



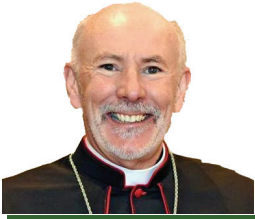
Galloway Diocese **NEWS**

St Ninian
digital
Edition
September
2020

Our church doors are open again



Welcome back!



The Bishop Writes

Bishop Nolan on remembering, forgetting, forgiving - and why the sun always shines in Scotland.



Do you remember what you were doing this day five years ago, or even this day last year? I can't. Mind you I am at that stage of life where I find it difficult to remember what I was doing yesterday. And during lockdown, because every day was the same, apart from my Sunday excursion to the Cathedral for Mass, or my weekly shop in the supermarket, I found it difficult to remember which day was which.

However while I can't remember what I was doing this time last year, Google can. My photographs are stored with Google, on the cloud, and that means every now and again Google sends me a notification, a link to click on, if I want to see a photo of what I was doing in the past.

This is actually quite a useful feature since it brings up photos of events I had forgotten about, or pictures of happy times spent with others, or sunny holidays abroad.

There are pictures there too of Scotland, and they all show blue skies and sunshine. I thought at first that maybe the Scottish weather is better than what we complain about, but then I realised that I never take photographs in the rain.

Sometimes when meeting foreigners abroad and telling them I am from Scotland, they ask to see some photographs. And so I show them photos of the sun-kissed south beach of Ayr, where the sea is always blue and the sun always shines. At least that is the impression my photos give! What the photos never show, of course, is the cool and indeed chilling breeze that often comes off the sea.

Recently while walking along the shore, on what was a gorgeous day, I passed a young boy who had just come out of the sea, still wet, proclaiming to all the world: "I'm cold".

And I remembered when I was his age also being cold on coming out of the sea at Ayr and being chilled by the cool breeze. It is not just Google that can prompt us to remember.

Being able to remember and having a good memory is something we normally consider to be a good thing. I am sure I am not the only one who admires those who never forget a face, and having met someone once can remember where they met them and when. And of course how many students wish they had a good memory as they cram their minds with facts and figures before an exam, hoping that what they study will not all be forgotten.

But being able to forget and not remember is also a blessing and a gift from God. There are moments in life when we put our foot in it, or do something so embarrassing in public that we wish the ground would swallow us up – those events we want to forget about, and thankfully we do. As time goes on the memory fades and the embarrassment fades with it. We forget and we hope others forget as well.

But unfortunately Google remembers. I don't use social media, Facebook or Twitter, but I feel sorry for those who do, particularly young people, who as carefree youngsters post things on the internet which a few years later might come back to haunt them – for the internet does not forget.

People in public life now have their social media accounts trawled to uncover from the past things now considered inappropriate. And there seems to be no sympathy for those who say, in all honesty, "the person I was then, is not the person I am now". The internet does not forget and those who use it are reluctant to forgive.

Perhaps the phrase "forgive and forget" should really be forget and forgive, for if someone has hurt us or wronged us, as with time we begin to forget what happened and as the sense of pain or anger eases, then it becomes much easier to forgive.

If there is one thing then we should all remember, it is that it may be good to remember, but it is also good to forget.



The sun-kissed south beach of Ayr where the sun always shines!

Jim McKendrick sees the wonders of nature and creation reflected in Laudato Si' and brought to the forefront of his thoughts during lockdown.

The *Laudato Si'* Special (fifth) Anniversary Year runs from 24th May 2020 to 24th May 2021 and comes in the midst of another watershed moment – a global pandemic. Reflecting on my Covid-19 experience – as made clear how deeply we are all interconnected and interdependent. *Laudato Si'* tells us that “everything is connected” and tragically, this health catastrophe has much in common with the ecological catastrophe.

- ◆ Both are global emergencies that will affect many people, both directly and indirectly.
- ◆ Both are experienced most deeply by the poor and vulnerable, and expose the deep injustices in our societies.
- ◆ Both will be solved only through a united effort that calls on the best of the values we share.

During Lockdown, I have had abundant time and opportunity for prayer, pottering about in the garden and reading the text of *Laudato Si'* and the poetry of the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. I even found my old schoolbook, which is a mere six years younger than me!

There are so many beautiful things within the pages of *Laudato Si'*. I am sure we all have our own personal favourites. Mine include: “The Divine and human meet in the slightest detail, in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet.” And also: “The Universe unfolds in God who fills it completely. Discover God in all things. Spend some minutes embracing the God who has embraced you in all things.”

The pope goes on to invite us to see God all around us in the poor and in nature. These words of the pope take me back over 50 years to my sixth form classroom and the joy of discovering a deeper appreciation of Creation in the sonnets of Hopkins.

In *Pied Beauty*, he writes:

*“Glory be to God for dappled things;
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
... Landscape plotted and pierced – fold, fallow and plough;
all things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)”*

Finally, after rejoicing in God’s creation, Hopkins invites us *“he fathers-forth whose beauty is past change; Praise him.”*



One of the side effects of the coronavirus is a new awareness of the sights and sounds of nature. I have been much more aware of birdsong and bird life in our garden. I even saw what looked like a crane one day, posing imperiously on the roof. The flowers on the decking and throughout our garden seem more profuse and brightly coloured. Feeding the birds that visit our back garden has long been a regular activity. This year, they are more numerous, with lots of young, fledgling sparrows in particular. Almost immediately, I had to abandon my normal sources of bird food and order bird seed in 17 kilo sacks and energy balls (I always call them fat balls) in boxes of 150.

Pope Francis reminds us, “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (*LS*, 14). The Season of Creation, which began on 1st September (World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation) and runs until 4th October (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi), has been designated as a “Jubilee for the Earth.” The season will provide formal opportunities for prayer and action to protect our common home. We can also read *Laudato Si'* and reflect on its rich contents; slow down and take time to appreciate the beauty and wonder of Creation; live more simply and consume less of the earth’s resources.

Filled with awe at the beauty and wonder of Creation, we should join Pope Francis in prayer: “*Laudato Si'*, mi signore....”

Your Galloway Diocese News

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

We would also like your photographs for ‘Galloway Glimpses’.

Send your contributions, before 30th October 2020 for inclusion in the Advent 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 number SC010576

Diocese of Galloway Youth Ministry

Father Jim Hayes reports

World Youth Day

The next international meeting of World Youth Day due to take place in Lisbon, Portugal in the summer of 2022 has been postponed and will now take place in the summer of 2023. We look forward to visiting the Church in Portugal then. The reason for this is of course due to the Covid-19 pandemic which has caused the World Meeting of Families international conference due to take place next year to be postponed till the June of 2022 and as it is organised by the same Vatican department it would be too soon a turnaround to organise the WYD in Portugal the very same summer so they took the decision to push that on till 2023. It gives us much more time to prepare and when this pandemic is over we look forward to welcoming you to our local preparation for that wonderful occasion.



Caritas Awards

Once again because of the coronavirus restrictions the annual Caritas Awards ceremony due to take place in Glasgow was cancelled. Across Scotland 1,280 young people from all our secondary schools achieved the award this year. The Award is given in recognition of the young people's involvement with their local church and wider community. The participants have to commit to a significant number of hours of volunteering in a myriad of projects, from helping with First Communion preparation, visiting the housebound, helping with parish mission projects and joining Youth for Lourdes and HCPT groups. All of us at YMO would like to extend our congratulations to the 107 young people from across our four diocesan secondary schools who were among this year's recipients.



Did you see Andrew on Telly?

This is YMO team member, Andrew Jones. Andrew has been involved in parish and diocesan youth work here in the diocese for many years now and his day to day work is with children and young people with his local council. Those of you who participate in the diocesan pilgrimage to St Ninian's Cave will recognise him as one of the Kilmarnock Scout Leaders who helps prepare and steward the beach with their young charges for the annual pilgrimage. Recently Andrew was invited to be co-host on BBC Scotland's Sunday morning religious programme called, "Reflections at the Quay," broadcast on Sunday 7th June. Andrew led the show with his co-host and friend, Amy Tanner who is the children, youth and family leader in New Laigh Kirk, Kilmarnock. The broadcast was super and Andrew and Amy did a great job hosting the show and sharing aspects of their Christian faith that they enjoy and employ in their everyday lives. It was interspersed by worship hymns and music, Andrew told us, "It was a really fun experience, and I'm so pleased that I've been able to share my stories with so many people. The response to the programme has been so positive and humbling, and I'm so happy that I've been able to touch so many people in such a positive way".



All of us at YMO congratulate Andrew for the wonderful, friendly and cheery way he presented the programme. Well done "Mr Beard Man" from all of us.

Diocese of Galloway
Youth Ministry Office (YMO)
Director: Father Jim Hayes

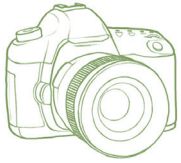
Office Contact:
St Teresa's, Glasgow Street,
Dumfries. DG2 9DE.
Tel: 01387 252603



Find us on Facebook

Galloway Youth Ministry Office

RC Diocese of Galloway. Charity Number: SC010576



Galloway Glimpses

*A splash of summer green to see us into autumn.
Thank you to Ian Johnson for these photographs taken
in Logan Gardens and Glenwhan Gardens*



Poetry corner - Back on Track

By Samuel Hynds, a pupil at St Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock

*Sometimes your life seems worthless
Sometimes it can be sad,
Just remember things can change
And life is not so bad.*

*Don't be a bear and hide in your hole
Sleeping all winter suppressing your soul.*

*Be like a bird – soar high in the sky,
Spread your wings and learn how to fly.*

*Gather the strength to talk to your friends,
They will help and support, and soon you will mend.*

*The weight on your shoulders can fall off your back,
As talking about it can get you on track.*

*You are never alone, so try not to cry.
The sun it shall rise every day in the sky.
There is hope in the sun, there is hope in the clouds.
Together we stand and speak out loud!*

Rest In Peace

Constant Botter SCJ (1932-2020)

By Bishop William Nolan

Gilmour Ommer (1929-2020)

By Father William McFadden



Father Constant Botter, who died on 15th August, was a remarkable man with a remarkable story. He was Dutch, from a family who lived in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. Born on 10th November 1932, as a young child, he lived under Japanese occupation during World War

II. His family returned to the Netherlands at the end of the war. Constant discerned a vocation to be a missionary priest and was ordained on 24th September 1960 in the Sacred Heart Congregation, a religious society founded in 1878 by Father Leo John Dehon, a Frenchman who had already been a diocesan priest for some years.

