

FREE ADVENT/CHRISTMAS EDITION

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

December 2023



Beato Angelico, Adoration, 1440

As violence overwhelms the Holy Land ...

All we are *praying* is 'give peace a chance'

40 years of delivering the good news

BY RONNIE CONVERY

BEARSDEN parishioners marked a special milestone last month with the 40th anniversary of the parish messenger service.

Messengers past and present gathered for Mass followed by a celebratory ruby anniversary cheese and wine in the Church Hall.

The ministry in St Andrew's can be traced back to the visit of Pope St John Paul II to Glasgow and Bearsden in 1982.

Parish Priest Fr Joe Mackle said: "Here's to another 40 years of messengers reaching out. The Christmas *Reachout* will be delivered to around 1300 homes in the parish during the coming weeks. If *Reachout* is not delivered to your home, and you would like to receive a copy, please email standrew@rcag.org.uk"

The parish messenger *Reachout* edition is eight pages which is delivered at Christmas and Easter by the volunteers. In keeping with modern technology the weekly newsletter is electronic delivery only to over 1,000 email addresses.



Archbishop's plea for COP action to aid the poor

ARCHBISHOP Nolan, as President of the National Justice and Peace Commission has issued an impassioned plea to delegates at the COP28 conference on behalf of countries facing financial ruin because of climate change

The Archbishop said: "At COP26 in Glasgow, one of

the biggest disappointments was the failure to agree a fund for 'Loss and Damages'.

"Countries which are most vulnerable to climate change and yet the least responsible, need financial support from industrialised countries who were, and continue to be, responsible for gas emis-

sions.

"A Dialogue was set-up to continue the conversation, but at COP27 in Egypt no conclusion was brought to this dialogue.

Responsibility

"Now it appears that at the start of this COP world leaders are beginning to take responsibility for the

damage caused by climate change especially affecting the smallest and most vulnerable countries.

"COP28 in the United Arab Emirates cannot be mere talk but must take decisive action to create a robust fund to aid those struggling with climate change that threatens their very existence.

"My hope is that those taking part in the Conference will be strategists capable of considering the common good and the future of their children, more than the short-term interests of certain countries or businesses.

"In this way, may they demonstrate the nobility of politics and not its shame."



Carols for Peace 2023

In its 21st Year

Hosted by Glasgow City Council Lord Provost's Office
Sunday 17th December 2023 at 3.00pm

Doors Open 2.30

Glasgow City Chambers, George Sq



Join The Lord Provost, Councillor Jacqueline McLaren and other Civic Leaders with

Glasgow Churches Together Church Leaders

The Piper will welcome you.

supported by the St Mungo Singers, Ukrainian Singers the Salvation Army Band, South Side Fiddlers, St Denis' Primary School, Piper, Harpist and Music Ensemble

We will pray for peace in our world but particularly Bethlehem, our Twin City

Enjoy refreshments afterwards in the Satinwood Suite overlooking George Square in all its Christmas Splendour where the Crib still has a place of prominence.

Everyone is Welcome to this Very Important Event

A collection will be taken up for the Lord Provost's Fund for Children



University of Glasgow

JOIN OUR FUTURE LEADERS

Take your Catholic Teaching Certificate as part of the University of Glasgow's teacher education degrees:

- Masters in Education (MEduc)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)

Your school placements will focus on the Catholic sector and you'll be part of an engaged community committed to creating a vibrant research and teaching culture in the field of Catholic education.

Find out more at glasgow.ac.uk/education

St Roch's bids farewell to Fr Thaddeus

PARISHIONERS of St Roch's Gargad have paid a fond farewell to Father Thaddeus Umaru, who has returned to his home diocese of Minna, Nigeria, after serving as their parish priest for the past eight years.

Speaking to *Flourish*, following an emotional Mass of Thanksgiving shortly before his departure, Father Thaddeus, who has served under three Archbishops in Glasgow, said: "I wish to thank the Archdiocese for giving me this wonderful opportunity to serve God's people – it has been the privilege of my life."

He first arrived in Glasgow in 2006 to cover summer supply in various parishes including St Augustine's Milton, Holy Family and St Ninian's Kirkintilloch, and St Mary's Calton.

He then began his studies at Glasgow University, while

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

being resident in St Mary's remaining there until 2015 when he was appointed Parish Priest at St Roch's and Chaplain to St Roch's Primary and St Roch's Secondary Schools.

School

Father Thaddeus added: "Every day here has been a learning curve for me especially as a school chaplain which is challenging but rewarding in so many ways. Both the teachers and students have always been very supportive, and I will always be grateful for that."

Among those paying tribute to Father Thaddeus was Claire Butler, head of RE at St Roch's Secondary, who said: "Father Thaddeus' return to Nigeria will leave a massive hole in our school

community of St Roch's Secondary.

"He has been a huge support to staff and students alike, and we wish him every blessing as he returns home, and we extend our love and appreciation and the acknowledgement that our school and ourselves are all the richer for having had him as our chaplain, mentor and friend."

He is returning to his diocese in Nigeria at the request of his bishop and initially will work in an administrative role.

The Diocese of Minna is a mission diocese located in Niger State, North Central, Nigeria where the population is predominantly Muslim while the Catholic population is around 98,000.

In January of this year Father Isaac Achi, a priest from Minna diocese who attended seminary with Father Thaddeus, was burnt to

death in the parish building of Saints Peter and Paul Church following a raid by terrorists in an area which has seen a growing number of atrocities committed against Christians in recent years.

The brutal slaying of Father Isaac took place in the Kafin-Koro region of Niger State about 50 miles from the capital Minna where Father Thaddeus will be based.

Father Thaddeus said: "I have been on loan here in Glasgow and so like all priests I promise to obey my bishop and go where he wants me to serve – it is not up to me."

"I look forward to seeing my family again, but I will truly miss the good people of God here in the parish and throughout the Archdiocese who have supported me from the very beginning of my ministry. May God bless them all."



Ecumenical visit to Parliament



ARCHBISHOP Nolan joined other members of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland last month on a visit to the Westminster Parliament.

The Bishops met up there with the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and various Scottish MPs before attending Prime Minister's Questions as

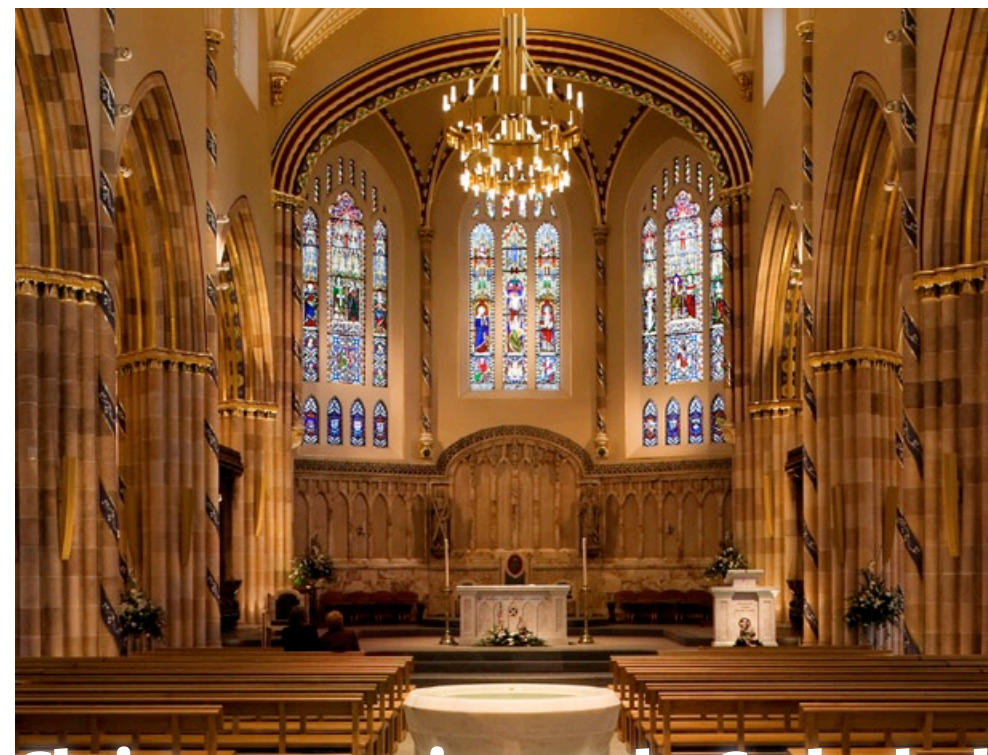
BY RONNIE CONVERY

well as a reception in the House of Lords, which focused on International Aid to South Sudan.

Archbishop Nolan said: "It was good to have the chance to bring our concerns to politicians at Westminster and to meet the UK Government and

our Westminster MPs to discuss matters that are important to Christians and people of faith in Scotland."

The Bishops also met with Lord McFall, the House of Lords Speaker and a parishioner of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, and were able to celebrate Mass in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft.



Christmas services at the Cathedral

If you are planning to be in the city centre over the Christmas holidays ... read on. Because the times of celebrations in the Cathedral have now been published.

Christmas Day falls on a Monday this year which means particular plans had to be made.

The full schedule is as follows:

Sunday 24th December, Christmas Eve

- Mass at 10.00am
- Mass at 12 noon

The Nativity of the Lord
First Mass of Christmas
Sunday 24th at 5.15pm

- Midnight Mass of Christmas at 12.00 midnight, Carols before Mass from 11.30pm.

Monday 25th December

- Mass at 10.00am
- Mass at 12noon
- No 5.15pm Evening Mass

(The Cathedral will close after 12noon Mass)

Tuesday 26th to Thursday 28th December

- Mass at 1pm each day

Friday 29th December

- Mass at 1pm and 5.15pm

Saturday 30th December

- Mass at 1pm, Vigil Mass at 5.15pm

Sunday 31st January The Feast of the Holy Family

- Mass at 10.00am, 12noon and 5.15pm

Monday 1st January 2023, New Year's Day
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

- Mass at 10am and 12noon
- No 5.15pm Evening Mass

(The Cathedral will close after 12noon Mass)

Tuesday 2nd January to Thursday 4th January

- Mass at 1pm each day

Friday 5th January

- Mass at 1pm
- Mass at 5.15pm

Confession marathon ahead of Christmas

COME home for Christmas ...that's the message being sent out this Advent as Catholics across the Archdiocese are invited to go to confession ahead of the festive break.

A special day of confessions will be held in St Andrew's Cathedral on Tuesday 19 December.

Priests will be available all day in the Cathedral confessionals for an event which has become a regular in the pre-Christmas calendar of many people.

The confessionals will be manned throughout the day from 9am until 5.15 with a break for 30 minutes at 1pm to allow for the celebration of the lunchtime Mass.



On Tuesday 19th December priests will be available all day in Saint Andrew's Cathedral (from 9.00 am until 5.00pm) for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Come home for Christmas!

Medals mark years of service at St Brigid's

TWO parishioners from St Brigid's Toryglen have been presented with Archdiocesan medals for decades of hard work and devotion to their parish.

The medals were awarded to Hugh Cullen, 81, a parishioner for 54 years, and Anne Hendry, 86, a parishioner for 57 years.

Parish Priest Father Gerard Byrne, told *Flourish*: "Hugh and Anne are typical of those who work quietly behind the scenes because of their faith – we are all very proud of them."

Addressing the congregation at the Mass where the medals were presented Father Byrne said: "Hugh helped with pass-keeping for many years, quietly but faithfully assisting five parish priests of St Brigid's, taking on the role with great enthusiasm and pride."

"Sadly, his health took a downturn last year, and has had to take a step back from his work in the sacristy and I can say that his daily presence around the parish is greatly missed by me and by the parishioners but I am so pleased that this award recognises his great contribution to the parish."

BY BRIAN SWANSON Hugh's daughter Annemarie told *Flourish*: "Even when dad was in hospital he was thinking about the parish."

"When he was quite ill one time he kept reminding us that Father Byrne needed a new supply of altar wine – that's how devoted he was!"

"He is over the moon to have the medal and we are delighted for him as well."

During her years of devoted work in the parish Anne Hendry, a mother of six with 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren, was a member of the coordinating team for charismatic renewal in the Archdiocese for many years, and founded a parish charismatic prayer group in the early 1980s.

She also co-ordinated the readers' rota for many years until she took retirement.

Father Byrne said: "Anne always ensured that there were enough lay faithful to proclaim the word of God during the liturgy, and that training was giving to those entrusted with this important ministry. I hope that she always knew how much she was (and is) appreciated by me, her Parish Priest and



by the parish community as well."

And there was another surprise for Anne on the night when two of her great grandchildren, Liam Welsh, 18, and his brother Alfie, 15, who are altar servers at St Brigid's, were chosen to present her with the medal.

Her daughter Anne Marie, who sings regularly at Mass in St Brigid's, said: "Faith and family have always been important to mum and although she was delighted to get the medal it was not something she expected – and she definitely didn't expect Liam and Alfie to present it."



Internet saint team plan year of outreach

A GLASGOW-BASED team of volunteers is planning a year of outreach to bring the story of a teenage 'internet saint' to parishes across the country.

They are offering to bring an exhibition, which is entirely the work of Blessed Carlo Acutis himself, and which has already been shown on every continent including more than 10,000 churches in the USA alone, to local parishes and schools.

The exhibition documents Eucharistic miracles from as early as 750AD, and as recently as one in Buenos Aires in 1996 when Pope Francis was still Cardinal Bergoglio of that city.

