

THE BALLINCOLLIG PARISHIONER



St. Mary & St. John
Station Road

Sunday 24-December-2006

Fourth Sunday Of Advent

God's anointed was born by the power of God's spirit. He is the Son of God, and fulfils God's promise of an everlasting kingdom for his people.



Christ Our Light
Innishmore

Christmas Customs from Various Countries and Cultures

Centuries ago Christians brought plants and flowers into the celebration of Christmas, for did not Christ come to uphold the dignity of all God's creation? The natural world, as well as humans, angels and animals, should have a part in welcoming him.

Evergreens, from ancient times symbols of life and eternity, have always had a prominent place in Christian celebrations. Holly, with its green leaves, its prickly points and red berries, suggested that the Child born in the manger would wear a crown of thorns and shed drops of blood. Mistletoe, long associated in the pre-Christian world with healing, became a symbol of the healing power of Christ.

The poinsettia, from Central America, with its bright, star-like flowers, is a natural reminder of the Star of Bethlehem. Other plants that bloom during this season are images also of the Root of David that flowered with new life.

The Christmas meal after midnight Mass, in which all the family participates, is traditional among the French. Among the Slavic peoples on Christmas eve, the father of the family breaks the feast-day wafers of bread and gives them to the members of his household, while wishing all the peace of Christmas.

From Ireland came the custom of placing lighted candles in the window during Christmastime. It originated in penal times when the Catholic religion was suppressed in Ireland and priests were forced into hiding. Irish families put a burning candle in their window and left their doors unlatched, hoping that a priest might come to their door and celebrate the Christmas Mass with them.

On the feast of the Epiphany, January 6th, in Spain and South America the celebration of the coming of the Three Kings is highlighted with colourful processions and giving of gifts, (rather like our Christmas presents on the 25th Dec).

The Christmas tree probably originated from popular early medieval religious plays, "the Paradise Plays," performed in churches and town squares of Europe during the Advent season. The plays told the story of the human race from the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise till the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. On stage during the play was a great tree hung with apples, symbolizing the Garden of Paradise. Soon people began the custom of putting a "paradise tree" laden with gifts and lighted with candles in their homes during the Christmas season to celebrate paradise regained through the coming of Christ.

Representing many things--the original tree of paradise, the life-giving tree of Christ's cross, the tree John the Apostle saw in the Book of Revelations, "a tree of life, which yields twelve crops of fruit, one for each month of the year...for the healing of the nations"--our Christmas tree is rich in Christian symbolism.

It was St. Francis of Assisi who first popularised the Christmas manger. Wanting to see how Christ was born with his own eyes, he had a stable and some images made before Christmas and then invited his neighbours and friends to come and join him at his "Bethlehem." And thus began the tradition of the Christmas Crib that we see in all churches and many homes at this time of year.

Sean O'Driscoll

Christmas Day Masses

St. Mary & St. John 6.00 pm (vigil) 10.00 pm 8.30 am 10.00 am 12 Noon
Christ Our Light 6.00 pm (Children's) 8.00 pm 12 Midnight 11.00 am 12.30 pm

There will be no 5:30 pm Mass on Christmas Eve & Christmas Day in Christ Our Light

Fourth Sunday of Advent

We are about to take our final step in preparation for our Christmas meeting with Christ. In the Gospel we hear the words spoken to Mary: "Do not be afraid". Let us place our trust in God, who is very near us. With open hearts may we embrace the grace of our Saviour.



PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Priest

As we approach the Church's celebration of the Birth of our Redeemer, we present our needs and the needs of our world before our loving God.

Reader

For all who look forward to the coming of Christ, that their hearts may be filled with joy.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the Jewish people, our ancestors in the faith, the nation which gave us Our Saviour, that all Jews scattered throughout the world may be blessed at this Christmas time.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who find this time of year difficult, for those who carry heavy burdens, for those oppressed by memories of tragedy or loss, and for those who mourn departed loved ones, that all may receive a special grace on this Christmas Eve.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

For all who fail to find meaning in life, for those tempted to despair, that they may be led along the way of hope.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our families, relatives and friends, for all here present, and for all who travel at this time to re-unite with family.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our people who have gone before us in faith, that they may share in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

Priest

Loving God, as we come to the end of this Advent season, we wait in joyful hope for the celebration of the birth of the Saviour. In your great goodness hear the prayers we make in the name of Jesus, whose coming is joy to the world, whose kingdom will never end.

