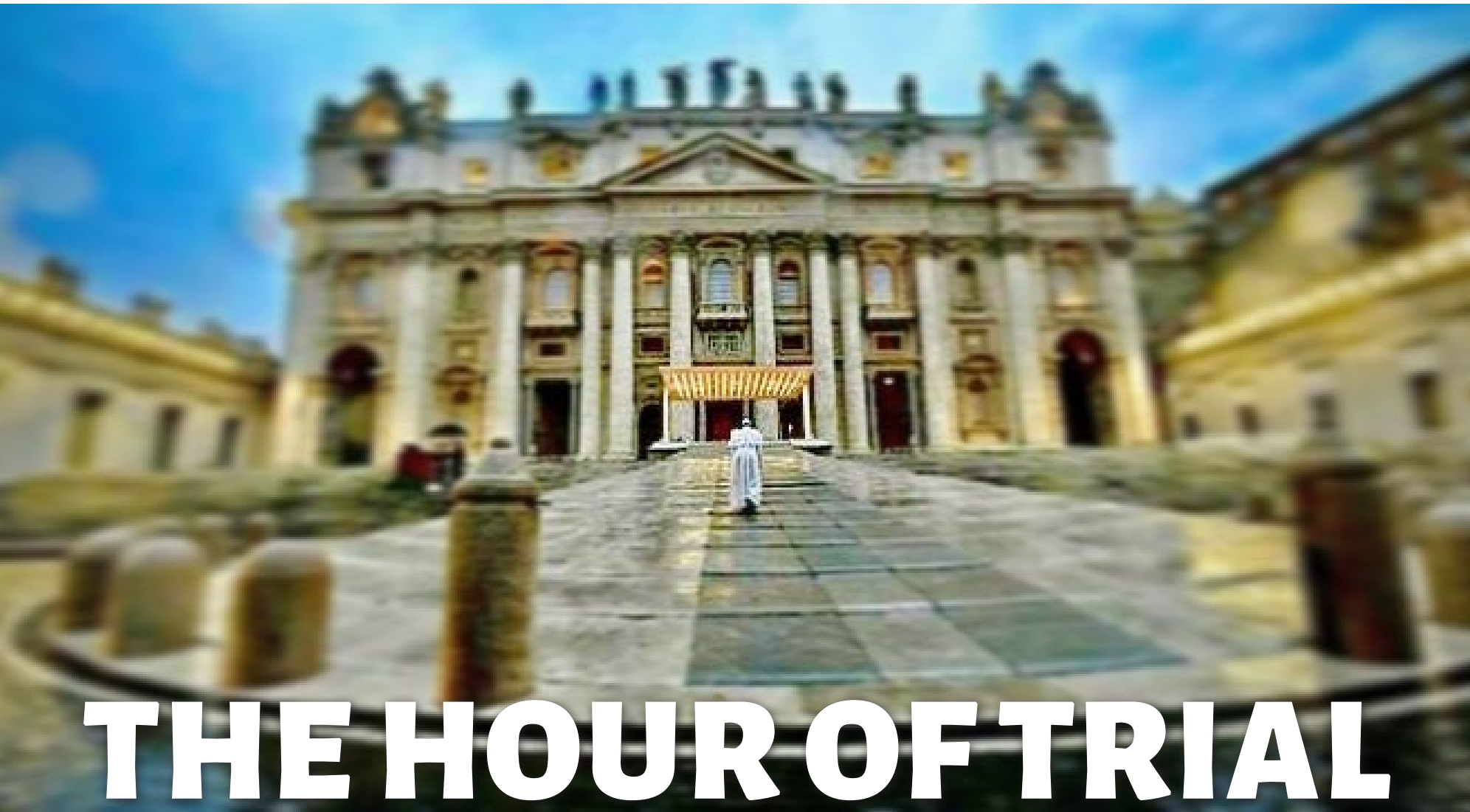


FLOURISH

Official Journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow April 2020



It has been the Lent we had never considered possible.

Prayer, yes, prayer for our very survival.

Fasting, yes, but fasting from the Bread of Life.

Almsgiving, yes, but almsgiving to save lives in our midst.

The iconic image of Pope Francis, alone, silent, fragile in a rainswept St Peter's Square, imploring God to spare his people, and imploring people to turn to

God, is one we will never forget.

The Pope's words penetrate our souls:

"For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by..."

"We feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them

BY **RONNIE CONVERY**
EDITOR

away. We find ourselves afraid and lost.

"Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us

in need of comforting the other.

"On this boat... are all of us.

"Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying 'We are perishing' so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this."

Those words echo in our minds. "Only together can we do this ..."

Throughout the Arch-

diocese and beyond those words have been heard. Parishes are mobilising. People are thirsting for the Mass in a way that was unforeseeable. Livestreams attract huge numbers. People gather round computers on a Sunday to hear the Archbishop speak to his diocese as never before...

"Only together we can do this ..."

As we enter the most sacred week of the year, we do so knowing that we will not

be able to kiss the cross on Good Friday, to go to communion on Easter Sunday, to sing "alleluia" together... not yet.

This will be the longest and strangest of Holy Weeks. But at its end, our joy will be greater, our union stronger, and our faith deeper. The Easter message is needed more than ever... death does not have the final word. Christ will rise, and so will we, to a new and better future.

CORONAVIRUS

Church faces crisis with faith

FULL REPORT **PAGE 2**

FAITH

Focolare from Trent to Glasgow

FULL REPORT **PAGE 8**

SVDP

Christianity in shirt sleeves

FULL REPORT **PAGE 10**

My dear friends, stay at home, keep safe, and may God bless us all

Archbishop Tartaglia addresses the whole Archdiocese in this dramatic and powerful letter

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

In an effort to help halt the spread of the coronavirus, on top of the suspension of public Mass and other acts of worship, following Government advice, we have had to close our churches. I had hoped that this would not become necessary, but it has.

The new golden rule in this battle against the virus is that we should all stay at home, if possible, and that, outside the home, no group larger than two persons should form.

We are all a bit anxious just now. I know I am. The coronavirus will have mild effects in the vast majority of people, but, according to the experts, we can expect confirmed cases of the virus to rise and fatalities to grow in number.

At the same time, our leaders and medical officers have advised us that staying at home will halt the spread of the virus, lessen suffering and save lives.

I do not want to do anything that encourages people to come out of their homes, or that causes people to gather in a group of more than two, or that might contribute in some way to the spread of the virus through some hidden contagion. Churches therefore have to close – even for private visits.

The full package of restrictions is therefore as follows:

- Suspension of public Masses and Acts of



Worship

- Closure of churches
- No marriages in church
- No baptisms in church
- No home visits to the sick
- Funerals limited to the Act of Committal at the graveside or crematorium

Thankfully, Government directives still allow for the livestreaming of Masses and other acts of worship from behind closed doors. I encourage you therefore to follow Mass online, and, as you do, to make an Act

of Spiritual Communion, asking the Lord to come into your heart through the grace of the Holy Spirit, even though you cannot receive him sacramentally in Holy Communion.

