

DIOCESE OF MOTHERWELL

FREE

FONTES

CHRISTMAS 2024 | ISSUE 16 | FREE

MAGAZINE



Make room for **Christ** this

Christmas

+ Bishop Toal's Christmas Message

+ Interview with the youngest organist in the Diocese + Time of change for Bellshill parish

+ The Missions driving Wellspring + Stella Maris helping celebrate Christmas at sea

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NEXT EDITION

Lent 2025

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Cover photo: Nativity Scene in St Augustine's Church, Coatbridge

BISHOP'S DIARY

24th December

Celebration of the First Mass of Christmas in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral

29th December

Opening Mass of the Jubilee Year

3rd-10th January

Masses at Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral

21st January

Diocesan Gatherings with Bishop McGee on Synod on Synodality

23rd January

12noon Motherwell Catholic Headteachers' Meeting

26th January

10.00am Sacrament of Confirmation at St Kevin's Church, Bargeddie

28th January

11.30am Diocesan Fabric and Planning Committee

2.00pm Diocesan Finance Committee

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at Corpus Christi Church, Calderbank

29th January

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Edward's Church, Airdrie, for St Dominic's PS

30th January

9.30am Bishops' Conference Meeting

31st January

Mass at Cathedral Primary School Motherwell for Feast of St John Bosco.

1st February

11.00am Diocesan Ecumenical Meeting at Carfin

4th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Mark's Church, Rutherglen

5th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Bride's Church, Bothwell

6th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Columba's Church, Viewpark, for St John Paul II PS.

9th February

11.30am Sacrament of Confirmation at St Bartholomew's Church, Coatbridge

11th February

2.00pm Diocesan Trustees' Meeting

7.00pm 60th Anniversary Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride

12th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Anthony's Church, Rutherglen

13th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at Christ the King Church, Holytown

17th-24th February

Motherwell Deacons' Jubilee Pilgrimage to Rome.

25th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Mary's Church, Coatbridge

26th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Michael's Church, Moodiesburn

27th February

7.00pm Sacrament of Confirmation at St Ninian's Church, Hamilton, for St Ninian's PS and St Cuthbert's PS

A WORD FROM BISHOP TOAL



Dear Brothers and Sisters...

On the First Sunday of Advent a phrase from the Reading from St Paul's Letter to The Thessalonians caught my attention – it was “more and more”. In some ways “more and more” may sum up Christmas for many of us - more lights and decorations, more shopping and presents, more parties and festive treats, more songs and entertainment, more gatherings of family and friends. The list can continue and we are very lucky when we can enjoy many of these good things.

Why did St Paul use these words then? Here is what he wrote:

“Brothers and Sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.”

It sounds that he recommends making more and more room for Jesus in our lives, so that we can walk and please God in the way Jesus himself and the Apostles taught. We should certainly try to make more room for Jesus at Christmas as we listen again to the great story of his birth at Bethlehem, and celebrate it in prayer and in song in our churches, homes, and schools.

The true and full celebration of Christmas is a mark of our

identity as Christians, and our joy that God became one of us to bring us salvation. In the spirit of St Paul's instruction let us be united in the Lord Jesus this Christmas and through his grace draw more and more closer to him, through our prayer and our charity to those more needy than ourselves. By doing this we strive to fully please God as true and faithful followers of Jesus, his Son and Our Lord.

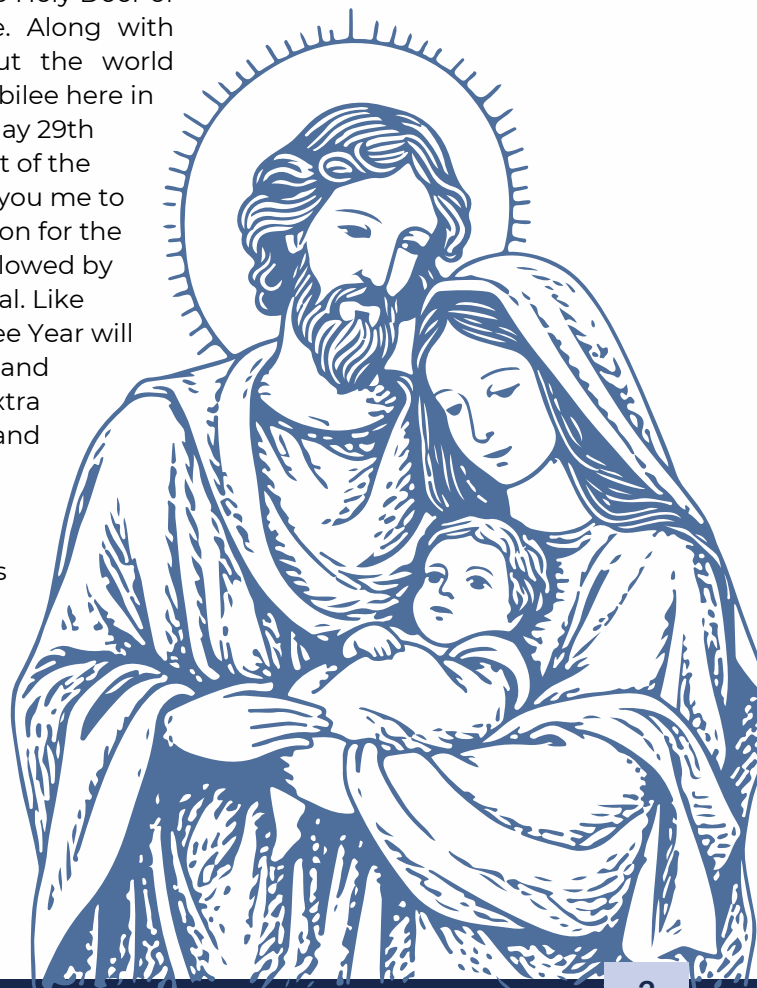
On Christmas Night Pope Francis will begin the Jubilee Year of 2025 by opening the Holy Door of St Peter's in Rome. Along with dioceses throughout the world we will begin the Jubilee here in Motherwell on Sunday 29th December, the Feast of the Holy Family. I invite you me to join me that afternoon for the Opening Service, followed by Mass in the Cathedral. Like Christmas our Jubilee Year will be a period of more and more as we make extra efforts to celebrate and live our faith both at home and on pilgrimage. The theme for the year is Pilgrims of Hope, and as we continue our earthly pilgrimage in our difficult world we do indeed need more and more hope, flowing from our faith in God,

and witnessed by our charity as members of Christ's Body.

May the Lord bless you and your families with love and peace this Christmas, and may our celebration of His birth bring renewed hope to all in hardship and distress.

With my prayers and best wishes,

+ Joseph Toal



Community Garden brought back to life in Blackwood



In the summer of last year, the pupils, staff, parents and parishioners of St John's in Blackwood set about transforming the overgrown and dilapidated Community Garden which sits behind the Parish Hall.

With the help of local businesses, donors, volunteers and community helpers the garden has been transformed into a beautiful sensory garden for the whole community.

Parishioner and Church Representative on the School Parent Council, Vivien Stewart, was pivotal in leading this initiative and worked tirelessly to get many various bodies involved and the funding to make this dream a reality.

The parish donated a beautiful statue of Our Lady which has been sited at the rear of the garden where the children gather to pray the Rosary in May and October and provides a space for reflection and prayer all year round for the adults and young people.

In September we were delighted to receive an Outstanding Level 5 Award from 'It's Your Neighbourhood' a part of the Keep Scotland Beautiful Charity.

In their glowing report they said, "What has been achieved is a credit to all - the community - both local and within the county - the school and its partnership group, and the Church. As noted below, this relationship has resulted in a garden feature which incorporates the Christian faith, biodiversity, colour, a place for contemplation, and a learning environment. An added benefit is its use to support John Muir Awards, and it was a pleasure when visiting to be accompanied by the school's John Muir Ambassadors whose friendliness, plus knowledge, is another example of how a successful community gardening partnership can develop."



Bothwell get together for Autumn

St. Bride's Parish in Bothwell recently held their annual lunch and "Autumn get together", organised by the SSVP for senior parishioners. A great time was had by all.



Theology on Tap

Our Lady of Fatima Parish hosted their First Theology on Tap recently in the Parish Hall. The insightful and thought-provoking talk was given by Fr Stephen Reilly on Mary as Disciple and Herald of the Kingdom in the New Testament. It was a great beginning to our Theology on Tap course which will be held each month in the Parish Hall at Our Lady and St John's Blackwood. All welcome.



Ozanam Club celebrates St Andrew

The SSVP Ozanam Club In Viewpark celebrated St Andrews' night with music and dancing. Jim the piper brought a true Scottish feel to it, before dancing to the disco. Thanks to Jimmy & family and all the volunteers for a fabulous event.

Craigend parishioners celebrate 50 years of St Dominic's



FROM CATHERINE BOYLE

Last month, St. Dominic's Parish in Craigend marked a significant milestone in its history, as it celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the opening of their Church with a Mass of Thanksgiving attended by parishioners past and present.

The special Mass was celebrated by Bishop Joseph Toal, with parish priest, Father Jim Thomson, and Fr Michael Briody concelebrating.

The Craigend parish was founded in 1972 and the Church opened in 1974 with founding parish priest, Father Gerald McColgan.

After the Mass, the celebrations continued in the hall with face painting and a fire engine for the children.



Civic Reception for Coatbridge Parish

BY CLAIRE O'NEILL

On 30th of October, Provost Kenneth Duffy of North Lanarkshire Council hosted a civic reception to mark the end of a year of celebrations to mark the 150th Anniversary of St Mary's Church, Whifflet, and 50th Anniversary of St Bernard's Church, Shawhead. Parishioners from both churches joined Bishop Toal, parish priest, Fr James Travers and members of the council in St Andrew's Community Hub to join in a celebratory afternoon tea.



Caritas pupils host Holy Hours for Justice and Peace

Caritas Students from St Joseph's Parish Blantyre and St Anthony's and St Mark's Rutherglen each hosted holy hours in their parishes this week as part of the Justice & Peace Scotland Parish Project they are working on for their Caritas Award.

