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Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

July 2026



Pope's powerful message to older people...

'God is our Father... but even more He is our Mother'

FEEL God's fatherly – and motherly – love in your lives. With these striking words Pope Leo has addressed a beautiful 'letter of love' to grandparents and the elderly, ahead of a special day dedicated to them later this month.

The Papal letter is for 'World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly' which is marked this year on July 26 – the feast of Jesus' grandparents St Joachim and St Anne.

It is an emotional 'thank you' to older people from the Holy Father in which he shows a rare capacity to understand the issues they face.

He writes, "The Church understands the suffering

of her elderly members; she knows full well that they are all too often viewed through the lens of stereotypes and considered a burden.

Burden

"She knows that many elderly people are left behind by children who are forced to migrate ... For each of these reasons, she proclaims the Lord's promise: 'But I will never forget you!'"

In a gentle reminder to children and grandchildren to treasure older family members the Pope writes: "May this day be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting

their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them.

"Bring them, through this message and your presence, the closeness and affection of the Pope..."

And in a striking passage he quotes Blessed Pope John Paul I (right) – the 'smiling Pope' who reigned for only 33 days in the summer of 1978.

"It is a joy, at any age, but especially when we are no longer young, to discover, as John Paul I said, that we are the recipients 'of undying love on the part of God... he has always his eyes open on us, even when it seems to be dark.

"He is our father; but even



more He is our mother."

Pope Leo adds: "Even in old age we do not cease to be sons and daughters; therefore, the invitation to return to the arms of God — whose love is both paternal and maternal — remains worthwhile at any age."

And he invites people who

have never been religious before to 'go deep' during their retirement years.

"Old age — beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency during this season of life — can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life. On this new journey, one can recognise that as Saint Augustine says, "God is a mother because He cherishes, because He nourishes, because He nurses, because He protects."

Pope Leo ends the letter with a fitting expression of thanks to all the older people who pray for him.

"Dear elderly brothers and sisters, I thank you for supporting me every day with your prayers, especially

when you recite the Holy Rosary.

"I return this gratitude from the bottom of my heart and leave you with this prayer: may the Lord always renew us in faith, hope and love — He who never forgets us!"

■ Scan the QR code below to read the full letter on the Vatican website.



Pope takes Spain by storm

Millions welcome Pope Leo

POPE Leo XIV took Spain by storm last month during a six-day visit which combined powerful expressions of faith with a strong appeal for solidarity with migrants.

The highlight of the Madrid leg of the journey was the Corpus Christi celebration in the capital, where an estimated 1.2 million people gathered for Mass and a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the city centre.

The extraordinary attendance represented one of the largest public demonstrations of Catholic faith seen in Europe in recent years.

Speaking at the Corpus Christi procession, the Pope paid tribute to “the beauty and elegance of the floral carpets, the altars erected in the streets, the carefully crafted monstrances and stands, the hymns and the liturgical vestments.

He added: “This is not an exhibition, a remnant of folklore or a simple display

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

of beauty. It is a profession of faith in the presence of the risen Lord, who is alive and continues to walk among us.”

The enthusiasm of young people was particularly evident throughout the Madrid events, with hundreds of thousands participating in prayer vigils and gatherings.

In Barcelona, Pope Leo presided over historic ceremonies at the city’s iconic Sagrada Família Basilica.

Tower

The visit coincided with celebrations marking the completion and blessing of the magnificent Tower of Jesus Christ, the basilica’s central spire and the culmination of more than a century of construction inspired by the vision of architect Antoni Gaudí.

He described the building as “an architectural masterpiece, which is also an

eloquent catechesis made of stones, colours and light.”

Greeting King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia, who welcomed him alongside Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, Pope Leo stressed that the Basilica of the Sagrada Família opens its doors like outstretched arms, inviting everyone to its altar and to listen to the Word of God.

Migrants

The final stage took the Pope to the Canary Islands, where he drew attention



Pope Leo welcomed by the King and Queen of Spain



to the plight of migrants risking their lives on small boats to reach Europe.

Meeting migrants, aid workers and Church volunteers, he insisted that every person possesses an inviolable dignity and urged political leaders to pursue policies rooted in humanity and

compassion.

The Pope said. “They are looking for someone to tell them through actions rather than with words: ‘your life is not a waste; your suffering is not invisible; your dignity has not been washed away in the waters you have crossed.’”

Change of faces at St Aloysius as Fr Andrew takes the helm

PARISHIONERS of St Aloysius, Garnethill, the only Jesuit Church in the Archdiocese, are set to pay a fond farewell to Parish Priest Father Gerard Mitchell SJ who will be replaced later this summer by fellow Scot Fr Andrew Cameron-Mowat SJ.

Father Gerard spent most of his priestly life in parishes in London where he gained a reputation as an anti-poverty campaigner but in 2021 he returned to his home city as parish priest of St Aloysius – the same church in which he was ordained 43 years ago.

In a message to parishioners in a recent bulletin he wrote: “I want to share with you that this summer I will be completing my time as parish priest here at St Aloysius.

“It has been a privilege to be part of this community, to pray with you, and to walk with you in so many moments of faith and life. I am deeply grateful for your kindness, your patience,



Fr Andrew Cameron-Mowat SJ

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

and your generosity over these years.”

And speaking of his successor he went on: “The Provincial has appointed Fr Andrew Cameron-Mowat, SJ as the next parish priest. Many of you will already know Fr Andrew, and I am confident that he will serve you with great dedication and pastoral care. Fr Andrew Cameron-Mowat SJ is a Scottish Jesuit priest known for his thoughtful preaching and deep love of the Church’s liturgy.



Fr Gerard Mitchell SJ

“He holds a doctorate in liturgy from Berkeley and has taught theology at Heythrop College. He was parish priest of Farm Street Church and St Ignatius’, Stamford Hill.

“He brings warmth, creativity, and a strong pastoral presence to every community he serves. He was born in Bellshill and educated at St Aloysius’ College.

“Please keep both of us in your prayers. And know that I will continue to hold this parish, and each of you, in mine.”

Who needs the World Cup?



WITH the World Cup well under way, football fever is sweeping the country.

And even if in just a few short weeks it will all be over in the USA we will still have the SCIAF Shield to look forward too!

Fancy having a great day with your pals while raising money for a worthwhile cause? Then the SCIAF Shield is for you.

Ben Wilson, SCIAF’s Director of Public Engagement said: “Last year was our first ever SCIAF Shield, so we’re hoping to build on last year and

make 2026 bigger and even better.”

The SCIAF Shield is a tournament for 5-a-side football teams promising an exciting afternoon of community and sport – all in support of SCIAF’s life-changing work overseas.

With four groups of four teams, the tournament will kick off with a group stage, followed by a thrilling knockout round to crown the champions of the SCIAF Shield.

Last year a team made up of parishioners from The Sacred Heart in Salsburgh and St Aloysius

in Chapelhall won and was led by parish priest, Father Mark O’Donnell.

It will be held on Saturday, 1 August at Goals on Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow at noon. It’s £125 to enter a team, which includes entry, a minimum of one hour of football, lunch and a welcome pack for every player. There will also be music, bouncy castle, face-painting and more!”

Find out more here. <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/get-involved/events/799-the-sciaf-shield>

Artwork recalls the night Maryhill was a river of fire

THE new 'Welcome and Information Brochure' produced by Immaculate Conception Parish in Maryhill contains a very special piece of artwork.

The parish has bought the copyright of a painting from the National Gallery in Edinburgh entitled "Rescue Party on Kilmun Street", an artwork by Ian Fleming which has a special resonance in the community.

It recalls the events of March 1941. During the air raids the old Immaculate Conception Church, St Mary's school and tenements in the adjacent street were bombed in the Clydebank blitz.

Bombardment

In total 169 people died and the church had to be demolished after the war. The bombardment is still recalled as a tragic piece of local history.

The publication led to a spate of memories from parishioners who had been affected by the bombing.

