

The  
**PRIORITIES  
OF JESUS**

# PARISH BULLETIN

## St Kieran's, the Catholic Church *in*

*Campbeltown and Islay*

*Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain*

4<sup>th</sup> of February 2024

## **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time**

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

**Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of  
Ordinary Time, Holy Mass, 10.00am**

Monday: Holy Mass, 6.00pm

Friday: Holy Mass, 10.00am

### **Devotions:**

*Friday:* Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Mid-morning Prayer and Holy Mass, 9.30am

*Scripture Discussion: Friday:* 10.30am

**Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> February, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm**

**Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time,**

**Holy Mass, 10.00am**

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February, Holy Mass, 4pm**



### Hymns/Music

**Processional (Sunday only)**

87: Colours of day (Keys) [76]

**Offertory**

359: My God loves me (McLellan - quick) [397]

**Communion**

Tebe nojem (We hymn thee)

**Post Communion**

58: Be still and know that I am God (McLellan) [49]

**Recessional**

Sheet: Make way, make way (McLellan) [318]

### **Psalm response**

*Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.*

### **Gospel acclamation**

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*He took our sicknesses away,  
and carried our diseases for us.*

*Alleluia!*

## Communion Antiphon

*Let them thank the Lord for his mercy,  
his wonders for the children of men,  
for he satisfies the thirsty soul,  
and the hungry he fills with good things.*

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## Take Five

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*Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.*

### MONDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT AGATHA, VIRGIN, MARTYR 5 FEBRUARY 2024

It's stories like that of Agatha, a young virgin from Sicily (d. 251) who was tortured by having her breasts cut off, that make following in the footsteps of the saints seem so, well, horrible. But what's often missing from popular accounts of the lives of saints is their ability to find God, and therefore joy, in all things — including those experiences that an observer might consider unbearable. Today as we contemplate our own voluntary deprivations during the upcoming season of Lent, we can glimpse the inner peace that conquers hardship when our intention is, as Agatha put it, that “Christ possess alone all that I am.”

**Today's readings:** *1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Mark 6:53-56. “They . . . began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.”*

### TUESDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINTS PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS 6 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Give your all

Japanese-born Paul Miki (1562-97) was baptized at age 5. A man of his culture with a profound knowledge of Buddhism, he made an effective and affectionate preacher among the Japanese. When his fellow Jesuits were expelled from Japan, he remained and was eventually crucified with 25 others in Nagasaki. For each generation of Christians the demands of faith and the promises of Christ remain the same: Love God and love one another and you will live in love eternally.

**Today's readings:** *1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Mark 7:1-13. “Can it indeed be that God dwells on earth?”*

### WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Let wisdom be your guide

King Solomon had the legendary reputation of being the wisest man who ever lived, yet some of the scripture stories about him suggest that

the capacity for wisdom isn't the same as its exercise. How often in news cycles do you hear about really smart people making really dumb or even scandalous choices? Great talent often breeds great arrogance. “Pride goes before disaster, and a haughty spirit before a fall,” as Proverbs 16:18 warns. Solomon overburdened his citizens, over-married, and was overly tolerant of foreign gods. You must become like little children for wisdom to take you in hand. **Today's readings:** *1 Kings 10:1-10; Mark 7:14-23. “Blessed be the Lord, your God, whom it has pleased to place you on the throne of Israel.”*

### THURSDAY: OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT JEROME EMILIANI 8 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Let the children come

Born into a noble family, Jerome Emiliani (1481-1537) led the life of a carefree and dissolute soldier. After being captured and imprisoned, however, he underwent a conversion. Upon release he began devoting his resources to overseeing the educations of his nephews and caring for the sick and poor. Eventually he dedicated himself to abandoned children, of whom he is now the patron saint. Jerome helps us to remember that unwanted children are all around us, and that all children need care and support.

**Today's readings:** *1 Kings 11:4-13; Mark 7:24-30. “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.”*

### FRIDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Embody mercy

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology that proposes that human beings must have their basic physical and emotional needs met before they can realize their fullest potential. Catholics are expected to help others satisfy those needs through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which include feeding the hungry, sheltering the

homeless, and visiting the sick as well as teaching those who lack education, forgiving offenses willingly, and comforting the afflicted. Through works of mercy the world gets closer to reaching its fullest potential. Let's all get to work!

**Today's readings:** *1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19; Mark 7:31-37. "He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

**SATURDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN**  
**10 FEBRUARY 2024**

Once a year Saint Scholastica and her equally

busy brother, Saint Benedict, would pause to visit each other for a day. At one of these meetings Scholastica wanted Benedict to linger on but he insisted on going. Tradition has it that Scholastica prayed that God hear the request her brother was ignoring, and a furious storm came up, forcing him to stay longer. Back home three days later, Benedict saw his sister's soul leaving the earth and ascending to heaven in the form of a shining white dove. Cherish each visit with a loved one as if it were your last.

**Today's readings:** *1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34; Mark 8:1-10. "They ate and were satisfied."*

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## *Readings for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time*

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### **Job 7:1-4, 6-7**

Job wonders if life is worth living for the one who suffers.

### **Psalms 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6**

The Lord is the hope of the broken-hearted who heals every wound.

### **1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23**

Paul preaches the gospel at great cost and also under great constraint to fulfil his charge.

### **Mark 1:29-39**

Jesus cures a fever on his day off and then keeps on healing, travelling, and teaching.

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## *Words on the Word*

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## **A day in the life of Jesus and the messianic secret**

### **A calendar with daily duties**

The more functions we perform and the more different activities we have in different places, the more we need a calendar with a daily schedule. Children only need a lesson timetable because their responsibilities revolve around school activities. Adults must write down important meetings, anniversaries or birthdays of loved ones or friends, holidays. Of course, no one writes down regular activities in the calendar that are part of everyday life, such as mealtimes or the morning ablutions. Only what's special about a given day is recorded. Some people use traditional printed calendars, others use modern ones – on smart phones.

