



# PARISH BULLETIN St Kieran's, the Catholic Church *in Campbeltown and Islay* *Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain*

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

## *1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

**Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, *First***

***Sunday of Lent*, Holy Mass,**

**10.00am**

Monday: No Mass

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: Holy  
Mass, **10.00am**

### ***Devotions:***

*Sunday: The Bitter Lamentations*, 9.45am

*Wednesday: Mid-morning Prayer*, 9.50am

*Friday: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament,  
and Meditations on the Way of the  
Cross*, 9.30am

***The faith and belief: Friday:*** 10.30am

**Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, *Vigil Mass*, 6.00pm**

**Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> February, *Second Sunday of Lent*, 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)

298: Lead us, heav'nly Father, lead us (Hamel)

#### Offertory

456: Praise to the Lord (Keys[3])

#### Communion

Херувимски химн (Cherubim Hymn)

#### Post Communion

Nada te turbe,  
nada te espante,  
quien a Dios tiene  
nada le falta

Nothing can trouble,  
nothing can frighten,  
those who seek God  
shall never go wanting.

Nada te turbe  
nada te espante  
sólo Dios basta.

Nothing can trouble,  
nothing can frighten,  
God alone fills us. (Taizé-comb.)

#### Recessional

148: Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go (McLennan)



### ***Psalm response***

*Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.*

### ***Gospel acclamation***

*Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!*

*Man does not live on bread alone,*

*but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

*Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!*

## Communion Antiphon

*The Lord will conceal you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will trust.*

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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: LENTEN WEEKDAY

19 FEBRUARY 2024

#### The least we can do

The vivid biblical descriptions of the Last or Final Judgment are designed to impress upon us the importance of taking our obligations to the less fortunate very seriously indeed. “But where to begin?” you might ask. The Corporal Works of Mercy are a pretty good place. If we each do our part, we can hope for the day when there will be no more hungry to feed, homeless to shelter, prisoners to visit, and the like. Then we can welcome that Final Judgment with confidence. But let’s get started today — after all, none of us knows the day or the hour.

**Today's readings:** *Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46.* “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

### TUESDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

20 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Listen with your heart

One of the cornerstones of Lent is prayer, something we often consider *our* job: talking to God, pouring out our hearts, asking for what we need. It is all that, but more. If we compare prayer to the living intimacy between people who love each other, we will see clearly that if their conversation is one-sided, if they do not let the other speak, if they do not listen with the same intensity with which the other pours out their needs, then something is wrong. Someone put it this way: *Show up. Shut up. Pay attention.* Crude, but true. To spruce up one’s spiritual life is to consider how one prays. Is there room in my time with God just to be? Must I always be talking or reading or planning? Can I simply wait? Listen?

**Today's readings:** *Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15.* “My word . . . shall not return to me void.”

### WEDNESDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

21 FEBRUARY 2024

#### God is already here

When you hear the name *Jonah* you may automatically think about his encounter with a whale. As spectacular as that story was, Jonah did one better. He went to a land that was not

his own, announced a message that was an indictment of the evil ways of its people, and he lived to tell about it. Many times prophets are rejected because the truth is hard to bear and change is difficult. The readiness of the Ninevites to take in Jonah’s message illustrates that God had prepared the way. God was already with the Ninevites, even in the midst of the struggles. Pay attention to the ways that God is reaching out to you through the Jonahs in your own life.

**Today's readings:** *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32.* “They proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.”

### THURSDAY: FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER

22 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Pull up a chair

Like a number of Christian celebrations, the Feast of the Chair of Peter has its roots in an older non-Christian religious observance, the *Parentalia*, when people would set out an empty chair to honour a deceased family member or friend. In today’s feast, however, the Church looks not to an empty chair but to an occupied one, and what we remember is not an absent figure but a living presence, the leadership and teaching position of Saint Peter in the early Church and what that has come to symbolise. May Peter’s chair serve to remind you of the contributions you can make to supporting healthy and effective leadership — practice some yourself.

