

IRISH CATHOLIC – available in the Church each week. Cost €2.

Please put the money in the Candle Shrine.

SUNDAY, 10th JANUARY – BAPTISM OF THE LORD

We invite all families who had a Baptism during 2020 to tune into the 11a.m. Mass on Sunday, 10th January. There will be a Special Blessing for their Child.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY – Deacon Liam Dunne

The Feast of the “Epiphany” marks the end of Christmas, and the Gospel of Matthew focuses primarily on the revelation of the infant Jesus as the Christ to the three wise men.

Pope Francis in his first Epiphany homily in 2014 as pontiff, reminded us that our lives were a continual search for “the Light” of Jesus, and that the: “destiny of every person is symbolized in the journey of the Magi of the East: our life is a journey, illuminated by the lights which brighten our way, to find the fullness of truth and love which we Christians recognize in Jesus, the Light of the World.”

It is interesting to recall that the Feast of the Epiphany pre-dates Christmas, and its celebration has developed rich cultural traditions in different parts of the world. Here in Ireland, Epiphany is traditionally known as “Women’s Christmas” or “Little Christmas” and was supposed to be a day of rest for women from cooking, housework and cleaning. However, any traditional gathering of women for high tea with wine to honour the miracle at the wedding of Cana will more than likely have to be postponed. For many 2020, due to the reality of COVID-19, was a very challenging year because of the upheavals of so much that was taken for granted, especially for families that suffered the death of a loved one.

But 2020 was also a year that demonstrated the importance of the values of solidarity and the common good over the shortcomings of autonomy and individualism in a time of crisis. Therefore, as we begin 2021, peoples, including believers and non-believers, all around the world are looking forward with hope for a better year ahead.

So, no matter how the feast of the Epiphany is celebrated today, it points us towards the mystery of the incarnation and the first encounter of three gentiles with Christ. Three risk-takers in faith searching for the truth in foreign lands, which may be a good metaphor for believers in Ireland today. They were lucky in that they had a bright light to guide them. For us Christians, our guiding star can only be the person of Jesus Christ, whose example and word are our light in creating a better, more just, and human world.

RATHVILLY KILTEGAN PARISH

NEWSLETTER

**St. Brigid’s
Talbotstown
2nd & 3rd January 2021**

**St. Patrick’s
Rathvilly
2nd & 3rd January 2021**

**The Assumption
Tynock
2nd Sunday of Christmas**

Recent Deaths: Jim Doyle, Ricketstown. Maureen Flinter, Ballyraggan.
Pádraig Egan, Tobinstown. Breda Molloy, Collins Park.
Fr James Patrick Bohan, St. Patrick’s, Kiltegan.

ANNIVERSARY MASSES

Rathvilly – Sat/Sun, 2nd & 3rd January 2021

Ed O’Connell, Ballyoliver – 1 st Anniversary	
James & Teresa McGuire, Kylebeg, Lacken	Sheila Fitzpatrick, Mount Kelly
Peter Ralph, Delacy Abbey	Joe McCall, Bough
Mary Plant, Rahill	Molly Lawlor, St. Patrick’s Park
Ann O’Connor nee Plant, Rahill	Moore Family, Stratford on Slaney
Liam Lawlor, Phelan Street and deceased family members	
Paddy & Elizabeth Kelly, Ricketstown and deceased family members	
Timothy & Patrick Doyle, Tobinstown	Eileen Balfe, Rahill
Jim Dempsey, Rathvilly	Christina Balfe, Rahill

Rathvilly – Sat/Sun, 9th & 10th January 2021

Patrick & Mary McNevin, Raheendaw
William Smith, Monavothe
Peter Smith, St. Patrick’s Park

MASSES THIS WEEK – will be celebrated behind Closed Doors

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday – Mass at 9.30 a.m.

Wednesday, 6th January – **The Epiphany of the Lord** – Mass at 11.00 a.m.

Rosary before Mass each day.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION – Tuesday & Thursday 10.00 – 11.00 a.m.

The Church will be open for Adoration.

VIEW ALL MASSES AND PRAYERS ON THE WEBSITE AND RADIO

www.rathvillykiltegan.ie/our-parish/webcam

Radio 104.3 fm

ST. PATRICK’S CHURCH IS OPEN DAILY FOR QUIET PRAYER

Monday to Saturday – 10 a.m. – 4p.m.

Sunday – 12 Noon – 4 p.m.

