

Portrait of a Diocese

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PORTRAIT OF A DIOCESE

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Pseudo-Preface

When you open a book and then discover that it has a Preface, does your heart not sink a little? Mine does. And the depth to which it sinks is in direct proportion to the number of pages in the Preface. One or two pages are tolerable, but some books can fill the prospective reader with gloom. Must I read the Preface? Will I not understand the book properly if I skip the Preface? Perhaps, if I enjoy the book, the Preface will be more interesting as a Postscript; and, if the book has been a struggle, I can close it without feeling that I have missed much by ignoring the Preface. These are the thoughts that often pass through my mind. So I spare my readers the necessity of either choosing conscientiously to read a long Preface or guiltily to skip it.

By the way, when we speak of the “Preface” in the Mass, we are not speaking of something that precedes and leads us to the Eucharistic Prayer, but the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer itself, a paean of praise and thanksgiving to God with the acclamation “Holy, Holy . . .” as its climax and after which the Eucharistic Prayer continues. Perhaps a new English word is needed for the Latin “*Praefatio*”.

To revert to my subject after that digression, I want in my retirement to do various useful things during the years left to me on earth. This attempt to offer a portrait of the diocese of Galloway will be, I hope, of interest to some people at present and perhaps provide some useful information or material in years to come for those with an interest in the diocese as it was in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first. Even if this ambition or hope is never fulfilled, at least the work of compiling this portrait will keep me from mischief and indolence.

This is not my first attempt at a written portrait. In 1991 the opportunity arose for me to spend a few months in a rural parish in El Salvador (Central America) as acting parish priest while the “official” pastor was on leave. Before taking up the temporary appointment, I discovered that I had a problem to solve. The Code of Canon Law states (canon 395 §2): “Apart from the visit *ad limina*, attendance at councils or at the synod of Bishops or at the Bishops’ Conference . . . he [the diocesan Bishop] may be absent from the diocese, for a just reason, for not longer than one month, continuously or otherwise, provided he ensures that the diocese is not harmed by this absence”. In view of these rather threatening words, I wrote to Rome, to the Congregation for Bishops, for permission to be away from the diocese of Galloway for three months, explaining the reasons for my request. I added that, as I had been bishop for ten years, the object of the request might also be considered as a kind of sabbatical. The reply stated that my request was an unusual one but, for this particular occasion and for the reasons given, it had been granted. The permission seemed to have been grudgingly agreed; at least the tone and the expressions employed gave me that impression. Perhaps Rome does not like to appear over-generous. However, the main thing was that I was free to go to El Salvador.

The experience that I had in the parish of Dulce Nombre de María in the diocese of Chalatenango made a very deep impression on me, an impression that I wanted to share. So I wrote *Portrait of a Parish* which the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund published and which now, revised, is on my website (www.bishopmauricetaylor.org.uk).

During my time in Dulce Nombre de María I received such great kindness and learned so much that the *Portrait*, which I composed on my return to Scotland, seems a very small recognition of my debt of gratitude to the people of the parish in El Salvador. The same is true of this tribute, *Portrait of a Diocese*. To serve the people of Galloway diocese as their bishop has truly been a privilege and I am only too pleased to offer them this *Portrait*, hoping they will find it of interest. At least it is meant as my recognition of what they mean to me. So let me begin to paint the portrait.

THE SUBJECT BEING PORTRAYED

The diocese of Galloway can claim to be the oldest in Scotland, founded as it was by St Ninian, the first known Catholic missionary in the country. The tradition is that he arrived in 396 (though quite probably the correct date is some decades, even a century, later) and established the earliest Christian settlement, which was given the name Candida Casa (White House) and, in the vernacular, Whithorn. The diocese is still officially known in the Vatican as “*Diocesis Gallovidiensis seu Candidae Casae*”.

For over a thousand years, Galloway continued as a diocese or, at least, as an ecclesiastical entity. I quote from *The Catholic Directory for Scotland* (2012, page 73): “*The See of Whithorn is associated from the late fourth century with St Ninian, but it is possible that a Christian community existed there before his arrival. There was a continuous succession of bishops in the eighth century. The See was revived c.1128 and recognised the metropolitan authority of York until 1355. It became a suffragan of St Andrews in 1472 and of Glasgow in 1492. The See was, in effect, vacant from the death of Andrew Durie (1541-1548) since his successor, Alexander Gordon, conformed at the reformation in 1560, and it remained vacant until the restoration of the hierarchy in 1878.*”

The first four bishops after the restoration were John McLachlan (1878-1893), William Turner (1893-1914), James McCarthy (1914-1943) and William Mellon (1943-1952). These bishops had their residences in Dumfries and their cathedral church at St Andrew’s, Dumfries. The fifth bishop of the restored hierarchy was Joseph McGee (1952-1981); in 1959, to be more central in the diocese which, in 1947, had been given more territory in the north, he changed his residence from Dumfries to Ayr, giving his newly acquired house the name “Candida Casa”, an appropriate but slightly incongruous choice since the house is built of red sandstone. In 1961 when St Andrew’s cathedral was destroyed by fire, Bishop McGee made Good Shepherd church, Ayr, the cathedral.

I was the sixth of the post-restoration bishops and, in 2004, was succeeded by John Cunningham. In 2007 Bishop Cunningham changed the cathedral to St Margaret’s church in Ayr. Good Shepherd church was in need of extensive and costly repairs, its normal congregation had greatly decreased over the years and the proposal to close it was finally approved by Rome. The building was sold and then partially demolished but with the façade and tower retained as embellishment for the housing built on the site.

It is perhaps worth remarking that none of the seven bishops of modern times have been either natives or originally priests of the diocese of Galloway. Respectively, they were born in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Edinburgh, Perthshire, Hamilton and Paisley.

The diocese's name being Galloway can puzzle strangers. There is no town, let alone, city, of Galloway, although there is a village called New Galloway. Galloway is a district, that part of Dumfries & Galloway that extends westward from the river Nith (in the town of Dumfries) to the Mull of Galloway (whose principal town is Stranraer).

In 1947, the territory of Galloway diocese was increased because, when the archdiocese of Glasgow was divided into the archdiocese of Glasgow and the dioceses of Motherwell and Paisley, the parishes in the north of Ayrshire, previously in the archdiocese, were transferred to Galloway. The diocese therefore is located in south-west Scotland and its territory is easily and exactly described as all of Dumfries & Galloway and, except for the island of Arran, all of Ayrshire.

The diocese is divided into a number of deaneries, seven in 1981, but now only four. The number of deaneries has been largely dependent on the number of Catholic secondary schools in the diocese. This is because a secondary school with its "feeder" primary schools gives a certain unity to an area. In recent years, secondary schools in Girvan, Cumnock and Kilwinning have closed and only four remain: in Dumfries, Kilmarnock, Saltcoats and Ayr. In 1981 one new deanery was established (for the Wigtownshire area of Dumfries & Galloway), not because it had a Catholic secondary school but because there was a certain justification for having two deaneries in the extensive sweep of Dumfries & Galloway and, besides, the priests allowed to concelebrate with Pope John Paul II at the Mass in Bellahouston Park on 1st June 1982 were limited to one per deanery!

Each deanery has a certain number of parishes within its boundaries. "Parish" is a legal term: "a parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor" (canon 515 §1). This definition left me in some confusion, since there were a number of communities with their own church for Mass and usually without their own resident priest. I did not know whether they had been established by one of my predecessors as parishes or whether I ought to establish them; or if they were simply "chapels of ease" of neighbouring parishes. I never was certain if my guess was correct but I did calculate that we had 47 parishes. Over the years, a few of these have been closed or merged (especially those with very few parishioners). The present number is 43.

PERSONAL

My ordination as bishop of Galloway took place in the grounds of Fatima House, Coodham, by Cardinal Gordon Joseph Gray on 9th June 1981. I took up my duties gladly and enthusiastically, without any great fear but, I hope, humbly and with some nervousness. I was aware that I had much to learn and that I would make mistakes. But I wanted to be a good bishop and to do all that I could for the diocese, its priests and all of its people.

I did not have a detailed plan of work but I did want to become known and to get to know the diocese. I wanted to visit the parishes as often as I could and also to visit the religious houses and the Catholic schools. The priests were my closest collaborators and I realised that it was my duty to serve them, care for them, encourage them, consult them and support them in every way that I could.

I was conscious of my inexperience as well as my ignorance of many aspects of the diocese. That meant that I should be greatly dependent on the priests of the diocese and also, I hoped, on my predecessor, Bishop Joseph McGee. I already knew and liked him and admired him as a kindly, intelligent and wise man. However, although I wanted his advice, he never offered it and, out of a wish not to interfere, was reluctant to discuss problems with me. When I sought his counsel, his inclination was to agree with my way of thinking, although I suspect that, sometimes at least, he did so out of courtesy rather than from desire and conviction.

Since Bishop McGee did not become involved in any diocesan activities after his retiral, I cannot say that he exercised much influence on what I did or how I did it. Rather, it seems to me that Bishop Frank Thomson, who had been my bishop when I was a priest of Motherwell diocese, and who had been extremely kind to me since my nomination as bishop in early April 1981, influenced me in the sense that I copied some of his style and manner in carrying out various episcopal duties. Archbishop (later Cardinal) Winning was equally approachable and was quite ready to offer advice. Of course, he and I had been friends since our schooldays. We were in the same year group in Our Lady's High School in Motherwell, and had gone to Blairs College together in 1942, the philosophy course having been located there during wartime, since the Scots Colleges in Rome and Spain were inaccessible. After my three years of army service from 1944 to 1947, we were together again when I was sent to Rome for my theology course. When the dioceses of Motherwell and Paisley were set up as suffragans of Glasgow in 1947, we were both assigned to the former, having been born and brought up there. After our ordination to the priesthood we were priests of Motherwell diocese although each of us spent most of our years working outside the diocese until episcopal ordination took him to Glasgow in 1971 and me to Galloway in 1981.

Church law requires a bishop to have a vicar general. "In each diocese the diocesan bishop is to appoint a vicar general" (canon 475 §1); "he is to be known for his sound doctrine, integrity, prudence and practical experience" (canon 478 §1); "the vicar general has the same executive power throughout the whole diocese" as the bishop, except those matters reserved by law or by the bishop himself (canon 479 §1). Even if there were no law, common sense would dictate the wisdom of having a vicar general. A bishop needs someone in whom he can confide, from whom he can ask advice and guidance, who can point out errors (if possible, before they are made) and who can provide support in difficulties and anxieties.

Mgr Francis Duffy had been Bishop McGee's vicar general. He was extremely well liked in the diocese and had the confidence of my predecessor. I thought that he was also the obvious choice for me and I therefore asked him to continue his important duties. When he retired, I invited Fr (now Mgr) Joseph Boyd to succeed him. He proved to be a man who was liked by the priests and people and who gave me great support as well as acting with complete discretion.

In addition to the general plans which I have already mentioned, there was one initiative which I had very much in mind. This was to make the Second Vatican Council's aim of renewal a feature of diocesan life in Galloway. I shall be more detailed on the subject later but I remember that, when in the very early days I mentioned renewal to people, there tended to be a rather scared and defensive reaction. "Do you mean charismatic renewal?" To have had plans to introduce, or worse try to impose, that practice would have been widely unacceptable and would probably have put paid to any hope of their new bishop being given the kind and sympathetic welcome which I did receive.

EARLY DAYS

It was my wish not only to be known but also to be as pastorally involved in the diocese as possible and to spend only the necessary amount of time in administration. Being pastorally active, of course, meant being willing to drive all over the diocese, getting to know the priests and their parishes, celebrating Masses, preaching, visiting sick and housebound parishioners, spending days in schools and so on. My ordination on 9th June 1981 came towards the end of the annual confirmation season but Bishop McGee had thoughtfully arranged that I should still have some confirmation Masses to carry out. In fact, there was a confirmation on the evening of 10th June, my first full day as a bishop.

Bishop McGee drove me to the parish involved - it was St John Ogilvie's in the Bourtreehill district of Irvine, a "new town" which never achieved its intended size. He left me there, returning alone to his new residence in Prestwick. The parish is in a part of the town that had been recently built and its church is perhaps, of all the churches in the diocese, the most difficult to locate. It is in the middle of a housing estate where no streets are straight and the district seems deliberately constructed to baffle strangers. The church had been opened very recently and that evening it was packed.

I think I managed fairly well, conscious that all eyes were upon me, but I was rather flustered and nervous, not only as the very new bishop but also as a complete beginner at conferring the sacrament of confirmation. The parish is under the direction of religious priests (Fathers of the Sacred Heart, "Dehonians") and I recall that my discomfiture was increased by the parish priest (Fr Jim Feeney SCJ, who died not long afterwards) telling the people that the parish had areas totally unknown to me. "He has never heard of Girdle Toll or Stanecastle or Springside or Dreghorn". It seemed to me that everyone in the congregation was enjoying the joke, so I tried to look as amused as possible also.

At that time, when I became bishop, I began to appreciate the wide variety in the size of parishes and in their distances from Ayr, as well as the times needed to drive to them. Some parishes had 3,000 or so parishioners, others were very small. The diocese is fairly large geographically, the farthest parish (Langholm in east Dumfrireshire) being about one hour and three quarters' drive from Ayr. There were about 500,000 people in the area of the diocese, about 10% of them Catholic and about half of whom were Sunday Mass attenders.

THE PAPAL VISIT OF 1982

The prospects for pastoral and spiritual renewal in the diocese were greatly enhanced, and fortuitously, by the announcement that Pope John Paul II would visit Britain at the end of May 1982. I had begun my episcopal duties in Galloway the previous summer and the news of the papal visit meant that, along with the other Scottish dioceses, we had almost a year to prepare for the unprecedented experience of having a pope present in our own country.

Preparations were started on two fronts, national and diocesan. The Bishops' Conference appointed Bishop Thomson of Motherwell to lead the national preparations and especially to be in charge of the arrangements for the various events during the Pope's stay in Scotland, above all the Meeting with Youth on Monday evening, 31st May, at Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh, and the Mass on the following afternoon at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow. Those two events were extremely well organised and unforgettable successes.

The national preparations were, of course, much wider than simply making arrangements for the events during the Pope's two days in Scotland. While Bishop Thomson and his team were engaged in the enormous amount of work involved in negotiations and preparations for the events of the papal programme, various ideas and materials were offered by national sources for pastoral preparations in the dioceses and parishes. These were taken up and used in Galloway – days of prayer, discussions in the parishes, distributing tickets and booking transport to the events and, not least, several collections to meet the considerable and increasing costs of all the events and of the accommodation for the Pope and his entourage and their travel to, within, and from Scotland. All of this engendered a great deal of excitement and anticipation which, in themselves, provided elements of pastoral and spiritual renewal in all of our parishes.

It will not be forgotten that, as anticipation of the Pope's visit grew, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. At first, the ensuing war between Great Britain and Argentina was not reckoned a threat to the papal visit but, as the war continued and became more violent, anxiety increased that the visit might have to be cancelled or postponed. In particular, Argentina declared that a papal visit to Britain would be seen as favouring one of the combatants. This particular complaint was met by Pope John Paul II heroically agreeing to a visit to Argentina shortly after his visit to Britain. That gesture did help, but there was still a real possibility that, given the conflict situation, the Vatican authorities or the British government might decide that the visit was inopportune and would have to be cancelled. Cardinal Gordon Gray and Cardinal Basil Hume went to Rome to discuss matters with officials of the Holy See and with some representative Argentine bishops. Matters were not settled until Archbishop Winning and Archbishop Derek Worlock (Liverpool) followed the cardinals to Rome and bluntly insisted that the visit must go ahead. Their uncompromising view won the day, the situation was saved, Argentina seemed to acquiesce, especially as the Pope was to go there after being in Britain.

The Pope's days in this country were an unqualified success, with huge crowds, gloriously sunny weather, and a relaxed atmosphere of friendship and admiration throughout the whole population of Scotland. The only exception to this was the

presence of a few protesters as the Pope stopped for a short meeting in Edinburgh with the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In all, the papal visit was a wonderful experience for hundreds of thousands of Catholics and, indeed, for many other people as well.

As an informal postscript to the celebrations, the Scottish bishops were invited, after the Mass in Glasgow, to dinner with the Pope in the Cardinal's house in Edinburgh, where the Pope was staying for his two nights in Scotland. The Mass in Bellahouston had seriously overrun its scheduled time and, although the Pope and a few others were taken from the park to Edinburgh by helicopter, most of the bishops travelled by coach. The result was that it was late when we finally began the meal. The day had been extremely hot, the Holy Father was tired but very content with the Mass and with the enthusiasm with which he had been welcomed in Scotland. Cardinal Gray and his staff had gone to considerable trouble in preparing the meal and it was an enjoyable and exciting experience for those privileged to be there. Two slightly bizarre incidents occurred during the meal. At the main course, when the Pope was about to be served, the Cardinal attracted his attention. "Your Holiness, the roast beef is prime Scotch beef which I chose myself and bought from a butcher in Hawick, the best in Scotland". The Pope smilingly acknowledged the Cardinal's words but without understanding what he said, because he then helped himself, not to the roast beef but to the alternative – a piece of chicken. Then, at the dessert, the cook's speciality was brought in – baked Alaska. However, due to the delay and the lateness of the meal, the confection was a sorry sight of bits of meringue floating on a sea of white liquid.

These were mishaps of no consequence. The entire visit was a complete success, unforgettable for all of us privileged to take part and the best possible foundation with which to set up a pastoral plan of renewal for the local church. Blessed with the graces flowing from the presence of Pope John Paul II in our midst and the response of the people to him – not merely the euphoria attached to the unprecedented event, but a sincere desire to be active disciples of Our Lord – we looked forward expectantly to building up the local church and opening ourselves to the graces of renewal.

PASTORAL RENEWAL (i-ii)

(i) DIOCESAN QUESTIONNAIRE

I thought that the first step ought to be a consultation with the people of the diocese to seek their opinions as well as their hopes for the future. As a result, we spent some time in constructing a questionnaire to be given to every Catholic aged sixteen and over in the diocese or at least to as many of them as we could reach. A considerable amount of preparation, consultation and experience was used to produce the questionnaire. Copies were printed and distributed through the parishes and, although quite detailed, the questionnaire brought an excellent response. I do not know how many copies were distributed – perhaps about 20,000 – and we received 7,772 completed responses. The process lasted longer than we had anticipated, but we did not want to rush things. Compilation, distribution, collection and counting all duly completed, the results were announced in 1984.

