

Mount Merrion

PARISH NEWS

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LET THE LIGHT IN

In one of his songs, called Anthem, Leonard Cohen has a much repeated lyric that says, **'There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in'.** Most of us will

admit some shadow in our own lives that may not suit everyone around us. However, as the lyrics suggest, when we accept our own human weakness, the light gets in. We are always more than one description of ourselves. Christmas can be a great test for families as all our different personalities gather together. This can sometimes open old wounds or heal them. It can also be testing if the wrong words are chosen or it can be a great time of reconciliation. **Accepting that I need light in my own life surely will help us to see the light in other's too.**

Jesus, born into a family of migrants, came into our world as the light of the world. During his own life he shed this light on many people of all kinds, cultures and backgrounds. His only question for most of these people was, 'What do you want me to do for you?'. He never asked them about their past. In his ministry, for me, Jesus displayed three major qualities; inclusivity, compassion and love. It should always be understood that the only commandment that Jesus gave was about love; Love one another as I have loved you. I hope we can share these qualities with each other this Christmas. I have been so lucky in my illness to receive so much love. At times I'm overwhelmed by it but always so grateful. Like you, I look forward to this Christmas with my family. **I hope for you and for us that it is a happy and peaceful Christmas with the light breaking through.**



Fr. Tony

Hello!

A warm welcome to our bumper December Parish News and a very special welcome to you if you are new to our faith community.

Our parish has been exceptionally busy in the past months! Highlights included the overwhelming contributions by many to Father Tony's "Walk While You Can" fundraising programme. "OUR PARISH JOURNEY", focuses on the WWYC events and reflections, Pope Francis's visit and our Senior Choir's wonderful singing at the Papal Mass.

On other pages you will find news of resulting follow-up parish initiatives and consultations and results from a parish survey undertaken by the Parish Pastoral Council. Inspired by our specially commissioned icon, we have warmly noted the Canonisation of Oscar Romero, October 14th, renewing our awareness of his inspirational legacy. Elsewhere you will see that, along with our PPC, Ministries, and Groups, members of the community continue to volunteer their prayerful support and energy to parish life. As we celebrate Christmas and herald in the New Year, there is much opportunity for our continued partnership filled with LIGHT and HOPE, of priests and people, to go from strength to strength.

"Nollaig Faoi Shéan is Faoi Mhaise Daoibh" –
"A Christmas of happiness and joy to you"

The Editorial Team

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL UPDATE

The purpose of a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is in essence to be a collaborative 'faith-filled' leadership group which engages in pastoral planning and considers areas of mission in our parish. For example: are we doing enough in the parish to be truly welcoming, inclusive and hospitable to all? Or, are there things happening which prevent us from being more welcoming and inclusive?



The **PPC Icon** provides useful guidance to the purpose of the PPC; the top left part of the Icon shows a bowl of water representing the water of our baptism and our constant need for formation; the top right section shows God's Word, nourishment for our Christian growth; the circle of candles on the bottom right, indicates our faith community and a sense of welcome and belonging that we have as an active participative community; the compass on the bottom left section signifies 'mission' and 'outreach' to all corners of our parish and beyond; and these four aspects are supported through the Holy Trinity - God our Father, his beloved Son and the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis says parish can be like **"a village fountain"; a "sanctuary"; "a home"** where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey. We pray Lord, that our parish may be a welcoming, loving and hospitable community to all.

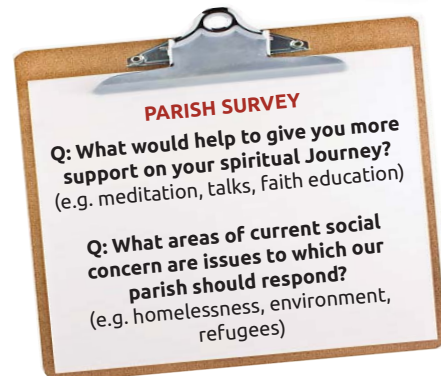


Parish Survey

A Parish Survey, undertaken by the PPC at 7.30pm Mass on Sunday 21st April 2018, forms a good basis for framing future parish initiatives. Of 180 questionnaires returned, the respondents were 60% female, 40% male, with 40% being under 50 years of age and 60% above. 68 respondents were visitors to Mount Merrion Parish (from 19 separate parishes, with Kilmacud, Dundrum, Booterstown and Blackrock being well represented).