The group in St Joseph's have been learning, praying and acting around the theme of refugees and migrants and hosted a "Welcome The Stranger" holy hour for their parish on Tuesday evening. Thank you to Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees for helping the group learn more about refugees and the difficulties they face both in their own countries and once they get to the UK.

In St Anthony's and St Mark's the young people have been exploring the issue of human trafficking and modern slavery. They were visited by Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland who told them how people end up trapped in situations of trafficking and about the work they do to recover people and help them rebuild their lives. On Wednesday the group hosted a holy hour dedicated to St Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of victims and survivors of human trafficking, to pray for all trapped in modern slavery today.





As one Church closes another reopens

St Gerard's Church was packed out beyond capacity as parishioners past and present came together for one last Mass in the much loved Bellshill Church.

Undoubtedly a sad day for the whole community, the Mass of Thanksgiving on the Solemnity of Christ the King was celebrated by Bishop Joseph Toal, who himself lived in St Gerard's for ten years, and parish clergy, Fr Stuart Parkes and Deacon Jim Aitken. During the Mass tribute was paid to the clergy who have served the Church since 1971 including founding parish priest, Canon Patrick Moss, Canon Patrick O'Hare, Canon Timothy Brosnan - the much loved longest serving priest of the parish -, Father Michael Brown and Father Kevin McGoldrick.

The Church on Fleming Road opened in June 1971, four years after the parish was founded. The first four years saw the parish based in the old Noble School which was converted into a Church.

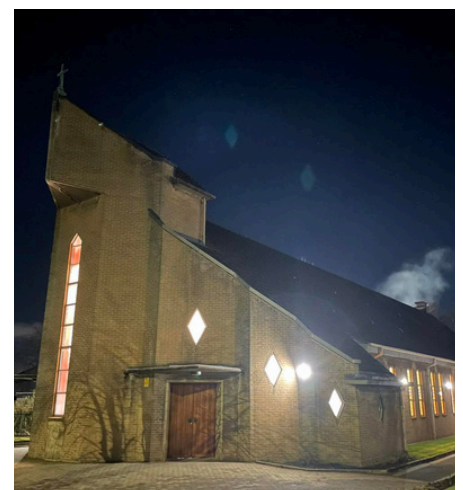
During the Mass, prayers were offered for all who had celebrated the sacraments in the Church, calling to mind all baptised, married, ordained and buried from the Church as well as those who gave been dedicated to serving the Church over the pasty 53 years.

During the Mass, Bishop Toal shared his own sadness at the closure of the Church, comparing it to the death of a loved one that you have been preparing for for a while yet its still very painful when the time comes and brings with it a time of mourning. However he

offered encouragement to the parishioners to be strong in faith and to rise up to this new start together with hope and that while the church we worship in may change, the faith we celebrate never changes.

A choir of over thirty pupils from St Gerard's Primary School sang a hymn of thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament was then processed out of the church at the conclusion of the Mass.

Two days later, the parish gathered together once again, this time in a spirit of joy, for the Mass of Blessing to celebrate the reopening of the Sacred Heart Church, celebrated by Fr Stuart Parkes and clergy associated with the Church, including Father Michael Briody and Father James Travers, both ordained in the Church.





in Bellshill

For the past year, the Church, opened in 1951, has been closed to undergo major repairs and refurbishment. The Church will now serve as the spiritual home for the whole parish of Sacred Heart and St Gerard's Bellshill.

The renovations have included major repairs to the external roof, installation of a new ceiling and redecoration of the church. The original wooden sanctuary floor from 1951 has also been repaired and is back in use after being hidden by carpet for many years. Father Stuart began the Mass by thanking the various contractors and architects involved in the project, many of whom attended the opening Mass.

A number of the treasures from St Gerard's Church have been incorporated into Sacred Heart Church including the statues, crucifixes, stations of the cross, vestments, vessels and tabernacle, which will be used for Holy Thursday Altar of Repose, while other items will go to St Gerard's Primary and other churches in the Diocese.

Bishop Toal joined the parish again for Holy Masses on the First Sunday of Advent, to begin the new liturgical year and a new chapter in the life of Sacred Heart & St Gerard's Parish.

Legacy of Love

Geraldine Baird writes about a five-year long project she has undertaken to document the history of her local community of St Columbkille's, Rutherglen

A unique five-year project has come to a successful end for two Rutherglen parishioners.

Geraldine Baird and Kathleen Lenaghan from St Columbkille's Church Rutherglen have written a much-needed local historical account of the iconic Church which serves our area. Our project was to write a local history from a community perspective. Our focus was on the origins of the building and the memories of the community.

The impact of the book should urge readers to consider local everyday history and what ordinary community members have achieved. It should lift people's spirits, increase their knowledge, and help them learn about the past.

Hopefully, the book will encourage other parishioners to write about members of our community. This book is certainly a one-off.

Fundraising allowed us to get this project to fruition, and the generosity of individuals, organisation and businesses helped to pay for the printing and publication. There is no financial profit in this endeavour.

1,000 books have been produced which I am giving, at no cost, to members of our community. This book is certainly a one-off.

The history book, titled Legacy of Love, was officially launched on September 14th in St Columbkille's Parish Hall by Bishop Joseph Toal, the Irish Consul, and our local MP, who all helped us celebrate. Our local MSP, Clare Haughey, submitted a parliamentary motion at Holyrood to commend the book.





Special occasions for members of the Diocese as they continue their vocations journey

Three men from Motherwell Diocese have been celebrating Important milestones in their vocational journey recently as they prepare for the Priesthood and Permanent Diaconate.

On 3rd November, Stephen Nevans was admitted to candidacy for the Permanent Diaconate by Bishop Toal during Holy Mass in St Benedict's Church, Easterhouse where Stephen is currently on pastoral placement. This is one of the final major steps before Stephen's ordination to the Diaconate next year. Stephen is pictured above (left photo, 2nd from right) with Bishop Toal and his family after the Candidacy Mass.

Meanwhile in Rome, seminarian Matthew O'Neill from Coatbridge was admitted to candidacy for the Priesthood by Bishop John Sherrington. Matthew, who is preparing for the priesthood at the Scots College in Rome, was admitted alongside Patryk Solik from the Archdiocese of Glasgow. This is a significant milestone in a seminarian's journey, marking the beginning of the Configuration phase of formation, which continues throughout their theological studies. Matthew is pictured above (right photo, 2nd from left) with Bishop Sherrington, staff of the Scots College and fellow seminarian Patryk.



For seminarian, Christopher Igwe (above), a very special day was approaching as Fontes went to print. On 14th December he was ordained to the Diaconate in St Mary's College Oscott by Archbishop Bernard Longley. Deacon Christopher will now return to the Diocese and minister in St Mark's and St Anthony's Parish in Rutherglen. God willing he will be ordained to the priesthood next year.

ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
MOTHERWELL

THINK ABOUT PRIESTHOOD

If **YOU** are ready to answer God's call to be a priest in the **Diocese of Motherwell**, get in touch:

VOCATIONS DIRECTOR

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01698 423044
frofarrell@rcdom.org.uk

VOCATIONS PROMOTER

Fr. Sean Wyllie
01698 884017
frwyllie@rcdom.org.uk

ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
MOTHERWELL

THINK ABOUT PERMANENT DIACONATE

If **YOU** are ready to answer God's call to be a Permanent Deacon in the **Diocese of Motherwell**, get in touch:

VOCATIONS DIRECTOR

Deacon Bill McMillan
07912 859037
fdeaconmcmillan@rcdom.org.uk



Last month, the Bishops' Conference of Scotland gathered at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge for their autumn meeting.

During the meeting, the Bishops' elected Bishop John Keenan of Paisley as the new President of the Conference, succeeding Bishop Hugh Gilbert of Aberdeen, who held the post since 2018. Bishop Brian McGee of Argyll and the Isles was elected Vice-President, whilst the newest member of the Conference, Bishop Andrew McKenzie of Dunkeld was elected Secretary.

Meanwhile, all eight of Scotland's Bishops recently met with the First Minister of Scotland, John Swinney, at Bute House ahead of St Andrew's Day.

The meeting is thought to be the first time all of Scotland's Catholic bishops have been invited to the First Minister's official residence.

Following some warm words of welcome from the First Minister Bishop Keenan, thanked Mr Swinney for his kind invitation to the bishops and for his generous hospitality.



Bishops with John Swinney at Bute House

The bishops and the First Minister discussed a range of important issues, including education, poverty, pro-life issues, assisted suicide, freedom of religion, and the Scottish Government's commitment to 'loss and damage' and helping communities particularly vulnerable to climate change. The work of various Bishops' Conference agencies including SCIAF and the Scottish Catholic Education Service were also discussed.



L-R, Bishops Brian McGee, John Keenan and Andrew McKenzie

New Rector appointed to Salamanca



Father John Carroll

The Bishops' Conference has announced the appointment of Fr John Carroll, currently serving in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, as the rector of the Royal Scots College in Salamanca, Spain. The current rector of the College, Fr Thomas Kilbride, will finish his tenure after ten years.

Fr Carroll is presently the parish priest of St Mary Immaculate's and Holy Name Parish, Pollokshaws, in the city of Glasgow. He is an alumnus of the Royal Scots College, Valladolid and Salamanca, having been ordained a priest in 1989. He also served as Vice-Rector of the

College in Salamanca from 2000-2004.

Following his appointment, Fr Carroll expressed his gratitude: "I am honoured that the Bishops have asked me to return to Salamanca as the Rector. To have put their faith in me to take up the position leaves me feeling a little humble. I hope to be able to bring some of the experience of parish and school ministry from the last 20 years in Pollokshaws to the role. I am looking forward to working with Fr Stuart, the Spiritual Director, and the students to help them on their journey of discernment."

The young face behind the keys

Fontes recently caught up with **Jason Harkin**, who at age 7 is the youngest organist in the Diocese, to talk about his passion for playing the organ.

Jason. You seem young to be an organist. How old are you?

I am 7. I will be 8 in December

So when did you start playing the organ?

Fr Dominic Quinn at St Leonard's in East Kilbride let me play when I was 6, well 6 years and 8 months I think.

And you are the organist at St Leonard's?

