

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

November 2023

£1 million fund launched to spread the Gospel

Archbishop's support for new ideas

THE Archdiocese's £1 million Evangelisation Fund is formally launched this month ... and applications are now open for innovative projects designed to help reach out to those untouched by the Gospel message.

Archbishop Nolan said: "We are challenged to make evangelisation – or reaching out in faith to others – our principal objective. Our resources, including our energies, our buildings and our material resources should be directed towards this objective.

"We wish to pass on to others the good news of Jesus Christ, so that they can come to know him and have their lives transformed by having faith in him. We Catholics are blessed to have faith in Jesus, and that is a blessing we wish to share with others.

"This fund has been made available – largely from

BY RONNIE CONVERY the sale of the former Archbishop's house used by Archbishop Taraglia. The new scheme will provide financial backing to new projects – generally with a one-off grant to kick-start an evangelisation initiative."

Applications for support and funding from the new initiative are now invited from parishes, deaneries and Catholic organisations.

The new scheme is not intended to top up existing projects but to stimulate new initiatives. Also projects without matched funding will not be considered. Similarly direct salary costs (other than a short term start up fund where it can be demonstrated that the salary in the longer term can be maintained from another source) are excluded.

An Evangelisation Fund Committee has been estab-

lished and it will meet quarterly to review applications. The deadlines for applications in 2024 are 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October. Normally applicants will receive a response within six weeks of these dates.

Applications should be made online. Full details are available on the RCAG website: <https://www.rcag.org.uk/evangelisation/evangelisation-fund>

All applications will be vetted against the published criteria. If a proposal meets the criteria, it will proceed to stage two which involves a more detailed budget plan for the proposed new project.

Successful projects will be asked to report back to the Archbishop after six months to share their experience of how people have been evangelised, how the initiative has progressed, what the impact has been, and how the money has been spent.



Picture by Paul McSherry



East End Covid memorial page 3



World Day of the Poor challenge pages 10–11



Pope's peace prayer page 17



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**St Mary's Cathedral
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St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen, is seeking a full time Youth and Children's Ministry Coordinator to bring their passion, vision, and energy to the Parish, assisting young people in seeking a personal encounter with Jesus in their lives, growing in the life of the Spirit and nurturing Christian values.

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- Employment start date: 16th January 2024

Applicants should send a covering letter with their CV, plus a 10-minute (max.) video of themselves responding to the following:

1. (1 min) Briefly introduce yourself.
2. (3 mins) What is Jesus doing in your life just now?
3. (3 mins) Describe your experience as a youth leader within the Catholic Church.
4. (3 mins) Why do you feel the Lord is calling you for this job?

To apply, or for more info about the post, please contact Fr Keith Herrera at administrator@cathedral-abdn.org

Kelvin masterpiece's Spanish break

ONE of Glasgow's most famous treasures, Salvador Dali's *Christ of St John of the Cross* has returned home to the artist's native Spain.

The work will be the centrepiece of a major exhibition at the Dali Theatre-Museum in Figueres, which opened on 1 November. Part of the museum, Galatea Tower, is where the artist lived.

The painting hasn't been seen in Spain since 1952, when it was shown in Madrid and Barcelona, shortly before being acquired for Glasgow and becoming the most famous exhibit at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

The painting will return to Kelvingrove in June 2024.



Young pilgrims will follow the footsteps of St John Paul II

PUPILS from Holyrood Secondary School are preparing to walk in the footsteps of St John Paul II in a pilgrimage to Poland next year.

The 29 students will visit places associated with the former Pope including the St John Paul Museum, Schindler's factory, the Jewish Quarter of Krakow, the Devine Mercy Shrine, St Mary's Basilica, Wawel Cathedral and Saint Stanislaw Kostka Church.

They will also celebrate Mass with school chaplain Father Benneth Onyebuchukwu at the underground chapel in the famous Krakow salt mines.

The most poignant part of the five day pilgrimage will be a day trip to Auschwitz where they hope to meet a survivor of the concentration camps.

When fundraising began for the trip which will take place in June next year, one of the first to respond was Archbishop Nolan.

BY BRIAN SWANSON Holyrood RE teacher Maureen Harcombe, who first came up with the idea of the John Paul Pilgrimage said: "Two of my own children were fortunate to be able to go on a pilgrimage to Poland with the Paisley Diocese when they were in school which was organised by Father John Morrison from Paisley Youth and Bishop Keenan.

Inspiration

"This was my inspiration as I saw first hand the impact it had on them. I approached Mrs Watson, my headteacher, with my initial idea and she was very supportive.

"Our main concern was the cost as airfares had skyrocketed and this was the first overseas school trip that the RE dept has planned since Covid.

"We knew that fundraising would be crucial to help families with the financial aspect.



"Our school Chaplain Father Benneth from St Helens's Langside approached the Archbishop and straight away he made a substantial contribution towards the trip as part of the Youth evangelisation programme which immediately reduced the cost for all of the students."

"I have written and reached out to many of our surrounding parishes and Catholic organisations asking for donations to financially assist our students "We have had help from the St Albert's, Our Lady of Lourdes Church and the St Vin-

cent De Paul Society, as well as substantial donations from two former parishioners of Father Benneth at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Broomhill.

Three other teachers will also be taking part, including Polish RE teacher Marcin Swol. The others are Korin Litster and Robyn McCluskey from the technical department.

Father Benneth said: "The Holyrood Secondary School's evangelisation trip to Poland scheduled for 11th June - 14th June 2024 is planned to help our young people learn more about their faith, deepen their connection with God and to the wider Christian community, feel connected to aspects of our rich Christian history by visiting holy sites where miracles happened and receive special blessings."

■ To find out more about the pilgrimage or make a donation email gwisharcombemaureen@glow.sch.uk

St Margaret celebrations mark unity efforts

ST Margaret of Scotland will be honoured at an ecumenical evening of prayer in St Aloysius Church, Garnethill, later this month.

The event, which will be held at 7pm on November 17 the day after the saint's feast day, also marks the first anniversary of the St Margaret's Declaration - a historic friendship agreement between the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church in Scotland.

It was signed at Dunfermline Abbey by Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, then-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Archbishop Leo Cushley,

BY BRIAN SWANSON of St Andrews & Edinburgh.

The document was also signed by the Princess Royal who endorsed the historic friendship during a service to mark the Abbey's 950th anniversary.

A spokesperson for Glasgow Churches Together, who organised the prayer evening said: "The declaration document is a very important one for both faiths and by choosing to call it after St Margaret reminds us of her role in the life of our nation and of her work in her own life for the unity and peace of Christ's church in Scotland."



Gethsemane in the Calton

New memorial garden will recall those who died during the COVID epidemic

FINISHING touches are being made to a prayer garden in St Mary's parish in Calton which is due to be blessed next month on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The garden is to be dedicated to Our Lady and features three olive trees which symbolise the garden of Gethsemane, the olive grove where Christ endured his agony before his betrayal and arrest.

Parish priest at St Mary's, Canon Tom White, said: "The prayer garden will be known as Gethsemane in the Calton and will honor

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** the memory of all those whose funeral rites were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The parish is very much looking forward to the realisation of this project which was the initiative of some of the bereaved families during lockdown and the idea was warmly embraced by their fellow parishioners and supporters from other parishes in the Glasgow area.

"It has been a team effort of the whole parish and beyond. Fortunately, I am blessed with a cousin

who is a stonemason, and he volunteered his skills to work on the plinth on which the statue of Our Lady now stands.

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

Two new curved stone benches, each inscribed with

biblical quotations chosen by Canon Tom, have been placed alongside Our Lady's statue where flowers will be planted in the spring.

Canon Tom added: "There are so many people to thank but on behalf of the parish we owe a particular debt of gratitude to Pat Kelly and AS Homes who volunteered to undertake the ground work which has greatly improved the appearance of the church as well both the garden and the Irish Famine Memorial."



Lourdes youth plea for funds



HELP us to help others – we can't do it without you!

That's the heartfelt plea from the St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group as it launches a fund-raising effort to allow them to play their part in the Glasgow Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in July next year.

The group also fundraises to sponsor children and their families in financial need to go on the annual Glasgow pilgrimage.

Each year over 80 young people give up their summer holiday to go to Lourdes to work in the hospitals, to get out of bed early, to push wheelchairs, pull 'voitures' and assist the elderly and the infirm, and they pay for this privilege. They come for many reasons, but all of them have an overwhelming desire to do some good.

A spokesperson for the group said: "In Lourdes, they give their all to help those less fortunate than themselves. They bring their energy, their enthusiasm,

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

their sense of responsibility – in essence, they bring their youth! For that wonderful week in Lourdes they shoulder someone else's burden and over the years, have touched many lives.

"It has been said that Lourdes is 'Love in Action' and the collective aim of the youth group is to make that statement a reality during its seven day pilgrimage.

"In addition, the lives of the many young people have been enriched by the experience. They learn much about dignity, respect and courage from those they come into contact with during our pilgrimage. The group are not saints, just committed young people who want to help others by giving their best."

For further information on an upcoming fundraising Ladies' Lunch or to support the group please contact Clare Reilly on 07957 743712.

Archbishop joins call for ceasefire

ARCHBISHOP Nolan has added his voice to that of Church leaders from across the UK to plead for a ceasefire in the Holy Land.

In a letter drawn up by the Christian Aid charity, the Archbishop and his fellow signatories say there can be no justification for the deliberate killing, maiming and kidnapping of civilians, 'which is a crime under international law and for which the perpetrators should be held accountable'.

They also "unequivocally condemn the violence carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7 October".

