

PARISH BULLETIN

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

Memorial of the
beheading of Saint
John the Baptist

August 29th

23rd August 2026

The 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 21 of Ordinary Time

Tuesday: Holy Mass, 6pm

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

Coffee and Discussion Group

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

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional

82 Christ is made the sure
foundation

Offertory

28 All that I am

Communion music

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

Post Communion

498 Soul of my Saviour

Recessional

518 The Church's one foundation

Next weekend:

Saturday, 29th of August, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 30th of August, 22nd 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

6th September: Holy Mass, 4pm

20th September: Holy Mass, 4pm

Psalm response

*O Lord, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.*

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

*The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord;
you bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer the heart.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY: FEAST OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE

24 AUGUST 2026

Be your blessed self

Bartholomew or Nathanael? With most of the apostles we know only their name, but with today's saint we're not sure even of that. Another apostle, Philip, seems to have been a friend to him and is the common denominator. In the synoptic gospels Bartholomew is always mentioned along with Philip; in John—where “Bartholomew” is not mentioned—Philip brings “Nathanael” to meet Jesus. That meeting results in something extraordinary: Jesus greets the newcomer and refers to Nathanael admiringly as “a man without guile.” In itself, and in an age that revels in irony if not cynicism, how refreshing to encounter someone who is without pretence, without a mask. Be aware of the faces you wear today; can you be more honest, more open?

Today's readings: Revelation 21:9b-14; John 1:45-51, *“Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him.”*

TUESDAY OF WEEK 21

25 AUGUST 2026

Beautiful authority

The stereotype of authority is that it's the “heavy” in every situation. Sometimes corrupt, often self-serving, authority is actually intended to govern on behalf of the common good. We need authority like that to lead us in the direction of integrity and unity. Pope Clement of Rome wrote a prayer for those in authority: “Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, concord, and stability, so that they may exercise without offense the sovereignty that you have given them.” The more questionable the leadership, the more they need your prayers!

Today's readings: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a, 14-17; Matthew 23:23-26. *“Let no one deceive you in any way.”*

WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 21

26 AUGUST 2026

Do what you say

The word *hypocrite* comes from the Greek for “one who acts on a stage” and means “a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.” Hypocrisy was one of Jesus' frequent targets, and the criticism of hypocrisy

has played a major role in Christian moral life ever since. Those who say one thing and do another, who want people to think they are something different than what they really are, or who hold others to standards they themselves don't keep fall under this ignominious title. The simple antidote to hypocrisy comes from *integrity*: consistency between your thoughts and actions and between those actions and what you expect of others.

Today's readings: Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22; Matthew 18:15-20. *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.”*

THURSDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT MONICA

27 AUGUST 2026

Hope trumps disappointments

Saint Monica is the patron saint of disappointing children, along with Saints Clotilde, Louise de Marillac, and Matilda of Saxony. As wild and profligate as her son, the eventual Saint Augustine, was during most of Saint Monica's life, she did live to see him baptized, and he eventually became one of the world's greatest Christian thinkers. Clotilde was not so lucky—her sons continually warred over their father's kingdom—and Matilda's son falsely accused her of mismanaging the finances of the religious communities she established. Yet through all their children's misdeeds these women remained faithful and hopeful, the perfect Christian witnesses. Go and do the same, and with luck some of it will rub off on your offspring or others within your sphere of influence.

Today's readings: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, 16-18; Matthew 23:27-32. *“On the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.”*

FRIDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT AUGUSTINE, BISHOP, DOCTOR

28 AUGUST 2026

Leave your baggage behind

The twists and turns of Saint Augustine's faith journey are a model for those who struggle to live in the best way they can. Part of what holds people back is that they punish themselves for past sins, errors, and lapses, dragging them into the present like a ball and chain. That is where

Augustine's story is most helpful: He lived a wanton life as a young man. When he finally turned to God, however, he acknowledged his sins (publicly!) and let them go. What in your past keeps you from moving forward? What have you not been able to forgive in yourself? Today ask God to help you release this burden so that you may live your best life.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Matthew 24:42-51. *"You are not lacking in any spiritual gift."*