Fr Jim Lawlor, Parish priest of Immaculate Conception said: "There is



BY **RONNIE CONVERY** a whole section in the latest book about the Clydebank blitz, and the bombing in Maryhill. It is still a very powerful memory in many people's lives."

As if to prove the point,

one follower of the Parish on Facebook, Mary Ribet, posted: "That night the Blessed Sacrament was brought to our family home 190 Cumlodden Drive and brought into the room where my mother and I were after she gave

birth to me on 8th March. "My Aunt Ciss (Miss Harkins of St Mary's School) baptised me that very night."

The new brochure can be collected from Immaculate Conception Church before or after services.

Sign up for new theology classes

Two new chances to study the faith to a new level are on offer this summer with start dates in the autumn.

Both courses are the result of close ties between the Church and Glasgow University – itself a Papal foundation.

The Certificate in Religious Education by Distance Learning (along with the necessary church approval) will allow those who complete the course successfully to teach in Catholic schools.

It is designed to provide them with the requisite understanding of the main tenets of Catholic theology, the Catholic vision of education and the methodology appropriate to Catholic religious education.

This programme is also recommended for qualified teachers who want to revisit their understanding of these issues as part of Con-

tinuing Professional Development (CPD).

Full details of the course can be found here: www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/religiouseducation/bydistancelearning

Also on offer is the popular Catechists' Course – also run in collaboration with Glasgow University.

The Archdiocese offers a two year programme in partnership with the University of Glasgow School of Education directed towards the formation of Catechists to work in parishes, principally with adult Catholics, but also in RCIA, with children or with young people – in short, wherever a parish recognises its responsibility to support life-long faith formation of its community.

■ For more information contact the RE Department by e-mailing Christine. Burke@rcag.org.uk

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Lisa says 'arrivederci' to St Paul's

GENERATIONS of pupils, staff past and present, along with a wide circle of friends gathered for a thanksgiving Mass in Saint Paul's High School, Pollok to say 'arrivederci' to head teacher Lisa Pierotti.

Lisa, who became head teacher 19 years ago, said: "I give thanks to God for every day I have worked at this wonderful school. But as the Scriptures say there is a season for everything under heaven and although I am devastated to leave it is my time to do so.

Forever

"I will treasure forever the strong resourceful community that has been built up in this school over the years with pupils, staff, parents and the whole community where the Gospel is at the heart of everything we do."

Lisa, whose sister Caroline also teaches at St Paul's and retired on the same



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

day, was praised during the Mass for her lifelong commitment to education and was presented with the Archdiocesan Medal, recognising her service.

The sisters' dad Louis, aged 92, was on hand too to see his daughters honoured.

Paying tribute to Lisa, school chaplain Father Martin Kane said: "The words of St Paul 'Aim for the higher gifts' is the motto of the school and over the past 19 years as head teacher not only has Lisa lived up to that saying herself but encouraged her pupils, staff and parents to do so as well.

"She has led with passion and sincerity with the

Gospel at the centre of everything she has done for the school in which every pupil is nurtured and encouraged. The entire school community will always be deeply grateful to her".

Lisa began her teaching career as a probationer at Saint Robert Bellarmine secondary school and later accepted a teaching post at Saint Peter's High School in London and Santa Rosa High School in San Francisco in the 1980s.

After spells at Holyrood Secondary and St Gerard's Govan she moved to her beloved St Paul's and remained there until her retirement.

Lisa said: "My dad is from Barga and mum from Montecasino and although I know Italy well I am going to spend as much time as I can visiting all the places I have always wanted to see – I'm not going to live to a timetable for a change!"

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Carfin shrine will bloom again

As the Carfin pilgrimage season gets under way, a new fund raising appeal has raised almost £4000 to 'bring flowers of the rarest' to the National Marian Shrine as part of a long term refurbishment.

The first step will be the planting of dozens of red roses around the statue of St Therese of Lisieux who famously promised to "let fall a shower of roses" after her death.

John Patrick Mellon, of Sancta Familia Media, who are working on the campaign with Fr Jim Grant, the Guardian of the Shrine, said: "Carfin Grotto has meant something to generations – a place to pray, to light a candle, to find peace but right now parts of the Grotto need care.

"One of those areas is around the statue of St Therese of Lisieux which in the past was filled with roses so we have been encouraging people to donate so we can plant roses and bring it back to its former glory.



BY BRIAN SWANSON

We launched our appeal just a few weeks ago but the response so far has been impressive.

"Future visitors will notice a great difference once all these roses are in full bloom."

In the longer term it is hoped that ongoing donations will also be used to

plant drifts of daffodils at different locations in the grounds of the grotto which attracts upwards of 70,000 visitors a year.

Donations

Father Grant said: "Because we depend entirely on donations from visitors and pilgrim groups, appeals like these are very useful – and necessary – because the work to keep the Grotto in the best possible state is constant.

"For that we must thank our volunteers who turn out regularly to care for a place which means so much to them because in many cases it was their families who helped build it."

■ To find out how to donate visit the Carfin Grotto 'Go Fund Me' Page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/carfin-grotto-flourish-with-flowers>

Evangelisation at the Fringe as Gaudì returns

THE Archdiocese's Arts Project (AGAP) is taking its message of faith and hope to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this summer with an updated version of the popular play 'Gaudì: God's Architect'.

And due to demand, extra Fringe Preview Performances have had to be added: one last month in St Thomas' Riddrie and one coming up on Friday 17th July at Blessed John Duns Scotus Church Hall, Gorbals, as well as performances in other Scottish Dioceses.

The Edinburgh Fringe run will see Stephen Callaghan head a cast of three (with Russell Wheeler and Berni McCluskey) on stage at the world's biggest arts festival from 7th-15th Aug, at 8.35pm each evening at The Space at Surgeons Hall.

The story of Antoni Gaudì, the internationally renowned visionary architect responsible for Barcelona's towering Sagrada Familia is likely to be a huge success once more, especially since the Sagrada Familia which was Gaudì's crowning glory was visited by Pope Leo this month.

The sell-out 2024 Fringe show has been revised to mark the centenary of Gaudì's death.

As all eyes turn towards Barcelona for the completion of Gaudì's masterpiece and the case for Gaudì's



canonization continues, AGAP promise to bring to life the powerful and enigmatic events and characters surrounding 'God's Architect'.

Reviews

On its previous visit to Edinburgh, the show won some rave reviews: 'Acting is strong throughout... engrossing' (AllEdinburghTheatre.com). 'Superb writing' (Derek Awards). 'Sincere storytelling' (BroadwayBaby.com). 'Fun and educational' (Scotsman).

Stephen Callaghan told Flourish: "It's important for us to revisit Gaudì's story to mark the centenary of his death and it fits the Francis-

can Jubilee of the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi too. Both men experienced a Divine calling to build a church, both were 'eco warriors' of recycling, and both were great lovers of nature and defenders of the poor. We hope that the play will inspire and educate many as we tour it to the Fringe and roll it out across schools."

■ Tickets for Glasgow performance – £10/7/5 (Pay What You Can) – from www.gaudi-play.co.uk or 0141 552 5527. To book tickets for the Edinburgh Fringe show go to: <https://tickets.thespaceuk.com/event/911:5230/>

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Archbishop: migrants are people, not numbers



■ An impassioned plea to see migrants as people to be helped, not numbers to be reduced, was made by Archbishop Nolan at a day of solidarity at Dungavel detention centre.

The Archbishop was joined by local bishop, Joseph Toal of Motherwell Diocese, Deputy Speaker of the Scottish Parliament Clare Adamson MSP and supporters of

Justice and Peace Scotland.

The Archbishop echoed Pope Leo's call in Spain last month for recognition of migrants' dignity and for humane systems to be put in place to assist them in their hour of need.

"These people are human beings and they need our compassion," said Archbishop Nolan.

Lourdes pilgrims prepare to depart

PILGRIMS across the Archdiocese and beyond are preparing for this month's special encounter with Our Lady...

