



Galloway Diocese NEWS

*Ninian
Edition*

*September
2026*

National Whithorn Pilgrimage



Pilgrims Gather at Whithorn in a
Year of Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Bishop Frank Writes

Honouring our Heritage, Embracing our Mission



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the time of writing, it is early August, so I am looking forward to the national pilgrimage to Whithorn. I do this with a little trepidation. In my first two years with you, the weather has conspired to keep us from the beach itself, despite which we did have lovely celebrations of Mass in the church in the town. I have (half) joked this year that even if I have to tie an anchor around my leg to stop me blowing away, I will be going to the beach whatever the conditions! As you read this, you will know how things have gone.



Bishop Frank assured pilgrims that he intended to have Mass on the beach

Either way, the pilgrimage to Whithorn is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our shared inheritance, on the thanks we owe to great figures like St Ninian who carried the faith to our shores. The longer I am here, the more I see our Christian heritage in places across the Diocese. So, for example, it was a great pleasure to celebrate Mass at Birnieknowe, on the former site of a convent, church and school outside Auchinleck. There is little to see there now, but it was lovely to hear the story of those who remembered the school or who had been baptised there. It is so important to tell our stories and to remember with thanks those who brought the faith to us, those who preserved it and those who handed it on to us.

But we remember not just so we can tell stories of the past. We remember so that we can remind each other that we are part of the story of the present and part of the story still to come. The faith that we have received is one that we must preserve and one that we must pass on. If we are to faithfully honour those who came before us then we must also faithfully imitate their missionary spirit.

Because, make no mistake about this: we now live in missionary territory! The majority of people in Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway have either drifted from their faith or have never received that gift at all. And this is where we come in, every one of us. We have to be filled with the same urgency that brought St Ninian to us in the first

place, an urgency that drives us to share what we have received. In other words, if this is missionary territory, then we have to be the missionaries.

I have invited you to reflect on the question of how the Holy Spirit wants the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ proclaimed in the Diocese of Galloway. We have prayed to the Holy Spirit asking him to fill our hearts and kindle in us the fire of his love. As you continue to do this, I ask you to take to heart the call made to each one of you to be a missionary disciple. If we are to be a Church that looks outward, that seeks to share the treasure we have received, that can only succeed if we recognise that each one of us has a role to play. It is not something that can be left to a group within the Church, whether clergy or others. No one is exempt from the demand of Christ that we make disciples of all people.

The work is the Lord's of course. But he is not content to allow us to be bystanders. The same command that he made to the Apostles to proclaim the Good News is the same command he made to Ninian and is the same command he makes to us. He will give us the means to do this, not least the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but he expects us to play our part.

As you read the stories and reflections in the latest edition of the Galloway Diocese News, I invite you to do so with a spirit of thanksgiving for so much good that is already happening in the Diocese. These are fruits of our cooperation with the Lord, His Church and each other. And let that thanksgiving spur us on to do greater things with and for the Lord so we can truly form part of the legacy of St Ninian, a legacy that is not just of the past but that reaches forward in faith, hope and love.



+Francis Dougan

Prayer for the Diocese of Galloway

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful and
kindle in us the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit
and we shall be created and you
shall renew the face of the earth.

O God,
who has taught the hearts of your
faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit;
grant that by the gift of the same
Spirit we may be always truly wise
and ever rejoice in his consolation.
Through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

St Ninian, Pray for us.

Adult Faith Formation in the Diocese

By Father William McFadden



In the previous two editions of the Galloway News there has been information about a proposed initiative in the diocese responding to Bishop Frank's invitation to pray during 2026 for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we prepare for the Great Jubilee of 2033. This Adult Faith Formation proposal will be available from September with parishes being offered a five-week programme on the teaching document from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland, called *The Gift of Scripture*. This document can be found at <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture/GoS.pdf>

Since the document is a pastoral text and not an academic textbook, the invitation to use it is not simply to learn something about Sacred Scripture but to encounter Christ in the Word. It is an opportunity to go beyond seeking information and instead strive for transformation and conversion.

The five-week programme is not designed solely to make us better educated or knowledgeable in the Sacred Scriptures but to help us become better witnesses of our faith. It is a safe place that recognises that adults learn in different ways, and it encourages different learning styles to be appreciated and acknowledged.

It is hoped that by participating in the programme an individual will encounter, explore, experience and embody Christ in the Word, and be facilitated to a deeper encounter with the spiritual, cognitive, interpersonal and practical dimensions of their individual faith experience. The programme promotes self-directed learning for adult participants and invites individuals and parishes to consider using the material for an in-person meeting, an online meeting, or a blend of the two. No one who signs up to take part in the programme should feel pressurised to speak or to share if they do not feel comfortable, but there should be an atmosphere of genuine listening and an openness to authentic conversation.

The programme should last five weeks with an introductory session and four separate meetings. The materials provided offer all the information and specific steps required to present the programme, but it is flexible in its framework to allow individual parishes to meet their specific needs, and so is not prescriptive or rigid. It is suggested that the meetings do not take place during Advent or Lent as these liturgical seasons are already full and active. Each meeting should be prepared for by reading a number of short paragraphs in the document and should end with an invitation to participants to think of a practical step which they might make as a consequence of what they have just heard.

The programme will be launched by an online video message from Bishop Frank inviting interested parishes to make use of the materials which will be available for access online on the diocesan website from the beginning of September. The Diocesan Adult Faith Formation Team will be available to provide support and assistance for any parish or group undertaking to offer the programme, and who may have questions or are uncertain about any aspect of the course.

It may be that a group of parishes in a cluster or in a deanery might wish to engage with this initiative together, and so a willingness to communicate between leadership teams in parishes might deliver greater opportunities for participation and engagement.

This Gift of Scripture initiative is simply a resource which is being offered to individuals and to parishes who may wish to respond to Bishop Frank's appeal to make 2026 a year of prayer to the Holy Spirit in our diocese. By entering into the riches of the Scriptures through sharing and learning, we can certainly experience this outpouring of the Spirit in a powerful way. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we journey in faith as a diocesan family open to the power of God's Word and responding to the privileged gift of the Scriptures as a means of God's genuine and authentic communication with us.

