

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

April 2021

Pope's message of hope

“Faith is not an album of past memories; Jesus is not outdated. He is alive here and now. He walks beside you each day, in every situation you are experiencing, in every trial you have to endure, in your deepest hopes and dreams.

He opens new doors when you least expect it, he urges you not to indulge in nostalgia for the past or cynicism about the present. Even if you feel that all is lost, let yourself be open to amazement at the newness Jesus brings...”

Pope Francis, Easter 2021



Bishops urge reflection before Scottish election

Make the ~~X~~ count

MAKE the cross count ... that's the appeal of Scotland's bishops ahead of the elections taking place on May 6.

In a letter to Scotland's Catholic community, the Bishops highlight key issues which should inform the choice of voters, including the looming threat of euthanasia, the need for a serious response to climate change and the importance of Catholic schools.

They also appeal to politicians and supporters of parties to ensure the campaign is respectful and courteous.

The Bishops urge people to consider the candidate

rather than just the party when it comes to voting: “Some of the most important issues, including abortion and assisted suicide, are commonly decided by a conscience, or free, vote. Therefore, it is critical to ascertain candidates' personal values and opinions and not concentrate solely on party policies.”

On euthanasia the bishops warn that a further attempt to legalise assisted suicide in Scotland is likely to happen in the new parliament. “Legalising assisted suicide or euthanasia suggests that some lives are not worth living, contrary

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**
EDITOR

to the Christian belief that every life has equal dignity and value. It is incumbent upon our parliamentarians to show compassion for the sick and dying. This is not achieved by assisted suicide or euthanasia but by ensuring support is provided through caring and attentive politics, including investment in palliative care”.

The Bishops call for a preferential option for the poor in social policy: “Poverty remains a scourge for too many people. The margin-

alised, the homeless, and the lonely and isolated have been cast further adrift because of the pandemic. And poverty now affects 24% of children in Scotland. We need elected representatives who respect a preferential option for the poor, who are willing to prioritise their need and respect their human dignity”.

And on the environment the Bishops write: “The next group of MSPs will be tasked with protecting our neighbours at home and abroad from the poverty and climate crises which continue to rage on. In November Glasgow will play host to

the COP26 international climate change summit. We should listen to Pope Francis' call to 'hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' by lifting up the voices of the global south and coming together to rebuild our Common Home in a way that leaves no-one behind. Scotland can also demonstrate global leadership by strengthening its commitment to becoming a carbon neutral country.”

They continue with a plea for freedom of speech and religion ... “If Scotland is to be a tolerant, open, diverse country then we must be free to discuss and debate

ideas, even those which are deemed by some to be controversial. Whilst being mindful of the need to protect citizens from hate, government must not overstep into the realm of unjust restrictions on free speech, free expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion...”

Finally the Bishops call for guarantees on Catholic schools calling on candidates to “support an open and diverse state education system which includes Catholic schools.”

The full text of the Bishops' election letter can be found here: www.bcos.org.uk

First Holy Communion joy for Bartek on his last day in Glasgow

THE reopening of churches for public worship was a day of special significance and perfect timing for one youngster who made his First Holy Communion just 24 hours before he and his family were due to return permanently to their native Poland.

Bartek Wator, aged 12, a member of the children's SPRED group in St Philomena's, Provanmill since October 2016, should have received his first communion on Pentecost Sunday last year.

Family and friends from Kraków were planning to travel to the celebration but it was cancelled by Covid restrictions.

And then, just days before the family's homecoming deadline of March 27 their prayers were answered with the announcement that churches could reopen on March 26 and Bartek's First Holy Communion Mass could finally go ahead.

Addressing worshippers at the end of the Mass, Father John Gannon, Parish Priest at St Philomena's said:

BY BRIAN SWANSON

"I for one am very relieved that we got this done before too much longer had passed because we were really cutting it very fine."

"God is definitely in his Heaven and God is definitely looking after you Bartek so congratulations to you and to the whole family."

"I also give my thanks to the whole SPRED family for all the hard work and all the blood sweat and tears that they have put into this over the last few weeks so it's great that we have been able to have this celebration with you all."

For Bartek's mum, Ewa, who left Poland 15 years ago and whose sons were born in Scotland, it was the perfect way to say goodbye to his SPRED group and she left her last-minute packing aside to bring Bartek and his younger brother, Norbert, aged 10, to St Philomena's.

At the Mass, Bartek was joined by a small number of friends and family from Scotland, together with the catechists from his SPRED group, including his special friend in SPRED, Ann



Picture by Paul McSherry

McLaughlin, who has shared faith and friendship with Bartek since he joined the group.

Family from Poland and members of the Glasgow SPRED family were able to

join via livestream.

Director of SPRED, Lisbeth Raeside, said: "It was a privilege for us to be able to celebrate this special occasion with Bartek before his return to Poland. This is

why SPRED exists, to ensure that our brothers and sisters who have learning disabilities but who are first and foremost God's beloved children, can take their place in the Church."

Bishops rebuke UK government on nuclear plan



SCOTLAND'S bishops have added their voices to sharp criticism of the UK Government's plans to spend more on nuclear weapons.

Bishop William Nolan, Bishop of Galloway and President of the Scottish hierarchy's Commission for Justice and Peace, joined seven other Scottish church leaders in signing a statement responding to plans to remove the cap on the number of nuclear weapons stockpiled, allowing for an increase of up to 40%.

They wrote: "The UK Government's decision to increase the number of Trident nuclear warheads the UK can stockpile by more than 40% is a deeply worrying development."

"The move, part of the integrated review of defence, security and foreign policy, is a retrograde step which threatens the common good and reverses nearly 30 years of gradual

disarmament.

"The decision is a contravention of the UK's obligations under the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty and undermines the international rules-based order. It ignores the growing global movement in support of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which calls for the irreversible, verifiable and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons".

For many years, Scottish bishops have agreed that the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons is immoral and their very possession should be condemned in a world that needs peace.

Opponents of the move point out that the financial cost of a larger nuclear arsenal cannot be justified in the face of the UK's high rates of poverty and deprivation, and the challenges of the climate emergency and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sr Henrietta marks big day as PhD awarded

PARISHIONERS of Holy Cross, Crosshill, have warmly congratulated one of their own for gaining a PhD from Glasgow Caledonian University.

Sister Henrietta Fawole, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who also serves the parish as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, expects to return to her native Nigeria in summer after six years of study for her doctorate.

In that time Sister Henrietta, who lives in her order's motherhouse has become a popular and familiar figure in the parish.

Speaking at a recent live streamed Mass, Parish Priest Monsignor Hugh Bradley, Administrator for the Archdiocese following the death of Archbishop Tattaglia, said: "I've just heard that Sister Henrietta, who you will all know, has gained a PhD from Caledonian University which is a wonderful achievement. I'm sure you will all agree that we should be very proud of her for all her hard work."

