



Diocesan Centre
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Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

10th August 2021.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I wish you all well and thank you for your supportive prayers as I underwent eye surgery last week. It went well and hopefully will be of benefit.

I write on the Feast of St Lawrence, the great 3rd Century Deacon Martyr of the Church in Rome. I especially greet our deacons, therefore, and those preparing for the ministry of Deacon. Stuart Dick and Kevin Kirby, both from St Vincent's Parish in East Kilbride, are preparing for the diaconate and will be instituted as lectors at Mass in St Vincent's on Sunday 22nd August. I ask your prayers for them and for Michael Meechan, who will be ordained deacon on 4th October in St Athanasius, Carluke.

Those preparing for Holy Orders receive the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte during their preparation for ordination as deacons and priests. Earlier this year Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini* decreed that these ministries should no longer be reserved to those preparing for the ordained ministry but can be entrusted to all suitable lay faithful, male or female. These institutional ministries are based on the common condition of being baptised and the royal priesthood received in the Sacrament of Baptism and are essentially distinct from the ordained ministry of the Sacrament of Orders. The Bishops' Conference of Scotland has to decide now on the age and qualifications necessary for the lay people who are to be admitted to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte.

In a further Apostolic Letter, *Antiquum Ministerium*, Pope Francis established the Lay Ministry of Catechist, and invited the Bishops' Conferences to establish it in their countries, determining the formation required and the criteria for admission to this important ministry and how it should be exercised in Dioceses and Parishes. Here again the Holy Father wishes to formally recognise and institutionalise the outstanding work being undertaken by so many lay women and men in their witness to Christ and the teaching of the faith. I welcome the Holy Father's decisions and hope we can move to implement them in Motherwell Diocese and institute those who are properly prepared and willing to serve in ministry, as Catechists, Lectors, and Acolytes. You are welcome to contact me personally about this or speak to your Parish Priest or Deacon. Many of you already carry out aspects of these ministries but there is opportunity now to offer more formal recognition and the commissioning of the Church. Part of the Holy Father's thinking is also to recognise and value the ministry and service of women in the Church.

I extend an invitation to the faithful from across the Diocese to attend the **Annual Vocations Mass on Thursday 26th August at 7pm in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell.** This is one of the Diocesan Masses each year and it does feel that it should be a special occasion this year as we are able to come together again as a Diocesan Community in sizeable numbers. For those who may feel hesitant about gathering in larger groups there will be an area reserved in the Cathedral with wider spacing. It will be good to pray for those already preparing for ministry as priests and deacons and for those considering their vocation.

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The Diocese of Motherwell continues to be blessed in having six seminarians and another three men hoping to join the Preparatory Year of formation. I mentioned above the three men preparing for the diaconate and we look forward to others joining them. Our Vocations' Mass is a thanksgiving for the gift of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and of Religious Consecration and a plea to the Lord to continue providing labourers for the harvest in our Diocese.

Beyond the Vocations Mass we keep a week in September as Vocations Awareness Week and I ask that we do mark this in our parishes and schools and propose to our young people the possibility of giving their lives to Christ as priests or consecrated religious. It is a beautiful calling and some young people are ready and willing to respond with good encouragement and example.

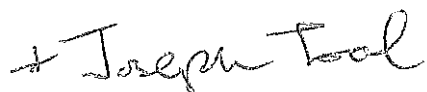
During the month of September, the Special Collection in our churches will be for our Ecclesiastical Students' Fund – for the formation of our future priests and deacons. I ask for a generous response as the Diocese needs your financial support along with your prayers. You can make a contribution through the Special Collection in your parish or on-line through the Motherwell Diocese web-site.

I ask your prayers for Mgr Tom Millar, who leaves Our Lady of Lourdes, East Kilbride, this weekend to become Spiritual Director at St Mary's College, Oscott. In recent years a number of Motherwell priests have received their seminary formation at Oscott, and indeed three will be studying there next term, so it does seem reasonable for Motherwell Diocese to provide a priest for the seminary staff. When asked, therefore, I agreed that Mgr Millar be appointed as Spiritual Director and, although he will be greatly missed in the Diocese, he will bring to the seminary the wealth of his experience as a diocesan priest and his own spiritual gifts and love of the Lord and the Church. Our prayers and good wishes go with you, Mgr Tom, as you cross the border to pastures new.

Having mentioned the Feast-Day of St Lawrence at the start of this letter, I end by moving to St Clare's Feast-Day tomorrow. I am sure you will join with me in offering the Poor Clares in Bothwell a very Happy Feast-Day, and in thanking them for their prayers and sacrifices, particularly for those who have been ordained and those preparing for ordination. We ask the Lord's protection for them at present and into the future.

Yours in Christ,

With my prayers and best wishes,



+ Joseph Toal