

PARISH BULLETIN

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

*Campbeltown and Islay
Ceann Loch Chille
Chiarain*

March 29, 2026



PASSION SUNDAY

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional (Sunday only)

465 Ride on! ride on in majesty!

Offertory

307 Let us break bread together on
our knees

Post Communion

498 Soul of my Saviour

Recessional

195 Hail, Redeemer, King divine

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Holy Week

Tuesday of Holy Week: **Holy Mass, 6pm**

Wednesday of Holy Week: **Holy Mass, 10am**

Maundy Thursday: **Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7pm**

Good Friday: **Celebration of the Lord's Passion, 3pm**

Next weekend:

Saturday of Holy Week: Blessing of Easter baskets,
2.00pm

Vigil of the Holy Night of Easter, 8.30pm

Easter Sunday: Holy Mass, 10am

Sacrament of Reconciliation: anytime on request.

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Easter Sunday, 5th April, Holy Mass and the blessing of Easter Water, 4pm

Psalm response

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Gospel acclamation

*Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
Christ became for us obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.*

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Communion Antiphon

*Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it,
your will be done.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

30 MARCH 2026

Honestly assess your motives

It's good to keep in mind that Jesus chose a thief to be one of his 12 apostles. Otherwise we might think Jesus chose us because we're so good! It's also ironic that Judas' false protest that the money spent to anoint Jesus should have been given to the poor elicited this famous rebuke from Jesus: "You will always have the poor with you." We use that quote today to put off giving to the poor. In reality the money we possess has been entrusted to us to help the needy. When we refuse to do so, we are thieves like Judas. There's one week left to repent.

Today's readings: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11. *"He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief."*

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

31 MARCH 2026

Look to yourself

We move into Holy Week with a sober reminder of our imperfect nature, exemplified by predictions of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial of Jesus. It would be easy to point a finger at their failings while denying our own potential to do the same. At one time or another we all disappoint those who count on us for support. Today is a good day to make some amends for past shortcomings or betrayals. Then you can move toward Easter with a lighter spirit and a more joyful heart.

Today's readings: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38. *"Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."*

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

1 APRIL 2026

Listen up

As Holy Week continues you might stop to think about the importance of listening for your Lenten journey. In prayer you listen for the Spirit of God and the promptings of your own heart. In *almsgiving* you listen for the voices of those in need and then respond. In fasting you listen to your own spiritual and physical hungers to sort out what is truly important. In these last few days of Lent, take some time to listen.

Today's readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25. *"The Lord God has opened my ear."*

MAUNDY THURSDAY

2 APRIL 2026

Live the memory

The liturgy of Holy Thursday is rich in symbolism and meaning. The stories of the first Passover and of Jesus celebrating the Passover with his friends contain images foundational to our self-understanding as Christians, images that for centuries have inspired our prayer, art, imagination, and theology. Today we do not merely remember the story of the Last Supper and the washing of feet; we open ourselves to God's presence here and now, which we experience in communion with our family and friends over a meal, during a liturgy, and by caring for one another and for those in need. May Holy Thursday be nourishing to you this day and may you find ways to make present the reality of God's deep love for you and for the world.

Today's readings: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15. *"This day shall be a day of remembrance for you."*

GOOD FRIDAY

3 APRIL 2026

Allow yourself to be raised up

On this most solemn of days we focus on the Passion and death of Jesus. But remember what happens tomorrow night: resurrection. The story is not over until that happens. Beyond the darkness of Good Friday will shine Easter light. God reaches out a hand to raise us up out of suffering, sin, even death, and calls us back to God. And the crucified Jesus shows us God's love: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends," Jesus says in the Gospel of John (15:13). Jesus is the human hand of God; all we need to do is grasp it.