I am one of them. I play at the Saturday Vigil Mass. I've played 62 Masses there. Samuel is the other organist who plays at the 12 O'clock Mass.

Have you played other organs in the Diocese?

Yes. I have been an "assistant organist" to Greg McHugh at St Augustine's Coatbridge since April. I just finished my apprenticeship with Greg at St Augustine's. 21 Masses. Playing with Greg and Hannah (the cantor) has been really great. I was so sad to have to finish. I also play now at Sunday Mass in St Benedict's in Easterhouse. We have a fantastic choir of adults and nuns and also a school choir! And I've been very lucky and got to play in lots of parishes. John Pitcaithley let me play the organ in Motherwell Cathedral twice! I've also played with Ronan McQuade (who's my organ buddy) at St Joseph's in Blantyre. And I've played at Masses in St Bartholomew's Coatbridge, St Kevin's Bargeddie, St Mary's Lanark, St John Baptist Uddingston and St Francis Xavier's Carfin where I did a duet with Fr Jim Grant.

In Lanark, Fr John-Paul took a video of me and posted it on Facebook and it got 2,000 views!

Wow that's a lot of churches!

It's my hobby. That and Roblox!

How did you get into the organ?

I was so excited about pianos. I was playing a lot at home and in train stations and places like that. Then I saw organ videos on YouTube. And I wanted to challenge myself. There's a fantastic set of videos about St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney where they have 6 organs! That changed everything. The organ is my favourite instrument, even more than the piano. I like the accordion too.

So who taught you the organ?

I kind of just started to play it. I hear things and try to play them. And I've learned a lot from Ronan and Greg. A huge amount. They are fantastic teachers

What's your favourite organ?

Oh. This is the hardest question. We are about to get a new organ in St Leonard's and I think that will be my favourite. Kelvingrove organ is my favourite so far. It's a Lewis organ. I got to play it because Ronan (McQuade) invited me to play as part of a performance he was putting on when I was 6

What's the most exotic organ you've ever played?

I was on holiday in Florida and got to play in the Basilica in Orlando.



And then last year I was on holiday in Vietnam (my mum is Vietnamese) and I got to play a 2 manual Yamaha Stagea in a huge 100 year old church in my great grandmother's village

So what do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be the organist at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. My mum and dad will move there with me.

Some quick questions! What's your favourite hymn?

Thine be the Glory

Your favourite piece of music?

Liberfure-Wely in e flat

And finally, what is your favourite organ stop?

Chamade trumpet, 8, Grand

Where can people who read Fontes hear you play?

They can invite me to play in their parish. I'd love that! And they can hear me on YouTube and they can subscribe!! Jasonorganpiano is my channel



The Missions driving Wellspring

BY ADRIAN HARKIN

Project Wellspring was agreed as an initiative by the clergy of the Diocese in September 2023, and launched across the Diocese in February 2024. The objective of the programme is to arrest the decline in Mass attendance across the Diocese and to enhance the spirituality of our people. We are now around a year into the programme. In this Wellspring update we provide 2 things:

1. An overview of Wellspring across the Diocese, as informed by an Assembly of Clergy in October.
2. An overview of the fruits coming out of the 5 priority Wellspring Missions.

WELLSPRING ACROSS THE DIOCESE

The Bishop invited all clergy to an Assembly in Motherwell on 29 October. In advance of that clergy were invited to provide input via a questionnaire. Of the questionnaires we received from the clergy here are the findings:

- 91% of our 57 parishes have launched Wellspring in the parish and the remaining 9% intend to launch it.
- 83% of parishes have had a holistic conversation across the parish following the launch of Wellspring.

- 70% of parishes have discussed entering into renewal and already 56% of parishes have started to renew themselves.
- 26% of parishes have seen some early signs of positive movement following some of their Wellspring initiatives.





Wellspring Missions

One of the keys to Wellspring is focussing our efforts on the 5 Missions which we judge will drive people back to the church, and help all of us to deepen our faith. Each Mission is led by a member of the clergy and has a team of people supporting the Mission. Here is a summary of where we are, and where we are going, on each of these 5 Missions.

Adult Formation *Led by Father Martin Delaney (helping adults to deepen their faith)*

- Called and Gifted** Through our baptism we all have a vocation and spirit-imbued Charisms (i.e. a special gift from the Holy Spirit) . Called and Gifted is a well-established programme that helps individuals discern what their own charisms are. We are training a team for Called and Gifted in the Diocese and over time will be inviting laity across the Diocese to find out their own charisms so they can have the most appropriate ministry in the church
- Online Resources** We will make resources available online for parishes across the Diocese (and beyond), supporting ongoing learning and discipleship
- Alpha Course** The Alpha Course is a powerful bedrock for groups getting to understand their faith more deeply. It is also very communal and ideal for parishes starting renewal. We will facilitate the sharing of good practices as well as providing training
- Talks and seminars** We will run 4 talks across the Diocese annually; in 2025 the talks will have a Jubilee theme

Education *Led by Father Colin Hughes*

- Examen** Examen is a daily prayer and devotional exercise that involves reflecting on your day and looking for God in the people and events around you. We introduced the Examen method to staff in our schools at the start of academic year 24 – 25, and the staff will progressively introduce it to pupils across the schools (72 Primary Schools, 12 Secondary Schools)
- SALT** We are piloting the SALT approach in 3 parishes across the Diocese. SALT is a hands-on educational approach and set of materials that opens children up to seep spiritual realities using Montessori educational principles. Assuming the pilots are successful we will roll SALT out to other parishes across the Diocese
- Ignite** Ignite is a programme for children preparing for the Sacraments (Confession, First Communion and Confirmation), in which the parish and the school partner to provide a series of fun educational sessions provided in the church during 8 Sundays of the year. Parents and families are invited to attend and the whole approach demonstrably impacts on the likelihood of the children receiving the sacraments to continue to practise
- Revamped Children's Liturgy** During the course of 2025 we will develop a more integrated approach to Children's Liturgy across the Diocese, reusing best approaches available
- Baptismal Boxes** During 2025 we will develop and deploy "Baptismal boxes" the contents of which are designed to help parents and godparents raise baptised children in the faith

Emmaus *Led by Deacon Michael Ross (focusing on the provision of support to people in need)*

- Approach and ethos** The Emmaus Mission is specifically concerned with 'process', with the steps required in developing a parish-level response to issues of marginalisation/deprivation. To that end, the Mission has been invaluablely assisted by Faith in Communities Scotland, a community development charity. The work of the Mission is conducted in partnership with this charity.

Provision in different parishes and towns

There are a multitude of organisations and initiatives providing support for people in need of relief (food, clothing, furniture, warm spaces, advice). No one area of our Diocese has the exact same needs as another. We are therefore moving from town to town looking at the best way of having the parishes in each area help people live out their faith through the provision of support to people in need. Our first initiative is underway in Easterhouse, where we will provide a service to the community to help those who need help navigating the 256 providers of support, whether that need be advice, translation, clarification or transport. This will be achieved through volunteer clinics manned by the local parish and available to the whole community. We will then move from town to town across the Diocese, deploying reusable toolkits to speed our progress

Caritas

We will engage with the Caritas students in each of our Secondary schools as we move this initiative forward. Work with the Caritas pupils in the Secondary Schools is aimed at raising awareness among young people of deprivation issues in their school communities and in the wider community.

Liturgy

Led by Father Stuart Parkes

Resources

We will provide online resources to support the provision of magnificent liturgy in every parish in the Diocese

Communities

We will create communities of practice (e.g. Sacristans, Masters of Ceremony, Readers, Musicians) across the Diocese, with periodic meetings to provide community, information and spiritual development

Youth

Led by Father Stephen Reilly

Approach and ethos

Our approach is expressly that parish-based projects and initiatives are the best way for youth to engage. But that the parish-based approach needs to be augmented by diocesan-level youth projects and initiatives so that our youth can see that there are broader groups and horizons with which they can engage

Called and Gifted

As with adults, youth will be invited to understand their charisms and to adopt areas of ministry that reflect their gifts and callings

Useful Reading List

We are in the course of producing lists of the most useful reading that can help parishes engage, develop and retain their youth

Appraisal of programmes and resources

We will provide an assessment of what works best for youth from the plethora of provision, so that parishes can turn to tried and tested approaches

Youth Monthly events

Youth Monthly events take place on Sunday nights at the Cathedral, featuring a spiritual input, music, a time of prayer then social time in Motherwell. There was a special version for December called Kingdom, which was run by the young people themselves and was open to the whole diocese.

Jubilee Initiatives

We will run initiatives for youth during the Jubilee year of 2025. The first such event will be the Jubilee walk from Carfin to the Cathedral on Sunday 29th December. The group will carry the specially-made Jubilee cross in procession via St Bride's Hall to the opening Mass of the Jubilee year in the Cathedral.

Pilgrimages

Lourdes ALMA: The ALMA youth group will accompany the Diocesan pilgrimage this July, caring for the pilgrims, providing entertainment, and helping to animate the pilgrimage Masses and services. Upwards of 35 young pilgrims are expected.
Salamanca summer formation school: Young people who have previously travelled with the Diocese to Lourdes and/or Rome in recent years have been invited to this formation school, where they will be encouraged and challenged to discover their gifts and charisms and to place these in the service of their parish and Diocese, using the Called and Gifted process. We expect around 30 young people to participate.

The Scriptures

by FATHER THOMAS MAGILL



4th Sunday of Advent Year C 22nd December

Micah 5.2-5a; Psalm 80; Hebrews 10.5-10; Gospel of Luke 1.39-45

On this last Sunday of Advent, we are invited to contemplate the figure of Mary, the mother of the Lord. Having just been told that she would give birth to Jesus, she journeys to her cousin Elizabeth to tell her the Good News. In turn Elizabeth tells Mary her good news that she too is pregnant. Here we see a synodal Church in miniature – a Church which journeys with and to others, a Church of encounter which gives and receives the Good News of Christ, and which is filled with joy as she faces the challenges of what is to come. This is a Church which dwells secure in the peace of Christ.