It was to become Father Botter's destiny to spend much of his life as a priest in Britain and, indeed, for many of his years in the diocese of Galloway. The Sacred Heart priests were invited by Bishop McGee to assume responsibility for the new parish in the part of Irvine named Bourtreehill. The entire area of the parish was part of the post-war 'new town' of Irvine. The church was newly built and opened in 1979, as part of a complex of church-hall-house. The architecture was modern and original, the outstanding feature of the church being the stepped downward approach from the rear to the sanctuary, the lowest point in the church. There were two serious problems about the buildings – the recurring need of repairs, some serious, some trivial, but all requiring attention; and the high cost of the finished product, well beyond the powers of the parish to pay.

Despite this dual worry, Con Botter was a zealous parish priest, anxious, even impatient, to seek ways to develop the spiritual commitment of the parishioners and to build them into a true community. After a visit to Indonesia, he returned with ideas from parishes there to make St John Ogilvie's a centre of evangelisation for the district. He found the going very hard. He had two spells as parish priest in St John Ogilvie's, interrupted by a few years in a parish in Stockport (where he introduced the 'Renew' process which he had experienced in Galloway!).

Con Botter often joked that he was 'a constant bother'. In some ways, that was not totally untrue. He had 'holy impatience' in abundance and must have endured much frustration as a result. He was not a man to calm down when things do not happen as he hoped. But he was a good man and a holy man whose life, from beginning to end, has not always been easy.

In the last couple of years, his health was broken, and he lived out his life in a care home in Kilwinning. He and his sixty years of priestly service deserve our admiration and our gratitude. Following Requiem Mass at St John Ogilvie, Bourtreehill, Father Bottar was buried in the Sacred Heart Fathers plot at Kilwinning cemetery. Requiescat in pace.

Father Gilmour Ommer, born in Glasgow on 2nd February 1929 died in Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary on 29th July 2020. The son of a dentist, Gilmour studied and qualified in Veterinary Science before illness forced him to spend time recovering in Switzerland. Here he began studies in Philosophy and Theology, which would lead him to studying for the priesthood in the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, where on 2nd April 1960 he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Galloway.



Following ordination, Gilmour served from June 1960 until 1964 as an Assistant Priest in St Quivox, Prestwick. Then, from 1964 until 1966 in St Mary's, Saltcoats. He was then transferred for a year to St Margaret's, Ayr, and from there to Our Lady and St Meddan's, Troon, from 1967 until 1973. From here he was appointed as Parish Priest of St Conal's, Kirkconnel, where he stayed until April 1976 when he was transferred to St John's, Cumnock. Gilmour remained in Cumnock for fourteen years until he retired in September 1990.

Following retirement Gilmour lived in Durisdeer, from where he supplied in various parishes in the diocese. He also took on the role of prison chaplain in H.M.P. Dumfries from 1992-1995 which brought him much satisfaction, allowing him to continue in retirement to minister pastorally to those in need.

A further move south saw Gilmour spend a number of years in retirement living in Wigan, before he returned to the diocese at the invitation of Bishop Nolan to reside in the parish house of St Peter's, Dalbeattie. Here again, Gilmour was able to offer pastoral care for his regular morning Mass participants, and engage more easily with the priests of the deanery and of the diocese than had been the case when he was living in Lancashire. He was a much respected and appreciated presence in St Peter's until ill health forced him to move into a local care home for his final years.

One aspect of ministry in which Gilmour was actively involved was Religious Education. Having been sent, along with Father Jack Kerr, by Bishop McGee to Corpus Christi College to study the new religious education methods and models, he was an integral part of Diocesan Religious Education from 1967-1974, during which time he also lectured at Craigie College, Ayr. In later years Gilmour would often reminisce about the task involved in Religious Education following the Second Vatican Council, and he felt some sadness that much of the vision which had enthused him in those early days had not really materialised.

Throughout his many years as a priest, Gilmour was devoted to the liturgy and to the Eucharist. He put a great deal of store in celebrating with devotion and dignity, and he

The Sisters of Marie Reparatrice say Farewell to Mount Carmel Parish

Sister Barbara Carroll says goodbye on behalf of all the sisters, past and present



It was in October 1987 that the Sisters of Marie Reparatrice first came to Kilmarnock to serve the people of the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Onthank. Sr Teresa Nolan and Sr Margaret Gaffney were the founding members,

and over the past 33 years several sisters have continued the ministry there and for a few years in Stewarton. Sr Teresa spent an outstanding total of nearly 28 years, as many people know, and her companion for many of these years was Sr Imelda James. Now both these sisters are in residential care, and now the time has come for Sr Barbara Carroll to say farewell on behalf of the Sisters of Marie Reparatrice, and to thank the diocese and the parish for the kindness and welcome received over all these years.

Sr Barbara returned to Kilmarnock in 2016 to share the pastoral ministry with Sr Imelda after Sr Teresa left to join our London community. However, Sr Imelda has faced increasing health problems over the past year, and in January we both made the decision that it was time to consider moving at some point later in the year. Sometime afterwards we learned that the Nigerian Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary the Mother of Christ would come to live here after we left so as to continue pastoral work here, so we were happy that this would be a good continuation. Bishop Nolan asked us if we would be willing to leave in six months, which would take us to the end of August, and that was the plan for Imelda and myself.

However, events took a different turn when Imelda's health problems worsened with increasing mobility problems,

to the point that we asked if the Little Sisters in Newcastle would have a room for her to meet her needs. We already have Sisters in care there, and Imelda had already requested a place in the future. We were so grateful that a room was offered to her in mid March, just before the Home went into lockdown. Over the past five months her condition has worsened, and we have finally received the sad news that she has Motor Neurone Disease, a hard diagnosis to accept and live with, and one which has caused great shock and sadness not only to our sisters but to her family and friends, and the parishioners here in Kilmarnock. It is already quite advanced, so I ask your prayers for her at this difficult time.

I moved to a flat for independent living with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Robroyston in Glasgow in the first week of September, after saying farewell on behalf of all our sisters to the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I hope eventually to connect with Religious in Glasgow, though so much has changed because of Covid 19. I also leave with a heavy heart on account of Imelda's illness, and the fact that she is not here to say farewell with me. I know that the parishioners will be remembering her in prayer, thanking the Lord for her presence here over many years.

However, it will still be the beginning of a new stage in my life, and I trust in the Lord's loving presence accompanying me.



Father Ommer ...

was fastidious about good liturgical practice. In this regard it was certainly a concession from him when he reluctantly accepted that when celebrating Mass in his room in the care home, and no longer able to struggle into his alb, he agreed simply to wear a stole. He managed the changes in the liturgy in the 1960s and 1970s with great attention to detail, and he remained until his death firmly committed to his daily private prayer.

Gilmour was a wonderful example of a priest who, though ordained in the pre-Vatican II Church, was firmly committed to the new realities demanded by the changing times. He embraced the Council teachings, and he lived out their message which sought to engage the Church with the demands of the modern world of the late 20th century.

Gilmour had a great affection for the Dumfries and Galloway region, frequently recalling holidays in the Wigtown and Whithorn areas he had experienced as a young boy. It was fitting therefore that following his Requiem Mass in St Peter's, Dalbeattie, he was laid to rest in the local Dalbeattie cemetery.

An individual with the blend of knowledge in veterinary science and with religious learning is probably not very common, but Gilmour was such a person. He was a gentle man and a gentleman. He chose to serve God and God's people, rather than devote his life to God's creatures. Like us all he had his own strengths and weaknesses. It is with gratitude that we remember his gifts, and his genuine desire to serve with a generous spirit and a willing heart. We entrust him into God's loving embrace; something which Gilmour awaited without any fear or anxiety. May he rest in peace.

Safeguarding In Galloway Diocese

by Hilary Mackintosh, Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer and representative for SPRED on the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group



Safeguarding may now seem to be something that is only needed by people who are keen to signal how ‘woke’ they are. After all, it may appear that the need to provide safeguarding is all done and dusted so only those who wish to show off about how good they are keep on about it. And yet – is it really all over? Will people who are vulnerable because of age or perceived disabilities cease to be so? Will the person sitting next to you in at Mass who seems so strong and confident be able to keep themselves safe from someone in authority who is adept at emotional manipulation?

Rather than being a knee-jerk reaction to what has happened in the past, and a tick box exercise, safeguarding will always be necessary and is something that each parish has to address. Churches, and any associated groups, must be safe places for everyone and it is the responsibility of us all to ensure this. There are several possible types of abuse, including sexual, physical, psychological, domestic, financial and spiritual – and we never know when we may encounter this ourselves, *or* become aware that someone we know is being abused, *or* is in danger of being abused and needs our help. In such a case would you know what to do?

That is why learning about safeguarding is important. Rather than having to start from scratch it is worthwhile (and also mandatory if you are volunteering for duties in your parish) to undertake training and it is also vital to keep refreshing this training. It gives us the ability not only to

become aware of *when* something is just not right but also, even better, it gives us the knowledge of *what* to do about it and may, potentially, help to prevent it.

