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FLLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

October 2026

‘WE MUST FACE UP TO REALITY’

Priests back major restructuring plans

- Vocations crisis bites
- Major merger programme
- Parishes to be reduced by half



My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

FOR years now there has been much talk of the need to restructure and reduce the number of parishes in the Archdiocese. A plan for that restructuring has now been drawn up, reducing the number of parishes by half and seeing the closure of two dozen churches.

There are too many parishes but too few people, too many churches but too few priests.

Compared to when these parishes were formed and our churches built, there are significantly fewer people coming to Mass. Some of our largest

churches are in places where there are fewest people.

And as for priests, I have been Archbishop for less than five years and the number of our active priests is down by a third in that time. Only one of our priests is under the age of 45, most are

over the age of 60. Thank goodness we have foreign priests and religious willing to serve in the Archdiocese, otherwise the situation would be even more critical than it is.

Our parishes and our churches hold great memories for us and are dear to our hearts, so any reduction in parishes and any closure of churches will be a painful experience. We cannot avoid that pain, though, by not facing up to reality.

Just as the vinedresser cuts back the vine so that it may grow, so we too must trim and prune in order

to stay healthy, in order to grow.

I would ask everyone in the Archdiocese to respond to these plans with a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to make sacrifices, to look to the past with fondness, but to let the past go in order to enable a new future to take shape.

May we trust in God as we face the road ahead.

Let us pray for each other as we make difficult decisions in these changing times.

In Christ,
+William Nolan
Archbishop of Glasgow

How is your parish affected by new plans?

Full details on page 2

Parish changes: how the plans will affect you

A DETAILED blueprint for the future of parishes in the Archdiocese has been produced, reducing the number of parishes to around 40 through a programme of mergers and closures over the next decade.

It will lead to a major reorganisation of Catholic parish life in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, the biggest ever undertaken.

The proposals follow local deanery area consultations over the past few years and reflect population shifts and the dramatically reduced number of priests available to provide pastoral care.

The plans will see mergers in many areas and a reduction in the number of church buildings.

The proposals have been approved in principle by the Archbishop and the Council of Priests and will now be discussed locally in parish and deanery pastoral councils ahead of the changes taking place.

Mergers and closures will not take place on a single future date but rather each case will involve due process in Canon law.

The blueprint provides for changes affecting the following parishes:

Dunbartonshire East

St Joseph's, Cumbernauld will merge with Sacred Heart and St Lucy's, Cumbernauld, with these parish-

BY RONNIE CONVERY

es eventually being reduced to two churches over 5–10 years.

Holy Cross, Croy will merge with Our Lady and St Helen's, Condorrat, with an eventual reduction to one church over 5–10 years.

Holy Family and St Ninian's, Kirkintilloch has already merged with St John of the Cross, Twechar, and St Flannan's, Kirkintilloch, eventually being reduced to one church within 10 years.

St Andrew's, Bearsden will merge with St Joseph's, Milngavie within 5 years with the two churches being maintained.

No immediate change is proposed for the two Bishoppriests parishes.

Dunbartonshire West

St Kessog's, Balloch to merge with St Martin's, Renton, and Our Lady and St Mark's, Alexandria, with an eventual reduction to one church over 5–10 years.

St Michael's Parish, Dunbarton (including St Mahew's church) to merge with St Joseph's, Helensburgh, (including the churches of St Gildas', Rosneath, and St Peter & St Paul, Arrochar). The document envisages the merger over the next 5–10 years, with Rosneath and Arrochar closing and St Michael's, St Joseph's and St Mahew's being maintained.

Our Holy Redeemer and St



Margaret's Parish to merge with St Eunan's, Clydebank, with a reduction to two church buildings within 5 years.

St Mary's, Duntocher, merged with St Joseph's, Faifley, will reduce to one church within 5 years.

St Stephen's, Dalmuir parish will merge with St Patrick's, Old Kilpatrick, with an eventual reduction to one church over 5–10 years.

No immediate change is proposed for St Patrick's, Dumbarton.

Glasgow South

St Helen's, already merged with St Albert's, Pollokshields, will further merge with St Mary Immaculate, Pollokshaws, with a reduction to two churches within 5 years, with some of the territory of St Mary's being transferred to St Gabriel's in Merrylee.

Merger of St Bartholomew's, Castlemilk and St Margaret Mary's, Castlemilk, with an eventual reduction to one church within 5 years.

Merger of Our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald with St Leo's, Dumbreck, with an eventual reduction to one church within 5 years.

St James' parish will merge with St Conval's, with an eventual reduction to one church over 5–10 years.

St Constantine's, Govan will merge with St Anthony's, Govan, with one church closing depending on the condition of the buildings, within 5 years.

Holy Cross, Crosshill parish will merge with St Brigid's, Toryglen within 5 years.

St Robert's, Househillwood and St Bernard's, Nitshill to discuss reducing to one church within 5 years.

St Vincent's, Thornliebank parish will merge with Holy Name, Mansewood, with an eventual reduction to one

church building within 5–10 years.

No immediate changes are proposed for the parishes of Christ the King, Our Lady and St George's, St Gabriel's and Blessed John Duns Scotus.

Glasgow West

St Peter's, Partick parish, including the Glasgow University Chaplaincy, will merge with Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Broomhill, with an eventual reduction to one church within 10 years.

St Ninian's, Knightswood will merge with Corpus Christi, Scotstounhill, St Laurence's, Drumchapel, and St Benedict's, Drumchapel, with an eventual reduction to two churches, one of them in Drumchapel, within 5 years.

St Columba's, Woodside will merge with St Gregory's in Wyndford and St Charles', Oratory with an eventual reduction to one church within 5 years.

St Andrew's Cathedral parish, including the Strathclyde University Chaplaincy, which is already merged with St Patrick's, Anderston, will see an eventual reduction to one church within 5 years.

St Paul's Whiteinch will be merged with St Brendan's, Yoker, with eventual reduction to one building within ten years.

No immediate change is proposed for the parish of the Immaculate Conception.

Glasgow East and North

St Michael's, Parkhead will merge with Sacred Heart, Bridgeton, St Mark's, Shettleston, St Joseph's, Tollcross, and St Joachim's, Carmyle, with future discussions on reducing provision to three buildings.

St Mary's, Calton parish will merge with St Alphonsus, St Anne's, Dennistoun, and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Dennistoun, with consultation on reducing church buildings over 5–10 years.

St Augustine's, Milton will merge with St Agnes', Lambhill, and St Teresa's, Possilpark, with an eventual reduction to one or two buildings within 5 years.

Dioceses consider future mergers



THE future structure of the Catholic Church in Scotland may look quite different after a request for the Vatican for the Bishops to consider changes to the current arrangement of eight dioceses.

The last time the diocesan structure was touched was shortly after World War II to allow for the creation of the 'new' dioceses of Paisley and Motherwell.

The current discussion centre on merging or sharing resources.

The following options are now being presented by the Bishops of Scotland for further reflection and consultation.

- **Argyll and the Isles merging with either Paisley or Glasgow**
- **Galloway merging with either Paisley or Motherwell**
- **St. Andrews and Edinburgh merging with Dunkeld**
- **A merger between Motherwell, Paisley and Galloway.**

The bishops have also said they will consider maintaining the current diocesan structures but with greater sharing and collaboration.

St Catherine's, Balornock will merge with St Aloysius', Springburn, and Immaculate Heart of Mary, with a reduction to one or two buildings within 5 years.

St Thomas, Riddrie will merge with St Bernadette's, Carntyne, and St Maria Goretti's, Cranhill with an eventual reduction to one building within 5 years.

St Paul's, Shettleston will merge with St Jude's, Barlanark, and St Barnabas', Shettleston, with an eventual reduction to one church within 5 years.

No immediate change proposed for St Philomena's.

In a statement, the Bishops said: "These are possibilities for further discernment, not decisions or an agreed map for the future."

"This is not simply a question of boundaries, administrative adjustments or the sharing of resources more effectively. Primarily it is about how we can better proclaim the Gospel, support our clergy, religious and lay people, and strengthen our parishes and communities for evangelisation."

"As your bishops, we recognise that dioceses are communities of faith with their own histories, relationships and traditions. Any change must therefore be approached with prayer, sensitivity and care for the people and communities involved."

The bishops conclude by asking people "to look beyond our own self-interests and to consider what will best serve the Catholic Church in Scotland as a whole."

Further consultation will now be held across the country before a final report is submitted to Rome.

■ **As the current edition of *Flourish* was going to press, the death was announced of Canon John McGorry, Parish Priest of St Kessog's, Balloch. A full obituary will be carried in the next edition. Requiescat in pace.**



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Picture by Paul McSherry

Stations of Resurrection shine in Cumbernauld



THE joy of the resurrection is being proclaimed in Cumbernauld through art ... and you don't even have to go inside the church to see it.

The Parish Community of Sacred Heart and St Lucy have inaugurated a *Via Lucis* (Way of light) which shows the 'stations of the resurrection' – a modern extension of the traditional *Via Crucis* or way of the cross.

Parish Priest Fr John Campbell said: "The artistic designers were Roz and Jordan from Impact Signs, a local Cumbernauld company.

"The windows in our church are our 'Via Crucis' the Way of the Cross, so when trying to brighten up our property we didn't want it just to be a paint job, but something artistic and useful. With our windows being such a feature of the building we thought of complementing them by carrying on and completing the story of redemption.

"The cross is not the whole story so we decided to create our own 'Via Lucis' the Stations of the Resurrection; the completion and continuation of the story.

"We are now part of that story today as



BY BRIAN SWANSON

we are the beneficiaries of the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the great Commission to go out and preach the good news and Baptise.

"Parishioners have commented that it has brought the church outside.

