

Saturday 16th May was a memorable day for the 23 Scoil Íosa children who received First Holy Communion. Their photographs were displayed at the rear of the church, the Scoil Íosa choir provided music, and Fr. Stephen thanked the teachers, parents, guardians and volunteers who prepared the children and decorated the church. Refreshments followed in the Community Hall, where Adam and Anna Kaczmarek of AK Photography took class and individual photographs.



First Communion Class, Scoil Íosa, May 16th, 2026, with teachers Ms Lisa Watchorn, Ms Sharlene Ruane, Ms Tara Cusack, SNA Rosie Nolan & Fr Stephen Farragher, P.P.

Oliver Jordan was soloist, with Ludmilla on organ, for the 10 o'clock Mass on the Feast of the Assumption. Ruth and Miriam coordinated the Children's Liturgy on Pentecost Sunday, focusing on Our Lady during May, and the Abbey Choir enhanced the liturgy. The Leaving Certificate class also celebrated their Graduation Mass in the Community School.

June

In June, Fr. Stephen celebrated Mass in the Community School for students preparing for the Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations. The final "Grow in Love" Mass for the Scoil Íosa children who had received First Holy Communion and Reconciliation took place on 6th June, with Magda Manke and Oliver Jordan as soloists and Ludmilla on organ.

Following the Vigil Mass, the Corpus Christi procession proceeded from the Parish Church through the town to the Friary, where it concluded with Benediction. Fr. Stephen carried the Blessed Sacrament, First Holy Communion children scattered petals, Mike Byrne recited the Rosary, Mike Griffin carried the cross, and Tommy Caulfield acted as MC. Fr. Stephen thanked the children who created artwork outside the Friary, the canopy bearers, Irene, Geraldine Devine, the PPC members and the Gardaí. Brian Flanagan was soloist at the 10 o'clock Mass on Corpus Christi.

Mass was broadcast on Midwest Radio on 7th, 14th and 21st June, with music and singing provided by Brian Flanagan, John Dave on guitar, and the Parish Choir under Martina Kelly, joined by violinists Moira Delaney and Ita Fahey and Ludmilla on organ.

Sr. Geraldine Henry of the Daughters of Charity addressed the congregation at weekend Masses on 20th and 21st June. She spoke of the congregation's work in African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya and Burkina Faso, where Irish Sisters support health, social services, nutrition, education and empowerment programmes. The same Sunday marked 'Day for Life', whose theme invited reflection on the humanity of the unborn child.

The Abbey Choir, under Moira Delaney with Paula Donnellan on organ, sang at the 10 o'clock Mass on the final Sunday of June. The final Children's Liturgy of the term also took place at this Mass, bringing the parish's first half of the year to a close.



The Corpus Christi procession makes its way from the Parish Church, via Main St, to the Friary on June 6th, 2026.



Ballyhaunis

Parish Pastoral Council Newsletter

January

The 10th of January saw the resumption of the 'Grow in Love' preparation programme for the children of Scoil Íosa. The focus was Baptism, the sacrament through which new members are welcomed into the parish family. Grace and Emma proclaimed the readings, Rachel read the reflection, and Fr. Stephen blessed the Holy Water bottles at the conclusion of Mass. Rodrigo's guitar music and singing enriched the liturgy.

At the Parish Pastoral Council meeting on 12th January, members noted very positive feedback on the Christmas Masses, which were well attended. The Family Mass on Christmas Eve is greatly appreciated. Fr. Stephen also referred to a letter of thanks from Nuala Caulfield, formerly of Carrowkeel and now living in the United States, who regularly follows the Masses online.

Parish maintenance matters included the installation of a shed beside the public toilets, preparation for sacristy renovation, and continued monitoring of the automatic gates. The sandwich board was to be updated for wedding and funeral parking, and Fr. Stephen asked the hall committee to notify the parish of events that might affect Mass parking.