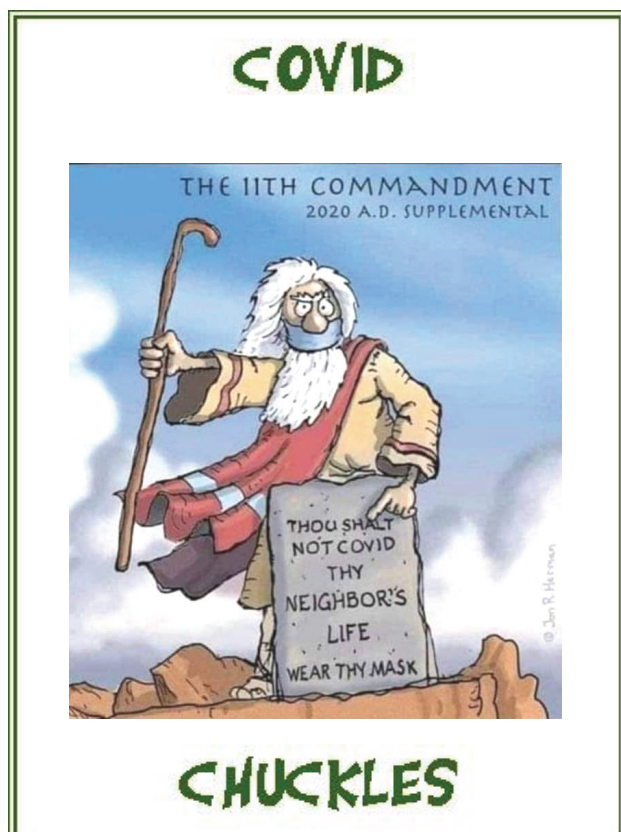
Taking the wider outlook, all parishes are supported by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service which was set up by the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland to lead and develop Safeguarding in Scotland. The National Adviser, Tina Campbell is indefatigable in working for the provision of training opportunities for all church members and liaising with external bodies.

In the Catholic Church in Scotland, safeguarding is guided by the core text *In God’s Image*. Parish priests are responsible for the safety of parishioners, and Safeguarding teams work very closely with them and other clergy, including the bishops. Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators work with the parish priests.

Safeguarding training has been carried out in this Diocese by an established team. Trainers provide the training, and plan the priorities and delivery alongside the Safeguarding Adviser and, now, the Safeguarding Officer. Most but not all Trainers are also PSCs. Thus our team is made up of local people from across the diocese who are committed to striving to ensure that Galloway Diocese is a place where our community is supported when necessary and kept as safe as possible now, and in the future.

Covid-19 has caused some interruptions in training but please keep a look out for notices in your parish as to when there will be a chance for you to give your support to this vital task.

Safeguarding is not simply about providing support for people who have suffered abuse in the past, it is about continuing to keep our church safe. As Catholics we believe that every person is valuable and is deserving of a precious dignity; we have a duty to take care of those who need special care. When it comes to looking after people in our parishes, it’s not someone else’s job to do, it’s *our* job. We each need to take responsibility to make sure that we provide a safe place for everyone.



If you wish to be part of the conversation, or think you can help, or if you have any suggestions or experiences you wish to share, email safeguarding@gallowaydiocese.org.uk or phone the diocesan office 01292 266750 and leave a message for the Safeguarding team: we will get back to you.



Seventy years of priestly service

Not many priests have the longevity to reach seventy years of sacred ministry, but Bishop Maurice Taylor is an exception.

Maurice Taylor was born on 5th May 1926 in Hamilton, the eldest of four children, to parents Maurice and Lucy. He attended St Cuthbert's Primary, Burnbank, St Aloysius College, Glasgow and Our Lady's High School, Motherwell. Since the foreign seminaries were closed because of the Second World War, Bishop Taylor studied philosophy for two years in Blairs College just outside Aberdeen. On his eighteenth birthday he had to register for Military Service and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in several locations including India. Demobbed in 1947, he returned to his ecclesiastical studies, this time in Rome where he was ordained a priest on 2nd July 1950 in the chapel of the International Carmelite College for the newly-established Diocese of Motherwell.

He served as a curate in St Bartholomew's, Coatbridge and St Bernadette's, Motherwell. In 1955, he was appointed to the staff at St Peter's College, Cardross, first teaching philosophy and later theology.

In summer 1965, Father Taylor was made rector of the Royal Scots College, Valladolid where he was sensitive to the traditions of the Scots College. His love of its history led to him providing us with "The Scots College in Spain", the splendid account he wrote in 1971, detailing the college story since its foundation in Madrid in 1627, making a significant addition to the body of writing on Scottish Catholic History. For a priest who had been trained in Rome, he became a "Spaniard". He loved and still does love Spain and all things Spanish and encouraged the student priests to delve into its history, geography, culture and language.

On return to Scotland, Mgr Taylor – as he then was – became parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride. During seven years, he worked to implement the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the nature of the Church, on liturgy, on ecumenism, encouraging collaborative ministry to help people fulfil their baptismal calling as active members of the Church.

On 1st April 1981, the Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, Archbishop Bruno Heim, phoned Mgr Taylor asking him to come and see him in London. Did it cross his mind someone might be playing an April Fool!? He went the following day and received the news of his appointment as Bishop of Galloway. Influenced by Bishop John Geddes (1735-1799), he took as his motto "Ambula coram Deo" – "Walk in the presence of God". The episcopal ordination took place in the grounds of Fatima House, Coodham on 9th June (feast of St Columba).

At an early stage in Galloway diocese, Bishop Taylor realised good pastoral planning was required in order for local churches to implement the vision and hopes of Vatican II. The *Renew* programme was introduced in the diocese improving the celebration of the liturgy, fostering widespread lay

involvement in parish activities, building a stronger sense of community in parishes and of the universal call to holiness.

A *Ministry to Priests* programme was introduced to care for clergy and their ongoing formation. A change in the order of the sacraments of initiation for children led to Confirmation and First Holy Communion being received together at the younger age of 7 or 8 years.

Embracing the Future was a plan introduced to envision the circumstances and conditions in future years and increased lay involvement further, especially as the number of priests decreased.

An entire generation of schoolchildren and their teachers fondly remembers Bishop Taylor's regular visits to the schools of the diocese.

Because of his fluent and polished command of Spanish, Bishop Taylor became a regular visitor to Central America, to raise awareness of poverty, corruption and other suffering experienced by the peoples of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica. On a number of occasions, he served for short periods in Central American parishes, an association which he describes as one of the most enriching and interesting aspects of his life.

Bishop Taylor became the Scottish representative on the Episcopal Board of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), later as ICEL chairman. During the years he was involved, most of the work was on revised translation of the Roman Missal. Bishop Taylor's sadness and disappointment that this work was to be rejected by Rome is well documented. Notwithstanding, he greatly enjoyed working with the other fine members of the ICEL team.

Bishop Taylor led numerous pilgrimages to the Holy Land a place for which he had great affection. Over the years, he built up friendships not only with the many pilgrims who accompanied him but with the people who live there with little hope of peace, showing solidarity with them and the sadness of their lives.

When he retired in 2004, Bishop Emeritus Taylor with typical self-deprecating humour told people when he looked up "emeritus" in the dictionary he found it said: "of no further use"! Of course, that was never going to be true. In retirement he continued to celebrate Masses throughout the diocese, especially to allow priests to take a holiday, and played a regular role in worship in the parishes in Ayr where he lives. He has written several books on a variety of topics, has given talks and retreats, and is about to publish an autobiography.

Seventy years of priesthood is a life well spent. Bishop Taylor has had a tremendous influence for the good on countless lay people and priests. At 94 years of age his warmth, his wit, his willingness to help and encourage, and his desire to serve are undiminished. And, as his health allows, he will continue to minister to the people of God and support them with his prayer. On reaching an anniversary that few clergy will celebrate, his priestly service deserves gratitude and admiration.

One hundred and sixty years of sacred ministry

Two of the priests of our diocese celebrated their Golden Jubilees in the summer and Canon McSorley celebrated sixty years of priesthood. We salute them and wish them well in the coming years.

Very Rev. Canon Patrick McSorley

Canon Patrick McSorley is one of a rapidly diminishing number of priests who, born and educated in Ireland, came to exercise their sacred ministry in this diocese of Galloway. He comes from a family living in Northern Ireland and who gave two of their sons to be priests – Pat's brother was a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Pat himself received his seminary education at All Hallows College in Dublin and, following successful examinations and a favourable report from the college superiors, he was ordained in June 1960 in All Hallows for the Diocese of Galloway. In the situation nowadays when we are so short of priests, it seems strange that, when later in that summer he presented himself to Bishop McGee, he was told that, since there were no vacancies at that time in Galloway, he was to be 'farmed out' temporarily to the diocese of Dunkeld.

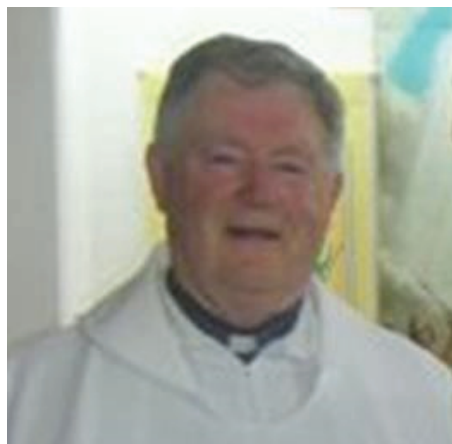
However, when that exile came to an end, Father Patrick McSorley was formally admitted to the Galloway presbyterate and appointed an assistant priest in St Joseph's parish, Kilmarnock. The appointment was made at an appropriate time since, later, the area of New Farm Loch was detached from St Joseph's and Father McSorley was appointed its first parish priest.