The exhibition was put

BY RONNIE CONVERY together by the young Carlo Acutis, reflecting his own fascination with phenomena such as the eucharistic host transforming into human flesh. It explains the scientific investigations carried out since the discovery of DNA in the 1970s.

Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991 to wealthy Italian Catholic parents. Despite the fact that his family were not practising Catholics the young boy developed a profound interest in and devotion to the Eucharist.

Carlo started work on the exhibition at the age of 11 – using the internet for his research – and completed it

shortly before he died at the age of 15 in 2006, one week after being diagnosed with leukemia. He offered up his suffering for 'The Pope and The Church'.

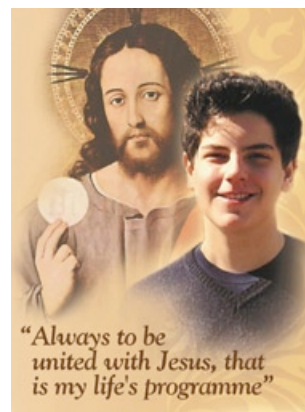
In 2013 a miracle was attributed to Blessed Carlo which involved a young Brazilian boy who suffered from a rare pancreatic disease. Pope Francis confirmed the miracle and Carlo was beatified in October 2020.

For his beatification Carlo's body was exhumed from his original burial place in Milan to be reinterred in Assisi. When exhumed, his body was found to be intact. He was then reinterred wearing a tracksuit top, jeans and Nike trainers – a true Saint of our times!

Due to public demand his glass tomb remains on permanent view to all. Thousands file past it daily.

The "Life in The Eucharist" Team, led by a Blessed Sacrament priest, Fr Darren Maslen, has been exhibiting Blessed Carlo's exhibition for over three years throughout Scotland, England and Ireland.

To complement the exhibition and to further spread the Eucharistic message, they offer Holy Hours, Veneration of the Relic of Blessed Carlo, Eucharistic talks, stories and witness sessions.



Blessed Carlo Acutis

The team come under the umbrella of The Congregation of The Blessed Sacrament based at St Columba's, Hopehill Road, Glasgow.

Maria Novani, who heads up the team said: "We are currently finalising our programme for 2024 which will take in parishes and schools in Scotland, England and Ireland as well as Trinity College in Dublin and Oscot Seminary in England."

"It's particularly rewarding to experience the great interest schoolchildren take in learning about Blessed Carlo, and the Real Presence of Christ in The Eucharist. So many people of all ages seem to relate and fall in love with Carlo's story and his life's work. As a result they will most certainly never again doubt the miracle which happens at every Mass."

St Monica's marks 70 happy years



There wasn't a spare seat in the church as Archbishop Nolan visited a southside primary school marking a special anniversary. St Monica's Primary School, Crookston, arranged a special 70th Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving at St James the Great Church, and current and former pupils and members of staff came along in great numbers. Archbishop Nolan waded into a youthful sea of enthusiasm to deliver his homily and was joined in the sanctuary by Parish Priest and chaplain Fr Martin Kane and Deacon Michael O'Donnell. Picture by Paul McSherry

Les Misérables bishop is on the path to sainthood



ONE of the protagonists of the much-loved musical Les Misérables is on the path to sainthood.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

The bishops of France have voted to open the beatification of Bishop Charles-Bienvenu de Miollis (1753–1843) whose character as the humane and generous cleric in the musical is well known.

"Bishop de Miollis is without doubt the best-known bishop in the world, and at the same time nobody knows that he really existed!" said Bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard of the Diocese of Digne, the current successor of de Miollis on whom Victor Hugo modeled the character Monseigneur Bienven in

his book on which the musical is based.

"He was truly a poor man living among the poor, and he left a deep impression on Victor Hugo, who would have liked to meet him and thought for 20 years about how to portray him in Les Misérables," said Bishop Gobilliard.

In the musical "Monseigneur Bienvenu" gives Jean Valjean – who has just stolen his silverware – two extra candlesticks.

Since 2009, Les Misérables has recorded the highest worldwide attendance of any musical at over 65 million.

JERICHO

The Compassion of Jesus

Drug & Alcohol Rehabs., Refuge for Victims of Domestic Violence, Supported Accommodation for the Destitute, the Distressed, and all being 'passed by on the other side.'

A COMMUNITY OF MEN OF PRAYER FOR OUR TIMES (founded 1970)

Vocation info. from Bro. Patrick Mullen, The Jericho Society, Mater Salvatoris, Harelaw Farm, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire. PA10 2PY
Scottish Charity SC016909 Tel: 01505 614669
Email: theJerichosociety@gmail.com

Looking to the future: 'Change is inevitable' in shape of parish provision

THE reflections of parishioners across the whole Archdiocese are in ... the work of discerning how best to organise parish life in the future will now move ahead.

Groups of priests and lay people have been meeting in local area/deanery forums in recent months to work out what will be needed in terms of parish churches and personnel to allow the Archdiocese to function better as a dynamic evangelising community in coming years.

Canon Andrew McKenzie, administrator of St Andrew's Cathedral who has been co-ordinating the responses told Flourish: "The Archdiocesan programme on the future of pastoral care in the Archdiocese, Looking to the Future, reached an important milestone on St. Andrew's Day.

"That was the date for submitting responses from the Deaneries for the first phase in the consultation process which was asked to consider Pathways to Change in the provision of pastoral care throughout the Archdiocese.

"Over the last few months deaneries have been asked to

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** review the parish structure in the Archdiocese and to consider what that structure might look like five years from now. Deaneries have been invited to discuss the changes that will be necessary to sustain healthy parish communities into the future.

"The parish structure needs to consolidate to reflect changes in the number of priests in the Archdiocese, along with changes in the Mass-going population.

Cross

"Over the next five years, the number of priests available for service in the Archdiocese is likely to fall by 35%. This reduction in the number of clergy will have significant implications for parish life.

"Change is always difficult, but for the Archdiocese of Glasgow change in the way that our parishes are configured is unavoidable. By sketching Pathways to Change it is hoped that the impact of that change can lead to stronger, more vibrant communities of faith.

"While the November date was important it is only part



Canon Andrew McKenzie

of a much wider reflection. The programme is ongoing since it seeks to strengthen our network of parishes

through increased collaboration and a renewed emphasis on evangelisation.

"The process undertaken by the Archdiocese does not have a cut-off date, by which a number of parishes will close. Parishes will close or combine when the time is right for this to happen.

"The Looking to the Future process seeks to facilitate consultation in order to advise the Archbishop on the shape of this change and when these changes need to take place."



Down memory lane

IT was a day to recall precious memories and renew old friendships of student days and beyond when the Notre Dame College of Education class of '73 gathered for a Mass of Thanksgiving to celebrate the golden jubilee of their graduation.

Held in Turnbull Hall, Glasgow University, the Mass was concelebrated by Canon Gerard Conroy, University Chaplain and Monsignor Henry Docherty, a former lecturer at the college, and later General Secretary of the

Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Eileen Logan, one of the reunion organisers, who was a student at the college from 1970 to 1973 and went on to teach at a number of schools in Glasgow said: "It was a wonderful day and a very good turnout after all that time.

"Looking round the room and seeing everyone chatting away and being so familiar with one another it was as if we had seen each other last week - not 50 years ago!"

Vatican reaffirms Freemasonry ban

THE Vatican has upheld the traditional ban on Catholics becoming Freemasons.

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a document signed by the Prefect, Cardinal Victor Fernández, and approved by Pope Francis, has reaffirmed the prohibition following an inquiry from a Bishop Julito Cortes in the Philippines.

The Vatican response makes clear the importance of involving the Bishops' Conference of a territory and suggested a coordinated strategy that would involve two approaches.

The first approach addresses the question on the doctrinal level: the Holy See reiterates that "active membership in

Freemasonry by a member of the faithful is prohibited, because of the irreconcilability between Catholic doctrine and Freemasonry..."

Therefore, the note explains that "These measures also apply to any clerics enrolled in Freemasonry."

The second approach concerns the pastoral response: the dicastery suggests that the Philippine bishops undertake "a popular catechesis in all parishes on the reasons for the irreconcilability between the Catholic faith and Freemasonry." The bishops of the Philippines are also asked to consider whether they should make a public pronouncement on this topic.

B MAIN
SCULPTORS

OPEN
7 DAYS

We have 100 different styles of headstone to choose from at our showyard

2'6" POLISHED GRANITE HEADSTONES FROM

£450

0141 641 0088

WHY PAY MORE THAN YOU HAVE TO!

282 Main Street, Cambuslang, Glasgow (at Railway Station)
www.mainheadstones.co.uk

INSTALLATIONS, REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE OF ALL GARAGE DOORS

DALY GARAGE DOORS

Family Business With Over 30 Years Experience

Extensive range of doors including: Henderson, Hormann, Garador, Gliderol, Caradale, Novoferm etc.

- Electric operators installed to new & existing doors
- Roller doors & spares
- Free estimates & advice

24 Hour Call-Out

TELEPHONE: 01355 261601

MOBILE: 07821 679606

www.dalygaragedoors.co.uk

Email: markpdaly@blueyonder.co.uk
1 Kendal Road, East Kilbride G75 8QT

Is God calling you?

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

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

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

Vocation Director, Nunraw Abbey
HADDINGTON, EH41 4LW, Scotland
Or email: nunraw.abbot@yahoo.co.uk
Scottish Charity No SC022611

Bernard Corrigan Ltd

WHOLESALE FISHMONGER • POULTERER & GAME DEALER

1 KEPPOCHHILL PLACE
PORT DUNDAS BUSINESS PARK
GLASGOW G21 1HS

Telephone: 0141 552 4368 • Fax: 0141-552 4731

blaneycarnan

SOLICITORS

BUSINESS AND PROPERTY LAWYERS

Standard Buildings, 94 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6PH
Telephone +44 (0) 141 248 8111 Fax +44 (0) 141 221 8420
E-mail mail@blaneycarnan.com

Schola's premiere at university chapel



Picture by Paul McSherry

THE beautiful setting of Glasgow University Memorial Chapel played host to a special concert to mark the 10th anniversary of a Scottish musical group whose focus is on sacred music.

The Schola Benedicti marked their anniversary with the Scottish premiere of 'Missa Deus Nobiscum' – The Mass of God with us – conducted by the composer Philip Stopford at the Uni-

versity of Glasgow Memorial Chapel late last month. Also on the concert running order were, In My Father's House and Come Down O Love Divine and music by Mozart, Chilcott, Tallis and

Bruckner.

Archbishop Nolan was delighted to attend and afterwards greeted the singers and musicians to congratulate them for their fine performance.

St Paul VI exhibition

VISITORS to Rome this festive season will have a rare chance to glimpse the private life of one of the great Popes of the 20th century.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the election of Pope St Paul VI, an exhibition of his personal belongings has been set up in the Poli Art Gallery, steps away from Vatican City.

Founder of the Museum of the Popes at the Poli Gallery, Ivan Marsura explained: "The exhibition was inaugurated by Cardinal Mario Grech right at the beginning of the synod. It was organized to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the election of Paul VI and, above all, to reconstruct his entire life through objects and some handwritten writings."

Visitors to the exhibition can revisit some significant milestones in the life of Saint Paul VI, from his childhood to his



ordination as a priest, his service as Archbishop of Milan and his years as Pope.

Ivan said: "Inside the exhibition are some particular pieces, such as the umbrella with which the mother of the future Paul VI accompanied her children to the shrine of Madonna della Stella".

"From his pontificate, there are specific items like the hammer and trowel used to open the Holy Door" for the Jubilee Year 1975 and a chalice with which he celebrated the Christmas Midnight Mass of 1972."

Sr Isabel honoured by Pope for interfaith work

Bishop McCee and Archbishop Buendia with Sr Isabel



ONE of Scotland's best known religious sisters, Notre Dame Sister Isabel Smyth, has been honoured by Pope Francis for her pioneering inter-faith work.

The Papal Nuncio to Great Britain, Spanish Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía conferred the honour on Sr Isabel as he visited the Bishops Conference for the first time since taking office.

Sister Isabel told *Flourish*: "I was delighted and honoured to receive the Pro Ecclesia Medal from the Scottish Bishops. While it is good to have my own work recognised and applauded the award for me was a sign that the committee for interreligious dialogue is now an accepted part of the structure

of the Bishops' Conference and the work of interfaith relations is seen as part of the evangelising mission of the Church.

"The Church's journey into the world of interfaith began at Vatican II and has continued through the example of Pope John Paul, Pope Benedict and Pope Francis who has shown how central interfaith friendships are to his peace missions throughout the world.

Dialogue

"For me the work of inter-religious dialogue has been a great grace, taking me into the world of other faiths, seeing and experiencing the wisdom and goodness to be found there and enlighten-

ing some aspects of my own faith.

"John Dunn, a Catholic theologian, has said that the spiritual adventure of our day is to do just that, to travel over into the world of other faiths and return with a new perspective on one's own. I have had many opportunities to represent the Church on various committees and interfaith initiatives and latterly for the past 15 years or so to be the Bishops' Secretary for Inter-religious Dialogue.

"I have been grateful for all these opportunities and hope and pray that they have contributed in their own small way to harmony within our nation and peace in our world."



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow



Learn 50+ at CLL

Check out our exciting range of on campus and online classes aimed at those aged 50+.

Subject areas include:

Archaeology • Art Appreciation • Creative Art • Creative Writing • Film Appreciation • Genealogy • Health & Wellbeing • History • Information & Communication Technology • Languages • Literature • Music & Singing • Photography & Digital Image Manipulation • Psychology, Politics & Humanities • Science & Technology • Wine Appreciation

Connect and learn with likeminded people.

