

### Mass Times

**Sundays:** 9 am & 11 am  
**Saturday Vigil:** 6.00 pm  
**Tuesday & Friday:** 9.30 am  
**Fr. Michael Keohane Co-PP**



### Baptism

**Finn Galvin Buckley.**  
**Alfie Thomas Murdock.**  
**Éabha Valerie Dennehy.**  
**Macdara Martin Galvin.**  
Welcome to the Christian Family.



### Recently Deceased

**Brendan Cullen, Menloe Gardens**  
May the light of God surround him forever



### HAPPY CHRISTMAS

When we will kneel in front of our Church Crib on Christmas Eve, Christmas morning, or at another time, we will have our own thoughts. We may be thinking of the people who are not with us this year, thinking of our families, thinking of the year gone by, thinking of health, perhaps saddened by non-communication with someone who was close, glad for the joys of the past year, the birth of a child, a grandchild. You know your own prayers. Bring your joys, your sadnesses, your loneliness to the Infant Jesus, the Emmanuel, God-is-with-us.



These are lovely days ahead. The running and racing are almost over. Schools have closed for the holidays. Family members may be returning home. You may be joining family somewhere else and travelling. May the Newborn Infant Jesus bless you and your family. May you experience the presence of God. May you see the promise that 'God is in our midst' fulfilled. May you truly have a Happy and Holy Christmas.

Fr. Michael  
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**Christmas Arrangements in St. Michael's** – Masses on Tuesday Christmas Eve @ 6pm & 8pm. Wednesday Christmas Morning Masses @ 9am & 11am.

**Christmas Arrangements in Holy Cross** – Masses on Tuesday Christmas Eve @ 4pm & 6pm. Wednesday Christmas Morning Masses @ 10am & 12.30pm

**Sacrament of Confession** – after Masses this weekend.

**Monday 6th January** – Feast of the Epiphany – Mass @ 9.30am.

**Christmas Offering Envelopes** – have been delivered to homes recently and are also available in the church. Thank you all for your generosity and support. It's deeply appreciated. Fr. Michael

**Christmas Bouquet Shared Mass** – some still available from the Sacristy after Masses.

### A brief introduction on Sunday's readings

**First Reading** **Micah 5:1-4 (2-5)**  
The people who went before us faith longed for God to come more richly into their lives. As we hear this reading, we may ask ourselves what do I long for, as a person of faith, this Christmas?

**Second Reading** **Hebrews 10:5-10**  
The letter to the Hebrews—for all its apparently remote Temple language— asks a central question: what happened for us in the death of Jesus? The answer is a key to Christian discipleship in every age.

**Gospel** **Luke 1:39-44**  
Christmas is a time of travel and encounter, visiting and friendship. May we know in these Christmas encounters the blessedness and joy and the Holy Spirit!

### The Papers Say.....

**Irish Catholic.** (1). A decisive step forward -- The Catholic Church after the Synod (2). Why euthanasia is not an answer to suffering. (3). Michael Kelly: Gaza at Christmas -- where there is love, there is hope. (4). Cloistered Christmas -- celebrating like a nun.

**Tablet.** China Vatican relations -- The Holy See is facing fierce criticism for its policy of negotiating with China's leaders, in spite of the government's dismal human rights record and brutal treatment of minorities. A Beijing based analyst argues that the alternative would be unlikely to improve the situation for Chinese Catholics. (2). Monk, mystic, mentor. -- The life of Bede Griffiths is a testament to the integration of diverse spiritual paths, embracing both the Christian tradition and the wisdom of the East. (3). Rebels who ousted Assad reassure Syrian Christians.

**Sacred Heart Messenger.** (1). Fr. Bernard Cotter of Cork: Families of Parishes (2). Bishop Larry Duffy of Clogher looks forward to new challenges of ministry in his diocese. (3). Fr. Peter McVerry: The pain behind addiction.



**Celebrating Altar Servers:** Altar servers are a really important ministry in each of our Parishes. Since Covid some Parishes have struggled to reengage Altar Servers. The Office for Mission and Ministry and the Coordinator for Youth Ministry are looking at ways of supporting Parishes to develop or introduce Altar Servers. A first step is to gather with all of our Altar Servers and those priests and adult volunteers who look after them to celebrate Altar Serving in a fun atmosphere and to look at how we can together develop this ministry. We are gathering on Saturday, January 25th from 2.30pm to 4.00pm (venue to be confirmed).

