

28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## Community

**“The only way by which anyone divests [themselves] of [their] natural liberty and puts on the bonds of civil society is by agreeing with other [people] to join and unite into a community.”**

*John Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government (1690)*

The *Daily Record* Pride of Scotland Awards, in partnership with the *TSB*, celebrate Scots who are transforming the lives of others. Nominated by the public, the winners are of all ages and from every part of the country. Bravery, fund-raising, emergency services, community work, self-improvement, service, and much more, are all recognised. The inspiring inaugural Award Show was broadcast on STV last Hogmanay, and I was delighted to discover that I had a connection with an award winner!

In 2015, at the height of the migrant crisis, twenty-four refugee families, fleeing the war in Syria, came to the Island of Bute. At a time when not everyone was open to new arrivals, churches, local groups and individuals came together to organise donations – from shoes and blankets, to spices and chickpeas – to make the newcomers feel welcome. The Bute Foodbank was repurposed to help the new residents. The community opened its doors and hearts to those most in need. Five years on, seventeen families remain. Some have started their own businesses, including a hairdresser, a Syrian takeaway, and a bakery. The children are a part of the local schools – now speaking English with broad Scottish accents. Other families have settled elsewhere in Scotland.

It was heart-warming indeed as actress Blythe Duff presented the islanders with the *TSB* “Community Heroes Award”. In an open-air presentation in Rothesay, she told them: “It’s a privilege to be back on the Isle of Bute and to be amongst the community, because I know how well you embrace people on this island.” My friend, Father Michael, is the Catholic priest in Rothesay, so I’d known some of this first-hand. But it was so good to see it recognised and shared with a wider viewing public.

What a terrific example of John Locke’s “agreeing with other [people] to join and unite into a community” and to see the difference it makes. Community heroes! Thank God for them all.

### **A prayer for today**

*Bind us together, Lord, into a community of faithful people, loving, serving, giving and welcoming, where the need and the suffering are greatest. Amen.*

*An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>*