

# PARISH BULLETIN

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

February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

ASH WEDNESDAY

Holy Mass, 10am

15<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Hymns/Music for Sunday

#### Processional (Sunday only)

190 Guide me, O thou great  
Redeemer

#### Offertory

158 Gifts of bread and wine

#### Post Communion

326 Lord Jesus Christ

#### Recessional

716 Jesus Christ is waiting

### St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Tuesday: **Holy Mass, 6.00pm**

Ash Wednesday: Adoration and mid-morning prayer,  
9.30am; **Holy Mass, 10.00am** with imposition of Ashes

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

### Next weekend:

**Saturday: Vigil Mass, 6.00pm**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent: Holy Mass, 10.00am**

**Sacrament of Reconciliation** Saturday 5.15pm-5.45pm or  
anytime on request.

### St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> February: Holy Mass, 4pm

Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, Holy Mass, 4pm

### **Psalm response**

*Blessed are those who walk in the law of the Lord!*

### **Gospel acclamation**

*Alleluia, alleluia.*

*I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,  
you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children.*

*Alleluia.*

### **Communion Antiphon**

*God so loved the world*

*that he gave his Only Begotten Son,  
so that all who believe in him may not perish,  
but may have eternal life.*

# Take Five

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

## MONDAY OF WEEK 5

16 FEBRUARY 2026

### Take advantage of the trial period

Everyone experiences difficulties at some point in their lives. No matter how fortunate a person may be, going a lifetime without adversity is next to impossible. The early Church from time to time went through trials of a different sort: hostility, persecution, and the general tension of living in a pagan world that did not share its beliefs. These days there is still friction between a life of faith and an increasingly secular, and indeed pagan, world. The response of some is to condemn that world rather than engage it. On this score, however, contemporary Christians can learn from the first ones, who saw in trials the opportunity to grow in virtue and develop their faith.

**Today's readings:** James 1:1-11; Mark 8:11-13. *“Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials.”*

## TUESDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT FINTAN (FINAN), ABBOT

17 FEBRUARY 2026

### Rise to the occasion

As any baker will tell you, a small amount of leaven – yeast – goes a long way, working its effect on a much larger mass of dough. For this reason, Jews of Jesus' age saw the fermentation process brought on by leaven as a metaphor for a corrupting influence, something that in excess would overflow its container. Jesus warned His disciples to be on guard against the “leaven” of leaders – religious or political – who sought to manipulate the people by exercising authority beyond its proper bounds. Jesus had a healthy scepticism about authority not grounded in humility and respect. A wise attitude, history teaches us.

**Today's readings:** James 1:12-18; Mark 8:14-21. *“Guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”*

## ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

18 FEBRUARY 2026

### The mark of the sinner

At the checkout she looked at you kind of funny. “You’ve got something on your forehead,” she said, unaware of Ash Wednesday. We spend the day with a mixture of pride and embarrassment. We’re proud to be Catholic, but we’re a little uneasy about appearing in public wearing such a strange sign. Some think the ashes mark the righteous, those who go to church. But in reality, it expresses our need for repentance. Jesus calls those who need the mercy and compassion of God so that the life-changing power of forgiveness might be experienced. Lent is a time for us to become familiar with that saving power.

**Today's readings:** Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18. *“Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart.”*

## THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

19 FEBRUARY 2026

### Losing it

What does it mean to “lose one’s life” for the sake of Jesus? In certain times and places, it could literally mean martyrdom. But for many of us the phrase might involve something a little different. Lent is a good time to consider a bit of healthy self-denial as one path we can take toward greater awareness of Jesus and His inspiring message. Something as simple as the proverbial giving up of chocolate can serve as a reminder of our deeper spiritual hunger. Acts of charitable service also help. As we get outside our small world and connect with those in greater need, we just might find the road to salvation.

