

St. John Paul II, in his Letter to Families, beautifully wrote: "The Holy Family is the beginning of countless other holy families."

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—a feast that reminds us that God Himself chose to enter the human condition not in isolation, not as a solitary sage or ruler, but within the embrace of a family. In Nazareth, holiness was lived not through grand gestures but through the quiet fidelity of daily love. The Holy Family stands as the model and mirror for all Christian families, calling us to live the Catholic life not in abstraction, but in the ordinary rhythms of home.

Scripture tells us little about St. Joseph, but what it does say is powerful: he was a "just man." To be just in the biblical sense means more than being fair or law-abiding — it means to live in right relationship with God. Joseph was a man of faith, integrity, and deep obedience. His justice was expressed not in words, but in deeds — quiet, steadfast, protective love.

In today's Gospel, we hear how Joseph protects his family from Herod's wrath, taking Mary and the child Jesus and fleeing into Egypt. It was a journey marked by fear, uncertainty, and hardship. Yet Joseph obeyed the angel's message without hesitation. He did not know the destination, but he trusted in divine providence. His courage teaches us that authentic fatherhood and leadership are rooted not in control, but in faith.

Our readings today remind us of the dignity and sacredness of the family unit. The family is the "domestic Church," as the Second Vatican Council tells us—a place where faith is taught, virtue is formed, and love is learned.

Today, families come in many shapes and circumstances. Yet every family, whatever its composition, is called to be a school of love, protection, and forgiveness. Like a mother bird shielding her young, the family must be a refuge that nurtures life until it is ready to soar.

Each member has a role. St. Paul's words — often misunderstood — invite us to mutual love and reverence: "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and avoid any bitterness toward them." This is not about domination but about imitation — imitating Christ who loved the Church and gave His life for her. True love, as St. John Paul II taught, is self-gift. Husbands and wives sanctify each other by giving themselves completely, by building one another up in faith, patience, and tenderness.

The Ten Commandments instruct us to "honour your father and mother." This commandment extends across the whole span of life. As children, we depend upon our parents' love and guidance. As adults, we are called to care for them with that same tenderness when age or illness weakens them. Life is cyclical. The hands that once held us up in infancy will one day need our hands to steady them. Sirach reminds us today: "My son, take care of your father when he is old . . . even if his mind fail, be considerate of him." Such love reflects the love of Christ, who on the Cross entrusted His Mother to the care of His beloved disciple. To honour our parents is not merely a duty — it is an act of gratitude that keeps the commandment of love alive across generations. The Holy Family of Nazareth offers us more than a portrait—it offers us a path. To live like them is to live in simplicity, fidelity, and joy. To support, protect, and serve one another. To love without counting the cost.

If we let their example shape our homes — if fathers love like Joseph, if mothers nurture like Mary, if children grow in obedience and grace like Jesus — then our own families become holy ground. They become small Nazareths, hidden yet radiant with divine love.

Can we imagine what the world would be like if every home reflected even a fraction of the holiness of Nazareth? A world where every family was a place of prayer, forgiveness, and faith—a world where love was learned first at the dinner table and carried into the public square.

That is our calling. That is our hope.



St. Stephen's R C Church

8 Bank Street, Blairgowrie Ph10 6DE, 872171

& St. Luan's Alyth.

Solemnity of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph 28/12/25

Parish website: <https://www.st-stephens-blairgowrie.org.uk/>

E-mail: ststephen@dunkelddiocese.org.uk

Scottish Charity No: SC001810



Warm welcome to all our parishioners and visitors.

Whether you are visiting our parish or just moved into the area, please feel very welcome ... thanks.

***Our Vision:** To be a welcoming and participating Catholic community on a journey, striving to be led by the Spirit, strengthened by a bond of love and unity, guided by the gospel message of Christ, refreshed and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharistic table. Enriched by a vibrant people of God from diverse backgrounds and supported by many gifts employed in various ministries and stewardships, we journey together hand-in-hand through life as a community.*

Parish diary: 28th /12/25

Sunday: Mass of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph – Feast - 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan's Alyth.

-11.00am: Holy mass at St. Steph's.
Monday - 10.30am/1.30pm Masses and Ministry of Care all day in Prisons.

Tues— Tuesday—10.00am Holy mass at St. Stephens.

Sunday: 1st Feb 2026

-9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan's Alyth.

-11.00am: Holy mass at St. Steph's.

In Christ, the marvellous exchange that brings our redemption is revealed this day in all its splendour.

When your eternal Word assumes human frailty, our mortal nature takes on immortal value.

