

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

December 2021

O come all ye faithful

Bishops appeal for return to Sunday Mass as census shows 30% drop in attendance

SCOTLAND'S bishops have asked Catholics to use the forthcoming Christmas season to make the decision to return to Sunday Mass.

The appeal follows new figures which show the impact of the Covid pandemic on Mass attendance across the Archdiocese – a significant 30 per cent drop, with some parishes losing more than half their Sunday Mass attendees.

The unsurprising drop in numbers attending Mass followed the suspension of the Sunday obligation last year and the repeat waves of Covid 19 which left many people afraid to come to Mass.

From the start of the New Year the Bishops have restored the Sunday obligation, though the current decision came before the new variant of Covid was discovered.

The Bishops acknowledge the difficulty of making their decision in a pastoral letter: "We have often been asked about reinstating the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation. In our fluid situation, this is not an easy judgment to make. Thanks, however, to the effort and

good sense of so many, our churches have proven to be safe places. So, saving any serious worsening of the situation, we believe that Christmastide provides an opportune moment to restore the obligation".

They add: "In accordance with the common teaching of the Church this obligation does not bind those in ill health or those otherwise impeded from attending Mass.

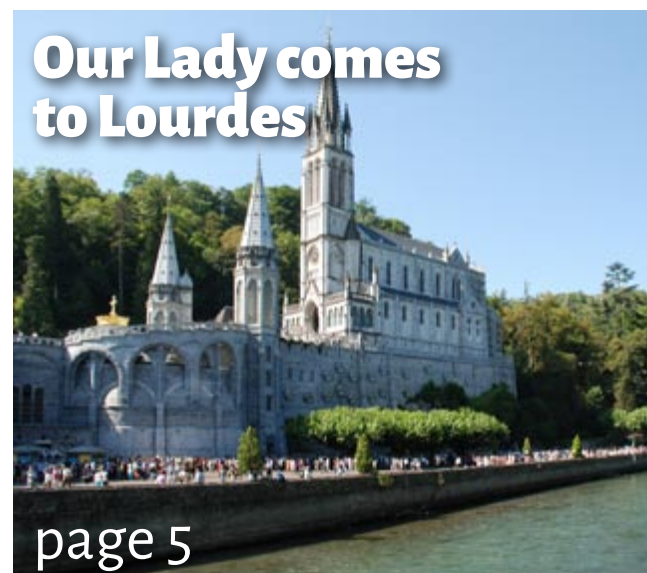
"Nor, in the context of Covid, does it bind those showing symptoms of the virus or with underlying health conditions, or those with responsibilities for people in need of special care. The obligation to keep the Lord's Day holy by attending Mass should not be seen as a burden. It is a summons addressed to our human freedom and to the heart of every baptised member of the Church."

The scale of the challenge facing parishes across the Archdiocese is huge. All but one parish have shown significant drops in the numbers attending since the start of the pandemic, though in some cases people are choosing to attend Mass on a weekday rather than a Sunday to avoid crowds.



School of Botticelli, *Madonna and child*, 1490

Our Lady comes to Lourdes



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Remembering Archbishop Philip



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Look out for the angels of Advent



centre pages



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Sunday Mass should not be seen as a burden

Bishops' Letter on restoring the Mass obligation in the Dioceses of Scotland

DEAR Brothers and Sisters, Christ is born for us, come let us adore him.

Christmas is approaching. It is an occasion to renew our family life, to reach out to the lonely and to celebrate the core of our faith: Emmanuel, God with us.

We have all experienced the negative impact the pandemic has had on our common liturgical celebrations and our access to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Now that more people are attending church, the Bishops of Scotland want to encourage all the Catholic faithful to renew their covenant with the Church and her worship. Christmas seems the right time to do this. We remember how the shepherds said to each other: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Lk 2:15). The Child in the manger calls to us to go with them.

Christmas Day this year falls on a Saturday. It will be followed immediately by the feast of the Holy Family on the Sunday. We therefore strongly encourage you to take advantage of the celebrations of that weekend by attending Mass on both days, or at least once.

We have often been asked about reinstating the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation. In our fluid situation, this is not an easy judgment to make. Thanks, however, to the effort and



Bishops' conference with Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gugerotti
Picture by Paul McSherry

good sense of so many, our churches have proven to be safe places. So, saving any serious worsening of the situation, we believe that Christmastide provides an opportune moment to restore the obligation.

The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation will therefore be reinstated from Sunday 2nd January, the first of the new year. That Sunday coincides with the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. It will be an occasion for us to join the wise men in offering worship to the Infant Jesus.

In accordance with the common teaching of the Church this obligation does not bind those in ill health or those otherwise impeded

from attending Mass. Nor, in the context of Covid, does it bind those showing symptoms of the virus or with underlying health conditions, or those with responsibilities for people in need of special care. The obligation to keep the Lord's Day holy by attending Mass should not be seen as a burden. It is a summons addressed to our human freedom and to the heart of every baptised member of the Church. "There is within me", said St Ignatius of Antioch, "a murmur of living water which says, 'Come to the Father'". The obligation calls us to come to the Father together with our fellow-believers, to "listen to the word of God and to take part in the Eucharist,

calling to mind the passion, resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus, and giving thanks to God who 'has begotten [us] to a living hope, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead'" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 106;1 Pt 1:3). Sunday Mass can reinvigorate and refresh our Christian faith, our sense of community and our desire to live as missionary disciples in the world. This is why the Church takes this obligation seriously.

It has been good to have access to the Sacred Liturgy online, and we encourage those unable to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays to continue making use of this. Of itself, though, online participation does not fulfil the obligation. Noth-

ing can adequately replace actual presence. At the heart of our Christian life is the event of the Word becoming flesh and our incorporation through the Sacraments into his Body. It's to experience this that we come to church. Our current reflection on synodality points us in the same direction: we are a people who meet together because we journey together.