Today's readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42. *"See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up."*

SATURDAY OF HOLY WEEK: VIGIL OF THE HOLY NIGHT OF EASTER

4 APRIL 2026

Nothing but the truth

In a world that so often is critically balanced between made-made crises and disaster, and teeters between white lies and damnable ones, God speaks the truth. God is truth, so when God says, *Let there be light*, prepare to be dazzled! And when Jesus says, I am the light of the world, trust that we can follow him through the dark valley of death and find our way. Jesus also says to his friends: *You are the light of the world* — which means it's up to us now to carry

"Christ our light" higher than the darkest deceptions of our times. He is risen! Who needs to hear this message tonight?

Today's readings: Vigil: 1:1, 26-31a; 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12. *"Then God commanded, 'Let there be light' — and light appeared."*

Readings for Passion Sunday

At the Procession: Matthew 21:1-11

Fulfilling the ancient prophecy, Jesus rides into a starstruck Jerusalem.

At the Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7

The loyal servant endures rejection and abuse for the sake of his Lord.

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

The faithful one, seemingly abandoned, cries out for the God who is near.

Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus is lifted to the highest glory because he willingly suffered the greatest depths.

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or 27:11-54

The disciples pledge their allegiance to the death, yet Jesus faces his cross without them.

Words on Word

What distinguishes Holy Mass (on Palm Sunday) is the exceptionally solemn reading of the Passion of the Lord. In accordance with the three-year cycle, the Gospels according to Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, or Saint Luke are read in turn, however, traditionally the Gospel according to Saint Matthew is read on this day.

The Gospel is not preceded by an opening prayer — no candles, no incense, even the Sign of the Cross is omitted. Only a simple announcement: "The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew." The Passion Gospel requires no additions, no introduction, no homily — it speaks for itself. Read with deep feeling, it cannot fail to make a profound impression.

There are many books about the life of Christ, many meditations and treatises on His Passion. Yet nothing makes a greater impression than the sober yet deeply moving account of the Lord's Passion as handed down by the Evangelists. There is no attempt whatsoever to play upon our emotions, nor any embellishment of the narrative. Neither is there any diminishing of the physical and moral sufferings of our Lord. It is a story told in simple words, with consistency and restraint. And yet it tells us everything, to such a degree that we feel as though we were eyewitnesses of the events described. It is a drama both deeply moving and, at the same time, peace-bearing. The figure of Christ dominates over His accusers and tormentors.

The Gospel is read by three lectors, as this aids in focusing attention. It helps to accentuate the words of Christ, which are read by the principal celebrant. The second lector serves as narrator, while the third takes on the remaining characters (V. Ryan OSB).

In Christ's love,
Fr Anthony

THE MOTHER OF GOD IN ICONS: 23. VARIANTS OF REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD WITH THE CHILD

The images of the Hodegetria and Eleusa appear in many iconographic variants, retaining the basic features that determine their belonging to a given iconographic type.



Master John: *Our Lady of Galaktotrophousa*, 1778

The Mother of God Pelagonitissa, the Tender Mother, the Mother with the Playing Child, are representations of the Eleusa type, particularly popular in the Balkans. The Child, shown in motion, tilts His head towards the viewer. The countenance of the Mother of God emanates sorrow. It is believed that the name of this variant derives from the earlier name of Bitola (Pelagonia). The most well-known icons come from the monastery of Zrze near Prilep and from the church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričane.

The Mother of God Galaktotrophousa, that is, the Nursing Mary, is a rarely encountered image. These icons, found primarily in Greece, emphasise the human nature of Christ. The origins of this variant are to be sought in Hellenistic art, into which the motif passed from Egyptian representations of Isis.

The Mother of God Kykkotissa is a type of image originating around the eleventh century, associated with the monastery of Kykkos. It is characterised by a vivid, dynamic composition. The Mother of God supports the Child, who is turned towards the viewer and holds in His hand an unrolled rotulus (scroll).



Simon Ushakov: *Our Lady of Kykkotissa*, 1668, The Russian Museum of St. Petersburg

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 in certain seasons, e.g. Easter, Christmas.

“Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see’, your guilt remains.” (John 9:41)

There’s something profoundly precious that goes beyond simply healing: it’s the journey of helping someone uncover their own truth.

