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FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

November 2026

Hospice 'puts faith into action'

Archbishop's words of praise as new facilities are opened



A NEW chapter in the story of compassion and care provided by St Margaret of Scotland Hospice in Clydebank was written last month when Archbishop Nolan cut the ribbon to open its new Specialist Palliative Care Centre.

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

Despite hurricane-force winds a specially-erected marquee survived the storm and allowed a special Mass to be held to mark the milestone.

For more than 75 years, St Margaret's has provided specialist palliative care to patients with advanced illness and those with complex medical and nursing needs, supporting thousands of families through some of the most challenging times in their lives.

In his sermon, Archbishop Nolan spoke of how the staff at the hospice put into action the Gospel command to love God and neighbour by expressing their love of God through care for their neighbours who are ill.

"No patient here is told 'there is nothing more we can do for you'," said the Archbishop.

"Instead patients are reassured that there is much that can be done for them as they love through the great transition period of their lives, preparing for the fullness of life with God."

The opening of the new facilities follows a major redevelopment programme designed to enhance the care, comfort and wellbeing of patients and families for generations to come.

Dignity

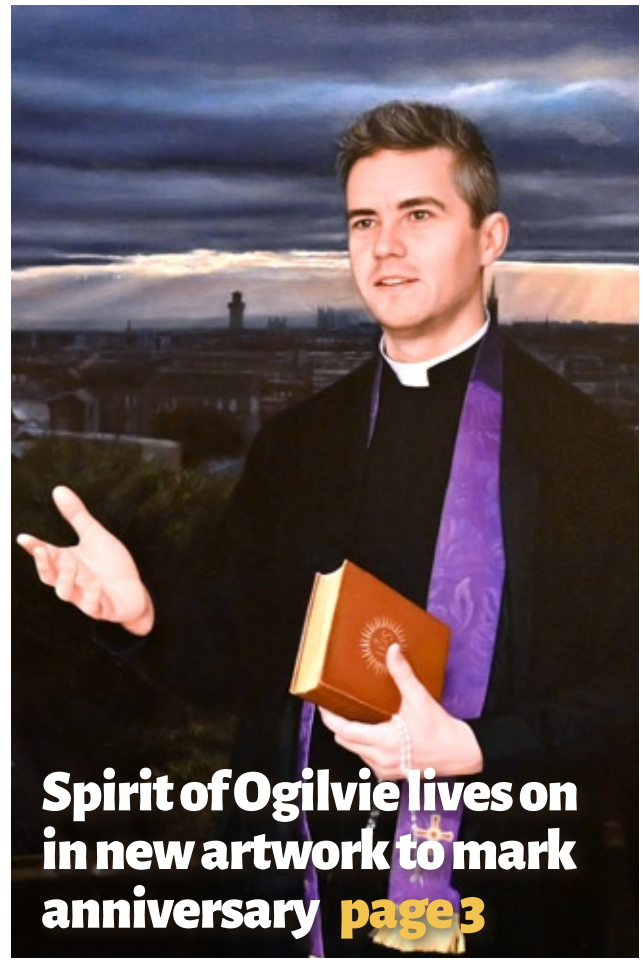
Among the new developments are 20 modern, comfortable inpatient beds designed to enhance dignity, comfort and wellbeing for patients and their families and improved family spaces, including the addition of a roof garden.

The redevelopment represents one of the most significant investments in the Hospice's history.

Hospice Chief Executive, Sister Rita Dawson MBE, CEO said:

"This marks the beginning of the next chapter in the history of St Margaret of Scotland Hospice. The transformation of our Hospice and the opening of the new 'Professor John Welsh Specialist Palliative Care Centre' reflect our commitment to providing the highest quality specialist care in surroundings that offer comfort, dignity, peace, and hope.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Spirit of Ogilvie lives on in new artwork to mark anniversary page 3



Despite cancer scare Pope is heading to Latin America page 6

Private diary of Pope Francis to be published

THE Vatican is to release private diaries of Pope Francis in five languages across 94 countries later this month.

A new book – 'The Private Diary of Pope Francis' – will offer insight into the late Pope's inner life through notes he kept between 1992 and 2024.

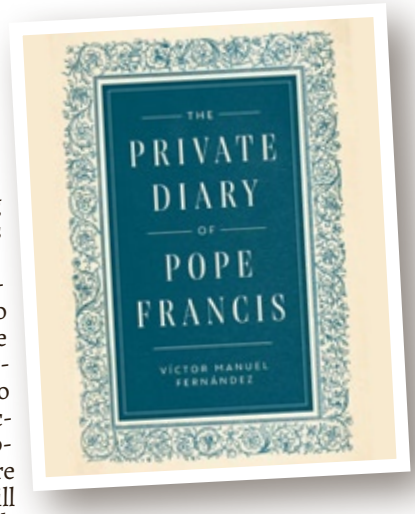
The book is edited by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, who presents and comments on notes Jorge Mario Bergoglio kept between 1992 and 2024.

The book offers a deeper understanding of the personality and inner life of the Jesuit Pope, who led the Church from 2013 until his death in 2025.

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

'The Private Diary of Pope Francis' will be released simultaneously worldwide on 24 November. The Italian edition will be published by the Vatican Publishing House; the Spanish, English and Portuguese editions by the respective branches of Penguin Random House; and the French edition by Éditions Albin Michel.

Andrea Tornielli, Editorial Director of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, said: "We are very honoured to publish this text by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, which presents Pope Francis' Diary to the public.



"Through this book, which we believe readers around the world will appreciate, we will be able to gain an even deeper understanding of the Argentine Pope's inner life."

"The Vatican Publishing House works to bring the words of the Popes to readers internationally," said Lorenzo Fazzini, Editorial Director of the Vatican Publishing House. "We are truly pleased that we will soon be able to make these personal pages by Pope Francis available to readers around the world…"



Joy for Adriana, young recipient of Archdiocesan Medal

THE Archdiocesan Medal has been awarded to a parishioner of St Peter's, Partick, and, unusually, to a young person.

Altar server, Adriana Devine (29), has faithfully carried out her duties for many years, serving every Sunday and for special occasions in the parish.

St Peter's has an active altar server programme and the former Notre Dame pupil plays a significant part in the training of its new recruits.

Despite her youth, Adriana was put forward for the award by parish priest, Mgr Paul Murray, who recognised her stalwart dedication.

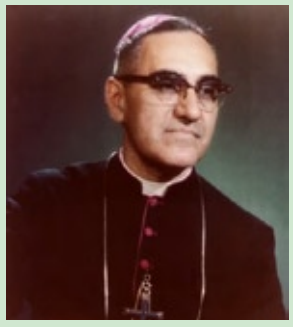
"Adriana is a worthy recipient of the Archdiocesan Medal which tends to be given to older people after many years of service. The Archbishop was delighted to see a young person who has shown such devotion to her duties being put forward and I was delighted to recommend her," said Mgr Murray.

"She participates fully in the life of the parish and that's a great example to other young people and to all parishioners. She sings beautifully and she brings enthusiasm and commitment to everything she does."

Message of hope as Saint Oscar Romero is remembered at annual city lecture

THE Immaculate Conception in Maryhill played host to a fascinating event recently – 'From Romero to Gaza: the Price of Living By Our Principles'.

The Romero lecture is named after Saint Oscar Romero, the El Salvadorian Archbishop who was critical of the government during the Salvadorian Civil War and was outspoken about social justice. He was assassinated while celebrating Mass. He was canonised in 2018 by Pope Francis.



This year's lecture was delivered by the internationally recognised peace mediator Oliver McTernan and hosted in partnership with SCIAF, Justice & Peace Scotland, the Newman Association, the Romero Trust and Pax Christi Scotland.

Oliver McTernan said: "Saint Oscar Romero's example leaves us with a question that remains urgent today:

"Are we prepared not only to condemn violence, but also to confront the injustice that sustains it – and to defend the dignity of people whose suffering challenges our own political loyalties."

Fr Jim Lawlor, who as Parish Priest of Immaculate Conception hosted the event said: "Everybody feels exasperated about the situation in Gaza, and the plight of the Palestinians. It can be difficult to feel hopeful, but the night asked us to see that there can be hope if we can change like Romero to play our part in in the drive for peace."

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New chapter for Hospice 'puts faith into action'...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Every aspect of the work has been designed with our patients and families in mind. We wanted to create an environment that feels welcoming, calming and uplifting at a time when people need it most.

"We are incredibly grateful to the many individuals, trusts, foundations, businesses, and community groups whose generosity has helped make this vision a reality. This achievement belongs to them as much as it does to the Hospice."

The Professor John Welsh Specialist Palliative Care Centre has been named in recognition of the outstanding contribution Professor John Welsh has made to research, teaching and the delivery of specialist care across Scotland.

He served for more than 20 years of service as Medical Director at St Margaret's, and he continues today as Chair.

New painting captures spirit of St John Ogilvie

SUSTAINED applause and gasps of admiration greeted the unveiling of this stunning new painting to mark the 50th anniversary of St John Ogilvie's canonisation.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

Painted by Gerard M Burns, acclaimed as Scotland's foremost figurative artist, it reveals a clear eyed and devoted modern-day Jesuit ready to do God's will.

The model for the painting was Father Christopher Brolly SJ who was ordained in June last year at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle.

Father Christopher, 37, two years older than Saint John Ogilvie when he was hanged at Glasgow Cross in 1615, is currently completing his priestly studies in Boston College and was unable to attend.