Mass is celebrated online from the Cathedral every weekday at 8.15am, 1pm and 5.15pm, and on Sundays at 10am and 12 noon. You can follow these Masses at www.cathedralg1.org

It is important to be aware that, if you need any personal pastoral or sacra-

mental care, please call or email your parish priest, and he will discuss with you how best to help you in the circumstances.

I encourage you to pray unceasingly in your homes for a halt to this epidemic, for those who are suffering, for all doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, and for our civic leaders.

You can access news updates and online prayer resources at the www.rcag.uk and other Catholic websites.

Let us together put our trust in God the Father who created us with a loving purpose.

Let us together put our trust in God the Son, Jesus Christ, who, through his death and resurrection, conquered sin and death, so that death will never have the last word in human destiny.

Let us together put our trust in God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us and gives us the strength to do what is right in every circumstance.

Let us together continue to seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Michael and all the Holy Angels, St Andrew, St Ninian, St Mungo, St Columba, St Margaret, St John Ogilvie and all the Saints, that the human race will come through this time safely.

My dear friends, stay at home, keep safe, and may God bless us all.

Yours devotedly in Christ,
Philip Tartaglia
Archbishop of Glasgow

Emergency indulgence granted to the sick

During the current emergency, new arrangements will apply for the care of the sick and dying. The following note was released by the Archdiocese last week.

THE current health emergency has led to radical changes in our hospitals. To protect staff and patients, new rules essentially prevent almost all visits to in-patients.

One side-effect of this is that priests will not have the same access to patients in hospitals they have always had up until now.

In particular, patients with Covid-19 are strictly isolated even from their own families.

The Archbishop is anxious to provide, as far as possible, support to the sick and dying in these terrible circumstances. In recent days Pope Francis has approved a new decree which, during the current crisis, provides the option of a plenary indulgence (the remittance of all temporal punishment for sins forgiven) to those who cannot receive the Last Rites of the Church and the Archbishop wishes this to be widely known.

In practice this means that if a patient cannot get to confession because a priest cannot attend, then God, in his love for us offers us other means of forgiveness. As St Paul reminds us in his letter to Timothy, God desires all men and women to be saved (cf 1 Timothy 2:4).

Patients in these circumstances are urged to say the Creed, Our Father and Hail Mary and make an act of perfect contrition – this means that we hate the sins we have committed, we are truly sorry for them, are resolved not to sin again and that we will confess our sins if we can, when that is possible.

This prayer of sorrow will obtain forgiveness of both mortal and venial sin.

The act of contrition can be in the patient's own words – no specific formula is needed. It can be a simple phrase, "Lord, have pity on me, a sinner."

The indulgence is also granted to every Catholic who, at the point of death, cannot receive the Last Rites (as may well be the case due to current health restrictions), and who, even if they cannot recite the prescribed prayers, in their life, has tried to pray and to love God.

Please make this information known to anyone currently in hospital or likely to be admitted.

Pope: We are on a stormy sea – save us, Lord!

Pope Francis spoke not only to Catholics, but to all humanity as he addressed the world from St Peter's Square during his extraordinary Urbi et Orbi blessing. *Flourish* here reproduces some of his most powerful words

THE storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities.

It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our

communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls...

In this storm, the façade ... with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging

as brothers and sisters.

Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything.

Greedy for profit, we let

ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet.

We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: "Wake up, Lord!"

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting



in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!", "Return to me with all your heart".

You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement,

but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.

It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.

Eastender Andy's golden touch

AN altar server at St Alphonsus, Calton, is using his skills as a self-taught gilder to complete a restoration project at the church, part-funded by unwanted gold jewellery donated by parishioners.

For almost two years Andy Scott, 57, spent hours, usually before the church opened for worship, painstakingly restoring gilt on the magnificent Sacred Heart side altar.

The former demolition worker is currently working on the equally elaborate Marian side altar, which he expects to complete over the coming months.

The project began after a chance conversation with Canon Tom White, who is Parish Priest of both St Alphonsus and St Mary's Calton.

Andy said: "I used to be a pass keeper in both churches and one day about three years ago Father asked me if I wanted to be an altar server

BY BRIAN SWANSON

PICTURES BY PAUL MCSHERRY



and I thought, fair enough, and then we got talking about the side altars in St Mary's and how they could do with being restored.

"I said to Father that I learned gilding from an older guy when I worked with Lipton's the gravestone company in Eglinton

Toll and that I'd be happy to help."

Grandfather Andy, who has been a regular worshipper at both churches for more than 20 years added: "I'm not a professional gilder but I've definitely got the hang of it now. I use a brush or my fingers to place it where I want the gold to go – you have to have an eye for it because the altars are pretty complicated bits of carving!

"But the main thing is to take your time – rush it and ruin it as they say."

After both altars were completed in St Mary's, Andy began work on the ones in St Alphonsus.

And to raise money for the 24 carat gold leaf needed for the gilding Canon White asked parishioners to donate old or broken gold jewellery to be sold to pay

for a regular supply of the precious material.

Parishioners responded with typical generosity allowing the work to go ahead although donations are still welcomed.

Andy said: "I'm actually quite pleased with the work. It won't need replaced in my life time that's for sure – they say it lasts 100 years so I'd love to think when my seven-year-old grandson has his own kids he'll tell them 'my grandad did that'. It's a good thought."

Canon White said: "Andy's typical of the volunteers we have here in the Calton... along with others, he helps maintain and bring out the physical beauty of both churches and there are others who help support and maintain and bring out the beauty of living stones."



Vatican street art

THE Vatican has chosen street art for its 2020 Easter stamp.

A version of the Ascension by Heinrich Hofmann seen near Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome will be available soon at the Holy See's post office in St Peter's Square.

The choice of the image didn't pass unnoticed on social media.

"What does the slogan 'Just Use it' mean please?" asked one tweeter.

"A play on Nike's 'Just Do it'? Use the Sacred Heart... as in work it, use it for refuge etc..." suggested another.

A US street artist hailed the image, saying: "As a Catholic artist who lives in LA, street art is one of the most influential and inspiring things I have witnessed in this secular world. Witnessing murals has reminded me of how God touches the artists' soul and how they are given the ability to

share their creativity!"

The Vatican's full programme of stamp releases for 2020 has now been published.

Among the special stamps to be released this year will be commemorative sets to mark the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II; one to mark the 5th centenary of death of the painter Raphael and the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth.

Political events will also be marked with special stamps, including the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the European Union.

And in a release which is sure to have a special resonance in Glasgow, the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Stella Maris, which will be marked later this year with a special congress in the city, will also be recalled with a special Vatican stamp.

Canon Bob's book

ST Matthew's, Bishop Sbriggs' Parish Priest Canon Robert Hill, whose regular Scripture reflections appear in Flourish, has completed an in-depth commentary on the Gospel of John which is now available on Amazon Kindle.

Entitled "The Gospel of John in the Lectionary, Volume 1" and also available in paperback, Volume 2 will follow in due course.

