

FONTES

SUMMER 2026 • ISSUE 25 • FREE

‘Mission is the primary responsibility of the church’

From Maintenance to Mission:
Divine Renovation founder,
Father James Mallon, leads open
day in Uddingston

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At the end of May, Pope Leo XIV published his first Encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, reflecting on the need to protect the centrality of the human person in the wake of the rapid technological advances now being achieved, particularly in regard to AI. It is a long letter in which the Holy Father offers a biblical perspective on the danger of humans thinking we can progress without God, while also presenting the development of Catholic Social Teaching from the time of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical , *Rerum Novarum*. He extensively applies the Church's teaching to the issues we now face in what is described as our technologically advanced age. I quote this heartfelt plea from Pope Leo:

"With the heart of a shepherd and a father, I ask everyone to abandon yet another construction of the Tower of Babel and to join forces in building up the common good so that humanity will never lose its beauty and the world once again will come to recognise the human heart is the place where God desires to dwell." (MH 16).

Here in the Diocese we are in a time of celebration at the end of June as a number of priests mark their Golden and Silver Jubilees (*page 14*), and also the Ordination to the Priesthood of Father Kieran Burt which took place on Friday (*full report in the August edition*). Our prayers are very much with

Fr Kieran as he begins his priestly ministry, and we thank God for the priests who have now given 50 and 25 years of service in the Lord's Vineyard here in Motherwell Diocese.

+ Joseph Tool

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

Deadline for submissions - **7th August 2026**

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Bishop's Diary

June

- 21 June** 12noon • Mass at Holy Trinity Church, Lamington, with Confirmation
- 22 June** 5.00pm • Confirmations in St Patrick's, Strathaven
7.00pm • Silver Jubilee Mass for Fr Kenneth O'Brien in St Barbara's Muirhead
- 23 June** 7.00pm • Confirmations at St Francis Xavier, Carfin
- 24 June** 12noon • Mass at the Scottish Parliament
- 26 June** 7.00pm • Silver Jubilee Mass for Bishop Frank Dougan at St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr
- 27 June** 9.30am • Rite of Candidacy for Stephen Kilcoyne in St Anthony's Rutherglen
- 30 June** 2.00pm • Meeting of Diocesan Trustees

July

- 02 July** 7.00pm • Golden Jubilee Mass for Fr Gerard Chromy in St Joseph's Blantyre
- 04/18 July** Masses in the Cathedral and St Luke's
- 06 July** 7.00pm • Silver Jubilee Mass for Fr Stuart Parkes in Sacred Heart Bellshill

August

- 18 Aug** 3.00pm • Deans and Executives of Council of Priests Meeting in Diocesan Office
- 25 Aug** 11.30am • Diocesan Fabric and Planning Committee
7.00pm • Annual Vocations Mass in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell
- 26 Aug** 2.00pm • Diocesan Finance Committee



Pic: Frank Nuttall

Legion of Mary hold annual Acies Mass

BY FRANK NUTTALL

Our Lady of Light Curia of the Legion of Mary in the Motherwell Diocese recently celebrated their annual Acies Mass with the Renewal of Promise.

The annual service was hosted by Our Lady of Lourdes praesidium, East Kilbride, which welcomed Bishop Joseph Toal as main celebrant along with Parish Priest Father Kenneth Campbell, Deacon Joe Dowds and Father Pat Hennessy, Spiritual Director for the Legion of Mary in Motherwell Diocese.

In his homily, Bishop Toal emphasised Our Lady's continual service, humility and presence throughout the life of her son Jesus, at His birth, baptism, Passover, the wedding feast of Cana and His passion and crucifixion. She was a constant and of prime importance in the life of Jesus, and it is right that we offer our devotion to her and seek to emulate her virtues.

Over 100 active and auxiliary legionaries from the diocese attended the service and renewed their promise of service and devotion to our Blessed Mother through the intercession of the Holy Spirit.



Pics: Knights of St Columba

Knights of St Columba gather in Blantyre

The Knights of St Columba Province 16 Motherwell were warmly welcomed by Fr Martin Delaney and the parish community of St John Ogilvie Church, Blantyre, recently, where they attended Mass and carried out the installation of the Provincial and Council Officers.

The ceremony saw the installation of the councils of Carfin 246, Blantyre 490, Coatbridge 520, and Muirhead 525, and the Knights also had the privilege of venerating the relics of St Francis of Assisi, as the parish is a designated place of pilgrimage for the Franciscan Jubilee Year.

A special presentation of £10,000 was made by outgoing GK Brother Robert McInnes on behalf of Council 490 to Father Martin and his parish to support the forthcoming ordination of Brother Kieran Burt.



Pics: Real Colegio de Escoceses, Salamanca

Bishop visits Seminarians in Salamanca

After Easter, Bishop Toal, along with Bishop Frank Dougan of Galloway, made a visit to the Royal Scots College in Salamanca, where they met with seminarians from across Scotland, including from Motherwell Diocese, who are taking part in the propaedeutic period before beginning their formal seminary formation in September.

The Bishops of Scotland have also announced that Fr Stuart Chalmers, a priest of Aberdeen Diocese and currently the Spiritual Director of the college, will take up a new position as Lecturer in Theology at the Fremantle Campus of the University of Notre Dame Australia. Announcing the appointment, the Bishops express their "deep thanks for the years he has given to the seminary in Spain and offer him our deepest congratulations, best wishes and prayers."



L-R: Fr John Carroll, Rector, Bishop Frank Dougan, Fr Stuart Chalmers and Bishop Toal

Fr Logue celebrates 90th Birthday



Congratulations to Father Brian Logue, a retired priest of the Diocese, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday at the Little Sisters of the Poor in Robroyston, where he now resides. We wish him every blessing, good health, and happiness on this special milestone.

A special day in St Dominic's



by CATHERINE BOYLE
It was a joyous day in St Dominic's Craigend recently as their parish Deacon, Rev Stephen Nevans, celebrated his first baptism. Deacon Stephen was ordained last August and baptised Koa on the same day as his brother Kilean celebrated his First Communion.

Fr Montesi recognised for support to Italian community in Scotland

Congratulations to Father Eugenio Montesi SX, a much-loved member of the Xaverian community in Coatbridge, who has been awarded the annual Italian Scotland medal for his decades of care and support of the Italian community.

The charity's Patron, Sir Anton Muscatelli, presented the award to Father Montesi, who was born in Corinaldo in Italy. Father Montesi has ministered in Scotland for many years, after serving in Sierra Leone, and is still working at the grand age of 86.

After receiving the award, Father Montesi said, "Thanks so much to the Italian/Scottish committee; I am proud of all of you and happy to be a member. I was struck by so many and all so happy, smiling people."



Pic: Terry Boyd. L-R: Lady Rita Rae, Fr Montesi and fellow Xaverian, Fr Jim Clarke

Motherwell Pilgrims celebrate 70 Years of Everyday Miracles at HCPT Trust Mass in Lourdes



Bishop Toal, along with a large number of clergy and parishioners from across the Diocese, joined more than 3,000 pilgrims who gathered in Lourdes at Easter as HCPT marked 70 years of its life-changing pilgrimage.

Founded in 1956 by Brother Michael Strode, HCPT began with a simple but transformative vision, that young people should be able to travel to Lourdes with dignity, joy and a true sense of belonging. Today, that vision continues to shape the charity's work, as 3,399 pilgrims gathered this Easter under the theme "Together in Love."

HCPT marked its 70th anniversary in Lourdes with a joyful Trust Mass, reflecting on seven decades of service, belonging and life-changing experiences rooted in the message of Lourdes.

Archbishop Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh and President of HCPT, invited pilgrims to reflect on both the origins of HCPT and the deeper meaning of Lourdes itself.

"We have a lot to be grateful for," the homily reflected, recalling the founding vision of Brother Michael Strode, whose initiative began something that "we've kept going since."

Throughout the week in Lourdes, pilgrims take part in a rich programme including Mass, torchlight processions, and visits to the Grotto, as well as excursions to the mountains. Alongside these moments, it is often the simple, personal encounters that leave the deepest impression.

These are what many from HCPT would describe as "Everyday Miracles", the small but significant moments that continue to define the pilgrimage, 70 years on.

As HCPT celebrates this milestone year, the Trust Mass stands as a moment of thanksgiving, not only for the past 70 years but also for the countless lives impacted through pilgrimage and for the generations still to come.