The entire questionnaire, with the introductory explanation which I wrote, as well as the statistics in response to each question, is reproduced in the following four pages.

DIOCESE OF GALLOWAY

DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE 1983-84

After the success of the pastoral preparations for the Pope's visit in 1982, there was a widespread desire to go on seeking the graces of a spiritual renewal in the diocese. In particular we recognised the value of pastoral planning to meet the needs of the people and the parishes.

Such a plan, and any guidelines for it, cannot be imposed. They must be the result of consultation throughout the diocese.

This questionnaire is an attempt to further such consultation. We ask you, please, to answer the questions frankly so that we can try to build up a picture of our strengths and weaknesses, our needs and concerns, our hopes and aims.

Thank you for your help.

TOTAL RESPONSES RECORDED: 7772

PLEASE TICK EITHER
'YES' OR 'NO' OR 'DON'T KNOW' FOR EACH QUESTION

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Blanks
1. Do you think that your parish has become a community?	3443	2344	1779	01 150
2. Do you normally go to Mass on Sundays?	6289	1388	53	02 42
3. Do you sometimes go to Mass on ordinary weekdays?.....	3703	3903	86	03 80
4. Apart from Mass, are you involved in your parish in any other way?	1819	5777	98	04 78
5. Are you a member of some group in the parish or diocese? If so, which ones?	1335	6010	207	220 05
6. Would you like to be more active in the parish than you are at present?	2481	3557	1592	06 142

	Blanks	Don't			
		Yes	No	Know	
7. a) Do you find prayer important for your life?	63	6596	726	413	07
b) Do you find Mass important for your life?	58	6240	452	522	08
c) Do you find confession important for your life?	70	4488	2336	878	09

8. Should parishioners be involved in the following areas of parish life?					
a) reading at Mass	108	6270	809	585	10
b) giving Holy Communion at Mass when asked by the priest....	91	3225	3546	910	11
c) taking Holy Communion to the sick and housebound	96	3174	3523	479	12
d) leading discussion groups	129	5373	1092	1178	13
e) helping to look after parish finances	146	4689	1919	1018	14
f) sharing responsibility for maintenance of parish buildings	115	5750	473	934	15
g) organising youth activities	129	6730	377	536	16
h) visiting the sick and housebound	114	6586	540	532	17
i) helping to prepare engaged couples for marriage	133	3055	3175	1409	18
j) visiting non-attenders to help them keep in touch	121	3030	3025	1596	19
k) working with other Christian churches	144	6238	575	815	20
l) any other activity not mentioned (please specify below)	2919	450	894	3509	21

9. Would you like to know more about any of the following matters?					
a) methods of prayer	291	3936	2569	980	22
b) understanding the bible	240	4818	1898	816	23
c) what Catholics should believe nowadays	211	5629	1328	604	24
d) the Church's attitude to world poverty	212	5869	1049	642	25
e) the Church's attitude to unemployment	195	5644	1216	717	26
f) the Church's teaching on war and nuclear weapons	208	5421	1479	664	27
g) the Church's teaching on marriage and sex	224	4833	1920	795	28
h) moral issues of today	281	5408	1259	824	29
i) any other subject not already mentioned (please specify)	3017	340	1010	3405	30

Please circle here the three you consider most important:

a b c d e f g h i
 1755 3667 1848 1909 148
 18% 2575 2718 2780

10. Do you think that separate Catholic schools should remain?	402	4246	2186	938	32
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11. In your parish are you satisfied with the following aspects?	Blanks	Blanks			
		Yes	No	Don't Know	
a) the friendliness of the parishioners	141	5357	1527	747	33
b) the social events that are organised	140	3978	2447	1507	34
c) the atmosphere in the church during Mass	161	5119	1681	811	35
d) the care shown to those in need	165	4175	1284	2148	36
e) good relations with non-Catholics	110	5632	822	1208	37
f) the fact that the parish seems alive	198	3658	2061	1855	38
g) the support offered to married couples	204	2344	1474	3728	39
h) the opportunities given to young parishioners	247	2253	2553	2719	40
i) any other matter not yet mentioned (please specify below)	3058	230	905	3579	41

12. Do you think that enough is done in your parish for the following groups?					
a) pre-school children	317	1533	2914	3008	42
b) children 5 - 10	286	2253	2329	2404	43
c) children 10 - 14	308	2181	2372	2911	44
d) youth 15 - 18	315	1611	3106	2740	45
e) young adults 19 - 30	322	1302	3045	3103	46
f) adults 31 - 45	370	2289	1885	3228	47
g) adults 46 - 60	374	2424	1684	3290	48
h) those over 60	326	2988	1463	2745	49
i) single people	372	1387	2437	3576	50
j) the sick and the housebound	275	3284	1622	2591	51
k) lapsed Catholics	263	1005	2729	3775	52
l) the divorced and separated	304	822	2393	4253	53
m) the handicapped	296	1897	1940	3639	54
n) single-parent families	314	1138	1961	4389	55
o) the unemployed	303	848	2695	3924	56
p) alcoholics and drug addicts	402	754	2362	4254	57
q) another group not already mentioned (please specify below)	3083	124	788	3777	58

Please circle here the **three** groups which you think most in need of support:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q
 541 672 979 440 456 1739 1968 1829 69
 437 1965 440 776 2536 894 1139 2014

59

13. Do any of the following problems cause you worry?	Blanks	Yes	No	Don't Know	
a) the threat of nuclear war	169	5649	1639	315	60
b) increasing godlessness	233	4953	1579	1007	61
c) abortion	172	5623	1296	681	62
d) Third World poverty	184	6231	730	627	63
e) the present state of the Catholic Church	233	3408	2825	1306	64
f) the shortage of vocations	242	4465	1645	1420	65
g) your children and their attitudes	453	3287	2629	1403	66
h) falling moral standards	238	5311	1212	1011	67
i) your eternal salvation	279	4332	2154	1007	68
j) unemployment in your family	335	3427	3369	614	69
k) ill health in your family	333	3980	2920	539	70
l) another problem not yet mentioned (please specify below)	3258	306	902	330x	71

Please circle here the three most important:

a b c d e f g h i j k l
 3216 2507 1022 1129 989 1394
 1720 2433 1227 2094 1049 127

72

This questionnaire will be given to everyone in the parish over 14.
 Please complete it and return it within a week.

**YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ARE NOT REQUIRED —
 BUT PLEASE TICK WHAT APPLIES TO YOU BELOW:-**

male	3248	73	age 14 - 18	1479	75	full-time employed	2397	80
female	3712	74	19 - 30	1047	76	part-time employed	630	81
			31 - 45	1724	77	unemployed	536	82
			46 - 60	1524	78	retired	1002	83
			60 +	1460	79	housewife	1502	84
						student	770	85

IF YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON ANY OF THE QUESTIONS IN THE
 QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE DO SO HERE OR ON A SEPARATE PAPER.

Some of the questions and their responses seem specially relevant and worthy of comment.

Question 1 Do you think that your parish has become a community?

Although there was a majority for “yes”, the alternatives, “no” and “don’t know”, had sizable minorities. Perhaps the question seemed a strange one in the early 1980s; if so, many would be unsure what was entailed in their parish being a community.

Questions 2-6 [Questions on respondents’ Mass attendance and parish involvement]

Most of the respondents to the questionnaire were at the “active” end of the spectrum of parishioners, although this tended to be limited to regular attendance at Mass with only a minority more active even than that.

Question 8 Should parishioners be involved in the following areas of parish life?

Most of the areas suggested received wide approval, although at that time (1983-84) Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and lay involvement with marriage preparation and with non-attenders attracted only minority approval.

Question 9 Would you like to know more about any of the following matters?

Of the eight topics listed, the responses showed strong majority interest in knowing more about Church teaching, doctrine (including Scripture) and morals, as well as Church teaching on poverty, war and nuclear weapons; but the largest majority was on “What Catholics should believe nowadays”.

Question 10 Do you think that separate Catholic schools should remain?

Although a substantial majority favoured separate Catholic schools, I recall being surprised and disappointed that more than 25% did not. Especially in the south of the diocese, there are a number of parishes without reasonably easy access to Catholic (particularly secondary) schools. Were people in such parishes less supportive of Catholic schools?

Question 11 In your parish are you satisfied with the following aspects?

In the question, the word “satisfied” was used to gauge people’s thoughts. Consequently, the results were fairly favourable, especially the friendliness of parishioners, the atmosphere during Mass, attitude to those in need, relations with non-Catholics and support for married couples. Slightly less favourable opinions were expressed on organised social events and a sense of the parish being alive. The only aspect of parish life that attracted more “no” votes than “yes” (2,553 against 2,251) was on the opportunities offered to young parishioners. This negative vote is not unexpected because, whenever parishioners are asked about needs not being met in their parish, better care of the youth and more facilities for them are nearly always required.

Question 12 Do you think enough is done in your parish for the following groups?

This question probably covers much the same ground as the previous question, but from the point of view of the various possible ways of providing help (rather than from the different ages of parishioners and also people’s personal circumstances). The responses indicate that those in need of help were reckoned to be those between fifteen and eighteen, the sick and housebound, alcoholics and drug addicts.

Question 13 Do any of the following problems cause you worry?

This final question was more personal than parochial. The choice of concerns listed seemed to cover most people's worries; the invitation to add further "worries" elicited only 306 responses out of more than 7,000 respondents. The matters that caused greatest concern were the threat of nuclear war, shortage of vocations to the priesthood, falling moral standards, the practice of abortion and Third World poverty. All eleven "worries" listed received more "yes" votes than "no", with "unemployment in your family" emerging as least of the worries. Would the same concerns reappear and in the same order, if the questions were posed today, thirty years later? It is perhaps noteworthy that, even in the early 1980s, concern about a shortage of priests was widespread. That foreseen shortage is now a reality and the concern remains and is even greater because the present scarcity seems certain to become even more serious.

Few respondents gave their names and addresses, but we did ask for gender, age and occupation.

We welcomed the response to the questionnaire which we received, not only because we considered the number of respondents gratifyingly high but also because we had given the parishioners an opportunity to express their opinions and their wishes. All the responses were carefully counted and the results made known to the whole diocese and not only to those responsible for leadership in the parishes.

I considered the results highly informative and interesting, though not really surprising and not at all shocking. They demonstrated the seriousness of so many people in the diocese. The evidence provided by the questionnaire helped to point the way ahead, especially in regard to what could be done by way of pastoral and spiritual renewal.

Perhaps I may make the interjection here that a phrase like "spiritual and pastoral renewal" can be used so frequently that its precise meaning becomes lost in the very familiarity of the phrase which, as a result, becomes a mere cliché. So let me try to be explicit. "Renewal" in the context means an openness to change, based on gifts such as wisdom and discernment being brought to bear on God's will for us, known through Scripture, Church tradition and teaching, and therefore especially through the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The adjectives "pastoral" and "spiritual" are not mutually exclusive; perhaps the former emphasises more the communal dimension and the aspect of good works; while the latter's primary emphasis is internal, on our growth in faith and personal holiness.

The questionnaire told us quite a number of things about the diocese. It assured us that there was a great amount of good will and openness among the people, that those who were practising Catholics (regular Massgoers) were of moderate views, traditional in the best sense of the word, and that there were many people, baptised and brought up as Catholics no longer actively involved in the practice of the faith These impressions were confirmed by meetings, both formal and informal, with the priests, by my visits to parishes (not only for the sacrament of confirmation but on other occasions such as weekend "pastoral visits" which I made throughout the whole year) and by my custom of an annual visit to each Catholic primary school in the diocese with time spent in every classroom as well as in the staffrooms.

Following the papal visit of 1982, there was a widespread feeling that we should build on that memorable experience. To prepare for the visit we had had national initiatives but there was little in the way of any national follow-up to invest in the experience. It was clear that, if we wanted to have something serious and constructive, we should have to make decisions in and for our diocese.

Although what we ought to do was evident, how to do it was not. Planning spiritual and pastoral renewal for the diocese was presenting a frightening challenge to us but then, providentially and apparently fortuitously, a way forward presented itself.

(ii) “RENEW”

I was in the United States to visit Sister Mary George O’Reilly, a religious of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She was a distant relation (second cousin by marriage is possibly the correct description) and, over the years, we had become close friends. At the time, she was employed by the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, in its education services. Talking about the archdiocese one day, she mentioned that they had a pastoral renewal process which they called “Renew”. I was immediately interested and so I was taken to Renew’s headquarters in Newark and there learned some details of the process.

The need for diocese and parishes to have a planned process for renewal (and not simply urging bishops, priests and parishioners to “do” pastoral renewal) had impelled two priests of the archdiocese, Msgr Tom Ivory and Msgr Tom Kleissler, to plan the details of the process and to provide the necessary materials and specific guidance for its successful delivery in parishes. Msgr Ivory had gone on to other areas of pastoral planning in Newark but Msgr Kleissler had stayed with Renew and had become its executive director. The process had been successful in the parishes of Newark and was already being used in many other dioceses of the United States and Canada.

I was much impressed – and very hopeful that I had found an answer to the problem of how to carry out a programme of renewal in the diocese. The upshot of my discovery of Renew was that I invited Msgr Kleissler and his assistant director, Sister Donna Ciangio OP, to come to Galloway diocese, present an explanation of the process to the priests and parish leaders and then ask them to consider with their parish communities whether they were in favour of taking on Renew for our diocese. The response was overwhelmingly positive and favourable; not unanimous (there were some who said that the process sounded “too American”) but a clear majority wanted to go ahead. At the very least, it was a ready made tool, not only saving us a lot of time and trouble but perhaps saving us the embarrassment of attempting something that would have been too much for us and our inexperienced resources. One lady told the gathering that she was “chuffed to bits” at the prospect, an expression that had to be explained to the mystified Americans. In the event, forty-two parishes decided to undertake Renew and five parish priests told me that their parishes had decided against it.

The Renew process was nothing if not thorough. We had to select two people to go to Newark for an international summer school and be trained to lead Renew in our diocese. I chose Fr Archie Brown and Mr Jim McMillan for this task. By sheer

coincidence, the latter had been born in Newark and, as an infant, had come to Scotland with his returning parents. The course on which they embarked was of two months' duration in the summer of 1985 and was very intensive. The participants came from various nations and dioceses, especially from Australia, India and England as well as from Galloway and Glasgow. Without any collusion between us, Cardinal Winning had heard about Renew, investigated, and decided to have it in Glasgow. This gave us in Galloway the advantage of having a partner-diocese in Scotland and we worked closely together, especially in producing Scottish versions of the materials (booklets and other resources) used in various activities of the Renew process.

When our two leaders returned to Scotland, we began a full year of preparation for Renew in the diocese and in each parish which had chosen to do the process. Each of the parishes had to choose a lay person to be its Renew coordinator and others to conduct the various aspects of the process in the parish community. There was training provided for the parish coordinators and their assistants, each parish had to be helped to organise the various Renew activities, to encourage as many parishioners as possible to be involved in these activities and to be reassured of what would be asked of them. Extensive materials had to be written, printed, distributed to parishes and participants. The various activities required people to be recruited and trained for their requisite tasks.

The two diocesan coordinators and I were kept very busy, travelling around the diocese to explain the process and encourage participation. We had overnight retreats for those who, in each parish, were to have leading parts in Renew, including the parish priests. It was a hectic time, but also a good time because there was great enthusiasm, many people felt a growing sense of anticipation and of responsible involvement. Thus, for them, the grace of renewal was already very active, whether they recognised it or not. Every now and again during that year of preparation, we had visits from Msgr Kleissler and Sr Donna Ciangio, as well as continuing our collaboration with the archdiocese of Glasgow. I remember that time with great memories of hard work yet increasingly assured prospects for the success of the initiative.

Every diocesan bishop has to send a very comprehensive report about the diocese to the Holy See every five years. My first quinquennial report covered the period from 1982 to the end of 1986. In it, I made these comments on Renew:

“The process is totally parish-based in order to avoid any tendency to elitism or the establishment of separate parallel communities. By means of the Sunday liturgy, small faith-sharing groups, large group activities, and material for use in the home, Renew leads participants through five seasons (two seasons each year) of spiritual renewal.

“The first season of Renew began in the diocese in the autumn of 1986 and, at the time of writing this report, we can thank God for many wonderful graces of conversion, renewal and commitment. The process is based on prayer and organisation and so we can also record the great increase in praying and prayerfulness as well as the large number of laity who, though not previously very active in their parishes, have now assumed various ministries in accordance with

their gifts and without any difficulty in accepting the proper authority of the parish priest and the bishop.”

My subsequent quinquennial reports were equally positive. For example, in the report for 1992 to 1996, I wrote:

“The Renew process was completed at the end of 1988 Renew is a pastoral plan that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in the parish and in the individual

“It is my opinion that Renew transformed the diocese in several ways; viz., thousands of people “discovered” the Scriptures and different forms of prayer; there began a much greater involvement of laity in parish ministries and in small group leadership; the experience of faith-sharing was new but has become accepted in the diocese and treasured by many; in addition (although this is not an easy matter to prove by statistics), I believe that many people were enabled to develop a much deeper and more personal relationship with God.”

In such reports to one’s superior authority, the tendency is to speak in glowing terms and to avoid mention of negativities. That tendency is evident in the quotations above. Nevertheless, Renew was a success in the diocese. Nowadays, when I think about Renew or am asked questions such as “What benefits did it bring to the diocese?”, I recall that it changed the attitudes of many people, both with regard to their own spiritual life and growth and also in their active involvement in the life of the parish community; it made us more familiar with the Scriptures and with informal and formal prayer; it gave us a familiarity with faith-sharing and discussion; and it provided an impetus for parish and diocesan liturgy to be taken more seriously and more knowledgeably.

There were disappointments too. About half a dozen parishes (or their parish priests) decided not to participate; in those parishes which took part, there were parishioners who avoided any voluntary participation, especially the small groups; and our attempts at “large group activities” such as parish picnics and barbecues as well as gatherings for specifically religious purposes were not as successful as hoped. Perhaps the Scottish climate must share some of the blame Overall, however, the process was, I believe, highly successful as we advanced through the five seasons from autumn 1986 until autumn 1988. Each of the seasons had its own theme, all of them following a logical sequence of personal and parish renewal: God’s Call; Our Response; Empowerment by the Spirit; Discipleship; Evangelisation. It is because of Renew’s profound and lasting impact on the diocese that I have dwelt so thoroughly on describing it.

