

Farewell Fr. Paul

This week we bid farewell to Fr. Paul as he leaves us to prepare for his new role as Bishop of Achonry. He has been with us since 2014 and became Parish Priest in 2015. Since then he has worked tirelessly in the parish, putting great enthusiasm and energy into everything he has done. On a practical level, we can look to work done in St. Conleth's Church and Cill Mhuire such as new lighting, redecoration and new flooring that have enhanced both as places of worship. The renovated parish centre is a tribute to his commitment to having a place where all are welcome to gather in the parish. His pastoral outreach cannot be easily quantified; his presence with people at moments from birth to death, his belief in and encouragement to young people, his welcome to all without question – everyone will have their own memories and moments to cherish.

Like Peter and the disciples in today's gospel we have all been buffeted by the wind and waves of Covid 19 these past months. During that time Fr. Paul kept the boat on course as it were, leading the parish in prayer and liturgy, offering comfort to the bereaved in very difficult circumstances, encouraging his fellow Parish Team members and all our parishioners to keep going. Little did we think last January when his appointment was announced that he would still be here in August, but the ways of the Lord are strange indeed. No doubt in his new role there will probably be days when, like Elijah, he wants to take refuge in a cave to get away from the many demands coming at him but it is there too that he will encounter the powerful and empowering presence of God.

It is with great sadness for ourselves that we bid him farewell but with pride that he has been chosen to lead the people of Achonry. Much as we would like to keep him with us, we recognise that the Lord is calling him to a new pastoral experience in a new place. We wish him every blessing in his new ministry and assure him of our prayers as he prepares for his Episcopal Ordination on August 30th. In these difficult times we hold to the words of Jesus himself *"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."*