

# FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

March 2026

## Yours faithfully



Picture by Paul McSherry

**If anyone doubted the quiet revival in Catholicism across the Western world, then this picture contains the evidence.**

This Easter will see 120 'new' Catholics join the Church in the Archdiocese of Glasgow alone – a 20 per cent increase on last year.

The story is the same across Europe, with record numbers of new adult converts being reported in England, Ireland, France and Belgium. Similar growth is reported in the USA.

Canon David Wallace, who oversees the RCIA programme for adults seeking

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

to join the Church, said: "It was lovely to see the Cathedral filled with so many people who are hungry to know more about the Catholic faith and to live it out fully in their daily lives."

"Here at the Cathedral we have been working with 13 adults as they grow in knowledge and faith."

### Rewarding

"It has been a deeply rewarding experience as we accompany them now in this last phase of prepara-

tion before they are baptised or received into full communion with the Church at Easter."

Archbishop Nolan said: "It is always one of the highlights of the year for me to preside at the Rite of Election and meet the new generation of people who have

made the conscious and active decision to join the Church.

"Recent years have seen a steady growth in numbers, and each of these people can tell their own story of coming to faith, which in itself is an inspiration for us 'cradle Catholics'."

## Pope's Lenten advice: 'switch off your phones'

**POPE Leo XIV has urged Catholics to switch off their mobile phones during Lent to create room for silence and prayer.**

In a mid-Lenten address, following up on his letter for the season, he said: "Let us create space for silence by turning off televisions, radios, and cellphones for a while .... Let us meditate on the word of God, approach the sacraments, and listen

to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in our heart. Let us also listen to one another — in our families, workplaces, and communities."

### Cooperate

In his Lenten advice the Holy Father urged a renewed appreciation of "prayer, fasting, and almsgiving," saying these practices help us cooperate with God "in the craft-

ing of our lives as a unique masterpiece."

Pope Leo acknowledged that Lent is "a demanding journey" and that there is "always the risk of discouragement or of being drawn to easier paths to satisfaction, such as wealth, fame, and power."

Such temptations, he said, "are merely poor substitutes for the joy for which we were created," and ultimately

leave people "dissatisfied, restless, and empty."

### Margins

The Pope also urged care for those on the margins: "Let us dedicate time to those who are alone, especially the elderly, the poor, and the sick," he said, adding that by giving up what is superfluous, "we can share what we save with those in need."



# Law change risks major hit to finances of our listed churches

## Grant scheme scrapped without warning

**AN urgent appeal has gone out to parishioners to take action to protect some of our oldest and most vulnerable church buildings.**

The UK Government has announced the closure of the grant scheme which benefitted 'Listed Places of Worship'.

The Archdiocese of Glasgow has more than 40 such churches which are either A, B or C-listed and thus subject to restrictions on alterations, repairs and structural changes.

Until now the Church has been allowed to reclaim VAT on repairs to listed places of worship. The change will effectively add 20 per cent to the costs of repairs to all listed churches.

This announcement was unexpected and will impact current projects as well as ending a scheme which has been vital over many years, and without it will add fur-

BY RONNIE CONVERY

ther financial burdens to dioceses.

The UK Government has announced a replacement grant scheme for England only. The Scottish Government has not been informed about the details of this change or whether any additional funding (allocated through the Barnett Formula) would be available.

### Concerns

The Bishops' Conference is working with other stakeholders to raise concerns with both the UK and Scottish Governments – but parishioners are now being asked to make representations to their local MP too.

A spokesman for the Bishops' Conference said: "It is better if as many people as possible in a constituency write to their MP."

The spokesman added: "It

would be good to bring MPs' attention to local churches affected and point out that the Bishops' Conference of Scotland was not consulted or informed about this decision. Mention also the listed churches that are part of your diocese/deanery/parish – their history and the role they play in the constituency

"Point out that a new fund is for England only; but that the UK Government appears not to have liaised or consulted with the Scottish (or Welsh or Northern Ireland) Government about this and ask your MP to follow up with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Treasury, and the Scotland Office."

■ **To find your MP's contact details click Enter your postcode into the Find your MP search bar at the top of this page: <https://members.parliament.uk/>**



St Andrew's Cathedral during restoration works

## US television bishop Fulton Sheen is to be beatified

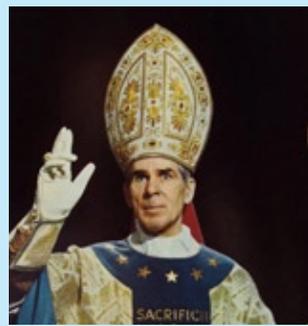
**AN Emmy-award winner who is considered the first ever Catholic televangelist is to be beatified.**

Archbishop Fulton Sheen was a household name in the 1960s and 70s, bringing no-holds-barred Catholicism into millions of American homes with his broadcasts on national television.

Now the Vatican has approved the cause of Archbishop Sheen, setting the stage for a beatification Mass later this year, possibly in September.

The ceremony is likely to take place outside Peoria, Illinois, the largely rural diocese where Sheen was ordained a priest, and where his canonisation cause was initiated.

The Bishop of Peoria, Bishop Louis Tylka, said: "Archbishop Fulton Sheen was one of the greatest voices of evangelisation in the Church and the world in the 20th century. I have long admired his lifelong commitment to serve the Church as a priest, rooted in his deep devotion to the



Blessed Mother and the Eucharist.

"As he journeyed through the different stages of his life, his ability to share the Gospel and truly relate to people drew countless souls into an encounter with Jesus—one that transformed not only his life, but more importantly, the lives of those he touched," the bishop added.

Sheen came within three weeks of a scheduled beatification in December 2019, but things were delayed after the Vatican postponed the process, over concerns from the Diocese of Rochester that Sheen—who served as Rochester's diocesan bishop from 1966 to 1969—might be accused of

mishandling cases of sexual abuse or misconduct.

A full investigation was held which cleared the Archbishop.

**Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to Sheen in 2019 – the unexpected recovery of a baby stillborn in 2010, who was miraculously revived, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints concluded, after his parents prayed for Sheen to intercede for their son.**

Fulton Sheen was ordained a priest in 1919. He was appointed an auxiliary bishop of New York in 1951 and soon after moved into television, hosting "Life is Worth Living" from 1952 until 1957 and "The Fulton Sheen Program" from 1961 until 1968.

He became Bishop of Rochester in 1966 and remained in that office until 1969. After his retirement, Saint Paul VI named him a titular archbishop.

Sheen died in 1979, and was initially buried in St Patrick's Cathedral, later his remains were moved to his native Peoria.

## Vatican basilica has big plans for its 400th birthday



**THE world's most famous Catholic church is marking its 400th birthday with a year of events and new services.**

St Peter's Basilica in Rome has seen countless Papal Masses, canonisations, synods and councils take place within its walls over the last four centuries, and now it is preparing itself for the future.

The year began last month with the inauguration of a new Via Crucis and will conclude on 18 November with a Mass presided over by Pope Leo XIV.

Describing a year of spiritual, cultural, and technological developments, Cardinal Mauro Gambetti – the Archpriest of the Basilica – revealed new services for pilgrims and visitors, including a multilingual serv-

ice which will offer real-time translations accessible by smartphone during Masses in the basilica which are mostly celebrated in Latin or Italian.

**At the entrance and at various points within the Basilica, it will be possible to scan a QR code to access a dedicated webpage providing both audio and text translations, without the need to download apps or use special equipment.**

In addition, previously inaccessible areas of the basilica will be opened to the public, which include the entire terrace, with its three fan-shaped sections, and the Octagonal Halls, housing the models of the Basilica.

A new real-time booking system, Smart Pass, will help regulate visitor flows while safeguarding the sa-



cred character of the site.

Cardinal Gambetti explained that celebrating the centenary is not merely recalling a date, but "bringing back to the heart" what gives life and hope.

There will be weekly "Spiritual Elevations" of prayer and sacred music, along with lectures and reflections on Saint Peter.

There will also be a new 'pilgrimage route' allowing visitors to retrace the footsteps of Saint Peter and Paul in Rome, and a theatrical performance near the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul on 29 June.

To celebrate the anniversary the Vatican will also make available a new writing font, which will be called "Michelangelo," inspired by the handwriting of the great sculptor Michelangelo Buonarroti, which will be included in Microsoft Office packages.

## Glasgow shopkeeper praised in Italian parliament

**A** GLASGOW-BASED watchmaker whose commitment to peace and reconciliation was legendary is to be recalled in his native Italy with a national day of commemoration.

Rando Bertoia ran a jewellery repair shop in Victoria Road for decades, but few of his customers knew he had been caught up in a wartime disaster which is today commemorated in the Italian Cloister Garden next to St Andrew's Cathedral.

Now, plans for a national memorial day in Italy to honour those who died in the sinking of the *Arandora Star* have been agreed by the Italian parliament.

And the date chosen is 11 October – the date Rando Bertoia, the last survivor of the disaster, died in 2013.

The name of the humble hero whose life was spent in Glasgow was repeated again and again in the splendour of the parliamentary chamber at Montecitorio as the

debate progressed before a final vote which united parliamentarians of all parties in confirming the national day of mourning.

When Italy entered World War Two, Winston Churchill ordered the internment of all Italian male civilians aged 16–70.

Hundreds of them were on board the *Arandora Star* – a converted liner being used to transport internees – along with some German prisoners of war.

### Sunk

It was heading to a camp in Canada when it was sunk by a torpedo from a U-boat off the Irish coast on 2 July 1940.