SATURDAY: MEMORIAL OF THE BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

29 AUGUST 2026

Takes criticism well

It's human to feel pain and anger, especially at times when you've made a mistake and have been soundly called on the carpet for it. King Herod's wife Herodias wanted to get even with John the Baptist after he spoke out about something she was involved in that was morally wrong. Herodias got revenge, but not a better life. Although hers is an example of extreme vengeance, the moral of her story is one worth remembering. When you make mistakes that others rightfully point out, you can punish the messenger or take them to heart, but only by doing the latter can you make things right.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Mark 6:17-29. *"Herodias harboured a grudge against [John the Baptist] and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so."*

Readings for the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 22:19-23

Shebna of the palace loses his key, and Eliakim is presented with it.

Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

God's love is eternal, and that's to say nothing of divine kindness, which is relentless.

Romans 11:33-36

God's ways are unsearchable, divine judgment unfathomable. God is a "deep" subject!

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter gets the keys. Now he has to learn how to drive the church.

Words on the Word

The Courage to Confess Christ

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On one of his many pilgrimages, Pope Benedict XVI gave an important warning. He reminded us that faith comes from hearing the word of Christ, as Saint Paul teaches. He said that, just as in the past, there are people today who try to change Christ's message. They want to remove from the Gospel the truths that modern society finds difficult or uncomfortable. They try to make it seem as though everything is relative, and that even the truths of our faith can change depending on the times or on human opinion.

* *

But Pope Benedict made this clear: the Church cannot allow the Spirit of Truth to be silenced. That warning is very important for us today.

In our own time, many people find it difficult to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. They may see Him only as a wise teacher, a good man, or the founder of a religion. But our faith tells us something far greater: Jesus Christ is God Himself.

Today, Christ is often placed alongside other religious figures, as if He were simply one spiritual

leader among many. At the same time, ideas that go against the Gospel are often presented as modern, clever, scientific, or freeing. Meanwhile, Christian faith is sometimes treated as old-fashioned, narrow, or out of touch.

And we must be honest: many Catholics feel this pressure.

In public life, in the media, in schools and universities, and even in family conversations, faithful Catholics can be made to feel uncomfortable for believing what the Church has always taught. Sometimes we are criticised. Sometimes we are laughed at. Often, we simply stay silent.

We may withdraw into our churches, our familiar groups, and our safe conversations. Like Saint Peter in the courtyard, we may feel afraid or embarrassed when someone asks us:

“Are you one of His disciples? Do you really believe this?”

But Christ still calls us.

He calls us to stand firm.

He calls us to speak the truth with love.

He calls us to follow Him without fear and without shame.

Our task is the same in every age: to confess Jesus Christ clearly, faithfully, and courageously.

Saint John Paul II put it powerfully when he told young people: *You may not be asked to shed your blood, but you will certainly be asked to remain faithful to Christ! A faithfulness to be lived every day.*

I am thinking of engaged couples and of the difficulty, in today's world, of living in purity while awaiting marriage. I am thinking of young married couples and of the trials to which their promise of mutual fidelity is exposed. I am thinking of relationships between friends and of the temptation to disloyalty that can arise between them.

I am also thinking of those who have chosen the path of special consecration and of the effort sometimes required to persevere in their dedication to God and to their brothers and sisters. I am thinking too of those who wish to live relationships of solidarity and love in a world in which only the logic of profit and personal or group interest seems to have value.

I am also thinking of those who work for peace and yet see new centres of war emerging and spreading in various parts of the world; I am thinking of those who work for human freedom and yet see that man is still a slave to himself and to others; I am thinking of those who struggle so that human life may be loved and respected, yet must witness frequent attacks upon it and upon the respect owed to it.

Dear young people! Is it difficult to believe in such a world? Is it difficult to believe in the year 2000? Yes! It is difficult. This should not be concealed. It is difficult, but with the help of grace it is possible, just as Jesus explained to Peter: 'Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.' — Saint John Paul II, Rome, 19 August 2000

These words are still powerful today.