Let us therefore use the coming Christian season to return, with purified hearts and fresh fervour, to our sacramental and liturgical life. During Advent and beyond, there will be opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And Christmas itself is more than a Day. It is a

Season. Beyond Christmas Day, it includes the beautiful feasts of the Holy Family, of Mary, Mother of God, of the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. In the northern hemisphere, this season falls at a dark and low time of the year. This is not by chance. It's precisely at this time, made darker still by so many current uncertainties, that we are offered divine energy and the joy of the human birth of a divine child. Christ's birth means the forgiveness of our sins and our rebirth as children of God. We sense how Mary's motherhood embraces us as well and, at the Epiphany, the star of faith lights up our hearts. As the Lord is immersed in the River Jordan the waters of our own baptism can flow in our lives with new force. We are given light and strength to live a new year in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In his Letter of the 9th of November to the Catholics of Scotland, written in the midst of CoP26, the Holy Father said, "In these challenging times, may all Christ's followers in Scotland renew their commitment to be convincing witnesses to the joy of the Gospel and its power to bring light and hope to every effort to build a future of justice, fraternity and prosperity, both material and spiritual."

We echo these words as we seek together to follow God's ways and open our hearts to the gift of his Son.

Priests: "We're up for the challenge"

CATHOLICS are being urged to return to Mass for Christmas as new figures reveal an alarming fall in attendances despite the easing of Covid restrictions, writes Brian Swanson.

Some parishes have seen numbers fall by as much as 60 per cent according to the latest census of church attendances.

Yet despite the downturn since the 2019 census the trend should be seen as an stimulus to renew according to priests across the Archdiocese.

Monsignor Paul Murray, parish priest of St Helen's Langside who is also Chancellor of the Archdiocese, said: "I fear the pandemic has only caused an existing process to accelerate - the response to which is the same as it has always been - some kind of Pastoral Plan

of Evangelization capable of reaching to the peripheries.

"The average decline in attendance since the last census has been about one third. The 'best' parishes are down only about 15 per cent with the 'worst' around 60 per cent mark while Saint Helen's is sitting around the 45 per cent mark.

"The main demographic in decline, I think, are the younger parishioners and families who may have been hanging on to practice by their fingertips before the pandemic and have simply got out of the habit."

"They were probably always a bit vulnerable to other distractions diverting them from weekly practice and the closure of churches has allowed for the establishment of a different weekend routine where Mass attendance does not play a part.

"Some of these may be continuing to watch Mass on line, but I'm not sure it's significant - although Facebook and YouTube analytics have to be treated very cautiously - I have noticed a general decline in engagement over the last couple of months."

Canon David Wallace, parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald, also spoke of the need to respond to the census with courage.

He said: "It can be easy to be downhearted, realising this might cause some changes we won't be comfortable about. However, we are still dealing with a global pandemic and aren't done with it just yet. The effects of the pandemic will undoubtedly impact on our future and encourage us all (not just clergy) to find new ways of transmitting the Gospel message for all to hear.



Fr Jim Lawlor

"I am confident that we'll come out of this tough time on everyone with an eagerness for new life and a fresh excitement for evangelisation. It won't happen overnight and it's going to be hard work, but we're up to the challenge"

He added: "There was absolutely no doubt as we approached the annual census at the beginning of November that numbers attend-

ing church services would be stark. Our own numbers were reduced by 50 per cent.

"Over the past 20 months, we found ourselves having to keep our buildings closed for 6 months, restrictions on numbers gathering restricted to 20 or 50 people, high numbers staying at home to live stream Masses and other liturgies and even watching those numbers falling away through all we've had to face.

"We might ask questions about why people are reluctant to return? Some will have become used to not attending.

"Some are still fearful of coming into crowded spaces. Some have grown frail and lost confidence in going out at all. Some, in fact, favour coming to weekday Masses which are quieter instead of joining the assembly on a

Sunday."

Father Jim Lawlor, parish priest of Immaculate Conception Maryhill, where figures are down by about a third, believes that fear of Covid is not the single reason for parishioners to stay away from Mass.

Pointing out that Churches had among the most stringent hygiene of all public places, he said: "We still get good attendances for weddings, funerals, christenings and things like the recent COP26 Masses so there's obviously a willingness for people to come through the doors but not sadly in the numbers we would like for weekly Mass.

"The live streaming of Masses might turn out to be a Catch 22 because people got out of the habit of going to church. To reverse

Continued on page 12

Trees planted in honour of 'our uncle Philip'

THEIR faces solemn with concentration, three children plant a holly tree in memory of the man the world knew as Archbishop Philip Tartaglia but who was to them simply Uncle Philip.

Gabriel, 13, Lucia, 10, and Philip, 6, are students at St Aloysius College whose fellow pupils, with the enthusiastic support of staff, arranged the simple service which took place overlooking a small unused piece of land outside the Junior School in Hill Street now transformed into an everlasting memorial garden to Archbishop Tartaglia who died on January 13, 2021, the feast day of St Mungo.

And as members of his immediate family, including his brother Canon Gerry Tartaglia, parish priest of St Margaret's Clydebank, looked on proudly, another significant coincidence emerged when it was pointed out that the day chosen at random to pay tribute to the Archbishop – November 19 – was almost exactly 16 years to the day that he was ordained Bishop of Paisley.

There was symbolism too in the choice of the holly tree voted for by pupils.

Headmaster Matthew Bartlett said: "The senior school recently planted a sycamore tree for the Archbishop just round the corner in Scott Street and today was the turn of the junior school to pay their own tribute.

"They voted for the holly I think because it is sturdy and robust – in many ways just like the Archbishop himself who was a great friend to our school and who truly believed in the value of young people and their education."

Father Gerry Mitchell, the newly-appointed parish priest of St Aloysius who taught in the college almost



Pictures by Paul McSherry

30 years ago, conducted the service which included this prayer:

"We pray that this tree will take root in this soil, drawing from it water and nutrients so it may grow and blossom bringing beauty, offering shelter to birds and insects, its evergreen presence reminding us of the Archbishop's love and goodwill; his faith and commitment to the people of Glasgow and beyond. We ask this through Christ our Lord."

The St Aloysius tribute trees now join dozens of others in schools throughout the Archdiocese inspired by the words of Bishop Hugh

Gilbert of Aberdeen who in his funeral eulogy compared the death of the Archbishop to 'a great tree felled during a storm'.

After the service Canon Gerry Tartaglia, speaking on behalf of the family said, "In various schools around the Archdiocese these trees have been planted in his memory – what a beautiful tribute to him.

"He had a great affection and admiration for Catholic teachers and schools and never tired of supporting them. Catholic schools are a wonderful gift to Scotland and everyone who participates in them is the better for doing so."