In the past, life didn't flow at such a crazy fast pace as it does today. The Lord Jesus didn't need a calendar of activities. This Sunday, however, the evangelist Mark will present us with a day in the life of Jesus, starting in the evening. In the liturgy, we refer to this tradition of starting the day in the evening, and that is why in many places Sunday Mass is celebrated on Saturday evening.

### **Jesus' daily tasks**

So how did Jesus spend His day? We learn that He participated in liturgical prayer in the synagogue, then restored the health of Peter's mother-in-law, who welcomed him into her home, ate a meal with James, John, Peter and the household, and Peter's healed mother-in-law "waited on them" (Mark 1:31). Then, after sunset, "He cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many demons" (Mark 1:34). Then He

went to bed and got up early in the morning before sunrise. He left home "and went to a lonely place and prayed there" (Mark 1:35). Then He went with Peter and his companions to the towns neighbouring Capernaum and taught there. This was His main mission. So, He encouraged the disciples: "Let us go [...] to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came" (Mark 1:38). And so, from day to day Jesus went "all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils" (Mk 1:39).

Summarising the evangelist's account of a day in the life of Jesus, we can say that our Lord lived essentially in relation to God the Father and lived for people. First, let's look at Jesus' relationship with the Creator. The Son of God treated it as a priority. He devoted time to public worship in the synagogue, during which the faithful listened to the word proclaimed from the



Torah and the prophets. Moreover, Jesus practiced private prayer. There He went before dawn. He found a lonely place to remain in silence before God the Father (cf. Mk 1:35). Even though people flocked from all over the city and gathered at the door of Peter's house, looking for Jesus, He didn't allow healing the sick or casting out demons at the expense of prayer. So, He gave us an example and made us realise how important prayer is for humans. Time spent alone praising God and listening to His voice is not wasted. This is time given to

recognise and fulfil His will. Through prayer, a person prepares for eternity in which they will experience complete happiness in the presence of God.

Now let's look at Jesus' relationship with people. Jesus did not live for Himself. He didn't plan anything for His own gain. His entire life was pro-existence, that is, life for others. "They brought to Him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils" (Mark 1:32), and Jesus had time for them. He was not upset that more and more people were coming. "He cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; cast out many devils" (Mark 1.34 ). However, He didn't want to be identified as a wonder-worker who heals. The signs were to help people believe in the identity of Jesus, in who He is. And He's not one of many benefactors of humanity. He is unique and special. He is the Lord, the Son of God and Saviour of people. Therefore, He wanted people to be prepared to believe in God's unprecedented intervention in history. With Jesus, the kingdom of God had come near. He testified to it. So, He told the disciples: "Let us go [...] to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came" (Mark 1:38).

### **Messianic secret**

What is noteworthy in Jesus' speeches is His discretion: the demons "he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was" (Mark 1:34). Last Sunday we heard an account of a demon being driven out of a possessed man. The demon then shouted, "What do you want from us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24). Jesus then sternly ordered him: "Be silent! Come out of him!" (Mark 1:25). Why did Jesus order the demon to be silent and not to proclaim that Jesus is "the Holy One of God"? Christ made a similar appeal to His disciples. He instructed them firmly not to tell others that He is the Messiah (Mk 8:30; cf. Mt 16:20).

How to properly understand the messianic secret of Jesus? Well, Jesus doesn't need followers who don't take action. He even warns against people who are only His nominal followers, that

is, they acknowledge His name, call Him Lord and call themselves Christians, but do not keep God's commandments and do not fulfil the will of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 7:21f).

The same applies to evil spirits. Saint James remarked rhetorically: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder." (James 2:19). The profession of faith must be accompanied by deeds, otherwise it is a useless faith, diabolical and therefore harmful. The demon confessed that Jesus is the Holy One of God (cf. Mk 1:24) and thus wanted to deceive Him so that He would be satisfied with the confession and leave everything as it was. He has none of it, where Jesus is, everything becomes new (cf. Rev 21:5). "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus was not deceived by evil spirits who wanted to maintain the status quo. His presence means taking away the domain of the demon's activity, it means his defeat.

Professing faith in Jesus involves doing His will and giving Him due honour, that is, recognizing that He is the Lord and we are His servants. The demon is unable to recognise the rule of Jesus, he has no humility, therefore he must be cast out.

Whoever confesses Christ and does His will does not have to fear the demon. But it is also true that whoever wants to confess Christ must agree to the consequences of this confession, and ultimately must agree to the cross. You can't really know who Jesus is without looking at Him and all His work through the prism of the crucifixion. Jesus did not want to be declared the Messiah until He revealed the fullness of God's love for people through His death on the cross. Only the One dying on the cross out of love for people can be recognised as the true Messiah, the Servant of Yahweh. According to Saint Mark, the first believer in Jesus as the Son of God was a Roman centurion who saw Jesus dying on the cross. Only the cross of Jesus, completed with His resurrection, fully reveals the logic of God's action and the victory over the evil spirit. Christ defeated the devil and death through crucifixion, through a radical sacrifice of Himself made out of love for people.