God’s presence in our lives is all about this journey — becoming who we truly are and recognizing ourselves in our authentic state. At the heart of true love lies a love for truth, and let’s face it, truth can sometimes hit us like a ton of bricks, especially when it clashes with the self-image we’ve crafted for ourselves.

For many, the idea of being genuine feels completely unattainable. It’s scary to think about letting go of the masks we wear, the pretences we maintain, and the lofty ideals of who we think we should be. It’s as if acknowledging our flaws would force us to confront the parts of ourselves we’re ashamed of. In fact, that constant loathing of our own selves often stems from a deep-seated pride. True humility comes when we recognize our humble beginnings — so fragile, so ordinary. When we embrace the fact that we are “dust and ashes,” we begin to foster a healthier acceptance of ourselves.

But here’s the kicker: truth also demands responsibility, particularly in our relationship with the Most Important Being of all — God! If I yearn for a deep connection with Him, I must strive to be authentic — completely honest with myself and, more importantly, with God. This means confronting the reality of who and what I am, even if that means embracing the notion of merely being dust and ashes. There’s no way to truly see God if we can’t first see ourselves in all our vulnerability.

Remember the Pharisees? Their blindness to their own hypocrisy was staggering. They hurled accusations at the man Jesus healed and even at Jesus Himself, all because they couldn’t face the truth about themselves. Hypocrisy is like closing our eyes to our own reality, and sadly, it cuts us off from truly knowing God — the God who chose to become human.

In Exodus, we find a fascinating bit of scripture that metaphorically illustrates this whole idea. It talks about a bronze basin made from the mirrors of the ministering women, intended for washing before approaching the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 38:8). The mirrors are symbolic — they remind us that we need to see ourselves clearly before we can engage intimately with God. Only when we gaze into the mirror of our souls can we grasp the truth about ourselves, which is the first step toward getting closer to God.

The Hebrew word for “mirror” — *Měṛā’āh* — also speaks to the idea of sight, as seen in Genesis when Jacob receives a vision of God (Genesis 46:2). A true mirror reflects our inner selves, allowing us to see God for who He is. As James puts it so beautifully, the Word of God serves as this mirror for our conscience. It’s easy to hear the Word but much harder to live it out. James encourages us not to merely listen and walk away; we need to act on it to truly be blessed (James 1:23–25).

For Jesus, the most tragic form of blindness isn’t the physical kind; it’s the blindness born out of hypocrisy — pretending to be something we are not. One of the greatest dangers leading us into this trap is...religiosity. Now don’t get me wrong; being religious isn’t inherently bad. But it can create an environment ripe for self-deceit. When someone lives a pious life, their vices seemingly disappear, only to be replaced by pride and a critical spirit toward others. They may

forget who they were, hiding their faults beneath a veneer of perfection, while boasting about their new "righteousness."

Jesus often called out this kind of hypocrisy, especially among the Pharisees. He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside, they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25). The Jewish tradition calls human life a vessel, a reminder that being engrossed in rituals can distract us from the deeper essence of our humanity — justice, mercy, and faith. What good is it to have eyes if they can't see what truly matters to God?

To truly see God, we have to acknowledge Him for who He is while realizing our own limitations — that we are as flawed and helpless as the worst of us. Isaiah reminds us of this: "Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!" (Isaiah 43:8). It's a call for us to own our shortcomings while bearing witness to the One God! If you find yourself judging others harshly, that's a pretty clear sign you're missing the mark. But if you can proclaim God's truth while recognizing your own blindness, you're on the right path.

Sin, in all its ugly forms, blinds us. But none is more damaging than self-deception. Jesus made it crystal clear that hypocrisy is a perilous state. As Zephaniah said, "I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord..." (Zephaniah 1:17). The moment God became man, we lost all excuses for not seeing Him. Our eternal life hinges on this ability to see and believe in Him (John 6:40).