BY BRIAN SWANSON

Sister Henrietta joined the congregation of the Franciscan Sisters in 1999, made her first profession of vows in September 2002 at St Benedict's Catholic Cathedral, Osogbo, Nigeria and the following year moved to Glasgow to study health care.

That eventually led to her becoming a physiotherapist, later gaining a Masters degree in Physiotherapy and in 2011 leaving Scotland to work as a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Physiotherapy at Benin University, Nigeria.

In 2016 she was awarded a PhD scholarship from Glasgow Caledonian University to study links between physical and mental activity and fatigue in knee osteoarthritis.

Sr Henrietta, who took her final vows in 2007, expects to graduate in the summer before returning home.

She said: "I will leave with nothing but good and happy memories from my time in Glasgow – it will be a time of my life I will never forget."



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ANYONE who has visited St Aloysius recently will have noticed unique and thought-provoking Easter themed installations in the sanctuary, which have been created by a Jesuit artist in residence at the city centre church.

Brother Rene de los Reyes spoke movingly to *Flourish* about how his art is inspired by God.

He said: "What I put into a

painting or an installation is not me but what God wants others to see.

"I do my art through prayer. My art is a prayer – not a form of prayer but a prayer. If I'm asked to paint something I pray over it and I would stay with that for a day or two or even a week before I pick up my brush and paint and begin..."

Originally from the Philippines, Brother Rene, 52,

Brother Rene's art is pure prayer

Pictures by Paul McSherry



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

joined the parish pastoral team at St Aloysius six months

ago where he used his artistic skills to create a 3D Nativity scene for the church and later produced the parish liturgical calendar illustrated with exquisitely detailed images of Scottish wild flowers.

One of seven children, he was taught to paint by his late father Jene, a farmer and prominent activist who worked with a Catholic radio station called Radio M,

which fiercely opposed the brutal Marcos regime in the Philippines.

Between 1975 and 1985 the Marcos-supporting military was responsible for 3,250 deaths in a period in which also saw several thousand tortured while countless others simply disappeared.

It was the example of his devout Catholic family and particularly his father, a fearless critic of the regime, which inspired Rene to fight for social justice which ultimately led him, in 2013, to join the Society of Jesus.

He said: "From a young age I went with my father to meetings and political rallies and what I learned there inspired me to help marginalised and dispossessed people."

As part of his Jesuit studies Brother Rene, who first came to the UK in 2006 to work as a critical care nurse in London, has developed close links with Inuit people in Canada, worked in a prison in Birmingham, and was a manager with the Jesuit Refugee Service in London.

His spiritual journey has

now taken him to Glasgow where he continues to use his experience to work alongside a team of dedicated St Aloysius volunteers who run the well established and highly successful ESOL classes for refugees and asylum seekers.

And Rene, who expects to continue to serve the parish for the foreseeable future, is full of praise for the warmth of the welcome he received – and for the famous Glasgow patter.

He said: "Not long after I arrived here they asked me just to go out and talk to people so they'd get to know me and I'd get to know them."

"So I got out and you know at once I felt the warmth and the friendliness of the people and I got so touched by that."

"One of the first tasks I was given was to open the church in the morning and get to know the people and one of them said, 'Are you the new bouncer then?' and now that's what they call me!"

"I've been to many countries and cities around the world but I have never felt so much warmth as I felt here in Glasgow and that gave me such a boost and I thought 'yes this is it' – The start of my apostolate and my pastoral work begins right here."

Archbishop Mario's prayer for a successor

ARCHBISHOP Conti found himself once more offering the Mass of Chrism this year following the death of Archbishop Tartaglia.

The Mass was reduced in scale, with only the Deans of each Deanery and two lay representatives present in the Cathedral in conformity with Covid rules.

Despite the empty pews Archbishop Conti spoke of the "purity and dignity" of the Mass with its complex liturgy of blessing the oils which will be used in parishes over the coming year and renewing of priestly promises by the clergy.

Joy

The Archbishop spoke for many in expressing the wish that the oils blessed this Easter will soon be used to anoint his successor's successor as the new Archbishop of Glasgow.

He said: "It is surely a joy for all of us to be able to return to the Cathedral of the Diocese, and particularly for this Mass, which touches the very heart of the Church's liturgy, the Worship of God... Its foundation are the sacraments, instituted



we affirm by Christ himself, and administered by the Catholic priesthood which is a sharing in the Priesthood of Christ."

Reflecting

Reflecting on the readings for the Mass of Chrism the Archbishop recalled the words of Pope St Leo the Great in the 5th century in a homily he gave on the anniversary of his election as

Pope in 440 AD.

"You might have expected him to focus on his priestly or pontifical service. In a sense he did, but as the starting point of a broader consideration of priesthood, since he recognised in the anointing of the faithful in the sacraments their own sharing in the priesthood of Christ, and in his Kingship."

"Think of it, the same chrism which anoints the

hands of the priest, and the head of the bishop, anoints the head of the adult and the baby at baptism, and of the maturing Christian at Confirmation, while the other oils blessed alongside the Chrism are used even more generously: the oil of the sick in strengthening the sick person whenever there is need, and the oil of catechumens in their approach to baptism...

"Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and sacred vessels, and most extravagantly in the blessing of altars, as I well remember when I had the privilege of consecrating this altar at St Andrew's Cathedral."

"Such thoughts do not in any way diminish the dignity of the ministerial priesthood. What they do is underline the dignity of every baptised Christian."

They reveal the sacramental infra-structure of the Church's liturgy by which every Christian is inserted into and grows in Christ. They describe the Church itself.

"Priests and people, we receive through the sacraments what we need for our state of life, from a generous Lord who has called (us) out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Pictures by Paul McSherry



Pope declares a special Year of the Family

POPE Francis has asked the world's Catholics to use the next year to focus on the family and efforts to reach out to families facing difficulties.

Five years after the publication of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia*, the Vatican inaugurated the "Amoris Laetitia Family" Year on March 19, the Feast of St Joseph. Pope Francis sent a message to launch the special year.

Fire

The Holy Father came under fire from some conservative voices even within the Church when the document was published as it opened a way of return to the sacraments for those who are divorced and remarried. However the document was welcomed by bishops and priests across the globe for its honest approach to real life situations and focus in mercy.

In his launch message, the Pope invited all to "live a year of rereading the Document and reflecting on the theme, until the celebration of the Tenth World Meeting of Families which, God willing, will take place in Rome on 26 June, 2022."

