



Galloway Diocese NEWS

Lockdown
Special
Edition

May/June
2020

Welcome

to this special, 'virtual' edition of the
Galloway Diocese News.



Truly we are living in interesting times where our everyday freedom is curtailed, travel restricted and social interaction a distant memory! Some restrictions are being eased but things will still take a while to get back to some sort of normal. So, no theatre, no concerts, no holidays, no meeting friends for coffee (and a doughnut).

But above all, no more going to Church – but thanks to technology Church can come to you in your own home. Many parishes in Galloway Diocese, in Scotland and indeed, throughout the world have been streaming Mass and other services and many people have 'tuned in' to take part in the liturgy and pray together even when apart. So we too are taking advantage of technology to bring you this digital edition of the magazine.

In this edition most of the illustrations, including our front page, are drawings sent to the Cathedral or individual parishes by primary school children. You will also be able to watch Bishop Nolan and Father William McFadden; just click on the icon at the top of their pages.

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of your magazine. God bless you until we can all meet again.



The Bishop Writes

Do we want to go back to normal? Or is the virus an opportunity to create a new, better vision for the future.



When this is all over I don't want things to go back to *normal*. When the coronavirus pandemic has passed I don't want a return to *normal*. Not if *normal* means that we fall back into our old way of living. Not if it means that the health care workers, whom we clap as heroes every Thursday, return to being underpaid and undervalued. Not if those in low paid jobs who were surprised

We now appreciate that those who add real value to our world are not necessarily the rich and the well paid, but those who enhance our world and our lives by their acts of care and compassion.

Do we really want to return to *normal*?

The virus has forced us to change our lifestyle, but are we so addicted that we will revert back to bad habits of old; are we just longing to clog the roads once again with our cars, to fill the air with our exhaust emissions; are we dreaming of that flight abroad or that Mediterranean cruise, and never mind the CO₂?

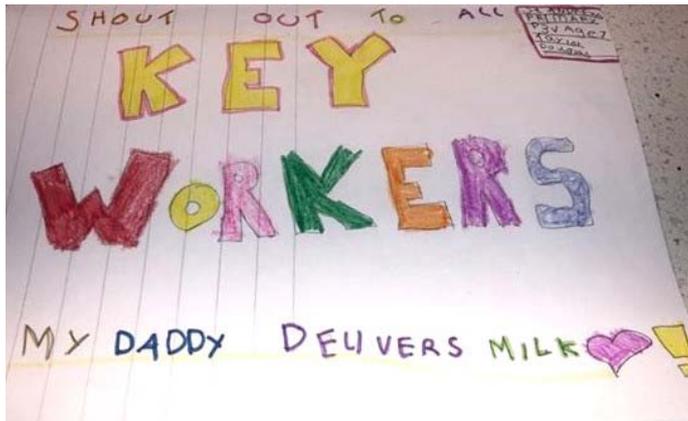
Our common home requires us to change our way of life. Our sick planet needs the same care as our sick bodies.

If we can unite against a virus, can we not unite against other problems that inflict our world. Such as poverty, which decimates so many lives. Covid-19 has killed many, but many more die throughout the world every year due to hunger and malnutrition. In a world where there is food aplenty for everyone, not everyone is fed.

And our society, which was becoming more and more focused on the individual and narrow self-interest, has suddenly been reminded of the value of community, of being concerned for others, of working with a common aim for a common good, of being united with our fellow human beings as part of a greater humanity.

We will all be glad to see the lockdown over. It places

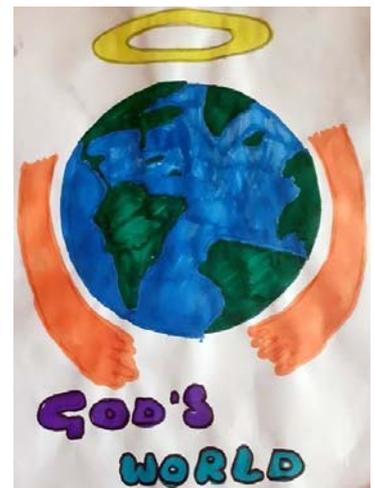
so many restrictions on our lives that it will be good when it is lifted. But it will be even better if, when it is lifted, we replace the *normal* of the past with a new vision for the future, an appreciation of what is really important in life and a determination to ensure things are never the same again.



to find themselves raised to the dignity of key workers, like shop assistants, carers and cleaners, are once more considered unimportant. Not if the air that we breathe, which has suddenly become healthier and less polluted, and the world that we live in, that is now being valued as our common home, return to being exploited, abused and scarred by human activity.

The virus has in an instant brought our old way of life to a halt. Now during lockdown we have time on our hands to think and reflect about how things were, and to plan and to prepare how we want things to be.

The virus makes us aware of the fragility of our humanity, and of how men and women everywhere, rich and poor alike, are all vulnerable. It makes us conscious of how our strength as a global human family is when we are all united together. There have been acts of selfless dedication, of health care staff risking infection to care for the sick. There have been acts of human kindness with people looking out for their elderly or housebound neighbours. And there have been parents giving that gift to their children which they are often denied, the gift of their time.



Reflection

What do we do in this new situation?

Jim McKendrick reflects on the strange times in which we find ourselves and looks to faith to lead us out of uncertainty.

The Coronavirus has come as a huge shock to me and everybody else, and within a very short time it has challenged our attitudes and behaviour radically. In one sense, life continues as normal – and yet it's not normal at all. Should I take the bus? Can I safely go out for a walk? Should I visit my neighbour or my friend? That cough I notice, could it be the virus? How long will this last? Will we ever get back to real normality again? Even



the language is different. Like so many others, I only knew the word 'corona' as a trendy Mexican beer; and for me 'lockdown' was a situation, involving invisible monks, which occurred in 'Pointless' when two couples achieved the same score.