Principal Survey Findings:

- In general, respondents find our parish/church to be welcoming and friendly, although some felt strongly about improving inclusion within the community of people who are lonely, isolated and/or marginalised.
- There was a strong desire to improve knowledge and personal development in matters of faith, religion and spirituality through talks, seminars and group discussions for different age groups.
- Some were not fully aware of the range of activities already undertaken / available within the Parish.
- There were many positive comments about Fr. Tony - his homilies being insightful and his support, actions and words being inspirational.
- Respondents considered that relevant and meaningful homilies are invaluable and that the importance of prayer should be highlighted repeatedly.
- There was a strong consensus that the involvement of youth in parish activities is of great importance, with the lack of youth engagement being of serious concern to parents / grandparents.
- Respondents expressed a willingness to be involved at many levels of parish life but were often unsure how best to achieve this. A feeling was expressed that there should be constant changes to personnel in the various ministries in order to share out and mix around the opportunities and responsibilities.
- Various suggestions were made regarding how individuals of different age categories might be encouraged to volunteer in parish activities.
- Issues such as homelessness, the environment and refugees were considered very relevant and important, but were seen as being greater than just a parish problem. However, the Parish as a body should be seen to promote / support initiatives at both local and national level where appropriate.



Parish Pastoral Council: Audrey O'Sullivan (Chairperson), Fr Tony Coote (President), John Barry (Secretary), Jennifer Kelly, Martina MacNamara, Kathleen O'Donnell, Susanne O'Reilly, Clodagh O'Reilly-Boyles.

PARISH OUTREACH – SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

OUR LETTER TO YOU...

To the parishes of Mount Merrion and Kilmacud... with love.

Our story with the parishes started almost three years ago and your generosity and support has allowed us to have a home and a lot of stability.

I would like to inform you that both myself and my wife are now working in CPL company in Dublin. Our eldest daughter is in her third year of Science in UCD and hopes to complete her study as a doctor. Our middle daughter started first year studying Computer Science in UCD and our youngest daughter is in school studying for her Leaving Certificate this year.

It was our honour to speak about the generosity of the people of Mount Merrion and Kilmacud in the RTÉ 1 programme this year when Pope Francis visited Ireland, and we spoke about how God had sent his word to Francis which comes by Father Tony, and you, finally to us.

We can't thank you all enough. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you, thank you, thank you!

May God bless you all and Father Tony and we wish you a very Happy Christmas and all the best wishes for the new year.

The Aljarad Family

Arising out of a public meeting that Fr. Tony held as the Syrian crisis unfolded, local communities supported the Aljarad family in relocating locally.

HAITI SUMMER PROJECTS



Our recent collections in Mount Merrion and Kilmacud raised €10,844.93 for our Summer 2019 project. The continued support from the parishes over the last three years for our work in Haiti has been truly humbling, without which the Haiti project simply would not have happened. Knowing how warmly and fondly Fr. Tony speaks of his parishioners I am not surprised by such generosity and support.

This allowed us to do the following in July 2018: 650 local primary school children, specially selected from the poorest zones of the towns within which we work, attended our Sports and Literacy programme. They had a chance to live the reality that all children should live, which is to receive love, affection and unending encouragement.

Your support paid for all the resources and materials we used in this camp. It paid for the 26,000 meals we served to the children over the course of the project. It paid for the wages of the 82 Haitians we employed across the two camps. Simply incredible and I cannot thank you all enough.

I along with my fellow board members have set up a charity called Solèy Haiti (solèy being the Haitian Creole for sunshine) and our mantra is that we are working towards a brighter future for Haiti.

We would like to invite applications from parishioners over the age of 18 who would like to spend the month of July volunteering on our projects in Haiti to email soleyforhaiti@gmail.com for additional information.

Thank you.
Patrick O'Neill, Team Leader Haiti Project



SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

The SVP group in Mount Merrion would like to thank all of you most sincerely for taking us into your hearts and being so thoughtful and generous! Our main fund raising during the year is the monthly outdoor collection and the Christmas Appeal that was held recently.

Children at our local schools provide great help every year with our food hampers from donation, which we distribute to needy families before Christmas.

All this assistance is put to good use! We channel your generosity to those in greatest need in our parish and beyond. Mount Merrion is not immune to problems, sometimes arising unexpectedly, with little or no notice. We reach out to those families in our community who need us. Sometimes we may advise on other local services available. Anyone in our Parish, who seeks our help, is visited by two volunteers in a completely discreet and non-judgemental manner. The help we provide is not just financial but is direct, personal assistance based on the needs of the individual or family.



