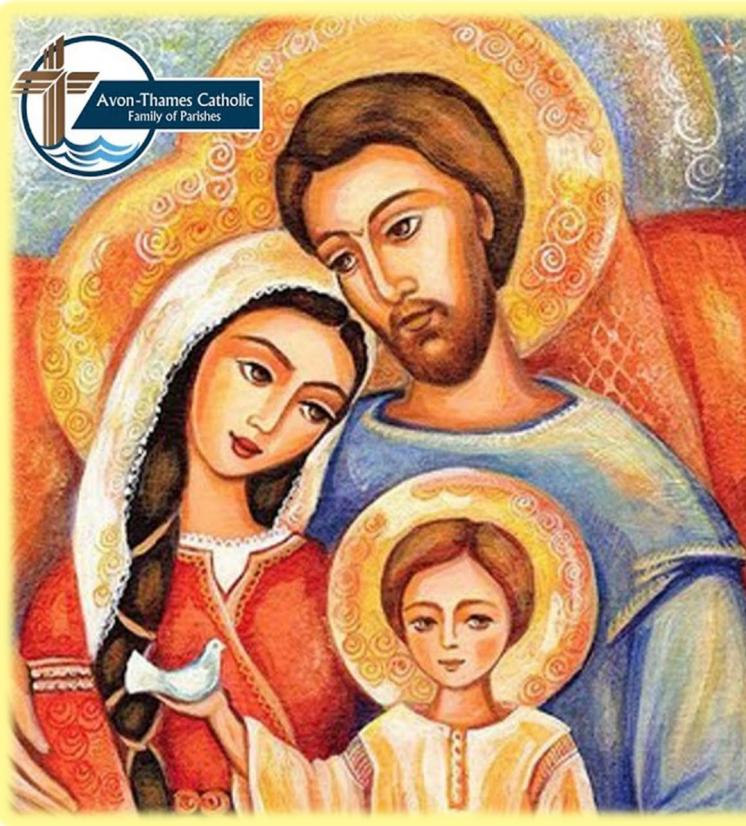


PARISH BULLETIN

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

28th December 2025



Feast of the Holy Family

The Feast of the Holy Family

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional (Sunday only)

577 Unto us is born a son

Offertory

78 Child in a manger

Post Communion

605 What child is this

Recessional

487 Sing of Mary, pure and lowly

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Tuesday: Holy Mass, 6.00pm

Thursday – the first day of 2026; **Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God**: Adoration and Mid-morning Prayer, 9.30am; **Holy Mass, 10.00pm**.

Friday: Mid-morning Prayer; Mass, 10.00am.

Next weekend:

Saturday: Vigil Mass; the blessing of Epiphany Water: **6.00pm**

Epiphany of the Lord: **Holy Mass;** the blessing of frankincense, myrrh, gold and chalk, **10.00am**

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

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Epiphany, 4th January 2026: Holy Mass, 4pm

Sunday, 18th January 2026: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, and walk in his ways.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts;
let the message of Christ find a home with you.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

Take Five

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

MONDAY: 5TH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS 29 DECEMBER 2025

Your attention, please!

"Be attentive," the theologian Bernard Lonergan used to say, to which he added: "Be intelligent. Be reasonable. Be responsible." Do those and you will have understanding. In this Christmas season, think of the attentiveness of Simeon. He was a devout and righteous man who stayed in the Temple waiting for the salvation of the people. When Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem, Simeon recognized the saviour immediately. Because of his humble faith, Simeon's eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit. Signs of God's presence are around you, too. Ask the Spirit to help you see them with the gift of attentiveness.

Today's readings: 1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35. *"My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples."*

TUESDAY: 6TH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS 30 DECEMBER 2025

Give a little

When it comes to the virtue of generosity, it's easy to believe that wealthy people are the only ones who can afford to be generous while the rest of us are just getting by from week to week. But consider this: Generosity is a state of mind; it doesn't depend on the size of your bank account. To offer someone the gift of a genuine smile, a hug, or a few minutes of attentive listening doesn't cost a cent. When you are generous in these simple ways, two things happen: You learn that you have something to offer (which sometimes is a surprise), and the recipient learns that he or she is worthy of the gift. Make it a point to give and receive the gift of generosity today, and see what happens.

