

FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow

September 2025

FREE COPY



St Carlo Acutis



St Pier Giorgio Frassati

Canonisation special
see page 5

Portraits of modern sainthood

Sunshine and celebrations mark a special Lourdes pilgrimage



THIS year's Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes was marked by a series of memorable anniversaries... and a new use of technology to share the experience with those back home.

First off to be honoured was Dr Angela Campbell (right), the pilgrimage Medical Director, who was presented with a Diocesan Medal by the Archbishop for her 30 years' service to the Lourdes Pilgrimage Community.

Next up came Elizabeth McQuade and Irene Carrol. Liz and Irene both celebrated 50 years as members of the Glasgow Lourdes Hospitalite and are pictured here with Archbishop Nolan.

But to cap it off, there was a spontaneous round of applause at the Mass at the Grotto when the Archbishop introduced Canon Sean Cunney of Paisley Diocese

BY RONNIE CONVERY

(left), who has been travelling to Lourdes for longer than anyone can remember and who this year marks his 70th anniversary of ordination.

Canon Sean concelebrated the Grotto Mass and the Archbishop acted as his 'brancardier' or helper when the liturgy was over.

The pilgrimage also saw the main events filmed and broadcast via social media, leading to a sharp increase in engagement on the Archdiocesan Facebook page.

The Mass at the Grotto concelebrated by the Archbishop and the priests taking part in the pilgrimage was broadcast on French Catholic TV and is available on YouTube, allowing those who couldn't be physically present to take part from a distance.



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It's 'Open Doors Day' at Cathedral and Garden

THE doors of some of Glasgow's most iconic spaces will be thrown open later this month as the city celebrates its annual Doors Open Day.

The event can be seen as an opportunity for evangelisation as people will cross the threshold of churches and cathedrals who would not otherwise feel able to do so.

Tours

St Andrew's Cathedral will once again be taking part and is included in the official programme, as is the Cathedral Italian Cloister Garden.

There will be guided tours of the Cathedral during the weekend, on Saturday 20 September at 11:00am, 2:30pm and 3:30pm and on Sunday 21 September at 2:30pm and 3:30pm

Tours last 30 minutes and no booking is required.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Meanwhile the team of volunteers of the Italian Garden Improvement Group will be on hand to give tours of the Italian Cloister Garden and

Arandora Star Memorial on both days too – as they have every year since 2011.

This year the Cathedral Cloister Garden will be open on Friday 19th, Saturday 20th, and Sunday 21st September 10am – 3pm each

day. Tours and talks by experienced and knowledgeable guides available continuously throughout each day.

More details at www.glasgowdoorsopendays.org.uk



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Scots teachers meet Pope



Archbishop leads new teachers on Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome

A GROUP of early-career Scottish teachers had the privilege of a lifetime when Archbishop Nolan presented them to meet Pope Leo XIV at a private audience in the Vatican.

The Archbishop was leading the group, which included young teachers from England, Wales and Ireland to Rome for a pilgrimage

organised by the Scottish Catholic Education Service.

During the Papal audience, the Holy Father spent time with each individual present and gave the group some powerful advice as he encourage them in their career choice.

He said: "God has created each one of you with a purpose and a mission in this

life. Use this opportunity for listening, for prayer, so that you may hear more clearly God's voice calling you deep within your hearts.

"Today, so often, we lose the ability to listen, to really listen. We listen to music, we have our ears flooded constantly with all kinds of digital input, but sometimes we forget to listen to our

own hearts and it's in our hearts that God speaks to us, that God calls us and invites us to know him better and to live in his love...

"Dear teachers: what I have just said to the young people applies equally to you, especially given your important role in the formation of today's youth: children, teenagers, young

adults. For they will look up to you as models: models in life, models of faith. They'll look to you particularly as to how you teach and how you live.

"I hope that, each day, you will nurture your relationship with Christ, who gives us the pattern of all authentic teaching so that, in turn, you may guide and encour-

age those entrusted to your care to follow Christ in their own lives."

Later the group had the chance to meet representatives of the Roman Curia, and visited the main Roman basilicas before exploring some of the other great sites including the catacombs, the Vatican Gardens, Montecassino and the town of Assisi.



Above: Archbishop Nolan shares a few words with the Pope. Right: A gift of whisky from the new teachers. Left: Mass at the Abbey of Montecassino



NEW MUSIC FOR YOUR PARISH

Mass of Saint Carlo Acutis



Celebrate Carlo's Canonisation by singing this newly composed Mass, dedicated to him in his honour. Described as 'lively and very rhythmical' (*Catholic Talent Network*), parishes and schools are now enjoying this contemporary style of liturgical music. Booklets of the Mass are now available and full recordings can be used for teaching by scanning the QR code above.

Order your free booklets at enquiries@paulcarrollmusic.co.uk



May Saint Carlo Acutis intercede for all who will use this Mass setting



Canonisation joy for the two young men who are truly ‘saints of our time’

Acutis and Frassati raised to sainthood

THE Catholic world rejoices this weekend at the canonisations of two remarkable young men: Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati.

Their lives, though separated by nearly a century, radiate the same powerful message — holiness is possible any time, any place and in any circumstances.

Carlo Acutis, who died in 2006 at the age of 15, has become known as the “Internet saint”. Born in London and raised in Milan, Carlo used his digital talents to spread devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, creating a website on Eucharistic miracles around the world.

A teenager like any other — who loved video games, football, and his dog — Carlo stood out for his sincere re-



Carlo Acutis

ligious faith. He attended daily Mass, prayed the Rosary regularly, and was known for his kindness and concern for the poor. His motto, “The Eucharist is my highway to Heaven,” continues to inspire young Catholics to center their lives around the Real Presence of Christ.



Pier Giorgio Frassati

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** Pier Giorgio Frassati, born in Turin in 1901, died at just 24.

Known for his adventurous spirit and deep compassion for the poor, he lived what St John Paul II called “a life lived in charity and grace.”

An avid mountain climb-

er, Pier Giorgio saw nature as a place to encounter God. His faith moved him to action — from helping the sick and the outcast to engaging in political and social causes rooted in Catholic teaching.

His death from polio, likely contracted while serving the poor, came as a shock to his family and friends. Yet his legacy — of joyful service, devout faith, and radical generosity — endures.

Both young men offer the Church of today vibrant models of contemporary holiness. Their stories challenge the narrative that holiness is reserved for the old or the odd.

Carlo and Pier Giorgio were students, friends, sons, and believers. Today they share a new title, the greatest of all ... ‘Saint’.



Scots pilgrims in Rome for St Carlo

AMONG the multitude **A**thronging St Peter's Square for the canonisation of new saints are a group called Life Through the Eucharist (LITE) from parishes in Glasgow and Motherwell who have worked tirelessly over the years to promote his cause in Scotland, writes **Brian Swanson**.

Speaking to *Flourish*, team leader Maria Novati said: “The whole experience of waiting for this day has been extremely emotional — it was what so many people prayed for after all — but knowing now that he is being declared a saint... we feel such peace, such love.”

“For all of us who have become so devoted to his cause this moment will remain with us forever.”

“It is a privilege for us to witness this day but we feel desperately sorry for all the young people who came to Rome back in April when the canonisation was postponed after the death of Pope Francis.”

Carlo's deep devotion to the Eucharist became the group's inspiration and four years ago they began organising exhibitions, school and parish visits across Scotland, England and Ireland to tie in with similar initiatives worldwide and have vowed to continue that mission.

They also were responsible for bringing the first relic to Scotland and sponsored a statue of Carlo at Scotland's National Shrine at Carfin, the first one in the UK.



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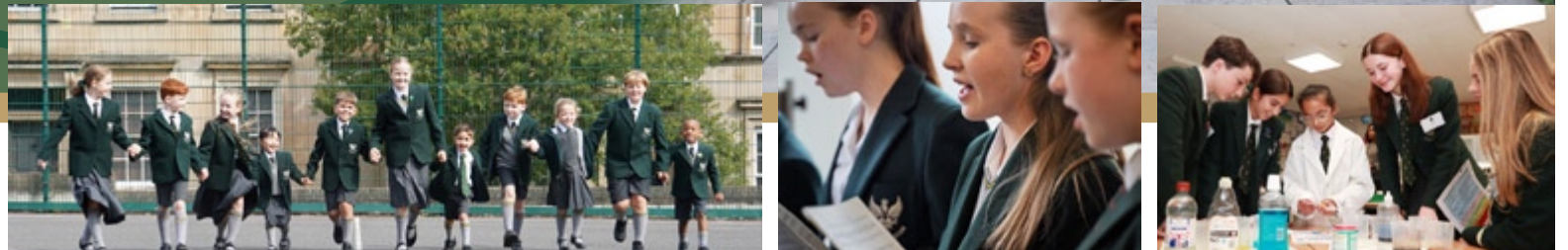
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Parishes prepare to say goodbye (and hello) to priests on the move



THIS month will see big changes in parish life across the Archdiocese as some senior priests retire and others are appointed to new parishes.

Canon Willie McGinley, who was ordained back in 1962, recently retired as parish priest of Saint Patrick's, Old Kilpatrick after many years at the little church near the Erskine Bridge.

To mark his retirement Marie McNair, the SNP MSP for Clydebank and Milngavie, recognised Canon McGinley in the Scottish Parliament in a parliamentary motion for his contributions to the Catholic community in Clydebank and beyond.

