

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow April 2023

Archbishop's rallying cry: it's time to spread the...

Good news!

- New fund for evangelisation
- Consultation on future plans
- Archbishop's words of hope

A FUTURE built on vibrant, outward-looking parishes, where priests and lay people share the challenge of spreading the good news ... that's the vision outlined by Archbishop Nolan in a powerful pastoral letter which will have a major impact on the faith life of Catholics for years to come.

After a year spent listening and learning, the Archbishop has launched a series of initiatives designed to restore energy and enthusiasm to parishes after the challenges of Covid and prolonged closure, and designed to equip the Archdiocese to face the future.

Among the key points are:

- The establishment of a new £1m fund to support parishes with initiatives

BY RONNIE CONVERY

- to evangelise
 - The creation of five new consultative bodies (to be known as 'deanery councils') to allow local lay people and priests to recommend how best to organise church life in their local area
 - A rallying call for people to live coherent lives which will attract others to the faith.
- Later this month a consultation process entitled

'Looking to the Future' will be launched with representatives of every parish invited to a meeting at the Archdiocesan Offices. There the new deanery councils made up of one lay person and one priest from each parish will meet and learn what is expected of them.

Archbishop Nolan said it was important that the new consultative bodies should not be seen as mere talking shops but rather as a way of shaping practical proposals for the future.

He said: "It is important

"Archdiocese must be outward-looking"
—Archbishop

Picture by Paul McSherry



that each Deanery Council focuses initially on the vision for the future before turning its attention to how this can be achieved and what practical steps need to be taken within each deanery.

"The Archdiocese will be looking to the Councils to make concrete proposals regarding the use of both personnel and property."

With the establishment of the five new Deaneries (down from the previous nine) five new Deans have been named to lead the process of consultation.

They are: Dunbartonshire West – Fr Aidan Martin, Dunbartonshire East – Fr John Campbell, West – Fr Allan Cameron, North/East – Canon Anthony Gallagher, South – Fr Martin Kane

Archbishop Nolan told *Flourish*: "The Archdiocese must be outward looking. Any decisions about how to use our resources, including people (whether clergy or lay) and property (whether money or buildings) must be determined by how they can best serve the mission Christ has given the Church.

"We need to remember, of course, that what we are preaching is not the Catholic Church, what we are preaching is Jesus Christ. Our aim is to bring people to Jesus and bring Jesus to the people, so that that encounter will change their lives.

"Sometimes the Church and its members have been a counter sign, discouraging others from coming to Christ. That is why it is so important that we don't just talk about Jesus but that we put his teachings into practice."

ANNIVERSARY

Ten years of Pope Francis

PAGE 10-11

CHURCH

St Pat's memories

PAGE 5

SAINT

Padre Pio devotion

PAGE 6

Easter with the BBC for Archbishop

ARCHBISHOP Nolan is to take part in a special programme for Easter bring produced by BBC Scotland to go on air on Easter Sunday morning.

Reflections at the Quay (so called because the programme is based at BBC Scotland's Pacific Quay HQ) will see the Archbishop being joined by three other guests including former Kirk Moderator Lorna Hood.

Rehearsals got underway last month for the broadcast which is being overseen by veteran religious broadcasting producer David Strachan.

Archbishop Nolan will speak about the message of the Gospel passage when the disciples rush to the tomb of Jesus and find it empty.

He told *Flourish*: "I hope to offer a few thoughts that might inspire people to see the relevance of that passage to their lives."

"Just as the empty tomb was the spur for the disciples to believe so also the emptiness of our lives is often the spur moving us to faith."

Focus

"At moments of loss – of our job, of our health, of a relationship, of someone precious to us – our life seems suddenly empty and has lost all meaning and purpose. At that point, in that emptiness, when all that is precious has been taken from us, we encounter God. In tragedy we come to realise that we have lost our focus, we have to refocus our lives."



New catechists are commissioned and ready for action

A NEW generation of catechists has been commissioned by Archbishop Nolan at a ceremony in the Cathedral and they are now ready, in the words of Pope Francis, to 'walk with the people of God' and lead others in understanding their faith.

The commissioning of the eight new catechists and the re-commissioning of 18 others is seen as a hopeful sign for the future.

Once appointed the new catechists serve in parishes working with young people and adults and with those who wish to be received into the Catholic Church under the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) programme.

Archbishop Nolan said: "It was a great joy to commission our catechists and see them head out into parishes with secure formation and real enthusiasm to engage with others."

"It is good to see lay people taking on a role which is rightfully theirs as educators in the faith."

For the new catechists the commissioning Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral marked the end of a two-year period during which time they spent one night a week studying for an Award in Catholic Theological Education in a course run in conjunction with the Uni-



BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

versity of Glasgow's Catholic Education Department.

The Course is overseen by a steering group whose members are Canon Anthony Gallagher, director of religious education for the Archdiocese and Parish Priest at St Catherine Labouré, Balornock, Professor Stephen McKinney, Glasgow University, tutor Ellen McBride, and former catechist student Kathleen Thompson.

Ellen, who has been a parish catechist for more

than 30 years and is keen to encourage more candidates to come forward.

She said: "Catechists come from all walks of life and all ages who all have one thing in common and that is a deep faith and a desire to share it with others"

"All candidates must have the approval of their parish priest and in a lot of cases the priest will often know of someone in their parish with the right qualities and so he will encourage them to come forward. Speaking to your priest is always a good first step."

"But it does require a commitment. The course

is two years long and split into eight different modules and involves attending a study night once a week.

"There are no exams or essays but candidates must give presentations on different topics."

"Those taking part get great encouragement not only during the course but as they continue their journey, for, as Pope Francis said being a catechist is not a job but a vocation."

■ To find out more about becoming a catechist and the award in Catholic Theological Education email Christine.Burke@rcag.org.uk

'The best day of my life'

FOR Linda Fagan her journey to becoming a catechist began, although she did not realise it at the time, when she was asked to become a reader at St. Helens Church, Langside, where she has been a parishioner for the past 14 years.

Linda (pictured fourth from right, in blue scarf), who worked in local authority HR before she retired, said: "I was very nervous, literally shaking, the first time I stood up to read but the more I did it not only did I become more relaxed, but it made me want to learn more and more about the scriptures and the messages behind the passages I was reading."

"I realized that was the beginning of deepening my faith, learning more about it and my relationship with God."

After attending a series of faith development classes Linda decided that not only did she want to deepen her own faith but to share it with others which led her to discuss becoming a catechist

with former parish priest Monsignor Paul Murray, now parish priest at St Peter's Partick.

She said: "He could not have been more helpful and very encouraging and put my mind at ease over a couple of things I was concerned about."

Superb

Linda added: "The course was hard going at first, but I must say the teaching was superb and we all encouraged each other so that was a big help."

"The commissioning Mass was the best night of my life. Its not like me to use phrases like this but I can honestly say that the Cathedral was filled with love and talking afterwards everyone else felt the same."

Linda, who is also safeguarding officer for her parish and a member of its parish council, is currently a member of St Helen's RCIA team.

And she is still reading at Mass – where her journey to become a catechist began.

Musical relaunch at the Cathedral

A NEW era begins this Easter at St Andrew's Cathedral with the appointment of a new Musical Director.

Des McLean, who for 30 years directed the choir at Our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald, and who wrote music for both Papal Masses at Bellahouston, takes over the reins from Maria Madden who led the choir for many years.

Having retired in June 2021 after a lifetime in music education, Des told *Flourish* he hopes to build on the foundations he has inherited to create a choir for male and female voices – sopranos, altos, tenors and basses – who can perform a range of sacred music to enhance the Cathedral liturgies.

He said: "One of my immediate challenges is to

develop the choir and so I would want to say to anyone who has ever thought about joining a choir – give it a try!

"I am looking for people to sing in the choir in all four sections and whilst the ability to read music would be beneficial, it is by no means essential.

"This invitation is extended to anyone across our Archdiocese who may have an interest in choral singing but is not intended to draw parishioners away from their own parish music ministry, rather it is for those for whom, for one reason or another, there is no choir, music group or music ministry."

Des says he hopes to provide the very best of liturgical music – everything from modern hymns to plainchant and polyphony.

He said: "We want to follow the conciliar documents

to make good choral sound that helps people to worship well. The role of the choir is to lead the congregation, support their singing and also to provide choral music to help those at Mass to reflect and raise their minds and hearts to God.

"We will rehearse on a Thursday evening from 7pm until 9pm and sing at the 12 noon Mass on a Sunday. Already we have worked on some of the great Lenten chants such as Attende Domine and look forward to a full sung Triduum ending with the Regina Coeli on Easter Sunday.

Are you interested? Do you want to come even on a trial basis?

■ For more information, Email Des McLean at desmclean1960@gmail.com or call him on 07712

Holy Week and Easter in Cathedral



■ St Andrew's Cathedral will be open throughout Holy Week and over the Easter weekend for visits and private prayer. The full programme of liturgies is as follows:

Monday 3rd to Wednesday 5th April

■ Mass at 8.15am, 1pm and at 5.15pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.
■ Confessions at 12.30pm each day.

Holy Thursday

■ 11.00am—The Chrism Mass concelebrated by priests of the Archdiocese
■ 6.00pm—The Mass of the Lord's Supper
■ 10.00pm—Night Prayer at the Place of Repose.

Good Friday

■ 10.00am—Morning Prayer.
■ 3.00pm—The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord.
■ 6.00pm—Meditations on the Passion with Veneration of the Cross.
■ 9.00pm—Night Prayer

Holy Saturday

■ 10.00am—Morning Prayer.
■ 8.30pm—The Easter Vigil celebrated by Archbishop Nolan

Easter Sunday

■ Mass at 10am and 12noon.

Easter Monday—

■ Mass at 1pm.

Tuesday 11th April—

■ Normal Mass schedule resumes.

All services streamed at www.cathedralg1.org

Catenians boost for Lourdes pilgrims

A LOCAL Catholic charity has given a generous donation to a group of young volunteers who help the sick and those with a handicap to go to Lourdes... and more grants are available!

The money was gifted by local members of the Catenians, an association founded in Manchester in 1908 which now numbers 8,000 members worldwide, and whose charitable works include supporting young Catholics who volunteer to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Brendan Berry, President of the Glasgow Catenian Circle, presented cheques to members of the Scottish Youth Group of the Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage Trust (HCPT) following Mass at the end of a training day for the young volunteers at St Columbkille's church in Rutherglen.

HCPT, founded almost 70 years ago, takes over 1000 disabled and disadvantaged children and adults to Lourdes every year and relies heavily on volunteers.

Mark Armstrong, Leader of the HCPT Scottish Youth



Brendan Berry hands over cheque to young pilgrims

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

Group: "We are delighted to return to Lourdes this year after Covid. The costs have gone up, but we were determined not to allow this to stop young people having the chance to take part in the Pilgrimage.

"Many may not be able to travel without the welcome support of the Catenians, so I would like to thank mem-

bers of the organisation for their generosity."

