



Catholic Families for Life NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 9 DECEMBER 2025



Welcome Message by Bishop John Keenan

President of National Commission for Marriage, Family and Life

I am happy to report that our Scottish Catholic Marriage, Family and Life Commission is moving forward apace. Firstly, I want to introduce our new Director, Dr Emma McGowan, a young wife and mother with experience of raising a Catholic family. Professionally, Emma has a background in genetic science where she gained a doctorate. Her studies in Theology have included Pope St. John Paul II's anthropology, and she is currently completing a doctorate that looks at the relationship between faith and science. Living in St. Andrew's and Edinburgh, she assists their Catechetical Diploma

with talks on marriage to lay people and seminarians to help communicate the Church's vision for marriage and family life, while also lecturing at St. Mary's University Twickenham in Christian Spirituality and Biblical Studies.

The other good news is about our first National Family Conference in Motherwell which attracted families from just about every diocese in Scotland. We hope that families will now be able to meet physically at diocesan events to support each other to rebuild our Scottish Catholic homes as domestic churches, where the Holy Family of Nazareth is the living heart and centre.

Please keep our Commission in your prayers.

John Keenan

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And thanks...

As we look forward to welcoming Emma to her new role, we want to thank June Clunie, our founding Director, for her wonderful work in getting the Office up and running and building up our apostolate with dioceses in their marriage preparation, family ministries and the promotion of the sanctity of life, especially at the beginning and end of life.

The Bishops' Conference

"Wishing you and your family a Blessed and Holy Christmas" +John



‘Rebuild the Domestic Church’ - Scotland’s First National Family Conference

On Saturday, 25th October, Catholic families from across Scotland came together at St Bride’s Hall in Motherwell for the first Scottish National Family Conference, themed “Our Home: A Holy Place”.

Participants shared that the day exceeded their expectations, offering inspiration, fellowship, and a renewed sense of mission for family life. Talks by Chris Stefanick and Angela & John Deighan provided practical encouragement for strengthening faith within the home.

A highlight of the event was the sense of fellowship — meeting other Catholic families from across dioceses and discovering a shared desire to live out the Gospel more fully in their homes and parishes.

The day concluded with Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop John Keenan, sending families forth, encouraged to rebuild their domestic churches with love, prayer, and faith - beginning in their own homes and radiating outward to their parishes and beyond.

*“Renewed
sense of
mission for
family life”*



Hope & Hunger – Fr. Joseph Lappin

As a priest and as Director of the Marriage and Family Life Office in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, I felt a sense of both hope and hunger. To encounter families who are intentional in living the faith in the home, the domestic Church, filled me with hope for the future: young couples raising their young families with a love for the Lord and an active membership of the Church was a thing of beauty to see and can only bode well for the future.

The challenge to me was the hunger I felt from couples for a strong support structure for them. Many feel alone and isolated, needing a space to meet like-minded families and the opportunity for their children to form friendships with other young Catholics. By the grace of God, the conference will inspire Catholic families to come together to create the supports they need, and to challenge their parishes and dioceses to work with them to help them live a faith-filled marriage and family life.

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill



The Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has dismissed several proposed safeguards, including limiting eligibility to those with six months or less to live, excluding cases driven by intellectual disability or eating disorders, and ensuring decisions are not influenced by poverty or inadequate housing.

The committee also voted against permitting hospices and care homes to opt out of facilitating assisted suicide, raising concerns about freedom of conscience and the viability of faith-based institutions. **The failure to include**

an institutional opt-out on the face of the Bill could have devastating consequences for Catholic hospices and care homes, which may lose vital funding or be forced to shut down completely.

