

# PARISH BULLETIN

**St Kieran's, the Catholic**

**Church** *in Campbeltown and Islay*  
*Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain*

16<sup>th</sup> November 2025

## 33<sup>rd</sup> 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)

627 You shall cross the barren desert  
(John Keys)[578]

#### Offertory

320 Lord, accept the gifts we offer  
(Kevin Mayhew)[288]

#### Post Communion

176 Godhead here in hiding (John  
Keys)[150]

#### Recessional

122 Do not be afraid (Clyde McLennan)[107]

### Next weekend:

Saturday: *Vigil Mass: 6.00pm*

*Solemnity of Christ the King: Holy Mass, 10.00am*

**Sacrament of Reconciliation** Saturday 5.00pm-5.30pm or  
anytime on request.

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> November: Holy Mass, 4pm

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, 7<sup>th</sup> December: Holy Mass, 4pm

### Psalm response

*The Lord comes to judge the peoples with  
fairness.*

### Gospel acclamation

*Alleluia, alleluia.*

*Straighten up and raise your heads,  
because your redemption is drawing near.*

*Alleluia.*

### Communion Antiphon

*To be near God is my happiness,  
to place my hope in God the Lord.*



Presentation of the  
**BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**  
Thursday  
21 November

# Take Five

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

## MONDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, RELIGIOUS

17 NOVEMBER 2025

### Hold nothing back

Who can hope to emulate the selfless lives of women like Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a princess who fearlessly nursed the gravely ill and gave away much of her fortune to the poor? We wonder at her willingness to live such a difficult and demanding life. We are, however, overlooking one crucial detail: She was happy! As Dostoevsky writes in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “We are made for happiness, and anyone who is completely happy has a right to say to himself, ‘I am doing God’s will on earth.’ All the righteous, all the saints, all the holy martyrs were happy.” What creates happiness is different for each one of us. If you aren’t sure, ask God to lead you to the happiness that is your birthright.

**Today’s readings:** 1 Maccabees 1:10-15, 41-43, 54-57, 62-63; Luke 18:35-43. *“The king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, each abandoning his particular customs.”*

## TUESDAY: OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE DEDICATION OF THE BASILICAS OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

18 NOVEMBER 2025

### Hold nothing back

Elected in 440 A.D., Pope Saint Leo I assumed leadership of the church in the midst of the quickening disintegration of the Roman Empire, when both Western and Eastern Europe were becoming increasingly decentralized. As a result, understanding about the nature of Christ and salvation similarly underwent a variety of interpretations. One school of thought prevalent at the time taught that Christ’s life and death were merely an example that we should follow, rather than a sacrifice for our salvation. Taking his position seriously, Leo greatly strengthened and consolidated Roman authority on matters of doctrine.

**Today’s readings:** 2 Maccabees 6:18-31; Luke 19:1-10. *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”*

## WEDNESDAY

19 NOVEMBER 2025

### Turn down the stereotypes

Womanly is a word that too often has been used by our culture to suggest weakness or inadequacy. Worse, these negative connotations can sometimes lead to derision and oppression. Phrases such as “he/she throws like a girl,” though harmless-sounding, reflect this negativity. Yet when we look at the women around us, in the Bible, and in our Catholic tradition, we learn the truth. We find women who exhibit a womanliness that is synonymous with courage, strength, boldness, and savvy. They have led countries, built schools and hospitals, led people to God, and given their lives and their deaths to what they believed in. How can we adjust our own language to be more affirming – and more accurate – about the nature and gifts of women?

**Today’s readings:** 2 Maccabees 7:1, 20-31; Luke 19:11-28. *“Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons perish in a single day.”*

## THURSDAY

20 NOVEMBER 2025

### Ask for direction

The journal *Christianity Today* says, “Spiritual direction is a voluntary relationship between a person who seeks to grow in the Christian life and a director.” It has been defined as the practice of being with people as they attempt to deepen their relationship with the divine and to learn and grow in their own personal spirituality. Those in religious life and ministry are encouraged to have spiritual direction, but it is not just for “professionals.” All of us have a spirituality of life, but sometimes we lose sight of our priorities. Spiritual Directors International. Perhaps it is time to stop for directions!

