



# THE SUNDAY NEWSLETTER

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord  
Sunday 11th January 2026

St Joseph's – Our Lady of Mount Carmel – St Matthew's  
Catholic Parishes, Kilmarnock

**Parish Priest:** Father Stephen G. McGrattan (stephen.mcgrattan@rcdg.org.uk)

**Assistant Priest:** Father Kevin J. A. Rennie (kevin.rennie@rcdg.org.uk)

**Pastoral Assistants:** Sisters Mary Rose Confidence, Mary Mabel and Marilyn Juliet (ihmsisters@rcdg.org.uk)

**Parish Secretary:** Mariella Hoekstra Berry (rckilmarnock@rcdg.org.uk)

Items for the newsletter to the Parish Secretary (by 10 am Thursday please): rckilmarnock@rcdg.org.uk

Web: www.rckilmarnock.org.uk

Parishes of the R C Diocese of Galloway (www.rcdg.org.uk). Charity number SC010576. ONELICENCE #A-632895.

## LITURGY AND GATHERINGS FROM SUNDAY 11th – 18th JANUARY 2026

Time	Venue	Gathering	Mass intention
<b>Saturday 10th</b>			
11.00 – 4.00 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Diocesan Youth Christmas Gathering</b>	
12.30 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Mass with the Diocesan Youth</b>	Galloway Youth
5.30 – 5.45 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Confession</b>	
6.00 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Vigil Mass</b>	Alex Bolland (RIP)
<b>Sunday 11th</b>			
9.30 am	St Matthew's	<b>Mass with Bishop Frank</b>	
11.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	Mary Williamson (RIP)
11.30 am	OLMC	<b>Mass with Bishop Frank</b>	
After Mass	OLMC	<b>Tea and Coffee</b>	
12.30 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Senior Parishioners' Christmas Lunch</b>	
12.45 pm	St Matthew's	<b>Community Lunch</b>	
3.30 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Diocesan Young Adults' Christmas Lunch</b>	
<b>Monday 12th</b>			
9.30 am	St Matthew's	<b>Recitation of the Holy Rosary</b>	
10.00 am	St Matthew's	<b>Mass</b>	Peter Mason (RIP)
10.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	Betty McCaffrey (RIP)
10.30 – 10.45 am	St Joseph's	<b>Confession</b>	
<b>Tuesday 13th</b>			
10.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	
10.30 – 11.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament</b>	
10.00 am	OLMC	<b>Mass</b>	Mary Power (RIP)
10.30 – 11.00 am	OLMC	<b>Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with Confessions</b>	(until 10.50 am)
11.00 – 1.00 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Community Caf�</b>	
7.00 pm	OLMC	<b>RCIA in the Norbert Room</b>	
<b>Wednesday 14th</b>			
10.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	
After Mass	St Joseph's	<b>Recitation of the Holy Rosary</b>	
10.00 am	St Matthew's	<b>Mass</b>	Mary McNally, Donal McNally, John Byers, Ronnie Morton (RIP)
10.30 – 11.00 am	St Matthew's	<b>Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with Confessions</b>	(until 10.50 am)
1.30 pm	OLMC	<b>U R Welcome AGM</b>	
<b>Thursday 15th</b>			
6.00 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	Betty Catanzaro (RIP)
6.30 pm	St Joseph's	<b>RCIA in St Joseph's Presbytery</b>	
<b>Friday 16th</b>			
10.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass</b>	Jean Mulhern (RIP)
<b>No Rosary or Friday Mass in Our Lady of Mount Carmel this week.</b>			
<b>Saturday 17th</b>			
5.30 – 5.45 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Confession</b>	
6.00 pm	St Joseph's	<b>Vigil Mass with Bishop Frank</b>	
<b>Sunday 18th</b>			
9.30 am	St Matthew's	<b>Mass</b>	
After Mass	St Matthew's	<b>Tea and Coffee</b>	
11.00 am	St Joseph's	<b>Mass with Bishop Frank</b>	
After Mass	St Joseph's	<b>Tea and Coffee</b>	
11.30 am	OLMC	<b>Mass</b>	
After Mass	OLMC	<b>Tea and Coffee</b>	

**St Joseph's is open for prayer Monday to Friday from 9.30 am until 4 pm. Enter through the small side door.**

Fr Stephen and Fr Kevin will be overseeing all eight of the East Ayrshire parishes from after Christmas and during much of January to accommodate annual leave. The pastoral needs in the other parishes may effect changes to the Kilmarnock weekday Mass schedule.