**About 100 Scots Italian civilians died and their names are now inscribed in the marble plinths on the Cloister Garden wall.**

MP Deborah Bergamini told the parliament that the disaster had “long been forgotten” by many and the



Picture by Paul McSherry

law creating a national day would “keep alive the memory of their loss”.

*Flourish* Editor Ronnie Convery recalled meeting Rando Bertoia when he came to the opening of the Cloister Garden in 2011 as a guest of Archbishop Conti (above) who had overseen the project.

“He was one of the most humble and serene men I have ever met,” he said.

“He came along that night, and although he was in the company of politicians and prelates, he was the real hero of the evening, as the last survivor of the *Arandora Star* tragedy.

“When journalists covering the event prompted him to allocate blame or demand apologies his response was always the same: ‘It was a time of war. These things happen in war.’”

## Young Scots invited to World Youth Day in Seoul next year

**Y**OUNG people across the Archdiocese are being invited to consider signing up for a life-changing experience... the Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to World Youth Day with Pope Leo in Seoul in 2027.

The Archdiocese Youth Office hopes to take a significant group to the next World Youth Day, taking place from 3rd to 8th August 2027 in South Korea.

Under the theme “Take

courage! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), the global celebration invites young people to encounter Christ, experience the life of the universal Church, and grow in faith alongside millions of others.

The Youth Office is inviting young people aged 19 to 35 (at the time of travel) to consider joining the Archdiocesan pilgrimage. An ‘Expression of Interest’ process has now opened to help

shape the group and share updates as plans develop.

Submitting the form does not commit anyone but it allows those interested to stay informed as arrangements take shape.

### Information

**An Information Evening will be held on Monday 23rd March at 7pm at the RCAG Youth Office. More information can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/wydracagoyouthEOI>**

World Youth Day has already borne fruit for Glasgow. One young pilgrim who travelled to Lisbon in 2023 reflected:

“Making the pilgrimage with a group of over 70 young Catholics was a profound and grace-filled experience for me, there was such a strong sense of com-

munity, prayer, and shared purpose among us. I felt incredibly blessed to be part of it.”

“Meeting pilgrims from so many cultures, all seeking Christ, made the Church feel alive and universal. It encouraged me to live my faith more openly, especially since I was about to start university and the challenges I experienced proved I was capable of more than I thought.”

“WYD reminded me that I am not alone in my journey of faith. In a world that can sometimes feel isolating, it was a powerful witness to the universality of the Church and the joy of belonging to something so much bigger than myself.”

An appeal has gone out too to help young people raise funds for the trip.

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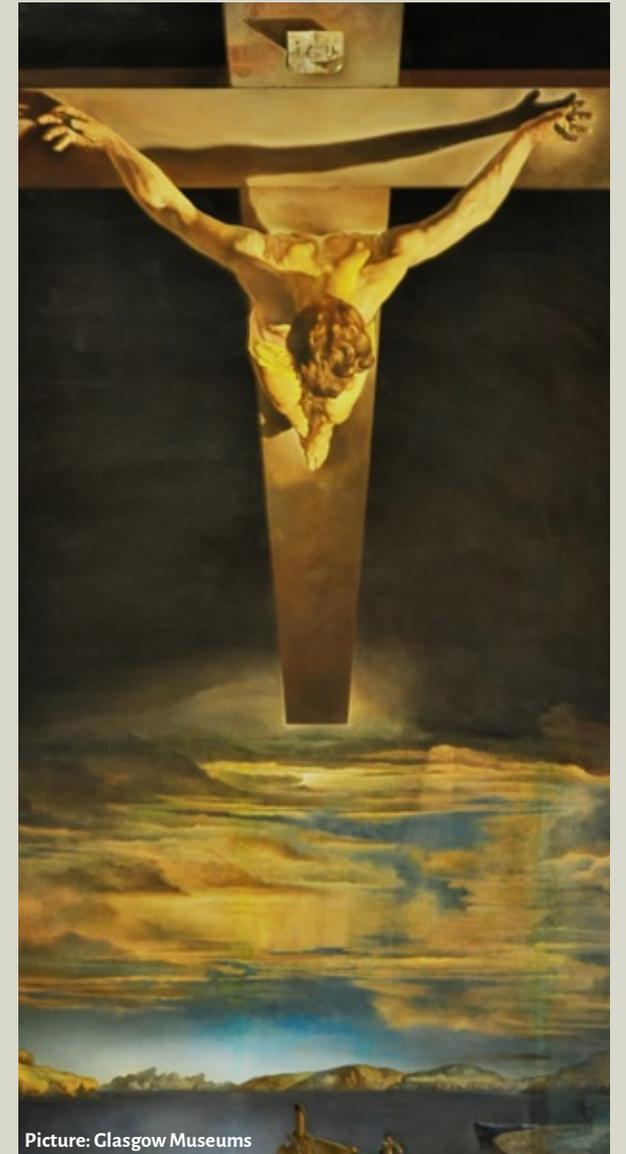
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## The Dalí is back!



Picture: Glasgow Museums

**G**LASGOW'S best-known – and most valuable – religious painting is back on display in time for Lent.

Salvador Dalí's ‘Christ of St John of the Cross’ had been removed from its traditional location at Kelvingrove Art Gallery in recent months for restoration.

Eagle-eyed visitors might spot a subtle change to the slip – the narrow band around the painting, just inside the frame.

The painting was taken to Rome for the Jubilee last year and drew record crowds leading to Archbishop Fisichella, the Vatican's head of the Holy Year, encouraging Glasgow's Catholics to realise the spiritual value of the image and use it as a pilgrimage point.

Positioned on a cross which hovers over a watery landscape, Salvador Dalí's masterpiece is radically different from other crucifixions.

While simultaneously looking directly out across the water, viewers are also looking down on the image of Christ, positioned above. His head bowed, we are unable to see his face at all.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Instead of the usual attributes we might see in paintings of the crucifix from art history – thorny crown embedded into the forehead, painful-looking nails pinning down bloody hands, and an open gash at the lifeless Jesus' side – Dalí's Christ bears no injury. His body is perfect and, as Dalí stated, ‘as beautiful as the God that He is’.

Later explaining the painting, Dalí recalled that he was so impressed by a drawing of the crucifixion made by the sixteenth-century Carmelite Friar Saint John of the Cross, that it inspired a dream.

The painting's purchase for Glasgow caused controversy. Director of Glasgow Museums Dr Tom Honeyman (1891–1975) was instrumental in its acquisition after seeing it exhibited in London in December 1951. Honeyman and his art committee faced a major public backlash including a protest and petition, even though the price had been negotiated down from £12,000 to £8,200 and included copyright.

# Step back from the abyss

## Bishops' plea to Scotland's parliamentarians

'Make your voice heard in defence of those who may not be able to speak for themselves ...'

**DEAR brothers and sisters in Christ,**

Scotland stands at a moment of profound moral consequence. In the coming weeks, the Scottish Parliament will cast its final vote on the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill; legislation that would, for the first time in our nation's history, permit physician-assisted suicide. As your shepherds, entrusted with the care of souls and the protection of human dignity, we write to you with deep concern.

True compassion is not found in hastening death but in walking with those who suffer, ensuring they receive the medical, emotional, and spiritual care that affirms their inherent worth. Every person—regardless of age, illness, disability, or circumstance—is a gift from God. There is no such thing as a life without value. Our task as a society is not to eliminate suffering by eliminating the sufferer, but to surround every individual with love, support, and dignity until their natural end.

Over recent months, several Members of the Scottish Parliament who once supported the proposal have now either withdrawn, or are seriously considering with-



drawing, their backing, recognising that the risks embedded within it are too grave to ignore. Their change of heart reflects a dawning awareness that coercion, especially the subtle, hidden coercion experienced by the most vulnerable, including the elderly, the sick, the disabled and those living with domestic abuse, cannot be reliably detected, let alone prevented.

### Flawed

Key protections that should form the very foundation of such legislation, however flawed the principle may be, have been removed or rejected. Proposals for mandatory training for doctors to recognise coercive control were voted down by the Parliament Health and Social Care Committee. Measures ensuring that patients are

offered proper palliative and social care before considering assisted suicide were dismissed. An opt-out for hospices and care homes who object to assisted suicide was also rejected. Even the conscience rights of health-care workers remain uncertain. As a result, MSPs are being asked to vote on a Bill that is incomplete and reliant on future intervention from Westminster—an arrangement that several parliamentarians have already described as unworkable and irresponsible.

Experience from abroad also offers a sober warning. In countries where assisted suicide has been introduced, narrow criteria have widened over time, placing ever more people at risk—not because of unbearable physical suffering, but because they feel

abandoned, isolated, or burdensome. We must not allow such a trajectory to take root here in Scotland.

We therefore urge you, the Catholic faithful of Scotland, to act. Please contact your MSPs and respectfully ask them to oppose this legislation. Make your voice heard in defence of those who may not be able to speak for themselves. Resources to assist you — including Care Not Killing's online email tool — are available and we invite you to use them prayerfully and thoughtfully.

Let us also hold in prayer all those approaching the end of life, all who care for them, and all charged with shaping the laws of our land. May the Holy Spirit grant our nation the wisdom to choose the path of life, compassion, and genuine human solidarity.

## MSPs expressing mounting concerns



**SCOTLAND may be on the brink of passing one of the most damaging laws in its history—but the ground beneath the proposed assisted suicide bill is visibly crumbling.**

In recent weeks, MSPs who previously backed the legislation have expressed significant reservations, warning that the bill cannot protect vulnerable people from pressure to end their lives prematurely.