But for his parents, Theresa and Martin, who travelled from their home in Newcastle to join over 200 guests in Glasgow City Chambers, it was a highly emotional moment as they saw the portrait of their son for the first time.

Theresa said: "That's just him – an incredible likeness that Gerard has captured but it's more than that – you can see his joy and his hope when you look at it.

"Christopher is so committed – especially to education and teaching and that's what the portrait shows to me. And it goes without saying that we are very proud of him."



Gerard Burns, Martin and Teresa Brolly with Archbishop Cushley and Fr Roger Dawson SJ, Jesuit Provincial for Scotland

Joy

Martin added: "Joy is the first word I thought of when I saw it – ten years and more in formation and that joy has never left him."

The painting, paid for by an anonymous donor, was commissioned by the Jesuit community of St Aloysius Church, Garnethill, home to the National Shrine to St John Ogilvie to mark the 50th anniversary of his canonisation.

It will be permanently displayed at nearby St Aloysius College, where Gerard Burns was principal art teacher for 12 years.

The artist told *Flourish*: "This has been a collaborative project from start to finish and words that were used all the time were 'legacy' and 'hope' – something that would last long after the anniversary.

"It was very important that we created something hopeful and not linger on the saint's martyrdom.

"I hope we have succeeded but everyone who sees the painting will see something different – something that we have not seen – and as the years pass interpretations will change."

The painting, which will have a QR code displayed alongside it telling the saint's story, took Gerard six months from start to finish which included many weeks of discussion on what the finished portrait should look like.

Cathedral Mass for Jubilarians



GLASGOW priests with more than 200 years of service between them were remembered in word and prayer by Archbishop Nolan for their devotion and commitment at the annual Jubilarians Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

PICTURE BY **PAUL MCSHERRY**

The longest-serving Jubilarian this year, celebrating 60 years as a priest, was Canon Harry McKay, who retired in 2023 after 30 years serving at the parish of St Joseph's Cumbernauld.

Marking 40 years of service were Father Gerard Bacon, formerly of St Laurence's Drumchapel, Father Gerry Barnes, who retired last year from the combined parishes of St Laurence's and St Benedict's, and Father Joe Sullivan, who currently serves as parish priest of St Barnabas, Shettleston.

Father Joseph Lappin, who is the parish priest of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Dennistoun and former director of religious for the Archdiocese, is marking the 25th anniversary of his ordination.

They were joined at the Mass by Fr Bernard Fox, a Mill Hill Father based in Cardonald who marked 50 years as a missionary.



Franciscans' sad farewell to Glasgow

Next year the Franciscans will leave the Archdiocese. Declining vocations mean that the order can no longer provide priests for the Gorbals community they have served for over a century. ***Joanna Magoufakis*** looks back at the Franciscan story in Glasgow since their first arrival in 1472, and ***Fr Caoimhín Ó Laoide OFM,*** former Parish Priest of Blessed John Duns Scotus, shares his reflections.

When the Franciscans first came to Glasgow in 1472, the city was a small medieval town clustered around the Cathedral.

Their friary on High Street quickly became a centre of preaching, learning, and care for the poor. That first chapter ended abruptly with the Reformation of 1560, when Catholic worship was outlawed and religious orders were driven out.

The friars returned three centuries later, in 1866, establishing a mission in Cumberland Street to serve the poorest families in the Gorbals, then one of Europe's most overcrowded districts. Their ministry laid the foundations for a renewed Franciscan presence in the city.

The parish of Blessed John Duns Scotus grew out of a further change in circumstances. Named after the great Scottish Franciscan theologian of the 13th century, the parish is located on the former St Luke's church site and is the result of the amalgamation of a number of parishes including the original St Francis Parish, Cumberland Street.

Centuries

Today, Fr Michael Nicholas, and Fr Jim Hasson remain at Blessed John Duns Scotus, carrying forward a Franciscan tradition that stretches back more than five centuries. Their fellow friar, Fr Donal Walsh OFM, passed away last month following a long period of illness (see obituary, page 19).

Fr Caoimhín Ó Laoide OFM, until recently Parish Priest of Blessed John Duns Scotus is frank about the challenges. "Over the past 30 years in Ireland, I've been involved in closing houses that had existed for 750 years. It's a huge change in the Church in Europe."

Yet he remains hopeful. "Religious life moves in seasons. As the poet Shelley says: If winter comes, can spring be far behind? As Religious, one of the things we can be tempted to believe is that our projects must be successful. But really, our calling is to be faithful, not necessarily successful."

Faithfulness has sustained the Franciscans before. "When the Reformation began, the Franciscan presence lessened and stayed small for 300 years before it grew again. We are called to be like yeast in the Kingdom of God and yeast takes time to rise. It works slowly but is impactful."

He acknowledges the challenges of secularisation. "It impacts on our ability to attract new vocations, but at a more basic level, our Catholic culture faces the danger of losing



an understanding of the fundamental concepts of Christian life.

"People often lack the language to talk about faith. Concepts like redemption, incarnation, and salvation are not well understood. Neither are confession, repentance, forgiveness, grace, or sin and guilt."

Modern culture adds further pressures. "Technology, social media and the AI revolution bring new challenges. There's a danger of handing over too much of our humanity to systems and structures. Materialism and the sexual revolution have left many people disadvantaged.

"Many men struggle with commitment, whether it be in relationships or in joining a Religious Order. Typically, they stay with us for a few years, but a disinclination to opt for one choice to the exclusion of other life choices causes them to leave."

The Franciscan vows, he says, speak directly into this world. "Poverty, chastity, obedience run counter to the main drivers of modern life: money, pleasure, personal freedom. They remind us that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves.

At the key moments of life – birth and death – we see this most clearly, and it's where the Church communicates the deepest truths: that there is more to our lives than what we see and understand here and now."

After 45 years as a Franciscan, Fr Caoimhín describes community life simply: "We have common prayer, the Divine Office, lauds, vespers, and Mass. We cook meals and eat together and care for each other when illness hits. We also have quiet time to reflect on our ministry and our relationship with God. It is a good and enriching life."

He is quick to praise his former parishioners. "At Blessed John Duns Scotus the parishioners show deep commitment to the running of the parish, which is done entirely on a voluntary basis."

Fr Caoimhín and Br Niall have returned to their native Ireland, and the Franciscan Provincial Minister, David Collins, has announced that the remaining Franciscan friars will also return to Ireland after Easter 2027.

"The Franciscans have given a lot over the years," says Fr Caoimhín, "but what we have received is far greater."

Throughout the years, the Franciscans have demonstrated remarkable resilience, enduring adversity and finding ways to overcome even the most difficult of circumstances. While this marks a farewell for now, their legacy will remain, and who knows what the future may hold?

Perhaps, one day, they will return.



More Catholics but fewer nuns

The number of Catholics worldwide rose by almost 17 million last year to 1.422 billion, according to the Catholic Church Statistics 2026 dossier prepared by the Vatican.

The number of priests also increased slightly, while the totals for religious sisters and seminarians fell substantially.

The new figures show Catholics accounted for 17.8 percent of the world's population of almost 8 billion. Their numbers increased on every continent, led by Africa, with 7.58 million more Catholics, and the Americas, with 7 million more. Asia gained almost a million new Catholics as did Europe.

For the first time in five years, there is also an increase in the total number of priests in the world. The total reached 407,421, up 425 from the previous year.

Growth in Africa (+1,676), Asia (+1,065), and the Americas (+199) outweighed a sharp decline in Europe which was down almost 2500 priests year on year.

The average number of Catholics per priest across the world rose by 38 to 3,491. Numbers of permanent deacons are up by 669 worldwide.

Women religious declined by 9,292 to 580,131. Africa was the only continent to register an increase in religious sisters, gaining 2,190, while Europe recorded the largest decline, with a loss of 6,473 nuns in a single year.

The number of major seminarians fell by 2,891 to 103,604. Only Africa saw growth, with 786 more seminarians; Asia registered the sharpest fall.

The new figures show that the Catholic Church also runs 75,448 kindergartens, 103,666 primary schools, and 51,810 secondary schools worldwise. Its healthcare and charitable network comprises 101,110 facilities, including 5,397 hospitals and 13,646 dispensaries.

Africa has the largest number of both hospitals and dispensaries in the continental figures.

Gorbals pipe band brings music to the heart of Assisi

In this historic year of Saint Francis, the pipe band which bears his name travelled from the Gorbals to Assisi to return to the source of the inspiration that has influenced their activities since it was founded by Franciscan friars 100 years ago.



Band members meet Mayor of Assisi

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

A group of 20 young musicians performed in the town centre of Assisi to entertain the assembled international audience of more than 3000 who gathered to celebrate the Feast Day on 4th October, marking 800 years since the saint's death.

Anthony O'Doibhailein from the band said: "Everywhere we went we were greeted with great enthusiasm and warmth, meeting Franciscans from all over the world, sharing the story of the band and how the great man inspired us.

"He was truly a man for all times making it a joyous occasion to follow in his footsteps and a few days none of us will ever forget."

Later some of the band members gave an impromptu performance for Mayor of Assisi, Valter Stoppini and his staff and presented him with a cap badge and a lapel pin. With the help of a translator Anthony gave a history of the band's origins and its long association with St Francis.

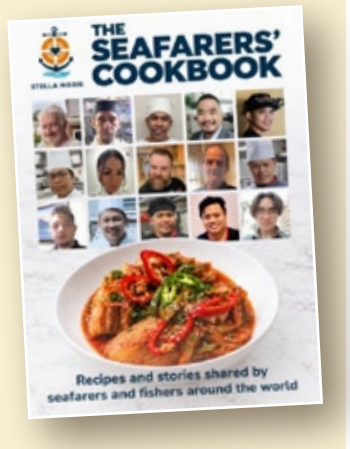
He said: "The Mayor was interested in our story and very keen to explore closer links between ourselves and the Assisi community and that is something we will definitely look at.