Celebrate

According to the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, 1994 was declared an "International Year of the Family" by the United Nations. Pope John Paul II wanted the Church to also celebrate this Year of the Family, and so the 1st World Meeting of Families (WMF) was held. It took place in Rome on 8 and 9 October 1994 under the guidance of the Pontifical Council for the Family who went on to organise all subsequent WMFs.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Since then, every three years, in different places around the world, a World Meeting of Families has been held, together with an International Pastoral-Theological Congress. It typically concludes with a Festival of Families in the presence of the Pope and a final Eucharistic Celebration.

Pope Francis noted that "the main intention of the Document is to communicate...that today a new look at the family is necessary on the part of the Church." He stressed that reiterating the value of doctrine is not enough. Rather, we must become "custodians" of the beauty of the family, and take care of its fragilities and wounds "with compassion".

Frankness

Pope Francis went on to say that there are two aspects at the heart of all family ministry: "The frankness of the proclamation of the Gospel and the tenderness of accompaniment".

He explained that, on the one hand, "we proclaim to couples, spouses and families a Word that helps them grasp the authentic meaning of union and love..."

On the other hand, the Pope noted, "this proclamation cannot and must never be given from above or from outside."

He explained that when the Church proclaims the Gospel of the family she does so by immersing herself in real life, "knowing first hand the daily struggles of spouses and parents, their problems, their sufferings, all those small and large situations that weigh down



and sometimes hinder their journey."

He said the year should focus on practicalities – "the love generated by the simplicity and the silent work of the life of a couple, by that daily and sometimes tiring commitment carried out by spouses, mothers, fathers and children".

Commitment

He said that if the Gospel is proposed as a "doctrine from on high" without entering into the "flesh" of daily life, it risks remaining only a beautiful theory and even being experienced as a moral obligation.

"We are called to accompany, listen, and bless the journey of families," said the Pope. Not only to chart the direction, but to make the journey with them; to enter the home with discretion and love, to say to the couple: the Church is with you; the Lord is close to you; we want to help you safeguard the gift you have received.

Finally, the Pope urged, "Let us support the family! Let us defend it from all that

compromises its beauty."

And he invited everyone to "approach this mystery of love with wonder, discretion and tenderness. And let us commit ourselves to safeguarding its precious and delicate bonds: children, parents, grandparents... We need these bonds to live and to live well, to make humanity more fraternal."

A special website of materials has been created by the Vatican for use at home or in parishes.

Through a series of ten videos, the Holy Father, with the help of several families, invites us to journey together to rediscover the family as a gift, despite every problem, obstacle and challenge that families have to face today.

Each video is accompanied by a guide that can be used flexibly either by families or by small groups.

You can access the material here: www.laityfamilylife.va/

You can read the Pope's document here: www.amoris.ie/amoris-laetitia/



Amoris Laetitia quotes

"I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfil their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way. [57]

"The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realize that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship; instead, it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union." [232]

"I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street." [308]

"We have been called to form consciences, not replace them." [37]

"Young love needs to keep dancing towards the future with immense hope." [219]

"Here let me say a word to fiancés. Have the courage to be different. Don't let yourselves get swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances. What is important is the love you share, strengthened and sanctified by grace. You are capable of opting for a more modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence over everything else." [212]

*Numbers in square brackets refer to the paragraph of the Papal document

Organ donation 'should be act of love'

SCOTLAND has now moved to a new system of presumed consent, or deemed authorisation, with respect to organ donation.

The Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Act changes the law on organ and tissue donation from an opt-in system to a 'soft opt-out' system. Authorisation is now presumed for organ/tissue donation for those who have not actively opted out.

Close relatives and next of kin may still be able to stop the removal of organs where it can be shown that it was not the deceased's wishes that their organs be donated. Hence, the

term 'soft' to describe the new system.

The Bishops' Conference of Scotland has released a statement, below, to coincide with the introduction of the new system.

"The Bishops' Conference of Scotland acknowledges organ donation after death as a noble and meritorious act to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity. It is a gift and a sign of great love for one's neighbour.

"However, fundamental to the generous act of organ donation is its voluntary nature and, thus, the require-

ment for explicit consent. An opt-out system of organ donation may result in organs being taken after death without the deceased having previously given explicit consent.

"Individuals should take great care to be clear about whether they would like to donate their organs when they die. Their intentions should be reflected on the organ donation register and made known to relatives."

For more information and to update your details on the Organ Donation Register, visit www.organdonationscotland.org or call 0300 303 2094.

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Art of the month

George Henry Boughton, *Woman Kneeling at Prayer*, ca.1860.

Portrait of woman kneeling at prayer has so much to teach us

A COUPLE of months ago we looked at a Carthusian monk at prayer. This month, by contrast, we have before us George Henry Boughton's 'Woman Kneeling at Prayer.'

As a child, I remember very vividly seeing my mother kneeling by the hearth before a picture of the Sacred Heart which hung above the fireplace, which bore the inscription, 'Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.'

Below, in his own hand, Pope Benedict XV on 17th July 1921, had written in Italian, 'We grant three hundred days indulgence to the Faithful who shall recite three 'Gloria Patri' before

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

one of these pictures of the Sacred Heart." The picture now hangs in my bedroom.

George Henry Boughton, whose work impressed Vincent Van Gogh, was an Anglo-American painter (1833-1905) who spent some time during his training, in Scotland. This month's work can be seen at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, USA.

One wonders if the woman is a lonely widow, a concerned mother of children, or simply a devout woman with a strong belief in the power of prayer. Pure faith

made tangible through the genius of the artist. She looks like a woman of means. Look at the rich fabric of the chair with its heavy brass studs and at the gown she is wearing. Her hair seems well-kept and her hands are not rough or marked, rather suggesting a certain gentility. Even the colour of her robe suggests a measure of wealth since purple pigment was hugely expensive. Every colour tells its own story.

Yet, the riches of this world are not a guarantee against worry and anxiety. The clasped fingers and closed eyes, in a very natural way, suggest a woman deep in prayer and, perhaps, with a lot to pray about!

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Let us Pray: Dear Lord, you know me and my imperfections so well. I beg you today for peace and grace in my heart. Guide my attention to the centre of your love. Grant me the ability to feel how very deeply you love me because I am flawed and need

your saving. Open my battered heart and lead me to comfort and peace. Please heal the pain I carry in my heart each day.

I ask this in the name of your most loving mother, the mother of us all. Amen.

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Times change but the Church offers new ways to pray for the Holy Father's intentions

Father David Stewart SJ, a Glasgow-educated priest who has returned to Scotland as national director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, has this message for *Flourish* readers: "Together let's be apostles of prayer."



Father David, based at the Garnethill Jesuit Community, said: "Each month Pope Francis identifies particular challenges facing the world and asks for our prayers. These monthly Intentions are entrusted to the People of God via the Network which is now the largest prayer group in the Church."

