



## Parishes of Greystones & Kilquade

# *The Good News*

## *Christmas Newsletter 2021*



Dear Friends,

Christmas reminds us that we gather as a people of hope and promise. We remember at Christmas the gifts which we receive from the birth of Jesus: peace, hope, promise, mercy, compassion, and above all, the knowledge that Jesus accompanies us in every moment of our lives.



Even throughout the pandemic the Faith Community of the parishes of Greystones and Kilquade (clergy and congregation) have continued to find ways to connect, to pray and support each other. In this challenging time, we witnessed the love of Emmanuel, "God with us".

As we gather for Christmas this year, we are mindful of the journey we have had throughout 2021 – it has been challenging. We think of the COVID experiences of families and others this year: people working at home; parents assisting their children to learn remotely and all that has happened throughout this year.

We think of the aged and vulnerable, the sick and dying and those who felt alone, and disconnected. We think of those families and businesses who have been under so much stress and those who have lost their jobs. We are mindful of these people and their needs as we approach Christmas.

There have been times of grief and sadness and postponements of important sacraments and celebrations. Our heartfelt condolences go to all those who lost loved ones during this year. Christmas is always difficult and different for bereaved families. Let us remember these families and share our love with them.

In the spirit of Christmas joy, a word of congratulations goes to all who received sacraments this year: Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage.

Alongside this, we are grateful for the gifts of goodness shared by so many. On behalf of all the priests of the Pastoral Area, I would also like to thank all who have been involved in parish ministry and committees this year; you gave, and continue to give, of your time to ensure that our Faith Community remains active and vibrant, especially through this challenging year. We truly appreciate it. We thank the parish staff for their commitment and enthusiasm in these challenging times.

The lives of the three Magi were changed forever by daring to follow the star to find where Jesus lay. And the same can be true for us – once we meet Jesus Christ and accept him, our lives are changed forever.

As you gather this year, hopefully with family and friends, perhaps for the first time in a very long time, may you experience the God of Promise in the birth of Jesus. May you be blessed and enjoy the gifts of this time for God has sent his son, born among us and for us – God-with-us.



Fr. John, Parish Priest

While the past year has been another unprecedented year for everyone with uncertainty around every corner, the Faith Community has rallied around each other.

- ♦ Welcoming teams are present at the churches for every Mass to help people feel more at ease and protected as much as possible.
- ♦ A new website was launched to consolidate information with the joining together of the parishes;
- ♦ Ministries were set up to assist the priests and we welcomed new sacramental coordinators to the parish team to help with preparation for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- ♦ Outreach projects were supported in Syria and Africa.
- ♦ Virtual prayer meetings take place on a regularly and the live streaming of Mass allows all those not able to attend in person to participate.
- ♦ Alpha faith development programmes for those in ministry and for parents preparing their children for the Sacrament of Confirmation took place in person and online.
- ♦ New innovative ways of contributing to the parish were introduced in the churches with the move to online and contactless donations.
- ♦ Our Lady's statue and garden in the grounds of The Holy Rosary Church Greystones were beautifully refurbished, as were the stained glass windows from The Carmelite Monastery, Delgany, and which have a new home in Kilian House Family Centre, Greystones.

As much as possible, life continued, but as a Faith Community we adapted to a slightly different way of life, which included our Liturgical ceremonies, music for our liturgies, Blessing of the Graves, Blessing of the Animals, Blessing of the Sick, our Remembrance Mass, Advent and Lenten initiatives.

Without the coming together of the community many initiatives would not be possible or be as successful. As a Faith Community we kept the spiritual heartbeat going and we certainly did not stand still!

## *Hospitality, Prayer and Mission are at the core of our Faith Community.*

As we returned to worship in person, a new initiative was the coming together of a large group of volunteers forming the Welcome Ministry Team. This team welcomes worshippers into the Church, reminding them to sanitise their hands and wear masks. Initially, they also helped to seat people safely and sanitised the seats after the congregation left.

Many of the faithful found it very reassuring to have somebody welcome them back and particularly to find them a socially distanced place to sit and feel at ease in the Church.

While worshippers who wish to attend in person cannot always be accommodated due to capacity restrictions, your understanding of and patience with this is appreciated by the volunteers in the Welcome Ministry Team.

## **A new website for the Pastoral Area of Greystones and Kilquade**

The website was launched at the end of July 2021. It replaced the two websites of the two parishes - Holy Rosary & St. Kilian's Parish, and Kilquade Parish. A new logo was designed to represent the two parishes and one Faith Community.

You will find lots of information about the spiritual life of the two parishes, such as, Mass schedules, the team, ministry groups, sacramental updates, prayers, notices and much more.

We hope you will explore the site, and find and benefit from what you are looking for, whether it is spiritual or practical information.



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[www.gkpastoralarea.ie](http://www.gkpastoralarea.ie)



Jesus challenges his church to be the [salt of the earth](#), and we as the Faith Community desire to live up to that expectation. Someday.

We value the flavour-intensifying and food-preserving qualities we are called to follow and we are thankful for each person, each voice and each hand building up our Faith Community. The church is impossible without God and incomplete without people.

Every year we are delighted to journey with about a thousand families, presenting their children for the sacraments of initiation. It's an incredible honour and a privilege for the Community to share the gift of light with families preparing for such crucial spiritual events.

As thrilled as we are, we also had to acknowledge our limitations in supporting those families on the administrative and faith developing levels. With Paul Thornton's departure from the Pastoral Team, the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation especially required additional support.

We announced a Sacramental Coordination role in the middle of the year and we were astonished by the response. We are blessed to be a community of dedicated and talented people. The outcome of the selection process surprised and exceeded our boldest expectations.

