

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

February 2024

His uncle and brother were brutally murdered. His father died of a broken heart. But Glasgow-based priest finds the strength in his vocation to say the most powerful phrase of all...

Full story page 5



Picture by Paul McSherry



**Lentfest 2024
full preview page 7**



**Countdown to Holy Year
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Pope set to publish his autobiography

POPE Francis is to become the first Pope in history to publish an autobiography.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Picture: Imago Mundi

On March 19, the feast of St Joseph, the Pontiff's new book will be in bookstores. *My Story in History*, published by Harper Collins, is a true autobiography, but with a twist.

Pope Francis tells the story of his life through the events that have marked humanity, since the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, when he was almost three years old, up to the present day.

"In this book we tell a story, that of my life, through the most important and dramatic events that humanity has experienced over the last 80 years.

"It is a volume that is written so that young people especially can listen to the voice of an elderly person and reflect on what our planet has experienced, in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past," explains the Holy Father in the introduction.

"Think, for example, of the wars that have plagued and are still plaguing the world. Think about the genocides, the persecutions, the hatred between brothers and sisters of different religions! How much pain!

"Once we reach a certain age it is important, even for ourselves, to reopen the book of memories and remember: to learn, looking

back in time; to rediscover the bad things, the toxic ones that we have experienced, together with the sins committed, but also to relive everything good that God has sent us.

"It's an exercise in discernment that we should all do, before it's too late!" writes Pope Francis.

The book promises to be an extraordinary journey over the decades through the Pope's memories. Among them: the fall of the Berlin Wall, Videla's coup d'état in Argentina, the moon landing in 1969 and also the 1986 World Cup, where Maradona scored the goal that went down in history as 'The Hand of God'.

Conclave

From his very personal point of view, he will narrate the years of the Nazi extermination of the Jews, the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the great economic recession of 2008, the collapse of the Twin Towers, the pandemic, Benedict XVI's resignation and the conclave that elected him Pope with the name of Francis.

Pope Francis will also use the book to comment frankly on current issues: social inequalities, the climate crisis, war, atomic weapons, racial discrimination, pro-life battles, all topics that are

very dear to him. The voice of the Pontiff alternates with that of a narrator, Fabio Marchese Ragona, the Vatican correspondent for the Mediaset television group.

The volume, published by HarperCollins Italia, will also be in bookshops next month in the United States, United

Kingdom, Canada, Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Spain and South America. It is the first time that the HarperCollins group has published a book by Pope Francis.

"We are honoured. From his life in Argentina to his appointment as Pontiff of the

Catholic Church, Pope Francis has lived an exceptional life, witnessing some of the most defining moments in recent history. We look forward to bringing his story to readers around the world," commented Brian Murray, president and CEO of HarperCollins Publishers.

News and views
for
FLOURISH
Editor-Flourish@
rcag.org.uk



Parliament salutes the achievements of Sacred Heart parish and school

THE anniversary marking 150 years of worship at Sacred Heart Parish Bridgeton has been noted in the records of the UK Parliament and will remain there for all time after an Early Day Motion was submitted by SNP MP Alison Thewliss whose Glasgow Central Constituency includes the parish.

It reads: "This House congratulates Sacred Heart Parish in Bridgeton, Glasgow, on the 150th anniversary of its founding; notes that the church was built through the efforts of its first Parish Priest Father Edward Noonan, who performed the opening ceremony in the original wooden church

BY BRIAN SWANSON

in 1873; welcomes the commitment to education of this endeavour, with school facilities opening alongside the church in 1874, where they still remain at neighbouring Sacred Heart Primary School; recognises the role of Sacred Heart School's first headteacher, Andrew Kerins, better known as Brother Walfrid, in the growth of football in Glasgow for the purpose of raising funds for educating and feeding young Catholics through the Penny Dinner scheme, and thereafter the establishment of Celtic Football Club; appreciates that the growth of the

church necessitated the construction of the present Church of the Sacred Heart, which was opened in 1910; congratulates all involved in the parish for their efforts over the years, and wishes them all the very best for the future."

Honour

Father Liam McMahon, parish priest of Sacred Heart, described the submission of the early day motion as a great honour and added: "We are very grateful to those who supported us in this way.

"It's wonderful to think that many years in the future people will still be able to read the story of our anniversary."



Archbishop Nolan on a recent visit to Sacred Heart
Picture by Paul McSherry

SCIAF to relocate to Archdiocesan offices

GLASGOW'S Archdiocesan Offices have been in a tumult for the first few weeks of the year, as preparations are made to welcome a new neighbour.

SCIAF, which is currently based in the city centre, will move in this spring, taking over a floor of the offices which was previously used by the Archdiocese's youth, finance, and safeguarding departments as well as *Flourish*.

These departments have now been redeployed within the 196 Clyde Street building and the aid charity will reconfigure the third floor of the iconic glass building next to the Cathedral for its own requirements.

Exciting

SCIAF's Chief Executive Lorraine Currie said: "This is an exciting opportunity for SCIAF and its staff to put down new roots, at the heart of Catholic life in the city. SCIAF is the Catholic Church's official aid agency here in Scotland, so being based within the Archdiocese offices, next to the beautiful St Andrew's Cathedral is very fitting.

"Our staff have been at the centre of our plans for the



BY **RONNIE CONVERY** new office and we hope to be in our new home by April.

"The move is also a chance for us to save money. SCIAF, like many other charities faces continuing funding pressures, while aiming to limit our expenditure and ensure even more of our supporters' donations go to

SCIAF's mission of helping the world's poorest people."

Commenting on the move, Archbishop Nolan said: "It will be great to welcome the SCIAF staff to Clyde Street. It will mean a much better use is made of the available space, and the influx of new people will certainly make the offices busier.

"Although the Archdiocese

and SCIAF remain separate organisations, I am sure there will be new opportunities for co-operation.

"I want to thank the staff of the Archdiocese who have been very understanding of the need to slim down our presence, make better use of limited space, and work in slightly less roomy surroundings."

Synod 2024: the next chapter...

BY **FR JOHN CAMPBELL**

You will remember all the work preceding the Synod of Bishops Meeting in Rome in October 2023.

For the first time in history our Church canvassed the opinions of all God's people on issues affecting the Church today.

Lay people and clergy were encouraged to gather in groups and in a spirit of prayerfulness, discern where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church in our time.

The Church is now asking us to be part of a "deepening discernment". We are being consulted again, not to go over old ground but to look at 20 areas of interest that surfaced at the synod in October. Again, in a spirit of prayerfulness, the idea is to meet in parish groups, or as a religious community, maybe a group of friends, or in apostolic groups, Union of Catholic Mothers, St Vincent de Paul Societies, class groups in Secondary Schools or confirmation classes and choose one or more of the following areas to discuss, pray about and discern.

Then, with reference to the synodal document, groups are asked to feed back to the Diocesan team their further discernment and ideas.

The idea is to deepen our reflection and discernment on areas that interest us. This in turn will be fed into the Scottish response from all eight dioceses in our country and eventually go to the next meeting of the Synod in Rome October 2024.

Please gather and contribute to this process. The "sense of the faithful" is very important in this process and our church will be poorer without your efforts and deliberations.

So the appeal is... To gather a small group and choose one or more of the following topics to pray and discern:

- 1 *Synodality: Your recent experience and understanding of it in parishes – your community – the Church in general.*
- 2 *Do you feel part of a Church community gathered and sent by the Trinity?*
- 3 *Entering the Community of Faith: Your experience of Christian Initiation (RCIA)*
- 4 *People in Poverty, is this setting the Church's agenda?*



5 *A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation" – how do you experience our Church as universal?*

6 *The Eastern Churches and Latin Church Traditions.*

7 *On the Road Towards Christian Unity – your experience of ecumenism.*

8 *Church is Mission.*

9 *Women in the Life and Mission of the Church.*

10 *Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: are they a charismatic sign?*

11 *Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church.*

12 *The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion.*

13 *The Bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops.*

14 *A Synodal approach to the formation of clergy.*

15 *Ecclesial Discernment and Open Questions.*

16 *Towards a listening and accompanying Church.*

17 *Mission in the Digital Environment.*

18 *Structures for Participation.*

19 *Groupings of Churches within the Communion of the whole Church.*

20 *The Synod of Bishops and Ecclesial Assemblies.*

More information on these topics (some of which can seem complicated) is available on the Vatican Synod Webpage www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report

When you have met and engaged with your chosen topic or topics, then please e-mail our Glasgow Synodal site Synod@rcag.org.uk and your anonymous response will be included in Glasgow's submission. Please meet – pray and have your say!

Submissions should be in for Sunday 3 March 2024.

St Bernard's marks 60th anniversary

ACHURCH of the Archdiocese where parishioners first worshipped in a former stable has marked its 60th anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Archbishop Nolan.

St Bernard's, South Nitshill, was established to serve a rapidly growing Catholic community on the southern edge of the city and, since no suitable buildings existed at the time, the Sunday Mass was celebrated in the early days by the late Father Gerry Dunn, the first parish priest, in a former stable once owned by the Montfort Missionaries.

As a well-produced booklet to mark the 60th anniversary notes: "Since it all began 2000 years ago in a stable, there could not have been a more fitting place for the spiritual life of the parish to begin."

A wooden church was built over the next few months and three years later, in 1963, the new

church was opened with the former building serving as the parish hall.

But in the years that followed the housing scheme the parish was built to serve entered a period of decline and eventually was almost fully demolished by the late 1990s.

Within a few years, with parishioner numbers falling, the late Father Jim Dean, parish priest at nearby St Robert's became responsible for both parishes.

In March 2020 churches and other public building were closed by Covid restrictions.

But when they were lifted in 2022, St Bernard's remained closed because by this stage, for health reasons, Father Jim could not minister to both parishes and on Palm Sunday he died suddenly just before he was due to celebrate Mass.

Fr Joseph Uwah was appointed initially as administrator to both parishes



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

and members of St Bernard's Parish approached both Fr Joe and Archbishop Nolan, requesting that once again Holy Mass be celebrated in St Bernard's.

And in June 2022, St Bernard's finally reopened after the lockdown closure, and has remained opened since.

In his homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving Archbishop Nolan paid tribute to both those whose faith founded the parish 60 years ago and the parishioners of today who continue to support it.

But he reminded parishioners that while it was good to learn from the past, it was also right to look to the future with faith and not fear of the challenges it would bring.

Mungo Festival celebrates Glasgow patron

ONCE again, the annual St Mungo Festival provided an opportunity to celebrate the life, work and legacy of St Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow.

The annual programme of events was organised by the Mediaeval Glasgow Trust and Glasgow Churches Together and took place in early January to coincide with the feast day of St Mungo and was supported by the Friends of Glasgow Cathedral and the Mitchell Library.

The opening lecture and the second lecture are normally delivered in the St Mungo Museum. This year though, the museum had to be closed for emergency repairs and the Eyre Hall in the Archdiocesan Offices was used instead. This proved to be an excellent venue and the Mediaeval Glasgow Trust was very grateful to the Archdiocese for a very speedy and gracious response to the request for help.

The opening lecture was delivered by Dr Gordon Wylie, the eminent lawyer and author on medieval Scotland. He delivered a highly erudite talk on Mediaeval Burgh Life ranging from Roman times to the eve of the Renaissance. The lecture

BY STEPHEN J MCKINNEY
AND CLARE FODEY



took us through Scottish Royalty, Burgh job titles, place names and laws surrounding fairs and employment and some of the more gruesome punishments imaginable inflicted on beggars.

Later in the programme, Alan Tavener and the Strathclyde University Chamber Choir presented a programme of music in honour of St Mungo and other saints of Scotland at St Columbkille's Rutherglen.