We can find glimpses of God right here and now — through the Eucharist, in scripture, in the icons, and, importantly, in the community of the Church. The beauty of faith is that while seeing God in fullness might not be possible yet, we can desire to see Him more clearly. Paul tells us that as we gaze upon the glory of the Lord, we're transformed "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Can you see Him in your day-to-day life? Are you looking for Him in the small things? Remember, it starts with honestly assessing ourselves — even when the truth is hard to swallow. Look at Job; he saw God only after acknowledging his own suffering and insignificance. "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5–6). Dust and ashes are the raw materials for seeing God.

God desires to reveal Himself to us in the humblest moments. Even as we wrestle with our own pride, He meets us where we are — hidden in the simplicity of the Eucharist, the Word, and the unnoticed acts of humility. Authentic spirituality, the true stuff of saints, isn't about showmanship. It's rooted in the quiet and often hidden life where we don't seek the limelight but rather the depth of God's love.

There's something profound about the seven veils mentioned in the Tent of Meeting. They remind us that sometimes, the most profound truths, the most brilliant beams of grace, are hidden from plain sight. We might have to sift through rejection and humiliation to finally uncover the brightness of God's love.

So why endure the pain of rejection to draw nearer to God? Because only through those experiences are we stripped of our masks, free to truly connect with Him. The author of Hebrews challenges us, saying, "So, Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12).

Therefore, I circle back to Exodus, where the Tent of Meeting held the presence of God. When Moses completed the preparations, that's when the glorious cloud of God appeared! It's when

we are veiled in humility and truth that we truly encounter God. It's simple — our most beautiful selves — reflecting love and mercy — only shine through when we're willing to admit our vulnerability.

God tells us, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:6). What's the mystery behind that unseen space? Perhaps it's the indescribable gift of intimacy with God — a profound experience that transcends words. It's a love that can't be encapsulated in mere language — one that encompasses us but can't be fully grasped.

So, let's strive to engage in this journey of authenticity. Let's let go of the façades and embrace our most genuine selves, allowing the truth to illuminate our paths towards God's love.

Fr Anthony



Around the World

RUSSIAN OIL

Side-Effects of War

The conflict between Israel, the United States, and Iran has unleashed a cascade of consequences that extend far beyond the battlefield, laying bare the moral compromises that govern the modern world's relationship with power and profit. Russia, seizing upon the suspension of US sanctions as an opportunity born of chaos, redirected millions of barrels of oil toward India — seven tankers carrying some 10 million barrels, originally bound for China, altered their course toward the Malabar Coast after Delhi received temporary American approval to purchase Russian oil. Among these vessels, the Aqua Titan, loaded at a Baltic port in late January and originally destined for Rizhao on the Yellow Sea, quietly changed its heading in mid-March, a small but telling symbol of how swiftly principle yields to pragmatism when economic interests are at stake.

Washington assured the world that the suspension of sanctions was a measured act of stewardship — a temporary concession intended to stabilise global markets, lasting no more than a month, and conferring no meaningful advantage upon the Kremlin. Yet the virtue of prudence demands that we judge actions not merely by their stated intentions but by their foreseeable fruits. Russia's oil export revenues rose by some USD 900 million in a single week, reaching approximately USD 2 billion — gains unprecedented since the beginning of its brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Financial Times reports that rising oil prices are adding as much as USD 150 million daily to Russia's treasury. One is compelled to ask, in all conscience, whether those who authorised this suspension truly weighed the blood that such revenues may yet purchase.



India's role in this arrangement invites its own moral scrutiny. The Church has long taught, through the tradition of *Rerum Novarum* and the broader corpus of Catholic Social Teaching, that nations bear responsibilities toward one another rooted in solidarity and the common good — responsibilities that transcend the narrow calculus of national advantage. Yet India's dependence on Russian oil has been eagerly exploited by Moscow, which raised the price of Urals crude from approximately USD 40 per barrel in February to nearly USD 99 by late March. Indian refineries have already ordered at least 20 million barrels. In this transaction, we witness the ancient sin of avarice operating at a geopolitical scale: one nation's vulnerability becoming another's leverage, and the suffering of the Ukrainian people rendered, in effect, a footnote to a commercial arrangement.