In many ways, we have come to believe that we are in control of our lives, that we have a cure for every disease, that we can fend off all the dangers that threaten our securities. We have built up solid walls to protect us against every unwanted guest, but now our walls have been breached. On top of all that, the one place we turn to in times of trouble is not physically open to us. Churches have closed and public

Masses have been cancelled. The uncertainty of practically everything is most unsettling. And no one knows for sure when things will be back to normal.

What do we do in this new situation? How do we grow spiritually when we might not even be able to go to Mass? God wants to meet us in our uncertainties, fears and disappointments. He wants to comfort us and help us carry the crosses we are facing. But he also wants to do some work in our souls right now. He's inviting us to trust in him, to rely more on him and not on ourselves and give up our desire for total security and control. We must have confidence that God is still really in charge and he can use all the trials we face to bring about some greater good in our souls. He can even use all the chaos that the COVID-19 situation has had on our lives

Recently, Pope Francis challenged us "Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?" Having so recently completed our Eastertide commemoration of God's plan for our salvation, and with the joy of the Holy Spirit fresh in our hearts, we must cling to and nurture our faith in the risen Lord; his promise to be with us always and the Gift of the Holy Spirit for each of us.

It is the indwelling of the Spirit which provides us with the reassurance and strength confidently to hope and trust in God's providence.

In his Extraordinary Urbi et Orbi Blessing, the Pope provided us with a roadmap for the difficult days ahead:

"How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service:

The Spiritual Communion

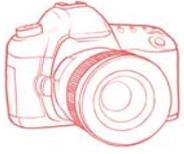
My Jesus,
I believe that you are present
in the Holy Sacrament of the
altar.
I love you above all things
and I passionately desire to
receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot now receive
you sacramentally,
come spiritually into my soul
so that I may unite myself
wholly to you now and
forever.
Amen.

(Saint Alphonsus Liguori)

these are our victorious weapons".

Pope Francis recommended prayer to Our Lady and the recitation of the Rosary during May, and has written two new Marian prayers to be said after the rosary. He also led the worldwide faithful in the Lord's Prayer. I find attendance at live streamed Mass and the practice of Spiritual Communion and the Prayer of St Alphonsus very beneficial and uplifting.





Galloway Glimpses

Around our region in your photographs



Although our walks have been restricted to the local area there are still some lovely glimpses to be had..



Thank you to Katrina Pollock of St Peter in Chains Parish, Ardrossan “This photo was taken on the North Shore, Ardrossan towards Seamill during the Coronavirus allotted exercise time. I found it very uplifting.”



Taken just a week apart in May, these two views of the Caul in the River Nith in the heart of Dumfries. Thank you to Annette Barnett for these and the swans.



Safeguarding In Galloway Diocese

A Message from the Safeguarding team

“God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

In the very beginning, God gifted mankind with a worth and a dignity that came from the very way in which he created us – *in his own image and likeness*. Every single person ever born is a unique, unrepeatable creation, gifted to Earth by its Creator and chosen by him to be alive at that time, and in that place. Each one of us, regardless of our time of life or our position in life, has been perfectly placed by our Father to be precisely where we are right now, as an infinitely loved part of his masterpiece of creation.

Many great saints have implored us to see Christ in one another, but the importance of treasuring our fellow humans as though they truly are worthy of the utmost respect was most succinctly stated by Jesus himself: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

The Catholic Church has always taught of the need for her members to genuinely and visibly care for one another. Still today, this message is preached from pulpits the world over.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states that “Man and woman, created in his image and likeness, are for that very reason called to be the visible sign and the effective instrument of divine gratuitousness in the garden where God has placed them as cultivators and custodians of the goods of creation” (§26), while the Catechism of the Catholic Church bluntly points out that “failure to observe it brings great harm to communities and to individuals” (§2200).

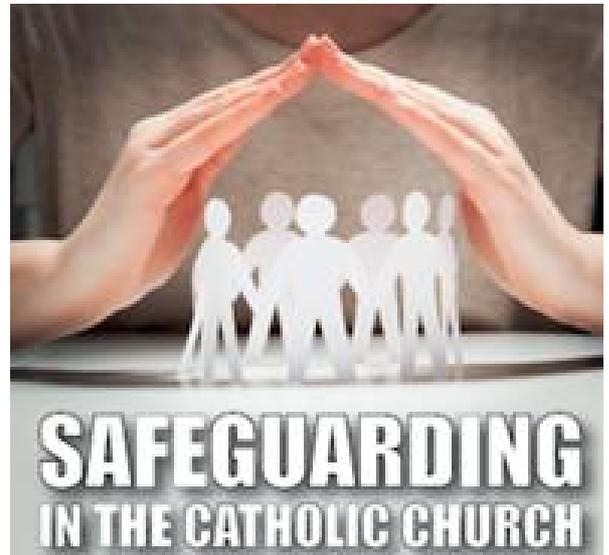
The great harm brought about by a catastrophic failure to love one another has never been more evident in the Church than now, in the wake of the abuse crisis. St Paul’s warning “the body is a unit, though it is comprised of many parts... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Cor 12:12, 26) rings today with a prophetic truth for our times. On this point, the Church is absolutely united: never again can her people be hurt by abuse of any kind. Pope Francis has instituted mandatory reporting of sexual abuse, and is unambiguous about the need to “repair the damage, to attain justice, and to prevent, by all means possible, the recurrence of similar incidents in the

future” (Chirograph for the Institute of a Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 22nd March 2014).

Safeguarding within our communities has long been associated with children, with adults who are considered to be vulnerable due to age or infirmity, and with copious amounts of paperwork. While these associations are critical in taking first steps towards ensuring our parishes are safe, they are only the shell. For safeguarding to be truly effective, we need to be the disciples that Christ called us to be. We need to see him in everyone we encounter; we need to recognise the inherent dignity and worth of each individual soul; and we need to accept that every one of us needs to safeguard, and to be safeguarded, in our fallen world.

