



# Galloway Diocese NEWS

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*St Ninian Edition, September 2025*

## Diocesan Pilgrimage to Whithorn 2025



Pilgrims from across the diocese gathered in Whithorn on the last Sunday in August for the annual pilgrimage in honour of St Ninian. Although warnings of 50 mph winds made Mass on the beach impossible the faithful packed into the beautiful church of St Martin and St Ninian for each of two Masses celebrated by Bishop Frank.

Young people of the diocese made their own pilgrimage to carry the Jubilee Cross from the Cathedral to the site of Mass. Photos of the young people are on page 10.



# Bishop Frank writes

## ... and looks back on a memorable summer, at home and abroad



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the time of writing, I have just returned from a lovely visit to the south of the diocese with Father Philip Kitchen. He was keen to take me to visit



the Kirkmadrine Stones, the ancient stones from the 5th century that likely mark the place where two of the early Bishops of Galloway were buried. This was a powerful and quite moving experience, not least because one of the stones has the exact image of the cross that we use on the Diocesan coat of arms today. From there we visited the Isle of Whithorn and the ruined church that would have welcomed so many pilgrims on their way to Whithorn itself.

This did not just put me in touch with our past story but also made me think of being with many of you at Whithorn a few weeks later. By the time you read this, I truly hope the weather has been kinder than last year! I also reflected on the fact that Father Kevin Rennie plans to bring some of our young people to Whithorn this year, and I have invited them to carry our Jubilee Cross from the Cathedral to the site of Mass on the beach. What a wonderful way to keep alive the Church's long tradition of pilgrimage.

As I look back on the last few months, I give thanks for a few things:

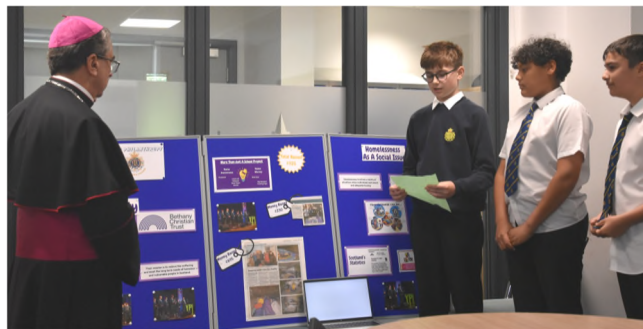
On 22nd June in St Mary's, Irvine, I celebrated the



Candidacy of Peter Sharp on his journey to the Diaconate. This is an important moment where he is formally accepted as a candidate by me

and it was a pleasure to do so with his family and fellow parishioners. I am grateful for his generosity in offering himself for this. Some of you have deacons working in your own parishes and you will know and value their ministry. I wonder if any other men might want to reflect on whether they have such a vocation.

In the same month, we welcomed Archbishop Buendia, the Papal Nuncio to the 'diocese. He visited all four deaneries, and we had some lovely celebrations in our schools and parishes and with members of other churches and representatives of local civic life. It was a



great opportunity to remind ourselves that we are part of the Universal Church and to be able to receive Pope Leo's delegate to our corner of it. Archbishop Buendia, (pictured during his visit to St Joseph's College, Dumfries), spoke highly of his visit and left us greatly uplifted by what he saw. Happily, he did not understand the reference I made to this feeling like an HMI visit to a school! I am grateful to all who helped make this such a success.

In July, I joined many of you on our pilgrimage to Lourdes. What an uplifting pilgrimage it was, and it was great to be joined by so many pilgrims, including some wonderful young people. As with our own holy places in Galloway, in Lourdes it is not hard to feel close to the Lord with his Blessed Mother, and to each other. As well as God's grace, that was down to the hard work, commitment and care of so many people and I thank God for that. The dates are already out for 2027. Maybe you could give it a try.

And one last thing that wasn't a source of joy but maybe one of hope was the Mass we celebrated in August asking the intercession of Our Lady of Palestine for peace. Principally, this was brought on by the awful pictures we have watched of the situation in the Holy Land, but we also remembered that there are so many places riven by war. We have to agree with Pope Francis and then Pope Leo that war itself is a defeat. And while we can feel so helpless in the face of it, we can offer prayer and solidarity to our brothers and sisters. That may feel inadequate, but we must never tire of presenting the suffering of the innocent to Our Lord and to the intercession of Our Lady. I was heartened to see so many join us for Mass in the Cathedral in person and online. At the end of this reflection, brothers and sisters, let these be the most important words we say:

Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Pray for us

I thank God regularly for your faith and your witness and I ask you to please pray for me.

+Francis Dougan



September is a month well endowed with Feasts and Memorials. These include St Gregory the Great, St Jerome, St Matthew and St Vincent de Paul. The month also contains several important Marian Feasts and is dedicated to Our Lady Of Sorrows, with the feast day celebrated on September 15th. The feast is a memorial of the seven sorrows Mary experienced during her life as the mother of Jesus, especially during his passion and death. The seven sorrows include the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of the child Jesus for three days in the temple, meeting Jesus carrying his cross, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, receiving the body of her dead son from the cross and the burial of Jesus. Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows arises from understanding that Mary has walked the path of sorrow before us. She understands our suffering from the depth of her own experience. She is our mother and her motherly love is like a gentle balm to our wounded hearts. And she wants to fill pained hearts with hope in her son.



I often feel that the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows commemorates the deep union of heart and love that existed between Mary and her beloved son, and as a result, she experienced many internal sorrows during his passion and death. The title "Our Lady of Sorrows" acknowledges the pain Mary suffered on occasions, both during her son's early years and the cruel rejection by so many of his public life; she shared so much of his hurt and humiliation. All this before the Cross. I think that it is extremely appropriate that her feast follows immediately after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, since she played such an important part in God's plan of salvation and suffered so many of her son's final agonies.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross refers to the feast day when we commemorate the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. The Feast also celebrates the finding of the true cross by St Helena, its return to Jerusalem, and the dedication by her son, Emperor Constantine, of Churches built on the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary.



Although the historical events are important, the cross is a powerful reminder to us of God's boundless love and the ultimate sacrifice made for our salvation. The Feast encourages us to allow the power of the cross to transform their lives, embrace suffering and find meaning in their own crosses, uniting them with Mary's suffering and Christ's sacrifice. There are references to the Exaltation of the Cross in Jerusalem as early as the middle of the 6th century. In 787 the Second council of Nicaea drew the distinction between veneration of the cross and worship which "belongs to the Divine nature alone."

The Season of Creation in the Catholic Church 2025 runs from 1st September to 4th October (feast of St Francis of Assisi). The 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' occurred earlier this year in May. This year's theme is "Peace with Creation" inspired by Isaiah 32: 14-18. The prophet pictures the desolated Creation without peace because of the lack of justice and broken relationship between God and man. The description of devastated cities and wastelands makes the point that human destructive behaviour has a negative impact on the earth. We hope creation will be at peace when justice is restored. This ties in nicely with the Jubilee and Pilgrims of Hope. I think this has become an urgent issue. Particularly when we see the dramatic climate changes, in southern England. Three heatwaves in one summer and serious concerns about feeding livestock

I am sure that Jesus, Mary and Creation are closely entwined. "To Jesus through Mary" is a long standing devotion that emphasises the belief that the best way to grow closer to Jesus is through devotion to his mother, Mary. This concept is rooted in the understanding that Mary, as the mother of Jesus plays a unique and powerful role in God's plan of salvation. By entrusting ourselves to the maternal care and guidance of Mary we hope to be led more effectively to her son, Jesus,

### Galloway Diocese News

*Deadline for the Christmas edition  
21st November 2025*

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# Pilgrims of Hope

## Catholic Teachers' Journey to Rome

*This summer, primary teacher Amélie Davidson and Louise Girvan, a secondary School music teacher, had the tremendous honour of representing the Diocese of Galloway, on a pilgrimage to Rome as part of the Jubilee Year of Hope with the Scottish Catholic Education Service. Catholic teachers from across the UK came together for this special occasion, travelling as pilgrims to the heart of our Church to renew their vocation, deepen their faith, and find strength and unity in the mission that they all share.*

### Amélie tells the story ...

**I**t was a true privilege to take part in such a spiritually rich experience – one which will stay with me for the rest of my life. We were blessed to stay at the Pontifical Irish College, a peaceful and historic seminary in the centre of Rome, which offered a prayerful home for the week and a chance to reflect away from the bustle of the city.

