

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL

FREE

# FONTES

LENT 2026 | ISSUE 23 | FREE

MAGAZINE

## FRANCISCAN JUBILEE

Marks 800th anniversary of death of St Francis of Assisi [p. 8-9](#)

## INTO THE MARGINS

Conference brings focus on Marginalised [p. 10-11](#)

## SOAP GLOW

The Coatbridge Primary trying to combat hygiene poverty [p. 12-13](#)

**JOE'S FAITH CONTINUES TO**

# INSPIRE

**Bishops of Scotland support further investigation into Joe's reputation for holiness**

[Pages 14-15](#)

# INSIDE THIS EDITION

## PAGE 3

A word from Bishop Toal

## PAGE 4-7

News around the Diocese

## PAGE 8-9

Bishop Inaugurates Franciscan Jubilee in Diocese

## PAGE 10-11

Into the Margins: Deacon Michael Ross gives an insight into poverty conference

## PAGE 12-13

Soap Glow: How one primary school is helping restore the fundamental dignity of the child

## PAGE 14-15

Louise Lawlor Devanney on the faith of Joe Wilson that continues to inspire today

## PAGE 16-17

Stephen Ferrie reports on the latest Wellspring Forum

## PAGE 24-25

Fr Colum Martin reflects on Pope Leo XIV's first Christmas Urbi et Orbi message.

## PAGE 26-27

Ben Wilson explains how your donations to SCIAF's WEE BOX appeal can transform lives



 [rcdom.org.uk](https://www.rcdom.org.uk)

## NEXT EDITION

Easter 2026

Send your news, events and articles for the next edition to [media@rcdom.org.uk](mailto:media@rcdom.org.uk).

Deadline for submissions - 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026

# BISHOP'S DIARY

## 22nd February

**10.00am** Confirmations St Kevin's, Bargeddie  
**3.00pm** Rite of Election at Cathedral

## 23rd February

**9.30am** Visit to St Louise's PS, East Kilbride

## 24th February

**9.30am** Visit to St John the Baptist PS, Uddingston  
**2.00pm** Wellspring Integration Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations Christ the King, Holytown

## 25th February

**9.30am** School visit to All Saints PS, Airdrie  
**2.00pm** Wellspring Steerco Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Anthony's, Rutherglen

## 26th February

**9.00am** Bishops' Synodality Day  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Serfs, Airdrie

## 2nd March

**9.30am** Visit to St Mary's PS, Larkhall, and thereafter to St John's PS, Blackwood

## 3rd March

**9.30am** Visit to St Ignatius' PS, Wishaw  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Ninians's, Hamilton, for St Ninians's PS and St Cuthbert's PS

## 4th March

**9.30am** Visit to St Patrick's PS, Shotts  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Vincent de Paul, East Kilbride, for St Louise's PS

## 5th March

**2.00pm** Council of Priests' Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St John the Baptist, Uddingston

## 6th March

**9.30am** Visit to St Patrick's PS, New Stevenston

## 7th March

**9.00am** Cardinal Winning Lecture at Glasgow University

## 9th March

**9.30am** Visit to Our Lady and St Joseph PS, Glenboig

## 10th March

Festal Mass at St John Ogilvie HS, Hamilton  
**11.45am** Diocesan Fabric and Planning Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Margaret's, Airdrie, for All Saints PS

## 11th March

**9.30am** Visit to St Leonard's PS, East Kilbride  
**1.30pm** Visit to St Hillary's PS, East Kilbride  
**2.00pm** Diocesan Finance Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations Our Lady of Fatima Larkhall, for St Mary's PS and St John's PS

## 12th March

**9.30am** Visit to St Charles' PS, Newton  
**7.00pm** Confirmations St Ignatius', Wishaw

## 13th March

**2.00pm** Caritas Cup Netball Final at Ravenscraig

## 16th-18th March

Bishops' Conference of Scotland meeting at Schoenstatt

## 18th March

**7.00pm** Confirmations St Patrick's Shotts

## 19th March

**7.00pm** Confirmations St John Bosco, New Stevenston, for St Patrick's PS

## 21st March

**12noon** Legion of Mary Acies Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride

## 24th March

**2.00pm** Diocesan Trustees Meeting  
**7.00pm** Confirmations Our Lady and St Joseph's Glenboig

## 25th March

**7.00pm** Confirmations St Leonard's Church, East Kilbride, for St Leonard's PS and St Hilary's PS

## 26th March

**7.00pm** Confirmations at St Cadoc's Church, Halfway, for St Charles PS

## 2nd April

**11.00am** Mass of Chrism in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell

## 5th-12th April

HCPT Pilgrimage to Lourdes

# A WORD FROM BISHOP TOAL



## Dear Brothers and Sisters...

**A desire for better weather and longer days is shared by most of us. Someone told me recently he is looking forward to getting back out into his garden, with renewed enthusiasm for tidying up the ground after the winter months, turning over the soil, and planting new bulbs in the expectation of new growth and beautiful flowers through the summer months. It is an expectation fulfilled each year as the natural world comes to life again each spring and begins to produce its fruits, frequently enhanced by the hands and skill of the dedicated gardener.**

Soon we will enter the Season of Lent, and it will be good to approach it like the enthusiastic gardener, eager to attend to our spiritual lives by following the traditional Lenten discipline of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. We recognise the need for a renewed effort in tidying up our lives, getting rid of all wrong-doing and slackness in our actions and attitudes; preparing the ground of our souls for new growth and good fruit; opening our minds and hearts anew to God's Word and the promptings of

the Holy Spirit in our lives. Yes, Lent is the season for re-awakening and attentiveness to the Lord, giving time to prayer, participating in the sacramental and devotional life of the Church, and sharing generously our time and wealth with those in need. The following words from the Prophet Isaiah set the Lenten tone and expectation:

*"For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bud and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the earth, so shall my word be; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

May this be a blessed and fruitful Lent for us all.

*Joseph Toal*

## RITE OF ELECTION



The annual Rite of Election takes place in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell, on the First Sunday of Lent, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, at 3.00pm.

During this liturgy, the Catechumens and Candidates from across the Diocese who are preparing to be received into full communion this Easter will be presented to the Bishop and enrol their names in the book of the elect.

## MASS OF CHRISM



On Holy Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, at 11.00am, the clergy and faithful of the Diocese will gather with Bishop Toal in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell, for the Annual Mass of Chrism.

The Chrism Mass is one of the most important liturgies each year, during which the priests of the Diocese renew their vows and the Sacred Oils are blessed for use in the celebration of the Sacraments during the coming year.



## PETER'S SERVICE TO MOODIESBURN PARISH HONoured BY DIOCESAN MEDAL

BY GERARD HART

**Bishop Toal joined the community of St Michael's in Moodiesburn on the Solemnity of the Epiphany for Holy Mass during which he presented the Diocesan Medal to parishioner, Peter Shalley, in recognition of his dedicated service to the parish.**

Peter has been a highly active member of the parish since it opened in 1960 and, at the age of 91, remains an active, highly respected and much-loved parishioner to this day.

In the early years of the new parish, while the church was being constructed, Peter was very involved with building parish life, including being instrumental in setting up the first Parish Youth Club, raising funds for the group and organising events for young parishioners. Peter always made sure everything was centred on our Catholic faith. When the church building was complete, Peter took on the role of assistant sacristan and undertook the task of training all of our altar servers.

Peter fulfilled these roles over several decades, seeing the parish and altar servers through significant changes such as the Second Vatican Council and the transition from services being conducted in Latin to English.

A founding member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul parish conference, Peter remained a highly active member. He took his duties very seriously, visiting and comforting poor and needy members of our parish and conducting rosaries in the homes of bereaved parishioners. He was also a member of St Michael's award-winning church choir in the first half of the 1990s.

In addition to his parish roles, Peter has been a member of Council S25 of the Knights of Saint Columba since 1970 and is currently the longest-serving member of that council and has held roles at local and regional levels.

The parish of St Michael's celebrated 65 years since it was established at the end of last year, and Peter has been with us every step of the way from day one. He has willingly helped and tirelessly supported each of the 10 parish priests and administrators over those 65 years, listening to each, sharing his wealth of knowledge about the parish's past and, most importantly, being active and practical in how he can contribute to the pastoral development of the Catholic community in Moodiesburn.

**THE SEASON OF LENT AT CARFIN GROTT**



**Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Mass will be celebrated at 1.00pm Monday to Friday at Carfin Grotto during the Season of Lent. Ash Wednesday Mass in the parish church thereafter, Mass will be celebrated in the Glass Chapel.**

**SANTA JOINS PARISHIONERS FOR A ROLL AND SAUSAGE**



BY RITA CLARK

**Santa brought lots of festive cheer to St Mary's and St Paul's parish, Hamilton made a visit to our Santa's Sausage Sunday breakfast. He brought sweets for the children while the adults enjoyed rolls and sausage, all organised by our parish council. A huge thank you to Santa and all his helpers.**

**MARGARET'S CENTENARY**



**Mrs Margaret Gordon, a parishioner of St Columbkille's Rutherglen, recently celebrated her 100th Birthday. To mark this significant birthday, parish priest, Fr Bernard Mournian, presented Mrs Gordon with a Papal Blessing from Pope Leo XIV after Sunday Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany.**



## NEWLY ORDAINED VISIT CARMELITES

**The newly ordained priests of our Diocese, along with Deacon Kieran, who will be ordained to the priesthood later this year, spent time with Bishop Joseph Toal on an evening focused on prayer, ongoing formation and fraternity.**

The time together included shared prayer, conversation, and a visit to Falkland Palace. The group also visited the Dysart Carmelite Monastery, spending time with the sisters and celebrating Holy Mass together.

