



Parish of Abbeyside, Ballinroad & Garranbane



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

'When are you coming back to us?' asked a lady, whose face was vaguely familiar, outside Stradbally Church after Fr Jerry Condon's funeral. It was disconcerting. Apparently positive, they wanted me back. But *who* and *where* were they? I trawled through a mental database of faces and previous parishes, and eventually declared my (empty) hand. 'Back where?'

How often I, and all who have lost loved ones, wish to beseech, *'when are you coming back to us?'* I began these greetings on 27th November, the evening of Eilish Collender's burial. I had visited her scenic hillside home to pay my respects. I was moved to hear how she loved cows and calves, children and grandchildren, prayer and hard work, and how contented she was, even in her final decline saying, 'I'll be no bother.' It could almost have been my own mam, and the tears streamed down my cheeks. Asked to say a decade, my voice broke during the first few Hail Marys and I got bogged down like the tractor whose wheels spinning in wet clay I had seen hours earlier, being pushed by a yellow track digger. In my case, the family seated around the coffin, had traction and took over leading the rosary for their mother. Others' grief, as well as joy, connects with ours.

Something spurred me this evening to visit a neighbour we as children idolised. Partially paralysed now by a stroke, he was a young mechanic at a Main Dealer fifty years ago working on a tractor fit for scrap which the Clancy Brothers in their heyday were about to buy. 'Young man, is that a good tractor?' Paddy Clancy asked. Searingly honest, the mechanic could not stand over the machine but daren't condemn it in front of his employer! 'I thought 'tis a new tractor ye'd be buying. Sure, one chorus of any song would pay for it!' The Clancys clapped him on the back, bought the spang new tractor, and the salesman gave £10 to Tom! Having regaled me with such stories, 'will you call again before Christmas?' his parting shot, as I went out the back door at half past midnight, the breen home brightened by a full moon, my heart humming and happy. What better than to sit and chat in a neighbour's kitchen.

It is now late Tuesday morning, 28th November. I'm betwixt and between. Sitting at Mam's living room table wearing wellingtons, something I wouldn't have done in her presence! I was halfway towards getting a shovel, sweeping brush and wheelbarrow to try and remove a year of neglected weeds growing in cracks, and pines scattered on the concrete yard,

but doubled back to work on words.

Her first anniversary on December 16th is fast approaching. Abandoned spiders have spun their magic in every corner, crevice and surface imaginable. Yesterday, I booked the Mass with PJ her parish priest and started to script her memorial card, a herculean task: how to even attempt to capture someone so pivotal as a mother.

As I penned these greetings, Ena O' Riordan ever loyal and prayerful, (who, sadly, was to slip away two days later) then occupied the room where Mam spent her last three weeks, exactly a year ago. The staff of Dungarvan Community Hospital continue to exude their sensitive love, care and attention on our most vulnerable reaching the end of life. We are deeply indebted.

The sky is blue, sun bright and Cruachán Paorach a purplish brown against the darker Comeraghs behind, green fields in the foreground. The condensation slowly evaporates from the window, a single vertical spider's string like an abseiler's miniature rope hangs from a giant web on the fascia and catches the light. Now it carries my mind and emotion towards Mam above. Could she also use this silky string to ease herself back down to us? Love connects, we hope, from here to there and back; from now to then. We could clinically clean and dust away such webs and connections by being too caught up, too busy to simply sit and linger in the untidiness of grief.

'The world isn't half settled,' my father used to say. Now we know it. Dublin. Gaza. Ukraine. And beyond. Christmas celebrates an annual 'ceasefire' of commerce, capitalism, competition, market mayhem to allow a 'humanitarian corridor' for family to cocoon around the dinner table, Christmas tree and forget for a while the woes of the world. To focus on what comes first: love, nurturing dreams and lavishing presents, making memories, telling tales.

Can our romanticised and sanitised cultural celebration of Christmas countenance the genocide in Gaza? *When are you coming back to us?* could, and possibly should, be asked of the seemingly absent Jesus whose birth we honour.

'What training programme did you do for Ironman 70.3 in Youghal?' asked a young man visiting for his granny's Month's Mind. 'Not much,' I mumbled. 'I swim because I like swimming. I was off the road for eighteen months before the race, so I was travelling by bike.' Others ask, 'what's it like to be back driving?' Freedom. On cold wet days and nights, it's easy to sit in and drive. I sometimes massage the steering wheel, enjoy the smooth movement, the power of the engine; how effortless to scale steep hills.