Every year the Catenian Association, whose core mission is to promote friendship and strengthen faith and Catholic family life, supports young Catholics through its Bursary Fund, a UK-registered charity.

Two types of award are available: for individual projects, often in a gap year, or for travel to Lourdes to

act as a helper for assisted pilgrims.

The fund is open to young people between the ages of 16 and 25. Applicants do not need to have any knowledge of, or acquaintance with, the Catenians to apply. Full details can be found at <https://catenianbursary.com>

More information, for those interesting in joining, can be found at <https://the-catenians.com/about-us>

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Countdown to Lisbon

THE countdown is on for 64 young pilgrims who are going to World Youth Day this summer with RCAG Youth, the Archdiocesan Youth Office.

They are all very excited and looking forward to various elements of the pilgrimage. Flourish spoke to four of them to get a snapshot of their hopes and excitement:

OLIVER

18 – St. Mungo's Townhead

Why did you sign up for World Youth Day?

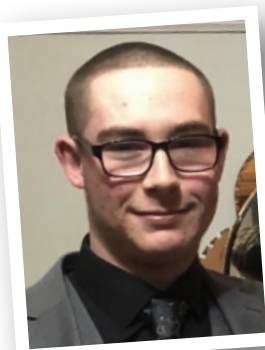
I want to grow in faith and to meet young Catholics from around the world.

What do you hope to get out of the pilgrimage?

I hope that World Youth Day will help me draw close to God and live my life the way he wants me to.

What are you most excited for?

I am excited to attend



Mass with the Pope and to visit the National Stadium.

MOLLY

18 – St. Martin of Tours, Renton

Why did you sign up for World Youth Day?

World Youth Day allows young people to experience and celebrate the true joy of being Catholic. I cannot wait to be involved in the gathering of thousands of pilgrims coming together for a time of prayer and fellowship! Sometimes, life as a young teenage Catholic in today's society can feel very isolating and abnormal. However, this pilgrimage allows us to

connect with people who also share the same enthusiasm about their faith. Most importantly, I signed up to encounter Jesus and to share in the fullness of the gospel. This will be my first time attending WYD and I am so excited about this new journey!

What do you hope to get out of the pilgrimage?

I hope that I will be able to strengthen my relationship with God through receiving the sacraments and spending time in prayer with other young people. I think that this pilgrimage



will allow me to grow both personally and spiritually,

helping me understand more about my faith. Ultimately, I pray that we will be inspired and our hearts may be opened so that we might be faithful disciples of mercy and truth.

What are you most excited for?

There are so many things about this pilgrimage that I am super excited about! I am most looking forward to spending time with Pope Francis and to experience the vibrancy of the universal Church! Also, I am excited to meet new people, visit a new country and discover a different culture! Of course, I am looking forward to having some sunshine (we don't seem to get a lot of that in Scotland!)

REJOICE

28 – Sacred Heart, Bridgeton

Why did you sign up for World Youth Day?

It was the perfect opportunity to travel; take time off from everything and meet like-minded people my age who love God and share a passion for the Catholic faith.



What do you hope to get out of the pilgrimage?

Knowing I'm part of a community and not alone in the quest for holiness, while creating lasting

friendships that are spiritually edifying would always give me a sense of satisfaction. I also hope to encounter God personally and just enjoy being in his presence during the pilgrimage.

What are you most excited for?

The two things I'm especially looking forward to are visiting Fatima, and the Papal Vigil night.

MATTHEW

30 – Our Lady & St. George, Penilee

Why did you sign up for World Youth Day?

In 2022, during a trip to Italy with a university friend and a brother in Christ, we went on a pilgrimage to Loreto. In Loreto, we visited the Basilica della Santa Casa where the Nazareth House of Our Lady is enshrined. Standing inside our Blessed Mother Mary's earthly home was a deeply moving and humbling experience. During our visit, we participated in the daily Rosary; surprisingly each decade was said in a different language: Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as the Mass with the parishion-

ers. After visiting Loreto, I knew that I wanted to participate in more pilgrimages to deepen my faith and connect with young Catholics.

What do you hope to get out of the pilgrimage?

I am hoping the pilgrimage will strengthen my journey in faith towards virtue and truth as declared by our Lord: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).



What are you most excited for?

For me, I am especially looking forward to: Catechesis, the Scottish gathering, our trip to Fatima and the Papal Mass. But, when thinking about our group of pilgrims, I am particularly excited about joining them each day in prayer, communion and friendship.

Please continue to pray for our group of pilgrims as we walk together, with the Lord, towards Lisbon. Please also consider partnering with us financially to help us provide this opportunity for young people who are unable to afford this experience.

■ **Key Pilgrimage Details: 30th July – 8th August 2023.** Pilgrim age is 16 (as of Feb 2023) through to 35 at time of pilgrimage to Lisbon. The cost to young pilgrims is £750 (with the real cost being £1750). To find out more or to register, email us: youth@rcag.org.uk. To partner with us financially and provide assistance to our young, please contact me, Mairi-Claire McGeady by email (youth@rcag.org.uk) or phone (07496876910).

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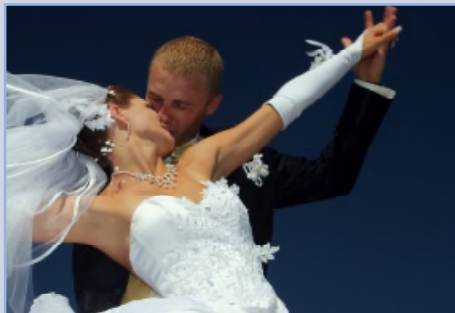


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Making memories at St Pat's

THE parish with – probably! – Scotland's most viewed church building marked a special anniversary last month as St Patrick's Anderston celebrated 125 years since the opening of the red sandstone building which is seen by millions of motorists every year as they cross the Kingston Bridge.

Archbishop Nolan was joined by former Parish Priests and a large congregation of parishioners past and present for an anniversary Mass.

The Anderston Parish has produced many notable public figures over the years including former speaker of the House of Commons, the late Michael Martin, the former head of Europe's largest education authority, Frank Pignatelli and former Lord Provost Alex Mosson.

When the current church was consecrated in 1950 by Archbishop Campbell the parish had 16,000 parishioners and six priests and a chapel of ease to help overcome the pressure of numbers!

Picture by Paul McSherry



But the construction of the Kingston Bridge in the late 1960s cut a swathe through the middle of the parish,

eliminating huge numbers of houses, and led to the redistribution of St Pat's people to all corners of the city's

new housing schemes.

Today the Parish has a small but devoted congregation who took great pride in



creating an anniversary 'history wall' recalling the glory days of the parish.

Archbishop Nolan – who is now St Patrick's best known parishioner as he lives in the presbytery – joined the congregation for the anniversary Mass and recalled the great heritage of faith that is represented by St Patrick's but also encouraged the parishioners to look forward with positivity and belief.

Canon Paul Gargaro, Par-

ish Priest at St Patrick's for the last six years, said: "The anniversary has been a great opportunity to bring people together, to share fond memories and to remember those who have gone before us."

"The celebrations ended with a lusty rendition of 'Hail glorious St Patrick' which left us all in good heart and spurred us on to keep the faith as we face the challenges of the future."

Milestones for Mgr Gerry and singers

IT was a case of 'better late than never' when Monsignor Gerry Fitzpatrick, Parish Priest at St Leo's Dumbreck and the Mungo Singers, the choir he co-founded, marked two significant anniversaries with a special Mass in the south side church.

Plans for both Monsignor Gerry's 80th and the choir's Golden Jubilee were delayed for three years because of Covid restrictions but now the double celebration has finally taken place.

A Mass of thanksgiving to mark the founding of the Mungo singers was held in the Cathedral October 2021, when Archbishop Conti was the chief celebrant, but it was always intended to have a Mass for parishioners at St Leo's when the time was right.

Monsignor Gerry, who is also director of music for the Archdiocese, and parish priest at St Leo's for the past 30 years said: "Our parish Mass was a very joyful occasion and despite the wait to mark both birthdays I can say that both myself and the choir are in very good heart."

The choir was formed in 1971 to promote the development of liturgical music



BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY

and was given the name at the suggestion of Archbishop Scanlan.

As well as Monsignor Gerry the choir's other living founders were Dr Noel Donnelly, his wife Kathleen and Paul McNeill who were among those who attended the thanksgiving Mass.

Over the years the Mungo Singers sang for the installation of three Archbishops, the visits to Scotland



of Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as well as countless other events in the Archdiocese and beyond.

Monsignor Gerry said: "We look forward to continuing our friendship, enriching the Church's life and helping others and ourselves in our prayers through music – Let Glasgow Flourish and the Mungo Singers with it!"

Writing in an anniversary booklet outlining the

history of the Mungo Singers Archbishop Nolan said: "In my short time in the Archdiocese of Glasgow I have been impressed by the commitment and dedication off the choir, their love of music and their desire to enhance the liturgy."

"Impressively the St. Mungo singers do not seek to replace the congregation but to inspire the congregation so that all are involved in the praise of God by singing a song to the Lord".

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That's the challenge from SPRED who have been ministering to children and young adults in the Archdiocese for more than 35 years.

Lisbeth Raeside, Director of SPRED – the name comes from the phrase Special Religious Development – said: "Until recently there were three SPRED groups which served all the local parishes, helping them to welcome their members who need extra help to take part in parish life due to a learning disability. The groups have been well supported practically and financially by all the local clergy and parishioners."

"The passing of time has led to some volunteers having to retire after decades of faithful service and one of the groups has had to close, leaving four people on the waiting list

BY BRIAN SWANSON

for a place in SPRED.

"We now need to recruit eight new volunteers and four people who would be willing to drive someone to and from their SPRED group."

She added "It is heart-breaking to know that there are people who are desperate to have a place in SPRED and not be able to offer it to them. I know how much SPRED means to them and to their families and I have promised them that we will do all we can to form a new group for them."

"To do that, we need kind people who are willing to share their faith with one person in a supportive small group. Those who are interested can experience SPRED through taking part in a short training programme and then decide if it is for them."

■ To find out more call the SPRED Centre on 0141 770 5055 or email Glasgow.spred@btconnect.com

Padre Pio devotion stronger than ever

PADRE Pio is a saint for our time. He has been recorded on tape, filmed, and photographed by many people.