For almost 80 years the annual Archdiocesan Lourdes pilgrimage has accompanied the people of Glasgow and the surrounding area to the shrine of Our Lady at the foot of the French Pyrenées each summer.

It is the largest and most long-running annual pastoral initiative undertaken in the name of the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

Canon Tom White, the Pilgrimage Director, said: "Each year, pilgrims—those who are sick, housebound, bereaved, or simply burdened by life's challenges—journey to Lourdes seeking spiritual renewal and the comfort of Our Lady's care and protective embrace.

"Supporting them is a remarkable community of volunteers: experienced Lourdes veterans, medical and care professionals, and young people, many of whom are serving for the



BY BRIAN SWANSON

very first time with a genuine desire to help others.

"The Archbishop and clergy faithfully dedicate this week to walking alongside the pilgrims, offering prayer, presence, and pastoral support.

"For those who have experienced Lourdes with the Archdiocese, this will resonate deeply. For those who have not, the invitation is simple: come and see!

"One ongoing challenge is the lack of a stable working fund to support planning and development. We are seeking to address this need now and any contribution you are able to make will be deeply appreciated and carefully used to support and enhance the Lourdes pilgrimage."

The financial issues of running the annual pilgrimage have led the organisers to take steps now to 'futureproof' pilgrimages of

the future by launching an ambitious, and continuous, fund-raising programme.

■ To help out, please visit the Archdiocesan website at www.rcag.org.uk or scan the QR code to go straight to the donation page.



Changing face of pilgrimage

In the past, elderly frail and dependent pilgrims had to be separated from the rest of the group to be looked after by health professionals and volunteers in specialist medical centres.

But the organisers of this year's pilgrimage felt that everyone should be together in Lourdes hotels.

The extra cost of hiring equipment to provide for care in hotels served as the catalyst for launching the fund-raising programme.

As one of the organisers of this year's pilgrimage put it: "Everything from the lanyards we issue to the special beds we need has a cost which we have to meet."

As well as the differ-



ent methods of donating shown in Canon Tom's letter it has also been suggested that in the future parishes could be willing to sponsor individual pilgrims to the French shrine.

Above all, say the organisers, the care, love and devotion shown to all pilgrims, which began seventy-eight years ago, will never be diminished.

Papal Knights gather for special Mass at University



Picture by Paul McSherry

This 'rank' of Papal knights (the correct collective noun as every heraldic expert will tell you) was warmly praised by Archbishop Nolan for their many years of devoted service as they gathered in St Kentigern's Chapel, Turnbull Hall, Glasgow for their annual Mass of Thanksgiving.

Those present were Knights and Dames of

both the Pontifical Orders of St Sylvester and St Gregory the Great.

In his homily Archbishop Nolan said: "When I spoke at the Caritas Awards recently I told the young people that they were at the beginning of their journey of 'caritas', and all of you here today have shown that service to others does not have an end date..."

Charlie McCluskey,

who was invested as a Knight of the Order of St Gregory eight years ago in recognition of his three years' service as Supreme Knight of the Knights of St Columba said: "It really was a wonderful occasion meeting up with all the other knights and dames. We are all busy people, so we don't often get the chance to be together to talk about what we are all up to."

All smiles at St Ronan's big day



The pupils of St Ronan's Primary School, Bonhill, were given an unforgettable 'audience' with Archbishop Nolan during a Mass of Thanksgiving to mark the school's 50th anniversary.

The Archbishop is known for speaking to the children directly on such occasions and this time was no exception according to those who gathered for the celebrations in Our Lady and St Mark's Church, Alexandria.

One parishioner said: "He began by asking the children questions but then he stopped at every row and spoke to them individu-

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

ally – it looked as if he was really enjoying himself and the kids seemed very impressed. It really was a wonderful day."

Welcoming the Archbishop were Parish Priest Father Charles McElwee and Canon Peter McBride from the nearby parish of St Martin's, Renton, along with pupils, staff, past and present, and education officials and councillors from West Dunbartonshire.

But for some of those present, particularly the

clergy, the day had a poignant significance as they reflected that the silver jubilee of the school was celebrated by Cardinal Thomas Winning shortly before his death on June 17, 2001.

The photograph shown here was also taken by Paul McSherry who remembers the Cardinal's visit fondly. He said: "He was always happy when he was with school children chatting and joking with them as usual and putting them at their ease. Just typical Cardinal Winning."

Parishes unite to thank Fr Joe

WHEN Father Joe Uwah, much loved Parish Priest of St Robert's and St Bernard's, celebrated the 20th anniversary of his ordination a very special guest was waiting in the wings to surprise him...

For his sister Florence, a nun serving with the Daughters of Divine Love in London (pictured right) travelled north to join in the celebrations which by happy co-incidence fell also on her brother's 50th birthday.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** And there was more joy to come when Father Joe, to sustained applause from parishioners past and present, their families and friends along with fellow Nigerian priests and local clergy, was presented with a framed Papal blessing in recognition of his devoted service.

The celebrations did not fail to recall former priest Father Jim Dean who died in April, 2022.

Ordination

By a twist of fate Father Joe's first appointment when he arrived in Glasgow in 2015 shortly after his ordination, was to St Agnes's in Lambhill, working alongside the man he was later to succeed at St Robert's.

A member of the Parish Pastoral Council told the gathering: "In the midst of the sadness of Father Jim's death Archbishop Nolan asked Fr Joe to step in as Administrator for both parishes – a responsibility he accepted with great sensitivity, compassion and

steadiness at a time when we needed it most."

"In October 2022 much to our delight and after the two parishes were merged, he was appointed parish priest of both parishes.

"And since then his prayerful ministry has not only strengthened our spiritual life but enriched our parish community in so many ways.

"Father Joe's unwavering commitment to the people of Saint Robert's and St Bernard's speaks volumes about his faith and his dedication."

Father Joe said: "I want thank everyone so much for their generosity, their prayers and for joining me in this wonderful celebration which has meant so much to me.

"I will continue to pray for you all and ask that you keep me in your prayers too."



SCIAF kids' book wins international award

A CHILDREN'S book written by SCIAF's Development Education Officer Elaine McGinlay has received international recognition after being named a winner of the Christlit Book Award.

The illustrated children's book, *The Wisdom of the River*, is rooted in the Catholic vision of human flourishing and invites young readers to journey through the story making choices, in a 'choose your own adventure' format.

The Christlit Book Award is a highly renowned prize dedicated exclusively to Christian literature.

Elaine's writing was recognised for exceptional skill in weaving faith and storytelling into a vibrant children's book.

Drawing on over a decade of experience with SCIAF, Elaine developed the book through her work with schools and parishes,



Pupils from St Joseph's, Clarkston enjoy the book

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

alongside her academic research in global learning.

The book theme was also shaped by time spent with SCIAF partners in Ethiopia, witnessing how communities supported one another to flourish in the face of challenges such as severe droughts.

Commitment

As part of SCIAF's commitment to Development Education, every Catholic primary school in Scotland has now received a free copy of the book.

Elaine said: "I am deeply grateful to receive this award from The

Christlit Book Award judges. *The Wisdom of the River* was created to help young people understand SCIAF's work in light of our faith."

"I'm proud to have brought this vision to life through my writing.

"It has been a privilege to work with the team at SCIAF and alongside illustrator Anh Cao to share this story."

SCIAF's chief executive Lorraine Currie added: "SCIAF is incredibly honoured to see this book recognised. Helping children understand climate change through hope, curiosity and storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to inspire the next generation. This award affirms our belief that meaningful change begins with education."



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St Joseph's welcomes back Bishop Andrew for anniversary

It was a night of nostalgia, prayerful gratitude for the past, and optimism for the future when generations of parishioners from St Joseph's Tollcross gathered for a Mass of thanksgiving to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of their church building.

Archbishop Nolan presided while Bishop Andrew McKenzie of Dunkeld, who served as Parish Priest at St Joseph's concelebrated.