At St Matthew's, he had the work not only of directing and supervising the material building of the parish property but also, what is in a way a more difficult task, of ensuring that the people of the parish should have a sense of community and of common responsibility for the smooth operation of day to day and week to week activities in the parish and that these activities should engender a truly vibrant growth of parish life.

Pat McSorley succeeded in those aims and he was a well-loved figure in the parish.

However, there came a time when he thought that it was time for a change, both for himself and also for the parish community. He hoped that he might have the opportunity of experiencing life in the south of the diocese. So when St Teresa's parish in Dumfries became vacant, Bishop Taylor appointed him as the new parish priest. That was another successful appointment. Pat McSorley was a revered pastor. In addition, he carried out the necessary but difficult work of chaplain at Dumfries prison to the satisfaction of the prisoners as well as the officers. He spent his final years of pastoral ministry as parish priest of St Quivox's, Prestwick.

Father McSorley is now, of course, Canon McSorley, a very popular priest, both among his fellow-priests and among the laity. His fellow-priests know his golfing prowess which often brought him victory in the annual Bishop's Cup which, alas, is no more. Everyone who knows him, whether they are clerical or lay, finds him friendly, courteous, affable and with a sense of humour which often shows itself in gentle sarcasm. It is good that, although now retired, he still lives in the diocese, ready to help when needed and always a pleasant person to have with us.



Very Rev. Canon Patrick Keegans



Canon Keegans now lives as a retired priest in Prestwick, but he is still active in the diocese when his services are required.

His parents, William and Mary Keegans, resided and brought up their family in Saltcoats. Their son Patrick was born on 13th February 1946 and baptised in St Mary's, Star of the Sea, in the town. However, when the new parish of St Brendan's was established, the Keegans family, because they lived in Sannox Drive, became parishioners of St Brendan's.

Pat spent some years in Blairs College (the national junior seminary) where his form master was Father John Kane (well remembered in Galloway diocese). After gaining his Higher Leaving Certificate, Pat was asked by Bishop McGee to go to the Royal Scots College in Valladolid for his six years in tertiary education as a student for the priesthood. The students of the college received their main classes in philosophy and theology by daily attendance at the diocesan seminary in

Very Rev. Canon John Anthony McGee

Canon McGee was born in Kilmarnock on 4th August 1947, his parents Patrick and Anne having come from Donegal to live in Scotland. From having been parishioners of St Joseph's in Kilmarnock, they were included in the parish of St Michael's when that parish was established, detached from the town's mother church of St Joseph. Mr and Mrs McGee and their family were quiet people but, when their son expressed a desire to become a priest and went to Blairs College, he acquired a reputation for intelligence that led to the authorities there deciding that he be allowed to omit the sixth form and go straight from fifth form to a major seminary, namely the Royal Scots College in Valladolid.

There he flourished in his studies and, particularly, in his abilities in Spanish. He was ordained in Kilmarnock by Bishop Joseph McGee (no relation) on 11th July 1970, three weeks short of his twenty-third birthday. By this time, due to the several students in Blairs and in Valladolid whose name was John and to lessen resultant confusion, he agreed that, though his name in the family was John, he would answer to Jack in seminary and priestly circles.

So Father John, or Jack, returned to the diocese of Galloway and spent a few years as assistant priest in St Paul's parish, Ayr, where his duties, in addition to parish work, included Ayr Hospital, Ailsa Hospital, several villages and the residential Butlin's Holiday Camp (where there was in those days Mass on Sundays during the holiday season). However, his time in parish work was limited because, in 1974, Father John Walls, vice-rector in Valladolid, was made rector and the vacancy was filled by Father Jack McGee. Then, when Father (then Canon) Walls returned to Galloway diocese and became parish priest of St Paul's, Hurlford, the Scottish bishops nominated Jack McGee to be the new rector, a nomination

that was duly accepted and formally ratified (as protocol required) by the Spanish Head of State, King Juan Carlos.

Father McGee, not content with fulfilling the duties of rector, also continued his studious pursuits, both in reading and private study, and also in enrolling in various courses in Scripture and canon law which required, from time to time, travel to the Pontifical University of Salamanca.



When he returned to Galloway diocese, he served briefly in Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Beith. He later became parish priest of St Sophia's, Galston. From there he was appointed the Administrator of the former Good Shepherd Cathedral. When the Cathedral was moved to St Margaret's and Good Shepherd Church closed, Father McGee was made parish priest of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Girvan. Our Lady and St Cuthbert's, Maybole was later joined with Girvan under his care. He was also appointed to be a member of the Galloway Chapter of Canons and, perhaps more usefully, his canonical skills have been recognised and constantly employed in work for the Scottish Catholic Interdiocesan Tribunal, requiring a weekly stint in Glasgow as well as work in the parish house in Girvan.

Very Rev. Canon Patrick Keegans, continued

Valladolid where the teaching was done in Spanish and Latin. However, from 1967 on, the students, for their theology classes, attended the Augustinian college in Valladolid which was an affiliate of the Pontifical University of Comillas and therefore authorised to confer the degree of Bachelor of Theology.

Bishop Joseph McGee ordained Pat to the priesthood in St Brendan's church on 4 July 1970. After a few years as a curate in various parishes of the diocese, beginning with a term in Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Kilmarnock, he became parish priest of St Martin & St Ninian's parish in Whithorn, with the additional duty of serving the people of Wigtown. However, after a relatively short time, the condition of his health necessitated a period during which, with treatment and his own determination, he regained his good health and was able to resume his work in the diocese. He became parish priest of Holy Trinity parish in Lockerbie, serving also Moffat. During his time in that post, the Lockerbie disaster occurred on 21st December 1988. Father Keegans had his mother with

him in his house for a few days at the time and both had a very narrow escape when a large section of the stricken plane fell on a house just a very few yards away, killing its occupants.

Since that time, Father, now Canon, Keegans has become well known nationally, even internationally, for his continuing work as a source of strength and consolation to the bereaved of the tragedy, especially those in the United States, and for his courage in taking an active share in the debate concerning the cause of the disaster and the question, 'Who was responsible?'

In more recent years, Canon Keegans was administrator of St Margaret's parish, Ayr (where, in his younger days, he had been a curate). He was a well-liked priest, tireless in his care for the parishioners, the staff and children of St John's primary school, and staff and patients of Ayr University Hospital and of Ayrshire Hospice. He supervised a thorough repair and repainting of St Margaret's (now the diocesan cathedral) and a complete renewal and re-ordering of its sanctuary.

Returning to Public Mass

Three priests of the diocese offer their personal reflections of the return of the people to Mass and how they are coping with the restrictions and limitations imposed on priest and people alike.



“There is no need for them to go...”

From Father Philip Kitchen, Parish Priest of Saint John the Evangelist, Cumnock

These may seem like strange words with which to begin a reflection on the return of people to church after the period of lock down. They are the words of Jesus as recorded in the passage from St Matthew’s Gospel which was read on the Eighteenth Sunday in ordinary time this year, that passage which we know as ‘the feeding of the five thousand.’ Jesus spoke the words in response to the very genuine, well placed concerns of the disciples that Jesus should dismiss the people so that they could in effect forage for whatever food was available to them in the area. It was a very practical concern for the physical well-being of people.

“There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.” Jesus is no less concerned for the physical well-being, of the people, but he knows that there is something much more important that needs to be catered for, their spiritual well-being; they need to know the truth of God

as expressed in the life and teachings of Jesus. The short term practicalities of catering for the physical requirements of people can never trump the fundamental need to cater for their spiritual needs.

There is a very important message here as we feel our way forward into a strangely modified liturgy. It is disconcerting to preside at an assembly of masked people whose expressions can only be guessed at. The People of God are nervous as they enter church focussed above all on ‘not getting it wrong’. Have I properly sanitised my hands, have I remained two metres from the welcomer who is showing me to my seat, how do I receive the body of Christ, what is the sequence hands, two paces to the side, remove mask, receive Blessed Sacrament, replace mask? All very understandable. A very genuine concern for our own and other people’s physical well-being, but the practicalities have simply got to be accommodated that we may focus on our true end that in receiving the body of Christ we may become the body of Christ for others in our communities. We are very adaptable and there is no doubt that the focus on ‘not getting it wrong’ will quickly fade as once again we are caught up in the fervent celebration of the Eucharist.

Sadness was completely erased by joy

From Father Jim Hayes, Parish Priest of St Teresa’s, Dumfries, St Luke’s, Moffat and Holy Trinity, Lockerbie

Friday 20th March 2020 will remain a sad memory for me in my over 26 years of priesthood for it was the first time I had ever celebrated Mass on my own. Never having the need to celebrate Mass on my own as priests did regularly before the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. I come from that generation of priests who have enjoyed the privilege of concelebration.

The reason for this unhappy occasion was the necessary but sudden lockdown that hit the UK in response to the deadly Covid-19 virus. All of us found ourselves “locked” in our homes isolated from everyone else and only allowed to leave for essential shopping or medical attention.

We priests were faced with the question on how to continue to offer sacramental and pastoral support to our parishioners. One of first things that was decided was that we would continue to celebrate Mass in our churches. So from 20th March till Wednesday 15th July the daily celebration of Mass in empty churches began. The only good news from the very beginning was that here at St Teresa’s in Dumfries we were used to kivestreaming our Masses on the YouTube

channel (for the housebound essentially) so an email to the wider parish community to alert them to this facility brought me an e-congregation and so began the habit of attending Mass in slippers and pyjamas!

I will never forget the surprise of emotion I had on that first Mass on my own, following the blessing and dismissal at the end of Mass as I was leaving the Sanctuary I felt something was not quite right because as most of us priests do at the end of Mass we usually meet our congregation on the steps of the church or a chat in the sacristy about this, that and the other. Realising that that was not going to happen I found myself waving to the camera in an effort to reach out that little bit more to my online church and from that day till the last day of closure I waved to everyone as I left the Sanctuary following every Mass. It helped me enormously and soon, with feedback flowing in, I realised it helped everyone at home too – they were all waving back! Thank God for a simple gesture that, like all the many wonderful thousand and one small gestures that we all heard about, witnessed and practiced during lockdown among our families and neighbours, meant so much to us all.