Taizé in Rutherglen

BY FR STEPHEN REILLY

St Anthony & St Mark's Parish in Rutherglen recently held its annual Taizé Service. Organised by the parish's Justice & Peace Group, this well-attended evening of readings, reflection, prayer and chanting has become a well-established fixture in the parish calendar and attracts a considerable number of members of other Christian denominations.



Diocesan Synod Group

As reported in the Easter Fontes, the Synod now enters the implementation phase, and following a meeting with the faithful in April, the Bishop has chosen the following persons to participate in the Diocesan Synod Group:

- **Fr Gerry Maguiness**
St Bride's, Cambuslang
- **Sr Anne Frances McNamee**
St John Bosco's, Easterhouse
- **Ann Marie Dickson**
St Columbkille's, Rutherglen
- **Anne Marie MacEwan**
St Columbkille's, Rutherglen
- **Lawrence Toner**
St Bernadette's, Motherwell
- **Helen Martin**
St Leonard's, East Kilbride
- **Eileen McQuade**
Ss Ninian & Cuthbert's, H'ton
- **Adam Costello**
Most Blessed Trinity, Coatdyke
- **Gerry McDonald**
Cathedral Parish, Motherwell
- **Matthew Munro**
Cathedral Parish, Motherwell
- **Mary Maguire**
St Ignatius' Wishaw

‘Mission is not optional: it is the very identity of the church’

Stephen Breen shares his experiences of the recent open day at St John the Baptist’s to share their experience of Divine Renovation

More than 130 people from across Scotland and overseas gathered at St John the Baptist Church in Uddingston as the parish hosted an open day to share their experiences of trying to implement the Divine Renovation programme, which is designed to revitalise the parish.

The keynote speaker was Father James Mallon, the author of the book ‘Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission,’ who travelled from Canada for the event on 25 April.

People from almost 40 Scottish parishes – representing seven of the eight dioceses of Scotland – attended the all-day event, as did 11 clergy, including Archbishop William Nolan, Bishop Joseph Toal, Bishop Frank Dougan of Galloway and Bishop John Keenan.

The St John the Baptist leadership team of Father Ivan Boyle, Deacon Joe Gallagher, Susan Henderson, Helen Tiffney, Raymond Kawase and Pat Connor held a series of workshops on Evangelisation, Youth and Family, and Music and Liturgy. The day ended with a session on the Holy Spirit, led by the Divine Renovation team, and Mass led by Bishop Toal, which was concelebrated by six other priests.

Father Ivan explained that after the Diocese of Motherwell launched Project Wellspring two and a half years ago to address decline in church attendance, Bishop Toal asked a coalition of priests to volunteer for renewal projects. Father Ivan read Father Mallon’s book on how he had rejuvenated parishes in North America, which included running Alpha courses, and decided a



We are a ‘sent’ missionary church, sent to make disciples of God.

FATHER JAMES MALLON

series of Alpha courses would be the best way to launch the Divine Renovation programme in St John’s. Almost 70 people attended the first Alpha course, and there have been another four since.

Father Ivan said, “We were trying to see where the Holy Spirit was taking us. Renewal is not our job – it is being open to where God leads us through the Holy Spirit.”

Helen said the Alpha courses led to a “wave of faith formation” as parishioners wanted to know more about their faith, scriptures and the Bible. On the first Alpha course, people were asked what talents and interests they have and encouraged to volunteer for groups. The parish now has 150 volunteers and 34 groups. As a result of Alpha, “There are lots of fruits of the Holy Spirit blossoming, and there is more to come,” added Helen.



We were trying to see where the Holy Spirit was taking us. Renewal is not our job - it is being open to where God leads us through the Holy Spirit

FATHER IVAN BOYLE

In a workshop on evangelisation, Father Ivan said our mission is not survival, but rather it is to communicate God's love for the world. He quoted Father George Elsbett of Vienna: "This parish no longer exists for those sitting comfortably in these pews. It exists for those who are not yet here, who do not know Jesus and do not know the joys of a vibrant community."

In his keynote address, Father Mallon said he had inherited a new parish comprised of four dying parishes, where Mass attendance had fallen from 1862 in 2001 to just 300 in 2020. The faith was no longer being passed on as it had been in previous generations, and many priests were expecting to carry on doing the same things and get different results.

He said we needed to address the barriers which were stopping people coming to church. Many people were hungering for God's love, and it was the mission of the church to cast out into deep waters and reach them.

"Mission is the primary responsibility of the church," he said. "We are a 'sent' missionary church, sent to make disciples of God. Mission is not optional: it is the very identity of the church."

He said the Divine Renovation ministry which he launched was based on three keys: the power of the Holy Spirit; the primacy of evangelisation; and the best of leadership. For a parish to move from maintenance to mission, it was essential to unleash the talents of people.

Feedback from those who attended the Open Day was overwhelmingly positive. Comments included "The whole day was very uplifting, and I couldn't see any improvement areas." "Thanks to all involved, particularly the lovely people of St John's, who made us all so welcome" and "The atmosphere was wonderful, and the hosting team were excellent. The opportunity to listen to Father James was excellent, as was the opportunity to make some wider connections."



Pic: All the Daises Photography





'The best job in the world'

Priests of the Diocese reflect on the vocation of priesthood as they celebrate special anniversaries of their ordinations

This year, a number of our priests are celebrating special anniversaries of their priestly ordination. Together, they have given 215 years of ministry to Motherwell Diocese.

GOLDEN JUBILEE

Marking five decades of priesthood this year, **Father Thomas Magill** reflects on a life dedicated to faith, education, and parish ministry. His journey began in 1964 at the minor seminary in Langbank, before continuing his studies at Blairs College and the Scots College in Rome. In 1976, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Francis Thomson at St Mary's in Hamilton.

Much of his priesthood has been spent teaching in seminaries, in both Rome and Scotland, as well as at the University of Glasgow. "It gave me great pleasure to be the first Catholic priest since the Reformation to be appointed as a lecturer in the university's Faculty of Divinity," Father Magill recalls.

As well as his academic work, Father Magill served faithfully as Parish Priest of St Dominic's in Craigend with St Mungo's in Garthamlock, before later serving at St Athanasius' in Carluke, from where he retired in 2024.

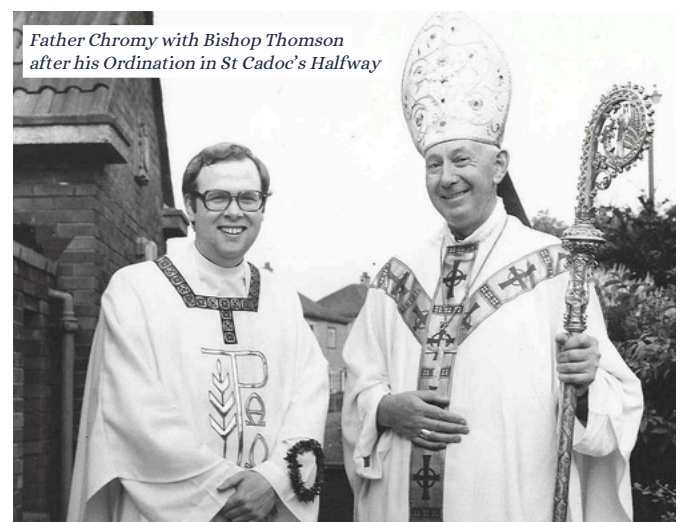
Reflecting on the highlights of his ministry, Father Magill said, "Celebrating the Eucharist in the bosom of a parish community must be the great highlight of priestly ministry - for me, 'opening the scriptures and breaking the bread' remain the heart of my life and ministry. Living as part of a community of faith, teaching and learning together, growing in faith and humanity, sharing Christ and his Good News with others, these are the great gifts of our Catholic life."

As he marks this significant milestone, Father Magill also expresses gratitude for the many people who have accompanied him throughout his vocation. He

credits their encouragement, wisdom, and selfless love for sustaining him over the years. "I do believe that being a parish priest must rank as one of the best jobs in the world." Father Magill said, "There is always the Cross to bear, but through it God's grace gives so much fulfilment, satisfaction, and joy."

Also celebrating fifty years of priestly ministry is **Father Gerard Chromy**, currently Assistant Priest of St Joseph's, Blantyre. Raised in Halfway, he attended St Charles' Primary, Newton, before moving to St Cadoc's Primary, Halfway, later continuing his education at Holy Cross High School in Hamilton. After completing his sixth year, he entered St Peter's College, Cardross, and six years later, on 2 July 1976, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Francis Thomson in St Cadoc's Church, Halfway.