"I warmly invite *Flourish* readers to join us. This is a daily prayer pathway that anyone can follow. There's nothing to join, it's free and we have all resources you'll need both online and printed."

■ For more details visit: www.praywiththepope.net

Francis asks us, this month, to pray with him "for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorship, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis".

Human person, human dignity

Praying with the Pope this month is associating ourselves with his frequent assertion that human rights cannot be ignored, because of the basic dignity of each human person. This month is not the first time he has raised this. When, in 2018, the world marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Francis recognised that, with this landmark document, "the family of Nations wanted to recognise the equal dignity of every human person"...

We need to be particularly vigilant about the poor and dispossessed because, when they are denied these rights, they "see their dignity ignored, despised or trampled on and their most basic



rights ignored or violated." That dignity is, of course, God-given.

Pope Francis in Iraq

Recently, Pope Francis has given us another example of combatting the virus of authoritarianism that has become a pandemic, even in democracies. His risky visit to Iraq included a historic meeting with the most revered Islamic Shi'ite cleric, the 94 year-old Ali al-Sistani.

Their significant encounter came just when xenophobic nationalism, ugly populism and dangerous fissures in even democratic political systems are eroding fundamental rights worldwide. The Pope had spent time and prayed in ruined Christian places of worship, in solidarity with all those who had suffered – and been killed – by the forces of intolerance and hate. Both religious leaders thus promoted the rights of all oppressed religious and ethnic groups. But hard-liners within their own religions, and populist, authoritarian politicians, have opposed their peacebuilding efforts.

St Oscar and Fr Rutilio

Many of those who risk their lives under authoritarian dictatorships, for the sake of fundamental rights, are killed. They know the risks yet do not keep quiet.

In our epoch, Oscar Romero is a notable example. We celebrated his feast-day as a Saint of the Church just last month, on the 24th, that being the date of his assassination, while celebrating Mass, in March 1980.



Picture: Imago Mundi

We recalled how this rather shy and bookish archbishop of San Salvador had been seen by the ruling elite as no threat to their oppressive dominance... Many brave clergy and religious did speak out; contemporary eyewitnesses reported graffiti slogans appearing on city buildings, declaiming, "Be a patriot – kill a priest".

Assassinated for justice and human rights

Things changed suddenly. Fr Rutilio Grande, his close Jesuit friend, was murdered by the state's death-squads because of his advocacy for oppressed communities. Romero, seeing the bullet-ridden body of his best friend by the roadside (beside the murdered corpses of two parishioners) knew what he had to do. He began to denounce injustice and state violence.

Poor and exploited people in villages across El Salvador tuned into his weekly radio homilies. Many called him the voice of the voiceless – and he encouraged others to become advocates too. This was too much for the powerful elites. Archbishop

Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass in the cancer hospital where he lived simply.

He spoke out rather than remain silent, following the example of his great friend Rutilio three years earlier – and of his leader, Christ the King. St Oscar and Rutilio ask us now if we really can remain spectators, not speaking out.

Prayer moment

A suggested Morning Offering:

Trinity of communion and mutual love,

Show me the world of to-day as you see it;

momentous acts of kindness and service but also intolerance, rage and basic rights denied.

Grant me and my community the wisdom and courage that inspired Rutilio, Oscar, Pope Francis and all fearless leaders who struggle for basic human rights.

As we have accompanied, in this strangest of years, your Son to his redemptive Cross, we now ask for inner knowledge of your resurrection, your continuing glorious presence to your people.

May the peace that you offered to your grieving

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friends inspire us as it consoled them.

I offer today, all my words and actions, for your mission

and may we pray, with the Pope, for all those who risk everything for the rights of all.

Proposals for April and Eastertide

- Explore the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, which enshrines the rights and freedoms of every one of us. Learn how it commits nations to recognise that every human person is "born free and equal in dignity and rights". Consider, and discuss if you can, with friends

and parish groups, how well its precepts are observed in our times.

- Read about St. Oscar Romero, his conversion to advocacy for the poor, his martyrdom and his canonisation in 2018. Read also about Rutilio Grande SJ. There are high hopes for his beatification and eventual canonisation, which will be joyous occasions for all Jesuits and Ignatian people and for all who fight for fundamental rights. See <http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/martyrs/rutilio-grande-sj>

- Read Pope Francis's "Let us Dream - The Path to a Better Future"; look for, or form, an online reading group to explore it together. Pray, share and discuss the Pope's reflections on how to rebuild our world.

Pope's prayer intentions

JANUARY

Intention for evangelisation - Human fraternity

May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

FEBRUARY

Universal intention - Violence against women

We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.

MARCH

Intention for evangelisation - Sacrament of reconciliation

Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.

APRIL

Universal intention - Fundamental rights

We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis.

MAY

Universal intention - The world of finance

Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers.

JUNE

Intention for evangelisation - The beauty of marriage

Let us pray for young people who are preparing for marriage with the support of a Christian community: may they grow in love, with generosity, faithfulness and patience.

JULY

Universal intention - Social friendship

We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

AUGUST

Intention for evangelisation - The Church

Let us pray for the Church, that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.

SEPTEMBER

Universal intention - An environmentally sustainable lifestyle

We pray that we all will make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, rejoicing in our young people who are resolutely committed to this.

OCTOBER

Intention for evangelisation - Missionary disciples

We pray that every baptised person may be engaged in evangelisation, available to the mission, by being witnesses of a life that has the flavour of the Gospel.

NOVEMBER

Universal intention - People who suffer from depression

We pray that people who suffer from depression or burn-out will find support and a light that opens them up to life.

DECEMBER

Intention for evangelisation - Catechists

Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.



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We rejoiced when 'Let us go to the h

ON the morning of Friday March 26, the beginning of Holy Week and with absolutely no fanfare whatsoever, our churches were freed from the darkness of lockdown into the light of God's Word with the eagerly awaited resumption of public worship.

There may have been no fuss yet it was noticeable that the masks the faithful wore could not disguise their joy as once again priests and people met as a community of faith, and, at last, were able to celebrate the Eucharist together.

Lockdown

The long-established lockdown rules still applied with hand sanitising now as familiar as genuflecting.

Although for now one-way systems, pre-booking and numbers capped at 50 remain in place, anecdotal evidence suggests that nearly every church in the archdiocese could have posted a 'house full' outside on 'opening day'.

And if the joy that the faithful felt in our diocese was mirrored across the land as Mass resumed from Wick to Wigtown after a three month lockdown, then on this one single day in March, Scotland must have been a very happy place indeed to be Catholic.

As in many parts of the Archdiocese parishioners from St Catherine Labouré, Balornock, arrived early for the 9:30 Mass to be greeted warmly, if in a socially distanced manner, by Parish Priest Canon Anthony Gallagher.