**Today’s readings:** 1 Maccabees 2:15-29; Luke 19:41-44. *“1 Maccabees 2:15-29; Luke 19:41-44. ‘If this day you only knew what makes for peace? But now it is hidden from your eyes.’”*

## FRIDAY: THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

21 NOVEMBER 2025

### Presenting Mary

Today’s feast takes us back to literature that never made it into the official canon of scripture but was influential in the early church. According to these apocryphal texts, Mary’s parents Joachim and



Anne, who had been childless, brought Mary in thanksgiving as a young child to the Temple in Jerusalem where she was consecrated to God. She remained in the Temple to be educated in preparation for her role as Mother of God. We do not have to believe that events actually unfolded in that way to grasp the truth that Mary played an extraordinary role in the salvation story, and we can only marvel at her courage in being willing to see her role through to completion. Are we prepared to do the same?

**Today's readings:** 1 Maccabees 4:36-37, 52-59; Luke 19:45-48. *"All the people prostrated themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who had given them success."*

## **SATURDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT CECILIA, VIRGIN, MARTYR**

**22 NOVEMBER 2025**

### **Time for a song**

If you're reading this, so far this year you've survived two apocalyptic predictions. One fellow was so sure that Judgment Day was May 21 that he persuaded others to quit their jobs and paper the country with warnings. The other messenger, channelling an alleged ancient spirit, predicted that an earthquake on June 15 would devastate the West Coast. Some continue to root for the Mayan calendar, suggesting that we will run out of time on 12-21-12 according to the Mayan calendar. But many of us will put our trust in Jesus, who said the day cannot be known. On the feast of the patron saint of music, we'd rather sing a song than whistle in the dark.

**Today's readings:** Maccabees 6:1-13; Luke 20:27-40. *"His not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."*

## *Readings for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday*

### **Malachi 3:19-20a**

It's not always going to be like this. On the day of the Lord, everything will change.

### **Psalms 98:5-6, 7-8, 9**

The arrival of divine rule is reason to celebrate, Earth and all its creatures together.

### **2 Thessalonians 3:7-12**

How should we behave after we receive the gospel of Christ into our lives?

### **Luke 21:5-19**

Don't be impressed by worldly grandeur. Divine authority is the only superpower there is.

## *Words on Word*

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*"Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilisation and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows what is in man. He alone knows it." (Saint John Paul II, Homily for the Inauguration of his Pontificate, 22 October 1978).*

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John Paul II's words speak directly to those moments when anxiety tightens its grip and we feel stuck. Rather than letting fear lock us into ourselves, he urges us to open everything – our homes, our hearts, even our societies – to Christ. The Lord knows the human heart through and through, and his grace unfreezes us, restores confidence, and sends us back into life with hope. Not only in our times, but probably always, people have felt the need for hope. The human person is "leaning forward," that is, lives by hope, by expectation – both the elderly and the young. But what is this human hope, and where do we get it? Who can offer it? There have been many such teachers, philosophers, or self-proclaimed prophets who tried to point people

to the sources of hope. It was the hope of a just society, where equality and justice would reign – and communism arose. There was the hope of a society arranged according to the orders esteemed in some nation – and fascism arose.

This happens because those prophets promise us and others an earthly paradise; they often also sow fear and panic about the imminent end of the world and sometimes proclaim that only they have the recipe for establishing justice on earth – and many believe them. The Gospel is always addressed to me. It asks us the question: where are we ourselves? On what do we build our hope? What radiates from us as Christians?