Safeguarding is not boxes we tick to demonstrate that a job has been done. It is who we are. We are Christ’s disciples, and we are called to love one another. All of us.

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



Lockdown

First person to buy a Gregg’s pastie after lockdown



Especially for readers in Dumfries!
Laughter



We hope you have enjoyed this edition of your magazine. We hope to produce another in early September and we would like to hear from you. Look out for the email but you can also send your contributions to The Editor The Galloway Diocese News, Candida Casa, 8 Corsehill Road, Ayr, KA7 2ST. Email: gdn@gallowaydiocese.org.uk

RC Diocese of Galloway, charity number SC010576

Live streaming Mass

In the days since lockdown began and the churches had to close many parishes in the diocese have managed to 'livestream' Mass and other services. This has enabled many people to 'attend' Mass and participate, albeit at a distance. But how do priests and people cope with Mass on line; Here are some thoughts on the experience.



Celebrating Mass with my e-congregation **Father David Borland, St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr**

“Make eye contact with God’s people!” These were the words my homily tutor used to regularly say to me when I was in Seminary, and oh how I wish that were possible today! Celebrating Mass in an empty church with only children’s paintings before me for a congregation, and under the watchful lens of a camera, is a very strange experience, and goes against everything I believe ‘Church’ to be, and yet at the same time, I am so incredibly thankful that we already had the cameras installed in the Cathedral before the lockdown happened.

One of the great blessings of live-streaming on social media is that God’s people, my e-congregation as one member christened themselves, can leave comments, observations, prayers, good wishes, and these are all an absolute blessing to me – because it is these that remind me it is not just me and God at that moment, there are many other souls gathered with us virtually, and together we are doing what we as God’s people have been doing for over 2,000 years, we are together in prayer and worship, but just in a different way. I may be the only human person in the building, but I am not the only human person praying in that act of worship and, although it may seem odd to say it, I do ‘feel’ their presence with me.



While this way of celebrating our Mass is the very best we can do just now, I long for the day I can stare into the eyes of my friends at Mass, I long for the day when a child drops their toy with a clatter and an adult ‘tuts’ at them, I long for the day when someone arrives late for Mass and makes lots of noise by trying to be quiet, but most of all I long for the day when I hear those beautiful words said aloud: ‘And with your spirit’.

‘Where two or three or more are gathered in my name, I am there in your midst!’ **Father Martin Chambers, parish priest of St Matthew’s, Kilmarnock**

In the final years of seminary life, we used to have ‘Practice Masses’ where one of the priests of the staff would take us through our paces to see if we knew how to celebrate Mass correctly. It was a bizarre experience – not to have people to interact with and not responding to the prayers.

I had a similar bizarre experience when the lockdown came on March 23rd. We were forced apart – people and priests. For me, days one and two were strange, celebrating Mass on my own. Then Kevin Rennie, one of our seminarians, installed the equipment whereby I could start live-streaming the Mass. Immediately I got a REAL sense of God being present. Every day I have a sense that the community is ‘there’ and gathered for prayer. We have been able to involve parishioners in various ways: doing the Mass readings; playing the hymns on the organ; and inviting the children to be part of the Mass by drawing a picture of the image of that day’s Gospel. Mostly, though, I’ve had the sense that, although physically divided, we are united in prayer.



When I celebrated Mass on my own in my early years as a priest, I found it quite awkward: no people and no participation. However, during this Coronavirus lockdown, I have had a sense that people are with me – even although I am the only person in Church. I will always be grateful for this memory and for the words of this hymn reminding me of God’s presence: ‘Where two or three or more are gathered in my name, I am there in your midst!’

Live streaming Mass

What do parishioners think? Jim McKendrick and Gerry Lynch share their thoughts.

Jim McKendrick, St John's, Cumnock

In these difficult times, our world has turned upside down and I am saddened by so much financial hardship, suffering and death; I struggle to comprehend the numbers. During social distancing, live streaming of Mass comforts and reassures me that we are not on our own and provides an opportunity for us to come together spiritually for prayers and worship, further enhanced by Spiritual Communion and the prayer of St Alphonsus. Although slightly disconcerting at first, I soon settled into the rhythm and find the reverence and silence, with no distractions or chit-chat, enriches both prayer and reflection. It also allows me to both concentrate more intensely on the Readings, Gospel and Homily and to be more attentive at the Consecration and Communion. Having 'attended' live streaming at most of the available Diocesan sites, I have a deep sense of gratitude that our dedicated and gifted clergy across the diocese have adapted so quickly to this new initiative to provide such a faith filled and meaningful experience. I realise more fully now that I belong not only to the parish of St John's, but also to the wider diocesan faith community. Above all, I have a deep sense of hope and realise that the future holds nothing to be afraid of, safe in the hands of God and the Holy Spirit.

Live Streams and podcasts in the Diocese of Galloway



- ◆ St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr - Live Stream
- ◆ St John's, Cumnock - Live Stream
- ◆ St Andrew's, Dumfries - Live Stream
- ◆ St Teresa's, Dumfries - Live Stream
- ◆ Garnock Valley Parishes - Audio Podcasts
- ◆ St John Ogilvie, Irvine - Live Stream
- ◆ St Joseph's, Kilmarnock - Live Stream
- ◆ St Matthew's, Kilmarnock - Live Stream
- ◆ St Mary, Star of the Sea, Largs - Live Stream

Remember to look at your own parish website and Facebook pages for local details and news.

Gerry Lynch, St Andrew's, Dumfries

I found that part of Eastertide where I shared the Mass of the Pope at Santa Marta very uplifting not just because of the beautiful simplicity and wisdom of the homilies but the fact that I was sharing Mass with people throughout the Universal Church. Praying the office of the Church alone is always a joy but to join those also saying the morning and night prayers at the cathedral in Ayr also gave a sense of belonging to a community of faith. Whilst streaming can never replace the communion we have with those in our parish with whom we share more than the Sacrament, it has been of immense help in keeping us close to Jesus and helping us to join our prayers with others in these difficult times.