And behind the banter about lack of haircuts and mock surprise at seeing each other after so long it was clear that here was a community delighted to be able to participate once again in the celebration of Mass.

As Canon Gallagher said during his homily: "We can listen to the word of God over a transmission of Mass but nothing can touch us the way God touches us today

WORDS **BRIAN SWANSON**
PICTURES **PAUL MCSHERRY**
AND **ROSS TURPIE**

here in our church."

He continued: "The most important thing about reopening is that people can receive Communion – that above all is what people have missed."

"We have a great community here and they all look out for each other but as a priest you worry about people when you don't see them so it's good to have so many familiar faces here today".

Some of those familiar faces were happy to welcome this stranger with the notebook asking frankly very obvious questions about being back at Mass.

Colin Gillespie didn't hesitate with his answer: "I believe in God, this is God's house and that is where we belong."

The retired welder added: "I couldn't wait to get to Mass – it was just brilliant to be back receiving Communion again."

Former local government official 84-year old Dan Rogan, who has worshipped at St Catherine's since it was built just over 70 years ago said: "It was wonderful today, just wonderful. Don't get me wrong it's been good watching Mass from home but you can't fully participate and that's what we have all missed but now we can and let's hope there will be no going back to more lockdowns."

The setting might have been different but the emotions were the same as parishioners filed in to St Andrew's Cathedral for the lunch time Mass celebrated by Canon Gerald Sharkey.

"I am not an emotional person," he told them "but when lockdown was first announced I had tears in my eyes but there is a different kind of emotion today because it is wonderful to welcome you all back..."



The entire congregation, you felt, was silently applauding in agreement.

Outside in the Italian Garden after Mass old friends greeted each other and the body language said it all. The heartfelt phrase "Thank God" was the answer most gave on being asked how they felt to be back at Mass.

When Sister Roseann Reddy, of the Sisters of the Gospel of Life was asked what being able to return to Mass meant to her, the reply was unequivocal. "Everything," she said, adding, "there has been a lot said and written recently about Mass being a human right and that's true but we must never forget

that is also a human need."

Across the river at St Robert Bellarmine parish, in Househillwood, the Palm Sunday Vigil Mass was different this year with the traditional procession on hold and palm branches sterilised before being handed out but the Mass was celebrated with no less joy by priest and

parishioners.

Father Jim Dean set the tone at once. Flinging open his arms, he said: "I've missed every single one of you."

He joked: "I've been streaming Masses from the oratory during lockdown and the only face I see in the monitor is my own so to see so many people in front of

we heard them say house of the Lord'...

PSALM 122



Archbishop Tartaglia remembered

ARCHBISHOP Tartaglia was recalled with affection on Easter Sunday morning in the Cathedral from which he loved to preach.

His predecessor Archbishop Conti spoke warmly of him as he preached the Easter homily.

He said: "My successor Archbishop Philip went to God on the Feast of St Mungo, our heavenly Patron; he died having experienced the joy of reopening the doors of the Cathedral, for he saw in that event the hope we all entertain of a return to a life free from the daily fear of the deadly virus."

"Dying on the morning of such a significant day, St Mungo's day, was to those with faith in the Providence of God a certain consolation. With you I recall Philip today, with thanksgiving to God for his service of the Archdiocese and of the Church in Scotland."



me .. I'm actually a bit nervous standing here!"

More seriously he added: "We come together as a community but we are not as we were before lockdown. We are a fractured community, a broken community, a hurt community..."

"And the community is less than it was – I have con-

ducted a hundred funerals over the past year which is maybe double that of 'normal' times.

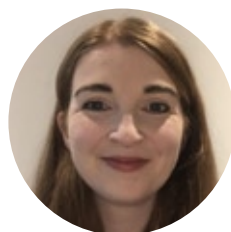
"And yet we are a strong community, who check up on each other, who have shown great kindness to me and a community which comes together in the love of Christ. Let us never forget

that."

Parishioner Geraldine MacDonald said: "Getting the churches open for Mass again has been the answer to my prayers – literally. I've been praying for this moment, I'm sure we all have, and it's just so wonderful to be back and to receive communion again."

Pictures clockwise from top left: Canon Gerald Sharkey and a young parishioner; Fr Jim Dean greets familiar faces; Canon Anthony Gallagher's smile says it all; the home team at St Catherine's

Online rosary has kept us united in faith



Teacher Marie McCoy writes about a special lockdown prayer

FOR many years, my most prized possession has been a set of wooden rosary beads, a present from my mum following a pilgrimage she made when I was four years old.

To an outsider these beads would no doubt appear to be nothing special and are even lacking the image of the crucified Christ, the miraculous medal and the scent of rosewood possessed by some of the other sets I have been gifted over the years.

However, it is these simple beads, from early childhood, which have travelled the world with me, lain under my pillow, and been prayed with more times than I could possibly count.

In many ways this set of beads sums up what the rosary itself means to me and

I imagine many other Catholics: a set of simple prayers which we have known since childhood and which, for that very reason, are comforting and familiar, able to bring us together as a community of prayer and provide us with great comfort and solace, even in the most difficult times in our lives.

During these challenging days of church closures and reduced mass numbers, I have at times felt myself to be distanced from my parish community and it is the rosary which has provided me with a way of connecting with others through prayer.

Since July I have been part of an online prayer group initiated during the first COVID 19 lockdown by Dr Leonardo Franchi from the University of Glasgow and comprising over 40 mem-

bers from across the UK and beyond.

We meet on a weekly basis via Zoom to pray five decades of the rosary together and although our meeting lasts for just thirty minutes, having this regular time to focus on prayer and the increasing familiarity of the faces on my screen has brought me much joy and comfort during this difficult time.

I have also witnessed first-hand the role that the rosary can play in the most distressing moments in our lives when grief and pain can make prayer challenging even when we need it the most.

During my third year at secondary school one of my teachers passed away suddenly. Seeing the great distress of every member of class and clearly very upset himself, the teacher of my first lesson that day suggested that we begin our class by saying a decade of the rosary.

Even at the time, I knew that this was the right decision.

The prayers of the rosary which we knew so well and had recited throughout our childhood came back to us easily even at that painful moment when it might otherwise have been difficult to find the words we needed. The rosary allowed us to experience the comfort of God's presence and unite as a faith community to pray for the teacher we had lost.

A little over a decade later I found myself with the roles reversed, standing as the teacher in front of a bereaved classroom full of pupils, this time after the tragic loss of one of their classmates.

Searching for some way of bringing any hope I could to this devastating situation, I began my lesson in the only way that I knew how: with a decade of the rosary.