**Today's readings:** Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25. *“Those who lose their life for my sake will save it.”*

## FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

20 FEBRUARY 2026

### Not so fast?

One out of six people in the present generation lives in extreme poverty. Not simply below the poverty line established by government organizations: Extreme poverty means living in danger of death because there is no food. By virtue of living in a country where food is affordable, it's easy to forget and hard to imagine the kind of suffering starvation entails. If one in six neighbours were hungry, wouldn't the other five feed that person? Fasting, even abstaining from meat, reminds us that our neighbour is hungry – and of our responsibility to help.

**Today's readings:** 1 Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15. *"This . . . is the fasting that I wish: . . . Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless".*

## SATURDAY AFTER ASH

WEDNESDAY

21 FEBRUARY 2026

### Be creative this Lent.

Is it Lent already? Yes, which means another season of opportunity to grow in holiness. Consider how you might wisely spend the next 40 days by focusing on one thing in your life that needs to change. Try a new spin on the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Prayer can be engaged in many ways: with words, silence, contemplation of icons – or the Stations of the Cross for the spiritually fidgety. You can "fast" from more than food: Give up media distractions or idle gossip. Alms can be paid out in other than pound notes: Offer your time to the lonely, your love to the elderly.

**Today's readings:** Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32. *"I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."*

## *Readings for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### Sirach 15:15-20

The hour of decision is always before you. Life or death are the terms you must live by.

### Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

The ancient law is not a burden but a lamp to guide.

### 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Worldly wisdom may make you rich. Divine wisdom will really get you places.

### Matthew 5:17-37

In Jesus, the law doesn't get smaller but higher, wider, and deeper than before.

## Words on Word

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*I encourage all Christians, regardless of the place and situation in which they find themselves, to renew today their personal encounter with Jesus Christ – or at least to decide to be ready to meet Him, to seek Him unceasingly each day. There are no reasons for anyone to think that this invitation is not addressed to him, for "no one is excluded from the joy brought to us by the Lord" (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino). The Lord will not disappoint the one who dares to take a small step toward Jesus. He will then discover that He was already waiting for him with open arms. It is a way to say to Jesus Christ: "Lord, I have allowed myself to be deceived; I found a thousand ways to flee from Your love, but here I am again to renew my covenant with You. I need*

*You. Deliver me again, Lord; take me into Your redeeming arms” (Pope Francis, Evangelii gaudium).*

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### **Transformation, even to the point of denying oneself**

A deeply lived encounter with Christ transforms. It allows us to understand that astounding demand: “Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar; first go and be reconciled with your brother; then come and offer your gift.” It is not that we have something against our brother, but if we suspect that our brother has something against us, we should leave the altar and be reconciled with him. This is a demand that surpasses all our expectations and seems utterly unrealistic. For how can one require reconciliation between a brother and a sister if only one of them seeks reconciliation, if many times the proposal of peace is rejected, if in attempting reconciliation there is constant humiliation and the outstretched hand is refused? Bitter is such a promise of amendment made by someone who continually yields to the same weakness, who continually commits the same mistakes.

Here two sisters stand before the court. One cared for their ailing father, who in the end died, and he had promised her all his property – at least compensation for what she spent during his illness. The other watched from afar and hardly involved herself in helping their father. The man died suddenly, without settling his estate. And the sister who watched from afar takes her sister to court, because she wants an equal division of the property. Law is not yet justice.

We often ask ourselves whether it is possible to live according to the Gospel.

*... Hold back the ocean's mighty swell;*

*For see, I am frail, unwell,*

*A soul adrift from Sodom's shade,*

*A leper's plight, a cripple's trade.*

*I bear the weight of countless woes,*

*A tangled mess, where chaos grows.*

*I struggle to comprehend,*

*A humble clerk in this grand expanse;*

*Yet You urge me to soar, to transcend,*

*With faith that could make mountains dance.*

*But I falter; behold my kin,*

*Our humble home, where love begins –*

*A lovely sofa, a tattered rug,*

*A lamp that casts its gentle glow,*

*With stars upon its fabric snug,*

*An earthly light – O how so slow!*

*And yet, You ask to turn this scene,*

*Into a Bethlehem, pure and serene.*

*I occupy a role in this web of lies,*

*Amidst iron and paper, my daily guise.*

*If I abandon this fragile post,*

*Who will embrace me? Who shall host?*

*A Seraph? A Cherub? Their grace I seek,*

*Yet here I scramble, in fear, feeling weak,*

*Clambering up the flowerbeds rare,  
In my firm of "Fear & Stomach," I bear.  
Oh, grasp my doubts and make them light,  
Transform my plight into the divine light.*

