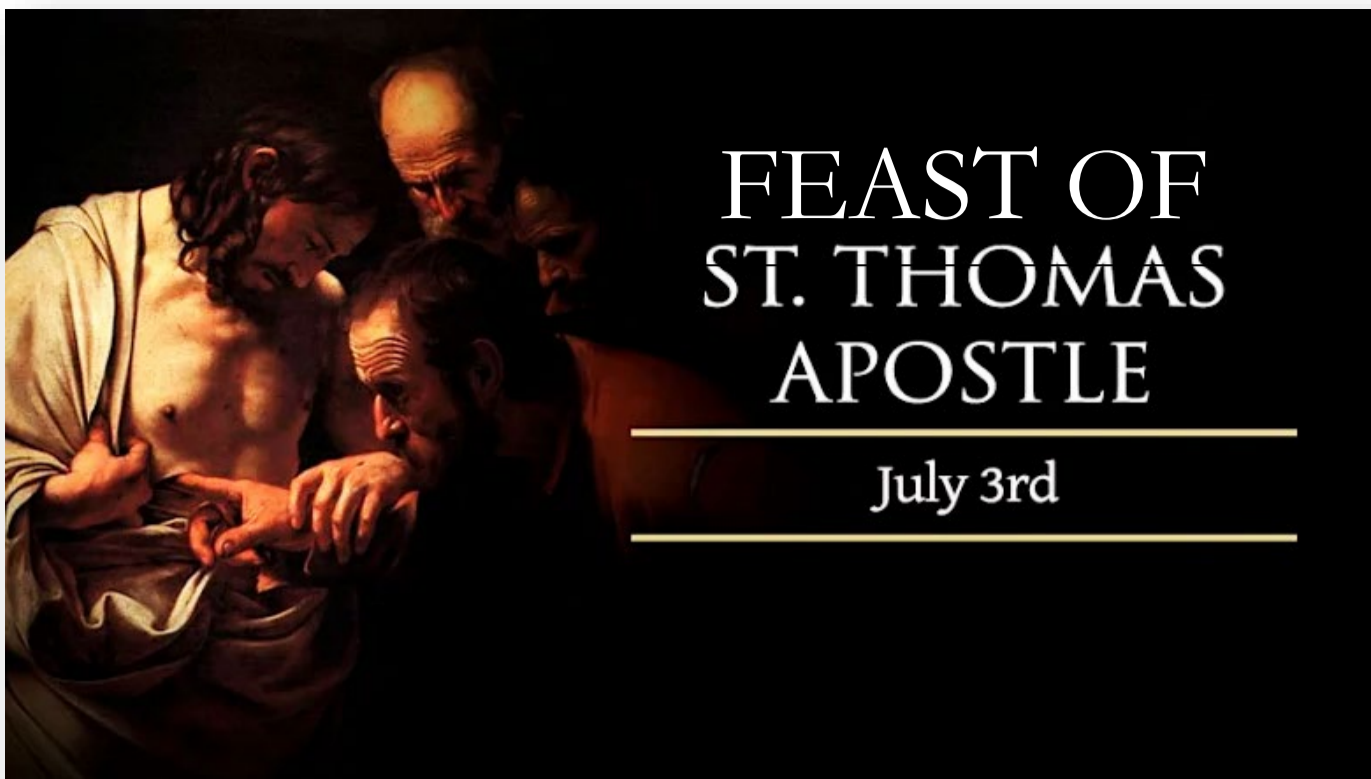


PARISH BULLETIN

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

*Campbeltown and Islay
Ceann Loch Chille
Chiarain
28th June 2026*



FEAST OF
ST. THOMAS
APOSTLE

July 3rd

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 13 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

Sheet For all your saints still active
(Peter and Paul)

Offertory

359 My God loves me

Communion music

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

Post Communion

498 Soul of my Saviour

Recessional

130 Faith of our fathers
(Tynemouth: St. Catherine)

Next weekend:

Saturday, 4th of July, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 5th of July, 14th 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

5th July: Holy Mass, 4pm

19th July: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

From all my terrors the Lord set me free.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

*And Jesus replied: You are Peter,
and upon this rock I will build my Church.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY OF WEEK 13

29 JUNE 2026

Keep the light on for them

Jesus was not the first person, and certainly not the last, to experience homelessness. The problem is persistent and worldwide – an estimated 100 million people lack stable housing. The reasons are many and complex, from chronic unemployment to substance abuse to mental illness to natural disaster. But while none of us may be able to “solve” homelessness alone, each of us can respond to it with compassion. The website nationalhomeless.org offers some ideas and opportunities. Find a way to help someone – you are likely to meet Jesus along the way!

