

PARISH BULLETIN

**St. Kieran's, the Catholic
Church** in Campbeltown and Islay
Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain
14th June 2026

Week 11 of Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 11 of Ordinary Time

Tuesday: Holy Mass, 6pm

Wednesday: Adoration and Mid-morning Prayer, 9.30am; Holy Mass, 10am

Discussion Group: scripture discussion group, 10.30am

Friday: Mid-morning Prayer, 9.50am; Holy Mass, 10am

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional

569 Though the mountains may fall

Offertory

67 Blest are you Lord

Communion music

Възвеличай, о, душа моя – Magnify, oh my Soul

Post Communion

507 Sweet Sacrament divine

Recessional

178 God is love

Next weekend:

Saturday, 20th of June, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 21st of June, 12th Sunday in Ordinary
Time, Holy Mass, 10.00am.**

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday 17.30-17.50 or anytime on request.

St. Columba Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Isle of Islay

21st June: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*The kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the gospel*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*There is one thing I ask of the Lord, only this do I seek:
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*



Take Five

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

MONDAY OF WEEK 11

15 JUNE 2026

How do you plead?

In order to accuse someone of wrongdoing in biblical times, you had to produce at least two and often three witnesses who would substantiate your claims. The notion of “due process” is embedded in this tradition—that no one should accuse lightly, and the accused should be presumed innocent until proven guilty by strong evidence. What’s good for a court of law is also good for your personal life. Before jumping to conclusions or criticizing someone, ask yourself if you have given them due process in the courtroom of your heart.

Today’s readings: 1 Kings 21:1-16; Matthew 5:38-42. *“Give to the one who asks of you.”*

TUESDAY: FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OF SCOTLAND

16 JUNE 2026

What will you treasure

Sceptics who disbelieve the resurrection say the disciples only saw a vision of Jesus. The Gospels, however, give us a vivid picture of the reality of the resurrection. Jesus went out of his way to offer his disciples various proofs of his resurrection – that he is real and true flesh, not just a spirit or ghost. In his third appearance to the apostles, after Jesus performed the miraculous catch of fish, he prepared a breakfast and ate with them. Peter’s prompt recognition of the Master and exclamation, It is the Lord! stands in sharp contrast to his previous denial of his Master during the night of arrest. The Lord Jesus reveals himself to each of us as we open our hearts to receive his word. Do you recognize the Lord's presence in your life and do you receive his word with faith?

Today’s readings: Hebrews 12:1-3; John 21:1-11. *“Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.”*

WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 11

17 JUNE 2026

Back to the present

With the seasons of Lent and Easter well behind us, the last thing on your mind may be the practices of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. Those, however, should be part of a Christian’s life year-round, not only during those times especially devoted to cultivating them. Every day presents opportunities to become more prayerful, generous, and focused on God. You are called to live in Lent’s spirit of hope and repentance and Easter’s joy all the time.

Today’s readings: 2 Kings 2:1, 6-14; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18. *“Your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”*

THURSDAY OF WEEK 11

18 JUNE 2026

Lead on

A small change in translation can be a big deal when the words of the Lord’s Prayer are at stake. After years of consideration, Italian and French bishops embraced a change in the version said at Mass, from “lead us not into temptation” to “do not let us fall into temptation.” The change intends to clarify the fact that God doesn’t lead people toward evil. So, if you are tempted toward sin today, why not ask God to lead you elsewhere?

Today’s readings: Sirach 48:1-14; Matthew 6:7-15. *“This is how you are to pray: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.’”*

FRIDAY OF WEEK 11

19 JUNE 2026

Ever the same, ever new

At many times throughout human history, *change* was a dirty word. There was security in things not changing. When something did change, people tried to undo it and go back to the old ways. Of course that attitude didn’t stop change from happening anyway. But it was still resisted. Some in the church fear change while others push it. The reality, however, is where it usually is: in the middle. The basic message, the gospel, does not change, but ways of communicating it do. Keep that in mind in this exciting time in the Church’s history.

