

2 018 is a significant year for me, because this time 30 years ago I took my final vows as a Redemptorist and was ordained on October 2, 1988. In the three decades since then, I have preached in parishes throughout the country and beyond. I have conducted retreats and novenas. I have studied journalism and edited several publications.

I have spent years in college and accumulated a level of knowledge, but there is one question I keep asking, a question that seems to me to have ever greater relevance in the context of the declining significance of the church in Irish society: As a vowed religious, as a priest, what precisely is my value to society? What difference do I make?

Those who went to school with me all those years ago have gone on to settle down, have families, forge careers, and contribute to the country in various ways. I look at those in the professions, and see the contribution they make. Teachers, doctors, nurses, carers provide a vital service. They change lives. I look at those who are counsellors or social workers, and see that they offer something truly valuable. They help people. I look at those who are farmers, and see the fruits of their labours. They produce the food we need to survive. I look at those who are parents, and see their extraordinary achievement - they have brought new life into the world, and care for it and nurture it, ensuring the future of the human race. I look at those who have joined the police and defence forces, and the critical work they do to keep us safe. I look at entrepreneurs, lawyers, journalists, even politicians, and see how essential they are too. I look at everyone around me and see the colour and contribution they make to the Ireland of 2018.

Then I look at myself, and those like me who are in religious life, and I wonder what I offer. What service do

I provide? What practical use am I in today's Ireland? What contribution do I make to society?

And this is the crucial question, especially with so many Irish people now wanting nothing to do with religion, and choosing not to have their children baptised. What's the point of living the religious life? What good do I do?

WITNESS

The answer is clear: I do some good if I am a person of love, one who champions and exemplifies the values of compassion, justice, forgiveness, tolerance. Through my preaching and my living, I must mediate the God of love to people. I must highlight injustice, offer hope. Be a sign of goodness, inclusion, generosity, peace. If I am not, then I'm not witnessing to what I profess. As a religious, I am nothing if I'm not a person of love. I contribute nothing if I'm not a person of love.

This is a relevant question for each of us to think about on this feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and as we begin a new year. Not many of us are priests or religious but, by virtue of our baptism, all of us are Christians, members of the Catholic Church. Baptism makes us one family. Through baptism Christ claims ownership of us. Through baptism we are called to grow in faith, hope and love.

If I do not live a life of love, then it's clear that I'm not a good priest and religious, and my life is of little use. During this anniversary year, I aspire to live in such a way that love governs everything I do. It's my top New Year's resolution. Whatever your vocation or occupation, as a Christian, living a life of love must top your New Year's list too. ■



Today's readings

Isaiah 55: 1-11
I John 5:1-9
Mark 1:7-11

having a little water trickled on your head. It was quite literally being plunged into deep water that made you splutter as you came up. It is in this moment that Jesus sees the heavens opened and hears the heavenly voice tell him "You are my Son, the Beloved." Other Gospels have "this is my Son", as though the message was addressed to someone else. Mark wishes us to see this as the moment of Jesus' call from the Father, his 'vocation story'.

GOD'S WORD TODAY

We read the first part of today's Gospel earlier in Advent, so let's take time to look at the second part. Jesus, the village carpenter of Nazareth, goes in search of John the Baptist. He might have met him for the first time as he made his way to Jerusalem with friends and neighbours from Nazareth for one of the annual pilgrimage feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. John certainly spoke with authority and conviction that attracted people. Being baptised was not just

SoulSpace

7 January 2018 – The Baptism of the Lord Year B

Psalter Week 1

SERIES: NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

Season colour: WHITE

In this series, Gerard Moloney CSsR offers tips for being a better Christian in 2018.



LOVE IS WHAT COUNTS

They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love' was a popular hymn back in the 1970s. It is inspired by a verse in St John's Gospel (13:35) and sums up what our life must be about as followers of Jesus. There is no better New Year's resolution any of us can make than to try to be more loving.

[continued on back page]



THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

7th January 2018

At his baptism Jesus was revealed as the Son of God and began his work of bringing the vision of God, his justice and his liberation to people. At our baptism each of us is given a share in this mission, so we become children of God.

CHOOSE LIFE

"While it is true that the taking of life not yet born or in its final stages is sometimes marked by a mistaken sense of altruism and human compassion, it cannot be denied that such a culture of death, taken as a whole, betrays a completely individualistic concept of freedom, which ends up by becoming the freedom of "the strong" against the weak who have no choice but to submit."

Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 19

GETTING MARRIED IN 2018 / 2019

Couples wishing to book their wedding in the Cathedral should contact St. Mary's Presbytery on 071 9162670 or email finance@sligocathedral.ie.

Please remember: If you are getting married over the next six months, make sure all paperwork is completed in good time. By the Law of the State you must give three months notice - contact Markiewicz House on 9155115.

MUSIC FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES The Cathedral in consultation with our Musical Director has produced an extensive list of appropriate hymns that can be used at a Wedding Ceremony. This is available online on our website under '[Marriage & Family](#)' or from our Parish Office.

