

PARISH BULLETIN

**St. Kieran's, the
Catholic
Church** in Campbeltown
and Islay
Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain
6th September 2026



The 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 23 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

Proclamation

223 How lovely on the mountains

Offertory

342 Make me a channel

Communion music

Благослови Господа, душе моя – Bless the Lord,
my Soul

Duszo Chystusowa – Soul of my Saviour

Post Communion

Sheet As the deer longs

Recessional

147 Forth in the peace of Christ
we go

Next weekend:

Saturday, 12th September, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 13th September 24th 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 that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts.'*

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY OF WEEK 23

7 SEPTEMBER 2026

Give the sabbath your attention

In our busy world, how can we keep the Lord's Day holy, friends? With children's games and meetings filling Sundays, it's up to us to draw the line now that old trading laws have gone. Why not use this Monday to plan a wee change? Make Sunday sacred again – set apart for Mass, rest and family time. It'll nourish your soul and draw you closer to God's love.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; Luke 6:6-11. *"I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"*

TUESDAY: FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

Channel goodness

Life has its peaks and troughs, but for many, existence remains a struggle. In the Beatitudes, Our Lord offers a beautiful promise: "Blessed are those with no earthly reason to expect blessing." This reveals God's tender love for the poor.

How do we practise authentic charity? It involves:

- Recognising the inherent dignity of every child of God.
- Offering our hearts, not just a helping hand.
- Serving our neighbours with genuine kindness.

By seeing Christ in others, we mirror His divine love. Let's journey together in faith, ensuring no one walks alone.

Today's readings: Micah 5:1-4a; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23. *"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God."*

WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 23

9 SEPTEMBER 2026

God is here

Today marks the anniversary of Saint Celestine I's election in 422. Whilst he famously established the papal diplomatic service during his ten-year reign, his pastoral compassion remains his greatest legacy. Celestine taught that reconciliation must never

be refused to any dying sinner who sincerely seeks it. He beautifully noted that repentance depends not on time, but on the heart, which God can transform in an instant.

As we continue this Year of Mercy, let us pray for all departing this life today. May they receive the grace of a transformed heart and find peace in God's holy will.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 7:25-31; Luke 6:20-26. *"Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours."*

THURSDAY OF WEEK 23

10 SEPTEMBER 2026

Freedom of forgiveness

In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, Catholics receive forgiveness for their sins. This calls for true sorrow, a sincere confession, and then absolution.

Through this beautiful sacrament, the person is brought back into harmony with God and the Church community. When we forgive others, we share in their healing too. As Catholics, we're called to forgive even those who aren't sorry. Often, starting this process frees us from bitterness and resentment, bringing peace to our hearts.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 8:1b-7, 11-13; Luke 6:27-38. *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."*

FRIDAY OF WEEK 23

11 SEPTEMBER 2026

What would Jesus do?

A Call to Charity

Faith is too often weaponised to justify division. Yet, as Catholics, we recognise God as the source of infinite mercy. As we honour those lost on 9/11, we recall that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is our true compass.

Whether confronting injustice or welcoming a neighbour, His love must guide our steps. We are called to resist using religion as a tool for harm. Instead, let us strive to reflect the Prince of Peace in all we do.

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22b-27; Luke 6:39-42. *"Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not*

perceive the wooden beam in your own?"

SATURDAY OF WEEK 23

12 SEPTEMBER 2026

There's always time for reconciliation

Today marks the anniversary of Saint Celestine I's election in 422. Whilst he famously established the papal diplomatic service during his ten-year reign, his pastoral compassion remains his greatest legacy.

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seeks it. He beautifully noted that repentance depends not on time, but on the heart, which God can transform in an instant.

As we continue this Year of Mercy, let us pray for all departing this life today. May they receive the grace of a transformed heart and find peace in God's holy will

Today's readings: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; Luke 6:43-49. *"The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good."*

Readings for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 33:7-9

The prophet learns to sacrifice popularity for the sake of bearing God's truth.

