



## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KEVIN

*Christmas is a time of many images; parcels and reindeer, candles and trees. The image that is always strongest for me, however, is the image of family. Christmas brings me face to face with the Holy Family of Nazareth, the family into which Jesus was born and grew to human maturity, nourished by the love of Joseph and Mary. At the same time, my childhood memories of Christmas are memories of family and so I find myself, each Christmas, giving thanks for the gift of my own family which was – and still remains – an important influence in who I am as a person. This year, of course, I have a new diocesan family and I very much look forward to celebrating the Birth of Christ here with you in the Diocese of Elphin.*

*It is important not to over-romanticise our notion of family. Love is challenging. Men and women struggle with what it involves. The family of Nazareth struggled with it too. Many families in our diocese face particular difficulties relating to the economy, to ill-health and to the breakdown of relationship, to mention just the more obvious challenges. In our recent pastoral letter *The Meaning of Marriage* the Irish Bishops commented that it is not sufficient for us to talk about the importance of family. We also have a responsibility to do all that we can to offer practical support for marriage in our parish communities, in our liturgies and our pastoral action and, as individual members of society, through our social and political action. I hope that our celebration of Christmas and our prayer before the crib can help to reawaken in all of us, an awareness of what it means to be the family of God, and brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. Perhaps, without any hint of interference, you may be able, from your family, to reach out to another family in need of support.*

*Christmas is often associated in our minds with the New Year. The government has indicated its intention to hold a referendum in the New Year which, if passed, would change the meaning of marriage and raise serious questions about parenthood. "Children have a right", as Pope Francis says, "to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child's growth and emotional development". At this stage, I would ask you simply to read carefully what is written in the pastoral statement "The Meaning of Marriage", which you can find in your parish Church, or on [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie). Weigh the arguments carefully and remember, this is not about the equal dignity of every person (which is beyond doubt). Rather, it is about the meaning of marriage.*

December 2014

## CHRISTMAS THANKS

**As it would be impossible to mention by name the very many of our parishioners who helped in various ways towards making our Christmas celebrations in the Cathedral experiences of community and blessing – we simply offer sincere thanks to all involved.**

*With every blessing  
Bishop Kevin Doran  
Bishop Emeritus Christopher Jones  
Canon Tom Hever  
Fr Pat Lombard  
Fr Andrzej Szulczynski  
Fr Declan Boyce  
And all at St Mary's*

# Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

## Sligo

### Christmas Day 2014



*The Word was made flesh,  
He lived among us,  
and we saw His glory.*



### CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

*As we celebrate the Feast of Christmas - we wish to extend to each and every one of you our prayer and blessing for deep peace in your hearts and homes over these days. As you light the white candle on your Advent Wreaths may you know Christ's presence amongst you. We pray a blessing on the families of this parish and especially on those who are far from home; we pray for those who have been bereaved - that they may know solace; we pray for the sick - that they may know healing; we pray for the poor - that they may find in us the compassion and gentleness of Christ.*

*During our celebrations here this Christmas in our Cathedral may we experience unity and strengthening with one another and please accept our sincere gratitude for your participation with us as a parish community today. We hope that together we will celebrate the joy at the heart of Gospel living as the year unfolds.*

*God bless you all.*

**Joyeux Noël - Heureuse et Sainte Année!**

**Wesolych Swait Bozogo Narodzenia | Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!  
aligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon!**

### CHRISTMAS PRAYER WORD MADE FLESH

You came among us as a little baby over two thousand years ago to share our life and to show the depth of your love to us.

Help us to be evermore aware of your presence in our world especially in the joy and hope we share with all those who believe in you.

May we open our hearts fully during this season of celebration to receive all the blessings you long to give us and to share that abundance with those around us. Amen.

### FAMILY PRAYER FOR 2015

Let us pray for God's blessing on our family.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, giver of life; give your strength and wisdom to the father of our family.

Blessed are you, Holy Spirit, bearer of love; give your compassion and understanding to the mother of our family.

Blessed are you, Son of God, eternal wisdom; give your knowledge and truth to the children of our family.

Blessed are you, Holy Trinity, eternal and almighty; shadow with your protecting wings the absent or departed members of our family. Amen.

### CHRISTMAS GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Blessed are you, God our Father, you have gathered us together once more at this Christmas table. Christ is the light that shone in our darkness. May the light of the first Christmas night shine on our table and on all in our home. Amen.