Faithfulness is not always dramatic. It does not always mean visible martyrdom. Most of the time, it means being faithful in ordinary daily life: living purity before marriage, showing loyalty in marriage, being honest in friendship, persevering in consecrated life, having courage to witness to the faith in public, and respecting every human life from conception to natural death. This is why Saint Peter is so important.

Christ promised Peter the keys of the Kingdom. In the Bible, keys are a sign of authority. This promise shows Peter's special role, and also the role of his successors, the popes.

Peter was weak. He denied Christ in the courtyard of the high priest. He said he was not one of

His disciples. He even tried to hide that he came from Galilee.

Yet Christ did not take back His promise.

Peter remained the rock. He became the visible head of the Church on earth, the Vicar of Christ. This mission continues through the popes who come after him.

The pope's task is not to change the Gospel. It is to protect it. He is not called to make the faith fit the fashions of the world, but to guide the Church on the way to salvation.

The keys given to Peter are meant to open the way to heaven. Christ Himself criticised the Pharisees because they closed the door of salvation to others. So the authority of the Church is not about power for its own sake. It is about service, truth, mercy, and salvation.

Christ has opened the gates of heaven. He is the Saviour. Whoever believes in Him and remains faithful to Him receives life.

So the choice is still before us: life or death, blessing or curse, Christ or the spirit of the age.

In a noisy and restless world, the Catholic answer must remain simple, strong, and clear:

We choose Christ.

* * *

*Woe to the mind where secret evils start,
Woe to the tongue withholding balm for the heart,
Woe to the hand that turns from friendship's plea,
Woe to the fist that will not set love free,
Woe to the soul shut fast from God's own Heart.*

(R.B.)

In Christ's love,

Fr Anthony

40 MASTERS OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF ICONS: DIONISIUS

Dionisius and the Moscow School of Icon Painting

Dionisius (c. 1440–after 1502)

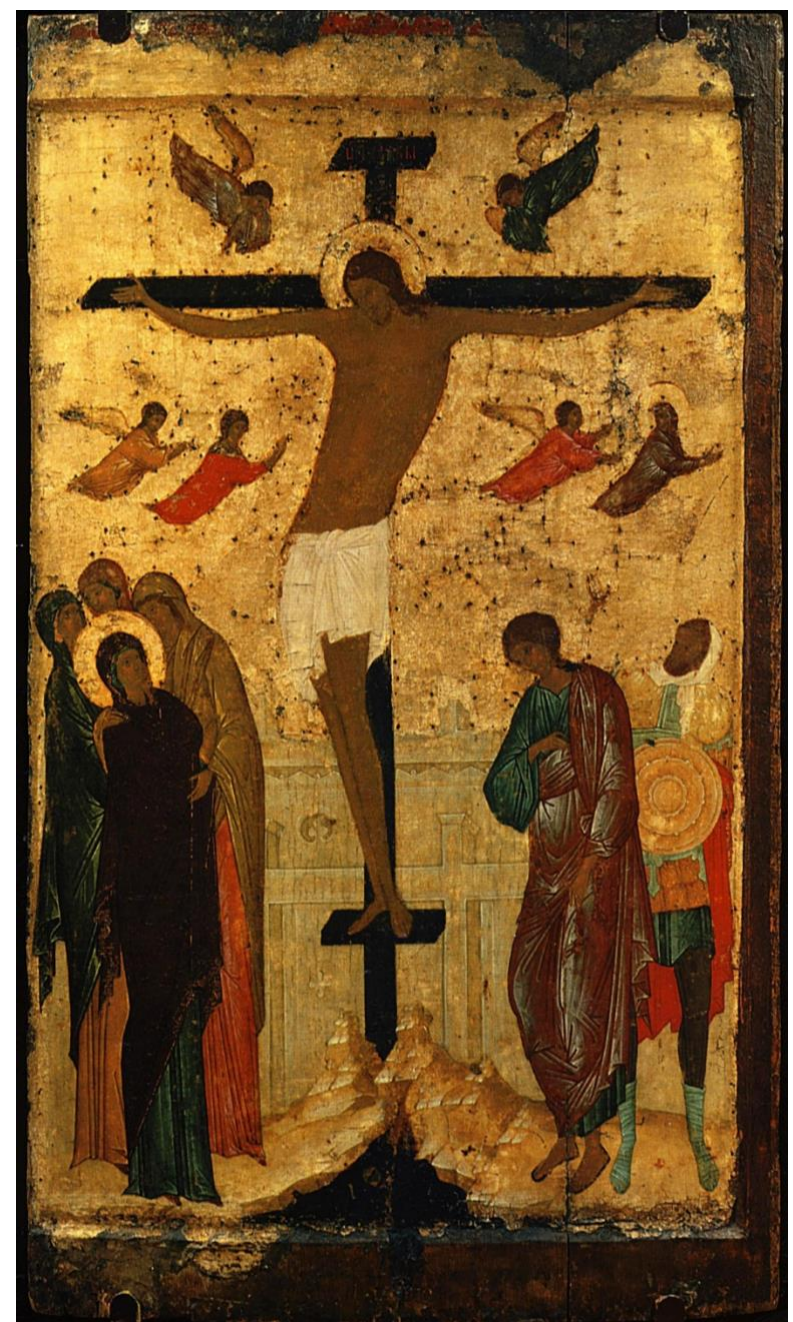
Dionisius was one of the greatest painters of the Moscow school of icon painting. He is often seen as the finest successor to Andrei Rublev, the famous Russian icon painter.