Safeguarding in Galloway Diocese

Tony Fisher is Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser



Training for Parish Safeguarding Coordinators

A new version of the Parish Safeguarding Coordinators Training has been developed by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency and is now ready to be rolled out to all Parish Safeguarding Coordinators in Galloway and further across the country too.

Delegates will be identified by first confirming those who have recently completed the Induction Training offered by the Diocese.

Annual Safeguarding Conference 2026

The annual conference will take place on Saturday 7 November at the Science and Innovation Centre on the Strathclyde University campus in Glasgow. Please note that the Diocese will fund the places for those in the Safeguarding Community that wish to attend the Conference. Joining details will follow.

Disclosure Scotland

A small number of volunteers will be contacted by the Safeguarding Team in the next few weeks to make sure that all of your details that are held on record, are accurate and up to date. You will be asked to make contact with Disclosure and they will update their records where required. Many thanks once again.

A Message from the Editor

By Louise Girvan

This edition of the Galloway Diocese News marks my fourth since becoming editor, which means I have now completed my first full cycle. When I took on the role, I wrote that although I am originally from Prestwick, I now attend Mass regularly in both Dumfries parishes as well as Ayr and Prestwick. Because of this - and my involvement with the Youth Office programme - I often feel as though I am both nowhere and everywhere at once.

Since becoming editor, I have discovered how much people across the diocese genuinely enjoy the GD News. I also seem to have adopted the persona of "the person who asks you to write an article" whenever I see something interesting happening. However, I do feel that we can do even more together to ensure this publication truly reflects the whole diocese.

For every edition, I email all parishes inviting contributions, and each edition includes details on how to submit items for the next one. A priest emailed me a few months ago saying they had long felt that more pieces encouraging dialogue among readers would be valuable. He added that he wanted to help and so had written an article. That article was very warmly received across the diocese.

Similarly, Fr McFadden has written in the past three editions (including this one) about adult formation and taking ownership of growing "in knowledge and love of God and finding new and exciting ways of experiencing and sharing that awareness." This is something anyone and everyone is invited to do through the GD News by sharing their experiences. Bishop Frank has also emphasised the importance of hope, waiting, and

sacrifice. It is essential that lay people recognise their role in the Church, and if you feel you have something to share, you are very warmly invited to send it in.

It is so important that the voices of all of Galloway are heard - whether you live in Largs, Stranraer, Annan, or Galston. The aim of this publication is to produce something physical, filled with insightful articles and news from all areas of the diocese. It is not simply a repetition of content found on social media. To achieve this, we need to work together. I will always try to include as much as I can, and I know that people across the diocese appreciate having the opportunity to grow in faith with one another.

The deadline for submissions for the Advent Edition is 6 November 2026. Contributions can be sent to gdnews@rcdg.org.uk.

Galloway Diocese News

Deadline for the Advent Edition
6th November 2026

Email:
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www.rcdg.org.uk

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The New Evangelisation

By Father Stephen Latham

Every generation faces the same challenge: how do we tell the story of God's love in a way that speaks to the people of today?

The Gospel never changes, but every age has its own language, culture and questions. The challenge is to share the life and message of Jesus in ways that are engaging for those who know the stories well, while remaining welcoming and accessible to those who may be hearing them for the first time.

This is the vision behind what has become known as the new evangelisation. The phrase was popularised by Pope St John Paul II during the 1980s. He recognised that many places with a long Christian history were becoming increasingly secular and called for evangelisation that would be "new in its ardour, methods and expression." The message itself would remain unchanged; what needed to change was the way it was shared.

Today, this vision continues to inspire Christians across many traditions. Rather than simply maintaining what already exists, churches are looking for new ways to reach out, to build relationships and to share the hope that lies at the heart of the Gospel.

Here in the Diocese of Galloway we are seeing this in a variety of ways. Under the leadership of Bishop Frank, the diocese has embraced digital media as a means of reaching people where they are. Through initiatives such as

Being Catholic TV, stories of faith, parish life and Christian hope are shared far beyond the walls of our churches. Instead of waiting for people to come to us, we are learning to take the message to them.

The diocesan Youth Office is also making imaginative use of social media and online technology. Young adults from across south-west Scotland can meet both online and in person, overcoming the distances that often separate our communities. Conversations about faith, life and hope can continue throughout the year, regardless of geography.

Even long-established traditions are finding new life. The annual youth pilgrimage to Whithorn, the cradle of Scottish Christianity, is promoted through digital newsletters and social media, making it easier for young people to discover and take part in this ancient journey of faith.

At its heart, however, the new evangelisation is not about technology, marketing or persuading people to belong to a particular institution. It is about helping people discover that they are loved by God. Every conversation, every video, every pilgrimage, every act of welcome is simply another opportunity for someone to encounter that love.

The methods of evangelisation will continue to change. New technologies will emerge, new ways of communicating will develop, and each generation will ask new questions. But the heart of evangelisation remains wonderfully simple: helping people discover that they are loved by God. Everything else follows from that.

Reflections of a (Newly) Retired Teacher

By Angela Taylor

I like to spread good news! I have just retired as a Primary School Teacher after 25 years teaching in Catholic schools in East Ayrshire. I am certain it was the right time for me. I feel I have contributed the best I could have during all of it – and what a journey it has been!

It was an early wish of mine to teach after leaving school, however, that didn't materialise the way I'd planned it, so it took me another 15 years (of working, living and deciding) before I started a 4 year B-Ed course, as was the route in those days.

I wanted to teach in the Catholic sector. Why? For me, to educate the whole child was fundamental: to celebrate, nurture and promote the individual, spirituality included, and Catholic education does that. One of the absolute aims of mine was to always recognise the uniqueness and individuality in each child and encourage this to shine.

