

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL

FONTES

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Scotland's youngest priest ordained

Fr Kieran Burt ordained to the priesthood

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In recent times I have had the opportunity to travel to my home area of Lochaber in the West Highlands, then to South Uist and Eriskay in the Western Isles, and then to County Monaghan in Ireland. In each place there is much discussion about the realities of life today in more rural or remote areas, but among Catholic people there was also reflection on how people hung on to their faith in difficult times. One particular example of this in each of these areas are the Mass Stones or Rocks where Catholics gathered for the celebration of Holy Mass during penal times. The memory of these locations has been kept alive by the designation of a large stone or rock as the place on which a brave priest celebrated Mass. There was a strong element of risk both in the priest's presence and in the people gathering together. They were prepared to take this risk of being detected and possibly punished because their faith in the Holy Mass was important and worthy of making sacrifices for.

Each Mass is, of course, the renewal of the one sacrifice of Christ on Calvary as explained to us by the Lord himself at the Last Supper, whose celebration is attested to by the Apostles and subsequently lived in the Church's continuous tradition through the centuries. Sometimes it is celebrated in our magnificent churches but just as truly and fully in hidden, isolated outdoor locations in Scotland, Ireland, and elsewhere. It should make us humble to think of this and grateful to the people who hung on to their faith in hard times. Their witness encourages us to maintain a strong faith in the Mass and a willingness and determination to be present at it in our local churches. These churches stand also as testimony to the faith of the people who built them and their desire to have the Mass celebrated in our towns and villages, also supporting the priests who make possible its celebration.

I appeal to you, therefore, to continue to be, or return to being, true Catholics, who love Holy Mass and are present at it each Sunday as the Church requires of us. It is not a chore to be endured but rather a privilege through which our faith is sustained by the gift of the Lord in his Word and in the Sacrament of his Holy Body and Blood. We thank God for such a great blessing and ask that he keeps us faithful in practising our holy faith.

+ Joseph Tool

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NEXT EDITION: 31 October/1 November 2026

Send your news, events and articles for the next edition to media@rcdom.org.uk.

Deadline for submissions - **9th October 2026**

www.rcdom.org.uk



Bishop's Diary

September

- 1 Sep** **1.00pm** Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group
2.00pm Meeting of Diocesan Trustees
- 2 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to St Barbara's PS, Muirhead
11.15am Visit to St Joseph's PS, Stepps
- 3 Sep** **9.15am** Visit to St Gerard's PS, Bellshill
11.15am Visit to Sacred Heart PS, Bellshill
- 6 Sep** **3.00pm** Annual National Pilgrimage to Carfin Grotto
- 7/14 Sep** Bishops' Conference of Scotland In-service at Salamanca
- 15 Sep** **3.00pm** Council of Priests Executive
- 16 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to Holy Family PS, Mossend
11.15am Visit to St Aloysius PS, Chapelhall
- 17 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to St Bernard's PS, Coatbridge
11.15am Visit to St Patrick's PS, Coatbridge
12noon Meeting with new Head Teachers in the Diocesan Office
2.00pm Council of Priests
- 18 Sep** Scottish Catholic Collections Heritage Trust Meeting in Aberdeen
- 21 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to Our Lady of Lourdes PS, East Kilbride
11.15am Visit to St Vincent's PS, EK
2.30pm Festal Mass at Holy Cross High School, Hamilton
7.00pm Patronal Feast Mass for SVDP at St Columba's Church, Viewpark
- 22 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to St Bridget's PS, Baillieston
11.15am Visit to St Francis of Assisi PS, Baillieston
2.30pm Festal Mass for Our Lady's High School, Motherwell
- 23 Sep** **9.30am** Visit to Cathedral PS, M'well
11.15am Visit to St Bernadette's PS, Motherwell
- 24 Sep** Visit by Archbishop Rino Fisichella
12noon Address to Clergy in St Bride's Centre, Motherwell
7.00pm Mass in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral

29 Sep **9.30am** Pre-Confirmation visit to St Bride's PS, Cambuslang

11.15am Pre-Confirmation visit to St Cadoc's PS, Halfway

30 Sep **11.00am** Caritas Commissioning Service at Carfin
1.00pm Missio Champions Service in the Cathedral

October

1 Oct **11.00am** Festal Mass at Taylor High School, New Stevenston

1/2 Oct CHAPS Conference, Glasgow

5 Oct **9.30am** Visit to St Thomas' PS, Wishaw
11.15am Visit to St Athanasius' PS, Carluke

6 Oct **11.45am** Fabric and Planning Committee

7 Oct **11.00am** Festal Mass for Cardinal Newman High School, Bellshill
2.00pm Finance Committee

8 Oct **9.30am** Visit to St Rose of Lima PS, Craigend

13 Oct **12noon** Ambrosian Society Mass in Motherwell Cathedral

18 Oct Mass in St Aloysius' Church, Glasgow, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Canonisation of St John Ogilvie.

21 Oct **10.00am** Panel discussion at St Andrew's and St Bride's HS, EK.

22 Oct **9.30am** Visit to St Andrew's, Airdrie

25 Oct Mass at Holy Family, Mossend, to mark the Feast of St John Paul II & 20th anniversary of Polish chaplaincy in the Diocese

26 Oct **11.00am** Episcopal Finance Meeting, Glasgow

3.00pm Council of Priests Executive and Deans

7.00pm Confirmations at St Barbara's, Muirhead

27 Oct **7.00pm** Confirmations at St Joseph's, Stepps

28 Oct **7.00pm** Confirmations at St Dominic's Craigend, for St Rose of Lima PS

29 Oct **10.00am** Panel discussion at Cardinal Newman High School, Bellshill
7.00pm Confirmations at St Thomas', Wishaw

New clergy appointments announced



Bishop Toal has recently announced new appointments for three priests of the Diocese.

Father John Paul McShane (*left photo*) has been appointed the new Parish Priest of St Mary's and St Bernard's, Coatbridge. Ordained in 2017, Father John Paul takes up his new appointment in Coatbridge having served as Parish Priest of St Mary's Lanark for the last 6 years.

Meanwhile, the current parish priest of St Mary's and St Bernard's, Father James Travers (*centre photo*), will leave behind the Coatbridge parish where he has served since 2018 to become the new Parish Priest of the more rural parish of St Patrick's in Strathaven

Taking up his first parish priest appointment since being ordained in 2022, Father Christopher Morris (*right photo*) will become the new Parish Priest of St Mary's in Lanark. For the past two years Father Morris has been caring for the parish of St Patrick's Strathaven where he has served as Administrator.

The new changes will take effect from 1st October 2026.

Bishop Toal thanks the three priests for their ministry in their present parishes and asks your prayers for them and their parishes as they prepare to move.



St Mary's Church in Coatbridge



Archbishop Fisichella to Visit Motherwell Diocese

The Diocese of Motherwell is delighted to announce that Archbishop Rino Fisichella, one of the Catholic Church's leading voices on evangelisation, will visit the Diocese on Thursday 24 September.

Archbishop Fisichella is the Pro-Prefect of the New Evangelisation sections of the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation. The Dicastery has responsibility for promoting the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world and supporting the Church in responding to the challenges of evangelisation today.

Born in Italy in 1951 and ordained a priest for the Diocese of Rome in 1976, Archbishop Fisichella has served in a number of important roles within the Church. He is a theologian and former professor of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and was ordained a bishop in 1998. He later became President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, a role in which he became particularly well known for his work encouraging the Church to proclaim the Gospel in an increasingly secularised world.

During his visit to Motherwell Diocese, Archbishop Fisichella will address the clergy on the theme of New Evangelisation, reflecting on the Church's mission in today's world and the ways in which Catholics are called to share the Gospel with renewed confidence and hope.

Following his meeting with the clergy, Archbishop Fisichella will celebrate Holy Mass at 7pm in Motherwell Cathedral, to which all parishioners and members of the Diocese are warmly invited and encouraged to attend to hear Archbishop Fisichella speak about the Church's mission today.

It promises to be an important opportunity for the Diocese to reflect on how we can respond to Christ's call to evangelise and to become, in the words of Pope Leo XIV, a Church whose proclamation of the Gospel continues to offer hope and meaning to the world.

Holy Mass with Archbishop Fisichella



Thursday 24th September 2026



7.00pm



Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell

All welcome!

Parishioners acknowledged for years of dedicated service to Lanark parish



On the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Bishop Toal visited the parish of St Mary's in Lanark and presented the Diocesan Bene Merenti medal to several parishioners.

Receiving the medals were Grace Abernethy, Pat Brady, Kevan Carty, Hugh Kennedy, Jim McAlavey, Mary Margaret Meldrum, Tom Mullen, and John Reilly. The award recognises their many years of faithful commitment, generous service, and dedication to the parish of St Mary's and the wider Church.

We offer our heartfelt congratulations to each of the recipients and thank them for the countless ways they have enriched the life of St Mary's through their witness, generosity, and service. Their example reflects the strength and spirit of our parish community. Today is an opportunity for us all to come together in thanksgiving and celebration: welcoming Bishop Toal among us, honouring those receiving this special recognition, and giving thanks for the many parishioners whose quiet dedication helps our parish to flourish.

A few weeks later, Bishop Toal returned to the parish, this time celebrating Sunday Mass for the community in Holy Trinity, Lamington. This was a special day for three of the young parishioners who celebrated the sacrament during the Mass. Chloe and Rosa both received the Sacrament of Confirmation, whilst Marco received his First Holy Communion.



Bishop Toal and Fr McShane with Chloe, Rose and Marco in Lamington

Parishes welcome Assistant to General Superior of the Spiritans



BY JIM O'HARE

The parishes of St Brendan's, Muirhouse, and St Patrick's, Shieldmuir, recently welcomed Fr Jude Nnorom, 2nd Assistant to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) in Rome.

During his visit, Fr Jude concelebrated Sunday Masses with Fr Ricklan Mallya, Fr Bernard Waave and Deacon Harry McKenna. He also visited the Spiritan community in Carfin as part of a wider tour of Spiritan ministries across Scotland and England.

