



Galloway Diocese **NEWS**

Lent
Edition

March
2022

From Galloway to Glasgow



God speed, Archbishop William Nolan

More photographs and comment on the back page and on page 7

Words from the Administrator

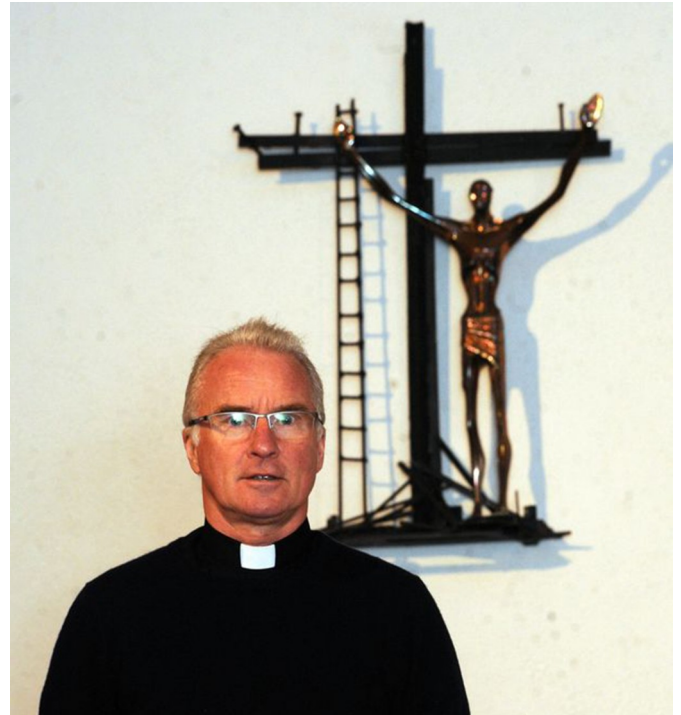
Father William McFadden has been elected by the College of Consultors as the Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Galloway until a new Bishop is appointed by Rome.

It is my privilege to have been appointed as the Diocesan Administrator during the *sede vacante*, the official term for the period when a diocese does not have a bishop in post. When a diocese is *sede vacante*, literally meaning “the seat is empty,” it is the responsibility of the College of Consultors to appoint someone to administer the diocese. This took place on Monday 28th February, and I thank the Consultors for putting their faith in me.

Although the term “administrator” sounds as if the diocese is calling in an accountant because of insolvency or bankruptcy, it is really just an acknowledgement that the day to day running of the diocese must continue until a new bishop is appointed. As Diocesan Administrator, it will be my task to continue what took place under the leadership of Bishop Nolan, and to ensure that the diocese is prepared for the new incumbent when chosen.

In this role, I will be supported by the College of Consultors, who will work in collaboration with me as we address the spiritual, pastoral and governance issues in the diocese. It is not the responsibility of the Administrator to introduce new initiatives, but to offer continuity and stability.

Unfortunately, the time scale for appointing a new bishop for the diocese is somewhat open ended. The process for appointing is the responsibility of the Papal Nuncio, Pope Francis’ representative in the United Kingdom. He will consult and draw up a list of candidates, with this list being sent to Rome where the final decision will be made by the Congregation for Bishops. Pope Francis will then make the appointment. During the process the Nuncio will consult as



widely as possible, hence the lengthy interval between Bishop Nolan’s departure and a new appointment, but hopefully suitable candidates will emerge, and the diocese will get a new bishop before too long. However, there is no definitive time frame.

In the meantime, I will serve the diocese in the role of Administrator, and if there is anything that you wish to contact me about as I fulfil this role, then please do so. I can be contacted at william.mcfadden@gallowaydiocese.org.uk.



Help for Ukraine

All over the diocese, and the country, help is pouring in for the people of Ukraine. Here is one example of love in action.



Father Jim Hayes, in his role as parish priest of Holy Trinity, Lockerbie, visited the Ukrainian Chapel in Lockerbie on behalf of the Catholic community of the town and the area to pass onto the Ukrainian community there the love and prayers of the local Catholic community at this most trying time for their families and friends back home in the Ukraine. Father Jim offered them the use of our parish halls for storage and sorting area for all the donations of clothing and medicines they had already received from all over the local community should they run out of space. The parishes in Lockerbie, Moffat, Annan and Dumfries are busy collecting

clothing and medicines for this local initiative and Holy Trinity, Lockerbie,

St Luke’s, Moffat and St Teresa’s, Dumfries took up a special collection for the work of the Ukrainian Catholic community in the UK and they will present a cheque to Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the UK .

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of my favourite Lenten Gospels. It encapsulates what Lent is all about – repentance, attrition, forgiveness, reconciliation with God and his Church, and deeper conversion to Christ and his Gospel. We all know the story. The younger son asks for his share of the family property without waiting for his father's death, and then leaves home as soon as he can and burns through his inheritance. Gradually he sinks to what, for a Jew, was the lowest possible level, for he was reduced to caring for the pigs of a Gentile landowner. For the Jews, the pig was considered the most unclean of all animals, and to be employed by a Gentile was to be under the influence and control of one who worshipped foreign gods. Even in the moment of deepest despair, his father's love was active in his memories. The father's deep longing for his son was present within the son's burning desire to return home. Though distant, father and son were united in love and yearning for each other – one calling, one responding. The father received his returning son and he kissed him tenderly. The son began his carefully rehearsed admission of guilt. He said, "I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son". He was interrupted by his father's unrestrained joy. In the embrace of his father, the son was welcomed, forgiven, and restored to full sonship. Now he knew what it meant to be his father's son. He was home! The father was so overjoyed he killed the fattened calf and organised a great celebration.

The father senses that his older son was suffering an alienation of his own. The older son's attitudes had distanced him from his brother to such an extent that he referred to him not as "my brother" but as "this son of yours". His self-righteous behaviour had prevented him from entering into a loving relationship, not only with his brother but also with his father. The elder son reacts angrily to his father's forgiveness of this wayward brother. He thinks that, although he has worked dutifully on the farm, he has not been truly valued or appreciated, and so, he is full of resentment. This seems a little digression from the story until we remember that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, telling them that, despite their rigid observance of the Commandments and fastidious attention to their prayers and duties, they had neither love nor compassion for those they saw as their inferiors.

