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FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

December 2022



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We must always be close to the people – Archbishop



Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren
and City Officers greet the
Archbishop at Civic Mass
Picture by Paul McSherry

AFTER an absence of several years caused by the Covid pandemic, the Civic Mass returned to the Cathedral last month.

Glasgow's Lord Provost was joined by councillors, bailies, city officials and parliamentarians from Holyrood and Westminster,

at a packed Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral – appropriately on the Feast of Christ the King.

The city of Glasgow's ceremonial mace was laid before the altar and city officers accompanied the city leadership who wore their chains of office. Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren read the First Reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians.

Archbishop Nolan welcomed the politicians and officials at the start of Mass and thanked them for their public service to the citizens

of the Archdiocese and beyond.

Later in a powerful sermon he urged them to base their service on the example of Christ the King.

He said: "Kings in the past sometimes abused their authority, but Jesus is a King who comes to serve his people, not to be distant from them. He reigns not from a throne but from a wooden cross."

"Christ is not remote from us, but close to us, especially when we are suffering."

"This is a great lesson for

those of us who occupy any position of authority in public life. We are not to be remote from people, especially when they are suffering or in pain."

"It would be so wrong to be distant from people – we need to share their pain, their hurt and, in a sense, take that pain on ourselves."

"We acknowledge Christ as our King, as our guide and inspiration but we must also imitate him in service of others, especially the poor and needy and all those hurting in their lives."

St Barnabas marks 60th

Picture by Paul McSherry



PARISHIONERS from St Barnabas Parish in Shettleston got a taste of the warmth and sunshine of Africa when Archbishop Nolan paid a pastoral visit with a Mass of Thanksgiving to mark the 60th anniversary of the opening of the parish church.

The Archbishop and invited guests were entertained to a display of traditional

African music dance and organised by the Parish Priest Father Desmond and assistant priest Father Vincent who are both from Nigeria and belong to an African order – the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy (SMMM).

Archbishop Nolan said: "It is always wonderful to look back and share memories of those who have gone before us but we must also

look to the future and be ready for the challenges that lie ahead."

St Barnabas parish was founded in 1950 and the current church opened in 1962.

In 2005 it was united with the parish of St Mark's in Muirfauld Drive and now services are provided in both churches although the 2500-strong parish is known as St Barnabas, Shettleston.

A very intelligent lecture

ONE of the world's leading experts on Artificial Intelligence, who also advises Pope Francis on the issue, became the latest high-profile speaker to deliver the annual Cardinal Winning lecture at Glasgow University last month.

Dr Paolo Benanti, from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome – pictured here – joined clergy staff and students from the University of Glasgow for the annual lecture.

He follows such distinguished speakers as First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and prominent Catholic historian Sir Tom Devine.

Dr Benanti spoke on the

Picture by Paul McSherry



challenges and opportunities for education and formation following the rapid growth of Artificial

Intelligence and the challenges it posed to science and faith.

Golden Jubilee at St Margaret's

PARISHIONERS of St Margaret's Clydebank have marked the 50th anniversary of the opening of the church with a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated by Archbishop William Nolan.

Among the guests was the previous parish priest Canon Gerry Tartaglia who served for 18 years before moving recently to Holy Family and St Ninian's parish in Kirkintilloch.

Parishioners recently welcomed Canon Gerald Sharkey as their new parish priest from his previous role as administrator of St Andrew's Cathedral.

The 'top of the hill' parish was founded in 1969 to cater for population changes after the war in Clydebank and the striking modern church was opened in 1972. For many years Mgr James McShane was the legendary parish priest.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

In a sign of the times, the parish was linked with the fine old parish of Our Holy Redeemer in 2005.

The former mother church of the town had a dwindling population of parishioners and the link with St Margaret's allowed the preservation of the beautiful sandstone building on Glasgow Road, while uniting the two congregations under the pastoral leadership of St Margaret's Parish Priest.

Archbishop Nolan said: "It is always a pleasure for me to take part in significant milestones for parishes in the Archdiocese. It was a pleasure to visit St Margaret's and to thank the clergy and parishioners for all their hard work over the last half century and encourage them as they look to the future."

Picture by Paul McSherry



New book is full of Cathedral tales

FOR many Catholics, References to the 'Cathedral' calls to mind the 200 year old building on Clyde Street which serves as mother church of the Archdiocese.

But the story of the 'other' Cathedral – St Mungo's Cathedral in High Street, or Glasgow Cathedral as it is usually known – is one that offers fascinating insights to the Catholic reader.

The story of the old cathedral is told in a new way in a book being published in good time for Christmas.

In 1936 Rev Dr A. Neville Davidson, who had recently been appointed minister of Glasgow Cathedral, decided that an organisation should be formed to improve the long-neglected interior of the city's oldest building. He founded the Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral which over the following decades undertook much restoration work, particularly the replacement of stained glass.

The Society recently celebrated its 85th anniversary and to mark the occasion, the late Chairman, Dr James Macaulay, came up with the idea of an anniversary volume.

Edited by Dr Andrew Ralston, the new book, entitled 'Where Mortal and Immortal Meet', contains 16 studies by eminent historians of the past and present, covering different aspects of the development of the Cathedral

from the time of St. Mungo up to the 20th century.

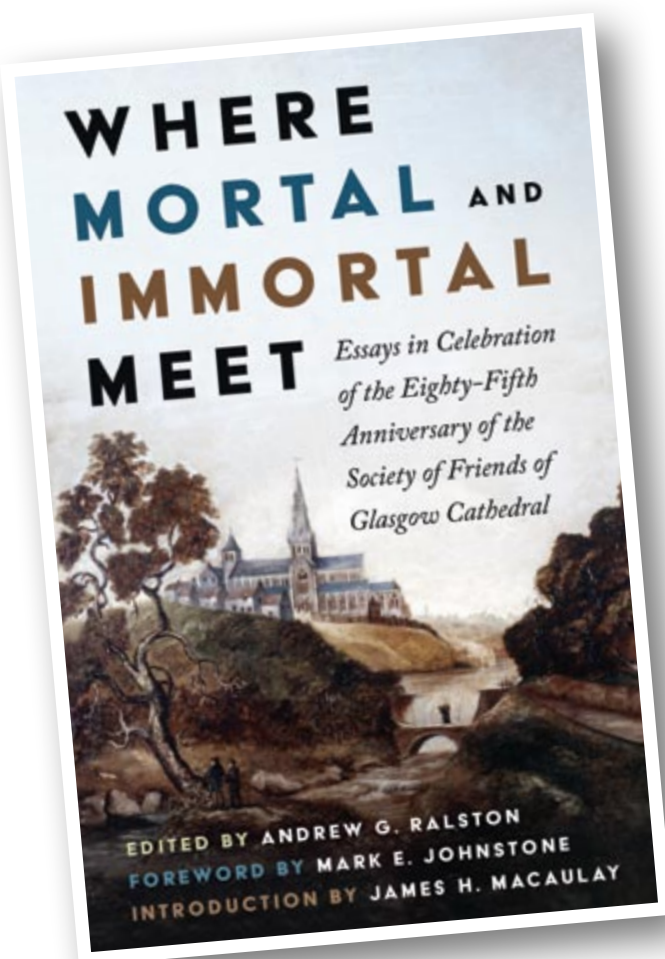
Contributors included famous Catholic historians past and present including John Durkan, Monsignor David McRoberts and Daniel MacLeod of the Jesuit Centre for Catholic Studies, University of Manitoba.

In the words of Dr. Macaulay, who sadly died before the volume was published: "A volume of this kind is long overdue. Where Mortal and Immortal Meet represents the first attempt to present a scholarly overview of the Cathedral's history since Scottish historian and literary critic George Eyre-Todd compiled The Book of Glasgow Cathedral: A History and Description more than 120 years ago.

"We are confident that it provides a compendium of knowledge about the Cathedral's history which will be an invaluable resource both for future generations of historians and for all those who have a love for one of Scotland's most significant architectural treasures."

Published by Wipf & Stock Ltd., the book has retail price of £29, but a limited number of copies are available as a special offer directly from the Society of Friends of Glasgow Cathedral at £15 each (plus post and packing).

■ To order copies, please contact: publications@glasgowcathedral.org





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All smiles at All Saints

IT was all smiles at All Saints last month as the famous Glasgow secondary school marked its 50th birthday.

Archbishop Nolan joined pupils, staff, parents and friends of the school together with past and present chaplains to mark the event

BY RONNIE CONVERY

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

with a reception and Mass.

Head teacher, Brian McDermott said: "All Saints really is a special place to learn and to work and, for me, the reason for this lies with the



spirit, resilience, positivity, compassion, care, and love shown by our young people each and every day.

"Our school has served the young people and the families of Barmulloch and surrounding communities for 50 years. We all came together to share in our 50th anniversary Mass to acknowledge and cherish our

relationship with All Saints' and to celebrate our connection as a community of faith and learning.

"We did this because we love our school, we love what our school represents, we love our community and we love the young people of All Saints'.

"As we reflect on 50 years of All Saints, I am incredibly proud of all that our

young people have achieved in these last few years - including last session's excellent academic success in the SQA examination diet, our many sporting and wider-achievement successes and our work to prepare young people for post-school transition.

"I am also very proud of the opportunities our young people have throughout

their time in our community to develop their God-given talents as they make their way in the world.

Archbishop Nolan said: "It was great to visit All Saints and see that the school is flourishing and, while we rightly think of and acknowledge the wonderful history of the school, we can also look forward to the very bright future ahead".

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St Joseph's golden day

Picture by Paul McSherry



THEY knew he was coming so they baked a cake... Archbishop Nolan celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving to mark the 50th Anniversary of St Joseph's parish Cumbernauld as he continued his 'getting to know you' visits to parishes throughout the Archdiocese.

The Archbishop said: "I am always struck by the fidelity and enthusiasm of the people to spread the good news when I come to a parish like St Joseph's for the first time."

The need for a parish to be established to cope with the rapidly growing popula-

tion in the Carbrain and Seafar areas was recognised by Archbishop Scanlan when he founded the parish in 1967 with the present church opening for worship in 1971.

The parish priest for the past 31 years, Canon Harry McKay said: "There have been many changes to the church building in that time but what has not changed is the faith of the people."

"I can honestly say that I have learned much more from them than they learned from me - the parishioners of St Joseph's are a grand bunch that's for sure."

Brother Walfrid's incredible life story has been published

THE definitive and eagerly awaited book examining in comprehensive detail the life of Brother Walfrid, man of God, Marist Religious, champion of the poor and globally revered as the founder of Celtic has been published in time for the club's 135th anniversary.

The widely-acclaimed account is the work of devoted Celtic fan and post-graduate student Dr Michael Connolly who spent five years of meticulous research at Stirling University into the life of the man born Andrew Kerins in County Sligo in 1840, and who arrived in Glasgow aged just 15.

Like countless thousands of others Walfrid was a victim of *An Gorta Mor* – The Great Hunger – who fled their native Ireland in search of a better life.

When he was 24 he joined the Marist teaching order, took the name by which generations would know him and devoted the rest of his life to working with the poor in some of the worst slums in Europe. He died in Dumfries in 1915, aged 74.

Michael's book, *Walfrid, A Life of Faith, Community and Football*, was based on his research at Stirling Uni-

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

versity where he now works and where he received his doctorate this summer after producing the world's first PhD on the club's founder.

The book has already impressed critics, academics and readers alike with the vivid picture it paints not only of the appalling poverty faced by the desperately poor both in the West of Scotland and Ireland but the heroic efforts of Brother Walfrid and others like him to overcome it.

Michael, 31, whose research was funded by the Glasgow Arts Group Nine Muses, said: "When I started this research I said I felt blessed to have the opportunity to really get to know Brother Walfrid and now that I've finished the research and published the book finished I can definitely say that I still feel that way."

"It really has been a huge privilege."

As well as spending countless hours poring over books, newspaper articles, and substantial material from Celtic's own extensive library, Michael also travelled to Brother Walfrid's birthplace in Ballymote, County Sligo where he in-



Michael Connolly meets Br Walfrid's grandniece Alison Healy

terviewed a number of his relatives.

Recalling his meeting with them Michael said: "His grandnieces, Ann Maguire, Frances Healy and Margaret McGee were all very generous in giving me their time by offering their own insights into aspects of the family history and recounting tales of helping out on the old Kerins farm and their pride in what one of their direct relatives had gone on to achieve after departing Ireland in 1855."

The author also spent some time with the Marist community in Lyon.

He said: "It's been quite a journey – but as the fa-

mous song goes, I never walked alone and there are so many people I want to thank for their help and encouragement over the past five years, especially Dr Joe Bradley from the university who mentored me from the start, everyone at Celtic and the fans who got in touch with all sorts of information and of course Nine Muses for their funding."

■ Walfrid A Life of Faith, Community and Football is published by Argyll Publishing, available priced £20 from thirstybooks.com, branches of Celtic Superstore or Amazon.



10 things you might not know about Brother Walfrid

1 Marist Brothers do not choose the religious name they adopt but are given it by their superiors. He was named after Saint Galfrido of Pisa who founded a Benedictine monastery in 765 and who had been canonized in by Pope Pius IX in 1861 just as Andrew Kerins was beginning his spiritual journey. Walfrid is the English version of the Saint's name.

2 Fifteen-year-old Andrew Kerins and a friend of the same age called Bart McGettrick paid for their journey by coal boat from their native Sligo to the Broomielaw in 1855 by selling a calf at the Ballymote Fair. No one knows what happened to his travelling companion, but his direct descendant is Professor Bart McGettrick, retired principal for Catholic teacher training at Glasgow University.

3 The Marists are a teaching order founded in France and candidates who want to take the habit, must study in France and speak the language fluently since lectures are conducted in French.

Andrew Kerins, who was a native Irish speaker, studied it at night school in Glasgow where he was taught by French-speaking Marist Brothers. He became so profi-

cient and did so well in his studies that he was allowed to take his final vows earlier than most of his contemporaries.

4 Journalist and author Alison Healy who is Brother Walfrid's great grandniece flew from her home in Ireland to make her first visit to Glasgow and Celtic Park having met Michael Connolly during his research trip to Sligo. She said: "My mother was a devout Catholic and told us about her grandfather's brother who was a Marist brother in Scotland. Michael's book refers to suggestions that Brother Walfrid should be considered for sainthood because of his charitable work. My mother recently died and so did not live to hear this, but I suspect the suggestion of a saint in her family would have answered her lifetime of prayers".

