

Into the Deep



June 2026

Issue 03



Summer: A Season of Opportunity in Parish Life

There is a certain sense of wind-down at this time of year in parish ministry. The graduation masses have been celebrated, the flurry of Confirmations and First Communions are behind us, the school tours and sports days indicate that the conclusion of the primary school year is upon us. School is out, people are on holiday, and Mass attendance is down. In many parishes, regular meetings of parish councils, children's liturgy and other scheduled events will enter a period of hiatus until the Autumn. It can be tempting to surrender to the quietness of the season and shelve our programming until September. However, if we do, we may be missing out on some great opportunities to engage the faithful and bring new people into our parish communities.

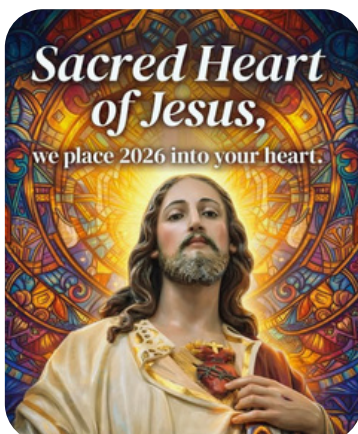
When churches plan intentional summer events, they can: strengthen relationships within the congregation, reach people who may not typically attend church, create welcoming entry points for visitors and new families. With the right approach, summer can become one of the most fruitful seasons for outreach and connection. Are there social events that could improve engagement with the community? In summer (weather permitting)

it could be a good time to gather people for things like family days, picnics or barbeques. Don't forget to consider Christ-centred or evangelisation-focused events such as pilgrimages/hikes to holy wells or Mass rocks that underline the spiritual heritage on which our communities are founded.

Young people from our pastoral areas may be participating in pilgrimages to Lourdes or Taizé. Can we provide them with an opportunity to witness to their experiences before the community that may well have supported them or assisted them in getting to these places? Why not invite them to share their experiences at a Sunday Mass? Witness is an effective tool for encouraging other young people to engage with the parish life.

Summer may bring schedule changes, but it also creates unique ministry opportunities. With thoughtful planning, churches can transform these months into a season of meaningful engagement. Whether through community service, family events, outreach gatherings, or spiritual growth opportunities, summer activities help pastoral areas strengthen relationships and serve their communities. When parish leaders approach the season with creativity and intention, summer can become a powerful time of connection, growth, and ministry impact.

editorial
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June: The Month of the Sacred Heart

The month of June is traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a devotion that invites us to reflect on the immense love, mercy, and compassion of Christ. The Sacred Heart is a symbol of Jesus' self-giving love for humanity and His desire to bring peace, healing, and hope to all.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart was especially promoted through the visions of Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 17th century. Later, Pope Pius IX extended the

Feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church in 1856. In 1899, Pope Leo XIII consecrated the whole world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, highlighting its importance for the life of the Church.

During this month, we are invited to contemplate the loving Heart of Jesus and to imitate His virtues of humility, forgiveness, and compassion. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspire us to become witnesses of His love in our families, parishes, and communities.



Ministry of Altar Servers

Many of our second class pupils will have just celebrated their First Holy Communion in recent times and a great follow up to their faith-formation and participation at Mass make this a good time to encourage continued engagement by recruiting new altar servers for your pastoral areas. It may also be an opportunity to enlist the help of adults in the parishes to help train and organise your teams of servers. Parishioners might take on the responsibility of guiding the formation of servers and ensuring diocesan safeguarding children guidelines are followed. As with any ministry in the Church, formation before beginning, and continuous formation during their ministry is important for altar servers. They are often very competent in what they do, but it is important that they also know why they are doing it. By their nature children can be curious, especially around rituals or objects they see to be unusual. Foster that curiosity and develop a rapport where they can ask questions.



As with any ministry, ensure that the faith of the server is being nourished – there can be the danger of servers being seen as do-ers only. Trust them and thank them – it enables them to take ownership for their ministry. Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh siad – praise and encourage servers in what they do.

It's also worth considering that the ministry of altar server is not limited to primary school children. We should consider ways of retaining older young people and teenagers in the ministry, perhaps by giving them greater responsibility as they move into secondary school. Don't forget that adults can serve too – it can be a great advantage to have someone who can work and handle a thurible or carry a processional cross at a weekday funeral when the young people are at school.



Pope Leo XIV's First Encyclical – Magnifica Humanitas



An encyclical is one of the highest forms of papal teaching. It is a letter from the Pope addressed to the entire Church and, in this case, to "all men and women of goodwill" on a matter of serious urgency. When a pope writes an encyclical, he is not offering a casual

opinion. He is speaking as the universal shepherd, drawing on centuries of Scripture, Tradition, and the lived experience of the Church.

Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical was signed on 15 May 2026, exactly 135 years after Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum* on 15 May 1891. That was not a coincidence. Pope Leo XIV is making a deliberate statement: what the Industrial Revolution was to Leo XIII, artificial intelligence is to us. The scale of disruption is comparable. The stakes for human dignity are just as high. And the Church cannot afford to be silent. The encyclical is not anti-technology. It never says AI is evil. What it says is that technology is never neutral. It takes on the character of the people who build it, fund it, and use it. And so the question is not whether we will use AI, we already are. The question is what kind of people we will be while using it.

The Pope traces the history of Catholic Social Teaching from Leo XIII to Pope Francis, showing how the Church has always engaged with the "new things" of each era. In the encyclical Pope Leo puts certain tasks before us in our response to AI – above all to get involved and take responsibility – and not to allow it to weaken our personal creativity. He underlines the need for dialogue and human interaction reminding us that physical presence remains crucial. He stresses the need to teach and to protect children and be vigilant to protect human dignity. The Pope invites us to be mindful of our words and engage in dialogue and he lays out the core principles that must guide our response to AI, including human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity, solidarity, and social justice.