I was very fortunate in achieving a position in St Sophia's Primary school after graduating and I taught there for my first year learning a LOT- including how exhausting the job was but also how wonderfully satisfying it was. One proud memory I have is that I promoted art (a love of mine) among my lovely class of 16 pupils (!) and saw the emerging talent among them. Years later I spotted fabulous large paintings on display and discovered these were by one of those pupils who had continued with her love of art alongside training to be a doctor!

In my next school St Matthew's Primary, I continued to share my creative side by choreographing many of the school performances (their shows were a big thing!) and it was also my first experience of teaching Liturgical Dance, which is prayerful expression through movement. Dance was, and still is, a passion of mine and is probably the thing most past pupils will remember about me. I've lost count of the number of shows, dance clubs and performances we've done together. These were in school halls, community halls, churches, theatres and more. We even performed outdoors in the Covid-recovery period. Within Liturgical dance, there was a lovely group who helped celebrate their school's 50th Anniversary Mass. The same group 'almost' had the privilege of opening a Scotland-wide to-be-livestreamed Mass in Falkirk before horrendous storms hit overnight and it had to be called off. (I do still question the Divine intervention there?!)

My next school was St Columba's who later amalgamated with St Matthew's to form the new St Andrew's Primary – a new build and a shared campus so it became a very different experience to teaching in the more nurturing environment of the smaller ones.

I was privileged in that I knew most staff members from both schools so I saw myself as a liaison person to help smooth over some expected disagreements and encouraged everyone to work together better. (Not alone, of course.)

It was in St Andrew's that I did my longest stint in teaching and it was there that the job changed most. There have been so many challenges and barriers in education: from learning needs, changes in structures, risks to health and often unrealistic expectations. But one thing remains and that is seeing the potential in each child, no matter their circumstances or perceived ability and striving for the best attainment possible. And it is surprising, even enlightening, what I've learned from the children themselves. Every day's a school day.

I did very much enjoy teaching the Roman Catholic Religious Education programme in schools and I always found that, during prayer times, there was a different mood: a shift, a stillness. For me, how their spirits connected to prayer was tangible. Believe it or not, we loved to say the Rosary. I had gathered different Rosary sets from different places around the world and the children loved to choose from these: be it Rome, Rio or Reims! I've left these behind at school hoping the tradition will continue.

Colleagues have been amazing. It would be hard to meet a more supportive and caring bunch as teachers and school staff. I have found that, despite how busy and time-pressured a staff member is, they will take time to help and support you. They helped me survive many a challenging year (thank you).

Over the years it has been wonderful to catch up on how pupils are doing later in life. Almost all 'find their way' and I am immensely proud to hear of their achievements. Laterly the catching up has been whilst teaching the children of some of these pupils! That's when you know you're getting old!

Life is a journey. This 25 year 'chapter' has finished and now it's time to see where the next one takes me. Echoing my last boss, I don't expect that it will be a quiet one.



Angela pictured in St Andrew's Primary, Kilmarnock
Picture used with permission thanks to Kilmarnock Standard

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Discernment: What Exactly Is It?

By Father Joe Boland

Discernment is one of those buzzwords we hear a lot these days in Catholic circles. The trouble with buzzwords, however, is that they tend to be used without any clarity or proper understanding of what they mean. And, of course, this can lead to misunderstandings and confusion, not to mention their nasty relatives, discord and division. So, what exactly is this thing we call discernment and why is it so important for us at this particular moment in the life of the Church? Well, those are the two questions I hope to say something helpful about in this short article.

And to understand what the word means, I want to take you back to a moment in the life of Jesus mentioned in all four Gospels: the story of how he drove the money changers out of the Temple. Hidden deep in this story lies a very early use of the word discernment. Being a money changer was a risky business in those days. The marketplace was full of false coins, and no money changer could survive long unless he had developed the skill to sift through the coins as they passed through his fingers, to separate the genuine from the false. And the Latin word for this important skill was *discernere*. To sift through and tell the genuine from the fake. And that, essentially, is what it still means today.

At which point I turn to St Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits. Many spiritual writers have spoken about discernment over the centuries, but Ignatius is the person most associated with the idea in the world today, through his *Spiritual Exercises*. Speaking to the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel, and through her to every one of us, Jesus says: 'If only you knew what God is offering you.' He is speaking of God's unique and individual dream for each of us, better known by most people as 'God's Will'. And what Ignatius offers us, based on his own life experience, is a way of discovering this for ourselves through a process of Discernment.

The full story of what this involves is for another day. But the process is based on two fundamental truths, both of which, are deeply rooted in the Tradition of the Church. The first I

learned in primary school, namely that we are all Temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells within each of us. And the second, which is also in the Catechism, is that Faith, Hope and Charity are Theological Virtues. This means that they can only come from God. Left to ourselves we could never acquire them. And what Ignatius invites us to see is that, if we can sift through all the thoughts, inclinations, longings, fears, desires etc that go on inside us every day, and find the movement which builds up Faith Hope and Love, then 'all' we have to do is follow this movement and it will lead us to the source from which it came, namely God. And, of course, that is what Catholics throughout the world right now are trying to do and falling out with each other about. What kind of Church is God calling us to be? What is the Spirit telling us at this moment in history? And these are not easy questions to answer. The movement of God is deep and not always easy to identify. It is gentle, does not force itself on us and can be mistaken for movements which come from ourselves. Ignatius himself recognizes this and offers us a whole series of rules or guidelines to help us in this process. We cannot go into all of these here, but there is one in particular which is of such fundamental importance that, if in our parishes and diocesan meetings we are not constantly aware of it, our discernment may come to nothing. And it is what Ignatius calls our inordinate attachments and our need, first, to be aware of them, and, second, our need to seek from God the grace to be free of them. So what are they?

Well, they come in all shapes and forms. I often think of them as ropes attached to a hot-air balloon and tied to the ground, preventing it from doing what it was made to do, fly. In human beings and in the Church all kinds of things can be inordinate attachments which stand in the way of genuine discernment. From unhealthy attachments to our own opinions or ways of thinking whether they are of the conservative or liberal variety. One many of us are struggling with today is an unhealthy attachment to a church building we have attended all our lives or a Mass-time we have become used to and are not prepared to change.