Like Rublev, Dionisius worked on both frescoes and icons. His sacred art is known for its clear form, graceful style and strong spiritual character.

Little is known about his personal life. He was not a monk, but a layman. He had three sons, and two of them, Theodosius and Vladimir, later worked with him as artists.

Dionisius became well known through important commissions. He painted frescoes at the monastery in Borovsk and in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow.

His most important surviving work is the fresco cycle in the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Theotokos at the Ferapontov



Dionisius, *The Crucifixion*, 1500, Tretyakov Gallery

Monastery. This work was completed around 1502 and has been preserved in remarkable condition. Several icons are also linked to Dionisius. These include the 1482 icon of *Our Lady Hodegetria of Smolensk*, icons of *Metropolitan Alexius and Metropolitan Peter* from around 1480–1490, and *the Crucifixion*, dated to 1500.

Dionisius used bright and radiant colours, as Rublev had done before him. However, his range of colours was more limited, and he often used stronger contrasts. His drawing was precise and elegant, and in his work line was just as important as colour.

His compositions were often simple, but this gave them greater strength and dignity. At the same time, he remained faithful to the traditional rules of icon painting.

The main features of his style are long, graceful figures, rich decoration and carefully designed ornament. Many scholars believe that this style reflected Moscow's growing sense of power and imperial identity in the sixteenth century.

God's Guide

Relations with Angels: To Be Closer to Our Guardians

Chapter 7

THE ORDER OF CHOIRS: ARCHANGELS

The word "archangel" (Gr. *archangelos*) means "a high-ranking angel," as well as the first among angels, the leader of the angels. They are the direct superiors of the Guardian Angels. They are regarded as the protectors of popes, bishops, and those who hold authority in the Church. From the Bible we know three archangels:

Michael (which is translated as: WHO IS LIKE GOD) – he is the angel who conveyed God's inspirations to Saint John in the Book of Revelation. Saint Michael the Archangel is also known for the role he played in casting the rebellious angel Lucifer out of heaven. Moreover, he is recognized as the defender of the Church, protecting it against evil. In the Apocalypse of St. John, it is the archangel Michael together with his angels who takes up the fight against Satan, according to the words: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels were to fight the Dragon. And the Dragon and his angels went to war, but they did not prevail, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great Dragon was thrown down, the ancient Serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (Rev 12:7-9). Furthermore, the archangel Michael received authority over the angels (after it was lost by the rebellious angel of light, Lucifer, who became Satan), becoming also the protector of Israel, according to the words of the prophet Daniel: "At that time Michael shall arise, the great prince, who is the protector of the children of your people. Then there shall be a time of trouble such as has never occurred since nations first came into being until the present time. At that time your people shall be delivered: all those who are written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. The wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who taught many righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan 12:1-3). Saint Pantaleon states that the archangel Michael "is among the angels the leader and guide." Also in the Book of Joshua we read of the archangel Michael's authority over the hosts of angels: *When Joshua was near Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and saw before him a man with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and said: 'Are you on our side, or on the side of our enemies?' And he answered: 'No, for I am the commander of the army of the Lord, and I have now come'. Then Joshua fell face down to the ground, paid him homage, and said to him: 'What does my lord command his servant?' And the commander of the army of the Lord said to Joshua: 'Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place on*