Christ is not in Lockdown

From Father Duncan McVicar, Parish Priest of Saint Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan

Every one of us, at some time or another, is faced with tragedy or unexpected suffering: illness, a family crisis, worry, bereavement, unemployment. When we all went into lockdown in March, no one saw this coming. No one would have predicted that tens of thousands would be infected by this virus, that thousands would die, that we would be shut in our homes, that the economy would go into meltdown. Everything seemed more or less okay and then it all changed. Such times, bring home to us a truth about the nature of the world – a truth that we often choose to overlook or even ignore: we are all in God’s hands, our human condition is fragile, things can change without our control, in an instant. And this is when we look for God in our situation. Difficulties and the experience of our own fragile human state, can throw us into the arms of a loving Father, who has the answers to the questions we ask and who can offer us security and certainty when everything around us seems unstable. These months of the pandemic can give rise to a deeper sense of God.

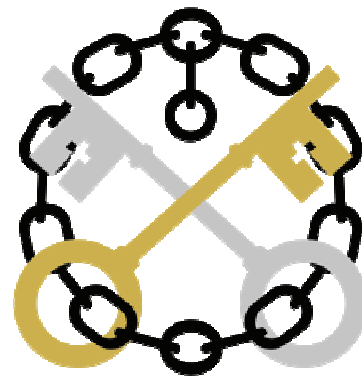
When I chat to my parishioners about how they are coping in this crisis, it becomes ever more evident that there are many insights that have emerged during these dark months. I would like to highlight three: first of all, we are an intensively Eucharistic Church. How many people have really missed Mass, and missed receiving the Lord in Holy Communion? One lady simply asked on her birthday to be able to sit in the church and be close to the Blessed Sacrament. She said it was the best birthday present you could give her. Many parishes have live-streaming; it definitely helps but it will never be a

substitute for the real thing. The hunger for Christ in the Real Presence has become so evident in these weeks.

Secondly, there does exist a deep bond between the priest and people: calls for visits in hospital, phoning round the sick and housebound to make sure they are ok, sending emails and text messages, etc. In short, anything to keep the connection alive. The priest and people thrive when they are together. We need each other mutually. The bond between priests and people is indispensable to our own spiritual health. We exist for each other and for the communities we serve. The priests are “married” to their people and, through these months of the virus, there emerges a heightened awareness of how important we are to each other.

And thirdly, as a Church, we are a real community. We miss the fellowship, seeing people we know. It matters that we come together as the Body of the Christ. We pray together, speak and sing together. We aren’t just “lone-rangers” in a private and personal relationship with God. We share our faith in community and to experience our churches closed or restrictive is simply hard.

We are in a painful time, but perhaps the “hungers” we share and experience in these months of the pandemic can lead us again to a deeper understanding of these deep truths.



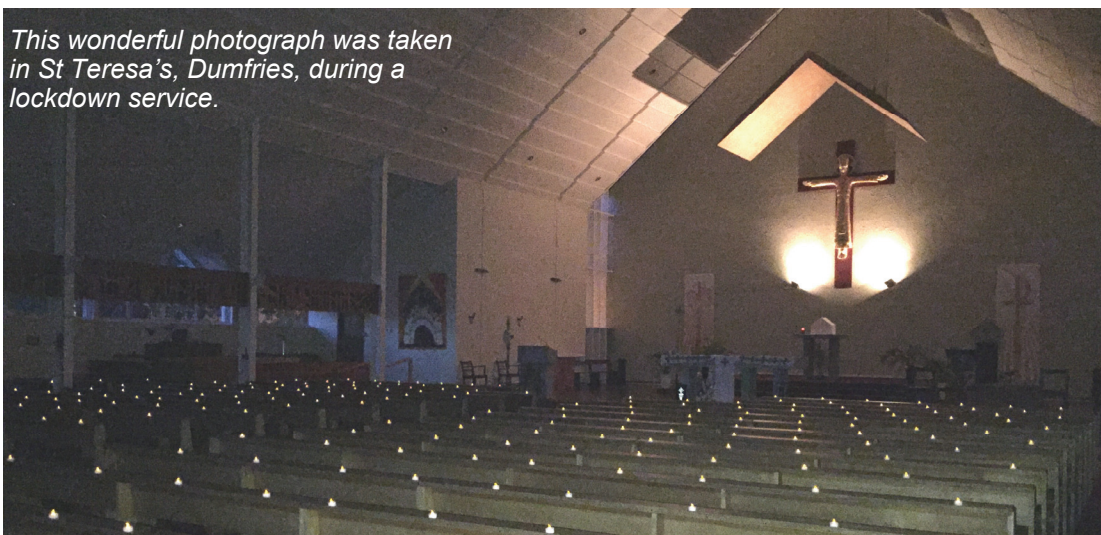
Father Jim Hayes ...

The sadness of the 20th March was completely erased by the joy of 15th July when I met parishioners for the first time in over 16 weeks. Because of all the wonderful preparation done by all three communities we were ready to open the very first day places of worship were allowed to. The pass-keeping and hygiene teams in all three of our churches led by Timothy in Holy Trinity and Moira and Kevin in St

Luke’s and Terry, Derek and Elizabeth in St Teresa’s had made sure all was well. The churches were ready, the people were ready, I was ready and what a happy occasion it was! We decided to have Mass in each of the three places that day to celebrate the end to being locked out of our churches. At the opening words of the Mass it was wonderful to hear a congregation say back (even through face coverings) with much enthusiasm, “And with your spirit” and then in each

place a spontaneous applause! It is a wonderful emotional memory I will remember for a very long time. It almost at once dispersed the sadness we all felt in these lockdown months and immediately we felt restored, graced, renewed and refreshed once more!

This wonderful photograph was taken in St Teresa’s, Dumfries, during a lockdown service.



Returning to Public Mass

Let's hear from some parishioners on their return to Mass following lockdown.
Is it all plain sailing?

“as a parish we never felt closer than we did on the first day back.”

From Hugh Matthews, St Joseph's, Kilmarnock

Years ago I read a book, possibly some trashy holiday novel, which contained a description of a villain. Like Hamlet's wicked uncle Claudius, he was a villain who smiled. The novel suggested that you could tell this character was evil because he only smiled with his mouth, not his eyes. I confess that I had no real idea what that meant. A few weeks ago, though, I got the message.

Along with a number of fellow parishioners I was lucky enough to have been allocated a place at Sunday Mass. I turned up and, like them, wore a mask. They were all smiling. I couldn't see the whole of their faces, of course, but I could see their eyes. They were shining. No mask could hide the happiness which we all felt at returning to something like normal worship.

We could not sing out loud. So what? We could sing in our hearts and God would still hear us.

We were not in our “own” seats but that was no bad thing. Seeing things from a different perspective is helpful. We have all now had, to some extent, the perspective of fellow Catholics

who are not able to attend the Sacraments except, perhaps, on very rare occasions, and that should teach us not to take what we have for granted.

I wrote “to some extent” because most of us had been able, during earlier parts of the lockdown, to take part through the internet or television. Maybe Jesus would have used these if He had been born a couple of millennia later but we would still have wanted to go and see Him.

Despite the instant replays and close-ups, going to a cup final or a concert is better than watching a transmission, perhaps because you feel part of what is going on. How much more is that true of being gathered together physically, rather than virtually, in the Real Presence.

The Lord is always with us, wherever we are, but communal worship is at the heart of our being with Him. No wonder we were smiling at its reinstatement.

Socially distanced we may have been but I suspect that as a parish we never felt closer than we did on the first day back.



“The Sign of Peace caused a flurry of waves and signs of love throughout the church.”

From Anne Barbour, St Andrew's, Dumfries

Who could have thought on St Joseph's Day 2020 that it would be 18 weeks till we could once again participate, in person, at Mass? Many of us have learnt how to stream Mass, a godsend literally for the house bound, and hopefully this will continue as part of our faith community.

My contribution to the wonderful “return” is to be a steward/cleaner at St Andrew's Dumfries. I like to think of myself as a modern St Martha. Our preparatory meeting, socially distanced of course, brought up many questions. One amusing point was that we would be going against centuries of Catholic tradition by filling the seats from the front!

The first Mass back was fully attended and parishioners arrived well spread out. No last minute rush at three minutes to 6 pm. Everyone was amenable to instruction, once we got over the difficulty of speaking/ listening through masks.

Speaking personally, that first Mass made me realise how much I had taken full participation in Mass for granted over the years. The consecration was almost a time travel back to the wonder I felt as a child that this was the crucial part of Mass and of our belief.

The Sign of Peace (which I am old enough to remember caused some disquiet at its introduction) caused a flurry of waves and signs of love throughout the church. Community was definitely alive and kicking. Communion was taken, slowly compared to before, but with a sense of reverence and attention which was almost palpable.

Once the congregation have left the church the cleaners get to work. Over the weeks we have now fine-tuned the spraying and wiping and have it off to a T. It is a different way to serve the Church but vital.

“I look forward to joyful Masses, full of people, music and song.”