How often have we heard things like, 'Well, if this church closes, I'll no be back'. We can all get stuck in the past, hanging on to what is familiar, what we have always known while the future meanwhile waits for no man or woman. Our God is a God who is always doing a new thing, singing, as the Scriptures put it, a new song. What exactly that song will be is not clear yet, but it will be different, it will amaze us, it will make those who come after us laugh with joy.

But to be part of that Church or to lay the foundations of it for our children and grandchildren we have to be open to something more, something deeper, something better, something beyond the limits of our own thinking. We have to know our own prejudices, our own blind spots and our own stubbornness. Like Abraham, our father in faith, we have to be willing to let leave one place and go to another God will show us. Discernment is not about having meetings or discussions. It is not about what we think. It is certainly not about voting or the rule of the majority. Instead, it is about listening, and attending through prayer and reflection, to the movement of God deep within ourselves, deep within the life and history of the Church, deep within the world and all that happens in it, and ultimately deep within the cosmos itself.

All of this, of course, is pure grace. Only God can do this in us, as St Ignatius makes clear in this prayer from the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
My memory, my understanding, my
entire will,
All I have and possess.

You have given all to me,
To you, Lord, I return it.
All is yours:
Do with it what you will

Give me only your love and your
grace,
That is enough for me.

Happy Retirement Father Philip Kitchen and Deacon Robert Mackie

In June and July, the three parishes of St John's the Evangelist Cumnock, Our Lady of Lourdes and St Patrick's Auchinleck and St Thomas's Muirkirk came together to celebrate Fr Philip Kitchen and Deacon Robert Mackie as they retire. The entire Diocesan community joins with the parish communities in which Fr Philip has ministered in offering our prayers and best wishes to him as he retires, having turned 75 in March. Deacon Robert has serviced the community over the last 8 years.



Father Philip Kitchen pictured with Deacon Robert Mackie and Bishop Frank Dougan



Deacon Robert Mackie, Father Philip Kitchen and Bishop Frank Dougan

Congratulations Bishop Frank

On 27th June, Bishop Frank celebrated 25 years since his ordination to the Priesthood. To mark the occasion, he was joined by his brother priests and faithful from across the Diocese for Mass in St Margaret's Cathedral, Ayr, with Fr Stephen Reilly from the Diocese of Motherwell, a long time friend of Bishop Frank, preaching the homily.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Frank was presented with a quaich by the Rev David Gemmell, the local Church of Scotland minister, marking their strong friendship and shared ministry.



Bishop Frank pictured with family



Homilist Father Stephen Reilly



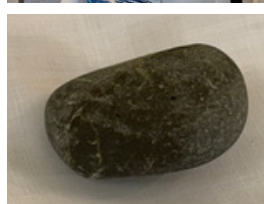
Rev David Gemmell marks the friendship between him and Bishop Frank

National Pilgrimage to Whithorn

Pilgrims from across the diocese gathered in Whithorn on 30th August for the annual National Pilgrimage in honour of St Ninian. Despite the hopes to celebrate Mass on the beach near St Ninian's Cave we were unable to due to heavy rainfall over a short period of time. Bishop Frank, Archbishop Nolan, Archbishop Cushley and clergy from across the diocese celebrated a beautiful Mass together in the church of St Martin and St Ninian in a packed church of pilgrims.

After a fairly calm morning the rain started just over an hour before Mass was due to begin and came down fast and heavy. Bishop Frank, who was already on the beach, had to make the difficult decision that the conditions for pilgrims walking down the glen were unsafe due to the volume of water flow across the burn that requires to be crossed and the underfoot conditions. The 91st Ayrshire Scouts had worked tirelessly since the Friday evening to ensure that the path was cleared and the altar was prepared, for which we are very grateful for despite not being able to celebrate Mass on the beach.

After a last minute change of plan, this year's pilgrimage Mass was celebrated in the church rather than on the beach. Bishop Frank reminded pilgrims that the location never diminishes the meaning of the Eucharist, emphasising that wherever we celebrate Mass, it remains the most important thing we can do. He shared a recent striking connection between Whithorn and Seville, where a hospital chapel is dedicated to St Ninian. The chapel had asked for a pebble from the Whithorn shore to be blessed and sent to Spain. Bishop Frank personally collected the pebble from the beach and brought it into the church, where he blessed it as a symbol of faith carried across places and generations.





Organ Recitals in Kilmarnock

By Niamh Taylor

On 23 June, some other pupils and I from Wallace Hall Academy, Thornhill had the opportunity to go and hear an organ recital performed by Aaron Hawthorne at St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock. This was an amazing experience for all of us, and I especially found it interesting as we were taught about the history of the organ at the church along with some history of how the church was built. Hearing about the background of how the organ came to Kilmarnock and the structure of it made the instrument even more admirable. As I sat in the church and heard the opening song, I was immediately captivated by how beautiful the organ really is and how the sound filled the room. Hawthorne played a variety of pieces such as Mary Poppins and a collection of dances.



Wallace Hall Pupil, Niamh, having the opportunity to try the organ



Wallace Hall Pupils with Father Stephen McGrattan, Aaron Hawthorne and Raymond McCluskey

which was a surprise and shows that you can play pretty much anything on the most unexpected instruments. After the recital, we had the amazing opportunity to go up and get a closer look at the organ. When we were being taught about the history of the organ before the recital, we were told that before technology, organs used to have to be manually pumped to let the air travel through for sound to be produced, but nowadays most organs are electrically powered for the air flow to pass. We saw the pump and two people demonstrated how it was used which was crazy. I am so grateful for the opportunity to try out the organ, it was a surreal experience going from playing a standard piano at home to an organ with huge pipes in a church. Seeing how intricate an organ is and the amount of work it takes to build one blew my mind and I am forever grateful I was able to see this in person.

Fr Erasmus Anniversary

By Hannah Farley

We were delighted to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Fr Erasmus Egenonu CSSp's ordination at St St Sophia's Church in Galston. Although the official date was June 30, we held our celebration early on Saturday, June 20, allowing the parish community to come together and mark this important occasion.