Born in Nigeria, Fr Jude was ordained in 1994 and has served extensively in South Africa in parish ministry, formation and leadership, as well as with Religions for Peace, an interfaith organisation linked to the United Nations.

The visit offered an opportunity for Fr Jude to see the dedicated ministry taking place in both parishes, their schools, and at University Hospital Wishaw. The parish communities were delighted to welcome him and hope to see him again in the Diocese of Motherwell in the future.



Forging ahead ahead with parish renewal Project Wellspring Forum



BY STEPHEN FERRIE

We are delighted to confirm that the next in a highly successful series of parish forum meetings on Project Wellspring will take place at the beginning of October.

The next forum will be held in Our Lady & St Anne's Parish Hall, Jack Street, Hamilton, ML3 7QP, from 7.00pm to 9.00pm on Monday, 5th October 2026.

The parish forum meetings are designed to bring lay people and clergy together to discuss how we can best support parish renewal and evangelisation across the Diocese of Motherwell.

As well as hearing about the latest developments with some of our key Wellspring Missions, parishes will have the opportunity to share ideas and discuss progress with individual parish plans. This will be our fifth parish forum meeting since the launch of Project Wellspring, and we are looking for representation from as many parishes as possible from across the Diocese. If you have not yet attended one of these meetings, please consider joining us on 5 October. It promises to be an energising and engaging evening.

You can register your interest in attending the October parish forum by emailing sferrie@rcdom.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you there!



Parishioners head 'doon the water'

BY MARGARET DALY

Parishioners of St Bride's Bothwell recently enjoyed a spectacular day out together down the coast to Largs, organised by the parish SSVP.

The trip featured a variety of delightful activities with many parishioners enjoying a memorable boat trip on the famous Waverley whilst others spent time shopping. The day was rounded off at the beach, where everyone enjoyed some fish and chips and delicious ice cream.



Called to Serve

Celebration as the Diocese's newest priest, **Fr Kieran Burt**, ordained in his home parish of St Joseph's Blantyre this summer

There was a profound sense of joy and thanksgiving in St Joseph's Church, Blantyre, as the parish welcomed one of its own home-grown sons back to the Church to be ordained to the priesthood.

In a packed church filled with family, friends, parishioners, clergy and well-wishers, Kieran Burt was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Motherwell by Bishop Joseph Toal. The occasion was particularly special for Kieran, who grew up in the parish and has long felt called to serve God and His people as a priest.

Now the youngest priest in Scotland at the age of 25, Fr Kieran has followed a vocation he first recognised at a young age. His desire to become a priest was so strong that, following his time at school, he went directly to seminary to begin his formation.

During his homily, Bishop Toal remarked, "Kieran has experienced the call of God from his young days and has been very strong in acknowledging that and responding to it. In fact it gives me and many other priests here, who followed a similar course, confidence that God really does call us in our younger days. It's not an easy thing to become a priest, and Kieran has been very determined to follow God."



We hope and pray there will be many years ahead of him to serve the church as a priest and we will all benefit from his ministry.

BISHOP JOSEPH TOAL





I have to make a special thank you to my mum and dad who brought me into this world and have given me everything

FATHER KIERAN BURT



The packed church reflected the affection in which Fr Kieran is held, not only in his home parish but across the Diocese of Motherwell. His ordination marks the beginning of a new chapter in his ministry, one in which he will serve the people of God in a number of different pastoral roles.

Following his ordination, Fr Kieran will take up his appointment as Assistant Priest of St Joseph's, Stepps, and St Barbara's, Muirhead. The appointment will see him return to communities with which he is already familiar, having served there as a deacon during the past year.

He will also continue his work in chaplaincy at St Ambrose's High School, Coatbridge, where he has already been involved in supporting young people in their faith. In addition, he will serve as chaplain to the Diocesan Youth Mission, bringing his enthusiasm for evangelisation and his particular passion for accompanying young people.

As he begins his priestly ministry, Bishop Toal stressed during his homily that Fr Kieran will need the support of the people in his ministry, saying, "I think in the future perhaps life is going to be more challenging for your generation of priests than it was for mine, and you will need that strong sense of the Lord being with you and the support of the congregation, the people of God, the body of Christ. The reward is great, though, as the Lord promises, 'rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven.'

The day after his ordination, Fr Kieran returned to his home parish of St Joseph's, Blantyre, to celebrate his first Mass. It was another joyful celebration for the parish community and provided an opportunity for Kieran to offer his first Mass among the people and in the church that had played such an important part in his journey of faith.

The homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving was preached by Fr James, a Jesuit priest who was Fr Kieran's Spiritual Director in Rome, whose reflections offered encouragement to the newly ordained priest as he begins his ministry. Fr James reflected: "The Sacrament that Kieran has just received does not make him less human but more human, not less vulnerable but more vulnerable, because now he is committed to you and you are committed to him. You cannot be a priest in solitude,

you can only be a priest in the service of God's people. And that means being with one another in our joys and sufferings, questions and doubts, loneliness and searching. The sacrament of priesthood is itself a self-gift, a gift to God and a gift to God's people. Its lived in prayer and especially every day in the joy of the Risen Christ."

At the end of his Mass of Thanksgiving, Fr Kieran thanked all who had prepared the church and contributed to the beautiful ordination liturgies and all who had supported him over the years. A special tribute was paid to his parents, Sharon and Eddie, for their love and support to Fr Kieran throughout his life.

Fr Kieran's ordination is not simply the culmination of a long-held dream but the beginning of a lifetime of service. From his childhood in Blantyre, through seminary and his years of formation in Rome, to his first pastoral appointments, his journey has been marked by a desire to respond generously to God's call.

As he begins his priestly ministry, the Diocese of Motherwell gives thanks for the gift of his vocation and asks God to bless Fr Kieran abundantly as he begins this new chapter.



Taking the next step on the journey to Diaconate

The Diocese of Motherwell is giving thanks for the continued growth of vocations to ordained ministry, with several men taking important steps in their formation towards the Permanent Diaconate and priesthood.

In June, Paul May, who has worked in the Parish of St Anthony and St Mark for the past two years, was formally admitted to the Ministry of Lector by Bishop Joseph Toal at St Anthony's Church. Paul will now continue his formation for the Permanent Diaconate following the diaconate study programme through the Edinburgh Campus of St Mary's, University, Twickenham, and with a pastoral placement at St John the Baptist's, Uddingston.

A few weeks later, Stephen Kilcoyne, a parishioner of St Anthony and St Mark's, Rutherglen, took part in the Rite of Candidacy for the Permanent Diaconate, celebrated by Bishop Toal at St Anthony's Church.

Having completed his Propaedeutic Year, Stephen will now begin the four-year programme of diaconal formation. We give thanks for his generosity in responding to God's call and assure him of our prayers as he begins this new stage of his journey towards ordained ministry.

The Diocese also continues to support a growing number of men discerning a vocation to the priesthood. Seminarians Aidan Kelly and Matthew O'Neill will return to the Pontifical Scots College in Rome following the completion of their Pastoral Year in the Diocese.



Paul May and his wife with Bishop Toal



Stephen Kilcoyne and his wife with Bishop Toal



Seminarians return to Rome

Seminarians Aidan Kelly and Matthew O'Neill will return to the Pontifical Scots College in Rome following the completion of their Pastoral Year in the Diocese.

They will be joined by three new seminarians for the Diocese, who have recently completed the Propaedeutic Course at the Royal Scots College in Salamanca and will now continue their formation in Rome.

The Diocese is also looking ahead to the next generation of vocations. A number of young men have been meeting with the Vocations Director, Fr Charlie O'Farrell, and it is hoped that a couple may begin the Propaedeutic Period in Salamanca in January.

Is God calling you to the Priesthood, Diaconate or Religious Life?

If you would like to know more about a vocation to the priesthood, diaconate or religious life, speak to your parish priest or contact the Diocesan Vocations Director:

Priesthood

Father Charles O'Farrell

Email: frofarrell@rcdom.org.uk

Diaconate

Deacon Bill McMillan

Email: deaconmcmillan@rcdom.org.uk





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Mini Vinnies Swap Shop at St. Teresa's



BY DANIEL SMITH

The Mini Vinnies at St. Teresa's Primary in Newarthill organised and ran a very successful toy and book swap stall.

This initiative allowed children to bring used toys and books to school and exchange them for something new and exciting. The Mini Vinnies were keen to demonstrate the importance of recycling and reusing by giving preloved items a new home. Many thanks must go to all children who donated toys and books. In addition to this, the Mini Vinnies have also been busy throughout the months of May and June. They led daily rosaries in each of the classes throughout the school and later came together with Mini Vinnies from other schools to take part in a retreat day at Carfin Grotto. This event enabled them to share their experiences and focus on all the good works they do throughout the year.

Celebrating Faith and New Beginnings



BY SANDRA MCLEAN

Sacred Heart Primary School in Bellshill recently came together in faith as we celebrated the Feast of the Sacred Heart with Bishop Toal, who led Holy Mass for the children and families of our school community.

After the Mass, Bishop Toal blessed the new school within the Orbiston Community Hub. It was a truly memorable occasion, made even more special as Bishop Toal took time to visit each classroom, meeting our pupils and staff.

This marked our first Feast Day in our new school building — a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our faith, our community and this new chapter in the life of Sacred Heart Primary.

Celebrating the Sacraments



First Communions at St Patrick's, Strathaven



First Communions at St Augustine's, Coatbridge



First Communions at St Mark's, Rutherglen



First Communions at St Michael's, Moodiesburn



Confirmations at St Patrick's, Strathaven



Join the
MOTHERWELL
DIOCESAN
Children's Choir

A PLACE TO SING • A COMMUNITY TO GROW • FAITH TO SHARE

 STARTS Wednesday 2 September	 TIME 6pm - 7pm	 WHERE Cathedral Primary School Motherwell	 REGISTRATION Online at rcdom.org.uk/childrens-choir-registration
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ALL CHILDREN FROM P5-7 ARE WELCOME!
FREE FOR ALL CHILDREN. NO AUDITION REQUIRED

Join the new Motherwell Diocesan Children's Choir

We're delighted to invite children from across the Diocese of Motherwell to become part of our new Diocesan Children's Choir – a place to sing, grow in confidence, make new friends and share our faith through music.