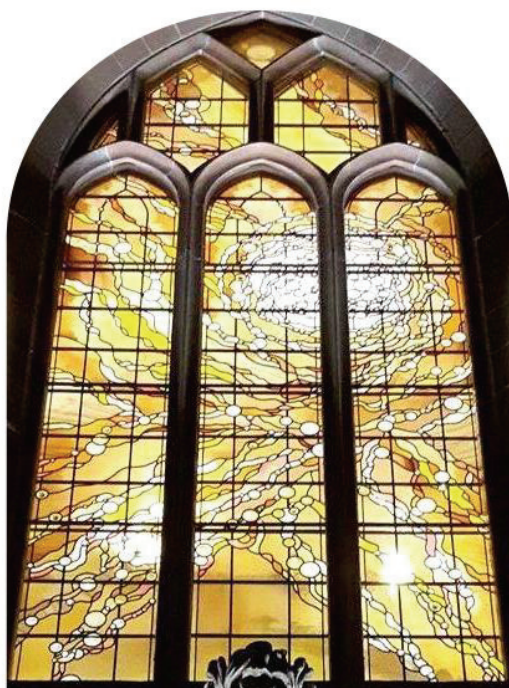
From Kathleen Handley, Margaret’s Cathedral, Ayr

Over the years I have travelled to various parts of the world and one of the first things I do on arriving at an unfamiliar location is to find out about the nearest church and times for Mass.

Many years ago, I was on holiday in a small resort in a remote and sparsely populated area of Queensland, Australia. It was the month of February and the day before Ash Wednesday. Initially, I had little hope of finding a church in the locality, so I was both astonished and delighted to discover that there was indeed a little Catholic parish church within a couple of miles of our resort. Having no transport, I set out on foot, in the tropical heat, to the church, where I was able to join with fellow Christians, locals and tourists alike, in the worship of Our Dear Lord, Jesus.

My church has been important to me throughout my life. It is part of me, my culture, my life. It has always been there for me, always available at any time or place – until a few months ago, when the coronavirus denied me access to my very own parish church. No church attendance, no Mass, no face to face contact with our bishop, our priests, our parish family.

There was some consolation in that we could watch



The “Glory to God” window

livestreamed Masses online, but there are many distractions at home. The phone rings, someone comes to the door, or the cats begin to chase each other around the room!

The weeks and months trailed by. Then, finally, the news arrived that once again our church could be open for Mass. Firstly I had to absorb all the rules and regulations and book a place for Sunday Mass. I set out, on that first Sunday, feeling a bit apprehensive. It was a strange experience: being seated so far apart, wearing the masks and so on – but nevertheless, I felt so uplifted.

I looked around this church that is so familiar to me. I re-engaged with the altar, the stained glass windows, the statues. I felt at home, that I belonged once more. I felt joy and

relief that the long wait was over. Bishop Nolan was in great form. It was a joy and a privilege to join in his celebration of the Mass. I looked around the church at my fellow parishioners, but as there were so few of them compared to our normal Sunday Mass, this did make me really sad.

I am, however, full of hope and expectation that our parish will gradually reach its potential again. I look forward to joyful Sunday Masses, full of people, music and song.

“I am aching to receive the Blessed Sacrament so why am I choosing to stay at home?”

A different view, from Helen

The last time I was at Mass in person was on 15th March in the Cathedral in Funchal. The next day I was back in the UK and we were in lockdown within a few days. Since then I have thanked God that by the miracle of technology and livestreaming I have regularly been able to ‘attend’ Mass and other services, at first from the Cathedral in Ayr and later from other churches in the diocese, including my own parish.

I was delighted when some restrictions were lifted and churches were able to open, first for private prayer and then for public Mass. I marvelled at the volunteers who came forward to steward and clean. So why haven’t I been to church ‘in the flesh’. In truth, I don’t know.

I feel uneasy about mingling; I am not afraid of catching the virus but I dread having to go back into self-isolation if someone else in the church tests positive. I hate the thought of wearing a mask; I am claustrophobic and it makes me feel trapped. I dislike the artificiality the restrictions impose;

having to book a seat to attend the Eucharist is anathema, the lack of social interaction seems sterile and contrived, the ban on singing makes the service somehow flat.

But are these just excuses. After all it’s Mass, it’s the centre of worship, it’s what we do. I have never in my life actively chosen to miss Mass on Sundays, holy days, feast days. I am aching to receive the Blessed Sacrament again. So why am I choosing to stay at home now?

I am writing this in early August and by the time this edition is published I feel sure I will once again be seated in church, with the congregation, in front of the altar, ready to receive the Body of Christ. I pray that I can overcome my fears, my reluctance and my reservations. Never has the expression ‘a leap of faith’ been more apt. In the meantime God has not been banished by the pandemic – thanks to technology and the devotion and endurance of the priests He is more in evidence – and more accessible – than ever. We are truly living in strange times.



Thank God for volunteers



Public resumption of Mass in our churches would not have been possible without an army of people who volunteered as stewards and to clean and sanitise the churches after each Mass. Here is a small sample of that army from a few churches - but we thank you all.



Living in FAITH

in the age of COVID-19



The Bishops conference recently published a Covid-19 newsletter regarding the challenges - and opportunities - posed by the reopening of churches in the 'new normal'.

In his introduction, Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll & the Isles, the Chair of Pastoral Ministry Covid-19 Working Group writes:

"The Bishops are well aware of the challenges which Covid-19 has presented for clergy and for parish communities. We greatly appreciate all that has been done to assist people to remain involved with their parishes and the Church. I know that the Spirit is breathing new life."

The full text can be found on the Galloway Diocese website: click here to download the newsletter in full.

Learning to live with Covid-19

Among the many difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, has been the challenge of sustaining a normal faith life involving worship in Church. When all church buildings were closed on 19th March, no one could predict when they would re-open and how the 'new normal' would look. With our churches now re-opened, we still face significant restrictions on our worship, necessary if we are to minimise the risks of gathering in confined spaces.

Parish communities have responded to the challenges with creativity, determination and love to find solutions for the good of all. This newsletter provides information and advice which may be of benefit to parishes across Scotland and points to sources of support which might assist the Catholic community to deal with some of the effects of the pandemic and to continue living in Faith as we deal with any future issues arising from the crisis.

How did we manage to keep in touch?

The greatest challenge facing clergy during lockdown was the lack of face-to face contact with parishioners as everyone remained socially isolated and at home.

How were spiritual needs met?

During lockdown, all parish clergy made efforts to keep in touch with their parish communities in various ways. Some used technology to livestream the celebration of Mass.

Impact on mental health

People suffering from mental ill-health often feel isolated from their faith community and thus isolated from God. This chapter contains some information, advice and support for those whose mental health is being affected by COVID-19.

Supporting prayer and devotion

This chapter has links to other sources linked to the liturgical year.



Getting ready for the next phase

It is likely that we may require to retain more 'distanced' forms of contact for some time yet.

Clergy and their cameras

Thanks to Deacon Willie Hiddleston for this stunning photograph of a bald eagle taken at a Bird of prey centre near Cumbernauld





Praying with your fears

By Father Martin Chambers

How do we, as faithful Christians, cope with our fears – irrational or real – that flit in and out the mind and plague our heart?

You don't need me to tell you that, during this Coronavirus pandemic, we live in uncertain and fearful times. The wearing of masks and the continual use of hand-sanitisers mean that we are more wary than usual of entering once-innocent public places: shops and schools, to say nothing of our own Churches. Even as we have moved forward with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we have found ourselves worried about who we are talking to, how long we should be talking to them and wondering if we are actually standing two metres away from them.

Fear and anxiety have marked many of our days since the lockdown began in March. However, if truth be told, from the conversations over many years with parishioners, with friends and with family, fear and anxiety seem to mark quite a few of our days. Fear and anxiety are not new phenomena! How many times do we wake up in the morning realising that a deep-rooted fear or panic has meant that we have spent another restless night of interrupted sleep. In these pandemic days, of course, the fears that we face are real and immediate. We are worried about your jobs and finances. There is fear about family: when can we visit our sick relatives? When will we be able to celebrate that family wedding? How will our children react to the new restrictions in place at school? And our young people themselves are fearful of their future: what qualifications will be of use to them as they plan ahead? What jobs will be available in to them the uncertain months and years ahead?

Yes, fear, concern and a heightened panic seem to mark these days. So how do we, as faithful Christians, cope with these fears – irrational or real – that flit in and out the mind? One of our most common hymns is 'Do not be afraid', so how can we cope with the fear that plagues the heart? And how can praying through our fears help us?

Whenever I spend time in prayer, I more often than not start by simply spending five or ten minutes laying before God the things I am worried about. Even as I do this – listing my worries, fears and concerns – I am aware that God will know them before I even speak them. However this 'listing' helps me to bring to mind the areas of my life where I am specifically looking for God to inspire me. I would invite you when you are praying to do the same – spend some time simply listing the worries and concerns you have; these will become the areas where you will then find God most clearly. However, put a time limit on it – five minutes or so – so that you do not what I have often done in prayer – spend the entire time in prayer simply going over and over in my mind the worries, fears and concerns. Once you have made this list before God, you can then move on to the specific Rosary, Meditation or Scripture passage that will be the focus of your prayer.



For the purposes of this article, I wish to centre on the Scripture passage that was the Sunday Gospel some weeks ago:

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

I think this is a classic Gospel story for us who are living through the Coronavirus pandemic and a Scripture passage that helps us see a prayerful way through this moment of fear. There are several aspects that speak powerfully to us all:

- 1) For how many times since lockdown have we felt, like the scene in the story, that we are "battling with a heavy sea"! These have indeed been choppy waters and so, as we settle into a prayerful reflection on this Gospel, we know that we experience what the disciples experienced in this passage from Matthew's Gospel.
- 2) Another powerful aspect of the story is the way that Jesus comes to the disciples "walking on the lake." Once again Jesus is not seen as a remote God who shouts from a distance. Jesus is a God who



An unexpected direction

Kevin Rennie, one of our seminarians, recalls a year which despite an unexpected turn has had its share of good experiences.

Fifth year in Rome certainly took an unexpected direction, I suspect if you'd asked anyone back in January what 2020 would look like what it has turned out to be would be radically different. For many in Scotland home working and blended learning became the new norm, and in Rome we were no different.