Visit [MyCLL.strath.ac.uk](https://mycll.strath.ac.uk) to browse and book
0141 548 2116

The University of Strathclyde is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, number SC015263



Have your say on our new Catholic museum

PARISHIONERS throughout the Archdiocese are being asked to respond to a survey with their views on the new Scottish Catholic Museum which will be re-located next spring from Blairs, Aberdeenshire, to a new home in the East End of Glasgow.

The building, in the Calton area, will also house the agencies of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Noted Catholic commentator, Professor Gerard Carruthers of Glasgow University, is chair of the steering group which organised the survey.

He said: "We aim to report to the Bishops by Christmas on the survey feedback and with a draft vision statement to be used in the development of the new facility which will bring together museum and archives functions to produce added value, including interaction between both for the benefit of research, exhibition, and

education. **BY BRIAN SWANSON** "The Glasgow location is also intended to provide a site more readily available for visits to a much larger share of the population. With the museum collection we are moving from one historic heartland of the faith to another.

"It is to be hoped too that the new location will bring added opportunity for public talks and other knowledge exchange activity."

The decision to move the museum and its collection, which includes a priceless portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, was taken following a survey which concluded that £2m worth of repairs would be needed at its current location in St Mary's Chapel, Blairs, which closed in 2022.

Its new home will be the former St Mary's Primary School in Orr Street behind St Mary's Calton, in Abercromby Street.

The move to bring the



Abbot Leo Linse of Fort Augustus

agencies together in a central location is designed to promote the identity of the Bishops' Conference and the presence of Catholic Church in Scotland at a national level.

Among the agencies involved is the Scottish Catholic Heritage Collection Trust which is co-ordinating the responses from historians, partners, stakeholders, parishioners and members of the public.

A spokesman for the Bishops' Conference said: "The Scottish bishops hope that the new Museum of Scottish Catholic History, will be able to tell the story of the Church in Scotland over the centuries.

"Hopefully, many Catholics will engage with this survey as their responses will greatly help in the development and design of the new museum."

■ You can respond to the consultation at forms.office.com/e/6D7EuB8EvU



Mary Queen of Scots

Silver trowel goes home to St Patrick's – after 125 years

A SILVER trowel presented to Archbishop Charles Eyre, the first Archbishop of Glasgow after the Reformation, which he used as he laid the foundation stone of St Patrick's, Anderston, has been entrusted to the care of the parish in its 125th anniversary year.

The ivory handled trowel, hall marked, ornately engraved and with the date of St Patrick's Day 1896 when the foundation stone was laid, has been in safekeeping in the different offices occupied by the Archdiocese over the last 125 years, but now to the delight of parishioners it has returned 'home'.

Canon Paul Gargaro, parish priest of St Patrick's, which is also the residence of Archbishop Nolan, said: "I think people were pleased to see it and hold it after such a long time, especially in this 125th anniversary year.

"Some of the older parishioners were talking about their grandparents

BY BRIAN SWANSON being involved in building of the church and this provides a tangible link.

"We were all delighted to see this souvenir of the history of our parish and to reconnect with the past.

"Our beautiful church is built on the foundation-stone laid by the trowel, but we know that it is even more built on the faith of the parishioners and we hope to keep strengthening and sharing that faith today."

Foundation

"Unfortunately we won't be able to display it publicly constantly for safety reasons, as the church is open all day for private prayer, so it will be kept in a secure location and displayed on special occasions."

The custom of presenting a dignitary with an engraved trowel to mark the laying of a foundation stone for a significant building such as a church



is a long established one and as a result a significant number of them are held securely in the Archdiocese office in Clyde Street.

A spokesman for the Archdiocese said: "We have a couple of dozen of these trowels in the Archdiocesan safe from across the years, even up to our most recent church building – St Joseph's in Fairley – albeit the new ones are much more modest than the older ones in their design."



Aid to the Church in Need
ACN UNITED KINGDOM

This Christmas, give the gift of faith to suffering Christians around the world

War and persecution are leaving Christians suffering and in need. With your help, ACN can provide aid and pastoral assistance. Your gift of faith this Christmas can offer a much-needed lifeline to displaced Christian families in Nigeria and around the world in desperate need, helping keep the Faith alive.



www.acnuk.org/fl-gof

Aid to the Church in Need
12-14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA
A registered charity in England and Wales (1097984) and in Scotland (SC040748)

0345 646 0110 | www.acnuk.org | acn@acnuk.org
Donations can also be given online at www.acnuk.org/fl-gof

Rev/Sr/Mr/Mrs/Miss: _____ Address: _____
Postcode: _____

I enclose £100 £50 £25 Other £ _____ to help persecuted Christians.
I enclose a cheque to Aid to the Church in Need OR please debit my VISA/MasterCard/Amex/Maestro

Expiry Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Valid From Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Issue No: ____ (Maestro)

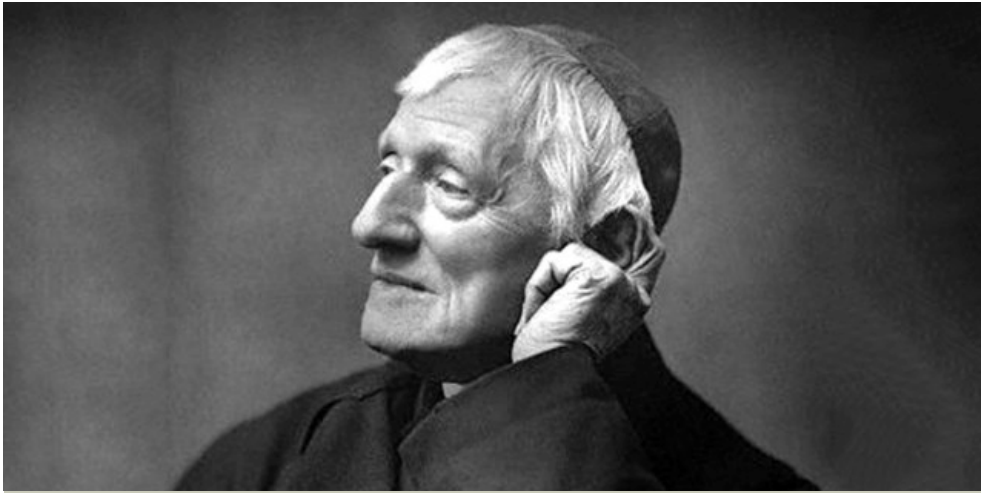
Signature strip code (last block of digits): ____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Yes, I would like to boost my donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 I donate. *giftaid it*

Yes, I want to Gift Aid my current donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to 'Aid to the Church in Need'. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donation in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

Please send me information about setting up a regular gift.

A23P6FL Please photocopy this form if you do not want to cut your copy of the Flourish.



Bishops back call for Newman to be made Doctor of Church

SCOTLAND'S bishops have asked the Holy father to declare John Henry Newman a Doctor of the Church.

The Scottish Bishops join prelates from England and Wales and the US in supporting the request.

Upon the request of the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the US bishops will also send a letter to the Holy Father supporting the proposal that Pope Francis make Cardinal Newman a doctor of the Church.

Newman was a 19th

century convert from Anglicanism who died as a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. He was a theological favourite of Pope Benedict XVI, who beatified him during his visit to Britain.

Wise

Beginning in the 13th century, Popes have given particularly wise holy men and women the official title of doctor of the church, the Latin root word *docere* meaning "to teach."

To be considered a doctor, a saint needs to

qualify according to certain criteria. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* names these as, "eminent learning, a high degree of sanctity, and proclamation by the Church."

St John Henry Newman has been praised by a variety of members in the Church, especially for his sermons and his vast number of theological writings and his sermon on the development of doctrine is seen by many as the key to understanding the Pope's vision of synodal Church.

Pope: Make 2024 a year of prayer ahead of the Jubilee of 2025



POPE Francis has announced that next year – 2024 – is to be marked as a 'Year of Prayer' in preparation for the next Holy Year of 2025.

The Pope made this announcement when he met with a group of shrine rectors and workers at the Vatican last month.

"I wanted next year, in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee, to be entirely dedicated to prayer," he told them.

The Pope said that "guides" will be published, "which will help rediscover the centrality of prayer."

I recommend them to you: they will be a good read, which stimulate prayer with simplicity and in accordance with Christ's heart.

Meanwhile a mobile phone app has been launched which will be required for pilgrims coming to Rome to take part in Holy Year pilgrimages and pass through the Holy Door and gain the Jubilee indulgence.

The official mobile app for the 2025 Jubilee Year, "Iubilaeum25", is available for free download from the App Store for iOS and from the Android Play Store.

The app, available in six languages, will allow access to all the latest news on the Jubilee, and allow the user to register as a pilgrim for the Holy Year and obtain the Pilgrim Card for free.

Once registered on the portal, users will also be able to sign up for Jubilee events and pilgrimages to the Holy Door.

Users will also be able to 'save' the events they are interested in, access their per-



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

sonalized area more quickly and obtain the unique QR code needed for access to the Holy Door.

Meanwhile ahead of the Jubilee 2025, the application process for those who wish to serve as volunteers during the Holy Year will

be opening shortly. These applications will be managed by the Dicastero for Evangelisation. Guidelines for the selection of volunteers will be published on the official website www.iubilaeum2025.va

Hospitality by P&A



If you are looking for catering services for weddings, parties or events in Glasgow, Motherwell, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire or in the central belt of Scotland, P&A offers a wide range of services that will complete your special day. You can choose from a range of packages for your special event by contacting P&A and we will be glad to assist you in choosing your personalised menu.

Telephone: 01698 720333 · Mobile: 07768 588707
www.anyascatering.co.uk

www.franciscanvocations.org.uk

FOR WOMEN
EXPLORING
FRANCISCAN
VOCATION

Here's how to evangelise...

Fr Wang's words of encouragement to priests

ARCHBISHOP Nolan's call for a new season of evangelisation took a step forward last month when an expert speaker on the topic offered advice and ideas to the clergy of the Archdiocese.

Fr Stephen Wang delivered a powerful talk on the practicalities of evangelisation and offered practical examples of schemes which have proven effective. Fr Wang is a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster who is cur-

rently Rector of the Venerabile – the English College in Rome.

He told the clergy that evangelisation has many, many forms.

He spoke of two extremes. The first is private evangelisation – an individual living out the faith in everyday life having a quiet but profound influence on others. It can be unplanned or even accidental without any strategy... just impressive quiet individual witness which

BY RONNIE CONVERY has an impact on the person observing it.

The second is be a planned, large, strategic plan with resources designed to implement it.

He said: "Evangelisation can be 1000 different things. But at its heart – more than anything – evangelisation needs faith. No evangelising programme can substitute for a profound and lively faith.

"A lack of evangelisation

is often caused by a lack of faith. Because it's only when you're fired up by faith that you feel the overwhelming desire to spread it that you can be an effective evangeliser.

"Most evangelisation comes about through ordinary life experiences, ordinary people touching the lives of other ordinary people. It might be through good example or an invitation or a relationship... evangelisation also needs desire.

"But sometimes people with a strong faith, don't feel the desire to evangelise. They don't feel that urge or responsibility to share their gift with others. That is a serious misunderstanding of the call of the modern disciple."

At the end of the conference Archbishop Nolan warmly thanked the speaker for his insights and encouragement. And he urged



Pictures by Paul McSherry



priests and lay people to check out Fr Wang's very useful and versatile online evangelisation programme which can be used for all sorts of purposes in parishes and at home or in groups – <https://www.sycamore.fm/>

12 methods that really work!

FR Wang gave 12 examples of evangelisation which he has seen work in practice. He urged priests and lay people to work together and consider which form of evangelisation might work at local level.

The examples of good practice were:

1 Night Fever
This is when a city centre church is used as a base, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and the church is lit with hundreds of flickering candles. Those inside go out and invite people in the street to come inside, perhaps to light a candle or to spend a moment of reflection. It's a very gentle encounter a gentle invitation and you'd be amazed at how effectively it works.
<https://nightfever.org/en/about-nightfever>

2 Alpha Course
It's effectively an evangelisation course with good resources and good techniques, especially for helping people to move from accepting the theory of Christian faith to putting it into action.
<https://alpha.org.uk/catholic-context>

3 Genesis Mission
This is an initiative in Plymouth Diocese which works by finding ways to have meaningful conversations with people which can open doors to evangelise.
<https://genesismission.co.uk/about-us/>

4 Pilgrimages/World Youth Day
Often a 'soft' encounter of faith between young people can lead to a much deeper transformation. Young people can sometimes go on the pilgrimage almost as a holiday and find something deep which strikes them.
<https://www.lisboa2023.org/en>

5 The 'Bishop Phonsie Model'
The Bishop of Waterford goes out into the square every week with his chair and table and makes himself available to people who might want to talk, or go to confession or complain or ask questions ...
<https://www.youtube.com/@waterfordlismore-diocese3755>

6 The Legion of Mary
The oldest and best form of lay evangelising activity which still has a role in the life of the Church, going door to door, with courtesy and respect giving people the chance to talk about faith.
<https://www.legionofmary.ie/>

7 Theology on Tap/Café Catholicism
Hosting a talk in a non-traditional venue – a pub or a café. Inviting people to listen in a non-threatening environment, especially effective for those who may not feel comfortable inside a church setting.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology_on_Tap

8 Plymouth Street Evangelisers
An ecumenical initiative which uses the medium of conducting a survey to engage with people on the

street and start conversations about spiritual topics.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/117995602226495/>

9 Spirit in the City
Hosting processions in the city – Marian or Eucharistic processions can be enough to get people thinking, or asking questions or inquiring ...
<https://rcdow.org.uk/news/spirit-in-the-city-returns-to-londons-streets/>

10 Local media
Almost all local newspapers and radio stations would be glad to have a regular weekly or monthly feature/reflection from a priest/bishop/representative of the Church. This can reach many people who have no living link with the Church and spark off a new engagement.

