

A Word of Heartfelt Thanks...

In August, 2014, I came to Newbridge. It was somewhat daunting coming to a very large parish, wondering what the future might hold. My fears were short lived because from the moment I arrived, the welcome was warm and hospitable. Looking back over the six years spent here, I can say they were some of the happiest in my life.

I was blessed and privileged to work with great priests, a wonderful Parish Team, and dedicated Staff. Special mention has to be made of my housekeeper, Adrienne Murphy. The commitment and care shown by all of these was an inspiration to me in my ministry. Everyone went the "extra mile" when needed, something I very much appreciate.

So many others contribute to Newbridge being such an active parish. I think of all involved in ministry; Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, Choirs, Collectors, Religious Communities, Share Food Volunteers, Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Committee, School Principals, Teachers, Staff and Chaplains, Lourdes Committee, Amadeus Youth Group, Funeral Ministry, Adoration, those reaching out to people in Direct Provision, stewards, Altar Society, and so many more. This active involvement is also the case for the people of Caragh and Prosperous. All of this illustrates a Church that is alive and active, a Church which is rooted in Christ!

As a priest I've had the privilege of journeying with people in the happiest and saddest of times. The Baptisms, Weddings, Communion, Confirmations, Novenas and the Funerals. I've said before and I say again, the faith displayed by so many people in the face of difficulty and tragedy has inspired me on my own faith journey. I thank you sincerely for that.

Last December, I was informed that Pope Francis wished to appoint me as Bishop of Achonry. It was something I never expected and a decision I did a lot of deep soul searching about over many days (and sleepless nights). It would have been far easier to say "no" and continue happily on the path I was on. However, in complete faith, trusting that this is what the Lord wants, I said "yes" to Pope Francis' request. Priesthood is about call and response. When the Lord calls, despite our unworthiness, fear, and anxiety, the challenge is to respond positively, trusting in His love. This is what I have tried to do.

I was due to be ordained bishop on 19th of April last, but COVID 19 had other ideas! This meant my move West was delayed by a number of months. As it turned out, I was so glad to be in Newbridge during the lockdown. I, along with the other priests, were able to serve the parish, albeit online, for the Easter Ceremonies, Novena, daily and weekend Masses and funerals. It has been a strange few months, but I know we were in it together, something I will always remember.

My move to the West is imminent. I am due to be ordained bishop on the 30th of August. I have been deeply humbled by the amount of good wishes, cards, gifts, calls and, of course, prayers, from so many people. Thank you so much for your kindness, generosity and love. Despite my sadness on leaving Newbridge, it gives me great strength to have your support as I begin this new chapter. I look forward to coming back to visit someday when the COVID 19 crisis is behind us.

As we look ahead in these uncertain times, I finish with an encouraging thought; "*Don't worry about the future, God is already there...*"

Please keep me in your prayers as I will remember you in mine.

With heartfelt thanks and every blessing,

Fr. Paul Dempsey.