Book your Pre-Marriage Course early with either Accord on 071 9145641 or Esker Retreat House on 091 844549.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018

In just under 9 months' time, Ireland will host the World Meeting of Families. Register now to attend this historic event! Over 18s ticket is €68 for all five days (22nd - 26th August) and all under 18 are free of charge. The WMOF2018 team are also looking for Volunteers. You can book your tickets and / or register to be a volunteer via their website www.worldmeeting2018.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

SUNDAY READINGS for 14th January: 1st Reading: 1 Sam. 3:3-10. 19; 2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 6:13-15. 17-20; Gospel: Jn. 1:35-42.

BINGO, GILLOOLY HALL, RESUMES TONIGHT

SUNDAY 7th January at 9.00pm

With a JACKPOT of €2,950

Raffle at interval with refreshments available. All welcome.

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH – 2200 FAMILIES

SUNDAY, 31st December **PARISH ENV: €1,726 PL/STAND. ORD: €1,777**

THANK YOU for your contribution.

ST MARY'S PRESBYTERY ☎ 071 9162670 SACRISTY ☎ 071 9161261

✉ email us at info@sligocathedral.ie We welcome your comments.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

JANUARY 25th 2018

Theme: *"Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power.*

Church Unity Week commences on Thursday, January 25th and will continue until Thursday, February 1st. During this time we are asked to pray in a special way for unity among all Christians.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2018

Lord Jesus, Lord of wholeness, your prayer for unity amongst your disciples has fallen on closed ears and on hard hearts.

Open our hearts, eyes and minds to your love and truth within all Christian people and strengthen in us the resolve to work to restore the unity of your Church and your creation to the glory of your name. Amen.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL SERVICE

**CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
SLIGO**

THURSDAY 25th JANUARY 2018 - 8.00 P.M.

Homilist: Rev. Canon Patrick Bamber, Calry Parish Church, Sligo.
All are welcome to attend.



*Visit Our
Christmas Crib*

Come and pray with us at our Christmas Crib:

God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Saviour was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.

To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger, may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise up our thoughts to Him, who is *God-with-us* and Saviour of all, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

RETOUVAILLE A LIFELINE FOR MARRIED COUPLES Do you want to improve the communication with your spouse? Do you feel lost, alone or bored in your marriage? Are you hurt, frustrated or angry with your spouse? Does talking about it only make it worse? The Retrouvaille programme can help marriages at all stages. Next programme starts 2nd - 4th February 2018. For information contact Tony & Anne (01) 495 3536, (01) 450 0922, text or call 086 413 5440, or email info@retrouvaille.ie or visit www.retrouvaille.ie

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

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

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS**

THE WEEK AHEAD

Wednesday 10th January **"Wednesday Tea"** after 10.30am Mass.
Saturday 13th January **Confessions** from 2.00pm to 5.00pm.

DATES TO REMEMBER

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY Next meeting will take place tomorrow, Monday, 8th January, immediately after the 10.30am Mass in the Upper Room of the Cathedral Sacristy. New members welcome.

ST BERNADETTE'S CHAPEL, Rockwood Parade. Mass will be celebrated on Monday, 8th January at 5.15 p.m. All welcome.

SLIGO ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION Monthly meeting at 2.30pm in the Presbyterian Hall, Church Street on Tuesday, 9th January. New members welcome.

ENROLEMENT FOR TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC CLASSES with Fred Finn Branch of Comhaltas will be held on Tuesday 9th January 2018 at MERVILLE Community Centre Maugheraboy from 7pm to 8pm. All welcome.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP BOXES & 2018 CALENDARS We thank most sincerely our dedicated Area Representatives who have distributed the Responsible Stewardship Envelopes and Calendars for 2018. Please let us know if you have not receive yours and we apologise for the oversight. We take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all who have joined our parish community during the last 12 months and invite you to contact the Parish Office on 9162670 or email finance@sligocathedral.ie to join in support, in whatever way you can, of our Cathedral. We would also like to express, once again, our deep gratitude to all who contribute to the upkeep of the parish.

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](tel:0879880690) Email: frank.mcguinness@elphindiocese.ie

anniversary & remembrances

DAY	8.00 a.m. Mass	10.30 a.m. Mass
MON 8 th	WILLIAM FOX	—
TUES 9 th	MICHAEL MCMORROW & deceased family members	EAMON HENRY
WED 10 th	MARY JANE HEALY	WILLIAM & MARY O'HANLON, sons BILL, PAT & EDDIE, daughters in law MARY & GERALDINE & son in law SEAMUS
THURS 11 th	—	MICHAEL MCKEEVER
FRI 12 th	AGNES FOWLEY	ANNIE KELLY
SAT 13 th	✠ 20th Anniversary FRANCES LYNCH	Month's Mind BRENDAN MORRIS ✠

✠ **MONTH'S MIND MASS** for VERA GALLAGHER will be celebrated at the 7.30pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, 13th January.

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

KATHLEEN BUCKLEY (nee Dodd), Strandhill Road; KATHLEEN QUEENAN (nee Lang), Strandhill Road; ANGELA COSTELLO (nee Lynch), Rathedmond Estate; TERESA FORDE, Beechlaw Court, Maugheraboy; MARY SCANLON, (nee Maguire), Saint Bridgid's Place; CATHERINE MULLINS, (nee Foley), Harmony Hill; TERESA BURKE, Kevinsfort Lawn and IMELDA BURKE (nee Fowley), formerly of St. Anne's Terrace.

May God grant them eternal rest and comfort and console their bereaved families and friends.