



## Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone (Diocese of Derry)

St. Patrick's, Greencastle      Our Lady of the Wayside, Broughderg

**The Feast of Pentecost (23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2010)**

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

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Risen Christ, through your Holy Spirit you remain in us always, and you enable us to remain in you.  
And you never cease reminding us that such a communion can last forever. *Letter from Taizé*

Liturgy Schedule for the Eighth Week in Ordinary Time (24 <sup>th</sup> May, 2010 – 30 <sup>th</sup> May, 2010)			
<b>Saturday Evening</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>5.30pm</b> Confessions and Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass for Sunday	
<b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> May</b> Feast of Pentecost	St. Patrick's	<b>8.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>9:00am</b> Mass: Misso Pro Populo	
	Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>10.30am</b> Confessions	
		<b>11:00am</b> Mass	
<b>Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May</b> Eighth Week in Ordinary Time	St. Patrick's	<b>9.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>10.00am</b> Mass	
<b>Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May</b> Eighth Week in Ordinary Time	St. Patrick's	<b>9.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>10.00am</b> Mass	
<b>Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May</b> Seventh Week of Easter	St. Patrick's	<b>9.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>10.00am</b> Mass	
<b>Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May</b> St. Augustine of Canterbury	St. Patrick's	<b>9.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>10.00am</b> Mass	
<b>Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May</b> Eighth Week in Ordinary Time	St. Patrick's	<b>7.30pm</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>8.00pm</b> Mass	
<b>Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May</b> Eighth Week in Ordinary Time	St. Patrick's	<b>7.30pm</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>8.00pm</b> Mass: Derry Diocesan Society*	
<b>Saturday Evening</b>	St. Patrick's	<b>5.30pm</b> Confessions and Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>6.00pm</b> Vigil Mass for Sunday	
<b>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May</b> Feast of the Most Holy Trinity	St. Patrick's	<b>8.30am</b> Public Recitation of the Rosary	
		<b>9:00am</b> Mass: Misso Pro Populo	
	Our Lady of the Wayside	<b>10.30am</b> Confessions	
		<b>11:00am</b> Mass: Brigid Coyle (15 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary)	

During the month of May members of the Legion of Mary will lead us praying the Rosary *30 minutes before* the beginning of Mass each day. Please join them or make the Rosary your special family prayer during this month.

**We welcome new parishioners and invite you to register by filling out a parish census form**

**Weekly Offerings:** Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to **£1,040**. Please support your community by using your envelope even if you must attend Mass outside your parish, thank you. Our parish depends upon your envelope contribution for our material support. Envelopes received from visitors coming to Mass in Greencastle are returned to those parishes.

**Trócaire Lenten Campaign:** A **£25** donation was received this week.

**Diocesan Purpose Collection:** This annual collection was taken up on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> May, this week £170 was added. Further donations will be acknowledged. *Please use the envelope in your box and be generous*

**Remembering Our Dead:** As a parish faith-community we extend our sympathy to Packie Vincent, Magaret and Suzanna, the brother and sisters of **Michael John Morris** whose Requiem took place on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. We pray for **Vincent Harley** (Birmingham, native of Leaghan) whose Requiem has yet to be arranged. We also pray for **Enda McDermott** whose anniversary occurs at this time.

**Thank you to everyone who helped make last Sunday a day of special blessing for our parish** – the children who made First Holy Communion, their parents and families, our school teachers, the 'Do This In Memory' leaders, the choir, sacristan, altar-servers and the entire faith-community who gathered at Our Lady of the Wayside, Broughderg for last Sunday's 11.00am Mass and BADA for their generous and kind hospitality after Mass.

**Pilgrimage to Knock – Bus with Pat McSwiggan:** Date changed from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August.

**Brother Roger – “Peter was questioned by Christ”:** To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Taizé and the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brother Roger's death, an extract from unpublished video interviews with Brother Roger will appear on the Taizé web site at the beginning of each month through 2010. *taize.fr/en*

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Proverbs:8:23-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15 (Lectionary I, page 601)  
(Sunday: Year C) (Weekday: Year 2)

**Lotto Results:**    N – R – T – Y – Z (5 winners with 3 letters – £10 each)    **Next Jackpot:** £2,400

Parish Liturgy for 29 <sup>th</sup> / 30 <sup>th</sup> May, 2010	St. Patrick's (6.00pm Vigil Mass)	St. Patrick's (9.00am Mass)	Our Lady of the Wayside (11.00am Mass)
Prayers of Intercession	James McCullagh	Volunteers needed	Volunteers needed
Offertory Gifts	The family of Jack Tuohy	The family of Luke Breslin	