More wonderfully still, this union between God and ourselves makes us sharers in eternal life.

-Other Participatory Programmes of the Parish from the New Year

-Family Rosary and adoration. Every Wednesday 6.00pm-7.00pm. Mass for the sick every Wednesday 7.00pm-7.30pm.

-Sac. of Reconciliation: 5.00pm every Sat and 9am every Sun. **-Divine Mercy Devotion.** Tuesdays after morning mass.

-Please join us. Mass with St. Stephen's Pri. Sch: 1st Fri. of the month; end of terms and core events masses.

Journeying together in Faith Group – Come and learn the faith we celebrate! Session. Every fortnight. Next Session starts in Feb. 2026

Don Bosco Group: with activities tailored to children and young people and open to everyone in the community. 6-7:15pm. Hall. Next session, 16th January 2026.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad

"The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (CCC, No. 44).

This Week's Message in a Glance...

The Holy Family is the focus on the first Sunday after Christmas, so we honour Jesus, Mary and Joseph today. We worship God who shared the life of the human family, and thank God for all the gifts we continue to receive in each other.

Kindly remember also those on our prayer list: Michael Rolls, Neil McDowall, Pam McKenna, Mary and George Flockhart, Snooky Marshall, Maud McGinn, Cipriano and Carmelita, Tom O'Malley, Giles Umunna and Tony Donnan, Lisa Robertson, Philip Lafferty, Philip Jackson, Morag McInness, James Jeffrey.

Introduction to the Scripture Readings: Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6, 12-14 — Those who look after their elderly or frail parents will be rewarded.

Colossians 3:12-21* — Family life works when people live in harmony. (*Last paragraph may be omitted — verses 18-21.)

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23 — Describes the early family life of Jesus, from his exile in Egypt to his childhood in Nazareth.

In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.



ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH PASTORAL TEAM

Parish Priest/Prison Chaplain: Fr. Gregory E. Umunna Ph.D.

Phone: 01250872171. **Email:** ststephen@dunkelddiocese.org.uk

Address: 8, Bank Street, Blairgowrie, PH10 6DE.

Hall Reservations: Contact no: 01250872171.

Hospital Chaplains: Please call: N/wells Direct line: 07821624124,

Hospital Pager 01382660111; **P.R.I.:** 01738259371. *Pls let the priest know if you are on a long stay at the hospital and would like a visit.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals: Please make appointment with Priest before any arrangements are made.

Diocese of Dunkeld Scottish Charity No:SC00810

Parish Ministries, Volunteers and Contact Persons:

H/T: St. Stephen's P. S: Lindsey Smith. Ph: 871950.

Catechist: Mrs. Gail McIntyre.

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator: Mrs Maureen Jackson 07952376985; Email: ststephenpsc@dunkelddiocese.org.uk

Parish Webmaster: Mr. Irek Kawalinski. irekkowalinski@gmail.com

Music Directors: Mr. Tom Buckham and Mrs. Gail McIntyre. (Blair) The Donnelly Family (Alyth)

Responsible Person for Eucharistic Ministers: Mrs Maureen Jackson.

Responsible Person for Children's Liturgy: Mrs Mary Wojtowicz

Responsible Person for Lectors: Mr. Anthony Jervis (Alyth) Mrs Maureen Jackson.

Responsible Group for Parish Social Justice Issues: SVP

Responsible Person for Church Flowers: Jean Scott (Blair), Mrs Elma Sharp (Alyth)

Resp. Person: Altar Servers: Mr Rolly Colanese

Grounds Flowers: Mrs Jennifer FitzPatrick (Blair)

Responsible Person for St. Luan's RC Church, Alyth: Daria McDowall: dariam@gmx.com

Adviser on Finance: Mr. Mike Coyle

Adviser on Fabric: Mr. Jim Graham

A team of vibrant Welcomers in St. Luan's and St. Stephen's

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week.

Email: peacegreg2002@yahoo.com Phone: 01250 872171

Information on Annual Leave: I wish to inform all our parishioners that I hope to be away from the parish for my annual leave from Wednesday the 31st of December to Saturday the 31st of January 2026. During this period, I will be able to stay close to my siblings and manage some rest away from parish settings. Please give our usual warm welcome to **Fr. Elias or any of the Redemptorist Fathers in Kinnoull. 07378648048/ 01738624075** who has gladly accepted to cover the Sunday masses which will be limited to 9.30am in St. Luan's Alyth and 11.00am in St. Stephen's Blairgowrie. In the case of an emergency, he could be contacted.