We are grateful to the retired clergy who are making the weekend Mass cover possible in all of the churches at this time.



Please switch mobile phones to silent when in the church and especially during Mass.



**BURNS' SUPPER**

JOIN US FOR A TRADITIONAL BURNS' SUPPER  
 ACCOMPANIED BY LIVE MUSIC AND POETRY FROM  
 THE BAIRD AND ACROSS SCOTLAND!

**SATURDAY 31ST JANUARY**  
**7.00 PM**

**ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH HALL**

TICKETS ON SALE FROM THE STALL:  
**£10 - ADULTS/ £5 - CHILDREN/ U-10S FREE**

name/intention, the preferred date and the church where you would prefer it to be offered. Mass Intention envelopes are available from the stall or the sacristy.

Every effort will be made to offer the Mass in your preferred location and on your preferred date, but this will not always be possible if a Mass intention has already been arranged. Where a Mass is offered for someone who is living, this will be listed as "Special Intention" rather than listing their name to respect the privacy of the individual.

Mass intentions are planned a week in advance: for this reason, it is hoped that you will understand that Masses requested at short notice may have to be offered on another day.

**REGISTRATION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS:** Primary 1 registration at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Andrew's Primary Schools takes place this week from Monday to Friday for children who attain the age of 5 years between 1 March 2026 and 28 February 2027, and whose parents/carers wish them to attend school. Registration forms should be completed online at [www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk) and submitted no later than Friday 16 January 2026.

Our parishes have close ties with St Andrew's Primary and Mount Carmel Primary for both Sacramental preparation and Catholic education and would strongly encourage you to choose these schools for your child.

To register your child you will require to upload a copy of your child's birth certificate and two proofs of your residence in the catchment area in the form of a Council Tax Notice or Utility Bill. Should you require a copy of your child's birth certificate for Registration, this can be obtained at [www.certificates.scot](http://www.certificates.scot)

If you are unable to register online then please phone your local school who will assist you to register your child. 01563 549549 (St Andrew's) or 01563 525897 (Mount Carmel).

**SUPPORTING OUR CHURCHES:** It is now possible to donate online to the Weekly Collection and Building Fund in all three of our churches by scanning the QR code or going to the parish website. Next week, contactless terminals, similar to those already in many of the churches around the Diocese, will be installed in St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel to offer an alternative means of donating to support our churches for those who do not carry cash/ use standing orders.

**BURNS NIGHT:** The annual St Joseph's Burns Night will take place in St Joseph's hall on Saturday 31st January at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm. The programme is not too formal and there will be live music, entertainment, a three-course meal and the bar will be open. Tickets are available from the Church Stall in all three parishes priced: £10 for adults, £5 for school children, under 10's are free. Tickets are limited so please buy them soon. Donations of raffle prizes are welcome and can be left in the stall/Church house.

**FELLOWSHIP OF KILMARNOCK CHURCHES PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY:** On Sunday 25th January at 3.00 pm we will be hosting The Fellowship of Kilmarnock Churches annual prayer service praying for Christian Unity. We would encourage you to join us in prayer as we gather with Christian communities from across Kilmarnock in celebrating our similarities and our common belief in God.

**REGISTRATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF FIRST RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION:** If you have a child in primary three and would like for them to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion during 2026 and 2027 please register with the parish by email. When emailing, please include the name of your child, the church where you would like your child to receive First Holy Communion, and a statement of commitment to attend Sunday Mass with your child during the time of preparation and also after First Communion is received. Please do so no later than Friday 30th January.

On Tuesday 3rd February there will be a parents' meeting in St Joseph's hall (for all three parishes) at 7.00 pm to explain more about the sacraments and the process of preparation. Attendance at this meeting is very important.

**CARD PAYMENTS:** It is now possible to pay by card in any of our parish stalls.

## GENERAL NOTICES

**PASTORAL VISIT FROM BISHOP FRANK:** Following the clergy changes in Kilmarnock, we welcome Bishop Frank to St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel parishes this weekend as he celebrates Sunday Mass. Next weekend, he will join St Joseph's for the Saturday Vigil and Sunday morning Mass. We would encourage as many as possible to attend Mass over these weekends to meet the Bishop and to hear what he has to say.