Reflecting on the beginnings of his vocation, Father Chromy recalls the influence of parish life at St Cadoc's, where he was an altar server and reader, and the encouragement he received during his school years. Visits from diocesan vocation promoters and religious congregations during his time at school



Father Chromy with Bishop Thomson after his Ordination in St Cadoc's Halfway

were what "sowed the seed in my mind of the possibility of becoming a priest" Father Chromy reflected.

"I thought about it for a long time and then spoke with Father Martin O'Keefe, who was a priest in the parish, and he listened to my thoughts and ideas and then advised me to apply to the diocese to study for the priesthood," said Father Chromy.

Over the years, Father Chromy has served in a number of parishes across the diocese, including St Patrick's, Shieldmuir; St Bride's, Bothwell; the Cathedral in Motherwell; and St Joseph's, Blantyre, as Assistant Priest and as Parish Priest of St Patrick's, Shieldmuir; St Margaret's, Airdrie; and St Leonard's, East Kilbride, as well as Administrator of the Cathedral in Motherwell.

Alongside parish ministry, Father Chromy has undertaken several important diocesan responsibilities, serving as Spiritual Director for the Diocesan Society of St Vincent de Paul, playing a role in establishing the Permanent Diaconate within the diocese as well as serving as a judge with the Inter-Diocesan Marriage Tribunal and as Vicar General.

Looking back over five decades of priesthood, Father Chromy said: "I am grateful for the Lord's presence and guidance over the years and for the countless blessings received from all the people I have been privileged to come to know over the past 50 years and who have allowed me to share their lives and have witnessed the depth of their own faith and the high value they place on the priestly ministry."

RUBY JUBILEE

Earlier this year, **Father Colin Hughes**, parish priest of St Bride's Bothwell celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination. Born and raised in Shotts, Father Hughes studied at St Aidan's High, Wishaw and Notre Dame College of Education before studying for priesthood at Drygrange. He was ordained to the priesthood in St Patrick's Shotts on 14th March 1986 by Bishop Devine.

Since ordination, Father Hughes has served a number of parishes, including Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride; St Patrick's, Coatbridge; St Francis Xavier's, Carfin; Holy Trinity and All Saints', Coatdyke; St Stephen's, Coatbridge; and now St Bride's, Bothwell.

He has also served as a high school Chaplain, at present to Holy Cross, Hamilton and as Vicar Episcopal for Education.

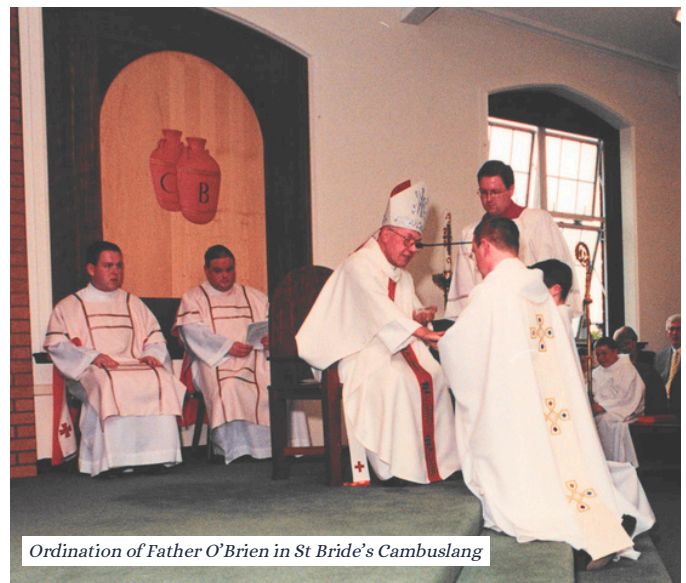
Speaking at his Mass of Thanksgiving, Fr Hughes reminded of the need to pray for priests: "The priest is not an island; the priest needs people to support him, to nourish him with your kindness and example. Pray for priests, they need your prayers."

SILVER JUBILEE

The first of three priests ordained for the Diocese. In 2001, **Father Kenneth O'Brien** celebrates twenty-five years of priestly ministry this year. Educated at Fernhill Primary School and later St Bride's Primary in Cambuslang, he attended Trinity High School in Rutherglen before continuing his studies at Salesian School in Chertsey, Surrey. In 1995 he entered Scotus Seminary in Bearsden, where he remained until his ordination to the priesthood on 22 June 2001, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, in St Bride's Church, Cambuslang, by Bishop Joseph Devine.

Father Kenny describes his vocation story as fairly traditional. "If Blairs College had still been open, I would have been there, but it closed 3 years before I would have gone," he recalls. While no junior seminary existed, Father Kenny became involved with Vocations Scotland and the Diocese of Motherwell Vocations Schemes for those of High School age who were thinking about a vocation to Priesthood. These were led by the great Fr. Angus McLean and Fr. Paul Morton.

By his final year of high school, despite then living in the south of England, he applied to study for the Diocese of Motherwell. The process was overseen by the Diocesan Vocations Director, Father Daniel Rooney, the beginning of a long friendship.



Ordination of Father O'Brien in St Bride's Cambuslang

During his 25 years of ministry, Father Kenny has served as Assistant Priest of St Margaret's, Airdrie; St Augustine's, Coatbridge; and Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride. He has also served as Parish Priest of St Patrick's, Strathaven and St Dominic's, Craigend. Today he serves as Parish Priest of St Joseph's, Stepps and St Barbara's, Murihead.

As well as having served for many years as a high school Chaplain and Diocesan Master of Ceremonies,

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Fr O'Brien celebrates Mass in St Barbara's with his Ordination Chasuble and Chalice

Father Kenny has undertaken significant work within the Scottish Catholic Interdiocesan Tribunal, serving as an Instructor, Judge, and currently as Vice Officialis. He also undertook further academic studies at St Paul's University in Ottawa, Canada, earning both a Master of Canon Law from the University of Ottawa and a Licentiate in Canon Law from St Paul's University.

Asked to identify highlights from twenty-five years of priesthood, Father Kenny finds it difficult to point to any single particular highlight, instead he said: "The reality is the highlight is working with people in parishes and in other areas of people's lives, either through the schools or tribunal or through the many pilgrimages I have been on. It is all these places where together we make up the family of God. It is usually in the little moments we find God and they are the things that would be the highlight of my years of ministry."

Recalling his ordination day, Father Kenny remembers many moments, in particular when he answered the door to Bishop Devine who had forgotten his name and so referred to him as 'the man himself'. He also recalls the ordination being so busy he wasn't able to get into his own reception and so sent Stuart Parkes to get him a fish supper instead! Yet amid the busyness and chaos, Father Kenny remembers a profound sense of calmness during the ordination liturgy itself, particularly during the laying on of hands, when he experienced a deep closeness to the Holy Spirit.

Also celebrating 25 years of ministry is **Bishop Frank Dougan**. Having grown up in Wishaw, he attended St Aidan's High and studied for the priesthood at the Pontifical Scots College in Rome. On 27th June 2001, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph Devine in St Aidan's, Wishaw.

After ordination, Father Frank served as Assistant Priest of Our Lady and St Anne's, Hamilton, before being appointed Vice Rector of the Scots College Rome. On his return to the Diocese, he served as Parish Priest of St Mark's and then also St Anthony's, Rutherglen, before moving to Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride.

In 2023, after 22 years of ministry in Motherwell Diocese, Father Frank was appointed by Pope Francis as the Bishop of Galloway and his Episcopal Ordination

took place on 9th March 2024 in St Peter's-in-Chains in Ardrossan.

The third of the priests ordained in 2001 was **Father Stuart Parkes**. Raised in Halfway, he attended St Cadoc's Primary School before moving on to Trinity High School in Rutherglen. Following his school years, he entered Scotus College in Bearsden in 1995 and was ordained to the priesthood on 6 July 2001 in St Cadoc's Church, Halfway, by Bishop Joseph Devine.

Looking back on the beginnings of his vocation, Father Stuart recalls that involvement in parish life, as an altar server and reader, and the example of priests in the parish, especially Monsignor Tom Connolly, proved a lasting inspiration. During his secondary school years, he began to seriously consider priesthood and became involved with both the Vocations Scotland Scheme and the Diocesan Vocations programme, led by Father Paul Morton.

Following ordination, Father Stuart has served as Assistant Priest at St Joseph's, Blantyre, and St Columbkille's, Rutherglen, before briefly serving as Administrator of St Mark's, Rutherglen. He later became Parish Priest of St Edward's, Airdrie, and Our Lady of Lourdes in East Kilbride. Between 2017 and 2020 he served as Vice Rector of the Pontifical Scots College in Rome before returning to diocesan ministry as Parish Priest of Sacred Heart and St Gerard's, where he continues to serve today.