Today's readings: 1 John 2:12-17; Luke 2:36-40. *"Yet the world and its desire are passing away. But those who do the will of God live forever."*

WEDNESDAY: 7TH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS 31 DECEMBER 2025

Some friendly advice

The seventh day of Christmas is also New

Year's Eve when many of us will find ourselves singing "Auld lang syne," which speaks of days long gone and the healing and joy one experiences in remembering one's most intimate friends and the moments that have sealed those friendships. Companionship has marked the way of Christ from the day Jesus first invited James and John, Peter and Andrew to be not only followers but friends. Your own journey in Christ's footsteps has undoubtedly been graced by those who have walked with you. Say their names. Right now. Picture them, call them, write to them, pray for them today. Give the gift of companionship.

Today's readings: 1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18. *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

THURSDAY: SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD 1 JANUARY 2026

Warm to the idea of protecting creation

Within a couple of decades the Arctic ice cap may disappear entirely in summer months because of global warming, experts warn. The theme of today's World Day of Prayer for Peace is therefore quite timely: "If you want to cultivate peace, protect the creation." Citing the many environmental challenges, a Vatican statement cautions that "if the human family is unable to face these new challenges with a renewed sense of social justice and equity, and of international solidarity, we run the risk of sowing seeds of violence among peoples, and between current generations and those to come." Pray for the gift of peace through the work you do to protect God's creation the whole year long.

Today's readings: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21. Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21. *"The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you!"*

FRIDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINTS BASIL THE GREAT AND GREGORY NAZIANZEN, BISHOPS, DOCTORS

2 JANUARY 2026

Share in a God-sized love

"God is on earth," said Saint Basil the Great – whom we celebrate today along with his friend Saint Gregory Nazianzen – in a fourth century

homily. "God is among us," Basil said, "not now as a lawgiver . . . but as one gently and kindly conversing in a human body with his fellow men and women. God is in the flesh." Perhaps a no more amazing thing could be said. God not only created human beings but wanted to be one of them so as to invite them into God's life. That's says a lot about the God we believe in—one who loves generously. Shouldn't we do the same?

Today's readings: 1 John 2:22-28; John 1:19-28. *"There is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me."*

SATURDAY: THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

3 JANUARY 2026

What's in a name?

How you talk about someone by name shows

the regard—or lack of it—you have for them. God gave the Israelites the commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Honouring the name of God, though, means more than not using it casually. It also involves showing respect for whom the name represents. That there is a feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus should come as no surprise. Devotion to Jesus' name goes back many centuries, and the Franciscan saints Bernardine of Siena and John of Capistrano helped to make it popular. Honouring the name honours Jesus the person and his presence in your everyday life

Today's readings: 1 John 2:29; John 1:29-34. *"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."*

Readings for the feast of the Holy Family

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

An old man reminds a young one the debt each generation owes to the last.

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Prosperity will follow the one who follows the will of the Lord.

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Dress with care in the virtues that are perfected in love.

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Joseph remains obedient to dreams, angels, and the promptings of God.

Words on Word

*

A certain legend tells of a married couple who were having a hard time: he – though wise and educated – could not find a position anywhere; she – admittedly resourceful and thrifty – had nothing to put in the pot. He believed in himself and hoped for better times. She – tired of waiting – lost patience and insisted that she had to leave to marry another (of course, richer!). After much urging, he painfully consented to the departure of his beloved wife. Soon afterward fat years came for him: he received a splendid job, and in addition a sizable inheritance came his way, so that he quickly became a wealthy and respected man. His former wife, upon learning of this, returned with a request that he take her back again: "I am still alone and poor," she explained. He looked at her for a long time in silence; then he told her to pour the water from the jug onto the ground. The woman carried out the order without hesitation.

- Now, please, gather up that water, he ordered coolly.
- "How," she asked, "am I to gather spilled water?" The man only shook his head sadly...

* *

We often refer to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the Holy Family. That doesn't mean life was always

lovely for them. From the Gospels, we learn they faced real struggles: they were poor, and they couldn't even find a proper place for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Then, as we hear in today's reading, they were forced to flee to Egypt to escape Herod.