The Catholic moral tradition reminds us that cooperation with evil — even remote, even indirect — carries its own weight of responsibility. When the mechanisms of international commerce serve to sustain a regime engaged in an unjust war, the question of complicity cannot be dismissed with appeals to market necessity. Justice, solidarity, and the preferential option for the vulnerable demand more of us than that.

MIGRATION

A New Wave

Even before the outbreak of hostilities between Israel, the United States, and Iran, the UN Migration Agency had sounded a grave warning: any further destabilisation of the region could unleash refugee movements of a scale the world has never before witnessed. That warning now weighs heavily upon the conscience of Europe. Ministers for immigration from several EU member states are raising urgent concerns about the influx of refugees from Iran, and indeed from across the wider region, into European territory. "We cannot ignore the possibility of a new refugee crisis," declared Cyprus's Deputy Minister for Migration, Nicholas Ioannides — words that ought to resonate not merely as a political observation, but as a moral summons. For what is being tested here is not simply the administrative effectiveness of EU regulations, but the very capacity of nations to honour their obligations in justice and charity toward the most vulnerable.

Turkey, for its part, is pursuing efforts toward de-escalation, with Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan warning that a massive wave of displaced persons could overwhelm both his country and the European Union. He rightly drew attention to the suffering in Lebanon, where one million souls — one sixth of the entire population — have been forced to abandon their homes. The Catholic tradition has always held that the right to seek refuge is rooted in the inviolable dignity of the human person, a dignity that no border policy can extinguish. The virtue of solidarity demands that we see in each displaced family not a statistic, but a brother or sister made in the image of God. A still greater wave of displacement may yet lie ahead, and with it, a still greater test of whether our civilisation retains the moral courage to respond with both prudence and compassion.

THE DEATH OF CHILDREN

WORLD

The latest UN report on child mortality presents us not merely with statistics, but with a profound moral indictment of our age. Some 4.9 million children worldwide perish before their fifth birthday — nearly half of them newborns, souls who have scarcely drawn breath before

being called from this world. "These figures are horrifying. This is one small country," observed Renata Bem of UNICEF Poland, and indeed, we ought to sit with that image: an entire nation of children, erased.

What makes this tragedy all the more piercing to the Christian conscience is the testimony of those who work closest to it: most of these deaths were preventable. Proven, low-cost interventions and access to basic medical care could have saved countless lives. Here, the virtue of solidarity — so central to Catholic social teaching — is placed squarely on trial. When over 100,000 children between one and fifty months of age die of malnutrition, we are confronted with a failure not of nature, but of human will and human organisation. The earth produces enough; it is the distribution of its fruits that condemns the innocent.

Infectious diseases — malaria, diarrhoea, pneumonia — continue their grim harvest, particularly among the most vulnerable. Nearly 60% of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, with a further 25% in South Asia. Children born into conflict-affected regions face almost three times the risk of dying before the age of five. In this, we see the culture of death — so presciently named by Saint John Paul II — operating not only through direct violence, but through the slow, grinding neglect that war and poverty inflict upon the least among us. Christ's words ring with terrible urgency: "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Mt 25:45).

The Church has always insisted upon the preferential option for the poor, and nowhere is that option more urgently demanded than in the defence of the child — the most defenceless of all human persons. These are not abstractions. These are children made in the image and likeness of God, each one irreplaceable, each one mourned in Heaven even when forgotten on earth. The question these figures place before every Catholic — and indeed before every person of goodwill — is whether we are prepared to let our charity extend beyond our borders, our comfort, and our indifference.

CARIBBEAN

What Will They Do With Cuba?

President Donald Trump has declared that he will soon “do something with Cuba”, which is in very bad shape, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has stressed that new people must take power on the island. Rubio, whose parents emigrated from Cuba, noted that the regime authorities in Havana face making “major decisions”. He explained that the lifting of the embargo depends on political changes, and that for that the authorities must change. “Their economy doesn’t function. It is a non-functional economy. What they have survived on were subsidies from the Soviet Union, and now – from Venezuela. They no longer receive subsidies, so they have serious troubles, and those in power do not know how to fix it. That is why the Cubans must have new people in power,” he said. This is yet another declaration of a drive to change the regime in Cuba. It was made in the face of the worsening humanitarian situation on the island.