Almost a year after his death the great affection in which Archbishop Tartaglia is still held continues to be marked by trees planted by schoolchildren in memory of a church leader who had a special passion for education. The latest of these, at its heart a faith-filled tribute by the Archbishop's family, was one of the most poignant, as **Brian Swanson** reports



Red-letter day for St Helen's

A **SOUTHSIDE** church has been illuminated in red as part of a global campaign to raise awareness of Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

St Helen's Langside joined famous buildings including the Trevi Fountain in Rome, Manila Cathedral in the Philippines, and Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro which were also lit up in support of Red Wednesday, which was marked on November 24.

Awareness

The annual global awareness campaign was organised by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) which supports Catholics and other Christians who are persecuted or oppressed.

The day was marked by a special Mass at St Helen's celebrated by Parish Priest

Nations to take action to stop the abduction, forced conversion and sexual enslavement of Christian women and girls as young as 12 years of age.

"After hearing about the work of Aid to the Church in Need in Syria, we decided to involve our parish with the ACN annual Red Wednesday campaign.

So, in St Helen's we found a way to light up our church building in red to join many other churches and buildings throughout the world shining a light on Christian persecution. Red of course being the Christian colour of martyrdom, a symbol of the innocent victims of religious persecution, but also highlighting the injustices perpetrated against other faith groups and we as a parish community are only too pleased to add our voice to the campaign."

Mary's Meals will double your money

YOU can afford to be twice as generous this festive season in your support for Mary's Meals.

The charity, which is headquartered in Scotland has launched a Double the Love campaign.

Right up until 31st January 2022, all donations up to a total of £1.6 million will be matched by a generous group of private donors.

A spokesman for the charity said: "Every little act of love for the hungry children who eat Mary's Meals will be doubled during this period, so please consider support-



ing this campaign and praying for its success.

"There are many ways to donate, including choosing Mary's Meals gift cards as a meaningful gift this

Christmas, or setting a virtual place at your Christmas table."

■ **More information at** www.marysmeals.org.uk

Celebratory rebirth at St Joseph's

WHEN the parish family of St Joseph's, Faifley, gathered for Mass to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the rebuilding of their church after the original was destroyed by fire, it also created lasting memories for a young couple who had brought their son for baptism.

Samantha and Kevin Maxwell, both 33, who have close family links to the church were forced to postpone the baptism of their 15-month-old son Kieran because of Covid but were determined

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY

him when he gets older."

Parish Priest Father Paul Milarvie said: "It was a good day to welcome a child into the family of St Joseph's and was symbolic of new beginnings as we recalled the destruction of the original church and the building of the new building which we celebrate today."

Earlier, in a powerful homily Father Milarvie had set the occasion in context.

as many of you stood and watch helplessly on that fateful December night for the parish to see the original church destroyed by fire... It would also, in due course, be the best of times.

"Despite many peoples' fears that the community of Faifley would be abandoned, plans were soon in place to build a new Church. Now, here we are today as a community of faith gathering 25 years later to celebrate a simple but for many a poignant and emotional occasion.

Prophet

"The prophet Daniel tells us, 'there is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence'.

"These words, prophetic in their own way, remind us of that dark night when all seemed lost. They may also dare to speak to us about the pandemic and the impact that it has on us and on the whole Church.

"We face new challenges but they are rooted in our Christian faith, particularly in the Easter Mystery in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Family

"In many respects, our parish family of St. Joseph's has shared in the Easter Mystery in its own way from the agony in the garden, which we look to with fear and disbelief on Good Friday, when only in broad daylight were you able to see the damage that had been caused to the original Church and the sense of loss that went with it.

"Then you waited, as the Church waits on the morning of Holy Saturday in silence, hoping that you would hear that the loss of the Church would not be the final word. And it wasn't!"

He added. "As the disciples and some of the women



to go ahead once restrictions were eased.

Samantha said: "We had no idea that the anniversary Mass would be happening at the same time when we arranged the christening but we couldn't have picked a better day for it. It will be something special to tell

He said: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times", so Charles Dickens famously wrote in 'A Tale of Two Cities', published over 150 years ago in 1859.

"How apt these words are today for this parish community of St. Joseph's. It was the worst of times

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All over Scotland, including the Highlands and Islands



ran to the tomb on Easter morning to discover that the tomb was empty, and that Jesus had risen as he said he would, so you gathered 25 years ago to watch the

late Cardinal Winning lay the foundation stone so that you would once again have a church that you called your own...

"We look to the future,

praying that the light of faith will not be extinguished but will continue to be a sign of faith to a world that dares to overcome its own times of darkness."

VIP visitors at media centre



STAFF and customers at the Pauline Media store in Glasgow's St Enoch Square had a VIP visitor last month as Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the Papal Nuncio popped in for a visit and to admire their selection of books.

The Nuncio was in Glasgow to attend the COP26 event at the SEC, but insisted on taking time out to visit the shop which is a favourite of Glasgow Catholics.

Staff were delighted to welcome the Archbishop and Glasgow's own Archbishop Conti and show them the array of cribs, Advent books and Christmas cards on offer ... and even persuaded the Pope's ambassador to try some Scottish shortbread while he browsed!

Archbishop Gugerotti has promised Sister Angela that he would visit the Catholic

Book Centre during his visit while attending the COP26 conference. The Nuncio was well impressed by the beautiful ambience in the heart of the city and he thanked the lay collaborators for their presence, missionary spirit and warm Scottish welcome, asking them to encourage people to read.

Later last month the Media store welcomed another bishop as Mass was celebrated by Bishop John Keenan in this 'Centre of light' as the founder, Blessed James Alberione referred to it – 'a place where the truth and live of Jesus Christ can be found and shared'. The Mass was to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Blessed James Alberione.

Pauline Books & Media Centre is a dimension of the ministry of the Daughters of St Paul.

Putting 'Our Lady' into Lourdes

To the delight of parents, pupils, staff and parish priest, a south side primary school has changed its name in honour of Our Lady.

Lourdes Primary, Cardonald, with a roll of 300 pupils, will in future be known as Our Lady of Lourdes Primary after Glasgow councillors approved the move following a vote by pupils and staff.

Now Canon David Wallace, Parish Priest of Lady of Lourdes Parish and school chaplain is planning to get touch with Monsignor Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, rector of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France, informing him of the new link between school and shrine.

