

FLOURISH

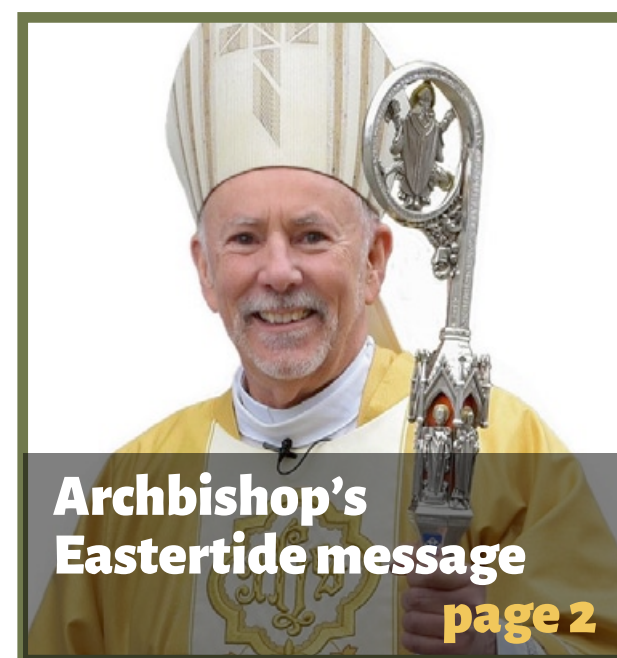
Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

April 2024

GAZA'S PARISH PRIEST TO VISIT GLASGOW



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reclaiming the big day**
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GLASGOW is to hear first hand from the Parish Priest of Gaza about the horror his parishioners are experiencing every day.

Fr Gabriel Romanelli (left) has been invited to the city later this month by Archbishop Nolan.

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Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Glasgow Archdiocesan Council

Annual Ozanam Talk 'The Christian Presence in the Holy Land'

Monday 22nd April 2024 at 7.30pm
Blessed John Duns Scotus Hall
270 Ballater St, Gorbals G5 0YT

Guest Speaker
Emeritus Professor
Bartholomew J. McGettrick O.B.E KGCHS
Professor of Education, Dean Emeritus
of the Faculty of Education at the
University of Glasgow

Professor Bart McGettrick is a notable academic with specialist knowledge of the Holy Land and the history of the Christian peoples and presence in the Holy Land. It promises to be an enlightening talk and will set out the challenges that our Brothers and Sisters in Christ face as they bear witness to the Resurrected Christ.

An open invitation to attend is extended to all.

New President and new challenges for SSVP

It's shaping up to be a busy time for Patricia McCartney, the new President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Glasgow Archdiocese, and one of only a handful of women to be appointed to the post in its 176-year history, as she explores the future of the society.

As someone with a career spanning the statutory, private, and voluntary sectors, including a 17-year stint with the Big Lottery Fund, the former secondary school teacher is well suited to her new role but sees her first step as consulting the membership.

Patricia, who succeeds former president Joe McGuire, said: "I believe as members we owe it to

Picture courtesy ssvp



BY **BRIAN SWANSON** our founders to protect the integrity of the SSVP and the legacy they have left us.

"I definitely do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, but I do think perhaps it is time to look at refreshing that bathwater!"

"We need to ask ourselves a number of questions – What do we need to do to continue to serve those most in need?"

"What new projects could we do collectively to serve those most in need?"

"What do we need to do to attract and retain new members including young members and volunteers and how do we make sure that SSVP

is vibrant and relevant?"

Patricia, who joined the St Peter's Partick SSVP Conference along with her husband 15 years ago when it was in danger of closing after 140 years, added: "Becoming a member remains one of the best decisions I have ever made."

"As for becoming President I can honestly say I feel humbled and honoured to be appointed to this position."

The society was founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam in Paris when he was aged just 21.

Today, the St Vincent de Paul Society is active in 150 countries through 800,000 members and 1,500,000 vol-

SSVP in numbers

THE Archdiocese currently has 500 members spread over 59 active conferences.

Last year the Glasgow conferences made a total of 4538 home visits, 429 hospital visits, gave financial help to 1736 families.

They donated furniture to 78 families, took 1135 people to social outings and accompanied 478 people to Mass.

In addition conferences provided hot meals and clothing, food parcels and toiletries to the Ozanam Centre as well as to local food banks, and delivered Christmas presents to children, elderly housebound people and the homeless as well as providing holidays for three families at Craig Tara Holiday Park, Ayr.

unteers.

The society is organised into conferences with the society having a presence in almost every parish in the Archdiocese and a policy of richer parishes making donations to poorer ones.

The first Scottish conference was founded in Edinburgh in 1845, followed three years later by the first Glasgow conference in St Andrew's Cathedral.

Cardinal Winning lecture will ask the big questions

This year's Cardinal Winning lecture will be given by a leading academic who holds the prestigious role of Chief Inspector of Catholic schools in England and Wales.

Philip Robinson follows in the footsteps of distinguished educators, leading Vatican theologians, public figures, historians and politicians who, since it was inaugurated almost 30 years ago, have delivered the annual lecture in memory of the late Cardinal.

Organised by the St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Education at Glasgow University it will take place on Saturday April 20, and on the day Philip will pose the question: "In an increasingly secular society who are we and what is our role?"

Speaking to *Flourish* as he put the finishing touches to his lecture, Phillip, a former RE teacher who was appointed to his post last year after 10 years as religious education advisor to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, said: "I will be looking to answer a seemingly simple question... but is it?"

"As someone who has devoted his whole life to Catholic education, I have seen the ways in which Catholic schools have changed over the decades and the perpetual challenge that face them to witness to the Lord



BY **BRIAN SWANSON** who calls them, at the same time as being places of hospitality for those who have not heard, or do not heed, that call.

"I hope to explore who exactly it is that works and learns in our Catholic schools, and what the purpose of our schools should be in that context. In an increasingly secular context, who are we and what is our role?"

Although he has never been to Glasgow before, he already knew Cardinal Winning by reputation – thanks to two Glaswegian members of his folk band.

He explained: "I play part time in a folk band and when I told them I was asked to deliver the Cardinal Winning lecture they told me all about him, so it is a huge honour to be asked to give a lecture in his name."

"The late Cardinal is rightly beloved, not only in

Scotland, but by all those who recognised in him a prophetic voice for the ages; a man who, to paraphrase Kipling, could walk with crowds and keep his virtue, and talk with kings and not lose his common touch.

"Inspired by his witness, I hope to explore how, as Catholic educators we can live in fidelity to our mission and at the same time remain open to all those in our schools who have been sent to serve."

The lecture will take place in the Saltire Lecture Theatre, 438AB, James McCune Smith Building, University of Glasgow on Saturday 20th April.

It will be preceded by Mass at 9:30pm in the University Chapel celebrated by Archbishop Nolan, with the lecture due to begin at 11:10pm.

■ **To book tickets, click on <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/cardinalwinninglecture2024>**

Archbishop's Easter message

CHRIST is Risen, Alleluia.

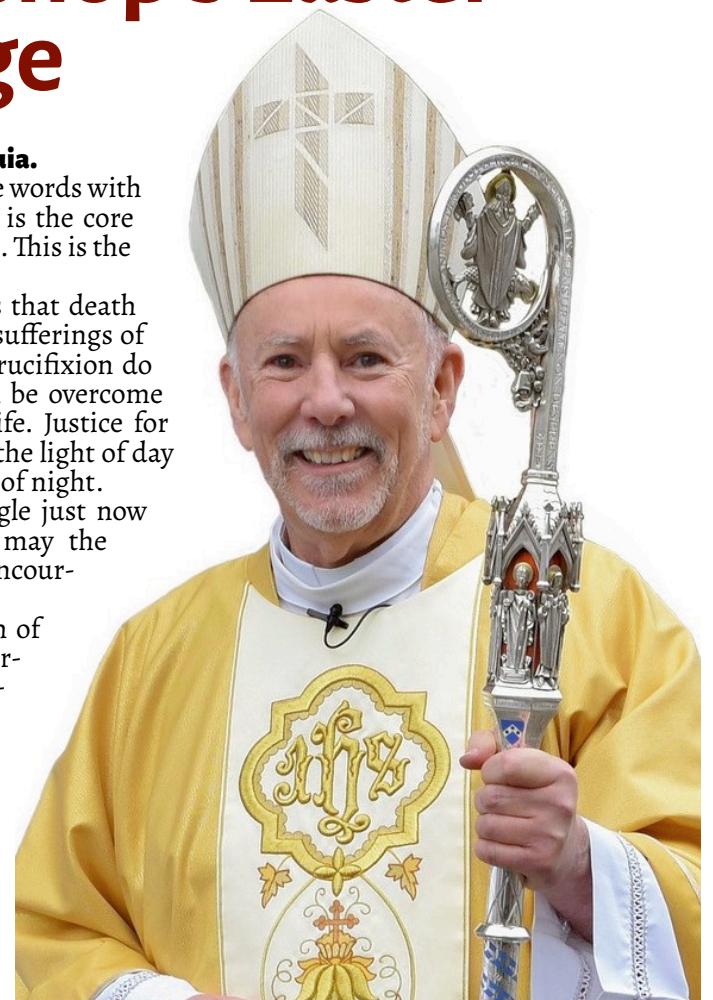
We should say those words with joy in our heart for this is the core of the Christian message. This is the centre of the good news.

These words assure us that death is not the end. That the sufferings of Calvary, the cross and crucifixion do not last. That death will be overcome by life, the fullness of life. Justice for Jesus and so also for us, the light of day will banish the darkness of night.

Therefore, if we struggle just now with our own Calvary may the resurrection of Jesus encourage us to persevere.

If we mourn the death of a loved one, may the resurrection lighten our sadness with the assurance of life eternal.

If we struggle to see how the many problems of the world can be overcome let the resurrection give us hope that Christ has risen. He is risen indeed, Alleluia.





Happy birthday to St Martha's

FORMER pupils, ex-staff members, families, friends and local authority figures were warmly welcomed to St Martha's Primary, Balornock, to celebrate its 70th anniversary (above) – but the most important presence at the celebrations was that of Jesus, Archbishop Nolan said.

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

Speaking directly to the children in his usual informal way, he said: "I know that some of you here will be making your First Communion soon and that you have been working hard with your teachers to prepare for that wonderful occasion when for the first time you truly get to know Jesus.

"But of course, Jesus has always been with you looking after you and you must always remember that he is your friend, someone you can turn to always."

And Head Teacher John O'Donnell stressed the importance of the Catholic faith to the school commu-

nity over the past seven decades.

He said: "70 years ago, Glasgow City Council laid the foundation for this magnificent building and under the watchful eyes of our Creator, the seeds of St Martha were planted.

"This Catholic institution would serve as a beacon of light, instilling values, knowledge, and the teachings of Christ into the hearts of generations.

"Today, we stand here not just as a school community and a learning community but as a testament to the enduring strength of our Catholic faith.

"As we celebrate this significant milestone, let us not only look back with nostalgia but also cast our gaze forward. In the years ahead, may we continue to be guided by the light of our faith."