At Christmas, we naturally want to renew our family bonds – visiting our relatives, sending Christmas cards, reconnecting with loved ones. And so, during the Christmas season, on the Sunday right after the big feast, we celebrate the Sunday of the Holy Family. After all, most of us arrive in this world within a family, we're usually raised in one, and it's often where our faith is first sparked.

Tertullian, a Christian writer around the second and third centuries, captured this beautifully. He wrote, "How can I extol the happiness of that marriage which the Church binds, the Eucharistic offering strengthens, and the blessing seals, which angels proclaim and the Father ratifies? (...) What a yoke of two believers united in one hope, in one fidelity kept, in one service! Both are siblings and both serve together; there is no division between them either as to body or as to spirit. Rather, they are truly two in one flesh, and where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit."

When talking about so-called free unions, which seem more common nowadays, Saint John Paul II had a few pointed remarks: "Some persons feel almost compelled to this kind of life by difficult economic, cultural and religious situations, because contracting a proper marriage would expose them to harm, to the loss of economic benefits, to discrimination, etc. Others, however, manifest an attitude of contempt, protest and rejection of society, of the institution of the family, of the socio-political order, or else the exclusive pursuit of pleasure. Still others are driven to this by complete ignorance and extreme poverty, and at times by conditions arising from situations of real injustice, or by a certain psychological immaturity which makes them too uncertain and fearful to enter a stable and definitive union. In some countries traditional customs provide for the conclusion of a proper and true marriage only after a certain period of cohabitation and after the birth of the first child" (*Familiaris Consortio*).

In today's Gospel, the story of the Holy Family – told in a way that's inspired countless poets and painters – also highlights a harsh reality: from the very moment of Jesus's birth, the world was already turning against Him. Still, the Holy Family followed God's plan of salvation. Both then and now, the life of Jesus, His Church, and His followers is often a story marked by challenges, hardships, and even martyrdom. Bethlehem's light and the world's darkness can't really get along. But the Gospel makes it clear where the final victory lies: "those who were seeking the child's life are dead" (Mt 2:20). In other words, God always wins.

The world that Jesus enters doesn't easily welcome salvation. The Gospel paints a bleak picture – people living in darkness, completely unscrupulous, consumed by political power. In that realm, God seems to have no rightful place, and the powerful will run roughshod over the weak. It's the world of Herod and those who followed in his footsteps throughout history.

Even so, the Gospel offers real hope. God is the Lord of human history. No one's schemes or efforts can rewrite His plans. His authority rises above all else. Notice how quietly He intervenes: through an angel appearing in a dream, telling Joseph, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt" (Mt 2:13). Gentle, yet unstoppable. Jesus is Lord, and any believing family that places itself under His care can be sure it's living out His holy will.

* * *

Oh, how greatly we would like to return anew to the years of childhood and submit ourselves to that humble yet lofty school of Nazareth! How we would like, under Mary's gaze, to learn anew the true knowledge of life and the highest wisdom of God's laws!

But we are only passing through here. We must renounce that desire, so as to learn here to understand the Gospel, that teaching which in truth never comes to an end.

But before we depart, we must quickly, as it were by stealth, make our own a few brief lessons of Nazareth. First, the lesson of silence. Let respect for silence be reborn within us, that beautiful and irreplaceable attitude of the spirit. How necessary it is for us in our contemporary life, full of anxiety and tension, amid its turmoil, clamour and din. O silence of Nazareth, teach us recollection and interiority, openness to God's inspirations and to the words of the teachers of truth; teach us the need and value of preparation, of study, of meditation, of personal interior life and prayer, which God hears in secret.

There is also the lesson of family life. Let Nazareth teach us what the family is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, its holy and indissoluble character. Let us learn from Nazareth that family upbringing is precious and irreplaceable, and that in the social sphere it has a primary and incomparable importance.