The Solemnity of Christmas Year C 25th December

There is a wealth of Scriptures to savour and enjoy today, with different readings for the Vigil Mass, Midnight Mass, Mass at dawn, and Mass during the day. All focus on Jesus of course, but in their different ways. The Vigil Mass emphasises the fulfilment in Christ of God's promises and of the people's hopes and dreams. At Midnight Mass the glory and beauty of what is happening is visible in the appearance and song of the heavenly host. It is a glory in the poverty of the manger, a glory wrapped in swaddling clothes. The dawn Mass describes the journey of the shepherds who glorify and praise God for all they had seen. At the Mass during the day we listen to the Gospel of John describing the Word made flesh who dwells

among us who see his glory, grace and truth. A synodal Church is a Church formed by an attentive listening to this Word made flesh who dwells in our midst. Like Mary, this is a contemplative Church which ponders and treasures these things in her heart

Feast of the Holy Family Year C 29th December

1 Samuel 1.20-22, 24-28; Psalm 84, 1 John 3.1-2, 221-24; Luke 2.41-52

The child Jesus, on the cusp of adolescence, already acknowledges his true Father. He knows that he must leave the security of the family home to do the Father's will. The amazement the teachers in the Temple feel as he speaks anticipates the amazement which will greet the Lord during his ministry. The anxiety expressed by his mother is already that sword which would pierce her heart and an anticipation of the Lord's suffering and death. Like Christ, we are each of us beloved sons and daughters of God, each with our own vocation, charisms and gifts which flourish in a synodal church in the service of all.

The Epiphany of the Lord Year C 5th January

Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72; Ephesians 3.2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2.1-12

The contrast between light and darkness, the feel of movement, the sensation of being drawn and gathered, the pull of the earthly by the divine, the urgency of the journey, all are present in both the readings from Isaiah and Matthew. These are sensations which immerse us body and soul into today's feast. The Glory of God

alights upon all humanity, the entire creation. This Khabod Yahweh elicits a sense of weightiness as though the cosmos itself is anchored in or tethered to the Glory of God. Isaiah describes the thrill of this experience; Matthew, the joy. Both show forth the brightness and radiance of what is taking place though for Matthew there are still pools of darkness. Herod is stuck in the seeming fastness of his palace, unwilling to emerge from its shadows. His questioning of the Magi reveals a shady and shadowed mind. He is unwilling to move, to change or be challenged by the events taking place. He is filled with fear and apprehension. He is content with the system that was, and supremely unaware how deeply it was collapsing with this new thing that God was doing. By contrast, the decision of the Magi to bypass Herod on their return journey and to go home "by another way" shows they are utterly changed by what they have experienced, still filled with the joy of their encounter, ready to continue on the journey. No longer will they dally with darkness or pander to the powerful; now they are their own men, claimed by God through this ecstatic experience; now they can choose a new road which will take them home, yes, but by different means and by new mapping, "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation.". Now they walk together to the homeland as fellows with all in Christ, members of his body, and sharers in his promise.

The Baptism of the Lord Year C 12th December

Isaiah 40.1-5, 9-11; Psalm 104; Titus 2.11-14, 3.4-7

The Spirit hovers over the waters in this liminal space, the Jordan river, the margin separating the wilderness from the land of bounty. We hear so many echoes: the creation, the flood, the waters flowing from the Temple, the years in the wilderness, the land flowing with milk and honey. These echoes come together in harmony with that voice from heaven: "You are my beloved Son: with you I am well pleased." This is the same Holy Spirit "poured out on us richly" through whom we hear those words addressed to each of us, the beloved sons and daughters of the Father. Together as Church we seek out those liminal spaces, those margins where the marginalised live, the fringes, outskirts, and peripheries of our world "betwixt and between the familiar and the completely unknown" but where we experience the Spirit of the Lord upon us. We go to the uneven ground and the rough places, the deserts and wildernesses, and are lifted up on a high mountain, so to speak, to see reality from a new view-point, "deep down things." And there, strangely, wonderfully, we are gathered to the God who comes to us, covered in the comfort he wraps us with. In Christ, we are plunged into this good earth to be raised up renewed and regenerated, now standing on holy ground, in sacred time and space. Now the whole of creation becomes sacred, all humanity is made holy. As we wait for our blessed hope, we recognise that we live in a sacramental world, that materiality itself is shot through with the heavenly, where everything points to and holds the divine. Truly, "earth's crammed with heaven," and we must now live our faith, do our theology, and be Church together in that ecological way we are summoned to by Pope Francis.

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C 19th January

Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 96; 1 Corinthians 12-4-11; John 2.1-11

The Lord gave "signs" to move people from the superficial to the profound, from the earthly to the heavenly, so that "they may believe." John's entire gospel is to be read in this way – a narrative pulling the reader down from the surface level of life to something deeper and effecting transformation on the way. The story begins "on the third day." (With a tin ear, the editors of the Lectionary change this to "at this time"). Already the reader is alerted to the third day of the Resurrection with the abundance of new life it brings out of the emptiness and dryness of the tomb. The story is to be read in the light of the Risen Lord when his hour had come. "They have no wine," the Mother of the Lord says. The people are running on empty, but unaware they are thirsting, that the empty jars of their lives are lying un(ful)filled and unsat(isfi)ed. It is a satiation, not just a fulness, the Lord brings. There is an intimacy and closeness to the Lord's presence. The wedding nods to the marriage feast of the Lamb, to that spring of living water welling up to eternal life, to the true vine and the branches, to the fulness of life the Lord brings. He is at one with them as he is at one with his heavenly Father and he it is who will bring them into that divine union. This earthly life is already enwrapped with the divine life. "Here is a vintage richer for the keeping." His Mother appears again at the very end of the gospel at the foot of the Cross thus bookending his entire ministry. She invites us to read the whole narrative through the prism of her discipleship and faith "so that we may believe" and become as she is "a crown of beauty" and a "royal diadem" in the hand of our God.

The Presentation of the Lord Year C 2nd February

Malachi 3.1-4; Psalm 24; Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40

Unlike the other gospels, Luke omits the accusation against Jesus that he would destroy the Temple and raise it in three days. For him, the Temple remains a place of prayer and sacredness, as he shows in the Acts of the Apostles. More, it is a place of encounter, of recognition, and of revelation. The parents of Jesus would experience all this when they find their child there sitting among the teachers (2.46). Their confusion and fear give way to pondering a treasure in their hearts. Simeon and Anna, figures straight from the Old Testament, are waiting, expecting, anticipating, praying, but now "dragged from secret dreamings." Unexpectedly, almost unthinkably, the Lord "has come suddenly to his Temple," in the words of the prophet Malachi. Simeon encounters the salvation he cradles in his arms; now he is released from the waiting, now he sees God's light and glory. Anna, after all those days and nights of fasting and praying, now gives thanks to God and speaks to anyone who would listen of the redemption she has experienced. The Lord is the refiner and purifier who gives them sweet voice to proclaim his presence. Both know the "joy, beautiful spark of divinity" that is the Lord. As the temple curtain is torn in two (23.45) Jesus enters to become the merciful and faithful High Priest of all, sharing in human flesh and blood. He is our hope, who has entered the inner shrine behind the curtain so that we can approach the throne of grace with boldness. Yet, in all this glory and light, already lowering and looming is the hostility which will contradict this sign. Shadows splinted by clouds, sovereign raw flesh, the blurring of the clearness, darkness blown by and gone away, skulking beneath stormy skies.





Church gets ready

Looking ahead to the Jubilee Year

BY JIM MCKELVIE

NATIONAL DELEGATE FOR HOLY YEAR 2025

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The Jubilee Year of 2025 is almost upon us, and the Holy Father will open the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica at Midnight Mass on 24th December and declare the beginning of the year of grace. Dioceses throughout the world have been asked to mark the start of the Holy Year on Sunday, 29th December, the Feast of the Holy Family.

The Jubilee will launch in Motherwell Diocese with a group of young people procession with the Holy Year Cross from Carfin Grotto to the Cathedral where the opening Mass will take place (see next page for more details).

In a message about the start of the Holy Year in this diocese, Bishop Toal said:

"An invitation is extended to everyone in the diocese and it is hoped it will be a great beginning for this special year under the logo, Pilgrims of Hope."

The theme of the Holy Year will be 'Pilgrims of Hope', and already there have been pilgrimages organised to Rome from parishes, diocese and organisations throughout the country, including from our own Cathedral in Motherwell. The Eternal City will certainly be busy this year, with over 4 million extra visitors expected to make the pilgrimage.

Pope Francis has also encouraged the faithful to make their own pilgrimages at home. We are currently finalising details of a pilgrimage to Iona on the weekend of 17th /18th May, led by Bishop Toal. Last year, about 15 pilgrims completed the walking pilgrimage from Motherwell to St Andrews, and we will repeat this in 2025, starting in March and walking once a week, covering about 11 miles each day. For further information about these pilgrimages, please see the contact details above.

The Jubilee logo will become familiar to us as the year progresses. It shows four figures representing the solidarity and fraternity which unites all of humanity. The cross is seen as an anchor in life's troubled seas, and is a sign of our faith and hope. Our pilgrimage is not an individual undertaking, but is done with our fellow pilgrims as we help each other through life's journey.

The Vatican has also released a cartoon mascot, Luce, as the face of the Jubilee Year of 2025. Luce is dressed in a Vatican-yellow raincoat, symbolising our journey through life's storms, and carries a pilgrim's staff with the pilgrim's shell reflected in her eyes, echoing the Holy Year's theme of Pilgrims of Hope. Her muddy boots are a sign of our long journey.

There is a packed diary of events in Rome for the Jubilee Year, with around 35 different Jubilees for different groups. There will be Jubilees for Artists, for Workers, for Priests, for the Disabled, and many more. Pope Francis has announced that he will canonise Blessed Carlo Acutis on Sunday, 27th April during the Jubilee of Adolescents, and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a young man from Turin, at the culmination of the Jubilee of Young People on August 3.



dy for Holy Year 2025



Jubilee launch in Motherwell

BY FATHER STUART PARKES
DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF LITURGY

“Hope does not disappoint” (Romans 5:5) is the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the Jubilee Year 2025. The hope which does not disappoint is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, a message of hope that fulfils the ancient promises, leads to Glory and is grounded in love. Pope Francis hopes the Jubilee will provide each of us with a personal encounter with the Lord.