The SNP's Audrey Nicoll MSP, a former police officer with 31 years' experience, now says she will vote against the law because it exposes vulnerable Scots to "coercion and pressure... in ways which may be subtle and difficult to enunciate."

Her reversal is not an isolated case. Other MSPs admit they can no longer support the bill in its current form, raising doubts about

whether it can survive the final vote.

Protections for healthcare workers who object on moral grounds cannot remain in the bill, because they fall under UK-wide law and will need to be fixed after the Bill passes. This means that MSPs will be asked to vote blindfolded on a matter of life and death and then hand the reins to Westminster to finish the job.

Labour MSP Michael Marra said this significant setback effectively "holes the bill below the waterline."

**■ Please help to protect vulnerable people by engaging with your MSPs about this dangerous Bill. You can find your MSP's contact details here: <https://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps>**

## Deacon Rene's golden day

**A MUCH-LOVED former Jesuit brother from St Aloysius Church, Garnethill whose life-long ambition was to serve God as a priest has been ordained as a Deacon for the Diocese of Aberdeen.**

Rene Delos Reyes, originally from Manilia in the Philippines, will complete his spiritual journey in August when he is ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Hugh Gilbert in St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen.

News of his diaconate ordination (right) was greeted with delight at St Aloysius where parishioners recall a

BY BRIAN SWANSON

humble man of great faith and good humour, whose organisational skills were used to great effect in the highly successful ESOL classes for refugees and asylum seekers.

He is also remembered as a talented, self-taught artist, who regularly gifted his paintings to friends and created intricate Nativity scenes using just a few basic materials.

He used his artistic skills to design calendars for the church and then cycled to every parish in the Archdiocese to deliver them.

But with every day that passed his desire to become a priest grew stronger and eventually he left the order and was accepted as a seminarian for Aberdeen.

He went on to study at Allen Hall Seminary in the Diocese of Westminster where his ordination took place last month.

Deacon Rene said: "At the age of eight, the call to the priesthood was planted in my heart, but in my teenage years, after the death of my father, I needed to focus my attention on helping my family.

"After my siblings had

finished their studies, found jobs, and started their own families, I could finally pursue God's call which had been the yearning of my heart since I was a boy.

"I joined a religious order, grew deeper in faith through prayer and discernment, finding God in everything, even in the most miserable condition of life with the marginalised of the society.

"After a thorough discernment process, I left the religious life to continue my training to the diocesan priesthood."



# A belief that moves beyond words

**A SCIAF supporter has vowed to embark on a Big Lent Walk for his sisters and brothers across the world – while he still can.**

Joseph McCauley (right) has supported the humanitarian charity since childhood and is taking on the Big Lent Walk for Water – despite living with a rare degenerative neurological disease which will rapidly weaken his mobility.

For many Big Lent Walk participants, the challenge of walking through Lent is an opportunity to rack up some miles and raise aware-

ness and funds for SCIAF's work around the world. However, Joseph's starting point looks a little different.

**He said: "I was diagnosed in 2022 with Leigh's disease, a progressive neurological condition – especially rare in adults.**

"Muscle weakness and various seizures are now part of daily life. While some symptoms can be managed, the disease continues to progress. The most significant impact is on my mobility, which is steadily

declining and becoming increasingly difficult to manage.

"Right now, I can walk well. I can travel. I can move independently. But I know that compared to others my age, my walking is likely to decline much earlier. Some days, even getting out of bed feels heavier than it should.

"Walking is no longer something I take for granted."

As Joseph steps out this Lent, he reflects on his faith, which fuels his determination to do something that truly matters.

"I used to rack up the miles knocking on doors in political campaigns. Now I walk for something that feels less about promises and more about people. Supporting SCIAF gives these miles meaning.

"Supporting SCIAF now feels different from when I was a child. Back then, it was about encouragement and learning to give. Now it is about gratitude; about using what I have while I have it – turning faith into action in a season where I am more aware than ever that time and movement are gifts.

"I am proud that my faith shapes this choice. Faith in action is something beautiful. It is a belief that moves beyond words; love that does something practical. And in many ways, it all goes back to that struggling childhood home, a praying mother, devout grandparents, and a child learning that even the smallest offering matters."

■ Joseph, and all the other Big Lent Walkers are walking to raise awareness and funds for SCIAF's Wee Box Appeal. If you're feeling inspired to join them, you can find out more at [www.sciaf.org.uk/biglentwalk](http://www.sciaf.org.uk/biglentwalk)



## Glasgow school hits all the right notes in Rome



**YOUNG singers from Glasgow have had the privilege of a lifetime, singing in some of the most famous churches of Rome.**

Last month saw the Schola of St Aloysius College share their musical talents in the eternal city at a series of Masses and concerts.

They sang at Mass in St Peter's Basilica, at the Altar of the Chair – an extraordinary privilege and a deeply moving moment for all

present. Then they travelled to visit the tomb of Pope Francis and sang at Mass in Santa Maria Maggiore, followed by an evening concert at St Paul's Within the Walls, which ended with a standing ovation!

### Journey

A spokesperson said: "Throughout the journey, they were overwhelmed by the encouragement and

support shown by families, friends and those who simply stopped to listen – drawn in by the beauty of the music and the spirit behind it.

"Under the direction of Miss Archibald, Director of Choral Music, the Schola represented their families, their school and the wider Jesuit tradition with grace and distinction – truly flying the Jesuit flag for St Aloysius' College, Glasgow."

## Wanted: safeguarding trainers

**THE safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults who participate in the life of the Church is a top priority for the Archdiocese.**

It is for that reason volunteers are trained in Safeguarding before they undertake any work with children and/or protected adults.

Each Diocese has specially trained individuals who provide this training. The Archdiocese of Glasgow has around 2,500 tier 1 and tier 2 volunteers, plus many others who may also require training in the future.

This is an ever-evolving situation with new volunteers coming on board, all of whom require training before beginning in their Parish role. These volunteers are

essential to the life of each Parish.

The Archdiocese is therefore looking to expand its cohort of trainers and hopes for volunteers to join the training team to help run courses throughout the year.

Training and support are provided to all volunteer trainers. There are a range of courses delivered and they are done both in person and using Zoom. We urgently require the assistance of volunteers who have training experience either in their current or previous roles.

If you or fit this description and are interested, please contact the Director of Safeguarding, Caterina O'Connor (DSA) mobile number: 07539 893396 email [caterina.oconnor@rcag.org.uk](mailto:caterina.oconnor@rcag.org.uk) for an informal chat.

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# A saint for All Saints

**T**HERE'S a rapidly growing atmosphere of faith-filled excitement in the corridors and classrooms of All Saints Secondary, Barmulloch, this month as the school prepares to host a relic of St Carlo Acutis during Holy Week.

St Carlo (right), who died from leukaemia aged 15 and was canonised in September last year, has become known as the internet saint, who used his digital talents to spread devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and create a website on Eucharistic miracles.

The teenager's faith example has led to a global devotion to him especially among young people, which will be highlighted by Archbishop Nolan when he celebrates Mass on Monday March 30 before leading a procession through the school.

In respectful silence a senior pupil will carry the relic, a strand of the saint's hair kept inside an ornate reliquary as the procession moves through the school stopping regularly in a moving celebration of prayer and reflection.

Maria Novani, team leader of 'Life In the Eucharist' (LITE) the group who helped to organise the visit said: "When the young people watch the relic being displayed it is a very emotional time for them. But they get it, they understand – they



BY BRIAN SWANSON see that saints aren't old men from another age but people just like them."

Preparation for the visit began back in November last year when Louise Elliot, Principal teacher of RE at the 1000 pupil school met Maria and chose Holy Week 2026 as the ideal time.

Louise said: "Since then all our children have been learning about Saint Carlo, meeting with parish groups to talk about him, explain-

ing what the visit of the relics means, sharing his story and really becoming fascinated with the idea that he was teenager just like them.

"As we get closer to the visit there is just such a buzz among pupils and staff throughout the school. It really will be a very special occasion – people will talk about it for years."

Throughout Holy Week while the school host the relic a comprehensive exhibition organised by LITE which tells the young saint's

story will be held in the school library.

In the past few years the exhibition has visited 27 parishes, 13 schools, 3 university chaplaincies, 2 hospitals and 2 convents across Scotland, England and Ireland to tie in with similar initiatives worldwide.

The relic itself is in the care of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers who have a presence in three parishes in Glasgow – St Michael's Parkhead, St Columba's Woodside, and Sacred Heart, Bridgeton.

## Pope's travel plans revealed

**P**OPE Leo will mark the first anniversary of his election with a visit to the Italian shrine of Pompei near Naples on May 8, the feast of Our Lady of Pompei.

The first American Pope has also chosen to visit the refugee island of Lampedusa on July 4 – far from the pomp in Washington marking the 250th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence on that day.

The visit carries particular significance, as the southern Italian island—the landing spot for up to 100,000 migrants a year—was the destination of Pope Francis' first pastoral journey outside Rome in 2013.

The Vatican has issued a list of the Pope's travel within Italy for the rest of the year which include a June visit to the northern Italian city of Pavia – a university town where St Augustine is buried; an August trip to Assisi to mark the 800th



anniversary of St Francis; and an August visit to the seaside town of Rimini to take part in a gathering organised by the Communion and Liberation Movement.

The Pope's international travel plans include a day trip to Monaco on March 28, and a long journey across Africa from April

13 to 23, taking in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea.

Also planned is a week-long visit to Spain from June 6 to 12 with expected stops in Madrid, the Canary Islands and Barcelona to inaugurate the tallest tower in the Sagrada Familia Basilica.