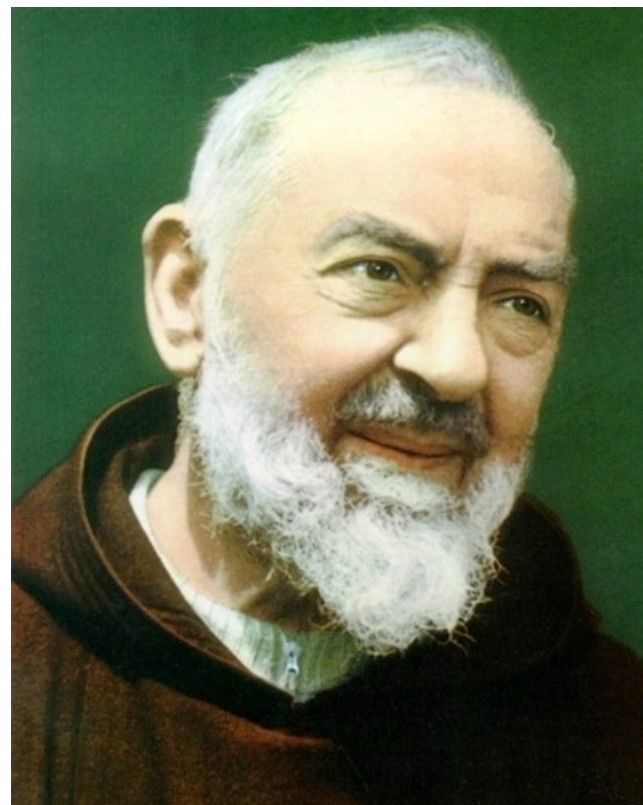
I've known and spoken to people who have met him, talked to him, and been to confession to him. He has enormous appeal and while he was alive, over the years, people flocked in their droves to meet him, to be blessed by him, and to listen to what he had to say.

Part of his mystique was the supernatural dimension to his everyday life and these examples are well known.

Among them was his ability to be in more than one place at once, his power to read souls, his gift of healing, and of course the stigmata.

He prayed for the physical marks to leave him but for the pain to remain.

Each day friars used to bind the wounds with fresh bandages and cover them with a mitten, a fingerless brown or black glove which



As relics of Saint Padre Pio were brought to several Glasgow parishes as part of a rare visit to a number of churches in Scotland, **Father Bryan Shorthall**, director of the Padre Pio Apostolate, Ireland, tells *Flourish* about the enduring appeal of one of our most popular modern day saints

Padre Pio was asked once who are you? He replied; 'I'm just a poor friar who prays.' I've no doubt that he would prefer to be remembered for this rather than all his supernatural gifts.

he removed for Mass.

The visible wounds appeared on his body in 1918 and for 50 years they were a daily source of pain and embarrassment for him. Medical experts were at a loss as to why the wounds continued to bleed over the years.

He attracted pilgrims from all over the world and as the years went on, people even had to book a ticket to go to confession to Padre Pio.

He would enter the realm of the supernatural as he heard each confession. His compassion for those who were suffering because of a physical or a moral problem would come through.

Padre Pio was an ordinary friar who did extraordinary things. He seamlessly connected from our world to the next world in prayer and while he suffered greatly, he offered it all up and believed that his sufferings were not a waste of time and could perhaps do some good.

He spent many years helping to build the 'Home for the Relief of the Suffering' the great hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo which stands today as his legacy of care for those who suffer.'

Today, it is one of the finest hospitals in South Eastern Italy. He knew the hardships of the sick and also what their families go through. Padre Pio would say that while he will always pray for the sick, he would offer every support to the

great work of those whose skills are put at the service of patients.



Picture by Paul McSherry

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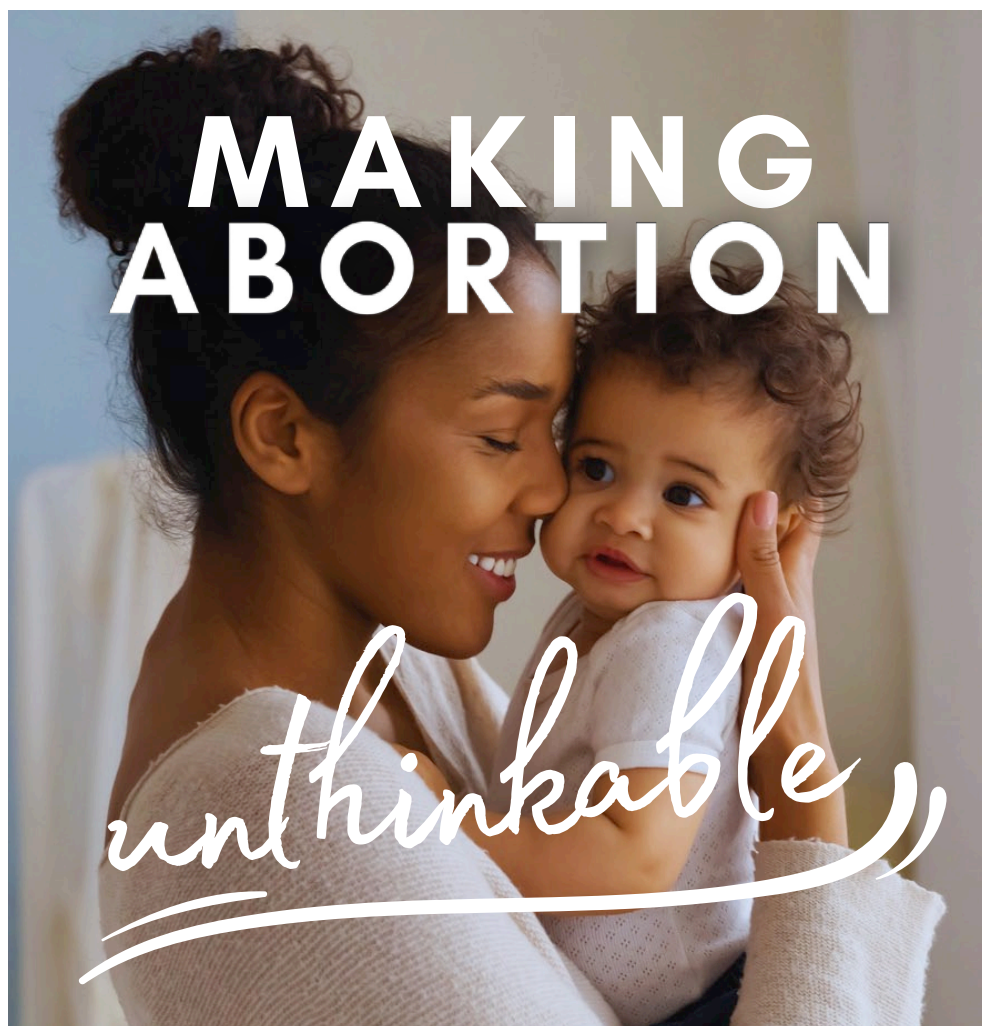
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Schools mark Golden Jubilees with visit from the Archbishop

It's always a happy occasion when a neighbour looks in to mark a special birthday as this little boy discovered when Archbishop Nolan, parishioner and resident of St Patrick's Anderston, said a Mass of thanksgiving to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the adjoining primary school which also bears the saint's name.

And during the Mass and in a nod to the past, the Archbishop used a chalice, gifted by young parishioners in the early days of the church which this year celebrates its 125th anniversary.

Joyful

Parish Priest Canon Paul Gargaro said: "It was a very joyful occasion which the pupils enjoyed very much. It was good to see them reacting so well to the Archbishop who immediately put them at their ease."

Over the past few weeks, as these pictures show, Archbishop Nolan has gone back to the classroom as two



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURES BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

other primary schools in the Archdiocese, St Mungo's Townhead and St Patrick's Dumbarton also celebrate their Golden Jubilees.

After celebrating Mass

and meeting pupils and staff Archbishop Nolan said: "It was a great joy to visit on such a such a landmark occasion for the schools, but it is also a great celebration of everything the schools have achieved up to now."

"These schools are filled with a great group of kids,

a great team of staff and a real sense of community.

Head teacher at St Mungo's, Patricia McNulty said: "We're delighted that the Archbishop celebrated Mass with us. It was a beautiful celebration of what St Mungo's is all about – faith, family, community and coming together."

And the same sense of joy was evident as the Archbishop met pupils and staff after celebrating Mass at St Patrick's Primary, Dumbarton to mark 50 years of the opening of the present school building.



Left: St Patrick's Anderston; far left: St Mungo's; below: St Patrick's Dumbarton



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Volunteers sought for hearing test study

Hearing Diagnostics Limited, an Edinburgh-based start-up, is piloting its new type of hearing test, which has shown to enable clinical-level accuracy in community-based settings in previous informal pilots.

The company recently started a pilot study in central Glasgow and Milngavie and continues looking for volunteers with hearing loss and also those with normal hearing, to come forward and help the company to prove the effectiveness of its hearing test.

The company is looking for volunteers – who will be unpaid – who are older than 18 years.

They can volunteer by calling 07780132745 or email: participants@hdiags.co.uk and the company will confirm times and the location.

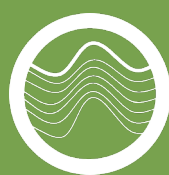
About 1 in 5 individuals aged 40+ have hearing loss. Early detection is crucial as without management, individuals with hearing loss are at risk of:

- Anxiety issues and depression
- Social isolation

- Job loss and economic hardship
- Cognitive decline: the risk of developing premature dementia is 5 times higher without hearing aids.

However, an estimated 86% of those with hearing loss in the UK are unaware of their hearing loss.

Hearing Diagnostics was founded with the mission to drive early hearing loss detection by making access to reliable hearing screening easy and convenient.



**Hearing
Diagnostics**

Volunteers for hearing testing study sought

Testing takes place in central Glasgow and Milngavie

Volunteers will learn about their hearing ability

Volunteers must be older than 18 years and participation is unpaid

Testing runs from February 2023 onwards

To contact please call us in 07780 132745 or send and email to participants@hdiags.co.uk



hdiags.co.uk

Belief and independence

ACADEMICS at the University of Glasgow have been awarded funding to look at the role of faith in deciding Scotland's constitutional future.

The Paristamen Charity has awarded its 2023 Blue Sky Grant of £25,000 to a team led by Rev Dr Douglas Gay and Professor Heather Walton, who work in the University of Glasgow's Theology & Religious Studies subject area.

The Charity asked for proposals to increase understanding of Christian Reflection on Scotland's Constitutional Future. The aim of the project is to bring together those on all sides of the independence debate, including those who are undecided, to listen and

respond to a range of arguments and perspectives.

Dr Gay and Professor Walton will oversee research throughout Scotland, exploring how church members and adherents apply faith-based arguments to Scotland's continued belonging to the UK or its becoming an independent country.

Rev Dr Gay, Senior Lecturer, Theology & Religious Studies, based in the School of Critical Studies at the University of Glasgow, said:

"There are high levels of interest today in the place of faith in public life in Scotland. We are delighted to receive funding from Paristamen to explore these issues with folk in the pews and to deepen our understanding

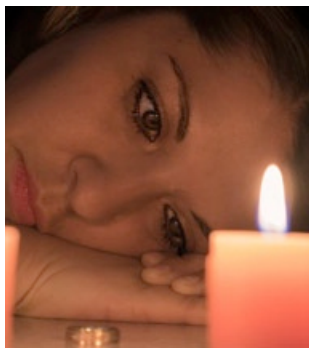
of how people relate their faith to their thinking about constitutional options."

Professor Gareth Morgan, Chair of Trustees of The Paristamen Charity, added:

"Paristamen has funded a number of projects to encourage debate and exploration of sensitive or controversial issues, usually from a Christian perspective. We were delighted to receive an extremely strong proposal for this project from the University of Glasgow and we look forward to working with their team."