We were especially fortunate to be joined by Bishop Frank, who shared in the celebration with us before marking his own anniversary a week later. His presence added to the joy of the occasion and made the celebration particularly memorable.

Fr Erasmus was surrounded by many friends from near and far, with people travelling from different parts of the country to join him, as well as many friends from the local area. It was wonderful to see so many people come together to celebrate this special milestone with him.

Following Mass, members of the parish gathered in the church hall for a small celebration. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to share in the occasion, along with a wonderful cake to mark Fr Erasmus's Silver Jubilee. Fr Erasmus had a lovely evening and clearly enjoyed the chance to chat with everyone. He was warmly congratulated and wished well by all who had gathered to celebrate this significant anniversary with him.



Outdoor Adventure Retreat Weekend St Quivox, Prestwick

By Gordon Mitchell

Our Adventure Weekend at Abernethy Trust Outdoor Adventure Centre in Nethy Bridge was a fantastic opportunity to step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and spend quality time together, surrounded by the stunning scenery of the Cairngorms. The weekend brought together faith, family, friendship and adventure, creating something that truly had something for everyone. With full board included, families could relax and enjoy the experience without having to worry about meals or the usual day-to-day distractions. There was plenty of excitement, with a fantastic range of outdoor adventure activities from Bushcraft to Gorge walking giving everyone the chance to try something new, challenge themselves and, most importantly, have fun together. Whether it was getting the adrenaline flowing, encouraging one another through a challenge or simply enjoying the beautiful surroundings, perhaps watching others take an unplanned dip in the pond, there were plenty of smiles and memories made along the way. Alongside the adventure, there was also time to pause, reflect and reconnect with our faith. Quiet moments of reflection provided an opportunity to step back from busy lives and consider what really matters. We were joined by Fr Stephen Latham who celebrated Mass in the Tipi, bringing everyone together in prayer and celebration. What made the weekend particularly special was the atmosphere — Adults supporting one another, children making new friends, plenty of laughter and the opportunity to experience faith in a relaxed and welcoming environment. If you missed this year's weekend, don't miss out next year! Come along with your family, meet new people, make lifelong memories and experience some incredible adventures. Next year's weekend promises to be even bigger, better and full of adventure. We would love to see you there! contact Gordon for more info -: gordonericmitchell@gmail.com. A video of the weekend can be found by scanning the QR code.



During his visit, Fr Jude also met with Bishop Frank and other Spiritan representatives to discuss their ministry in the Diocese.

Left to Right: Fr Benjamin, Fr Bartholomew (Spiritan Regional Coordinator), Fr Erasmus, Bishop Frank, Fr Jude (Second Assistant to the Superior General), Fr Ugo (Provincial Superior (Britain))



Fr Jude Nnorom pictured with Fr Erasmus and Parishioners

Second Assistant to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit Visits Galloway

By Louise Girvan

Fr Jude Nnorom CSSp, the second assistant to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) is carrying out a Visitation of the Diocese in July as part of his responsibilities. During his stay, he visited all three pastoral centres - Dumfries, Galston, and Maybole - served by the four Spiritans - Fr Benjamin, Uchenna, Francis, and Erasmus - in our Diocese.

He began his visit with Vespers (Evening Prayer) in St Teresa's, Dumfries, and after Mass and a gathering with the parish the following morning he travelled to Galston. During his visit, he looked to see and hear what ministries the Spiritans are carrying out in the Diocese by speaking not only to his brother religious, but also to parishioners.



Fr Jude Nnorom pictured with Fr Uchenna, Fr Francis and Parishioners

Annual Pilgrimage to the Birnieknowe St Joseph's Deanery

By Robert Sheerins

The weather was kind to all who attended the now annual pilgrimage to celebrate Mass at the Birnieknowe, outside of Auchinleck.

As one of several former pupils of St Patrick's and parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes who were present, this event has become a date in the calendar not to be missed.

Mass was celebrated by Bishop Frank Dougan with concelebrants Fr Stephen McGrattan, Fr Erasmus Egenonu, Fr Kevine Rennie, and the recently retired Fr Philip Kitchen, who was very much back on home territory.

This open air event gives us the opportunity to celebrate Mass within a unique community and in a quite unique setting.

Birnieknowe at one time comprised miners' rows, a railway platform, convent, chapel and school, all of which served Catholics in the local area.

The convent was home to the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, an order which focussed on education and social care.

For generations they provided the backbone of teaching staff in the primary school until their departure in 1965. The best known of the Sisters is Sister Laurienne, who on August 7th 1888 was killed by a train while calling the children in from play. A red sandstone cross marks the spot where the accident happened and has itself become a place of pilgrimage.

During Mass, the recurring themes of continuity, perseverance in the face of challenges and the important legacy bequeathed to us by those who had kept the faith, were highlighted.

Mass was brought to a conclusion by Bishop Frank who reflected on the important role played by the Nuns as he invited those who could, to join in what turned out to be a rousing rendition of Salve Regina in honour of their service.



Memories of St Patrick's Primary

Set on a hill in the middle of the rolling Ayrshire countryside, St Patrick's Primary school was a good place, a caring place, qualities embodied by my P1 teacher, Miss McAtee, who left an indelible mark on everyone with whom she came into contact.

If I could take you back in time and put you in my classroom, you'd hear her say "Sit up straight boys and girls", and we'd do just that. When Miss McAtee told you to do something you did it! She had our complete respect and we'd hang on her every word.

She had full authority in class but she was also your Mum in the room, your confidante, the source of all knowledge and the final arbitrator of what was right and what was wrong in Primary 1 and Primary 2.

Miss McAtee, a striking looking woman, slim with dark hair and piercing eyes, represented what was good and caring about education, and she also evidenced an ethos and a set of beliefs which she instilled in us while we were at our most receptive.

She dispensed elementary knowledge and directed her pupils like an orchestral conductor from behind her big wooden desk, only leaving it to inspect the work she had

given us, moving steadily up and down across the rows, checking each pupil's progress and remarking on your work or offering encouragement.