We know that the remedy for fear and resignation, for indifference and disappointments and empty promises, is only one – the promise given to us by God. The question, however, remains: do I live by this hope? Is it somehow visible in my life? Is it evident that I have it, that I carry it in my life? We can build our lives on hope – on the foundation of God's promise. This promise of God is contained in His word, especially in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have gathered in the church to listen to it, to draw precisely this hope from the Eucharist, from common prayer, from listening to the Word. In the Eucharistic Prayer (Canon V) the priest prays that the Church may become a place of truth, justice, and freedom, that all people may open themselves to the hope of a new world. If we believe in God, our Father, if we believe in Jesus Christ, can we expect paradise already here on earth? We cannot, because Jesus tells us of the necessity of the Cross and that if we wish to follow Him, we will not avoid the Cross. We will be brought before courts, they will accuse us, for Christian hope is not cheap – therefore Jesus not only foresees, but also promises that if we persevere, we will attain eternal life. It is important that we ourselves not give in to the fear and catastrophic moods that prevail in the world. Sometimes we can counteract them somehow, but it is always necessary that we cling more firmly to Jesus Christ and to His promises. With Him no catastrophes or persecutions can frighten us. Jesus does not promise us an easy life of amusements and revelry, nor any cheap harmony, but He promises peace which this world cannot give. The promise of the Resurrection is Good News for the world. Our Saviour convinces us that not death, but life, will ultimately triumph. From Him flows the energy that gives us joy. A young man, recently told he had cancer, met a priest two days before he died. He told him, 'In these two days I've learned two important things about myself. First, I'm not afraid of death. My whole life I've been preparing for this moment. Second, it's become clear to me that Jesus is my friend. From my earliest years I've tried to serve Him.'

That's Christian hope in real life. Not bravado, not wishful thinking, but the calm, steady trust that comes from walking with Jesus day by day. When we know Christ as friend and Lord, death is no longer a wall but a doorway, not the end, but the passage to the Father's house. This hope doesn't deny pain or fear, but it keeps them in their place. It gives joy in the present, courage for what's ahead, and strength to love right to the end.

"Our world needs people who have precisely such deep, Christian hope. Only such true hope can give the joy of life and energy for life; it can ward off disappointments and anxieties. In conclusion, let us quote the words of Saint Paul the Apostle from the Letter to the Romans: May the God [the giver] of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15:13).

\* \* \*

*"It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity,*



*the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.” (Saint John Paul II, Vigil of World Youth Day, Tor Vergata, 19 August 2000).*

In Christ's love,

Fr Anthony

## CHRIST IN ICONS: 5. THE RAISING OF LAZARUS



Andrei Rublev – *The Raising of Lazarus*  
14<sup>th</sup> century – Tempera on board; The Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow

Saint John's Gospel gives us the fullest account of the raising of Lazarus (John 11), and it's the place to go if you want the pattern for how this scene has been imagined in Christian art. The Church reads the episode as a sign that points ahead to the Lord's Passion and Resurrection: Jesus conquers sin and death, reveals himself as "the resurrection and the life", and invites us to trust him in the face of grief and the grave. It's also the moment that shows his deep humanity – "Jesus wept" – and his divine authority – he calls a man four days dead back to life.

From early Christian times, the miracle was celebrated liturgically. In the Orthodox tradition there's a specific "Lazarus Saturday" just before Palm Sunday. In the Roman Catholic calendar, the Gospel is proclaimed on the Fifth Sunday of Lent in Year A and used in the Scrutinies for those preparing for Baptism, precisely because it proclaims new life in Christ. We also honour the household of Bethany – Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus – on 29 July. All this underlines how the Church

sees the event: not simply a wonder, but a clear step towards Easter and a promise of our own resurrection.

Iconographic depictions tend to stay close to John's narrative. The setting is the cave-tomb at Bethany, with the town's walls often suggested in the background. Christ stands at the centre, surrounded by disciples and onlookers; Lazarus emerges from the tomb, still bound in grave cloths; and helpers are there to move the stone and unbind him, following Jesus' command.