Bishop Andrew said: "I know this building very well – every creak, every sound every part of the fabric is familiar to me and I have very fond memories of my time here.

Building

"But as we celebrate, we must remind ourselves that it's not about the building – it's about the people who have made St Joseph's a place of faith over the past half century."

Clergy who had close connections with the East



BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

End parish over many years were welcomed by the current Parish Priest Father Stephen Hannah who said: "It was wonderful to see so many old friends get together to mark 50 years in this building. So many

memories to share.

"But as Bishop Andrew said it's the people who have made St Joseph's what it is, so if I was giving a toast which summed it all up I would say it is important for us all to give thanks for the past, for what we have today and to look forward with God's help to the chal-

lenges of the future."

One of the highlights of the evening was a photographic exhibition in the church hall which featured baptisms, first communions, and weddings as well as a section showing Bishop McKenzie celebrating the 25th anniversary of his ordination.

Crib competition



If you are looking for a new project this summer how about this? Design a crib to go on display at the Vatican this Christmas.

The international exhibition "100 Nativity Scenes in the Vatican" is now open to new entries. The aim is to tell the story of the Nativity through different cultures, materials, and formats. The selected works from around the world will be displayed beneath Bernini's Colonnade in Saint Peter's Square.

The exhibition will offer a journey through faith, art, and popular traditions, highlighting the unique combination of craftsmanship and cultural heritage that makes each Nativity scene distinctive.

Applications are now open for the 9th edition of "100 Nativity Scenes in the Vatican exhibition and entries have to be in by September 30.

How to apply: Applications must be submitted exclusively online through the official website, www.100presepi.va. The website has all the technical regulations and the application form.

Exhibition

A Commission appointed by the Dicastery for Evangelization will evaluate all submitted works. Every applicant will receive notification of the selection results via email. The exhibition will be inaugurated on December 8, 2026, and will remain open until January 7, 2027.



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They offer comprehensive hearing tests, expert hearing aid fittings, and specialised ear wax removal. The clinic provides a wide range of hearing aids, including advanced AI models, and allows clients to trial them before committing.

Their approach focuses on understanding each client's unique situation, considering factors like daily activities and aesthetic preferences.

Audiology House also offers ear protection for noisy environments and hobbies, custom-fit in-ear monitors for professionals, and specialised plugs for sleep and swimming.

Glen and Jayne's commitment to independence ensures clients receive unbiased care, with access to all hearing aid manufacturers in the UK.

Their goal is to provide a better experience for every patient, prioritising personalised, compassionate care.



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CARITAS AWARDS 2026

Archbishop's message to children: "You are all special"

Two heartfelt phrases "You are not alone" and "you are all special" were the central themes of this year's Mass for children with additional support needs – a message that was underlined by Archbishop Nolan as he welcomed them, their parents, carers, and extended families to St Andrew's Cathedral.

He said: "In God's eyes every one of us is special. And God does not want us to be alone. That is why we all need each other, to help each other. That is what God wants us to do."

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURE BY PAUL MCSHERRY

He then presented each youngster with a Carlo Acutis medal and a prayer card printed with a child's prayer to the young saint.

It reads: "Saint Carlo Acutis, you loved Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, you used your gifts for God's glory."

Joy

"Help us to live as Jesus asked us to. Help us to work well and use technology for good. Guide us more to Jesus each day and walk the

road to heaven with joy."

Children from St Oswald Secondary School, Castle-milk, Cardinal Winning Secondary School, Tollcross, and St Joseph's Rainbow School, Faifley were among those attending.

The ASN Mass which has been celebrated in the Cathedral for the past 17 years is seen as one of the most eagerly awaited in the Archdiocese calendar.

One parent summed it up as she left saying: "As the Archbishop said, nights like this remind us that we are not alone."



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Head Teacher: Mrs Christine Downie
0141 577 2400
schoolmail@St-Lukes.e-renfrew.sch.uk
Springfield Rd · Barrhead G78 2SG



ST PETER THE APOSTLE

Congratulations to our S6 Caritas Award winners from St Peter the Apostle High School. Your commitment to faith, service, and compassion is an inspiration to our school community. We are proud of all you have achieved and wish you every blessing for the future.



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St Andrew's R.C. Secondary School

Putting Young People First



Congratulations to all our Caritas Award winners of the Class of 2026
Our whole school community is very proud that you have pursued all that is noble and worthwhile.



Head Teacher: Kevin Quinn
www.st-andrews-sec.glasgow.sch.uk
@StAndrewsRCsec

CARITAS AWARDS 2026

Caritas awards for the young people who put faith into action

THE 12th annual Caritas Awards Ceremony has taken place in the Clyde Auditorium with record numbers of young people involved.

A brief, if accurate, sentence to be sure, but one which cannot possibly sum up the excitement of witnessing one of the most joyful, faith-filled and eagerly-anticipated events in the calendar of our Catholic schools.

So let's hear it for the class of 2026, immaculate in their uniforms as they tumbled out of their hired coaches, mobile phones at the ready, clearly buzzing with noisy excitement as they headed for the 'Armadillo' to give the Clyde Auditorium its everyday nickname.

For those of us who have attended these events in the past it was all reassuringly familiar.

But for these fully paid-up members of the TikTok and Instagram generation it was all new, fresh and exciting – and infectious!

Bishops beamed as teachers, school chaplains, education officials, parents and grandparents, mingled in a faith-filled atmosphere of shared pride.

This year medals were presented to 2200 youngsters from 60 centres – a term used because some areas do not have Catholic secondary schools.

The figure is impressive by any standards.

In the first year of the awards

WORDS BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY



these young saints have been marching on in, with growing numbers receiving awards for voluntary and faith-inspired work carried out in parishes, churches, schools, local communities and at an individual level.

Once again, the event was hosted by husband and wife broadcasters David and Maura Currie, both parishioners of St Charles' Paisley, who have loyally given of their time and talents since the very first ceremony.

The event got under way, as usual, with the march of the school banners as David and Maura encouraged the pupils to 'raise the roof' with their cheers – a request that, given the upbeat mood in the hall seemed almost superfluous.

Then it was time to hear the many ways that young people undertook their year-long Caritas journey, strengthening their own faith and that of others as they did so.

When the Caritas programme began there were no foodbanks, no energy crises no Covid, but generations of Caritas pupils have always reacted to the world as they found it and, in the words of scripture, 'clothed themselves in compassion.'

Acts of service included volunteering at foodbanks, raising money for schools in countries facing appalling poverty

Pupils from St Andrew's Secondary pose with a cut out of Pope Benedict



caused by war famine and disease, writing letters of welcome to refugees and sending birthday cards to residents in care homes, and 'adopting' parishes to serve.

Hospices

Some worked with the Wayside Club, in Glasgow, held the hands of those in hospices, and collected money in a variety of novel ways so that children with additional needs could enjoy pilgrimages to Lourdes.

Others ran eco-projects, helped out in homeless shelters, visited the sick and house-

bound, assisted with the children's liturgy, served as readers at Mass and helped younger pupils with literacy and numeracy.

The warm votes of thanks that followed had a common theme emphasising that the award of medals was not the end of a journey but the beginning.

Speakers were keen to point out that in interviews for University or employment a candidate who has taken part in Caritas is seen as someone with something 'extra' to offer.

As one senior educational figure said: "There is no hard

evidence to back it up – it would be impossible to collect that kind of statistic – but Caritas is most certainly taken into account at interviews."

In the absence of hard evidence perhaps we must rely on that most accurate of commentators – the proud Glasgow Catholic granny.

Spotting my lanyard as we jostled for the exit she told me in her direct Glasgow way: "Never you mind what people might say, son – these weans are brilliant. Mind and say that in your paper."

I think I just did.

Joe could be Scotland's first millennial saint

A MOVING video telling the story of a devout teenager from Carfin who could become Scotland's first Millennial saint moved many to tears as it was shown at this year's Caritas awards ceremony in Glasgow.