Chant

This included chant from the office of Mungo taken from the mediaeval Spruston breviary and a performance of 'Ninian's Gift', a collaboration between the composer Tom Cunningham and the writer Alexander McCall Smith.

Professor Elaine Moohan presented the second lecture of the week: From Choir to Congregation: Music of

Picture by Paul McSherry



Mungo's bairns steal the day

The ecumenical service to mark the end of another successful St Mungo Festival once again showed that our city's patron is admired not only by Catholics but those of different faiths who were represented at the event in Glasgow Cathedral, writes Brian Swanson.

Organised by Glasgow Churches Together and the Cathedral Community it featured prayers for peace sung by a Ukrainian choir, the Mungo Singers, and pupils from St Denis's Primary school choir. And in a poignant ceremony pupils from the school laid a wreath on the saint's tomb in the Cathedral crypt. Monsignor Gerry Fitzpatrick, who directed the Mungo Singers, who were present at a number of festival events said: "I get the sense that this year's attendances were up from last year and it was great to see how many more young people took part."

Glasgow Cathedral to 1620. This was a very enjoyable and informative talk piecing together what is known about music in Glasgow's mediaeval Cathedral before the Reformation.

The lecture considered the musical roles of Precentor, Sub chanter and the choir

of the cathedral and enlisted audience participation in singing to demonstrate various musical styles – which was very well received.

At the end of both lectures the audience was treated to a collection of songs about Mungo and Glasgow that were composed and sung by

Vincent Mellon. This proved to be a delightful addition to the Festival.

On the eve of the feast of St Mungo, Vespers was held in St Andrew's Cathedral. There were a number of events on the feast of St Mungo on January 13th. Masses were said throughout the city and in St Andrew's Cathedral.

There was also an opportunity to view a copy of the *Vita Kentigerni* in the Mitchell Library. This book was commissioned in the 12th century by Bishop Jocelyn of Glasgow and written by Jocelin of Furness in Cumbria.

Power

Peter Mortimer led a walk that followed part of the route St Mungo would have taken following the Molendinar Burn from Provanmill to Glasgow Cathedral. Gordon Wylie and Reverend Mark Johnstone, trustees of the Mediaeval Glasgow Trust, discussed some of the signs and symbols in the Cathedral in an online event

focusing on expressions of civic and royal power in the Cathedral.

The Annual Festival Ecumenical Service, organised by Glasgow Churches Together, concluded the festival. All of the major denominations were represented at the service and the children of St Denis' primary school provided some colourful songs. The Festival once again successfully served as a timely reminder of the richness of the historical and contemporary religious heritage of the city of Glasgow.

A number of the 2024 events were recorded and can be viewed on the Festival website or social media.

<https://stmungofestival.co.uk>

<https://www.facebook.com/stmungofestival/>

■ **Stephen J McKinney is a professor in the University of Glasgow and a trustee of Mediaeval Glasgow Trust. Clare Fodey is a lecturer in Religious Education at the University of Glasgow.**

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Work continues on future parish provision

THE study of future parish provision in the Archdiocese of Glasgow is progressing, based on new advice and information from local parishes and deaneries.

As part of the programme *Looking to the Future*, deaneries were asked to come up with pathways to change by St Andrew's Day last year.

It was hoped that these pathways might be the fruit of deanery discussion throughout the Archdiocese, offering a vision of the way forward for the archdiocese in planning its future resources of buildings and personnel. Most of the deaneries have now responded and the co-ordinating group will now take time to consider these responses.

Although some deaneries have circulated their responses more widely, these responses are merely sketches of what the future may look like. The process is ongoing. The Archbishop will take time to consider all responses and will continue to consult before any decisions are taken.

Canon Andrew McKenzie



(pictured), who is coordinating the work, said: "At the end of January there will be a meeting of Deans and Lay co-chairs to the Deanery Councils. This meeting will consider the sketched Pathways to Change and in the light of these responses discuss how the process should continue.

"On Saturday 10th February the Archdiocese will host a day on Evangelisation for Deanery Pastoral Councils.

"The Looking to the Future process is a process of Evangelisation which seeks to reinvigorate our witness to the gospel through the renewal of parish structures, creating vibrant faith filled communities. Many of the responses are creative and optimistic for the new opportunities that lie ahead."

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‘My heart is broken but I forgive. If I did not, there would be no value in the Gospel I preach..’

A GLASGOW-BASED African priest has delivered a powerful message of forgiveness to the Islamic terrorists who murdered his uncle and brother.

Speaking on the first anniversary of the killings, Father Isaac Abba (pictured) said: “I forgive the men who did this. If I did not, then there would be no value in the Gospel I preach.”

His uncle, Father Isaac Achi, who inspired him become a priest, was burnt to death in the attack on the parish buildings of Saints Peter and Paul in a remote part of the Diocese of Minna, in Northern Nigeria early last year.

For the first time since the atrocities, Father Isaac, 32, a priest from the same diocese and now working in parish ministry in St Andrew’s Cathedral, has spoken at length about the events of January 15 2023 and the murder also of his beloved brother Oliver by the same terrorist group two weeks earlier.

Oliver was shot at a roadblock as he returned from hospital with his sick father.

BY BRIAN SWANSON

Referring to the killing of his priest-uncle, Father Isaac said: “I was about a 90 minute drive away from the church residence where my uncle lived when around 1.30 in the morning I received a call to say that it was under attack.

“I became restless and worried and praying that it would just be mere hearsay.

“But by 3am, I got another call, and I learned that the rectory was set ablaze, and Fr Achi was burnt beyond recognition. The house where he lived had become a furnace.

“It was a Sunday. Despite all this, I had to gather momentum to celebrate the Sunday Mass as if nothing happened.”

What the Glasgow-based priest did not know at the time was that his father, who lived just round the corner from the church, could only watch helplessly as his priest brother perished in the flames.

Father Isaac added: “It



Picture by Paul McSherry

wasn’t long after that that my father also passed away. He was sick, but also, he couldn’t stand the shock of the death of his son and his brother and so in a matter of months we lost three members of our family.

“Oliver and I were very close... he was my brother but also my friend.

“He was always there and ready to help me whenever I needed assistance. He did a lot to assist me perform my priestly duty well – now he’s gone, how that made me feel, only I can tell.

“Fr Achi, on the other hand, was my uncle but also a guide – he was someone I could call at any time for guidance during my studies in the seminary and even as a fellow priest.

“He was my uncle but also a father and brother figure to me by virtue of our priesthood. Now he’s no more – that still hurts me.”

The St Andrew’s Cathedral priest went on: “While many people believe that terrorist attacks are politically manipulated (since Fr Achi was the voice of the people), there are those who feel the attack was perpetrated because of sheer criminality.

“Others who think that it was brutal because of his identity as a priest.

“All I know is that the government, which has the responsibility to protect our lives and property, failed to stop this and to also fish out the perpetrators.

“Governments at the state and federal levels need to explain to the public what happened.”

It was the example of his uncle that encouraged the Glasgow-based priest to follow in his footsteps and become a priest himself, even sharing his name at baptism.

He said: “Fr Isaac Achi was a man for all. His relationship with Christians and Muslims was cordial. He was the Christian Association of Nigeria coordinator of the county – he has always fostered unity among the people, regardless of their religious and political affiliations.

“Fr Achi was born in that community; he began his primary education in that same community – his call to the priesthood began in the same community.

“In fact, he was the first priest from the Koro tribe and I am the second from that community.

“My heart is broken but I forgive the men who did this. If I did not, then there would be no value in the Gospel I preach.”

■ A fuller version of this interview was first published in the American Catholic magazine *Pillar*. It was written by fellow Nigerian priest Father Justine Dyikuk, who holds a Master’s degree in investigative journalism, and is currently studying for a PhD at Strathclyde University. *Flourish* gratefully acknowledges his assistance. To read Fr Justin’s interview go to: <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/now-hes-more-priest-nephew-of-slain>

Nigeria spotlight



RELIGIOUS violence in Nigeria is dominated by the Boko Haram group, which aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.

Since the turn of the 21st century, 62,000 Nigerian Christians have been killed by Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen and other violent groups. The killings have been referred to as a silent genocide.

With over 230 million citizens, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and the world’s

sixth most populous country.

Nigeria is divided roughly in half between Muslims, who live mostly in the north, and Christians, who live mostly in the south.

Nigeria, together with the Democratic Republic of Congo, boasts the highest number of priests in Africa.

A quarter of Christians in Nigeria are Catholic (12.39% of the country’s population) served by over 9,500 priests and 6,500 sisters.

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Memorial garden for Covid victims opened at St Mary's

ON a bone chilling night in Glasgow's East End, priest and people gather before a statue of Our Lady for the blessing of a Covid memorial garden in honour of those who died in the pandemic.

Parishioners shielded their candles from the wind and huddled close as parish priest Canon Tom White of St Mary's Calton, in a brief but moving ceremony, blessed the garden, known as Gethsemane in the Calton, with prayers and holy water.

Earlier inside the church, lit almost entirely by countless candles, Canon White celebrated the Mass of Our Lady with a congregation which included not only regular parishioners but many who had roots in the area and who had lost relatives to Covid and were there to honour and remember them.

In his homily Canon Tom said: "Even with the briefest glances I recognise many of you here tonight have lost loved ones to Covid.



BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

"One of the very worst things for me as a parish priest was to celebrate fu-

neral masses with no relatives present because of restrictions which applied during lockdown.

"I started keeping a note of the funerals I conducted but I gave up... after reach-

ing number 136."

The memorial garden, he explained, was a way of remembering them, and came about after he was approached by several parishioners who fundraised to make the project a reality.

Dedicated to Our Lady, patron of the parish, it features three olive trees which symbolise the garden of Gethsemane, where Christ endured his agony before his betrayal and arrest.

Biblical

It also includes two new sandstone benches carved with biblical inscriptions.

The first is from John 16:22 – "Now is time of grief but I will see you again and no one will take away your joy." The second bench from Philipians 3:20 reads: "Our true homeland is in Heaven and Jesus Christ whose return we long for will come down from Heaven to save us."

Canon White said: "The garden is for all time and will be there to honour the memory of all those whose funeral rights were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It has been a team effort of the whole parish and beyond. Fortunately, I am blessed with a cousin who is a stonemason, and he volunteered his skills to work on the plinth on which the statue of Our Lady now stands.

"The statue itself has been in storage for the past 30 years and was removed from the old Saint Mary's school prior to its demolition so will bring back fond memories to many old Caltonians."



ARCHBISHOP Nolan has joined Catholic leaders from across the UK in writing to Chancellor Jeremy Hunt calling for him to prioritise care for the poor at home and abroad in next month's Budget.

The full text of the letter follows:

Dear Chancellor,
We are writing to ask that you put tackling poverty at the heart of your Spring Budget.

The Catholic groups and organisations we represent have a deep concern for the poorest in society, both in this country and around the world.

This concern is rooted in our faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In Pope Francis' most recent encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, he writes: "Amid the daily concerns of political life, the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a 'right' to appeal to our heart and soul."

This is why we have come together to make this joint submission. Ahead of what is likely to be the last Budget before the next General Election, we urge you to focus on helping people escape poverty so they can live in dignity.

At home, this means making changes to our tax and benefit system to help families keep more of the money they earn and support those most in need.

This should include finally lifting the two-child cap on Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits; a pol-

icy which a parliamentary inquiry found had "evident, unintended consequences that no Government should be willing to accept".

Internationally, this should include returning our overseas aid budget to 0.7% of GNI in line with the commitment made in your manifesto at the last General Election.

Support should also be provided by the Treasury working towards debt-relief for low-income countries that need it.