Lough Derg 2010 Season Guide at <a href="http://loughderg.org">loughderg.org</a> :			
<b>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June</b>	Three-Day Pilgrimages commence	For the 2010 season we are once again offering a varied programme. The usual Three-Day Pilgrimages, One Day Retreats, Quiet Days and a Day for Families, along with Confirmation and School Retreats and the Life's Journey Series of Workshops will provide opportunities for many to visit. Whether it is for healing or strength, or for reconciliation or renewal, we invite you to join us for a few hours or a day (or three days!). Whatever your reason for wanting to be connected with the Holy Island, know that we are committed to bringing you the <i>Gift of Hope</i> .	
<b>Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Last day for starting Three-Day Pilgrimages		
<b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Last day of the Three Day Pilgrimages		
<b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August</b>	One Day Retreats resume		

**\*Derry Diocesan Society for Sick and Infirm Priests:** 1. Any person may become a member, sharing in all its privileges by paying £20. 2. Likewise, any person whomsoever 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 at 10.00am in St. Patrick's Church on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May**). 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 the Church notice board. 2. When a living member dies the name is transferred to the list of deceased members without further payment.

**Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes (16<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2010):** The Pilgrimage is anxious to have the assistance of 3 more nurses to help in the provision of care for those registered for medical support. There are also places available for general pilgrims. For more information contact the Pilgrimage Office, Derry. Telephone: (028) 7126 0293.

**Irish Wheelchair Association – Flight of the Earls Walk:** An information meeting is to take place in Greencastle Community Centre on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm, where plans will be detailed for the Irish Wheelchair Association 'Flight of the Earls' walk on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June. *Please come along*

**Carmelite Retreat Centre (Termonbacca, Derry) – 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Funday:** Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June. We would be grateful for any items you would like to donate for our Funday stalls. *For more details call (028) 71262512 during office hours*

**St. Vincent de Paul Society – Clothing Bank:** We do not have anyone involved with the St. Vincent de Paul locally in the parish of Greencastle, but other groups have asked for support, a clothing bank is now available near to St. Patrick's Church.

**Pastoral Youth Ministry Leader**

The parishes of St Eugene's Cathedral, St Mary's Creggan, and Holy Family in Derry City are embarking on an exciting new project. Investing in our young people, we are looking to employ an enthusiastic person to lead and direct youth in the three parishes in the ways of faith. The Pastoral Youth Ministry Leader will be employed for a one year contract. The successful candidate must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be an active member of a Catholic Parish Faith Community
- Have experience of skilled leadership in a Youth Setting
- Have a third level qualification in a relevant discipline e.g. education, theology, youth work, community work OR One Year's experience of Youth Project Management
- Be competent in the use of ICT

The Pastoral Youth Ministry Leader will be based within the parishes of St. Eugene's Cathedral, St. Mary's Creggan and Holy Family in Derry City. The above criteria may be enhanced to facilitate short listing of candidates.

**Application Form, Job Description and Personnel Specification may be obtained by telephoning (028) 71264087 during normal office hours and completed applications must be returned to: Derry Diocesan Youth Commission, Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, The Gate Lodge, 2 Francis Street, Derry, BT48 7DS not later than 5.00pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010**

**Greencastle Community Centre – Vintage Rally:** Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May. A fun day for all the family with funds raised being distributed to various charities.

**Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre – Open-Air Mass:** Bishop Hegarty extends an invitation to all the children in the diocese who were Confirmed in their faith this year to an open-air Mass in Celtic Park, Lone Moor Road, Derry on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> June, beginning at 11.30am and finishing around 1.00pm.

**BADA An Bruach Dearg Community Centre – Upcoming Events:**

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May**      Annual Guest Tea at 8.30pm with music from *Larry and Co*. Tickets available from all committee members and Broughderg Post Office ((028) 8675 1633).

*Items for inclusion should be forwarded to the Parochial House by the Wednesday evening prior to publication*