The choir is open to all children in P5–P7, with no audition required and no cost to take part.

Starts: Wednesday, 2 September

Time: 6.00pm–7.00pm

Where: Cathedral Primary School, Motherwell

Whether your child already loves singing or would simply like to give it a try, they will be very welcome.

Please share with families, schools and parishes across the Diocese.

 Starts Wednesday 2nd September
 6.00pm–7.00pm
 Cathedral Primary School, Motherwell

 Register at:
www.rcdom.org.uk/childrens-choir-registration

**WORLD
MISSION SUNDAY
18TH OCTOBER**

**ONE IN CHRIST
UNITED IN
Mission**

100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY



The Pope's charity for the Missions

The Church - One Family

Mission Sunday is the day when all the Catholics of the world - in every parish, in every country - show solidarity with one another through prayer and giving financial help where it is needed.

Missio Scotland supports the Church where it is young, small and financially poor in 1,200 dioceses in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Oceania and parts of Europe.

This year we want to highlight the needs of the Church in Albania and Ukraine.

You can learn more about how you have helped the Church by visiting:

www.missioscotland.com

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Text MISSIOSCOT to 70085 to donate £3 or scan this QR code





Father Agustin (left) with Maximillian

In Albania, love is inventive to infinity

Ahead of Mission Month in October, **Gerard Gough** from **Missio Scotland**, provides an insight into how your donations help the Vincentians carry out their mission in Albania.

One of the first things I noticed when my colleague Andrea and I entered the Vincentian Fathers' House in Grudë e Re, escaping the searing Albanian summer heat, was a simple fledgling house plant tied to two broom handles to help it grow.

It was a small image, but one that captured something important about this place: it is rooted in love, care and support. It also brought to mind the words of St Vincent de Paul: "Love is inventive to infinity."

The love and care shown by the Vincentian Fathers will be familiar to people in Scotland. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), present in many of our parishes, has been a powerful witness to that same spirit for almost 200 years. In my own family, the SSVP supported my grandmother during difficult times in the 1950s and 60s. I only discovered this after her death – something which reflects the dignity and discretion with which the Society serves those in need.

HELP AND HEALING

Albania lived under a brutal Communist regime for almost five decades. Catholicism and other religions were forced underground, and 37 men and one woman were eventually martyred for their faith. They were beatified by Pope Francis in 2016.

Mass was celebrated secretly; Catholics spoke quietly about their faith to avoid the attention of the Sigurimi, Albania's secret police, and churches were converted into cinemas and sports halls. It was a struggle for survival, but the faith endured through the courage of Albania's Catholic men and women.

Although Communism ended in 1991, its scars remain. Historical trauma, distrust of authority, corruption, poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, violence and emigration continue to affect many communities. Organised crime has also exploited vulnerable young people. Yet, amid these difficulties, trust in the Catholic Church has grown.

Fr Agustin Margjoni, Superior of the Vincentians in Albania and the country's first National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, explained the congregation's approach: "Wherever we find people with the greatest need, that is where we believe Christ is calling us to be."

The Vincentians work with elderly people, families, children, the sick and the poor, seeking not simply to provide practical help but to accompany people and share their lives.

Their mission brings to mind Christ's words in Matthew's Gospel: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome..."

This spirit is particularly evident in the men's refuge run by the Vincentians in nearby Vinotekë, a project supported by Missio Scotland. The refuge welcomes men who have been abandoned, former prisoners and others who have nowhere else to turn.

Some have found housing and begun new lives; others have reconciled with their families. For the Vincentians, each person is given the opportunity to begin again.

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

One of those given that opportunity is 26-year-old Maximilian Fushë.

Fr Luigi Cannato first encountered Max in prison. His life had been marked by extreme hardship. His mother was abandoned by Max's father, leaving her and her two sons practically homeless. As a child, Max lived in an orphanage, a semi-legal squat, Red Cross accommodation, abandoned train carriages and even parks.

Despite being highly intelligent, his education suffered as he left school early to help support his family. He later fell into drug addiction. After overcoming his addiction, the death of his mother in 2024 led to a relapse, and following a violent altercation with his brother, he ended up in prison. There he met Fr Luigi.

"He trusted in me. He saw more in me than I did in myself," Max recalled.

Fr Luigi invited him to stay with the Vincentians and helped him begin rebuilding his life.

Today, Max is free from drugs and says he has returned to God. He hopes to build a family, give something back to others and, above all, make his mother proud.

His love for his mother is evident in a childhood memory. At eight years old, he overheard her worrying about how she would feed him and his brother. Max sold his bicycle for €10 and bought food for the family. He then told his mother that he had crashed the bike and someone had given him the money.

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

THE TIDE HAS TURNED

Another man whose life has been transformed is 56-year-old Kastriot Fushë.

Kastriot's family suffered persecution under Communism. A relative who was a seminarian was killed, while a priest in the family died in prison. Even their surname was changed by the authorities.

Kastriot himself endured violence and rejection during childhood. Later, after marrying and having a daughter, his family life eventually collapsed. His wife left for Italy, and Kastriot became homeless.

A Vincentian priest, Fr Gjergj Ndreka, found him living on the streets and eventually brought him to the Vincentian House.

Four years later, his life has changed dramatically. He has stability, a home and, most importantly, a renewed relationship with his daughter and granddaughter.

Kastriot credits the Church with helping him rebuild his life. "God has helped me through His people. So, my faith is very important to me. Nothing is more important than God."

He also had a message for those in Scotland supporting the Church's work in Albania: "God bless you. I love you very much, and I will pray for you. Thank you for everything."

GOD'S GRACE IN ACTION

Missio Scotland is supporting the construction of a new men's refuge in Vinotekë, which will provide a safe place for many more vulnerable men to begin rebuilding their lives.

For Fr Agustin, the support from Scotland is much more than financial assistance.

"For us, this support is truly a grace from God. It feels like the hand of God reaching out to us."

He spoke warmly of the connection between the Church in Scotland and Albania, emphasising that the Church is one family and that working together to serve the poor is a deep and meaningful collaboration.

The Vincentians' work in Albania is a powerful reminder that love does not simply respond to need – it finds creative ways to help people grow. Love, truly, is inventive to infinity.



Father Agustin at the Men's Refuge



To donate to Missio Scotland:

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or write to: **Missio Scotland, St. Andrews, 4 Laird Street, Coatbridge ML5 3LJ**

text: **MISSIOSCOT** to **70085** to donate **£3** or

MISSIOSCOT with any number between 1-20 after it to donate your desired amount (For example MISSIOSCOT 10 will donate £10).

missio
Scotland

Bishops Congratulate New Prime Minister and Call for Leadership Rooted in Human Dignity

The Catholic Bishops of Scotland have written to the new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, offering their congratulations and assuring him of their prayers as he begins his term of office.

In their letter, the bishops urge the Prime Minister and his Government to place human dignity at the centre of public life, with particular concern for the poorest and most vulnerable, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the unborn, those nearing the end of life, and communities affected by war, poverty and climate change.

Bishop John Keenan, President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, said, "As a Catholic, the Prime Minister will be familiar with the Church's enduring commitment to the dignity of every human person and to the promotion of the common good – principles which lie at the heart of Catholic social teaching. We hope these values will underpin his leadership, particularly in serving the poor, the vulnerable and those on the margins of society and in advancing the cause of peace, justice and reconciliation both at home and abroad.

"We assure the Prime Minister of our prayers for wisdom, courage and integrity as he undertakes the responsibilities of this high office. We look forward to working constructively with him and his Government on the many issues that affect the lives and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and we pray that the United Kingdom will continue to use its influence in the service of peace, justice and human dignity throughout the world."

Meanwhile, the Bishops have welcomed the Prime Minister's call for the serious gaps in palliative and social care to be



addressed before the Westminster Parliament considers assisted suicide legislation.

Bishop John Keenan said, "The Prime Minister's intervention is both timely and welcome. We have a duty to ensure that every person approaching the end of life has access to the compassionate palliative and social care they deserve. No one should ever feel driven towards assisted suicide because they lack the care, support or dignity they need.

"We were grateful that the Scottish Parliament resolutely rejected assisted suicide only recently. We hope this latest intervention will encourage Members of the Westminster Parliament to reflect carefully before taking a step that would fundamentally change the way our society cares for the sick and vulnerable.

"This is an opportunity to rethink the whole approach to assisted suicide. The compassionate response to suffering is never to help people end their lives, but to ensure they receive the high-quality care, love and accompaniment they need. Let us pray for all who are seriously ill, for their families and carers, and for those in public office, that they may always uphold the dignity of every human life and work to build a society that truly cares for its most vulnerable members."

MSPs Join Scotland's Catholic Bishops for Annual Mass in Holyrood

Bishops from across Scotland gathered at the Scottish Parliament on recently to celebrate Mass with MSPs and parliamentary staff.

The Mass, an annual event at Holyrood, this year marked the Solemnity of the Nativity of John the Baptist. It was led by Archbishop William Nolan, Archbishop of Glasgow, and concelebrated by Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles; Bishop Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell; Bishop Frank Dougan, Bishop of Galloway; and Father Bill Russell, Ecumenical Officer for the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Around fifteen MSPs from across several parties attended, including First Minister John Swinney, Minister for Equalities and International Development Simita Kumar, and Mark Griffin MSP, who sponsored the Mass. Representatives of agencies and commissions of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland were also present.

In his homily, Archbishop Nolan recalled the words of Pope Francis, who said politics could be "an outstanding form of charity". He reminded MSPs that, in their demanding public role, they are first and foremost called to serve. The Church, the Archbishop said, "sets out ideals", but the responsibility for putting those ideals into practice rests with politicians.

