

## The Ordinary Season in St. Brendan's.

## Sacraments for our children.

- Here we consider how we can best serve the community through the preparation of children for the celebration of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST:** This has justifiably been spoken and written about many times recently by Fr. Ness. Bishop Toal has instructed me that whatever I do in our church, keeping things safe for all is the priority.

- Keeping children safe has needed the involvement of many people acting courteously with authority from the priest. THANK YOU to the stewards whose commitment to Jesus Christ has been shown in their service of our community. THANK YOU to Jim O'Hare for taking the role of Parish Coordinator, for the hours spent not only in working in our building but also in liaising with Bill McMillan the Diocesan Coordinator, to ensure that we are complying fully with the Instructions issued and revised by the Bishops Conference of Scotland. THANK YOU to Kathleen Cosgrove for the energy and organisation brought to coordinating the ministry of the stewards and for working along with Lynne Kellas in establishing participation at our four Sabbath Day Masses and in trying to ensure through endless hours of telephone contact with parishioners and by holding in place a waiting list of parishioners, that when the church has been open there has been as full participation as possible on each Sabbath Day.
- THANK YOU to those parishioners who have trusted this community while attending Mass and other Services and have accepted [largely] with good grace, the restriction on free movement while they are in and around the church.
- Please take care of our system for attending weekend Masses. *If you cannot attend, please give notice asap.*
- **If you invite family or friends to any liturgy such as Sacraments for your child, please explain that they must comply with the system established by our community for their safety even if it is different from their own parish.**
- **Please consider joining the Stewards. Understandably,** some are now unable to commit to the same hours through restored full-time working. The desire for family contact also calls on their time. There have been many and varied requests for help by the priest from our stewards and they have willingly and fruitfully answered all of them.
- **Baptism:** last Sunday PM the family of the infant Theo Thomas Savage, the son of Johncraig Savage and Gemma [Whitton] Savage gathered to celebrate his baptism. Baptisms can now be celebrated separately from Mass with a limit of fifty persons present. We look forward to welcoming Theo Thomas to our parish family at Mass with his family.
- **P3 Baptism:** three children from the P3 class in the Primary School will begin the preparation for baptism. Given their age, they will be involved in this leading to the celebration of this Sacrament either on their own or with the P3 children in March 2022. Training will follow the programme written for this Diocese by Fr. Nolan [now bishop] and Fr. Stephen Reilly. It will begin in August. Any family with children already at school but not yet baptised, are invited to contact Fr. Ness to join the three children in their preparation for baptism.
- **THANK YOU** to the P3 children for the energy they gave with help from their parents and whole family and their teachers for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation last Tuesday evening. *A special mention for Ellen's mum, [the girl in the pink dress who was famous for lighting the Advent Candles last year], for speaking with and leading Sophie's mum, Catherine, to enter into the perfect preparation for this Sacrament - participating with Sophie and with Sophie's gran - three generations - at Sunday Mass. A Sacrament is a gift offered freely by God to nourish our spiritual life. It must be treasured. The grace of each Sacrament will be fruitful in our life.*
- **P4 children looking forward when in P5 to First Holy Communion on 2<sup>nd</sup> October:** last Saturday you would ordinarily have had your First Holy Communion Morning Mass. The parish family cares about you and hasn't forgotten about you. Your mums and dads can read with this bulletin a new insight into how we will celebrate with you in October the Mass we call our First Holy Communion. We will meet with them on an evening in August after the school holiday to consider and adopt this recommendation even if there is no longer any restriction in the numbers who can come to church. From Saturday/ Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June they can collect a Letter of Request to complete for this Sacrament.
- **For P7 children,** the practices began last Wednesday with their teacher Mrs. Colton for the three Masses for Confirmation at 7pm on 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June. These will continue next week when the school resumes after the holiday weekend. The young people bring great energy - the same but different from P3 children when they come into what is for many of them their church. They have been made aware of what has been done to prepare the church for them.
- **P6 children preparing for Confirmation:** we have not forgotten about your preparation. Those who have written a Letter of Request for this Sacrament later this year will be invited to a meeting in August to set the date for it.