Our helpline number is 086 600 9857

PARISH GROUPS IN ACTION

AUTUMN IN THE FAITH SPACE

Over the past summer, the Faith Space Group, along with many others in the parish and beyond, were inspired by Fr. Tony's charity fundraising as a response to his illness. This made us think about how we can all contribute to the common good by our individual actions.

WWYC

The late summer installation featured drawings of the "Walk while you Can" campaign, coloured and embellished by pupils from all the local primary schools. When they were all pinned up together on the walls, they were truly imaginative and eye-catching.



Remembering in November

The installation for November didn't require too much inspiration, just lots of



ribbon cutting : following on from All Souls Day and the Feast of All Saints, the theme of Remembrance has proved very popular over past years. So, once again, parishioners were invited to tie a ribbon and say a prayer to remember a deceased loved one.

Advent & Christmas

Then, suddenly it was time to think about Advent and Christmas again! Angels came to mind, and we talked about how angels can be both God's messengers and also our helpers. From the Annunciation to the Nativity, on to the Visit of the Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt, and through to the Resurrection and Ascension, Angels have alerted us to God's love for his



people. We also thought about the Prayer to Our Guardian Angel, and how some of us have experienced particular assistance from our own Angel, both guiding and guarding us. We asked people to reflect on who has been an Angel to them, and to choose a feather to add to the angel wings. We also encouraged selfies with the wings!

In some ways, the Faith Space Group is like a high street merchant, always thinking a couple of steps ahead of the current season. However, instead of offering retail therapy, we hope that some of our installations suggest a more spiritual alternative!

Check out the Faith Space near back of church.

The Faith Space Group

FUNERAL MINISTRY TEAM

Mount Merrion Funeral Ministry established 9 years ago, currently have a team of 12 volunteers all who have had training in this Ministry.

The Funeral Ministry Team represents the Parish Community, providing support through a ministry of compassion and consolation to bereaved families. This is done in collaboration with the Priests of the Parish of Mount Merrion who work closely with the Team at each stage of the process.

Funeral Ministry Support at time of Bereavement:

- Meeting the bereaved family and assisting with the preparation of the Liturgy for the Reception of the Remains and the Funeral Mass.
- Being present in the church for the Reception of the Remains and Funeral Mass and assisting the bereaved family.
- Regularly attending the Graveside or Crematorium.

On the first Sunday of November there is a Mass for the Bereaved, prepared by the Funeral Ministry Team, Youth Group and Celebrant. Families who have been bereaved during the year are invited to participate in this very special Mass.

The mass which took place on November 4th last was preceded by a Candle of Light Ceremony to commemorate all parishioners and friends who have died. A large candle in a storm lantern was lit before morning masses that day. The celebrant took the candle to the Garden of Remembrance in the Church grounds where prayers were said. All families were presented with a candle of Remembrance and a cyclamen plant. The flickering candle reflects the light of faith and hope at the core of our storm-lantern being;



Seated: Mary Golden, Helena Geoghegan, Ruth Lambert, Ann Monaghan, Ronnie Lawlor.

Standing: Eddie McCourt, Matt Kelly, Jackie Murphy, Mary McGlynn, France Carr, Mary O'Neill, Ciaran Kennedy.

the white plant helps us to hold the memories of the love that we shared and will always endure.

Bereaved families have expressed their deep appreciation of support they receive from Funeral Ministry which is now an integral part of all funerals that take place in the parish.

The Funeral Ministry Team can be contacted through the Parish Office by phone @ (01) 288 1271 or email: parishoffice@mountmerrionparish.ie

We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss further your interest in this Ministry.

CAN YOU HELP FINANCIALLY?

An invitation to make a regular financial contribution to the Parish

An appeal for more regular contributions

The parish income from regular contributions has been falling in recent years as the parish ages and the demographics change.

In order to facilitate the ongoing liturgy and pastoral activities and to assist with the upkeep of the church and grounds, we are targeting an increase of €50k in income.

Deficit

You may have seen from the 2017 Parish Accounts that the Parish is in a deficit position in relation to its running costs.

The deficit for 2017 is €14k after taking account of a healthy surplus from the Parish Centre of €47k and a substantial contribution from the shrines in the church of €47k. Ignoring these contributions the operating deficit would be significantly larger. (A copy of the Accounts is available on the parish website mountmerrionparish.ie).

Does all the money collected stay in the Parish?