Clergy changes

SEVERAL parishes in the Archdiocese will see a change of priests this Easter following recent clerical changes.

Canon Gerald Sharkey, Parish Priest of Saint Margaret's and Our Holy Redeemer, Clydebank has stepped down for reasons of ill health. The Archbishop has made alternative provision in order to allow Canon Gerald the opportunity to recuperate.

The Archbishop has appointed Father Patrick Boyle as Administrator of the parishes of Saint Mar-

garet and Our Holy Redeemer, Clydebank, in addition to his current office of Parish Priest at Saint Eunan's.

To assist him, the Archbishop has appointed Father Greg Zungdet, on loan to the Archdiocese and until recently resident at the Cathedral, as Assistant Priest.

Canon Tommy Hendry has retired from the Office of Parish Priest of Saint Teresa's, Possilpark. He will move to Saint Joseph's Home, Robroyston during this month.

Gaza priest will visit Glasgow

GLASGOW is to hear first hand from the Parish Priest of Gaza about the horror his parishioners are living every day.

Fr Gabriel Romanelli has been invited to the city later this month by Archbishop Nolan to appeal for help for his stricken parish – the only Catholic parish in Gaza, which has already seen many of its people killed or injured in recent months.

Fr Gabriel will come to Glasgow on April 26, and hopes to meet political, civic, and religious leaders. He will also concelebrate the 1pm Mass in the Cathedral with the Archbishop.

At 11am on the day of the visit a Public Event is planned at the Trades Hall, Glassford Street – "Hope For Peace in Gaza: A Conversation With Fr Gabriel Romanelli".

There will be a first hand account of the horrors happening in Gaza by Fr Gabriel, and a discussion panel with Archbishop Nolan and the Moderator, a public statement and the signing of a plea for peace.

Details of how to attend the event will be published on the Archdiocesan website and social media streams in coming days.

At 1pm Archbishop Nolan and Fr Gabriel will concelebrate the lunchtime Mass in the Cathedral and Fr Gabriel will preach. All are welcome to attend this Mass to show their support and solidarity for the small Catholic community caught up in the conflict.

Ahead of his visit the Gaza priest said: "The situation continues to be extremely grave and worsens by the hour. Our Christians have faith and hope in the Essential, in Jesus Christ. They have been enduring relentless Calvary for months."



Gaza Catholics mark Palm Sunday

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Fr Romanelli lamented the terrible toll of the war, saying, "This conflict has already resulted in more than 32,000 deaths, 12,000 of which are children."

He himself has been stuck in Jerusalem since war broke out on October 7, but he constantly stays in touch with his parishioners in every possible way.

Refuge

Members of the parish have been taking refuge in the parish compound along with other displaced Christians, totalling about 600, who have lost everything in the bombings.

Fr Romanelli spoke of reports from inside Gaza which he has received from his curate, Fr Youssef Asaad, who remains in the parish.

"You cannot imagine the pain we are experiencing and the desperation of the people," he said.

He described the scene in the area surrounding the parish in Gaza City, with

mountains of rubble, garbage, and burst sewers.

"Despite everything," adds Fr Romanelli, "they pray for

peace every day and offer their suffering and hardships for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages."

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The 'best church windows in Britain'



New book hails Sacred Heart, Cumbernauld's artwork

ITS Parish Priest cheerfully admits that his church has been said to resemble "a disused bingo hall", yet Sacred Heart Church Cumbernauld is a classic example of never judging a book by its cover.

To look inside, as award-winning Scottish author Peter Ross did in his new book, just published in paperback, is to be overawed by the most exquisitely detailed stained-glass windows depicting the Stations of the Cross created by artist Sadie McLellan for the opening of the church which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

Parish Priest Father John Campbell said: "Someone once described being in Sacred Heart, especially at sunset, was like sitting inside a jewellery box with the walls covered with colour. I'd say that's a very fair description – but from the outside who would know?"

Author Peter was so impressed with what he saw that he described them in his book *Steeple Chasing*, as 'the best church windows in Britain' making Sacred

Heart, (one of 14 modernist Catholic churches built

by the architectural practice of Gillespie, Kidd and Coia between 1957 and 1972), the only church in the Archdiocese to feature in the publication.

Father Campbell added: "I'm a big fan of Coia churches but a lot of people hear the name and all they want to talk about are leaks – which is bonkers.

"I'm very proud of the church and I know the parishioners feel the same. Over the years we've had countless architects, artists and other people who make a point of coming to the area just to look at these magnificent windows.

"I always tell them to come as the sun is setting which is the very best time to get the full effect – I never get tired of seeing them even after all the years."

Technique

The windows were created by internationally acclaimed stained glass artist Sadie McLellan, who pioneered an innovative technique known as *dalle de verre* which involved painstakingly setting thousands of pieces of coloured glass into concrete.

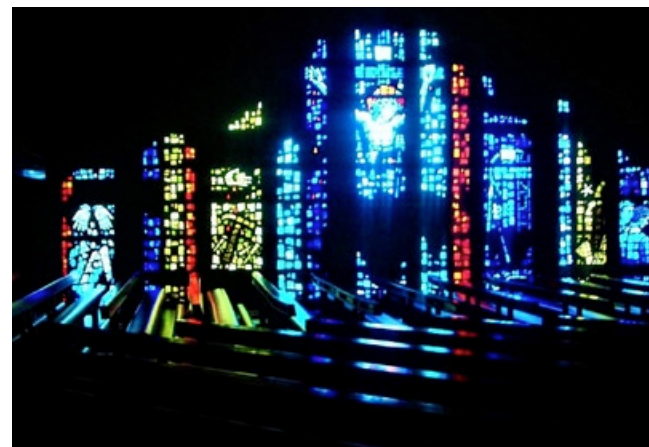
Sadie, from Bearsden who died in 2007 aged 92, also created windows for Pluscarden Abbey, Glasgow Cathedral, The Robin Chapel, Edinburgh and Our Lady of Lourdes Church Cardonald.

Sacred Heart was one of around 50 churches Glasgow-based Peter visited while working on the book, ranging from the former St Peter's Seminary, Cardross, Pluscarden Abbey to Southwark Cathedral in London.

It has won extravagant praise from reviewers: "What makes *Steeple Chasing* so compelling – and it is a wonderful book; thoughtful and challenging – ... is Ross's essential kindness, his unfailing empathy with the people he meets on his pilgrimage," said the *Daily Telegraph*.

His previous book, *Tomb With a View: The Stories and the Glories of Graveyards* won the non-fiction prize at Scotland's National Book awards and was BBC Radio Four Book of the Week in 2023.

Steeple Chasing is published by Headline priced £10.99. To contact the publisher email: enquiries@hachette.co.uk



New Glasgow synod report released

ANEW series of insights and reflections from the Archdiocese of Glasgow has been collected to be included in the Scottish submission to the next gathering of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October.

Individuals and groups from across the Archdiocese contributed their thoughts on the 20 areas for consideration circulated by the Vatican for this period between synods.

And some powerful insights and suggestions emerged. Among them were:

The Christian community needs to use technologies more effectively. The RCIA programmes work well, but numbers are characteristically very small.

Baptism tacked onto the end of Mass is not welcoming, and a more wholesome initiation into church would be welcomed.

Concern exists that many women feel active only in minimal roles. A role could be developed for both men and women, to lead services such as Funeral Receptions, and Eucharistic Services when required.

Churches are encouraged to extend their work of listening, accompaniment and care to the most marginalised women in their social contexts.

We need to abandon our own reticence and learn to be open with other people about our faith and what it means to us. For most of these things we need support and guidance, and we need to have patience, but,

contrary to the Church's traditional way of doing things, we don't want to think in centuries – we need action now.

Not everyone has been free to make their life choices: for example, there are those who are unmarried, not from choice but because they have never found the right partner and thus have been excluded from marriage and the opportunity to be parents. Like the elderly and the ill, they often feel excluded and ignored.



We have to consider just how welcoming our parish is to marginalised people. For example, young single parents (usually mothers) need to feel that they are welcome in the parish Mother and Toddler group. A community garden might be another way of reaching out to people who would not normally come to the church.

It is useful to have Synodal Assemblies – so long as they address the issues that the laity wish addressed. There is a danger of continuing to provide answers to questions that nobody is asking, in a language that nobody understands!

The full text of the submission can be accessed via the synod section of the Archdiocesan website.



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Jesuits mark Glasgow anniversary

WITH solemn step they process, while behind them in this most magnificent of churches, walk the honoured spirits of those who came before them to bring the Society of Jesus to Glasgow.

It is their legacy that is being celebrated here in a Mass of thanksgiving in St Aloysius' Church, Garnethill, officially described as solemn but in truth most joyful – to mark the arrival, 165 years ago, of the first two members of the Jesuit order in Glasgow.

For context it must be remembered that when they arrived from England in 1859 the Catholic Church in Glasgow was in its restoration infancy and outsiders such as the Jesuits were viewed with widespread suspicion by the largely Protestant population.

Yet many more followed and the legacy, left by these humble but cultured men of God, whose Victorian age studio portraits stare steadfastly at us from these pages, is considerable.

They provided education, created parishes, founded St Aloysius' College, surely a story for another day, and gave Glasgow St Aloysius' Church which houses the National Shrine of Saint John Ogilvie, their fellow priest and brother Jesuit, martyred at Glasgow Cross on March 10 1615, making him Scotland's only post-Reformation saint.

And all this they did, as



Pictures by Paul McSherry

BY BRIAN SWANSON

the Latin translation of their motto reminds us, 'For the greater glory of God'.

But as a congregation we were also invited not just to remember the past but to celebrate what has been achieved by generations of Jesuits in the intervening years.

School

Listed in the order of service they were: Celebrating the Shared Mission and Life of the Jesuit Community in Glasgow, St Aloysius' College, the Ignatian Spirituality Centre, St Aloysius' Church and St Aloysius' Refugee Language School.

The latter was founded

eight years ago, during which time volunteers have taught thousands of refugees and asylum seekers – one of whom, Valentyn Chos from Ukraine, delivered the second reading.

Today St Aloysius' is the only Jesuit church in Glasgow, routinely described as one the most beautiful in the UK, but the early Jesuits were more concerned with practicality than beauty, as those attending a reception in St Aloysius' College after the Mass were to learn.

We discovered that in the early days two energetic Jesuits, Frs Kay and Parkinson, were sent north to form a new mission, and soon built the forerunner of today's church which stood on the

site of what is now St Aloysius' College Hall.

And what would Father Kay and the other Jesuits think of the many achievements that have occurred in the past 165 years?

Father Roger Dawson SJ, Superior of the Jesuits in Scotland does not hesitate with his answer.

"Quite simply, they would be absolutely astounded," he said. Few, you feel, would argue with that.



Is God calling you?

to a life of silence and solitude within a community of fellow seekers? The Cistercian monks at Nunraw Abbey offer such an opportunity.

