

News • Spirituality • Culture • Education • Life

HOLY YEAR SPECIAL EDITION

FLOWERISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

December 2024

“Hope is the central message of the coming Jubilee... For everyone may the Jubilee be a moment of personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, our Hope”

—Pope Francis

Pilgrims of hope

Theme of 2025 Jubilee



Glasgow takes its Christianity seriously

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

Glasgow is taking its Christian heritage seriously this winter with a series of events reflecting the city's origins and culture.

The annual blessing of the crib in Glasgow's George Square has already taken place... putting Christ firmly at the heart of the city's Christmas celebrations.

Archbishop Nolan joined

the Lord Provost and other church and civic leaders for the event, which is a much-loved moment in the city's Advent season.

Peace

The city's commitment to the real meaning of Christmas continues on Sunday December 15 at 3pm in the City Chambers. A 'Carols for Peace' service will take place hosted by the Lord Provost to pray especially for peace in the Holy Land and surrounding areas.

And next month the city's patron will be celebrated during the St Mungo Festival.

Now in its second decade, the Festival hosts performances, lectures, concerts, and ecumenical events around the week of the saint's feast day in January.

The Mediaeval Glasgow Trust promotes the St Mungo Festival together with its partners in Glasgow Churches Together and Glasgow Life.

Festival

The St Mungo Festival will be the first event in the official programme for the Glasgow 850 celebrations.

It opens on Monday 6 January with Louise Welsh's talk 'Who owns the Clyde?'. The 9th sees Dr Craig Lamont discussing 'Glasgow and Cultural Memory'. Friday 10th sees a celebration of



Children from city primary schools gathered with the Archbishop and Lord Provost for the Blessing of the Crib

Vespers of St Mungo at St Andrew's Cathedral. Saturday 11th has a 'Celebration of St Mungo in Words and Song' at the Mitchell Library.

On Sunday 12th there is the annual ecumenical service at Glasgow Cathedral and on the feast day of St Mungo itself there will be Masses in

every parish in honour of the city's patron.

■ More info at <https://stmungofestival.co.uk/>



Archbishop recalls St Mary's, Duntocher, 'rising from the ashes of war'

Archbishop Nolan delivered a heartfelt message to parishioners of St Mary's Duntocher as he celebrated Mass to mark the 70th anniversary of their church: "Remember the faith of the unsung heroes who came before you and bring that faith and the joy of Jesus into your lives."

The Archbishop went on: "We may not know who many of these people are – their names are lost to us – but we do know that they carried the Good News of joy to others through their faith."

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

The anniversary Mass celebrated the opening of the present St Mary's Church in 1954 by Archbishop Donald Campbell.

The original church, built in 1841 when the parish was founded, was destroyed in the Clydebank blitz a century later.

Priest who concelebrated the Mass included sons of the parish – Fr Bernard Fox, a Mill Hill Missionary; Fr Gerry Byrne, PP at St Brigid's, Toryglen; and

Fr Scott Deeley, PP at St Patrick's Kilsyth.

After the Mass Archdiocesan Medals were presented by the Archbishop to husband and wife James and Phyllis Smith and fellow parishioner Jim Brown to mark their commitment and devotion to their parish over the years.

Parish Priest Father John McGinley said: "There was a great atmosphere of togetherness on the night making it a fitting celebration as we journey on towards the Great Jubilee in 2025 with lots more exciting times to celebrate."

St Nicholas Care Fund is more necessary than ever as winter poverty bites

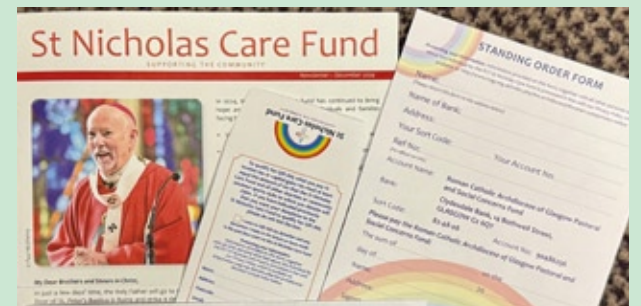
Archbishop Nolan has used the message of hope that the Holy Year will bring to make a powerful plea to parishioners to give generously to the St Nicholas Care Fund to support their mission to help those on the margins of society.

In a letter to be read out in parishes on Caring Sunday, December 15, the Archbishop writes of the poverty witnessed by the late Cardinal Tom Winning more than three decades ago which inspired him to establish the fund.

"More than three decades ago, moved by the deep hopelessness and poverty he saw within our communities, the late Cardinal Winning established the St Nicholas Care Fund to provide aid and hope to those in need throughout the Archdiocese of Glasgow."

"His compassionate response to the suffering he witnessed has continued to bear fruit, and the Care Fund remains a vital lifeline for many."

During 2024 the Fund has helped vulnerable people battling addiction, isolation, and discrimination; refugees fleeing from wars and the effects of cli-



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

mate change, and those without homes or families who are struggling to survive in the harsh realities of today's world.

Archbishop Nolan said: "These are not distant strangers but people in our own communities who may view the upcoming Christmas season with fear and uncertainty, rather than the joy and hope that should mark the birth of our Saviour."

Grants

Grants awarded by the fund last year included:

£2000 to St Paul's, Shetleston, to help with start up costs of their Community Hub's "Wee Blether and Bite" initiative which provides free hot meals and companionship for people living in the parish regardless of their faith.

£4020 to Immaculate Conception Parish Maryhill to enable it to continue funding its breakfast club, food bank and other activities working alongside partner churches in the area.

£2524 to refurbish therapy bikes for clients of Revive MS Scotland, based in Govan, the only charity in the West of Scotland providing nationwide support for people who are affected by multiple sclerosis.

■ Advent packs already delivered to parishes contain an envelope for small donations, a form for setting up regular donations, and a newsletter featuring a QR code enabling donors to make quick and secure donations. For more information contact the St Nicholas Care Fund on 0141 226 5898 or email PCT@rcag.org.uk

New catechists will spread the word

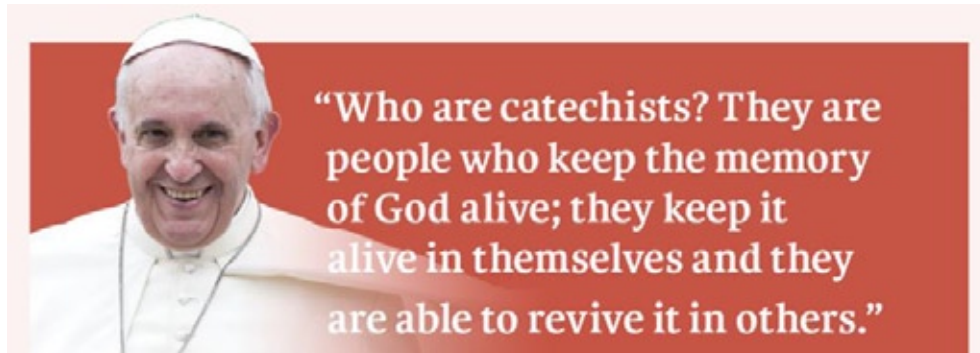
A NEW generation of catechists has been commissioned for the Archdiocese who will offer their skills and commitment in parishes for years to come.

Archbishop Nolan was joined by Bishop Toal of Motherwell at a special Mass in the Cathedral to commission seven new catechists – six for Glasgow and one for Motherwell Diocese.

The seven newly commissioned come from St Aloysius Springburn, Sacred Heart and St Lucy's, St Catherine's, St Gregory's, Immaculate Conception, and St Bride's in East Kilbride.

Blessings

The Archbishop said: "Tonight we celebrate three blessings. The great personal blessing for each of the catechists in being able



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

to deepen their faith. The blessing their service will bring to the parishes from which they come, and the blessing which the whole Archdiocese receives from their work as catechists."

The new catechists were joined by a bumper group of 26 catechists who are already working in parishes throughout the Archdiocese

and who were recommissioned to teach for a further five years.

The new catechists' commissioning was the culmination of a 2-year course run in conjunction with Glasgow University, covering modules such as dogma, sacraments, scripture, liturgy, theology, morality catechesis. Priests and laypeople from the Archdiocese act as

tutors to the students who meet weekly and study for two years.

Education

The scheme started in 2007 under Archbishop Conti who was keen to see lay people trained to work in parishes, assisting with such roles as RCIA groups, sacramental preparation, adult education and so on.

Each student is sponsored by their home parish which helps with the course fees. Two new groups of trainee catechists are already in training – 19 people in total.

Anyone interested in finding out more about what is involved in the new season which starts in September 2025 should contact Christine.burke@rcag.org.uk

UCM prays for more vocations

PRAYER for more vocations, especially to the priesthood, has always been at the forefront of the prayers of the Union of Catholic Mothers over the decades.

Through prayer and donations they support the clergy within the Archdiocese and also seminarians studying abroad.

Last month, Fr Patrick Boyle, Vocations Director of the Archdiocese and the Union of Catholic Mothers asked for the support from parishioners to take part in a Holy Hour offered up for Vocations at St Andrew's Cathedral.

UCM Secretary Clare Thain said: "It

was a beautiful service which was spiritually uplifting and inspiring, allowing us to focus our thoughts and prayers on those thinking of answering God's call by taking up religious life and for those who have already answered their call to serve in the priesthood.

"We hope that through more support from our fellow parishioners and clergy that we can spread awareness of the need for more prayers for Vocations and hold more Holy Hours in the future, creating a regular slot for our Archdiocese to offer up prayers to much needed vocations."

St Albert's welcomes Archbishop

ON the Feast of St Albert the Great, Archbishop Nolan celebrated Mass in St Albert's primary school for the pupils, staff, and parents.

And as this picture shows, the school community was delighted to receive the visit.

Fr Benneth Onyebuchukwu, the Parish Priest of St Helen's and St Albert's and chaplain to the school, said: "This occasion was very important because it shows that the Archbishop is following in the footsteps of Pope Francis who has made it the focus of his papacy to visit communities at the Periphery.

"St Albert's has only 10 Catholic children in it. A mere 10 per cent of the entire population of the school.