**"YEAR OF PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT" – A PASTORAL LETTER FROM BISHOP FRANK DOUGAN:** In the Diocese of Galloway, Bishop Frank has established a "Year of Prayer the Holy Spirit", promoting frequent prayer to the Holy Spirit as a means of opening our hearts and minds to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the local Church. The letter is included in this week's newsletter, and prayer cards with a Prayer to the Holy Spirit will be distributed soon.

A monthly Mass of the Holy Spirit will be celebrated in the different deaneries. The first Mass will be in St Margaret's Cathedral on Tuesday 20th January at 7.00 pm. All are welcome.

**2026 YOUTH OFFICE CALENDAR – NOW ONLY £5:** The Youth Office's 2026 Calendar is available in all of our Church Stalls priced £5 and featuring a range of photos from their events over the last 12 months, as well as a full religious and social calendar for the year. All proceeds from the calendars go towards supporting ministry to youth and young adults in our Diocese.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** The parishes have moved to a new 'RC Kilmarnock' Facebook page as well as launching on X and Instagram. Our old pages have been archived, but please like and share our new pages to keep in touch.

**LIVESTREAMED MASS:** We have moved to a common 'RC Kilmarnock' YouTube channel. Following this change, each weekday, Mass will be livestreamed from one of our parishes, with Sunday Mass continuing to be streamed from all three parishes.

**MASS INTENTIONS:** When asking for a Mass to be offered, please indicate on the "Mass Intention" envelope, the



**CONTACTLESS DONATIONS:** It is now possible to support all three of our parishes through contactless donations, or through online giving on our website, just: 1) Select the Collection, 2) Choose the amount, 3) Tap your card, 4) (If you're a taxpayer) Enter your email address to register for Gift Aid.

**Gift Aided Donations:** It is possible to add Gift Aid to donations made through this system, just enter your email address after making your donation and you'll be emailed a Gift Aid form. Once you've completed it, any future donations made with the same card will be automatically Gift Aided. Even if you have already completed a Gift Aid form for envelopes, you still need to complete this form for contactless donations to be Gift Aided as it is a separate system.

**HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY:** Fr Stephen, Fr Kevin, and the Sisters visit Catholic patients in Crosshouse Hospital typically twice weekly. If you know of anyone in the hospital, please let us know by email ([stephen.mcgrattan@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:stephen.mcgrattan@rcdg.org.uk)) or phone 01563 521832 and they will be visited during our routine visiting. We are not automatically notified when a Catholic patient is admitted to hospital and so we rely on receiving the information from family and friends. For general visiting in Ayr Hospital please contact Fr Benjamin Mkeri at [benjamin.mkeri@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:benjamin.mkeri@rcdg.org.uk) or on 01655 882145. For urgent or emergency assistance from a chaplain please ask the hospital staff to page the priest on call.

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The Sacramental Preparation dates for our young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of First Eucharist are shown below. On each listed Sunday, 'I Belong' will take place in their respective parish following Mass. Each session lasts approximately 1 hour and attendance is required as part of their preparation to receive the sacraments.

- Session 6 – Sunday 25th January
- Session 7 – Sunday 22nd February
- Session 8 – Sunday 22nd March
- Session 9 – Sunday 26th April
- Session 10 – Sunday 10th May
- Retreat Day – Saturday 16th May (For all young people in the deanery) in *St Joseph's* from 10.00 – 2.00 pm.

First Holy Communion will be celebrated:

- St Matthew's – Sunday 31st May, 9.30 am
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel – Sunday 31st May, 11.30 am
- St Joseph's – Sunday 7th June, 11.00 am

The monthly 'I Belong' sessions will now take place in:

- St Matthew's: After Sunday Mass, 10.30 – 11.30 am in the Committee Room
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel: 10.15 – 11.15 am in the Norbert Room
- St Joseph's: 12.30 – 1.45 pm in the Greenroom (*with Parents' Session in the main hall*)

**PARENTS' MEETINGS:** To discuss the programme and to answer any questions, Fr Stephen will meet with the parents of the Sacramental children in St Matthew's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Sunday 25th January:

- St Matthew's – Immediately after Mass in the Church
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel – 11.10 am in the Norbert Room

Attendance at this meeting is important as part of your child's preparation for the Sacrament, as is weekly attendance at Sunday Mass.