Canon Hill, whose commentaries on the Sunday Lectionary volumes A, B and C have been available on Amazon Kindle for the past

BY BRIAN SWANSON

four years said:

"It's really just a hobby for me and one which I very much

enjoy. I write where others do – or watch – sport, so it does not take away from parish work. I get up at 5.30 each day and after the dog has been dragged round the park, and the day set in motion I get to work before Mass, and again at the end of the day, time permitting."

Canon Hill's books are available via the Amazon website.

THE WHITE FATHERS (Missionaries of Africa)

MASS FOR THE DECEASED

SUNDAY 26TH APRIL 2020

HAS BEEN CANCELLED

THIS IS DUE TO THE CURRENT CORONAVIRUS CRISIS.

WE WISH TO THANK EVERYONE FOR THEIR CONTINUED HELP AND SUPPORT IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.

THE WHITE FATHERS WILL BE REMEMBERING YOU IN THEIR PRIVATE MASSES AT THIS TIME.

PLEASE STAY SAFE!

GOD BLESS.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Glasgow Archdiocese

Cancellations

Please note that due to the ongoing health issues, the Annual Ozanam Talk on Monday 20th April in Blessed John Duns Scotus and Annual Concert on Friday 8th May in the Woodside Halls, have now been cancelled. Hopefully take place later in the year.

Thank you
Yours in St Vincent and
Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Joseph Maguire
Glasgow Archdiocesan President



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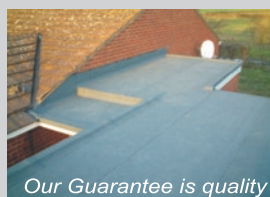
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Glasgow youth team inspired at Catalan shrine of Our Lady



Participants
Canon Tartaglia
(3rd from right)
and Michelle
Kerr (7th from
right)

AFTER a breath-taking bus journey through the Pyrenees, the team arrived at the beautiful old Benedictine monastery called Santa Maria de Montserrat, which is located about 45 km northwest of Barcelona and is nestled in the jagged mountain peaks of Montserrat.

The monastery is surrounded by the astounding natural beauty of unusual rock formations and offers spectacular, misty views of the Catalan countryside. It is also home to the famous statue of the Virgin Mary, known locally as 'La Moreneta', which pilgrims can visit in the monastery's gothic basilica.

More than 200 youth leaders, priests and religious from all over Europe gathered in Montserrat for Life Teen's conference aimed at encouraging youth workers to "dive deeper with Christ" and glean more practical skills so as to transform the culture of their parishes and lead their youth into a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

The theme of the conference centred around Our Lady's 'Fiat' (the Latin word

Last month, Archdiocesan Youth Director, Canon Gerry Tartaglia and RCAG Youth Officer, Michelle Kerr, teamed up with the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia and fellow youth ministers, Tamara Sanchez-Kapostasy and Sam Begbie from Our Holy Redeemer's and St Margaret's parishes, and headed to Spain to attend the Life Teen European Training Conference. Their mission? To learn more about successful programmes and ideas which are leading to successes in outreach to young people across the globe. In this article, Michelle reports back on the experience

meaning 'let it be done.')

It was incredible to see how much the Holy Spirit worked in just one week-end. The team experienced God's grace through the dynamic, Spirit-filled speakers who shared practical leadership skills, covering a diverse range of topics such as: how to use the various social media platforms effectively to engage with the youth in our ministry; the importance of meeting our young people where they are in their lives, and the ways in which we, as leaders, can better understand the current youth culture

in order to touch the hearts of our young people more deeply and profoundly.

It cannot be denied that we each encountered Jesus personally throughout the conference; in the Word, in the Sacraments and in the laughs and heartfelt conversations that we shared over the dinner table.

Each day ended with a peaceful time of prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament while gentle, reverent worship music filled the Basilica.

We were reminded by one of the speakers, Mark Berchem, founder of NET

Ministries, that in order to "cultivate a missionary heart" it is not enough to simply "talk about Jesus", rather we must "experience and come to know the person of God" through nurturing a personal relationship with Him each day.

The team returned to Glasgow renewed and strengthened in their mission to invest in the future of the Church by being the Spirit-filled evangelisers Pope Francis speaks of in his exhortation to young people *Christus Vivit*.

I returned reassured that throughout Europe is a generation of young Catholics, leaders in their communities, who are standing up to give their own 'fiat', with hearts on fire for the conversion of our young people, following the advice that the Pope gives in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel)... In order to best win hearts for Christ, we must each become "ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ".

Our Lady of Montserrat, pray for us!





A MINI-PANIC broke out in Rome recently following an article in the Roman newspaper *Il Messaggero* by veteran Vatican reporter Franca Giansoldati, who reported that Pope Francis has undergone a test for the coronavirus and the results were negative.

Prompting the ferment is the fact that Francis has been suffering from what's been described by the Vatican as a "light cold," which has caused him to cancel several public engagements and to restrict himself to appointments within the Domus Santa Marta, the hotel on Vatican grounds where he's chosen to reside since his election in 2013...

Francis also was forced to bail on the annual Lenten retreat for the Roman Curia held in Ariccia, a town nestled in the hills outside Rome, restricting himself to following it at a distance.

What drove Vatican-watchers batty is not so much the idea that Francis's medical team would have carried out a test for the coronavirus – which, since he's sick and the disease has a large footprint in Italy, seems an entirely reasonable precaution. In fact, given the circumstances, the real story probably would have been why the Pope hadn't been tested for the disease.

Instead, the thing driving some people crazy is that the Vatican didn't provide any comment on Giansoldati's story, so that journalists have been left to traffic in second-hand reports and conjecture rather than officially confirmed information.

The most we got was a fairly oblique statement from the Vatican Press Office, which said: "The cold diagnosed in the Holy Father in the past few days is taking its course, without symptoms attributable to other pathologies."

In all honesty, the reticence shouldn't be terribly surprising. Over the years, the Vatican has always been extremely reluctant to divulge information concerning what it would consider the private life of a pope, especially when it concerns his health.

When I first arrived in Rome as a cub reporter in the 1990s, the city was awash with rumours that Pope John Paul II had Parkinson's disease. Italian newspapers routinely carried reports to that effect,

Vatican silence on Pope's cold sets the alarm bells ringing



BY **JOHN L ALLEN JR**
EDITOR OF CRUX

though all were unsourced. In my naiveté, I decided to call a Vatican spokesman to put the question on the record.

When I finally got someone on the line, the answer was brusque: "Si tratta della vita privata del papa," he said, meaning, "It's a matter of the pope's private life." The response was meant to end the conversation, and the dial tone I was greeted with on the phone after it was uttered sort of put an exclamation point on things.

There's a grand history of such refusals. On August 19, 1914, for example, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, published a stinging editorial denouncing unnamed commentators who had suggested the previous day that Pope Pius X had a cold.

Less than twenty-four hours later, Pius X was dead.

