

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Adapted from a tale by Francois Coppee

It was so long ago that the whole world has forgotten the date and even the name of the little town in which lived a little boy whose name was Hans.

Little Hans lived with his aunt, who was quite an old lady. She was not always kind to Hans, but this made no difference to him. He loved her just the same, and forgot that she was ever cross and very unkind to him at times.

Hans went to school with many other boys, but he was not clothed as they were. He had to wear the same clothes both weekdays and Sundays; the same even in the summer that he wore in the winter.

It was now midwinter, when everything was wrapped in snow and glazed with ice, while the north winds sang loud and whistled down the chimneys, played very roughly with the bare trees, and crept through every crack and crevice of the house. The frost, too, was busy pinching the cheeks and biting the toes of the boys, and making them run, jump and dance to keep warm.

The children were wild with the excitement and the joy that was astir at this time. For there were secrets in the air. Every one was busy making gifts for some loved one.

It was the night before Christmas, the one great birthday on which the whole world rejoiceth and when all endeavor to make their fellow men happy.

The schoolmaster and all of his pupils started for the midnight worship and prayer at the church. All of the boys were well clothed, with heavy coats, fur caps, thick mittens, and very heavy and warm shoes. But little Hans had only a poor, plain, ragged suit, with no overcoat, no mittens, and his shoes were only wooden ones.

It was a very cold night, and the boys and the schoolmaster had to walk very fast to keep warm. But little Hans did not mind the cold so much, because the stars smiled down upon him and seemed like so many diamonds set

in a deep blue canopy, each one glittering and flashing in the darkness. The snow, too, was a sparkling mass, and Hans wondered if the stars could see themselves reflected in the tiny snow crystals which covered the earth.

At last they reached the church, whose windows were shedding forth a soft, golden light on the stillness and darkness of the cold winter night. This little group of worshipers quietly passed into the church and sank noiselessly into their pews. It was a beautiful place to Hans. He loved it dearly, and was always happy to come here.

The candles were all lighted, and they burned steadily brighter and brighter, filling the church with a beautiful mellow light. The grand old organ softly and clearly sent forth its tones, each one growing richer, deeper and sweeter, and gradually the voices of the choir boys and the tones of the organ filled the old church with such beautiful music that little Hans's heart seemed to bound within him, and his whole soul was enraptured, while there shone from his face a radiance that only a divine inspiration could bring forth.

At length, after the people had sung, each one knelt and offered thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father, little Hans, too, knelt and offered thanks for the blessings which he had received during that year, and for the tender care of the Father of all.

The people then quietly passed out of the warm church into the cold of the night. Hans was the last one out, and as he carefully made his way down the icy steps he noticed a little boy no larger than himself sitting on the steps, with his head resting against the church. He was fast asleep. His face was beautiful, and seemed clothed in a golden light.

Beside him, tied in a cloth, were a square, a hammer, a saw and other tools of a carpenter. He had neither shoes nor stockings on his feet, although his clothing was spotless and of

the purest white. It grieved Hans that the child should have no shoes, not even one to place for the Christ-child to fill with gifts.

Hans stooped and took from his right foot the wooden shoe and placed it in front of the sleeping child, so that the Christ-child would not pass him by. Hans then limped along on the ice and snow, not feeling how cold it was, but only thinking of the poor child asleep out in the cold.

The other boys were talking of the good things awaiting them at home, of the feasts, the plum pudding, the Christmas trees, and the many drums, wagons and blocks the Christ-child would put in their shoes that night.

When Hans arrived home he found his aunt awaiting him, and when she saw that he had only one shoe, and he had told her all about the other one, she was very angry with him, and sent him to bed. Hans placed the wooden shoe from his left foot at the fireside, hoping that the Christ-child would remember him as he passed by.

The first sunbeam that crept into Hans's bedroom and kissed him the next morning awoke him, and he bounded downstairs, and flew to the great open fireplace to find his shoe.

Hans rubbed his eyes and caught his breath, for, to his great surprise, there were both of his wooden shoes, filled with beautiful toys; by the fireside he found warm clothing and many other things to make him comfortable and happy.

