

# 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](http://www.bangorparish.com) Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9.30pm to 1pm.

PARISH NEWSLETTER

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY IN ADVENT – 4 December 2022 –

### Your prayers are requested for

#### Recently Deceased:

Mary Quinn (Holywood)

**Month's Mind:** Freda Devlin

#### Anniversaries:

Mona Fox, Terry Fox, VJ Thomas, James Thomas, Patrick Ward, Gerry McQuaid, Peter & Rosetta McCullagh, Brid Coyle, John Mullin, Molly Crossey, James Spence, Amanda Davidson, Patrick McBrearty, Bridie York, Mamie Dougherty, Paddy McKenna, Brendan Curran.

For more details on the different notices please go on to the parish website:

[www.bangorparish.com](http://www.bangorparish.com)

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

[www.bangorparish.com](http://www.bangorparish.com)

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**Holy Hour** in St Comgall's Donaghadee – every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in the month @ 2.45pm

### SUNDAY MASS TIMES THIS WEEKEND

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

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December @ 9.00am

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

Saturday vigil 3<sup>rd</sup> December @ 6.30pm  
Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December @ 10am & 12noon

#### MASS TIMES FOR:

**DAILY MASS NEXT WEEK – 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> December**

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Morning Mass: Monday to Friday at 9.30am

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin**

**Mary – 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. Mass Times: 9.30am, 1pm, 7pm**

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A number of Masses including funerals are recorded.

These can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

[www.churchservices.tv/bangor](http://www.churchservices.tv/bangor)

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

Bishop Noel's Letter to the Diocesan Clergy and Parishioners is now on the parish website under 'News'.

"Pope Francis appoints Bishop Noel Treanor as Apostolic Nuncio to European Union."

### PREPARE FOR ADVENT!

*'Emmanuel, God is with us.'*

**Venue:** St Comgall's Church, Brunswick Rd

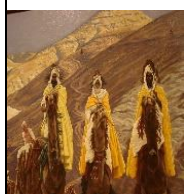
**Time:** 7pm to 8pm **When:** Thursdays over 3

weeks: Dec 1<sup>st</sup>, Dec 8<sup>th</sup> after Mass,

and Dec 15<sup>th</sup>. 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!!!

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

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

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

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

**TUES 13 DEC at 7.30pm.** Together as a Pastoral Community we prepare for Advent.

**Taizé Service:** Our Lady of the Visitation, Comber - Lead by Deacon James McAllister

"As the world around us surges into a frenzied and festive December, let's take a step away from the party and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts for a deeper and truer celebration of Christmas — one that is not undermined by lamentation, but that is made more potent because of it."

— Kerry van der Vinne,

*Advent: Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room*

**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'

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

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

**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'

**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.

**St. Comgall's Pre-School Open Day.** *We will be holding our 'Open Day' on Tuesday 13th December from 12 noon to 1pm For the academic school year 2023/24. If you require any further information, please phone the Pre-School on 02891 468844 between 11.50am-12.15pm daily.*

**SUN 27 NOVE** at 3pm

MASS OF HOPE FOR SUICIDE AWARENESS - Suicide Awareness have asked if this could be circulated to parishes for inclusion in bulletin/notices this weekend? **Mass of Hope**, in Clonard Monastery, for those who have lost loved ones through suicide. Fr Paddy McCafferty

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**Thanks to the generosity of all who supported our TROCAIRE CHRISTMAS EVENT, we raised a fantastic £1310.00**

**PARISH NOTICES**

**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.**

**CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2022**

in St Comgall's Church, Donaghadee

**CHRISTMAS DAY SUNDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER at 9AM**



in St Comgall's Church, Brunswick Rd

**CHRISTMAS EVE – SATURDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

**5PM, 7PM, 9PM**

**CHRISTMAS DAY – SUNDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

**9AM, 11AM**

**SAINT STEPHEN'S DAY – MONDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER at 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. For those interested in being part of the Guild. All are welcome to the below meeting.