Historically, the most reliable way to destabilise a monarchy, whether of the secular or ecclesiastical sort, is to suggest that the king is ill. Traditionally, therefore, the Vatican is extremely reluctant to acknowledge that a pope is ill, fearing that it will induce a *fin de régime* scramble for power and turn the sitting pope into a lame duck.

None of this is to suggest there's any reason to think that Pope Francis is seriously ill, or that the Vatican's explanation of a "light cold" isn't correct. To date, Francis has shown himself to be remarkably resilient despite his age...

Two points from the current bout of papal sniffles, however, suggest themselves.

First, it's a reminder that sooner or later, the 83-year-old Francis will go into de-

cline. How that will play itself out, meaning how long an illness might unfold and whether he'd choose to resign if he feels he can't govern effectively any longer, is impossible to say, but the brute fact is that no papacy goes on forever.

The current hiccup beckons the question of whether cardinals who will be voting in the next papal election may be thinking more intentionally right now about what comes next. It would be natural if they were – perhaps especially the expanded number of cardinals from outside the West created by Francis, such as cardinals from Myanmar, and Cape Verde, and Tonga, and Laos, who've never had to think about deciding the future leadership of the Church before, and who may have been reminded by these events that someday they'll have to make that fateful choice.

Second, the Pope's case of the cold also raises the question of what the Vatican will tell us when things are more serious.

Francis has endeavoured to promote a culture of transparency in the Church, urging officials at all levels to tell the truth even when it's inconvenient, on the conviction that it's ultimately better to take a small hit up-front than a much bigger one down the road. It will be interesting to see if that philosophy also drives Vatican communications when the Pope's health truly is uncertain, or if the institution falls back on its historical patterns.

In the meantime, one hopes that Francis stages a quick recovery and is good to go as Catholicism nears the holiest period on its calendar...

■ **Follow John Allen on Twitter:**
@JohnLAllenJr

This article also appears on the Crux homepage www.cruxnow.com

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Arbroath's Papal anniversary



“As long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours, that we are fighting, but for freedom – for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself”.

These are the best known words in the Declaration of Arbroath, foremost among Scotland's state papers and the most famous historical record held by the National Records of Scotland. The Declaration is a letter written in 1320 by the barons of the kingdom of Scotland to the Pope, asking him to recognise Scotland's independence and acknowledge Robert the Bruce as the country's lawful king.

The Declaration was written in Latin and was sealed by eight earls and about 40 barons during the long war of independence with England which started with Edward I's attempt to conquer Scotland in 1296. It was sent to Pope John XXII who was resident not in Rome, but in France.

At this time Scotland was having its difficulties with the English King, Edward I, the “Hammer of the Scots”, mainly over a question of jurisdiction. After a succession of able Scottish Kings,

For many of us, Arbroath is synonymous with smokies and bank holiday day trips ... but this month the seaside town in Angus is being remembered for one of the most significant moments in Scotland's religious and political history...the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath. To mark the anniversary the iconic document is planned to go on display in the National Museum of Scotland. In this article, **Archbishop Mario Conti** sets the story in context and recalls links between Scotland and the Papacy.

sons of St Margaret, one of whom, David, has been hailed as a saint, the nearest blood relative to the throne was Margaret, the Maid of Norway.

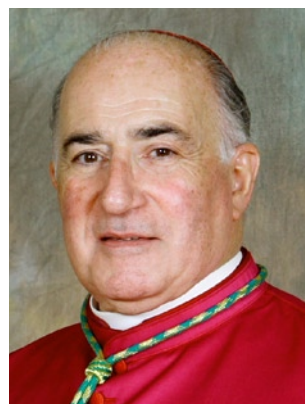
Sadly she died on her sea journey to Scotland. King Edward used the opportunity to revive English claims of superiority. He had already attempted to conquer the country but was rebuffed by William Wallace at Stirling Bridge... think Braveheart, but that's another story!

Kind Edward I backed a certain John Balliol to be the new ruler of the Scots and wrote to the Pope giving his reasons for the choice. I have seen the actual letter in the Vatican Archives. But in the meantime Robert the Bruce had seized the throne and defeated the English army at Bannockburn in

1314. The English refused to recognise Scotland's independence or Bruce's position as King.

The Pope intervened with a peace plan but the Scots defied papal efforts to establish a truce with England. The Pope excommunicated Robert the Bruce and three of his barons, once again using spiritual power to solve a political impasse. The Declaration of Arbroath was part of the Scots' diplomatic counter-offensive.

Written at the great Abbey of Arbroath under the guidance of Abbot Bernard, and sealed with some 40 seals of Scottish Barons, it is a masterpiece of diplomacy. Calling on the fatherly concern of the Church's chief shepherd and underlining the bullied condition of the Scots, it stated in majes-



tic sentences their call for justice, their right to independence:

“As long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours, that we are fighting, but for freedom – for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself”.

Last summer I fulfilled an ambition to visit Avignon and see the papal Palace there to which the Declaration of Arbroath was sent. It has a significant role in the history of the Papacy. For two distinct – though connected – periods of time it served as the residence of Popes. Indeed throughout most of the 14th century it was home to the Bishops of Rome, and it remained the

property of the Popes until the French Revolution.

There is another city wherein the Popes had a temporary residence which I have also visited in recent years. It is south of Rome, in Lazio, signposted “La Città dei Papi” the City of the Popes – the city of Anagni. There a significant event took place which influenced the course of history, the history of the Church but with wide political implications.

But why was the Papacy in exile from Rome? This resulted from an original fallout between Pope Boniface VIII and the French King.

Boniface attempted an expression of universal jurisdiction even in the political sphere when he addressed Philip, the French King, in a letter which started “Ausculta Fili”, Listen Son!

The king did listen – and put a heavy tax on the Church!

He also sent 1600 soldiers to Anagni and impiously assaulted the Pope in his palace, a shock from which the Pontiff died the following month!

The Cardinals appointed in due course a successor in the person of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, a friend of King Philip, who, in turn, prevented him leaving France.

The creation of many French Cardinals ensured future popes would be French and they preferred Avignon to Rome as home! Only 70 years later, a saint, Catherine of Siena, got the popes back to the eternal city.

It was for this reason that the Scots addressed their plea to the Pope – John XXII – not in Rome but in France.

The independence of Scotland (until the Union of the Crowns in 1603) was eventually recognised.

A papal mission to Scotland, famously recorded by Pinturicchio in Siena Cathedral, was conducted by Aeneas Piccolomini who became Pius II, one of the great Renaissance Popes, and the great Sword of State in the honours of Scotland was the gift of Pope Julius II to James IV, our Renaissance prince.

The Diocese of Glasgow had already been granted by Pope Alexander III independence of the metropolitan claims of the Archdiocese of York and designated the “Special Daughter of the Roman See” (1175).

This was subsequently extended and was confirmed in effect by the independent restoration of the Scottish Catholic Hierarchy in 1878.

Celebrating the centenary of Chiara Lubich

From Trent to Glasgow

BY EDWARD DUNCAN

THIS year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the International Focolare Movement. Events to mark the occasion have been happening across the world.