## St. Brendan's Church – the place of worship and Sacraments for families.

### The children in P7:

- Forty-six children have requested the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is an increase of one from last week and that is Angel Adaze Iyabor, daughter of Dickson Adaze Iyabor and Anna Edomkionyi who have very recently moved into Grange tower with their five daughters. Anna came to Mass on Friday with her youngest daughter, Elina and we welcomed them into the parish family.
- All of the young people have the booklet to let them participate in our Faith Friends programme. It offers a sense of sharing in the community experience of this Sacrament. Whereas many children have a deep knowledge of their faith and of religion, some do not have a consistent experience of the high point of our faith which is the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist in their own parish. In 2019 the Faith Friends programme did provide the young people in P6 and P7 with that experience on six Sundays. Bishop Toal has reminded every priest despite or even more because of the circumstances of the pandemic, to find a way to lead the Confirmandi into the experience of the Church. Faith Friends done at home with parents is one element of our response. Mass next Sunday with the bishop is another.
- The young people have been asked to complete the Faith Friends programme - and also the School's Catechetical programme - so that their celebration of the Sacrament on their appointed evening will be supported by their experience of the Church. Their parents will remember being invited at our meeting in the church to willingly take the part of the Parish Liturgy Leaders from 2019 in completing the programme in their home. In 2019 many parishioners had led the Confirmandi in discussions in groups of three or four after Mass on each of four Sundays for about forty-five minutes.
- Fr Ness will have a sense of the level of experience of the Confirmandi with the Church through this parish if the Faith Friends booklets can be returned to him by next Sunday. Many of the young people have already arranged with their families to participate at Mass with Bishop Toal on that day either at 10.30AM or at 2pm and so they can bring the booklet with them or deliver it to the chapel house.
- The parish has bought for the young people at the School the Diocesan booklets which are used in the Class for catechesis [teaching] of Sacraments. This underlines our parish family's care for and interest in the young people and our earnest desire that each one participates in our spiritual life.
- The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship has imposed this duty on all priests: *One of the highest responsibilities of the people of God is to prepare the baptised for confirmation. Priests have the special responsibility to see that all the baptised reach the completion of Christian initiation and therefore that they are carefully prepared for confirmation.*
- The Congregation also explains the role of parents *the initiation of children into the sacramental life is ordinarily the responsibility and concern of Christian parents. With the help of Catechism [teaching classes] through the school, the parents are to prepare their child for the fruitful reception of the sacrament of confirmation. If any parent feels they have not been able to help their child in the way intended and expected of them, please make contact with Fr. Ness to see what he might do to assist.*
- Especially families of P7 who had not been able to participate at Mass in this Parish during the period of Lockdown, the bishop invites them to participate at Mass NEXT Sunday at 2pm when he will preside. The bishop was delighted when we immediately took up his offer to celebrate Mass here prior to Confirmation next week. He comes hoping and expecting to see all of the P7 children and their families.
- Families can reserve a place at this Mass through contacting Lynne or Kathleen until 12 noon on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June. After that, the opportunity to take the remaining places with the bishop at that Mass will be available to all parishioners.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by the celebrant [Fr. Ness on this unique occasion] ANOINTING the Confirmandi with the Oil of Chrism on the forehead and through SAYING the words **BE SEALED WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The laying of hands over the Confirmandi carried out with the express prayer [of the Church] spoken before the anointing, is still to be regarded as very important, even if it is not of the essence of the Sacramental Rite.
- As regards the three Masses for Confirmation, The HT of the School has divided the children into three groups and prepared a seating plan focusing on the child and the sponsor which Jim O'Hare as Parish coordinator acting for Fr. Ness and assisted by the stewards, will do his best to implement. This will need all families to accept where they can be accommodated in the remaining available seating.
- Be assured that Fr. Ness understands the desire of each family to experience the celebration of their child's Sacrament as fully as possible, but the demands of social distancing limit the available space.
- Any issues around the seating of families should be raised with Fr. Ness well in advance of the beginning of Mass. The celebration of this Sacrament will be a unique and once only experience for him in taking the ministry normally reserved to a bishop, it is and will be spiritually very demanding at each Mass.

PRAYER INTENTION REQUESTS FROM PARISHIONERS:

**those who died recently:** Elizabeth Doyle; Jim Corr; Cathy Byres.

**those whose Month Mind or Anniversary occurs about now:** Gerry Lynch; Henry Douglas; Ann McAleavy; Sadie Smith [Yoker, mother of Josie Smith (19<sup>th</sup>)]; Thomas Whitton [19<sup>th</sup>]; Annie Halligan and Harry Coady.

**THE YEAR OF THE FAMILY 2021**                      **LIFE IS PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY.**

**Congratulations and Happy 103<sup>rd</sup> Birthday: Mrs. Susan Laird.** Susan is our oldest parishioner!

**The Piety Stall:** is still set out in the Hall. **Access to it is available after the four Masses on Saturday and Sunday.** Evelyn and Elspeth have the monthly supply of My Day by Day Scripture booklets for June and July and the Magnificat booklet for June in the Stall. **You can follow the daily readings for Mass in the parish using one or both booklets, and this practice is to be encouraged in all our parishioners not only those attending Mass.**

**The story of Emma Jane and the parish's RCIA programme 2021-22:** as we reported last week the RCIA programme will begin for Emma in late August and will continue by meetings held weekly through to Easter 2022. An Inquiry Evening will be announced to introduce the programme. Any adult [16 years +] considering joining Emma in the Rite should make this known to Fr. Ness in advance of the Inquiry Evening.