Today's readings: Amos 2:6-10, 13-16; Matthew 8:18-22. *“The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”*

TUESDAY OF WEEK 13

30 JUNE 2026

Fear and trepidation

What is stronger than fear, even the fear of death? Scripture gives an answer: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). The Wisdom of Solomon tells us that “love is stronger than death” (Song of Songs 8:6). Jesus’ sleeping presence on the storm-tossed sea reveals the sleeping faith of his disciples. They feared for their lives even though their Lord and Master was with them in the boat. They were asleep to Christ while he was present to them in their hour of need. The Lord is ever present to us. And in our time of testing he asks the same question: Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? Do you recognize the Lord’s presence with you, especially when you meet the storms of adversity, sorrow, or temptation? Whenever we encounter trouble, the Lord is there with the same reassuring message: “It is I, do not be afraid”.

Today's readings: Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12; Matthew 8:23-27. *“What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?”*

WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 13

1 JULY 2026

Carry water

While in India recuperating from a serious illness, author Marion Woodman went to the lobby of her hotel to write. Presently a large woman squeezed in between her and the end

of the couch where she was sitting. Irritated, Woodman moved a little, only to have the woman move, too. Woodman eventually noticed the comfort of the other woman’s arm against hers and relaxed. The two women had been sitting arm-to-arm for a week when a man said to Woodman, “You’re all right now. My wife won’t come tomorrow. I saw you were dying and sent her to sit with you. I knew the warmth of her body would bring you back to life.” A warm arm, a glass of cold water: These are the things Jesus calls us to. What can you do for someone today?

Today's readings: Amos 5:14-15, 21-24; Matthew 8:28-34. *“Let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream.”*

THURSDAY OF WEEK 13

2 JULY 2026

Now hear this!

Ancient philosophers thought that reason Amos did not want to be a prophet. He had not been one nor “belonged to a company of prophets.” Rather he was a shepherd and took care of trees. God, though, called him from the midst of his life to a different role, and once in the job he did not hold back. Alternating invitations to repentance with condemnations and ultimately hope, Amos spoke his prophetic word to Israel and its leaders but also to all nations and even the universe: Everything is accountable to God. Make yourself responsible to God today.

Today's readings: Amos 7:10-17; Matthew 9:1-8. *“The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ Now hear the word of the Lord!”*

FRIDAY: THE FEAST OF SAINT THOMAS, APOSTLE

3 JULY 2026

May we see your wounds?

Saint Thomas is famous for his scepticism toward initial reports of Jesus’ Resurrection. Meanwhile, you may wonder if you’d believe in such fabulous goings-on if they were reported to you in real-time today. Good news often seems feeble compared with the magnitude of the bad news that comes to you daily. Thomas is the patron saint when the reasons for hope appear frail indeed. Early traditions say he died as a martyr in India, pierced by a sword. The one whose faith was bolstered by the wounds of Jesus proved his faith with his own torn body. What has faith cost you, and do you have

the scars to prove it?

Today's readings: Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:24-29. *"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands . . . I will not believe."*

SATURDAY: OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL

4 JULY 2026

Give the royal treatment

If you had a relative who was a saint, would you be more likely to view such a choice as a family calling? Like her great-aunt Elizabeth of Hungary, Elizabeth of Portugal embraced a life

of prayer and charity. And like her aunt, she married young into a royal household. While the elder Elizabeth enjoyed a happy marriage, the younger suffered the anguish of an unfaithful husband and a regicidal son. Both Elizabeths were banished from their courts for a time and became Third-Order Franciscans after the deaths of their husbands. It is good to be queen – enshrined in the hearts of the poor!

Today's readings: Amos 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17. *"On that day I will raise up the fallen hut of David; I will wall up its breaches."*

Readings for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11

James is killed and Peter is arrested, but the word of God cannot be put in chains.

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

God hears the one who cries out to heaven, and an angel encamps with the faithful one.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

Saint Paul concludes his life of evangelization with a rousing declaration of faith.

Matthew 16:13-19

Saint Peter has to decide on the spot and testify in public who Jesus is for him.

Words on the Word

The Church of Christ Is Apostolic: Navigating Co-Responsibility in a Relativistic Age

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Applied Faith in the Modern World

Public opinion polls over the last two decades reveal a striking crisis of confidence regarding institutional Catholicism. Commentators and critics have frequently seized upon such data to accuse the Church of being overly hierarchical, clerical, and top-down – what some describe dismissively as a “Church of hierarchs.”

To understand the shifting landscape, it is helpful to look at the numbers. Recent surveys highlight a persistent, albeit fluctuating, challenge in public perception across historically Catholic nations:

Public Trust in Church Authority

<i>Year</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Polling Organization</i>	<i>Metric</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
2007	Germany	Gallup	Trust in Church authority	30%
2007	Poland	Gallup	Trust in Church authority	8.8%
2018	Ireland	General Polling	Lack of confidence	52%
2025	Ireland	Iona Institute	Unfavourable view of the Church	40%

For decades, a steady rise in priestly vocations seemed to support the perception of a purely top-down institution. A strong clergy presence, numerous seminarians, and highly visible ecclesiastical leadership gave the impression that the Church was primarily a clerical domain. Today, however, as vocations in the West show signs of decline, a different reality is emerging: the indispensable role of the laity.