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

God's word comes to us every day. Are we listening, or closing our hearts?

Romans 13:8-10

If we live in the spirit of love, we fulfil the law.

Matthew 18:15-20

Telling the truth to another is tough love. But hiding the truth is tougher on everybody.

Words on the Word

The Monkey on Our Back: Why Silence Isn't Always Golden

*

Convert yourself, for you have lost your very self. You are no longer yourself, you are a mannequin who has given up the independence of your own steps and lets yourself be pushed around. (...) You do not think, you have allowed others to think for you. You do not decide, you have allowed others to decide for you. You are now only an executor, and you are not a creator, you are not a child of freedom - you are a child of bondage, which diminishes and humiliates. (...) You now have only regulations, you now have only instructions - secret or not secret - and you seek inspiration for your decisions outside yourself, in what fashion dictates, in what people said on the street, what was said at the meeting, in what is said in company, in how the world lives - and you no longer seek it within, there, where a person meets himself, there, where a person meets God (Bishop J. Pietraszko).

* *

We've all seen those three little monkeys: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. They're cute, sure, but they've become a spiritual trap. We often use them to justify our silence when we should be speaking up.

In the Gospel, Christ calls us to courage: "As you see... then speak." Yet, fraternal correction is incredibly tough.

The Train Carriage Confession

I once met a grandmother on a train, heading to help her daughter for a month. She had a bag full of Catholic newspapers but sighed, "My granddaughters don't know how to pray, they don't

go to Mass."

When I suggested she teach them, she shrank back: "Oh, I couldn't. It would anger my daughter."

It's a classic modern dilemma. We worry more about keeping the peace with our children than helping them keep the peace with God.

The Prophet's Warning

But Holy Scripture doesn't let us off the hook. In the Book of Ezekiel, God is blunt:

"If you say nothing to turn the wicked man from his way... I will hold you responsible for his death." (Ez 33:8)

This isn't about being a self-righteous busybody; it's about salvation.

Love in Action

To counter those three silent monkeys, we must adopt three holy habits:

- To See: Recognise the spiritual danger.
- To Hear: Listen to the quiet struggles of others.
- To Speak: Share the truth in charity.

We must do this with a massive heart. It's not about wagging fingers, but saving souls. When we speak face-to-face in love, we don't spark shame; we awaken the conscience. That is where conversion begins, leading our loved ones back to the joy of God's grace.

Let's throw out the monkeys. It's time to speak up.

* * *

The Sorrow of the Golden Cage

*Our God-given freedom we barter for hopes,
Bound by the world and its slippery slopes.
These hopes we replace with the cold light of mind,
Leaving the mystery of faith far behind.*

*Our reason we yield for a fleeting repose,
A false peace of mind where the thorny path grows.
This peace we exchange for a duty of clay,
As grace is forgotten and bartered away.*

*This duty we trade for the trumpet of war,
Waging our battles on some distant shore.
For victory we bleed, in our pride and our pain,
Yet victory leaves us with silence again.*

*In peace we seek wealth, and for silver we sell
The quiet of conscience, descending to hell.
For money brings freedom – or so we believe –
A phantom of liberty meant to deceive.*

*Thus back to the start of our sorrow we run,
Bereft of the Father, the Spirit, the Son.
We grasped at the cosmos, by vanity led;
We wanted all things, but have nothing instead.*

(A.W.)

The Great Exchange

To heal this tragic cycle, we must trade our worldly illusions for the supernatural virtues:

<i>The Worldly Exchange</i>	<i>The Divine Reality</i>
Human Reason Alone	Divine Faith and Revelation
Earthly Peace (Mammon)	The Peace of Christ (Pax Christi)
Total Autonomy ("Everything")	Holy Poverty (Spiritual Abundance)
Only when we surrender our desire to possess "everything" on earth can we receive the true inheritance of Heaven.	

In Christ’s love,
Fr Anthony

God’s Guide

Relations with Angels: To Be Closer to Our Guardians

Chapter 8

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.

