



Galloway Diocese NEWS

Lent
Digital
Edition

March
2021

Emerging from the Desert

Possibility of public worship at Easter



One year after Covid arrived on our shores, many hoped that the health crisis would be all but over by now and that parish life would be reasonably normal once again. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. However, despite the present challenges, we know that we are not in the same place as last March. The Holy Spirit and the positive response of the faithful and clergy have ensured this. Although we presently cannot worship and interact as we would like, we know by experience that we are not alone. The Lord is with us and within us!

Lent has been different for us. We have been more on our own. Jesus entered the desert alone before reemerging to begin his public ministry. Lent mirrors Christ's desert experience and so, perhaps during this particular Lent, we can become even more centred on the Lord. If we do, we will be allowing God's grace to raise us to new heights.

More information on page 6

During Advent, in preparation for Christmas, I read Luke's Infancy Narrative. I thoroughly enjoyed this and feel that I developed a deeper insight into the Nativity, the back story of John the Baptist and the prominent role played by Mary in the whole proceedings. It struck me quite forcefully that Mary is less conspicuous in the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, the journey to Jerusalem and the events of Holy Week. For example, she is mentioned by name eight times in the synoptic gospels (mostly in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke) and not at all in John. She speaks four times – three in the Infancy Narrative of Luke and once in John's account of the Wedding feast in Cana.



I enjoyed reading about the Nativity/Infancy in Advent so much that I decided to read, during Lent, Luke's account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. As luck would have it, the next day was the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple and so I read this passage as a lead-in.

A mere 40 days after the Nativity, Simeon told Mary that her heart would be pierced by a

sword so that "the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." This prophecy was fulfilled on the numerous occasions when Mary witnessed the suffering and rejection of her beloved son before culminating in Christ's passion when Mary stood beneath the cross witnessing her son's crucifixion. During Lent, I usually reflect on Jesus' suffering and death. However, now, for some reason, I find myself dwelling on Simeon's words and the suffering of Mary. Lent is a journey and Mary made the journey alongside Jesus during his earthly life.

As his mother, she carried him in her womb; she had no place to stay, but a stable when it was time for him to be born; then had to accept putting her beloved baby, Jesus in a manger, for a crib in the midst of the animals. How terrifying for a young, teenage girl alone in a strange town with a partner she was unsure of. She had hardly recovered after the birth when she had to flee into Egypt, fearful for her life and that of her son. Reflecting on the times in Mary's life when she had blindly to trust shows me the way to trust in God. Thinking about the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation, Wedding at Cana, her son's rejection as a prophet in their home synagogue at Nazareth, ultimately, the entirety of Mary's discipleship of her son was through her model of trust and belief. And so, there's nothing better I can do this Lent than to trust to and believe in Jesus; and there's no better

teacher than his mother.

On Ash Wednesday, we are encouraged to repent; believe the Gospel and become more faithful disciples of our Lord. Mary was Jesus' first and most faithful disciple. Although there is no record in the gospels, I feel sure that, as his loving Mother, Mary accompanied Jesus when he crossed the Jordan and journeyed to Jerusalem. What a kaleidoscope of emotions she must have experienced on the way. Joy and pride at seeing her son's power revealed as he healed the blind beggar in Jericho, mixed with amazement as he addressed Jesus as "Son of David" – a title usually reserved for the Messiah. I am sure she must have been totally dumbfounded to witness the raising of the widow's son in Nain and the bringing back to life of their friend Lazarus.

I feel certain she must have dug deep into her mother's treasure trove of things stored in her heart. A 12 year old boy sitting among the teachers in his Father's house, being about his Father's business; her adult son mildly rebuking her at Cana – my hour has not yet come; her kinsman, John the Baptist, proclaiming Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But nagging amongst the happiness, the words of Simeon – a sword would pierce her heart. She would enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, feeling a mixture of joy and apprehension. However, her Lenten journey ended with her hearing the words HE IS RISEN. Mary is the perfect companion for Lent: She is the model of the perfect disciple because she entrusted herself completely to God.



Your Galloway Diocese News

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

Send your contributions before 30th April 2021 for inclusion in the Pentecost edition to:

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Safeguarding In Galloway Diocese

Saint Joseph – a patron saint for Safeguarding?

by Helena Rameckers, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

On 8th December 2020, Pope Francis announced the year of St Joseph and published a new Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* ('With a Father's Heart'), with the aim "to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal". On reading this Letter, we are repeatedly reminded how steadfastly and patiently Joseph cared for Jesus and Mary when they were at their most vulnerable; indeed, the very language of the Letter focuses on "care", "safekeeping", "vulnerability" and "protection".

Pope Francis reminds us that the "Son of the Almighty came into our world in a state of great vulnerability. He needed to be defended, protected, cared for and raised by Joseph." The analogy is obvious: there are those in our midst who need our protection. This is not a new principle for Safeguarding; it underpins all our endeavours to ensure people working with vulnerable groups follow rigorous recruitment and training procedures. What is often lacking is an understanding that these processes are so much more than merely box ticking exercises. Just as Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father, perhaps we too can learn at the school of Joseph what it looks like to make a decision to protect those around us.

In looking back at the past, it is obvious that the abuse crisis happened because of a catastrophic failure to love one another as Christ commanded us to do. Considering Safeguarding through the lens of God's saving plan, what can we learn from St Joseph? Firstly, in every instance, Joseph's response was immediate: he took whatever steps were necessary to provide care and protection for Mary and her child, and to remove them from dangerous situations.

Secondly, he was certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. Perhaps it is tempting to feel a certain apathy towards Safeguarding – what can be done to remedy the grave wrongs committed, and aren't those particular sins in the past? Passive resignation, however, leads to dangerous inactivity. Only a prayerful, courageous and proactive culture which insists that our parishes become united, holy, and catholic communities can truly eradicate harm.

Thirdly, St Joseph did not look for shortcuts, but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it. Where parishes rely too heavily on policies and procedures, on box-ticking and number crunching, Safeguarding is reduced to facile and comforting solutions without ever truly examining its core message of discipleship – to the detriment of all.

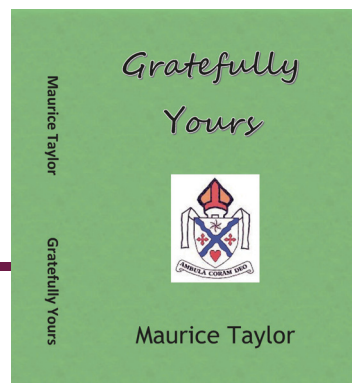
The process of annual parish audits has just been completed, and evidence abounds from across our diocese that Safeguarding is becoming a natural part of the ethos of our parish communities.

From extended parish Safeguarding teams who pray and plan together, to innovative ways of ensuring the Standards of *In God's Image* are met, a positive picture is emerging of a developing collective responsibility for Safeguarding. However, for Safeguarding to become truly embedded in our culture, perhaps St Joseph can again point us in the right direction: Joseph's attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are – and to show special concern for the weak.

Safeguarding currently has no patron saint; I would propose that St Joseph is a perfect contender.

Gratefully Yours

Bishop Maurice Taylor writes about his new book



When I retired from being Bishop of Galloway in 2004, I left with many memories (mostly happy!) of my 23 years as bishop of the diocese.

Here I am now, almost seventeen years later, and still with those memories. In fact, the present pandemic and the lockdown meant that the thought came to me, 'Why not write them down?' That idea then became 'Why not write also about my story of the years before I became a bishop?'

So arose the present book. It has occupied many hours which otherwise would have been spent less usefully and less pleasantly in these days of retirement and lockdown. I have called the result GRATEFULLY YOURS because I am aware of how much I owe to the goodness of God and of countless others.

I hesitate to call the book an autobiography. I think of a genuine autobiography as a long book with a thorough description of every phase of the author's life. On the other hand, my book, though it does speak of each part of my life, for some parts it does so rather briefly.

So my tale is told of my childhood, schooldays, life in the army and life in the seminary; then from ordination as a priest and, even more as a bishop, the story is more detailed.

I hope that you will enjoy the read and even, with me, be grateful for story I tell.

GRATEFULLY YOURS
282 pages of text; 32 pages of photographs.

From Bishop Maurice Taylor,
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Price (with package & postage) £15;
(if direct, without postage) £10.

Cheques payable to "Maurice Taylor".





SPRED Galloway

Janette Douglas Coordinator of SPRED Galloway, with news of SPRED's activities in the pandemic.