"It has attracted a lot of local interest and people coming to look at them so we have included a short guide beside each station to explain what the picture is about and also a QR code that will take people to our website, 'Catholic Cumbernauld' where they will find a set of prayers to allow them to pray their way along the 'Via Lucis'."

Fr John added: "The people have been very complimentary about the work and are very proud of it. A lovely touch was someone handed in a thank-you card to be given to the anonymous donors, who financed and organised the work, and to them we are eternally grateful.

"It's not only useful to ourselves – a busload from another parish also came to pray the stations: we hope they may be a source of quiet evangelisation and spiritual nourishment to others."

Archbishop's lesson for Primary Mass

ARCHBISHOP Nolan let his hands do the talking as he gave children a lesson on how to pray when pupils from 60 schools celebrated the first ever Primary Schools Mass in St Andrew's Cathedral.

Youngsters looked on intently as the Archbishop, with appropriate actions, said: "The thumb represents those closest to you like friends and family;

your pointing finger is for people like teachers who point you in the right direction; the next finger for those in Government who lead us; the ring finger is for those that are weak, or in trouble or pain; and the pinkie, the smallest finger, is for yourselves."

Each primary school in the Archdiocese was represented by five pupils and a staff member with music provided by a choir

from St Monica's Primary Milton.

Canon Anthony Gallagher, Director of Religious Education was celebrant.

Catriona Ward, RE advisor for primary schools in the Archdiocese said: "As they left the cathedral lots of the children were copying what the Archbishop showed them – they really took the messages to heart".

New priest for Chinese community

ACHINESE priest who has just joined the clergy team at St Andrew's Cathedral won't have any problems getting to know West of Scotland culture – for Father Bernard Zong, 47, has spent the last five years serving in parishes in Dublin.

Speaking in the Cathedral House where he will be based for the near future he told *Flourish*: "The friendly people, the culture and even the weather are the same in Ireland and Scotland – I know I'm going to be very happy here."

Universities

His main role while in Glasgow will be ministering to the spiritual needs of the Chinese community especially its young people including those studying at our universities

He said: "I have always had a fire in my heart to tell young people about Jesus – I cannot wait to begin my mission here".



Born into a devout Catholic family in Shaanxi, China, in 1979, he began his priestly studies at St Joseph's Seminary in the Diocese of Fengxiang in September 1995 and was ordained a Catholic priest on 17th December 2006.

From 2007 to 2019, Fr Bernard exercised his priestly ministry in Xi'an, Shaanxi, where he devoted twelve years to parish ministry and actively fostered young adult communities by organising

regular youth gatherings for university students. he was ordained in December 2006, served as a priest until 2019 when he left the country to learn English in the Philippines.

He next moved to Dublin where he combined parish work with further studies and gaining a PhD in Theology.

Two years ago, he was recommended to Archbishop Nolan, and the process began to bring him to Glasgow.

PHOTOS OF FAITH

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



■ Manuel "Tatay Maning" Tagle, Sr., father of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, has been laid to his final resting place.

Cardinal Tagle, who was widely considered to be 'papabile' at the most recent conclave, led the funeral Mass for his father at Imus Cathedral in the Philippines.



■ The new British Ambassador to the Holy See met Pope Leo last month as she took up her appointment. Tammy Sandhu MBE said she was "humbled and honoured to present my Letters of Credence to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. It was both a privilege and a deeply moving moment. I look forward to strengthening UK-Holy See ties and working together on the global challenges of our time." The new ambassador was previously Consul General in San Francisco. Her career has seen her deal with hostage negotiations, she has served in Iraq & Kenya, worked in Morocco, Brussels and India.

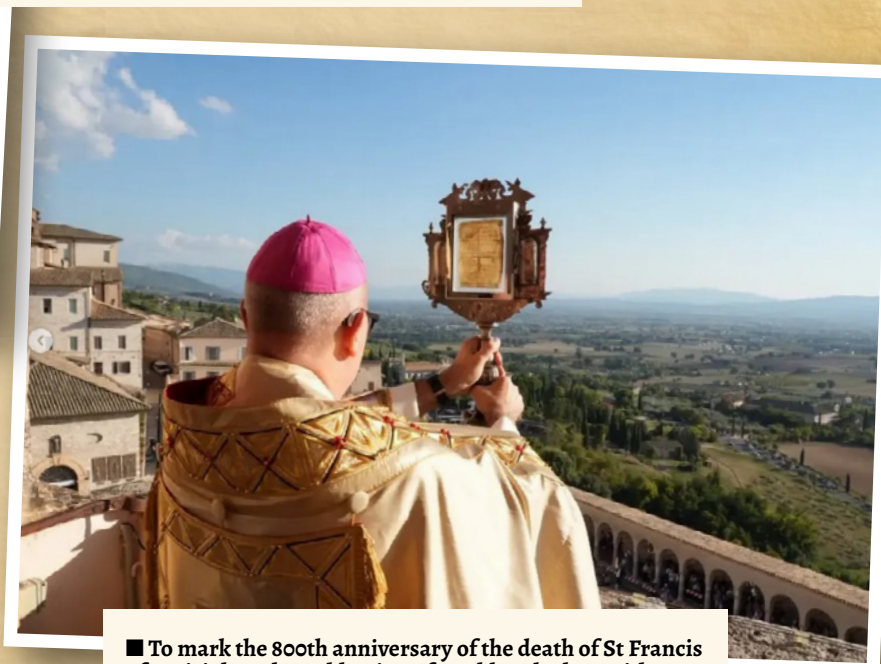


■ Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura crowns the revered statue of Our Lady of Ciminà in Calabria in southern Italy.

The crown—blessed by Pope Leo XIV—was placed on the head of the Madonna by Cardinal Mamberti before a crowd that brought together bishops from every corner of Calabria alongside the highest civil and military authorities. The new crown is made of silver and coated in 24 carat gold.



■ Even the Catholic world's best-known church needs a dusting every now and then! In the Basilica of St Peter, as in every parish in the world, there are people who make sure visitors can pray with dignity in a clean and ordered setting. Last month the columns of Bernini's baldachino above the high Altar were cleaned... but given the size of the basilica a turntable ladder was needed to reach the nooks and crannies!



■ To mark the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi the solemn blessing of world took place with Saint Francis's 'Chartula'. It was imparted by Bishop Felice Accrocca from the Basilica of Assisi, following Pontifical Vespers held for the National Celebrations of Saint Francis. The Chartula contains the handwritten prayer, blessing, and drawing composed by St Francis of Assisi for Brother Leo.

Back to the future as the ‘old’ Scots College comes to life

An extraordinary new exhibition opens in Edinburgh this month which will bring back to life the old Scots College Chapel in the heart of Rome using modern technology.

Visitors will be able to use virtual reality headsets to explore the historic heart of Rome, wander among Rome’s most iconic monuments, from the majestic ruins of the Colosseum to the unique silhouette of Piazza Navona and St Peter’s Basilica.

They can then ‘visit’ the original Scots College Chapel using the latest virtual reality systems.

Construction of the Scots College Chapel, or the Church of St Andrew of the Scots (to give the building its ‘proper’ title) began in 1644 and was completed in 1646.

It was built on what is now the Via delle Quattro Fontane adjacent to the Scots College and for centuries it was the spiritual home of Scots clergy who trained in the Eternal City and the home of the Scottish Catholic community living in Rome.

It was in use for more than three centuries until its closure in the 1960s when a new College was built on the edge of the city.

The free exhibition cel-



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

celebrates the centuries-old bond between Italy and Scotland through its focus on the Church which served as the home of the Scots community in Rome’s Baroque heart for more than 300 years.

Those coming to the exhibition can ‘visit’ the College Chapel as it was in the late 1600s, walk through its aisles, view the altar paintings, look down at the tombs and see it as it was when Archbishop Conti and Cardinal Winning stud-

ied in Rome in the 1950s.

They can also learn about how it served as the spiritual home of the Jacobites who remained loyal to Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Stewart family’s claim to the throne.

Director of the Italian Institute of Culture, Stefano De Angelis, told *Flourish*: “The exhibition combines scientific rigour and digital innovation through a 3D physical model, and dynamic multimedia content, alongside an immersive Mixed Reality experience that virtually restores the space to its 18th-century splendour.”



■ The immersive exhibition “The Church of St Andrew of the Scots alle Quattro Fontane – An immersive experience inside a hidden gem of Scotland in Rome” runs from 9 October to 18 December at the Italian Institute of Culture in Edinburgh (20-22 East London St, Edinburgh EH7 4BQ). Entrance is free, booking required. Book visit at rsvp.iicedimburgo@esteri.it

New head teachers are commissioned



The newly commissioned head teachers, left to right, are Colette Wright, St Mungo’s, Townhead, Coleen Straub, St Lucy’s Cumbernauld, Danielle Reid, St Mary’s Maryhill, Aileen Monaghan, St Paul’s Whiteinch, Martyn Glancy, St Nicholas, Bearsden. Picture by Paul McSherry

ARCHBISHOP Nolan has praised Catholic educators for their ‘steadfast commitment’ in passing on the faith to pupils.

Speaking in St Andrew’s Cathedral at the Annual Mass for Teachers and Support Staff he reminded them ‘never to lose their passion for teaching’.

The Archbishop went on: “Education, education – we are all familiar with that mantra but for all of you here tonight who are involved in education it is not a mantra, it is a passion and that is something you must never lose.”

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** “Think of all the great things that you do in the name of education – spiritually, morally and socially. And of course that brings challenges which I know you all face every day with courage and commitment. For that I thank you.”

The Mass also saw the commissioning of five newly appointed primary school heads.

At the end of the commissioning ceremony Archbishop Nolan presented each of the new head teachers with a copy of Pope Francis’ best-selling book *Happiness in This Life*.

Parliament praise for Alexandria parish centenary



A much loved Parish Priest got an unexpected surprise as he prepared to retire.