Father Aidan Martin has been appointed as parish priest of Saint Patrick's, in addition to his current appointment in Saint Stephen's, Dalmuir.

Big changes are happening too on the south side of Glasgow with Father Gerard Hill retiring this month as parish priest of Saint Vincent de Paul, Thornliebank. He has served the area faithfully despite bouts of illness and oversaw

the building of a new hall and the restoration of the parish church.

Nearby, Father Michael Woodford will retire as parish priest of Saint Gabriel's, Merrylee, this month too. Another long-term Parish Priest, Fr Michael was hugely popular in the Cathcart area which he has served.

Retirals

The retirals herald a new era for the parishes affected with the arrival of new priests.

Father Gerard Byrne has been appointed as parish priest of Saint Vincent de Paul, Thornliebank after many years at St Brigid's Toryglen.

While there he cultivated a rich musical tradition and offered the Tridentine Mass for those with a devotion to the old Latin rite. This provision will now be continued at Thornliebank.

Meanwhile the Archdiocese's Vicar General, Monsignor Hugh Canon Bradley has been appointed as parish priest of Saint

Gabriel's, Merrylee, to be assisted by Father Lukose Kannimel, leaving behind his beloved Holy Cross parish in Crosshill.

Father Allan Cameron has been appointed as parish priest of Holy Cross, Crosshill, and also Saint Brigid's, Toryglen, with effect from September – a big change for the popular priest who did so much to build up the community in Wyndford while Parish Priest at St Gregory's.

Father Ezra Dauda has been appointed as Administrator of Saint Gregory's, Wyndford, and Rector of Saint Charles' Oratory, and Father Joseph Sullivan has been appointed as parish priest of Saint Barnabas, Shettleston.

Father Chukwuemeka Vincent Livinus SMMM has been appointed as parish priest of Saint Margaret Mary's and of Saint Bartholomew's parishes, Castlemilk, to be assisted by Father Richard Kenechukwu Anigbogu SMMM.

The shortage of priests means some clergy are having to take on additional roles.

Father Andrew McGowan now has three parishes, having been appointed parish priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Broomhill, and of Saint Brendan's, Yoker, in addition to his current appointment in Saint Paul's, Whiteinch and Father Paul Milarvie has been appointed as parish priest of Corpus Christi, Knightswood, in addition to his current appointment in Saint Ninian's, Knightswood.

Thanks

The Archbishop said: "I would like to thank those retiring, or leaving the Archdiocese, for their many years of devoted service and to thank those moving to new parishes, or taking on additional parishes, for their generous response to the invitation to serve the People of God in new places."

PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT –

Top left: Fr Gerry Hill, top right: Fr Michael Woodford

CHANGING PARISHES –

Bottom left: Mgr Hugh Bradley, bottom right: Fr Allan Cameron

Pictures by Paul McSherry

Tech pupils' gift to parish



Fr Joe well chuffed with custom-built lectern

BY BRIAN SWANSON

A NEW lectern has been presented to the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes, Cardonald – created and gifted by the young people of the secondary school of the same name.

Parish Priest Father Joe Mackle, who is also the school's chaplain, admired a portable lectern he saw during a visit to the school earlier this year.

Malcolm Docherty, a teacher in the technical department, immediately offered to make another one to mark the Jubilee Year and present it to the parish.

Father Mackle said: "I said I could do with a portable lectern like that for when we say Mass in the

hall and right away Malcolm said he would get to work and make one for us.

"A few weeks later he brought it to show me and I was absolutely delighted with it.

"It's lightweight so you can carry it with one hand and it looks very attractive. The whole parish is very grateful for this wonderful gift."

Malcolm told *Flourish*: "It's a fairly basic design made from wood and metal using an old lectern that was damaged.

"I forged a simple design of a fish and a shepherd's crook on the front, and I must say I was very pleased with the final result and Father Mackle himself was well chuffed."

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Archbishop's sombre message: 'We are running out of priests..'

Vocations crisis begins to bite

BY RONNIE CONVERY

ARCHBISHOP Nolan has delivered a sobering message to parishes across the Archdiocese at the annual Mass for Vocations... in future we will no longer have enough priests to maintain our current number of parishes.

Speaking in the Cathedral, the Archbishop urged prayer for vocations at all levels, and asked priests themselves to share with others the joy of the priesthood so as to encourage vocations.

Overseas

He warned: "The faith is not healthy in our country, in our diocese, if we have to look overseas for priests to come and help us."

"When Jesus spoke to the disciples about the harvest being great, he asked them to pray for more labourers, he didn't say 'go and look overseas for labourers'."

Later, in an interview with *Flourish*, the Archbishop laid out the scale of the challenge facing the Church in the near future as the vocations crisis deepens.

He said: "This year in the Archdiocese we have lost six

Parish Priests through retirement and ill health. The last ordination for the Archdiocese was three years ago, and the next ordination, God willing, will be in two years' time.

"I simply don't have priests to send to parishes, even where there is a strong local tradition and a good community."

He said: "It is increasingly difficult to bring in priests from abroad."

"Our recent request for sponsorship forms was refused and this has stopped us bringing in additional clergy to the Archdiocese from overseas."

"We have to pray fervently for more vocations and encourage more young men to offer their lives to God and the Church."

"We need to let them see the rewarding life of the priesthood, and we need to support the priests we have as they face ever greater burdens of responsibility as the years go on."

The lack of available clergy will have an impact on the future provision of parish churches. Already some parishes are covering three parishes and more communities face merger as the number of priests drops.



Archbishop Nolan with Archdiocesan seminarians



Vocations prayer

God our Father,
In the course of his preaching
St Mungo prayed
that Glasgow would flourish
by the preaching of your Word
and the praising of your name.
We pray that you will send new
Ministers of your Word and Sacrament
to serve the people of the Archdiocese of Glasgow as priests.
May they help your people to flourish in the practice of their faith,
by building up parish communities through sharing your love for us.
Help your people to respond to your call,
especially those you call to the priesthood within the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

Help me to understand my own vocation,
so that I may walk in your ways and find my joy in your presence.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.
Amen.
Mary, Mother of priests, pray for us.
St Mungo, pray for us.
St Enoch, pray for us.

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10th – 13th November

'Go, Rebuild My Church': Pope Francis' Vision
17th – 20th November

For all these weeks arrive for supper (19.00hrs) on Sunday and depart after lunch (13.00hrs) on Thursday.

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Friday 12th December – Sunday 14th December

Individuals and parish groups are welcome throughout the year for a time of rest, reflection or retreat.

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Cathedral at heart of the 'new' Clyde Street

PLANS have been published which will see St Andrew's Cathedral at the heart of a futuristic development which will involve both banks of the Clyde being transformed into a river park.

Under the proposals the Cathedral will be surrounded by green spaces, play parks, and the regeneration of both Carlton Place after years of neglect and Clyde Street.

Even the historic 'Ladies Waiting Room' building on

BY BRIAN SWANSON

Clyde Street, dating back to Victorian times and now virtually a ruin, could have a new lease of life as a fashionable cocktail bar or up-market restaurant!

The regeneration proposals from Glasgow City Council also include quay wall repairs, spaces for gathering and pop-up events and new lighting. New flowers and plants are to be added to boost diver-

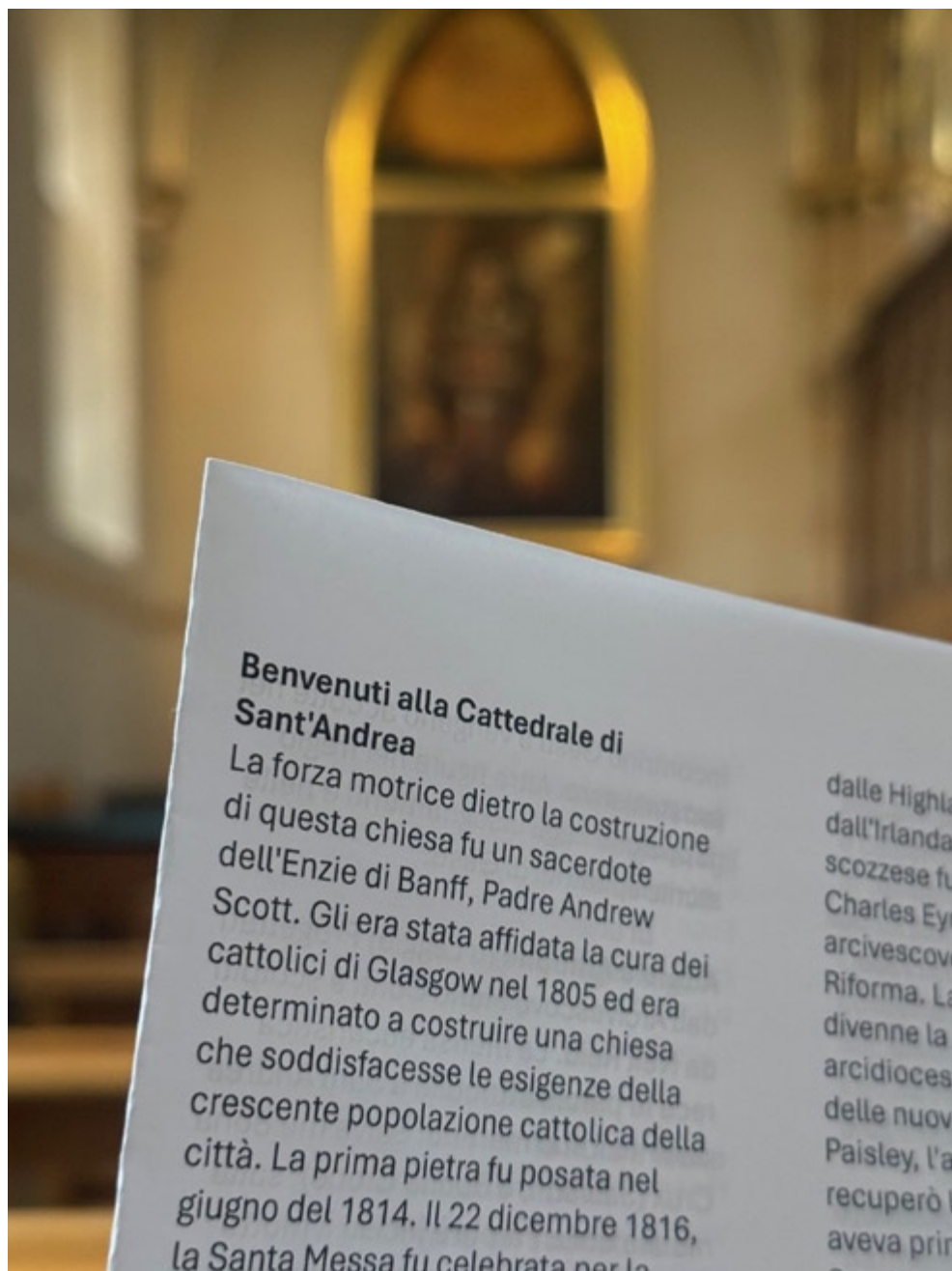
sity along with trees.