**Today's readings:** *1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19.* “Be examples to the flock.”

### FRIDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

23 FEBRUARY 2024

#### Less is more

On a Friday of Lent we meditate on the virtue of less in practicing abstinence. Many don’t have meat on the table daily as a matter of course — for reasons of health, ecology, social justice, affection for animals, or cost, but you can still answer the call to abstinence in other ways. Traditional Church practices also include refraining from alcoholic beverages, desserts, or emotional indulgences of temper. Modern

practices may involve turning off the TV, internet, cell phone, or iPod. You're learning to say "no," and the no creates a space that wasn't there before. What will you do with yours?

**Today's readings:** *Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26. "Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

**SATURDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY**  
**24 FEBRUARY 2024**

**You gotta love 'em**

Christian love is much more difficult to practice when it lives next door in the form of the noisy

neighbour who lets his dog run wild and plays loud music late at night, but he's the guy the Gospels are written for. As Jesus pointed out, you don't need any help learning to love those who are good to you. You're no dummy and you know which side your bread is buttered on. It's the burnt toast that is more difficult to swallow. Chew slowly; it does go down, and it does nurture you as a Christian. You don't have to like someone to love them.

**Today's readings:** *Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48. "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."*

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## *Readings for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*

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### **Genesis 9:8-15**

God establishes the rainbow as a sign of the covenant with all living things.

### **Psalms 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9**

God guides and teaches those who are humble enough to accept instruction.

### **1 Peter 3:18-22**

God waited patiently for Noah to build the ark of his salvation.

### **Mark 1:12-15**

After the trial in the desert, Jesus proclaims repentance and the Kingdom coming.

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## *Words on the Word*

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*God is not the God of a place or even the God of a specific holy time, but He is the God of a person, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, capable of establishing contact with man and establishing a covenant with him (Pope Francis, *Lumen fidei*, 8).*

\* \*

A covenant is a type of alliance – an agreement on joint action. Two parties undertake to keep the contract. Fidelity to such an agreement depends on the approach of each party. French President De Gaulle once said that agreements between some countries are worth less than the paper they are written on. Some even cynically claim that contracts are used to mislead the other party. In God's covenant with people, man turned out to be the shaky and treacherous side.

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33).*

God does not withdraw His faithfulness, even though we – as our lives show – are sometimes unfaithful. According to the Bible, after the punishment of the flood, God established a rainbow

in the sky – a beautiful sign of the eternal covenant with man. Whenever a person sees this charming phenomenon, let him remember that it is a sign of the eternal covenant between him and God.

Our Creator has most fully demonstrated his faithfulness and love to us by sending Jesus Christ. In today's Gospel, Saint Mark very succinctly tells us that before Jesus' public appearance, He spent forty days in the desert, where He was tempted by the devil. Jesus chose this and no other path to man's salvation, even though He saw how difficult it would be and how much mockery and pain He would experience from people. He also knew that this path would lead Him to loneliness in the Garden of Olives and on Calvary. He knew that there, on Calvary, He would experience in His human nature the indescribable pain of being abandoned by the Father. Ultimately, He knew that by dying He was opening the gates of life to His People.

He called us by name to a covenant with Him. It was in the sacrament of baptism that we were grafted into the vine, which gives supernatural and eternal life in Jesus Christ. While we remain here on earth, we must fight for faithfulness to our personal covenant because we are subject to Satan's deceptive and tempting wiles. We do not know how long our journey will last – forty years, forty days, hours, minutes. . . While we are on the journey, we must decide, not without the help of God's grace, whether we are walking with God or without God?

Fewer and fewer people decide to walk with God through life. They even treat the Bible selectively, choosing from it what suits them. In this way, people dance around their own idol and give it worship, and often give money or even their own freedom.

Doctors ordering sex-care for the disabled in the Netherlands is an example of the low level of our culture. Instead of providing them with opportunities for development, trained sex-carers are sent to infirm people for sexual satisfaction, and their services are paid for by the health insurance fund. We have reached the pre-Christian moral level.