## ST JOSEPH'S PARISH

**CHOIR PRACTICES:** Choir Practices for Holy Week and Easter will commence on Sunday 1 February, 6.15 - 8.15 p.m., and each Sunday evening thereafter. Please note: there will be a final practice on Wednesday 1 April at 7 p.m. New members in all voice parts are welcome. The ability to read music is helpful but is not an essential requirement.

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:** The St Joseph's Parish Pastoral Council will meet on Monday 27th January at 6.30 pm in the church hall. There will be a time of Eucharistic Adoration from 6.00 pm in the church for those who can manage. Should parishioners wish an item to be discussed, please email [rkilmarnock@rcdg.org.uk](mailto:rkilmarnock@rcdg.org.uk) or pass the item to the parish house.

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD:** We have very few volunteers to lead Children's Liturgy at present and, without more coming forward, we may not be able to offer this to the children every week. If you would like to guide the children through the Liturgy of the Word in the hall during Mass, please speak to Fr Stephen, Fr Kevin or Margaret McGrath. All resources and training are provided. Children's Liturgy will resume next Sunday, 18th January.

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE:** Please remember in your prayers the soul of Mungo Miller who died recently. Mungo's Funeral Service will be on Wednesday 14th January at 12.30 pm at Holmsford Bridge Crematorium. May he rest in peace.

**SUNDAY TEAS:** The Sunday teas will resume next Sunday.

## OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PARISH

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE:** Please remember in your prayers the soul of Gerda Devlin who has died. Gerda's Funeral Mass will be on Tuesday 20th January at 10 am. May she rest in peace.

**U R WELCOME CLUB:** The Annual General Meeting of the U R Welcome Club will take place on Wednesday 14th January at 1.30 pm in the Norbert Room. This will be followed by a cuppa and a catchup. All are welcome – please come along and bring your ideas for the year ahead.

## ST MATTHEW'S PARISH

**COMMUNITY LUNCH:** Join the group today for the regular community lunch at 12.45pm in St Matthew's Hall. The meal is free and all are welcome.

**THANK YOU:** Thank you to St Kentigern's Church for the generous donation of £1,046.65 for the work of the Foodbank. The gift is greatly appreciated.

## MINISTRY TO YOUNG PEOPLE

**YOUTH OFFICE 200 CLUB:** This provides support for young people who otherwise would struggle to participate in events. Membership is £5 per month, with a monthly draw giving you the chance to win cash prizes. **Pick up a form in the stall to register, or go to their website: [youth.rcdg.org.uk](http://youth.rcdg.org.uk).**

## FOLLOW US ONLINE

Facebook – X – Instagram – [@rckilmarnock](https://www.instagram.com/rckilmarnock)  
Web: [www.rckilmarnock.org.uk](http://www.rckilmarnock.org.uk)  
YouTube: RC Kilmarnock

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- I Belong – Sunday 25th January, After Mass (*All Parishes*)
- Fellowship of Kilmarnock Churches Christian Unity Service – Sunday 25th January, 3.00 pm (*St Joseph's*)
  - St Joseph's PPC Meeting – Monday 26th January, 6.30 pm (*St Joseph's*)
  - Burns' Night – Saturday 31st January, 7.00 pm (*St Joseph's – Open to All*)
  - Young Adults' Evening – Sunday 1st February, 5.45 pm (*St Joseph's*)
- St Joseph's Choir Practices Commence – Sunday 1st February, 6.15 pm (*St Joseph's*)
  - Youth Evening – Sunday 15th February, 5.00 pm (*St Joseph's*)
- Deanery Pastoral Council Meeting – Tuesday 17th February, 6.30 pm (*St Joseph's*)

