

PARISH BULLETIN

Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels



St. Kieran's, the Catholic Church in

Campbeltown and Islay

Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain

27th September
2026

September 29th

The 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Week 26 of Ordinary Time

Tuesday: Holy Mass, 6pm

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

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

Coffee and discussion in the Chapel House, 1030am

Hymns/Music for Sunday

Processional

50 At the name of Jesus

Offertory

243 In bread we bring you

Communion music

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

Post Communion

*Nada te turbe,
nada te espante
quien a Dios tiene
nada le falta.*

*Nada te turbe,
nada te espante
Sólo Dios basta. (Taizé)*

Recessional

206 He is Lord

Next weekend:

Saturday, 3rd October, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

**Sunday, 4th October 27th 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

4th October: **Holy Mass, 4pm**

Psalm response

Remember your compassion, O Lord.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

*My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord,
and I know them, and they follow me.*

Alleluia.

Communion Antiphon

*Remember your word to your servant, O Lord,
by which you have given me hope.
This is my comfort when I am brought low.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY: OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT WENCESLAUS, MARTYR

28 SEPTEMBER 2026

A saint for a violent season

We live in violent times, as even a quick glance at the headlines or the evening news will quickly confirm. Every now and then it's enough to make you want to lock the doors and pull the covers over your head! But we must do more than that, and "Good King" Wenceslaus can provide some inspiration. He worked tirelessly for political and social harmony and, although he ended up giving his life for the cause, it is no accident that we remember and honour Wenceslaus 1,000 years later while those who took his life are long forgotten. Trust that the violence in the world cannot overcome the good you do in the cause of peace.

Today's readings: Job 1:6-22; Luke 9:46-50.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

TUESDAY: FEAST OF SAINTS MICHAEL, GABRIEL AND RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

You have friends in high places

Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, the archangels, are great examples of how to follow Jesus. Michael, "one who is like God," is a protector and teaches us how to stay close to the truth and away from sin. Gabriel, "one who is the strength of God," is the Lord's messenger and exemplifies our ability to find guidance in God and our calling in life. Finally, Raphael "is the healing power of God" and helps us to heal body, mind, and spirit and find joy in our lives. Pray to these heavenly helpers today!

Today's readings: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; John 1:47-51. *"Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them."*

WEDNESDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT JEROME, PRIEST, DOCTOR

30 SEPTEMBER 2026

A word so deep

"Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ." In the fourth century, Jerome was a priest who peculiarly never celebrated the

Mass. Instead, he dedicated his life to creating a new translation of the Bible. To probe the mysteries of the Old Testament, he studied Hebrew with rabbis in the Holy Land—a collaboration no Christian had considered for centuries. Aided by lay women like Saint Paula who assisted his work and financially supported him, Jerome laboured in a cave in Bethlehem until his death. Catch the spark of Jerome's passion. Read the Bible regularly.

Today's readings: Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Luke 9:57-62. *"No one who sets a hand to the plough and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."*

THURSDAY: MEMORIAL OF SAINT THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR

1 OCTOBER SEPTEMBER 2026

Blessed be childlike ways

When people enter Roman Catholic religious orders, they sometimes take on a different or additional name to symbolise a new way of life. It was no different for the French teenager Thérèse Martin, who upon becoming a Carmelite nun in 1888 at age 16 adopted the name "Thérèse of the Child Jesus." Why *the Child*? Because it expressed the essence of the spiritual path she called "my little way," which was "the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute surrender"—not childishness but *childlikeness*. Be mindful of the ways of simplicity and obedience to God's call and find satisfaction with the small things and quiet work of your day.

Today's readings: Job 19:21-27; Luke 10:1-12. *"Peace to this household."*

FRIDAY: MEMORIAL OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS

2 OCTOBER 2026

Someone to watch over me

According to Catholic tradition, everyone has a personal angel guarding their bodily and spiritual well-being. "Beside each believer," said the fourth-century theologian and bishop Saint Basil, "stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading [them] to life"—and he should know, having been called the "revealer of heavenly mysteries"! Guardian angels remind

you that you are always in the presence of God and should act accordingly, and that God is also with others, whom you should treat accordingly.