This overseas aid budget should be used to promote integral human development amongst the world's poorest.

This money was never intended to be used supporting those seeking asylum in this country. Nor should it be spent without regard to a country's human rights record.

At the Budget last year, there was barely any mention of efforts to tackle poverty. We strongly encourage you to make poverty reduction central to your next Budget and encourage you to publish an impact assessment of your policies in relation to poverty metrics.

Catholic churches and charities are at the forefront of efforts to support people on the margins of society. We see the needs of the communities where we live and serve on a daily basis. We would be happy to meet you ahead of the Budget to discuss ways of reducing poverty.

We look forward to hearing from you.




Can you offer a Gift of Faith to Syria's Christians?

After more than a decade of war, persecution, a crippling financial crisis and the recent earthquake – displaced Christians in Syria are destitute and in urgent need. At least 90% of the population are living below the poverty line.

Syria's suffering Christians need your prayers and support today.

With your help, ACN can provide Syria's Christians with emergency aid and pastoral assistance. **Your Gift of Faith can offer a lifeline to displaced Christian families in desperate need and help them keep the Faith alive.**

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Demarco tops the bill at Lentfest

THE Archdiocese's annual Lenten arts festival is back with a full programme this year, but with new formats and a new setting.

Theatre, film, music, art exhibitions, poetry, performance art and talks all form part of the vibrant line-up for the 2024 edition of Lentfest.

"We've taken a slightly different approach this time," said AGAP Director, Stephen Callaghan. "Many of the events will be concentrated at the Archdiocesan Offices across two weekends. Whilst some events are happening in parishes, we hope that this will allow greater access and the chance to take in a full day or weekend programme for the price of a single ticket. We have also absorbed the cost of booking fees into the ticket price."

Events include a special screening of the award-winning documentary, "Rico: The Richard Demarco Story", followed by a talk from Demarco – a devout Catholic who is widely regarded as the 'Father of the Edinburgh Festival' in honour of

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** his friend, the late Archbishop Mario Conti, who founded AGAP.

There will be live performances including "The Magdalene", a contemporary movement piece by Olivia Vong and a visiting production of the acclaimed "I AM Mark" by Stefan Smart.

The live music programme includes Maureen O'Kelly, Martin Jones, Heelster Gowdie and the Morgan-Llewellyn Band.

Visual art will include a special showing of "A Glasgow Calvary" by the late John Cairney, and "The Undoing of Death" by Anne Devine and Lorraine Lamond.

There will be the launch of a new poetry book by Anne B Murray and a talk from composer Jacqueline Hazle along with a public conversation that draws together several creative artists, including Suzanne Bunniss of FireCloud.

There will also be multiple online events available free on the website, including a new exhibition by German artist, Albrecht Behmel,



Richard Demarco

"Biblical Roots: Genesis".

For those looking for the traditional AGAP Theatre performance, Stephen Callaghan said, "We are working towards a new produc-

tion that will tour later in the year. In the meantime, I will perform "The Pew With A View", which I brought to the Fringe in 2018 and has never been seen in Glasgow.

It will be accompanied by scenes performed by AGAP actors."

This is due to huge success of last year's AGAP play, "Oggie! Oggie! Oggie!" which

toured until Christmas 2023 and was seen by around 2000 people across the country.

■ Visit www.lentfest.co.uk for more information.



Lent offerings for young people

THE Youth Office at the Archdiocese is planning a series of events to interest young people during Lent and encourage them in their faith journey.

Young Adult Online Lent Group: RCAG Youth are running weekly Zoom 'pilgrimages', 7-8pm, each Monday of Lent for 16-35 year olds. The session will have video input, time for discussion and the opportunity to pray. The group will start just ahead of Ash Wednesday on Mon 12th Feb. www.tinyurl.com/rcagyouthlent

Alpha Youth in a Catholic Context Discovery Day: Alpha Youth is a great resource for the formation and evangelisation of our young and could be used in our parish! Join Michael Roche of Alpha and the

Archdiocesan Youth Office for an opportunity to sample Alpha Youth sessions, find out how Alpha works in a Catholic parish or school setting and have your questions answered. Sat, 17th Feb 2024. 1000 - 1600. 196 Clyde St, G1 4JY. This event is in-person and free. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/alphayouthscotland>

An Audience With The Youth Office are running a series of events for young adults (16-35) with various guest speakers sharing about their journey with God and where he has led them. This is a great opportunity to be inspired by people's sharing, reflect upon one's own journey, and get to know others. Find out more and sign up: www.rcagyouth.co.uk



Support for divorced and bereaved

A PROJECT which offers support and friendship to women affected by separation or divorce is planning a new series of sessions in 2024.

The next meeting of the support group will take place on Friday, 9th February in St Patrick's church hall, Dumbarton, from 6.00pm to 8.00pm.

All new members are welcome to this confidential support group, which is run by women who have come through this experience themselves. The

group has been running very successfully for over two years and is delighted to welcome women from across the Archdiocese, whether they experienced this 30 years ago or more recently.

Organisers have put in place a variety of ways that women can reach out before the meeting: Twitter: @GAWomenSupport

Facebook: Faith Living (Archdioceses of Glasgow)

email: glasgowarchdiocesewomensgroup@gmail.com



Flying start for Lourdes pilgrims

ONE of the Archdiocese's longest established parish pilgrimages to Lourdes is encouraging a greater number of the faithful to join them this summer at the famous French shrine to Our Lady.

Such is the popularity of the St Jude's Lourdes Pilgrimage, founded in 1987, that the coaches they traditionally use are already full.

Now in response to demand from all over Scotland the organisers are offering pilgrims the opportunity to experience the pilgrimage as a group while allowing people to arrange their own flights from Edinburgh.

The cost for the pilgrimage excluding flights is

£335.00 per person based on 2 or more sharing, plus transfers of £50.00 each. The single room supplement is £150.00.

Father John Gannon parish priest of St Philomena, Provanmill, who will act as spiritual director during the pilgrimage which takes place from June 17 to June 23rd said: "I have joined them eight or nine times over the years and I can tell you that the organisers could give lessons on how to run a pilgrimage. They offer a very full spiritual programme and yet everything goes like clockwork."

■ To find out more contact Margaret McElroy on 0771 258 2661 or email mcelroy2@ntlworld.com

Fr Robert leaves Glasgow with a kilt and a doctorate!

AN African priest with close links to St Bartholomew's Castlemilk has been awarded a PhD from Glasgow University – and proud parishioners couldn't be more delighted.

In true Glasgow fashion they threw a party to celebrate the achievement of Father Robert Sowa, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Bo, Sierra Leone, who has been a much-loved figure in the parish during his studies at the Uni.

Father Robert, 43, said: "Maybe I am a bit biased but having travelled all around the UK, I can say Glasgow is the friendliest city despite having the four seasons in a day, I have come to appreciate the people of Glasgow

who are warmer than the sunshine.

"The phrase 'People make Glasgow' is not an abstract catchphrase but a reality that Glaswegians embody."

It began 10 years ago when the Xavierian Missionaries UK Province needed a priest from Sierra Leone to work with them and Father Robert was sent by his bishop to the order's Scottish base in Coatbridge.

It was while working with them that the late Father Tom Welsh SX encouraged him to study for a PhD.

He said: "I opted for the University of Glasgow both for its Catholic origins – it was founded by Pope Nicholas V in 1451 – and for its vibrant theological heritage and so in September 2017, I gained admission to the University for a research PhD degree in Theology and Religious Studies."

But a series of setbacks including family bereavements meant he could not begin his studies until two years later and there were further delays when Covid restrictions took effect.

He said: "Since my PhD research focused on environmental justice concerns or the lack thereof in

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone, these

restrictions meant that I could not travel for fieldtrips, so I started having challenges with my research, but I knew I had to persevere and repay the faith that everyone had placed in me."

Father Robert said: "I am forever grateful to God who made it possible for me to come this far and who provided amazing grace throughout my studies."

"During my time here I was officially assigned to St Bartholomew and St Margaret Mary parish communities but I have been privileged to minister in many Catholic parishes in and around Glasgow."

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the parishioners of St Bartholomew and St Margaret Mary Castlemilk and all the parish communities I have ministered to in Scotland for their tremendous support and continuous encouragement, and for keeping me grounded."

Before he left, Fr Robert was presented with a cheque from parishioners for £2000.



Inter-religious dialogue event is open to all

THE Scottish Bishops' Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue is offering Catholics in Scotland a space to explore the Church's teaching in this area.

Their annual residential event is planned for later this month and explores the important themes and the theology that emerges in this important aspect of the Church's life and ministry in contemporary Scotland.

This year it will focus on how our religious experience can nurture mutual understanding and the main speakers are coming from the Vatican and the from the United States to lead the discussion.

The Annual Colloquium Residential will run from Friday 23rd February to Saturday 24th February 2024 in the Conforti Centre in Coatbridge.

A spokesperson for the Commission said: "Our theme 'With the living God at the Centre', looks to explore the role of religious experience in interreligious dialogue. The event will be led and facilitated by Rev Professor Will Storrar, the Director of the Centre for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, USA.

Sessions include: Religious Experience: The role of religious experience in interreligious dialogue: past and present challenges and opportunities.



Rev Prof Will Storrar

Religious Experience: "How do people of faith dialogue through Religious Experience in and with a secular culture?"

Lived Experience Seminar: "The future of Interreligious Dialogue in the life of the Church"; Paulin Batairwa Kubuya, sx Under-Secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for

Interreligious Dialogue.

Lived Experience Seminar: "The Role of Religious Experience in Interreligious Dialogue in Scotland: learning from the past and hopes for the future."

There are 22 residential places available and 22 non-residential places available. Residential cost per person is £75. This includes your Friday evening meal, single room accommodation with en-suite bathroom and shower facilities and Saturday breakfast and lunch.

Non-residential participants can attend for £30. This includes Friday evening meal and lunch on Saturday.

■ To reserve your place contact the Interfaith Officer Joe Sikora: joseph.sikora@bcos.org.uk Payment is by cash or card on arrival.



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Historic mitres will go on show

A SET of unique hand-embroidered mitres commissioned by the late Cardinal Winning and Archbishop Conti are to be displayed in the Scottish Catholic Museum when it relocates to its new home in the East End later this year.

They were designed and created by Glasgow-based artist Netta Ewing over many years, and Archbishop Conti, who died in November last year aged 88, was so impressed with her handiwork that he left instructions for them to be displayed in the museum.

Museum

As Bishop of Aberdeen he was instrumental in setting up the Blairs Museum in what was the chapel sacristy of the former junior seminary on the outskirts of the city.

It closed last year and will reopen later this year in its new home in the former St Mary's Primary School in Orr Street, behind St Mary's, Calton in Abercromby Street.



Netta founded the Silver Threads Embroidery Guild 40 years ago, and their work can be seen in churches and other religious buildings throughout Scotland. The group has completed works including the Four Seasons mural at Pluscarden Abbey and the Scottish Saints

Vestments. Netta has also designed the ten murals at St Stephen's church, Dalmeir and for embroidered art for churches in Kirkintilloch, Dreghorn, Saltcoats, and Indiana USA. She made her first mitre



Cardinal Winning and Archbishop Conti wearing the artistic mitres created by Netta Ewing and her team

in the nuclear age, which Archbishop Conti commissioned during his time in Glasgow.

Describing the process involved in creating the mitres, Netta said: "To encapsulate all the instructions of a Bishop and impart meaning and symbolism within such a small work of art is a very strict discipline for a designer.

Everything

"You have to say everything in a small space and eliminate anything which is not essential.

