

4th Sunday of Advent



GOD WITH US

Divinity in the straw  
Advent longings  
fulfilled.  
Love made human  
in a stable.  
Circle of adoration.  
A homeless couple  
shaping history.  
Memories clutching  
at the heart.  
Prodigals coming  
home  
Emmanuel,  
God with us  
in our wonder child,  
In the angels' song,  
in hungry hearts  
Divinity in the straw.



**St. Augustine's Church**

Child Safeguarding  
Representatives.

Fr. Flor O'Callaghan O.S.A.

Fr. John Lyng O.S.A.

Ms Geraldine van Dam

Mr. Robert Ryan

Ms Charlotte Gleeson

Mr. John Doyle



St. Augustine's Church  
Limerick  
4th Sunday of Advent  
24th December 2023

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# A Christmas

**It's nearly seventy years ago now but that Christmas is still clear. Two days** before Santa we left home early. I carried a rope and my father a slash-hook. Contrary to appearances, we weren't out for a lynching or final settlement of an old feud. It was the great quest and the holy grail was holly. We crossed silver fields and then a lane of frozen mud and frost-fastened stones. He wondered would we succeed at all. Could we even find the place? Maybe the precious stuff was not there at all. Maybe someone got there before us. Maybe some bad man, beast or ghost had blighted it. It wouldn't be easy. As he was building up our adventure towards Himalayan status I trod on the thin ice of a donkey's hoof-print and a jet of the coldest water geysered into my face. I thought the Abominable Snowman had got to me, but big men didn't cry and on we went. Pooling our navigational skills and discussing every life-or-death decision about direction in a democratic manner we found at last the treasure. Evergreen and rich with scarlet berries it was. The best branches were soon severed and roped into a bundle bound for decoration to shame tinsel and bauble, giving out scent no smelly candle could match.

The expedition-leader pretended to need my help to get the load onto his back and we headed home. In accord with the Health and Safety regime of the time, I carried the slash-hook. **We'd climbed over Paddy Lalor's gate on the out-**ward trek but now, heavy-laden, we had to open it. This portal was not of the remotely-controlled or smooth-swinging kind. I had to lift, tug and lift again to get it to budge. That's how I fell on the slash-hook and blood spurted from a bad gash in the heel of my hand. I was shocked but my father was alarmed. He dropped the holly, picked me up in his arms and clamped a hand tightly around my wound. Up to that day I didn't know he could to run but now I knew. Near the house he shouted to Mammy to start the car and, uncharacteristically, that aged wagon - the car - obliged.

My muddy feet next touched down in Dr Quigley's surgery. The doctor was a kind, clean, well-kept sort of a man. What impressed me as he bent over me was the great number of buttons on his waistcoat, each working hard at its job of containment. He did three things. He told me I was a great man. I liked that. He gave me two shillings and I liked that too. Then, something I didn't like at all, he stitched my hand with a hooked needle like men used in loft or barn to sew sack-ing into pre-plastic winnowing sheets on winter days too wet to be out.

From then on I had the upper-hand for that Christmas. Sling and bandage **ensured that brothers and sisters didn't challenge me. They couldn't win. I was the** main man at midnight Mass; everyone said so. And I believe Santa moved me from the *barely makes it* to the *well-done* section and made appropriate adjustment. When I was weak, then I was strong.

JL



## After Christmas Mass Times

Tuesday, St. Stephens Day  
10.15am & 4.00pm

Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> December  
10.15am & 4.00pm

Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> December  
10.15 & 4.00pm

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> December  
10.15am & 4.00pm

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> December  
10.15am  
3.00pm Mass for the Sick

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December  
**New Year's Eve 9.00am 11.15am**  
No evening Mass

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January  
**New Year's Day 10.15am & 4.00pm**

From Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January  
Masses Resume to usual times

Confessions Resume: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> Jan



## Prayer at the Crib

### The Word Was Made Flesh'

*(Gospel of John)*

As I come before this crib  
Draw me into this circle of adoration  
Help me to take on the wonder of the shepherds  
**Lead me to 'the wonder child' within me**  
Bless my heart with memories of childhood cribs  
Hold me open to the miracle  
of divinity in the straw.  
Take me into the surrender in Faith  
Give me eyes to see Immanuel, the God  
Who is with us in swaddling clothes.  
Nurture me with the love of Mary and Joseph  
Minister to my pain and my doubt through  
the humility of the shepherds.  
Help me to hear the song of peace in my heart.  
Bring me to a place of healing,  
into a still centre, into a prayer  
that is deeper than words.  
Amen



## Mary's Song



Scripture does not record many of the words of Mary, the mother of the Lord. Perhaps this is because her actions spoke louder than any words. She did not DO theology; she DID the will of God. She did not try to explain the meaning of God to scholars; she brought the Son of God to the world. Her longest continuous monologue was in fact not a speech but a song ... a love song to her divine love. It is a good song for us to hear as we wait for the coming of the Lord because it tells us how it feels to give oneself totally to a lover, human or divine. It tells us how our divine lover deals with those he loves, how he affects a human being who has accepted his love. Meditating on Mary's song reveals to us how it will be when the Lord comes to us and takes over our lives, as he once long ago took over the life of the maiden Mary. Mary sang her song when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth ... a happy circumstance since an audience insures that a song will be remembered and sometimes improves the singing. As Mary sang, the child in Elizabeth's womb danced. We don't know what Jesus did. Perhaps he kept time gently tapping his foot deep inside Mary's body. All things considered it was a happy occasion, two glowing mothers rejoicing in their unborn sons and the God who made their "giving birth" possible. **Donald Burt OSA.**



## Thank You



*On behalf of the Augustinian Community thank you for all your support and prayers throughout the year. We wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas and may God continue to bless us as we journey on together.*