5 After he left Glasgow for London in 1892 Brother Walfrid maintained close links with Celtic and every Saturday until his death in Dumfries in 1915, he received a telegram with the Celtic result. And on the day he died Celtic won the Scottish League.

6 The motto of the Marist Brothers translates as unknown and partially hidden in this world and according to Scottish-born Colin Chalmers, recently retired Rome-based archivist of the order, this was certainly true of Brother Walfrid's legacy at least as far as some Marist Brothers are concerned. Colin said: "We tend to hide our heroes I think because when I told the brothers in Rome that I was coming to Celtic Park they were all interested because they had they heard of the team of course. But they were astonished when I told them it had been founded by one of our own."

7 Celtic's founding fathers could not possibly have forecast the huge sporting success that Celtic was to achieve but for Brother Walfrid that was not the point – it was all about raising money for charity and particularly to provide food for growing number of impoverished children in Glasgow's East End. Their first game after they were formed was against Rangers in May 1888 whom they beat 5-2. But the real winners were the children of the East End as Brother Walfrid was able to report that when the ticket money was counted £400 was raised – the equivalent of £50,000 today.

8 Brother Walfrid did not actually come up with Celtic as a name for the new club and credits his French-born colleague, the long serving headmaster of St Mungo's School, Townhead, Brother Ezechiel for suggesting calling it Glasgow Celtic Football and Athletic Club. That name was heard for the first time when the club was founded at a meeting in the League of the Cross Hall adjoining St Mary's Church, Calton on November 6, 1887.

9 Although no written records exist it is believed that after arriving in Glasgow, Andrew Kerins found work as a labourer at the St Rollox Railway works Springburn which was one of the biggest employers in an area which had a large concentration of Irish Catholic immigrants.

10 He was a regular attender at St Mungo's Church Townhead and where he first encountered the Marist Brothers who arrived in Glasgow in 1858 and who used the church as an early base for teaching. Inspired by their example he joined the order some years later and became Brother Walfrid, founder of Celtic.

Fr Eugenio, globetrotter for Christ



AMUCH loved priest celebrated 60 years of service to others last month and declared: "I have been blessed every single day of my life".

Italian born Xaverian missionary Father Eugenio Montesi, 84, based at St Bartholomew's Castlemilk spoke as he delivered the homily at his Mass of Thanksgiving during which he recalled his life as a 'globetrotter for Christ'.

He spent many years as a missionary in Sierra Leone but after contracting malaria returned to Scotland twenty years ago where he now serves as an assistant

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

priest at St Bartholomew's and the neighbouring parish of St Margaret Mary's both of which are in the care of the Xaverians.

So many wanted to attend his diamond jubilee mass, where the chief celebrant was Archbishop Nolan, that it was decided to hold it in nearby Christ the King church which is bigger, where packed pews, a busy car park and every table fully booked for the dinner that was to follow, testified to Father Montesi's popularity.

He said: "We are here tonight to celebrate, love, life, service, unity, diversity, friends, and above all, as the archbishop said at the start, to thank God.

"God could not have been more generous with me anyway - God knows how many times He saved me from malaria, from dangers, from evil, from sickness.

"I have been blessed in my travels to Sierra Leone, to Boston, Chicago, Uganda, Kenya, Mexico Colombia, London and Scotland where I have lived before some of you were born.

"I am blessed to have met the Xaverians whose motto is Christ in everyone so we can make the world one family.

"I have been blessed on the occasions I have visited Medjugorje as a pilgrim to discover that each one of us is both a message and messenger - so blessed be God".

And in a gesture that brought instant applause from his listeners Father Montesi finished by raising his hands saying: "Now let us give a big hand to God for choosing us!"

Earlier, to highlight his life as a missionary, when the offertory was brought to the altar it included an inflatable globe marked with the

places where Father Montesi had worked.

That theme was continued with the bidding prayers which were read in the language of these countries and included one read by his nephew Mauro Montesi who travelled to Glasgow especially for the celebrations from the family home in Corinaldo, in Central Italy where Father Montesi was born.

It was also, as Father Montesi said in his homily, the birthplace of Saint Maria Goretti who, in 1902 was stabbed to death aged 11 by a 20-year-old neighbour Alessandro Serenelli after she refused his sexual advances.

He was jailed for 30 years but the story had a remarkable outcome of faith and forgiveness which was to inspire the young Eugenio Montesi and remained with him throughout his life

After serving seven years in prison Alessandro asked to see Maria's mother Assunta and asked for her forgiveness having seen his victim in a dream who also forgave him.

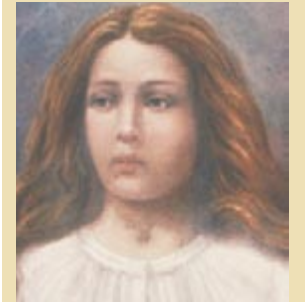
Assunta willingly agreed and on his release they both took Holy Communion together and continued to do so every day until Assunta's death.

At her funeral Alessandro was given the honour of being the first mourner to walk behind her coffin. He later became a lay brother with the Capuchin order and remained with them until he died aged 87.

He and Assunta are buried on either side of the altar in their local church.

Father Montesi said: "As children my friends and I saw often Mamma Assunta with the killer pushing her to the altar rail in a wheel chair and soon we realised that this was a true example of God's love and mercy and it inspired me then and still does."

Little saint's family forgave her killer



MARIA Goretti was killed by Alessandro Serenelli in July 1902 after she resisted his sexual advances. She was declared a saint in 1950.

But her canonization was not the end of the story.

Serenelli was captured shortly after the attack, the police taking him to prison overtook the ambulance carrying Maria to the hospital. He served 30 years in prison.

He remained unrepentant for three years, until local bishop, Monsignor Giovanni Blandini, visited him in jail. He wrote a thank you note to the Bishop asking for his prayers and telling him about a dream, "in which Maria gave him lilies, which burned immediately in his hands."

After his release, Alessandro visited Maria's mother Assunta and begged her forgiveness. She forgave him, and they attended Mass together the next day, receiving Holy Communion side by side. The little saint's killer was present at her canonization.

Alessandro later became a lay brother of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, living in a monastery and working as its receptionist and gardener until he died in 1970 at age 87.

St Maria's mother meets her killer



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Right:
Paul with nieces
Gillian and Joanna



Choral Mass celebrates Uni's Church link

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

THE eagerly awaited University of Glasgow Choral Mass, beautifully sung by the University choir, returned once again after being cancelled for the past two years because of Covid restrictions

Archbishop Nolan was principal celebrant and was joined in the stunning surroundings of the Univer-



sity's Memorial Chapel by Catholic chaplain Father Ross Campbell, Monsignor Paul Murray, and Father Stephen Reilly.

Father Campbell said: "It was wonderful to have the choral Mass back again - it's one of the highlights of our year and once again the choir showed that they are world class."

The University Memorial Chapel is dedicated to St Mungo and recalls all those who have died in war. The motto of the University of Glasgow - Via, Veritas, Vita (the Way the Truth and the Life) - is prominent in the internal decoration.

World Youth Day programme revealed

If you're an avid Flourish reader then you might be looking at these articles that showcase the joy and transforming nature of World Youth Day but question what exactly it is, what experience will the young people have?

Our potential pilgrims had the same questions at our information evening last month. Here are the responses to the most asked questions regarding the pilgrimage.

What is World Youth Day?

World Youth Day (WYD) is the gathering of young people (often in the millions) from all over the world with the Pope. It is not just an event but is a pilgrimage, a celebration of youth, an expression of the universal Church and an intense moment of evangelization for the world. It is a time for young people to explore, deepen and celebrate their faith as it provides the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ, to learn more about what the Church teaches and why and to build friendships with other young Catholics.

What's the programme like?

The Archdiocesan pilgrimage group has an action-packed programme in store! There will be many spiritual and cultural experiences to enjoy, as both a diocesan group and as part of the wider group with pilgrims from across the globe! There will be opportunities to explore Lisbon, make a pilgrimage to Fatima, join with other English speaking pilgrims for Catechesis each day, meet up with other Scots for prayer and fellowship, hear from your peers local and further afield about their journey of faith, have Mass as a group some days and Mass with the Holy Father another day, visit the National Stadium, enter deeply into prayer both on your own and with the Pope, all whilst getting to know others just like you from Glasgow and beyond!

When will it take place?

The pilgrimage will run from 30th July - 8th August 2023.

How is the group getting there?

Planes, trains and automobiles (also known as buses!) The group will be traveling to and from Edinburgh airport by bus and flying to Lisbon and back.

What's the accommodation like?

The group will be staying in a hotel in central Lisbon, within walking distance from all the major events sites. It is lovely, and pretty 'cool', that's Lisbon for you, and will cater well for the needs of the group with hangout spaces indoors, outdoors and on the terrace.

BY MAIRI-CLAIRE MCGEADY

How much is it going to cost?

For those within the Archdiocese, there is a 'Pilgrim Contribution' of £750. The real cost, due to the economic situation that we find ourselves in is £1750.

How big is the group?

The group will total 74, with 4 clergy, 4 leaders and 66 pilgrims.

Who's all going?

Archbishop Nolan, Fr Gerard Tartaglia (Youth Office Director), Fr Edward Toner (youngest priest in Scotland), Fr Paul McAlindan (St. Augustine's, Milton), Mairi-Claire McGeady and Michelle Kerr (Youth Officers), two RCAG Youth volunteers, and 66 pilgrims! Currently there are 38 pilgrims registered for the trip, aged 16 - 35 years old. That means that there are only 28 places left!

Who can come?

Young adults aged between 16 (as of Feb 2023) through to 35 at time of pilgrimage.

Will it be fun?

YOU BET! It will be great fun to be together, to explore together and to grow together.

How do I sign up?

You can find the information you need by following this link: www.tinyurl.com/rcaginfopack and register here: www.tinyurl.com/rcagwydregistration

How do I partner with RCAG Youth to help young pilgrims on their journey?

If you would like to help a young person on their journey, please make a decision to pray for the group. We would be tremendously grateful if you could include us in your daily prayers, that God would prepare the way in each pilgrims heart!

If you would like to help on the journey to Lisbon, financially, please contact me, Mairi-Claire McGeady, by email (youth@rcag.org.uk) or phone (07496876910) or send cheques made payable to the 'Archdiocese of Glasgow' to Youth Office, 196 Clyde St, Glasgow, G1 4JY. Not to coin Tesco's catchphrase but 'every little (really does) help'!

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CATECHESIS	CATECHESIS
EXPLORATION	THE WAY OF THE CROSS
PAPAL WELCOME EVENT	EXPLORATION
SATURDAY 5TH AUGUST DAY 7	SUNDAY 6TH AUGUST DAY 8
EXPLORATION	PAPAL MASS
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www.craiglodge.org

PRAYER

3



The Legion of Mary
Wayside Club

The members, volunteers and service
users of The Legion of Mary Wayside
Club wish you all a very happy
Christmas and appeal to you for your
continued support.

PROVIDING

4



Missio
The Pontifical Mission Societies

Missio wishes everyone the joy of
discovering God's love during Advent.
May we celebrate Christmas in solidarity
with our brothers and sisters in faith
throughout the whole world
so that we will bear witness
to the presence of the Child Jesus.

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4 Laird Street, Coatbridge ML5 3LJ - 01236 449774 - admin@missioscotland.com

PEACE

5



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their place in their parish community.
Find out about joining a SPRED group in your area.
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SPRED – because no one should feel like a stranger in their
own house.

FRIENDSHIP

6



Society of
St. Vincent de Paul
Scotland

Glasgow Archdiocesan Council
Wish all our members, benefactors
and all whom we serve
A Holy & Joyous Christmas

COMPASSION

7



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1 Ellangowan Court, Glasgow G62 8PH
telephone 0141 956 2051
email gary@flourishnewspaper.co.uk

PROMISING

8



PARKINSON'S^{UK}
SCOTLAND

We wish you all a happy
and peaceful Christmas.

Please continue your very kind support for
Parkinson's UK Scotland

E: scotland@parkinsons.org.uk T: 01738 231 270.
Parkinson's UK Scotland, Mailbox 14, King James VI Business
Centre, Riverview Business Park, Friarton Road, Perth PH2 8DY
Charity number Scotland (SC037554).

ENCOURAGING

9



My Light

We're with you every step
OF THE WAY

Whether you've just started treatment, you're
living with cancer, or supporting a loved one,
access My Light for advice blogs, information
articles and helpful videos, tailored to every
stage of your cancer journey.

For more help and advice:
T: 0141 222 0805
E: info@beatsoncancercharity.org
beatsoncancercharity.org/my-light
We're with you

SUPPORT

10



Faithful Companions of Jesus

Is God calling you to religious life?

For more information contact
Sr Lynne fcj:
Fcjvocationeurope@gmail.com

www.fcjsisters.org

VOCATIONS

11



St Nicholas Care Fund

Caring Sunday, 11 December 2022
Giving thanks for all those we have
supported our cause throughout
2022. Thank you for the generous
donations.

pct@rcag.org.uk - 0141 226 5898
Scottish Charity SC029832

REJOICING

12



Catholic Charismatic Renewal
Archdiocese of Glasgow

1 Thess 5:16-18. Be joyful always;
pray continually; give thanks in all
circumstances, for this is God's will
for you in Christ Jesus.

Prayer Groups meet throughout Glasgow.
For more info call 0744 8786569
Email glasgow.service.team@gmail.com
Wishing you all a happy
and holy Christmas.

FAITH

13



VOCATION INVITATION
Come, follow Me...

Find out about us:
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the Perpetual Rosary
Rua do Rosario, 137
2495-444 Fatima
Portugal
www.fatimadominicans.com

MISSION

14



SCIAF
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Glasgow G3 6BE
www.sciaf.org.uk
sciaf@sciaf.org.uk
Charity Number SC012302

Give the gift of
happiness this
Christmas

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic
Church in Scotland and a proud member of Caritas Internationalis

GIVING

15



Thank you to all who have supported
St Margaret of Scotland Hospice
throughout the year. We wish you a very
happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and
blessings in the New Year.

