

PARISH BULLETIN

**St. Kieran's, the
Catholic
Church** in
Campbeltown and Islay
*Ceann Loch Chille
Chiarain*
12th July 2026



The 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 15 of Ordinary Time

Tuesday: Holy Mass, 6pm

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

Coffee and Discussion Group: 10.30am

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

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional

449 Praise my soul the King of
Heaven

Offertory

511 Take our bread, we ask you

Communion music

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

Post Communion

176 Godhead here in hiding

Recessional

188 Go, the mass is ended

Next weekend:

Saturday, 18th of July, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 19th of July, 16th 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

19th July: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*The seed is the word of God, Christ the sower;
all who find him will live for ever.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY OF WEEK 15

13 JULY 2026

Looking for prophets in our midst

Many of us lately have learned what it's like to be held back by illness, as the coronavirus brought about grinding halts to life as we knew it. Blessed Charlie Rodríguez Santiago, a candidate to be the first Puerto Rican saint, was prevented from getting an education because of severe chronic illness. He died on this day in 1963 at the age of 44 – and left behind a legacy of liturgical renewal in the church. He advocated for use of vernacular languages and increased lay participation – which came to be shortly after his death with Vatican II reforms. How can you too be a prophet for hope and change in our own disease-challenged days?

Today's readings: Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 10:34-11:1. *"Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."*

TUESDAY OF WEEK 15

14 JULY 2026

Contemplate this

"I will pray for you" is regular evidence of Christian charity, but prayer is not only about asking. The deepest prayer – often assumed to be reserved to nuns and monks – is accessible to all. Contemplation, or the prayer of unity, is the simple and intimate experience of oneness between you and God. Such prayer is neither secret nor for "specialists." It is not a fad nor a new way to pray, but ancient and time-honoured. Helpful guides include Father Basil Pennington and Father Thomas Keating, but be careful not to substitute reading about contemplative prayer for experiencing it.

Today's readings: Isaiah 7:1-9; Matthew 11:20-24. *"Unless your faith is firm you shall not be firm!"*

WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 15

15 JULY 2026

Let nothing hold you back

Anointing of the Sick is one of the seven sacraments of the church. In its pre-Vatican II life, this sacrament was called Extreme Unction and was reserved for the time of death. Now the church invites all who are seriously sick or experiencing the challenges of advanced age to receive the grace of this sacrament. Celebrated

at home, in a church, or in a healthcare facility, often in the presence of loved ones, this sacrament offers those who are sick the peace, strength, and courage of the Lord who himself knew the pain of human suffering. Draw on God's healing powers and encourage others to do so as well.

Today's readings: Isaiah 10:5-7, 13-16; Matthew 11:25-27. *"All things have been handed over to me by my Father."*

THURSDAY OF WEEK 15

16 JULY 2026

Where there's a will, there's a way

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness," Jesus says in the biblical passage known as the Beatitudes, "for they will be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). It's an interesting comparison to make: that hungering and thirsting for righteousness is as important as doing the same for real food and drink, but doesn't it feel that way? In the face of injustice, don't you almost physically yearn for what God wants? But how do you deal with that disconnect between what should be happening and what is happening? Remember the second half of the Beatitude: They will be satisfied. That's where faith comes in. Believe God's will is real and pray for it and try your hardest to help bring it about. Somehow, some way, sometime, it will be done.

Today's readings: Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19; Matthew 11:28-30. *"My soul yearns for you in the night, yes, my spirit within me keeps vigil for you."*

FRIDAY OF WEEK 15

17 JULY 2026

Follow the law of love

The Pharisees were a sect that among other things demanded strict interpretation and observance of Mosaic Law. They sometime preferred rules and regulations to thoughtful consideration of circumstances or the larger picture. It's not hard to see why: Laws are neat, impartial, neutral, clear. Moreover, when we simply follow laws, thinking is generally not required! Jesus, however, calls his followers to a higher standard: to love, which, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu rightly observed, "is much more demanding than law." Just for today, let's immerse ourselves in the "something greater" that Jesus talked about. Let's immerse ourselves in love. What would your day be like if you did

so?

Today's readings: Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Matthew 12:1-8. *"I say to you, something greater than the temple is here."*

SATURDAY OF WEEK 15

18 JULY 2026

A tireless voice for justice

During the era of European conquest of the Americas, Native American people were typically regarded as savages who must be "conquered" and coerced into conversion or pushed aside.