In active parishes around the globe, lay faithful are increasingly taking on essential responsibilities, including service as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, catechists, and parish administrators. Fairly assessed, this shift is not merely a concession to practicality; it manifests a deeper theological truth. The Church of Christ is co-created by both laity and clergy. Without either, the visible Church cannot fully function.

Still, while it is a serious distortion to reduce the Church to its hierarchy, it is equally crucial to insist upon Catholic orthodoxy: the Church is apostolic. Every Sunday, Catholics profess in the Creed: “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

The unavoidable question for the modern believer is: what does this actually mean?

What “Apostolic” Really Means

The Church is apostolic – built by Christ upon the apostles – in three essential ways:

1. **Founded on the Apostles Themselves:** Christ personally chose and sent the apostles as witnesses of His life, death, and resurrection. The New Testament speaks of the Church as built “on the foundation of the apostles” (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). Their testimony grounds the Church in historical reality, not in myth or private speculation.
2. **Guardian of Apostolic Teaching:** With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Church preserves and hands on the teaching of the apostles, known as the Deposit of Faith. This is not a museum archive, but a living tradition – the same faith believed, celebrated, and lived across centuries and cultures.
3. **Led by the Successors of the Apostles:** The apostolic mission did not end with the death of the first apostles. The Church continues to be guided by their successors: the bishops, in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter and Supreme Pastor of the Church (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 857).

Among the apostles, two stand out in the life of the Church: Saints Peter and Paul. The Church venerates them not out of mere sentiment, but because of their foundational, complementary roles.

Saint Peter: First confessed faith in Christ and founded the first Church from converted Israelites.

Saint Paul: Received the grace of a clear understanding of the truths of faith and became the teacher of the Gentile nations.

Christ Himself underlined Peter’s mission by changing his name. In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus declared:

“And I say to you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18–19).

These words are not poetic flourishes. They define the enduring structure of the Church: apostolic, hierarchical, and rooted in Peter’s confession of faith.

The Hierarchical Church in a Relativistic Age

What role does the hierarchical Church play in today’s world?

In our age, almost everything – including truth itself – is subjected to relativism, personal preference, and shifting cultural moods. Against this backdrop, the Pope and the bishops act as guardians of the truth, the fullness of which is found in Christ. This truth is not optional; it is essential for attaining eternal life.

The Pope, bishops, and their co-workers have received from Christ a threefold task: to teach, to sanctify, and to govern the faithful. Through their ministry, Christ remains

present and active, especially in the liturgy. The Church, therefore, is not merely a human institution or a voluntary association; it is a mystery, grasped fully only in faith (cf. CCC 771).

The bishops also bear responsibility for the continuation of the Church's sanctifying work. Only a bishop can ordain priests and other bishops. The ancient Church coined a concise formula to express this reality:

Ubi episcopus, ibi Ecclesia. "Where the bishop is, there is the Church." – Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Thus, the local bishop serves as the teacher of the faith, the chief liturgist in his diocese, the visible head of the local Christian community, and the instrument of the Church's unity. At every Holy Mass, the priest names the local bishop in the Eucharistic Prayer. This is no mere formality; it is a concrete expression of communion with the apostolic Church.

A Church Both Human and Divine

Because bishops and priests are chosen from among men, they share the weaknesses of human nature. The apostolic Church exists in a state of tension. It is at once:

- Visible and spiritual
- A hierarchical community and the Mystical Body of Christ
- Human and divine
- Marked by the sin of its members, yet continually sanctified by grace

The early 21st century offered a painful illustration of this tension. When the Church in the United States and elsewhere was shaken by scandals involving the grave immorality of some clergy, the credibility of the entire hierarchy was justly called into question. Media coverage often painted all priests with the same brush of institutional failure. Yet, a fair assessment requires looking at an often-overlooked reality: the response of the laity. Many lay faithful chose not to abandon the Church, but to stand by the vast majority of good, self-sacrificing priests. They wrote letters, sent emails, and offered words of encouragement to the clergy they knew personally. In parishes across the country, lay Catholics stepped forward to support their pastors morally, spiritually, and practically.

This episode highlights an essential truth: the Church is not a "they," but a "we." The laity are not passive spectators in a clerical drama. They are co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church, in union with their bishops and priests.

The Call Today: Support Your Shepherds

In a climate where criticism of the Church is frequent and often generalized, a fair and faithful response is urgently needed. The more intense the hostility of the modern world, the more necessary this lay support becomes.

Catholics are called to:

- Pray for their priests and bishops by name.
- Defend them when they are unjustly attacked by secular critics.
- Encourage them when they are burdened, isolated, or fatigued.
- Collaborate with them in evangelization, catechesis, and works of charity.

In an era of mistrust and fragmentation, the path forward is not to abandon the apostolic and hierarchical nature of the Church, but to live it more authentically: laity and clergy together, united in Christ, faithful to the apostles, and steadfast in truth.