### **The logic of the kingdom's disciples**

In the Gospel we are dealing not with the ordinary logic of this world but with the logic of the Kingdom of God, which we call the logic of the heart. It is a different logic. It is the logic that Jesus Christ embraces when He stoops over wayward humanity and wills to make reparation to the Father for the sins of the world. He took flesh and became man, and then was crucified, rejected, nailed to the Cross, pushed away – for the salvation of the world. It was not God who was guilty of human sin; sin is the result of man's free choice.

The holy Curé of Ars expressed it thus: "How cruel it is that man compels God to curse him. Do you understand this – man compels God to reject him. This God, Who knows only how to bless, Who is Love itself."

He first shows that the measure of His love is precisely love without measure; He calls us to imitation not based on "you must do so," but on the basis of "you may do so – if you wish." And thus, the logic of the Christian's conduct always stands in a certain contradiction to the logic of this world. Those who have the courage to live thus Christ has already called "His disciples," and even "brothers and sisters."

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*Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly kingdom,  
But few who would carry His Cross.  
Jesus has many who desire consolation,  
But few ready for affliction.  
Jesus has many partakers at His table,  
But few of fasting.  
Many follow Jesus as far as the breaking of bread,  
But few as far as the draining of the chalice of His Passion.  
(Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*)*

In Christ's love,  
Fr Anthony

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## **THE MOTHER OF GOD IN ICONS: 17. THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE TEMPLE**

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In a fascinating glimpse into early Christian tradition, apocryphal writings tell us that the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary chose to dedicate their daughter to serve in the Temple when she was just three years old. This pivotal moment is marked in the Eastern Church by the Feast of the Entrance into the Temple, celebrated on November 21 in the Orthodox calendar. Although the feast was officially instituted in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it seems to have been recognised much earlier, with icons depicting this significant event appearing as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The artistic representations surrounding this feast are truly captivating. One iconic scene shows Saints Joachim and Anne lovingly entrusting Mary to the care of the priest, while a crowd of onlookers gazes on, their expressions reflecting a mix of awe and emotion. In some versions, the Archangel Gabriel is depicted delivering sustenance to young Mary, adding a touch of divine intervention to the narrative.



Ruthenian: *The Entrance of the Blessed Virgin Mary into the Temple*, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Museum of Fine Arts in Arkhangelsk

within the Church and the profound significance of Mary's early life. So next time you pass by a depiction of this event, take a moment to reflect on what it represents in the heart of the Catholic tradition.

In these icons, the young Mary is often portrayed reaching out trustfully to the priest, a symbol of her innocence and faith. Saint Anne is seen bidding her daughter a tender farewell, with tears of emotion also visible on Saint Joachim's face. In the background, temple maidens whisper among themselves, captivated by the solemnity of the occasion, which is beautifully underscored by the presence of seraphim. What really stands out in these artworks is the artist's skill. They brilliantly capture the linearity of form, using a limited colour palette dominated by vibrant reds, golden ochres, and olive greens that make the scene all the more striking. The attention to detail is remarkable, especially in how they depict the architectural features of the temple and the ornate curtains that frame the sacred moment.