SPRED Galloway

Spiritual and Personal Development for people with special needs



Like all parish communities, SPRED Galloway is improving and developing its IT skills. We are delivering the SPRED programme via ZOOM and DVD, enabling all of our friends and catechists to participate in a SPRED session within the comfort of their own homes. We continue to use the Church's Liturgical Calendar to support the delivery of our symbolic catechesis, share life experiences with everyone within the SPRED Community and develop the growing talents of all involved in production of the DVDs.

VIRTUAL QUIZ NIGHT

The recent on-line Quiz Night with Friends, Catechists, families and carers featured our Joint quiz masters Hilary McKenzie and Scott O'Hare. The 'fabulous prize' of an online Certificate (!) was won by Billy and Denise Hendren, in spite of the devilishly difficult music quiz questions set by 'Pop Master' Scott O'Hare – available for birthdays, weddings and celebrations of all kinds – whenever it's allowed.

Rest in Peace

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on many of us and SPRED is no different, Many friends and volunteers have been taken ill with the virus, I am pleased to say the majority have recovered, however in these uncertain times, SPRED has lost four of its community over the past few weeks.

Rosina Gordon was a catechist with SPRED for many years. She was a caring and thoughtful person who will be very sadly missed by friends and colleagues in the Irvine Group.

Jane Michelle Doyle, one of the first friends to join SPRED, was a lovely young person who brought lots of joy to her group.

June Farrell, a friend from the Kilmarnock Group, was full of fun, cheeky, caring and was not frightened to say what was on her mind whatever the occasion.

Jack Kavanagh, the Chair of Trustees, always ensured that everyone involved with SPRED was treated with dignity and respect, and his ideas and support ensured that the charity continues even in these uncertain times. Jack committed a lot of his time and energy to SPRED and his legacy will continue for a very long time.

Rosina, Jane-Michelle, June and Jack will be sadly missed; the thoughts and prayers from everyone at SPRED go out to each of their beloved families and friends.

During Lent SPRED is developing a reflection pack which contains music, prayer, activities and ideas of activities aimed at helping others. In addition weekly reflections are being uploaded to our Facebook page.



Here are some reflections on the impact and benefit of SPRED from a Friend and a Catechist:

Billy Hendren – a Friend attending the Thursday evening Ayr Group

SPRED is something that I treasure very much. I get on well with all the friends, or as I call them, troops, at SPRED. Back in 2012 I took a violent epileptic fit, and I was in hospital. This meant that I missed a lot of sessions, but one thing that I was definitely assured of was my friends' prayers. I love coming to SPRED sessions on a Thursday evening, particularly if the day has been a stressful one. If I've had a bad day, SPRED helps me forget anything bad that's happened. There's one thing that I have learned by being a friend at SPRED and that is: we are Jesus' special friends.

Ann-Marie Glass – a Catechist attending the Thursday evening Ayr Group

Well, it all started back in 2005, when Sister Kathleen asked me if I would like to join SPRED and the best way of understanding what it's like would be come along and experience a session for myself before deciding. That was fifteen years ago and I am still here. It's such a really inclusive place of safety for the Friends, where they spend quality time with other Friends and Catechists. I have enjoyed my time in SPRED especially being a personal catechist. It's hard to explain just how good it is when we all come together in the group, each session starts the same way. For me the feeling you get when we all come together in the Celebration Circle is very special, hearing God's word being spoken to each of us and receiving the personal blessing "Jesus says to you tonight" is very powerful and you can feel God's presence. When we remember God's promise to us "Whenever two or more gather in my name there am I also."

If you would like to access the SPRED DVD visit the SPRED website
www.spredgalloway.org.uk
or Facebook www.facebook.com/SPREDGalloway

Gathering together in Jesus' Name

Lockdown, the parish and technology

by Hugh Matthews of St Joseph's, Kilmarnock.

A few years ago I remember reading that Pope John Paul II had nominated St Isidore to be the patron saint of the internet in light of his effort in the seventh century to record everything that was known in an encyclopaedia that was ultimately published after his death. He doubtless had to compare notes with St Clare, who has had the television portfolio for quite some time. I am not sure if you can get double time in Heaven but recently they have had their work cut out and maybe they should put in a claim. Not only has the science proceeded at a staggering pace but the uses to which it has been put would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

There is of course nothing novel in the idea that religious services should be broadcast. There are plenty of examples of that having been done in the past, such as the Pope's *Urbi et Orbi* message, and we have been watching televised Mass for decades. However, those were in addition to and not in substitution for "the real thing" and I for one did not fully appreciate that there was a real need for a facility to attend Mass remotely. It is only now that I can appreciate what a Godsend (literally) this facility is.

Who would have thought that instead of using YouTube to look at videos of grumpy cats we would now be able to use it to access live the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from churches all around the world; a practical demonstration of the meaning of the word Catholic?

Note that I used the word "watching" televised Mass at first and then changed it to "attending" Mass. Whatever may have been the case in the past, it is not now just a question of being a passive viewer. The broadcast is an opportunity for us to join with our community in the celebration which defines us. That being so it is incumbent on us, if we can, not just to sit in a chair and watch but to stand, kneel, say the responses and unite our thoughts and prayers with the whole body of the Church, our parish and the wider community. Though far apart we are still gathered together in Jesus' Name.

While the Mass is at the centre of parish life, there is more to it than that.

Before the 1960s people could have been forgiven for thinking that Mass and parish business generally was almost like something that was done to the congregation rather than something in which they participated. The role of readers, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, parish pastoral councils and the like is now a given but we have all had to adapt. Readings are recorded and council meetings conducted through Zoom or Webex and the like. Were it not for technology, the laity might have felt side-lined and parish life might have stagnated. Face to face communication and interaction is part of being human and there is no real substitute for meetings in person. Maybe parishioners who cannot be in Church through illness for example could still have their voices heard through recorded readings.



One of the odd things about this pandemic is that, at least for someone of my generation, it almost seems that it requires a greater effort to attend Mass or parish meetings than was the case when all I had to do was leave home and go there. Will I still make the same effort, perhaps channelled in a different direction, when I can be present physically or will I take it for granted? I think we all know what the answer should be.

Emerging from the desert

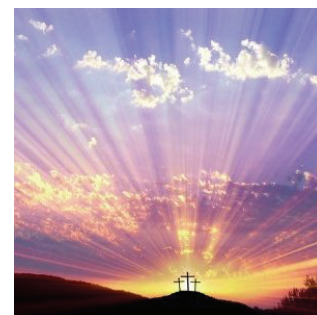
Public worship in time for Easter

At the time of writing and should progress in suppressing the virus continue as modelled, public worship for limited numbers is scheduled to resume in Scotland in time for Easter. It may even be possible to celebrate part or all of the Easter Triduum from Holy Thursday with a small congregation of 20 people. The Government will announce specific dates at the appropriate time.

Parishes will make known arrangements for "booking" a place to attend Mass in due course. Weddings with more than the bride and groom, witnesses and celebrant present are unlikely to resume until we return to the geographical levels 0-4 system on 26th April at the earliest. Baptisms will be able to take place from 26th April.

From 26th April, areas in level 3 or below can have public worship with 50 of a congregation. Parish priests will make arrangements for the celebration of First Holy Communion depending on local circumstances. The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated by the bishop when larger gatherings become possible, hopefully later in 2021.

The Pastoral Ministry Working Group has prepared a "Living in Faith in the age of COVID-19" newsletter which can be read at Living in Faith with Covid Newsletter [130221.pdf](#) (bcos.org.uk).





Coronavirus Will Change Us

Amelie Davidson on a contagion of kindness

As the Coronavirus continues to spread across the world, it is a period of uncertainty and worry for us all. It may feel easier to focus on the negatives - the rising death rates and the empty supermarket shelves. However, the pandemic which has shut churches, cancelled flights and turned people into teleworkers is also bringing out the best in people and proving that even in dark times, kindness prevails.



Recently, we have seen a beautiful, dormant side of human nature re-emerge such as strangers on social media offering to shop for people who are at high risk. These acts of kindness illustrate how humans are able to come together in times of need. A little kindness goes a long way and creates a ripple effect for everyone involved. The difference you can make to someone by extending a helping hand can make all the difference. Kindness is easy. It doesn't cost anything and it goes a long way. If you can add even a small amount of joy to someone's day, you are doing it right. In the powerful words of Mother Teresa, "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."