<p><b>The Pope's Intentions for May, 2010 (please remember these in your personal prayer)</b></p> <p><b>General:</b> That the shameful and monstrous commerce in human beings which sadly involves millions of women and children, may be ended.</p> <p><b>Mission:</b> That ordained ministers, religious women and men, and lay people involved in apostolic work may understand how to infuse missionary enthusiasm into the communities entrusted to their care.</p>
<p><b>Study Theology From Home:</b> The Dominicans are offering a theology programme specifically for lay people, offered by distance learning. This means that one can study for a certificate, diploma or degree in theology, and even more importantly, become more educated in the Faith, all from the comfort of home. For more information contact The Priory Institute, Tallaght Village, Dublin 24, Tel: 00353 1404 8124/7 or email <a href="mailto:enquiries@prioryinstitute.com">enquiries@prioryinstitute.com</a> Visit our website <a href="http://www.prioryinstitute.com">www.prioryinstitute.com</a></p>
<p><b>Children in Crossfire – 25<sup>th</sup> Budapest Half Marathon:</b> Children in Crossfire are recruiting 20 enthusiastic individuals to join them for the 25<sup>th</sup> Budapest Half Marathon on 5<sup>th</sup> September. A deposit of £150 is requested and minimum sponsorship applies. Contact Sarah on (028) 7126 9898 or e-mail <a href="mailto:events@childrenincrossfire.org">events@childrenincrossfire.org</a> for more information. Children in Crossfire also hold a car boot sale every Saturday and Sunday at Elagh Business Park on the Buncrana Road, Derry. £5 entry for cars.</p>
<p><b>Family Care Society – Adoption:</b> Could you make a child happy again after a difficult start in life? Family Care Society is presently seeking adoptive families who would be interested in parenting children aged between 3 and 8 years and who need the love and attention of a caring and understanding family. Could this be you? For more information contact Family Care Society on: (028) 9069 1133 (Belfast) or (028) 7136 8592 (Derry). <a href="mailto:email@familycaresociety.org">email@familycaresociety.org</a> <a href="http://www.familycaresociety.net">www.familycaresociety.net</a></p>
<p><b>Our Parish cemeteries</b> 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. Monumental Sculptors who have completed their work should take rubble away and not dispose of it at the side of the cemetery.</p>
<p><b>Medjugorje Irish Centre:</b> Every week for a year we are giving away one weeks free apartment accommodation for up to 4 people. Text the word PILGRIM followed by your name and county to 60777 or phone us and we can enter you into the draw for free. Special introductory offer E260 package. Website <a href="http://www.med-irishcentre.com">www.med-irishcentre.com</a> Tel: (028) 82241888.</p>
<p><b>The Priests, with special guest Camilla Kerslake at Millennium Forum, Derry:</b> Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June at 8.00pm. Tickets £19.50 / £24.50 / £29.50 Box Office: (028) 7126 4455.</p>
<p><b>Knock Marriage Introduction Bureau:</b> The aim of the Bureau is to introduce people considering marriage to a suitable marriage partner. Over 800 marriages have taken place as a result of these introductions. If you are searching for a suitable partner, why not consider applying? For further information contact the Bureau at Knock, Co. Mayo. Phone 00353 94937 5960 or visit our website at <a href="http://www.knockmarriagebureau.com">www.knockmarriagebureau.com</a> and read about the workings of the Bureau.</p>
<p><b>Addiction – The First Step Towards Recovery:</b> Learn from the past, plan for the future, live in the present - Dependence on alcohol, other drugs or gambling presents life threatening physical and mental health challenges for individuals, stress and relationship difficulties in families, financial problems for all concerned, educational issues for children and young people, deaths on roads and crime on our streets. An honest response to the following questions will confirm evidence of addiction.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you ever felt you should cut down on your use of alcohol, other drugs or the time and money spent gambling?</li> <li>2. Have people annoyed you by criticizing your dependence on alcohol, other drugs or the time and money spent on gambling?</li> <li>3. Have you ever felt guilty about your dependence on alcohol, other drugs or on gambling?</li> <li>4. Have you needed alcohol or other drug first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?</li> </ol> <p>If you are concerned about your dependence on alcohol, other drugs or gambling, staff in White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre R.O.I Tel: 074 9384400 or N.I. Tel 00353 749384400 provide a confidential counselling service for individuals, couples or families.</p> <p><i>It has been said that a journey of 1,000 Km begins with the first step, begin the journey into recovery today</i></p>