We are invited to search for Signs of Hope in this jubilee year, to search for hope in the signs of the times that the Lord gives us, to find hope in the desire for peace in our world and in an openness to life. We are also invited to be signs of hope to the sick, to the young, to migrants, the elderly, and the poor. Hope is the virtue that will give direction and purpose to the life of believers.

An important part of the Jubilee has always been a sense of journey and pilgrimage – setting out on a journey being associated with the human search for meaning and understanding in life. While Holy Doors will open in the city of Rome elsewhere Pope Francis has asked for a pilgrimage behind a cross. Bishop Toal has asked Holy Cross High School in Hamilton to make the Jubilee Cross for the Diocese.

The Holy Year opens in our diocese with a pilgrimage moving towards the Cathedral behind the cross prepared for the year – a sign of a journey of hope, a pilgrim people behind the cross of Christ which remains the anchor of salvation.

People are invited to gather at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in Carfin at 1pm on Sunday 29th December for a short gathering that introduces the pilgrimage and the opening of the Holy Year. Bishop Toal with a small group of young people will then make the first part of the pilgrimage towards the Cathedral.

At 2.30pm, all people from across the Diocese are invited to gather in St Bride’s Hall (across from the Cathedral) for another gathering time on the journey behind the cross and for the short pilgrimage to the Cathedral, the veneration of the Cross, a memorial of our baptism and the celebration of Mass on the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Please join us for the celebration of the opening of the Jubilee Year on 29th December.

Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators
of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.



Travelling Crib:

bringing home the true meaning of Christmas

Our Lady and St Joseph's, Glenboig @our_joseph

Well done and thank you to our Pope Francis Children for taking part in today's special Jubilee Mass. What a lovely morning celebrating 50 years of our beautiful church building!



St Andrew's, Coatbridge @StAndrewsHS

Thank you to Bishop Toal for celebrating our Patronal Feast Day Mass. Thank you to all the young people who contributed. Happy St Andrew's Day!!!



St Columbkille's Rutherglen @StColumbkilles

Thank you again to Fr. Bernard for coming in to teach our class this week



St Barbara's, Muirhead @St_BarbarasPS

Well done to our Primary 6 children who celebrated an Enrolment Mass for the Pope Francis Faith Award this morning. Thank you to Father O'Brien and Father Rooney for a beautiful service.



Primary school pupils across the Diocese have been preparing to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas this Advent by taking home the Travelling Crib.

An initiative which started last year organised by the RE Department of the Diocese of Motherwell and Pauline Books & Media, sees pupils in each primary school get the opportunity to take home a small nativity for a few nights to help teach them of the true reason for the season.

The Travelling Crib is a child friendly

nativity scene with a book about the first Christmas which each child gets to take home to reflect and pray together with their families about the birth of the Christ Child.

Families and schools across the Diocese have been sharing photos online throughout Advent of the travelling crib being taken home and used by the children and their families.

Below are some of the pupils from St Ignatius' Primary Wishaw and St Mark's Primary Rutherglen taking part in the Christmas initiative.





Missio Stall at St. Teresa's

Mini Vinnies and Missio Champions at St. Teresa's Primary Newarthill raised £122.40 for Missio by organising a successful Missio stall, selling religious-themed gifts, including rosary rings, calendars, fidget toys, coloring books, prayer cards, miraculous medals, and books about saints during Catholic Education Week.



Pope Francis Faith Award launches at St Benedict's

Primary 6 pupils from St Benedict's in Easterhouse had a special launch service for the Pope Francis Faith Award attended by parents and Caritas Pupils from St Andrew's Secondary. They were also joined for the special occasion by parish priest, Fr Jim Thomson, and the School Choir.



Pupils put faith in action

In St Leonard's Primary in East Kilbride, Pope Francis Faith Award pupils along with the Mini Vinnies led the whole school as they gathered to pray the Rosary every Tuesday and Thursday during October. Pupils have also been busy making beautiful Christmas artwork to enter into the Missio Scotland Christmas Art Competition.



Sacramental Enrolment

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, Our Lady of Fatima Parish marked Catholic Education Week with an Enrolment Mass for our young people preparing for First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation in 2025. The Sunday Masses at St Mary's Larkhall and Our Lady & St John's Blackwood were a joyful expressions of our desire to love and serve God and to be nourished by his Sacraments.



Catholic Education Week 2024

During November, Schools and Parishes across the Diocese celebrated Catholic Education Week. This year's theme was 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Here are some of our schools celebrating in their local Churches.





Second Session of the Synod comes to an end in Rome

Bishop Brian McGee, Scotland's representative at the recent Synod in Rome, reports back on the second session

The Second Assembly of the Synod was an enriching and formative experience which built upon last October's First Assembly. I had been looking forward to returning to Rome for the Second Assembly. The atmosphere was very positive, prayerful, we were glad to meet each other again and determined to work hard and do the best we could. We immediately settled into the rhythm. The methodology was essentially the same, albeit with some tweaks: **Conversation in the Spirit, mixture of Small Groups and Plenary Sessions. The sharing was deep and based on trust. People spoke openly and freely about challenging issues. Pope Francis attended most of the Plenary Sessions. The Assembly was very well organised. It was a tiring but formative experience. Much to our surprise many expressed some sorrow at the Assembly concluding!**

SOME KEY THEMES

Synodality is Natural for the Church Synodality should be 'normal' in the Church. Synodality is rooted in the Trinity. We are called into relationships. Because relationships are both beneficial and fragile they need to be supported by formation. Synodality is in continuity with Vatican II, strengthens unity and seeks renewal, reform and inner conversion. However, synodality would benefit from a simple, concise description.

Baptism is a central theme. From baptism we are clothed in Christ, begin Christian Initiation, enjoy equal dignity, have co-responsibility. The role of women must be developed. The importance of ecumenism was



emphasised, including ecumenism by blood.

A central, but not the only image, was that of the People of God. We are on a journey together towards God but led by God. The importance of listening. We are called to mission. We are all members of the People of God. We asked 'Who is missing?' All must feel welcome and receive hospitality. What is the place of our separated brethren and indeed all of humanity within the People of God?

The Church's primary role is mission. The Church is enriched by many gifts, ministries and vocations. God offers the Church what she needs in a particular place and time. I found this very helpful and hopeful. The Church is always called to conversion. Relationships are extremely important within the Church. Hope is central.

Pope Francis established 10 Working Groups to study recommendations which were raised during the First Assembly but needed further theological or canonical research. They will report back to Pope Francis by the end of June 2025.

WHAT NOW OF THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY?

As I was vesting for the Closing Mass Fr Christoph Theobald, a Jesuit theologian based in Paris, said to me – "Now your hard work begins. Much will depend on how the Bishops' Conferences respond to and implement the Report." This was already in my thoughts. I had moved thinking primarily about the Synod to implementing synodality at home. The Synod meetings have concluded but the period on implementation has begun. As Pope Francis said "Now you are missionaries of synodality." As bishops, collectively and individually, we have responsibility for developing synodality within our dioceses and nation.

Find out more

Visit rcdom.org.uk/synod to read the full report by Bishop McGee as well as the final document from the Second Session of the Synod. You can also read a summary of the final report by Father Tom Magill.

Saints & Feasts

by FR FRANCIS MCGACHEY



Every evening, in the Church's last prayer of the day, called Compline or Night Prayer, a short canticle is recited, which is taken from Saint Luke's Gospel. The words of the canticle are those spoken by Simeon, an elderly and devout man, who met Mary and Joseph when they came to present the infant Jesus in the Temple, forty days after his birth. Simeon acclaimed the infant Christ as the "a Light to enlighten the Gentiles".

On the 2nd of February every year – the fortieth day after Christmas - the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple is celebrated. This feast is sometimes known as Candlemas, since on it, from the Tenth century, candles for use in the Church, as well as the homes of the faithful, are traditionally blessed. Why?

Apart from their practical use, essential in the days before

electricity, candles have always had a strong symbolic value: they are used in the liturgy to represent Christ, "the Light of the world", "the Light no darkness can overpower" (John 1,5).

In addition, candles, and light they give, are a sign of festivity and celebration, and a mark too of reverence for God's presence. Since they honour God, the Church states that they should always have a percentage of beeswax.

The most prominent and important candle in any Church is the Paschal Candle. Blessed at the Easter Vigil, it is placed at the side of pulpit during the Easter Season; it stands by the baptismal font throughout the rest of the year. It stands at the head of a coffin at a Funeral Mass.

Another prominent candle present in all Catholic Churches is the red coloured Sanctuary Lamp. It burns day and night, to indicate the

reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.

Candles are placed on the altar for the celebration of Holy Mass and Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Blessed candles are used at the celebration of the other sacraments except Penance. They are used too in processions: at the beginning and end of Mass, before the Gospel, and at the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday.

It is customary for every Catholic home to have at least two blessed candles. They are to be used when the Blessed Sacrament is brought to someone sick or housebound; for the administration of the Sacrament of the Sick; or to burn in the presence of a corpse – as a mark of vigil and respect. Blessed candles are to be used too at any time of prayer in the home.

Pilgrims follow in the footsteps of saints in Salamanca



BY JIM MCKELVIE
St Mary's and St Aidan's parish enjoyed an 8-day trip to the Royal Scots College in Salamanca in July, accompanied by Fr Michael Briody.

The parishioners are no strangers to Salamanca, with this being their seventh trip to the college. This year we visited Avila, Segovia, visiting the tomb of St John of the Cross, Toro

and Alba de Tormes, where Mass was celebrated at the tomb of St Teresa of Avila. The weather was particularly hot this year, reaching 45 degrees on our trip to the Parador in Plasencia, to the south of Salamanca. We would like to thank Fr Tom Kilbride, Fr Stuart Chalmers and the staff of the college for their outstanding hospitality and their contribution to a memorable trip.

“A devastating blow which pushed us out of the careers we loved very much”

Ten years on from a legal bid to protect midwives from participating in abortions, **Mary Doogan** reflects on the importance of the pro-life message

Ten years to the day have passed since my dear friend and colleague, Connie Wood, and I found ourselves sitting in the hallowed environment of the highest Courtroom in the land, the Supreme Court in London, defending the rights of labour ward midwifery managers to not participate in the practice of abortion.