### MINISTRY ROTAS FOR THIS WEEK AND NEXT WEEK

	Readers (1st, 2nd, Intercessions)	Ministers of Communion	Altar Servers	Sunday Teas	Children's Liturgy	Welcomers	Bidding Prayers
<b>Saturday 10 Jan</b> St Joseph's 6 pm	M Kirk, E Heron, K McGhee	Sr Juliet, Sr Mabel, C Power, A Gorman, F Donachie	Joseph, Ethan, Antoni, Ravindu, Lexi, Maia			Claire, Margaret	Hugh Matthews
<b>Sunday 11 Jan</b> St Matthew's 9.30 am	Anne Gillion, Brian Gihooley, Joseph Duff	R: M Musilli, S Duff L: N McKenna, F Stacey, C Stacey	Luca, David, Rebecca		Kerry, David		
<b>Sunday 11 Jan</b> St Joseph's 11 am	G McGee, G Smith, F McCann	P Dorrian, H Matthews, P Chigbo, E Cunningham, L Dorrian	Ryan, Luca, Mark, Rachel, Gabo, Jason, Marilyn, Kamili, Bianca, Jude	None today	None today	Alan, Theresa	
<b>Sunday 11 Jan</b> OLMC 11.30 am	tbc	tbc	Jessica, Farrah, Katie	Suzy	Julie, John	Martin Duffy Rita Chak	
<b>Saturday 17 Jan</b> St Joseph's 6 pm	A Davidson, M McGrath, F Donachie	C McGowan, L Rankin, G Rankin, K McGhee, M McGrath	Joseph, Ethan, Antoni, Ravindu, Lexi, Maia			Kathleen, Frances	Marie Wilkie
<b>Sunday 18 Jan</b> St Matthew's 9.30 am	Margaret Merrick, Kenny Ainsworth, Dawn Bias	R: Sister, Clare Gordon L: M Bradley, M Dempster, M Gordon	Luca, David, Rebecca				
<b>Sunday 18 Jan</b> St Joseph's 11 am	M Andrew, An Davidson, H Matthews	I Love, F McCann, R Murphy, A Neil, J Shields	Ryan, Luca, Mark, Rachel, Gabo, Jason, Marilyn, Kamili, Bianca, Jude	Anne & Gerry Smith	Emma Boyd, Karen Cassidy	Paul, Libby	
<b>Sunday 18 Jan</b> OLMC 11.30 am	tbc	tbc	Jessica, Farrah, Katie	Suzy	Marion, John	Charlie Harper, Marie Wylie	

### Useful Contacts

	Hall bookings	Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators
St Joseph's	Margaret McGrath (01563 542130)	Margaret McGrath (psc.kilmarnock.stjoseph@rcdg.org.uk)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel		Alice Brown (alice.brown@rcdg.org.uk) Charles Harper (charles.harper@rcdg.org.uk)
St Matthew's	Margaret Merrick (07765 715798)	Marjorie McInnes (marjorie.mcinnis@rcdg.org.uk)
<b>Crosshouse and Ayr Hospitals:</b> In emergencies ask hospital staff to page the on-call priest. For regular visiting: <i>Crosshouse Hospital:</i> Fr Stephen McGrattan (stephen.mcgrattan@rcdg.org.uk or 01563 521832) <i>Ayr Hospital:</i> Fr Benjamin Mkeri (benjamin.mkeri@rcdg.org.uk or 01655 882145)		
<b>St Andrew's Primary:</b> 01563 549549 <b>Mount Carmel Primary:</b> 01563 525897 <b>St Joseph's Academy:</b> 01563 526144		

### Parish Office & Presbytery Contact Details:

St Joseph's Presbytery, 15a Hill Street, Kilmarnock, KA3 1HB – Telephone: 01563 521832

### Convent Contact Details

Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mount Carmel Convent, 14 Kirkton Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 2DF  
 Telephone: 01563 523822 • Email: ihmsisters@rcdg.org.uk

### Collections for Sunday 4th January

St Joseph's	<b>Standing orders:</b> £834.08. <b>Weekly collection:</b> £1,192. <b>Building Fund:</b> £30. <b>Justice &amp; Peace:</b> £825.43. <b>SCES:</b> £20. <b>Ecuador Trust:</b> £200.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel	<b>Standing orders:</b> £261.57. <b>Weekly collections:</b> £296.98; <b>Justice &amp; Peace</b> £222.78. <b>SSVP:</b> £122.16.
St Matthew's	<b>Standing orders:</b> £515.54. <b>Weekly collections:</b> £277.88. <b>Christmas collection:</b> £858.62. <b>Justice &amp; Peace:</b> £292.95. <b>Community Box:</b> £124.25. <b>Ecuador Trust:</b> £6.50.