Research will include ecumenical field work across a range of Christian churches and traditions in the Autumn and Winter of 2023/4, leading to a final report in the first half of 2024.

Women's support group is here to help



FAITH Living – the support group for women affected by divorce or separation – is offering a warm welcome to anyone who might be interested in sharing in the group.

The next meeting for women affected by separation and divorce will take place on Friday 14th April in St Patrick's church hall, Dumbarston from 6pm to 8pm. All

new members are welcome to this confidential and peer support group. The group is peer led and confidential. There are a variety of ways that women can reach out before the meeting:

Twitter: @GAWomenSupport
Facebook: Faith Living (Archdioceses of Glasgow)
email: glasgowarchdiocese.womensgroup@gmail.com

Could you help tell the story of oppressed Christians worldwide?

AN international Catholic charity which stands in solidarity with Christians wherever they are persecuted is seeking new volunteers in Scotland to boost funds for its vital work.

BY BRIAN SWANSON

Founded by a Catholic priest in Belgium more than 70 years ago to help war refugees – and recognised as a Pontifical Foundation since 2011 – Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is dedicated to providing practical support to oppressed Christian communities worldwide.

William More, who is in charge of fundraising for ACN in Scotland, said: "Volunteers who raise funds for us are our life blood – we simply could not exist without them."

"They help to share our

story with parish groups, schools and other communities and organise sponsored events all to raise awareness and funds to support oppressed Christians wherever there is a need – and there always is a need.

"This can be responding to everything from helping those affected by natural disasters to rebuilding churches destroyed by terrorist groups and that is where the funds raised by our volunteers here in Scotland

"When I visit parishes sometime people say to me that charity begins at home and I like to reply that the rest of the quote says 'but it doesn't have to stay there'

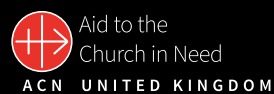
and that's really what we are all about.

"Everyone who has volunteers with us has found it a very rewarding experience and I'd encourage people to get in touch with us to find out for themselves how they can help. I promise you they won't regret it"

With headquarters in Germany CAN now has a presence in 96 countries, including Nigeria, Chile, Lebanon, Syria and Ukraine and annually funds more than 5,000 global projects.

ACN receives no funding from other sources for this vital work and relies solely on money raised by its volunteers.

■ **For more info email William on William.more@acnuk.org or call him on 07939 809414**



Earthquake Appeal

Please help the victims of the earthquake in northern Syria – where ACN is working with project partners to deliver emergency aid including food, blankets, medicine and shelter for those who have lost everything. **Syria does not have the infrastructure to cope with this disaster – so please give whatever you can afford!** They need our prayers and support at this time.

**Please give today:
Call 0345 646 0110
quoting 'P2FL' or visit
www.acnuk.org/e23fl**



SCAN ME



Thousands killed and mass destruction in Syria.

Kinza's story



A CATHOLIC girl in Pakistan, who was raped and forced to convert by her kidnapper, has spoken out about her harrowing ordeal.

Kinza Sindhu – who is just 14 years old – was abducted from her home in Lahore by five men in September 2022.

She said: "My parents, who are both cooks, were away at work. My elder sister was in the kitchen when I heard a knock on the front door at around 12pm."

"When I opened the door, the armed men pulled me out and pushed me inside a van. I recognised two of them, but the rest were unknown."

"One of them made me take a sedative and I slipped into unconsciousness. Later

one of the young guys I knew raped me at gunpoint, at an unknown location."

Kinza was put under pressure to convert to Islam and marry her rapist – but she refused to co-operate.

Relating her terrifying experiences in her native language Urdu, she said: "The next day the guy who raped me brought a bearded man to register the nikah [Muslim marriage]."

"I told them I am a Christian and refused to repeat the Arabic verses..."

"They made me sign a white paper and took my fingerprints. They also made videos of the ceremony on a phone."

She told ACN that she survived by praying silently throughout her ordeal.

In October 2022 she was finally able to return home, but she and her parents are not out of danger.

Miss Sindhu told ACN: "I am worried for my family who are still receiving threatening calls from unknown numbers."

She said: "Now I am back home. I feel I am closer to God. I had lost all hope. It was God who sent help in the shape of lawyers who fought the case and brought me back."

Up to 1,000 young female Christians and Hindus, aged between 12–25, are abducted and forced to convert to Islam every year.

In 2021 ACN launched an initiative with Pakistan's national Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace to protect minority girls and produced the report 'Hear Her Cries', highlighting the kidnapping, forced conversion and sexual victimisation of Christian women and girls around the world.



Aid to the Church in Need

12-14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA

ACN A registered charity in England and Wales (1097984) and in Scotland (SC040748)

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Donations can also be given online at

www.acnuk.org/e23fl

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I enclose a cheque to Aid to the Church in Need OR please debit my VISA/MasterCard/Amex/Maestro

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A23P2FL

Church unity in action

THE Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has warmly praised a pioneering community partnership between Catholic and Church of Scotland parishes in Maryhill.

The project, which began more than two years ago, is designed to identify the needs of local people of all faiths and none and help them cope with the escalating cost of living crisis.

Speaking after joining locals at a breakfast club in St Gregory's, Wyndford, Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields said: "This was a prime example of the great good that can be done when churches from different denominations work together for the benefit of their community."

Dr Greenshields visited the project at St Gregory's which is part of an initiative with Maryhill Ruchill Parish Church ensures that five buildings in the area are kept open as warm hubs throughout the week.

During his visit the Moderator and his wife Linda talked to volunteers at the foodbank which provides more than 200 bags of groceries each week to local people.

Father Jim Lawlor, parish



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

priest of Immaculate Conception Maryhill, who along with a growing number of parishioner volunteer has been closely involved in the community project said: "We were delighted that the Moderator took the time to see for himself what we are doing here – he was clearly impressed with what has been achieved in the past couple of years."

"Because we are in partnership with other churches, we have been able to access funding from various sources to employ an outreach worker to identify the needs

of folks in the community.

"That led to breakfast clubs, warm hubs, food banks and so on – our aim is always to be there when the people need us."

"Essentially what we are doing is creating churches without walls so that we can keep bringing the community together after the crazy couple of years we have had with Covid, and now the cost of living crisis."

"One of the very encouraging things I've noticed as far as our parish is concerned, and I'm sure it's the same with our partner churches, is that that number of volunteers is growing all the time."

Bishops criticise immigration bill

SCOTLAND'S bishops have sharply criticised the UK Government's immigration policies which would see those arriving in small boats kept in detention camps before being deported to Rwanda.

The bishops urge the Conservative Government to remember that 'these people are our fellow human beings ... and regardless of their immigration status their intrinsic dignity must be upheld.'

Full text of the Bishops' statement follows:

"People come to the UK for a multitude of reasons. Numerous are driven from their homes by persecution, conflict, poverty, natural disasters, or lack of opportunities. Many of them attempt the extremely dangerous journey across the Channel to reach the relative safety of the UK."

"Everyone would like to see the end of dangerous Channel crossings using small boats, however, the UK Government's Illegal



Immigration Bill, the stated purpose of which is to bring an end to these crossings, raises more questions than it provides answers.

"The Bill fails to provide sufficient detail on the establishment of more safe and legal routes for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. These routes, which are a lifeline to many desperate and vulnerable people, are essential if the Government is serious about ending perilous Channel crossings."

"Due to their very vulnerability many refugees and asylum seekers cannot possibly have all the necessary documentation with them."

This proposed Bill will automatically force their removal regardless of how or why they came here.

"There is also a pressing need for reform of the asylum process which currently has a backlog of hundreds of thousands of asylum applications."

"The Government must remember that behind each application is a human being. The establishment of asylum processing centres in France could help speed up the process and provide a safe, legal route for vulnerable people to come to the UK."

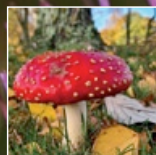
"We call on the UK Government to provide an assurance that it will respect the terms of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Refugee Convention, and its obligations to victims of modern slavery."

"These people are our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters, and regardless of their immigration status their intrinsic dignity must be upheld."

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10 years of Pope Francis

as expressed in 10 memorable words and phrases



Rome's streets were dark and uncharacteristically wet on the night 10 years ago last month that 267th successor of St Peter was elected. As the bells began to peal after a two-day conclave, people from all over the city began to run to St Peter's Square. Confirmation that something significant was happening came with the switching on of the spotlights picking out the loggia above the central door of the basilica and the arrival of the bands of the Vatican gendarmerie and the Italian carabinieri, their uniforms uncharacteristically bedraggled by the rain.

Then the doors swung open, a processional cross emerged and the Cardinal proto-deacon read the celebrated formula ... "Annuntio vobis Gaudium magnum Habemus Papam!" – I bring you news of great joy. We have a Pope!

At his first audience on 16 March 2013, Francis told journalists that he had chosen the name Francis in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi, and had done so because he was especially concerned for the well-being of the poor. He explained that, as it was becoming clear during the conclave voting that he would be elected the new bishop of Rome, the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes had embraced him and whispered, "Don't forget the poor", which had made him think of the saint. The name was a surprise. No Pope had ever been called Francis.

Ten years on the extraordinary pontificate of Pope Francis continues to be a papacy of surprises. To mark the anniversary, *Flourish* editor **Ronnie Convery** chooses 10 words to summarize 10 years of the Argentinian Pope. Words that Francis has spoken and written, and which have shaped the life of the modern Church.



Picture: Imago Mundi

ENVIRONMENT

The first pope to select as his namesake the patron saint of ecology, Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis has emphasized concern for creation as a new priority of the Church and made ecology a central theme of his papacy.

"As stewards of God's creation, we are called to make the earth a beautiful garden for the human family. When we destroy our forests, ravage our soil and pollute our seas, we betray that noble

calling." —Speech, Manila, Philippines, January 18, 2015

"A Christian who doesn't safeguard creation, who doesn't make it flourish, is a Christian who isn't concerned with God's work."— Meditation, February 2015



FORGIVENESS

The day after his election Pope Francis went to the Basilica of St Mary Major in Rome. There he greeted the priests hearing confessions. "Forgive everyone" he said. This insistence on God's mercy has been a constant theme.

"God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy". – The Joy of the Gospel 2014

"The confessional is not a torture chamber, but the place in which the Lord's mercy motivates us to do better." – My Door is Always Open, 2014

CHURCH

Repeatedly the Holy Father has insisted the Church must be welcoming, open and caring. He defines the Church as a 'field hospital' ready to heal those injured in the battle of everyday life.

"I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds ... And you have to start from the ground up." – Interview September 2013

MIGRANTS

The Pope has insisted that Catholics must show a welcoming attitude to migrants and refugees.

"It's hypocrisy to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone who is in need of my help. If I say I am Christian, but do these things, I'm a hypocrite." – Audience October 2016

ABORTION

The Pope has been a strenuous defender of the right to life but has shifted the focus away from an exclusively abortion-centred approach to a more 'whole life' understanding of the dignity of human life.