This is a story of a father who had two sons. He lost them both, one in a foreign country, the other behind a barricade of self-righteousness. Popularly known as the parable of the prodigal son; a more appropriate title might be the parable of the forgiving father, because the focus of the story is primarily on the father's love and mercy toward his sons. The parable of the forgiving father is surely one of the most beautiful stories ever written. It has been celebrated on stage, in art and music, and over the years, it has been relived in countless lives and families. Luke has so exquisitely



rendered the feelings of the father and his sons that we are immediately drawn into the drama and can easily identify with the main characters.

In this parable, Jesus reveals to us the limitless compassion and mercy of God, our Father. When we fall into sin, God seeks us out, brings us home, and celebrates when we are reconciled to him. For me, this is what makes this parable so beautiful. Our Lord is telling us that sin does not have to be the last word in our lives. It is God who rejoices in the parable: "My son was dead and is alive again". When he gives his son a new robe, it signifies the white garment we are clothed with in baptism. When he orders a feast of thanksgiving, it signifies the Eucharist. The pilgrimage of the prodigal son is the story of our lives!

Our Lady of Lourdes

Sadly there will be no Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes this year but it is hoped to organise a pilgrimage to the Grotto at Carfin. At the time of writing, the provisional date is 12th June. Look out for more information in your parish bulletins and the Galloway Lourdes Hospitalite Facebook page.



The Synodal Logo

It has become familiar, but how many of us have stopped to look at it properly and to reflect upon it?



By now, hopefully the logo for the Synod on Synodality has become quite familiar. Its bright colours and simple font have been printed in bulletins the length and breadth of the diocese, posted on social media pages and on websites, and publicised on various leaflets and invitations to synod encounters. However, how many of us have stopped to look at it properly and to reflect upon it?

The most immediately striking feature is perhaps the tree, reaching upwards and dominating the rest of the image. The artist, Isabelle de Senihles, describes it as “a sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ”. The strong branches of the tree reach out protectively over the people beneath it, while at the same time holding the Eucharist aloft, the pinnacle of the image.

Under the shelter of this strong tree, upon which the Eucharist rests, are the People of God. Even at first glance, it is easy to see that they are not standing still or resting under the shelter of the tree. They are moving together, *walking together*, in synodality. Isabelle de Senihles says they are “united by the same common dynamic that this Tree of Life breathes into them”.

Spend a few moments looking at the people. Notice that the bishop with his crozier is in the midst of them: he does not walk in front, leading the way, neither is he somehow

separated from them. The same is true of the Religious Sister, who represents all professed people. They are in this journey with us, in our midst and walking alongside us. In fact, if we look to the front of the people, it is children who are leading the way. This, says the artist, was a quite deliberate reference to Matthew 11:25: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants”.

The diversity of the people who are walking together is clear, and is emphasised by the use of colour (all bright colours to emphasise the joy of the Synodal way). In spite of the diversity, there is no hierarchy, no pecking order, and no divisions.

It is difficult to imagine a more apt logo for the Synod on Synodality. Nurtured by the Church and nourished by the Eucharist, we – the diverse People of God – are invited to walk together in synodality to wherever the Holy Spirit reveals we should go. An attitude of childlike trust, like the little children at the front of the people, is essential.

Synod encounters are now well underway in our parishes, having been postponed due to the Omicron wave of the virus. The diocesan team are receiving daily submissions from parishes and groups, as well as individual responses, and will soon begin the process of collating and analysing every response received. A second wave of opportunities to participate will begin in April, based on the responses received to the first wave.

Please participate in the Synod as best you can – ideally by attending an encounter in your parish or online (please email synod@gallowaydiocese.org.uk for details). Importantly, please keep the diocesan team in your prayers as we complete the privileged task of leading the diocese through this first phase of the Synod on Synodality.

The Sycamore Course was rolled out in various parishes towards the end of 2021, and reports of its success and popularity were very encouraging. It allowed participants to watch informative videos on aspects of faith, and to then share in a relaxed manner on the issues about which they had heard. Different parishes chose different topics from the options available, and the programme certainly provided for diversity and flexibility depending on particular pastoral situations.

A number of parishes are now going ahead with further sessions during Lent,

SYCAMORE

and the programme suggests a specific Lent Pathway, focussing on the topics of (1) The Existence of God; (2) Who is Jesus? (3) The Holy Spirit and the Church; (4) The Gift of Faith; (5) Finding True Freedom; and (6) The Meaning of Love. Individual groups may prefer to choose their own themes, however these six offer a good overview for reflection during Lent.

The Sycamore Programme is a convenient option which can give individuals within parish groups the chance to renew their faith during Lent. Many people throughout the diocese have already benefitted from engaging with it. Perhaps others might also enjoy the experience if they too were to get involved. Anyone interested in finding out more should go to www.sycamore.fm or contact Father William McFadden on william.mcfadden@gallowaydiocese.org.uk who can put them in touch with parishioners in their own area who already have experience of the programme.



Jim's Eighty Years Of Service to Saint Peter In Chains

When the Church of Saint Peter in Chains opened in Ardrossan in 1938, it did not have its own priest. Instead, it was served from the Saint Mary's in nearby Saltcoats. In 1941, Father Hugh Deery, a Saint Mary's curate, approached a young parishioner called James Donnelly and invited him to become an altar server. Eight-year-old Jim willingly agreed and assisted at hundreds of services over the next eight years.

In 1945, Father Archibald McSparran was appointed parish priest at Saint Peter's with Father Matthew Littleton as his curate. Four years later, Father Littleton suggested to Jim that he should join Saint Peter's choir. Again, Jim complied with the request.