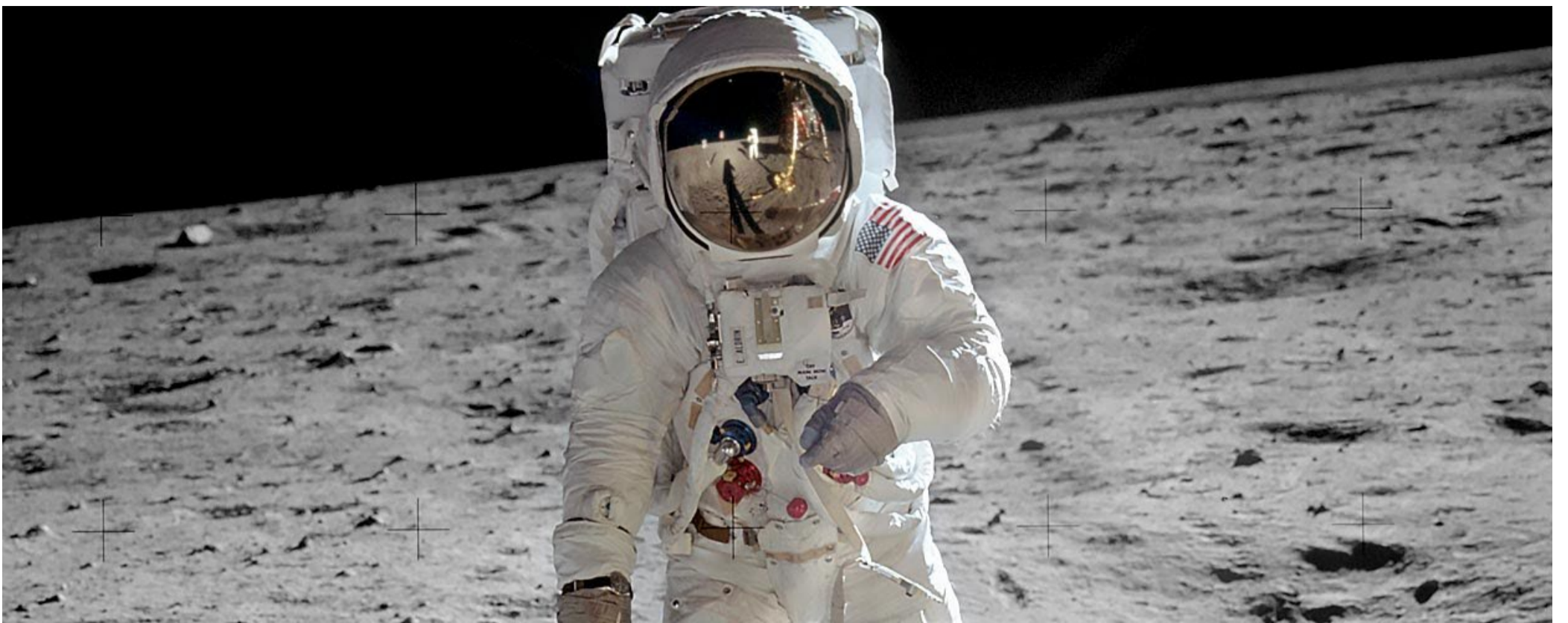
### **The daily tasks of Jesus' disciples**

Jesus didn't heal all people. But He has proven that He cares about everyone. He showed that illness is not a condemnation by God. On the contrary, suffering is a special participation in God's work of saving the world. John Paul II called the sick the treasure of the Church. "To suffer means to become particularly susceptible, especially open to the saving powers of God offered to humanity in Christ." In God's eyes, one hour of suffering endured patiently and in unity with the suffering of Jesus can mean more than all actions in the world undertaken for themselves. It is worth remembering this in the context of the Day for the Sick, celebrated in the Church every year on February 11, the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes. Half an hour spent with the sick gives us the opportunity to obtain an indulgence; it has a value comparable to spending half an hour in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.



This day in the life of Jesus we've considered encourages us, like our Lord, to live in close relationship with God through prayer and liturgy. From this relationship, we can draw strength to live for others. So, let's think about what we can do for an elderly mother and a lonely father who enjoy every conversation with their children. What good things can we do for our friends? Let our profession of faith motivate us to perform deeds of mercy.

# The Sky Above Us



He was an ordinary American nineteen-year-old raised in a religious, middle-class family. He was interested in many things apart from God: sports (including baseball) and, above all, aviation. He dreamed of flying jets, so while still going to school, he was already receiving pilot training . . .

Dale's parents, who owned their own business, put their children to work early and in gainful employment. Work, and especially flying, caused Dale's increasing neglect of his studies; he was eventually expelled from school. . . His parents hoped that their son's passion for airplanes would fade away, but he felt more and more fascinated by everything related to aviation.

On July 18, 1969, the entire world's attention was focused on the Apollo 11 spacecraft, whose lander was being prepared by astronauts to touch the surface of the Moon. In a few hours, man would step on the silver globe.

## **An unlucky flight**

On the same day, aspiring pilot Dale Black, his teacher and an authority in aviation – Chuck Barns, and experienced pilot Gene Bain boarded a Piper PA-31 Navajo plane to fly over the northern part of the state.

Already during take-off, something alarmed the two more experienced pilots, although all the plane's indicators were correct. The plane rose into the air. But the engines, which had been working together harmoniously for a while, suddenly began to howl. By then, all three pilots felt that something bad was happening. They tried to land in the cemetery, but it was too late to perform this manoeuvre. The plane hit a monument honouring fallen



pilots, located in the cemetery, called the Portal of Folded Wings. Both senior pilots were killed. Dale survived, but was badly mangled: a large head wound, loss of an eye, broken legs and arms, three spine fractures, a crushed left ankle and severe damage to the glenoid fossa of the left shoulder. Doctors feared paralysis, internal damage and brain injuries, but they did everything they could to save the boy's life.