"In visiting, the Archbishop was putting into practice his emphasis on evangelisation – the defining characteristic of his episcopacy."



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Bishops call for carbon transition to save planet

SCOTLAND'S bishops are calling on world leaders to commit all nations to a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels.

They ask for an "equitable" post-carbon economy to secure the livelihoods of those who worked in industries that relied on fossil fuels.

In a statement released to mark the COP29 climate summit in Azerbaijan, the bishops asked world leaders to establish a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The bishops have also asked the Scottish Government to start a transition away from fossil fuels, while remembering the impact on workers in industries that depend on such fuels.

Delegates from all over the world at COP29 dis-

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** cussed measures designed to prevent the planet experiencing a ruinous rise in temperatures because of climate change. The bishops refer to "the urgent needs of our people and planet" and backed a worldwide commitment to ending the extraction of fossil fuels.

A recent report from the United Nations stated that current national climate plans fall well short of what's needed to stop global heating.

This is recognised by the bishops in their statement which describes a transition as being "vital" for those currently suffering from economic precariousness, poverty and environmental destruction; and the "un-



born future generations from whom we are borrowing the Earth".

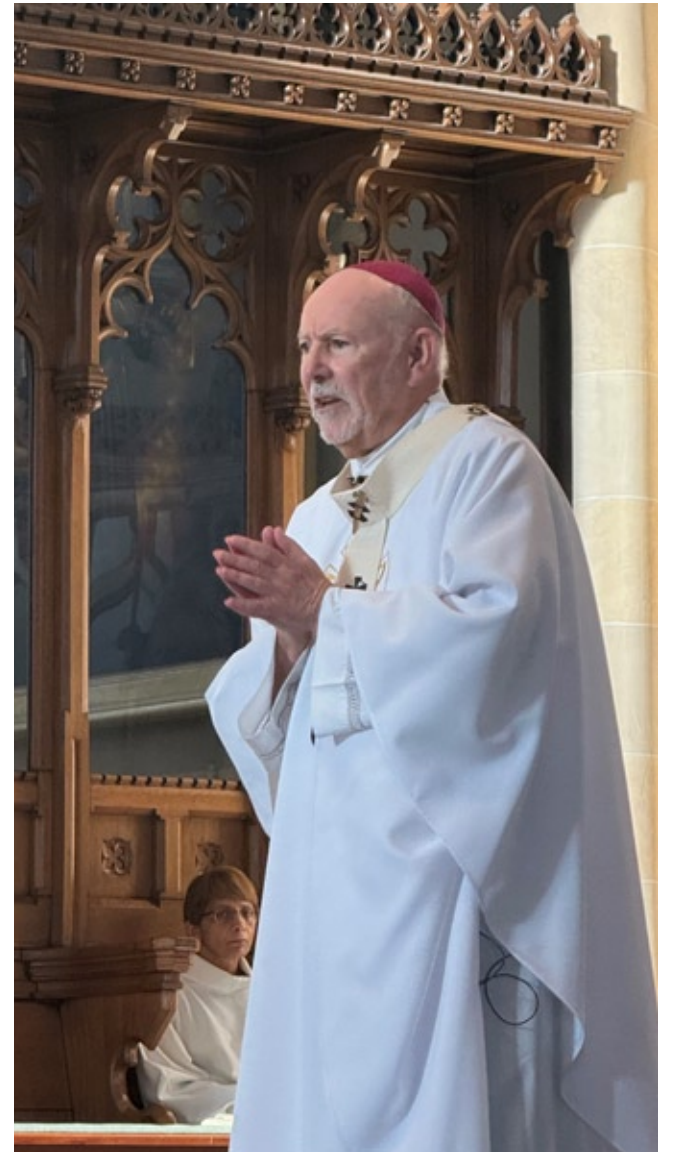
Archbishop Nolan (right) launched the appeal at a special Mass in the Cathedral for the Care of Creation.

He said: "When we look at God's creation we see its beauty scarred, tainted, used and abused. The cause of that abuse is human beings. We are the ones responsible for the abuse of creation..."

"The prophets in the Old Testament called on people

to change their lives and we are also called upon to change our lives today. We can't go on living the way we have up until now, that is destroying our planet."

After the Mass there was a live video link (above) in the Archdiocesan Office with SCIAF's Ben Wilson who attended the COP conference in Azerbaijan. He told students from secondary schools and SCIAF supporters about the hopes and fears of those taking part for the future of the planet.



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St Thomas marks a century of faith

Picture by Paul McSherry



A CENTURY of spreading the Gospel in Glasgow's East End has been marked by a joyful Mass of Thanksgiving at the Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, Riddrie, celebrated by Archbishop Nolan.

The parish was founded in 1924 when the first church was built to cater for the growing number of Catholic families moving into the newly-built Riddrie housing estate.

The original church was replaced in 1957 and years later the building was solemnly dedicated by Cardinal Tom Winning.

Addressing a congregation of parishioners, their families, friends and members of the clergy with a long-standing

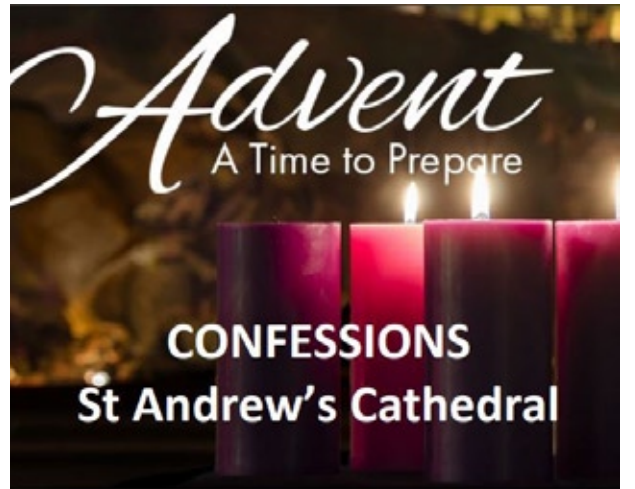
connection to the parish, Archbishop Nolan reminded them that parishes like St Thomas are communities of faith where people have always contributed, mostly behind the scenes, to keep the parish alive.

War

He said: "We remember those who were involved the early days of the parish all those years ago just a few years after the end of the First World War and we know the great things that they achieved."

"We must continue to honour them and be like them in our devotion to the parish and be faithful to Gospel in our own day."

Day of confessions



On Tuesday 17 December 2024
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!

THE tradition of 'getting to confession for Christmas' is still alive and well and to cater for the demand St Andrew's Cathedral is offering a full day of confessions during Advent.

Visiting priests will man the confessionals from 9am to 5pm on Tuesday 17

December.

The event which has become an annual fixture on the Glasgow Catholic calendar is intended to take the pressure off local parishes and offer those working or shopping in the city centre the chance to prepare for Christmas spiritually in good time.

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

Spain is calling for Father John

PARISHIONERS of Holy Name in Mansewood and St Mary Immaculate in Pollokshaws are preparing to bid a fond farewell to Father John Carroll, their parish priest, following his appointment as the new Rector of the Royal Scots College in Salamanca.

Father Carroll, who served as Vice-Rector of the Spanish college from 2000–2004, told *Flourish* that he was 'humbled and surprised' by the appointment but said he was looking forward to the challenges his new role presented.

He added: "I am honoured that the bishops have put their faith in me to take up the position but it leaves me feeling a little humble."

Experience

"I hope to be able to bring some of the experience of parish and school ministry from the last 20 years in Pollokshaws to the role."

"I am looking forward to working with Fr Stuart Chalmers, the spiritual director, and the students to help them on their journey of discernment."

He added: "On a personal note I will miss all the good people in this community who have supported me both personally and spir-

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

itually over the years."

Father Carroll, a former chaplain to Holyrood Secondary School, succeeds the current rector Father Tom Kilbride – also a priest of the Archdiocese and author of *Flourish's* Scripture column – who has held the post for the past 10 years.

Fr Tom will return to the Archdiocese early next year after a brief handover period.

Father Carroll, who studied at the Spanish college before being ordained in 1989, is known for his devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, and in his role as chaplain to Hosanna House and the Children's Pilgrimage Trust (HCPT) he has accompanied young pilgrims to the French shrine for a number of years.

Archbishop Nolan said: "I welcome the appointment of Father Carroll and I know that future seminarians will benefit from his lived experience of priesthood which has honed his humanity and his pastoral skills."

"He will continue the good work of Fr Tom Kilbride who will be an asset to the Archdiocese on his return to parish life."



Bishop John Keenan of Paisley, President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, said: "We are grateful to Fr John for accepting this important role in the introduction of our seminarians to their journey of priestly formation and we look forward to him bringing his long experience in priestly service and pastoral ministry to his office as Rector."

"We are also grateful to Fr Tom for his wise and faithful service as Rector over the past ten years in which he successfully pioneered the propaedeutic period which is now well established and fruitful in preparing our seminarians for major seminary."

"We wish them both well and ask you to keep them in your prayers."

Spare a rosary for prisoners

AN appeal has gone out to remember prisoners this Christmas by donating religious items to those incarcerated.

While we are called as Christians to care for those in prison, we cannot all visit prisoners. But there are things we can do to make their life easier.

One of these is the donation of liturgical items to those in prison, and the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Scotland is presently appealing for these items.

The intention is to give them to Catholic prison chaplains who will distribute them to prisoners throughout Scotland.

They include missals, prayer books, prayer cards, medals, and rosaries (not metal). Crucifixes and statues are not acceptable.

Deacon Kenny McGeachie, who is the national adviser to Catholic chaplains in Scottish prisons, notes that the prisoners greatly appreciate receiving these items. "Many of them hang the rosary or a holy picture above their bed," he says.

If you have items of this kind that you wish to donate, please contact your local St Vincent de Paul Conference. Alternatively, please contact socialjustice@ssvpscotland.com

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New parish calendar will reflect universality of Church

EVANGELISATION can take many forms – and for parishioners of Immaculate Conception, Maryhill it means spreading the message of the Gospel by distributing their annual calendar and Christmas card from a café in the local shopping centre.

Volunteers will start handing them out, along with a Christmas candle and prayer cards later this month.