From the moment we arrived, we knew this would be a pilgrimage in every sense. Our days were full, our feet were sore, but our hearts were overflowing. The itinerary was thoughtfully packed with opportunities to pray, to learn, and to walk in the footsteps of the saints.

A key part of the pilgrimage was passing through the Four Holy Doors, opened only during a Jubilee year and which symbolise the opening of God's mercy to all. As we stepped through each door, we



carried the prayers of our school communities and paused to reflect on the journeys we have taken – not only to Rome, but throughout our lives as educators and disciples.

Each basilica had its own unique atmosphere. St Peter's, with its breathtaking scale and grandeur, was alive with pilgrims from around the world. At St Paul Outside the Walls, we prayed before the tomb of St Paul, reflecting on what it means to be modern-day missionaries. In St John Lateran, the Pope's cathedral as Bishop of Rome, we felt closely connected to the universal Church. And in St Mary Major, we were struck by the sense of ancient beauty and maternal peace.

One of the most deeply moving moments of the week was our private audience with Pope Leo XIV. We gathered in the Apostolic Palace, filled with reverence



and anticipation. There was a mix of nerves and excitement. What would we say? What would we do? Would we find the right words?

But when the Holy Father entered the room, there was a quiet stillness. His presence was humble, yet deeply powerful. He addressed us with warmth, humility, and encouragement.

The Holy Father then shared these words with us – words that have stayed with me ever since:

"[Young people] will look up to you as models: models in life, models of faith. They'll look to you particularly as to how you teach and how you live. I hope that, each day, you will nurture your relationship with Christ, who gives us the pattern of all authentic teaching, so that, in turn, you may guide and encourage those entrusted to your care to follow Christ in their own lives."

I had the joy of presenting the Pope with handmade cards from the children of St Ninian's Primary in Prestwick, filled with colourful artwork and heartfelt prayers. Louise brought a family crucifix, which Pope Leo blessed. It was a humbling and unforgettable experience.

**B**eyond the audience with the Holy Father, our itinerary was rich with spiritual and cultural experiences. We visited the Vatican Museums and Gardens, where centuries of art, faith, and history are preserved. Walking through the Sistine Chapel, under Michelangelo's depiction of creation, was an awe-inspiring moment of silence and wonder.



A highlight for both of us was visiting the tomb of Blessed Carlo Acutis. This modern-day teenager and digital missionary continues to inspire young Catholics around the world with his devotion to the Eucharist and his joyful witness of faith. Standing before his tomb, we offered prayers for our pupils – especially those searching for meaning, belonging, and hope in an increasingly digital world.

We also travelled outside Rome to visit Assisi, the home of St Francis and St Clare. There was something uniquely peaceful about Assisi – from the hills overlooking the countryside to the gentle spirit that lingers in the streets and churches. Praying at the tombs of these beloved saints reminded us of the power of humility, simplicity, and joy. Their lives continue to guide and inspire Catholic educators today. Another powerful moment was our visit to Pompeii, where we explored the ancient ruins before gathering for prayer at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Rosary. This holy site, built near the remains of a once-thriving city, reminded us that faith endures through every season of history – and that Mary, Mother of Hope, walks with us still.

Throughout the week, we were privileged to attend Masses led by Archbishop William Nolan, whose gentle leadership and pastoral presence added great depth to our journey. His words at each liturgy invited us to draw closer to God, to renew our sense of purpose as Catholic teachers, and to live our vocation with hope and humility.



We were also blessed with opportunities for community and friendship. Teachers from Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland quickly bonded through shared stories, laughter, late-night conversations over gelato, and moments of quiet prayer.

We came from different countries, but we shared the same mission.

This Jubilee Year of Hope calls us all to move forward with confidence – not because the journey is easy, but because we do not walk alone. This pilgrimage helped me to rediscover the joy of my vocation, the strength found in shared faith, and the quiet power of saying “yes” to God’s call.

I return to my school community renewed, uplifted, and filled with gratitude. The words of Pope Leo, the witness of saints, the beauty of our Church – all of it has deepened my sense of purpose. I walk forward now as a pilgrim of hope, and I pray that through every lesson, every smile, and every moment of listening, I can pass that hope on to the young people in my care.



## And Louise adds ...

We were privileged to be invited to a private audience with Pope Leo XIV at the Apostolic Palace, where we were honoured to greet him personally. He received various gifts from Scotland, including whisky and a SCIAF Real Gift of clean water for a village. A particularly special moment for me was presenting him with a Diocese of Galloway Youth Office pin badge.

We spent a week in Rome, passing through all four Holy Doors opened for this Jubilee Year and visiting Palazzola, Castel Gandolfo, Montecassiano, and Assisi.



It was a week filled with hope, joy, and spiritual growth. This pilgrimage was more than a journey through sacred sites — it was a reminder of the deep connections between faith, education, and community. Sharing this experience with fellow Catholic teachers I return with renewed sense of vocation and hope, inspired to continue working with our young people as they grown in faith.

On Wednesday, 11th June 2025 the Saint Paul VI Prayer Group's Annual talk on Pro-Life Issues was given by Father Jim Hayes, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Matthews, Kilmarnock.

Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights (enacted into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998) provided that *"Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law"*, means that this civil law reflected our belief as Catholics that all human life is a gift from God.

Father Hayes noticed confusion in the scientific world as to when exactly human life might begin. He observed that upon conception, each human life had its own unique DNA and all it needed to develop into a fully grown human person; this was not *potential human life*, but rather, *human life with potential*.

In 2022, there were 18,710 abortions in Scotland: around 50% involved single females and two thirds were a subsequent abortion. 77% were from the areas of lowest income and with the associated traumas suffered. The so-called abortion clinic "safe access zones" mean that an individual can be arrested, charged and convicted for praying within a certain distance of an abortion clinic in Scotland. Father Hayes pointed out that the truth of the unborn baby's life was fully recognised in criminal law; the killing/murder of a pregnant woman is considered to result in the loss of two lives.

Attendees were very appreciative of Father Hayes' warm and inspiring words. Donations totalling £40 were raised and donated to further the work of Pro-life charity, SPUC Scotland in Glasgow.



## *The Jubilee Family Weekend of Hope*

*by Gordon Mitchell, St Quivox parishioner and retreat organiser*

A group of families and friends from St Quivox church, Our Lady and St Meddan's church and St Ninian's primary school returned from an unforgettable retreat. The Jubilee Family Weekend of Hope was held at the Abernethy Trust, Christian Outdoor Adventure Centre in Abernethy in June.

Set against the stunning backdrop of the Cairngorm Mountains the weekend offered the perfect blend of outdoor excitement, faith sharing and friendship. From the moment they arrived, the families threw themselves into the experience. Whether it was soaring through the trees on the zipline, testing their teamwork on Jacob's Ladder, or balancing on a stack of crates while harnessed, laughter and encouragement echoed throughout the centre. Gorge walking provided a refreshing thrill, while canoeing on the pond brought moments of peaceful paddling and shared joy. Swimming sessions in the centre pool and gentle walks around the area offered just as much enjoyment.

