

Archbishop makes annual appeal at St Patrick's, Dumbarton - Sunday, 13 December 2009

Archbishop Mario Conti has urged Catholics in West Dunbartonshire to support the St Nicholas Care Fund which provides support to local people suffering the effects of deprivation, unemployment, poverty and addiction.

The Archbishop was speaking in St Patrick's Church, Dumbarton, where he concelebrated Mass with Canon Gerry Conroy before making his annual Caring Sunday appeal from the pulpit there.

The St Nicholas Care Fund, which was established as the Pastoral Care Fund in 1992, was the equivalent of the Scottish International Aid Fund (SCIAF) through which Catholics in Scotland support charities and aid missions abroad.

In particular, said the Archbishop, its aim was to offer small grants to groups, agencies and projects working for the common good of all people in need.

St Patrick's parishioner, Elizabeth McQuade, who is director of the Care Fund, said the fund had raised £1.3 million in total, and £100,000 of that had been raised in the past year.

It operated mainly to help social projects in areas of deprivation – and surveys showed that West Dunbartonshire was one of the most deprived areas in Scotland.

The Fund encourages applications from community groups, voluntary organizations, charities and other bodies tackling social need.

The St Patrick's Babies and Toddlers group, recently set up in St Patrick's Church Hall in Strathleven Place, had been one of the groups to benefit from the Fund.

However, the people of Dumbarton had always been extremely generous givers to the Fund, and it was to recognise this fact that the Archbishop had chosen to come to St Patrick's to meet them and to make the annual appeal, Elizabeth said.

After the Mass, Archbishop Conti greeted members of the congregation as they left the church. They included young and old – elderly parishioners, mothers with babies and couples with young children.

Later, at a reception in the Church Hall, Archbishop Conti was introduced to two of the oldest parishioners, 94-year-old Cathie King from Gibson Street and 92-year-old Marjorie Ferrie from Bonhill Road.

He also met sisters, Kitty and Liz Jones, and thanked them for their recent work in raising funds – more than £4,000 this year – for children for poor and hungry children who have been orphaned by HIV in Zimbabwe.

Canon Gerry Conroy, St Patrick's parish priest, thanked the Archbishop for coming to Dumbarton. He added: "The work done by the Care Fund made a real difference to

the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of the community and we are grateful for that.”

To make a donation to the St Nicholas Care Fund please go to:
<http://stncf.workwithus.org/donate>