Consider adding the following prayer to your daily devotions:

Lord Jesus Christ,

*Sanctify the shepherds of Your Church,
so that through their teaching and ministry
the radiance of Your truth may shine upon us.
Grant that we may grow in faith, hope, and love for You
and receive the grace of eternal salvation.
Amen.*

In Christ's love,
Fr Anthony

ICONS OF EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES, AND SAINTS: 33 SAINT PARASKEVA

Saint Paraskeva: One Name, Two Stories of Holiness

Saint Paraskeva is a beloved figure in the Christian East, especially in the Orthodox world. But when we talk about "Saint Paraskeva," we're actually talking about two different saints who share the same name – a name that points directly to the Passion of Christ and to Good Friday (in Greek, Paraskevi means "Preparation," the traditional name for Friday).

Both women lived the Gospel heroically, but in very different ways and in different centuries.

Paraskeva of the Balkans: The Pilgrim Nun

In the regions influenced by Constantinople – especially Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, and later Moldavia – there is deep devotion to a saint often known as Saint Paraskeva of the Balkans or of Iași.

She was a pious nun of Serbian origin who lived in the 11th century and died in Constantinople. After her death, the place of her burial quickly became known for miraculous healings, and the faithful began to flock there.

Her relics did not remain in one place for long:

- 12th century: Her relics were transferred to Tărnovo, then the capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire.
- 1641: They were moved to Iași, in Moldavia, where they remain a focal point of pilgrimage to this day.

The journey of her relics is often seen as running parallel to the historical journey of the Balkan Slavs themselves – suffering, displacement, and yet a persistent, living faith.

Her feast is celebrated on 27 October according to the Gregorian calendar.

In iconography, she is usually depicted:

- Clothed in black monastic garments,
- With her hands crossed over her chest in a posture of prayer.

Icons that tell the story of her life typically include:

- Her birth,
- Paraskeva appearing before the emperor,
- The saint at the gates of Constantinople,
- And various events from the translation of her relics from city to city.

Paraskeva of Rome: The Martyr of the Early Church



In the lands of ancient Rus', devotion grew around another Saint Paraskeva – this time, a Greek martyr from the era of Emperor Diocletian (late 3rd–early 4th century), one of the harshest periods of persecution against Christians.

This Paraskeva was a devout Christian who was:

- Imprisoned for her faith,
- Pressured to renounce Christ,
- And ultimately martyred because she refused to abandon the faith.

In Rus', her cult became closely linked with the veneration of Saint Anastasia. Icons frequently show the two saints together, underlining their shared witness as steadfast women who suffered for Christ.

On Russian icons, this Paraskeva is usually depicted as:

- A young woman dressed in red garments,
- Often with a white kerchief,
- Holding an amphora (a large vessel),
- And sometimes a *rotulus* (a scroll) containing a profession of faith.

Her feast is celebrated on 28 October.

One Name, Two Witnesses

So, under the single name “Saint Paraskeva” we find:

- A monastic saint from the 11th century, whose relics travelled across the Balkans and whose life speaks of prayer, humility, and quiet holiness.
- A martyr from the age of Diocletian, whose unwavering fidelity to Christ led her to prison and death.

Both reflect, in different ways, the mystery of Good Friday that their name evokes: a life offered to God in love, whether through hidden asceticism or public martyrdom.

For Catholics today, especially in a world that often pushes faith to the margins, the two Saints Paraskeva offer complementary models:

- The courage to stand firm in the faith, even under pressure,
- And the quiet fidelity of daily conversion and sacrifice, sometimes unnoticed by the world, but very much seen by God.

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

The Life-Giving Spirit

John 20:19-23

He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, standing before them with open wounds and risen-awakened from the dead.

When Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, He stood before them with open wounds, awakened from the dead. This moment beautifully mirrors God breathing life into Adam, but it is infinitely greater. To give life is to create; to bestow the Holy Spirit is to awaken life where it had definitively ended.

The Spirit draws us out of the suffocating tombs of fear, hopelessness, and spiritual inertia. He bears witness that our history is unfolding toward an unbelievable, overwhelming resolution: eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Becoming Christ's "Twin" Through Our Scars

In the Book of Leviticus, a sacrificial lamb must be offered without blemish. The Hebrew word for this perfection reveals a profound spiritual truth:

Term	Language	Meaning	Spiritual Significance
Tam	Hebrew	Whole, perfect, pure	Points to Christ, the unblemished Lamb.
Tammim	Hebrew	Twins	We are called to be conformed to Him.
Didymus	Greek	Twin, twofold (Thomas)	The duality of our human faith and doubt.

How can we, broken and imperfect as we are, become Christ's "twin"? We become His twin through our scars.

Perfection is hidden not merely in the flawless mastery of virtues, but in our resemblance to the wounded Lamb of God. If you struggle to find a likeness to Jesus within yourself, look to your wounds. Life has surely not spared you from them. The greater your wounds, the closer your potential resemblance to the Risen Christ, who chose to keep His scars to show us that our pain can be transformed into peace.