11 Philanthropy
Giving away free copies of catechetical or devotional material. Can work best when each recipient is given two copies and asked to read one and give the other to someone who would find it interesting/encouraging.

12 Traditional Parish Missions
Old-style (or new-style!) parish missions can provide a spiritual boost to an area and encourage people to come back to the faith who have drifted away.

Hughes Shaughnessy McFarlane

INCORPORATING McDAID FARRELL

HSM
SOLICITORS

OUR SERVICES

Residential conveyancing
Wills
Powers of attorney
Guardianships
Executry

Get in touch!

216 Kilmarnock Road, Shawlands,
Glasgow G43 1TY · 0141 636 5115

256 Castlemilk Road, Kings Park,
Glasgow G44 4LB · 0141 649 9772

20 Croftfoot Rd,
Glasgow G44 5JT · 0141 634 0437

www.hsm-solicitors.co.uk

When prayers for peace hit a high brick wall

At 5.30pm every Friday, a group of Christians walk up and down beside the Separation Barrier between Checkpoint 300 and the Greek Catholic Monastery in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

They recite the five mysteries of the rosary.

This is a group of about 12 or 15 people, sometimes visitors from abroad, but always the brothers from Bethlehem University and the sisters from the monastery. Decades of the rosary are led by different members of the group, in a number of different languages, usually English, French or Arabic.

The prayerfulness of the group contrasts starkly with the 8-metre concrete blocks erected to separate the West Bank from Israel, Palestinians from Israelis. Military watchtowers are placed along the barrier and Israeli soldiers may or may not be watching from above.

The group proceeds slowly through each decade, members of the group taking it in turn to lead a decade. Some of these people have been coming along for years to join in a quiet but persistent prayer for peace.

The rosary ends at the wall

This article has been written by Jean, from Holy Name Parish in Glasgow, who has recently returned from the Holy Land where she volunteered as an Ecumenical Accompanier serving on the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. For safety reasons we have not used Jean's surname

containing the icon of the Virgin Mary and the group starts singing the 'Salve Regina'. Some of the words are particularly poignant: 'Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle' – 'To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears'.

Brother Peter Bray, a supporter of the weekly prayer and Vice-Chancellor of Bethlehem University, describes how the Wall Prayer began in 2005 when the wall was built in Bethlehem;

"I have been part of the group that assembles there since I arrived at the end of 2008. I look on participating in that prayer as a way of standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people who are so oppressed and restricted by the wall.

"For many of us, when walking up and down pray-

ing the rosary we think of Joshua and his process of walking around the walls of Jericho. Those walls came tumbling down! Our prayer is that this monstrosity will also come tumbling down and the Palestinian people will be free, free at last!"

A Palestinian woman who has attended the Wall Prayer many times over the years says;

"The situation is so sad and bad. We live with fear and doubt of what is going on. We don't stop praying for peace. Mention everyone in your prayers."

Israel started building the Separation Barrier in 2002 and whilst every state has a right to build a barrier along its borders, the Israeli separation barrier does not adhere to the internationally recognised border (known as the 'Green Line') between Israel and Palestine. In-



stead, 85% of the barrier deviates up to 20km inside the into the occupied West Bank, trapping Palestinian land on the Israeli side and separating many Palestinians from their crops and livelihoods. The route of the barrier was deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004.

Many Palestinian communities in the West Bank have to apply for special permits from the Israeli authorities to access their farms on the other side of the barrier for cultivation and harvesting. The process is complex and rejection rates are high.

Soldier

According to the UN, between 2014 and 2021, 'the limitations in accessing land has resulted in a 60 per cent reduction in yield in land beyond the barrier.' Limitations on farmers have increased over the years with more military gates in place, which often open erratically for just 10-15 minutes each time. Where farmers do have permits, permission to enter rests with the Israeli soldier guarding the gate and is not guaranteed.

The impact of the Hamas attack in Israel on the 7 October, where 1,200 Israelis were killed and more than 100 are still being held hostage, is being felt across Is-

rael and Palestine. The Israeli military's bombardment of Gaza has led to the death of more than 14,000 Gazans, including over 6,000 children. The West Bank has been placed on military lockdown, with the whole of Bethlehem closed off. More than 220 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers and over 2,700 injured.

October and November is olive harvest season in Palestine but with movement restrictions and the risk of settler and military violence at an all time high, the already existing challenges for Palestinian olive farmers have heightened considerably. 80,000-100,000 Palestinians rely on olive trees as their primary or secondary form of income.

Our local contacts in Bethlehem tell us that most farmers have been unable to access all or part of their harvest. In Al-Walaja, farmers did not risk harvesting about 75% of their olive trees, fearing attacks by settlers. In Wadi Fukin village, Israeli soldiers assaulted Palestinian farmers, and prevented them from harvesting.

"The olive harvest season is usually a hugely special and joyful time for Palestinians, when families and friends come together to pick their olives and share food. But

this year is very different. Farmers have been shot dead while harvesting their crops, while others have had their trees cut, uprooted, or set on fire.'

At a time when Bethlehem would usually be bustling with international pilgrims visiting the birthplace of Jesus, contacts in the tourist industry in Bethlehem city tell us that they are staying home due to lack of business and fear of violence:

War

"The day after the war, on 8th October, all of the tourists left. They were here and it was starting to get busy but they went home. All of the hotels are closed. Nobody is staying here since the start of the war.

"My friend has a travel agency office and he told me that people who were booked in for visits next spring are cancelling also. It is a very, very difficult life. The economy is very bad and we cannot go from village-to-village, city-to-city. We can hardly go out at all. It is not safe. We hope this situation will stop and there can be freedom for everybody."

The Mayor of Bethlehem recently announced that traditional celebrations in Nativity Square including the switch-on of the Christmas lights would be cancelled in mourning and solidarity with Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Wall Prayer continues to take place without a break every Friday at 5.30pm...

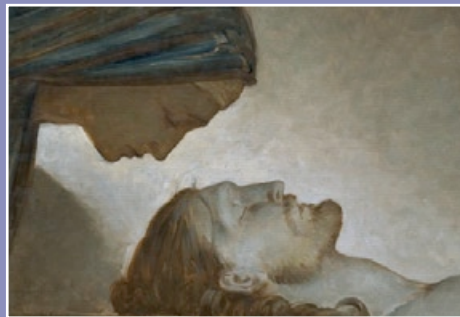
■ You can read more at www.eyewitnessblogs.com/the-wall-prayer-in-bethlehem/
 ■ If you would like Jean to visit your parish/school to talk about her experiences, please email Ronnie Convery, Editor of Flourish, at Ronnie.convery@rcag.org.uk

A word in your ear...

SILENT GRIEF AT CHRISTMAS

This breathtakingly beautiful painting of Jesus and Mary captures the silence that accompanies the death of a loved one... and the sea of grief that engulfs us. The music seeps into our hearts in a way that no words can... and whispers to us of resurrection just around the corner. You may prefer to mute the video and play your own meaningful background music as an alternative.

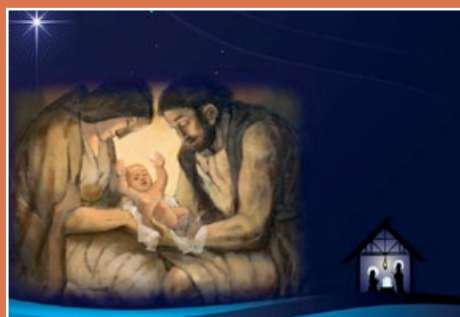
At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Saviour... who came into the world to destroy death forever. Let us accompany all who are grieving this Christmas – in our families, parishes, local communities and our brothers and sisters worldwide.



<https://youtu.be/zLSL4zskgSA>

SILENT LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Perhaps the most effective evangelisers I see are the little children in our communities. They are living their baptism... at their own level of development. They use little or no words to share their friendship with Jesus with others. Instead, they share 'who they are', rather than 'what they say'. They are pure, joyful, innocent, and spontaneous... with a tremendous power to 'just be themselves'. They are living in the present moment... living in the presence of Jesus! They are just so alive! Energised by their baptism. As they are totally dependent on parents and others for their every need... they understand 'Baby Jesus' very well... and take Him to their hearts with great joy. A lifelong personal relationship with Jesus has begun... This is a great time for all of us to 'Unleash' our Baptism, our 'Hidden Treasure', to be energised by the Resurrection!



<https://youtu.be/NLW5wly1g8A>

<https://www.youtube.com/@awordinyourear>

The icon on the Separation Barrier



Pope's advice: 'Never neglect the wonder of the crib scene'

Find inspiration and encouragement in the Nativity scene as the best preparation for Christmas ... that's the message of Pope Francis as the world prepares for a festive season scarred by war and violence.

The Pope says the first Christmas crib scene, built by St Francis of Assisi in the small Italian town of Greccio in 1223, and replicated in homes, squares and churches ever since, should once more become the focus of our preparation for the Nativity.

The Holy Father's message is contained in a new book published in preparation for Christmas and to mark the 800th anniversary of the first Christmas crib scene.

What better preparation for Christmas than to consider the Holy Father's reflection below ... perhaps read it prayerfully in front of the crib in your home or parish church:

TWICE I have gone to Greccio. The first time I went to learn about the place where St. Francis of Assisi invented the Nativity scene, something that also marked my childhood: in my parents' house in Buenos Aires, this sign of Christmas always was put up, even before the tree.

The second time I gladly returned to that place, in the province of Rieti, to sign the apostolic letter *Admirabile signum*, on the meaning and significance of the Nativity scene today.

On both occasions I felt a special emotion emanating from the grotto, where a medieval fresco can be admired, one side of it depicting the night of Bethlehem, and the other depicting the night of Greccio.

The excitement of that sight prompts me to delve deeper into the mystery that loves to hide within what is infinitely small. Indeed, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ remains the heart of God's revelation, although it is easily forgotten that its unfolding is so unobtrusive, to the point of going unnoticed.

Litleness, in fact, is the way to encounter God.

On the tombstone of St. Ignatius of Loyola, it is written, "Non coerceri a maximo, sed contineri a minimo, divinum est" (Not to be limited by the greatest, and yet to be contained in the tiniest—this is the divine). In short, one should not be frightened of the big things; one should go forward and

Advent and Christmas meditation by Pope Francis

take into account the smaller things.

This is why safeguarding the spirit of the Nativity scene becomes a healthy immersion in the presence of God manifested in the small, sometimes trivial and repetitive, everyday things.

Knowing how, in order to understand and choose God's ways, to renounce what seduces but leads down a bad path is the task we face. In this regard, discernment is a great gift, and we must never tire of asking for it in prayer.

Gift

The shepherds in the manger are those who welcome God's surprise and live in wonder at their encounter with him, adoring him: in littleness they recognize the face of God. Humanly we are all inclined to seek greatness, but it is a gift to know how to really find it: to know how to find greatness in that smallness that God so loves.

In January 2016 I met the youth of Rieti at the very haven of the Infant Jesus, just above the Nativity shrine. I reminded them, and everyone today, that on Christmas night there are two signs that guide us in recognizing Jesus.

One is the sky full of stars.

There are many of those stars, an infinite number, but among them all a special star stands out, the one that prompted the Magi to leave their homes and begin a journey, a journey that would lead them where they did not know.

It happens the same way in our lives: at a certain moment some special "star" invites us to make a decision, to make a choice, to begin a journey. We must forcefully ask God to show us that star that draws us toward something more than our habits, because that star will lead us to contemplate Jesus, that child who is born in Bethlehem and who wants our full happiness.

On that night, made holy by the Savior's birth, we find another powerful sign: the smallness of God. The angels point out to the shepherds a baby born in a manger. Not a sign of power, self-sufficiency, or pride. No. The eternal God is reduced to a helpless, meek, humble human being. God lowered himself so that we could walk with him and so that he could stand beside us, not above and far from us.

Awe and wonder are the two feelings that move everyone, young and old, before the Nativity scene, which is like a living Gospel over-

flowing from the pages of Holy Scripture.

It's not important how the Nativity scene is set up; it can remain the same or change every year; what matters is that it speaks to life.

The first biographer of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, describes the Christmas night of 1223, whose 800th anniversary we celebrate this year.

When Francis arrived, he found the crib with the hay, the ox, and the donkey. Before the Christmas scene, the people who flocked to the place manifested an unspeakable joy, never tasted before.

Priest

Then the priest, at the manger, solemnly celebrated the Eucharist, showing the link between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. On that occasion, there were no figurines in Greccio: the Nativity scene was created and experienced by those who were present.

I am sure that the first Nativity scene, which accomplished a great work of evangelisation, can also be an occasion today to summon forth awe and wonder. Thus, what the simplicity of that sign made St. Francis realize persists down to our own days as a genuine form of the beauty of our faith.

■ The Holy Father's new book on the importance of the Nativity scene can be purchased at www.focolaremedia.com/bookstore



The Vatican this year commemorates the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi setting up the first Nativity scene in Greccio with a special issue of Christmas stamps. Here is a preview.

St Francis' first Nativity scene



"I WOULD LIKE to represent the Baby born in Bethlehem, and somehow let people see him with their own eyes... how he was laid down in a feeding trough and how he lay there on the straw between the ox and the ass."

Franciscan sources describe in this way the desire that burned in the heart of St Francis in the weeks leading up to Christmas 1223 – the desire to represent the Nativity in a way that everyone could experience and take in with a glance the reality of God made man.

