

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

‘Sunday of the Word of God’

Parish of The Most Holy and Undivided Trinity

The Catholic Church in

Grimsby, Cleethorpes & Immingham



Contact Us

Parish Administrator
(Admin & Finance)

Duncan Weston

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Parish Priest

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Parish Deacon

Deacon Stephen Durkin

07505 559360

Parish Sister

Sister Ann Helen Byrne



Please wear a mask provided
if you are recovering
from colds and flu.

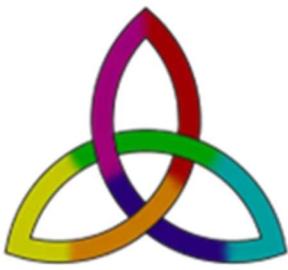
Newsletter



Saint Matthew wants us to remember this dark history as he recounts a prophecy from Isaiah for God's future restoration of all that was lost to Him when His people rebelled and had to be punished: "the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." Someday, God would visit His people with salvation—with forgiveness, healing, and renewal. Isaiah says this great visitation would begin in the very place that was first lost, which was "the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles." Galilee was the northernmost area of Israel; thus, it was neighbour to Gentile lands. It was the place where the light had first gone out in Israel. This is the exact spot where Jesus wanted to begin His preaching ministry: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Light of restoration, the Voice that would call all Israel—north and south—back to God had arrived.

He was the living fulfilment of God's promise: "On those overshadowed by death, light has arisen."

Gayle Somers, St. Thomas the Apostle parish in Phoenix



Our Schools

St Marys Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy
Wellington Street
Grimsby
DN32 7JX

Mr Joseph O'Connor
Headteacher

Tel: 01472 357982
office@smp.nelcmail.co.uk

St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy
Philip Avenue
Cleethorpes
DN35 9DL

Mrs Michelle Steeper
Acting Headteacher
01472 690672
office@sjp.academy

Our Hospital

Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital
Scartho Road
Grimsby
North East Lincolnshire
DN33 2BA
01472 874111

Parish Safeguarding Team

Richard Mellows
richard.mellows@psr.dio.nottingham.uk
07513 725509
(lead)
&
Sarah Pollard
(deputy lead)
sarah.pollard@psr.dio.nottingham.uk
01472 342301 (ext 6)

Sign up for the Parish Bulletin



Sunday: Yr. A - Weekday: Cycle II Eucharistic Prayer: II - Psalter: III

Saturday 24th January - St Francis de Sales, Bishop, Doctor

10.00am - Holy Hour in Cleethorpes

10.00am until Noon - Confessions in Cleethorpes

5.00pm - **Immingham** - Mass - Deceased Members of the Beresford, Kelly and Cox Families - Christina & Colin

6.00pm - Grimsby - Polish Language Vigil Mass

Sunday 25th January - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

9.00am - **Cleethorpes** - Mass - People of God

11.00am - **Grimsby** - Mass - Intentions of MT Shennan

12.30pm - Cleethorpes - GCI Baptisms - Nathaniel

Monday 26th January - Saints Timothy & Titus

No Mass/No Service

Tuesday 27th January - Saint Angela Merici, virgin

9.00am - Grimsby - Rosary - Sorrowful Mysteries

9.30am - Grimsby - Mass - Angela O'Callaghan RIP

Wednesday 28th January - Saint Thomas Aquinas, priest, doctor

9.00am - Immingham - Rosary - Glorious Mysteries

9.30am - Immingham - Mass - In thanksgiving for David's 80th Birthday - Pauline

5.45pm - Grimsby - Eucharistic Adoration with Confessions

6.30pm - Grimsby - Mass - Zilmar Souza - Maria Duraes

Thursday 29th January - Feria

9.00am - Cleethorpes - Rosary - Luminous Mysteries

9.30am - Cleethorpes - Mass - Joe - Pat

Friday 30th January - Feria

5.45pm - Cleethorpes - Eucharistic Adoration with Confessions

6.30pm - Cleethorpes - Mass - Terry Robinson - Nanette Brown

Saturday 31st January - Saint John Bosco, priest

10.00am - Holy Hour in Cleethorpes

10.00am until Noon - Confessions in Cleethorpes

12.30pm - Grimsby - GCI Baptisms - Ojo

5.00pm - **Immingham** - Mass - Dean Purdon RIP - Caitlin Cassidy

6.00pm - Grimsby - Polish Language Vigil Mass

Sunday 1st February - Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

9.00am - **Cleethorpes** - Mass - Sr Rosemary Reily RIP - Sr Bridgetta

11.00am - **Grimsby** - Mass - People of God

12.30pm - Grimsby - GCI Baptisms - Siobhan



Monday 2nd February - The Presentation of the Lord (Feast)

9.00am - Cleethorpes - Rosary - Joyful Mysteries

9.30am - Cleethorpes - Mass - Margaret and Leo Solomon RIP - Family

Parish Office

Holy Trinity Presbytery

Grimsby, DN32 9DZ

01472 342301

Monday,

Tuesday & Wednesday

9.00am until 12.30pm

Outside of these times the office
will not be available.