The Grace of Our Spiritual Poverty

We often feel unworthy of this calling. I recently experienced this profound poverty of spirit. Walking to the altar to preach, I felt a crushing shame – a fear that I had no right to utter holy words because my own heart felt dry. My voice trembled; I felt as unreal as a counterfeit banknote. At Communion, I couldn't even unlock the tabernacle because of a crooked keyhole, forcing me to ask a sacristan for help. I thought to myself: The power of the keys serves everyone who comes to me seeking God, yet I cannot even open the tabernacle myself.

Yet, after Mass, a young man ran up to me, enthusiastically praising the authenticity of the homily. He had no idea of my internal desolation. This is the beautiful encouragement of the Gospel: God uses our deepest poverty to feed His flock. When we feel completely untrue, God's truth shines most brightly through our brokenness.

Open Wounds of Mercy

The Apostles locked their doors out of fear, but Jesus opened His wounds out of mercy. His mercy is a wound that never scars over, remaining forever open to heal our unbelief.

Thomas "the Twin" was absent when Jesus first appeared. Didymus perfectly describes the duality within us: we can be Christians in name, yet harbour deep distrust. Unbelief isolates us, leaving us drifting toward a disappearing horizon. But Jesus does not abandon Thomas to the abyss of doubt. He returns specifically for him.

Furthermore, Thomas was saved by the joyful insistence of his friends: "We have seen the Lord!" Proclaiming God's mercy is the ultimate act of love. By convincing someone of God's love, you help rescue them from despair and offer them the eternity of life.

Remain Unto Ash

We all experience a terrifying duality in our walk with God. One moment we gaze upon His face with the burning love of Moses; the next, we are overcome by spiritual weariness. We discover

within ourselves both a prophet and a doubter, fire and ashes.

What is the way out of this struggle? To remain with Him even unto ash.

Do not lose hope when you feel empty. Let the Holy Spirit breathe upon your dying embers. Let your wounds conform you to the Risen Christ, and trust that His mercy is always open to receive you.

Lord, when I am fire, let me warm others with Your mercy.

When I am but ashes, let the breath of Your Spirit ignite me anew.

Give me the grace to remain with You, always.

Fr Anthony

How to Listen to the Successor of Peter

Obedience to the pope doesn't mean leaving your brain at the church door. The real issue is more precise: what exactly is papal infallibility, and how should Catholics today respond to what the pope says and writes?

The Dogma of Infallibility: What It Is – and What It Isn't

The Church has never claimed that the pope is infallible every time he speaks, tweets, or gives an interview. Papal infallibility, as defined by the First Vatican Council, is something much narrower and more focused.

The pope is protected from error only when:

- He speaks as supreme pastor and teacher of all Christians,
- He defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals,
- And he intends this teaching to be held by the whole Church – this is what we call speaking *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”).

That's a very specific kind of act.

So we are not talking about:

- Every homily
- Every in-flight interview
- Every off-the-cuff comment
- Or even every encyclical

We're talking about a rare, formal, deliberate act of teaching. In recent centuries, Catholics usually point to just two clear examples:

- Immaculate Conception (1854)
- Assumption of Mary (1950)

The scarcity here is part of the point. Infallibility isn't a daily management tool; it's a safety net for the deposit of faith – guarding, not constantly redefining, what the Church has received from Christ and the apostles.

Beyond Ex Cathedra: The Ordinary Papal Magisterium

But if infallible acts are so rare, does that mean everything else a pope teaches is just personal opinion you can ignore if it's inconvenient? No.

The Church also speaks of the ordinary papal magisterium – the pope's regular teaching through things like:

- Encyclicals

- Apostolic exhortations
- Catecheses and general audiences
- Letters, speeches, and official messages

These don't all carry the same weight, but they're not trivial. They call for a Catholic's serious, respectful attention.

Not every papal statement requires the assent of faith as an infallible dogma does. But simply brushing aside papal teaching with "That's just his take" is just as immature as treating every papal soundbite as if it were the Nicene Creed.

There are also moments when the pope speaks more like:

- A theologian explaining a point
- A pastor giving advice
- A commentator on social, political, or economic issues

Here, he often offers prudential judgments – well-informed, rooted in the Gospel, but still open to discussion and debate among Catholics of good will. Catholic adulthood includes learning to recognize these different levels of teaching and to respond to each in the right way.

Guardians of Unity, Not Producers of Slogans

This isn't just a technical distinction for theology nerds; it matters in daily Catholic life.

We've all seen it happen:

- One papal line – ripped from its context – becomes a "new dogma" in headlines and social media posts.
- Or, on the flip side, a papal teaching that stings a bit gets instantly dismissed as "just his personal opinion."

Both reactions are emotional shortcuts. Neither reflects a real understanding of the papal ministry.

The old phrase "*Roma locuta, causa finita*" – "Rome has spoken, the matter is settled" – never meant that every papal quip shuts down discussion. It meant that, when serious doctrinal disputes threaten the unity of the faith, the Church ultimately looks to the See of Peter as a final point of reference.

History after the Reformation makes that role painfully visible. Once there's no settled authority to resolve doctrinal conflicts, interpretations multiply and communities split. That's not an insult to Protestants; it's a simple historical observation. When private interpretation becomes the last word, fragmentation is almost inevitable.

