



## Celebrated Ministry

### Fr David Houlding retires after 38 years at All Hallows', Gospel Oak

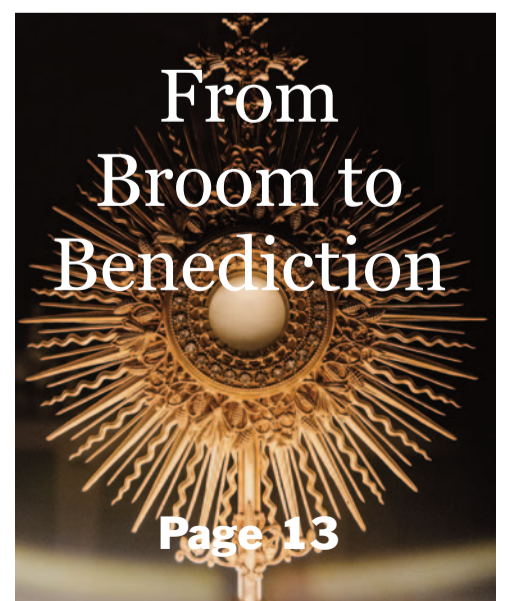
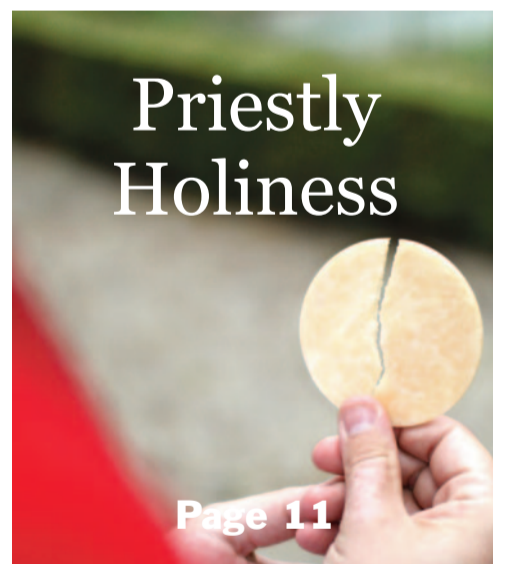
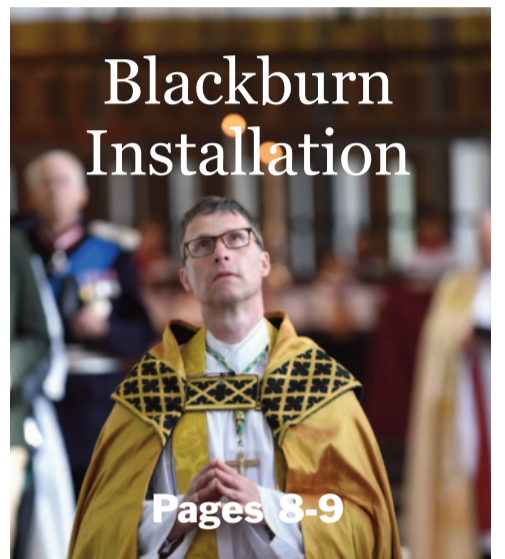
Not even national rail strikes could deter hundreds of worshippers on a clear summer's day in early June as they made their way to a corner of North London, on the edge of Hampstead Heath, in order to celebrate the remarkable ministry of a faithful priest. Fr David Houlding first arrived at All Hallows', Gospel Oak, in 1985 after curacies at All Saint's, Hillingdon, near Heathrow, then the famous Catholic destination church of St Alban's, Holborn. He would go on to do two main things: to revitalise the parish church where he was appointed from its mid-1980s doldrums. ("When I arrived all the churches in the area were on their uppers," he said. "Bishop Brian Masters made a point of finding young, energetic clergy to come and turn them around, and they did.") And second, to serve the national Catholic movement with all his time and talent at a difficult moment of split, division and anxiety. He is credited by many for having helped the Church of England's Catholic wing to maintain its confidence, and keep it within the Anglican orbit –

particularly when it came to the amendment he tabled achieving an honoured place for Catholics.

As one observer commented: "It really was a terrible time. Many thought the way to win was by being difficult, even nasty, completing opposing whatever they could and refusing to budge an inch. But Fr Houlding knew the way to do it was to build relationships and alliances, even when people were on different sides. It required generosity and he helped a lot of Synod members especially to see and appreciate the complexities involved. He was instrumental in the key votes of the time."

One of his guiding inspirations was Archbishop Michael Ramsey, whom he got to know at Canterbury and would serve for at the cathedral from time to time. The sense of holiness, godliness, priestcraft and absolute commitment

*Continued on page 3*



# Ordinations 2023

## Congratulations to the following on their ordination this summer

### By the Bishop of Beverley

Fr Raymond Parkin (*deacon, 2 July*)  
 Fr Jonathan Roberts (*priest, 15 June*)  
 Fr Warren Mitchell (*priest, 1 July*)  
 Fr Lewis Oliver-Hemmings-Faye  
 (*priest, 1 July*)  
 Fr Al Thompson (*priest, 1 July*)  
 Fr Michael Dixon (*priest, 2 July*)

### By the Bishop of Blackburn

Rachel Fielding (*distinctive deacon, 1 July*)  
 Fr Jean Kouacou (*deacon, 1 July*)  
 Fr Jordan Bentliff (*priest, 2 July*)  
 Fr Ryan Otley (*priest, 2 July*)

### By the Bishop of Chichester

Fr Richard Keeble (*deacon, 25 June*)  
 Fr Ben Scott (*deacon, 25 June*)

### By the Bishop of Durham

Fr Gareth Gladman (*deacon, 2 July*)

### By the Bishop of Fulham

Fr Duncan Hegan (*deacon, 1 July*)  
 Fr Roger Turner (*deacon, 1 July*)  
 Fr Andrew Bailey (*priest, 2 July*)  
 Fr John Hillman (*priest, 2 July*)  
 Fr Stephen Miller (*priest, 2 July*)