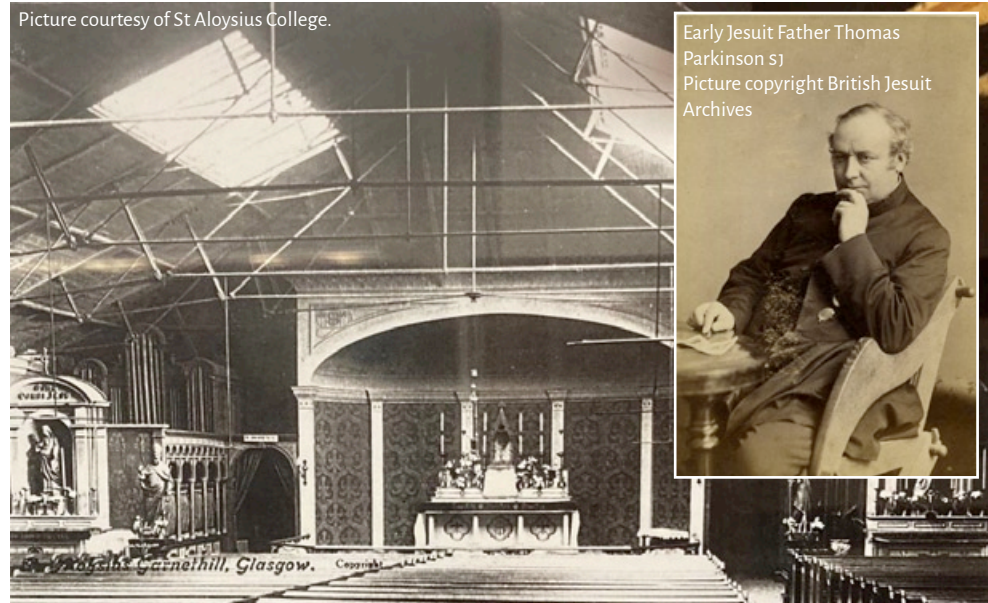
With them you can praise God through the psalms and liturgy at set times during the day. You will have time to study the ways of God and to meet God in your *lectio divina*. And, you will find work that will keep body and soul together.

If you have good reason to believe God may be calling you to be a monk, write to:

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HADDINGTON, EH41 4LW, Scotland
Or email: nunraw.abbot@yahoo.co.uk
Scottish Charity No SCO22611

How it all started: two priests and a railway shed

Picture courtesy of St Aloysius College.



Early Jesuit Father Thomas Parkinson SJ
Picture copyright British Jesuit Archives



THIS is believed to be the only image of the church that was used before the present St Aloysius opened for worship.

Built from cast iron and

glass, it was proudly utilitarian and said to resemble an early version of Queen Street Station hence its nickname of 'Father Kay's Railway Shed'.

It was the Jesuit place of worship for 40 years until the present church in all its neo-baroque splendour was built on its current site in Rose Street.





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Liberia Appeal

‘We want to build a church to honour God. We have the bricks but we need help.’

Oliver – Youth Leader at Divine Mercy Parish, Fishtown, Liberia

In 2003, just five people would meet for Holy Mass in a parishioner’s front room. By 2024, the parish had swelled to 210 people and they badly need a proper church.

Parishioners have made the bricks by hand but need £60,000 to build a church to serve the whole community.

Liberia is one of the world’s poorest countries. **Will you help answer Oliver’s call to build a House of God?**

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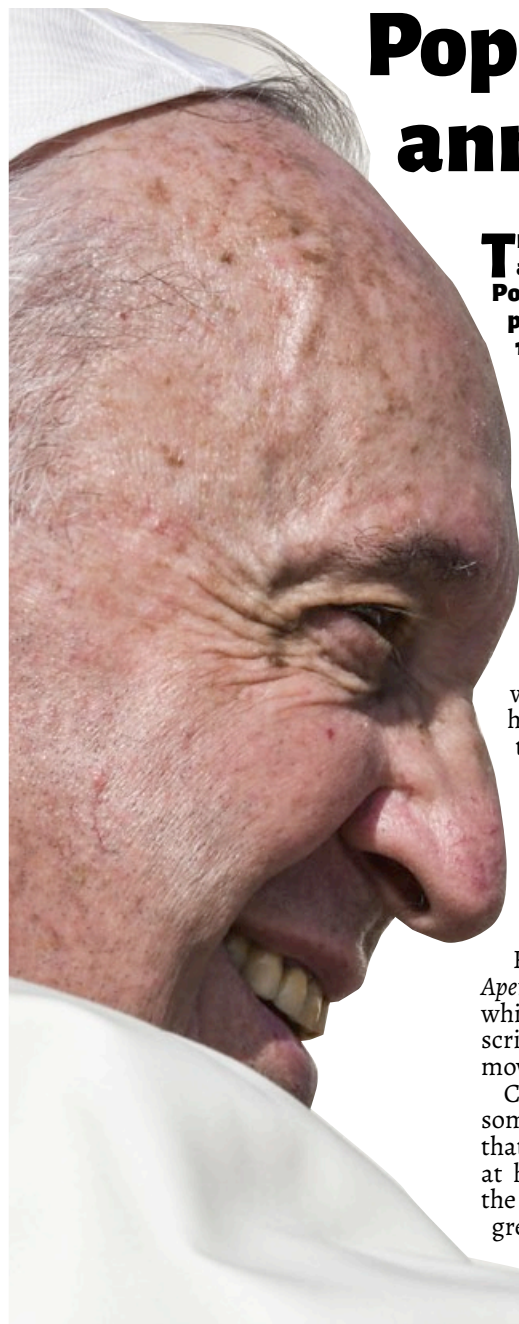
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Pope 'from the ends of the earth' marks anniversary as successor of Peter

THE highly anticipated autobiography of Pope Francis has been published to mark the 11th anniversary of his installation as Bishop of Rome and it reveals extraordinary insights into the man who sits – sometimes uncomfortably – on the throne of Peter.

It is the story of 88 years in the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, intertwined with the great events of history, explored from the Pope's perspective.

The book sees the Pope open up about his early life in a way he never has before. He recalls the songs and films which marked his youth. Rossellini's *Roma Città Aperta* is 'a masterpiece' while *La Strada* is described as his favourite movie of all.

Controversially, given some of the criticisms that have been levelled at him, the Pope admits the teacher who had the greatest influence on him was an avowed Communist

BY RONNIE CONVERY

whom he refers to as Esther. He described her as a true communist, 'atheist but respectful', who, despite having her own ideas, never attacked the faith.

The Pope reveals he experienced the joys and sorrows of love as a young man – even in seminary. He writes that he had a crush on a local girl: "It's normal, otherwise we wouldn't be human beings," he quips.

Football

In the book the Pope shares his love of football but explains that he doesn't watch matches on TV. The reason? A vow he made on July 15, 1990. While watching television that day in a Jesuit house, some 'not very delicate scenes' were broadcast. 'A priest can't look at these things', said the future Pope and so the next day, at Mass for the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, he made a vow not to watch TV again.

The Holy Father reveals fascinating details of the conclave from which he emerged as Pope. He

knew that he was in the running when Cardinal Santos Abril asked him: "Eminence, sorry for the question, but is it true that you are missing a lung?" He replied that only the upper lobe of his right lung was missing, removed when he was 21. The Cardinal, annoyed at the rumour, muttered, "These last-minute manoeuvres..."

Conclave

In the book the Holy Father reveals that he already had many votes at the start of the conclave. Cardinal Claudio Hummes approached him and said: "Don't be afraid, eh! This is what the Holy Spirit does!" When the numbers required for election were reached, Hummes approached him again, and said: "Don't forget the poor..." And there and then he chose the name he would have as Pope: Francis.

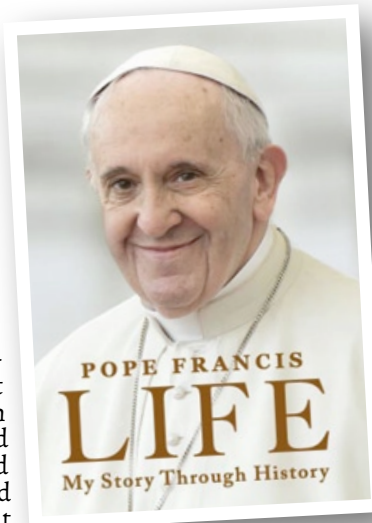
The Pope writes of his belief that gay people need to be made to feel more welcome in the Church. He says that he likes to think of a 'Mother Church', which embraces and welcomes everyone,

even those who have been judged harshly in the past.

He comes out in favour of civil unions for gay people, saying that it is right that they should have legal protection like everyone else.

The Pope acknowledges that many in the Church criticise him and jokes that, if he read all the things said and written about him, he would have to see a psychologist once a week. But he admits he is hurt by those who accuse him of destroying the Papacy.

As his health declines question arise about a possible abdication. But he shows no sign of stepping down, "I think that the Petrine ministry is *ad vitam* [for life] and therefore I don't see any conditions for renunciation." He acknowledges that things would change if a serious physical impediment occurred, and in that case, he has written a resignation letter which is deposited in the Secre-



tariat of State.

If he were to resign, the Pope says that he would not call himself 'Pope Emeritus', but simply 'Emeritus Bishop of Rome', saying that he would live at the Roman basilica of Our Lady, Santa Maria Maggiore, hear confessions and take communion to the sick.

■ **Life: My Story through History is published by HarperCollins. Pope Francis wrote it with Fabio Marchese Ragona. The words quoted in this article are translated from the original Italian text.**

1 LAST month Pope Francis marked the 11th anniversary of his election as successor of St Peter.

Flourish has chosen to mark the anniversary with a look back (and forward) to 11 key features of this extraordinary papacy.

1 Evangelii Gaudium: Pope Francis's mission statement for the Church

Pope Francis has published numerous key letters and documents in his time as Pope. He set the tone for his papacy only a few months after his election in 2013 with a document called *Evangelii Gaudium*, or 'The Joy of the Gospel'.

The document was effectively a mission statement for "a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets".

2 First trip outside Rome: Lampedusa

As with so many moments through his papacy, Pope Francis used a grand gesture to indicate what would be one of his priorities as Pope.

In this case, it was the

Pope's decision to visit the island of Lampedusa for his first trip outside Rome – an island off the coast of Italy where thousands of people escaping poverty and persecution have arrived in Europe, with many losing their lives in dinghies and small boats in the Mediterranean Sea.

3 World leadership

In a distinctively humble way, Pope Francis has epitomised servant leadership – and shown other heads of state what leadership looks like.

That's often involved reminding politicians what their priorities should be, not least in 2015 when Pope Francis spoke at the United Nations General Assembly and the US Congress. The Holy Father declared the Sustainable Development Goals to be "an important sign of hope" when he spoke at the UN – while reminding them that "solemn commitments" without action to turn them into a reality were not enough.

4 Laudato Si'

Pope Francis' second encyclical. *Laud-*

11 keys to the 11 years of Pope Francis

ato Si' is one of the most important documents written this century. The Pope's letter, addressed to "every person living on this planet", is a clarion call for us to care for the earth – our common home.

That means changing the ways we live our lives: tackling the climate crisis and ending the "throwaway culture".