Over the years, Jim's singing ability increased and he would be asked to sing as cantor on many occasions. On Christmas Eve in 2008, Canon Matt McManus, then Saint Peter's parish priest, presented Jim with a Papal Blessing in recognition of sixty



years faithful service to liturgical music. *(Pictured above)*

As well as singing in church, Jim plays an active part in parish life and has performed at many social events. His wife Cathie is also a committed parishioner and in 2013, Canon Matt celebrated Mass for Jim and Cathie on the occasion of their Golden Wedding.

On Good Friday in 2021, Jim led the music in Saint Peter's for the last time – seventy-two years after he had joined the choir at Easter in 1949 – and having sung thousands of times.

At that time, Covid restrictions prevented a parish acknowledgement of Jim's contribution to church music but this was rectified on 11 December 2021 when parish priest, Father Duncan McVicar presented Jim with a rose bowl. The bowl carried the parish logo and was inscribed with the words 'Presented to James Donnelly in grateful recognition of seventy-two years' service to the Sacred Liturgy at Saint Peter in Chains Parish, Ardrossan'.

Sycamore sessions at St Bride's

SYCAMORE

St Bride's parish, West Kilbride recently held a second series of Sycamore sessions based on the Formation and Renewal Pathway "Living the Christian Faith in the World", considering topics including: "Creation, Fall, Salvation"; "Forgiveness, Healing and Mission" and "The Social Teaching of the Church". Many parishioners had returned from the first series, while others had signed up for the second series based on the recommendation of others.

Principal highlights were the videos themselves, particularly Father Wang's down to earth commentaries as he shared his own faith. Equally impressive were the very honest and sincere responses from individuals interviewed during each session had a very positive impact on the confidence of our parishioners in sharing their own thoughts and beliefs.

It was felt that that this had been an excellent opportunity to refresh our own faith which had been badly needed since the imposition of Covid restrictions. And, dare I say it, we even had fun. We would all welcome the opportunity to see more young people participating in the next series and have been looking at the possibility of outreach to the secondary school

Your Galloway Diocese News

At the Galloway News we want to hear from you, the priests and parishioners of Galloway. You can send your news items to the editor at any time or look out for the 'email hotline' and 'reply' to the reminder email.

Send your contributions before
13th May for inclusion in the
 Pentecost edition to:
**The Editor The Galloway
 Diocese News,
 Candida Casa,
 8 Corsehill Road, Ayr, KA7 2ST.**

Email:
gdnews@gallowaydiocese.org.uk

RC Diocese of Galloway, charity
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SPRED Galloway

Spiritual and Personal Development for people with special needs



We at SPRED Galloway are enjoying being in our groups face to face at last. It is wonderful to share time with our Friends and Faith Friends in person once more.

Annie writes, “My youngest daughter has just been confirmed by Bishop Nolan. It was a lovely service, and Bishop Nolan spoke about the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples like flames on a candle. Without these little tongues of light, candles are useless. Lit candles not only provide warmth and light to the person holding it, but also to those around them and their light, and warmth can be so easily shared with others. It does not diminish when we share it, it increases and increases the more we share. This is so true in our everyday lives. If we keep sharing the flame of the Holy Spirit with everyone we meet, then soon, all the darkness in our hearts, minds, souls and deeds will be chased away”.

The Holy Father has called us all to spread the light of Christ to all we meet. Please remember SPRED Galloway in your prayers as we journey with our Friends into the Light of Easter Morning.

Covid restrictions easing

We are all looking forward to further easing of restrictions and getting back to worshipping in a ‘more normal’ way but churches and other places where people gather continue to be spaces where we have to take care.

Since summer last year, we have been able to reintroduce, with mitigations, the ministries of altar serving, readers and extraordinary ministers of Communion. Music groups and choirs can also meet. Long gone are the one-way systems, quarantined hymn books, taped off pews, and slavish surface-cleaning routines! In recent weeks, the use of Holy Water to bless oneself was finally regarded as very low risk.

However, hand-sanitising, good ventilation, maintaining a respectful distance where possible and the wearing of masks are essential mitigations, especially when daily case numbers are high. A Government review of restrictions will take place on March 21 while the Galloway Diocese News is being printed. Should there be any changes they will be advised in parish newsletters and by the priest at Mass.

While the liturgical celebration of Mass should now be almost the same as before Covid, at the same time there are real challenges in rebuilding communities, re-engaging all who were involved in ministries, and drawing younger families and children back to Mass. These are challenges we face together. Please stay safe and be respectful of others.

Rite of Election

Eighteen adults from across the Diocese of Galloway took part in the Rite of Election in St Margaret’s Cathedral, Ayr, on Sunday March 6th. Father William McFadden, the Diocesan Administrator, led the liturgy with priests and deacons from a number of parishes.

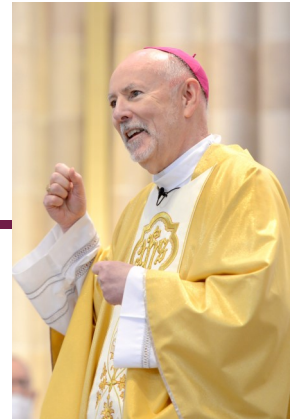




At his last Mass as Bishop

Installation of Archbishop William Nolan

Saturday 26th February 2022



At his first Mass as Archbishop

The installation of the Most Reverend William Nolan as Archbishop of the Archdiocese and Metropolitan of the Province of Glasgow took place at St Andrew’s Cathedral, in the presence of the Papal Nuncio to Great Britain, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Bishops of Scotland and over 100 priests. They were joined by civic and religious leaders and representatives of almost 100 parishes in the Glasgow Archdiocese.

This joyous occasion was able to be witnessed by many hundreds of others who viewed the livestream online, including many from the Diocese of Galloway. Here are a few comments from those who watched online.

Helena from Ayr:

“The turnout at the cathedral to welcome Archbishop Nolan was joyful as the archdiocese welcomed their new pastor, who the Papal Nuncio said was ‘famous for his tenderness’”.