'Wonderful'

Canon Wallace said "This is a wonderful move as it aligns the name of both parish and school to be the same. The amendment also means the school is more clearly dedicated to Our Lady's apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous between 11th February – 16th July 1858 and will allow staff, pupils and the wider community to reflect on those wondrous events and the words spoken by Our Lady to the young Bernadette.

"I am delighted at the prospect of the amendment and look forward to celebrating our communal feast day together on 11th February."

Maureen Simpson, head teacher of the 360-pupil school said "This is wonder-



ful news for our school and our school community will be so pleased.

"The modification of the school name has been discussed for a number of years but in the last two years of reflection during the pandemic it was something that school staff and pupils have felt very strongly about the desire for our Patron to be part of our school."

In a report to councillors,

Education convener Chris Cunningham said: "There has been strong suggestion within the wider school community, including parents, that the name of the Catholic Patron should be added to the school name.

Links

"Lourdes Primary School is currently named after the town in France with strong links to the Patron.

"It was, therefore, agreed

that the school community could consult on a modification to the school name to include the name of the Patron and reflect the school's strong links to the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes."

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Thank you for your support. The society wishes you all a very holy Christmas.

Remembering our priests



Picture by Paul McSherry

A shaft of winter sunlight seemed to preach a message of hope amid sorrow as the annual Mass for deceased clergy was celebrated at St Andrew's Cathedral last month.

Archbishop Conti led the moving liturgy at which he recalled the lives of his succes-

sor, Archbishop Philip Tartaglia, and his long-time chancellor Mgr Peter Smith along with the much loved Fathers Gus Hurley and Chris Gilfedder (who died on the day the Mass was celebrated).

Requiescant in pace ...

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Blessing

2

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3

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Giving

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Comforting

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Empathy

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Promising

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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.

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Faith

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Prayer

9

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Education

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Compassion

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Friendship

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Caring Sunday – 12th December

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Rejoicing

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Believing

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Support

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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

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Peace

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CAROLS FOR PEACE

Carols for Peace will go out digitally on 19th December to include part of the Carol Service from St Leo the Great Dumbreck (5th December).
glasgowchurches.org.uk

Praising

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St Margaret's
Children and Family Care Society

Your donations will help close our funding gap caused by the pandemic and support more children and adoptive families with our Extended Post Adoption Support Services. You can donate online or at your church's Crib Collection.

We're also hoping to reach anyone with connections to St Margaret's who'd be interested in purchasing an engraved leaf to add to our St Margaret's Family Tree
stmargaretsadoption.org.uk

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Belonging

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CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Could you bring a smile to a child's face on Christmas morning?

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: ELAINE@GLASGOWCAREFOUNDATION.ORG

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Helping

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Charity

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Life

Wishing you a peaceful Advent and a very happy Christmas

Pope's Charity Cup is back!

SCOTLAND'S historic victory over Denmark may have had the nation rejoicing last month but for a school team there was only one game in town when St Bridget's Primary, Baillieston, won the Pope's Charity Cup Final beating St John Paul II Primary Castlemilk 5-1.

The final of the tournament, held in partnership with Missio Scotland and the Glasgow Catholic Schools FA took place at Shettleston Juniors Ground and it was the first time the tournament had taken place for two years because of Covid restrictions.

But for St Bridget's player Jayden Akande it was a night the youngster will never forget having scored all five goals for his side.

St Bridget's head coach John McManus said: "We told the kids about this new tournament that had been introduced by Missio Scotland and they have been buzzing about it since the start of the season."

"This is an incredible tournament. This is just the start, the whole season is in front of us, our league campaign and other cups coming, but this is the big one that kicks us off and we have our annual Mass coming up, which is the climax to it."

"We totally love the tournament and we're over the moon to have won it."



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

Liam McLaren, the Glasgow Catholic Schools FA President, said: "I'm delighted with how the final went. To have the Pope's Charity Cup back and the stature of the game we had today really means a lot to the Glasgow Catholic Schools FA and all the schools that are affiliated with us."

Gerard Gough, Communications Officer for Missio Scotland said: "It's brilliant to have the Pope's Charity Cup back."



"It's important for us at Missio Scotland to have this link with the Glasgow Catholic Schools FA. It's been really beneficial. We're always looking at different ways to engage with the schools,

not least because Missio Scotland is the designated charity for Scotland's Catholic primary schools, so this has been a fantastic way to engage."

"Anywhere I've been in the world with Missio Scotland too, when you throw a ball in amongst the kids, they love it and you realise that football is a great way for people to connect. The Pope's Charity Cup Finals have shown that."

Take care at Christmas Masses

As concern continues over high levels of Covid in the community questions are being asked about arrangements for Christmas Masses, traditionally the busiest of the year.

Canon Paul Gargaro, who has overseen Covid guidelines in the Archdiocese told *Flourish* that while a full-scale lockdown with church closures was unlikely, parishes would have to think seriously about how to manage demand at Christmas.

He said: "There are no suggestions of further restrictions at the moment, but we see such things happening in other countries so we need to wait and see how things develop."

Fears have been voiced that the vaccine passport scheme might be an issue for churches but the First Minister has specifically said that "exceptions would be retained for worship, weddings, funerals and related gatherings." Any extension of the vaccine passport scheme should not therefore affect churches directly although



depending on the definition of "some hospitality venues" it may affect some activities in parish halls.

With regard to Christmas Masses, Canon Gargaro said: "I've been asked about parishes which tend to have large attendances at some Christmas Masses, especially Vigils."

"Obviously we don't know whether large numbers will come this year, and last year we had strict caps at Christmas so we can't assume

things will be the same this year. I would say that parishes which normally have large numbers attending the Vigil should have some booking system in place, even if only for that Mass."

"We don't want a situation where people are crowded in, standing around the walls, etc., and if that's likely we need to adopt some approach that helps avoid it, and booking in advance is preferable to turning people away on the night."



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Christmas reflections for young and old alike from the Archbishop of Milan

Keep a look out for the angels of Advent



The Angel of Silence

THE Angel of Silence doesn't make much noise. To let him into your house you don't even have to answer the door. All you need to do is switch off the TV, switch off your mobile phone and shut down the computer.

It's only then that you notice the smile of the Angel of Silence. This angel teaches us that to learn how to pray and prepare ourselves for Christmas, how to prepare ourselves for life, and prepare ourselves for death and for glory, we must first learn how to be silent...