Monday mornings brought forth the statement "Put your hands up if you were at Mass yesterday" and while there would be a flurry of tiny arms raised, Miss McAtee would scan the room for those without a hand up and say "You'll need to make sure your Mum and Dad take you next Sunday". There was little worse than disappointing Miss McAtee and I'm sure it led to a few uncomfortable conversations at home as it wasn't only the children who didn't want to let her down.

Pupils at St Patrick's didn't only come from the Birnie, but also from Auchinleck, Catrine and Mauchline and what they got up to, well we just didn't know!

Some years later I got to know her outside of the classroom as she became a regular visitor to see my mum, always a Tuesday night at 7 pm. It was strange seeing the actual Miss McAtee in my house as a real person with a first name too and not just a teacher.

She was always friendly and smiling and really enjoyed my Mum's company.

Reflecting on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit



As we continue our Diocesan Year of Prayer schools across our Diocese have been reflecting on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is the second of two parts in which St Sophia's, Galston write about the gifts and their reflections on them.

Wisdom

I am writing about Wisdom. It is very important because the world would be in chaos without it. Wisdom is knowing when to speak up and how to make the right choices. I show this when my friends and family are annoying me. I tell them to stop and when I see something that is not good I always think first and tell an adult. Fortitude is when you stay calm during a difficult situation. For instance, your parents are fighting and you use this gift to stay calm. I use this when I get stressed and I use this to stay calm. By Lucas.

Wisdom is very important because the world would be in chaos without it. Wisdom is to be brave, speaking up and doing the right thing always. I show wisdom when someone is hurt. I help them, I am kind and I get a trusted adult to help. By Sophie.

Understanding

I have chosen Understanding because I know how important it is to do the right thing. I feel like I'm able to show understanding really well. I show understanding by listening when a person is upset and trying my best to help. I show understanding by knowing what someone needs and giving it to them. I know the difference between right and wrong. If someone does something wrong, I notice it and I tell an adult. I am good with the wee ones in our school. By Maya.

I have chosen to write about Understanding. Understanding is so important because it lets you help people and do the right thing. I help my little sisters; they are five years old and one year old. I play with them so they giggle and have fun. When I play with them it lets mum clean up and do the cooking. By Stephen.

Counsel

I have chosen to write about Counsel because I use this everyday. If teenagers offered me drinks I would say no. This could damage my body and my body is important. I use the gift of Counsel to decline things that I know are bad and God guides me. By Lennon.

Fear of the Lord

Fear of the Lord means I know how wonderful God is and I want to please him. I pray and I show respect for God. I do this out of love. By Evie.

Fear of the Lord – I show this because I respect my family and love them. I love my Gran's dog too and I respect nature. The definition is knowing how wonderful God is and wanting to please him. You show love and respect. Wisdom – if someone is getting bullied I tell an adult and they sort it out. I know when to speak up about things. Knowledge – I use this gift because I'm good at drawing/colouring. I'm good at Sports, especially football, and I'm good at writing and grammar. By Theo.

Piety

I have chosen to write about Piety because it is important to me. I help mum with my little sister Lara. She is three years old. I help Lara get dressed and do her hair so my mum can get dressed and make breakfast. At night time I help Lara go for a bath so mum or dad can do the dishes. I help mum with tidying the house, go with her to get shopping and if we go out for dinner I play with my little sister. This gift means I see God as a loving father, I pray and I want to please God. I use this gift with my family and friends. By Louise M.

Knowledge

I have chosen to write about Knowledge because I am good at art and I know how to draw, paint and do arts and crafts. I want to please God by using my gift of art and seeing nature through God's eyes. Creation is important because God made it. By Darcie.

Fortitude

Fortitude is the gift which gives us the courage to help us to overcome challenges in our lives, it is the gift which helps us to live our lives following Jesus and trusting in him no matter what difficulties we may face.



IS GOD CALLING YOU TO THE PRIESTHOOD?

Do you sense a vocation to be a Priest and wish support to discern this call?

Contact Fr Stephen McGrattan
vocations@rcdg.org.uk 01563 521832



RC Diocese of Galloway

Youth Office

Gather · Pray · Discuss · Socialise



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youth.rcdg.org.uk



First Communion Celebration Day

Saturday 25th July saw the first Galloway Youth First Communion Celebration Day, as young people from across the Diocese who celebrated their First Communion this year gathered to discover what it's like to be a part of Galloway Youth and to be invited to join us for events in the future. Recognising the excitement and joy that young people have at celebrating First Holy Communion, we wanted to encourage them to continue to live out that joy as a part of Galloway Youth. Our events are now open to young people in P5-S4, allowing them to get involved from their First Communion onwards.



We were delighted to welcome fourteen First Communicants alongside a few of our regular young people who were able to support our new young people in taking part in activities, and in sharing in their joy at having received First Holy Communion.

Bishop Frank joined the group for Mass and reflected in his homily on the word "Amen". He invited the young people to consider what they're saying when they say "Amen" and how in saying it, they are professing their faith in Jesus, but how it is important to then live out that profession in their lives.

The group also heard talks from Margaret and Louise, two of our Youth leaders, recalling their own First Holy Communion and the importance of the Eucharist in their lives. Louise also shared her devotion to Mary with the young people, encouraging them to remain close to Mary as well as to Jesus, her son.

Finally the young people also enjoyed a delicious pizza and BBQ lunch as they spent time getting to know one and other, making new friends who they'll see at future Galloway Youth events.





A particular favourite was the game 'Human Hungry Hippos' where the young people competed in teams to collect as many of the balls from the middle of the room as they could with the results making for a close competition. They also enjoyed a number of other favourite games and a few new ones too - including pool noodle knockout.

All of the young people had a fantastic day and are looking forward to joining the larger Galloway Youth community for the Summer Youth Gathering.