Andrei Rublev's version, like the icon you may have seen alongside, streamlines the scene for greater focus and drama. He pares back the crowd to a handful of figures so that the eye is drawn immediately to Christ, who stands on the compositional axis and, with a clear, commanding gesture, calls Lazarus to rise. Lazarus is shown wrapped in a white shroud, stepping forward in obedience to the word that restores him. At the Lord's feet kneels one of Lazarus's sisters – traditionally Martha – fixed in expectant trust as she looks to Jesus. Two young attendants energetically push aside the stone, ready to do what the Lord will shortly ask: "Unbind him, and let him go." Rublev's figures are solid and tactile, their presence almost weighty; the colours are strong and warm, with reds and browns dominating, which adds to the sense of immediacy.

Theologically, it's worth noting the difference between Lazarus's return and Christ's own Resurrection. Lazarus is restored to this earthly life and will one day die again; Christ rises in



glory, never to die. Even so, Lazarus's rising is a real victory over death and a pledge of what is to come. It stirs faith (Martha's confession is central: "I believe that you are the Christ") and triggers the final opposition to Jesus, setting the stage for Holy Week. For us, it points to the sacramental life – especially Baptism, where we pass from death to life – and it reassures us that no grave is beyond the reach of the Lord's voice.

In short, the raising of Lazarus is both deeply human and profoundly divine: grief, friendship, and tears on one side; authority, mercy, and life on the other. Artists like Rublev help us see the Gospel afresh, but the heart of the matter remains the same – Christ calls, and those who hear his voice live.

## Wounded Light

Commentaries on the Gospel of St John

Saint John's Gospel is used in the lectionary for Sundays on particular occasions, feasts and solemnities, and also in certain seasons, e.g. Easter.

### Chapter 2

### Light of the Word

John 1:1–18

When someone we care about is stuck in a really tough spot, we reach for words. We try explanations, encouragements, and all the love we can muster, hoping to throw a bit of light into their darkness. We put our whole selves into it because we want them to see that their life can change. In a far deeper way, God has done exactly that for the whole human family. He has given us His Word as light, and in that Word He has given us Himself. The Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, and His light makes sense of life's meaning and goal: not simply to get by, but to receive power to become children of God; to be reborn for eternity.

We're not just bundles of appetites and needs. We also have a deep, aching desire to be needed by someone. Abraham Joshua Heschel once put it bluntly: "I need nothing so much as to be needed by someone." That desire points to something bigger than us and, astonishingly, it's answered by God. God, who is love, truly wants us. Not because He lacks anything – He is eternally complete – but because His love is generous, personal, and free. God is Father eternally in relation to the Son; that's who He is in Himself. By sheer grace He also calls us into that family, adopting us as His children through Christ. So our craving to belong isn't a mistake; it's a clue to our real destiny.

That awareness lands like light. We don't just need someone for a quick favour; we long to be wanted forever, for a happiness that doesn't fade. And that's exactly what God offers. His love isn't a mood or a passing feeling; it's His very being. In Christ we see the Invisible and receive "grace upon grace" – promise fulfilled, understanding deepened, hope secured. The Father's love comes to us in the Son, and through the Spirit we are drawn into that life.

Now, set that truth against the backdrop of our age. John's Prologue – "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh" – shines with a sharp brilliance when we look around and see an orphaned civilisation. Fatherhood is often sidelined or rejected; we've normalised men who never grow up and cultures where many children struggle without a stable home. We've also opened doors to technologies – genetic interventions, heterologous procedures, sperm banks – that can obscure the meaning of procreation and the dignity of the child. Even some atheists have raised alarm bells. Jacques Testart, a biologist and a critic of artificial

insemination, argues that children aren't indifferent to parentage the way animals are. When Sweden permitted heterologous insemination, reports surfaced of children driven by a fierce desire to know their biological fathers – a kind of “genetic jealousy”, a desperate search for identity. Whether one accepts every detail of those accounts or not, the point stands: people are made for belonging, for a name, for a face, for a father.