## Mass for Fr William's brothers

**F**ATHER William Omatu, who lost brothers Stephen, Casmir and Collins in a tower block fire in their native Nigeria on Christmas Eve, will concelebrate a Memorial Mass this month at our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald, where he is assistant priest.

He will be joined by fellow Nigerian priests from the Archdiocese and others from his community who have given him unwavering support throughout recent months.

The Mass, to which all are invited, will take place on Monday March 9 at 7pm.

Father William was given the heart-breaking news of the tragedy as he prepared for Christmas Masses at his former parish of St Helen's, Langside.

After his brothers' funeral in Nigeria he took up his current post where he served previously and quickly gained a reputation as a popular and much loved cleric.

Parish priest Fr Joe Mack-

*Painful Exit*

Memorial Mass ~ Fr William will be joined by his Nigerian priest friends and Religious on Monday, 9th March at 7:00pm in Our Lady of Lourdes Church for a Memorial Mass offered for the peaceful repose of the souls of his dearly beloved brothers, Stephen, Collins, and Casmir.

All are most welcome to attend and unite in prayerful solidarity, as together we honour their memory and seek God's comfort, peace, and strength for Fr William and his family.

MR STEPHEN ONYEKA OMATU	MR CASMIR NNABUKE OMATU	MR COLLINS KENECHUKWU OMATU
40	39	37

le said: "All are most welcome to attend and unite in prayerful solidarity together to honour their memory and

seek God's comfort, peace and strength for Father William and his family back home in Nigeria."

# St Patrick's Day Mass will be at the heart of Glasgow Irish festival

**‘If you're Irish come into the parlour' says the old song ... but this month the invitation is 'If you're Irish come into the Cathedral!'**

The annual St Patrick's Mass will be celebrated on March 14 by Archbishop Nolan as a focal point of a full day of celebrations which enjoys the support of Glasgow City Council and the Consulate General of Ireland.

Following the Mass, which is scheduled for 10am in the Cathedral, the St Patrick's Festival will be lit up by a civic

parade through the city's streets which promises to be bigger and better than ever.

Participants are being asked to assemble between 10.45am and 11.15am for the start of the parade, which will set off at 11.30am.

Organiser, Danny Boyle, of St Roch's Marching Band and Irish Minstrels CCE expressed his excitement at having another civic St Patrick's parade in Glasgow and spoke of it not only offering the Irish community an opportunity to celebrate its story, but also to extend a

hand of friendship to those who are new to Scotland as more recent migrants.

He said: "The Festival Parade is our chance to honour the Irish story in this city, a story born of hardship, resilience and hope. As we proudly welcome the bands travelling from Ireland, especially from Donegal and West Donegal, we celebrate the living links that bind our communities across generations and across the sea.

"This parade belongs to every volunteer, every organiser, every cultural group

and every family who has protected and promoted our heritage through decades of challenge. It is our way of saying thank you for your relentless commitment, your pride, and your belief that our community deserves to stand together in the heart of Glasgow.

### Hostility

"At a time when migrants and minority communities again face hostility, uncertainty and renewed public suspicion, our own history gives us a moral responsibility to stand firm.

"We know what it means to arrive in a new city with little but hope, and we know how much a welcoming hand can change a life. Recognising yesterday's struggles helps us meet those of today with compassion, solidarity and clarity."



Picture by Paul McSherry

[www.franciscanvocations.org.uk](http://www.franciscanvocations.org.uk)

FOR WOMEN  
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VOCATION

## New production of hit Gaudi play this month

**THE** hugely popular **AGAP** play on the life of Catalan artist Antoni Gaudi is debuting in Glasgow parishes this month, ahead of a predicted sell-out run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival later this year.

The revised version of the play – to mark Gaudi's 100th anniversary – is written and directed by Stephen Callaghan and tells the story of the visionary behind Barcelona's Sagrada Familia.

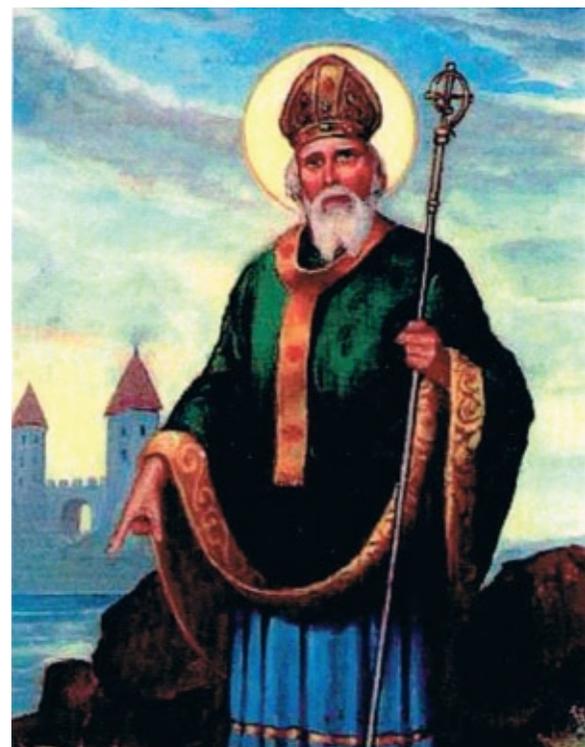
Genius? Madman? Saint? You decide!

There will be preview shows at St Thomas in Riddrie, St Bernard's and Blessed John Duns Scotus in the Gorbals while the Edinburgh Fringe performances will run from 7–15 August.

■ More info and dates at [www.gaudi.org.uk/gaudi](http://www.gaudi.org.uk/gaudi)

Saint Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral, Glasgow

## Saint Patrick's Day Mass



Saturday 14th March 2026 · 10am  
Celebrant: Archbishop William Nolan

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

## Vespers for Ogilvie

**ST** John Ogilvie will be remembered in a special way this year... with an ecumenical evening of prayer in Glasgow city centre.

The saint – who was a victim of religious hatred – will be recalled in a spirit of reconciliation and a desire for unity.

The Ecumenical Vespers

of St John Ogilvie and other witnesses of faith will take place in St Aloysius' Church, on Monday 9th March at 7pm with church and civic Leaders, St Mungo Singers and musicians present. All welcome.

Refreshments will be served in the Ogilvie Centre afterwards.



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**End of an era for Catholic Directory**

**F**OR close on 200 years *The Catholic Directory for Scotland* – the clue is in the name – has been consulted by historians, researchers, journalists, clergy, parishioners and the simply curious.

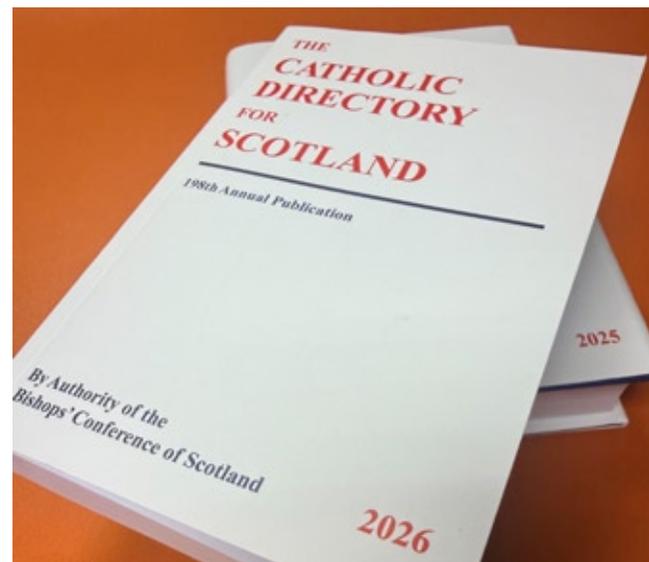
Published by the authority of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, everything linked to Catholic life in Scotland has been meticulously recorded in its pages since the very first issue was published.

**Service**

But the new 2026 edition, consisting of 600 pages and in paperback for the first time, marks the end of an era, as the highly respected family firm of J S Burns, who have printed the directory since 1937, hand over the reins to others.

A spokesman for the Bishops' Conference said: "The long and faithful service to the Church by generations of the Burns family has been nothing short of remarkable. It has been a great matter of pride for them and is very much appreciated by everyone associated with the directory over all these years.

"It's worth noting that Frank Burns, who has since



BY BRIAN SWANSON

retired as head of the firm, was made a Knight of the Order of St Gregory in rec-

ognition of his service to the Church."

There have only been 12 editors in its entire history – by tradition they remain anonymous – and despite

two World Wars and more recently Covid not a single issue failed to be published.

It is the oldest ecclesiastical yearbook in the world and even predates the Vatican's version which was first published in 1859, by which time the Scottish Catholic Directory was already 30 years old.

The first two editions were simple liturgical calendars written in Latin before switching to English and expanding to become today's comprehensive guide to the presence of the Church throughout Scotland.

■ Copies of the directory are available from the Pauline Bookshop, 36 St Enoch Square Glasgow priced £20. To order a copy (£7 post and packing) email [directory@rcag.org.uk](mailto:directory@rcag.org.uk) for more details.

**Two Popes for the price of one**

**T**wo Popes for the price of one ... that was the scene last month at the unveiling of the official portrait of Pope Leo.

Italian artist Roberto Ferri was the artist chosen for the commission and he had the honour of presenting the finished painting to the Pope.

He said: "It was an immense honour for me to personally present to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV the official portrait I created, a work that has already found its permanent home in the Hall of the Congregations, on the third floor of the Apostolic Palace.