Today's readings: Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Matthew 18:1-5, 10. *"Do not despise one of these little ones, for . . . their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father."*

SATURDAY OF WEEK 26

3 OCTOBER 2026

Joy to the world

It's Rosary Month. If you're not a daily bead-handler already (and especially if you are), consider spending time each October Saturday

reflecting on the mysteries that this well-loved prayer form illuminates. The Joyful Mysteries come first, drawing our attention to the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation, and Finding Jesus in the Temple. When has new life been announced to you? When has sharing good news doubled your joy? How does Christ come into the world through you? How do you present your best gifts in service to God? How do you "find" faith again when it's been lost? Pray the Joyful Mysteries to help you answer these questions.

Today's readings: Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Luke 10:17-24. *"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."*

Readings for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Is a merciful God less fair than a scrupulously just one?

Psalms 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Youth is full of errors in judgement. May God remember mercy and not our foolishness!

Philippians 2:1-11

The Crucifixion of Jesus is the ultimate injustice. Was it a mistake?

Matthew 21:28-32

Sinners get to heaven ahead of religious leaders. What is God thinking?

Words on the Word

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As long as we live, we are in the Lord's vineyard. It is everywhere.

We cannot be indifferent when children are suffering nearby;

we cannot remain indifferent when single mothers or single fathers are far too tired

and overburdened; we cannot remain indifferent when the young lose faith in God and

lose the meaning of life because they find neither understanding nor appreciation; we

cannot remain indifferent to our own discourtesy and arrogance; we cannot remain

indifferent when so many elderly or sick people are alone. At times they die alone, and

their neighbours learn of their death only after many days. This litany could be continued.

(W. Acht, Predigtvorschlag zum Caritassonntag 2017, Hildesheim, Sept. 2017)

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In the English language, we rarely say to one another, "I do not want to"; rather, we use the diplomatic phrase, "I can't." "I do not want to" is understood as a sharp refusal, one that may provoke surprise, suspicion of hostility, or suggest reluctance or ill will.

"I cannot" means that I have some reasons. It is a more polite and diplomatic form, but not always a sincere one.

In the Gospel we read about two sons whom their father asked to work in the vineyard. One answered, "I am going," but did not go; the other did not want to undertake the work, but

reflected and changed his mind.

Christ told this parable in the temple courtyard on Holy Tuesday, before everyone without exception. It was provocative, because the temple priests were among those who heard it. We are not always fully aware of how many times we have already said “yes” to God. A more conscious saying of “yes” began at First Holy Communion; then we were asked whether we were ready to live according to the faith. Later, at the time of marriage, when asked, “Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” we answered “yes.” Likewise, at your child’s baptism you answered “yes” three times: we believe in God and we desire to raise this child in the faith of the Church. Every liturgy is such a “yes” spoken to God and to His Word.

While praying the Lord’s Prayer or other prayers, we emphasize: “Thy will be done.” We are ready to fulfil God’s will, or, in biblical language: “We are ready to work in the Lord’s vineyard.” So let us ask: to which of the brothers are we more similar?

This is a special kind of work. Let us call its first form compassion, the second respect for others, the third concern especially for the lonely and the needy, and the fourth forgiveness and reconciliation. Above all, however, one must sustain hope, which enables people to live. Those small hopes, without which it is sometimes hard to await tomorrow, but also that fundamental hope of salvation. These fruits are also the reward for work in the Lord’s vineyard. Pope Francis calls us beautifully: “Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. I repeat here for the entire Church what I have often said to priests and laity in Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving” (*Evangelii gaudium*, no. 49).

The rude son underwent a process of conversion; one might say a miracle of transformation. Both the Gospel tax collector and Mary Magdalene, as well as so many known and unknown saints, experienced this miracle of conversion. Perhaps it is precisely that consciously hostile act, “I do not want to,” that later causes reflection and the question: “But why, really, do I not want to?” We dream of an angelic world, but is not the real world richer, fuller? Does it not create more opportunities to do good?