These are the latest in a series of redevelopments in the area which over the years has seen the expansion of the financial district, new high rise rental flats and student accommodation, new hotels, both luxury and budget as well the introduction of cycle lanes and walkways.

Glasgow City Council planning officers are evaluating the application and a decision is expected by early November.



Welcome, Willkommen, Benvenuto, Bienvenue!



Cathedral reaches out to city tourists with new brochures

NEW free multi-language guides have been made available to cater for the growing number of overseas visitors to St Andrew's Cathedral.

The leaflets which give a fascinating insight into the cathedral's history and are offered in German, Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Vietnamese as well as English, were compiled by Cathedral Administrator Canon David Wallace.

Visitors

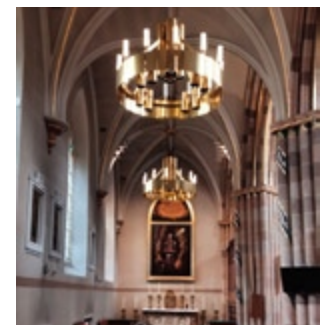
He said: "We've noticed that each year a growing number of visitors to Glasgow are finding their way to the Cathedral and many of them do not have English as their first language so it makes sense to cater for them and in that way share our story with them."

As well as a history of the Archdiocese, the guide explains Archbishop Conti's Cathedral restoration of 2011 and tells the stories of what visitors can see as they walk around, from

BY BRIAN SWANSON

the stained-glass windows to the portrait of St John Ogilvie.

The leaflet also encourages visitors to say 'Grazie', 'Danke' or 'Merci' by leaving a donation after their visit, to contribute to the upkeep of the Cathedral.



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Michelle's hymn, inspired by Pope Francis, is SCIAF's gift



WHAT happens when a Scottish pop star, a world-renowned hymn writer, and the late Pope's most urgent message to humanity converge into one moment of music, meaning, and mission?

That was what happened recently at St Andrew's Cathedral when Scotland's Hymn for Earth was recorded for the first time by popular singer Michelle McManus ahead of this year's Season of Creation.

The hymn – 'Because' – was finished the day after Pope Francis died. It was penned by legendary Scot-

BY **RONNIE CONVERY** tish composer and hymn writer, John Bell of the Iona community, for the 60th anniversary of SCIAF.

Later this year it will be sent by SCIAF to all the Catholic parishes in Scotland thanking them for their financial generosity to the charity.

Harmony

The words in the hymn are set to an old Latin American melody and harness the late Pope's message for the earth. It talks about how we should seek harmony with nature

and become the willing servants of the earth, enabling it to fertilise and flourish.

The hymn will be unveiled, with a backup choir, in front of an audience for the first time ever at SCIAF's 60th anniversary Mass in Rutherglen, the birthplace of the charity, later this month.

The crescendo will come in late October, when Michelle hopes to perform 'Because' at the 10th Anniversary 'Laudato Si' Conference in Rome – in front of a global audience and Pope Leo himself, who will hear this legacy hymn from his predecessor, for the first time ever.



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'Never again' as Church leaders mark atomic bomb anniversary



SCOTLAND'S Church leaders were joined by more than 100 people last month for a peace vigil outside the Faslane naval base, home to the UK's nuclear-armed submarines.

The event came within days of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombs being dropped on Japan.

The Clyde port is home of all the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, including the Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarines which carry Trident nuclear missiles.

Archbishop Nolan was joined by Rt Rev Rosie Frew, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Members of the Quakers, the Iona Community and the United Reform Church also took part.

Powers

The Archbishop said: "The phrase 'never again' gained much currency 80 years ago. But the actions of nuclear

powers, including our own, run contrary to that.

"As the late Pope Benedict articulated, the very concept of a nuclear deterrence has instead fuelled an arms race as those on opposing sides keep seeking to outdo the other.

"We have seen this in the replacement for Trident. Deterrence itself, therefore, has increased insecurity and does nothing to build up trust which is necessary to encourage disarmament and build up peace."

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Priest pals mark 50 golden years of ministry

Two young boys who started out at junior seminary on the same day, were ordained within days of each other, and began their ministry in adjoining parishes, have celebrated fifty years of priestly service – and a lifetime of close friendship.

Father David Brown, who retired in 2022 from St Paul's Shettleston and Father Joe Boyle, still serving as Parish Priest of Our Lady and St George, Penilee, met for the first time as slightly nervous 12-year-olds on their first day at Langbank Junior Seminary, Bishopton in the summer of 1963.

The pair went on to study together at Blairs for four years before continuing their studies at St Peter's Cardross for a further six.

Originally the two friends were to be ordained together by Archbishop Winning, in the

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY

summer of 1975, on June 29, the feast of St Peter and St Paul's which for decades was the traditional ordination day in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

However, Father Brown was given special permission to have his ordination held a few days later on July 3rd in his home parish of St Mary's Duntocher.

Close

Even after ordination the two remained close in both senses with Father Brown appointed to St Bartholomew's and Father Boyle to St Martin's – each in Castlemilk.

And that friendship came full circle when the two friends marked their 50 years of ministry with Masses of thanksgiving

with Archbishop Nolan.

In remarks that were greeted with sustained applause by his parishioners, Father Boyle spoke of the honour and privilege it was to have served in so many different roles over the years, while thanking those whose prayers had sustained him.

He added: "My gratitude is expressed in that hymn of Mary, the Mother of the Lord 'The Almighty has done great things for me – holy is His name.'"

Father Brown, who now lives in Motherwell diocese, said: "I could not have possibly predicted from our first day at junior seminary that we would both go on not only to remain friends but to serve as priests for 50 years.

"I thank God for the honour and the privilege I have been given and for those who kept and continue to keep me in their prayers."



Fr Boyle at anniversary Mass



Fr Brown with his family

Retired clerics are top of the class at learning the lingo!



RESIDENTS of St Francis Care Home in Govan have spent the summer studying Italian with Canon Robert Hill, former parish priest of St Matthew's Bishopbriggs, among those who graduated after a Scottish Qualifications Authority course.

Canon Hill, left, moved into St Francis 18 months ago and was supported in his lessons by his sister Carlyn, a former primary head teacher.

She said: "The classes are a great idea. I know Robert has thoroughly enjoyed being part of it."

"It's fascinating to see how the brain works. He has been diagnosed with a mild cognitive impairment, and often he can find

BY BRIAN SWANSON

it difficult to make himself understood in English. But then he speaks Italian, and all he has learned comes back and it's really quite something.

Stimulating

"It's a challenge, but the teachers are just fantastic and make it a lot of fun."

Shareen Beg, activity coordinator at St Francis said: "This project is part of a wider effort to create stimulating and inclusive activities. Some of our residents are native Italian speakers, so we thought it would be good to learn their language."

"Lingo Flamingo, an organisation that special-

ises in bringing language learning to older adults, have been delivering the sessions and it has been a lot of fun."

Canon Hill, whose Gospel writings were a regular feature in *Flourish* for many years, said: "I love the classes, they are great fun and we learn a lot."

Another priest who took part was Father George Gillespie, right, former Parish Priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Broomhill, who retired in 2017 and has been a resident at St Francis for number of years.