Today's readings: 2 Kings 11:1-4, 9-18, 20; Matthew 6:19-23. *"Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."*

SATURDAY OF WEEK 11

20 JUNE 2026

As you sow, so shall you reap

"If we are rushed for time, sow time and we will reap time," Dorothy Day wrote in her memoir *The Long Loneliness*. "Go to church and spend a quiet hour in prayer. You will have more time than ever and your work will get done. Sow time with the poor. Sit and listen to them, give your time lavishly. You

will reap time a hundredfold. Sow kindness and you will reap kindness. Sow love, you will reap love." How many of us would try to cope with our busy schedules by actually taking time for something not on our to-do lists? Today's lesson compliments of Dorothy Day: Trust that God will multiply the time we invest in prayer, love, and generosity into a great harvest.

Today's readings: 2 Chronicles 24:17-25; Matthew 6:24-34. *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides."*

Readings for the 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 19:2-6a

Being God's people means embodying the very holiness of God.

Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5

God made us and claims us. There is no end to God's kindness shown to us.

Romans 5:6-11

To die for someone else is the greatest sacrifice. To die for someone who doesn't deserve the sacrifice is beyond wonder.

Matthew 9:36-10:8

Because the crowds needed shepherding, Jesus supplied 12 of them

Words on the Word

Called and Chosen: Finding Your Purpose in a World That's Lost Its Way

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"The harvest is great" — also today, precisely today. Although it may seem that vast areas of the contemporary world, and a considerable number of people today, are turning away from God and regard faith as something belonging to the past, there is nevertheless a desire that justice, love, and peace may ultimately prevail, that poverty and suffering may be overcome, that people may find joy. The desire for all this is present in today's world, a longing for what is great, what is good. It is a longing for the Redeemer, for God Himself, even where His existence is denied. Precisely in the present time work in God's field is especially urgently needed, and precisely now we feel in a particularly painful way the truth of Jesus' words: "The labourers are few." At the same time the Lord makes us understand that we ourselves cannot simply send labourers into His harvest; that this is not a matter of management, of our organizational ability. Only God Himself can send labourers into the harvest of His field (Pope Benedict XVI, homily, 5 February 2011).

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In our non-stop, 24/7 world, it's easy to feel like you're just trying to keep your head above water. The pace of change is dizzying, and there's hardly a moment to catch your breath, let alone reflect on life's bigger questions. Who are we as believers? What is the Church, really? What does it actually mean to believe in God, and what difference should it make in my life and the lives of those around me?

Today's readings hit the pause button on our frantic lives and invite us to think about one of the most fundamental themes of our faith: our vocation. We're reminded of the moment Jesus called his Apostles. He didn't just pick them to be his road trip buddies; he chose them to be witnesses. He

wanted them to see his miracles, hear his teaching, and, most importantly, to carry that message forward. He called them to be His people, His "special possession."

And guess what? That same call extends to us today. It's a call that unfolds in three essential ways.

1. First Things First: Deepen Your Roots

Before we can change the world, we have to let God change us. The first and most important task of any disciple is to build an ever-deeper, personal relationship with Jesus. Let's be honest, that's a tough job in a culture that is growing more and more indifferent to faith and numb to morality.

But this is our foundational calling. It's what God meant when he told his people in Exodus:

"[Y]ou shall be my special possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex 19:5-6)

This is what Jesus meant when he called us "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." We are the ones who, by God's grace, refuse to let the worries of this world block out our ultimate goal: our life with Him. This is a journey we take together, striving to shape our lives around this beautiful truth.

2. The Power of Prayer: It's Not Just Up to Us

Once our own foundation is solid, our second task comes into focus: prayer. Specifically, Jesus asks us in the Gospel to pray for vocations—for priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers. He also asks us to pray for everyone who is out there trying to be a good witness for Him.

The fact that Jesus himself asks for this prayer tells us how vital it is. It's a powerful reminder that the Church isn't just a human organization that we can manage with clever strategies and business plans. The Church belongs to God, and He is the one in charge of the big picture. Our prayer invites His power into the places we need it most.

3. Living the Message: Your Life is the Sermon

Finally, we are all called to be witnesses. Now, this doesn't mean we need to be aggressive or get into arguments to "fight for God." As someone once wisely said, God doesn't need advocates; He needs witnesses.

In our time, some of the most powerful evangelization happens far from a church pulpit. It happens at the office, in the classroom, or at the neighbourhood barbecue. It's when people who don't believe are moved by the quiet dedication, the selfless love, and the genuine spirit of prayer they see in a believer's life.

Sometimes, all it takes is a good word, a moment of encouragement, or a piece of sound advice to completely change someone's path. The key is humility. We share the good news not as experts who have it all figured out, but as fellow travellers who have found a source of living water and simply want to share it.