*which you are standing is holy'. And Joshua did so (Josh 5:13-15). The teaching of the Church tells us that only our Blessed Mother surpasses in graces received from God, in holiness and glory, our beloved archangel Michael (LG, 53, 66, 69). This is so, even simply because she was the Mother of Jesus Christ and became the Mother of us all as well. In turn, Zechariah, in a vision he received from God, tells us about the effectiveness of the archangel Michael's intercession and the fruits of his prayer. He teaches us how to do this in a passage from his book, Zechariah: *Then the angel of the Lord asked in these words: 'Lord of Hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry now for seventy years?' In response given to the angel who spoke to me, the words of the Lord rang out with mercy and comfort. Then the angel who spoke to me gave me this command: 'Proclaim that thus said the Lord of Hosts: I love Jerusalem and Zion with a great love, but my anger has weighed heavily upon the proud nations, for when I was angry only a little, they went too far in punishing. [Here I am reminded of the parable of the Lord Jesus about the unforgiving debtor, whose king forgave him his debt, but he himself refused to forgive his own debtor, and so came to a bad end. Hence also the words in the prayer: Our Father: 'and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us']'. Therefore, thus says the Lord: With mercy I return to Jerusalem, my house shall stand there again – oracle of the Lord of Hosts – and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. And proclaim this also: Thus says the Lord of Hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, the Lord will comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem' (Zech 1:12-17). What did the archangel Michael do? In his intercession he referred to God's earlier promises, which He gave to the prophet Jeremiah in the words: I will cause to cease among them the voice of gladness, the voice of joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land shall be laid waste and desolate, and the nations shall serve the king of Babylon for seventy years (Jer 25:10-11). And in the next passage: For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfil my gracious promise to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you – oracle of the Lord – plans full of peace and not of ruin, to give you the future for which you hope (Jer 29:10-11). Effective intercession therefore occurs when we refer to God's promises. Of course, we must first come to know them well, so that we may then also pray effectively. Once I read in the Old Testament that God told Jacob that whoever blesses him will also be blessed, and whoever curses him will be cursed. From that time on, in prayer you should also bless often, awaiting in your heart the blessing of God. I will add: no one has ever been disappointed. However, remember, that this is not about some incantation which you will now recite, awaiting a response. Let the Holy Spirit arrange all this in your heart and soul, and ask for this first of all. Read the Bible and pray that God may reveal to you the promises that are destined for you at this particular moment of your life. Can you draw upon the promises? Yes. They are for all Christians who read them with their soul and, in the Spirit, bring them before God.**

COMPLAINING

ACHIEVES NOTHING.

PRAYER

YIELDS EVERYTHING

WHAT DO YOU

CHOOSE TODAY?



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

RUSSIAN ELECTIONS

TOO POPULAR TO RUN?

What do you do when an opposition party starts looking a little too competitive? In Russia, it seems, you remove it from the race.

The Russian Supreme Court has barred the liberal opposition party Yabloko from taking part in September's parliamentary elections. The move followed a complaint from the nationalist Rodina party, but few doubt it suited the Kremlin rather well.

The alleged offences were hardly earth-shattering: using publicly available photographs and quotations in campaign material, and accepting a supposed foreign donation of just under £150. Yet the punishment is severe: exclusion from the ballot.

The real issue appears to be Yabloko's rising poll numbers. The party, which opposes Russia's invasion of Ukraine, looked capable of crossing the 5% threshold needed to enter the State Duma. For a system keen to manage outcomes, that was evidently too risky.