They say that you don't know what you have until it's gone. The truth is, you knew what you had, you just thought you would never lose it. When this is all over, we will see the good in everything and appreciate the little things. We will appreciate going to Mass more: the Eucharist, the quiet, the colours streaming in through the stained glass windows, singing hymns, shaking hands at the Sign of Peace, the sense of belonging.

I hope that we will emerge stronger, more compassionate and appreciative of the things in life which we had taken for granted. We will focus on the simple pleasures which surround us every day, instead of sweating about the small stuff; worrying, complaining, gossiping and waiting for something better. This pandemic has highlighted to us how short and unpredictable life is so read the books lying on your shelves, book the flight, tell them that you love them, ask the question, say sorry. As cliché as it sounds, life is too short.

Under the immense stress and fear, good is rising to the top. Let us utilise this time to put aside our differences and build the future world that we want to live in - a kinder, more humanitarian world. This pandemic will change the world forever and provide us with a whole new outlook on life. In the rush to return to normal, let us use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to.

The virus which has divided us has in fact, brought us closer together. If there is a silver lining to be found, Coronavirus isn't the only thing that is contagious. Kindness is too.

Sacraments of Initiation

Last year many children were disappointed that they could not receive the Sacraments of Initiation. Father David Borland explains what we hope will happen this year.

Our children, families and schools have faced many challenges during the Coronavirus pandemic: home-schooling, lack of equipment, poor Wi-Fi, parents trying to juggle working from home, teachers preparing and delivering online lessons (while at the same time trying to teach face-to-face the children of key workers), and all the uncertainty the on/off restrictions have brought with them, to name only a few!

The closure of our churches, and the limited numbers permitted when open, have also brought many problems and disappointments to our young people and families as the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation has been interrupted. It is sometimes easy for us grown-ups to say "Don't worry, it'll happen soon", but for many of our children, who were working so hard preparing for these major milestones in their young lives, the delay of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Holy Communion is heart-breaking, there is a real sense of losing out.

We were very blessed that last year as we managed to celebrate Confirmation before lockdown, and First Communion, albeit in a very different way, when our Churches reopened, but some were not able to celebrate First Reconciliation. So this year some parishes have two years of children for Reconciliation and one year for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

Bishop Nolan has deferred the Sacrament of Confirmation until after the summer as he will not be able to travel around the Diocese to administer the Sacrament for some time, but he encourages parishes to celebrate First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion as soon as it is safe to do so, giving permission for the order of the sacraments to be changed this year due to the extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in and the importance of these events in the lives of our young people.

When will this be? Unfortunately we do not yet know! Much of the preparation for the Sacraments takes place in our wonderful primary schools and not all our children are yet back at school. But our children need to know that they will celebrate these wonderful moments in their lives as soon as it possible to do so. Parishes and schools and parents are already speaking about this, tentative arrangements are being made and, please God, these arrangements can be firmed up soon.

A final word to the children who are waiting - thank you! You have all been so patient and understanding and please know that you have not been forgotten.



New sisters arrive in Galloway Diocese

The Religious Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ, Nigeria, have recently joined the parish communities St Joseph's, St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Kilmarnock.

Michael Duff takes up the story.

Can you tell us a little bit about your Congregation and Founder?

Our Congregation is called 'The Religious Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ, Nigeria'. It is a missionary indigenous Religious institute of Pontifical rite founded in Nigeria on the 7th of October 1937 by Late Archbishop Charles Heerey, C.S.Sp., an Irish missionary from Clonkeefy, County Cavan, Ireland. For the good of humanity, he left his Irish homeland to labour generously as a great missionary in Nigeria. To continue his missionary work, he founded our congregation. His major aim for founding us are;

- ◆ For the greater glory of God,
- ◆ Raising up of women and children,
- ◆ The care of the sick in the hospitals, Maternities, orphanages, clinics, dispensaries and the marginalized of the society.

He wanted us to be conscious of the needs of the Church according to the signs of the times. He had an overwhelming concern for the plight of the underprivileged and gave holistic attention to such people by building structures for the purpose of enhancing their living standard. His work and Charism continued in us, his spiritual daughters. We participate in the



My name is Michael. I'm sixteen, a member of St Matthew's Parish and a student at St Joseph's Academy. There (at least before Covid when we could meet) I was part of the Young Journalist Society; the school's magazine. I am not foreign to interviews, granted, I have not done many by email! I prepared some questions for the sisters to give the readers and everyone in the parishes a chance to get to know them a little more.



missionary work of the Church, in our Spirit of Humility and our Charism of Compassion serving the people of God in in Nigeria and other parts of Africa like Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Chad, Tanzania, Republic of Benin, Cameroun. And we also serve in Germany, England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States of America and Canada.

You have only recently moved here but are all from Nigeria. Could you tell us a little bit about your family and where in Nigeria you are from?

My name is Sister Mary Rose Confidence Maduka from Ehime Mbano, Imo State, Nigeria. I am from a Christian family of the late Dennis Maduka and Ezinne Eunice Maduka. We are five surviving children; one boy and four girls. I am the second child. My home Parish is St Michael's Parish, Umuezala Ogwara, Okigwe Diocese.

I am Sister Mary Mabel Chukwu from Ugbo town in the Awgu Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. I am from a Christian family of the late Joseph and Janet Chukwu. I am the first of the four surviving children of the family; two girls and two boys. My home Parish is St. Anthony's Parish, Ugbo, Awgu Diocese.

I am Sister Marilyn Juliet Obiorah from Ichi in the Ekwusigo Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. I am from a Christian family of Emmanuel and Charity Obiorah. I am the fifth child out of the six children in the family; three boys and three girls. My home Parish is Divine Mercy Catholic Parish, Ichi, Nnewi Diocese.

Although you have only been here for a few months, would you say there was a dramatic difference between Nigeria and Scotland? What are the similarities-if any?

Firstly, talking about the difference, there is obviously a whole lot. The weather is one of the outstanding differences owing to the fact that Nigeria has almost an extremely hot weather compared to here that is really cold. Secondly, our culture is quite different. For instance, when our people are happy, they tend to be quite loud in the expression of their joy; quite different from here where excitement is somehow expressed in a calm and quiet way. Again, when our people want to show respect to the elders, we do not address them by their names; unlike here that it is a mark of respect to address elders by their names.

On the similarities; both peoples are quite welcoming and warm to visitors which is exactly what we experienced here on our arrival and we can see that the welcoming spirit is the way of life here.

Sister Rose, before you moved here you have been in England for some years. Would you say the Church life and community are any different here than down south?

I was in England for 19 years at the Sacred Heart Parish in Stoke-on-Trent. I am a nurse by profession and I was working in Royal Stoke University Teaching Hospital for 15 years. I hope to continue my profession here in Scotland as a nurse as well as helping in the parishes when need be. A noticeable difference in the Church's/community life there and here is that the people here are more welcoming than those down south. However, in terms of the church, of course, the universality of the Catholic Church makes our life and worship as Catholics the same everywhere. So, there is not much pronounced difference.

Sister Juliet and Sister Mabel, how did you come into the Congregation?

What attracted us to the Congregation was the Institute's Spirit and Charism which is Humility and Compassion respectively. These resonated perfectly with our deep thirst for God and our longing to live the life of perfect charity in the service of God, the Church and humanity.

Sister Mabel: "I was first inspired by the words of the Apostle Paul, "the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit... " and I really wanted to dedicate my life to the service of God and humanity with an undivided heart, so, I went for it".

Sister Juliet: "I attained the age of discretion aware of a deep thirst in my soul for something I knew would later be translated into this total dedication of myself to God. In other words, I cannot think of anytime in my life when I considered another state of life. I also attended a mission school managed by nuns and I admired them so much and longed to be like them".

What were all your thoughts when you found out you would be moving to Scotland? Did you have any expectations, and how did they compare to reality?

We were excited because of the change of environment especially for the both of us just leaving Nigeria for the first time and because we were going to meet new people with a totally different way of life. Of course we really felt homesick at some point but the warm welcome and love we were given on arrival was really great and overwhelming and that made us automatically feel at home while staying in the house at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We really appreciate our Beloved Bishop William, our priests, Fathers Martin Chambers and Stephen McGrattan and the parishioners from our three parishes; their warmth, love and reception was splendid. May God bless them all.