"I had the rare and profound privilege of experiencing one of the highest, most intense, and significant moments of my artistic career, in the extraordinary setting of the Sala Ducale in the Vatican, under the eternal gaze of a great masterpiece by Bernini."



# Pope Leo XIV's message for Lent



*Dear brothers and sisters,*

**L**ent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the centre of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit...

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality.

In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognise and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does.

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God.

Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognise what we "hunger" for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance.

Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our "appetites," keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us

to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor...

I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves.

Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities...

Finally, Lent emphasises the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting...

Our parishes, families, groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance...

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others.

Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilisation of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

*From the Vatican,*  
LEO PP. XIV

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12th October – 26th November

#### Silent Advent Retreat

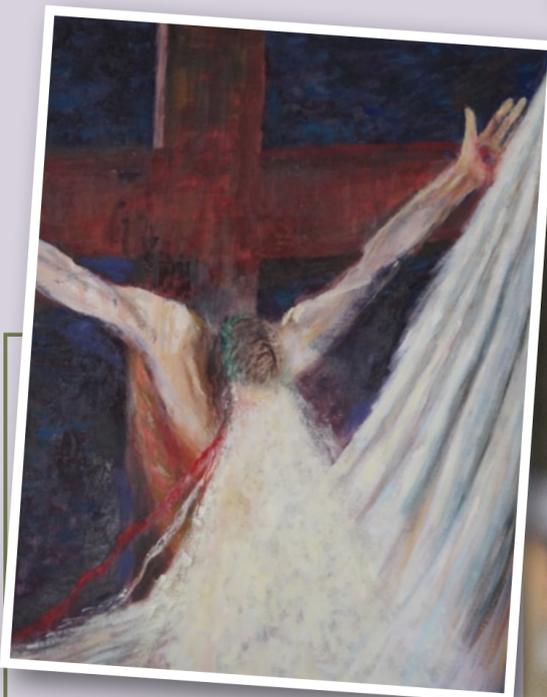
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# Ten tips to make the most of Lent



## Mini Vinnies get their own Stations

**A** NEW set of Stations of the Cross is helping young people across the Archdiocese and beyond to live the spirit of Lent.

Through 'Mini Vinnies' in primary schools and 'Senior Vinnies' in secondary schools young people play a vital role in the Society of St Vincent de Paul by using their gifts to serve others while growing socially and spiritually.

This Lent, Mini Vinnies schools received copies of a Stations of the Cross resource (above), which can be downloaded and printed, which was written by Fr Gerard Bogan, parish priest of St Columba's, Uddingston and illustrated by Christine Mailley.

Senior Vinnies also received a version for secondary schools and Mini Vinnies also received a Lenten guide to help pupils make and display their Lenten promises while Senior Vinnies have been invited to take part in a "40-day Care of Creation Eco-challenge."

More than 150 schools

BY BRIAN SWANSON throughout Scotland take part, giving young people practical ways to put their faith into action.

School groups operate like parish SSVF Conferences which means they meet regularly to pray, spend time together, and plan their activities.

Young people of all ages are involved in a wide variety of work – from organising appeals for clothes and food to visiting elderly residential care homes and helping with street outreach volunteering.

■ For more information about Mini Vinnies and Senior Vinnies email Margo Morris, National Youth Development Coordinator for SSVF Scotland, at [youth@ssvpscotland.com](mailto:youth@ssvpscotland.com)

Stations of the Cross booklet and Lenten Guides can be downloaded at [www.ssvpscotland.com](http://www.ssvpscotland.com)

As the second half of Lent approaches, it can be discouraging to think we haven't made much of the holy season so far. But don't lose heart.

This *Flourish* feature offers you 10 practical ways to make the weeks ahead fruitful. It's not too late to live the best Lent of your life so far!

## 1 Go to Confession early — and more than once

Many Catholics wait until Holy Week for confession. Why not go during Lent instead?

A good confession clears the spiritual clutter. It gives you a strong heart and a renewed sense of grace. And if possible, consider going again before Easter. Think of it as spiritual housekeeping — not because God is harsh, but because His mercy is abundant.

## 2 Pray the Rosary with new attention

You may already pray the Rosary. This Lent, why not deepen it? Instead of reciting it quickly, slow down.

Before each decade, name a specific person or situation you're praying for — a struggling grandchild, a sick friend, the Church, peace in the world. Let the mysteries connect to your own life.

The Rosary is not just repetition; it is companionship with Mary who leads us closer to her Son.

## 3 Read one Gospel slowly

Rather than attempting an ambitious reading plan, choose one Gospel and stay with it for the rest of Lent. Read a short passage each day. Sit with it. Imagine the scene. Ask: "What is the Lord saying to me today?"

Why not join a faith-sharing group in your own or a neighbouring parish?

As the years pass, we learn from experience. The Gospel passages we heard decades ago often speak differently to us now. Let them do their work!

## 4 Fast from complaining

Traditional fasting is important. But perhaps this year, (maybe after failing in your good intentions to give up coffee or wine!), consider fasting from something less obvious: complaining.

As we grow older, it can be easy to lament how the world has changed, how the Church has changed, how our health has changed. Some concerns are valid. Yet constant negativity can harden the heart.

Try offering small irritations to God without comment. Replace complaints with gratitude. This quiet discipline can transform not only your spirit, but your home.

## 5 Make Friday truly different

Reclaim Lenten Fridays as sacred. In addition to abstaining from meat, attend Mass if possible. Pray the Stations of the Cross. Keep entertainment simple. Prepare a modest meal and remember those who have far less.

Let Friday feel different. Let it gently remind you that love involves sacrifice.

## 6 Reconnect with the corporal works of mercy

Lent is not only about personal piety. It is about charity. Consider one concrete act of mercy for each remaining week of Lent:

- Visit someone who is lonely.
- Call a relative you've drifted from.
- Write a note to someone who is grieving.



## 7 Simplify your life

Is there a cupboard that needs clearing out? Papers that need sorting? Subscriptions you no longer use? Simplifying things outwardly often creates interior space.

You might even pass along meaningful items on to children or grandchildren, telling them the stories behind them. This can be both spiritual and deeply relational. Letting go can be an act of trust.

## 8 Spend time in Eucharistic adoration

If your parish or a parish near you offers adoration, make a commitment — once a week, or even once during Lent.

You don't need elaborate prayers. Just sit. Look at Him. Let Him look at you.

In a noisy world, silent time before the Blessed Sacrament is increasingly rare and precious. Many

Catholics discover that this quiet hour becomes the most important hour of their week.

## 9 Offer up physical or emotional suffering

Instead of merely enduring discomfort, consciously offer it for someone — a fallen-away child, vocations, those who have died ...

This transforms suffering from something meaningless into something redemptive.

## 10 Prepare for Easter with joy

Lent is not meant to be grim. It is serious, yes — but it leads somewhere glorious.

Keep Easter in view. Plan a meaningful celebration. Invite the family to Mass. Prepare your home for the feast.

The Christian life is not only about self-denial. It is mostly about resurrection.



## New Stations of the Cross at the Vatican

**T**HE world's most famous church is full of works of art ... but it has always had something missing.

St Peter's Basilica has never had stations of the cross — until now.

This Lent, for the first time a set of 14 stations are being displayed on the walls of the great basilica after an international competition to commission the new images.

As part of the 400th anniversary of the Dedication of St. Peter's Basilica (1626–2026), the competition drew over 1000 applications from 80 countries across five continents.

A Commission of art historians, liturgists, and representatives of Vatican institutions conducted the selection.

The winning stations were created by a young Swiss artist Manuel Dürr, 36 (see artwork above).

Dürr's proposal was unanimously selected for

its compositional balance and expressive power in portraying the Via Crucis.

The fourteen stations, framed by the craftsmen of the Fabric of St Peter, will be displayed along the central nave and around the Confession throughout Lent, offering a space for prayer and reflection for both the faithful and visitors.

### Faith

Although Dürr is not Catholic, he described himself as "theologically quite close to the Catholic faith." He belongs to the Jahu community — about 600 people worldwide — linked to the Swiss Reformed Church.

Two of his brothers hold doctorates in theology from Catholic universities, which, he joked, helped him get to know the tradition "from the kitchen table."

Picture: Imago Mundi

# PHOTOS OF FAITH

## A monthly round-up in pictures of what's happening in the Catholic world

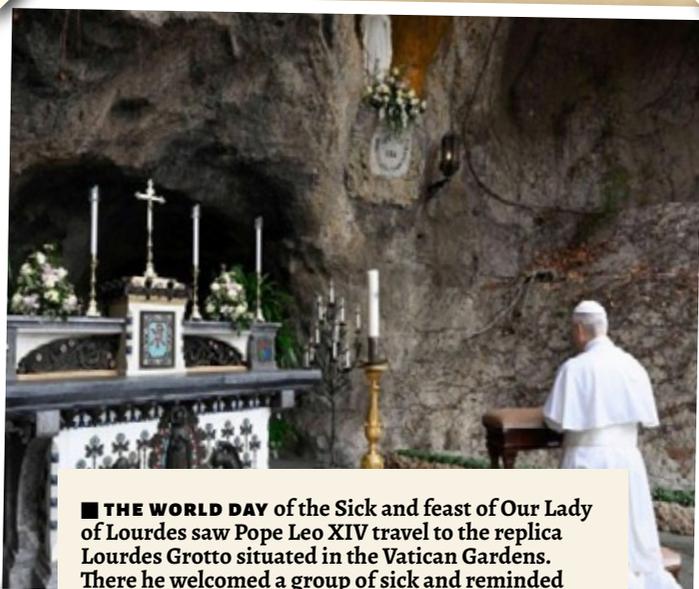


■ **BARCELONA'S SAGRADA FAMILIA** Basilica reached its maximum height last month 144 years after building started.