### **Everything had changed**

The battered man remained in a coma for three days. After waking up, he didn't remember anything of what

happened. This amnesia was a very unpleasant experience for him. Dale wanted to know, wanted to understand what had happened and what was happening to him. Relatives, friends and colleagues visited him in the hospital, and sometimes he had no idea who they were or why they had come. He only wanted solitude and silence to be able to collect fragments of memories, of which there were more and more every day, but they were unbelievable. . .

On top of all this, Dale began to realise that there had been a great change in him, that he was a different person. He began to ask God the fundamental question: "Why do I live and not others?" His thoughts began to turn into a prayer: "Did you save me so that I could serve you? I'm a guy in a wheelchair. How will I go through life with this limp body and this weak mind? . . . I have never known loneliness before, God. Is this a time in my life where you want it to be just you and me? If so, just say so. Is this what you want? Please do something, say something. Whatever. Just don't leave me alone."

### **Every person is important**

Dale's attitude towards people also changed: known or unknown, they became close, important and loved by him.

Before his next surgery, he shared a room with a disruptive guy who constantly shouted at the staff. Finally, Dale got up, limped over to his bed and asked, "Mr. Green, do you know Jesus Christ? It is thanks to Him that I live. He gave me a joy I had never known before. Now I know what I live for." The answer was: "I am seventy-seven years old, and I have been running away from God all my life. It's too late for me, Dale . . ."

"It is never too late to allow God to take your life and transform it into something beautiful. Mr. Green, would you like to pray to God now and ask Him to forgive you? "I wish". . . They talked all night long.

When Dale returned to his room after surgery, he found his new friend's bed empty. Green had died. . . "I promised myself then," Dale said, "that I would never be shy in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ again."

### **An extraordinary experience**

The amnesia began to wear off, and various scattered fragments of events gradually came back. Dale had the impression that God was directing this process, that He was restoring his memory.

The moment of disaster, the smell of jet fuel, the shocks of a rushing ambulance, and then. . . I was leaving myself on the operating table and following what seemed to be some narrow path that was a bright beam of light in the darkness.



“What’ll happen now? . . . I can’t describe what happened. I’ll use the best words I can find, but these best words pale in comparison to what I have experienced.”

Dale was getting closer to some light, but he had the feeling that the light was inside him too. He was accompanied by two men in white robes, leading him with incomprehensible joy. Together they approached the wonderful city, all in light and music. The light was composed of the most beautiful colours, and "the music was the most majestic, enchanting and wonderful that I had ever heard. I knew immediately that this place was completely and utterly sacred. I was deeply moved by its beauty. Its appearance was stunning and breathtaking. . . And a strong sense of belonging filled my heart; I never wanted to leave this place again. Somehow, I knew I had been made for this place, and this place was made for me. I have never felt so "good" anywhere. For the first time in my life, I was fully “complete.”

The city he saw was bathed in the most wonderful light. Dale wanted to look at it forever, because it was warm and alluring, drawing you to it. “Somewhere I knew that light, life and love were interconnected and interdependent. I had the impression that in heaven the very heart of God was open to everyone, so that one could bask in His glory, be warmed by His presence, (...) experience revival, renewal and refreshment.

Dale saw a huge gathering of people and angels in the centre of the city. “There were millions of them, countless millions,” he recalls. The space they occupied was like a rippling ocean of people praising God. The worship of God was expressed by music that "was everywhere." This music was an uninterrupted communion of voices and instruments. “I felt part of this music. One with it. I experienced complete joy, delight and adoration. . . Everything glorified God.”

When Dale didn't understand something, the answer came straight to his heart; he now saw that the knowledge obtained on earth was imperfect. But in heaven the truth shines. Already in heaven he understood "that the word of God was and is the basis of everything. God is the heart of heaven, His love, His will, His order. Somehow, I recognized that Jesus, the Word, was, as it were, the structure that held it all together. . . Multitudes of angels and men responded to God's will and acted in perfect ways to fulfil it.”

The way Dale describes the view of the city, becoming more and more detailed as you approach it, brings to mind what St. John writes about the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation.

Dale, on his way to the heavenly city, met people dressed in white robes who seemed to come out to meet him, full of love, joy and acceptance. “Their smiles were brighter. Their faces are more vivid. Each person was a vibrant, eternal being, radiating the life of God," he recalls.

### **There was no sin**

Something Dale realized at the end, as he walked through heaven, was the sinlessness there. “I was so used to sin that I didn't even recognise its far-reaching effects in every area of life,” he said. In heaven, “the absence of sin was something that was felt; there was no shame, no sadness, no hiding. Everything was public, clear, clean.” There was nothing to fear because "there was no conflict, no competition, no sarcasm, no betrayal, no deceit, no lies, no murder, no infidelity, no disloyalty, nothing opposed to light, life and love. To experience something as holy, as overwhelming as God's boundless love was the most fascinating thing in heaven."

Dale was approaching the gate of the most beautiful city that cannot even be imagined; he felt that he was going for some amazing, unimaginable gift; the people he meets are happy for him. Thus, he stood before the gate of wonderful beauty. The majestic figure of an angel stood next



to it. "I felt like I belonged here. I didn't want to leave it. Never. I felt like this was the place I had been looking for all my life and now I had found it. My search is over," he recalls.

### **And then Dale came back to earth. . .**

The touch of heaven he experienced left such a deep impression on him that Dale was left wondering how to continue living with this mystery: whether to proclaim it or hide it in his heart.

Treatment and rehabilitation were still ongoing, arduous and painful, and there was uncertainty as to whether Dale's damaged left ankle could be saved. Professor Graham, who cared for the young patient with all his devotion, suggested another operation to fuse the bones, but this would eliminate the possibility of returning to aviation, and Dale did not want to hear about it.

