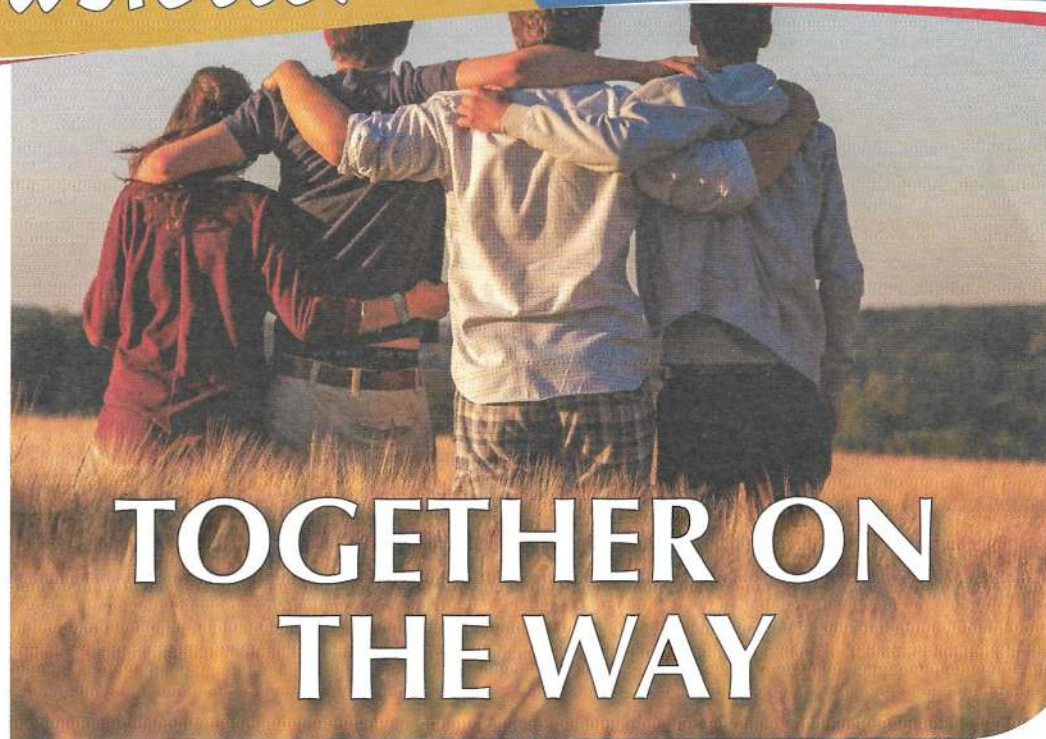


# Parish Newsletter

**W**e gather, after saying the immortal words 'Happy New Year' over these last few days, in our holy huddles with more than a mustard-seed-sized faith. We said it last year through gritted teeth and a fair bit of muscle-memory, as uncertainty loomed much larger on our horizons. This coming year beckons a lot more appealingly and invites renewed vision.

The feel-good 1958 film version of the musical *South Pacific* includes, in a wartime setting, the song 'Happy Talk', with the immortal words 'If you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?' A vision gives you direction, motivation, creativity and resilience. Without a vision you become passive, aimless, bored and tempted to quit.

With a view to developing a vision, parishes and dioceses will be gathering this year. Globally, Pope Francis has called for a Synod (a Greek word



## TOGETHER ON THE WAY

meaning 'walking together'). We are invited to become a Synodal Church – one where all bishops, priests, and people 'walk together' in a common mission. It is possible that – when our worlds, our parishes, our dioceses and our vision are too small – fewer voices can have a disproportionate effect, for good or ill. As our parishes seem set to widen, whilst our clergy personnel numbers reduce, so does our world view need to expand. It is

only in expanding the voices that we can be assured of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Over 60 years ago, on 12 April 1961, Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin orbited the earth in 89 minutes in Vostok 1. He did say – as the first human being in space – 'I see Earth: it is so beautiful.' But petty Soviet politicking at the time removed that from transcripts and added in, 'I see no God.' We all tend to reduce everything – even God – to our own smaller world view. Considering that Gagarin had his daughter baptised before he took off, it seems unlikely he ever made that 'no God' comment. It all seems odd, now that you see Orthodox priests today splattering Russian space rockets with holy water, but sometimes religion can be used by politics. Our own history in Northern Ireland reminds us of that danger.

So, we take tentative steps into the new year of 2022, not just personally but as a wounded church. The old ways of power, dominance and privilege have no place in our own lives or in faith life. The Christ-like way is humble, inclusive, compassionate and gentle and – yes, like Christ himself – the way of humility, where we deepen our religious lives to love one another – not simply to distinguish between each other and point score. 'Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, "it will be happier."' – Alfred Tennyson.

– Tom Cox

### Reflection

Read these verses from the Gospel slowly and thoughtfully as the beginning of a wonderful poem introducing you to the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ.

### Lesson

Jesus Christ is both life and light for all, like the tree of life and the tree of knowledge in the story of creation (Gen 2:9).

### Prayer

Lord, help us to ponder over the truth that you are the beginning and the end. With your loving presence, protect us throughout the year. Amen.

### Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**  
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right and just.**

### Sanctus

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. ...

### After the Consecration

The mystery of faith.

**Save us, Saviour of the world,  
for by your Cross and Resurrection  
you have set us free.**

### This Week (3-9 January)

- 3 **M** The Most Holy Name of Jesus; St Munchin
- 4 **T** St Elizabeth Ann Seton
- 5 **W** St John Neumann, bishop
- 6 **T** THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
- 7 **F** St Raymond of Penyafort, priest
- 8 **S** St Thorfinn, bishop
- 9 **S** BAPTISM OF THE LORD

### THE COMMUNION RITE

#### Communion Antiphon

(Cf. Jn 1:12)

**To all who would accept him,  
he gave the power to become children of God.**

#### Prayer after Communion

Lord our God, we humbly ask you, that, through the working of this mystery, our offences may be cleansed and our just desires fulfilled. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.