Amen.

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

Visit Our Website: www.ballincolligparish.ie

BAPTISMS

WE WELCOME TO OUR COMMUNITY ALL THOSE WHO WERE BAPTISED RECENTLY :

Aoife Christine Cronin, Ballyburden, Waterfall.
 Emma Rachel Elliott, 31 Willow Grove, Coolroe Heights.
 Ian Christopher Elliott, 31 Willow Grove, Coolroe Heights.
 Aisling Kelleher, 20 Prospect Lawn, Westfalia Drive.
 Tadhg Eoin Daly, Oaklands, Farran.

† **IN SYMPATHY** †

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE RECENTLY DECEASED :

Francis Long, Blackpool & Farnanes.
 Dermot Murphy, Upton.
 May Manley, 47 Leeview.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF THE FOLLOWING WHOSE ANNIVERSARY OCCURS:

Con O'Regan, Maglin.
 Deceased members of the Cummins & O'Regan families.
 Jim & Kathleen Doyle, Westcourt.
 John & Mary Ann Finn, Ballyduff.
 Maureen Cuddihy, Coolroe.
 Alex McSweeney.
 Deceased members of the Aherne Family, Fr. Sexton Park.
 John Doab, The Crescent.
 Margaret, Patrick & John O'Mahony, Carriganarra.
 Cecily O'Sullivan, Beech Park.
 Margaret O'Connor, Carrigrohane.
 Deceased members of John A. Wood Staff.
 Deceased members of the Cronin Family, Pearse Place.
 Mary Bridget Creed, Inniscarra & Healy's Bridge.
 Mary Lenihan, Inniscarra View.
 Helen Keneally, Beech Park.
 Peter & Hannah Crowley, Leemount.
 David Brosnan, Muskerry Estate.
 Dan Kearney, Inchigeela.
 Eugene McDonnell, Barrack Street.
 James Prendeville, Castle Park.
 Michael & Sheila Murphy, Coolflugh, Tower.
 May Donelon, Co. Galway.
 Deceased members of the Flanagan Family, Castle Park.
 Deceased members of the O'Sullivan Family, Tralee.
 Dan & Eileen Burke, Whitechurch.
 John & Lena Gaffney, Carrigrohane.
 Con, Nora & Donal Ahern, Fr. Sexton Park.
 Patrick & Mary Radley, Powdermills.
 Josephine Murphy, Castle Avenue.
 Mick & Mary Gaffney, Ballincollig & Limerick.
 John, Mary, Thomas & Harry Twohig, Farranree.
 Masie Kearney, Farranree.
 Eileen Padgett, Farranree.
 Bridie O'Driscoll, Farranree.
 Kay Barrett, Beech Park.
 Mary O'Mahony, Castle Park.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Fourth Week Of Advent

24 Sunday Mic. 5: 1-4. Ps 79. Heb. 10:5-10. Lk. 1 :39-45. Lect I: 73
 25 Monday Midnight Mass Is. 9: 1-7. Ps. 95. Tit. 2:11-14. Lk. 2: 1-14. Lect I: 104
 26 Tuesday Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59. Ps 30. Mt 10:17-22. Lect I: 125
 27 Wednesday 1 Jn 1:1-4. Ps96. Jn 20:2-8. Lect I: 127
 28 Thursday 1 Jn 1:5-2:2. Ps 123. Mt 2:13-18. Lect I: 129
 29 Friday 1 Jn 2:3-11. Ps 95. Lk 2:22-35. Lect I: 131
 30 Saturday 1 Jn 2:12-17. Ps 95. Lk 2:36-40. Lect I: 134

Next Sunday's Readings 31-December-2006

Eccles. (Sir) 3:2-6, 12-14. Ps. 127. Col. 3:12-21. Mt. 2:13-15, 19-23. Lect I:

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 ☆
 ☆ *To all our Readers & Parishioners* ☆
 ☆ *Happy Christmas* ☆
 ☆ *Nollaig Shona Dhuit* ☆
 ☆ *Feliz Navidad* ☆
 ☆ *Boas Festas* ☆
 ☆ *Sretan Bozic* ☆
 ☆ *Ruumsaid juulup|hi* ☆
 ☆ *Hyvaa joulua* ☆
 ☆ *Joyeux Noel* ☆
 ☆ *Buone Feste Natalizie* ☆
 ☆ *Priecigus Ziemas Svetkus* ☆
 ☆ *Linksmu Kaledu* ☆
 ☆ *Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia* ☆
 ☆ *Sarbatori vesele* ☆
 ☆ *Cestitamo Bozic* ☆
 ☆ *May the Child Jesus and His Mother* ☆
 ☆ *watch over you this Christmas and* ☆
 ☆ *throughout the coming year.* ☆
 ☆ *As once they came to the stable of* ☆
 ☆ *Bethlehem, may they come to you* ☆
 ☆ *and bring you all the desires of your heart.* ☆
 ☆
 ☆★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

The Pyke Theatre Group Social Committee

Presents

Ritchie Halpin

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on

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THE SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading: Mic 5:1-4

Jesus Christ is coming soon, as he once came to Bethlehem. His origin is ancient. His message is timeless. His truth is eternal. Jesus Christ is peace itself.

Second Reading: Heb 10:5-10

The coming of Christ brings about our sanctification. As Jesus came to do the will of God, we too have the same purpose in life. We offer our bodies as a spiritual sacrifice to God. In his will is our peace.

Gospel: Luke 1:39 - 44

Luke tells us much in this account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Mary went to Judah to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who knew nothing of Mary's pregnancy before their encounter. Yet Elizabeth knew that there was something special about Mary and the baby she carried. This is made clear by her calling Mary the "mother of my Lord." The baby that Elizabeth carried leaped for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. This completes the prophecy of the angel that Elizabeth and Zechariah were expecting a baby and is symbolic of John's announcing Jesus' coming.

49th Cork Ballincollig Scout Group

Last Saturday the Tue. Night Macoimh held a sleep over in the hall, they met at the Scout hall at 11 am and set off for the Scout Centre at Mount Melleray where in the sunshine they took turns on the Zip wire, climbed on the indoor climbing wall and spent time in the games room playing air hockey, pool, fuzzi ball as well as table tennis. They stopped for dinner in Fermoy on the way back, after watching DVDs and having supper they went to sleep. After Breakfast they went swimming in Douglas Pool, back in the Hall they packed up their gear and went home.

Robert Baden – Powell the founder of Scouting wrote a book called Scouting for Boys in which he laid out the blueprint of Scouting; here is an extract.

Here is a very important bit of courtesy, that is too often forgotten, but which a true Scout will never omit, and that is to thank for the kindness you receive. A present is not yours till you have thanked for it. You have not finished your camp, even if you have packed up your kit and cleaned up the ground, until you have thanked the owner for the use of it and have thanked God for giving you a good time.

Hello Ballincollig Parish without spending a cent.

PAY E taxpayers who are contributing five euro a week (€250 a year) to the offertory collection can help the parish by agreeing a direct debit to the parish bank account. The parish being registered as a charity is entitled to claim at least €62.00 from the dept. of Finance for each such contributor. A number of parishioners have already intimated their intention to complete a direct debit and this will enable the parish to apply to the Dept. of Finance for the money waiting to be drawn down on an annual basis. I hope that many other parishioners will join up during the next two weeks. Please speak to me or ring me at the following number 021 4871206, or 0862618824 and hopefully I will be able to help you take the next step. Hopefully (with your help) we will manage to claim some of the money that is rightfully belonging to Ballincollig parish.

Yours Fr George.

MARY'S DREAM

'I had a dream, Joseph. I don't understand it, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our son. The people in my dream had been preparing for about six weeks. They had decorated the house and bought new clothes. They'd gone shopping many times and bought many elaborate gifts. It was peculiar though, because the presents weren't for our son. They wrapped them in beautiful paper and stacked them under a tree. Yes, a tree, Joseph, right inside their homes! They'd decorated the tree with sparkling ornaments. There was a figure like an angel on the top of the tree. Everyone was laughing and happy. They gave gifts to each other, Joseph, not to our son. I don't think they even knew him. They never mentioned his name. I had the strangest feeling if our Jesus had gone to this celebration, he would have been intruding. How sad for someone not to be wanted at his own birthday party! I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible, Joseph, if it had been real!