The retreat offered space for reflection and mutual support as these men continue their formation and priestly ministry within the diocese.

Joining Bishop Toal for the retreat were Fr Christopher Morris, Fr Christopher Furmage, Fr Christopher Igwe, Fr Colum Martin and Deacon Kieran Burt.

## HAMILTON CHURCHES JOIN TOGETHER IN CHRISTIAN UNITY

**BY JAMES MCCLUSKEY**

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, St Ninian and St Cuthbert's Parish in Hamilton was delighted to host a Taizé inspired Ecumenical prayer service.

We were joined by clergy and congregations from some of the Hamilton



Churches including: Rev Christopher Rankine of Hillhouse Parish Church; Fr Alisha Ramzy of St. Mary and St. Michael's Coptic Church and Canon Matthew Little of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, along with our own Fr. Charles Dornan and Deacon Stuart Dick.

The theme for this year's 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' was "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling."

## REQUIESTCAT IN PACE

**In recent months, two Religious Sisters with connections to the Diocese have sadly died.**



Sr. Marie Therese (above), a member of the Carmelite community in Glasgow, passed away on 17<sup>th</sup> December having just celebrated her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Sister had not enjoyed good health for a number of years and had been in Saint Francis Care Home in Govan for the last two years. Although Sister lived her religious life in Glasgow, she is a native of Coatbridge and retained a good number of contacts within the Motherwell Diocese. Her Requiem Mass took place in Holy Family and St Ninian's Kirkintilloch.

In January, Sr. Rosemary Reilly, a native of Newarthill, passed away. Sr Rosemary was a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace for over 70 years and ministered for many years at Our Lady and St Anne's in Hamilton, where her Requiem Mass was celebrated.

Prayers have also been offered following the death of Mr Michael Hartley, who passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> January. Michael, along with his wife Nora, was greatly involved in marriage preparation in the Diocese for many years, in addition to other duties. In 2022 they both received the Diocesan Medal from Bishop Toal in recognition of their service to the Diocese and Marriage Preparation (picture below). Michael's Requiem Mass was celebrated on 13<sup>th</sup> February in his home parish of St Leonard's, East Kilbride.



# NEW ENTRANCE ENSURES WARM WELCOME FOR ALL AT ST ALOYSIUS'

**Parishioners of St Aloysius in Chapelhall came together recently to celebrate the official blessing and opening of the new disabled access to their Church.**

After years of hard work planning and fundraising, the new entry was blessed by parish priest, Fr Mark O'Donnell, with two young pupils of St Aloysius' Primary helping to open the new doors.

Following the opening, a message on the parish's facebook page said:

"Today is a joyful and meaningful moment in the life of St Aloysius. After many years of prayer, planning, generosity and fundraising, we gathered to give thanks to God and to bless this new disabled access ramp and door.

This entrance is a sign of the determination, faith and care of this parish community – to welcome all people without barrier or exclusion, so that everyone may come freely to worship, to belong and to share fully in the life of this community. As Christ



welcomed all who came to him, especially those who were vulnerable or overlooked, so may this place always reflect his love, dignity and compassion for everyone.

A huge thank you to all who, through their charity (monetary/time/prayer), have enabled this to be realised."

# 'HOME FROM HOME'

**St Anthony & St Mark's Parish in Rutherglen has experienced a significant increase in parishioners born overseas who actively engage in parish life and worship.**

To better reflect the diverse backgrounds of these members, known as "The New Scots," the parish has implemented several changes to its worship practices. These include child dedication at Baptisms where the family is of Nigerian origin, and offertory processions in which parishioners present their gifts at the altar rails through dance rather than passing collection plates. Additionally, our annual Pentecost celebrations now feature a multicultural meal, music, and dancing, and where this feast coincides with First Holy Communion weekend, this event follows a procession of the Monstrance around the church's boundaries.

The latest event in Parish life was "Home from Home," held on January 3rd, which brought together people from all nations represented in the parish for a unique New Year celebration.

Parishioners with roots in Nigeria, Rwanda, Portugal, Mauritius, Tanzania, Angola, El Salvador, and Scotland gathered to enjoy an afternoon filled with shared food, music, dancing, lively conversation, and an impressive display of traditional costumes. Those who may have been far from home and family felt that our parish was truly their home for the day.

Parish Priest Fr Stephen Reilly remarked, "The communal meals, songs, costumes, and dances from around the world filled everyone with happiness and warmth. We are so lucky to have such a wonderful little parish!"





## Mini Vinnies head to Carfin Grotto

BY MICHAEL GOLDIE

On Monday, 24th November, Father Bogan, chaplain for the SSVP in Motherwell Diocese, celebrated Mass in St Francis Xavier Church, Carfin, for the Mini Vinnies of the primary schools in the East Kilbride, Rutherglen and Cambuslang Deanery - representing a total of 12 primary schools of the parishes Our Lady Of Lourdes, St Vincent de Paul, St Bride, St Leonard in East Kilbride; St Collumbkille, St Mark, St Anthony in Rutherglen; St Bride, St Cadoc, St Charles in Cambuslang.

Around 200 Mini Vinnies arrived by coach and minibus, accompanied by school staff and adult volunteers. They all gathered in the Xavier Centre before entering the church for Mass at 11.30 am. Representatives of the parish SSVP groups were also in attendance.

Father Bogan stood before the altar to welcome the youngsters and encourage their responses and their singing during the Mass.

His homily centred on the importance of faith in action, which is promoted by the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Father Bogan invited them to be active young Catholic Christians, showing their faith through prayer, through giving their time in the good works

they do, as well as the way they treat other pupils in school and in their daily lives.

Father Bogan stressed the need to help others, especially those in most need, and in the school environment to try to be kind and good to everyone.

He did so by asking simple questions, "Will you .....?"

He received very loud replies of "Yes!" to each question, making baptismal vows come to mind.

After mass, all the pupils gathered in front of the altar for a group photograph.

Thereafter, the children had their packed lunch in the Xavier Centre, followed by an opportunity to explore the Grotto before returning to school, having thoroughly enjoyed the community spirit and the prayerful side of their visit.



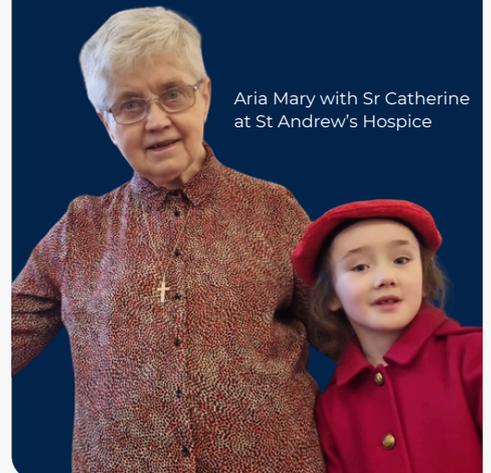
### St Michael's Mini Vinnies

Pupils from St Michael's Primary in Moodiesburn recently joined the local parish SSVP conference and Fr Emmanuel Ikpa in St Michael's Church to make their promise as Mini Vinnies. The group have been straight into action and hosted the senior members of the community for a Christmas event in December.

### Aria is a Pilgrim of Hope

Kind-hearted Aria Mary showed her dedication to her faith last year by supporting a number of local charities to celebrate the Holy Year.

She supported the Spiritans Autumn Fayre in Carfin by selling her old toys and auctioning off an old signed Celtic top, helping to raise funds for their mission. As the Holy Year continued, Aria Mary also raised money for St Andrews Hospice by completing the Santa Dash at Strathclyde Park and was delighted to get to meet the Sisters at the Hospice. Although the Holy Year is over, Aria Mary vows to keep supporting local charities in the Diocese.



Aria Mary with Sr Catherine at St Andrew's Hospice



# Pope Leo XIV proclaims Franciscan Jubilee Year

Special Jubilee Year commemorates 800 years  
since the death of St Francis of Assisi

Bishop Toal officially inaugurated the Franciscan Jubilee Year in the Diocese of Motherwell with the celebration of Holy Mass at St John Ogilvie's Church, Blantyre, on the Solemnity of the Presentation of the Lord.