"Our defence of the innocent unborn needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, re-

gardless of his or her stage of development.

"Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection" – Gaudete et Exsultate April 2018

HOMOSEXUALITY

Pope Francis has adopted a welcoming approach towards gay people, focusing always on the person and not the label. He has regularly met with gay Catholics and encouraged them to play an active role in the Church. He has condemned acts of discrimination and violence against them and supports proper recognition of civil partnerships in state law.

"If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him? ... The problem is not having this tendency,

no, we must be brothers and sisters to one another." – Press conference July 2013

"I am glad that we are talking about homosexual people because before all else comes the individual person, in his wholeness and dignity. And people should not be defined only by their sexual tendencies: let us not forget that God loves all his creatures, and we are destined to receive his infinite love." – The Name of God is Mercy, 2016

LITURGY

Pope Francis has insisted that the reforms of Vatican II must be followed. This has led him to restrict the celebration of the Tridentine Mass while at the same time insisting on proper celebration of the post-Vatican II rites:

"I am saddened by abuses in the celebration of the liturgy on all sides. I deplore the fact that in many places the prescriptions of the new Missal are not observed in celebration, but indeed come to be interpreted as an authorization for or even a requirement of creativity, which leads to al-

most unbearable distortions.

"But I am nonetheless saddened that the instrumental use of the old rite is often characterized by a rejection not only of the liturgical reform, but of Vatican II itself, claiming, with unfounded and unsustainable assertions, that it betrayed the Tradition and the 'true Church'. The path of the Church must be seen within the dynamic of Tradition." – Letter to the Bishops of the World, July 2016

SYNOD

Pope Francis has made the process of synod part of the Church's everyday life and wants to see the system of consultation, listening and accompaniment continue into the future.

"The Synod offers us the opportunity to become a listening Church, to break out of our rou-

tine and pause from our pastoral concerns in order to stop and listen ...The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us." – Address for Opening of Synod October 2021

DEVIL

Pope Francis has surprised many with his insistence on the reality of Satan and his warnings to be on guard against the Devil and his presence.

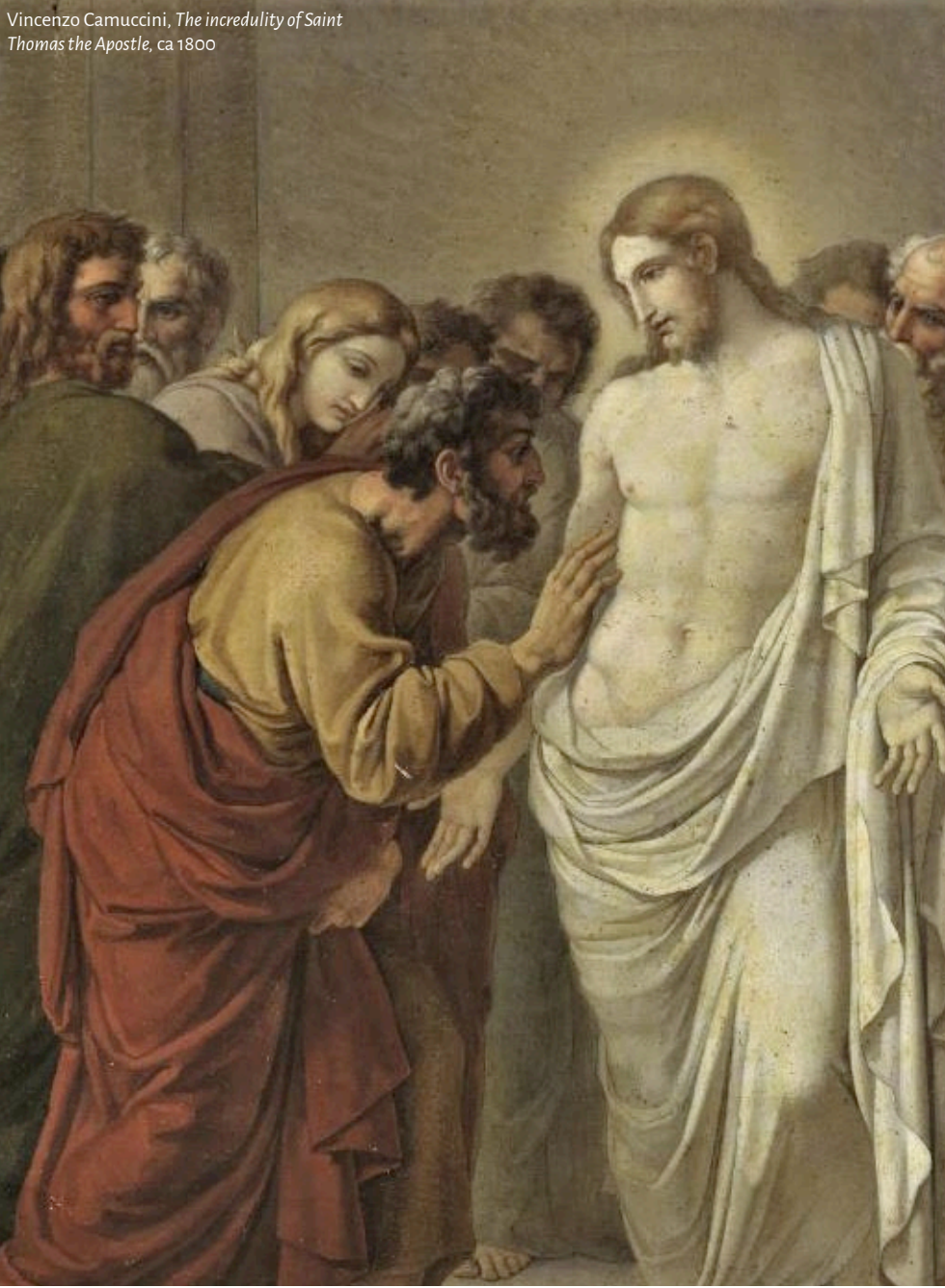
"We must pray, do penance, and not approach him or dialogue with him. And as well, to go to our mother, as children do. When a child is afraid, he goes to his mother. 'Mum, mum, I'm afraid.' When he's had a nightmare, he goes to his mother. Go to the Virgin. She protects us." – Mass Homily August 2018

OUR LADY

The Pope has encouraged a typically 'Latin' piety with great confidence in the intercession of the Madonna.

"The gaze of Our Lady helps us to look at one another as brothers and sisters. Let us look upon one another in a more fraternal way! Mary teaches us to have that gaze which strives to welcome, to accompany and to protect." – Sept 2013 Mass at the shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria, Cagliari

Vincenzo Camuccini, *The incredulity of Saint Thomas the Apostle*, ca 1800



ART OF THE MONTH

Faith and doubt in sacred art

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

Probably the most famous painting of 'Doubting Thomas' is *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* by Caravaggio, a truly magnificent piece where Jesus seems to guide the hand of Thomas, like a surgeon, into the wound which is mirrored by the rip in Thomas' garment.

There is, however, a lesser well-known version of the scene by Vincenzo Camuccini to be seen in Saint Peter's Basilica. Originally painted by Domenico Passignano, it lacks the close-up intensity of Caravaggio's image.

The body of Jesus is presented to the viewer with only his face turned towards the Apostle. The low-held outstretched hands almost seem to suggest that Thomas' incredulity is misplaced and his close examination and touching of the wound seems inappropriate and unwarranted.

With other apostles gathered around and looking on, perhaps the artist wanted to show that Thomas was not alone in his doubt.

Perhaps, with the posture of the Lord's Body, Camuccini portrays that the viewer

is also involved in the doubt.

Jesus alone is painted in white and with a halo around his head. He is, after all, the Holy One of God, who brings Light and Truth into the world.

Camuccini's painting stands out for its powerful depiction of the moment of doubt and faith in the resurrection of Jesus. It is a stunning example of neoclassical

art that captures a crucial moment in Christian history.

Its vivid portrayal of the interaction between St. Thomas and Jesus serves as a reminder of the power of faith and the importance of questioning and seeking answers in our spiritual journeys.

The grace for Thomas was that his finger, pointing into the side of Christ, would later point to Christ as his Lord and God.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, Saint Thomas the Apostle struggled to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But through your grace and patience, you revealed yourself to him and strengthened his faith. May we have the courage to face our doubts and bring them to you in prayer. May we also have the humility to accept your truth, even when it challenges our understanding. We thank you for the example of Thomas and his ultimate belief in Jesus. May he inspire us to trust in your unfailing love and to never give up on our journey towards faith. Amen.

Our responsibility for 'Mother Earth'

Most days, I walk between four and six miles – sometimes more, sometimes less depending on my schedule.

Being part of the Laudato Si Movement as well as chair of Pax Christi Scotland, I find this connecting with Mother Earth good for my heart, soul and mind.

Sometimes when I'm walking I recite St Francis of Assisi's canticle – Praise be to Sister Air, Sister Water, Sister Fire, Praise be to Mother Sister Earth...

Tramping forest tracks and native woodlands, picking my way along the shorelines of lochs and burns, and along muddy pathways (in Argyll there are always muddy pathways), these words draw attention to the most minute detail of Mother Earth's ever-changing apparel.

'Mother Earth.' It's not a phrase that sits well with everyone, but Pope Francis has used it, echoing St Francis of Assisi, and the United Nations even created International Mother Earth Day



Marian Pallister

The chair of Pax Christi Scotland focuses on the issues of the day

(April 22). Pax Christi Scotland has an on-line event on April 20 to discuss how we are caring for her.

Whatever phrase we use – our Common Home, Mother Earth, the planet – we can't turn our backs because without it/her we simply don't exist. We read in Exodus that God made this earth, and having made it he saw it was good.

Then, of course, He added humans to the equation, and we have to admit that this after-thought, this addition of people (whether we go with the clever biblical analogy or evolution), has over time made a bit of a mess of Mother Earth.

But why would Pax Christi Scotland hold an event to mark UN International

Mother Earth Day? Surely Pax Christi (the Peace of Christ) is about peace, not climate?

I don't think that peace and climate can be separated. Just as we have to work for justice if we want peace, we must work to stop the climate emergency if we want peace.

SCIAF's Lent campaign focused on Zambia, where Caritas Kabwe (funded by all who donate to the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund) is empowering those badly affected by the climate emergency, bringing families peace of mind.

Mike Mwenda, the young Zambian journalist who joins our Mother Earth, The Environment & Peace panel, has interviewed those



who have had to move from their traditional lands in many African countries be-

cause persistent droughts have destroyed their crops year after year. They have to

go somewhere, and 'somewhere' doesn't want to welcome them, whether that is a neighbouring country equally affected by changing weather patterns or a distant one where a hostile reception is part of the political agenda. No peace for the starving...

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities met.

Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. If shelter and food are denied because of climate change, we need to do something very quickly to protect those affected. I reckon it's our responsibility to Mother Earth and all who are sustained by her.