The Mysterious World of Archangels

You might be wondering who these mysterious figures are and what's their role in the Catholic faith. Let's turn to the world of archangels and explore the lives of Gabriel and Raphael, two of the most fascinating angels of all.

Thrones – these are the ones to whom all demons are subordinate and by the power of authority are subdued. It is worth turning to them with a request for liberation from all torments, possessions, and enslavements. Also a good example for such missions is the archangel Raphael, who – as I mentioned – freed Tobias's wife from demons, and it is worth turning to him as well in these matters.

The Principalities – these signify those who make subject to themselves that which they govern, in order to fulfil God's mission. Endowed with immense wisdom and intelligence, they unmask the intrigues of evil spirits and the diabolical plans meant to destroy us. I think it is worth turning to them for help in moments of temptation, while of course avoiding daily occasions that lead to falling into sin. The simplest way, however, to get out of a distressing, recurring sin in our life is prayer to the Holy Spirit, that He may convince us of the sin in our heart. Of its horror, stench, rot, and destructive influence on our soul and our whole life. Conviction in the mind is not enough. We then know that it is evil, but nevertheless we do it again and again, and again, yielding to the damning whispers of the horned scoundrel.

HELP GOD
MAKE YOU HAPPY
AND START
PRAYING.

Powers – these are the ones through whom miracles most often occur. They are frequently instruments in God's hand for performing signs of the presence of God's kingdom on earth. To the Powers, or Dominions (as they are also called), is entrusted (just as to Mary) the distribution of God's graces. Let us ask them to bring us as many of these as possible – especially those that root out evil inclinations, habits that destroy our soul. While writing these words, a certain situation came to my mind. Once, while praying that God would show me my holy intercessor in heaven, I saw as if in a half-dream Pope John Paul II. He was sitting next to me on a little bench. All around there was a great deal of beautiful greenery. The Pope, sitting on my right side, turned to me and with his right hand – with his index finger – with a smile of kindness and warmth on his face, wagged it at me, saying: “Sins are not plucked off like chives, but they are pulled out like parsley”, after which he disappeared (I immediately wrote this sentence down at the time, so that it would not slip away from me). This event took place around 4:00 in the morning during my prayer. After breakfast I looked at the internet and read a message from a certain lady who had just finished an Ignatian retreat. That lady wrote to me that during the retreat contemplations the Lord Jesus commanded her to convey to me that my intercessor, my advocate in heaven, would be John Paul II.

Dominions – these are the ones who surpass the choirs of Principalities, Powers, and Virtues. The choirs of Dominions are the highest of the Choirs of Order; they are absorbed by concern for fulfilling the will of God. We may ask them for intercession in matters of knowing God's will regarding us, so that we may scrupulously fulfil the directions of Jesus.



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

TRAGEDY IN THE HIMALAYAS

A CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

A devastating flash flood has struck the border region of Nepal and Tibet after a glacier fragment, likely dislodged by a seismic tremor, unleashed a wave of mud, rock, and ice. The cataclysm levelled villages and destroyed vital infrastructure, including bridges and power installations.

The human cost is profound, with hundreds killed or missing, including local families, pilgrims, and international tourists. Behind these tragic figures lies the irreplaceable value of each human life, created in the image of God. This disaster is a stark reminder of our moral obligation to exercise solidarity with those who suffer, regardless of distance or creed.

While this event was seismic, it highlights the fragility of our common home and our duty of stewardship over God's creation. The challenging rescue efforts, hampered by blocked roads,

call us to both prayer and action. We must pray for the victims, the bereaved, and the courageous rescuers. Let us also support the work of Catholic relief agencies on the ground, offering material assistance to our brothers and sisters in their time of desperate need.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

THE NEW ARCTIC FRONTIER

A MORAL THAW?