<p><b>Engaged Encounter's Rules for Arguing:</b> Couples who discover they have a disagreement are invited by Engaged Encounter to share their opinions in the following manner. The sentences in italic following the rules are Jay Keenan's comments from his perspective as an Engaged Encounter leader with his wife Suzanne.</p>
<p><b>No name calling</b> <i>This includes using affectionate names sarcastically</i></p>
<p><b>No third parties</b> <i>The argument is between the two of you</i></p>
<p><b>No past history</b> <i>If it's already been settled, don't bring it up again</i></p>
<p><b>Stick to the subject</b> <i>Identify the real problem — don't go to other issues</i></p>
<p><b>No cheap shots</b> <i>Don't use the other's weakness to gain advantage; you may win the argument, but injure your relationship</i></p>
<p><b>Don't go to bed angry</b> <i>Finish the argument or call a truce and agree on a time to continue</i></p>
<p><b>Maintain a sense of humour</b> <i>Don't take yourselves too seriously; laughter can be the best medicine</i></p>
<p><b>Hold hands while arguing</b> <i>This helps to keep your focus where it belongs — on the person who means more to you than anyone in the world</i></p>
<p>"In terms of what we today can discover in this message, attacks against the pope or the church don't come just from outside the church. The suffering of the church also comes from within the church, because sin exists in the church. This too has always been known, but today we see it in a really terrifying way. The greatest persecution of the church doesn't come from enemies on the outside, but is born in sin within the church. The church thus has a deep need to re-learn penance, to accept purification, to learn on one hand forgiveness but also the necessity of justice. Forgiveness does not exclude justice. We have to re-learn the essentials: conversion, prayer, penance, and the theological virtues." <i>Pope Benedict XVI en route to Fatima</i></p>
<p><b>Broughderg First Responders Scheme:</b> The role of a First Responder is to attend, when possible a patient who has collapsed and administer CPR and / or defibrillation whilst waiting for an ambulance crew to attend. The Broughderg First Responders are volunteers who live and work in the local area they are fully trained and are fully insured. When an appropriate 999 call is received from the area covered by the First Responder Scheme; the volunteers are notified and try to attend to provide whatever care is reasonable. First Responders will only attend when dispatched by Ambulance Control. They have no role in the diagnosis or management of illness apart from the collapsed patient. There will always be a 999 ambulance in attendance. Volunteers are clearly identifiable as they will have ID with them. They will provide whatever care is reasonable and will endeavour to assist either doctors or members of the Ambulance Service as appropriate. If you require any further information about the scheme please do not hesitate to get in touch. <i>Janet Shields (Dalriada Urgent Care) (028) 2566 3502</i></p>
<p><b>Pilgrimage to Our Lady's Shrine, Knock. Co. Mayo:</b> The pilgrimage season lasts from the last Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April (last Sunday in April) to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October (second Sunday in October). Please consider making a pilgrimage either personal or with your family this year. A poster in the Church porches gives details of the times and dates for the ceremonies or you can call 00353 9493 88100, fax: 00353 9493 88295, email: <a href="mailto:info@knock-shrine.ie">info@knock-shrine.ie</a> or visit <a href="http://knockshrine.ie">knockshrine.ie</a></p>
<p><b>Lough Derg Retreat Guide for 2010</b></p>
<p><b>Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June</b> Three-Day Pilgrimages commence</p>
<p><b>Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August</b> Last day for starting Three-Day Pilgrimages</p>
<p><b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August</b> Last day of the Three Day Pilgrimages</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August</b> One Day Retreats resume</p>
<p><b>Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> August</b> <i>This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God</i> Workshop: Desi Maxwell</p>
<p><b>Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August</b> Family Day</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> August</b> <i>The Befriending God who turns Strangers into Friends</i> Very Rev. Dr. Ken Newell and Fr. Gerry Reynolds</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September</b> Quiet Day</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September</b> <i>Don't count your years, make your years count</i> Doug and Sue Barnett</p>
<p><b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September</b> National Lough Derg-Day Pilgrim Walk</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September</b> <i>This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God</i> Workshop: Desi Maxwell</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September</b> One Day Retreats end</p>

Naomh Padraig Greencastle GAA May 2010 Fixtures		
Date	Fixture	
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	U10 Boys	Blitz in Gortin
Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> May	U14 Girls	Sperrin Og v. Cookstown
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> May	Og Sport	
Training Times		
Under 12 and Under 14 Girls	Monday nights	
Mens Reserve and Senior Training	Tuesday and Friday nights	
Ladies Senior Training	Monday and Wednesday nights	
Gaelic Start	Thursday nights	
Information provided by Pat Clarke (Chairman)		

<b>This Week's Calendar of Saints:</b>	
<b>Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May – St. Bede the Venerable (priest and Doctor of the Church)</b>	St. Bede lived 673 – 735, a monk of Jarrow, historian and biblical commentator, patron of scholars.
	<b>St. Gregory VII (Pope) [1028-1085]</b> Born Hildebrand of Tuscany, was a Cluniac monk in Rome, who, on becoming Pope, worked for reform, and died in exile in Salerno.
	<b>St. Mary Magdalene (virgin) [1566-1607]</b> A Carmelite in Florence offered her life for the spiritual renewal of the Church.
<b>Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May – St. Philip Neri (priest) [1515-1595]</b>	Born in Florence but spent most of his life in Rome, where he founded the Congregation of the Oratory to foster good preaching and to promote holiness of priestly life.
<b>Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May – St. Augustine of Canterbury (bishop)</b>	Was a monk in Rome when sent by Pope Gregory the Great to preach to the English. He set up his see at Canterbury and had much success in converting the south of England.