A crane placed the upper arm of a cross atop the 'Tower of Jesus Christ', the church's soaring central piece, which now stands 172.5 metres (566 feet) above the city.

However, work continues on the interior of the amazing structure.

The completion of the Tower of Jesus Christ coincides with the centenary of the death of Antoni Gaudí—a historic milestone for the Sagrada Família and a tribute to its architect. To mark the occasion, commemorative events will be organised, with details available on the official centenary website.



■ **THE WORLD DAY** of the Sick and feast of Our Lady of Lourdes saw Pope Leo XIV travel to the replica Lourdes Grotto situated in the Vatican Gardens. There he welcomed a group of sick and reminded them that the Blessed Mother teaches us the meaning of suffering and love.

"It is a very beautiful day that reminds us of Mary's closeness, our mother, who always accompanies us and teaches us so much: what suffering means, what love means, and what it means to entrust our life into the hands of the Lord."



■ **THE POPE TRAVELLED** to the Roman seaside district of Ostia to visit the Parish of St. Mary Queen of Peace and met with children, young people, and elderly during his first parish visit as Bishop of Rome.

During Mass, observers noted that it was the first time he had celebrated Mass assisted by female altar servers whose assistance helped the rite go smoothly. In his remarks he stressed that the sign of an authentic Christian community is when 'welcome' is more than a word, but "a spirit—opening the door to everyone."



■ **CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS** leaves Westminster Cathedral after a poignant Thanksgiving Mass bringing to the end his 16 year term as Archbishop of Westminster and de facto leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

In his Homily, the Cardinal said: 'Here there is a new summons for me, a summons to use time more carefully in coming closer to the Lord, to spend more time in his presence now that the demands of this office are lifted.'

'So please pray for me that I may have the radical trust in the Lord that was asked of the disciples as they set out on their new mission. And be sure of my continuing prayers and service for you all, for this beloved Church of Westminster and, of course, for our new Archbishop, as he, in turn, accepts the call of the Lord.'



■ **ARCHBISHOP MARIO DELPINI** sprinkles ashes on the head of a parishioner in Milan Cathedral ... but not on Ash Wednesday.

The Archdiocese of Milan (the largest diocese in the world) has its own liturgy – the Ambrosian Rite – which has no Ash Wednesday. Instead ashes are sprinkled on people's heads on the First Sunday of Lent.

Visitors to Milan will notice Mass is celebrated slightly differently there, using more ornate vestments, with an Advent lasting six weeks and in Lent the 12-fold repetition of the Kyrie Eleison.



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# Caring for the gift of health really is a sacred responsibility for us

**I**n a world that often separates spiritual life from daily habits, it is important for Catholics to remember that our physical health is not merely a personal preference—it is a responsibility before God.

The Church teaches that human life is sacred, and that includes the body as well as the soul. We are not owners of our bodies in an absolute sense; rather, we are stewards of a gift entrusted to us by our Creator.

Sacred Scripture reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. This powerful image calls us to reverence and care. Just as we would not neglect a church building dedicated

to God, neither should we neglect our own well-being. Proper rest, nourishing food, regular exercise, and necessary medical care are not acts of vanity. They are acts of gratitude and obedience.

Looking after our health also enables us to serve others more generously. When we care for our physical and mental well-being, we are better equipped to fulfill our vocations—whether as parents, clergy, religious, or lay faithful.

Fatigue caused by neglect or preventable illness can limit our ability to love and serve effectively.

Of course, caring for health does not mean ob-

sessing over appearance or seeking perfection. It means practising prudence and temperance, virtues that guide us toward balance and ultimately towards God.

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versations, especially in background noise. It can also protect relationships by reducing misunderstandings and social withdrawal, which are common when people start avoiding groups or noisy places.

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Glen, born deaf, and Jayne, with family connections to hearing loss, bring unique empathy and understanding to their practice.

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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.

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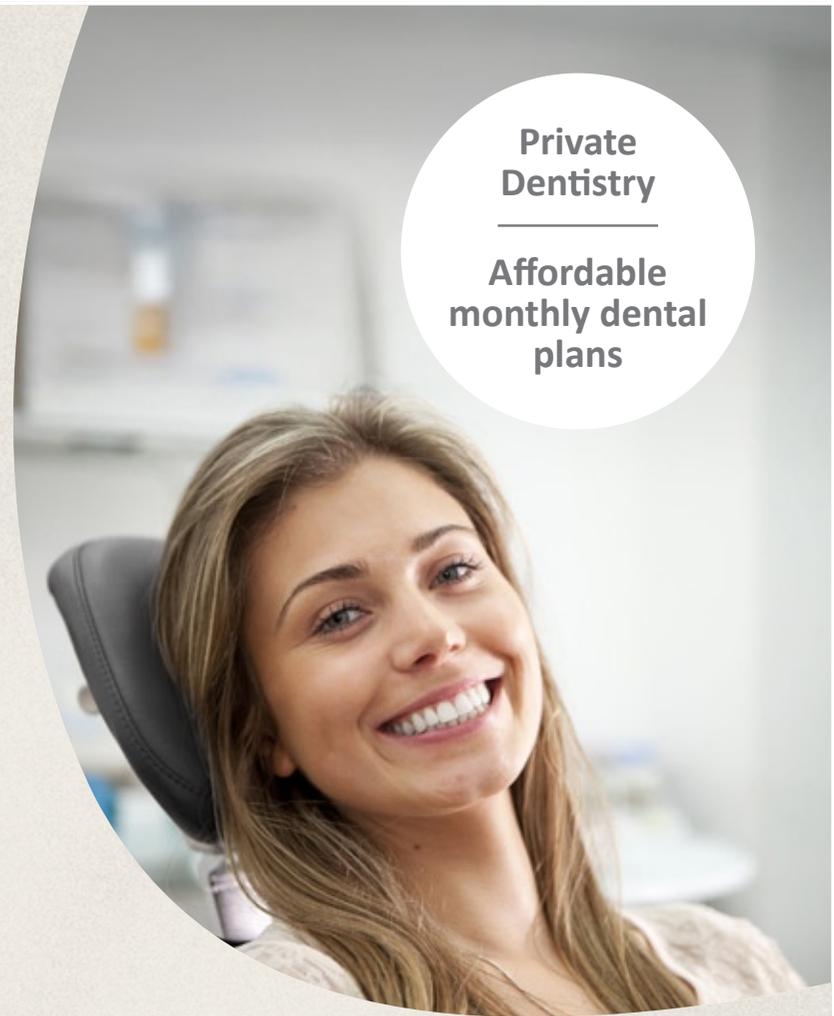
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# We may have lost the ability to appreciate silence but we also need to speak our mind

**M**ANY of us could use more silence in our lives. I say this cautiously because the place of silence in our lives isn't easy to specify.

Silence is complex; sometimes we fear it and try to avoid it and sometimes when we are tired and over-stimulated we positively long for it. Generally, though, we have too little of it in our lives.

Work, cellphones, conversation, entertainment, news, distraction, and preoccupations tend to fill up every waking minute. We have become so used to being stimulated by words, information, and distraction that we often feel lost and restless when we find ourselves alone, without someone to talk to, something to watch, something to read, or something to do to take up our attention.

Not all of this is bad, mind you. In the past, spiritual writers were generally too one-sided in extolling the virtues of silence. They tended to give the too simple impression that God and spiritual depth were only found in silence, as if the virtues of ordinary work, conversation, celebration, family, and community were some-



## Scribblings of the spirit

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

how second-rate spiritually.

While we need silence for depth, we need interaction with others for grounding and sanity. Certain inner work can only be done in silence, but a certain grounding of our sanity depends on interaction with others.

### Escape

Silence can also be an escape, an avoidance of the stinging purification that can happen only through the challenge of interacting within a family or community.

Moreover, silence is not always the best way to deal with heartaches and obsessions. Ultimately, this is a form of overconcentration. Sometimes when a heartache is threatening our sanity, the best thing we can do is not go to the chapel but rather to the theatre or to a meal with a friend.

Preoccupation with work or a healthy distraction can sometimes be just the friend you need when your heart is fighting asphyxiation.

There's a story about the famous philosopher Hegel. Immediately after finishing his monumental work on the phenomenology of history, he realised that he was on the edge of a major breakdown because of the intensity of his concentration over so long a period.

What did he do to break out of this? Go on a silent retreat?

**No. He went to the opera every night, dined with friends, and sought out every kind of distraction until, after a while, the strangling grip of his inner world finally let go and the sunshine and freshness of everyday life broke through again.**

Sometimes distraction, not silence, is our best cure,



even spiritually.

Still, there's a need for silence...

Silence can speak louder than words, and more deeply. We experience this already in different ways: when we are separated by distance or death from loved ones, we can still be with them in silence; when we are divided from other sincere persons through misunderstanding, silence can provide the place where we can be together.

When we stand helpless before another's suffering, silence can be the best way

of expressing our empathy; and when we have sinned and have no words to restore things to their previous wholeness, in silence a deeper word can speak and let us know that, in the end, all will be well and every manner of being will be well.

Nothing resembles the language of God as much as silence. It's the language of heaven, already deep inside of us, beckoning us, inviting us into deeper intimacy with everything, even as we still need the therapy of a public life.