Fr Charlie McElwee, long-time Parish priest of Our Lady and St Mark’s, Alexandria was presented with a parliamentary motion recognising the centenary of the parish church.

Local MP Douglas

McAllister was behind the surprise. He said: “It was great to be at Our Lady and St Mark’s, Alexandria to join in their centenary celebrations and present Father McElwee with my parliamentary motion marking this special occasion. 100 years of faithful worship at the heart of the local community.”

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New 'Way of St Francis' launched

THE Year of St Francis has been marked by a new long-distance pilgrimage route in Italy which may eventually rival the Camino to Santiago in Spain.

The new walking route unites Italy's scattered Franciscan trails into a single camino stretching more than 1,500 kilometres.

The *Cammino di Francesco* – *Cammino della Luce* (The

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

Way of Francis – The Way of Light), is a joint project between the Church and the Italian state.

Present at the launch was tenor Andrea Bocelli who has lent his voice to the official promotional video for the route.

The new network crosses

six regions of Italy – Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Marche, Tuscany and Umbria – and includes existing trails including a stop at the sanctuary of La Verna, where St Francis is said to have received the stigmata.

Every stop and signed route leads to Assisi, the saint's birthplace and final resting place.

The routes have been

mapped and historically verified and are now listed on Italy's official tourism platform, Italia.it, giving travellers access to maps, stage-by-stage itineraries and planning tools.

As in the Santiago Camino, those making the pilgrimage can have a card stamped en route and receive a certificate on arrival in Assisi. A special certificate for accompanying dogs has also been produced!

The route was launched just before the visit of the Holy Father Pope Leo XIV to the town last month for a gathering of European young people.

Last year the Italian government voted to reinstate 4 October – the feast day of St Francis – as a national holiday in Italy to honour the country's patron saint.

■ To find out more visit: <https://www.italia.it/en/italy/things-to-do/credentials-testimonium-the-way-of-st-francis> or scan the QR code.



Singer Patti Smith's Franciscan tribute

THE year of St Francis has resulted in many surprises, but none more so than the gift of a poem to the saint of Assisi by Patti Smith the American singer-songwriter.

The singer, who recently met Pope Leo at the Vatican, is not Catholic, and indeed is regarded by many as the 'Godmother of Punk'.

But she was asked by the Franciscan community at Assisi to pen a tribute to their patron to mark this special year.

The text arrived on November 26th last year, four days after her concert in New York and three days before the electrifying finale of her tour at the Met in Philadelphia.

It is carried below.



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Where Francis walked

Lost in a forest
praying for guidance
I heard the cries
of a wolf wounded
cowering a mound
once deemed sacred

His lone whines
travelled through
the trembling night
pressing the wind
confusing my senses
darkened by disquiet

When suddenly I felt
a benevolent presence
with movement so light
so not to trample
the festival of patterns
the splendid symmetry
the kaleidoscope
of fern and flower

The sky conveyed a field
where distant lights bloomed
The stilled wind whispered
Once Francis walked here
gentle as lambs' breath

Behold! He returns
to console and calm
the desperate wolf
seething in loneliness

A chorus of tiny bells
chimed all is well
sweet as a lullaby

I was no longer lost
The moss offered a bed
The tree of love, shelter
I lay listening to the rain
yet it was not raining

Nature was weeping
all her soul entreating
with virtuous longing
Francis, come, come again
as his footsteps receded

Patti Smith

New play will bring Br Walfrid to the stage

A NEW play about Celtic founder Brother Walfrid will be premiered in Glasgow early next year telling his life story from famine in Sligo to selling a cow to pay for his passage on a coal boat to Glasgow.

The play will focus on his years as a Marist Brother.

Written by retired teacher Edmund Kelly, it covers the six-year period during which he founded Celtic, as well as the rest of his 48-year ministry in London, Kent and Dumfries.

Podcast

Edmund, a parishioner of St Helen's Langside, was inspired to write the play after listening to a podcast three years ago by Dr Michael Connolly, author of the best-selling "Walfrid: a Life of Faith, Community and Football" which began as a PhD thesis at Stirling university.

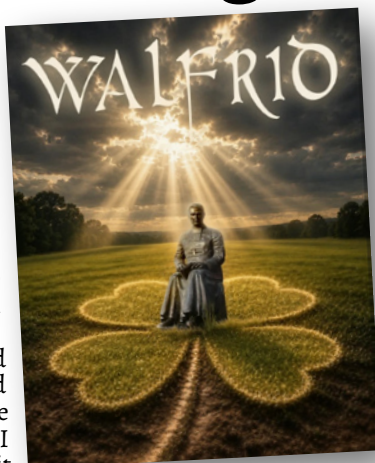
BY BRIAN SWANSON

Lifelong Celtic fan Edmund said: "Writing had always been a big hobby of mine and I was looking for a new project when I happened to listen to the podcast and the experience stopped me in my tracks.

"I had never even asked questions about Walfrid beyond Celtic and before the interview was over, I knew I just had to write it as a stage play from a Catholic witness perspective.

"It is too important to remain in an academic book – it had to be brought to a wider audience.

"Walfrid's story is, at its heart, one of outstanding Catholic witness. It is faith, hope, and charity in practice, and reads like a Victorian Acts of the Apostles, with a fair amount of foot-



ball and song."

Michael said: "Edmund told me he was writing the play and I was very happy to help in any way.

"When he sent me a copy of the finished script I was just blown away. It's absolutely brilliant – he has made a wonderful job of bringing Brother Walfrid's story to life and I can't wait to see it on stage."

Hyndland

The play is produced by Arts Enigma Productions, and will be staged from March 11th to 14th 2027 at Cottiers Theatre, Hyndland Street, Glasgow.

By happy co-incidence the theatre is not far from the former Marist Brothers' House – now converted into luxury flats – where Michael carried out much of his early research for his book and where Edmund regularly attended prayer meetings in the past.

Plans for Walfrid chapel at Sacred Heart parish

BROTHER Walfrid – the Irish religious who founded Celtic – is to be remembered in the church he served back in the 1880s.

Parishioners at Sacred Heart in Bridgeton took advantage of the fact that a side chapel needed re-decorating to provide an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable connection between the parish and Brother Walfrid.

The suggestion was made that, following the works, the chapel could be rededicated as the 'Brother Walfrid Memorial Sacred Heart Chapel'.

They posted their idea on Facebook and were so encouraged by the response that they have decided to go ahead with the idea.

One of the organisers said: "We are delighted to confirm that we are now proceeding with the refurbishment and re-decoration of our side chapel.

"Our insurance claim will cover part of the cost, but we still need to raise a significant amount to complete the project.

"The work will include repairing and repainting the side chapel and, most importantly, creating a fitting memorial to Brother Walfrid, including securing a large portrait of him to place in the chapel.

"We believe this will become a beautiful and meaningful space for prayer, reflection and remembrance

Artist's impression of the new chapel



BY RONNIE CONVERY

—celebrating the remarkable life and

legacy of Brother Walfrid and his connection with our parish."

The parishioners have set up a donations campaign to see the project through to completion and a campaign leaflet has been produced, which was distributed at Masses.

Brother Walfrid was born Andrew Kerins in County Sligo, Ireland. After joining the Marist Brothers, he was appointed in 1874 as the first headmaster of Sacred Heart School.

While serving at Sacred Heart, Brother Walfrid saw the hardship faced by many families in

Glasgow's East End, particularly within the Irish Catholic immigrant community. Children were growing up amid poverty, hunger, unemployment and overcrowded living conditions.

He established the "Penny Dinner" scheme, giving children a hot and nourishing meal for just one penny. For families who could not afford even that small amount, the meal was provided free of charge.

Brother Walfrid was not only the first headmaster of the parish school; his work at Sacred Heart helped inspire a lasting response to poverty, and his vision ultimately contributed to the foundation of Celtic Football Club.

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International Mass at Maryhill

THE word Catholic means 'universal' and no one is more aware of it than the parishioners of Immaculate Conception parish.

The Maryhill parish has a congregation regularly made up of 27 different nationalities and this rich diversity was at the heart of their International Mass last month.

After the inspiring liturgy there was an international buffet where families from around the world brought food, faith and stories to the table.

Parish Priest, Fr Jim Lawlor said: "Scotland is a far richer country when we embrace the diversity of all the people who made this their home. For whatever reason they've ended up here, as new Scots they



enrichen us – they are not refugees or asylum seekers, they are a blessing.

"Many of us have roots in Ireland, many of us are here because of hunger, because of the Famine; people fleeing, looking for food and stability.

This Parish was founded for just that reason in 1851 and we proudly want to continue to be the Parish that acknowledges our roots by welcoming the new refugees.

"Together we can make a better world when we are

together acknowledging our sisters and brothers irrespective of nationality."

The Mass was supported by SCIAF – the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, as charity close to Fr Jim's heart and those of his congregation.

"Here we call ourselves a SCIAF Parish. As a community here we are committed to what SCIAF does, but SCIAF touches the whole world. We are really proud that through our international aid agency we can send our love and our fraternity and solidarity to all the people of this planet."

The international buffet was also a hit.

Fr Jim said: "It all became quite competitive. 'Our burritos are better than your haggis pakora' and 'our chicken biryani is better than your empanadas!'

"It was lovely to see and really, really tasty."

When a saint gives you a book you don't hide it in a glass case...

THERE are some encounters in a priest's life which, at the time, seem almost too slight to deserve the name of an event. Sometimes, however, Providence has other ideas.

Shortly after my ordination to the priesthood, on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul in 1969, my mother and I went to Dublin.

We attended a Holy Hour at the Carmelite Church, conducted by Bishop Fulton Sheen. The bishop reminded his listeners that the priest must have an interior strength if he is to meet the pressures and difficulties of the world without being mastered by them.

