

PARISH BULLETIN

**St. Kieran's,
the Catholic
Church** in
*Campbeltown and
Islay*
**Ceann Loch
Chille Chiarain**
21st June 2026



12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 12 of Ordinary Time

Tuesday: Requiem Mass, 1 pm (John Brown †)

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

455 Praise to the holiest in the height

Offertory

243 In bread we bring you, Lord

Communion music

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

Post Communion

381 O bread of heaven

Recessional

514 Tell out my soul

Next weekend:

Saturday, 27th of June, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

Sunday, 28th of June, Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Holy Mass, 10.00am.

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

St. Columba Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Isle of Islay

5th July: **Holy Mass, 4pm**

19th July: **Holy Mass, 4pm**

Psalm response

In your great mercy, answer me, O Lord.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*The Spirit of truth will bear witness about me, says the Lord,
and you also will bear witness.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*The eyes of all look to you, Lord,
and you give them their food in due season.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY OF WEEK 12

22 JUNE 2026

Use your best judgment

Matthew's gospel quotes Jesus as saying, "Stop judging, that you may not be judged." But of course, you have to make judgments every day. What Jesus forbids is judging a person's character, worth, intentions, or even their standing before God on the basis of what you see. A bit of wisdom cautions: Do not judge someone's insides by their outsides. In the gospels Jesus rarely uses the word hypocrite, but when he does, it is with a vengeance. Hypocrisy comes from the Greek word for "actor," someone who wears a mask. The gospel asks that you unmask yourself, be real, and not judge others (God's job) and certainly not on the basis only of what you can see.

Today's readings: 2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18; Matthew 7:1-5. *"You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye."*

TUESDAY OF WEEK 12

23 JUNE 2026

Show yourself the door

During a tour of San Francesco Basilica in Assisi, Italy, a friar took a group of pilgrims through the upper and lower churches and to the crypt where Saint Francis and his companions were buried. Throughout the tour he talked about the life of Francis and the architecture, art, and history connected to him. At the end the friar brought the group back to the upper church and showed them the stunning frescoes attributed to Giotto illustrating scenes from scripture and Francis' life. As he guided the group to the exit, he explained that on this wall was the most important scene yet: the door! The exit, he said, is a reminder to go through the doors and spread the Good News to the whole world. Something to think about next time you

leave a church building!

Today's readings: 2 Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36; Matthew 7:6, 12-14. *"Enter through the narrow gate."*

WEDNESDAY: SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

24 JUNE 2026

What's in a name?

In the Rite of Baptism, the first question the priest or deacon asks is: "What name do you give this child?" At first glance this seems like a superficial question; a way to get the ball rolling as it were. But like all the elements of the sacrament of Baptism, there is more here than meets the eye. To give someone or something a name is a powerful act. As God named each part of creation as it was brought into being, so do we. Take some time today to think about the story of your name. Whom were you named after? What qualities did the person have that your parents may have wished for you?

Today's readings: Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80. *"The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name."*

THURSDAY OF WEEK 12

25 JUNE 2026

Hear the word in the world

Ancient philosophers thought that reason governed the universe. They called this reason the logos: Greek for "word." In the Hebrew Bible the "word of God" was not only the way God communicated with human beings, but it also had its own creative power. The New Testament, especially the beginning of the Gospel of John, says this creative power became human in Jesus. All this history testifies to the "Word" being the way people have experienced God's guidance in the real world. God can be known – and wants to be known. All you have to do is listen to God's

word – and follow it.

Today's readings: 2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29. *“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”*

FRIDAY OF WEEK 12

26 JUNE 2026

Keep it clean

No one quite knows where the expression “cleanliness is next to godliness” comes from. It may be an ancient Hebrew saying. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, used it in a homily in 1791 as if it were common wisdom. It had a practical value, because being clean helped combat disease. Religions have made cleanliness a sign of God's favour – not only the absence of dirt but also to say that one is in the right way with the divine. In his healing ministry, Jesus, though almost constantly “unclean” because of his contact with “undesirables,” also made people clean, restoring them to health and the community. To whom can you reach out a healing and welcoming hand?

Today's readings: 2 Kings 25:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4. *“A leper approached, did him homage, and said, ‘Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean.’”*

SATURDAY OF WEEK 12

27 JUNE 2026

Only say the word

In 2011, the revised Roman Missal underwent a number of changes. One of the more noticeable changes was in the Eucharistic Prayer: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you . . .” became “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof . . .” The new wording echoes the gospel story of Jesus healing the centurion's servant from a distance. It was Christ's word and the centurion's faith that healed. Perhaps as we participate in the Mass these words are a good reminder that the words we use are powerful – filled with faith and capable of miracles.