This rich tapestry of faith and artistry serves as a reminder of the deep-rooted traditions

## 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 11

**The Greatest Obstacle**

John 3:14-21

### **The Night Encounter of Nicodemus: A Journey from Darkness to Light.**

**Nicodemus had a tough night – literally and metaphorically. The man who came to Jesus under the cover of darkness did so not just to avoid the glaring eyes of others, but perhaps out of fear.**

As a revered member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee, Nicodemus found himself in a precarious position, acutely aware of the potential consequences should his interest in Jesus become public knowledge. Imagine the internal struggle he faced – holding a position of great influence yet drawn toward the enigmatic presence of a controversial teacher. Picture him: a man of knowledge, deeply rooted in the Law, yet also thirsting for the profound mysteries of faith.

In his community, scribes sought out extraordinary teachers who could help illuminate the intricate pathways of divine wisdom. Thus, Nicodemus ventured to meet Jesus under the cover of night, yearning for a connection that would deepen his spiritual understanding, free from the scrutiny of his peers. Rather than indulging in abstract discussions, Jesus directed Nicodemus's attention to fundamental truths, referencing the Old Testament tale of Moses and the serpent. Through this, He revealed His divine identity – proclaiming Himself as the Son of God, sent not to condemn but to save.

This moment was transformative. Jesus understood that the greatest obstacle to acceptance isn't the adversarial forces around us but rather our own human inclination to mask our shortcomings. The tendency to dwell in darkness, clinging to sin instead of acknowledging it, poses a far greater threat to our spiritual wellbeing.

We've all wrestled with that inner voice that urges us to conceal our frailties, driven by fears of humiliation and rejection. This is a universal challenge, yet it is the pursuit of truth – the very thing that liberates us. The saints recognised the value in embracing humility, for it brought them clarity and an authentic understanding of their nature.

Let's be honest: nobody relishes the idea of being seen as imperfect, whether in the eyes of God or others. It's far simpler to wear a polished exterior. However, as illustrated by Jesus with the woman caught in adultery, the Lord offers compassion and forgiveness to those courageous enough to confront their sins. He liberated her from the shackles of shame, inviting her to embark on a new journey of renewal.

Many of us strive for success in different realms – be it spiritual, intellectual, or aesthetic. When our accomplishments feel threatened, anxiety often ensues, leading us into a labyrinth of deception towards ourselves and others. Perhaps you've observed someone who speaks excessively or seems overly eager to impress; often, such behaviour conceals a deeper insecurity – a defence mechanism against their own hidden truths.

This highlights an essential truth: in our attempts to obscure our realities, we unwittingly isolate ourselves, severing vital connections with both God and those around us. The prodigal son's story serves as a poignant reminder that the pursuit of earthly pleasures can drive us away from genuine, meaningful relationships.

Fear of rejection frequently inhibits our willingness to be honest about our imperfections. We may justify blending into the crowd, thinking that it is safer than standing out in vulnerability. But is that truly the case? Do people genuinely prefer those who project a perfect image over those who, though imperfect, are authentic in their self-revelation?

Jesus dismantles these misconceptions. In hiding from the truth of our flaws, we risk eternal separation from the very relationships that nourish our souls. The parables of banquets and talents remind us that what truly matters is not our outward appearance but the sincerity with which we engage with our own realities.

As we navigate our individual journeys, let's bear in mind that humility and openness pave the way to joy, whereas pride and denial lead us into darkness. Ultimately, embracing honesty about ourselves opens the door to true mercy – a transformative grace that reshapes our perception of shame, allowing us to accept our human condition with light-heartedness.

So, I urge you: dare to step out of the shadows, confront the truth of who you are, and you may find that the light is far less intimidating than it initially appears. Embrace your journey towards authenticity, for it is in the sunlight of truth that we discover profound freedom and genuine connection.

*Fr Anthony*

# Around the World

## CARITAS ALARM BELL

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### The Drama of Children in Gaza

The Gaza Strip today is a heartbreaking scene that goes beyond just being a humanitarian crisis; it's a powerful narrative of tragedy unfolding for the young, innocent lives caught in the tumult. The staggering number of orphans here is beyond what most of us can imagine. According to Caritas, there are around 58,000 children who now face this reality without the care and love of their families. It's gut-wrenching to know that many little ones, who have endured the horrors of bombings, wake up in hospitals only to find out they've lost their entire families. Once they recover, they often confront a haunting emptiness - with nowhere to call home.