Morally, this is more than political gamesmanship. A just society requires truth, fair process, and respect for the dignity of citizens, including their right to choose their representatives freely. When elections become theatre and opponents are removed on technicalities, democracy is hollowed out — and public trust with it.

PALESTINE

OCCUPYING THE OCCUPIED

Something unusual happened near Nablus: Israeli troops clashed with Israeli settlers who had been laying siege to Palestinian homes in Qusra, in the West Bank, occupied since 1967.

The settlers reportedly set up an illegal outpost, blocked access to two Palestinian families' homes, and cut them off from electricity and water. The villagers appealed to Israeli forces for help. Yet footage appears to show the first soldiers arriving not to remove the settlers, but to pray with them.

Later, the army and border police did confront the crowd, using stun grenades and tear gas. Even so, the settlers were not ultimately removed.

This matters morally, not just politically. Catholic teaching is clear: every person has God-given dignity, and no community may be deprived of basic necessities, security, or rightful access to home and land. Defending Israel's security cannot justify injustice against Palestinian civilians. Equally, anger at Israeli policy must never become hatred of Jews.

The deeper scandal is impunity. When violence and land seizures go unanswered, extremists are encouraged. Peace needs law, justice, and the courage to protect the vulnerable — whoever they are.

SURVEY

ZELENSKY FACES A TOUGH ROAD — BUT NO ELECTION IS IMMINENT

If Ukraine held a presidential election now, Volodymyr Zelensky would reportedly lead the first round by a slim margin — but struggle badly in a run-off, according to a poll by the Socis Centre for Social and Marketing Research.

The survey suggests Zelensky would take **22.3%** in the first round, just ahead of former army commander **Valerii Zaluzhnyi**, with other senior figures also polling strongly. In second-round scenarios, however, Zelensky would lose to several potential rivals.

That sounds dramatic, but there's a big catch: Ukraine is at war and under martial law, meaning presidential elections are not currently on the cards. The poll also excludes people living in Russian-occupied territories and areas of active fighting, so the results need careful handling.

There are also factual points to tidy up: **Mykhailo Fedorov is not Ukraine's Defence Minister**, and **Kyrylo Budanov heads military intelligence, not the Presidential Office**.

Moral and ethical note

In wartime, polling can inform public debate, but it should not be used to deepen division or weaken legitimate defence against aggression. A Catholic view must hold together truth, justice, peace, and the common good — including respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and concern for every civilian life.

We Read Pope Leo

We are the Church of Jesus Christ in a troubled world, a world that seeks peace.

Today, too, the Church can allow itself to be surprised by the action of God and bring the peace of Christ beyond boundaries already drawn. Its mission is preceded by God's grace, which works in the hidden depths of consciences. That is why, in every encounter, even one that disrupts our plans, we must lend an ear, open our eyes, and open our hearts to what God wishes to tell us. (...) We are the Church of Jesus Christ in a troubled world, a world that [seeks] the signs of passing time, but rather that upon our bodies too may be engraved the signs of a love that never ceases. In this way we are encouraged to rethink many canons of beauty, marked above all by the hedonism and consumerism that the world imposes upon us and that can enclose us within strong conditionings, causing us to waste precious energy on what truly has no meaning and does not last forever. In everyday life we meet people whose faces are marked by the passing of years and by suffering, yet who nonetheless are able to radiate around themselves serenity of spirit, kindness, and peace. We may also meet others, perhaps outwardly attractive, but inwardly hard and cold. It is then easy to understand where true beauty is hidden, and where there is still a need for conversion, forgiveness, and healing.