5 Mercy

In 2015 the Holy Father proclaimed a 'Year of Mercy' for the Church. This 'extraordinary jubilee' encouraged Catholics worldwide to undertake works of mercy, and to rediscover God's infinite desire to forgive human beings their faults and sins.

In his first visit to the basilica of St Mary Major, the day after his election, he called out to the priests in the confessionals ... "Show mercy, don't be harsh on people."

6 Peacemaking

Pope Francis made one of his most memorable and profound gestures when he invited the leaders of the previously warring factions in South Sudan to the Vatican in 2019 – kneeling awkwardly to kiss the feet of the two men as he issued a plea for peace.

The Pope has been an untiring 'beggar for peace' throughout the last decade, and almost every Sunday prays for peace in Ukraine and Gaza.

8 Pope of young people

Pope Francis made clear how important a role young people have to play in the Church.

The letter the Pope wrote to young people after the youth synod, *Christus Vivit* – or 'Christ is Alive' – reminded young people that everyone has a vocation, with Francis calling on them "to dream great things, to seek vast horizons... and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better."

9 Synods

The Holy Father has made listening a crucial theme of his papacy, and his call for the Church and the world to listen and learn is likely to be his lasting legacy.

He has convoked several synods in Rome, on issues such as marriage and the family, young people and the Amazon.

But it is his ongoing 'listening exercise' which will conclude in October 2024 which is likely to change definitively the way the Church discerns its role and responsibility in the world.

10 Building a better world after the pandemic

One of the defining images of the pandemic is Pope Francis leading benediction in pouring rain in an empty St Peter's Square.

With millions worldwide watching from home, the Pope led prayers, giving thanks for the essential workers and volunteers serving their communities during lockdown and urging us "to seize this time of trial" to reflect on the things that matter most.

11 The Jubilee Year 2025

Perhaps the last great dream of the current pontificate is to celebrate the great Jubilee Year of 2025.

Work is already advanced in planning for the event and the Pope is expected to open the Holy Door to St Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve this year.

To mark the first Holy Year of the digital age, a special website has been set up to help pilgrims plan how to live the Holy Year fruitfully at www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html

Dorothy Day's message for today: 'You can't do nothing'

THE granddaughters of Dorothy Day, America's foremost Catholic peace-activist who is now a candidate for canonisation, visited Glasgow last month to meet with and encourage those active in social justice activities.

Archbishop Nolan chaired a 'summit' gathering of representatives from Justice and Peace, Pax Christi, the Jesuit Order, SCIAF and the Catholic Worker Movement to hear the testimony and insights of Martha and Kate Hennessy.

Martha, who carries forward her grandmother's work in New York spoke quietly and movingly of Dorothy Day's perseverance in the face of criticism and misunderstanding and urged those gathered to never lose hope in a better world.

She said: "There are always roads to non-violence. Works of mercy provide for the human family. Works of war work against the human family."

Archbishop Nolan drew parallels between the conflicts in the Holy Land and Gaza.

He said: "Both wars have been fueled by the arms industry. What is needed in both cases is an imme-



Archbishop meets Martha and Kate Hennessy

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

diated ceasefire. In both cases the war effort has failed ... Russia has failed to take over the whole of Ukraine, and the war there could go on forever unless a solution is found. Similarly, Israel is waging war 'to protect its security' but in their actions they are encouraging violence and planting the seeds for future versions of Hamas."

The Archbishop also called for a more powerful role for the United Nations in intervening in conflict round the globe. He said: "We lack an international body that can act effectively. The UN is greatly weakened by the policy of allowing a veto on actions and resolutions by any of the five permanent members of the security

council.

"A more effective UN is needed but that requires nations to cede some of their sovereignty in favour of international peace-keeping."

The event ended with a powerful input from Martha Hennessy, who spoke about what her grandmother, Dorothy Day, would do if she were alive today.

She said: "Dorothy knew the depths of evil in the world and she knew too that we can't expect to see the results of our efforts in this life. She knew the importance of hope so she would say to us today, 'You can't do nothing'."

"There's always hope. I find hope in the resurrection every day of my life. Hope is there. The Eucharist is there... never lose hope!"

US activist's path to sainthood

DOROTHY Day, a remarkable figure in American Catholic history, is celebrated for her unwavering dedication to social justice and her tireless efforts to serve the poor.

A lay woman, her cause of canonisation is now open.

Born in 1897 in Brooklyn, New York, Day's journey to sainthood began with a turbulent youth marked by a search for meaning and purpose. Despite her struggles, she found solace in literature, politics, and spirituality.

In her early adult years, Day immersed herself in socialist and anarchist movements, advocating for workers' rights and social reform.

However, it was her conversion to Catholicism in 1927 that profoundly transformed her life. Inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church's commitment to charity and compassion, Day dedicated herself to

serving those in need.

In 1933, alongside Peter Maurin, she co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement, a grassroots organisation dedicated to promoting the principles of solidarity, nonviolence, and hospitality.

The movement established "houses of hospitality" where the homeless and impoverished could find shelter, food, and support. Day's commitment to voluntary poverty and her advocacy for pacifism and social justice became hallmarks of her life's work.

Opposition

Despite facing criticism and opposition from some within the Church and society at large, Day remained steadfast in her beliefs. She used her platform as a journalist, writing for The Catholic Worker newspaper, to shed light on issues such as poverty, inequality, and war.

Throughout her life, Day



Dorothy Day

lived in solidarity with the poor, often choosing to reside in Catholic Worker houses alongside those she served. Her radical hospitality and willingness to embrace a life of simplicity and sacrifice continue to inspire Catholics and non-Catholics alike to live lives of compassion and service.

In 2000, the Church officially opened the cause for Day's canonisation, recognizing her heroic virtue and lifelong commitment to the Gospel values of love, mercy, and justice.

St Patrick's cantor will stage her new opera in Glasgow

New work will tackle humanity's big questions

An opera written by the cantor at St Patrick's church in Anderston will be performed in public for the first time later this month.

Entitled "The Witnesses", it is the work of parishioner Jacquelyn Hazle, an American-born composer, clarinetist and classical singer who moved to Glasgow three years ago to study for her PhD at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Jacquelyn, who grew up in a non-religious family in Southern California, converted to Catholicism while studying in Boston.

Tragedy

She describes the opera, which is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Glasgow Arts Project as: "A two-act tragedy about martyrdom and the universal human search for something certain that withstands all time and trial".

She added: "Through the witnesses I've encountered who revealed to me what's possible in human life. I



Jacquelyn Hazle

BY BRIAN SWANSON

wanted to write an opera that wasn't afraid to ask and talk about life's hardest questions: How could someone face their death and still have hope?

"Is feeling remorse just an easy way out of real accountability or could it be proof of potential for redemption?"

"The opera wanted to tell a story about little lives and the stories that little lives can teach us about having hope in our own journeys."

It will be sung by Rosie Lavery, an award-winning Glasgow born soprano and conductor, and baritone Colin Murray, an RSC graduate from Hamilton who recently completed a tour with Scottish Opera bringing opera to small communities throughout Scotland. They will be accompanied on piano by RSC graduate Clarisse Teo from Singapore.

Canon Paul Gargaro, parish priest at St Pat's said: "In a fairly short time with us Jackie has become a welcome and valued member of our community."

"We are very grateful for the time she devotes as cantor and we wish her well with her opera."

Witnesses will be performed in the Blythwood Hall, Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street at 7pm on Friday April 26. The event is free with tickets available from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland box office.

Evangelisation and culture event to be held at Uni Chaplaincy

An invitation to an informal conference later this month has gone out to Catholics throughout the Archdiocese with the aim of helping them gain a greater understanding of their faith.

Taking place on Saturday April 27 in Turnbull Hall, the Catholic Chaplaincy at the University of Glasgow, the organisers hope it will become an annual event.

The speakers are Canon Gerry Conroy, University Chaplain, who will discuss a Christian understanding of our human nature, historian Andrew Hagarty on culture today and evangelisation, and journalist Katherine Bennett, on a Catholic vision of the feminine.

Dr Robert Doherty, a senior lecturer at Glasgow University's School of Education and one of the organisers said: "We know full well that our minds are limited, and it is ultimately



Turnbull Hall Catholic Chaplaincy

faith that opens us to God, but we also need to know this Faith and be able to explain it to others.

"The act of seeking formation is a way of expressing our love for God and our desire to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us and lead us into all truth."

"The morning of formation will help anyone at-

tending to understand aspects of the Faith in a new light, offering insights that will help us to guide our lives and remain faithful to the Gospel."

The free event will begin with Mass at 9 am and expected to finish by midday.

For more details email Robert.Doherty@glasgow.ac.uk

Easter welcome to world's Irish dancers

It was an Irish-themed Holy Week and Easter in Glasgow this year as thousands of Irish dancers from all over the world poured into the city for the World Championships.

Archbishop Nolan joined Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren for the opening ceremony, though he confessed he was relieved not to be asked to dance a jig at the event!

It is the sixth time Glasgow has hosted the 'Worlds' and the city was the first ever city outside the Emerald Isle to host the championships back in 2002.

Speaking at the opening ceremony the Archbishop offered a warm 'Glasgow welcome' to the visitors and



Picture by Paul McSherry

invited them to share in the life of the city during the championships which coincided with the most important week in the Christian calendar.

Malawi bishop thanks SCIAF and Scottish Government for aid

SCIAF has welcomed a contribution of £250,000 from the Scottish Government's Humanitarian Emergencies Fund to provide cash grants for people in Malawi affected by the ongoing food crisis.

More than four million people in Malawi are currently facing a serious hunger crisis which is putting lives and livelihoods in serious danger. The national food supply is running extremely low, food prices are skyrocketing, and many families are struggling day by day.

This crisis has been made worse by climate change, in particular the long-term impacts of Cyclone Freddy which destroyed large areas of agricultural land in March last year.

Working through its partner CADECOM (Caritas Malawi), SCIAF will reach more than 4,500 households who are struggling to find



Bishop Alfred Chaima

enough food to eat.

Bishop Alfred Chaima, the Chairman of the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi said: "On behalf of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi I hereby wish to extend our deepest gratitude to the Scottish Government for the generous grant of £250,000 to the Malawian people SCIAF and Caritas Malawi.

"The grant comes at a time that many households are in dire need of food assistance. It is with sincere gratitude that I come forth on behalf of my fellow Bishops in Malawi to make this statement as a gesture of appreciation by the Church and many people in need that will benefit from the support."

Scottish Government International Development Minister Kaukab Stewart said: "These funds will help people buy food and other essentials in a time of great hardship and I'm grateful to Christian Aid, SCIAF and the other aid agencies working in Malawi for all their efforts to support those in need."

"Scotland has historic ties with Malawi and this funding also reflects our commitment to the partnership between our two countries, which supports development in areas such as health, education, renewable energy and access to safe water

supplies."

Lorraine Currie, SCIAF's Chief Executive said: "The people of Malawi have been dealt blow after blow in recent years, particularly in southern region which has suffered numerous cyclones, some of which brought winds of over 200 kilometres per hour as well as devastating floods."