And here are some comments from across the Diocese

Many thanks for the very heartening Mass. God bless.

Thank you so much for this morning's Mass, Father. We really appreciate it. Stay safe and well.

This is wonderful, looking forward to talking part God Bless

Thank you, and for the Rosary

Thank you very much Father, it must have been very strange for you, but much appreciated, take care

Honoured to attend another of your Masses. You are doing a wonderful service. God Bless.

Thank you Father for the Celebration of the Holy Mass and Rosary. May the Holy Spirit guard and protect you

Thank you Father, a lovely mass!! From the Grace Family in Ireland

Thank you

Lockdown

Went to my first social distancing Christening last Sunday



Even these strange times can raise a smile ...

Laughter





Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation February 2020



St Mary's Irvine, 3rd February
with children from St Mary's and St John Ogilvie's parishes



St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan, 4th February
with children from St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan, St Bridget's, Kilbirnie, St Palladius', Dalry, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Beith and St Mary's, Largs



St Teresa's, Dumfries, 6th February

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



St Mary's, Saltcoats, 13th February

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



St Joseph's, Kilmarnock, 17th February

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



St Winin's, Kilwinning, 18th February

With children from from St Luke's Primary School (yop) and St Winning's Primary School, Kilwinning (bottom)



St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr, 20th February

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



Our Lady and St Meddans, Troon, 24th February

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



The annual Mass to celebrate the election of those adults preparing to celebrate the Sacraments at **The Rite of Election 2020**

Easter took place on the first Sunday of Lent in St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr. Twenty people were presented for election, eleven of whom are preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and nine who are already baptised but are preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist.



The twenty Elect came from eight different parishes spread throughout the diocese, and were accompanied to the cathedral by their godparents, sponsors and parish RCIA team members. Following their election they joined the rest of the Catholic community in using the period of Lent as a time of intense spiritual preparation, to come ready to celebrate the Easter Sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

As always, the Mass of Election was a joyful occasion and a wonderful way to open the Lenten season in the diocese.

FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND GIVING HOPE TO VULNERABLE CHRISTIANS

Thank you

In the Lent edition of the magazine (how long ago that seems now) we told how Dr Allan O'Neill was planning to run the Palestine marathon to raise funds for the Friends of the Holy Land.

Thank-you to everyone who helped raise a fantastic total of £2644.12 for Friends of the Holy Land (FHL) after I ran a 13.1 mile (socially distant) distance around a very peaceful Glasgow at the end of March.

When I first learned of the progression of COVID-19 across the globe, I was worried. This worry turned to upset when I saw how it was affecting our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. This upset selfishly turned to disappointment when I learned I was not going to be able to visit to complete the half marathon I had trained so hard for.

All of these feelings have now combined together into what I think is called determination. A determination to play my part as a GP in the fight against COVID-19 within our fantastic NHS, but also an enhanced determination to help in any way I can to help those in the Holy Land who don't have access to the health or social care that we do.

I am sure that every pound that has gone to FHL will ensure someone there feels that "little bit more equal", and my hope is that this pandemic changes us all for the better. It has certainly changed me.

All that said, I'm also determined to be in Bethlehem for the re-scheduled half marathon and to enjoy a pint of Taybeh with my Palestinian friends. BRING IT ON!





Covid-19 FoodAid Appeal

Donate £5

Text FOODAID to 70085

Texts will cost £5 plus one standard message charge. Consent from the bill payer is required. If you are under the age of 16, you must have your parent or guardian's permission to send a text donation. The SMS donations services to Galloway Foodaid are supplied by a third party provider. We are therefore not liable for any delays or failures in your receipt of any SMS messages. Delivery is subject to transmission from your network operator and processing by your mobile phone device. Further details can be found here: www.dgnc.com



OUR SCHOOLS' GOT TALENT

Children from primary schools throughout the diocese have been sending their drawings to the Cathedral or to their own parishes. The children are praying for their families, their priests and their friends and they honour the NHS and other key workers. We hope you enjoy this selection.



...praying for the NHS
...Father Duncan



Bishops' Conference Working Groups to respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic

By Father Stephen McGrattan

After their May meeting, the Bishops' Conference set up two working groups to address the situation in which the Church finds herself as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Infection Control Working Group

This group will help the Bishops' Conference consider the health and safety implications of the pandemic and plan for the kinds of practical steps which will be needed to open churches gradually and in ways that are safe. The group, led by Sir Harry Burns, Scotland's former Chief Medical Officer and Professor of Global Public Health at the University of Strathclyde first met on 13th May. Its immediate work will focus on two parallel work streams: Infection Control and Liturgical Norms. The drafting of infection control standards will be overseen by Sir Harry Burns and Professor Stephany Biello, Professor of Neuroscience and Biopsychology and Dean for Learning and Teaching in Science and Engineering at the University of Glasgow, who has joined the group. The creation of new liturgical advice which will govern the celebration of Mass and other sacraments, will be led by Bishop Hugh Gilbert together with Canon Thomas Boyle, Canon Thomas Shields and Father Gerry MacGuiness.

The reopening of churches and the reintroduction of public worship will happen in a phased way, always taking account of best infection control practice and guidelines on social distancing and hygiene.

A first step, as confirmed by the First Minister on 21st May with the publication of the Scottish Government Routemap through and out of the Crisis, will be the opening of church buildings for private prayer under physical distancing rules and hygiene safeguards. This will be possible in Phase 2 of the Routemap (possibly mid-late June). However, the celebration of Mass with a congregation will not be introduced until Phase 3 (possibly July/August). When public Masses are re-introduced we should be prepared for limitations in the way we celebrate. Full details of what these will be is being worked out in collaboration with the Government, but we can expect the following:

- ◆ Social distancing will need to be respected, so capacity in our churches will be significantly reduced. It may also be necessary to register in advance to attend.
- ◆ All churches may not reopen for Mass at the same time.
- ◆ Congregational singing may be limited, at least initially.
- ◆ There will be modifications to the way we receive Holy Communion.
- ◆ At least initially, those who are vulnerable may be discouraged from attending and those in the shielded group are likely to be instructed not to attend.

