

# *Ballineaspig Parish Bulletin*

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Bulletin: 25th December, 2022 - Christmas Day

## **THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS**

It's the sounds and voices of people I remember most of Christmas. My childhood was spent in the street of my town, a street bustling with children when I was growing up, with the occasional widowed or single person living alone. I can still hear the voice of Ellie Holland who always called in the afternoon, chatting about the latest person who had died, asking how I was doing at school, and talking about some of the Christmas cards we got. We were a quiet household, just my mother, father and me; a turkey would have been wasted on us, although one year my father brought a live one home after a win at a game of cards. Another Christmas our chimney went on fire, filling the whole street with black smoke. Neither my parents or Ellie batted an eyelid; my mother opened back the lever over our range and left it burn away, roaring for over an hour, no fire brigade, no panic. We kept talking away.

I wonder about what the sounds and voices in Bethlehem were like all those years ago. What sounds did the baby's crying interrupt? Thousands of people were crammed in one place to satisfy the ego of an emperor who wanted to find out exactly how many people he ruled. I cannot imagine Joseph and Mary saying much, the shepherds saying much....all bewildered in the noise around them. Even later, we are told the Three Kings were moved to silence when they came together under the star. The silence spoke louder than the noise.....'and Mary kept all these things to herself and pondered them in her heart...'. Both Mary and Joseph are almost completely silent in the whole story, yet how extraordinary they both were, how loving and giving their hearts were.



Your house might be very noisy this Christmas. Children and grandchildren will come to you or you to them with new-found freedom after the last two years. You will delight in their sounds and surprises and laughter and marvel at how much they have grown. Equally, your home may be quiet with the memories of voices past, where you raise a prayer and a thought and maybe a glass. I will certainly be lost in thought for special people I lost in the past year, equally for those who have recovered, or thrived, or are still struggling.

The Christmas story is the same every year, but we ourselves do not remain the same. This is what Fr. Denis Mc Bride, the Redemptorist writer and scholar says:

Our memories have grown, our hopes have been tested, our love has been called on in new ways. But no matter what changes we have undergone, what losses we have mourned, the Christmas story speaks to us again of rebirth and the possibility of our own rebirth.

That is why we make the journey back to Bethlehem each year: to rediscover our own roots in the gift of Jesus. For us it is a journey home. As GK Chesterton wrote:

To an open house in the evening,  
Home shall people come,  
To an older place than Eden  
And a taller town than Rome.  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and that are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all people are at home.

Go neiri linn go leir an Nollaig seo.

Fr. Donal