Of course, there are lots of challenges because the Covid lockdown has really restricted us a lot from visiting our beloved parishioners especially the sick and the housebound. Consequently, we have not been able to interact well with them. We cannot even see them and surely there are some who really would want to meet us too and are not able. So, the lockdown is a real handicap but, notwithstanding, we are settling in as much as we can in the house. We are carrying everyone along in our prayers both in our community prayers and the livestream rosary on our parish YouTube Channel which we pray every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6 pm.

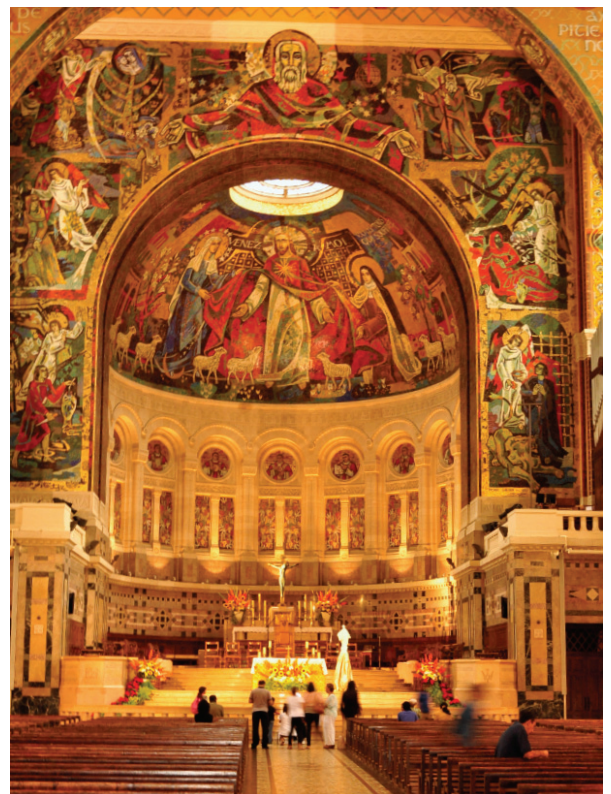
We hope to be fully engaged in all pastoral work in St Joseph's, St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We'll work in the parishes especially helping in organising the liturgy, the choir, Church groups, cleaning the church etc, visiting the schools, visiting the housebound and the sick and bringing them the Sacrament of the Holy Communion.



Close to my heart

A special place, a memory, a wish to return ...

Deacon Willie Hiddleston of St Teresa's, Dumfries, is reminded of a parish visit to Lisieux home of the parish Patroness. The photos are of the interior of the magnificent Basilica in Lisieux.



A Decade of Deacons

Galloway Diocese is fortunate in having four deacons supporting their parishes and contributing to the pastoral life of the people. This year is the tenth anniversary of the first ordinations. Deacon Bob Simpson takes up the story.

As most of our Permanent Deacons are of a certain age (my apologies, Robert) they may not celebrate 25 or 40 years of service without breaking world age records. So we are marking ten years instead. The story began on Tuesday 7th June, 2005. A meeting took place then in Candida Casa between Bishop Cunningham, Father Stephen Latham, representatives from the Scottish Permanent Diaconate, and a number of men from our diocese. In late August 2006 four of us, with our wives, began the preparatory year in Dundee, and went on to the course proper in mid-September 2007. Four years later three of us were ordained: Deacon Willie Hiddleston, Deacon George McDermott and Deacon Bob Simpson. Deacon Bill Corbett will celebrate his ten years next year. All are pictured with their wives (their previous vocation).

Deacon Willie Hiddleston



Willie remarked that it does not seem like ten years since becoming a Deacon. When he left school he had various jobs. He worked in a tailor's shop as a sales assistant then on the display team, then worked in a trouser factory. After that he worked for ICI for 27 years. He then worked at a motorway service station and finally his last job was with Tesco's before retiring. He is married to Irene whom he met when they were both cub leaders. They have two daughters, one who is married and they have one grandson. His hobby is photography. He was on the Diocesan Pastoral Ministry Course when he first thought about the diaconate.

Deacon Willie was ordained by Bishop Cunningham in his home parish, St Teresa's, Dumfries, on August 20th 2011. He was then placed with Father Hayes in St Teresa's. Later Moffat and Lockerbie were added. He assisted with the Chaplaincy at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary for a time before being named Chaplain.

Deacon Bob Simpson

Bob trained as a scientist. Six days after he and Geraldine married they went to Nigeria – where the civil war was nearly over – as volunteers with VSO. Bob decided that teaching was for him and that let them return to Scotland. After spells in Currie and Dunblane, Bob finished his career in Newton Stewart. Geraldine and Bob have three children, two girls and a boy, and four grandchildren.

Deacon Bob was ordained by Bishop Cunningham in his home parish, Our Lady and St Ninian's, Newton Stewart, on August 13th 2011. He was placed initially with Father Lodge in Newton Stewart, Wigtown and Whithorn. When Father Lodge left Whithorn was removed from the list. For a few years he had a role in supporting our primary schools. More recently he has functioned as a 'pastoral deacon', visiting the sick and housebound, and leading services during the week.

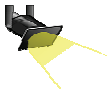


Deacon George McDermott



Deacon George was ordained by Bishop Cunningham on Saturday 2nd July 2011 in his home parish, St Mary, Star of the Sea, Largs. George was then placed with Canon Poland in St John's, Stevenston. George writes: "At this point I want very much to offer my sincere thanks to His Lordship for my ordination. I was already past the age of such a venture but none the less I am extremely grateful to him for his trust in me. I want also to thank sincerely Canon Martin Poland for the time I spent with him as the Parish Deacon. He was very kind and patient with me during my short stay with him.

I am still on the inactive list and because of my illness the doctor advised that my wife Jane and I move closer to the family."



Spotlight

on

Education



Learning in Lockdown

Amelie Davidson looks at the experience of weeks of lockdown on school pupils as restrictions begin to be lifted.

As face-to-face teaching came to a halt, our teachers have gone above and beyond gathering packs and online learning resources for children to access at home, which our pupils have embraced. Schools may have been closed, but that did not mean learning was cancelled. At the time of writing some younger pupils are back in class, more are due back in March and we hope the vaccination programme and the effect of the other lockdown restrictions on the virus will mean all children and teachers are able safely to return to their classrooms by the end of April.



Here, two pupils share their experience of online learning during lockdown:

Megan Queen, Primary 6 pupil at St Andrew's Primary, Kilmarnock

“Right now, we are in lockdown because of coronavirus. During lockdown there have been positives as well as negatives. The positives have been all of the time we have had to bake and cook! I have made lots of delicious treats and meals! We have made crunchie ice-cream, pavlova, chocolate cake and all sorts! It has been great spending more time with my Mum and brother, which has meant lots of laughs as well. The negatives have been not being able to go out and see my friends, which has not been great, but the main thing is that we're safe, and that is what matters.”

Joseph Davidson, S3 pupil at St Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock

“Although I miss going to school and seeing my teachers and friends every day, there are a lot of positives to online learning. I like having live lessons on Google classrooms because it means that I can still keep in contact with my teachers. My art teacher made up a pack of materials including paints, pencils and a sketchbook for our class to collect so that we can continue learning new art skills. Due to all of my classes being online, I have improved my computing skills and I think that I can type a lot faster! I also like being at home because I can do the lessons at a time that suits me and I can spend more time with my family and dog.”



SCIAF
Uniting to end poverty
Caritas Scotland
WEE BOX, BIG CHANGE
This year £1 = £2

This year's SCIAF campaign is raising money for children with disabilities living in war-torn South Sudan. When a crisis comes, be it conflict, famine or coronavirus, it is the poorest and most vulnerable children who suffer most. By filling up your WEE BOX this Lent, or making an online donation, you can help children with disabilities access the education and support that they need.

Remember to send your WEE BOX donations to SCIAF by Wednesday 11th May as the UK government will double your donation.

As well as fundraising, you can use their prayer resources to pray for the people they serve and you can get involved with campaigns that support policy changes at government level or promote lifestyle changes.

Every Friday during Lent you can join SCIAF on their Facebook page for the Stations of the Cross, recorded by Catholic trainee teachers from the University of Glasgow.

Charity Corner



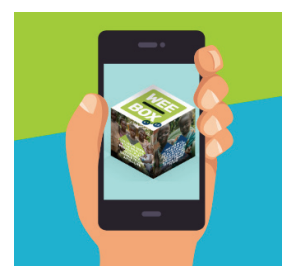
Over the years we have featured in these pages many charities, fund raising and good causes supported by parishes throughout the diocese including SCIAF, Mary's Meals, Friends of the Holy Land, The Adaba Project, The Ecuador Fund and foodbanks.