Allan from Glasgow:

“It was really clear from Archbishop Nolan’s homily that he intends to work as hard for the people of Glasgow as he did for those of Galloway. There was a theme of joy and I think that those in Glasgow should be truly joyful to have him as their new Archbishop. Let Glasgow Flourish!”



Chris from Ayr and Glasgow:

“Hope was overpowering. I have hope that Archbishop Nolan can use his experience, compassion and inclusive nature to build a welcoming and reinvigorated church in Glasgow”.

Gerry from Dumfries:

“The greatest impact for me was the all-embracing homily given by the newly installed Archbishop. It was totally inclusive of all aspects of life in his new Archdiocese and gave a great hope to all his people, of all faiths and none, of the care he will take of them all during his tenure”.



East Ayrshire Schools

In this edition we hear from St Joseph's Academy and St Patrick's, St Xavier's, St Andrew's, Mount Carmel Primary Schools and, overleaf, St Sophia's Primary School

St Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock *has overhauled its core values and house patron saints*

Previous values are replaced with values modern and relevant to Catholicism and, specifically St Joseph's Academy. Pupils and staff chose values important to them, with the most popular being taken forward. The acronym "REACTS" which stands for Respect, Equality, Ambition, Courage, Truth, and Service, will help everyone remember our new values. Promotion of these Gospel values will help rebuild our school community after the damage created by the pandemic, and will help us share love and peace, while consolidating the link between community and faith. Depute head teacher Mrs Shearer, who led the change said, "Our values should help create a warm, friendly and positive school ethos. They should demonstrate how we all relate to each other and should be at the heart of learning and teaching and our school community".

With house patron saints, pupils and staff were not aware of their history and there was a feeling of disconnect. However, there is greater enthusiasm and a new-found curiosity following the patron saint vote that all pupils, staff, and parents took part in. Principal teacher of the Religious Education department, Mr Sikora, worked alongside Father Chambers to create an extensive list of potential saints. Following discussions with pupil focus groups and the Senior Leadership Team this was narrowed down to six saints in three categories: Social Justice (St Oscar Romero and St Theresa of Calcutta), Environmental Issues (St Francis of Assisi and St Kateri) and Young people (Blessed Carlo Acutis and St Bernadette). These themes arose as important to the pupils. In recent times, the theme of social justice has been prominent in our lives as we strive for equality in the world. Climate



change, environmental issues are important to us as we do all we can to look after our God-given planet. Finally, it was important to have a saint who championed young people and the entire generation. Using a polling station set up by CARITAS pupils, students voted to elect St Teresa of Calcutta, St Francis of Assisi, and Blessed Carlo Acutis. Mr Sikora said: "They are important because patron saints give us something to aspire to".

In both areas of change, there is a common theme of community involvement. The new values are unique to St Joseph's Academy because everyone came together to choose them. Similarly, the house patrons are fitting champions of young people since it was the young people in the school that voted for them. The idea of community ownership was important to both Mrs Shearer and head teacher, Mr Kane. He said it "was important that our Vision, Values and Aims were defined by our Community, rather than on behalf of our Community. For this reason, the involvement of pupils, parents and parishes was central to the work of Mrs Shearer and our pupil leadership team". He believes that this change will have a tangible impact on school life, creating a greater sense of ownership and togetherness across our community.

Mount Carmel Primary School, Kilmarnock *continuing to grow in our love of God our Father*



The school values of Faith, Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, Fairness, Kindness, Perseverance and Learning permeate across all that the children and adults do. Mrs Fergusson, depute head teacher commented, "As a school we are supported by Father Martin Cambers, all of the school staff as well as the invaluable guidance from the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ".

The pupils in Primary 4 have been showcasing these values as they prepare for three Sacraments this year. Their class teacher, Mrs McCreadie, has been impressed with how they have been growing in their love for God. The children have been working together to think how they can help other children in the world. As a class they are creating a series of events for Lent to help raise funds for SCIAF, including an Easter raffle, colouring competition, Teddy Bear Raffle a and as an Activity day. Mrs McConville, head teacher added, "As a school we are so aware of the importance of helping others and we are very proud of the work Primary 4 are doing to support this loving charity".

St Patrick's Auchinleck

a warm, friendly, and inclusive ethos

Our pupils, staff and families strive to uphold the values of social justice in all that we say and do. Since the start of session 2021/22 our school has pledged to support Pope Francis' call to look after our common home by committing to living by the motto 'CHANGE FOR GOOD' through becoming a Laudato Si' School. We look forward to developing this through our learning, prayers and actions in the coming months.



We are delighted that Father Kitchen was able to resume visits to our school each Friday, visiting a different class each time. All pupils look forward to his visits and the interesting conversations that take place. In November, our school was represented at Mass in all our parishes for Catholic Education Week. Mrs Bradley spoke at all three Masses and pupils led the prayers of intercession and the psalm. They proudly represented our school by wearing school uniform and showing themselves to be true ambassadors of our school values.

Our Primary 6 and 7 pupils continue to work towards their Pope Francis Faith Award. We have had several fundraising events organised by these pupils including a 'Reindeer Run', 'Number Day' and a foodbank appeal, all of which were very successful. We are grateful to the continued support from our families, parishes and wider community. In December, two of our classes visited local residential care facilities to spread our message of hope and love. Classes prepared special messages which were given to Berryknowe and Glennie House along with festive plants, flowers and wreaths.

During Lent, our Pupil Leadership Team have plans in place to support this year's SCIAF Lenten appeal and develop our relationship with God.

St Xavier's, Patna

a Laudato Si' School

Our school community has promised to love God, to do all we can to care for our common home and to show care and love to others. We have been praying that we can make changes to help protect our precious planet and we pray that we can encourage others to do the same. During COP 26 the children made posters and leaflets to raise awareness of climate change and to encourage others to act with love to care for God's creation. The children in P1/2/3 have also been doing weekly litter picks around the community. Our work and commitment to learning for sustainability has been recognised by Eco Schools Scotland and we have been awarded our third Green Flag, which we are very proud of.



