



Thought for the Month: As Holy Week begins we Catholics are encouraged to understand the significance of this most important time in the Church year. One of the best ways to do this is to participate in the liturgies of this week.

On **Holy Thursday** we re-enact the washing of the feet – a vivid reminder of Jesus' command to love one another as he loved us. We also hear again the story of the Last Supper, which has special significance for the children in our parish who are preparing to receive Holy Communion for the first time.

Good Friday is the most solemn of days. We listen to the story of the passion and death of Jesus and we are invited to venerate the cross.

The Easter Vigil on **Holy Saturday** night is the highlight of all our Easter celebrations, the night when we remember and retell our story from the very beginning. We keep vigil and move from darkness to light; we mark the beginning of new life in resurrection by lighting a new Paschal candle and blessing fresh baptismal water.

Trócaire: Please empty your Trócaire boxes and reduce to the smallest denominations. Make returns on Holy Thursday evening in the special envelope that was in the package you received at the beginning of Lent. The humanitarian mission of Trócaire is to contribute to the saving of lives, the alleviation of suffering, and the protection of human dignity. Thank you in anticipation for your support.

Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Greencastle invite you to a Coffee Morning and Cake Sale on **Tuesday 7th April** after 9.30am Mass. **Proceeds are in aid of the Trócaire Lenten Appeal.**

Good Friday is a Day of Fasting & Abstinence. It is also recommended that Holy Saturday be so observed, 'so that the Church, with uplifted and welcoming heart, be ready to celebrate the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection.'

The Good Friday retiring collection after the 3.00pm celebration of the Lord's Passion is in response to an appeal to help "our Christian brothers and sisters of the Holy Land who, along with other inhabitants of vast areas of the Middle East, have long aspired after that peace and tranquillity which are still so much under threat".

'Do This In Memory' (week 8): Our First Holy Communion parish programme will continue at the Vigil Mass this weekend (Saturday 4th April). The next liturgy will take place at the Vigil Mass (Saturday 25th April) for the Third Sunday of Easter.

Next Sunday's Readings: Acts of the Apostles 10:34-37; Psalm 117; Letters to the Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; John 20:1-9 (Lectionary I, page 417)

Carmelite Retreat Centre – Termonbacca, Derry: Three evening retreats in preparation for Easter, 7.30pm to 10.00pm on 6th, 7th and 8th April. This is an invitation to spend some time in quiet adoration, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and attend Mass.

"It touched my heart to see a world of so much suffering, all the suffering, sadness and poverty of human existence; but also to see how State and Church work together to help those who suffer. ... It is, I believe, evident that by helping the suffering man becomes more human, the world becomes more human".

Pope Benedict XVI en route back from Africa (23rd March, 2009)

HELPING CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND (VATICAN CITY, 25TH MAR 2009 (VIS)): Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, has sent a letter to the bishops of the world encouraging them to participate in the collection for the Holy Land, which traditionally takes place on Good Friday. In the letter, which also bears the signature of Archbishop Antonio Maria Veglio, then secretary of the same congregation, now president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, the two prelates express the Church's "profound concern" for the position of Christians, particularly following the conflict in Gaza. They also underline how Benedict XVI "constantly comforts Christians, and all the inhabitants of the Holy Land, with special words and gestures, coupled with his desire to make a pilgrimage in the historical footsteps of Jesus". "The wounds opened by violence make the problem of emigration more acute, inexorably depriving the Christian minority of its best resources for the future. The Land that was the cradle of Christianity risks ending up without Christians". Cardinal Sandri and Archbishop Veglio make an appeal to help "our Christian brothers and sisters of the Holy Land who, along with other inhabitants of vast areas of the Middle East, have long aspired after that peace and tranquillity which are still so much under threat".

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches interprets the Pope's "loving solicitude" for the ecclesial community in the Holy Land, "again exhorting all Catholics to contribute, also with material resources, to the upkeep of the Holy Sites". The prefect and secretary of the dicastery give assurances that "Churches of the Latin rite and of the various Eastern rites, which benefit from this vital aid, express their recognition with constant prayers for the particular Churches of the whole world". A document drawn up by the Custody of the Holy Land and a note from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, details the projects undertaken using the 2008 collection. Apart from providing study grants for priests and seminarians from the Holy Land to study in pontifical universities, various restoration projects were carried out in, among other places: Jerusalem, Bethany, Bethlehem, Haifa, Magdala, Nazareth and Nablus (the Shechem of antiquity). Funds were also distributed to support parishes, families, schools and universities, and - through the Custody of the Holy Land - to various cultural projects, such as the faculty of biblical sciences and archaeology of the "Studium Biblicum Franciscanum" in Jerusalem.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has published a special prayer for Benedict XVI's forthcoming pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 8th to 15th May in the hope that "this visit will be for the Holy Land a moment of renewal and a time of particular grace".