Today's readings: Lamentations 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Matthew 8:5-17. *“Jesus said to the centurion, ‘You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you.’”*

Readings for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Friends turn into enemies, as the prophet's worldly fate is imperilled.

Psalms 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

The friend of the Lord is shamed and cast out but cannot be lost.

Romans 5:12-15

The sin of the world infects us all, but the gift of Christ is greater still.

Matthew 10:26-33

Those who can crush our souls are the only ones we must fear.

Words on the Word

The Power of Joy, Goodness, and Peace in the Face of Adversity

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Saint John Bosco spread the following rule as a pedagogical principle in his educational institutions: “Be cheerful, do good, and let the sparrows chirp.”

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As we navigate the complexities of life, it's easy to get caught up in the hardships and crosses that inevitably come our way. But what if we told you that there's a way to approach these challenges with a sense of joy, goodness, and peace? It's a mindset that's rooted in the

teachings of the Old and New Testaments, and it's one that can transform the way we live our lives.

The Joy of Living

The Bible is replete with exhortations to live one's life with joy and optimism. The knowledge of being chosen for the heavenly kingdom, redemption, and salvation is a powerful antidote to the hardships we face. Yet, we often struggle to find joy in the midst of adversity. We're not taught how to value old age and illness, how to overcome fear of death, or how to remain merciful in the face of trickery. These lessons must be learned through personal experience, but they can be made easier when we cultivate a sense of detachment and perspective.

The Virtue of Goodness

A life of goodness is not just a moral ideal; it's a fundamental aspect of the Christian vocation. As the inscription on Cardinal August Hlond's tomb in the Warsaw cathedral so eloquently puts it, "He went through the world doing good." This is the highest assessment of a human life. Good deeds and a good life flow from a good heart, and it's a virtue that's threatened by the temptation to take the easy way out. "And what do you need that for?" the devil whispers. "Look, it can be done differently and more easily." But the norm is clear: "Act rightly!" This principle applies to every area of life, from our thoughts and speech to our deeds and intentions.

The Elusive Nature of Peace

In today's world, fears and a sense of threat are becoming increasingly prevalent. Despite our best efforts to create a sense of security through agreements, laws, and insurance, fear is omnipresent. We worry about losing what we have, our position, our good name. But true inner peace returns when we recognize that these things are not as important as we think they are. Distance from ourselves and our problems is essential, as is the ability to laugh at ourselves. Jesus Himself teaches us to do so, saying, "Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?" (Mt 6:26).

The Opposite of Fear

Fearful anxiety before man and the fear of God are mutually exclusive. The more we fear people, the less reverence we have for God. But when we cultivate reverence and trust in God, fear of man disappears, and our worries seem insignificant. It's a paradox that's at the heart of the Christian faith: that true security and peace come not from our own efforts, but from our relationship with God.

In conclusion, living a life of joy, goodness, and peace is not a naive or unrealistic ideal. It's a fundamental aspect of the Christian vocation, one that requires us to cultivate a sense of detachment, perspective, and reverence for God. By embracing this mindset, we can navigate the challenges of life with confidence and hope, knowing that we are not alone, but are part of a larger story of redemption and salvation.

* * *

*In the depths of trust, I find the courage to soar
To dare to leap, before the safety net is laid before
No insurance policy can guarantee the fall
No net to catch me, if I choose to lose it all*

*To leave behind the weights that bind and suffocate
The fears that grip and paralyze, the sorrows that create*

*A life of monotony, an existence without a spark
To shatter the chains that hold me back, and embark*

*On a journey of self-discovery, where creativity and strength reside
In the presence of the divine, where love and freedom abide
To trust in the unknown, to trust in the divine plan
To leap into the void, with faith as my guiding hand*

*Life after life, I'll find my way
Through the darkness and the light, I'll find my day
To trust in the universe, to trust in my own heart
To leap into the unknown and never depart.*

(A.W.)

In Christ's love,
Fr Anthony

ICONS OF EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES, AND SAINTS: 32 SAINTS COSMOS AND DAMIAN

The Unyielding Legacy of Saints Cosmas and Damian

In the annals of Christian history, few saints have left an indelible mark on the faithful as profoundly as the twin wonderworkers, Cosmas and Damian. Their remarkable lives, marked by selfless devotion to the healing arts, have inspired generations of believers and earned them a revered place in the pantheon of Catholic saints.

A Life of Service



According to tradition, Cosmas and Damian were born on the island of Cyprus in the third century, a time when the art of medicine was a rare and exclusive privilege reserved for the wealthy. Defying convention, the twin brothers dedicated their lives to the practice of medicine, providing free care to the poor and marginalized. Their unwavering commitment to serving others earned them a reputation as paragons of virtue and compassion.