Silence can seem very boring if a person doesn't know where to look, what to do or where to be. That's why the Angel of Silence suggests that we fix our gaze on an image which helps us think of Jesus and the mystery of Christmas... That might be a crib or a crucifix or an image of the Lord's face.

While we look at the sacred image, we can put our hand over our heart and feel it beat or we can bring our attention to our breathing, becoming aware of its rhythm. The heart beats regularly: but you don't notice it unless you are silent placing your hand on your chest. Each breath has its own rhythm: the air enters and exits, enters and exits, but you don't notice that unless you are in silence.

The days leading up to Christmas can help us to meet Jesus if we learn to live each day a little time in the company of the angel of silence.

While you are sitting in silence you can think... I am alive because I have received the great gift of life; I live because my heart beats without me telling it to, without me even thinking of it. We live a life that is a gift. The Angel of Silence suggests the words for our prayer...

Glory be to the Father and the Son and to the Holy Spirit...



Each year in preparation for Christmas, Flourish publishes the charming Advent tales of Archbishop Mario Delpini, the Archbishop of Milan, whose writings enchant adults and children across Italy. This year we are delighted to offer readers the delightful tales of three angels from the booklet 'Love comes down from heaven' written by Archbishop Delpini, translated by Flourish editor Ronnie Convery.



The Angel of Smiles

THE Angel of Smiles enters our home like an unexpected joy – a surprising presence.

You don't know why but suddenly you feel happy. You've been through moments of sadness, you've even felt anger, but then suddenly the sadness is gone, and the anger has passed. You almost feel like singing and a smile appears on your face. Those confusing and dark thoughts which have troubled you dis-

solve like clouds swept away by the wind and the sky is suddenly surreal. When this happens the Angel of Smiles has entered your home...

The Angel of Smiles is a friend of the Angel of Silence and he invites us to look on the day which has just passed with a benevolent gaze; to realise how many people have loved us, how many people have made things easier for us and helped us in the difficult and dark mo-



The Angel Gabriel

If truth be told the Angel Gabriel is actually an Archangel. But that's neither here nor there. When he comes to visit, he fills our homes and our lives with joy and hope.

His greeting, as ever, is "Rejoice!" His mission is to reveal the new and secret name which will give sense to each of our lives.

When he was sent to Mary of Nazareth, he revealed to her that her new and secret name was "full of grace."

Mary, as we know, was very disturbed by this revelation and wondered what sense these words had. In her dialogue with the Angel Gabriel, Mary understood that her life was full of grace because she was called to be Jesus' mum.

The visit of the Angel Gabriel can help those of us

who receive it to understand that no-one is born into this world by chance or without a purpose. We are alive because we are called to be happy, each taking part in the life and the joy of God.

If someone tells you that you are not worth anything, they are wrong. You are precious for God.

If someone tells you that after life is over you die and there is nothing after death, they are wrong. We are sons and daughters of God, and our life doesn't come to an end but is fulfilled in the life of God.

The angel Gabriel suggests to us that we confide in Mary. From her we can learn the path which leads us to the fulfilment of our vocation.

The angel Gabriel also suggests to us the words we can use... Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee...

Advent Prayer

This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart. Fill me with Your presence from the very start. As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given, Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven.

The first Christmas gift, it was the greatest gift ever. You came as a baby born in a manger. Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree, Waiting to be opened, to reveal Your love to me.

Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth, When He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth. Emmanuel, God with us, Your presence came that night. And angels announced, "Into your darkness, God brings His Light."

"Do not be afraid," they said, to shepherds in the field. Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield. Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call. Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.

Surround me with Your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice. Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise. Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.

In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush. This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart. Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part. Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day. Keep me close to You, Lord.

Amen.



William Brassey Hole, *The Angel of the Lord appears to the Shepherds—Bible*, c.1913.

Art of the month

Waiting: the lesson of the Advent season

THE appointment of a new Shepherd to lead the Archdiocese of Glasgow sometime hopefully in the near future, together with the forthcoming Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord led me to this painting of the Angel appearing to the shepherds of Bethlehem.

The role of the new archbishop, like that of all bishops, is to teach, govern and sanctify. Thus, they care for their flock.

At Bethlehem, shepherds had watched their flocks on the hills above the town for a thousand years and more. They were aware that Moses had delivered their people on the first Passover night.

The lamb's blood, daubed on their doors, was a sign that their sins had been atoned. The lamb gave its

BY MGR TOM
MONAGHAN

life that they may keep their own lives. Judgment had passed them by. But God would not.

A new Deliverer was to come. No wonder, then, with the symbolism of the lamb, that they guarded their flock not from the cold nights but from their enemies – from wolves and thieves. Day and night, they watched with care. They really did “smell of the sheep” except for one occasion when, after the angel appeared to them, they went to a cave and saw the Baby. Then they returned to care for their flocks.

But their witness would not be forgotten. It lives still. In our painting, “The Angel of the Lord appears to the Shepherds – Bible”

by William Brassey Hole, an angel in blinding light appears to the shepherds who, with cloaks wrapped around them to protect them from the cold night air, warm themselves by the fire just as Peter would do 33 years hence.

The young boy wearing the white cap of innocence looks astonished. The old man standing has a worried countenance, perhaps feeling uncomfortable because of his sins.

A thorn bush is in the foreground – a sign of future sorrow and the sheep lie close by, unaware of their place in history. The shepherds of Bethlehem were to be greeted by an angel. The people of Glasgow will, we pray, one day soon, by a shepherd.

POEM OF THE MONTH

The Shepherd
By William Blake

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Let us Pray:

Come, Lord Jesus, come soon. In this time of your coming, support and console us who trust in your love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Unto us a (grand)child was born



Mary's musings

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

If a week is a long time in politics a fortnight is an eternity when your little granddaughter has entered the world and you're laid up with Covid.

For the best part of two years we have lived with pandemic restrictions which have become part of our everyday lives. Social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing have become second nature to us. Other restrictions have only become real when they directly affect us.

With fathers only being allowed into the hospital, we had known for a while we wouldn't be able to see the baby on the day of its birth as we had done with our four grandsons. If we were slightly disappointed we were fully appreciative of the reasons for such a measure.