As we neared the end of Renew, there was widespread regret among many parishioners. Liturgy standards remained very high and in some parishes, small faith-sharing groups continued to be organised for autumn and Lent, with booklets providing material for the meetings being written and published in the diocese. I asked the priests if they would like the diocese to continue to provide plans for an “After Renew” process. The clear majority was against continuing diocesan direction and with a preference for each parish to be responsible for planning and organising its own efforts. I accepted this decision as I was anxious not to seem to be ambitious to micro-manage. The principle of subsidiarity is a good one but, in retrospect, I feel

that the decision may have been unwise. It is my impression that few parishes achieved much in specific and formal ongoing spiritual and pastoral renewal. Perhaps, however, the process was still going on in ways less visible and organised. Perhaps, too, the time will come when a diocesan plan of renewal will again be judged opportune. I certainly hope so!

ALARMING STATISTICS

The very favourable opinion that I express with regard to the effectiveness of Renew is true of those who remained firmly committed to religious practice, people who probably were already convinced Catholics. The quality of their practice was, I think, notably enhanced. However, it has to be admitted that, despite the papal visit of 1982 and the Renew process, the success of our efforts cannot be measured in terms of numbers.

Here are some sobering statistics.

	1982	1992	2002	2012
Estimated Catholic Population	51,400	48,400	47,700	45,000
Sunday Mass Attendance	22,267	16,860	12,962	10,214
Baptisms	909	761	568	514
Marriages	413	251	181	128
Parishes	46	47	47	43
Diocesan Priests (including retired)	59	60	53	41
Religious Priests	22	10	3	4
Religious Brothers	23	10	6	2
Religious Sisters	73	60	35	22
Retired Priests	N/A	7	10	11
Seminarians	11	13	2	1

Although some decrease in numbers is to be expected, some of the statistics are depressing and distressing. Let me make some comments on the various figures.

The “Estimated Catholic Population” is partly guesswork. Who or what is a Catholic? How “lapsed” should you be in order to cease being a Catholic? Each parish in *The Catholic Directory for Scotland* gives a figure for the number of Catholics it has, but these figures often remain unchanged for years, while different parishes have different criteria of “Catholicity”. The customary belief was that Catholics comprised about 10% of the population of the area of the diocese, higher in Ayrshire (especially in North Ayrshire) and lower in Dumfries & Galloway.

The “Sunday Mass Attendance” is based on an annual count in every parish on a weekend in early November. As a result, the totals are fairly accurate. The drop in numbers over the period is very great indeed. There are many reasons for this - growing secularism, loss of faith or of the sense of sin, other attractions on Sundays, boredom at Mass. (So is Mass boring?) Whatever the reason in each case, the fact is tragic since participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is not only an obligation but should be the necessary centre of our lives as baptised Catholics who want to love God.

The decrease in the number of baptisms indicates that less importance is given to the sacrament by some Catholic parents but the figures for marriage in church are even more startling. Nowadays the great majority of couples are either of mixed religion (Catholic and Protestant) or of what is rather quaintly called “disparity of worship” (Catholic and unbaptised). In addition, the figures show fewer Catholics marrying in their parishes, choosing instead either a Protestant church or, more often, a registry office or, by far most often, not formally marrying. This last option used to be called “living in sin” but nowadays is more politely included in the expression “partners” (rather than “husband and wife”).

The steep fall in Mass attendance, baptisms and marriages is alarming. The first statistic is now less than half of what it was thirty years ago; the second is a little more than half; and the last is only between a third and a quarter. Is the precipitous trend stoppable?

Perhaps it is worth noting that, in the Diocesan Questionnaire of 1984 (which, of course, was open only to over-sixteens), of the 7,772 responses, 6,289 said they were regularly at Sunday Mass and 1,388 said they were not. Since the attenders figuring in the annual count in the early 1980s were three times the number of questionnaire respondents but less than half the estimated Catholics in the diocese, it may be that the only valid conclusion to be drawn is that more attenders than non-attenders responded to the questionnaire.

The decreases in the number of diocesan priests and of seminarians are directly related, of course. Like all other mortals, priests retire from active work and die. The drastic dearth of seminarians is very troubling. Why is the priesthood attracting hardly anyone? At the present time, most applicants/candidates are older than was the custom some years ago; an applicant straight from secondary school is the exception. Perhaps the trend to older men is wise but few of them are available, especially because of the celibacy rule. Young men in their late teens are fewer than years ago but, in addition, so many of them these days seem to have abandoned the practice of faith and religion some years before they finish school, that it is not surprising that so

few are attracted to the priesthood. Further reflection on the decreasing number of priests is to be found below, in the section “The Priests”.

The recent introduction in the diocese of permanent deacons gives some help but, since they neither celebrate Mass nor celebrate the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick, their help is limited and in crucial areas non-existent.

The figures for members of religious congregations (priests, brothers and sisters) are perhaps most drastically fallen of all. Much of the decrease is due to the closure of a number of convents and religious houses that were previously in the diocese. Religious also grow older and recruitment, especially of those wishing to be religious brothers or sisters, is minimal. We miss the presence, work and witness of the numbers we used to have in the diocese and of the religious centres which were much used by the people of the diocese. Nowadays, many of the religious who remain reside fairly quietly in ones and twos and in much smaller accommodation. In 1982 two parishes were staffed by religious (Norbertines and Dehonian Sacred Heart Fathers). Now, only the latter are still in the diocese. Since the turn of the century, two priests, a Mill Hill Missionary and a Passionist, have come to the diocese and are parish priests, but the arrangements are personal ones for them.

So in terms of numbers, the picture in the diocese of Galloway is a gloomy one. Years ago I remember the prognosis of the great German theologian, Karl Rahner SJ. He foresaw that the Church would be much reduced in numbers, at least in Europe, but that the people who remained would be more committed, with a deeper faith and more fervent practice, than before. Certainly the first part of that prophecy has been fulfilled.

THE PRIESTS

In a Catholic diocese, priests are very special people and their work is vital and essential. The priests are the closest collaborators of the bishop. Their relationship with him is that of both sons and brothers; and, with the bishop, they serve the people as their pastors, their shepherds, proclaiming the gospel to them, providing them with Mass and the sacraments, leading them in lives of faith, hope and charity by their presence, their teaching, their constant care and the example of their lives.

That may not be a definition of the ordained priest nor may it give a complete picture of his vocation and role, but I hope that it is some use in describing the life and work of a diocesan priest in our day.

When I came to the diocese of Galloway in June 1981, I wanted, during my years as bishop, not only to exercise good leadership and gentle authority for the priests but to serve them as wisely and well as I could and to be as close to them in friendship as was possible. I am not sure how well I have fulfilled that last desire or intention of my ministry towards the priests; others will judge but, to the extent that I fell short, I ask their pardon.

Prior to becoming bishop, I already knew many of the priests – Scotland is a relatively small place and, although our work is confined to one diocese, we do know and meet priests of other dioceses from time to time. Moreover, since I had spent

many years in seminaries, quite a number of the Galloway priests had been with me while I was a seminarian in Rome, a lecturer in St Peter's College, Cardross, or the rector of the Scots College in Spain. And since the total number of priests in the diocese when I became bishop was around sixty, it was easy, within a few weeks of my arrival, to get to know those previously unknown to me.

In a few cases, establishing friendship was not as easy as I had hoped. Some priests perhaps found it a little strange to meet me as friend and to be relaxed socially with me. I think also that one or two suspected that I wanted to use the "friendly" approach as cover for a desire to check or snoop on them. That attitude was very exceptional and, generally speaking, I hope that the priests did not resent my efforts or misunderstand my motives. However, sometimes I did wonder whether I was trying to be too close for comfort to some of them. I am sorry also for the opportunities I probably missed of showing care, compassion, respect and understanding for such good men, the priests of the diocese.

On the whole, I found the priests supportive, helpful, cooperative, friendly and kind. It is from that standpoint that I now speak of their place in the diocese of which I am attempting to draw a portrait.

During the years since I became bishop (that is, from 1981), the number of priests in the diocese has decreased noticeably and, given the lack of applicants in recent years, the decrease is alarming. There has been a dearth of vocations to the priesthood or, perhaps more accurately, a reluctance to respond to God's call. Even so, when I think of my experiences in Central America and in some countries of South America where many people have Mass only occasionally, the situation here may be considered still reasonable. Nevertheless, it worries me that, while some countries in Europe and some areas of Britain now seem to be enjoying an increase in applicants, they are still few and far between in Galloway.

The statistics are worth noting. In 1981 there were 56 priests active in the parishes of the diocese; they included six who belonged to religious congregations and eighteen who, though priests of Galloway diocese, had come from Ireland to work in Scotland. There were a further seven priests of this diocese, some of whom were retired and others working in seminaries or as chaplains in the forces. Now, in 2012, there are 27 priests active, a number which includes only one Irishman and four religious. There are also eleven priests retired, as well as two who are forces' chaplains and one who works outside the diocese.

A significant figure in those statistics is the drop in Irish priests working in Galloway, from eighteen in 1981 to one in 2012; likewise, from six religious priests thirty years ago we have now only four. The decrease in Irish and religious priests from twenty-four in 1981 to five in 2012 provides a partial but important explanation of the overall fall in numbers over the period.

The Scottish priests of the diocese were educated at various seminaries – the Pontifical Scots College and the Beda College in Rome, the Royal Scots College in Spain (at Valladolid until 1988 and now at Salamanca), St Sulpice in France, St Andrew's College at Drygrange near Melrose and at Scotus College in Bearsden. Over recent years the seminaries in Scotland have closed and, at present, no students

from Scotland are sent to Salamanca or Paris. They all go to Rome and the Scots College there. It is worth remarking, however, that a considerable number of the Galloway priests are products of the Scots College in Spain. That predilection for Spain is probably and at least partly due to the association that two recent bishops of the diocese had with the college there, Bishop Joseph McGee having been a student for seven years (1922-1929) and I the rector for nine years (1965-1974).

The Irish priests in the diocese were educated in various seminaries in their home country – All Hallows in Dublin and the colleges in Kilkenny, Carlow, Thurles, Waterford and Wexford, none of which is still functioning as a seminary.

At the beginning of the period under review, most students had gone to the seminary directly after completing their secondary education, either at Blairs College or at a local school, and “late vocations” were the exception. Nowadays, however, candidates (very reduced in numbers) have usually completed their tertiary education and/or have been working for some years before going to a seminary, while someone “straight from school” is a rarity.

In the 1980s Galloway seminarians, when ordained, spent some years as assistant priests under the guidance and authority of a parish priest, thus benefitting from the experience of an older man. However, as numbers have gone down, a newly ordained priest will spend only a few months or, at most, a year as an assistant priest and then will find himself installed as a parish priest. Since the newly ordained are now usually older, they are probably more capable of taking early responsibility as parish priests than someone who has had no experience of having lived independently and having worked for a living.

One sometimes hears the complaint that, these days, priests no longer visit the parishioners unless they are housebound through illness or disability. I have heard people say that, in their young days, “Father So-and-so was never out of our house”, which must be something of an exaggeration since, in that case, every other family in the parish would feel rather neglected. But the point is a valid one and deserves a response.

Apart from the fact of there being fewer priests, there are now evening Masses, meetings in the parish and elsewhere, and a considerable number of other duties since nearly all priests are parish priests and, as such, have administrative tasks that assistant priests (curates) do not have. It may be that priests today could manage some “old fashioned parish visitation”, but there are also difficulties from the point of view of the families to be visited. People are much more mobile these days, less likely to be at home and, if they are at home, many do not particularly want to be interrupted from the television or the computer. Even in the 1970s, when I was a parish priest and tried to visit, I was conscious of interrupting people’s TV enjoyment. Some people switched off the TV when I visited but others simply lowered the sound and couldn’t resist glancing at the screen, which made me feel awkward and not particularly welcome. Some priests would ask the family to switch off the television, but I never had the courage to do that. So there, if you like, is another reason why many priests no longer visit families in a systematic way as they used to do.

Nowadays, “ongoing formation” is on the agenda for all priests. It is something that wisdom urges, especially as we live in times that are so subject to change. Moreover, we owe it to those whom we serve. Ongoing formation is prescribed by the Second Vatican Council and also by Blessed Pope John Paul II and our present Holy Father. It comprises spiritual, intellectual, social and physical efforts to keep ourselves active, up to date and “fit for purpose”. Clearly, it requires a certain determination and asceticism to be faithful and persevering in our efforts.

The diocese provides some help and encouragement for our ongoing formation with retreats and days of recollection. There have been attempts to update us on contemporary scholarship in regard to Scripture and Church teaching on faith and morals and so on. However, I must confess that, perhaps through lack of opportunities and perhaps, even more, due to lack of enthusiasm and dedication, our organised efforts have probably been no more than half-hearted and not always well supported. We have occasional social events, such as Mass followed by lunch, for various celebrations, especially, for example, priests’ jubilees. And one deanery holds a very enjoyable monthly Sunday night supper for its priests. The former custom of groups of priests gathering on Sunday night to play cards no longer takes place and even the annual golf tournament for the priests of the diocese to contest the Bishop’s Cup is a thing of the past.

However, one very important and interesting initiative was undertaken when, after consulting the priests, I invited Fr Vincent Dwyer OCSO, an American Cistercian, to introduce his “Ministry to Priests” scheme to the diocese. Although a member of a contemplative religious order, Fr Dwyer was aware of the loneliness of many diocesan priests and the scarcity of opportunities for growth in spirituality in their lives in parishes. He therefore designed and constructed his “Ministry to Priests” initiative. It consists in two main areas of activity: (a) one-to-one meetings and (b) small groups. The first invites a priest to choose a brother-priest whom he trusts, not to be his confessor or spiritual director but rather to be a friend or confidant with whom he can discuss any topics of personal concern to him, whether about his spiritual life or his work or relationships. The other priest’s role is not to solve his friend’s problems but to provide a sympathetic ear and, if asked, to offer some thoughts that may be helpful for his friend’s personal growth or reassurance. The second activity of the Ministry to Priests scheme is for a number of priests, say between five and ten, to meet together regularly, perhaps monthly, for an overnight and at a place away from their own homes. At these meetings they will pray together, eat together, have some social time and probably celebrate Mass together; specifically, each group will also choose some type of activity that will be a feature of every meeting – for example, a paper by one of the group followed by general discussion of some topic of Scripture or liturgy or theology; another group might choose a topic of current affairs or history or literature; other groups’ specific activities might be sport or music or a visit to a place of interest.

Before embarking on the Ministry to Priests activities, those of us who wished to participate in the scheme had a few preliminary meetings at which one or two people from the Ministry to Priests headquarters in the United States explained the programme to us, told us how to be involved and asked us to elect, from among those participating, a priest who would be diocesan director and a few others to help him with the work. In addition, we were invited to complete written psychological tests; our papers were sent

to the United States for assessment and then, some time later, returned to us individually with a confidential report on our psychological strengths and weaknesses, our needs, attitudes and personal traits. I think that some of the priests found this part of the preparatory sessions “too American” and somewhat threatening. I remember, with some embarrassment, that my answers showed that I lived too much in the future and should be more concentrated on the present; in my own defence, I did a lot of thinking, during those early years of my time as bishop, about the needs of the priests and lay people of the diocese and so gave the impression of being too concerned with what might be, rather than what was the then present reality in my life. Well, you can’t just sit around, waiting for things to happen!

With the preliminaries completed, the priests embarked on the programme proper. The first activity, the “one-to-one”, was taken up by a number of the priests, but a minority. On the other hand, nearly all joined a small group of one kind or another. The groups continued for a number of years and were very enjoyable, not only for relaxation but for beneficial reasons too. However, numbers gradually dwindled as the numbers of priests decreased, small groups got smaller and eventually the Ministry to Priests activities in the diocese have more or less ceased. I do not know the story of the programme in the other three or four Scottish dioceses which adopted the scheme, but such things do not last for ever and I am satisfied with what the programme achieved in Galloway. Nonetheless, ongoing formation is still required and should be taken seriously by each priest and by the presbyterate as a whole.

At what may be termed the business level, the priests have a variety of meetings. The number of deaneries has been reduced from seven in 1982 to four in 2012. The four are St Margaret’s deanery (South Ayrshire), St Joseph’s deanery (East Ayrshire), St Mary’s deanery (North Ayrshire) and St Andrew’s deanery (Dumfries & Galloway). There are statutory meetings of all the priests in a deanery and additional meetings if and when necessary. Each deanery elects representatives to be members of the Diocesan Council of Priests which the bishop attends and to which he nominates several additional members, usually those holding certain diocesan offices. The bishop can also call meetings of every active priest in the diocese, as needs require.

There are also meetings of the members of the chapter of canons. There are seven canons, the most senior (that is, longest ordained) of the priests of the diocese, provided they accept the bishop’s invitation and nomination. The canons used to be a bishop’s close advisers and he can still consult them as he wishes; but since the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983, a new office of Consultor was introduced. The College of Consultors, a group of up to twelve priests of the diocese, chosen by the bishop, are now his statutory advisers; moreover, when a diocese becomes vacant, it is the Consultors who meet to choose an Administrator who has (limited) authority in the diocese until a new bishop takes charge.

On the whole, I have a very high opinion of the priests of Galloway diocese. They are good men and with a genuine desire to serve the people of the parishes. They work conscientiously to “build the Kingdom” in this local Church. Each priest, of course, has his own unique character and personality, as well as his own strengths and weaknesses. There is genuine friendship among them and great kindness towards the bishop, whom, because the diocese is small and the clergy not numerous, they get to know very well.

Things were not always perfect, of course, because priests (and bishops) are human. Perhaps the area that was most difficult to manage well was that of asking priests to accept changes and to move from parish to parish. I tried to do what was best, not only for the parishes concerned but also for the priests. However, such occasions naturally caused upset to those priests who were involved and, in addition to the inconvenience, I know that they sometimes caused dismay, disappointment and even anger. Canon Law decrees that priests have a certain stability and should be asked to move only for serious pastoral reasons. Applying this law is not easy. What are “serious pastoral reasons”? Is it better for a priest to remain more or less permanently in the same parish or should he transfer after a reasonable time in a parish? And, if so, how long is “reasonable”? Leaving one parish and starting afresh with a different parish community is very hard, especially if the priest is no longer young.