"I always enjoyed the embroidery, but became much more nervous when it came to construction. The mitre has to lie flat most of the time but then flip open at a moment's notice when it is about to be worn, which must be a smooth operation. It's a worry until the piece is finished and experimented with."

for Archbishop Conti in 1980 when he was Bishop of Aberdeen.

She said: "I very much enjoyed the enthusiasm which Archbishop Conti displayed in the planning process for it – he involved himself closely in the design which included symbols associated with the diocese on one side and his own coat of arms on the other.

"He was absolutely de-

lighted with all the mitres and wore them as often as he could."

She also made a green mitre which incorporates images of Christ on the cross.

His final commission was for a mitre worn used on days when the liturgical colour is red or purple and which incorporates an amethyst which belonged to his mother and symbolises the power of the Holy Spirit



Glasgow pupils' gift to Holy Land children's refuge

THE pupils and parents of St Charles's Primary School, Kelvinside, Glasgow collected £1025 recently for the Creche in Bethlehem, and when he heard about it Archbishop Nolan asked to meet the young fundraisers!

The Creche is managed by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul

and Palestinian staff. It is a well-known refuge for around 50–60 children up to the age of 8 years.

It caters for the most deprived children including those rejected by parents, or those at risk of abuse, violence and orphaned.

The pupils gathered the funds from Nativity plays and fund-raising, and the

pupils gave these funds to Archbishop Nolan when they visited him at the Archdiocesan offices in Clyde Street.

The Archbishop thanked the community of St Charles's School for their support and urged them to keep praying for peace and justice for all in the Holy Land.

Saint Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral, Glasgow

Saint Patrick's Day Mass



Saturday 16th March 2024 · 11am

Celebrant: Archbishop William Nolan

Please come early. You will be greeted by an Irish piper, followed by traditional music from St. James the Great Céilí Band. Cantor for the Mass is Clare O'Neill.

'The sick are the heart of the Church. Let us never forget this truth'

Pope Francis' message for World Day of the Sick 2024

POPE Francis has called for a 'new deal' between the sick and the rest of society in his letter for World Day of the Sick.

The annual day of prayer will be celebrated on February 11 this year – the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

This year the Holy Father speaks up for the elderly and inform who lonely and abandoned and reassures them... 'you are never a burden!'

He writes: "Old age and sickness are frequently experienced in solitude and, at times, even in abandonment.

"This grim reality is mainly a consequence of the culture of individualism that exalts productivity at all costs, cultivates the myth of

efficiency, and proves indifferent, even callous, when individuals no longer have the strength needed to keep pace.

"It then becomes a throw-away culture, in which persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor or disabled, 'not yet useful' – like the unborn, or 'no longer needed' – like the elderly...

"The abandonment of the vulnerable and their isolation is favoured also by the reduction of healthcare merely to a provision of services, without these being accompanied by a "therapeutic covenant" between physicians, patients and family members."

"Brothers and sisters, the first form of care needed in any illness is compassionate and loving closeness.

"To care for the sick thus means above all to care for their relationships, all of them: with God, with others – family members, friends, healthcare workers – with creation and with themselves.

"Can this be done? Yes, it can be done and all of us are called to ensure that it happens. Let us look to the icon of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25–37), to his ability to slow down and draw near to another person, to the tender love with which he cares for the wounds of a suffering brother.

"Let us remember this



Picture: Imago Mundi

central truth in life: we came into the world because someone welcomed us; we were made for love; and we are called to communion and fraternity.

"This aspect of our lives is what sustains us, above all at times of illness and vulnerability. It is also the first therapy that we must all adopt in order to heal the diseases of the society in which we live.

Closeness

"To those of you who experience illness, whether temporary or chronic, I would say this: Do not be ashamed of your longing for closeness and tenderness! Do not conceal it, and never think that you are a burden on others. The condition of the sick urges all of us to step back from the hectic pace of our lives in order to rediscover ourselves.

"Let us care for those who suffer and are alone, perhaps marginalised and cast aside. With the love for one another that Christ the Lord bestows on us in prayer, especially in the Eucharist, let us tend the wounds of solitude and isolation.

"In this way, we will cooperate in combating the culture of individualism, indifference and waste, and enable the growth of a culture of tenderness and compassion.

"The sick, the vulnerable and the poor are at the heart of the Church; they must also be at the heart of our human concern and pastoral attention. May we never forget this!"

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St Nicholas Care Fund would like to thank all our donors who gave so generously on Caring Sunday and all those who make regular monthly donations to us. The money you give us helps improve the lives of people living in poverty, in isolation or dealing with illness and addiction.

If you would like to donate, please contact us.
The next deadline for applications is 5 February 2024.

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12–19 JULY 2024

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



Elizabeth McKee
125 Cortmalaw Crescent
Robroyston
Glasgow
G33 1TD

Tel: 0141 558 0994

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

The price for the 2024 Pilgrimage is from £899. *The price does not include insurance. Terms and conditions apply.*

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

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

A narrow escape from crowd violence showed the power of peaceful dialogue

WHAT exactly does 'social justice' look like?

In Scotland it could be a fair wage, benefits that meet families' needs, action on damp housing, an end to racism and sectarianism – all issues that trouble the peace of mind of so many individuals.

In so many other countries around the world, we would have to say, "Much of the above" and then factor in the need to end conflict. Because where there is conflict, there can be no social justice. If your home, your family, your livelihood, have been destroyed, the very idea of social justice is shattered.

February 20th is the UN's World Day of Social Justice, an annual event aimed at raising awareness of the concept that everyone should have equal access to the same standards of education, employment and healthcare, regardless of their race, religion, sexuality, gender or class.

Back in 1972, Pope Paul VI said "If you want peace, work for justice."

As a journalist, I wrote from several areas of conflict, and I often felt that this was a chicken and egg scenario. Which comes first? With no disrespect to Pope Paul VI, working first



Marian Pallister

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

for peace lays a level playing field for justice.

Pope Francis has so often called for dialogue, and at the turn of the year he reiterated this in a meeting with ambassadors from all over the world.

He had a very long list of conflicts where such dialogue is needed – Israel and Gaza, Syria, Ukraine and Russia, Myanmar, Colombia, DR Congo, Sudan, Tigray, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Guyana, Peru and more. No wonder he describes this as World War Three, fought piecemeal.

He's surely not wrong in believing that if conflicted parties talk first, create a peace (he again demanded a ceasefire in Gaza), and then work for social justice that will create harmony and douse down the flames of war?

For gestures of peace can indeed douse those flames. I can't forget such a gesture in Romania in the days after the dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu was executed on

Christmas Day, 1989.

I had travelled there with photographer Bill Fleming, and after witnessing a rally in the bullet-spattered Bucharest square where the execution had taken place, we walked with the 10,000 or so people marching on the country's television station. That march was to pass the main police station – a place where so many had been tortured, so many had died, and which was still staffed by Ceauşescu's

supporters.

We were worried.

What if the police came out and opened fire on these innocent protesters, whose lives had been so restricted under the dictator's regime?

Instead, what we saw was wave after wave of these 10,000 protesters kneeling in silence in front of the police HQ, candles in hands, prayers whispered.

No one came out of the building. No one challenged them. And, in time, such nonviolent actions and dialogue with former members of the Ceauşescu dictatorship led to a social justice not seen in 40 years.

My Pax Christi instincts suggest that if we want justice, dialogue for peace.



Street protest in Romania

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In Scotland today we have 129 MSPs and 126 palliative care doctors. I think that says it all...

Mary's musings

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



GLASGOW has the Subway while London has the tube, and there the similarity ends.

I was reacquainted with this fact when Himself and I went to London for a few days.

For someone who is a regular user of the Subway, but only the four stops it takes me to get to Buchanan St, I could lose my sanity when I am negotiating the various lines on the London Underground.

In Glasgow, not only do we travel in a simple circle, we still have human beings in booths. I could have done with one of those when I jammed my debit card in the slot for banknotes. Fortunately I

am no stranger to ineptitude so I wasn't too fazed by the situation.

When we arrived one afternoon at Hyde Park Corner we were grateful to ascend the escalator into glorious sunshine, and a coffee stall with no queue.

Fully caffeinated and sated by our cinnamon buns, we ambled around the Serpentine in welcome respite from the seething mass of humanity that is the Big Smoke. My only disappointment was that we hadn't visited on a Sunday when Speaker's Corner comes into its own.

I'd love to have heard the speakers in full flow, since I'm not above a good heckle, it could have been

a great day out. It set me thinking about what subjects I'd like to jump on a soapbox and share with anyone willing to listen.

Plastic packaging that is almost impossible to open without an A&E visit to suture a gaping wound, dripping with blood is one that immediately comes to mind. I could wrack up a good 20 minutes on that.

On a more serious note I'd plump for assisted suicide. Any Sunday, hail, rain or shine.

Dying

Here in Scotland we are now facing the fourth attempt since 2004. The proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill would allow "competent adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with assistance to end their life."

A few short years down the line and it will not be restricted to the "competent", "adults" or

the "terminally ill." Experience around the world has taught us that. In Canada it took a mere six years for the initial safeguards to be eroded. The "terminally ill" soon became "chronic physical illness" and soon it they will include "chronic mental illness."

In the Netherlands the conditions were strictly limited when euthanasia was legalised in 2002. Last year their Act was extended to babies as young as 12 months. These are just two examples of how the very ones we should be protecting – the sick, the young, the elderly, and the vulnerable – are regarded by the society.

Among the submissions in the consultation process for Liam McArthur MSP's Bill were the were testimonies from people who said that their loved ones had suffered a "bad death". We need to be clear, this is not an argument for assisted suicide but an argument for the best palliative care

we can offer.

Dr Gillian Wright, spokesperson for Our Duty of Care, a group of healthcare professionals opposing assisted suicide and euthanasia, made an impassioned plea in Holyrood last month.

She asked Liam McArthur to consider a statistic – we have 129 MSPs and just 126 palliative care doctors. What we need, she said, is a "sea-change on how our dying are looked after instead of assisted suicide."

"Instead of allowing people to kill themselves desperately need to invest our resources, creativity, ideas and funding not in helping people die but in helping them live until they die," she said.

If you would like to read Dr Wright's full text you will find it on the website of Our Duty of Care, which is a group of healthcare professionals opposed to assisted suicide and euthanasia. www.dutyofcare.org.uk



Preparations start now for the Holy Year dedicated to hope

Pope announces a Year of Prayer to prepare for the Jubilee Year which will begin in December

P O P E Francis has declared open a 'Year of Prayer' to prepare for the Holy Year 2025 which will open on Christmas Eve 2024.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

filled with tears of pain... prayer cannot be captured in a pre-established pattern because it is an expression of the believer's personal relationship with God himself within that intimate and exclusive relationship that distinguishes our faith."

The Vatican has prepared a series of materials and aids for the coming months and wants to encourage local initiatives which will help people pray better.

The Archbishop said: "I would offer some suggestions that can accompany our meditation and reading so as to better understand the value of prayer."

"First of all, there are the 38 catechetical talks that Pope Francis gave from 6 May 2020 to 16 June 2021. These are texts that consider the various forms of prayer and they can be re-read, as they contain many useful suggestions. [These can be read and downloaded from the Vatican website]

"We also thought it useful to prepare a series of eight short volumes to be made available to the various Bishops' Conferences and which over the next few months will be a useful aid to better understand prayer."

"The Vatican Publishing House has already published the first volume in Italian written by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, *Praying today: A challenge*, with a preface by Pope Francis (English-language translations will soon be available).

Resources

"Together with these resources we will prepare pastoral aids that re-present the various expressions of prayer in the community, in the family, for priests, cloistered nuns, sanctuaries, young people and so on... in short, nothing extraordinary, not new prayers, but help to live with greater awareness of the need for daily prayer."

