

PARISH BULLETIN

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

19th October 2025

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Tuesday: **Holy Mass, 6.00pm**

Wednesday: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Mid-morning Prayer, 9.30am;
Holy Mass, 10.00am

Friday: Mid-morning Prayer, 9.50am; **Holy Mass, 10.00am**

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional (Sunday only)

765 The Lord hears the cry of the poor
(Mayhew)

Offertory

243 In bread we bring you Lord (Mayhew)

Communion chant

Bless the Lord my Soul (Kyiv Chamber Choir
– Liturgy of Peace)

Post Communion

742 O Lord, hear my prayer (Taize; Mayhew)

Recessional

32 All ye who seek a comfort sure (Keys)

Next weekend:

Saturday: **Vigil Mass: 6.00pm**

**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Holy Mass,
10.00am**

Sacrament of Reconciliation 5-5.30pm Saturday or
anytime on request.

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Sunday, 19th October: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

*Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.*

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*The word of God is living and active,
discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*The Son of Man has come
to give his life as a ransom for many.*



Take Five

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

MONDAY

20 OCTOBER 2025

No fooling

Recent books like Jack Miles' *God: A Biography* trace the changing image of God in Hebrew scripture, pointing out that God is presented in radically different ways. While God is often seen as angry at sin, though, it is in the New Testament that God directly calls a human being a fool! What persuades God to such an insult, however, is an ancient problem: a person who is so self-involved that they have no sense of life's fragility, no sense of compassion for others, no sense of gratitude toward God. Building up stock in wealth, in stuff, seems logical in a world that judges on the basis of "who has the most toys when they die." To God, however, that is the height of folly, and God is not afraid to call a fool a fool.

Today's readings: Romans 4:20-25; Luke 12:13-21. *"You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you."*

TUESDAY

21 OCTOBER 2025

Prepare to wait

Waiting is among the greatest spiritual challenges a believer faces. Twentieth-century French philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilard de Chardin, whose visionary writings were not always well received in certain Catholic circles, knew what it meant to wait. It wasn't until several decades after his death that the Church fully embraced his theological insights. His prayer "Patient Trust," borne out of his own trials, continues to offer hope for those who wait: "Above all, trust in the slow work of God. /We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. . . . /Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete."

Today's readings: Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21; Luke 12:35-38. *"Be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks."*

WEDNESDAY

22 OCTOBER 2025

What are you driving at?

On the back of countless lorries on our

motorways appears the curious inquiry: "How is my driving?" The accompanying number to call invites our critique. What if we all came equipped with signs inviting the moral critique of those around us? We might be surprised and not at all pleased with the feedback. Thankfully, Christianity doesn't rely on external judgment; Jesus even warned against judging others. But we are encouraged to perform our own regular examination of conscience. For everything that we have – life and love, relationships and resources, talent and time – we will one day be accountable.

Today's readings: Romans 6:12-18; Luke 12:39-48. *"From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required."*

THURSDAY

23 OCTOBER 2025

All fired up

Jesus shocks his disciples – and many of us as well, no doubt – when he declares that he came not to establish peace but rather division, to "set the earth on fire." What kind of fire did he have in mind? Fire in biblical times was associated with God's action in the world and the lives of people. Jesus is using strong language to impress upon us the importance of taking responsibility for our spiritual growth. Do our relationships, choices, lifestyles, and loyalties reflect the seriousness of the call to spiritual maturity? If not, what can we do today to begin to put things right?

Today's readings: Romans 6:19-23; Luke 12:49-53. *"Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth?"*

FRIDAY

24 OCTOBER 2025

The forecast calls for peace and harmony

We spend a lot of time worrying about the weather. Nothing captures national attention like a brewing hurricane or a string of tornadoes or an earthquake. Weather programming is a fixture of any local news programme, and one of our first questions on waking up in the morning is, "What's the weather like today?" Not much has changed (except the technology) since Jesus' time. He pointed out that for all the attention folks paid to storm clouds in the west or wind from the south, they didn't seem to be able to tell right from wrong when dealing with one another.