It's the latest initiative by the parish, one of the most diverse in the Archdiocese with more than 25 nations represented, to reach out to the community by working together with partner churches in the area.

The mix of people from



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

different nationalities who regularly attend Mass at Immaculate Conception is reflected in the cover design of the

calendar which shows parish priest Father Jim Lawlor alongside parishioners and their country's flags.

Father Jim said: "We produce our own calendar every

year with as much in it as possible on the life of the parish and this year again it will focus on one special event each month to reach out to the parish and wider community.

Hope

"Because 2025 is under the banner of 'Pilgrims and Hope' we thought we'd use these words as you'll see from the front cover. And to mark the Holy Year we are going to have our own pilgrimage as well."

"We are in the early stages of planning going to Iona at Easter, probably with our Church of Scotland partners, then Lourdes in the summer and Rome and Assisi next autumn."

New President for Bishops' Conference

THE Bishops of Scotland have elected a new President of the Bishops' Conference, and named Bishop John Keenan, who grew up in St Gregory's Wyndford, and served for many years as Glasgow University Chaplain, to the role.

The Bishops also named Glasgow's former Cathedral administrator, Bishop Andrew McKenzie (now bishop of Dunkeld) as Episcopal Secretary and Bishop Brian McGee of Argyll and the Isles as Vice President of the Conference.

Thanks were expressed to Bishop Hugh Gilbert of Aberdeen who has served as President for the last six

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

years. During their recent meeting at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge the Bishops heard from a series of representatives of Church agencies. Among others ...

Parliamentary Officer, Anthony Horan, who spoke in particular about the campaigns, both south and north of the border to legalise assisted suicide. He urged the Bishops to appeal to MPs to challenge the Leadbetter proposal especially since it does not allow sufficient time for consultation and debate.

Jill Kent, chair of Justice and Peace, gave her annual

report thanking the new employees for their efforts to highlight pertinent issues in Scotland including Care of Creation, the war in the Holy Land and the care of migrants.

Barbara Coupar, the director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service, highlighted the Holy Year and how SCES was working with schools to celebrate the Pilgrims of Hope theme. This was underlined by the planning of a national celebration of Catholic education in June 2025.

Training

The Bishops also discussed issues relating to the training of future priests in the seminaries in Spain and Italy.

The Conference concluded with the presence of the Conference of Religious of Scotland, represented by Sr Kathleen Curran, an Ursuline Sister, and Fr Peter Dowling of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers based in St Michael's, Parkhead.

They spoke about the involvement of religious in the Holy Year and specifically the celebration on the Feast of the Presentation 2025 in the cathedrals of Scotland for religious congregations.



Christmas at the Cathedral



THE Christmas season is one of the busiest times of the year in St Andrew's Cathedral.

To help *Flourish* readers plan ahead here is the calendar for the festive season:

Tuesday 24th December, Christmas Eve
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and first Mass of Christmas at 5:15pm**
 ■ **Midnight Mass at 12:00 midnight celebrated by Archbishop Nolan.**
 (Carols before Mass from 11.30pm)

Wednesday, 25th December, Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord
 ■ **Mass at 10am and 12 noon**
 ■ **No 5:15pm Mass**
 (The Cathedral will close after 12 noon Mass)

Thursday, 26th December, The Feast of St Stephen.
 The Cathedral will open at 12 noon
 ■ **Mass at 1pm**

Friday 27th December, Feast of St John.
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and 5:15pm**

Saturday 28th December, Feast of the Holy Innocents
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and Vigil Mass 5:15pm**

Sunday 29th, Feast of the Holy Family, Opening of the Holy Year

■ **Mass at 10am, 12 noon (celebrated by Archbishop Nolan) and 5:15pm**

Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st December
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and 5:15pm**

Wednesday 1st January, 2025
 Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God, World Day of Prayer for Peace
 ■ **Mass at 12 noon**
 ■ **No evening Mass**
 (The Cathedral will close after the 12 Noon Mass)

Thursday 2nd January
 ■ **Mass at 1pm**

Friday 3rd January
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and 5:15pm**

Saturday 4th January
 ■ **Mass at 1pm and Vigil Mass at 5:15pm**

Sunday 5th January, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Day of Prayer for Justice and Peace
 ■ **Mass at 10 am, 12 noon and 5:15pm**



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Fear reigns in Bethlehem this Christmas but hope will not die

THIS Christmas, children in the Holy Land aren't dreaming of gifts, nativity plays, or decorations – but rather roadblocks and bombs.

A heartbroken father shared, "My oldest daughter, only six and a half, asks me why they are killing children in Gaza. It's impossible to shield children from the horrors of war, and this constant exposure to death and destruction is impacting their mental health."

This Christmas there may be no celebrations in Bethlehem for a second year, however, Friends of the Holy Land are determined to keep hope alive for our brothers and sisters.

Since October 2023, up to 20% of schools in the West Bank have closed due to escalating violence. Many more children are unable to attend due to travel restrictions, school fees, or because they're simply too frightened to leave their homes.

A father in Bethlehem explained, "They are fearful that the military could come at any time."

Their fears are justified. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education, there have been 69 attacks on schools and over 2,350 incidents affecting students



Picture by Paul McSherry
Archbishop Nolan welcomed civic and ecumenical guests to the Cathedral for a prayer vigil and live link to Glasgow's twin city of Bethlehem

BY **BRENDAN METCALFE**
FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Our team on the ground sees the impact every day. We have funded critical therapy and counselling services to provide regular interventions, equipping more children with the tools to navigate the ongoing trauma of their daily lives.

Families

While other international organisations may remain stuck at borders or struggle to establish local connections on the ground, our local team know the families at

breaking point personally.

Over the past year, as well as keeping children in school and helping vocational studies, we have been able to provide medical care and trauma therapy, build wells, install water tanks, help small businesses start and restore the dignity of those unemployed. We have also helped other local Christian organisations maintain their social programmes.

Though Christmas celebrations may be cancelled in Bethlehem, our brothers and sisters there share our hope in Christ. With your help, we can ensure that hope shines brightly through the remarkable Christians who continue to witness for us.

As you spend time with your families this Christmas, we ask for your help so that we can continue to give Hope to the Children of Bethlehem.

McFarlane



8th 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.



School singers were true 'pilgrims of hope'

ST Andrew's Cathedral Organist, Des McLean, has delivered a big 'Thank You' to the 10 Glasgow schools who led the singing during Catholic Education Week Masses each day in the Cathedral.

And the young primary and secondary school singers showed the way with a musical preparation for the Holy Year.

Des said: "The pupils' full and active participation in the Masses was fabulous

and each school prepared and sang the new 2025 Jubilee Hymn 'Pilgrims of Hope' (See page 14 for music and text).

Vibrant

"The vibrant voices of pupils uplifted our worship, creating an atmosphere of reverence and joy. Whether through leading hymns or joining in communal prayers, their contributions reflected the strong faith that forms

the foundation of Catholic education in Glasgow.

"The participation of the schools in the Masses truly embodied the theme of Catholic Education Week – celebrating the richness of faith and the importance of community but also as true 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Their involvement not only enhanced the liturgical experience but also showcased the strength of our Catholic educational community."

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GIVING HOPE TO VULNERABLE CHRISTIANS

Christmas Appeal 2024



This Christmas there may be no celebrations in Bethlehem for a second year, but we are determined to keep **HOPE** alive for the region's children.

You can help our team and Christian partners as they respond to the immediate needs of children and young people while providing them with opportunities to heal, grow, and gain the vital skills they need to thrive.

Give a gift of **HOPE** this Christmas
Please give securely online at:
www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/christmas
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Celebrations for the church which started as an iron hut

THE parish of Our Lady and St George, Penilee, whose first church was a prefabricated Nissen hut erected by volunteers, has marked its 75th anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Archbishop Nolan.

Despite a post-war shortage of building materials, the first parishioners enlisted the help of Rolls Royce workers in Hillington to construct the corrugated iron building.

They then donated curtains which became altar frontals, chairs, tables, holy statues and gradually the building became a place of worship until 1958 when the new church was built.

The Nissen hut doubled as a church hall until it was

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

replaced by a new building in 2011.

Referring to the work of the early volunteers Archbishop Nolan said: "We need to honour these people – the ones over the past 75 odd years. Some we will know, some whose names we have heard of and others whose names have faded completely.

Quietly

"Even today while some carry out the more visible roles such as servers, cantors, musicians and so forth the parish depends for its very existence on people just working away quietly doing

so many different things.

"And of course, there are the people just coming along quietly to the church to say their prayers and help bring up their families in the faith as an encouragement to others to do the same.

"So today is a day to give thanks for God's goodness and to these people and all the good thing they do and have done for us. It's also a challenge to us – we too should be active in our parish.

"A parish is there obviously for our benefit but we are there in the parish so we can benefit others – it's a mutual relationship so we make that journey to God together."



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SPECIAL HOLY YEAR SUPPLEMENT



Jubilee logo is hymn to hope

THE Jubilee logo shows four stylised figures, representing all of humanity, coming from the four corners of the earth.

They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples.

The figure at the front is holding onto the cross. It is not only the sign of the faith which this lead figure embraces, but also of hope, which can never be abandoned, because we are always in need of hope, especially in our moments of greatest need.

The rough waves under the figures symbolise the

fact that life's pilgrimage does not always go smoothly in calm waters.

The lower part of the cross which has been elongated and turned into the shape of an anchor which is let down into the waves.

The anchor is well known as a symbol of hope.

The image illustrates the pilgrim's journey not as an individual undertaking, but rather as something communal.

At the bottom of the logo is the motto of the 2025 Jubilee Year: *Peregrinantes in Spem* (Pilgrims in hope) written in Latin in green – the colour of hope.

The history of Holy Years



THE concept of a Holy Year in the Catholic Church began in 1300 under Pope Boniface VIII (above), who proclaimed the first Jubilee Year.

It was meant to offer a special opportunity for pilgrims to visit the holy sites in Rome, receive a plenary indulgence to take away all punishment due for sins already confessed, and experience spiritual renewal.

Initially, these years were celebrated every 100 years, but Pope Clement VI short-

BY **RONNIE CONVERVY**

ened the interval to 50 years in 1350, and Pope Paul II further reduced it to every 25 years in 1475. Over time, the celebration became more frequent and more accessible to the global Catholic community.