Joe Wilson, who died from an undiagnosed heart condition in December 2011 aged just 17, had been working towards his Caritas award when he passed away, leaving family and friends devastated at his early death.

His medal was accepted posthumously by his father, Alan, in June 2012.

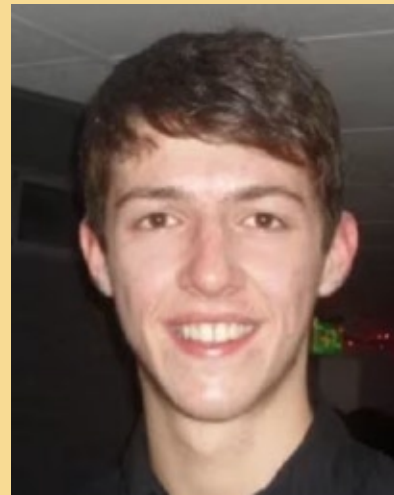
After their son's death his parents found three years of their son's diaries which detailed his deep love for his Catholic faith, his devotion to Our Lady and St Thérèse of Lisieux. Joe's dad called his son's writings 'deep powerful reflections'.

Diary

The diary became a book called 'Joe's Words' and to date, 10,000 copies have been distributed and continue to inspire those who read it.

It reveals a beautiful spirituality, deep humility, and a sincere desire for holiness.

Teachers at his former school, Taylor High, New Stevenston, spoke movingly of his devotion to the faith and his willingness to help others.



BY BRIAN SWANSON

Now, more than a decade after his death the Bishops' Conference of Scotland has agreed to formally approve the opening of his cause for canonisation, allowing evidence of his life and legacy to be submitted to the Vatican.

Carfin Grotto was a place dear to Joe in his life and is now the spiritual home for all those who have been moved by Joseph's witness and it is there regular devotional evenings take place.

More information of Joe Wilson can be found at www.joesfaith.com/



Left: Pupils from Holyrood Secondary

Right: Pupils from Notre Dame High

The brave teacher who died to protect her class

THE incredible bravery of a young Catholic teacher who saved the lives of twelve of her girl pupils before being shot in cold blood was remembered at a moving moment of the Caritas Awards.

Nanette Hanson will be remembered in a stained glass window at St John's High School, Dundee on the 60th anniversary of her death.

Teacher Nanette, who was just 26 and recently married, was taking a needlework class on All Saints Day in 1967 when ex-pupil, 19 year-old soldier Robert Mone, still in uniform and armed with a shotgun, burst into St John's firing indiscriminately.

He had been expelled from the school three years earlier and had been drinking heavily.

Nanette was able to persuade him to allow the girls to leave but without warning he shot her in the back killing her instantly.

Martyr

St John's headteacher, Brother Bede, said at the time: "Nanette is a heroine, a martyr who died for these children."

The young teacher was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal, now known as the George Cross, for her bravery.

Mone later surrendered, was found to be insane and sent to the State Hospital at Carstairs. Nine



BY BRIAN SWANSON

years later he and fellow patient Thomas McCulloch escaped and killed a male nurse, a patient and a police officer.

Plans for a memorial window were revealed by Marie Therese Black, the house captain of St John's school, during the Caritas Awards ceremony.

She explained that a local artist had been commissioned to create the window with design input from pupils.

The £3000 cost will be met by donations and fund raising in the local area.

CARITAS AWARDS 2026



Top marks for St Monica's

No wonder these youngsters from St Monica's Primary School in Milton look so happy ... their school has become the only primary school in Glasgow to receive an 'excellent' rating from Government inspectors.

The grading was given for the school's policy of nurture and inclusion while inspectors also praised its

strong Catholic ethos.

In their report inspectors said that just under half of the pupils in the school, in the north side of Glasgow, are entitled to free school meals while 30 per cent of them have English as an additional language.

Head teacher Martin Broadley told *Flourish*: "People are quick to make certain assumptions about schools like ours but this excellent report just shows what can be achieved with a dedicated staff working with hard working pupils who are such a credit to themselves, and their parents who give us such great support."



As a Catholic school with a strong commitment to service, we commend our pupils for their dedication to putting their faith in action. Their witness throughout the Caritas Award reflects the true spirit of our school motto, *Alios Adiuva - Help Others*.



St Roch's Secondary
Rhymer Street
G21 2NR



Head teacher: Kevin Herron
headteacher@st-rochs-sec.glasgow.sch.uk

St Ninian's High School, Kirkintilloch



"The Catholic values of the school are key drivers for change and improvement. All the school community work together to demonstrate a commitment to the conviction 'we all have more to give.'"
St Ninian's High School HMIE report, March 2018



The community of St Ninian's would like to congratulate our Caritas award winners and acknowledge the outstanding contribution they made to the spiritual development of our school community.

School Prayer
Heavenly Father,
We thank you for the graces you bestow upon us. We ask you to ignite our school with your Holy Spirit.
Guide us with your love
And aid us in our everyday learning,
for all knowledge leads to you,
Through Christ, our Lord
Amen.
Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom: Pray for us
St Ninian: Pray for us



Bellfield Road, Kirkintilloch, G66 1DT
www.st-ninians.e-dunbarton.sch.uk



St Thomas Aquinas Secondary

"Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God"



112 Mitre Road · Glasgow G14 9PP
Tel: 0141 582 0280
<http://twitter.com/StThomasAqSec>
headteacher@st-thomasaquinas-sec.glasgow.sch.uk



Congratulations to all young people who have achieved the Pope Benedict XVI Caritas Award and who have contributed to their school and parish communities.

"Grow in holiness: become saints of the 21st century."
Pope Benedict XVI



Congratulations Class of 2026!



With thanks to all who walk beside us in prayer and service, helping our mission flourish.



299 Ryehill Road · Glasgow G21 3EN · 0141 582 0010 · Email: headteacher@allsaints-sec.glasgow.sch.uk
Website: www.allsaints-sec.glasgow.sch.uk



CARITAS AWARDS 2026





St Margaret Mary's Secondary School 2026



St Margaret Mary's Secondary School would like to send warmest wishes and pray for God's blessing on the recipients of Caritas Awards: Ciara Eardley, Weronika Jasinska, James Kennedy, Jackson Kerr, Tosia Kwiecinska, Daniel Kwiecinski, Angel Olanrewaju, Abigail Pierrotti, their family, teachers and friends.

St Margaret Mary's Secondary School
 9 Birgidale Rd, Glasgow G45 9NJ
 Tel: 0141 582 0250
 Web: www.st-margaretmarys-sec.glasgow.sch.uk




CARITAS CUP WINNERS 2026



Congratulations
 TO OUR RECIPIENTS OF THE
 POPE BENEDICT XVI
 2025-26
CARITAS AWARDS
 CARDINAL NEWMAN HIGH SCHOOL






Congratulations to our Caritas Award Winners of 2026. We are so proud of you all.
 You have been fantastic ambassadors who have embraced our school values – Respect; Learning; Community & Success.
 Good luck in the future.

Head Teacher: Lisa Pierotti
 Email: headteacher@st-paulshigh.glasgow.sch.uk
 Address: 36 Damshot Rd, Glasgow G53 5HW
 Tel: 0141 582 0040




St Andrew's and St Bride's High School

DEUS SOLEM SUFFICET



Lord Jesus,
 Thank you for all the gifts you give us.
 Help us to care for the world we live in and see the goodness in it.
 Give us the strength to help others.
 Guide us in everything we do.
 Lord Jesus, thank you.
 St Andrew and St Bride, pray for us.

Plathorn Drive · East Kilbride G74 1NL · 01355 529417



Our Lady and St Patrick's High School



Congratulations to all the 2026 Caritas Awards winners from the staff, pupils and community of Our Lady and St Patrick's High School, Dumbarton

Our Lady and St Patrick's High School
 Howatshaws Road, Dumbarton G82 3DR
 Tel: 01389 773920
SchoolOffice.OLSPSecondarySchool@west-dumbarton.gov.uk
www.olsp.org.uk

"At our school everyone will be helped towards their fullest spiritual, educational, social, vocational and physical development."