<b>Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – John 20:19-23:</b>
1. Jesus comes into a room full of fear. Sometimes it is fear itself that makes us close the door on others and on God. Occasionally a person comes along with the gift of breaking through our closed doors, a person who comes to be with us in our fears. Do you have memories of people getting through to you and being with you despite your closed doors? Who brought you peace in a time of anxiety?
2. Jesus showed his wounds to his friends. Moments of grace can occur when another shows us their vulnerable side, or when we do that with them. Let your memories speak of such experiences to you.
3. In As Jesus was sent by the Father, so he sent out the disciples. This evokes images of receiving and handing on the things that give life: values, meaning, sense of purpose, love. Who are the people who gave you life by what they handed on to you? To whom have you handed on what is life-giving?
4. In our tradition the final verse reminds us of the Sacrament of Reconciliation but its meaning is broader than that. Spirit-filled people are people who forgive. You might like to recall memories of when you have forgiven, or retained, another's sins. What difference has it made to you and others when you forgive rather than hold sins against others?
<i>John Byrne OSA (john@orlagh.ie)</i>

<b>Questions people ask:</b>
Q. What is the divine indwelling?
A. Many people have favourite places of pilgrimage where they feel close to God. Perhaps the most important pilgrimage is the journey inwards to recognise the presence of God with us and within us. St Paul told the Romans, 'the Spirit of God has made his home in you'. He added that when we do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit prays within us in ways beyond the scope of words. The indwelling of God is like a secret room. Jesus said that when we pray we should go into that secret room, close the door, and be attentive to God within us.
<i>Fr. Silvester O'Flynn OFM Cap (silvesteroflynn@gmail.com)</i>

<b>The Deep End – Reachers Not Preachers:</b>
Where would we be without scientists? Certainly not in the calmest place on earth. For it is they who have pinpointed just that place. The mother of all 'getaways' you might think, but don't make plans to go there just yet. Problem is it's not a gorgeous tropical island but an icy plateau in Antarctica. Situated several hundred miles from the South Pole this place, sporting the alluring name of Ridge A, has an atmosphere so still that stars don't twinkle there. Its air is 100 times drier than the Sahara's. And its average winter temperature of -70°C makes it the coldest place on earth too. But when we're looking for a calm refuge from life's stress and strain we don't have to budge from where we are. We find peace and calm in our hearts, or we don't find it at all. One of the surest things to disturb one's peace of mind is a relationship gone sour. One where communication has ceased. Communicating well calms the heart. It's interesting that the first effect of God's Spirit coming upon the apostles is their new ability to communicate without barriers to all and sundry.
In less dramatic fashion that's true today too. Nobody has much difficulty with understanding the language of goodness, kindness and love. A smile says the same thing in any language. It doesn't need translation. Neither does a helping hand. It's not preachers that we need today to spread God's word but 'reachers' – people who reach out to others be they Parthian, Medes, or Elamites – or their modern-day equivalents.
<i>Fr. Tom Cahill SVD, Divine Word Missionaries, Donamon, Co Roscommon (tomcee@eircom.net)</i>

<b>On the Catholic frontier</b>	<i>Article Details by Daniel Wilkes (published in the National Catholic Reporter)</i>
Bishop Stephen Lepcha baptises Patricia, a former Hindu, in the village of Mabong in Sikkim, India, 12 <sup>th</sup> March. (Photos by Daniel Wilkes)	
WEST SIKKIM, INDIA -- Bishop Stephen Lepcha gasps for a breath in the thin air. He trudges a few more steps along the narrow path etched into the side of the mountain, here in the craggy foothills of the Himalayas, then stops, his chest heaving. We are enveloped in an inky blackness except for the weak beam of a flashlight four of us share. The road we left behind an hour ago is far below, yet the lights of Behga, the tiny village atop this mountain five miles from the border with Nepal, still look distant.	
Bishop Stephen, a stout man of 57 with graying hair and a generous smile you rarely see him without, is the ordinary of one of most remote regions of the Catholic and geographical world. He is on his way to say Mass and administer the sacraments. This long and tortuous journey on foot from the barely navigable dirt road below has been made for a single -- albeit somewhat large -- family.	
At Behga, a village of a few hundred souls scattered among small plots of terraced farmland, a plastic canopy flaps in the breeze, supported by large bamboo poles. This is the parish church. Under it sit over a hundred people, wrapped in thick jackets and blankets against the night's chill, who rise as the bishop approaches. The bishop was scheduled to be here at 4 p.m. It is now 8. This is his yearly visit and at least the day is correct. The actual time of day has little meaning for this special occasion.	
William Sherpa, 31, takes a cup from a tray, and as the bishop bends his head back, William pours the warm milk into the bishop's mouth. This is the traditional greeting of the Sherpas, the storied mountain-dwelling tribe, best known in the West as guides and porters for Mount Everest ascents; many individuals, like William, also have this as a last name. They are traditionally Buddhist, and were all Buddhist for centuries. It was just 20 years ago that Catholicism began making slow inroads in the Sherpa communities of western Sikkim.	
Far removed from the church's current dilemmas with sex abuse and debates over stem cells, women's roles, and procreation, Bishop Stephen serves on one of Catholicism's final frontiers. Overcoming immense natural and man-made hurdles to bring the church to the people of Sikkim, this is Catholic evangelization and pastoral care in its purest and most direct form. I was able to witness it firsthand traveling with the bishop and the parish priest of West Sikkim, Salesian Fr. George Thirumalachalil, over three days in the spring.	
→	