Bartolomé de Las Casas is remembered today as one of the few voices opposing the dominant ideology of religious and secular leaders alike. Appalled by colonial cruelties in the Caribbean in the 1500s, he doggedly advocated for the rights of indigenous people for some 50 years, urging an end to the cruelties and coerced conversions. Remember de Las Casas and make justice a central part of your own witness.

Today's readings: Micah 2:1-5; Matthew 12:14-21. *"They oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance."*

Readings for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:10-11

The words of God are never spoken in vain but do just as they say.

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

The abundance of the Earth has only one cause: the gracious will of God.

Romans 8:18-23

Creation groans under its subjection but will one day be set free to share God's glory.

Matthew 13:1-9

Jesus speaks in parables because some people just don't have time for the truth.

Words on the Word

A Sacred Ache: Finding Hope in a Groaning World

A deep and restless groaning echoes through our modern world. We hear it in the anxiety over our planet, the anger in our politics, and the personal ache for meaning in our own hearts. In a world that often feels broken, it is easy to lose hope.

Yet, the Word of God, spoken through the Apostle Paul, gives us a divine lens to see this reality. This universal groaning is not the sound of death, but the sound of a world in labour, filled with the painful but powerful hope of a new birth.

Our Pain in God's Plan

Saint Paul makes a bold and certain declaration: **"the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."**

This is not a dismissal of our pain. God sees our every sorrow. Rather, this is the truth that puts our suffering in its proper place within His eternal plan. Our trials – illness, loss, and inner struggles – are temporary. The glory that awaits us in Christ is everlasting.

This is the Catholic virtue of hope in action. It is the confident trust that God's promises are true. When we unite our personal crosses to the Cross of Christ, our suffering is no longer meaningless. It becomes redemptive, a small share in His saving work, and it is utterly dwarfed by the promise of eternal life with Him.

A World Waiting with Us

This longing for wholeness is not just a human feeling. St. Paul reveals a profound mystery: **"The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth."** The sin of Adam and Eve did not just wound humanity; it fractured our relationship with the created world,

subjecting it to decay and futility. The storms, the decay, and the disorder we see in nature are echoes of that first sin.

This truth gives ultimate meaning to our call to care for the environment. Creation is not a disposable object but a fellow victim of sin, waiting with us for liberation. Its destiny is tied forever to our own. The Catechism affirms that when we, the children of God, are fully redeemed in the resurrection, creation itself will be gloriously renewed as a "**new heavens and a new earth**" (CCC 1042-1050).

The Hope Within Us

Most powerfully, St. Paul assures us that even we who have the Holy Spirit within us still groan. If you feel a deep ache for something more, do not think your faith is weak. That feeling is a holy sign. It is the Holy Spirit Himself within you, yearning for the completion of your salvation: **the resurrection of your body.**

We live in the sacred time of "already, but not yet." We have *already* been saved through Baptism, but we do *not yet* experience the fullness of heaven. This inner groaning is the holy tension of a soul that knows it was made for God but still lives in a fallen world.

Let us, therefore, embrace this sacred ache. It is not the groan of despair, but the groan of childbirth. Let us face the challenges of our time not with fear, but with the steadfast hope of a child awaiting the glorious dawn of their Father's eternal Kingdom.

In Christ's love,

Fr Anthony

35 ICONS WITH SCENES FROM LIFE: WINDOWS INTO HOLINESS

How to Read the Icons of the Saints

In the rich tradition of the Catholic Church, sacred icons are much more than beautiful decorations. They are theology painted in color, offering the faithful a vital window into the divine.

Among the most powerful of these sacred images are biographical icons – artworks that tell the complete story of a saint. Rooted firmly in approved Church biographies and sacred tradition, these icons serve as visual homilies. For centuries, they have instructed the faithful, providing a masterclass in holiness that goes far beyond the written word.

The Eternal Centre

When you look at a biographical icon, your eyes are immediately drawn to the center. Here stands the saint, facing forward in a commanding, peaceful pose.

The Church does not require earthly realism or photographic accuracy in sacred art; rather, it demands spiritual truth. The central portrait is intentionally stylized. It shows the saint in their glorified, eternal state, bathed in the uncreated light of God. This heavenly stillness commands our reverence and invites us into deep, prayerful veneration.



Theodoros Poulakis: *Saint Spyridon with Scenes from His Life*. 2nd half of the 17th century. Benaki Museum, Athens.