In an alarming and dishonest move, MSPs decided that death certificates should list the underlying illness rather than the administration of lethal drugs as the cause of death in cases of assisted suicide. Read more here: <https://rcpolitics.org/doctors-to-be-allowed-to-initiate-assisted-suicide-discussions-with-patients-under-proposed-new-law/>

PLEASE USE Care Not Killing's convenient online tool to write to your MSPs and update them on these deeply troubling developments - <https://carenotkilling.scot/>

Controversial Report Calls for Decriminalisation of Abortion Up to Birth in Scotland

A Scottish Government advisory group on abortion has recommended sweeping changes to abortion legislation.

The advisory group has courted controversy since its establishment in 2024, after it was discovered that it was to be chaired by a former trustee of the UK's largest abortion provider, BPAS, and not even one of its 13-strong membership was pro-life or represented a pro-life organisation, which the Bishops' Conference of Scotland described as "unjust and undemocratic".

The group has made radical recommendations to the Scottish Government which would effectively permit abortion up to birth for any reason and would see the removal of the current requirement for two doctors to sign off on abortions up to 24 weeks.

READ THE REPORT: gov.scot

"Sweeping changes to abortion legislation"

International Conferences

The National Office for Marriage, Family and Life was represented recently at two international conferences in Rome.

The Second International Congress on the Pastoral Care of the Elderly highlighted several initiatives that could be explored to support elderly people and their families within our parish communities.

The meeting of the CCEE Commission for Family & Life emphasised the need to support parents in bringing Christian values to their children and to secular society.





Building a Stronger Relationship: The Gottman Method

Are you seeking a path to a healthier, happier Christ-centred partnership? The Gottman Method offers a structured approach to couples counselling. Refined by over four decades of scientific research, Drs. John and Julie Gottman have integrated their findings with principles of faith and commitment.

The method is grounded in the Sound Relationship House theory, which provides a framework for relational success, much like building your home on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Resting firmly on the cornerstones of Trust and Commitment, it outlines nine key components for a healthy relationship, starting with small steps like “Building Love Maps” (knowing your partners inner world) and “Turning towards instead of turning away”.

A major focus is on replacing destructive habits—known as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling)—with positive communication skills. The method teaches couples how to manage conflict constructively, find compromise, and make successful “repair attempts” to de-escalate as well as understand disagreements.

Ultimately, the Gottman Method aims to disarm conflict, increase intimacy, and help couples create Shared Meaning and achieve their Life Dreams together, leading to a profound and lasting connection.

For more information about Marriage Counselling visit: <https://marriagefamilyandlife.org.uk/marriage-counselling/>

• Upcoming Events •



THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SCOTLAND

World Day for Marriage 2026

Sunday 8th February

FOR ALL MARRIED COUPLES:
May they strive daily to faithfully and lovingly live out their marriage promises,
bearing witness to the love God has for each of us.

FOR ALL THOSE DISCERNING A VOCATION TO MARRIAGE:
May they recognise the Holy Spirit working in their hearts and respond generously to the call of God.



ADVENT ROSARY FOR LIFE



Monday 1, 8, 15 & 22nd December

Please join us every Monday in Advent
at 7:45pm to pray for unborn children,
their mothers, and all pro-life intentions.

Each session is on Zoom and lasts about 30 minutes.

Following the Rosary there is a short reflection from a guest speaker.

Register at bit.ly/rosary25

FESTIVE • FUN • EDUCATIONAL

ST. NICHOLAS IS COMING TO TOWN

Saturday 6th December

St. John's Hall, Barrhead G78 2RW
3.00 - 4.30pm



ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

A Diocesan Gathering for Families

Organised by the Marriage, Family & Life Commission and Catholic Mothers (Barrhead Group)

Stories / Kids Crafts & Activities / Talk for Parents / Tea, Coffee & Cake / Special Visitor!

To Register : There is no fee but donations are appreciated!

Please register by 1st December at <https://rcdop.org.uk/st-nicholas-celebration>

A special collection of toys and money for children will be sent to Ukraine via the Ukrainian Catholic community in Glasgow. Feel free to bring your old toys in good condition!



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