The date, 11 November 2014. At exactly 11 minutes past 11.00, everyone present in that room stood in silence for 2 minutes, commemorating Armistice Day, solemnly reflecting on the loss of life of the brave soldiers who had fallen in both world wars.

Outside of the courtroom, thousands of red poppies lay strewn across the sidewalks all around, rightfully reminding everyone of the bravery of the men and women who had given their lives in battle for freedom. The red covered pavements that day stretched out far and wide. Armistice Day commemorates the day the guns of war ceased operating.

The irony of our situation was not lost on me as I reflected upon the weapons of war that still operate in taking the lives of many more fellow human beings since the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act when abortion was made legal in the UK.

For these children whose numbers far exceed the combined numbers of soldiers killed in the two World Wars, no Armistice Day yet exists.

With a team of lawyers and QC, Connie and I had spent 6 years struggling to hold onto our rights



as conscientious objecting midwifery managers to abstain from participating in abortion in the maternity unit.

That battle against our employers, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, had already resulted in two Court hearings in Edinburgh, the first one which we lost but which after a successful appeal in front of three judges, resulted in a well-reasoned and very favourable outcome for us.

The determination, however, of various ideological bodies to eliminate the conscientious rights of health care workers proved the hardest hurdle to overcome as the Health Board appealed the Edinburgh Appeals Court ruling.

In the end the five Supreme Court

Justices in London overturned the Edinburgh decision and in practice, took away the rights of midwifery labour ward managers to abstain from the practice of abortion.

For Connie Wood and me this was a devastating blow which pushed us both ultimately out of the careers we had practised for years and loved very much, caring for pregnant mothers and their unborn babies, and ultimately bringing life into the world.

Ten years on from that decision and if anything, the situation now seems so much worse than then.

Since 1967 over 10 million babies have lost their lives to abortion in the UK. But added to this horrific reality and for which very little is made, is the loss of potential

children, grandchildren and future generations that have been stolen through the taking of all these lives. Why be shocked then to learn of the ageing population problem currently afflicting Europe and many other parts of our world and to learn now of the UK Government's current attempts to legalise euthanasia? Logic alone tells you one surely follows the other.

Our society has aborted so many of its healthy children, practically all of its handicapped children and now we have raised voices in support of so called "mercy killing" for the sick and the elderly.

Mother Theresa once said, "When you create violence in the womb, you create a violent society".

One day, I am absolutely convinced, abortion will be seen for the horror it actually is and will be shunned by a spiritually awakened society of people.

When will that happen? Who knows? But for the sheer survival of the human species, it has to happen. When it does, humanity will look upon the practice of this current generation with great wonder, astonishment and incredible sadness.

The Medjugorje visionary, Miryana, when told by a visiting pilgrim 'she was afraid to bring children into our current world', quoted the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary as having responded, "You should be afraid to not have children".

We see today some of the reasons for that heavenly advice. The only question now is are we wise enough to pay attention and act on it? I hope and pray we are.

Leadbeater Bill passes Second Reading in UK Parliament but Majority of Scottish MPs Vote Against



BY ANTHONY HORAN

November, MPs voted in favour of Kim Leadbeater's Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill.

The Bill, which would legalise assisted suicide in England & Wales but will have a significant influence on a similar proposed law in Scotland, passed by 350 – 275 votes. The Bill will now pass to Committee, then to Report Stage, following which MPs will be given another chance to vote at Third Reading, likely to take place in April.

Reacting to the vote, Bishop John Keenan said: "This is a sad day for the sick, the vulnerable and the disabled in society. Today's vote strikes a blow against the foundational principle of medicine "do no harm". Since parliamentarians have voted to create a category of people that the state will help to commit suicide, doctors will now be invited to help their patients to kill themselves. As we have seen across the world, once enacted these laws are rapidly and dangerously expanded."

Despite the overall majority in favour, Scottish MPs bucked the trend with a majority voting against the Bill. A total of 29 Scottish MPs rejected the Bill, and 17 voted in favour. Eleven Scottish MPs did not vote, including nine SNP members and two Labour members.

Thank you to all of those who contacted their MP ahead of Friday's vote. Your emails, letters, phone calls and meetings worked, with two Scottish MPs reporting that at least 90% of correspondence received was opposed to the Bill. Your engagement on this very important issue has been significant and helped to make a positive difference, at least here in Scotland.

And whilst a majority of MPs expressed support for the Bill, many of those who voted in favour have expressed significant concerns about safeguards, including the risk of coercion and people feeling they are a burden, and the lack of funding for palliative care.

The Second Reading vote is a blow, but it is far from a knockout, and it's still all to play for.

Whilst we will continue to encourage engagement with MPs on the Leadbeater Bill we will also need to turn our attention to Holyrood, and Liam McArthur's Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill. The Catholic Parliamentary Office will shortly provide more information on this and what you can do to help.

In the meantime, it would be extremely helpful if you could contact your MP to tell them what you think of their vote on the Leadbeater Bill and to urge them to vote against the Bill at Third Reading. Below is a list of Scottish MPs and how they voted on the Bill. Please do contact your local MP, using the Write to Them website, and remember to urge them to vote against the Bill at Third Reading.

Anthony Horan is Director of the Scottish Catholic Parliamentary Office on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland

The compulsion for a Catholic education



BY JOSEPH M BRADLEY

In Scotland, amongst the various ways a Catholic education can be discussed and commented upon, there is a tendency to conflate it with an uncomplicated identification with the distinctive, scattered, and largely west-central belt presence of Catholic schools. These serve a Catholic minority of the Scottish population while in much of the rest of the country there is a prevailing perspective that there are too few Catholics to merit the presence of such schools. This referred to conflation also means that in Scotland Catholic schools are frequently referred to in limited historical, ethnic, cultural and political terms. For example, in November 2023, a letter contributor to the country's main broadsheet, The Herald, rehearsed frequent themes relayed by numerous antagonists of Catholic schools in Scotland, and who can in turn also be opponents of public displays and utterings of Christianity/religion per se. The communication contains and relays a dominant narrative that, unlike today, 'Scotland 100 years ago was a very different place'.

This, when much of Scottish society was religiously, culturally, economically and politically anti-Catholic (this self-proclaimed non-religious letter writer revealingly refers to this as 'persecuted'), in addition to being anti-Irish. However, despite a semblance of acceptance for an ethno-cultural need for these schools in the past, this writer believes currently:

"Catholics no longer face the real persecution which once justified their privilege of having separate state-funded schools.....The job of schools is to prepare pupils for adulthood, equipping them with the knowledge they will need to play their part in society. The knowledge they need does not depend on a pupil's religion.....It is of course important that, in order to understand our history and the modern world, pupils learn a bit about each of the main religions and their sects..... Balanced and unbiased teaching about religion would equip pupils to make their own minds' up if, as is their right, their parents choose to evangelise on behalf of their own religion either at home or with the help of their church, mosque, chapel, synagogue, temple or whatever.

Scotland is now home to people of many different religions and also a home to a great many of us with no religious beliefs. There can be no justification for continuing to provide separate schools for just one religious group just because it was persecuted one hundred years ago."

If one separates much of the historical content of this letter and the narratives of bigotry or prejudice against Catholics, its crucial to be mindful of its perceived representation of a 'Catholic' rationale for a Catholic education. This depiction is a demonstration of an impoverished understanding about the Catholic *raison d'être* and discernment for the existence of such an education and the presence of Catholic schools in Scotland, as well as in other societies. Outside of bigotry, racism or anti-Christian and anti-religious sentiments, it is possible also that this argument unfortunately partly reflects an inadequate and insubstantial articulation of such schools by a number of those that attend, support and advocate the same – although often this might be

because such supportive voices are diverted from or not voiced in conventional communications, particularly in mainstream media.

Nonetheless, a significant area of discourse almost entirely absent with respect to popular constructions, opinions and urgings in Scotland, as relayed in for example The Herald letter, is the fundamental Catholic purpose that such an education is intended to serve for their advocates. Although rarely stated, the rationale for Catholic schools, for a Catholic education, and ultimately for being Catholic, is and should be profoundly different from that which is often popularly conveyed. To a great extent, a standard school education in Scotland plays a significant role in preparing pupils to 'fit in' with society. Nevertheless, while preparing pupils for the veracities of the 'real' world that lays outside the school gates, Catholic education has an additional and more fundamental and central role, ethos and mission. It is partly in this context we might recall some well-known words from Mark's Gospel (8:36).

'For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?'

Such teaching, wisdom, morality and philosophy, is invariably absent in terms of a secularised and mechanistic view of the purposes of formal education in western societies, including in Scotland. Jesus' instruction warns against over-estimating, indeed that we should frequently reject, human created ambitions, values, status, and achievements. Some, or many 'worldly things' may of course have worth, but these can't be lived or sought at the expense of what Jesus tells us is more important. Mark's Gospel message also echoes the words of Jesus as chronicled in numerous places in the New Testament: that is, to 'Follow Me'. By implication, the path of Jesus is not 'the way' of the world. The chorus of a particular Catholic hymn emphasises Jesus' message, to, 'Follow Me': in the process encouraging an appropriate deviation from following worldly things.

'Lord, you have come to the seashore, neither searching for the rich nor the wise, desiring only that I should follow.....at your side, I will seek other shores.'

Mark's Gospel therefore can assist understanding with respect to the rationale for Catholic schools. This, in that the words of Jesus offer a counter prevalent cultural deduction regarding an education that leads pupils to seek or to simply join in with the ways of the world. From a Catholic educational perspective, this is not enough: indeed, it's wholly inadequate. Pope Saint John Paul says:

'To believe in Jesus is to accept what He Says, even when it runs contrary to what others are saying. It means rejecting the lure of sin, however attractive it may be, in order to set out on the difficult path of the Gospel virtues'

Thus, although offering a similar diet to the required and prevailing formal learning experience, theoretically a Catholic education holds the further promise of being characterised by teaching, learning, ambitions, virtues and achievements more in line with the teachings of the Gospels than those of a secular society. From this Catholic perspective these characterisations have potential to actively assist shape a better actuality that what currently exists. Accordingly, this potential represents a world intended by Jesus Himself.