What made the weekend especially meaningful was the spirit of togetherness — not just in the challenges overcome, but in the moments of quiet reflection and prayer. A highlight for many was the beautiful outdoor Mass, celebrated by Father Stephen Latham in the Tipi on the lawn. With the birdsong above and the mountains behind, the celebration of faith felt deeply rooted in creation and community.

From toddlers to teenagers, parents to grandparents, everyone found something to love and someone to connect with. New friendships were forged, old ones deepened, and families left with hearts full of gratitude. Thanks to Sam, the chief instructor, and his amazing team who on hand to provide expert guidance and instruction. Hannah and Ollie who entertained the kids with the Cairngorms as the backdrop, while Father Latham led the adults in a short reflection about finding God in creation.

One participant summed it up perfectly: "It was the best family weekend we've ever had. We came home tired but buzzing. We can't wait for the next retreat."

Plans are already underway for next year's trip, with families eager to return to Abernethy to relive the joy, adventure, and faith-filled moments that made this weekend truly special.

Scan the QR code to watch the video from the weekend.





## Age of Confirmation. Bishop Frank wants your help

Over the autumn months, I am going to ask you a question about the age of Confirmation. At present, it is usually celebrated in P4 before First Holy Communion, and I am asking if this should continue to be the case. Materials will be prepared that will be distributed in parishes and schools to be used to pray and reflect over this.

I invite you to engage with this as it is an opportunity for us to synodal. Synodality is simply about walking together with the Lord. It means that I will be asking you to help me to discern what the Holy Spirit wants of us in this 'diocese.

Look out for this in September.



## Confirmation at Our Lady Star of the Sea, Saltcoats and St John's, Steventon

This photograph arrived too late for the last edition we – are pleased to include it now.



## St Joseph's Deanery Pilgrimage to the Birnie By Margaret McGrath

On Sunday 17th August on a glorious summer day, some 80 pilgrims from across the deanery and beyond, made their way to a small site known as the Birnie, just outside Auchinleck.

Looking at the site now it is hard to believe that until the 1960s there was a church, convent and a school here to cater for the educational and spiritual needs of a large Catholic community. However as the local industry closed, the community dwindled and eventually a new church, Our Lady and St Patrick was built in Auchinleck. Indeed, the only visible sign remaining is a beautiful Celtic cross, erected in the field opposite, as a memorial to one of the nuns who was fatally injured by a train in 1888.

Our pilgrim Mass was celebrated by Father Stephen McGrattan with an excellent homily by Father Philip Kitchen who outlined the history and significance of the Birnie. We were also privileged to be able to use the candlesticks and cross from the original Birnie church which have been lovingly saved by former parishioners, several of whom were also present. There was a display of photographs which reminded everyone of just what a thriving Catholic community used to live and work there.

After Mass we gathered there in the church hall where the ladies of the parish had laid out an excellent buffet. It was also a chance for those who had attended the Birnie school to share their memories, including one gentleman who remembered the boys rushing out of school at the end of the day to jump on board the guard's van of the train to save themselves a walk home. No health and safety then!

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this pilgrimage so successful.



## A success story from the Ababa Project by Beatrice Gardner

St Teresa's Parish Mission, The Ababa Project, celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, is absolutely thrilled that the TEACH Programme has produced its first graduates. Amina and Fitsum, both from Adama/Nazret have been amongst the beneficiaries since their primary school days. It is an enormous achievement for both, coming from very poor backgrounds, Amina has graduated in Law and Fitsum is a Bachelor of Commerce.

Amina sent a beautiful letter of thanks addressed to "Dear My Beloved Supporter". She goes on to say; "As I sit down to write this letter, I find myself overwhelmed with emotion. It's hard to find the right words to express the depth of my gratitude but I will try, with all my heart, from the bottom of my heart, thank you. You made a difference. You are the reason I made it. With endless gratitude and love."







## Galloway Lourdes Pilgrimage 2025

*Pilgrimage director, Father Gerald Donnelly, reflects on an activity packed, prayerful and successful pilgrimage*

Once again, on the 7th July, clergy, assisted pilgrims, Youth for Lourdes and many pilgrims, from all across the diocese gathered at Prestwick Airport for our Pilgrimage to Lourdes. All pilgrimages are special but this one was in a Holy Year when we are called to be Pilgrims of Hope and it was also the first to be led by Bishop Frank. Our aircraft was shared with the Diocese of Dunkeld with whom we shared much in the week, themselves being led by their new Bishop, Andrew

McKenzie. Our week in Lourdes featured all the activities and devotions that you would expect; Masses, afternoon and evening processions, devotions, rosaries, Stations of the Cross, celebration of the Sacraments, Eucharist, Penance and the Sacrament of the Sick.

On the Wednesday we participated in the International Mass where everyone on Pilgrimage in Lourdes that week celebrates Mass together in many languages and cultures. It displays the variety and also the universality and Catholicity of the Church. Mass on Friday was particularly poignant as we joined with Dunkeld to worship as two Scottish Diocese and also to remember Father Martin Chambers, priest of Galloway and Bishop elect of Dunkeld. We were to join with Dunkeld the next day too with our Mass at the Grotto, together with the Diocese of Down and Connor from Ireland.



Another highlight was the Marian torchlight procession on Friday, which was led by Galloway pilgrim Michael McHugh and which ended with a beautiful rendition of Highland Cathedral on the bagpipes – against a spectacular sunset.

Away from the formal programme, there was still time for socialising and recreation with a games night and our farewell concert. Time also for private prayer, going to the baths or to revisit places that are particularly special and meaningful within the Grotto domain.

Time too for souvenir shopping and relaxing with new friends and old. over the town.



Every pilgrimage is the fruit of two years preparation and special thanks goes to the Committee of the Lourdes Hospitalité, the Hospitaliers, Youth for Lourdes and their leadership team and Father Jim and all who contributed to a great week. Already thinking about 2027!







## Lourdes 2025 a volunteer's experience

**M**ari Biondi of the Safeguarding Operational Team shares her experiences of her third trip to Lourdes.

We met up with some of the youth on our first visit ten years ago and how special it was to meet up with them again as adult helpers. The people you meet in Lourdes become friends so quickly and that friendship stays with you forever. It truly is a remarkable place; there is always someone there to share in the laughter but also to support you when the tears flow too.

When you look around the sanctuary, Corinthians 13 comes to mind:

**Faith:** So many, many people all there for the same reason from all of the corners of the world.

**Hope:** In the year of hope, the youth give us hope for the future, hope in abundance.

**Love:** The atmosphere is peaceful but there is love all around, Lourdes is more a feeling than a place.

If you ask me where Lourdes is, well it's in my heart.



Diocese of Galloway Youth for Lourdes July 2025





# Galloway Youth comes to Whithorn

As part of this year's National Whithorn Pilgrimage the Diocesan Youth Office led a group of almost 40 young people from across the diocese to Whithorn as part of their own Youth Pilgrimage. The group spent the morning in Our Lady & St Ninian's Church in Newton Stewart before joining the diocese for Mass in the town where 19 of the youth assisted with serving, reading, and the offertory. The youth also presented the Jubilee Cross to Bishop Frank which they had brought from the Cathedral as part of the Jubilee celebrations. After Mass they heard a talk from Father Stephen Latham in the ruins of the Whithorn Priory about St Ninian: his ministry and what we can learn from him.





## *Come Close, See Far and Live with Hope*

BY Helen-Marie Bradley



Sometimes living in the Machars and the Rhins can feel as if it is a very long way from train stations, airports, theatres ...

