



*1813 - 2013*

*Bicentenary Concert  
St. Manman's Church  
Clonaslee*

*Friday 24th May*

*Brona Comoy*

*How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those  
who bring good news  
who herald peace and happiness  
who proclaim salvation  
and announce to Zion: "Your God is King"  
Isalah 52:7*

One of the most difficult things to learn is the one that teaches us how to count our blessings. There are many things we take for granted. Things we didn't and couldn't ask for such as life, intelligence and creative abilities. We didn't ask to be born yet don't regret that we were.

There are things money can't buy: family, friends and freedom. These are gifts we should not take for granted. Television brings us disturbing pictures of thousands upon thousands of refugees forced to survive in camps, living in tents for years with nowhere to go and nothing to do.

There are more gifts: gifts of faith in God and hope in his promises. We have Good News to share as we celebrate the bicentenary of our church - St Manman's - here in Clonasslee. Over the past two hundred years our ancestors have been coming to this sacred space to pray and worship. Here the newborn were baptised, the Eucharist celebrated, the Word of God proclaimed.

Spring and Summer witnessed First Communion, Confirmations, weddings and other special moments. Funerals brought the community together to say goodbye to our loved ones.

This bicentenary is an occasion to remember and honour the memory of the people, priests and religious who have gone before us, and to acknowledge their faith and commitment over the years. The year 1813, in which the church was built, under the guidance of Rev.

Thaddaeus Dunne, seems a long time ago. It was more than bricks, stone, mortar, timber and slates. In the First Letter of Paul we read in chapter two "He is the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to Him: set yourselves close to Him that you may be living stones making a spiritual house".

This is also a time to look forward with hope and confidence. John O'Donohue, in his book *Benedictus*, "For a New Beginning" says:

*In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.*

*Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.*

*Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.*

I wish to acknowledge all who contributed to this event in any way. Thanks to Annette Doolan, Dolores Murray, Tom Conroy, John Cusack and Jody Conway for their help with this project. I would also like to acknowledge the help from members of the Parish Council and the wider parish community. It is my wish that this celebration will help to keep alive the traditions of the past, celebrate the present and look forward into the future with enthusiasm and hope.

*Fr Thomas O'Reilly, Parish Priest*



*Scoil Bhríde N.S.*



*Clonaslee Community Choir*



*James Kilbane*



*Sax Sisters*



*Castlecuffe N.S. Choir*



*Le Chéile Singers*



*Portlaoise Gospel Choir*



*Emer Dunne*

## *Extract from History Queen's County O'Hanlon & O'Leary Pub. 1914*

In 1793 the two new parishes of Clonaslee and Rosenallis were formed. Mountmellick had previously been formed in 1770. Nearly all the districts embraced within these three parishes had from early times been included in one parochial territory known as Kilmanman.

In later times the extensive parish of Rosenallis had taken in the whole of the barony of Tinnahinch. At present Clonaslee includes Kilmanman proper, and most of Rearymore.

In the Registry of Popish Priests of 1704, Kedagh Dunne set down as P.P. cc of Rossanolis, Rerymore, Castlebrack, and Killmanman, then and ever since 1678. The ruins of the ancient parish church are still to be seen at Kilmanman, about a mile and a half from the village of Clonaslee.

The district chapel in the penal times was that called the Old Chapel of Brittas. It stood just inside the former demesne wall of Brittas, the seat of the O'Dunnes of Hy Regan, the old mountain road from Clonaslee passing outside. This chapel, which was of considerable size, was thatched; as was, also the old manor house of Brittas, adjoining. At a distance of some three hundred yards south of this chapel, on a rising ground, and also within the precincts of the old demesne, a place is pointed out on which, it is said, a monastery stood in the times of persecution.

In 1771, a chapel was erected in the village of Clonaslee. It is probable that the apostasy of Squire Francis Dunne, the then head of the family, which took place in that year, rendered the change of the place of Catholic worship necessary. At the same time, there is reason to think that the squire intended to conform only for a while, with a view to keeping hold of his estate. All his children were baptised Catholics.

The old chapel of Clonaslee, like its predecessor of Brittas, was a humble, unpretentious, thatched edifice. It stood close to the site occupied by the present Catholic church. It was replaced by this fine, commodious church, in the year 1813.

## *Curates in Clonaslee Parish from 1884- present:*

1884 – John Hughes	1916 – John P Norris
1884 – Laurence Hosey	1918 – A.G. Byrne
1897 – Thomas Byrne	1923 – Patrick O'Byrne
1898 – John Dunne	1929 – Tom N Cunningham
1901 - Thomas Byrne	1932 – Tom Doyle
1906 – M Walshe	1957 – Lar Fleming
1907 – M Conroy	1963 – Patrick Breen
1908 –	1978 – Robert E Lee
1910 – Patrick Hayden	1979 – Thomas Foynes
1912 – Martin Brophy	1983 – Patrick Curran
1913 – M O'Bróite S.Ó.	1998 – Adrian Carbery
1915 – J Prendergast	