The Earthly Journey (The *Klejma*)

Framing this heavenly centrepiece is the saint’s earthly journey. The main portrait is surrounded by a series of smaller panels, traditionally called *klejma*. Arranged like a border, these panels act as a visual storyboard of the saint’s life.

An artist might paint anywhere from a dozen to over thirty of these scenes. They guide the faithful chronologically through the saint’s journey, typically highlighting five key phases:

- Early Grace: Birth and childhood, highlighting early signs of the saint's divine calling.
- The Great Choice: Personal struggles, sacrifices, and the ultimate decision to embrace God's will.
- Divine Action: Miracles, healings, and profound acts of charity.
- The Final Witness: A holy death or martyrdom, followed by a reverent burial.
- Heavenly Glory: Miracles that occur after death, proving the saint's enduring power to intercede for us from heaven.

Where Time Meets Eternity

The most striking feature of these icons is the contrast between the centre and the edges.

Feature	The Central Portrait	The Border Panels (<i>Klejma</i>)
State of Being	Eternal and glorified	Temporal and earthly
Pacing	Still, peaceful, and unchanging	Dynamic, active, and moving
Focus	The saint's soul resting in God	The saint's actions in the world

While the central saint stands perfectly still in eternity, the border panels are full of action and earthly life. Historically, artists took creative liberties in these border scenes, incorporating details from their own time periods. If you look closely at the backgrounds of these panels, you will often find:

1. Buildings that mirror the architecture of the artist's own era.
2. Familiar elements of the local landscape.
3. Background characters wearing the clothing of the artist's contemporaries.

This is not a historical mistake. It is a profound theological statement.

By placing an ancient saint against the backdrop of a contemporary world, the Church reminds us that the call to holiness is not stuck in the distant past. It is lived out right now, in the gritty reality of our daily lives.

For the orthodox Catholic, looking at a biographical icon is a dual invitation. We are called first to venerate the saint, and second, to imitate them. As we meditate on the scenes that frame the saint in glory, we are reminded of a powerful truth: every human life – including your own – has the potential to be transformed by God's grace into a masterpiece of divine love.

God’s Guide

Relations with Angels: To Be Closer to Our Guardians

Chapter 1

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Your Constant Companion: The Church's Teaching on the Guardian Angels

From the dawn of life to its final breath, every human soul is entrusted to the watchful care and intercession of a Guardian Angel. This profound truth of our faith is not a mere pious sentiment

but a doctrine rooted in Sacred Scripture and affirmed throughout the Church's tradition. Each person has a unique angel, assigned specifically to them as a guide, protector, and friend on the journey toward salvation.

The Witness of Sacred Scripture

The foundation for this belief is found directly in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ warns against causing scandal to the vulnerable, revealing the dignity they possess in the eyes of heaven:

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10)

This passage is foundational. It confirms not only the existence of angels assigned to individuals but also their profound intimacy with God. They stand perpetually in the Divine Presence, seeing the Beatific Vision, which equips them perfectly for their mission.

This belief was a living reality for the early Church. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see a vivid illustration of this when Saint Peter is miraculously freed from prison by an "Angel of the Lord." When he arrives at the house where the faithful are gathered in prayer, their initial reaction to the news is telling:

Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, 'You are mad.' But she insisted that it was so. They said, '**It is his angel!**' (Acts 12:14-15)

For the first Christians, the existence of a personal angel who could act on a person's behalf was an obvious and immediate explanation. Their faith accepted as a matter of course what many today have forgotten: we do not walk alone.

The Testimony of the Saints

Throughout history, the saints have provided a deeper understanding of this angelic partnership through their own mystical experiences and pastoral wisdom.

Saint Faustina Kowalska, in her *Diary*, speaks of her Guardian Angel as a constant companion, especially during her supernatural visit to Purgatory. His presence was a source of guidance and strength. She recounts:

“My Guardian Angel did not leave me for an instant... I wanted to speak with them some more, but my Guardian Angel signalled me to leave. We went out through the door of that prison of suffering.” (Diary, 20)

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, a master of the spiritual life, consistently urged his spiritual children to cultivate a relationship with their angels. In a letter, he provided this practical advice:

“Never forget your Guardian Angel. He is always with you and, despite your many failings, never leaves you. Ah! The goodness of our angel is simply beyond description... This most faithful friend will protect us from further infidelities.”

Our Angelic Partnership

Because of their constant communion with God and their superior intellect, our Guardian Angels possess a profound understanding of God's providential plan. They are not passive observers but active participants in our spiritual warfare, illuminating our minds, strengthening our wills, and protecting us from spiritual and physical harm.