The letter states: "Subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza has added enormously to the toll of civilian suffering. Innocent Palestinians are going through an increasingly grave humanitarian crisis as a result of the Israeli government's strategy of relentless bombardment, which has left no place safe, and of siege, which effectively

strangles life."

The Church leaders, who include the Kirk's Moderator, call on the UK Government to help bring about an immediate end to the violence. Specifically, they call for:

- Protection of civilians and an end to all violence, with adoption of a ceasefire without conditions.
- The unconditional and immediate release of all hostages.
- Humanitarian access and reconnection to water and electricity.
- Unequivocal support for the ICC to conduct a truly independent investigation into all war crimes to ensure accountability.
- Acknowledgement of the failure of the international community to effectively engage with any meaningful peace process, and a commitment to work ceaselessly from now on to address the root causes of the violence which must include an end to the occupation.

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Youth reunion for 'Archbishop's Party'

If you happened to be in Merchant City a few weeks ago on a Friday night, you would have been understandably confused when the usual club music of a weekend bar was replaced with something a little different...

Because from one of the rooms in Spanish-themed venue, Artà, over 60 World Youth Day pilgrims were singing together the *Salve Regina* to conclude their evening celebrations.

The 'Archbishop's Party'

as it has been named amongst the group, was an opportunity for the pilgrims to gather in a social atmosphere and celebrate their newfound friendships and the many other gifts and blessings that the Lord granted them during their journey to and pilgrimage in Lisbon, last July at World Youth Day.

Given that the event was nicknamed 'The Archbishop's Party', there was some confusion amongst the

group with a few pilgrims finding themselves blushing after wishing him a 'Happy Birthday' and others even bringing His Grace a card along!

While it was not his birthday (that's in January!), it was certainly a joyful occasion for Archbishop Nolan as he gathered again with his young pilgrims, heard about how they had been moved by their World Youth Day experience and had a moment to encourage and pray with them again.



Archbishop Nolan takes his turn at trying to win a voucher for Nando's

Picture by Paul McSherry



Canon Gerry's letter ahead of this month's celebration of World Youth Day

The Solemnity of Christ the King is World Youth Day.

Please pray, particularly on this day for all our young people that they will encounter Jesus in a personal way through the Sacraments, the celebration of the Word of God, the example of others and the love of our parish communities.

1.5 million young Catholics gathered with Pope Francis, last July, in Lisbon to celebrate their faith. It was an astonishing event. Many, many, more would have liked to have been present also.

Our Catholic Church is young in most parts of the world, and we have an emerging committed, vibrant Catholic youth scene here in Scotland, too, with young Catholics living their faith with courage, wholeheartedness, and a desire to grow, in our city, Archdiocese and country.

More and more of our parishes are re-engaging with young people, with new youth and young adult groups emerging

BY CANON GERARD TARTAGLIA
YOUTH OFFICE DIRECTOR

every few months in different places, and our Archdiocese is offering opportunities for parishes to rebuild youth ministry, as well as directly reaching out to young people.

Pope Francis has given us the theme "Rejoicing in hope" for this celebration of World Youth Day. This is something each of us can do! Let us respond to St. Paul's call, echoed by the Holy Father and 'rejoice in our hope, be patient in our tribulation and be constant in prayer' (cf. Rom 12:12).

The virtue of hope sustains us and helps us to move forward, with God, when things are hard or when the path ahead is unclear.

We are living in extraordinary times. Our Catholic Church is ever more conscious of the need to foster participation and co-responsibility in the mission and life of the Church because of our baptismal calling. All of

us can contribute to the life of our parishes and to sharing the gospel, particularly with the young.

Do not be afraid to encourage your peers, your children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends in their faith!

A small, loving, expression of the presence of Jesus in our world may be all it takes.

While some are not ready, many young people are searching to understand what their life is really for and about. Our faith is the beautiful answer.

Be positive. Be gentle and sensitive, honest, and understanding, but don't be afraid to share that faith with them.

If you would like to find out more about how you can reach out to the young people in your parish, please speak to your parish priest or contact youth@rcag.org.uk.

We are excited to support you so that every parish may engage with their youth and young adult parishioners!

Young people invited to Holy Hour with Archbishop to start season of Advent

Archbishop Nolan is planning a new initiative next month to reach out to young people throughout the Archdiocese and beyond ... mixing spiritual input and a social gathering.

All young people, aged 16 to 35, are invited to join the Archbishop in St. Andrew's Cathedral for an hour of prayer and reflection to mark the season of Advent on Monday November 11.

The event is being run in conjunction with the Youth Office of the Archdiocese.

Mairi-Claire McGeady from the Youth office told Flourish: "Advent is an exciting time of preparation. During this season,

we are encouraged to reflect upon the birth of Jesus and prepare our hearts for Christmas, whilst also looking to the future and how we can prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ again.

"Our invitation is to all young people to come and gather with Christ Himself, present in the Blessed Sacrament, to pray, reflect and prepare your heart for the coming of Jesus this Christmas and to be encouraged by His shepherd, Archbishop Nolan.

"This will be followed by an opportunity to socialise with your peers over mince pies and mulled wine."

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with Archbishop Nolan

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St Simon's site will serve local community in future

WHEN a disastrous fire reduced St Simon's to a ghastly skeleton of twisted metal and blackened stone on a summer's evening two years ago it also tore a hole in the community it had so faithfully served for more than 160 years.

But that culture of community did not die in the flames, and now the site is to return to use. Not as a church – even the most optimistic parishioner could not believe that this would be a realistic option – but as the site of much-needed new social housing following the sale of the ground to Partick Housing Association for £500,000.

Established in 1975 the Association already looks after

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

around 1800 properties in the West End.

The sale of the site of the former B-listed building, built in 1855 and the third oldest in the Archdiocese, was completed only a few weeks ago after discussions between the Archdiocese and interested parties, finally allowing Monsignor Paul Murray, parish priest of St Peter's Partick to announce the sale to parishioners at Mass last month.

Mgr Paul told *Flourish*: "The loss of Saint Simon's was a tragedy, but sometimes even the bleakest of situations can present an opportunity.

"The sale of the site to PHA continues Saint Simon's long

tradition of community engagement with the prospect of affordable social housing in an area where reasonably priced accommodation is so hard to find.

Heritage

"Earlier in the year the two parishes were merged so the proceeds of the sale can now contribute to the long-awaited renovation of St Peter's which is due to begin early in the new year."

Although it will be some time before the site is completely cleared and work begins, there are already indications that the design of the new housing will reflect the heritage of the generations of Polish families who worshipped there.

The ferocity of the blaze,

which took away roof, walls and fittings, left nothing but charred wood, metal and stone when the flames were extinguished. The Polish shrine, the stained glass of Lorraine Lamond, the refurbishments overseen by the legendary Fr Paddy Tierney – all were reduced to black ash in the cold light of day.

But for generations of Poles the biggest loss was that of their icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, originally brought from Poland to St Simon's in 1979.

A replica of that icon, paid for by Polish families not only in Glasgow but throughout Scotland, is now displayed in St Peter's in Partick as a lasting memory of St Simon's as a new chapter begins.



Actors alert – Lentfest is calling!

CALLING all budding actors! AGAP is looking for actors to take part in future productions.

Following the success of this year's touring production, "Oggie! Oggie! Oggie!", and the launch of a new schools programme, the Archdiocese of Glasgow Arts Project is seeking new talent for Lentfest 2024.

Applicants are asked to prepare a monologue from past AGAP productions and may also perform a piece of their own choice. They will also be asked to take part in a dialogue, which will be provided at the audition.

Open Auditions will take place on Monday 4th December from 5pm – 8pm in the Eyre Hall at the Archdiocese of Glasgow



Curial Offices, 196 Clyde Street, Glasgow G1 4 JY.

For details and to register, please contact stephen@agap.org.uk or call 0141 552 5527.

Could you be a permanent deacon?

THE Permanent Diaconate is a 'fabulous vocation' for men, including married men, to serve the Church in Glasgow.

That's the firm view of Deacon Kenny McGeachie who heads up the Archdiocesan Diaconate Programme.

Deacon Kenny said: "Service is the hallmark for who a deacon is and what they do. Their ordination allows them to preach the Word of God and minister in liturgical celebrations. But most of all, deacons are called to serve in works of charity, especially in ministry involving the poor and those on the peripheries of society.

"Alongside marriage and family life, becoming a deacon has been the most rewarding and fulfilling vocation, and is the privilege of my life."

Deacon Kenny continued: "If you would like to explore – without any commitment or expectation – if God is calling you to become a permanent deacon, come along to our information evening on Friday 17 November at 7pm in Eyre Hall, 196 Clyde Street Glasgow.

"Archbishop Nolan and some student



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and serving deacons will be there to assist you and answer any questions. You will be made most welcome.

"Just turn up on the night or contact me using the details below."

■ Kenneth.mcgeachie@rcag.org.uk

Light and shadow in new statistics

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

THE Vatican has published its annual year-book of statistics and the numbers confirm a new trend... while the number of Catholics across the globe continues to grow, the number of priests and religious is in serious decline.

And Europe is the continent most dramatically affected by the change.

The latest figures in the new *Annuario Pontificio* show Catholics in the world were 1.376 billion, an increase of 16 million in 12 months.

Europe

Europe was the only continent not affected by this increase, with numbers actually down by quarter of a million. In Africa, Catholics grew by more than eight million in a year, in the Americas by almost seven million, and in Asia by 1.5 million.

The number of priests however showed a marked decline across the globe – down year on year by 2,347. Losses in Europe (3,632 fewer priests) and America (down 963) were compensated for by growth in Africa (1,518 more priests), and Asia (clergy numbers up by 719).