Reflecting on the Gospel account of the birth of John the Baptist, Archbishop Nolan highlighted the words: "For the hand of the Lord was with him." He told the MSPs gathered that they should "never be in any doubt", because "the hand of the Lord is always with you, too".

Following the Mass, Mark Griffin thanked the bishops for leading the celebration in the Parliament. Archbishop Nolan, in turn, thanked Mr Griffin and all the MSPs present and offered his best wishes for the parliamentary session ahead.



Bishops Reflect on Diocesan Consultations and Renewed Mission for the Church in Scotland

In recent weeks, discussions about our diocesan structures have taken place among the clergy, religious and lay faithful in all of Scotland's eight dioceses. Following these local consultations, the bishops devoted significant time at the recent Bishops' Conference meeting to prayerfully reflecting on the contents of these reports. The Conversation in the Spirit prayer method has proved particularly fruitful in providing rich insight and direction at this stage of our discernment.

What emerged from local reports were encouraging areas of convergence. There is a clear desire to see this process as more than a consideration of administrative structures alone. Rather, it presents an important opportunity to reflect afresh on our mission and vision as the Church in Scotland and on how we can best proclaim the Gospel in our time.

The bishops recognised a strong appreciation for greater collaboration across dioceses, including the sharing of curial resources and expertise, enabling us to support one another more effectively. They also acknowledge strong local identities which are tied to each diocesan community.

Above all, there was a shared conviction that this moment can help renew our commitment to evangelisation and to the Church's mission of bringing the hope of the Gospel to every corner of our nation.

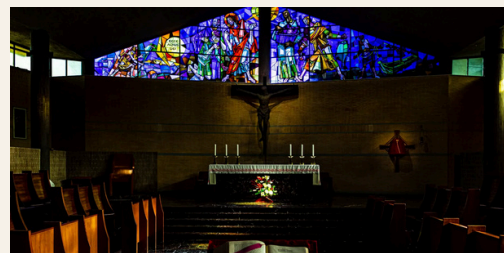
The Bishops thank all those who contributed their voices to this important consultation and for generously sharing feedback as the fruit of sincere, Spirit-led prayer.

The Bishops will continue their reflections in the months ahead and look forward to hearing further views from all those involved as they evaluate concrete options to present to the Holy See towards the end of the year. In harmony with the hopes of the Holy See, they look forward to continuing this process as a synodal journey with the active participation of clergy and faithful.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to listen attentively to God's will and to each other as we move forward together with faith, hope and confidence.



Sale completed for former Scots College building



The Bishops of Scotland have confirmed the completion of the sale of the former Pontifical Scots College building on the Via Cassia in Rome, marking the end of an important chapter in the history of the college which has been home to generations of Scottish seminarians since 1964.

The rector of the Pontifical Scots College in Rome, Fr Mark Cassidy, said: "The sale of the Via Cassia building brings to an end a significant chapter in the life of the Church in Scotland. We now look forward to the next chapter in our 425-year history and to finding a new home for the seminary, where we can continue to form men ready for the Church's mission."

New Spiritual Director appointed to Salamanca

Fr Pat Keegans, a priest of Galloway Diocese, has been appointed by the Bishops of Scotland as the new Spiritual Director of the Royal Scots College in Salamanca.



Fr Keegans is a former student of the Royal Scots College in Valladolid and has maintained close links with the Scottish seminary over many years through the Ambrosian Society and visits to both Valladolid and Salamanca.

Fr John Carroll, College Rector, said: "I am delighted that Fr Pat is joining the College community. I have known him for many years and know he will be an understanding, compassionate and prayerful guide for our seminarians."

Commenting on his appointment, Fr Pat said, "Being asked to be the Spiritual Director at the Royal Scots College in Salamanca is a privilege and honour. I can hardly believe it. I am thrilled and very happy indeed."

A New Altar of Faith

Jimmy Joseph writes about the joy of the historic milestone as the Syro Malabar Community in Motherwell Diocese opens its own 'Mart Mariam' Church



The Scottish Catholic faith soil is witnessing a rare and historic milestone that deserves to be inscribed in golden letters in the history of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain. The Motherwell St Mary's Syro-Malabar Catholic Mission has fulfilled its long-cherished dream of owning its "own church".

Embodying the scripture "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone", this historic triumph stands as a crowning example of the unwavering faith, unity, and prayers of a diaspora community of fewer than a hundred families.

To be known henceforth as "St Mary's Syro-Malabar Church, Motherwell" (Mart Mariam Church), this new church (formerly the Craigneuk & Belhaven Church of Scotland) is a living testament of the Syro-Malabar faithful in Scotland and the fulfilment of a generational dream. The fact that this small community—which was once on the verge of closure due to various crises and lacked even its own priest—now owns its own church is a wondrous chapter in the migration history of the Church.

Rev. Fr Varghese Kochupurackal (Sunil Achan), the Mission Director, led this dream project as an inextinguishable beacon of hope. It was under his energetic guidance and the united efforts of the faithful that years of waiting and prayer finally bore fruit.

The 'Martha Mariam' Church in Motherwell stands as a flowering of faith in a foreign land. Some histories are not written with ink but with prayer, sacrifice and hope. Some dreams are not fulfilled through the efforts of one person but through the strength of a community's faith, unity and dedication.

After almost a quarter of a century of waiting, a community that had held firmly to its faith and traditions despite the challenges of life as migrants in Scotland finally dedicated its own church. This was more than simply the blessing of a Catholic church; it was, for many, a divine response to a generation's prayers.

The consecration of the Martha Mariam (St Mary's) Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Motherwell on 26th July took place in a deeply prayerful atmosphere, with Bishop Joseph Srampickal, Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain, as principal celebrant, joined by Bishop Joseph Toal and several priests of Motherwell Diocese.

With the consecration, it became the seventh Syro-Malabar-owned church in the UK and the first Syro-Malabar church in Scotland. Yet the true significance of the achievement cannot be measured simply in numbers.

EARLY HISTORY

The spiritual journey of this community began in Cambuslang, widely considered the cradle of Malayali migration to Scotland.

In 2002, Rev. Fr Thomas Joseph Therakath, a visiting priest from Kerala, celebrated the first Holy Qurbana in Malayalam at St. Brides Church in Cambuslang. When the opening hymns of "Annapessaha Thirunalil" echoed for the first time inside St. Bride's Church, no one anticipated that it would mark the historic birth of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Scotland.

Contact was established in 2003 with Fr Biju John Kochuparambil in London, and monthly Syro-Malabar liturgical services were organised in St Brides R.C. Church, Cambuslang. Fr Paul Morton's and Fr Biju John's service was invaluable to the spiritual awakening and unity of not only Catholic faithful but also members of other denominations in Glasgow's Malayali migration.

In cooperation with Fr Paul Morton and Fr Biju John, and alongside Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprail (Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Synod Migrants Commission), we visited diocesan bishops in Scotland. Based on a detailed report submitted during these visits, on November 7, 2006, Fr Sebastian Kallath VC (Motherwell Diocese), Fr Joy Cheradi CMF (Glasgow Archdiocese), and Fr Jose VC (Edinburgh Archdiocese) were appointed as Syro-Malabar Chaplains.



As migrants, we were received in this Blessed Isle with great respect and warmth. The Latin Church embraced us as brothers and sisters, generously sharing their churches, presbyteries, and all that was needed for worship, faith formation, and the nourishment of our sacramental life. For this kindness, we remain deeply grateful to all of you.

FATHER VARGHESE

AN ERA OF FELLOWSHIP AND GROWTH

Subsequently, an ecumenical fellowship named ICOMS (Indian Christians of Motherwell, Scotland) was formed, encompassing various apostolic churches and various groups, including the church committee, choir, prayer groups, catechism classes, Church feasts, processions and spiritual retreats; and traditional cultural activities, including Chenda (traditional percussion) and classical dance, which all flourished.

Following Fr. Sebastian Kallath's return to India in 2011, Fr. Joseph Vembadamthara VC took over as the new chaplain. Under his leadership, this fellowship fully transitioned into a formal Catholic community.

By 2016, the community's headquarters was moved from Cambuslang to St Cuthbert's in Hamilton. The Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain was established in the same year on 28th July. On 24th November 2018, Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal declared this community as "St Mary's Syro-Malabar Catholic Mission, Hamilton".

In 2019, the Holy Family Mission was established for Knanaya faithful, and from April 2021 to July 2025, Fr Johny Vettikkal VC took care of the mission's spiritual responsibilities.

A HISTORIC CELEBRATION

Among those present for the historic occasion were Bishop Joseph Toal, numerous priests from the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain and the Diocese of Motherwell, North Lanarkshire Provost Kenneth Duffy, MSP Clare Adamson, MPs Pamela Nash and David Do, representatives of other Christian denominations and hundreds of faithful who travelled from different parts of Scotland.

A felicitation ceremony followed the consecration, with Dr Chris Kurian and Dr Sherin Jason acting as presenters and coordinating the proceedings.

Messages of congratulations from the distinguished guests highlighted the importance of this historic achievement.

Today, the Martha Mariam Church stands as a landmark in Motherwell. But it is more than a place of worship.

It is described as the soul of a community, the shelter of a faith that has put down roots in a foreign land, and a spiritual home that connects generations.

It is a bridge between the prayers of parents and the future of their children.

History does not always remember only great wars and empires. It also remembers the people who quietly preserved their faith.

The consecration of the Martha Mariam Church in Motherwell is one such piece of history.

For future generations, it will be remembered not simply as the story of a church building but as the story of a community that refused to abandon its faith in a foreign land – a story of faith, perseverance and victory.





Catholic Leadership in Parish Life: Young People Leading the Way



BY MISHAL NOVANI

On Tuesday 6 June 2026, St Bride's Hall in Motherwell became a hub of energy, prayer, and purpose as 96 senior pupils from across the diocese gathered for a "Catholic Leadership in Parish Life" day, organised by the Diocesan Youth Office and led by Youth Officer Mishal Novani. The day brought together 56 students from our Catholic secondary schools to explore what it means to live out their baptismal call through leadership in parish communities.