Martyrdom and Legacy

The circumstances of their deaths are shrouded in mystery, with some accounts suggesting they met a martyr's fate at the hands of Emperor Diocletian in 303 AD, while others propose a more peaceful demise in Mesopotamia. Regardless of the specifics, their tombs became revered pilgrimage sites, attracting the faithful from far and wide.

A Global Phenomenon

From the fifth century onward, the cult of Cosmas and Damian spread like wildfire across the Christian world, with the brothers being particularly venerated in Constantinople. Today, their

feast day is celebrated on November 1 in the Eastern Church and July 26 in the Catholic Church, a testament to the enduring power of their legacy.

Patron Saints of the Healing Arts

As patrons of physicians, pharmacists, veterinarians, and dentists, Cosmas and Damian continue to inspire professionals dedicated to the pursuit of healing. Their icons, depicting the brothers in ornate attire, often accompanied by symbols of their profession, serve as a poignant reminder of their unwavering commitment to serving others.

A Timeless Legacy

In an era marked by increasing specialization and commercialization of healthcare, the lives of Cosmas and Damian offer a powerful reminder of the transformative impact of selfless service. As we reflect on their remarkable lives, we are reminded of the enduring power of compassion, empathy, and devotion to the healing arts.

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 28

Resurrection

John 20:1-9

The Resurrection: A Beacon of Hope in a World of Uncertainty

In the heart of every believer lies a profound question: Did the apostles see Him? The answer resonates with a resounding affirmation. Yes, they did. And if they could witness the awe-inspiring sight of the empty tomb, then so can we. This is not merely a historical recounting but a living testament to the transformative power of faith in our modern lives.

The Significance of the Empty Tomb

The linen cloths, still tangled and covered with the dust of spices, held a mystery that even the most devout followers could not ignore. Peter and John, driven by an inexplicable urgency, entered the tomb and beheld the form of collapsed fabrics – sheets that had not been unwound by anyone. This was no ordinary resurrection; it was a revelation of life transcending the physical realm.

John Stott's insights illuminate this phenomenon: the apostles' instant belief stemmed from the impossibility of exiting such a cocoon without a miraculous intervention. Just as Lazarus required assistance to free himself from his linen wrappings, Jesus emerged from His own with a divine ease – as if passing through light itself. This image, vivid and unsettling, shook the apostles to their core, affirming that the Resurrection was not merely a return to life but a profound transformation into a new form of existence.

The Hidden Nature of the Risen Christ

The Risen Christ, as described by theologians like Olivier Clément, eludes the confines of time and space, yet remains accessible to those who seek Him. He is present and absent simultaneously, a mystery that beckons us to look beyond the visible. The question arises: Why

does Jesus reveal Himself only to those who believe? The answer lies in the respect for human freedom. God does not impose Himself but invites us into a personal encounter, a meeting that reaches the deepest recesses of our being.

Encouragement for the Modern Faithful

In today's fast-paced world, where distractions abound and certainty seems elusive, the Resurrection offers a steadfast anchor. It reminds us that faith is not about intellectual assent but about a lived experience of encountering the divine. As Benedict XVI eloquently states, God does not impose Himself; He invites us to an encounter that transforms us from within. This invitation is open to all – Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, and each one of us, regardless of our past or present struggles.

The Call to Belief

The Resurrection does not compel faith; rather, it awakens it. It is the quiet voice of God calling us by name, urging us to recognize the Christ who is both tangible and transcendent. The sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, serve as gateways to this life-transforming encounter. They offer us a humble yet profound access to the Resurrection, stronger than death itself.

Conclusion

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, let us remember the apostles' encounter with the empty tomb. Let it inspire us to look beyond the surface, to seek the hidden presence of Christ in our everyday experiences. In doing so, we not only affirm our faith but also discover the hope and renewal that the Resurrection promises. May we, like Peter and John, be moved to see the emptiness of death and the boundless life that lies beyond it.

Call to Action

Take a moment today to reflect on your own encounter with the Risen Christ. Ask yourself: How does this transformation touch my life? Allow this reflection to deepen your faith and encourage you to share this hope with others, for in the Resurrection, we find the ultimate promise of life everlasting.

End Note

In the words of the early Church Fathers, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" Let this truth resonate within you, guiding you through every challenge and every triumph. The Resurrection is not just a historical event; it is a living reality that empowers us to live boldly, love deeply, and hope faithfully in a world that so desperately needs its light.

Encouragement

Believe, for the light of the Resurrection shines brightly within you, beckoning you forward into a life of grace and purpose. Embrace this hope and let it illuminate your path today and always. Amen.

Fr Anthony

Israel persecutes Christians

The Fading Light: The Everyday Struggle of Christians in the Holy Land

For centuries, the Holy Land has been the cradle of the Christian faith. Today, however, local Christians face a growing crisis. Caught between political radicalization and ongoing war, the everyday reality for Catholics and other Christians in Israel and the Palestinian territories is becoming increasingly difficult.