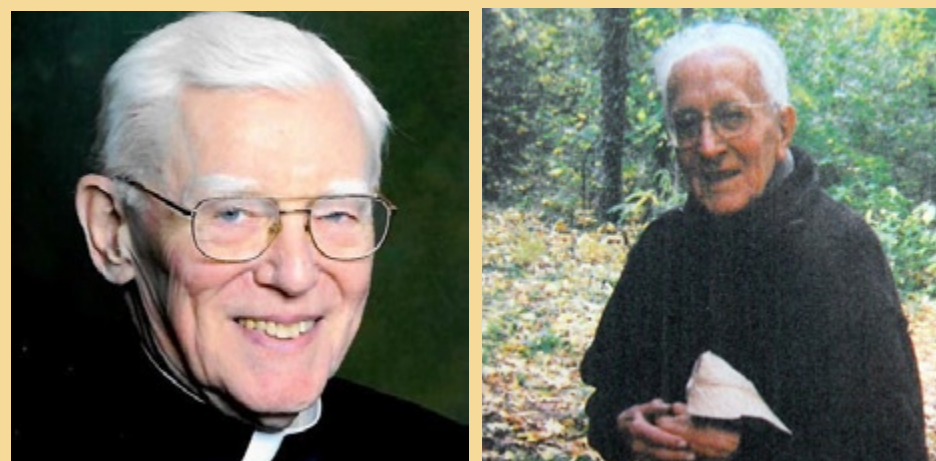
He said: "I worked in Rome for 13 years and spent some time at the Vatican and learned some Italian and I can say these lessons are very good."



FOCUS ON SPRED – THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF FAITH

SPRED spreads joy and care to our very special friends

How it all began... the Church has had to learn new ways to hand on the faith to those with learning disabilities



THE so-called 'Méthode Vivre', the catechetical method used in SPRED, began in France in the 1950's, the idea of Father Henri Bissonnier, a French priest working in a huge institution for people with learning disabilities.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Fr Bissonnier (top right) found that the traditional ways of passing on the faith simply did not work in a situation where people could not easily learn facts about Jesus or the Church. Something different was needed.

He discovered the importance of environment... he saw that the place where people gathered had to communicate a sense of the sacred – to be a holy place.

He began to gather people around the Book of God's Word with a candle and flowers. The place was sacred. Jesus was truly present in his Word and in those gathered in his name.

Instead of giving a lesson about the Bible, he communicated a sense of the sacredness of the Book in the way he lifted it, held it, and read the words with gesture and eye contact.

In 1955, Fr Jean Mesny, a French theologian, joined Fr Bissonnier. He began drawing out people's life experience. He found that this worked better than

trying to impart facts.

The third important figure in the history of SPRED was Fr Euchariste Paulhus, a Canadian educational psychologist whose book was the first in the history of the Church stating that people with learning disabilities were educable in faith. The problem prior to that was knowing how to share faith.

The work of these three priests provided the beginning of a method which is now used in SPRED.

Chicago

In the early 1960s, in Chicago, people with learning disabilities were being encouraged to live with their families rather than being consigned to hospital care.

Fr James McCarthy (top left), who himself had a brother with learning disabilities, became aware of parents seeking meaningful and respectful experiences of catechesis for their children that would nurture their faith and the seeds of their Baptism.

His journey led him to the French pioneer work and eventually in 1966 the SPRED Agency was born in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

In 1984 SPRED came to Glasgow after Sr Agnes

Nelson was sent by her congregation, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur to study the SPRED method for one year.

As a teaching order, they thought it was something that could be used in schools but Sr Agnes quickly learned that it was a parish programme.

On her return Archbishop (later Cardinal) Winning established SPRED in the Archdiocese of Glasgow as an approved catechetical method for people with learning disabilities.

From the initial base in Newlands groups began to be established. After a number of moves funds were raised to build a training and observation centre in Provanmill from where the work of SPRED could be co-ordinated. The centre was opened in 1999.

From Glasgow, directors of SPRED for other Scottish dioceses were trained and SPRED now exists in St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Motherwell, Paisley and Galloway.

Directors were also trained for Malta by the Glasgow team and Glasgow is now seen as one of two centres, the other being Chicago, where SPRED materials can be developed and directors formed in the SPRED method.



WORDS BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY

IT'S a perfect summer evening outside SPRED's training centre in Robroyston Road in the north-east of the city.

In my rear-view mirror two young men, stripped to the waist, stand bawling at each other though their voices are almost drowned out by the sound of motor-bikes and revving car engines.

Yet inside the centre the contrast to the cacophony of street life outside could not be greater.

The training centre, next to St Philomena's church is full of light and life and as soon as I step through the front door I am struck by a serene atmosphere of welcoming calm.

I've been invited to see for myself what happens at a typical SPRED evening and like all strangers in unfamiliar surroundings I feel a bit lost in unfamiliar territory.

That's not something that troubles Lisbeth Raeside, director of SPRED Glasgow, who credits the local community with fully supporting the organisation's work.

I follow her to the hall, where, for the next couple of hours, I will be both observing and taking part. "No one is a bystander at a SPRED meeting," Lisbeth says with a smile.

Perhaps I was expecting rows of misty church chairs in a dusty church hall with a few wall posters – these quick fire judgments again – but instead I walk into what resembles a colourful classroom, with pale blue

Flourish's Brian Swanson drops in on a SPRED session to learn what can be achieved...and is moved and inspired by the unique atmosphere of peace, care and spiritual enrichment

walls, functional furniture, boxes of crayons, jigsaws, and simple activities.

This is the last meeting of 2024/25 but every session begins the same way, in silence, with activities – painting, drawing, jigsaws – designed to induce a calming atmosphere for the evening ahead.

And so, to the accompaniment of soothing background music I pick up a packet of crayons and begin colouring in a black and white drawing of an owl – an activity I find, to my surprise, incredibly calming.

So much so that when Lisbeth welcomes us in turn with the warmest of handshakes it was like waking up from a particularly pleasant dream.

The calmness remains with me when we move to the 'celebration room' as I immediately feel at home with my new friends who wave and smile as I join them.

Tealights twinkle on a silver tray as we sit holding hands in a semi-circle focussing on the stump of a flickering candle in a glass jar which was lit at the beginning of last year's session.

Later there will be a period of reflection on the year that's gone and the many blessings it has brought.

For now though, overcoming darkness will be the overriding theme for the next few minutes and Lisbeth expresses it in such beautifully simple terms that I found it instantly inspiring.

"The candle is God's light, and he is sharing his light with us," she began and the phrase and the others which follow, are repeated.

"We grow together in God's light."

"My light grows strong in you"

Then it is time to move back into the main hall and gather round the table to sit together to share experiences over a simple meal of crisps and cakes and tea.

Delighted

Lisbeth invites us to share what has been happening in our lives and I'm delighted to tell the group that my wife and I just found out we are to become grandparents again; others recall a holiday with family or a visit to the cinema while another friend talks excitedly about a concert at the Hydro.

As the evening draws to a close and we drift away I reflect over the coming days that the calmness, serenity, love, patience and the powerful imagery of God's light dispelling darkness that I witnessed will almost certainly never leave me.

SPRED's amazing impact on the family of friends

A FATHER has told Flourish of his family's gratitude to SPRED for its many years of continuing love, care, and devotion to their son through most of his adult life.

Brian McDonald, 48 (right, with long-time catechist Angusina MacInnes), who lives with his parents in the south side of Glasgow has a very rare form of severe epilepsy which began in childhood and although he needs constant care at home and at a day centre, he eagerly looks forward to his SPRED sessions.

His father Jim, a retired Rolls Royce engineer, said: "He's a very sociable lad chatting away all the time and as soon as he comes home from a SPRED meeting he always says 'when are we going back?' So my wife Linda and I know that it means a lot to him – and to us.

"It can be hard going for families like us and you can't get away from that but ever since we got involved with SPRED they have made a difference to our lives and we are grateful for that."

The family are lifelong parishioners at Our Lady and St George, Penilee, and it was after Mass one day when Brian was about 12 that SPRED first came into their lives – and it began with a kindly word from a volunteer.

Meeting

Jim said: "A lady came up to us after Mass and asked if we had ever thought of bringing him to a SPRED meeting."

"I had no idea at the time what SPRED was. But it seemed amazing to us right

from the start that here was a group of people who really care about people like Brian."

"The first thing that hit me was how calm the atmosphere was... the best way I can put it was that it was like a mindfulness session with candles and calming music.

"The other thing was the patience of the catechists towards their 'friends' as they call the people they look after – it really is impressive and I could see why Brian is always so happy to be there, surrounded by love and respect."



Facing the future in faith



Lisbeth Raeside, centre, with retiring leader catechists Irene, left, and Rosemary, who have each given 30 years' service to SPRED

An interview with SPRED Director Lisbeth Raeside

How has SPRED changed over the years?

Until COVID we had used a very stable model for nearly 40 years. Nowadays our friends' needs are changing and more complex, especially among the younger age group.

For example, we see more people with autism and fewer with Downs Syndrome. It can be harder to attract volunteers from a traditional parish appeal. People have so many commitments.

We still attract volunteers, but it can be harder to find them.

What challenges do these changes bring?

SPRED has a fantastic group of volunteers and many have been with us for over 20 years but we need to plan for the future as people retire.

For some friends we also need to adapt how we do things to give them the support that best fits their needs.

How is SPRED responding to these challenges?

We are working with three experimental groups.

One involves parents bringing their child to short sessions. Parents remain responsible for their children while two trained catechists lead the session.

These sessions are focussed on sacramental preparation, which is so important for families whose children are placed in non-denominational schools for educational reasons.

BY MARY MCGINTY

The second is a school group. We are working with the school to see how much of the SPRED method staff can use in a busy and noisy school setting.