### By the Bishop of Leeds

Fr Joseph Harrison (*deacon, 1 July*)

### By the Bishop of Lewes

Fr Thomas Cotterill (*priest, 4 June*)

### By the Bishop of Oswestry

Fr Timothy Davies (*deacon, 3 July*)  
 Fr Philip Garrett (*priest, 25 June*)  
 Fr Sebastian Way (*priest, 28 June*)  
 Fr Daniel Vickerstaff (*priest, 4 July*)

### By the Bishop of Southwark

Fr Joshua Pollard (*deacon, 24 June*)

### By the Bishop of Wakefield

Fr Daniel Heaton (*priest, 24 June*)

## together contact details

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Continued from front page



to the task ahead – all whilst having a little eccentric fun – were very much the Ramsey way. Fr David brought this into his own ministry and inhabited it fully. Aware of how young people always need feeding and vocations had to be built up, he helped to conceive Forward in Food – a youth-oriented mission to younger Christians long before the Alpha Course started doing it.

These themes were picked up in the speeches delivered after the service of Evensong and Benediction. First, Bishop Tony Robinson of Forward in Faith and the Diocese of Leeds commented on Fr David's years of service to international Catholic witness and his profile as a popular parish priest in the local area. Canon Robin Ward, of Stephen's House, Oxford, spoke warmly of Fr David's personal support, sense of fun, steadfastness and encouragement. He also noted how many pastoral assistants had come through Fr David's ministry, and how many of them were assisting at the altar

that day in holy orders, having become fine parish priests themselves. Dr Colin Podmore, formerly of Church House and Forward in Faith, praised Fr David's performances in the debating chamber and his evident ability to walk the Synod 'tea rooms' with consummate skill to build consensus and sympathy during dark times for Catholics. Without his input and oversight, much of what has been achieved for the Catholic wing over the last 30 years would simply not have been possible. The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, echoed these sentiments, thanking Fr David for his kindness, friendship and bonhomie. Concluding, the Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham and significant figure himself in the Catholic movement, brought the various contributions together, making the point how much he as Fr David's bishop always knew he could count on him, which was invaluable, going beyond partnership and the shared responsibility of pastoral care for the cure of souls in the parish and the wider Catholic scene. The Bishop

also thanked David Heminway, who was acknowledged with a round of applause, for having been a constant support throughout Fr David's ministry, supporting his many endeavours and commitments, and being a central member of the parish community. He too, it was clear, had shared



in the nurturing of many vocations to the sacred priesthood. As everything concluded with a toast, there was a standing ovation for this much-loved priest.

First elected to the General Synod in 1995, Fr David Houlding was Proctor-in-Convocation until 2015, serving as Pro-Prolocutor of Canterbury from 1997. He chaired the House of Clergy in the Diocese of London 2000-12, was the Area Dean of North Camden 2000-03, and a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral from 2004. In 2005 he was awarded Honorary Doctor of Divinity by Nashotah House. He sat on the Archbishops' Council 2003-11 and chaired the Church of England Appointments Committee 2003-13. From 1996 until this year he served on the Council of the Additional Curates Society and was its Chairman from 2016 until last year. He was President of the Church Union 2010-22, a governor of Stephen's House, Oxford, from 2000 until this year, and was the Master Provincial and Master General of SSC 1997-2013. Now Master Emeritus, Fr David had invited the current Master General, Fr Carl Schaefer SSC, to the celebration service and lead the congregation in the Prayer of the Society.

**David Houlding is one of the Church of England's longest-serving parish priests. He was quoted in the Camden Journal saying he was "feeling awful" about being forced to retire and leave, All Hallows Gospel Oak, his church and home after 38 years.**

As traditional Catholics in the Church of England we have to say a big thank you to Fr David for all that he has done over the past thirty years in General Synod and on the numerous Catholic Societies he has served, to fight for and secure a future for us in the CofE. In the years leading up to the ordination of women as bishops in 2015 there were some very difficult times when we feared that there would be no provision for us. David worked behind the scenes in discussions and in speeches on the floor of synod to get the House of Bishop's Declaration and the five guiding principles. He was instrumental in the formation of 'The Society' which is how we hold together within the CofE.

While on General Synod from 1995 to 2015 Fr David served on Archbishops' Council, Chair of the Appointments Committee and Chair of the committee that produced guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy. He has been a Governor of St Stephen's House in Oxford, a member of the Council of Forward in Faith, President of the

Church Union, a member, and Chairman of the Council of the Additional Curates Society, Master Provincial and Master General of the Society of the Holy Cross. He was made a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral in 2004.

Thank you, Fr David, for all you have done. May you enjoy a long and happy retirement.

**Bishop Tony Robinson**



"I'm not looking forward to retirement very much," confesses Fr David. "It will be a wrench to leave this corner of London which I love so much and where I have been so very happy. But I go back to where I grew up in Kent, and know that everything is for a season." He hopes to continue being useful. "I'm happy to help out wherever I can and have accepted a number of invitations to preach recently – getting me in before I have to go quiet for a while! But there is work to do and I am keen to help bring the Catholic societies closer together and work more in sync. We have a lot of charities and it's important both to preserve their character and mission as well as ensuring they do what they are supposed to be doing on the ground, which is supporting Catholic parishes to survive and hopefully flourish. It's a crucial time and greater co-ordination is vital." It's perfectly evident he isn't ready to lay down his biretta just yet, or that we have heard the last of him. A priest forever indeed – even into retirement and beyond.