Finally, the example of work. O Nazareth, "home of the Carpenter's Son," it is precisely here that we would like to understand and strengthen the austere yet saving law of human work, to restore awareness of its value, to remind that work cannot be an end in itself, but that its value and the freedom it gives flow more from the value of the end it serves than from the economic benefits it brings. How we would like to greet from here all the workers of the whole world and show them the great example of their divine Brother, the prophet of all their just rights – Christ, our Lord! (from the address of Pope Paul VI, Nazareth, 5 January 1964).

In Christ's love,

Fr Anthony

CHRIST IN ICONS: 11. MANDYLION – ACHEIROPOIETOS

The origins of the Mandylion are typically traced back to the legend of King Abgar of Edessa and

the miraculous effect of Christ's image "not made by human hands" – namely, the impression of His face on a cloth. This remarkable imprint underpins the Byzantine concept of icons as "likenesses of the original representation imprinted on fabric". Every year on 16 August, the Eastern liturgy commemorates this legend and the Mandylion's transfer from Edessa to Constantinople with a special feast honouring the divine image.

The earliest surviving examples of the Mandylion date from the sixth century. Many believe these representations strongly influenced depictions of Christ in the Pantokrator type. The "not-made-by-human-hands" icon features Christ with long hair and balanced features, posed against a backdrop of fabric. Encircled by a cross-shaped halo, His solemn, bearded face highlights the striking, almost otherworldly eyes. Other icons inspired by the Mandylion include images such as Christ with the Wet Beard or Christ with a stern gaze. In Western art, this type is linked to the Vera Icon, showing Saint Veronica holding



Simon Ushakov: Icon Christ "not created by human hands"

1658; 53 x 42 cm, tempura on board, Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow

the cloth with Christ's face.

The example by Simon Ushakov demonstrates his characteristic style: although it follows the traditional iconographic outline, the face is rendered with the kind of chiaroscuro modelling familiar in Western artworks.

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, Christmas.

Chapter 7(b)

Seeing the Truth: Sense and nonsense

John 1:39

He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

Ever notice how, when someone pops up with a truly important or wise statement, everyone perks up and pays attention? On the flip side, if they're rattling off tired clichés that don't help anyone, we're quick to tune them out. That's the contrast we see when Jesus strolls into the synagogue: He speaks powerful, comforting words to those in dire need – prisoners, the hopeless, the oppressed. And aren't we often in that boat ourselves?

A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE NO SENSE OF PURPOSE

Let's be honest: plenty of us are drifting without a clear goal. We sometimes wonder what the point of everything is. The Book of Revelation famously calls Jesus the ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. But why talk about letters at all? Because letters form words, words shape thoughts, thoughts build our knowledge, and knowledge flows from experience. In short, words give us meaning. Without them, life can feel empty. Jesus is the ALPHA – meaning He's our beginning, the core of life – while also the OMEGA, the last letter, pointing us towards our final goal, reminding us He identifies with the weakest and the least.

SEARCHING FOR MEANING

So many questions: Where am I going? Why am I here? We can't really be happy until we have a handle on life's purpose. Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, described how he survived multiple concentration camps thanks to three main motivators. First, he was determined to rewrite a manuscript snatched from him in the camp – he believed his words would help people struggling with life's meaning. He scribbled bits of it on scraps of paper, convinced it would benefit others one day. That sense of mission gave him unimaginable resilience.

We all need something – or someone – that keeps us going. For you, it might be your family, your work, or a cause that sets your heart on fire. In my case, it's preaching the Gospel. Before I proclaim it, I write, reflect, and pray. Day by day, I'm crafting what I believe will draw others to Christ, who can turn our "concentration-camp" world into something brimming with hope.

THE POWER OF LOVE

Frankl also stayed alive because he longed to reunite with his beloved wife. Love, he discovered, can get us through the most crushing suffering. Even if you lose everything, as long

as you love someone – or something – there's hope. But imagine if that cherished person passes away or abandons you. Who's left to live for then? This is exactly why it's vital to fix our hearts on Christ. He doesn't die, doesn't betray, and never walks away. Even when everybody else is gone, we can still cling to Him – a love that never fails.

