

SoulSpace

SERIES: AWAITING SOME REAL
GOOD NEWS

Season colour: ROSE (OR PURPLE)

In this series, Gerard Moloney CSsR takes a deeper look at the great Season of Advent.

The captain of the Springboks was a flanker called Francois Pienaar. Growing up under apartheid in a rural Afrikaans community, young Francois would hear talk about the "bad man". The name of this man, Nelson Mandela, came up often in conversations among adults, and was usually twinned with the word "terrorist". Pienaar said it created a powerful impression on children listening nearby.

"What you believe is what you hear around the barbecue fires," he said. "That if this person comes out of jail there will be serious issues in South Africa."

Mandela did come out of jail in 1990 and in 1994 he became the country's first democratically elected president. Pienaar and others in South African rugby didn't know what to expect. Would the new government punish the Springboks as a way of getting back at their old white masters? Would they force them to give up their cherished green and gold jersey and change their springbok emblem?

But it never happened. Instead, Mandela championed the Springboks, seeing it as a unifying moment for the new "Rainbow Nation".

Pienaar describes the day of the World Cup final. South Africa had made it to the final, and they were playing the All Blacks, who seemed invincible.

Mandela arrived for the game but not in a suit and tie, like you'd expect. Instead, he was wearing the Springbok jersey and peaked cap. Pienaar was overwhelmed. "Here was Mandela supporting the white man's game, wearing the white man's jumper," he recalls.

After Mandela had been presented to the teams, he turned to walk away, and Pienaar saw the number on the back of Mandela's jersey – it was the N° 6; Pienaar's number.

"I would have died for him that day," he says.

South Africa won right at the death and a beaming Mandela presented the cup to Pienaar. It was an extraordinary moment that spoke of forgiveness, reconciliation, unity, change, love.

THINK AND GROW

John the Baptist is one of the great figures of Advent. He was a strange kind of a man, who would have no problem surviving in *Im* a celebrity – Get me out of here. He lived on his own in the wild, he wore clothes made of camel hair, he ate locusts and wild honey. But John was also a charismatic figure and he spoke a powerful message.

He was so charismatic that people poured out into the desert to hear him preach and be baptised by him. His message was about change, repentance, the need to become new people. He challenged people to turn their lives around – and they did. They were baptised by him; they changed their ways.

That is what the season of Advent invites us to do also. It asks us to look at our lives, to see what needs changing. If there is one time of year that's designed to distract us completely, it's the lead-up to Christmas. There is so much we have to do – cards to write, presents to buy, cupboards to stock, trips to plan.

Advent encourages us to step back from the distractions of these weeks to focus on what is truly important. We are asked to think about where we stand with God. What do we need to change in order to be ready for Christ's coming? What is keeping us from putting Christ first? How do we need to repent and grow?

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison. His treatment there could have made him full of hate. But it didn't. Instead he used that desert time to grow as a human being, to think about the best way forward for his people and country; to see that forgiveness and reconciliation was the only solution for South Africa and the world.

Thank God, we don't have to face jail, but the season of Advent is a desert time for us. A chance to think and grow. The question is: how do I need to change? ■



The Season of Advent invites us to focus on those areas of our lives that we might need to change.



One of my favourite images of Nelson Mandela is at the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa. Rugby, beloved by the Afrikaners, was considered by many black South Africans to be a symbol of white minority rule. They didn't play it; they didn't support the Springboks. They considered the Springbok jersey to be a symbol of oppression.

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Today's readings

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

of David was expected by many. He is just a voice, someone who prepares the way for the Word of God who is to come in the human shape of Jesus of Nazareth.

GOD'S WORD TODAY

Today's reading is from the Gospel of John. In it, John the Baptist speaks on his own behalf. John says, "he appeared as a witness." That word has the suggestion of a courtroom or trial and one of the major themes of John's Gospel is that all through his life, Jesus is on trial that comes to a climax with his condemnation to death on the cross. John the Baptist speaks out eloquently in his defence – he is not the Christ or Elijah or the prophet whose coming to announce the restoration of the Kingdom



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
17th December 2017

John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare for Christ's coming. His task was to make them attentive to the Spirit who would be fully present in God's anointed.