2023 is the year that marks the eighth centenary of that first representation of the Nativity scene which Saint Francis set up in Greccio, a little village close to the Italian city of Rieti.

In 1223 the future patron saint of Italy stopped off in the valley outside Rieti, probably on his return journey from Rome, where, on 29 November of that year, he had received from Pope Honorius III the confirmation and approval of his new Franciscan Rule.

The grottos which occur naturally in the area around Greccio reminded him of those he had seen in the Holy Land and especially recalled the panorama of Bethlehem.

Two weeks before Christmas, Francis called on a man known only as John, and asked him to help him build his crib. So it was, that on 25 December that year, in the presence of many Friars who had made their way to Greccio, St Francis, when he saw the crib with the straw, the ox and the ass, was filled with joy.

"In that moving scene shines forth the simplicity of the Gospel: poverty is praised and humility presented to us in a positive way. The little town of Greccio has become like a new Bethlehem," said the saint.

Now, 800 years on from that first Christmas crib scene in history being set up, the tradition is passed on in homes and communities, across the world, bringing with it a message of hope and peace which never fades away.

Glasgow crib takes centre stage

THE annual blessing of the crib in George Square took place in an atmosphere of reflection as prayers were offered for peace in the Holy Land and with a minute's silence on the 10th anniversary of the Clutha helicopter crash in which 10 people died.

It began with Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren welcoming guests including senior councillors and clergy representing a number of Christian denominations throughout the city.

Archbishop Nolan, who was due to read a passage from St Luke's Gospel which told of the

shepherds adoration of the infant Jesus, was unable to attend after his car broke down on the M8 shortly before the blessing ceremony.

His place was taken by Rev Bob Johnston, chair of Glasgow Churches Together which organised the event.

The prayer of blessing over the crib was delivered by Rev Prof Roger Sturrock, Moderator of Glasgow Presbytery of the Church of Scotland.

But for many in the crowd the highlight was the carol singing by the choir of St Monica's primary Milton accompanied by Alba Brass.



We believe in **giving back** to our local communities.



Scan to find
out more

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



Beatson Cancer Charity



Kiltwalk



BEN



Maggies



Marie Curie



Arnold Clark
Community Fund

Proud to support
Flourish

Arnold Clark

1 **SCIAF**
Uniting to end poverty
Caritas Scotland
19 Park Circus
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.

2 **Kidney Kids Scotland**
Registered in Scotland
SC030284
www.kidneykids.org.uk
office@kidneykids.org.uk
01324 555843

3 Wishing you all a very happy and holy Christmas
LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR ST JOSEPH'S HOME
14 CUMNOCK ROAD, GLASGOW G33 1QT
www.littlesistersofthepoor.co.uk

4 We would like to wish everyone a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and Joy in the New Year
University of Glasgow
School of Education
www.glasgow.ac.uk/education

5 **missio** Scotland
The Church - One Family
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.
www.missioscotland.com
4 Laird Street, Coatbridge ML5 3LJ - 01236 449774 - admin@missioscotland.com

6 Aid to the Church in Need
ACN UNITED KINGDOM
This Christmas, give the gift of faith to suffering Christians around the world
Aid to the Church in Need
12-14 Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DA
www.acnuk.org | acn@acnuk.org
0345 646 0110

7 **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.

8 **SPRED**
Special Religious Development
Can you give the gift of your time?
SPRED works in small groups to support adults and children who have a learning disability to take their place in their parish community.
Find out about joining a SPRED group in your area.
Contact us on glasgow.spred@btconnect.com or 0141 770 5055.
SPRED - because no one should feel like a stranger in their own house.

9 **Faithful Companions of Jesus**
Is God calling you to religious life?
For more information contact
Sr Lynne fcj:
Fcjvocationeurope@gmail.com
www.fcjsisters.org

10 **St Nicholas Care Fund**
Caring Sunday, 17 December 2023
Giving thanks to all who have donated to us throughout 2023, helping us to reach many projects supporting those in greatest need.
pct@rcag.org.uk - 0141 226 5898
Scottish Charity SC029832

11 **Craig Lodge**
Family House of Prayer
T: 01838 200216
www.craiglodge.org

12 **mscpublishing&design**
7 Dumbrock Road, Milngavie G62 7RB
telephone 0141 956 2051
email gary@flourishnewspaper.co.uk

13 **St Andrew's Hospice**
St Andrew's Hospice
Henderson Street
Airdrie
ML6 6DJ
Tel: 01236 786951
www.st-andrews-hospice.com
We provide specialist palliative care for the people of Lanarkshire
St Andrew's Hospice is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC010159

14 **Beaumont Cancer Charity**
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: F: 0141 213 0505
E: info@beaumontcancercharity.org
beaumontcancercharity.org/my-light
We're with you

15 **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.

16 **Society of St. Vincent de Paul Scotland**
Glasgow Archdiocesan Council
Wish all our members, benefactors and all whom we serve
A Holy & Joyous Christmas

17 **Glasgow Lourdes Hospitalité**
wishes pilgrims and supporters a very happy Christmas

18 **CAROLS FOR PEACE**
In its 21st year
Hosted by Glasgow City Council Lord Provost's Office
Sunday 17th December 2023 at 3.00pm
Doors Open 2.30
Glasgow City Chambers, George Sq
glasgowchurches.org.uk

19 **CARFIN GROTTTO Bethlehem Shrine**
St Francis Xavier's Church, Carfin ML1 5AJ
Telephone: 01698 263308
Email: info@carfingrotto.org

20 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

21 **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

22 **Glasgow Care Foundation**
TEXT 'GLASGOWCARES' TO 70085 TO DONATE £10 TO GLASGOW CARE FOUNDATION AND GIVE THE GIFT OF A SMILE THIS CHRISTMAS
www.glasgowcarefoundation.org

23 **MAKING ABORTION UNTHINKABLE**
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
www.spuc.org.uk

24 **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 SC061674

Light

Family

Wishing you a peaceful Advent and a very happy Christmas



Glasgow Lourdes Hospitalité
**GLASGOW ARCHDIOCESAN
LOURDES PILGRIMAGE
12-19 JULY 2024**

Anyone wishing to apply to go to Lourdes as a Pilgrim under the care of the Glasgow Lourdes Hospitalité (this can be anyone living with an illness or disability, or would be unable to go to Lourdes without assistance), should write or telephone for an application to:



Elizabeth McKee
125 Cortmalaw Crescent
Robroyston
Glasgow
G33 1TD

Tel: 0141 558 0994

The Hospitalité, Medical Team and St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group work together to ensure that those who would find it difficult to undertake the pilgrimage are cared for in Lourdes.

Prices will be confirmed in the next advert.

Please Note: The closing date for return of applications is 31 March 2024

(Pastoral theme 2024)
"and that people should come in Procession"



St Nicholas Care Fund

Please consider the PCT-St Nicholas Care Fund when you are making a will or leaving a legacy.

Your support will help change the lives of children living in poverty, will assist older people in situations of isolation and vulnerability and will foster initiatives which bring people together in our local communities.

We accept applications from qualifying organisations quarterly with more information on our website at www.rcag.org.uk

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

Gillian's debut novel will be a special thank you to cancer care team

A PARISHIONER from Immaculate Conception, Maryhill, is donating the profits of her debut novel to the Beatson Cancer Care unit in gratitude for the support she continues to receive after being diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago.

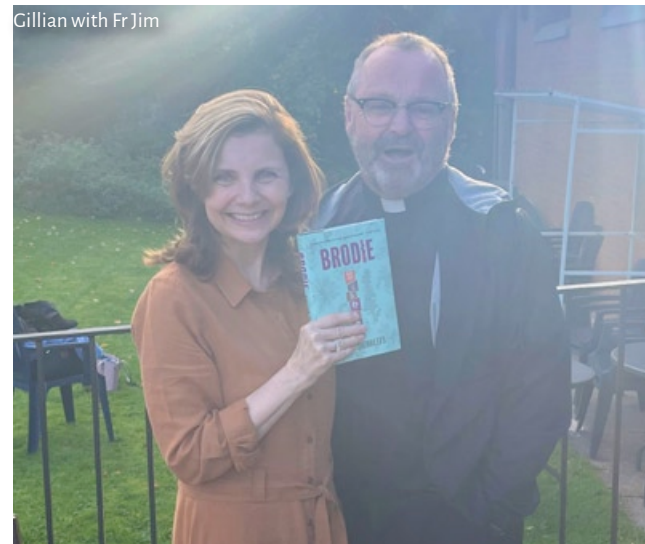
And remarkably Gillian Shirreffs, 53, completed her book – called *Brodie* – while also continuing to receive treatment for MS which was first diagnosed sixteen years ago.

The West End author with a background in HR and a degree in Creative Writing from Glasgow University, finished her book earlier this year and published it in hardback in September. The paperback version is due out shortly.

Her Parish Priest, Father Jim Lawlor, said: "We are very blessed here with people of faith and with many talents. I'm delighted Gillian's novel has been published – nothing short of miraculous given what she's been through and a real testament to her grit and her deep faith!

"That she is donating the royalties to the Beatson – to which so many of our people are indebted – is something

Gillian with Fr Jim



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

we applaud and support and of course we are all super proud of her.

"On December 10th we are inviting people to come here for a Christmas tea – and a book sale and signing – to celebrate the new novel and above all to support the Beatson."

Former English teacher Gillian, who is married to Ronnie, CEO of an international technology company, credits her Irish Catholic family as her faith inspiration and what she describes

as her 'eternal optimism'

After several years working in America and Europe she returned to Glasgow and became a parishioner at Immaculate Conception where she is a now a regular reader at Mass.

Praising the positive experiences she received at the Beatson, Gillian said: "It's a place which everyone admires but no one ever wants to be there. I was that person, so you can imagine how apprehensive I was.

"At the beginning of treatment – and this was in the middle of lockdown – I

couldn't see beyond it, I couldn't see that there was a life beyond.

"But I soon discovered that there was, and I wanted to be able to give something back because I got so much support from the different services they offered me.

She added: "For example they have a Telephone Befriending Service which is wonderful. You get linked up with a volunteer and you talk about anything and everything not just about your condition.

"And when I needed a wig, I went to the service offered in the Wellbeing Centre and they could not have been kinder.

"I really hated losing my Irish hair but everybody was so kind and positive that it all turned out to be an almost glamorous experience!

"It really was a no brainer for me to donate the profits from *Brodie* in gratitude for all the kindness I received."

Gillian's novel tells the story of six women whose lives intertwine over 30 years told not by a conventional narrator, but by a book – *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* which gives the book its title.

■ **To order a copy of Gillian's book go to: <https://intocreative.co.uk/shop>**

Glasgow Prof Leonardo's new book shines light on a forgotten Catholic educator

who died in 1921, whose dedication to Catholic education is nothing short of inspirational. Shields' life story serves as a compelling backdrop against which the author delves into the challenges and opportunities that Catholic education has faced in recent decades.

Fr Shields emerges as a beacon of hope for the renewal of Catholic education, and the author does an excellent job of portraying his vision and passion for this cause.

One of the book's strengths lies in its historical context. Dr Franchi provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of Catholic education, from its historical roots to the challenges it faces in

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

the present day. This historical backdrop adds depth to the narrative and allows readers to appreciate the significance of Shields' contributions.

Anecdotes from Shields' life, interviews with colleagues and students, and excerpts from his writings create a vivid portrait of this remarkable figure. Readers will find themselves deeply engaged with Shields' journey, from his early experiences in Catholic education to his pioneering efforts to adapt and modernize the system.

The book also offers a critical examination of the challenges that Catholic education has encountered,

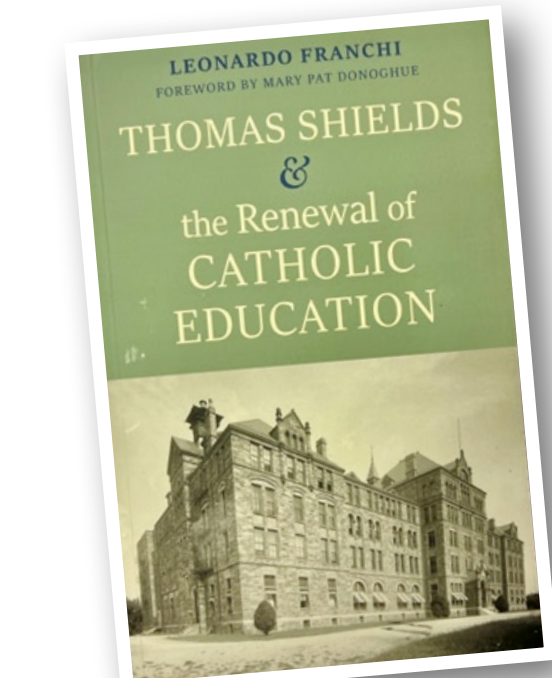


Leonardo Franchi

including declining enrollment, changing demographics, and the secularization of society. The author highlights the importance of

adaptability and innovation in addressing these challenges. Shields' efforts to integrate technology, embrace diversity, and foster a more inclusive and holistic approach to education (100 years ago!) are particularly inspiring.

"Thomas Shields and the Renewal of Catholic Education" is a captivating exploration of a visionary educator's life and legacy. This book will serve as a valuable resource for educators, administrators, and anyone interested in the future of Catholic education. It reminds us that with passion, innovation, and a commitment to core values, the renewal of Catholic education is not only possible but within our reach.



THE story of a forgotten pioneer of modern Catholic education has just been published by Glasgow University academic and parishioner of Our Lady and St Mark's, Alexandria, Leonardo Franchi.