■ Register for the April 22 online event at: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/84451234567>



By the time he marked a decade at the pinnacle of power, it was clear that under this maverick leader, nothing would ever be the same.

His openness, his passion for reform, his electric sense of possibility, had captured the imagination of the world and propelled the institution he leads into uncharted waters.

It was equally clear, however, that this mesmerizing leader may have let loose energies that ultimately he won't be able to control.

Despite his tremendous popularity abroad, the leader faces a determined core of domestic opposition from both the right and the left, leaving his own institution lacerated, polarized, and increasingly fragile. A decade of previously unthinkable change has shattered old certainties, creating a context in which almost anything seems possible — including outcomes the man at the top neither intended nor desired.

That could easily be a description of Pope Francis right now, as he marks the 10-year anniversary of his election to the Throne of Peter. In fact, however, it's a characterization of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev in early 1991, just before the Soviet Empire over which he'd presided, and which he'd desperately tried to renew from within, fell apart.

Today, it seems clear that Pope Francis has a "Gorbachev problem" — enormous acclaim outside the Catholic Church, but increasingly brazen opposition from within. Also like Gorbachev, Francis's foes come both from a traditionalist right unhappy with his progressive agenda, and an impatient left increasingly hungry for actual revolution rather than mere reform.

Francis, too, has promoted an ecclesiastical version of glasnost, lifting old taboos and encouraging robust debate on previously closed questions, from outreach to gays and lesbians to the role of women in the church, married clergy, and matters beyond. He too has also launched a program of decentralization, which now goes under the buzzword of "synodality."

After taking the reins, Gorbachev signaled a strong break with the past by



After a decade Pope Francis faces his 'Gorbachev moment'

openly reversing some of the positions of his predecessors. He freed dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov, rejected the "Brezhnev doctrine" that justified Soviet military incursions into satellite states and pulled Soviet troops out of Afghanistan.

In a similar spirit, Francis rehabilitated figures marginalized under previous popes (such as Cardinals Walter Kasper Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga) and reversed the church's course on matters such as communion for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics and the Latin Mass.

Looking back, it's clear what Gorbachev intended to accomplish: He wanted to revive what he saw as the original promise of the Soviet system, its twin commitments to social justice and global solidarity, in the conviction that freed from its pretensions of command and control, that vision would be strong enough to sustain a new and better future for the Soviet institutional apparatus.

In the end, of course, that's not how things played out.

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

Instead, right-wing elements led by the so-called "Gang of Eight" attempted to lead an anti-Gorbachev coup in August 1991. The failure of that effort emboldened the liberals, who were impatient with the pace of change; led by Boris Yeltsin, they essentially engineered a series of events that led swiftly to the transition to a confederation of independent states, marking the effective end of the Soviet era.

Like Gorbachev before him, Francis faces a strong right wing inside his own system, including a large swath of the middle managers he depends upon to govern, which fears things are going too far. While they're unlikely to attempt an actual coup, they're certainly inclined to resistance, either active or passive, to much of the pope's agenda.

In the meantime, he also faces a growing cohort of liberals unwilling to wait for permission to implement even more sweep-

ing reforms, perhaps most pointedly right now in portions of Western Europe such as Germany and Belgium.

The recent vote by the German bishops to authorize blessings of same-sex unions, in open defiance of Vatican directives, is eerily reminiscent of the 1990 elections for the Russian Supreme Soviet, when it became clear that Yeltsin and the other liberals would press ahead with their agenda regardless of Gorbachev's calls for restraint.

Granted, the Catholic Church has a staying power that vastly outstrips the USSR. The Soviets endured less than 70 years; Catholicism has been around for more than 2,000. No matter how much the contradictions under Francis may be heightened, the church he leads is deeply unlikely simply to dissolve.

Nevertheless, the question remains: Can the moderate reform sketched by Francis endure, or will the centrifugal energies of a deeply polarized era prove so intense that a rupture is inevitable?

In other words, is Francis destined to follow the Gorbachev script to the very end — to drink this bitter cup to the dregs, in the language of the Psalms? Or, given the comparatively greater resilience of Catholicism and Francis's own opportunity to learn from experience, can he succeed where Gorbachev failed, leaving behind a revitalized institution ready to face its challenges with new energy and sense of purpose?

It's too early to say, but we can at least phrase things this way for Francis at the ten-year mark: For the rest of his papacy, the drama is whether he'll end up as the Gorbachev of history, or the Gorbachev of a parallel universe in which things actually turned out as planned.

CRUX
Taking the Catholic Pulse

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If only Lent could be just that wee bit longer...

Mary's musings

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



HERE'S a new one. I need Lent to last a couple of weeks more.

My Lenten penance of cutting my social media time to the bare minimum hasn't gone as well as I'd hoped. I need to come with a late run in Holy Week. That and topping up with ad hoc denials of bags of smoky bacon crisps and bars of Fry's Chocolate Cream.

My youngest daughter recoiled in horror when I told her I was putting a limit on my daily dive into Twitter and my (I'll be honest) ashamedly frequent scrolling of the sidebar of shame. It's how young people live and they don't remember a time when a daily newspaper printed the night before was seen as breaking news.

Himself and I are meat-free on Fridays during Lent. I've always argued against

abstaining from meat on a Friday because we're big fish people so where's the mortification? But, no, he insisted. He's right, it is a penance – for me.

I'm the one who has to schlep along to the local fish shop, pitching up just on closing time to the obvious ire of the fish merchant. He's shutting up shop for the night and has to dig deep in the fridge in the back shop for two fillets of peat-smoked haddock.

I came home late from work the first Friday of Lent to a couple of juicy steaks in the fridge, begging to be tossed in a pan, lovingly sautéed and served with a salad. Quick, nutritious and so, so tasty.

Not a chance. "What'll it be", says he. Fish fingers from the corner shop or a chippie? The fish supper



won the toss. Not so quick, given the teatime queue; questionably nutritious, with a month's fat content in one portion; definitely tasty though.

With grandchildren on the scene I'm trying to recreate the Easters of my childhood. In typical rose-coloured-spectacle memory those Easters were warm and sunny. They were always the first outing of a new summer dress, an-

kle socks and sandals. The Easter bonnet completed the ensemble and the sun continued to shine gloriously while I rolled my egg.

Today's reality is a bunch of feral boys fighting over the spoils of the Easter egg hunt and traipsing mud through the house. I wouldn't change any of it. On I plough keeping to tradition. I firmly believe in giving them eggs rather than chocolate bunnies to

keep the message clear. I harbour no such objections to the baby rabbits when it comes to my own consumption.

It won't fly with vegans and vegetarians but my Pascal leg of lamb is non-negotiable. Easter Sunday family lunches have a lovely feel to them. Unlike Christmas, despite the best attempts of the supermarket giants, they are not completely overrun by commer-

cialism.

As I wish you and yours a Happy Easter I'll leave you with Pope Francis' first Easter message 10 years ago.

"It is always possible to begin anew, because there is a new life that God can awaken in us in spite of all our failures. From the rubble of our hearts God can create a work of art."

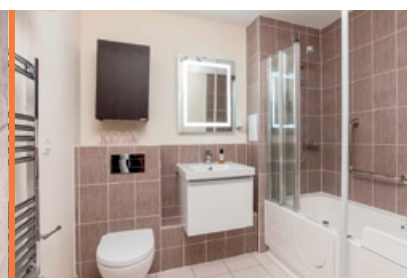
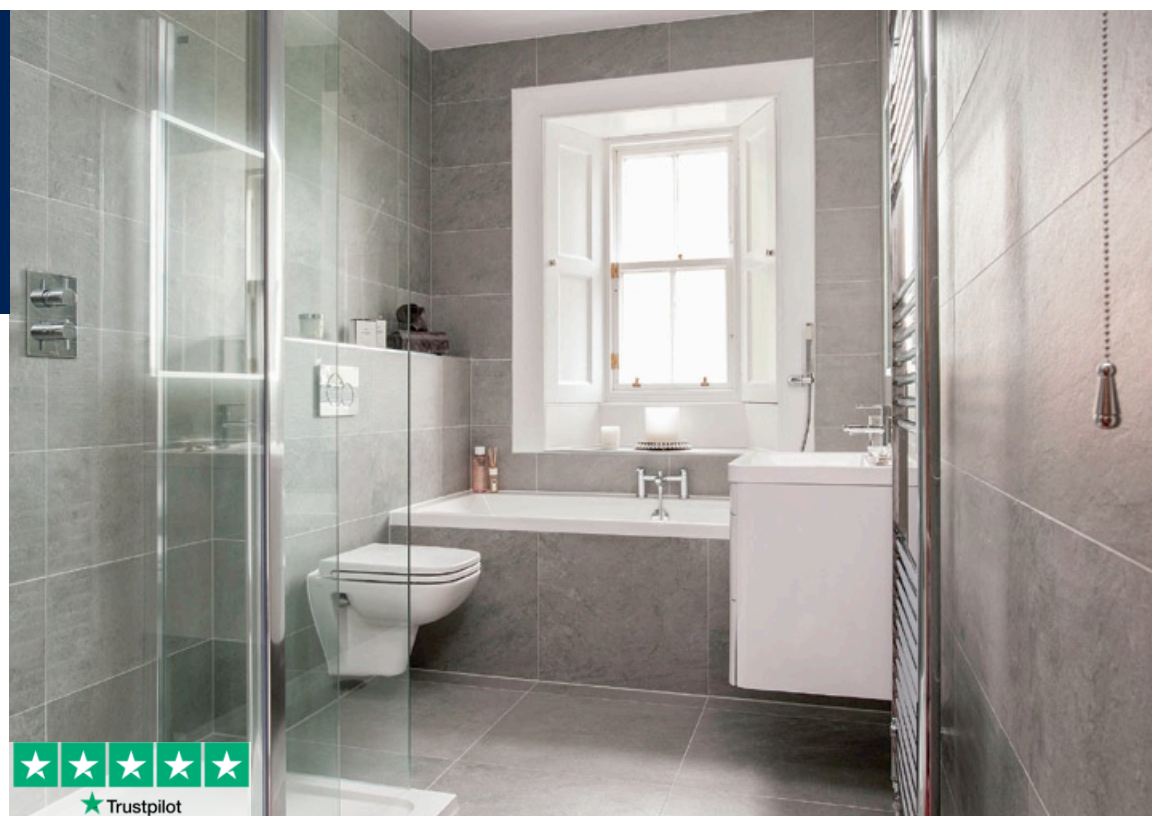
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The angel always comes at just the right time

THE night before he died, Jesus struggled mightily to accept his Father's will. The Gospels describe him in the Garden of Gethsemane, prostrate on the ground, "sweating blood", and begging his Father to save him from the brutal death that awaited him.

Then, after he finally surrenders his will to his Father, an angel comes and strengthens him.

This begs a question: where was the angel when, seemingly, he most needed it? Why didn't the angel come earlier to strengthen him?

Two stories, I believe, can be helpful in answering this.