Interestingly, permanent deacons are increasing over-

all: in 2021, there were 541 new deacons ordained, almost half of them in Europe, bringing the number of permanent deacons worldwide to almost 50,000.

The number of religious men decreased by 795, dipping under 50,000 for the first time. And the global decrease in the number of religious sisters continues. In 2021, the number of religious women decreased by 10,588 compared to the previous survey. Again only Africa and Asia buck the trend.

The number of seminarians is also down. In 2021, there were only 109,895 seminarians in the world, 1,960 fewer than in 2020. Only Africa is seeing vocations flourish where there were 187 more men in seminaries.

Despite the worrying figures for vocations, there are impressive numbers revealed in terms of the Church's wider impact on society.



Worldwide, the Church now operates almost 75,000 kindergartens attended by 7.5 million pupils, it runs over 100,000 primary schools for almost 35 million youngsters, and just under 50,000 secondary schools educating around 20 million teenagers.

Health, charitable, and welfare institutions run in the world by the Catholic Church include 5,405 hospitals; 14,205 dispensaries; 567 leprosy facilities; 15,276 homes for the elderly; 9,703 orphanages; 10,604 marriage counseling centers and 35,529 other social institutions.

Vatican Synod opens door to new discussions on the 'difficult' issues

THE long-awaited Synod bringing together representatives from across the Catholic world has concluded its month long meeting... with discussions due to resume next October.

The gathering – which for the first time included priests, religious and lay people with voting rights – focused on a wide array of topics.

But those expecting instant dramatic changes in Church teaching were left disappointed.

Many of the more controversial topics discussed were left firmly on the table for further study this year before the synod resumes in 12 months' time to make decisions.

Among the issues up for discussion and discernment between now and next year are:

- The possibility of ordaining female deacons
- The possibility of allowing priests who have left ministry to be re-admitted to a role in delivering pastoral care
- The possibility of establishing some form of appraisal system for bishops

The assembly also proposed reconsidering the way the Church discerns controversial issues and “open questions”...

“Some issues, such as those related to gender identity and sexual orientation, the end of life, difficult marital situations, and ethi-



BY RONNIE CONVERY

cal issues related to artificial intelligence, are controversial not only in society but in the Church because they raise new questions,” the final document stated.

The synod stated that the Church’s anthropological

categories are sometimes “not sufficient to grasp” complexities that emerge in these areas.

As a response, the document called for the promotion of “initiatives that allow for shared discernment on doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues that are controver-

sial ... in light of the word of God, Church teaching, theological reflection, and valuing the synod experience.”

The Pope acknowledged the situation in his homily for the closing Mass.

He said: “We have listened to one another and above all, in the rich variety of our backgrounds and concerns, we have listened to the Holy Spirit. Today we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with far-sightedness we look to the horizon opening up before us...”

He quoted the late Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini of Milan, saying: “The proof that we do not always have the right idea about God is that at times we are disappointed: We think: ‘I expected one thing, I imagined that God would behave like this, and instead I was wrong’. But in this way, we turn back to the path of idolatry, wanting the Lord to act according to the image we have of him.”

The conclusions will now be sent back to the local Churches, according to Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, general reporter of the Synod.

Before participants return to the Vatican for the second session next year, and the Pope draws the final conclusions of the four-year synodal process, “canonical, theological and pastoral research will have to be carried out” over the next 11 months on the themes addressed, Cardinal Hollerich added.

Bishop Brian reflects on a unique month



SCOTLAND’S Synod Representative was Bishop Brian McGee of Argyll and the Isles. And in keeping with the Synod spirit of inclusivity he penned a series of reflections and reports on the event on Facebook.

At the end of the month long assembly, Bishop Brian wrote: “My feeling is one of deep peace because I am satisfied that the Holy Spirit is at work. Yes, important and delicate questions remain but if the Church can genuinely be open to the Spirit I sincerely believe that all will be well.

“The report accurately reflects the Synod’s experience during the past month: where there has

been agreement, where there have been divergences, where progress has been made, suggestions for further reflection and proposed actions.

“Please remember that this was only the Synod’s First Session while the Second Session will be held in October 2024. Therefore the report which we approved is a transitory document.

“It is important to recognise that the text doesn’t have definitive answers precisely because we have one more year for prayer, sharing and deeper discernment. However, next October’s Synod will present concrete proposals to the Pope for his consideration.”

Archbishop’s nuke message



ARCHBISHOP Nolan had a strong message of support for all those campaigning against the proliferation of nuclear weapons at the recent Festival for Survival organised by CND.

The Festival for Survival was a gathering exploring the link between nuclear weapons and climate change.

The Archbishop said: “I went to reaffirm the Catholic Church’s opposition to nuclear weapons dating back to John XXIII’s great encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, in which he says nuclear weapons should be banned – a constant teaching which

was manifested most recently by the Holy See being among the first to ratify the UN treaty banning nuclear weapons.

“Vatican II condemned the use of nuclear weapons as immoral and Pope Francis has emphasized the immorality both of production and possession of these weapons and the resources they consume which could be spent on the poor.

“And his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI said that deterrence was fuelling the arms race as nuclear powers sought to spend more and more money updating their systems.”



Stoves, chickens, goats and spectacles: SCIAF launches Real Gifts campaign

WHAT have a toilet, a chicken and a pair of specs got in common? It's not a trick question; it's an ethical one. They are all Christmas presents you can buy this month, while helping people in the world's poorest places enjoy a better tomorrow.

SCIAF has relaunched Real Gifts campaign, more than doubling its ethical offering this year from 17 gifts to 37, with cows, wheel-chairs and sewing machines making an appearance for the first time.

Support

SCIAF sells a range of Real Gifts, from seeds to stoves and even chickens and goats. Every Real Gift purchased goes to support their work around the world and allows money raised to be used where it is needed most.

For the first time this year, SCIAF has introduced



some Real Gifts that help women specifically and promote gender equality. These include a Positivity Period Pack, as well as medical aid and counselling for survivors of gender-based violence.

Lorraine Currie, SCIAF's

new Director, said: "Many women and girls experience period poverty, which can have a devastating impact on their dignity, education and ability to earn money. This is also the case in the world's poorest places, but these period essentials en-

sure women and girls have access to affordable and reusable period products.

"Gender-based violence can leave both physical and emotional scars, which can be devastating. By buying one of our Real Gifts, you can help women access urgent medical care and further down the line, expert psycho-social assistance and counselling therapy. This way women and girls can confront their experiences, express their emotions, and create more hopeful futures."

Impact

Larger gifts like 'Water for a village' can be purchased by schools, churches or friend groups. Many of the gifts can be purchased for emergency situations and natural disasters, like warm blankets and Shelter for a Family.

SCIAF supporter Jim Berry from Troon not only buys Real Gifts himself but encourages his whole parish to do the same.

He said: "Sometimes, at

Christmas, we end up buying things people don't need, just for the sake of giving them something. But these Real Gifts are different – they can make a world of a difference.

"As soon as the catalogues are in, I pop up to the office in Glasgow to collect enough for the whole Parish here in Our Lady of the Assumption and St Meddan's in Troon. There's a whole range of affordable gifts to choose from.

"It's a great way of show-

ing our love and support for our sisters and brothers in the poorest parts of the world."

Ordering a Real Gift is easy. Simply browse the catalogue or visit sciaf.org.uk/realgifts, pick your gifts and receive a beautifully designed card to your doorstep. You can personalise it with a heartfelt message and share the amazing impact of your gift with someone special.

www.franciscanvocations.org.uk

FOR WOMEN
EXPLORING
FRANCISCAN
VOCATION

Justice and Peace plan special meeting

PARISHIONERS have been invited to learn at first hand the valuable work carried out by the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission by attending its AGM later this month.

The Commission campaigns for social justice, gives practical support to those suffering from poverty – especially as the cost of living crisis deepens, raises awareness of environmental issues and campaigns against nuclear weapons and the arms trade.

But now in a bid to highlight these issues and encourage parishes, church groups and individuals to come up with their own ideas, the commission has issued an open invitation to its annual gathering which takes place at St Joseph's, Tollcross on Thursday November 16 at 7pm.

Commission chair Rick Jackson said: "It is several years since we held an event like this and we hope by inviting parishioners and others that this might shine a light on what we suspect is only the tip

of the iceberg on what is happening throughout the parishes in the Archdiocese.

"It might even inform and interest those quietly working away in their parishes to let the Commission know about what they are doing and encourage them to join with the Commission in forming a Justice and Peace information network.

"The AGM is open to everyone and anyone in the Archdiocese, not just Commission members. There is also no limit on how many people from a parish can attend. The more, the better!"

A number of parishes in the Archdiocese are already running successful initiatives.

They include Joseph's Tollcross where volunteers organise a monthly Mary's Meals Coffee Morning, and a knitting group providing hats for premature babies.

St Leo's Dumbreck supports its local food bank and works with other faith

groups giving practical help to newly arrived refugees in the community.

At Immaculate Conception, Maryhill an array of activities are up and running including a Men's Group and joint community initiative with the local Church of Scotland, while at St Gregory's, parishioners perform heroics to support the local foodbank.

St Patrick's, Dumbarton, runs a series of monthly talks on Catholic Social Teaching and current social issues involving SCIAF, Pax Christi and Aid to the Church in Need.

St Andrew's & St Joseph's J&P group have joined Milngavie Refugee Action group to set up a refugee sponsorship scheme while St Mary's, Duntocher, and St Joseph's, Faifley are collecting women's clothes for refugees at Erskine Bridge Hotel and an ongoing spectacles recycling collection.