Alongside parish appointments, Father Stuart has served as Chaplain to several high schools, including his current appointment, Cardinal Newman High, Bellshill. The role he is most familiar for across the Diocese is as Diocesan Master of Ceremonies, which he has served since 2002, first as Assistant then as Principal MC from 2008-2017 and 2022-present.



Bishop Joseph Devine with Father Parkes after the Ordination Mass

Reflecting on the last 25 years, Father Stuart said: "There have been many wonderful experiences over the last 25 years, but Lourdes has been a particularly special place for me over these years, especially going with HCPT and other pilgrimages with young people."



Father Parkes carries the Blessed Sacrament in Lourdes

"On a recent pilgrimage with Cardinal Newman High School," Father Stuart recalls, "our group was asked to provide pupils to fulfil the ministries at the Blessed Sacrament Procession. This was a fabulous opportunity for our pupils to participate in the procession in a special way. I always enjoy seeing pilgrimage members taking on the different roles at these large celebrations and hearing about the prayerful experience that it provides. I also found myself with a role as well when the presider did not arrive, and I was asked to preside at the Blessed Sacrament procession. It was a powerful spiritual and prayerful experience to lead the procession carrying the Blessed Sacrament. The pilgrimage was also a great opportunity to share my love of the story of Lourdes, and it was great to see the students engaging with the message throughout the week."

Thinking back to when it all began, Father Stuart says, "My ordination doesn't seem that long ago, although the pictures tell otherwise. I have so many wonderful memories of the last 25 years, the parishes, places, events and the people with whom I have been privileged to share so much".

Father Stuart concluded: "The prophet Micah describes what God asks of us as 'acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with God.' I hope in some measure I have been able to achieve these 3 things as a priest in the ministries in which I have served."

THINKING OF PRIESTHOOD TODAY?

As they celebrate significant milestones in their priestly ministry, the jubilarians are also eager to encourage a new generation to consider where God may be calling them.

Father Gerry Chromy encourages anyone considering a priestly vocation to "think seriously about the possibility, pray for guidance, and seek out a priest with whom you can share thoughts and ideas, ask questions and reflect on what is shared", he said. "Get information about vocations evenings in the diocese and go along,

join a Young Adult Group in the parish or diocese, volunteer in your parish and, if at university, go along to the Catholic Chaplaincy, join HCPT or the SSVF and get some experience of supporting and helping others. These experiences will hopefully offer help with discerning the Lord's call."

Reflecting on his own twenty-five years of ministry, Father Kenny O'Brien said, "I have loved 25 years of priesthood. It has not always been plain sailing, but no walk of life is. I also loved seminary life. I never thought I would survive seminary, but I lived to tell the tale. If you think God is calling you, answer the call with a yes. God can work out the rest."

Drawing inspiration from a familiar saint, Father Stuart Parkes said: "St John Henry Newman speaks of God having created us for some definite service. If that service is as a priest, trust that the Lord will provide the grace for you to respond and answer the call. He will fill you with the Holy Spirit and the gifts needed for the ministry entrusted to you. In responding to the invitation to serve we will find the joy and fulfilment of life in God's service and doing his will."

Looking back over decades of ministry, each priest speaks not only of the blessings and challenges of his vocation but also of the deep sense of purpose, fulfilment and joy that comes from serving God and His people. Together, their witness stands as a powerful reminder that vocations continue to flourish when hearts remain open to God's call.

Each of the jubilarians will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving to mark their anniversaries:



Father Kenneth O'Brien

Monday 22nd June • 7.00pm
St Barbara's Church, Muirhead



Father Thomas Magill

Friday 26th June • 7.00pm
St Athanasius' Church, Carluke



Bishop Frank Dougan

Friday 26th June • 7.00pm
St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr



Father Gerard Chromy

Thursday 2nd July • 7.00pm
St Joseph's Church, Blantyre



Father Stuart Parkes

Monday 6th July • 7.00pm
Sacred Heart Church, Bellshill

Motherwell Reflects on Scotland's Diocesan Boundaries Consultation



The Bishops' Conference of Scotland's consultation on diocesan boundaries has prompted thoughtful discussion across the country about how the Church can best organise itself to serve its mission in the years ahead. Within the Diocese of Motherwell, clergy and laity alike have engaged seriously with the process, reflecting on the opportunities and challenges that any future changes might bring.

Three recent consultation gatherings—the Clergy Assembly, the Council of Priests, and an Open Meeting involving members of the faithful—revealed a strong sense of admiration in the Diocese of Motherwell and a shared conviction that any consideration of structural change must begin with mission rather than administration.

A STRONG DIOCESAN IDENTITY

Participants highlighted Motherwell's strengths, including its compact geography, healthy vocations, effective structures, and strong local identity. While some felt Scotland's eight dioceses could be reviewed, most were cautious about mergers, fearing they could weaken parish life, local traditions, clergy fraternity, and the bishop's pastoral presence.

MISSION FIRST

A consistent theme was that any discussion about boundaries should begin with a clear vision for mission. Priests stressed the need for reliable data on parish populations, Mass attendance, clergy numbers, and future needs before considering major changes. Many felt restructuring should only be pursued if it clearly strengthens evangelisation and pastoral care.

COLLABORATION OVER MERGERS

There was broad support for greater collaboration between dioceses, including shared safeguarding services, formation programmes, specialist expertise, property management, and clergy support. However, participants emphasised that local identity, resources, and decision-making should be protected.

VOICES FROM THE FAITHFUL

Parishioners spoke positively about diocesan initiatives such as youth ministry, Lourdes pilgrimages, and activities at Carfin. Most valued being part of Motherwell Diocese and saw no immediate need for change. While open to sharing resources and expertise,

many felt they lacked sufficient information about other dioceses to assess the benefits or drawbacks of mergers. At the Open Meeting on 25 May, parishioners spoke positively about the many examples of mission already taking place throughout the diocese. Youth ministry, pilgrimages to Lourdes, and activities centred on Carfin were among the initiatives highlighted as signs of a vibrant diocesan life.

Most attendees expressed a strong sense of belonging to Motherwell Diocese and saw no immediate need for structural change. At the same time, many acknowledged that they had limited knowledge of the wider diocesan landscape in Scotland and therefore felt unable to assess fully the merits or drawbacks of possible mergers.

Participants generally welcomed the idea of sharing expertise and resources if it could benefit the Church as a whole. However, there was a strong consensus that any future discussions would require greater transparency and access to information about the realities facing dioceses across Scotland.

LOOKING AHEAD

Taken together, the consultation responses reveal a consistent message. There is broad support for exploring closer collaboration, sharing resources, and planning responsibly for the future. Equally, there is significant caution about pursuing diocesan mergers without clear evidence that such changes would strengthen evangelisation, pastoral care, and the Church's mission.

Across clergy and laity alike, there is a strong desire for decisions to be guided by prayerful discernment, reliable data, and a clear missionary vision. For many within Motherwell Diocese, what already works well should not be lost lightly. Any future restructuring, they argue, must demonstrate tangible benefits for the people of God and respect the traditions, relationships, and local identity that have helped shape the life of the Church in Scotland.

As the Bishops' Conference continues its consultation, the voices from Motherwell offer a valuable reminder that effective structures are important—but only insofar as they enable the Church to proclaim the Gospel and serve its communities more fruitfully.



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St John's Primary, Blackwood



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St Mary's Primary, Cleland



St Monica's Primary, Coatbridge



St Patrick's Primary, Coatbridge

ommunions 2026



St Leonard's Primary, East Kilbride



St Cadoc's Primary, Halfway



Our Lady & St Anne's Primary, Hamilton



Holy Family Primary, Mossend



St Patrick's Primary, Shotts



St Anthony's Primary, Rutherglen



St Mark's Primary, Rutherglen

Celebrating 20 years of faith and learning

Kris Thomas, Head Teacher of St John Paul II Primary, looks back as the Viewpark school celebrates 20 year since opening.



The school community of St. John Paul II Primary School in Viewpark has been celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the official opening of the school in 2006. The school was built as part of North Lanarkshire's Education 2010 PPP Project. It was one of the first schools to be opened with around 20 or so being opened in total. Many other schools in the Diocese were part of this.