Here's a simple way to test if I'm living as a child of God: if I truly am, I'll go looking for Him. I'll drop lesser things to seek the One who gives me my name and my home. It's one thing to say “God is Father”; it's another to want Him and to be bonded to Him. Knowing the definition of love doesn't make you loved; you actually need the relationship. Jesus put it plainly to the apostles: “I will not leave you orphans.” Information about a distant father isn't enough. We need the embrace.

Years ago, a teenage girl told me she'd burned her eyelids under a bulb to get sent from a locked room to hospital, just so she could flee and find her mum. She wanted nothing more than an embrace. I said, “You could have gone blind.” She laughed in that slightly reckless way that comes from pain and said, “Better to be blind than unembraced.” It's a painful story, but it exposes something true: we will go to extreme lengths for love.

So how does God answer that need? He does it the way only God can: by coming close. In Christ crucified and risen, He has opened His arms; in the Holy Spirit, He pours love into our hearts; in the Church, He provides a real family; in the sacraments, He lets us touch, taste and see His mercy. Confession isn't a cold courtroom; it's a place of healing and a fatherly welcome. The Eucharist isn't a mere symbol; it's the living presence of the Son who brings us to the Father. Scripture isn't a dusty book; it's the Father speaking through the Son by the Spirit today. Prayer isn't just talking to the ceiling; it's the child coming home.

Now, a word of clarity because it matters. We mustn't play games with sin to chase the feeling of being forgiven. Grace isn't a trick to trigger an embrace on demand. Saint Paul is direct: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means.” Presumption injures love. The Father's arms are already open; we don't manufacture His care by doing wrong. Instead, we turn away from what harms us so we can receive what heals us. Confession, mercy, absolution – these are medicine for the wounded, not fuel for recklessness.

All of this brings us back to where we started: words used with love can brighten someone's darkness. God's Word, made flesh, does more. It changes us. It shows us that our lives aren't accidents or dead ends. We are called, wanted, named, adopted. In a culture that often forgets fathers and leaves children longing, the Gospel tells a different story: the Father has sent the Son to gather His sons and daughters, and the Spirit makes that adoption real in our hearts. If we feel orphaned by the world, Christ reminds us we're not abandoned. If we're searching, He invites us to seek and find. If we're hurt, He offers forgiveness and a future.

So, don't settle for information about God. Go for the embrace. Let the Word who became flesh lead you into the Father's arms. That's not sentiment; it's the deepest truth about who we are and where we're going.

*Fr Anthony*

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## THE DRAMATIC BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

Saint John Paul II warned of “**an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life’.**” We are not merely observers, he stressed, but participants with the “inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally



pro-life” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 28). His words still resonate. Where faith in God is weakened and moral standards erode, societies drift towards self-destructive choices. Catholic teaching holds that the dignity of the human person and the good of the family must be safeguarded against ideologies and influences that undermine fidelity, responsibility and openness to life.

Many Catholics recognise in elements of contemporary culture a rejection of Christian family life and a normalisation of sexual licence, marital infidelity, contraception and abortion, alongside a discouragement of large families and the generous raising of children. Literature has long sounded similar notes of caution. Fyodor Dostoevsky observed that when a nation’s spiritual ideal falters, its civic principles soon follow. A world built on atheism alone, he warned, becomes blind to the human person and collapses under the weight of its own contradictions.

Against this backdrop, the Church continues to invite couples to embrace children as a gift. **The decision to welcome a third, fourth or fifth child is, in Catholic understanding, an act of trust in God’s providence. It is sustained by prayer, regular reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and a daily surrender to God’s will.** The sacrifices involved in raising children become, over time, occasions of growth in mutual love, joy and fulfilment, with God as the source of every blessing.