The Catholic Church has had its own share of drama, crises, and very human failures. But across all that, the Petrine office – the role of Peter's successor – has been a key instrument for keeping the Church united in faith across twenty centuries and every continent.

The Right to Ask Questions – and the Duty to Ask Them Well

Listening to the pope doesn't mean turning off your brain. The Church doesn't want Catholics to be intellectually passive. In fact, Catholic theology explicitly talks about:

- Development of doctrine
- Deeper understanding of revealed truth
- Growth in how that truth is expressed over time

So yes, you can ask questions. That's not automatically disobedience.

What really matters is the disposition behind the questioning:

- Am I asking to understand more deeply, or to find a loophole to ignore the teaching?
- Am I trying to grasp the fuller meaning of what the Church says, or just cherry-pick the parts that match my own tastes?

A Catholic listens to the pope not because he expects the pope to be infallible on every political policy, economic theory, or diplomatic move, but because he believes something deeper: Christ has not left His Church alone. The Holy Spirit really does assist the Church's shepherds – especially the one who sits in Peter's chair.

Recent Popes and Their Different Footprints

Each pope leaves a distinct mark – not just a personal style, but a theological and spiritual emphasis.

Saint John Paul II: The Human Person in Christ

John Paul II's central concern was the Christian vision of the human person.

From *Veritatis splendor* to *Evangelium vitae* to his catecheses on the theology of the body, his refrain was constant: You cannot understand the human person apart from Christ.

In a culture drowning in moral relativism, he insisted that:

- Freedom is not doing whatever we feel like,
- Freedom is the capacity to choose what is true and good.

Benedict XVI: Faith and Reason in Harmony

Benedict XVI's hallmark was the unity of faith and reason. He pushed back against the idea that Christianity is just:

- A vague spiritual feeling
- A private comfort
- Or a purely moral rulebook

Instead, he presented Christianity as an encounter with the Logos – the Word who is Truth itself.

In *Deus caritas est* and *Spe salvi*, he underlined that at the heart of Christianity is not a theory but an event: God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis: Mission and Mercy

Pope Francis is best known for his bold gestures and down-to-earth style, sometimes ambiguous but beneath that is a consistent line of thought.

His teaching highlights:

- The missionary nature of the Church
- The primacy of mercy in pastoral life

In *Evangelii gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, and *Fratelli tutti*, he calls the Church not to close in on itself, but to go out – especially toward those who are wounded, confused, or on the margins.

Pope Leo XIV: Unity, Vatican II, and the Living Word

As for Leo XIV, it's still early to write the definitive summary of his pontificate. But some themes are already emerging:

- A strong emphasis on the unity of the Church
- A renewed, balanced reception of the Second Vatican Council
- A clear stress on the inseparable bond between Scripture and Tradition

These belong to his ordinary magisterium, not to new infallible definitions, but they show the direction of his service to the Church.

What's striking across these recent popes is this: they have not been busy cranking out new dogmas. Their deepest influence has come through their daily, ordinary teaching – the slow, steady shaping of how Catholics think, pray, imagine the world, and understand the human person and the Church.

Not Above the Gospel, but at Its Service

Papal authority is not a rival to the Gospel. It exists to serve the Gospel.

The pope:

- Does not stand above the word of God,

- He stands as its servant and guardian.

His mission is not to invent a fresh faith for every new century, but to protect and hand on the one apostolic faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

So maybe the key question isn’t, “Do I always have to obey the pope?” A better one might be:

“How do I listen to the pope as a Catholic?”

That means steering between two temptations:

- Papolatry – treating every papal sentence as if it were a dogma carved in stone
- Selective obedience – accepting only the parts that already line up with my politics or preferences

Mature faith recognizes that the Petrine office isn’t meant to replace conscience, reason, or serious theological work. It exists to protect the unity of faith in the middle of history’s storms.

And that mission is anything but small. In an age when almost every kind of community – political, cultural, even familial – is fracturing, the stubborn fact that for two millennia the Church has looked to the Bishop of Rome as a visible sign of unity is not just ammunition for arguments.

For the believer, it can be something quieter and deeper: a reason, even in confusion and controversy, to trust that Christ is still faithfully shepherding His Church.



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

KYIV

RESILIENCE AMIDST THE RUINS: THE MORAL WEIGHT OF REBUILDING KYIV’S SACRED LAVRA

The reconstruction of the historic Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery, recently damaged in Russian drone attacks, is projected to take up to two years and cost more than 500 million hryvnias (approximately 45 million zlotys). This estimate was provided this week by Maksym Ostapenko, director of the National Museum, which oversees the ancient complex.

As the dust settles on another scene of destruction in Eastern Europe, the faithful are once again called to reflect on the intersection of human conflict, the preservation of our Christian heritage, and the moral imperatives of peace.

