



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

WALKING TOGETHER

A Journal for our Journey

Issue 5

June 2024

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THEMES FOR THIS EDITION:

Communion:

God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith. The communion we share finds its roots in the love and unity of the Trinity and we all have a role to play.

Mission:

To witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family, especially with those on the social, economic and political margins of our world.

Participation:

To invite the involvement of all who belong to the people of God (the laity, consecrated and ordained) to serve one another through the distinct gifts we each have received through the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Kingdom of God.



Welcome to your Parish Synod Journal - Walking Together

Welcome to the summer edition of your Synod Journal in which we focus on the themes of Communion, Mission and Participation, vital pillars of a Synodal Church. Our contributors have shared their Personal experiences of these themes in their lives: becoming full members of the Catholic church; coming from a different culture and joining a new parish; sharing gifts as they lead the Stations of the Cross or support our parish or local community. Former youth group members recall supporting the mission of Fr. Martin Chambers, R.I.P., who served the people of Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Thank you to all contributors who remind us that God calls us in many different ways to live out the Easter message. We hope they will inspire our own faith journeys as we participate in the mission of the church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. Synodality reminds us that the entire People of God walk forward together, listening deeply and respectfully to one another, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.



R.C.I.A. Journey

Afzal Monir



Hello, I would like to briefly talk about my journey towards the Catholic faith. I was born and brought up as a Muslim and although I was never a particularly devout and practicing Muslim, I have always communed with God on an almost daily basis, albeit often in an argumentative and fractious manner regarding help with my frequent failings.

So, what/who am I? The honest answer must be that after so many years, I am a Muslim who has adopted the Catholic faith as a channel of communication towards the same, The One, God.

Over many years, I have got into the routine of attending St Mary's Chapel with my wife, who has been a life-long quietly devoted Catholic. I have always believed that there are several channels towards God, and that an intrinsically good person of whatever faith, would inevitably be recognised and saved.

I have found St Mary's a welcoming community where I can, hopefully, continue to find comfort and guidance in practicing my faith.



We are on



SCAN ME
Like, Follow and Share
Stay updated on events,
important dates
and critical celebrations
in the RC calendar.

X/TWITTER ACCOUNT

The X/Twitter handle is:
@stmarysstjohns
for those who wish to follow it.



R.C.I.A. Journey (Contd.)

Tom Cochrane

After years of consideration, at the age of 27, I embarked on a profound journey of faith and self-discovery by enrolling in the R.C.I.A. process at St John's in Stevenston. From the outset, I was warmly welcomed by Tam, Josie, Bernadette and Canon Poland. Our weekly gatherings quickly became the highlight of my week, as we engaged in thought-provoking conversations about life's deepest

questions and the role of God in our lives. These discussions allowed me to deepen my understanding of my own faith and inspired me to align my life more closely with the teachings of Jesus.

The experience of entering the candle-lit church during the Easter Vigil was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating. The bustling energy of the congregation, combined with the solemnity of the occasion, created a powerful atmosphere unlike anything I had experienced before.



St John's Youth Group - Tribute to Fr. Martin Chambers



Our trip to Ecuador to meet Fr Martin during his missionary work was one which we will all cherish for a lifetime. During our time there we spent lots of time within the community; visiting the school and food bank, going to different parishes, and giving house visits to other members of the community. It was very clear to see just how much Fr Martin meant to them and the joy he brought to their lives. He provided not only financial help and assistance through various fundraising, but also prayer and most importantly, hope. It was clear that there was so much hope in the people of the town and that through the love, and as always, the laughter that Fr Martin brought to the community was their beacon of hope. He led lots of projects throughout the area and made sure to get us involved in these, including the building/decorating of a new school and church. During the painting and building, there was always singing and laughter. Music was such an integral part of Fr Martin's ministry and it certainly shone through, with us all learning songs in Spanish to

sing along with the community. We will never forget our time in Guayaquil which would always have been life-changing, but was made even more special by Fr Martin's charm and infectious energy, and the outpouring of love he showed to everyone around him.



St John's Parent Council

St John's Parent Council are delighted to have been invited to take part in providing teas and coffees after Mass on alternate Sundays.

Welcomed by parishioners old and young, we have become part of the St John's Parish community. The children who have volunteered with us have grown in confidence and are beginning to show leadership skills. In participating in church teas, it has allowed the Parent Council to support St John's Primary School by providing learning and educational/social experiences to all children within the school. Without the kind donations of parishioners, these activities would not be achievable. All of us at St John's Parent Council wish to thank St John's church and Parishioners for their continued support. It is greatly appreciated.