Fr Robbie's Friday Spiritual Surgery

Holy Trinity Presbytery

Grimsby, DN32 9DZ

01472 342301

Each Friday Morning

by Appointment Only

via the Parish Office

Appointment Times Available:
9.00am, 10.00am and 11.00am

Parish Finances Last Week

9th / 10th January

Thank you for your generosity
to the work of the Church!

In your Will, please remember
your Church.

Loose Plate	£ 319.70
Contactless	£ 167.00
S/Orders	£1,156.17
Total	£1,642.87

Did you know?

In total, in the last financial
year, it cost us £226,167 to run
our Parish.

That's £4,349 a week.

**Please be generous in your
giving to our Parish.**

(these figures were taken from *The
Parish's Annual Return FY24-25*)

There was a frog living in a forest up north, and he persuaded two geese to fly him down to Devon for the winter. He tied the end of a long cord to each of the geese and he held the centre of the cord in his mouth, and off they went. The journey was going well until someone on the ground noticed the strange sight passing by over-head. "Hi! Look at that!" he shouted, "That's fantastic! Whose idea, was that, I wonder?" In his anxiety to get the credit for being so clever, the proud frog opened his mouth and shouted, "Mine!"

News for the Pews

Stewarding Volunteers Needed

We greatly need volunteers to steward during 11:00am Mass on Sunday's in Grimsby. A number of stewards have stepped down over the last year causing us to reduce our groups down, meaning our stewards are having to steward more regularly. We would love to add an additonal stewarding group to the rota cycle, once again, if possible. If you would like some more information about this important ministry of welcome, and how you could help, then please contact the Parish Office, this role is open to everyone.

Safeguarding Refresher Training – Final Mop-Up Session

Thank you to everyone who attended one of our three safeguarding refresher courses. We truly appreciate you giving up your time and recognise how seriously you take your ministry. Unfortunately, a number of volunteers did not attend, and many did not make contact with a Parish Safeguarding Rep. (thank you to those who did).

A final "mop-up" session will take place:

Monday 9th February 2026 **Time: 5.30pm - 6.30pm**

Venue: Holy Trinity Parish Hall, Cleethorpes

(Next to Corpus Christi Church)

This will be the **final** opportunity to attend a safeguarding refresher course. Any volunteer who does not attend any of the refresher sessions will, regrettably, be unable to continue in their ministry. At Holy Trinity GCI, we take safeguarding extremely seriously. It is essential that all volunteers are fully trained to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our parish community. Safeguarding guidance changes, and it is vital that all volunteers know how to respond appropriately to a variety of situations. As Parish Priest, Fr Robbie is responsible for all parishioners and must be confident that every volunteer will act correctly in any safeguarding situation, as he must delegate this responsibility. Many thanks for your cooperation and continued commitment to safeguarding.

Kind regards, **Safeguarding Team, Holy Trinity GCI**

Under 18s - Registration Requirement

All Under 18s, whatever their ministry (altar serving, reading, stewarding, or any other ministry), **must be registered**. Some paperwork may have been completed previously; however, updated forms are now required. All Under 18s must be registered using the new forms **by the end of this year**. You may request a paper pack or complete the forms electronically. Please contact: **Sarah Pollard**

sarah.pollardPSR@dioceseofnottingham.uk

Deputy Parish Safeguarding Representative

Once registered, Under 18s will receive a **blue lanyard**. **Under 18s must not take part in any ministry without wearing a blue lanyard.** Many thanks for your cooperation and continued commitment to safeguarding.

Kind regards, **Safeguarding Team, Holy Trinity GCI**

How do I know if God is calling me to be a Priest? Want to speak to someone about whether God might be calling you to the priesthood? Contact Fr Neil Peoples, Vocations Director, on 01283564814, or email vocations@dioceseofnottingham.uk

Rita Hall RIP - It is with sadness that I announce the passing of Rita. Her Requiem Mass will take place at **St Mary on the Sea Church, Grimsby** on **Wednesday 11th February at 11.00am** followed by committal at **Scartho Cemetery**. Please keep her family in your thoughts and prayers at this sad time. **Requiescat in pace**

(This Funeral Mass will be in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes)

PRAYER FOR PEACE



Remember, O most gracious Mary, Star of the Sea that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us.