When we left Rome in March, even then no one expected things to go the way they did – we all thought it'd be over by Easter and we'd be back in the Universities then continuing our studies in person. As time has shown that wasn't the case, classes moved online, and then exams moved online – thankfully oral exams are more easily accommodated online than written exams would have been. Class discussions, and in particular seminars, were a lot trickier, being able to see only a handful of the class, and all of us in different time zones between the United States and Europe.

Of course, this new normal wasn't all bad, we didn't have to get up at 5.30 for Morning Prayer and Mass, but it was challenging, in communion with Catholics throughout the world to have to participate in the Mass and the celebration of Easter online through streaming. Since the easing of the lockdown it has been wonderful however to be working around the diocese as we all work to expand the availability of internet streaming, and at the time as we prepared for reopening. It was a great joy on the 22nd June to be part of the reopening of St Teresa's in Dumfries for private prayer, and to be able to welcome parishioners back – albeit to the "new normal" with face coverings and one way systems, and then subsequently to be in St Peter in Chains in Ardrossan for the resumption of public Mass, and to hear once again the community gathered together for the celebration of Mass. Whilst a very challenging time for all, the Coronavirus has given us all a chance to slow down and to take stock, recognising that which is really important, and in particular the importance of our Faith and the celebration of the sacraments as being at the heart of our lives as Catholics. I

believe its also encouraged us all to slow down at times and recognise those things which we have grown accustomed to but don't really need, and those people and things which are most important to us. Whilst the lockdown's digitisation of society, relationships and work will diminish as we meet with those we've missed in person again and are able to return to full Eucharistic Communion through our physical presence and participation in the celebration of Holy Mass, it has also enabled us to reach out more to those on the peripheries. Indeed a number of studies have shown how the Coronavirus has turned people back to God who had never considered themselves religious in the past, in this regard, technology has been invaluable. For me, one of the most poignant and powerful moments

of the lockdown was Pope Francis's extraordinary "Urbi et Orbi" as he walked through an empty St Peter's Square in the pouring rain, an image which I believe will be defining for a long time to come, but which emphasises that even in the darkness, pain and turmoil, whilst we may be physically alone we are supported by the community of the Church, and especially by God who never abandons us.



In spite of the challenges presented, the year was good and all of my exams were completed successfully marking the completion of the Theology degree. The seminary will resume on the 20th September when I will enter my sixth year of formation and, God willing, be received as a candidate for Holy Orders as I prepare for ordination as a deacon next year.

Praying with your fears

comes to us when we are in a crisis. We believe in a God who walks at our side. If that is the case in this Gospel, then in faith we also know it is the case in our daily lives: God is with us in our life's storm; God walks at our side.

- 3) As he speaks out, Peter symbolises each one of us who shout out in fear and in concerned anxiety. "Lord! Save me!" is Peter's cry but it is also our cry as we come through these stormy Covid-19 times. Let's join our voices to Peter's voice and reach out in faith and in prayer to the God who walks with us.

And let us be aware not just of the calming words "why did you doubt?" but also of that beautiful action from the Saviour when "Jesus put out his hand at once and held Peter." If we open ourselves in prayer and in faith to the calming presence of Jesus, we will be aware of that calming hold that Jesus provides for our lives.

And so, although our time in prayer may start in fear and anxiety, by the time we have finished our period of prayer we have realised that we are not alone and that we do not have to solve all our problems on our own. In prayer we remember that God walks by our side. And, as we leave prayer, we know that opening our hearts and minds to God's values we have a calm way through whatever storm life may throw at us. In prayer we remember that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who in the past has led us to rest in his loving presence, who in the present holds our hand in the storm of life and who surely in the future will lead us in hope as we trust in his mercy.

Diocesan Pilgrimages

The Pilgrimages to the Holy Land this year, and Lourdes next year are the latest victims of the pandemic. But hope is on the horizon that both events will still take place at a later date.

Holy Land, October 2020

It “will come as no surprise to anyone that, due to the current Coronavirus pandemic sweeping across the world, our next Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, due to take place in October of this year, has been postponed. We now plan to travel to the Holy Land on Monday April 12th and return on Monday April 19th 2021 – assuming that it is safe to do so by then, and the safety of our pilgrims is, and always will be, our principal concern.

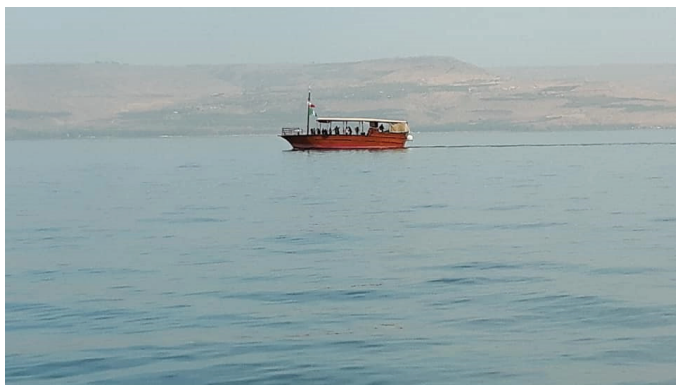
Those of you who had booked a place on the October 2020 Pilgrimage should have received a communication in recent weeks from Joe Walsh Tours already advising you of this change and assuring you that your deposit and any monies already paid are completely secure and will be transferred, should you so wish, to the new dates. Anyone who is now thinking about booking for the new dates should also know that these financial guarantees will also apply to any new booking.

The Covid-19 situation in Palestine and Israel at the moment is very difficult. While Israel are now permitting travellers from the United Kingdom to enter Israel without the need for a fourteen day quarantine, the level of infection and transmission is currently much higher than it is in this country and so neither Palestine nor Israel are on the Scottish or UK Governments’ green list and so it would still be necessary to quarantine when we arrived home.

While it is disappointing for us that we cannot travel to Palestine and Israel in October I would ask you to please remember our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land in your prayers. The Christians in the Holy Land are very dependent on pilgrims and tourists to provide them with an income and, as they have been in complete lockdown now for over six months, they are now desperately struggling to financially support their families and are more dependent than ever on international aid and charities like ‘The Friends of the Holy Land’ to meet their daily needs.

Please God the situation will improve for them very soon – I know from my regular conversation with friends in Bethlehem how much they are looking forward to welcoming us back to the Holy Land. St George, patron saint of Palestine, pray for them.

Father David Borland, Pilgrimage Director



Lourdes July 2021

After a meeting with Bishop Nolan, representatives of the Galloway Lourdes Hospitalite and Youth for Lourdes, the decision was made to postpone the Pilgrimage 2021 for twelve months until July 2022. This decision was made principally because of the uncertainty around how the course of the pandemic will run and how the world and the country will look in twelve months’ time. There were also specific reasons for postponing; medical, Youth for Lourdes and financial.

Medical Concerns

It may be that even next year there is still a degree of shielding or restrictions on the movement of older people and they would not be allowed to travel. The medical team do extensive preparations to assess each of the assisted pilgrims prior to the pilgrimage and this may not be possible. Lourdes also may impose limits on who is able to come.



Youth for Lourdes

YfL should be beginning their preparations for Lourdes July 2021 right now but unfortunately next year’s pilgrimage has become another victim of the pandemic. We’re sorry to the young people who were ready to join us for this wonderful experience this season but we do hope you will keep your diary free to join us in July 2022. We hope to begin to recruit in our schools and parishes in June 2021.

Finance

We know it is not cheap to go to Lourdes. Individual families and other pilgrims wishing to come on Pilgrimage may well have had a severe restriction of income over the last few months. A postponement would allow more time to recover financially. Many parishes help to the costs of helpers or younger pilgrims. Parish incomes have been severely restricted over the last four months and may not be able to help.

It is a huge disappointment to have to postpone the pilgrimage and is not done lightly. No one knows how this will play out in the year ahead. It may well be that next July we are all “back to normal” but decisions need to be taken now. We hope you understand these concerns and are able to come on pilgrimage in July 2022. The date is still to be confirmed but is provisionally set for Monday 11th July 2022.



The Teaching of Pope Francis

by Father William McFadden

Pope Francis has declared this year to be one of special reflection to draw attention to the cry of the earth and of the poor.



An appropriate description of Pope Francis could well be the “Pope of Surprises.” Every so often he comes out with something that is unexpected, and which often results in unforeseen and unpredicted consequences. One such unanticipated announcement came with the message that there was to be a year-long “special reflection” on his encyclical *Laudato Si’*. This year of reflection started on 24th May, the fifth anniversary of the publication of the encyclical.

It could be argued that *Laudato Si’* will turn out to be the document which will be Pope Francis’ most significant written piece of work during his papacy. It is already recognised as having a valuable impact both within the Church and beyond. As Pope Francis himself said in offering a reason for writing it: “I sought to draw attention to the cry of the earth and of the poor.”

Laudato Si’ is a document which invites all people to reflect on the world around us, and to choose to make appropriate responses to what we find. It encourages us to reject the contemporary ‘throwaway’ culture, and to open our eyes to see how God is present throughout creation. The encyclical is very strong on our shared humanity, and challenges us to be more aware of the terrible environmental and ecological realities facing so many of our sisters and brothers throughout the world. Pope Francis clearly recognises that one of the reasons they are being pushed deeper into poverty is due to the effects of the changing climate.

Whilst for Pope Francis climate change is critical, it is but one symptom of a much deeper problem, namely how we as individuals and as communities share our common home. What the pope specifically calls us to is “a change of heart.” We are asked to adopt an attitude of profound respect and care towards ourselves, our neighbours and to the earth, as this will be our way of communicating our love for God. Only by having this “change of heart” will we be able to live in harmony with one another and with God’s creation.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated, there is an interconnectedness in everything that happens in our world. The Year of Reflection is offered to help us focus on the intimate link between the protection of nature and of human life, central themes in *Laudato Si’*.