To find out more about the AGM and the work of the commission email: richard.jackson@justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk



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Please send me information about setting up a regular gift.

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

Glasgow and Bethlehem link in peace prayer

Glasgow and its twin city, Bethlehem, will link up in a powerful service of solidarity next month to pray for peace in the Holy Land.

A joint service, conducted by video link, will bring together worshippers in Glasgow Cathedral and the Chapel of the Divine Child in Bethlehem University.

The ecumenical Advent Service at Glasgow Cathedral will be held on Saturday 9th December at 2pm.

The event is organised by the Friends of the Holy Land organisation and supported by the Lord Provost's office.

Brendan Metcalfe of the organisation told *Flourish*: "We call upon peacemakers of every faith to join us as together we pray for all those killed and injured, those taken hostage and those in anguish in Bethlehem, Gaza, Israel and within our own communities here in Glasgow as they fear for family and friends.



"We will demonstrate that the Christians of Glasgow are with the innocent victims of this war in prayer and concrete solidarity; we know that their suffering is united with the redemptive suffering of Christ and pray it will bring a lasting justice and peace ever closer in the

Holy Land.

"I am sure we have all been distressed and upset by the abhorrent acts of Hamas, the plight of hostages and the devastating bombing of Gaza resulting in the loss of so many innocent lives all of which is unfolding before our eyes in the media."

SCIAF launches emergency appeal for Gaza

SCIAF has made an urgent appeal for an immediate ceasefire in the ongoing conflict in the Holy Land, stating, "We stand in solidarity with the people of the Holy Land and across the world who are crying out for peace."

They have also launched an emergency appeal for the appeal directly afflicted by the violence.

A spokesperson said: "People in Gaza are in dire need of food, power, water and medicines now. The violence must stop. Their survival requires unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza to be granted as soon as possible to allow essential aid and alleviate this tragic human suffering. The safeguarding of civilians, their hospitals, homes and places of refuge must be absolutely prioritised.

"People across the region also need an immediate ceasefire to put an end to this violence now and prevent a further, deeper and irredeemable humanitarian disaster.



"The atrocities committed in Israel on 7th October have no justification. The taking of hostages is unacceptable. Just as we utterly condemn the vile atrocities committed that day, we must also condemn the carnage which has followed in Gaza.

"With each passing day, the relentless destruction takes a heavier toll and the chance of long-term peace in the region feels ever further away. But we must not lose hope. As we mourn we must also cry out for peace, and beg those with power have the courage, prudence and wisdom to hear these cries and invest in building a

lasting peace.

"Ultimately, we must also recognize that this conflict did not begin with the atrocities on the 7th October, and see this in the wider historical context. The people of the Holy Land need peace; deep and lasting peace where everyone can survive and thrive, feel safe, secure and authors of their own lives' stories."

■ To donate to the emergency appeal for Gaza visit the SCIAF website at www.sciaf.org.uk/about-us/news/580-israeli-palestinian-conflict-how-you-can-help

Rivers of violence are turning into lakes of despair



Professor Bart reveals the background to the human tragedy enveloping Gaza

RETURNED from the Holy Land on the day before the Hamas incursion into Israel.

BY PROFESSOR BART MCGETTRICK
PRESIDENT OF THE HOLY LAND COMMISSION

Let me say at the outset that nothing can excuse the horror and carnage perpetrated on the Jewish village in that brutal Hamas attack on 7th October. I would condemn this in the strongest terms. This attack was not perpetrated by the Palestinian people, but by the military wing of Hamas.

I had gone to the Holy Land with The Holy Land Commission to overview the needs of the Christian communities in education, humanitarian aid, and pastoral care.

Starvation

We had clearly identified those needs especially in humanitarian aid. There are people in Palestine who are dying of starvation, increased numbers with no medical help, and increased numbers are being displaced from their homes and livelihood.

Numbers of refugees are mounting daily. Over 1,000 people had lost their homes since January 2022 before the 7 October; numbers are now into millions.

With the increased pace

of land grabs, of removal of Palestinian people from their land, and the increasingly severe restrictions on mobility, it is hardly surprising that there has been a reaction.

The legal and social conditions affecting the Palestinian people are difficult to imagine if you do not witness it at first hand. I spoke to young students in Bethlehem University who are in their early 20's, and their dream is to see the sea. (They are only 30 minutes' drive away!) These are their lives.

Tragically one student has been shot and killed in Jerusalem after the Hamas attack... one young life lost is one too many. Now thousands of lives are lost and tens of thousands injured.

This attack did not happen as a one-off event, although the nature and scale of it is, I hope, unique. The causes of this attack are in large part due to the release of deep frustration and anger among the Palestinian people. Let me reiterate this *cannot excuse the violence.*

Experience tells us that the only consequence of violence is the assurance of further violence. We witness this with the horror of the carnage at the Al-Ahli Hospital airstrike with over 500 children, women and men killed on 17 October; as well as losing all the expertise of doctors and nurses.

The consequences of this action seem to expose this region to a re-think about the future of Israel and Palestine. Discussions on a "one-state solution" or a "two-state solution" seem distant and futile. There has been instability in the socio-political for the past 75 years; and hardening attitudes does not make it seem likely that there will be any early resolution.

When the younger populations of Israel and Palestine say, "Enough...!" there may be hope in a peace. This has to come from new generations, since the current "leadership" has run out of credibility for a peace-filled future.

That peace has surely to be based on a recognition of the human rights of every person. At present the rivers of violence and bloodshed are filling lakes of despair and hopelessness.

Xaverians mark 75 'tartan' years

The Xaverian Missionaries are celebrating 75 years in the UK this year and in this special article for Flourish, Father Jim Clarke, based at St Bartholomew's, Castlemilk, looks back to the early days and outlines the challenges of the future

EARLIER this month we marked our anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Mary's, Coatbridge giving us a chance to look back in gratitude at how the Lord has been good to us, but also to look forward in faith to what He is calling us to do now.

From the heydays of a region of 20 plus Xaverian priests, a Junior Seminary in Coatbridge, a Novitiate in Glasgow, and a Theology Community in London, we find ourselves today reduced in number but not in vision or hope.

In the early days we were a Region preparing missionaries to proclaim the Kingdom, in far off places, where the Gospel was not yet known. Now we are living in a country where the Gospel has been proclaimed yet forgotten or ignored, and where other faiths and no faith are now part of our context.

"Europe is now mission territory" – this has been written in the recent Xaverian Documents and our role here is to respond to that challenge.

Currently we are nine Xaverians in three premises: the Parishes of St Bartholomew and St Margaret Mary in Castlemilk, the Northwest of England (currently moving from Preston to Manchester) and in the Conforti Centre, Coatbridge.

Our activities have changed much over the 75 years. Our call in the UK is to seek to be present and to work where the Church is not present or needs a boost.

As well as Mission Appeals, Supplies and a missionary presence in the local churches, with the help of lay employees and collaborators, we are involved in mission on the margins through interfaith dialogue,



Picture by Paul McSherry

in anti-poverty work, in justice and peace work, in Pax Christi, in Prison Befriending, in Community Partnership initiatives and in the creation and the upkeep of the Coatbridge Community Foodbank.

In 2009 we built the Conforti Centre, on the site of the old seminary in Coatbridge which is now a purpose-built residential retreat and conference centre facility with 30 en-suite bedrooms.

Our Founder insisted that hospitality be a trademark of our community living and this is what we are trying to do. Mission is encounter and, in our communities, we try to live this.

Mission is no longer going to other parts of the world but entering the world of the other.

Pope Francis calls us to be "missionary disciples" wherever we are, proclaiming the love of God to our broken



Down memory lane: Xaverian College in the 1960s



humanity as announced in Jesus Christ. "We may not always be able to reflect adequately the beauty of the Gospel, but there is one sign which we should never lack: the op-

tion for those who are least, those whom society discards."

May God continue to bless us and may this be our Mission Statement for the next 75 years.

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WORLD DAY OF THE POOR – NOVEMBER 19 2023



WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

Papal letter's simple message: 'Don't look away'



POPE Francis has released his message for the annual World Day of the Poor, to be marked this year on Sunday November 19 with a heartfelt plea to each and every Catholic worldwide ... "When you see a person in need, do not look away!"

The Pope says that a "great river of poverty is traversing our cities", and that every Christian is called to become personally involved in the struggle against it.

Pope Francis begins his letter by acknowledging that the scale of poverty all around "seems to overwhelm us, so great are the needs of our brothers and sisters who plead for our help, support and solidarity..."

Affluent

"We are living in times that are not particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor. The pressure to adopt an affluent lifestyle increases, while the voices of those dwelling in poverty tend to go unheard."

The Pope also stresses new forms of poverty, such as "peoples caught up in situations of war", the "inhumane treatment" of many workers, and "speculation in various sectors", which he said had led to "dramatic price increases that further impoverish many families".

Faced with problems of this magnitude, Pope Francis writes, our responsibility is clear. We must heed Tobit's words to Tobias: "Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor."

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** "In a word," he continues, "when ever we encounter a poor person, we cannot look away, for that would prevent us from encountering the face of the Lord Jesus."

Thus, "the parable of the Good Samaritan is not simply a story from the past; it continues to challenge each of us in the here and now of our daily lives. It is easy to delegate charity to others, yet the calling of every Christian is to become personally involved."

Pope Francis goes on to point out that this year is the 60th anniversary of the publication of Pope John XXIII's landmark encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, in which he urged that "Every human being enjoys the right to life, to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, including food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services."