****Derry Diocesan Society for sick & infirm priests:** 1. Any person may become a member, sharing in all its privileges, by paying a one-time fee of **£10**. 2. Likewise, any person whosoever may have a deceased relative or friend placed on the Register of Members of the Society, the deceased person thereby becoming a sharer in all the Masses and prayers offered for members. These Masses go on all the time.

Privileges of members – deceased: 1. A Mass every day in a parish in the Diocese (*this will take place in Our Lady of the Wayside on 5th April at 11.00am*). 2. The prayers of every congregation in the Diocese on the first three Sundays of each quarter. **Living:** 1. Mass will be offered each month, as listed on church notice board.

2. When a living member dies the name is transferred to the list of deceased members without further payment.

Sick and housebound will be attended Monday 6th April. Please let them know if you live nearby. If you know of anyone who is sick or housebound and would like a visit please inform Fr. Hasson.

Thank you for your support for **Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** in Saint Patrick's Church, last Sunday. May you receive many personal blessings in the same way as our parish was blessed.

Questions people ask:

Q. Was there any special reason why people chose palm branches to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem?

A. The date palm, valued for its nutritious fruit, was depicted on the walls of the Temple. A palm tree grows as a single trunk, tall and straight. At the top it spreads out a crown of fronds or short branches which bear leaves and fruit. Its upright standing inspired the psalmist to picture the just flourishing like the palm tree. It is a symbol of prayer, as one stands before God, with arms outstretched and bearing fruit. In the Apocalypse the Christian martyrs are clad in white garments, waving palm branches before the throne of God. We speak of the palm of martyrdom.

Fr Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap (silvesteroflynn@gmail.com)

Diocese of Derry, Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone

Saint Patrick's Church
Greencastle

Our Lady of the Wayside Church
Broughderg

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion. 5th April, 2009

The Parochial House, 164, Greencastle Road, Sheskinshule, Omagh, BT79 7RU

Website: greencastleparish.com Tel: (028) 8164 8474 Email: greencastlepp@yahoo.com

Summary Financial Statement for Year Ended 31st December, 2008

Greencastle Parish

As we come to the end of the tax year The Parish Finance Committee, with the help of Patrick Friel (accountant) have prepared the following Financial Statement Summary:

	2008	2007
INCOME		
Routine income (envelopes etc.)	59,326	52,339
Investment Income	2,156	2,598
Exceptional Items (Ins. Claim, Special Donations, etc.)	100	5,355
	61,582	60,292
EXPENDITURE		
Property Expenses (Rates, Insurance, Maintenance, etc.)	20,412	20,165
Administration Expenses (Salaries, etc.)	25,795	26,499
	46,207	46,664
NET PARISH INCOME	15,375	13,628

We thank you for your financial support for the parish and we encourage you to use your envelopes weekly. We also invite **taxpayers** to consider signing up to the Gift Aid Scheme. The parish is a registered charity and can claim back the tax on contributions you make. (25pence for every £1) We are in the process of setting up this scheme for the benefit of the parish. Further details will be supplied as soon as they are available.

Parish Finance Committee: Fr. Eugene Hasson P.P., Susan McCrory and Peter Tracey.

Please remember your parish when making your will

Weekly Offerings: Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to **£1,050** and the annual collection for Clerical Education and Ongoing Formation **£30**.

Remembering Our Dead: We pray this week for **Margaret Hagan** whose anniversary occurs at this time.

Stewardship Fund: Bishop Hegarty wrote this week to thank you for your contribution of **£640**.

Go raibh maith agaibh for the recent **Irish Language Annual Collection** which totalled **£197.50**. Any student or adult from the parish attending a language course at Gaeltacht this Summer contact a club committee member.

Pioneer Total Abstinence Association – Annual Buffet and Dance: Shepherd's Rest, Friday 17th April at 8.30pm. Admission by ticket only (£10), available from any committee member. *Music by 'Larry & Co.'*

Saint Vincent de Paul Society: We do not have anyone involved in the parish of Greencastle, but neighbouring groups have asked parishioners to leave a container for recycled clothes near to Saint Patrick's Church for a period of time. Please support them in any way you can.

Parish Clustering: At the recent Priests' Conference held on 23rd March in Derry, Bishop Hegarty informed us that preliminary consideration is currently taking place of the possibility of clustering parishes, as a potential future pastoral strategy in areas of the diocese. He told us that he would be pleased to receive written advice and reflection from priests. If parishioners in Greencastle have any ideas / thoughts you would like to share, please arrange to speak to Fr. Hasson.