This is a question we are asked frequently. The income from both collections at Mass plus the Christmas and Easter Dues do **NOT** form part of the parish funds. These funds are transferred directly to the Archdiocese. The first collection at Sunday Mass contributes towards the salaries of all the priests of the Diocese. The second collection contributes to the running costs of the Diocese, including Child Safeguarding Office, as well as other sections of the administration.

So, the only money collected which remains in the parish are the regular contributions (family offering / envelopes), donations, shrine offerings, Parish Shop profits and Parish Centre.



If you are not currently contributing, and are in a position to do so, we are inviting you to contribute to the parish. It's easy and can be done.



On the Church website – use the 'Donate' button on the home page to make regular contributions or once-off amounts.



By Standing Order – forms available for download from the website or at the Church doors, forms to be sent to Parish Office.



By Bank Transfer to the Parish of St. Thérèse, Account No: 47669173 Allied Irish Bank Plc., Stillorgan, Co. Dublin, 93:35:70. IBAN: IE08AIBK93357047669173

If you have any queries, just email or call to the Parish Office (details on the front page). We would like to sincerely express our thanks for all who so generously contribute financially to the running of the parish each year.

As the advert says **"Every little helps!"**

Thanking you in advance.

Fr Tony, Parish Finance Committee

FLOWER POWER

APPEAL

Many people compliment the wonderful flower displays in our Church at Weddings, Holy Days, Christmas, Easter, Confirmation and First Communion celebrations.

Financial contributions to Flowers are no longer being collected in the box at the back of the Church but you are invited to make a donation by leaving an envelope in the Sacristy marked 'For Flowers'.

New Members are always welcome to join the Altar Society Flower Team. Volunteers will receive expert training on a team while enjoying the social and creative work involved. Regular outings too!

Please leave name and contact number with Rosemary in Parish Office.

Thank You!

'Walk While You Can – Our Parish Journey'

On July 10th, a misty morning, at 10am we set out on our walk from Letterkenny. It was unknown as to how far or how long we could go, but the aim was to reach Ballydehob 27 days later. Tony and two young teachers led the way setting a smart pace towards Ballybofey. It was the start of a journey that I will never forget.

Having previously run the Dublin city marathon with Tony and parishioners back in 2010, I was interested in taking part from the moment I heard about this venture. The challenge involved in walking from coast to coast is one which struck a chord with me. In hindsight, the month did have many similarities to a marathon. It was both a physical and mental challenge, yet along the way seeing familiar family and friends, and meeting many new people made each day different and became an adventure. It reminded me of the Camino, people emotionally opened to each other with personal stories and a definite infectious sense of WWYC team comradery quickly developed.

I can safely say that I enjoyed every step of the way. I learned that sheep's wool between the toes was excellent for sore feet. Tobercurry in Sligo is a place that my feet will never forget – blistered, cold, and tired. Yet when I saw a man walking buckled over, refusing a lift, determined to walk every step of the journey onwards that day, the feet were reassured that we were all in this together.

On our journey we met GAA teams, multid denominational communities, farmers on tractors, elderly folk at gates, truck drivers and tourists all throwing donations into buckets, providing food, accommodation, socks, plasters, wheel pumps and anything for us that we may have needed. We walked through villages I had never heard of, all of whom had a warm welcome and reception for us. The generosity and friendliness of people throughout the whole of Ireland and so many (too many to name) from Tony's own life, was astonishing. I can only commend Tony for bringing us all together. I admire how one man has such an impressive support network behind him and am humbled that I have had the privilege to cross paths with so many of that network.

WWYC has brought Mount Merrion / Kilmacud, an already excellent community, even closer together. It has brought people with MND further together, many of whom we had the pleasure of meeting. It was a summer not to be forgotten with many memories formed, yet with over 500km complete I feel a level of sadness as to how it all came into being and am certain that I am not alone in that sentiment. I am deeply grateful for having been a part of this hugely successful project.

Michael O'Brien, Trees Avenue

While the walkers completed >500km on the road, somehow my car clocked >1000km, and while the walker's waistlines decreased in size, as part of the support team, I managed to gain an extra few pounds. With T-shirts and high-vis jackets to dispatch, bucket contents to be deposited in banks, snacks to be supplied at specifically chosen stop offs, there was never a dull moment.

Maureen O'Brien, Trees Avenue



I talked instead of walked on The Walk in Co. Donegal and Co. Cork with Mary McAteer. Well, I was amazed at the large number of fellow parishioners who participated, even whole families on some sections. All looked fitter and happier for doing so and good humoured in their bright gear. One of them said that I was the best dressed walker. I honestly think that should have been the best 'talker'!