At the heart of today’s marital difficulties lies, for many, a crisis of faith: neglect of prayer, the abandonment of Christian moral practice, and the loss of a Christian culture in the home. Catholic teaching is clear that sin enslaves and distorts our freedom; the Gospel offers a way out through conversion, mercy and grace. Conscious of the manifold wounds inflicted by what Saint John Paul II called a “culture of death”, the Church urges prayer and repentance. We commend to God’s mercy all who have been involved in abortion and all unborn children whose lives were taken. We also pray for those in public office who support the destruction of innocent life or the legalisation of pornography. Naming moral evil for what it is is not an act of condemnation but of clarity; as Saint John Paul II cautioned, confusing good and evil places consciences on a path of “extremely serious and mortal danger” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 24). The Church likewise calls married couples to renounce contraception and to be open to the gift of life, trusting God’s grace to sustain them.



### ***The gift of life is God’s greatest grace***

Known as the “pope of families”, Saint John Paul II consistently affirmed the dignity of every child and the vocation of parents. “Each child born into the world is the ‘epiphany’ of God, is a gift of life, hope and love,” he said. “I pray for the children – born and unborn – in all the countries of the world: may each of them be accepted and surrounded with love” (Rome, 11 January 1998).

In Poland, he appealed for a change of attitude towards the unborn: “You must first change your attitude towards the conceived child. Even if it appears unexpectedly - it is said ‘unexpected – it is never an intruder or an aggressor. He is a human person, so he has the right not to let his parents deny him the gift of themselves, even if it requires a special sacrifice from them.

The world would turn into a nightmare if spouses in material difficulties saw in their conceived child only a burden and a threat to their stability; if, on the other hand, the well-off spouses



saw the child as an unnecessary and expensive living allowance. This would mean that love no longer counts in human life” (*Homily of Pope John Paul II*, Monday, 3 June 1991).

*Evangelium Vitae* sets out the Church’s teaching on the beginning of human life with notable clarity: “from the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already ... [Modern genetic science has demonstrated] that from the first instant there is established the programme of what this living being will be: a person, this individual person ... Right from fertilization the adventure of a human life begins” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 60).



Life is entrusted first to parents. Saint John Paul II reminded mothers and fathers of their mission: “God gave you a special vocation. To ensure human life should exist on this earth, he called you to live together as the community of the family. You are the first guardians and caretakers of life even if it is as yet unborn... Accept the gift of life as the greatest grace of God, as His blessing for the family, for the nation, and for the Church... Each child conceived in its mother’s womb has the right to life! Human life is sacred. No one, in any situation, can claim the right to

the direct destruction of an innocent human life. Only God is the Lord of the life of man, formed in His own image and likeness” (cf. Genesis 1:26–28). “Human life on earth is, therefore, sacred and inviolable... God resolutely protects life with the Commandment given on Mount Sinai: ‘Thou shalt not kill’” (14 June 1999).

### ***Married couples: purity of heart and daily conversion***

“The call to purity of heart” is central to Christian discipleship. Saint Paul’s counsel remains timely: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). The Church teaches that maturity in love and purity of heart grow through a daily surrender to Christ, whose mercy heals the wounds of sin and frees us from destructive habits.

This is the purpose of the Church’s teaching: to help husbands and wives cultivate prayer, sacramental life and mutual self-giving, and to strengthen them against addiction and division. Anyone who wishes to offer their heart to Jesus for healing, and to learn from Him how to love with a pure heart, can with His grace.

### ***A fair summons to hope***

The Church’s stance is unambiguous: human life is sacred from conception, family is the primary school of love, and mercy is offered to all. Yet the tone is not accusatory but invitational. Catholics are urged to pray for those wounded by abortion and for those who

promote laws contrary to human dignity, and to seek forgiveness for their own failings. In every case, the remedy is the same: conversion to Christ, confidence in Divine Mercy, and a renewed commitment to the Gospel of life.