In Trent, the beautiful little city in the folds of the Italian Alps, where Chiara was born, the President of Italy and other dignitaries attended an event to celebrate her life, its impact and message for the world today.

In the UK ecumenical and interfaith events are being held with a similar aim. But in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, which has been home to the Focolare movement for decades, the anniversary is truly something to celebrate.

Chiara never planned to start a movement. In her own words, she “only wanted to follow God”. The fact that the Focolare Movement developed was a direct response to her “yes” to love God before all else, and the attraction of that way of life on those around her.

Contagious

Chiara was 19 years old, when on a dreich morning in 1943 she offered to walk from her home to the farm, in place of her sister, to get some milk. A practising Catholic, she was trying to understand what God wanted of her life.

On her way she felt very strongly that God was calling her, “Give yourself completely to me”. Soon after she arranged to meet a local Franciscan priest. After a long chat, he agreed to let her consecrate herself to God, which she did in private, at 6am on 7 December 1943. Chiara’s diary entry that day states, “The interior joy was inexplicable, secret, but contagious.”



Focolare Movement foundress Chiara Lubich with early companions

Contagious is the right word.

Within a short time, Chiara’s radical choice of God attracted a group of friends. Initially these were young women like her, who recognised that, amidst the ruins and destruction of the war that was devastating their city, one thing was left: God. Love.

Their only rule was the Gospel, which they read together in the air-raid shelters and tried to put into practice in everything they did.

Soon a group of these women began living together in a humble apartment. This was the first Focolare house – a community of consecrated men or women who give their lives for God through the spirituality of communion (*Focolare* is an old Italian word for hearth or fireplace).

Living together this first group of companions discovered the Gospel truth that, “Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

One day, reading the Gospel, they were struck by Jesus’ prayer, “Father, may they all be One” (Jn 17:21), and decided to make this prayer their own, to live for unity.

The Focolare spirituality is focused on this idea of communion that developed from those early days has now spread across the world. Approximately two million people (children, young people, married or single, priests, religious and consecrated lay people) put it into practice in various ways: within their daily life and work; in their parish; ecumenically; in interfaith relations; with people of no religious beliefs; and across political, economic and social spheres of life.

The story of the Focolare Movement

From Trent to Glasgow: The story of Focolare

continued from page 8

Bombed-out
Trent, Italy, at
the end of the
war



Chiara (in white jacket) with St John Paul II

The Focolare Movement arrived in Scotland in the late 1960s, through an Italian Xaverian priest (Fr Polowski) who had met Chiara in the 1950s. Fr Polowski invited Dori Zamboni, one of Chiara's friends from that first group of girls to speak to a group in Coatbridge. Soon people from Glasgow and beyond started attending monthly community meetings at Strathclyde University chaplaincy.

They were a complete cross section of society: taxi drivers, barbers, academics, painters, priests, religious, teachers, housewives, and families – all wanting to live for unity and to put the Gospel into practice.

In 1976, the first summer gathering of the Focolare, known as a Mariapolis, was held in St Joseph's College, Dumfries. Then in 1977, a women's Focolare community house opened in Glasgow. It has moved location across the city several times over the years, but today is located in the south side at 2 Sherbrooke Gardens.

Commitment

Over the years, Focolare in Scotland has grown. Today it is characterised by an even more diverse cross section of society, people who are all united in their commitment to live for universal fraternity, to love God and their neighbour.

The Focolare Movement in the Archdiocese of Glasgow works for unity within the Catholic Church as well as ecumenically, with people of other religions, and with

those of no religious affiliation. Most recently, the Focolare community locally has developed a profound dialogue and fraternal relationship with members of the Shia Muslim community in Glasgow.

Reflecting on the gift that Chiara Lubich's spirituality of communion has been in her life, local Focolare member, Angela Marr, said: "Chiara Lubich and Focolare mean family to me. Where you are completely loved, accepted and cherished for who you are, a child of God. Through truly living the Gospel, Chiara taught me how to love and to experience the joy of the Gospel in a completely new way.

"Many times in my life I've asked 'why?'. When Chiara shared her understanding from God that Jesus too cried out 'why' and yet con-

tinued to love, this was such a turning point in my life. I understood the value of suffering and that by loving Jesus in the suffering, he Himself gives us light and the joy and the peace of sharing in His Resurrection.

"Chiara taught me how to start again and again! To have mercy on myself and others, and to root myself in the present moment. As a wife and mother these are precious treasures to live together."

■ If you want to find out more about the Focolare, visit www.focolare.org/GB or Tel. Mil Zomack (2 Sherbrooke Gardens, Glasgow) – 0141 637 3316.



Chiara (centre) with Archbishop Conti and the late Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor

The spiritual insights of Chiara Lubich

■ The wisdom of Chiara Lubich has inspired countless thousands of people, inside and outside the Focolare movement to deepen their faith. Here is a taste of the spirituality of Chiara:

"Lose everything, even the attachment to holiness, so that you aim only at one thing: to love"

"In life we do many things, say many things, but the voice of suffering offered out of love – which is perhaps unheard by and unknown to others – is the loudest cry that can penetrate Heaven"

"We discovered, like infants opening their eyes for the first time, that God's coming upon earth out of love for us had radically changed the world, because he had remained with us. As we walked about the city, or traveled to different cities and countries, it was not the beautiful and interesting things around

us that attracted us. Not even Rome's wonderful monuments and precious relics seemed so important. Rather, what gave a sense of continuity to our journeying through the world for Jesus, was His Eucharistic presence in the tabernacles we found wherever we went."

"Be aware that the fire that does not grow is extinguished."

"That all may be one... We were born for these words, for unity, to contribute toward its fulfillment in the world."

Urgent appeal

THE current emergency means our churches have had to close, but costs remain and some parishes are in a difficult situation.

If your own circumstances allow it, please consider helping us by donating £5 during this worrying time.

The Archdiocese has set up a system whereby you can simply text RCARCHGLA to 70085 to donate £5.

Please share this emergency donation option with others, especially those who may be anxious because they normally contribute to their parish through collection envelopes. Those who use collection envelopes are asked to continue to place donations in these and deliver them to the local parish after the emergency has passed.

Text RCARCHGLA to 70085 to donate £5



Archbishop pays tribute to health care workers

ON behalf of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, I wish to offer a heartfelt message of appreciation for all doctors, nurses and healthcare workers who are striving so valiantly under taxing conditions to care for the sick during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We include in our appreciation the Funeral Directors and personnel who, under a great deal of pressure, take care of our deceased loved ones so respectfully. Please know that you all have our support and gratitude. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Keep safe and well. May God bless and protect you.

HEAR THEIR CRY



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Faith, hope and holy hot pies

To the casual passer-by or rush hour motorist the Frederic Ozanam centre in the Briggait seems permanently closed. And who, they might wonder, was Frederic Ozanam anyway to have his name written so prominently on an unlovely looking building sandwiched between an old Glasgow pub and a New Age café? For those in the know, the centre provides a vital lifeline by giving clothes, food and friendship for those living in the margins as it has been doing for decades. **Brian Swanson** joined volunteers at the centre, which opens for lunch every Sunday. **Paul McSherry** took the pictures.