The third group involves a family with children who have very complex needs that would be hard to meet in a traditional group.

There will be more new initiatives this coming year.

What makes a good catechist?

Someone who is grateful for their relationship with God and the Church and who wants others to have that too.

Good catechists are warm hearted and accept people as they are. They are also willing to receive from those they accompany in faith.

The friendships we share in SPRED are two way and we soon learn that we can receive even more from our SPRED friends than we offer.

Why is SPRED an essential part of the Archdiocese?

For people living with a learning or developmental disability it's often difficult to engage with the life of their parish. Taking children (including adult children) to Mass can be a challenge for families.

SPRED forms a bridge that helps our friends feel at home in God's house.

For many families SPRED is the face of the Church in which they find that their child is loved and valued, not because we tell them but by what we do and how we relate to them.

That makes a tremendous difference to the faith life of entire families and enriches the wider community.

Pope and Patriarchs plead for peace as Israel plans invasion



POPE Leo XIV and Holy Land Patriarchs have appealed for an end to the conflict in the Holy Land and spoken out against Israeli government plans to annex Gaza City.

The conflict has already caused the deaths of around 70,000 people in Gaza, according to Palestinian estimates, and 1200 Israelis

killed in the initial Hamas terror attack.

In July an Israeli tank fired on the Church of the Holy Family, the only Catholic parish in Gaza. The attack killed three people and injured several others, including Father Gabriel Romaneli, the pastor of the church.

In his latest appeal Pope Leo implored that all hos-

tages be freed, a permanent ceasefire be reached, the safe entry of humanitarian aid be facilitated, and humanitarian law be fully respected, "particularly the obligation to protect civilians and the prohibitions on collective

BY RONNIE CONVERY punishment, the indiscriminate use of force, and the forced displacement of populations."

The Pope's words were echoed by Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa and Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III who issued a joint statement saying there is "no reason to justify the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians" in Gaza.

The patriarchs criticised the Israeli government's recent decision to take control of Gaza City.

"It seems that the Israeli government's announcement that 'the gates of hell will open' is indeed taking on tragic forms.

"The experience of past campaigns in Gaza, the declared intentions of the Israeli government with regard to the current operation, and the reports now reaching us from the ground, show that



Latin Patriarch Cardinal Pizzaballa

the operation is not just a threat, but a reality that is already in the process of being implemented."

The Church leaders said many of those seeking shelter at the Christian compounds are weakened and malnourished due to the hardships of the last months and leaving Gaza City and trying to flee to the south "would be nothing less than a death sentence."

"We do not know exactly

what will happen on the ground, not only for our community, but for the entire population.

"We can only repeat what we have already said: There can be no future based on captivity, displacement of Palestinians or revenge."

"This is not the right way. There is no reason to justify the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians," the patriarchs continue.

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Archbishop marks St Bart's anniversary

ARCHBISHOP Nolan urged parishioners of St Bartholomew's, Castlemilk, to follow the example of their patron and preach the good news of Christ to others as they celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the parish.

In his homily on the patronal feast day, the Archbishop said: "St Bartholomew travelled to India, Armenia and Ethiopia and he was an example to us of someone who was committed to passing the faith to others.

"When the parish was founded 70 years ago, no one knew what the future would hold and today all these years later we still don't know what the future holds either, but



as these who founded this parish realised, we must continue to put our faith and trust in God as St Bartholomew did.

"This is what a parish, all parishes, should be – a family of faith, a community, where we can come and feel at home and support each other in faith."

The parish came into being 70 years ago to cater for the grow-

BY BRIAN SWANSON

ing number of Catholic families moving into the then-new Castlemilk housing estate.

Before the present church building was constructed worshippers used a green painted hut, built in 1955, which still stands in its grounds.

Archbishop Donald Campbell laid the foundation stone on the 23rd of May 1957, and it opened the

following year.

Fr Daniel Toy, widely respected as a simple man devoted to the poor of the parish, was appointed as first parish priest.

Many well known priests went on to serve St Bart's, as it is affectionately known, including the present Chancellor of the Archdiocese, Monsignor Paul Murray, and Canon David Wallace, Administrator of St Andrew's Cathedral.



New deacons graduate with flying colours

FOUR of the newest deacons in the Archdiocese have marked the final stages of their academic formation by graduating with Bachelor of Divinity degrees with Honours.

Deacons Andrzej Brzuchalski, Elvis Arrey Etra, Tony Murphy and Paul McNair were among a group of around 50 who each received their degrees in various disciplines from guest of honour, Bishop John Keenan of Paisley, at a ceremony at St Mary's University, in Oscott, Birmingham.

Since their ordination in recent years the four have been appointed by Archbishop Nolan to various parishes throughout the Archdiocese.

Andrzej serves in St Conval's and St James the Great, in the south side of Glasgow, Elvis in St Joseph's, Cumbernauld, Tony in St Matthew's, Bishopbriggs and Paul in Holy Cross, Croy and Our Lady and St Helen's Condor-rat.

Speaking to *Flourish* after the ceremony, Deacon Paul said: "It was a real joy to share that moment as brother deacons, and an



BY BRIAN SWANSON

added privilege to receive our awards from Bishop Keenan.

"It's been a blessing to walk this road with my brother deacons, and I've learned a great deal from their example. While our academic formation is complete, our journey of faith and service continues, rooted in prayer,

shaped by study, and lived out in our parishes and communities."

He added: "The diaconate isn't about being perfect or knowing all the answers. It's about being willing to serve, to learn, and to walk closely with Christ and His people. If that speaks to something in your heart, speak to your parish priest. It might just

be the start of something life-changing."

■ **To find out more about the vocation as a Deacon email Deacon Kenny McGeachie, Archdiocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate, at [Kenneth.mcgeachie@rcag.org.uk](mailto:mcgeachie@rcag.org.uk) or 07772 392682.**

Papal blessing joy for St Mungo's



Deacon Joe, Pat, Bob and parish priest Fr Frank Keevins

TWO loyal parishioners from St Mungo's, Townhead, have been presented with a framed Papal Blessing certificate from Pope Leo XIV in recognition of their many years of devoted service.

BY BRIAN SWANSON

Deacon Joe O'Donnell arranged for Bob and Pat Ramsay to receive the honour during a recent visit he made to Rome.

He said: "I was meeting

someone at the Vatican anyway and while I was there I made some inquiries about getting a Papal Blessing because we had been talking for some time about finding a way of showing our appreciation for the loving and

devoted service they have given to the parish.

"They both celebrated their 80th birthdays recently but are still very active supporters of the parish and a great example to others."

Bob said: "It was a real surprise for us both and a great honour.

Honour

Pat added: "St Mungo's has always been a big part of our lives but we never expected an award like this."

Meanwhile parishioners and other supporters have raised £30,000 to upgrade heating works in the church.

Parish Priest Father Frank Keevins said: "This really is a fantastic achievement, and we are very grateful to everyone who has donated so far.

"There's a wee bit to go yet to reach our target of £50,000 with the option of a loan from the Archdiocese to make up the shortfall but it remains to be seen if that will be needed.

"Please God the work will be completed by the end of October at the latest."

North Korea: the silent martyrdom

A NORTH Korean Christian who has fled from one of the harshest dictatorships in the world will be in Glasgow this month to tell the story of persecution in his homeland.



Aid to the Church in Need Scotland will host Timothy Cho, a North Korean human rights activist and defector, who has found refuge in the UK and now advocates for religious freedom around the world.

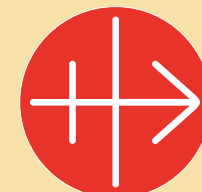
Timothy will share his remarkable journey, discussing how faith has shaped his path and what life is like for Christians in North Korea. It is extremely rare for a Christian from North Korea to be able to share their gripping story first-hand.

Timothy was born during the 1980s and endured the infamous Great Famine, which resulted in 3.5 million deaths across the nation.

Cho managed to flee to China when he was a teenager; however, he was soon deported back and was immediately sent to a detention centre, where there was extreme overcrowding.

Incredibly, Cho was later sent to the Philippines rather than North Korea. Many would see such an event as an act of God. From there, Cho eventually made it to the United Kingdom.

William More, Manager of Operations in Scotland, said: "In one of the most closed and oppressive re-



ACN

gimes in the world, simply believing in God can cost you everything.

"In a land where Christianity is outlawed and the faithful are driven underground, Timothy's testimony offers a rare glimpse into the courage of those who risk their lives to hold onto their belief in Christ. This is a one-off event – it is a witness to truth, a call to solidarity and a reminder of the price of faith in places where freedom is just a dream."

The CAN event will take place at St Joseph's, Clarkston on 10th September from 7pm to 9pm.

Reserve your free ticket now at <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FDYV>.

■ **For more information, please contact the ACN Scotland office at scotland@acnuk.org by calling 01698 337 470.**

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Many people believe they must be wealthy to leave a charitable gift in their will. In truth, even a small percentage of your estate can have a profound impact. After providing for loved ones, consider how your values might live on through a cause close to your heart.

This September you might prayerfully reflect on how you might leave a legacy of Christian love. Speak with your solicitor and include a gift that reflects your faith and compassion.

By remembering a charity in your will, you help build a better future—one that echoes the Gospel call to love our neighbour as ourselves. A fitting final act of faith-filled generosity.