"Enlivened by the shared experience of seeing where so much of the Saint's life was spent, we returned to Scotland with a renewed sense of purpose and energised for the future."



Stella Maris' new taste of hospitality

Glasgow-founded charity Stella Maris launched The Seafarers' Cookbook at a supporter event held at City of Glasgow College last month.



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

The Seafarers' Cookbook brings together recipes and personal stories from around the world, offering readers a taste of life at sea and the dishes that connect crews to home.

It recognises the ingenuity of those preparing meals at sea, where limited supplies, tight budgets and changing schedules can make feeding a crew a daily challenge.

The book grew from a campaign inviting seafarers to share meals that keep them going on board: breakfasts that fuel the working day, comforting dishes that bring crews together and snacks for a busy watch.

Recipes feature Filipino, Korean, Turkish, Chinese and European cooking.

Stella Maris CEO Tim Hill said, "Behind every meal at sea is someone finding a way to feed their crewmates, make ingredients go further or bring a familiar taste of home to the table. We wanted this book to celebrate that resourcefulness and give seafarers and fishers the chance to tell their own stories.

"Good food matters to wellbeing, but so do the conversations, memories and moments of enjoyment that come with it.

"By buying the cookbook, readers can discover those stories while helping us provide practical, pastoral and spiritual support to seafarers, fishers and their families."

All profits from sales of The Seafarers' Cookbook will support Stella Maris's work with seafarers, fishers and their families.

■ **The book is available from Stella Maris' online shop, priced at £11.99.**

Bishopbriggs' very own Rosary Garden

The old hymn to Our Lady of the Rosary tells of 'gathering to thine honour, buds white and red and gold'... and that's just what parishioners of St Matthew's Church in Bishopbriggs were able to do last month thanks to their new Rosary Garden.

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

In May this year St Matthew's Church in Bishopbriggs opened the Rosary Garden.

Reflecting Pope Leo's request for Catholics worldwide to pray the Rosary for peace, the new space is intended to promote Marian devotion.

The vision for the Rosary Garden arose from a parishioner looking to create an outside space to offer quiet prayerful reflection for everyone to enjoy.

This idea was embraced by St Matthew's priest, Fr Alex, and thereafter a project team evolved to transform an unused and derelict gated space, tucked away at the side of the Church, into a garden for prayer.

The focal point of the garden is a wall mounted mosaic of Our Lady, which was designed by Helen Miles Mosaics. Helen's own inspiration for this beautiful piece of artwork was the imagery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.



Noise

As one parishioner put it: "Amidst the busyness and noise in all our lives, it can be helpful to reflect on the message of our Lady of Guadalupe, which is one of maternal comfort, compassion, hope and divine protection."

The team were grateful to receive monetary donations, garden vouchers, plants, containers and two seating benches, all of which have helped build the ever evolving Rosary garden. Whilst it may not provide the warmth of Mexico, it now offers parishioners a secluded garden that can be visited at any time of the day for prayer and contemplation, or just to sit in silence resting their eyes on the mosaic.

The garden is also interactive, so any weeding , watering or planting is most welcome – as the old poem says, "One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth ".

Parishioners told *Flourish* they were deeply grateful to Fr Mpagi Alex Kisasa, Parish Administrator, for all his support and to everyone who generously contributed to the garden.

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Glasgow visit for Talbot relics

Relics of Venerable Matt Talbot will be brought to Glasgow for the first time early next year to support a long running global campaign to have him declared a saint.

The docker who went from the depths of alcoholism in the slums of 19th century Dublin to a revered figure of faith devoting his life to caring for those on the margins of society, was first declared 'Venerable' in 1975 by the Vatican.

Five years earlier a group of friends took his name and inspiration when they established the Talbot Association in Glasgow and over the years have become among the strongest supporters of his cause.

Next year his relics will be brought from Dublin to Glasgow by Michael Murphy, Vice Postulator of the Cause of Venerable Matt Talbot, who will take part in a public Q & A to raise awareness and share his story more widely. Dates are still to be finalised.

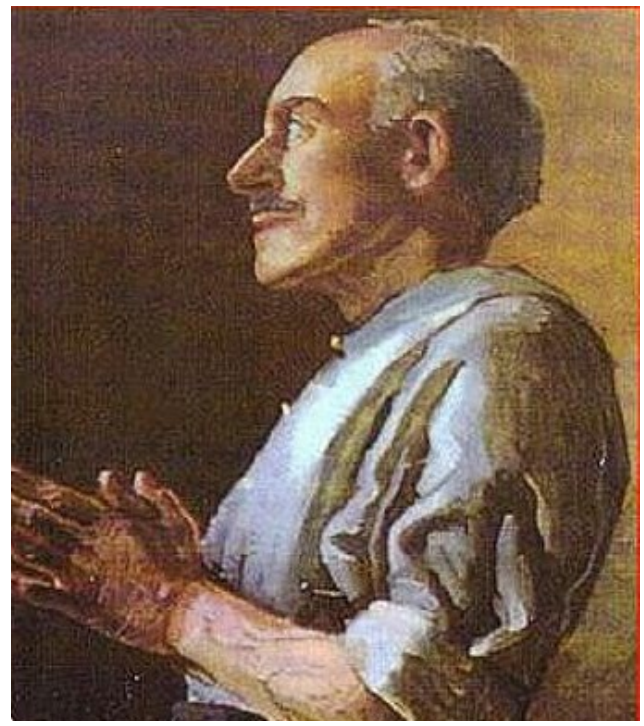
The offer came after the Talbot Association organised a free screening of a new award winning film about his life called 'Urban Mystic' which attracted a full house at its Scottish premiere in the Glasgow Film Theatre in September.

BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

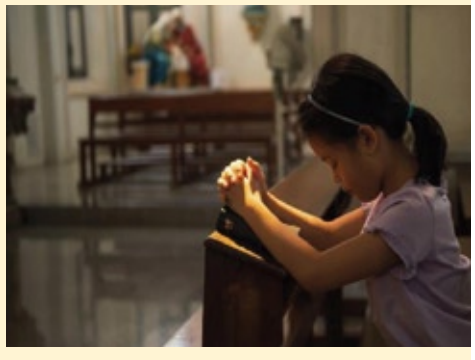
Michael O'Neill, director of development for the Talbot Association, said: "It was a special evening for us and because the film was so well received we are now looking at ways to make it available at no cost to parish and community groups."

Since it was founded the Talbot Association has greatly expanded to provide care from a number of centres to meet the changing needs of society.

■ **To find our more or to donate search for www.talbotassociation.org**



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Pope ready for his Latin American 'homecoming'



Pope Leo XIV is preparing for a major visit to Latin America this month, in a journey made all the more remarkable by his recent health problems.

Following surgery to remove a cancerous growth from his lung, the Holy Father has committed to a demanding visit to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

The 71-year-old Pope's determination to continue his pastoral mission will be welcomed by Catholics across the world.

The journey will carry particular significance in Argentina, the homeland of Pope Francis.

Buenos Aires, Córdoba and the Marian shrine of Luján are among the planned destinations. It

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

will be the first papal visit to Argentina since St John Paul II travelled there in 1987.

Pope Francis, despite his deep affection for his native country, avoided returning to his homeland during his pontificate.

The stop in Peru will have a special place in Pope Leo's heart. He spent many years there as a missionary and bishop, eventually acquiring Peruvian citizenship.

Friendships

His visits to Lima, Chiclayo, Cusco and Pucallpa will allow him to renew old friendships and reconnect with communities he served long before becoming Pope.

The visit will also include Uruguay, where Catholics form a smaller proportion of the population than in many neighbouring countries.

His presence will offer an opportunity to encourage the faithful and remind society of the Church's continuing contribution to human dignity, solidarity and care for the poor.

Some have expressed concern about the demands of such an ambitious itinerary following major surgery.

Yet the Pope's willingness to keep the journey in view has already been seen as a source of hope.

Cathedral Mass marks Italy's remembrance day

St Andrew's Cathedral played host to a historic Mass to mark Italy's first National Day of Remembrance for the civilians who perished when the *Arandora Star* was sunk in 1940.

The Mass was attended by the Lord Provost of Glasgow Jacqueline McLaren, the Consul General of Italy Luca Fratini, and was concelebrated by Cathedral Administrator Canon David Wallace, and Fr Eugenio Montese.

The Mass was followed by the laying of wreaths and a moment of reflection at the memorial dedicated to the 100 or so Scots Italian civilian victims, in the Cathedral's Italian Cloister Garden.

Among those present were relatives of some of the men who left Glasgow in June 1940 and never returned including a lady of 97 who saw her father taken away in the night.

Ronnie Convery, Director of Communications for the Archdiocese and also Hon Consul of Italy, said: "It was especially poignant to welcome visitors from all over the country to the world's largest monument to the tragedy and to remember the late Rando Bertoia – the last survivor of the *Arandora Star*. He spent his life living and working quietly in Glasgow and was present when the garden was opened.





"The date of October 11 was chosen by the Italian Parliament for the new annual Day of Memory because it is the anniversary of Rando's death.

"When the monument opened, he was an honoured guest along with the First Minister, Ambassadors, Consuls and even the chorus from La Scala in Milan. Yet he remained humble and kindly, refusing to get involved in polemics.