Nina Mocior, a psychotherapist and expert at Caritas, shares that they support four essential medical facilities in the Strip. These places often serve as the only safe havens for the youngest who have tragically lost their parents or have become separated from their families. It's estimated that at least 40,000 children are now without both parents, while another 17,000 find themselves disconnected from their families due to the chaos of war and displacement.

Life in Gaza is harsh, with difficult weather conditions and makeshift shelters deteriorating around them. These tented homes, rather than providing refuge, have turned into breeding grounds for disease, making survival an uphill battle - especially for those malnourished kids with weakened immune systems. The struggle becomes even more daunting with the increasingly limited humanitarian aid available.

Amid all of this, the chaos that reigns in Gaza leaves a void. There's no functioning administration, no documents to track the lives lost, and families have been torn apart. The trauma of losing parents and caregivers manifests in silence and withdrawal, especially for the youngest. The situation is critical; Caritas highlights that the plight of children in Gaza is one of the most severe humanitarian crises of our time, and day by day, the number of victims and orphans continues to rise.

But amid this overwhelming darkness, there is a flicker of hope. There are organisations, like Caritas, working tirelessly to bring comfort and assistance to these children. They remind us that every child deserves a safe, nurturing environment – one where they can dream, heal, and thrive. Together, we can amplify their voices and ensure that the future holds promise for these young souls. Let's not forget them.

## CUBA

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### A Growing Crisis

The situation in Cuba is becoming increasingly dire, and it's hard to overlook the challenges facing the island right now. The sudden loss of vital oil and raw materials – key ingredients for everything from medicine production to essential goods – has been a tough blow, particularly in the wake of Nicolás Maduro's government falling in Venezuela. This grim update comes from a report by the Cuban opposition, shining a light on the struggles that many Cuban families are enduring.

Pharmacies are running low on essential medicines, and healthcare services are feeling the pinch, leading to a significant rise in social protests. It's heartbreaking to see that many of these

demonstrations have been brewing for years, driven by problems like constant power failures and the glaring shortages of basic necessities in shops. The root of these electricity outages? Aging generators that haven't seen a repair in ages, all because there's simply no access to spare parts for power plants.

Cuba relies almost entirely on fuel imports for electricity production. With the recent oil shortages, it's become all too common for people to be left without power for up to 20 hours a day. To compound matters, the recent reaction from US authorities – threatening tariffs on countries supplying fuel to Cuba – has only made a difficult situation worse.

In moments like this, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, but it's important to remember the resilience of the Cuban people. This is not just a crisis; it's a call for unity, innovation, and support from the global community. Now more than ever, we must advocate for hope and positive change, standing in solidarity with those enduring these hardships. Together, we can foster a brighter future for Cuba and its incredible people.

## MONEY FOR WAR

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### Hiding Expenditures

According to the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND), the true scale of Russia's military spending is much greater than what's officially reported. They've found that Russia actually poured in 66% more into its military last year than the figures suggest. It turns out that some of this spending was cleverly hidden away in different budget categories!

The BND report reveals a staggering trend: since the onset of the war in Ukraine, Russia's defence budget has been on a steep upward trajectory. And it's not just about the current conflict; a good chunk of those military funds is also dedicated to bolstering their military presence along NATO's eastern flank. In a world where transparency is crucial, this revelation reminds us to look beyond the surface. It calls us to remain aware and vigilant, for the stakes have never been higher. Let's stay informed and engaged, reflecting on the implications this has for peace and security in our times.