As we successfully arrive to the end of 2025, I give thanks to the almighty God in "in whom we live and move and have our being" and offer my deepest appreciations to all our parishioners - children, young and not so young—for all your unflinching support to the parish throughout 2025. Because of your faith, your support and participation, our parish family is alive, flourishing, stable and focused.

As a parish community, 2025 was significantly spiritually and pastorally nourishing as we anchored on Pope Francis' **Jubilee Year of Hope** and celebrated the various aspect of society in their efforts to offer hope. We started the **Journeying together in Faith Group** as we gather every fortnight and learn about the faith we celebrate! We also started the **Don Bosco Group** to provide a safe space for children and young people of the parish to learn and grow together. We sustained our usual **Wednesday exposition of the Blessed sacrament and adoration**, regular weekly **mass for the sick, confessions, sick calls, visit to the house bounds, infant baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmations, regular Sunday and weekday masses in St. Stephen's and St. Luan's and befitting funeral services to our beloved dead parishioners.** This year we **completed the resurfacing of the grounds/parking spaces in St. Stephen's** and continued to make sure that the **presbytery** and our two lovely **churches** are structurally sound and well looked after. Our vibrant **altar servers** are remaining strong and engaging us with their faith not only on the **altar** but also with **regular concerts.** In view of our proposed joint celebration of our **"300 years of Catholicism"** (St. Stephens 175th & St. Luans 125th) we have set up committees which have met 3x to stir the programmes successfully and plans are ongoing. In 2025 **prison care and apostolate** was added to my tasks. We have had two **visits from Bishop Andrew McKenzie** and visits of **missionary priests on mission.**

May 2026 usher in for us all, a blessed, healthier, happier and more prosperous individual and parish family lives. I commend our whole parish and my journey to the powerful intercessions of the Blessed Virgin Mary the mediatrix of all graces and to your prayerful support. With all my love. **-Fr. Gregory**

Opening Prayer

Loving God, guardian of our homes, when you entrusted your Son to the care of Mary and Joseph, you did not spare them the pains that touch the life of every family. Teach us to rely on your word, that in our trials as in our joys we may be clothed in gentleness and patience and united in love. Make us ever-thankful for the blessings you give us through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light. God for ever and ever.

Food 4 Thought: These challenging and most difficult Times Require us to LEND A HELPING HAND. Please let us know if you would like somebody to talk to at this difficult time. "Service is our work too; it makes our talents bear fruit and it gives meaning to our lives. Those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life. We must repeat this, and repeat it often: those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life. We should reflect on this: those who do not live to serve, serve for little in this life." —Pope Francis

Today's and Up Coming Events:

- 28th Dec: Building maintenance Fund; 11th January: Justice & Peace Collection; 25th January: Building maintenance Fund; Feb. 15th: Ecclesiastical Students Fund; 1st March: Building maintenance Fund. 15th March: SCIAF Sunday; 29th March: Building maintenance Fund. Feb. 18th 2026. Ash Wednesday; 5th April 2026 Easter; 31st May 2026: Confirmation; 7th June 2026 First Holy Communion; 25th/26th June Joint Anniversary Celebrations for St. Luan's and St. Stephen's "300 years of Catholicism."
- **Join Justice & Peace Scotland** to call for "Dignity Not Detention" and advocate for an end to the inhumane practice of unlimited immigration detention. The UK is the only country in Europe that does not have a statutory time limit on detention, meaning people can be held in prison-like conditions indefinitely with no idea when they will be released. We do so mindful of Pope Leo XIV's recent reaffirmation that we will be judged by how we treat the stranger.
- **Don Bosco Group:** The Parish is beginning a programme, Don Bosco Group with activities tailored to children and young people and open to everyone in the community. The aim is to meet every other Friday from 6-7:15pm. St. Stephen's Hall. Next session, 16th January. Basic idea: This project seeks to engage young people with meaningful activities. We Learn skills, Perform tasks, Gain confidence, Grow together and Pray together. In November we can start preparing a quiz/play for a parish Christmas social night. Contact person: Esther Brown sdjbya@gmail.com.
- Children's Liturgy: I want to thank Mary Wojtowicz and her team of Liturgists for the wonderful work they do for us and I encourage the parents to please
- **Altar Servers/Children/Young parishioners Christmas Party:** 22nd December 2025, 6.00pm, Parish Hall. Lots of gifts, music, dance, games, snacks and fun.
- **Religious articles Stalls:** The repository is packed for your early shopping for Christmas cards, gift items and other religious items. Please visit stall and enjoy chopping at subsidised prices.
- Mill Hill Missionaries will be preaching mission here in St. Stephen's parish in the weekend of 19th of April 2026. Please welcome them.