"He was a true champion of peace and reconciliation and it was so lovely that his anniversary was chosen by the Italian Parliament to mark this day of memory."

Mass baptism at Sacred Heart

It was a celebration with a difference when these young pupils from Sacred Heart Primary School, Bridgeton, were baptised together on the same day.

A pre-school brother and sister, and an adult parent were also baptised while other families made separate arrangements.

It is believed to be the biggest baptismal event to have taken place in the Archdiocese in recent times.

Head teacher of the 330-pupil school, Patricia McNulty, told *Flourish*: "After weeks of preparation, prayer and anticipation, it was a truly beautiful and moving celebration of faith, belonging and welcome.

"The occasion was also a reminder of the special relationship between home, school and parish.

"So many people contributed to making the celebration possible. Fr Peter supported families with kindness and generosity throughout their preparations. Teachers helped organise the ceremony, prepare the children, provide music and coordinate resources, while support staff ensured that families received a warm welcome at the school hall afterwards.



BY **BRIAN SWANSON**

"The celebration recognised the essential role of parents and families as the first educators of their children in faith.

"Parents had taken time to prepare alongside their children, while godparents and extended family members travelled to join them in prayer and celebration on this very special day."

The children were baptised by Sacred Heart's Parish Priest, Father Peter Dowling, who said: "This was a really good idea. It was very well organised I must say. I've never baptised so many at once, but it went very well and the children were a credit to their parents and teachers."

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Mary's Meals Market is first stop for Christmas shopping



An early chance to get going with your Christmas shopping, while also helping a great cause, takes place later this month.

Mary's Meals Christmas Market will take place on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 November at Trades Hall of Glasgow and promises to be a wonderful community event, featuring a range of local stallholders, festive gifts, refreshments, and seasonal activities.

As well as celebrating the spirit of Christmas, the event will help raise awareness and support for the work of Mary's Meals, providing life-changing school meals to children living in some of the world's poorest communities.

All welcome to COP31 Cathedral Mass and live link to conference



Come together to pray for all those taking part at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31) and for the care of our common home.

Hosted by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland's Care of Creation Office and supported by Justice & Peace Scotland, SCIAF, and SCES, Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Nolan on 12 November in the Cathedral to pray for the the COP31 climate summit in Türkiye.

After Mass, refreshments will be served in the Eyre Hall and a live video update from CAFOD representatives at the summit will be shown.

Young people's heartfelt thanks for life-changing trip

A life-changing experience for young people in Glasgow was made possible thanks to the support of the St Nicholas Care Fund ... and by way of gratitude the youngsters have just raised £1000 to give back to the fund to help others.

Earlier this year, a team of eight pupils from St. Roch's and Holyrood Secondary Schools travelled to Blantyre, Malawi, for 12 days.

The pupils were selected to support their wider achievement and future employability, with a focus on those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds who would not otherwise have access to such an opportunity.

One of the unique elements of the trip was that the young people and their families were not asked for contributions – they did lots of fundraising.

One of the organisers, Maureen McKenna, said: "I



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

made and sold marmalade in both schools (the novelty value of the former Director of Education making marmalade helped considerably!), I knitted Aran jumpers for friends for donations, the young people sold cakes, one had a ceilidh and they spoke at Masses.

"The Wood Foundation through the late Sir Ian Wood gave us money, Iain MacRitchie, a Glasgow-born businessman gave us money too as well as local businesses.

"Parents told me that this made such a difference to them as they felt that for other trips this had put pressure on them."

The initiative was part of the Malawi Leaders of Learning programme, a charity that promotes educational cooperation between Scotland and Malawi. The team were accompanied by Maureen McKenna, Douglas Hutchison both former Directors of Education in Glasgow, and Terry Strain, Principal Teacher of Pastoral Care at St. Roch's.

The young people worked in a primary school supporting children's learning. They also got to shadow pupils in a state boarding school, visit community projects, take part in a Corpus Christi mass and visit Godknows Maseko and his wife who have opened their house to children who have abandoned or abused – now caring for around 110 children.

Maureen said: "Each evening we reflected on what we had seen and how it made us feel. This was not simply a school trip – it was a journey of growth, and transformation to bring hope and dignity to children and young people across two continents."

My Malawi trip taught me so much

Hollie Thomson, a senior pupil at St Roch's Secondary School shares her extraordinary experience with *Flourish* readers.

This summer I had the life-changing opportunity to travel from Glasgow to Blantyre, Malawi, where I helped support primary school learners.

I never imagined this experience would change my outlook on friendship, community, charity, and the privilege of education.

During our visit we worked at Namalimwe Primary School, which has more than 2,000 learners attending in shifts because there are not enough classrooms for everyone at the same time.

Despite these challenges, we received an incredibly warm welcome from the headteacher, staff, and learners, whose kindness immediately made us feel at home.

Before travelling, we used $1,000 of our fundraising money to purchase reading books locally in Malawi.

Buying the books there supported the local economy while ensuring the stories were culturally appropriate for the children.

Najma and I worked with a group of eight children aged between five and eight.

Although there was a language barrier, laughter quickly brought us together, especially when everyone joined in with "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes."



We also organised a PE session. Standing in a circle with around one hundred enthusiastic children, singing, dancing, and sharing each other's cultures, was one of the most memorable moments of the trip.

Later, we visited Stella Maris, an all-girls boarding school. The girls welcomed us warmly, answered our questions, and spoke proudly about their school community. They described each other as sisters who supported one another through every challenge.

Their sense of respect, kindness, and belonging was inspiring.

Although resources were much more limited than those available in schools back home in Glasgow, the enthusiasm for learning was remarkable. Seeing around one hundred students learning together in one classroom, with some lacking basic equipment, was eye-opening.

Yet what surprised me most was how positive and determined everyone remained despite these difficulties.

This experience taught me that a successful learning environment is not created by modern classrooms or expensive resources.

It is built through strong relationships between teachers and learners, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to education.

The kindness and resilience shown by everyone left a lasting impression on me.

Returning home, I realised how easy it is to take our own opportunities for granted.

Distances

Many children in Malawi walk long distances to school and face financial barriers that prevent them from continuing their education. Despite this, they arrive eager to learn and determined to succeed.

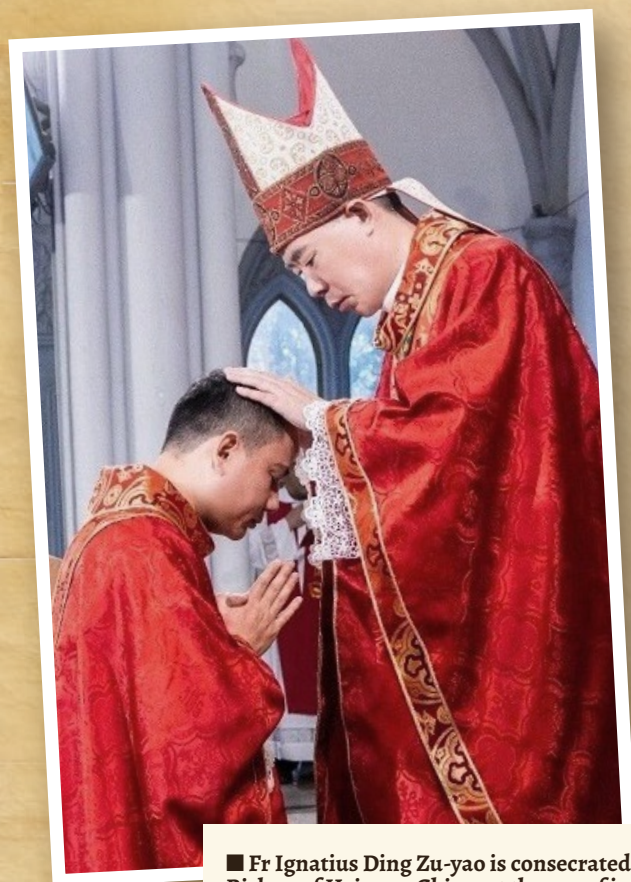
I am incredibly grateful to everyone who supported our fundraising and made this journey possible. The experience has given me a new perspective on the world and reminded me that talent exists everywhere.

Among the children we met will be future teachers, doctors, engineers, musicians, and leaders.

Every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential.