Please consider the PCT-St Nicholas Care Fund when you are making a will or leaving a legacy. Your support will help change the lives of children living in poverty, will assist older people in situations of isolation and vulnerability and will foster initiatives which bring people together in our local communities.

Applications from eligible organisations are invited quarterly – next deadline 3 November.

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New Vatican site is a paradise for collectors' items

If you know a stamp collector or a coin collector with an interest in the faith, then all your Christmas and birthday present problems may have been solved at once!

Last month saw the launch of a new website of the Vatican Office which produces the much sought-after collector's items, allowing people living outside Rome to access the beautiful stamps and coins in mint condition.

The Philatelic and Numismatic site offers a range of products of historical and cultural significance. Each stamp and coin is created to celebrate events, personalities and moments that have left their mark on time.

Fascination

A Vatican spokesman said: "In an age when traditional mail gives way to digital messages and physical currency stands side by side with electronic and virtual currency, stamps and coins retain their fascination as vehicles of knowledge and beauty, fragments of history imprinted on paper or metal.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

"Every collector can find meaning in the details, the artistic techniques, the materials, and the stories that

each piece holds. With our new e-shop, this universe is now even more accessible."

Among the highlights on offer are:



- The special stamp (below) issued during the 'Sede Vacante' period between the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo.
- Coins issued to mark the Jubilee Year

- The first stamps (left) to carry the image of Pope Leo XIV
- With prices starting at just over £1 for a stamp marking the life of Pope Francis and running to a 100 euro gold coin dedicated to the Second

Vatican Council's declaration Dignitatis Humanae, on sale for 3800 Euros, there is something for every budget. All purchases can be shipped to the UK.

■ You can consult and buy at the website www.cfn.va



Cathedral's link to Third Lanark

It is well known that Celtic Football Club was founded in the parish hall of St Mary's Abercromby Street. But it has now emerged that another historic Scottish club was also founded in the shadow of a church.

Third Lanark – the club which went out of existence in 1967 – was founded right behind St Andrew's Cathedral as a new plaque just revealed confirms.

The club was founded by soldiers from the Third Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers, an Army Reserve protection force set up to protect the country against invasion from Napoleon's France.

BY RONNIE CONVERY

Several of the regiment saw the world's first international football match held on 30th November 1872 at West of Scotland Cricket Ground, Partick and were inspired to found a new club.

Twelve days after this inaugural match between Scotland and England, a meeting was held in the Havelock Buildings in East Howard Street and Third Lanark was founded – the original name being Third Lanark Rifle Volunteers Football Club.

The Havelock Buildings were directly behind St An-

drew's Cathedral.

The team played their football on ground off Victoria Road before moving into the first Cathkin Park on Cathcart Road in 1875 (Old Cathkin Park), before moving again to the New Cathkin Park in 1903.

The club played in the first Scottish Cup in 1873 and the first season of the Scottish Football League in 1890 and were a powerhouse of Scottish football until their demise in 1967.

More information on the new plaques telling the story of Glasgow's football history at <https://www.footballssquaremile.com/>

SSVP Youth lead the way!

THE example of Glasgow University students who put their Catholic faith into action as members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul could act as a template for other Scottish universities and colleges.

That's the view of Margo Morris, the Society's recently appointed National Youth Development Coordinator, after spending time with the Glasgow University SSVP1833 Conference – which takes its name from the year that the society was founded.

Inspiring

Margo said: "They really are a group of very inspiring young adults who are just the kind of people in the 18-to-33-year age group we need to become involved with us."

"I'm very keen to see similar conferences set up in other universities and colleges I want to use the work of the Glasgow students as an example."

"The Glasgow group serve their local community by supporting the homeless

with an outreach programme, and in the winter months, they distribute essential night kits including hand warmers and thermal wraps to provide warmth and comfort and they also volunteer at a local clothes bank."

Meanwhile it's looking like a busy year ahead for Margo, who is relishing the challenge that her new role involves.

Belfast-born Margo, who has lived in Scotland for the past 30 years, said: "Over the new few months we will be working closely with primary and secondary schools setting up SSVP Youth groups."

"We will also be expanding that work into universities and colleagues as well as developing resources that link Youth SSVP with Catholic Social Teaching."

"And also on the agenda is collaborating with partners such as Justice and Peace Scotland, SCIAF, and Misio Scotland on shared priorities."



SCIAF birthday Mass – and you're invited!

SCIAF marks its 60th birthday this month and you are warmly invited to join Scotland's official Catholic aid charity for a Mass of celebration and thanksgiving.

The Mass will take place where the charity was founded all those years ago... St Columbkille's church in Rutherglen Main Street (below) on Saturday 13 September.

A spokesperson for SCIAF said: "This special occasion offers us the opportunity to give thanks for six decades of walking in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in need, promoting human dignity, justice, and peace across the world. We would be honoured by your presence as we unite in faith to

renew our commitment to building a just and compassionate world, inspired by the Gospel. Refreshments will follow in the hall."

Ahead of the Mass, there will be a special pilgrimage walk leaving from St Andrew's Cathedral at 9.45 and reaching Rutherglen in time for the 12 noon Mass of Thanksgiving.

The route will follow the peaceful paths of Glasgow Green and along the banks of the River Clyde – a chance to walk together in nature, prayer and reflection.

More information and sign up forms for the walk at <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/get-involved/events/835-sciaf-anniversary-mass>



Step away from times of stress with a retreat

Craig Lodge Community is offering a new way of experiencing the House of Prayer. Living Water retreats are a chance to step away from the pressures of daily life to find refreshment by spending time with Jesus.

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What really makes a truly happy marriage?

No amount of preaching shapes a soul as much as seeing someone living an honest life. If that's true, and it is, then no marriage course is ever as powerful to teach about marriage as is the witness of a good marriage.

I understood this firsthand several years ago when I attended the 50th wedding anniversary of an uncle and aunt. Theirs was a good marriage: harmony, hospitality, family, faith.

However, and only they knew the price tag, this did not always come easily. They spent the first years of their marriage without much money and without extras, raising a large family. His first job, clerking in a store, paid him a pittance. She couldn't find any work at all, since in the small town where they lived, women weren't much wanted in the job market then.

As well, as in all families, there were countless other struggles and, in their case, countless hours spent by both, beyond their own family concerns, working in church and community circles.

More than 200 of us, family and friends, gathered to toast and roast them. At the end of the banquet my uncle stood up to thank everyone



Scribblings of the spirit

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



and ended his comments with these words.

"When we got married fifty years ago, we didn't have much, but we had an unconscious trust that if we lived by the Ten Commandments and the laws of the church, then things would turn out all right – and I think they did."

What an understatement! They turned out better than all right.

A good marriage can best be described, I believe, by

four images, and theirs is the prime analogate of each:

A good marriage is a warm fireplace. The love that the two people have for each other generates a warm place. But the warmth it creates does not just warm the two of them, it also warms everyone else who comes near them: their children, their neighbours, their community, and everyone who meets them.

A good marriage is a big table, loaded with food and

drink. When two people love each other in a true sense, that love becomes a place of hospitality.

Love feeds not just the two people who are generating it, it always contains more than enough surplus to feed everyone who is fortunate enough to meet it. This is what makes it sacramental.

A good marriage is a container which holds suffering. An old axiom says: "Everything can be borne if it can be shared!" That's true.

Anyone fortunate enough to have a true moral partner in life can bear a lot of suffering. This is particularly true in a good marriage where the wife and husband, because of their deep moral affinity, can carry not just their own sufferings but also can help carry the sufferings of many others.

Finally, a good marriage is Christ's body, flesh that is "food for the life of world." Christ left us his body to feed the world. A good marriage does precisely that, it feeds everything and everybody around it.

The marriage of my aunt and uncle can be described by these images. Their relationship with each other was a fireplace, where many people, including myself, found warmth. It was a ta-

ble; their houses always had big tables, loaded refrigerators, and friendly doors that welcomed and gave hospitality to everyone who crossed their threshold.

And their relationship was a container for suffering.

Through the years, thanks to their love for each other, they were able to bear with faith all the pain, tragedy, and suffering that came their way, and were able to help many other people carry their sufferings.

Sacrament

In an age which no longer understands sacrament, we might look at a marriage like this one to better understand what constitutes a sacrament.

Sometimes the answers we seek are not found in a book, but in the house across the street; sometimes the divine grace we seek is found when someone opens a door of welcome to us; sometimes the elusive consolation we seek is given us by a friend who understands our pain; and sometimes the sacrament we seek to feed our souls is found in a warm living room, at a loaded table, in the banter and humor flowing back and forth across the table, and in a couple who are happily married.

OASIS

Nourish your soul with our monthly spirituality supplement

The wisest of grandmas can still wear jeans!

ASKED one of my daughters if she thought there was a time when a woman is too old to wear jeans.

I was hoping it wasn't going to be any younger than my own age since I'd just bought a new pair!

Thankfully she was able to quote a reply to that very question when it was asked on Mumsnet. 'Half an hour before you die' was the firm opinion of one contributor.

I was relieved to have settled that matter since none of us wants to be accused of age-inappropriateness. Mutton dressed as lamb and all that...

The grandchildren count having tipped into double figures last month might have been the trigger. Even although the eldest of the gang is still in single figures it feels like a moment for me.

I feel like I am in different territory. While not ready to embrace old age I feel I have earned the status of wise old woman (just a little less of the old).