Although this year is different for parishes, charities still need your help. Our 'Charity Corner' is a new feature of the Galloway Diocese News where we will feature a charity or parish, parishioner-led or school project in each issue. We invite you to write about a local initiative, charity or cause that your church or school supports and send it to gdnews@gallowaydiocese.org.uk.

Making your WEE BOX donation

If you've collected money in your WEE BOX, count the money you've saved and donate that amount by using any of the following steps:

- ◇ Make your donation online at www.sciaf.org.uk
- ◇ Send a cheque made out to SCIAF to FREEPOST SCIAF
- ◇ Call SCIAF on 0141 354 5555 and donate using a credit or debit card.



Scientific Investigations at Whithorn

The Whithorn Trust was set up in 1986 to explore the archaeology and history of Whithorn, and its role in the evolution of Christianity in Scotland. Julia Muir Watt describes recent exciting scientific and archaeological findings.



Despite lockdown and difficult conditions for visitor attractions during 2020, the Whithorn Trust has been able to continue its research behind the scenes into the early origins and development of Whithorn and its monastic community. Thanks to the ubiquity of Zoom technology, members of the public have been able to participate in cutting-edge archaeology from home.

The summer of 2020 saw a series of Whithorn Trust-sponsored lectures, hosted by AOC Archaeology online and delivered by leading experts, particularly in relation to the Northumbrian Church (c.600s-700s AD) at Whithorn, the first and last of which were given by Dr Adrian Maldonado, Glenmorangie Fellow at National Museums Scotland, who has been studying Whithorn, its cemeteries, chronology and burial practices since his PhD thesis at Glasgow University. Dr Maldonado was able to summarise the results which have so far come from radiocarbon dating, while Dr Shirley Curtis-Summers, of Bradford University, gave an update on the results from stable isotope analysis,

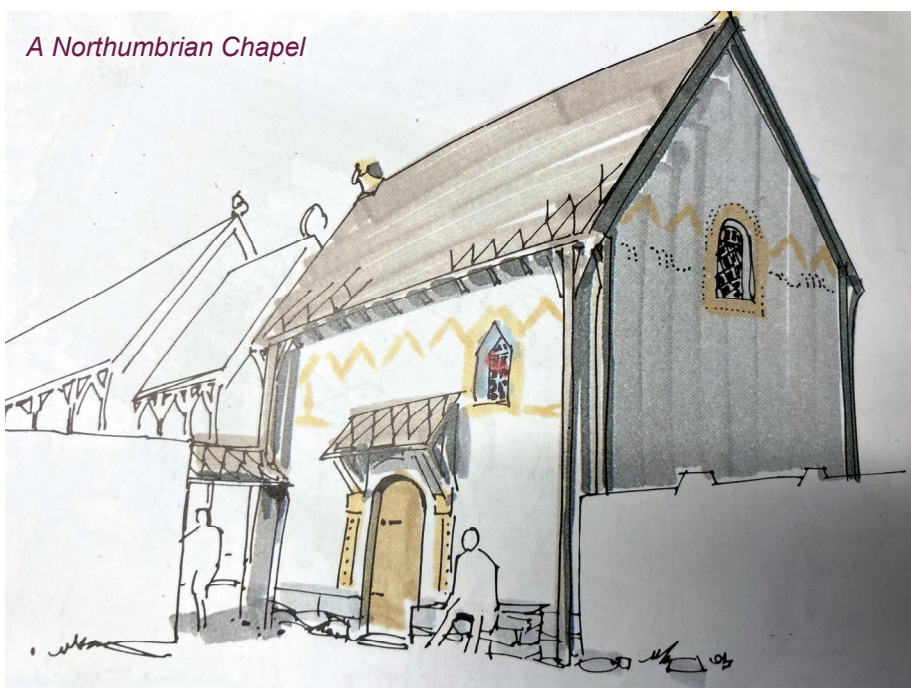
which enables us to know, for instance, where individuals have been brought up and what they have eaten.

The emerging picture shows that in this period of Whithorn's development in which Anglo Saxons from the Northumbrian kingdom of Bernicia were, according to Bede, in charge here, local people seem to have shown much more resilience than previously thought. Rather than finding that the prominent burials – for instance, within the burial chapel – were all people who hailed from the North East of England, it seems that people of local origin remained in elite positions: burials side-by-side of newcomers and residents – one of whom was a woman – proved that the change which Whithorn underwent at the period of Bede's history (and his friend Pechthelm's new bishopric) was not imposed. Rather, it looks as if the incoming Anglo-Saxons may have fitted in and adopted local customs, perhaps as part of a negotiation rather than an invasion: this is particularly evident in the continued use, during this period, of an indigenous Whithorn tradition of burial within log coffins, hollowed out of the trunks of

trees. Indeed, Dr Maldonado's eye-catching headline: "The Monks who were Buried in Trees" was taken up by the BBC and an article published on their website last year. Dr Maldonado also speculated that the presence of women and children – Whithorn has an unusual children's cemetery – may have indicated the presence of neophytes, still under the care of women, within the monastery. The Whithorn Trust is delighted that word of the new research is spreading and the Ulster Archaeological Society will be hosting an online lecture on Whithorn, by Dr Maldonado, at the end of March.

The lectures were recorded and are still publicly available on the Trust's website <https://www.whithorn.com/archaeology/whithorn-rebuild-lecture-series/>

The ambitions to bring the latest science to bear on the Whithorn collection have not stopped with the end of phase 1 of the "Cold Case Whithorn." Further radiocarbon tests will be carried out to certify further the findings thus far, and make the dates more precise, while the Trust has also sought contact with and enthusiastically taken up an offer from the University of Cambridge, to test the DNA of its early mediaeval population. Dr Tom Booth, from the Francis Crick Institute, is working in the Pontus Skoglund Ancient Genomics laboratory, studying ancient DNA as a means to understanding human evolution, mobility, and disease over time. The testing of samples from Whithorn will be a hugely important contribution to the project's data for the South of Scotland, where few other large mediaeval populations have been preserved, but it will also assist the Whithorn Trust in understanding family relationships within its early cemetery and even in getting to know individuals' appearance. The prospects of facial reconstruction and meeting our ancestors – those within the burial

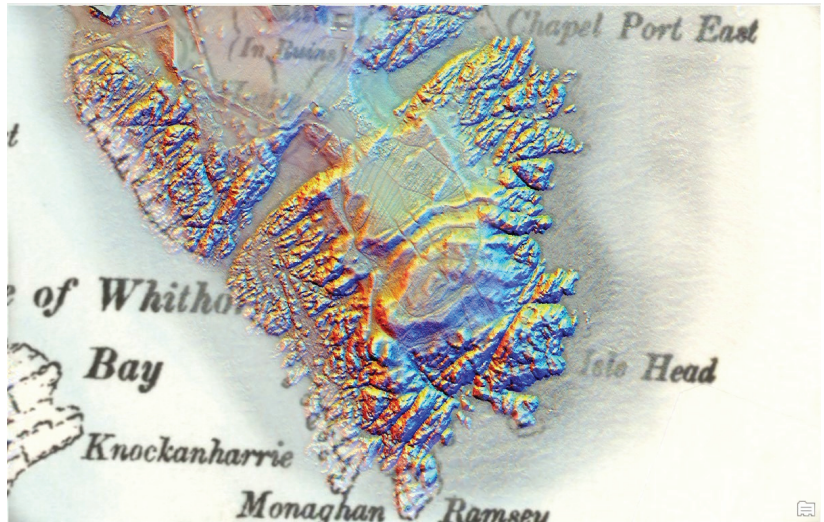


A Northumbrian Chapel

chapel of of the 8th Century, for instance – will then become a real possibility. It is hoped that, alongside the research work, activities can be held in local schools to increase interest in science subjects.

Meanwhile, the “appliance of science” continues over the winter of 2021, as the Whithorn Trust secured funding for a Year of Coast and Waters project, funded by Historic Environment Scotland, to study the LiDAR (light detection and ranging) maps for the Machars, which enable us to see features often undetectable by the human eye. The Machars Waterborne project involves volunteers in studying the maps, identifying and recording features, and a report will ultimately be uploaded to the historic monuments record, giving new findings and also recording sites which are in need of conservation. So far, in just a few weeks, eagle-eyed volunteers have spotted a potential Iron Age fort and a crannog and over four hundred new sites were identified only in the North West of the Machars. In future weeks, attention will turn to features of the historic period.