For couples and families, this path is demanding but life-giving. With faith, prayer and the sacraments, the years of child-rearing become a source of grace, deepening love and joy. In that spirit, may every home rediscover the harmony that comes when Christ is at its centre, and may every child – born and unborn – be welcomed as the epiphany of God's love.

## *We read Pope Leo XIV*

**On the wounded faces of the poor we recognize the suffering of the innocent, and thus the suffering of Christ himself.**

The lot of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, continually demands a response: from our lives, our societies, political and economic systems, and also – no less importantly – from the Church. On the wounded faces of the poor we recognize the suffering of the innocent, and thus the suffering of Christ himself. At the same time, perhaps we should speak rather of the many faces of the poor and of poverty, because it is a varied reality; indeed, there are different forms of poverty: the poverty of those who lack the material means to live, the poverty of those who are socially excluded and have no opportunity to express their dignity and their abilities, moral and spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, the poverty of those who find themselves in situations of personal or social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom. (...) Concrete commitment on behalf of the poor should be accompanied by a change of mentality that can affect the cultural level. For the illusion of happiness that comes from a life of plenty drives many people to perceive existence in terms of accumulating wealth and achieving social success at any cost, even at the expense of others, exploiting unjust social ideals and politico-economic systems that favour the strongest. In this way, in a world in which more and more people are poor, we paradoxically also observe the growth of wealthy elites living in a bubble of very comfortable and luxurious conditions, almost in a different world than ordinary people. This means that there still exists – sometimes well disguised – a culture that discards others, even without realizing it, and tolerates with indifference the fact that millions of people die of hunger or live in conditions unworthy of the human person. A few years ago, a photograph of a dead child lying on a beach along the Mediterranean Sea caused tremendous stir; unfortunately, beyond a brief stirring of emotion, such events are becoming less and less significant as marginal news. (...) The poor do not exist by chance or because of a blind and bitter fate. And certainly for most of them poverty is not a choice.

***Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi te, on love for the poor, nos. 9, 11, 14.***

The poor are not a peripheral issue for the Church (...), but are our dearest brothers and sisters, because each of them, through the life, words, and wisdom he or she brings, inspires us to personally experience the truth of the Gospel. The World Day of the Poor therefore aims to remind our communities that the poor are at the centre of all pastoral work. Not only in its charitable dimension, but also in what the Church celebrates and proclaims. God embraced their poverty in order to enrich us with their voices, stories, faces. All forms of





poverty, without exception, are a summons to live the Gospel concretely and to give effective signs of hope.

**Message for the 9<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor, no. 5, November 16, 2025.**

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## *In my opinion*

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### ***Marian titles clarified: keeping Mary in Christ's light***

My thoughts on the Vatican "Note" *Mater Populi fidelis*

**What does it mean to call Mary the Mother of the Son of God "in his human nature", and how does her virginity point to his divine origin?**

From the earliest centuries the Church has seen Mary above all in relation to Christ. That perspective sits at the heart of the note published on 4<sup>th</sup> November by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mater Populi fidelis*, on certain Marian titles linked to Mary's cooperation in salvation. Its central line is unambiguous: "Therefore, a gaze directed toward her [Mary] that would turn us away from Christ or place her on a par with the Son of God would be foreign to authentic Marian faith" (no. 66).

At heart, the document restates the Church's belief that teaching about Mary, and the devotion it inspires, must be genuine and firmly centred on Christ. The note is clearly Christ-focused: it presents Mary and her titles as always underlining the unrivalled primacy of Christ's unique role as mediator.

That focus clarifies two perennial points. First, when the Church calls Mary "Mother of the Son of God," it speaks of the person she bore, not of the divine nature she did not generate. She is mother of the Word made flesh – true God and true man – because motherhood pertains to the person, and the person of Jesus is the eternal Son. Hence the ancient title Theotokos, "God-bearer," guards the truth of the Incarnation. Secondly, her perpetual virginity is a sign of Christ's divine origin: Jesus is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit without human seed. Mary's virginity does not lessen the fullness of Christ's humanity; rather, it witnesses that His coming is God's sovereign initiative and gift.