**Come and Discover Alpha:** Would your Parish or Family of Parishes like to find out more about Alpha? We are hosting a 'Come and Discover Alpha' day from **10am to 4pm in the Visitor Centre of the Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Anne on Saturday, January 18th from 10am to 4pm.** In the morning, you will have the opportunity to experience a full Alpha session, and we will be offering workshops in the afternoon on how to run Alpha. Registration is essential: [tinyurl.com/mission-ministry](http://tinyurl.com/mission-ministry)

### FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTIONS:

Exposition, Rosary and Benediction will **NOT** take place on JANUARY 3rd, 2025. We will return to normal in February but will have the Rosary and Benediction at 4.00pm.

### Observations

The things we do at Christmas time are very human and life-affirming: we meet and we exchange greetings and we give gifts and we celebrate. In other words, we make contact with family and friends, we make the effort to connect, even with people we might not see that often. It may help to reflect on that before we celebrate the feast of Christmas itself and in the days that follow. Our Gospel today is inspiring.

The story of the visitation illustrates in a particularly intense way our human encounters. A successful coming together has three characteristics, what I call the three Rs: to receive, to recognise and to reciprocate. Elizabeth receives Mary, while recognising who she is, in a rich and joyful way. The encounter triggers a prayer in Mary, "My soul glorifies the Lord my spirit rejoices in God my saviour" (not in the reading). Both women are full of joy, in Luke's narrative. They receive each other, they recognise each other and they reciprocate. The encounter is joyful, affirming and refreshing. Something similar happens, somewhat more mysteriously, between the children they are carrying.

### Reflections

1. The greeting of Elizabeth to Mary "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb" is a joyful welcome of the child to come. Bringing new life into the world through pregnancy and birth is one of the most awesome human experiences. How have you experienced this for yourself or in someone close to you?
2. The image of the pregnant Mary going a distance to visit her cousin is a symbol of willingness to look beyond one's own needs to the needs of others. When have you witnessed that kind of generosity in others, or have been able to act in this way yourself?
3. Mary is praised for her faith, because she believed the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled. In what ways have you experienced blessings from your faith and trust in God's promises?

### PRAYER

*Who are we, Lord God, that you should come to us? Yet you have visited your people and redeemed us in your Son. As we prepare to celebrate his birth, make our hearts leap for joy at the sound of your Word, and move us by your Spirit to bless your wonderful works. We ask this through him whose day draws near: your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Our own Catherine Conlon extolls the virtues of Choir singing at Christmas in the Evening Echo Dec 19th. Great article with a photo of St Michael's Church Choir as a feature!



**Mass cards** are available in the sacristy after every mass both at weekend and weekdays.

### Thought for the day

Even in its resolutely secular form, the Christmas celebration has positive sides to it. People do try very hard to get together with close family and friends. It might help to reflect in advance on this seasonal intensity of encounter. What do I hope for? What do I bring? How can I/we be so that we are not simply in the same physical space but truly meet each other and are the better for it? There should be some leap of joy, so that at the end of the festivities, we are glad we made the effort.

### Prayer

*God of all loving, bless all our encounters this Christmas. Help us to be both kind and joyful, so that all whom we meet will be the better for it. Inspire us to know when a word of witness will lift the celebration and enable family and friends to get to the heart of it all.*

K O'Mahony OSA

### ENTRANCE - Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly minded,  
for, with blessing in His hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,  
as of old on earth He stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture,  
in the body and the blood.  
He will give to all the faithful  
His own self for heav'nly food.

At His feet the six-winged seraph,  
cherubim with sleepless eye,  
veil their faces to the Presence,  
as with ceaseless voice they cry,  
"Alleluia, alleluia,  
alleluia, Lord Most High!"

### RECESSIONAL - O COME EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
To free your captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.  
*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel,  
To you shall come Emmanuel.*

O royal branch of Jesse's tree,  
Redeem us all from tyranny;  
From pain of hell your people free,  
And over death win victory.  
*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel,  
To you shall come Emmanuel.*

**Anam Cara** - supporting parents after bereavement, are hosting their first Online Bereavement Information Evening of 2025 on Tuesday 7th of January 2025.

This online talk is for bereaved parents only.

**Date: Tuesday 7th of January 2025**

**Time: 7pm - 8:30pm**

**Guest Speaker: Niamh Finucane**

If you would like to receive a weekly commentary on the Weekly Scripture Readings, both in AUDIO, VIDEO and in PDF, please log on to [www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie) and register to receive the emails.



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