There is, after all, little point in a man attempting to put the world to rights if he has not first allowed Christ to put something of himself to rights.

At the end of the devotion, Bishop Sheen processed down the aisle. As he passed me, he stopped. "Are you a student?" he asked. "No, Your Excellency," I replied. "I have just been ordained a priest." We spoke for a few moments. That was all...

Or, at least, that was all that I knew was happening. I had no reason to suppose that a brief conversation with a bishop was going to become one of the small landmarks of my priesthood. Yet it did.

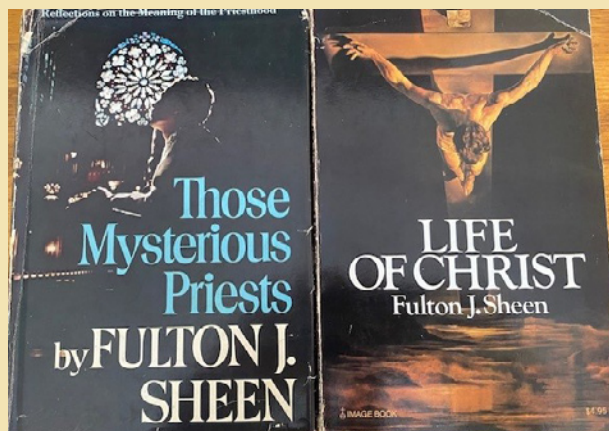
Bishop Sheen told his secretary to take down my address. A fortnight or so later, a parcel arrived from the United States. Inside were two books by Bishop Sheen: *Life of Christ* and *Those Mysterious Priests*. But there was something more. Each bore a handwritten inscription from the bishop himself. In *Life of Christ* he had written: "To Father Thomas J. Monaghan in gratitude for your prayers. Fraternally in Christ. + Fulton J. Sheen."

And in *Those Mysterious Priests*: "To My Brother Priest Father Thomas J. Monaghan A tribute of esteem and gratitude. Fraternally in Christ, + Fulton J. Sheen."

I have kept the books ever since, and they have remained, in their mod-



Mgr Tom Monaghan



est way, a treasured possession. Recently I showed them to a friend. He looked at the books. Then he looked at me. And he pointed out that I had made a serious mistake. I had allowed them to be read. Had I preserved them in pristine condition, he suggested, they might now be worth a considerable sum.

But it occurred to me that Blessed Fulton Sheen might not be especially pleased if the books he had sent to a newly ordained priest had spent the intervening years sitting safely upon a shelf, protected from the untidy attentions of human beings.

Books

The books have been read. Not merely by me, but by other people as well. Their pages have been turned, their spines bear creases and they have the unmistakable signs of having fulfilled the purpose for which books were invented.

And surely Bishop Sheen would have preferred that. A book about Christ is a rather curious object if nobody reads it. A book about the priesthood is hardly improved by being kept beyond the reach of priests.

A priest is not ordained to become a perfectly preserved specimen. He is sent out into the untidiness of human life: into hospitals

and schools, houses and churches, into the happy occasions and the miserable ones. The priest, like the Gospel he preaches, is intended to be used.

And perhaps this is why I have never been greatly troubled by the condition of those two books. Their little imperfections are not signs that they have been neglected. They are signs that they have been loved.

I sometimes wonder what Bishop Sheen would say if he could see those books now. I suspect he might smile at the suggestion that I should have kept them in a glass case. He was, after all, a preacher. And preachers do not spend their lives putting words into glass cases. They give them away.

So, I shall continue to treasure those two books—not because they might someday be worth something in the marketplace, but because they remind me of something that is worth considerably more. They remind me of a few minutes in a Dublin church in 1969; of the kindness of a great bishop to a young priest he had never met before; and of the simple truth that the priest who wishes to bring Christ into the world must first learn to remain close to Him.

A book is not meant to be kept in a glass case. Especially if it's a book about Christ.

Sr Evelyn's 25 years of service



AVOCATION born in Africa and currently blossoming in Scotland was joyfully celebrated in Glasgow last month at a Thanksgiving Mass for Sister Evelyn Okonta, a sister of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, marking 25 years since her first profession.

She is one of three sisters from the same order based in St Bernardette's Presbytery, Carntyne, who left their Nigerian home two years ago and came to work for the Archdiocese.

Sister Evelyn now works in St Francis Care Home, Sister Immaculata at St Andrew's secondary school, and Sister Felicia for the RE department of the Archdiocese focusing on primary schools.

Their hard work, commitment and unswerving faith since their time here was warmly praised by Archbishop Nolan during the well-attended Mass in St Thomas, Riddrie.

Reflecting on the past 25 years Sr Evelyn told *Flourish*: "I see a journey guided by God's loving hand, one that has shaped who I am and continues to form the

person I strive to become.

"Over the years, I have been blessed with opportunities to serve in a variety of ministries and today, I continue this journey in Glasgow.

"My time here has been a great blessing. I have found the people to be warm, welcoming, and kind-hearted,

and their friendliness has made Glasgow a memorable part of my vocation journey.

"This Jubilee is not simply a celebration of 25 years in religious life; it is a celebration of God's unwavering faithfulness. After 25 years, my heart can only say: 'Thus far, the Lord has been faithful to me.'"

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Caritas journey begins at St Mary's



FINAL year pupils from Catholic secondary schools in the archdiocese began their Caritas journey with an inspiring message of encouragement from Archbishop ... using a mobile phone.

Addressing this year's cohort of 700 pupils at a Caritas commissioning service in St Mary's Calton, he held his own mobile aloft and said: "We all know how much we depend on phone like these but when they run out of charge, you'd be as well with a brick (which he then held aloft) until you re-charge them."

"So it must be with your spirituality – you must keep it charged at all times, throughout your Caritas journey and as you continue to encounter Jesus on your journey through life as well."

After he offered prayers for them they stood to make their commissioning promise with the response of "With God as my help, I will."

A pupil representative from each Secondary school across the Archdiocese, along with a member of staff brought their badges to the sanctuary where they were blessed by the Archbishop.

The 2027 Caritas Awards ceremony will take place at the Clyde Auditorium on Tuesday June 1st.

Phoenix choir to make St Peter's debut



THE acclaimed Glasgow Phoenix Choir is to hold its first ever concert in the magnificently refurbished St Peter's Church, in Partick, later this month, in aid of the restoration of the original church organ.

The concert organisers promise a rich variety of choral excellence from a choir whose voices have been heard everywhere from the BBC Proms, Celtic Connections, as well as touring throughout Europe, Canada and America.

Since it was founded 76 years ago the choir has raised over £1.75 million for charity and the eagerly awaited event at St Peter's is expected to give a significant boost to help meet the cost of what will be the organ's second restoration since its installation in 1916.

The recently completed two-year refurbishment is credited with not just restoring the great red sandstone church in Hyndland Street to its former glory but exceeding it.

The concert takes place at 2:30 on Saturday 24th October, with tickets costing £10 and no charge for under 12s.

Tickets are available from St Peter's or WeGotTickets via the choir's website at www.phoenixchoir.org

BY BRIAN SWANSON

www.franciscanvocations.org.uk

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A few friends of Collemacchia are getting together to repair and bring back to life the little church in the borgo of Collemacchia. At present, it is locked up, not being used, looking neglected and has a leak from the roof due to a broken roof tile.

It is intended to: repair the roof leak, renew the windows (just 3 of) and front door, paint outside and inside, rewire, clean and polish the bell. When all done, it is intended to have the church open during the day and have Mass said for the feast day and special intentions. With the parish priest's blessing, used for other community events.

If you'd like to help, there is a Just Giving link <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/kevin-feeney-4> or the QR code to make a donation. If you'd like to know more, please contact me: Kevin Feeney (kevin.feeney137@icloud.com)



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ST JOHN OGILVIE JUBILEE

Celebrations mark golden jubilee of the canonisation of John Ogilvie



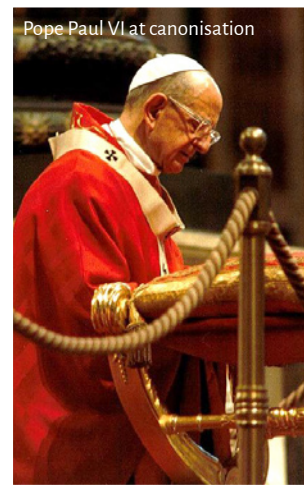
National Shrine at St Aloysius

BY BRIAN SWANSON

YOUNG seminarians from the Scots College in Rome created their own lifetime memories when they acted as servers at the Mass of John Ogilvie's canonisation.

Some went on to serve as priests in the Archdiocese of Glasgow or in other dioceses, while others took different paths in life, but in St Peter's Basilica, on the morning of Sunday October 17, 1976, they stood a heartbeat away from the future Saint Pope Paul VI as they acted as altar servers.

They included Father Alfie McKenzie, who held the Pope's mitre that day, and now works in the estates department of the Archdiocese combined with his other responsibilities which include editing both the *Western Cal-*



Pope Paul VI at canonisation

endar and the *Catholic Directory for Scotland*.

Canon Peter Gallacher, 73, who retired last year as parish priest from Christ the King, King's Park, after 26 years said: "One of the most abiding memories for me was when we gathered near

Michelangelo's Pietà in St Peter's Basilica waiting for the Pope to lead us out.

"Then he appeared and for me, a 23-year-old from Dumbarton, in my second year, to be so close to the Holy Father was just wonderful.

"It's different for students now who are seen regularly with the Pope but in our day it was different. So being there with the Holy Father on such an occasion left a lasting impression."

Drama

The Pope's Missal was held by Paul Laverty, who went on to become a TV script writer and close collaborator of veteran film director Ken Loach, whose award-winning films expose social injustice through drama.

Fr Michael MacDonald, Parish Priest of St Michael's Ardkeneth, South Uist was

also a server at the Papal altar and reflected on the day itself and the legacy of the canonisation.