Sister Rita, Board of Directors and
all at St Margaret of Scotland Hospice

CARING

16



Capability
Scotland

Making a real difference to
the lives of disabled people.

Donate generously and make
Christmas extra special: capability.scot/donate

EMPATHY

17



University
of Glasgow
School of Education

We would like to wish
everyone a very Happy
and Peaceful Christmas
and Joy in the New Year

www.glasgow.ac.uk/education

WISDOM

18



CARFIN GROTTTO
Bethlehem Shrine

St Francis Xavier's Church, Carfin ML1 5AJ
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Email: info@carfinrotto.org

BELIEVING

19



Kidney Kids
Scotland

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SC030284

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office@kidneykids.org.uk
01324 555843

CHARITY

20



Providing support for children,
young people and their families

Wishing you and your family a
happy and peaceful Christmas

The Notre Dame Centre
Parkhouse Business Park, Kelvin House
419 Balmore Road, Glasgow G22 6NT
T 0141 339 2366 - E info@notredamecentre.org.uk
www.notredamecentre.org.uk
Charity Number SC002851

NURTURING

21



SPUC
FOR A WORLD WITHOUT ABORTION.

www.spuc.org.uk @SPUCProLife @spucprolife

LIGHT

22



A SMALL DONATION
A BIG SMILE
THIS CHRISTMAS

Could you bring a smile to children on
Christmas morning?
The Glasgow Care Foundation have created
the campaign "A SMALL DONATION, A BIG
SMILE" to raise funds to buy Christmas
vouchers to give to Glasgow Families
who are Most in need so they can provide
Presents or food for Christmas for their
children For More Information please
contact elaine@glasgowcarefoundation.org

Glasgow Care Foundation

HELPING

23



NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
FREE CLINICS & SUPPORT

Support Fertility Care Scotland to provide
free education on fertility health and
marriage preparation

www.fertilitycare.org.uk - 0141 221 0858 - info@fertilitycare.org.uk
Registered Charity SC051574

LIFE

24



At this time when the whole Church rejoices at God's gift to us of
the Holy Family of Nazareth, ST MARGARET'S ADOPTION SOCIETY
would like to wish you all a Happy and Holy Christmas and a big
thank you for helping us to give vulnerable children the gift of a
forever family!

St Margaret's
Adoption Society

BELONGING

Wishing you a peaceful Advent
and a very happy Christmas

Archbishop: Care Fund more necessary than ever this year

THE need for the St Nicholas Care Fund is now greater than it ever has been since it was founded by Cardinal Winning 30 years ago.

That is the message Archbishop Nolan will deliver in a letter to be read out at all parishes in the Archdiocese on Caring Sunday, December 11, when money is raised for the fund which relies entirely on donations.

Speaking in advance of the appeal Archbishop Nolan said: "Today, poverty continues to afflict the lives of so many people throughout the Archdiocese. Indeed, the need for help has never been greater."

Hardship

"The St Nicholas Care Fund provides assistance, in Christ's name, to people and communities facing hardship, putting into practice Jesus' words: 'whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did to me'."

Established in 1992 by the then-Archbishop Winning, the Pastoral Care Fund, as it was first known, was his response to the poverty and need he witnessed throughout the Glasgow area and beyond. The idea behind setting up the fund was –

Interfaith Glasgow were funded for their weekend activity club for refugees



in his memorable phrase – "to do at home what SCIAF does overseas."

In 2006, Archbishop Conti renamed the Pastoral Care

Fund the "St. Nicholas Care Fund" – to reflect the spirit of St Nicholas of Bari (the original inspiration behind the figure of Santa Claus).

It has raised over £2.2 million over the last 30 years – money donated during Caring Sunday, by individual donors and fundraising

through schools and charities.

All the money collected is given out in grants, and over the years, 723 grants have been awarded to a wide range of good causes – churches, schools, community projects throughout the Archdiocese of Glasgow that offer support to people and communities facing hardship. Grants are awarded quarterly.

Examples of recent grants include:

- St Vincent Centre for the Deaf - £7000 for facilities
- Hope - £5000 to assist with the reintegration of prisoners into society
- Amma Birth Companions (support for refugee mothers)

Fund administrator Sheena Kenny said: "Looking back over the 30 years, grants were initially awarded to established charities with a proven track record in charitable aid. Now, in 2022, as Scotland has changed, so has our grant giving – most recently helping individuals, families and communities come through the Covid19 pandemic and lockdown – providing funds to purchase laptops, tablets and other equipment to help children and young people continue



with their studies at home as the schools closed.

Tireless

"Once the pandemic hit and we found ourselves in lockdown, the St Nicholas Care Fund took the decision immediately to suspend the quarterly deadlines for applications and began awarding grants whenever applications were received."

In recent years a new crisis had emerged – people fleeing persecution, war and hunger, coming to Glasgow in search of safety and a better life.

The St Nicholas Care Fund has been a tireless supporter of schools, charities and community groups working to make the lives of refugees and asylum seekers more comfortable.

Fr Broderick's words of wisdom

ONE of Glasgow's oldest Priests celebrated a special jubilee earlier this year surrounded by his fans!

Father John Desmond Broderick celebrated his 70th Anniversary of his Ordination with other priest jubilarians at a special Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral.

During his ministry he has served in several parishes and retired from St Teresa's Parish, Possilpark in 1993. He was also the Spiritual Director for the Legion of Mary's governing body (Senatus) for many years even after he retired. He moved to Nazareth House, Cardonald when he retired, where he has lived for the past 29 years.

Helen Border, a close friend of Fr Des, said: "When I think of Fr Des, I always think of him with a smile on his face for everyone. He has helped so many

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

people throughout his 98 years on this earth. Fighting in World War II and then coming out of the Army to become a priest.

"He was the College Chaplain at St Andrew's Teachers College in Bearsden for several years and has been my spiritual director for many years. We sit and pray the Divine Mercy chaplet together discuss our faith and the work of the Friends of Divine Mercy Scotland which he supports in many ways several times a week."

Bishop John Keenan – a close friend of Fr Broderick – said: "Fr Des has been a living Paschal candle for the clergy and people of the Catholic Church in the West of Scotland. They have found in him the bright fire of the Holy Spirit homed

in exquisite gentleness and sheer joy. He is never without a unique word of encouragement to anyone he meets ... His heart remains as open as ever to Jesus and to His people and we are blessed to have had such a fine example of the Lord's priesthood for so long.

Fr Des said: "I just want to bring people to the Lord but what I would say is please remember people who are not on your radar as they used to be. Sometimes when people get to a certain age they are written off."

"Old people feel forgotten as if they are dead even when they are still alive. We should all meet people with a smile and a kind word. Always say hello to all you pass as the gift of contact and communication seem to be lost in this fast throwaway society, we live in."

"Always meet people with the love of Christ."





Archbishop Mario was a man for all seasons

His vision created a cathedral of light and space which, defying the gloom of a dank November day, now became his final resting place.

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

The capacity congregation stood as one while brother bishops, priests and deacons, all wearing purple to signify mourning, turned, in utter silence to watch as his coffin was carried to the crypt where his predecessors lie.

Archbishop Mario was now and forever among them.

Many noted the poignancy of the short few steps from altar to crypt which meant that the mourners – his immediate family – walked over a mosaic version of his personal coat of arms which he himself designed.

It bears his motto 'to serve with a sincere heart' and was inlaid into the floor as part of the cathedral restoration which will forever be his legacy.

Irresistibly that famous Latin phrase *Si monumentum requiris circumspice* – If you seek his monument, look around – came to mind.

It is inscribed on the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect who designed St Paul's Cathedral in London, but it must surely apply equally to Archbishop Mario who re-designed and oversaw every aspect of the restoration of his beloved cathedral on the banks of the Clyde.

Restored and completed over a 16 month period over a decade ago, his eye for detail contributed to everything

from the design of the altar – famously (and literally) sketched on the back of an envelope to the lighting and the colour scheme.

It will come as no surprise then, given his gift for meticulous planning, that he had chosen the readings for his Requiem Mass well in advance.

Over the years he revised notes and suggestions of what should be included in the homily which was delivered by his good friend Bishop Gilbert of Aberdeen as stipulated by Archbishop Mario in his will.

And was Archbishop Mario responsible, we wondered, for the choice of "The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen" played as a quiet instrumental solo just before his coffin was carried into the cathedral on the previous evening?

By the happiest of providences, the day chosen for the funeral was the Feast Day of St Fergus – patron saint of Wick in Caithness – which along with the neighbouring town of Thurso, the then Father Conti served as parish priest for 15 years before being appointed, to his great surprise and as reported elsewhere in this newspaper, Bishop of Aberdeen.

The phrase 'people person' might have been coined especially for him – a man who could discuss the finer points of Ital-

ian renaissance religious art with experts and days later could be found drying the dishes after a fund-raiser with parishioners.

He once said: "The engagement with people above all is what I will always cherish. The humility and fidelity they have shown in uncertain and testing times has made a deep impression on me."

And you can be sure it made a deep and lasting impression on them as well.

When the news broke about his passing, social media almost buckled under the weight of messages of thanks and condolence.

Everyone in the congregation, whose numbers had to be limited because so many wanted to attend would almost certainly have their own 'Mario' story, and as Bishop Gilbert said as he began his homily it was impossible to remember him without raising a smile.

Bishop Gilbert also spoke of his friend's energy even in the weeks before his death. He had visited his only sister, Stella, in Birmingham to mark her wedding anniversary and also recently spent a few days in Rome – aged 88 – sharing memories with his lifelong friend Monsignor Charles Burns, a priest of the diocese of Paisley who spent his entire working life in the eternal city as an archivist in the Vatican.

His last public appearance came when he presided at the installation of the new Lieutenant for the Scottish Lieutenancy

of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in the Catholic chapel of Falkland Palace in Fife, a country retreat of Mary Queen of Scots.

At the same occasion Archbishop Mario was given the title of Grand Prior of Honour having just retired as Grand Prior.

The event received substantial coverage in the most recent edition of *Flourish* of which he was a great supporter and typically Archbishop Mario took the time to thank the editor for its inclusion.

Knights and Dames from the Order wearing their distinctive robes emblazoned with the scarlet cross of Jerusalem and Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta were among those who joined civic leaders, politicians, and religious, those of other faiths, and representatives of each parish in the Archdiocese.

A final coincidence.

Many of those who shared stories that day spoke warmly about Archbishop Mario's enthusiastic commitment to ecumenism and interfaith relations.

Two days before his funeral Mass, on the feast day of St Margaret of Scotland, in the historical setting of Dunfermline Abbey and in the presence of Princess Anne, a historic declaration of friendship was signed between the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland.

Archbishop Conti, you may be sure, would have greatly approved.

Requiescat in pace.

Tributes to a life well lived

Warm tributes and heartfelt condolences from religious leaders of all faiths, local and national politicians and simply those whose lives he touched were paid to Archbishop Conti as soon as news of his death became public. A selection is published here.

I was fortunate to know Archbishop Conti personally and have happy memories of meetings with him, most recently at the centenary celebrations for the Marian Shrine at Carfin. I assure you and all in the Archdiocese of a special remembrance in prayer for the happy repose of his soul. May he rest in peace.

Most Rev Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, President of the Irish Episcopal Conference

I have fond memories of my many meetings with Archbishop Mario, a man of great warmth and commitment. Trusting in God's great mercy, may Archbishop Mario's soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, President, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Archbishop Conti has answered the Lord's call and will find solace in his kingdom, because "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.... They will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them" (Rev 14:13). May the Lord accept him in his kingdom and reward him for his services to the Church and humanity. Requiescat in Pace!

Archbishop Brian Udaigwe, Apostolic Nuncio to Sri Lanka

We are aware of the affection he had for the College and for Rome and I and my predecessors benefitted from his generous support and wise counsel. Archbishop Mario was also most loyal in his support of the Scots College Society for which we are so grateful. A community Mass will be celebrated in the College chapel for the happy repose of Archbishop Mario's soul and for the comforting of all those who will mourn his death.

Fr Mark Cassidy, Rector Pontificio Collegio Scozzese

He was a good friend to our Community – Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur – since his time in Aberdeen where he invited us to run summer catechetical programmes. He was a good pastor. May he rest in peace.

Sr Mary McClure, Provincial

His life of service as a priest, Bishop of the Catholic Church of Scotland and Archbishop of Glasgow will be long and fondly remembered. May he rest in peace.

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland

Mario was a fine churchman and a source of great wisdom and sympathetic advice. The commemoration of the Arandora Star was of course something in which Mario was greatly invested and

rightly so as one of our most prominent Italian Scots. Mario lived a full life of faith and will be much missed.

Alex Salmond, Former First Minister of Scotland

I know the people of Glasgow, and particularly those of the Catholic faith, will be reflecting on the great loss his death represents for our city and beyond. It is with great sadness that I pay tribute to him.

Jacqueline McLaren, Lord Provost of Glasgow

I had the pleasure of meeting and dealing with him on a number of occasions in my role as councillor, but more particularly in my civic capacity as Bailie, Depute Lord Provost and latterly as Lord Provost. He will be sorely missed, and please can I hereby extend my deepest condolences to the whole Archdiocese and everyone knew him.

Councillor Philip Braat, Former Lord Provost

On behalf of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, may I offer our sincere condolences to the Catholic Church in Scotland and, in particular, to the Catholic community in Glasgow. Archbishop Mario's contribution to the good relationships between our two churches is remembered with gratitude and his loss is deeply felt.

Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland

His Grace was such an inspirational leader to your people and beyond, his warmth and humility towards all peoples and his contribution to Interfaith relations was immense. Scotland has lost a truly special man.

Timothy Lovat, President, Glasgow Jewish Representative Council.

The Archbishop Emeritus visited Glasgow Central Mosque many times over the years. We remember his warmth and kindness as he worked tirelessly to foster good relations between Scotland's faith communities.

Irfan Razzaq, General Secretary Executive Committee – Glasgow Central Mosque

On behalf of our Shia Muslim Community we share in your grief and great loss. May the dearly departed soul rest in eternal peace. Such a great man of peace, I am really going to miss my dear friend.