The family WhatsApp group was a godsend with photos flying in of Rose Mary, the first girl of this generation. A video of the

moment her two-year old brother first clapped eyes on the pal he will navigate his formative years with, and please God, be close to his heart all his days was a tear-jerker. Watching Joseph bestowing the gentlest kiss on Rose's little cheek was the tenderest sight.

Himself and I hadn't bargained on the two-week wait until we were both fully clear of our isolation period. The last few days dragged on especially as the family live just around the corner. The proximity to this new wee treasure we could not see was pure torture.

When we finally got to see Rose all the aching bones and fevers of Covid, and the longing to give her a cuddle, were forgotten. There is no feeling like holding a newly-minted human being.

The first photos after her birth showed Rose, weighing in at 10lb 7oz, was well



and truly a whopper of a baby. Holding her for the first time, we were blown away by her smallness and fragility. There is no end to the wonder and awe a new baby inspires.

Although not quite a Christmas baby like her brother, who will be two on Christmas Eve, she will still only be weeks old when Jesus is in the crib. The Christmas tradition continued when she was baptised during Mass on the First Sunday of Advent.

Dressed in the family christening gown which her mother and god-mother had worn before her, Rose was welcomed into the Church and the parish community. It was at this altar where her parents had

pledged heart and hand a few years ago.

Rose was named after her paternal great-grandmother and I'm chuffed to bits, this aul' gran here, got a mention too with her middle name. Born at the end of the month of the Holy Rosary her name is particularly apt. The symbolism of new life being received into the Faith at the beginning of the Church's new year was not lost on us either.

With family associations so strong my thoughts went to my parents. As an Advent baby myself, and one who was baptised on the 28th of December, I thought of what feelings they might have held in their hearts.

They are both long gone now but I can guess their hopes and prayers would be for me to live a life surrounded by love and to hold on to the Faith which was the bedrock of their lives.

After a worrying pregnancy Rose came into the world on a wave of prayer. In that respect she is already greatly blessed. Like her brother and their cousins she is loved beyond measure. My prayer for Rose, now and always, is that she loves and is loved, and she keeps the Faith.

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THE poor are the first to suffer when things go wrong and they are the ones that suffer the most – whether it's the economic crisis of 2008 or the pandemic we have suffered for the past two years or the ongoing environmental crisis that we face just now.

And when it comes to the environment it's not just individuals who suffer but also societies, whole countries, the people with low incomes where the people live more in harmony with nature than we do, when the people who have not caused the pollution suffer from our pollution and from our addiction to the consumption of fossil fuels.

It should not be that way if course

If we go to the Gospel of John it starts by saying in the beginning was the Word and then a few verses later it says it is through the Word that all things were made

John refers back to Genesis, and it's there we hear God speak the word and we are told that God looks on creation and sees all that was made and indeed it was very good.

Today though as we look around at God's creation we have to hold our heads in shame as we see how a creation that has been damaged and destroyed by human activity,

We step outside our building and breathe in polluted air, we see plastic filling our seas, rivers and oceans and we know of the exploitation of the world's resources which are dug out with no concern for the indigenous people who live there, without a care for preserving the diversity of nature or giving a thought for future generations or what we are going to leave behind for them.

We have heard the cry of the earth and cry of the poor.

That is why COP 26 is taking

Priests 'ready for challenge'...

Continued from page 2

this it's a challenge we must face with prayer and practical steps."

Canon Paul Gargaro of St Patrick's Anderston who has been collating the figures said: "So far 58 parishes have replied, which is about two-thirds of the Archdiocese

"For those parishes, the total change is 34 per cent



Of all the stirring speeches delivered during COP26 a powerful homily by Bishop Bill Nolan of Galloway will linger long in the memory of those who heard it and gave it sustained applause. Speaking passionately, and without notes, at a Mass for delegates in a packed St Aloysius Church in Garnethill, he addressed a congregation which included the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, and more than 20 priests and bishops. Extracts from his speech are reproduced here.

ing place in Glasgow and we will hear many words spoken; many human words spoken.

In the Bible when God speaks God's words and God's action go together so God's words effects what it sets out to do.

But that's not the case with human words; human words and human actions are separate and while we hear fine human words about the environment we still hope actions will accompany these words and make a difference.

Here we see a common problem faced by the environmental movement also faced by religion.

Take Christianity as an example - many people admire the teachings of Jesus and they will say if only people lived by these teachings how much better the world would be.

But we don't live by to

decline, down from 22151 in 2019 to 14682 today

"Leaving aside some places with statistical anomalies such as remembrance Masses, COP Masses and so on we have one parish which has shown an increase. The others have shown decreases of between 15-20 per cent at best to 50-60 per cent at worst."

Do we not realise that our current lifestyle is the cause of the problem and these problems go deep?

When was the last time you heard you heard yourself called a citizen? More often we hear ourselves referred to as 'consumers'.

What an insult to be called consumer!

As if our whole purpose in life was to be called a consumer; as if our whole purpose in life and in society was to consume because the more we consume the more we spend the greater the economic growth, the higher the GDP and how much better things will become - or at least according to the current economic model.

But it is a flawed model and it is the cause of the environmental crisis because it is based on consumption, without recognising that the earth's resources are limited and finite, failing to recognise that these resources are there to be shared by all and not just used by the powerful and rich.

It is true to say that even in the wider Church not everyone agrees that this is a religious issue - there are even those who would think that Pope Francis would have better things to do with his time than to write an encyclical like *Laudato si* ...

They fail to realise that we are not talking here about the climate - we are talking about creation.

We have come to this church today motivated by our faith because we recognise that our faith urges us to do something about this because we have been commissioned by God to be guardians of creation.

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Schools unite to thank John

ONE of the best-known figures in Catholic education in Scotland will retire this Christmas, after an extraordinary career.

John Docherty, Head Teacher at St Ninian's Eastwood has achieved enormous success for pupils over four decades in Catholic schools and the local cluster wanted to acknowledge his contribution with a Mass.

Canon Stephen Baillie of St Joseph's, Clarkston, led the liturgy and chil-

"It has been such a privilege"

dren from St Ninian's were joined by young people from the feeder primaries – St Cadoc's, St Joseph's, Our Lady of the Missions and St Clare's – to pray for and thank Mr Docherty.

John Docherty, who has been at the helm of St Ninian's High School in Giffnock since 2005, was last year



awarded the OBE for his services to education over a 42-year career.