This beautiful program for a life of faith, laid out for us by Pope Benedict XVI and rooted in the Gospel, is our call. It starts with our own heart, extends through our prayers for the Church, and shines out into the world through the witness of our lives.

- ❖ "I ask you, strengthened by faith in God, to commit yourselves fervently to building up His Kingdom on earth, the Kingdom of goodness, justice, solidarity, and mercy; I ask you to bear courageous witness to the Gospel before today's world, bringing hope to the poor, the suffering, the abandoned, the despairing, and those who hunger for freedom, truth, and peace;
- ❖ I ask you, by doing good to your neighbour and caring for the common good, to bear witness that God is love;
- ❖ finally, I ask you to share the treasure of faith with other nations of Europe and the world, also through the memory of your Compatriot who, as the Successor of Saint Peter, did this with extraordinary strength and effectiveness" (homily of Pope Benedict XVI, Kraków, Błonia, 28 May 2006).

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*A sunbeam shared in just a passing smile,
A whispered balm to soothe a soul's long mile,*

*A gaze that builds a bridge across the doubt,
A solace of the hand when light is out.*

*All offered freely, a gift without a cost,
And yet, in giving, nothing's truly lost.*

*The endless shelter of a Maker's care,
The cleansing mercy, washing clean despair,
Poured out so freely, a river deep and wide,
It leaves a high-tide mark upon the soul inside.
For this is grace, unearned and unconstrained,*

*A holy gift, but not a gift unstained
By the deep change it works within the heart.*

*So, we who drink must learn to play the part,
To be the vessel, open and unbound,
To let the grace we're given circle 'round.
Can we both take and offer up this love?*

*We can. We must.
As Heaven does above.*

In Christ's love,
Fr Anthony

ICONS OF EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES, AND SAINTS: 31 SAINT GEORGE

Beyond the Dragon: Decoding the Icons of Saint George

When you hear the name "Saint George," what immediately pops into your head? If you're like most of us, you probably picture a valiant knight on a white horse, a damsel in distress, and a giant, scaly dragon. It's the ultimate medieval blockbuster.

But as Catholics navigating the modern world, looking at the icons of Saint George can offer us a lot more than just a cool fantasy aesthetic. There's a rich, historical faith behind the brushstrokes. Let's peel back the layers of legend and look at the real man—and the powerful symbolism—behind the iconic depictions of Saint George.



The Real Soldier Behind the Myth

Before he was a legendary dragon-slayer, George was a real guy making incredibly tough choices. Born in Cappadocia at the turn of the third and fourth centuries, George was a Roman legionary who climbed the military ranks to become a tribune.

But George had a secret that was dangerous for a Roman soldier: he was a Christian.

When the emperor began persecuting his fellow believers, George didn't just keep his head down. He actively criticized the state-sponsored violence. Naturally, calling out the emperor didn't go over well. George drew the full fury of the Roman empire upon himself. He was brutally tortured and eventually beheaded in the year 303. He didn't slay a literal monster, but he stood up to the monstrous evil of his day.

Enter the Dragon

So, where did the dragon come from?

Fast forward to the time of the Crusades. A wildly popular

legend began circulating that Saint George arrived on a white horse to save the inhabitants of Silene—and a doomed princess—from a terrorizing dragon.

From this story, we get the classic, iconic image of Saint George: the knight on the white steed, piercing the beast with his lance. In this artistic tradition, the dragon isn't just a monster; it's a powerful symbol of evil, sin, and paganism. When we look at this icon today, it's a great reminder of the spiritual warfare we are all called to fight.

Reading the Icons

If you spend time looking at Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic iconography, you'll notice Saint George shows up a lot. Here is how he is typically depicted:

- ❖ **The Triumphant Knight:** Depicted in full figure, George is shown mid-battle, defeating the dragon. Often, the central image is surrounded by smaller panels showing scenes from his life and martyrdom.
- ❖ **The Armed Soldier:** Sometimes, the horse and dragon are ditched entirely. Instead, George is shown standing in full military attire, armed with a sword and shield. In places like historical Rus', this depiction became incredibly popular as the people sought spiritual strength during the Tatar invasions and their own struggles against unbelievers.
- ❖ **The Martyr:** Though much less common, you can occasionally find icons focusing solely on his identity as a martyr, emphasizing his sacrifice over his military prowess.