During my first year in the diocese, I asked some priests to change their parishes. They agreed, but some did so reluctantly and some of the moves were criticised. So from that time I had the advice of an appointments committee of the vicar general and three priests chosen by the Council of Priests. This proved very helpful to me and I believe that the priests appreciated it as well. Despite this, a situation arose that caused great distress in the diocese and much unwelcome publicity, especially through press reports. I reproduce the paragraph I wrote on the subject in *Being a Bishop in Scotland* (page 17).

A very serious situation arose following an assembly of priests of Galloway which we held in 1990. One of its recommendations (not unanimously approved) was that priests should not remain “for ever”, especially in those parishes which were considered among the “best” in the diocese. When I put this recommendation into effect and asked some priests to transfer to other parishes, they declined. Without going into details, suffice to say that the dispute was finally decided by the Church’s highest court, the *Signatura Apostolica* in Rome. That court found in the priests’ favour, advising me that I had made errors in procedure and that, if I wished to proceed, I should correct such procedural errors. However, since the whole business had already caused bitterness and had been widely reported, I had no stomach for prolonging the dispute.

It was a sad experience for all of us who were concerned and there will always be disagreement about the wisdom, or lack of it, of my actions But since 1990 or thereabouts, I confess that I have asked priests to change only when it was necessary and not in cases where I thought such changes would be merely beneficial. As I said, priests’ changes are never easy. For me, they were a source of real distress.

Still on the subject of priests being asked to transfer from one parish to another, should not the lay members of the parishes affected be consulted? Ideally, of course, they should. Not only with questions such as “Are you happy that the priest at present in your parish should remain with you?” but also “What qualities should your new parish priest possess?” But the ideal is not feasible, particularly in a relatively small diocese suffering from a chronic dearth of priests.

An attempt to respond to parishioners' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their parish priest by transferring in the latter case and excluding transfer in the former is impractical. How to measure satisfaction or dissatisfaction? Even if the latter is clear, is another parish to be compelled to have him? The bishop's better response if there are serious or widespread complaints from parishioners about their priest is to take the matter up with him and proceed from there, not simply to transfer him to another parish.

Regarding the proposal that parishioners should be consulted about the kind of priest they would like to have, their response would be very predictable: "someone who is friendly, hard-working, dependable . . .". Yet the choice facing the bishop is very limited, in fact usually restricted to one priest. I think that most parishioners realised the impracticality of prior consultation and that was the reason why I received very few requests for it. Besides, to have held consultation in the prevailing circumstances would have suggested that such consultation was no more than a meaningless pretence.

A rather more general subject, but nevertheless related, is that of bishops' and priests' accountability. All such men are, of course, accountable to God and we shall have to give an account of our stewardships when we die. In theory, also, bishops are accountable to the pope and diocesan priests to their bishop. But in practice, a situation has to be very serious before that accountability is effective. Moreover, the relationship between bishop and priest is not that of employer and employee and so does not encourage such a confrontational attitude, apart from the dire shortage of priests being exacerbated if the bishop decides on drastic action.

So can an unsatisfactory bishop or priest rest unperturbed and undisturbed? Are there no ways to assess, judge and correct such cases? Probably not, unless in extreme cases. The superior can urge, encourage, even threaten but, in contrast to inadequate performance in other professions, bishops and priests do enjoy a freedom from rigorous assessment of their work. Sanctions are possible up to ordination but, thereafter, the bishop or priest knows that his only effective judge in this life is his own conscience. It is a serious responsibility. "When a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him" (Luke 12:48). Although the situation is not ideal, the maintenance of the good relationship that ought to exist between pope and bishop as well as between bishop and priest is so important that the effect of introducing anything that would destroy or weaken that bond is probably the principal reason for maintaining the prevailing state of affairs. How significant, therefore, are those words of Jesus just quoted: "When a man has had a great deal given him **on trust** . . .". Of course, a wise bishop or priest might well seek an informal and unbiased appraisal from someone whom he trusts, provided that the person asked is someone who has a proper awareness of a priest's or bishop's work and the ability to make true judgments and give a useful appraisal and helpful advice.

When the issue of the sexual abuse of children arose and, in particular, the fact that the guilty persons sometimes were priests, we had to take the whole matter very seriously indeed. In Galloway, we had training days which all our priests had to attend. At these, we were instructed, by professionals in the field, about how to behave correctly with children and how we should act if cases occurred, or were suspected, of child abuse by fellow priests or by others who were engaged on any

business connected with the parish. Since the issue first became a prominent scandal, there have been developments in the way in which the evil should be prevented, reported, treated and so on; in these respects, we have had to invest a great deal of time, effort and money in order to do everything possible to prevent abuse, to protect the vulnerable, including some adults also, and to deal with offenders or suspected offenders. In this diocese, and until the present, we have not gone unscathed but, compared with other places, the dioceses of Scotland have emerged less afflicted.

It is not difficult to realise how much this issue of the abuse of vulnerable people has affected the priests. We have felt compassion for the victims and anxiety to help them in any way that we could, we have been ashamed of those priests who have been guilty of abuse, we have endured the widespread suspicion and opprobrium engendered by the publicity, we have been more vigilant than before about our own behaviour and that of others involved with our parishes. It has been a time of suffering for priests and yet they have continued to do their work and live their lives in as conscientious and exemplary a manner as possible.

With regard to permanent deacons, there were none ordained for the diocese and none in training during my years as bishop. I consulted the clergy, especially the Council of Priests, on two or perhaps three occasions, and the general opinion was not in favour of their introduction. The prevailing view was that, since they can neither celebrate Mass nor confer absolution nor anoint the sick, their usefulness was unfortunately limited; moreover, lay people, both men and women, can carry out many of the duties that deacons perform. It seemed a pity to “clericalise” ecclesial ministry even more than before and thereby, especially, reduce women’s involvement. However, my successor, Bishop John Cunningham, has introduced permanent deacons in the diocese, a decision that I am happy to accept, especially because the permanent diaconate now exists in the Roman rite and it is therefore good to use it; and already all the other seven Scottish dioceses have introduced the practice of having permanent deacons.

RELIGIOUS

The statistics given on page 18 are stark. They show a great decrease in the number of religious, both male and female, in Galloway diocese between 1982 and 2012. The fall in men religious (both priests and unordained brothers) was from 45 to 6 and, in religious sisters, from 73 to 22.

The reasons for the decreases differ in the two cases, men and women. In 1982 there were five male religious congregations in the diocese: Passionists, Norbertines (Premonstratensians), Verona Fathers, Sacred Heart Fathers (“Dehonians”) and Marist Brothers. All had sizable numbers in the diocese, the first four being almost entirely composed of priests and two of them were in charge of parishes: Norbertines and Sacred Heart Fathers. The Marist Brothers had three houses: St Joseph’s College in Dumfries, Kinharvie Centre near New Abbey, and St Columba’s College in Largs. Today, all have gone with the exception of the Sacred Heart Fathers, who take care of St John Ogilvie’s parish in Irvine and Smithstone House of Prayer and Spirituality in Kilwinning.

Soon after the end of the Second World War, the Passionist Fathers opened several houses in the diocese. When I came to Galloway in 1981, there was only one left, Fatima House at Coodham, near Kilmarnock. Within a few years, extensive dry rot was found and very costly repairs were undertaken. Unfortunately, further damage to the building was discovered some years later and the Passionists understandably decided to cut their losses and put the estate on sale. The departure of the Passionists from Coodham, around 1990, was a particularly heavy blow as the large house and modern extension offered a magnificent pastoral and spiritual resource for the diocese and indeed for the whole country. Coodham provided residential courses and retreats, days and weekends led by members of the Passionist community and/or renowned speakers from Britain and abroad. In addition, the accommodation was always available for our diocesan use, especially during the years of the Renew process and the introduction of the Ministry to Priests programme as well as many other occasions. On a personal note, I also mention the fact that I received episcopal ordination in the Coodham grounds in front of Fatima House on 9th June 1981, a rather cold and windy, but ultimately sunny, afternoon.

The Marist Brothers came to the diocese in 1872 to establish St Joseph's College, Dumfries. Consequently, when they left after such a long association, their going, and especially the loss of their rightly famed educational gifts, was deeply regretted. At present, the only male religious community in the diocese are the Sacred Heart Fathers who have been in St John Ogilvie's parish since it opened in the late 1970s and in Smithstone since purchasing the house and grounds in 1970. The latter, due to the shortage of priests to staff it, does not at the moment provide any pastoral or spiritual resources for the diocese or the wider public, again a very regrettable situation. Partially offsetting the bad news, two religious priests have come to the diocese as individuals and are parish priests, resident in Annan and Newton Stewart.

At the start of the period under review, there were in the diocese nine convents of women religious. Today there are seven. The Benedictine Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (of Montmartre) are different from the others, being the only enclosed contemplative community in Galloway diocese. The original establishment was a community of Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament (whose mother house is in France). They were in charge of a secondary school for girls, attached to their convent in Dumfries. When the community became very reduced in numbers, the nuns closed the school and the girls were transferred to St Joseph's College, which then became coeducational. This had, in fact, several advantages, perhaps the most important being that Catholic secondary education for girls was no longer limited in numbers, a situation that had deprived an indeterminate number of girls of a proper secondary education. The few nuns still in Dumfries voted to be received into the Benedictines of the Sacred Heart, whose mother house is Tyburn Convent, London. A few years later, a decision was made to move from the convent in Dumfries to a large building purchased in Largs, where the community of some eight or nine members now lives, prays, works and accepts guests for private retreats, visits and hospitality.

The six other houses of female religious have much smaller communities, ranging from one to three persons. In most cases, however, the sisters are still very active, either in the parishes in which they reside or in duties ranging further afield. Nor should it be forgotten that many of these women, in earlier life, carried out a valuable

service either in teaching or in nursing and that some of them served in missionary countries in arduous and even dangerous and hazardous conditions.

Both the contemplative religious and those who belong to “active” congregations are important elements of the diocese, through their exemplary presence, their prayers and their work. The decrease in numbers and the lack of applicants for both male and female orders and congregations is a cause of concern. It is true that some were established to educate the young and to nurse the sick at times in the nineteenth century when there was a shortage of lay people to undertake such work, a shortage that is not nearly as severe now. But the absence of religious from our dioceses would be a sad loss, especially for the exemplary witness of faith and dedication that they provide for us all.

However, the global picture is not as bleak. In the so called developing world, in Africa and parts of South Asia, the number of recruits to religious congregations is gratifyingly on the increase. This is very fitting in those areas where religious, especially women, do necessary work in the traditional fields of education and health care. What I find very heartening is not only the increase in numbers but also the fact that many of the congregations are now appointing people from these new areas of the world to positions of high responsibility in their ranks. Religious life in our world is not moribund but its “centre of gravity” is moving.

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

The Church in Scotland is proud of the network of Catholic schools that there are in the country. Originally they were set up and paid for (including teachers’ salaries) by “the pennies of the poor” until the early years of the twentieth century. In 1918 negotiations resulted in the Church handing over their school buildings to the local authorities, namely the various county councils of Scotland. These assumed the responsibility of maintaining the properties, building new schools as necessary, appointing and paying teachers and other staff, and supplying all necessary equipment, including books, stationery and furnishings. The legislation allows the Church to retain certain rights, especially that teachers’ appointments must be approved by the local bishop, that a certain time each week is devoted to the teaching of Catholic faith and practice, and that the Church may appoint priests to have access as chaplains.

The arrangement on the whole works very well and, in particular, it relieves the Catholic community of the burden of funding the schools. From time to time, difficulties have arisen in operating the system but usually these have been settled, more or less to the satisfaction of the local diocese and the local authority.

Of course, in areas of Scotland that are sparsely populated, and especially where Catholics are not a large percentage of the local inhabitants, separate Catholic schools are not provided. This is a reasonable restriction but it does call for efforts by the local priest or parish community to provide alternative arrangements for the religious education of the Catholic children of the district, a responsibility that is fulfilled in a variety of ways.

In the diocese of Galloway, the number of Catholic primary schools in 1982 was in the mid-thirties. Since then, a number of the smaller schools, perhaps around ten of them, have been closed. I was in the habit of making an annual visit to each school and spending some time in each classroom, as well as having a meeting with the head teacher and going to the staffroom with all the teachers at the morning interval and, if I were still in the school, at lunch time. Since I am not a trained and professional schools inspector, I did not attempt any assessment of the quality of religious education on offer. My reasons for visiting the schools were pastoral – to encourage staff and pupils, to demonstrate my interest and friendship, to say something helpful that might strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and their fidelity to Catholic practice. Of course, not all the children in the schools are Catholics and, even among those who are, many are strangers to Sunday Mass. The visits were tiring, especially in the bigger schools. The largest primary school in the diocese was St Peter's in Ardrossan and the smallest was All Souls' in Wigtown; closely rivalled by St Margaret's in New Cumnock and St Thomas' in Muirkirk, all three now no more. I was invariably received with kindness and courtesy and, for me, the visits were personally very rewarding.

Visiting the secondary schools was much more difficult for me. It was not only their size and their complexity but, even more, the classes were constantly on the move from subject to subject, from room to room and from teacher to teacher. Those factors, plus the feeling that a visit by me would not always be convenient for the school, deterred me with the result that my visits to secondary schools were rare and nearly always on the occasion of some specific event.

In 1982 there were eight Catholic secondary schools in the diocese. Over the years, the two smallest have closed – Sacred Heart Academy in Girvan and St Conval's High School in Cumnock; in Dumfries the Benedictine Convent School was also closed and the pupils, all girls, went to St Joseph's College; and in North Ayrshire, St Michael's Academy in Kilwinning and St Andrew's Academy in Saltcoats were amalgamated as St Matthew's Academy, located on the Saltcoats campus. Queen Margaret Academy, Ayr, and St Joseph's Academy, Kilmarnock, remain as they were. Consequently, there are now four Catholic secondary schools in the diocese.

Apart from the widespread reluctance of Catholic teenagers to persevere with practice of their faith, especially as regards attendance at Mass, the rolls of the secondary schools contain a percentage of teachers and pupils of other faiths (and none). As a result, although in primary schools it is relatively easy to "deliver" the religious education curriculum, the same does not hold in the secondary schools. In each of them there is a specific RE department with properly qualified teachers, but for them to achieve a satisfactory outcome of their efforts must sometimes be a problem. I have great sympathy for those teachers and pupils who are conscientious and dedicated Catholics, as also for the priests, appointed to part-time chaplaincies in each school.

The celebration of Mass in school, whether primary or secondary, causes concern and on more than one ground. For example, on holy days of obligation, should there be a Mass in the local school, if possible? Is such a Mass much more than a too easy way to fulfil an obligation? On days of obligation and on other occasions, did a school Mass or a class Mass not mean that those who never went to Mass in the church just

received Holy Communion merely because everyone present did so? And those who were not Catholics? Furthermore, I found that the standard of liturgy at school Masses generally left a lot to be desired, even making allowance for the conditions and circumstances. Of course, the counter argument is that, by having Mass in school, an opportunity is given to those who otherwise would never be at Mass.

As I have already noted, the people's commitment to separate Catholic schools, as shown by the questionnaire, is far from overwhelming. That is a negative factor. Sometimes, while I was bishop of the diocese, I confess that I had doubts about the value of separate Catholic schools. Was the religious instruction as good as it ought to be? Why did it not appear more effective, at least as far as Sunday Mass attendance showed? Sometimes I got the impression that children who attended non-denominational schools, either by their parents' choice or through lack of any alternative, were more likely to be at Sunday Mass than those at Catholic schools. Such thoughts are depressing and worrying. I hope they are also mistaken.

However, on the positive side, the establishment some years ago of the Scottish Catholic Education Service, under its excellent director, Mr Michael McGrath, has been a success and SCES is doing outstanding work. Its recently published RE programme *This is Our Faith* has been widely praised and is now being implemented in all of our schools. May it help to bring a rediscovery of faith and of God's loving call to our adolescents and young adults.

There are local authority schools (non-denominational) for children with special needs, although the tendency is to have as few children as possible at such schools and as many as possible in mainstream education. In my early years in the diocese, there were "St Francis Clubs" in Ayr and Kilmarnock where Catholic children with special needs were welcome. In the 1990s these groups ceased because we adopted, for Catholics with learning difficulties (and not only children), the system known as SPRED, Special Religious Development. Begun in Chicago in the 1960s, SPRED is "designed to assist those with developmental disabilities and/or learning problems to become integrated into parish life through a process of education in faith". Since its introduction in Galloway, SPRED has been directed by Sister Kathleen Hogg DC and has now several centres in the diocese. The system has enabled many "friends", as they are called, to develop an awareness of the presence and love of God and to receive sacraments which, otherwise, might not have been offered.

Some mention ought also to be made of adult education in faith, even although it is a voluntary matter and not something organised and obligatory, as is the case with children's religious education. Our most important and effective instrument in adult education in faith was undoubtedly the Renew process, which is described in its own section.

For some years the diocese also sponsored a scheme known as the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry. This was begun by the diocese of Dunkeld in collaboration with Abertay University, into which Galloway also entered. It was a three-year part-time course of classes, essays and required reading on a variety of theological and pastoral subjects. The classes or lectures were given by qualified priests and lay persons, the participants were lay people recommended by their parish priests as involved or able to be involved pastorally in their parishes. On completion of the course, the students

were awarded a certificate to show their competence in pastoral matters. The scheme lasted for a number of years and, in the diocese, something over a hundred people did the course.

In some parishes, schemes such as Alpha and CaFE were introduced and, at deanery and diocesan levels, many series of talks have been held, all with the aim of fostering a greater interest in theological, scriptural and pastoral areas of knowledge.

By its very nature, adult education in faith has to be “bitty” and we have to be content with what is achieved; hence, there always remains the desire to do more. Active Catholics hear a weekly homily, of course, and many copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* were bought when it was published in 1994. Not many people would read it from cover to cover but, one hopes, it is a frequently consulted reference book. Finally, if the Year of Faith (October 2012 to November 2013) is to be effective, it must encourage not only that we invite the Holy Spirit to revitalise and deepen our belief but also that we sincerely try to widen our knowledge of God’s revealed truth.