**Meeting in St Comgall's Church , Brunswick Rd on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm to set up a Rota.**

**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)

**JOIN THE PARISH FOLK GROUP**

**St Comgall's Parish Folk Group** is looking for new members! The folk group provide music at Saturday night vigil mass and will be playing at **7pm Christmas Eve Mass** this year. We would **love** to see some new **musicians and singers** joining us. Minimum age is 8 years old. If interested, please contact Colleen on: 07538784565.

**THUR 8 DEC - HOLY HOUR AND CANDLELIGHT PROCESSION** For the Feast Of the Immaculate Conception Saint Mary's, Chapel Lane, Belfast. Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 commencing at 6.30pm. Light refreshments available following the procession. All are welcome. A Legion of Mary event.

**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\\_EzO95fgWnvT-KSgg?e=1Qh0jL](https://1drv.ms/v/s!Aj_T6Njt1EjHj_EzO95fgWnvT-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.





## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 4 December 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.soulparemission.com](http://www.soulparemission.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

## DECEMBER 2022

#### 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

#### Saturday 10 December

Our Lady of Loreto

#### Sunday 11 December

3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### Monday 12 December

Our Lady of Guadalupe

#### Tuesday 13 December

Saint Lucy, Virgin & Martyr

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.



## PARISH SACRAMENTAL CLASSES

Sacramental Class for **CONFIRMATION**. Starting: The first Sunday in **JANURAY the 6<sup>th</sup> 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]

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### FRI 9DEC:

TWO EVENTS COMING UP AT BENBURB PRIORY

**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



Join our Big Family Christmas and help feed hungry children with Mary's Meals.

For just £15.90 you can set a place for yourself or a loved one at our virtual Christmas dinner table. Your name will appear online and you'll receive a beautiful PDF

placemat to pass on as a gift.

And, with Double The Love, donations to Mary's Meals until 31 January 2023 are being matched by a group of generous supporters – up to £1.5 million. This means each place set will feed two children with life-changing school meals for a whole year!

**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.

**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)

**TUES 13 DEC** at 12-1pm

**St. Comgall's Pre-School Open Day.** *We will be holding our 'Open Day' on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December from 12 noon to 1pm For the academic school year 2023/24. If you require any further information, please phone the Pre-School on 02891 468844 between 11.50am-12.15pm daily.*

### 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!



**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!**

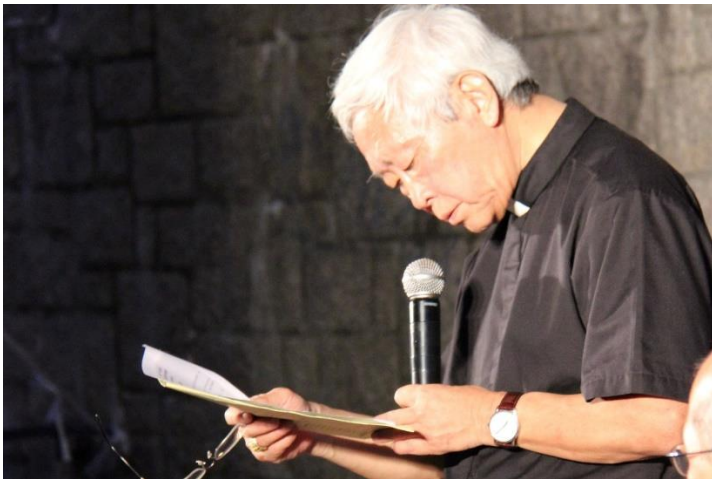
## AID TO THE CHURCH

<https://www.acnireland.org/n-donate>

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE MIRROR**

# Pray for Cardinal Zen

**ACN ENCOURAGES ALL OF OUR BENEFACTORS TO PRAY FOR CARDINAL ZEN.**



By ACN Staff

Cardinal Zen

At the end of a two-month trial Cardinal Joseph Zen was found guilty along with five other human-rights activists. A \$512 fine was imposed on Cardinal Joseph Zen, the Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, for his role in the now-dissolved fund established to aid participants of the 2019 pro-democracy demonstrations in the former British colony.