WELCOME the stranger. That was the simple philosophy of Frederic Ozanam, the young French student who founded the Society of St Vincent de Paul in 1833 and whose members run the Briggait centre today.

On the biting cold Sunday morning when I visited, the welcome was as warm as the home-made soup simmering in two large pans, as Dominic Sutherland, former deputy head of St Maurice's High School, Cumbernauld and his team of volunteers prepared lunch for the 30 or so clients who will begin arriving shortly.

The use of the word 'clients' is deliberate – there are myths to be dismantled today.

Dominic, who has worked at the Briggait and a former centre in nearby Parnie Street for many years said: "We'd never use terms like down and outs or rough sleepers and even the phrase homeless is not 100 per cent accurate nowadays."

"The numbers have dropped in the past couple of years and that must be a good thing – but as long as there is a demand we'll be

here.

"Nearly all of the clients, mostly men but some women – are not homeless. Some live in hostels, some with friends; sofa surfing they call it while some live in rented accommodation but for all sort of reasons can't look after themselves and come here not just for food but for the banter – that's very important."

Dominic, a parishioner of Holy Family, Kirkintilloch added: "Their backgrounds don't matter to us – If they want to tell us their stories that's enough but to us – no matter their background or religion – they are people in need and we are happy to help them."

English teacher Siobhan Thompson and Caritas award student Adam Crainie, both from Dominic's old school, are among today's volunteers.

They have spent the past couple of hours setting tables in the compact dining room of the centre, filling takeaway food bags, and keeping a careful eye on the soup, Scotch pies and beans.

This is Christianity with its sleeves rolled up, so it



seems unnecessary to ask Siobhan and Adam why they give up a part of their Sundays to be here but they are happy enough to explain anyway...

Siobhan said: "It really opens your eyes when you come here – it makes you very grateful for what you have but more than that it really is a very uplifting experience."

Adam, a parishioner of St Patrick's Kilsyth, who at 17 is the same age as Frederic Ozanam when he founded the society, said: "It's giving back I suppose – that's why I do it because you don't often get a chance to do that nowadays."

Last word goes to Duncan, enjoying a lunch served with extra banter on the side with his pals Peter and Colin.

He said: "See this place mate – I'll be honest with you – we'd all be lost without it. It's knowing you can come here, no questions asked, no problems, no hassle. Great people these volunteers – fantastic the lot of them. And the food's great too."

■ **Volunteers are always welcome at the centre. For details contact the national office of the Society of St Vincent de Paul on 0141 226 8833**

Above: Dominic, Adam and Siobhan plate up the pies. Right: Adam serves lunch. Left: Siobhan and Adam checking the soup.





Art of the month

Praying the painting: finding inspiration in art

THIS painting, *The Descent of Christ from the Cross*, is on a wood-panel by the Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden.

It dates from around 1435 and can be found in the Museo del Prado in Madrid. There is a copy of this painting in the Chapel at Turnbull Hall, the Catholic Chaplaincy of the University of Glasgow.

Jesus is dead and has been lowered from the cross, by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The flesh tones of the Body of Christ stand in stark contrast to the beautiful and sometimes rich garments the others are wearing.

Look at the grief on the faces of those around the dead Christ. Bewilderment, grief and piercing sorrow. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, seems to faint or swoon with shock and is comforted by John, the beloved apostle. This small group alone, care tenderly for Jesus.

Where are all those he healed and cured and comforted during his public ministry? Where are we? Are we mere on-lookers?

The month of the Crucifixion! This year, Good Friday falls on 10th April which happens to be the anniversary of the election in 2005 of His Holiness, Benedict XVI. Holy Week and Good Friday in particular, presents us with

BY MGR TOM
MONAGHAN

time and opportunity for being holy, or desiring holiness, in all things.

It is a time during which we may strengthen ourselves, family and friends. Saint Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the Church of Ephesus, gives good advice that this can be done, "by your faith, your encouragement, your patience, your serenity."

As we observe the Passion of the Lord, we mark the day with fasting and abstinence. It may be useful to remind ourselves of what this involves. As on Ash Wednesday, on Good Friday everyone 14 years of age or older is bound to abstain from meat. Those of us who are 18 or older, but under 59 years of age are bound also to fast on these penitential days.

In practice, what does this involve? We should eat only one full meatless meal. Two other small meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. So, you could, if you think it necessary or advisable, have two small snacks during the day to keep from feeling unwell. That apart, eating between meals really shouldn't happen!

Ill health, of course, could be

an excusing cause but we should not lightly excuse ourselves from these rare acts of penance and mortification.

A mortification is an act of self-denial to teach us the value of discipline and to unite ourselves with Christ on the Cross. The greatest act of mortification the world has ever known was the Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord.

Archers

Look at the painting again and note the unusual shape of His Body. Does it remind you of anything? Well, here's a clue... The artist, Rogier van der Weyden, was commissioned by the Leuven guild of archers for their chapel and very cleverly and uniquely, he positioned Christ's body in the T-shape of a crossbow to reflect the commission.

The feet of Christ seem still to be nailed together; the arms still stretched as they were on the Cross as if to suggest the Crucifixion will not end until the world does. The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen used to speak of "the eternal freshness of the wounds of Christ."

Holy Week is such a poignant time but one comforting thought that gets us through Good Friday is that, of course, it is not quite the end!

INDIFFERENCE

In this poem, much favoured and frequently quoted by the Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the poet puts a modern-spin on Christ's Passion and has him in the city of Birmingham suggesting that apathy and indifference regarding the Cross is worse than opposition or ignorance..

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged
Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and
feet, and made a Calvary;
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns,
red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and
human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham, they
simply passed Him by.
They would not hurt a hair of Him, they
only let Him die;
For men had grown more tender, and they
would not give Him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and
left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they
know not what they do, '
And still it rained the winter rain that
drenched Him through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets
without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall, and
cried for Calvary.

G. A. Studdert-Kennedy

PRAYER TO ST. ROCH

O Blessed Saint Roch,
Patron of the sick,
Have pity on those
Who lie upon a bed of suffering.

Your power was so great
When you were in this world,
That by the sign of the Cross,
Many were healed of their diseases.

Now that you are in heaven,
Your power is not less.
Offer, then, to God
Our sighs and tears
And obtain for us that health we seek
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Repeat the following 3 times)

Saint Roch, pray for us,
That we may be preserved
From all diseases of body and soul.

Meet Holy Family's Pope Francis Award Club

In August 2018 Holy Family Primary School in Kirkintilloch changed the way they implement the Pope Francis Faith Award.

Instead of undertaking this through the curriculum, Mr Nicholas McMahon and Mrs Karen Crossan decided to do this as an after-school club which would meet regularly throughout the year.

Nicholas said: "We felt that the children who signed up for the award would be fully committed to learning more about their faith and more enthusiastic over the course of the two-year journey. This has proven to be the case and we are delighted that 16 pupils are nearing the completion of the award."