Congratulations from the parents, pupils, parishes, chaplain and staff of John Paul Academy



2 Arrochar Street
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 Head Teacher:
 David Owen

Thanks for shining the light of your goodness and love.



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Scan to find out more!

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What it means to be a Permanent Deacon

Deacon Michael O'Donnell of St Constantine's Parish, Govan reflects on his role and offers practical advice

RECENTLY Archbishop Nolan met with Glasgow's deacons for a review of how the ministry of the diaconate has developed within the archdiocese.

I was one of the first group of deacons who were ordained in the archdiocese by Archbishop Conti back in 2009. Since then another 10 have been ordained.

The Diaconate is one of the most ancient ministries of the Church. As far back as the time of the Acts of the Apostles a local church was asked by the apostles to choose seven men to serve the community and then the apostles laid their hands on them. From that beginning, today there are over 50,000 deacons throughout the world and the number is steadily increasing.

The essence of our role is service. As the Church clearly emphasises: "Deacons ... receive the imposition of hands 'not unto the Priesthood but unto ministry'".

Strengthened by this sacramental grace we are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the Bishop and his priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the gospel, and in works of charity.

In the sacrament of ordination a deacon is 'configured' to Christ in his servant role and is a living sign of that. Jesus himself said, "I came not to be served but to serve."

Ordination

At the Ordination Mass the Archbishop presents the deacon with the Book of the Gospels, saying "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are: Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach". This is central to our ministry.

There are three aspects of the Ministry of a deacon:

- **The ministry of the Word involves the visible aspect of proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, articulating the Church's needs through the Prayers of the Faithful, working in catechesis,**



RCIA, facilitating retreats etc. In their everyday lives deacons can also spread the gospel in their contact with people in the work-place and wider community.

- **The ministry of the Altar is when deacons prepare the Altar, distribute communion, conduct baptisms, witness marriages, bring Viaticum to the dying, and preside at the non-Eucharistic parts of the Funeral Rites. A Deacon may also preside at Prayer Services and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.**
- **The ministry of Charity relates to being involved in chaplaincy work in hospitals, prisons and schools. Also, ministry to those who are sick, are affected by addiction, are treated unjustly, are struggling with issues etc.**

I have been involved in hospital ministry for 10 years where I support patients, families and staff. I find it is an enabling ministry providing support to patients who are so pleased to see the Church is there with them in their hour of need.

Yet, it is also a challenging ministry as I am en-

gaging with patients who have been diagnosed with life-changing conditions, for example, cancer, or with families who have just lost their child. It's at times like this when the sacramental grace received at ordination nourishes me.

At present there are eight candidates from Glasgow in formation, training to be deacons.

If you feel called to be a deacon and, if married, having discussed it with your wife (you can be married or celibate but cannot marry after ordination) you should approach your Parish Priest or deacon and speak with him.

You can also contact the archdiocesan diaconate-director, Deacon Kenny McGeachie (kenneth.mcgeachie@rcag.org.uk) and have an informal discussion.

Discernment

If you apply you will participate in a year's discernment which is co-ordinated nationally. You will then undertake the national four-year academic and pastoral degree programme which follows a continuous assessment model with no exams, though it must be said, entails a lot of study,

and you have to ensure that you balance your work/life-commitments.

If involved in your parish community sometimes you have to step back in order to focus on your course.

There will be three weekends and a week-long summer school at the Redemptorist Retreat at Kinroul each year to factor in too. During the course you will receive support from the national-formation team, the diocesan-director, a deacon-mentor, an academic tutor as well as a spiritual-director.

It is evident that although it may be the candidate who is following the path to ordination, if married you cannot do so without the love of your wife and children as it does affect your life-pattern especially if working full-time.

However, the effort will be worth it as you will receive the sacramental grace of ordination which will be continuous as you carry out your ministry of service.

In our ministry it is important to go on retreat to reflect on and nourish our ministry. The following reflection is one I read whilst on retreat and which I regularly take time to reflect on:

The deacon is one who waits. He is never in charge. He is the servant of others – of God, of his bishop, of the people.

He is a voice: it is his task to read the Lord's Gospel, not his own.

He is a servant: it is his task to wait at the Lord's table. It is others who preside; he is the waiter, the attendant.

Is there anything at all that is peculiar to the deacon?

The answer is 'no'. There is nothing he can do which nobody else can do. But that is just what is distinctive about him; he has no power.

He is a servant. He is entrusted with the ministry of Christ who washes his servant's feet. He embodies the service of the Lord who has made himself the servant of us all.

The St Nicholas Care Fund offers small grants to schools, churches and community groups working with vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and individuals in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

We accept applications every quarter – the next deadline for applications is 3 August 2026.

Application forms and guidance is available at www.rcag.org.uk

Or contact us at: pct@rcag.org.uk · 0141 226 5898
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If you have good reason to believe God may be calling you to be a monk, write to:

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

www.franciscanvocations.org.uk

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Nourish your soul with our monthly spirituality supplement

We all face the struggle to be sincere

WHO are we really? Who are we when we are stripped naked in soul: stripped of ego, stripped of the image we have of ourselves, stripped of the hype, fads, and ideologies that we unconsciously inhale and stripped of our habitual unconscious posturing?

When are we sincere?

In a popular understanding, the word sincere comes from two Latin words: Sine (meaning without) and Cera (meaning wax).

To be sincere is to be without wax, that is, to be who we truly are beneath all the levels of ego, self-image, ideology, trauma, and unconscious posturing that beset us.

It's not easy to be sincere, given the baffling complexities of our minds and hearts. It's hard to dig beneath it all to touch who we really are.

So, when are we sincere? I offer two stories.

The first comes from Ruth Burrows, one of the deep mystical writers of recent times.

She grew up in England and both she and her family were not particularly reli-



Scribblings of the spirit

Fr Ronald Rolheiser offers practical insights each month into improving our spiritual lives

gious. Her parents sent her to an all-girls private school run by an order of nuns, not for religious reasons but because the education there was superior to that of the local public schools.

She did her high school years there, never really immersing herself in faith. Then, in preparation for graduation, the nuns took the students to a renewal center for a retreat.

Ruth and one of classmates did not take the retreat seriously, but giggled, snickered, and passed notes to each other during the conferences. At one point, the nuns pulled Ruth and her friend out and they had to sit silently in the chapel for hours, under the watchful eye of a nun. Initially, Ruth confesses, she and her friend still giggled and

winked at each other.

But the hours were long! And during one particularly long period of silence, she had a moment of grace, of clarity, of sincerity, of nakedness of soul.

In the moment, she saw herself for who she really was – a young woman, air-headed, not thinking straight, caught up ego and hype, but also, underneath it all, a good, loving person loved warmly by God. The single moment of clarity changed her life.

My second story is more earthy, but powerful precisely because of that.

Some years ago, my close friend, only 54, was dying of cancer. When he entered hospice, I brought him Therese of Lisieux' book, *The Story of a Soul*. Some days later, as we talked on



the phone, he said: "Thank you for the book by Therese of Lisieux, it's the only thing I can still read. When you're dying, it cuts away all the bullshit. You know what's real and what's not."

Dying

The dying process was his mystical moment; it brought him to sincerity.

So, how do we get there? How do we cut through all that sits between us and sincerity, between us and nakedness of soul?

We need to consciously take it to daily prayer. Indeed, during the second half of life our basic struggle in prayer should be precisely to try to bring ourselves to nakedness of soul, to be be-

fore God and our ourselves 'without wax'.

Thomas Merton once said: "With God, a little sincerity goes a long, long way." We can take consolation in knowing that God understands that the struggle is hard, and that most of the time we have at least a little sincerity.

