

A short reflection on today's Gospel John 1:6-8, 19-28

In today's Gospel John the Baptist, when questioned by the priests and Levites, predictably points away from himself and towards Jesus:

'I am not the Christ.... I am not the Prophet. I am a voice that cries in the wilderness, 'Make a straight way for the Lord.'

One of the most satisfying characteristics of this unorthodox man who fulfils his God-given mission so powerfully and so passionately, is his humble acceptance of who he is and what exactly he has been tasked to do. He firmly refuses to make it about himself despite the fact that his preaching attracts people to him in their thousands. He removes the attention from himself always and onto Christ.

'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you- the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap;'

Advent is a season which invites us to look more deeply with new-washed eyes and to see more clearly.

Jesus, may we understand and accept, as John did, that nothing is really about us: it is about you. And may we be aware that, as in John's time, you stand among us, and more often than not, as then, you stand among us unknown to us. May we look more deeply and may we see you more clearly as we move through this blessed season of Advent.

National Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood – Our prayer this weekend for the seminarians of the diocese of Derry and for those discerning their vocation is taken from the words of St Paul in our second reading: "May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body.... God has called you and he will not fail you."

The season of Advent -take some time out from the pressures of getting ready for Christmas to pray and meditate on the true meaning of Advent.

Morning Prayer of the Church will be prayed in the Cathedral each morning at 7.45am, Monday to Friday.

Late opening: In preparation for Christmas, the Cathedral will open late on Monday (18th December) from 8.00pm to 10.00pm. During this time there will be an opportunity for Confession and prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

St Dymphna's Mass, Tuesday 19th December at 7.30pm with Anointing of the Sick.

Eucharistic Adoration: every Sunday from 3.00pm to 6.00pm and every Tuesday from 10.30am until 7.20pm.

Saint Eugene's Carol Service will take place in the Cathedral at 4.00pm today (Sunday 17th December).

Saturday 23rd December – Confessions 11.30am to 5.30pm

Sunday (Christmas Eve) – Confessions from 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Christmas Mass times

Christmas Eve – 6.00pm and 12.00 midnight

Christmas Day at 7.00am, 9.30am, 11.00am and 12.30pm

Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to the family and friends of:

Rita Harkin

May she rest in peace

Anniversaries

Please pray for the repose of the souls of:

Harry Francis

Frank McGinley

Dan Cullen

May they rest in peace

Readers 23rd / 24th December

06.15 pm Helen Sweeney

07.30 pm Majella Coyle/
Caitlin Horner McLaughlin

09.30 am Rosemary Finan

11.00 am Oran Gartland

12.30 pm Kevin Finan

06.00pm Anna Begley

Christmas Day

12 midnight Piaras O Meallain/
Marian Boyle

09.30 am Kate Doherty

11.00 am Claire O'Kane

12.30 pm Eilish Friel

Collection

Last week's collection: £5,347

Parish Development: £891

Thank you for your generosity

Thank you

Fr Farren acknowledges with thanks the following donations for:

Mary's Meals: £25, £20

Trócaire: £50, £200

Children in Crossfire: £40

SVdP: £100, £300, £20

St Therese: £60

Missions: £350

Cathedral Funds: £5

Children in Need: £50

Gaza Appeal: £200

Hungry Children: £5

Flowers for Altar: £10

Sick Visitation

Fr Paul Farren will attend the sick and housebound in his care during the coming week:

Monday (pm): Lisfannon Park, Glenfada Park, William Street, Creggan Street, Fahan Street, Chamberlain Street, Westland Street. Cable Street, Lower Road.

Tuesday (pm): Mulvey Park, Beechwood Street, Elmwood Terrace, Elmwood Road, Gartan Square, Clarendon Manor.

Update from Universal Synod – In October 2021, Pope Francis launched a Synod on the theme of synodality. The Irish Catholic Bishops sent a report to the Synod Office in Rome in August 2022. This became part of a Continental Stage in Prague (February 2023), and a working document was published based on the themes worldwide (June 2023). This document was the official working document for the first session of a universal assembly known as the Synod of Bishops which took place from 4th – 29th October. A second session is scheduled for October 2024, where further decisions will be taken following a year long process of reflection, further research, and prayer. A full report from the assembly is available online at www.synod.ie/bishopsreport.

If you had your child baptised here in the last year and would like their baptismal leaf that was placed on the baptismal tree, please contact the Parochial House next week.

Join a host of wonderful, gifted singers and musicians for a lunchtime Concert on Wednesday 27th December at 1.00pm in St Eugene's Cathedral. Joy to the World - Concert celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Singing by Anne Marie Hickey, Lauren & Bethany Doherty, Roisin Rice, St Eugene's Cathedral Folk Group and Sally Mae Comey. Accompanied by Charlotte Logue & Aidan Watkins. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy this special time of the year.

Live Crib featuring real animals and people at St Eugene's Church Moneyneena, on Saturday 30th December following the 10.00 am Mass, at which Bishop McKeown will be chief celebrant. The Live Crib will be operational all day until candlelit Mass at 6.00 pm. Refreshments will be served throughout the day. Everyone is welcome to come and discover the true meaning of Christmas.

St Mary's College presents Carols by Candlelight - A Candlelight Christmas Celebration on Wednesday 20th December 2023 at 7.00pm in St Mary's College. Tickets cost £5. Festive refreshments will be served after. With proceeds going to St Mary's College Choir.

Online Lough Derg Christmas Shop is now open at www.loughderg.live/shop. The Christmas shop provides much needed financial income to support the mission and ministry of Lough Derg outside of the Pilgrimage Season. Thank you for your support.

Trócaire School Volunteers: Are you a retired teacher or someone who has experience presenting to groups of schoolchildren? Trócaire is looking for volunteers to support its School Talks Programme for Lent 2024 in parishes of the Derry Diocese. If you think you have the right skills and experience and will have a few free hours during Lent then we would love to hear from you. For more information call Casey Schell on 028 90 808 033 or email casey.schell@trocaire.org

Foyle Hospice Christmas Tree Recycling Scheme is now open. The scheme helps Foyle Hospice secure much needed funds whilst offering people the opportunity to have their tree disposed of in an environmentally friendly way, for a suggested donation of £10. Shredded trees are then used in our gardens throughout the year. Trees can be registered for collection through the website - foylehospice.com - or by calling Foyle Hospice fundraising office on 02871 359888. Registration closes on 7th January 2024.

St Eugene's Cathedral is monitored by CCTV cameras and by two live streaming cameras. Live streaming can be viewed online at www.churchservices.tv, www.watchmenmedia or the parish website. The Diocese of Derry Privacy Notice is displayed on the parish website and Cathedral notice board, or you may obtain a copy from the Parish Office.

Safeguarding Notice: If you have any concerns regarding the Safeguarding of children or adults in need of protection within the Church please contact Marie Gormley, the Diocesan Designated Liaison Person (DLP) at 07596500793 or at mariegormley@derrydiocese.org or contact the Safeguarding Office, Diocesan Pastoral Centre, 164 Bishop Street, Derry, BT48 6UJ or PSNI (Police Service of Northern) 101 or Social Services: Gateway Services, Western HSC Trust, 71314090 and ask for the Duty Social Worker.

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17th December 2023*

Priests: Fr Paul Farren, Fr Shaun Doherty