

Parish of Bangor, Member of Ards Pastoral Community

Parish Priest: Very Rev Joseph Gunn St Comgall's Presbytery, 27 Brunswick Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT20 3DS
T: (028) 9146-5522 E: bangor@downandconnor.org W: www.bangorparish.com Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9.30pm to 1pm.

PARISH NEWSLETTER

1st SUNDAY IN ADVENT – 27 November 2022 –

Your prayers are requested for Recently Deceased:

Margaret McClean, Laurence Ryan,
Benny Mulligan (Dublin), Eileen McAllister (USA)
Sr Veronica O'Brien (Belfast).

Month's Mind: Peter McQuade, Rita Allen Anniversaries:

Charlie Morrison, Maureen Duffy, Anthony Mulligan, Lily Campbell, Hazel Coyle, Packie Rafferty, Danny & Mary McDowell, Vincent Jamison Snr, Catherine & Jim Brown, James Brown, Bridget & Frank McQuade, Peg McVeigh, Clare Shields, Theresa Burke, Margaret & John Cleary, Dymphna McHugh Stephen Anderson, Una Evans.

For more details on the different notices please go on to the parish website:
www.bangorparish.com

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Mass is Live Streamed and can be accessed via the Parish Website

www.bangorparish.com

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Holy Hour in St Comgall's Donaghadee – every 2nd Sunday in the month @ 2.45pm

SUNDAY MASS TIMES THIS WEEKEND

[ST COMGALL'S CHURCH, DONAGHADEE](#)

Sunday 27th November @ 9.00am

[ST COMGALL'S CHURCH BRUNSWICK ROAD](#)

Saturday vigil 26th November @ 6.30pm
Sunday 27th November @ 10am & 12noon

MASS TIMES FOR:

DAILY MASS NEXT WEEK – 28th Nov to 2 December

Morning Mass: Monday to Friday at 9.30am

A number of Masses including funerals are recorded. These can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

www.churchservices.tv/bangor

Solemn Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Monday. Adoration will last from after Morning Mass until **4.00pm**.

<https://www.bangorparish.com/the-parish-today/the-columban-sisters/>

LINK FOR: 🙏 Sr Maura's PRAYING TOWARDS... SUNDAY REFLECTIONS on the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

PARISH SACRAMENTAL CLASSES

Sacramental Class for **CONFIRMATION**. Starting: The first Sunday in **JANURAY the 6th 2023** at **10.30am to 11.45am** in Saint Comgall's Parish Centre.

Cost £40 to include workbooks and supplies.

Due to pressure of space - only children registered by Monday 12 December will be accepted this year. Register interest with the Parish Office by email.

[giving child's name, class, age, school]



PREPARE FOR ADVENT!

'Emmanuel, God is with us.'

Venue: St Comgall's Church, Brunswick Rd

Time: 7pm to 8pm **When:** Thursdays over 4 weeks: **Nov 24th**, Dec 1st, Dec 8th after Mass, and Dec 15th. Prepare for Christmas! Open our hearts to the beauty and richness of God's Word

through Lectio Divina – Listening, Praying and Meditating on the Divine Word. All Welcome. Led by Derek Le Mahieu.

[children under 18 to be accompanied by an adult]

Come and be a part of the **Friendship Club Tuesdays at 10am**. ALL WELCOME!!!

TROCAIRE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Sunday November 27th after both Masses: 10am, 12noon
Please join us in St Comgall's Parish Centre (*behind the Church*)

- Tea/Coffee and Christmas Treats;
- Super Christmas Ballot ; Tombola; Toys and Books
- Live Fiddlers, carols & Santa will be there with sweets for the children!

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Trocaire Gifts of Love on sale in the Parish Centre during Fair!