If we truly wish to discover and cultivate the divine beauty by which we are surrounded and for which we were created, and also to spread it around us, we must learn to perceive it both in the tender face of a child and in the wrinkles of an elderly person, in the vigor of a young person and in the steadiness of an adult (...). We must listen attentively to the unique stories of love that each of these realities tells us, recognizing in them small glimpses of heaven. It is love that is the most beautiful adornment of the human person: love that transforms, transfigures, ennobles, and lifts upward; love that makes us light, free, and close to God, despite the changing vicissitudes of life. ***Homily of Leo XIV on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Parish of St. Thomas of Villanova, Castel Gandolfo, 15 August 2026.***

To sanctify Sunday, the celebration of the Eucharist is indispensable. Listening to the word of God and partaking of the Body of Christ presuppose — according to the Fathers of the Council — *convenire in unum*, that is, the festive assembly of the faithful. In it, the Christian community makes visible its communion with the Lord and bears witness to its belonging to Christ and its fidelity to the Church. Such an assembly cannot be replaced by a mere virtual presence, nor can it

be reduced to passive participation. The liturgical assembly is realized, indeed, through the active participation of the brothers and sisters, called together to give thanks to God (...). In this regard, I encourage everyone to create the best possible conditions so that those who on Sundays are unable to refrain from work may also be able to take part in Holy Mass.

General Audience, Basilica of St. Peter, 12 August 2026.

In my opinion

How Russia Tries to Mess with British Minds

Russian disinformation is not always loud, crude, or easy to spot. Increasingly, it works by blending into ordinary public debate: a post about the cost of living, a video about immigration, a meme about Ukraine, a “leaked” document about NATO, or a fake article designed to look as if it came from a British newspaper.

The aim is rarely to persuade every reader that Moscow is right. More often, it is to make people doubt everyone else: the Government, the media, Ukraine, NATO, the police, even their neighbours. Confusion is useful. Distrust is useful. A divided society is easier to influence.

The First Line of Defence: Knowing It Exists

Russian state-backed disinformation has been present in the British information space for years. Since the invasion of Ukraine, it has become more visible, but it did not begin in 2022.

The UK has already seen clear examples. After the Salisbury Novichok attack in 2018, Russian officials and state media pushed numerous contradictory claims: that the poisoning had not happened, that Britain had staged it, that Porton Down was responsible, or that other countries were somehow involved. The point was not to establish one credible alternative explanation. The point was to muddy the waters.

That same method is now used around Ukraine. British audiences are told, directly or indirectly, that Ukraine is hopelessly corrupt, that President Zelensky is a puppet, that NATO “provoked” the war, that Britain is being dragged into a conflict against its own interests, and that money sent to Kyiv is money stolen from the NHS, pensioners, or struggling families.

Some of these arguments are dressed up as ordinary political concern. In a democracy, it is entirely legitimate to ask how public money is spent. But propaganda exploits such concerns by twisting facts, inventing evidence, and encouraging resentment.

What Propaganda Aimed at Britain Looks Like

A typical Russian-aligned message aimed at the UK public might look like this: “Britain cannot afford to heat its homes, yet the Government sends billions to Ukraine. NATO caused this war, Zelensky is corrupt, and ordinary British people are paying the price. Stop funding Kyiv and make peace with Russia.”

This is effective because it contains a mixture of real anxieties and misleading conclusions. Many British households have faced genuine pressure from energy bills, inflation, and public-service strain. But the propaganda message redirects that frustration away from the causes of the war and towards Ukraine, NATO, or British support for Kyiv.

Another example might appear as a social media post claiming: “Ukrainian refugees are being given priority over British families for housing.”

Such claims can spread quickly, especially when accompanied by an emotional image or an invented “local story”. Sometimes they rely on isolated cases stripped of context. Sometimes they are simply false. Either way, the purpose is to inflame resentment between Britons and Ukrainians, and to weaken public sympathy for people fleeing war.

The “Matryoshka” Method: Layers Within Layers

One reason this material is difficult to identify is that it does not always come from official Russian sources.

The method resembles a matryoshka doll: one layer hides another. A message may begin with a Russian state outlet, then be repeated by a foreign website, then shared by an anonymous social media account, then reposted by an influencer who has no obvious link to Russia. By the time it reaches a British reader, the Russian origin may be almost invisible.

This is why a false claim can look local, spontaneous, or “grassroots”. It may appear in a Facebook group, under a TikTok video, on X, or in the comments beneath a newspaper article. The person sharing it may not even realise where it came from.