Liam Flynn



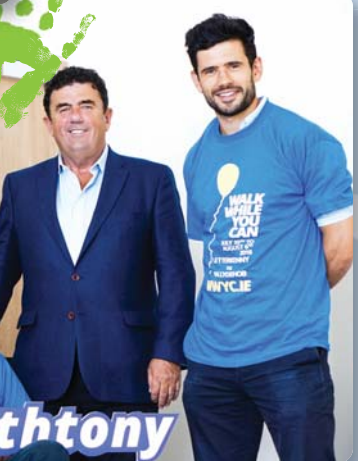
HOPE

WWYC inspired so many to do so much for those who need it so badly. I found it a wonderfully rewarding experience.
Sue Kenny

My family and I walked the Tuam to Claremorris route, on a Saturday morning in July. Initial panic, were we at the right Cathedral? Who would have known there were two in Tuam! The 23km walk was not easy, but we were committed to share and support Fr Tony, who captured the heart of my extended family. Mile Buiochas Tony.
Martha & Giollaioisa.

It was an honour to join others from Fr Tony's huge network of friends, parishioners and former colleagues for even a token day of support. I was part of a parish Hen Party on the Shannon Town to Limerick day, with an added birthday treat - walking in to Cork with the gang in gratitude for still being able to WWIC at 78. Thank you, Tony, for bringing us all under your generous, life-affirming banner!
Mary de Paor

We only took part in the walk on the last day but there was a euphoric feeling walking in to Ballydehob. The love, friendship, camaraderie people had built up (as well as worn tired feet & blisters!) was palpable. A fantastic ending to a fantastic fundraising venture.
Christine Mullock



'And On We Go...'

WWYC Experience

"Tony's organising a Big Walk". As recent retirees we wondered "What can we do to contribute to this crazy initiative to walk from Letterkenny to Ballydehob" ... and in just over 6 weeks time?

Tracking the walk

We are hillwalkers, well used to reading maps and we have a GPS...so we offered to track the route and prepare daily detailed instructions for walkers.

The route had already been decided and published with its various 'pit-stops'. Our first thoughts were to keep to the main roads. However, once 'Google Maps' was engaged, we realised often the shorter walking distances between points A and B were on backroads. With consideration for those intending to do many stretches (especially 'Strongman' Michael O'Brien who was going to do it all) the road less travelled seemed like the best option.

Over the course of three weekends, we drove the route... like rally drivers putting their 'pace notes' together

"2km....main road...wide hard shoulder....2.6km....straight through roundabout...marshalling required....6km....turn left....tertiary road....10km....Daybreak shop in garage....etc."!!!!!!

At times we wondered what sort of fund-raising would be achieved as we drove into some villages at 4 o'clock in the afternoon to find the one or two pubs that still existed shut and no sign of life in the village. How wrong we were with that view!

Anyway, onwards with the job. Daily route notes were drawn up and, with the wunderkind Johnny Blackmore always at the ready in London, the Route PDFs were uploaded onto the WWYC website in time.

Walking the walk

We watched Twitter on Day 1 ... the WWYC crew arrived in Ballybofey ahead of schedule ... Route Notes must work ... Phew!! Maybe this walk will work!!

We joined the walk for the second week: Ballysadare to Tuam. Pat acted as one of the support drivers for most of the week, corralling the walkers with his 'verbal' loud-hailer and side-tracking to Michael at The Bike Clinic in Castlebar (to, yet again, get the tyre for the wheelchair sorted). Nuala spent the week walking in wonderful company trying to keep up with the pace set by the wheelchair.

And those quiet villages we encountered a few weeks previously? Why worry? Towns and villages sprung to life once WWYC entered. The gingham tablecloths were out, pots of tea were at the ready, sandwiches, scones and cakes were piled high and often local musicians were on hand to help us further enjoy our refreshments. Crowds emptied their pockets into Maureen's 'Moneybags' buckets to support Tony and their own local MND friends.

Leaving Tuam we knew we would have to join the walk again and booked our B&B in Ballydehob and we also did the Milford-Mallow and Mallow-Cork stages. The crowds seemed to get bigger by the day ... and the final leg to Ballydehob - wow! Church bells tolled, horses escorted us into town and an incredible community hall was full of trellis tables ready to serve over 300 people with home-made goodies. An amazing, wonderful and humbling experience.