**St. Brendan:** the parishioners in Yoker were consoled to be prayed for at Mass celebrated here last Monday in our appreciation of all that has been offered from them to us in sharing the benefit of their spirituality and generosity of spirit. This continues through them preparing at our request a laminated prayer card to be given to each young person celebrating Confirmation next week together with a replica of the papal Cross formed and worn by Pope Francis.

**Prayer Partners:** from our spirituality we will offer prayers for the forty six young children who will be confirmed next week. The photographs of all the children will be on display from Tuesday at the rear wall of the church. Let us take up the ministry of praying for each one. If you will do this, please give your name to one of the stewards who will allocate this to one young person and give you that person's name. If you have a preference, please make this known to the steward. Social distancing prevents parishioners being able to gather to view the photographs and sign up as before.

**Memorial Service:** this Thursday evening at the request of Donna Black, a parishioner and mum of young Ryan whom we have missed from Mass since the first Lockdown, we will lead a Service of Scripture and Prayer for her late father-in-law, Alex Black who died recently. Members of Alex's family including Anne his sister will attend this Service with Alex's son David, Donna's husband. Alex lived in British Columbia, Canada and his widow Petra and friends there will follow with deep gratitude our Service online.

**The Diocesan special collection last week for Sick and Retired Priests:** in 2020, the costs to the Diocese for the care of sick and retired priests was in excess of £305K. Over the years this will have included the care of our former parish priests Fr. Kean, Fr. (then Canon) Carey, Canon Ashe and Canon Boyd. The deficit after allowing for the proceeds of the annual collection is unsustainable for the Diocese. Our collection last weekend amounted to £531.42. Donations can be made using the Payacharity online portal on the cover page of the diocesan website. The options provided on that portal include Sick and Retired Priests. **We will retain our donation for this year until next Sunday when the bishop will celebrate Mass and include any additional funds given in the course of this week.**

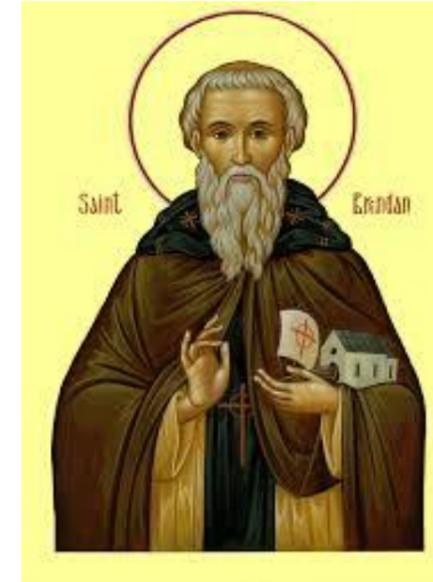
**The construction of the platform and ramp:** Viridor Credits Steering Group for Scotland decided last Thursday to award us a Grant of £5000 in response to our request for £6,700. Prater Contracts can now be formally instructed to begin the construction work. The Grant is paid out on completion, to include the ornamental Guard Rail supplied and installed by Belhaven Engineering. This is a good outcome to our application for the maximum available Grant .

**St. Brendan's the Navigator Parish**

**51 Barons Road Motherwell. ML1 2NB.**

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**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/saintbrenrc](https://www.facebook.com/saintbrenrc)**



**Trinity Sunday - Ninth week in Ordinary Time.**  
**Thirtieth day of May 2021.**

**Liturgies for this week:**

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: Mass at 9.30 AM** - [*streamed live on our Facebook page.*]

**Wednesday: Mass at 7pm** [*Streamed live on our Facebook page.*].

**Thursday at 7pm: Funeral Service for Alex Black.** [*Streamed live on our Facebook page.*].

**Saturday: Vigil Mass of Sunday at 12 noon and again at 6pm.**

**Sunday: Mass at 10.30AM** [*celebrated and presented for children with their families*]  
**and at 4.30pm.**

[*Mass on Saturday at 6pm and Mass on Sunday at both 10.30AM and 4.30PM is streamed live on our Facebook page.*]

***The parish's Facebook page and Twitter feed show any changes to the schedule.***



**Sarah Carey  
reflects on her son's  
recent First Holy  
Communion**

## *A fresh approach...*

**AS** the current pandemic drags on, we're all wondering when we'll return to normal, but I wonder if there are some normals we can do without. More than a few people have whispered to me conspiratorially they hope there will be no return to big weddings.