This celestial guardian is at your side at this very moment. He sees your struggles and rejoices in your victories. It is therefore of paramount importance that the faithful cultivate a conscious and deliberate relationship with this heavenly friend. He is a powerful intercessor and a

trustworthy guide through the complexities of the modern world.

The practical means of fostering this vital relationship – how to listen to, speak with, and cooperate with your Guardian Angel – will be explored in a subsequent article. For now, know this: your Angel, a friend most faithful, stands beside you, ready to guide you closer to the heart of God.

Fr Anthony



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

RUSSIA – UKRAINE

MILLIONS OF CASUALTIES

The Heartbreaking Toll in Eastern Europe

This week, we need to look at the staggering human cost of the four-year war in Ukraine. A new report from the CSIS think tank reveals that total casualties – dead and wounded – have crossed a tragic milestone: 2 million souls.

Here’s a quick look at the devastating numbers:

Nation	Total Casualties	Estimated Deaths
Russia	1.4 million	450,000
Ukraine	Up to 625,000	Up to 150,00

(Note: Russia heavily understates these figures, while Ukraine keeps them private. These stats rely on US and UK estimates.)

Behind this data is a profound moral crisis. Every single number represents a child of God, yet the disregard for human dignity is glaring. To maintain its numerical edge, Russia is actively drafting criminals and desperate debtors, treating vulnerable human lives as expendable cannon fodder.

We can’t just scroll past this news. The sheer scale of this violence – with Russian deaths alone quadrupling US losses since WWII – is a grave offense against the sanctity of life. Let’s keep praying hard for a just peace and for the millions of grieving families left behind.

GERMANY

BEWARE OF THE CHINESE

When Science Meets Subterfuge: A Moral Wake-Up Call

Here’s a sobering update from the latest German counterintelligence (BfV) report. The threat of Chinese espionage in our scientific institutions isn't just a spy thriller – it's a serious ethical crisis

happening right in our backyard.

Alongside Russia and Iran, China is heavily targeting Germany to siphon off critical research, aiming for global tech and military dominance by 2049. But how they're doing it crosses a major moral line.

The BfV highlights several troubling tactics:

Exploiting Trust: Taking advantage of our open, collaborative academic community.

Misusing Freedom: Twisting the freedom of science – a gift meant for seeking truth – into a legal grey area for systematic theft.

Compromising People: Pressuring visiting Chinese scientists to act as informants, which violates human dignity by treating people as mere tools for state power.

As Catholics, we believe knowledge should serve the global common good, not fuel military build-ups through deceit. When nations weaponize academic freedom and exploit human vulnerability, it's a stark reminder that progress must always be anchored in justice and honesty. Let's stay vigilant and pray for the integrity of our scientific communities!

We Read Pope Leo



We have entered a millennium in which we are to give the civilization of love a spiritual, cultural, legal, political, and economic shape.

Brothers and sisters, how can the weight of the cross be “easy” and “light” [cf. Mt 11:30]? For only one reason: because the Lord carries it first and together with all of us, never leaving us alone in what weighs us down. As the true Teacher, Jesus

takes upon Himself humanity wounded by evil in order to surround it with care. The wisdom He gives us is therefore a message of salvation, and His yoke raises us up from every fall. When we follow Christ, our path is not a tormenting asceticism: it is a school of freedom that takes seriously the drama of history and always illuminates its meaning, especially in the darkest moments. (...)

In captivity, Christ is liberation. Under the scourge of war, Christ is hope. In the hour of sin, Christ is forgiveness. This is true wisdom, the path we wish to walk together, united as disciples in His name.

Angelus, July 5, 2026.

Dear friends, when we participate in the Eucharist, we are invited to listen to the word of God and to be nourished at the table of the Lord, where He Himself offers Himself to the Father. These two parts of the Holy Mass – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist – “are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 56).

With regard to the Word, it must be remembered that this is not merely a matter of acquiring intellectual knowledge of Scripture, but of receiving the Word that is “living and active” (Heb 4:12), addressed by God to all and at the same time to each person individually; the Word which, together with the Eucharistic Bread, nourishes and sustains us and leads us from the fall of sin to new life in Christ.

General Audience, June 24, 2026.