TURNING TRAGEDY INTO TRIUMPH

The third pillar that kept Frankl going was his decision to turn his tragedy into a personal victory. With no way to change the dreadful situation, he allowed it to change him instead. And, in the end, he emerged from the camps a transformed man – wiser, more compassionate, ready to lead others out of despair. If you're ever stuck in a hopeless moment, try to see how that crisis is shaping you. There's often meaning in what feels meaningless at the time.

The ultimate example is Jesus. In His darkest hour – His crucifixion – He turned apparent defeat into victory three days later. And the Bible emphasises how those “three days” felt like an eternity for everyone watching. Sometimes, real triumphs only emerge after we've hit rock bottom.

FINDING HOPE IN SCRIPTURE

I'm not spinning these ideas out of thin air. They're backed up by experiences of desperate suffering in my own life. In my worst moments, when I had nobody to pull me out of despair, I'd grab my Bible and pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Time after time, the Bible would fall open at the same words from 2 Corinthians: “Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.” (1:9-10) Those verses are practically smudged to oblivion in my Bible from reading and underlining them so often!

GLIMPSES OF MEANING

It's never that life is actually meaningless – rather, we might not yet understand what's going on. Over the years, I've spoken to thousands of people convinced their lives had no purpose. But as we talked, as they put things into words, they often had a sudden glimpse: Ah, so that's why this happened! Jesus talks about having words that open the eyes of the blind, free the imprisoned, and bring good news to the poor. When we're totally stripped of everything, only then can God's words fill our minds and hearts with hope again.

BELIEF AND HOPE

Frankl notes that prisoners who gave up hope couldn't survive those hellish conditions. Similarly, in her account of battling schizophrenia, a woman named Arnchild Lauvang wrote about how she later found healing. Even when she lost faith in an immediate cure, she still clung to hope. While faith has that steady conviction, hope is like a lifeline that refuses to let go.

She also describes how she kept a childlike belief that God is there, both on our best days and absolute worst. In Ezekiel 34:16, she found the line: “I will search for the lost, bring back those who've strayed, bandage the injured and strengthen the weak.” Eventually, she went from being a long-term patient to becoming a clinical psychologist, sharing hope with others.

SUFFERING THAT CHANGES US

Sometimes, we trudge through our personal hell so that one day, we can guide others out of theirs. Realising that our dark times can have purpose protects us from the ultimate surrender – losing hope. Back in 1940, plenty of people in France thought there was no chance of beating the Nazi war machine. If they had all given in, then real victory would've been lost from the

start.

It's similar in moments of personal agony. I remember a night of severe physical pain when I was on the edge of despair, and not so long ago. I found myself yelling for Jesus in my mind – nobody else. In those desperate hours, it suddenly becomes clear who really matters to us. Eventually, I got treatment, but those long hours (at night) taught me that even unbearable pain can be endured if we hold fast and trust that help is coming.

WHEN YOU FEEL FORSAKEN

I once came across an older woman who said her life was pointless. She had no husband, children, or fulfilling job; she felt no one needed or understood her. Her suffering was beyond words. So, I asked, "Which hour of Jesus' life do you think was most crucial – apart from the Resurrection?" Without blinking, she replied, "When He hung on the Cross, forsaken." Exactly. Jesus Himself cried out, "My God, why have You forsaken me?" She felt similarly forsaken.

But if God was truly all she had left, then she was perfectly placed to form a deep, life-giving bond with Him. People often look for salvation in someone just as broken as themselves, and that rarely fixes anything. Whereas turning our hopelessness towards Christ can be the start of something extraordinary, even if it's hard to see at first.

HOLDING ONTO HOPE

In the end, hope and meaning often show up in places we least expect. Sometimes, we only see it once the storm has passed or the tomb is found empty. Even then, we might have to wait longer than we'd like. But that's how the greatest victories are won.

An American philosopher and psychologist, William James, supposedly told people tempted by suicide, "Read tomorrow's newspaper first." If a random piece of news can revive hope, how much more can God's words lift our spirits? If you're feeling like giving up, pick up tomorrow's Gospel reading instead – you might find the thread of hope you need. After all, God has a habit of turning our defeats into triumphs, precisely when we think the story's over.