ADVENT JESSE TREE The Jesse Tree is a way of reflecting on the key people who prefigure the coming ('adventus') of Jesus.

Symbols for the Jesse Tree are:

ADVENT JESSE TREE - WEEK THREE

The Staff symbol represents JESSE

The Lyre Key & Star symbols represent DAVID

The Temple & Jerusalem symbols represent SOLOMON

ADVENT PRAYER Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan, you sent a messenger to prepare people's hearts for the coming of your Son.

Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins,

so that I may clearly see the way to walk,

the truth to speak, and the life to live for him,

Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH IN THE HOME:

Lord God, Let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

CHOOSE LIFE

"This week's decision by the Oireachtas Committee to recommend the repeal of the Pro-Life Amendment is totally at odds with the fundamental human right to life. There is nothing "liberal" or "progressive" about it. I strongly urge all Catholics in this Diocese - and all people who respect life - to oppose, with energy and with respect, the proposal to legalise abortion." Bishop Kevin

TOMORROW, MONDAY, 18th DECEMBER

RECONCILIATION SERVICE Welcome home for Christmas. Christmas is homecoming time. Journey with us towards a personal homecoming with the Christchild by availing of this opportunity for Confession Monday, 18th December at 7.30pm in the Holy Cross Friary. A celebration of the Lord's forgiveness in an atmosphere of calmness and peace with the opportunity for individual confession.



TOWARDS PEACE In 2009, at the request of survivors of abuse by Church personnel in Ireland, the Irish Bishops and the Religious and Missionary congregations established Toward Peace to provide a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time. Full details of how to access the service of Towards Peace can be found on www.towardspeace.ie

BINGO, GILLOOLY HALL, TONIGHT,
SUNDAY 17th December at 9.00pm
TONIGHT'S JACKPOT €2,900.

Raffle at interval with refreshments available. All welcome. There will be no Bingo on Christmas Eve, Sunday, 24th December. The Bingo will resume on Sunday, 31st December at 9.00pm.

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH - 2200 FAMILIES
8th & 10th December **PARISH ENV: €2,729 PL/STAND. ORD: €1,815**
THANK YOU for your contribution.
ST MARY'S PRESBYTERY ☎ 071 9162670 SACRISTY ☎ 071 9161261
✉ email us at info@sligocathedral.ie We welcome your comments.

TONIGHT
SLIGO CATHEDRAL CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE
YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO JOIN OUR
CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY DURING A SERVICE
OF LESSONS AND CAROLS TONIGHT,
SUNDAY, 17th DECEMBER at 8.15pm.
FEATURING THE CATHEDRAL CHOIR UNDER THE
DIRECTION OF CHARLES O'CONNOR.
All most welcome.

CHRISTMAS 2017
CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
SUNDAY - DECEMBER 17th

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE - 8.15 p.m.
MONDAY - DECEMBER 18th - FRIDAY - DECEMBER 22nd

MASSES - 8.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 23rd

MASSES - 8.00 a.m., 10.30 a.m. Vigil: 7.30pm

CONFESSIONS - 2.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 24th CHRISTMAS EVE

MASSES - 8.30 a.m., 10.30 a.m. & 12noon

CONFESSIONS - 1.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.

9.30 p.m. CHRISTMAS CAROLS

CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASS 10.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DAY

MASSES - MONDAY - DECEMBER 25th

8.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. - 12.00 noon

Sligo Cathedral Christmas Fair Thanks

We wish to express our sincere thanks to all who supported our Christmas Fair held in Gillooly Hall last weekend. The total raised was €5,827.00. Well done to all involved. Deep gratitude.