"On the day itself, the only things that I remember vividly are meeting the Pope and receiving Holy Communion from him. I have always had a deep devotion to Saint Paul VI, and this was an emotionally and devotionally overwhelming moment.

"There was a pilgrimage from the Islands, which came for the Canonisation, and as a student, I spent a great deal of time with them, as a guide, and I made many friendships which have lasted a lifetime.

"Each year on holiday I visit close friends of mine in the northeast of Scotland. I love to celebrate Mass with the small Sunday congregation at St Thomas's, Keith, which, you could say, is the

northern shrine to Saint John Ogilvie. The people gathered for Mass are a multi-cultural group: Indians, Filipinos, local people. Small numbers – yes, but the liturgy is vibrant, and everyone is involved.

"What I see and what I take part in convinces me that Saint John Ogilvie's martyrdom for religious freedom – his prayers for our country – are in the Providence of God and are leading to the formation of new groups of the People of God; groups with their lives centred on the Eucharist and the gifts which it brings, that very Eucharist which Saint John Ogilvie died for."

Pope Paul's words on the day of the canonisation are worth recalling. He spoke haltingly in English at the beginning and reverted to Italian for the main section of his long homily.

He said: "We have great joy in being able to announce to all of God's pilgrim Church on earth the glorious name of a new Saint, that of John Ogilvie, who died a martyr in Glasgow, on 10 March 1615, and who has already been accorded the honour of beatification by our venerable predecessor Pope Pius XI, on 22 December 1929..."

Heroic

He returned to English for his final words:

"We are happy to recognise in this sympathetic and heroic figure of a man, a saint and a martyr, the symbol of your own religious, strong and generous land.

"And in Saint John Ogilvie we willingly greet a glorious champion of your people, an ideal exemplar of your past history, a magnificent inspiration



Anniversary timetable

THE 50th anniversary of the canonisation of Scotland's only post-reformation martyr is an occasion for celebration ... and nowhere more so than in Glasgow where the saint was executed.

A rich programme of events is planned to mark the occasion, bringing together the City Council, the Archdiocese and the Jesuit Order.

Among the events planned:

- A lecture on the saint's life to be delivered by leading Jesuit scholar from America, Fr Thomas Flowers SJ
- A Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving in St Aloysius Church, Garnethill, at which Archbishop Nolan will be the main celebrant.
- A Civic Reception in the City Chambers with special guests from around the world.

Meanwhile the anniversary is to have a permanent

legacy with a new online resource being finalised to offer scholars and the merely curious a state-of-the-art insight into the life and times of the young Jesuit martyr.

The new website is at <https://ogilvie.staloyusglasgow.org/>

An enthusiastic and hardworking organising committee based at St Aloysius, the only Jesuit Church in the archdiocese, is working hard on the new online resource so that future generations can delve deeply into the world of St John Ogilvie whose national shrine was established in the church in 1933, four years after he was beatified.

Researchers have uncovered a large quantity of archive material, much of which has never been seen before, from Jesuit sources, the Archdiocese of Glasgow and Aberdeen Diocese.

The archive will also include photographs, and reports by Catholic newspapers – including *Flourish* – of the Canonisation Mass in Rome on October 17, 1976.



The first ever edition of *Flourish* reported the Church's recognition of the miracle attributed to the then Blessed John Ogilvie

New portrait of saint will be unveiled

THE striking image of St John Ogilvie (left) which was painted for the renovation of St Andrew's Cathedral by top artist, Peter Howson, has won wide acclaim and is instantly recognised as capturing the saint at the point of martyrdom.

Now a new portrait of St John Ogilvie is to be unveiled to mark the canonisation anniversary.

Painted by Gerard M Burns, widely regarded as one of Scotland's foremost artists, it will be seen in public for the first time later this month when it will be unveiled at a civic reception in Glasgow City Chambers

honouring Scotland's only post-reformation saint.

The new image will be permanently displayed in Saint Aloysius College where Gerard was principal teacher of art for 12 years.

The new painting, paid for by an anonymous donor, will show a young Fr Ogilvie in the early stages of his priestly ministry – quite different from the traditional images of the saint at the gallows.

Gerard said: "I approached this painting in the context of someone coming to it for the first time and

imagining that person maybe not knowing the back story.

"We wanted to create something that would be lasting to celebrate the anniversary, but we cannot know at this stage how this painting will be received.

"But when people bring themselves to artworks they bring their own context, so it very likely that people will see things in this painting that we have not seen."

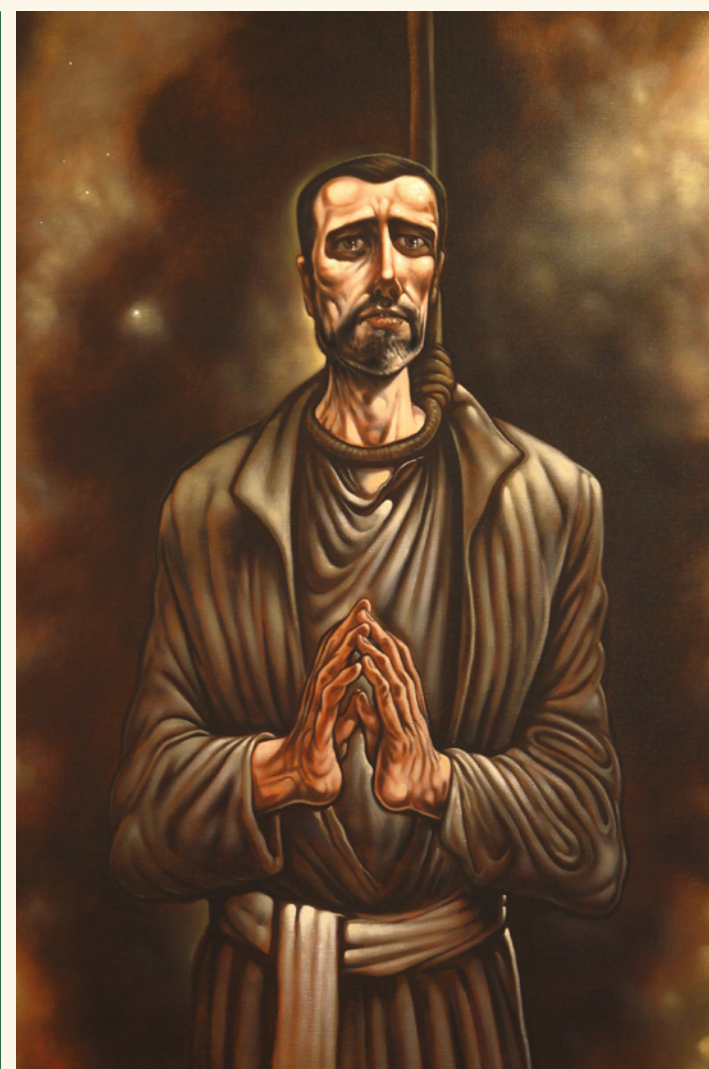
The painting will be displayed with a written explanation and a QR code alongside telling the story of the saint's life and martyrdom.

ST JOHN OGILVIE SJ (1579–1615)

SCOTLAND'S ONLY CANONISED POST-REFORMATION MARTYR

A TIMELINE OF TEN KEY MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF SAINT JOHN OGILVIE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4 JULY 1579 Drum-na-Keith, Banffshire, Scotland	1592 Helmstedt, Germany	1596 Louvain, Belgium	5 NOVEMBER 1599 Brno, Moravia	1610 Paris, France	NOVEMBER 1613 Glasgow, Scotland	14 OCTOBER 1614 Glasgow, Scotland	10 MARCH 1615 Glasgow Cross	22 DECEMBER 1929 St Peter's, Rome	17 OCTOBER 1976 St Peter's, Rome
BIRTH John Ogilvie, eldest son of Sir Walter Ogilvie, was born on 4 July 1579 (traditionally recorded). He was raised as a Calvinist in the Scotland of the Reformation.	EDUCATION At about 13, John was sent to the Continent for his education. Exposure to the religious controversies of Reformation Europe profoundly influenced his search for the truth.	CONVERSION At the age of 17, Ogilvie was received into the Catholic Church while studying at the Scots College. He continued his studies with the Benedictines and Jesuits.	JESUIT NOVITIATE Ogilvie entered the Society of Jesus, beginning his Jesuit novitiate. He subsequently undertook years of study and teaching in central Europe and France.	ORDINATION Ordained a Jesuit priest in 1610. He then continued his studies and prepared for the dangerous mission in Scotland.	RETURN TO SCOTLAND Ogilvie secretly returned to Scotland, travelling in disguise. He ministered clandestinely to Catholics, celebrating Mass and hearing confessions despite the penal laws.	ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT Ogilvie was arrested after being betrayed. During months of interrogation and brutal treatment he refused to reveal the names of Catholics or to recognise the King's authority over spiritual matters.	MARTYRDOM Convicted of high treason, Ogilvie was hanged at Glasgow Cross. He was about 36 years old. His final testimony was that he was dying "for religion alone."	BEATIFICATION Beatified by Pope Pius XI. The first process for his beatification began in 1628–29, but the cause remained incomplete for centuries before being successfully revived and concluded in 1929.	CANONISATION Canonised by Pope Saint Paul VI. The healing of John Fagan in 1967, after prayers through Blessed John Ogilvie's intercession, was accepted as the miracle required for canonisation.



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Mission Sunday means love in action

St Vincent De Paul once said: "Love is inventive to infinity." The love, care and support provided by the Vincentian Fathers in Albania is proof of that.

Despite the fall of Communism in 1991, the scars of living under a brutal regime are still visible today and the Vincentian Fathers there have to deal with historical trauma, violence, drug addiction, poverty and homelessness.