A Holy Year is marked as a time of prayers, pilgrimages, and indulgences. The ultimate purpose is to inspire repentance, forgiveness, and a deeper commitment to the faith.



The tradition is tied to the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica in Rome, (and other Roman basilicas) which pilgrims pass through as a symbol of entering a time of spiritual grace.

Jubilee

The most recent 'extraordinary' Holy Year was declared by Pope Francis in 2015, emphasizing mercy and reconciliation as key themes. The 2025 Jubilee follows on from the great Jubilee of 2000 called by St John

Paul II (above) to usher the Church into the new millennium.

Holy Years serve as moments for Catholics worldwide to reflect, seek God's forgiveness, and renew their commitment to Christ and the Church. In this way, the history of the Holy Year has been a continuous call to personal and communal holiness for over 700 years.

Pope Francis has asked that the 2025 Jubilee be marked as the 'Jubilee of Hope'.

The church bells of Rome will peal as the Jubilee opens

THE 2025 Jubilee (or Holy Year) dedicated to Hope – will officially open on December 24, 2024 at 6pm UK time with the Opening of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St Peter by the Holy Father, who will then preside over the celebration of the Night Mass of the Lord's Birth inside the Basilica.

At the moment the door opens, bells will peal to proclaim the solemn moment, marking the beginning of a year of grace for the world.

It will be possible to follow the event only through the giant screens installed in St Peter's Square but also on television with live broadcasts scheduled by EWTN and Vatican Media. You can follow online



coverage here: <https://www.comunicazione.va/en/servizi/live.html>

The Holy Father wants

the Holy Year to be defined by the theme of Hope.

He said: "We must fan the flame of hope that has been

given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit,

a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.

"The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope."

On December 26, 2024, the feast of St Stephen, Pope Francis will open a Holy Door in the Roman prison of Rebibbia, marking a historic moment in the history of Jubilee years. It will be the first time that in addition to the Holy Doors opened in the four Roman Papal Basilicas – one will also be opened in a penal institution too.

On December 29, 2024,

the Holy Door of St John Lateran's Basilica – the Cathedral of Rome – will be opened, and ceremonies will be held in every Cathedral in the world to open the Holy Year in local dioceses.

On January 1, 2025, the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St Mary Major's will be opened. Finally, on Sunday, January 5, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls will be opened and the Jubilee will be fully operational.

It is expected that 35 million pilgrims will go to Rome to take part in the Holy Year events.

SPECIAL HOLY YEAR SUPPLEMENT

Archbishop will open the Holy Year in the Cathedral by blessing a new Jubilee cross

Luce is the Jubilee mascot

THE Holy Year of 2025 is to have its own mascot, in an appeal to young people and children who may not understand the Jubilee.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella – tasked by the Holy Father with organizing the 2025 Jubilee – officially presented the mascot “Luce” (Italian for ‘light’) just ahead of the start of celebrations.

The little female character, designed by the illustrator Simone Legno, brings with her a message of hope and welcome.

Luce is a pilgrim dressed as a typical traveler: a yellow anorak to protect herself from the elements, dirty boots that bear witness to the path she has already traveled, a



missionary cross around her neck and the pilgrim's staff in her hand.

Particularly evocative are Luce's eyes, which shine with an intense light: they symbolise the hope that is born in the heart of every pilgrim, and reflect the desire for spirituality and connection with the divine. They act as a reminder of the universal message of peace and brotherhood.

The choice of a mascot like Luce is part of a broader context, aimed at reaching new generations and promoting intergenerational dialogue. The mascot not only represents the Jubilee, but is also a symbol of community, of welcome and of sharing.

THE Holy Year which is about to begin will leave its mark on St Andrew's Cathedral... as the sanctuary area will play host to a newly commissioned cross for the next twelve months.

The Jubilee Year will open in every Cathedral of the world on Sunday December 29. The Vatican has drawn up a liturgical celebration which will see a special 'Jubilee Year Cross' placed in each Cathedral.

In Glasgow a new cross has been created which will be placed above the Archbishop's 'cathedra' or chair on the read wall of the sanctuary behind the altar throughout the Holy Year.

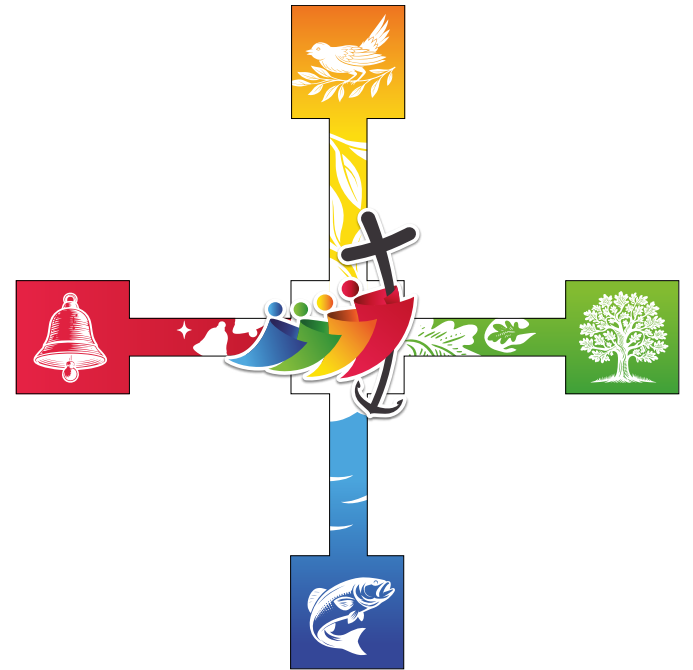
It will be a Greek cross (each arm of equal length) made of wood with the traditional symbols of St Mungo (bird, fish, bell and tree) represented at the ex-

tremities of the cross while at the centre the symbol of the 2025 Jubilee will feature bearing the image of 'Pilgrims of Hope'.

Mgr Paul Murray, the Archdiocesan chancellor, who has overseen the preparation of the cross said: "We hope that the Jubilee cross will be a striking reminder to all who enter the Cathedral of the special period of grace of the Holy Year."

"It will be suitably prominent when set against the marble of the sanctuary wall."

"When the Cathedral was being restored by Archbishop Conti, that space was left free for further consideration. The Holy Year offered us the opportunity to place a cross there which will act as a reminder to people of the traditions of our patron saint."



Two new saints for youth in Jubilee year

Acutis and Frassati to be canonised during the Holy Year of Hope: the ceremonies will take place on April 27 and August 3

YOUNG people across the world celebrated last month at the news that two patrons of youth will be canonised during the Holy Year.

"Next year, during the Jubilee of Adolescents, I will canonise Blessed Carlo Acutis and in the Jubilee of Young People, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati".

Pope Francis made the official announcement at the end of this week's general audience. Acutis will be declared a saint at a Mass on Sunday, April 27, 2025, the closing Mass for the Jubilee weekend dedicated to teens. Frassati, the young man from Turin, will be raised to the glory of the altars during the Mass on August 3, 2025, at the culmination of the much-anticipated Jubilee of Young People.

Last May 23, Pope Francis approved the decree for the canonisation of Carlo Acutis, the young layman from Lombardy in northern Italy, famed for his love of the Eucharist and his passion for technology, who has been defined by many as "an influencer of holiness". Acutis was born in 1991 and died in 2006 of fulminant leukemia, and even dur-



BY RONNIE CONVERY

ing his lifetime was famed for his sanctity. He was beatified by Pope Francis on October 10, 2020, in Assisi where he is buried.

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in 1901, and died at just 24 years old. He was a student from Turin, also in northern Italy, a Dominican tertiary and was very active in the Catholic Action movement, in Fuci (the Italian Catholic students' organisation) and with the Vincenzians.

He is one of the best known and best loved blessings among young Catholics,

and is considered one of the Italian "social" saints, because of his life completely dedicated to the most needy. He came from a wealthy family, the son of Alfredo Frassati, who was the editor of *La Stampa*, Turin's famous newspaper, and his short life was devoted to prayer and helping the vulnerable.

Mountains

He is also famed as the "saint of the peaks", because he loved climbing mountains, accompanying his friends to the highest peaks, so as to see the sky better. He would end his many letters to friends with the phrase

"Duc in Altum" (Put out into the deep) and was known as the "boy of the eight beatitudes". He was beatified by Saint John Paul II in 1990.

Canonisations have always played an important role in the history of Holy Years.

Among others were the canonisation of Mother Teresa of Calcutta by Pope Francis in 2016, during the Jubilee of Mercy; Sister Faustina Kowalska, canonised by Pope John Paul II in the Great Jubilee of 2000; and Saint Maria Goretti, elevated to the glory of the altars in the Jubilee of 1950 by Pope Pius XII.

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JUBILEE 2025

CALENDAR OF MAJOR EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024

24 December
Opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica



Photo Vatican Media

JANUARY 2025

24-26 January
Jubilee of the World of Communications

FEBRUARY 2025

8-9 February
Jubilee of Armed Forces, Police and Security Personnel

15-18 February
Jubilee of Artists

21-23 February
Jubilee of Deacons

MARCH 2025

8-9 March
Jubilee of the World of Volunteering

28 March
24 Hours for the Lord

28-30 March
Jubilee of the Missionaries of Mercy

APRIL 2025

5-6 April
Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers

25-27 April
Jubilee of Teenagers

28-29 April
Jubilee of People with Disabilities

MAY 2025

1-4 May
Jubilee of Workers

4-5 May
Jubilee of Entrepreneurs

10-11 May
Jubilee of Marching Bands

12-14 May
Jubilee of the Eastern Churches

16-18 May
Jubilee of Confraternities

30 May - 1 June
Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly



JUNE 2025

7-8 June
Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities

9 June
Jubilee of the Holy See

14-15 June
Jubilee of Sport

20-22 June
Jubilee of Governments

23-24 June
Jubilee of Seminarians

25 June
Jubilee of Bishops

25-27 June
Jubilee of Priests

JULY 2025

28 July - 3 August
Jubilee of Youth

SEPTEMBER 2025

15 September
Jubilee of Consolation

20 September
Jubilee of Justice

26-28 September
Jubilee of Catechists

OCTOBER 2025

4-5 October
Jubilee of the Missions

4-5 October
Jubilee of Migrants

8-9 October
Jubilee of Consecrated Life

11-12 October
Jubilee of Marian Spirituality

31 October - 2 November
Jubilee of the World of Education



NOVEMBER 2025

16 November
Jubilee of the Poor

22-23 November
Jubilee of Choirs

DECEMBER 2025

14 December
Jubilee of Prisoners



SPES non confundit. "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5).