Reflections

It has been a real privilege to have participated in this incredible campaign. What made this walk so special? ... Tony's amazing strength and positivity ... new friends from the parish (shopping in SuperValu now takes a lot longer!!) ... meeting Tony's former colleagues from Ballymun and the terrific squad of previous UCDVOs ... Joe Carthy and his team in the 'UCD in the Community' office who kept the WWYC caravan moving, etc.

One thing though, it is now very hard to drive around Ireland without commenting ... 'narrow hard shoulder ... footpath on the right'!

And, remember ... everything doesn't have to be in place before doing something – it will work out once there is a group of people ready to support a wonderful person.

Pat Macken & Nuala Bannon



The memories linger of

- the food for the journey - for body, soul and spirit - provided daily in abundance through the innate goodness and generosity of individuals and local communities.
- the sharing along the way, with friends and strangers alike, of stories about what life's journey had brought and the joys and tears that came with that. No agendas, no holding back – just loving trust and openness.

Financial targets for MND were more than doubled but, for those of us who walked, the memories are pearls beyond price.

Mary A. McGlynn

All who walked had only one agenda: love and support for Fr. Tony and for all who suffer, as he does, from MND. The walk was a unique experience and a privilege to be in such company.

Paul

In the Recording Studio

Fr Tony's support for all the Family Mass group's activities, his youth-focused sermons and his sense of humour have always had a huge impact on the children, teenagers and adults involved. So when he developed MND, we wanted to do something to show our support for him. We decided to record a Christmas CD, the proceeds from which would go to WWYC.

In October, the Senior and Junior choir spent the day in Scoil San Treasa school hall with Bogdan Music Productions, recording the chosen tracks. We all learnt a lot about what goes in to producing music- Bogdan explained everything really well and was super patient with the children, and us adults too!

A huge thank you to all who helped out on the day. We hope you all enjoy our music!

**The Children's Choir CD in aid of WWYC is available for sale in Mount Merrion Parish. €20 per CD or €30 for two!
Email Susanne on susannemoreilly@gmail.com to reserve a copy.**

Papal Mass – 26th August 2018

It was a wet Sunday morning, when 19 Mount Merrion Senior Choir Members met in UCD Belfield, to get the bus into the city centre, and then walked up to the Papal Mass Site.

Wet & bedraggled when we got there, but tea & coffee awaited us, and also gave us a chance to dry ourselves off. We had a good practice with the massed choirs, from all around the country, and again gave us time for more tea & coffee.

The Pope arrived in his Pope Mobile and drove through the large cheering crowds, before saying mass on the altar.

It rained on & off during the day, but it did not seem to matter. We sang our hearts out, and think we enjoyed it more than the congregation.

When the mass finally ended and the Pope departed, we walked back into town, exhausted but elated.

Noel Larkin, Senior Choir

The Youth Group Gala Dinner

The Youth Group organised a Gala Dinner in support of Fr. Tony and WWYC in September in The Talbot Hotel Stillorgan. Thank you to all who joined us – over 200 of you sat down to the Dinner with us and from the very beginning there was a magical buzz and fantastic atmosphere!

On the night we were delighted to be joined by members of Fr. Tony's family as well as guest speakers from Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association (IMNDA): Ms. Róisín Duffy, CEO, and Mr. Norman Hughes, Board Member; Research Motor Neuron: Dr. Marie Ryan; as well as members of the WWYC: Mr. Joe Carthy, Ms. Theresa O'Leary, Ms. Holly Dignam and Ms. Aoife Fitzgerald. During the evening we also asked people to write a personal message to Fr. Tony which have been given to him as a gift from the people of the parish.

The whole evening could not have happened without our team from the Youth Group who did everything they could to help us make our Dinner a memorable and enjoyable event. Thanks to the extreme generosity of the parishioners of Mt. Merrion and Kilmacud, we raised a grand total of €6,704.74 for the WWYC fund! It was a very special evening and one that will stay with us all for many years to come.

**Francesca and Sophie Keane
(The Youth Group)**

HOPE





Caroline's Corner

Thoughts on Advent and this time of year.

"God is unexplainably born in our hearts moment by moment, breath by breath. In order to discover that, we must leave the noise and business of the inn, finding our way in the dark back to the stable. We have to enter into the humility, simplicity, patience, and delicate nature of what's unfolding in our hearts to discover how God is being born in our lives. We are asked to bring this delicate simplicity out into the world."