Yet, Fr Agustin Margjoni—Superior of the Vincentians in the country and National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Albania—remains undeterred as he talks about a new men's refuge the Vincentians run and which Missio Scotland is supporting.

"Over the past few years, we have welcomed several men into our house," Fr Agustin explained.

"Some have found housing and started a new life; some have reconciled with their families and sadly one or two have returned to prison because they made

BY **GERARD GOUGH**

bad choices."

It was in a prison that fellow Vincentian,

Fr Luigi Cannato, encountered Maximillian Fushë, a bright, intelligent, young man of 26, who had fallen on hard times.

Before he was born, Max's grandmother had been murdered by his grandfather. Max's mother witnessed this. Her trauma didn't end in childhood though.

Abandoned

She met Max's father, and they started their own family but Max's father's family were never happy with the arrangement, claiming their son could have chosen a wife with higher social status.

They did their best to break Max's family up and eventually succeeded when his father abandoned them.

Max, his brother and his mother were practically homeless seeking shelter variously in an orphanage, a squat, abandoned train carriages and in parks where



Max and Fr Luigi

his mother would put cardboard down on the ground in winter as basic protection from the snow.

Max left school early to try and be the head of the family, but the burden took its toll. After issues with drugs and a violent altercation with his brother, following their mother's death, he found himself in prison. This is where Fr Luigi and the Vincentians came in.

"I met Fr Luigi for the first time in prison," Max recalled. "He was so kind to me and he said: 'you can come and stay with us.' He

trusted in me. He saw more in me than I did in myself. He helped me get better.

"Now I am free of drugs and I am working on having a better relationship with myself and with God."

Max sees a better future for himself, in which he has a family, gives back to others and makes his late mother proud. The love Max still feels for his mother is also 'inventive to infinity'.

"My mum was basically my idol," Max said. "My childhood was about trying to make her proud. She was my understanding of love,

sacrifice and everything.

"If I could have had one gift as a child, it would have been to see her happy and not crying anymore.

"When I was eight, I came home from school and overheard her in the kitchen asking my brother how they would feed me. So, I took my bike, sold it for €10 and bought food with it. I told my mother I had crashed my bike and someone who saw me crying had given me the money to compensate me. I never told her the truth, because I didn't want her to feel bad.

Determined

"You can't change your childhood, regardless of how bad it was, but I am very positive for the future and I'm still determined to make her proud."

Max and several others will be housed at the new men's refuge, which boasts space for the men to live and work. It will also be staffed by healthcare professionals who can deal with mental health issues.

Missio Scotland is proud to be supporting this project

that will assist the men who pass through its doors. Fr Agustin, meanwhile, was fulsome in his praise of Missio Scotland for providing much-needed assistance.

"It feels like the hand of God reaching out to us," Fr Agustin enthused. "At exactly the moment when we need to begin this work, help has arrived.

"Knowing that people in Scotland are thinking about us and standing beside us as we try to serve the poorest people gives us enormous encouragement.

"The Church is one family. That is exactly what this partnership shows. Those who have a little more are helping those who have a little less. That is how the Church should be.

"For Scotland to work closely with us in helping the poor here in Albania means a great deal. We are sincerely grateful and I will pray for all of you. God bless you."

To read about Missio Scotland's work in Albania visit: www.missioscotland.com/blog

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

The quiet power of oral health

BY **DR PHILIP J FRIEL** BDS
BSc(HONS, MEDSCI) MFDS
RCS (EDIN) MRCPS (GLAS)
MCGDENT
CLINICAL DIRECTOR -
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health.

Winter can also be an ideal time to seek advice about persistent discomfort, bleeding gums, damaged teeth or changes to your smile, allowing concerns to be assessed before they become more complex.

Caring for our smiles is ultimately an investment in comfort, confidence and overall wellbeing. By using the quieter winter months to address issues and strengthen everyday habits, we can begin the new year with a healthier foundation.

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Extraordinary success of Pope Leo’s visit to France

POPE Leo XIV’s four-day visit to France last month saw scenes that few could have anticipated.

From Paris to Lourdes and finally Metz, the Pope encountered extraordinary crowds – prompting even the secular French press to marvel at the strength of the response.

His visit started in Paris, where an estimated 800,000 people filled the Champs-Élysées and Place de la Concorde for an open-air Mass. The crowd stretched along the two-kilometre route, with people cheering, waving Vatican flags and bringing children forward to receive the Pope’s blessing.

Le Monde described the vast gathering as “a demonstration of the Pope’s ability to draw huge crowds” while other reports noted that many present were not practising Catholics – or were not Catholic at all.

The Pope then travelled south to Lourdes, where he prayed at the Grotto of the Apparitions and celebrated

BY RONNIE CONVERY Mass at the sanctuary. The Marian shrine, visited by millions of pilgrims every year, provided a profoundly different setting from the grandeur of Paris: a place of prayer, healing and quiet devotion.

There, Pope Leo XIV launched an appeal that he said was “particularly close to my heart, here in this place.”

Rosary

Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette in the Grotto of Lourdes with a Rosary and guided her in prayer, the Pope said he hoped all Christians will pray the Rosary especially during the month of October.

He called for them to pray the Rosary “with the particular intention that wars may cease and that peace may be established among peoples in conflict.”

“Let us accompany this prayer with concrete acts of penance and mercy, com-

mitting ourselves always to fostering dialogue and reconciliation,” he said.

His final destination was Metz where Pope Leo placed his message within the wider story of Europe.

In a city associated with Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of European integration, and a candidate for canonisation, he called for peace, dialogue and unity. Some 35,000 people gathered for his final events, while an inter-religious meeting brought together representatives of different faith traditions.

As the Pope departed France, the remarkable crowds left one unmistakable impression. In a nation often portrayed as increasingly secular, hundreds of thousands had come simply to see and hear the successor of St Peter.

For the Church in France, it was a moment of encouragement – and perhaps a reminder that, beneath the statistics, the thirst for faith remains very much alive.





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OASIS

Nourish your soul with our monthly spirituality supplement

The story of my priestly vocation

In telling his faith story, C.S. Lewis shares that at the moment of his conversion, he was “the most reluctant convert in the history of Christianity”.

That phrase spoke to me recently when I celebrated the 60th anniversary of making my first vows as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. I was 18 then, far too young by today's assessment to be making that kind of commitment.

But I wasn't too young. Intuitively, I knew what I was signing up for. I wasn't starry-eyed and unaware that taking religious vows is a serious business. The decision I made to enter religious life with the hope of becoming a priest was the most difficult decision I have ever made in life and wasn't predicated on a natural attraction to that vocation.

The opposite. That was something I didn't want, but something I felt called to and not morally free to resist. I was a reluctant novice, but there because of God's compulsion.

Until one month before I entered novitiate, I resisted the call, planning instead to



Scribblings of the spirit

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

go to university to become a psychologist. I made the decision to pursue religious life and the priesthood during the summer immediately after my high school graduation.

During that summer I worked on a farm and spent long hours alone on a tractor working in fields. During those long hours alone, a tension that I had long suppressed began to build up in me, namely, one between my natural desire regarding my choice in life and a call, a compulsion, inside me that simply would not go away, calling me to the priesthood. Eventually I gave in. I said yes to that call.

So, at the tender age of 17, I made the most difficult (but paradoxically, the clearest, freest, and most life-giving) decision I have ever

made. And as I look back on it now, 61 years later, I see it as pure grace.

There have been some difficult times, but there have been no regrets. From day one, I knew that this was right for me.

The renowned novelist Morris West published his autobiography sometime after his 70th birthday. It's a slim little volume entitled *A View From the Ridge* and begins with these words: When you reach the age of 70 there should only be three phrases left in your vocabulary: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

I'm over 70 now and were I to write an autobiography, like Morris West, I would begin with the words: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

I remember clearly that day of my vows. My moth-

er and father were there, proud of me. I have a cherished photo of them with me, made even more precious because both of them, still young, died within the next six years. As well, I have 60 years of cherished friendship with some of my fellow novices – a couple of them who were even younger than me.

And so, in celebrating this anniversary, I want to say thank you.

Anniversary

First, to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for accepting me and providing me with support, good community, friendship, exceptional educational opportunities, and with grace-filled, life-giving ministries.

In these years, I estimate that I have lived in community with over 400 different men. That wasn't always without its tensions, but it was always supportive and life-giving – and full of the kind of healthy banter that breathes oxygen into a room.

As well, a huge thanks to my family, a large amorphous tribe, now spanning

three generations. We have managed to stay close, despite distance, and I have always felt their unfailing support. They are still an anchor, a home, which helps steady me when things get confusing.

Next, a huge thank you to the untold number of people, friends and others, whom I have met in ministry. I was ordained sacramentally by a bishop but have been continually re-ordained by the people in my life. They've shown me what priesthood means. The highlights in my priesthood have been hearing the word “thank you” from people with whom I have had the privilege of being with.

Finally, the biggest thank you of all to God. Thank you for calling me. Thank you for the compulsion and the persistence in that call, for knowing what was best for me. Thank you for sustaining me during some difficult, obsessive, and depressive periods in my ministry. Thank you for staying with me all these years.

Indeed, God's compulsion is our liberation – and pure grace.

Seasons of life marked in the parish community



Mary's musings

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

WE'RE gearing up for a new arrival this month. The cutest wee two year old and her glorious wildwoman sister, who is nearly 4, are preparing to welcome a new sibling.

Their parents are in the minority in choosing not to find out the sex of the baby so we're taking bets on what the stork will bring. With 5 grandsons and 5 granddaughters already, this baby will tip the scales.

Zagazoo, the character in Quentin Blake's children's book, has made so much of an impact on the girls they're determined that's what baby will be named. Fortunately it's been met with a parental veto.

Boy or girl, whatever they are called, one thing is for sure, they will have a full social calendar.