### CHRISTMAS GRACE AFTER MEALS

God, you are the giver of all good gifts. We thank you for this Christmas feast, for the beauty of decoration, for the food we have shared; for all who have worked to prepare it, and for keeping us together today and throughout the year. Amen.

## Sligo Cathedral Parish Newsletter for Christmas Day Thursday December 25 2014



### VISIT OUR CHRISTMAS CRIB

*Come and pray with us at our Christmas Crib.*

*Let God love you in Jesus, the child of Bethlehem. There are no conditions. There are no interviews to get through, no exams to pass, no points to notch up. Come as you are, without masks, without pretence. There is no need for that when approaching a baby. There is room for everyone around the crib. Friends, enemies, rich, poor, sinners, saints; no one who approaches with sincerity is turned away. There we begin to understand that He is the Gift and the Giver. As St. John says: From His fullness we have all received. "Father, as we celebrate the birthday of Christ, our Saviour, may we come to appreciate more deeply the meaning of what is being offered to us. May we too share in the joy of the Angels who gave Glory to God in the highest and sang of peace to the people on earth.*

### BLESSING OF THE FAMILY CHRISTMAS CRIB

*Heavenly Father, as we wonder and hesitate to believe, like the shepherds at Bethlehem, fill our hearts with joy, as we recognise in this helpless babe the revelation of your love, a new and radiant vision of your glory.*

*Filled with wonder at the nearness of our God in Mary's new-born child may we now offer Him our praise, worship and thanksgiving and give Him the love and loyalty of our hearts. Amen.*

### MASS TIMES THIS WEEK

**Christmas Day - Thursday December 25<sup>th</sup>**

VIGIL MASS Wednesday 10.00 p.m.

Thursday 8.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. - 12 noon

Polish Mass - 5.00 p.m.

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December**

Masses 10.30 a.m. Vigil 7.30 p.m. (Sat.)

**Sunday December 28<sup>th</sup>**

Masses - Vigil (Saturday) 7.30 p.m.

8.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. 12.00 n - 7.00 p.m.

**Monday 29<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> December** Mass 10.30 a.m.

**Wednesday December 31<sup>st</sup> - New Year's Eve**  
Mass 10.30 a.m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 10.30 p.m.

Special New Year's Eve Mass at 11.30 p.m.

**Thursday January 1<sup>st</sup> - New Year's Day**

MASS FOR PEACE - 10.30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY - DECEMEBER 31 - 11.30 P.M  
NEW YEAR'S EVE MASS

Bishop Kevin will celebrate Mass on **WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 31** New Year's Eve at **11.30 p.m.** in our Cathedral. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place from 10.30 p.m. All are invited to join us for this sacred celebration to welcome in the New Year.

NEW YEAR'S DAY - MASS FOR PEACE  
THURSDAY - JANUARY 1 - 10.30 A.M.

On this coming New Year's Day we wish all our parishioners a very happy New Year. The Annual MASS FOR PEACE will be celebrated in the Cathedral on

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup> at 10.30a.m.**

Everyone is encouraged to attend and to begin this New Year by placing their lives and work under the loving care of the Father.

### BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL

Please note that for the first time this Christmas with the assistance of the Youth of our Parish the Chapel of Adoration will **remain open**.

We take this opportunity to wish all our Adorers and their families a happy and grace-filled Christmas.

### THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH SUNDAY NEXT - 28<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2014

The Feast of the Holy Family where we celebrate the sacred place of family as the essential foundation of society.

We encourage all families to attend **10.30 a.m.** Mass next Sunday where they can avail of a special blessing by Bishop Kevin.

### CHRISTMAS PLEDGE

Pledges suggested for Catholics as we enter the year 2015.

Perhaps visit someone who is sick, lonely or in prison.

Advocate for public policies that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation and build peace.

Consider taking the Pioneer Pledge in the New Year.

Please discuss with your family and friends the above suggestions for inclusion in your Personal Pledge.

### NO ONE ALONE - INVITATION

We invite all our parishioners to be part of the NO ONE ALONE awareness wish for Christmas and New Year. Please contact neighbours and friends who may live alone particularly those who are aged or infirm - to ensure that they have their spiritual, material and personal needs throughout this sacred season.

### SENIOR HELP LINE

A national confidential telephone listening service for older people provided by trained volunteers open Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day from 10am to 10pm, (closed Christmas evening from 7-10pm). All calls are strictly confidential. LoCall 1850 440 444.

### CHRISTMAS ON OCEAN FM

We invite all the community to join us on OCEAN FM for the LIVE broadcast of our 10.30 a.m. Mass on Christmas morning.