The occasion was particularly fitting, as the Feast of the Presentation is also observed throughout the Church as the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. Religious men and women from across the Diocese gathered for the Mass, joining parishioners in

prayer and thanksgiving for the gift of consecrated life to the Church. The celebration held special significance for the local community with the presence of the Poor Clare Sisters, a Franciscan contemplative order who have recently taken up residence in the parish.

At the conclusion of Mass, those present were given the opportunity to venerate a relic of St Francis, allowing the faithful to draw closer to the saint whose life of humility, peace and love for creation continues to inspire the Church today.

The Franciscan Jubilee Year, announced by Pope Leo, is a special period of grace for the universal Church, inviting the faithful to rediscover the spiritual heritage of St Francis of Assisi. Jubilee years have long been part of the Church's tradition and are marked by prayer, conversion of heart and renewed commitment to living the Gospel.

Announcing the jubilee, the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See, in accordance with Pope Leo XIV, issued a decree which states:

"Whilst the fruits of grace of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 that has just ended... here is added to it as an ideal continuation a new occasion for jubilation and sanctification: the Eighth Centenary of the happy passage of St. Francis of Assisi from earthly life to his heavenly homeland (3 October 1226)."

The decree continued:

"In recent years, other important jubilees have concerned the figure and works of the Saint of Assisi: the eighth centenary of the creation of the first Nativity scene in Greccio, of the composition of the Canticle of the Creatures, a hymn to the holy beauty of creation, and that of the impression of the Sacred Stigmata, which took place on Monte della Verna, almost a new Calvary, two years before his death. 2026 will mark the culmination and fulfillment of all previous celebrations: it will in fact be the Year of St. Francis and we will all be called to become saints in the contemporary world following the example of the Seraphic Patriarch. "

During this Year of St Francis, we are encouraged, according to our possibilities, "to imitate the poor man of Assisi, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ, not to frustrate the purposes of the Holy Year that has just ended: may the hope that has seen us as pilgrims now be transformed into zeal and fervour of active charity," the decree states.

To mark the Franciscan Jubilee in the Diocese of Motherwell, Bishop Toal has designated St John Ogilvie's as a place of pilgrimage throughout the Jubilee of St Francis. There will be an opportunity to reverence a relic of St Francis at the Monday Evening Mass in St John Ogilvie's at 7.00pm each week. Those

wishing to obtain the Plenary Indulgence are encouraged to attend this particular Mass. The instruction about fulfilling the requirements for obtaining the indulgence is as follows:

"To obtain the Plenary Indulgence during the Year of St Francis, certain conditions indicated by the Church must be fulfilled: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, prayers for the intentions of the Pope, interior detachment from sin, and the performance of certain works, such as pilgrimages to Franciscan churches, participation in Jubilee celebrations, prayer and meditation in the Franciscan spirit, as well as daily acts of charity and humility that express the spirituality of St Francis".

The Vatican decree advises that the elderly, the sick and those who take care of them and all those who for serious reasons are unable to leave their homes will also be able to obtain the Plenary Indulgence, provided that they are detached from any sin and intend to fulfil the three usual conditions as soon as possible, if they join spiritually in the Jubilee celebrations of the Year of St. Francis, offering their prayers to the Merciful God, the pains or sufferings of one's life.

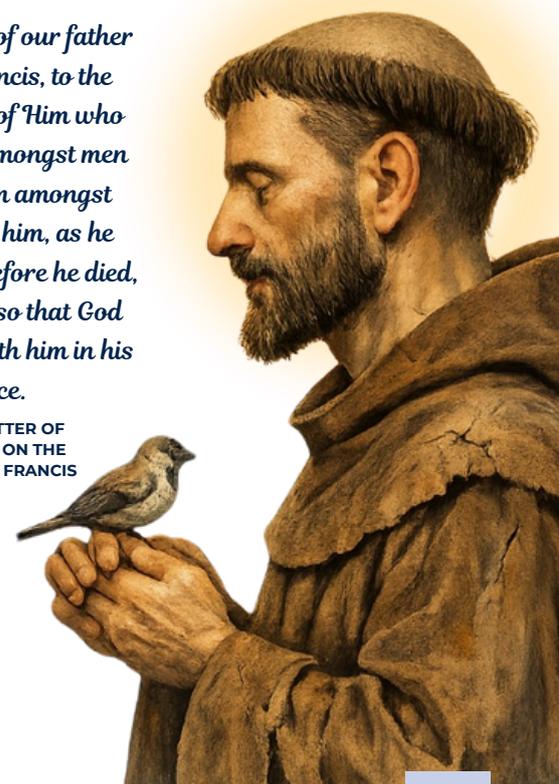
During this special Year of St. Francis may every Christian faithful, following the example of the Saint of Assisi, become a model of holiness of life and a constant witness of peace as desired by the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV.

1. Sisters of St Peter Claver bring forward the offertory gifts during Mass, 2. the faithful venerate the relic of St Francis, 3. Deacons Kieran Burt and Kevin Kirby with the relic of St Francis.



*Keep the memory of our father and brother Francis, to the praise and glory of Him who made him great amongst men and glorified him amongst angels. Pray for him, as he himself asked us before he died, and pray to him, so that God may also share with him in his holy grace.*

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF BROTHER ELIAS ON THE TRANSITUS OF ST FRANCIS



# Into the Margins

Deacon Michael Ross gives an overview of the recent conference focused on Motherwell Diocese and our Response to Deprivation and Marginalisation



**The Diocese recently hosted a Conference, 'Into the Margins: Motherwell Diocese and our Response to Deprivation and Marginalisation'. This Conference was held at St. Bride's Hall, Motherwell, on November 15, 2025, and was planned to coincide with the Jubilee of the Poor, held in Rome on November 16, 2025, as part of the Jubilee Year events. The Conference attracted wide representation from across the Parishes in the Diocese and was also attended by a significant number of secondary school pupils from local Schools.**

It was in early 2025 that Bishop Toal suggested that a Conference considering issues in deprivation and marginalisation in the Diocese would be of benefit. Following discussion with Reverend Stuart Parkes, an Organizing Committee, which included Danielle Healey, Daniel Horisk, Mary Keenan Ross and Reverend Michael Ross, was established and two Keynote Speakers were invited to address the Conference: Sir Harry Burns and Professor David Hillier.



Sir Harry's presentation, 'Understanding Poverty', began with the premise that the outcomes of a child's life are largely determined by the environment in which that child is born and raised. He considered the factors that constitute 'wellness', and introduced the concept of

salutogenesis, an assets approach, defined by gratitude, self-efficacy, hardiness and empathy. Sir Harry argued that the causes of wellness are: an optimistic outlook, a sense of control and internal locus of control, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, confidence in the ability to deal with problems, a supportive network and a nurturing family. He added that, in order to avoid chronic stress, the social and physical environment must be comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful.

Sir Harry stated that adverse events in childhood, including physical/sexual/emotional abuse, neglect, domestic substance abuse, domestic violence, parental mental illness and parental criminality result in an economic burden in the billions of pounds. Reversing the impact of adverse childhood

circumstances may, according to the evidence, may be supported by physical activity, mindfulness, and strong social connections. Sir Harry also cited some evidence that suggests that the most efficient way to spend money on the homeless might be to give money to them. He closed by saying that what we require in dealing with the poor is a "...compassion that can stand in awe at the burdens that the poor have to carry rather than standing in judgement at how they carry them.'

Professor Hillier's presentation, 'Into the Margins: What Motherwell Diocese can realistically do in the next twelve months' began by stating clearly its purpose: to consider both material deprivation and deprivation of meaning in life experienced by many in our



contemporary world. Citing 'Dilexi Te', the recent Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Leo XIV on poverty as a theological anchor, Professor Hillier noted that our faith becomes 'real' when it transforms practical structures and committed budgets into tangible choices. Further, he noted that the poor experience not only material poverty but also relational isolation, digital exclusion and spiritual deprivation. He argued that the 'preferential option for the poor' prioritises the needs of the poor and vulnerable in public policies and actions.

Professor Hillier stated that the preferential option for the poor is defined by a commitment to the poor that calls for concrete actions, transforming concern into impactful service across integral worship and service, holistic support and advocacy, empowerment through education and structural justice. In order to achieve these goals of service, we must 'see clearly' (listen deeply to local realities), 'act locally' (identify and replicate that which is working) and 'measure humbly' (honestly evaluate activities). Throughout his presentation, Professor Hillier stressed both material deprivation (food insecurity and hunger, fuel poverty, unstable housing situations and debt burdens) and digital and structural barriers to well-being (lack of devices and digital skill, transport barriers, social isolation and loneliness and loss of meaning and spiritual connection).

As a starting point in understanding local poverty, Professor Hillier advocated the use of the 'Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), a tool widely used across the statutory and voluntary services in Scotland to identify local poverty. He suggested that there are two inseparable dimensions of service to the poor in the Church: human/practical service (feeding the hungry, relieving debt, education and advocacy) and spiritual/evangelical service (seeing Christ in the poor, prayer, catechesis, witness to the Gospel).

Notably, Professor Hillier stated that '...the Church is not an NGO with hymns'.