* * *

*In tender hours the heart may turn aside
From Guardian Angels, Cherubim on high,
From radiant hosts where love and light abide,
From spirits near that whisper from the sky —
To Jesus, lowly, bound to earth and pain;
No angel knows the nails, the thorny crown,
The body’s weight upon the cross’s strain,
The love that bleeds and will not lay it down.*

In Christ’s love,
Fr Anthony

God's Guide

Relations with Angels: To Be Closer to Our Guardians

Chapter 11

GETTING ON WITH IT!

GOD'S CONSTANT PRESENCE

Right now, in this very second, God is with you. He is at your right hand and at your left. He goes before you and walks behind you. He is beneath you as your foundation and above you as your protection. Even more, as you read these words, He is lovingly present within the very depths of your being.

He is doing all this without ever forcing you, without crushing your freedom. He waits. He is gentle. He knocks but never kicks the door down.

Let Him in today. Let Him shape this whole day from beginning to end. Give Him permission; say a simple, honest “yes” to everything He wants to give you — and to what He, in His wisdom, may want to take away. Remember: God is Love. Whatever He allows today, however small or hidden, is ordered towards a greater good in your life.

AND BE CONCRETE

Godly hope isn't vague optimism or “Ah well, it'll all work out somehow.” It's a firm trust in God's specific promises, especially those He speaks in Scripture and in prayer. He doesn't want lukewarmness or mediocrity for you. He desires fullness, abundance, a heart that expects much from Him.

You will receive in the measure that you dare to believe. So, review your hope. Let God enlarge it. Let Him teach you to expect more.

BECOME THE PERSON

YOU ONCE WERE

WHEN YOU USED TO PICK

FLOWERS

FOR YOUR MUM.

THEN YOU

WILL ENTER HEAVEN.

TODAY'S TASK FOR YOU: DO THIS TOO.

In the most painful and unjust moments of his life, Saint Paul chose love over resentment. When an angel loosed his chains and opened his prison cell, Paul did not flee in anger or rejoice at his captor's fear. Instead, he consoled the jailer, forgave him from the heart, and by that mercy became an instrument of the man's conversion. Grace flowed not through revenge, but through forgiveness.

Later, when Paul stood alone at his trial — abandoned even by those he had served and helped — he did not curse their cowardice. He prayed instead: “At my first defence no one took my part, but all deserted me. May it not be held against them!” (2 Tim 4:16)

The same spirit filled Saint Stephen as the stones rained down upon him. He had spoken the truth; in return he received hatred. Yet, on his knees and close to death, he prayed: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”... “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” (Acts 7:59–60)

Whom were they imitating? Our crucified Lord Himself: “Father, forgive them, for they know not

what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

So today, let us make this personal. Think of one person who has wounded you — perhaps deeply. In the quiet of your heart, pray:

“Jesus, please forgive, who wounded me, who wronged me. Please let it not be held against him/her. O God, do not count this sin against him/her, and please forgive, for he/she did not know what he/she was doing. Amen.”

If you wish, seal this intention by praying one Our Father. This is how Christ’s mercy begins to heal the heart.

GOD DOES NOT NEED
A THOUSAND PEOPLE
TO HEAL
ONE;
A SINGLE
BELIEVER
IS ENOUGH TO HEAL
A THOUSAND PEOPLE.



Around the World

The sometimes-missed news

REPORT

WHAT ABOUT DEMOCRACY

The United States is now posting its bleakest democracy scores in half a century, with 2025 marking the 11th year in a row in which democratic standards have declined in most countries, according to a report by the International IDEA organisation. Nearly half of the 30 democracy indicators for the US have dropped to their lowest level since 1975, when data collection began. These include access to justice, judicial independence, economic equality, freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

From a Catholic moral standpoint, this should worry us deeply. When courts lose independence and the press is stifled, the pursuit of truth and justice — both core moral goods — is undermined. Inequality and restricted access to justice offend the Church’s teaching on the dignity of the human person and the preferential option for the poor.

Globally, the sharpest declines have been in judicial independence and media freedom, though the holding of elections and basic parliamentary oversight still appear relatively robust. Elections alone, however, do not make a just society; without truth, transparency and respect for conscience, democracy becomes hollow.