(James Finley – Advent Reflections 2018)

A few weeks ago in October, Donal Dorr spent two evenings with us here in the parish. He was invited back this Autumn to offer us some space to reflect after the Pope's visit: to look at the impact of Francis' Message and to consider where to now? what's next? and what impact or inspiration has his visit left us with? What I was left with over the two evenings was the importance of the inner journey; the need to pause and reflect, to absorb and reconnect with what inspires each of us beyond the work, activities, meetings and outward engagements. I was struck by how important it is to constantly remember to find ways to connect with the heart of the Christian message in order to sustain and inform, from a deeper place, our activity and work at parish and organisational level.

It is so very easy to become disillusioned, to wonder about the future. For many, the concern is with loss, low attendance at masses and how we are to be relevant in culture and society going forward. To

me, it highlights the importance of going back to the source, to allow oneself to be nourished. The poets, mystics and the natural world around us invite us to this deeper sustaining place and they help us to reconnect with the mystery and message of love at the heart of the Christian story.

The arrival of Advent signals the beginning of a new year's cycle in the Church's liturgical calendar but around us too, the entire natural world has slowed down. If you notice the light at this time of year...it is soft and trickles gently into the day...because of the darkness, the light is even more noticeable. The Earth is resting...inviting us to rest and be still. It is an ancient wisdom, which we struggle to remember in the business and stress of this time of year. It invites us to reflect and to connect with what sustains us and what inspires us as a Christian community - the story of a child's coming into the world and the profound mystery of life and birth and love. As James Finley says in the opening quote, we must leave the business, the work, aside and take ourselves to the dark stable, in a sense, into the stillness and quiet of our own hearts.

Alongside the very many wonderful and vibrant ongoing events in the parish at this time, we warmly welcomed Deirdre Ní Chinnéide on Dec 3rd for a morning of reflection and prayer "Listening in Advent". Please keep an eye on the notice boards, website and our weekly newsletter for other reflective and nourishing moments where you might find some still spaces for prayerful listening.

Warmly,
Caroline, Parish Catechist



Advent Meditation

Thursday 6th, 13th, 20th

December 9.15am

Blessed sacrament chapel
Church of St Thérèse

An opportunity to reflect and take some time out
in the busy lead up to Christmas.

A chance to stand still and remember the deeper
meaning of this time of year.

Everyone is Welcome

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**MASS FOR THOSE BAPTISED
IN THE PARISH DURING 2018**
Sunday 20th January, 11.15am

Next DO THIS IN MEMORY MASS
(preparation for First Holy Communion
and their families)
Sunday 16th December, 11.15am
Sunday 27th January, 11.15am

CONFIRMATION
Friday 5th April, 11.00am

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION CEREMONIES 2019
Mount Anville Junior School
Saturday 6th April –
(Mount Anville School Chapel)

Scoil San Treasa:
Saturday 11th May, 11.00am

Oatlands:
Saturday 25th May, 11.00am.

PARISH AGM
May 2019 (date tbc)



CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME



MASSES

CHRISTMAS EVE: Monday 24th December

No 10am Mass

4pm "Happy Birthday Jesus" (*Children's Liturgy*)

6pm Vigil Mass for Christmas (*Lisieux Singers*)

7.30pm Vigil Mass for Christmas (*Youth Choir*)

9.30pm Christmas Carols (*Senior Choir*)

10pm Mass for Christmas Night

CHRISTMAS DAY: Tuesday 25th December

10am Mass (*Senior Choir*)

11.15am Family Mass
(with *Children's Nativity Drama*)

No evening Mass

St. Stephen's Day: Wednesday 26th December

10am Mass

No evening Mass

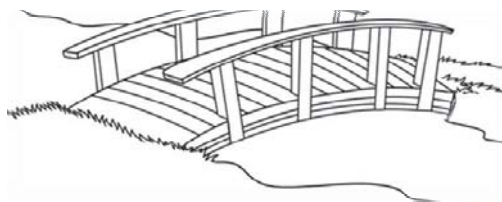
RECONCILIATION

Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday 17th December 7.30pm:

Joint Kilmacud/Mount Merrion
Communal Celebration in the
Church of St. Thérèse, Mount Merrion