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

The Mass should, and does, hold a special place in our lives as Catholics. Perhaps in the days before Vatican II, when the Mass seemed so unchangeable, we did not pay great attention to how we celebrated it. The priest knew the rubrics, the missal provided him with all the words, the people were little involved except as devout spectators – that was that and Mass was Mass. But, thanks to the Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) and to subsequent official documents, things are very different nowadays. Every Mass requires careful preparation and diligent, devout celebration by all those present, each of us fulfilling his or her own role and with an awareness of what we are doing as sharers in Christ’s priesthood and as the community of his Church. That is the ideal. To what extent do we achieve it, or approach it, in this diocese of Galloway?

Personally, I had a great desire, as bishop, to help the parishes to celebrate Mass well. I had taught liturgy to the students in the Scots College in Spain and have welcomed the reform and the renewal of liturgical practice decreed and inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council. I had to implement the directives and the guidance of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* when I was a parish priest in East Kilbride in the diocese of Motherwell. That aim was confirmed and intensified when I was made a bishop and especially when I was appointed to be the Scottish member of the Episcopal Board of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and, even more, when elected chairman of that body in 1995.

From the beginning of my time in Galloway, I encouraged the full use of lay ministries at Mass – Scripture readings by lay people, singing of those parts of Mass which are meant to be sung, the availability of Holy Communion under both kinds at all Masses. Nearly all the priests were of similar mind as I was in these matters, although there were a few priests and parishes that perhaps were less enthusiastic in having as much lay participation in certain parts of the Mass or in making Holy Communion under the form of wine available to all.

A matter in which we could have done better in some parishes was in the effort to have Holy Communion for the lay people provided from hosts consecrated at the Mass being celebrated. For obvious reasons, complete success in that direction is not possible, but to have a full ciborium of hosts in the tabernacle and already consecrated to be distributed at a later Mass is wrong. And the practice has been discouraged and deplored by popes from Benedict XIV in the eighteenth century to those of the present century.

On a few occasions of the year there are diocesan Masses in the cathedral church. Such Masses are the highest and best expression of the Church's worship because they involve bishop, priests, deacons and laity from all the parishes, that is, all the elements that comprise the local Church. Such a celebration of the Eucharist, led by the bishop, the principal liturgical figure of the diocese, and with the entire diocese represented, is a wonderful act of faith and merits every effort to make it an impressive and memorable occasion.

There is one particular diocesan Mass that, year by year, shows the diocese at its best. I refer to the Mass of Chrism, celebrated in Galloway on the Tuesday evening of Holy Week. The cathedral is packed, people have come from the farthest parts of the diocese, from Largs and elsewhere in the north to Dumfries and neighbouring parishes in the south. The music is well chosen and the singing full-throated and wholehearted. The great majority of the priests are present and publicly renew their promise of commitment to priestly life and service; the sacred oils are solemnly blessed and then distributed to the parishes for use. The Mass of Chrism is a splendid occasion that affords us a spiritual experience of liturgy at its best, its most participatory and sacred.

To introduce a bleak realistic note, the relatively low percentage of baptised Catholics who regularly take part in Mass on Sundays, and the fact that that low rate continues its fall, is very worrying and perplexing. It should challenge us to try to encourage those who are "inactive" Catholics to be open to God's invitation and desire for them to worship him in the perfect way left to us by our Saviour. However, since we are told so often by those who do not go to Mass, and by some who do, that "Mass is boring", I do think that, although Mass is not celebrated as an entertainment to be enjoyed by spectators, parishes should frequently be aware that their Sunday Masses should try to be as attractive and interesting as possible and avoid the tendency to a routine and dullness that can legitimately be criticised as boring. As the people leave the church, is their good humour the result of what and how they have celebrated or merely a sense of relief and gratitude that "it's over for another week"?

THE SACRAMENTS

It is useful to make some comments on certain pastoral aspects of the sacraments, aspects that are relevant to life and religious practice in the diocese.

Baptism

The number of infants and young children being baptised has reduced greatly in the thirty years from 1981 to 2012. This is partly due to the decrease in the size of

families but more to the fact that many people who, in a previous generation, would at least have observed this most basic practice of a Christian family, no longer do so.

Most Catholics would agree that parents, asking to have their children baptised, should receive some instruction about the Church's teaching on baptism and its effects, as well as on their responsibilities as parents. After all, the liturgy describes them as "the first and most important teachers of their children". It is clearly to be hoped that they themselves will be practising Catholics or, in the case of a mixed marriage, that the Catholic partner should be. When there is little sign or founded hope of Catholic practice in the parents, should baptism of the children be refused? Most would probably say no, but that the sacrament might be delayed for a short time, in the hope that there would be a change for the better.

For those of a later age who seek to be Catholics, the process leading to baptism is normally the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) or, in the appropriate case, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children "who have reached catechetical age". In our diocese, the RCIA process usually lasts from September to the following Easter Vigil. In fact, however, we find that a majority of those seeking to become Catholics have already been baptised, with the result that their status during the time of preparation is different from that of the unbaptised, the catechumens, although, in practice, they accompany the catechumens in the various courses of instruction.

Care is taken that the RCIA process should be followed very seriously, not only in the various liturgical rites during it but also in the teaching offered to the candidates for full initiation into the Catholic Church. On the First Sunday of Lent, the bishop invites the catechumens to the cathedral for the Rite of Election, as they begin the final and intense period of preparation; those already baptised are also invited, recognised and enrolled. After their reception into full communion at the Easter Vigil in their parishes, the new members of the Church should carry out, along with the parish community, a period of mystagogia, "a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and doing the works of charity" (RCIA §234).

I sometimes wondered whether we were fulfilling these instructions about the period of mystagogia as well as we should. It would not be correct to generalise, either in criticism or in complacency, but there were reports and there was evidence that, in some cases, those who had been through the RCIA process and had received the sacraments of initiation did not persevere in the practices of Catholic life.

Despite the recommendations of some liturgical scholars, we do not yet have baptism by immersion, either of infants or of adults, but simply by water poured on the heads of the recipients of the sacrament. Perhaps the Scottish climate and the time-honoured norms of seemly decorum provide powerful deterrents.

Confirmation

During my time as bishop, we introduced the practice of conferring confirmation on children before first Holy Communion. Thus we restored the correct order of the sacraments of initiation into full membership of the Church, as recommended by the

official documents of the Church. This order had been upset over a century ago when St Pius X decreed that, once they reach the use of reason, children should be admitted to Holy Communion. Previously, that sacrament had been delayed until early teenage and normally after the sacrament of confirmation.

Some other Scottish bishops also restored the official order, although others did not. The bishops did attempt to achieve unanimity on the matter, but unfortunately failed to do so. When the change was made in this diocese, I think I did not succeed in convincing most people of its rightness or wisdom. This was due to a number of practical difficulties that the change brought in its wake. Let me outline three such difficulties.

First, since, having received baptism and confirmation, children have a right to receive Holy Communion, we decided that confirmation and first Holy Communion should be received at the same Mass. This meant that, since the appropriate season for the sacraments of initiation is Easter time, the bishop cannot manage to go to most parishes for the administration of confirmation. Some of the solemnity and specialness of confirmation is thereby lost and, moreover, it is overshadowed by first Holy Communion.

Second, teachers felt that children in primary 4 class and therefore eight or nine years old were too young to appreciate the Church's teaching on confirmation; besides, since the class teachers had to prepare the children for two sacraments, the work became a rushed and unsatisfactory task. To this, of course, it can rightly be responded that full knowledge of the meaning of a sacrament is not necessary prior to its reception – think of baptism! – but could and should continue to develop afterwards. In fact, the Church's teaching on confirmation is rather vague and tentative. And (a personal observation), the emphasis placed on the "Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit" is confusing and detracts from the New Testament teaching, especially St Paul's rich theology of the gifts of the Spirit.

Third, it is argued that teenage confirmation provides an opportunity for the recipients to make a mature commitment to be faithful disciples of Christ and members of his Church. However, in reply, the facts do not seem to bear out these claims and reception of the sacrament of confirmation is not a very effective guarantee of faithful commitment. In fact, it is not the purpose of the sacrament that it should be used as the occasion of making such a faithful commitment. The time for that is the Easter Vigil when all of us, not just teenagers, are called to make a solemn renewal of our baptismal commitment. If this were taught and advertised properly, it would provide an excellent and annual opportunity for all of us to pledge ourselves publicly to Christ and his Church.

A fully satisfactory solution to the dilemma about the order of Christian initiation of children seems unlikely, mainly because the Church's theology on confirmation is so meagre and tentative, and particularly on the relation between baptism and confirmation. What does confirmation add to baptism? Should the two be separated when baptism is administered to infants? Whatever we do in practice, it seems bound to be open to criticism.

There is another issue connected with children's initiation that, theoretically, should be easier to solve but that, in practice, seems very resistant. It is the emphasis, probably also increasing, that many parents put on the material aspects of the event. Costly and unsuitable outfits for the children, expensive gifts, special cars, unnecessary hotel or restaurant catering – all these detract from the true importance of the day and can be a gross waste of money that some people can ill afford. But the peer pressure is very strong and it seems to emanate from those with an inadequate awareness of where the true importance of the celebration really lies.

Eucharist

The Mass is, of course, the principal celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, but there are other expressions of this sacrament that derive from the Mass. One of these is Holy Communion for the sick at home or in care, as well as for the housebound. This ministry is carried out by the priest and also by properly commissioned lay people. A few of the recipients prefer to be visited only by a priest, but most enjoy Holy Communion brought by a lay person, often also providing the opportunity of a short chat.

With the increasing shortage of priests and therefore the difficulty of daily Mass in every parish of the diocese, the rite known as Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion, carried out by lay people with one of them, male or female, presiding, is becoming more common. Since, by the nature of things, the priest is not present, I have sometimes wondered if the rite is being carried out in a fully correct manner. This is a matter that should be courteously checked by the priest. There is no doubt, however, that the rite is celebrated with care and devotion and is appreciated by those who used to be, and would still like to be, daily Mass-goers.

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and processions are now, in most parishes, rare occurrences. But many parishes have weekly periods during which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in a monstrance to allow people to come to the church and spend some time in prayer, whether by contemplation, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, or propitiation. This is a form of devotion that is much encouraged by recent popes.

When I came to the diocese in 1981, there was still a programme for each parish to have the Forty Hours Devotion, namely exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for the daylight hours of three days. The days, Sunday to Tuesday, were assigned so as to have Forty Hours in a different parish in as many different weeks as possible in the year. Sadly, the practice was very difficult to sustain for a variety of reasons, some very understandable, and soon was discontinued.

Reconciliation

The Second Vatican Council and subsequent official instructions brought about a renewal of the sacrament of reconciliation. The main change is that there are now three forms of celebrating this sacrament: individual and private (where the celebration directly involves only the priest and the penitent); communal, but with individual confession and absolution (in which the community celebrates a liturgy of the word to prepare, to express repentance and to give thanks together); and general

(with no individual confession, but only a communal expression of repentance followed by a general absolution by the priest). This last form is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and with, if possible, prior permission of the bishop and later confession of all serious sins absolved.

The third form is rarely, if ever, encountered in this diocese. The other two forms are in use, the first much less than before Vatican II. The second form is popular with many people and, in each parish, it is celebrated with quite large numbers and several priests assisting, every Advent and Lent.

Concern is sometimes expressed about the relatively few people who use the first rite of the sacrament of reconciliation. Naturally and as a result, the times set for the first rite to be available are much shorter than in days before the Second Vatican Council, although, if a person wished to use this form of the sacrament, a priest would always be ready to oblige when requested. We should keep in mind also that, over the centuries, this sacrament has experienced a great range of ways in which it has been used. There were times when it was celebrated only once in one's lifetime and therefore tended to be delayed until as near death as seemed likely. At other times, it came to be used with great frequency by some people, not only weekly but even daily. It is said that one king of Spain in the eighteenth century was likely to need his confessor several times a day. So, given such great variations in the use of the sacrament, I can accept, without great concern, that many people, who used to have frequent (weekly or monthly) confession, now receive the sacrament less often. My concern is for those who, it seems, never receive the sacrament in any of its three forms.

At celebrations of the second form of the sacrament of reconciliation, we remind the people that they should confess any serious sins not previously absolved and, if they have none to confess, as is usually the case, they should at least briefly mention some area of their conduct or some incident for which they feel truly repentant. The individual confessions are usually very brief and, if a person seeks a longer time with the priest, it is better to arrange private and individual celebration of the sacrament.

To revert for a moment to the subject of the frequency with which this sacrament ought to be received, we should remember that most practising Catholics who confess occasionally but not frequently are not aware or guilty of regularly committing serious sins. Less serious sins can receive God's forgiveness in many other ways, for example by celebrating Mass and/or receiving Holy Communion, incidentally a practice much more frequent than it used to be. There are other areas that perhaps should be of greater concern to us than the infrequency of reception of the sacrament. For example, have many of us lost a sense of sin or of sinfulness in our lives? Do we realise that some behaviour is still seriously wrong? And how much should psychological factors be seen as affecting, and perhaps lessening, the culpability of our actions?

Anointing of the Sick

In addition to the administration of the sacrament of anointing of the sick in people's homes and in hospitals etc., most parishes have occasional Masses with the sacrament offered to the sick and the elderly who wish to receive it. Such an occasion is

pastorally very valuable, not only for those being anointed but also for families, friends and parishioners in general present at the Mass. It is a source of satisfaction, an opportunity to pray for sick and old parishioners and a chance for the parish community to celebrate its faith when some of its members are present who normally are not able to be there. Besides, the provision of transport to and from the church and the opportunity to entertain the recipients socially after Mass are excellent ways of showing our love and care for those in need.

There are still, in people's minds, the vestiges of the time when the sacrament was called "extreme unction" or when the sick were given "the last rites". As a result, the impression, even subconsciously, is prevalent that this anointing is the sacrament of the dying, rather than of the sick. The consequence, especially in hospitals and nursing homes, can be that a priest is not called until the person is near death or already dead. Furthermore, when a person who is ill is offered this sacrament, he or she has to be reassured that this does not imply that death is near and that the truth has not been divulged.

Another misapprehension that I think may be widespread is that, if a person has died without receiving anointing or viaticum, the former, or even both, sacraments can still be given. To attempt to give a sacrament thus may provide some consolation to the bereaved family members but I hope I may suggest, without offence, that the anxiety to confer a sacrament after someone has died may betray a very limited sense of God's infinite mercy, as if that mercy was not operative if a person had not been anointed; besides, the omission was one for which the person who died was in no way responsible.

Matrimony

The drastic decrease in the number of marriages celebrated in our parish churches in recent decades, as shown already in the statistics given earlier, is a matter of serious concern. The implication that many Catholics either seek to solemnise their marriages elsewhere or, more often, prefer to live together unmarried, is extremely depressing. Perhaps social and/or economic factors play their part, especially in the latter situation, but there is also evidence that many Catholics simply are not aware of the Church's regulations on marriage and of the conditions for it to be valid.

Another sad fact is that, nowadays, the great majority of Catholics who do marry in accordance with the Church's rules do not have Catholic spouses. In the case of such mixed marriages, does the Catholic partner ever do or say anything that would suggest to the other the idea of becoming a Catholic? An incident that occurred in the early 1950s, shortly after I was ordained, remains in my memory. I asked an excellent Catholic lady and "a pillar of the Church", whose husband was not a Catholic, if the situation caused any friction between them. "None at all", she replied, "we never discuss the subject of religion". By the way, I now recognise that my question was an unwarranted intrusion, and I am sorry for my impertinence.

Another related matter. There are no statistics, but I wonder in regard to mixed marriages, (a) what proportion of Catholic partners remain active in practising their faith, and what proportion do not; (b) what percentage of the non-Catholics become

Catholics; and (c) what percentage of the children of mixed marriages are given a Catholic upbringing at home and in school?

On the subject of weddings themselves, I have great sympathy for those who have to meet the very large costs incurred. Clothes, flowers, photographs, car, organist, other musicians and singers, various extras as well as the cost of the reception including food, drinks and accommodation; all those, and probably other expenses of which I am unaware. Is there not some way of reining in the huge expenditure? How much influence do such considerations as “Nothing is too good for our daughter” or “We have to do it because everyone else does it” play in the planning and decisions? People are very susceptible and vulnerable when they approach hoteliers, caterers and the like. Moreover, all the emphasis on the material aspect of the wedding detracts from an occasion that is primarily religious, sacred and serious.

The lavishness of the entertainment and other expensive aspects that increasingly accompany sacramental occasions is a matter of concern. Undoubtedly, the expenses that have to be met, so as to “keep up with the Joneses” and not be called a skinflint, can be a crippling financial burden for some and an unwelcome expenditure for most. In addition, removing the emphasis from the religious event to the subsequent hotel reception means that the local parish community cannot play its proper part in the sacramental celebrations of its members. Does that merit any consideration?

Ordination

Since there is a whole section of this “Portrait of a Diocese” on the priests of the diocese and since ordinations to the priesthood have become so scarce, the following is the only point which I make here.

During my twenty-three years as bishop of Galloway, I ordained many priests, both for this diocese and for various religious orders and congregations. Those occasions were, for me, invariably times of tension, great privilege and sacred wonder. To be empowered to confer the share in the priesthood of Christ that ordination gives was always a spiritual experience that I found as awesome as it was fulfilling.

FUNERALS

Although not a sacrament, a funeral is, to some extent, a similar ceremony and is one of the group of rites and quasi-rites called “sacramentals”.

I believe it is true to say that, when a death occurs in a parish, the community and the priest show truly Christian compassion for those who are bereaved. Perhaps, however, in some cases, we forget to ensure that, if the bereaved need compassionate help of a specific kind, even an occasional visit, that that work of mercy is not overlooked.

Most deaths see the dead person’s body brought to the local church, usually the evening before the funeral although, recently, that ceremony is sometimes being delayed until immediately before the funeral Mass. Most funeral Masses take place at the normal morning Mass time; on some occasions the time may have to be changed to suit the cemetery or crematorium schedule. There are three crematoria in the

diocese and the number of Catholic funerals using them is, I think, slowly increasing. Most funerals, however, go to one of the local cemeteries. The crematoria are more welcoming for the mourners in bad weather, but no doubt the decision between the alternatives is made, by the deceased or the bereaved family, on grounds of preference for one or other manner of treatment of the body after death.