I can't believe the year and half has passed, and now seems a dream. I thank everyone who offered to drive me, whether I called on you or not. I have an A4 page of scribbled names and numbers of volunteer drivers. To feel, literally, *car-ied* is wonderful, and I am so appreciative.

It is now 4.22pm on Sunday 10th, as I scramble in a darkened kitchen to finish this note (rather than risk an office mutiny!), a tiny, and momentary, trace of orange/red high over Moran's roof lifts my mood. The setting Sun lit up an airplane's parallel exhaust fumes, while COP28 continue the fossil debate. Could it be Santa's precursors preparing for their Christmas Eve fly-over?

I was consoled to read poet Micheal O'Siadhail say of his writing routine, 'you're there every day but you might not write every day. It's not a sausage machine.' One year a lady teased me, 'how could it take three weeks to write the Newsletter. Just sit down, and do it!' For me, I feel I'm guided. I just can't force it. For example, I was stuck right here, not knowing how to wrap up, or open out. I sensed *when are you coming back to us?* had much deeper, broader resonance, but didn't quite know how or what. I didn't want to be presumptuous by issuing this appeal to all who live in Abbeyside, Ballinroad, Garranbane and beyond.

A lady in her thirties who had explored various spiritual traditions, at home and abroad, was telling a friend that she was now moving back towards the Catholic Church. The friend said, 'oh no. Buddhism great. Church of Ireland, okay. But CATHOLIC!!! How could you ever go back there?' She and most of her friends had left the Church a long time ago. Decades later she found an inner pull towards Christ, and prayer, and authentic living. She is always delighted if friends are in any way open towards mystery, something bigger, beyond this life, but she is never pushing it. Simply following her own call, and allowing others to follow theirs. She feels it is really exciting, that we're on God's rollercoaster. 'If I came back to Church, anyone could. It's about letting go, letting go of all of the smallness that we attach to God, to take over, take control of....'

To be honest, I'm a little nervous to invite all who distanced themselves from Church to come back. It's not my Church, and I'm not the great inviter. I'm much more interested in us collectively trying to discern where Jesus is inviting us. Pope Francis is encouraging us to have 'good conversations', in a spirit of really open listening about what is important. In this broad, deep sense, I'd like to say, *when are you coming back to us?*



It is 8.36am on Wednesday 13th, I'm eventually putting the final touch before heading out to celebrate God's forgiving love with school children, when golden rays emerge from just over Helvick Head and blind me. Clothes saturated on the line since Monday, are now almost dry. The mid-Winter Sun, having hidden behind darkness, rain, cloud and mist has come back to us, and my heart beats a little lighter.

For the record, the lady in Stradbally was mistaken. She thought I was someone else, and invited me back to Bridge which I never played! *When are you coming back to us?* even if issued in error, shows that we all like to be remembered, revisited, invited back, or enticed to a deeper, fresher more meaningful engagement.

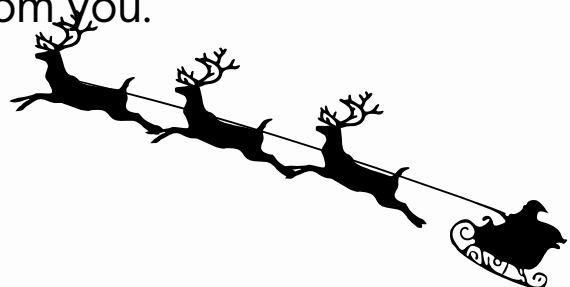
Christian or not, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas, and please God, peaceful New Year.

Fr Ned

A Big Thank You

We have bell ringers and candle snuffers, CE workers out in all weathers keeping church yards, hall and cemeteries clean and clipped, 24-7 sacristans and Monday to Friday secretaries, readers and ministers, singers and music makers, Mass ministers of welcome and behind the scenes doers of good. Some spearhead projects like Ballinroad Hall upgrade or Abbeyside stained glass window repair and refurbishment, others carry these greetings to your door. There's money to be counted and spent and these wonderful volunteers do it so selflessly. Míle Buíochas.

If you would like to volunteer in any capacity please contact the Parish Office we would love to hear from you.



New to the Area?

Our Parish Community welcomes you and hope that you are settling in well. You are welcome to join us for weekend or other liturgies in our Parish of Abbeyside, Ballinroad and Garranbane.