Before checking today's forecast, take a moment

to examine the “climate” of your interpersonal relationships. Dispel the storm clouds and bring some sunshine to those nearest and dearest.

Today’s readings: Romans 7:18-25a; Luke 12:54-59. *“Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?”*

SATURDAY

25 OCTOBER 2025

Decisions, decisions

One of the choices life offers is whether to let God be part of your life. Of course, God is always present, within you and around you, but

you can choose to ignore, shut out, or pretend God isn’t there. Saint Paul called this “I don’t need God attitude” living in “the flesh” and believed this illusion of self-sufficiency hid the road to death. Openness to the divine, though – to the power and Spirit of Christ – guides you to life in God. Find some ways to choose God today.

Today’s readings: Romans 8:1-11; Luke 13:1-9. *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies.”*

Readings for the 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Exodus 17:8-13

Three old men hold the victory together in unsteady but steadfast hands.

Psalms 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

The Creator of all is the one who sustains and protects us.

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

The word of God contains wisdom necessary for the salvation of the world.

Luke 18:1-8

Jesus tells a parable that makes clear the significance of persistent prayer.

Words on Word

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In a certain family the father had a birthday and on the occasion of this feast the wife and children decided to prepare something for him. First the youngest child stepped forward and recited a poem he had memorized for Dad. “Bravo!” said Dad to him. “You said it wonderfully!”

Then the older son, who was already embarrassed by childish rhymes, prepared a small speech for his father, which he had composed himself. “I can’t believe you’re already this independent, this hardworking, that you composed it yourself, bravo!”

Next in line was the daughter, a young lady coming of age. She brought her father a beautiful bouquet of flowers, but no words would pass her lips; quite flustered, she handed him the bouquet, blushing. “Thank you, child, I see you love me very much!” said the father gently.

Finally his wife approached him, the mother of his children, by his side for many years. She had no gift, she simply looked at her husband, straight into his eyes, and he looked at her – just that look! That look summoned their entire shared past, their whole life: the good and the bad times, joy, suffering, simply everything.

These are the four kinds of prayer. The first, a learned poem, is vocal prayer. The second kind, a small speech, is meditation. The third kind, the bouquet of flowers, is affective prayer, when our feelings speak in prayer. The fourth kind of prayer, the look into the wife’s eyes, is the prayer of simplicity. I simply stand before the Lord

and say nothing, I just look at Him. Sometimes we think this is a less valuable prayer (I do nothing), but it surpasses the others. Prayer is presence, abiding (St. John Paul II).

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In this Sunday's Gospel, we encounter Jesus' moving parable of the persistent widow who struggled to secure justice for herself. The judge, who ought to have supported her, was unjust and likely anticipated a bribe she could not afford. Still, through steadfast determination, she finally succeeded, bringing to mind the saying, "constant dripping wears away the stone." Yet in this account, our Lord highlights not simply the widow's persistence, but the importance of patient, enduring prayer.

"I don't like to pray," some of our children now say, which can be surprising because children often pray with natural enthusiasm. Yet, it is less surprising when prayer is absent in the home altogether. Like any skill or habit, prayer must be learned and nurtured, passed on by loving example.

Today's Gospel focuses on the prayer of petition – presenting our needs before God. This prayer is both straightforward and frequent in our lives. Yet how many of us treat God like a vending machine, expecting an instant response simply because we have made our request? Prayer is never about demanding favours; rather, it rests on the understanding that God, in His great love, freely grants us countless blessings. When these blessings do not match our immediate desires, some lose faith, believing God has overlooked them. We can forget how generous He is, ceaselessly pouring out gifts upon us.

There is a lovely illustration of this generosity in the well-known story of a little boy who wrote a bill for his mother, itemising the ways he had helped around the house – shopping, washing dishes, cleaning, and vacuuming – each task assigned a price. His mother paid up, but then wrote her own bill: ten years of washing his clothes, feeding him, buying his outfits – all at no charge. The boy was so moved, he handed the money back.