A new digital ticket for the Whithorn Trust will be available at the Whithorn Trust website <https://www.whithorn.com> by March, enabling ticket holders to enjoy digital content before they visit and to come in person at a time to suit themselves. The new online content which comes with the ticket will be a blend of new videos, 3D interactive models, slideshows, podcasts and educational worksheets, all on a scrollable timeline.



The LiDAR (light detection and ranging) maps for the Machars

Diocesan Holy Land Pilgrimage 2021

Father David Borland, Holy Land Pilgrimage Director, reports on a sad, but inevitable, situation.

It breaks my heart to write this, but it will come as no surprise to anyone that, due to the current Coronavirus pandemic sweeping across the world, our Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, already rescheduled to April 2021 from October 2020, has once more been postponed. We now plan to travel to the Holy Land on Monday April 25th and return on Monday May 2nd 2022 – 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 have booked a place on the 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.

The Covid-19 situation in Palestine and Israel at the moment is very difficult. While Israel has managed to vaccinate a great number of their population, they are failing to recognise their obligation under international law to vaccinate the population in the occupied territories, and so very few vaccinations have taken place among the Palestinian people. Therefore, even if our government were to suddenly permit international travel without quarantine on return to Scotland, we would still not be able to visit Palestine because of the vaccine situation at this time.



an empty Manger Square, waiting for pilgrims

While it is disappointing for us that we cannot travel to Palestine and Israel this year I would ask you to please keep 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 had neither for a year now, 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, in the meantime please pray for them, and if you can find it in your heart to help them financially then donations can be made at www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk.

St George, patron saint of Palestine, pray for them.



The Teaching of Pope Francis

by Father William McFadden



In creating the Year of St Joseph and the Year of the Family, Pope Francis has offered a way forward for our spiritual and pastoral priorities. It is now up to us to respond.

Among the many actions of Pope Francis that will surely be remembered as particularly significant was his calling of a Year of Mercy from November 2015 until December 2016. This whole year dedicated to the theme of mercy allowed us to really focus on God’s love and compassion, and it gave a strong and powerful direction for our individual and communal spiritual journeys, and for our pastoral initiatives.

Well he has done it again, declaring not just one year, but two different years for us to focus on over the coming months. First of all, on 8th December he announced a special year dedicated to St Joseph, which will run until 8th December 2021, and then on 27th December he announced that the Church will dedicate more than a year to considering the role of the family. This will begin on 19th March, and will be a year of reflection based on deepening our understanding of the pope’s Apostolic Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia,” which was published in 2016.

In the letter *Patris Corde* (“With a Father’s Heart”), which accompanied the pronouncement for the Year of St Joseph, Pope Francis says that he had been thinking about doing this for some time, but with the dramatic circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, he wants us to see St Joseph as helping to highlight the many unheralded essential workers

who have been keeping life and society going in these times of social distancing and working from home.

Pope Francis says; “Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble.” And he



St Joseph the Worker

adds that “Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”

The pope describes Joseph as a “beloved father,” as an “obedient” and “accepting father,” as a “creatively courageous father,” as a “working father,” and as “a father in the shadows.” And in developing each of these aspects we are encouraged to imitate Joseph’s virtue and to learn from his example. The pope also comments that Joseph is traditionally described as a carpenter, “who earned an honest living to provide for his family,” and Francis makes the strong appeal that we might “implore Saint Joseph the Worker to help us find ways to express our firm conviction that no young

person, no person at all, no family should be without work!”

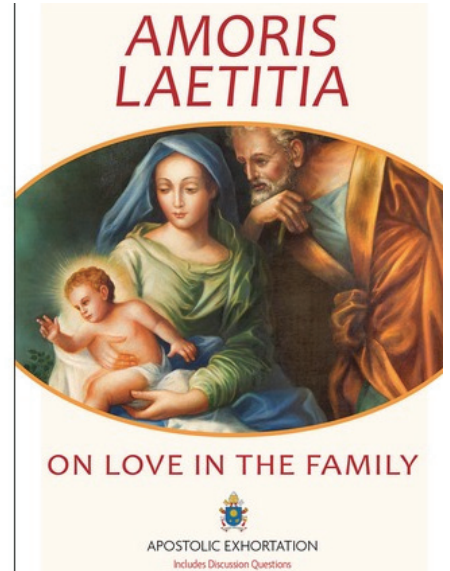
Alongside this focus on the example offered by St Joseph, the declaration of a year concentrating on the document *Amoris laetitia* is an opportunity for families to be seen as the principal agents of evangelisation, and for Pope Francis’

teaching contained in *Amoris laetitia* to be more widely promoted and understood. In announcing the Year the pope stated: “I invite everyone to take part in the initiatives that will be promoted during the year and that will be coordinated by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life,” and he added: “Let us entrust this journey, with families all over the world, to the Holy Family of Nazareth, in particular to St. Joseph, the devoted spouse and father.”

This Year drawing attention to *Amoris Laetitia* and dedicated to deepening our understanding of family love will conclude on 26th June 2022, with the World Meeting of Families in Rome.

One of the fruits of the Amoris Laetitia Family Year has already been seen in Pope Francis declaring that beginning this year the Church will now celebrate a Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. This will take place each year on the fourth Sunday in July, and in the words of Pope Francis, “remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between the different generations, to pass on to the young the experience of life.”

With these initiatives Pope Francis has certainly given a strong indication of where he thinks our energies should be directed for our spiritual and pastoral priorities over the coming weeks and months. We have been offered a way forward. It is now up to us to respond.



Monsignor Joseph Boyd R.I.P.

by Bishop Maurice Taylor



The twelve months since March 2020 have been very difficult for all of us – restrictions, anxiety, bereavements. One death that saddened very many of us in the diocese was that of Monsignor Joseph Boyd, who died on 4th February this year. By his passing, the Galloway clergy, and indeed all in the diocese, are deprived of a prominent figure and a good priest.

Joseph Boyd was born on 19th July 1933. The family lived in the Giffnock area of Glasgow and Joseph attended Holy Cross Primary School in the city. From there, he proceeded to Holyrood Secondary for a short period. His father, who was a head teacher, sadly died and the bereaved family (mother, daughter Isabel and sons John and Joseph) moved to Ayr. As a result, Joseph transferred to St Margaret's Secondary School, Ayr. However, since he expressed a youthful desire to be a priest, Mgr Joseph McHardy, parish priest of St Margaret's, arranged for him to be admitted to Blairs College, near Aberdeen, the junior seminary for Scotland. There, Joseph was a clever and successful student so that, after passing his Higher Leaving Certificate, he was selected to continue his tertiary education at the renowned Seminaire St-Sulpice in Paris. After five years in France, he returned to Scotland and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph McGee in St Margaret's, Ayr, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 29th June 1957.

As assistant priest, he spent nine years in St Michael's, Kilmarnock (the church is now demolished and the parish is united with St Joseph's in the town). In autumn of 1965, Bishop McGee asked him to go to Our Lady of Lourdes and St Patrick's, Auchinleck, to be temporary administrator during an illness of the local parish priest. Then, after Easter 1966, he received his first appointment as a parish priest. The bishop assigned him to Millport and the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. He spent four happy years there, followed by a short spell as parish priest at St Conal's, Kirkconnel. Although both Millport and

Kirkconnel are small parishes, the similarity ends there. In fact, there is a stark contrast between the holiday island parish and the rural villages (Kirkconnel and Sanquhar) on the road between Cumnock and Dumfries. However, the Kirkconnel appointment was brief. Bishop McGee asked him in 1971 to transfer to St Joseph's parish in Stranraer, a much bigger parish than his previous appointments. Stranraer had its own primary school, a convent of nuns, an active port, several villages in Wigtownshire and the Mull of Galloway, and the Wigtownshire Education Committee of which he was an active member.

In 1977, he transferred to a large parish, but still on the coast – Our Lady, Star of the Sea, at Largs. His final change occurred in 1988 when he was appointed parish priest of St Paul's in Ayr with responsibility also for St Clare's parish in Drongan and St Francis Xavier's in Waterside. In those days, St Paul's had an assistant priest as well as the parish priest; and so Mgr Boyd had a succession of curates with him and to help with the work (which also included chaplaincy of Ailsa Hospital and the holiday facility of Butlin's and its successors). In 2006 he asked to be relieved of the burden of St Paul's and went to live in the house where, before they died, his mother and his sister had dwelt. However, he was reluctant to give up all pastoral work. For the last fifteen years, he has acted as administrator of the parish of St Clare, Drongan, faithfully providing the small congregation there with Sunday Mass and other services, especially funerals.