How should we react, Pope Francis asks, in the face of the failure of the political process to deliver these aims?

The answer, he says, is two-fold. There is, on the one hand, "a need to urge and even pressure public institutions to perform their duties properly", but, on the other, "it is of no use to wait passively to receive everything from on high".

Those living in poverty, Pope Francis stresses, ought also to be included in this search for "change and responsibility."

The Pope has a question for you... what are you doing to help the poor in your everyday life?



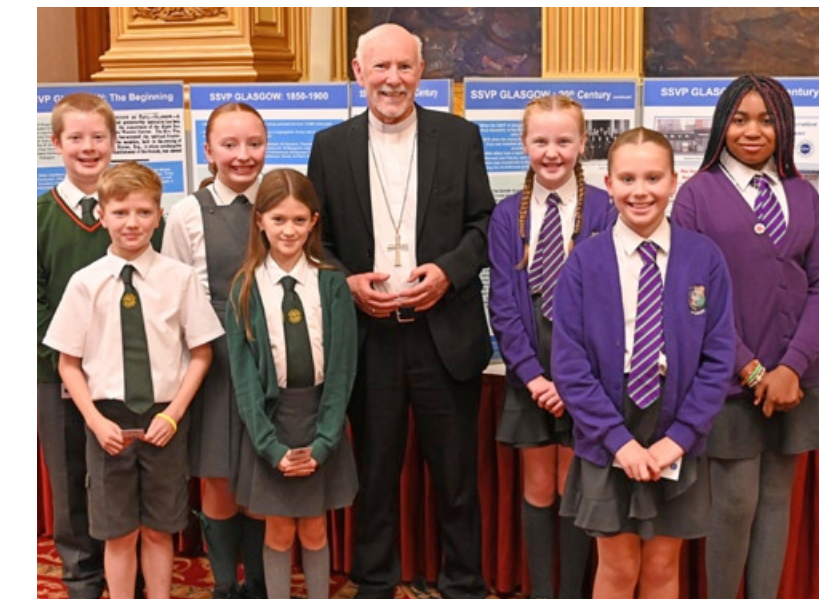
Picture: Imago Mundi

Food for thought in 10 ideas in Pope's letter

In the Pope's own words ... 10 powerful challenges to consider on World Day of the Poor

- How meaningful it would be if, on the Day of the Poor ... we were to invite someone to share our Sunday dinner, after sharing in the Eucharistic table, the Eucharist we celebrate would truly become a mark of communion.
- It is easy to delegate charity to others, yet the calling of every Christian is to become personally involved.
- How much frustration and how many suicides are being caused by the illusions created by a culture that leads young people to think that they are "losers", "good for nothing". Let us help them react to these malign influences and find ways to help them grow into self-assured and generous men and women.
- The poor are persons; they have faces, stories, hearts and souls. They are our brothers and sisters, with good points and bad, like all of us, and it is important to enter into a personal relation with each of them.
- Everyone is our neighbour. Regardless of the colour of their skin, their social standing, the place from which they came, if I myself am poor, I can recognize my brothers or sisters in need of my help.
- Caring for the poor is more than simply a matter of a hasty hand-out; it calls for reestablishing the just interpersonal relationships that poverty harms.
- Our sharing should meet the concrete needs of the other, rather than being just a means of ridding ourselves of superfluous goods.
- What the poor need is certainly our humanity, our hearts open to love. Let us never forget that we are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

SSVP marks 175 years of reaching out in Christ's name



ARCHBISHOP Nolan praised the faith and commitment of these junior members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (above) and declared: "You are its future."

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURES BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

Known as Mini Vinnies, the primary pupils from St Monica's Milton and St Thomas's Riddrie, were among SSVP volunteers at a reception in the City Chambers in recognition of the commitment and contribution that members have made to the city over the past 175 years.

Addressing the youngsters directly the Archbishop went on: "It is wonderful to think how much help the society has given to the people of Glasgow over so many years as we can see from the exhibition in the room tonight."

"Of course it is right that we look back on these wonderful achievements but it is also right that we look forward to the future and the challenges it will bring."

"You young people are that future and I know that with God's

help you too will, as Pope Francis says, look the poor in the eye as those who have gone before you have done."

The exhibition the Archbishop referred to was co-ordinated by Honor Hania who is currently doing a PhD on the Society and featured the work carried out by members and volunteers from 1848 to the present day.

Earlier this year the Archbishop celebrated a special 175th anniversary Mass for the SSVP and praised the work of members (below).

Remembering the Society's work for the poor in Glasgow dating back 175 years, he urged members to respond to new challenges of poverty in the city in the 21st century.





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Make a will for you... make a difference for your family's future

BY BRIAN SWANSON

It is one of the most important documents any of us will ever sign, yet there are those who believe that making a will is something we can ignore.

We tell ourselves that we have nothing of value to leave and somehow everything will be taken care of after we die.

Sadly, that is not the case, which is why it is essential for the sake of those we care about that everyone should draw up a will – which should be seen not as a chore but as true act of charity.

As one leading Glasgow solicitor with years of experience in this field put it: "Not only are you providing for your loved ones, but you are giving yourself precious peace of mind."

"People are often apprehensive when it comes to writing a will, but I never cease to be pleased at how relieved they are when the process is completed."

According to the Law Society of Scotland it is essential to consult a solicitor rather than using online services when it comes to drawing up a will.

A spokesperson for the Society said: "DIY and internet wills

are available but there are obvious risks where no personal advice is given.

"Wills are often straightforward, but some involve complicated arrangements and financial affairs such as inheritance tax, all the more reason to ensure they are drawn up by a qualified solicitor.

Pitfalls

"Even if your will is simple and want to write it yourself, it is advisable to consult a solicitor to avoid pitfalls and ensure all the legal formalities have been followed correctly, otherwise it may be invalid.

"Making a will is one of the most important things we can do after all it will determine how our most personal possessions and hard-earned savings will be shared among close family and friends.

"It is often a simple and inexpensive process but failure to make a will can pause major difficulties for those left behind."

Your estate – money, other assets and possessions - could be distributed according to law rather your wishes and it is particularly important to leave instructions if you own a property".

■ Some solicitors offer a free service in return for a donation to charity, for instance, those participating in www.willaid.org.uk during November.

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Tel: 0141 354 5555 Scottish Charity No: SC012302 Company No: SC197327
Photo by Colin Hattersley.



Angel, Zambia




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WARS, especially in the 21st century, are fought on multiple levels. Beyond what happens on the battlefield, there's also the "soft power" contest to claim the high moral ground, and in that sense, one of the emerging fronts in the bloody conflict in Gaza now pits Israel against the Christian leadership of the Holy Land.

In that standoff, the Vatican for the moment appears caught somewhere in the middle, though over time it's likely that its position will shift in the direction of the Christian leadership – in part because one of those leaders is their own man on the ground, new Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, a body that brings together the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant leadership of the Holy Land, has issued several statements on the conflict so far, both of which have brought swift responses from Israel.

Attack

On October 7, the day that Hamas's surprise attack on Israel triggered the present conflict, the Christian leaders issued a statement saying that "our faith, which is founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, compels us to advocate for the cessation of all violent and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians."

That language triggered a quick response from the Israeli embassy to the Holy See, which complained of "linguistic ambiguities and terms that allude to a false symmetry."

"To suggest parallelisms where they don't exist isn't diplomatic pragmatism, it's just wrong," the embassy said.

The tit-for-tat cycle unfolded again after another statement from the Christian leaders followed by a series of ten posts on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, from Raphael Schutz, the Israeli Ambassador to the Holy See.

"We are witnessing a new cycle of violence with an unjustifiable attack against all civilians," the church leaders said in their second statement.

They asserted that Gaza's population is being deprived of electricity, water, food, fuel and medicine, warning that orders to evacuate the north of Gaza "will only deepen an already disastrous humanitarian catastrophe." They called upon Israel to allow humanitarian supplies to reach Gaza, and



Cardinal Pizzaballa

Diplomacy and justice at the heart of the Vatican's response to Gaza crisis

asked all parties to work to deescalate the conflict.

Schutz called the statement "unfair, biased and one-sided."

"What actually happened was that the 'circle of violence' (typical false symmetry expression) started with an unprovoked criminal attack by Hamas + Islamic Jihad (the Patriarchs refrain from mentioning their names) murdering more than 1300 Israelis and from other 35 nationalities," he said in one post.

"They also raped women, burned babies, beheaded people and took hostages. Simultaneously they launched a wide range missiles and rockets attacks against centers of civil population in Israel – cities, towns, villages, kibbutzim," he said.

"The only party the patriarchs single out by name with a specific demand is Israel, the party that was viciously attacked a week ago," Schutz said. "What a shame, especially when this comes from people of God."

So far, Pope Francis and his top diplomats appear to be striving to remain even-handed.

The pontiff has called for the release of Israeli hostages taken by Hamas and acknowledged Israel's right to self-defense, comments welcomed by Schutz in an interview with Crux. Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the pope's top diplomat, also made a short-

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

notice visit to the Israeli embassy to the Holy See, expressing what Schutz described as his "deep sentiments of pain and solidarity on the background of the terrible attack against Israel."

At the same time, Parolin also gave an interview to Vatican News, the state-sponsored media platform, in which he said that while "it's the right of an attacked party to defend itself," he also stressed that "legitimate defense must respect the parameters of proportionality."

Later, the Vatican announced that Parolin had called Mohammad Shtayyeh, the Prime Minister of Palestine, in part to confirm "that the Holy See continues to recognize only the State of Palestine and its authorities as the representatives of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people."