Shabir Begg OBE, Chairman, Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

In a life filled with prayerful service to others his contribution to the development of Interfaith relations in Scotland were a significant part.

Allan Forsyth, Baha'i Council for Scotland



Sincero corde servire



Flourish editor **RONNIE CONVERY** looks back on an Archbishop who truly lived out his episcopal motto 'to serve with a sincere heart'

FranchiLaw^{LLP}

We wish to offer our sympathy on hearing about Archbishop Conti's death.

He was always such a kind, gentle man with a great sense of humour.

Our dear friend you will be sadly missed by all.

May the Lord grant him eternal peace.

Queens House, 19 St Vincent Place,
Glasgow G1 2DT. Tel: 0141 225 3810
Fax: 0141 204 1199

lawyers@franchilaw.co.uk

ARCHBISHOP Mario Conti was one of Scotland's best-known churchmen, a pioneer of ecumenism and the de facto father of the Italian community in Scotland. He was also one of my best friends.

The Archbishop died peacefully on 8th November, after a short illness at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow. He was 88 years old. He had been a priest for 64 years and a bishop for 45 years.

Born at Elgin, Moray, on 20 March 1934, he told anyone who asked that he had wanted to be a priest for as long as he could remember. It is even said that he told his primary school teacher his ambition was to be Pope!

He trained at St Mary's College, Blairs, Aberdeenshire, before studying at the Scots College and Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome where he obtained degrees in philosophy and theology. He was ordained priest in Rome on 26 October 1958.

After a series of roles, including his only Parish Priest appointment to Wick and Thurso – Scotland's most northerly mainland Catholic parishes – he was named bishop of Aberdeen in February 1977 and was ordained bishop by Cardinal Gordon Gray, of St Andrews and Edinburgh at Aberdeen, 3rd May 1977 at the extraordinarily young age of 43.

He was one of the last surviving bishops in the world to have been appointed by Pope (now saint) Paul VI. He often spoke fondly of

Pope Paul, recalled meeting him, and was convinced of his great wisdom and courage in steering the Church through the difficult years of the 1960s and 70s and overseeing the implementation of the Second Vatican Council.

After 25 years in Aberdeen as Bishop he was named as successor to Cardinal Tom Winning as Archbishop of Glasgow in 2002, serving for 10 years as head of Scotland's largest Catholic diocese during which time he developed deep ties with the city and its people, oversaw the renovation of St Andrew's Cathedral and the construction of the adjacent Italian Cloister Garden to remember the victims of the wartime *Aran-dora Star* tragedy.

The Cathedral renovation is his most obvious legacy. He took a very personal interest in the redesign, famously (and literally) sketching out the plan for the altar on an envelope before handing it to the marble mason to make happen!

He was often found, swapping his mitre for a hard hat, amid the scaffolding, directing the artists on his to bring the 1816 building to life.

On the opening night of the Italian Cloister Garden he welcomed the last survivor of the *Aran-dora Star* tragedy, Scotland's First Minister, the UK Ambassador to the Holy See and the chorus of La Scala opera house in Milan to his Cathedral for an event never to be forgotten!

Perhaps his proudest moment came when he welcomed Pope Benedict XVI

to Britain at the first public Mass of the German Pope's state visit in 2010 at Bellahouston Park.

Ever a 'Pope's man' he had great admiration for Pope Benedict's erudition and gentleness but was also a strong supporter of Pope Francis and his open approach. Indeed, throughout his episcopate, Mario Conti had argued for greater lay involvement in church structures and more involvement of the Catholic Church in the life of wider society, and on controversial matters he wasn't afraid to take a different line, as in his support for the use of condoms in the fight against AIDS.

Culture

A man of culture, he was involved in a wide range of activities. He held three honorary doctorates and was the first Catholic bishop to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He would regularly attend events there and participated with a doughty yet polite defence of the Catholic worldview.

He was regarded as the Scottish Catholic Church's lead expert on ecumenism and inter religious dialogue. Touching were the scenes in St Andrew's Cathedral as members of the Muslim community gathered round his coffin, some in tears, the evening before his funeral. For members of the Church of Scotland and Scotland's other reformed faiths, Mario Conti was a gentleman – a Catholic they could do business with, in the sure and certain knowl-

edge that he would be both open to dialogue but gently firm in advancing the Catholic position on any given matter.

His knowledge of history, art and architecture was widely acclaimed, and he took a particular interest in the plight of the people of the Holy Land.

His talents were noted in Rome too, which led to him leading the Vatican delegation to the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998.

During the pontificate of St John Paul II he also served as a member of two departments of the Roman Curia – the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and the Pontifical Council for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church.

He was much loved by the Italian community in Scotland and became a reference point for them. Shortly after being named Archbishop he was granted the title *Grande Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana* by the President of the country for his distinguished service.

At the time of his death he had been preparing to welcome a delegation from the Tuscan town of Barga (from which his forebears came) who were due to present him this month with a special honour from the nearby city of Lucca.

His episcopal motto was '*Sincero corde servire*' – to serve with a sincere heart – and those who knew him well can testify that he lived up to that motto to a heroic degree.

The Mario I knew and admired

WHEN Mario Joseph Conti was a young schoolboy in Elgin 80 years ago, his teacher asked the class what they would like to become when they grew older. Mario's response was quick and candid: 'Pope', he replied.

He was not far off the mark. He became Bishop of Aberdeen, his home diocese, aged 43, in 1977, and then Archbishop of Glasgow succeeding Cardinal Thomas Winning in 2002.

He was very gracious when Archbishop Keith Patrick O'Brien of St Andrews and

BY FR PAUL BONNICI
HOLY FAMILY, L-IKLIN, MALTA

Edinburgh was created a cardinal by the ailing Pope St John Paul II and assigned the titular church of Saints Joachim and Anne on Via Tuscolana in Rome. Those of us who knew Mario knew fine well how much this title would have suited him because of his own years as Parish Priest in St Joachim in Wick and St Anne's in Thurso. But it was not to be. Those years in the far-

flung northernmost parishes of the Scottish mainland helped the young Fr Conti realise that ecumenism was for him 'a need of the heart'. Friendship with local clergy of other denominations came naturally to him. Later, he would be asked to serve the Apostolic See on the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

For me, Mario has a special place in my heart because he ordained me a deacon and priest and then gave me my first parish when I was just 28 years old. He was always kind and gentle, humble in his demeanour, unassuming yet always a bishop of the Church in the way he spoke and acted. I found him very supportive in my ministry as a young Catholic priest-journalist and broadcaster.

He used to say that when you are a priest in a small parish or a bishop in a small diocese, you simply learn how to be an all-rounder, and Mario certainly had that gift. He knew how to build community, and how to create lasting friendships with people from all walks of life. He enjoyed preaching, introduced the permanent diaconate to Scotland and was good at administration.

Re-ordering Church buildings after the Second Vatican Council and restoring those that needed maintenance and care up and down the diocese gave the artist and architect in him great satisfaction.

When a young and much-loved parish priest of the diocese asked his permission to become a monk of Pluscarden, Mario eventually said yes – but with one condition: please pray constantly for the Diocese.

Mario himself was equally at home on his knees in front of the Blessed Sacrament, breviary in hand, sometimes in Italian, sometimes in English. For him it was all part of living out his episcopal motto – 'Sincero Corde Servire' – to serve with a sincere heart.

Coming from a family of Italian shopkeepers he knew how to 'make ends meet'. This helped him when he was transferred to Glasgow and found the Archdiocese needing an organized plan to ensure long term financial sustainability.

He had already organised something similar on a smaller scale in Aberdeen with what he called the 'Millennium Appeal'. Joyce Webster from the Cathedral Parish attracted his attention when she distributed Smartie tubes to parishioners and

told her: 'Where there is a will, there is way!'

In Glasgow, Mario learned how to be even more professional. He called in a team of experts and launched his Faith into Action appeal. The people answered with sheer generosity. Parishes had the much-needed cash to function as pastoral concerns. St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow was restored to magnificence and beauty. New funds were created for sick and retired priests and youth work.

When I was asked to look after a brand-new cash-strapped parish in Malta, Mario's model from Glasgow was of great help to me – and it worked a dream!

Archbishop Mario was a constant and re-assuring presence in the Catholic Church in Scotland for almost half a century. Now he is with the God he loved and served. May his generosity and loyal service inspire many to be priests according to Our Lord's heart.

May the warm welcome he gave others be now recompensed with the sheer hospitality of God.



asked them to fill them up with 20p pieces over several weeks. He hired her to go about all the parishes of the diocese to talk about fifty-

two-week giving through the bank and the Gift Aid scheme. She spoke too about remembering one's parish in one's will because, as Mario



St Nicholas Care Fund

The St Nicholas Care Fund offers our sincerest sympathy on hearing about the death of Archbishop Mario Conti.

He was a great supporter of the Care Fund and an inspirational Chairman of our Board of Directors. We will miss his great sense of humour and his kindness.

May he rest in peace.

pct@rcag.org.uk · 0141 226 5898
Scottish Charity SC029832

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL



The Bishop, clergy and parishioners of Motherwell Diocese extend our sympathy to all in the Archdiocese of Glasgow on the death of Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti – may he rest in peace. Our sympathy extends to his family and friends across the Church in Scotland and beyond, recognising his years of dedicated service as a priest and then Bishop of Aberdeen Diocese before his appointment to Glasgow.

We thank God for his life and faithful witness, trusting he will now enjoy the joy of eternal life in Christ Our Lord.

Our Lady of Aberdeen, St Mungo, and Blessed John Duns Scotus pray for him.

Fertility Care Scotland

With deepest sympathy to all of Archbishop Conti's family, friends and all at the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

He was always so kind and supportive, and he will be very sadly missed.

Rest in Peace

Contact Fertility Care Scotland **0141 221 0858**

info@fertilitycare.org.uk

www.fertilitycare.org.uk

Registered Scottish Charity no. SC051574
Companies House No. SC721652

REMEMBERING ARCHBISHOP MARIO 1934–2022



A Christian gentleman

Bishop HUGH GILBERT of Aberdeen preached at Archbishop Mario's funeral. He spoke with fondness of his predecessor's ways, his strengths and his achievements. His words are carried here in tribute

REMEMBERING Mario, and his long, rich and fruitful life, it's hard not to smile. He had a certain manner, shall we say, a certain sense of the bella figura and his own dignity.

As a boy at Blairs, it was well-known that he had no love for football but plenty for performing in Gilbert and Sullivan. In later years, Cardinal Winning, God forgive him, found the aesthetic side of Mario an irresistible target.

But the more one knew Mario, the more one realised that, despite appearances, he would not have been finally or fully happy as a Renaissance Prince-Bishop or as a Prelate of the Ancien Regime. He had too much heart, too much humanity. The "boy from Barga" or, more strictly, the "Elgin loon", always came out on top.

An Aberdeen parishioner told me how luridly Mario had been described to him, and how then, on a pilgrimage, he met this warm, humorous, approachable bishop who was just happy sitting on the grass and chatting with the folk for an hour and a half.

I first set eyes on Mario when I was 25 and very recently professed as a monk. I can still picture him. It was a February day of fearsome winter weather, and he was sitting by the fire in the Chapter House of Pluscarden Abbey, he was in his early 40s and parish priest of Wick and Thurso, bright-eyed and with a notable nose. A few days later we heard that he had been appointed Bishop of Aberdeen.

Later, he would ordain me as a deacon, and as priest, bless me as abbot, and co-ordinate me as bishop – all that over a span of 30 years. I think of him as sacramentally a father. And it was a grace to visit him, with others, on the day he died.

An addendum to his will, written twenty years ago, just after his coming here, reads: "I desire to proclaim my confidence in God's mercy, as I end my days – and to acknowledge the gift of his grace when called to priestly and episcopal service".

In the light of that last phrase, and of today's Gospel (his choice), of his episcopal motto drawn from the liturgy, *sincero corde servire*, "to serve with a sincere heart", it's natural for us today to recall something of that service.

He was 64 years a priest and 45 years a bishop. His priesthood, and its fullness as bishop, was his life and his love, and they touched many lives over those many years.

Ordained in 1958, his youthful ministry would have coincided with the pontificate of St John XXIII and then with the Second Vatican Council. The latter shaped him. He was always a man of the Council.

After a spell at St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen, he was sent to Gaithness, far to the north and a world of its own. Wick was already a church and a parish, but Thurso was not. Fr Mario had the church and the presbytery built there. So, at St Anne's, Thurso, all those years ago, an interest began that culminates in this St Andrew's Cathedral so transfigured by his renovations ...

"A Christian gentleman" was how an Aberdeen worthy once described Mario to me. One can only touch on some features of his episcopal years – almost 25 of them in Aberdeen and some 10 in post in Glasgow, a tale of two cities ... In his unique way, Mario traversed that particular epoch of Scottish Church history, perhaps yet to be defined and already different from where we are now.

He enjoyed civic events, knew how to work a room and was a good dinner companion. I was always struck how consistently, in such

"I desire to proclaim my confidence in God's mercy as I end my days..."

Archbishop Mario

Pictures by Paul McSherry



settings, he confessed the faith. He would speak up for the Church and Christian tradition. He was never embarrassed at being Catholic. "As far as I am concerned, he said, we are part of Scottish society. The Catholic Church is not foreign to Scotland."

He relished recalling Catholic history. After one of his lengthy sermons in an historic Moray church, a visiting prelate commented that "Mario has turned the pages of history for us, indeed leaving no page unturned!"

He will be remembered for his ecumenical sensibility and his wide and appreciated involvement in dialogue with other Christians and the workings of the various ecumenical bodies. In later years, he engaged, with no less commitment, in inter-faith relations. He supported the Catholic knightly orders generously.

He could be a sharp and perceptive critic of the extravagances of secularism, the errors of government and social injustice. He was an eloquent advocate of a bioethics that respected the dignity of the human person, from conception to natural death and consistently upheld the Christian vision of marriage.

He was always well-disposed to Religious

orders and Congregations. To my own Benedictine community [at Pluscarden], he was a stalwart friend and always a welcome visitor. He remembered picnicking as a boy with his parents and sister in the Priory grounds before the monks returned. His father prophesied that they would, and when in 1948 they did, the teenage Mario served at the official opening Mass.