Professor Hillier described a number of models of support that have proven effects, including Income Maximisation, Pantry and Fridges, Digital Inclusion, Transport Solutions and Community Wardrobes and argued that these models should be employed where possible.

In the afternoon session, participants in the Conferences were divided into groups and asked to consider the presentations given in the morning session and a series of questions regarding current Diocesan activity and future steps.

A summary of points raised by participants is presented below:

- The notable work of the SVDP in the Diocese was acknowledged. It was also suggested that a review of activities within the SVDP might prove useful in allowing the organisation to continue to focus activities effectively.
- A range of Parish activities ('Warm Spaces'; 'Uniform Banks) were identified as useful initiatives.
- Issues related to immigration and asylum-seeking were identified as contributing to local poverty.
- It was suggested that the use of social media would be a necessary adjunct to activities in poverty relief.
- It was also emphasised that the poor themselves must be asked to identify unmet needs.
- There is, it was suggested, an opportunity to learn from other faith communities in the area of poverty relief.
- It was also suggested that the Church must be seen as an important 'player' in the community in providing support and not remain insular.
- There was enthusiasm for a 'follow-up' Conference to be held in a year's time.

On the basis of these presentations and the group discussion that followed with participants to the Conference, a number of trenchant learning points appear available:

- As a Diocese, we have a clear responsibility to the poor that must be met with determination and clarity of purpose;
- We must address both material poverty and spiritual poverty and avoid becoming '...an NGO with hymns.';
- While addressing food poverty and other forms of material poverty is crucial, we must not lose sight of the 'bigger picture' of spiritual and existential poverty;
- To that end, we must seek to link our efforts at evangelisation with a clear understanding of those barriers to evangelisation that are present in spiritual and existential poverty;
- In addressing the challenges of poverty, we must be prepared to utilise those structures and processes that are currently in place and are proving effective, while, at the same time, honestly challenging our current activities to ensure 'best practice';
- All activities must be sustainable in the longer term;
- Each Parish locality will experience differing profiles of poverty, and through use of tools like the SIMD, each Parish can define its areas of need and the types of need that exist;
- A variety of approaches will be required and 'one size fits all' (across the Diocese) thinking should be avoided;
- Central organisation and direction across the Diocese is required, supported by an appropriate Task Group composed of stakeholders in poverty issues across the Diocese.

The Conference was an extremely successful event that brought together experts in health and management and local stakeholders/champions in the Diocese to reflect on the crucial issues of poverty in our times. Participants engaged with the event enthusiastically and there was a clear appetite to work toward social equality from a Catholic perspective. Clearly, in order for this event to benefit the Diocese over time, it is essential to absorb the available learning and to translate that learning into clear accountable action.



# SOAP GLOW

**Karen Shields** shares the initiative by St Bernard's Primary school which is helping to restore dignity

The Diocese of Motherwell has challenged us to engage in profound reflection: to examine the nature of poverty and marginalisation and to find effective ways to alleviate it. We believe the answer must be found in action, one focused on restoring the fundamental dignity of the child.

This is the purpose of Soap Glow, a small but mighty social 'MISSIO' enterprise based in Coatbridge. As a teacher at St Bernard's Primary in Shawhead, I, alongside my co-founder, witness the unseen impact of hygiene poverty every day. A lack of basic essentials—a toothbrush, soap, a clean uniform—is more than a physical inconvenience; it shatters a child's confidence, damages their self-worth, and acts as a huge barrier to engagement and learning.

With the crucial support of our Headteacher, Mrs. Kellyanne Dunn, who actively champions this mission, our aim is beautifully simple: to ensure no family in our cluster is forced to endure the marginalisation that comes from lacking the basic necessities to feel clean and cared for.

## Grounded in Dignity and Solidarity

Soap Glow is a direct expression of the principle of Solidarity—community looking after its own—and upholding the Dignity of the Human Person. Our model is sustainable, community-driven, and relies on a powerful network: our schools, social work teams, local businesses, volunteers, and the vital anchor of St Bernard's Church.

We transform community spirit into tangible support through three core initiatives

'MISSIO' Can-to-Coin Recycling: This brilliant system turns environmental responsibility into funding. Pupils and families collect empty cans and bottles, which are exchanged for Lidl vouchers—money that directly purchases the hygiene essentials. It is sustainability funding dignity.

The MISSIO Community Café: Held monthly in St Bernard's Chapel Hall, this is the heart of our fundraising. It is a warm, inter-generational gathering that raises essential funds in an atmosphere that is intentionally stigma-free, reinforcing that this is neighbours helping neighbours.

**Local Business Support:** Our local doorstep shops, pubs, cafes, and care homes run "empties drives" and donate products. This localised support ensures our commitment is robust and deeply rooted in the Coatbridge community.

## An Approach of Utmost Respect

In keeping with our Catholic values, we understand that providing help must be handled with utmost care and respect. We operate a trusted referral system used by cluster headteachers and social work teams. Wellbeing Hygiene Boxes are prepared discreetly and collected from our school, ensuring families receive the help they need without stress or embarrassment.

## More Than Just Products

Hygiene is not a luxury; it is the fundamental, missing piece that restores self-esteem, improves attendance, safeguards mental health, and prepares a child to learn. When we secure hygiene, we are directly challenging the effects of poverty and restoring the God-given dignity of every young person.

We invite families, schools, and staff across the Diocese to reflect on this mission and feel part of something that is genuinely lifting the wellbeing of children in our community. Every donation - a pack of wipes, a deodorant, a bottle of shampoo - is an act of profound Christian charity. Together, we can ensure every child in our community feels seen, supported and able to shine.

## SOAP GLOW PROVIDING FAMILY WELLBEING PACKS



**07889 490494**  
soapglow25@gmail.com

# COMMUNITY CAFE

On the first Tuesday of every month, St Bernard's Chapel Hall in Coatbridge fills with the sound of cups landing on saucers, chairs scraping, and children reminding each other to do their duties and tasks.

At one table, a Primary 7 pupil carries a tray with the seriousness of a surgeon. At another, younger children hover beside plates of biscuits, waiting for their moment. Ages three to ninety-three sit in the same room. No one is rushed. No one is left out.

This is the Community Café run by the children of St Bernard's Primary. Guided by their Missio leaders, they serve neighbours with a simple idea at the centre of it all: 'children helping children.'

What most people don't realise is that the kindness doesn't stop when the hall empties. Everything that happens in that café feeds directly into Soap Glow, a local initiative quietly fighting hygiene poverty across North Lanarkshire. The connection is very real. The children aren't fundraising for something distant or abstract. They are helping build hygiene wellbeing packs that go straight into the hands of children and their families they might pass in the street every day.

And it has grown faster than we expected. Recently, a high school headteacher came and collected seven Soap Glow boxes for young people and their families. There was no announcement, no photographs. It begins with a simple referral form, then just a quiet exchange in a school foyer. That is how most of this work happens. Discreet. Respectful. Done before things become a crisis.

The packs now support local social work departments and parish families in St Bernard's, St Augustine's and beyond. We're also in conversation with Waverley Medical Centre about becoming a provision point, because dignity in basic care isn't separate from health, it's part of it.



Sustainability is woven into the whole thing. Twice a week, children and volunteers make Can-to-Coin trips to Lidl in Baillieston, turning recycled cans into vouchers that buy toiletries. We collect cans and bottles from pubs across North Lanarkshire, including the Cross Keys in Wishaw, and the children see the full circle with their own eyes. Waste becomes soap. Aluminium becomes toothpaste. A bag of empties becomes a box that matters to someone. They understand that their actions don't disappear. They land somewhere.

What has emerged is less a project and more a living network. Schools, parishes, social work teams, businesses and families joined by the belief that small, practical interventions prevent bigger hurt later. Hygiene isn't a luxury item. It's the foundation for confidence, learning and dignity, and we see that every day in school.

There are no banners when the café runs. No speeches. Just children concentrating very hard on carrying out small jobs with responsibility and fun, learning that care is something you do with your hands as much as your heart. Soap Glow grows in the same way. Quietly. Practically. Rooted in ordinary community life.