In the spirit of hope, the Apostle Paul addressed these words of encouragement to the Christian community of Rome. Hope is also the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years.

My thoughts turn to all those pilgrims of hope who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches.

For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope".

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.

Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt.

Happiness

Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope.

Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life.

A pilgrimage on foot is a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life.

In the coming year, pilgrims of



Each Jubilee is proclaimed through the publication of a Papal 'Bull of Indiction', generally written in Latin, bearing the seal of the Pope. The 2025 Holy Year Bull is identified by its initial words 'Spes non confundit' – Hope does not disappoint. Here is a summary of the Holy Father's letter.

hope will surely travel the ancient and more modern routes in order to experience the Jubilee to the full. In Rome itself, along with the usual visits to the catacombs and the Seven Churches, other itineraries of faith will be proposed.

Beauty

Journeying from one country to another as if borders no longer mattered and passing from one city to another in contemplating the beauty of creation and masterpieces of art, we learn to treasure the richness of different experiences and cultures, and are inspired to lift up that beauty, in prayer, to God, in thanksgiving for his wondrous works.

The Jubilee Churches along the

pilgrimage routes and in the city of Rome can serve as oases of spirituality and places of rest on the pilgrimage of faith, where we can drink from the wellsprings of hope, above all by approaching the sacrament of Reconciliation, the essential starting-point of any true journey of conversion.

In local Churches, special care should be taken to prepare priests and the faithful to celebrate the sacrament of Confession and to make it readily available in its individual form.

Sustained by this great tradition, and certain that the Jubilee Year will be for the entire Church a lively experience of grace and hope, I hereby decree that the Holy Door of the Basilica of

Saint Peter in the Vatican will be opened on 24 December 2024, thus inaugurating the Jubilee.

In addition to finding hope in God's grace, we are also called to discover hope in the signs of the times that the Lord gives us.

Signs of hope

The first sign of hope should be the desire for peace in our world, which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war... May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called "children of God".

Looking to the future with hope also entails having enthusiasm for life and a readiness to share it. Sadly, in many situations this is lacking. A first effect of this is the loss of the desire to transmit life.

A number of countries are experiencing an alarming decline in the birthrate as a result of today's frenetic pace, fears about the future, the lack of job security and adequate social policies... the desire of young people to give birth to new sons and

daughters as a sign of the fruitfulness of their love ensures a future for every society. This is a matter of hope: it is born of hope and it generates hope.

During the Holy Year, we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind. I think of prisoners who, deprived of their freedom, daily feel the harshness of detention and its restrictions, lack of affection and, in more than a few cases, lack of respect for their persons.

In every part of the world, believers, and their Pastors in particular, should be one in demanding dignified conditions for those in prison, respect for their human rights and above all the abolition of the death penalty, a provision at odds with Christian faith and one that eliminates all hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation.

Signs of hope should also be shown to the sick, at home or in hospital. Their sufferings can be allayed by the closeness and af-

fection of those who visit them.

Signs of hope should also be present for migrants who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families. Their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection.

The elderly, who frequently feel lonely and abandoned, also deserve signs of hope. Esteem for the treasure that they are, their life experiences, their accumulated wisdom and the contribution that they can still make, is incumbent on the Christian community and civil society, which are called to cooperate in strengthening the covenant between generations.

Poor

I ask with all my heart that hope be granted to the billions of the poor, who often lack the essentials of life. Before the constant tide of new forms of impoverishment, we can easily grow inured and resigned. Yet we must not close our eyes to the dramatic situations that we now

encounter all around us.

The reality of death, as a painful separation from those dearest to us, cannot be mitigated by empty rhetoric. The Jubilee, however, offers us the opportunity to appreciate anew, and with immense gratitude, the gift of the new life that we have received in Baptism, a life capable of transfiguring death's drama.

What, then, will become of us after death? With Jesus, beyond this threshold we will find eternal life, consisting in full communion with God as we forever contemplate and share in his infinite love. All that we now experience in hope, we shall then see in reality.

We are reminded of the words of Saint Augustine: "When I am one with you in all my being, there will be no more pain and toil; my life shall be true life, a life wholly filled by you". What will characterize this fullness of communion? Being happy. Happiness is our human vocation, a goal to which all aspire.

We should indeed prepare ourselves consciously and soberly for the moment when our lives will be judged, but we must always do this from the standpoint of hope, the theological virtue that sustains our lives and shields them from groundless fear.

The judgement of God, who is love, will surely be based on love, and in particular on all that we have done or failed to do with regard to those in need, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present.

Jubilee indulgence

The Jubilee indulgence, thanks to the power of prayer, is intended in a particular way for those who have gone before us, so that they may obtain full mercy. The sacrament of Penance assures us that God wipes away our sins...

Still, as we know from personal experience, every sin leaves its mark. In our humanity, weak and attracted by evil, certain residual effects of sin remain. These are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, "is himself our 'indulgence'".

The coming Jubilee will thus be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God.

May it help us to recover the confident trust that we require, in the Church and in society, in our interpersonal relationships, in international relations, and in our task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God's gift of creation.

Open the doors to hope ...

The Holy Doors of Rome



THE four great basilicas of Rome will each have a Holy Door opened to mark the start of the Holy Year. Pilgrims passing through the Holy Door can gain the Jubilee plenary indulgence.

St Peter's

According to tradition the tomb in which the Apostle Peter was buried after his crucifixion was situated here, and so it was on this spot, in the 4th century, that Emperor Constantine decided to build the basilica.

During the High Middle Ages, this place of worship became the main pilgrimage destination of the Western world. In 1506, Pope Julius II decided to demolish the original structure to replace it with a larger and grander worship space.

Some of the greatest artists in history were involved in the construction and decoration of this hugely impressive basilica: Bramante, Raphael, and Michelangelo among others. In 1629 Bernini finished the internal decoration of the whole church, creating its present look.



St John Lateran's

The Archbasilica of The Most Holy Saviour and of Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist, commonly known as St John Lateran, is situated in the area of the Caelian Hill. It is the Cathedral of Rome.

The Basilica, consecrated in 324 by Pope Sylvester I, was dedicated to The Most Holy Saviour. In the 9th century Pope Sergius III also dedicated it to Saint John the Baptist and in the 12th century Pope Lucius II added Saint John the Evangelist to the title.

In 1650, Pope Innocent X commissioned a wholesale reconstruction the Basilica, entrusting the work to Francesco Borromini.



St Paul's Outside the Walls

After the edict of Milan of 313, which granted Christians freedom of worship, Emperor Constantine decided to donate two basilicas to the Church, erected on the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul.

This basilica is built over St Paul's grave. In the 5th century, the constant flow of pilgrims was too much for the original basilica to cope with, and a larger building was constructed.

It was only in 1854 that Pope Pius IX inaugurated the present monumental basilica which contains the chain, which, according to tradition, bound the Apostle Paul to the Roman soldier who was guarding him while he was imprisoned awaiting trial.



St Mary Major's

The Papal Basilica of St Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) is the oldest and most important Marian sanctuary Christendom and is the only one of the Papal Basilicas to have maintained its early Christian appearance.

The Basilica is home to the most important of all Marian icons, the Salus Populi Romani (Our Lady Saviour of the Roman People). Tradition attributes the artwork to St Luke the Evangelist and patron of painters.

Pope Francis places all his apostolic journeys under the protection of Our Lady, stopping off to pray at the icon before his departure from Rome and again on his return.



JUBILEE HYMN

Holy Year hymn is an anthem to hope

A RELATIVELY recent tradition of Holy Years is the publication of an official hymn for the Jubilee.

For the 2025 Holy Year a hymn has been written (in Italian) and translated into many languages.

It is offered to parishes and groups as a musical accompaniment to their celebration of the Jubilee of

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** 2025.

The melody is simple and can easily be picked up by a congregation.

The Jubilee, which in itself is expressed as an event of people on pilgrimage to the Holy Door, here uses music as one of the ways of expressing its motto, "Pilgrims of Hope".

Many themes of the Holy Year are woven into the text written by Pierangelo Sequeri and set to music by Francesco Meneghello.

First of all, the motto, "Pilgrims of Hope", is echoed, then the themes of creation, fraternity, God's tenderness and hope in our destination are expressed in the language of our time.



Pilgrims of Hope Hymn for the Jubilee Year 2025

Original text: Pierangelo Sequeri

English translation: Andrew Wadsworth

Music: Francesco Meneghello

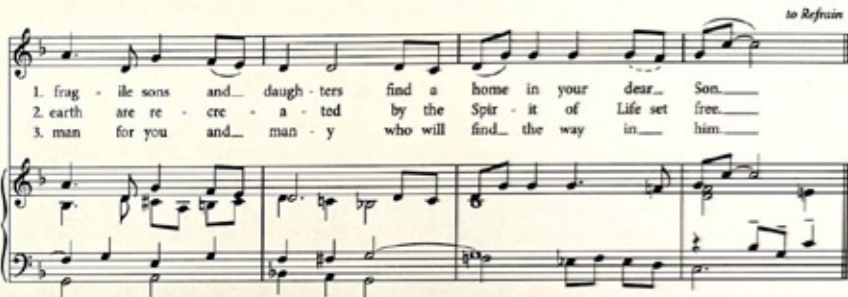
With Confidence (♩ = c. 69)
INTRODUCTION



REFRAIN



VERSES



Pilgrims of Hope

HYMN FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR 2025

*Like a flame my hope is burning,
may my song arise to you:
Source of life that has no ending,
on life's path I trust in you.*

**Ev'ry nation, tongue, and people
find a light within your Word.
Scattered fragile sons and daughters
find a home in your dear Son.**

Like a flame ...