We, too, can never truly "repay" God for all we receive – from the natural gifts of creation to the supernatural gifts of grace. Each day, may we turn to Him with trusting hearts. Like the persistent widow, let us approach the Lord continually, confident in His mercy. Far from a transaction, prayer is a living relationship that grows deeper the more we honour it, rooted in the assurance that our loving Father sees and knows our every need.

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Prayer is not the idle pastime of old women. Understood in its value and properly practiced, it is the most powerful means of action (M. Gandhi).

In Christ's love,

Fr Anthony

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT ICONS: 8. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The way Eastern and Western art shows the Nativity scene couldn't be more different. In the Eastern tradition, the setting isn't some wooden stable but a cave among the hills. Here, the composition typically features multiple figures and a clearly defined storyline.

Take this icon, for example. It's a classic piece of Orthodox iconography. Right at the centre, you'll find the Mother of God, resting after the demands of childbirth. Beside her is the infant Christ, carefully watched by the animals and honoured by the angels, who bow in reverence.

The purple cloth, shaped a bit like a mandorla, under Mary – who is clothed in black – calls to mind the Byzantine practice of using special postpartum chambers.

Everything else fans out around Mary and the Christ Child in a circular arrangement. Down in the lower left, you'll see Joseph deep in thought, while a shepherd looks on with curiosity. Some interpret this shepherd as the prophet Isaiah or Ananias. Across on the right, you can spot two midwives getting a bath ready for the newborn. Up in the top left, the Three Magi head towards the cave, their journey observed from afar by a group of angels.

Colour-wise, black and red dominate, and the icon's serene yet majestic feel is further enhanced by gold and yellow tones. Keep an eye out for those silver highlights on the rocks, which give the scene a modest illusion of depth. Overall, it's a rich visual retelling of the events in Bethlehem, steeped in the Orthodox style and tradition.



Waves of Grace

Comments on the Gospel according to Luke

Year C in three-year cycle of Gospel readings focuses on the Gospel according to Luke. So, here we consider some of the main events in Luke's narrative.

Chapter 27
True Humbling
Luke 24:1–12

“Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marvelling at what had happened.” (Luke 24:12)

When do we bow our heads? We do it in shame, in fear, in sorrow, in reverence – and also when we want to examine something closely. Pride, however, stiffens the neck. It resists the gentle wisdom of lowering our brow before truth. So often, unbelief takes root not in argument but in the paralysis of pride.

I think of Georges Bernanos's Father Cénabre in *The Imposter* – a priest who slowly loses faith because he is dazzled by his own perfection. His spiritual arrogance hollows him out until he is little more than a shell. Isn't vanity, at its core, the shock of facing our own emptiness – and then rushing to hide it behind clever words and borrowed learning? Cénabre pretends to believe because admitting his unbelief would cost him prestige. All because he could not bow his head, bend his neck, lower his brow in shame and begin anew.

I remembered him when pondering Peter stooping at the empty tomb. That gesture is not mere posture; it is the turning point of a heart. The apostles are our fathers in faith, and we inherit not only their privileges but also their weaknesses – hypocrisy, rivalry, the endless jostling for first place. Our Lord often rebuked His closest friends for the desire to be seen as great. None wanted to bow before another. I recognise that temptation in myself: prone to pretence, stiff-necked, weak in faith.

The Greek verb Luke uses is rich: *PARAKYPTŌ* means not simply “to stoop”, but to lean in, to peer attentively, to press mind and senses into the mystery. Saint James uses the same word for the one who “looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty” (James 1:25) – not glancing and

forgetting, but looking and doing, gazing and obeying. When we bow over the Word of God, grace passes through our eyes and lights the interior; we see ourselves in truth.