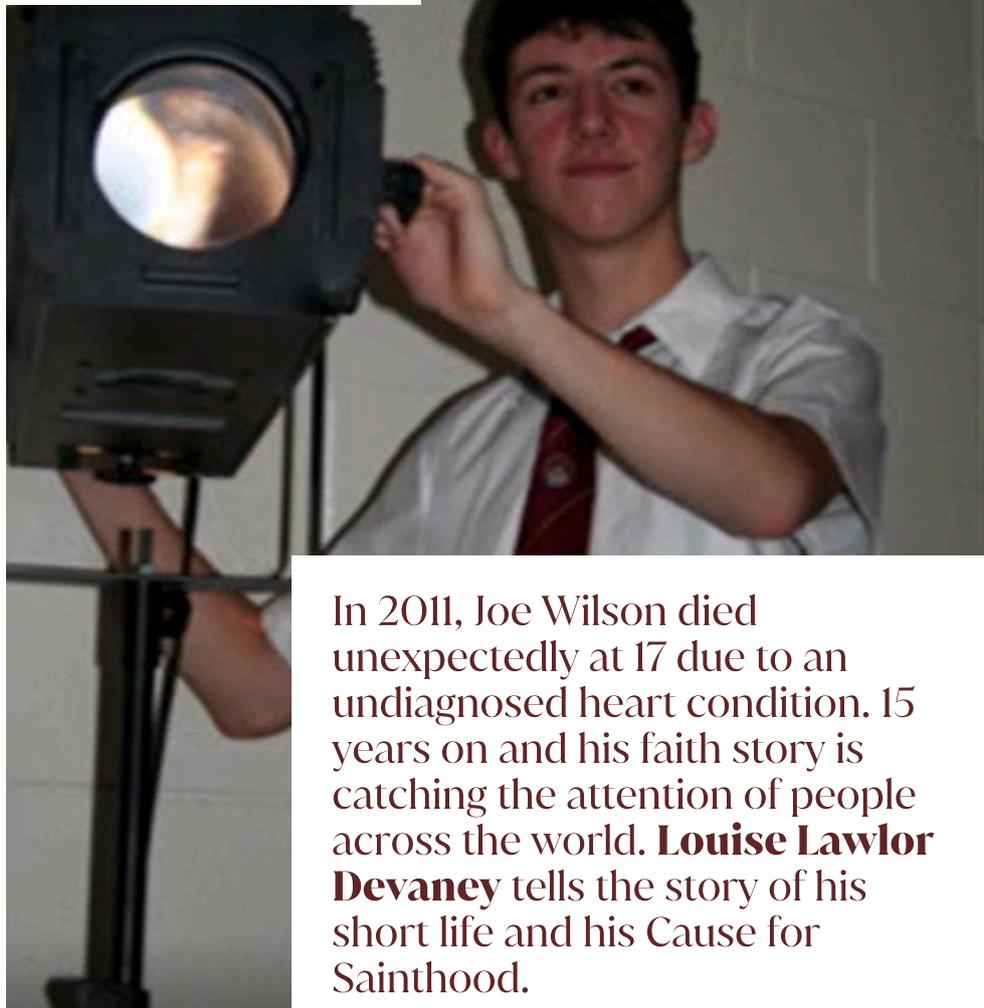
And once you notice it, you realise something important has been happening right in front of us. We just hadn't named it yet. This is happening here. In Shawhead, Coatbridge and our towns. And it's kind of extraordinary.





# The story of JOE WILSON

The Millennial whose faith  
is inspiring people  
across the globe



In 2011, Joe Wilson died unexpectedly at 17 due to an undiagnosed heart condition. 15 years on and his faith story is catching the attention of people across the world. **Louise Lawlor Devaney** tells the story of his short life and his Cause for Sainthood.

**Joseph Wilson, affectionately known as Joe, is fast becoming a familiar and inspiring name within the Diocese of Motherwell and beyond. This follows the recent announcement that his Cause for Sainthood has been supported by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland and will now proceed to the next stage. An important milestone that has renewed interest in the life of a young man whose quiet holiness continues to touch hearts across the world. The required documents have been submitted via the Nuncio to the Dicastery for the Cause of Saints at the Vatican, where they will be checked to make sure there are no obstacles to proceeding. Once their Nihil Obstat (no obstacles) has been received the case will be officially opened. An important milestone that has renewed interest in the life of a young man whose quiet holiness continues to touch hearts across the world.**

Joe was born on 12 December 1994 at Bellshill Maternity Hospital in North Lanarkshire to his parents, Alan and Veronica Wilson in Newarthill. He later became a loving older brother to his sister Angela. Joe was baptised at his local parish, St Teresa's Catholic Church, on the 5th of February 1995.

After attending nursery for two years, Joe became a pupil at Our Lady of Saint Francis Primary School, where he celebrated his Sacraments at St Francis Xavier's Church in Carfin. He went on to attend Taylor High School, where he was known as a diligent and conscientious student who consistently gave his best. Joe excelled academically, achieving A's in five of his Highers, and in 2011 he was awarded the 'Head Teacher's Award' in recognition of both his achievements and his character. Despite his success, he remained deeply humble and approachable.

Joe would often seek out those who were standing alone, even leaving his lunch unfinished to help younger pupils with their assignments.

Joe had a clear ambition to become a doctor, motivated by a genuine desire to help others. He relished his work experience alongside medical professionals and had already applied to medical school at the time of his sudden death at the age of 17, caused by an undiagnosed heart condition.

Alongside his academic talents, Joe was a keen sportsman. He enjoyed rugby, athletics, tennis and badminton but had a particular passion for table tennis. Friends and family often recall his enthusiasm, positivity and joy for the game, which reflected his wider approach to life.

While Joe lived an outwardly ordinary teenage life, what set him apart was his profound devotion to God and his ability to live out Gospel values with remarkable maturity. Raised in the Catholic faith, Joe developed a deep relationship with God from an early age. As a teenager, he regularly read at mass, volunteered as a helper during Children's Liturgy, and made prayer an integral part of his daily routine. On the night of his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, Joe gave up his night to help at the Ozanam club. He would often write short reflections in his diary on how prayer made him feel happier and closer to God. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2010 (after he attended a Papal visit alongside other pupils in Bellahouston Park), he wrote, "Our gentle and humble Pope Benedict is a model of Jesus. My faith is growing, and I have experienced so much joy today."

Carfin Grotto held a special place in Joe's spiritual life. It was a sacred space where he spent time in quiet reflection and prayer, alone or with his family. In the years following his death, friends and family have continued to visit the Grotto, seeking Joe's intercession and drawing comfort from the place he loved so dearly.

Joe was deeply loved by all who knew him. Teachers, friends, and family frequently remarked on his natural ability to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. He had a gentle way of including others, leaving all who met him feeling more

calm, positive and valued no matter how brief their interactions.

After Joe's death, diary entries written throughout his teenage years were discovered. These reflections were later compiled into a booklet entitled 'Joe's Words'. His simple yet profound prayers and reflections continue to inspire thousands of people around the world.

Over the past decade, devotion to Joe has grown steadily. Many who have encountered his story have started praying through his intercession, and numerous testimonies have emerged from people who believe their prayers have been answered, many of whom never met Joe. This growing devotion has recently attracted attention from the press worldwide. The holiness evident in Joe's life continues to inspire, uplift and ultimately help others which was always his main desire. Joe Wilson stands as a modern-day example of holiness lived through humility, prayer, and everyday kindness. His life reminds us that faith in God, nurtured through prayer and a sincere desire to serve others, is powerful.



Joe's Baptism in St Teresa's in 1995

# Bringing Wellspring to life at parish level

BY STEPHEN FERRIE

Parishioners and clergy from across the Diocese gathered in great numbers at St Joseph's Blantyre on 27 January for the latest Project Wellspring Diocesan Forum. In total, 12 clergy and 55 lay people from across 26 parishes attended what was a very energising and informative evening - a great turnout on what was a very inclement evening!

The focus for this particular forum was on all of the great renewal and evangelisation work that is going on at parish level. Parish representatives were provided with an engaging platform to share progress with the delivery of their Wellspring plans and to signpost their priorities for the year ahead.

Prior to the inter-parish discussion, Father Vincent Lockhart provided some insightful input on the importance of spirituality in the context of renewal and evangelisation planning. Deacon David Harper then updated on the latest developments arising from the Marriage, Family and Life Mission, which involves the introduction of ambassadors at parish level to promote and support the aims of this Mission.

However, the bulk of the evening was devoted to inter-parish dialogue and the sharing of ideas and plans. This played out over the course of two very lively table discussions and via the sharing of feedback from those discussions with the collective audience. As well as providing parishes with an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas, the collective output from the discussions helped to paint a picture of the progress that is being made across the Diocese. It was extremely heartening to hear about the great initiatives that have been implemented by parishes, with lots of exciting new ideas and proposals on the stocks as we look ahead to 2026.



Some of the key themes emerging from the inter parish dialogue included;

- A strong focus on youth and adult formation
- An honest reflection on current parish realities
- A shared desired to build on good practice that is already underway

We are now entering the fourth year of Project Wellspring. As we move through the various phases of the programme, our focus looking ahead is on embedding and localising renewal and evangelisation at parish level. This will be supported by a number of initiatives that are intended to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, experience and capability in order to support implementation at the local level. This includes building on last year's introduction of Deanery Coordinators with the rollout of nominated Wellspring Parish Representatives. Each parish priest has been invited to appoint a layperson to act as their Wellspring delegate. Looking ahead, this network of representatives will play a key role in bringing the renewal and evangelisation programme to life across our parish network.

The next Project Wellspring forum will take place some time in September. Watch this space for further information!