**God, so tender and so patient,
dawn of hope, you care for all.
Heav'n and earth are recreated
by the Spirit of Life set free.**

Like a flame ...

**Raise your eyes, the wind is blowing,
for our God is born in time.
Son made man for you and many
who will find the way in him.**

Like a flame ...

THE HOLY YEAR INDULGENCE

New approach makes the Jubilee indulgence an option for everyone


SOCIAL MEDIA

PENANCE

CARE FOR POOR

PRAYER

As Holy Year tradition dictates, pilgrims passing through the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica during the Holy Year, going to confession, receiving Communion and praying for the intentions of the Pope can receive an indulgence...

But Pope Francis has made changes to ensure the Jubilee indulgence is not available only in the eternal city.

In a decree released by the Vatican a surprising number of new ways are listed to gain the Holy Year indulgence such as visiting inmates in prison, assisting migrants and refugees or even fasting from Twitter!

Fasting "at least for one day of the week from futile distractions" such as social media can be a means of obtaining a jubilee indulgence, according to norms published by the Vatican.

For centuries a feature of holy year celebrations has been the Holy Year plenary indulgence – the removal of all punishment due for sins forgiven in confession and the weakening of the scar left by sin on our psyche.

Every sin 'leaves its mark' even after a person has received forgiveness and absolution through the sacrament of reconciliation, Pope Francis writes.

The norms for receiving an indulgence during the Holy Year were issued by Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, the head of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

The basic conditions are that a person is "moved by a spirit of charity," is "purified through the sacrament of penance and refreshed by Holy Communion" and prays for the Pope's intentions. Along with a pilgrimage, a work of mercy or an act of penance, a Catholic "will be able to obtain from the treasury of the Church a plenary indulgence, with remission and forgiveness of all their sins, which can be applied in suffrage to the souls in Purgatory."

The Rome pilgrimage can be to the papal basilicas. Other churches in Italy are also named as Jubilee churches, including the Basilica of Our Lady of Loreto and the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi.

Pilgrims to the Holy Land



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

can receive the Holy Year indulgence by praying at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem or the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

For those who cannot travel abroad, local bishops around the world can designate their cathedral or another church or sacred place for pilgrims to obtain the indulgence.

Elderly

People who are unable to travel outside "especially cloistered nuns and monks, but also the elderly, the sick, prisoners and those who, through their work in hospitals or other care facilities, provide continuous service to the sick" can spiritually join a pilgrimage and receive the indulgence, according to the norms.

Visiting the sick or a prisoner, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked or welcoming a migrant, "in a sense making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them," can be another way to receive the indulgence.

"The Jubilee Plenary Indulgence can also be obtained through abstaining on Fridays from "futile distractions" like social media or from "superfluous consumption" by not eating meat.

"Supporting works of a religious or social nature, especially in support of the defence and protection of life in all its phases," helping a young person in difficulty or a recently-arrived migrant or immigrant – anything involving "dedicating a reasonable portion of one's free time to voluntary activities that are of service to the community or to other similar forms of personal commitment" also are paths toward an indulgence, according to the decree.

■ You can read the full Decree on the Holy Year indulgence here:



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SPECIAL REPORT FROM SCIAF'S REPRESENTATIVE AT COP29

Climate summit has left the world's poorest countries short-changed

THE COP29 climate conference drew to a close in the early hours of a late November Sunday morning in Baku, Azerbaijan. Three years on since the world came to Glasgow to try to renew a deal to save the planet, at COP29 world leaders met to discuss a deal for the cash to fund climate action.

Unfortunately, the deal reached has been widely criticised as inadequate by the poorest countries in the world. SCIAF is now deeply concerned about what this deal means for the people we support.

Some people I know wonder why SCIAF is so concerned about climate change. For many people, climate change has more to do with recycling, polar bears or trees and birds than it does to do with serving the poorest people overseas.

However, the reality is that climate change is now the number one threat facing the communities that SCIAF serves. Climate change is hurting the poorest people in the world already, and it's only going to get worse unless something is done and done quickly.

At SCIAF, we are deeply passionate about providing long-term solutions to global poverty and injustice. We believe in giving a hand-up, not a hand-out; in teaching people to fish rather than giving them fish to eat, so to speak.

In recent years, we've had to contend with the challenge that the river no longer has fish for people to catch – because it's warmed due to climate change. People no longer are safe to live by that river, because it bursts its banks every year now, flooding their homes. Their homes aren't secure either, as climate change is bringing increasingly devastating cyclones, which blow the roofs off, and folks don't have enough money to repair them.

Therefore, we at SCIAF believe it's vital that we help advocate on behalf of these



BY **BEN WILSON**
SCIAF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
DIRECTOR

communities to call on the powerful to do all they can to tackle the climate emergency.

At COP29, I attended on behalf of SCIAF as an official observer of the talks. Working together with Caritas colleagues from Caritas USA, Australia, Zambia, Malawi and Brazil, we followed the negotiations and put forward our case to our leaders there on the deal that we hoped COP29 would achieve.

We worked closely with the Vatican's delegation too, who were part of the negotiations in Baku, bringing Pope Francis' message which had been delivered by Cardinal Parolin at the beginning of the conference.

Through our partners, SCIAF has deep understanding and first-hand experience in how to address climate impacts with

communities. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we have expertise and understanding of the types of things that can be done to help people to weather the storms of climate change, to endure flooding and cyclones, and build back better from disasters.

We took these case studies to negotiators at COP29, trying to help make the case for why the conference needed to agree a deal that worked for the world's poorest people.

Disappointed

COP29 drew to a close and many countries were left disappointed. The world's poorest countries had arrived in Baku pleading for \$1.3tr package to help them grow greener countries, adapt to and recover from the impacts of climate change.

Unfortunately, the deal reached was only for \$300bn by 2035, far short of what is needed, and crucially mostly made up of loans rather than grants.

In many of the countries SCIAF works in, governments are burdened with huge national debt, some paying more on interest payments to big banks than they are for their own health and education services. Therefore, the deal reached at COP29 might spell more debt crisis for the poorest countries, something that will have a terrible human impact.



In these dark days, when we see increasing conflict around us and the breakdown of international co-operation, it can be hard to remain hopeful.

However, if there is anything that is keeping me optimistic it is the determination of the youth of the world that was on display at

COP29.

I was proud to attend COP alongside young people from Malawi, from Zambia, from Rwanda, Latin America and the Pacific, all of whom had a deep passion for combating the climate crisis and building a better world for the future.

Our generation has a duty

not to fail future, unborn generations from whom we are only borrowing the earth.

As we look forward to COP30 in Brazil next year, I hope our leaders remember that the world is watching them, and that young people across the world are counting on them to deliver.

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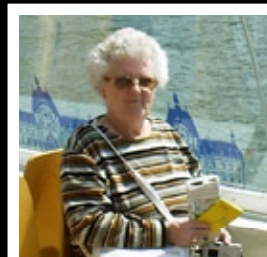
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It's OK to fear both birth and death

SOME years ago, a friend was facing the birth of her first child. While happy that she was soon to be a mother, she confessed openly her fears about the actual birth process, the pain, the dangers, the unknown.

But she consoled herself with the thought that hundreds of millions of women have experienced giving birth and managed it. Surely, she felt she could manage it too.

I sometimes take those words and apply them to the prospect of dying. Death is the most daunting, unsettling, and heaviest topic there is, our occasional false bravado notwithstanding.

When we say that we are not afraid of dying, mostly we're whistling in the dark and, even there, the tune comes out easier when our own death remains still an abstract idea, something in the indefinite future.

Full disclosure, my own thoughts about dying no doubt fit that description, whistling in the dark. But why not? Surely whistling in the dark is better than torturing ourselves with unnecessary fear.

And so, I employ my friend's methodology for steeling her courage in the

face of having to give birth and face that unknown. Simply put, millions and millions of people have managed the process of dying, so I should be able to manage it too!

Moreover, unlike giving birth to a child, which affects less than half the human race, in the case of dying, everyone, including myself, is going to have to manage it. A hundred years from now, everyone reading these words will have had to manage his or her death.

So, here's a way to look at our own death: Billions and billions of people have managed this, men, women, children, even babies.

Some were old, some were young; some were prepared, some were not; some welcomed it, some met it with bitter resistance; some died from natural causes, some died through violence; some died surrounded by love, some died alone without any human love surrounding them; some died peacefully, some died crying out in fear; some died at a ripe old age, some died in the prime of their youth...

Some suffered for years from a seemingly meaningless dementia with those around them wondering why God and nature seemed

Scribblings of the spirit

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



cruel in keeping them alive; others in robust physical health with seemingly everything to live for, took their own lives; some died full of faith and hope, and some died feeling only darkness and despair. But every one of them somehow managed it, the great unknown, the greatest of all unknowns. It seems it can be managed.

Moreover, nobody has come back from the other world with horror stories

about dying which suggests that all our horror movies about being tormented after death and ghosts and haunted houses are pure fiction, through and through.

Most people, I suspect, have the same experience that I have when I think about the dead, particularly about persons I have known who have died. The initial grief and sadness of their loss eventually wears off and is replaced by an inchoate

sense that it's alright, that they are alright, and that death has in some strange way washed things clean.

In the end, we have a pretty good feeling about our dead loved ones and about the dead in general, even if their departure from this earth was far from ideal, as for instance if they died angry, or through immaturity, or because they committed a crime, or by suicide. Somehow it eventually all washes clean and what remains is the inchoate sense, a solid intuition, that wherever they are now, they are in better and safer hands than our own.

When I was a young seminarian we once had to translate Cicero's treatise on aging and dying from Latin into English. I was 19 at the time, but was very taken by Cicero's thoughts on why we shouldn't fear death. He was a renowned stoic; but, in the end, his lack of fear of dying was a little like my friend's approach to giving birth, that is, given how universal it is, we should be able to manage it!

Our faith tells us that, given the love and benevolence of the God we believe in, only the second option, happiness, awaits us. And we already intuit that.

The joys of a Christmas mum

Mary's musings

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



If you've never uttered the immortal line "Christmas, I could see it far enough" I'll wager you are not of the fairer sex.