"Much of Malawi is rural and these severe weather events not only claim lives and tear apart homes and infrastructure, but they also rob people of their ability to grow food to feed their families. This funding from the Scottish Government will supplement the efforts of the country's own government in feeding those in most need."

"Thanks to this funding provided by Scottish taxpayers, we will do all we can to help families survive this crisis and build a better future."

Pop up evangelisation event in Maryhill



A POP-UP cafe offering information packs about Easter services, goodie bags for the kids and information on all the activities run by Maryhill's churches ... that was the example of evangelisation in action recently organised by parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish Maryhill.

And when he heard about it, Archbishop Nolan couldn't resist swinging by to offer a helping hand.

Parish Priest, Fr Jim Lawlor, said: "It was great to have the Archbishop pop up and do his 'shift' handing out welcome packs to the shoppers on a Saturday morning. A great example of ecumenism and evangelisation in action, and a chance to show the human and welcoming side of the Church."



St Nicholas Care Fund

The St. Nicholas Care Fund offers grant support to schools, churches and community groups working in the Archdiocese of Glasgow with vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and individuals.

We are accepting applications every quarter – the next deadline for applications is 6 May 2024.

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How can we 'reclaim' First Holy Communion days?

Picture by Paul McSherry



Father Ian Bathgate sx

PARISH PRIEST, ST BARTHOLOMEW/
ST MARGARET MARY, CASTLEMILK

'A week after the big day just four children came to Sunday Mass...'

LAST May our first communicants looked incredible in their outfits. An energetic packed church, proud families and friends came together. Photos were taken, cards and gifts given out, halls rented and videos organised. Applause rung out for the future of our faith community.

That was Saturday. On Sunday, only four of the group were at Mass and the following week even fewer.

Has our 'faith focus' really been overtaken by the 'people's party'?

Nowadays faith practice for many families crumbles before the challenge of dance classes, football games, various shows and tournaments... all much more attractive than church.

Our sacramental moments risk becoming a social gathering dressed up as a prayer.

St Augustine wrote in one of his letters: "We should hate and denounce sinful behaviour, but not reject or judge the people who commit them".

So, as leaders, how best can we criticise the practice without condemning the person?

God proposes and never imposes. I believe that our task as faith leaders (parents/guardians/pastors) is to be spiritual sat navs – to suggest how our 'B.I.B.L.E.' (Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth) highlights the best way to reach our final destination. However, each driver ultimately decides which route they'll take.

One of the responsibilities of Catholic drivers in transporting their offspring on the sacramental road is to 'pay' the non-negotiable road toll – catechism classes/coming to church.

Once that toll has been paid, the clergy, tempting as it might be to try, can't control the quality of the driving, the speed or direction.

So, if our aim as parents and pastors is to achieve a more positive response regarding the practice of our Faith, we must self-evaluate:

- Do we communicate happiness as committed missionary disciples?
- Do our young folk identify their parents and priests as enthusiastic and fulfilled in how they try to live their faith?

- Are we critical and judgemental – focusing on the empty benches rather than attending to the needs of those sitting on them?
- Am I more akin to a driving test examiner than a driving instructor?

We are all, religious and lay, called to follow our B.I.B.L.E. (see above) and lead by example.

We never better ourselves by belittling others. Let's critically judge our own level of commitment and practice without condemning other 'road users', some of whom are driving in a storm, some in brilliant sunshine, others with reduced visibility and some are simply just lost!

Your child's celebration of the sacraments is an opportunity for you as parent/guardian to adapt your driving habits and 'service' your own vehicle. Our young folk need living examples, not more rules.

The greatest investment we can make is our positive testimony. They'll never remember the cards they receive, but they will remember the example we've shown.

¡Buen viaje! Bon voyage! Buon viaggio!



THE months of April and May see some of the best-loved moments of celebration in Catholic parishes across the country as classes of children receive their first Holy Communion.

It's a day which is etched in the memory of youngsters, parents, and

parishioners alike and a powerful example of parish, school and family working together for the good of the child.

But in recent years, there has been increasing concern that the 'big day' element of the celebration is overshadowing the spiritual event.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Stories of horse-drawn carriages and light-up veils are legendary, but all too often there is an expectation that the Church should provide a 'show' ahead of a party, and many parents do little before or after the

event to encourage their children in their life of faith.

This month, two Glasgow priests write frankly about their experiences and offer ideas on how to reclaim the traditional First Communion Day experience from the clutches of consumerism and excess.

Pope Francis' advice to First Communion children

WHAT would Pope Francis say to the children preparing for First Communion over the next few weeks and months?

The answer can be found in his words the Holy Father addressed to first communicants during his trip to Bulgaria in 2019 when he gave 253 children their First Holy Communion.

On that occasion he spoke movingly to the children:

"Dear boys and girls, now you will receive Jesus. Don't think about anything else. Come to the altar with silence in your hearts. Think about how Jesus comes to your heart, and how he will do the same again and again.

"Think of your parents, your catechists, your grandparents, your friends. And if you've had a fight with someone, forgive them from the heart. Draw close to Jesus."

He added: **"I hope that today is the beginning of many Communion days, so that your hearts are always like they are today: celebrating, full of joy, and above all, full of gratitude."**

The Pope also encouraged them to try to pray always with the "enthusiasm and joy" that they have on the big day.

"Remember, that this is the sacrament of your First Communion, not of your last! Remember that Jesus is always waiting for you."

Picture: Imago Mundi



Picture by Paul McSherry



Father Jim Lawlor

PARISH PRIEST, IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION, MARYHILL

We have to change saying 'yes to the dress' to saying 'yes to the Lord'

EASTER thrills us with the life Jesus wins, celebrated in our most sacred days.

The proclamation of the resurrection, the core of our faith, coincides with the resurrection in nature of longer days, greening trees and brighter, sharper, sunnier light.

When we evangelise, we share the news that Easter offers everyone life in its fullness, here and now, and the fullness of the life that is still to come.

Right on the back of Easter comes the increasing challenge of a moment of evangelisation – the season of First Holy Communion in parishes across the country.

Most all of us are aware of changes – social or religious – which affect our public celebrations.

Weddings have become an industry. The celebration of Baptism, too, becomes a party-package. Even funerals are not immune to the pressures to put on a display.

Nowhere have we seen more changes than in the celebration of First Holy Communion.

Our teachers and parish catechists do sterling work to teach our faith to the children preparing for the sacraments and to include our families in the life of the parish family.

But we have to face up to the fact that in celebrating First Holy Communion we are up against serious market forces.

Some months ago, I was asked to advertise the arrival of this season's new 'first communion dress collection'.

In the same week a dance school called to ask if we could move the First Communion date to accommodate a dance competition! You can imagine the response!

Social media is flooded with information on balloon arches, communion cakes, kilt hire, bouncy castles and DJ's.

There are challenges here, not least the trend of turning little girls into mini brides... spa days, treatments and – worst of all surely – those 'I said yes to the dress' pictures!

Underneath is a serious inability to make any kind of commitment to the life of a parish. Tragically, for many, First Communion is often 'last communion' – at least for a while.

Rather than deploring the excesses around First Communion, the challenge of evangelisation is to explore the opportunity this moment offers.

To people often intimidated by the unfamiliarity of the church it's important to ensure they feel welcomed. A simple, reverent liturgy, manifesting the utter centrality of the gift of the Eucharist, might go some way to gently putting the razzamatazz into context!

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the apparent distance between us at these moments of encounter.

Our challenge is to narrow that distance while people who are perhaps not familiar with our faith practice are with us. Maybe even help them to see that as well as saying 'yes to the dress', they can also say yes to the Lord!

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FOR more than 170 years St Mary's Primary School has faithfully served the community of Maryhill, and in that time has seen countless changes.

But as Archbishop Nolan said in his homily at a thanksgiving Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of the present school building in Kilmun Street, one thing has remained constant – the encouragement by teachers for children to follow the example of Jesus.

He said: "This is a school where generations of families have attended to study and learn, and from listening to the children I can see it is a wonderful happy school, where everyone shows respect and kindness.

"All the staff want the children to be kind and good just like Jesus asks of us all. They do that by their example and encourage everyone to be a good and kind person."

Earlier, pupils and staff, past and present, parishioners', families and friends,



BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

local councillors and politicians gathered in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Maryhill for the 50th anniversary celebrations.

The school, with a roll of just under 300 children, is regarded as one of the most diverse in the city with 30

different languages spoken by youngsters from all over the world.

In her speech of thanks, head teacher Madeleine McGeachie recalled that the older St Mary's primary opened in 1851 but rising numbers of up to 1,000 pupils meant a larger school was required, which was built in 1926 to accommo-

date 1,200 pupils.

Around 15 years after it was opened the school was destroyed by a German bombing raid which also killed more than 100 people in the adjoining streets.

Pupils then moved to the school annex next to Maryhill Barracks and remained there until the opening of the present building in 1974.



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AMUCH-LOVED piece of Glasgow's pre-reformation Catholic history has reopened to the public.

Provand's Lordship, the oldest house in Glasgow, opened its doors again on Good Friday after a £1.6 million repair and improvement programme.

It was built in 1471 and is one of only four surviving medieval buildings in Glasgow. Visitors will now see the building as it looked when first opened in the 15th century.

Upgrading works have included repairs to the building's roof, chimneys, and downpipes. Doors and win-

BY RONNIE CONVERY

dows have been replaced in original styles and protection against rising damp has been added.

Provand's Lordship was built as part of St Nicholas's Hospital by Andrew Muirhead, Bishop of Glasgow, in 1471. The house is believed to have provided accommodation for the 32 Canons of the pre-reformation Cathedral Chapter, each associated with one of the deaneries into which the then-Diocese of Glasgow was divided.

After the Protestant reformation, the building lost its religious significance to the

point that in the 19th century it was acquired by the Morton family who used it as a sweetie shop!

Following a generous donation by Sir William Burrell, the house was bought by the specially-formed Provand's Lordship Society, whose aim was to protect it.

In 1978, the building was acquired by the City of Glasgow District Council who restored it. It was first opened to the public in 1983.

Provand's Lordship is part of Glasgow's Cathedral Precinct. The area will have a significant part to play in celebrations of Glasgow's 850th anniversary in 2025.

Care for a walk with a difference?

Young pilgrims will walk across the Archdiocese in a pilgrimage of faith which is open to all

FOR some of us when we hear 'The Journey', the lyrics of 'Don't Stop Believing' may chime in our head.

In this case, it's pretty apt as this Spring, the Archdiocesan Youth Office will lead a Walking Pilgrimage across the Archdiocese (19th - 21st April) to help encourage and inspire young people in their walk with Christ.

Venturing from St Mahew's, Cardross to St Andrew's Cathedral over three days, we will stop at various parishes, celebrate Mass together with the Archbishop, have opportunities to pray and to listen to talks to give us food for thought as we walk.

Sleeping in church halls, for those who wish, we will embrace a spirit of pilgrimage, focusing on our pilgrimage to heaven and how Jesus walks with us and encourages us in taking that narrow path.

