

**PARISHES OF SAINT MARY'S AND OUR LADY'S  
CUMBRAE, FAIRLIE, LARGS & SKELMORLIE**



**TEN REASONS TO HOPE AND TO STIR HOPE  
IN THE WORLD TODAY**

**As given by Pope Francis in the document  
“Hope does not disappoint” (*Spes non confundit*)  
with which he convoked the Jubilee Year of 2025**

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**REASON NUMBER TEN:**

**“THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA SOUGHT TO PRESERVE THE  
CHURCH’S UNITY, SERIOUSLY THREATENED BY THE  
DENIAL OF THE FULL DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.”**

**For your prayer, reflection and action  
throughout December 2025**

THE WORDS OF POPE FRANCIS, RIP

‘[In 2025 we mark] the 1700th anniversary of the celebration of the first great Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea ... Some three hundred bishops took part ... After various debates, by the grace of the Spirit they unanimously approved the Creed that we still recite each Sunday at the celebration of the Eucharist. The Council Fathers chose to begin that Creed by using for the first time the expression “We believe”, as a sign that all the Churches were in communion and that all Christians professed

the same faith. The Council of Nicaea was a milestone in the Church's history. The celebration of its anniversary invites Christians to join in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity and in particular to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "consubstantial with the Father", who revealed to us that mystery of love. At the same time, Nicaea represents a summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of finding ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).' (*Spes Non Confundit*, par.17).

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## REFLECTING ON THE POPE'S WORDS

The Council of Nicaea itself (325 AD) was a singular sign of hope as the Church emerged from the catacombs in the early decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It showed that the Holy Spirit, true to Christ's promise, was keeping the Church faithful to the truth despite the plausible attempts of heresy to lead Her into error. Other Councils throughout the course of the past two millennia have done the same. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) rejected the heresy that Christ had only a divine nature. The third Council of Constantinople rejected the heresy that Christ had only a divine will, and not also a human one. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) rejected numerous doctrinal errors of the reformers like Martin Luther. The Holy Spirit who led the Church through all these crises, keeping Her faithful to the truth, is still alive and at work in the Church today.

The division among Christians is not only a scandal. In terms of sheer logic, it is also a nonsense for there is only one Christ and therefore there can be only one Church founded by Him. Indeed, from His perspective our divisions, whoever caused them, are the result of sin, especially of pride. Error, heresy and division emerge from the darkness of the human heart and mind. To dispel that darkness only the Light of the Spirit is capable. He purifies pride, He corrects error, He reconciles the divisions. The Spirit who guided those historic Councils to the truth will, in God's time, lead all believers in Christ to form once again one Body and one Spirit in Christ. Pray for the Spirit to come: that's the engine and hope of Christian Unity!

## THE WORD OF GOD ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

John 17:20-21: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.”

1 Corinthians 12:12-14: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.”

Ephesians 4:3-6: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

## SAINTS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Saint Josaphat (1580-1623): As a bishop in the 17th century, he is the most prominent patron saint of Christian unity. His work to restore communion between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches led to his martyrdom in 1623. His mission was not uniformity, but unity in faith while preserving diverse traditions.

Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) and Pope John Paul II (1920-2005): Both popes are recognized for their significant efforts in overcoming estrangement and division among Christians. John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, which promoted ecumenical dialogue.

Blessed Maria Gabriella Sagheddu (1914-1939): A 20th-century Cistercian nun, she is remembered for her intense prayer and sacrifice for the unity of Christians. She died in 1939 and is seen as a modern-day saint for this cause.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200 AD): He is also called the "Doctor of Unity," but is a more distant historical figure compared to the others, known for his defence of Christian unity in the early centuries of the Church.

## FROM THE ENCYCLICAL OF POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II ON UNITY

“The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of Churches and Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigour to the Vatican II's call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the Kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.

Christ calls all his disciples to unity. My earnest desire is to renew this call today, to propose it once more with determination ... I stated that believers in Christ, united in following in the footsteps of the martyrs, cannot remain divided. If they wish truly and effectively to oppose the world's tendency to reduce to powerlessness the Mystery of Redemption, they must profess together the same truth about the Cross. The Cross! An anti-Christian outlook seeks to minimize the Cross, to empty it of its meaning, and to deny that in it man has the source of his new life. It claims that the Cross is unable to provide either vision or hope. Man, it says, is nothing but an earthly being, who must live as if God did not exist.

No one is unaware of the challenge which all this poses to believers. They cannot fail to meet this challenge. Indeed, how could they refuse to do everything possible, with God's help, to break down the walls of division and distrust, to overcome obstacles and prejudices which thwart the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation in the Cross of Jesus, the one Redeemer of man, of every individual? (“*Ut Unum Sint*”, from nn.1-2).

### LET US PRAY

Lord Jesus, may your prayer to the Father on the night before you died, that “we might be one”, come to fruition urgently and expansively in our own time. Pour forth once more in abundance upon all Christians the Holy Spirit who is in Person the very Unity of the Father and the Son. Instil Him in our minds and hearts to seek the ways of reconciliation and mutual love by which He will lead us once more to become one Body, one Spirit in You. Restore the beauty and grace of Your own glory upon the face of Your Church so that the world will see and believe in You. Amen.