# Walsingham 2023



On the first truly hot day of the year of the year when temperatures soared, thousands of pilgrims converged on the village of Walsingham in Norfolk for the National Festival Day. The atmosphere was as bright as the sun and joyous with numbers clearly starting to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic which restricted so many areas of our life and worship. The Shrine Church buzzed with conversation as over 100 clergy vested in preparation for the outdoor mass, servers were marshalled into position, assistants were briefed, and Guardians of the Holy House reclined in their stalls, enjoying gentle conversation.

The day fell on the Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, a theme picked up in the sermon preached after lunch by the Bishop of Richborough. First, as the procession moved from the Shrine to the Abbey Grounds, the popular Marian hymns rang out, and much intercession was made. Shortly before noon, the clergy arrived at their places along with the image of Our Lady, the bishops of The Society, and principal Celebrant at the Pilgrimage Mass, the Bishop of Lewes, the Rt Revd Will Hazlewood. The Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher, was also in attendance. As usual, the distribution of communion was assisted by ordinands from theological colleges (Mirfield and SSO) who accompanied the priests with a white umbrella to signal the sacramental stations. At the conclusion of the service, the Angelus was recited and the final hymn was 'Jerusalem the golden'. Parish notices were delivered with warmth and humour by the Priest Administrator, Fr Kevin Smith.

Picnics then blossomed everywhere with some visiting the Shrine Grounds to enjoy the barbecue and beer festival, a novel innovation for this year's celebration. All then returned to their seats in the

## Chantry Change in Walsingham

In March, Fr Andrew Greany retired as the Guild of All Souls Chanty Priest at Walsingham. He has been succeeded in this role by Bishop Robert Ladds SSC. We congratulate Bishop Ladds on this new appointment and send Fr Geany every good wish for his retirement.

### *Fr Greany writes:*

It has been a privilege to serve the Guild of All Souls as Chantry Priest in Walsingham since the beginning of May 2018. My five years in the post covered the months of the major lockdown in 2020. Celebrating the Chantry Mass at home during that time intensified my sense of the participation of angels and saints and the faithful gone before us in the mystery of the Mass; but in 'normal' times, it has been a joy to have the company both of local people who have followed a regular pattern of attendance at the Guild Mass and of those who have come from a distance, perhaps on a day's visit to Walsingham, finding the late morning time helpful. There are some too who come with their prayers on the anniversary of the death of a loved one, others who are simply moved by being in a building where the focus is so strongly on prayer for those who have died, and on witness to the credal doctrines of the Resurrection of the Body and the Communion of Saints. I have enjoyed pointing out to visitors the way in which the stained glass in the chapel moves from sombre colours at the 'west' end to the gold above the entrance to the sanctuary... from death and bereavement to life in the glory of the Lord's Resurrection.

It has been interesting too to keep an eye on the supply of literature and prayer cards in the chapel, seeing the popularity of Prayers for those who sit

with the dying, and encouraging visiting groups to take copies of Upon my Death, so that they may be sure of a proper funeral now that our culture sorely needs reminding of one of the foundation objects of the Guild: the provision of Furniture for burials according to the use of the Catholic Church, so as to set forth the two great objects of the Communion of Saints and the Resurrection of the Body.

In thanking Bishop Norman and the Council of the Guild for their encouragement and support to me over the past five years, I pray for the continuing work of the Guild in all its aspects, and in particular for the witness of the Chantry Chapel in Walsingham.



### *From the President of the Guild of All Souls:*

On behalf of the Guild of All Souls, may I add my thanks for Fr Andrew Greany's work as Chantry Priest in Walsingham over these past five years. The ministry of a designated Chantry Priest is presently unique in the Church of England for its charism is to bridge the Reformation and recall the faithful to their obligation and privilege to pray for the souls of the departed.

Father Andrew has built on the work of his predecessor, Canon Paul Locket, and helped the Chantry Chapel fulfil its role not only as a place of intercession for the dead but also as a healing sanctuary for the bereaved and those with serious illnesses. Groups increasingly offer Mass at the guild altar while pilgrims and visitors find the quiet and still atmosphere within the chapel both a comfort and an inspiration. Fr Andrew has not only faithfully offered the Holy Sacrifice and prayed the names on the Chantry Roll but made himself available for spiritual counsel and support. His gentle presence in and around the chapel has been greatly appreciated while his work preaching and ministering in the Shrine Church has been a positive bonus and enrichment. Fr Andrew has helped organise the July Mass at Saint Mary's West Tofts in the Thetford Forest Battle Area, the annual conference day at Walsingham sponsored by the Guild and has contributed several articles to the Intercession Paper. Father Andrew's pastoral skill and wisdom has been regularly sought out, appreciated and acted up by so many people over these past five years and he has been such a blessing not only to the Guild and the Shrine but to the wider community in and far beyond Walsingham.

*The Rt Rvd Norman Banks*



Abbey Grounds for Bishop Noman's sermon. A former Vicar of Walsingham himself (2000-11), he had first come to the Shrine as a student and throughout his ministry has encouraged devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham with a particular focus on pilgrimage to her shrine. His thoughtful and uplifting sermon is reproduced below.

The day then moved onto the rosary procession around the village streets and lanes with the Walsingham Pilgrim Hymn given full voice. Never had the line 'Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies' seemed more apt. Benediction, once back in the Abbey Grounds, was given by the Bishop of Fulham and Guardian, the Rt Revd Jonathan Baker. The Salve Regina at the end was a happy bring together of all the day had been about. Friendships were renewed, old faces seen again, hands touched, candles lit, drinks enjoyed, prayers given and received, and the gentle intercession of Our Lady invoked. Many enjoyed fellowship afterwards, if only to experience the beer festival. Gradually, coaches and cars found their way out and in the Norfolk landscape. As the sun set, pilgrims were assured in the knowledge that praise would indeed sanctify their rest.

**Our Lady of Nurture**

The sermon preached by Bishop Norman Banks at the Walsingham National Pilgrimage in May

Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the wee Donkey!