Dear friends, whoever allows himself to be drawn into this dynamic of compassion and mercy begins to live differently, to be a citizen differently, to work differently. Then the civilization of love can truly be born, the one shown by my holy predecessors: John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. Together with the great host of prophets and martyrs of the past century, they understood that only mercy can respond to the abysses of the human heart and the horrors of war with new beginnings. Now, standing on the shoulders of these giants, we have entered a millennium in which we are to give the civilization of love a spiritual, cultural, legal, political, and economic shape. May the immensity of the suffering we behold help us grasp the radical nature of this call. Like that Samaritan, we can change our plans and take another road. Even more than that Samaritan, we have the means and possibilities to give hope a concrete shape in history. (...) We too must acknowledge that “the civilization of love is not born from one spectacular gesture, but from the sum of small and persevering acts of fidelity that set a barrier against dehumanization” (encyclical *Magnifica humanitas*, 213). Friends from Lampedusa, you are witnesses to this! Here, meeting with you, one can better understand our time, and each person can discern the direction of his or her own life. (...) Therefore, from this farthest edge of Europe in the Mediterranean Sea, one can see more clearly the epochal call before which the phenomenon of migration places European societies. (...) Because of its geographical position and institutional form, Europe is capable, in this area, of facing the crisis in a comprehensive way: incorporating first aid into a long-term strategic plan, capable of welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating migrants, while also working for development so that no one is forced to emigrate. All this should take place with vigilant concern for respect for the dignity of every person. This is the task of public institutions, but also of all civil society and of the Church.

Pastoral Visit to Lampedusa, July 4, 2026.

The Crusades in Context: A Response to Islamic Expansion



Popular books and documentaries still often present the Crusades through an outdated lens shaped by Protestant polemics and Enlightenment scepticism. In that telling, the Crusades appear chiefly as a disgraceful aberration – an embarrassing departure from the Gospel that Christians must explain away.

Whatever judgment one reaches about particular crusades, that familiar narrative does not fit the broader historical record. The crusading movement lasted more than five centuries, involved both Western Europe and the Christian East, and arose in the setting of sustained military pressure on Christian lands and peoples.

A Long Defensive Background

Long before Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade in 1095, Christians in the East were already speaking of war in religious terms, especially when they believed the Faith itself was under attack.

In the early seventh century, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius fought the Persian Empire in a struggle widely seen as a defence of the Cross. That conflict followed a Persian invasion of the Holy Land marked by the killing of Christians and the seizure of relics associated with the True Cross.

Soon afterward came a far greater and more enduring challenge. Beginning in the 630s, Muslim armies rapidly conquered territories that had been Christian for centuries: Syria, Egypt, North Africa, much of Asia Minor, Spain, and parts of southern Gaul. The Holy Land also passed into Muslim control.

These were not marginal regions. They included some of the heartlands of early Christianity: Antioch, one of the ancient patriarchal sees; North Africa, homeland of St. Augustine; Cappadocia, cradle of major saints and theologians; and, above all, the Holy Land, sanctified by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Jihad and the Reality of Conquest

Historically, it is difficult to treat early Islamic expansion as merely incidental or politically neutral. Classical Islamic sources contain passages that many Muslim jurists and rulers understood as authorizing armed struggle in the extension of Islamic rule.

Two often-cited texts are Qur'an 9:29: "Fight those who do not believe in God and the Last Day ... from among those who were given the Book – until they pay the tribute with their own hand and are humbled," and Qur'an 8:17: "It was not you who killed them, but God killed them."

Quoting such verses does not settle every question about how Islam was interpreted across different centuries and societies. Historical reality was complex, and Muslim rule was not identical in every time and place. Still, these texts help explain why medieval Christians did not see themselves as responding only to isolated outbreaks of violence. They faced a pattern of expansion often justified in explicitly religious terms.

Life for Christians Under Muslim Rule

In many conquered lands, Christians were allowed to remain, but usually under dhimmi status: tolerated, yet subject to legal and social inferiority.

Restrictions commonly included special taxes on non-Muslims, limitations on public worship, prohibitions on evangelization, and various social humiliations. In some places, non-Muslims faced rules about clothing or riding horses, symbols of dignity and rank. Churches could be confiscated, restricted, or converted to other uses, including major sanctuaries.

Conditions varied considerably by ruler, region, and century. Yet the larger pattern of inequality was real, and it shaped Christian memory and political thought.

Western Europe: Poitiers and Rome

Western Europe, too, experienced the advance of Islamic power not as a distant theory but as a military threat. The Battle of Poitiers in 732, in which Frankish forces defeated an Umayyad raiding

army, became a lasting symbol of a defensive stand.