Contrasting visions

In a world that can evidence physical beauty and splendour, happiness and endeavour, charity and compassion, it is also overshadowed, indeed, often dominated and overwhelmed, by cultural, political, economic and social conflict, self-gratification, individual, national and international self-interest and violence. Devoid of Jesus at the centre, the socio-economic, politico-cultural ideologies and practices that have long dominated in some shape or form, can be considered culpable in creating, encouraging, and reflecting these transgressions: what Christians otherwise refer to as 'sin'.

Although a Catholic education, like most others, has a responsibility to prepare pupils to positively engage with the world as it exists, part of its greater role, like that of the Church, is to be a radical voice that recognises, questions, challenges and changes numerous real-world actualities. Such critical engagement is arguably inherent to, and a distinguishing feature of, a truly Catholic education, one that should be reflected in the rationale and core mission narratives of a Catholic school. Catholics too seek to achieve in education, business, music, science, engineering, culture, sport, politics, etc. However, Jesus (Mark 3:6) offers no solace with regards the acquisition or pursuit of academic qualifications or wealth, of fame, a capacity for entrepreneurship, having a good singing voice or an ability to dance well, or if in possession of a large salary or Champions League medal, etc. Whatever merits found in these, on their own they remain inadequate and deficient, even inconsequential.

There is nothing inherently wrong with having money, being the fastest athlete, acquiring a PhD or being an effective businessperson. These have the potential to be functional, beneficial, uplifting, gratifying, rewarding. However, from a Catholic perspective, the merits or otherwise involved depend on what these represent, the importance given them, and how they are utilised, with respect to life's journey and human relations. As Mark's Gospel emphasises, and critical with regards context, if these are gained at the expense of one's spirit and soul then Christ's teachings have been ignored. Part of the cost of these playing an elevated role for an individual or society, is that any might be acquired or paraded at the expense of the greater Christian mission of service to others: and in turn, of faith, hope and love.

A Catholic education does not distinguish between the religious/spiritual and the secular. In this vein, it aims to generate as many pupils as possible that attain academic excellence and/or can use their acquired knowledge,

understanding and experiences for self, family and community empowerment and advancement in the real world. However, this is underscored and qualified by the principle need to take in to account the radical and revolutionary attitudes and actions that radiate from the Gospels. Such recognition extends beyond a secular understanding of formal education. This, therefore, partly includes perceptions of popular notions about what constitutes progress, achievement, ambition, success, development, etc. Thus potentially, Catholic education can offer a more ethical understanding and meaning with respect to such conceptualisations.

In the footsteps of Jesus, the task of building God's Kingdom partly means acting to transform the existing world to better reflect the teachings and virtues of the Gospels. The success or otherwise of a Catholic school in contributing to this, as of course with an incalculable number of other factors and actors (not least of all immediate family and quality of teaching), is key as to whether a Catholic education can assist make the world a better place.

In this sense, and reflecting the deeper, all-embracing and extensive aspects and attributes inherent to a Catholic education, if the relevant decisions of a Catholic-educated person are guided by a Christ centred consciousness, knowledge, understanding, motivations and actions, we are guaranteed to have a better world. Thus, if a Catholic-educated person sees war, poverty, racism, materialism, the politics of food, human sexuality, homelessness, immigration, the inherent dignity of the human person, the environment, etc, from the perspective of the Gospels, and if this person has commensurate attitudes and virtues and acts accordingly, for that individual at least, and almost certainly for some that experience, are touched by, even imitate, their witness, the Catholic school – and of course the Catholic family – has succeeded in its mission. In this way, a Catholic

school makes a small contribution to Scotland and the world being truly better places. This is also strongly linked to what Australia-based Professor Brother David Hall says about some of the potential 'added value' of Catholic schools.

"Many of us are judging the outcome of Catholic schools on the basis of whether our young people are explicitly religious, which is one dimension we would like to see. But another critical dimension is 'are they compassionate human beings?'"

In the Jesuit constitutions, Saint Ignatius exclaimed that we can and ought to "seek God our Lord in all things". Ronald Modras elaborates saying, that if this is so, "then there is no aspect of human endeavour that is outside of grace or inappropriate for Christian service". Pope Saint John Paul said in a message to almost 20,000 mainly Catholic parochial and public high school students at Maddison Square Gardens in 1979:

"by the practice of your religion, you are called to give witness to your faith. And because actions speak louder than words, you are called to proclaim, by the conduct of your daily lives, that you really do believe that Jesus Christ is Lord."

For Pope Francis, being motivated by Gospel virtues means proclaiming and living, 'the reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, unity, and love that the Holy Spirit gives us'. The widespread acquisition and practice of such virtues in fact would make for a truly improved, progressive and equal society. In contrast, and following the 'ways of the world', it is evident that no Government, no political power in any country, no multi or trans-national business or corporation, is motivated, thinks, speaks or acts in such a way.

Of course, as part of the secularism that often dominates, we also have the real world that Catholic schools exist within. As with numerous other types of schools and educational systems, designs and types – this includes, Catholic failures, lapses, errors (sins), etc. This real world also involves the efficacy

that Catholic education relies on, including, on the part of those that proclaim and live it, as well as those that receive, experience, and learn it. Theoretically and philosophically, a Catholic education aims to live in and engage with the reality of the world as it is. This also, whilst constructing it anew and aspiring, hoping and praying, with respect to the world to come.

Catholic Social Teaching

Although rarely stated outright, a core rationale for the existence of Catholic education originates with Catholic Social Teaching and its concomitant Catholic Social Principles. Rooted in scripture, and developed, formed and articulated through the wisdom of theologians and numerous Popes, especially the latter since 1891 and the encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum*, the Church identifies key aspects that comprise and provide practical relevance to Catholic social principles, and, their teaching, promotion, learning and practice: specifically, with respect to guiding responses to the existing social, economic, political and cultural world. These are; *'The Life and Dignity of the Human Person, the Call to Family, Community, and Participation, Rights and Responsibilities, the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, Solidarity, Care for God's Creation.'*

Most Catholic schools in Britain follow the dominant conventional model shared by the majority of other schools; that is, preparing pupils to make their way in life and positively contribute, economically, socially, culturally and politically, to society. However, found within Catholic Social Teaching are the key distinctive dimensions and formulae that constitute the referred to varied, and more critical discernment: one that provides the foundations and reasonings behind Catholic education and Catholic schools – and which ultimately is tied to Catholic understandings and beliefs regarding life's purpose.

In discussing the role of the State in providing school education, Glasgow University's Leonard

Franchi talks about a Christian seeing this as promoting human flourishing. He argues Catholic social teaching is not just one part of the wider curriculum, but should, ideally, form and 'underpin the mission, aims and objectives of the [Catholic] school'. In other words, the very purpose of an education in a Catholic environment is to see beyond any described human interpretation of what constitutes education and related progress, a successful and flourishing humanity and to see such advancement and 'joy' as only truly achievable if led by Jesus. After all, Jesus said: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John, 14:6).

Distinct from any human interpretation or direction, the spiritual purpose of progress, success and flourishing is intended to lead everyone to God's Kingdom, and for His children to recognise their own and each other's creation as constituting His image and likeness (imago Dei). Directly related to this, and arising from Catholic Social Teaching, the idea of imago Dei is viewed, comprehended and regarded by Catholic educationalists as constituting the foundation for, as well as pervading and encompassing, amongst much else, a range of principles that define what can be regarded as life's fundamentals. Not exhausted by such a list, this includes employment, human conflict, militarism, colonialism, suffering, poverty, hunger, abortion, euthanasia, wealth, racism, bullying, sexual relations, pornography,

marriage, conceptions of family, community, materialism, consumerism, nationalism, human rights, care for the physical world and its resources, economic exploitation, and the uses of influence and power. This also, with respect to charity, sharing, truth, prudence, justice and our obligations, particularly as servants, to those rendered disadvantaged, marginalised and poor: that is, our neighbour. These, and others, added to related teachings about the true and authentic nature of joy, happiness, service and love, are what form and direct the template for Catholic education. Such an education comprises a life code, an ethical and moral compass for teaching, promotion, learning and practice, to guide actions in, and reactions to, the existing social, economic, political and cultural world: and to make the choices God wants humanity to make, and thus, acting in the image of God.

Such a setting and relevant curriculum, ultimately contextualised by Catholic Social Teachings, are viewed as promoting the common good and sustaining and pointing to an orientation towards God in all things. Bishop Robert Barron talks of identifying and undermining what is 'dysfunctional in the surrounding culture'. For him, a Catholic education, initiated by family, extended by school, and providing the foundation and moral compass for the rest of one's life, is intended to assist create people of quality and integrity, whereby:

"we shed light, illuminating what is beautiful and revealing what is ugly. The clear implication is that, without vibrant Christians, the world is a much worse place."

It must also be recognised that the small unit of the human family, just like larger cultural, national and international ones, is imperfect. Thus, education can also be seen as never ending, and a function and responsibility of all Catholics/Christians as to how they reflect, as well as imitate, the face of Christ.

Where a typical or standard education in Scotland may contain much to value, Jesus warns how a focus on worldly matters is spiritually unproductive, indeed, is detrimental regarding humanity's ultimate purpose and destination. In this context, Catholic Social Teaching and learning, reflected through a Catholic education, and in the setting of a Catholic school, offers a way of thinking, being, and seeing the world. This includes the possibility of being part of a faith community that reflects truth, one that grows and develops in truth, and offers this truth for others to learn from. It is a prescription for living a life of holiness, one that provides a coherent vision for an authentic and just society in which the dignity of all is recognised and fully respected: one destined also for everlasting life with God. This dignity is founded on a fundamental understanding of, and belief in, the sanctity of human life.



New Devotion for Carfin Lourdes Grotto

Devotions to Léonie Martin

Sister Françoise-Thérèse

7.30pm - First Tuesday of Every Month

BY FATHER JIM GRANT

Léonie has, I think, a very important story because she was the FORGOTTEN ONE.