For those of us who are fans of the TV drama Line of Duty, 'Jesus Mary Joseph and the wee Donkey' is uttered in absolute exasperation by Superintendent Ted Hastings. And then, for some reason, the 'wee donkey' caught the imagination of the nation. Why such an impact? Of course, it told us something of the inspecting officer Ted Hastings and his Catholic background but there was also something more.

So, let's think about the wee donkey. My mind – lots of people's minds – will involuntarily go back to nativity plays in our childhood, to tea towels and tinsel and the stable with farm animals looking on. And, if we were fortunate to be in a Sunday School, to learn about what happened next to the Holy Family... Their flight into Egypt to escape from Herod and then their return to Nazareth bringing Jesus up in a loving, pious home, working in the carpenter's shop and worshipping the synagogue. Think of all



those paintings and stained-glass depicting moments in the life of the Holy Family and some of the most poignant are those recording that fearful Flight into Egypt. Joseph leading the donkey, while Mary cradles her infant and fragile son. Journeying into exile; far, far away from home in Nazareth.

It is almost half a century since I journeyed here to England's Nazareth. Walsingham spoke to me then and has held onto me ever since. I remember worrying when I was appointed as vicar whether the mystery and the spiritual intensity of this holy place would be diluted and compromised by overfamiliarity. Thankfully that's not happened and the thrill of entering the Holy House and kneeling before Our Lady is as special and awe-inspiring now as it was all those years ago.

Preparing for today, preaching here before you as a fellow pilgrim, has certainly helped focus my mind. And it's given me a special opportunity to spend some time thinking about all the threads that bind us all together and connect us in our Christian journey and where Walsingham has been so pivotal.

Not that all that is Walsingham made sense from the beginning. I remember very well being confused by all those titles of Mary in the Litany of Loreto, the repetition of exuberant prayers and what at first seemed as exotic devotions – all a long way from where I started my Christian journey as a boy in Saint Luke's in Wallsend on Tyneside. Yet slowly, slowly, their meaning has opened up – revealing portals, windows into the divine.

So, here I am today on this Feast of Our Lady preaching about one of those holy titles: 'Mary, Mother of the Church'. Three words. Mary, Mother and Church. Three words that, if we embrace them, impact hugely on our Christian lives.

Mary, Mother of Jesus.  
 Mary, Mother of God,  
 Mary, first among the disciples.  
 Therefore: Mary, Mother of the Church.

Mary's own discipleship began at the moment she said "yes" to the angel and accepted her vocation as God's vessel of grace. And it becomes ever more clear that her vocation was not simply to nurture her son Jesus but to nurture all those he draws into himself.



A simple example. Those of you who know me will be expecting at least one reference to my great friend and encourager, Saint Teresa of Avila. Teresa tells us that when as a young girl her mother died she felt disorientated, lonely and vulnerable and so she made her way to the cathedral in Avila to kneel before Our Lady asking her to take over as her mother. In her autobiography Teresa openly talks about how deeply she felt at the loss of her mother. A loss many of us here share. Teresa explains to her readers that there is nothing more beautiful and rewarding than to choose Our Lady Mary as our heavenly Mother. This same Teresa of Avila - confined to an enclosed convent in sixteenth century Spain – managed not only to reform her Religious Order but give Holy Church significant insights about our relationship with the Holy Family.

Mary's vocation is always to point us to her Son, to encourage us to accompany her to him, giving us the courage and the confidence to be ourselves, to be natural in the presence of the Lord. It is significant that she was present at Pentecost and was herself filled afresh with the Holy Spirit... empowering her to offering herself to us as mother protectress and advocate. With Mary's help, then, Holy Church herself is thankfully ever being recalled and reminded that the Good News must always be proclaimed with gentleness, sympathy empathy and love.

To conclude. If ever I were to be given the opportunity to add a title to Mary, this is what it would most certainly be: Blessed Mary, Full of Grace, Mother of Nurture. And what about that wee donkey? Well, there he is, drawing us back to the stable, to the place where Mary gives birth to her son, where the adventure for each and every one of us, of life in Christ first begins and joyfully continues.

Mary, Mother of the Church ever enfold us in your protective love and bless Walsingham, your home and our home here in England's Nazareth.

'Lady of Walsingham be as thou hast been England's Protectress, our Mother and our Queen'. Amen

Bishop Norman Banks is the Bishop of Richborough.

*All photographs: Andy Langley Photography © Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham*



## Again in God's house Mary's praises resound! The Shrine of Our Lady of Egmonton in Nottinghamshire

Why Our Lady chose to appear at Egmonton, not to mention the National Shrine at Walsingham, or indeed Lourdes, Fatima, Kazan, and so on, we do not always know. But Egmonton is among the places that Mary chose to appear and thus, with devotion to her, we should follow her command and attend her and worship there whenever it is possible.

You do not have to be member of the SOLE to join in pilgrimages to this regional shrine of Our Lady. You are very welcome just to come and worship. Thus we welcome members, since the SOLE has moral, if not legal, duty to help sustain the Shrine church. It is a parish church, being the responsibility of Churchwardens & PCC, but it is tiny congregation in very small rural village. Therefore the more paid up

members we have, the more we can do to help the Shrine.

Membership currently costs £7.50 per year or £75 for life membership. If you pay by BACS then please kindly note the following:

Account name: Society of Our Lady of Egmonton  
Sort code: 30-99-50 Account number: 36966060  
And in that case please kindly email the treasurer (ipackard@milverton.net) and also myself (life.draw@btinternet.com) just to let us know the names of those who have paid, and how much. Any additional donations are also gratefully accepted.

The main pilgrimages dates already booked (so the hall is open for lunches and other facilities) include:

**Saturday 5th August 2023**

12noon Sung Mass

**Saturday 4th November 2023**

12noon Requiem Sung Mass

**Saturday 18th May 2024**

12noon Sung Mass

**Saturday 3rd August 2024**

12noon Sung Mass

**Saturday 2nd November 2024**

12noon Requiem Sung Mass

If you would like a delightful light lunch prepared by a lovely team of volunteers in the excellent Village Hall (just across from the Shrine Church), then please, please, remember to book as there are limited places; or, of course, you can bring a packed lunch.