The danger reached even the centre of Latin Christendom. In 846, Muslim raiders operating from southern Italy and Sicily attacked Rome and damaged the basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul Outside the Walls.

For medieval Christians, such events were not abstract geopolitical developments. They were seen as assaults on Christian peoples, holy places, and the public order of a Christian civilization.

How Crusading Took Shape

Over time, Christians in both East and West became more accustomed to the idea that the militia Christi – the knighthood of Christ – could involve more than spiritual struggle alone. For monks, the battle remained chiefly against sin. For laymen, it could also mean the defence of Christian lands, the protection of pilgrims, and the safeguarding of holy sites.

This helps explain why crusading could be presented in medieval terms as a form of just war – not simply as conquest, but as defence and, in some cases, the recovery of territories and churches long lost.

The medieval Polish jurist Stanisław of Skarbimierz, writing in *De bello iusto* (On Just War), argued that it was no contradiction for the pope to grant indulgences to those who fought to recover the Holy Land, revered because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A Necessary Balance

None of this proves that every crusade was prudent, just, or free from grave sin. Catholic teaching does not require romanticizing the crusading era, nor does it deny the crimes and scandals committed by Christians.

But historical fairness requires more than repeating modern clichés. The Crusades did not arise in a vacuum. They emerged from centuries of conquest, subjugation, raids, and the loss of ancient Christian lands, together with a growing conviction in both East and West that armed defence could be a religious duty as well as a political necessity.

A balanced assessment begins there: with the long experience of pressure, dispossession, and survival that shaped medieval Christian thought.

In my opinion

Will Belarus enter the war?

Belarus finds itself in a challenging position in the complex world of international relations. The country's leadership, led by President Alexander Lukashenko, is navigating a delicate path amid competing influences from major global powers.

President Lukashenko has shown reluctance to get involved in the Ukraine conflict. This was evident when he shut down a Russian military base in Belarus after Ukraine issued an ultimatum. Lukashenko has made it clear that Belarus should not be drawn into the war, stating he does not want to be "pushed into a situation where actions aimed at dragging us into the war are organized."

Lukashenko has shifted his strategy to seek support from non-traditional allies. After a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko traveled to Beijing, where Chinese President Xi Jinping assured him of support for Belarus's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. This move highlights Lukashenko's efforts to avoid direct involvement in the war while securing economic and political backing.

Lukashenko's reliance on Putin as a security guarantor has decreased, especially given Russia's difficulties against Ukrainian drone attacks. This shift has prompted Lukashenko to explore other

support avenues.

Both Kyiv and Washington are trying to influence Belarus's course in different ways. Kyiv is threatening to target Belarusian military installations, while the U.S. is offering eased sanctions, particularly on potash fertilizers.

The President of France has also warned Lukashenko about the severe consequences of aligning more closely with Moscow. According to geopolitical analyst Mark Budzisz, a more independent Belarus could serve as a buffer between NATO and Russia, presenting a significant geopolitical advantage. The fate of Central Europe and NATO's eastern flank depends on Belarus's future status. Major players – Moscow, Beijing, Kyiv, Washington, and Paris – are engaged in a complex game to shape Belarus's role on the international stage.

Belarus stands at a pivotal crossroads, with its leadership making strategic moves to secure its sovereignty while navigating the complex interplay of global powers. The outcome of these maneuvers will have far-reaching implications for regional stability and international relations.

Prayer



Please remember to pray for those who are unwell, in need, or have requested our prayers: Richard Fox, 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 Elizabeth Finn, Margaret Robertson, Sean McGrory (2017) **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!

Second Collection this Sunday for Stella Maris.

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

World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly: Everyone is warmly invited to a special celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly at Carfin Grotto on Sunday 26 July 2026. Bishop John Keenan will celebrate Holy Mass at 3:00pm, as we give thanks for the invaluable contribution of grandparents and elderly to our families, parishes and communities. Please bring your grandparents, family members and friends. All are welcome.

Pilgrimage for Life 2026: The annual Pilgrimage for Life will take place at Carfin Grotto on Saturday 1 August 2026. Led by Bishop John Keenan, the day offers an opportunity for prayer, reflection and witness to the dignity and sanctity of every human life.

The programme includes: 12:00 noon – Holy Mass; 2:00pm – Eucharistic Adoration; 2:15pm – Stations of the Cross; 2:45pm – Divine Mercy Chaplet; 3:30pm – Holy Rosary; Families are especially encouraged to attend. All are welcome.



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