Young Adults Summer BBQ

On Saturday 8th August, Young Adults gathered for their summer social at St Joseph's Church in Kilmarnock. The group came from across the Diocese and beyond as they gathered for the evening to catch up after the summer over a BBQ and drinks. Sadly the weather didn't quite cooperate, so the social was indoors, but the BBQ continued and everyone enjoyed having the chance to catch up - so much so that the party continued afterwards as they headed out for a few games of pool.



We extend our thanks to the parishioners of the Kilmarnock Catholic Churches who generously donated a range of salads and home baking, which was very much enjoyed by the group.

Are you a young adult? Our Young Adults meet monthly, normally on the first Sunday of the month, for a talk followed by a social. Each month, we invite a different speaker to talk on a range of different faith issues, and new members are always welcome. **If you don't live in East Ayrshire** you can still join online, to hear the talk, and to be part of the discussion, just go to our website: youth.rcdg.org.uk and click on 'Young Adults - Online Participation'.

Young Adults (S5 - 30) Sessions

Sunday 13th September

Sunday 4th October

Sunday 1st November

Sunday 6th December

Every evening takes place in St Joseph's, Kilmarnock, beginning with Adoration at 6.00 pm, and continuing with the talk in the Hall from 6.30 pm.

Don't live in East Ayrshire? You can join online! Go to our website to register and be part of the discussion.



2027 Galloway's Seoul

"Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

7th - 11th August 2027

Gowanbank SU Centre (Outside Darvel)

Join us for World Youth Day 2027 as Seoul comes to Galloway!

What happens at World Youth Day?

World Youth Day includes a variety of different events, following a pattern similar to the below:

- Day 1 - Opening Mass
- Day 2 - Catechesis & Mass
- Day 3 - Catechesis, Mass & Opening Ceremony with the Pope
- Day 4 - Catechesis, Mass & Stations of the Cross with the Pope
- Day 5 - Prayer Vigil with the Pope
- Day 6 - Missioning (Closing) Mass

Galloway's Seoul will run from Saturday 7th to Wednesday 11th August 2027 and replicate many of these elements, following some of them online, and celebrating them ourselves.

We'll also be including a wide range of outdoor activities each day, including: tree climbing, canoeing, hill walking, archery, nature trails, and more.

The programme blends the World Youth Day programme with our own on site programme to provide a balance of faith and activities, to support young people in fostering friendships with one another, and growing in faith and knowledge of God.

What is Catechesis? The Catechesis sessions at World Youth Day are an opportunity to learn and grow in faith. A different person each day speaks on a topic around the theme of World Youth Day - for 2027, courage and strength in Christ - before Mass is celebrated.

Who can take part?

The event is open to any young people currently in P6-S5 (P7-S6 in August 2027). The cost for the whole week, which includes all food, accommodation and activities is £400.00 per person, however we will work with and support young people over the coming year in doing fundraising in their local area to reduce this cost as far as possible. If finance is a concern, we also have grants and bursaries available, we are also able to provide support if you have more than one child wishing to take part. **There is no requirement to be Catholic to take part.**

How can I register?

For more information and to register, scan the QR code or visit our website: youth.rcdg.org.uk.

We'll help you get there!

We've lots of group fundraisers planned across the Diocese, get involved and get money off your place - our Millport cycle raised enough to cover each young person's deposit, and there's lots more planned. You can also do your own fundraising as well!

Fundraising Calendar

Saturday 31st October

Afternoon Tea (St Teresa's, Dumfries)

December

Bag Packing

Saturday 6th February, 7.00 pm

Bingo Night (St Quivox, Prestwick)

March

Sponsored Criffel Climb

April

Race Night (St Joseph's, Kilmarnock)

June

TBA (North Ayrshire)

Millport Sponsored Cycle



On Thursday 6th August, nine young people, accompanied by five of our youth leaders took part in a sponsored cycle around Millport. The young people and leaders each completing one circuit of the island (10 miles), while Fr Kevin, our Youth Chaplain, completed 57 of a planned 60 miles. It was a fantastic achievement for some of our young people who had very little experience cycling but still persevered and managed to complete the distance. All of the young people enjoyed the day, taking several hours to travel around the island, stopping for lunch and ice cream halfway round. After they completed the cycle, the group enjoyed having some time to explore Millport - enjoying the shops and the Millport Fayre while



Fr Kevin completed his six circuits. Thank you to everyone who have donated so far, over £1,400 has been raised to date!

We've lots of group fundraisers planned across the Diocese, get involved and get money off your place - our Millport cycle raised enough to cover 20% of each young person who took parts place, and there's lots more planned. You can also do your own fundraising as well!



Support our fundraising!

Scan the QR code to donate and support our young people in their journey to Galloway's Seoul!



Summer Youth Gathering

On Saturday 15th August, over 30 young people from across the Diocese gathered at St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock, for their Summer Youth Gathering - a day of fun and games, faith and friendship. A particular highlight was the outdoor Mass, celebrated in the church garden. The young people also enjoyed trying out some new games, as well as lots of old favourites. As part of the day, Louise spoke on St Maximilian Kolbe, who had his Feast Day on the Friday, and his extraordinary example of love and martyrdom.



Upcoming Youth (P5 - S4) Evenings

Sunday 27th September

Sunday 25th October

Sunday 15th November

Sunday 13th December

5.00 - 7.00 pm

St Joseph's, Kilmarnock

St Teresa's, Dumfries

St Margaret's, Ayr

St Peter-in-Chains, Ardrossan

The Privilege of Witnessing Malawi — And the Responsibility It Leaves Behind

By Douglas Hutchison

I will be honest, I was looking forward to the trip to Malawi with a degree of anxiety and trepidation. As a natural catastrophiser, I was focused on the mosquitoes, sanitary conditions and the 24 hour journey. I had my vaccinations completed and the malaria tablets and Imodium in my bag. I had relatively low expectations of the trip, such as not coming back with Malaria or any form of parasite - I managed both as far as I know. The trip however far exceeded my relatively low expectations. I was surprised to find myself falling in love with Malawi and the people that we met.