Year by year, aggression against Christians is rising. What was once sporadic harassment has become a regular, seemingly tolerated part of life, threatening the very presence of the Church in the land of Christ.

Hiding the Faith in Broad Daylight

In Israel and the occupied territories, incidents of vandalism, intimidation, and physical assault are multiplying. To avoid being spat on, verbally abused, or beaten, many Christians feel forced to hide their identity. Laypeople are leaving their crosses and medals at home, while some religious orders are advising priests and nuns not to wear their habits in public.

Fr. Bernard Alter, who served in the Holy Land for 20 years, recalls a stark example of this daily indignity:

“When I walked in my habit through Jerusalem... on a route of about 4 km I was spat on at least 10 times. Once, near our abbey on Mount Zion, I encountered a group of young people coming out of a Talmudic school. I had to let them pass, and each one who passed me spat... A policewoman was standing nearby and did not react at all.”

According to the Jerusalem-based Rossing Centre for Education and Dialogue, these are not isolated incidents. The centre reports that violence against Christians increased by over 60% in the past year alone.

Common Forms of Harassment:

- Verbal and Physical Abuse: Spitting and shouting at clergy and laypeople.
- Vandalism: Desecration of churches and Christian symbols.
- Intimidation: Harassment in heavily patrolled areas, particularly the Old City of Jerusalem.

The Devastation of War

While the situation has been deteriorating for years, a radical shift occurred following the tragic events of October 7, 2023, when the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas massacred Israeli civilians. In the ensuing war, the Israeli military response aimed at dismantling Hamas has brought widespread devastation to the Gaza Strip – and its small Christian community.

Before the war, over 1,000 Christians lived in Gaza. Today, fewer than 500 remain. Many have been killed, died from disease and hunger, or fled. Catholic institutions, including a local school and the Church of the Holy Family, have been caught in the crossfire, facing bombings and sniper fire.

Fr. David Neuhaus, an Israeli Jesuit and professor of Sacred Scripture, warns of the severe humanitarian toll. “If we do not stop this in Gaza, the same thing will happen in the West Bank,” he notes, pointing to the extreme rhetoric used by some political leaders regarding Palestinians.

Political Radicalism and Unchecked Violence

The rise in harassment is closely tied to a broader trend of political and social radicalization in Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition relies heavily on the Religious Zionism bloc. This includes figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Minister of National Security, who has a history of extreme nationalist activism.

Under this ideology, some political leaders promote the belief that only Jews have a divine right to the land, leaving little room for Arab Palestinians, including Christians. Consequently, law enforcement often turns a blind eye to harassment. The Rossing Centre notes that the vast majority of cases involving attacks on Christians are closed without any investigation.

Holy Land Demographics & Statistics at a Glance

Metric Data	Historical / Previous Data	Current
Christian Population in Gaza	> 1,000 (Pre-Oct 2023)	< 500
Overall Christian Population	~4% (20 years ago)	< 1%
Christians in Israel (Mostly Arab)	N/A	~180,000
Christians in West Bank/Gaza/East Jerusalem	N/A	~45,000
Increase in Violence (2024 to 2025)	N/A	+ 63%

Caught in the Crossfire

For local Christians, everyday life is a struggle for basic dignity. While international pilgrims visit holy sites in comfort, local Palestinian Christians face severe travel restrictions.

“People making pilgrimages to the Holy Land do not realize what problems local Christians have to struggle with every day,” explains Sylwia Hazboun, who is married to a Palestinian Christian. “Pilgrims get annoyed that they have to spend 15 minutes at a checkpoint, while local Palestinians do not even have the possibility of passing through such a checkpoint.”

Because of these harsh economic and social conditions, young Christians are increasingly leaving the Holy Land to start families elsewhere.

The Misuse of Scripture

Adding to the complexity is the influence of “Christian Zionism,” heavily promoted by certain evangelical Protestant groups in the United States. This political-religious movement argues that the modern state of Israel has a God-given right to expand its borders – sometimes stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates – to fulfil biblical prophecy.

This theology heavily influences U.S. politics, as seen in the appointment of figures like Pastor Mike Huckabee as U.S. ambassador to Israel. However, Catholic leaders warn that this interpretation distorts the Gospel.

Fr. Neuhaus, who converted from Judaism to Catholicism, emphasizes the true message of the Bible:

“We must remind people that the Holy Book speaks of life, human dignity, and the equality of all people.

Unfortunately, many times in history the Bible has been interpreted in such a way as to enslave people and justify colonialism.”

As the Christian presence in the Holy Land dwindles to less than 1%, the universal Church is called to look beyond the ancient stones of Jerusalem and see the living stones – the everyday believers – who are struggling to keep the faith alive in the very place where it was born.