What lifestyle impresses us? Is it the lifestyle of those who persecute in God's name, or of those who suffer persecution and desire justice and holiness? Do we want the living God or the tempting idols of this world? This choice is constantly valid, every day.

Jesus accomplished the work of salvation, and God's faithfulness was revealed in Him. More than faithfulness – incomprehensible love for us, people, for myself, burdened with sins. Each of us is a son or daughter of the Most High God. Not torn between good and evil but reconciled with God. Faithful to the covenant with Himself, we remain His children.

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*On the edge of the rainbow you have set me a sign  
a signpost to my heart  
mercy before justice  
a withered bush and a blooming fig tree*

*How should I go to follow you  
to the other edge of the heavenly rainbow  
where wisdom never fades  
and love never dies. . .*

(Malina, M\*; from *After the Rainbow*; [wiersze.kobieta.pl/wiersze/po-teczy-433573](http://wiersze.kobieta.pl/wiersze/po-teczy-433573))

# I will not forget you, poor earth



**As we enter the first week of Lent, let's remind ourselves how much Jesus Christ loves us, wants to reveal His mercy and to pour out graces. And also the power of sincere prayer and how it can assist the dying and deceased. All this and more was related to Saint Faustina Kowalska. So, let's delve into her *Diary*.**

“I want to tell souls about Your goodness and encourage them to trust in Your mercy,” wrote Sister Faustina in her *Diary*. “This is my mission, which you yourself have assigned to me, Lord, in this life and in the next” (1325).

Beatifying Sister Faustina in 1993, the Holy Father spoke with admiration about her extraordinary mission in the world: "Her mission did not end with the moment of death, but quickly crossed the walls of the convent, spread throughout the world like radio waves and reached all continents."

The crowd of approximately 250,000 pilgrims who came from all over the world to Rome for the canonisation wonderfully confirmed the accuracy of the Pope's words. In the constant stream of people wanting to kiss the relics of the holy sister from the Krakow convent, how can we not see a sign of the fulfilment of a promise once made: "I will sing my first hymn to Your mercy when I stand at the foot of Your throne. I will not forget you, poor earth – although I feel that I will immediately drown in God, as in an ocean of happiness; but this will not prevent me from returning to earth and encouraging souls and encouraging them to trust in God's mercy. Yes, this immersion in God will give me unlimited ability to act" (1582).

“What are you sad about?” – Jesus once said to Sister Faustina, who was vainly concerned that some people sarcastically called her "saint". “But you are her; Soon I will show it in you, and they will say the same word: saint – only with love...”

## **First in trust**

Leading Sister Faustina along the paths of her special vocation, Jesus invited her to get to know more and more deeply the mystery of His unfathomable mercy: "Look into my heart full of love

and mercy that I have for people, especially for sinners" (1662).

While introducing her to the secrets of His Heart, the merciful Jesus also addressed her with the following request: "Today I am sending you to all humanity with my mercy" (1588);

"Your task is to write everything that I make known to you about My mercy, for the benefit of souls who, by reading these writings, will find consolation in their souls and will gain the courage to approach Me" (1693).

"My daughter, I demand that you devote all your free moments to writing about my goodness and mercy; it is your office and your task throughout your life to make souls know the great mercy I have for them and to encourage them to trust in the abyss of my mercy" (1567).

However, Jesus expected much more from the secretary of His mercy than just writing. He wanted His own love for all people, without exception, to be reflected not only on paper, but in her heart: "Love everyone out of love for Me, even the greatest enemies, so that My mercy may be fully reflected in your heart" (1695 ).

Experiencing Christ's love for herself and for every human being filled Sister Faustina with inexpressible happiness, which she wanted to share with the whole world: "How much the heavenly Father loves us! Oh, what great happiness fills my soul with the knowledge of God and the life of God. I want to share this happiness with all people, I cannot confine it to my own heart, because its flames burn me and burst my bosom and my insides. I want to go through the whole world and tell souls about God's great mercy" (491).