When I say fairer sex, you'll appreciate that's a euphemism for the shopping, cleaning, organising branch of the human family.

I'm not talking about the birth of the Child Jesus, but the festive extravaganza of gift-giving and partying. Also the bonus ball of tidying up in the cyclonic aftermath and, if you're doing your shopping online, the hauling of copious cardboard boxes to the dump.

We career around the shops like caffeine-addicted squirrels. The shops themselves are veritable petri dishes of useless tat which we are buying like Christmas is going out of fashion.

It's not just the shopping.

It's the menu planning, the wrapping, the cards, and when we manage to get ahead of the game, the cleaning in corners nobody will ever look near. That was one Christmas around 2003.

Crackers. It's not Christmas without crackers. If there has ever been an expenditure with less return on investment, I'd like to see it. All you get for your money is a not remotely funny joke or riddle, a paper hat that you will wear only under sufferance, and some sort of item whose only purpose it to add to the seasonal debris.

All this preparation culminates in the mammy, beads of perspiration dripping onto her rictus smile, gamely butchering an innocent bird. It's not even an especially flavourful bird.

I have long maintained,

if turkey was such a succulent and tasty dinner, we'd be eating it with more regularity than once every 365 days. Yet, in my family, if it's not ordered by mid-November, we feel the panic rising.

Then you have to contend with the lie we are sold by social media. In Christmas past I would treat myself to a lifestyle magazine, offering a, thankfully finite, number of pages of perfect homes. I'd flick through it in the occasional idle moment, pick up some ideas, give them my best shot, and be mightily pleased with the results, however lacking they might be.

Now our Yuletide fantasies are fuelled by Instagram. Impeccable homes and tables so laden with food they would do justice to a Jacobean banquet.

For me, part of the wonder of Advent is how quickly the mood can shift.

If I find myself overwhelmed at the self-imposed demands of the season all it takes is a choir of carol singers and I'm reduced to tears. A rendition of Silent Night or O Holy



Night and the emphasis shifts, in a flash, from the secular to the sacred.

It's a reminder that while I'm not, as I promised myself, uber-organised, it's of no consequence. My Christmas shopping is starting as late as it ever has and the wrapping will likely be done

on Christmas Eve. None of it matters.

Advent is upon us and we await the birth of the Christ Child in joy and prayerful anticipation.

I wish you and all those dear to you a happy Christmas and all the best for the coming year.

The Holy Year is intended to help us to grow in holiness!

LOOKING for a prayer to pray as we get ready for the Jubilee Year?

Pope Francis has released the official Jubilee prayer. It's available in nearly 20 different languages on the official Jubilee website so people around the world can pray it with one heart in many voices.

In the first section, we call to mind the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity that we receive as gifts from God, infused in our souls. We can pray for an increase of these virtues and work with God to activate them in our lives.

The second section calls to mind the parable of the Sower and our mission to

spread the gospel.

We might be sowing seeds that we never see grow into full flower. Or we may be sowing seeds for someone else to harvest! But we do our part in humility, trusting in the Lord that he will be faithful to his promises.

It might be easy to lose hope if we keep our eyes focused on this life and our current age with its problems and anxieties. But as the Jubilee theme reminds us, we are called to hope in the new heaven and the new earth, trusting that the Lord works all things for good, and having faith that one day our present trials will be transformed into glory.

The third section of the

Jubilee prayer asks that this special Holy Year, which is about to begin, can be an impetus of grace both in our own lives and throughout the world.

The Holy Year is not just a ritual or a tradition in a far-away place called Rome. It is meant to impact on our own lives here in Scotland.

In practice that means growing closer to God next year, by trying to pray more and pray better and it also means we should commit to small acts of charity during the year, finding ways to dedicate this Jubilee of 2025 in a special way to the Lord.

The graces are ready to be given! Let's not waste this opportunity!



ART OF THE MONTH

A winter painting with a secret ingredient: hope

AT first glance, this winter scene seems merely to depict a bustling Flemish village, its icy air alive with the rhythms of daily life; depicting its struggles, and its hopes.

But the ordinary contains the extraordinary.

What mastery lies within the painting... you can almost feel the cold! In the midst of the despair that Bruegel was living through, and portraying in this work, lies hope. Hope in a baby.

One might miss that that the Holy Family are there. But they are! In the centre, near the bottom of the painting. Mary and Joseph, humble travellers ignored by the crowd, make their way to Bethlehem to fulfil a decree from an indifferent

BY MGR TOM
MONAGHAN

empire.

A busy, crowded town with everyone going about their business, rushing here and

there, not noticing the couple. Joseph leads them both, unobserved, quietly through the snow. Mary's blue cloak is a symbol of the divinity that she carries within her.

Joseph, leading the group, carries his carpenter tools with him. The Woman, sitting on the donkey that will keep them company in the stable, was about to give birth to the Saviour; and no one noticed.

The ox knows and he looks out of the painting

directly at us as if asking, 'Do you know, do you have understanding?'

The census, perhaps, suggests systems that value numbers over souls, control over compassion. Yet even

in this, we find hope.

The Holy Family's journey reminds us that within the darkest winters of our lives, a light still seeks to be born – a light that cannot be extinguished by "man's inhu-

manity to man." Gaze upon *The Census at Bethlehem*, and affirm, not only the worth of others but the enduring hope that lies within us all. In the midst of despair, it seems, lies hope.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Census at Bethlehem*, 1566

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, in the quiet of winter's embrace, we glimpse Your presence. May our hearts rise in hope to welcome Your Son. Teach us to trust in the promise of new life. Guide our steps through the cold shadows of waiting until we stand in the warmth of Your eternal dawn. Transform our longing into joy and our winter into the spring of Your love. This, we ask, through Christ your Son. Amen.

New Mass reading translations can give us fresh insights into the Christmas story

WE are beginning to hear the new translation of the readings at Mass this month.

In some ways, they are quite familiar – they are the same passages from the Bible that we've been hearing for a long time, after all – but maybe we're having to listen a bit harder, hearing them in a new way.

There may be some unfamiliar phrases, some more formal language. Maybe hearing them differently makes us think of them in a new way too. And maybe that's a good thing, preventing us from thinking we've heard it all before!

God's word should always be fresh and there are always surprises for us if we listen carefully, no matter how familiar they are.

Maybe it's not only the words on the page that should be new – maybe we all need fresh ears to listen from time to time as well. Hearing the word and letting it impact our lives will be an important theme as we listen to Luke's Gospel on the Sundays of this new liturgical year.

Third Sunday of Advent, C

As always in Advent, the middle two Sundays present us with John the Baptist. This Sunday, we meet John teaching the crowds about what preparing for the Lord's coming will mean for them. His message is supremely practical.

Here, there's a subtle change from the previous translation. We used to hear



Fr Tom Kilbride

Rector of the Royal Scots College,
Salamanca, Spain

the various groups asking John "What must we do?"

Now we hear the question translated more literally: "What shall we do?" The question is more direct. It sounds like less like seeking advice and more like a statement of intent. It seems to imply a commitment to a path already chosen.

The people have chosen to prepare for the Lord and want to know what it will involve for them. The answers are specific to those who ask it, but they all focus on justice and relations with others.

So, in our case, "What shall we do?" What is our intent and what will we do to carry it out? Clearly, preparing for the Lord's coming means acting justly and generously towards others. Luke calls this "good news" as John preaches it. It shouldn't be a strain on us, but something positive: fairness and generosity are joyful proclamations of God's kingdom among us, not burdens imposed on us!

Fourth Sunday of Advent, C

In the final week of Advent, including on the Sunday, we hear of the events leading up to the birth of

Jesus. On Saturday (21st December) and again on Sunday we hear the story of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth.

The new translation hints at the breathless pace of the story, as every action is linked by "and" (six times in seven short lines!). We almost stumble over the phrases "with haste" as things unfold so rapidly, and we only stop for breath when Elizabeth cries out her greeting to Mary, "Blessed are you among women!"

The "haste" suggests excitement and spontaneity, but also a readiness to act on God's word, to believe what God had spoken. This is seen in Elizabeth, in Mary and in John, hidden but leaping in the womb of his mother. All three recognise the amazing things God is doing, and which are about to burst forth.

Elizabeth also recognises that the tiniest one among them is her "Lord", the first in Luke's Gospel to call him that (the Christmas angels will do so later as well), and he is not even born yet! What faith she has in the unseen work of God, and what excitement it elicits from her, from Mary and from John!

Christmas Day, C

The readings of Christmas night and the "Dawn" Mass come from Luke's Gospel, with its focus on the sim-



Giotto, Nativity, ca. 1304

licity, even poverty, of Jesus' coming into the world.

His family is far from home, his bed is a manger, and his first visitors are shepherds. Poor and outcast, they are the first to hear the "good news of great joy" as heaven is lit up with joy. Moreover, this good news "will be for all the people". It is to be shared, and we hear the shepherds doing just that in the first Mass of Christmas Day.

In fact, all the Masses of Christmas, in their different texts, insist on telling others what God has prom-

ised and has done. "I will not keep silent" says Isaiah at the Vigil Mass, and the news spreads from there. Indeed, the watchmen "lift up their voice" and Jerusalem "breaks forth into singing".

Even the Gospel of the Day Mass, which takes us to John's famous opening reflection on the Word made Flesh, John comes "as a witness" to all that God is doing.

Christmas is a feast which so many people celebrate, even with no faith context. Maybe we're being invited to be "joyful messengers" and "witnesses to the light" to share the good news with them!

The Christmas Feasts, Year C

One person who unites all of these Sundays and feasts, and about whom we hear much in the readings over the Christmas season, is Mary. She is one who "treasures" and "ponders" these things in her heart, in texts we hear at Christmas, on the Sunday (Holy Family) and on her own feast day on New Year's Day.

Mary is presented in Year C as a woman of prayer, open to the word of God, responding to it "with haste"

and pondering all that is being brought about by God in her life and in the lives of those around her.

If we use the suggested readings for Year C for the feast of the Holy Family, we also meet Hannah, another woman of faith and of prayer, who goes to the Temple to dedicate her son, Samuel, to God's service. He would be a great prophet and would eventually anoint King David, Jesus's great ancestor.