In fact, the club has been so popular that a new group of pupils enrolled in August 2019. Throughout the year the pupils have added depth to their knowledge of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and this has been evident in their preparations for Confirmation.

Karen said: "I am very proud of the cohort of children participating in our PFFA club. They have shown a high level of maturity throughout all of our meet-

ings. This has been shown through their honesty and self reflection of their personal faith journey. Our P7 children have been an excellent example to our new P6 cohort. I have no doubt that they will continue to use their new knowledge and understanding of their faith in their day to day lives."

The children have reflected on their experience and have shown that it has been a worthwhile spiritual endeavour:

"I joined the Pope Francis Faith Club because I wanted to learn more about my faith and I thought this was a good opportunity. I have learned about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how I can apply these gifts in my life. It has helped me be a better person. I am also an altar server and I now feel that I understand my role in the Parish." Mia, P7.

"I enjoyed learning about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how I can use them in my life. I also enjoyed taking time to have reflections to let me think deeper about my faith." Eve, P7.

"It has helped me understand my faith and it makes me feel like I am a

Club members show off their good work



good person." Mark, P7.

"I joined the Pope Francis Faith Club because I wanted to expand my faith journey. I enjoyed looking at the checklists within the gifts and setting myself targets

to achieve in school and at home." Freya P7.

Andrew Gallagher (Head Teacher, Holy Family Primary) reflected on the journey so far. He said: "I am delighted with the commit-

ment of the pupils who enrolled for the award, and the dedication of Mrs Crossan and Mr McMahon for leading them. Not only are they learning about their faith, but they are putting their

faith into action on a daily basis. In fact, all of the first cohort will lead the whole school in a Pope Francis Faith Award Mass at the end of the school year to celebrate their achievements."

Help protect children's futures



Today, more than 50 children will be diagnosed with leprosy. Many will already have life-changing disabilities due to delayed diagnosis. Unable to hold a pen or walk properly, often these children have to drop out of school.

Many more children are unaware they have the disease. Without treatment, they face a life of increasing disability and unbearable prejudice.

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We will beat leprosy together



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The Caritas award changed my life

BY LUCY MCALINDON

SIXTH YEAR PUPIL AT ST ROCH'S
SECONDARY

THROUGHOUT the year, Caritas has enabled me to take a more active role in the faith life of the school and parish.

There have been so many examples... talks on the school's values, fundraising, saying the opening prayer at staff meetings, reading at lunchtime Mass, recording faith-based informational videos for the school's social media, helping out with RE classes, preparing prayer services and taking a lead role in them.

I recently had the privilege of helping Fr Thaddeus distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday. I felt honoured to help in this way and repeating the words "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel" helped me to reflect on what more I could do to live my life according to Gospel teaching.

Safe

One of our school values is inclusion and one way I embrace this is by attending a weekly 'Chat 'n' Chill' club where some of the senior girls create a safe space for S3 girls to share any concerns with us in an environment where they feel comfortable. They can trust us to help them or at least ease their worries a bit as we were in the same position as them just a couple of years ago.

I would have loved to have an opportunity like that when I was their age as I was extremely worried about things such as the increasing workload in the senior phase of school. I am also a senior prefect which means I have duties including weekly lunchtime hall monitoring and staying back late to help out at parents' evenings along with other after-school events like information evenings for the local primary school pupils who will be progressing on to our school. My involvement with Caritas has made me see that sacrificing my spare time can be an act of love.

Highlight

The highlight of my Caritas experience this year was an overnight retreat at the Craigmare centre. The sessions were centred around themes such as responsibility, courage, faithfulness and love.

The one I found particularly motivating was the session about responsibility where we had to decide what

we value most in life and examine how much time we actually spend focusing on these things. I discovered that I had been prioritising meaningless things like TV and social media over more important aspects of my life like appreciating the people who support me and spending more time helping those in need. As a result, I made a conscious effort to spend less time on my phone and to try harder to show God's love ('caritas') to others.

Eye-opening

The parish I attend is St Roch's, Garngad, which runs a weekly food bank. Visiting the food bank was a particularly eye-opening experience for me. It is run by a local family who often have to buy the food themselves as there is often a lack of donations. In order to help them, the Caritas nominees and I made an appeal at school assemblies for non-perishable food and loose change.

The people who run the food bank are the personification of what Caritas is all about. They work hard to give to people who need it, regardless of their religion

Lucy with fellow
St Roch's pupils
and Archbishop
Tartaglia



or background. The first time I attended the food bank, I was quite anxious, and I worried that I might see people I know and my being there could make them uncomfortable. However, we were greeted with joy and gratitude.

One of my favourite Pope

Francis quotes is: "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God... and when it's better to say nothing and let love speak." Although the Church is called to preach the Christian message, spreading the faith isn't just about converting others... Sometimes

the most loving thing you can do in a situation is not to say anything but to show God's love through action.

Teaching

Many of the frequent users of the food bank suffer from forms of drug or alcohol addiction but they

are never turned away or looked down upon. They are taken in and cared for just as anyone else would be. This makes explicit the Bible teaching that we are all made in the image of God and therefore deserving of respect and dignity.

JOE WALSH TOURS
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ON the same day I had to announce to people that all public Masses in Scotland were suspended until further notice, I also had to announce the death of Father Lawrence Byrne CP, a member of our Passionist community here at St. Mungo's.

It was a real double-whammy for people, like a double bereavement, the loss of not being able to gather for the Eucharist, the source and summit of our Christian lives, for God only knows how long; and the loss of a man who was a much loved preacher and confessor, and whose kind and gentle approach endeared him to so many folk who will grieve at the thought of never seeing or hearing him again. I don't think he realised how much loved he was, perhaps people didn't tell him enough, but they certainly told us.

Passionists

Lawrence was born in Irvine during the 2nd World War. On his birth certificate his father is described as an explosives' worker. Lawrence himself qualified as an electrician but then joined the Passionists in his early 20s and made his 1st Religious Profession on 8th March 1964. He spent many years in Botswana as a Passionist Brother but in the mid-1970s he decided to return home and study for priesthood.

That meant we were students together in Dublin and during that time Lawrence was persuaded by his confreres to come out of sporting retirement to take up his position as a goal-keeper when we were struggling to put a team together for the Seminary League, and a fine goalkeeper he was too. He was the original Holy Goalie. Lawrence loved his football and especially he loved Glasgow Celtic. Before he joined the Passionists he had attended Celtic's famous 7-1 victory over Rangers in the 1957 League Cup Final, and his account of that day was submitted and included in Pat Woods' book recalling that memorable event, "Oh! Hampden in the Sun".