To some extent, tensions between Israel and the Christian leaders of the region are inevitable, given that the Christian population is largely Arab and Palestinian, and therefore tends to see Israeli policies in the same way as the broader Palestinian population.

It is also likely inevitable that as the war grinds on, the Vatican's own stance will become increasingly aligned with the patriarchs and church leaders, and not only be-

cause Pizzaballa is part of the group and the Vatican's most trusted figure on the ground – a trust reflected in the fact that Francis just made him a cardinal in his September 30 consistory.

More deeply, the Vatican simply isn't the United States, where support for Israel is a bipartisan cornerstone of American foreign policy. Historically, the Vatican always has supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, as one of the world's smallest states itself, it has always felt a natural sympathy for the Palestinians.

Public opinion

Moreover, the outlook of Vatican diplomats tends to reflect that of their European counterparts, especially Italy, on many foreign policy questions, and public opinion in Italy never has been uniformly pro-Israel.

All this has been amplified under Pope Francis, history's first Pope from the developing world. On his watch the Vatican increasingly is reluctant to be identified with the Western powers, positioning itself more as a non-aligned party.

The current row between Israel and church leaders in the Holy Land, therefore, may well be a preview of tensions to come with the Vatican itself.

Israeli-Vatican relations were not exactly untroubled even before the war began, with an economic and tax agreement still unconsummated three decades after the two sides signed a Fundamental Agreement, and an increasingly hostile climate in Jerusalem for Christians fueled by the growing antagonism of ultra-Orthodox groups, including numerous incidents of spitting directed at Christian faithful and clergy.

Where the relationship will be when the dust settles after the carnage in Gaza is over is anyone's guess... but the prospect that it, too, may be a casualty of war doesn't seem completely remote.

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Reflecting on the death of my brother

THERE are different ways of being excluded in life.

Earlier this year, one of my older brothers died. By every indication he had lived an exemplary life, one lived mainly for others. He died much loved by everyone who knew him. His was a life lived for family, church, community, and friends.

Giving the homily at his funeral, I shared that, while he almost always brought a smile, a graciousness, and some wit to every situation, underneath he sometimes had to swallow hard to always do that.

Why? Because, even though through his entire adult life he gave himself to serving others, for much of his life he didn't have much choice in the matter. Here's his story.

Migrant

He was one of the older children in our family, a large second-generation immigrant family, struggling with poverty in an isolated rural area of the Canadian prairies where educational facilities weren't easily available at that time.

So, for him, as for many of his contemporaries, both men and women, the normal expectation was that after elementary school you were expected to end your school days and begin to work to support your family.

Indeed, there was no local high school for him to go

to. Making this more unfortunate, he was perhaps the brightest, most gifted mind in our family. It's not that he didn't want to continue his formal education. But, he had to do what most others of his age did at that time, leave school and begin working, giving your entire salary over every month to support your family. He did this with good cheer, knowing this was expected of him.

Through the years, from age 16 when he first entered the workforce until he took over the family farm in his mid-thirties, he worked for farmers, worked in construction, and did everything from operating a backhoe to driving a truck.

Moreover, when our parents died and he took over our farm, there were a number of years when he was still pressured to use the farm to support the family. By the time he was finally freed of this responsibility, it was too late (not radically, but existentially) for him to restart his formal education.

He lived out his final years before retirement as a farmer, though as one who found his energy elsewhere, in involvement in ongoing education and lay ministries programs where he thrived emotionally and intellectually. Part of his sacrifice too was that he never married, not because he was a temperamental bachelor, but

Scribblings of the spirit

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



self-serving and mostly irrelevant.

There's a wonderful dignity in working with your hands, as there was for my brother.

However, the importance and dignity of that work notwithstanding, the happiness of the person doing it is sometimes predicated on whether or not he or she had a choice, that is, whether or not he or she is there by choice or because factors ranging from the economic situation of their family, to their immigrant status, to lack of opportunity, have forced them there.

As I walk past these folks in my day-to-day life and work, I try to notice them and appreciate the service they are rendering for the rest of us.

And sometimes I say to myself: "This could be my brother. This could be my sister. This could be the brightest mind of all who was not given the opportunity to become a doctor, a writer, nurse, a teacher, or a social worker."

If in the next life, as Jesus promised, there's to be a reversal where the last shall be first, I hope these people, like my brother, who were deprived of some of the opportunities that the rest of us enjoyed, will read my heart with an empathy that surpasses my understanding of them during their lifetime.

because the same things that bound him to duty also, existentially, never afforded him the opportunity to marry.

After I shared his story at his funeral, I was approached by several people who said: "That's also my brother! That's also my sister! That was my dad! That was my mother."

Having grown up where this was true of a number of my older siblings, today, whenever I see people working in service jobs such as cooking in cafeterias, cleaning houses, mowing lawns, working in construction, doing janitorial work, and other work of this kind, I am

often left to wonder, are they like my brother?

Did they get to choose this work or are they doing it because of circumstances? Did this person want to be a doctor, or writer, a teacher, an entrepreneur, or a CEO of some company, and end up having to take this job because of an economic or other circumstance?

Don't get me wrong. There's nothing demeaning or less-than-noble in these jobs. Indeed, working with your hands is perhaps the most honest work of all – unlike my own work within the academic community where it can be easy to be

Getting priorities right: it's G-O-D not D-O-G

Mary's musings

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



THIS month's column comes with a wee bit of trepidation in case I'm cancelled by Flourish's dog-loving readers, of which I am one, I might add.

I love animals, especially dogs. Our children are divided on the subject with two for and two against and so our couple of attempts at welcoming dogs into the mayhem of our lives were not successful.

For people who live on their own and would otherwise have little interaction with others the chats they have with fellow dog owners can be a lifeline. I completely understand how, when a nurturing person does not have children, a dog can fulfil a role in their

lives. A dog is indeed man's best friend.

As a caveat I would add my dad's advice. He, a man never without a dog, used to say, a dog's a fine thing so long as you don't spell it backwards.

And that's what troubles me. There is a line and somewhere over the last couple of decades, I'd say, it has been well and truly crossed. While dogs might not have been deified (we could debate that) they have assumed the status of humans.

I've seen social media post of people devastated by the loss of their 'son' or 'daughter' only to read on and find it's a child of the

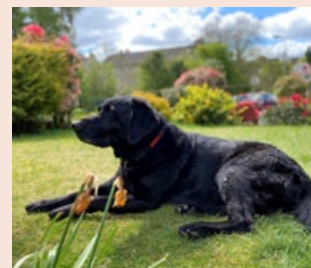
canine variety.

I'll give you dog walkers, even doggy day care despite the eye-watering prices they charge for their services. Just as in case you're in the market you get a price-break if you've got two or multiple doggies!

But it's a hard no from me on dog treat advent calendars. I made my children rotate their days opening the calendar and it never had any chocolate in it so I'm hardly going to vote for mutts getting goodies.

I say this as the wee girl who never celebrated Christmas without filling her dog's stocking with Bonio, the dog treat of choice in the seventies. A biscuit or two out of his own personal stash was as good as our Duke could ever expect and let me tell you he was one happy boy on Christmas morning.

The 'pawconomy' as it's become known is a money spinner. Doggy play zones



similar to the soft-play centres for children are on the rise. Good luck to the folk who run them. Small businesses are the lifeblood of the economy and in Glasgow parlance I hope their tills are rattling to some tune.

There's a bigger point to be made here and a recent situation in California demonstrates it. The city of Ojai became the first city in America to grant legal rights to a non-human animal. Specifically relating to elephants who have been grossly mistreated in zoos, kept in tiny enclosures and paraded for public enter-

tainment – one was even taught to roller skate. The legislation protects elephants' rights to freedom.

I'll be the first to advocate for humane treatment of any creature of God's creation. It's the language used by the Nonhuman Rights Project (NRP) that concerns me. They are demanding "recognition of the legal personhood and fundamental right to bodily liberty."

These same authorities offer no such protection to unborn babies, who will never get to exercise any rights because their basic right to life is being denied them.

Of course, one is not exclusive to the other, a society can bestow individual rights on an elephant at the same time as protecting the unborn child, but what does it say about our culture when an elephant has more protection under the law than a child in the womb?

OASIS

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Pope's heartfelt plea to Our Lady to obtain peace... 'Mother, take the initiative for us'

MARY, look at us! We stand here before you. You are our Mother, and you know our struggles and our hurts.

Queen of Peace, you suffer with us and for us, as you see so many of your children suffering from the conflicts and wars that are tearing our world apart.

This is a dark hour. This is a dark hour, Mother. In this dark hour, we look to you, and in the light of your countenance we entrust ourselves and our problems to your maternal Heart, which knows our anxieties and fears.

How great was your concern when there was no place for Jesus at the inn! How great was your fear when you fled in haste to

Pope Francis responded to the latest emergency in the Holy Land by doing what he often does ... turning to Our Lady. In a televised recitation of the Rosary, the Holy Father led this heartfelt prayer

Egypt because Herod sought to kill him! How great was your anguish before you found him in the Temple!

Yet, Mother, amid those trials, you showed your strength, you acted boldly: you trusted in God and responded to concern with tender care, to fear with love, to anguish with acceptance. Mother, you did not step back, but at decisive moments you always took initiative: with haste you visited Elizabeth; at the wedding feast of Cana you prompted Jesus' first miracle; in the Upper Room you kept the disciples united. And when, on Calvary, a sword pierced your heart, Mother, by your humility and strength you kept alive the hope of Easter through

the night of sorrow.

Now, Mother, once more take the initiative for us, in these times rent by conflicts and laid waste by the fire of arms. Turn your eyes of mercy towards our human family, which has strayed from the path of peace, preferred Cain to Abel and lost the ability to see each other as brothers and sisters dwelling in a common home.