At St Xavier's we have been focusing on the importance of kindness and how being kind to others can be a way to bring God's love to everyone. The children in P6/7 made kindness pledges and spoke to the younger children in P1/2/3 class about how acts of kindness can be very simple but can make such a positive difference to others. The children in P6/7 made a pledge set a good example to others and to be kind in every way. Across the school we have been using positive language and giving positive message to others. We recognise that the simple gift of a smile can be enough to brighten someone's day. Our House Captains made positivity balloons with positive affirmations to place around the school grounds to remind everyone of how unique and special they are.

St Andrew's, Kilmarnock

aim to develop and promote a positive, nurturing, Catholic ethos

At St Andrew's Primary school, we strive to produce mature young people, who have explored their faith in a variety of ways. We use the four main values of *Caring, Optimistic, Rights Respecting* and *Effort* on a daily basis and pupils who live by these values are celebrated on a weekly basis. We are also aiming to achieve our silver award for being a rights respecting school. We are supported by chaplains Father McGrattan, Father Chambers and the IHM Sisters

Recently, some of our children received the sacrament of Confirmation at Mount Carmel. They were joined by their family and friends as well as many members of the local parishes who will provide a constant support to these children and their families. Children within Primary 6 and Primary 7 are also working hard on their Pope Francis Faith Awards, with the Primary 7s hoping to have achieved this by Easter time.

As a result of our focus on making the most of our external environment, all classes have taken the opportunity to explore the outdoors and to take their learning into an outdoor environment. Many classes have also been working with other agencies to help improve the school grounds. These include P7 working with Rosie from The Conservation Volunteers, to clear, clean and improve the polytunnel and the surrounding areas.

During Lent our attention turns towards helping those in our wider communities. Over the next 4 to 5 weeks, we will be engaging in a variety of events such as 'Crazy Day' and 'Be your Hero' to help raise funds for our chosen charities including SCIAF. We look forward to these fun events.





Becoming a Catholic Teacher

In this series, Amélie Davidson (a Primary Education student at the University of Glasgow) writes about her journey to becoming a Catholic teacher. In the fourth part of the series, Amélie writes about returning to campus after two years of online learning.

As I write this article, I am sitting on a bench overlooking Kelvingrove Art Gallery waiting for the bus home. It is my first day back at university for face-to-face teaching since the first lockdown. The bell tower of the university towers behind me as I look at the sun glistening over the skyline of Glasgow. You could be mistaken for thinking that it is June... although, of course, the temperature tells a different story. Prospective students are standing taking photos of the beautiful architecture. It doesn't feel like three years ago that I was in their place: visiting for the first time and deciding which universities to apply for. There is a hustle and bustle that is reminiscent of times before Covid – when words and phrases such as 'social distancing', 'lockdown' and 'masks' were not part of everyday language. It feels good to return to a sense of normality

I was apprehensive about going back in person. Although Zoom lectures are not the same as face-to-face teaching, I didn't have to spend three hours travelling to and from home every day. Admittedly, I quite enjoyed being able to roll out of bed and switch on my laptop! Of course, online learning provided a challenge at times; students and staff just had to be a little more inventive, making the most of times when we were able to meet in person, and organising socially distanced walks or video calls when we had to stay apart. I may have met less people than I would have in an 'ordinary' two years at university, but I think that I have got to know those that I have met really well as we had to purposefully organise ways to meet, and so have made the most of our opportunities



In March, I am looking forward to returning to St Sophia's Primary, Galston, for a seven week placement with Primary 4/5. This will be my first experience of teaching in the upper school – read all about it in the Summer edition!



St Sophia's Primary School, Galston *embrace their motto of 'Faith, Hope and Love'*

We put our faith in action by our prayers both daily and at our School Masses. During lockdown, and adhering to covid restrictions to keep everyone safe, we found new ways to celebrate the Eucharist. Live Masses were streamed to classrooms and we were delighted that our senior pupils could still celebrate their Leavers' Mass in the local Church, which was streamed to children and staff back at school, to parents and to the wider community and was a great source of joy and celebration. Our senior pupils loved using their talents as readers, singers, and technicians. This also allowed us to issue the Pope Francis Faith Award to Primary 7. They worked hard to demonstrate how they used the 'Gifts of the Spirit' to support others in the local community.

When we could not be physically together, we showed love and gave hope by using our literacy and art skills designing and making cards and letters for the sick and housebound and for our parishioners. We had to be creative but still used our enterprise skills to plan and arrange a whole host of fundraisers for SCIAF and MISSIO.

A small group of our senior learners continue leading our 'FOJ Club' or the 'Friends of Jesus'. They prepare, organise and run our Advent and Lent prayer groups and keep us focused as Mission Children. They are busy organising fund raising events for SCIAF focusing on the phrase 'Together, we can build God's Kingdom here on Earth'.

Our young people are the future church and our school continues to link with the parish to plan and organise a monthly young person's Mass where young people take on all the duties and responsibilities usually carried out by adults. Primary 3 and 4 children preparing for the Sacraments take on extra special responsibilities. They are doing a great job!



Bishop John Cunningham

22nd February 1938,
1st December 2021

Bishop John Cunningham was born in Paisley 22nd February 1938. He was preceded by two brothers. His family lived in St Mary's Parish, Paisley, where they were very active in church life. John said that he admired the Parish Priest of St Mary's at the time, and when he was asked what he would like to do when he 'grew up' he said that he wanted to become a priest.

John went to Blairs when he was 11 years old in 1949, and studied there for five years. From there he went to St Peter's in Cardross, studying for six years, and he was then sent as a student of the Scots College in Rome, and attended the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was ordained after his first year, on 29th June 1961 in St Mirin's Cathedral, Paisley, and then returned to Rome where he obtained a Doctorate in Canon Law.

