

# The Church in St. John's and St. Mary's



## WALKING TOGETHER

### A Journal for our Journey

Issue 2

Summer 2023

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#### THEMES FOR THIS EDITION:

- **Youth**  
How they engaged in the Synod process and how they are committed to social action and mission.
- **Laudato Si!**  
Custodianship of the planet and our awareness of environmental issues.

There is still time to respond to the appeal to be active in both parishes. We all have different talents and are encouraged to use them for the good of the whole community.

The community of St. John's would especially welcome new members to assist with the Music Ministry.



#### Welcome to your Parish Synod Journal - Walking Together

The parishes of St Mary's and St. John's have worked together to produce our second issue of this newsletter.

We hope you found our first edition interesting and useful and that this summer edition will be equally informative.

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Pope Francis Papacy. He decided on the name Francis because of St. Francis' great love of the poor and all of God's Creation.

He is also concerned about young people's welfare in the modern world. We therefore concentrate in this issue on young people and the Pope's great encyclical Laudato Si.

If you have any suggestions for improvement or ideas for topics to cover on our journey, please get in touch at: [walkingtogether2023@gmail.com](mailto:walkingtogether2023@gmail.com)



#### The Pope Benedict XVI Caritas Award - St. Matthew's Academy



The Pope Benedict Caritas Award encourages and promotes the ongoing faith journey of young people in secondary schools in Scotland.

Leyla Turk and Courtney Robertson are two Award winners from St. Matthew's Academy and agreed to share what Caritas meant for them.

They both agree that it "was an opportunity to restart their faith journey" and they enjoyed "building bonds with the local community".

Leyla helped with a church 'blingo night' and found out "that volunteering and raising money doesn't need to be through sad, boring ways but rather in ways that uplift people and bring them together".

Caritas also gave the girls "a deeper understanding of what the Church is as young people typically view the church as a place where people go to on Sundays, when in fact, so much time is spent on trying to help people".

For Leyla "Caritas motivated me to get involved with the Mass more often." The girls also realised that "spending a little amount of time on doing something good for the community, but a difference in their self-worth. It really makes you feel rewarded when you know you have spent your time doing something selfless".

For Courtney "Caritas taught me about my values and helped me shape them through events like the Wayside Club's Christmas Party in St. John's." It gave her an insight into "the way people live their lives and the hardships they face. I know how lucky I am to be in the position I'm in".

Courtney thought, "Caritas is such a good opportunity to build on your faith and it helped me explore who I am and what impact I can have on other people".

Both girls received their Caritas Awards on the 6<sup>th</sup> June in Glasgow. Congratulations!



## Pope Francis Faith Award

**“How beautiful it would be if each of you, every evening, could say: “Today at school, at home, at work, guided by God, I showed a sign of love towards one of my friends, my parents, an older person!”**

*(Pope Francis, addressing young people, April 2013)*

This is an award of the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, designed to help children to show “signs of love” in their daily lives and to be active members of their local church.

It invites young people at the Primary 6 and 7 stages to use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and to see how they can bear fruit in their homes, schools and parishes. It is directly connected to what young people are learning about the Sacrament of Confirmation. The award is open to all Catholic Primary schools and parishes.

### St. Anthony’s Primary School

St. Anthony’s undertakes this with pupils. In P6 they look at the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit and how the children display these gifts through their daily lives. They evidence this from things such as events they take part in at school, in clubs outwith school and in parish events.

In P7 they look at these again and add more examples.

Some quotes from our P6 pupils on their Pope Francis Award Faith Journey:

“I like that we are learning about the Bible and it is fun!”

“I like that we do not need to read. It is always fun things we do.”

“I like doing crafts relating to the Gifts.”

“It is fun as we do lots of things and we are still learning.”

13 children explored the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit and tried to become aware of His presence in their lives.