Another initiative, planned for the Year of Prayer will see the Holy Father set up a 'School of Prayer'. This will be a series of moments of encounter with specific categories of people to pray together and understand better the various forms of prayer: from thanksgiving to intercession; from contemplative prayer to the prayer of consolation; from adoration to supplication.

More information at: www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html

The announcement brings to life a desire the Pope expressed last year, when he wrote "From now on I am happy to think that the year preceding the Jubilee event, 2024, will be dedicated to a great symphony of prayer."

"First of all, to rediscover the desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and adore him. But also, to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation, which commits everyone to respect and to take concrete and responsible actions to protect that creation."

The Year of Prayer 2024 will therefore be a year of preparation for the Jubilee – the theme of which the Pope has chosen as 'Pilgrims of Hope', placing the whole event under the organisational charge of Archbishop Rino Fisichella and his team at the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation.

Archbishop Fisichella explained what will be involved in this 2024 Year of Prayer.

"This is... a privileged time in which to rediscover the value of prayer, the need for daily prayer in the Christian life; a time to discover how to pray, and above all how to educate the people of today in prayer, in this age of digital culture, so that prayer can be effective and fruitful."

"We cannot deny the fact that our time manifests a profound need for spirituality. The louder the cry of technology that seems to correspond to all our desires, the deeper we discern the search for a true spirituality ..."

"There are many people who pray every day; perhaps, I dare say, everyone prays. No statistic can give us a true picture, in facts and figures, of this very intimate experience of people who know the multiple ways of prayer in a completely personal way."

"From those who quickly make the sign of the cross, to those who participate in the daily Eucharist, there is such a vast range of ways of praying that no one can fully describe them all."

"From quick to distracted prayer; from contemplative prayer to prayer

Hope is the theme of the Holy Year logo

THE Jubilee of 2025 will have its own logo (see above). The design – chosen personally by Pope Francis after an international competition – shows four stylised figures to indicate all of humanity from the four corners of the earth.

They embrace each other, indicating the solidarity and brotherhood between peoples. The first figure is clinging to the Cross. The underlying waves are choppy to indicate that the pilgrimage of life is not always on calm waters.

Because often personal circumstances and world events call for a greater sense of hope the lower part of the Cross is elongated turning it into an anchor, which offers security from the stormy seas.

The image shows how the pilgrim's journey is not individual, but rather communal.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella who has been charged with organizing and overseeing the Jubilee said: "The Cross is not static but dynamic, bending toward and meeting humanity so as not to leave us alone, but rather offering the certainty of its presence and the reassurance of hope."

The Jubilee 2025 Motto, 'Peregrinantes in Spem' – Pilgrims in Hope – is also clearly visible, written in green – the colour of hope.



Scottish pilgrimage planned

IN preparation for the Holy Year, the Scottish Bishops' Jubilee Committee is proposing a walking pilgrimage from Motherwell Cathedral to St Andrews, a distance of about 110 miles (175 km).

Organiser Jim McKelvie told *Flourish*: "We will be walking the route in 10 stages, every Tuesday, starting on 2nd April 2024, and each day will involve a walk of about 10–12 miles. The pilgrimage will have an experienced guide, and we will have a chaplain walking with us for most of the stages."

"There will be no charge for the pilgrimage – the only cost will be returning from our destination each day to our starting point. Some stages have public transport, but if not, we will arrange a minibus."

The route follows the Ladywell Way from Motherwell and, after North Queensferry, follows the Fife Pilgrim Way to St Andrews.

The first leg will be from Motherwell Cathedral to Caldercruix, a distance of about 11 miles. It takes pilgrims uphill through Carfin, past the National Marian Shrine to Newhouse, and from there along quiet roads across the moors to Caldercruix.

If you are interested, or would like further information, please contact the organisers by emailing info@holy-year2025.org.uk or calling/texting Jim McKelvie on 07957 847290.



Jubilee hymn now available

THE Holy Year 2025 will have its own hymn, and church choirs and cantors can access it already, allowing it to become familiar to congregations across the world this year.

On the YouTube channels of the Dicastery for Evangelisation (Evangelizatio) and that of the Jubilee (iubilaeum25) new videos are available with the official texts of the hymn in English and recordings to help singers and musicians learn the music.

Monsignor Pierangelo Sequeri, a theologian and musicologist, composed the text for the Holy Year hymn.

He said "The theme for the 2025 Jubilee is 'Pilgrims of Hope' and therefore the hymn is written starting from this image."

"The words take form starting from our own mother tongue, the language of the bible, which is so rich in powerful images, capable of reaching everyone, even those who are not familiar with ecclesiastical language."

The music score can be downloaded free from the Vatican's Jubilee website <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/inno-giubileo-2025.html>



Smartphone app for pilgrims

THE 2025 Jubilee will be a Holy Year unlike any other in its use of technology.

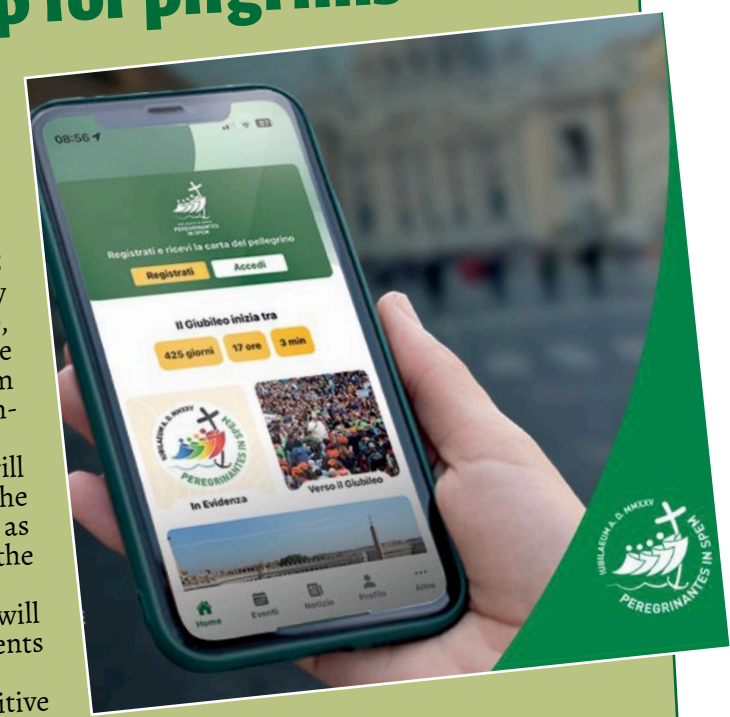
Indeed a mobile phone app will be used as the main means of booking a slot to enter the Roman basilicas and pass through the Holy Door to gain the Jubilee indulgence.

The official mobile app for the 2025 Jubilee Year, "iubilaeum25", is already available for free download. The app, which will make registration for Jubilee events easier, can be downloaded from the App Store for iOS and from the Android Play Store.

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

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

By navigating the simple and intuitive menu, users will also be able to 'save' the events they are interested in, access their personalised area and obtain the unique QR code needed for access to the Holy Door.



St Ninian's marks 'feat of faith' at its 150th birthday

PARISHIONERS, friends, families, pupils, and priests joined teaching staff past and present, along with civic leaders in Holy Family and St Ninian's Church Kirkintilloch to mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of St Ninian's High School.

And since these early beginnings the link between St Ninian's High School and the parish has remained unbroken.

Hailed by parish priest Canon Gerry Tartaglia as a 'feat of faith, persistence, and prayer' the Kirkintilloch Catholic community of 150 years ago overcame hardship and poverty to provide a school for their children.

And in his homily principal celebrant Archbishop Leo Cushley of the Archdio-

BY BRIAN SWANSON

cese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, which has historic links to the area, revealed that parents firmly believed that providing a school was more important than building a church.

The first school, which catered for 200 pupils, opened in Union Street in 1874, but the parish had to wait for almost 20 years before the present church was built.

Among the many messages of congratulations was one from Archbishop Nolan who was on holiday and unable to attend.

He wrote: "In St Ninian's education has always been more than just the imparting of knowledge: it has been about inspiring young

people with the teachings of Jesus Christ and setting them the challenge of living out those Christian values in their lives.

"May the present school community look to the past and be inspired by those who have gone before. May you be inspired also by your patron, St Ninian, who in the year 397 was the first apostle bringing the faith to Scotland. He sought to transform Scotland by spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. May the gift of education you receive in this school enable you to grow in knowledge and wisdom and inspire you also, like Ninian, to transform our world for the better."



Picture by Paul McSherry

St Ninian's High School



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Pope Francis speaking to the Congregation for Catholic Education, February 2014

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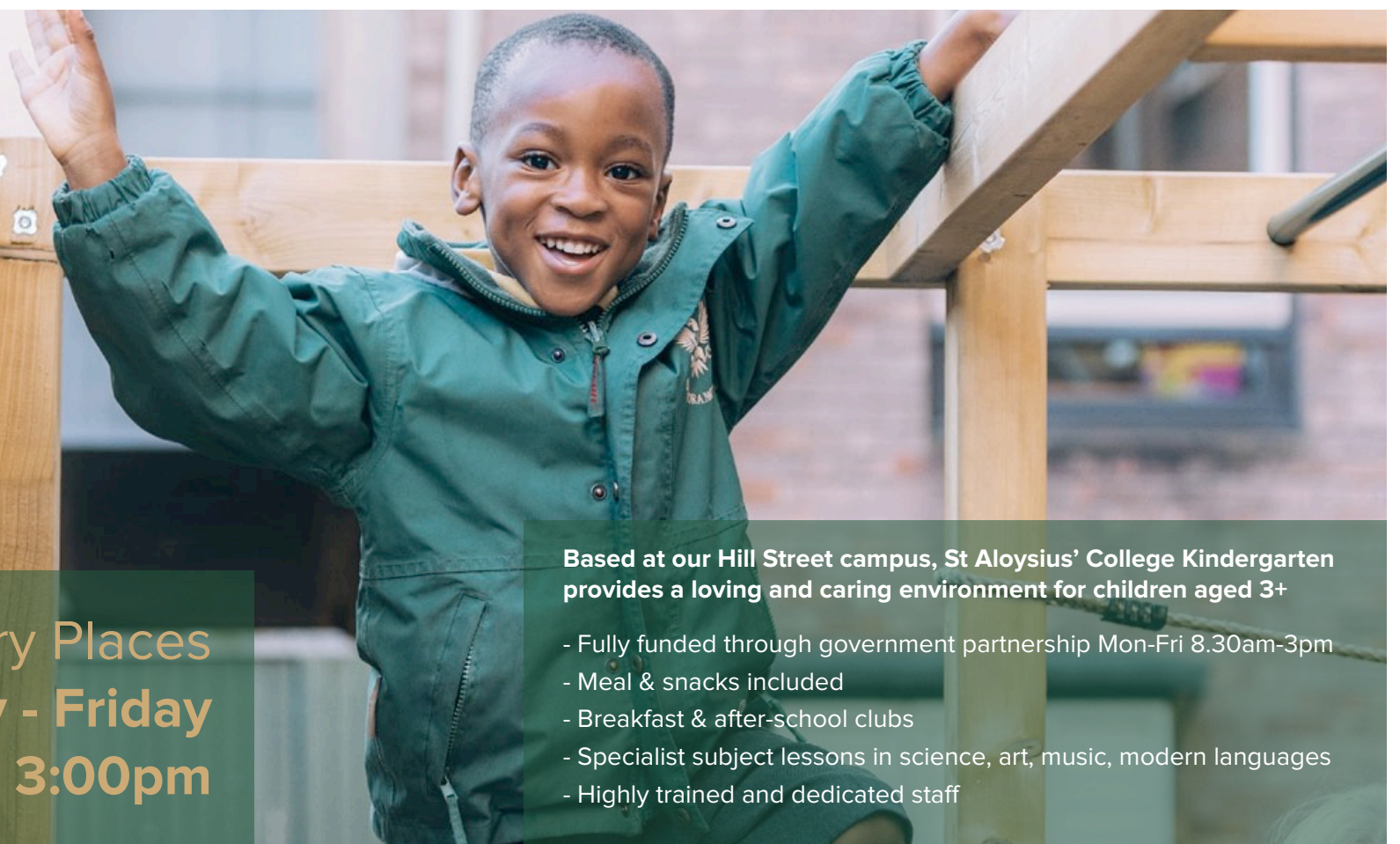


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Catholic philosophy can help our young people navigate the minefield of internet fake news

ANYONE who has had any type of interaction with young people soon realises how much time and energy a young person spends on social media.