The report's credibility is questioned, however, by its positive assessment of the UK, grouped with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Syria, while countries such as Russia, Georgia and Slovakia are rated more negatively — a reminder that such indices must themselves be examined critically and ethically.

READING

THEY PAY FOR READING

The authorities in Singapore have launched a five-year campaign to rebuild the habit of reading, offering small cash rewards to residents who log their daily reading sessions on a government website. It is a classic bit of gamification: read, earn points, get money. The scheme hopes to beat back the numbing pull of endless negative news and shallow content online.

On the surface, it is harmless, even clever. But it does raise questions Catholics cannot ignore. Is it healthy to pay people to do something that should be loved for its own sake, especially an activity as formative as reading? Virtue, in Catholic moral teaching, is about freely choosing the good, not merely chasing incentives.

Officials argue that “reading longer texts strengthens concentration, the ability to think critically and the imagination”. Melissa Tam, head of Singapore's library board, says they want “a nation of readers who are curious about the world, reflective, capable of making informed choices, and prepared for life in an increasingly complex reality”. All laudable aims, and very much in line with the Church's esteem for the life of the mind.

Still, one Singapore dollar — about 80 US cents — for 50 days of reading (only one session per day counts) subtly risks turning a noble habit into a transactional one. The deeper moral task remains the formation of hearts and minds that seek truth, not merely tokens.

AI

THEY ARE STARTING TO SLIP OUT OF CONTROL

Work on the most advanced artificial intelligence models should be paused, the Financial Times has argued. It is not alone. A growing number of observers now warn that certain AI systems are beginning to slip beyond meaningful human control — a prospect that raises not only technical questions, but grave ethical concerns about human responsibility and the sanctity of life.

Even industry leaders — Sam Altman of OpenAI, Elon Musk of xAI and Dario Amodei of Anthropic — are urging caution. When those who profit most from AI sound the alarm, we should listen. Some warn that AI “could kill us all by the end of the decade”. Whether that timeline is accurate or not, the moral point is clear: no technology may be pursued blindly if it places human life, freedom or dignity at serious risk. Catholic teaching has long insisted that science must remain at the service of the human person, never the other way round.

A corporate race is on to build self-improving systems — AI designing and training ever more powerful AI. Amodei warns that this could push systems beyond human understanding and control. From a moral perspective, that is a red line: we may not deliberately create tools whose behaviour we cannot, even in principle, govern. To do so would be an abdication of stewardship.

The Financial Times suggests that the United States, still the world's leading power, could help impose a halt on the most advanced models. Yet Washington is not even fully enforcing current safeguards. Proposals include criminal liability for executives whose systems cause serious harm — a move that accords with the basic Catholic principle that those who wield power must also bear personal responsibility.

Donald Trump rejects such constraints, arguing that America must outpace China. But a purely

nationalistic “AI arms race” ignores the moral reality that both nations are dealing with a technology that transcends borders. Beijing views AI as vital to economic and military strength. Yet Chinese firms remain heavily dependent on American research and hardware, meaning that a genuine slowdown by US companies would inevitably slow China’s progress too.

From a Catholic standpoint, neither Washington nor Beijing may morally treat AI as just another weapon in a geopolitical contest. The common good, international solidarity and the protection of the most vulnerable must come first. If advanced AI threatens those goods, then a firm, global “not yet” is not cowardice; it is prudence — and an act of justice towards future generations.

CHILDRENS ACT

COMING TO THEIR SENSES

The European Commission has unveiled the so-called “Children’s Act”, a draft regulation aimed at tightening the protection of children online. Under the proposal, children under 13 would be barred from accessing social media platforms altogether. Those aged 13–14 would be allowed only tightly controlled “mini-accounts”, created and supervised by parents, with limited functions and strict time caps. Teenagers aged 15–18 would have to be offered safer, age-appropriate versions of social media services.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared, “We set our rules, not the big technology companies.” She pointed to research showing that young people now spend between four and six hours a day in front of screens, while social media platforms are deliberately engineered to maximise attention and engagement — often at the cost of children’s mental health, privacy and even basic innocence.

