**Prayer of the Faithful**

Introduction (by the Presider)

Let us bring our petitions before God, confident that our prayers are always heard.

Intercessions (announced by the deacon, cantor or another person)

1. We pray for the leaders of the Church and for all who are called to spread the good news. May they be granted wisdom and right judgement and may they be guided by the Holy Spirit. Lord, hear us.
2. We pray for our young people. That they may be guided and protected from the dangers that are ever-present in our world today. May they be given the courage and strength to make the right decisions as they journey through life. Lord, hear us.
3. We pray for those who have made their home in Ireland. May they be warmly welcomed into our communities and may we treat them with the kindness and goodness we wish for our own emigrants overseas. Lord, hear us.
4. We pray for Irish people all over the world. That they may be kept safe from all harm, evil and danger. We pray especially for those who are unable to come home for whatever reason and those who are in trouble and lonely in a faraway land. Lord, hear us.
5. We pray for the people of Ireland. May our faith be renewed and new life breathed into us. May we treasure the gift of faith given to us by St Patrick. May those who have left our shores to preach the good news of the Gospel be guided and blessed; may they find peace and know the value of their labour and the satisfaction in knowing they glorify you in sharing your word. Lord, hear us.
6. We pray for all who have died. May those we love who have died be blessed and granted peace and eternal rest in your presence. We remember especially people who died alone or away from family and friends and Irish people who died abroad in tragic circumstances. May their families be comforted and reunited together in your love forever. Lord, hear us.

Conclusion (by the Presider)

Heavenly Father, we thank you for our faith and the life and example of St Patrick. Hear the prayers we now make, in the name of Jesus, your Son, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

**Prayers for Emigrants**

Bless all those who have left our country and now live in other lands.

Give them a strong faith so that they will always put their trust in you

and make you known by the example of their lives.

Console those who are lonely because they are separated from those they love.

Help all missionaries who are working far from home to make your love known.

Bless our people overseas who are sick or in prison.

We pray for foreigners living in our country that they may experience our hospitality.

Grant your eternal welcome to our emigrants who have died and to all the dead.

Amen.

Lord,

Some may know the bleakness of life,

It’s capacity to disappoint,

The waning of energy or health.

Yet they have a place in the soul which time cannot touch,

A wisdom and beauty from lives deeply inhabited.

May all of them know the warmth of their soul,

The natural shelter around their lives.

In dignity and freedom may they return home to themselves.

Amen

Lord,

No one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care.

In your kindness watch over refugees and exiles, those separated from their loved ones, your people who are lost,

And those who have left or run away from home.

Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be

And help us always to show your kindness to strangers and those in need.

Amen

*Roman Missal: For Refugees and Migrants*

**Homily Notes**

Patrick brought the good news not only to Ireland but also through those who followed him to all the corners of the world. Patrick’s memory will not disappear – generations after his name will live. Nations will proclaim his wisdom.’ All over the world, all the celebrations, all the parades are part of keeping alive the memory of this man and indeed of keeping alive the name of this small country.

God’s ways are not our ways – all of this celebration, this achievement stemmed from what, for Patrick, looked like disaster, but as we say in Irish, An rud is measa le duine ná a bás ní fheadair sé ná gurb é lár a leasa é (that which seems for a person worse than death could be the centre of his welfare). While not forgetting all the heartbreaks of emigration, for those who left and for those left behind, we give thanks today for all the new lives and opportunities it gave to so many; for all the good families it gave rise to and indeed for the growth of the Church in Britain, in the United States and other places. We remember the thousands of missionaries, those other exiles; emigrants who brought the faith, hope and practical help to the poor in all parts of the world. Just as our songs capture the reality of emigration – and there are hundreds of them – so too do our prayers.

The following are prayers imagined by me in Intercom many years ago and sadly relevant even now. There is a phrase in the third Eucharistic prayer which has to mean more in Ireland than in any other country: ‘In your compassion, O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.’ How evocative that ‘scattered throughout the world’ is. How much salt and zest it adds to the prayers. Our knees may be anchored in a church in Donnycarney or Dunmanway, but our minds are with sons and daughters in Sydney, or with a long-lost uncle in Birmingham, or with the men and women we knew in Boston or London when we ourselves were emigrants. There will be no family at Mass on St Patrick’s Day who will not make that prayer for real people since over 2 million of those born here now live abroad and one in nine of the congregation have lived more than a year away.

A mother in suburban Dublin will be praying: ‘Lord, remember my Sally in Australia, taking her year out. May she find joy and fun in it without becoming a hedonist. Keep her safe from the dangers of youth, fast cars and alcohol; remind her to think of You now and then and to say thanks for all of this time.’

Joe in Mayo is remembering his younger brother Sean who left when Joe inherited the farm: ‘Lord, you know that Sean is the real “scattered throughout the world” man. Help us to find him again, safe and happy. And let him know he can always come home, in case he feels too ashamed at what he thinks is his failure.’

Mary in Tyrone is praying: ‘Lord, thank you for my sister who has been a marvellous aunt to all my children, returning home with presents for all, remembering their birthdays. Only you and I, Lord, know how that cheerfulness hides the deep sadness in her life, her homesickness, her loss of identity in a big city. Comfort her, Lord.’

Paddy’s prayer is that of the rememberer: ‘Lord, St Patrick’s day reminds me of all the fellas I worked with on the buildings in Birmingham forty years ago. I thank you for Mary who I met there and who gave me the sense of purpose to make something of my life. We were young and strong then but I know that many of them lost strength and health and are in a bad way in England’s cities. I pray for them and those who help them.’

Bridie, at Mass in Dublin’s inner city, prays: ‘Father, as I look around me and see the faces of those who are obviously immigrants, I remember that I too was an immigrant. I remember the prejudice against me once I opened my mouth. Help us as a people to be hospitable to the stranger, as so many countries were to the Irish.’

Fr Paul Byrne OMI (1932-2018)

Former Director of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants

**Parish Newsletter Insert**

Today we remember in a special way and pray for all Irish emigrants, particularly those who have left our communities and might be struggling. We think particularly of isolated, elderly Irish abroad, the undocumented, Irish prisoners overseas and those dealing with addiction and mental health problems.  A special Emigrant Collection is being held in the parish for those who might wish to contribute.



*Hot water bottles, sleeping bags, blankets and flasks for seniors in Luton*



*Two ladies enjoying a cup of tea at Tuesday’s Warm Space in Luton Irish Forum*