Canada's investment of CA\$11.3 billion in six new icebreakers is more than a simple modernisation of its coast guard. It signals an escalation in a geopolitical contest for the Arctic, a region opening up due to the alarming effects of climate change. This rivalry for new shipping routes and resources places Canada in direct competition with other powers:

- The USA: Developing its Polar Security Cutter programme to rebuild its icebreaker fleet.
- Russia: Already possessing a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers, ensuring its dominance on the Northern Sea Route.

Beneath this strategic manoeuvring lies a profound moral question. The very "opportunity" that nations seek to exploit is born from a collective failure to act as responsible stewards of creation. As Pope Francis reminds us in *Laudato Si'*, the cry of the earth is also the cry of the poor.

While the creation of 5,000 jobs in Quebec is a tangible good, we must ask at what ultimate cost this "progress" comes. Does the pursuit of national interest justify the potential for irreversible environmental damage to our common home? The rights and cultural survival of indigenous communities, whose lives are intrinsically tied to this fragile ecosystem, must be at the forefront of any discussion. True sovereignty in the Arctic should be measured not by military presence, but by a commitment to cooperative stewardship for the universal common good.

THEY WANT TO ASSIST SUICIDES

UK BISHOPS WARN AGAINST ASSISTED SUICIDE BILL

The sanctity of human life as a gift from God, from conception to natural death, is the cornerstone of Catholic opposition to the proposed 'assisted dying' bill.

Bishop John Sherrington, the lead on life issues for the Bishops' Conference, has urged Parliament to reject this dangerous legislation, highlighting grave moral and practical failings. The opposition is rooted in fundamental ethical principles:

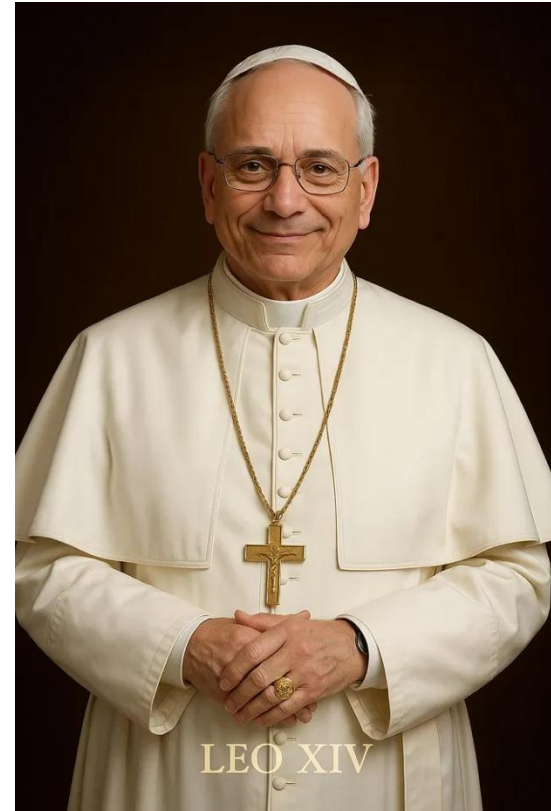
- The Vocation of Medicine: It is morally indefensible to transform the role of doctors and nurses from preserving life to intentionally ending it. The act of assisting a suicide is a corruption of the healing profession.
- Justice for the Vulnerable: The bill creates a two-tiered society where the lives of the sick, disabled, and elderly are treated as less worthy of protection. True compassion does not eliminate the person suffering; it provides love, support, and high-quality palliative care.
- The International Precedent: In jurisdictions where such laws exist, eligibility has inevitably expanded beyond the terminally ill to include those with disabilities and mental health conditions, demonstrating a perilous 'slippery slope'.

The Church continues to advocate for excellent end-of-life care, which affirms the inherent dignity of every person.

We Read Pope Leo

One should never break off the dialogue with the Lord, but rather speak to Him with trust also about our difficulties in understanding what He asks of us.

