

## CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1863)*

## Nenagh Parish

### WISHING YOU A JOYFUL AND PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS

#### Christmas Eve, 1914...somewhere on the Western Front

"All of a sudden, lights appeared along the German trench. And I thought this is a funny thing. And then the Germans started singing 'Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht'. And I woke up, and all the sentries did the same thing, all woke up the other people to come along and see this and what the Earth is going on. They finished their carol and we applauded them and we thought we should retaliate in some way. So, we replied with The First Noel."

**Rifleman Graham Williams**

Such was the power of the celebration of the birth of a baby two thousand years earlier in a land far, far away, that armies of bitter enemies sent out to desolate battlefields to fight each other to the death, were moved to lay down their weapons and pause the hatred they were told to feel for each other.

In a world that has never appeared more divided, it seems that now more than ever, we must dig deep to capture something of the spirit of the fabled Christmas Truce of 1914.

Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, the soldiers of the Western Front were witnesses to the hope that was gifted to the world by the birth of the infant Jesus. Our small communities may seem inadequate when measured against the problems of the world but we are not powerless. In these times of peril, we can reach out to the stranger in our midst, the person who may once have seemed like the 'other'. A smile. A warm hello. A helping hand. A friendly gesture. Joy in our home and goodwill in our community are the building blocks of peace in our world.

*Fr Pat, Fr Jofin, Fr Lorcán and Fr Rexon*



## Blessing of A Christmas Day Meal

God of all gifts, we thank you for the many ways you have blessed us this Christmas time. We are grateful for all who are gathered around this table. We ask you to bless us and our food and to bless those we love who are not with us today. In our gratitude and love, we remember your humble birth into our lives and pray for those who are without enough to eat. We remember the stable in which you were born and pray for those who have no place to live. We remember your challenging message of caring and giving and we pray for peace in families and nations throughout the world. We give you thanks in your Spirit who brings our hearts to life this Christmas Day and forever. **Amen.**



May the light of Christ's birth shine brightly in our parish this Christmas, uniting us in love, bringing peace to our homes, and filling our hearts with the hope and joy of His coming. May we, as a community, be inspired to share His message of compassion and grace with all.