### Here are some of the P7 pupil’s evaluations:

*“I have used the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in many ways at home, in school and in my local community/Parish.*

*“It has taught me to be grateful for everything I have in my life and not to be selfish or complaining. It has also taught me to be kind towards everyone because even the smallest words and voices can hurt somebody.”* Vanessa P7

*“All of these gifts have shown love and kindness to others in many ways.”* Jorja P7

*“This has taught me love, generosity and kindness for my family and peers.”* Amy P7



## Young People and Synod

### The voices of young people are being heard!

Pope Francis made clear at the start of Synod that he wanted the voices of young people around the world to be heard and included at all stages of the synodal process of discernment.

Our own young people contributed to the synod and shared their views on the themes of Communion, Participation and Mission; and they were clear, emphatic and, with a few exceptions, consistent in what they said.

### Young people are calling for:

- the church to be more welcoming of everyone including people who have been traditionally excluded from parts of parish life such as divorced or separated people or people in same-sex relationships,
- a more loving church which relies less on expressing judgement and more on showing God’s love for each one of us,
- a more honest church which focused on missions in the world and giving witness to the power of God’s love.

Much of what young people expressed reflected similar views shared by the ‘rest of us’ (not so young people) meeting in parish groups. It is also clear that, whilst young people feel disconnected from church and parish life, they are not disconnected from their faith which they continue to express through mission and community work.

So, what started with young people having discussions in the Galloway Diocese became part of the Scotland country report. This was then integrated into the European Continental report which has now been forwarded to Rome.

The continental report shows that our own young people have much in common with their peers across Europe who have expressed similar views and hopes for a synodal church.

Pope Francis has provided places for young people to work alongside bishops, clergy, laity and others in preparing the final global document which will come from Rome in 2024 – as if to make sure that young people’s voices from our parishes and from around the global Catholic Church will be heard.



### Where are all our young people?

This is a question many of us ask when we look around church at Mass and speculate on what will happen as our parish community inevitably gets older and where are all our young people, we seem unable to plan to hand over to the next generation of parish leaders and ministries.

Well, we asked young people the same question and this is what some of them told us. Be prepared to be surprised and, possibly challenged.

The church’s teachings on sex, sexuality and birth control are seen as ‘out of date’ and make them feel ‘ashamed’ and unlikely ‘to get to heaven if they make a mistake because they are judged by the church’. The stigma around LGBTQ+ ‘creates a gap’ between the church and young people because whether as LGBTQ+ young people themselves or their friends they feel excluded instead of being ‘loved as equally as everyone else.’

So, young people show a clear awareness of the world around them. They also describe how they try deal with life’s conflicts and challenges, including the consequences of social and economic deprivation, isolation and lack of opportunity. However, that doesn’t mean they don’t want to be more engaged in parish life; quite the opposite, in fact.

They also said that ‘in order to build a bridge between the church and young people’ there should be more opportunities for, and awareness of, volunteering activities around parish life.

Our young people face the challenges of life – and of their faith – every day and for the most part, they do want to play a fuller part in the life of the wider parish. The challenge which they lay down takes us to the heart of our synodal journey together.

Perhaps the question now for the rest of us is ‘What can we do individually and collectively, to ensure young people feel welcome, respected and valued participating members of our parish community?’



## Laudato Si'

At the end of his Encyclical on the environment, Laudato Si, Pope Francis offers us a prayer, which can be found using this link: <https://cafod.org.uk-prayer-for-our-earth>

The prayer sums up the main points of the Encyclical.

*God is present in the Universe and  
in the smallest of his creatures.  
Give us your Love that we may  
protect Life and Beauty.  
Give us your peace that we may  
live together harming no one.*

Help us rescue the poor and abandoned and forgotten of this earth who are so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look to gain at the expense of the poor.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing and fill us with awe at your creation and help us to realise that we are profoundly linked to every creature.

### What can we do to respond to Pope Francis’ call in Laudato Si?

We are all doing our bit to try and reverse the damage we have done to the environment. We recycle as much as we can. Some of us help keep the beaches clean of plastics. Other things we could maybe do would be to plant a tree if we can or switch to an ethical bank such as Triodos, Monzo, Nationwide or Engage. Ethical banks don’t invest in fossil fuels or the Arms Industry.