Church of the Multiplication in Tabgha as seen through the burnt roof of an auxiliary building next to the church.

A Prayer for the Holy Land:

Lord, Prince of Peace, we pray for our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. Grant them courage in the face of persecution, comfort in their grief, and hope amidst the ravages of war. May leaders be guided by justice, and may the dignity of every human life be respected. Amen.



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

FORTIFYING THE FLANK

THE BALTIC DEFENCE LINE

In a sobering reflection of modern geopolitical tensions, Latvian, American, and Danish forces are constructing a prototype of the Baltic Defence Line at the Selija training ground.

Project Highlights:

Scope: Fortifying the eastern borders of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Features: Bunkers, trenches, armoured positions, and concrete “dragon’s teeth.”

Goal: Deter potential incursions from Russia and Belarus, eventually connecting with Poland’s “East Shield.”

Captain Roberts Zarins of the Latvian National Guard explains the urgency: “There is no longer time to improvise.” Consequently, the Selija base is expanding to house 2,000 soldiers.

From a Catholic perspective, this development invites a fair and nuanced moral evaluation. The Church affirms the legitimate right – and grave duty – of sovereign nations to protect their citizens from unjust aggression (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2265). The Baltic states’ prudent measures to safeguard their people align with this principle of proportionate self-defence.

Yet, the necessity of pouring heavy concrete to divide lands is a tragic reminder of our fractured world. While we acknowledge the practical need for deterrence, these physical barriers must call the faithful to urgent prayer. True peace requires more than “dragon’s teeth”; it demands justice, diplomacy, and a conversion of hearts.

CONFRONTING HISTORICAL TRUTH

THE TRAGEDY OF HUTA PIENIACKA

As Catholics, we are called to build peace on the firm foundation of truth. Recently, the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance announced research efforts in Huta Pieniacka (now in modern-day Ukraine), stating the village was tragically destroyed by “German police” in

February 1944.

While remembering the dead is a moral imperative, authentic reconciliation requires confronting uncomfortable realities. The Polish Institute of National Remembrance corrects this historical record:

The Perpetrators: Primarily Ukrainian volunteers of the 4th Galician Volunteer SS Police Regiment.

The Collaborators: UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) units and local nationalist paramilitaries who, according to witnesses, surrounded the village.

The Crime: Not a vague wartime tragedy, but a targeted mass murder of civilians.

Obscuring the identities of the perpetrators – even to protect a national narrative – is a profound ethical failing. Christ teaches that the truth sets us free (John 8:32). Downplaying a mass murder hinders genuine healing between neighbouring peoples and feeds the running sore.

Journalistic integrity and Christian justice demand clarity, not omission. Only by acknowledging the precise nature of this atrocity can we truly honour the victims' God-given dignity, seek authentic forgiveness, and ensure such darkness is never repeated.

THE HOLY LAND

ETHNIC CLEANSING

Amnesty International has levelled one of the gravest accusations in international law against the Israeli authorities: “ethnic cleansing” of Bedouin communities and shepherds in the West Bank, alongside the illegal annexation of Palestinian land. In a recent report, the organisation says Israel’s forced displacements in the West Bank amount to a crime against humanity.

In Area C – more than half of the West Bank, under full Israeli control – Amnesty reports that 27 communities were either forcibly displaced or threatened with displacement between 2023 and 2025. At the same time, Israel is pursuing an active policy of expanding Jewish settlements. UN data suggest that, on average, six settler attacks on Palestinians take place every day.

From a Christian moral perspective, this isn’t just about geopolitics; it’s about breaking the basic commandment to love one’s neighbour and respect the God-given dignity of every person. Policies that deliberately minimise a people’s presence, grab land, or arm civilians in ways that fuel violence run directly against Catholic social teaching on the common good, solidarity, and justice.

Whatever one’s view of the wider conflict, the deliberate uprooting of communities and systematic intimidation cannot be squared with the Gospel or with any serious ethic of human rights.

BELARUS

TURNING UP THE HEAT ON THE CHURCH

In Belarus, the authorities have quietly but steadily tightened the screws on the Catholic Church. Most recently, they have forced a group of long-serving Polish priests to leave the country by simply refusing to renew their residence permits. As reported by Bryan Lawrence Gonsalves for EWTN News, this isn’t an isolated bureaucratic hiccup; it’s part of a pattern.

In early March, two priests from the Diocese of Pinsk in southern Belarus were blocked from continuing their ministry. In May, three more from the Diocese of Vitebsk lost their permits. At the end of that month, five priests and one religious from the Archdiocese of Minsk-Mohilev followed. All of them are Polish citizens who have ministered in Belarusian parishes for years – some for decades.