There is no simple, straightforward way to get to Glasgow or Edinburgh, you have to drive winding and twisting roads for miles before you hit that wonder of modern engineering - a motorway (there are certainly very few dual carriage ways down here). And yet, we live in one of the most stunningly beautiful areas of Scotland. Many areas are rugged and unspoilt. And it is our privilege to be inheritors of the title 'The Cradle of Christianity in Scotland', all due to the mission of an elusive Bishop who we know as St Ninian.

One of the logos of the Whithorn Trust is 'Come Close, See Far'

Maybe that is what we should all do. Yes, come on the national pilgrimage, if you are able to. But what may be more important to Bishop Ninian is that his mission was to preach the Good News to the Picts, to bring them nearer to Christ. His travels tell us that, like the early friends of Jesus, they needed vision to 'See Far', to travel far and to retreat into a cave - whether real or metaphorical - to get closer, to contemplate the message that was given to them, to proclaim to all people the Good News.

## **Whithorn 2025**

High winds might have prevented celebrating Mass in the beach for a second year running but the willing workers from the 91st Ayrshire Scouts were still on hand to help and support the pilgrimage in any way they could. However, their first task was to prevent the tent used to shelter the altar from taking off and landing in Canada!

***Thank you for everything you do.***



### ***Interested in Desk Top Publishing? Want to help the diocese?***

*After compiling the magazine for 12 years, 50 editions (and three bishops), Mary has decided to hang up her keyboard and hand over to someone new. Could this be you?*

**The** Galloway Diocese News is looking for a new member of the editorial team with responsibility for the compilation and layout of the magazine. It is produced four times a year and is professionally printed. At present we use Microsoft 365, Outlook, Word and Publisher.

As part of the team, you will:

- Attend editorial meetings, usually on-line via MS Teams
- Liaise with parishes and individuals to receive and collate the articles and contributions for the magazine, usually by email
- Source and edit illustrations and photographs where required
- Lay out and publish the magazine on computer
- Proof-read in collaboration with the editorial group
- Submit the files to the printer as PDF.

You need good all-round IT skills and experience in layout, photographic reproduction, and desktop publishing. A good command of written English, a flair for document layout, and an eye for detail are essential.

This is a voluntary position and might be of particular interest to a recently retired person who would like to keep up their computer skills and is willing to use their talents in the service of the diocese.

If you are interested in this position or would like further information, please contact Mary on [gdnews@gallowaydiocese.org.uk](mailto:gdnews@gallowaydiocese.org.uk). Include your phone number so that we can have a chat.

***Thank you,***







RC Diocese of Galloway

# Youth Office

Gather · Pray · Discuss · Socialise

The Diocesan Youth Office team has been very busy since the last edition was published. We've been delighted with the response we received to the appeal for new adult leaders, with 15 coming forward to help facilitate and supervise youth events – this means that following the summer, we will be launching our monthly Youth Evenings in St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr, on the 28th September, and in St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan, on the 26th October. Thank you to everyone who has responded with such generosity of spirit – we now have 28 adults involved in facilitating youth events across the diocese.

We've had two very enjoyable Diocesan Youth & Young Adults events over the summer. For the BBQ we welcomed over twenty young adults from across the diocese for a fun and relaxing evening, which was also a great opportunity to get to know each other better. Following the BBQ, we're working to set up a social committee to organise even more social events. We had a very successful Summer Youth Day with 26 attending and spending the day growing in faith and friendship whilst reflecting on the theme of Hope and bringing Christ's hope to others through our lives.

In the coming months we've got a great selection of events coming up, and we're particularly excited about our Advent Youth Retreat from the 29th - 30th November at Gowanbank, just outside of Darvel – places are already starting to fill up, so if you're interested, sign up soon!

Read on to hear all about what's been happening from some of our Youth and Young Adults themselves.

## ~ Preparing for the Camino de Santiago ~

by Devlin McCloskey, Young Adult (North)

*From the 12th-19th October, a group of 11 Young Adults from across the Diocese, accompanied by Father Kevin Rennie, Father Stephen McGrattan, and Margaret McGrath, will walk the final 112km of the Camino de Santiago from Sarria to Santiago. They'll walk the distance over a five-day period, before spending two days in Santiago. Devlin McCloskey is one of the Young Adults taking part and here reflects on the preparations so far.*

Young Adults from across the diocese have spent the past year in active and prayerful preparation for our upcoming pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. This journey is not only a physical challenge but a spiritual one as well, and we have been working hard to ready ourselves in body, mind, and spirit.

Our preparations began on Palm Sunday, when we undertook our first practice walk from St Joseph's Church in Kilmarnock to Irvine. This walk served as a test of our stamina and an opportunity to reflect on the significance of pilgrimage during Holy Week. It was a meaningful beginning, reminding us that each step we take is rooted in a deeper journey of faith.

In June, we followed this with a second practice walk – this time from St Joseph's to St Quivox in Prestwick. This route offered new challenges and insights, helping us to grow in community and perseverance. These walks have not only helped us physically prepare for the terrain of the Camino but have also given us the chance to connect with each other as fellow pilgrims and



deepen our sense of shared purpose.

In addition to our physical preparations, we have also been committed to fundraising to support the pilgrimage. Over the course of the year, we have hosted a series of events that brought together members of our parishes and wider communities. These included a ceilidh, a quiz night, and a race night – all of which were joyful and successful

occasions. Each event reflected the generous spirit of those around us and reminded us that this pilgrimage is supported by a much larger family of faith.

This pilgrimage to Santiago is more than a journey across miles; it is a journey of faith, friendship, and formation. As young adults, we are grateful for the opportunity to take part in this ancient tradition, to walk in the footsteps of countless pilgrims before us, and to carry with us the prayers and hopes of our diocese.

We ask for your continued prayers as we take our final steps of preparation and begin this sacred journey together.



## ~ Being a Young Adult in the Church today ~

by Martin & Catriona Hanna, Young Adults (North)

*Martin and Catriona are a married couple who live in the Kilmarnock area. Here they reflect on their experience of being young adults in the Church and the importance of having a strong community around them.*

Having moved to Kilmarnock in 2023 from Motherwell Diocese, we have really appreciated becoming part of the Young Adults group in Galloway.

In our previous parish, we had both been involved in youth activities and were keen to continue that when we moved. Joining the Young Adults group in Galloway has given us the perfect way to stay connected, grow in our faith and meet other young Catholics.

The events we've attended have been both thought-provoking and inspiring, with a wide variety of talks and reflections led by clergy and laity. Each gathering has offered something new – whether a fresh insight, a meaningful conversation or simply the chance to pause and reflect on how our faith shapes daily life. We always come away with something to carry into the week ahead.

Equally important has been the social side of the group. We've enjoyed getting to know people from across the diocese, each bringing their own experiences and perspectives. This diversity makes discussions richer and helps us see more clearly the many ways God is at work in people's lives. As a result, we have made new friends at the events, and it has been encouraging to



share faith together in such a welcoming community.

A real highlight was the summer barbecue, which combined prayer and fellowship with plenty of laughter and good food. It captured perfectly what the Young Adults group is all about – faith lived out in a spirit of joy and community.

Being part of the group has deepened our sense of belonging both in our parish and in the wider diocese. It has given us both encouragement, growth and joy. We are grateful to be part of something that strengthens our faith while also meeting new friends.

*Galloway Young Adults meets monthly on the first Sunday of each month in St Joseph's, Kilmarnock and St Teresa's, Dumfries. For a full programme of upcoming talks and social activities, check out our social media: @rcdgyouth or go to our website: [youth.rcdg.org.uk](http://youth.rcdg.org.uk).*

## ~ Summer Youth Day ~

by Magdalena Wolos, Junior Leader (East Ayrshire)

*Alongside our monthly programme of events in each cluster, the Youth Office also organises a number of events each year to bring young people from across the whole diocese together. On Saturday 9th August we held Summer Youth Day welcoming 26 young people from across the diocese. Here, Magda, one of our Junior Leaders from East Ayrshire, reflects on the day.*

The 'Summer Youth Day' was an event which was led by a group of Junior Leaders from the Youth Office and took place during the summer holidays. This was an opportunity for young people from P6 all the way to S4 to socialise, play games and deepen their knowledge and relationship with God.