Undeterred by contemporary barbarians, he championed the cultural heritage of the Church, both in Scotland and more widely as part of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Cultural Heritage of the Church. Indeed, the future of St Mary's Chapel, Blairs was a preoccupation of his last days.

If in some domains, he didn't always hit the right note – or was it just the politically correct note he didn't hit? – there was never any doubt of his commitment. In the north-east, I can say from experience, he brought the Church down from the glens, as it were, and out of the back streets.

He wasn't willing for it or its bishop to be consigned to the footnotes. The University of Aberdeen was the first to give him an honorary doctorate and he celebrated the first Catholic Mass since the Reformation there

in Bishop Elphinstone's University church. It said a lot that at the time of the Piper Alpha Disaster in 1988, it was he who led the mourning in Aberdeen. An obituary that described Mario as "effete" was seriously wide of the mark. He was perceptive, practical and firm, sustained by a sense of self and of mission.

I want to find the way to what was at the heart of this multi-faceted ministry. What held it together? It was the ideal of service, the service of the Lord and of his people. And it was the liturgical-sacramental-preaching role of the bishop which stood at the centre of this service and energised it.

He was a natural celebrant. He must have confirmed a great number of young people over the years, celebrated many ordinations and performed the Eucharist in many varied settings...He cared for and about the liturgy. His first pastoral letters as bishop were a commentary on the order of Mass. He encouraged communion under both kinds. He introduced the permanent diaconate to Scotland ...

Remembering Mario, we remember a good and faithful servant, and pray that through the intercession of our Lady of



Aberdeen, and of Sts Peter and Paul, and St Mungo, his judgment may be merciful. And we, the Catholic people of Scotland, as well as our friends of other denominations and religions and in civic society, have much to be grateful for.

It is much more than a smile he leaves with us. It is real affection and appreciation. "Heart speaks to heart". He certainly speaks to mine, and I don't think I'm alone.

When he spoke at his own ordination as bishop in 1977, he quoted St Gregory the Great: "Who am I? What kind of watchman am I? I do not stand on the pinnacle of achievement; I languish rather in the depths of my weakness. And yet the Creator and Redeemer of mankind can give me, unworthy though I be, the grace to see life whole and power to speak about it effectively. It is for love of him that I do not spare myself in preaching."

He wrote those words out again in 2002 and in another note of 2016 called them "still dear to me".

Dear Mario, your preaching, celebrating and pastoring now done, may you rest in peace and enter into the joy of your Lord. Amen.

Archbishop who helped SCIAF grow

WITH profound sadness and gratitude, SCIAF mourns the death of Archbishop Mario Conti.

Archbishop Conti made an enormous contribution to SCIAF throughout his decades as Bishop of Aberdeen and subsequently Glasgow, and particularly during his time as SCIAF's Bishop President from 1978-1985.

Archbishop Conti was profoundly committed to social justice and was a great champion and supporter of SCIAF.

Director Alistair Dutton said: "Archbishop Mario was a colossal character in the Church in Scotland and a great friend to SCIAF.

"He supported us as a priest and as a bishop before going on to be our Bishop President and even in retirement was a great ambassador for our work.

"He was a major figure in Scottish public life, who had a fierce intellect and was a great raconteur - he was warm and engaging when meeting supporters at SCIAF events, and represented the Church, SCIAF and our issues of concern with statesmanlike dignity, diplomacy and gravitas.



Archbishop Mario greets young parishioners at a Mass in the Cathedral. Picture by Paul McSherry

BY **ALISTAIR DUTTON**
SCIAF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

"As the eyes of the world concentrate on the UN global climate negotiations at COP27, we remember with gratitude Archbishop Mario's commitment to

climate justice, and his active engagement with both Westminster and Holyrood on this and many other important issues.

"Archbishop Mario leapt at every opportunity to support the work of SCIAF and we have lost a great friend.

He will be sorely missed."

Dr Duncan MacLaren KCSG was SCIAF's first Director and worked directly with Archbishop Conti for many years.

"I owe Archbishop Mario my career in SCIAF and Caritas as he hired me as the

first full-time staff member in SCIAF in 1983 to take forward the task of educating the Catholic community in Scotland about development as a way of reducing the dehumanising poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. "We quickly became

friends and he was so supportive of the new initiatives which were undertaken by SCIAF to benefit the poorest in the Global South. And he was immensely proud of the contemporary SCIAF as a leader in development and humanitarian work from a Scottish base.

"In later life, we renewed our friendship when I was asked to join the Bishops' Committee on Inter-religious Dialogue, of which the Archbishop was President, until his handing over the baton to Bishop Brian McGee of Argyll and the Isles a few years ago.

"I know how popular Archbishop Mario was among people of other faiths in Scotland because he had a real commitment to building fraternity through inter-religious dialogue, as Pope Francis encourages us all to do.

"I will miss his smile and his chats which ranged over all Church matters, and his beloved Italy through to culture. The restored St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow is testimony to his love for beauty in the Church. May Archbishop Mario rest in God's peace."



"Archbishop Mario was a colossal character and a great friend to SCIAF. He supported us as a priest and as a bishop before going on to be our Bishop President and even in retirement was a great ambassador for our work.

"Archbishop Mario had a fierce intellect and was a great raconteur - he was warm and engaging when meeting supporters at SCIAF events and represented us with statesmanlike dignity, diplomacy and gravitas.

"We also remember with gratitude his commitment to climate justice. Archbishop Mario leapt at every opportunity to support the work of SCIAF and we have lost a great friend. He will be sorely missed."

– **Alistair Dutton, SCIAF Chief Executive**



A Catholic to his core but a friend to people of all faiths and none

THE interfaith community in Scotland has lost a friend and champion in the death of Archbishop Mario Conti on 8th November. Archbishop Mario had an open ecumenical outlook from his early years and for decades was involved in the ecumenical movement which, in 1990, gave rise to a new ecumenical instrument called Action of Churches Together in Scotland.

He came later to the work of interfaith relations when in 2006 the Bishops' Conference set up a committee for interreligious dialogue and he became both President and chair.

At first, he was cautious, asking for advice and help in how to address people of other faiths, what was appropriate dress, what was expected when visiting places of worship etc. but he embraced the whole interfaith adventure as he had done the ecumenical one and soon felt at ease in his

BY **SISTER ISABEL SMYTH SND**

relationship with people of other faiths.

This was because of his innate charm, friendliness, and out-going manner which drew people to him and made them feel at ease in his presence. He was loved within the interfaith world and many of our sisters and brothers in faith have phoned, texted or emailed to express their deep sorrow at his death and to pass on their condolences to the catholic community.

All of them mentioned his charm, friendliness, wisdom, and clarity of thought.

Hospitality was a hallmark of Archbishop Mario and for many years, indeed until Covid stopped it, he hosted a reception for faith communities which was not only well attended but was considered an important event



Members of the Muslim community pay tribute
Picture by Paul McSherry

in the interfaith calendar.

He was often advised at these gatherings not to let them go. Archbishop Mario was quick to accept invitations to visit places of worship, to meet with faith communities, to talk at important events such as the 200th anniversary of the birthday of Bah'ullah, to meet visiting dignitaries and to engage in dialogues such as the current one the committee for interreligious dialogue has with Ahl alBait

Scotland, a Shiah Muslim group.

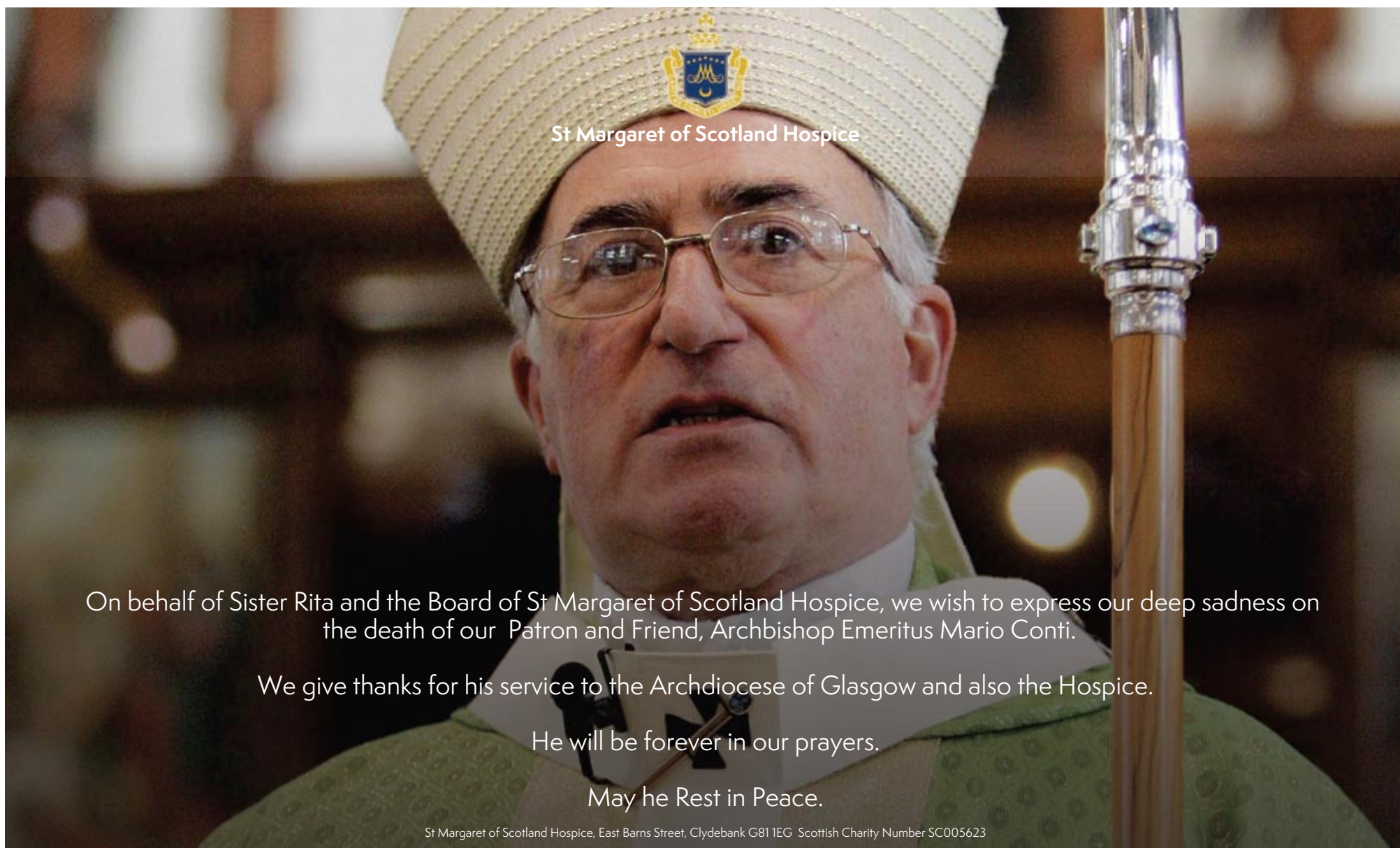
Together we have studied the document on Human Fraternity for Peace in Our World and never did Archbishop Mario come to a meeting of that group unprepared. He was supportive of all the work of the committee and contributed to our annual colloquium which was intended to educate the Catholic community in the faith of others as well as interfaith issues.

As well as this he participated in national interfaith events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, the twice annual meetings of the Scottish religious leaders Forum and the First Minister's Annual Interfaith Symposium. His contribution was greatly respected, especially if he spoke his mind and was not limited by a government agenda.

Archbishop Mario was a good friend to me, both as an individual and as the sec-

retary for interreligious dialogue. He supported me in good times and was always there to lend a listening ear and offer advice in difficult times - and there were some of those. We attended many events together and never did he fail to thank me or fail to show his appreciation for my work and contribution to interfaith relations in Scotland. We had good conversations, not always agreeing but respecting one another and his sense of humour made him very easy to be with. He has now entered the realm of the ancestors and has joined a small body of people who have gone before us in Scotland and continue to give those of us involved in interfaith relations the confidence to continue in their footsteps.

May his memory be a blessing to us all and an inspiration for the future of interfaith work within the Scottish Catholic Church and this nation.



On behalf of Sister Rita and the Board of St Margaret of Scotland Hospice, we wish to express our deep sadness on the death of our Patron and Friend, Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti.

We give thanks for his service to the Archdiocese of Glasgow and also the Hospice.

He will be forever in our prayers.

May he Rest in Peace.

Happy days with Archbishop Mario

Members of the Focolare Movement share their memories

THE Focolare Movement in Great Britain felt a particular mourning for the departure of Archbishop Conti, who had been for so many of members also a dear friend and supporter.

On hearing of his death, various members of the Focolare community who live now in different parts of the world but had the privilege of meeting or working with Archbishop Conti over the years shared their gratitude and memories.

"I've always experienced Archbishop Conti's graciousness, kindness, deep sensitivity, wisdom and understanding. I am very thankful to him both personally for his encouragement and for his accompaniment of the Work of Mary (Focolare) in Scotland and more widely." (Irene Jovaras)

"Archbishop Conti always supported us, also in a personal way. I had not long arrived in Glasgow and my parents came to visit me. He made a point of coming to greet them. It was a real surprise and honour for them that an Archbishop would come to the Focolare house to visit them, rather than us going to him. He was a man of great culture and I was struck by the simple 'family' way he treated us." (Claudia Melis)

"Archbishop Conti's help and support was key to my time in Glasgow. He was a good friend to many, always the epitome of courtesy and grace and, perhaps surprisingly, was open to change and to the unexpected. I remember him accepting a spontaneous invitation to a supper of sausages and mash around the kitchen table and persevering in a game of Scrabble when his opponent was playing according to rules with which he didn't agree.