Fifty years ago, black vestments were worn for funeral Masses. Later, the usual colour was purple but, in the last twenty years or so, when white became a possible choice, most funeral Masses seem now to use that colour, based on the fact that death is not the end of our existence but the entry into eternal life, sharing in the Lord's resurrection. Nevertheless, the funeral Mass is offered for "the repose of the soul" of the one who has died and this intention of praying for the deceased should be the principal reason for the funeral Mass. I fear that, perhaps due to theology of the Reformation or the outlook of people with no religion, the impression is sometimes and unfortunately given that the Mass is mainly a celebration of the life of the deceased, even though the official prayers of the Mass constantly ask God to give a merciful judgment to the one we mourn.

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

The bishops of the Catholic Church in Scotland have twice yearly meetings with the bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church, at which various topics are chosen for discussion and any matters of mutual concern are also on the agenda. No similar statutory meetings with the leadership of the Church of Scotland take place but, as occasion demands, there are meetings between relevant commissions of the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland. A Catholic observer is invited to attend the annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, a duty normally fulfilled by a bishop.

At the diocesan level, there are no regular meetings between our bishop and leaders of the reformed churches or non-Christian faiths. However, informal relations at parish level are usually good, often very friendly and warm. Various occasions during the year, for example, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Remembrance Sunday, Advent carol services, are opportunities for joint meetings or services of prayers and hymns. Many Catholics in the diocese assist in the work of Christian Aid (in addition to their commitment to SCIAF). There are various local ecumenical contacts in different towns in Ayrshire and in Dumfries & Galloway and there is at least one ecumenical prayer group which has been meeting weekly for many years and continues to do so very successfully.

However, it has to be admitted that, generally speaking, although relations are friendly, formal ecumenical activity does not seem to have a very high profile in our diocese, either at diocesan or at parish level. Perhaps we should be more zealous and proactive, but neither does one detect great enthusiasm from the reformed churches or communities. Perhaps a contributory factor to this state of affairs is the differences that exist in boundaries, structures and methods of operation between the neighbouring parishes of the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church.

FINANCE

I recall Bishop McGee, in my very early days, telling me that the diocese had no debts, with one exception – the costs incurred in building the church, house and hall of St John Ogilvie’s parish in Irvine. During his time as bishop, many new churches had been built, others had had repairs and alterations. To have cleared all the debts was a record of which he could be proud, but he was very apologetic about the one exception, especially as the amount of debt was considerable. The explanation seems to have been that, during the months of construction, several changes had been made in the plans and additions had also been requested. Eventually, we managed to pay all the bills, as I shall explain later.

Despite Bishop McGee’s success in paying all but one of the debts, the diocese is not wealthy. There were, and are, no investments and very little income apart from that generated from the levies collected from each parish, as a percentage of its ordinary income. When I came, the levy was, I think, at 12%. I raised it to 15% but with the promise that, in future, the diocese, rather than the parishes, would pay the annual contribution to what was known as the Retired Housekeepers and Domestic Fund, a national fund to pay the beneficiaries a modest pension.

At the start I felt very anxious about the small amount of income coming to the diocese. Early in 1982, Bishop Thomson was kind enough to give us an interest-free loan from the funds of the diocese of Motherwell. It was of £6000, a greater sum than it would be nowadays, and we managed to repay it by the beginning of 1985. We also inaugurated, copying Motherwell, a Parochial Investment Fund, whereby parishes with money to spare would lend their surplus to the diocese at a fairly low rate of interest and with the guarantee that the loan would be repaid immediately on request. This brought in a considerable amount of money and, with the income from the levy on the parishes, I began to feel that we were more financially secure.

Occasionally the diocese was left bequests and then, some time in the 1990s, I was informed that the lawyers of the archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh had rediscovered a fund known as the Taggart Bursary. It was a bequest for the education of students for the priesthood in that archdiocese and in our diocese, the former to have two-thirds of the income and Galloway one third. That provided a few thousands each year. A small number of other bequests were also in our “portfolio”, but the income from them came to very little indeed.

In the 1980s, Lady Carmont established the Carmont Settlement for the financial relief of “necessitous priests” in Scotland. It was administered by a firm of Edinburgh lawyers and the trustees were lay people, with the exception of the bishop of Galloway, an *ex officio* trustee. Although the beneficiaries were individual priests, there was a clause in the Settlement stipulating that, if the income were insufficient, Galloway priests were to have priority. This clause was the result of the association that Lord and Lady Carmont had with Dumfries. Since the income never was insufficient to support all the applicants, the trustees agreed to my suggestions that, because it seemed as if the priority for Galloway priests would never have its effect, the Settlement might invest some of its funds in purchasing three houses for retired Galloway priests, the diocese to pay a small annual rent to the Settlement. This was agreed and so, in an indirect way, the Carmont Settlement also benefits the diocese.

The ordinary collection at Sunday Mass remains in the parish and the levy is paid from it. Parishes should, of course, encourage parishioners to Gift Aid their contributions to their parish, thus enabling the parish to augment its income. In the early days of the Covenant scheme, before Gift Aid, a few parish priests, not properly understanding the scheme, claimed more money from the Inland Revenue authorities than their entitlement; the authorities discovered this when a full inspection of parish accounts and records took place, and the offending parishes had to repay the excess of their claims. The consequences of the mistake might have been worse!

Around the year 2000 we made a diocesan-wide effort to ask parishioners to review the amount which they each paid weekly to their parish. If they then realised that the amount was lower than they thought reasonable and/or it had not been increased for years, they were asked to consider raising their weekly offering. Volunteer lay people went to each parish and, with permission, made their appeal in a short address at the end of Masses on one Sunday. The results were good - not spectacular but certainly worth the effort and, since the address was gently phrased, no offence was given and no complaints reached me.

When there are special collections, they are usually for national or international purposes but a few, for example for retired priests and for students, go to the diocese.

These are the sources of income for the diocese. So what is the expenditure which the diocese incurs and the expenses it has to meet?

One of the largest is the annual payment to the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. The amount is calculated on a *pro rata* basis, each diocese paying according to its size. If I remember correctly, Galloway pays around 8% of the total required each year. Pensions and other expenses for retired priests are also a considerable cost, only partially met by the annual collection. Nowadays, with so few seminary expenses, that collection and the Taggart Bursary will cover the cost. The upkeep of the bishop and his house, the salaries of diocesan employees, subsidies to small parishes, the Retired Housekeepers and Domestic Fund are all considerable, and varying, expenses.

When parishes embark on expensive projects, such as construction, alteration or repair of property, the diocese will repay any money which the parish has in the Parochial Investment Fund and, if it is requested and can, it will lend money at low interest to the parish. In cases where the parish has to seek a loan from a bank, it was my custom to suggest the Bank of Ireland because the interest charged to the parish tended to be slightly lower than from Scottish banks. In such cases, the diocese usually had to give "a letter of comfort" to the bank to guarantee repayment.

The diocese with its parishes is a charity, its accounts have to be audited professionally and are published and open to inspection.

Priests receive board and lodging from the parish where they work. From the same source they receive a modest remuneration (less than £3000 per annum) and a mileage allowance when they use their cars for their work. They can keep fees received for marriages, baptisms and funerals as well as Mass offerings, but not any quarterly or Christmas or Easter collections in the parish. Some retired priests reside,

rent free, in diocesan or Carmont Settlement property; others may live in houses owned by themselves or relatives. In addition, they receive a monthly pension from the diocese, an award of £200 per annum from a charity called the St Mungo Fund and, if in need, an allowance from the Carmont Settlement; all this in addition to the state retirement pension.

DEANERY BY DEANERY (i-iv)

(i) ST ANDREW'S DEANERY (Dumfries & Galloway)

In St Andrew's deanery lies the parish of **Whithorn**, the place of St Ninian's arrival in Scotland. At Whithorn he established the first Christian community in the country and the base for his missionary work. Very little is known for certain of the saint revered as the person who first brought Christianity to Scotland. In the village of Whithorn today there is, following recent and extensive excavations, important archaeological evidence of the saint's early followers, as well as a small museum containing contemporary ecclesiastical objects found there and in the vicinity. Alongside is the Priory, belonging to the Church of Scotland and built on the exact site of the medieval church.

On the other side of the broad main street is the Catholic church of St Martin and St Ninian. The decision to name two saints is due to the tradition that, on his way from Rome, where he is said to have become a Christian, a priest and a bishop, St Ninian spent some time with the bishop of Tours, St Martin. Since the latter died in 397, it is suggested that that is also the year of Ninian's arrival in Whithorn. On the other hand and following recent "digs", some scholars believe that the Whithorn foundation is more likely to have occurred in the fifth century. The present Catholic church is modern, opened in 1960 and replacing an inadequate building known as "the iron church" which had been in use since 1882.

Whithorn was a famous place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages but, after 1560 and the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, pilgrimages ceased. It is probable that they did not resume until 1924 but, since then, they have been held annually on the last Sunday of August. The Pilgrimage Mass normally is celebrated at St Ninian's Cave on the seashore, three miles from the village. In some years and for various reasons, the Mass has been in Whithorn itself, in the grounds of the church. In recent years, there have been two simultaneous Pilgrimage Masses, the principal one, with the bishop as chief celebrant, at the Cave and the other in the parish church, for those unable to undertake the difficult and tiring walk down a muddy and wet track through the glen and then along a stony beach to St Ninian's Cave.

The annual Mass at the Cave attracts several hundred pilgrims, who arrive from all over the diocese as well as from further afield, by bus or by car or on foot. The duties of readers, homilist, cantor and choir are fulfilled by each deanery in turn; generator, microphones and portable toilets are hired; and, despite the terrain, Holy Communion under both kinds is carefully and safely provided. Even a piper is at hand, to play the bishop and other pilgrims across the beach before and after Mass. The only uncertain item is, of course, the weather. Most years it has ranged from beautifully sunny to tolerable but three occasions when the weather added its penitential element to the

pilgrimage remain in my memory. On one of these, a high tide and a very stormy day almost succeeded, during Mass, in bringing the waves to the altar. In 2010, the rain was so heavy that Mass was celebrated with as much speed as decorum allowed, the homily being simply omitted. And in 1997, the sixteen hundredth anniversary of the saint's arrival, there was heavy driving rain and very slippery conditions down the muddy track and along the stony beach for all the pilgrims, who included, for that special anniversary, the bishops of Scotland.

For years the feast day of the saint was observed on 26th August but, although the date of the pilgrimage is unchanged, we have now reverted to the previous custom and restored the feast to 16th September. By a happy coincidence, this was the date which Pope Benedict XVI spent in Scotland during his visit to Britain in 2010 and the papal Mass in Bellahouston Park that sunny afternoon was that of St Ninian.

It is interesting that, in official documents of the Holy See, written in Latin, this diocese is called *Diocesis Gallovidiensis seu Candidae Casae*, thus conferring on us the alternative names of Diocese of Galloway or Diocese of Whithorn. Geographically, one name is that of the western, rural part of St Andrew's deanery and the other that of a small, but historic, parish in the same deanery.

Whithorn no longer has a resident priest, since its parish priest is also parish priest of, and lives in, **Newton Stewart**, beside the beautiful church of Our Lady and St Ninian (1876). The same priest also serves the parishioners of **Wigtown** and its church of the Sacred Heart (1879). When I came to the diocese in 1981 there was also a church in Creetown - St Joseph's, served from Newton Stewart. In those days there was a priest also resident in Whithorn, who served Wigtown. The congregation in Creetown had dwindled to a very few, augmented by some who travelled from Newton Stewart for an early Sunday Mass. St Joseph's was closed in the early 1990s and then sold to the Creetown Town Band as a place to store their instruments and hold their rehearsals.

The other Catholic church in Wigtownshire is St Joseph's, **Stranraer**. The parish has its own parish priest. Next to the church, there was a convent of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. They were invited to the town towards the end of the nineteenth century to staff the new Catholic school, but the community withdrew at the start of the present century because of their falling numbers.

Wigtownshire has two Catholic primary schools, one in Newton Stewart and the other in Stranraer. There used to be a very small Catholic primary school, with all the pupils in the one classroom – All Souls', in Wigtown. This school is remarkable on two counts. First, Mrs Bridget Mills was appointed as the only teacher, and therefore also head teacher, immediately after qualifying as a teacher and she spent her entire career there, the only teacher, until her retirement. Second, despite several efforts by the local education authority to close the school, these attempts were foiled by vigorous campaigns of the parents, their appeals upheld by the full local Council, until finally the parents were defeated and the school was closed, early in the present century.

Most Catholic children of primary school age in Whithorn and other villages attend the local non-denominational schools. There is no Catholic secondary school in Wigtownshire and the Catholic children attend either Douglas Ewart High School in Newton Stewart or Stranraer Academy.

In the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, east of Wigtonshire, there is now only one priest serving the area. Residing in **Kirkcudbright** (in the house which adjoins the church of St Andrew & St Cuthbert), he also serves Castle Douglas, **Dalbeatie** (St Peter's) and **Gatehouse of Fleet** (Church of the Resurrection) and celebrates Mass in the last two of these places. There was a priest resident at St John the Evangelist's church in Castle Douglas until a few years ago but now, sadly, even the church is closed. It is in an unsafe condition and, even if repairs had been feasible, they would have been very costly. There is a weekly Mass (on a weekday) for Catholics in the local Scottish Episcopal church, by kind permission of the latter. Catholic schooling in the area is also sparse; in fact, only St Peter's primary school in Dalbeattie continues in existence.

Special mention should be made of Dalbeattie because, until recently, there has been a priest there since the middle of the eighteenth century, originally residing with the Catholic owners of the mansion house of Munches, a mile from the town, and then in the house attached to St Peter's church, built in 1814 and therefore the oldest Catholic church continuously in use in the diocese.

East of Dumfries, there are a number of Catholic parishes, all of which are now under the pastoral care of one priest. He lives in **Annan** and is parish priest of St Columba's there and also of Holy Trinity parish in **Lockerbie** and St Luke's in **Moffat**. The church in Lockerbie, situated in the centre of the town, was built in 1874 and was acquired by the diocese from the Church of Scotland in 1973, the Catholics having previously had Mass in a structure, elegantly known as "The Tin Hut". Lockerbie used to have its own priest. In fact, the then parish priest was in his house on 21st December 1988, the night of the disaster when PanAm 103, en route from London to New York, crashed in the town and 270 people were killed. The largest piece of the plane fell only a few yards from the parish house where the priest and his mother had a very narrow escape. Nearly all the casualties (259) were in the plane but eleven Lockerbie people were killed, all of them, by coincidence, Catholics.

St Ninian's church, Gretna, was built by the British government during the First World War to meet the needs of the many Catholics who had come to the town to work in nearby munitions factories. Until recently, there was a resident parish priest in Gretna; in fact, the last in the series was, appropriately for Gretna, part-time assistant to the local blacksmith. As well as regular Masses in Gretna, the priest there also went on Sundays to celebrate Mass in Eastriggs, using the Scottish Episcopal church there, by courtesy of their local and diocesan authorities. When St Ninian's closed, Mass attendance had dwindled to a handful of people. The building was sold and its new owners use the former church as a location for the celebration of marriages since Gretna is very popular with people from various countries as a venue for their weddings. My memories of St Ninian's are of a brick building but with some notable architectural features. The church always seemed damp and was bitterly cold. Until he retired, the organist (playing a small harmonium) had a very limited repertoire of hymns and was alleged sometimes to play wedding music at funerals and vice versa. It must be said in his defence that he was almost totally blind.

In Langholm there was, until around the turn of the present century, a residential care home for the elderly. The home, called Erkinholme, was owned and run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady. One of our priests was resident chaplain and there was daily Mass in the convent chapel (which Catholics from the town could attend). When the home closed and the sisters left, the diocese bought a former

Protestant church in the town, The building was repaired, refurbished and refurnished and opened as St Francis of Assisi church. The interior arrangements were excellent. The altar was at one end, the lectern at the other and, completing an oval, two arcs of chairs between the two focal points and facing one another, with the presidential chair in front of the altar; the Blessed Sacrament chapel was in the church crypt. There was a small but regular and active congregation, served from Annan, but unfortunately the arrangement was discontinued a few years ago, mainly because the shortage of priests necessitated retrenchment in services provided.

The only Catholic school in the area east of Dumfries is St Columba's primary in Annan. For secondary education, some go to St Joseph's College in Dumfries. The dearth of Catholic education in this area (and in others in the diocese, particularly in this southern deanery) prompts the question: do Catholic children who attend non-denominational schools, primary or secondary, suffer deprivation in their religious education? Clearly, the curricula of the schools they attend do not include Catholic RE; but (a) is that loss compensated by their parents and/or parish? And (b) (a very radical question) how much value does RE in Catholic schools have in the lives of those who have access to them? The Bishops' Conference of Scotland and its agency, the Scottish Catholic Education Service, are aware that that latter question must be asked, and strenuous efforts are being made to improve the current situation. Furthermore, when, as bishop of the diocese, I used to make regular weekend visits to each parish, I had the impression that there seemed sometimes to be a higher proportion of teenagers present at Mass in parishes without Catholic schools than there were in parishes with such schools. If that is true, what is the explanation? Adverse peer pressure in Catholic secondary schools, a deterrent that is not so prevalent in non-denominational schools?

North of Dumfries there is, in the deanery, an extensive but sparsely populated area with a few towns and some villages. This part of the deanery has one parish, that of St Conal in the small town of **Kirkconnel**. The parish had a resident priest until the mid-1980s but is now served from St Teresa's in Dumfries. Although the weekend (Saturday Vigil) Mass has a congregation of less than twenty, the liturgy is good, well prepared and participatory.

Until the beginning of the present century there was Sunday morning Mass in Thornhill, north of Dumfries. The Mass took place in the Drumlanrig Café, where the space was very restricted both for the twenty or more who attended, as well as for the priest. Consequently, the liturgy was not particularly vibrant or imaginative. However, as I remember from occasional experience, it was enjoyable, when the congregation had dispersed, the tables and chairs rearranged and the crucifix on the wall replaced by secular decorations, to be invited to sit down and eat a cooked breakfast before the shop reopened for normal business.