The "new normal" will have to be lived with patience as restrictions change the way we live our lives and extend pastoral care in the Church. Already families are praying together at home, something that may previously have been reserved only to the church. As well as sacrifices, there are opportunities for renewal, and it will be important not to miss these in the months to come.

The Pastoral Ministry Working Group

This group will offer advice to the Bishops' Conference on how parishes and dioceses might make suitable provision to address the pastoral needs of the Catholic community during a time of ongoing restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The group would collaborate with other Church groups in the development of particular advice/materials. Chaired by Bishop Brian McGee of Argyll and the Isles, the group members are Father Stephen McGrattan (National Liturgy Commission), Father Michael Kane (St Augustine's, Coatbridge), Nicola McDonagh (St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh), Margaret Barton (RE Adviser, Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh), Barbara Coupar (Scottish Catholic Education Service), Tina Campbell (National Safeguarding Co-ordinator) and Michael McGrath (Assistant Secretary to the Bishops' Conference).

Very quickly, when 'lockdown' began, priests and parishes reached out using technology, to live-stream Masses and other liturgies, and to share the Gospel in new ways. Although this doesn't make possible sacramental participation, these efforts have been welcomed by parishioners who have been helped to remain connected to their local parishes in these difficult times. This use of technology has enabled a larger group of people to hear the Gospel than would normally participate in parish Masses.

While it will be wonderful when our parishes can reopen, we recognise that parish life cannot quickly return to normal until a vaccine or a treatment is available. We do not expect this to happen until at least 2021. This means, that even when Churches reopen, parish activities will still be greatly restricted; the Pastoral Ministry Working Group hopes to identify and publicise advice and resources to help dioceses and parishes face fresh challenges in a safe manner.

At the time of writing the group is about to meet for a second time and has identified several aims which include:

- ◆ Directing people to information, advice and resources;
- ◆ Remembrance of those who have died;
- ◆ Outreach to those who are isolated, can't access technology, face economic hardship or unemployment;
- ◆ Chaplaincy and resources for schools, hospitals and care homes;
- ◆ Practical ways to keep communities connected;
- ◆ New opportunities for catechesis, faith renewal, engagement in parish ministry, and a deepened knowledge of Scripture.



Letters from Lockdown

Michael Kearns – at home during the present situation – gives us an insight into how young adults are viewing the world as it is today.



I laughed a few days ago when I read that we are living through a time of unprecedented use of the word ‘unprecedented’. Clearly, the onset of COVID-19 has caused the greatest disruption to life in this country since the Second World War. It’s an immense challenge for everyone; perhaps the main reason being that both the virus and the lockdown arrived so suddenly and unpredictably. When I boarded a flight from Fiumicino to Glasgow on the 6th of March, I simply thought that a minor influenza outbreak had caused Italian universities to temporarily close, that I was getting an early, extended Easter holiday, and that I would return to Rome on the 19th of April. Instead, ideas of normal life in Italy, the UK and throughout the world were soon shattered.

Members of my own generation must sometimes scratch their head and wonder what it could have been like to have grown up in a normal world. When we were children, we watched the 9/11 disaster on TV, and the world has never really become safer or more stable since. When we were teenagers, the global economy completely collapsed, and little effort from any political direction has bothered to make things fairer or more secure since. Now, as young adults, we are forced to stay inside, away from friends, family, work and hobbies, because of a virus unlikely to affect us, with plenty of confusion and little explanation. Meanwhile, young people remain much-maligned by sections of the media, often based on false premises or assumptions.

Nevertheless, in my experience, young people are very much not complaining or feeling sorry for themselves. In fact, they are happy to comply with the stringent regulations, because – even in a world where the sanctity of human life is not always respected – they know that the lives of the old and the vulnerable are much more important than their own plans and ambitions. There is a togetherness and a selflessness that our country, and its young people, are showing what they are still capable of. This is not a saccharine sentimentality, but rather a stoic, and often happy, sense of duty. People who have been, for example, to Lourdes, and seen how the young volunteers conduct themselves there, will smile and nod as they read this, knowing exactly what I mean. The country has pulled together, despite a media and politicians who have perhaps let us down, and I believe the same togetherness and selflessness may help us rebuild a decimated economy, upon which, of course, lives also depend.

Political point-scoring should be left to those with nothing better to do.

I did enjoy however, when last year when one senior MP accused a rival of “peddling optimism”. In times of unprecedented fear, I think that is exactly what we should be doing. The infection rate is dropping precipitously. COVID related deaths, every one of which is a tragedy to the families involved, do continue to drop. In London, the UK’s epicentre, the disease appears to have been almost suppressed. My former and current cities of residence, Salamanca and Rome, have reopened churches, parks, and even some restaurants and bars. The peak has passed. We are winning the battle. And none of this is inconsistent with common sense and safe practice. We’ll wait a few more weeks for some restrictions to ease, and a few more months for the rest. So-called social-distancing isn’t nice, but it is wise for the time being. More frequent hand-washing I hope will be permanent!

Sometimes, perhaps because of the litany of catastrophe I mentioned earlier, in modern life we can be peddlers of fear. And yet I write these words a few days after the feast of the Ascension. Matthew’s account has Jesus telling us that he will be with us always, even to the end of time. Jesus is quoted telling us not to be afraid about a dozen times throughout the Gospels. The same advice appears hundreds of times throughout the whole Bible. It’s a message we have to take to heart. After his Ascension, the disciples had to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, which we celebrate at Pentecost. I suppose we are all in an enforced period of waiting just now, waiting for life to return to normal, for churches to reopen and public Mass to reconvene. During this waiting, let us imitate those disciples, who with Our Lady, prayed constantly, trusted God earnestly, and abandoned fear.