It's sure to be a fantastic time for all our young people and we welcome all 16 to 35 year olds who want to join us. For more information, we can be contacted via email: youth@rcag.org.uk and registration can be done online: www.tinyurl.com/rcagpilgrimage

We will also be journeying with our younger youth,

BY MAIRI-CLAIRE MCGEADY

secondary school aged pupils, to Life Teen Summer Camp in Alton Castle this July (21st-25th). Places are limited but still available. www.tinyurl.com/ltcamp24

If you want to journey with other young people your age, there is an exciting array of opportunities

and you can find out more about our monthly events (FORMED & An Audience With) on our website: www.rcagyouth.co.uk

Let's pray for all our young people, across the Archdiocese, wherever they're at on their journey of faith, that they may walk closer with Jesus and be supported by other disciples along the way.

New bishop for Galloway

THERE was a special joy in the air for Archbishop Nolan's former diocese of Galloway last month as it finally welcomed its new bishop.

The see of St Ninian has been empty since February 2022 when its then-bishop was named to succeed Archbishop Tartaglia in Glasgow.

But after more than two years of waiting Fr Frank Dougan was formally ordained bishop at the church of St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan last month, before taking possession of the Cathedral of St Margaret in Ayr a day later.

Archbishop Leo Cushley led the ordination ceremony, as Metropolitan of the province in which Galloway is situated while Archbishop Nolan was a co-consecrator along with Bishop Joe Toal of Motherwell (the native diocese of the new bishop).

The new bishop said: "I am humbled and more than a little bit nervous that Pope Francis has asked me to take on this office. I feel confident however that I will not be alone in spreading the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I will be joining with every single person in Galloway Diocese all of whom have a role to play, my role being just one of them."

Picture by Paul McSherry



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Arnold Clark



PAPACIES, almost by definition, are complex affairs. Popes govern the world's largest and most complicated religious institution, and they do it for a relatively long span of time.

Over the arc of the last 10, the average length has been 14.5 years. Given such a flurry of activity, any effort to reduce a papal legacy to a quick sound-bite inevitably will be over-simplified, misleading, and, possibly, a total waste of time.

That said, let's do it anyway!

Thinking about the 10 completed papacies since the election of Leo XIII in 1878 – the first after the collapse of the Papal States, and thus marking the birth of the modern papacy – I've come to believe that at the popular level, the most memorable legacy of a Pope usually can be expressed in a simple, two-word formula:

Leo XIII (1878–1903): Social Teaching

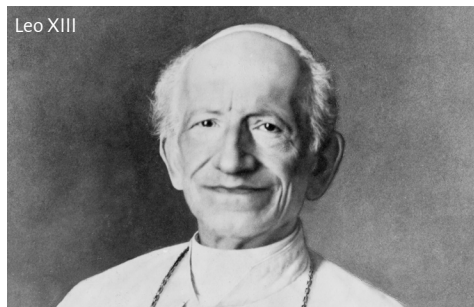
Almost 125 years after Leo's death, what most ordinary Catholics likely can remember, maybe from a course in school or from hearing it a homily somewhere along the line, is that Leo XIII launched the modern tradition of Catholic social teaching, and especially the church's analysis of economic justice. He did so with his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which tackled the situation of the working classes in the new capitalist order being born.

Pius X (1903–1914): Anti-Modernism

Okay, I concede that "anti-modernism" actually is one word, not two, but it contains two ideas: Modernism, and being against it. That's likely what most people today could summon to mind about Pius X's reign: Loyalty oaths, condemnations, spying networks in the guise of sodalities, and other strenuous efforts to combat the rise of "modernism" – broadly meaning détente with science, secularism and contemporary philosophy – in Catholic theology.

Benedict XV (1914–1922): "Useless Slaughter"

Benedict's reign was defined by the First World War and its aftermath, and what most remember today was the



Ten Popes in two words

Pope's valiant but futile efforts to end the conflict, famously captured in his description of it as an *inutile strage*, or "useless slaughter." His diplomatic and moral efforts failed at the time, but later his warnings about mounting European nationalist resentments after the war were seen as prophetic.

Pius XI (1922–1939): Lateran Pacts

With the agreements between Italy, under fascist Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, and the Vatican under Pius XI, the famous "Roman question" was definitively settled, marking the end of the papacy's political isolation and, more broadly, its acceptance of modern secular states and church/state separation. It also, of course, filled the Vatican's coffers with compensation for its lost territories, providing a financial patrimony for its operations to this day.

Pius XII (1939–1958): Holocaust "Silence"

However unjust it may be, what most people likely could tell you today about Pius XII's 18-year reign – arguably the

most fraught and anguished of any on this list – is

that there's a debate about whether he did enough to denounce the Holocaust and to save Jews and other victims of the Nazis. The case for the prosecution was most famously expressed in John Cornwall's polemical 1999 book *Hitler's Pope*.

John XXIII (1958–1963): Vatican II

This one's a no-brainer. By far, what history will recall about "Good Pope John" is his surprise decision to summon the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), and all the earthquakes in Catholic life it triggered. He didn't live to see the council's end, but his vision in calling it and opening it, including his celebrated "prophets of doom" speech, were decisive for everything that followed.

Paul VI (1963–1978): *Humanae Vitae*

Another slam-dunk here, as Paul VI's landmark 1968 encyclical letter reaffirming the church's traditional ban on birth control remains by far the most discussed, and debated, aspect of his

papacy. To this day, *Humanae Vitae* is probably one of only a handful of papal encyclicals that even non-Catholics would not only recognise, but they'd have an opinion about it.

John Paul I (August–September 1978): Smiling Pope

Though he reigned for only 33 days, Pope John Paul I managed to leave a legacy simply by representing a breath of fresh air. After the perceived gloom of the late Paul VI years, this charming, engaging figure seemed to invest the papacy with a new lease on life, quickly earning the moniker of a "smiling pope" that follows him to this day.

John Paul II (1978–2005): Ended Communism

If you were to ask most ordinary folks, the first thing that likely would come to mind is the way his sponsorship of the Solidarity movement helped set the dominoes in motion that led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet empire. Certainly, his fellow Poles do everything in their power to make sure no one ever forgets.

Benedict XVI (2005–2013): He Quit

Though Benedict presided over a dramatic, and often turbulent, papacy, nothing he did will pass into history like the way it ended: With the first resignation in 500 years, and arguably the first ever under uncontested circumstances. In effect, Benedict became the Catholic Cincinnatus, a leader who had absolute power and voluntarily relinquished it when he believed his task was complete, becoming an eternal symbol of civic virtue.



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OASIS

Nourish your soul with our monthly spirituality supplement

Don't wait too long to understand ... now is the time to live in the present

SOMETIMES there's nothing as helpful as a good metaphor.

In his book, *The God Instinct*, Tom Stella shares this story: A number of men who made their living as porters were hired one day to carry a huge load of supplies for a group on safari.

Several days into the journey they stopped, unshouldered their loads, and refused to go on. No pleas, bribes, or threats, worked in terms of persuading them to go on. Asked why they couldn't continue, they answered: "We can't go on; we have to wait for our souls to catch up with us."

That also happens to us in life, except mostly we never wait for our souls to catch up. We continue without them, sometimes for years.

What this means is that we struggle to be in the present moment, to be inside our own skin, to be aware of the richness of our own experience. Too often our experiences aren't very soulful because we aren't present to them. I cite myself as an example:

For the past 25 years, I've kept a journal, a diary of sorts. My intent in keeping this journal is to record the deeper things that I'm aware of throughout each day; but

mostly what I end up actually writing down is a simple chronology of my day, a day-book, a bare, no-frills, re-counting of what I did from hour to hour.

My journals resemble what you might get from a schoolboy describing his day at school, a simple chronology of what happened.

Yet when I go back some years later and read an account of what I did on a given day, I'm always amazed at how rich and full my life was on that day, except that I wasn't much aware of it at the time.

While actually living through those days, mostly I was struggling to get my work done, to stay on top of things, to meet expectations, to carve out some moments of friendship and recreation amid the pressures of the day, and to get to bed at a reasonable hour. There wasn't a lot of soul there, just routine, work, and hurry.

I suspect that this is not atypical. Most of us live most of our days not very aware of how rich our lives are, forever leaving our souls behind.

For example, many is the woman who gives 10 to 15 years of her life to bearing and raising children, with all that entails, tending constantly to someone else's

Scribblings of the spirit

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



needs, getting up at night to nurse a child, spending 24 hours a day on constant alert, sacrificing all leisure time, and putting a career and personal creativity on hold.

And yet often that same woman, later on, looks back on those years and wishes she could relive them – but now, in a more soulful way, more consciously aware of how privileged it was to do precisely those things she did within so much tedium

and tiredness.

Years later, looking back, she sees how rich and precious her experience was and how because of the burden and stress how little her soul was present then to what she was experiencing.

This can be multiplied with a thousand examples. We've all read accounts wherein someone shares what he or she would do differently if he or she had life to live over again.

Mostly these stories re-

work the same motif. Given another chance, I would try to enjoy it more, I would try to keep my soul more present and more aware.

For most of us, I fear, our souls will only catch up with us when, finally, we are in retirement, with diminished health, diminished energy, and no opportunity to work.

It seems we need to first lose something before we fully appreciate it. We tend to take life, health, energy, and work for granted, until they are taken away from us. Only after the fact do we realise how rich our lives have been and how little of those riches we drank in at the time.

Our souls eventually do catch up with us, but it would be good if we didn't wait until we were in assisted living for this to happen. Like the porters who dropped their loads and stopped, we need to stop and wait for our souls to catch up.

Early on in his priesthood, when Pope Francis was principal of a school, he would at a certain point each day have the public address system cut in and interrupt the work that was going on in each classroom with this announcement: "Be grateful. Set your horizon. Take stock of your day."

When young lives seem to end far too soon for us

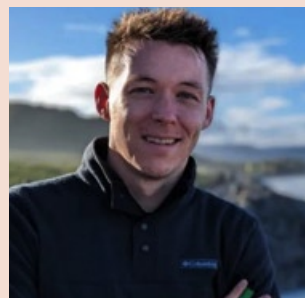
IT is never good news when a reporter is the story. Last month, in the saddest possible way, the journalist and author, Nick Sheridan (right), a familiar face and voice on BBC Scotland was the lead story.

His death, after a short illness, at the age of 32, left everyone who had ever had the pleasure of meeting him reeling.

The superlatives were flowing in tribute to Nick and still they fell short. How could they not? His vibrance and vivacity sat easily alongside his warm and deeply caring nature. Nick was the real deal.

At his core he was a fundamentally humble person. Every compliment on a recent success would be met with "Ah stop..." delivered in his soft Wexford lilt.

Nick was our next door neighbour until he moved. He was the most genuine, lovely soul you could ever meet, so much so we re-



marked on it every time we were in his company.

Deliveries of his legendary baking, chats in our shared gardens, a wee nip of whisky with Himself. These are golden memories of a young man taken in the prime of his life.

We logged on to his Requiem Mass in St Ibar's, his family's church in County Wexford, to hear the priest recall only last Christmas Eve when Nick sang *O, Holy Night*, accompanied on the church organ by his father, Nick senior.