Years ago, I the Lord's Tomb in a monastery prepared for Holy Week. Among white flowers was placed a dark coffin with a mirror hidden inside. People came to venerate Christ, drawn by a quiet, unsettling curiosity. Stooping, they saw their own reflection. No one wants to see himself in a coffin, just as no one easily accepts the certainty of death. Yet if death is absurd, life loses meaning. Why labour through illness, fear and the thousand daily burdens? Why strive to learn, to love, to build? The Christian answer begins not by denying death but by bowing to look more deeply – into the Paschal Mystery where death is conquered.

Peter saw the place where the Body had been and went home. To go home is to return to oneself – to cease living outside one's heart, to live truly and no longer pretend. We must bow before death and see that it has been defeated by the Son of God so that we might finally stop fearing life. The Resurrection is not an idea; it is a change of atmosphere for the soul. Hope becomes the air we breathe.

If we are honest, we sometimes fear living: we dream of escape, we feel we cannot endure another day. Yet we cannot die before we have discovered the consolations that strengthen our hope in the Resurrection. God allows us terrifying moments not to crush us, but to stretch our trust in Christ's power to deliver. Every night's sleep is a little rehearsal of death; every morning's waking is a small Easter. We can train our hearts to rise from darkness by practising the simple act of getting up with grace.

I have learnt to bow over every event – especially those that prick my pride – and look at it intently through the lens of Scripture. Time and again, things prove different once examined in Christ's light. Strangely, what becomes most precious are the very events I once found most shaming: the ones that humbled me, buried my pride, and opened me to mercy.

Perhaps today we can make a gentle resolution:

- Bow your head at the Holy Name of Jesus, as the Church teaches.
- Kneel in heart over the Gospel, lingering long enough to let it read you.
- Practise a quiet bow before others, choosing to serve rather than to be first.
- Bring your fear of death – and your fear of life – into the light of the empty tomb.

To stoop is to see. To bow is to belong. Christ has broken the back of death; He lifts the humble and enlightens the lowly. Let us learn Peter's posture at the tomb, and then take Peter's path home – into a life made new by the Risen Lord.

Fr Anthony

Faith

On the Little Way of Life

On October 19, 2017, John Paul II proclaimed St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus a Doctor of the Church. "The Holy Father did this because he wanted the Church to make her message of spiritual childhood its own," explained Cardinal Paul Poupard. This message continues to inspire and bear great fruit.



The Saint of Lisieux

Although the doctrine of spiritual childhood is the spiritual hallmark of Saint Thérèse (1873–1897), her own childhood was not strewn with roses. At the age of four she lost her mother, and despite the love shown her by her father and older sisters, until the age of 13 she reacted to this tragedy with emotional instability. During this time she moved to live with her family in Lisieux, France, where she was brought up in a strict atmosphere.

The difficult beginnings of her life came to an end with a spiritual healing that Thérèse experienced at Christmas 1886. From that moment – as she herself writes – she began to "go with the stride of a giant" along the road to perfection.

Her pace quickened as the desire matured in her to dedicate her life to God in the Carmelite order. She planned to enter the convent at the age of 15, which initially met with resistance from the religious authorities and the local bishop.

In this situation, taking advantage of the opportunity for an audience with Pope Leo XIII, Thérèse did not hesitate to ask him for permission. The Holy Father referred her back to her superiors in France, but his words, "you will enter, if God wills it," brought her deep peace.

The subsequent months of waiting for the final decision of the church authorities became for the teenager a school of trust and hope against adversity. She experienced the dark night of faith; she felt as if Jesus had fallen asleep and, like a little ball He had been playing with, had dropped her to the ground.

Yet she consented to accept spiritual sufferings, striving in the spirit of mortification to "grow in humility, abandonment to the Lord's will, and other virtues." This exercise would bring blessed fruits in her later life.

Ultimately, Thérèse's desire to begin a contemplative life was fulfilled on April 9, 1888, when she entered the Carmel in Lisieux. Despite her youth and many weaknesses, the sister carried out her religious duties zealously and did not complain about difficulties.