Fr Anthony

THE TRUTH OF CHRISTMAS

For many believers, Christmas isn't just about decorations and presents – it's about celebrating one of the greatest mysteries in human history. Judaism and Christianity stand out because, long before Christ's birth in Bethlehem, the prophets of the Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messiah.

Unlike Muhammad, the Buddha, Confucius, or other religious founders, the arrival of Jesus Christ was both foretold and eagerly anticipated. From the earliest days of the Chosen People up to now, He's honoured as the Saviour – the God-Man.

A UNIQUE PHENOMENON

For a staggering 40 centuries, Jews and Christians have paid homage to the promised Messiah, defying any usual patterns of history. These two faiths offer a completely unparalleled phenomenon compared with other religions. Yet it wasn't easy for people to recognise the long-awaited Messiah in a newborn child lying in a humble stable. Identifying Him as the true God – who became truly human – was, by normal human standards, nearly impossible, especially for those who worshipped the transcendent Yahweh, whose name was so sacred it was not to be spoken aloud.

The Jewish authorities ultimately sentenced Jesus to death because, as a man, He claimed to be

God (see Mt 26:63–66). Meanwhile, Islam’s prophet Muhammad led a movement that also rejected the notion of Jesus’ divinity. Around the dome of Jerusalem’s Mosque of Omar, a key Islamic site, there’s an inscription reminding Christians that “Jesus is only the Son of Mary, a man like other men.”

For many Jews and pagans alike, the idea that the almighty Yahweh might be born at a specific time and place seemed absurd. Plenty of men cropped up in Jesus’ day claiming the title of Messiah – Barabbas, Theudas, Bar Kokhba, to name a few – leading revolts against the Romans. After their deaths, their movements fizzled out.

Christianity took a radically different path. Right after Jesus’ death and Resurrection, Jewish converts boldly proclaimed He was both truly God and truly risen. Their faith spread quickly throughout the Roman Empire – often at the risk of imprisonment or worse. Saint Paul, himself a Jewish convert, wrote, “Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name [...] every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD” (Phil 2:9–11). For anyone genuinely looking at the evidence, the birth of Christianity points to one of the biggest miracles in history – only possible through God Himself, who became fully human, died, and rose again. As Saint Paul also reminds us, “only those who by their wickedness suppress the truth” (Rom 1:18) refuse to accept it.

WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?

Various Jewish, Christian, and Roman sources confirm Jesus really did walk this earth. Of all historical figures from antiquity, Jesus Christ boasts the richest and most thoroughly documented biography. He was born during the reign of Emperor Octavian Augustus (30 BC – AD 14) and King Herod the Great (37 BC – 4 BC).

In AD 525, Pope John I asked a monk named Dionysius Exiguus to figure out the exact year of Christ’s birth. Dionysius claimed it happened in 754 from the founding of Rome, but modern researchers suggest he might have been off by six or seven years. So, if we’re being precise, Jesus was probably born in 747/748 from the founding of Rome, or 7/6 BC. Even so, Dionysius’ date stuck, hence the division of history into “before Christ” and “after Christ.”

DIVINITY HIDDEN IN HUMANITY

What sets Christianity apart is the astonishing fact that God became fully human. Born as a powerless infant, He bridges the infinite gap our sins create between us and God. Driven by love, the Creator takes on human nature, suffers and dies on our behalf, then rises from the dead, defeating evil and opening the door to salvation for all. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus once put it this way: God becomes man so every person can share in God’s nature (see 2 Pet 1:4).

But God never forces us to love Him; He honours our free will. By revealing Himself in Jesus, He chose to remain “hidden” in humanity – never overpowering us with spectacular displays of power. The baby in Bethlehem, the servant washing His disciples’ feet (Jn 13:8), and the man crucified for our sins all point to a love so humble and sincere that it respects our freedom.

In Jesus’ humanity, the mystery of the Trinity shines through: God in three Persons – Father, Son, Holy Spirit. We only begin to grasp this through faith “which works through love” (Gal 5:6). Then the words of Jesus make sense: “He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me” (Jn 12:45), and “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30).