Use the QR code to sign-up to mailing list and receive the Diocesan Pastoral Directory



# A Fatal Flaw: Why Scotland's Assisted Suicide Bill Is Falling Apart

BY ANTHONY HORAN

**Scotland is on the brink of passing one of the most consequential laws in its history — yet the ground beneath the proposed assisted suicide bill is visibly crumbling.**

In recent weeks, MSPs who previously backed the legislation have expressed significant reservations, warning that the bill cannot protect vulnerable people from pressure to end their lives prematurely. Audrey Nicoll, a former police officer with 31 years' experience, now says she will vote against the law because it exposes vulnerable Scots to "coercion and pressure...in ways which may be subtle and difficult to enunciate."

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

Their concerns are well-founded. Key safeguards have already been rejected or removed. Amendments requiring doctors to receive specialist training in detecting coercion or ensuring that palliative or social care is offered before proceeding were dismissed during committee scrutiny. Even protections for healthcare workers who object on moral grounds cannot remain in the bill, because they fall under UK-wide law and will need to be fixed after the Bill passes. This means that MSPs will be asked to vote blindfolded on a matter of life and death and then hand the reins to Westminster to finish the job. Labour MSP Michael Marra said this significant setback effectively "holes the bill below the waterline."

Worse still, experience abroad shows that eligibility criteria tend to expand once assisted suicide is legalised. In Canada, what began as a narrow system for the terminally ill has widened dramatically, with those suffering only mental health conditions set to qualify next year. Audrey Nicoll warns that such "gradual broadening" is a real and foreseeable risk. Scotland would not be immune.

Supporters of the bill claim Scotland must show compassion. They are right — just not in the way they imagine. Compassion means ensuring people have access to excellent palliative care, emotional support, and a dignified death. It does not mean constructing a hurried, legally unstable system of state-assisted suicide that even its former advocates no longer trust to protect the vulnerable.



When a law dealing with irreversible decisions is rushed, weakened, and riddled with unanswered questions, the responsible course is clear: stop. Scotland should reject this dangerous bill and insist on a system that protects life, safeguards the vulnerable, and upholds the highest ethical and legal standards.

Please help to protect vulnerable people by engaging with your MSPs about this dangerous Bill.

The best way to do this is to meet your MSPs in person, either by contacting their office to arrange a meeting or by attending a local surgery. You can find your MSPs contact details at:

**[parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps](https://parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps)**

If you are unable to meet your MSPs in person, please use **[carenotkilling.scot](https://carenotkilling.scot)** to write to your MSPs about the Bill. Be sure to carefully read the wording of the email to make sure you are happy for it to be sent to your MSPs.

Please remember to always be courteous and respectful when engaging with your MSPs.





## LIVE ART GALLERY COMES TO MOSSEND

A live art gallery is coming to Holy Family Parish Hall in Mossend to help raise funds for the parish.

You are invited to join Holy Family Parish for a Live Art Gallery on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026, at 7.00pm, which will feature live music, a bar and food, as well as an exclusive opportunity to view and acquire an original work by portrait illustrator Bill Stewart.

All donations received will go towards supporting ongoing parish ventures and supporting their parish hall.

PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY  
TRAINING - Part III

# WITNESS THROUGH PRAYER

EXPLORING WAYS OF PRAYING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

26TH FEB | 6.30PM – 8.30PM  
DIOCESAN CENTRE, MOTHERWELL

SIGN UP NOW

OPEN TO ALL PARISH YOUTH LEADERS

WHAT DOES PARISH RENEWAL LOOK LIKE FOR US?

# OPEN HOUSE SCOTLAND

St John the Baptist Church  
136 Lower Millgate, Uddingston, Glasgow G71 7AH

Calendar icon Saturday, 25th April 2026  
Clock icon 9:30 AM – 5 PM

Keynote Speaker  
Fr. James Mallon  
Founder: Divine Renovation Ministry

Register today at [divinerenovation.org/events](http://divinerenovation.org/events)

BY STEPHEN BREEN

St John the Baptist Church in Uddingston is hosting a Divine Renovation Open Day on 25 April.

Father James Mallon, the author of 'Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission' and the founder of Divine Renovation, is travelling from Canada for the event.

Parishioners from St John the Baptist, who have organised a series of Alpha courses as part of the Wellspring initiative, will share their experience of how the parish is striving to evangelise, to be a missionary church, and to be a beacon of hope for God's love.

The event, which runs from 9.30am to 5.00pm at St John's, will include a Mass celebrated by Bishop Toal. All are welcome, and you can register at [divinerenovation.org/events](http://divinerenovation.org/events).

## O'HARE

Please pray for David O'Hare, a cherished husband to the late Esther, and much loved dad and Papa, who sadly died February 13 2002. Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese, Pray for him.

Jesus, I trust in you.

He will be forever in our hearts  
*Inserted by his ever loving family.*

## INTIMATIONS

If you would like to remember your loved ones anniversary in Fontes, email [media@rcdom.org.uk](mailto:media@rcdom.org.uk) for more info.



# MacGregor Family Funeral Directors

Traditional Funerals

Headstone and Memorial Works

Golden Charter Funeral Plans

*Rooted in Scotland, Raised in Faith*

Providing services throughout all of the  
Motherwell Diocese

Call: 01236 425 109 or 01698 387 444

Email: [info@macgregorfamilyfunerals.scot](mailto:info@macgregorfamilyfunerals.scot)



# The Scriptures

by FATHER THOMAS MAGILL



## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent Year A 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

*Genesis 2.7-9, 3.1-7; Psalm 51; Romans 5.12-19; Matthew 4.1-11*

The Lord goes from the bountiful waters of the Jordan where his true identity is revealed to the wastelands of the desert where that identity is challenged. This is the “meta-temptation” present in the individual temptations he faces – the denial of his true identity. (Gospel) His self-knowledge of who he really is -- his divine sonship, of his Father’s pleasure in him and of his being beloved -- all are undermined by the tempter in this wilderness when he is weakened by hunger and thirst. Adam and Eve, by contrast, are in a garden of plenty and they succumb to the tempter by forgetting who they truly are, beloved children of the Father. (1<sup>st</sup> reading) During Lent, we recognise that temptation for us is a struggle between me and myself, between my true self as a beloved child of the Father, and the pull to make myself “as God,” stuffed with material things, trapped by status and power, filled with self-trust rather than deep confidence of being led by the Spirit, and perhaps as a consequence entangled in despair and emptiness. Day by day through Lent we get rid of the old Adam, the false self, and put on the new Adam, Christ himself who constantly holds us in our deepest identity, beloved of God. Our Lenten practices of prayer, self-denial, and almsgiving will truly bear fruit when they lead us into this profound and truest self-knowledge: through his gift and an abundance of grace God has made us his children in Christ. (2<sup>nd</sup> reading)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent Year A 1<sup>st</sup> March 2026

*Genesis 12.1-4; Psalm 33; II Timothy 1.8-10; Matthew 17.1-9*

Peter, James, and John are filled with fear, apprehension, misunderstanding and self-will as they reach the mountaintop with Jesus. Their heads and their hearts are all over the place. This is a moment when they become deeply “centred” – at the end they see no one but Jesus alone. The vision of the transfigured Lord dispels all that chatter in their heads; now they are totally focused in the moment and want it to last forever. But the vision passes and what remains is what they hear – “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him,” “Rise,” “Have no fear.” In the end, the Transfiguration is more about listening than seeing. (Gospel) It was Abram’s readiness to listen that allowed God’s promises to come about; (1<sup>st</sup> reading) it’s through listening that we will hear God’s call and know God’s purpose and grace. (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) As they come down from their “high” on the mountaintop, these disciples must learn to rely on the Lord’s Word alone. Lent is a season of deep listening to this Word which re-focuses and re-centres us on the Lord alone and enables the Church to empty herself of all distractions and delusions through her trust in Christ. He is the Beloved; he is the one who must be listened to. And he is the one who tells us to rise, have no fear, and who gives us the courage to follow where he will lead.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent Year A 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

*Exodus 17.3-7; Psalm 93; Romans 5.1-2, 5-8; John 4.5-42*

Water, its abundance and lack, feature in so many biblical stories. From the rivers that flowed out of Eden to the 40 years in the desert, God’s people oscillate between dryness and satiation. Yet, in both times of plenty and of want a pattern emerges of their forgetting what God was doing for them, wondering “is the Lord among us or not?” (1<sup>st</sup> reading) The Samaritan woman is fully focused on the water she needs for the day and at first fails to recognise the divine presence before her. Her material needs overwhelm her. Gently and patiently the Lord leads her on a journey of faith. From her initial seemingly haphazard encounter with him, she progresses to a fullness of belief and trust which in turn attracts others to faith. (Gospel) Her journey mirrors the journey the People of God took through the desert – the dry and fertile times, the lack of full understanding, the failures and brokenness. The Church will always stand with those who are denied the essentials of life but will also bring to them Christ the Living Water who pours God’s love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) Even in the midst of our weaknesses and mistakes, God is at work. During Lent, we share that same journey of faith in both the dry and abundant moments knowing that in everything God is drawing us more deeply into himself.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent Year A

##### 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Laetare Sunday

*I Samuel 16.1, 6-7, 10-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5.8-14; John 9.1-41*