In Ireland, a one day celebration has, over the past twenty years, escalated into a three-day pageant with hen and stag parties adding an extra weekend and expense to the put-upon guest. But my favourite part of the wedding is the church. I love all the warmth and love in the ceremony and dread standing around in painful shoes afterwards with a drink in my hand, dying for dinner while the hapless bride and groom are tortured with photographs.

Leaving aside all the money saved, I think couples forced to have pared down ceremonies with just their closest friends and family present will look back in fondness rather than regret. The small wedding might be here to stay.

Rather guiltily I harboured the same dread of First Communions as I did of weddings. Like any other parent I adore the rite of passage and thankfully only having sons, was able to keep life simple enough

with a suit rather than worrying about dresses, hair, bags and shoes. But the circus surrounding the sacrament itself wore me out. Last year, my third and final son made his First Communion in October. It had been postponed twice. With strict social distancing rules in place, only the child and parents were present. We were arranged in small groups and spaced out around the church rather than having the entire cohort of children and several relations packed in.

Instead of the usual school choir we had a lovely folk singer and there was no big party at home or in a hotel. To some it might sound drab and sad. In fact, I thought it the loveliest of all the ceremonies my children had experienced. It was an intimate family occasion with just our lovely local priests and removed all the fuss and work. It was so relaxed and with the focus off the party, we could enjoy the moment. Standing outside in the sunshine afterwards everyone agreed it was brilliant. The ceremony had been streamed online with grandparents watching at home and relations all around the world tuning in. I was getting text messages from my brother in America who had never been able to watch before. So perhaps the time is right to decide on the First Communions of the future.

“

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Here in Ireland, the public conversation about First Communion tends to be dominated by two themes. First, there are those who protest that preparation for the big day takes place mostly in school.

Over 90% of our primary schools are under Catholic management and yes it's true, teachers spend hours, days and weeks teaching the theory and logistics of First Communion. Some people resent the educational priorities displaced by this activity while others feel it creates social pressure for their children to conform and take the sacrament, even if they'd rather opt out.

The second public complaint usually arises on the popular phone-in radio shows. Parents get very angry when some parishes insist that First Communion be confined to those who actually attend Mass.

So you have two paradoxical complaints – from those who feel pressured into taking part and those who are furious at the prospect of being excluded. But both stem from the same origin – the system in Ireland whereby most children get their First Communion, even if they're not committed Catholics. The religious element is almost entirely irrelevant. Instead it's seen as an almost mandatory rite of passage. So those who don't want to be included and those who feel excluded get very annoyed.

In our school there's a rather brilliant female catechist who gives an annual talk to parents to assure them that if they want to opt out their child won't be made feel different in school. She encourages them to only put their child forward for Communion if they genuinely want to be an active Catholic. She asks parents to really think about why they want to take part. It's a great question.

It's easy to criticise parents who proceed simply because it's a tradition when they have little or no faith themselves, are going with the crowd or are just obsessed with the fancy dress and party.

But I remember when the debate came to our house. My middle son is an outgoing and independent personality. When it came to his First Communion he called me to his room for a chat. He very seriously declared that he didn't believe in God and therefore felt he shouldn't go through with the sacrament. His doubt sprang from the age-old problem of evil, or, as he put it, "If God existed, he wouldn't have allowed Hitler to

be born". Since this thorny problem has challenged the best of theologians and philosophers I was extremely proud he was applying a thinking mind to the issue. I was also alarmed at the prospect of creating a fuss and offending both our priest and his grandparents who would be appalled if I let him drop out so precociously. We'd never live it down.

So I decided to handle this carefully and showed no resistance. I complimented him on his philosophical bent and assured him this question was indeed a difficult one that occupied great minds for centuries. But I put it to him that opting into a religion later was much harder than opting out and that perhaps bearing in mind *Pascal's Wager*, he should get his Communion now in case he changed his mind later. Then his religion would always be there for him if he needed it in the future. I thought this a high-minded approach and meant it sincerely.

To my shame, I also added there would be no party or money if there was no Communion. The dread of breaking the news to the grandparents may have pushed me too far on that score. Thankfully he accepted these points and once he could see I'd taken his lack of faith seriously, he sailed on.

Being faced with the dilemma showed me how hard it is to break a social norm. I'm not personally very religious but it is important to me that my children are reared as Catholics. While they may not observe their religion much now, or ever in their adult lives, at least they have some resources to draw on should they be required. When we least expect it, the traditions of our childhood and foundation of faith can emerge to give us comfort later in life.

However, relying on the schools to put in so much work doesn't create the right environment. If parents had to opt-in rather than opt-out then families would think about it more seriously and positively. The intimate atmosphere of First Communion during the pandemic revealed the very best of this sacrament.

As the world resets for life after the pandemic, a fresh approach to First Communion would be a lovely legacy. ■

Sarah Carey is a columnist for *The Irish Independent* and a communications consultant.

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