- Please use hand sanitiser when entering and leaving the Church.
- Please use one way system and follow the signs.
- Please adhere to social distance and wear a face covering.
- Please do not sit in the restricted areas.
- **Seats at the front of the Church is an unrestricted area.**

A NEW YEAR IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

Our thoughts as we commence 2021 are full of hope that we are leading to a time of betterment in the overall situation which has become our life for the past almost ten months. When we first heard of the virus named COVID-19 months ago, we had no idea how it was going to affect our lives, our country, jobs, travel, and every aspect of our existence over an extended time. Soon enough we realised the nature of the virus was such that a vaccine which would protect populations was what was required to complement all that we learned to do with hand washing, face masks, social distancing, refraining from hugs, handshakes and physical visits to our nearest and dearest. It has been a most challenging time for everyone without exception.

While scepticism abounds about the effectiveness of vaccines which have been produced by the big Pharma companies in record time, we are being reassured by scientist and medical experts that the proper steps have been taken and the necessary verifications have been rigorously carried out. Many people cannot wait to receive their offer of the opportunity to receive the vaccine. Older people remember the very successful campaigns of vaccination which happened in previous decades. Conditions where there was then a great danger have almost disappeared and we don't hear them mentioned.

What we have learned

When the pandemic began and we entered into the first lockdown in March 2020 we found it amazing to have quiet roads, clean air, the absence of signs of air travel, the closure of all except essential shops. We enjoyed the good weather and a lot of outdoor activity, with plenty of walks and observation of nature around us. Gardening and cooking became widely popular. Home education was experienced at every level until the summer holidays. We were aware of the disadvantages too and in late August school communities were pleased to be able to resume in classrooms, while taking a high level of precautions. We have learned as a community of new ways of living and of caring for ourselves and each other. Collectively, we have been shocked when we note the denial by some and the reckless behaviour of others.

Looking back on the year gone by in the Parish

A year that began in a normal way soon changed radically. We read in January of Wuhan, China and the measures used there to combat a strange new kind of virus (not yet named by the World Health Organisation). The spread to North Italy was much in the news. Ski holidays in that region became high risk activities. Leap year day, 29 February, recorded the first case of the virus in Ireland. We could not have imagined how it could spread. So much attention has subsequently focussed on the public health authorities and NEPHET has been relied on greatly for advice and mapping of the spread of the virus. The state has had to provide extraordinary levels of support and subsidy because of resulting unemployment, and loss of income in companies of every sort. People are still worried about many aspects affected by the pandemic.

In the parish, congregations have for three long periods been unable to attend worship in their Churches. Churches were initially required to be kept locked. In the newer approach they are open for private prayer, which is a great comfort to many. People have been learning to attend Mass virtually either on television, radio or via the online options such as made possible by Church webcams, Facebook, Youtube etc. Many older people have virtually confined themselves to their homes and gardens for many months now.

People have rediscovered the importance of the telephone call, the virtual visit through Zoom or other methods. The usefulness of social media has been exploited in a big way by many and has helped when actual visiting is so curtailed.

In more recent weeks we have learned of the identification of a new variant of coronavirus which is much more infectious. Cases and deaths reported daily are at a high level. That alone reinforces for us the need to be very cautious and careful in our movements. The sacrifice we are asked to make now will produce dividends in suppressing the current serious wave of infection.

Postponed ceremonies were a big feature of 2020: weddings, baptisms, confirmation and first penance and first communion ceremonies. Some weddings were deferred for a year. The other ceremonies have eventually been celebrated in a different way to ensure safety for all concerned.

Thank you

I take the opportunity of thanking all who have helped in the parish in the past year. The sacristans Breda, Mary and Josie have been wonderful. We appreciate the extra work which has been necessary to keep our Churches safe for everyone. Thanks are due to the Covid-19 Sub-Committees in the areas of the parish who guided and implemented safe arrangements in the Church buildings.

Trish our parish secretary kept the office open right through and has worked harder than ever in being of service to the whole parish. People are deeply grateful to her.

We are most appreciative of those who have continued or resumed their ministries as readers or ministers of Holy Communion.

New roles have emerged in the form of Church sanitisers and stewards. They play a vital role and their extraordinary dedication is deeply appreciated. Volunteers are invited to join them or give them a break. The *meitheal* principle applies here in a big way.

Finance

All charities and Church congregations have been aware of the strains caused by the pandemic to many household economies. In spite of such difficulties, people generally have continued to be generous in their support for the parish collections through weekly envelopes and to the clergy fund through the various collections, most recently the Advent Stations and Christmas collections. I and Fr Pat O'Brien offer sincere thanks to all who have supported the parish and clergy in these difficult times.

Happy New Year

Fr Pat O'Brien SPS and I wish all parishioners of the Rathvilly and Kiltegan areas our best wishes for health and safety in the new year.

Fr John