The day opened with a powerful reflection on the baptismal call to discipleship and mission. Participants were invited to see themselves as future leaders as well as present contributors whose gifts are needed now. This set the tone for a series of practical, interactive workshops designed to be inspirational and, more importantly, move towards actionable projects within Parishes.

In the first workshop, "The big idea", students reflected on the spiritual gifts they have received and how these can serve the common good of the parish. Mishal led the students to consider their charisms as tangible gifts, encouraging young people to identify concrete ways their talents could build up the Body of Christ in their local parish communities.

The second session, "The big talk", focused on confidence, clarity, and collaboration. Facilitator Raymond Kawase, Evangelisation officer for St John the Baptist Parish, guided participants through exercises in communicating ideas in a way that invites others into shared projects. The emphasis was on authentic, respectful communication that builds trust between generations within the parish.

Stephanie McCrossan, Diocesan retreats lead, guided and supported the third workshop, where students moved from ideas to plans. Working in small groups, they designed simple, realistic projects they could take back to their parishes and creative ways to welcome and encourage youth involvement within the liturgy and life of the parish. The atmosphere was one of focused creativity: young people asking, "What is possible here?" and "Who can help us make this happen?"

Fr Stephen Reilly, Vicar Episcopal for Youth, offered encouragement throughout the day, reminding students that their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives are gifts to the Church. He challenged parishes to take young people seriously as co-responsible partners in mission. A few local

parish priests joined in during the talks and workshops and found the day helpful whilst building connections with schools and senior students.

The day was marked by a genuine sense of hope, and many spoke of feeling more confident to speak up in parish meetings, to propose new initiatives, and to see their Caritas commitments as part of a wider ecclesial mission.

The leadership day was run as a pilot programme for ongoing formation and involvement, and now the Youth Office invites parishes, schools, and pastoral teams to build on this momentum.

First, invite these young adults into parish planning groups and ministries. Make a welcoming invitation and space for young people and support them to turn their project ideas into reality.

Second, encourage other young people to attend in the future. If you know a 6th-year pupil who shows initiative, prayerfulness, or concern for others, suggest this opportunity to them, their parents, or their school chaplaincy team. The Church needs their gifts.

Third, contact the Diocesan Youth Office for support with youth-led projects. Mishal and the Youth Office can help with planning, training, resources and connections across schools and parishes. This is especially important for making meaningful use of Caritas hours so that service learning in schools flows naturally into parish life.

Finally, pray for our young leaders and their parishes that bridges between schools and parishes will grow stronger, older generations will listen and make space, and that our young people will find a home in their parishes where their leadership and talents help make the Church more alive.





Saleians bring Summer Oratory to Easterhouse

BY SISTER ANNE FRANCES

The Salesian Sisters based at St John Bosco's parish, in Easterhouse, ran their Summer Oratory during the first two weeks of the summer holidays.

A Salesian Oratory is a place where children and young people can experience a home, school, church and playground all in the same place. Children from P4-7 attended each day from 11:00am to 4:00pm, and the Senior Oratory ran in the evenings from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. The Sisters were helped each day by some Salesian Brothers, local parishioners, a Seminarian for the Diocese and some of our Senior Oratory Team who had completed their Young Leader Training during the year. They were a great asset to the team and showed great willingness to make a positive contribution to their local community through volunteering.

The theme of the Summer Oratory was 'Our Wonderful World', and each day the children learnt about various aspects within the theme, including Wonders of the World, Language & Communication, Inspiring People, Amazing Ecosystems and Our Future World. The young people absolutely loved the active learning sessions. They also took part in games and activities which developed confidence, team-building and

personal leadership skills. In the afternoon there was an opportunity to develop various skill during the free time activities which included arts & Crafts, Music, Sport, Games and even Special Effects Make up.

A time of 'Quiet Camp' took place each afternoon, which was an opportunity for the children to learn various ways of praying and reflecting; even the liveliest of children enjoyed this opportunity to have a moment to stop and be a little calmer.

At the end of the Summer Oratory the children and young people delivered a showcase of talent, sharing all that they had learnt and developed over the two weeks with their parents and families. This is always a highlight of the summer oratory, as it allows everyone to celebrate the amazing young people we have here in Easterhouse. At the end of the showcase, we all enjoyed a fun afternoon and BBQ.

The Salesian Oratory runs daily (Monday to Thursday) from 3:00 to 4:30pm for all children in P6-7, and the Senior Oratory for young people in S1-S6 runs Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. For more information, please contact the Sisters on fmaglasgow@salesiansisters.co.uk

Sunday Cathedral Nights

27
September

25
October

29
November



7.30pm



Our Lady of Good Aid
Cathedral, Motherwell



S6 to 35

Sunday Cathedral Nights, the popular monthly gathering for young Catholics returns this autumn, offering young people an opportunity to deepen their faith, meet others and enjoy a relaxed evening together.

Talk and
Discussion on
aspects of faith

Prayer &
Adoration with
music

Catch up with
friends &
socialise



For more info contact Mishal Novani at
mishal@rcdom.org.uk



MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS

Catholic Intellectual Life in an age of Artificial Intelligence

By Stephen McDonald



"Artificial intelligence needs to be disarmed." Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas* (2026), is an extraordinary statement.

At a time when states compete for technological supremacy, corporations race to develop powerful artificial intelligence systems, and universities seek to integrate AI into every aspect of learning, Pope Leo XIV begins not with optimism or alarmism, but with a moral challenge: artificial intelligence "needs to be disarmed".

At first glance, the encyclical appears to concern artificial intelligence. On closer reading, it addresses a fundamental question: who guides civilisation when technological capability outpaces moral wisdom? This question formed the basis of an evening of discussion hosted by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Motherwell on 3 June 2026 at the Diocesan Centre. Convened by Paul Foley, clergy and lay participants gathered to reflect upon Pope Leo's encyclical and upon the wider implications of artificial intelligence for democracy, education, human dignity and the common good. What emerged was not principally a discussion about technology. Rather, it became an opportunity to reflect upon one of Catholicism's oldest contributions to public life: its intellectual tradition.

Contemporary culture frequently portrays Catholicism as antithetical to intellectual enquiry. Popular commentators such as Richard Dawkins (2006) have argued that religious belief inhibits critical thought and scientific inquiry. They have helped establish a view that faith and reason exist in permanent tension, yet history presents a more nuanced picture.

Indeed, the earliest universities of Europe, Bologna, Paris and Oxford, developed within the institutional life of mediaeval monasticism (Rüegg, 1992). Major figures such as Thomas Aquinas demonstrate that the Catholic intellectual tradition presents faith and reason as complementary avenues in humanity's search for truth. This conviction received its modern expression in Pope St John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, where faith and reason are described as "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" (John Paul II, 1998). Seen within this broader tradition, *Magnifica Humanitas* is not an isolated intervention into contemporary technological debates but the latest chapter in an intellectual dialogue extending across centuries, around

education. Pope Leo XIV argues that the greatest challenge posed by artificial intelligence is not simply the possibility of academic misconduct or the erosion of assessment integrity but to alter our understanding of what it means to be an educated person. Education is fundamentally concerned with the formation of the human person, rather than the efficient acquisition of information (Leo XIV, 2026). He writes that education is "a long journey requiring patience" which demands "time for development and for engagement with reality beyond appearances. Although acknowledging AI's extraordinary ability to provide rapid answers, summaries and analysis, he warns educators that students must learn "when and for what purpose it ought not to be used".

This raises an important distinction between producing text and producing thought. When considering authorship and authenticity of enquiry in an age of artificial intelligence, we should recognise that a student may submit an entirely original essay generated by artificial intelligence while contributing minimal original thinking. Conversely, another student may employ AI as a conversational partner, a research assistant or a means of challenging assumptions, while remaining the genuine author of the intellectual journey.

If universities become institutions primarily concerned with producing outputs rather than cultivating judgement, they risk confusing information with wisdom, as Pope Leo XIV cautions. Education, he asserts, must preserve those human capacities which artificial intelligence cannot replace: discernment, moral judgement, curiosity, imagination, dialogue and the patient search for truth.

As discussion progressed during the evening hosted by Justice & Peace, participants returned repeatedly to one of the encyclical's central metaphors. Pope Leo XIV frames the contemporary technological moment through the biblical contrast between Babel and Jerusalem. Babel symbolises humanity's extraordinary technical achievement detached from moral purpose. It represents civilisation's confidence in its own ingenuity while forgetting to ask why such ingenuity exists. Jerusalem, by contrast, represents a society ordered towards justice, truth, solidarity and love. Participants resisted interpreting this simply as a contrast between technology and religion. Rather, they recognised it as a profound question concerning the ends towards which technology itself is directed.

Participants reflected how AI carries great promise. AI will improve medical diagnosis, accelerate scientific discovery, personalise education, enhance accessibility and assist humanitarian work. Yet alongside these remarkable opportunities lie equally significant concerns, including autonomous weapons systems, algorithmic discrimination, misinformation, surveillance and accelerated concentration of technological power within a small number of multinational corporations. Decisions affecting millions of people may be made through opaque algorithmic systems that neither citizens nor governments fully understand. Such developments raise fundamental questions concerning democracy, accountability and the common good.

One of the evening's themes concerned what might be described as institutional humanity. Modern institutions, including universities, often measure success through efficiency, productivity and quantifiable outcomes, and artificial intelligence promises unprecedented improvements across each of these metrics, yet efficiency alone cannot define educational excellence. Universities remain communities of persons before they are systems of information. Their vocation from a Catholic perspective is not simply to generate graduates but to form thoughtful citizens capable of independent judgement, moral responsibility and intellectual honesty. In this respect, Magnifica Humanitas issues a profound challenge to educators. Its concern is not technological capability itself but whether educational institutions continue to cultivate authentic enquiry amid the challenges of AI. The encyclical therefore invites universities to recover an older understanding of education and of themselves not as a means of credential production but as a medium for the formation of wisdom.