In this dilemma, he went to his grandfather, a deeply religious man. At the end of a long conversation in which Dale firmly resolved to pray and seek light in the Holy Scriptures, the grandfather sensed that something else was troubling his grandson. Then Dale confided in him about his experience of heaven and his uncertainty about what to do next. They talked for a long time and finally Dale decided: he didn't want this to become fodder for sensationalists, so he would keep it in his heart until God gave him a sign when to start talking about this grace. In the meantime, let his life testify to the greatness of this grace.

Now the fight to save Dale's damaged ankle began. Dr. Graham was horrified by the patient's decision to refuse surgery; presented him with a worst-case scenario of the consequences of this refusal. Dale, however, prayed for healing with ever stronger faith, and his friends and loved ones, whoever believed in God's omnipotence, prayed with him. Each subsequent X-ray of the affected leg was a great test of faith for everyone. Unfortunately, there was no improvement. . . One time the doctor said: "There is no blood circulating in your ankle anymore. . . The bone is completely dead". . .

### **He received what was most important**

After this verdict, Dale realised his mistake: he sought healing, not the Healer, and did not give up his sinful habits. "If I've seen heaven, why am I still so self-centred?" – he asked himself. And he decided to give everything to Jesus: his whole life, in a wheelchair or not, giving up sports, flying, walking and personal plans – if it is His will. "I was filled with joy and peace," he said. He vowed to serve God for the rest of his life in every situation he finds himself in.

Shortly thereafter, at another follow-up visit, Dr. Graham, after looking at an X-ray of Dale's leg, said, "Your ankle is on the mend. I don't understand it". . . There was a complete healing of the crushed ankle.

Dale returned to aviation. He worked in many positions, teaching piloting, ensuring flight safety, conducting missionary or humanitarian aid flights, and above all, testifying with his life and words about the love and omnipotence of God.

It was not until forty years later that Dale Black decided to write about his experience of heaven. He also added information to his memories that few people know about; what happened during the disaster and then the vision of heaven he experienced. Here it in his words: "While I was in a coma and exploring the wonders of the heavens, astronaut Buzz Aldrin led Neil Armstrong and the NASA team in the first – official or perhaps not so official – human activity on the surface of the Moon.



Buzz received Holy Communion. Rumours of what he did were hushed up for many years, but now it's common knowledge. While still in the lander that had just arrived on the lunar surface, Buzz Aldrin decided that the best way to show respect and honour was to thank God for their safe arrival by receiving Him in Holy Communion, which was to be the first human act on the lunar surface. He decided to honour God for this human victory, and he did so despite much opposition. From then on, I somehow felt a connection or kinship with Buzz Aldrin."

Source: Captain Dale Black, *Flight to Heaven*, Bethany House Publishers; Original edition (1 May 2010).

Pictured: Edwin (Buzz) Aldrin on the Moon, July 20, 1969 (photo by Neil Armstrong).

## Law above love – eugenics



The 18th-century German poet Friedrich Hölderlin wrote that "the attempt to create paradise on earth always ends in hell." The 20th century and the criminal ideologies prevalent at that time - communism and national socialism - provided all too much evidence of the truth of this statement. The tens of millions of victims of the regimes created by these ideologies are a reminder that cannot be ignored.

### The idolatrous cult of progress and science

It should be noted that every criminal ideology – whether in the twentieth century or earlier (e.g., during the French Revolution) – referred to the categories of progress and science.

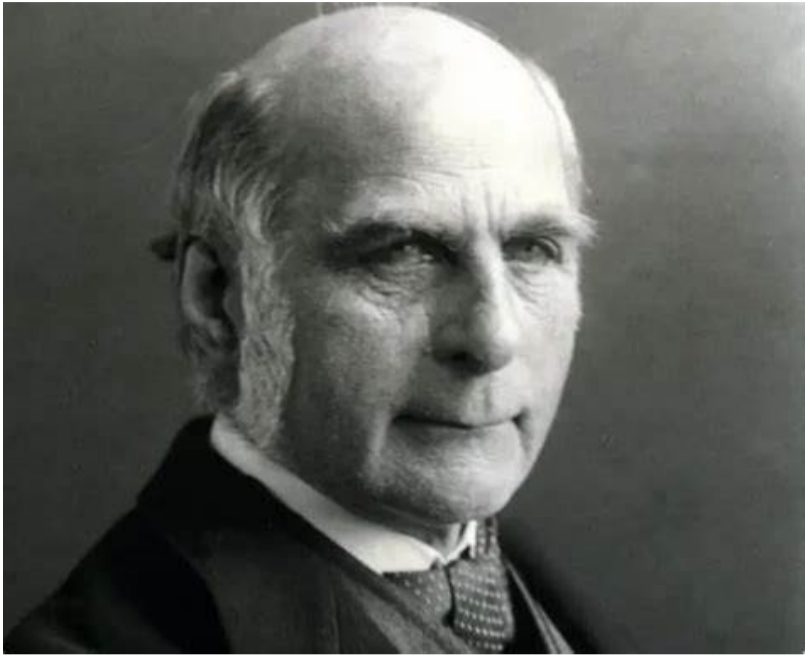
Communism was "scientific socialism". Hitler's National Socialism also referred to science, using the "science of races" for its criminal purposes.

The latter arose from a certain intellectual climate (not just characteristic of Germany), which was determined by the growing fascination with biological sciences.

Biology and progress in this field of knowledge took on, in the eyes of some scientists and politicians, at the beginning of the 20th century, a key role which made it possible to learn the secrets of the natural environment surrounding us. But it also – and perhaps above all – it was seen as a universal remedy for all civilization and social problems.