**St Vincent de Paul Helpline**

**077 0367 9384**

**Bethany Bereavement Support Group**  
we are here to support and listen.  
Confidential.  
07740-286738

#### BAPTISM REGISTRATION

Please register online SIDE BAR under '**Sacramental Preparation**'

Full Copy of The Sunday Missalette can be found on The Parish Website Under "News"

**PARISH CENTRE – PARISH GROUPS RESTARTING – SEPTEMBER 2022**

| <b>MONDAYS</b>                             | <b>TUESDAYS</b>                                                    | <b>WEDNESDAYS</b>                             | <b>THURSDAYS</b>                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BRIDGE CLUB</b><br>at 7.15 until 9.45pm | <b>FRIENDSHIP CLUB</b><br>at 10.00am                               | <b>MENCAP</b><br>Every fortnight at 6.00pm    | <b>St Comgall's Guide Unit</b><br>(Girls aged 6-18)<br>at 6.30pm |
| <b>YOUTH CLUB</b><br>6.30pm – 8.30pm       | <b>IRISH DANCING CLASSES</b><br>at 6.00pm                          | <b>YOUTH CLUB</b><br>6.30pm – 8.30pm          | <b>IRISH CLASS &amp; CEILI DANCING</b><br>at 7.00pm              |
|                                            | <b>SENIOR CHOIR</b><br>Starting 11 <sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm | <b>BADMINTON</b><br>Every fortnight at 8.00pm |                                                                  |

**BOOKING OF PARISH CENTRE:**

Contact Thomas on T: 07305 746 263 or Email: [mcmullanthomas481@gmail.com](mailto:mcmullanthomas481@gmail.com)

**If you have a parish group and wish to advertise the times of starting or day in this Parish Newsletter please contact the parish office by email on: [bangor@downandconnor.org](mailto:bangor@downandconnor.org)**

**AT A GLANCE – NEWS ITEMS IN THE PARISH AND AROUND THE DIOCESE**

To see the fuller details please go to the parish website 'Parish Newsletter'

**SUN 27 NOV** at 3pm  
Mass of Hope, in Clonard Monastery at 3pm, for those who have lost loved ones through suicide.

**3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> DEC**  
This week the **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY** launched its ANNUAL APPEAL, *"Impossible Choices - Food or Heat?"* Members of St Comgalls Conference will address the Congregations at the weekend Masses 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> December, ahead of the Annual Collection on 10<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> December.

SVP Christmas cards will be available, at the back of the Church, from this weekend for the payment of a voluntary donation.

The cards are also available now at the Mace Shop (Thomas's) Brunswick Road, again for a voluntary donation.

**SUN 4 DEC** at 5pm.  
ARDS CCE present their Irish Christmas concert in St Comgall's Parish Centre. Tickets £5 from Thomas shop. Tea/ biscuits and fab ballots. Music/ dancing and guest artists including the Mc Clean family and Fr Martin o Hagan.

**SUN 11 DEC** at 7pm.  
St Agnes Choral Society in St Anne's Parish Centre, Finaghy BT10 ONE, Tickets £10+fees. Tickets can be booked via this link: [shorturl.at/bruWY](http://shorturl.at/bruWY)

**Knock Shrine** - Daily Masses continue to be broadcast at 12 Noon and 7.30pm, with Rosary at 7pm. For further details, please see [www.knockshrine.ie](http://www.knockshrine.ie)

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**SAT 26 NOV** BEGINNING EXPERIENCE:  
The loss of a partner through death, separation or divorce is devastating. Booking essential. To find out more, contact Phil: 02890 207645 or Marie 07896119669 or email [belfastbe@yahoo.com](mailto:belfastbe@yahoo.com)



**CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2022**  
in St Comgall's Church, Brunswick Rd - ONLY  
CHRISTMAS EVE – SATURDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
**5PM, 7PM, 9PM**  
CHRISTMAS DAY – SUNDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
**9AM, 11AM, 1PM**  
SAINT STEPHEN'S DAY – MONDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
**1PM**

**Saint Martha's Guild – St Comgall's Brunswick Road**

It is proposed to revive the St Martha's Guild to ensure the regular cleaning of the church on a rota basis. Any parishioner interested in volunteering in this vital service is kindly asked to give his/her name into the Parish Office during office hours 9.30am-1pm or by email: [bangor@downandconnor.org](mailto:bangor@downandconnor.org). Thank you to the 7 who have come forward already once we have a few more we hope to set up a meeting and a Rota.