The above fragment of the *Diary*, one of many in this style, shows the extent to which Sister Faustina's desires were united with those of the merciful Saviour.

"My dearest secretary, write that I want to pour my divine life into human souls and sanctify them, if only they would accept my grace. The greatest sinners would achieve great holiness if only they trusted in my mercy".

By showing His chosen daughter the treasures of His inexhaustible love for people, Jesus stirred her heart to limitless trust. She was to be the first of those who trusted completely in order to encourage others to trust: "My daughter (...), whoever comes close to you, let him not leave without this trust in my mercy, which I so desire for souls" (1777).

### **She trusted a lot and received a lot**

A special expression of Sister Faustina's trust was her constant prayer for the dying. She accompanied them spiritually many times, even though sometimes they were hundreds of miles away from her. She also wrote many times in her *Diary* about the extraordinary seriousness of the moments preceding the encounter with God in eternity. She was allowed to see what a terrible battle was going on in the human heart in these last moments; a fight for trust, for humbly admitting one's own littleness and sin, and for total entrustment to God's infinite mercy.

"Pray as much as you can for the dying, ask for their trust in my mercy, because they need trust the most and have it the least. Know that the grace of eternal salvation of some souls at the last moment depends on your prayer" (1777).

What really happens at the moment of death? Far from making any attempt to satisfy the human curiosity of people who will read her *Diary* in the future, Sister Faustina describes a vision of the death of a certain famous man. He does this to show what a terrible enemy of trust in God's mercy pride is.

She writes: Then I saw a soul which was being separated from its body amid great torment. O Jesus, as I am about to write this, I tremble at the sight of the horrible things that bear witness against him. . . . I saw the souls of little children and those of older ones, about nine years of age, emerging from some kind of a muddy abyss. The souls were foul and disgusting, resembling the most terrible monsters and decaying corpses. But the corpses were living and gave loud testimony against the dying soul. And the soul I saw dying was a soul full of the world's applause and honours, the end of which are emptiness and sin. Finally, a woman came out who was holding something like tears in her apron, and she witnessed very strongly against him.

O terrible hour, at which one is obliged to see all one's deeds in their nakedness and misery; not one of them is lost, they will all accompany us to God's judgment. I can find no words or comparisons to express such terrible things. And although it seems to me that this soul is not damned, nevertheless its torments are in no way different from the torments of hell; there is only this difference: that they will someday come to an end." (425-426 ).

The danger of eternal damnation is not a matter of the lack of God's mercy, but of the lack of human ability to open ourselves to it. This ability, however, develops throughout life on earth. Through Sister Faustina, Jesus gave humanity the "prayer of trust", i.e., the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. He promised that "Souls who recite this chaplet will be embraced by my mercy in life, and especially in the hour of death" (754).

Daily recourse to God's mercy through the humble acknowledgment of one's own sinfulness and insufficiency, along with thanking God for His love greater than all sin, is a sure way of preparing for the fullest experience of God's mercy at the moment of death: "Happy is the soul that calls upon the mercy of the Lord. It will see that the Lord will defend it as His glory, as He said. And who would dare fight against God? All you souls, praise the Lord's mercy by trusting in His mercy all your life and especially at the hour of your death. And fear nothing, dear soul, whoever you are; the greater the sinner, the greater his right to Your mercy, O Lord. O incomprehensible goodness! God is the first to stoop to the sinner. O Jesus, I wish to glorify Your mercy on behalf of thousands of souls" (598).

If Sister Faustina prayed constantly for sinners and the dying, it was because of her boundless trust in God's goodness, which can work effectively even in the last moment of life. This type of prayer was asking for a lot, such a lot, but: "The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts" (1578).