The conciliar reform, placing at the centre that which constitutes the heart of the Church's experience, was meant to reveal in full splendor the liturgy as "the primary source of that divine exchange in which God's life is communicated to us." From this conviction arose the need to make the richness of the biblical texts and prayers more widely available to all the faithful, as well as to give the order of celebration greater simplicity and clarity in comparison with that provided by the liturgical books then in force. For the liturgy, being a living reality, has continually undergone development and change throughout the centuries. The Magisterium adapted its forms to the needs of different eras. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Second Vatican Council too, with the utmost respect for the heritage of Tradition and precisely in order to make it more accessible, deemed a revision of the liturgical books necessary. (...) The desire for a "general reform" did not arise suddenly, but found expression in the actions of successive popes already from the beginning of the twentieth century, in accordance with the postulates of the liturgical movement. (...) The liturgical reform promoted by the Second Vatican Council is therefore inscribed within the living Tradition of the Church. Its proper understanding also allows us to reject the abuses that occurred in some circles of the Church in the post-conciliar period and which, unfortunately, sometimes take place even today, as a result of the absolutizing or improper understanding of certain principles underlying the reform itself. (...) It is therefore a particular task of pastors, of bishops, but also of every priest, to safeguard and promote a liturgy which, with the observance of the liturgical norms, shines forth with noble simplicity, thus showing the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.



General Audience, 26 August 2026

It is not always easy for us to understand and accept the ways of God, especially when they are very far from our own. Then the temptation arises, contrary to all the logic of faith, to think that the Lord is mistaken, or – what is worse – that He is not listening to us or is not interested in us. In the face of this uncertainty, Peter, despite his impetuosity, teaches us two important things. First, one should never (...) break off the dialogue with the Lord, but rather speak to Him with trust also about our difficulties in understanding what He asks of us. Second, however, one should never judge God's action, but rather, with humility, in prayer, listen to what He reveals to us through His action, even if it does not correspond to our expectations.

Angelus, 30 August 2026

As we celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, we are invited to contemplate the gift of life and to care for the earth that sustains it, because these are concrete ways of giving glory to our Creator. Today we are witnesses to many crises and to the immensity of human suffering. At the same time, it seems that the disruption of the harmonious balance of creation is advancing ever more rapidly. These phenomena are not independent of one another; they constitute one and the same cry for healing and peace, rising from a wounded world... War leaves behind social and ecological devastation whose effects endure for generations. Moreover, the interplay between armed conflicts and environmental degradation

often creates a vicious circle that leads to the destruction of ecosystems. This in turn deepens poverty and inequality and gives rise to new social tensions, which can contribute to the outbreak of further conflicts. War stands as a counter-witness to the Gospel of peace. The true instruments for building peace are truth, dialogue, patience, kindness, justice, mercy, understanding, care and love. Only these values have the power to transform people, to renew communities and to heal the wounds of our world.

Message for the XI World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2026

Closer to a Life of Faith

Human Stories: Mysticism

The Stigmatist of Valdarno, Servant of God Nella Pratesi, called the "crucified woman of Valdarno," lived for almost seven years with bleeding stigmata on her hands, feet, and chest. Alongside the visible signs of the Lord's Passion, the woman had the gift of mystical vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, certain saints, and her Guardian Angel.

A Childhood Marked by Suffering

There are not many accounts of Nella's childhood. She was born on September 20, 1907, in Petrognano di Pomino in the municipality of Rufina (province of Florence) as the eldest of the nine children of Joseph Pratesi and Cesira Mozzi. Fate later brought her to Stagi di Faella in the Valdarno valley (province of Arezzo). It was there, in a humble country house, that Pratesi spent most of her life.

In her Diary, Nella wrote that her sufferings began already in childhood. Her father was fighting in the war, and her mother had to provide care for the children. For 3 years, Pratesi attended a school run by religious sisters. She recalled that very often, on the way home, together with her best friend, she recited the Rosary and invoked the intercession of the Mother of God.

Unfortunately, her health steadily deteriorated. She was seriously ill and increasingly had to be absent from school. In 1931, she was operated on for appendicitis and spent a long time in the hospital. During this time, her beloved father died. Her health problems began to worsen. Nella struggled with severe spinal pain and kidney colic. She also suffered from asthma. She decided that she would offer up her sufferings to Jesus, and she humbly accepted everything that the Saviour offered her, thus making reparation for the sins of the world.