"At the end of a Christmas party, Archbishop Conti's hat was nowhere to be found; eventually it was discovered crushed underneath a pile of coats. Not showing what must have been his dismay, the Archbishop managed to push the hat back into shape; after that, whenever he came, the hat was never put in the cloakroom, but had its own place on the post at the bottom of the stairs." (Liz Taite)

"I have special memories, going back to 45 years ago, of his simplicity, approachability and already then, his warm attitude towards the Focolare." (Margaret Coen)

"Although I didn't know Archbishop Conti very well, each time I met him, I felt so supported by him, very much appreciated, he made me feel special. And this could just be with a brief encounter in the car park." (Elisabeth Hachmoeller)

"Archbishop Conti always struck me as someone erudite and gentle who also possessed the great art of being approachable: a humble priest who in his humility was first and foremost a pastor." (Mabel Aghadiuno)

"I had the good fortune to work with Archbishop Conti in ecumenical matters. His diplomacy was exquisite and all found him endearing. At the same time, he had a very clear vision – there was no fudging the issues. On several occasions, I went to ask his advice and invariably he shed light on even the most sensitive matters. His hospitality was five star and this was all part of establishing relationships with all. It was on his insistence that Glasgow Churches Together had extra places at the Centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, such was his belief in its importance." (Margaret Long)

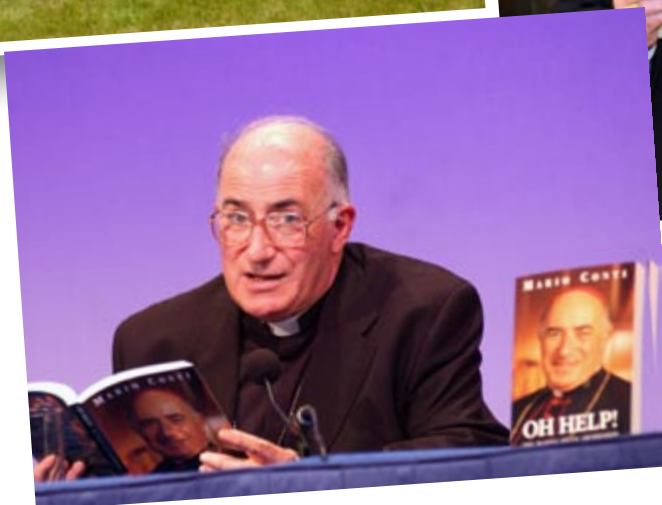


"Being part of the Committee for Interreligious Dialogue with Archbishop Mario as president and chair for a few years, I realised how fortunate I was to be in such company. He had a passion for interfaith work and was keen to meet various faith leaders and communities in Glasgow. He became a true friend for all those people of other religions he had met and worked with." (Yolanda Matro)

The Focolare community also received lovely testimonies from Shia Muslim friends.

"Archbishop Mario Conti was always a humble presence at the many interfaith and community gatherings in which we've participated over the years. He carried a great intellect, warmth and wit and will be remembered fondly as a colossus in the Catholic Church arena but also in the wider community. His smile was infectious and he always made a telling contribution in our discussion circles, full of wisdom and charisma and I was honoured to share the space with him on many occasions." (Ahmed Kweir)

"The loss of Archbishop Mario Conti has been felt across multiple faith communities. He entered the hearts of many in Ahl Al Bait Society and he will remain in many hearts. Many philosophical chats I had personally with him across tables and on journeys together. He was a teacher, a mentor and most importantly a dear friend to me.



He leaves an abundance of love and happy memories. (Azzam Mohamad)

"I have just heard of the sad news about the loss of Archbishop Mario Conti. The loss of his presence will be heart breaking for you all. He really was one in a million, a very special soul. He gave me time, attention and entertained my inquisitive nature with humility and kindness. He challenged my thinking, inspired by mind but also touched my heart." (Zarina Ahmad)

Two weeks before he died, we had the joy of sharing the celebration of Mass followed by dinner at our house to mark his 64th anniversary of ordination.

We remember him for being content in his vocation, his love of beauty in all its expressions and so much more. Now we think of Archbishop Conti in the place especially prepared for him in Heaven and we will continue to count on his support and guidance.

Thank you, Your Grace, may you rest in peace!



Pictures by Paul McSherry



**ST ANDREWS & EDINBURGH
ARCHDIOCESE**

On the occasion of Archbishop Mario's death, I offer on behalf of St Andrews & Edinburgh our deep sympathy and prayers to his family and to the people and clergy of Glasgow and of Aberdeen. May the Good Lord grant him rest from his many labours.

+Leo



+Leo Cushley
and all at the
Archdiocese of
St Andrews
& Edinburgh.

A Cathedral renewed is one of his greatest legacies

BY **D J JOHNSTON SMITH**

DIRECTOR, SCOTLAND'S CHURCHES TRUST

PICTURES BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

THE late Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti was a giant figure in Scottish religious circles in the last quarter of a century. As the First Minister wrote in her tribute to him, his long life and service dedicated to the Catholic Church in Scotland will be remembered fondly by all who knew and worked with him.

His obituaries in *The Herald* and *The Scotsman* also make note of his passion for Scotland's rich ecclesiastical built heritage which is how he came to become so involved in the work of Scotland's Churches Trust and of one of our parent charities, Scotland's Churches Scheme.

While he was Bishop of Aberdeen, he joined the Board of Trustees of the latter in 1996, a year after its formation. He continued to be an active Trustee for almost 20 years – after his elevation to Archbishop of Glasgow in 2002, through the merger of SCS with the Scottish Churches Architectural Heritage Trust and the formation of Scotland's Churches Trust, until his retirement in 2015.

In those first few years on the Board of SCS, he joined an impressive circle of influential contemporary figures with a passion for Scotland's Churches, including Church of Scotland Moderator Robin Barbour, Episcopal Primus Richard Holloway and Lady Marion Fraser, who became the President of both the SCS and SCT.

Archbishop Conti was a powerful advocate of our Trust's national network of local volunteers and an enthusiastic promoter of our "Scotland's Pilgrim Journeys" initiative. On moving to Glasgow, he was closely involved with Baillie Cathie McMaster in the city's work on regeneration and preservation of the religious built heritage of the city and strengthening its links with SCS/SCT.

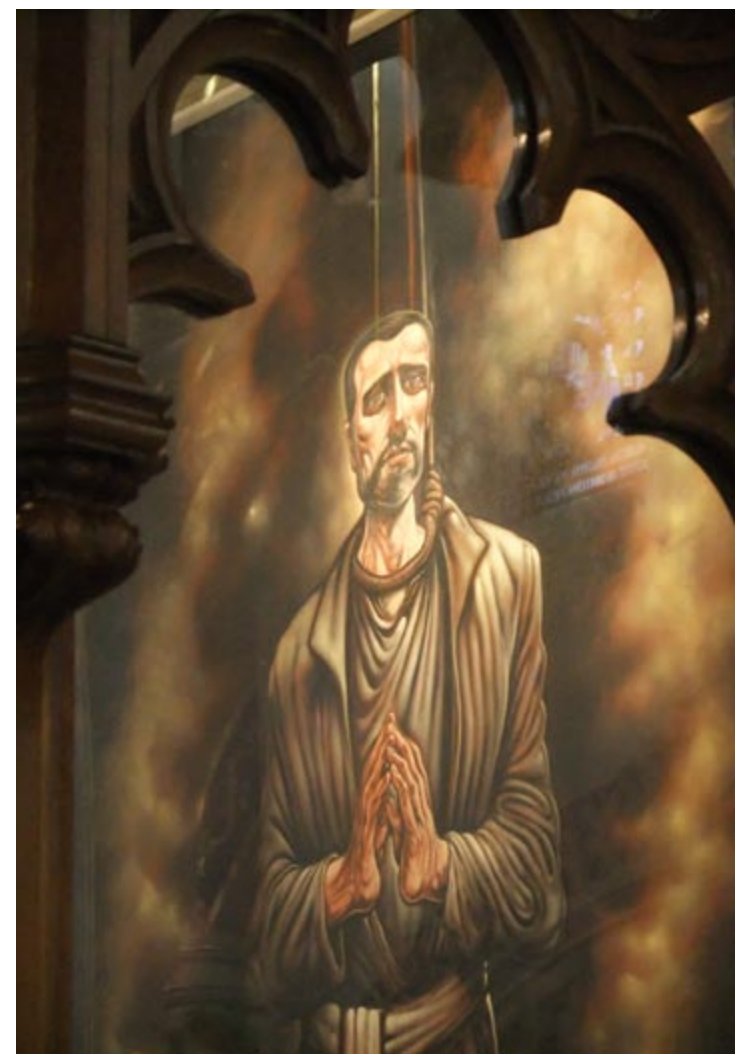
His superb work on the renovation of St Andrew's Cathedral between 2009 and 2011 has been described as "the most significant renovation of a Catholic church in Scotland since the Reformation". His creation of a memorial garden to victims of the Arandora Star sinking in the cloistered garden outside rightfully garnered international attention on this oft-overlooked sad episode in Scotland's 20th century history.

As Bishop, Archbishop and Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti was a welcome and regular figure at our annual Patron's Gatherings, right up to this year's event in Glasgow.

In discussing his passing, former Director of SCAHT and Trustee of SCT, Dr Brian Fraser commented that: "Mario Conti was a formidable figure in the protection and promotion of Scotland's rich ecclesiastical heritage, transcending the denominational divides with an ease of manner and quirky sense of humour which endeared him to so many."

Our Chairperson, Prof Adam Cumming added, "It is always sad to see such a stalwart champion of our work pass and Archbishop Conti will be greatly missed, but we always remember his steadfast support and enthusiasm with huge gratitude."

The thoughts of our Trustees, past and present, our staff and volunteers are with Archbishop Conti's family and friends at this difficult time.



Mario in his own words

In February 1977 a priest who had for the past 15 years served faithfully in the most northerly mainland parish in Scotland, received a brief and intriguingly mysterious phone call, which was to change not only his life but that of countless others over the next 46 years. The priest was the then Father Mario Conti and the call from the Papal Nuncio in London was to lead to his appointment as the new Bishop of Aberdeen. In a wide ranging interview for *Flourish* to mark his 40th anniversary as a Bishop in 2017, Archbishop Conti told BRIAN SWANSON, of the events leading up to his appointment in this edited extract

ARCHBISHOP Conti, a proud grandson of Tuscan forebearers, and devoted son of his birthplace of Elgin, told how his unexpected transition from priest to bishop which began with a telephone invitation, (for which read summons!) to a meeting in London the following day with the Papal Nuncio, Bruno Heim.

Archbishop Conti said “He gave no indication whatsoever why he wanted to see me. All the way down I tried to think what it could be, wondering if perhaps the Nuncio wanted to know what life was like for a priest in such a remote parish, and perhaps get some information re the vacancy in the diocese.”

The silent chauffeur who collected him in London in the Ambassador's limo gave nothing away and dinner with the Nuncio and his staff, while cordial, revealed nothing.

Then, almost as an afterthought, they went to a private room where the Nuncio told him: “You're our new bishop.”

He was told that Pope Paul VI had nominated him to become the new Bishop of Aberdeen to succeed Glasgow-born Bishop Michael Foylan who had died nine months earlier.

That elevation, at the age of 42, made him one of the youngest Bishops ever appointed.

“Before these words were spoken,” Archbishop Conti recalled, “I noticed he was sitting in the light and I was in the shade so he asked me to change places and it was obvious he wanted to see my reaction – which was one of shock and that inevitable doubt that I was up to the job.”

What was never in doubt

was that Mario Joseph Conti, encouraged from an early age by his parents Louis and Josephine, who ran a family business in the town, to believe in the mercy and love of God and the power of prayer, was surely destined for the priesthood.

The landscape so dear to Archbishop Mario too would have shaped that decision. Every day on his way to school he saw the magnificent ruins of the pre-Reformation Elgin Cathedral, once seat of the Bishops of Moray.

Pluscarden Abbey was nearby and John Ogilvie, Scotland's only post-Reformation Saint, was born at Banff just 35 miles away.

The achievements since that appointment as bishop of the one-time parish priest from St Anne's in Thurso and St Joachim's in Wick, could – and do – fill several pages in reference books.

In Scotland these include the major restoration of St Andrew's Cathedral, the introduction of permanent deacons which he pioneered in Aberdeen and is now the norm in every Scottish diocese, restructured deaneries and parish councils in Glasgow, the promotion of marriage and life issues at a national level and tireless labours in the fields of ecumenism and inter-faith relations.

His passionate belief that God's love can be found in service to others was the inspiration for his efforts as President-Treasurer of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund 1978–85, to expand SCIAF from an organisation run by a bishop and an office manager and several volunteers from a shared office in a Rutherglen back street, to a major Scottish charity.

In a life full of highlights,



“From day one I have been touched by the warmth and good humour of the people of Glasgow”

pride of place must go to the single honour of welcoming Pope Benedict to Bellahouston Park in September 2010, and the Archbishop took impish delight in pointing out that although Benedict was on a visit to the UK, Scotland, not England, was the Pope's first destination.

When asked for his abiding memory of a lifetime serving the Church he said: “The engagement with people above all is what I

will always cherish. From day one, I have been touched by the warmth and the good humour of the people of our Archdiocese. The humility and fidelity they have shown in uncertain and testing times has made a deep and lasting impression on me.”

“At times the seas have been rough and the course far from plain sailing, but I hope the Lord will judge me kindly on what I strived to do in my time at the helm.”



Archbishop Conti, you will be forever remembered in our prayers

May the Lord grant him eternal peace.

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This year's motto: 'Tis the season to be canny!



Mary's musings

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

WE'RE a winter family. Out of the whole gang only three have summer birthdays. It's full-on party season from October to February with a couple of stragglers in the spring. The Christmas season is especially strong. Our grandson Joseph arrived late on a Christmas Eve.

We've got a bit of a thing going with Christmas names. With the recent arrival of new grandchild Mary (I'm trying to hard not to lapse in to Mary Doll, or Wee Mary, which would position me as Big Mary and I don't love that) to add to Joseph and Gabriel we're well on our way to our own nativity play.

As Mary's father quipped at her Christening, all we need now are the wise men. Ain't that the case!

This Christmas it should be looking more like Christmases past. We could have expected the Covid restrictions of 2020 and the lingering anxiety of 2021 to have given way to a return to full houses, tables heaving with turkey and trimmings, and generous gift giving.

But the cost-of-living crisis is biting and our spending habits are changing. According to one poll, a third of the UK population

is set to cut Christmas spending by at least a third, some saying by half.

In looking at our budget we are becoming more canny in our purchasing. Some are saying they will give to their immediate family only or to just the children. The amount we will spend on those we buy for is also set to drop. Secret Santas have long been popular for larger groups and that is a trend that will grow.

