



## A WORD FROM THE CARDINAL

My dear Friends,



It is indeed a privilege being asked to address a Christmas message to you at this time - and, for me, a joy to be able to use the themes suggested by this year's Christmas stamps.

As you may remember, in recent years there has been some controversy over those themes chosen by the Royal Mail for their Christmas stamps. I have had occasion to comment publicly and unfavourably on some of their choices. This year, however, in accordance with a recent convention of alternating secular and religious themes, religion and the Gospel story of the Nativity is very much to the fore. Perhaps we could ensure that our purchase of Christmas stamps takes place every two years - if we wish to continue to use stamps with a religious theme!

We might say that the 2011 Christmas stamps are exceptional, not simply in concept - they adopt the Nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke's Gospels - but in design, they are beautifully engaging and colourful renditions of that incredible, wonderful story of the birth of Jesus Christ, God made man. This series of stamps tell that story and I believe it is one which our society needs to hear today more than ever before.

For me the stamps which we will use more frequently over the next few weeks, the 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamp and the 1<sup>st</sup> class stamp, give us the basic facts of just what happened at the first Christmas. Those basic facts are contained in the two quotations from St Matthew's Gospel, which remind us that Mary will give birth to a son who must be named Jesus; and that this miraculous birth fulfils the prophesy in the Old Testament that a son will be born called Immanuel, a name which means 'God is with us'.

As we think of these words, we realise something of the love of God for his people in giving them his son - and we realise the wonder of that message that son is God and was and is still with us. And perhaps, like Mary, we can ponder further, and hopefully can thank God for our own family lives, and perhaps for the gift of children. Hopefully, every child who is born is at the heart of a loving home - and if there is anything we can do to ensure that continues in our own family circle, we must, of course, try to do so. A further cause for thought might be the news recently released that the population of our world has reached 7 billion. I wonder if each and every life is valued as it should be?

The other three stamps continue the Christmas message, with further quotations from St Matthew's Gospel and St Luke's Gospel.

We are reminded of the birth of the baby and the child being laid in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. We can think again of the message of his birth being brought to shepherds watching their flocks and told to rejoice at this news. And then there is recounted the story of the wise men being led by a star to the place of the birth and of their rejoicing 'with exceeding great joy'.

We can also apply this account to our own lives as best we can.

In the midst of our plenty, when we are told from a recent survey that the cost of having a child is now over £100,000 in its early years - think of the lack of any expensive trappings in that birth in a stable, but realise that that child was surrounded by what is most important in the life of any person, namely love.

The message of the birth brought to the shepherds we are told was a message of 'good tidings of great joy'; and similarly, the kings when they saw the star, 'rejoiced with exceeding great joy'. Shepherds and kings, the poor and the rich, the deprived and the mighty - altogether must realise this Christmas message of the love of God for mankind and of the response that should be given by each and every individual person in their own lives to that call of love from God.

Yes - at this Christmas time, these words should give us encouragement to carry that message of love from the Nativity scene into our communities, our churches and our homes. God has indeed shown his love for us and given his Son, Jesus, as God-with-us. Our response must surely be one of love, especially at this time - love of God, love of our neighbour, love of those who are in most need at home and throughout our world.

Last Christmas Pope Benedict XVI indicated: "What the celebration of Christmas proposes to us, besides examples to imitate, such as the Lord's humility and poverty or his benevolence and love for human beings, is to let ourselves be totally transformed by the One who took on our flesh".

May God indeed bless you and all of your families and friends at this time.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+ Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien  
Archbishop of St. Andrews & Edinburgh

## Ecumenism

### Ecumenical Service of Prayer & Worship, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2012 at 7.30pm

The annual Ecumenical Service of Prayer and Worship organised and hosted by the Archdiocesan Ecumenical Commission, to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, will be held in St. Margaret's Chapel at the Gillis Centre on Wednesday evening, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 7.30pm.



Each year the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity in Rome and the World Council of Churches, who together have ultimate responsibility for the Church Unity Octave, invite a national Church to choose a theme and prepare worship materials for the week. For 2012 the Christian Church in Poland, Catholic, Orthodox, Old Catholic and Protestant working with the Polish Episcopate and the Polish Ecumenical Council chose a theme based on 1 Cor. 15: 51-58 "***We will all be changed by the Victory of our Lord, Jesus Christ.***" Further information from Paddy Ferry - Tel. 0131 554 8216

### 2000 Years of Christianity, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 7.30pm

Murrayfield Churches Together (MCT): Discussion group continues on Melvynn Bragg's 2000 years of Christianity at the United Reformed Church, Saughtonhall Drive at 7.30pm. All welcome.

## Religious Education

### Archdiocesan Launch: 'This is Our Faith' the National Syllabus for Religious Education Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 3.30pm



The Archdiocesan launch of 'This is Our Faith' will take place at the Gillis Centre, Edinburgh on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 3.30pm. Formal invitations have been sent out this week and each school community will be represented. A joyful celebration is anticipated.



# Adult Faith Formation



## Theology for Catechists Dates for 2012

In the New Year there will be an opportunity for catechists and teachers to continue to reflect on the theological themes in 'This is Our Faith' in all four deaneries. You can take part in these workshops even if you have not participated in the previous five. Those who have completed all 8 workshops will receive the 'Archdiocesan Certificate in Theology for Catechists' in May 2012.