Today's children have more active social lives than their parents. Once mum and dad have co-ordinated the logistics and ferried them here, there, and everywhere, they are too exhausted to think about much else than a night on the couch.

There's Toddlers Group where on a dreich day it's dog-eat-dog for a spot before the numbers hit their ceiling and the doors close. You've got Bounce and Rhyme for babies and swimming lessons for when they are old enough.

The girls' Monday trip is to the Catholic Mothers Pray and Play which currently meets in St Vincent's, Thornliebank, and I hear it's a morning well spent.

Before any of this, they



are welcomed into the faith and the life of the parish. More and more I see how parish life is a microcosm of life itself. It holds the breadth of human experience from new life to death and everything else in between.

From babes in arms, through the terrible twos, to the truculent teenagers, many of whom fall away from attending Mass. Later on it's weddings and baptisms and the circle begins again as parents carry their

newborns in to Mass to the delight of fellow parishioners.

When the time comes the dying are accompanied and the bereaved consoled.

Recently at a weekday Mass we shared the joy of a couple attending who were celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary at the altar where they had made their vows.

As happy as that occasion was we were reeling from the sudden death of Deacon Jim Kernaghan. He was

an ever-present fixture at St Peter's and, prior to the fire, at St Simon's. Like the long married couple he had a deep sense of belonging to the parish.

His coffin lay in the front of the altar at which he had assisted for so long. In a poignant mark of the circle of life his remains rested close to the baptismal font he had been carried to by his parents as a newborn. And it was from there he was carried to his final resting place.

The parish is its own little reflection of the wider world, but it is anchored by a hope and a faith that that is all too absent from the world in general.

Side by side we sit in this sacred space woven together. We ask after the familiar faces we haven't seen for a while. Those absent through illness, because their time has come or simply because they've moved away are written into the fabric of the parish.

From the first arrival to the final farewell the parish is there to remind us we belong to each other.

ART OF THE MONTH

Art and prayer can calm storms of life

JACOPO Tintoretto's 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee' captures the drama of faith. Created during the Italian Renaissance, he transforms a biblical story into a vivid scene of danger, uncertainty and of hope.

At its centre is Jesus Christ, raising his hand towards his apostles as they struggle to control their boat amid turbulent waters.

Tintoretto places the viewer directly in the middle of the storm. The boat appears vulnerable against the enormous waves, while the apostles strain to keep it under control.

Their physical struggle reflects a deeper emotional and spiritual crisis. The figure of Christ provides a striking contrast. While the apostles are caught in the chaos of the sea, Christ raises his hand with an authoritative gesture. His presence introduces a sense of calm and reassurance into the scene.

The gesture can be understood as a reminder of divine power and protection: even when circumstances

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

appear overwhelming, faith offers the possibility of hope. The boat and its occupants seem to be pushed and pulled by the movement of the water, creating a strong sense of instability.

The storm can represent the trials and uncertainties that people encounter in life. The apostles' fear and struggle may resonate with us. We may not face the same physical danger, but we all experience moments when life feels unpredictable or beyond our control. The combination of physical and spiritual tension gives the painting its lasting impact.

The artist invites us to consider what faith means when we are surrounded by uncertainty.

The apostles represent human vulnerability, while Christ represents the possibility of reassurance amid the storm. The dramatic imagery speaks to anyone who has experienced fear, struggle or uncertainty—and to

the enduring human desire to find strength and hope in difficult times.

More than a depiction of a storm at sea, the painting is a meditation on faith under pressure.

In that powerful contrast lies the painting's enduring message: even in the midst of life's greatest storms, hope can still be found.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

Lord Jesus Christ, when the storms of life surround us and our hearts are filled with fear, help us to remember that You are always near. Strengthen our faith when we feel overwhelmed, calm our troubled hearts, and guide us safely through every trial.

May we trust in Your loving presence and never lose hope. Amen.



The death penalty brings shame upon humanity

AT 8am on the morning of August 13, 1964, the last executions took place in the UK.

Peter Anthony Allen and Gwynne Owen Evans had been found guilty of murdering John Alan West while they were carrying out a robbery in Cumberland.

The last woman to be hanged was Ruth Ellis, who died in Holloway Prison in 1955.

Four months after her death, a Private Members Bill was introduced in parliament to abolish the death penalty. By 1957, there were restrictions being introduced under which Ruth Ellis would never have died – the new defence of “diminished responsibility” would have prevented that ultimate punishment.

Pardon

She was granted a posthumous conditional pardon in July this year because serious mitigating circumstances were not considered, including the fact that the judge directed the jury to ignore all references to



Marian Pallister

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

her having been subjected to serious and prolonged gender violence and told court officials not to record those details.

I hope her grandchildren got some form of closure.

The UK's capital punishment laws continued in relation to treason and military crimes until 1998, but in 2004, the UK ratified Protocol 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights, totally banning the death penalty even in wartime.

We can't feel smug about that ratification. Somebody's gran, who had been physically and emotionally abused by her partner – the man she eventually turned on and murdered – died a hideous death just 71 years ago. An uncivilised punish-

ment, sometimes wrongly carried out, needs to be on our collective conscience.

Which is why I was deeply moved to hear Dr Ogarit Younam, an expert in non-violence, education, sectarianism, human rights and gender-based discrimination, talking with pride about the abolition in her native Lebanon of the death penalty on August 11, 2025.

Barbaric

This is a country invaded by Israel, host to thousands of Syrian refugees despite its financial crisis, with a past that includes civil war that tore communities apart from 1975 to 1990 – and yet in the midst of all of that, it has legislated to end humanity's most barbaric punishment.



Ogarit, with her colleague Walid Al Salibi, were hugely instrumental in taking the Middle Eastern country to that point.

An academic who has campaigned for a nonviolent culture (a pillar of Pax Christi's work internationally) since 1983, Ogarit is rightly proud of that achievement.

Ending the death penalty

was not her only goal.

Her major project over the past four decades has led to establishing a University of Nonviolence.

Now, she told an online meeting of Pax Christi International delegates, there are Universities of Nonviolence in several Arab countries, including Morocco and Algeria, and even in France in Bordeaux.

Imagine Scotland founding such an institution and offering degrees at all levels in nonviolence.

How different a society would that make us?

What kind of world could we achieve if Universities of Nonviolence educating the next generation in methods of achieving peace were established globally?

So far this year, Matthew's gospel has been offering us each Sunday important elements of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, the blessings it brings us and the virtues it demands of us, such as justice and forgiveness.

Now, however, we will hear about different kinds of response, especially negative ones, including subtle hints at Jesus's own impending suffering and death.

As we move past the Autumn Equinox and the nights begin to get longer and darker, our Sunday Gospels in October seem to mirror that: our Sunday liturgy seems to get a little darker this month too, as the challenges Jesus issues are not always well received.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday A

Jesus addresses the leaders in a parable, to show how their response to the kingdom of heaven isn't what it should be. They themselves are the ones who, according to the parable story, refuse the invitation to the royal wedding feast. They re-

October Gospels are a reminder of responsibilities of Christians



Fr Tom Kilbride

Parish Priest of Christ the King, Glasgow

ject God's invitation, God's plan.

In fact, their rejection even goes as far as killing the messengers sent to them (again Jesus hints at his own death). However, the message will still go out far and wide, as Jesus will send his disciples to "make disciples of all the nations".

The invitation to the feast will be heard and many will respond positively. Matthew's version of the parable has the little "epilogue" about the man thrown out

for not dressing properly. That does seem a bit harsh! He did, after all, come along! However, Matthew is keen to underline that hearing the message isn't enough: there needs to be a proper response too. As is stressed in so many of the parables, we have to take the Gospel message Kingdom seriously and act on the demands it makes of us.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday A

If the leaders of the peo-

ple have been the object of Jesus' parables over the past few weeks, this week they begin to "plot" in response, hoping to "entangle" him by what he says. Of course, Jesus is wise to their plotting and offers a reply to their question about taxes and coins which completely wrong-foots them.

The First Reading reminds us that God can make use even of pagan rulers like Cyrus, the pagan king of Persia, to advance his plans for his people. Perhaps God can work through "Caesar" or Cyrus; perhaps they will be obstacles. Either way, God's will and God's word is what matters, and cannot be manipulated to our own ends or desires, as it appears the Pharisees and Herodians are trying to do here.

It is for us to respond to that will and word by doing

it, as Paul rejoices that the Thessalonians have in fact done (Second Reading).

Thirtieth Sunday A

Unlike Mark, who understands today's question to be an honest one, Matthew sees the lawyer's question as an attempt to "test" Jesus. Curiously, it is the same word used for the temptations in the desert, as though the leaders are challenging Jesus by using Scripture as the devil did.

Jesus answers the question easily, as the words "love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength" would have been very familiar to anyone immersed in the Torah. They would have repeated the words many times in prayer each day.

However, Jesus puts another text from the Torah beside it not only to explain

it, as a good rabbi would, but because it is "like" it. Indeed, all the Torah and Prophets "depend" on both loving God and loving your neighbour. The two go together.

The First Reading expresses this in relation to compassion and justice towards the poorest: any prayer we make to God must be matched by our own willingness and ability to hear the cries of those in need around us. For Matthew, the lawyer thinks he has set a test for Jesus. The real "test", however, is whether we let our faith lead us to reach out in love to others.

So, as October progresses, the Gospel readings darken a little, as plots and tests are set to ensnare Jesus and he hints at his own rejection and death. However, he has already called us to be "light of the world" and has been called by Matthew the "light of the nations".

So, even as things get darker, Jesus remains the light and he invites us to respond positively to his word, so that we too can be a light in our world and in our communities. How we respond to his message is the real test.



Our service is run from Glasgow and is the only Catholic adoption agency in the UK.

There are currently around 3500 children waiting to be adopted across Britain and only 1,400 approved adoptive families.