January Draw Winners

1st Prize- £40 - No 235
Daniel Omonbude

2nd Prize - £10 - No 175
Andrea Gawrylo

DETAILS ABOUT THE FINAL SUPERDRAW, TO FOLLOW, NEXT WEEK!

Important

Safeguarding information

Please be aware that our Masses and Events are regularly recorded at Grimsby & Cleethorpes and will appear online on our YouTube channel. If you would like to receive Holy Communion but wish not to be visible on YouTube, please request via a steward that

Fr Robbie bring you communion to your pew.

News for the Pews



NEW - Altar Server Cassock & Cottas

Would you like to gift a new server cassock and cotta to the parish?

As you can imagine this is an expensive undertaking done by parishes every 10 years or so. Each child's outfit will cost around £100 each and this is from a really good contact we have, rather than the more expensive regional wholesalers.

So your continued generosity to support this venture for the beauty of the Holy Mass would be really helpful. Please mark your envelope 'Cassock'

My gift for the future

A WILL IS YOUR LOVE LETTER

Writing your will is like writing a legal letter of love which gives you the freedom to pass on what is important to you to the people that matter to you. When the time is right for you to write your will, please consider including your parish. We rely on the generosity of our benefactors, who love these sacred places, to provide for its financial needs. Please remember your parish in your will can help to continue and sustain our mission here in North Lincolnshire for future generations and beacon of hope. Every gift makes a difference, even one percent.

How to leave a gift in your will... It is simple to make or amend your will, and we can offer support if you need it. Gifts in wills to UK charities are not subject to inheritance tax and can reduce the overall amount of inheritance tax on your estate. Your solicitor can give you further advice. To remember the **Parish of The Most Holy and Undivided Trinity - Grimsby, Cleethorpes & Immingham** as a beneficiary in your will, please provide your solicitor our information.

By leaving a gift in your will to your parish,
you will support the mission and the beauty of a place
you love for future generations.



St Joseph & St Mary - School Corner

This Coming Lent Term

Our Children move into Lent

Branch Three: Galilee to Jerusalem

Branch Four: Desert to Garden

Hear - Believe - Celebrate - Live



The
Catholic
Diocese of
Nottingham

Saturday 31st January 2026

I HAVE MY MISSION

A day to discover what your call to evangelise could look like



**Keynote speaker: Abbot Hugh Allan,
Mission Director – The Bishops'
Conference of England and Wales**

St Mary's Church Hall, Derby, DE 1 3AU

Mass 10am | Conference 11am-4pm

More information at: dioceseofnottingham.uk/events



Gregorian Chant Workshop

Saturday 14th February

10am - 4pm

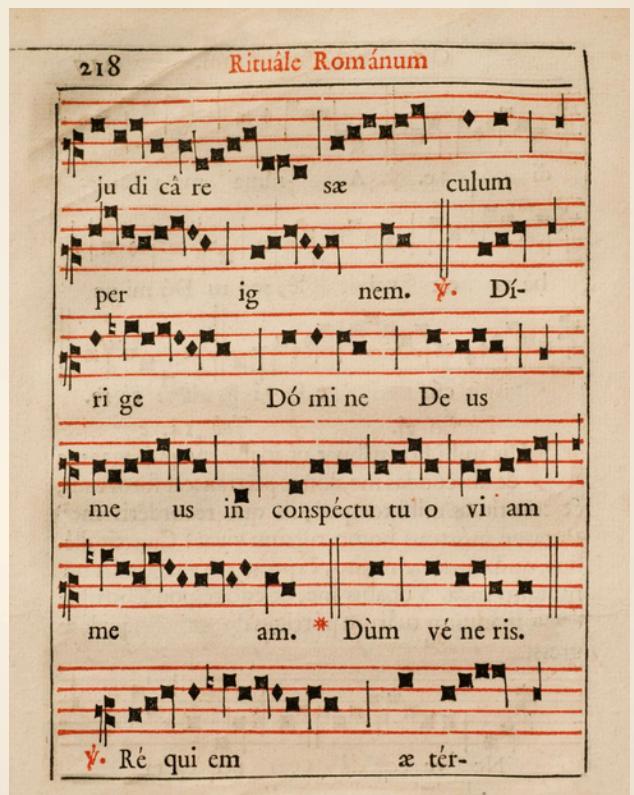


St Mary's of the Annunciation Catholic Church
97 Ashby Rd, Loughborough LE11 3AB

St Mary's Choir Loughborough are hosting a Gregorian Chant Workshop led by Gregory Treloar, looking at the basics of notation and learning a variety of chants for parish use. The day will finish with a Sung Vespers at 3:30pm.