Sight and insight, looking and perceiving, light and darkness, outwardness and inwardness -- all are present in today's readings. And there is movement. The man born blind journeys from blindness to sight, then to deeper perception and finally to faith in the Lord. (Gospel) It's almost as though his lack of sight prepared him for this deeper insight into the reality of the Lord. Encounter with Christ is the start of this journey of illumination and enlightenment which will lead the blind man to look with the eyes of God and see into the heart. (1<sup>st</sup> reading) Faith leads from superficial seeing into deep perception and insight. The disciples, perhaps unknowingly, are on this journey too. As they see and witness what the Lord is doing, they are led from their own prejudice and thoughtless mind-set to join in faith and worship the man who can now see. Lent is the season of enlightenment which leads us from the darkness of our own superficial viewpoints to the light of deepened faith. (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) Then we can see each other with the eyes of God, allow others to encounter Christ in us, and then walk with them on their journey of faith.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent Year A

##### 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

*Ezekiel 37.12-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8.8-11; John 11.1-45*

John's gospel works at two levels, the superficial and the deep, or the flesh and the spirit as St Paul puts it. (1<sup>st</sup> reading) It is the Spirit who gives life to us so that we can be drawn down into the text's spiritual meaning. In today's passage, Martha and the disciples are initially presented as stuck in a superficial understanding of the Lord – if only he had been there he could have fixed things! (Gospel) Bit by bit, step by step the Lord comes to them and leads them to reflect on their own brokenness, suffering, and death. Step by step, he pulls them all, not just Lazarus, from the tomb

and grave of their darkness, (1<sup>st</sup> reading) through the portals of death, to life restored and awakened. The stone covering the tomb must have been seemed an unsurmountable object, a sign of final separation, the last word. But like the stone which would cover the tomb of Jesus, it became the gate to the new life the Lord would win through his Resurrection. The story foreshadows the Lord's own death and Resurrection just as it foreshadows every Christian who though baptism dies with Christ, leaves the tomb with him, and rises with him to new life.

#### Palm Sunday Year A

##### 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026

*Matthew 21.1-12; Isaiah 50.4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2.6-11; Matthew 26.14-27.66*

Today's liturgy moves from the joyful Hosannas from the crowd as Jesus enters the Holy City to the baying mob crying out for his blood and his cry of utter dereliction on the Cross. Matthew's story sketches out this movement from welcome to rejection in terms of the fulfilment of the Scriptures, God's presence in history, one of his central themes. Like Moses, Jesus experiences the wrath of the people and yet also like him leads them through suffering and death to new life. His perfect obedience to the Father ("your will be done") is in contrast to the betrayal of the disciples ("All the disciples left him and fled"). Pilate washing his hands

not only shows his cowardice and weakness but, ironically, not his innocence but the innocence of Jesus ("I am innocent of this man's blood"). Another irony is that the confession of faith in Jesus is made not by any of his followers but by the pagan centurion. It seems the world has been turned upside down. This is confirmed by the description which appears only in Matthew of the great earthquake and the bodies of the saints rising from their tombs. Already here, right at the point of the Lord's death, the light of the Resurrection is visible. Just as at his birth Herod failed to destroy the "King of the Jews" (2.13-18) so here it is clear the Lord would vanquish his foes and death itself. Throughout his gospel, Matthew has outlined the beginnings of the Church — stressing its foundation in the confession of Peter (16:16-19), empowering its members (18:18), and emphasizing the abiding presence of the risen Christ in its midst (18:20; 28:20). Here at the Cross, the Church learns that failure, betrayal, and desolation will be part of her story just as it was for Peter and the other disciples. Equally she learns that it is fidelity to the Lord, trust in him, and courage to stand with him which will take her through every crisis, something embodied powerfully and beautifully in the women who remain near the cross. The Church's future will always be in the hands of God.





# Urbī et Orbī

**Fr Colum Martin reflects on Pope Leo XIV's first Christmas Urbī et Orbī message through the lens of Justice and Peace.**



**As the bells of St. Peter's Square rang out this past Christmas, they signalled more than just the birth of Christ; they marked the closing of the 2025 Great Jubilee and the definitive beginning of a new chapter under Pope Leo XIV. For those of us in Scotland committed to the work of Justice and Peace, the Holy Father's first Urbī et Orbī address serves as both a roadmap and a challenge for the year ahead.**

Leo XIV did not merely offer a customary greeting; he offered a theological mandate for 2026. By weaving together the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Hope with a stark, Augustinian reminder of human agency, he has set a clear agenda for Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in action.

### **"God Will Not Save Us Without Us": The Mandate of Agency**

The theological heart of the Pope's address was his citation of Saint Augustine: "God, who created us without us, will not save us without us." For our local groups in the diocese of Motherwell, this is a powerful corrective to "quietism", the idea that we can simply pray for peace without working for it. In 2026, our reflection must move from the pews to policy. Whether we are addressing the persistent poverty in the schemes of Scotland or the isolation of our elderly or indeed the right to life, the Pope is reminding us that grace works through human hands. Peace is not a passive state we wait for; it is an "active responsibility". In the Scottish context, this means our advocacy for a "Wellbeing Economy" one that prioritises human dignity over GDP, is not just a political preference but a spiritual necessity.

### **The Global Becomes Local: From Ukraine to the Clyde**

The Pope's urgent plea for "sincere, direct, and respectful dialogue" between Russia and Ukraine, and his prayers for Gaza and Sudan, resonate deeply with our Scottish identity as a globalised nation. We cannot ignore that while we pray for disarmament in Rome, our own backyard on the Gare Loch remains

home to the UK's nuclear deterrent. Leo XIV's call for dialogue challenges us to look at the "logic of fear" that sustains the arms race. In the coming year, our Justice and Peace groups should use this address to reinvigorate our support for the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) and their work in conflict zones. Furthermore, we must ask: how can Scotland be a "Pilgrim of Hope" in the movement for global nuclear disarmament? The Pope's address reminds us that peace in Eastern Europe or the Middle East is intrinsically linked to the moral choices made by nations like ours.

### **The Open Door: Welcoming the Stranger in Scotland**

A poignant moment in the address was the reflection on the Jubilee Holy Doors. As the physical bronze doors of the Great Basilicas closed, Pope Leo XIV reminded us that Christ remains the "Door that is always open." Pope Leo XIV's Urbī et Orbī address, 2025. In 2026, Scotland continues to face a crisis of hospitality. The "Open Door" of Christ stands in stark contrast to the hardening of borders and the "hostile environment" policies that affect refugees and asylum seekers arriving in our cities. Our reflection must lead to action: · The 2026 Integration Challenge: We must support the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees to ensure that those seeking sanctuary are treated with the dignity CST demands. · A "Jubilee Legacy" for Prisoners: Following the Pope's call for the release of prisoners, we should turn our attention to the Scottish prison system, addressing overcrowding and the root causes of recidivism through the lens of restorative justice.

### **A Multilingual Church: Diversity as Strength**

By restoring the tradition of greeting the world in dozens of languages, including those of the Global South and East, Leo XIV signalled a Church that is truly "Catholic" (universal). This is a vital lesson for the Church in Scotland, which is becoming increasingly diverse through the arrival of New Scots from across the globe. Our Justice and Peace groups must be spaces where these voices are not just "included"

but are leading the conversation. Justice is not something the "established" Church does for the marginalised; it is a walk we take together. The Pope's use of Mandarin and Arabic is a liturgical reminder that our solidarity must cross every linguistic and national boundary.

### Looking Ahead: 2026 Campaigns for Scottish Justice and Peace

As we reflect on this address, let it catalyse our participation in key campaigns for the year ahead: · The Right to Food: Inspired by the Pope's focus on the "excluded and forgotten", we must advocate for the incorporation of the Right to Food into Scottish Law. No one in a land of plenty should rely on food banks. · Climate Solidarity: Building on *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*, and echoing the Pope's call for global stability, we must press the Scottish Government to meet its climate targets, recognising that the environmental crisis hits the poorest first and hardest. · Dignity in Work: As the cost of living continues to pressure Scottish families, our groups should champion the Living Wage Scotland initiative as a practical application of the Dignity of Work.

### Pilgrims, Not Tourists

Pope Leo XIV has invited us to be "Pilgrims of Hope". The difference between a pilgrim and a tourist is that a pilgrim is changed by the journey. As we move into 2026, let us not be tourists of the Pope's words, simply observing them from a distance. Instead, let us be pilgrims who carry the weight of this address into our parishes, our Scottish Parliament, our schools, our universities and our streets. The Holy Door may be closed, but the opportunity to work for justice opens somewhere every day. Let us ensure that in Scotland, the "Door of Christ" remains open through our advocacy, our protest, our unwavering commitment to the common good, and fundamentally through our prayer and witness to the Gospel!



