

‘Communion with Christ and with one another’ - Parishes gather in thanksgiving.



Aerial view of the gathering.

At 4.00pm on Sunday August 5th 2012, (the eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time), the parishes of Ardstraw East (Newtownstewart), Ardstraw West and Castleberg, Badoney Lower (Gortin and Rouskey), Cappagh (Killyclogher, Knockmoyle, Mountfield and Strathroy), Drumragh (Omagh), Greencastle and Langfield (Drumquin) gathered for a Mass of Thanksgiving and rededication to the journey of faith at the site of the Penal Mass rock in the townland of Formil (Greencastle, Co.Tyrone).

Parishioners from these faith-communities first came together over three years ago to prepare themselves for the International Eucharist Congress that was held in Dublin last June (10th – 17th). Sunday’s Eucharistic gathering was a fitting conclusion to their previous work and also a fitting place to rededicate themselves to their continuing faith journey in anticipation of Pope Benedict XVI’s invitation to celebrate a year of faith beginning in October 2012. The ‘Year of Faith’ coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. More than three hundred people were present including parishioners from neighbouring parishes (Ballinascreen, Desertmartin, Termonmaguirc, Kildress, Cookstown) and from further away.

This was the second time that Mass was celebrated at Formil Mass rock within living memory. The previous occasion took place at the invitation of the then parish priest Father Seamus Shields in spiritual preparation for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland. The stories as well as the folklore around that experience lives vividly in the minds and hearts of many Greencastle parishioners.



Photos from our previous gathering belong to Catherine Donnelly

The Mass rock site is situated about half a mile from the Crockanboy Road on land owned by Aidan Daly and his family. They and the farmer whose cattle graze the land were gracious in providing the venue. The podium used, came from the parish of Termonmaguirc with the assistance of Brendan Loughran and his workers. It was decorated

with five quilted tapestries created by Sarah Warnock and Josephine Clarke. Two young Greencastle parishioners, Elaine Coyle and Aidan Clarke set the theme for the gathering with words of introduction and young people from each of the seven parishes brought forward different symbols on the theme of pilgrimage.

The lectors were Francis McDermott (Greencastle) and Alice Woods (Badoney Lower) and each parish took responsibility for preparing the prayers of intercession. After the distribution of Holy Communion Sean Clarke led the 'Prayer for the Diocese' recently composed by Fr. Kieran Devlin P.Em Badoney Lower and Geraldine McNamee lead the prayer we used in preparation for the Eucharistic Congress.

The full team of altar servers included Niall Coyle, Shaun Coyle, Eunan Morris Noel McKenna, Shane McKenna, Laura Tuohey, Megan Coyle, Alanah Coyle, Catherine McKenna supported by Greencastle's committed parish sacristans Alice Keenan and Anne McDermott.

The homilist last Sunday was Father Francis Bradley a native of Badoney Lower who now ministers in Derry.

Fr. Colm O'Doherty PP Ardstraw West & Castlederg was our musical animator supported by the combined parish choirs under the leadership of Mrs Sinaed Donnelly (director of music ministry at Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Broughderg).

The concelebrating priests included Monsignor Joseph Donnelly PP VF and Father John McDevitt (Drumragh parish), Fr. Stephen Kearney (Newtownstewart), Fr. John Forbes (Badoney Lower), Fr. Kevin McElhennon Adm, Fr. Joseph Gormley (Cappagh), Fr. Peter Madden (Desertmartin), Fr. Eugene Hasson (Greencastle), Fr. John Ryder (P.Em Greencastle), Fr. Joseph O'Connor (P.Em Badoney Upper), Fr. Terry and Fr. Donal Bennett (natives of Drumragh and retired from missionary work with the Columban Fathers in the Philippines), Fr. Mark and Monsignor Danny Monaghan (natives of Drumragh and ministering as missionaries with the SMA Order in Nigeria).

The Knights of Malta attended in case first aid should be needed. Noel Carson organised the amplification. Conway's yard and Rory Conway's field on the Crockanboy Raod were made available for car parking and a many stewards helped people get to the venue. Local musicians entertained with traditional music before the choir practice.

A parish event like this cannot take place without a myriad of helpful parishioners keenly involved in different aspects of organising and to all we express our mutual gratitude.

We were especially blessed in that despite ominous dark clouds overhead the weather remained dry throughout the afternoon.



Prayer for the Diocese of Derry

God our Father, we your people of the diocese of Derry,
turn to you in prayer, as our ancestors have done,
In good times and bad,
since the days of Saint Columba and Saint Eugene,
Saint Lurach and Saint Mura.
Although aware that we are unworthy of your grace,
with confidence in your love we ask your help.
Support and care for our bishops in their retirement,
give courage and vision to those
who are called on to administer the diocese at this time.
Grant your wisdom and discernment to those charged with the
task of choosing your next bishop.
We ask you this in the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord.

***Mary Mother of the Church, pray for us,
Saint Columba pray for us,
Saint Eugene pray for us,
Saint Lurach pray for us,
Saint Mura pray for us,
all you saints of the diocese pray for us.***

*Composed by Fr. Kieran Devlin P.Em
(Badoney Lower, 2012)*

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
You were sent by the Father to gather together those who are
scattered.
You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
announcing the Word of salvation
and giving the Bread which lasts forever.

Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.
May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
enliven our hope and open our minds,
so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith we may
recognise you in the Scriptures
and in the breaking of bread.

May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
in justice and love,
as witnesses of your resurrection.

In communion with Mary,
whom you gave to us as our Mother at the foot of the cross,
through you may all praise, honour and blessing
be to the Father in the Holy Spirit
and in the Church, now and forever.
Amen