In the *Diary* we find many examples proving the effectiveness of the "prayer of trust" that Jesus gave us through the secretary of His mercy. Let me quote a particularly telling one: "When I entered the chapel for a moment, the Lord said to me: 'My daughter, help Me to save a certain dying sinner. Say the chaplet that I have taught you for him'. When I began to say the chaplet, I saw the man dying in the midst of terrible torment and struggle. His Guardian Angel was defending him, but he was, as it were, powerless against the enormity of the soul's misery. A multitude of devils was waiting for the soul. But while I was saying the chaplet, I saw Jesus just as He is depicted in the image. The rays which issued from Jesus' Heart enveloped the sick man, and the powers of darkness fled in panic. The sick man peacefully breathed his last.

When I came to myself, I understood how very important the chaplet was for the dying. It appeases the anger of God" (1565);

"Even if I had the sins of all the damned weighing on my conscience, I would not have doubted God's mercy but, with a heart crushed to dust, I would have thrown myself into the abyss of Your mercy. I believe, O Jesus, that You would not reject me, but would absolve me through the hand of Your representative" (1318).

Let's look at Jesus' actions: first He teaches Sister Faustina to say the chaplet, then He listens to her prayer, and finally He demands that she testify to all this.

"Write this for the many souls who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permissions nor storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul. If a soul does not exercise mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment" (1317).

### **I am always with you**

Without trust in God's mercy, Sister Faustina would not have fulfilled her vocation. Through her, Jesus demanded the establishment of the Feast of Divine Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter. He demanded that she paint a picture with the inscription "Jesus, I trust in You" and ordered her to found a religious congregation dedicated to imploring God's mercy for the world.

"I see that this work is beyond my strength in every respect," confesses the author of the *Diary*, immediately adding: "I am a small child compared to the enormity of this task, and only on God's express command do I begin to fulfil it" (786).

Trying to spread the cult of Divine Mercy, she encountered new difficulties, misunderstandings and humiliations. She felt and understood the sudden need to act, but at the same time she was aware of the lack of resources that seemed necessary to complete the entrusted mission.

How to humanly reconcile the fact that, on the one hand, Jesus demands specific undertakings from her, and on the other, He does not provide her with the necessary resources, especially health. Humanly speaking – a complete paradox. What was Sister Faustina's trust then?

First of all, obedience to God's will and faith, despite all obstacles, that His decisions will certainly come true: "Everything that I will go through is not a secret to me, but I accept with full awareness everything that you send me, O Lord. I trust in You, merciful God, and I want to be the first to show the trust that You demand from souls" (615).

She trusted, but at the cost of enormous effort in clinging to the truth that God cannot fail: "I am an infant, Lord, so I cannot get along by myself. However, beyond all abandonment I trust, and in spite of my own feeling I trust, and I am being completely transformed into trust-often in spite of what I feel." (1489).

Her trust was a fight full of realism of faith to maintain hope "against all odds": "I understand souls who suffer against hope because I have experienced this fire in myself. However, God will not allow us to suffer beyond our strength. I have often lived in hope against hope, and I have pushed my hope into complete trust in God. Let what He has decreed from the ages be done to me" (386).

But the fight against discouragement, however difficult, was only a preview of the fight against the greatest enemy of our trust in God. It is worth dwelling on the fragment of the *Diary*,



where Sister Faustina describes her struggles with Satan, who tries to intelligently take advantage of her state of physical and spiritual fatigue: "Total discouragement came over me. Then I heard Satan's voice: 'See how contradictory everything is that Jesus gives to you: He tells you to found a convent, and then He gives you sickness; He tells you to set about establishing this Feast of Mercy while the whole world does not at all want such a feast. Why do you pray for this feast? It is so inopportune.' My soul remained silent and, by an act of will, continued to pray without entering into conversation with the Spirit of Darkness. Nevertheless, such an extraordinary disgust with life came over me that I had to make a great act of the will to consent to go on living. . .

And again I heard the tempter's words: 'Ask for death for yourself, tomorrow after Holy Communion. God will hear you, for He has heard you so many times before and has given you what you asked for.' I remained silent and, by an act of will, I began to pray, or rather, submitted myself to God, asking Him interiorly not to abandon me at this moment. (. . .).