As the meeting drew towards its conclusion, Paul Foley posed a deceptively simple question, "What would it mean to disarm artificial intelligence?" This question transformed the conversation, as the preceding discussion had made it clear that Pope Leo's challenge extended far beyond regulation, governance or technological safeguards. Perhaps to disarm AI is first to disarm ourselves, to resist the temptation to surrender our capacity for independent thought, moral discernment and intellectual responsibility. Artificial intelligence should remain an instrument rather than an authority. As in Jerusalem, technological capabilities must serve human flourishing rather than redefine it. More than sixteen centuries ago, St Augustine observed in *The City of God* that the greatness of a civilisation depends not upon the sophistication of its achievements but upon the ordering of its loves (Augustine, trans. Dyson, 1998). In an age increasingly defined by algorithmic intelligence, Pope Leo XIV's encyclical

reminds us that the decisive question is not whether machines will become more intelligent; it is whether humanity will remain sufficiently wise to direct them. The challenge before education and wider society is therefore not simply to teach ourselves how to use artificial intelligence; it is to ensure that we never lose the desire, or the courage, to think for ourselves.

Similarly, parishioners of St Columbkille's were inspired by Magnifica Humanitas to gather and share in synodality what the encyclical said to them. Meeting in June, they formed a WhatsApp group to share thoughts over the summer break. Each took something different from the encyclical. Some were intrigued to learn more about how Catholic social teaching guides us to live our faith in everyday life. Some wanted to use the encyclical to learn more about our faith. Some were inspired to act in favour of the poor of the world, who are at risk of disproportionate oppression through artificial intelligence. All were greatly encouraged by Pope Leo's reiteration of the dignity of our humanity made in God's image. Each of us has value in our own right, regardless of how productive or intelligent we are. The group looks forward to resuming meetings and growing in faith together, inspired by Magnifica Humanitas.

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Pope Leo's Prayer Intentions

SEPTEMBER

FOR THE CARE OF WATER

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

OCTOBER

FOR MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY

Let us pray that mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.





MPs prepare to vote again on Assisted Suicide

BY ANTHONY HORAN

On 11 September, MPs are expected to vote again on assisted suicide. This is not simply another parliamentary debate. It is a decision that could profoundly affect how our society protects people who are seriously ill, elderly, disabled or vulnerable.

We all want people approaching the end of life to be treated with dignity, compassion and proper care. But assisted suicide is not the answer to suffering, loneliness, fear or inadequate support. The answer is better palliative care, stronger safeguards and a society that tells every person: your life matters, you are not a burden, and you will not be abandoned.

The proposals now returning to Westminster remain deeply unsafe. They would allow assisted suicide to be raised with vulnerable patients, including those who have not asked for it. That creates a real risk of pressure, subtle coercion or a sense that choosing death is expected. Concerns have also been raised about people with hidden disabilities, eating disorders or complex medical conditions being inadequately protected. Once the principle is accepted, there is a serious danger that assisted suicide could come to be seen as a cheaper or easier alternative to high-quality care. Hospices and Care homes cannot opt out of providing assisted suicide. Imagine what that would mean: our Catholic care homes and hospices facing closure if they do not agree to offer assisted suicide.

It is reported that the sponsor is also prepared to ask Parliament to use legislation never before used to get a private members' bill on the statute book and even bypass the normal scrutiny that would be expected for a bill of this gravity.

Before your MP votes, please make sure they hear from you. A short email matters. A personal letter can have even greater impact. A respectful meeting, especially where you can explain your concerns or share personal experience, would be even better, if you are able.

Please contact your MP today and urge them to vote no. Even if they voted against it last time, we still need you to contact them and ask them to defend vulnerable people and focus on fixing care, not legalising assisted suicide. Every message is counted. Every voice matters. Yours could make the difference.



To find your MP, visit:

members.parliament.uk/members/commons

Bishop Keenan leads First Pilgrimage of Reparation and Prayer for the Sanctity of Life at Carfin

BY GERALD KERR

The first annual Pilgrimage of Reparation and Prayer for the Sanctity of Life took place at Scotland's Marian Shrine at Carfin on 1st of August, led by Bishop John Keenan, the Bishop responsible for Marriage, Family and Life.

Catholics from all parts of Scotland and further afield were joined with pilgrims at England's Marian Shrine in Walsingham to make reparation for the sins against life; to intercede for a change of heart across every part of society, and to refresh themselves in the peace and beauty of the Shrine.

The Pilgrimage consisted of Holy Mass followed by Stations of the Cross, offering reparation in union with the Passion of Our Lord. Pilgrims were blessed to be able to recite the rosary alongside the miraculous image of the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of unborn children. The pilgrimage closed by praying the Litany of Life and Benediction by Bishop Keenan.

In Bishop Keenan's homily he spoke powerfully of the necessity of prayer to counter a culture of death and how our Christian beliefs, especially on Pro-Life, are not only vilified, they are even criminalised. Currently, in Scotland, we are facing the real risk of a law being passed to allow abortion up to birth for any reason, whilst Westminster recently decriminalised the act of abortion by the baby's mother. And despite assisted suicide legislation failing to be passed in both Parliaments this year, in a matter of weeks another attempt will be made to legalise assisted suicide at Westminster. He urged us all to be brave and resilient and be prepared to stand up for our beliefs to reverse the culture of death in our society and "one last sprint so that we can do away with this terrible threat that assisted suicide poses to the elderly, the vulnerable and the disabled so that they can be free to live their lives without fear and in peace."

At the end of Mass, Bishop Keenan invited a local Pro-Life volunteer to speak to the congregation about the current campaign against assisted suicide. He urged everyone to keep praying, especially to Our Lady of Guadalupe, to help defeat this bill. Pilgrims were also encouraged to lobby their MPs.

Honour Our Lady this October at Carfin Grotto

This October, you are invited to mark the month of the Most Holy Rosary at Carfin Grotto, the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes.

As in previous years, the Holy Rosary will be prayed every evening throughout October at 8.00pm at the Grotto of Massabielle.

The Rosary will, for the most part, be led by senior pupils from secondary schools from across the Diocese and further afield.

Everyone is warmly invited to come and pray together, find peace and spend time in prayer at this beautiful Marian shrine, giving honour to Our Blessed Lady in this special Marian month.



To keep up to date with events taking place at Carfin Grotto, visit:
www.carfingrotto.org



Could You Be a Voice for the Suffering Church?

BY PETER DIAMOND

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is seeking committed Catholics across Motherwell Diocese to become Parish Appealers. The Pontifical Foundation, which is based in Motherwell, is hoping to expand its team and find people who can share the stories of persecuted and suffering Christians and inspire parish communities across the diocese to respond with prayer and support.

Every day, millions of Christians face discrimination, violence and oppression because of their faith. More than 380 million Christians worldwide experience high levels of persecution and discrimination, making the need for support greater than ever.

With Christian persecution increasing worldwide, ACN is seeking to expand its presence and profile across Scotland. Successful applicants will be self-employed individuals who help connect parishes with the wider mission of supporting the Church through ACN.

William More, Head of ACN (UK) in Scotland, said: "We are looking for people with a heart for persecuted and suffering Christians and a desire to make a difference.

"Parish Appealers give a voice to Christians who often cannot speak freely for themselves. Their witness helps build solidarity between parish communities in Scotland and our brothers and sisters overseas who face persecution, poverty and conflict.

"It is a rewarding opportunity that combines faith, service and advocacy, and we would be delighted to hear from anyone who feels called to become involved. Our Parish Appealers are the bridge between parishes in Scotland and the people we serve."

The role is ideal for practising Catholics who enjoy engaging with people, have confidence in public speaking and are passionate about the Church's mission. Full training, presentation materials and ongoing support are provided. The position is self-employed and remunerated, with expenses covered, and involves attending weekend Masses to deliver appeals.

As challenges facing Christian communities continue to grow around the world, the Church needs men and women willing to speak on behalf of those whose voices are too often ignored.



For more information:

visit www.acnuk.org/jobs, call 01698 337 470
or email scotland@acnuk.org.



Marking the Season of Creation by going Fairtrade

BY MIRIAM MCKERNAN

Inspired by Eileen McQuade's article on ethical purchasing in June Fontes, our SCIAF group in St Columbkille's is planning to mark the Season of Creation (September 1-October 4) and FairTrade Fortnight (September 21-October 4).

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with God, our Creator, through celebration, conversion and commitment. The theme for 2026 is "Living Waters". Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that God would give her living water (John 4:10). As Christians, we value living water both spiritually and physically.

St Paul, writing to the Romans, said that "The whole of Creation is eagerly waiting for God." Fairtrade is one way we can support Creation. We can buy products from workers who receive a decent wage and working conditions, respecting their dignity as humans made in God's image. Fairtrade minimises damage to the environment through restricted use of pesticides such as DDT and responsible use of precious water.

We aim to raise the profile of Fairtrade with a raffle of Fairtrade hampers in the parish. Our raffle proceeds will support the provision of water to a village through SCIAF's programme, bringing water to people deprived of this source of life.

We're looking at ways of increasing our use of Fair Trade tea, coffee and sugar at home and in our cafes. We're also reducing our air miles by using locally roasted coffee and sourcing baked goods from local bakers using local delivery businesses.

Elsewhere, the Diocese is already buying its gas and electricity from green sources, and parishes are moving towards the easily accessible Fairtrade certification.



It is good to hear of the plans of St Columbkille's SCIAF Group to mark the Season of Creation, and the encouragement offered to the Diocese and Parishes to obtain Fairtrade certification.

It seems to me to be a worthwhile endeavour and something we can all participate in as a sign of our care for creation and a fair deal for workers in providing us with tea, coffee, and sugar.

