

# **THE PARISHES OF BELLAGHY AND GREENLOUGH**

**SUNDAY 5 JANUARY 2025**

**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

## *“PILGRIMS OF HOPE”*

On Christmas Eve Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican which marked the beginning of the Jubilee Year during which he wants us all, members of the Church, to be “Pilgrims of Hope.” The Jubilee will end on 6 January 2026. During this year there will be a number of events, including some “mini” Jubilees, inviting us all to find ourselves in at least one of the categories.

The Pope took the unusual step of opening a Holy Door in a prison in Rome to remind us that the love and mercy of God extend to all the corners of the world, and that no one is excluded. He challenges us to find Hope no matter who or where we are. As “Pilgrims of Hope” we will bring the virtue and blessing of Hope into a world which sometimes descends into despair and hopelessness; to bring Love into a world riven with war, conflict, hatred, bitterness, and violence; to bring Faith to those who may have drifted away from the Church, Mass, the Sacraments, and Prayer.

On 28 March we will be invited to join the Holy Father in spending “**24 Hours for the Lord.**”

**Looking back on 2024** is an opportunity to thank God for the blessings we’ve known in the past year, to ask for forgiveness for anything hurtful we’ve said or done; to learn from the mistakes we’ve made; and to resolve to be better and do better in 2025.

On Sunday 26 January there will be a meeting in The Open Door Complex, Bellaghy, at 2pm for **couples getting married in our parishes in 2025 and 2026.** If you know of such a couple, please let them know about the meeting, and encourage them to attend. It will be an important part of their preparations for their future as husband and wife.

“**Children in Crossfire**” boxes/envelopes should be returned to the churches by Sun 12 January, please.

Mass for **The Feast of the Epiphany, Monday 6 January:**

Greenlough, 9am; Bellaghy, 10am; Ballyscullion, 7.30pm.

We pray for the happy repose of the soul of **Sean Diamond**, Deerpark Road, and **Kathleen Henry**, Moyagoney Road, who died recently, and for all those whose anniversaries occur at this time. We pray God's blessing on their families and friends.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to the **Christmas Collection**, and for your financial support in the past. Our parishes depend on your ongoing generosity.

The huge number of people attending our **Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses** was very encouraging, and our liturgies were enhanced by the involvement of our Parish Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, Sacristans, Collectors, Stewards, Car Parking Attendants, and our very talented Musicians and Choirs. It was great to see so many families coming together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and to be able to welcome parishioners who came "home" and visitors who came among us for the holiday period. Maybe a New Year's Resolution would be to ask someone – a family member, a neighbour, a friend – to join us regularly at Mass this year.

**Vocations:** We ask God's blessing on our seminarians and on those discerning a vocation to the priesthood for the diocese of Derry, remembering especially Gary Duddy, Gerry Friel, and Gary White as they begin their propaedeutic studies in Salamanca on Monday 6 January. With St Paul in our second reading this weekend, we pray: "May He enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope His call holds for you, what rich glories He has promised the saints will inherit."

Bishop McKeown is inviting us all to join him in "**33 Days of Prayer**" beginning on Thursday 9 January, and concluding on Tuesday 11 February, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. More details in next weekend's newsletter.

**Getting fit and healthy in 2025:** Bellaghy Wolfe Tones GAC is promoting its "Bellaghy, let's get moving" programme of exercises and practices to encourage health and wellbeing in 2025 and beyond. Anyone interested will be able to find information on the Club website etc., and there will be volunteers available to talk with you in the Prayer Room at St Mary's Church, Bellaghy, after the weekend Masses on 11/12 January.

As Parish Priest I wish to express my gratitude to all those who work or volunteer their services in our parishes. Without your contribution we simply could not do the things we do to help spread the Gospel, the Good News of God's tremendous love. The Church here in our parishes and throughout the world needs people of faith, hope, and love. Together we can build up the Kingdom of God, and make our little corners of the world places of justice, love, peace, and hope.

While I'm off and recuperating from my knee surgery Fr Peter O'Kane and Fr Kieran O'Doherty will celebrate the Masses in our parish, with the usual timetable in place, unless otherwise announced. If, for any reason (illness, weather...) there's no priest available for Mass, I would ask the Reader(s) to deliver the readings and Prayers of the Faithful, and the Eucharistic Ministers to distribute Holy Communion, on both weekdays and weekends.

*Fr Pat*

The Jubilee Year is a time for us to renew our faith and a time for us to dive deeper into hope, to look for the signs in everyday life, where we can bring reconciliation, peace and harmony.