The Physical Toll on a Spiritual Haven

The recent drone strike ignited a fierce blaze at the monastery complex, whose sacred origins date back to the 11th century. According to reports, the fire consumed approximately 800 square meters of the roof of the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Summary of Damages & Reconstruction Estimates

<i>Location / Item</i>	<i>Extent of Damage / Status</i>	<i>Estimated Recovery Time</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Cathedral of the Dormition	800 sq. meters of roof consumed by fire	Up to 2 Years (Total Site)	> 500M UAH (~£8.5 million)
Ivan Kushchnyk Tower	Structural damage sustained	Pending comprehensive analysis	Included in total
Surrounding Complex	17 additional structures damaged	Pending comprehensive analysis	Included in total
Interior & Exhibits	Saved / Dismantled for protection	N/A (Secured by first responders)	N/A

Director Ostapenko outlined the path forward, noting the prudence required in the restoration effort:

“Further work will include a comprehensive analysis of all elements requiring restoration, taking into account current prices and available possibilities.”

Moral Commentary: The Ethics of War and Sacred Spaces

The destruction of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra is not merely a loss of masonry and timber, but a profound spiritual wound. While the Church rightly teaches that the greatest tragedy of war is the loss of human life – made in the image and likeness of God – the targeting or reckless endangerment of sacred spaces carries its own grave moral weight.

1. The Violation of Distinction

Catholic Just War theory, deeply rooted in the teachings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, insists on the principle of distinction. Warring parties must differentiate between combatants and non-combatants, as well as between military installations and civilian or cultural sites. The damage to an 11th-century monastery dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary serves as a stark reminder of the indiscriminate nature of modern warfare, which too often ignores the boundaries of moral law.

“Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation.” – *Gaudium et Spes*, 80 (Second Vatican Council)

(While this strike may not have destroyed a whole city, the ethical principle of protecting civilian and sacred infrastructure remains a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching on peace.)

2. The Heroism of Duty

In the midst of this tragedy, we must also recognize the moral goodness displayed by the first responders. Firefighters successfully prevented the blaze from reaching the interior of the church, allowing all exhibits at risk of damage to be dismantled and saved. In Catholic moral tradition, the fulfilment of one’s duty for the common good – especially at great personal risk – is a profound act of virtue. These men and women acted as stewards of Christian history, preserving artifacts of faith for future generations.

3. The Cyclical Nature of Sin and the Endurance of Faith

This is not the first time the Cathedral of the Dormition has faced ruin. The structure had already been rebuilt once in the 21st century after being entirely destroyed during World War II by the Soviet army.

Herein lies a profound theological lesson. The cyclical destruction of this holy site reflects the

enduring reality of human sin and the devastating consequences of totalitarianism and conflict. Yet, its continuous resurrection stands as a testament to the Catholic understanding of hope. Earthly empires and secular armies may reduce stone to rubble, but the Church and the faith of the people endure.

Moving Forward in Faith

As commentators and believers, it is our duty to report fairly on the realities of this war, acknowledging the immense financial and historical costs, such as the 500 million hryvnias required to heal the Lavra. But it is also our duty to view these events through the lens of Catholic orthodoxy.

The rebuilding of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra will be a monumental task of architecture and funding. More importantly, however, it will be a supreme act of spiritual resilience – a physical declaration that the peace of Christ and the veneration of His Holy Mother will outlast the weapons of men. Let us pray for a swift and just peace, and for the hands that will once again rebuild this historic beacon of faith.

MIDDLE EAST

FAR FROM NORMALITY

Even if a diplomatic agreement is finalized to end the recent war between the United States and Iran, and the strategic Strait of Hormuz is reopened, the return to normality on this vital global waterway will likely take many months. While an agreement would undoubtedly ease the immediate risks related to global energy supplies and relieve some of the continuing pressure driving up oil prices, the wounds of war – both economic and relational – are not easily healed.

Rebuilding trust among shipowners, insurers, and international refineries will require significant time. Furthermore, trade should not be expected to return to pre-war levels immediately, as many buyers have already organized alternative supply chains and logistical routes.

Moral Reflection: The Nature of Trust

From the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching, the economy is inherently relational. When war shatters the bonds of international trust, it damages the “global common good” (Pacem in Terris, Pope St. John XXIII). Trust is not merely a market commodity; it is a moral requirement for human solidarity. The hesitation of shipowners and insurers is a stark reminder that violence destroys the social fabric required for human flourishing.

The Slow Road to Economic Recovery

Before the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran, and Iran’s subsequent blockade of the strait at the beginning of March, one-fifth of global oil and gas exports passed through the Strait of Hormuz. The sheer volume of this energy flow means that the consequences of its disruption ripple across the globe.

Despite newspaper headlines that might suggest an immediate drop in fuel barrel prices following a peace deal, several logistical and security hurdles will cause prices to fall much more slowly. These factors include:

- Mine Clearance: The physical removal of explosive hazards in the strait.
- Insurance Premiums: Skyrocketing costs for vessels entering a recently active warzone.
- Port Congestion: Backlogs created by disrupted shipping schedules.
- Geopolitical Risk: The lingering threat of renewed hostilities.