During the course of the day, we had a range of



games and activities.

Before Mass, the Junior Leaders gave a short talk about Hope, as this was the theme of the event. This happens at all events,

as it enables the young people to hear about topics from a different perspective and hopefully get inspired.

Luckily, the weather was dry, enabling us to spend

the day outdoors. This event was similar to the Youth Gatherings which take place every month, however it took place from 11 am to 4 pm. The activities began with some icebreakers followed by the most popular and enjoyable games such as Steal the Wifi, Musical Chairs and Protect the President, as well as True or False, Are we there Yet? and more.

Before a barbeque, we had a big game of volleyball in which even some of the Junior Leaders took part. During lunch everybody had the opportunity to have a small break from the activities and could relax, socialise and get to know each other.

Towards the end, we had a session of Adoration and were able to promote some of the upcoming events such as the Pilgrimage in Whithorn at the end of August, and the Advent Retreat later in the year.

As we came towards the end of the day, we saw positive feedback from everybody, and their enthusiastic mindset towards future gatherings and events. It was really great seeing how not only the young people, but also adults, enjoyed themselves during this event.



## ~ Youth Evenings Schedule ~

Following the summer holidays we look forward to welcoming young people (P6-S4) back to our monthly Youth Evenings, starting back on Sunday 28th September.

### New Clusters Launching!

We're very excited to be launching our Youth Evenings in the Queen Margaret Academy Cluster (South Ayrshire) on Sunday 28th September. The evenings will take place from 5.00 – 7.00 pm in St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr and follow the same format as our established evenings in East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

If you're in P6-S4 why not come along and join us and see what all the fuss is about? It's a great opportunity to meet other young people and to spend time growing in faith and friendship. On Sunday 26th October we'll also be launching in the St Matthew's Academy Cluster (North Ayrshire). The evenings will take place in St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan from 5.00 – 7.00 pm.

We're extremely grateful to all of the new adult volunteers who've come forward in both North and South Ayrshire to enable these events to take place – twelve in all – as well as the volunteers who have joined our established teams over the summer. We're also excited to be expanding our Junior Leadership team, welcoming students from Queen Margaret Academy and St Matthew's Academy.

*In P6-S4? Come and join us and see for yourself all that's happening for Youth in your area!*

### Autumn/ Winter Young Adults Talks

Following the summer holidays our Young Adults' talks have resumed in Dumfries and Kilmarnock and continue on the first Sunday of each month. Whether you've joined us for some of our talks before or you're a first timer we'd love to welcome you along to St Teresa's, Dumfries or St Joseph's, Kilmarnock. All of these talks and social events are open to Young Adults (S5-30) throughout the diocese, regardless of whether you normally attend the host parish or not.

### Advent Retreat

Registration is now open for the Youth Office 2025 Advent Retreat. The retreat takes place at Gowanbank (just outside of Darvel) from 6 pm on Friday 28th November to 4 pm on Sunday 30th November. Over the weekend we'll have a great range of activities including tree climbing, team building, nightline, archery tag and more, as well as a range of talks reflecting on Advent and Hope, and prayer. It promises to be a fantastic weekend and a great chance for young people to take a break, slow down, and grow in friendship and faith with one and other.

The weekend costs £160, with a £60 deposit payable on registration, and is open to all young people in P7-S4. For more information and to register go to:

<https://youth.rcdg.org.uk/advent-youth-retreat/>.



## ~ Supporting Youth Ministry in the Diocese ~

The Youth Office team has been extremely busy in recent months to establish a programme of events for youth and young adults which reaches across the entire diocese, and we've been delighted with the response: from the 100+ youth who have taken part in events, from the young adults, volunteers, schools, and everyone we've been working with. Youth Ministry is a team effort in which we all have a responsibility as Catholics to seek to share our love of God, our friendship with him, with others: through our witness, and through our actions.

In the year ahead, we have over 60 scheduled events for youth and young adults. As far as possible, we endeavour to run these free of charge or for a minimal cost to ensure that our events are accessible to everyone, regardless of background or financial means.

In order to help us continue to keep our events accessible to everyone, and to establish a fund to support young people in taking part in residential pilgrimages (e.g. our Advent Retreat or Generation Hope) we're creating a new **Youth Office 200 Club**.



RC Diocese of Galloway  
**Youth Office**  
Gather · Pray · Discuss · Socialise

**JOIN OUR...  
200 CLUB**

and help support Youth and Young Adults ministry in Galloway.

**£5 per month**

**Cash Prizes to be won!**  
(20%, 10% & 2 x 5% of the Total Income)

**Register today and help support Youth Ministry in Galloway.**

Email [youth@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:youth@rcdg.org.uk) or go to: [youth.rcdg.org.uk/200-club](https://youth.rcdg.org.uk/200-club).

The Youth Office is licensed to operate a 200 Club under licence no SAC/298.  
@ youth@rcdg.org.uk · Diocese of Galloway Youth - @rcdg youth

### Youth Office 200 Club

Are you passionate about Youth and Young Adults ministry in Galloway. Would you like to support our work in ensuring that events remain free or as affordable as possible? Why not join our new Youth Office 200 Club.

For £5 per month, you will be entered into a monthly prize draw where you could win one of four prizes: 20%, 10%, or 2 x 5% of donations from that draw. For less than the cost of a cup of coffee a week you could help ensure we can continue reaching out to and sharing the Gospel message with young people across the 'diocese. Anyone at all can join, and all support is gratefully received.

How can you join? Email [youth@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:youth@rcdg.org.uk) or go to: <https://youth.rcdg.org.uk/200-club>.

*Note, the 200 Club will be drawn on the first Friday of every month. To be entered into the draw, your subscription has to have been received by the last Friday of the month – monthly, quarterly, and annual payment options are available. By law, 40% of all income from the draw is required to be paid out as prize money. The lottery is operated under licence number: SAC/298.*

### Get your 2026 Calendar Now!

It may only be September, but we're thinking about Christmas and the New Year already. And as we prepare for the New Year, we've launched our 2026 Youth Office calendar packed full of photos from our events this year. Why not get one as a gift, or one for yourself, and help support youth and Young Adults' ministry in the diocese!

We've also got a fantastic selection of Youth Office branded merchandise available to buy through our website: <https://youth.rcdg.org.uk/shop>. By buying through our website you'll be getting some great stocking fillers, whilst also supporting our work in sharing faith and love of God with youth and young adults throughout Galloway



RC Diocese of Galloway  
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**DIocese of GALLOWAY  
YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS  
2026 CALENDAR**

**YOUTH OFFICE 2026  
CALENDAR**

**£10**

**The perfect gift or the home office essential? Why not both?**

Enjoy a different photo each month above a month long A4 landscape calendar with plenty of room for adding your own appointments.

Order yours today and help support youth and young adults ministry across the Diocese.

**Go to: [youth.rcdg.org.uk/shop](https://youth.rcdg.org.uk/shop)**

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# Visit of the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, to the Diocese of Galloway

*The Papal Nuncio to Great Britain, His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, made an apostolic visit to Galloway Diocese from 24-27th June. He has now visited all of the dioceses of Scotland to experience first hand the life of the local Churches. He was accompanied by his Secretary Father Andrew Coy.*

On the afternoon of his arrival, Gordon Neil, the Executive Director of Estates and Operation for the King's Foundation, welcomed His Excellency to Dumfries House, Cumnock. As well as learning more about the connection of this residence with the Marquesses of Bute (some of whom were generous benefactors to the Catholic Church in Scotland), the Nuncio was pleased to hear about the acquisition of the House by the then Prince Charles in 2007 for the nation.