The John Paul II group began with six participants and explored involvement in an Eco Congregation project. The Ballyhaunis 'Faith and Light' group also reported a successful fiesta with members of 'Faith and Life' Dunmore dramatising the Christmas Story. The Children's Liturgy took place on 18th January for children aged four to eight, under the direction of Ruth Murphy and Miriam Judge. It coincided with 'Catholic Schools Week'. This year families and schools are invited to reflect on holiness in ordinary life.

Safeguarding was addressed after discussion on ensuring a parent or guardian is present with Mass

servers before and after Mass. Training, conducted by Maureen Walsh in the Community Hall on 27th January, was attended by more than 20 people, with a rota to follow once Garda vetting was completed.

February



Members of Ballyhaunis 'Faith & Light' enjoying the St Valentine Fiesta, held in the Communal Centre, Clare Court, February 15th

February opened with the feasts of St. Brigid, the Presentation of the Lord and St. Blaise, marked by the blessing of crosses, candles and throats. Mass on Lá Fhéile Bríde was broadcast on Midwest Radio, with readings by Joan Flanagan and music from Le Cáirde. The Monday 10 a.m. Mass introduced the weekly 'Missa Pro Populo', offered for the people of the parish, while anniversary Masses for the deceased were assigned to Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and the vigil mass at 7.30pm on Saturday. The story of St. Valentine featured in the Children's Liturgy on 15th February.

Ash Wednesday

On Ash Wednesday, Fr. John Peyton joined Fr. Stephen for Mass. Fr. Stephen spoke on the Lenten pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, describing Lent as a time of renewal and self-evaluation. Blessed ashes were distributed, and "Walk with Me" booklets and Trócaire boxes were made available in the church porch.

The 'Grow in Love' Mass on 21st February focused on the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the Scoil Íosa children preparing for First Holy Communion. The Mass also included the baptism of Samuel celebrated by Fr. Stephen with the baptismal team of

Kay Curley and Lorraine Waldron. Samuel's classmates from second class were present to witness his baptism.

The parish also noted the appointment of Archbishop Francis Duffy, as bishop of Killala.



Samuel from 2nd Class was baptised at the "Grow in Love" Mass on February 21st, in the presence of his parents, class mates and the congregation at 7.30pm Mass.



'Trees & Renewal' conference. Planting of tree in the grounds of St Patrick's Church, in memory of Seamus O'Brien RIP, who spoke at last year's conference.

March

March began with congratulations to the 24 children from Scoil Íosa who made their First Confessions in the church on 3rd March.

National Tree Week was marked in the Friary on 8th March through a well-attended series of talks organised by Margie Phillips. Speakers included Thomas Pakenham, Neil Porteous and Paul Waldron, with Margaret Monaghan as MC. The Scoil Íosa choir, directed by Carol Freeley with Paula Donnellan on organ, contributed to the 10 a.m. Mass on the second Sunday.

Lá Fhéile Pádraig

Lá Fhéile Pádraig, an lá a cheiliúraimid ár gCríostaíocht, ár n-oidhreacht, ár dteanga agus ár gcultúr, cuimhnimid go h'áirithe ar ár múintir thar lear. The readings were proclaimed by Tommy Caulfield agus dfhógair an t-Athair Stiopháin an soiscéal as Gaeilge. The Parish and Abbey Choirs combined under the direction of Martina Kelly, accompanied by violinists Moira Delaney and Ita Fahey with Paula Donnellan on the organ. Choiscrigh an t-Athair Stiopháin an tseamróg ag deire an Aifrin. Thanks were expressed to Margie Phillips for decorating the sanctuary and to Michelle Conlon for supplying the shamrock. Bhí siamsaíocht agus ceol sa halla phobail tar éis an Aifrin.

Palm Sunday, 29th March, marked the beginning of Holy Week. Palms were blessed at the start of Mass, with Norma Jean Folliard and Tommy Caulfield assisting Fr. Stephen with the proclamation of the Passion. The

Abbey Choir, directed by Moira Delaney with Paula Donnellan on organ, provided music and singing. At the PPC meeting on 23rd March, members discussed cleaning the church exterior, favouring spraying the stonework to remove algae rather than power washing, which could damage the pointing. Painting the front doors was deferred until cleaning was completed. Sacristy renovation was expected to begin within months, and the automated gates were working satisfactorily despite further damage to the sensor.