I had agreed to join the group of 8 senior pupils from St Roch's Secondary and Holyrood Secondary in Glasgow when I was still Director of Education in Glasgow. Our aim was to experience Malawi's education system and work with children in schools around the Blantyre area. The children, young people and staff we met in Malawi were incredibly welcoming and Malawi lived up to its reputation as "the warm heart of Africa".

Under the warmth and hospitality however, poverty was always present. Statistics, like being one of the ten poorest countries in the world, take on flesh when you see children with no shoes, villages with one clean source of running water and a country which appears to lead a hand to mouth existence.

Subsistence farming remains the main way of surviving. The impact of climate change is clear as is the impact of geo-politics. Malawi is a land locked country, so the recent increase in oil prices due to the Iran war impacts hugely. Food inflation was around 30% with overall inflation around 21%. Cuts to overseas aid from wealthy countries such as the UK and USA have an immediate and obvious impact on health and education.



We met and worked with staff from Mary's Meals who provide 1.3 million meals a day to the children of Malawi. We saw first hand what a difference it made. Mary's Meals provide the flour needed to make a porridge for the children, then the school takes responsibility for cooking and distributing the food - a task done by parent

volunteers. One of the young men in our group wrote about Mary's Meals in his reflections on the trip:

One of the organisations that made a huge impression on me was Mary's Meals. We had the opportunity to help serve porridge to hundreds of children and saw first-hand how a simple meal encourages children to come to school and gives them the energy to learn.

Before travelling, I thought we were going to Malawi to make a difference. While I hope we did, I realised that Malawi made just as much of a difference to us. It changed the way I see education, gratitude and community. It reminded me not to take for granted the opportunities we have here in Scotland. (Peter)



Similarly, one of the young women with us reflected on the differences between our education system and what she saw in Malawi:

Seeing the very clear differences between secondary education in the UK compared to Malawi shocked me. Seeing one-hundred children sitting on workbenches or stood around the classroom, some with jotters and some without, was heartbreaking and really eye opening, especially when I am used to seeing classrooms full of desks and chairs, and spare stationery for every child. (Holly)

We had the immense privilege of meeting Lettie, from the Mary's Meals Child 31 video – well worth a watch. She joined us for dinner one evening with her son. Surviving as a 12 year old orphan and bringing up her two younger brothers, Lettie is a reminder that education is still an important root out of poverty for children in Malawi.

My first visit to the great continent of Africa was an immense privilege. My reason for writing this short article was just a gentle reminder to myself and to all of us that, from our relative comfort, we have a responsibility for our brothers and sisters in the global south. We can make a difference, no matter how small through organisations like SCIAF and Mary's Meals. I hope our trip makes a positive long term impact on the young people in our group, it certainly made an impact on me.

Join Young Caritas today for a better world tomorrow

At a time when our world is a pretty scary place, young adults in Scotland are being given an opportunity to put their faith into action.

Young Caritas Scotland, launched by SCIAF, is a new national movement aiming to encourage young adults across the country to engage in the international work of the Catholic Church.

SCIAF is part of Caritas Internationalis, a network of Catholic humanitarian organisations spanning 200 countries, united in their goal of reaching out in love to people in the poorest parts of the world. These organisations have developed 'Young Caritas' in their own country, and SCIAF is now creating this in order to provide a platform for young Catholics here in Scotland.

SCIAF's Michael Hamilton said: "Caritas means love and love is at the centre of everything we do for our sisters and brothers around the world.

"Young Caritas will give young adults to chance to speak up, take action and join a global family working to build a better world.

"Whether you are motivated by the war and devastation we see on our screens, climate change or social injustice, this can be a space for you to help shape how our Church can respond to these issues here in Scotland."

Young Caritas has the backing of team behind the Caritas Cup which has organised charitable football and netball tournaments in the Diocese including Adam Costello, 22.

Adam said: "The Caritas Cup started as a game of football between two schools in Airdrie and Coatbridge. It then spread to multiple sports across many parts of Scotland and last year it even reached Rome.

"We support SCIAF due to the values instilled in us from a very young age. The values that resonate with people across our Diocese.

"We are so pleased to be involved in the launch of Young Caritas Scotland. It gives young people an opportunity that others places don't and that's the opportunity to take action.

"That's what we love, being able to put our faith into action and see where we can make a difference. It's being part of a community, where everyone is focussed on the same goals.

"Being involved in Caritas has allowed us to see this work around the world, meeting with other Caritas networks and working with people from all walks of life. It's a great community, which everyone should get involved in.

"It really is one thing seeing what's happening in the world on your phone or news feed. Young Caritas is a place where you can do something about it, take action and make your desire for change happen."

To find out how you can get involved, please visit sciaf.org.uk/youngcaritas



In Malawi and across Africa, people are on the frontline of a devastating hunger crisis. People are severely malnourished, and emergency supplies are running dangerously low. Your donation can help provide life-saving food now, and empower people across Africa to break free from the vicious cycle of poverty through long-term support. Go to <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/get-involved/appeals/954-emergency-hunger-appeal-2026> to donate.

Loving God,
Look mercifully upon us, Your children in Malawi,
our fields cracked by drought,
our homes swallowed by floods,
our few belongings swept away,
our hearts worn thin.
Bless the generous work of SCIAF,
and all their generous supporters,
through their immense generosity,
may a mother's hand find food to give,
and a child too hungry to cry, learn to laugh again.
Let Christ's own compassion flow through this help,
turning our desperation into dignity,
our silent tears into grateful prayer,
and our little ones, from the brink of death,
back into life.
Amen.



Bishop Frank needs YOUR help!

**He needs a new Christmas card to
send to all his friends
– and he wants you to design it!**

**Are you in P5–S4? Draw your
favourite Christmas-themed design
and send it to us! The winning design
will become the Bishop's Christmas
Card for 2026, as well as being
available to buy from our Youth Office!**

Closing date: Friday 9th October

**Ask your parent/ carer to email your design to:
christmas@rcdg.org.uk including your name and age. The
winner will be notified in mid-October with their card being
featured as the Bishop's Christmas Card. The winner will
receive printed cards, their design on a set of Christmas
Baubles, and a certificate from Bishop Frank.**