From a Catholic moral perspective, there is a clear ethical tension here. Parents are the primary educators of their children and have the first responsibility for their upbringing and moral formation. Any state regulation must respect this principle of subsidiarity, supporting families rather than replacing them. Yet parents are often overwhelmed by technologies designed to bypass adult supervision and to exploit children’s vulnerabilities. In that sense, policies that restrain powerful corporations from manipulating minors can be seen as a legitimate protection of the common good.

Von der Leyen insisted that the initiative is not about whether children may access social media, but about whether and when social media may access children. That shift in language highlights an important moral point: children are not commodities, users or “data points”, but persons with a God-given dignity who need real-world time to play, to form friendships, to grow in virtue — and, yes, to make mistakes safely, away from the glare of the algorithm.

We Read Pope Leo

The future of humanity depends on the commitment of each one of us to cooperate with God and with our brothers and sisters in building a more humane world.

The perfection of the human person and the development of society should be seen as closely linked: setting them against one another or separating them would lead to a distortion of both realities. History, including recent history, clearly confirms this truth, and therefore we cannot cease to recall, after the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, that “the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person, especially since by its very nature it stands completely in need of social life” (*Gaudium et spes*, 25). From this perspective, *Gaudium et spes* states that the diversity existing among persons and nations in the world should not be seen as a danger or threat, but as an opportunity for mutual enrichment and growth. (...) We must become ever more open to the logic of reciprocity, sharing and care, just as this takes place among the individual members of the human body. (...)

This vision of humanity as a “community of persons” is a precious legacy left to us by the Second Vatican Council. It helps each of us to make personal and communal discernment, so as to evaluate responsibly contemporary social and political projects in the light of the criteria of the dignity of the human person, social justice and free participation in building the common good. For the future of humanity depends on the commitment of each one of us to cooperate with God and with our brothers and sisters in building a more humane world.

General Audience, September 16, 2026.

The Church does not exist for herself, but in order to lead every person to an encounter with the Lord. It is not enough, therefore, to ask whether a given activity is well organised, whether many people take part in it, and whether it has been carried on for many years. One must ask whether it truly leads to Christ, whether it causes the Gospel to meet the concrete lives of people.

Address to the diocesan assembly of Rome, 18 September 2026.

Taking part in sport calls for serious commitment and effort, and then for sharing the fruits of one’s perseverance through loyalty, trust, openness, team spirit and courage. You do all this, and you show its beauty in a truly remarkable way, both to those who compete and watch, and to those who know you and meet you. (...) Our world is greatly in need of people who – like you – remind everyone what the true values of life are; men and women who, by their example, show that the way of sharing and love is the only one that truly leads to happiness and peace.

Address to the delegation of Special Olympics (the organization that organizes the Paralympic Games), September 19, 2026.

God has other paths and new plans also for those who consider themselves first and think that they alone have earned who they are and deserved what they have achieved. All of us, however, gain joy, understanding and a future when the law of love interrupts the logic of calculation, the experience of mercy broadens the perspective of merit, and the gift of peace puts an end to rivalry and draws us closer to one another in gratitude. (...) Where God’s newness enters with power, there is no room for jealousy and divisions. Let us therefore seek the Lord while He lets Himself be found; let us call upon Him while He is near; let us abandon wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts.

Angelus, September 20, 2026.

In my opinion

Was Jesus a refugee?

Scripture, Refugees, and Today’s Debates

It is often claimed that “Jesus was a refugee”, and that this fact, taken alone, compels Christians to endorse every form of modern immigration. Many Catholics instinctively sense that the matter is not so straightforward, and that such reasoning is too simplistic or even misleading. Yet it is not always easy to explain why.

This difficulty points to a wider problem: how do we apply the principles of Scripture to the complex realities of the modern world? It is easy to say that we must live according to the Gospel; it is much harder to show, in concrete detail, what that actually looks like. What does loving one’s neighbour demand in particular circumstances, especially when public policy and social order are at stake?

A responsible application of biblical teaching requires two kinds of discernment.