Merton prayed: "My Lord God, I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it."

Always remember: "With God, a little sincerity goes a long, long way."

The sheer folly of seeking the 'perfect child'

ON a flight when I'm buckled up, ready for take-off, and the captain says "cabin crew prepare for take-off" I've often thought there should also be a sign at that effect at the entrance to maternity units.

Parenthood is one wild ride, that's for sure.

As the mother of small children there was never time to draw breath. As a grandmother it's a different game (and not just the joy of a full night's sleep!).

At a deeper level without the relentless slog of the daily routine we are free to ponder the individual characters of their little personalities. We can rejoice in the shared family traits and celebrate their differences.

The familial similarities are unmistakable, yet they are all so distinct. The early riser and the bed-blocker. The rule follower and the rule breaker. The one who is perpetual motion and the one whose head is permanently in the clouds.

Experience has taught me how to pace myself to meet the demands of the



Mary's musings

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

high-octane child and how to sit in peace with the deep, quiet dreamer. It's these differences that bring vibrance and texture to family life.

Sometimes the differences would not have been the first choice of the parents for their child.

Down (or Down's) Syndrome is a prime example. Those who live to see the light of day are treasured by their families and their diagnosis does not define their life their place in the family. Their difference is not a flaw, it is simply a difference.

An American YouTuber with a multi-million following, Jesse Ridgway, sparked a massive online debate recently when he announced his wife had undergone a termination



of their first baby following a diagnosis of Trisomy 21, better known in the UK as Down Syndrome.

There followed an enormous backlash to his comments that the baby was an "algorithmic glitch" when they had been expecting a "ray of sunshine." He spoke of Down's people being to-

tally dependent with shortened lifespans.

He described what he referred to as the devastation a Down's child wreaks on a family, which he used in justification of their decision, a description which reflected neither the medical perspective nor the lived experience of Down people and their families.

Often these arguments are thick with irony. A reduced lifespan is cited as part of the case for termination, yet such a decision denies a child any lifespan at all beyond the womb.

Irony

There was another irony that was not lost on many of Ridgway's critics. His dog suffers from kidney disease so severe that it is effectively living without functioning kidneys.

In a previous post, he described her as being among the "0.0001% of superhero dogs" able to continue living in such circumstances. He attributed her survival to her "determination to survive" and he continues to do everything he can to

let her live.

We must stand up to fallacious arguments and outdated misconceptions that implicitly devalue the lives of Down's people. Too often the worst case scenarios are presented as likely outcomes.

We have to call out the screening process which seems to aim at eliminating all babies that do not fit society's notion of perfection. Children are gifts to be welcomed, not products to be quality-controlled.

They arrive carrying surprises no scan could ever predict. People with Down's and their families face challenges and it would be wrong to pretend otherwise. But neither should they be reduced to a diagnosis.

Parenthood doesn't come with a perfectly plotted flight path. It's a journey into the unknown. It's often in the unexpected turns that we find the deepest love and open ourselves to the most profound graces.

Human life is precious not perfect and all the richer for it.

ART OF THE MONTH

Great art can be a reminder of the infinite dignity of human life

POPE Leo XIV, now gloriously reigning, has the intention this month to pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognising it as a gift from God.

In this painting of *The Visitation* by Jacopo Pontorno, the Florentine painter captures the tender embrace of Mary and Elizabeth, revealing the sacred dignity of every human life, already beloved and purposeful in the eyes of God before birth.

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

It is, in a profound sense, a meeting of two mothers and two unborn children. The unborn Christ and the unborn John the Baptist are already presented in the Gospel as participating in God's saving plan (Luke 1:39-45).

Elizabeth's child "leaps for joy" in the womb, affirming the dignity and spiritual significance of life before

birth. The painting radiates tenderness, reverence, and gratitude for life received as a gift from God rather than as a possession or achievement.

The scene also reminds us that every human life is relational: each person is welcomed by others and ultimately by God.

The Visitation is a direct and theologically rich visual expression of the Church's conviction that human life, even in the womb, is a sacred gift entrusted by God.



PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Heavenly Father, as we gaze upon Mary and Elizabeth meeting in joy, we behold the wonder of Your love already at work in the hidden lives of Jesus and John the Baptist.

Before they were seen by the world, they were known and cherished by You. Teach us to recognize in every human life, born and unborn, young and old, healthy and frail, the sacred dignity bestowed by Your hand.

May we welcome each person with the same reverence, tenderness, and joy shown in this holy visitation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mandela taught us a very valuable lesson in how to listen

As lay people, we may well be inclined to think of 'synodality' as something Pope Francis introduced. There was the Synod on the Family, the Synod on Amazonia, and then in 2024, the Synod on Synodality.

Synodality is still a concept that puzzles some, despite parish and diocesan meetings.

The Festival of Synodality in Glasgow last month aimed to help take us forward in this process of speaking and listening – but mostly listening.

Some suggest that the biggest success of Pope Francis's papacy was his move towards a more synodal Catholic church, in which synods give us a plat-



Marian Pallister

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

form for free and frank debate.

Of course, if we'd taken any notice of what Vatican II was all about we'd have been practising a form of synodality since the 1960s. It was Vatican II's vision that we would move from the exclusively hierarchical model to the 'pilgrim People of God' model of Church in which we all play our part, all take responsibility

for what happens, and are guided by listening to the Holy Spirit.

I confess to looking outside the Church for synodality role models. In 2010 I was asked to write a biography of Nelson Mandela as part of a series of books intended to inspire teens, partially funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

It was a daunting task, given that so much had al-

ready been written about him, but I hope that one thing which answered that intention to inspire young readers was including information about the tribal councils that Mandela experienced from a very early age – the nine-year-old who was allowed to listen to the discussions alongside tribal chiefs and village headmen.

Rule

If I could quote myself from *Nelson Mandela: Robben Island to Rainbow Nation*: "Mandela has explained that majority rule was not part of this tribal culture and that in his own leadership, he always tried to listen to all points of view before giving an opinion."



I have come across the same listening process in Zambia, where all are heard before decisions are taken. In fact, I saw it magnificently in action when the words of a 12-year-old overruled the ideas of the older members of his group.

The charity I founded to support education of vulnerable children in Zambia

used to be able to organise exchange visits with funding from the Commonwealth Youth Exchange programme (no longer in existence, of course).

One year a Zambian group performed at an arts festival in Aberdeen. There was a dispute about who would carry the Zambian flag during their national anthem. An older boy was vociferous. The 12-year-old quietly put forward his idea, which was carried. The group listened. Their version of synodality.

As I think respectfully of Nelson Mandela on July 18, his birthday in 1918, I will also think of the value of synodality in our Church and in our everyday lives.

Whoever has ears...

If you are looking for some holiday reading... try something different this year: the Gospel

WITH the football fever of the World Cup underway and the Commonwealth Games back in Glasgow later this month, there's a lot of energy, effort and skill on show around us.

Our Sunday Gospels this month, however, have a more peaceful feel, perhaps a welcome thing as we enter the summer holiday period and parish life quiets down a little.

We all need a little "down-time", perhaps admiring but almost certainly leaving to others the exertions and the sporting prowess on show over these weeks!

14th Sunday of the Year, A

Skipping ahead in Matthew's Gospel from the chapter on Mission, we hear this week a gentle invitation to rest. Jesus has had much to say about his disciples' mission and all that they will be asked to give, but to-



Fr Tom Kilbride

Parish Priest of Christ the King, Glasgow

day the invitation is to come to him for rest, to put down our burdens.

Perhaps this is timely, insofar as we are reminded that as we go about our busy work in parish life, in the mission we have been given, we always have to return to Jesus who is the centre and the purpose of it all.

We can be so busy doing things that we can lose sight of the person who is the source and reason for it all! So, we are invited to rest by returning to him.

He models this for us, as he in turn gives all the praise to his Father. We might sometimes be over-

whelmed at the scale of the task in front of us, but his is an "easy" yoke. The clamour, the noise, the struggle is set aside (First Reading) as we come to our humble king. He will walk and work with us through it all.