In **Dumfries** itself there are two parishes. The older, in the centre of the town, is **St Andrew's**. When the Scottish hierarchy was restored (having disintegrated in 1560), St Andrew's church, which had been built in 1813, became the cathedral of the Diocese of Galloway. A disastrous fire in 1961 totally destroyed the old building and the present church was built and opened in 1964. The only remnants of the old church are the two towers, which had been added in 1843 but are now some twenty metres away from the new building. Bishop Joseph McGee had already changed his

residence from Dumfries to Ayr to be nearer the centre of the diocese, several parishes in the north of Ayrshire having been added to the diocese in 1947. After the cathedral in Dumfries was burned down, the bishop also transferred the diocesan cathedral, on a provisional basis which was to last almost fifty years, to the new church of the Good Shepherd in Ayr.

In St Andrew's parish, the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul had a convent from 1892 until a few years ago, when the community had to leave because of decreasing numbers. Their departure caused much disappointment among the parishioners, especially those whom the sisters visited and cared for, and among the itinerants for each of whom the sisters always had a packet of food.

St Andrew's parish was also the location of a large community of Marist Brothers, who arrived in Dumfries in 1872. Their principal work in Dumfries was St Joseph's College, a secondary school for boys, both boarders and day pupils. The College had an excellent reputation and was highly prized in the town and in the diocese but sadly dwindling numbers forced the brothers to withdraw from the College. Some of them continued to live in retirement nearby, but even they are now gone. St Joseph's College, with its buildings, continues to exist, now as a local authority Catholic secondary school, coeducational but not boarding, and with a fully lay staff. Although it is a Catholic school, a large majority of the pupils belong to other denominations and faiths, or to none, which makes the maintenance of a Catholic ethos a difficult task.

Currently, there is one priest resident in the large house beside the parish church, a house that was the original residence of the Marist Brothers and then, until a separate house across the river was bought, of the bishop of the diocese. The parish priest also serves the village and little parish of St Mary's, **New Abbey**, where the church, built in 1815, stands just a stone's throw from the ruins of Sweetheart Abbey, a Cistercian foundation of 1273 and where the heart of John Balliol was placed.

The second **Dumfries** parish, **St Teresa's**, was established in the 1950s and the church was opened in 1958. The parish is on the north side of the River Nith and serves the people who live in the housing estates developed after World War II. The priest at St Teresa's also serves the large territory north of Dumfries to the Ayrshire border at New Cumnock, an area that includes Kirkconnel (see above). Since Kirkconnel is twenty-seven miles from St Teresa's, and the road is winding, difficult and lonely, the Saturday Vigil Mass is at 2pm on the reasonable grounds of allowing the priest to drive as many as possible of the fifty-plus miles before nightfall.

Within St Teresa's parish territory, on a prominence known as Corbelly Hill, are the priory, church and school, formerly of the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament. The community of contemplative nuns came to the town in 1884 and had a secondary school for girls. The school closed in the late 1980s and the nuns left, two for France, but most to their new priory in Largs (see later). The closure of the school also ended an anomalous situation regarding Catholic secondary education for girls in Dumfries. The convent school was selective, St Joseph's College was for boys only; and, as a result, some girls were denied a Catholic secondary education. This situation was rectified when St Joseph's College, already non-selective, became coeducational.

Both Dumfries parishes have Catholic primary schools. St Andrew's school was very recently built to replace old and inadequate accommodation; its pupils are, in the main, Catholic. On the other hand, St Teresa's school, inaugurated in 1963, has a large majority of non-Catholic pupils, the result of the school's good reputation but creating a situation less than ideal.

(ii) ST JOSEPH'S DEANERY
(East Ayrshire)

The long road from Dumfries to Kirkconnel, winding and narrow for the heavy vehicles it has to carry and therefore not easy driving, continues in a north-westerly direction into Ayrshire and to the town of **Cumnock** and its parish of St John the Evangelist. The resident priest here also serves the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Patrick in the town of **Auchinleck** and the parish of St Thomas in the town of **Muirkirk**. In 2011, the parish of St Joseph in Catrine, and which also embraced Mauchline, was closed. There used to be a parish also in New Cumnock with a small stone church of St Margaret, now demolished. Many years ago there was a parish in Birnie Knowe, but both church and village have disappeared. Some older people still remember the tragic death of one of the religious sisters who taught in the school there and who was killed by a train as she crossed the railway tracks.

St John's church in Cumnock is not a large church but was built and opened in 1884, with help from the 3rd Marquis of Bute, who owned property in the area and especially the mansion known as Dumfries House. Influenced by his hopes that it would be a place of liturgical excellence, the church design has certain pretensions, especially a chancel where a choir would sing the Divine Office. That grandiose hope was not realised but the chancel, which before Vatican II separated altar from nave, since the liturgical reform separates tabernacle from altar.

St Margaret's in New Cumnock had no architectural or liturgical pretensions but older people still tell of the occasions when the bishop came to confirm children of the parish. The recollection is not of any ceremonial nature, but rather gastronomic. Since there was not a priest's house nearby and the episcopal visitor had to be fed after Mass, the little church was filled, towards the end of the ceremony, with the aroma of bacon and eggs being fried in the sacristy, to be set before His Lordship on a specially set makeshift table.

Still on the theme of cooked breakfasts but bringing the subject up to date, the parish hall of St Thomas' in Muirkirk lies about one hundred yards from the church and directly across the road from the local kirk. On Sunday morning once a month, a group of St Thomas' parishioners prepare a full cooked breakfast in the hall at ten o'clock for those coming from the nine o'clock Mass and also for the Church of Scotland parishioners prior to their service at eleven o'clock. It is a very popular event and is a novel and imaginative way of encouraging a pleasant form of ecumenism.

The whole area of Cumnock and neighbourhood used to be a thriving district of coal mines but all of these are now closed and employment opportunities are scarce. Some parishes have closed, as has been noted. At one time there were five parish priests and two assistant priests resident in the district. Now one priest serves the entire area.

Four Catholic primary schools, at Cumnock, Auchinleck, Muirkirk and New Cumnock, are now reduced to the two first named. St Conval's High School, which for many years provided the first four years of secondary education for Catholics and then, for some years, increased to all six years, has gone. Families, wishing to have a Catholic secondary education for their children, have to send them to Kilmarnock. Nevertheless, and despite the reduced state of the district, the people retain a sense of community and mutual support that is characteristic of mining towns. The Catholics of the area are noticeably friendly and caring people and with a readiness, in fact a desire, to share with others and to offer a generous helping hand to those who require it.

The more populous part of St Joseph's deanery and of East Ayrshire is **Kilmarnock**. The town has, in comparison with other parts of the diocese, a relatively high proportion of Catholics and there are still four parishes there: **St Joseph's** (dating from 1847) in the town centre and the other three built after the Second World War: **St Matthew's** (in New Farm Loch), **St Michael's** (in Bellfield and Shortlees) and **Our Lady of Mount Carmel** (in Onthank). There are priests resident in the first three of these parishes, while the priest in St Michael's serves Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish and, indeed, also Our Lady and St John's in **Stewarton**, some five miles beyond Onthank and north of Kilmarnock.

Until recent years, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Stewarton were in the charge of a community of Norbertine Canons (Premonstratensians), whose abbey is at Kilnacrott, Co. Cavan, but who, due to declining numbers, had to withdraw from the diocese at the start of the present century. Their former residence at Mount Carmel is now used by a small community of Sisters of Marie Reparatrice. Nazareth House, adjoining St Joseph's church, was a large building and a very well used home for the elderly. It closed early this century due to decreasing numbers of Poor Sisters of Nazareth, in whose charge it was.

St Joseph's Academy, recently housed in new buildings in New Farm Loch, is the Catholic secondary school for the deanery. Nearby is St Andrew's primary, also in a new building, which replaces two primary schools, St Columba's and St Matthew's, now closed. One other Catholic school is situated in the town – Mount Carmel primary school, near the church in the Onthank area of Kilmarnock.

Along the River Irvine eastwards from Kilmarnock, in an area known locally as "The Valley", there lie the two parishes of St Paul's in **Hurlford** and St Sophia's in **Galston**; in the latter parish but in the town of **Darvel** is the church of Our Lady of the Valley, a converted hall bought from the Church of Scotland around 1990. Formerly, both parishes, Galston and Hurlford, had their parish priests but now one priest is responsible for both and for the three churches. There is a Catholic primary school in Galston, but the school that used to be in Hurlford closed in the 1990s.

St Sophia's, opened in 1886, was also the recipient of the generous benefactions of the 3rd Marquis of Bute, as can be deduced from its appearance and design. It is a remarkable church, built in Byzantine style, of red brick, and modelled on Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Its capacity is less than might be imagined from its exterior since one of the arms of its Greek cross construction is an empty chancel, originally intended for a choir and a choral liturgy. The church's outstanding feature is its

central dome, a very prominent landmark in the area. When St Sophia's needed very extensive repairs around the year 2000, a local hall belonging to the Church of Scotland was placed at the disposal of the parishioners for temporary, but long term, use and without cost. Non-Catholics also contributed to the funds which helped to meet the costs of the repairs at St Sophia's and there was a generous donation from the local Freemasons and publicly presented to parish representatives.

I remember an incident in the parish hall in Hurlford when, during a meeting, the loudspeakers failed. The person at the microphone, a parishioner, told us not to worry because "we've all got loud voices here". However, he was speaking in a local accent and "loud voices" came over as "lewd vices". Few seemed to notice the *double entendre*

A couple of miles to the south of Kilmarnock lies Coodham or, to give it the full name it had when it belonged to the Passionists, **Fatima House, Coodham**. For more than forty years, from 1949 until it was sold, Coodham served as an excellent pastoral centre for the diocese and far beyond. Its closure was a serious loss.

(iii) **ST MARY'S DEANERY** (North Ayrshire)

This deanery, the largest in terms of numbers of Catholics, can be considered as having two groups of parishes. One is the series along the coast of the Firth of Clyde; the other comprises the parishes inland from the coast.

Beginning with the coastal series and in the north, the first is **Largs**, a very popular town for excursions and days "at the seaside" because of its situation and the many attractions for visitors. The views across the Firth of Clyde are, in good weather, magnificent, my favourite being from above the town, on the Haylie Brae. The Catholic church, Our Lady, Star of the Sea, but commonly known simply as St Mary's, dates from 1962. It has a striking location on the sea front and is one of the finest churches in the diocese.

Another religious feature of the parish is the monastery of Benedictines of the Sacred Heart (Tyburn nuns). Their monastery is a former hotel and, in addition to the community of nuns, it offers residential accommodation for private retreats as well as a welcome for those simply wishing to visit the chapel and small historical museum. These Benedictines came to the rescue of the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament who, in their Dumfries convent, had reached crisis point and seemed destined to close. The Tyburn nuns sent a few of their number from London to assume control of the situation and, a few years later, the remaining Dumfries nuns, at the invitation of Tyburn and with permission of the Holy See, opted to become Tyburn nuns and the merged community left Dumfries for Largs.

In the very north of the parish, in the village of Skelmorlie six miles from Largs, there is a large house, known as Lincluden, on the sea front. It belonged to Archbishop Charles Eyre, archbishop of Glasgow (1878-1902), who bequeathed it as a holiday home to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who had come to Glasgow to teach in a number of newly opened Catholic schools. More recently, the sisters have made the house a place suitable for people coming for retreats and conferences and other

meetings. Sadly the property, which is known as the Notre Dame Apostolic Centre, has been sold because the sisters can no longer continue the work.

Largs has a Catholic primary school. The Catholic secondary school is in Saltcoats but many children simply transfer from St Mary's primary school to the adjoining non-denominational Largs Academy.

There is one "overseas" parish in the diocese, on the island of Cumbrae, just under two miles across the Firth of Clyde from Largs. There is a frequent ferry service between Largs and the island; the road round the island is about twelve miles long. At the south end of the island is the only town, **Millport**, and it is there that the church, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, built in 1958, is located.

Previously, the Catholic church had been a small stone building, originally part of the stables in the grounds of The Garrison House. This latter, a large, handsome structure in the centre of Millport, had been built in 1745 for the accommodation of the captain and crew of the Revenue cutter *The Royal George*, used to combat smuggling in the Firth of Clyde. The 3rd Marquis of Bute bought The Garrison in the nineteenth century and it was then that the little building in the grounds, having served for a time as a Sunday school for children of the Episcopal Church, was given over for Catholic use. That old church had a very distinctive and curious arrangement of seating since the chairs and benches and pews seemed to have been garnered from a wide variety of sources. In those long-gone pre-World War II days, a priest was brought over on Sunday mornings in summer from Largs in a small motor boat, weather permitting.

The present church had a resident priest until a few years ago. Latterly I made strenuous efforts and indulged in extensive advertising in attempts to find a priest to take over the attractive work as parish priest on the island. These efforts were only partially successful, some priests soon leaving, others being unsuited to the task. Now, Millport depends on the parish priest of Largs and, sometimes, on the kindness of one or other retired Scottish priest.

Millport possesses one ecclesiastical building of which it is justly proud. On the same road as the Catholic church, but a little higher up the hill, stands the Cathedral of the Isles and the Collegiate Church of the Holy Spirit, which belongs to the diocese of Argyll and the Isles of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The cathedral, a result of the munificence of the Earl of Glasgow in the mid-nineteenth century, is a small and very beautiful gothic building standing in its own grounds and providing a very fine adornment for the island.

Catholic children in Millport attend the only primary school on the island and, for secondary education, cross daily in the ferry to attend Largs Academy.

Following the coast southwards from Largs, the next parish is St Bride's, **West Kilbride**, which also serves the adjoining town of Seamill. The parish has a resident parish priest but no Catholic school. Most Catholic children attend the local non-denominational school while some go to the Catholic primary in Ardrossan.

A little further south are the "Three Towns", Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston, all situated contiguously along the shores of the Firth of Clyde.

Ardrossan is the largest parish, numerically, in the diocese of Galloway, the Catholic population, according to *The Catholic Directory for Scotland*, being 4000. The church is St Peter in Chains', an early work of Jack Coia who later became well known as the principal partner of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, Architects, who were responsible for several Catholic churches in Scotland, mainly in Glasgow, as well as for St Peter's College, the inter-diocesan major seminary in Cardross, near Dumbarton. The seminary is a large concrete structure which, although praised by architectural and other authorities, unfortunately proved unsuitable for its proposed purpose and lay derelict and abandoned for many years. All Coia churches are distinctive in style, the early examples, as in Ardrossan, being of brick and the later of concrete. Although impressive architecturally, the buildings are of debatable success pastorally and liturgically.

In 2004 fire broke out in the presbytery in Ardrossan and the parish priest, Fr Michael Lynch, died in the blaze. The tragedy occurred very soon after my successor's arrival as bishop and was compounded by the house being so badly damaged that it had to be demolished. The house, being listed (along with the church), had to be replaced by a new building exteriorly almost identical to it.

Saltcoats, until recently, had two parishes, Our Lady, Star of the Sea, usually called St Mary's, (1856) and St Brendan's (1961). The latter developed serious defects and became unsafe. It was demolished and was not replaced. Instead, the two parishes were united. Like St Peter's in Ardrossan, St Mary's is situated very near the sea front and, although these are very favourable locations, the churches are not central for the parishioners. St Mary's is by far the oldest Catholic church in the three towns and its exterior retains the dignity of mid-nineteenth century gothic. However, with the liturgical changes of the 1960s, the interior underwent a transformation with the high altar and sanctuary now occupying the centre of what originally was a side wall. The main entrance is opposite the sanctuary and the original entrance and sanctuary have become lateral spaces or shrines. The resulting 90 degrees change allows the congregation to be nearer the altar, but the sanctuary, although adequate length-wise, is somewhat cramped in front of the altar.

Among the parishioners of St Mary's is Peter Reilly, well into his nineties, who has been a daily Mass server for over eighty years and still exercises that ministry each morning.

St John's church in **Stevenston**, built in 1963 and centrally situated, replaced an earlier church constructed over school classrooms and increasingly inadequate as the town extended inland in the years after World War II. The present church is remarkable for the extensive and beautiful stained glass which provides much of the side and rear walls of the building and was designed and produced by the celebrated French master, Gabriel Loire of Chartres.

Each of the three towns has its own Catholic primary school. Catholic secondary education for the three towns and, in fact, for the whole deanery, is provided by the recently opened St Matthew's Academy, a school which results from the amalgamation of two schools, now closed, St Michael's Academy in Kilwinning, and St Andrew's Academy in Saltcoats, on whose site the new school is located.

Like the coastal parishes of the deanery, the inland parishes also follow a line approximately from north to south.

In the north is **Kilbirnie**, an industrial town that is, these days, a place of relatively high unemployment but it also has its religious inheritance in a fine pre-Reformation church, still in use but as the “Auld Kirk” and belonging to the Church of Scotland. The local Catholic church of St Brigid dates from around 1860 and, in the last century, was enlarged by moving the sanctuary further back and filling the resultant space with an extension of the nave. The parish has a resident priest and a primary school which has the same patron as the church but, curiously, with a different spelling - Bridget.

The church in **Beith** was built in 1816 and had been a Protestant church until bought by the diocese in 1947 and placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. It is a small building, square in shape and with two side aisles. In that respect and in having a tiny, cramped sacristy, it is similar to Holy Trinity church in Lockerbie, which also started life as a Reformed church. Beith had a resident parish priest until a few years ago but is at present served from Dalry.

The church of St Palladius in **Dalry** is the second oldest Catholic church in Ayrshire, dating from approximately 1850. The nave is similar in size and shape to that in Beith, but the sanctuary is spacious. There have been considerable renovations in St Palladius’ during recent years, both in the church and in the house. The parish has a resident parish priest and a Catholic primary school. The international pharmaceuticals firm, Roche, provides much of the local employment.

The church of St Winin in the relatively large town of **Kilwinning** is located away from the main thoroughfares and can, in consequence, be difficult to find. In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the interior had a 90 degree reorientation similar to that in St Mary’s in Saltcoats, although it was built much later, in 1937.

The parish has two Catholic primary schools, St Winning’s (note the varied spelling) and St Luke’s, an indication of the sizable Catholic population in the town, in spite of Kilwinning’s reputation as a stronghold of Freemasonry and the Orange Order. Perhaps at one time in the past there was overt hostility and bigotry. If such attitudes exist today, they no longer constitute a serious hazard or nuisance for Catholics.