Christmas sales represent a massive part of the revenue of businesses whether the corporate giants or small independent traders. They are a vital part of our economy. It's tough times all-round.

And yet there are upsides in all of this. This could be the Christmas of change. Thinking more about how we are going to spend our money will lead to a reduction in extravagance, more thoughtful gifts, and less last minute buying of the first thing we see.

While no one wants those we give to, who might otherwise receive little, to go without, why are we giving to our neighbour's daughter's children if they already receive plenty? Granted it is a sign of the warmth and depth of our relationship ... but do they



really need another box of bath bombs or yet more chocolate?

Let's face it, choosing gifts is a hit or a miss. You're buying for a man who you know likes a blue jumper. You buy large and it drowns him so returning and exchanging it is yet another task for his poor wife who is wrung-out after organising Christmas.

I can't receive enough scented candles but more than once I've given one as a gift to be met with a look which says, "I'll just stick that in the cupboard with all the rest".

Not over-indulging the children in our lives is to their benefit and creates more equality with school friends who may get very little. It's a lesson for them in giving and sharing, reminding them that some children will not be so fortunate. And not just children, but the lonely and otherwise forgotten too.

Charities, many of which are always under pressure at this time year, are still suffering the lasting effects of the pandemic, battling rising costs and a dip in donations. Another survey found that 55 per cent of us will find it harder to donate.

Glasgow folk are known as generous and giving. Little things like leaving quality biscuits and treats in foodbank collection baskets will make a difference to someone. As will donating as much as we can afford from the savings on our Christmas spend to the Archdiocesan St Nicholas Fund.

As well as wishing you and yours a happy and peaceful Christmas I'll leave you with one final survey. Only 30 per cent of young people in the 18 to 24 age group are opting for a turkey. It looks like Christmases they are a-changing!

Overworking... our silent addiction

THERE'S only one addiction for which we are praised – overworking. With every other addiction, concerned others are looking to put you into a clinic or into a recovery program, but if your addiction is work, generally it's seen as virtue.

I know of what I speak. I'm a "recovering workaholic", and not exactly in full sobriety at the moment. However, I recognize the disease. Here are its symptoms: we are forever short of time with too many things to do. Our days are too short.

In his autobiography, movie critic Roger Ebert, writes, "I have filled my life so completely that many days there is no time to think about the fact that I am living it." Many of us know the feeling. Why do we do this to ourselves?

The answer may surprise us. When our lives are so pressured that we never have time to savour the fact that we are alive and living it, when we are always short of time with too many things to do, we are suffering from greed, one of the classical deadly sins.

We have a simplistic no-



tion of greed. When we think of a greedy person, we imagine someone who is stingy, selfish, rich in money and material things, hoarding those riches for himself. Few of us fit that category. Greed, in us, has infinitely subtler forms.

What most of us who are generous, unselfish, and not rich in money or property suffer from is greed for experience, greed for life itself, and (if this doesn't sound too heretical) greed even in our generosity. We are greedy to do more (even good things) in our lives than time allows.

Where do we see this? We see it in ourselves whenever

there is never enough time to do what we (seemingly) need to do. There is always pressure that we should be doing more. When we think that somehow God made a mistake with time and didn't allot us enough of it, we are suffering from greed.

Henri Nouwen once described it this way: "Our lives often seem like overpacked suitcases bursting at the seams. In fact, we are almost always aware of being behind schedule. There is a nagging sense that there are unfinished tasks, unfulfilled promises, unrealized proposals. There is always something else we should

Scribblings of the spirit

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



have remembered, done, or said. There are always people we did not speak to, write to, or visit."

But ... God didn't make a mistake in giving us time. God gave us enough time to do what is asked of us, even in generosity and selflessness. The issue is on our side and the problem is greed. We want to do more in life than life itself allows.

Moreover, in most cases, this is easy to rationalize. If we are burning out while serving others, we can easily look at our over-extension, tiredness, and our haunting sense that we are not doing enough and see it as virtue, as a form of martyrdom, as selflessness, as giving our lives away for others.

Partly this is true, there are times when love, circumstance, or a particular

season in our lives can demand that we hand it all over to the point of radical self-abnegation; even Jesus was overwhelmed at times and tried to sneak away for some solitude. However, that is not always the case.

What a mother needs to do for an infant or a young needy child is quite different from what she needs to do when that child is grown and is an adult. What is virtue in one situation can become greed in another situation.

Being too busy generally begins as a virtue, and then often turns into vice – subtle greed. What was once necessary to serve others now begins more to serve our own self-image and reputation.

As well, it functions as a convenient escape. When

we are consumed with doing work for others, we don't have to face our own inner demons nor the demons that need to be faced in our marriages, vocations, and relationships. We are simply too busy; but this is an addiction, the same as all other addictions, except that this particular addiction is seen as a virtue for which we are praised.

This is one reason why God gave us the Sabbath, ordering us to stop working one day each week. Sadly, we are losing the very notion of Sabbath. We have turned a commandment into a light lifestyle suggestion. This can be a good thing to do, if you can manage it!

However, as Wayne Mueller writes in his very challenging book on the Sabbath: "If we forget to rest, we will work too hard and forget our more tender mercies, forget those we love, forget our children and our natural wonder. ... So God gave us the commandment to observe the Sabbath – 'Remember to rest.' This is not a lifestyle suggestion, but a commandment, as important as not stealing, nor murdering, not lying."

Overwork is not a virtue.



URBI & ORBI
NEWS FROM THE VATICAN AND THE CATHOLIC WORLD
In association with **Crux** – taking the Catholic pulse

RECENTLY a learned Jesuit historian took to the editorial page of the *Irish Times* to insist on the de-Italianisation of the Vatican, beginning with making English rather than Italian the institution's official working language.

"If the church of the future is truly to be a global instrument of evangelisation, its centralised bureaucracy must lose its Italian ethos," wrote Jesuit Father Oliver Rafferty, an Irishman who teaches at Boston College.

Though presumably the timing was accidental, Rafferty's piece appeared around the same time that a former Auditor General of the Vatican and his deputy, both Italians, filed a USD 9.6 million lawsuit against various parties in the Secretariat of State, also all Italians, amid charges and counter-charges of spying, corruption and resistance to reform – a soap opera-esque spectacle which, needless to say, has buttressed impressions that as long as Italians run the show, very little will change.

Yet while breaking the Italian stranglehold on church governance may appear a no-brainer, perhaps it's worth pausing a moment to consider the case for the defence. It can be expressed in terms of four P's: Providence, perspective, parity and politics.

First up is providence.

Pope Benedict XVI famously criticised attempts to "de-Hellenise" Christianity by insisting that the intersection between Christian faith and Greek rationality was no accident, but rather a decisive turning point in salvation history. One could make a similar point about the fact that the central government of Catholicism took root and developed over the centuries in Italy, a contention bolstered by the observation that on the rare occasions when the papacy has relocated outside Italian airspace, it's not been an altogether positive experience.

The second point has to do with perspective.

Rafferty is absolutely right that English is the dominant language today in finance, communications, politics and many other arenas of life. Precisely for that reason, English-speakers tend to be a bit self-referential, presuming that their concerns and experiences are shared by the entire world. In a Catholic church of 1.3 billion people, in which less than 30 percent of its membership is composed of native English-speakers, that can be a dangerous assumption indeed.

Who said the Church is too Italian?



Italians, on the other hand, know in their bones that they're not the centre of the universe. They know no one else really speaks Italian, and they know Italian affairs aren't really followed anywhere else. They tend to think globally about most everything, arguably a healthy instinct for the Vatican.

For instance, during my recent stay in an Italian hospital, nurses and doctors and orderlies repeatedly solicited my perspective on the American midterm elections. If I'd been an Italian in an American hospital, I wonder how many people would have sought out my take on the new center-right Italian government under Giorgia Meloni.

The third plank in the pro-Italian platform is parity.

Like any other global institution, the Catholic Church has its own internal rivalries. In the West, American and German Catholics sometimes clash, in part because they're the two largest annual donors to Vatican coffers and naturally think that largess ought to buy them influence. In Latin America, the Bra-

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

zilians and the Argentinians are natural rivals (especially under an Argentinian pope), while in Asian Catholic affairs the Filipinos and the Indians sometimes butt heads.

One factor that tends to prevent any of these ecclesiastical titans from dominating to an excessive degree is that they have to compete on Italian terrain – they have to make their arguments in Italian, they have to master Italian psychology and customs, and they have to build relationships with the Italians who move the levers of power. As a result, none of the great powers has a built-in advantage, which tends to create a level playing field and, overall, promotes a rough sort of internal balance.

Finally, there's politics, especially geopolitics, to consider.

The Vatican aspires to be a voice of conscience in global affairs, a desire that can be seen right now in its approach to the conflict in Ukraine. Rome has tried desperately to be

seen as *super partes*, meaning non-aligned, and therefore at least theoretically able to engage all the actors in the drama from a non-threatening position.

In order for the Vatican to be able to intervene successfully in global conflicts, it has to be seen as extraneous to superpower rivalries and conflicts. The election of history's first pope from the developing world has been a boon in that regard, as it cements impressions that the Vatican isn't simply a Western institution.

Making English the Vatican's official language, which would almost certainly have the effect of giving Americans and Brits home court advantage in most internal debates, arguably would weaken impressions of the Vatican as non-aligned and compromise its ability to advance the church's social agenda on the global stage. Italians, on the other hand, have played the diplomatic game capably for centuries, in part because no one is especially threatened by Italy.

Of course, the choice here is not an either/or – either allow Italians to rule the roost unchallenged, or get rid of them altogether. Every pope since Paul VI has wanted to "internationalise" the Vatican to some extent, which is a polite way of saying reduce the Italian predominance, yet each has ended up relying to a significant degree on the Italian infrastructure in order to get anything done.

Perhaps the central point is simply that it's easy for Catholics from other parts of the world to complain about the over-representation of Italians in church government. The harder part is figuring out how to change that without actually making things worse in the name of making them better.

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Taking the Catholic Pulse

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Wickedness of the 'send them back' politics



Marian Pallister

The chair of Pax Christi Scotland – and our new columnist – focuses on the issues of the day

It may be because I was picked for a star role as Herod in a school play that I have carried in my heart a lifelong empathy for refugees.

I was about seven, and our form mistress (a lady with a Masters in sarcasm and a PhD in Put Down) had written the script for the Christmas play.

The line I remember (it's a very long time ago) was "All the little boys I'll kill," and I was to declaim this from a throne with as much bluster as I could muster.

Herod

While delighted at getting this major role, I was horrified by the sentiment of my key speech and thankful that Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the wee donkey made it safely to Egypt till this nasty piece of work was off the scene.

Words like "refugee" weren't really part of my vocabulary then, but I knew that when people fled from somewhere terrible, they had to be offered sanctuary – a word that for some reason I did know.

Sanctuary

A couple of years later, I was given a dozen or so books for Christmas. I had devoured them before the end of the Christmas holidays, locked into stories about some Jewish children brought for safety to the UK from Nazi Germany and housed with a farming family in the south of England.

I romanticised their plight, not yet knowing the horrendous details of the concentration camps, but I understood how important it was to open our hearts and homes to people like them – "refugees".

As an adult, my journalism took me to places of conflict around the world. On the border of Thailand and what was briefly known as Kam-

puchea, thousands of refugees were housed in International Red Cross camps – camps that became known in war torn regions as 'tent cities'. The children were kept in one camp, their pictures and details on a board at the gate. If members of their families recognised their child in a photograph, a reunion was possible (a system long since computerised).

Hope

But few came out of the jungle to claim these children, and so the kids would pull down their picture and give it to a Red Cross nurse or a visitor they had got to know in the hope of creating a new family.

A wee girl called Ra held my hand throughout my visit. I can still weep for her and all the children, women and men that I met in subsequent years, trying to tell their stories to raise awareness of what refugees are in truth – the victims of war, of violence, of persecution.

When the little girl threw a bottle containing a note asking for help over the perimeter fence of Manston processing centre; when the young lads were taken from Manston and dumped in a London station without food, clothes or a place of safety, I wished I could tell their back story – not only to Suella Braverman but to all those who want to "send them back where they came from".

Jesus, Prince of Peace, spent his first few months of life as a refugee. What would this world have been like if Herod had had his way, or if the Egyptian Home Office had shipped the Holy Family to a remote region of Africa?

And by the way – I never did get to play Herod. I came down with German Measles.

Young people must hear Pope's environment plan

CHRISTIANS welcomed the publication of *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis, published prior to COP 26 in Glasgow.

Commendably, in keeping with this important document, the Archdiocese of Glasgow Synod Group report underlined 'The crisis of global warming and the destruction of the environment' as one of the specific areas on which the Catholic population wished to speak out.

What are children and adolescents to conclude from the many contradictory points of view which circulate about the future of planet Earth?

Some commentators tout spin over substance, cause distractions or attempt to kick thorny conundrums into the distance for future generations to grapple with. Others simply reject evidence-based data and statistics.

Groucho Marx succinctly summarised narrow, short-term outlooks – 'Why should I care about future generations? What have they ever done for me?' In contrast, there is 'cathedral thinking', or in other words, 'being good ancestors'.

Our predecessors bequeathed much for us to admire. Can we, in turn, leave a delightful and healthy world as an inheritance to our descendants?

A focus on climate change is only one element, albeit a markedly important one of a wider study.

The curriculum on offer from 3 to 18 years of age requires to be all-embracing.

It needs to extend beyond saving the biosphere and incorporate the numerous processes through which everyday living conditions will be improved.

Within this broader framework, a commitment on decarbonisation towards net-zero emission targets can be regarded as a 'saving



Last month's COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh has brought back memories of its predecessor held in Glasgow last October. In this special article for *Flourish* FRANK O'HAGAN, a former member of Her Majesty's Inspector of Education and a parishioner of St Andrew's Bearsden reflects on the role school pupils can play in protecting the planet

aspect. When the agenda morphs into the creation of a truly greener and life-enhancing environments for all, objectives are magnified towards 'saving and beyond'.

Educationalists have various good practices to observe as regards learners' participation and elucidation at all stages.

As some might have felt confused and been left with a sense of helplessness due to media reports, a warm and inclusive learning ethos can do much to reduce emotional upset and avoid deleterious influences on mental wellbeing.