At the same time she deepened Carmelite spirituality, finding particular delight in the writings of Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint John of the Cross. She advanced in holiness, distinguished by a spirit of humility, self-sacrifice, and the joyful acceptance of sufferings.

In time there arose in her a desire for apostolic and missionary engagement. And though Thérèse would never depart for the missions, with a love wholly devoted to Christ she enkindled the novices under her care in the convent. It was to them that she revealed the principles of spiritual childhood – the so-called Little Way – which the world would later admire.

Placing love at the center of her spirituality and making of herself an act of total oblation to God's merciful love, she quickly matured for the meeting with the Bridegroom. There was not much time, for plagued by illness the nun died on September 30, 1897, at only 24 years of age.

In Search of Holiness

Little Thérèse's short life, much of it spent behind the cloister, proves no obstacle to the great mission of evangelising the world that the Lord God accomplishes through her. Her work reaches far beyond the walls of Carmel, and beyond the nineteenth century.

In Teresa's life God set forth a particular message for the world, showing people the Gospel path: the Little Way – on which all can walk, for all are called to holiness," writes Saint John Paul

II on the centenary of the Carmelite's death.

What is this Little Way, and where did it come from?

The French sister discovers it when she longs to become a great saint and at the same time notices that she is far from the perfection and heroism she knows from the lives of the saints. For in those books there is no mention of people who – like Little Thérèse – are slow and clumsy at work, excessively shy in dealing with others, hypersensitive, and who moreover sometimes fall asleep at prayer...

Happily, the awareness of her own weaknesses does not lead the young nun to pessimism, resignation, or spiritual laziness. On the contrary, having avoided those dead ends, she enters the Little Way, which proves to be a true highway leading to heaven. The main principle that governs it the Carmelite sums up in the sentence: "Yes, it is enough to humble oneself, to bear one's imperfections patiently: this is true holiness."

Thérèse herself reaches great heights in this regard. To the end of her life she does not master her frailties, but this is not a source of sadness for her. On her deathbed she confesses: "I feel great joy not only when others discover my imperfections, but above all when I sense them myself. That surpasses praise, which bores me."

A Child's Trust

Noticing one's weaknesses (and even boasting of them) was for the Carmelite a turning point on the Little Way to holiness. But not the only one. She also took a second, more important step: she entrusted herself completely to God, like a defenseless child placed in the hands of its parents. She took to heart the words of Scripture: "If anyone is little, let him come to me" (Prv 9:4) and "[Infants] shall be carried upon the hip and dandled upon the knees" (Is 66:12), and she drew a lesson from them. With joy she discovered that "Jesus does not ask for great deeds, but only that we abandon ourselves to Him and be grateful."

And this means that even those who, on account of their own weakness, like Saint Thérèse, do not feel – according to her image – like spiritual eagles, but little birds, can soar high toward the sun of Love. For they do not fly on their own wings; Christ Himself carries them there. The Saint of Lisieux also compares the Saviour's arms to an elevator by which one can reach the summit of Christian perfection most quickly.

Saint Thérèse is convinced that unconditional reliance on Jesus is the shortest way to heaven – and therefore she urges the sisters to trust God and to abandon themselves completely to His will. She says that the principle of the Little Way is to act like a child before God, that is, "to acknowledge that one is nothing, to expect everything from God, just as a little child expects everything from its father; to worry about nothing, to seek nothing for oneself [...].

To be little is also not to attribute to oneself the virtues one practices, thinking that one is capable of anything, but to recognize that God places a treasure in His child's hands so that it may use it as needed, yet the treasure remains always God's property.

Love of God and Neighbour

The principle of spiritual childhood does not, however, mean a wrongly understood passivity. Saint Thérèse expressed her love for Christ to a heroic degree, especially by accepting sufferings.

She compared the sacrifices she made to flowers strewn at Jesus' feet and to caresses by which she won Him over. Despite the pain she felt, she rejoiced that she could bring joy to God, and therefore did not hesitate to speak of the "sweetness of suffering".