The Quick Guide to Saint George's Attributes

When you're trying to spot Saint George in a church or museum, keep an eye out for his classic "attributes" (the symbolic items artists use to identify him).

| <i>Attribute</i> | <i>What it Represents in the Icon</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| The Dragon | The devil, sin, or paganism being conquered by faith. |
| The Lance | The weapon of truth and spiritual warfare. |
| The White Horse | Purity, victory, and the triumph of good over evil. |
| The Laurel Wreath | The crown of martyrdom and eternal victory in Christ. |

A Saint for the East and West

Saint George's appeal is truly universal. Counted among the "Fourteen Holy Helpers," he is a massive figure in the East. The Orthodox Church venerates him on December 9 (according to the Gregorian calendar), and he serves as the patron saint of numerous Orthodox countries, including Bulgaria, Lithuania, Serbia, and Montenegro. He is also the go-to patron for countless chivalric brotherhoods.

Next time you come across an icon of Saint George, take a second to look past the fairy-tale elements. Whether he's painted as a dragon-slayer or a stoic Roman soldier, his icon is an invitation for us to stand firm in our faith, speak out against injustice, and bravely face whatever "dragons" are lurking in our own lives today.

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.

Chapter 27
The Pearl

John 16:23–28

Turning Our Wounds into Pearls: Why God Doesn't Always Take the Pain Away

Let's be real for a second: when we pray, we usually just want God to fix our problems. But if we look closely at the most effective prayerful request made in the name of Jesus—the Ave

Maria—we see a different story.

In the Hail Mary, the name of Jesus is tucked away like a pearl inside an oyster shell. Mary (Miriam) carried immense inner pain. From the moment of Christ's conception until she watched Him die on the cross, her heart was pierced. Yet, she also witnessed His resurrection and now shares in His heavenly reign. She started as a humble servant holding the "pearl" of Jesus in her womb, and she became a queen enveloped by the invisible majesty of heaven.

Jesus promises that whatever we ask the Father in His name will be granted. But we often misunderstand what "*in my name*" actually means. The name *Yehoshua* translates to "YHWH, save!" Therefore, to ask in Jesus' name is always to ask for salvation.

Here's the catch: "saving" doesn't mean giving us a free pass from hardships, temptations, or spiritual combat. It means giving us the grace to fight through whatever torments us—whether that's spiritual warfare, personal failures, deep wounds, or nagging doubts. As the French writer Georges Bernanos brilliantly put it, "In prayer one does not ask for forgetfulness, but for strength."

The "Slap" of Saint Paul

Take Saint Paul, for example. In the famous twelfth chapter of his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul gets incredibly vulnerable about his unanswered prayers.

"Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it should leave me, but he said to me: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Cor 12:8-9)

Paul asked in the name of Jesus, and God essentially said, "No." Did the Lord deceive him? Not at all. Paul admits that without this "thorn in the flesh"—this messenger of Satan sent to beat him—he would have become unbearably proud.

We don't know exactly what Paul's "thorn" was. It could have been humiliating sexual temptations, failures in his ministry, chronic illness, or the haunting memories of the Christians he persecuted before his conversion. He describes it as being "beaten" or slapped.

I know these slaps. You probably do, too. We all have those humiliating experiences that leave us feeling ashamed and helpless, driving us to our knees in fear. There is nothing quite as exhausting as coming face-to-face with our own dark side. But as Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Anthony the Hermit both pointed out: take away temptations, and you take away the saints.

Our salvation isn't found in dodging the blows; it's found in pushing through them. Think of it like going to the gym. What kind of coach would let an Olympic weightlifter skip the heavy lifting? Your spiritual strength comes from the struggle.

The Pearl Metaphor: Wounds Turned to Jewels

When we experience this kind of spiritual narrowness and weakness, our inner pain is slowly being transformed into a jewel. This brings us back to the image of the pearl.

Pearls are essentially a biological reaction to trauma. When a foreign body—like a sharp grain of sand—gets trapped inside an oyster, it irritates and wounds the soft tissue. To protect itself, the mollusc surrounds the painful invader with layer upon layer of mother-of-pearl (nacre). Eventually, the thing that caused the wound becomes a priceless gem.

If your life had never been wounded, your soul would never become a pearl. Everything that hurts you must be continually coated in the nacre of prayer.