This means around half of these children wait 18 months for a new family.

The need for adoptive parents has never been greater and we are eager to hear from people interested in offering these children a home.

Our social work practice and religious values will always firmly align with those of the Catholic Church but we welcome adoptive families from all faiths.

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Prospective adopters

Some of the children waiting longest to be matched have additional needs and we are keen to recruit adopters who can welcome them into their homes.

We also seek adoptive parents who can care for sibling groups of two or three children to allow them to be kept together.

St Margaret's offers post-adoption support services to help families understand the process and what adopting a child involves.

Crucial to modern-day adoption is ongoing contact with the birth family at a level assessed as safe and in the child's best interests. This can range from written communication once a year to face to face contact with a family member.

We also want to recruit adopters from minority ethnic groups to ensure that our prospective adopters mirror the ethnicity of the children waiting for adoption.

It is possible for a family from one ethnic background to adopt a child from another, but they must understand the importance of the child being brought up with a clear understanding of their identity and sense of belonging to their ethnicity, culture and religious practices

Fostering and Adoption Panel

We are looking for new volunteers to join our panel.

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Deacon Jim's was truly a life well lived

WHEN, thanks to the vision of Archbishop Mario Conti, the Archdiocese of Glasgow restored the permanent diaconate almost 20 years ago, it may have surprised those close to him that the prayers of Jim Kernaghan had been answered.

Jim's was a life of faith whose cherished ambition was, with God's help, to serve others as a Deacon and that ambition was now in sight.

And when Archbishop Conti ordained the first group of 12 permanent deacons for the Archdiocese at St Mary's, Abercromby Street (then serving as a pro-cathedral) on June 28, 2009, Jim Kernaghan whose journey with Christ began with his baptism in St Peter's, Partick, was among their number.

At his Requiem Mass in the church where (along with St Simon's) he faithfully served as a Deacon for the past 17 years, the symbolism of that journey with Christ – his coffin lying just a few metres away from the font where he had

BY **BRIAN SWANSON** been baptised 82 years previously – could not have been clearer.

There was, said his Parish Priest Monsignor Paul Murray, a beautiful symmetry in that moment which was not lost on the congregation.

And his Requiem Mass allowed Monsignor Murray the chance to share Deacon Jim's unique sense of humour.

He said: "Jim spoke often about his own baptism and the reason he did that is because this is not the original site of the font. The font used to be in the space that is now the accessible toilet! And Jim, with that twinkle in his eye, never tired of telling people of the exact location of his baptism."

"He would be most annoyed if I had not mentioned that today because he mentioned it himself so often!"

Referring to his everyday work as a deacon in St Peter's, Monsignor Murray said: "There were mornings



Deacon Jim prepares the oils at the annual Chrism Mass

Picture by Paul McSherry

when I did not quite know if Jim was bringing me a couple for a child's baptism or a wedding – but he had his methods, and his instincts with people were always right."

The congregation learned

that Deacon Jim, famed for his booming voice, had a habit of answering the telephone the minute it rang in the presbytery with the feeling that it would be someone who needed his help – and invariably

it was. Again his instincts were right.

As a close friend remarked on the day of his funeral "His life was serving God and others as a Deacon – nothing more, nothing less."

In that role he was deeply spiritual, generous and prayerful, approachable, patient and kind.

Away from his ecclesiastical duties he was an intensely private man living on his own who had worked in the same office of a local plumbers' merchant until he retired at the age of 65 in 2009 – the same year he was ordained as a Deacon.

In the years leading up to that landmark moment he spent most of his life in his beloved Partick making exceptions for the annual Glasgow pilgrimages to the Holy Land organised by former Lord Provost Alex Mosson.

He also visited Rome on numerous occasions, always staying in the same hotel, and after a long day familiarising himself with its spiritual life, relaxing

with a gin and tonic as the sun went down over the Eternal City.

He relished lunches and dinners with his fellow deacons, and these were by no means po-faced affairs.

One who attended said: "Jim certainly was private but at the same time very good company. He was a great reader and could talk about all sorts of subjects with humour and insight."

"We shared stories of our time studying for the diaconate and you can be sure that we laughed as we enjoyed these memories – there was nothing dull or boring about him."

Deacon Jim, who lived a ten minute walk away from St Peter's, died suddenly and there was profound shock and sadness when his passing was announced to the Sunday Mass goes shortly after his body was found at home.

His funeral took place at St Peter's Partick followed by a burial at St Peter's Cemetery, Dalbeth. He is survived by sister Agnes.

Requiescat in pace.

Our faith can ease the sorrow when a parish closes

A *Flourish* reader's letter to fellow parishioners facing uncertainty, change and loss...

THERE is a particular sorrow in being asked to care for something you deeply love when you know you cannot preserve every part of it unchanged.

I sometimes think the Archbishop's position is a little like that of a gardener entrusted with an ancient orchard during a difficult winter.

He neither planted every tree nor controls the changing seasons. He did not choose the storms, the failing soil, or the difficult realities now facing the orchard. Yet the responsibility still falls to him; to care for the whole as wisely as he can, to steward limited resources faithfully, and to make painful decisions in the hope that life within the diocese may continue and flourish in the years ahead.

These decisions may wound many hearts because parishes are not simply buildings or administrative units. They are places where people encounter God; where children were baptised, couples married, and loved ones buried. They are

places where generations of the faithful were formed and created their families.

For many, the prospect of losing a parish church might feel like losing part of their own story. This grief is real and the depth at which it is felt deserves compassion, dignity, and space.

Perhaps, then, we are being called to deeper compassion on all sides: compassion for parishioners carrying loss, fear, anger, and uncertainty; compassion for priests called to accompany communities through heartbreak; and compassion for an Archbishop carrying responsibilities he likely wishes he never had to bear.

There are some burdens in leadership where every available path carries sorrow. Not because of failure, but because the realities being faced are larger than any one person, parish, or diocese.

Across the world, Church leaders are wrestling with similar challenges: fewer priests, ageing congregations, rising costs, and changing demographics.



BY **ZOE JARVIS DUCASSE**

None of this removes the grief people feel. But perhaps it invites us to hold one another more gently, recognising that beneath disagreement are people trying, in different ways, to remain faithful stewards of something shared and sacred. We must also carry grief carefully. When grief is left unheard or borne alone for too long, it can slowly harden into resentment, anger, and division between people who are, in truth, grieving the same loss.

The Church has never ultimately been built of stone

alone. Its deepest foundation is Christ living among His people. The buildings matter because within them people encountered grace, forgiveness, community, and God. Yet the Body of Christ is carried most truly in living souls. In us, the community, choosing love over bitterness, communion over fracture, and tenderness over blame.

Perhaps our present moment resembles Holy Saturday: a time of bewilderment, sorrow, and uncertainty. Even those closest to Jesus struggled to remain faithful in the shadow of loss. Yet the story did not end at the tomb. The risen Christ returned not simply to restore what had been lost exactly as it was, but to call His followers forward as pilgrims whose hope could never rest finally in stone, however beloved those stones might be.

The witness the Church most needs now is not the absence of grief, but the presence of love within it. May we mourn honestly, persevere faithfully, and

turn not against one another, but toward each other in love.

This letter is not written to deny grief, nor to ask anyone to abandon deeply held

concerns. Rather, it is an invitation to all of us, whatever our views, to remain in communion with one another as we walk through a painful season together.



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Sister Placida's fond Malawi memories

RECENTLY, I was blessed to have the opportunity to travel to Malawi to see SCIAF's life-changing work and talk to people about the impact it has.

I was joined by SCIAF's CEO Lorraine Currie, Bishop of President Brian McGee, Liaison Officer Dr Blessings Kachele and Michael Hamilton, the Public Engagement Officer.

We arrived in Lilongwe where we were warmly welcomed by Caritas Malawi officials and the local auxiliary bishop. They all expressed their sincere gratitude for the wonderful support they receive from the people of Scotland through SCIAF.

While we were there, we visited the 'Hope for Youth' project in Zomba. The young people involved in the project welcomed us with singing and dancing. This project is a vocational school for young people who have no other chance to gain employment. The

BY **SISTER PLACIDA MCCANN**
FRANCISCAN SISTER OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

students showed us samples of their work and explained what they were doing.

Experience

The main areas were carpentry/joinery, masonry and iron work. The students were mostly boys, but there were a few girls there, too. The thing I loved most about this project was that, after completing their course and getting experience of starting and running a business, the staff at the school followed up with them to check if they were doing well.

If they weren't doing so well, they were invited to return to the school to sharpen their business skills. The staff were very committed and passionate about the success of their students.

The next project was

an agricultural project in Mangochi and, again, we were greeted by a large group of enthusiastic women singing and dancing and smiling. This project uses irrigation to grow crops during the dry season.

Due to climate change, the dry season is becoming more intense and much longer year by year. This project helps the people to produce food both for sustenance and also to sell to earn money to pay for school fees, medical bills, etc.

Livelihoods

Then it was on to Mangochi where we visited a livelihoods project where the women were taught to make local stoves, soap, honey from bee-keeping and the young people were taught carpentry/joinery and tailoring/dressmaking.

All these projects were really impressive, but the one that blew me away was



and safety, but they were trained in vocational skills to earn their living. This gave them dignity and a sense of self-worth.

A group of about twelve of them expressed their heartfelt gratitude to SCIAF and the people of Scotland, not just for their skills but for their very lives.

Amazing

Another significant aspect of our visit was seeing the amazing commitment and passion of the local partners who are helping to implement these projects.

I always knew SCIAF was doing a great job, but to see just how much impact it is having on the lives of these lovely people was so heartwarming. So, to SCIAF, I say, "Keep up the excellent work!" and to the wonderful people of Scotland, "Keep on donating to help our sisters and brothers in need."

"The world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us"

- Pope Francis

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