

## LETTER FROM THE BISHOP Arpil 2012.

Dear Friends

These words will reach most of you on Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week. Last year in the diocese as you will recall Holy Week was a very particular time of renewal and mission which I hope planted quite a number of seeds which will bear fruit in terms of how we keep the week in this and future years. Certainly I hope that the sense of energetic devotion (a strange phrase that, but It does rather capture the flavour of what we sought to do last year) will not be lost among us in 2012.

Lest it be forgotten, let me remind you of words I used in the introduction to last year's Holy Week programme with its memorable slogan PASSION OF JESUS – PASSION FOR JESUS. At that time I wrote –

*I have long believed that the way Holy week and Easter are kept are the best indicators I know of the spiritual vitality of a parish...we want to use these days as a time of renewal, of engaging worship and of real spiritual insight. We hope we will lay firm foundations for future witness and that our commitment to the challenge of the cross will also strengthen our voice in the world for which Christ died.*

In saying AMEN to all of that I wish you every blessing for the Holy Week journey in the places in which you are. Every year I try myself to spend much of Holy Week in a particular parish in the diocese and this year on Palm Sunday morning, and then on each of the evenings from Monday to Good Friday, I look forward to being in the churches of Clonmel Union. I plan in my addresses to return to a subject which continues to fascinate me but which I have not attempted to address for a number of years – namely the character and role of Judas and his treatment in Christian tradition. There is much to learn indeed from Judas, for every time I look in the mirror he can feel disturbingly close....

I might draw your attention to a number of other events in which indeed I find myself involved during Holy Week. On Maundy Thursday at 11 a.m. the diocesan clergy will come to St Canice's for the service in which they renew their commitment to ministry. This is emphatically NOT a clericalised occasion – indeed it takes place in the context of a very varied and colourful liturgy at which we are reminded that, by virtue of our baptism, ministry is the calling of us all. This year in a particular way the Diocesan Readers are being invited to the service to affirm the invaluable ministry they exercise in our midst.

On Good Friday I hope to join in the diocesan children's event in Leighlin Cathedral in the morning – this was a really fruitful and highly valued initiative last year and it is excellent that it is being repeated. In the afternoon I look forward to listening during the Three Hours of Devotion from noon to 3 p.m. in St Canice's to a former curate of mine, The Reverend Daniel Nuzum who is now chaplain to the Cork city hospitals. I do not wish to over-stress such cathedral events as if they are somehow competing with other parish services, some of an ecumenical nature, around the diocese that day, but the three hours in the cathedral is very special... often captivating the soul and thus appearing to pass almost in the twinkling of an eye. That said, people who cannot stay the whole time are of course free to come and go as they wish.

Again, I do not want to stress one particular Easter Eve liturgy as opposed to others but those who participated last year in the cathedrals will be able to testify to the power and drama of these services as joy, life and light transform the atmosphere in a thrilling way. I look forward to being at the Easter Liturgy at 9pm in Cashel Cathedral when those from that area shortly to

be confirmed will be specially involved and will indeed participate fully in the Resurrection Eucharist in the context of being 'ready and desirous to be confirmed'.

There are a number of Dawn Services around the diocese on Easter morning and details of these will be found in appropriate sections of this magazine. There is something powerfully authentic about replicating the experience of those who came at first light to the tomb of Jesus and ended up finding their world utterly transformed. There is an excitement about making Eucharist as the dawn breaks, renewing baptismal vows on the edge of water, making a joyful noise in the open air, popping the champagne corks as the sun bursts through and then barbecue – ing into the morning. Last year in the grounds of Stradbally Hall (provided by kind permission) the Laois Youth Council organised a splendid dawn eucharist at 5.45 a.m. (NOTE THE TIME) and this is being repeated this year at the same hour. All are welcome, whatever their age (save that under 18s should have adults with them), and entrance is by the main gates in Stradbally itself. If you are not at your own dawn service elsewhere in the diocese, this is something well worth the excitement of getting up for and I greatly look forward to being there. Then it will be back to Kilkenny for the Festal Eucharist at 11.30 a.m....

Wherever you are, take the time to relish the power of worship this Holy Week and Easter

MICHAEL CASHEL + OSSORY

A number of charities have received a welcome financial boost with the handing over of the 2011 Black Santa Funds. Over €34,000 was given out in St Ann's Church on Dawson Street, Dublin, on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February last.

Among the beneficiaries were Bishops' Appeal, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Protestant Aid, the Salvation Army, Trust, the LauraLynn Foundation, the Samaritans, the Church of Ireland Discovery Committee, PACT, Barnardos and the Dublin Simon Community. Representatives of the charities attended the morning service in St Ann's.

The Bishop of Cashel and Ossery and chairperson of Bishops' Appeal, the Right Revd Michael Burrows, preached at the service on the subject of charity. He congratulated the Vicar of St Ann's, Revd David Gillespie, and the people of the city for their generosity in raising the record sum.