

## **BCOS NOVEMBER 2019 MEETING**

The Bishops' Conference held their November meeting at Schoenstatt retreat centre from 4 to 6 November. All eight of Scotland's bishops attended. The meeting was chaired by Bishop Hugh Gilbert, President of the Conference. The bishops received reports from a number of agency Directors and National Commission members and discussed a range of issues of interest to the church.

### **Monday 4 November**

#### **Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES)**

Director, Barbara Coupar reported on the recent work of SCES. She advised that a number of Local Authorities, including; North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire, Dundee, Argyll & Bute and Renfrewshire have confirmed that they will not review or change the role of Church Representatives on Education Committees. Local Reps, continue to contact councils with a view to completing a full analysis of council's intent on this matter.

The Humanist Society has sent FOI requests to all Councils asking for copies of the voting records of all Education Reps. This may be difficult for councils to answer as it might involve a disproportionate amount of work. In the light of these challenges, SCES has updated its manual for Church Reps.

Relationships and Sexual Health Programme (RSHP), Barbara Coupar advised that the RSHP website promoted by the Scottish Government is not endorsed by SCES and misinformation to that effect has been corrected. SCES continue to stress that "Called to Love" and "God's Loving Plan" remain the core curricular resources in catholic schools.

Barbara Coupar will continue to liaise with parents and groups who have concerns in this area. Almost 6,000 pupils have registered to complete the Pope Francis Faith Award.

#### **Independent Review Group (IRG)**

Baroness Helen Liddell gave the conference an update on the work of the IRG and the two diocesan audits already conducted.

Three members of the IRG also attended: Lisa Markham, Gordon Jeyes and Donald Urquhart.

Baroness Liddell expressed her hope that the diocesan audits of St. Andrews & Edinburgh and Galloway, would soon be concluded and highlighted their purpose as collaborative processes. There was a wide-ranging discussion on how concerns about the conduct of the audits might be addressed and resolved in future. It was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding was the best way to set out the relationship between the IRG, the auditing body and a diocese.

## **WORSHIP**

Dom Henry Wansborough of Ampleforth presented some samples of a new translation text of the Lectionary, based on the Revised New Jerusalem Bible. There was a discussion on the various texts used across the English speaking world.

Bishop Gilbert updated the Conference on revised liturgical texts which are currently awaiting approval by the Holy See or will shortly be sent for approval.

## **CARITAS**

Climate change: there was a wide ranging discussion attended by Alistair Dutton of SCIAF and Daniel Sweeney of Justice & Peace on the UK's successful bid to host the 26th Conference of the Parties, known as COP26, which will take place in Glasgow at the end of next year and may be attended by up to 30,000 delegates.

Investment policy: Bishop Nolan spoke about the Global Catholic Climate Movement and energy suppliers.

## **MINISTRY**

### **Pontifical Scots College Rome:**

The Rector, Fr Dan Fitzpatrick, reported on a larger than usual intake of students in the past year. There are currently 21 seminarians studying at the college. A survey of the building has shown a need for some extensive repair work over the coming years. Fr Dan commended the "atmosphere of dedication and study" within the college.

In anticipation of the UK's departure from the EU all the students have been registered as residents in Italy to protect their rights to remain post-Brexit. Clarification is awaited on the need for visas and permits in future.

### **Royal Scots College Salamanca:**

Rector, Fr Tom Kilbride reported that ten students attended the propaedeutic formation course in 2019. Of this number 8 entered major seminary, afterwards. The college expects around 8 students to begin the propaedeutic course in January 2020. The college continues to liaise with the Spanish Embassy regarding residency requirements post-Brexit. The priests at the college currently have the relevant residency and health documentation.

### **Media**

The bishops were shown a preview of the Solas Productions documentary on the Scots College in Rome commissioned by BBC Scotland and expected to be broadcast early in 2020.

### **Tuesday 5 November**

### **Ministry**

Members of the board of the Apostleship of the Sea joined the bishops and gave a

report on their work. The charity advised that they are in the process of changing their name to Stella Maris which will identify them more closely with the international mission to seafarers.

The centenary of the organisation will be marked next year and the world conference of Stella Maris will take place in Glasgow, where the Apostleship of the Sea was founded. The conference will take place from 29 September to 4 October 2020. The bishops offered congratulations and looked forward to participating in the centenary celebrations.

## **COMECE**

Bishop Hugh Gilbert gave a report on COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union) He advised that on 23-25 October 2019 delegates of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union gathered in Brussels for the COMECE Autumn 2019 Assembly. The meeting was dedicated to post-EU elections challenges and, in particular, to ecological policies centred on persons, families and communities.

Delegates also expressed their concern over the current situation in Syria and encouraged the EU to intensify its humanitarian and diplomatic efforts in view of lasting and sustainable peace in the region.

## **Justice and Peace**

A report on the Justice and Peace Commission was given by the Chair Honor Hania. She highlighted the commission's increased focus on communications work especially the social media channels being used, together with a weekly blog and a You Tube channel which now hosts over 30 videos.

Information was given on "Encounter Calais" following a visit by Bishop Nolan and Danny Sweeney in November 2017, various activities were undertaken to mark the anniversary of the visit and highlight the continued existence of "the Jungle" migrant camp at Calais. Information was also given to the bishops on the J&P campaign against human trafficking.

## **Safeguarding**

The bishops received a report on the work of the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service (SCSS) from Tina Campbell. There are currently 81 safeguarding trainers across Scotland. The National Safeguarding Conference, was held on 5th October in Edinburgh. The theme was Journey in Silence and it was attended by 160 delegates. In July, Scotland was well represented at the final Anglophone Conference. Ireland and New Zealand co-hosted.

The 2018 safeguarding audit statistics were distributed to the bishops.

### **Scottish Catholic Inter Diocesan Tribunal**

A report on the Scottish Catholic Inter Diocesan Tribunal was given by Canon Paul Gargaro. It is hoped that the Tribunal will be able to recruit more lay auditors in 2020, who undertake the process of interviewing witnesses. Training and support will be provided to new volunteers.

Over the past ten years the number of marriage annulment cases brought to the Tribunal, has fallen by 75%. Over the past five years the number of cases has fallen by over 50%, in the last year the number of cases has fallen by over 30%.

To make the Tribunal more approachable and accessible, there are plans to update the website and the enquiry forms in 2020. The forms, which are the first contact most people have when seeking an annulment, have grown over the years and become complex documents, currently running to over twenty pages.

The bishops were urged to discuss the work of the Tribunal at Councils of Priests, Pastoral Councils, Deanery Meetings, diocesan events, etc, while encouraging priests and deacons to get in touch with the Tribunal.

### **Wednesday 6 November**

Director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office, Anthony Horan updated the bishops on the work of the Parliamentary Office. Among the matters raised was the

decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland and the decision by the UK Government to commit a further £600m in funding to support international abortion providers.

The bishops also agreed that a pre-election pastoral letter should be drafted for distribution before the forthcoming UK General Election.

#### ECUMENICAL

The three-day meeting ended with a visit from a delegation of bishops from the Scottish Episcopal Church. The bishops discussed; ecumenism and a new forum for engagement to replace ACTS as well as nuclear deterrence.

ENDS

Peter Kearney  
Director  
Catholic Media Office  
5 St. Vincent Place  
Glasgow  
G1 2DH  
0141 221 1168  
07968 122291  
pk@scmo.org  
[www.scmo.org](http://www.scmo.org)