The school came to be following the amalgamation of St Columba's and St Gabriel's Primary Schools, which both served the parishes within the Viewpark, Tannochside and Birkenshaw areas of North Lanarkshire.

At the point of opening, the then Head Teacher of St Columba's, Marian Di Nardo had the responsibility for amalgamating the schools in a way which would quickly establish this new school as the new heart of Catholic Education in the area. She did this with such professionalism and care! The school was being named not long after the death of Pope St John Paul II and the community quickly agreed that there was no better tribute to pay and no better Patron to be adopted for the school. His Coat of Arms is reflected in the school badge.

Mrs Di Nardo was succeeded by Mrs Margaret Brady, who served the school community with a huge amount of pride, and she too has left her own mark on the school's history. Margaret was succeeded by me as Head Teacher – a role which I have carried out since 2017, having previously spent nine years in Viewpark!

Mrs Brady always described the children as being the beating heart of the school community, and to this day, that is still the case.

There are too many highlights and achievements to mention in our 20-year history. However, St John Paul II

has always been known as a special place. It is a place where people comment on the tangible ethos and the feeling as soon as you walk over the threshold. It is a place where the children and our families come first. It is a place of inclusion, learning, joy and (most importantly) faith.

As part of our celebrations, we were delighted to welcome Bishop Toal, along with our wonderful school chaplains, Father Morris (St Gabriel's) and Father Bogan (St Columba's). The Bishop was the Principal Celebrant for our Mass of Thanksgiving, during which he invoked the intercession of our beloved patron, St John Paul II. He encouraged us to continue to be a community built on faith. The Bishop also blessed some beautiful Icons of St. John Paul II and Crucifixes, one for every class. The Mass was a beautiful way to bring our whole school community together, including former members of staff, former pupils, families, parishioners and invited guests. The children made this a celebration to remember. Our school hall was filled with song and prayer, in praise and thanksgiving to God for 20 years of faith and learning.

Past and present staff, parents and pupils have contributed to an Anniversary Movie which can be viewed on the school YouTube page. It is a wonderful testimony to the first 20 years of our school and a toast to the future of this remarkable place.

Being the Head Teacher of St John Paul II is a huge honour and privilege. I am so proud when I say the name of our school, not just because of our patron but because of the wonderful people with whom I work and serve in the community. Our children, staff and community make our school the happy place that it is, and I look forward to the future with all of them in mind!

St John Paul II, pray for us!



Signing our Faith:

Motherwell Diocese Hosts National Makaton Course
by **Claire O'Neill**



The Diocese of Motherwell recently welcomed participants from across Scotland to take part in a Makaton “Know and Grow” Course, a project that continues the Church’s mission of fostering inclusion, understanding, and shared worship.

Hosted by the Diocesan Religious Education Office and supported by the Scottish Catholic Education Service, the five-week course was led by Clare Preston, a teacher from Drumpark Primary School. Clare completed her Makaton Trainer qualification last year on behalf of the Diocese, with a particular focus on faith signs.

The course was opened to neighbouring dioceses, and more than 20 participants travelled from the Diocese of Galloway, the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, and the Archdiocese of Glasgow, as well as from within our own Diocese of Motherwell. Those taking part brought a rich range of experience, including teachers and support staff from ASN schools and units, SPRED volunteers, and staff working in mainstream Catholic schools seeking to make prayer and liturgy more accessible to all.

A particular highlight of the programme was its conclusion: a beautiful Prayer Service led by Fr Kevin Lawrie, during which participants were able to use the signs they had learned as part of their shared worship and were encouraged to replicate this in their own setting.

Each participant received a certificate recognising their completion of the course, and plans are already underway for a recall day later in the year. This follow-up gathering will provide an opportunity to share additional resources, deepen learning, and continue developing ways to support prayer and liturgy for children, young people, and adults who benefit from Makaton.

Pupils have unforgettable experience in Lourdes



Young parishioners from St Augustine's Coatbridge recently went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, engaging in a week of prayer, friendship, and memorable experiences. They visited the Grotto, explored sites related to St Bernadette, participated in the Torchlight Procession, and attended various Masses and services, while also reflecting and bonding with fellow young pilgrims.

St Patrick's Primary host St Michael statue



BY JACQUELINE HAGERTY

St Patrick's Primary, Coatbridge, was honoured to welcome the statue of St Michael the Archangel to our school community. The statue remained with us for two weeks, and we were very privileged to host it.

It served as a powerful focal point during our assemblies and prayer times. St Michael is remembered as a fearless saint who stood against wickedness and the snares of the devil, offering courage and protection to all who call upon him.

Thank you to SSVP for bringing the statue to us. Our Mini Vinnies were especially pleased to be part of this special occasion, showing great pride and enthusiasm throughout.

The new alternative to the ‘strong man’

As the first anniversary of the election of Pope Leo XIV passes, **Father Colum Martin** examines the impact the Holy Father’s style is having on the world

A year has passed since the election of Pope Leo XIV which has been met not with spectacle or sweeping gestures, but with something far rarer in today’s world: a steady, almost disarming quiet. In a politically global age shaped by noise, personality, and political theatre, his early days have signalled a different kind of leadership, one deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition of justice and peace and one that offers a compelling alternative to the “strong man” politics associated with figures like Donald Trump and other populist leaders across the globe.



From the outset, Leo XIV has avoided the temptation to dominate headlines. There have been no dramatic pronouncements designed to provoke or polarise. Instead, his words have been measured, his tone pastoral, and his focus unmistakably consistent: the dignity of the human person, the demands of the common good, and the urgent need for solidarity in a fractured world. It is a style that may seem understated, even fragile, when set against the forceful rhetoric of contemporary politics, but it carries within it a deeper, more enduring strength.

This approach is not accidental. It stands firmly within the lineage of Catholic Social Teaching, most notably articulated by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*. Like his predecessor in name, Leo XIV appears intent on engaging the social and economic realities of the age without succumbing to ideological extremes. Where populist leaders often thrive on division and casting society into opposing camps of winners and losers, Leo speaks a language of encounter. He does not deny the existence of conflict or injustice, but he resists the urge to weaponise them.

The contrast with “strong man” leadership is striking. Populist politics frequently relies on the projection of strength through dominance: the ability to command attention, to silence critics, and to present oneself as the singular solution to complex problems. It is a model that can be seductive, particularly in times of uncertainty. Yet it often leaves little room for nuance, dialogue, or the slow, difficult work of reconciliation. In other words, the reality of the world as we find it, not as how we wish to find it.

Leo XIV’s leadership offers a different vision. It is not built on the force of personality but on

the credibility of witness. His authority does not come from asserting power over others but from a visible commitment to serve. In his addresses, there is a consistent refusal to reduce human beings to categories or slogans. Migrants are not statistics; the poor are not abstractions; political opponents are not enemies. Each is treated as a person of inherent dignity, deserving of justice and compassion. This stance has brought him the most unlikely of supporters, such as *The Guardian* columnist Rebecca Shaw.¹

In doing so, he exposes a quiet weakness at the heart of “strong man” politics. For all its volume and certainty, it often struggles to sustain a vision of the common good that includes everyone. Its strength is immediate but fleeting, dependent on constant negative reinforcement. By contrast, the quiet leadership of Leo XIV is cumulative. It will build trust over time. It will form consciences rather than mobilising crowds. It does not seek to win or dominate every argument or disagreement but to transform the way arguments are held.

The Catholic Church, under such leadership, has the potential to become a different kind of global voice, one that neither withdraws from the public square nor becomes captive to it (ironically, I believe we have been guilty of both in recent times). It can engage political realities without mirroring their excesses. It can speak truth without resorting to hostility. In a world increasingly defined by extremes, this middle space grounded in principle, yet open to dialogue may be precisely where hope resides.

Of course, this path is not without its challenges. Quiet leadership can be misunderstood as weakness or indecision

It does not generate the immediate gratification that comes with bold, dramatic action. And it requires a level of consistency and integrity that is difficult to sustain. For Leo XIV, as for the Church he leads, the test will be whether this vision can be embodied not only in words but also in concrete action within the Church itself and in its engagement with the wider world.



The leadership the world now needs may not be louder, but wiser; not more forceful, but more faithful.

FATHER COLUM MARTIN

Yet there is reason to believe that such leadership meets a deep, if often unspoken, hunger. Many are weary of the constant conflict, the erosion of trust, and the sense that public life has become a contest of egos rather than a search for truth. In this context, the quiet, steady voice of Leo XIV may carry further than it first appears.