Please kindly list these dates in your diary, and also publish in parish magazines & news sheets, and relevant Church calendars and so on. You are welcome to pass on this information to anyone who may be interested, thank you.

We usually send further details nearer the time of each pilgrimage, but please feel free to contact me in the meantime.

**Revd Fr Philip Reynolds**

Membership Secretary of the Society & Shrine of Our Lady of Egmonton

The Shrine Church of Our Lady of Egmonton  
Tuxford Road, Egmonton, Nottinghamshire,  
NG22 0EZ. [www.egmonton-shrine.net](http://www.egmonton-shrine.net)



## Ministering through boundaries

**Further thoughts on the 'affinity parishes' model from Fr Luke Miller and Fr David Fisher**

Parishes in partnership is a good thing and can take a number of forms. Sometimes a 'big sister-little sister' arrangement can be established between a more thriving or wealthy parish and one which is struggling. Clergy can be licensed to one another so that each is parish priest in one parish, and assistant curate in the other. A youth or children's worker might be shared, or a photocopier. Arrangements can be liturgical - sharing Holy Week or weekday festivals.

The key in all the various patterns is that 'good fences make for good relationships.' It is best to be explicit about expectations and not leave too much to vague agreements. This is especially important if staff are shared: which night is the youth worker in each parish; and what about half terms? Money also needs to be clear: who pays if the photocopier breaks down? Who is responsible for the cost of the leaflets advertising the concert series? Working agreements are important for clergy: which church will they say the office in? What happens about holidays and days off - who does assembly each week?

If this is true of day to day expectations, the term of an agreement is worth thinking about at the beginning. "We will support the church on the other side of town by seconding the curate to live in their vicarage and run the show" - but for how long? We want our own website now, but the agreement with the web designer was for three years and there is still a year to go.

It is possible for a wealthy parish to lend money to another church, which could be a great way to seed fund recovery. Fix the loos in the other church's hall and they can hire it out, doubling their income and

paying you back in a few years' time. Your contribution to the other parish might be to forgo some of the income you would have got had you charged (commercial) interest. This sort of thing needs proper advice, and full governance. Too many schemes were agreed on the back of an envelope and then the envelope got lost.

So include the PCC, with explicit resolutions, and work with the archdeacon or the diocesan office or the Registrar to get it right. Take advice of every wise person. The signing of the memorandum of understanding - call it a covenant if you want a more ecclesiastical phrase - is necessary to make sure that the whole thing is well structured and explicitly governed; but it can happen in the context of a glorious thanksgiving. "These things were not done in corners" and there is no need to be shy of the frameworks which make it all possible.

**The Ven Luke Miller is the Archdeacon of London.**

A question: is it 'Fellowship' that we as Christians enjoy, or is it more properly 'Companionship?'

My training Incumbent, Fr Norman Carter, disliked the word fellowship to describe what we as Christians enjoy with one another intensely and so whenever he spoke the word he would screw up his nose and mouth in disgust. The word he much more preferred was COMPANIONSHIP. And Fr Carter's preference has stuck with me over the 40 years of my ministry. Why? One dictionary I use offers this as the origin of the word Companion: 'C13: from Late Latin, *companio*, literally: one who eats bread with another, from Latin *com-* with + *panis* bread.' I think you may already see where I am leading!

These thoughts came back to me as I was reviewing a part of my ministry when I was an NSM at St. Laurence, Long Eaton, which benefice includes the

Parish of Holy Trinity, Ilkeston. This might not seem strange, apart from the fact that the two churches are 20 miles apart, a drive of about 35-40 minutes. Yet this is single benefice. It is a single benefice because these two churches are Society Churches who have petitioned the Bishop the Derby for Alternative Episcopal Oversight, in this case of the Bishop of Oswestry. This single benefice is an example of what increasingly, it seems to me, will be the case for Catholic and therefore petitioning parishes within the Church of England, and referred to as Affinity Grouping in some places. The Diocese of Lincoln is completing a pastoral re-organization in which Society parishes have been grouped according to the need for Sacramental Assurance, in fact for Companionship: the sharing of the Bread of Heaven between Christians that we may grow into the Lord Jesus. In other dioceses such Affinity Groupings of Society Parishes will more and more, I believe, become the reality on the ground as the money, as we seem to be told continually, runs out.

The important point is surely what Fr Carter taught me 40 odd years ago; fellowship only grows if fed by companionship, by the breaking of the bread together. In parish groupings we are used to parishes being next to each other with contiguous boundaries, or at least in the same town. Yet, as we are increasingly warned that as the resources the CofE has for parishes becomes more and more limited, so we need to be more imaginative and constructive in the ways in which as Catholics we organize ourselves, that we may continue to benefit from the Companionship of our life together, that is at the heart of our discipleship.

**Fr David Fisher is the Rector of St Martin's, Salisbury, and a member of the Church Union Council.**

# MOON LANDING

Fr Edward Gunn reports on meteorites...



The parish and community of St Helen's, Auckland, recently got their hands on rare samples of moon rocks and meteorites. Over a two-week period, the community were given opportunities which were truly out of this world. This experience has allowed all to see the vastness of God's creation in a way that they couldn't imagine before: Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars (Ps 148.2-3).

All who visited were encouraged to reach for the stars and learn more about the Universe around us during a two-week-long interactive experience of astronomy. A group of the Air Cadets from Bishop Auckland 2505 whom I serve as Padre are being given the opportunity to visit NASA later this



year and so are focussing in 2023 on space and astronomy. It seemed an ideal opportunity to bring this experience and contact, from my days of teaching, into the church and community.