Decoding Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*

This beautiful spiritual reality is perfectly captured in Jan Vermeer's 17th-century masterpiece, *Woman Holding a Balance*. At first glance, it looks like an ordinary Dutch woman weighing her jewellery. But art historians and theologians know there's a much deeper, spiritual message at play.

Here is a quick breakdown of the painting's hidden Catholic symbolism:

Symbol in the Painting

Spiritual Meaning

The Mirror

Conscience and self-reflection; seeing our lives from a reversed, divine perspective.

The Light (from the window)

God's truth, which is the only thing capable of drawing us out of the darkness.

The Balance / Scales

Uprightness, judgment, and the weighing of our souls (often associated with Saint Michael the Archangel).

The Empty Pans

Microscopic exams show she isn't weighing physical pearls at all; she is weighing her *deeds* and her soul.

The Painting in the Background

It depicts the Last Judgment, contrasting Christ's eternal judgment with our earthly choices.

Perhaps the woman in the painting is weighing the "pearls" of her soul—the painful, foreign bodies that caused her suffering, which she has slowly coated in grace.

Entering the Pearly Gates

In the Book of Revelation, St. John describes the Heavenly Jerusalem—our ultimate home. He notes a fascinating architectural detail about the city:

"And the twelve gates were twelve PEARLS: each of the gates was made of a single pearl." (Rev 21:21)

This isn't just pretty imagery; it's profound theology. You enter heaven **through a pearl**. You enter through your own weakness, which has been overcome by the power of Jesus. You walk through the very things that were unbearable for you, the wounds you begged God to take away, now transformed into glory.

The Process of Making Your Pearl

How do we actually do this? How do we coat our wounds in grace? **Through forgiveness.**

Jesus tells us in Mark 11:25 that when we stand praying, we must forgive. Yes, there are wounds that feel impossible to forgive. But forgiveness isn't a one-time magic trick; it's a process of layering grace over the pain.

Here is how the nacre of forgiveness usually develops:

- **Step 1:** Releasing the immediate desire for revenge (often accompanied by tears and anger).
- **Step 2:** Directing that raw emotion honestly to God.
- **Step 3:** Finding compassion for the wounded parts of yourself.
- **Step 4:** Slowly extending that understanding and release to the offender.

The longer you surround the memory of the wound with prayer, the more the anger gives way to peace. Eventually, you become so strong in love that the old injury actually makes you look more like Jesus and His Mother.

A Daily Practice for the Wounded

If you're struggling with a "thorn in the flesh" today, try using this simple framework in your daily prayer journal:

1. **THE IRRITANT:** What is the "grain of sand" wounding me today? (Name the specific pain, temptation, or person).
2. **THE SURRENDER:** "Jesus, I cannot fix this on my own. I ask for salvation and strength in Your name, not just an easy escape."
3. **THE MOTHER-OF-PEARL:** Pray one Ave Maria specifically for the grace to forgive the person (or forgive yourself) involved in this wound.
4. **THE PROMISE:** "Lord, I trust that You are turning this wound into a pearl for Your heavenly gates."

Suffering doesn't have to be a cause for despair. It all depends on how we use what happens to

us. So, take those painful memories—especially the ones you least want to revisit—and start surrounding them with prayer. Let God turn your deepest wounds into Heaven's pearls.

Fr Anthony



Around the World

The sometimes missed news

WITHOUT SMARTPHONES

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE BAN

It seems a simple classroom rule in New York is teaching a profound lesson. Banning smartphones during school hours is having a huge positive impact, with Governor Kathy Hochul's office reporting that 80% of educators surveyed see better behaviour and greater student engagement.

This is more than a policy win; it's a moral one. In a world of digital isolation, these schools are rediscovering the value of face-to-face community—a cornerstone of our faith. By removing a primary tool for distraction and cyberbullying, they are fostering an environment where the dignity of each student is better respected.

Educators note that students' attention is now on the lesson, not a screen. This cultivates the attentiveness needed for both deep learning and prayer. As the conversation expands to other devices and AI, it's a powerful reminder for our parishes and families: what might we all gain by putting our screens down and looking up at one another?

REPORT

YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT WORK: NOT JUST IN THE UK

Youth unemployment is not merely a statistical fluctuation; it is a profound crisis of human dignity. While headlines often focus on the UK, a recent report by EU auditors reveals a systemic failure across the European Union. Despite the unemployment rate for those aged 15–29 dropping from 20% in 2013 to roughly 12%, young people remain twice as likely to be jobless as the general population.