It does not seek to overpower. It seeks to persuade. It does not divide. It invites. And in doing so, it points to a different understanding of strength that the world so desperately needs. One rooted not in control but in the courage to serve, to listen, and to hold fast to justice and peace.

If the age of the "strong man" has revealed the limits of power without humility, then the emergence of a figure like Pope Leo XIV suggests another possibility: that the leadership the world now needs may not be louder but wiser and not more forceful but more faithful.

In this sense he is truly living his papal motto '*In ill uno unum*', in the one we are one.



Pope Leo's Prayer Intentions

Every month, The Holy Father asks Catholics around the world to pray for a particular intention.

JULY

FOR RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognising it as a gift from God.

AUGUST

FOR EVANGELISATION IN THE CITY

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.



How Grassroots Pro-Life Campaigners Helped Defeat the proposed Assisted Suicide Bill

Gerard Kerr shares the work of three parishioners whose campaigning helped highlight the dangers of assisted suicide

Bishop John Keenan of Paisley Diocese recently expressed his relief at the defeat of the assisted suicide bill at Holyrood and thanked MSPs and all the campaigners for their role in voting down this attack on the weak and vulnerable. He also thanked the work of three pro-life campaigners from the Motherwell Diocese in their role in highlighting the dangers of the bill to Catholics in five dioceses in Scotland. Their tireless efforts to raise awareness of the threats to the sanctity of life that assisted suicide would cause were believed to be significant in the recent success in defeating the bill at Holyrood and demonstrate how, despite our small numbers, we can achieve great things with prayer. Hopefully we can achieve the same outcome at Westminster.

The three campaigners sent weekly updates to over 40 parishes in Motherwell Diocese asking that parishioners keep praying and lobbying their MSPs to defeat this bill. They then organised a letter-signing campaign, and the campaigners were able to send over 700 letters to protest against the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill.

That success did not go unnoticed, and Bishop Keenan and the Campaign Against Assisted Dying (CAAD) endorsed the letter-writing campaign, and, working together, they delivered nearly 10,000 letters to selected MSPs before the final vote in Holyrood in March.

This incredible achievement was supported by parish priests and committed volunteers in their congregations. The volunteers gave a talk at Sunday Masses to highlight the reasons why Catholics must oppose Assisted Suicide legislation. With lots of help from local parishes, the following weekend, letters were made available for parishioners to sign.


The campaign became so successful that over 30 parishes across the central belt of Scotland participated. Once parishioners understood what was at stake if Assisted Suicide became legal, they were willing to take the campaign message to adjacent parishes and help spread the message to keep praying and lobby MSPs to vote against the bill.



The three campaigners also displayed the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe when they visited some parishes, urging parishioners to pray to her as our greatest support in our defence of the sanctity of life.

A spokesperson for the letter-writing campaign said, "If we had had more time and helpers, we could have gathered substantially more letters to hand to our MSPs. There are undoubtedly more battles ahead to protect the lives of the unborn and those nearing the end of life. So we hope that many more parishes will be able to get involved in future campaigns and help to defend the sanctity of life. Bishop Keenan reminds us that there is no such thing as a useless life and the Church will never abandon the poorest and most vulnerable."

Pilgrimage of Reparation and Prayer for the Sanctity of Life

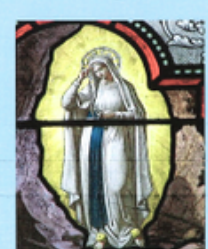


President: Bishop John Keenan

When: 1st August 2026
Where: Carfin Grotto, Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, Taylor Avenue, Motherwell, MLI 5AJ



Start time: 12:00pm with Mass
Approximate finish time: 4:30pm

Please bring water and a packed lunch



"Human life is sacred—all men must recognize that fact. From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God."

— Pope St. John XXIII



[@PilgrimsForLife](https://www.instagram.com/PilgrimsForLife)



Gaudi: God's Architect

Following the performance at St Bernadette's in Motherwell, **Lawrence Toner** looks at the life of Gaudi and how AGAP's production brings the story of his life to light

Having arranged tickets and knowing of the Sagrada Familia Basilica after a visit to Barcelona, I asked my daughter, "Was Gaudi primarily an architect, or was he an artist or a visionary?" I suddenly realised that although familiar with the name, I didn't really know anything about the person.

I had also gleaned from the media that Pope Leo was going to Barcelona to visit Sagrada Familia. There was talk of Gaudi possibly being raised to sainthood. Why would that be?

AGAP's (Archdiocese of Glasgow Arts Project) timely production of Gaudi, performed recently in St Bernadette's, Motherwell, really helped to answer some of these questions but also raised others – was he a madman, a genius, neurodiverse, or really a man of God?

Stephen Callaghan, writer, director and performer, began his account at an encounter with a tram – the death of Gaudi! We are then led through the highs and lows of Gaudi's life, which in a worldly sense saw more lows than highs. His life was a difficult one, from being a chronically sick child diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis to outliving his healthier siblings and having to care for his father and niece.

His chronic pain and brash demeanour almost hid a deep faith which was rooted in the beauty of nature and its eschatological ability to bring him to God. He expressed this through his art and design, culminating in his masterpiece, the Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona, his monument to the Holy Family and his testimony to the centrality of God and the family.

This account portraying Gaudi as a gruff, angry, rebellious man does not speak to our traditional image of a saint. But his loyalty to his family, his rejection of his peers' fascist tendencies, his support for the poor and the working class and his relationship with God through the beauty and wonder of nature and all of God's creation influencing his masterpiece, which points each of us towards the heavens, perhaps reveals a life given to God.

Through the question-and-answer session following the play I saw how many others had also been prompted to think and ask more questions, to discover more about this man, his complicated life and his holy journey through it.

After seeing AGAP's last production of "A Pilgrim of Hope", I had the opportunity to arrange for it to be performed for two primary schools in the parish of St Barbara's in West Lothian. I realised then that AGAP can be a powerful instrument for evangelisation, but they cannot do it alone; they need us to attend, to volunteer and to bring others, making use of our contacts and networks to spread the word. Next year is AGAP's 20th anniversary; perhaps together we can make it their best yet, bringing the arts to people locally, allowing their work to touch the lives of many others.

AGAP Theatre Company is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Glasgow, and its aim is to evangelise through the arts. The performance which St Bernadette's in Motherwell was delighted to host was the third of three planned Edinburgh Fringe previews.



Opening the Scriptures

with **Father Thomas Magill**

Having celebrated the central mysteries of our faith through the Easter season, we now return to Ordinary Time which will take us through to Advent.

This year we are listening to St Matthew's Gospel, so be ready for some of the themes which will be repeated throughout the season: Jesus is the fulfilment of the Scriptures and of human yearning; he is the new Moses who places the Great Commandment of love before all others; he uses parables to teach the present reality of the Kingdom of Heaven and the centrality of the "little ones," the marginalised and rejected, in this Kingdom; he describes the Church as a little flock so often under pressure but always assured of his presence and built upon him; he teaches that discipleship and membership of the Church demand the Cross and the denial of self and gives practical advice about Christian living.

Over these weeks there is also a continuous reading of St Paul's Letter to the Romans. Here St Paul lays out the heart of our Christian faith: the centrality of Christ's death and Resurrection for all of humanity and creation (the Paschal Mystery); our reconciliation to God and our justification as a complete free gift through Christ; the grace of God poured into our hearts through faith in Christ; the gift of the Spirit which comes to us in our weakness and enables us to live in Christ; our being conformed to Christ and not the world through dying to the old self and putting on the mind of Christ; the reality of human suffering but its transformation in Christ; and, finally, love as the heart of the Christian life.