The community, young and old, were given the unique opportunity to actually touch a piece of space rock not of this Earth as they were allowed to handle some genuine meteorites. A small group of kindergarten children even got the opportunity to sit on the Moon and Mars along with the Cubs from 1st St Helen who all jumped over the Moon.

Over 400 people attended the experience including Bishop Auckland Astro Society, local school children, Scouts and Guides groups, air cadets, the Ark Youth group and of course the parish congregation.

These rare samples were provided free of charge by the UK's Science and Technology

Facilities Council (STFC), which provides educational packs in a bid to inspire young people to get involved in science.

The experience certainly had the desired effect. One young person who visited the exhibit said: "I have so many questions; I just want to find out more." This awe also helped to open up questions about faith, after all Astronaut John Glenn said: "To look at this sort of creation out here and not believe in God is impossible."

This same feeling made others open up about faith, the Big Bang and the existence of God. These discussions were all affirming and we continue to hold them in our prayers, and invite you to do the same, as they continue to explore.

The pack provided by STFC included a 1.2 billion-year-old piece of Mars rock and a 4.3 billion-year-old nickel meteorite. It is unlikely that students will ever get the chance to hold an object older than this, as Earth itself was formed 4.6 billion years ago.

The lunar samples were collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s during some of NASA's first manned space missions to the Moon. During these missions, a staggering 382kg of material was brought back to Earth – mostly for use by scientists, but small quantities are used to develop educational packs like this one.

Samples like these can tell us a great deal about the planets, from which they originate, but there is still much to learn – and STFC hopes these packs will encourage students to become the next generation of astronomers. Aside from this, my prayer is that these



materials, when handled and used by faith groups, will inspire them to look at creation in a way that they never have before and to see their unique place in creation. Buzz Aldrin as he stepped on to the Moon during that first landing said: When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Psalm 8:3-4.

STFC's Executive Chair, Professor Mark Thomson, said: "We are thrilled to be able to offer this unique opportunity to young people. It is not often they will be able to see close-up, and actually touch, such important fragments of science history. Samples like these are vital in teaching us more about our solar system, allowing us to confront theory with fact. We hope this experience will encourage the students to take up a career in science." STFC is the only authorised source to loan lunar samples to educational and scientific organisations in the UK.



If you would like to know more about this experience then please get in touch with me at St Helen's Church, West Auckland, Durham. Alternatively, if you would like the meteorites to land at your own parish, community or school, then contact STFC through their website: [www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

# Children at the heart of Bishop Philip

**From the very moment the new Bishop of Blackburn arrived in the cathedral, until the end of a service attended by more than 1,000 people from across Lancashire, including many civic, community and faith leaders, it was the voices of the young that were heard most loudly.**

Bishop Philip North had pledged when he was announced as the tenth Bishop of Blackburn in January that he would place children and young people at the heart of life in the diocese. True to that, all children who were present were invited to a very special 'Messy Installation' downstairs in the Cathedral Crypt – possibly the first time such an event specifically for children has been held at the same time as an installation service in any cathedral. Organised by the Diocesan Board of Education, it was a fun variation of the well-known 'Messy Church' that has grown in popularity in recent years and it allowed the children present to learn about the Bible and Jesus through play and craft.

Meanwhile the main service itself was a Eucharist of the Holy Spirit, during which sang the Cathedral Choir alongside the Cathedral Youth Choir and children from the following schools: Langho and Billington St Leonard's, Church of England Primary School, Salesbury Church of England Primary School, St Aidan's Church of England Primary Academy, Blackburn, St Christopher's Church of England High School, Accrington (Year 7), and St John's Church of England Primary School, Cliviger. At 2pm precisely Bishop Philip, as is custom for the inauguration of a new diocesan bishop, knocked loudly five times on the West Door of Blackburn Cathedral with an ancient Saxon hammer before being allowed to enter. He was met by three young people from St Luke's Church in Blackburn – Ollie, Lacey and Kenzie – who offered greetings and led the moment of welcome along with the entire congregation who had turned to face the action. Later in the service, the first reading from the Bible was delivered by Maayana Cox and Oscar Newby from All Saints, New Longton.



And children continued to be to the fore. Towards the end of the service Bishop Philip led a Messy Installation procession through the Cathedral and down the nave, with the youngsters all wearing colourful home-made mitres (Bishop's hats). The Bishop also donned a special cloak made for him during the Messy Installation by the children. Notable figures attending the service included the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Rt Hon. The Lord Shuttleworth KG KCVO and Lady Shuttleworth and Speaker of the House of Commons and MP for Chorley, the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle. Other guests were the High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mr David Taylor CBE; The Venerable Joshua Skee and Rev. Martin Stützer (representing our Diocesan links from South Africa and Germany) alongside many Mayors and

Mayoresses, council leaders, faith and community representatives.

From the Diocese, alongside Bishop Philip, were: Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff, Anglican Bishop of Lancaster; the Dean of Blackburn, Very Revd Peter Howell-Jones; the Venerable Mark Ireland, Archdeacon of Blackburn; the Venerable David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster; Dean of Women's Ministry, Revd Anne Beverley; the Bishop's Adviser on UKME issues and Deacon for the Installation Service, Revd Sarah Gill and many clergy and their parishioners from across Lancashire.



As well as clergy and civic processions, those in attendance and watching online via the livestream also witnessed the Oaths of Allegiance by Bishop Philip to His Majesty the King and to the Archbishop of York, the enthronement when the new Bishop takes his episcopal seat (the 'Cathedra') in the Cathedral and also the Presentation, when Bishop Philip was presented as the new Bishop of Blackburn to the congregation.

As well as an emphasis on children and young people at the heart of all we do, during the sermon (see below) Bishop Philip also placed the spotlight on social justice and the importance of proclaiming the Gospel to the whole County of Lancashire. He previously declared all three as key aims to be 'labouring tirelessly' for in the years to come when he was first announced as the new Bishop in January this year.