At once every single pupil in front of me feverishly joined in with the familiar words, all teenage embarrassment gone as they



snatched at this opportunity to pray for the friend they had lost.

Once again the rosary was the accessible set of prayers I needed at what was the most challenging moment in my teaching career. They were just what my pupils needed too.

Like my much-loved beads therefore, the rosary is both simple and beautiful.

It is a set of prayers for every Catholic, no matter their age or the language they speak. It has the power to bind us together and gives us the words we need

to reach out to the Lord in prayer, no matter what the situation.

It is a gift that will never stop being a joy to receive.

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CATHOLICISM is a vast, riotously diverse global institution, counting 1.3 billion members scattered in every nook and cranny of the planet. As a result, Catholic experience is a constant interplay between the universal and the local, a few basic constants refracted and lived out in a stunning myriad of different milieu.

One of those constants, given that religion stirs people's deepest passions, is that someone in the Catholic Church is always upset about something. Novelist John Sandford, author of the Lucas Davenport series of detective novels, once had his hero explain the difference between Catholicism and Pentecostal-style Christianity this way: "Holy rollers scream about Jesus. Catholics scream about their bishop."

However, precisely what upsets different Catholics at any given time often reflects features of their local cultures. Three tempests swirling around the Church over the past week illustrate the point.

In Italy, some Catholics have objected to an announcement by the Archbishop of Potenza in the southern region of Basilicata that as soon as restoration work is complete on the city's Church of the Most Holy Trinity, it will reopen as a functioning parish.

The church has been closed since 2010, when the remains of a teenage girl who had disappeared in 1993 were discovered in its loft, raising still-unanswered questions about how the body of one of Italy's best-known missing children had gone undetected in such a spot for almost two decades.

In Germany and Austria, Catholic organisations and even several bishops have voiced critical reactions to a recent declaration from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith insisting upon the impossibility of offering blessings to same-sex unions.

Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, the elected president of the German bishops' conference, described the content of the Vatican document as "points of view" that will be taken into consideration, but not necessarily heeded, during the Germany church's ongoing synodal discussions.

In the United States, some Catholics have applauded while others have expressed outrage after Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, who chairs the US bishops' pro-life committee, said in media interviews that US President Joe Biden "should stop defining himself as a devout Catholic" and

Local controversies can be overcome with a universal spirit



Left to right: Archbishop Liguori, Archbishop Naumann, Bishop Bätzing

refrain from taking communion because of his pro-choice policies.

A petition calling for Naumann to be removed as chair of the pro-life committee quickly garnered 22,000 signatures.

Of course, it's not only Italians who would be scandalised by perceptions that church personnel may have been negligent, if not complicit, in covering up the murder of a child, just as it's not only German-speaking cultures where a debate in Catholic circles about the Vatican declaration on same-sex unions is underway. Nonetheless, the fact that these reactions seem most intense in particular settings is revealing.

In general, Italians tend not to get as upset as Anglo-Saxon and Germanic cultures about debates over Catholic doctrine and discipline, which reflects a basic cultural difference concerning law.

In Anglo-Saxon and Germanic settings, law tends to be seen as a lowest common denominator of civic morality, so if something's a law, it has to be followed and enforced exactly as written. In Mediterranean cultures, law is seen as something of an ideal, with a realistic understanding that most people, most of the time, will fall short, and so there needs to be plenty of room for interpretation and application to concrete circumstances.

Hence most Italian Catholics would look

BY **JOHN L ALLEN JR**
EDITOR OF CRUX

at the recent Vatican decree and conclude there's no need to react until they figure out what Don Guido plans to do about it in their local parish – and, most likely, Don Guido will treat it with formal praise while quietly continuing to do whatever he thinks is the best pastoral choice.

Perceptions

On the other hand, Italians do get upset about perceptions of hypocrisy and clerical arrogance. Thus when the brother of the 16-year girl who disappeared in 1993, and whose body apparently lay undetected in the local church for years while an agonizing nationwide search unfolded, recently demanded that Archbishop Salvatore Grigorio first come clean about everything the church knows, and then reconcile with the family and the community, before reopening the church where the remains were found, that position resonated deeply.

Among other things, it tapped into a classic Italian fascination with what are known here as *gialli*, meaning unresolved mysteries presumed to conceal dark truths.

Meanwhile, Germany was the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation, where disputes over doctrine and law long have been part

of the fabric of ecclesiastical experience, and where Catholicism inevitably is influenced by the surrounding Protestant ethos of much of the country. Where Italians may greet Vatican decrees with a shrug, Germans are more likely to become outraged, to organise, and to speak up.

Finally we come to the United States, where it's telling that this week's Catholic brouhaha once again has a partisan political edge.

Over the years, I've often heard Catholics from other places say they regard their American coreligionists as denominationally Catholic but culturally Calvinist, implying sharply dualistic tendency to think in terms of absolute good v. absolute evil, the elect and the reprobate. Nowhere is that tendency sharper than in politics, as the ongoing upheaval related to former President Donald Trump illustrates.

Had Naumann simply repeated core Church teaching on abortion, it's unlikely beyond a small circle of the usual suspects even would have noticed. By tying those points to Biden, however, he guaranteed that it would go viral, triggering absolutely predictable reactions from the politically polarised camps into which American Catholicism has chosen to organise itself.

Naturally, the fact that these three controversies reflect the cultures in which they're set doesn't, by itself, provide a roadmap for resolving them. However, perhaps Catholics in each setting could at least consider that since the Church is universal, perhaps there's perspective from another culture which could be helpful in thinking through the challenges in their own.

■ Follow John Allen on Twitter:
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Charity begins at home – but it must not end there

In a recent media interview it was put to me that, with life so difficult under the COVID restrictions, we shouldn't be asking people to give up their treats during Lent to help some of the poorest people in the world through SCIAF's annual WEE BOX Lent appeal.

The suggestion was that life is so miserable, we should leave people's treats that help soften the blow alone.

It was also suggested that, in such difficult times, we should be helping people here in this country, not those overseas.

SCIAF works in some of the world's poorest countries. We see the devastating impact the pandemic is having on extremely poor and vulnerable communi-



Alistair Dutton

Chief Executive, SCIAF

ties who, already living on a knife-edge, face alarmingly increased levels of hunger, poverty and destitution. It is undoing decades of progress and is rendering what was already a fragile existence for so many families even more precarious.

According to the World Bank, half a billion people have been pushed further into poverty during the pandemic and the United Nations World Food Programme reports 270 million people – the equivalent

to the combined population of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy – are facing starvation. This number has doubled since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

This year's WEE BOX appeal focuses on a generation of children with disabilities in South Sudan, the world's newest country and one of the very poorest. Life remains tough in South Sudan. The conflict has left behind a legacy of fear, displacement and despair. The

onset of the coronavirus has now increased the levels of poverty and hunger.