The Signs of the Lord's Passion

Nella also received many extraordinary signs from Jesus, including bleeding stigmata. The wounds on her wrists and chest caused severe pain, in addition to that already felt from the attacks of asthma and diseased kidneys. The woman also experienced the living presence of the Mother of God, certain saints, including St. Joseph, and her Guardian Angel. "I felt weak in spirit, and my body weighed on me much more heavily. I wanted my thoughts to be calm, but I could not manage it. I turned insistently to the Mother of God and became calm. In this way, the torment truly became joy, and I agreed to offer up my sufferings as reparation for myself and for so many insults committed against the Lord, and for the return to God of a great many lost souls," she noted in her Diary on March 4, 1956.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, Nella was especially afflicted by bleeding wounds. On March 30, 1956, she wrote: "All day suffering and pains in every part of my poor body. Blood flows from the wounds. I suffered peacefully, close to the agonies of Jesus."

Other signs received by Pratesi were visions and conversations with Mary, as well as the gift of seeing the souls in purgatory.

The Italian mystic and stigmatist prayed constantly for other people, obtaining graces for them.

"Many souls come to me to pray for them; they return content and moved. The Mother of God ceaselessly distributes graces – it is enough to ask and to make a true resolution not to fall any longer into grave sins, but to do the will of God," Nella wrote in April 1955.

She Died in the Odour of Sanctity

On March 23, 1958, Nella departed to the house of the Father. Many people, thanks to the testimony of her life, were reconciled with God.

"People who for long years had not been to church, and even fought against it by every means, knelt for a long time that night before her body."

Nella showed others that every suffering, physical or psychological, just or unjust, is a great gift if it is offered to Jesus with love.

The beatification process of Nella Pratesi is currently underway.

In my opinion



An RAF P-8 aircraft—used for tasks such as hunting and engaging submarines—appeared during exercises over the Baltic Sea.

Photo: defenceimagery.mod.uk

On the Brink: Deception, and the Moral Stakes in the Baltic

A fragile peace, the "tranquillity of order" that Catholic teaching holds so dear, was tested in the skies over the Baltic states this past month.

What happened was more than a military exercise. It was a tense and sobering drama, one that showed the whole world the hard choices behind deterrence, deception, and the danger of a terrible war.

The Sword of Deterrence

People watched the largest show of NATO air power the region has ever seen. Official statements called these surprise exercises, but the size of the operation, the advanced equipment, and the careful coordination between nations pointed to something far more urgent. This was a clear and deliberate message to Moscow: do not attack the states of the Alliance.

The operation over Baltic skies lasted several days. At its height on 18th August, around 60 aircraft took part, including:

- Dozens of fifth-generation F-35 fighters
- Apache attack helicopters
- Five refuelling planes
- Five AWACS reconnaissance aircraft
- An airborne command centre
- The newest American EA-37B Compass Call aircraft

This last aircraft is built for electronic warfare. It can shut down an enemy's communications and air defences by jamming their signals, leaving them blind and deaf before an attack. Such tools may be needed as part of deterrence – stopping a greater evil through a show of overwhelming strength – but they remind us just how dangerous a moment Europe now faces.

Many of the aircraft flew with their transponders switched off, making them invisible to civilian air traffic control. One spy plane, a Bombardier ARTEMIS II, flew carefully around the Kaliningrad region, its sensors effectively scanning the entire Russian enclave. The message was

plain: if a NATO member is attacked, the first response will be to wipe out this heavily armed territory.

As one military expert put it, "These NATO movements were a deliberate and ostentatious demonstration of the strength of kinetic use of military force... we have seen how one of these scenarios is being trained in practice."

From a moral point of view, the Church recognises that states have the right to defend themselves. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed" (CCC 2308). The NATO exercises can be seen in this way – a serious and needed act to hold back an aggressor and shield innocent nations from harm. Yet this is a peace held together by fear, and it falls far short of the true peace that comes from charity and justice.

