



# Unity<sup>37</sup>

Lochgilphead/Inveraray



L-R: Our new diocesan canons – William MacLean, John Paul MacKinnon, Michael Hutson, and Roddy Johnston. Canon William & Canon Michael were both past parish priests here at St Margaret's.

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On March 10, before the closure of all churches, St Margaret's parishioners travelled to Oban for the installation of the four new canons.



## Putting trust in the Lord...

*Dear Brothers and Sisters*

The outbreak of the Coronavirus has brought our world to a standstill in a way unseen in peacetime. Every aspect of our lives has been affected, and this of course includes our faith lives. All public masses have been suspended, churches have been closed, no weddings or baptisms can take place and funerals can only be conducted at the graveside with immediate family present. We know that these measures are in place to restrict the spread of a virus that knows no borders. It is difficult, however, for all of us to comprehend, especially if we're separated from family and friends.

With modern technology, we are able to do much more now to 'stay connected' with loved ones and many churches, including St Margaret's, are 'live streaming' their services. Indeed Bishop Brian is streaming a mass daily and we are encouraged to have a look at the readings of the day and gain spiritual nourishment through that.

Having had the opportunity to take part in many silent retreats during my time in college, the prospect of self-isolation isn't as daunting as it might have been. Those who live alone and/or are housebound are likely to have similar coping strategies through lived experience.

For those of us who are able to remain in good health throughout this pandemic, it is an opportunity to step back and reflect on the fact that much of our control and liberation has been taken from us. How does that make us feel? Are we able to place ever greater trust in God during this time? Do we have greater empathy for those for whom being a 'captive' is the norm? At a time when much of our relationships are on hold, can we use this time to strengthen our relationship with God? It has been strange having to say mass with only myself and the Lord in St Margaret's, and it will be stranger still having to conduct Holy Week celebrations and the Easter Triduum in private, particularly with this being my first year in Priesthood. As is often the case, when we are forced to be a little more reflective or we slow down, this is when God's voice can generally be heard speaking to us in the context of our own life situation.

Among the many things that have jumped out at me this week, is this passage from Deuteronomy:

***"The Lord your God carried you all the way in the wilderness as a father carries his son, and yet you would not trust the Lord your God."***

The Lord will carry us out of this present wilderness, we place our trust in him and are confident in that. I will then look forward to welcoming each of you back into your church.

In the meantime, be assured that you are in my prayers daily, stay safe and well and get in touch if I can help in anyway – or if you just want a chat.

With every blessing, *Fr Ronald*

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# Worshipping under lockdown



## Juggling the technology

The image above has become very familiar to many of us since the Scottish Bishops' Conference took the decision to close our places of worship – a decision sensibly taken ahead of the Westminster government's 'lockdown' of all public places.

On March 19 Fr Ronald celebrated the last public Mass till – well, this we don't know. It was a moving occasion and there was a feeling almost of bereavement. How could we survive without St Margaret's at the heart of our parish community?

And yet, on March 22, we 'went' to St Margaret's by clicking on the Facebook link and Fr Ronald and Fr Damien brought the Mass into our homes.

Since then, we have been able to 'attend' daily Mass celebrated by Bishop Brian in the Oratory in the Bishop's House in Oban (the image above).

There have been some technical hitches - and rest assured these were not experienced only by St Margaret's and the Oratory in Oban – parishes and cathedrals across Scotland have been coming to terms with equipment, Youtube timings, and much more.

We as parishioners also needed time to get to grips with the technology, the timings, and for some, the mysteries of social media. Interesting to see, however, that just half way through the first week of 'virtual church attendance', 223 people had subscribed to the Bishop's daily Mass and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception had 184 views – perhaps suggesting that where couples or families are watching together at home, many more would have 'taken part' in the Mass.

There are, of course, many other daily celebrations of Mass that we can access on line, including a very slick production from Canada, where the Catholic TV station seems to be extremely well financed!

Of course it isn't the same as coming together at St Margaret's, but then, nothing is the same for the foreseeable future and as it says on the diocesan website, we are 'sacrificing for the common good'. No one foresaw that we would be giving up 'real time' in St Margaret's for Lent.

Bishop Brian has shared a prayer for when we can't physically partake of the Eucharist. Here is one to say at home:

*O my divine Jesus, how great is my desire to receive your sacred body! Oh, come now into my soul, at least, by a spiritual communion! O Jesus, my divine Saviour, save me. O my God, hiding myself with a humble confidence in your dear wounds, I give up my soul into your divine hands. Oh, receive it into the bosom of your mercy. Amen.*

**HOLY MASS**

Celebrated by Bishop Brian McGee

**LIVE STREAM**  
Daily at 10:00 am

# Parish Projects: time for planning instead of doing?

## EcoCongregation

We have the EcoCongregation certificate and we have plans. We even have some tyres. Now we need COVID 19 to go away and some volunteers to come on board.

**Plan A: The garden.** The tyres are to create raised beds – everything from veg to share to bird and bee attracting plants. Cecelia and John Rees know how to do it but we will need people and a rotivator. While we have time on our hands, any thoughts on begging or borrowing a rotivator should be shared with Fr Ronald.