## POPE LEO XIV CLOSES HOLY DOOR AS JUBILEE ENDS

**Pope Leo XIV closed the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica in Rome on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, officially marking the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope.**

In his homily, Pope Leo reflected, "The Holy Door of this Basilica, which today is the last to be closed, has seen a stream of innumerable men and women, pilgrims of hope, journeying toward the new Jerusalem, the city whose doors are always open (cf. Rev 21:25). Who were these men and women, and what motivated them? At the end of this Jubilee year, the spiritual searching of our contemporaries, much richer than perhaps we can comprehend, invites us to earnest reflection. Millions of them crossed the threshold of the Church. What did they find? What was in their hearts, their questions, their feelings? Yes, the Magi still exist today. They are the people who sense the need to go out and search, accepting the risks associated with their journey, especially in a troubled world like ours that may be unpleasant and dangerous in many ways.

During 2025, over 33 million pilgrims are believed to have passed through the Holy Door at St Peter's, exceeding expectations. The next Holy Year will be in 2033, marking 2000 years since the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

In Motherwell, Bishop Toal closed our Diocesan celebration of the Holy Year during Holy Mass in the Cathedral on the Feast of the Holy Family, during which the Jubilee Cross was processed out of the Cathedral for the final time. The Cross will now find a permanent home in Holy Cross High, Hamilton, where it was made.



# SCOTTISH FAITHFUL GO ON PILGRIMAGES OF



# Hope

**Jim McKelvie** looks back on the Holy Year 2025 and the opportunities for Pilgrimage

**As the Jubilee Year of 2025 has now drawn to a close, it may be a good time to reflect on the national pilgrim events that took place in Scotland to mark the Holy Year.**

The theme for the Holy Year 2025 was 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Pilgrimage has always had a central place in our tradition – Pope Francis, whose earthly pilgrimage came to an end in the Jubilee Year, described it as a symbolic journey of faith, life and conversion. Pilgrimage keeps us moving forward in our faith and encourages us to see life as a path and allows us to focus on deepening our faith and serving others.

There were a number of pilgrimages on offer in Scotland throughout the Jubilee Year. In March, we began our walking pilgrimage from Motherwell to St Andrews and were blessed this year with good weather throughout our walk. About 18 stalwarts made the journey, walking around 10-12 miles per day along the 10 stages of this Scottish Camino. We walked every Thursday, and our journey took us from Motherwell Cathedral through Caldercruix, Avonbridge, Linlithgow and over the Forth Bridge to North Queensferry, where we joined the Fife Pilgrim Way, following the tracks of the Medieval pilgrims who made their way to the important ecclesiastical centre of St Andrews. St Andrews was a major pilgrim centre until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when pilgrimage was banned in Scotland by the Reformation, and there are a number of reminders of the ancient pilgrim way still evident along the route.



One of the outstanding aspects of our journey was the hospitality we enjoyed from the Catholic and Presbyterian churches along the way, as they opened their halls to offer rest and sustenance to the weary pilgrims. We are grateful for their kindness.

As we walked the 110 miles, we had time for reflection and fellowship, as our diverse band of pilgrims bonded and new friendships were formed. We tried to start each day with Mass, where possible, and finished in St Andrews with Mass celebrated by Fr Stephen Reilly.

In May, a coachload of pilgrims from far and wide made the journey to Iona, led by Bishop Toal. Again, we enjoyed two wonderfully sunny days as we visited St Columba's Isle and celebrated Mass in the Abbey. We stayed in Oban on the Saturday evening, and had Mass in Oban Cathedral, where we had the privilege

of celebrating the Golden Wedding of two of our number, Jim and Anne Campbell. On the Sunday, we made our way across the island of Mull to Iona, where we saw the island at its best in the sunshine. After Mass and a few hours exploring Iona, we made the long journey back to Glasgow and Motherwell.

Our next pilgrimage was a day trip to the island of another Irish saint, St Aidan, as we made our way to Lindisfarne. Again, the weather was good to us, and some of our number, young and old, walked the final part of the journey along the causeway to the island. Fr Michael Kane led the pilgrimage, and in the afternoon we celebrated Mass in the island chapel of St Aidan. We also enjoyed the hospitality of the good people of Our Lady and St Cuthbert's parish in Berwick, as we stopped on our way home for some fish and chips.

Pope Francis had asked as many as possible to make the pilgrimage to Rome for the Jubilee Year, and in September some 55 pilgrims from all over Scotland made their way to the Eternal City, stopping off firstly for 3 days in Assisi. Fr Gerry Maguinness led the pilgrimage, and we profited from his extensive knowledge of both cities. The highlight of our trip was attending an audience with Pope Leo in St Peter's Square, and our enthusiasm was not dampened by the inclement weather on the day. On the day of St Carlo Acutis's canonisation, we happened to be in Assisi, his final resting place.

On a chilly October day, a coachload of pilgrims ventured to the Kingdom of Fife to visit some important ecclesiastical sites, led again by Fr Gerry Maguinness. We stopped off at the pre-Reformation church of St Drostan in Markinch, where we were made very welcome and given a guided tour, before we moved on to St Andrews. We had short services in St James' Church and in the ruined cathedral before a few hours of free time in the town. In the evening, we visited the National Shrine to St Margaret in Dunfermline, where we attended the Vigil Mass.

We would like to thank all those who took part in our various pilgrimages throughout the year and are grateful to the many kind people who offered us hospitality along the way. As the Jubilee comes to a close, we continue to pray for the people we met on our journeys.

As Pope Leo said at the conclusion of the Holy Year, "It is wonderful to become pilgrims of hope; it is wonderful for us to continue to be pilgrims together."



St Drostan's Markinch



Iona



Assisi



Lindisfarne



St Andrews

# WEE BOX 2026



**SCIAF**

Uniting for a just world  
Caritas Scotland

As SCIAF launch their Lenten WEE BOX appeal for 2026, Ben Wilson, Public Engagement Officer for SCIAF, shares how your generosity helps create a better world.



**In Scotland we are blessed with some of the finest drinking water in the world. We bathe in it, use it for cooking, and drink as much as we want, whenever we want. We take it for granted that it will always be there.**

Water is life. Yet, for far too many in this day and age, it is dangerously scarce.

I saw the reality for myself when I visited Tigray in Ethiopia. Not only is the area recovering from bloody conflict, it's also engulfed by drought. In Tigray, I met Hirit and her family. Finding water was a daily struggle.

In Ethiopia, many women, girls and boys walk for hours every day under the scorching sun. Nearly half the population (43%) don't have access to an improved water source. Given the backdrop of simmering tensions, they even risk their safety in search of water. At times of crisis, many today are still forced to drink unclean water, making them and their families sick, because there just aren't any alternative sources for them to access.

"All of our time was spent fetching water," she told me. "It used to be very scary – there were attacks by soldiers. One of my brothers was beaten and now lives with injuries to his head."

Despite decades of progress in Ethiopia, the recent war has torn families apart, extreme weather is destroying landscapes and livelihoods, and now international aid cuts risk further decimating vital services.

For Hirit, these combined challenges made accessing water, the most basic human need, a terrifying tightrope walk. Every morning, she would trek five miles just to find clean drinking water, which she'd carry on her back every day for her family.

However, thanks to people like you, SCIAF's partners have been busy delivering life-changing water work in Hirit's community, digging wells and installing pumps.

I walked with Hirit to the new community tap – only 20 minutes away. Hirit's family offered us the warmest hospitality, welcoming us into their home and introducing us to their culture.

Hirit said: "This tap has resolved so many problems, especially for girls like me. We used to go to school with dirty clothes and bags and unwashed hair. But now we can stay clean.

"With water nearby, we have more time and can focus on our education. I want to pursue a career in business when I'm older."

Hirit and her family use the new tap all the time. There's also a pond nearby, so their fields are now green and full of maize, fruits and vegetables, and their livestock are plump and healthy.

For them, clean, safe water has helped unlock a happy, healthy and hopeful future. Today, from Scotland to Ethiopia, you can help that hope flow further to other communities in need.

Improved access to water is just one of the ways SCIAF helps people lift themselves out of poverty. We work in many of the world's poorest countries to tackle both its causes and consequences. We work with people in the hardest circumstances so they can overcome their daily struggles and the injustice that makes and keeps them poor.

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

**Across Ethiopia and beyond, UK government aid has helped provide clean water and support communities in building a future of hope. But with new cuts to the aid budget, this vital progress is at risk of being undone. Families living in the world's poorest communities are once again facing thirst, hunger & uncertainty. Take action now at [sciaf.org.uk/aidcuts](https://sciaf.org.uk/aidcuts) to demand that the UK government restores international aid to 0.7% and helps keep water flowing.**





**SUNDAY  
CATHEDRAL  
NIGHTS**



*An evening of faith,  
prayer and fellowship*

**MAR 8<sup>TH</sup> | MAR 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**YOUNG ADULTS | 7:30  
S6-35 YRS OLD | PM**

**MOTHERWELL  
CATHEDRAL  
ML1 1PP**

**FOR MORE INFO**

**frreilly@rcdom.org.uk  
@rcdomyouth**

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL



YOUTH