His new book, "Thomas Shields and the Renewal of Catholic Education," takes readers on a thought-provoking journey through the life and work of Thomas

Shields, a prominent figure in Catholic education in the early 20th century.

This meticulously researched and engagingly written book not only sheds light on the life of this American priest educator but also explores the broader context of Catholic education in the modern world.

The narrative begins by introducing readers to Thomas Shields, an American priest



IT'S rare indeed when an American president takes part in a four-way conversation and was, arguably, the least remarkable person in the group, but such was the case in June 1975 when President Gerald Ford made a visit to the Vatican.

On that occasion, Ford met Pope Paul VI, today St Paul VI, the Pope who guided the Catholic Church through the close of the Second Vatican Council and the immediate post-Vatican II years. The two were joined by then-Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, the legendary Vatican diplomat who authored the Holy See's policy of *Ostpolitik*, or outreach to the Soviet bloc.

At the time, Casaroli was playing a key role in negotiations that would lead to the Helsinki Accords, an agreement that brought together all the European states, East and West, as well as the US and Canada, and which has been cited repeatedly by Pope Francis and his aides as a template for multilateral engagement.

The other party to the conversation was Henry Kissinger, at the time still the US Secretary of State as well as the National Security Advisor, and perhaps the most celebrated, and controversial, statesman of the 20th century.

Capitulate

Based on a now-declassified memorandum about that 1975 conversation, we know it was wide-ranging: The Middle East, including negotiations at the time toward an agreement between Egypt and Israel on the Sinai; Lebanon and its swelling population of Palestinian refugees; the Helsinki process (including Ford's warning that western Europe should not "capitulate and give in to Russia"); Vietnam, including the settlement of refugees in the US; the Portuguese revolution, and US fears that a Communist-backed government in Lisbon could unravel the NATO alliance; the future of post-Franco Spain; not to mention Ethiopia, Malta and Cyprus.

It was not the first time Kissinger, who died on November 29 at the robust age of 100, had swapped views with his Vatican counterparts. According to the transcript, Paul VI actually referred to Kissinger as an "old friend," noting that the two had met on at least two previous occasions.

Nor was Casaroli the only opposite



Fascinating conversations between Kissinger and the Popes

number in the Vatican with whom Kissinger had contact.

As part of the Wikileaks releases, for instance, we know of an October 1973 conversation between Kissinger and then-Archbishop Giovanni Benelli, at the time the *sostituto*, or "substitute," of the Secretariat of State, in which the two discussed the recent coup in Chile that brought down the government of Salvador Allende.

His first meeting with Pope John Paul II came during a private audience in October 1979, after Kissinger no longer had any official role in the American government, and it didn't occur under the most propitious of circumstances.

Chilean Foreign Minister Hernan Cubillos would later recall that a year earlier, just after then-Cardinal Karol Wojtyla had been elected to the papacy, he met Kissinger at his Manhattan residence at the River Club, whereupon Kissinger delivered himself of the opinion that the choice of a Polish Pope was a deliberate provocation to Moscow and might not be "good for humanity."

Nevertheless, John Paul II and Kissinger hit it off, and would continue to interact often during the next quarter-century.

In 2001, for example, Kissinger brought his wife Nancy to the Vatican to receive a blessing from John Paul, and when the Pope died in 2005, Kissinger told NBC he was

BY JOHN L ALLEN JR
EDITOR OF CRUX

convinced that John Paul II, not him, was the most influential figure of the 20th century.

Whenever Kissinger was asked by interviewers about John Paul II, he would always say that he was so attached to the Pope that he had saved the photos of every meeting they ever had.

Kissinger also had entrée with John Paul's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, who met the legendary American diplomat during a lengthy audience at Castelgandolfo in September 2006.

The chemistry between the German pontiff and the German-born Kissinger was sufficiently strong that one Italian newspaper reported afterwards that Benedict had asked Kissinger to serve on an unofficial council of foreign policy advisors, a rumor the Vatican subsequently was compelled to deny.

One year later, Kissinger would be back in Rome to address the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, saying: "For somebody who has had the honor of having audiences with three Popes and to have respected and admired the role of the Church over the centuries, to be able to be in the Vatican with a group dedicated to these purposes means a great deal."

In fact, Kissinger was a regular on the Ro-

man scene, in part as a result of his close friendship with Gianni Agnelli, the long-time head of Fiat and a fixture on the Italian political scene for decades.

Gore Vidal, in his 1995 memoirs *Palimpsest*, recalls bumping into Kissinger during a 1994 dinner sponsored by Agnelli in the Hall of Statues at the Vatican Museums, to celebrate the restoration of the Sistine Chapel.

"As I left him gazing thoughtfully at the hell section of 'The Last Judgment,'" Vidal wrote of Kissinger, in typically caustic fashion, "I said to the lady with me, 'Look, he's apartment hunting.'"

Over the years, Kissinger and the Popes with whom he forged relations certainly had their differences, especially during the Paul VI/Casaroli era and the questions of how best to navigate the challenges of the Cold War.

Cynicism

On the other hand, Kissinger clearly admired the Vatican's capacity to take the long view of international relations.

Despite being associated with an approach of *Realpolitik*, which critics would say was based more on cynicism than high ideals, Kissinger also seemed to appreciate the unique sense of the transcendent the Vatican strives to bring to very earthly questions.

"The German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, wrote an essay in the eighteenth century, in which he said someday there will be universal peace. The only issue is whether it will come about by human insight or by catastrophes of such a magnitude that we have no choice," Kissinger told that meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 2007.

"He was right then, and he is right today, although some of us may add that it may take some divine guidance and not just insight to solve the problem," he said.

CRUX
Taking the Catholic Pulse

CRUX is an independent US-based news agency with the mission to deliver the best in smart, wired and independent Catholic news. We have special editorial interests, such as faith and culture and anti-Christian persecution around the world, but we cover the whole Catholic story.

CRUXNOW.COM

Caring Sunday: Your chance to make life better for our friends in need

THE world has changed dramatically since Cardinal Winning founded the charity which is now known as the St Nicholas Care Fund just over 30 years ago but the need for it is greater than ever as growing numbers turn to it for help.

That is the stark message that Archbishop Nolan will deliver in a letter to be read out at parishes throughout the Archdiocese on Caring Sunday, December 17, when money is raised for the fund, which relies entirely on donations.

Speaking in advance of the appeal he said: "This year more than ever before, a combination of the cost-of-living crisis and international events have meant a surge in requests for assistance from the Care Fund.

"Widening health inequalities, food inflation and diminishing financial support has badly affected those already struggling and it is the money given on Caring



BY BRIAN SWANSON

Sunday which enables the fund to continue its work."

The Archbishop added: "Over the years it has provided support to people and communities throughout the Archdiocese and beyond who are facing hardship – vulnerable groups and individuals affected by addiction, loneliness, or discrimination, refugees fleeing conflict and climate change, and people without homes or families of their

own who are struggling to survive the winter.

"We rely on the generous donations of the people of the parishes, so this year, once again, I ask people to dig deep and give what they can so that we can continue to direct our support where it is most needed – to people in our midst. People who view the upcoming feast of Christmas with fear and anxiety rather than hope and joy."

Grants awarded last year by the fund included £15,000 to Faith in Community Scotland, £6,400

to the RCAG Youth Team to help fund their pilgrimage to World Youth Day, £2000 to St Francis, Gorbals, help fund a P7 residential trip, £4,000 to Immaculate Conception Maryhill, to enable them to continue with their breakfast club and other ac-

tivities in association with partner churches, £4124 to the Isaro Community Initiative to provide activities for the children of asylum seekers and refugees and £2000 to the Hopscotch Children's charity which provides activities for disadvantaged

young people throughout Glasgow.

■ For more information and to find out how you can donate contact the St Nicholas Care Fund on 0141 226 5898 or Email: PCT@rcag.org.uk



Cathedral lights will be brighter than ever

THE natural light that has flooded St Andrew's Cathedral since its renovation continues to delight visitors and parishioners alike, but sections of artificial light have not fared so well with a survey revealing an estimate of £80,000 to upgrade them.

Launching an appeal for support as part the Cathedral Renovation Fund, Canon Andrew McKenzie, the Cathedral Administrator, said:

"It is now around 12 years since the cathedral was renovated and we are currently

trying to gather funds to repair the lighting in the building. Around one third of the bulbs need replacing and there is the need to replace the programmer for the lighting system which is not working correctly.

"The estimated cost of this is around £80,000 with a significant part of that figure in the cost of building scaffolding to gain access.

"This is a major expense, and it will take time to gather the required funds, but we are very grateful to those who have contributed

so far."

The upgrading of the lighting is just one of several works planned in the cathedral.

Canon McKenzie added: "Other projects are also being considered, for example the interior paintwork is flaking, particularly on the west wall, but in other places too.

"Some work has however been completed recently, the heating is now working and although there is still some work to do on the sound system it is already much improved."

St Paul's invitation to 'bite and blether'



MP David Linden (second left) drops in at St Paul's

A NEW community hub, inspired by faith and created by the selfless dedication of volunteers, is now up and running at St Paul's Shettleston, opening its doors every Friday to provide warmth, food, and friendship to members of the community regardless of faith.

Known as The Wee Blether and Bite, it has been backed by a £2000 grant from the St Nicholas Care Fund, donations from the local SVPD, second collections, individ-

BY BRIAN SWANSON

uals, and local businesses.

Teams of volunteers spent the summer months building a serving kitchen and storage areas in the church hall so that it could open in time for the winter months - and it has already proved a big success.

One of the first to look in and see for himself was David Linden, SNP MP for Glasgow East who said: "I'm very impressed - this is a

brilliant example of a community getting together to look after each other in times like these. Well done to all concerned!"

Parish Priest Father Frank Balmer, said: "One of the things I love about being a priest is to encourage our people to live the Gospel and reach out to the whole community."

"So when two parishioners approached me with the idea of a community hub I was all for it - and I'm delighted it has worked so well."

Parishioner Tony Valbonesi who came up with the idea for a community hub along with his wife Anne, said: "We want to acknowledge the kindness and generosity of fellow parishioners and local businesses and organisations in helping us get the community hub off the ground, whether that be financial donations, practical DIY skills, providing catering equipment, training opportunities, or donating weekly supplies of vegetables and other foodstuffs."

Pope pays tribute to Celtic's 'valued legacy'

THE result against Lazio was disappointing, but Celtic players and staff had their spirits lifted the morning after their Champions League defeat as they were granted a private audience with Pope Francis.

Manager Brendan Rogers presented the Holy Father with the famous hoops top, suitably printed with the name 'Francis' and a Celtic cross in memory of the club's origins.

Pope Francis welcomed the Celtic visitors who were accompanied to the Vatican

by Bishop John Keenan of Paisley and spoke to them off the cuff in Italian, with his words being translated by a priest assistant.

The Holy Father referred to the 'valued legacy' of Celtic and how it was originally established to help fight poverty. "I pray that you will continue to remember and bear witness to everything that makes sport genuinely good and noble. May Almighty God bless each of you and your families. I wish you a safe journey home to Scotland," he said.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Magic of hearing

Experience the magic of the season by unwrapping the gift of shared laughter, heart-to-heart conversations, and a true sense of belonging. Surprise your loved ones with an extraordinary gift - the precious gift of hearing!

Consider the transformative impact of a personalized hearing aid this Christmas; it's not just a device but a gateway to a world filled with joy. Picture the warmth of laughter, the happiness of family conversations, and the sense

of togetherness around the holiday table. With a personalized hearing aid, you're offering your loved one the priceless gift of connection.

Our diverse range caters to all types of hearing loss, featuring stylish designs, including our popular 'invisible' range! At The Hearing Clinic UK, rest assured you'll find the perfect device, securing your spot at the top of their nice list. Gift the joy of hearing and make this holiday season truly special for someone you cherish.

Give The Gift Of Hearing This Christmas with our Incredible Invisible Hearing Aids!



Call Our Team Today!
0333-016-6490

WWW.THEHEARINGCLINICUK.CO.UK

OUR SERVICES:

- ✓ **FREE Hearing Tests**
Including Ear Imagery Using Advanced Video Technology!
- ✓ **Hearing Aid Demonstrations**
- ✓ **Full Hearing Assessments**
- ✓ **Paediatric Services**
- ✓ **Ear Wax Removal**
- ✓ **HCPC Registered**
- ✓ **NO WAITLISTS!**

SCAN ME



CLINICS IN GLASGOW CITY CENTRE, GLASGOW SOUTHSIDE, MILNGAVIE, STIRLING AND MORE!

Our customers say **Excellent** ★★★★★

4.9 out of 5 based on 8,007 reviews ★ Trustpilot



Our loved ones who have died need not be absent from us

GILBERT K. Chesterton once stated that Christianity is the only democracy where even the dead get to vote. In light of that, I share two stories.

A psychologist at a conference I once attended shared this story.

A woman came to see him in considerable distress. Her disquiet had to do with her last conversation with her husband before he died. She shared how they had enjoyed a good marriage for more than 30 years, with never more than a minor quarrel between them. Then one morning they had a quarrel about some trivial thing (of which she couldn't even remember the substance).

Their argument had ended in anger, and he had stomped out the door to go to work – and to die of a heart attack that day, before they had a chance to talk again.

What awful luck! 30 years without an incident of this kind, and now this, anger in their last words to each other! The psychologist first, humorously, assured her that the fault all lay on her husband's part, in his choosing to die at that awkward moment, leaving her with that guilt!