She was the one who was in the last place. She was the one who was less gifted than the others. Today we might call her a problem child and we'll see that she certainly was that the source of great anxiety to her mother. To her parents, she was responsible for disruption in the family for all the years of her infancy

and during her teenage years and then the story took the turn for the better. Léonie later became a Sister of the Visitation Order. Léonie is now regarded as a special intercessor and friend of children born with behavioural 'complications' (e.g. Asperger's, Autism...) as well as being a source of comfort to their parents, grandparents and siblings. A heartfelt invitation is extended to all who wish to learn more about Léonie and seek the intercession of 'God's Little Violet'.



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Blairs College Christmas at Blairs

David McCann reminisces about celebrating Christmas at the former Junior Seminary

Christmas was special. Although this seems a truism, a Blairs Christmas was very special.

In contrast to Pentecost, it came at the end of a very busy first term, a liturgically rich period with several important feast-days already celebrated and the preparation time of Advent solemnly observed. Some people were not happy to be away from family on Christmas Eve. (I had thought we travelled home after lunch on Christmas Day, but some friends assure me we travelled on Boxing Day.) This tended to be forgotten as preparation for the great feast-day came to an end and Christmas Eve dawned. A flurry of last-minute

preparations was followed by an early evening 'siesta' time for all but Sixth Year, whose task it was to prepare the house and the chapel for the celebration of the Nativity. I was never able to sleep during this rest period as the whole college was in a state of excitement and pre-Christmas apprehension.

Before the start of Midnight Mass there was the highly unusual traditional privilege of being allowed to go around to the front of the college in choir dress (a practice usually forbidden except in times of processions).

I have a vivid memory of one Christmas Eve where heavy snow

had fallen earlier in the day and the College was in its best picture postcard setting. A few of us went around to the front of the college half an hour or so before Mass was due to start and the stillness of the white countryside, with the imposing grey granite of the college softened by a gilding of white, was quite awe-inducing.

People were arriving from the parish and other places to take their places in the public area of the chapel and their talking and laughter could be heard in the crystal air. In all, I can think of few places more conducive to the beauty of the Christmas liturgy than the Blairs chapel.

Stella Maris

Helping seafarers celebrate Christmas

With Christmas approaching, **Greg Watts** from **Stella Maris** speaks to **Deacon Joe O'Donnell**, a port Chaplain in Glasgow, about how the charity helps seafarers during the festive period while hundreds of miles away from home.

“The ports are at their peak in the run-up to Christmas with the operation side handling double the amount of freight. This can mean even longer working hours for seafarers and shoreside workers,” says Deacon Joe O'Donnell. Joe works for Catholic maritime charity Stella Maris (formerly known as Apostleship of the Sea) as their Senior Area Port Chaplain for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Christmas is a boom time for the supermarkets and shops in the high street. However, the tills would not be ringing as much were it not for the men, and occasionally, women, who spend the best part of a year away from their families back home. People are often unaware that about 90% of goods that arrive in the UK do so by sea. That's everything from cars to computers and from fruit to clothes.

“The nature of seafarers working at sea is rarely recognised. This is due to most people not having access to port operations and not really understanding how much their daily life depends on seafarers keeping global supply chains moving,” says Joe. “I would suggest that only during the pandemic were seafarers acknowledged as key workers.”

Seafarers find it hard not being with their loved ones at this very special time of year. Many seafarers come from the Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, or India.

It is not uncommon to hear from a seafarer that he has not spent a Christmas at home for many years. This is why Stella Maris Port Chaplains and volunteer ship visitors try to make Christmas in port as special as possible for seafarers arriving here.

Joe explains that often seafarers would like to attend a church service while anchored in port over

Christmas, but this is not always possible. “Although there are no daily operations in port on Christmas Day, the crew still have watch duties and carry out maintenance work on board. Obviously, these can coincide with times of services.”

Anne McLaren, Stella Maris' Senior Area Port Chaplain for the North of England, explains that local parishes and schools also play an important part in making Christmas special for seafarers.

“We have run a woolly hat appeal with primary schools for a number





of years. We visit schools in November and in the assembly, we tell them all about the importance of seafarers and the goods that they bring to us an island nation. We explain how, especially at Christmas time, we should remember seafarers in our thoughts and prayers. A list of items is given to the school for the children to collect and then we return in early December to pack everything with the woolly hats with the children. We include a Christmas card from them or a label identifying the school which is attached to the hats.

“Then we deliver the hats to the seafarers on board their vessels. We tell them about the children who have prepared the hats and that they will be praying for them over the Christmas period.

“We let the schools know what vessel their hats are on, so they can track the vessel on a marine traffic app. That way the children can see where the seafarers will be in the world on Christmas Day when they open their presents from them.”

Seafarers find different ways to celebrate Christmas, explains Charles Stuart, the Stella Maris Regional Port Chaplain covering Southampton, Portsmouth and other ports on the south coast.

“I’ve seen Christmas trees made out of plastic water bottles. The cook will prepare a special meal and the shipping company may give an extra allowance for this. People of all faiths will come together to celebrate a feast day. Some who have time and can afford it will buy festive food and wine from the supermarket when in port.

“I wish you could see the smiles on seafarers’ faces as I arrive on board with a sack full of presents. Sometimes I even dress up as Father Christmas and bring a volunteer as my elf! Seafarers might be strong, hardy people, but their eyes shine as we hand out gifts. For many, it’s their only Christmas present.

“Our gifts will add sparkle to the table and offer a link to the world from which they are so often

isolated, and they will remember us for this. One ship’s master told me that we seem to be the only ones who care. I also heard from a master of a tanker who told me his company offered only a small chocolate bar for each member of the crew. He said he had them in his cabin, but he was too embarrassed to give them out because he felt this reward was too paltry.”

In the coming weeks, hundreds of vessels will stop in UK ports. Stella Maris chaplains around the UK will go on board to share Christmas joy with seafarers and provide gifts to them.



STELLA MARIS

To find out more about Stella Maris' work, or to make a donation to its Christmas Appeal for seafarers, go to www.stellamaris.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

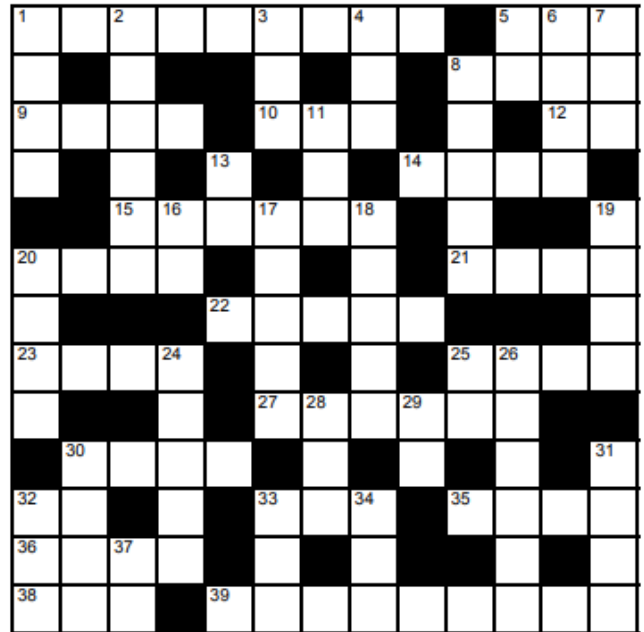
- 1 Jesus' birthplace (9)
 5 Herod slew the children of this age and under (3)
 8 Peter quoted his words on the day of Pentecost (4)
 9 "A ___ shaken with the wind" (4)
 10 "Ye shall find ___ babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" (3)
 12 The year from Jesus' birth (2)
 14 Anna was of this tribe (as recorded in Luke) (4)
 15 "Behold, a ___ shall be with child" (6)
 20 "Fruits ___ for repentance" (4)
 21 The wise men came from here (4)

- 22 "He shall reign of the house of ___ for ever" (5)
 23 A female ancestor of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 1 (4)
 25 The amount of manna to be gathered per person (4)
 27 He multiplied the widow's oil (6)
 30 "As soon as the voice of thy salvation sounded in mine ___" (4)
 32 An altar meaning witness (Joshua 22) (2)
 33 To increase (3)
 35 Malarial fever (4)
 36 To guide (4)
 38 There was no room here (3)
 39 These men went to see the baby Jesus (9)

DOWN

- 1 "Mary, of whom was ___ Jesus" (4)
 2 Jesus' age when he was taken to Jerusalem (6)
 3 Jesus did not do this in the wilderness (3)
 4 Adam's wife (3)
 5 "Mary was espoused ___ Joseph" (2)
 6 "They that ___ soft clothing are in kings' houses" (4)
 7 Zacharias said, "I am an ___ man" (3)
 8 Grandson of 23 (5)

- 7 Zacharias said, "I am an ___ man" (3)
 8 Grandson of 23 (5)
 11 A place near Bethel (3)
 13 "A pair of turtledoves ___ two young pigeons" (2)
 16 "That ___ might be fulfilled" (2)
 17 "The ___ of God was upon him" (5)
 18 Mother-in-law of 23 (5)
 19 This went before the wise men (4)
 20 The mother of Jesus (4)
 24 He was king at the time of Jesus' birth (5)



by Colin

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- 25 "___ that one would hear me!" (2)
 26 Jesus was laid in this (6)
 28 The spirit did this to Jesus in the wilderness (3)
 29 Thus (2)
 30 The first garden (4)
 31 "Where is he that is born king of the ___?" (4)
 32 A priest in the time of Samuel (3)
 33 A tree of the olive family (3)
 34 To put into water (3)
 37 "___ angel of the Lord appeareth" (2)
- 24 He was king at the time of Jesus' birth (5)
 25 "___ that one would hear me!" (2)
 26 Jesus was laid in this (6)
 28 The spirit did this to Jesus in the wilderness (3)
 29 Thus (2)
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 31 "Where is he that is born king of the ___?" (4)
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 33 A tree of the olive family (3)
 34 To put into water (3)
 37 "___ angel of the Lord appeareth" (2)

JOY *to the* WORLD

Wishing all our readers a very happy and holy Christmas.
 Thank you for your continued support during 2024 and we look forward to bring you all the news from Motherwell Diocese in 2025.