Parish Support

We sincerely thank everyone who contributes to the upkeep of our parish as we depend on our Sunday offertory collections to cover running costs and for the upkeep and maintenance of the churches, buildings and graveyards. .

Did you know if you contribute €250 or more in any calendar year, you may, if you wish sign a CHY3 form. This enables our Parish to claim back up to an extra 45c for every €1 given. From your contributions last year we have been able to get the Stained Glass windows in Abbeyside Church repaired and refurbished and next year we hope to start on the new graveyard in Ballinroad. If you require more information regarding the CHY form please contact us and we will go through it with you.

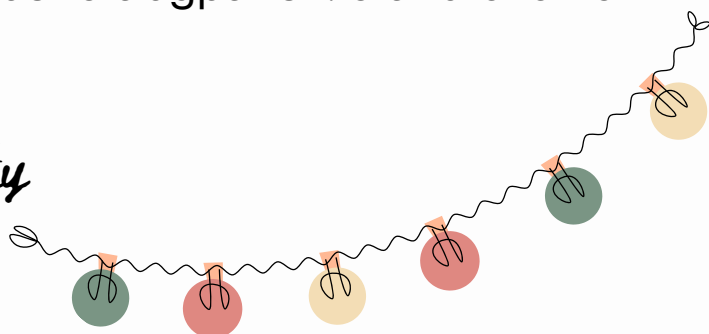
The parish office is currently up-dating records held by us of parishioners who receive boxes of collection envelopes and we ask that if you are not receiving a box and would like to do so please contact us. Donations can also be made via Standing Order, Bank Transfer or online at www.abgparish.ie/donations where you can choose a one off donation or a monthly recurring donation.

The survival of our parish depends on your continued financial support.

Christmas Collection

The Christmas Collection for the support of the Priests of the Parish is being taken up at all Christmas Masses. Extra envelopes are available at the back of the church. We also welcome online donations. You can log onto our website abgparish.ie and click on the donate button.

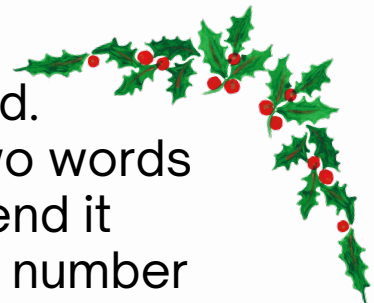
We thank you for your generosity



WORDSEARCH

2023

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Find the words listed below in the word search grid. The words can go across, down or diagonally. Two words are missing from the grid. Find those words and send it together with your name and address and contact number to the Parish Office, Strandside South, Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Co Waterford on or before 5th January.

All correct answers will go into a draw for a prize of €50

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| Abbeyside | Clonea Road | Monang |
| Abbots Close | Coolagh Road | Murphy Place |
| ABG Parish | Cruachan | Parklane |
| Ashcroft | Fenian Place | Pinewood |
| Ballinacourty | Friars Walk | Riverside |
| Ballinard | Garranbane | Sallybrook |
| Ballinclamper | Glendine Drive | Sarsfield Street |
| Ballinroad | Greenway | Scart |
| Ballyrandle | Hermitage | Seapark |
| Barnawee | Home Rule Street | Sexton Street |
| Burgery | Kilgrovan | Sheares Street |
| Castle Keep | King Street | Strandside North |
| Causeway | Kyne Park | Strandside South |
| Clash | McCarthyville | |

ANSWER: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE NO. _____

ADDRESS: _____





CHRISTMAS MASSES



Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Abbeyside

7.00pm

9.30am
12.00pm

Ballinroad

6.00pm

10.00am

Garranbane

6.00pm

11.00am

Daily Mass:

Tues 26th to Fri 29th @ 10.00 a.m – Abbeyside Church



NEW YEAR MASSES



Sunday 31st December

The Feast of the Holy Family Mass times as follows

Abbeyside Vigil 7.00pm

9.30am
12.00pm

Ballinroad

10.00am

Garranbane

11.00am

Daily Mass:

Monday 1st to Friday 5th @10am in Abbeyside Church

Epiphany 6th January

Abbeyside Vigil 7.00pm

12.00pm

Ballinroad

10.00am

To view any Mass at St Augustine's Church, Abbeyside, go to:
<https://abgparish.ie/live/> or YouTube: ABG Parish

Wishing you all a very Holy & Happy Christmas. Fr. Ned