No matter how bad we think things are here, people in the world's poorest countries are suffering much, much more.

To think our lives are so miserable or difficult now that we shouldn't be making sacrifices, reflects a growing culture of individualism.

Of course we need to reward ourselves, to take time for ourselves, to have things to look forward to during these trying days. But, aside from real health suffering of those who've had the virus or the distress of the bereaved, the hardest thing about the lockdown is our isolation.

Giving up something to help others is the very op-

posite of isolation. It is a sacrifice, a self-conscious act of self-abnegation, a willingness to enter into the lives and suffering of others in our imagination and give up some of our enjoyment so others may have hope. This is a most basic act of solidarity, of compassion, of friendship, of humanity, of community, and what it is to make the world a better place.

We can't allow the pandemic or the restrictions we're living under to lower our horizons or cause us to lose sight of those who need us most. We know the indignity and dehumanising consequences of poverty and injustice, and how they keep whole communities locked into hardship and instability. The coronavirus crisis has only made this

worse.

Now, more than ever we need to inform ourselves and use our imaginations to enter the lives of people who are far, far away. We need to empathise with them and, out of our shared humanity, solidarity and compassion, commit and recommit to helping them escape the challenging conditions in which they suffer. And we need to inspire our friends and the people we meet to do the same.

An essential part of what it is to be human is to be bound together by bonds of solidarity and compassion. The WEE BOX offers a reminder to go beyond ourselves and care for those far less fortunate. For our sake and theirs, no matter how bad things are for us, we must never forsake them!

Tuning in to nature's sermon



Mary's musings

Flourish's new columnist
Mary McGinty's monthly
musings on faith and family

Forest bathing and sea swimming are having a moment and I'm heartily embracing both.

It's taken a pandemic for me to realise time spent sitting in cafes drinking skinny lattes with friends is not the only way to enjoy their company. Restrictions permitting we've walked in hail, rain or shine, coffees in one hand and mobiles in the other.

Men, I've noticed, are quite happy to stuff their phones in their pockets when they're out and about. Mothers, even with grown-up children, are poised ever-ready to answer their children's every need. From what time are the lunchtime Masses in the city centre to how long does it take to cook a 4lb chicken ... we have the answers.

So, after swapping high heels for comfy flats and going-out coats for parkas, we've solved the world's problems and dealt with the dilemmas of family life. I might be imagining it but I think we've been more creative than usual with our solutions and I'm sure that's had something to do

with our environment.

Instead of four walls with their curated art and clutter of kitchen utensils we have submerged ourselves in the beauty of the parks and gardens of this dear green place. We're bounded only by the beauty of nature and the canopy of the sky. This is a theatre in which the star performance is the birdsong.

As much as we're eagerly anticipating the re-opening of our favourite eateries we're planning to keep on walking, at least some of the time.

It's not forest bathing in its purest form as practised by the Japanese. Shinrin Yoku is all about consciously soaking up the calmness, breathing deeply and absorbing the beauty of the natural surroundings. My version of eco-therapy is simpler and it works fine for me and my pals.

As for swimming, that's the province of Himself. As head honcho for health and safety he insists on coming with me. It's a while since he's taken a dip so he's been clear, if I get into trouble he'll be in af-

ter me in jig time although there will be limits to what he can do, but at least we'll be together.

Last year when restrictions first eased we took a few trips down the Ayrshire coast of my childhood. In my togs that mostly only see the light of day in some spa on a girls' day away I dragged my sorry carcass into the water. Once over the initial shock and what a shock, I can tell you, it was as if the sea was caressing my soul and I was surrendering my whole being to the glory of God's creation.

Stewardship of the earth has been entrusted to mankind and we have failed in our duty. As a result of man's actions over time not only are we failing to protect the planet but pursuing policies of rampant deforestation, flagrantly disregarding the imperative need to show due reverence to our common home.

To our shame we have polluted land, air and sea. In the developed world our overuse of natural resources and unrestrained consumerism have endangered the environment and its creatures.

We are mere custodians of the planet and it is our responsibility to protect it for future generations. Creation is God's great gift to us, entrusted to us for safe-keeping for future generations. If we love Him we must love his creation.

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Arnold Clark

It's time to encounter Jesus anew in the Easter readings

MANY, in these past weeks, have been able to return to Mass for the first time this year.

Between that and the change of the clocks, we do seem to be moving past the "dark days" of winter into the longer days of spring and maybe even a hint of warmer days to come. Don't we just want to burst out with "Alleluia"?

Easter is our time of hope and new life, born of our faith that Jesus has conquered suffering, darkness and death itself, and offers us a share in his risen life – a life begun in Baptism and sustained by the sacraments, prayer and a life of goodness and love.

These things, unsurprisingly, are at the heart of the readings each Sunday in this year's Easter season: we hear about the Risen Jesus and his victory over suffering and death, we hear him inviting us to share his life, and we hear, in various ways, how we might come to that through living the life Jesus teaches us.

The Gospels

For the first three weeks of the Easter season (including Easter Sunday) we hear about the Resurrection event itself. From Mary Magdalene's discovery of the empty tomb, which brings two leading disciples (Peter and the "Beloved Disciple") to an understanding of what Jesus had taught, we move to three appearances of the Risen Jesus to his disciples.

In the first, set on Easter day itself, he appears to them, proves he is real by showing them the wounds of his Passion, and, breathing the Holy Spirit over them, sends them out to be



Fra Angelico, *Noli Me Tangere*, 1442

his witnesses. Because of that encounter, their fear is transformed into joy.

The second (which forms the same Sunday Gospel but is set a week later), presents Thomas, the reluctant - or maybe resentful! - disciple, who missed that first encounter having his own spe-

cial moment with the Lord. As he is invited – literally – to enter the woundedness of his Risen Master, he comes to faith, professing Jesus as Lord and God.

The third encounter, from Luke's Gospel, is similar to the first, as Jesus enters into their group, shows them his wounds and the reality of his risen body, and replaces their fear with peace and joy. Once again – for the second Sunday in a row – Jesus speaks of sending them out as his witnesses.

Over these first three Sundays, the Easter Gospels have given us three things to consider: the mystery and reality of the resurrection of Jesus; the transforming impact of encounters with him; and the call to share the story and the power of that encounter with others. Even if we heard only those three readings over these weeks, we would have a lot to think about!

But there's more! For the next three weeks, we turn from the actual resurrection

stories to the more theological texts of John's Gospel.

On the 4th Sunday, we hear the famous "Good Shepherd" text. We always hear one of those on this Sunday, perhaps because for the early Church the figure of the Good Shepherd leading his sheep to pasture was understood as a powerful image of the Risen Jesus bringing his followers into heaven. In other words, it was a powerful resurrection image and one that brought hope for those who had died close to their Lord. It is one of the most common images in the catacombs of Rome, for example.