More seriously, he asked her, "if your husband was here right now, what would

you say to him?" She answered that she would apologize and assure him that considering all their years together this little incident meant nothing, that their love for each other utterly dwarfed that mini moment.

He assured her that her husband was still alive in the communion of saints and was with them right now. Then he said to her, "why don't you sit in this chair and tell him what you just shared, that your faithful love for each other completely obliterates your last conversation. Indeed, share a laugh over its irony."

A second story. Recently, I met with a family whose father had died by suicide twenty years ago. Through the years, they had made peace with that, though, like most families that lose a loved one to suicide, some uncomfortable residue remained.

They had long since forgiven him, forgiven themselves for any failure on their part, and forgiven God for the unfairness of a death like his. But something remained unfinished, something they felt but couldn't quite name (despite twenty years of time, despite forgiveness all round, and despite a more empathic understanding of suicide). I couldn't quite

Scribblings of the spirit

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



name it either, but I could suggest a remedy.

I suggested they have a ritual celebration in which they would celebrate their love for him, celebrate the gift that was his life, and work at redeeming the unfortunate manner of his death.

Here's the suggestion: Pick a day, perhaps his birthday or even the anniversary of his death. Meet as a family and have a celebration, complete with champagne, wine, and balloons. Share stories about him, highlighting stories in which he was joyous, in which he was laughing,

in which his spirit thrived, and in which he brought a special energy into a room. Celebrate that with food, wine, champagne, laughter, and love.

He will be there with you. You are still in a communion of life with him. He is joyous now. Celebrate that with him. Lift away the 20 years of heaviness. The absence of this kind of celebration is what still lies unspoken between you and him.

Stories like this can sound fanciful, wishful thinking, but they take their ground in solid, defined Christian

doctrine, that is, they are rooted in a faith that tells us that we are in living union with each other inside the Body of Christ.

As Christians, we believe (as a doctrine in our faith) that we are in unity with each other inside a living body (an organism, not a corporation) and that this union in one body takes in all of us, both the living and the dead.

We can communicate with each other, apologize to each other, make amends to each other, and celebrate each other's life and energy, even after one of us has died.

As Christians, we are invited to pray for the dead. Not surprisingly, certain Christians balk at this, protesting that God doesn't need to be reminded to be merciful and forgiving. They are right, but in the end that is not the reason we pray for our deceased loved ones.

Despite the stock formulae prayers we generally use which ask God to be merciful, the real intent of our prayer for the dead is for us to stay in touch, in a communion of life with them.

The real intent of our prayers and ritual celebrations for the dead is to continue to be in a more deliberate communication of life with them, to finish unfinished business, to apologize to them, to forgive them, to ask them to forgive us, to remain mindful of the special oxygen they breathed into the planet during their life, and to occasionally share a celebratory glass of wine with them.

The special wonder of the Christmas baby

Mary's musings

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



THE first notes of the symphony that is the Christmas retail season are struck earlier every year.

The Halloween pumpkins have barely had time to rot before the shelves are heaving under the weight of undersized and overpriced tubs of sweets – and that's not even the beginning of it.

We haven't packed away our sunscreen when the retail extravaganza has begun. We are tempted and teased by early price incentives with savvy shoppers squirreling away the goodies when they first hit the shelves.

I tried that once, fool that I am. While Himself

had a will of iron, our children and I failed at the first hazelnut whirl. Suddenly those savings didn't make so much sense.

This year, apart from pottering about locally for stocking fillers it's been online shopping for me. This is a decided departure from my usual tradition of charging up and down Buchanan Street in festive spirit, followed by a meltdown in the carpark when I realise I've lost my ticket and, deaf to my protestations, the attendants will let me exit only after I've paid the full daily rate.

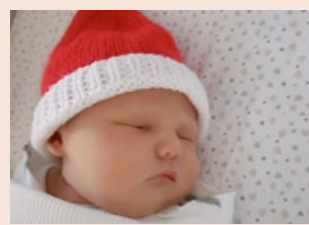
Against my strongly held concerns that online shopping and out-of-town soulless shopping centres will

be the death of the high street I have bought most of my gifts online. More accurately, my heavily pregnant daughter, who didn't have the energy to schlep round the shops, did the ordering for both of us. That leaves me the happy mid-December task of wrapping aided by a festive glass of mulled wine.

Sauchiehall Street at Christmas is no longer the seething mass of humanity it used to be. More's the pity. Part of the fun was the witty quips and caustic observations of Glasgow shoppers.

I used to love a day in town with morning coffee with a pal and a lunchtime Mass in the Cathedral or St Aloysius'. If I was parked in Buchanan Galleries, St Mungo's was just a hop, skip and a jump.

The threat to retail jobs because of online shopping will leave our city centre a mere shadow of its former self and that bothers me.



In my own little protest on behalf of retail workers I have been boycotting my local Marks & Spencer because they have only self-service tills. This will last until I remember they do a decent Christmas cake and I haven't made one!

It's a commonly articulated view that Christmas is all about the children. For us, as Catholics, it's about one in particular – the child Jesus, the baby in the manger.

Four years ago, late on Christmas Eve, our middle daughter gave birth to a baby boy named Joseph. At Midnight Mass so many feelings were brought into sharp relief.

I thought of my daughter

nestling her little newborn son in her arms and I wondered how Our Lady must have felt. She had given birth to the Saviour yet she had a heart of a mother like any other.

The bold Midnight boy is a baby no more. He and his two-year-old sister have been eagerly awaiting a new baby. If not exactly a Christmas baby then an Advent one. Amongst our grandchildren we have a Gabriel, a Joseph and a Mary so we consider ourselves quite the Christmas family.

Nature had other plans for the expectant mother and our new girl arrived a few weeks early and ahead of Advent. Probably just as well as Lucy Margaret weighed in at a robust 9lb 2oz!

Another year is drawing to a close. Another edition of *Flourish* is in the parishes. With that I wish you, and those dear to you, a happy and holy Christmas, and every good wish for 2024.

OASIS

Nourish your soul with our monthly spirituality supplement

An Advent letter from Bethlehem to Glasgow

THE historic town of Bethlehem, steeped in tradition and faith, is currently facing unprecedented challenges due to the ongoing war in Gaza.

This conflict has cast a long shadow over the lives of both Christians and the broader community in the West Bank and Bethlehem, leaving a deep impression on the very place where the Christmas story unfolded.

For generations, Bethlehem has been a symbol of peace and a pilgrimage site for Christians from all over the world. However, the recent turmoil has disrupted the daily lives of its residents, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. Families struggle to find normalcy amidst the chaos that has engulfed their once-tranquil streets.

As Christmas approaches, the joyous celebrations that usually envelop Bethlehem are muted this year. The traditional decorations and



BY LAILA ASFOURA

lights adorning the city's vibrant streets have been replaced with a somber quiet. The iconic Manger Square is now a symbol of the community's yearning for hope and resilience.

Despite the hardships, the people of Bethlehem remain steadfast in their determination to preserve their cultural and religious heritage. However, the plight of Christians in Bethlehem and the wider community is a story that needs to be heard. Families are dealing with disrupted education, limited access to essential



services, and the constant fear of violence.

This Christmas, let us reflect on the true meaning of the season. We ask our brothers and sisters to extend support to the people of Bethlehem and invite individuals, communities, and organizations to stand in solidarity with Bethlehem, offering support and prayers to help rebuild lives and restore the sense of normalcy that has been shaken.

The story of Bethlehem is not just one of struggle but

also of the unwavering spirit of a community that refuses to be defined by its challenges. Let us come together to ensure that the voice of Bethlehem is heard and that the hope and peace embodied in the Christmas story find a way to shine through, even in the darkest times.

■ Laila Asfoura is executive director of St Martha's House, Bethlehem, a community centre for families in the Bethlehem area

ART OF THE MONTH



Silent night of the nativity

THE painting "The Nativity at Night" by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, a Dutch painter, of the late 15th century, depicts the night our Saviour was born in a manger.

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

The angel in the sky lights up the way for the shepherds just as the star will light up the way for the Wise Men.

The baby Jesus is the source of light, casting a warm glow that envelopes the darkness. The divine light, emanating from the Christ Child, lights up the faces of the Virgin Mary and the angels. Even St Joseph, in the background and painted as a young man, is softly lit by the cradle light.

Barely visible is the enormous head of the ox which seems almost transfixed in looking at the Most Holy Child.

The angel at the top seems to peer over the heads of the others while the little red-head with sticky-out hair and hands apart, is astonished by the sight of God made Man!

Overall this rather small composition is intimate and harmonious. Mary's adoration and tenderness towards her son are palpable, emphasizing the maternal bond. Joseph stands slightly behind, observing this miraculous moment in awe, as the Holy Family shares the stable with the animals. Poverty and simplicity surround Christ's birth.

The not-so-well known artist, Geertgen tot Sint Jans, beautifully captures a moment of divine intervention and human humility in a painting that inspires awe and contemplation in this miracle of the Incarnation.

Christmas is Christmas... even for those in hospital

EVEN if it's snowing outside, Christmas Day in hospital is actually one of the warmest days of the year.

That sounds strange, and for most of us it is, yet if you are in hospital it is not so.

Hospitals are open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. People are ill on each of these days including Christmas Day. Illness does not take a holiday. If you are a patient on Christmas Day it is because you are too ill to go home.

Most of us would wish not to be in hospital at any time of the year but particularly at Christmas where you can be separated from your family. For many of us the thought is just so depressing; however it does happen.

In hospital this is clearly recognised by staff and volunteers who make every effort to ease this.

Leading up to – and on Christmas Day itself – there are decorations, carol services, lovely food, crackers, paper hats, smiles, humour. There are families, hugs, presents. And there is Santa. In particular, in the Children's Hospital the smiles

BY DEACON MICHAEL O'DONNELL

on the faces of both children and staff are so wide they can't be measured.

Yet life continues and tears flow, of sadness and of joy. There is illness and death, and in the maternity hospital new-born babies arrive.

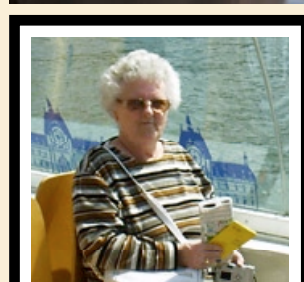
Amidst all this Jesus is present and our priest Chaplains are on-call.

The Sacrament of the Sick has to be administered. The chaplains will respond to being paged whether it be 8pm or 3am as God's family have to be cared for by the Mother Church.

On Christmas Day I will visit some patients to give them Holy Communion and share with them the joy of Christmas. Mass will be celebrated for the hospital community.

At your parish Mass you will pray for those who are sick.

In doing this we as an Archdiocesan community will remind all that on Christmas morn Christ was born!



3rd Anniversary

Remembering with love always

Helen Friar

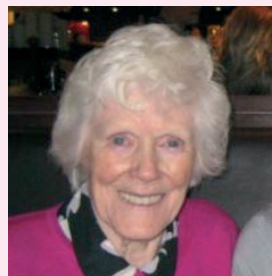
beloved wife of Bert, loving mother to Helen, Bert, Gary and their families.

Died on the 15th of December 2020

Our Lady of Lourdes pray for her.

She will live in our hearts forever.

McFarlane



7th 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.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, who came into this world to bring light to our lives and to show us the way to salvation. In the humble surroundings of the stable, a radiant glow reminds us of your boundless love and grace. May we recognize the significance of the birth of your Divine Son whom we humbly approach with gratitude and reverence. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Let the Sunday Readings guide your Advent preparations for Christmas and beyond

ALTHOUGH we have begun our journey with Mark's Gospel this coming year, during Advent and Christmas, we will hardly hear anything from him, since, in telling the Good News of Jesus, Mark skips over his origins and birth to get straight into the action with the adult Jesus and his public ministry.

This means that for Advent and Christmas, passages from Mark's Gospel act as a kind of opener and closer: John the Baptist comes (2nd Sunday of Advent) promising the one who would come after him, and, at the end of the season, we will hear those words repeated but also fulfilled when Jesus comes and is baptized (Feast of the Baptism).

In between are stories of promises made – to the people, to Mary (4th Sunday), to shepherds (Midnight Mass), to Simeon (Holy Family) – and of those promises kept (on Christmas Day and the Sundays thereafter).

Second Sunday of Advent B

We read the opening of Mark's Gospel today. Oddly enough, Jesus doesn't appear in the passage, but he is mentioned!

First of all, we are told he is the subject of the story Mark is about to tell: he is sharing the Good News about Jesus Christ, Son of God.

However, we first meet John the Baptist, the one who fulfils the promise made by Isaiah (from the First Reading) that one



Fr Tom Kilbride

Rector of the Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain

would come to announce the Lord's coming.

He tells us that the one coming is "more powerful" than he is and promises a new baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Advent has this tone of expectation and promise, summed up by John the Baptist here. But it is not just about "things to come": it also reminds us of promises already kept! Isaiah's words are fulfilled when John appears. John's words will be fulfilled when Jesus appears (we are looking forward to that in the liturgy).

Jesus then promises to come again (as in the Second Reading), which is a promise we can rely on just as much as those which have been fulfilled already. Peter tells us our "waiting", our expectation and hope, should lead us to live holy lives as Jesus taught.

Third Sunday of Advent B

Because Mark gives us very little about John the Baptist beyond what we heard last week, this week we take a passage from John's Gospel. He picks up on the same passage from Isaiah (having the Baptist quote it this time) as last

time, but now places the Baptist in relation to Jesus. John the Baptist is "a witness to speak for the light", Jesus, of course, being the "Light of the World" as we hear later in the Gospel. He points to Jesus, and later his light will fade as Jesus' grows stronger.