**MON 28 NOV** ANNUAL MASS FOR DECEASED CLERGY & RELIGIOUS  
There will be a Mass for Deceased Clergy and Religious who have died during the last three years. All Parishioners, Clergy and Religious throughout the Diocese are invited to join the families of the deceased to offer Mass together with Bishop Noel.  
**On:** Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November **In:** St Peter's Cathedral (Belfast) **At: 7:00 pm** The Mass will also be broadcast online at: <http://www.churchservices.tv/stpeterscathedral>

**St Comgalls Girl Guides Unit**  
We have limited space available in our sections Brigins p3-p6 Guides p7-yr9 and Ranger yr10+. We meet on a Thursday night from 6.30-8pm in the parish centre. We have a programme of creativity, health, outdoors, innovative and so much more. If you wish your daughter to join or for more information contact [stcomgallsguideunit@gmail.com](mailto:stcomgallsguideunit@gmail.com)

This is a **8** Page Bulletin so please scroll down!

**The Society of St Vincent de Paul** offers practical and confidential help to those in need throughout the North Down Area. We know it can be hard to ask for help but please, if you need help call us on **our Helpline: 077 0367 9384**.

This week the **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY** launched its Annual Appeal, *"Impossible Choices - Food or Heat?"* Members of St Comgalls Conference **will address the** Congregations at the **weekend Masses 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> December**, ahead of the **Annual Collection on 10<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> December**.

SVP Christmas cards will be available, at the back of the Church, from this weekend for the payment of a voluntary donation. The cards are also available now at the Mace Shop (Thomas's) Brunswick Road, again for a voluntary donation.

To help us to help others you can make direct payments to Conferences Bank Account.  
St Comgall's, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No is 25302098.  
Most Holy Redeemer Ballyholme, Allied Irish Bank. Sort Code 93-82-03. A/C No. 06885061.

Donations can also be made to SVP Giving Page at [www.svp-ni.co.uk](http://www.svp-ni.co.uk). If you are a UK income tax-payer please consider Gift Aiding your donation, which will enhance your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. Gift Aid forms are available on the Parish website, or on request, via SVP Helpline number, as above.

The Society is always on the lookout for new Members, and if you are interested and can spare a few hours per week please speak to a Conference Member, or leave your name and contact number on the Helpline and we will return to you promptly. You will be warmly welcomed and full training will be given.

***We can now accept donations of Good quality furniture – please call our Helpline or speak to a member of the Society.***

**STOREHOUSE NORTH DOWN** - Storehouse continues to help **St Vincent De Paul** provide non-perishable food for those in need. **Non perishable foodstuff donations, for Storehouse, have recommenced. Donations can be left in the receptacle in the Bishops Porch at the rear of the Church** or Storehouse welcomes donations of foodstuff at their premises, 12 Balloo Avenue, Bangor on Mondays and Thursdays between 10.00am to 3.00 pm. Cash donations are also very acceptable.

#### **Items For Christmas Hampers**

Tinned Meat (eg Ham, Corned Beef), Tinned Meat Meals for use with Potatoes (eg Chunky Chicken, Stewed Steak, Mince and Onion), Tinned Custard, Cranberry Sauce, Gravy Granules, Christmas Puddings, Mince Pies, Selection Boxes Tins or boxes of sweets, Boxes of Shortbread and biscuits, Bottles of Shloer, Small gifts for men and women.