Since 2014, the EU has allocated €25 billion to combat this issue. However, the audit exposes a troubling ethical lapse: much of this capital financed jobs that would have been created regardless, failing to reach the most marginalized. From a Catholic perspective, this represents a failure of stewardship and social justice. When resources are not directed toward those in greatest need, we neglect the "preferential option for the poor."

The report highlights 8 million "economically inactive" individuals facing health, social, or educational barriers. In the eyes of the Church, work is not a mere commodity; it is a participation in God's creative action.

| Key Statistic | Impact |
|---------------|---|
| 4.7 Million | Young people currently out of work. |
| 8 Million | Economically inactive facing systemic barriers. |
| 2 x Higher | Risk of unemployment compared to older adults. |

To leave millions in forced idleness is to risk a "throwaway culture" that discards the potential of the next generation. We must demand policies that prioritize the human person over bureaucratic efficiency.

HOW TO LIVE

LONG AND HAPPILY

For over eighty years, the Harvard Study of Adult Development has tracked 724 lives to answer a fundamental question: What constitutes a flourishing life? The data is conclusive. It is not wealth, fame, or even physical metrics like cholesterol that predict a long, healthy life. It is the quality of our interpersonal relationships.

As Catholics, these findings resonate with a deep theological truth: we are created *imago Dei*—in the image of a Triune God who is, in His very essence, a relationship of love. The study reveals that at age 50, relationship satisfaction is a more accurate predictor of health at 80 than any medical marker. Conversely, loneliness is a silent killer, accelerating cognitive decline and physical decay.

This is more than a psychological insight; it is a moral mandate. In an era of digital isolation, we must recognize that neglecting our neighbour is a failure of stewardship over the life God gave us. Authentic communion is the biological and spiritual foundation of survival.

Pillars of a Flourishing Life:

- ❖ **Sacrificial Presence:** Prioritizing face-to-face "communion" over superficial digital "connection."
- ❖ **Forgiveness:** Resolving conflicts that otherwise poison both the soul and the nervous system.
- ❖ **Charity:** Viewing the care of others not as a burden, but as a protective grace for the body and mind.

We Read Pope Leo

Silence can help us recognize the voice of God. When we seek silence, we decide what not to listen to and what noises we will not allow to distract us.

Today, the temptation to gain popularity by fuelling the fire of polarization seems to be growing rather than weakening, and human dignity continues to be violated. Therefore, we need culture, interior life, free and honest education; we need transcendence. (...)

The Catholic Church serves this longing of the human heart. She does so not by imposing, but through evangelical witness, confirmed by the countless multitude of martyrs and saints. Today, too, she is ready to place herself at the service of the future of a nation that seeks reconciliation and peace.



In the name of love for the truth, I call everyone to abandon narratives that divide and polarize your social reality and its history, so as to move from sterile simplifications to a fruitful appreciation of complexity. I see in this a particular vocation of Europe, in which Spain plays an original and fundamental role. This is a gift that the Old Continent can offer the world, if it wishes to remain young. For young is the one who feels that he has before him a future and a mission that still challenge him.

Apostolic Journey to Spain. Meeting with the authorities and the diplomatic corps, Madrid, June 6, 2026.

Silence can help us above all to recognize the voice of God. I believe it is very important for each of

us to strive to develop within ourselves the ability to remain in silence. We often walk around with headphones, listen to music, give in to distractions, and are unable simply to be in silence. I think that very often it is precisely in this experience of silence that God can speak to us, and precisely then that we can recognize His voice. When we seek silence, we decide what not to listen to and what noises we will not allow to distract us. Freeing ourselves from the clamour of a thousand voices, we perceive that some mislead our desires, others buy us off without giving true nourishment, and still others speak in the name of their own interest. In silence we understand that ideologies pass away, while truth endures.

Apostolic Journey to Spain. Prayer vigil with young people, Madrid, June 6, 2026.