Singers from across the Diocese are welcome to sign up and join the choir for the day. To sign up please contact Martins at: martinsobi@gmail.com

A suggested donation of £10 towards the parish is encouraged. Please bring your own Lunch for the day.





DECREE

ON THE EIGHTH CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, A SPECIAL JUBILEE YEAR IS BEING ANNOUNCED WITH ATTACHED PLENARY INDULGENCES.

“Keep the memory of our father and brother Francis, to the praise and glory of Him who made him great amongst men and glorified him amongst angels. Pray for him, as he himself asked us before he died, and pray to him, so that God may also share with him in his holy grace.”¹

Whilst the fruits of grace of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 that has just ended, in which we have all been spurred to become pilgrims of this hope that does not disappoint, are still timely and effective (cf. Rom 5:5), here is added to it as an ideal continuation a new occasion for jubilation and sanctification: the Eighth Centenary of the happy passage of St. Francis of Assisi from earthly life to his heavenly homeland (3 October 1226).

In recent years, other important jubilees have concerned the figure and works of the Saint of Assisi: the eighth centenary of the creation of the first Nativity scene in Greccio, of the composition of the Canticle of the Creatures, a hymn to the holy beauty of creation, and that of the impression of the Sacred Stigmata, which took place on Monte della Verna, almost a new Calvary, two years before his death. 2026 will mark the culmination and fulfillment of all previous celebrations: it will in fact be the Year of St. Francis and we will all be called to become saints in the contemporary world following the example of the *Seraphic Patriarch*.

If it is admirably true that “there is no other name under heaven given to men” (cf. At 4:12) apart from Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humanity, it is equally extraordinarily true that between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the age of so-called holy wars, laxity of morals, misunderstood religious

¹ *Lettera enciclica di Frate Elia, a tutte le Province dell’Ordine, sulla morte di San Francesco*, 7 (FF 311).



fervour, “a sun was born into the world”²: Francis, who, from the son of a rich merchant, became poor and humble, true *Ancient Christ* on earth, providing the world with tangible examples of evangelical life and a real image of Christian perfection. Our time is not very different from that in which Francis lived, and precisely in the light of this his teaching is perhaps even more valid and understandable today. When Christian charity languishes, ignorance spreads like immorality, and those who exalt concord among peoples do so more out of selfishness than out of a sincere Christian spirit; when the virtual takes over the real, disagreements and social violence are part of everyday life and peace becomes more insecure and distant every day, this Year of St. Francis spurs all of us, each according to our possibilities, to imitate the *poor man of Assisi*, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ, not to frustrate the purposes of the Holy Year that has just ended: may the hope that has seen us as pilgrims now be transformed into zeal and fervour of active charity.

“*And in this I want to know if you love the Lord and love me as his servant and yours, if you will do this, namely, that there may never be a brother in the world who has sinned as much as he could sin, who, after seeing your eyes, goes away without your merciful forgiveness, if he asks for it.*”³

With these extraordinary words, reported in the well-known Epistle *ad quendam ministrum*, St. Francis at the same time not only dispenses consolation and advice to an anonymous confrere, but above all outlines and emphasizes the fundamental concept of mercy, to which that of forgiveness and indulgence is inextricably linked. And it is precisely a pardon, the well-known “Pardon of Assisi” or “Indulgence of the Portiuncula,” that Pope Honorius III granted by exceptional privilege directly to Francis for those who, having confessed and received communion, visited on the 2nd August an ancient church near Assisi, erected 800 years earlier on a “small portion of land” (hence the name Porziuncola).

With the same generous enthusiasm and joy that the Saint, in seeing his prayer answered by the Vicar of Christ, radiated on the crowd present at the consecration of the Portiuncula in announcing the grace granted, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, Minister of our faith and our joy, establishes that, from January

² Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia, Paradiso*, XI, 50.

³ Francesco d'Assisi, *Lettera a un ministro*, 7-8 (FF 235)



10, 2026, to coincide with the closing of the Ordinary Jubilee, until 10 January 2027, a special Year of St. Francis may be proclaimed, in which every Christian faithful, following the example of the Saint of Assisi, may himself become a model of holiness of life and a constant witness of peace.

