

**Sunday 5th December 2021**

**Parish Newsletter**

**Advent Prayer Service:** Each Monday of Advent there will be a short prayer service here in the Cathedral after the 5.45pm Mass. All are very welcome to attend.

**Reflection:** On the second Sunday of Advent we are invited to return to our loving and forgiving God who will welcome and embrace us tenderly and compassionately. Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation could be a very enriching and fruitful way of getting ready for Christmas.

Perhaps this is what the second part of John's message means to us during these Advent days; he calls, invites and challenges us to prepare a way for the Lord. As well as preparing for Christmas by shopping and getting our homes ready, we could also take some time to get ourselves ready at a prayer and spiritual level too. What in my own daily life needs changing and improving? Is there someone in my family or a colleague in work to whom I am being asked to say sorry and apologise?

This week as we take another step on our Advent Journey may we do whatever we can to **prepare a way for the Lord**, whether at home, in school or at work.-



### **Gifts of Love Christmas Appeal**

**trócaire**  
Working for a just world

When you buy a Trócaire Gift of Love, your money goes to the developing world –funding critical work in Trócaire's justice, resource rights, women's empowerment programmes and more recently, support during the current Covid 19 pandemic. This is our third year supporting Trócaire's Gifts of Love Christmas Appeal and over the past two Christmas' we here at St John's have raised an incredible €5,000.

There are many Trócaire gifts to choose from, such as chicks, water, solar lamps, and many more, ranging in price from €5. Gifts will be available to purchase in the Cathedral over the weekend of the 11/12 December, but they will also be available to purchase in the Cathedral shop in the lead up to Christmas.

Gifts can also be ordered online at <https://trocaire.org/gifts> or by calling **1850 408408**.

Trócaire envelopes will be available at the back of the Cathedral to take home with you and can be brought back and collected at any mass in the lead up to Christmas.

Buy a sustainable and life changing Trócaire Gift of Love on behalf of a loved one and send some love around the world this Christmas.

**Lay Pastoral Ministry Programme:** A final information session will be held on **Zoom** on December 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm to explain the **Lay Pastoral Ministry** programme run by the Diocese with the Certificate element awarded by Mary Immaculate College. Currently we have 22 doing the course and they are thoroughly enjoying it. It equips lay people to take on various ministries and leadership roles within the Diocese. The programme is shaped in such a way as to be compatible with the lives of busy people and is suitable for anyone interested to pursue it. You are warmly invited to join the Zoom information session and find out more. Bishop Leahy is keen for many lay people to be involved as it will be important for the Diocese as it moves forward in new directions. To register to receive the Zoom link go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LayPastoralMinistry>

**Split the Pot:** Congratulations to *Liam O'Donoghue* the winner of last weekend's draw (28th Nov) Draw envelopes are available at the back of the church. All proceeds go towards maintenance of the Cathedral. We are grateful for your support.



## Parish History - St John's Cathedral Limerick Part 19 .... Restoration and Upkeep

While the building of the cathedral and spire were massive tasks undertaken by incredibly far sighted and talented workmen and administrators, the upkeep and maintenance of a building of that size and scale is immense. With a Spire now reckoned to be 81m high and a couple of acres of roof covering an eighty foot tall structure, every element of the building requires a maintenance and upkeep schedule to prevent the deterioration of the fabric of the structure.

The originally slated roof created immense problems from its first date of construction. With a nearly impossible pitch and angle on a roof so high there is no mitigation from wind and rain and it was found that whole swathes of slates were ripped off the roof regularly.

In fact, it is said that when the wind blows from a certain direction across the pitches and valleys that it forms a near vacuum literally sucking up the roof covering. In the early years this led to regular and serious leaks throughout the entire building, which in turn, led to the inevitable damage caused to the interior by water ingress.

General wear and tear caused by constant use also takes its toll and one can only imagine the stresses that the elements exert on the tower and spire. In fact, that the building has lasted for over a century and a half is testament to both the magnificence of the original construction and the efforts of those that sought to maintain it over the years.

While regular and routine maintenance was carried out in the years after the consecration in 1894, it wasn't until the 1950's, as the cathedral approached the centenary of the laying of its foundation stone in 1856 that a major scheme of restoration and refurbishment works was undertaken.

The decision was made in 1950 to completely replace the roof with 24 gauge copper, and it is fair to say that this course of action, though not universally popular at the time, probably has been the best element of the restoration efforts over the years. A curious part of this work is that over time the roof of the cathedral changed from slate black to copper brown and ultimately to the green colour we are now familiar with as the copper oxidised in the weather. This work was the first part of the 1950's restoration undertaken so that the building could be weather proofed. Much of this general work at this time was undertaken by Molloy and company, a building firm located in Cathedral Place.

In 1952 the massive work of stripping and replastering the walls of the cathedral began and while the plaster was drying out in advance of redecoration, the sacristies were remodelled and refitted to reflect the modern needs of the parish and diocese.

1954 was declared a Marian Year in order to reflect the centenary of the declaration of the dogma of The Immaculate Conception which as we saw earlier is reflected so beautifully in the stained glass window behind the main altar. In order to mark this event and to help defray some of the restoration costs the Pork Butchers Society of Limerick, which was a very strong grouping drawn from all of the ham and bacon processing factories that had made Limerick famous worldwide, decided to contribute handsomely to the work. They restored the Marian altar immediately behind Benzoni's magnificent statue and commissioned the beautiful mural of Mary's Ascension which sits next to the sacristy door. They are remembered in a plaque located next to the statue and in an annual Mass. We are told that all of this work was completed in time for a week of celebrations to mark the centenary led by Bishop O'Neill.

The changes in the liturgy brought about by the Second Vatican Council brought about the next big renovation in the 1980's. Under the guidance of Bishop Newman and under the stewardship of Fr Seamus Power Adm. and his team, the sanctuary was reordered with the altar table being brought forward and the sanctuary once again being lowered to nearly its original level. At this time, in what is generally regarded as a retrograde move, and one which was repeated across the country, the marble and brass altar rails were removed. The church was once again redecorated and the stained glass windows restored. In the 1990's Fr James Ambrose as Adm. installed external lighting on the tower which added greatly to its aesthetic appeal.

The most recent tasteful and comprehensive restoration which cost an estimated €8.5 million and was completed in the first years of the new millennium.



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