← Darjeeling, Bishop Stephen's diocese, comprises the state of Sikkim, the district of Darjeeling (of the train and tea fame) in West Bengal, and the kingdom of Bhutan. Within it are just over 30,000 Catholics spread out over some of the earth's most forbidding terrain, an area of some 17,000 square miles. A kingdom until it joined the Indian Union in 1975, Sikkim is wedged between Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan and is India's second-smallest state and least populated, the latest census numbering under 600,000. It is one of the most isolated places in the world, sorely lacking in infrastructure (it has no airport or railroad, and only poor roads) and economic opportunity. Average yearly income stands at just \$600. Most of Sikkim's population of 540,000 relies on primitive agriculture and government subsidies to survive.

In 1990 Father George moved to Sikkim and started the Don Bosco School at Malbasey, which is now one of the best in Sikkim. At first, he could claim only one family of converts, but today there are over 300 Catholic families and six churches and chapels sprinkled throughout the rugged mountains and pristine valleys of his parish. "There are almost no first- or second-generation Catholics in Sikkim," says Father George. "You're more likely to find first- or second-year Catholics."



On March 12, children at the Don Bosco School in Richenpong wait to greet Bishop Stephen Lepcha. Each child laid a ceremonial scarf, called a khada, around the bishop's neck. The story of a young church emerging in Sikkim is reflected in the evening at Behga. William Sherpa's parents, Bhaje and Bhoju, at 78 and 79, are being baptised as Helen and Paul. A decade after their son and his wife, Albina, converted to Catholicism, his parents have followed.

Only a 10th of the audience is Catholic, but they not only attend the bishop's two-and-a-half-hour Mass, but witness Helen and Paul's baptism, first Communion and confirmation. It is a prime opportunity to expose potential converts to the Catholic faith, a fact not lost on the bishop and Father George, who set up the bishop's itinerary. Father George knew the Sherpa family was popular, but even he was surprised by the large turnout.

"The most important thing," Bishop Stephen says during the homily, looking out over the largely Buddhist and Hindu group, "is to know about God. Forget about religion, religion will not save you. Don't be afraid to accept Jesus Christ." Then he strikes a reoccurring theme. "Holiness is not the monopoly of the few, but is open to all who are willing to accept it."

He is both an inspiring teacher and natural performer, spreading his arms wide, as if to embrace the entire world when he tells his congregants-cum-pupils that God is not just for a few of them, but for all. During a sung Our Father, with a beaming smile he waves his arms in the air to the rhythm, like a conductor before his orchestra. It is a bouncy, joyful Our Father, injecting life into what can be one of more routinized moments in the liturgy.

During Communion, he turns to a statue of Jesus on the cross behind him, the figure bleeding profusely. He points to the host, then back to Jesus, and uses the physical symbolism to explain how Jesus died to wipe away their sins. →

← In these remote villages that only see a priest once a month, and their bishop yearly, Bishop Stephen is keenly aware that to be effective he needs to instruct and enlighten, not just go through the motions of the Mass. "I must explain the meaning of what I am doing; I want them to better understand what they are partaking in," Bishop Stephen says after the Mass. "Only then can they fully enjoy it. I'm not great, but God is; I want them to feel that. I take as the gift of God the people that will listen to me. If I don't get to speak to someone about God each day, I'm not happy."

#### A tiger and a conversion

Bishop Stephen's unlikely journey from a tiny village in North Sikkim to his rise in the Catholic church begins with a story about a hungry tiger. When he was a young boy, a tiger developed a taste for cows and other livestock and set about terrorizing the animals and people of Stephen's village. The marauding tiger quite literally took a serious bite out of the Lepcha family's livelihood. That is, until a Swiss missionary priest came to the village. Fr. Augustine Rouller, of the Canons Regular of St. Maurice of Agaune, happened to be an avid hunter. He gladly stalked and killed the predator. It won him many compliments and a handful of converts, including Stephen's Buddhist mother and father.