The Funeral Ministry team continued to receive positive parish feedback. A diocesan review led to plans for information nights for parishes not yet participating, with a brochure to be issued in English and Irish. Preparations for the Easter ceremonies were also well advanced, with Paula Donnellan completing much of the musical preparation.

Fr. Stephen referred to correspondence on the Order of Christian Initiation and plans for a programme at Knock Shrine, particularly relevant as a number of people in the parish had expressed interest in becoming Catholics. 'Faith and Light' also reported a 'Down Syndrome World Day' celebration in the Community Hall and interest from two additional families.



Aifric Hodge, child of Liam Hodge & Elaine Donnelly, is baptised during the Easter Vigil, April 11th, 2026

On Good Friday, Norma Jean Folliard & Fr Stephen narrated the Stations of the Cross. At the Celebration of the Lord's Passion, Julia Kelly and Martin Fitzmaurice joined Fr. Stephen in proclaiming the Passion, and John Paul II members Ellen Murphy and Emma Mejnerka read the prayers of intercession. The Veneration of the Cross immediately followed, and the congregation left the church in silence.

At the Easter Vigil, the Abbey Choir, guided by Moira Delaney directed the music with Paula on organ. Fr. Stephen lit the Paschal Candle, and readings were proclaimed by Tommy Caulfield, Joan Flanagan, Emer Gallagher and John Doyle. Christina Concannon, Paul Sykes

and Breege Halpin brought forward the gifts, and Fr. Stephen baptised Aifric Hodge, whose mother Elaine is a native of the parish. He also blessed the Easter food prepared by the Eastern European community.

Easter Sunday featured a striking tableau of the Resurrection at the altar. The Parish Choir contributed to the celebration, with Mary Finan reading at morning Mass and Oliver Jordan soloist at the 12 o'clock Mass, where Mike Byrne proclaimed the readings. Fr. Stephen thanked all who organised and participated, including Gerry Glennon, sacristan Irene, the choirs, soloists, and the John Paul II group who filled the Easter Holy Water bottles.

Later in April, seminarian Wiktor Siemionkowski served as both cantor and organist at the Vigil Mass for Divine Mercy, while the Abbey Choir sang at Sunday morning Mass. The Children's Liturgy continued under Ruth Murphy, with Oliver Jordan and Lisa Higgins among the soloists.

The final Sunday of April was Vocations Sunday. Fr. Stephen prayed for more vocations to the priesthood and remembered seminarians Wiktor and David Corless. The children's choir, directed by Carole Freeley with Paula on keyboard, greatly enhanced the Mass.

May

At the May PPC meeting, Fr. Stephen reported that sacristy painting would commence shortly, followed by carpet laying and the fitting of new presses. New carpet is also planned for the gallery and stairs, while steel shelving had been installed in the new storage shed. The automated gate sensors had been relocated following recent damage, and the sandwich board was helping with parking for weddings and funerals.

With more parishes joining the Funeral Ministry initiative, Information Nights were arranged for Westport and Galway in June. The parish funeral ministry is running smoothly. 'Faith and Light' also announced the National Pilgrimage to Knock, 16th May.



A celebration of Irish Culture was held in the Community Hall, following 10am Mass on St Patrick's Day,



Children from Scoil Iosa prepare for Lent and Holy Week



Fr Kieran Waldron celebrated his 90th birthday in Ave Maria Nursing Home, Tooreen, on March 30th, 2026.

L-R: Archbishop Francis Duffy, Fr Stephen Farragher, Fr Kieran Waldron.

April

Gerry Glennon acted as MC for the Easter Triduum, introducing ceremonies that were broadcast on Midwest Radio. On Holy Thursday, members of the Funeral Ministry team and parish volunteers took part in the Washing of the Feet. Paula Donnellan proclaimed the Word of God. Claire Kelly, Willie Broderick, Mary Sykes and Ann Curley brought forward the oils, bread and wine, and the Parish Choir, directed by Martina Kelly with Ludmila on organ, provided music.