Mary's musings

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

As an only child myself, although a very happy one and never lonely, I thank God every day for these ten blessings he has bestowed upon me.

We're thinking our little Ciara May will be a chilled and laid back baby since despite her two-year old brother's early entrance and the midwife's predictions of an early arrival she was in no desperate hurry to appear.

The wee man is well-chuffed with his kid sister, to the point he's been trying to run the show, giving them nappies when he thinks she needs to be changed and informing them when she has hiccups. Although he did ask 'when is Ciara going back in mummy's tummy?'

Changed days. My eldest was six when the youngest was born and she took it at face value when I told her the fairies were bringing the baby.

Birth

The birth of a new baby is the purest distillation of life. In those precious first days nothing else matters. Life is pared back to its essential elements. Thoughts of the pram, the cot and the baby carrier are for another day.

A new life is here and the wonder, joy and gratitude it instills is of such magnitude that it is as if this baby is the first ever born.

As much as this is felt most deeply by the parents there is a particular feeling

in the older generations. We've seen countless new babies over the years and we are more in awe than ever.

Ours is the familial connection closest to the parents and that alongside our experience makes us well-placed as seams of knowledge and sage advice. If we are really wise we know to be careful how we dispense that advice. Only after it's been directly solicited and mindful it should be in line with the current mode of baby care.

Even as the elder stateswomen of the family we're hardly in creeping decrepitude territory, not quite ready to wither on the vine. Some among us are late bloomers, some are rein-

venting themselves. Among the fruits we can bring to the feast of family life are our deep wells of wisdom, our perspective on life and our confidence that with prayer and a fair wind most things work out in the end.

Whatever it is, we're up to the task. Navigating working life, children and grandchildren, some still with their own parents and in-laws to care for. We are less bound by societal strictures.

We in turn can take our inspiration from the aged women in scripture who by their example guided and influenced the younger generations. Like St Monica we will remain steadfast, resilient and strong.

As my lovely daughter-in-law grows her family with the birth of her second baby she is the Mrs McGinty of the new generation. Old Mrs McGinty, as I would have been known in previous generations, is perfectly content as she is. Wearing jeans of course.

ART OF THE MONTH

The sorrows of Our Lady inspired great art and devotion

THE month of September invites us to contemplate a beautiful devotion: the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We are drawn into the mystery of Mary's profound union with the Passion of her Son and her distinctive role in the drama of salvation.

The Lamentation of Christ (right) by Giotto di Bondone inspires our meditation on sorrow, love, and redemptive suffering.

In Giotto's fresco, the Virgin Mary bends over the broken body of her crucified Son. Her form is contorted with grief, yet she remains composed, as if the storm of anguish has become a silent vigil.

Every line of her body conveys not only maternal sorrow but the interior offering of one who has consented, again and again, to the mysterious will of God.

Her suffering has become, the fulfilment of the

BY MGR TOM MONAGHAN

prophecy of Simeon: "And a sword shall pierce through your own soul also"...

This is not merely a scene of maternal grief. The new Eve participates in the redemptive offering of the new Adam. She is co-sufferer and co-operator in the work of redemption. Her gaze, her gesture, and her stillness speak volumes.

She holds the broken body of the One she bore in quiet understanding. She becomes, as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux put it, the altar upon which the Sacrifice is laid and the most faithful companion of His redeeming work.

Giotto places Mary at the heart of the composition. The rocky slope descending from the top of the painting draws the eye toward her agonised face, making her grief the focal point of the scene. Nearby, Mary

Magdalene clasps the feet she once anointed and dried with her hair. Around them, each figure embodies a different expression of sorrow but all deeply human. Even the angels above, twisting in agony, seem to cry aloud the unbearable sorrow of heaven.

Two figures, with their backs to us, support the body of Christ. Their anonymity is striking. They offer no face, no name—only the gesture of service. Perhaps this is Giotto's invitation: that we, too, should take up the body of Christ in the world, unseen, unnamed, but faithful.

In this silent moment—love's last hour—Mary becomes the Church's mirror. Her sorrow is the sorrow of all who love Christ, her embrace the image of all who receive Him with reverence. She teaches us how to suffer in union with Him, not with despair, but as pilgrims of hope.



PRAYER OF THE MONTH

O sorrowful Mother,
who cradled the lifeless body of your Son,
help us to enter into the mystery of love that
suffers and does not turn away. May the
silent tenderness of this moment move
our hearts to repentance, our lives to
compassion, and our souls to hope. By your
holy Passion and Death, Lord, draw us into
your Resurrection.

Amen.

The power of music to inspire peace and promote justice

THERE were hymns and reflections by eminent folk from different denominations, including of course, Archbishop William Nolan, as well as Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and Rosie Frew, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

But it was when Brian Quail, a veteran peace activist who I'm sure many of you know, quietly began to sing "We shall overcome..." just as we had been told the vigil at Faslane nuclear submarine base was over, that tears came. Mine certainly did.

It was so good to see some young people at that vigil as we remembered the 80th anniversary of the horrific bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Perhaps they weren't familiar with the old protest song, but it's not hard to pick up on the words and it became the most fitting unscripted ending to a moving event.

Those of us with longer memories remember it being sung in the 1960s in the UK as a "Ban the Bomb" song, but its history is much longer. Its roots were in the



Joan Baez with Bob Dylan

American civil rights movement, first as a variation on a hymn and then adopted by tobacco workers during the 1945–46 Charleston Cigar Factory strike in Charleston, South Carolina.

It was published in 1947 by an adult education organisation that trained trades union representatives. Pete Seeger then included it

in his repertoire and by the 1960s it had become a well-known protest song associated with singers such as Joan Baez. It was Seeger who added the verses that, when it crossed the Atlantic, made it the perfect anti-nuclear weapons anthem.

In the United States, it remains indelibly linked with the civil



Marian Pallister

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

rights movement, not least because of its association with major civil rights events – including the Vietnam war and the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968. He had recited the words of the song in his final sermon just four days before his death. At his funeral, more than 50,000 sang "We shall overcome..."

Protest

In Pax Christi Scotland's last newsletter, Anne Dobbing (a Pax Christi Scotland member) wondered why we don't hear protest songs today, and she offered a version of "Where have all the flowers gone" that sought support for Palestine.

I'm the cracked record urging people to use their voices to make a difference. I believe we can make

a difference if we speak out, if we write letters to our MPs and MSPs, if we speak truth to power. But with no disrespect to the wonderful speakers at the Faslane vigil, I think Anne Dobbing was right. Brian Quail, also a Pax Christi Scotland member and present as a delegate for Glasgow Catholic Worker, proved her point.

At first wavering, then stronger, our "We shall overcome" convinced each of us in this Year of Hope that we can overcome, that we can convince the nine nuclear nations that possession of weapons of mass destruction is immoral, that to use them would not only be immoral but catastrophic for our common home.

I hope we find our voices again to sing our way to a nonviolent world. Thanks, Brian.

The Way of the Cross is not confined to Holy Week... it's part of our journey through life



Fr Tom
Kilbride

Parish Priest of Christ
the King, Glasgow

IT'S not been too bad a summer, as far as warm sunshine goes. A few "heatwaves" along the way, which will probably be little more than distant memories as we move into autumn and the longer nights!

Our Sunday readings will not be without their challenges too, as we continue along the road with Jesus, his resolute road to Jerusalem and the Cross.

The joyful days of Galilean healings and miracles seem largely behind us, as we are confronted with the challenges that being his disciples entails. Jesus is heading

for the Cross, and he wants us to know that we will face it too, but not alone and not without hope of greater things to come.

Twenty-Third Sunday C

It's interesting that today's Gospel reading begins by noting there are "great crowds" following Jesus. Anyone would consider that a success! Surely, we would want to keep them on-side, making sure we didn't do anything to put them off? Not Jesus! Rather, he takes the opportunity to offer the crowds a challenge: if you're serious about coming with me, you have to leave everything else aside.

No other task, no other relationship, will be as central as this. It is as though Jesus asks them (as he asks us): "I see you all gathering round me, but are you prepared for the cross, prepared for what being my disciple might cost?"

We have begun to walk with him on this road: can we dedicate ourselves to it or do we do so only half-heartedly? It's a real challenge, as we know all too well that we often fall short of that dedication. But if we hear the promise that wisdom will accompany and save us (First Reading), we

know we have the strength. And if we look out for each other in love as Paul does for Onesimus (Second Reading) then we know we don't walk the path alone either but have each other for support in carrying the crosses that come our way.

The Exaltation of the Cross

We interrupt our Ordinary Sundays for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. It's perhaps a good thing that, having heard last week about the challenges of discipleship, this week we celebrate the glory to which the road Jesus is taking to the cross ultimately leads.

Hope is always greater than suffering or difficulties, as this Holy Year is reminding us, and so today's feast offers the hope that a share in Christ's suffering means too a share in his triumph. The Cross is our sign of victory, of love, of hope, of salvation, greater than the healing brought by the bronze serpent of Moses which points to it. God sent his Son to save us by "lifting him up". Because Jesus humbled himself, therefore God exalted him. Humility, service, sacrifice and love of others is no sign of weakness. Rather, it is the ultimate path to triumph and glory.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday C

Returning to our regular Sundays, we are offered another important teaching on discipleship, about the use of material things, which we might need but which we must use wisely and not allow to dominate us.