She encouraged others to the same attitude, especially those who felt they could not meet such a demand. During her illness she confessed: "Many souls say: 'But I do not have the strength to make such an offering!' Let them do as I do; let them make a great effort. God never refuses the first grace, which gives courage to act. And then the heart grows strong and goes from victory to victory." Saint Thérèse also expressed her love for her neighbours, most often by patiently and understandingly bearing the failings of other sisters. She advanced most on this path at the end of her life, when she responded to God's invitation not so much "to love one's neighbour as oneself" as to love him "more than oneself". In the last year of her life, contemplating Christ's words, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12), the French saint felt called to love others after the manner of Jesus, who loved people even to the offering of His own life. Thérèse read this invitation in the spirit of the Little Way. She knew that of herself she was not able to love her neighbors, and yet she cried out to Jesus: "Ah! How I love this commandment, for it gives me the certainty that You Yourself want to love in me all those whom You command me to love! Yes, I feel that when I love my neighbour, the only one acting in me is Jesus; the more I unite myself to Him, the more I also love all the sisters."

A Great Saint

The ardent love for God and for her sisters that distinguished Saint Thérèse is a litmus test of the truth of the way of spiritual childhood. It was along this Little Way that the young Carmelite attained holiness and enkindled the whole world. Not only simple folk, but even popes admired the teaching and example of the sister from Lisieux, calling her "the greatest saint of modern times" (Pius X), "a teacher of life" (Pius XI), and "a master of the spiritual life" (John Paul II).

For everyone who opens himself to the spirituality of the Little Thérèse knows how apt is Fr. Wilfrid Stinissen OCD's sentence about the fruits this way brings: "Then everything will be different [...]. You will know that your own strength is not enough, and you will trust Him [God] more than yourself and you will not lose courage in failures. You will understand that there is only one failure: not to trust God, not to turn to Him."

Sources: Story of a Soul by Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, 1947; W. Stinissen OCD, The Simple Road to Holiness: In the Footsteps of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, 2014.

We read Pope Leo XIV

"The Lord creates and spreads peace through His friends, whose hearts are full of peace, and who themselves become builders of peace, instruments of His peace.

The Resurrection of Christ teaches us that there is no story so marked by disappointment or sin that it cannot be visited by hope. No fall is final, no night lasts forever, no wound remains open forever. No matter how far we may feel, lost or unworthy, there is no distance that could extinguish the unfailing power of God's love. At times we think that the Lord comes to us only in moments of recollection or spiritual exaltation, when we feel strong, when our life seems orderly and clear. Yet the Risen One draws near to us precisely in the darkest places: in our failures, in frayed relationships, in the daily hardships that weigh upon our shoulders, in the doubts that discourage us. Nothing of what we are, no part of our existence, is foreign to Him. (...) The Risen One desires only to show His presence, to become our companion on the way, and to awaken in us the certainty that His life is stronger than every death. Let us therefore ask for the grace to recognize His humble and discreet presence, that we may not demand a life without trials, that we may discover that every pain, if it is filled with love, can become a place

of communion.

General Audience, October 8, 2025.

In the Jubilee of Marian spirituality, our gaze as believers seeks in the Virgin Mary the guide of our pilgrimage in hope, looking to her human and Gospel virtues, the imitation of which constitutes the most authentic Marian devotion. (...) Like her, the first of the disciples, we ask for the gift of a heart that listens and becomes part of a hospitable universe. Through her, the Sorrowful, Powerful, Faithful Woman, we ask for the gift of compassion for every suffering brother and sister and for all creatures. Let us look at the Mother of Jesus and that small group of courageous women standing beneath the Cross, so that we too may learn to stand as they did beside the countless crosses of the world, where Christ is still crucified in his brothers, to bring consolation, communion, and help there. (...) Take courage, forward, set out, you who are building the conditions for a future full of peace, in justice and in forgiveness; be gentle and steadfast, do not lose heart. Peace is the way, and God walks with you. The Lord creates and spreads peace through His friends, whose hearts are full of peace, and who themselves become builders of peace, instruments of His peace.