We could also do away with our need for bottled water and drink tap water instead. Above all take time to appreciate God’s creation, the people and the planet.



## Laudato Si at St. Anthony's P.S.

St. Anthony’s Primary School in Saltcoats is a Laudato Si School.

St. Anthony’s is also an Eco School and has been awarded Green Flags on five occasions.

Outdoor learning is a huge part of our curriculum here. We do have a polytunnel, which we use to grow various produce. Some of this produce has been used in our school kitchen for school lunches.

We have a Walking Bus every Tuesday. One of the aims of this is to reduce the amount of traffic on the road. Parents and carers are encouraged to drop their children off on the route and the bus makes its way to the school.

This all ties in very well with one of the school values of Respect. We want to show respect to all of God’s creation.





## The Blessing of the Easter Baskets (Święconka) in St. John's

Święconka is one of the most enduring and beloved Polish traditions on Holy Saturday, with roots dating back to the early history of Poland.

The foods in the baskets have a symbolic meaning:

*Eggs – symbolise life and Christ's resurrection.*

*Bread – symbolic of Jesus,*

*Lamb – represents Christ.*

*Salt – represents purification.*

*Horseradish – symbolic of the bitter sacrifice of Christ.*

*Ham – symbolic of great joy and abundance.*

The food blessed in the church remains untouched according to local traditions until either Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning.



The Polish Community in St. John's



## Chana

No, not an African country! It is the name adopted by a group of representatives of various churches and stands for **Churches' Homelessness Action North Ayrshire**.

The aim is to make a Christian response to homelessness. It was born out of the Option for the Poor Group which emerged when we were trying to Embrace Change.

As far as we know there are no rough sleepers - or what are called "roofless people" - in North Ayrshire but there are a number living in temporary accommodation or trying to become established in newly allocated houses.

The main need is for basics such as toiletries and household goods.

We also run Lunch Clubs and offer a free lunch in the Kirkgate Church in Saltcoats on a Friday at 12.30 pm and St Margaret's Church in Dalry on a Monday at Noon.

Chana were awarded a Community Health & Wellbeing Award for services to the community. The Council commented that "volunteers provided a warm welcome to everyone who joins them and do so in a non-judgemental and friendly way."

**For further information please contact  
CHANA on 07585665751**



## Pause for Prayer

In October 2021 Pope Francis said, "the worst service someone can give God, and others as well, is... to pray like parrots. No, one prays with the heart. Prayer is the centre of life."

Here our parishioners share prayers which mean a great deal to them.

I pray to St. John Ogilvie as my son's anniversary falls on his feast day. This brings me great comfort.

*Almighty and eternal God, you gave to St. John Ogilvie wisdom in defending the Catholic faith and courage in facing a martyr's death: listen to our prayer, and send us an ever greater harvest of faith, hope and love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.*

**This poem encourages me and guides my prayer:**

*Thank you God for everything.*

*The big things and the small.*

*For every good gift comes from God,  
the giver of them all.*

*And all too often we accept without any thanks  
or praise the gifts God sends as  
blessings each day in many ways.*

*First thank you for the little things that  
often come our way.*

*The things we take for granted but  
don't mention when we pray.*

*Then thank you for the miracles,  
we are much too blind to see.*

*And give us new awareness of the many  
gifts from Thee and help us to remember  
that the key to life and living is  
to make each prayer a prayer of  
thanks and every day thanksgiving.*

Perhaps you have a particular prayer that you would like to share with us. In the meantime, can we also suggest reflect + prayer + act as a way of combining prayer and life. You can access this via the link:

[goodnews@franciscanmedia.org](mailto:goodnews@franciscanmedia.org)

Charity No: SCO10576:

St. John's Church, Stevenston and St. Mary's Church,  
Saltcoats. Parishes of the R.C. Diocese of Galloway.