A short video has been prepared as a Christmas. The video can be downloaded using this link:

[https://1drv.ms/v/s!Aj\\_T6Njt1EjHj\\_EzO95fgWwvT-KSgg?e=1Qh0jL](https://1drv.ms/v/s!Aj_T6Njt1EjHj_EzO95fgWwvT-KSgg?e=1Qh0jL)

**TRÓCAIRE** thank you for your help. You can donate in the following ways:

- Online at [www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org).  
T: 0800 912 1200 (NI)
- By post: Trócaire, 50 King Street, Belfast, BT1 6AD (NI).

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**Follow these links for more information about ACCORD NICMCS:**

<http://www.4ni.co.uk/c/1763/accord-ni-catholic-marriage-care-service-belfast>

<http://www.facebook.com/accordmarriagecare>



**Please find below the link to the Safeguarding Office 2022 E-Bulletin.** Newsletter - available to view on our website <https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/newsletters/>

**PRAYING WITH THE ICONS** *under The Four Saints*  
*found in 'Parish Today'*

**South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust Carer Support Service**  
**Are you an unpaid carer who cares for a family member or friend?**

You are invited to come along to the Carer Support Service Carer Hub in Bangor.

**When:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month

**Where:** North Down Community Wellbeing Hub, Main Street

**Time:** 10.30 – 1pm

No need to book, just call in at any time during the morning for carer information advice and guidance. Join us for tea/coffee and scones, we would love to meet you.





## 1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 27 November 2022

**Lord Jesus, you have said, 'Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'** I come to you in faith and trust, in love and hope. Let me know your closeness to me and your care for me and for all who are dear to me.

**My intention:** Hear my prayer (*mention intention*); grant what I ask, and may I always trust that in all that happens in life, you will be close to me as my friend, guide and saviour. And so, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

**Penitential Act:** I confess to the almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

### PRAYERS AT HOLY COMMUNION

#### Spiritual Holy Communion Prayer

My Jesus, I believe that you are present  
in the most Blessed Sacrament.  
I love you above all things and  
I desire to receive you into my soul.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart.  
I embrace you as if you have already come,  
and unite myself wholly to you.  
Never permit me to be separated from you.  
Amen.  
*composed by Saint Alphonsus Liguori*

#### ANIMA CHRISTI

#### Prayer to the Most Holy Redeemer

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, embolden me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within your wounds hide me.  
Never permit me to be separated from you.  
From the evil enemy defend me.  
At the hour of my death call me  
and bid me to come to you,  
that with your Saints I may praise you  
for age upon age. Amen

**Prayer Online:** Come and join us at... [www.soulpardonmission.com](http://www.soulpardonmission.com) Who are we? We are a new interactive prayer website created by Jacinta Crockford DipTH, Spiritual Director living in Down and Connor. What's on offer? A variety of PDF meditations on Scripture, Mother Teresa, Ignatius Spirituality to name but a few. Lots of content to Dive into! There you will find - Podcasts on Faith, Friendship & Knowledge; Rosaries, Prayers and Marian Consecration, Videos of Reflective Prayers during Adoration. Come and join us and be part of the local prayer movement online!

### CALENDAR OF SAINTS DAYS

## NOVEMBER 2022

#### Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November

Saints Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions, Martyrs

#### Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November

Saint Clement I, Pope & Martyr

#### Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November

1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY of ADVENT

#### Wednesday 30 November

Saint Andrew, Apostle

#### Saturday 3 December

Saint Francis Xavier, Priest

#### Sunday 4 December

2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### Tuesday 6 December

Saint Nicholas, Bishop

#### Wednesday 7 December

Saint Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor of the Church

#### Thursday 8 December

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

#### Friday 9 December

Saint Juan Diego

The Loyola Institute, *School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies* - TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN Taught postgraduate degrees in Christian Theology in the Catholic tradition, at Masters, Diploma and Certificate level are available. Evening lectures (usually on Monday and Thursdays) allow for other commitments, and the Masters degree can be completed on a full time (one year) or part time (two year) basis. Assessment is by written assignment, not by examination.