CHANA - Churches Homeless Action North Ayrshire

Our recent appeal for toiletries for those who are homeless was met by both our communities with real generosity. We took around 25 bags of various toiletries to the hostel in Ardrossan. Chana is supported by most churches in North Ayrshire. As well as supporting the homeless we run weekly Lunch Clubs in St. Margaret's, Dalry and the Kirkgate in Saltcoats. We are also in the process of providing suitcases for children in care who are moving.



Families Experiences - St John's Church

A Home Away from Home: My Journey with St John's Catholic Church



My name is Leonard Obini, a humble student from Glasgow Caledonian University. My journey from Nigeria to Scotland in September 2023 was not just a physical relocation; it was a spiritual voyage that led me to the warm embrace of the St John's Catholic church in Stevenston.

Upon our arrival in Scotland, my family and I were strangers in a foreign land. However, the moment we stepped into Stevenston in October 2023, we felt an immediate sense of belonging. As devout Catholics, we were drawn to the St John's Catholic church, and the reception we received was nothing short of extraordinary.

The members of the church welcomed us with open arms, their hospitality unmatched. Despite our difference in colour and culture, they made us feel loved and accepted. This overwhelming display of love and acceptance inspired my family and me to contribute more to the church. My wife and I joined the church cleaners, while our children became Mass servers.

One of the most memorable moments of our stay was the profound welcome we received from the Priest. His words of encouragement and his assurance that his doors were always open to us left a lasting impression on our hearts. His kindness and generosity embodied the spirit of the St John's Catholic church community.

The decision to leave Stevenston seemed like an impossibility. The St John's family had become our family, the church our home. We saw Jesus in every smile, felt His love in every handshake, and heard His words in every sermon. Our faith grew stronger, and our bond with the church deepened.

I am extremely grateful for the love and support we received from the St John's Catholic church community. They showed us that home is not just a place; it's a feeling of belonging, of being loved and accepted for who you are. They made us see that home is where the heart is, and our hearts will forever be with the St John's Catholic church.

In conclusion, our stay in Stevenston was not just about geographical relocation; it was a spiritual journey that brought us closer to God and to each other. The St John's Catholic church was not just a place of worship; it was a home, a community, a family. And for that, I can only say, "Thank you."

My family experience in St John's Church

My kids and I first arrived in North Ayrshire on Wednesday, February 22, 2023, but prior to our arrival, I had called Rev. Fr Canon Martin Poland to inform him of our arrival and we had just relocated from Nigeria and we needed some items for our house and he assured me of his assistance and when I arrived I was received and assisted by Danny and Susan, they both took me around to shops to get furniture and kitchen equipment for my house and also got the kids some toys. When it was time for the kids to start school, Canon Martin helped to register them accordingly and started off immediately.

We started attending Mass immediately, and everyone was welcoming, and some church members sent us cash gifts, which also went a long way to make our stay very comfortable. My kids started their baptism class and got baptised according to Canon Martin.

The church has become a great source of blessing to us and an inspiration to serve God diligently every day. The church has helped shape my kids, and they are now very much involved in church activities, which makes me very happy knowing that they are growing in the Lord's vineyard.

By Mercy Ugochwu





Stations of the Cross

S6 St. Matthew's Academy Caritas Award

A group of pupils participating in the S6 Caritas Award began the Lenten preparations in St John's church with Stations of the Cross on 23 February this year. They described the event as 'fantastic' and went on to say that 'for a group of pupils, being able to pick our own version of the Stations of the Cross and to lead a service in the church was a lovely experience. Thank you so much for asking us.' These positive words were added to by the Head Teacher of St Matthew's, Stephen Colligan, who said: 'I am confident that this year of service will encourage our young people to continue to share their talents, time and God-given gifts with others as they progress through adulthood.' Positive words indeed and both St Mary's and St John's look forward to an even greater connection with the new group of S6 students who will begin their Caritas journey in June this year.



Margaret and Hugh McCreath: Stations

We decided to get involved simply because we were asked. We found that sharing and choosing the content of each station was a very good experience because we don't normally undertake such an activity at home - it was another way of sharing. Lenten Stations were a great experience with different people participating each week. Interaction and cooperation between different groups was really good too.



Aldo and Anna

We are very traditional Catholics; we always attend the Stations of the Cross and the May Rosary in St John's. We were a little surprised this year when different groups led the stations. This was a real departure from what we had come to expect. Although we prefer the traditional stations, we were pleased to see other people participating, especially the young people. It would have been helpful to have had copies because it was difficult to hear some of the participants. We particularly liked the version of the Stations from Our Lady's perspective which was led by the Ladies Group in St John's.



Pause for Prayer

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer "Adsumus Sancte Spiritus," the first word of the original Latin, meaning "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2024, we propose to the following simplified version, [1] so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

**We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in your name.
With you alone to guide us,
make yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partially influence our actions.
Let us find in you our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of you,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the community of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.**