Intercede for our world, in such turmoil and great danger. Teach us to cherish and care for life – each and every human life! – and to repudiate the folly of war, which sows death and eliminates the future.

Your faithful people call you the dawn of salvation; Mother, grant that glim-



mers of light may illumine the dark night of conflict. Dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, inspire the leaders of nations to seek paths of peace.

Queen of all peoples, rec-

oncile your children, seduced by evil, blinded by power and hate. You, who are close to all, shorten our distances. You, who have compassion on everyone, teach us to care for one an-

other. You, who reveal the Lord's tender love, make us witnesses of his consolation and peace. Mother, Queen of Peace, pour forth into our hearts God's gift of harmony. Amen.

Archbishop Mario anniversary



THE life of Archbishop Mario Conti was recalled in prayer last month at a special anniversary Mass celebrated in the Cathedral on the first anniversary of his death.

Archbishop Nolan was the main concelebrant at the Mass which was also offered for the other priests of the Archdiocese who have died in the last twelve months.

Archbishop Mario was appointed to Glasgow in 2002 and served the Archdiocese for ten years, during which time he welcomed the Pope to Bellahouston Park, oversaw the restoration of the Cathedral and made a huge impact on the civic and ecumenical life of the city.

He died on November 8 last year and is buried in the Cathedral crypt. A full obituary and tribute to Archbishop Mario written by his longtime Director of Communications Ronnie Convery will appear in the *Western Catholic Calendar* which will be on sale before Christmas.



Painter reveals the art of saintliness

ST Charles Borromeo, whose feast day fell earlier this month, was a patron saint of St Peter's Seminary which was founded in Glasgow by Archbishop Charles Petre Eyre.

The painting of Borromeo by the Italian Baroque artist Orazio Borgianni draws us into the world of piety and devotion.

Borgianni was a contemporary of Caravaggio, over whom, it is claimed, he once threw a pot of varnish during a fit of bad temper! His portrait of St Charles Borromeo portrays fervour and spirituality and must have been painted during a time of the painter's good temper!

Charles Borromeo, born in 1538, was a cardinal and Archbishop of Milan during the tumultuous times

of the Counter-Reformation. His life was marked by a fervent commitment to the renewal and purification of the Catholic Church, and he is often depicted as an emblem of religious zeal and selflessness.

One of his great works was to reconvene the Council of Trent which had been halted due to war. This council would guide the Church for at least the next four hundred years. Another great work was the founding of seminaries for a strong and structured formation of the clergy.

Borgianni succeeds in capturing the intensity of this saintly figure. The saint is depicted gazing heavenward, his eyes suggesting a profound inner dialogue

with the divine which is emphasised by the rich, dark background, isolating the saint from the world.

The sumptuous fabrics of the ecclesiastical garments are in contrast to the humble life of simplicity and self-sacrifice which were more characteristic of the saint and perhaps is reflected in St. Charles' undecorated crucifix.

There seems to be the whisper of prayer upon his lips. This painting is not merely a portrait; it is a window into the soul of the saint. The saint's unwavering commitment to his faith, the intensity of his devotion, and his profound relationship with Christ serve as an eternal reminder of the power of spiritual conviction and the beauty of a life dedicated to the service of others.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

God our Father, St. Charles Borromeo stands as a symbol of unwavering faith and selfless service to Your divine will. May we be instruments of Your love and grace in this world who find strength in his example as we walk in faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday Gospels help us to reflect on the lessons of endings... and new beginnings

OUR liturgical year is hurtling all too quickly to a close. Often at this time of year our Sunday Gospels speak of the end times and judgement, offering sayings of Jesus which can be hard to interpret and a bit scary in their images.

In Matthew's year, however, we read the last chapter of the teaching section of his Gospel, in which, rather than apocalyptic images, Jesus presents three parables.

Yes, there is judgment in each of them, but there is also reward. Each one has its challenge, but the challenge lies in judging whether we have listened to the Gospel as it has unfolded, and whether we are putting it into practice.

Thirty-Second Sunday A

The first of the three final parables is the famous one of the five "wise" and five "foolish" bridesmaids. We're told that they differ in that five were prepared for the late arrival of the bridegroom and five were not. But what makes the difference?

Perhaps the First Reading, speaking about the gift of Wisdom, can help us. The "wise" are those who seek wisdom, those who are aware of both the world around them and the things that happen there, but also aware of the presence of God in the opportunities and challenges they face.

The "wise bridesmaids" recognise what challenges there might be in responding to the privilege of being



Fr Tom Kilbride

Rector of the Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain

a bridesmaid and come prepared to meet them. They recognise the "bridegroom" when he comes and are ready to go in with him to the feast.

The "foolish" ones are too caught up in their own needs ("give us", "open for us") and fail to respond properly to the situation they face. So, when the moment comes, they are not ready to meet it. They simply don't have the resources. They don't even know the bridegroom – and he doesn't recognise them either.

Thirty-Third Sunday A

Having reflected last week on awareness of the Kingdom and our readiness to embrace it, even its challenges, this week we reflect on how active we are in responding to God's gifts and presence in our lives, in the famous parable of the talents.

The amount entrusted to each person is enormous (some suggest it would be like saying the first was given "a million pounds"), a sign that God's grace and gifts are always more than we deserve.

The first, of course, appreciates this and goes on mul-

tiplying those graces and gifts. The last, by contrast, leaves them unused – perhaps aware of their value, but making no plans or effort to use them. In fact, he says he was "afraid".

Often in the Gospels fear is the opposite of faith, and, indeed, the other two are called "faithful" – one might say "faith-filled". Their multiplying of grace here – the extra talents they make – is not simply about financial transactions or business dealings. Rather, it is a sign that they opened themselves to the gifts they were given and, in faith, gave back so much more than could have been asked of them.

Faith embraces God's gifts and the Kingdom. It grows in it and expands it. The reward is a share in the joy of that Kingdom.

Christ the King A

The King we meet on this feast is the King who judges the nations. But we should not be surprised about the kind of judgement he makes.

Throughout this year, we have listened to Matthew's Gospel tell us that merely saying we have faith is not enough: we need to show it by our actions.

Faith has results which should touch the lives of others. To say "Lord, Lord" (like the foolish bridesmaids) is not enough; we have to do



Christ the King as depicted in a Melkite image in stained glass

the Father's will.

Jesus had already said this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, we now hear of whom it is said, "theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" and who will "inherit the earth".

It is the ones who care for the poorest and the least, they show themselves "hungry and thirsty for justice," "poor in spirit". They are the "merciful" who are given mercy. In other words, the Beatitudes which begin Jesus' teaching are seen in action in those who enter into the Kingdom and eternal life in the parable which concludes his teaching.

They are the ones who have lived the "deeper justice" Jesus spoke of. This is perhaps obvious, but it is no less challenging.

The King comes in glory, and certainly we must honour him. But he is present already in humility and suffering, among the least of his brothers and sisters, and in them we serve him.

This is the last word Mat-

thew gives us of Jesus' teaching before he turns to the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

As we reach the last Sunday of Year A, we go out on perhaps the greatest – and yet most familiar – challenge Matthew's Gospel gives us. Am I rising to it? The last words in Year A are "eternal life", but we can't take it for granted!

First Sunday of Advent, Year B

We end this month's reflections with a beginning: a new liturgical cycle, a new liturgical season, and a new Gospel: the Gospel of Mark.

Oddly, we begin at the end, hearing the last verses of Jesus's teaching before Mark begins to narrate the events of his Passion and Death. In them, Jesus reminds us that time is not ours to control.

We have to be "awake", conscious of what is going on around us and alert to living the Gospel as best we

can. Indeed, the last word in today's Gospel could be translated "Be alert", "Keep your eyes open!"

We watch for his coming, we look for his presence, we keep an eye on our actions and keep doing our best. This is what Advent always asks of us: not just a preparation for Christmas, it is also a time to refocus, to begin afresh in regard to our faith, our actions, our prayer and our life in Christ.

Paul reminds us of what we have already received (Second Reading); Isaiah calls on God with some insistence to help us, aware that things have been going awry (First Reading).

Maybe we are being invited to begin this new liturgical year praying for fresh grace, fresh hope, fresh fervour, to live our faith with open eyes and new commitment, so we are ready to meet the Lord when he comes (like the wise bridesmaids did only a few weeks ago!) not only at the end, but every day!

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When worries strike, it's time for a prayer!

I'M writing the log without knowing if I will actually be able to post it!

I returned from Dublin last Friday afternoon, intending only to collect my car at the church, head to my brother's house in Drumchapel, and then back to Bishopbriggs for the usual Friday night soiree which, on our three-weekly rota, would be Chinese, so I was looking forward to that.

On arriving at the church, however, there was some activity going on. We are in the situation at the moment of having to change the lightbulbs in the church as, especially for evening services, it's a bit like being in the catacombs, because so many of the existing lightbulbs have gone out.

The atmosphere can be quite peaceful and calming, but it's hard to read the hymn books!

However, it's not an easy task. The present lighting system was installed over 20 years ago at the time of



Fr Frank's log

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

the big renovations, and perhaps had more of the aesthetic about it than the practical. The last time they were changed was about five years ago.

There are a huge number of bulbs, many of which are at a very high level, therefore requiring scaffolding to change them. Added to that, the lightbulbs are bespoke, not able to be sourced anymore, and, even if they were, would not meet current energy saving standards. We are therefore trying to find a solution!