A battle of wits ensued as they were in different keys

with Nick ploughing on until his dad changed key. The three men laughed afterwards in what will now be a memory to treasure.

His brother, Brian, spoke of their close bond and how Nick, the younger of the two was the one who showed him how to live.

Nick's life was transformative, in life and in death. Just as he lived for others, in death he continued to be of service. Four people are now recipients of his transplanted organs.

Nick's life was not in the length of days but in how he lived those days.

His passing brought into sharp relief the loss of a much-loved young friend of our family, Rachael, who would also have been 32 in the days after Nick died. Her death, just over a year ago, at such a tender age, was a terrible pain for her parents and all those who loved her to bear.

Her heartbroken father told of the myriad achieve-



Mary's musings

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

ments in her all-too-short life. Rachael's career was flourishing and she excelled in her many interests. What shone through was her character and how she always found ways to be of service. It was noted in the homily how she would be a great loss to the parish council.

Faith is our comfort. The understanding of how we are called in the moment God knows is best for our soul.

Our faith teaches us there is a time to be born and a time to die. Each one of us has our season and our purpose.

The ancient Greeks measured time in two ways: Chronos and Kairos.

Chronos, the chronological, sequential time, quantified in minutes, hours and days.

Kairos was a more dimensional approach. Unlike the linear Chronos, Kairos was about the moments not the minutes. It found it meaning and expression in love and creativity. Kairos was defining and purposeful.

Its meaning is as real today.

Our time here is short and we are caught up in the prosaic concerns of our day to day lives. Kairos, be it a season or a moment is where the wisdom and direction lie.

Nick and Rachael showed how to be Kairos people in a Chronos world.

Vatican's free guide to the 'Year of Prayer'

To mark the Year of Prayer, the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation has prepared a series of useful materials and aids which can be used by parishes and individuals in their preparations for the 2025 Jubilee.

A new guide "Teach us to Pray" is now available online and a digital version in English can be downloaded free from the website. The title is taken from the 11th chapter of the Gospel of Luke (Lk 11.1).

The booklet, inspired by the teachings of Pope Francis, is written as an invitation to intensify prayer, understood as a personal dialogue with God, and to lead readers to reflect on their faith, and their commitment in today's world, in the various contexts in which they are called to live.

The aim is to offer reflections, ideas, and advice to help people to live their dialogue with the Lord more fully in their relationships with others.

The guide is made up of sections dedicat-



ed to prayer in the parish community, and in the family, with other sections dedicated to young people, cloistered communities, catechesis, and spiritual retreats.

It can be downloaded at the Jubilee website www.iubilaeum2025.va

Pope plans a day just for children

Picture: Vatican Media



A WORLD Children's Day, in the style of World Youth Day, will be held in Rome on 25-26 May 2024.

The event, which will see thousands of boys and girls from all over the world flock to Rome, is sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education.

The Dicastery had already offered its support for a gathering of very young people last November, at the "Let's Learn from Boys and Girls" event that saw Pope Francis surrounded by some 7,500 children from around the world in the Paul VI Hall.

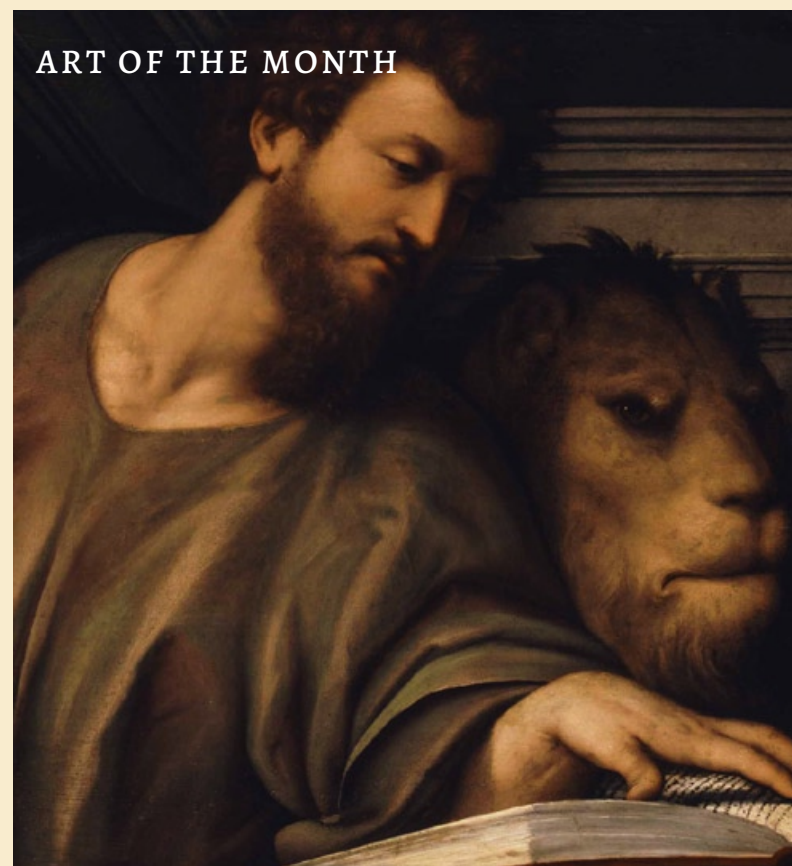
The idea of a Day entirely dedicated to children had been proposed to the Pope last July by a little Italian boy, 9-year-old Alessandro, who suggested it during the 'Popecast', a podcast made by Vatican Media with Pope Francis ahead of the World Youth Day in Lisbon.

"I like it very much!" the Pope replied after listening to the voice message. "We can have it organised by the grandparents. A beautiful idea. I will think about it and see how to do it."

In a message released ahead of the event, the Pope speaks directly to children: "I am going to share a special secret with you. If we really want to be happy, we need to pray, to pray a lot, to pray every day, because prayer connects us directly to God."

"Prayer fills our hearts with light and warmth; it helps us to do everything with confidence and peace of mind. Jesus constantly prayed to the Father. Do you know what Jesus called him? In his language, he simply called him "Abba", which means "Daddy". Let's do the same thing! We will always feel that Jesus is close to us."

ART OF THE MONTH



Letting art take us on a journey of faith and awe

A NAME, not so well known as others who were influenced by him and perhaps overshadowed him, such as Titian and Bellini, is that of *Il Pordenone* whose real name was Giovanni Antonio de' Sacchis.

Born in the quaint town of Pordenone around 1484, his artistic legacy spans a diverse range of subjects, from religious narratives to portraiture and architectural studies.

In his portrayal of Saint Mark, the Apostle and Evangelist, whose feast day occurs this month, there is a palpable sense of sanctity.

The presence of a lion symbolises strength and courage and is associated with Saint Mark and the city of Venice, where his relics reside. His Gospel begins with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, perhaps like a roaring lion which is bold and powerful.

Clad in flowing robes, Mark's hand is poised over the pages of the Gospel, with a hint of authority, tempered with humility and the

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

essence of divine inspiration.

The figure seems to be on the brink of motion. The saint's face is a study in contrasts, his features etched with a blend of serenity and introspection. His eyes are deep and penetrating and suggest a sense of wisdom. His lips curve in a gentle smile that speaks of his inner peace.

It is as though *Il Pordenone* has captured not just the physical likeness of St Mark, but the very essence of his being, drawing the viewer deeper into the mysteries of faith and redemption.

Through this composition, we are prompted to reflect on the intertwined themes of divine grace and human frailty, fostering a sense of wonder and reverence.

As we gaze upon the saint's serene countenance, we are reminded of the eternal truths that unite us all in a shared journey of faith and discovery.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, source of all wisdom and grace, grant us the courage to embrace our calling, as Saint Mark did, with unwavering faith and dedication. Inspire us to proclaim your Gospel with clarity and compassion, guiding those who seek truth amidst the tumult of this world. May we radiate the light of your love and mercy in our words and deeds, that we may bring hope to the weary and solace to the afflicted. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Easter means we can overcome any difficulty life may throw at us

DURING these days, we wish each other “Happy Easter”, and indeed joy is one of the first things we hear about this month in our Easter Gospel readings.

It is a joy which Pope Francis says we cannot keep to ourselves but which, by its very nature, we have to share.

So, our Easter joy goes hand in hand with our mission to others: to share the joy of the Good News that we are loved and forgiven and can share in his risen life. These ideas run through all our Eastertide Sundays this year.



Fr Tom
Kilbride

Rector of the Royal
Scots College,
Salamanca, Spain

Second Sunday of Easter,
Year B

Jesus’ first words to his disciples as he stands among them are “Peace be with you”. In fact, he says it twice. They are fearful, shut in, and he brings them peace. We are then told that they are “filled with joy”. Peace and Joy are two words

we often associate more with Christmas, but here they are in John’s story of the first Easter day, as gifts of the Risen Jesus.

He then breathes the gift of the Holy Spirit (a sign of new life just as God breathed life into Adam at Creation) and sends them out. John tells us that this is why he has written his Gospel: “that you might believe”. It is part of the ongoing mission of sharing the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Of course, Thomas reminds us that faith does not always come easily. It takes more than just hearing the story to convince him! However, his encounter with Jesus, and the gentle invitation to come close and touch for himself, changes everything and he makes that beautiful profession of faith, “My Lord and my God”. By this faith (as we hear in the Second Reading) we are born of God and prove our love.

We can overcome any difficulty the world throws up against us. It is that faith and witness to it that fosters the unity of the Church which makes such an impression on those who come into contact with the apostles.



Caravaggio, *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, 1601

Third Sunday of Easter,
Year B

This Sunday’s Gospel is Luke’s version of the events John told us about last week, namely that the disciples, at first unsure and even doubting, encountered the Risen Jesus suddenly among them, that he greeted them with “Peace be with you” and invited them to touch his wounds.

Luke doesn’t single Thomas out but applies the doubting and the invitation to them all. Jesus opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and, as last week, calls them to be his witnesses.

So, in the First Reading, we hear Peter explaining that the prophets had foretold all that had happened to Jesus. His witness, filled now with the Holy Spirit and with understanding of the Scriptures, is bold and challenging to the people who hear him: they must repent and have their sins forgiven, a forgiveness guaranteed by the sacrifice of Jesus for us (Second Reading).

Fourth Sunday of Easter,
Year B

Having heard some of the encounters of the disciples with the risen Jesus, the re-

maining Sundays of Easter are more reflective, exploring the meaning of his death and resurrection and their impact on us.

Today, as every year, we hear him speak of himself as the Good Shepherd. He knows us, invites us to know him, and he lays down his life for us. All this – his death on the cross and his resurrection – he does freely, out of love for us, a love which originates in God the Father himself. Even now, we are precious to the Father, with greater glory and love yet to be revealed. All this love is revealed to us if we listen to his voice, follow him and put our trust in the name of the one who died for us and rose again to save us.

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B

A vine can be a straggly, unruly plant, difficult to train. But if it is properly looked after, it can produce the most exquisite grapes. The image Jesus uses in the Gospel is, therefore, a powerful one.

We too can be difficult to train and a bit unruly, but, if we are open to God at work in and through us, and allow him to prune and shape us, the fruit can be rich and plentiful.