Kilwinning’s most important and famous building is the abbey, founded by Benedictine monks from Kelso between 1162 and 1188, but pillaged at and after the Reformation and now with only the walls still extant. I was invited to an ecumenical event to mark the eighth centenary of the abbey’s foundation and, as we entered the precincts, the local minister remarked to me that there was a certain appropriate significance in our being there. “The abbey belonged to you for its first four hundred years and to us for the next four hundred”. (“*Quam dispar exitus!*”, the thought occurred to me). Passing into the open lawn of the nave, we disturbed two little boys playing football and both dressed in miniature outfits of Celtic F.C.!

Just outside the town, on the Dalry road, the Sacred Heart Fathers (Dehonians) own **Smithstone House** and its grounds (bought 1970). This “House of Prayer and Spirituality” has been a place of great pastoral and spiritual benefit for the diocese and beyond, offering retreats, courses, talks, spiritual direction and opportunities for adult growth in faith and prayer. Unfortunately, it is not active at present, due to declining numbers of Sacred Heart Fathers as well as ill health and increasing age among them.

It is probably unfair to include the historic town of **Irvine** among the inland places of the deanery since it lies at the mouth of the River Irvine. However, it is not normally considered “a seaside town” or a place for holidays but, rather, commercial, industrial and residential.

The original Catholic church, still thriving (and with a new parish hall) is **St Mary’s** (1875). It is somewhat hidden in what may be described as a central backwater, as a result of post-war rearrangement of streets. Irvine was designated “a new town” in the 1950s and several new parishes and churches were planned for the much enlarged town. In the event, the extension was less than first proposed and so only two new Catholic churches were built, one of which was closed at the end of 2012.

The church of St Margaret of Scotland (1982) was a building which also served as a hall. Located in the Castlepark housing estate in the town, it had an enthusiastic community with a lively liturgy. Latterly, the parish no longer had its own priest, but shared with St Mary’s, the parish into which St Margaret’s has now been absorbed. The hall-church, house and connecting passages of the former St Margaret’s complex are all of simple construction, designed locally and at comparatively low cost.

The other Catholic church in Irvine serves those parts of the “new town” to the east of the older section of Irvine. Bishop McGee, my predecessor, entrusted this parish, whose patron is **St John Ogilvie**, to the Sacred Heart Fathers, who also are at Smithstone House. They have served the parish well since the church was inaugurated in 1979. The parishioners are “Glasgow overspill” and live in a number of districts, each with its own name. There is a good sense of community among those who attend church, but there also seems to be a considerable number of families who are not regular attenders, as well as other family homes where the husband/father is no longer there and another man has moved in. Sadly, many of the children who present themselves for the sacraments of confirmation and Holy Communion are seldom, if ever, seen again at Mass. And, of course, there are numerous homes, nominally Catholic, but with no Catholic involvement, either at church or at the local Catholic primary school. Undoubtedly, similar situations to these exist in most, probably all, parishes in the diocese, but St John Ogilvie’s seems to be among those where the problem is particularly acute.

St John Ogilvie’s church is in the district called Bourtreehill and it has another problem in addition to those just mentioned. The church/house/hall complex of buildings is an elaborate, ambitious and costly structure which, in many ways, has proved impractical in use, subject to leaks and other defects and with a financial burden that is far beyond the ability of the parishioners to meet; after all, they were not responsible for incurring the expense. Eventually, once the parish had valiantly raised a reasonable amount of money, all the remaining debts were paid off by the diocese, but only after many meetings, complaints and threats, much unpleasantness and disclaiming of responsibility among architects, contractors and tradesmen. The building has won several awards from artistic, cultural and professional groups, none of whom has to live in the house, worship in the church or pay for the construction or for the regular repairs.

Irvine is at the southern extremity of North Ayrshire, bordering South Ayrshire and St Margaret’s deanery, the final stage of this tour of the diocese of Galloway.

(iv) **ST MARGARET'S DEANERY**
(South Ayrshire)

Like St Mary's deanery, St Margaret's deanery also has some parishes on the coast (five of them) and some inland (four).

Troon is the most northerly of the coastal parishes. Its handsome and impressive listed church, built in 1911, has, as its patrons, Our Lady of the Assumption and St Meddan. The latter is a local saint and there is also, in the town, a Church of Scotland place of worship called St Meddan's. Details of the saint's life are obscure, in fact unknown. The Catholic primary school, called St Patrick's, is a new building which replaces older, cramped and now demolished premises, one section of which was the original church of the nineteenth century.. The parish priest also has responsibility for the villages of Symington and Dundonald, but the latter no longer has a Sunday Mass in the public hall.

There are golf courses throughout the diocese, but perhaps especially in South Ayrshire. Three of the most celebrated are Troon Old Course, Prestwick Old Course and Turnberry (near Girvan). The first and third of these are regular venues for the Open Championship, while the second, though no longer hosting that event, was in fact the venue, in 1860, of the very first Open Championship.

Prestwick is also a coastal parish, a few miles south of Troon. The patron of its church is St Quivox, another local but obscure holy person, commemorated not only in Prestwick but also in a nearby hamlet, itself called St Quivox and with a pre-Reformation church of the same name and still in use, but as the local kirk of the Church of Scotland.

The Catholic church in Prestwick was quite small when built in the 1930s but was skilfully enlarged after the Second World War and recently has had a new hall/parish centre attached. The Catholic primary school is St Ninian's, possibly thus named to avoid the error of thinking it to be in the hamlet of St Quivox.

The name of the town denotes its clerical origins ("place or district of the priest") but perhaps Prestwick is best known for its international airport, which dates back to the very early days of aviation. It narrowly escaped the ignominy of being officially named Elvis Presley International Airport on the extremely flimsy grounds that, during or after the Second World War, a US military plane, on which the singer was a passenger, had landed there to refuel.

The parish priest of Prestwick is also parish priest, non-resident, of St Ann's, **Mossblown**, a couple of miles inland. This parish comprises not only Mossblown but also the villages of Tarbolton and Annbank, the place from which the parish derives its name.

Also inland, but to the south of Mossblown, is St Clare's, **Drongan**. This parish, which also includes the village of Coylton, is in the anomalous position of being partly in East Ayrshire (Drongan itself) and partly in South Ayrshire (Coylton) but wholly in St Margaret's deanery. In fact, the entire territory of the parish (Drongan and Coylton) is much nearer to Ayr than to Kilmarnock, or even to Cumnock.

Both parishes (St Ann's and St Clare's) are in former coal mining areas but, with the pits now closed, there is a high rate of unemployment and of the elderly retired. But the traditions of neighbourliness and hospitality, characteristic of mining communities, are still very much alive. Neither parish has a Catholic school within its boundaries any longer and, like St Ann's, St Clare's is also served by a non-resident priest, in this case, from Ayr.

The church of St Francis Xavier in **Waterside** (or Dunaskin) is on the main road from Ayr to Castle Douglas. The place used to have large iron works with rows of cottages and some shops owned by the company and for the use of the employees. But the industrial site is gone and Waterside is now reduced to a single row of cottages. St Francis Xavier's church has the dubious distinction of being the only one in the diocese which is situated on a road with no speed restriction for vehicles except the general 60 mph limit. The church once had a presbytery and a convent next door; there is still a hall adjoining, but the other two buildings have gone, victims of dry rot as well as of the shortage of priests and religious sisters. The church, served by the priest from St Paul's in Ayr, still survives, although looking very lonely and isolated. Parishioners come from Patna and Dalmellington, both four to five miles distant, Patna to the north-west in the direction of Ayr, Dalmellington to the south-east, towards Castle Douglas. Surprisingly, since it is not large, the parish which, defying logic, is in East Ayrshire, has a Catholic primary school, St Xavier's, formerly near the old iron works but now re-established in new premises in Patna.

The fourth inland parish in the deanery is **Maybole**, situated between Ayr and Girvan. The church, Our Lady and St Cuthbert's, is a beautiful neo-gothic stone building (1878). It has a spectacular and lofty location which enhances its appearance but tests the parishioners' lungs, especially of the elderly. The inclusion of St Cuthbert in the church's name reminds us that the village of Kirkoswald is not far distant; thus two Northumbrian saints of the seventh century, a king and a bishop, are commemorated in neighbouring Ayrshire towns.

Two miles south of Maybole are the ruins of Crossraguel Abbey, built in the early thirteenth century for a community of Cluniac Benedictines. Just after the collapse of most Catholic life and practice in Scotland when the Catholic Church was proscribed in 1560, the abbot of Crossraguel, Quintin Kennedy, a zealous Catholic and thus something of a rarity at the time, challenged John Knox to a public debate. The confrontation took place in the open air in Maybole and lasted for three days. In fact, at the end of the third day, the two were still disputing on the first argument adduced by the abbot in his chosen task of vindicating the sacrificial nature of the Mass. With such little progress made and no agreement in sight, the debate was not resumed on the fourth day. Perhaps spectator – or sectarian – interest was exhausted by then and the two men no longer had an audience.

The southernmost parish of the deanery and one of the largest in area in the diocese is centred on the seaside town of **Girvan**. The parish has the unusual title of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and has the distinction of having had a community of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny since 1879. They were invited to Girvan to be in charge of the Catholic school which, for years, had both primary and secondary sections. The school also accepted boarders as well as day pupils. Over the years, the boarding facility closed and the primary section became a separate school. The secondary

section continued as Sacred Heart Academy, but with fewer and fewer religious sisters teaching there. Eventually, with the number of pupils only around the sixty mark for the whole secondary course of six years, Sacred Heart Academy closed, its pupils having the option of either Queen Margaret Academy in Ayr or the non-denominational Girvan Academy. The large convent and school building, property of the sisters, was sold and transformed into flats, the small remaining community of Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny occupying the flat that adjoins the church, allowing them direct private access to it.

Some two miles north of Girvan is the large country mansion known as Trochrague. This property was gifted to the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny after World War II and they ran it as a guest house, particularly for those who sought a quiet holiday in rural tranquillity and a religious setting. In the 1990s the Congregation donated Trochrague to the Jericho Society, who use it to provide holidays for families and others who would normally find such facilities beyond their means.

By the roadside at the north entry to Girvan there is a memorial stone marking the spot at which a policeman, Alexander Ross, was killed trying to prevent an Orange procession from entering the town on 12th July 1831.

The resident parish priest of Girvan has now also assumed the duties of parish priest of Maybole, where he resides for a couple of days each week. The small inland town of Dailly is within the parish boundaries of Girvan, as is the village of Ballantrae, some thirteen miles south of Girvan and only a few miles from the boundary with Dumfries & Galloway.

Ayr has two churches and two parishes, **St Margaret's**, the cathedral parish, and **St Paul's**, in the south part of the town and opened in 1967. Both have resident priests and, attached to the church buildings, their parish halls. The priest in St Margaret's acts as chaplain to the Ayr Hospital as well as the Ayrshire Hospice. His opposite number in St Paul's, in addition to serving St Francis Xavier's parish of Waterside, is chaplain to Ailsa (psychiatric) Hospital.

The Catholic secondary school for the whole deanery is Queen Margaret Academy, situated in St Paul's parish. There is only one Catholic primary school in the town and it is in St Margaret's parish but called St John's, an appropriate recognition of the patron of the town, St John the Baptist.

St Margaret's church was erected and opened in 1827 and is the oldest Catholic church in Ayrshire. Because of its age and since it is close to the busy centre of Ayr, it has always been seen as the mother church of the area and it was fitting that it was chosen and designated as the cathedral of the diocese in 2007. It underwent a very thorough makeover and rededication in the 1990s and early years of this century, with completely renovated sanctuary and new furnishings, a central aisle, stained glass windows, new organ, new large sacristy and toilet and many other improvements, including a brighter colour scheme for the ceiling and walls, new lighting and new central heating. All the improvements were costly, but substantial grants from Heritage Scotland and the National Lottery plus some very successful and imaginative fundraising saw the bills paid off in a remarkably short time.

The parish already had a new presbytery (1970s) and a new hall (1980s) so the complex serves very well as a liturgical and social centre for the diocese. Admittedly, the church is not large but there is only one annual occasion when the lack of space is a serious problem. That occasion is the Mass of Chrism on the Tuesday evening of Holy Week, which is always a most impressive liturgy with the bishop presiding and priests and laity gathered from all over the diocese, a truly moving and beautiful event.

The church of the Good Shepherd, built in 1957 and situated in a large post-war housing development in the north-east of the town, was a good choice to serve as the cathedral for about fifty years. Larger than St Margaret's and in a poorer district of the town, it had those points in its favour. However, by the year 2000 there were three large problems. The building needed extensive and costly repair work; normal Sunday attendance, two Masses, had dropped to about eighty people; and, with no proper parking places, cars left in the surrounding streets had become subject to frequent vandalism. Bishop John Cunningham, my successor, received the authorisation of the Holy See to make St Margaret's the cathedral church and to have Good Shepherd church demolished. On the site where the church stood, there is now an attractive cluster of flats which preserve some of the architectural features of the church, especially the whole façade with its tower and statue of the Good Shepherd. This outcome is some compensation for the unavoidable loss of a well loved church.

A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES?

In the Apostles Creed we proclaim our faith in the "Communion of Saints" (although, strangely and sadly, that item is not found in the Nicene Creed). The Communion of Saints applies not only to those "who have gone before us in faith" but to us still on earth. The Church, both universal and local, is the People of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, and therefore the Communion of Saints and, *a fortiori*, a community. The local Church is the diocese but the reality of community is more effectively felt in the parish. The persons who form a community have a sense of belonging, of being accepted by the others in the group, of being important to them, cared for by them, missed by them if absent; and this awareness is reciprocal and shared. "Communion" adds to community the element of the presence of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd and all that that title means to us.

The sense of community which a parish should have is best exemplified in the congregation at Sunday Mass. In practice, it is best felt in parishes where there is only one Sunday Mass. Where there is more than one and people attend "their" Mass, those at one Mass do not, in general, know those who are at the other Mass(es).

The parishioners who are frequently at weekday Masses have their own sense of a small community; likewise the members of small faith-sharing groups, where such exist. The same is, or was, the case with members of societies, guilds, confraternities and the like which used to play an important part in parish life, but much less so nowadays.

An area where community is very evident is that of pilgrimages. Galloway diocese has its pilgrimage annually to Whithorn and St Ninian's Cave. A greater awareness of community is apparent in the diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes every second year and,

perhaps most of all, in diocesan pilgrimages to the Holy Land. These latter take place every second year, alternating with Lourdes, although unfortunately, due to unrest in the Middle East and increasing prices, they have been less regular in the last few years. Parishes also have organised pilgrimages, especially to Rome and to Salamanca, and there is no doubt that, apart from other benefits, these greatly foster community.

The very first question in the diocesan questionnaire of 1982 intrigues me. “*Do you think that your parish has become a community?*” That question probably intrigued many of the respondents and puzzled them too. A majority answered in the affirmative, a sizable minority in the negative and something approaching a quarter of the respondents did not know. In fact, the “no” and “don’t know” votes combined exceeded the “yes” votes 4,173 to 3,443. Of course, it all depends on what you mean by “community”. My own answer to the question would, I think, be “yes”, but understood in the sense that most parishes are on the road there. The awareness of being a community (or not) will vary greatly from person to person but, slowly, the recognition of the call to be a community and to achieve that aim is gradually developing in the parishes. Perfection will never be fully achieved, but we must keep trying.

The Renew process was very effective in bringing people together, especially through small groups. The reformed liturgy with its emphasis on participation, today’s ecclesiology expressed in homilies – these are also some of the factors operative in forming community. Here are some others that I think play their part.

- *Socialising before and after Sunday Mass
- *Taking part in weekday Masses
- *Masses for particular occasions, especially for sick, with anointing
- *Attending parish social events and occasions
- *Visits/Holy Communion to sick, housebound, lonely, bereaved
- *Reporting from Pastoral Councils, both Diocesan and Parish
- *Various societies and groups (St Vincent de Paul, Union of Catholic Mothers, Justice & Peace, Catholic Men’s Society, Charismatic Renewal etc.)
- *Weekly parish bulletins, preferably interesting and attractive
- **The Galloway News* (and its more modest predecessor, *The Galloway Newsletter*)
- *Adult Growth in Faith groups, viz.,
 - Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
 - Certificate in Pastoral Ministry
 - Small faith-sharing groups (in the manner of the Renew process)
- *Responding to appeals for new ministers or tasks.

For a parish to be a community, relationships among and between its members should be correct, respectful and friendly. There is one relationship whose correctness is a vital one - the relationship that the priest has with the parishioners. Although the priest is the pastor and leader of the faithful laity, he should always remember that, generally speaking, they lived there before he arrived and will continue to be there when he goes; this fact plays its part in the laity’s feelings and attitudes, and rightly so. The priest should be constantly aware of it, and especially when he thinks it necessary to use his authority. “*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*” is good advice.

The Catholic Church lays down a number of laws and norms to regulate activities and govern relationships in parishes (*Code of Canon Law*, canons 515-552). Specifically, each parish must have a finance committee and, if the bishop “considers it opportune” (which I did), a pastoral council (canons 537 & 536) but these bodies have only a consultative vote. This last point should never be seen as practically allowing the priest to ignore their opinions or to neglect to consult them. In fact, if he is wise, the priest will listen carefully to their opinions and take them fully into consideration. On the other hand, lay people should remember that in “churchy” subjects (liturgy, doctrine, canon law), the priest is a trained and experienced professional so that his lack of enthusiasm for a proposal should not be presumed to be due to obscurantism or clerical quirkiness.

Why should the parish be a community? Because the teaching of Jesus is that his disciples should not be individuals but should be united in faith, hope and love, working together to form the Kingdom of God and to consider themselves brothers and sisters in the family of God. Above all, the great event of the Mass calls us to be united with Christ, taking part together with him in the renewal of his Paschal Mystery. In fact, we are called to be not merely a COMMUNITY of people who are friends with one another and act in collaboration, but through baptism and our union with Jesus Christ, we become that deeper unity that we call COMMUNION, the “COMMUNION OF SAINTS”.

To conclude on a positive note, the diocese is a community of communities, a communion of communions, because it is truly a church, a local church, one of thousands of local churches that, united, form the worldwide Catholic Church.