During his years in Paisley diocese, Father and later Monsignor Cunningham was remembered as a kind, gentle and faithful pastor in the parishes and the convent he served. He was assistant priest in Our Lady of Lourdes, Bishopston (1964-69), chaplain to Moredun Convent (1969-74), assistant priest in St Columba's, Renfrew (1974-86), Officialis of the Scottish National Tribunal (1986-92), and parish priest of St Patrick's, Greenock (1992-2004). Father Cunningham was nominated prelate of honour in 1994 – bestowing on him the title of Monsignor. From 1997-2004 he served as vicar general of Paisley diocese. He was nominated bishop of Galloway on 7th April 2004.

Bishop Cunningham was ordained the seventh bishop of Galloway on 28th May 2004 in Good Shepherd Cathedral, Ayr. The principal consecrator was Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien with Bishop Emeritus Maurice Taylor and Bishop John Mone as co-consecrators. Fittingly, Bishop Cunningham's two brothers Canons James and Thomas Cunningham served as the assisting priests. The ordination Mass on a warm evening in late spring was an occasion of joy and celebration for the whole diocese, the last episcopal ordination having taken place a generation – some 23 years – previously. The priests of Paisley and Galloway dioceses gathered in great number along with clergy from other places, family and friends. Although Galloway's Cathedral had capacity for around 600 people, a marquee had to be erected in the grounds to broadcast the event to more of the faithful. Hospitality was provided afterwards in the suite at Ayr Racecourse.



Bishop Cunningham chose as his episcopal motto "Congregare in unum" (to bring together as one) from the Holy Thursday offertory antiphon *Ubi Caritas*. In his early days as bishop, he recognised the value that the ministry of the permanent diaconate could bring to Galloway. Soon after, three candidates began their formation and were later ordained, and others followed the same path in subsequent years.

The condition of the fabric of Good Shepherd Cathedral had deteriorated over many years. Although Bishop Cunningham had fond memories of his ordination Mass there, he pursued the efforts of his predecessor to petition the Holy Father to move the *cathedra* (bishop's chair) to St Margaret's Church in Ayr. Permission was granted in February 2007 and the new Cathedral of St Margaret was re-dedicated on the following 14th September in a solemn Mass in the presence of the bishops of Scotland and large numbers of faithful from all parts of the diocese.

Bishop Cunningham took part in the diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes and to the Holy Land, enjoying the spiritual and pastoral opportunities as well as spending time socially with the priests and pilgrims. He also enjoyed the pilgrimages to Whithorn, a place he last visited as a young boy.

'Embracing the Future' was the name given to the discussions and preparations of priests and lay people to meet the needs of the future. Bishop Cunningham actively encouraged the groups involved in preparing for the pastoral, vocational and material needs of the years ahead.

When Bishop Cunningham retired at the time of the appointment of Bishop Nolan, he carried the burden of poor health. He spent the years of his retirement in the Little Sisters of the Poor in Greenock where he was well cared for and content.





The Sacrament of Confirmation

February 2022



In his last few weeks in Galloway, Bishop Nolan confirmed primary school children across the diocese.

St Mary's, Irvine , 1st and 17th February



With children from the parishes of
St Mary's and St John Ogilvie



St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr, 24th February

with children from St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr, St Paul's, Ayr, St Francis Xavier's, Waterside,
Our Lady & St Cuthbert's, Maybole and Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Girvan



St Joseph's, Stranraer, 19th February



With children from the parishes of St Joseph's, Stranraer, Our Lady and St Ninian's, Newton Stewart, and St Martin and St Ninian's, Whithorn

St John's, Stevenston, 3rd February

with children from St Mary's Saltcoats and St John's, Stevenston



Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Kilmarnock, 22nd February

with children from Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St Joseph's, St Matthew's, Kilmarnock
St Paul's, Hurlford, St Sophia's, Galston, St John's, Cumnock, Our Lady & St Patrick's, Auchinleck
and St Thomas', Muirkirk



Our Lady of the Assumption and St Meddan's, Troon, 21st February

with children from St
Quivox's, Prestwick, Our
Lady of the Assumption
and St Meddan's, Troon



St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan, 7th February

Bishop Nolan also confirmed children from St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan, St Bridget's, Kilbirnie,
St Palladius', Dalry, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Beith, St Mary's, Largs, St Bride's, West
Kilbride but no photographs were taken in an effort to keep children in their 'bubble'.

Confirmation at **Saint Andrew and Saint Cuthbert, Kirkcudbright**, due to take place on 26th
February was postponed.



St Teresa's, Dumfries, 10th February

with children from St Luke's, Moffat, Holy Trinity, Lockerbie and St Teresa's, Dumfries,
and St Andrew's, Dumfries and St Columba's, Annan



St Winin's, Kilwinning, 8th February



With children from St Luke's Primary School
and St Winning's
Primary School,
Kilwinning



The Teaching of Pope Francis

by Father William McFadden

Pope Francis asks us to prepare for the Holy Year in 2025 which he hopes will contribute to restoring a climate of hope and trust that we so urgently desire

Pope Francis is certainly a pope of initiatives. At present, we are responding to his ingenuity in calling us to engage with the process preparing for the Synod on Synodality, and only recently we concluded the Year of St Joseph, his creative proposal to foster devotion to this often overlooked and unappreciated saint. We are also in the midst of celebrating the *Amoris Laetitia* Year of the Family, which will conclude on 26th June 2022. Yet, Francis has now added another project for us: to prepare for the Holy Year in 2025. He has asked the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, under the leadership of Archbishop Fisichella, to take charge and to co-ordinate both the preparations for and the implementation of this particular opportunity.

A Holy Year is usually celebrated in the Church every 25 years, and is a time of pilgrimage, of prayer, of repentance and of acts of mercy. It recalls the Old Testament tradition of a jubilee year of rest, of forgiveness, and of renewal. Pope Francis did, of course, declare an Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy during 2015-2016, where he encouraged us to encounter the God of mercy in the many forms that God's merciful love reveals itself to us. Now with the motto for 2025 being "Pilgrims of Hope", the pope invites us to focus on these two great themes which are fundamental to his pontificate: pilgrimage and hope.