RANKING

The Happiest in the World

Finland has long been regarded as the happiest country in the world, holding that distinction continuously since 2017 according to The World Happiness Report — yet one must pause and ask, with a spirit of genuine discernment, what manner of happiness is here being measured.

Among the top ten in the global happiness ranking for 2026 are Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway — prosperous nations, certainly, yet ones in which the practice of the Faith has diminished markedly, raising the perennial question of whether material comfort and social security alone can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. The United Kingdom, placed 29th, finds itself in a middling position that perhaps reflects its own spiritual restlessness — a nation still wrestling with its inheritance of Christian civilisation. Costa Rica's remarkable rise to 4th place is particularly worthy of reflection; here is a predominantly Catholic nation, one in which the virtues of community, family, and faith remain more visibly woven into the fabric of daily life, standing with quiet dignity alongside the Nordic countries that embody the welfare-state ideal of earthly provision. At the bottom of the ranking, taking in over 140 countries, are nations situated near major conflict zones — a sobering reminder that where justice fails and peace is shattered, no index of happiness can flourish, and that the Church's tireless advocacy for the common good, human dignity, and the works of mercy is not mere sentiment, but a moral imperative written upon every human soul.

We Read Pope Leo

We cannot remain silent in the face of the suffering of so many defenseless people, who are victims of conflicts. What wounds them, wounds all of humanity.



The Church — as a communion of the faithful, which of course includes the pastors — cannot go astray in faith: the instrument of this characteristic, based on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is the supernatural sense of faith of the whole people of God, which manifests itself in the agreement (Latin: consensus) of the faithful. From this unity, which is guarded by the Magisterium of the Church, it follows that every baptized person is an active subject of evangelization, called to give

consistent witness to Christ in accordance with the prophetic gift with which the Lord endows his entire Church. The Holy Spirit, who comes to us from the Risen Jesus, also distributes “among the faithful in every condition certain special graces, through which he makes them capable and ready to undertake various works or functions aimed at the renewal and further effective building up of the Church” (Lumen gentium, 12). (...) Church communities and associations are a clear example of the diversity and spiritual fruitfulness of gifts that serve the building of the people of God.

General Audience, 18 March 2026.

Unity should not be understood as uniformity of thought, opinion, and lifestyle; indeed that could lead to the devaluation of one's own convictions, to the detriment of personal freedom and the listening of one's own conscience. Chiara Lubich (founder of the Focolare Movement) claimed that the premise of every rule is love. It is therefore essential that unity be constantly nurtured and sustained through mutual love. (...) Dear friends, together let us thank the Lord for the great spiritual family that has arisen from Chiara Lubich's charism. For the young people present in your groups, who clearly see the beauty of the vocation to be instruments of unity and peace in the world. For families who have been renewed and strengthened by the presence of Jesus among their family life. For bishops, priests, and consecrated persons, who have discovered the gift of their ministry and the renewal of religious life thanks to contact with your Movement and your spirituality. For the numerous members of the Focolare Movement who,

often with heroic sacrifice, continue to live by prayer, work, dialogue, and evangelization throughout the world, following the model of the apostolic life of the first generations of Christians. And let us give thanks for the countless fruits of holiness, known and unknown, which the return to the Gospel promoted by you has brought to the Church over the years.

Address to participants of the General Assembly of the Work of Mary – Focolare Movement, Vatican, 21 March 2026.

With deep concern I continue to follow the situation in the Middle East, as well as in other regions of the world torn by war and violence. We cannot remain silent in the face of the suffering of so many defenseless people, who are victims of these conflicts. What wounds them, wounds all of humanity. The death and pain caused by these wars are a scandal for the whole human family and a cry before God! I renew with strength the appeal for perseverance in prayer, so that armed actions cease and that, at last, paths of peace may open, based on sincere dialogue and respect for the dignity of every human person.

After the Angelus Prayer, 22 March 2026.