Jesus has already taught that we should be prepared



Carl Heinrich Bloch,
Christ on the Cross, 1870

to give up everything for the sake of the Kingdom. Now we hear again what we heard a few weeks ago: we must be whole-hearted in our dedication to God. We cannot serve two Masters after all. Our best choice is God who is eternal and who will never fail us, as opposed to material things, social status or power, all of which can be lost in an instant, as the "manager" in the parable discovers. The other readings too, in their own way, reinforce this message. Amos berates the people for not acting justly but rather using things – and even other people – for their own advantage. They were called to be different, to reflect God's

justice and compassion, but many of them allowed material things to rule them. Paul reminds Timothy that we need to live in peace with the world around us, because the whole world is God's and we should respect it as such.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday C

Again, this week challenges us about our use of material things. Do we become so wrapped up in our own lives and comforts

that we forget the sufferings of others, like the Rich Man in the parable? He had surrounded himself with such luxury and comfort that he couldn't see the suffering Lazarus right at his door. Amos warned about becoming so "at ease" that we stop noticing pain, "are not grieved by the ruin of Joseph". The Rich Man had not only stopped caring: he had stopped noticing. He was really the one who had fixed the "great chasm" between them, by closing his eyes and his heart to Lazarus, rather than reaching across the divide to help and embrace him.

We live in times of hardship for many, and perhaps these readings today are a reminder that if we are truly Jesus's followers, we should have our eyes and hearts open to those around us – near or far – who suffer, and do what we can to help them.

This month, then, we continue walking with Jesus along the road to Jerusalem and the Cross. We are challenged to reflect that it is not an easy path, but one which makes demands of us, especially in relation to sacrifice and service of those in need. But in the middle of all that, we celebrate the triumph, the victory which that Cross brings, and the hope we have, then, in difficult times.

If his Cross is our challenge and our hope, maybe the challenge is to share that hope with others too.

O'HARE



BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

Precious memories of our parents David, a cherished husband to the late Esther (née Murray), much loved Dad and Papa who died February 13, 2002 and whose birthday occurs on September 3rd; and our Dear mum, Gran and adored Great-Gran who died November 7, 2014 and whose birthday occurs on August 7.

Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Thérèse, pray for them.

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Golden Charter
Funeral Plans

Flourish editor Ronnie Convery looks back at the Holy Year's biggest event, the Jubilee of Youth

“DEAR young people, aspire to great things, to holiness. Do not settle for less...”

Thus, Pope Leo ended his homily at the Mass for the Jubilee of Young People, before a million pilgrims from all around the world.

Throughout the Youth Jubilee the Pope offered thoughtful and practical challenges to the young people.

“Serve the poor, bearing witness to the good we always desire to receive from our neighbour! Remain united with Jesus in the Eucharist. Adore the Eucharist, the source of eternal life! Study, work, and love in the manner of Jesus, the good Teacher who walks beside us.”

The Holy Father then practiced what he had just preached and spent about 40 minutes in silent Eucharistic Adoration with the young people before the monstrance which had been used for prayer by Saint John Bosco and newly-canonised Pier Giorgio Frassati.

His words at the con-



cluding Mass left a deep impression on the young pilgrims: “We continually aspire to something more that no created reality can give us, we feel a great and burning thirst, so great that no drink of this world can quench it. Faced with this thirst, let us not deceive our hearts by trying to quench it with ineffective substitutes!

“Let us listen to it, instead. Let us make it a stool on which we can climb, so that we can look out, like children, on tiptoe, at the window of our encounter with God. We will find ourselves before Him, who awaits us, or rather, who knocks gently on the window of our soul.

‘The Church is **YOUNG!**’

OVER a million young people from 146 countries around the world took Rome to their hearts last month and made it the capital of youthful faith. And the flag of Scotland flew high...

For seven days, the streets of the city were filled with joyful singing, flags waving, smiles, and emotion in young people’s eyes. Hundreds of dioceses, parishes, youth groups, associations, movements, and communities from around the world were present.

The young people – including a healthy presence from Scotland’s dioceses – had a great time, but above all, they had the opportunity to experience the Jubilee, with confessions at the Circus Maximus, catechesis throughout the city, moments of prayer, Masses, and the Holy Year pilgrimages to the Holy Doors.

120,000 attended the Welcome Mass in St Peter’s Square, presided over by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization. At the end of the Mass, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, paid a surprise visit to the young



BY **RONNIE CONVERY**

people present. “We hope that all of you will always be signs of hope in the world!” he said

in a greeting in front of the basilica.

During the Youth Jubilee the young people had the opportunity to participate in the various events held in squares, parishes, and theaters in the center and suburbs

of Rome... from moments of adoration and prayer to musical events.

A day was entirely dedicated to the sacrament of Reconciliation in the extraordinary setting of the Circus Maximus. A river of young people, over 30,000 in eight hours, lined up to go to confession, with 1,000 priests available for shifts throughout the day, hearing confessions in ten different

languages.

It ended with the gathering of all the pilgrims at Tor Vergata – a huge university campus on the edge of the Eternal City. A million young people gathered to spend two amazing days with Pope Leo XIV, first with the Vigil on Saturday evening and then with final Mass at which over 7,000 priests, 400 bishops, and 25 cardinals concelebrated.

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Blessing for faithful Sarah

AT the grand old age of 90 Sarah Coyle still makes sure she does not miss a single day at Mass at St Patrick’s, Dumbarton, and now her devotion has been recognised with a Papal Blessing arranged by Parish Priest, Father Ross Campbell.

For most of her adult life Sarah was a loyal parishioner at St Peter’s Bellsmyre which closed last May because the building was in a dangerous condition.

Father Campbell said: “I’ve not been here all that long but from what I have been told she never missed a day at St Peter’s and continues to attend daily at St Patrick’s – she really is a remarkable example of a woman of faith.

Birthday

“When we learned that her 90th birthday was coming up we arranged for a well-deserved Papal blessing certificate to be pre-

sented to her.” And the certificate was not the only surprise for the birthday girl who was given the honour – usually reserved for a local dignitary – of cutting the ribbon at the opening of the annual Parish fair.

Sarah said: “I never expected any of this. Everyone has been so thoughtful but before they could ask me I told them that I have no intention of stopping going to daily Mass anytime soon!”

'Get on your bike...' Mark takes on the anniversary cycling challenge from SCIAF

CYCLING all the way to work has been on my mind for years, ever since I bought a bike through the cycle to work scheme.

I had always intended to be able to cycle to work, but life and work always got in the way.

I had always wondered, would it be possible to cycle to the office in Glasgow from my home in Drem, East Lothian? For years, the idea lurked in the back of my mind, out of reach, and easily forgotten – no one else knew about it, and so no one ever reminded me of it.

That all changed in 2025, SCIAF's 60th anniversary year, when I decided to make the cycle a reality.

My map showed me a total distance of 77 miles, and suggested a total cycle time of around 6 and a half hours. The next point, then,

was to work out the timings – for me the challenge had to genuinely be "cycling to work" – I needed to arrive in time to complete a full(ish) day in the office. This meant leaving at 3am – at least the roads would be quiet!

The cycle into Edinburgh was surreal – retracing the route of my only training run, but this time in complete darkness, passing more frogs and toads than cars or lorries. We reached the start of the Union Canal in good time, and carried on towards Linlithgow – which proved to be a 13 mile stretch that nearly broke me.

It was the hardest part of the challenge, through a combination of tricky, bumpy towpaths covered in tree roots and surrounded by tall stinging nettles and brambles, tiredness, and

BY **MARK CAMBURN**
DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES, SCIAF

plummeting energy levels. It was during this section that I reflected most on the people we serve in SCIAF, the poor, marginalised, and vulnerable communities around the world where we work.

I thought of the families in Gaza, South Sudan, DRC, and Colombia, waking up each day to find themselves still in the midst of raging conflict. Of the women and girls spending hours each day collecting water and firewood, missing out on the chance to go to school or work. Of the families I have met who work tirelessly each day in their fields, producing food for their families and communities, whilst always worrying about when the



next flood or drought may strike.

There are also the amazing community leaders I have had the privilege to spend time with, who risk their own lives every day when they stand up to injustices that keep their communities poor. And

those people in every community where we work, who live with disabilities that often result in them being left out of community activities, excluded from the opportunities that others have, and compounding their levels of poverty.

These are real challenges, and they formed the motivation, the 'why', for my cycle challenge. If I could raise funds to help SCIAF do more of the incredible work it does with these communities, all over the world, then it would be worth it.

With energy levels topped up in Linlithgow, we carried on towards the Falkirk wheel, and then onto Kirkintilloch to meet up with our CEO Lorraine Currie, and many other SCIAF colleagues who had cycled from Bridge of Weir, Paisley, and Glasgow to

meet us.

We arrived at around 9.30 (for breakfast number 3!), and then all carried on for the final 10 miles, into Glasgow and to our offices beside the Cathedral on Clyde Street.

These final 10 miles were the most enjoyable of the whole challenge. Cycling along with my SCIAF colleagues, broad smiles all round I couldn't help notice a palpable positive energy radiating from us all.

As we rolled along the banks of the Clyde, I felt relief that we had made it, pride in proving to myself that it was possible, and immense gratitude to my colleagues for supporting the challenge, and to my family, friends, and all those who supported the challenge, helping us raise £1300 for SCIAF's 'Dignity for all' appeal.

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