In announcing this prolonged opportunity for reflection, Pope Francis asked: “What kind of world do we want to leave



to those who will come after us, to the children who are growing up?” Perhaps this is a question we all ought to address, and maybe allow our responses to motivate us into specific decisions and actions, particularly in drafting plans and strategies for leading simpler lifestyles,

and for choosing a more sustainable way of living going forward.

The Year of Reflection on *Laudato Si’* is a further opportunity to be led by Pope Francis’ wisdom and vision. It is our chance to take seriously the fact that we are all responsible for our common home. *Laudato Si’* is undoubtedly a prophetic teaching of the magisterial role of the pope. We have now been given this special occasion to allow it to influence us for the better.

Pope Francis has written a prayer for the Year of Reflection. It is worth quoting in full as it encompasses so much of the encyclical in it:



Loving God,
Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.

Open our minds and touch our hearts,
so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.
Be present to those in need in these difficult times,

especially the poorest and most vulnerable.
Help us to show creative solidarity
as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.

Make us courageous in embracing
the changes required to seek the common good.
Now more than ever, may we all feel
interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding
to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs of a more fraternal and sustainable world.
We pray through Christ our Lord,
under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians,
Amen.



A View from Westminster

Philippa Whitford, MP, returned to the NHS during lockdown and pays tribute to the care and dedication of the front line NHS staff and the other key workers who kept the country going in those dark days.

Little could we have imagined at Christmas that by Easter, instead of celebrating the most important feast in the Christian calendar, we would all be shut inside our own homes. The Covid-19 pandemic has totally dismantled modern, 21st Century life across the planet while the 'Lockdown' challenged and changed our own lives out of all recognition.

Many people have struggled with enforced inactivity at home while others have been working hard to keep critical services functioning. The clapping on a Thursday night started for the NHS but quickly expanded to recognise social care workers and then all those who were keeping us safe or well supplied with the necessities. One thing this crisis has brought home to everyone is a recognition of who the REAL key workers are!

When I returned to the NHS at the start of lockdown, I wasn't doing anything heroic on the frontline but it was lovely to be back at Crosshouse and see a few well kent faces. I was struck by how quickly the hospital had been reorganised, to accommodate the expected high numbers of Covid patients requiring critical care and with 'Red' and 'Green' zones to avoid cross-infection between patients. There were already some patients being treated for Covid but the hospital felt calm. Staff had worked hard to get ready, and there was a sense of the breath before the dive or the quiet before the storm.

There is, as yet, no cure for Covid-19 and, even with full ventilation, it is not always possible to change the outlook for the sickest patients. As I had looked after breast cancer patients for over thirty years, I was invited to become part of a palliative care project group which was developing guidance on the management of Covid symptoms to ensure that even patients who could not be cured, could be made comfortable at the end of their lives. Along with palliative care groups elsewhere, one of the earliest proposals was that patients' loved ones should be allowed to visit at the end of life, whether the patient had Coronavirus or not, as it is critical that patients do not feel isolated at such a time, and that relatives get the chance to express their love and say goodbye – even if through the layers of a mask and gloves.

A group of senior consultants recognised the need to provide emotional support for staff feeling exhausted and overwhelmed, particularly young nursing or medical students, who might be facing the traumatic situation of losing a patient for the first time or on a scale they had never

experienced before. Wellbeing centres were established in both acute hospitals so staff could simply take a break, share their experience with colleagues or seek more formal support from the psychology team.

We owe a great deal to ALL NHS staff, not just the doctors and nurses, for everything they have done throughout the Covid outbreak and must pay tribute to all key workers who have lost their lives while supporting the rest of us.

The NHS now faces the challenge of how to deliver more routine healthcare and deal with the back-log of patients waiting for investigations or treatment. However, with the need to avoid busy clinics and allow time for staff to change PPE between patients, this will be difficult while the virus is still circulating.

Of course, while key workers were working during lockdown, the majority have spent much of the last four months at home with very limited horizons. The Covid-19 outbreak brought the phrase 'social distancing' into our lexicon but we should rather talk about 'physical distancing' as what we really need, and indeed have seen, is social cohesion. One of the positive aspects of the outbreak is the way communities have rallied round to support elderly or vulnerable neighbours with their shopping or the collection of prescriptions. Whether through Government and Local Authority volunteering schemes, or the spontaneous organisation of community groups, we have seen support networks spring up right across the UK.

While it has been important to get such essentials delivered to those who were in the vulnerable or 'shielding' groups, we must also recognise the need for social 'contact'. Humans are gregarious creatures who require social interaction. We know loneliness and isolation is detrimental to both physical and mental health so, as well as dropping off their shopping, it is important to be in contact with our neighbours for a blether, whether by phone or over the hedge.

While there have been plenty of church services available online, my husband and I have been grateful to 'attend' Mass with our own parish, live-streamed by Canon Archie from Our Lady and St Meddan's in Troon (*pictured*). Due to the limited

number of people able to physically attend church due to Covid, online Masses will need to continue for quite some time. This service should also be considered in the long term to support those who cannot attend due to frailty or illness. I would certainly have appreciated



Continued on next page

A View from Westminster

Continued

joining our Masses online last year when I was stuck at home with my broken leg!

Many of us have had to adapt to holding meetings online by video, including in my case speaking in the Virtual Parliament at Westminster. Despite the challenge of technical glitches, home-working in the UK has risen from 12% to 44% and encouraging this in the future could contribute to reducing carbon emissions from transport. Obviously it has been difficult for those who were also providing home schooling, but the avoidance of the daily commute has allowed many parents to spend more time with their children. Over the last few months it has been nice to see whole families out for their daily walk or cycle together.

Whether spending more time with our families or paying more attention to our neighbours, the challenge now is how do we hang onto the things we have learned to value during Lockdown. Our society and economy have been brought to a complete halt by the pandemic and will need investment to restart. Instead of just returning to our old ways, we should build forward to where we need to be in ten years' time, with a sustainable, green recovery and a fairer more equal society.

As we have had to support each other during the height of the pandemic, we now need to do the same during the easing of Lockdown; with restrictions likely to continue for the next year or so. The virus is still with us, still infectious and still dangerous. We know that those who contract Covid become infectious a couple of days before they develop any symptoms, so are unaware they are spreading it. That means we should all behave as if we are carrying the virus and are trying not to infect those we love.

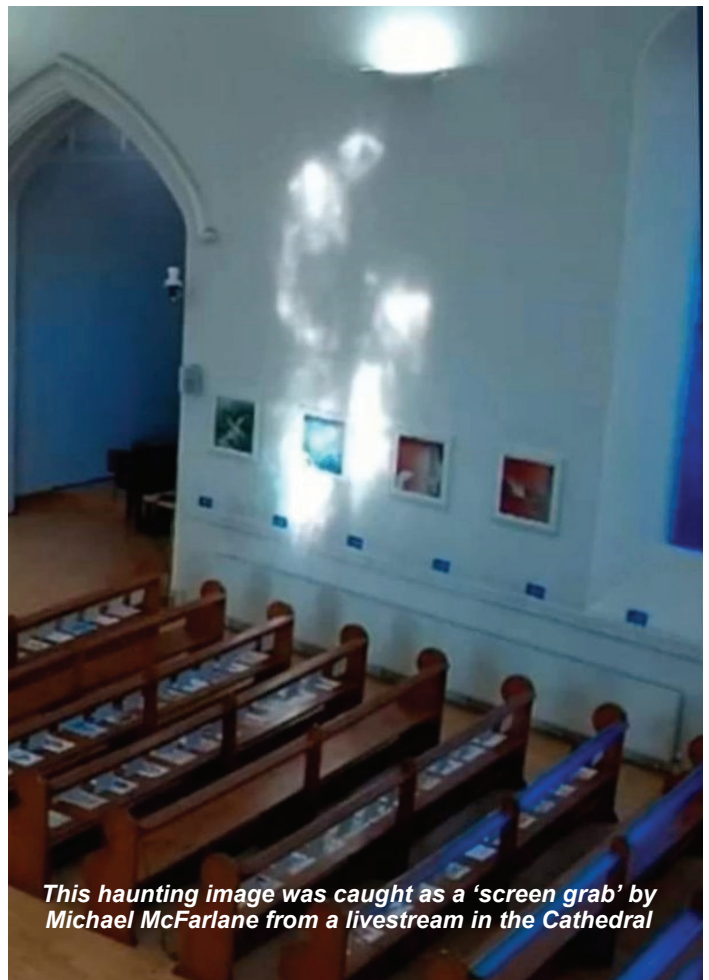


Central to this is the Scottish Government guidance to follow the FACTS.

Face coverings Avoid crowds: Clean hands and surfaces: Two metres distance: Self-isolate and get tested if you have symptoms.

This is the only way we can make vulnerable people feel safe enough to venture back out into society. Hopefully, if we all follow the rules, and remain considerate of each other, we can get through the challenging times ahead.

Dr 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 Shadow Spokesperson for Health at Westminster. In these articles she hopes to convey how her faith informs and impacts her politics. The views expressed in these articles are those of the author.



This haunting image was caught as a 'screen grab' by Michael McFarlane from a livestream in the Cathedral

A Parish Prayer

*Lord, we are Your people,
the sheep of your flock.*



*Heal the sheep who are wounded,
touch the sheep who are lonely,
find the sheep who have strayed, warm the
lambs who are cold.*

*May we know the Father's love through
Jesus the Good Shepherd
and through the Holy Spirit.*

*Help us to share that love with others, and
to show it to our country
and our world.*

*Help us to build love on justice
and justice on love.*

*Help us to believe firmly,
to hope joyfully, to love divinely.*

*Renew us so that we may renew
the face of the earth.*

Amen