After the service was over, clergy from across the diocese gathered for one of the largest ever group pictures of Lancashire clergy ever taken. The entire congregation was then invited to a community picnic with pre-prepared boxes in the Cathedral grounds.

## How do you respond to a crisis?

*The sermon preached by the Rt Revd Philip North at his installation service on 24th June in Blackburn Cathedral as the 10th Bishop of Blackburn.*

For me, a recent clergy residential became a fascinating case study in just this. It was a freezing cold night when at 3am the fire alarm went off. Very loudly. And it didn't stop. The conference centre, it would seem, was burning down! So in temperatures of about minus 5 we obediently assembled in the car park.

Which is where it was possible to observe how people respond differently to crisis. So for example one observable reaction was panic. These panicking priests flapped about, worrying about loved ones or complaining about their plight. Another reaction was organisational frenzy. For example one priest started to take a register, another informed his family, another appeared in full cassock with cape and cincture as if ready to administer the last rites. A third possible reaction was denial, and these priests

didn't appear at all, claiming the next day they had slept through it all.

Now all of these are wholly understandable, indeed in some cases commendable, reactions to a crisis. But one thing I did not notice a single person doing was singing. I can tell you that for sure. As we stood in that freezing car park in our pyjamas waiting for the fire brigade to give the all clear, not one single person started to sing.

The Gospel that we have just heard was set against a backdrop of crisis. Mary and Elizabeth were facing a massive, multi-layered crisis of extreme proportions. Mary was a teenager, pregnant out of wedlock and facing social disgrace. Elizabeth was a woman of great age who had little chance of surviving childbirth. Both were powerless women in a patriarchal society. Both were living in extreme poverty. Their nation was under brutal Roman occupation.

So how did Mary and Elizabeth respond to such extreme crisis? They burst into song! They sang their hearts out! They sang a song their ancestors sang and they sang it with uncontrollable delight. And their song was not about escaping crisis or pretending it wasn't happening. It was Mary's song that transformed the crisis, for she knew that God was scandalously making his dwelling within her very self to bring about his plan of salvation.

Fast forward to 2023, and at times it feels that we have become almost accustomed to crisis. In the nation we have lived through austerity, Brexit, a



global Covid pandemic, a massive cost of living squeeze that has pushed millions of families over the edge and a terrifying war in Ukraine, all against the backdrop of a climate crisis.

And the Church, which we hope might be our refuge in crisis, has been incredibly adept at manufacturing crises of its own. We have locked ourselves into a mood of anxiety about declining numbers and income. We're worried sick about schism, division and disharmony, not least because of the Living in Love and Faith process. We heighten the mood of crisis by insulting each other on social media. We live in fear of the future as if we have forgotten that Jesus has already won the victory.

As happens in crisis, it's not hard to observe a range of responses to all this. Some parts of the church have gone into organisational frenzy, producing a new strategy or resource every day and so exhausting parochial clergy. Some people have given up and resorted to declinism, assuming that the crisis means that the Gospel no longer has any power and the Holy Spirit has left his church. Many churches have simply become locked into insularity and lost the confidence to proclaim.

But there is another way. In the face of crisis, we could sing. We could sing the song of the Gospel. With Mary we could sing of that kingdom



# North's Blackburn Installation



transformation that only Jesus can bring, a transformation that will burn away our fears and anxieties like dew in the midday sun.

Friends, Christians of Lancashire, let's sing with Mary the Gospel song. In the face of miscomprehension, opposition and division, let's lift our voices and sing that song until we are hoarse. Let's sing it until every single person in Lancashire has heard and responded. Let's sing Magnificat: the song of the Kingdom. And let's sing it for three good reasons.

First, because this song is a song of joy. So as we sing it, let's grow in every corner of Lancashire communities of joy.

When Mary sang Magnificat, there were only four people there, two of whom hadn't got round to being born. And yet between them there was (in Jeremy Taylor's words) such a collision of joy that it echoes through the centuries. How? Because their joy was not rooted in the contingencies and circumstances of their lives. It was rooted in Jesus and in relationship with him. It was rooted in a profound trust in his saving work.

By contrast, a cloak of anxiety seems to have fallen across so many of our churches who are locked in the past and anxious about the future. But it is not our anxiety that will draw people to Jesus, rather it is our joy in the Gospel. And Jesus is the cause of that joy.

So let's shake off our anxiety and grow joyful communities in parishes across the Diocese. Let's find fresh joy in our worship and in the friendship we find in the churches we grow. Let's go on planting new congregations to serve different demographics and neighbourhoods. Because every single person in this beautiful county deserves to be served by a joyful fellowship of Christians committed to service and worship and proclamation.



Second, this song is a song of justice. So as we sing it let's strive to build now the justice of God's kingdom.

Listen to what Mary sings. 'He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.' She knows that because God dwells in her womb, so God's kingdom of justice is amongst us.

What a contrast there is between Mary's vision of a world renewed and the realities of life in the United Kingdom today. Lancashire is a place of extreme social inequalities. There are streets in Morecambe where life expectancy is just 48, the lowest in the country. By contrast in Ribble Valley it is 84 which is just about the highest. Our coastal communities and mill towns have been massively hit by economic insecurity and pandemic. A culture of low pay means that many work hard but are still dependent on food handouts. We seem to be willing to accept poverty and injustice as if it were somehow inevitable.

It is not God's plan that children should go hungry, that labour should go unrewarded, that gifts should go unused and undiscovered, that so many should fail to flourish. So the work that our schools and parishes do to address injustice is heroic, because it is our task to live now as if God's future kingdom of justice had come. We do that as we feed the hungry, empower the disempowered, help our children to discover their true value and purpose and live in harmony with the created world. These things are not bolt-ons to the Gospel. They are the Gospel.