The King's Foundation has improved the house and gardens, sustaining their cultural importance, as well as making use of the estate for a range of training opportunities for young people and traditional skills and crafts thus bringing many employment opportunities to the local area. During the visit Archbishop

Later that morning, Archbishop Buendía travelled to St John Ogilvie Primary School, Bourtreehill, Irvine,



where pupils from each of the Catholic primary schools of the diocese gathered for an assembly which focussed on the work undertaken to receive the Pope



Buendía played a historic harpsichord and viewed tapestries, the renowned orrery and admired the numerous artworks and furnishings.



After the tour of Dumfries House, the Nuncio returned to Kilmarnock where he was staying, and enjoyed a short recital on the restored Harrison & Harrison (1903, 2023) pipe organ by parish organist and choirmaster Dr Raymond McCluskey.

The following day began with a visit to the Food Bank overseen by the St Vincent De Paul Conference of St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock.



Francis Awards. Thereafter, the Nuncio visited primary 3 pupils who spoke to him about Jesus as the Good Shepherd who cares for us, his sheep, singing

the hymn "My shepherd is the Lord." Archbishop Buendía enjoyed tea and cakes with the teachers and staff from other schools while the pupils went out to play.

In the afternoon, the clergy of the diocese gathered in St Margaret's Cathedral Hall to share a meal with His Excellency who then addressed the clergy, speaking about the newly elected Pope Leo XIV and the late Pope Francis. A question and answer session followed which the clergy found helpful and informative.







**F**ollowing the meal, the Nuncio celebrated Mass in the Cathedral with the faithful of the diocese accompanied by the diocesan choir. He was photographed with the clergy and altar servers.

**T**he final full day of the visit began with a journey south from Kilmarnock to Dumfries to celebrate Mass with pupils, staff and invited guests in the St Joseph's College chapel, in the school's 150th anniversary year. Archbishop Buendía was greeted by the head teacher, Bernie Jones at the main entrance to the College. The music of the Mass was accompanied by the choir and instrumentalists from St Joseph's. The Nuncio and the invited guests were led by a piper to the main building where pupils addressed him about their work with homelessness and environmental projects, their study and witness to Marist values, and the Pope Benedict Faith Awards. The Junior Leaders from the secondary schools gathered with the Nuncio for a very informative question and answer session at the end of the day.







Members of the Parish and Deanery Pastoral Councils gathered in St Joseph's Church Hall, Kilmarnock, where the Nuncio addressed them and hosted a question and answer session about their work and the life of the Church. This gathering was followed by a beautiful celebration of Sung Evening Prayer in St Joseph's Church, facilitated by the parish choir and musicians, in the presence of ecumenical and civic guests and members of the local business community, as well as faithful from across the diocese.



Before returning to the Apostolic Nunciature in London on Friday morning, His Excellency celebrated Mass on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in St Joseph's, Kilmarnock. Breaking the journey to the airport, the former Provost of East Ayrshire kindly hosted His Excellency at Dean Castle for a short viewing of the exhibition of historical musical instruments.

Bishop Frank is grateful to Archbishop Buendía and Father Andrew Coy for their presence among the faithful of Galloway Diocese and for bringing with them the closeness and blessing of the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV.



Archbishop Buendía concluded the final public act of his apostolic visit by addressing the congregation: "I am very pleased to be here with you in this beautiful church dedicated to St Joseph, a house of prayer for the Catholic community of Kilmarnock since 1847. I bring to all of you the greetings and blessings of Pope Leo who desires to be close to you through my person.

"During this pastoral and apostolic visit to the Diocese of Galloway, I have had the opportunity to visit all four points of the compass of this ancient Christian see established by the saintly bishop, Ninian, in 397. I have witnessed personally, in this local Church, the meaning and the hope that Christian faith brings to parish and school communities, to the faithful and to the priests, deacons and religious of the diocese. And for this I give thanks to God.

"Among this congregation this evening are the members of the Parish Pastoral Councils and Deanery Pastoral Councils who collaborate with their priests, in a particular way, to fulfil the mission of sharing the Gospel and drawing people more deeply to life in Christ. I give thanks to God for the gift of faith he has poured into your hearts and for your generous response of service to the local Church.

"I extend a particular word of welcome to our brothers and sisters from the Christian churches in and around Kilmarnock, and to their leaders who are present. In his first words to the city and to the world, Pope Leo XIV spoke of the importance of "building bridges". I would like to thank you because the bridges

connecting the Christian communities not only in this town, but across the diocese are substantial.

"The presence this evening of members of local and national government, and of the business community seeking to build positive social change, is testimony to the value of dialogue and relationship between the Church and the wider community to respect and celebrate the profound dignity of human life.

"To the 91st Ayrshire Scouts and the young people in our midst, you are the promise of hope for so many of us. The world looks to you because we need you, we want you to come together to share with us in the common mission, as Church and in society, of announcing a message of true hope and of promoting peace and harmony among all peoples.

"Our Evening Prayer celebrates the first Vespers of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jesus our brother, our Lord and Saviour, whose heart burns ardently with love, with love for us. When we enter into the depths of our own hearts, we always find a deep desire: we long for happiness. This search of our heart ends when we discover God's Heart. We can say that In Jesus Christ, God has met us as human beings and has loved us with a "divine-human heart", the very Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"My prayer for all of you is that by your acts of loving service within a community of communities, you may be drawn to a fuller and deeper understanding of the true meaning of the love demonstrated by Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve. Amen."





# Whithorn's Northumbrian Church c. 700-780 AD

By Julia Muir Watt, Chief Executive of the Whithorn Trust

The period when Whithorn was occupied by Anglo-Saxon speakers and became part of the kingdom of Northumbria, from the late 600s, is of extreme importance for the development of the monastery. It is the time when Whithorn acquired its name – Hwitan-Aerne – the Anglo-Saxon translation of “Candida Casa”. This is the moment when Whithorn enters the history books, with the description by the Venerable Bede in 731 AD of throngs of pilgrims seeking miracles from a saint he named “Nynia”.

Archaeologically, this is the first church uncovered on



the Whithorn site, on the Glebe Field which is now the heart of the Whithorn Trust visitor experience, though it is by no means the first religious building

we think existed here: under the direction of Peter Hill, in the late 1980s, the footings of a timber minster were found, complete with stones from an altar, and, adjacent, a clay-built burial chapel, with the very first stained glass known in Scotland. Below the church were signs of pre-existing features, including possible shrines, whose presence indicated continuity of ritual activity from the fifth or sixth century and which the building of the timber church was designed to respect and protect. Around the minster, which was downslope from what was probably the major church of Whithorn on the crown of the hill, were burials indicating graves of monks and clergy, bearing out the words of Bede, that a great church and monastery was thriving here at this time.

Archaeologists studied the development of the buildings, showing that the church as it stood in around 780 AD was in fact composed of several stages: small oratories were eventually fused into a much bigger church, with the adjacent clay chapel which contained important burials.

The Whithorn Trust has not only been continuing to test the archaeological materials of this period, but has been linking the past architecture of these buildings with



contemporary skills – and particularly the skills of young people. The Whithorn ReBuild project involves both trainees in employment, learning heritage skills which are being rapidly lost,

and young people from the Douglas Ewart High School, who are interested in learning practical skills such as joinery and masonry. Now, the project has received two-year funding to build a mediaeval carpenter's workshop, of the sort that craftsmen of the Middle Ages would have built in the grounds of a large church, while it was under construction.