Thank you for generously supporting our parishes.

### SUPPORT OUR PARISHES

You can now support our parishes by giving online, just scan the QR code to donate or go to our website and click the link.

St Joseph's



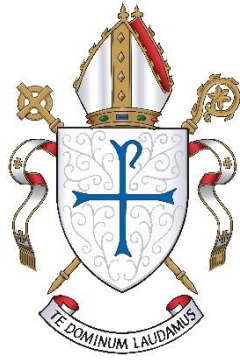
Our Lady of Mount Carmel



St Matthew's



Please ask your child(ren) to return to you immediately after the Children's Liturgy if you do not wish them to be captured on the live-stream recording.



## DIOCESE OF GALLOWAY

### “Year of Prayer to the Holy Spirit”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we celebrate the end of the Holy Year, I am aware that it also marks the end of my first full year as your bishop, and I am continually grateful for my ministry with you. Over that time, I have got to know you just a little bit more.

And I have seen and heard your worries for the Church in Galloway. We do see a Church that is a bit bruised and can feel a bit tired. We can be tempted to feel that things are only going in one direction and, crucially, that things can only go in one direction. But I have also seen parishes, schools and communities of real faith, sure hope and intense love. I have seen so many signs that this is the living Church of Jesus Christ and that we have much to build upon. I want you to be encouraged by this and by the continued call of Christ to follow him and bring him to others.

In my time with you, and in times of prayer, I have wondered how we might take steps to renew the Church in our Diocese, and crucially to understand how the Lord wants us to proceed. And what has caught my imagination is the next Holy Year: 2033 marks the two thousandth anniversary of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord. This will be a time of huge celebrations in the whole Church, and I believe it offers a great opportunity for renewal here in Galloway. And that renewal will rest on one question:

**How does the Holy Spirit want the Diocese of Galloway to proclaim the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus in 2033?**

This means asking where we are as a Church now, how we should be as a Church in 7 years' time, and how to get there. By asking this question, we will find answers that lead us to renewal and change in our Diocese. Over these few years, we can work together in the Lord to discern how best we can respond to that missionary command that is given to us all: Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News.

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What those changes will be, I do not know. If we approach it in a spirit of suspicion, of protecting our own corner of the Church, of saying things must be the way 'they have always been' then we will be in danger of listening to ourselves and reducing the Church to what suits our personal worship and practice. But if we approach it in a spirit of openness, like the disciples who followed Christ before they knew where that would lead, then we accept that we are part of a Church that is greater than us.

The first thing I am asking you to do is to pray. We all have opinions and ideas, hopes and fears, but it does not start with us. It starts with God. If we do not give him his place, then we will be working in vain. So, before we discuss, decide or act, we must pray asking the Spirit to open our hearts to his will. I am asking you to create an industry of prayer to the Holy Spirit in your private prayer, your homes, parishes, schools and communities.

Only by giving time in prayer can we allow the quiet voice of the Spirit the space to reveal himself to us. And where will this lead us? I do not know! I, like you, must allow myself to be unsettled by a Spirit who might take us to places we do not expect or even want. In our prayer to the Holy Spirit, we ask that he (not we) shall renew the face of the earth.

To help with this, prayer cards have been printed for everyone in the Diocese, for you to pray privately and together. Keep these cards close and pray the prayer often.

I will celebrate a monthly Mass to the Holy Spirit across the Diocese, beginning in the Cathedral on Tuesday 20th January at 7 pm and moving around one of the four deaneries each month.

This is the beginning of a process of discernment and renewal in Galloway. It might seem light in practical details. That is deliberate. From the beginning, I do not want us to lose sight of the fact that it begins with the Father's will, the presence of Christ, the action of the Holy Spirit. We will have much to do, and some changes might come sooner rather than later, but we must always have prayer and an openness to God at the centre.

Just as we were invited to look for signs of hope during the Jubilee, so let us listen for the voice of the Spirit in the year ahead.

**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.**

With every blessing for the year ahead,



+Francis

11 January 2026, Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord

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