Whether we like them or not, social media are here to stay and if used in an appropriate way, they can be a source of information and light entertainment.

One of the main issues that affects young people using social media at present is the uncontrolled spread of fake news. Because of the great opportunity that social media provide by democratising the production of information, any person with any or no qualification can share news items branding them as absolute truth.

Content is shared in an in-

BY LUCA LA MONICA

stant and can become viral quite easily with no ultimate guarantee of its veracity.

Over the past few years, the distribution of information on social media has seen a marked increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially with regards to the production of news items and various other types of content.

This does not come without its challenges. The use of software like ChatGPT poses huge challenges with regards to issues of authorship and the truthfulness of contents generated and shared on social media. There are already examples of news items entirely fabricated by AI that

have absolutely no element of truth in them.

In the midst of these dark clouds, there is a light after all. There is a discipline that can provide all young people with the means to critically analyse contents shared on social media which could also develop their sense of independence: Catholic philosophy.

If one interrogates two of the masters of the Catholic tradition, Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo, one can easily identify some suggestions on how to use the unique set of skills that philosophical reflection can provide to all (critical thinking skills) to interrogate any content shared and discern true facts from fiction.

Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* analysed every topic of discussion by posing a question about it. He would analyse all of the possible approaches to a specific statement on a certain theological or philosophical topic to then offer his own conclusion on that matter.

Following Aquinas' example, a careful scrutiny of any news item on social media could undoubtedly benefit all young (and not so young) people.

Identifying the source, the author of the news item, the evidence provided to support a certain thesis or fact, the page or provider which shares that news item, etc... these are simple steps that would allow any young person to better establish the truthfulness of any content accessed and shared.

When analysing the negative impact of misinformation in terms of moral issues, one can point to the manipulation of public opinion for political reasons, like the Cambridge Analytica scandal from a few years ago.

But even here Catholic philosophy can offer an invaluable contribution. Augustine of Hippo in his *On the teacher* highlights how philosophical questioning can offer striking advantages in all matters.

Augustine describes the

role of the philosophy teacher as crucial: he is the one that challenges any of us on our knowledge. The method used by the exterior teacher is the philosophical method (liberal arts), a critical disposition of the mind which is especially helpful when approaching misinformation and controversial moral topics.

That critical and discerning spirit learned from the past may just be the tool we need to face the challenges of the future.

■ Luca La Monica is a Religious Education and Philosophy teacher at Trinity High School, Renfrew




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THE journalist H. L. Mencken once famously quipped that love is like war, in that it's easy to begin but very hard to stop.

Had Mencken plied his journalistic trade in the Internet age, he might well have added rumours to that list of things which are notoriously easy these days to put into circulation and virtually impossible to extinguish once they're in the digital ether.

That may help explain why, despite two separate denials of mounting intensity, speculation continues to make the rounds that Pope Francis has tasked a veteran Italian cardinal and canon lawyer with preparing changes to the rules governing the next papal election, including the possibility of the participation of laity, either beforehand or even in the balloting itself.

Recently, veteran Italian journalist Massimo Franco published an essay in the country's paper of record, *Corriere della Sera*, under the provocative headline, "The ghost document that 'changes' the Conclave: Denials and tensions. The hypothesis of an attack against Pope Francis."

Rumours

Franco quotes Cardinal Gianfranco Ghirlanda, the canon law expert whose name has been linked to the rumours about conclave changes, basically issuing a flat denial: "It's a lie that I'm preparing a document on the conclave," the 81-year-old said. "It's false that I saw the Pope to discuss it. The reality is that I don't know anything, and I've never been asked for an opinion. I'm not involved. If something is being prepared elsewhere, I don't know about it."

Noting that the reports originally came from two conservative American Catholic news sites, Franco styles the situation as another reflection of a polarized church.

He quotes an unnamed figure he describes as "very close to Francis" who denounced the rumours as the "dishonesty of whoever arrives at such lies in order to discredit the Pontiff," seeing it as "an action of the Evil One who wants to divide the Church with lies."

As Franco rightly notes, in Catholic argot, invoking the devil is tantamount to sounding the loudest alarm you've got.

While there's no question that divisions in Catholicism run deep, what's not immediately clear is precisely how these reports, in



Picture: Imago Mundi

Could Pope be planning to change rules of next conclave?

particular, would amount to an "attack" on Francis, since, if anything, they seem likely to make his most ardent admirers happy.

After all, they don't suggest any corruption, abuse of power or doctrinal heresy, and politically speaking, the perception that Francis may be considering involving laity in the conclave process – almost regardless of what eventually happens – may help the Pope at least as much as it hurts.

In other words, if this is an attack, it seems pretty off-target.

While we wait to see how things shake out, there are three other bits of context worth bearing in mind.

First, as I've noted before, in some ways it's surprising Francis hasn't already issued a new set of conclave rules. Three of his four predecessors issued their own norms governing papal elections, and the only reason Pope John Paul I didn't do so is because he wasn't around long enough.

We know he planned to do so, because he discussed it with Italian journalist Gian Franco Svidercoschi, including the possibility of including the presidents of bishops'

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

conferences among the electors.

Second, if Francis were to decree that non-cardinals could participate in the next papal election, it might be spun as a big deal, but it hardly would be unprecedented.

We could start with the fact that the first use of the term "cardinal" to designate a cleric of the city of Rome dates to the sixth century, which means that cardinals had no role in the choice of Popes for at least 500 years. It wasn't until 1059 that the electoral body was restricted to cardinals, and even after that, non-cardinals occasionally cast ballots.

In 1417, for example, a conclave took place during the Council of Constance in order to heal a schism involving three rival claimants to the papacy. In order to produce a clear-cut result to which everyone could agree, the electoral body was composed of 23 cardinals and 30 representatives of the five nations represented at the council, meaning England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Those non-cardinal delegates were clergy,

including bishops, religious superiors, and deacons, though some of those deacons were essentially honorary positions who functioned as members of lay society, such as lawyers, politicians and university professors.

The result was that in 1417, not only did cardinals not have the exclusive right to elect the Pope, they weren't even a majority. So, don't say it hasn't happened before.

As far as lay participation in a conclave goes, it's worth recalling that in the early centuries of the Church, all bishops, including the Bishop of Rome, were chosen by a consensus of clergy and laity of a diocese.

Over time that practice changed, but even in later eras secular monarchs in Europe claimed (and exercised) a right to veto papal candidates, which was known as the *Jus exclusivae*.

Though that right was never officially recognised in Church law, and several Popes over the centuries issued decrees seeking to either curtail or abolish it, the "right of exclusion" continued to be employed until the early 20th century, when Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria successfully prevented the election of Italian Cardinal Mariano Rampolla in 1903, in a conclave that instead produced Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto as Pope Pius X.

In other words, it's hardly as if laity have never before had a voice in picking Popes, even if the laity involved most recently were of a fairly rarified sort.

To sum up: Maybe Pope Francis is contemplating changes to conclave rules, maybe he isn't (Though if he is, he apparently isn't discussing it with Ghirlanda).

But even if we take recent reports completely at face value, none of it would amount to a true novelty – because with a Church with more than 2,000 years of history under its belt, pretty much everything, and its opposite, has happened at least once.

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Bad piety should never be the enemy of good humour

PIETY is the enemy of humour, at least whenever something less than piety is masquerading as piety.

Here's an example: I would have lived in community with an overly serious man who, after someone would tell a colourful joke, would bring us back to earth with the question, "Would you tell a joke like that in front of the Blessed Sacrament?" That not only deflated the joke and its teller, but it also took the oxygen out of the room.

There's a response I would have liked to have given to his question, namely, a joke my Oblate Novice Master used to tell, one whose irony exposes false piety.

The joke runs this way: A young woman was getting married and her family could not afford a venue for a reception for the wedding. The parish priest generously offered them the foyer at the entrance of the church, telling them they could bring in a cake and have a reception there. The father of the bride asked whether they might also bring in some liquor. "Absolutely not," the priest replied, "you can't drink liquor in a church!" "But," protested the bride's father, "Jesus drank wine at the wedding feast of Cana." "But not in front of the Blessed Sacrament!" replied the priest.

Admittedly, humour can be impious, crass, offensive,

dirty, but whenever that's the case the fault normally lies more in the aesthetics than in the content of the joke. A joke isn't offensive because it is about sex or religion or any other area we surround with sacredness.

Humour is offensive when it crosses a line in terms of respect, taste, and aesthetics. Humour is offensive when it is bad art. Bad art crosses a line in terms of respect, either vis-à-vis its audience or its subject matter. What can make a joke offensive or dirty is when it is told, or how it is told, or to whom it is told, or the tone in which it is told, or lack of sensitivity to what is being told, or the colour of the language as it is being told.

Whether or not it can be told before the Blessed Sacrament isn't a criterion. If a joke shouldn't be told in front of the Blessed Sacrament it shouldn't be told in front of anyone. There aren't two standards of offensiveness.

Still, bad piety is the enemy of humour. It's also the enemy of robust, earthy living. But that is the case for bad piety, not genuine piety.

Genuine piety is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and is a healthy reverence before all of life. But it's a reverence that, while healthily respectful, is not offended by humour (even robust, earthy humor) providing the

Scribblings of the spirit

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



humour isn't aesthetically offensive – akin to nudity which is healthy in art but offensive in pornography.

False sensitivity that masks itself as piety also strips all spirituality of humour, save for the most pious kind. In doing that, in effect, it makes Jesus, Mary, and the saints humourless, and thus less than fully human and healthy.

One of our mentors at our Oblate novitiate told us, young novices, that there is not a single incident reported in scripture of Jesus ever laughing. He told us this to dampen our natural, youthful, rambunctious energy, as

if this was somehow a hindrance to being religious.

Humorous energy is not a hindrance to being religious. To the contrary. Jesus is the paragon of all that is healthily human, and he, no doubt, was a fully healthy, robust, delightful human person, and none of those words (healthy, robust, delightful) would apply to him if he hadn't had a healthy, indeed earthy, sense of humour.

For 15 years I taught a course entitled 'The Theology of God' to seminarians and others preparing for ministry. I would try to cover all the required basis asked for in the curriculum – bibli-

cal revelation, patristic insights, normative church teachings, and speculative views from contemporary theologians.

But, inside all of this, like a recurring theme in an opera, I would tell the students this: In all your preaching and teaching and pastoral practices, whatever else, try not to make God look stupid. Try not to make God look unintelligent, tribal, petty, rigid, nationalistic, angry, or fearful.

Healthy

Every homily, every theological teaching, every ecclesial practice, and every pastoral practice ultimately reflects an image of God whether we want it to or not. And if there is something less than healthy in our preaching or pastoral practices, the God who underwrites it will also appear as unhealthy. A healthy God does not undergird an unhealthy theology, ecclesiology, or anthropology.

