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**November 29th – December 5th
Our liberation from fear.**

Jesus said to his disciples: “hold your heads high, for your liberation is close at hand”. Over the past few years, with all the revelations of scandals in the Church and society, there is a lot for us to be ashamed of and repent for. However, the resulting despair that some people have experienced is not necessary because there continues to be so much goodness in the Church and society that we can be proud of. This week we begin a new year in our journey of faith with Christ. It is an opportunity to once again have confidence in his presence with us, and his power in us. Without in any way being unrealistic, this is a time to look towards him to save us and to set us free. We will find that freedom in how we are with one another in our homes and in our faith community as we approach Christmas and beyond with love rather than selfishness.

Has the mystery of Christmas been washed away by secularism

A reflective stillness lies at the centre of Advent. Placed between Christ's first and second coming. Quietly, but insistently, it awakens our hope and invites us to wait upon the Lord who will fulfil his promise. It assures us that we will not wait in vain. Advent calls us to renew and deepen our trust, while the world finds trust difficult, and "hope" is dismissed as naive. Now, in this season of Advent we come to know that this time, the time in which we live, whatever the time, is the time of our redemption.

The liturgy of Advent is not like the seasonal background music in the shops, designed to put us in the right mood for spending. It is the song of faith, which expresses the reality from which we live our lives, and that faith gives us a particular way of seeing the world, of living in it and for it. Christ is the centre of our existence; he is the one who establishes our perspective. For this reason, the Christian way of seeing things is necessarily distinctive. To those who do not share this perspective, it will appear strange. Hence the problem and the puzzle that Christianity poses for a secular culture. The puzzle is not caused by a Christ-centred perspective alone, however. Where a post-Christian society has forgotten how to read the substance of Christian faith, there can be a genuine ignorance but also a cultivated misunderstanding among those who presume to know Christianity already. The old cliché about familiarity breeding contempt can be disconcertingly true. We live at a moment when our society is marked by deep struggles about its identity, values and purpose. The Church wants humanity to succeed, not fail. That is why it is passionately engaged in this struggle. It does not have any ambition to take away the legitimate independence of the secular but it does have a vision of what that might be.

There are other voices, of course, sometimes representing an aggressive secularism or an anti-theism, a vision of a secular society completely free of religion and its influence. Part of this approach is to construct a version of religion, especially Catholicism, that not only makes it strange to the secular mind but presents it as a threat. Antitheism represents religion as the enemy of the good that a secular society aspires to. Religion in general, but the Church in particular, comes to stand for all the deepest fears and demons of a liberal secularism: it is prejudiced, oppressive, irrational, authoritarian, capable of inspiring fanatical violence and abusing power.

How often is the "religious" position characterised in this way? If religion is exorcised then somehow society is restored to health. Liberated from the myths that hold us back we can now make progress towards the secular light.

**Weekly Masses
Special Remembrance**

Mon. 30th Nov. to Sun. 6th Dec. 2009

Mass at 8.00 and 10.00 each morning, Monday to Friday, is offered for all those whose names are on the list of Mass intentions. If you wish to have someone mentioned specifically - for an anniversary, a recent death, an illness - please leave the name at the Reception Office.

In the Novena Masses on Saturday at 8.00 and 10.00 we remember especially all those who have sent in petitions and those attending the Novena..

Fri. 10.00 am. John Hehir R.I.P.
10.00 am. John Mannion R.I.P.
Sat. 10.00 am. George, Nora, Daphne King R.I.P.
Sun. 11.00 am: Patty Grennan R.I.P.
Sarah Cronnolly R.I.P.
May, Micko, Paddy Cronnolly R.I.P.
Deceased relatives of the
Redemptorist Community R.I.P.

Feast Days of the coming week.

Mon: Saint Andrew Apostle

Thur: Saint Francis Xavier

During the coming week:

In The Retreat House:

Dec. 4-6: Brothers of Charity (35)

Parish Missions & Novenas in Ireland & Abroad.

Nov. 28-Dec. 5th: Partry Parish Mission,
Co. Mayo

*Please share in this Redemptorist
Apostolic Work by praying for its success.*

Esker Retreat House Advent Retreat.

December 11th - 13th

Contact Fr. Johnny Doherty

Phone: 091-844549



THE SICK

Please pray for
Fr. Brian Foley,
Fr. Seán Mullin,
Majella Fahy,
Michelle O'Donnell.

Last week-end you were introduced to Brian Nolan, a Redemptorist student, who will be ordained to the priesthood next Sunday in our church in Dundalk. Brian is one of three. Another student joining Brian will be Tony Rice from the Redemptorist parish of St. Gerard's in Belfast. You can read his story overleaf.

Tony will celebrate his Mass of Thanksgiving in his own parish church of St. Gerard's in Belfast on Monday, 7th December, at 7.30 p.m.



TONY RICE:

I was born in 1978 in Belfast. I sat my A-levels in 1997 and then moved into the working world. I spent two years working in the retail sector and a further two years working in the financial services sector.

I have a large extended family, most of whom still live in Belfast. My immediate family consists of my dad, step-mum, brother and sister. I also have one nephew and two nieces. Close friends are important to me and I am blessed with quite a number, from many parts of the country and beyond.

Pastoral ministry, even if I never called it that, has always been a focus and an activity of mine. Over the years I have done this in many ways, particularly in working with young people.

I felt at an early age that I had a vocation, and in 2001 I finally took the plunge and decided to see if this is what God was really asking me to do. I joined the Redemptorists in September 2001. Since then I have lived in community (in Dublin, Dundalk and Cork). In my first two years I completed studies in Philosophy at Milltown Institute, Dublin.

In 2003-2004 I had my Novitiate year, a year of spiritual discernment. After that year of intense prayer and reflection I chose to continue living out my life of faith and work in the Redemptorist Congregation, and thankfully they accepted me! I made my profession in Dundalk on 22nd August, 2004.

It was back to Dublin after that, to follow two years of study in Theology and Anthropology/Cultural Studies at Milltown Institute.

After this I was to have two years living in our community in Scala, Cork. During the first year I worked mainly on parish missions across the South and South-West of Ireland, a little bit on youth ministry and I also travelled to Poland one summer to begin learning Polish! In my second year my main work was in youth ministry as co-ordinator of the Meitheal (Youth Leadership) Programme in Cork, with a few missions too.

In September 2008 I returned to Dublin to complete my course in Theology and Cultural Studies in preparation for Final Profession and Ordination. I do not know what is to come. What I do know is that I continue to discern my vocation and I trust that God will be with me at every step.