John's Gospel is full of identity statements by Jesus: "I am..." followed by an image of some kind (shepherd, light, bread, life, etc) and on the 5th Sunday we get another: "I am the vine". Like the Good Shepherd, it is a powerful image of the

Fr Tom is our new guide to the scriptures

Fr Tom Kilbride, Rector of the Royal Scots College, will be Flourish's newest writer with a monthly column on the scriptures. Fr Tom is a native of St Matthew's, Bishopbriggs, where he was ordained in 1996, after seminary formation at Chesters College and Glasgow University and then the Pontifical Scots College in Rome. After a year at St Roch's in Royston, he returned to Rome to complete his studies in Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He was then an assistant priest in St Andrew's Cathedral and Our Lady of Lourdes in Cardonald, before becoming Parish Priest of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Dennistoun in 2008. Having served also as Director of the Archdiocese's Religious Education Department, he has been Rector of the Royal Scots College in Salamanca since 2014, running the "propaedeutic course" or first stage of formation for priesthood.

intimacy and closeness with him to which Jesus invites us. His life must course through us like sap through the branches, and, if it does, then we will produce the proper "fruit" of goodness, peace, love and show others that his life transforms us.

And, just in case we didn't understand the metaphors of the previous two Sundays, the 6th Sunday gives us it straight: "Love one another as I have loved you". To be close to the Risen One is to love as he loved, to give as he gave, to witness to the Father's love for the world as he did. In this, surely, lies our Easter mission!

The First Readings: Acts of the Apostles

If the Gospels speak about the Resurrection of Jesus and what it asks of us, the First Reading each week will give us glimpses into how that took shape and was understood in the earliest days of the Church.

Through the fearless and tireless preaching of Peter and Paul in particular, we hear how the message transforms whole communities, and the ways in which they would live as a result. Community life, mutual wellbeing and shared prayer testify to repentance, faith and the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, as well as courage and conviction in their witness.

There may be some idealising going on (we know that the early Church had its tensions too) but those ideals are surely still valid today

if we let the Spirit moves us that direction!

The Second Readings: 1st Letter of St John

Finally, we also hear each Sunday from the first letter of St John. We heard these texts at Christmas, and hear them again now! What was true for the reality of the Incarnation is true for the reality of the Resurrection. The one only makes sense in the light of the other (if Jesus was not truly human, he would not have truly died, and so the resurrection would not have been real either).

John calls us to a genuine faith in Jesus, God and Man, and encourages us to keep close to him. Moreover, he reminds us over and over again that it must boil down to living that love with which he loved us, the very thing we hear from Jesus himself in the Gospel of the 6th Sunday.

This, then, is where our Easter readings direct us: faith in Jesus risen from the dead; the joy and peace which comes from an encounter with him, knowing that he still bears the scars of our humanity; staying close to him through our prayer, our sacramental life and our togetherness; bearing fruit through our witness to him, both proclaiming the message and loving as he loved us. The readings throughout this season tell us that Easter can transform us still – if we let it – and gives us maybe a basis for renewal as Christians as we look ahead to our post-pandemic world.



Fr Tom Kilbride

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LAST Sunday was a very beautiful day. I headed out mid-morning from the house and took a different route than usual, still intending to end up on one of the link pathways onto the Forth and Clyde Canal for the final lap back home.

The first thing I noticed was that there are now at least six post boxes in Bishopbriggs sporting brightly coloured, crocheted tam-mies, with bobbles on top, and so, it would seem, the yarn bombers of Bishopbriggs are multiplying.

Pleasant

The canal was quite busy with strollers, runners, dog walkers and cyclists, but still it was a pleasant Sunday morning jaunt, in bright sunshine, with a lovely warm breeze on my face.

Getting nearer to home again, just as I passed by the Episcopal Church of St. James the Less, I noticed crudely scrawled signs on a board, and on the ground, with arrows directing people to what was described as a "Wall of Hope and Sorrow".

Hope

There were also footsteps chalked on the ground, and so, intrigued by this, I followed the footsteps round to the back of the church, and discovered that the wall was in fact the wire mesh

Finding inspiration in our own back yard



Fr Frank's log

Fr Frank Keevins CP is Parish Priest of St Mungo's Townhead

fence at one end of the Bishopbriggs Fire Station. There was a white t-shirt hanging on the fence also bearing the words "Wall of Hope and Sorrow".

Apart from that, the fence was covered with different coloured clothes pegs and different coloured ribbons. I'm not sure if the pegs were for hope, and the ribbons for sorrow; vice-versa, or a mish-mash of both. There were only two written messages on the wall, one in remembrance of someone who had died, and the other from a child expressing happiness for her new kitten... Hope and sorrow can

take many forms.

Near to the wall, there was a labyrinth chalked onto the ground. A labyrinth is a circular path leading into, and out of, a central spot, and in spirituality a labyrinth can represent the journey to the centre of the true self, where God dwells, or perhaps just the journey of life, which is never a straight line.

So, you never know what is on your doorstep, and it was a nice little detour which added a new element to my walk. Next time I may bring a peg or a ribbon to add to the wall. I may also leave myself time to walk the labyrinth.

The night before, we had our own experience of hope and sorrow. In solidarity with Father Gareth, we gathered at 8pm to watch the France v Wales, 6-Nations Rugby encounter. Wales, and Father Gareth, had high hopes of a Grand Slam victory, and that's the way it was looking right until the end. But then, hope turned to sorrow in the last seconds as Wales somehow managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory as, with the last play of the game, France went over for a match winning try.

Sorrow

Father Gareth was desolate, and even attempted to accuse Father Antony of jinxing it by saying it was in the bag.

Now comes the irony, because the week before, Father Gareth delighted in Ireland beating Scotland, but now he still had to depend on Scotland beating France, so that Wales could still win the Championship – which indeed was the case keeping everyone happy.

At the time of writing, hope and sorrow are rearing their heads again, after the court ruling that the Government overstepped the mark; and that the blanket ban imposed on public worship, even when gyms and pubs were open, went beyond what they were legally able to do, and that churches could re-open immediately.

Normality

So, while we hold out the hope that this signals a sooner than expected return to normality, with a certain sorrow as to what may

have been needlessly lost, we must still imagine that all the safety protocols still need to be in place, and that opening will still depend on the very generous efforts of our volunteers. Once again, watch this space!

We are all well enough in Bishopbriggs. Father Justinian was scheduled to have his second Covid-19 vaccination, but then had to cancel as it was too close to his second cataract surgery. All in its own time.

So, as ever ... protect yourselves, your loved ones and others, and protect Christ in your lives.

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