On the feast of Mary, Mother of God, we honour her place in the story not only of Jesus, but in the story of God's love for us all, as our Mother too, who dedicates all of us to service of God, prays for us and guides us.

As we begin a new year – and 2025 is named a Holy Year – maybe we can renew our dedication to God, to our faith and to living it as Mary did, with joy, with love, filled with the Holy Spirit and rooted in prayer, pondering the wonderful things God does for us even now.

And, like John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and the shepherds, share the joy of God's word with others this year too. May God be gracious and bless us throughout these feasts and all through the year ahead!

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The priest, the player and the pundit

THE accolade 'larger than life' may often be applied to people who don't really merit it. However, recently a Passionist priest, Fr Myles Kavanagh, died at Holy Cross, Ardoyne, in Belfast, aged 89, and, if anything, 'larger than life' barely scrapes the surface.

He was actually a Dublin man, from around the Mount Argus area, but, while for short periods he lived in other communities and held other roles, without doubt, it will be his work at Holy Cross, Ardoyne, in Belfast, for which he will be forever remembered.

He received many awards and great recognition from places far and wide for this work, to which he tirelessly gave his life; work that accomplished real change and made a huge difference to people's lives, especially during what we call The Troubles.

Fr Myles committed himself to the reconciliation of a divided community through economic and social inclu-



Fr Frank's log

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

sion.

He was responsible for establishing the Flax Trust, turning an old linen mill into a thriving business centre, establishing a wide variety of projects and providing help to many charities.

He even took his message and vision to America and founded the Flax Trust/America in 1980, which provided funding for many other projects.

As I say, I'm not even scratching the surface here, but, if a Passionist is meant to reach out to suffering humanity, seeing the suffering Christ, and the Passion of Christ, in each one of them, then that's what Fr Myles did for the broken people of North Belfast during those

troubled times. May he rest in peace.

ON MONDAY OF this week, on the eve of his 75th birthday, I called in to see my older brother, Hugh, the doyen of Scottish sports journalists, just to bring him a card and a nice bottle of red wine, as I knew he would be spending the day itself with his much-loved wife, children and grandchildren.

Amongst the many things we spoke about, and caught up on, he was telling me of the privilege it had been for him to be asked to give the eulogy at the funeral of Celtic legend Tommy Callaghan at St Dominic's in Bishopbriggs.

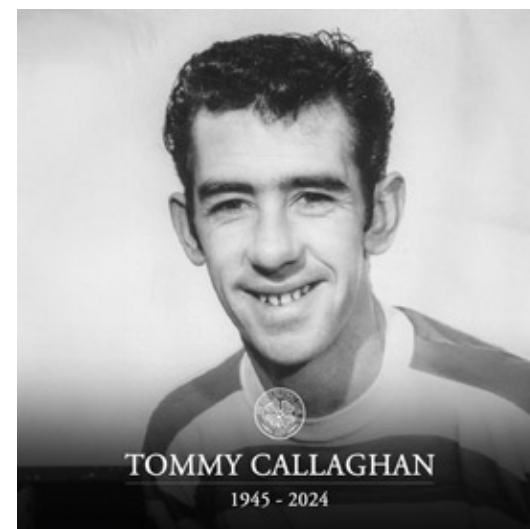
This had been requested

by Tommy's widow, and fully endorsed by his son, also called Tommy.

I don't know if you would call Tommy Callaghan larger than life, but, as Brendan Rodgers pointed out, if Jock Stein signs you twice (once for Dunfermline and once for Celtic), then there has to be something pretty special about you.

By sheer coincidence, I had to celebrate a daily Mass in St Dominic's a couple of months ago. In the sacristy after Mass a man came in to introduce himself, and to tell me he knew my brother. It was Tommy Callaghan!

I had never met him before, but I had so often watched him play with such grace and skill. Hugh had many great stories to tell in his eulogy but, while some of these stories were, naturally, about Tommy's impressive career as a player and manager, others were about Tommy's great faith, that nobody he ever played with, or managed, were



ever left in any doubt about. May his good soul, too, rest in peace.

IN THE LAST couple of days, a number of people have asked me if I listened to Super Scoreboard on Radio Clyde on the night of Hugh's 75th birthday. Hugh wasn't on that night. At that time, he would have been enjoying a nice celebration meal, probably Indian, with his good lady wife, after cake with his grandchildren, and I wasn't able to tune in anyway.

But it seems that someone phoned in who was on his way to hospital, after the birth of his first son. The conversation between the caller and the panel then

centered around whether this child might be named Hugh (or Shug, as he was sometimes called in his younger days), after my brother, as they would now share a birthday.

I did, however, tune in the next night on my way home in the car, and it turns out that, very sensibly, the couple decided to call the baby Jack!

Could my brother ever be described as larger than life? I don't think so, nor would he wish to be, but he certainly keeps lots of folk provided with stuff to talk about.

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

We really deserve to read better news

AFTER working for decades as a journalist, I now sometimes feel ashamed of that profession.

It heartened me when in November, 101 BBC employees accused the broadcaster of favouring Israel in its news coverage, and in total, more than 230 members of the media signed a letter to the BBC asking the corporation to "recommit to fairness, accuracy, and impartiality" over its reporting on Gaza.

This came just after I spoke at an Israel Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD) conference in Edinburgh. They had asked me to address whether the media can be mobilised against Israeli apartheid and for Palestinian rights. I can't say that I could offer too much hope.

When I was covering conflicts in Europe and the Far East, the travel costs were sometimes covered by an airline.

This once led to a bizarre situation in Thailand when I was sent to report on the camps flooded by refugees from both sides of the civil war in what was then briefly known as Kampuchea, and which became Cambodia. The photographer and I had to fit into our schedule not only harrowing interviews with Red Cross personnel and the victims of Pol Pot's savage regime,

but also produce a glowing tourist article to satisfy the Thai airline!

In the Falkland, Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, colleagues who were "embedded" with the British Army (the jargon for the Army accommodating journalists) saw those conflicts from the viewpoint of their hosts.

In the early days after October 7, 2023, Jeremy Bowen of the BBC was embedded with the Israeli army.

There are many factors working against all journalists in the current Middle East situation, starting with the fact that they are banned by Israel from entering Gaza and must rely either on Palestinian journalists or what we call "citizen journalists" – contacts within the territory with no



Marian Pallister

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

journalistic training – for their information and their video footage.

As someone in the audience at that ICAHD conference pointed out, few young people get their news from traditional media sources, relying instead on social media. That's not such a bad idea given that it isn't only the BBC which is offering questionable reports from the Middle East.

I told the audience about a post on social media that's doing the rounds now. It's

photographed against a newsstand and reads:

'Polite Notice: Customers are reminded that these newspapers are merely the opinions of a small group of billionaires desperate to influence public opinion and are not 100% factually reflecting reality. Please cross-reference everything you read. Thank you.'

That's not so far off the truth.

Three-quarters of national newspaper circulation has for too long been controlled by four families: Viscount Rothermere (owner of the *Mail* and *Met*), Rupert Murdoch (the *Sun* and *Times*), Evgeny Lebedev (London *Evening Standard*), and Frederick Barclay (*Telegraph* – now sold on to a right-leaning organisation).

There are news sources we can trust. But we could make a difference to the media showing bias if we make our voices heard, like those journalists who signed the letter to the BBC. Complain – let's demand that 2025 is a year of unbiased news.



Providing the professional touch and a traditional Scottish flavour for weddings, funerals and all other occasions for over 25 years.

Contact us with any questions or scan the code and send an enquiry instantly from your camera.

Remember to tell us you saw us in Flourish!



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As we fret about family Christmas celebrations, spare an Advent thought for Africa's mums-to-be

THE path to new life is not always an easy one.

My baby boy is the light of my life and all I've ever wanted.

Seeing him start to understand the world around him has made me slow down and appreciate the beauty of life around me too.

Yesterday, he noticed the moon for the first time, so together, we stood and smiled and pointed in awe under the glow of the sky.

My journey to get here was not easy, and I know this is the case for so many women, and often not spoken of. I had a few years of heartbreak before finally seeing my baby's tiny, beautiful heartbeat.

I was incredibly grateful to have an easy pregnancy with no complications. But still, I felt the weight of extreme worry throughout my pregnancy. Pregnancy

BY ELEANOR PORTER
SCIAF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT
OFFICER

is a blessing, but pregnancy can also be a time of worry – even when you're in Scotland with free and accessible healthcare and the hospital a 10-minute drive away.

In the throes of labour, I don't remember very much, but I do remember thinking about my wee gran who had ten children in the 60s; of how brave she was, and of how brave each and every woman who has had to endure pregnancy and labour is.

Last Advent, as my baby sat in his bouncer while I put my Christmas decorations up, I thought of Mary giving birth in a manger, and also, of women around the world who do not have access to a safe space to

have their baby.

It's a devastating reality that many women around the world still don't have access to a nearby hospital or clinic for check-ups and birth. Not having a safe sanctuary to bring your baby into the world with healthcare professionals nearby is almost impossible to imagine.

This year, SCIAF's Advent appeal centres around who gave birth in Zambia.

Sharon had an extremely traumatic experience; she and her baby nearly didn't make it. Sharon gave birth on a mattress on the floor of a dilapidated clinic. The room was in darkness. Sharon had no pain relief, clean water or privacy.

Thankfully, Sharon and her newborn son Joshua survived, but there were many other women and babies who tragically did not.

Thanks to donations to

SCIAF, our partners were able to support a clinic that is now stocked with safe medical equipment, beds for pregnant women, with nurses and healthcare assistants on hand. This makes me so proud of our partners in Zambia and of the people across Scotland for their generous donations that make this life-saving work possible.

Childbirth

As I hold my baby close, I think of what Sharon and what many women in Zambia had to go through, and of those women and their babies who didn't make it.

It breaks my heart that there are still women and babies who do not survive childbirth or who have to endure traumatic births.

It gives me hope that SCIAF is taking positive steps to improve this in Zambia.



EVERY MOTHER DESERVES A SAFE BIRTH EVERY BABY A BRIGHT FUTURE



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2024**