Hence, if we teach a Jesus who is humourless, who takes offense at the earthiness of life, who is uncomfortable hearing the word sex, who flinches at colourful language, and who is afraid to smile and chuckle at irony, wit, and humor, we make Jesus appear as rigid and uptight, a prude, and not the person you want to be beside at table.

Painting the sacraments

NICOLAS Poussin was an important painter in the 17th century who painted two series on the Seven Sacraments for different clients.

In the second series, Poussin depicts Peter receiving the Keys but entitles the work "Ordination" indicating that Christ is ordaining a group of men to the priesthood.

The ceremony is taking place in an outdoor setting with some buildings in the background.

In the centre, the ordinand kneels before Christ as he is about to become a priest. In this serene environment, Poussin uses soft, muted colours to make the scene feel calm, serious and solemn, although, some of

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

the outsiders wear luminous garments.

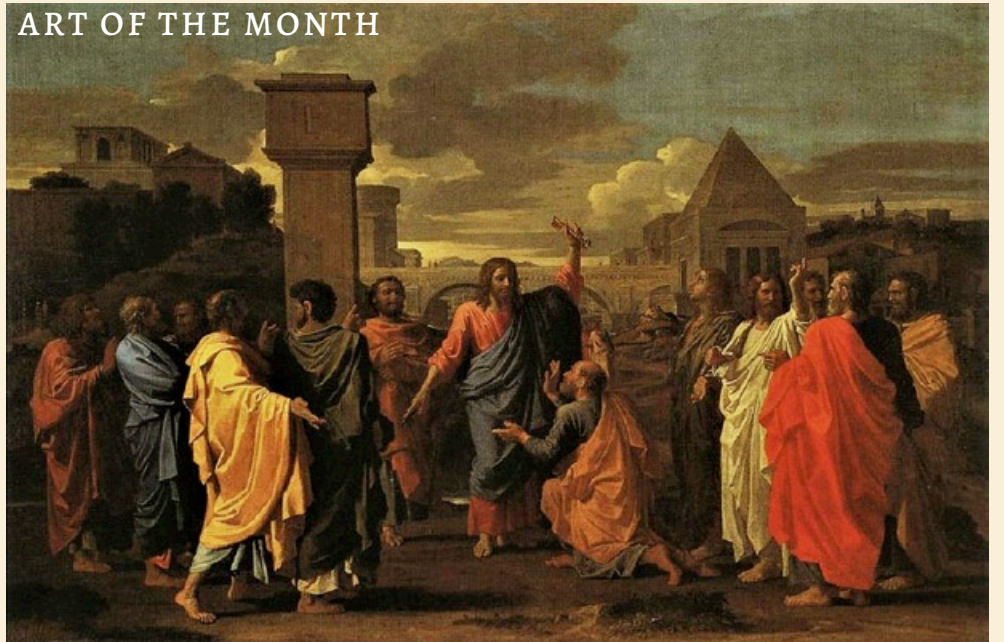
His use of light gently shines on the group of figures gathered in a semi-circle. They are portrayed in a dignified posture, wearing flowing clothes that look like those from ancient times.

Each person's face shows different feelings such as respect, deep thinking, or reverence.

Poussin's painting almost forces you to think and feel a sense of respect and awe for the sacrament as it depicts an important, life-changing moment in the lives of these men.

Even though it's from a long time ago, it still helps us understand the signifi-

ART OF THE MONTH



cance of traditions and ceremonies.

In a different setting, it could be the current Archbishop conferring the grace of Sacred Ordination. Then, as now, the sacrament of priestly ordination continues to inspire people for generations to come.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, where hands are laid in holy rite, give men the wisdom to discern the call to ordination's sacred grace. May all priests embrace ordination's sanctity as they fulfil their calling with unwavering trust and a continual desire to serve your people. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mark's Gospel is the perfect travelling companion for Lent

AFTER our course began in Salamanca last month, our seminarians, very appropriately, heard at daily Mass a number of biblical readings about callings and missions.

In the weekday readings we heard about Samuel's call and David's anointing and on Sundays so far, we've heard Jesus inviting Andrew and his friend to "Come and see", and then the call to the fishermen to follow him.

For young men praying and thinking about their vocation, especially a vocation to priesthood, it has all been very rich. And they've certainly noticed it!

In the two Sundays before Lent begins – and after it begins too – we'll continue with these themes a while longer. Mark's Gospel takes the lead this year, and we could be forgiven for thinking it's simple just because it's shorter than the others. But don't be fooled! Mark doesn't do anything by chance, but in fact gives us a lot to think about!

Fifth Sunday, Year B

If you were to write an outline of the Gospel, it might look something like this: Jesus preaches and heals people; he is arrested, suffers and dies on the Cross; he rises from the dead and sends out his disciples to preach his message.

Looking closely, that's remarkably like what we get in this Sunday's Gospel text!

We start with a healing (last week he taught in the synagogue "with author-



Fr Tom Kilbride

Rector of the Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain

ity"). Next, he exercises power over the forces of darkness – and Mark explicitly tells us it's at night, in the dark. Then, in the early morning, he rises and, strengthened by prayer, goes out with his disciples to continue the mission, preaching and healing as the daylight grows.

Mark tells us two things here. First, the cross will not be the end for Jesus. Whenever he takes on the forces of sin and suffering, he prevails. The dark is overcome and a new day dawns in Jesus. Darkness does not get the last word! Second, a response is always called for when lives are touched by the Kingdom: service in the case of Simon's mother-in-law, mission in the case of Simon himself and his companions.

Paul understands this about his life too (Second Reading), as he has no option but to join in the mission of preaching the Gospel!

Sixth Sunday, Year B

If last week was a kind of "gospel-in-miniature", this week we get another insight into the Cross and into the Kingdom of God.

By healing the man with leprosy – with all the isolation and fear that entails – Jesus reveals something of his will to save. The man doesn't tell Jesus what he wants himself, but rather trusts in Jesus's will, and lets him act accordingly, confident he can and wants to heal him.

The healing is complete on so many levels: physical, social, spiritual. No wonder the man can't help himself but goes off to tell the story: proclamation always follows an encounter with Jesus and his saving power!

But notice that in the end Jesus takes the man's place. It is Jesus now who has to go to places where no one lives, as the leper used to.

On the Cross, Jesus will take our place. We sinners will be saved, because he wills it, but he will put himself in our place, taking our punishment so we can be healed. Jesus does not use his power or authority for his own sake, but always for our good. Paul tries to act like that too (Second Reading).

First Sunday of Lent, Year B

The lesson from last Sunday – that Jesus uses his power for us and not for himself – is an idea often associated with the stories of his temptations in the desert, which we always hear on the First Sunday in Lent.

Mark's version is very brief compared to the others, however, but the idea is still in the background.

In the desert, Jesus faces the wiles of Satan and prevails. Trial and temptation – even the arrest of its first messenger, John – will not hinder the proclamation of God's Kingdom, nor prevent its power breaking into the world. Darkness and sin are overcome! That's a positive message for us as we begin our Lenten penance.

Indeed, out of that conviction emerges the call to repent, words we may have heard on Ash Wednesday. There is no time to waste and no need to fear! We heard this call already only

a few weeks ago, but there's no harm in the reminder.

How often do we need to hear the call to repent and believe the Gospel before we take it seriously?

Second Sunday of Lent, Year B

The Transfiguration of Jesus in Mark's Gospel is a powerful moment. We have just heard Peter call Jesus "the Christ", the first time anyone has done so, but he didn't understand when Jesus said that he must suffer.

Poor Peter can't get his head round it; after all, he's seen mostly miracles and displays of power. How can Jesus now be talking about suffering and death?

So, the glory they see on the mountain and the voice they hear, a voice first heard at Jesus's Baptism, give him and his companions a glimpse of the ultimate goal: resurrection and glory. Jesus will be the Son of Man who suffers, but he will also



Transfiguration of Christ by Fra Angelico (circa 1395–1455)

be seen as the Son of Man who comes in great glory. However dark things seem to get, the light will always win out.

They don't understand this yet, of course, but in time it will make sense. Abraham (First Reading) likewise had no idea what God had in mind, but he trusts and is rewarded for his faithfulness. He is prepared to offer his own beloved son, Isaac, out of pure love for his God.

How much more will God give his Beloved Son, Jesus, out of pure love for us, a love which will save us from all that is darkest in our lives, sin, sorrow, fear, and even death itself.

As we move further into Lent and springtime, the days get longer. The Sunday Gospels likewise remind us that Jesus overcomes the darkness and brings us light for a new day and for a whole new life.

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Requiescant

Fr Michael was a talented and gentle priest and artist

FR Michael Savage, who has died at the early age of 63 was a quiet, kind, and much-loved pastor whose impact on many lives across the Archdiocese of Glasgow and beyond is hard to over-estimate.

He was born on 22 January 1959 as one of seven children of James and Barbara Savage.

His brother Mark is a Benedictine monk and his sister Maura, also known by her religious name Dame Andrea Savage, is the retired abbess of the Benedictine community at Stanbrook Abbey, near Thirsk, North Yorkshire.

She is recovering from an operation and was the only member of the immediate family unable to attend, but sang the Responsorial Psalm 'I walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living', which was recorded and played to the congregation.

Father Savage was ordained priest by Bishop Joseph Devine at St Albert's church on July 3, 1983.

His education was at St Aloysius College Glasgow (1971-1976); St Peter's Cardross and Newlands (1976-1983); and the Schoenstatt Institute Germany (1978-1979).

His spirituality was greatly influenced by the Schoenstatt Movement and it is fitting that his remains were taken to the shrine of Our Lady at the Schoenstatt shrine in Campsie Glen, the movement's mostly shrine in Europe, before returning to his beloved St Margaret Mary's for the Requiem Mass.

For many years he helped the German-founded Movement in the Philippines - travelling there to help with formation of local clergy in the spirituality of the movement.

In a social media post in 2015 he wrote: "While they have their difficulties, the encounter with the Filipinos is refreshing and uplifts your faith. For these people the joy and spontaneous love for God and Our



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**
AND **BRIAN SWANSON**

Lady is taken as normal. It is curious to be in an environment where faith was celebrated, and you didn't have to always be on guard for critical comments and the cynical jibe."

Throughout his priesthood he was universally liked as a quiet, kind, unassuming man. Less known was his great artistic talent - he was a fine artist, and this was recognised by Archbishop Conti who appointed him to be chaplain of AGAP, the Archdiocesan Arts Project.

Requiem

And, as the congregation heard during his Requiem Mass at which Archbishop Nolan was the principal celebrant, he carved the Cross which was placed on his own coffin as it lay in the shrine on the eve of his funeral.

Father Savage's work is permanently on display in Immaculate Conception Parish in Maryhill.

There he painted the crucifix now suspended above the altar. It is based on the style of the early Italian Renaissance, but he added a detail where Mary, the patron of the parish, is actively participating in Christ's sacrifice, catching the blood from His pierced side in a chalice.

This cleverly links to the sacrifice of the Mass celebrated every day directly

below the crucifix.

He also created a stained-glass window, which is still in place, in the church of Our Lady and St George when he served in the parish as assistant priest in the mid-nineties.

He retired due to ill health in 2019 but the diagnosis of Parkinsons and dementia did not define him and he accepted it as part of his faith journey, according to his long-time friend Father Joe Sullivan of Holy Cross, Croy, who delivered the homily.

Candles

Father Joe said: "We were both very keen on cycling once going as far as Cape Wrath in the far North West of Scotland where we celebrated Mass at the lighthouse with candles the keepers gave us.