The Dagger of Deception

While NATO showed its strength openly, Russia seems to have chosen a darker, sneakier path. Western intelligence services report a worrying rise in "semi-military" actions – a campaign of sabotage and aggression carried out just below the line of open war. It is a strategy meant to spread fear and confusion while pretending nothing was ever ordered from above.

Consider these recent events:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Target Type</i>
Early Aug	Bulgaria	Fire and explosion at a plant making artillery ammunition.	Military Production for Ukraine
Mid Aug	Near Rome, Italy	Fire at an ammunition factory.	Military Production
Late Aug	Czech Republic	Fire destroyed a factory making drones and thermal-imaging optics.	Military Production for Ukraine
Late Aug	Estonia	Arson attack at a factory making ground drones.	Military Production
20 th Aug	Romania	Armed Russian naval drone attacked a natural gas platform.	EU Civilian Energy Infrastructure
30 th July	Near Zamość, Poland	Missile strike deliberately aimed at a specific spot.	A signal against armament plants

Here we see a serious moral wrong. These are not the acts of a state in a just war, but a campaign of subversion that deliberately blurs the line between war and peace, between soldier and civilian. It is built on lies, using criminal networks and paid agents to reach military goals. It breaks the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness," now on the scale of whole nations. By destroying infrastructure and spreading chaos through secret means, such actions reject the very basis of international order and trust.

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has openly published lists of "potential targets," and Kremlin advisers speak of "semi-military" responses. This open boasting about hidden evil shows a deep moral rot, where the rules of statecraft are traded for the methods of organised crime.

A Desperate Diplomacy

Against this rising tension, the world watched a mysterious flight of an American military plane

from Riga to Moscow. On board was John Ratcliffe, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. History shows that such sudden, secret visits by intelligence chiefs happen only in moments of deep crisis. They are often a final, desperate effort to stop a catastrophe.

The last such meeting took place in the autumn of 2021, when the CIA warned Moscow against its planned invasion of Ukraine. The warning was ignored. Now, with intelligence hinting that Russia may be weighing anything from a massive cyberattack to a limited invasion of a NATO country, the stakes are even higher. As one former official put it, the message was probably a blunt one: "We know what you are thinking, and you had better not do it."

This is the principle of "last resort" – a key part of Just War teaching – but played out not on a battlefield, in the quiet corridors of power. It is a moment of great moral weight, where a direct appeal is made to a leader's conscience and common sense, trying to pull the world back from the edge. The weighty question that remains is whether Vladimir Putin, having ignored the warnings once before, will listen this time.

A Call to Vigilance and Prayer

The great manoeuvres of Western aircraft and the secret diplomacy in Moscow are the tools of a fallen world – needed, but imperfect, ways to hold back the tide of aggression. We must hope these efforts of deterrence and diplomacy succeed, yet our deepest hope cannot rest in military hardware or secret meetings.

As Catholics, we are called to a higher watchfulness. We must see these upheavals for what they truly are: the outward signs of a spiritual battle between order and chaos, truth and falsehood, life and death. The Catechism reminds us, "Because of the evils and injustices that all war brings with it, we must do everything reasonably possible to avoid it" (CCC 2327).

This is a time for earnest prayer. Let's pray for the leaders of all nations, that they may be given wisdom and prudence, choosing dialogue over destruction. Let's pray for the people of Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states, who live under the shadow of this threat. And let's pray for a change of heart in those who would choose violence and deception as tools of policy.

In these dangerous times, let's turn to Our Lady, Queen of Peace, and ask her prayers to protect the world from the scourge of war and to lead all people toward the true and lasting peace found only in her Son, Jesus Christ.

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 Denis Meenan (2019), Gordon Clark (1998) **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!

Fr Tony will be away on 7-8 September for the Deanery Meeting in Brodick and from 15-17 September at the Clergy Assembly in Oban.



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www.stkierancampbeltown.org



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