## Reminder: The word 'Catholic' means universal!

**A**PAX Christi Scotland colleague and I had a rather downbeat conversation in early February about the apparent rise of the extreme Right in the UK mirroring what is happening in the United States and the effect it is having on people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants.

We were distressed that there have been ugly demonstrations in Scotland aimed at making those seeking a future here feel very unwelcome. Pax Christi worldwide seeks to support those fleeing from crisis of whatever kind.

And then on the International Day of Human Fraternity, my spirits soared.

The Scottish Bishops' Conference Interreligious Dialogue Committee and Ahl al Bait Society – Scotland hosted an event in Glasgow. Entitled Human Fraternity in Practice: Responding to Migrants and Refugees Today, it featured two inspiring speakers – Dr



## Marian Pallister

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



Anupama Ranawana and Sara Abidi – but what lifted me out of the Slough of Despond were the presentations by students from St Roch's and Holyrood Secondary Schools.

Both schools have pupils from more countries than the United Nations has members. They are of every faith and every ethnic background – and they are 'human fraternity' personified.

Their back stories were mixed. Some had parents who had sought safety in Scotland because of conflict, others had a history of economic migration (no surprises when we heard the descendant of an Italian family relate a saga of ice cream parlours and fish and chip shops). Others had a Polish background, with grandfathers who had fought with the UK in World War II then stayed

on in Scotland.

Of course there were those with Irish ancestry (few of us in Scotland don't share that), and there was a range of youngsters from countries across the African continent, from the Middle East, Far East, India and Pakistan.

Their personal presentations were polished, their PowerPoints sharing their school activities related to human fraternity were impressive.

**This is Scotland's future. Not the ugly demonstrations against immigration but a generation working, living, loving together, whatever their faith, whatever their country of origin.**

If these young people can be both proud of their heritage and of their identity as New Scots, surely we, with our Irish and Italian granies, can promote Pope Francis's culture of Fratelli Tutti?

It's time to remember that not only do we all come

from somewhere else, but that Scots have migrated in their thousands over the past centuries, taking our culture and language across the world.

It can't be acceptable for us to seek pastures new – but not for our brothers and sisters who need a new home because of war, climate change, or the difficulties that sent us to other countries: the inability to survive financially in our home country.

Pax Christi Scotland seeks a peaceful, nonviolent world. That starts with our children. It grows in our caring communities. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that God is present in every human, regardless of religion, culture, nationality, orientation or economic standing. We are called to treat every person with loving respect.

The kids of St Roch's and Holyrood are magnificent, inspiring proof that human fraternity can be our future.

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## ART OF THE MONTH

# There's so much to learn from St Joseph

**WONDER if Saint Joseph holds a special place of devotion among the readers of *Flourish*?**

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

He certainly does in many parts of the Catholic world.

Nowhere is that devotion more vivid than in the long-standing Sicilian tradition of Saint Joseph's altars—those elaborate, food-laden displays of bread, fish, fruits, vegetables, pasta, biscuits, and other meatless Lenten offerings, prepared in gratitude and shared in charity.

Our painting, "Saint Joseph and the Christ Child," is by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804), a Venetian master who frequently portrayed Saint Joseph.

According to the first chapter of Saint Matthew, Joseph was a fourteenth-generation descendant of the House of David, a hum-

ble carpenter of Nazareth is entrusted with the care of the Son of God.

In our day, Joseph is honoured as patron of fathers, workers, the unborn, travellers, and migrants—roles that speak not of power, but of protection and responsibility.

## Tenderness

In Tiepolo's painting, Joseph is depicted fully engaged, attentive to the Child he holds. The composition draws us into a moment of quiet tenderness. Joseph's posture is gentle yet protective; his strong working hands cradle the Child with surprising delicacy.

The Christ Child, in turn, looks relaxed and trust-

ing. The relationship between them feels natural, almost domestic—holiness expressed through care, closeness, and ordinary affection.

The background recedes into shadow so that our attention rests entirely on the relationship between father and child. There is no sign of the burdens he will carry ... The lack of welcome and comfort of Bethlehem; the urgency of Egypt; the long years of labour in Nazareth.

In Joseph we witness the quiet strength of a man who does what God asks, day after day. Tiepolo's painting captures that spirit. Not grandeur, but goodness. Not spectacle, but care.

Saint Joseph reminds us that the quiet life, lived faithfully, may be closer to the heart of holiness than we think.



## The wonderful riches of an Irish spirituality

**If you are part of the large chunk of Glasgow's population with Irish ancestry how you choose to remember your roots is personal to you.**

For some it is a bright and indelible thread that runs through the tapestry of their existence. For others it is an annual commemoration – a cold Guinness enjoyed with a hearty bowl of Irish stew in a nod to days gone by.

At the Glasgow St Patrick's Festival in the Merchant Square there is something for everybody. It takes place after the annual Mass for the Irish in St. Andrew's Cathedral.

For the second year a civic parade will take place through the streets later this month. One of the parade's organisers, Danny Boyle, captured the sentiment beautifully when he said "it is a chance to honour the Irish story in this city, a story born of hardship, resilience and hope."

There are others who take the view they have left it all behind. I'm of the 'thread woven into the very fibre of my being' type.



## Mary's musings

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

From an early age, hearing my mum play I'll take you home again, Kathleen on the piano, I sensed a painful poignancy. Her mother, Catherine, left Ireland when she was 16 years old, and even in my childish innocence I sensed the heart-rending lament of the exile in the playing of the song.

## Heartbreaking

If leaving home at such a tender age was heartbreaking, leaving again a few years later after returning to nurse her dying mother must have taken everything she had. Faith was her solace then, as it was all her life.

In later years my grandmother was able to visit her Co. Mayo family although her sisters who went to New York never came home. I

long ago downloaded the song to my playlist yet I have never been able to listen to it. Those aching feelings of loss and regret are deeply embedded and they live in me more in resignation than sorrow. It's my story, too.

**When my eldest grandson was a baby I felt it again. Without really thinking about it I would sing him to sleep with a Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral. After a few pitifully out of tune renditions I recalled my dad singing An Irish Lullaby to me. An emotional anchor is what the scientists call it.**

If, like me, you are drawn to the west of Ireland, you will understand the call of the untamed sea. The battering waves competing with the rugged landscape speak to my soul.



In the summer months I'll brave a dip in the sea but it is in the winter when it exudes its unyielding and unconquerable energy that I love it best. If Himself and I are considering a wee break and it's a choice between a sunny destination or the wide Atlantic coast, there's usually a clear winner.

Standing in the graveyard where my forebears lie and giving thanks for the faith that formed me is a ritual I will never tire of.

I never feel my Irishness more than on those wind-torn shores of the west coast, at the foot of the holy

mountain of Croagh Patrick where St Patrick is said to have spent 40 days and nights fasting in 441 AD.

Today that tapestry of our Irish heritage continues to grow as new threads are sewn.

The west of Ireland has a special place in the hearts of those Glaswegians of Irish descent. Your home turf might be Donegal, Sligo, Tyrone or elsewhere. This country of ours, the land of our birth, is home.

Ireland is a home from home. The land, the faith and the people to whom we will be forever ineffably tied.

## PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Let us Pray

Saint Joseph, faithful guardian of the Redeemer,

strong and gentle father, teach us your quiet trust in God. Help us to serve you without seeking praise,

to protect the vulnerable,

to welcome the stranger,

and to labour each day with love.

May our homes be places of care and charity,

and our lives, like yours,

simple, faithful, and close to Jesus.

Amen.

# The Lent Gospels have something to say to each one of us as we journey towards Easter

**L**ENT is a familiar time, and no doubt we're already well underway with our Lenten penances and plans.

Our Sunday readings are familiar ones too this year, as we hear those longer Gospel readings which guide those journeying towards Baptism and the sacraments at Easter time.

Many of our parishes will have hosted RCIA groups, and now those preparing for Baptism celebrate the "Scrutinies", guided by reflection on baptismal themes of water, light and life drawn from these great texts from the Gospel of John.

All of us, mind you, can benefit from that reflection, as we look to renewing our own Baptismal promises at Easter.

## Third Sunday of Lent, Year A

The story of the Samaritan woman Jesus meets at a well offers a powerful reflection on Baptism. Her life is not straightforward, and she is probably shunned by others, going to the well at midday rather than facing the morning crowd.

Yet, through Jesus' gentle invitation and her hesitant pondering, she slowly comes to a realisation both about



## Fr Tom Kilbride

Parish Priest of Christ the King, Glasgow

him and about herself. She is offered a new kind of water, not drawn from a well but from Christ himself, a living water which leads to a new and eternal life. Her encounter with him breaks down barriers and leads her to a place of faith which, in turn, sends her back to her community, to share the good news about the person she has found. Her village then becomes a place where Jesus will remain.

For both our catechumens and ourselves, baptism is a journey of deepening encounter and faith, which prompts us to share our discovery of Jesus with others, and to allow him to stay among us as we grow in understanding and grace.

## Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year A

In the Gospels, the healing of blindness is often a sym-

bol for coming to faith. Of course, there is the physical miracle at the heart of the story, showing God's power at work in Jesus, but new sight also becomes a metaphor for faith as a new kind of vision, an openness to the light which God shines upon us through Jesus.

The joy the man in this story feels is clear, but those around him are not so ready to let that light in, to accept his testimony. He has no doubt, however, that it was Jesus who opened his eyes and he sees clearly who he is: "Lord, I believe." He worships Jesus, a clear sign of the new perception and insight faith has brought him.

As baptised people, who would claim to have that new vision of faith, do we see Jesus when he stands before us? Do we hold to faith when we are challenged or opposed, as the man in today's story does?

## Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A

The third "Scrutiny" Gospel is that of the raising of Lazarus from death. Oddly, Jesus seems slow to act, as Martha and Mary will tell him, when all he would have had to do was perform a simple miracle when Lazarus was ill. However, they haven't realised that Jesus is preparing to do something even greater (Martha seems to know he can, mind you!). By Jesus' closeness to the Father in prayer, and a simple command to the dead man, Lazarus is freed from death.

In Baptism, our catechumens will be "set free" not from grave cloths but from sin and death itself. What they are asked is a simple question, as Jesus asked Martha: "Do you believe this?" At Easter, when we renew our baptismal promises, we will also be asked "Do you believe ...?" Martha responds with a powerful profession: "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God".



Andrea Mantegna, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1459

Our Lenten Gospel invites us to reflect on our response, when, like Martha, we face sadness, pain, suffering or loss.

## Palm Sunday, Year A

Writing for a community coming from a largely Jewish background, Matthew is keen to show how the death of Jesus fulfilled the promises made through the prophets. That was an important part of how he wrote about Jesus' birth and marks his telling of the stories of Jesus' ministry too.

Likewise, by quoting from the Old Testament at various moments here, Matthew helps us get to grips with the challenging events of the Passion, by showing us that Jesus' suffering and death on the Cross were how God kept his promise to save his people. The violence doesn't win out; sin has no triumph. Rather, sin is defeated on the Cross. Even the guards placed at his tomb hint that human sin and fear will not prevent God fulfilling his plan to save.

Like the Wise Men at Christmas, Pilate's wife is warned in a dream about Jesus (the Magi listened;

Pilate doesn't). Also, Matthew lists signs which accompany Jesus' death, such as the dead rising to life, hinting that death and sin are already defeated. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would "save his people from their sins" and Matthew wants to show that this is accomplished on the Cross. Throughout the Gospel, Matthew has shown Jesus as the one who does the will of his Father (and teaches us to do the same) and so it is even on the Cross.

Lastly, the centurion of Mark's Gospel who declares Jesus to be Son of God is joined in Matthew's account

by "those who were with him". Matthew's is a gospel which underlines the place of the Church in God's plan, recognising that faith is not a purely individual thing but always something done with others in a community of faith.

As we prepare for Easter – both catechumens or candidates preparing for the sacraments, and those of us preparing to renew our baptismal faith – Matthew reminds us that at the heart of that faith is Christ and his Cross, but he reminds us too that it is a faith expressed above all in the community which gathers around him.

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# ‘Blessed are the peacemakers..’

## Tributes are paid to Catholic peace activist Brian Quail

**PEACE** activist Brian Quail died last month. He helped to establish Pax Christi Scotland and was involved in many other peace organisations as well.

He came to mind the way the desert prophets do — a little wind-burned, a little out of step with the world, and wholly unwilling to soften the truth. John the Baptist, with his wild honey and locusts, his rough coat and rougher message, never tried to belong to polite society.

He prepared a way. He made straight the path. He unsettled people into honesty. Brian Quail lived like that.

There was in him the same stubborn, luminous refusal to compromise — the same sense that faith was not meant to be tidy or respectable, but alive, inconvenient, and burning.

The old Russians had a word for such people: a Fool for Christ. Not foolish in mind, but foolish in the

BY ROSS AHFELD

eyes of a world that mistakes comfort for wisdom. The holy fool speaks plainly, lives simply, renounces applause, and becomes, just by existing, a quiet rebuke to complacency. We had one of our own.

**I first met Brian on the evening of 19 March 2003, at a rally in Greenock opposing the second Iraq War. Within hours, the bombing would begin. Brian, already known as a tireless peace activist, spoke that night with a kind of trembling conviction — not theatrical, not rehearsed, but rising from somewhere deep and immovable. I was captivated.**

He was impossible to miss: an older man, white-haired, oddly dressed, wearing bright red braces, a CND T-shirt, and Doc Martens. Around his neck hung a large silver Russian cross. That, more than anything, startled me — this hardened

left-wing peace campaigner marked so visibly by faith.

Someone in the crowd heckled him: “Aye, you’re bangin’ on about peace, but that cross roon yer neck is the biggest killin’ machine the world has ever seen!”

Brian looked down at the cross, then back up, and said slowly, gently, “This? This is Jesus of Nazareth.”

It would not be the last time I watched him disarm hostility with nothing but simplicity, sincerity, and truth.

### Political

At that time, I had drifted from Mass and buried myself in Marxism. I did not know Christians like Brian existed, certainly not in left-wing political circles. I sometimes think that if I had not met him that night, I might never have returned to faith at all.

Brian did not preach at people. He never demanded heroic gestures or arrests. Yet his life — steady, stub-

born, sacrificial — unsettled our comfortable beliefs. He gave everything to peace, though he never romanticised it.

He did not enjoy prison. He did not enjoy cold cells. Once, on our way to Faslane for a four-minute prayer vigil — four minutes, the time it took for Nagasaki to be destroyed — he confessed he felt physically sick every time we went. Courage, in Brian, was not bravado. It was endurance.

**Even in later years, when his body began to fail him, he continued. Arrest, prison, witness — again and again. When he could no longer throw himself beneath military vehicles, he still showed up. Presence, for Brian, was resistance.**

Yet he was never dour. He could appear in full kilt and Glengarry at republican socialist commemorations, proud and smiling, a man stitched together from faith, politics, and history.

At the end of our weekly Catholic Worker meetings, he loved to lead us singing the Regina Caeli in Latin — his voice thin but determined, as if heaven might lean closer if we sang bravely enough.

He had a gift for unsettling rooms. In 2016, at a polished event in St Aloysius’ School, he stood mid-lecture and reminded everyone it was the anniversary of Easter 1916, asking Glasgow Catholics of Irish descent to pause and remember. The air thickened with embarrassment. I felt only pride.

He confused people, too — especially secular activists — with his seamless garment ethic: anti-war, anti-nuclear, anti-death penalty, pro-life. To Brian, consistency was not ideology but conscience.

Last August, though frail and gaunt, he joined us once more at Faslane to mark the 80th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He sat on a small stool, worn from a lifetime of resistance, yet still present. Around us hung peace banners. We carried a replica of the Nagasaki Cross — the only thing left standing after the cathedral was destroyed and its faithful incinerated. From ruin, a sign of reconciliation.

Many dismissed him as eccentric, unbalanced — a fool. But he understood something the world prefers to forget: sometimes one must become foolish to be wise. Brian was wise. The



madness was never his. He stood, stubborn and gentle, a voice in the wilderness, pointing toward another way — a world beyond violence, made possible through the life and witness of Christ.

He believed peacemaking was a calling, even unto imprisonment, trusting that faithfulness, not success, was the measure, and that in the end, resurrection would have the final word.

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# The water of life is a priceless gift

**F**ORTUNATELY, most of us don't have to climb a hill to brush our teeth in the morning.

But that's exactly what Bishop Brian McGee did to raise awareness of communities around the world in need of clean water.

Bishop Brian is SCIAF's Bishop President and cares deeply about poverty and injustice around the world.

Bishop Brian said: "What can be more unjust than not being able to access clean, safe water?"

"This year our WEE BOX Appeal focusses on just that. In Scotland, we are blessed with some of the finest water in the world. We bathe in it, use it for cooking, and drink as much as we want, whenever we want. We take it for granted that it will always be there.

"Water is life. But for many, it's dangerously scarce. In Ethiopia far too many women, girls and

boys still have to walk for hours every day under the scorching sun. This means missed days at school, getting sick from dirty water, and in some places taking their lives in their hands just to reach water.

"Getting that big sink up the hill was a struggle. It weighed a tonne and it was blowing a hooley, but I just did it once. It's nothing compared to the daily struggle many have to access clean water.

"Thanks to the generosity of people across Scotland, SCIAF has been funding local organisations in Ethiopia to bring clean water to communities and help people help themselves out of poverty. And we need

their help again to continue to do this."

Each year in Lent, generous Scots up and down the country give up a favourite treat such as coffee, chocolate, wine or crisps during Lent and put the money they save into a SCIAF WEE BOX.

Other supporters hold fundraising events in their schools and parishes and take on personal challenges to raise money. They then donate whatever they raise at Easter to provide a hand-up to vulnerable communities worldwide, struggling to survive due to hunger, poverty, conflict and the climate emergency.

Bishop Brian added: "I have had the privilege of seeing first-hand the transformational work that our amazing SCIAF supporters are funding in Ethiopia. It is genuinely changing lives.

"Bringing clean water closer to people's homes helps kids get to school and

improves the health of the whole family. It's amazing the difference basic things like taps and wells can make for people's lives.

"We know that there are still so many more people suffering in Ethiopia and across the world from extreme poverty. With support like this, we can reach more families and more communities and give them a hand up out of the challenges they face."

This Lent, please use your WEE BOX to make a BIG CHANGE. Your support can show young people around the world that a better world is possible – one where they can survive, thrive and flourish.

■ For more details on how to donate, please visit [www.sciaf.org.uk/weebox](http://www.sciaf.org.uk/weebox). To donate £10, please text SCIAF to 70580. Texts will cost £10 plus your standard network charge.



## BRING HOPE TO THE WORLD AND WATER TO THE THIRSTY



£40 could help people access clean water for drinking



£120 could provide tools, training and livestock



£1,200 could bring water to a village



**DONATE TODAY TO PROVIDE LIFE ESSENTIALS**

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Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

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**WEE BOX**  
Big change