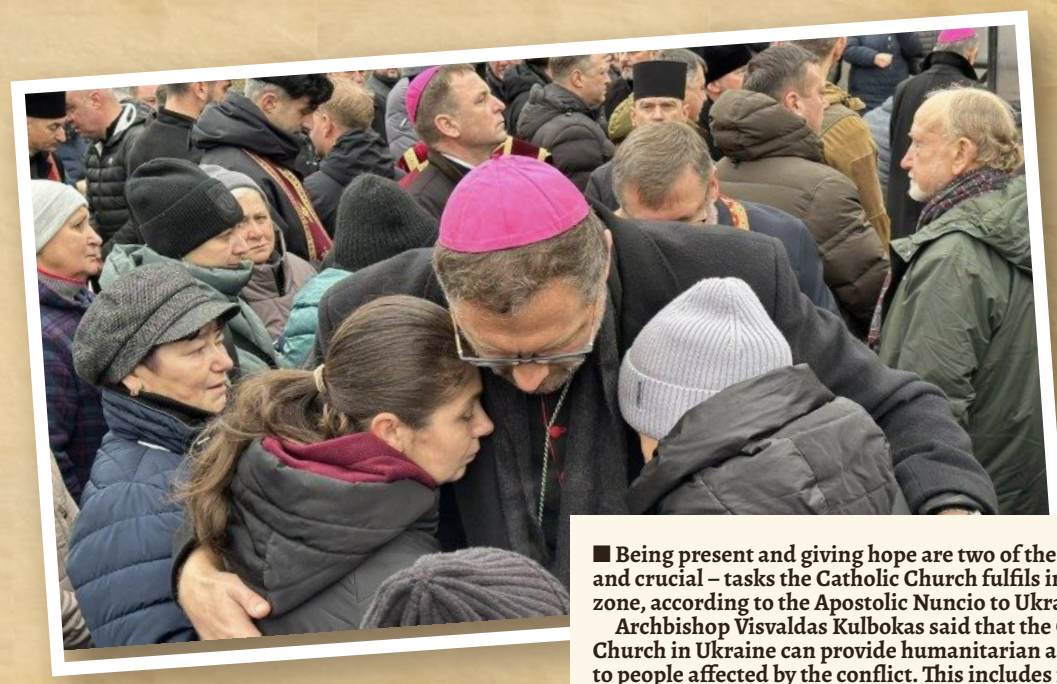
PHOTOS OF FAITH

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



■ Fr Ignatius Ding Zu-yao is consecrated as Bishop of Haimen, China, at the age of just 40. He is believed to be the youngest bishop in full communion with the Holy See in the world.

The new bishop was born in August 1986 in Qidong, Jiangsu Province. Between 2001 and 2004, he studied at a seminary in Shanghai. From 2004 to 2011, he studied philosophy and theology at the Beijing Theological Seminary. On 27 October 2011, he was ordained a priest.



■ Being present and giving hope are two of the main – and crucial – tasks the Catholic Church fulfils in a war zone, according to the Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine.

Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas said that the Catholic Church in Ukraine can provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by the conflict. This includes food, water, shelter, support for displaced people and psychological rehabilitation.

He describes this network of solidarity and love as the "greatness of the Church," explaining that "Thanks to this assistance, Catholics in Ukraine do not feel alone."



■ Sister Mary Teresa Barron, a nun from County Donegal in Ireland, has been appointed to a top Vatican role. She will serve as President of the Pontifical Mission Societies and will lead the Holy See's global missionary networks.

Sister Mary, who will take up her appointment in January, will be the first woman to hold this role.



■ The amalgamation of three dioceses in England seems a step closer after a new study found support for the move. Bishop Marcus Stock of Leeds (pictured) said that he believed a merger of the Hallam, Leeds, and Middlesbrough dioceses "would help to strengthen the mission of the local Church."

The unified diocese would serve a total of 495,817 Catholics, combining 140,571 from Hallam, 229,453 from Leeds, and 125,793 from Middlesbrough.



■ Dominican friars know all about the importance of wearing their habit ... and now the message is being taken to the streets of Oxford.

A new café has opened called 'The Good Habit' which will help support the order's educational work in Oxford.

The new café is also a work of evangelisation and the person popping in for a cappuccino may have no particular interest in meeting a Dominican friar. But the conversation struck up could prove life changing.

AGAP'S 20 YEARS OF KEE



Feasts and

A short histo

Remembering how the curtain came up...



An early Lentfest launch

Since its beginnings in 2006, AGAP has produced countless plays, events, school workshops and activities, many of which took place during the annual Lentfest.

This festival, and the smaller sister festival, Arts in Autumn, has allowed artists of every discipline and faith background to contribute to the cultural life of the Archdiocese and attracted international interest.

In 2008, Lentfest grabbed public attention with primetime coverage on BBC and STV and press interest from around the globe.

Buses and subway stations carried advertising and within 5 years the festival was included in *The List's* Guide to Scotland's Festivals, holding a place in the arts scene.

Participating artists have included world-famous composer Sir James MacMillan (above), singer Eddi Reader (below), artists such as Peter Howson, Richard DiMarco and Jolomo, as well as filmmaker Norman Stone and screenwriter, Sergio Casci and the late actor-turned-artist, Dr John Cairney.

The line-up has included art exhibitions, film screenings, concerts and talks as well as poetry nights and plays. They drew together audiences across greater Glasgow, with parishes welcoming people into their halls to enjoy events and have a positive encounter with the Church.

Due to the success of the festival, a sister festival began in 2008 called Arts in Autumn, which, in 2013 hosted the largest AGAP event of all time – a concert of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* involving over 300 musical performers in the Bute Hall at the University of Glasgow, in honour of Archbishop Mario Conti's retirement (see main picture).

Perhaps the best-known output of AGAP has been its theatre productions, which began with *Passionate Voices* in 2007 and most recently celebrated a sell-out run at the Edinburgh Fringe 2026 with *Gaudí: God's Architect.*

Community productions such as *The Martyrdom of Saint John Ogilvie* drew together large ensemble casts of diverse players, offering an experience of touring, friendship and faith formation as they explore faith themes.

In more recent times, the economy forced by the Pandemic has led to smaller casts and solo plays such as *Oggie! Oggie! Oggie!* (a modern treatment of the Confessions of Saint Augustine) in 2023 and *Pilgrim of Hope* in 2025. These productions have allowed greater touring opportunities and flexibility to take productions into schools and festivals.

Vatican

Commissions include *Star of the Sea* requested by the Vatican for the 100th Anniversary of Stella Maris, *The Margaret Sinclair Story* for the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, 400th Anniversary production of *The Martyrdom of Saint John Ogilvie* with support from the Jesuits, *Pure Dead Dangerous* in collaboration with the Scottish Catholic Parliamentary Office, and *If You Know Your History* for the 125th anniversary of Celtic Football Club.



It all began with a conversation. As autumn leaves fell around Glasgow University, a bad chest infection led to me missing seven weeks of lectures. I was torn between dropping out or trying to make up for lost time.

Having pursued the dream of working in performing arts since childhood I was also challenged by the attitudes and opinions of some of my lecturers and began to wonder if the two were compatible.

It was then that Catholic chaplain, Father John Keenan (now Bishop of Paisley, above right) invited me to look at the life and work of Karol Wojtyla, the little-known Polish playwright, actor and poet who became Saint Pope John Paul II.

"Take him as your role model," he said. Then, without hesitation, he added, "I've ordered one of his plays, *The Jeweller's Shop*, and I'd like you to help me with it."

"Do you want me to act in it?" I asked. "No," he said, "I want you to put it on."

Stephen Callaghan looks back on 20 years of the Archdiocesan Arts Project

This conversation led to the sell-out production of *The Jeweller's Shop* at Turnbull Hall in March 2003, with media coverage from BBC and Vatican Radio.

Due to the demand, we followed with an extended tour of Wojtyla's final play, *Radiation of Fatherhood* in 2004, which travelled all the way to Cologne, Germany for World Youth Day 2005.

For me, and for the other students and staff taking part, the experience was truly life-changing. Friendships were forged, vocations were engendered and the bigger questions about life, faith and meaning were discussed by those that had never seriously considered them before.

AGAP was emerging and I found myself asking when the Catholic Church had gone from patron of the arts, celebrating truth, beauty and goodness, to a moral watch-



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drafting a proposal for an Arts Project that would embrace not only the performing arts but every artform: visual art, music, dance, literature, film and theatre.

Support

Archbishop Mario jokingly described my tenacious approach to him as "Stephen pinned me to the wall and said 'We're not doing enough to support the arts!'" It was a of course an exaggeration because, in truth, no force was needed to convince Archbishop Mario, who loved the arts and saw that spiritual poverty and cultural poverty were closely related to the other forms of poverty blighting society. With support from various quarters, he raised enough seed money to offer me a job with the task of building up the Archdiocese of Glasgow Arts Project, now better-known as AGAP.

20 years later, having been blessed with many encounters with artists, audiences, clergy and schools, I am still excited about my work! I find myself returning to our roots, preparing to return to the Edinburgh Fringe after our recent sell-out run, with a new play that will tell the story of the wartime theatre of the young Pope John Paul II.

The battle for the nation's soul is still fought in the realm of culture and the arts. It is at the forefront of evangelisation, something that Archbishop William Nolan understands well and encourages.

I never did get that trip to Crete though ...

Evangelisation and hope will be future priorities



Vatican culture chief Cardinal José Tolentino with Stephen Callaghan



"IF I were in Glasgow, I would be involved in AGAP!" These were the words of Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia during his 2025 visit to the Archdiocese.

The endorsement from Pope Leo XIV's UK ambassador was testament to the Church's longstanding belief in the power of the arts as a bridge to dialogue through an encounter with Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

What was once referred to as the *Via Pulchritudinus* or 'Way of Beauty' has been a path to faith for many throughout the centuries.

The Nuncio's visit came shortly after the election of Pope Leo and in the midst of the Year of Hope. Just three months earlier, I had attended the Jubilee for Artists at the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education.

My place at the table was came about because AGAP had been officially recognised as a Catholic Cultural Centre by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture in 2019. At the meeting, Pope Francis (who was gravely ill and could not attend), adjured us to be 'Artisans of Hope'.

For Glasgow, and indeed for Scotland, under the present circumstances, we need Hope more than ever.

With bleak news of church closures, falling numbers of vocations and lower church attendance, we might be tempted to despair. Whilst it is true that, sadly, many people are not taking part in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church, they are engaging with culture; art, film, theatre, music and digital media.

I firmly believe that the battle for Scotland's soul will be won or lost in the field of culture and the arts. It is crucial for the Catholic Church in Scotland to be actively and positively involved in the arts.