Individual Confessions: Christmas Eve 9.30am-11am & 1pm-3pm

BUILDING BRIDGES IN OUR PARISH



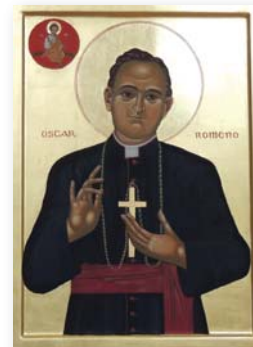
Following the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) and his desire to hear the voices of the voiceless, and also inspired by the book 'Building A Bridge' written by Fr James Martin SJ (who was a speaker at the WMOF congress), Fr Tony extended a sincere, humble invitation to people from the LGBT Community in Mount Merrion/ Kilmacud to his home, offering a space where their stories could be listened to respectfully. The short reports from the meetings reflect that what was heard was heart-warming and at times heart-breaking. It was sad, but not surprising, how rejected many felt by the language and harsh attitudes of those who profess to follow the commandment to love enunciated by Jesus. The gatherings heard from parents expressing their love for their children who are part of the LGBT community and from young men who won't allow any condemnatory message about their sexuality affect their right to be in the church or to go to Mass weekly. These meetings are entirely congruent with our desire to be and grow as a faith-filled welcoming parish and, as we go to print, the next such gathering will take place on **December 6th** again in **Fr Tony's home**, followed by a little Christmas celebration.

In a somewhat similar way, Fr Tony was prompted by Pope Francis' words to invite a small group to begin to find ways of more fully hearing the voices of women in our parish. More of this anon!

As always, if you have comments or ideas, please feel free to contact the Parish Office or the Parish Pastoral Council using the reference 'LGBT' and/or 'WOMEN' as appropriate.

Óscar Romero – 14th October 2018

Pope Francis declared and defined Óscar Arnulfo Romero Galdámez... to be saint and to enrol him among the saints, decreeing that he be venerated as such by the whole church. The pope wore the blood-stained rope belt worn by Archbishop Romero when he was murdered



For the faithful, his power came from the fact he criticised both sides of the El Salvadoran conflict, which started in 1980, for any actions that affected civilians. When the US-backed Salvadoran army was using death squads and torture to stop leftist revolutionaries from seizing power, he used what would become his last homily to speak out against it. "The law of God which says thou shalt not kill must come before any human order to kill. It is high time you recovered your conscience," he said, calling on the National Guard and police to stop the violence. The next day, on 24 March 1980, Archbishop Romero was shot dead as he celebrated Mass in a hospital chapel.

His death horrified the world and escalated the violence in El Salvador that spiralled into a 12-year civil war that claimed 75,000 lives

Our icon of Saint Oscar Romero, written by Sr Rosaleen Hogan, commissioned and blessed by Fr. Tony last Easter, is located at the back of our church. Why not take some time to visit it and pray?

Liam Ó Cochláin Retires

At the end of July this year Liam Ó Cochláin decided to retire after many years of dedicated service to the parishioners of Mount Merrion.

Liam has given so much of his time in a voluntary capacity organising the distribution of the religious papers each week in the Church as well as assisting in the Parish Bookshop.

The Bookshop team marked the occasion in order to have an opportunity to thank him on behalf of all the Parishioners for his years of generous service to us all and to wish him and his wife Kitty every happiness for the future.



A Note to Fr Tony



So much of your journey became our parish journey this year. We too were shocked and deeply saddened by your MND diagnosis and, as a parish community, we offered love and support as best we could. However, we couldn't have imagined the merry dance (walk!) you would lead us on! 'Walk While You Can' took to the roads of Ireland and, as highlighted in the recent RTÉ documentary 'Walking The Walk', it was an amazing, humbling experience.

We are delighted to learn that you were recently awarded an honorary **doctorate from UCD** in recognition of all your charitable work. Congratulations, Fr Tony! We are blessed to have you continue to celebrate Mass and share with us your faith and hope. Míle buíochas.

BLESSING OF HOPE

So may we know
the hope
that is not just
for someday
but for this day –
here,
now,
in this moment
that opens to us:
hope not made
of wishes
but of substance,
hope made
of sinew
and muscle
and bone,
hope that has breath
and a beating heart,
hope that will not
keep quiet
and be polite,
hope that knows
how to holler
when it is called for,
hope that knows
how to sing
when there seems
little cause,
hope that raises
us from the dead –
not someday
but this day,
every day,
again and
again and
again.



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THANK YOU!

Many thanks to all who contributed to our Christmas Parish News and to our dedicated team of Parish Deliverers.

As always we extend a warm welcome to YOU should you wish to volunteer and share your gifts within a Parish Group or if you have ideas to share...

Have a great Christmas and every blessing during 2019.

Mount Merrion Parish Communications Team delivers Parish correspondence to all houses in the Parish area unless otherwise advised. If you do **not** wish us to deliver programmes or newsletters please contact the Parish Secretary at (01) 288 1271 or Email: parishoffice@mountmerrionparish.ie