## *Parish Priests of Clonaslee 1678 to Present Day*

**Keadagh Dunne 1678-1714 Parishes of Rosenallis, Rearymore and Killmanman.**

**Rev. Bryan Dempsey 1714-1724**

**Rev. John Keenan 1724-1734**

**Rev. Valentine Dunne 1737-1780**

**Very Rev Dr. Patrick Dunne 1780-1793**

*Divided into two parishes, Clonaslee and Rosenallis in 1793*

**Fr. John Stapleton 1793-1810**

**Fr. Thady Dunne 1811-1828**

*PP of both Rosenallis and Clonaslee. Built the present church in 1813.*

*When he died the parishes of Clonaslee and Rosenallis were again separated.*

**Rev. Michael Graham 1828-1840**

**Rev. Richard Cullen 1840-1844**

**Rev. Andrew Phelan 1844-1847**

**Rev. Richard Buggy 1847-1864**

**Rev Fr. Michael Kenny 1864-1884**

**Fr. Thomas Maloney 1884-1903**

**Rev. P Maher 1903-1907**

**Rev. Thomas Byrne 1907-1913**

**Rev. Fr Murray 1913-1947**

**Fr Fanning 1947-?**

**Rev Fr. Thomas Ryan 195\_ -1966**

**Rev Fr. Thomas Mahon 1967-1969**

**Rev Fr. Alphonsus Kehoe 1969-1985**

**Rev Fr. Joseph Shortall 1985-1997**

**Fr. James Gahan 1998-2006**

**Rev Fr. Thomas O'Reilly 2006-Present**

## *An Old Man's Wish*

I was walking to the airport with my suitcase and my bags  
When an old man approached me and his clothes were all in rags  
Every footstep seemed an effort, there was anguish in his speech,  
He said, "Son forgive me asking do you come from County Laois?"

Well I could not help but wonder as he did his best to talk,  
How he ended up so broken in the subways of New York.  
Then I heard my flight announcement but before I went my way,  
He said, "Son do me a favour when you get back home today.

"Will you give my love to Emo" and the tears rolled down his face,  
"Will you make a wish for me beside the Rock of Dunnamaise,  
Will you smile on Ballybrittas and just tell her it's from me,  
And will you light a little candle in the Church in Clonaslee."

As the jet plane soared to Ireland he kept coming to my mind,  
I could see his tragic features as I left him far behind.  
I just could not bare to tell him that I'm not from Laois at all,  
That I come from near Bundoran in the County Donegal.

Well I suppose you'll say I'm foolish and who knows perhaps I am,  
But I know I had to grant that wish to that old, old broken man.  
As the sun set over Ireland I was on my way to Laois,  
I could see his troubled features, I could hear his voice beseech.

So I gave his love to Emo as I thought of his sad face  
And I made a wish for him beside the Rock of Dunnamaise,  
And I smiled on Ballybrittas just the way he asked of me,  
And I lit his little candle in the Church in Clonaslee.

Well three years have passed or maybe four, I soon forgot it all.  
I settled down and married in my native Donegal.  
Then one night as I was walking home this brilliant light appeared,  
And in it stood the old, old man, he smiled and said "Don't fear"

He said, "I've come to thank you" and his face was all aglow,  
And then my mind flew back to Laois, it seemed so long ago.  
And suddenly he disappeared, but AHH! that strangest peace  
For I knew that God had called him home to Heaven and to Laois.

He said "Give my love to Emo", and the light shone round his face  
"And make a wish for me beside the Rock of Dunnamaise,  
Please smile on Ballybrittas and just tell her it's from me.  
And will you light a little candle in the Church in Clonaslee."



## *Thank You*

*Thank you to all who have helped in any way to make this concert a great, success including:*

**The audience for attending and enjoying the night of entertainment,**

**All the performers for giving of their talent and time,**

**Kevin Lalor Fitzpatrick for being our Master of Ceremonies,**

**Clonaslee ICA for preparing light refreshments for our performers,**

**Parish Council for stewards inside the church,**

**Clonaslee St. Manman's GAA for stewarding the parking,**

**Clonaslee Community Development Association for use of their equipment,**

**FÁS workers for their help preparing the Church and surrounds,**

**Scoil Bhríde for use of their hall and facilities,**

**Paddy Bates for photography on the night,**

**Brona Conroy, student at Clonaslee College, for the excellent drawing on the programme front,**

**Cecil Carter for the sound, light and stage set up,**

**Malachy Mangan for video production,**

**Sacristans, Betty and Dinny Finnerty,**

**Bicentenary Organising Committee,**

**And Father Thomas O'Reilly, P.P for his foresight and diligence to bring this concert and other events to our community to mark the 200 years of**

**St. Manman's Church 1813-2013.**

## *Parish Bicentennial Prayer*

Gatherer of All Good Memories,  
the spirits of many ancestors join us  
here in this sacred place of Clonaslee St Manman's Church.

We have come to celebrate a history,  
to gather the memories of many decades.

You have been a Companion for each one:  
every grandfather and grandmother,  
every student and teacher,  
every single person, every priest, and nun,  
every father and mother, brother and sister.

You have been the Breath of Life  
for everyone who has birthed a child,  
wedded a lover, or buried a dear one.  
You have sown the deep seeds of faith  
in the waters of countless baptisms,  
kept alive a parish for two hundred years  
through the fidelity of those who prayed here,  
and the generosity of those who served here.

While our world is weary and worn with pain,  
may we take hope and find courage  
in what we celebrate:  
the strong faith of our ancestors,  
the friendship of neighbours and relatives,  
the generous leadership of priests,  
the goodness of each one willing to reach out  
and be there in a time of need.

We thank you, Gracious God, for our faith,  
and for this place of worship and community,  
which has nourished many souls,

and provided a source of nurturing faith  
for all who came seeking spiritual life.  
May we leave here filled with hope,  
knowing that the people of Clonaslee,  
believe in your constant Presence,  
accepted your Grace, shared your Love,  
and celebrated your Life with one another. Amen.

*Joyce Rupp*