Pope Benedict XVI said that 'art and the saints are the greatest apologetics for the faith' and this has been displayed in the numerous positive encounters facilitated by AGAP over 20 years.

These encounters have led to a greater awareness of the Gospel and the Church's mission, opening up paths of evangelisation, ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, vocational discernment and conversion.

Welcomed

People who would not easily set foot inside church premises for any other reason might attend an exhibition, a concert or a play if invited along and welcomed. I am grateful to those that have helped us achieve this by volunteering their time, talents and resources. Without them, it would be impossible.

We must 'put out into the deep' for the sake of our brothers and sisters, without compromising.

In doing so, we will truly fulfil our Gospel mission for future generations as 'Artisans of Hope' and secure a brighter future..

community

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Making a will is a real act of charity

For Catholics, preparing for the future means caring for both body and soul. While our faith helps us focus on spiritual readiness, putting our worldly affairs in order is also an essential act of love.

BY **JOHN ESTEVAN**

Making a will is fundamentally about stewardship. God entrusts our resources to us during our earthly pilgrimage. A will ensures those blessings continue to bear fruit even after we are gone.

Stewardship

First and foremost, a clear will is a gift to your surviving family. Grief is heavy enough without administrative chaos. Dying without a will leaves estate distribution to impersonal legal formulas, which can trigger misunderstandings, delays, and unnecessary strain among loved ones.

By making clear your preferences for burial/cremation, naming guardians for minor children and clarifying your intentions, you spare your family extra stress during a deeply vulnerable moment.

Second, a will enables lasting generosity. Once family obligations are met, legacy giving allows you to return a portion of whatever savings or property you may have to a good cause close to your heart. You can support a health charity, a cultural institution or your local parish, along with diocesan trusts and Catholic organisations dedicated to the poor, the sick, and education.

Time

Writing or updating a will takes little time, yet yields enduring peace of mind.

As November's focus shifts to those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, why not make the resolution to consult a solicitor or explore guidance via your favourite charity or local parish to put your house in order, safeguarding your family and carrying forward your support for the causes you care about.





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November reflections: the wisdom of the saints

In the month of November, when we remember in a special way those who have died, it can be comforting to reflect on the words of the saints as they reflected on death and eternal life.

ST TERESA OF AVILA: "My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time for us to meet one another."

ST ROSE OF VITERBO: "Live so as to not fear death. For those who lived well in the world, death is not frightening but sweet and precious."

ST AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO: "Lord, you have freed us from the fear of death. You have made the end of life here the beginning of true life for us."

ST THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX: "When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens, I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth."

ST JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ: "Death leads to the arms of God and to love… Be calm! Be happy!"

ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: "Those whom we love and lose are no longer where they were before. They are now wherever we are."

POPE ST JOHN XXIII: "At the moment for saying farewell, or better still, 'arrivederci' (until we meet again), I once more remind everyone of what counts most in life: Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Holy Church, His Gospel; and in the Gospel, above all, the Pater Noster (the Our Father), truth and goodness, a goodness that is meek and kind, active and patient, victorious and unbowed. My children, my brethren… arrivederci."



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Sort code: 80 07 61
Account Number: 00906559
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Scribblings of the spirit

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



There is an instance in the Gospels where, while Jesus is speaking, a woman from the crowd calls out to him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you..."

In effect, she is saying: "You must have a wonderful mother! Look how you turned out!" Jesus responds by saying: "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

It's easy to misunderstand his answer because on the surface it sounds like he is downplaying the compliment to his mother. But his response is really: "Yes, I have wonderful mother, but it's not because she gave me biological birth that makes her special; it's her faith that makes her special and particularly wonderful as a mother."

When Jesus says, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it, he has his mother specially in mind.

The renowned scripture scholar Raymond E. Brown points out that the apostolic community gave Mary such a special place, not particularly because she was Jesus' biological mother, but because of her special faith.

For Jesus, faith trumps biology. For him, real family is defined by faith, not biology or anything else. Who are my actual brothers and sisters? For Jesus, it's those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Biological family is a foundational structure, coming from God and nature, and it needs to be nurtured and defended, especially today when it is under siege from many sides.

A healthy society needs healthy families; a healthy Church needs healthy families; a healthy country needs healthy families: a healthy world needs healthy families; healthy liberals need healthy families; healthy conservatives need healthy families; and healthy individuals tend to come from healthy families.

Who are our brothers and sisters? Our biological family makes for real family, but our deepest, forever family is made up of all others who have faith in God, which does include our biological family if they share faith with us.

Who are our fellow church members? Our fellow church members are all fellow Christians, irrespective of denomination, who have a sincere faith in Jesus Christ. In faith we are all one family.

Who are our fellow pilgrims as we journey through this world? Our deepest, forever fellow pilgrims are all women and men, irrespective of their religion or honest agnosticism, who are sincerely searching for truth, goodness, beauty, and justice.

Who is our real ethnic family? It's everyone on this planet, irrespective of skin colour, mother tongue, or racial history, who is sincerely searching for a community within which differences will make for harmony and unity.

History

Who are our fellow citizens? Our fellow citizens are not necessarily those with whom we share a country and a common history; more deeply, it's people from every country in the world who, with us, share one land given equally to us all by God. For Jesus, there can be no Christian nationalism.

Who constitutes my ideological, political family? It's not those who share a liberal or conservative temperament and ideology with me. My deepest, forever ideological family is made up of those for whom truth and justice lay waste to all ideologies, both liberal and conservative.

Who is my family in terms of gender? Male? Female? LGBQ? My real family is inside the Body of Christ, within which "there is no male or female." (Galatians 3, 28)

When Jesus asks who are my brothers and sisters and then identifies them with those who are listening to him, he is teaching that our true, forever family is not rooted in biology, denomination, religion, ethnicity, nationality, ideological temperament, or gender, but in a shared faith which transcends all of these.

So, like the woman who wanted to compliment Jesus' mother, go out to that good friend of yours who is a pious Muslim, and to that honest colleague of yours who voted the opposite of how you did, and to that struggling immigrant you've ignored whom you see living in a fear you have never shared ...

And go out to that gracious, bubbly New Age neighbour of yours, who has just brought a casserole to your door and who once gave you a rainbow keychain, and say: "You must have a wonderful mom! Look how you turned out!"

Don't feel guilty... Time out is time well spent



Mary's musings

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



Nappetiser, disco nap, forty winks. Call it what you like. It's time to own our down time.

For those of you not already treating yourselves to a sneaky snooze, come and join the rest of us who are giving ourselves permission to switch to low-power mode when it's needed.

A 20 minute siesta on a working from home day or a car nap in the manner of a wiped-out toddler is nothing to be ashamed of. It's a lifeline for some of us and it should be celebrated.

For years I laboured under the delusion I'd be judged a slacker for fitting a cheeky wee nap into my daily routine, if at all possible.

If I'm outing myself here so be it. My little bit of research says not likely. I started by discreetly asking around and I soon discovered I'm far from alone.

There were embarrassed admissions of occasional 40-winks and loud and proud proclamations of a non-negotiable daily doze.

Back in the multi-tasking heyday of the 90s if you wanted to have it all (or even some of it) you had to be omnipresent. You had to be firing on all cylinders.

The myth of multi-tasking has now been exposed and we're told what we instinctively knew all along. The brain isn't so great at concentrating on two demanding tasks at once.

Instead, we switch rapidly between them, sacrificing concentration and creativity along the way.

The chronically busy miss out on creative thinking time when ideas percolate and take shape. They are more likely to make mistakes and they are less able to hear the contributions of others.

So I'm going to take a punt and say those who would have us believe they are perpetually on the go were (to put it in Glasgow parlance) "at it."

Either that or like a lot of us they are factoring in some shut-eye on the sly.

There's more to time-out than a restorative snooze. A quiet cup of tea, a walk without our phones or a few minutes of solitude, can help us return to those around us with greater patience, generosity and self-giving.

Our Lady understood something about the value of taking time to ponder. St Luke tells us that she treasured the events surrounding the birth of Jesus and pondered them in her heart.

She didn't have all the answers, nor could she have known all that lay ahead. But she made room for the mystery, holding things quietly within her heart.

I've discovered that stepping back is not a failure to contribute but rather what enables me to contribute more thoughtfully.

We are not called to run a race to see who can accomplish the most.

Our invitation in this life is to grow in love. The more we love, the more we give of ourselves in the service of others.

And if forty winks help us get there, I say they're a blessing.

ART OF THE MONTH

Autumn leaves teach us a precious lesson



Mgr Tom Monaghan

OUR painting, 'Autumn Leaves' by John Everett Millais, captures the fleeting beauty and melancholy of autumn leaves falling from trees, still with the rich vibrance of colour but marking the passage of time, and being carefully gathered.

Praying for the Holy Souls is a work of Spiritual Mercy and an opportunity to put our faith into practice. Our November Masses are an expression of Christian love that continues beyond death. They connect us with the communion of saints, the spiritual works of mercy and the Church's special remembrance of the faithful departed.

It's an ideal time to contemplate the importance of prayer, mercy, purification and the hope of eternal life.

November holds a special place in the heart of the Catholic Church. As the year draws towards its close, the Church invites us to to pray for the faithful departed, and to reflect on the mystery of death in the light of Christ's Resurrection. It is a month that calls us to look beyond the visible world and recognise that our Christian vocation to love does not end at the grave.

The Feast of All Saints on 1st November celebrates those who enjoy the glory of heaven, while the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, commonly known as All Souls' Day, on 2nd November, reminds us to pray for those who have died and are undergoing purification before entering the fullness of God's presence.