Thank You

The priests of the parish would like to say a sincere "Thank You" to all the members of the Parish of Ballincollig for their support and fidelity to the Church during 2003. Many young parents bring their newly born babies for Baptism; the churches were packed for the First Communions and so many wished attend the Confirmations that the Bishop had to come to the parish on three occasions as the churches would not hold the invited guests.

There is a great test of Christianity it is the test that Jesus himself applied when he said: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, naked and you clothed me..." The sincerity of our belief in Jesus is ultimately tested by our generosity to those in need.

The extraordinary response to the Christmas appeal of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference proved the sincerity of our parish's response to the words of Christ. Circa €19k was contributed at the Masses last weekend. This great contribution was given discreetly, anonymously and without any extra emotional appeals or promotions. It was simply a massive vote of confidence in the members of the local Conference.

The list of those who contribute their time to parish activity is too long to mention here. Choirs, Altar Societies, Parish Council, "Parishioner", Offertory Collectors, Counters, Envelope Distributors, Legion, S.V.de P., Ministers, Servers, Parish Organisations and Boards, etc. etc. are all volunteers who work for God and the parish. You will not see their pictures in the Newspapers. You may not know their names. But you do see the results of their contribution in the liturgical, educational, cultural and social life of our community.

Our wish is that the Lord will reward you all with a happy and holy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

**Christmas Collection
For The Priests of the Parish**

The collection on Christmas Day is for the support of the priests of the parish. This is my letter to Santa I am looking for ward to your generosity.

Thanking you in anticipation

Fr George.

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

Dec-30 & Dec-31-2006

St. Mary & St. John

Christ Our Light

6:00 pm (Vigil)
Michael Fitton
Paul Kearns
8:30 am
Elizabeth Daly
10:00 am
Margot Twomey
12:00 Noon
John Dorgan
Keevesa McGrath

8:00 pm (Vigil)
Michael Greene
11:00 am
Alex Hatsigrigoriou
Alison Henchion
12:30 pm
Tadhg Buckley
5:30 pm
Marlyn O'Connor

MASS TIMES

St. Mary & St. John

Christ Our Light

8:30 am, 10 am, 12 noon, 6 pm & 10 pm

Sunday

11 am, 12:30 pm, 6 pm, 8 pm & 12 Midnight

8:30 am, 10 am, 12 noon

Monday

11 am, 12:30

9:30 am

Tuesday

9:30 am

Wednesday

9:30 am

Thursday

9:30 am

Friday

10:00 am & 6 pm (Vigil)

Saturday

8 pm (Vigil)

CONFESSIONS

After 10:00 am Mass & before 6:00 pm Mass

Saturday

BAPTISMS

4:30 pm

Saturday

4:30 pm

Except First Saturday of Month

First Saturday of Month

12:45 pm

Sunday

PARISH CLERGY

Priest on Duty

087-2479140

Fr. George O'Mahony P.P.

021-4871206

Fr. Michael O'Mahony C.C.

021-4877161

Fr. Sean O'Driscoll C.C.

021-4870434

Fr. Anthony O'Mahony



MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

Dec-30 & Dec-31-2006

St. Mary & St. John

Christ Our Light

6.00 pm Steve Wills
Margaret O'Sullivan
Rita Aherne
Rose Doyle
Jim Walsh
Frances O'Brien

8:00 pm Anne O'Regan
Mairead Murphy
Finbarr Murray

11:00 am Seamus O'Connell
Mary O'Connell
Alan O'Riordan
Geraldine Keohane

8:30 am Mary Buckley
Rita Murphy
Mary O'Keefe

10:00 am Christina Walsh
Peter Reilly
Mary Collins
Christy Roche
Katie O'Shea
Claire Creedon