During its construction, young people will achieve certificated learning in joinery as they work with architects and craftsmen to build the all-timber structure, using original tools which they will be taught to create. The mediaeval craftsman's kit comprised axes and adzes, drawknives – for shaving and smoothing wood, pulled toward the body; chisels – in different sizes, struck with a mallet for mortises, carving, and finer shaping; augers and gimlets – early forms of drills, with spiral or spoon bits for boring holes. The production of such tools will require an intensive introduction to blacksmithing for young people, working out of their recently restored “Ben's Forge”, a smiddy belonging to the much-loved Ben Wilma, (*pictured below*) a craft blacksmith who came from war-torn Poland to make Whithorn his home.



To supervise the training, an array of experts have been

assembled, with Tom Addyman from architects, Simpson and Brown, leading research into the structure; mediaeval joinery expert, Gustave Remon from France, and Alex Sowden from



Hammer and Hound Forge in Northumberland, all ensuring that the workshop is completed with the utmost authenticity. The wooden buildings of this period have analogies in Scandinavian “stave churches”, with walls composed of slotted upright timbers.

Excitingly for the future, it is likely that such timber churches were highly carved and their plastered interiors decorated with brightly coloured paintings of Biblical scenes. As a reference for the artistic skill and craftsmanship that would have been on show in the making of such a building, we have to think of the quality of items in the Galloway Hoard and the artistic tradition they belong to. What the Trust's initiative hopes to do is to inspire the next generation of young artists and craftspeople, connecting them with a tradition that is over 1,300 years old.





You might know The Depot by its former name Massive Outpouring of Love (MOOL) – we recently had a change of name to reflect how our work has developed over the last few years. We are a small Dumfries based charity and we support refugees and those who have claimed asylum and find themselves in Dumfries and Galloway. In Scotland we refer to them all as New Scots.

In 2016 we came together to collect aid to send to Syria at the height of that crisis. From there we have developed and re-focussed to offer support to those closer to home. We support Syrian and Afghan families who have settled here under UK Government schemes, as well as Ukrainians who have fled the war. We also now support 90 people with physical donations as well as English classes, and other activities to help their mental wellbeing who have claimed asylum and are housed on a local hotel. We operate out of the basement of St Andrew's church hall in Dumfries, where we offer a range of support and activities to the refugees who face multiple challenges when integrating into local society. Most experience poverty, loneliness, isolation and language barriers. For those who have claimed asylum, there is limited access to resources, they have no recourse to public funds and are, for the most part, unable to work. Our work offers:

- A safe space in which people can meet, make connections, learn, and share.
- Welcome packs for new arrivals, including information and basic needs such as clothes, toiletries and the facility to repair or replace mobile devices.
- Refurbished bicycles to enable independent transport.
- A programme accessing sport and fitness facilities including the gym.



*Lydia Burnett is the Operations Manager of The Depot, and here she tells us of the work to help migrants and asylum seekers – the 'New Scots'*

- Opportunities for integration with local communities and volunteers through social, cultural, sporting activities.
- Partnering with other organisations to influence positive change.

We are a small team of three (very) part time staff, a Board of volunteer Trustees, and a merry band of other volunteers who help us do all our amazing work.

We want displaced people, including refugees and those seeking asylum, to feel welcomed and have consistent access to resources, help and the support needed to feel safe, healthy and able to thrive. Through our volunteering opportunities we encourage Dumfries and Galloway to further develop diverse, inclusive communities, where people of all ethnicities are welcomed and integrated.



One amazing project we have running is our Gardening Project – which is only possible because St Andrew's allows us to utilise part of garden in the grounds of the church. The Garden Group (a mix of all nationalities) has cleared the ground, tidied the site, dug it over, fertilized it and planted all manner of vegetables. We recently had a lunch based around the vegetables collected from the garden. Those who participate in the group enjoy the physical exercise as well as being out doors in the fresh air. Having a productive patch of ground has done wonders for their mental wellbeing too.

We are always looking for both physical and cash donations to help support our work – to find out more visit our website [www.thedepot.scot](http://www.thedepot.scot) or if you want more information you can email [hello@thedepot.scot](mailto:hello@thedepot.scot)

We would like to say a big thank you St Andrew's church and its parishioners for supporting our work.





# An Interview with Sir James MacMillan

## *Composing Faith and Scotland into Music*

Amélie Davidson interviews Sir James MacMillan to find out more about the inspirations that shape his work.

**Sir** James MacMillan CBE is one of today's most celebrated composers and conductors. Born in 1959 in Kilwinning and raised in Cumnock, East Ayrshire, his music is renowned for its emotional power, spiritual depth, and distinctive blend of modern classical composition with Scottish folk influences. A devout Catholic, MacMillan's works often reflect his faith, including acclaimed choral and liturgical pieces performed worldwide. His career has seen collaborations with leading orchestras, choirs, and soloists across the globe, and his compositions are regularly featured at major festivals and concert halls. In 2014, he founded The Cumnock Tryst festival to bring world-class music to his hometown and to engage the local community in creative musical projects. MacMillan was knighted in 2015 for his services to music, and he continues to compose, conduct, and champion music that bridges tradition, place, and faith.

Music was part of Jams MacMillan's life from an early age. His mother, a pianist in her youth, had left a treasure trove of music in the family home – Beethoven piano sonatas, works by Chopin, Mendelssohn and more. "I became obsessed with the idea of composing my own music," he recalls. His grandfather, a coal miner and former euphonium player in Ayrshire colliery bands, nurtured his talent further, buying him his first cornet and taking him to his first band practices in Dalmellington. "This was the beginning of my life in music."

**F**aith is not just a theme for MacMillan but the very foundation of his art. "I've always seen the spiritual dimension of music. Many lovers of music, whether religious or not, will acknowledge that it is the most spiritual of the arts," he explains. "As a Catholic I can't help but be aware of the umbilical connection between music and the faith. Composers have been midwives of faith all through history, creating music for the divine praises. And so it continues."

His music often carries a distinctly Scottish character, woven from the sounds of his upbringing. "Scottish traditional music was very much in the background of my life from when I was a little boy," he says. "It's got into the fabric of some of the music I've written over the years. People can detect a Scottish influence in some of the modes I use, the drones, the ornamentation, and the



*Photo by James Bellorini.*

styles that one finds in folk music here."

Among the many world-class venues MacMillan has worked in, one stands out: the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. "It has one of the best acoustics in the world," he says. "It was an overwhelming thrill for me to conduct my fifth symphony there a few years ago."

Founded in his hometown, The Cumnock Tryst brings international-standard music to East Ayrshire while deeply engaging the local community. "One of the unique features of the Tryst is that we work hard with different groups in the community in bringing music to them or bringing them to music in unexpected and imaginative ways," MacMillan says. The highlight so far has been the Coalfields project: "We worked with ten different

groups – adults, schools, existing musical communities, and people new to music. They created their own songs, melodies, texts, and we orchestrated the results. Then they performed with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra during the festival. It was unbelievably delightful!"

MacMillan's journey weaves together his deep faith, love for Scotland, and commitment to sharing music with others. From the concert halls of the world to the heart of his hometown, his work shows how music can transcend boundaries, connect communities, and speak to the soul. As his compositions continue to resonate with audiences far and wide, Sir James MacMillan remains a composer of our time – and for all time.

### ***Quick-fire favourites:***

#### ***Favourite piece of music to listen to?***

Anything from the Church's treasury of Gregorian chant.

#### ***Three dream dinner guests?***

JS Bach, Carlo Acutis, George Mackay Brown.

#### ***Favourite instrument?***

Cello.

#### ***Best place in Scotland to relax?***

My house overlooking the Firth of Clyde.

#### ***Three words to describe your music?***

Of our time.