Firstly, when we ask what a particular biblical passage “means”, we must not only look at the words themselves; we must also consider the original context. To whom were these words

addressed? What situation did they concern? How would the people of that time have understood them?

With sound biblical and historical knowledge, we can usually discern this with reasonable clarity, even if there will always be the risk of mistaken interpretations. The Church's tradition, the Fathers and the Magisterium are indispensable guides in this task.

Secondly, the next step is more precarious: we must seek to understand the world in which we live. Here we need knowledge of social, political, economic and psychological realities. Yet this is where we are most prone to illusion. Do we really see things as they are, or only as they are presented to us?

Modern perceptions are shaped by ideology, propaganda, and personal or group interests. Media narratives, partisan agendas and emotional appeals can distort our picture of reality. When this happens, conclusions supposedly based on Christian principles may in fact be quite false, since they rest on a distorted view of the facts.

In this sense, we stand on two "legs". One leg — the teaching of Scripture and the Church — rests on a relatively firm foundation. The other — our interpretation of current events — is unsteady and often subjective. This does not render moral reasoning impossible, but it does demand caution and humility.

Consequently, Christians can, in good faith, reach different prudential judgements on political and social questions, without ceasing to be faithful to the same Gospel. Yet the effort to bring faith into life is not optional. The Gospel is not a collection of interesting stories from two millennia ago; it is a living word, meant to shape personal, social and even political life.

Saint Matthew tells us that, to escape the murderous intentions of King Herod, St Joseph took Mary and the Child Jesus and fled from Bethlehem to Egypt (cf. Matthew 2:13–14, 19–23).

From Bethlehem to the frontier of Roman Egypt was not, in geographical terms, an enormous distance. Herod's small client kingdom, established by the Romans, did not extend endlessly; the border of the Roman province of Egypt could be reached on foot after hard travel. Beyond that boundary, Herod's authority simply did not apply.

Most likely, the Holy Family did not stop at the first safe village. The obvious course would have been to continue along the well-established coastal road into Egypt proper, an affluent and populous region of the empire. They may even have travelled part of the way by sea, since coastal shipping was common, relatively inexpensive and quicker than travelling entirely on foot.

In Egypt, they would have found an already significant Jewish presence. Historical sources suggest that around a million Jews lived there at various times, some settled for generations, others more recent arrivals. Although they did occasionally suffer harassment, they generally lived industriously and in relative peace. For a capable craftsman such as Joseph, finding work and blending into this community would not have been overly difficult. We know few historical details, though Coptic Christianity later wove many pious legends around their stay.

From the standpoint of the Roman world, then, the Flight into Egypt was an internal movement within one empire: a relocation from one region of Roman rule to another. It was:

- not an invasion of a foreign civilisation, but movement within a shared imperial framework;
- a family's individual flight, not a mass migration;
- motivated by immediate danger to life;
- carried out without the expectation of state benefits;

- likely supported, initially, by fellow Jews rather than by a public welfare system.

Similarities and Differences with Modern “Refugees”

There is, of course, a clear point of contact with modern refugee situations: the motive. The Holy Family fled because the Child’s life was threatened. Genuine refugees today are indeed those whose lives and safety are in real danger: war, persecution and violent oppression.

Under this heading, we can certainly speak of real refugees in our own time: for example, persecuted Christians from Syria or northern Nigeria, or many Ukrainians fleeing a bloody conflict. In such cases, the Church encourages generous assistance, within the limits of prudence and the common good of host nations.

Yet when we look at the total numbers involved in global migration, those who fit this strict definition are only a minority. Large groups come primarily in search of better economic prospects or more generous welfare provision. Many migrants from Islamic countries, for instance, are seeking a more comfortable life in Europe, often supported by social assistance; some even carry an explicit or implicit dream of cultural or religious dominance, rather than integration.

To call all such people “refugees” is, at best, imprecise and, at worst, a deliberate misuse of language. It becomes even more unjust when this imprecision is used as moral pressure: critics of uncontrolled immigration are denounced as un-Christian, and Jesus is invoked as a supposed prototype of today’s welfare-dependent migrant. This is a serious manipulation of the Gospel and a form of moral blackmail.