<b>St. Mary's Deanery</b>	St. Peters, Livingston	Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2012	7pm – 9pm	Mystery of God
	St. Peters, Livingston	Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	7pm – 9pm	Revealed Truth of God
	St. Andrews, Livingston	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2012	7pm – 9pm	In the Image of God

<b>St. Ninian &amp; St. Mungo's Deanery</b>	St. Francis Xaviers, Falkirk	Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2012	7pm – 9pm	Mystery of God
	St. Francis Xaviers, Falkirk	Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	7pm – 9pm	Revealed Truth of God
	St. Francis Xaviers, Falkirk	Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2012	7pm – 9pm	In the Image of God

<b>St. Giles Deanery</b>	Gillis Centre, Edinburgh	Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2012	7pm – 9pm	Mystery of God
	Gillis Centre, Edinburgh	Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	7pm – 9pm	Revealed Truth of God
	Gillis Centre, Edinburgh	Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2012	7pm – 9pm	In the Image of God

<b>St. David's Deanery</b>	St. Gabriel's, Prestonpans	Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2012	7.30pm – 9.30pm	Mystery of God
	St. Gabriel's, Prestonpans	Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	7.30pm – 9.30pm	Revealed Truth of God
	St. Gabriel's, Prestonpans	Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2012	7.30pm – 9.30pm	In the Image of God

To register for any of the above please contact [yvonne.fleming@staned.org.uk](mailto:yvonne.fleming@staned.org.uk) or call 0141 623 8903.



Patricia and all the agency staff wish you all a very joyful  
Christmas.

## Youth Ministry



# EXPO

**EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION for and with Young People**



This will take place monthly, normally the third Sunday of the month, at a different Parish/Deanery and all young people from the Archdiocese are invited and encouraged to take part. The hour of prayer, Scripture, reflection, silence and music in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament will follow the celebration of the Eucharistic.

The first **EXPO** will be at **Our Lady of Lourdes, Dunfermline on Sunday, 22nd January, with Mass at 5.00pm, followed by the Hour of Adoration.** There will be refreshments and a chance to spend time together in the Hall afterwards. The next venue will be **St Patrick's Church, Edinburgh on Sunday, 19th February following Mass at 4.30pm.**

**Come along and benefit from this special time and devotion especially if you have not experienced it before.**

## Justice & Peace

### Special Altar Cloths & Altar Linen



The Franciscan Sisters have set up a tailoring school to rescue young women from enforced prostitution. The funds raised from selling beautiful altar cloths and linen also help to build an HIV & Aids clinic in Kathipundi, Andhra Pradesh, India. Our own Fr. Jeremy Bath has been to see the school and brought back the altar cloths which he says are made from beautiful Indian cotton and well made. A new altar cloth can typically cost £160.00, buying one from the girls at the school ask simply for a worthy donation.

To order e-mail: [assisipbawan@yahoo.com](mailto:assisipbawan@yahoo.com) the coordinator is Sr. Raephele Kondody. Cheques should be made payable and posted to: Sister Raephele Kondody, Assisi Prasanthi Bhawan, (Via) Chebroli, Kathipudi (PO), East Godavari (Dist), Andhra Pradesh, 533449, India.

## Marriage and Family Life

### Teacher Training for Billings Ovulation Method Schoenstatt Centre, Lennoxton April 26<sup>th</sup> - April 29<sup>th</sup> 2012



Fertility Care Scotland is running a four day training course to train teachers in the Billings Ovulation Method. The course is open to residential and non-residential members and trainees, however, please note that there are evening sessions included.

This is a unique opportunity for new trainees, including health professionals, who wish to become Billings Ovulation Method™ Teachers, and for those existing teachers to update their knowledge in the light of the most recent scientific and practical findings in the field of Natural Fertility Regulation.

Accreditation/Re-Accreditation will depend on full attendance of the entire course and successful completion of a written questionnaire and an oral examination at the end of the course. Full accreditation for new trainees also involves further mentoring at one of our centers under supervision for 6 months. Accreditation is required to be renewed every 3 years. Funding may be available.

To apply or for further information contact Lucille McQuade on 0141 221 0858 or e-mail [info@fertilitycare.org.uk](mailto:info@fertilitycare.org.uk)

Would your parish, cluster or deanery like to establish or give support to their existing ministry to engaged couples, married couples and families? Please contact [sally.mcelroy@staned.org.uk](mailto:sally.mcelroy@staned.org.uk) (0131 623 8919) who can offer a number of resources/support in this area.

## Around the Diocese.....



### Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2012

The 2012 Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place from 6 to 12 July 2012 lead by Cardinal O'Brien. Costs are likely to be around £750. Details from Access travel, 6 The Hillock, Astley, Manchester M29 7GW, ([www.access-travel.co.uk](http://www.access-travel.co.uk)). Enquiries about sick pilgrimage to St Frai to the Booking Secretary, 61 Hailes Gardens, Edinburgh, EH13 0JN, 0131 441 1939.



## Next Issue.....

If you have any items about pastoral events in the Archdiocese and would like them in the next e-bulletin please send them by email to [yvonne.fleming@staned.org.uk](mailto:yvonne.fleming@staned.org.uk) by **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012**.



Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/EdinburghRCdiocese](http://www.facebook.com/EdinburghRCdiocese)  
Did you know that each week we highlight a 'Priest to Pray For' on our Facebook page, you don't need a facebook account to view the above link, just click.