John Docherty said: "I love teaching and get great

satisfaction from seeing pupils develop and become confident individuals who are ready for the next stage in their lives. Throughout

my whole career I have been fortunate to work with so many great colleagues, with many guiding me so wisely in the early part of my career.

It has been such a privilege to be the Head Teacher at St Ninian's."

Having graduated from the University of Glasgow in

1978 and completing teacher training the following year, Mr Docherty's career began as a Geography teacher at St Margaret's High School in Airdrie.

After six years, a promotion to Principal Teacher of Geography at St Columba of Iona, in Glasgow, was Mr Docherty's next move. Another Principal Teacher role at Taylor High School, in Carfin, was next, before becoming Assistant Head at St Ninian's in 1990.

In 1996, Mr Docherty moved to St Andrew's Secondary, in Carntyne, as Deputy Head before taking on his first headship at St Andrew's High, in Clydebank, four years later.

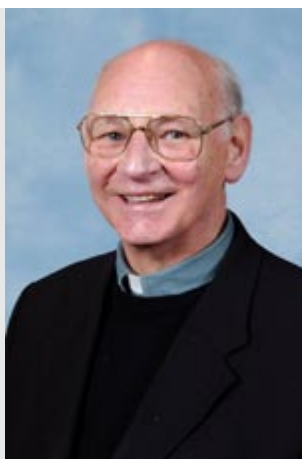
Five years later Mr Docherty returned to St Ninian's High, this time as Head Teacher, and during his time at the school has guided it through two successful inspections by Education Scotland.

The most recent, in June 2019, produced the best-ever secondary inspection report to be issued by Education Scotland.

Father Gilfedder RIP

As *Flourish* was going to press the death was announced of Fr Christopher Gilfedder, former Parish Priest of St Dominic's, Bishopbriggs and St Gabriel's, Merrylee and Pilgrimage Director and Chaplain to the Lourdes Hospitalité for many many years.

A full tribute will appear in the next issue.



Top award for Turnbull

STAFF and pupils at Turnbull High School, Bishopbriggs are celebrating after winning a prestigious award for putting care of the environment at the heart of school life.

The Catholic secondary emerged as winners in the Community category of the Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability awards.

Eileen Kennedy, Head Teacher of Turnbull said: "Having made our commitment to being a *Laudato Si* school back in 2020, we were absolutely delighted to receive this award. This recog-

BY BRIAN SWANSON

nises the learning and action that has taken place across our entire community in partnership with local and international organisations."

In a statement the school said "We have focussed on single use plastic and have provided all S1 pupils with a school-branded reusable water bottle and we have shared lessons on work with cluster primaries.

"Our P6/7 teachers collated pupil questions and queries through their 'wonder wall' and our geography teachers created a scheme of work

called 'Save our planet' to answer these questions and develop skills pupils would use in secondary school.

"Pupils identify their own targets and develop solutions to overcome issues in the school.

"As part of health and well-being and eating local sourced food, we have established a successful smoothie Lolly bar which takes place on a weekly basis.

"More recently we have launched a plastic bottle and bottles tops campaign for our Tech dept and pupils to turn plastic waste into pens."

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Discover the real meaning of the season in the Gospel readings this Advent



Fr Tom Kilbride

WE all know the Christmas story, right? We know about Bethlehem, the manger, the angels and shepherds.

And we fill in many other details too – oxen, sheep and donkeys, a crowded inn, noisy townsfolk and a smelly stable.

We all have our crib scenes at home and maybe if we're lucky we'll get to see our local school children perform the story in a nativity play (even if only online this year!). So maybe, when it comes to the Scripture readings, we skip over them, thinking we know them so well.

Maybe we think we've heard it all before. But the word of God is always new, if we are open to it, and the Gospels can hold surprises for us if we listen to them carefully, no matter how often we've heard them before.

So, how do we approach these beautiful seasons of Advent and Christmas and the powerful feasts they offer us, in a way that might speak to us in a new way? By a careful, prayerful listening – the kind of listening the Gospel of Luke, our guide for this year, itself recommends to us!

Third Sunday of Advent, C
As every year, Advent presents us with John the Baptist for a second time. This year, guided by Luke, we meet John teaching the crowds how to prepare for the Lord's coming – and reminding them that it's not him, but that there is someone else coming after him.

His message is supremely practical: three times we hear the question asked: "What must we do?" Each of John's answer is tailored to those who ask it, but equally all of them focus on justice and actions in relation to others.

So too for us: "What must we do?"

Our preparation for the Lord's coming – in Advent and always – means acting justly and generous sharing with others. In calling the people to this, Luke says John is announcing the Gospel, "the Good News".

Even before Jesus arrives on the scene, the Gospel is being preached and people called to live it. "Why wait?" Luke seems to say. Get on with it now!

Fourth Sunday of Advent, C
In the final week of Advent, the readings tell us about

events leading up to the birth of Jesus. Two are from Matthew and six are from Luke, including the story of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth which we hear this Sunday and again later in the week.

It is a moving story of love in a shared time of need. It is a story pregnant with excitement, nervousness, faith and love.

On the surface, two women meet and embrace. Hidden beneath, two others are present: Jesus and John, growing in their mothers' wombs. Mary acts, Elizabeth responds, John leaps for joy. All three recognise the amazing things God is doing, the new things that are about to burst forth, and all three recognise and celebrate the tiniest of the four of them whom Elizabeth calls her "Lord".

She is the first in Luke's Gospel to call him that (the Christmas angels will echo that title), and he is not even born yet. What faith she has in the invisible work of God, in his unseen presence!

Luke provides Elizabeth as a model for us here. She reminds us that faith is not a response to what is obvious, but rather a recognition, celebration and response to the hidden and the quiet where God is often most at work.

And like other figures Luke will introduce to us – Simeon, Anna, Zechariah – Elizabeth expresses this faith because she is open to Holy Spirit who helps her both to see it and to share that discovery with others.

Christmas and the Season's Sundays

Apart from the Sunday of the Epiphany, we hear from Luke's Gospel on Christmas Day and the following Sundays.

Luke doesn't tell us the story of the visit of the Magi so we go to Matthew for that one. There we find cosmic signs, Herod's palace and three rich gifts offered from the Wise Men's treasures.