I want to add one final note about Mass. I think I speak for everyone in the Diocese when I thank our priests for continuing to say Mass every day throughout these strange and lonely times. It must be difficult to do so without their beloved congregations. Sometimes they are streamed online, sometimes not. But we who have true faith know that a priest never celebrates Mass alone. He has our prayers with him, he has the angels and the saints and our loved ones gone before us with him, and he is in the presence of God. He offers the sacrifice of love and hope for us, even if not with us. Let that keep us going as we continue to wait, pray, and maybe even peddle some optimism.

Diocesan Holy Land Pilgrimage 2020

Update from Father David Borland, Pilgrimage Director

As I write this piece I'm afraid I am still not in a position to confirm any arrangements for our planned Diocesan Holy Land Pilgrimage in October 2020. At this moment, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we here in Scotland are still in lockdown, Palestine is just beginning to make the first moves in relaxing their 90+ day lockdown, and the State of Israel still has measures in place whereby both citizens and pilgrims must self-isolate in a private residence for 14 days when they arrive in the country. But who knows what is going to happen over the next five months?

All I can ask you to do just now is to be patient and 'wait and see'. The airlines all seem to be talking about resuming leisure flights over the summer, the Palestinian and Israeli authorities are indicating that they hope to welcome tourists again by the autumn, and our Tour Operator is hopeful that our plans can go ahead, although there may have to be some alterations to our proposed itinerary.



In the meantime I ask of you one thing – please remember our Christian brothers and sisters who live in the Holy Land in your prayers. In this country many of us have been hit hard by the restrictions placed on us during this time of crisis, but our friends who live in Palestine, without a welfare state or free-at-the-point-of-use healthcare system, have been very badly affected and I hear stories almost every time I speak with them of real hardship. Please pray for them.

I will keep you updated on any developments over the next few months.

'Across' Pilgrimage by Jumbulance

Report from Alison Neil, Group Leader

My annual pilgrimage to Lourdes with Across on the Jumbulance should have left Kilmarnock on 23rd April. In early March I received a telephone call from the Across office to advise that the decision had been taken to cancel pilgrimages at the start of the season due to Covid-19 which subsequently affected all our lives. By mid-May Across announced that they would not be able to travel to Lourdes in 2020. On a Jumbulance pilgrimage it is impossible to socially distance during travel or in the hotel.

It was very disappointing to receive this call, but as a nurse as well as Group Leader there was also a feeling of relief as we do not want to put pilgrims lives at risk. Naturally all pilgrims who were booked to travel were upset at the cancellation but fully understood the reasons. As an alternative, like, our local parishes, I turned to social media. At the end of April I posted a 'virtual' pilgrimage on Facebook. This included our programme and numerous photographs from previous pilgrimages. This virtual pilgrimage was well received by my own group and others who have travelled with the Jumbulance in the past.



Oberammergau Passion Play A p.s. from Mary Buckley

In the Pentecost edition of Galloway Diocese News last year I wrote of how much my husband and I were looking forward to a return visit to the famous passion play in Oberammergau, indeed at the time of writing we should be packing for the trip. In mid March, with the virus heading towards them, the organisers took the painful decision to postpone the play until 2022. It is ironic that an act of thanksgiving initiated because of a deadly plague has had to be cancelled 400 years later by another one. We wish them success in the future.

Across is currently supporting assisted pilgrims, with volunteers, phoning them on a regular basis to keep in touch and reduce loneliness. This is a wonderful way to show the community spirit of the charity.

Every Thursday evening at 5 pm Across streams a Mass on Zoom which my group had the pleasure of organising and leading on 7th May; these are well received.

God willing it is hoped that we will be able to travel to Lourdes in 2021.



The Teaching of Pope Francis

by Father William McFadden

With his words during the COVID-19 pandemic Pope Francis invites us to pray for very practical intentions and with faith and trust in God's love for God's people.



The images of Pope Francis celebrating the Holy Week and Easter liturgies in a deserted St Peter's Basilica, and with an empty St Peter's Square, were indeed iconic. His symbolic actions, together with his strong words, communicate the Gospel message of love, hope and courage in a unique way. Yet Francis does not only use the big liturgical celebrations, or the high points in the Church's calendar, to spread this message. Every day, in his short homilies given during the Mass held in the chapel of his residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae, he offers hope and inspiration.

For the Elderly

"Today, I would like us to pray for the elderly who are suffering now in a particular way, with great interior solitude and sometimes great fear. Let us pray that the Lord would be close to our grandfathers and grandmothers – to all the elderly – and give them strength." (March 17th) He also added on April 15th that we pray for elderly people living alone or in retirement homes who are living in fear of contracting the coronavirus and dying alone: "They are our roots, our history. They have given us the faith, traditions, the sense of belonging to a homeland. Let us pray for them so that the Lord may be close to them in this moment."

mothers who may be anxious or worried about giving birth during the COVID-19 pandemic: "Let us pray for them, that the Lord give them the courage to carry these children forth with the trust that it will certainly be a different world, but it will always be a world the Lord loves very much."

For Teachers and Students

On April 24th Francis highlighted those involved in education: "Let us pray today for teachers who have to work so hard in order to do lessons on the internet and other media... Let us also pray for students who have to take their exams in a way they are not used to."

For Families



Pope Francis is intensely conscious of the pressure experienced by families at this time, particularly those caused by financial anxieties. He said on April 23rd: "In many places you hear about one of the effects of this pandemic: many families who are in need, who are hungry and, unfortunately, a group of loan sharks 'helps' them. This is another pandemic." He added: "Let's pray for these families and their many children...and for the moneylenders that the Lord would touch their hearts and convert them." Then on May 4th the pope highlighted victims of domestic violence: "Sometimes there is domestic violence. Let us pray for families so that they go on in peace with creativity and patience during this quarantine." He also said that he was praying for expectant

For Homeless Men and Women

We know Pope Francis has a genuine love for the marginalised. On April 2nd he specifically sought to awaken our consciences to the plight of the homeless. He said he was struck by a photo in a local newspaper of "homeless people lying in a parking lot under observation" that "highlight so many hidden problems in the world," and so he prayed: "There are so many homeless people today. We ask St Teresa of Kolkata to awaken in us a sense of closeness to so many people in society who, in everyday life, live hidden but, like the homeless, in the moment of the crisis, are living in this way."