Through the Incarnation, the Son of God “has in a certain way united Himself with every human being” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 22). This truth gives every person an untouchable dignity, starting at conception and lasting until natural death. Human worth isn’t

based on class, skin colour, intelligence, or health. It's rooted in our humanity, which God Himself took on. "Whatever you did to one of these least brothers of mine, you did to Me" (Mt 25:40) underscores that God intimately identifies with each one of us.

Jesus stands alongside every person, hoping to guide us through life's challenges towards the fullness of happiness in heaven. It's entirely up to each of us whether or not we embrace that call.

THE MYSTERY CONTINUES

The miracle of the Nativity – the God who became flesh – takes place anew in every age. Sadly, as in Bethlehem, there are still people who want nothing to do with Him (see Jn 1:11). But for believers who pray daily, confess their sins, receive the Eucharist often, and strive to follow the Gospel, the wonder of the Word-made-flesh unfolds day by day. As St Edith Stein put it, their lives become a "daily fulfilment of the mystery of the Divine Nativity."

We Read Pope Leo



Talk of Pope Leo XIV and the papacy arouses the constant interest of nearly all mass media. People talk about the Pope, but do they listen to the Pope and... read him? For a Catholic, failing to listen attentively to the content of the Holy Father's teaching – who fulfills his mission as the successor of Saint Peter – would be disrespectful. The Pope is the rock who, opposing self-will and conformism, guarantees unwavering fidelity

to the word of God. We therefore encourage you to listen closely to the words of Leo XIV and to read – together with us – his texts.

- Love and unity – these are the two guiding lights Jesus entrusted to Peter. We might feel overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness, telling ourselves that history has always been this way and can never change. But the Gospel reminds us that, precisely during tumultuous times, the Lord steps in to save us.
- With humility and joy, let's share a simple message with the world: Look to Christ! Draw near to Him! Listen to His Word, which brings light and comfort! By doing this together, we can restore the credibility of our wounded Church, sent to care for a wounded humanity in a wounded creation. We're not perfect yet, but we must strive to be trustworthy.
- Marriage isn't just a lofty ideal; it's the model of genuine love between a man and a woman: a love that's total, faithful, and fruitful. It makes the couple "one flesh" and empowers them, in God's image, to give life. Real peace takes root in our hearts. From there it radiates out, as we let go of our pride, curb our ambition, and weigh our words carefully. After all, we can wound and destroy with our tongues just as surely as with weapons.
- Evangelisation isn't about winning the world by our own means; it's a boundless grace that naturally spreads out when our lives are transformed by God's Kingdom. It follows the path of the Beatitudes, and we travel it side by side.

- Marian spirituality supports the Gospel by showing its humble simplicity. Loving Mary of Nazareth helps us, with her, to be disciples of Jesus. She guides us back to Him. Our lives shine not because we're wealthy, good-looking, or powerful, but because we discover within ourselves a divine call – a vocation, a mission. We realise our lives serve something greater than ourselves, and each person has a vital role to play.
- In the same way there's personal suffering, we also see entire nations in pain – crushed by violence, hunger, and war – crying out for peace. This cry is so urgent it spurs us to both prayer and action, so that violence might end and people might find serenity once again.
- Let's not be impatient or shallow in our thinking. We must dig deeper, free from the world's craving for instant results, because it hasn't learnt the wisdom of waiting. The Church's 2,000-year story teaches us that humility and patience – together with God's help – are the only ways to build a real faith community.
- The fullness of our lives isn't about hoarding more things. It depends on what we can gladly welcome and share with others. Simply buying, accumulating, and consuming will never be enough. We need to look up, to focus on "the things that are above," so we see that everything in this world only truly matters when it brings us closer to God and to one another in love.

In my opinion

A page from the calendar: a little less serious than usual

FESTIVE ALL YEAR ROUND

Amid the baroque domes of Salzburg and the strains of Silent Night (which originated here), on Mozart Square—the square of the all-time great composer, who was born here—there stands a unique Christmas Museum. Though it is only 10 years old, its owner and originator—Ursula Kloiber – collected the exhibits for 40 years. It began with those she inherited from her grandmother.