At the early and nursery phases, children form habits relating to cleanliness, communication, health and safety, good manners and kindness to others.

During the primary school stages, pupils have opportunities to study more about how to take good care of ecosystems. Project work is

scarce commodities.

They have acquired the necessary competences to comment on how success and failure rates should be published and evaluated by governmental agencies. All being well, they become the guardians urgently required to protect our bionetwork.

No matter how erudite the conclusions of international conferences might be, if they lack expediency and pragmatism, they are of little or no value.

Young people who have studied and understood impending perils neither desire to propose utopian dreams nor convey death wish messages. For them, false narratives and nihilistic stances on future calamities being 'too big to handle' are not acceptable.

They comprehend that there is no quick fix, identify themselves as global citizens and demand a 'can do, make it happen' mindset to be adopted. They have demonstrated that incremental steps can result in giant leaps forward.

An emergency has already arrived, but their positivity has not been vanquished.

The report of the Diocesan Synod Group has pinpointed many predicaments, climate change being one, in need of social remediation. Hopefully, Catholic education - by demonstrating the relevance and richness of the Church's teachings about contemporary issues - will ensure that young and old fully embrace the key roles and responsibilities which they are asked to undertake.

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

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FOR WOMEN
EXPLORING
FRANCISCAN
VOCATION

LAST Monday I was interviewed in connection with a short documentary film that is being made on the life of St Thenew (also known as Thenogor Enoch), the mother of St Mungo.

Our church here at Saint Mungo's has one of the only remaining statues of St Thenew and the film makers were keen to come face to face, as it were, with the statue, in the making of the documentary.

As part of my preparation, I read an extract from an archive concerning the Dedication of the High Altar in St Mungo's, which took place on the 16th September, 1877.

The church itself was dedicated on the 12th September, 1869. As far back as then, on what was at that time a very ornate high altar, this beautiful statue of St Thenew was high up on the sanctuary alongside other saintly statues filling a number of decorative niches.

There is a picture of the high altar in the centenary booklet – *The Passionists in Scotland* – that was produced back in 1965. Now, of course, post-Vatican II, that High Altar is much simpler.

The main aim of this documentary is, as I understand it, to highlight strong women who helped shape the City of Glasgow, and the person who interviewed

Remember the strong women who shaped our culture and history



Fr Frank's log

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

me is keen on petitioning the City Council to instal some kind of commemorative plaque to St Thenew in St Enoch Square, which is named after her.

Records from the 15th century show that the bones of St Enoch were believed to lie in a chapel, which stood in the midst of a burial ground, which occupied the ground now forming St Enoch Square.

There is a modern-day interpretation of St Enoch and her baby, whom she called Kentigern, by Australian street artist Sam Bates (aka Smug) on the corner of High Street and George Street. Later, St Serf, would give the young Kentigern the pet name of Mungo, which means the Dear One of God.

Later that same day we went out for a celebration

meal to mark the platinum jubilee of Father Justinian's first Profession as a Passionist, as mentioned in last week's log.

We were joined by his two brothers and one of his sisters-in-law, and, by a happy coincidence, our Provincial was able to join us, having arrived in Glasgow from London earlier in the day. We went to a local restaurant in Bishopbriggs and had a thoroughly enjoyable time to mark the occasion, and indeed, it was an occasion well worth marking.

The following night we heard of the sad death of Archbishop Mario, after a short illness. I was never stationed in Glasgow during his time as Archbishop, but I know that he had a deep love for St Mungo's Church and, in many ways, was the driving force behind the renovations that took place over 20 years ago.

Not long after I came here, Archbishop Conti joined us for the Feast of St Mungo on 13th January 2017. Afterwards, we had some refreshments in the hall, during which he expressed his love for St Mungo's, but also, with a wry smile, apologised for leaving us with such a big debt on the church as a result of those renovations, which we are still trying to pay off. However, it was a job well worth doing.

We also heard of the sad death of an American Passionist, Fr. Don Senior CP, who was one of the finest scripture scholars that the

George Street mural of St Enoch and child



Passionists, and indeed the Church, has ever produced, especially in relation to the New Testament. His speciality was the Gospel of St Matthew.

He was mainly associated with the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and was appointed by Pope St

John Paul II to serve on the Church's Pontifical Biblical Commission. He was also a lovely, humble man, whom I had the privilege of meeting, and listening to, on a number of occasions, and my bookshelves at home, as well as my Kindle, contain a number of his writings,

especially on the Passion of Jesus in each of the Gospels.

He will be greatly missed. May both of these good men rest in peace.

As always, protect yourselves, your loved ones and others, and protect Christ in your lives.

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Advent readings teach us the art of waiting usefully for Christmas



Fr Tom Kilbride

THERE'S a particular power to the readings of the Advent and Christmas seasons.

As messages of hope, rich in optimism and faith in God's promises, they can give us new energy when we're flagging and inject much-needed hope and light in dark days.

Sometimes, though, we stop on the surface, enjoying their warm glow. When we hear them with Matthew's Gospel, however, there is a deeper truth present: these things happen (and will happen) because God wants them to happen and no one can stand in his way! And God's will is for salvation, peace, healing and joy.

We look forward in this season to experiencing these things again, even as Matthew tells us these things are there for us now, if we trust that God is with us already!

Third Sunday of Advent, A

We hear from John the Baptist a second time this Sunday as he asks whether Jesus really is the promised Messiah. All the promises of Isaiah about the one coming to save are indeed being fulfilled, but perhaps not in the way John had imagined. Last Sunday, we heard him preach about the harsh judgement awaiting the wicked. Jesus, however, does not seem to be such a judge. Instead, Jesus points out that the promises were about hope and healing for the suffering – at least to begin with. Judgement will come, but it will come later. First comes healing, mercy and renewal. That is the essence of the salvation Jesus brings: more about the joy and gladness mentioned in the First Reading than



Sandro Boticelli, *Nativity*, c. 1500

about fear or damnation. Matthew's Gospel does not shy away from the ultimate risk of "weeping and grinding of teeth", but for now, in Jesus, God is holding out his mercy and the prospect of joy.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, A

We return to the beginning of Matthew's Gospel today to hear of the "Annunciation" to Joseph and the start of the new phase in the human story that God has promised.

This story of Joseph has a number of interesting features. First, Joseph is a man of honour: he wants to keep the Law. In other words, he wants to be true to what God asks of his People. The angel, however, shows him that God is about to do something new and that he is called to help bring it to life. Joseph, then, is a man who is faithful to the tradition but also open to the new thing God wants to do. This will be a common thread throughout Matthew's Gospel in the year ahead.

Secondly, Joseph is silent. He simply does as the angel tells him. Again, Matthew's Gospel will be about hearing God's word and acting on it.

Lastly, the little text quoted from Isaiah gives us a clue to Matthew's understanding of who Jesus is. He is "God-with-us". Everything we will hear from Matthew this year has that

idea behind it. Every teaching, every healing, every moment in Jesus' life and ministry will reveal that God has come among us as he promised to.

Christmas Day

We get the option of hearing the whole backdrop to Jesus' birth at the Christmas Vigil (the sweep of his ancestry back to Abraham). It's understandable if that option isn't always taken, as it's quite long, but Matthew wants us to know that everything has been leading up to this moment, the birth of the Saviour. God who has guided his People throughout its history – through prophets, kings, priests – now comes in person, in the child whose birth we celebrate. He is God-with-us, as we heard last Sunday.

For most of our Christmas Masses, we'll probably hear the familiar story from Luke's Gospel (a census, a manger, angels and shepherds). Both texts tell us the same thing: God has kept a promise he made to come in person to save us. There is indeed great joy to be shared here. Light shines in darkness and gentleness shatters the pomposity of power. God becomes small, vulnerable, human so that we might become immortal, beautiful, sacred.

Christmas joy is not some fuzzy feeling: it comes from a transformation of everything we think we are into

something infinitely better because God has made it possible!

Mary, Mother of God

Since January 1st is a Sunday this year, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. We hear the ancient Levite blessing for New Year in the First Reading – a fitting prayer as the year begins – and then we turn our thoughts to Mary's place in the plan of God in the other readings.

Paul, like Matthew, sees everything unfolding in God's perfect time. "Born of a woman", Jesus is truly one of us and Mary is the one chosen to bring the Saviour into the world. But as Son of God he is the one who alone can save us. Mary ponders in her heart the remarkable things that are unfolding.

Others are "astonished", but she has a deeper understanding, treasuring it all. She and Joseph do as the angel told them. They are obedient to God's will for them, such is their understanding and openness to his word.

Epiphany

The final Christmas Sunday brings us the famous story from Matthew's Gospel of the pagan Magi visiting the new-born king (and another fulfilment passage!). From the start, Matthew wants us to know that God's plan – which has been unfolding so faithfully – is for everyone, not just for the Chosen People of the Old Testament.

We would have noticed this from his ancestry which includes a few pagans, like Ruth, among the Israelites. These pagan Wise Men seek the light.

It leads them first of all to the Word of God in Scripture, which points them to the saviour himself. They then become the first people in Matthew's Gospel to worship him, a sure sign that they recognise him as "God-with-us" as was promised (the disciples will do that too after the resurrection).

"Ordinary" Sundays of Year A

A brief side-step into John's Gospel brings us back to the witness of John the Baptist. This Sunday sums up everything we have been hearing: Jesus is the one to follow, the one God sends us, the one who will save Israel and indeed all of humanity.

When he comes then, he fulfils the promises (3rd Sunday has yet another fulfilment passage!) and brings the healing, hope and renewal God had promised. The light we heard about at Christmas has indeed dawned and is now active in the lives of people, especially where there is darkness or pain. Promises are kept; God is with us.

Matthew will show us as the weeks go by how Jesus reveals all that, in word and action, and how we ought to respond to it and share it in our words and actions too. But that is for the months ahead!



Christmas is among the most wonderful days of the year because it unites families, allows people to spread love to one another, and inspires children to dream with that unforgettable Christmas morning.

But what happens to the Glasgow children and families who are most in need? How can we ensure that they enjoy a wonderful and unforgettable Christmas?

That is why The Glasgow Care Foundation created the campaign "A Small Donation, A Big Smile" to raise funds to buy Christmas vouchers and give them to families in Glasgow who are most in need so they can afford to buy Christmas presents for their children or some food for Christmas dinner.

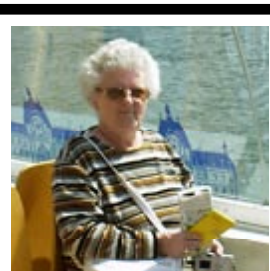
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Helen Friar

beloved wife of Bert, loving mother to Helen, Bert, Gary and their families.

Died on the 15th of December 2020

Our lady of Lourdes pray for her.

She will live in our hearts forever.

Make your presents matter this Christmas

“Now I can look after myself, I’m welcomed by my neighbours again.”

With these words Nafisa Rayan* described how, with SCIAF’s partner, MRDA’s, help, she and her friends had set up a bakery together. The income this provided and the reserves she amassed in the savings and loans scheme, quickly showed her neighbours that she could stand on her own two feet and didn’t need to be taken care of.

As people realised that, although a widow, she didn’t need to depend on them for food or other necessities, they stopped averting their gaze or avoiding her, and welcomed her back into the life of the village. Nafisa said: “People always used to look away if they saw me because they thought I needed a cup of sugar or something but now I’m [relatively] wealthy and I’m one of the community again, with lots of friends”.

During my recent trip to South Sudan I met several people with similar experiences to Nafisa. In the world’s poorest country,



Alistair Dutton

Chief Executive, SCIAF

ranked 191/191 on the United Nations Human Development Index, many people have next to nothing in terms of wealth, personal possessions or economic opportunity, and surviving is their daily struggle.

Impact

While I was there I spent several days staying with our partners and visited the Dioceses to see the impact of our work for myself. South Sudan has suffered from many challenges in its short existence. Poverty is ubiquitous and is made worse by conflict, displacement, and increasingly climate change.

But, what always inspires me, is just how much sheer hope and strength people have and how much they achieve for themselves.

However, the odds are always stacked against them. While we were there more than a third of the country was under water; for the third successive year the land has not had a chance to dry out and the crops are rotting in the ground. This is yet another glaring example of how countries in the Global South are bearing the brunt of climate change, despite having emitted almost nothing.

This issue of Loss and Damage – compensating people for the destruction they’ve suffered as a result of climate change – was high on the agenda at the recent UN climate negotiations at COP27 in Egypt. The First Minister, SCIAF, and other members of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, worked hard to



highlight the responsibility, importance and urgency of dealing with this.

Here at home, several of our Real Gifts this year focus on providing real solutions to the climate crisis. As Christmas approaches, it’s not unusual for us as Catholics to feel that the real meaning of Christmas is being lost in a flurry of turkey, tinsel and tat. Many of us long for the days when Christmas was less about Black Friday and

more about Midnight Mass with the family.

Our Real Gifts are carefully chosen ethical offerings that will help change the lives of families whose lives are being devastated by climate change in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There’s something for every pocket too, with Real Gifts starting at just £4, which will buy seeds to allow a family to grow their own crops. Or you can pick the materials required for

a family to build an eco-stove. These are roughly the price of a stocking filler back home.

We shouldn’t forget the true meaning of Christmas: hope, peace and joy for everyone, and particularly the poorest of our sisters and brothers around the world.

May you and your family have a happy and holy Christmas.

**name changed for security reasons*

**Buy SCIAF’s
REAL GIFTS
this Christmas
and transform
lives in the
world’s poorest
places.**

SCIAF
Uniting for a just world
Caritas Scotland

When you buy an ethical Real Gift for a loved one, you’re providing something vital to our sisters and brothers around the world and giving a thoughtful gift to someone in your life.

Real gifts that
**CHANGE
LIVES**

Visit sciaf.org.uk/realgifts today or call 0141 354 5555.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. 7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Email: sciaf@sciaf.org.uk Registered Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327. Photo credit: Stefanie Gliński for Catholic Relief Services.



We believe in giving back to our local communities.

This means charities, sports teams and great causes across the UK.



Beatson Cancer Charity



CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young)



The Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home



Crookston Community Group



Marie Curie



Oor Wullie's Big Bucket Trail



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