

...the iconic Hiberno-Romanesque doorway at St Lachtain's Church is an open and welcoming doorway at all times for the community in Freshford

In the footsteps of St Lachtain

Ned Kennedy



From left: Esther Farrell, Acolyte; Dean Stephen Farrell, Bishop Michael Burrows, Bishop Denis Nulty, Monsignor Kieron Kennedy, Canon Richard Marsh.
Photo by kind permission: Michael Brophy.

The Millennium Quatercentenary (1400th anniversary or MQC) of the death of Freshford's patron, St Lachtain, was commemorated in Freshford on Saturday, March 19, 2022 with an ecumenical service attended by both Bishops of Ossory, Bishop Denis Nulty, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ossory and Bishop Michael Burrows, Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory.

The service, titled "Celebrating our Shared Christian Heritage," was composed by Monsignor Kieron Kennedy, Parish Priest of Freshford and Canon Richard Marsh of the Union of Kilkenny Parishes. It began at 3.00 p.m. in St Lachtain's Church of Ireland led by both Bishops, Dean Stephen Farrell, Church of Ireland Dean of Ossory, Canon Marsh and Monsignor Kennedy. The choirs from St Canice's Cathedral and St Lachtain's R.C. Church sang at both churches. The Bishops

created their own bit of history when Bishop Nulty addressed the congregation in the Church of Ireland and Bishop Burrows addressed the congregation in the Catholic Church. In his sermon Bishop Nulty emphasised the equal importance of the home missionaries in Ireland who spread the gospel in the early years of the church, and since, as well as the foreign missionaries who ministered abroad during the history of the church.

Following Bishop Nulty's address, a procession took place to St Lachtain's Catholic Church. A replica of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm, made by local artist Kevin Buckley, was carried in the procession. In his address Bishop Burrows mentioned the iconic Hiberno-Romanesque doorway at St Lachtain's Church and spoke of the importance of it being an open and welcoming doorway at all times for the community in Freshford. The service concluded with the singing of

"Lachtaín Naofa," composed by the late Tom Waldron.

After the service an informal reception was held in in Freshford Community Hall where an exhibition of artifacts connected with St Lachtain was on display. These included Kevin Buckley's replica of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm and a wooden interpretation of the shrine executed by local student Pádraig Donnelly. Two other representations of the Shrine, executed by local artists Gemma Fullam and Seosamh Ó Faoláin, were shown with an artistic interpretation of the hymn "Lachtaín Naofa" by Larry Hamilton also on display.

The ecumenical service marked the opening of Féile Lachtaín 2022 which also celebrates more than 1400 years of worship in the parish of Freshford and in particular on the site of St Lachtain's Church of Ireland. The site



The procession leaves the Church of Ireland on March 19.



Members of the congregation arriving at St Lachtain's R.C. Church.

is acknowledged as the place where St Lachtain set up his first monastic foundation c. 570 A.D.

Today St Lachtain's Church of Ireland is famed for its iconic 12th century church doorway. In the Hiberno-Romanesque style, it is acknowledged to be one of only three or four similar churches in the country. It dates from c. 1150.

Féile Lachtain 2022 will continue for the rest of the year. Various events are planned. Highlights will include Pilgrimage Sunday on July 10 when participants will walk to the church ruins at Clashacrow; return to the village and continue on to the 13th century Ballylarkin Church before finishing at the Green in Freshford.

The MQC Concerts will take place in October with the Rafter Family performing at St Lachtain's Catholic Church on Saturday, October 8 while the Choir of St Canice's Cathedral will sing at a concert in the Church of Ireland on October 15. The festival will conclude on the weekend of November 12/13 with Mass at St Nicholas's Church Tulla and St Lachtain's Church, Freshford at which the spiritual songs of Elvis Presley will be sung by Alexander Rafter.

A series of lectures and exhibitions will also be held during the year. Information can be found on www.ionadlachtain.com

and on Facebook and Instagram at Ionad Lachtain.

Souvenirs of the celebrations are on sale in the craft shop at Ionad Lachtain which is open every Friday and Saturday. All are welcome to come and help celebrate this special year in the history of the church in the parish of Freshford and in the Diocese of Ossory.



Monsignor Kennedy and Bishop Nulty with a replica of the Shrine of St Lachtain's Arm made by local artist Kevin Buckley.



Bishop Burrows addressing the congregation.