You can read the full text of *Magnifica Humanitas* on the Holy See's website here:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>



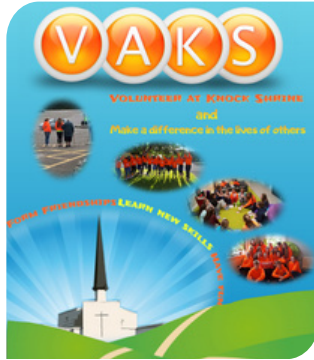
ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV
MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS
On safeguarding of the human person
in the time of Artificial Intelligence





VAKS (Volunteer at Knock Shrine)

Approximately 1 million people visit Knock Shrine each year from all over the world. It is a special place of prayer and pilgrimage. VAKS (Volunteer at Knock Shrine) offers young people aged 16 – 18 the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of pilgrims.



Volunteering at Knock is a wonderful way to meet new people, serve others, express your faith, and have fun. It can greatly enrich your own life while positively impacting those you serve. This programme is also an excellent opportunity to develop skills, share your talents, and receive training in areas such as communication and interpersonal skills. Cost: €40. This includes accommodation for the weekend at Knock Youth Village, all meals, and a VAKS t-shirt. Participants must be registered and complete the required training before taking part in the programme. Check out the Knock Shrine Youth Ministry page for details on how to apply.

<https://www.knockshrine.ie/knock-youth-ministry>

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Killaloe Diocese
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Ordination of Fr. Ian Cunningham, OFM



The Ennis community joyfully celebrated the priestly ordination of Fr. Ian Cunningham, OFM, on Sunday, 31 May 2026, at 3:00 PM at the Franciscan Friary, Ennis. The ordination was conferred by Bishop Fintan Monahan.

Fr. Ian is a native of Ennis, having grown up in Elm Park off the Gort Road. He is the son of Caroline and Denis and brother of Sarah. His faith journey was nurtured through his years at

Ennis National School and St. Flannan's College.

His call to Franciscan life led him to make his solemn profession to the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in September 2025. He was ordained a deacon on 9 November 2025 at the Poor Clares Monastery, Nuns Island, Galway, and carried out his diaconal ministry at Galway Cathedral before his priestly ordination.

We give thanks to God for the gift of Fr. Ian's vocation and pray that his priestly ministry may be filled with joy, wisdom, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. May he continue to serve God's people with the humility and love of Christ, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and prayerful wishes to Fr. Ian as he begins this new chapter of his ministry. May God bless him abundantly and guide him always in his priestly mission.

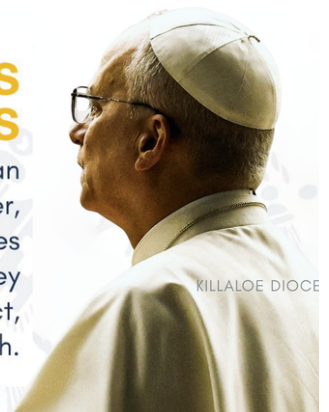
Pope Leo's Monthly Intention- June 2026



POPE LEO'S MONTHLY INTENTION JUNE 2026

FOR THE VALUES OF SPORTS

Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter, and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.





Pastoral Area News



The St. Anthony's Novena was held at the Franciscan Friary, Ennis, from 4–13 June 2026. Services took place twice daily at 10:00 am and 7:30 pm and were led by Fr. Tom Ryan.

The novena concluded on 13 June, the Feast of St. Anthony, with a Solemn Feast Mass celebrated by Bishop Fintan Monahan. The closing celebration saw a packed church and included the traditional blessing of lilies.



Pope Leo XIV has appointed Scariff native Archbishop Eugene Nugent of the Diocese of Killaloe as the new Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic. Archbishop Nugent, who previously served in the Gulf region, will take up his diplomatic post at the Apostolic Nunciature in Prague, Vatican City. We extend our prayerful congratulations and best wishes to Archbishop Nugent, and pray that God may bless and guide his ministry of service to the Church and the Holy See.



The 71st and final annual gathering of the Killaloe Diocese Apostolic Work Society took place on Saturday, 13 June 2026, at Maria Assumpta Hall, Ennis Parish Centre, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

The event marked the conclusion of the Society's long tradition of handcrafting vestments and sacred vessels and supporting missionary work. Bishop Fintan Monahan opened the exhibition and expressed gratitude to the volunteers for their decades of dedicated service to Gospel outreach.

Branches including Mullagh Apostolic Work Society and Clarecastle Apostolic Works also held their final displays as the Society came to a close.



The Killaloe Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage 2026, led by Bishop Fintan Monahan, will take place from 24–29 June 2026.

Parishioners are invited to submit petitions to be placed at the Grotto. All petitions should be sent to the Ennis Parish Office (info@ennisparish.com or 065 682 4043) by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 23 June 2026.



The Worldpriest Global Rosary Relay for the Sanctification of Priests was held at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, Ennis, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Led by Fr. Tom, clergy and parishioners of the Abbey Pastoral Area prayed the Luminous Mysteries at 2:30 pm, joining a worldwide chain of prayer for priests.



Fr. Gerry Kenny and Fr. Pat O'Neill of the Diocese of Killaloe celebrated 50 years of priesthood on 13 June 2026. They were ordained on 13 June 1976 by Bishop Michael Harty in Newmarket-on-Fergus. Congratulations were extended to both priests for their faithful and dedicated ministry over the past five decades.



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