**Plan B: The lighting.** It would be good to install the most eco friendly lighting in the church but this must be done according to all health and safety regulations - another post COVID 19 project in need of your thoughts.

All part of our efforts to combat the climate emergency, which sadly hasn't gone away because of the health crisis.

## Simon Community

The charity for the homeless has a new project to help homeless women retain their dignity and sense of self worth.

The Period Friendly Project (<http://www.simonscotland.org/period-friendly/>) will provide free sanitary products at specified outlets. This part of the project is funded, but Melissa Reid from the Simon Community says: 'Donations of disposable bags, wipes and pants would be great.'

Multiple packs of nice pants are available on Amazon & elsewhere at low cost. Perhaps we could get together a box of pants, disposable bags and wipes to deliver to the Simon Community when curfews are lifted. This is not a problem that is going to go away, and may in fact increase as the health crisis puts more people on the streets.

For example: Six pairs of 'Daisy Dreamer' pants on Amazon cost £6.99, which is the same as a bottle of Fair Trade wine in the Co-op.

## MOMA

There are now people perhaps in greater crisis than ever before. We don't need to go against the social distancing rules to continue donating to the MOMA box in the porch – canned fish & meat, pasta, rice, as well as toiletries & household cleaning materials are needed.

## Fundraisers

Parish and ZamScotEd coffee mornings and other fundraising events are on hold. SCIAF Sunday and the SCIAF Wee Box collections also have been casualties of the Coronavirus. Donating online can stem the losses.

**SCIAF:** Go to <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/donate> where we can make a single donation or sign up for monthly donations. Donating on this page will be counted as Wee Box donations, to be doubled by the Westminster government until May 2.

**ZamScotEd:** For St Columba's Community Secondary School to move forward, desks for two classrooms are needed as well as Grade 12 textbooks. Donate to ZamScotEd, A/C 00169242, sort code 83 – 2307

**St Margaret's:** Fr Ronald can advise how to pay online/by direct debit, and how to gift aid if you would like to switch, and of course, an extra donation (think of it as a virtual coffee, cake, and a purchase or two from the home baking stall) will make up for missed coffee mornings.



SCIAF SUNDAY – a Coronavirus casualty, but we can still donate on line.

## Putting faith into action (when social distancing ends)

- ✚ **The Simon Community**, which supports the homeless and rough sleepers and aims to combat the causes of homelessness, would welcome warm clothes, small cases or bags (box in the porch), but you can also donate online (<https://www.justgiving.com/simoncommunityscotland>) - eg: £10 could provide a warm meal, a shower and warm clothes
- ✚ **ZamScotEd**, which supports education in Zambia, needs help to fund desks and textbooks for Grade 12 pupils (<https://campaign.justgiving.com/charity/mli/zamscotedschoolfund>) – eg: £12 buys a desk (and employs a carpenter); £5 buys a book)
- ✚ **MO-MA** has an on-going need for toiletries, household cleaning products & **dried/tinned food**. Green box in the church porch. St Margaret's is part of a local church group supporting Moving On Mid Argyll, responding to calls for help to relieve hardship from Argyll & Bute Council, Carr Gomm, or a church or school representative. Emergency food parcels average two a month. Home starter packs (usually for a young homeless person) contain basics. MOMA needs toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, shower gel and some household items. There's also a box in the Co-op for food & household items.

### Parish life (everyone will be welcome again post COVID 19)

St Margaret's Prayer Group: Every Wednesday at 7pm at St Margaret's.

St Margaret's Justice & Peace Group: First Tuesday of the month, parish house



## Why we feel so strange in 'lockdown'

Not all of us have experienced solitary retreats as Fr Ronald has (see P1), and many people have reported feeling very strange as social isolation kicked in. Restlessness, inability to sleep, not being able to keep to usual routines, irritability, difficulty in making decisions, palpitations - even depression - have been just some of the reactions reported on social media.

A mental health therapist called Imogen Wall explained what happens when we face a crisis (and this is a crisis). Apparently (and those with medical knowledge can confirm this) we have an almond-sized section of brain called the amygdala that tells us to go into flight or fight mode when we are frightened. However, because the amygdala was programmed when Adam was a lad, Ms Wall says it perceives all danger as a bear. Right now, our amygdalae are on bear alert, but we aren't able to take flight. We are told to stay at home – virtually in the bear cave. No wonder we don't feel ourselves. Ms Wall has some tips to improve how we feel – such as breathing in slowly through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. We can call a friend (or Fr Ronald, who has kindly shared his contact details on P1). A chat and a bit of a chuckle will help. Try to do something creative – baking, knitting, drawing. Take a shower (but conserve the planet and don't make it too long – we have that other crisis to contend with). Stand outside, keeping your distance. The sunshine will do us all good, when it comes. Be kind to yourself and others.

And of course, we have a resource that Ms Hall may not have considered, which is our prayer life, our faith, the inner strength we get from being part of our faith community. Sharing in the virtual spiritual community we are offered on line can certainly keep that bear at bay.

In the box to the right is the prayer Bishop Brian is sharing each day so that we can make a spiritual communion.

### Prayer of St Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever.  
Amen