Undoubtedly, the impetus for this was provided in the mid-19th century by Charles Darwin and his theory of human evolution. In a short time, Darwinism – even without the author's intention

– began to be associated with terms such as "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest". These biological categories began to be applied to social conditions at the end of the 19th century. This is how social Darwinism was created, and one of its manifestations was eugenics – the dream of breeding a new, better human being.



As Francis Galton, a British scientist (a distant relative of Darwin) and the creator of this terminology, said: "if humanity reproduces spontaneously, evolution will begin to regress."

This "regression", according to Galton and all his disciples and followers, both in Europe and America, meant that those who should be the least in number, i.e., "people of low value", would gain the numerical advantage. By this last term, Galton understood primarily people from the so-called lower social classes suffering from various incurable

diseases, such as epilepsy or alcoholism.

Very quickly, however, racism entered eugenics, and its synonym became "racial hygiene".

## The primary enemy: human fertility

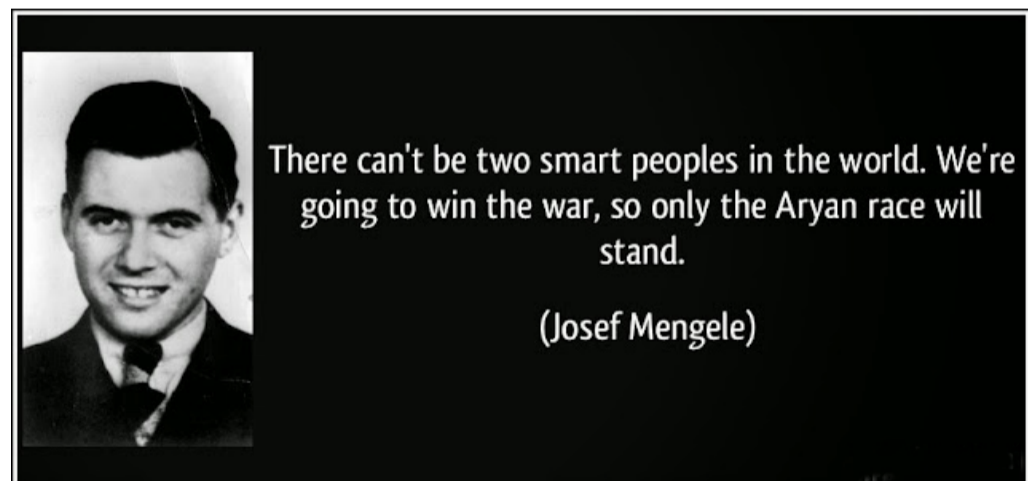
Eugenicists did not limit themselves to diagnosing the danger they considered that was the aforementioned "regression of evolution". They claimed to have found a way to avoid it. This was made possible by intervening in the process of human procreation so that those whom eugenicists labelled "low value" would no longer reproduce.

Of course, all this was dressed in phraseology in which the words "progress", "science" and "civilization" were modified in all cases. The poster of the 1921 eugenics congress held in the United States had a significant slogan: "Eugenics is self-directed evolution."

The most important enemy of all – past and present (although they deny this name) – eugenicists is human fertility. However, the basic tool in the process of "self-directed evolution" turned out to be the mass sterilisation of people classified as "having low-value genetic material".

One of Hitler's first decisions after coming to power was to issue a decree on May 26, 1933, on the forced sterilization of deaf people and all those who were described as "simple".

Under this inhumane law, approximately 300,000 people were forcibly sterilised in Germany between 1934 and 1939. During the war, the Nazi regime went a step further and simply mass murdered such people.



The German law on forced sterilization was by no means the first or last legal directive of this type. It can be said that the Nazi regime was imitating . . . the Americans in this respect.

By 1933, as many as 38 American states had passed laws allowing forced sterilization for eugenic reasons. In 1927, the case came before the US Supreme Court, which found the laws on forced sterilization of "low-value" people to be constitutional. The justification for this judgment stated:

*"We have often seen that the common good may require the best citizens to sacrifice their lives.*

*It would be strange if less sacrifice could not be demanded from those who are already weakening the power of the state. (...) The rule under which compulsory vaccination is allowed is broad enough to also cover the cutting of the fallopian tubes."*

Let us note that for those who signed this ruling, people who "weakened the power of the state" were people who were sick or came from families with serious illnesses (e.g., tuberculosis, epilepsy or schizophrenia). Mere vaccinations were equated with the forced deprivation of people of the gift of fertility; a gift whose Giver is not the state, not even a democratic state.

Before World War II, the epidemic of sterilization laws, which were supposed to support the breeding of a "new, fully valuable human", also spread to Europe. The leaders in this respect were the Scandinavian countries, considered to this day to be models of law-abiding democracies and the so-called welfare state.

Between 1928 and 1938, sterilization laws were passed in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway. In some cases, it turned out that Scandinavian sterilisation legislation was more restrictive than the above-mentioned Nazi law.

For example, the Swedish Sterilization Act amended in 1941, compared to the German one, significantly expanded the scope of people who were to be subject to compulsory sterilisation. In Sweden, this affected people leading an "anti-social lifestyle" or people whom officials found were "manifestly unsuitable to care for children in the future." These terms were so vague that virtually no Swedish citizen could feel safe.

World War II and the genocidal crimes committed by Nazi Germany in the name of "racial consciousness" began the retreat from cruel eugenic legislation. First in the United States, then in Europe. However, it was not a quick process.

It was only in the mid-1960s that the last American states abolished their sterilisation laws. In 1974, Sweden abandoned the forced sterilisation of its citizens. It is estimated that between 1928 and 1974, 350,000 Germans, over 60,000 Swedes, 40,000 Norwegians, 58,000 Finns and 6,000 Danes were sterilized.