BISHOP JOSEPH TOAL

SEASON OF CREATION CONFERENCE 2026

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2026
10AM – 3PM



EYRE HALL
ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW OFFICES
CLYDE STREET, GLASGOW, G1 4JY



REGISTER NOW

bit.ly/SeasonofCreation26



Season of Creation

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



GUEST SPEAKER

Lorna Gold

Executive Director,
Laudato Si' Movement

The quietest baby clinic in the world?

BY CLAIRE COOK

My 'babies' Jamie and Katie are now 25 and 22, but I remember their early days like it was yesterday. Now working for SCIAF, my mind often wanders back to those days, particularly when my work relates to children in the countries we serve.

When they were very young, they would get weighed regularly at the 'baby clinic' where my sister Jacqueline worked as a health visitor – and every week I would bounce out the door, proud as punch that they had gained weight and I had made that happen. I would head straight to my parents' house for lunch and to share my news.

I also remember their 'Red Books' and Jamie being on the 97th percentile for his height. "This boy will be over 6-foot-tall one day," they said. Well, he's only 5' 10", but I did my best!

Fast forward those 25 years, and I have the privilege to work for SCIAF. My colleague Jonathan has just returned from Malawi, which is facing a food crisis, and is giving the staff an update on his trip.

He tells us of a baby clinic in Nsanje, and what strikes me is he says it was eerily quiet. That's not how baby clinics should sound. They should be bustling, loud places with healthy babies screaming out their lungs for their next feed, and mothers chatting away. And right there and then I am transported back and left thinking how fortunate my journey into motherhood was.

These babies are too weak to scream, and the mums are too weak to breastfeed their babies. Some little ones are barely clinging to life. The mums patiently wait for their child to be weighed and measured. A tape is wrapped around their tiny arms to



gauge how far the malnourishment has progressed. Measure green and they are deemed safe for now. Yellow means they are on the brink. Red? Red means danger but brings hope too.

For those with the frailest babies measuring in the red zone, the hope comes in the form of a fortified corn soya blend (CSB). CSB remains a cornerstone of emergency nutrition programming. Because maize is Malawi's staple food, CSB is culturally familiar and easily prepared as porridge, making it especially suitable for young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and other vulnerable groups during the lean season.

To carry out this life-saving work, SCIAF received funding from the Scottish Government Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund, known as HEF. Scotland has a long and proud friendship with Malawi, spanning right back to the days of David Livingstone – they even named one of their main cities after the man from Blantyre.

So, when you next visit the baby clinic, or hold your grandchild, or get a smile from a baby on the bus, please think of these babies in Malawi, say a prayer, and consider supporting SCIAF's life-saving work.



Support SCIAF at:
www.sciaf.org.uk/donate

Join Young Caritas today for a better world tomorrow

At a time when the world can seem increasingly uncertain, young adults in Scotland are being given an opportunity to put their faith into action.

Young Caritas Scotland, launched by SCIAF, is a new national movement encouraging young Catholics to engage with the international work of the Church and respond to issues such as war, climate change and social injustice.

SCIAF is part of Caritas Internationalis, a global network of Catholic humanitarian organisations working across 200 countries. Young Caritas movements already operate in many countries, and SCIAF is now bringing the initiative to Scotland.

SCIAF's Michael Hamilton said, "Caritas means 'love', and love is at the centre of everything we do for our sisters and brothers around the world. Young Caritas will give young adults the chance to speak up, take action and join a global family working to build a better world."

The initiative has the backing of the team behind the Caritas Cup, which has organised charitable football and netball tournaments across Scotland, including in the Motherwell Diocese.

Adam Costello, a founding member of the Caritas Cup said, "We are so pleased to be involved in the launch of Young Caritas Scotland. It gives young people an opportunity that other places don't – the opportunity to take action."



Find out more at:
www.sciaf.org.uk/youngcaritas



The Scotch College Madrid (1627-1767)

Fr Michael Briody explores the history of the founding of a Scottish seminary in Spain

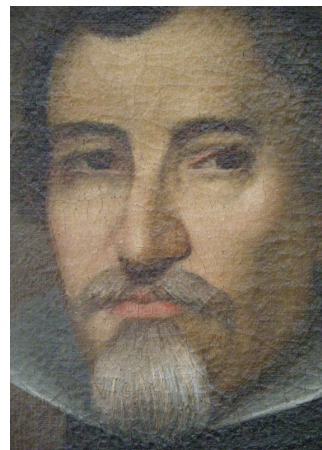
The college was founded by Colonel William Semple and his wife Doña María de Ledesma. That, in itself, was an unusual beginning – a seminary brought into being by a married couple. Semple was born in Craigbet, Lochwinnoch, in 1546. His early years were marked by the gathering storm of the Reformation. The Semples were firm supporters of Mary Queen of Scots and the Catholic cause.

With the passing of the anti-Catholic Penal Laws, he was among many who fled to the continent to continue from there the struggle to build up the Church again in Scotland. He was, successively, a mercenary soldier (where he gained the rank of colonel), a diplomat and an agent provocateur in the service of the King of Spain. In 1588, Philip II sent Semple on a mission to James VI, King of Scots, to woo him with Spanish gold to return to the Faith of his mother. Unfortunately, just after his arrival in Edinburgh, news came of the Spanish Armada (which Semple had advised the King against). He was deprived of his diplomatic status, imprisoned, and was lucky to escape back to the continent.

While Philip II was on the Spanish throne, Semple had the ear of the king. In 1597 he became officially Philip's most trusted advisor on British matters. He was given the title 'Gentilhomme de la boca de Su Majestad', originally someone who waited on the king at table but extended later to advisors. However, his influence at court evaporated when Philip died in September 1598.

On and off over the years that followed, he worked for the Spanish monarchy or pursued projects of his own connected to returning Scotland to its Old Faith. In 1613, after over twenty-five years of service when he had relied on his own resources, he went looking for payment from the Spanish Exchequer only to find it was bankrupt too. The solution was to give him royal property to the value of the money owed him, a sizeable building in central Madrid, about 160 feet square, on Calle Jacometrezo.

Hugh Semple SJ, William's nephew, who had been reconciled to the Church in Glasgow by Saint John Ogilvie, wrote to King Philip IV urging the establishment of a Scots College in Madrid. Colonel Semple and his wife wished to offer the large property for the purpose. Philip was favourable, but Pope Urban VIII thought there were enough Scots Colleges already – Rome, Paris, Douai, and the Bavarian Schottenklöster – but four years later Philip gave the go-ahead, and the Deed of Foundation was drawn up on 10 May 1627 – the 400th anniversary occurs next year.



The Semples put the administration of the college into the hands of the Jesuit Order, a common practice of the time. Their nephew was the first administrator. From the very beginning it was fraught with problems: shortage of money, shortage of students, students transferring to the Jesuits, students having to live in nearby inns, and tensions between Scots and Spanish Jesuits. It was threatened with closure several times and even amalgamation with the English College in Madrid.

Its record was not impressive: in just over one hundred years of operating, only seventy-seven candidates for priesthood came through its doors. Of them, five were ordained priests for Scotland; thirty-two left before ordination; thirty left to join the Jesuits; four joined other orders; three were dismissed; one was "not accepted" upon arrival; and two died as students in the college. The haemorrhaging of the supply of possible future priests for Scotland led to the desire to have seminaries in Scotland and the founding of one at Loch Morar in 1714.

In 1721, William Clerk SJ became rector. By 1724 he had 24 students, but only because he had allowed sons of the aristocracy to become boarders and receive an education, but with no intention of proceeding to priesthood. This was entirely against the Deed of Foundation, but the Scots Jesuits had acquired a reputation for providing a first-class education. They had become well-known because they were working in various educational establishments in the capital. Indeed, King Philip V intended to found a school for sons of the upper-class at Getafe, 13 kilometres south of Madrid, to be run by Scots Jesuits but encountered stiff opposition to the plan, and it never happened.

In 1734, the Jesuits decided that no new students should be accepted and that the revenues should be used to support the Scots College Douai (in present-day north-east France) which the Jesuits also ran. As early as 1636, the Father General of the Jesuit Order in Rome had reminded his confreres in Spain that although the administration of the college had been entrusted to the Jesuit Order, it was not Jesuit property. However, links with Scotland were weak, so increasingly the Jesuits were taking decisions which were not theirs to make.

For some considerable time, antagonism towards the Jesuits had been building up in several European capitals, including Madrid. It was claimed that the Society was becoming too powerful, was meddling in politics and was a danger to the well-being of the nation. Conversely it could be said that the Jesuits were hard-working, therefore successful, thereby wealthy, and as a result some people were jealous and greedy to possess their money and property.

Finally, at the end of February 1767, Charles III signed an order authorising the expulsion of all Jesuits from the kingdom. Charles' Minister of Justice, Manuel de Roda y Arrieta, took on the task with undisguised relish. He referred to it as "the caesarean operation". It was a highly secretive and well-planned manoeuvre. All Jesuit houses throughout Spain were surrounded at midnight, and the inhabitants were given only an hour or two to get ready before being escorted under guard to the seaports and expelled from the country. There is no doubt that the absence of the Jesuits resulted in spiritual, intellectual, cultural and economic impoverishment in many places.

The Madrid college had lurched from one crisis to another. Bishop Maurice Taylor, rector in Valladolid (1965-74), in his seminal work, *The Scots College in Spain* (Valladolid 1971), observed: "It may well be that Semple's foundation of the college was a somewhat irresponsible action, given his lack of resources, the absence of solid prospects for the future and the great debts with which he left the college burdened. ...The long-term prospects were not good. Nevertheless, the college survived...Hindsight, if nothing else, forces us to recognise a providential imprudence in the face of apparently certain calamity."

It was three years later, in 1770, before the Scottish Vicars Apostolic managed to find a priest, John Geddes, to send to Spain to recover the college. He transferred it to the northern city of Valladolid and established it firmly in Spanish Law. Seven years later the Spanish King, Charles III conferred on it the title "Royal". Happily, and by great contrast, the Valladolid college had greater success, providing 338 priests for Scotland in just over 200 years, many of whom have served in our Diocese including up to the present day.