Hearing loud voices, Hans went to the door. The people were standing in a crowd about the priest, who was talking to them. He told Hans that where he had seen the child asleep on the church steps there was now in the window above a beautiful crown set with precious jewels. He said that the child was the Christ-child, whom the Heavenly Father had again sent among men on earth for that night, and that it was He with whom Hans had shared his wooden shoes.

The people bowed themselves before that miracle that the good God had seen fit to work, to reward the faith and charity of a child.

Saint Malachy's

Outlook



Curate's note:

Christmas presents or Christmas presence?

Everyone wants Christmas to be special, to be magical, just the way we remember it from our childhood. We want it to be meaningful.

But so often Christmas feels like wading through a swamp of ever-growing to-do lists, never-ending shopping trips, writing Christmas cards, fighting for car parking spaces, high blood pressure and "maxed-out" credit cards.

Finally, the big day arrives, the children open their presents, we get to sing carols in church, go home and have our turkey dinner and ultimately fall asleep in front of the TV.

Sometimes we are just glad to survive it! Times are tough, the UK expenditure on Christmas is estimated to fall from £4Bn

in 2009 to £3.4Bn this year, a reduction of 15 per cent, but that is still an average of £560 for every man woman and child!

Many families will spend all year just trying to pay off the cost of Christmas, some won't manage.

How did Jesus celebrate?

He gave himself incarnationally, relationally.

He gave his presence!

What if you bought fewer gifts, like the quirky Christmas jumper she won't really like, the random gift token or the toy for a child that doesn't need it and probably won't appreciate it.

Then, instead of buying that gift, give something REALLY valuable, like YOUR TIME throughout the rest of the year, to

talk to one another, eat together, share life together, like you did when life was simple, when you were a child.

With the money you didn't spend, you could give something to the poor, the hurting, the lonely, the hungry, and the sick.

That is what loving your neighbour looks like.

Having more stuff doesn't make you happy or give your life meaning.

Spend less on gifts, give more presence, love like Jesus.

Have a very merry Christmas and a presence filled 2012.

Mike Dornan

Carols with 'CADENZA'

Monday 19th December 2011 at 8.00pm
in St. Patrick's Church, Ballynahinch

Accompanist ~ Phillip Elliott
Flute ~ Andrew Rowan
Directed by Michael McCracken

Admission: £10, including festive refreshments.
Tickets: T. 07773 846028 or pay at the door.

**An Caor Fuil-Dearg
(The blood-red berry)**

Nestling in the sheen
Of holly leaves
The berries shine
Like bright, clean clusters
Of Christmas lights.
The Celtic-Christians
Had the right way of it:
An caor fuil-dearg
They called the berry,
Likening its redness
To the blood on the brow
Of the crucified Christ.

Roy Gamble

Inspiring Quotes:

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."
Mark Twain

"The friend in my adversity I shall always cherish most. I can better trust those who helped to relieve the gloom of my dark hours than those who are so ready to enjoy with me the sunshine of my prosperity."
Ulysses S. Grant

"Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them."
Bruce Lee

FERRAN IS OUR NEW RECTOR

Two weeks ago the Bishop announced in church that a new Rector had been chosen for our Parish, but that we would have to wait for two weeks before the name was announced.

That time has now elapsed, and we are pleased to tell everyone that the person chosen is Rev Ferran Glenfield, who is currently rector of Kill o' the Grange parish in Co. Dublin.

Ferran is married to Jean, and their three adult children are Michael (21), Richard (19) and Esther (17).

Ferran was brought up in Belfast, and studied geography at Queen's University before becoming a teacher. He worked for a year at Friends' School Lisburn, and then for nine years at Rainey Endowed School, Magherafelt.

Then he felt God's call to the ordained ministry, and trained at the Church of Ireland Theological College. He served for five years in county Cork, first as a curate and then as a rector, before moving to his current parish in Dublin, where he has been rector for the past 15 years.

The Parochial Nominators are delighted with the appointment, and believe that Ferran is God's choice to lead us into the future. We commend him and his family to your prayers, and thank all of you who have been praying during the recent weeks.

He is expected to take up his duties in the spring.