## People as weeds to be pulled out (via abortion)

As already said, sterilization was perceived by eugenicists as the best means of implementing "scientific" prescriptions leading to breeding a better human being. But it was not the only instrument.

### WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE



MARGARET SANGER

Eugenicists attributed such a "noble" – because it was "scientific" – goal to abortion. It is no coincidence that many representatives of the eugenics movement were also pioneers of the "family planning" movement, understood as the promotion of abortion and contraception.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the figure of Margaret Sanger – a leading American feminist and organizer of the "birth control" movement in America after World War I.

In one of her books (*Woman and the New Race*), Sanger wrote: *"Many will perhaps think that it is not worth dwelling any longer on demonstrating the immorality of large families, since there is more than enough evidence, it can be used to set before those who still find it difficult to adapt old-fashioned concepts to reality. The best that such a family can do for a new infant is to kill it out of mercy."*

In an article published in 1925, Sanger directly equated people with weeds. She wrote: *“America (...) is like a garden in which the gardener pays no attention to the weeds. Weeds are criminals, weeds multiply quickly and are extremely resistant. They need to be eliminated. Prevent further reproduction of criminals and weaklings.*

*We maintain large insane asylums and other such facilities throughout the country where defective individuals and criminals are bred instead of exterminated. Nature eliminates weeds, but we allow them to parasitise and reproduce.”*

Margaret Sanger can be called a femi-nazi without exaggeration. From understanding people as weeds, it is only a step to the category of "sub-humans" who must be subjected to the "Final Solution" procedure in the gas chambers.

In 1997, the Swedish press published the story of Barbro Lysen, who in 1946, when she was twenty years old, was forced to sign a consent to sterilisation. The reason? One of the doctors, without conducting detailed specialist tests, concluded that she suffered from epilepsy.

However, the case was complicated because the twenty-year-old was six months pregnant. However, the eugenics law in force in Sweden did not provide for mercy either for the mother or the unborn child. . . In 1997, Mrs. Lysen recalled events from 50 years ago: “I wanted to have a child, even a sick one. I slumped in the corner and started crying. I told the doctors: 'I don't want surgery. Let me keep the child.' They replied: 'Impossible.' You signed the papers, surgery tomorrow. They were completely insensitive. That was awful”.

## Human breeding: the left says yes, Catholics say no

Researchers dealing with the history of eugenics have noticed that its great propagators in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were in circles that defined themselves as progressive and left-wing. For example, Scandinavian sterilisation laws were introduced by social democratic governments, and politicians descended from this stream of the political scene were loud apologists for breeding "fully valuable people". Let's quote only one of them here, Arthur Engberg – the social democratic minister of education in Sweden in the 1930s.

In 1921, he'd already written in the party press: "Our happiness is that we have a race that is not yet destroyed, a race that is a bearer of great and extremely noble features (...). However, it is strange that although we care deeply about the pedigrees of our dogs and horses, we do not care at all about ensuring the preservation of our Swedish human resources”.

Before Hitler implemented the German sterilisation law, its basic assumptions were developed in the Weimar Republic (democratic Germany), and the first violins in this work were also played by representatives of those broadly understood to be in leftist circles.

Similarly in pre-war Poland. On the Vistula River, it was primarily the representatives of moral liberalism and the "reform of customs" in a libertine direction (e.g., Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński) who opted for eugenic solutions.

However, it failed in Poland, as in other countries where the influence of Catholic religion and culture was strong. This is another truth that has not escaped the attention of historians studying this issue.

Very characteristic in this respect is the position taken by Mussolini's Italy, which rejected the principles of eugenics understood as pushing sterilisation and other forms of the so-called birth control.

Fascist Italy, as we know, agreed with the Third Reich on many issues, but not on this issue. In

1934, commenting on the German sterilisation law, the Italian daily "L'Italiano" wrote: *"You cannot imagine the brutality that prevailed among German doctors (...) when they were convinced that they were acting in the name of the fatherland and science (...), you can even guess what they are willing to do to protect the race, what madness can be found in their books."*

Legal sterilisation or any such manifestation of "racial consciousness" also had no chance of taking place in Spain ruled by General Franco.



The Church reacted very quickly to inhumane eugenic practices. Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Casti connubii* from 1930, devoted to the Catholic vision of family, marriage and the sexual sphere, wrote: *"The family is more important than the state. (...) people are born not so much for earth and eternity, but for heaven and eternity. (...) The state has no direct authority over the body of its subordinates. If there is no guilt and therefore no reason for corporal punishment, it may not violate the entire body or mutilate it, either for reasons of eugenics or for any other reasons"*.

The voice of the Church's Magisterium was supported by outstanding Catholic writers and publicists. In this context, it is impossible not to mention G.K. Chesterton – an outstanding English Catholic writer who for years fought against various forms of idolatry of the "progressive" intelligentsia, including the idolatry of the so-called the scientific procedure of breeding a better human being.

In his characteristic style, not devoid of sharp irony, he drew attention to the pseudoscientific jargon used by eugenicists. Their vocabulary, as Chesterton noted, has no place for words such as "family" or "marriage." Instead, there are "intersexual relationships" – "as if man and woman were pieces of wood placed at an angle to each other, like furniture in a room."

Eugenics, as this Catholic writer wrote in 1921, is an invitation to the "tyranny of experts": *"This is what true eugenicists essentially mean. That humanity would be given to them, not as pagans to be converted, but as material for experiments. This is the cruel, barbaric idea behind eugenics legislation."*

*Eugenicists (...) don't know what they want, except that they want your body and my body and soul – so they can figure it out for themselves. This is (...) the first experimental religion, not a doctrinal one."*

Chesterton summarized the essence of his criticism of the programme and the actions of the animators of the eugenics movement in two very apt sentences: "[Eugenicists] claim that they have discovered a law that stands above love. "Just reflect on this fact and the entire eugenic structure will collapse."