The message is clear: the state wants a Church it can control and reshape. Much like China's program of "Sinicization," Belarus seems intent on "Belarusianizing" the Church – weakening its historic ties to Poland, the only strong European link, and its freedom to speak truth.

From a moral standpoint, this is more than politics. It's an attack on religious freedom, on the right of communities to receive the sacraments from priests they trust, and on the Church's universal character. Catholics, after all, belong first to Christ, not to any state ideology.

We Read Pope Leo

The Basilica of the Sagrada Família reminds us that the Christian life is always a journey, because it concerns a project that God Himself is bringing to fulfilment.

The world is undergoing a deep spiritual and cultural crisis, manifested in many forms of violence, polarization, and mutual distrust. In this context, peace appears as a political aspiration, and even more as a true moral requirement. It calls for a public language that respects those who think differently; for institutions that serve encounter; and for historical memory that seeks truth and reconciliation.

Apostolic Journey to Spain, meeting with members of the Spanish Parliament, Madrid, June 8, 2026.

Let us not cease to seek, to ask questions, and to engage in dialogue – with God and among ourselves – even in the very heart of the night. Let us walk together in faith, which harmonizes the diversity of our ideas and sensitivities, so as to seek the truth that leads us toward the common good; so that this country may be a welcoming place for all, where each person is respected in his or her dignity and loved as he or she is.

Apostolic Journey to Spain, prayer vigil, Barcelona, June 9, 2026.

You ask me whether, as a child, I wanted to become pope. Well, Renzo, I think not. It seems to me that I never thought about it. I can tell you one thing, however: from my earliest years I felt the desire to give my life to God. I did not yet know exactly how or where the Lord would lead me. In time I discovered that Jesus was calling me to follow Him as a priest, and that this path led through the Order of Saint Augustine.

Answer to the question of a 6-year-old boy during a meeting with representatives of charitable and humanitarian organizations, Barcelona, June 10, 2026.

Today the Basilica of the Sagrada Família welcomes us in this beautiful city, opening its doors like arms, to invite everyone to this altar and to listen to the word of God. It is a church that makes us a family beloved by the Lord, nourished by His own life in the Eucharist. In this way Barcelona – *la ciutat comtal* [the city of the counts] – and all Catalonia gather in this church, which is also a sign of unity and concord, and lift their eyes to meet the face of God. (...) The Basilica of the Sagrada Família remains, even today, a building still under construction. It reminds us that the Christian life is always a journey, because it concerns a project that God Himself is bringing to fulfilment. (...) As an architect aflame with faith, the Venerable Servant of God Antoni Gaudí designed these spaces with the desire to recount the mysteries of the Lord's life – in this way he offered us a spiritual pilgrimage leading to an encounter with Christ.

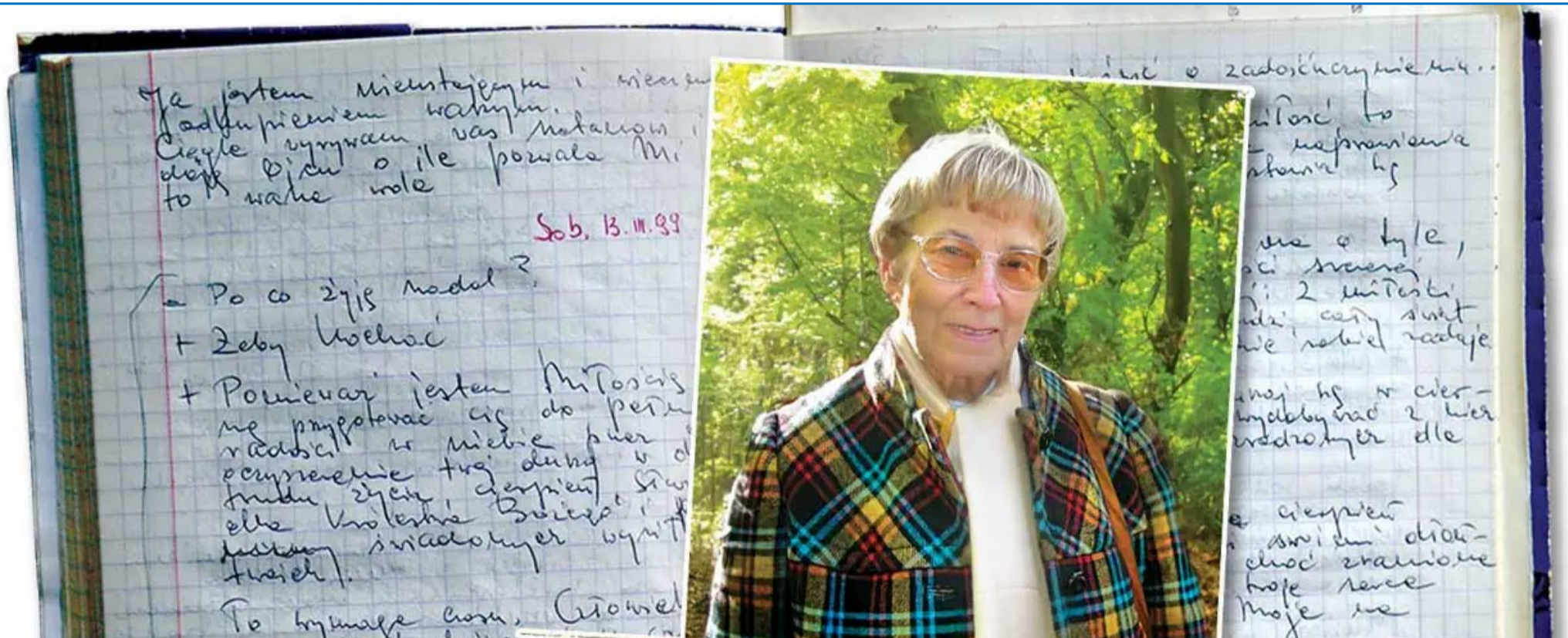
Apostolic Journey to Spain, homily in the Basilica of the Sagrada Família, Barcelona, June 10,