15th Sunday of the Year, A

Over the next three Sundays, we will hear from the chapter where Matthew gathers together seven parables of Jesus about the Kingdom of Heaven. It is in many ways the heart of his Gospel, where he presents how and what Jesus taught about the Kingdom.



Today, we hear the first one, the Parable of the Sower. We are very familiar with it, and perhaps that is a danger, as we think we "know" what it is about and how it applies to us.

However, it bears taking some time, to really think about (and – better – pray about) what Jesus is telling us. If he had simply "described" the Kingdom, we might have been tempted to treat it as something interesting but separated from us, a curiosity or an idea to be argued over and questioned.

By using parables, by using images, Jesus makes us ponder the questions it raises and see how it affects us.

Parables leave us with more than just intellectual ideas: they make us question ourselves, rather than concepts, and challenge us to make a response to what God is doing and what his Kingdom implies for us.

16th Sunday of the Year, A

The full version of today's Gospel offers us three more parables, building on last week's, again using the image of a seed. Last week's good seed might be sown in what seems like good soil, but the message can still go awry: other kinds of "seed", other messages, can get mixed in with it.

The parable goes in two directions. First, we are invited to question our own response to the Word of God. Perhaps we think we

are welcoming it into good soil, but what other messages distract us or vie for our attention? On the other hand, if we are to be sowers as well as receivers of the good seed, Jesus seems to suggest that our voice will be only one among many. The solution is simply to be patient, not to lose heart. We are to sow the seed anyway and leave it to God to sort it out by his grace and in his time.

The parables that follow tease that out: however small, seemingly insignificant or even invisible the seed sown might be, its effects can be amazing, like tiny mustard seed or yeast. Those who sow the mustard seed or knead in the yeast don't make the growth happen: their role is simply to place it there. God will make it grow.

The First Reading recognises that God's power is always at work for the good: "your strength is the source of righteousness". Similarly, St Paul (Second Reading) assures us that when we feel inadequate, especially in our prayer, the Holy Spirit is always at work in us far more deeply and far more powerfully than we can know.

17th Sunday of the Year, A

This week's full version presents the final three parables of the Kingdom. The first pair speak of it as something so precious that rejecting it would make no sense. It is a treasure of

such immense value that nothing else comes close!

We are reminded of the sower and the flawed response to the Word. If we only knew the treasure and its value, why would we let anything choke it or steal it away? And the merchant who finds the "pearl of great value" has been searching for fine pearls already, but nothing compares to this one he has found. Everything else (presumably even other fine pearls he has come across) are nothing beside this one!

Again, by using parables, Jesus invites us to reflect on our response to the Kingdom, rather than analysing its concepts. So, the final parable about the great catch asks how different people have responded to what is on offer. Matthew ends with a scene of judgement (the parables are certainly beautiful, but they come with a challenge!) and a question: "Have you understood all these things?" How will I answer? What kind of response have I made or do I make?

Our summer break might be the perfect time not only to recharge the batteries, but also to deepen through prayer our response to the Word of God sown in us, to appreciate the great treasure placed in the field of our hearts.

Take it out, rejoice in it and let it re-energise us for the mission we have before us, to join Jesus as sowers of his Word!

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PHOTOS OF FAITH

Ronnie Convery's monthly round-up in pictures of what's happening in the Catholic world

■ It is often said that Pope St John XXIII was a giant of 20th century Catholicism. The affable 'Papa Roncalli' as he was affectionately known, called the Second Vatican Council and introduced a process of updating which prepared the Church for the challenges of the modern world. Pope John came from the northern Italian town of Bergamo and the photo above shows the Bishop of Bergamo last month visiting the modern shrine on the anniversary of St John XXIII's death in June 1963. The shrine has grown up at Good Pope John's birthplace of Sotto il Monte, near Bergamo.



■ The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pizzaballa, has been presented with France's highest civilian honour, the Legion d'honneur, by President Macron. President Macron said: "As civilian populations – and among them, the Christians of the Holy Land – are caught up in the turmoil of war, I wanted to honour, through this gesture, this tireless apostle of interreligious dialogue, justice, and peace, and to express the Republic's gratitude for his courage and humanity."



■ The new Archbishop of New York, Ronald Hicks, has wasted no time in building a great rapport with the city's Mayor, Zohran Mamdani. They both took office around the same time and share a commitment to lifting up the most vulnerable people in the city. They recently met at the annual Puerto Rican Day in the Big Apple. The new Archbishop consolidated his New York credentials at a Sunday Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral, by producing a basketball vest during his sermon, celebrating the New York Knicks' basketball team's victory in the national championship – the first since 1973.



■ Father Gioele Schiavella is 103 years old and has more than 80 years of priesthood under his belt. But he continues in service to the Church ... in his case working in the Vatican. Ordained at the close of World War II, the Augustinian friar has been a priest for 81 years and still concelebrates Mass in public at the little church of St Anne at the entrance to Vatican city. He got a surprise last month when his boss, and fellow Augustinian, Pope Leo XIV popped in to thank him for his decades of vocation. The Italian priest said he has no plans to retire!



■ The sport of 'priest throwing' is one of the special customs of the Archdiocese of Milan. Each year after the annual ordination ceremony in the Duomo, or cathedral, the newly ordained priests for Europe's largest diocese are welcomed by family and friends alike and thrown up in the air in a celebratory gesture.

Your generosity keeps Rose's little girl alive... please don't ever forget that

NSANJE will not be a name familiar to most readers.

Situated at the southern end of Malawi it is a region suffering the full impact of climate change with extremes of both flood and drought bringing with them an inevitable lack of food

We are visiting Nsanje, where despite their hardships, people are warm and welcoming and eager to tell their stories.

We are accompanied by Father Semba, who is parish priest and Director for the diocesan social services in nearby Chikwawa. Father Semba is highly energetic and dedicated servant to his flock. He recounts how Nsanje flooded several times this year, culminating in the community here being inundated by flood waters over

Robert Angove

Programme Manager, SCIAF

a metre high. They wash away homes, belongings, livestock and crops.

It's hard to imagine how Rose Jefferey and her family have been able to survive this terror, let alone show the resilience to replant their vegetable garden to ensure they will have some food to eat and sell at the local market.

She recounts how the lack of food following the floods led to her daughter Bridget becoming dangerously malnourished. She rushed to the health centre desperate for help as Bridget's condition worsened.

Thankfully the local health workers were able to register her with Fa-

ther Semba's and SCIAF's emergency aid programme. She and her family received cash support and special fortified food for her daughter. She says that this helped them get through the most difficult time and Bridget has put on weight.

Rose is grateful for the support she received from the people of Scotland, but the need is still there. Her vegetables will not be ready to eat or sell for some time, but she and her husband have found low paid piece work in her neighbours' fields.

She's just managing to keep her three children in school which requires uniforms, shoes, pens and



notebooks. She also worries about their future. How will they overcome these hardships without vocational skills that will open up new opportunities for them, she asks?

We meet more families with similar stories of how the emergency support from SCIAF arrived in their time of most need. They tell

us how they are rebuilding their lives, how they thank God that their children are recovering from malnourishment, that they have some food on the table for now and the crops are growing again. However, fear of the future is never far from their concerns. They know that drought will almost certainly follow

floods in a repeating cycle.

Climate change is on show here for all to see. The day we visit Nsanje and meet Rose, the latest El Nino weather pattern is officially confirmed: with a forecast that it may be the strongest El Nino yet. We know that it will bring even more hardship and suffering to the people of Nsanje.

Please keep Rose and her children in your prayers and consider donating to SCIAF's Emergency Hunger Appeal.

■ **Robert Angove, Programme Manager and James Cave, Content Officer visited Nsanje for SCIAF. SCIAF's Emergency Hunger Appeal is now live, and donations can be made at sciaf.org.uk/donate.**

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