For a more perfect attainment of its intended purposes, the Apostolic Penitentiary, through the present Decree issued in conformity with the will of the Supreme Pontiff, on the occasion of the Year of St. Francis, grants the *Plenary Indulgence* under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father), which can also be applied in the form of suffrage for the souls in Purgatory:

1) Members:

- of the Franciscan Families of the First, Second and Third Regular and Secular Orders;
- Institutes of Consecrated Life, Societies of Apostolic Life and Public or Private Associations of the Faithful, male and female, which observe the Rule of St. Francis or are inspired by his spirituality or in any form they perpetuate his charism;

2) to all the faithful without distinction

who, with a spirit detached from sin, will participate in the Year of St. Francis by visiting in the form of a pilgrimage any Franciscan conventional church, or place of worship in any part of the world named after St. Francis or connected to him for any reason, and there they will devoutly follow the Jubilee rites or spend at least a suitable period of time in pious meditation and will raise prayers to God so that, following the example of Saint Francis, may sentiments of Christian charity towards one's neighbour and authentic wishes for harmony and peace among peoples spring up in hearts, concluding with the Our Father, the Creed and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Francis of Assisi, St Clare and all the saints of the Franciscan Family.

The elderly, the sick and those who take care of them and all those who for serious reasons are unable to leave their homes, will also be able to obtain the Plenary Indulgence, provided that they are detached from any sin and intend to fulfill the three usual conditions as soon as possible, if they join spiritually in the Jubilee celebrations of the Year of St. Francis, offering their prayers to the Merciful God, the pains or sufferings of one's life.



In order that such an opportunity to obtain divine grace through the Power of the Keys of the Church may be realized more easily, this Penitentiary firmly asks all priests, regular and secular, endowed with the appropriate faculties, to make themselves available, in a ready, generous and merciful spirit, for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This decree is valid for the Year of St. Francis. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary.

Given in Rome, from the See of the Apostolic Penitentiary, on the 10th January 2026, the Vigil of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

L. + S.

Prot. No. 03069/2025-1360/25/I

Meditation of Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe OP

at the Extraordinary Consistory

January 2026

The following meditation was preached by Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe, OP, during the Extraordinary Consistory convoked by Pope Leo XIV, held on January 7–8, 2026. Requested by the General Congregations prior to the Conclave, the Consistory gathered roughly 170 cardinals for prayer and reflection on synodality and mission. What follows is the full text of that meditation.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark

After the five thousand had eaten and were satisfied, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore. Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, “Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!” He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely astounded. They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

(Mark 6:45–52).

Accompanying Peter

We are gathered in this Consistory to be of help to the Holy Father in the exercise of his ministry to the Universal Church. How are we to do that? Tomorrow Pope Leo will preach on the gospel of the day, the feeding of the five thousand in St. Mark. It was suggested that the text which follows, Jesus walking on the water, gives us some clues as to our task.

Jesus commanded the disciples to get into the boat and go before him. Peter must not go into the storm alone. This is our first obedience, to be in the barque of Peter, with his successor, as he faces the storms of our times. We cannot remain on the beach saying, “Myself, I would not go sailing today” or “I would choose a different boat.” Jesus is alone on the mountain but Peter must not be unaccompanied.

John writes that: “If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” If the boat of Peter is filled with disciples who quarrel, we shall be of no use to the Holy Father. If we are at peace with each other in love, even when we disagree, God will indeed be present even when he seems to be absent.

In the storm, Jesus is a long way off on the mountain but, the gospel says, “He saw that they were making headway painfully.” His eye is always on them. It is as if Jesus wishes them to experience his apparent absence. He takes his time. He waits until they are almost exhausted. This experience of absence prepares them for an intimacy they could never have imagined. He gets into the boat with them.

Sometimes we too shall feel alone, burnt out, exhausted. But Jesus is watching and will come closer to us than ever before. So we need not be afraid. We live in a time of terrible storms too, of growing violence, from knife crime to war. The chasm between the rich and the poor is ever wider. The world order which came into being after the last world war is breaking down. We have no idea of what Artificial Intelligence will yield. If we are not nervous, we ought to be.

Sail out into the storm

The Church herself is shaken by her own storms, of sexual abuse and ideological division. The Lord commands us to sail out into these storms, and face them truthfully, not timidly waiting on the beach. If we do so in this Consistory, we shall see him coming to us. If we hide on the beach we shall not encounter him.