ONLINE ADVENT CALENDAR As a unique Advent prayerful resource, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has provided its online Advent 2017 Calendar which can be enjoyed by people of all ages. The calendar is available online, and on your smartphone, on catholicbishops.ie. This year's Advent Calendar focuses on the theme of family as we prepare together for next year's World Meeting of Families in Dublin from 21th - 26th August. Each day during Advent you are invited to click open a virtual door where you will find faith content for family, school and parish. During Advent, families are invited to take special time together to pray, to talk, and to be together. Family members are encouraged to undertake a daily act of kindness or charity - as suggested by the calendar - and by so doing reaching out to help those around us. By using the online calendar, we hope that you will be part of our journey through Advent this year. www.catholicbishops.ie

SUNDAY READINGS for 24th December: 1st Reading: 2 Sam. 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16.; 2nd Reading: Rom. 16:25-27; Gospel: Lk. 1:26-38.

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS**

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday 17th December **Christmas Carol Service** at 8.15pm.
Wednesday 20th December **"Wednesday Tea"** after 10.30am Mass.
Saturday 23rd December **Confessions** from 2.00pm to 5.00pm.

PARISH OFFICE at St. Mary's Presbytery ☎ 071 9162670

Please note that the parish office is open to the public at the following times:
Monday - Thursday 9.30am - 4pm & Friday 9.30am - 2pm.

DATES TO REMEMBER

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT SLIGO PARK HOTEL, Wednesday, 20th December at 8pm featuring Anne-Marie Keaney and her students with special guests Michael Rooney, June McCormack, Sligo Cathedral Choir and Nicola Cleary. Tickets €10. All proceeds in aid of Mitchell Sisters Fund.

ROTARY REMEMBRANCE CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION in aid of S.V.D.P. and Sligo Hospice will take place in O'Connell Street Sligo from Sunday, 17th to Sunday, 24th December inclusive. An Interdenominational Service of Thanksgiving will be arranged in the New Year.

FINANCE AND ASSET MANAGER The Diocese of Elphin is advertising for a Finance and Asset Manager. Job description is available on www.elphindiocese.ie

ELPHIN DIOCESE YOUNG ADULT PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI AND ANCIENT CHRISTIAN ROME 23rd June - 1st July, 2018 OPEN TO YOUNG ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 35. Cost €599. see www.elphindiocese.ie for details. For Further Information please contact *Frank McGuinness, Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry, St. Mary's, Temple Street, Sligo, Tel: 087 9880690* Email: frank.mcguinness@elphindiocese.ie

WMOF2018 PETITION BOX The Petition Box given to the diocese from the World Meeting of Families will visit each parish from now until August 2018. For schedule see www.elphindiocese.ie

NORTH WEST SIMON COMMUNITY looking for your support this Christmas - Fri 22nd Dec - Tesco Shopping Arcade Sligo, Sing for Simon from 11am to 4pm with choirs - collection for charity. Sun 7th Jan - Women's Little Christmas Ladies Lunch, Kilonan Castle, Tickets from 087 7708865. North West Simon Community thank all their supporters and volunteers very much. www.northwestsimon.ie

anniversary & remembrances

DAY	8.00 a.m. Mass	10.30 a.m. Mass
MON 18 th	MAUREEN O'GRADY	Recently Deceased PAULINE MELLY
TUES 19 th	MAI, JOHN & MICHAEL HOWLEY & deceased HOWLEY, BOLAND & HALLINAN family members	PADDY SLEVIN
WED 20 th	JOHN & ELIZABETH LYNCH	EMELDA GILMARTIN
THURS 21 st	PATRICK FALLON	DENNIS & AILEEN FOLEY
FRI 22 nd	DELIA & MICHAEL MULHOLLAND	Recently Deceased RODNEY GRANT
SAT 23 rd	FR. NED DURKIN & deceased DURKIN family members	1st Anniversary MAUREEN MULLEN

MONTH'S MIND MASS for INA MONAGHAN will be celebrated at the 7.30pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, 23rd December.

rest in peace Your prayers are asked for the repose of the souls of:

VERA GALLAGHER (nee Cleary), Oakfield Road; BRIGID KILFEATHER (nee McHugh), Jinks Avenue and PATRICIA MCMORROW (nee Coggins), Cummeen, Strandhill Road. *May God grant them eternal rest and comfort and console their bereaved families and friends.*