Another often-forgotten feature of genuine refugees is their basic orientation: they wish to return home when the danger has passed. The Holy Family did exactly that. As soon as Herod had died — this was probably only a few years after their flight — they returned to the land of Israel and settled in Nazareth in Galilee, Mary’s home region. Judea, under Herod’s son, was deemed too risky, but the goal remained their own land.

Here again, we see an essential trait of the true refugee: exile is a painful necessity, not a desired permanent state. The exiled person’s deepest longing is to return home in safety.

If, then, one insists on calling Jesus a “refugee”, honesty requires us to admit that His situation has little in common with the bulk of those now loosely given that title. Most contemporary migrants to Europe do not match the specific features of the Holy Family’s experience.

Sacred Scripture does, however, provide us with further examples of refugees, exiles and immigrants, which offer a more balanced foundation for Catholic reflection.

When the Babylonians invaded Judea in the sixth century BC, some Judeans fled to Egypt, where they were settled in underpopulated regions; many served in Pharaoh’s armies. Others joined them over time. Here we see a model in which refugees, while preserving their identity, enter the life of a host country and contribute to it.

The Old Testament also speaks frequently of “strangers” or “sojourners” in Israel. Translations use various terms — strangers, foreigners, aliens — reflecting several Hebrew words. These people, resident but not native, were to receive legal protection: “You shall have the same rule for the stranger and for the native” (Leviticus 24:22).

They were expected to respect the law of the land and, typically, were not granted their own portion of agricultural land. Yet hospitality towards them was strongly encouraged (cf. Hebrews 13:1–2). They were to be treated as neighbours (cf. Leviticus 19:33–34), because God Himself

loves them (cf. Deuteronomy 10:18–19). Along with widows, orphans and the poor, they fell under His special protection (cf. Malachi 3:5).

These commands rest on the assumption that such strangers are in need, but not hostile. Openness is especially urged towards those who seek the true God (cf. 1 Kings 8:41–43). Still, Scripture is not naïve. The same Hebrew terms (**nokri, zar, ger**) can also denote dangerous foreigners. The wisdom literature warns: “Give not to the ungodly, for he will repay evil double for good” (Sirach 12:5).

We also find a parallel in the experience of deportation and exile. The Assyrian and Babylonian empires forcibly resettled Israelites in Mesopotamia, assigning them places to live far from home. Despite being uprooted and ruled by foreign powers, they tried to live ordinary lives. Through Jeremiah and Baruch, God instructed them to seek the good of the cities where they dwelt and to pray for their rulers (cf. Jeremiah 29:4–7). Yet the spiritual heart of Israel remained fixed on one hope: a return to the promised land, to Jerusalem. That return was not merely a preference; it was perceived as a fundamental right.

The biblical record, read within the Church’s tradition, urges us towards a balanced and fair approach. On the one hand, the Christian must not harden his heart against genuine refugees and honest immigrants in need, especially those who share our faith or sincerely respect our culture and laws. On the other hand, charity does not require blindness. The Gospel does not command nations to dismantle their own common good, nor does it sanctify manipulation, ideological abuse of Scripture or uncontrolled demographic upheaval.

To read the story of the Flight into Egypt as a blanket endorsement of all contemporary migration policies is to do violence both to the text itself and to reason. The Gospel calls us to charity and justice; it does not relieve us of the duty to exercise prudent judgement in complex matters of public life.

Prayer



Please remember to pray for those who are unwell, in need, or have requested our prayers: Jim Irvine, Anne Smith, Richard Fox, Cecil Finn, Andrew McLaughlin, Claire Wiggins, Russell Carroll, Lucy Cunningham, Lilian Cox, Sarah Carmichael, and Doleen Durnin.

Please keep in your prayers James Carroll (Jimmy) (1965) **and all whose anniversaries occur 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!



Sunday 11th October at 6pm we celebrate the 800th anniversary of Saint Francis of Assisi's birth into heaven in words and song.

Readers for texts and to sing if willing, will be very much appreciated, so as to make this a worthy celebration of the gift of Saint Francis to us. Contact Lesley: lyoneda13@gmail.com



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