



Rt. Rev. Brian Thomas McGee Bishop of Argyll and the Isles

To be shared with Parishioners on 9th/10th March – SCIAF Sunday

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I write on this fourth Sunday of Lent on behalf of all the Bishops of Scotland, to thank you for your generous support of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, our relief and development agency of the Church. Your prayers, your donations and your gifts of time through volunteering continue to encourage the Bishops, and of course, make possible the life-transforming work of SCIAF.

With your support, SCIAF continues to stand in solidarity with the people we serve – and especially today, on this SCIAF Sunday.

It is a huge honour to be SCIAF's Bishop President and to play a role in the direction we move in after nearly 60 years of helping to support the poorest communities around the world.

We are part of the global Catholic Church and believe it to be our duty and our privilege to respond to the cry of the poor. Working with our Church partners all over the world, we help people help themselves out of poverty, and campaign for a world where everyone, everywhere has the basics they need to survive and thrive. We, the Church, are one body with many parts, all working together to put our faith into action. Serving the poor is absolutely at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic.

This year's WEE BOX Lenten appeal brings our attention to the country of Rwanda. A beautiful country known as 'the land of a thousand hills.' But also a country with great suffering and trauma, much of this following on from the horrors of the genocide 30 years ago – a time where it is estimated that one million people were killed.

SCIAF has been supporting projects in Rwanda for many years and has a close relationship with the Catholic Church there. We recently spoke to Cardinal Kambanda, Archbishop of Kigali, who wants to share the following with you. He says:

"It's now 30 years since the genocide – a very difficult period in the history of Rwanda where so many people were killed. The war, the exile, the genocide. It left so many injured people physically, psychologically, and spiritually. It left a lot of division.

"We have neighbours, some of them perpetrators; others are survivors of the genocide, who live side by side. It has been a long period of reconciliation, but we thank God that this process has gone well so far.

“A great part of the community is now reconciled, and people work together and live together with a common purpose. But also the genocide has left internal injuries and wounds that require healing from the trauma that both young and old experienced. We are dealing with many challenges.

“The Catholic Church has contributed a lot because it has an integral approach. So many structures were destroyed, and schools and hospitals needed to be rebuilt. The Church helps with this hand-in-hand with partners, including the Anglican Church.

“But the Church has got another important role, that of internal healing. Such internal healing can only be done efficiently with The Religious, and through making peace with God and with oneself.

“SCIAF has been a partner for many years. They accompany us. This process of reconciliation – training the community, and through counselling – is helping different groups come together.

“Current education projects are supporting the prevention of violence and preparing Rwanda for a peaceful future. This prepares children to be peacemakers and to build peaceful families tomorrow.

“Our history, however, continues to impact violent acts, especially those directed towards women and girls, despite efforts to promote harmony and peace.

“We are very grateful to SCIAF for all these years, for what we do together in Jesus’ name. We thank all the people who support SCIAF.”

I thank Cardinal Kambanda for his words and for the work he is leading in Rwanda.

Your donations make a real difference to the people SCIAF serve. By giving in today’s collection, and filling your WEE BOXES, together as the Church, we play a vital role in reaching out and showing compassion to our sisters and brothers in Rwanda – and in other countries where SCIAF partners with the Church.

As we look forward to the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus, let us stand in solidarity through prayer and in the generosity of our giving.

God Bless you and your families during this Holy Season of Lent.

+ Brian McGee

**Bishop Brian McGee,
Bishop President of SCIAF
On behalf of the Bishop’s Conference of Scotland**