November days remind us to reflect on the reality of death, the brevity of earthly life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. As autumn brings falling leaves and shorter days, those of us who have reached the seniority of years, perhaps especially are aware that earthly life is passing and that our ultimate hope rests in God.

This is the message of hope rooted in the Resurrection. November consequently becomes a season of remembrance, intercession and renewed faith. It encourages us to remember loved ones who have died, to pray for those who have no one to remember them, and to reflect on how we are preparing for our own encounter with God.

We should also remember those who have died without family, those whose graves are neglected, those who died in poverty or violence, and those whose names have been forgotten by the world.

They, too, deserve our prayers and remembrance.



PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

More than a century after the first armistice day, the poisonous stench of war still hangs in the air



Marian Pallister

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

MY grandfather took part in the First World War. Note – I don't say he fought in it. He was a butcher by trade, and he was assigned to the catering corps.

Unlike soldiers who suffered the horrors of the trenches and who rarely spoke of their experiences, Grandad was full of what he saw as funny stories. That included the horrific one about adding sand to donkeys' feed so that in time they died and could be used on the soldiers' menu.

And people ask why I'm vegan…

In war and armed conflict we count human lives lost, but rarely the cost to domestic and wild animals or to the environment. Yet one look at photographs from the battlefields of northern France in 1914-18 shows bleak landscapes with trees blasted to mere stumps and the historically rich farmlands of Normandy nothing more than a sea of mud.

I've travelled through Normandy and Belgium many times but rarely considered that the devastation caused over a century ago still affects people and the environment today.

Some things were restored, of course. Native woodlands once more cover vast hectares once turned into blasted heaths. Sadly, however, soils are still contaminated in some areas by zinc, lead, arsenic and mercury, and throughout Europe, there are still unexploded mines and weapons that claim unsuspecting lives.

More than a hundred years, yet still the effects of that war cost lives and damage the environment.

I once reported from a remote area of Mozambique after catastrophic floods there. The photographer and I followed a guide and a local farmer to a village that had not yet received aid. The guide told us that the track we were on was still littered with anti-personnel mines laid during the war with South Africa.

Mines that don't kill but are designed to maim. The risks to local people and wildlife were ever-present, decades after that war ended.

November 6 is marked as International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict – a wordy way to say that every drone, every mine, every bomb affects our common home.



In mid-November, there's a conference in Geneva to try to legislate internationally on lethal autonomous weapons – AI weapons that without human guidance search for, select, and engage targets. Who cares what damage those do to humans or the environment?

We know what devastation the first atom bombs caused in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but let's not forget the ongoing effects of radiation on sea life, agricultural land and wildlife habitats caused by testing nuclear weapons decades later.

A century on and the somewhat less sophisticated poisons of World War One still pollute our world. Imagine what long-lasting devastation today's weaponry is silently spreading in all those countries where, as Pope Francis said, World War Three is being fought piecemeal.

At the start of this year's Season of Creation back in September, Pope Leo said: "War leaves wounds that extend far beyond the battlefield"… leaving behind "social and ecological destruction that endures for generations", destroying ecosystems, contaminating essential resources, such as air and water, and undermining food security.

Surely a wakeup call to turn swords into ploughshares?

November's Gospels bring the Church's year to an end and lead to the Feast of Christ the King



Fr Tom Kilbride
Parish Priest of Christ the King, Glasgow



Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro

November is a month when traditionally we pray for all who have died, especially our own relatives and friends.

In part, this reflects the feasts which begin the month – the celebration of All Saints and a commemoration of all our Faithful Departed – but the Sunday liturgies too point us forward, especially the Gospel readings.

We hear this month from the last of the chapters where Matthew gathers Jesus' teachings and we hear three parables offering reflections on reward and judgement. How have we lived the teaching Jesus has been giving us throughout the Gospel? Are we "built on rock", "living a deeper righteousness", generous and forgiving? The parables, as always, will give us food for thought!

Thirty-Second Sunday A

The first of the three parables is the famous one of the "wise" and "foolish" virgins. Five are prepared for the late arrival of the bridegroom and five are not. The difference, as the First Reading suggests, is that five are living by Wisdom. In other words, they are aware of what life requires of them but also seek out and recognise the presence of God in the things around them.

The "wise virgins" are prepared to meet whatever challenges they might face – they have extra oil "just in case". Then, when he arrives, they recognise the bridegroom and go in with him to the feast.

The "foolish" ones haven't reflected on things properly and end up caught short. When the time comes to act, they are not ready. They lack what's needed. The bridegroom doesn't recognise them, as the moment to respond has passed.

In the Second Reading, Paul gives us hope for those who have gone before us, but the text comes as he reminds the Thessalonians that they have to be living the life God wants, in order to be ready whenever he calls us to himself.

Thirty-Third Sunday A

This week's parable, the famous parable of the talents, makes us reflect on how we are progressing in using the gifts and graces God gives us. The amount entrusted to each servant is enormous (think of several million pounds)! After all, God's grace and gifts are always more than we deserve.

The first servant understands this and acts in a way which adds grace to grace and uncovers ever more gifts. The last, by contrast, hides them – perhaps through fear, perhaps through indifference – even though he is aware of their value. The first two are called "faithful" – "faith-filled" even – since they have appreciated, used, and multiplied the gifts and graces. This is not some mere business dealing, but a sign that they have opened themselves to the gifts they were given and, in faith, given back even more.

The woman in the First Reading sees the opportunities to use her talents, not only for personal profit, but for generosity to the poor. Because she "fears the Lord", she lives her life in service and love, and for this "she is to be praised". God's kingdom grows when we embrace his gifts and open that grace in love to others. The seed the Sower planted produces its harvest!

Christ the King A

In our final parable from Matthew, we meet the King. He is a king who judges based on what we do for others (so we do for him). Matthew's Gospel has been our guide this year, where we are reminded that saying we have faith is not enough: we need to show it. To say, "Lord, Lord" (like the foolish virgins) is not enough; we have to do the Father's will (7:21). Many scholars see these parables as a mirror to the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus' last teachings reflect back on his first).

And so, we now hear who it is who is "blessed", of whom "is the Kingdom of heaven" and who "will inherit the earth" (or here "inherit the kingdom prepared for you"). Those who care for the poorest and the least are those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness". They are "merciful" and receive mercy. We see the Beatitudes in action in those who enter into eternal life in the parable which concludes Jesus' teaching.

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

As we reach the last Sunday of Year A, we finish with the words "into eternal life", but the parable which precedes those words reminds us of the path we have to follow, the path of the Shepherd-King who cares for and is found among his suffering children.

First Sunday of Advent, Year B

As often happens, November ends with a beginning: a new season and a new liturgical year, guided by a new Gospel, the Gospel of Mark. Our First Sunday of Advent, however, also begins at the end, as we hear the last verses of Jesus's teaching in Mark's Gospel. In them, Jesus reminds us we are not masters of time, but that we have to "stay awake", alert to living the Gospel in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

While Isaiah (First Reading) seems afraid that God has abandoned his people because of their sins, and prays insistently for God to return to them, Paul (Second Reading) assures us that it is Jesus who will "sustain you to the end". He does not leave us alone to get on with it!

While we watch and wait for his coming, we keep an eye on our actions and keep doing our best, knowing he will help us. This is what Advent always asks of us: not just to prepare for Christmas, but to refocus, to begin afresh in regard to our faith, our actions, our prayer and our life in Christ.

As November ends and Advent begins, we could do worse than to pray for new hope, new strength and new commitment to living our faith and looking for the signs of God's presence in our lives, so that we are ready to greet him, and to announce his presence to others, any and every day.

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12th Anniversary
Please pray for Esther (Murray) a cherished wife to the late David, Mum and Gran & adored Great-Gran, who sadly died November 7, 2014.

Our Lady of Lourdes & St. Thérèse, pray for her. She will live forever in our hearts.

Inserted by her ever loving family.

Canon John had time for everyone

Tributes paid to popular priest who has died after battling illness

The death of Canon John McGrorry, recently retired Parish Priest of St Kessog's Balloch, at the young age of 67 was greeted with sorrow across the Archdiocese and beyond.

Fr John was widely remembered as a cheery, engaging and kindly man who touched countless lives with his friendship and positivity.

The young John felt called to the priesthood from an early age and served daily at the 7am Masses in St Patrick's, Dumbarton, before going on to school. In October 1976 he was a student at the Scots College in Rome where he, along with many thousands of fellow Scots and other seminarians witnessed the Canonisation of St John Ogilvie.

He spoke about that experience often, telling how, on a human level, it moved him, inspiring him throughout his ministry.

He was ordained a priest in his home parish of St Patrick's on June 25 1982, just three weeks after Pope John Paul's historic visit to Glasgow. It was a hope-filled time, when the Catholic community was on a high after the Papal visit and Fr John seemed to encompass that spirit with his youth, his smile and his kindly manner.

His priestly ministry saw him serve many parishes of the Archdiocese, combining pastoral work with senior positions within the Archdiocese in the field of education.

His early years saw him constantly on the move. In 1982 his first posting was to the large parish of Christ the King, but less than a year later he was asked to take up temporary appointments, first at St Aloysius' Springburn, then at Our Lady of Lourdes and then at St Pius X in Drumchapel.

His first permanent appointment was to St Lucy's Cumbernauld as Assistant Priest where he stayed for four years. During that time, he was appointed by Archbishop Winning as Youth Chaplain to Holy Family Deanery in 1985.