"Michael was always fitter than me but one day he fell behind and I noticed that his hands were shaking and he told me, quite as a matter of fact of the diagnosis he had been given.

"He did not dwell on it and that took great faith and courage."

His list of appointments in such a relatively short life show his willingness to labour wherever in the Lord's vineyard the Church asked him.

He died peacefully at Nazareth House on December 28 2023 and is buried with his parents in the family plot at Mearns Cemetery.

Requiescat in pace.

Lawyer Len's beliefs sustained him in life

LEN Murray, who has died aged 90, was one of the leading lawyers of his generation, a much admired Burns scholar, and a man shaped by his Catholic faith.

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**
AND **BERNARD PONSONBY**

At the age of 27, Len was indelibly affected when his client, 19-year-old Anthony Miller, was hanged in Barlinnie prison for the capital murder of a man in Queens Park.

His friend, David Scott, remembers that Len was ashen-faced as he went down to the cells to speak with his client adding "he wanted to do more for Miller, and he carried the weight of the case for the rest of his life".

He had an association with the Glasgow firm of Levy and McRae for over 40 years and he featured regularly in the media owing to the high-profile nature of many of his cases.

The son of a head teacher from the Knightswood area, Len's education in the law took place at Glasgow University - an institution for which he retained a deep fondness.

His career was marked by a visceral horror at the use of the death penalty - a reaction to a case which affected him profoundly at the start of his legal career.

Anthony Joseph Miller was hanged on December 22, 1960. Len Murray died 63 years to the day after the execution of his client.

The experience led to a subsequent hatred of the

death penalty and decades later, Len could be moved to tears when telling of the agony of Miller's family as they campaigned for their son to escape the hangman.

Described by a High Court judge as the finest pleader of his generation, Len Murray brought intellectual rigour, common sense and a stylish wit to his work.

He carried himself with an air of natural authority which was buttressed by a distinctive voice which occasionally hinted at the theatrical.

He was a natural storyteller, who could rely on perfect diction and a comic's sense of timing in recounting whatever narrative.

It was no real surprise that when he fully retired in 2003, he went on to become one of the country's most

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respected after-dinner speakers. He could be funny without ever being vulgar.

He defined after-dinner speaking as art and he would never cheapen that artform by seeking solace in tired routines or the recitation of jokes.

He had the distinction of being retained, at one time by both Celtic FC and Rangers FC, although his loyalties and deep love were for Glasgow's green and white team.

Len was a towering figure in legal circles and despite

a distinguished career he rarely let it go to his head. He was an approachable man who had time for people, and he always carried himself with great grace and with impeccable manners.

He took his faith seri-

ously without ever using it as an identity marker. He was a traditional Catholic without ever being a traditionalist and he drew much consolation from Catholic liturgy and spirituality when faced with the bereavements which marked the latter part of his life.

He was a parishioner of St Andrew's, Bearsden, and offered his services there as a reader. He read the Genesis reading at the Easter Vigil in such a sonorous and eloquent tone that the whole rhythm of creation came alive. Len's baritone delivery, coupled with the celebrated passage... 'God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good...' seemed made for each other.

For many years he was a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and was a Knight Commander within that organisation which works to support the small Christian community in the Holy Land.

He admired – and was

admired by – the late Cardinal Tom Winning, and it was at Winning's death that he delivered what a fellow Glasgow lawyer described as the 'speech of his life'.

The occasion was a dinner at Glasgow University to mark the 550th anniversary of its foundation by Pope Nicholas V. For the first time since the Reformation a Mass was to be celebrated in the University Chapel and the Pope had sent an envoy, in the shape of Polish Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski (then head of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education) to preside, with Winning as host.

Cardinal Winning died unexpectedly a few days before the historic occasion and it went ahead with only Grocholewski presiding (in Latin as his English was non-existent).

At the dinner afterwards Len rose to sum up the contradictory moods of shock, sorrow, celebration and historical pride in an unforgettable tribute to his friend the Cardinal. He

spoke beautifully, with authority, with kindness, with humour and with emotion. Many were the tears shed as Len recalled his friend, setting him in a historical and political context while sharing personal anecdotes about Cardinal Tom's life and times. None who were present will ever forget it. It was Len at his best.

That faith was tested when first, his wife Elizabeth died in 2005 at the age of 72 and then in 2020 he was emotionally floored by the death of his son Kenneth at the age of 61.

For a man who had a serious illness in his relative youth, Len Murray lived a life of impressive longevity. His contributions to the law were significant and are rightly marked and remembered.

But to everyone who met him and counted him as a friend, it is not his career eminence they give thanks for, but for that precious, enthralling, and wonderful thing called friendship.

Requiescat in pace.

Eileen Anne: a mind for culture and a heart for faith

PROFESSOR Eileen Anne Millar, who has died, was a remarkable figure who had a powerful impact on thousands of students of Turnbull Hall, Glasgow University's Catholic Chaplaincy, and was a trusted advisor to two Archbishops.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

was halted when she was struck down by meningitis as a teenager, and only after a year of exhausting and painful treatment – as was common in the 1950s – could her studies be resumed.

Her flair for languages saw her obtain an Honours degree in Italian and she went to Rome to study for her PhD, where she met a young Scots priest, then working in the Scots College. "Have you got enough money for a meal?" was apparently the very practical question of the then-Father Tom Winning.

Cardinal

Whatever she answered, a friendship developed which lasted until the Cardinal's death.

He would often privately consult Eileen Anne on issues relating to the Archdiocese, his pastoral vision and his communications strategy. She formed part of an unofficial 'kitchen cabinet' of advisors which was well ahead of its time in seeking lay support and advice in Church life.

When Fr John Keenan arrived as chaplain, Eileen Anne assured Cardinal Winning that she would offer him every support she



could, and thus was formed another long and fruitful bond, which was reflected in her funeral Mass which the now Bishop John celebrated with Mgr Conway and Fr Domenico Zanrè from Aberdeen diocese, a former colleague of Eileen Anne, who credited her with encouraging his priestly vocation while they worked together at Glasgow University.

She served as a Governor of St Aloysius College after her retirement and was a Dame of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, but it was Turnbull Hall and its life of faith and education which

was closest to her heart.

Her final years were marked by serious illness and for two years she was confined to bed. She was greatly comforted by the regular visits of Bishop John and Mgr Michael visited daily to bring her Holy Communion.

Mgr Conway said: "Every day after communion she had a favourite prayer she would whisper... 'Sacred heart of Jesus I place all my trust in you.'"

"On the day she died Bishop John and I were with her, and we saw her breathing fail so she was given the last blessing of the Church.

Bishop John led the rite and I watched. And even though I have officiated at those prayers for 60 years as a priest I found it a very emotional moment.

"Though she was just two hours away from leaving this world she tried to say the prayers of commendation with us. She went to God with the words of those prayers on her lips."

Her legacy is surely the education bequeathed and the pastoral care she gave to countless students over the years. Many turned out at her Requiem Mass in St Joseph's Clarkston, in recognition of her impact on their lives.

Former colleagues of all faiths and none were present, as well as representatives of the University to which she had committed her life. In the words of Mgr Conway, "She gave not less than everything to the University of Glasgow," and indeed the motto of that institution – 'Via Veritas Vita' (the way, the truth and the life) – was included in the Gospel reading chosen for her funeral.

But her legacy is found also in a very tangible way in the Cloister Garden next to St Andrew's Cathedral. When Archbishop Conti was planning the site it became clear that phrases should be

chosen from the scriptures and from the great Italian poets to be inscribed on the mirror-like silver plinths.

Archbishop Mario had no hesitation in turning to Eileen Anne, whom he held in the highest esteem, asking her to choose phrases which would reflect the themes of life and death, of shipwreck, of baptism and new life which characterised the beautiful monumental space which was to be created in memory of the *Arandora Star* tragedy.

Her selection was remarkable, mixing beloved lines of scripture with phrases from Dante, Petrarch, Foscolo and Pascoli.

Perhaps her bravest translation was of the phrase 'L'amore è intrepido' from Manzoni's great spiritual novel, *The Betrothed* which she rendered in English, not as 'Love is intrepid' (which is the literal translation), but the much richer 'Love casts out fear...'

It was a phrase which summed her up.

"Eileen Anne had no fear. She wasn't afraid of death or dying. For her it meant going home..." With these words Mgr Conway described the life and death of a woman of faith, a woman of intellect and a friend of God and His Church.

Requiescat in pace.

Wee Box appeal will support a 'Rwanda policy' based on humanity

FOR those of us old enough to remember it, spring 1994 was a very dark chapter indeed.

Rwanda was blighted by 100 days of genocide, which left around a million people dead. Yes, one million people.

War inevitably hits the vulnerable most and around half of those who died were women and children.

Thirty years on and Rwanda and its people are still recovering from the genocide that ripped their country apart and the deep trauma and ongoing sexual violence it left behind.

But even after the genocide ended, Rwanda is a country where violence has become normalised. The legacy of these horrors are still open wounds on individuals and communities across the country, and shockingly, almost half of women aged 15 to 49 in

Rwanda have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. That's one in two.

SCIAF's work across Rwanda, driven by donations from the people of Scotland, focuses heavily on supporting those affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

Working through local Rwandan organisations, SCIAF is supporting projects which help women and girls rebuild their lives after abuse, works to change social attitudes, and build a future free of abuse and discrimination.

As such, SCIAF's Lenten WEE BOX appeal in 2024 touches on subjects that may be upsetting. But there are also stories of hope. Stories like that of Jeanette ...

Jeanette lives with her friends Audrey and Claudine in the back room of a tailoring shop that they run

together – a shop called Hope.

Jeanette was raped when she was 17 by a taxi driver when returning from market, leaving her pregnant. She suffered a lot and became so ill that she wasn't able to work, so would spend every day in bed, hungry, until she gave birth.

Stress

She said: "I was under a tremendous amount of stress during the pregnancy. I'd endured the traumatic experience of rape and was living in poverty. I gave birth to my son in November and I was hospitalised for the entire month. He was very little.

"Two months after he was born, my child died. He died in hospital. We buried him. That's the entirety of it.

"I struggled immensely with accepting what had



Lorraine Currie

Chief Executive of SCIAF

happened. The intense agony I experienced was so overwhelming that it felt like I was on the verge of losing my sanity."

In 2021 Jeanette got involved in a SCIAF project with the Justice and Peace Commission in Rwanda, supporting young people from poor families, or those who have become single mothers at a young age.

This is where she met Audrey and Claudine, during counselling sessions in her local Parish. The young women became firm friends and went on to complete vocational train-

ing in sewing.

She said: "After completing the training, we were given 100,000 Rwandan Francs (£67) to buy a sewing machine and a pair of scissors. We decided to seek a small loan to start our own business. We took a loan of 20,000 Rwandan Francs (£13), bought basic tools and started looking for premises.

"We live here in our workshop, we work as a team, and make joint decisions regarding any purchases we intend to make.

"Since I started receiving support from this project, my wounds have

been healed. I told myself that I'm not the only one who has been through this, and that I cannot change anything except to embrace and accept what happened, and become the best version of myself. My life has changed.

"God holds an irreplaceable position in my life, primarily because I attribute everything I have to Him. When people trust in God, facing trials and adversity can help them draw closer to Him."

SCIAF is providing medical care, trauma counselling and skills training so survivors can recover, support themselves and rebuild their lives. We're working to change attitudes, so women and girls are safe, respected and valued while also developing networks of community leaders who speak out against violence and demand gender equality.

"THROUGH LISTENING AND COUNSELLING, MY WOUNDS HAVE BEEN HEALED."

THIS LENT, SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS



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