And what is it like in our times? There are no sterilisation laws (yet), but the way of thinking behind the old eugenics has not gone away.

The logic of eugenic thinking also lies behind the so-called in vitro treatments. On what basis are people selected (called embryos) – those fit and unfit to live in the mother's body? This is an example of law that stands above love.

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# Humanity and solidarity – Inhumanity and death

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On 27<sup>th</sup> January, we commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day. I ask myself: what have we learned from the horrors of such a destructive and dehumanising human terror? I ask myself: what is killing this most important attribute we so badly need today: solidarity? Solidarity has added value, it is a conscious and voluntary approach towards others. However, something more fundamental is noticing and accepting the other – the human being. There can be no solidarity whatsoever if we dehumanise our neighbours through our way of thinking, speaking and judging.

## Humanity and Solidarity

Herein lies the tragedy of our society in the context of treating everyone as being "different". This is where one of the deep crises of Christianity lies, in which the Gospel is lived – let's call it this – in an asymptomatic way. Why is it that in our society that draws on the Christian tradition and the Gospel, there is widespread coldness or even hostility towards LGBT+ people, as well as suspicion of or even discrediting people wronged in the Church? I have heard and read about groups of religious brothers who maintain contact with people harmed by their own order say sadly, "we are still on the other side of the barricade." Such thinking is terrifying, deprived not only of the logic of the Gospel, but also of human compassion.

And what to say about our attitude towards refugees and migrants entering the country either legally or illegally. It is increasingly difficult to have a constructive and calm conversation about how we can help people who find themselves trapped in the cynical and Machiavellian game of international politics, conflict and economic protectionism. The politicians are talking about the problem, not the people. How is it that within a few years, as a result of a consciously built negative narrative in the political discussion, a contemptuous language towards refugees has become part of the mainstream of discourse about them?

It is not only the fault of politicians that the plight of refugees and migrants has been radically dehumanised in our society. This is primarily a failure of the Church's catechesis and of many clergy who themselves neutralised Jesus' words about Him being a stranger (wanderer) in order to lull first of all their own consciences, and then the conscience of the faithful, and effectively justify cutting themselves off from Christian responsibility.

## A far from cynical game

As disciples of the Kingdom, we should be afraid, above all, of setting limits to our humanity. Surrounded by a wall of indifference or even reluctance and contempt lead to the betrayal of Christianity. After all, humanity itself has become the instrument of our redemption in Christ. *Philanthropos* – as Christ is called in the East, is the only foundation of a solidarity-built *Christianitas*, i.e., the Kingdom of God based on the message of the Sermon on the Mount. However, it cannot be an ideological construct that exclusivism, nativist nationalism or xenophobia dreams of. If we lock humanity in a fortress of fear for our rights and set limits to our mercy, it will not be the barbarians (Latin: *barbarus* – foreigner) from the outskirts of Europe or society, but we ourselves who will contribute to the end of the hope of a Europe, built as a community of compassion and solidarity with others. "The stronghold of Europe is our humanity," said Mateo Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna, involved in helping refugees and migrants. Christian Europe belongs to those who "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh. . . but of God" (John 1:13) and who "love the little ones, the sick, the needy, the humiliated, they

love those who have been violated, they love those who suffer from injustice, they love the outcasts and all who are afflicted and distressed.” And also, to those – as Bonhoeffer continues in *The Cost of Discipleship* – who “will be persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Not recognition, but rejection, is the reward they get from the world for their message and works. It is important that Jesus gives his blessing not merely to suffering incurred directly for the confession of his name, but to suffering in any just cause. They receive the same promise as the poor, for in persecution they are their equals in poverty.” (pp. 69–71). These words were written by a man who stood on the side of justice, defending persecuted Jews, even to the point of martyrdom.

Dehumanising others or excluding people from human compassion and even mercy is often justified by arguing that they don’t belong, they don’t have certain human qualities (see above article *Law about love – eugenics*) or those born here should “go home”. Although the individual person is not totally innocent, I have the impression that this has much more to do with a cynical and calculated political game clothed in words of genuine care and compassion, a game also embellished with a pseudo-religious narrative about the supposed defence of Christian Europe. Bonhoeffer wrote about such an attitude in Nazi Germany, where believers were frightened with godless

Bolshevism: “*This beatitude is poles removed from the caricatures of it which appear in political and social manifestos. The Antichrist also calls the poor blessed, but not for the sake of the cross, which embraces all poverty and transforms it into a source of blessing. He fights the cross with political and sociological ideology. He may call it Christian, but that only makes him a still more dangerous enemy.*” (ibid p.66).



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## Prayer



**Please pray for those who are sick, in need or have asked for our prayers:** Tommy McGrory snr, Lilian Cox, Sarah Carmichael, Ailsa Stewart, Meg Douglas (Mull), and Doleen Durnin.

**Please remember in your prayers all whose anniversaries occur at this time.**

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## News and Events

**Tea and coffee** in the hall after Sunday Mass. Our visitors are most welcome to join us. Please do come.

**Next Sunday (World Day of the Sick):** in other years the 11<sup>th</sup> February would be the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes. The anointing of the sick and vulnerable will still be offered at the Vigil and Sunday Masses.

**Fr Tony away:** on Tuesday and back Wednesday afternoon. He is being assessed for his fitness to have radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

**Church heating:** there is a ‘second collection’ box in the church porch specifically for energy costs.



[campbeltown@rcdai.org.uk](mailto:campbeltown@rcdai.org.uk)



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Parish Priest: Fr. A. Wood, St. Kieran’s, Campbeltown; Tel. 01586 552160