## UKRAINE

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### The Aid mobilized to help

5 million 740 thousand zloty (1.5 million pounds) – this is the result of collections in churches of the Archdiocese of Krakow and donations from people of good will to the **Caritas Ukraine** account following Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś's appeal on January 24 for help for the residents of Kyiv. A collection throughout Poland for Ukraine will be conducted in dioceses on Sunday, February 15. The Chairman of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda, has asked diocesan bishops to organize it.

The Archdiocese of Krakow, which was the first to mobilize help, reported that with the collected funds "it has been possible to purchase and deliver to those in need 31 high-power generators, 172 medium-power generators, 900 heaters, 200 charging stations, and several tons of food, as well as industrial items needed to equip the so-called Points of Resilience being established at Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic parishes in Kyiv." "In the coming days, further transports with generators and products requested by Kyiv residents are planned," the statement informed. Russians are intensively attacking energy infrastructure, resulting in lack of electricity, water, and heat supplies. At the end of January, it was estimated that up to 600,000 residents of Kyiv are living in cold conditions. The number would probably be much higher if

everyone had stayed in the city. Some people heeded the authorities' appeals and left for relatives outside Kyiv. "Those who remained are essentially those who had nowhere to take shelter. – Please, help us survive this winter. The world is forgetting about us, humanitarian aid is weakening, and Russia is attacking more severely. We need great solidarity, because it is what warms us in these great frosts" – Bishop Jan Sobiło from Zaporizhzhia told Vatican media.

Meanwhile, **Sunflower Scotland**, a registered Scottish charity, has also responded with direct aid to Ukraine's most vulnerable. Since March 2022 it has delivered medical supplies, ambulances and evacuation vehicles to hospitals and frontline medics in Kharkiv, Sumy, Kherson and other contested regions. It supports two rehabilitation centres for those wounded in the war, including many who have lost limbs, and cares for over 200 orphans and nearly fifty children with Down's syndrome. ([sunflowerscotland.co.uk](http://sunflowerscotland.co.uk))



*Sunflower Scotland: Clothes and essential supplies for wounded soldiers in Kharkiv*

*Sunflower Scotland* ensures its aid is timely, appropriate and safe: its volunteers deliver help themselves, avoiding intermediaries, using protective gear, and bringing supplies where they're needed most. They source food and hygiene supplies locally in Ukraine – saving donor funds and supporting Ukraine's economy. The combined efforts of the Church in Poland and of organizations like *Sunflower Scotland* are testimonies to Christian solidarity in times of crisis. Both work to ensure that those suffering from cold, hunger, injury and loss receive not just material assistance, but the reassurance that they are not forgotten.

## ***We Read Pope Leo***

**Personal participation in another person's suffering goes beyond meeting needs, so that our very person becomes part of the gift.**

The conciliar constitution *Dei Verbum* (...) points to Sacred Scripture – read within the living Tradition of the Church – as a privileged place of encounter in which God continually speaks to men and women of every age, so that, by listening to Him, they may know and love Him. The biblical texts, however, were not written in a heavenly or superhuman language. For, as everyday reality also teaches us, two people who speak different languages do not understand one another, cannot enter into dialogue, cannot form a relationship. In some cases allowing the other to understand us is the first act of love. Therefore God decided to speak by means of human languages, and thus various authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, composed the texts of Sacred Scripture. As the conciliar document recalls: "For the words of God, expressed in human

languages, have been made like human speech, just as the Word of the eternal Father, having assumed weak human flesh, became like human beings" (DV 13). Therefore Sacred Scripture, not only in its content but also in its language, reveals God's merciful condescension toward human beings and His desire to draw near to them.

**General Audience, 4 February 2026.**

After proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus turns to those who live according to them and says that thanks to them the earth is no longer as it was, and the world is no longer plunged into darkness. "You

are the salt of the earth. (...) You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13–14). For it is true joy that gives flavour to life and brings to light what previously was not. This joy flows from a certain way of life. (...) This is the life that shines in Jesus, the new savour of His deeds and His words. (...) let us allow ourselves to be nourished and enlightened through communion with Jesus. Then, without any ostentation, we will be like a city set on a hill, not only visible but also attractive and welcoming: the City of God, in which all, deep within, long to dwell and find peace.