Mark gives us a strange detail: “He meant to pass by them.” The Greek word for “passing by” is connected with dying, as it is in English when we talk of someone “passing away.” We see the pattern of Holy Week. A shared meal, the feeding of the 5000; the absence of Jesus, and his sudden appearance. Already on the Sea of Galilee the disciples are living in anticipation of the death and Resurrection of the Lord. It will be repeated after the feeding of the four thousand.

In Mark, the Resurrection is both utterly new and to be relived again and again, as we do so in the Liturgical Year. In *Evangelii Gaudium* we read of how the Christian life is sustained by memory and by God’s inexhaustible newness. Augustine says that God is always younger than we are!

In the Consistory some of us will be champions of memory, cherishing the tradition. Others will delight more in God’s surprising newness, but memory and newness are inseparable in the dynamic of Christian life. So our discussions will come alive if we are both rooted in our memory of the great things the Lord has done and open to his ever fresh newness. There is no competition.

The disciples were “utterly astounded for they did not understand about the loaves, for their hearts were hardened.” In the Bible, the heart is the seat of thinking rather than emotions which were in the bowels. As one of my brethren said, “Everything happens 50 centimetres lower in the Bible...”

The disciples had fed the five thousand but they were stuck in the old logic of calculation. All that they had been able to produce was five loaves and a few fish. They had to discover that in the logic of the Kingdom. Their small offerings were more than enough for thousands. The Lord of the harvest works miracles with what they offer.

We may feel that, faced with the vast challenges of our world and Church, we have so little offer. What can we say and do that will make a difference? But with God’s grace, our little will be more than enough. So let us not harden our hearts but be open to the incalculable gifts of God, who bestows upon us grace without measure if we open our hands and our ears to Him and to each other.



Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for the 59th World Day of Peace

1st January 2026

Peace be with you all:

Towards an “unarmed and disarming” peace

“Peace be with you!”

This ancient greeting, still in use today in many cultures, was infused with new life on the evening of Easter on the lips of the risen Jesus. “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19, 21) is his Word that does not merely desire peace, but truly brings about a lasting transformation in those who receive it, and consequently in all of reality. For this reason, the Apostles’ successors give voice every day throughout the world to the most silent of revolutions: “Peace be with you!” From the very evening of my election as Bishop of Rome, I have wanted to join my own greeting to this universal proclamation. And I would like to reiterate that this is the peace of the risen Christ – a peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. It comes from God who loves us all unconditionally.

The peace of the risen Christ

The Good Shepherd, who gives his life for the flock and has other sheep not of this fold (cf. Jn 10:11, 16), is Christ, our peace, who has conquered death and broken down the walls of division that separate humanity (cf. Eph 2:14). His presence, his gift and his victory continue to shine through the perseverance of many witnesses through whom God’s work carries on in the world, becoming even more visible and radiant in the darkness of our times.

The contrast between darkness and light is not only a biblical image describing the labor pains of a new world being born; it is also an experience that unsettles us and affects us amid the trials we face in our historical circumstances. In order to overcome the darkness, it is necessary to see the light and believe in it. This is a call that Jesus’ disciples are invited to live in a unique and privileged way; yet it also finds its way into every human heart. Peace exists; it wants to dwell within us. It has the gentle power to enlighten and expand our understanding; it resists and overcomes violence. Peace is a breath of the eternal: while to evil we cry out “Enough,” to peace we whisper “Forever.” Into this horizon the Risen One has led us. Sustained by this conviction, even amid what Pope Francis called “a third world war fought piecemeal,” peacemakers continue to resist the spread of darkness, standing as sentinels in the night.

Sadly, it is also possible to forget the light. When this happens, we lose our sense of realism and surrender to a partial and distorted view of the world, disfigured by darkness and fear. Many today call “realistic” those narratives devoid of hope, blind to the beauty of others and forgetful of God’s grace, which is always at work in human hearts, even though wounded by sin. Saint Augustine urged Christians to forge an unbreakable bond with peace, so that by cherishing it deeply in their hearts, they would be able to radiate its luminous warmth around them. Addressing his community, he wrote: “If you wish to draw others to peace, first have it yourselves; be steadfast in peace yourselves. To inflame others, you must have the flame burning within.”