ACN asks for prayers for the 90-year-old Salesian Cardinal Zen to continue his journey as a "a 'man

of God'; submissive to the love of Christ, who wanted him to be his priest, deeply in love, like Don Bosco, with youth," as Cardinal Fernando Filoni, former prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, described him some weeks ago.

ACN Supporting Students in Lebanon click on the video link <https://youtu.be/Uv9jaaxPX4o>

## ACN Supporting Christian Students in Lebanon

**LEBANON'S CHRISTIAN YOUTH FACE A CRISIS, FORCING MANY TO LEAVE THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRY. ACN SUPPORTS CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY PASTORAL OUTREACH TO PROVIDE SPIRITUAL FORMATION TO YOUNG LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND HELP THEM STAY IN LEBANON.**

By ACN Staff

Catholic pastoral outreach in a Lebanese Catholic university. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)



Lebanon is the Middle Eastern country with the highest percentage of Christians, mostly Catholics, among its population. Over one-third of Lebanon's population is Christian. Or was? It is hard to be sure now. **Many young Lebanese people, particularly Christians, are leaving the country. This is mainly due to the economic instability in the country.** Jobs are hard to come by, and the devaluation of the Lebanese currency has destroyed savings and made basic necessities out of the reach of many. **Lebanon had**

previously acted as a bastion of stability for Christians in the Middle East. That is now under threat due to economic instability.



Holy Mass for university students. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

In this context, many young Lebanese Christians have tried to make their way through college to gain the skills they need to find a job and hopefully remain in Lebanon. Things are not easy. In many state universities, lecturers are on strike due to the failure of the government to pay them. **In other universities, students are illegally charged \$20 to sit an exam, which might not seem like much to some, but is a large amount in Lebanon, with monthly salaries in the country being about \$50.**

Things are slightly better in the country's seven Christian universities, six Catholic and one Eastern Orthodox. For example, the lecturers are not on strike. Many can't afford to travel to the university, so they give their lectures online. This can cause problems due to the country's poor electricity supply, with many unable to afford generators. Given all this, **it is not surprising that many college students are considering leaving Lebanon.** This is the case for **Stephen**, who studies computer engineering and works 13-hour shifts to cover his college fees:

*"Until three years ago I never thought of leaving, but these two last years were miserable. **My father is a carpenter, he has had no work in the past five years. We have no more savings.** We don't have a choice; we have to leave. My parents don't encourage me, but they wouldn't mind my going."*

Another student, **Maria**, who studies architecture, summarised how many of the students feel with this simple sentence:

**"We feel that our country doesn't want us here."**



Archbishop Georges Bakouny. (Credit: Aid to the Church in Need)

The Melkite Catholic Archbishop of Beirut, **Monsignor Georges Bakouny**, who also oversees pastoral activity in the Catholic university in Beirut, **said he has never seen the economic situation in Lebanon so bad** as it is now, even during the civil war.

One thing that helps make the students' time in the university more bearable is the **university pastoral service**. One of the students, **Jennie**, tells us that the service really helped her stay in Lebanon:

*"At the beginning of University, **I was in a really dark spot, and this***

***place took me out of it. I am staying in Lebanon because of this group.** I'm scared I wouldn't find this experience abroad. They are like a family for me."*

The service provides a space for socialisation and the opportunity to learn practical skills and prepare spiritual activities. **The service has helped Jennie to learn how to forgive:**

*"**Living with different communities is very difficult.** It is easy to stir up memories of violence. Radicalisation is on the rise, even among people who didn't live through the war. **Even Christians are clashing.** Every one of us is in survival mode. Even if reforms made the economic situation better, in 10 or 15 years it will happen again. There has been no reconciliation, no recovery from trauma. **This place helped me understand and forgive the murder of my grandfather during the civil war.**"*

Given the context for Christian university students in Lebanon, the university pastoral service is a vital lifeline in enabling them to remain in Lebanon. **ACN supports the service, and it is thanks to the support from ACN that the pastoral service can cover its annual budget.** If you would like to help ACN to continue our work in supporting the Church to remain in the Middle East, **please donate to our Christmas Appeal.**



### **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!