Following in the footsteps of St Cuthbert & St Aidan



About 55 parishioners from across the diocese made their way to Lindisfarne in July, led by Fr Michael Briody. We were blessed with great weather, and celebrated Mass in St Aidan's church in the afternoon. We would like to thank Sr Tessa for her hospitality on the island, and the parishioners of St Cuthbert's, Berwick-upon-Tweed for their welcome in the evening.

PIC: Pilgrims at the statue of St Aidan

Wishaw Parishioners make Pilgrimage to Salamanca



St Aidan's, Wishaw, had another successful pilgrimage to Salamanca in July, led by Fr Kevin Lawrie. About 40 pilgrims made the trip and enjoyed the beautiful city of Salamanca, as well as visiting some neighbouring towns. We went to the charming small town of Ciudad Rodrigo, where we had lunch in the Parador. We had the privilege of celebrating Mass in St Teresa's Convent of the Incarnation in Avila and had Mass in the chapel of the old Scots College in Valladolid, where our late, much-loved parish priest, Canon Joe Clements, was ordained in 1962. Canon Clements bequeathed his chalice to the college in Salamanca, and, appropriately, we used it each day at morning Mass. We would like to thank the Rector of the Scots College, Fr John Carroll, and his staff for making us so welcome and ensuring we had a memorable stay.

PIC: Pilgrims at the Convent of the Incarnation in Avila



PROJECT WELLSPRING

PASTORAL RENEWAL FORUM

MONDAY, 5TH OCTOBER 2026 | 7.00PM

OUR LADY AND ST ANNE'S, HAMILTON



An opportunity to listen, share and help shape the next stage of pastoral renewal across the Diocese.

ALL WELCOME



Marriage Preparation COURSES

Online booking is now open for couples preparing for marriage within the Catholic Church. Courses take place on Saturday from 11.00am to 3.00pm. All courses take place at Saint Augustine's Parish Centre, Coatbridge, ML5 1DQ

The dates for 2026 are as follows:

SEPTEMBER

19

2026

OCTOBER

31

2026

The course is £80 per couple and includes all course materials.

Book your course today at: **www.marriagefamilylife.org**

*Please book only **ONE** day course. For more information, contact Deacon David Harper from the Marriage, Family and Life Agency: info@marriagefamilylife.org*

NOSTRA AETATE CONFERENCE 2026

Walking Together *in* Hope

Why the Catholic Church Engages in Interreligious Dialogue



Saturday, 31st October 2026
Conforti Institute, Coatbridge
Scan the QR Code to register

OPEN HOUSE SCOTLAND

MAGAZINE

Open House is an independent Scottish Catholic journal of **comment, opinion and debate**

Founded by lay Catholics in Dundee in 1990, today it explores the intersection between faith and contemporary life and carries features on religion and current affairs, arts and culture, with editions published online in March, June, September and December.

We welcome submissions from contributors, particularly young writers, and hopes to foster a wide conversation among people of faith in Scotland.

A particular theme is chosen for each issue. The March edition had various essays on Peace-making. This June's edition will reflect on Health and Spirituality.



Join the conversation

Find out more and subscribe at
www.openhousescotland.co.uk



Diocese of Motherwell

Diocesan Music Group



The Diocesan Music Group is made up of musicians and singers from parishes across the Diocese. You do not need to be a trained singer or musician! We are always looking for new members to come and be part of our group and you can be assured of a warm welcome!

What we do:

- Fortnightly rehearsals in Sacred Heart Church, Bellshill
- Provide music for various Diocesan Events and Liturgies
- Support parishes with music for special occasions



in Sacred Heart Church, Bellshill

Contact Kris: 07747867003



Opening the Scriptures

with **Father Thomas Magill**

Sunday Reflections

22th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 30th August

Jeremiah 20.7-9; Psalm 63; Romans 12.1-2; Matthew 16.21-27

As the Lord foretells his death, he teaches that true discipleship demands the Cross. We must die to self, lose our life in order to find it. (Gospel) We must present ourselves to God as living sacrifices, no longer conformed to this world but transformed in Christ. (2nd reading) Even when we kick against this or fail, the Holy Spirit will flame up in our hearts like a burning fire, renewing and restoring us. (1st reading)

23rd Sunday Ordinary Time A - 6th September

Ezekiel 33.7-9; Psalm 95; Romans 13.8-10; Matthew 18.15-20

The Lord wants his Church to enjoy unity and peace. But he understands human nature and how easily we can fracture relationships. Here, he warns of the danger of "escalating" conflict and disagreements, and offers wise advice on how to deal with them. (Gospel) We too should be ready to offer good counsel when needed. (1st reading) but always be led by the supreme command of love. (2nd reading)

24th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 13th September

Sirach 27.30-28.7; Psalm 103; Romans 14.7-9; Matthew 18.21-35

Once again, the Lord gives wise advice regarding living together as a community of faith. Here he deals with forgiveness. (Gospel) The parable he offers is a reflection on what he says elsewhere – "Do unto others as you would have them to you." Forgiving others brings forgiveness to us. (1st reading) and reminds us that all of us together belong to the Lord. (2nd reading)

25th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 20th September

Sirach 27.30-28.7; Psalm 103; Romans 14.7-9; Matthew 18.21-35

Like so many of the Lord's parables, this one challenges us about the way we think and how we presume things go. It shows that God's ways are higher than our ways, his thoughts than our thoughts. (1st reading) It tells of the boundless generosity of God, it teaches that all is grace and that all of us equally are creatures of pure gift. (Gospel) All we are and all we have is given to us not as a reward but out of pure love. Each of us is equally a beloved child of God. Once we truly know this we can live lives worthy of the Gospel of Christ. (2nd reading)

26th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 27th September

Ezekiel 18.25-28; Psalm 25; Philippians 2.1-11; Matthew 21.28-32

Today's parable returns us to the very beginning of the gospel and Jesus' call to repent and to change our ways. He criticises the religious leaders for their lip service and praises the sinners for their trust in him. (Gospel) When we live justly and rightly (1st reading), we put on the mind of Christ and so turn from our old way of doing things to the new life he has won for us. (2nd reading)

27th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 4th October

Isaiah 5.1-7; Psalm 80; Philippians 4.6-9; Matthew 21.33-43

Today's Gospel shows one of the times, perhaps the only time, the religious leaders got it right – they knew that the parable was directed against them! (Gospel) God would bring them to a wretched end. It's important to note that it is they who have brought about the situation in which they find themselves. Through their mind-set and actions they have excluded themselves from the vineyard. God is portrayed in the parable not so much as a judge but as someone who never gives up on his people – he keeps on trying to win them back. God never lets up. Through the parable the religious leaders are confronted with their own choices. By contrast, the kingdom is given to those who have learned, and received, and heard the message of Christ. (2nd reading) They are the ones who have the same mind-set as the Lord. It is they who are God's "pleasant planting." (1st reading)

28th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 11th October

Isaiah 25.6-10a; Psalm 23; Philippians 4.12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22.1-14

This is the last of the series of Jesus' parables we have listened to over the past number of weeks. Like the other parables, this one is a story which shouldn't be understood literally but must be taken seriously. Like the others, it challenges the ways we think. In God's Kingdom, everyone is invited not because of anything they've done or of who they are, but out of God's utter graciousness and love. What differentiates those invited is presence – those who show up and those who don't. God wants us to be present to him, to hear his invitation, and respond with the same graciousness. (Gospel) We fail to be present when we are trapped by and entangled with our own concerns and cares. We fail to be present when like the guest without the wedding garment we are "speechless" in God's

presence unwilling to respond to his loving word with our own grateful words. He is the One who gives us the power to be present and to do all things through him who strengthens us. (2nd reading) And when we do respond, when we make ourselves present, we will be filled to the brim with the goodness and beauty of the banquet prepared for us. (1st reading)

29th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 18th October

Isaiah 45.1, 4-6; Psalm 96; I Thessalonians 1.1-5b; Matthew 22.15-21

The religious leaders are not being honest with Jesus. With their question about taxes, they want to entrap him and denigrate him in the eyes of the people. (Gospel) Jesus' answer about rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's is not quite as simple as it first seems. The Lord is telling us that as people of faith we live in the world and society that we have. Faith in God requires a commitment to and engagement with this broken, imperfect, and confusing world. Faith doesn't absolve us of these responsibilities but requires them of us. It's interesting that this encounter takes place after all the parables Jesus gave. They were about the nature of the Kingdom of God which time and again he emphasised was a present reality. It is a kingdom that comes into being in strange and surprising ways. (1st reading) As his followers, we are charged with building up this Kingdom and, as we do so, we engage in making this earthly world a better place for all. This is the work of faith and labour of love asked of all who are called by the Lord. (2nd reading)



If you would like to remember your loved ones anniversary in Fontes, email media@rcdom.org.uk for more info.

O'HARE



Birthday Remembrance

Precious memories of our parents, David, a cherished husband to the late Esther (nee Murray), much loved Dad and Papa who died February 13, 2002 and whose birthday occurs on September 3; 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 & St Therese, pray for them

Forever in our hearts
Inserted by their loving family.

30th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 25th October

Exodus 22.21-27; Psalm 18; I Thessalonians 1.5c-10; Matthew 22.34-40

In his answer to the question about the great commandment, the Lord recognises that we are complex and complicated beings. Our hearts, minds, and souls at times compete with each other and tempt us to compartmentalize different aspects of ourselves. The Lord is asking us to reflect the utter unity of God who is a communion of love. It is in a wholesome relationship with God, others, and ourselves that we experience the simplicity of the Gospel message and know the compassion of God for us (1st reading) We are being called to an integrity (wholeness) of life which integrates (brings together) all our separate parts in the simplicity of divine love and is made manifest in the joy of the Holy Spirit. (2nd reading)

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NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE 2026

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Sunday, 6 September

3.00pm

Carfin Grotto

Principal Celebrant: Archbishop William Nolan

All are welcome

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