The first comes from Martin Luther King Jr. In the days leading up to his assassination, he met angry resistance and began to receive death threats. He was courageous, but he was also human. At a point, those threats got to him. Here is one of his diary entries.

"One night towards the end of January, I settled into bed late, after a strenuous day. Coretta had already fallen asleep and just as I was about to doze off the telephone rang. An angry



Martin Luther King

voice said, 'Listen, nig..., we've taken all we want from you; before next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.' I hung up, but I couldn't sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached a saturation point.

"I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. Finally, I went to the kitchen and heated a pot of coffee. I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward.

"In this state of exhaus-



Dorothy Day

tion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory.

"I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. Now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.' At that moment I experienced the

Scribblings of the spirit

Flourish's regular columnist, Fr Ronald Rolheiser offers practical insights each month into improving our spiritual lives



presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before." (*Strive Toward Freedom*)

Notice at what point in his struggle the angel appears.

In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy Day shares this story. As a young woman, along with the man she loved, she had been somewhat militant in her unbelief. Indeed, their reluctance to enter the institution of marriage was meant as a statement of their non-acceptance of traditional Christian values.

Then she conceived a child and its birth was the beginning of a radical conversion for her. The joy she felt holding her baby convinced her that there was a God and that life had a loving purpose.

She became a Roman Catholic, much to the chagrin of the man she loved, the father of her child: he gave her an ultimatum: if you have this child baptized, our relationship is ended. She had the child baptized and lost that relationship (though they continued as friends). However, she now found herself a single mother with no job and no real vision or plan as to where to go now in life.

At one point, she became desperate. She left the child in the care of others and took a train from New York City to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. In her autobiography, she describes how she prayed that day, how desperate her prayer was.

Like Jesus in Gethsemane and Martin Luther King in

Montgomery, her prayer was one of raw need and helplessness, of an admission that she no longer had the strength to go on. Essentially, she said this to God: 'I have given up everything for you and now I am alone and afraid. I don't know what to do and am lacking strength to carry on in this commitment'.

She prayed this prayer of helplessness, took the train back to New York, and not long after found Peter Maurin sitting on her doorstep, telling her that he had heard about her and that he had a vision of what she should now do, namely, to start the *Catholic Worker*. That set the path for the rest of her life. The angel had come and strengthened her.

Notice at what point in these stories the angel makes its appearance – when human strength is fully exhausted.

Why not earlier? Because up to the point of exhaustion, we don't really let the angel in, relying instead on our own strength.

But, as Trevor Herriot says, "Only after we have let the desert do its full work in us will angels finally come and minister to us."

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to a life of silence and solitude within a community of fellow seekers?

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† Fr Tony Walsh

Fr Tony Walsh, the oldest priest in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, has died. He was 98 years old.

Fr Tony, originally from Hamilton, was a 'late vocation' when he was ordained in 1970 by Archbishop Scanlan in St Martin's, Castlemilk.

He was ordained in Glasgow to serve as a priest of the Archdiocese of Cape Town in South Africa however within three years he returned home and served the remaining years of his priesthood in Glasgow in parishes including St Constantine's, Govan, St Robert's Househillwood, St Michael's Parkhead and Holy Cross, Crosshill.

He retired from active ministry in 1991 and lived latterly at Nazareth House, Cardonald.

A full obituary of Fr Tony will appear in *Flourish* next month.

FCJ Centre St Hugh's

Spirituality and outreach with the Faithful Companions of Jesus

Email: FCJCentreStHughes@gmail.com

Events for Young Adults (20s and 30s) To find out more follow us on social media, or email us to join an event.



Holy week with the Faithful Companions of Jesus – in person (women only) 2-9 April

An opportunity to spend time with a religious community and pray through Holy Week alongside them. Based in Liverpool.

Lindisfarne Pilgrimage 12-16 April

A walking retreat to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne of the coast of North East England. We will walk part of St Cuthbert's way and across the ancient pilgrim path to Holy Island. There will be opportunity for prayer, reflection, walking and lots of socialising! Young Adults (20's and 30's)

Vocations weekends (in person) 26-28 May

For women considering the vocation to religious life. Opportunity for shared prayer, input, discussion, personal reflection and Q&A with FCJ Sisters.

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The FCJ Sisters are an international congregation of Catholic religious sisters who live Ignatian spirituality. We have communities across the world and are involved in a wide range of ministries and mission. If you would like to find out more take a look at:

www.fcjsisters.org

www.franciscanvocations.org.uk

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Nuns always on the run!

Sisters' busy schedule helps make lives better for many

ONCE a week Sister Mary, a Daughter of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, gets two buses from the south-side of Glasgow to the East End of the city.

The journey is by no means a brief one.

Once there, as she has done for many years, she visits the elderly in their homes, bringing Holy Communion on occasions and the gift of friendship always.

Sister Mary is 89.

Should you want an example of the invisibility of the work our religious communities it is surely that of Sister Mary, who has served faithfully as a Daughter for Charity for – and think of this – 67 years.

Resolutely camera-shy and surprised that anyone would be interested in what she does, she said simply: "I do it because I love doing it and I'll carry on as long as

What do religious sisters do all day? It's a question that's been posed for generations and one which we hope will be answered in a new *Flourish* series aimed at making the invisible visible as we focus on the behind the scenes work of religious communities in the Archdiocese

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY

the Lord lets me."

Women in religious life tend not to make a fuss about what they do so if her dedication seems remarkable to an outsider, it was mentioned almost as an afterthought at the launching of a new project by the Daughters of Charity called the Listening Heart based in a former undertakers premises at 1369 Gallow-

gate, opposite St Michael's Church.

However, the logo outside the newly acquired office and the invitation to "Stop and Blether" means that this is one initiative that will be among the most visible that the Daughters of Charity undertake.

Its opening hours are yet to be arranged but for now there is a simple rule for those who need help: If the lights are on – knock and come in!

There are now just seven active Daughters of Charity



in the Archdiocese but after hearing what they do behind the scenes the temptation to call them the Magnificent Seven is quite irresistible.

But before hearing about that, one of the other sisters, Sister Maria, who has been co-ordinating the new project, is keen to explain its background and what it is expected to achieve.

She said: "When we hear of need in an area the first thing we do is identify what exactly that need is.

"Collaboration is the key to what we do in projects like this so for the Listening Heart we started with lots of Googling ...

"Then we talked to schools in the area, the churches,

Catholic and otherwise, we spoke to doctors' surgeries, all sorts of health professionals, and as many people and organisations as we could think of to see if we could find exactly what people needed and how we could help.

"It took time, but we wanted to get it right.

"After that research the main thing we found that people had no one to talk to and therefore nowhere to go with their worries and of course Covid made it so much worse because they were stuck – literally – in their houses.

Burdens

"People carry burdens and they have nowhere to take them, the problems fester and then they become a huge issue but a problem shared is a problem halved.

"But we do not think for one minute we will solve people's problems – people solve their own problems, but we are here to listen.

"So, we call this project the listening heart because we listen with our heart but without judging.

"Basically, we will signpost people where they should go, and we can only do that by working very closely with all the many agencies in the area.

A good collective noun for the sisters might be a 'blessing' of nuns or perhaps, given that they are a cheery bunch, a 'giggle' of Sisters who were welcoming to this scribe whom they mercilessly teased about his choice of pink socks.

The mood turned more

serious when they talk about the troubled souls they help. They stand in solidarity alongside drug addicts, alcoholics, pregnant teenage girls and abused women.

They are there at the foodbanks looking out for the lost and the lonely, the marginalised who have little food and even less hope, giving them practical support regardless of that individual's faith and never making judgment.

Sister Marie, with more than 50 years of service, is happy to talk about her work as chaplain at The Space in Govanhill, founded by the Daughters of Charity 10 years ago and regarded as one its most successful projects working to improve the lives of disadvantaged families, including the Roma population said to be the largest in Scotland.

Wonderful

Sister Marie said: "It's been wonderful to see it grow over the years. I'm just a small part of a team – but I assist wherever I can. I help with the English language classes but really I do whatever is needed. Mostly people often just want to talk over a cup of tea and sometimes they'll tell me their problems and I'm happy to listen because that's often all they want – a good listener."

It's a template that has worked so well for The Space and given the faith and enthusiasm of those behind the Listening Heart there's every reason to believe that it too will become another very successful sister act.

Sister Marie with friends at The Space



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This year let's *really* listen to the message of Jesus' resurrection

WE begin April in Holy Week this year, recalling the events of Jesus's Passion, from the triumph of his arrival in Jerusalem, through the Last Supper and betrayal of Judas, to the trials, suffering and crucifixion.

However, the weeks of Easter which follow remind us of the more joyful truth: that the Cross was for our salvation, that Jesus' death was an act of total love for us and that from his death we find life, with him as our risen Lord.

This is our faith, a faith, we will see this month, that is to be shared.

Easter Sunday, Year A

Our Easter Liturgies offer us two accounts of the first Easter morning: Matthew's at the Easter Vigil and John's on Easter Sunday. Matthew's is full of drama. Unlike the other evangelists, he tells us about the wondrous things that happen when the stone over Jesus's tomb is rolled away (dazzling angels, earthquakes and swooning soldiers). He wants us to have a sense of the power of God at work in the Resurrection.

However, the women who arrive and see these things are told not to be afraid (twice in this short passage, in fact). The soldiers are "shaken" and faint; the women are "filled with awe" and leave in joy. They understand what is happening and go off to tell others. This, in fact, will be the important part: the women tell Jesus's disciples so they in turn can meet Him, now risen, to begin their mission of telling others. For Matthew, Easter leads to mission, to proclamation.

For John, on Easter Sunday, things are less dramatic. There is an empty tomb, some running back and forth and some confusion, of course, but the Beloved Disciple's experience leads him to believe and to understand the promises of God in Scripture. The resurrection was promised. For John, Easter leads to faith.

The First Reading on Easter Sunday brings these things together as Peter preaches the Gospel to a Roman centurion and his family in order to confirm them in faith. Mission and faith: both are part of our Easter celebration.



Fra Angelico, *Resurrection of Christ and Women at the Tomb*, 1442

Second Sunday of Easter, Year A

As always, today we hear about two appearances of the Risen Jesus to his disciples, with Thomas as a key character, seeking proof before he will believe. The First Reading from Acts, however, reminds us that what Thomas and the others experience, and the faith they profess as a result, will be shared.

Their witness – both in word and action, in their teaching and in the "signs" they work – will be a cornerstone of the early community. Their togetherness in love, their unity in prayer and their sharing of the Eucharist likewise shape their lives, all born of the Easter encounter with Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit he shares with them to bring

them peace and strength.

The transformation begun in that Upper Room will bear fruit when they go out to preach. Over these weeks, our Sunday readings will touch in various ways on these same themes: mission, prayer, unity, and Jesus present in the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharist. As St Peter says in the Second reading, "you did not see him and yet you love him".

We have not had the same experience of the Risen Jesus that the Apostles had, but we have put our faith in him and come to know him in so many ways. Our faith, like that of Thomas, like that of the Apostles in the Upper Room, should bring us joy, a joy to be shared.