**Angelus, 8 February 2026.**

We are immersed in a culture of speed, immediacy, haste, as well as rejection and indifference, which prevents us from drawing near and pausing along the way to notice the needs and sufferings that surround us. (...) Jesus does not teach who the neighbour is, but how to become a neighbour, that is, how to become close. (...) Indeed, no one is a neighbour to another until he draws near to him of his own will. Therefore the one who showed mercy became the neighbor. Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other; being a neighbour does not depend on physical or social proximity but on the decision to love. Therefore the Christian becomes the neighbor of the one who suffers by imitating the example of Christ, the true divine Samaritan, who drew near to wounded humanity. These are not mere gestures of philanthropy, but signs in which we can perceive that personal participation in another person's suffering means a gift of self; it goes beyond meeting needs, so that our very person becomes part of the gift.

**Message for the 34<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Sick, 11 February 2026.**

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*In my opinion*

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***An atheist and Jewish woman defends the cross***

*In a striking demonstration of civic engagement, Polish schoolchildren recently protested after a teacher removed a Christian cross from a classroom and discarded it in a bin. This incident, which unfolded in Kielno, prompted students to gather outside the school in a show of solidarity for their faith and traditions. As this unfolds, the Polish Justice Ministry is also considering changes to blasphemy laws, leading to concerns among some that Christians might be losing vital protections under the law.*

*The drama began on December 15 when the English teacher insisted that the cross be taken down from the classroom wall. In response to the students' outcry, she reportedly tossed the crucifix into the bin, igniting the anger of the community and sparking a broader conversation about religious symbols in public spaces. (Source: [BrusselsSignal.eu](https://brusselsignal.eu), 9 January 2026)*



The echoes of this situation take us back to an incident in 1988 in Italy, where a similar uproar erupted when a teacher in Cuneo removed a crucifix from a classroom wall. That action led to intervention by local authorities who insisted it be reinstated, igniting a spirited debate about secularism and the presence of religious symbols in educational environments.

Natalia Ginzburg, an esteemed Italian writer and journalist, weighed in on this debate, advocating for the recognition of the cross as a significant symbol that transcends religious boundaries. In her thought-provoking article titled *Non togliete questa croce: e il segno del dolore umano* (Do not remove this cross – it is a sign of human suffering), Ginzburg argued that the crucifix is far more than a Christian emblem; it is a profound part of human history and culture that represents collective pain and a call for solidarity.

She contended that if even one child in a classroom desires the crucifix to remain, that voice should be heard. Ginzburg pointed out that the cross itself does not discriminate; rather, it serves as a reminder of a revolutionary message: the equality and brotherhood of all people. The crucifix embodies the essence of compassion, suffering, and the shared human experience that binds us together, regardless of our beliefs.

Her compelling arguments challenge contemporary societal norms, particularly in countries like the UK, where the cross might be seen by some as a divisive symbol. Instead of shying away from it, perhaps we ought to ask ourselves: does it truly offend? Ginzburg's reflections remind us that, while we navigate the complexities of modern diversity, we shouldn't forget the fundamental values of empathy and solidarity that resonate across faiths.

It's worth pondering whether, in our quest for inclusivity, we've overlooked the universal messages of love and understanding that symbols like the cross inspire. After all, at the heart of this debate is an opportunity for dialogue, reflection, and ultimately a deeper appreciation for our shared humanity.

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** Mgr. Thomas Wynne (2020) **and all those whose anniversaries fall around this time.**

## News and Events

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

**The bishop's visit:** Bishop Brian will be making his parish visit to Campbeltown on 7/8<sup>th</sup> March.

**Ash Wednesday:** is the 18<sup>th</sup> of February. If you can please return last year's palms before then in order to make this year's ashes.

**A birthday card** is in the porch for the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday (15/02) of Lucy Cunningham for anyone who wishes to add their name.



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



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