It is in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic that Pope Francis wants the Holy Year of 2025 to focus on "restoring a climate of hope and trust". He sees the celebration as an opportunity to help people repair their relationships with God, with each other and with the Earth, and to engage in renewal and in regeneration: "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a



trusting heart and far-sighted vision," the pope wrote. He added, "in the last two years, not a single country has been unaffected by the sudden outbreak of an epidemic that made us experience first-hand not only the tragedy of dying alone, but also the uncertainty and fleetingness of existence, and in doing so, has changed our very way of life. Our churches remained closed, as did our schools, factories, offices, shops, and venues for recreation. All of us saw certain freedoms curtailed, while the pandemic generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation". Pope Francis wants the Holy Year to "contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire". As "pilgrims of hope", we will not be held back by the painful memories of the pandemic, but will move forward inspired by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis asks that in preparation for the Holy Year, 2024 be a time devoted "to a great 'symphony' of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him". It is only by concentrating on prayer that we will be authentic pilgrims and genuine spiritual travellers. "May it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God's grace and to make the 'Our Father,' the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples".

As we continue in the present to respond to Pope Francis' inspired leadership with regard to synodality, to the family, and to the environment, we also have his guidance directing us towards a deeper awareness and growing appreciation of pilgrimage and of hope awaiting us in the future.



Prayer for Ukraine

"I would like to appeal to everyone, believers and non-believers alike. Jesus taught us that the diabolical evil of violence is answered with the weapons of God, with prayer and fasting... May the Queen of Peace preserve the world from the madness of war."

*Pope Francis
February 23rd, 2022*



A View from Westminster

As conflict flares in Europe, the pandemic still raging across the globe and climate change an ever present threat Dr Philippa Whitford, MP, suggests that as members of a 'Universal Church' we have a duty to look at the bigger picture

As I write this article, shock has reverberated at Westminster over the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with all parties united in condemnation of Putin's actions which have brought war back to the continent of Europe for the first time since the Balkans conflict.

There was unanimity on the need to take the strongest action and all MPs expressed support for toughening up the fairly weak initial sanctions which were against only a handful of banks and only three oligarchs. These were drastically extended on the day of the invasion.

Naturally, our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine, who are seeing their worst nightmare come true, as well as the other states bordering Russia who will also now feel vulnerable to his expansionist threat.

Prior to this, the dominant issue was 'Partygate' and the future of the Prime Minister, which was distracting from other pressing issues, including the pandemic, ongoing fallout from Brexit and particularly, the emerging situation in Ukraine.

Despite calls from Government politicians to "move on", too many people have painful memories of what they and their families were going through at that time to pass over such hypocrisy and injustice.

It is perhaps most bitter for those who couldn't visit parents in care homes or hospitals, who didn't get the chance to say farewell to a dying loved one or who couldn't attend a friend's funeral when numbers were limited to immediate family. Many, like Aaron Bell, a Conservative MP, who spoke of feeling like a fool for following the rules for his grandmother's funeral, now feel guilty about letting down their loved ones.

For all people of faith, we could not attend church at the time of those early 'lockdown' parties and while some of us could watch Mass online, many could not and faced months of loneliness and isolation. None of us could take part in the core activity of our parish – the enriching experience of congregating as a prayer community and joining together with our friends and neighbours in prayer and song.

While Masses are returning to normal, and hopefully the Covid situation will continue to improve, it is hard to believe we are approaching our third Eastertide with the pandemic still raging across the globe.

Despite the warm words of world leaders in spring 2020, about organising a global response to a global crisis, the international community have failed to do so. Wealthy countries like the UK have bought up the vast majority of vaccines, purchasing enough to vaccinate their population many times over, while low-income countries have been left

for almost a year with no reliable access and less than 10% of their people having had even a first dose.

The arrival of the Omicron variant in November showed how short sighted such selfishness is as Christmas plans for businesses and families were scuppered either by new Covid precautions or relatives falling ill and having to cancel family gatherings.

Even now the World Health Organisation's vaccine distribution programme, COVAX, is struggling to get the vaccines promised by wealthy countries and some, including the UK, continue to block the sharing of intellectual property and technology to allow lower and middle-income countries to produce their own vaccine supplies.

One of the most depressing aspects of this failure of international co-operation and genuine brotherhood, is that it doesn't bode well for the radical global response which is needed to tackle the climate crisis. The worry is that wealthy countries will go on adding to the problem and just paying to 'off set' their carbon to salve their consciences. Meanwhile many low-income countries will face drought and island nations are at risk of disappearing beneath the waves.

Not only the pandemic, but the ongoing climate crisis will impact disproportionately on those with the least in wealth, resources or options to mitigate the damage.

As Catholics and members of a 'Universal Church' we at least have a duty to look at the bigger picture and think of our brothers and sisters across the world. We should consider how much we contribute to the damage of our planet and how we can change our personal behaviour to reduce our carbon footprint and protect our beautiful home.

Instead of just giving up sweets or alcohol for Lent, maybe we could all try to change some of the bad habits which are damaging the environment or generating the waste which litters our hedgerows, beaches and oceans.

So, as we approach Lent and prepare, hopefully, for full involvement in the sorrow of Christ's Passion and the joy of his Resurrection, let's make sure we learn the lesson of this pandemic and look beyond our own front door to support the vulnerable in our local community, who will be struggling as the cost of living soars, as well as our brothers and sisters across our beautiful but delicate planet.



Doctor Philippa Whitford is a parishioner of Our Lady of the Assumption and St Meddan in Troon. She is the MP for Central Ayrshire and SNP Health Spokesperson at Westminster. In these articles she hopes to convey how her faith informs and impacts her politics.



Praying with The Saints

Saint Oscar Romero

By Father Martin Chambers

I have been very fortunate in having inspirational people at different stages in my life. I'm sure you're the same. Whether it is inspirational people in our own families or within the community, we are blessed by the words and actions of the people that can touch our heart. In terms of faith, one of the people who has touched me deeply is Saint Oscar Romero – but who was he and how can he lead us in prayer?

Who was Saint Oscar Romero?

Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, from 1977 until his death in 1980. He was murdered while celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Cancer Hospital where he lived.

He was born in 1917 and studied for the priesthood in Rome. At the age of 25 he was ordained priest and returned to his native El Salvador where he was known as a quiet, humble priest with a simple lifestyle who simply got on with the pastoral work at hand. He was happy in his work amongst some desperately poor communities and was known as a 'workaholic in a soutane'. It was in 1974 that he became a bishop in the rural Diocese of Santiago de Maria, where his eyes were opened to the extreme poverty of the local farmers. And in 1980 he was a surprising choice to become Archbishop of San Salvador.

Although he had been marked out as a quiet man, his early days as Archbishop were turned on their head when his good friend, Father Rutilio Grande, was murdered by one of the many death squads that operated in El Salvador. From that moment, he began to speak out against the injustices that were so apparent in the country at the time. In an age where poverty



meant that most Salvadoreans could only afford a radio, the new Archbishop gave a weekly radio broadcast where he would read out the names of all who had been killed in the previous week and would call for an end to the violence in the country. He strained to promote peace but was vilified in the press and even by wealthy Catholic families. And so it was that at 6.26 pm on the 24th March 1980 he was shot dead with a single bullet.

After his death, more and more he was recognised for his great witness of faith and, in 2018, Pope Francis canonised St Oscar Romero.

What Prayer Lessons can we learn from his Homilies?

Against the backdrop of the great violence being meted out to the people of El Salvador, St Oscar's homilies and talks have remained a powerful tool in the promotion of justice. It is clear that his homilies and speeches emerge from a deep prayer life. I would highlight three homilies:

In one homily he said that **he had seen Christ** in many faces around him:

- ~ in the faces of the young Salvadorean children struck down by poverty;
- ~ in the faces of the indigenous people of his country living in inhuman conditions;
- ~ and in the faces in the people of the overcrowded shanty dwellings.

This is a prayerful reminder to us all that Christ is to be found living alongside us, in people from all walks of life.

The second homily that struck me comes from the last time St Oscar celebrated Holy Thursday. He highlighted the symbolism involved in Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet. He said: *"the gesture of Jesus kneeling in service motivates us all to follow him in humility. In the Christian life our first questions must be: what do YOU, my friend, need? How can I help YOU?"*

His final homily was on the evening of 24th March 1980 when he was celebrating Mass on the first anniversary of the death of a friend, Sara Meardi de Pinto. In his homily that day he was encouraging those listening to **make a stand for justice** basing himself on the call of Christ to give even your life in service of others. He said: *"If the grain does not die, it remains alone (John 12:24-25). If it yields a crop, it is because it has died"*. While preaching these words, he was shot by a single bullet and died.

Prayer Lessons

The life and service of St Oscar Romero is clear but, more than anything, it encourages us all to get down on our knees in prayer, asking God to inspire all of us to be people of service.

Our prayer lives can be inspired by this modern-day Saint. In particular St Oscar inspires us with three prayer lessons:

- ~ The God that we meet in prayer is the **God of all struggles**. Jesus Christ did not shy away from pain and, as such, shows us that, in the midst of our pains in life, we can find a God walking at our side;
- ~ **God can be found in daily life**. Our prayer life is not supposed to take us away from daily life but rather is meant to inspire us to find God in the midst of the pain and suffering, amongst the doubts and fears of my life :



A Lenten Reflection

By Deacon Kevin Rennie

Kevin Rennie reflects that Lent is a good time to pause and reflect on our lives, and to ask ourselves who we live for.

The phrase ‘in the event of an emergency, please leave all personal belongings behind so as not to impede your exit and that of others’ is one many of us may be familiar with – it’s used in airline safety briefings, emergency exit signs, and in a variety of other places. Whilst this phrase is intended as guidance for an emergency, I believe it’s also something we can all take to heart in the everyday.

It is something that we are reminded of in the scriptures as well: ‘Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me”’ (Mt 19:21) and ‘He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts’ (Mk 6:8).

As we enter into the season of Lent, we are encouraged to change our behaviours – to give up or to take up something to enable us to better order our lives towards God. We should all seek to love God as God loves us, to be friends with God. This is God’s desire for us, and should be our desire towards God. This is not always an easy task however. Just as in an emergency we are asked to leave behind our personal belongings in order to focus on saving ourselves and others, so too should we in our spiritual lives.

Our journey towards God is not one in which we ought to gather up material wealth, but

rather use material goods as a means of growing closer to God. As we enter into Lent, it is an ideal time to pause and to reflect, to ask ourselves, do we use material goods for good, or do we allow them to become our God? Do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by a desire for material goods such that we become distracted from God? It can be very easy to accrue material goods, and often we might not even realise that we’re doing it. But as we enter into Lent, it can be an ideal time to open our wardrobes and cupboards, and to ask ourselves, what do I really need? Do I have spare stuff, or things I no longer use? And to give these away – to clear out the cupboards in order to keep only that which is truly necessary.

And at the same time as we clear out our material lives, to consider our spiritual lives. Do I always live for God? Do I bear grudges? Do I lack forgiveness towards others? All of these things, whether small or big, have the capacity to distract from our relationship with God. Living for God does

not simply involve our celebrating Mass together on a Sunday, but ought to transform our inmost being, so that who we are on the inside, is who we are on the outside.

Lent is an opportunity for us all to pause and seek a true conversion of heart, to reflect on our lives, and to ask ourselves: who do I live for? For God, or for me?



Praying with St Oscar Romero: *continued*



~ We believe in the **God of hope**. This hope is not only for the future or even simply for the ‘eternal life’ of Heaven. The hope that God brings us through our prayer life is an ever present hope, as if we were constantly unwrapping a present from God every moment of every day.

Let each of us be inspired to do what St Oscar Romero did: make time every day to stop and reflect on daily life; to find God in daily life; and to go out to become an even greater witness to Christ.

Let me leave you with an extract from the famous Romero Prayer:

*This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow
We water the seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.*



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