HILLSBOROUGH PARISH CHURCH

Contact

Curate: Mike Dornan
Tel/Fax: 028 9268 3339

Church Office

Opening times: weekday mornings
9:30am — 12:30pm
Tel/Fax: 028 9268 8839
email: sec@hillsboroughparish.org.uk

Christmas Services at the Parish Church

Sunday 18 December
8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Family Service – Nativity Play
6.30pm Nine Lessons & Carols

Christmas Eve: Saturday 24 December
3.00pm Christingle Service
11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day: Sunday 25 December
8.30am Christmas Communion
10.30am Christmas Morning Worship
New Year's Eve:
Saturday 31 December
11.30pm Worship to herald in the New Year

New Year's Day:
Sunday 1 January 2012
8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

At St Colman's Church
6.30pm Christmas Mass

At Priesthill Methodist Church
Sunday 18 December
11.00am Sunday School Carol Service
6.30pm Carol Service

Christmas Day
9.30am Family Service



Well-attended Remembrance Day parade

Parishioners from Hillsborough's churches joined MLAs, councillors and representatives of various uniformed organisations for the annual service of Remembrance and laying of wreaths at the village war memorial on November 13.

Prayers were led by Rev Mike Dornan, curate-in-charge at St Malachy's Parish Church, and Andrew Conway from Hillsborough Presbyterian Church. A two-minute period of silence was observed.



Christmas Fair

Seasonal spending and festive fun came early to the Downshire Centre last month.

The Christmas Fair, organised by the Church Events Committee, offered families a chance to snap up some perfect presents and tasty treats, as well as enjoying coffee and tray bakes.

Among the stall holders in attendance were Floral Days, Usborne Books, Miglio, Jumping Clay, Fresh As A Daisy, Heritage Gifts, Reg Haslett Photography, Phoenix

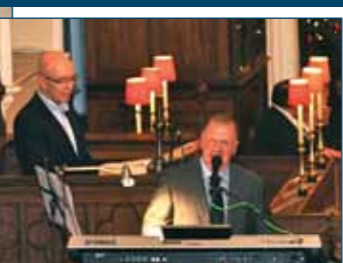
Cards and Temple Spa. And Santa took time out of his busy schedule to greet the young - and young-at-heart - and hand out sweets.

The Events Committee wish to thank everyone who helped, baked and came to support the Fair. A total of £1,620 was raised, which was a tremendous amount.

Following the unfortunate events on the morning of Sunday 20 November, the Committee donated the proceeds from the cake stand (£300) to East Belfast Mission.



SONGS OF PRAISE WITH HOUSTY AND FRIENDS



Hillsborough was 'alive with the sound of music' on Friday 2 December when the Parish church was the setting for an evening of Songs of Praise. The evening of old traditional hymns and choruses was the brainchild of organiser Norman Houston (Housty) and his wife Mandy. Norman, together with local TV personality John Daly, compered the programme with a capacity audience lifting the rafters as they sang their hearts out. Also taking part were: Norman Houston (Housty), Garvey Silver Band, Castlewella Accordian Band, Jonathan Houston (Snetzler organ), Julie Bell (Piano), Nicola Prentice (Soloist), William Wallace (Piper), Brian Houston (Flautist) and Choral Group - Eleanor Henderson, Sarah Eames and Jessica Hutchinson (above). A retiring collection was taken for church funds.

| FLOWER ROTA | | |
|-------------|----|-----------------|
| December - | 18 | Mrs A. Coulter |
| | 25 | Mrs A. Coulter |
| January - | 1 | Mothers Union |
| | 8 | Mothers Union |
| | 15 | Mrs R. Lyness |
| | 22 | Mrs R. Lyness |
| | 29 | Mrs C. McCarthy |
| February | 5 | Mrs C. McCarthy |

FREE WILL OFFERING PARISHIONERS who make their Free Will Offering by envelope are invited to collect them from the Church Porch on a Sunday morning, or from The Downshire Centre during the week (Open Mon-Friday, 9.00am - 12.00noon). This will save the church a considerable amount on postage. Many thanks.

Space to fill



Parish register

With joy we record the Holy Baptisms of Hannah Scott, Olivia Barker, Abigail Finney and Rebecca Buchannan on October 23; of Anna Elliott and Zoe McKeown on November 27, and of Patrick Burns on December 11.

Finish the race, keep the faith

With sadness we record the Deaths of Alice Walker, laid to rest on October 2, and William (Billy) Stinson, laid to rest on November 13.

Whosoever lives and believes in Him will never die