Here in Madrid, but also in many other places in Spain, Corpus Christi is not simply one of the days of the liturgical calendar, but a return to the roots of faith in order to renew love and fidelity to God. The solemn processions of this day have, over the centuries, shaped the piety, art, music, architecture, and life of the Spanish nation, and today they express and reveal the spiritual experience of this country also through the beauty and elegance of flower carpets, altars set up in the streets, care for monstrances and Eucharistic thrones, hymns, and liturgical vestments. This is not an external display, a folkloric relic, or a mere aesthetic ornament. It is about faith in the presence of the Risen Lord, who lives and still passes among us, who becomes bread for our hunger for life and visits the recesses of our hearts and of our history, even the darkest ones. (...) It is not merely a matter of raising the monstrance, but of allowing ourselves to be led out of selfishness, indifference, and a comfortable and private faith, in order to respond to His call to conversion, to a change of outlook, to the acceptance of His presence, which transforms us and makes us builders of a new world. Apostolic Journey to Spain.

Homily on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Madrid, June 7, 2026.

In my opinion

The Pope, AI, and a Pandemic Warning We Can't Ignore

In a world racing toward an AI-driven future, Pope Leo XIV has just hit the brakes—hard. His new encyclical on artificial intelligence, *Magnifica humanitas* ("The Splendour of Humanity"), isn't another dusty Vatican document. It's a powerful, clear-eyed, and timely warning about the path we're on.

While the Pope's message is balanced, it doesn't pull any punches. He flags two major concerns that should give us all pause.

Two Alarms from the Vatican

First, there's the unsettling reality that we don't fully control the AI we're creating. The Pope puts it brilliantly, noting that modern AI systems are more "grown" than "constructed." Think of it like a garden, not a skyscraper. We create the architecture, but we don't design every detail of its growth. As he writes:

"Consequently, fundamental scientific aspects — such as the internal representations and computational processes of these systems — currently remain unknown. All the more urgently does the need emerge for a twofold effort: on the one hand, to deepen scientific research; on the other, to practice moral and spiritual discernment" (no. 98).

In other words, we're building things we don't completely understand. That alone should be a flashing red light.

Second, there's the million-dollar question: Who's responsible when things go wrong? This is where it gets really murky. The main players are massive tech corporations that operate in a kind of digital wild west. They are global giants that exist beyond the easy reach of any single government. Who holds them accountable? This lack of clear responsibility is, as the encyclical suggests, deeply troubling.

Now, it's easy to dismiss this as the Church being sceptical of new technology. Is this a

reasonable alarm, or just unfounded fear?

Life Imitates Art: A Real-World Test Case

You might think this is all abstract, theological hand-wringing. But then, just four days after the encyclical dropped, a news story broke that felt like it was ripped from its pages.

The company OpenAI, famous for its ChatGPT chatbot, announced it's developing AI for "biological defence." The goal is to use AI to prepare for and manage future pathogen threats. In partnership with Rosalind Biodefense, their "GPT-Rosalind" model aims to create early warning systems, plan epidemic responses, and even develop medical treatments.

On the surface, who could argue with that? Preventing the next pandemic sounds great.

But let's unpack what this really means. It means handing over immense power to a tech company to manage a health crisis. It opens the door to a future where our personal health decisions—our very autonomy—are dictated by opaque algorithms. And as Pope Leo XIV wisely points out, these algorithms are never neutral. They are built by people with their own biases and goals, who make the crucial decisions about what data matters and what doesn't.

Déjà Vu? The Ghost of the Pandemic

At this point, it's hard not to get a sense of déjà vu. The memory of the COVID-19 pandemic is still fresh, and a frank analysis shows it was a period marked by chaos, conflicting information, and decisions that often felt more ideological than scientific.

Can we really expect AI models, trained on the messy data from that chaotic period, to be purely objective? Or will they simply amplify the biases and mistakes of the past, locking us into a single, algorithm-driven course of action without room for dissent or common sense?

What's most alarming is what's missing from OpenAI's announcement: any mention of an independent regulatory body to oversee these powerful tools before they're unleashed on the public.

A Voice of Wisdom in the Digital Wilderness

This is precisely why the Church's voice is so vital today. It isn't a voice against progress. It's a voice for humanity. It moves with deliberation, refusing to be swept up in popular trends while maintaining a healthy, critical perspective.

Ultimately, the Church draws from the deep well of its social teaching, which, as Pope Leo XIV reminds us, is all about building a just and humane community. In the age of AI, that timeless mission has never been more urgent.

Tony Wood

Prayer



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

Please keep in your prayers Please keep in your prayers Anthony Wilson (Tony)(1994), John Viola **and all whose anniversaries fall around this time.**

News and Events

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



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