For those who have died

On 30th April, conscious of the mounting number of deaths, he said: "Let us pray for the dead, those who have died from the pandemic... And let us also pray in a special way for the 'anonymous' dead. We have seen photos of common graves. There are so many there."



These are just a few illustrations of how Pope Francis, on a daily basis, continues to offer prayerful leadership and guidance during these extraordinary and unexpected times. His words are simple and direct, and we might do well to be influenced by them in our own times of quiet reflection.



Praying on your own

By Father Martin Chambers

Praying on your own can be difficult but find a prayer space, create some silence and open your heart to find Jesus. He is waiting for you!

This may come as a bit of a surprise, but I used to belong to a group in the Diocese called the ‘Young Priests’ Group’. It was set up to give the recently ordained a chance to pray together and to reflect on common challenges as we began the road of ministry. In Galloway Diocese back in the late 1980s, the group was led by Father Joe Boland and it was during one of our prayer sessions that Joe told us of what he called “*one of the most profound prayer experiences of his life.*” He went on to explain that, while he had been parish priest of St Conal’s parish, Kirkconnel, he had often celebrated Mass with no congregation. He described those times as moments when he was aware that, although there was no-one in front of him in the Church, he was in fact praying with the whole parish community and, indeed, praying with the wider Church. I myself celebrated Mass on my own on two occasions when I was parish priest at St Thomas’, Muirkirk.

By contrast to Father Joe, I found the experience of celebrating Mass out loud but with no congregation slightly bizarre. I resolved to never do that again if I could manage. In fact, the situation never occurred again as I always had a congregation. That is until earlier this year when Covid-19 occurred and our churches went on lockdown. I was once again forced to celebrate Mass on my own. However, this time I had a totally different experience. This time – particularly with the help of live-streaming the Mass – I had the profound experience that Father Joe had talked about over thirty years ago. This time there was no awkwardness for, although there was no-one responding ‘Amen’ out loud to the prayers, I was aware that many people were ‘there’ present. I was conscious indeed that, in the silence of the Church, I was present to God in perhaps a deeper way.

Of course, my experience was not unique. Many priests talked of similar experiences during the lockdown and many parishioners have talked of the great way in which they felt connected. However, for this article I wanted to reflect on what praying alone can mean for you who are reading this article and how

praying at home can be for you that profound experience that Father Joe found in Kirkconnel and so many have found during the lockdown.

‘Prayer Space’.

I think the first thing you need to do is to create a ‘**Prayer Space**’. Of course, space might be tight in the house and amidst the busyness of your family life. However, I have a space beside my bed which is really just a shelf with a candle on it and a Bible there. It is where I pray at night and first thing in the morning. Whatever you are able to organise will be up to the space available. However, I would suggest perhaps a little cloth, a candle and a Bible. In any case, it is ‘your prayer space’ where you and God can be alone together.

‘Silence’

I would say that a second aspect has to be ‘**Silence**’. Since prayer is about ‘listening to God’, then we need to give ourselves a chance to hear God. This, of course, is a very difficult thing to achieve in our noisy, modern world. To stop the world, even for the ten or fifteen minutes of prayer is always going to be a challenge. You might be a morning-person or you might be a night-person but you have to find the time of day that best suits you. I remember once talking to Sisters Imelda and Barbara at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Kilmarnock. They were talking about the little Oratory that they have beside the Church; there they would pray together. However, they also talked of their private prayers: Sister Imelda preferred praying privately last thing at night; whereas Sister Barbara said that she prayed there in the morning. In any case, you need to choose the time of day that best can suit your circumstances.

‘Prayer Tools’

A further consideration for private prayer is what ‘**Prayer Tools**’ you are going to use. For some the Rosary will be the best prayer tool, for others it will be their favourite Novena, and for others it will be reading the Bible or reflecting on the Scripture of the day. In any case, once you have stilled yourself, you need to open yourself to God’s grace which will come



through the prayer that you use. I must say here that prayer is not an escape mechanism, it is not an attempt to flee from the worries and stresses of life. Rather, prayer is about bringing all of those concerns, those fears and anxieties before your Loving God. Prayer is about listening for God in the depths of your heart, being inspired by God to return to daily life with a renewed spirit.

So 'Prayer Space', 'Silence' and 'Prayer Tools' are all important but the central purpose of prayer is that we should meet the God whom we know so well. I was struck during the Easter season this year by this aspect of the Resurrection story where Jesus meets the women who had found the tomb empty:

*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.

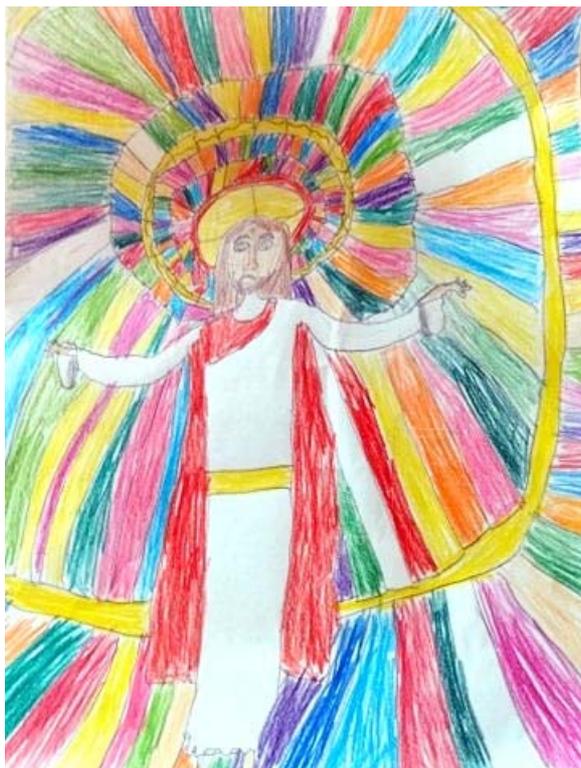
'Greetings' he said.

