Kevans.

Each Wednesday evening the Lotto Committee are to be found in the office of Ballycane Church overseeing the lotto draw. It is a task that they carry out with great dedication and faithfulness in supporting the finances of the parish. Particular mention should be made of the contribution of Jo Coy, who has voluntarily and faithfully coordinated the lotto draw since its inception.

Thank you Jo!

We take this opportunity to thank all parishioners who have remained so loyal to the lotto, whether buying their tickets weekly, by standing order, yearly subscription or online.

Also, a word of thanks to our Lotto Promoters.



Clodagh Ní Chuinn: Although the church may be new in comparison to others, it has been here for all of my 17 years. I have spent many a Sunday morning in the Church of Irish Martyrs with my family, in the presence of God. My siblings and I would be whisked away to Sunday School on many of them, much to the delight of my parents. The church was transformed on my Communion and Confirmation days, memories that will be cherished forever. And of course, Christmas Eve. When the church was packed with parishioners for hours on end. The nerves would pulse through me as I prepared to perform in the nativity play. When that was over, I was not finished yet. I would rise up onto a stool and sing "Silent Night" to a congregation captivated by our beautiful singing. I would look out and see some familiar faces, some not, but that was the beauty of it. Everyone gathered together in the beautiful oval church, united by one common interest.

That is what this Church means to me: Communion, Confirmation and Community.