He rejoices to hear "the voice of the bridegroom", something we hear echoed in the First Reading as well.

If Jesus is the one anointed by God and sent like a bridegroom to bring new beginnings for God's people, John is his "best man", preparing the way for him, getting everything ready for him, and making sure everyone knows him when he comes.

Fourth Sunday of Advent B

Our Fourth Sunday is already Christmas Eve this year, and by the time we end the day we will have begun our Christmas Masses already.

However, we mustn't overlook the powerful and beautiful liturgy of the day. The ancient promise to David that God will build him "a House" (First Reading) is to reach its climax in the birth of Jesus (in the Gospel), whom Mary will bear.

Yes, David had descendants who succeeded him as King, but in Mary's child something much greater will happen, an eternal



Adoration of the Shepherds by Giorgione di Castelfranco, 1510

kingdom, even greater than David's. He will not only be "son of David" but "son of the Most High", of God himself.

In our Sunday Mass, we hear Mary's acceptance of God's will and the message of Gabriel. We hear of the part she will play in bringing this great promise to life. But later that night, we will hear that Jesus is not just a King and descendant of David, but a Saviour for all.

In David's city, Bethlehem, a Saviour is born for us. The message of the angel to Mary about her future son, a cause of rejoicing for her, is echoed across the fields to the shepherds when he is born and it is joy to be shared with all!

Mary let what the angel had said be done to her; the

shepherds return rejoicing at having seen the truth of what they had been told. A promise is made; in faith it is accepted; it comes to be; it is seen and shared by all.

Holy Family, Year B

There are various options for this Sunday's readings, but the Gospel is the episode of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

One set of readings (the standard ones) link this to the Old Testament vision of the family and its intimate relations. This puts Joseph, Mary and the child front and centre. They are that good and faithful family which takes its obligations to God and to each other seriously, even in the context of poverty (the offering is that of a poor family) and possible suffering (as Simeon suggests).

If we use the readings given for Year B, however, the focus shifts more towards Simeon and Anna. They represent the faithful people of the Old Testament, like Abraham and Sarah of old, who put their trust in God's word, rejoice in the gift of a son and look forward to salvation, even if they don't know how God will bring it about.

Simeon and Anna belong to them, the faithful ancestors. But they also represent something new: filled with the Holy Spirit they are moved to announce the Good News.

Note how three times we hear of the Law, and then three times of the Spirit in

the first part. One is giving way to the other as God's plan unfolds. Simeon knows that what God promised is now coming about in this child, and it will change everything.

Epiphany

The Sundays of the Christmas season end with the Epiphany this year, since the Baptism of the Lord falls on the Monday and we return to the Ordinary Sundays the following week.

This feast shares much in common with the last few Sundays. A sign is given, prophetic promises are fulfilled (the First Reading and the Micah text quoted in the Gospel itself), the promise is seen to be kept and the response is joy (worship and gifts). The story of God's love for the world shown in Jesus has been witnessed by Mary and by the shepherds, by faithful Israel in Simeon and Anna and now by the pagan nations.

This is everyone's story; this is our story too. Will we trust in God's promises, see the signs of his grace at work and, rejoicing, share the joy with those we meet?

Our Advent hopes are fulfilled over and over, with more yet to come. Like Mary, like the shepherds, like Simeon, Anna and the Wise Men, this is not something to keep to ourselves.

It is hope, joy and love to be shared with all, just as the Christmas angels of Bethlehem said it should be! May it be so for all of us!

Alex Black Funeral Care
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

24 HOUR CALL OUT SERVICE
SERVICE ROOM AVAILABLE WITH
PRIVATE REST ROOM
HEADSTONES AND MEMORIALS

Drumchapel: 0141 949 1234
Knightswood: 0141 959 1234
Maryhill: 0141 946 1234
Possilpark: 0141 336 4000

Golden Charter
Funeral Plans

T. McGowan & Sons Monumental Sculptors



FAMILY FIRM ESTABLISHED 1947

St. Kentigern's Cemetery
109 Tresta Road, Glasgow G23 5AA
Telephone: 0141 946 2429

Linn Cemetery
602 Lainshaw Drive, Glasgow G45 9SP
Telephone: 0141 634 8515

Dalbeth Cemetery
1920 London Road, Glasgow G32
Telephone: 0141 778 4916

Philipshill Cemetery
Westerfield Road, East Kilbride G76
Telephone: 0141 644 4535

NEW MEMORIALS • ADDITIONAL LETTERING • CLEANING
All work completed in any cemetery. Brochure available on request

www.tmcgowan.co.uk

Driving tests mean panic and prayers

WE have been happy to welcome a visitor to our community in Bishopbriggs in recent times. He is a Passionist priest from India who is at present stationed at Highgate in London.

He has to do his UK driving test and, for all kinds of good and practical reasons, he is going to do it here. He has already passed his theory test, and now he is undertaking driving lessons, almost on a daily basis, sometimes twice a day, to get him ready for the test, which I have no doubt he will pass. Father Gareth and Father John have also been taking him out regularly for practice sessions.

When I ask him how things are going, his response makes me very aware that the driving test now is so much different than from when I took my own test.

In those days the theory exam was carried out by a series of oral questions at



Fr Frank's log

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

the end of the test itself. If the examiner started asking you the theory questions, then you at least knew that you had passed the practical test as, if you had failed, he wouldn't even bother asking you the theory questions.

There is now also something called independent driving, where the examiner can just ask you to follow signs to a particular destination, or else to follow directions on a Satnav. Those aspects of the test certainly didn't exist back then either. Neither did bay parking, if I remember correctly, a sign of changing times!

Having been an experienced driver at home in

India, my colleague had interesting accounts of how the instructor was helping him rid himself of certain driving habits that were not the accepted way of doing things here, which gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own driving habits acquired down through the years – whether bad habits or experienced habits may be debatable.

I didn't take my driving test until I was almost 30. Growing up in Partick, and then moving to Drumchapel, nobody ever had a car in the family and so, learning to drive was something I never had the opportunity to do. My familiar modes of



transport were the tram, the bus, the Underground, the Govan Ferry and Shanks's pony.

When I joined the Passionists in 1975, my primary concern was to learn how to ride a bike, another skill I had never acquired. My student days would be all about cycling to and from the Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Theology, about a 4-mile journey from our student house in Mount Argus. How I survived those journeys in the crazy Dublin traffic, and with my own erratic cycling, I will never know. It had to be divine providence or, as I reflected recently, my guardian angel.

When I went to the Novitiate in 1979, just after Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland, I was advised that I should learn to drive.

At first, I was given lessons by one of my classmates. The Novitiate was then, and still is, at Crossgar in County Down, so I was learning to drive around a relatively rural setting, with the biggest town being Downpatrick, about 5-miles away.

I seemed to take to driving without much difficulty, except for one manoeuvre, and that was reversing round a corner. Emergency stop, hill start, 3-point turn, none of these was ever an issue, but reversing round a corner became a mental

block for me!

As it got nearer the time of my test, my classmate gave way to a professional driving instructor. He would always bring me to this one place and tell me that this was where they would bring me during the test. But always, I ended up on the pavement, or in the middle of the road, either of which would be sure to fail me.

The driving test centre was in a quaintly named place called the Flying Horse. Everything went relatively smoothly but, in the back of my mind, I knew my jinxed manoeuvre was still to come. However, when we reached the dreaded corner, a delivery truck was taking up the whole space, and so we needed to go somewhere else.

The mental block disappeared, and I reversed round the corner perfectly. Again, it could only be divine providence, or my guardian angel. Either way, with a huge feeling of relief and delight, back at the centre, I was asked the theory questions, and I passed, first time. Whether I would pass first time now, I'm not so sure, but, no doubt, eventually I would get there.

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

Let's remember the true meaning of that sign of peace

In that post lock-down period when we could attend Mass again but couldn't touch, the thing I missed most was being physically able to offer the sign of peace.

Yes, there were elbow bumps and waves, but not the handshake that many Scots feel is as touchy-feely as we should get, or the kiss of peace that is the norm in the Mediterranean and has become so for many of us.

Had you asked me about this before the pandemic, I don't think I would have had much to offer on the subject. It was part of the ritual: important, but not something to give a great amount of thought to.

But of course, we should give it much thought. We've been doing this since the fourth century, when the Apostolic Constitutions said that after the Prayer of the Faithful, "let the bishop salute the church, and say, 'The peace of God be with you all.' And let the people answer, 'And with your spirit'; and let the deacon say to all, 'Salute one another with the holy kiss.'"

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal confirms the importance of the rite of peace, noting it as the Church entreating 'peace and unity for herself and for the whole human



Marian Pallister

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

family', when 'the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament' (GIRM 82).

And of course, it was Jesus Himself who gave us the concept of being at peace with each other before we approach the altar. He said: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Peace

At a time when the cruellest of conflicts are shaking our world and we are fervently praying for peace, we must surely start by offering each other that gentlest of greetings: peace be with you.

Pax Christi Scotland belongs to an international peace movement that was conceived after World War

II with the aim of encouraging a nonviolent world: a world in which dialogue is the weapon of choice; a world in which swords will most definitely be turned into ploughshares.

The world in which Our Lord grew up was far from peaceful. The Romans occupied His country and there were religious factions that added to the violence and unrest. Some thought that He was the one who would overthrow the colonisers. Instead, he preached peace; told the peacemakers they were blessed and would be called the sons of God.

As we wait for the arrival of Our Lord this Christmas of 2023, I pray that peace begins in our own hearts with that kiss of peace, is carried out into our communities and shared with our neighbours of all faiths, and helps to influence the politicians who have it in their power to make peace. As Pope Francis says, "War is always a defeat... may the Lord bring a just peace."

Your funeral wishes
At the lowest price locally.
Guaranteed.

Funerals from
£750

Our Price Promise

We promise to match the prices of any funeral director within 5 miles of our locations.

Terms and conditions apply.



TALK TO US ANYTIME

Whatever your funeral wishes or budget, we can provide a funeral to suit you. Prepaid funeral plans also available.

JOHN KANE | Dumbarton | G82 1BA | 01389 888 071
JONATHAN HARVEY | Kilbowie Road | G81 6QS | 01389 887 146
JOSEPH POTTS | Belshill | ML4 1QU | 01698 442 991
JOSEPH POTTS | Blantyre | G72 0YS | 01698 442 955
T & R O'BRIEN & SON | Glasgow | G20 7QS | 01415 306 649

www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/local

We are very proud to be a Dignity Funeral Director, providing a 5 star service to families across the U.K.



Advent – a time to give thanks and think of others

CHRISTMAS is a very special time, especially for those of us who have a strong faith. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord, we come together with our loved ones and give thanks for the joy in our lives.

Advent gives us the time for reflection and preparation and it's important to think and pray for our sisters and brothers whose lives are full of adversity in this uncertain world.

Right now, across the world, the effects of extreme weather and climate change are destroying people's lives. Families are losing their homes, their food and everything they own.

And it's those living in the world's poorest places who suffer the most.

Like in Malawi.

Sofia, her husband, and their five children were living in a place they believed to be safe. Severe flooding had forced them to flee their home in the south of the country and rebuild their lives in a new area, where they believed they would be protected from

BY LORRAINE CURRIE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SCIAF

danger.

Sofia said, "We were very happy; this place was good. We were expecting our lives to transform because, at last, we were protected from the deadly floodwaters."

Yet, extreme changes in the climate mean weather patterns are no longer predictable. There is no certainty. One night, floodwaters began to pour into the family's new home while they slept. When they woke, their doors wouldn't open. They were trapped.

"We began shouting. People came and pulled our doors until they broke them. They brought us to a shelter. We were traumatised," she added.

"We lost everything we owned. Goats, chickens, livestock – everything we owned in our houses, including the houses them-



selves. We lost everything."

Sofia and her family had no means to start again. This was the second time they had been struck by the severe consequences of extreme weather. The changing climate meant there was no guaranteed safety.

Unfortunately, they are not the only ones. It is a daily reality for so many

people around the world. And it's only getting worse – as extreme weather hits more and more frequently, and in places it didn't affect before, many more of our sisters and brothers are suffering from its devastating impact.

Through our partners, SCIAF works with communities to build resilience in

this ever-changing climate. This can be training local builders in climate resistant practices, creating and repairing flood defences or advocating for climate justice on the world stage; we stand shoulder to shoulder with communities to prepare them for the worst, whatever the weather.

And if the worst does

happen, we are there too. We reach out in love and compassion to help families who have lost everything to feel safe and secure, have food to eat and somewhere warm to sleep.

I am pleased that, this Advent, we have teamed up with a group of our generous donors, making it possible to double your donation. This means that your donation will be matched*, doubling the value of your gift. This is a tremendous opportunity for us to reach out in God's love to even more people next year, in their time of need.

As the new Chief Executive of SCIAF I want to wish you and your families a happy and Holy Christmas and a very peaceful 2024. Thank you for your continued support.

Happy Christmas,
Lorraine

■ **To donate to our Advent appeal, please visit sciaf.org.uk/advent. *Donations will be doubled up to a total value of £83,500.**

Sofia, Malawi



Help keep families safe this Christmas

Donate now at
sciaf.org.uk/donate

£1 = £2

Double the love this Advent

This Advent, thanks to a generous group of supporters, your donation will be doubled helping make an even greater impact

 **SCIAF**
Uniting for a just world
Caritas Scotland

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 Scottish Charity No: SC012302 Company No: SC197327. Donations will be matched to the value of £83,500 thanks to a generous donor, meaning that your gift will make an even greater impact. Photo by James Cave (SCIAF).