Goalie

During one of our Seminary League games in the late 1970s, when Lawrence was in goals and I was playing right back, I took a knock on the leg making a pass-back and I shouted to him not to throw the ball back out to me. Unfortunately, he did, and I made a poor clearance from which the opposition scored. He was not a happy goalie. Forty years later I was driving from Bishopbriggs to St Mungo's with Lawrence in the passenger seat and,

Fr Lawrence will be very sadly missed



Fr Frank's log

Fr Frank Keevins CP is Parish Priest of St Mungo's Townhead



believe me, he was not a good passenger. Turning into Baird Street I made a manoeuvre which Lawrence didn't appreciate. He turned to me with a glare

and said to me through gritted teeth: "You're as bad a driver as you were a right back" – some things are never forgotten. Of course, Lawrence himself was a no-

toriously slow driver. When Fr Pat Rogers was in St. Mungo's preaching the Novena of Hope in September 2017, Lawrence gave him a lift to the Passionist Retreat Centre at Minsteracres in County Durham where Pat was due to give a seminar. As Pat describes it; "It was a long, slow journey, for Larry was reluctant to bypass any other vehicle no matter how slowly it was travelling. It took me about six minutes to persuade him to pass a tractor, on a long, straight stretch of road, 30 miles east of Carlisle".

Courage

Lawrence was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer a few months after that, in December 2017. The next two years and more were an extraordinary journey of courage and determination. Time and again, just when you thought he had reached the end, he would somehow rally and say that he was fit for a Public Mass and could help with Confessions. He loved ministry because he loved people and he just wanted to keep getting back to it for as long as he was able, and the people were

always delighted to see him reappear. His last appearances in St Mungo's were for Fr Antony's ordination and to concelebrate at one of Antony's first Masses. In truth, he wasn't able, but he was so determined to be there. His last outing was when Antony drove him down to Irvine to see his ailing sister,

a much more mellow passenger at this stage. He saw her and came home, and his sister, Catherine, died the very next day, as if she had waited to see him before she let go. As I write, Catherine is still awaiting burial, and on Wednesday Lawrence passed away in the Marie Curie Hospice. RIP.

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No public liturgies – but let the scriptures guide us this Holy Week



Canon Robert Hill

HOLY Week opens with what used to be called Palm Sunday but now has the more expansive title of “Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord”.

The title alerts us to the fact that on this day we reflect on Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem for the only visit he makes to the city – at least according to the gospels of Matthew Mark and Luke. The week takes in that sequence of events from the Last Supper (Holy Thursday) to the death and burial of Jesus (Good Friday), the liturgical ‘non-day’ of Holy Saturday, when Jesus’ body is in the tomb and to the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night when we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus in a spectacular manner in the Easter Vigil.

5 APR

Palm Sunday

Matthew’s Passion Narrative is the longest of the four – John’s is the shortest! All accounts except John tell the same basic story of Jesus’ Passion and death. John’s text concentrates more on the theological significance of the narrative. In Matthew’s version, the emphasis is on how Jesus fulfils the scripture. At least seven times in the Passion Narrative, either Jesus himself or events around him, fulfil the scripture.

A good example is when Judas accepts 30 pieces of silver as payment for betraying Jesus, and again when he has remorse at what he has done and hangs himself. The 30 pieces of silver is a fulfilment of the prophet Zechariah, and Judas’ remorse is a fulfilment of King David’s trusted advisor (Ahithophel, by name) who betrayed his king, and

Jesus is condemned to death; Stations of the Cross, Saint Boniface Church, Leeuwarden, Holland



in remorse took his own life.

An interesting feature of Matthew’s passion is the description of the dead rising from their tombs after Jesus’ death. There is no account anywhere else of such a remarkable event whether in gospels, or any other source. Writers think that this is Matthew offering a prophetic statement that the day will come when the dead will rise as a consequence of the death of Jesus. To this day the prophecy has not been fulfilled!

9 APR

Mass of the Last Supper

The Easter Triduum begins with this Mass. The Gospel is the beginning of John’s Last Supper account. The meal itself is not recounted in detail. There is no institution of the Eucharist, but the significance of Eucharist is spelled out in the remarkable story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. His actions shock Peter, and no wonder. In the ancient world, washing

another person’s feet was the most degrading thing a human being could do – so much so that not even the lowliest slave could be compelled to do this, and yet here is Jesus washing the feet of his disciples!

Peter knows exactly what this means – that Jesus, and indeed God – serves even the lowest human being. Jesus washes even Judas’ feet, knowing full well what Judas will do! In washing feet, Jesus indicates the commitment to all people that will be made in his death, and which he offers to all in Eucharist.

10 APR

Solemn Commemoration of the Passion and Death of the Lord

Mass is not celebrated today. The focus is rather on the Proclamation of the Passion from the Gospel of John.

Most of the detail of the other Gospel accounts is either omitted, or dealt with only briefly. This is because John wants to focus on how God’s plan unfolds through the horror of Jesus’ death. Jesus is the one who brings God’s plan to its completion: in John, Jesus does everything without the help of others.

So, Jesus is taken into custody only after he has ensured the freedom of his followers. There is no Simon of Cyrene to help with the carrying of the cross, and Jesus does not have his life taken from him. At life’s end, he says “it is accomplished”, and he hands over his spirit to those at the foot of the cross.

John does not avoid Jesus’ suffering, but he stresses that through it all, Jesus voluntarily carries out God’s plan.

11 APR

Saturday

No liturgy is celebrated today until the Easter Vigil at night. There are seven Old Testament readings which give a full account of God’s dealings with humans, from the story of the creation of humans in God’s image and likeness, through the story of Abraham and on to the voice of prophets during the exile of God’s people in Babylon. At all times, the plan of God is unfolding. The Easter Gospel this year is from Matthew, and in an account not found in the other gospels, Matthew tells us that an angel descended, rolled the stone away and sat on it. Matthew is extremely explicit in this detail. The angel descends in the sight of those who have gone to the tomb. He takes away the stone and everyone present – the women, disciples and the soldiers placed on guard – can see that the tomb is empty. Later attempts to suggest that the disciples came and stole Jesus’ body are thus proven to be lies.

The angel speaks the well-known words: “There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would...” Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. ‘Greetings’ he says. ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.’

12 APR

Easter Sunday

To this day when a Palestinian host is called away from table, he may use his napkin as a signal to his

guests whether to expect him to return, or whether they should continue the meal in his absence. This practice goes back to at least the time of the writing of the gospels, and the Greek word which was used for the napkin was ‘soudarion’.

No meal is explicitly mentioned in this gospel passage. The story is about

Mary of Magdala going to the tomb very early on the first day of the week. To what must have been her horror, she sees the stone has been moved from the entrance, and that the tomb is empty. She runs to Peter and the unnamed disciple of this part of the Gospel. These two head for the tomb. Peter goes in first, sees the cloths on the ground, and one cloth rolled up in a place by itself. This was the cloth that had been over Jesus’ head. In the Greek text of the gospel, this cloth is called ‘soudarion’.

The ‘other disciple’ realises its significance; Peter does not. At the last supper, Jesus had said to the disciples, “I am going away...but I will come back to take you with me”.

The ‘other disciple’ in the tomb sees the soudarion rolled up and remembers what Jesus said. The soudarion is the sign that Jesus will return. This disciple, like Peter, sees, but this disciple also believes.

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