The tempter went on: 'Why should you bother about other souls? You ought to be praying only for yourself. As for sinners, they will be converted without your prayers. I see that you are suffering very much at this moment. I'm going to give you a piece of advice on which your happiness will depend: never speak about God's mercy and, in particular, do not encourage sinners to trust in God's mercy, because they deserve a just punishment.

Another very important thing: do not tell your confessors, and especially this extraordinary confessor and the priest in Vilnius, about what goes on in your soul. I know them; I know who they are, and so I want to put you on your guard against them. You see, to live as a good nun, it is sufficient to live like all the others. Why expose yourself to so many difficulties?" (1497).

What is surprising and at the same time terrifying is that all of the above temptations have the characteristics of wise and convincing human speech. Satan's arguments seem to be arguments of common sense.

Indeed, what great works can be expected from a nun struck down by tuberculosis? Why should we seek to establish a "strange" feast that no one wants? Why get involved in the affairs of sinners when it is better to pray for your own salvation? Why suffer for those who rightly deserve punishment? Why not ask God for death, that is, deliverance from all suffering and problems, knowing that God hears all prayers? What's the point of opening up before priests who are sinners like anyone else? Why stand out at the cost of so much suffering, humiliation and misunderstandings, if being a normal, average nun is enough to be happy?

When the mind faces such compelling temptations, it becomes obvious that maintaining trust in God can only be achieved thanks to unshakable faith. Jesus demanded from His bride a faith greater than she could understand with her mind: "I am pleased with what you are doing." He said to her the day after the night of temptation. "Satan gained nothing by tempting you, because you did not enter into conversation with him. Continue to act in this way. You gave Me great glory today by fighting so faithfully. Let it be confirmed and engraved on your heart that I am always with you, even if you don't feel My presence at the time of battle." (1499).

It is worth noting that Jesus praised His brave daughter for her categorical refusal to dialogue with Satan. Dealing with temptations would undoubtedly be the beginning of a breakdown of trust: "I want to live in the spirit of faith. I accept everything that comes my way as given me by

the loving will of God, who sincerely desires my happiness. And so, I will accept with submission and gratitude everything that God sends me. I will pay no attention to the voice of nature and to the promptings of self-love. (1549)

## A Testimony

# He doesn't disappoint!



In the twenty-third week of pregnancy (at the turn of the fifth month) I found out that I had eclampsia – the most severe form of pregnancy toxemia, very dangerous for the mother and the baby. This means that water is retained in the body, and by then it is too late to save the person. All this happens in a very short time, usually a matter of a few days.

Doctors gave us three options to choose from. The first – an induced birth, and it was obvious that the baby at such an early stage would have no chance of survival. Secondly, waiting until my condition was critical, even though I was almost on the verge. And finally, thirdly – termination, which the doctors very eagerly encouraged us to do, making no secret of the fact that in their opinion it was the best solution.

We lived in England at the time, where, of course, abortion is legal until the twenty-fourth week. We decided to wait. However, I was made aware that in my case it was a matter of days, at best a week, which did not increase the chances for our child.

Despite this, we trusted God and put everything into His hands. He was all that remained for us.

The "bombardment of heaven" began. My husband and I prayed together, along with our whole family, our friends, sisters, priests, prayer groups – half of London and in other countries too (we felt like it was the whole world).

All this time we felt the power of prayer, we knew that the Lord would not abandon us. We prayed the rosary and the chaplet of Divine Mercy, and we asked all the saints for help,

especially Saint Joseph, Saint Philomena, Saint Padre Pio and Saint Faustina, to whom I promised that if a girl was born, it would be named after her.

It was a very special time: John Paul II was dying, whose intercession we also asked, and anticipating Easter.

On the Thursday before Divine Mercy Sunday, I went for an ultrasound. The doctor, in a very firm, professional voice, said that the baby was weak, small and very sick, and that my condition was already very serious, and, in her opinion, the best solution was termination.