Sunday Reflections

12th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 21st June 2026

Jeremiah 20.10-13; Psalm 69; Romans 5.12-13; Matthew 10.26-33

Twice the Lord encourages his disciples not to fear even when they feel they are mortally threatened. (Gospel) His Father knows the eternal worth and value of every person. Those who speak in God's name have always experienced denunciation and rejection, as the prophet Jeremiah knew. (1st reading) God's revelation is progressively coming to the light throughout history. Human sinfulness is a reality but no longer has ultimate power because of the free gift of God's grace and forgiveness. (2nd reading)

Saints Peter and Paul A - 28th June 2026

Acts 12.1-11; Psalm 34; II Timothy 4.6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16.13-19

Today's Solemnity is of especial significance this year as we mark the 1st anniversary of Pope Leo's Papacy. Peter represents and serves the centre and unity of the church; Paul its spread and diversity. Pope Leo in his inaugural address emphasised both these aspects: unity in diversity, and the missionary nature of the church always going out from the centre to the peripheries. As today's gospel shows, all this comes from a deep faith in Christ, expressed so clearly by Peter. (Gospel) The Lord stands by and strengthens the Church as she proclaims his Good News (2nd reading) and will always deliver her from malevolent earthly powers, even when all seems lost. (1 reading)

14th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 5th July 2026

Zechariah 9.9-10; Psalm 145; Romans 8.9, 11-13; Matthew 11.25-30

The Lord places "little children" at the heart of his ministry. (Gospel) These are the ones at the margins of society, those considered of little importance and who live lives of burden and baggage. Zechariah looked forward to this gentle and lowly Messiah who would come to his people not in majesty and power but in humility (1st reading) and who would ease their yoke and lighten their burden. The Lord stands with the lowly in his own lowliness and gives life to their mortal bodies so that they and we can live in the Spirit. (2nd reading)

15th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 12th July 2026

Isaiah 55.10-11; Psalm 65; Romans 8.18-23; Matthew 13.1-23

Today we have the first of a number of parables which we will listen to in the coming weeks. The parables are the Lord's favourite way of teaching – short stories with vivid imagery which make us stop and think what they reveal to us about ourselves, the world, and God. The parable of the sower shows the profligacy of God – seeds are scattered in abundance. (Gospel) But, of course, they need fertile ground. God's Word comes constantly to us and shows that God wants to be "in conversation" with us -- he wants us to respond generously. This Word is alive and active and will always bring about the will of God which is so much greater than our own self-will. (1st reading) The whole of creation, ourselves included, groans in one great act of giving birth as we await with eager longing for this Word to be great fruit and to fulfil God's purposes. (2nd reading)

16th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 19th July 2026

Wisdom 12.13, 16-19; Psalm 86; Romans 8.26-27; Matthew 13.24-43

The Lord gives a series of three parables, all of which tell us something about the Kingdom of Heaven. He warns us not to go about looking for “weeds”, people who we think don’t belong or are different. He tells us that this Kingdom can flourish and grow large from the tiniest of beginnings – the kind word, the generous welcome, the act of forgiveness. He reminds us too that often this kingdom is hidden in the lives and deeds of people who never come to our notice. The Kingdom is present and alive despite what we might think! It is God’s work, not ours. (1st reading) And it is made possible by the gift of the Spirit who helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us. (2nd reading)

17th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 26th July 2026

I Kings 3.5-6a, 7-12; Psalm 119; Romans 8.28-30; Matthew 13.44-53

Once again, the Lord offers a series of three parables to describe the Kingdom of Heaven. (Gospel) All the parables present him as a Wisdom Teacher -- someone who uses human experience to talk of the things of God. This is in line with the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament which presents King Solomon as the finest example of wisdom. (1st reading) The Lord is like the scribe who brings out of his treasure things both new and old – Jesus constantly takes from the Old Testament to present his new teaching. The Kingdom is something for which we are prepared to give up so much (the treasure in the field); it is something we must always be on the lookout for (the fine pearl); it holds all of humanity, the good and the bad – the sorting out belongs to God. It is He who is working in all things for the good of those who love him. (2nd reading)

18th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 2nd August 2026

Isaiah 55.1-3; Psalm 145; Romans 8.35, 37-39; Matthew 14.13-21

We can see the overtones of the Eucharist in this miracle of the loaves and fishes -- Jesus “took, blessed, broke and gave” (Gospel) —the words still used at Mass today. As then, so now we experience deeply our hunger and thirst for something more than money can buy (1st reading); we feel God’s compassion; even in the midst of our desolation we know satisfaction; we are nourished from the profligacy and abundance of God’s love from which nothing can separate us. (2nd reading)

19th Sunday Ordinary Time A - 9th August 2026

I Kings 19.9a, 11-13; Psalm 85; Romans 9.1-5; Matthew 14.22-33

The calming of the storm says something about our experience as Church. (Gospel) At times it seems the Lord is absent and we are on our own. In the story the Lord had gone up the mountain to pray alone, a prayer which anticipates his continuing to intercede for us with his heavenly Father. At the deepest moment of crisis, the Lord comes towards us, at first unrecognised. As soon as he says, “Take heart, It is I; Do not be afraid,” Peter representing the Church throws himself into the arms of the Lord. Despite the hesitation and wobble, he renews his faith, and a great calm descends, a peace only God can give. (1st reading) Today’s 2nd reading reminds us that Christ and the Church emerge from the Jews together with whom we continue to praise and glorify God. (2nd reading)

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary A - 16th August 2026

Revelation 11.19a, 12.1-6a, 10; Ps. 45; I Cor. 15.20-27; Luke 1.39-56

Our Lady in a unique way “magnifies” God – she reflects the divine beauty, glory, and majesty of God and shows that this is possible for us too. (Gospel) As she celebrates the mighty being brought down and the lowly lifted up, she anticipates the ministry of her Son. She knows the mercy of God given to humanity. Not undergoing the corruption of the grave, she points all of us to the glory of the Resurrection in which Christ destroyed death forever (2nd reading) United with her, we celebrate God’s salvation, power, and kingdom which have come to us through Christ her Son. (1st reading)

21st Sunday Ordinary Time A - 23rd August 2026

Isaiah 22.15, 19-23; Psalm 138; Romans 11.33-36; Matthew 16.13-20

Today’s gospel is a central text for our Catholic faith. Jesus presents the faith of Peter, the first of the Apostles, as the rock on which the Lord would build his Church. (Gospel) Professing faith is our response to Christ as he seeks us out; it is through faith that we witness to him and upon which the Church continues as his presence in the world. It is faith which opens us up to the depths of the riches of God (1st reading) and unlocks the door to the household of God. (1st reading)



The Price of Tea

Eileen McQuade looks at how our buying habits can help change the world through ethical purchasing and how parishes can become Fairtrade



A cup of tea or coffee or a square of chocolate... simple wee pleasures that brighten our day! Wouldn't it be good if the profits from their global sale improved the living conditions of those in the developing world who produce them? The reality, however, is that large multinational companies and middlemen often take most of the profit leaving little for the small farmers and workers growing the crops. The result is family poverty, poor housing and healthcare as well as children missing school because parents cannot afford the fees.

JUSTICE MATTERS

In parts of West Africa, child labour and forced labour is involved in cocoa production. Children can work long hours carrying heavy loads, using dangerous tools and missing out on school. The lack of health and safety regulations leaves workers at risk. They have no entitlement to sick pay or job security and work long hours for little pay.

Forests are often destroyed to grow coffee, tea or cocoa cheaply and quickly. The soil is exhausted, and rivers become polluted by chemicals, affecting community access to safe drinking water. In addition, food security is threatened, wildlife is endangered and the global climate is impacted.

Governments could certainly do much to address these injustices but often lack the will to do so. We, however, are called to act for justice through our faith. In his encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis reminded us that "everything is connected". The choices we make as consumers can either support justice and human dignity or contribute to exploitation and environmental harm. We can promote dignity, fairness and stewardship of creation simply by what we choose to put in our shopping basket.

THE POWER OF THE CUSTOMER

Twenty to thirty years ago, it was difficult to buy ethical products in Britain. Choices were limited, prices were higher and complaints were made about the quality of the coffee. Enough ordinary shoppers, however, chose to buy according to their conscience.

They created a demand for affordable, ethical goods and the supermarkets responded. Today, supermarkets carry a range of ethical products. They

are competitively priced, good quality and have ethical labels, making them easily identifiable.

The scale of injustice in the world can seem overwhelming and make us feel like snowflakes. Pope Francis, however, told us that when snowflakes come together, they form avalanches. In Motherwell Diocese alone, there are over 140,000 Catholics. We have enormous purchasing power. We can create a demand for businesses and governments to act more responsibly. Together, by buying through our conscience, we can help build a world where trade is fairer, creation is respected, and human dignity comes before profit.

READING THE LABELS

Before making a purchase, check for an ethical or environmental certification. Look for trusted certification marks rather than vague claims like "natural" or "eco-friendly", which may not be independently verified.



Fairtrade is often considered to be the gold standard because it guarantees a minimum price for farmers and gives "Fairtrade Premium" money to communities. It also has strong rules against child labour and forced labour. It secures better working condition, long-term trading relationships and environmental protections



Rainforest Alliance is particularly strong on environmental protection, forest conservation, biodiversity, reducing harmful pesticides and sustainable farming. It is less strong than Fairtrade on guaranteed minimum pricing for farmers.