At age 11, Stephen followed his parents and became Catholic. He didn't understand much about the faith, but he says his parents' devotion had a major impact on him. His father never taught his son explicitly about Catholicism, but he would fast regularly, read the Bible daily, and wear fresh white clothing to Mass every Sunday, something Bishop Stephen remembers vividly. "By example, I could imagine, I could believe, he was worshipping a true God," says Bishop Stephen.

A missionary priest sponsored part of his Catholic school studies while Stephen worked manual labor jobs to fund the rest. He eventually studied at the seminary in Darjeeling, and went on for philosophy and theology under Belgium Jesuits in Calcutta, whose missionary zeal and intellectual rigor he admired greatly.

#### A road almost not traveled

Earlier in the day, before the evening with the Sherpa family and friends, we set off for the tiny village of Mabong after a short night's rest. We are already running late when we come upon a long bamboo stick blocking the road. Road construction on what will be a paved road above had loosened rocks and boulders that now tumbled down the mountain onto the old dirt road on which we travel. After an hour and a half delay, we are cleared to proceed. Five miles farther a sudden plume of dust envelops the road some 50 feet in front of our jeep. Large rocks and bone-dry soil cascade down the mountain side -- a natural landslide this time, typical for the region.



Bishop Stephen confirms Helen and Paul during Mass at Behga 12<sup>th</sup> March using his cell phone, the bishop calls the two Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Nellie Kujur and young nun-in-training Roselin Ekka, who had gone ahead to set up the chapel at Mabong for Mass. Once the slide subsides, we leave our jeep and carefully walk around the pile of rubble, praying the slide doesn't start again or that the crumbly ground under our feet would give way. The sisters' jeep arrives and we continue, the bishop noting that dry season is the easiest time of year to travel in Sikkim. During the rainy season whole roads -- including the one highway that connects Sikkim to the rest of India -- are flooded or washed out for days, weeks, sometimes months at a time. →



← We leave the sisters' jeep behind and hike up another winding trail of loose dirt and rocks to reach the chapel in the tiny community of Mabong. Children with soiled faces and dirty clothes run out to greet us, leading us to the plaster-walled chapel, the size of a modest American living room. They are in their "Sunday best," Father George says about the bedraggled children. They get a bath once a month because water is so scarce during dry season. The women walk each day to fetch water from a well four miles away.

After the bishop finishes hearing confessions in a nearby home, as he does at each stop, the Mass begins in the chapel, filled to capacity with around 70 adults and children. It is here in Mabong I witness the most touching moment of the journey. After 15 baptisms and 20 confirmations there is to be a marriage. Musa and Patricia, in their early 60s now, had married civilly some 40 years ago, but a few years ago Musa converted to Catholicism. The formerly Hindu Patricia professes her faith, and the bishop baptizes and confirms her.

The marriage ceremony is next. The bishop places a thin gold band in the groom's outstretched hand. Musa struggles to fit the ring on his bride's finger. He is entirely blind. With the helping hands of family members, and his wife looking on patiently and lovingly, he finally slips the ring on her finger. The parish church is awash in smiles.

### Other challenges

The formidable challenges posed by nature in Sikkim can be a significant obstacle to evangelization, but for Catholics in particular, social and political pressures are also a constant struggle. Though locals say the situation is slowly improving, Catholics report instances of being socially ostracized from their communities and find it harder to land government jobs and access government services.

Because of a history of outside invaders -- Muslim conquerors followed by European explorers, traders and occupiers -- who forced their religion on the locals, combined with the fact that Hindus and Buddhists do not put any emphasis on winning converts, many Indians are suspicious of anything that approaches proselytization.

For someone like Robin Tamang, who grew up an orthodox Buddhist and converted after teaching three years at the Don Bosco School in Richenpong, it was a controversial decision. Longtime family friends would refuse to visit Tamang's home and the staunch Buddhist community marginalized the family from social activities, especially after his parents also converted. "People convert because they see Catholic values in action. I did," said Tamang. "I saw that the Catholic lifestyle was different, not selfish, but caring about other people. I saw it in the religious and my school colleagues."

Michael Rai, who runs a Catholic primary school with his wife, had a similar experience when he converted as a sixth-grader 20 years ago. His Hindu caste, the Rai, place their main religious emphasis on ancestor worship. Michael's father, whom he was supposed to obey unquestioningly, was a respected Hindu priest. Michael says he was impressed by the values and action he heard in Catholic sermons and saw in the educational work of the church.