Dear brothers and sisters, whether we have the gift of faith or feel we lack it, let us open ourselves to peace! Let us welcome it and recognize it, rather than believing it to be impossible and beyond our reach. Peace is more than just a goal; it is a presence and a journey. Even when it is endangered within us and around us, like a small flame threatened by a storm, we must protect it, never forgetting the names and stories of those who have borne witness to it. Peace is a principle that guides and defines our choices. Even in places where only rubble remains, and despair seems inevitable, we still find people who have not forgotten peace. Just as on the evening of Easter Jesus entered the place where his disciples were gathered in fear and discouragement, so too the peace of the risen Christ continues to pass through doors and barriers in the voices and faces of his witnesses. This gift enables us to remember goodness, to recognize it as victorious, to choose it again, and to do so together.

An unarmed peace

Shortly before being arrested, in a moment of intimate confidence, Jesus said to those who were with him: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” And he immediately added: “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (Jn 14:27). Their distress and fear were certainly connected to the violence soon to befall him. But, more deeply, the Gospels do not hide the fact that what troubled the disciples was his nonviolent response: a path that they all, Peter first among them, contested; yet the Master asked them to follow this path to the end. The way of Jesus continues to cause unease and fear. He firmly repeats to those who would defend him by force: “Put your sword back into its sheath” (Jn 18:11; cf. Mt 26:52). The peace of the risen Jesus is unarmed, because his was an unarmed struggle in the midst of concrete historical, political and social circumstances. Christians must together bear prophetic witness to this novelty, mindful of the tragedies in which they have too often been complicit. The great parable of the Last Judgment invites all Christians to act with mercy in this awareness (cf. Mt 25:31-46). In doing so, they will find brothers and sisters at their side who, in different ways, have listened to the pain of others and freed themselves inwardly from the deception of violence.

Although many people today have hearts ready for peace, they are often overcome by a great sense of powerlessness before an increasingly uncertain world. Saint Augustine had already pointed out this particular paradox: “It is not difficult to possess peace; it is, perhaps, more difficult to praise it. To praise peace, we may find that we lack the necessary talent; we search for the right ideas and weigh our words. But to have peace, it is there, within reach, and we can possess it without effort.”

When we treat peace as a distant ideal, we cease to be scandalized when it is denied, or even when war is waged in its name. We seem to lack those “right ideas,” the well-considered words and the ability to say that peace is near. When peace is not a reality that is lived, cultivated and protected, then aggression spreads into domestic and public life. In the relations between citizens and rulers, it could even be considered a fault not to be sufficiently prepared for war, not to react to attacks, and not to return violence for violence. Far beyond the principle of legitimate defence, such confrontational logic now dominates global politics, deepening instability and unpredictability day by day. It is no coincidence that repeated calls to increase military spending, and the choices that follow, are presented by many government leaders as a justified response to external threats. The idea of the deterrent power of military might, especially nuclear deterrence, is based on the irrationality of relations between nations, built not on law, justice and trust, but on fear and domination by force. “Consequently,” as Saint John XXIII had already written in his day, “people are living in the grip of constant fear. They are afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence. And they have good reasons for their fear, for there is certainly no lack of such weapons. While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance.”

Moreover, it should be noted that global military expenditure increased by 9.4% in 2024 compared to the previous year, confirming the trend of the last ten years and reaching a total of \$2718 billion (or 2.5% of global GDP). Furthermore, the response to new challenges seems to involve not only enormous economic investment in rearmament, but also a shift in educational policies. Rather than fostering a culture of memory that preserves the hard-won awareness of the twentieth century and the millions of victims, we now see communication campaigns and educational programs – at schools, universities and in the media – that spread a perception of threats and promote only an armed notion of defence and security.

And yet, “those who truly love peace also love the enemies of peace.” Saint Augustine thus advised not to burn bridges or persist in reproach, but to prefer listening and, where possible, engaging in discussions with others. Sixty years ago, the Second Vatican Council concluded with a renewed awareness of the pressing need for dialogue between the Church and the contemporary world. In particular, the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* drew attention to the evolution of warfare: “The hazards peculiar to modern warfare consist in the fact that they expose those possessing recently developed weapons to the risk of perpetrating crimes like these and, by an inexorable chain of events, of urging people to even worse acts of atrocity. To obviate the possibility of this happening at any time in the future, the bishops of the world gathered together to implore everyone, especially government leaders and military advisors, to give unceasing consideration to their immense responsibilities before God and before the whole human race.”