And the fruit a vine produces is not for itself purely, but is taken, used and shared. So too our lives in Christ are not to be lived just for ourselves but are meant to bring goodness and hope to the lives of others. So, we see in Paul (First Reading) that after his conversion, he becomes docile to God’s will and, despite some difficulties and opposition, bears fruit for others by his bold preaching and his energetic mission. It proves a little too energetic for some, so he has to be taken in hand by others (firstly by Barnabas)

in order to properly prepare for the mission which lies ahead of him – to be pruned to bear more fruit!

Sixth Sunday of Easter,
Year B

The last Sunday before the Ascension brings us to the very heart of the Gospel: love as Jesus has loved us. This is Jesus’ commandment. But how can you “command” love?

What is being said is that, if we are truly his disciples and truly want to live the Gospel, we have to live as he did, giving of ourselves fully and generously in whatever situation of life we are in. We are not commanded merely to “feel” a certain way – that would be impossible. Rather we are commanded to act and to think in a certain way, to act and think as Jesus did, in love for us and revealing God’s love in the world.

Our acts of kindness, compassion, motivated by our faith and our desire to imitate Jesus, should do just that. We began this month thinking about the joy of the disciples when the Risen Jesus stood among them. This week, we hear that our joy is the joy which comes from loving as he loved, from doing as the Father asks. Joy is a theme running through these weeks’ Gospel readings: it comes from Jesus and is to be shared with others.

As we heard a few Sundays ago, we are to be witnesses to the saving, forgiving power of Jesus’ death and resurrection. May our lives reflect the love of God revealed in the Risen Jesus so that others might experience the peace and joy he brings and come to know and to believe in him too.

JERICHO †

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God is to be found in the humdrum... we are wasting our time searching for him in the spectacular

I WAS listening to reports on the radio about how disappointing the recent Willie Wonka Experience was at an industrial location in Whiteinch.



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

It was billed as a celebration of chocolate in all its delightful forms, which sounded right up my street, if only it weren't Lent, but apparently most families who turned up, expecting a wonderful and spectacular experience for their children, were left furious at what turned out to be a damp squib, and the event was cancelled.

Recently, in the first reading at Mass, we listened to the story of Naaman the leper, and he had a bit of a damp squib experience as well.

To cut a long story short, he was sent to the Prophet Elisha for a cure for his leprosy. Having exhausted all other attempts at a cure, he expected that the prophet would do something spectacular and ask him to do something really difficult to bring about a healing.

Instead, Elisha never even bothered to come out to look at his skin, he just sent out a message to go and bathe in the river.

Disillusioned and disappointed, Naaman wasn't even going to bother, but he gave way to the encourage-

ment of others, bathed in the river, and so was cured. So, that got me to thinking about a few of my own damp squib experiences...

The most recent was in the last couple of weeks and, in a sense, was my own personal Naaman experience. For a few days I had felt as if I had something in my eye, like a bit of grit, or an eyelash, but I couldn't actually see anything.

When I couldn't stand it anymore, and was finding it difficult to sleep, I went along to a pharmacist in town. He would be my Elisha.

When I told him the problem, he just said; "There's nothing I can do, it will be fine, it will sort itself out".

I said "Well, what about an eye wash, would you recommend anything?" He replied: "You can try one if you want, there are lots of them on the shelves..."

So, without a great deal of sincerity, I thanked him, pretty disappointed, like

Naaman, that he hadn't even had a look at my eye.

On the shelves there was an extraordinary and confusing array of eye washes, for all kinds of eye problems, and I just opted for one that looked as if it connected to my issue, and started using it.

For over a week I didn't think it was doing any good but then, just a couple of days ago, I awoke to find my eye clear. Probably it would have cleared without the eye wash, and the pharmacist, like Elisha, was right, and I had to eat humble pie.

When I joined the Passionists in 1975, I was looking forward to entering into an intense and wonderful spiritual journey. However, a few weeks before I was due to travel, I had a letter from the priest who was to be our formation director for that postulancy year.

The main instruction in the letter was that I was to bring a pair of wellies and some gardening clothes!



The beginning of my postulancy year introduced me more to gardening, doing the sacristy laundry, cleaning the toilets, and other such tasks, than it did to leading me into the mansions of contemplative prayer, so, in a way, that was a bit of a damp squib as well.

However, as it says in the Rule of St Benedict, with regard to daily manual labour: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labour".

When I made my 30-day Ignatian Retreat back in 1987, I was looking forward to the celebration of the Sacred Triduum towards the end of it. Surely this was going to be the most intense and inspiring experience of the Easter Mysteries of all time?

When it came to it, however, the ceremonies were very, very low key and, even at the Easter Vigil, having had some difficulty preparing the fire on a wet and blustery Holy Saturday night, the celebrant ended up lighting the paschal can-

dle using a Zippo cigarette lighter. What a damp squib that was!

At the end of the day, as I have come to learn more and more, we don't need the extraordinary, the spectacular, and the wonderful, to experience God.

God is in the simple, ordinary, everyday-ness of life. As St Ignatius would say – God is in all things. Amen to that.

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

Memories of living in the shadow of the bomb... and why we must never take the precious gift of peace for granted



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

THE two conflicts that have grabbed headlines in Scotland most recently have each raised the threat of employing nuclear weapons.

For a younger generation, that may not provoke the fear that similar threats did in my youth – and yet the devastation that a nuclear attack would generate today is many times greater than when those first 'atomic bombs' were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Those of us who were teenagers when Presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev took us to the brink in the early 1960s very seriously discussed how we wanted to spend our last four minutes, the time we were told would be left to us once 'the

bomb' exploded.

Today, scientists tell us that at the epicentre of such an explosion, everyone and everything would be instantly incinerated.

The damage from the fall out would be widespread and even more deadly than for those exposed to radiation during the tests carried out by the UK and US in the 1950s and '60s. People then, suffered from cancers, gave birth to malformed babies, and found fish and agricultural lands were obliterated.

That's why Clause 6 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons seeks compensation and reparation for those affected by nuclear tests.

On April 26, the United Nations marks Cherno-

byl Disaster Remembrance Day. No – that wasn't a disaster caused by a nuclear weapon but by an accident in 1986 within a nuclear power plant, which spread a radioactive cloud over large parts of the Soviet Union, now Belarus, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation. Nearly 8.4 million people in those three countries were exposed to the radiation.

I worked in Glasgow in 1986. I remember that it rained very heavily in the days following the disaster. Scientists said that rain brought with it the radiation experienced in the Soviet Union.

As journalists, we reported on how Scottish agricultural land was affected by radiation. Sheep in Scotland and Wales continued

to show levels of radioactive contamination for many years, and it wasn't until June 2010 – almost a quarter of a century later – that for the first time, sheep on all Scottish farms dropped below safety limits. That allowed the government's

Food Standards Agency (FSA) to lift controls on the movement and sale of sheep that had been in force since the Chernobyl accident.

Whatever the source, the effects of radiation are catastrophic.

An important part of Pax

Christi Scotland's work is to continue to campaign against nuclear weapons. Pope Francis has said, "The use of nuclear weapons is immoral." Our Scottish Bishops have campaigned against nuclear weapons since the 1980s.

Oppenheimer isn't just an award-winning movie but the story of the birth of the world's most disastrous weapon.

The UK government continues to spend billions upgrading its version of it and by sending arms to Ukraine and Israel, it makes the nuclear base at Faslane a greater target. Knowing the potential damage, Pax Christi Scotland is firmly with Pope Francis and our Bishops, saying "No" to nukes.



Kennedy and Khrushchev

Heartbreak and hope as Malawi starves

ON the final approach to Lilongwe, looking past the aeroplane's wing, the landscape is a patchwork of vibrant shades of green.

It's rainy season in Malawi, and small plots of maize separated by paths, long dirt roads, and clusters of small houses extend as far as the eye can see.

It looks like the small-holder farmers I see in the fields will be looking forward to a good harvest. But as we get closer, I see that the maize crop is looking thin and stunted. Many of the plants haven't developed the characteristic green corn cob which contains the kernels that are used for Malawi's staple food – 'nsima'.

I lived in Malawi for three years with my family and one of our children, Angela, was born here, which gives me a strong connection to this country and its wonderful, resilient people.

The following day in a village, farmers told me they planted their seeds in October, but the rains came

BY CHRIS MACLULLICH

late, the seedlings died, and they had to plant again in December. At first the crops grew, but then they were hit by a prolonged dry spell in February. The maize either withered on the stalks or failed to thrive.

We met with a family who, having nothing else to eat, had resorted to harvesting grass seeds that they grind to make a porridge. After gathering the seeds, the family have to carefully sort the grains to remove other seeds that can be harmful. There was a great dignity in the way these farmers explained their situation in these increasingly stark circumstances.

The tropical cyclones of 2022 and 2023 brought extremely strong winds and torrential rain which flattened crops, flooded farmland, killed livestock, and washed away entire villages. More than 700,000 people were displaced as six



months' worth of rain fell in just six days. Many lives were lost to the storms, and hunger followed as there were few crops to harvest.

This year, El Niño has triggered drought across Malawi. Whilst most of the country has experienced a dry spell in the last few months, other parts have been hit by raging floods. This back-to-back and completely unpredictable climate chaos has been devastating, with more than four million Malawians currently facing hunger. For the millions who rely on rainfed agriculture, the future is looking bleak.

The extent and scale of acute hunger in Malawi in 2024 is shocking.

SCIAF's response is firstly to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, and then to support people to be more resilient and diversify their sources of income. With the support of the Scottish Government, SCIAF and our partner Cadecom (Caritas Malawi) has distributed unconditional cash assistance of £250,000 amongst 4,250 of the most vulnerable families.

Cadecom, as part of the Catholic Church, has a permanent presence and en-

gagement with communities in every part of Malawi and is recognised as one of the country's most effective humanitarian actors. It's able to respond swiftly and with unmatched local knowledge, particularly in relation to the most vulnerable, including children, older people and those living with disabilities.

But there is hope among the farmers participating in SCIAF climate-smart sustainable agriculture projects. Rather than relying entirely on maize, they're growing a wide variety of crops and using agro-ecological practices to get better yields and to protect their crops from droughts. They're using solar irrigation to extend their growing season to most of the months of the year. They're planting trees to protect riverbanks and to reduce flash flooding and have formed Village Savings and Loans associations to save money for the lean season and to invest in small businesses.

At SCIAF our mission is to build a world free from poverty and hunger. Alongside providing farmers and their families with lasting solutions, we also campaign and lobby governments across the world to bring in the policies that can make a massive difference now and into the future. By doing this, we can help unlock the changes that make sure one day this world can be free of poverty and injustice.

In one of the meetings in a village in Malawi, the village headman spoke movingly about the 'Caritas' family, that is, a family in which people who support SCIAF in Scotland make their sense of solidarity a reality through projects that give hope and make a lasting difference.

■ Chris MacLulich is the Programme Officer for Malawi at SCIAF whilst also working part time for a community-based organisation in Benbecula where he lives with his wife and four children

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