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week.

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The Eucharist:

As food, do I feel nourished after holy communion? Do I feel a sense of being blessed and graced at the end of each Mass?

As Sacrifice, what have I offered as part of the sacrifice?

As communion, Has the Mass strengthened my identity as a member of this worshipping community?

As thanksgiving, do I give thanks always.



Adoration in St. Stephen's, every Wed. 6.00pm-7.00pm
To resume from February 2026. "The Eucharist is that love which surpasses all loves in Heaven and on earth." - St. Bernard.
Please feel free to join us for adoration.

St. Stephen's Parish Library:

Selection of Books on:
Spirituality/Prayer

Lives of Saints/Martyr

Theology/philosophy
History/Psychology
Pilgrimage sites
Pls feel free to borrow any from the shelves in the lower hall and return a week after use. Thanks.

You are never alone: For a shared a prayer, or just have someone listen to you, a candle lit for you or yours, have a mass offered for your intention or that of a loved one living or dead, please speak to the priest. Thanks

Tea/Coffee, Everyone is welcome to tea and coffee served in the Lower Hall after 11.00am mass in St. Stephens every Sunday morning after 11.00am mass. Thanks.

-Details of Parish account: Name: **St. Stephens RC Blairgowrie.** Account Number: 28075068; Sort Code: 80-22-60.

Last Sunday offertory collection: £428 Many thanks for your support to the parish. *Figures exclude takings from Standing orders, bank transfers and direct debits. Comprehensive Parish Financial Audits and Accounts are published on the Notice Board. Many thanks .



Project Matthew 25: Make the joy of the Christmas season go round. Support the PRISON APOSTOLATE with Food and vouchers, canned food, biscuits, chocolates, pastries etc. Collection bag at the back of the church.

Solemnity of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph 28/12/25

Ideals for family living

Some might feel that this feast sets too high an ideal for families, if the homilist highlights the virtues of the Holy Family, without also showing that they had to face many issues not unlike those of our own households. Fortunately the Gospel tells us something quite different about the childhood of Jesus, in a down-to-earth way, by instances.

Even though we call them the Holy Family that does not mean they never had problems to face, as every family must. Just as each follower of Jesus has a cross to carry, so also the holy family had to experience the crisis in their shared life. To mention just a few examples, we can imagine how misunderstood both Mary and Joseph must have been about the conception of Jesus before they came to live together. Joseph was even planning to divorce Mary privately before being assured that it was the work of God. Nine months later, the birthplace of Jesus was an animal shelter, since no better lodgings could be found. Today's Gospel from St Matthew shows how the little family had to flee as refugees to Egypt because the child Jesus' life was in danger from King Herod, in much the same way as refugees from war-torn countries have to flee to save their lives. This prompts us to be more aware of, and show more empathy towards, those refugees in our own day who seek a safer life among us than they had in the countries from which they fled.

St Luke has another story to illustrate what trials were faced by Mary and Joseph, in trying to understand the development of Jesus as a young person. When he was twelve, they were shocked to lose him for three days and then had to deal with the unsatisfactory explanation that he "had to be about his Father's business." Still, he returned with them to Nazareth and was subject to them, in the quiet rhythm of family life in their village. We do not hear of Joseph any more after that so we presume that he had died before Jesus began his public ministry. Then too, the public life of Jesus must have taken its toll on Mary. In the Temple when he was an infant, old Simeon had predicted that a sword of sorrow would pierce Mary's soul. How she must have been pained to hear his enemies say that Jesus was a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners, and at the end, when Mary watched her son die in public disgrace, on the cross.

What sustained the family of Nazareth through all of these trials and crosses? What holds families together in times of difficulty is love and trust. Whenever families are happy, it is where love and respect are highly prized among them. We pray for an outpouring of those qualities in our families today. A major threat to family life nowadays is that we don't spend enough time together. We are so busy working, socialising, using our electronic gadgets or watching TV that we have no time to talk to each other.

A barrister, a busy career woman, was living just ten kilometres from her old, widowed father. But months often passed between her visits to him; and when her father texted to ask when she might bring his grandchildren to visit him, she detailed lots of reasons that kept her too busy to see him, court schedules, meetings, new clients, research, etc. Her father frowned and then asked, "When I die, will you come to my funeral?" The daughter was indignant. "Dad, how can you ask me that? Of course, I'll be there!" He smiled and said, "Aah! Then please forget my funeral and come to visit me now. I need you now more than I will then." Message understood - and his daughter began to visit him regularly after that.