Organic certification mainly focuses on avoiding harmful pesticides, soil health, animal welfare and environmental sustainability. 'Organic' does not automatically mean fair pay or ethical labour conditions.

The combination of Fairtrade and organic together is often the most ethical choice. environmentally

TAKING ETHICAL PURCHASING INTO THE PARISH

There are essentially two main commitments required to register as a Fairtrade Place of Worship:

1. Use Fairtrade products wherever possible — especially tea, coffee and sugar at parish events.
2. Promote Fairtrade in parish life through education, worship, events or campaigns such as Fairtrade Fortnight.

The Fairtrade Foundation requires an application form to be completed online, which will require a main and secondary contact person, information about how your parish meets the commitments and future plans for promoting Fairtrade.

DOES ETHICAL PURCHASING CHANGE LIVES?

The Community of Peace was formed by a group of farmers in Colombia who wanted to oppose drug wars and the exploitation of their land. They didn't want to give in to violence or the revenge that goes with it but to offer a better future to their children. They grow products for their own subsistence and organic cocoa that is fairly traded to England, Germany and Italy. The profits boost their economic security and allow them to invest in training and education for the future.

The community's commitment has not spared them from the violence. Since its founding, approximately 200 members have been killed. The community lives under the protection of international human rights organisations in an attempt to help it avoid further violence. The community continues to be intimidated and abused by those who seek control of their land. Jose, who coordinates the selling of cocoa, said, "Our community is founded on justice and fraternity. We thought up and put into practice a new way of life, a new economy that comes from saying no to war." Jose continued, "We must fight together to protect our common home, as the Holy Father has called it. To defend the earth, to curb the advance of exploitation of our territory. To choose non-violence every day and have the courage to denounce all violations of human rights. This is the legacy we want to leave to our children."

The young people from the Community of Peace are aware that their community represents hope, not just for them, but for the whole world. A hope that we can nourish every day by simply buying ethically produced products. It is surely the least we can do to support their efforts.

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



Contact Kris: 07747867003

Pilgrimages in Scotland

Jim McKelvie explores some of Scotland's popular pilgrimage destinations that you can visit this summer



Pilgrimage has always played an important role in Catholic spirituality, and pilgrimages, especially walking pilgrimages, have seen a resurgence in recent years. The many caminos to the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain have seen a record number of pilgrims enjoy the experience of taking time out from the daily grind to walk day after day to reach a destination considered holy, and the journey itself is sanctified by the footsteps of countless numbers of men and women who went before them for centuries. In a world that has become increasingly materialistic and consumerist, people still seek meaning and purpose in life, and pilgrim experience helps them to find this authenticity.

Santiago, Rome and Jerusalem were the main pilgrim destinations in the middle ages, but here in Scotland we had our own holy sites, where pilgrims flocked in their numbers. The Reformation banned the practice of pilgrimage in Scotland, but the holy places that attracted pilgrims then are still accessible to us today, whether we travel by foot or by modern coach.



St Andrews and Fife

St Andrews was one of the main pilgrim destinations of Medieval Europe, and evidence of the pilgrimage can still be seen throughout the Kingdom of Fife. St Margaret, Queen of Scotland, was an important figure in encouraging pilgrimage, and started a ferry service for travellers across the Forth estuary at the place which still bears her title, Queensferry. After she died in 1093, her burial site at Dunfermline Abbey itself became a destination for pilgrims, and the church of St Margaret in Dunfermline today contains a relic of the Scottish Queen and Saint. A pilgrimage in honour of St Margaret takes place every year in Dunfermline.

The picturesque village of Culross, on the north shore of the Forth, is the birthplace of St Kentigern, or Mungo, and is also worth a visit. Kentigern and his mother, St Enoch, were given sanctuary by St Serf in Culross, where he was born in 518. Kentigern, at the age of 25, moved to the west of Scotland and established a church on the site of what is now Glasgow Cathedral, and is the founder and patron saint of Glasgow. The remains of the chapel of St Kentigern, established by Rober Blacadder, Bishop of Glasgow in 1503, can still be seen by the roadside in the village. Modern day pilgrims can walk the waymarked Fife Pilgrim Way from North Queensferry or Culross to St Andrews, a distance of 64 miles, and see along the way evidence of the medieval travellers who went before them to venerate the relics of St Andrew at their destination.



Scalan

The seminary at Scaln, in the Braes of Glenlivet, was, for much of the 18th century, the only place in Scotland where young men could be trained for the Catholic priesthood. Catholicism faced persecution through the century, and this secret seminary provided around 100 priests for the Church in Scotland from 1717 to 1799. Scaln played a vital role in keeping the traditional faith alive at this time. The importance of this site to our faith in Scotland is recognised each year, when Mass is celebrated at the seminary on the pilgrimage to the site on the first Sunday in June.



Whithorn and St Ninian

Very little is known for certain about St Ninian. We do know that he began his ministry in the late 4th century and that he was 'a most reverend bishop and holy man' who had studied in Rome before coming to Scotland to spread the faith. In subsequent centuries he was so revered that pilgrims flocked to Candida Casa, the base he established in Whithorn, in southwest Scotland. Archaeological investigations show that there were many ecclesiastical buildings in the area being built and extended over the years, and evidence shows that, by the 12th century, a huge church and settlement had existed to cater for the many pilgrims to the site. The Whithorn Way, a waymarked, 155-mile pilgrim walking and cycle route from

Glasgow to Whithorn, has been established to allow modern-day pilgrim to follow the path travelled by pilgrims for over 1300 years.

On the last Sunday of August each year, Mass is celebrated on the shore near Whithorn at St Ninian's Cave, where the saint is said to have retreated to pray.



Iona and St Columba

St Columba was born in Gartan, Co Donegal, in 521, and came with 12 of his companions in 563 to Iona, a small island off the west coast of Mull. He established an Abbey on the island and was said to be a holy and learned man. Iona became a centre of holiness, learning and art and a place of influence throughout the north of Britain. It was from here that Columba and his companions spread the Word of God throughout the Pictish tribes and beyond. A number of miracles were attributed to Columba, including his banishment of the Loch Ness Monster to the depths of the River Ness!

Iona remained an important hub of Christianity, learning and evangelisation long after Columba's death around 597. St Aidan of Lindisfarne was an Irish monk and missionary who set off from Iona and established a priory in Lindisfarne in Northumbria, which he used as a base to convert the Anglo Saxons in the north-east of England.

The present abbey, which was restored in the 20th century, dates from the 13th century, but there are still traces of earlier ecclesiastical life, including four intricately carved crosses, evidence of the craftsmanship flourishing on the island at this time. The famous Book of Kells, now on display in Dublin, is thought to have been crafted on Iona.

Pilgrims travel to Iona today, as they have done for many centuries, drawn by the sanctity of St Columba, who still speaks to us from across the centuries.



Carfin Grotto

We are blessed in the Diocese of Motherwell with our own modern pilgrimage centre at the National Shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes at Carfin. The Grotto was established in 1922 by Monsignor Thomas Canon Taylor and is open throughout the year to welcome pilgrims, who come from all parts of the country and beyond.

During the Pilgrimage Season, from April to October, many pilgrim events take place at this haven of beauty, prayer and peace.



Centenary of The Roman Catholic Relief Act

by **Father James Grant**

2026 marks the centenary of The Roman Catholic Relief Act, an Act which in no small part resulted from the initial efforts of the Rev. Thomas Nimmo Taylor, parish priest of St. Francis Xavier Carfin and builder of the Lourdes Grotto Carfin, now The National Shrine.

In 1924, Canon Taylor's planned Corpus Christi Procession through the streets of Carfin, culminating in a celebration Mass at the newly opened Carfin Lourdes Grotto, had to be cancelled. The Motherwell Conservative and Unionist MP and member of a local Orange Lodge, Hugh Ferguson, successfully stopped the procession by invoking Section 26 of the Roman Catholic Act of 1829. This prohibited Catholics from holding religious ceremonies on the public roads.

Canon Taylor complied with the law and held the procession on the private grounds of the Grotto. But he did not leave it at that. He wrote letters to people to get the law changed, and it was debated in the House of Commons. The ban resulted in a campaign against the restrictive 1829 Act.

This campaign resulted in Conservative MPs Francis Blundell and Dennis Herbert sponsoring the Roman Catholic Relief Act, which became law in December 1926. This Act allowed public religious processions, allowing Catholics to practise their religion outside private land or estates.

Photo: Canon Taylor leads a Blessed Sacrament Procession at Carfin Grotto

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