2026.

Mercy begins with small gestures: sometimes with a few biscuits and a little milk; at other times – with five loaves and two fish (cf. Mt 14:17-21). It is not a matter of solving everything, but of placing everything in God’s hands and being present where a person suffers, where resources are insufficient and there is no shared language, but where gestures can still speak.

Apostolic Journey to Spain, meeting with organizations providing assistance to migrants, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, June 11, 2026.

Alicja Lenczewska: A Modern Mystic’s Witness to the Risen Christ



On January 5, 2012, a retired Polish teacher took her final breath in a Szczecin hospice. To the secular world, Alicja Lenczewska was an ordinary woman who had spent her life teaching handicrafts and pedagogy. Yet, she left behind two profound spiritual diaries – Testimony and Words of Instruction – that have since been evaluated by a theological commission and approved by the Catholic Church.

Her writings reveal extraordinary theological depth, offering a serious and urgent message for the modern world: Christ is alive, the spiritual battle for souls is fierce, and the call to radical conversion cannot be ignored.

[From Superficiality to the Shock of Grace](#)

Born in Warsaw in 1934, Alicja’s early life was marked by the tragedy of World War II. Her father died in 1939, and she was raised by her mother, eventually settling in Szczecin. For decades, she lived a conventional life as a teacher and deputy headmistress. By her own admission, her Catholicism was superficial.

“There were periods lasting several years when I lived outside the Church, almost completely in clear contradiction to God’s commandments,” she wrote. She travelled the world seeking meaning, goodness, and beauty, only to be met with a profound sense of emptiness.

The turning point arrived in 1984. Following her mother’s death, Alicja and her brother began attending meetings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. She immersed herself in spiritual literature, which prepared her heart for a definitive encounter.

During a retreat in Gostyń on March 8, 1985, Alicja experienced a mystical awakening. After

receiving Holy Communion, the veil of the material world seemed to lift.

“Jesus stood before me. More real, more true than everything that was in the chapel... An immensity of love so great, so unheard of, that before it one can only weep over one’s ingratitude. And then joy that He loves me. Joy bursting the heart.”

From that moment, her hierarchy of values was permanently inverted. Jesus Christ became her sole desire.

The Diaries of a Soul

At the Gostyń retreat, Alicja received the rare grace of regular mystical encounters. Jesus began giving her direct spiritual instruction, commanding her to write everything down.

“What you are writing down is so that people may understand that I want to speak to everyone,” Jesus told her. “That I am with every person, at every moment of his life.”

These writings formed her two diaries. To align her life with her newfound faith, Alicja enacted radical changes. She sold her television, giving the proceeds to charity, and purged her home of unnecessary possessions. Her daily routine became anchored in the Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and strict fasting on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Core Theological Themes in Lenczewska’s Writings

The theological commission that reviewed Alicja’s diaries noted their profound alignment with Church teaching. Her writings address several critical aspects of the Catholic faith:

Theological Focus *Mystical Insight Received by Alicja*

The Eucharist Christ is truly present. The Mass is not merely a memorial, but the timeless reality of Golgotha made present. Receiving Communion in mortal sin is a severe profanation.

Sin & Mercy Mortal sin spiritually kills God within the soul. However, through the Sacrament of Penance, Christ resurrects the soul. There are no hopeless situations if one desires to return.

Prayer Prayer is unity with God. Without it, even “good” deeds are empty and vulnerable to demonic influence. Goodness and wisdom are energies flowing directly from the Divine Source.

Suffering Suffering, when united with Christ, has redemptive power. Love must be self-offering, not possessive.