A range of Scholarships are available. For further information please see our website: [www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute](http://www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute) Or contact Helen McMahon email: [Loyola@tcd.ie](mailto:Loyola@tcd.ie) or Phone : 01 896 4790

#### BANGOR PARISH PODCAST

You can listen to the Parish Podcasts Praying with the Icons by clicking on the audio files on the website or by searching for "Parish of Bangor Podcast" in the apple or google podcast Apps. Then subscribe to our channel so that you will receive all the latest podcasts straight to your device.





**SAT 26NOV & FRI 9DEC:**

TWO EVENTS COMING UP AT BENBURB PRIORY

**Martin Shaw and Paul Kingsnorth: Into the Hut of Stories on Saturday 26.11.22 at 7.30pm**

An evening of saints & beasts: of marvels, perils, and redemption. From The Voyage of Brendan to a chapel crafted lovingly by bees, these are Christian myths of ecological reverence and soulful nourishment. **Tickets: £10**

**A Christmas Concert with Fr. Ray Kelly on Friday 09.12.22 at 7.00pm** Benburb Priory will host Britain's Got Talent's Fr. Ray Kelly once again. This time, for an exciting Christmas concert. Fr. Ray will perform some beloved Christmas classics. Afterwards, he will join us in the Stables café for tea, coffee, and a meet and greet. **Tickets: £15** Tickets are available online at [www.benburbpriory.com](http://www.benburbpriory.com) or in-person.

**Stage & Screen... and a touch of Christmas!**

Join St. Agnes' Choral Society for an evening of songs from musicals and film, with Christmas music to get us all in the spirit! **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December**, 7pm, St Anne's Parish Centre, Finaghy BT10 ONE, Tickets £10+fees. Tickets can be booked via this link: [shorturl.at/bruWY](http://shorturl.at/bruWY)

**Special Belfast Pilgrimage to Fatima at Easter 2023** ex Dublin, Departing Wednesday (Holy Week) 5<sup>th</sup> April

5 nights. Full Easter ceremony and tour of Lisbon. Optional tour to seaside on Easter Saturday. **JUNE 2023** Special Belfast Pilgrimage to Fatima 9-14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Ex Dublin for Feast Day of Saint Anthony Patron Saint of Portugal visit Saint Anthonys birthplace and baptismal font in Lisbon contact James Treacy 0035361921470

**TUESDAYS – 6 DEC, 13, 20 DEC**

"A Leap of Divine Joy and A Look of Love: Advent Revealed through Paintings" with Sr Magdalen Lawler SND *hosted by Drumalis via Zoom from 2pm–3:30pm (Tuesdays, 22 November and 6, 13 & 20 December)*

Sr Magdalen Lawler invites us to join her via Zoom for four afternoons, during which she will lead us through a reflective time using scripture, paintings and poetry to explore the coming of the Saviour. Suggested Donation: £40 per person. For further details or to book a place, please contact Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am – 5 pm) – 028 28272196/28276455 or email [drumalis@btconnect.com](mailto:drumalis@btconnect.com)

**Certificate in Christian Thought – Adult Faith Development Programme**  
**Two-year, part-time course, now enrolling for 2022-2023 intake**

The Certificate in Christian Thought invites you to learn, reflect and discuss aspects of spirituality, theology and scripture at a greater depth. It is possible to do the course for personal development solely and/or to complete the written assignments required by St Mary's University College, which validates the course. For further information, please email [maura@drumalis.co.uk](mailto:maura@drumalis.co.uk) or phone Drumalis during office hours 02828 276455/02828 272196

**How might you be preparing for Christmas this year?**

This Advent, we invite you to join with us for a time of discussion, reflection and praying with the Gospels through Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) as we prepare our hearts and minds to welcome the child Jesus this Christmas. The sessions will run for 4 weeks online via zoom and will be facilitated by Fr Paul Byrne and Aishling Steen from the Living Church Office. We have 2 options for you to join in: Beginning Monday 21st November @7:30 pm or Tuesday 22nd November @11:30 am for 4 weeks. To book your place please contact Claire at [livingchurch@downandconnor.org](mailto:livingchurch@downandconnor.org) or tele 02890690920. We look forward to welcoming you!



WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE IN CHRIST,  
SR ANASTASIA AND THE SISTERS OF ST ELISABETH CONVENT

SEND PRAYER INTENTION



Dear Friend,

**Our Convent's Online Christmas Market is now open, you will find wonderful Christmas items for all your friends, family members, and loved ones.** You can follow the link below and order the gifts now so we can deliver them in time for the holiday.

**All the Christmas products represented on our website are made by hand with prayer and love!**



### **What is RCIA?**

RCIA (the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) is a process to introduce the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church to individuals who wish to learn more about Catholicism, including the opportunity, if they wish, to become Catholic through the Sacraments of Initiation.

RCIA is a time of teaching, formation and conversion to come to know, love and develop a relationship with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **How do I sign up for RCIA?**

The first step is to request a conversation with Fr Gunn PP T:028 9146 5522. We are facilitating one to one meetings on RCIA with the help of Sr Maura Gallahue in Bangor Parish.

### **When and where does RCIA meet together in the Diocese?**

We meet Thursday nights from 6.30 - 8.00 pm at St Mary's Hall, Chapel Lane, Belfast BT1 1HH from October to May. The start date for the programme is Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022. For registration form: E: [rcia@downandconnor.org](mailto:rcia@downandconnor.org)

### **What is the format of the sessions?**

The sessions begin with prayer, followed by teaching, question and answer and small group discussion and concludes with prayer.

### **What is the cost for attending RCIA?**

There is a minimal cost to you to attend RCIA. Resources are provided by the diocese.

### **May I bring my spouse/fiancé to the sessions?**

Yes, you may. We encourage your spouse/fiancé to attend the sessions with you.

### **If I have been baptized in another church, do I need to be baptised again?**

In most cases, you do not need to be baptised again. The Catholic Church requires that you were baptised with water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will need a copy of your baptismal certificate or other proof of baptism from the church where you were baptised. Proof of baptism may include a letter from the church, a copy of the membership record indicating that you were baptised, etc.

### **I was told I need a sponsor who is a baptised and confirmed Catholic, and is in good standing in the Catholic Church. What if I don't know anyone who could do that?**

Don't worry about it. We have people who volunteer to fulfil the sponsor role.

### **Do I have to attend every session?**

Our desire is to have you attend all sessions. RCIA is certainly a place where you will learn about what the Catholic Church believes and teaches; however, it is much more than that. It is a process of getting to know Jesus Christ and growing together in community. RCIA is a process of conversion to a life with Christ. This process takes time and commitment on your part.

### **How many sessions can I miss?**

RCIA is a building-block process and each session builds on the one before. However, we realise that there may be situations which would cause someone to be unable to attend. Therefore, absences are handled on a case-by-case basis. If you must miss a session, arrangements can be made to provide you with a copy of the notes from that session.

### **Can a Catholic attend to learn more about their faith?**

Yes, we have had many people do this in the past and would love to have you join us to learn more about your Catholic faith!

## Finding the Strength to Forgive

**BOKO HARAM KILLED JANADA'S FATHER AND TRIED TO CRUSH HER SOUL, BUT WITH THE HELP OF THE ACN-BUILT TRAUMA CENTER IN MAIDUGURI, SHE IS BACK ON HER FEET AND EVEN FOUND THE STRENGTH TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO CAUSED HER SO MUCH PAIN.**

By Patience Ibile

Janada Marcus. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

Janada Marcus (22) and her family had already escaped two attacks by Boko Haram unscathed, once abandoning their home in Baga Local Government Area in Nigeria's Lake Chad region and a second time fleeing their new home in Askira Uba, in southern Borno State, where their house was burned down, and a number of relatives were killed by the Islamists. Eventually they made their way to Maiduguri, but the worst was yet to come.