We narrowed down our choice to two candidates. On the one hand, there was Lisa Hawkins: originally from Kerry and well orientated in the locality. A dedicated wife and committed mother of two, Lisa was already familiar with our sacramental registration and preparation process. And on the other hand, Natalia Szczyglewska, originally from Poland and still new to Ireland and unfamiliar with the local subtleties and yet equipped in experience as incomprehensible as her surname. We couldn't make up our minds because both candidates brought completely different backgrounds and their talents matched perfectly.

We immediately saw all the benefits of bringing those unique perspectives together, and at the beginning of October, both Lisa and Natalia joined the pastoral team in part-time roles. Now, nearly three months into the project, we have successfully registered over 800 families for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We held enrolment services for both sacraments and a special Advent gathering and the Service of Light.



Our new coordinators are looking after the administrative and spiritual side of the preparation programme, and their presence has already proven to be fruitful. We are grateful to Lisa and Natalia for bringing their skills and commitment on board. We are also incredibly thankful for every donation towards the project as the divine inspiration requires human support and offerings. We need skilled people dedicated to building up our Faith Community in the spirit of the Gospel: salt of the earth and light that cannot be hidden – our mission is possible with your [contributions](#).



## SAAS - SPONSOR AN AFRICAN SCHOLAR

Thanks to the support of Kilquade Parish and other sponsors SAAS is now educating 183 children all of whom come from the Kongowea slum in Mombasa, Kenya. Currently 60 Kilquade parishioners are sponsoring 43 students. In the Autumn, Fr. John spent a week with this project in Kenya. He got the opportunity to visit the families of some of the students we sponsor. This was a real eye opener. The lasting impression from his flying visit was that the greatest gift our sponsors have given these young people is the gift of hope.

## Mission Possible!

Two Outreach Projects  
by our  
Pastoral Area



## SYRIAN SCHOOLS SUMMER PROJECT

This summer was a great experience and I found it was a great thing to do in my spare time. But you, [the reader], were the reason this was able to happen. You would bring or leave clothes then we would sort it into boys or girls. The next stage was age and type of clothes and then the last to happen was sealing and labelling. Myself and my brothers were so glad to have helped with this project. One of the best bits was when we got to meet Fr. William Stuart and chatted to him about his work and experience in Lebanon. It was always nice to know that in your actions you were helping others. I thought it was a great summer project! Seeing pictures of the kids receiving the packages were another highlight of this project. (Niamh, almost 12 years old).

[Read More &  
see a video  
available on the  
website](#)



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One of the good outcomes of Covid 19 restrictions in the Pastoral Area was that more of the Faith Community engaged with each other electronically. Ways of reaching out to the Faith Community were explored and put into practice (with gusto) by various ministry teams. Many people learned new skills. There were online and phone tutorials with many assisting those who struggled with new technologies. Virtual meetings were held, marriage and baptism preparation moved online.

Some members of our community did virtual church tours attending Mass in other locations around the country while others from afar joined in with us for Mass and Night Prayer. Others learned new skills in developing the website, broadcasting and streaming on Youtube, recording video and making presentations.

As well as the community embracing technology to remain connected, a new Ministry emerged within our Pastoral Area, the Technical Team Ministry. While Fr. John and Fr. Gerard got used to saying Mass to an empty church, they were broadcasting to a wide audience utilising the webcam and streaming facility. Broadcasting at first from St. Patrick's Church in Kilquade and then with the installation of broadband in St. Anthony's Church in Kilcoole we moved between the two churches; livestreaming Sunday Mass had begun. Hundreds of people tuned into our streamed Masses or Live Webcam. That certainly was a time of upskilling!

Again, beginning from a small ministry, many new skills were learned and perfected. The Technical Team Ministry were able to insert welcome videos before the start of Mass so that the community was gathered and welcomed in preparation for Mass. The team expanded to include front of the camera and behind the scenes involvement. Anywhere between 15 and 20 people give of their time to bring the streamed Sunday Mass to fruition. Ministers of the Word and Choirs recorded themselves reading the scriptures, prayers of the faithful and singing hymns that were part of our livestream Masses.



People were using Zoom for the first time. Night Prayer on Zoom regularly had up to 70 participating. From a small ministry of three techies, many have responded to the invitation to serve on this team. You are certain of a warm welcome with a strong sense of community in prayer. Please join us, Monday to Friday at 8pm.

An opportunity to engage with the readings for the following week, Alice Quinn offers two Zoom sessions on a Monday morning and evening. In a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, Alice guides you through the readings with background historical and cultural information together with follow-on notes enabling you to absorb the richness of the readings and take time to pause, reflect and pray.

Technology was used to support families with children preparing for the sacraments as they engaged virtually in preparation meetings and programmes, Alpha for parents and online resources throughout 2020/1.

In September 2021, the community witnessed a festival of faith, "*a Faithfest*", with 20 ceremonies taking place over each weekend from St. Anthony's Church. We were able to celebrate in person the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmations with the candidates and their parents (and sponsor). Some 1020 candidates received the sacraments during the month. Grandparents, siblings and family members recorded their well wishes which were incorporated into the many ceremonies together with recorded music and multimedia presentations focusing on the candidate. Family members at home joined virtually as each ceremony was livestreamed with a camera directed on each candidate receiving the sacrament and giant screens in the church displaying the order of service together with a video from the Archbishop, the Most Reverend Dermot Farrell.

As a parish, we are truly blessed with the commitment, expertise and dexterity of the technical ministry which has enabled parishioners to stay connected throughout these unprecedented times. Technology helped many in our area and in the wider community to feel more connected and less isolated.

***The Holy Spirit was truly working among us in 2021!  
May The Good News continue into 2022!***