The gathered mementos related to Advent and Christmas have been given the title: "Holidays between Advent and the New Year in the years 1840–1940." Thus various Advent calendars, Christmas-tree decorations, crèches and figurines, even cookie cutters, have found their place here. There is no shortage of letters and Christmas cards. A room from those years has also been reconstructed, of course in Christmas décor. There are also paintings that relate in theme to Christmas. All this makes it possible to feel the festive atmosphere here all year round.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Does the whole world celebrate the start of the new year now?

It all depends on place of residence, religion, and culture. Countries using the Gregorian calendar, including Poland, greet the New Year on January 1. How is it in other parts of the world?

Greek Catholics and some Orthodox who use the Julian calendar in the liturgical cycle end the old year and begin the new during the so-called Malankas from January 13 to 14, by our reckoning; the very name of their New Year's Eve also comes from the name day celebrated on the last day of the year, that is, of Melania. On a daily basis, however, they use the Gregorian calendar.

To us this sounds complicated, but for those who use the Chinese calendar it's the norm. As Wikipedia notes, their New Year usually falls on the second (and sometimes the third) new moon after the winter solstice, which in turn must occur in the eleventh lunar month. In Buddhism, according to tradition, the new year began with the first full moon of April; today it usually has a fixed date—April 13. The Jewish New Year, in turn, is connected with the feast of Rosh Hashanah, which literally translates as "head of the year" and in Poland is known as the Feast of Trumpets. It commemorates the creation of the world and recalls God's judgment and is celebrated in September/October.

Fun facts

THE BRAZIL NUT EFFECT

If we shake a closed container filled with a mixture of things of different sizes, e.g., nuts, seeds, and sand, they will all be sorted by size. The effect is that, contrary to gravity, the largest elements will be on top and the smallest at the bottom. Why? Voids form under the large ones, which are filled by the smaller ones. In the process, elements in the middle sink, and those at the edges rise.

HOW DOES “GPS” WORK IN ANIMALS?

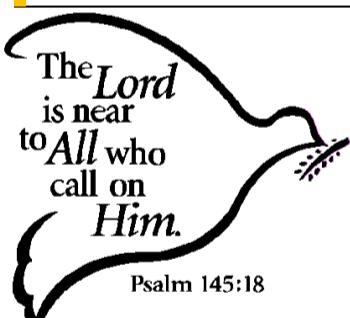
Scientists wonder how animals orient themselves during their migrations. It is known that they use the Earth’s magnetic field. For example, sea turtles are not only able to travel using our planet’s field, but are also able to remember the magnetic signatures of feeding grounds. The Earth’s magnetic field is produced by electric currents in the planet’s liquid core. Yet what mechanisms do animals use to employ it for localization? It is unknown where their magnetoreceptor cells are located or how the information originating from them is transformed into a perceptible and intelligible neural signal in their bodies.

DID YOU KNOW THAT.....HOT WATER FREEZES FASTER THAN COLD?

This statement is illogical; perhaps that is why scientists still cannot explain this phenomenon. We call it the Mpemba effect, after a 13-year-old student from Tanzania who in 1963 noticed it during a cooking class while making ice cream, though Aristotle, Francis Bacon, and Descartes had written about it earlier. This spectacular effect is easiest to observe when hot water is thrown into the air at extremely low temperatures, because it evaporates and freezes at the same time. One of the hypotheses that attempt to explain this phenomenon says that hot water evaporates more, which reduces its mass and leads to a faster drop in temperature. Experiments, however, have shown that this effect also occurs in closed containers, so other scholars have focused on dissolved gases. Hot water has a lower capacity to absorb them, which changes its thermal conductivity. Another hypothesis says that, in line with Newton’s law of cooling, a greater difference in temperature between two things leads to more efficient heat transfer. None of the hypotheses, however, explains the effect.

Tony Wood

Prayer



Please remember to pray for those who are unwell, in need, or have requested our prayers: Andrew McLaughlin, 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

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

New Year blessings upon all readers. May peace, harmony, health and joy be yours as the Lord grants, leading you into His true peace and love in the heart.

The blessing of frankincense, myrrh, gold and chalk. This sacramental will take place at the end of Holy Mass for the Epiphany. If you would like to take the opportunity to have any gold objects you have blessed at this time – just bring them along.



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