

Christmas Message 2025

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

As we celebrate Christmas once again, I want to extend warm and prayerful greetings to all in our parish communities of Monasterboice & Togher.

Christmas centres us on a simple, astonishing truth — **Emmanuel — God is with us**. Not as a distant idea, but as a child born into ordinary life. God steps fully into our hopes and worries, our joys and our grief. He knows what it is to be human — because He has lived it.

At Christmas, I've often reflected on the phrase "**Because of Bethlehem**." Because of Bethlehem, we can say God is close. Because of Bethlehem, faith becomes personal: God is for us. And because of Bethlehem, we have more than a comforting story — we have a Saviour who walks with us in every season of life.

Many in our parish are facing tough times — strain, illness, loss, uncertainty. And yet, I constantly see kindness and generosity — neighbours supporting neighbours, families caring for one another, people giving quietly of their time and heart. That goodness reflects the love first revealed in Bethlehem.

One of my favourite Christmas films is "**It's a Wonderful Life**." George Bailey learns that his life — ordinary and flawed though it seems — has touched countless others. That message belongs to Christmas too. Our lives — here in Dillonstown, Dysart, Fieldstown, Tenure and Togher — matter deeply to God. Every act of kindness, every moment of forgiveness, every fragile step of faith makes a difference.

Our parishes continue to stand as quiet witnesses of hope, holding the prayers, joys and sorrows of generations. They remind us that God does not disappear when times change — He remains with His people. This year has also brought change closer to home. The major renovation and relocation of the Monasterboice Parochial House - thank you for your support in this significant endeavour. Like our own homes, the parish adapts so it can serve into the future. Buildings may change — but the heart of parish life remains faith, welcome and community.

So this Christmas, may we rediscover that God's love has entered our world — and will not leave it. **Presence matters more than presents**. Relationship more than perfection. And — like George Bailey — may we realise our lives truly matter to God. If this Christmas is difficult for you, you are especially remembered in prayer. And if faith feels distant, please know you still belong here. Nobody is beyond the reach of the Christ-child.

May Christ bring peace to your homes and hope to your hearts. Thank you for the friendship and kindness that I meet so often in parish life. Thanks also to the **many** volunteers in our different ministries who do such a wonderful job in serving the various needs of our parishes with much enthusiasm and commitment.

Be assured of my prayers for you and all your loved ones - every blessing for Christmas and the New Year ahead.



Handwritten signature of Rev. Patrick O'Riordan.