Speaking to **Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)**, Janada Marcus described how Boko Haram almost destroyed her life.

Janada Marcus. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

**After fleeing Boko Haram twice, your family settled in Maiduguri. Then what happened?**

My father had obtained a piece of land very close to Maiduguri to start farming, to help the family financially. We were happy that all the nightmares we had experienced before had finally come to an end. Then came 20 October 2018, the day that took away the sunshine in our lives. We were at the farm, working happily, and singing some Catholic songs to raise our spirits, when suddenly we were surrounded by Boko Haram.

When I saw them, many thoughts ran through my mind: should I run away? If I do, what about my parents? What if they caught us even before we start running? Should I scream for help? Would anyone come to our rescue? I decided to remain calm and let God perform a miracle. But they did the unthinkable to us.

**What, exactly, did they do?**

They pointed a machete at my father and told him they would set us free if he had sex with me. I could not hold back my tears! I was shaking, but I could do nothing! My mother could not utter a word due to the state of shock she was in. With a machete pointed at my father's forehead, he looked at my mother and at me, but I avoided eye contact because I was ashamed to look him in the face, ashamed of what the men had suggested – it was an abomination!

My father put his head down in submission to be killed and answered: "I cannot sleep with my own flesh and blood, my own daughter, I would rather die than commit this abomination."

**What did the terrorists do?**



On hearing this, one of the men took out a machete and cut off my father's head, right in front of us. The pain that I felt at that moment, was unbearable. My father's blood was splattered all over the ground. Could you imagine the torture, the pain that I was going through at that moment? I pleaded with God to take my life; I was already a living corpse, but He turned a deaf ear! I found extraordinary courage, rushed, and took my head band to tie the head of my father to stop the blood from gushing out.

Trauma counselling in the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri. (Credit: Aid to the Church in

Need) **You survived that attack. But that was not the end of your terror at the**

**hands of Boko Haram...**

On 9 November 2020, I was on the way to a Government office when I was again surprised by Boko Haram. This time they captured me. They took me to the bush and tortured me severely, emotionally, physically and mentally for six days. I suffered a lot of terrible and wicked experiences – beyond explanation – that made those six days seem like six years. On 15 November 2020, I was released. I came back and spent a few days with my mother; then she brought me to the Trauma Center, operated by the Diocese of Maiduguri.

**What was it like at the Trauma Center?**

After a series of counselling sessions, I was taken to the hospital for a check-up and treatment in case I had contracted any disease. After that, I underwent six months of healing, prayers and counselling. Now I am back on my

feet. At first, I found it almost impossible to let go of my past, but after spending those months at the Trauma Center, I was able to let go. After my healing process, I enrolled in college. I am very happy, and I will give it my all to finish my degree and become someone great in society.

**What practical, emotional, and spiritual skills did you learn?**

I acquired new skills that have made me so proud of myself. I have learned to knit beautiful baby caps, socks, trousers, and cardigans which will help me earn some cash.

Emotionally, I have learned to let go of my past; I have learned the art of healing by letting go of my pain. My faith has strengthened.

**Has your suffering brought you closer to God?**

Trauma counselling in the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri. (Credit:

Aid to the Church in Need)

At first my experience drew me away from God. It was difficult to trust and come back to Him. Ironically, in the end my bitter experience has brought me closer to God, but at one point I felt like giving up. I felt that being a Christian was a total waste of time. Where was God when they butchered my father? Where was God when I was going through torture, agony, hardship? Where was God when I went to bed on an empty stomach? After my healing process, I got answers to all my questions. I have learned that God is still God. Amidst all that I have gone through, I will still trust Him, and I will serve Him for the rest of my life.

**Can you forgive those who hurt you?**

It's hard to forgive and forget, and with all that I have gone through at the hands of Boko Haram I can't even believe that I am the one saying this, but I have forgiven them in my heart, and I pray for the redemption of their souls.