Jubilee of Marian Spirituality, Marian Vigil, October 11, 2025.

Beloved, in this world that seeks justice and peace, let us sustain Christian spirituality and popular piety with regard to those events and places which, blessed by God, have forever changed the face of the earth. Let them be a motor of renewal and transformation, (...) a time of conversion and reparation, of rethinking and liberation. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, our hope, intercede for us and once again, and forever, direct us toward Jesus, the crucified Lord. In Him is salvation for all.

Jubilee of Marian Spirituality, homily during Holy Mass, October 12, 2025.

In my opinion

Who has the advantage in the war? Russia or Ukraine?

Russian cyberattacks, drone raids, and numerous acts of sabotage against NATO countries may be an attempt to divert attention from the military situation in Ukraine. Russia, after all, is facing more and more problems.

U.S. Senator John McCain once said that Russia is “a giant gas station masquerading as a state.” Today it turns out that this station doesn’t have fuel even for Russians. Of course, Kremlin media try to explain shortages at stations by the actions of unscrupulous speculators and excessive demand, and they don’t mention that the fuel crisis is nonetheless the result of Ukrainian attacks on refineries, pumping stations, and fuel depots. “The Russian fuel industry has been systematically destroyed since 2023. Unfortunately, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden forced a halt to these attacks for fear of rising fuel prices before the elections. Now the Ukrainians have the green light to destroy Russia’s energy infrastructure and are doing so very effectively,” says the editor at the military portal *Defence24.pl*.

Much indicates that Kyiv’s current actions are coordinated with the White House. It suffices to note that U.S. President Donald Trump stated at the end of September that Putin and Russia have enormous economic troubles and the time has come for Ukraine to act. “When the residents of Moscow and all the great cities, towns, and neighbourhoods across Russia learn what is really happening in this war, that it is practically impossible for them to get gasoline because of the long lines that are forming, (...) that most of the money is being spent on fighting Ukraine, which has great spirit (...), Ukraine will be able to take back its country in its

original form, and who knows, maybe even go further!” Trump emphasized in a post on the Truth Social platform.

Initiative on Kyiv's side

After many long months of Russian advantage on the battlefield, the Ukrainians have now gained the upper hand because they have found their enemy's weak points. Time will tell how painful this fuel crisis will be, but for now the situation is very serious, as the oil industry has lost about 40% of its processing capacity. There are also problems in the energy sector, because the Ukrainians are attacking power plants as well as factories producing turbines for combined heat-and-power plants located 2,500 km from their territory. Sanctions, in turn, mean that the Russians cannot properly service the turbines they once ordered from Western corporations. Already there is talk of a systemic energy shortfall of about 25%. “This means that Russians will feel the effects of the war with Ukraine not only through lines at gas stations, but also through a growing crisis in the power system and temporary power outages,” explains an energy-sector analyst.

The Russian authorities have introduced a ban on the export of gasoline and diesel and announced that the missing fuel will be imported, for example, from North Korea and Singapore. Russians are beginning to feel the burden of the war more and more, and the country's authorities must cope with a growing budget deficit; they intend to raise taxes, cut public spending, and are selling off gold reserves. The current situation clearly shows that Kyiv's military actions are far more effective than Moscow's moves. “What is new is that the Ukrainians have escalated to a new level, effectively striking targets deep inside Russia. The growing strength and effectiveness of attacks on Russia's refining, energy, and chemical industries shows that Kyiv is seizing the operational initiative on several axes. Of course, the Russians are learning, and it is unknown how long this Ukrainian advantage will last,” emphasise *Strategy & Future*.

We are in a state of war

The fuel crisis is a worry for the governors of Russia's regions and the energy ministry, but this problem does not reach the main decision-maker in the Kremlin. Although Russians are beginning to feel the burden of the war more and more, in his speeches Putin pretends that everything is going his way and threatens another war with NATO. He announced the largest draft in years so that the Russian Federation's army reaches the planned 1.5 million soldiers. “Putin's recent statements in Sochi indicate that he is quite relaxed, because he sees a very wide array of options for escalating threats against Western Europe. This shows that the Russians will continue to use their capacity for sabotage and provocation against NATO,” says Mark Budzisz, expert on Russia and post-Soviet areas at the *Institute of Freedom Foundation*.