And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet.

*Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid;
go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee;
they will see me there.'*

What struck me about that passage was the fact that the women would already have known Jesus. They would have walked with him. They would have seen the miracles, like the Feeding of the five thousand. They would have heard him speak and been inspired, for instance by Jesus saying 'I am the Good Shepherd.' However, now they were being invited to go further in their understanding of Jesus. Now they were being invited, through this Resurrection experience, not just to 'know' Jesus in their heads but to have Jesus alive in their hearts. They were being invited to go deeper in their relationship with the Son of God. What struck me was that this Gospel is good for you while you're reflecting on our Prayer Life. For, just like the women in that Resurrection Gospel story, you already know Jesus. You too have heard and understood the miracles. You already have engraved Jesus' teachings in your hearts. Now – through your prayer life – you are being invited to know Jesus much more deeply. Through the Bible, through the Rosary and the Novenas, you will find Jesus in a new way in your heart.

So – find the Prayer Space, give yourself some Prayer Silence, use whatever Prayer Tool you need. Most of all, open your heart to find Jesus. He is waiting for you!



A prayer for today

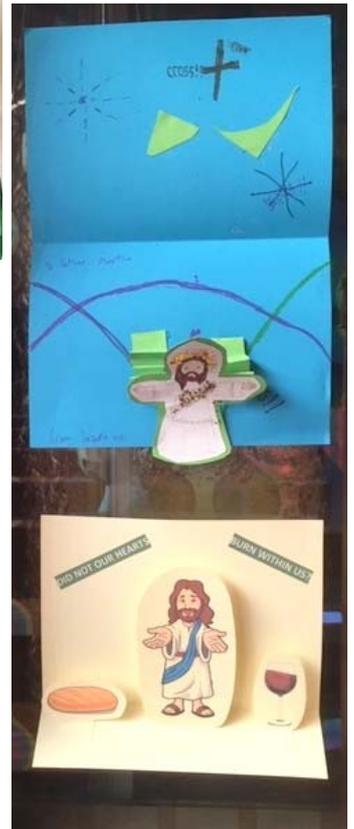
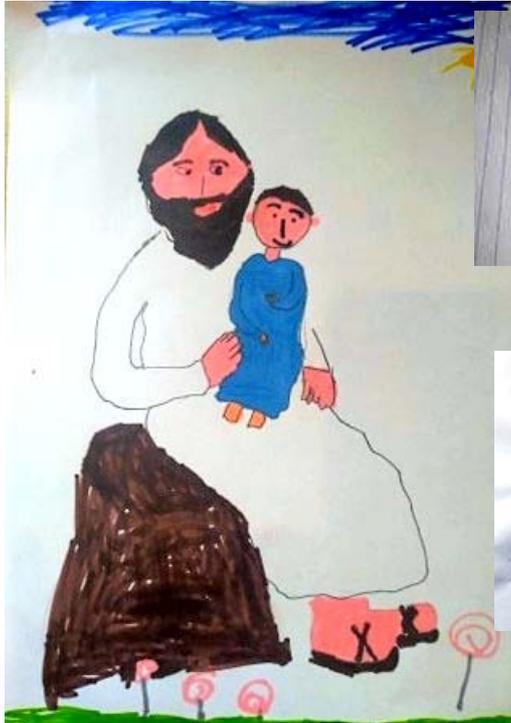
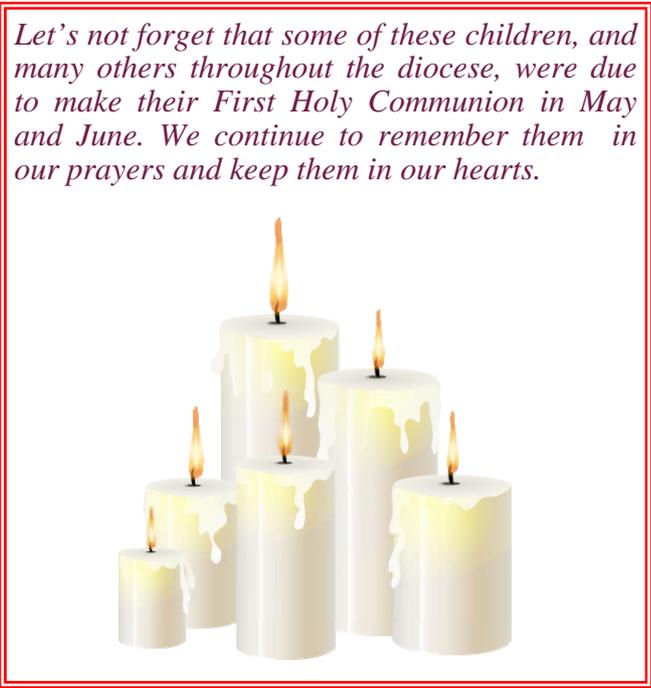
Dear God, may we feel your loving presence with us this day, especially when things are hard, when we feel lonely and we have difficult decisions to make.

Comfort us when we feel despair, when fear overwhelms us or when we fall and, in your mercy, set us on the path that leads to you, who live and reign for ever.

Amen.

More from our great children.

Let's not forget that some of these children, and many others throughout the diocese, were due to make their First Holy Communion in May and June. We continue to remember them in our prayers and keep them in our hearts.



I'm praying for all the elderly people that can't see their grandson