Trying to convince us that it was not worth the risk, she said: "You are a young couple, next year you can have more children," and then added: "I give this child a maximum of three days, but even if by a miracle it survives, which I personally do not believe, there is a risk that there will be mental disability". Finally, she asked: "How long are you going to wait?"

God gave us so much strength that we did not stop trusting Him and continued to pray even harder. We felt a huge peace. After another ultrasound, just after Divine Mercy Sunday, the same doctor, to my surprise, said: "I didn't think I will be seeing you here again. The baby looks much better, very active and you also look better." Then, confused, she said, "Well. . . We will be what happens."

These were the most awaited words for us. Each subsequent day was a gift from God, the "good news" – as my professor said, because it increased our baby's chances.

With God's help, I managed to carry the pregnancy to the twenty-sixth week, i.e., three whole weeks from the diagnosis of the disease. I gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Faustina, very tiny, weighing 574 g.

The birth went without complications, but right after it, when it seemed that everything would be fine, my blood pressure began to rise rapidly. It stayed around 180/125 throughout the night. In the morning all the staff gathered. They looked at me with helpless eyes.

I was connected to equipment that was to be used for defibrillation. I felt that these were the last moments of my life. . . I looked at the image of Jesus that I had with me all the time and said:

"Jesus, if you want to, please give me one more chance, so that I can tell the whole world how great Your Mercy is, and so that I will take care of Faustina until the end of my days, no matter what kind of child she will be."

Doctors gave me an intravenous drug to lower the blood pressure, although they had no guarantee of its effectiveness. After a few hours, the pressure gradually began to drop. The next day, my professor, congratulating me, saying: "It was a miracle that you are alive. Do you realise that if we had waited two days longer, neither you nor the baby would have survived?"

Only at that moment did I realise what God's Mercy had accomplished. The specialists who took care of Faustina, without giving her any hope, made us realise how serious the condition of our child was – she had internal bleeding, an open ductus arteriosus, low birth weight and not fully developed organs.

However, we believed even more after what Christ had already done. We offered Faustina to Him, submitting to His will. We did not stop praying. The child was in the hospital for four months, was connected to a respirator for over a month, underwent laser eye surgery, and had many infections, including a blood infection.

I especially remember the day I was called because the doctors thought they were losing her. . . But the Lord wanted her to live. After so many months of a hard fight for Faustina's life, we heard from the doctor: "You can take your daughter home."

It was a great day. As we said goodbye, one of the nurses said: "It's great to see this child who is going home today, whom we have lost several times." The second one confessed with tears in her eyes: "And we told you to remove it. . .".

Faustina is a wonderful, very cheerful, well-developing child. After arriving home, we went to specialists and did an ultrasound of her head, which showed that Faustina had no damage after the stroke, which the doctors were very afraid of. Stroke and hydrocephalus were also not detected.

The ophthalmologist, a specialist in eye diseases in premature babies, said that Faustina, yes, has a serious visual defect and must wear glasses, but this is nothing compared to the fact that she should not see at all and that her case should be considered a miracle. . .

God, how can I thank You for all this? I can't find the words, Lord. I want to thank You all my life. . . We asked for a little, and you gave so much! Glory to You, Lord! Let Your Name be glorified! Jesus, I trust in You and You, Mother of Beautiful Love, who was with us all the time and hugged Faustina to your heart when I couldn't.

*Caroline*

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## Prayer

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**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** Mgr Thomas Wynne (2020), William Brannigan (1969), Francis McWhirter (2019) **and all whose anniversaries occur at this time.**

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## News and Events

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**Tea and coffee** in the hall after Sunday Mass. Our visitors are most welcome to join us. Please do come. If you can, please sign up for this month and next.

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

**SCIAF Wee Boxes:** for the collection of small change that may be saved through a Lenten sacrifice.

**The Bitter Lamentations:** from next Sunday before Mass, at 9.45am.



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[www.stkieranscampbeltown.org](http://www.stkieranscampbeltown.org)



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