Maybe as we begin our discussions on parish clustering we could also reflect on the interesting quote below attributed to Timothy Dolan, Archbishop designate of New York earlier this year.
"What we have learned in the 'school of hard knocks' is that cooperation, mergers, consolidations, or closings are not successful when imposed from above. Dioceses where the bishop's office simply announces widespread reorganization without exhaustive dialogue, face bitterness, resentment and loss of people."
On why he didn't rush to reorganise the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, 2009 (National Catholic Reporter)

Lotto Numbers: 2, 6, 8, 16 (9 winners with 3 numbers – £10 each) **Next Jackpot:** £1,850

Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock: Bishop Hegarty asks for your support on **Sunday 7th June** (there will be no Lourdes Pilgrimage in 2009). The timetable is:

2.30pm Anointing of those who are sick. **3.00pm** Concelebrated Mass with Bishop Hegarty.

4.00pm Solemn Blessing of those who are sick, Benediction, Rosary and Procession to the Shrine.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: Flying directly from Belfast, Saturday 19th September to Monday 28th September, 2009. £1,090stg. For further information and bookings contact Charlie Gillespie on 075 3333 0756.

Pilgrimage to Medjugorje and San Giovanni: Flying directly from Belfast, Saturday 2nd May to Saturday 9th May, 2009. £689. For further information and bookings contact Pat Mullan on (028) 7130 1474.

Special Olympics Appeal: Tyrone Fundraising Coordinator Carolyn McKeown has appealed for support for national collection day on **24th April, 2009**. Their aim is to raise one million pounds in one day. Money raised will go towards providing sports training and competition for special needs athletes.

Annual Diocesan Mass for those with special needs, and their families and friends, will take place in *Saint Joseph's Church, Galliagh, Derry* on Saturday 9th May, 2009 at 3.00pm. Bishop Hegarty will celebrate the Mass. If you have a child who wishes to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation or First Communion at this Mass please contact the Catechetical Centre on (028) 7126 4087.

Our Parish cemeteries are special places providing a focus for our prayerful remembrance of the dead. Please cooperate in their maintenance and care with respect, dignity and honour. Remove flowers and wreaths that have withered. Please do not dump them anywhere in the graveyard. Ask Monumental Sculptors who have completed their work to take rubble away and not dispose of it at the side of the cemetery.

Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – **Mark 15:1-39:**

1. The injustice and brutality of the Passion of Jesus make it a difficult story to read as good news. Yet in the midst of that cruelty the courageous, faithful and self-sacrificing love that Jesus showed for us shines through. Recall moments when the account of the Passion has moved you in a special way. How have you experienced blessing through it?
2. Human love can also be painful. When have you experienced the courage, fidelity and self-sacrifice of others in their love of you? When have you shown that kind of love to others, as a parent, a spouse, or a friend, or in some other relationship?
3. We read the Passion story in the light of the resurrection. What seemed a humiliating and shameful failure for Jesus was not the end of the story. Perhaps with hindsight you can look back on something that seemed like a tragedy at the time but out of that tragedy new life and new possibilities followed for you.
4. For each of us there arise situations in which we feel things are outside our control and we are utterly helpless and powerless. We are not alone in this experience. In his Passion, Jesus is one with us in this human helplessness. When have you found that the presence of another with you helped you through a crisis? When have you been able to help another with your presence? *John Byrne OSA (john@orlagh.ie)*

The Deep End – **Fast-forwarding Pain:**

Why fast-forward Jesus' suffering and death to Palm Sunday? Why can't we wait for Good Friday? Today's celebration is joyous, even triumphal. Why spoil it by anticipating Jesus' suffering and death? Strange that Christianity, a religion of joy, can't celebrate today's joyous event without insisting on a long reading of Jesus' suffering and death (Mark 14:1-15:47) in its liturgy.

Today's First Reading (Isa 50:4-7) says, 'the Lord has opened my ear' (v. 5) – and I hear a question: Why not allow Jesus his moment of glory, and us our moment of joy? For a moment only it is. The triumph doesn't last long. We know that. Time enough to focus on suffering when Good Friday comes. Then it would have even greater impact as we moved from the exuberance of Palm Sunday and the cosiness of Holy Thursday to the horror of Good Friday, then soar to the elation of Easter Sunday.

Too quickly focusing on suffering, perhaps thinking it God-willed, presents a false image of God. Anyone inclined to do so should recall God's words to the prophet Ezekiel, 'Say to them, "As I live," says the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from their ways and live ..." (Ezek 33:11) Neither, does God take pleasure in the sinner's suffering. And most definitely, not in his Son's.

It's important that we be people of joy, even when faced with suffering. Let us celebrate joy exclusively when the occasion merits it. Palm Sunday is one such occasion.

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