Third Sunday of Easter, Year A

If the early community was "faithful to the teaching of the Apostles and to the breaking of bread", as we heard last Sunday, this week we get glimpses of that happening. In the First Reading, Peter stands up and teaches the crowds about Jesus, and shows how his death and resurrection were part of God's plan for salvation.

In the Gospel – the famous story of two disciples walking away from everything – we hear Jesus himself teach them this same lesson, that the promises of Scripture had been fulfilled in him and that, far from being dashed, their hopes had in fact been realised. The disciples only recognise

it is Jesus, however, in the Breaking of Bread, the very action Jesus had given them as his memorial at the Last Supper.

It is a story which reminds us of the movement of our liturgy: we gather in Jesus' company with our hopes, and often our disappointments; we hear the Scriptures spoken and shared (do our hearts "burn with us"?), and then recognise the Risen Jesus present in the Breaking of Bread, in the Eucharist itself.

And, like the two disciples at Emmaus, this leads us to find new strength and to share this news, this encounter, with others. In the Mass, we recognise him and know him better, are drawn more closely together, and are strengthened to bring the good news to others. Faith and mission again go hand in hand this Easter!

Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year A

These Sundays of Easter are speaking to us about the life of the Church, its faith and its mission. This Sunday, however, we are brought back to the person of Jesus at the heart of all of that. He is the one whom the crowds are called on to turn to (First

Reading), whose very name brings salvation and forgiveness. He is the shepherd who came in search of us, the sheep who had gone astray, despite the suffering and pain he took on for us (Second Reading).

This reading from Peter takes us back to Holy Week, and the meaning of the Passion: Jesus dying that we might live, revealing God's love for us. He is the one who gathers, protects and leads his sheep, calling each one by name (Gospel).

All of the readings today recognise the possibility that we might go astray and lose our way, but that if we listen to the voice of the Shepherd and follow him we will find life.

The Gospel passage also adds the image of Jesus as the "Gate", the shepherd who lies down at the entrance to the pen in order to keep the sheep safe. He will not leave them so long as there is danger around or so long as they might wander off. Jesus is, thus, a reliable, dedicated and unfailing Shepherd.

If Easter is about faith and mission this year, then our faith could not be more secure, and our mission could not be more joyful, when we remember who it is we trust and who it is we preach!



St Nicholas Care Fund

In March, St. Nicholas Care Fund awarded £6753 to 5 different projects supporting our most vulnerable citizens – funds to support young people, tackle racism, and combat isolation within our elderly communities.

We continue to offer funding support where it is most needed. Our next deadline for applications is Monday 8 May. Application forms and guidance available at www.rcag.org.uk

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THIS past month, as you well know, Lent began, and for the first time in three years, because of Covid, we were able to distribute ashes in the traditional way on Ash Wednesday.

Last year we were advised to sprinkle the ashes over people's heads. In 2021 we were in full lockdown, and the best we could do was to follow the instruction from the liturgists, inviting people to creatively provide their own ashes, using dried out soil from their garden; ashes from the grate; charcoal from the barbecue, or whatever else would suffice.

Then we blessed the ashes virtually during the streamed Mass from the Oratory, and asked those tuned in to sign themselves with their ashes, using whatever formula they felt drawn to, whether to remember being dust and returning to dust; or promising to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

It was good this Lent, once again, to be marking people with the cross.

We entrusted the task of preparing the ashes to Father John, and he made a good job of it. Once again, I was reminded of an incident back in 2014 when a number of parishioners in various churches in Galway, in the West of Ireland, were quite literally branded by the ashes, complaining of

Human beings have need of ritual



Fr Frank's log

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

a burning sensation as the priest signed them on their foreheads and spoke the accompanying words.

One priest had to actually stop the Mass and advise the people to go into the sacristy and wash the ashes off. He then sent the ashes to a public health laboratory for testing.

It turned out that the parishes where this happened had painstakingly prepared their own ashes which are produced by burning the branches of the leftover palms from the previous Palm Sunday. It emerged that the palms they burned were too dry, so that the ashes turned caustic when water was added and produced the chemical potassium hydroxide, which doesn't mix well with human skin.

Apparently, it's best to burn the branches while they are still green. The priests involved lamented

that in very many years of preparing their own ashes in such a way, this was the first time that there had ever been any problem.

I'm not too sure if they continued doing it that way, I suspect they did, but here in St. Mungo's we are happy to get our ashes already made up in Prinknash Abbey with just the water, and perhaps a little oil, requiring to be added.

It has been said that, since Covid and lockdown, church attendance in Scotland has dropped significantly, in some places by as much as fifty percent. However, as always there were good crowds at the Masses on Ash Wednesday, arguably the biggest crowds of the year, even more so than at Christmas and Easter, and it's a bit of a mystery as to why that should be, although here in St. Mungo's, as a Passionist Church, it may be that



Good Friday has even bigger crowds.

What both days have in common is powerful ritual – the signing with ashes

and the veneration of the cross. What deep places within ourselves must such rituals touch into?

I recently read that the well known fairy tale, Cinderella, can be understood as a kind of parable for Lent. The name, Cinderella, means the little girl in the ashes (the cinders). The tale begins with her being humbled, but at the end she is lifted up in love to a joy beyond her wildest imaginings.

We all start Lent being humbled. What could be more humbling than to be signed with ashes and reminded of our mortality, reminded that we came from dust and return to dust? But, by the end of Lent, we will be lifted up in love, the greatest expression of God's love being found in the Passion and Death of Jesus, through which we then enter into the incredible joy of the Resurrection at Easter.

Hopefully we can journey through Holy Week in such a way as to make this, not a fairy tale, but the greatest reality we can know. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will raise you up. (James 4:10)

As ever, protect yourself, your loved ones and others, and protect Christ in your lives.

Remembering Lourdes champions

As preparations get underway for the first Archdiocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes in three years, tributes have been paid to two pilgrimage veterans who died within weeks of each other.

Retired joiner Frank Maley, who died aged 87, and Felix Porter, former head teacher of St Roch's Secondary School, Royston, who passed away, aged 96, were both men of deep faith and humility with a great devotion to Our Lady, their families said.

A family member said of Frank: "Over a period of almost 50 years, he supported the St Joseph's Lourdes Group, the St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group, the Glasgow Lourdes Hospitalité and the Pilgrimage Committee."

"He didn't serve on committees; he didn't like the limelight, so he was always more content to carry out any tasks inconspicuously and he was always happy to help."

"He was a veteran fundraiser and together with his wife, Alice, raised many thousands of pounds which

BY BRIAN SWANSON sent countless Glasgow people to Lourdes.

"He was proud of what his family was able to contribute, with his support, but never more so, than when four generations of his family participated in the 2019 Pilgrimage."

His funeral mass was held at his home parish of St Joseph's, Tollcross, where Frank had been the hall keeper for many years. The Mass was celebrated by four priests and a deacon and the music was provided by the St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group which had been sending secondary school pupils to work with sick pilgrims for almost 50 years.

The group's Michael Canning told *Flourish* that Felix Porter was also a Lourdes institution.

He said: "He was a loving father, grandfather and great grandfather as well as a well-respected head teacher with a drive and passion for the pupils of his school, where he was head teacher from 1978 to 1989, to maximise their potential."

"For 13 years, he and



Frank Maley



Felix Porter

Theresa went on to lead the St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group on their annual Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Heaven help any young person who might have claimed that they were 'too tired' from the work in Lourdes for they would be met with a steely Felix gaze and hear the words, "Tiredness is not a condition... it is merely a state of mind!"

"Felix was a one off. He was passionate about creating opportunities for young people and with Theresa by his side, he spent his life

witnessing to that St Roch school motto "Alios Adiuvu" – to help others."

His Funeral Mass was celebrated at his home parish of St Bridget's, Baillieston.

Prices for this year's pilgrimage which includes flights from Glasgow and seven nights full board are from £879 per person. For more details contact Joe Walsh Tours on Freephone 0800 1890468, email info@joewalshstours.co.uk or visit the website www.joewalshstours.co.uk


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Seeing SCIAF's work up close...

In the last few weeks, Bishop Brian McGee, the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles travelled to Ethiopia with SCIAF Chief Executive Alistair Dutton to see the work they do through their partners there. Bishop McGee recently became SCIAF's Bishop President and this was his first trip overseas with them since taking up the role. This month and next we will share his diary from his trip, which he described as "fascinating, challenging but also uplifting."



Bishop Brian McGee
Bishop of Argyll and the Isles

Day 1

GREETINGS from Ethiopia where I am visiting SCIAF's projects with its Director Alistair Dutton. SCIAF is the Catholic Church's official Aid Agency in Scotland and has worked in Ethiopia for many decades.

After arriving this morning in the capital Addis Ababa, we travelled south to Arba Minch. There we met with the local bishop, as SCIAF provides funding for several projects in his diocese.

Day 2

Our five-hour journey to Jinka ended up taking six hours!

Ethiopians are a proud

people. Since arriving I have been struck by their intelligence, organisation, politeness and hard work. From early morning, children were taking cattle to pasture, gathering wood, women setting up roadside stalls and farmers tilling the soil. Ethiopians possess wisdom and know hard graft.

Day 3

The areas we have been travelling through have experienced drought for four years. It is now taking its toll. In Southern Ethiopia so many people need emergency aid. The amount of available food has reduced dramatically so that adults, especially mothers, will

chose to go without food so that others can eat.

Millions of livestock have died while those remaining produce little milk. I saw people, where rivers should be full of flowing water, digging in the sand for water underground for their animals. People are anxious about the future.

On a more positive note, we stopped at two SCIAF sponsored water points. We delighted in seeing the enjoyment of the people! The pumps don't remove all problems but they do ease a basic worry for our hard-working sisters and brothers. When you donate to SCIAF you are not simply giving to charity but partnering with fellow human beings across the world.

Day 4

When people hear of SCIAF they immediately think of responses to extreme poverty or sudden emergencies. This, of course, is true. But SCIAF is much more than that.



As our official Aid Agency, SCIAF implements Catholic Social Teaching which has, at its core, Integral Human Development. It's not sufficient to merely ensure people are fed, crucial as this is, but the whole human person must be allowed to develop. One aspect of this is the empowerment of women.

The first Women Empowerment Group I visited was near the city of Jinka. Women are often seen here as having no value except to have children. They described how their lives had been turned around through membership of the group. A safe space exists where domestic abuse and other forms of violence can be discussed and support given. Yes, the various life skills learned and the loan facilities to begin

a small business had lifted them out of poverty – but the transformation they described went much deeper.

They now had an inner confidence that not only allowed their own personal transformation but also positively influenced their families and wider society. Several spoke of how previously they had felt like "nobodies" but now recognised their true worth.

They have encouraged a further 22 groups in the area and so 260 women have benefited. It was clear to me that the empowerment group was a complete success and I am confident that the members will benefit for many years to come.

■ To find out more about SCIAF's work in Ethiopia visit www.sciaf.org.uk

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Catherine and her grandchildren, Zambia



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