12:30 pm Lucy O'Callaghan
Jackie Sheehan
Mary Green
Michael O'Leary

12 Noon Oliver O'Donovan
Barbara Kelly
John Jeffers
Mary McLean
Ellen Seymour
Nora Hennessy

5:30 pm Noelle Buckley
Mary Breen
Siobhan Burke



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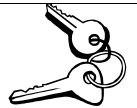
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*Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year from The Parishioner Editorial Team
Our Next publication will be on Sunday January 7th 2007*

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Thursday 9.30 – 5.00 pm
Friday 9.30 – 5.00 pm
Saturday 9.30 – 12.30 pm

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Tuesday 9.30 – 5.00 pm
Wednesday 10.30 – 5.00 pm
Thursday 9.30 – 7.30 pm
Friday 9.30 – 7.30 pm
Saturday 9.30 – 5.00 pm

THE BALLINCOLLIG PARISHIONER

Monday 25-December-2006



St. Mary & St. John
Station Road



Christmas Day
A child is born for us, a son given to us; dominion is laid on his shoulder, and he shall be called Wonderful Counsellor.



Christ Our Light
Innishmore

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MINISTERS OF THE WORD

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

St. Mary & St. John

Christ Our Light

6:00 pm Aine Sheehan	6:00 pm Children's Mass
10:00 pm Sandra Walsh	8:00 pm Jack Dorgan
8:30 am Pat Fennell	12 Midnight Brian O'Donoghue
10:00 am Grace Buttimer	11:00 am Cormac Manning
Orla Horgan	Joseph Manning
12:00 Noon Tony Lynch	12:30 pm Kay Carew

MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

St. Mary & St. John

Christ Our Light

6.00 pm	Phil Kennedy Irene O'Brien Ted Nelligan Steve Wills Margaret O'Sullivan Sr. M. Carmody	6:00 pm	Gareth Irish Sheila Curran Kathleen Daly
10.00 pm	Mary Buckley Anne Cahill Betty Casey Michael Crowley Theresa Lucey Tony O'Leary	8:00 pm	John O'Donoghue Kathleen Daly Mary Dineen
8:30 am	Mary Buckley Mary Collins Mary Buckley	12 Midnight	Bernard Curran Clare Curran
10:00 am	Seamus O'Shea Sally Crowley Joan Tobin	11:00 am	Angela Cunningham Laurence Cunningham Eileen Byrne
12 Noon	Joan Barrett Peter Reilly Christy Roche	12:30 pm	Eileen Garvey Sally Power Breda Callanan Marie O'Brien
	Sheila Carroll Angela Murphy John Henchy		
	Barbara Kelly Siobhan Riordan Geraldine Graham		

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PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Priest

On this wondrous day when we celebrate God's nearness to us, we bring our prayers with confidence.

Reader

That the Church throughout the world may rejoice at the presence of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

That all peoples and nations may share in the peace Our Saviour brings.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

That all families may experience joy and hope this Christmas Day.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

That those in prisons or detention centres may not be forgotten at this time.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

That those who are sick, whether at home or in hospital, may experience healing and peace.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

That those who have died may rise with Christ to a life of glory. We remember especially all our loved ones and all who have died during the past year.

**Lord, Hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.**

Priest

O God, you give us joy in the celebration of the birth of your Son, Jesus. Hear the prayers we make this day in his name.

Amen.

Best Wishes for a Happy and Peaceful Christmas

The priests of the parish join in sending their Christmas greetings to all members of the parish and to all readers of the Ballincollig Parishioner. We thank you all for your help and co-operation during the past year.

You will be remembered in our Christmas Masses.

George O'Mahony, Michael O'Mahony, Sean O'Driscoll & Anthony O'Mahony

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Window on Our Past

In keeping with the age-honoured tradition of the festive season this childhood memoir casts a backward glance to the rare old times in the home parish of Ballincollig.