In my opinion

War for Hidden Interests? The Unfolding Drama of Trump's Decision on Iran

Donald Trump faces an increasingly tough choice: take a stand against China today or risk losing military clout in a year.

Commentators are keen to dissect the fallout from Trump's decision to back Israeli aggression against Iran, but it's essential to dig deeper than the usual narratives of political pawns and shadowy influences.

Contrary to popular opinion, the notion that "the tail wags the dog" is a misleading simplification. This isn't just little Israel pulling the strings of the extensive U.S. war machine. Nor are we witnessing the supposed machinations of world Zionism or the murky pressures from the Epstein files that have allegedly held sway over the U.S. presidency.

The real catalyst behind the current escalation lies in Trump's flawed assessment of America's role in global dominance. With tensions rising, Trump seemed to realise that he needed to tackle China head-on or risk falling too far behind in military capability.

Initially, Trump had some successes, like driving Chinese influence out of the Panama Canal zone. But don't forget, his efforts to pull Russia away from its alliance with China through a favourable deal in Ukraine fell flat. Vladimir Putin sided firmly with Xi Jinping, recognising the uncertainty surrounding Trump's leadership.

Under significant pressure, Trump attempted a CIA operation to kidnap Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, which turned out to be a notable win. His next target? Cuba. However, given the historical weight of the Bay of Pigs experience, a Marine landing would have been anything but straightforward. Just when he thought he had a clear path, the Jewish lobby's demands led to a reshuffle in his plans, dragging him into the complicated quagmire that is Iran.

So, why now? The urgency grew from Israel's internal political dynamics, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu potentially facing a power crisis if action against Iran wasn't taken promptly. This push placed the U.S. in a corner: either join the offensive or risk abandoning an ally in a precarious situation.

Israel's game plan was audacious — eliminate Iran's leadership, stir up civil unrest, and spark a chaotic civil war. On paper, it looked feasible, with Kurdish militias and Baloch groups lined

up to strike. But Iran wasn't sitting idly by. The nation had prepped for the fallout and organised itself to endure losses among its top brass, ensuring that decision-making wouldn't grind to a halt even in wartime. Iran's strategy included asymmetric warfare, deftly leveraging Russian and Chinese intelligence to counter the U.S. and Israeli aggression. As the conflict drags on, the situation's dynamics are shifting, with Iran going all in. The turmoil threatens to impact the global economy, creating a headache for the U.S. administration, especially with midterm elections looming and a sluggish Democratic opposition in tow.

Trump's backing of Israel's open warfare hasn't played out as anticipated, leaving him trapped in a mess of their making. With the stakes so high, he faces a daunting choice: find a way to end the war or consider deploying ground troops to Iran. But let's face it, that could lead to American coffins arriving home — not an ideal scenario for an administration promising to ease military tensions.

Ultimately, the U.S. risks emerging from this conflict much weaker, particularly in its rivalry with China. It might be said that the fate of Taiwan is now intricately linked to the turmoil unfolding in Iran. Whatever the outcome, one thing's for sure: the political landscape and global power dynamics are changing, and they are changing fast.

In these turbulent times, it's clear that we need to step up our game and pray as intercessors for the world. There's a real urgency for us to call upon divine guidance for a better world order to rise from the chaos we see around us. Let's rally together in prayer, hoping for a brighter future for everyone.

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 Patrick Dunne (1986), Sinead Murphy (1916), **and all those whose anniversaries fall around this time.**

Please continue to pray for the innocent people of Iran and Ukraine, that they be protected, courageous and retain hope.

News and Events

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

SCIAF Wee Boxes Please bring them in on Palm Sunday/before Maundy Thursday.



campbeltown@rcdai.org.uk



www.stkieranscampbeltown.org



<https://www.facebook.com/campbeltownrcchurch/>

A Parish of the R.C. Diocese of Argyll and the Isles; Charitable Trust, a registered Scottish Charity, SC002876
Parish Priest: Fr. A. Wood, St. Kieran's, Campbeltown; Tel. 01586 552160