In recent years, European investigators and fact-checkers have also documented campaigns using cloned websites made to resemble recognised media outlets. A fake page may imitate the style of a British newspaper or broadcaster, using familiar fonts, logos, and layouts. The article may then be circulated as if it were genuine reporting.

The aim is simple: borrow the trust built by real institutions and use it to smuggle in a falsehood.

Old Themes, New Technology

Russian propaganda has long relied on familiar themes: the West is decadent, NATO is aggressive, Ukraine is controlled by extremists, and Russia is merely defending itself. What has changed is the speed and sophistication of delivery.

Artificial intelligence now makes it easier to alter images, generate fake screenshots, create misleading videos, or produce convincing comments at scale. A photograph can be manipulated to make someone appear to smile at the wrong moment. A video can be clipped to remove context. A fake “BBC-style” graphic can be produced in minutes.

This does not mean every suspicious post is part of a Russian operation. Nor does it mean British citizens are incapable of forming their own views. A fair assessment must recognise that domestic grievances are real. People are worried about housing, migration, energy costs, public services, and the direction of foreign policy.

But hostile actors look for precisely those pressure points. They do not create every division. They aggravate existing ones.

Why Britain Is a Target

The United Kingdom is a significant supporter of Ukraine. It is a NATO member, a nuclear power, and a country with global media influence. For Moscow, weakening British resolve has strategic value.

If British public opinion can be shifted from support for Ukraine to fatigue, suspicion, or hostility, that benefits Russia. If trust in NATO is eroded, that benefits Russia. If British voters come to believe that all institutions lie equally, that truth is unknowable, and that democratic allies are no better than authoritarian aggressors, that too benefits Russia.

Sometimes there is no need to fire a missile to achieve a political objective. A rumour, repeated often enough, can do damage of its own.

How to Recognise Manipulation

The first defence is awareness. When using social media, it is sensible to remember that not everything placed before us is organic or authentic. Some content is designed to provoke anger before thought.

Before sharing a claim, especially an emotional one, it is worth asking:

- **Who is the source?**

Is it a recognised outlet, an anonymous account, or a page with no clear ownership?

- **Is there evidence?**

Does the post link to verifiable documents, official statements, or credible reporting?

- **Is the language designed to inflame?**

Words such as “traitors”, “puppets”, “invasion”, “cover-up”, or “wake up” are often used to trigger emotion.

- **Are reputable outlets reporting the same thing?**

If a dramatic claim appears only on obscure websites or social media accounts, caution is needed.

- **Has the image or video been checked?**

Reverse image searches and fact-checking sites can help identify old, altered, or miscaptioned material.

- **Does the message divide people into enemies?**

Propaganda often turns complex questions into simple accusations: Britons against Ukrainians, ordinary people against “elites”, Christians against refugees, or patriots against NATO.

Freedom of Speech and Responsibility

Combating disinformation is difficult in a free society. Britain rightly values freedom of speech, political debate, and criticism of government policy. Not every wrong opinion is propaganda. Not every controversial view should be censored.

But freedom of speech does not require naivety. Platforms, journalists, public officials, and citizens all have responsibilities. Accounts that systematically spread demonstrable falsehoods, impersonate media outlets, or operate as part of foreign influence campaigns should be investigated and, where appropriate, removed.

At the same time, the strongest long-term answer is education. People need the tools to recognise manipulation for themselves. That includes media literacy in schools, better public communication from institutions, and more transparent action from social media companies.

The Quiet Poison

Russian disinformation is best understood not as a single dramatic attack, but as a slow drip of poison. It does not need to dominate the national conversation. It only needs to be present enough to deepen suspicion, harden divisions, and make lies sound plausible.

In Britain, as elsewhere, the challenge is to defend truth without becoming censorious, to preserve open debate without being exploited, and to remember that hostile propaganda often succeeds by using our own anxieties against us.

The answer is not panic. It is vigilance. Truthful public life requires patience, discernment, and a willingness to check before we share.

Tony Wood

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, Lilian Cox, Sarah Carmichael, and Doleen Durnin.

Please keep in your prayers David Brodie (2026), Margaret Wilson (2022) **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: funds raised £1200.



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