Reaction to the note has been quick, but its message is traditional and theologically balanced. Its wide scope, shown by the many footnotes, might suggest urgent problems. Yet when it turns to specific questions about Mary, the concerns seem less serious than the scale implies. The pastoral guidance is clear: Marian faith and devotion must not draw us away from Christ, and must never place Mary on the same level as the Son.

After many years, indeed decades of thinking about Mary's titles, I have not encountered a single serious theological work – ancient or modern – that breaches either criterion. Exaggerations or naïve flourishes do occur, but they do not elevate Mary to Christ's rank, let alone above him. Even the most ardent Marian Christians cherish Saint Ambrose's fourth-century axiom: "Mary is the temple of God, not the God of the temple."

Why, then, do occasional excesses arise? We rightly want to express Mary's singular grace and dignity among creatures. Vatican II's *Lumen gentium* says she "far surpasses all other creatures, both heavenly and earthly" (no. 53). We also want to honour her utterly unique bond with Christ as His Mother. That combination can strain our language. We do not possess a perfect theological vocabulary for her mystery, and our attempts to capture it – often through titles used in prayer – can lean into superlatives.

There is another challenge. When we speak about Mary – and about womanhood more broadly – we often use language shaped by love and reverence, drawing on symbolic and poetic images. These ways of speaking are powerful and pastorally helpful, but they can go too far if we try to turn them into strict doctrine.

The note does not ask us to drop symbolic or heartfelt expressions; it calls for care. Emotional language is not dogma and should not be made into a dogmatic definition. Feelings do not fit easily into dogma, and forcing them into that shape risks twisting the faith

to suit an ideology. Such expressions are meant to show a personal bond, not to create a new abstract theory.

In that sense, the cautions regarding “Co-redemptrix” are understandable. The line, “The use of the title Co-redemptrix to designate Mary’s cooperation [in the work of Redemption] is always improper” (no. 22), is strong. In the UK context, where the title is rare and mostly confined to traditional prayers, it may sound stricter than the situation warrants, and it hardly “requires numerous and constant explanations” (no. 22). Historically, some popes have used the term in a qualified way, and its advocates emphasise Mary’s subordinate, wholly dependent cooperation. The note’s firmness is more relevant in circles seeking dogmatic definition. Further research on Mary’s instrumental participation – always under Christ and never alongside him – in the one redemption wrought by the Saviour still remains possible and worthwhile.

A similar dynamic surrounds “Mediatrix,” particularly in forms such as “Mother of Grace” and “Mediatrix of all graces.” These venerable, passionate titles are not dismissed by the note; rather, it invites a sound understanding within the undeniable truth that Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator and the single source of grace. Mary’s maternal intercession and participation are entirely derivative and subordinate to Him.

All this leads to a simple pastoral point. Mary does not replace our personal effort to cooperate with Christ; she strengthens it. Her role in our salvation history is real and intercessory, but she chiefly shows us what cooperation looks like and how far communion with her Son can grow. In our time it is especially helpful to esteem Mary as “Disciple” in relation to Christ, and “Teacher” in relation to us – as the note itself suggests – so that we may live our share in the work of salvation more faithfully.

*Mater Populi fidelis, the Vatican note on certain Marian titles relating to Mary’s cooperation in the work of salvation, responds to numerous questions addressed to the Holy See in recent decades.*

*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** Teresa Dunne (2013), David Wike (2016) **and all those whose anniversaries fall around this time.**

## News and Events

**Tea and coffee** this Sunday due to the in the parish hall, all welcome.

**Christmas Concert:** We plan to have a Christmas concert on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 6pm in the church.

Please contact Lesley Yoneda on 07905 371837 or lyoneda13@gmail.com if you would like to participate in whatever way you are able.

*Any funds raised to go toward the repair of the parish hall interior gable wall and roof.*



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