The Archbishop spotted his academic potential and



interest in education and so in 1988 Fr John packed his bags to begin further studies at Fordham University in New York where he earned an MA in RE.

On his return he was able to put his skills to good use as he was appointed to St Eunan's Clydebank (Assistant Priest) and Chaplain to Notre Dame High School.

Just two years later he was on the move again – though just up the road to St Ninian's Knightswood.

In 1999 Cardinal Winning appointed him to St Joseph's Milngavie as Parish Priest, where he was a much loved young pastor.

From 2002-2007 he was Archbishop Conti's Director of Religious Education; a role for which no one could have been better prepared and which he fulfilled with great enthusiasm while also looking after a busy parish.

In 2012 the Archbishop asked him to take on the role of Parish Priest at St Peter's Partick and Dean of the West End Deanery and in 2013 he was installed as a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter.

He loved music and, as many of 800 tributes posted on social media pointed out, he possessed a wonderful singing voice. He loved opera, musicals and musical theatre of which he had an encyclopaedic knowledge.

His final appointment was to come in 2015 when Archbishop Tartaglia asked him to take on St Kessog's Balloch as Parish Priest. He was happy there and the people greatly appreciated him. One of his favourite places was the garden at St Kessog's where he felt close to nature – but to make sure visitors who needed him knew where to find him he left a handwritten note pinned to the wall which read simply, 'In the garden'.

It is not too fanciful to suppose that he was inspired by the lines of the famous poem 'We are nearer to God in a Garden that anywhere else on earth'

Illness

However, illness began to take its toll, and he had to slow down. Eventually it became clear that he was too unwell to continue and he retired earlier this year.

He was eternally optimistic throughout the last 18 months of his life bolstered by his unshakeable faith.

A fellow priest who was one of last to see him before his passing said: "In life he never stopped smiling and even as he faced death that smile never left him.

Requiescat in pace.

Fr Donal: a faithful son of St Francis

Sorrow at the death of 'a gentle soul' in the Gorbals

The death of Father Donal Walsh OFM, a much loved member of the Franciscan community which has served the people of the Gorbals for 160 years, brings with it an extra layer of sorrow for the parishioners of Blessed Duns Scotus.

When the Franciscans leave Glasgow next Easter, they will no longer have a parish in Scotland.

Father Donal, described by those who knew him best as 'a gentle soul with not a bad bone in his body', was one of the last of the brown-habited friars to have served the people of Glasgow for a lengthy period.

A priest for 43 years, he was born in Scunthorpe. Lincolnshire on 11 March 1952, educated at local Catholic schools, and attended two colleges run by the Holy Ghost Congregation.

Later he would spend two years with this congregation before entering the Franciscan novitiate in 1976.

After his First profession in 1977 he studied for the priesthood at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury and was ordained on 19th March 1983.

In the following years his ministry took him to East London, Ipswich, Nottingham, Glasgow and the Craigmillar area of Edinburgh.

He served as a hospital chaplain during these years as well as promoting vocations. He moved to Woodford Green in 2014, where he became Guardian of the community.

He then moved back to Glasgow, as part of the Franciscan community of the parish of Blessed John Duns Scotus.

Father Tom Scanlon CP, a member of the Passionist Community in Glasgow, knew Donal since they were pupils together at St Bernadette's Primary School in Scunthorpe which was run by the Presentation Sisters, many of whom were Irish as were Donal's parents.

He said: "Donal and I both were interested in the priesthood and had a mutual interest in religious life and I went to school in Ireland and later joined the Passionists while Donal went to the Friars Minor.

"He thrived in company and was a born listener who had an unassuming, even disarming nature, but had a great capacity for making friends and sustaining relationships throughout his life.

"He was a very warm, loving, friendly man with a trusting nature and a compassionate heart – he had what my mother would have called an open face.

"He epitomised to me the lovely expression they have in Ireland 'He hadn't a bad bone in his body.'

"He was a gentle soul who bore no malice, held no grudges and possessed a loving and welcoming spirit. He bore his illnesses with quiet courage and dignity and with gratitude for all who helped him".

Requiescat in pace.



SCIAF's Real Gifts make a real difference

WATER – it's not something we are short of here in Scotland, especially as the winter months draw in. Our lush green rolling hills are famous the world over.

I can reach for the tap without thinking, when I need a drink, bathe my kids, cook our food, or even wash my car.

Not everyone is so fortunate. In some of the countries where SCIAF works, water isn't so accessible – but when it is, it becomes life-changing. I saw this for myself when I visited Malawi this year.

There, some people need to walk for hours to access water which is often unclean and dangerous to drink, which is why SCIAF and our partners continue to work with communities to ensure they can have access to clean and safe water.

Every year, SCIAF offers Real Gifts, giving supporters the chance to buy meaningful Christmas presents for their loved ones. Every Real Gift that's shared goes to support those most in need, in communities around the world. One of the gifts, often bought by parishes I work with as part of my job at SCIAF, is 'Water for a village'.



Michael Hamilton
Community Engagement Officer, SCIAF

Precious

Bishop Brian McGee, SCIAF's Bishop President – who was my travel companion in Malawi – also saw how precious the gift of water is.

He said: "Water is life – the foundation for all flourishing. It's vital, therefore, that we reach out to those who don't have access to clean, safe water now!

"Water for a village can transform the lives of a whole community – and I've seen, first-hand, what it can do in Zambia and Malawi. It's truly life-giving and brings to light why Jesus compares his 'Living Water' to that of clean water here on earth."

What I remember most was one day we travelled to a village which was taking part in a project. They had a solar panel and pump to get water into the fields. Their fields were green and lush, it was almost like an oasis in comparison to the countless villages we had driven through to get there.

This access to water was the first necessary step they needed as they then were able to grow many different types of crops, use and sell these and they were then discussing how they could support neighbours in nearby villages and towns who were struggling.



As Bishop Brian said so rightly: "It is right that the Catholic Church here in Scotland reaches out to those most in need. And there are lots of way we can continue to provide hope and love.

"This Christmas, I hope parishes, schools and individuals come together to raise money for this transformational Real Gift, so that SCIAF can help install new water points and irrigation schemes in some of the world's poorest places."

Water is just one of many Real Gifts parishes and individuals tell me that they are saving to buy this year, when I visit them. People are planning to buy everything from seeds to emergency food packages, access to education and even chickens. I have now seen with my own eyes that they all make a difference.

Eliza from Malawi had her life transformed when she was gifted goats through SCIAF's work.

She said: "SCIAF gave me five goats. When they multiplied, I sold one, and the money helped me pay school fees for my children. This support has made a significant difference in my family's life, and I am deeply thankful."

Christmas is such a special time for us all... we come together to reflect on the messages of love and hope. A Real Gift is a gift of hope.

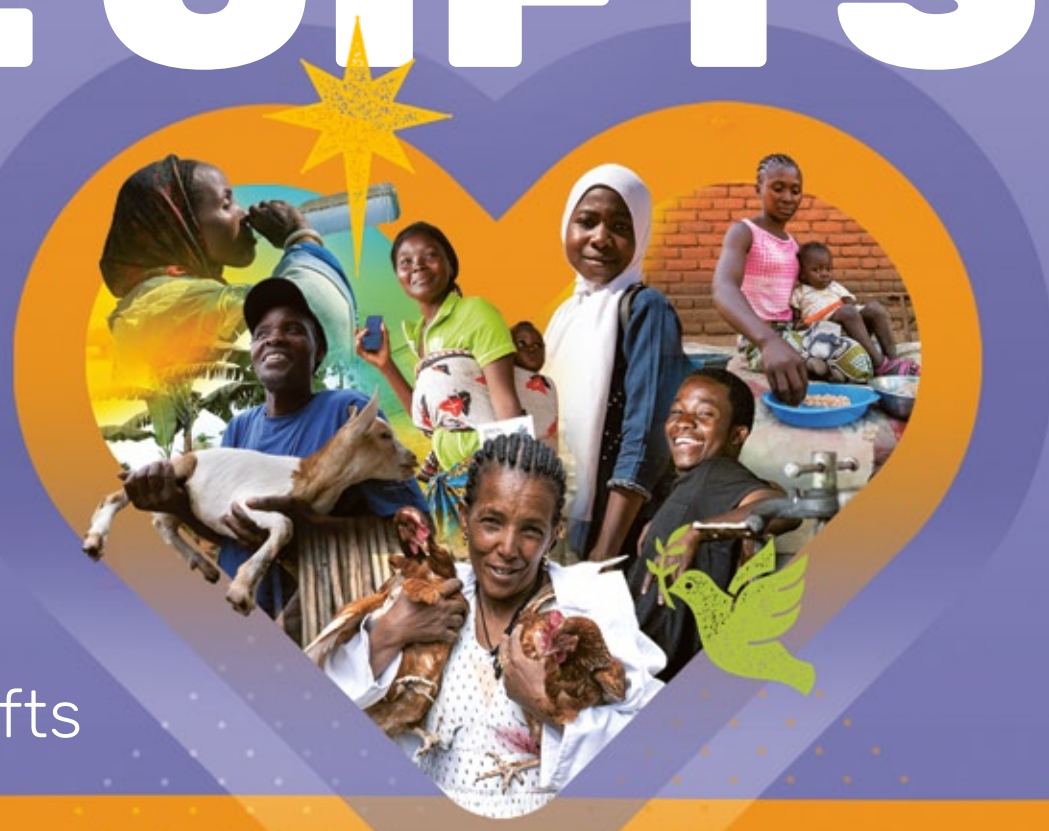
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REAL GIFTS

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