When I became bishop in 1981, I asked Mgr Francis Duffy to continue to be the vicar general of the diocese. However, when he retired in 1990, my choice as his successor was Joseph Boyd. It was a choice that I never regretted. He was aware of the needs that arose in the diocese, wise in his counsel and always available and ready to assist whenever requested. In addition, he possessed the invaluable quality of being able to keep

information confidential when required. I hope that his qualities were appreciated throughout the diocese.

While he was a good conversationalist, I think that few would dispute that Mgr Boyd was totally uninterested in any conversation about sport. He made no secret of that fact, which some might consider a defect in his character! However, he was widely known and recognised as an enthusiastic liturgist. He always gave a good example of liturgy correctly celebrated, he was anxious to adorn and improve the churches for which he was responsible (cf. for example, the tapestries in Largs and St Paul's), and his liturgical expertise was recognised in his being a member (and, for a time, secretary) of the Scottish National Liturgy Commission. It was in that post of secretary that he took part in an international meeting of liturgists held in Singapore – an event about which he was always ready to regale us.

Mgr Boyd was diocesan director of Lourdes pilgrimages for many years. He participated in diocesan pilgrimages to the Holy Land. A gregarious person, he particularly enjoyed the monthly meetings of the priests of Ayr deanery for a meal and conversation; he was always first to ask the date and place of the next meeting! Such events are in abeyance during the pandemic and, for the same reason, his funeral in St Margaret's Cathedral on Tuesday 16th February was a very quiet affair, led by Bishop Nolan, before the burial in Ayr Cemetery.

Ah! Joe, we miss you – we pray for you – intercede for us here in Galloway!



A Lenten Reflection number 1

(A View from (a virtual) Westminster)

Dr Philippa Whitford, MP, reflects on how our Lenten observance – like everything else – is affected by Covid, and how we can use it to help others.

It is strange to think that this time last year we had no recognition of the scale of the pandemic that was about to hit us and change our lives beyond all recognition. Or that, one year on, we would face another live-streamed Easter as we can't physically attend church, receive communion or celebrate Christ's resurrection through joyful singing in a packed Vigil Mass. However, with the positive power of the internet, we will still be able to join Catholics and Christians across the world in commemorating our salvation and rebirth, so that is something to celebrate.

Before that, the six weeks of Lent stretch ahead of us and, we need to be inventive in thinking how to prepare for the most moving and important feast in our Church.

As many of us are struggling against the inertia of lockdown, maybe the first decision is to consider cutting ourselves some slack, rather than aiming for some strict Lenten plan that we have no chance of sticking to. Something simple and reflective, that we manage to maintain until Easter, will probably bring more spiritual benefit than setting strict aspirations that we are unlikely to keep.

Lenten observance traditionally involves three main components – fasting, alms giving and additional prayer or devotion. Most people focus on the first of these and give up some non-essential treats such as chocolate, cake or alcohol but most years we don't really think about what we are doing or why. As we are not exactly out partying, or visiting pubs and restaurants, at present there is little to give up, unless we have been overindulging at home. Like myself, many will have been fighting the battle of the bulge for the last year, so by all means give up something but maybe not to the point of making our limited lockdown lives more miserable or even more of a struggle.

With regards to Lenten alms giving, that usually consists of what we collect in SCIAF's 'Wee Box' or our donation to their parish appeal. Hopefully, most of us will still contribute to supporting their great work but some of us may be in a position to stretch a bit further. While many families are struggling financially, due to furlough or redundancy, those of us with a stable income will have saved quite a lot over the last year, unless we have been going daft with online shopping. Many charities would be very grateful for donations at this time. There are those trying to support poorer countries, where people are



struggling to access PPE, Covid tests and even hand-wash, let alone vaccines, while medical research charities, such as Cancer Research UK, are having to cut back on drug trials and research programmes. Closer to home, Ayrshire Hospice and others are struggling as the marathons and large fundraising social events, on which they rely, have had to be cancelled due to Covid. Maybe those of us, whose incomes have remained unaffected through the pandemic, could donate some of what we haven't been able to spend on holidays or nights out to keep these amazing projects going through this difficult period.

Committing to additional devotions through daily prayer, reflection or even attendance at Mass, is the most challenging and is, unsurprisingly, less common, particularly among working age Catholics. Time is usually the commodity in shortest supply but, with those working from home spared the daily commute, the time gained could maybe be utilised in some mindful reflection and prayer; particularly if combined with some time outside appreciating the beauty of the reawakening world around us.



A daily walk is important for our mental health but can also contribute to our spiritual well-being. For those battling the challenge of homeschooling algebra and physics, getting children out for the 'Daily Mile' could help mend frayed tempers as well as improving concentration. Switching off from the busy schedule of Zoom meetings or home schooling for just half an hour could help us shut out the cacophony of the modern world and find the quietness to pray.

Whether a simple chat or something more formal, prayer is something very personal and may vary from day to day. While I am usually in the 'conversational' prayer category, my favourite formal prayer remains the 'Our Father'. Those opening words alone can bring so much comfort as we feel our hunched shoulders relaxing through the realisation that we are not left to carry our burdens, or face life's difficulties, alone. It's a prayer we often rush over in Mass with little attention but, when it is the focus of reflection, I find it takes quite some time to get through and covers everything I need to say.

Continued on next page

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



A Lenten Reflection number 2 (A view from Rome)

Kevin Rennie reflects on how we can observe the spirit of Lent after a year which has felt full of denial every day.

For many of us, this last year may have felt like something of an extended Lenten observance. We have missed or delayed many celebrations, and all those things which we may have taken for granted previously have suddenly become impossible – whether a coffee with friends, visiting family, or hopping on Ryanair for a cheap getaway to Spain. Lent is a time which encourages us all to stop and to reflect, but we could be forgiven for feeling like we had stopped and foregone enough over the last year already.

On Ash Wednesday, we heard the familiar phrase from the Gospel according to Matthew, “no one will know you are fasting except your Father who see all that is done in secret”. The traditional reading of this passage is that we ought not to use the season of Lent as an opportunity to show off our good deeds for our own glory, but rather to recognise that our actions, as in all things, are ordered and for the sake of the greater glory of God. This passage however also highlights the great importance of our interior disposition and our internal relationship with God, and so recognising this, I believe that



this Lent we are being invited to act more closely to deepen that relationship.

The last year has helped us all to recognise more closely those things which are most important to us, our Faith, our family, our friends. These

relationships are those things which very much define us as individuals and set us apart as human beings. Lent offers us the opportunity to pause and reflect in a particular way on the relationship we have with God, and how well our lives as individuals best reflect our identity as sons and daughters of God. In doing this, we are invited to free ourselves from those things which distract us or take us away from God, and to take up those things which help to deepen this relationship.

Whilst this year, giving up material things may not be as practical as in previous years – although it is still nonetheless laudable – this year I would encourage us all to consider what we can take up and do from home to show God’s love through ourselves. In doing this, we can grow in our love and friendship with God. It could be something as simple as phoning someone you have not spoken to in a while, or checking in on an elderly neighbour, or even something as simple as smiling at a stranger. These are all expressions of God’s invitation to us all from Matthew’s Gospel, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and in so doing, to love God ever more. So this Lent, I encourage us all to think about what we can take up to share God’s love with one and other, and in so doing to grow closer to God.

A Big Day

Kevin will be ordained a Deacon in Rome on the 2nd May. The details are still quite sketchy, including who will be celebrating it, as we don't yet know if a Scottish Bishop will be able to travel. The Mass will be live streamed on the Scots' College's YouTube Channel. Look out for details nearer the time.

A View for Westminster, Continued

The stress of the last year has affected everyone, from oldest to youngest: either through personal loss, financial difficulties or missing out on school and the company of friends. Even without our own difficulties, most of us have felt the underlying anxiety due to a constant diet of worrying news bulletins. However, Covid should have helped many of us recognise how much we have to be thankful for: our own health and that of our loved ones, whether we are lucky enough to have a secure job and home. There are also many people we have to be thankful to – those who have braved the risk of Covid in the NHS and Social Care or as key workers caring for us, keeping us safe and connected as well as supplying us with food or energy.