# Saint John Henry Newman

## A Doctor of the Church

*By Father William R. McFadden*



To be called a “Doctor” of the Church is a title conferred on a select number of individuals. However, on 31st July 2025 Pope Leo confirmed that the English 19th century thinker and writer St John Henry Newman would be added to this group. To be acknowledged as a “Doctor” is recognition that Newman’s writings have made an outstanding contribution to the spiritual, philosophical and theological tradition of the Church. It is also a powerful statement that these writings continue to offer wisdom, guidance and inspiration for the Church today.

Newman was an Anglican priest who was appreciated for his clarity of thought and inspirational writing, and the fruits of his studies of the Church Fathers in particular, led him to be received into the Catholic Church in 1845. His humility showed that though he was already a renowned theologian, he returned to seminary to study as a student for the priesthood in Rome



When Newman returned to England after ordination, he founded the Oratory in Oxford which he dedicated to St Philip Neri, a saint who greatly inspired him.

Newman’s influential works covered a range of subjects, but it is arguable that it is his insights into the development of doctrine, the role and value of conscience, and his understanding of the role of the laity in the Church that have had the most significant impact. Indeed, much of what he taught in these areas would come to influence the writers of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and this influence on the Council must surely have been a contributory factor in his being declared a “Doctor” of the Church by Pope Leo.

In his seminal work of 1845, “An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” Newman outlined his belief that doctrine is not a static body of abstract truths but is something that develops and grows over time. Newman saw in the doctrines of the Church how seeds found in the early Church Fathers had blossomed into the doctrines of today and so embraced the concept of doctrinal development.

This understanding of a dynamic and living Christian Tradition was set forth in the Council document “Dei Verbum” which taught that Revelation is the ongoing self-communication of God, and that God communicates through the living Tradition of the Church which is one source together with the Scriptures and the Magisterium of the Church.

On the question of conscience Newman affirmed that conscience is an essential element in any religious decision, and that personal and informed moral choices cannot rely solely on external authority or on a failure to take responsibility for one’s own actions. His inspiration can be found in the way the Council dealt with the questions of human dignity, religious freedom, and the balance between obedience and a well-formed and sincere conscience.

Newman, was made a Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879, and he chose for his motto “Cor ad cor loquitor” which means “Heart speaks to heart.” With his choice of motto, he was strongly declaring that beyond rational arguments and theological thinking, God speaks to our hearts. It is in prayer that we truly encounter God’s loving presence and in prayer that our hearts engage with the loving heart of Christ. Reading, study and theological reflection all have their place, but ultimately it is in the depth of our hearts that we meet the living and loving heart of the Lord.

Newman dedicated his life to searching for the truth, and although without doubt an academic and intellectual, he remains an author who can speak to the contemporary man or woman and offer insight into what is truth.

As a doctor of the Church Newman’s theological and spiritual contribution and the authority of his writings are recognised as significant for the Universal Church. He joins among others the ranks of St Ambrose and St Augustine, St Gregory the Great and St Jerome, St Thomas Aquinas and St Teresa of Avila, St Anselm and St Catherine of Siena. May Newman’s thoughts and the inspiration he now brings to the Church as a Doctor bear much fruit.



# The International Safeguarding Conference 2025

*Helena Remakers reports on a difficult, but worthwhile conference*



International  
Safeguarding  
Conference  
2025

The International Safeguarding Conference, held in Rome, over four days every June, is an important date in the calendar of those who have a calling to protect the welfare and dignity of others. People come from literally all over the world and congregate in the Pontifical Gregorian University for three days of lectures and discussions, and one final day where current research initiatives are presented. The theme this year was *Women of Faith, Women of Strength*.

Each year, in the months preceding the Conference, online working groups are held across the globe to prepare for the work of the conference itself. I have had the privilege of Chairing the UK & Ireland working group for the past four years. Each year, I am tasked with selecting up to 20 individuals from across the UK and Ireland who I believe to have relevant professional and/or personal experience of the Conference's theme. This year's group was a robust team of women: survivors of abuse; psychologists; counsellors; educators; Religious Sisters; and women with vast experience of safeguarding within the Church and other contexts.

The Conference itself began on Tuesday, 17th June with a powerful opening speech by Sr Simona Brambilla, the first ever female Prefect for DICLSAL (Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life). She spoke of women as weavers of bodies, bonds, bridges, safe spaces and shelter.

What followed was three days of intense inputs from around the globe. A Religious Sister from Ukraine spoke passionately about the routine use of rape and physical torture of women as a weapon in the war in Ukraine. The organisation Talitha Kum spoke of their work helping female victims of human trafficking. Awake from the US presented their model of accompaniment of survivors. Stories of hope and protection were also shared, but these felt like glimmers rather than rays of light.

By the third day, the mood in my working group had moved from compassion, to passion, to a righteous anger. Men in the group became angry as they began to appreciate the world as a place where women are inherently disadvantaged simply because of their sex. Women in the group were angry at having painful personal experiences re-surface as a result of others' testimonies during the Conference. Everyone was exhausted and began to complain of what people who work in the front line call "safeguarding fatigue" — too much exposure to the suffering of others that starts to take a toll on your own wellbeing.

The fourth and final day began, and now we were hearing about women who perpetrate abuse. Shocking facts and statistics of this under-researched field were presented, and in the end it proved too much for the weary delegates. An auditorium filled with seasoned safeguarding personnel from around the world descended into tears, left the room, or simply put their heads on the table in exhausted protest. It was a powerful moment of recognition that for those who may be tempted to reduce safeguarding to paperwork and annual returns, the reality is that we live in a broken world where people are harmed every single day, often in unimaginable ways. It was also a reminder of the need for all of us to look after ourselves while immersed in caring for those around us.

**W**as it worth it? Undoubtedly, yes. It is too easy to pass concerns about other people's welfare from desk to desk, or to write it off as an issue that somebody else can and surely will take care of. The resounding message at the conference was that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Pope Francis knew this. Pope Leo XIV knows this too. During this Jubilee Year of Hope, the question has to be asked: *how will we respond?*



## Safeguarding Annual Conference 2025

This year's Annual Safeguarding Conference will take place on 8th November at Strathclyde University's Science and Innovation Centre and sign-

up details will be circulated in the near future – and please note that the delegate costs are met by your local parish should you wish to attend. This year's theme include keynote input and workshops will enable participants to consider how the Church can be proactive in preventing abuse.

## Safe Words

You are welcome to attend with us when we will be joined by Lesley Anne Pratchett of *'Break the Silence'* on Saturday 27th September in the church hall at St John the Evangelist in Cumnock at 11 am. The session was initially presented at the National Safeguarding Conference last year and this is an opportunity to take part in a discussion that had the delegates deep in debate.

Please contact Tony Fisher ([tony.fisher@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:tony.fisher@rcdg.org.uk) or 01292 266750) Geraldine Butcher (07872 580688), Mari Biondi (07715 552563) or Ann Tierney (01292 266750) to secure your place and to have a light lunch with representatives from the Safeguarding Community in Galloway.





# Galloway Diocese Children's Liturgy



## DID YOU KNOW...?

A man named Ninian went to visit Scotland around 400AD to tell people about Jesus and Christianity. He built a church in the town of Whithorn and called it 'Candida Casa' which means 'Shining White House'. Ninian became the first Bishop of Galloway and later became a Saint.



Dear God,  
Thank you for Saint Ninian,  
who shared your love with  
the people of Scotland.  
Help us to be brave like him,  
and to tell others about  
Jesus through our words and  
actions.

Saint Ninian, pray for us.

Amen.



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**Find these words:**

NINIAN  
SCOTLAND  
FAITH  
JESUS  
PRAY  
WHITHORN  
SAINT