Recently Putin tested NATO's reaction to a drone attack on Poland and violations of the airspace of the Baltic states. He demonstrated his capabilities in Denmark and Germany, where drones disrupted operations at international airports. Europe is, for now, showing its helplessness, and U.S. responses to Russia's provocative actions against NATO are too weak. This picture encourages Putin to further escalate actions against the West, to divert attention from his domestic problems and the lack of results in the war in Ukraine. It is much easier for him to score a propaganda success by sowing fear in European countries than to achieve any military objective in Ukraine. “We in Europe must realize that we are in a state of war with Russia. Moscow keeps communicating this to us, but we refuse to acknowledge it. Russia wants to wear us down, frighten us, and demoralize us so that we stop supporting Ukraine and lift sanctions. And when we do that, new threats and further, even greater demands will appear,” notes a Russia analyst at the *Centre for Eastern Studies*.

Putin threatens Poland

In Russia's war narrative, the issue of war with Poland and all of NATO is appearing more and more often. A dozen or so months ago former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev devoted a very long text arguing that the ideal model of coexistence between the two nations was the era of the People's Republic of Poland, when Warsaw was colonized by Moscow. Recently the topic of Poland has been taken up even by Vladimir Putin himself. He blamed the outbreak of World War II on the "irresponsible" policy of the authorities of the Second Polish Republic, who did not want to delineate a corridor to Gdańsk. This is a continuation of a series of his statements from 2019, when he could not refrain from citing examples from Polish history. At that time he accused Poles, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians of collaborating with the Nazis in the Holocaust, which served as a prelude to his policy of "denazification" of, first and foremost, the authorities in Kyiv. That plan did not work out, because first the pandemic delayed the war, and after 2022 the Russians bogged down in Ukraine. Why are Putin and his circle returning to this narrative now?

The director of the *Mieroszewski Centre*, believes that Poland is the most important and most inconvenient country for the Kremlin in the entire region. Putin wanted to tell us that if Poland's authorities do not heed his suggestions, they will share the fate of the Second Polish Republic in 1939. He indicated that smaller states in the region should respect Moscow's imperial plans and accept this asymmetry, rather than punching above their weight. "This speech shows us that Poland plays an important role both in Kremlin policy and in ordinary Russian mentality. Putin even perceives Poland's aspirations to play an important role in Europe," he explains.

The fact that the Russian authorities appreciate Poland in terms of economic development and growing influence in Europe does not have to mean anything good. Recently they have had drone attacks, attempts at sabotage on the railways, and even dangerous moves near the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline. We also know that the Polish Armed Forces fend off hundreds of cyberattacks daily, and Polish services thwarted the downing of a cargo aircraft. Recently the Kremlin announced that Poland would be attacked with Russian drones by Ukrainians. *The Institute for the Study of War* warns that it is Russia that is planning a false-flag attack on Polish infrastructure to blame the Ukrainians. Nothing has changed for centuries in Polish-Russian relations, because Moscow, as usual, is trying to vassalize Warsaw through blackmail and sowing fear – that is, to force submission and obedience – which Poland cannot accept.

Tony Wood

Prayer



Please remember to pray for those who are unwell, in need, or have requested our prayers: Claire Wiggins, Russell Carroll, Lucy Cunningham, Tommy McGrory Senior, Sarah Carmichael, and Doleen Durnin.

Please keep in your prayers all those whose anniversaries fall around this time.

News and Events

Join us for tea and coffee in the hall after Sunday Mass. We warmly welcome visitors and would be delighted to share our hospitality with you. We hope to see you there!



campbeltown@rcdai.org.uk



www.stkieranscampbeltown.org



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