Luke, instead, focusses on the simplicity, even the poverty, of Jesus' coming into the world. He has no place, his family is far from home, he is placed in a manger for a bed, and is visited by poor, outcast shepherds. Yet even in that poverty, Luke tells us, something amazing has happened.

Angels declare news of salvation; heaven is burst-



Matthis Stomers, *Adoration of the shepherds*, c. 1625–50

ing with joy; promises of God are kept; there is good news to be shared. All these ideas will echo across the Sundays of 2022, through the Gospel of Luke, a gospel which, we hear during the week after the Epiphany, is "good news for the poor" especially.

And so, for the next year of Sundays, we will hear again and again of the joy which comes from encounters with Jesus, of salvation which has come even to the most unlikely of places, of the hope that comes from

recognising God is transforming our world, and of trust in his promises, his word, and the message we are hearing.

And, like Mary, in the passages for Christmas morning and the Sunday of the Holy Family, we are invited to respond in prayer, contemplation and reflection.

Indeed, when we reach the Sunday of the Baptism of the Lord, which both closes our Christmas season and launches us on our Ordinary Sundays, it is prayer that is the context for the great revelation of Jesus as God's Son.

We hear the same text we heard on the Third Sunday of Advent as the voice of John points us to the one

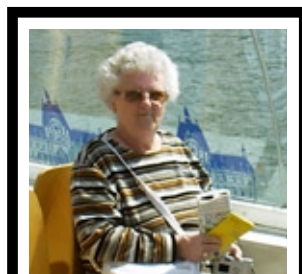
who is coming, but now his is surpassed by the voice of God proclaiming Jesus as his Beloved Son. And the link between them, for Luke, is the prayer of Jesus, a note only he includes.

Luke will place prayer as the context for everything: it opens us to the Spirit, it helps us see God at work in a confusing world, it helps us to see what we must do and it draws us into the relationship between Jesus and his Father where we find hope, forgiveness, salvation and joy.

We have been through a

lot again over these months and maybe Luke's nudge towards prayer is timely. There is much to ponder in these wonderful passages, as well as lots to celebrate in these feasts.

May God bless us as we enter them again this year and may the Holy Spirit which moved in Mary, Elizabeth, John, Simeon and the others we will meet in our readings this Advent and Christmas, renew in us a joy, a love and a peace which will shape our actions and which we can share with others throughout the year ahead.



1st Anniversary

Remembering with love always

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.

McFarlane



5th anniversary

Remembering with love always

RACHEL MCFARLANE

(Quigley) a beloved wife of Hugh, loving mother to Gail, mother in law to John and proud Gran to Kieran and Rachel. Died on the 8th of December 2016 aged 82. Our lady of Lourdes pray for her. She will live in our hearts forever.

Alex Black

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SOMETIMES in the Gospels you get, what seems to be, an ad hoc, and disjointed, collection of sayings from Jesus, and that's the format this log will follow as well; an ad hoc, and disjointed collection of anecdotes from me!

To begin with, last Saturday, I set out in the car from Bishopbriggs to St Mungo's. I soon noticed a light on in the car that I didn't recognise. In the process of trying to turn it off I discovered a feature of the car that I didn't even know I had. More in hope than expectation, I pushed a button near to the unidentified light and, suddenly, an alarm began to sound in the car. I went into a panic and wondered what button to push next!

At this stage, let me assure you, I had pulled into the side of the road. The next thing, a disembodied voice appeared, to ask me what emergency service I required. I apologised profusely and said that I didn't need any emergency service, I just needed to know how to switch the alarm off!

The rogue light that initially concerned me had already gone off. Once the person behind the mystery voice was convinced that I didn't need an emergency service he cut himself off, with me continuing to explore his help on how to

The anecdotes of Advent



Fr Frank's log

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

turn the alarm off. It then, mercifully, went silent, so he clearly was able to do it remotely.

The next day, Sunday, I was scheduled to celebrate a baptism after the 12 o'clock Mass. The family turned up in good time and, in conversation with the baby's mother, I discovered that I, in fact, knew her mother and father from years ago. The said mother and father duly turned up and, when I got talking to the mother afterwards, she mischievously produced, on her phone, a photograph of me dancing with her at her wedding back in 1985. I had no memory of this whatsoever.

As old photographs go, it wasn't too bad, but there was general agreement that, while I and her husband had changed a fair bit throughout those 36 years, and now

looked, shall we say, more 'mature', she, herself, had hardly changed a bit.

The next day again, on the Monday, I was celebrating the funeral of a young man of just 47 years of age. I knew his mother and his late father well, from back in the days when I was based in St Mungo's after ordination, the same period, in fact, when the aforementioned wedding would have taken place.

What I discovered, though, in the course of preparing for the funeral, was that the mother and father had first met at the Saturday night dancing in the church hall of St Simon's in Partick which, as many of you will know, was the parish I grew up in.

During the period that they met, my uncle Tony, who was really my granny's

brother, was the one who looked after St Simon's church hall, and who also ran the dances.

Every Saturday afternoon, I would be given the job of going round to the hall and, with a big lump of wax and a grater, I would grate the wax onto the floor, so as to make it nicely slippery and slidy for the dancers that night.

At the dances themselves, myself and my older brother, the doyen of Scottish sports journalists, as I like to call him, would have the job of selling the ginger and crisps through a hatch to the side of the hall stage.

When it got a bit later, older family members would take over, and we would be sent round to my granny's, stopping en route to pick up bags of fish and chips from the local Italian chippy. Happy days!

It is highly likely that I met and served this couple at the dances back then, years before I actually knew them from St Mungo's. What a small world it can be sometimes.

Back at Bishopbriggs, Father Gareth's absence is deafening; Father Justinian

is keeping well, Father Antony is in Dublin for meetings and, when he comes back, I, myself, go to Crossgar for meetings, so we will both be running a one-man

show for a few days. We will survive!

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

Demand for Natural Family Planning Soars

WHEN the Lockdown closed all our clinics overnight, Fertility Care Scotland could never have imagined the changes that would come.

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achieve or postpone pregnancy safely and to monitor and safeguard their reproductive health effectively. Developed by Drs John and Evelyn Billings, the Billings Ovulation Method® has been validated by eminent international scientists and verified by the World Health Organisation in a five nation trial (billings.life). To begin your NFP journey or to train to teach the method, email info@fertilitycare.org.uk today.

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