The era of the forties and fifties was a time when God-fearing parents herded their betimes reluctant offspring along the "via dolorosa" - up the square and under the archway - the well trodden path which also led to the Church of St. Mary and St. John, erected in 1866. Though not blessed with the religious fervour of our forebears, we dutifully trudged along for devotions, confessions, confraternity meetings, retreats and general missions. Even at home the inspiration of Rosary Crusader, Fr. Patrick Payton, conspired with mother's perspiration to have us on our bended knees each evening for the recitation of the family rosary. In due course, altar service beckoned and having memorised the Latin responses under the guidance of popular curate, Fr. Timothy O'Mahony, we were duly assigned to the "hierarchy" of senior acolytes, John "Bull" Fitzpatrick, Tim Murphy, John O'Connor, 'Spud' Murphy and Paddy Joe O'Brien. "Don't fret over Fr. Sexton - his bark is worse than his bite" confided church sacristan Polly O'Sullivan as she inspected the starched surplices and petrified demeanour of her latest troupe of novices. The awesome presence of his lordship the P.P. was enough to instil the fear of God and instantly call into question the true depth of our commitment to the noble calling!

Yet our place of honour on the altar steps did afford a grandstand view for the local highlights of the church year. Led by the venerable Nell Cody, West Village, the entire congregation was in splendid voice for the hymn-singing on Christmas morning with maestro Jane Callanan providing the accompaniment on the harmonium. One could sense the expectant mood of the faithful as they waited for that memorable moment when tenor Jerry Delaney rose from his lofty perch in the gallery to deliver his widely acclaimed rendering of Panis Angelicus. The Nativity Crib faithfully erected by Eric Down, a popular member of the farming fraternity, was, of course, an integral part of that Christmas scene. By far the most prestigious event of the church calendar was the biennial visit of Bishop Cohalan on Confirmation Day when the spirit of the Holy Ghost appeared to descent on every inhabitant of the parish.

To us it seemed to follow the natural order of things that the front pews should be reserved on such occasions for "the lords and ladies" of Ballincollig N.S. with the tiny contingent from neighbouring Ballinora bringing up the rear. But the inbred superiority of Ballincollig over Ballinora was ruefully shattered on the afternoon of Sunday, February 15, 1951, when the village and approaches to the church were gaily bedecked with flags and bunting for the eagerly-awaited homecoming of the newly-appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Cork - a boy from Ballinora no less - one Cornelius Lucey of Windsor, Waterfall. The elated visage of Fr. Sexton, more so than the colour and fuss which surrounded us bore graphic testimony to the parish's moment of triumph.

On that historic day when the purple biretta came to town our chief dilemma as we were pressed forward to kiss the Episcopal ring was one of elementary theology. That God should enlist the humble services of a Ballinora boy to transform us all into strong and perfect Christians seriously undermined our faith in the divine wisdom of the Almighty!

Nollag faoi shéan is faoi mhaise dibh go léir

Séamas O'Tuama

Bishop Buckley and Bishop Colton issue joint message for Christmas.

In joint Christmas message, two Cork bishops say the first step in confronting violence in society is a renewed respect for the dignity of the human person.

At Christmas we celebrate the coming on earth of Jesus Christ - the greatest event in the history of the world. After thousands of years, Jesus Christ is still the centre of the human race, the joy of every heart and the answer to all our expectations.

God loved us so much that He sent his only Son, who lived among us, sharing our human experience, enriching us and giving dignity to the human person. Jesus reveals to us that we are all God's children. His unique gift is love for each and every one of us.

Each and every human being is precious in God's eyes. In the words of St. Augustine: He has made us for himself and our hearts will not rest until they rest in Him.

Sadly, today, lack of respect for the dignity of every human person is present in our society and is the cause of much of the violence--in our country, in our streets and in some of our homes. This is a source of deep concern. It is destroying the lives, dignity and hopes of many families. A renewed and conscious respect for the dignity of each and every human person is the starting point for confronting this violence. That dignity underpins the need to respect human life in all its strengths and in all its frailties.

As we celebrate this Christmas season of goodwill towards all, we urge people to promote the dignity of each person as fundamental to all our living. Respect for this dignity has to be seen in our homes, places of work, wherever we meet, mingle and share in the varying relationships that make up our daily lives. The Good News of Jesus Christ gives us great hope, courage and strength to live as the Lord has called us to live.

Pray with us to the Prince of Peace at this time for a renewed appreciation of the great gift of our human dignity given to us by the coming of Jesus Christ. Right Rev. Paul Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Most Rev. John Buckley, Bishop of Cork and Ross. Christmas 2006.