Reiterating the appeal of the Council Fathers, and considering dialogue to be the most effective approach at every level, we must acknowledge that further technological advances and the military implementation of artificial intelligence have worsened the tragedy of armed conflict. There is even a growing tendency among political and military leaders to shirk responsibility, as decisions about life and death are increasingly “delegated” to machines. This marks an unprecedented and destructive betrayal of the legal and philosophical principles of humanism that underlie and safeguard every civilization. It is necessary to denounce the enormous concentrations of private economic and financial interests that are driving States in this direction; yet that alone would not be enough, unless we also awakened conscience and critical thought. The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* presents Saint Francis of Assisi as a model of such awakening: “In the world of that time, bristling with watchtowers and defensive walls, cities were a theatre of brutal wars between powerful families, even as poverty was spreading through the countryside. Yet there Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others. He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all.” This is a narrative that we are called to continue today, and that means joining forces to contribute to a disarming peace, a peace born of openness and evangelical humility.

A disarming peace

Goodness is disarming. Perhaps this is why God became a child. The mystery of the Incarnation, which reaches its deepest descent even to the realm of the dead, begins in the womb of a young mother and is revealed in the manger in Bethlehem. “Peace on earth,” sing the angels, announcing the presence of a defenceless God, in whom humanity can discover itself as loved only by caring for him (cf. Lk 2:13-14). Nothing has the power to change us as much as a child. Perhaps it is precisely the thought of our children and of others who are equally fragile, that cuts to the heart (cf. Acts 2:37). In this regard, my venerable predecessor wrote that “human fragility has the power to make us more lucid about what endures and what passes, what brings life and what kills. Perhaps for this reason, we so often tend to deny our limitations and avoid fragile and wounded people: they have the power to question the direction we have chosen, both as individuals and as a community.”

John XXIII was the first pope to advocate “integral disarmament,” which can only be achieved through renewal of the heart and mind. In *Pacem in Terris*, he wrote: “Everyone must realize that, unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach people’s very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or—and this is the main thing—ultimately to abolish them entirely. Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from our minds. But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today’s world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust. And we are confident that this can be achieved, for it is a thing which not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good.”

An essential service that religions must render to a suffering humanity is to guard against the growing temptation to weaponize even thoughts and words. The great spiritual traditions, as well as right reason, teach us to look beyond blood ties or ethnicity, beyond associations that accept only those who are similar and reject those who are different. Today, we see that this cannot be taken for granted. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly common to drag the language of faith into political battles, to bless nationalism, and to justify violence and armed struggle in the name of religion. Believers must actively refute, above all by the witness of their lives, these forms of blasphemy that profane the holy name of God. Therefore, alongside action, it is more necessary than ever to cultivate prayer, spirituality, and

ecumenical and interreligious dialogue as paths of peace and as languages of encounter within traditions and cultures. Throughout the world, it is to be hoped that “every community become a ‘house of peace,’ where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished.” Now more than ever, we must show that peace is not a utopia by fostering attentive and life-giving pastoral creativity.

At the same time, this should in no way detract from the importance of the political dimension. Those entrusted with the highest public responsibility must “give serious thought to the problem of achieving more humane relations between States throughout the world. This adjustment must be based on mutual trust, sincerity in negotiations and the faithful fulfilment of obligations. Every aspect of the problem must be examined, so that, eventually, a point of agreement may emerge from which sincere, lasting, and beneficial treaties can be initiated.” This is the disarming path of diplomacy, mediation and international law, which is sadly too often undermined by the growing violations of hard-won treaties, at a time when what is needed is the strengthening of supranational institutions, not their delegitimization.

In today’s world, justice and human dignity are at an alarming risk amid global power imbalances. How can we live in this time of destabilization and conflict, and free ourselves from evil? We need to encourage and support every spiritual, cultural and political initiative that keeps hope alive, countering the spread of “fatalistic terms, as if the dynamics involved were the product of anonymous impersonal forces or structures independent of the human will.” For, as has been suggested, “the best way to dominate and gain control over people is to spread despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending certain values.” Against this strategy, we must promote self-awareness in civil societies, forms of responsible association, experiences of nonviolent participation, and practices of restorative justice on both a small and large scale. Leo XIII had already made this clear in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*: “The consciousness of his own weakness urges the human person to call in aid from without. We read in Scripture: ‘Two are better than one, for they have the advantage of their society. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up’ (Eccles 4:9-10). And further: ‘A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city’ (Prov 18:19).”

May this be one of the fruits of the Jubilee of Hope, which has moved millions of people to rediscover themselves as pilgrims and to begin within themselves that disarmament of heart, mind and life. God will surely respond to this by fulfilling his promises: “He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Is 2, 4-5).

From the Vatican

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