If we are blessed enough that our family remains intact maybe just being thankful for our own health, and that of our loved ones, is the starting point in preparing to mark Christ’s sacrifice for our redemption. While vaccines now provide a light at the end of the tunnel, we have been through a year like no other. Politicians and activists talk about the need to learn from the mistakes of the past, not to go back to business as usual but to build forward to a fairer and more sustainable society. As we move through Lent to Easter, we need to ask ourselves what we have learnt from the last year and how we will change our lives in the future





Praying with The Saints

Saint Teresa of Avila

By Father Martin Chambers

A lot of people from all over Scotland will remember exactly what they were doing on 1st June 1982. 300,000 of us were crowding into Bellahouston Park in Glasgow for a Papal Mass as part of Pope St John Paul's visit to the United Kingdom that year. As an 18 year old, I thought that this was a one-off occasion. Little did I know that sunny afternoon in Glasgow that exactly five months later – on the 1st November that same year – I would be at Mass once again celebrated by the Pope. This time, having just arrived as a seminarian in Spain, the Papal Mass was in Avila, central Spain, with the altar set against the dramatic walls of the ancient city.



That was my first visit to Avila but, over the next seven years as a seminarian, I would be back and forward to that city. One person, in particular, drew me back and forth and that was Saint Teresa of Avila (also called Saint Teresa of Jesus). Although she is lauded as a Doctor of the Church, I was intrigued by her clear sayings, by the missionary force of her life and by the way she could inspire me to deeper prayer. I, therefore, share a few reflections on her life in the hope that you too will be inspired to a deeper prayer life and to a deeper love of God.

Teresa of Avila was born in that city in 1515 where she grew up within a dedicated, Catholic family. After her education, at the age of 20, she entered religious life at the Convent of the Incarnation in that same city. She was very focused on her prayer life and experienced several bouts of religious ecstasy. Over these early years, though, she noticed that life at Carmel was very lax with a great invasion of visitors taking the Sisters away from a life of prayer and towards a life of political influence and wealth. She was forever calling the other Sisters to a life of deeper commitment and eventually at the age of 45, she was given permission to set in place the reform of the Carmelite order. For the first five years, she lived in seclusion and was dedicated to writing down her intended reforms. Although some Carmelites were sceptical of her intentions, eventually the Carmelite General invited her to become the foundress of

the new Discalced Carmelites meaning 'shoeless Carmelites.' Saint Teresa's reform was a call to prayer and asceticism. This call to renewal was so well received that she spent the later part of her life travelling all over Spain, establishing convents in, among other cities, Valladolid and Salamanca where the Scots College also was eventually to settle.

I was enthralled way back in the early 1980s by Saint Teresa's spirit of prayer and her enthusiasm for the faith. I wanted then – and I still want now – to learn more about Saint Teresa's life that I, through prayer, could come to a similar love of Christ. I, therefore, want to share the following thoughts from Saint Teresa's own life that you too might grow deeper in prayer.

1. Silence and solitude help prayer

Saint Teresa wrote: *"It is well to seek greater solitude so as to make room for the Lord and allow His Majesty to do His own work in us."* And it's true, isn't it? Whenever we need a break from life, we take ourselves away from our normal surroundings. If we want to reflect on life or if we want to concentrate on a certain task (like studying), then it's good to take ourselves away from our normal distractions. Saint Teresa said the same about prayer – take yourself away to a quiet spot to help your prayer. Your prayer spot might simply be a wee corner of your room. Yet it's true, solitude helps prayer.

2. God dwells within us

This was a central theme for Saint Teresa: that God is within. For Teresa, it was not just that we should know that *'He is there'* but that we should understand *'who it is'* that is within. The God of forgiveness is within, the God of hope is within, the God of justice is within. Before you begin your prayer, simply spend some time reflecting on who God is for you today, how you need God's presence this very day.

3. Humility bolsters prayer

Saint Teresa recommends humbling yourself before God. This is not to say how bad you are or how sinful. It says rather that you are better with God at your side. This is the moment in prayer when you realise that, left to yourself, you make too many mistakes. However with God at your side, you are more able to loving, forgiving and peaceful thoughts.

4. Attentiveness is vital

Have you ever thought "why can I pray better some days and some days I am so distracted?" This is exactly what Teresa thought when she said *"a prayer in which a person is not aware of whom they are speaking to or what they are asking, I do not call prayer not matter how much the lips are moving."*

There is a challenge for us all here: to shut off all distractions and to ask 'who is this God before me? What grace am I asking for?'

5. Prayer is not thinking a lot

Teresa said that we do not need to speak a lot or fill our minds with holy thoughts. Simply sitting in God's presence and reflecting on God's love for you, this is prayer.

It reminds me of that famous story of St John Vianney who was intrigued by a local farmer who would spend hours in the Church without Bible nor Rosary. Eventually he asked the farmer: "What do you do in Church?" The farmer replied: "He looks at me and I look at Him."

6. Prayer is a habit

If you have the habit of prayer – at a certain time each day – then Teresa would say that the very habit will help you. Prayer, in that sense, is like learning to play a musical instrument: you'll only get better if you actually dedicate time to it.

7. Prayer exercises

Saint Teresa encouraged her Sisters to accompany prayer with other spiritual exercises: prayer exercises like Stations of the Cross but also works of charity. She felt that such activities would help feed a prayer life and give it inspiration.

When I thought of this, I thought of our parish Foodbank. As well as helping people in need, it helps us volunteers understand that Christian prayer and Christian activity go hand in hand. We are not simply called to be disciples sitting at Jesus' feet; we must also be Jesus' missionaries.

8. Prayer, a moment of love

One thing that Saint Teresa wrote often was that "Prayer is an exercise of love." It's that moment in our day when we remember that our activities are always in the context of love: before ever we do anything with our lives, we are loved by the God who created us.

Teresa often encourages her Sisters to be thankful in love. She encouraged them at the start of the day to write down five things for which they are thankful – then spend the rest of the day going over those five things while saying thanks.

9. Prayer needs courage

"Take my advice" said Saint Teresa "and do not stop along the road, for you are here to fight for love." She encourages us not to lose heart in prayer but that we are always heading towards God, often at a snail's pace.

10. Prayer builds a friendship with God

Just as in your own friendships, Saint Teresa tells us that our relationship with God has to be developed and nurtured over the years. What we know about God now is not the same as we knew when we were children. Our relationship with God will continue to develop through prayer, slowly but surely.

I hope these pointers from Saint Theresa's own reflections will help you as you develop in prayer, especially during this time of the Covid pandemic. The best way to finish, for sure, is with Saint Teresa's own famous prayer:

**Let nothing disturb you,
let nothing frighten you,
all things will pass away.
God never changes;
patience obtains all things,
whoever has God lacks
nothing.
God alone suffices. Amen.**



RENEW mourns the death of its co-founder

Msgr Thomas A. Kleissler, who launched a parish-renewal programme that turned into an international movement, died on Tuesday February in New Jersey. He was 89. May he rest in peace.

Those who were in the diocese when Renew was introduced in the 1980s may remember Msgr Tom Kleissler.

It may be of interest to know that his assistant presenter, Sister Donna Ciangio O.P., is now an employee of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey – she is Chancellor of the archdiocese.



PRAYER TO ST ANTHONY

Prayer for Divine protection

O dear St Anthony, by your holy example and apostolic life you led countless souls to the protection of our Divine Lord.

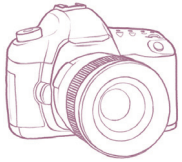
I beg of you, obtain that same protection and guidance for me and those dear to me during these times of dire distress.

In your tender charity, watch over our country and those who are serving it. Obtain courage and strength for their loved ones.

On earth your heart overflowed with compassion for those in danger or distress. In heaven you have never failed those who called on you with confidence.

I know you will not fail me now; that you will help me always to remain close to our Lord, who is the divine Protector of mankind.

O powerful wonder-worker, in this hour of need obtain what I ask of you. Amen



Galloway Glimpses

Lockdown has prevented many of us from getting out and about as much as usual. So here are some promised of spring from last year.

Thanks as always to Amy Kinnaid.



The Water of Lugar dam in Ochiltree, Ayrshire

Blossom on a blackthorn tree in Ochiltree

Snowdrops in woods near Culroy, Ayrshire



We are fortunate to live in a lovely part of the world.

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