Moral Reflection: The Human Toll of Economic Disruption

While markets focus on barrel prices, the Church asks us to consider the human person. High energy prices disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable – both in developing nations and in our own local communities. The “Preferential Option for the Poor” demands that we view these economic disruptions not just as corporate inconveniences, but as drivers of poverty. Furthermore, the necessity of mine clearance highlights the persistent, lethal legacy of modern warfare, which threatens innocent human life long after treaties are signed.

A Foundation of Sand: The Fragility of the Agreement

The slow recovery of the energy sector is exacerbated by the fact that any agreement between the United States and Iran rests on rather uncertain ground. Because the geopolitical trust deficit remains high, both energy companies and fuel-importing nations will continue to seek out additional and alternative logistical solutions rather than relying solely on the Strait.

To understand the intersection of the geopolitical reality and our moral obligations, we can look at the varying impacts of this conflict –

<i>Geopolitical Reality</i>	<i>Market Impact</i>	<i>Catholic Ethical Concern</i>
Fragile Peace Accord	Hesitation from investors and insurers.	True peace is the “tranquillity of order” (St. Augustine), not merely a temporary cessation of violence.
Naval Mines in the Strait	Delayed shipping, rerouted logistics.	The indiscriminate nature of such weapons poses a grave threat to innocent maritime workers and the environment.
Shift to Alternative Routes	Permanent alteration of global trade flows.	The need for nations to prioritize the universal destination of goods, ensuring all nations have access to necessary resources.

Moving Forward in Faith and Reason

In a fair assessment of the conflict, one must acknowledge the complex chain of events – from the U.S. and Israeli military strikes to Iran’s retaliatory blockade of the strait. Geopolitics is rarely a simple narrative of absolute good versus absolute evil; rather, it is a landscape marred by human failing, competing national interests, and the devastating use of force.

As Catholics observing the modern world, we pray for the success of these diplomatic agreements, even as we recognize their fragility. The Church teaches that war is always a “defeat for humanity” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*). The long, arduous process of clearing mines, lowering insurance costs, and stabilizing oil prices is a stark economic translation of a profound spiritual truth: it is far easier to destroy peace than it is to rebuild it.

Until genuine dialogue and mutual respect replace the reliance on military force, the Strait of Hormuz will remain a chokepoint not just for global oil, but for global solidarity.

We Read Pope Leo

If we want the world to live in peace, we must begin with ourselves. Enough of words of hatred. Enough of insults. Enough of persecution and violence.

During various meetings I perceived the need to hear, in the voice of the Pope, the Gospel of hope for our humanity today, sorely tried by the negative consequences of a deceptive model of development. This need – expressed in the many testimonies I was able to hear, at times moving, at times edifying – I also recognized, and above all, in the faces of the least and the poor whom I met: in the face of the child who waited for me in the parish to give me his letter; in the faces of

the prisoners who waited for me in the prison; in the faces of the young people who waited for me in the squares, full of anxieties and plans; in the faces of the migrants who waited for me in the migrant centres in the Canary Islands. (...) We know that the phenomenon of migration is complex and requires comprehensive and coordinated action plans. This key to interpretation, however, opens another, broader perspective: it allows us to understand that we are called to reread the Gospel in today's world, exchanging the gifts proper to our cultures, and especially the fruits that the fruitfulness of Christ's message has brought forth in them. One of these fruits is precisely dialogue between persons and peoples, an encounter in a spirit of fraternity, which makes it possible to discover and appreciate mutually the values that the other person bears within himself. This path is not easy; it requires good will and the help of God, but it is the path that leads to the civilization of love.

General Audience, June 17, 2026.

Show the whole world how, in difficult moments, everything becomes even more difficult if the presence and love of the family are lacking. (...) We must learn to be Christian communities focused on what is essential, even if this were to mean giving up some structures and certain securities from the past. What matters most is life with Christ, and what must be dear to our hearts is the proclamation of the Gospel. (...) If we want to change the times, if we want the world to live in peace, we must begin with ourselves. (...) Enough of words of hatred. Enough of insults. Enough of persecution and violence. Enough of everything that leads to war among people, communities, and nations.

Pastoral visit to Pavia and Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, June 20, 2026.

As then, so today it is difficult to remain faithful to the teaching of Jesus and to proclaim His Word – to respond to hatred with love, to the violence of the powerful with meekness, to discouragement with perseverance. Therefore we must root our faith and our mission in a strong relationship with Him. This gives us the strength not to give up and to continue conveying to everyone, in every circumstance, His message of hope, love, and peace. The world greatly needs this!

Angelus, June 21, 2026.

No one may turn away from those who seek protection and safety. Furthermore, I encourage everyone to welcome persons who are victims of persecution, so that they may live in peace and dignity and look to the future with hope.

After the Angelus prayer, June 21, 2026.

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 Roseanne Carlin (2001) 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!

COFFEE MORNING: is being planned for SATURDAY 15TH AUGUST. Anyone able to help in any way contact Cathy or Fiona Fox, or Fr Tony.



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