Invisible Stigmata and Spiritual Warfare

In early 1989, Alicja’s mystical journey deepened when she received the invisible stigmata. Rather than physical wounds, she experienced the acute spiritual agony of Christ. She felt His pain over priests and believers who betray Him, who use Him for their own vanity, and who trample His blood through selfishness.

“You have received the sign of pain,” Jesus explained to her, “to make it easier for you to remain constantly in Me... This is the truth, and this is a share in My suffering of reparation and redemption.”

With this grace came intense spiritual warfare. As she compiled Words of Instruction, Alicja endured severe psychological and spiritual attacks from demonic forces. Jesus reminded her of the stakes:

- The Global Threat: Jesus warned that Satan’s new work, following the totalitarianisms of the 20th century, is to incite mutual hatred and division using ethnic, national, and religious differences.
- The Battle for Souls: “Oh, if you knew how great a battle is being waged, how fierce the fight for every human heart,” Jesus told her.
- The Weapon of Prayer: To combat demonic oppression, Jesus gave Alicja specific instructions regarding spiritual defence.

Spiritual Defence Directive:

“If you feel that Satan’s attacks are coming, when darkness and oppression surround your soul, immediately pray Sub Tuum Praesidium [We Fly to Thy Patronage], because it is an exorcism.”

A Prophet for the Modern Era

Following her retirement in 1987, Alicja dedicated her life entirely to evangelization. She volunteered at her local parish, took perpetual vows in the Family of the Heart of Crucified Love, and co-founded the Apostles of Pure Love.

She was deeply devoted to the messages of Fatima and Medjugorje, organizing pilgrimages and leading prayer groups. She echoed the urgent calls of the Blessed Mother for penance, warning that without conversion and a return to God, global unrest and division would only escalate.

“Nothing will be united and there will be no peace without conversion – without God,” she recorded in 1999.

“We Are Burning Up to the End”

In 2010, the mystical encounters ceased. That spring, Alicja was diagnosed with terminal kidney cancer. She faced her diagnosis not with despair, but with serene acceptance, viewing her illness as a final purifying gift from God.

By December 2011, she entered a hospice in Szczecin, desiring only to attend daily Mass and to avoid burdening her family. In her final hours, those keeping vigil witnessed her peering into eternity.

“How beautiful it is there! I saw my parents. How He loves us! I was outside time,” the dying woman whispered.

Her final words were a profound testament to a soul entirely consumed by divine love: “O Jesus, look at me. We are burning up, Jesus! We are burning up to the end! You burned Yourself up to the end. I burned myself up to the end.”

Alicja Lenczewska passed away on January 5, 2012. Her life serves as a stark, beautiful reminder to the modern Church. As she wrote in 2009, the greatest threat to the Church does not come from the secular world, but from within – from hearts that, “instead of being the heart and hands of Christ, are His Wounds.”

Through her diaries, Alicja continues to invite everyday Catholics to step out of spiritual superficiality and become the heart and hands of the Risen One.

In my opinion

Is Ethics Just an Old Superstition?

We’re heading toward a serious crossroads. If we drop our values, we lose the inner strength we need to face a changing, tougher world.

Today, money and usefulness seem to rule everything. What matters is what sells, what pays,

what gives quick pleasure. Relationships get reduced to networking: we talk to people who can help our careers, not those who help us grow as persons. Deals replace real conversations. A quiet “social Darwinism” is spreading: if you earn, you count; if you stop earning, you vanish. What’s immediately useful outweighs what is true, good, or beautiful.

So, we have to ask: do we still need ethics, philosophy, and art that don’t “pay off”? If marketing and quick profit are king, why think about goodness, dignity, or what can restore our trust in others?

We’re also told that almost everything – culture, civilization, even biological sex – is just a “construct.” At the same time, Europe is receiving many newcomers from places that don’t share its ethical roots in the Gospel and the Ten Commandments. Some come to build a life together; others simply come to take advantage of a society that no longer believes in itself. That’s the hard truth: without firm values, without a moral backbone, we become easy targets – for aggressive ideologies at home and for those who see our confusion as an opportunity. Defending our civilization isn’t about longing for the past. It’s about deciding whether we still believe in ethics, even when it’s “commercially useless.” Christian ethics gives courage, clarity, and firm ground. It tells us who we are and what is worth protecting.

If we abandon that, we won’t end up in some neutral, “value-free” space. We’ll wake up inside a system designed by others – people who do believe in rules, but not necessarily in justice, mercy, or human dignity. No community lives without norms; the only question is whose norms they will be.

So, the choice is right in front of us: drift along with a culture that worships utility and quick gain or deliberately return to an ethic rooted in our Christian tradition – before the empty space we’ve created is filled by something far harsher.

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 John Brown who passed away last week, and 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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