The activity in the church last Friday was because one of the workers from the company we have engaged

was trying some trial bulbs out at a lower level to see if they would work. Sadly, they didn't, and so the quest goes on.

I also discovered that, while I was away, a problem had arisen with the live streaming service, which, in fact, turned out to be a problem with our broadband, which has now gone down completely. This problem may or may not be connected to the adverse weather conditions that have affected so many things during these days.

Even while I was away in Dublin, I was settling down to relax last Thursday, after a hard day's work with our



auditors, and watching a drama on television that I had been looking forward to when, just as I was getting into it, there was a power cut, and the whole area was plunged into darkness.

There was nothing to do then except say a few extra prayers and have an early night!

Back now in St. Mungo's, we still haven't got the broadband sorted out, hence my uncertainty as to whether I will be posting this log. If you're reading it, we're sorted!

As I've said before, I am no lover of technology. I yearn for the days of a quill and ink and vellum, where, all you needed to worry about

was the occasional blot.

When the broadband goes down, we realise how totally dependent on it we are to get the ordinary, everyday work done. We can't receive or send emails. We can't print anything as the printer connects to the computer via the internet. We can't make the necessary calculations in order to pay wages or tax. We can't use the phone, because even the phone is now connected via the internet. We can't do anything really. There is a feeling of complete and utter helplessness.

Still, we are able to celebrate Mass and hear Confessions, and, at the end of the day, those are the most

important things.

I am a bit of a worrier when such things happen. I think there is a worrying gene I inherited from my mother, who worried about everything.

I lay awake at night and imagine that these things will never be sorted; that the church will descend into darkness because no suitable lightbulbs will ever be found; that the broadband issue is terminal and will never be sorted.

But then comes a heavy dose of reality, and the realisation that the things I am worried about will eventually get sorted – 'All will be well, and all manner of things will be well', as Julian of Norwich famously said; and also, that the things I am worried about are so trivial compared to the terrible things that people are suffering across the world right now, especially the awful situation in the middle east, in the land that Jesus himself walked.

I am not lying awake listening to artillery fire and exploding bombs nearby, or worrying about loved ones in the line of fire. I am worrying about lightbulbs and broadband – time to catch myself on!

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

Tolerance is a vital virtue

SADLY, the only reason I have visited some countries is because I was sent there to write about conflict or disaster.

That can skew your perspective just a little, and yet I never failed to see past the horrors of those catastrophes to take in the beauty of a landscape and the beauty that continues to shine in individuals even under extreme duress.

After floods in Mozambique, a photographer and I accompanied representatives from an NGO trying to get supplies to a village that had remained cut off on the shores of the flooded Zambezi River.

If it wasn't distressing enough to be isolated, the people living in this area also had to contend with added hazards. The floodwater had ruined their crops, brought deadly crocodiles onto their farmland, and raised to the surface unexploded mines from the civil war that ended in the early 1990s.

It was alarming to be told by our guide of the risks of the mines and crocodiles, but when we reached the village, we weren't welcomed simply because the NGO had brought needed supplies – we were guests and we were treated like long lost cousins.

Even in their distress, there were smiles, laughter, and despite our protests, a meal eaten at a



Marian Pallister

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

family's fire.

I often think of that situation – and similar incidents I've seen around the world – when those seeking asylum in the UK are treated with such hostility, as if they were alien beings – certainly as people unwilling to be part of an integrated society.

Even in the remotest parts of the world, there is tolerance of the stranger, a generous welcome for those who are clearly from a different culture.

International

That's why I hope that we make a big thing of November 16, the UN's International Day for Tolerance. As a member of an international peace organisation, tolerance is a starting place for world peace.

In 1995, UNESCO's Declaration of Principles on Tolerance defined 'tolerance' as "...respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human."

The following year, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 16 November as

the International Day for Tolerance. It stated: "People are naturally diverse; only tolerance can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe".

I'm not naïve. Of course there are countries where I am not welcome, because of my gender, my nationality, my religion. Those are countries with very questionable human rights records.

But under the most extreme situations, I have experienced tolerance as described by that Declaration. And if we are to be able to describe ourselves as tolerant, we can't dis-mantle human rights, turn away people because of their gender, dismiss their fears of discrimination and persecution in their own countries, and treat them as criminals while considering their fate.

The richness of this world's cultures is precious. Please God, let's reach out to our brothers and sisters, unfold them in our own lives, and offer the tolerance found in the poorest, remotest corners of our common home.

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Children's lives are being transformed – thank you!

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family."
– Kofi Annan

In South Sudan, SCIAF is working with our partner to transform the life chances of children with disabilities, who might otherwise have been marginalised and forgotten.

During SCIAF's Lenten campaign in 2021, you stood in solidarity with the people of South Sudan and gave generously, raising an amazing total of £2.8 million, including £1.4m of match funding from the UK Government.

As a result of this fantastic support, we were able to create a three-year education programme to get more children living with disabilities learning and interacting with others.

Now, 18 months in, almost 400 children get up in the morning and go to

BY **LORRAINE CURRIE**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SCIAF

school with their friends, breaking down barriers and opening their minds to a whole new world of learning.

Working with our local partner, Sudan Evangelical Mission (SEM), we've been able to provide a smoother path to mainstream education for children with disabilities – by building ramps and accessible toilets, training teachers in inclusive education, and providing equipment and uniforms.

Our support reaches beyond the child, to their whole family and their community. We are also working closely with the wider community to promote equality and inclusion and tackle discrimination towards people living with disabilities. Our hope is to support them to live life to



the full, free from stigma and exclusion.

Our partners go door-to-door in target villages in South Sudan, seeking out those living with disabilities and offering the chance of an education. So far, almost 400 children have gone to school, who otherwise would have stayed home all day.

We've also provided training to teachers in working

with those with disabilities, including inclusion training, lesson preparation and even sign language. Schools have been repaired and improved, learning materials provided and clubs started. They now have access to clean water tanks.

Additionally, of those encouraged to go to school for the first time, six were also offered surgery to repair cleft lips – impacting their ability to eat, swallow, speak and to smile!

Life has improved beyond measure for these children in South Sudan. Thanks to your generosity, and match funding from the UK Government, a whole new world of learning has opened up.

■ To find out more about SCIAF's work in South Sudan and donate to our life changing work around the world visit www.sciaf.org.uk

Lorraine is new chief at SCIAF



SCIAF has a new Chief Executive.

With an impressive career spanning three decades in humanitarian relief and international development, Lorraine Currie combines her wealth of experience with a deep-rooted and active faith, and a profound commitment to her new role.

Lorraine is no stranger to SCIAF, having served as the Director of International Programmes and Advocacy for the organisation for over 13 years.

Her commitment to Catholic values, passion

for an integral approach to development and dedication to SCIAF's mission have been evident throughout her tenure.

Taking up her new role this week, Lorraine told Flourish: "I am deeply honoured to take on this new role as Chief Executive of SCIAF. I am passionate about our mission and vision and am eager to lead the organisation towards new horizons with a steadfast commitment to the people we serve, fuelled by the generous support of people across Scotland."

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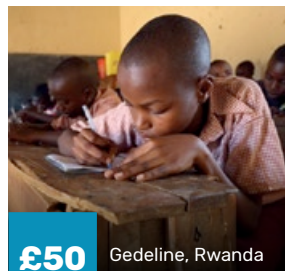
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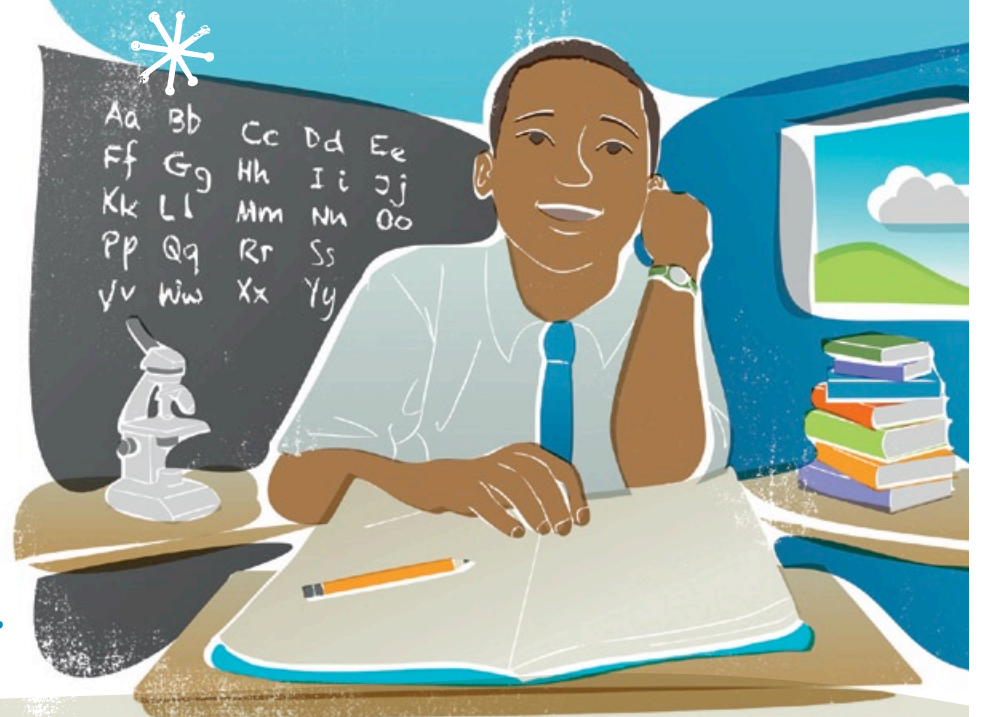


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