His father, whom one might expect to be the most upset with his son, started reading the Bible and soon became an expert on Christianity. He took great joy, says Michael, in singing the Psalms. Ultimately, at 75, Michael's father joined the church, abandoning centuries of ancestor worship and the Rai caste. The Hindu community never forgave the family for "switching sides," as they viewed it.

Non-Christians are not the only ones discriminating against Catholics in Sikkim. Bishop Stephen notes that it has become increasingly common for members of Protestant denominations (Presbyterians and Baptists are the largest) to sideline Catholics socially, and sometime politically, in the struggle to win more converts to their side. Protestants are more heavily engaged in politics and have the ear of many high government officials, says Bishop Stephen.

When the state government does not want Catholics to own land on which to build a church or institution, an 1834 law from the former kingdom of Sikkim is selectively invoked that stipulates that tribal land cannot be sold. To circumvent this, the diocese will sometimes register the land in an individual's name, not the church's. →

← Bishop Stephen says it is also difficult for Catholics to find government jobs, that the common refrain from bureaucrats who control jobs is: "Well, you are Catholic, go ask *your* people, they will give you a job." As for government assistance, Catholics are often conveniently left "off the list." For instance, a popular and widely publicized program to give poor villagers corrugated metal roofing did not reach many poor Catholics. "If the government is giving out anything," Bishop Stephen says, "Catholics get the last drop."

Additionally, the bishop notes that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a pro-Hindu nationalist organization and the ideological faction at the core of the larger right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, has been making a push into Sikkim. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its supporters have been fighting for years to pass an anti-conversion bill in Sikkim, says the bishop, and the legislation made it before the legislative assembly twice but failed.

Despite all this, Bishop Stephen is not quick to condemn. "Christian spirituality is very mysterious in the non-Christian world. For instance, the idea that you should unconditionally forgive your enemies sounds like madness to the rest of the world. So it is really out of ignorance they are persecuting us."

### Are converts Catholic enough?

Late on the third night of our journey, we leave the last village on our itinerary, Khanisirbong, where over 50 new Catholics were baptized, received first Communion and were confirmed, to return to the Don Bosco School in Malbasey. In the jeep, Bishop Stephen voices some concern to Father George and Sister Nellie, the nun who prepares the villagers for the sacraments, that some of the new converts don't appear to be ready, a theme he has hinted obliquely before. "They can't enjoy it," said the bishop. "That's the sad part. They don't understand it and they can easily leave the church."



Bishop Stephen makes his way past rubble left by a landslide on the road to Mabong. Father George, who along with the sisters is the driving force on the ground behind evangelization in West Sikkim, demurs. "People may have a lot of faith but little understanding. It would take many years to build up that understanding," he replies diplomatically as we bump along yet another rutted road.

Later, when it's just Father George and me talking, he's more direct. "New converts don't need to know everything," he says. "So what if they can't memorize every prayer perfectly or get the sign of the cross exactly right? Are those really the most important parts of our faith?" he asks rhetorically. "My job is not to be an obstacle. Start with faith then knowledge will come. Knowledge grows over time."

Father George sees joining the church as a first step to improving oneself and the community. "When you become a Catholic, you earn a passport to upward mobility: better education, no caste distinction, and help from the Catholic community. It's a liberating influence from ignorance, from poverty. It is the poor who are always searching for God because they need him the most," he says. "Take Mabong, for example. Catholicism is new there. Go back in three years and you'll find improvements. Cleaner children, kids are in school, which in turn makes the parents want to work harder." →

← In a way, the bishop himself is a product of such thinking. He joined at an early age and says he didn't grasp much meaning for years. But slowly, by watching his parents' example and learning from his interactions with priests -- and benefiting from their kindness -- his faith blossomed into a better understanding of the Gospel and the theological underpinnings of Catholicism. It was a process that took time.

On one of our stops, we visit Dentam, a town near Behga that serves as the small commercial hub for this area of West Sikkim. Father George and Bishop Stephen look out over a large plot of vacant land; Father George points out a spot he thinks would be good for a proper church, so Masses will no longer have to be held under tarps or in living rooms. The two meet with a local Catholic businessman to talk about land possibilities. The bishop and Father George nod in agreement as they talk of better fulfilling the needs of the budding Catholic community here. While they may have minor philosophical differences about the speed at which they induct new adherents into the church, they are both toiling under incredibly difficult circumstance for the same mission. As Bishop Stephen puts it, "Our first duty is to bring the Gospel to people. We should be giving Christ every day, and going door-to-door to do it."

Door-to-door, indeed.

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