And as we address injustice in the nation we also need to name and address injustice within our own church, one that embodies so many of the inequalities that we so freely condemn when we see them elsewhere. We cannot accept any longer a situation in which some dioceses are sitting on vast piles of inherited cash whilst others in the north have next to nothing. We cannot accept any longer these wealth disparities between dioceses which mean people in Lancashire pay more in parish share for fewer clergy because we didn't get lucky when the big bucks were being handed out. How will God honour a church which is so keen to address injustice when it sees it elsewhere but will not first remove the vast log in its own eye?

And thirdly, this song is a song of the young. So as we sing it, let's place our children, our young people and our schools right at the very heart of our common life.

Mary was just 14 when she sang this song, one which so inspired the ageing Elizabeth and which has inspired so many generations since. A teenager, filled with the joy of the Gospel and sharing that joy with others. A teenager, set free by Jesus to believe, rejoice and proclaim the good news of his salvation.

The Church often engages in ministry to the young as a kind of insurance policy. We do it to make the adults feel a bit better about themselves because it suggests the church may have a future. But the desire for institutional survival is the wrong starting point. The right starting point is the Gospel song all ages can sing together.

We want young people to be inspired by the person of Jesus. This wonderful current generation, so many of them in this cathedral today, is a searching one. They are asking profound and challenging questions about purpose, about relationships, about the future of the planet. Christians believe the goal of that searching is found in relationship with Jesus. So let's create the spaces where we can have those conversations. Imagine every parish engaging in ministry to the young. Imagine a network of children and youth workers supporting that ministry across Lancashire. Imagine an even closer partnership between churches and our amazing family of church schools for the benefit of the young.



But equally, we want young people to inspire the church, just as Mary inspired Elizabeth. The song is incomplete unless all ages sing together. So let's create the places where young people can pray, worship, sing and lead. Let's follow the lead of Jesus and place the young right at the heart of the community as role models of Christian discipleship. That's a true kingdom vision.

So in the midst of endless talk of crisis, let's sing the song of salvation to Lancashire. A song of joy. A song of justice. A song of the young. A song that will change lives.

A few years ago I was leading a pilgrimage to Bethlehem. We found ourselves one morning in a beautiful, circular chapel on the Shepherds' Field, but there was such a hubbub of sound it was impossible even to think. People were gossiping and chatting, tour guides were shouting, it was a racket. So four of us started very quietly to sing. We hummed in harmony the tune of Silent Night. And one by one people stopped talking, they listened, and then they too started to sing until the whole Chapel was singing the song of Jesus. And when they stopped, the silence was sublime. It was a foretaste of the perfect peace of heaven.

Let's sing. Let's sing the Gospel song. Let's sing with all our hearts, so that all might know Jesus Christ through whose saving work we sinful mortals are raised up to play our part in the eternal music of the heavenly choir. Amen.



# The Joy of Religious Life

Fr Peter Yates of the Community of the Servants of the Will of God reflects on closeness to the Almighty through sacrifice and service

I had been mulling over writing something that would speak about the joy of religious life when I googled the words: 'joy' and 'monastic life'. I was rather pleasantly surprised at what came up. The Joy of the Saints – Exploring the Role of Joy in Desert Monasticism (by Deborah Casewell at Liverpool). 'Joy' among the Desert Fathers and Mothers?! Really? I thought. Surely this author has been reading something different from me!

These Fathers and Mothers flourished in the deserts of Egypt and Palestine from the beginning of the 4th century. All my forays into the writings of these spiritual athletes of the Faith uncovered chapters on fasting, night vigils, prayer, and a minimal diet; accounts of what appears to us strange, even eccentric behaviour, or occasionally some wise anecdotes about the resolving of disputes between brothers, all of these would also feature.

I have been reading these holy saints all through my monastic life, usually in the popular editions translated by Benedicta Ward on the Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Lives of the Desert Fathers. I had never particularly associated joy and happiness with the strictness and rigours of this ascetic life. I was nevertheless pleased as it chimed in with my own experience of monastic life, though I had always concluded that my experience was peculiar to me, not generally the case. I re-read the article and happily concluded that it was spot-on.

The author was not simply recording the presence of these qualities in the lives of these saints, as though they had been incidental. She was stressing that joy and happiness were integral to their life and witness, indeed they were the very goal and purpose of that life of prayer. The final purpose of the life was after all union with God, and the result of closer relationship with God is... happiness, fulfilment, joy, well-being: incisively simple, and exactly the case.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers represent the very foundation of Christian religious life. Every Christian religious order that exists owes its foundation ultimately to the inspiration of these 'giants' of the Christian faith, with their bold and courageous, 'ascetic' endeavours, whose spiritual influence affected the spread of the Christian faith to every corner of this world: a fresh outpouring of the gospel 300 years after the original Pentecostal outreach.

But the conclusions that this writer came to remain true for all of us: spiritual ascetic endeavour of any kind is never an 'end' in itself. The purpose of any discipline in the life of prayer or in spiritual endeavour generally must always be one of a closer relationship with God, and in the doing of His will. One of the proofs of that should be an increase of love, of well-being, happiness, of a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

In his writings, Fr Sofrony – the celebrated writer on prayer and former abbot of the Orthodox monastery in Essex – used to speak about 'the cost of prayer, even to the point of shedding blood'. We know the Lord actually sweated blood in the testing of his prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22.44). 'Blood' is what our fall from God costs, and it is therefore also how it is repaired... through the cost of self-giving, self-sacrificial lives, lives offered through a life of prayer.

But sacrifice is never an isolated act. The Letter to the Hebrews in speaking of sacrifice in the Lord's

offering strikes what may sound to us like a discordant note: the author says:

Jesus ... who for the sake of the joy that was before Him, endured the cross, disregarding the shame. (Hebrews 12.2, my italics)

What (we may think) has joy to do with his sufferings to take away the sin of the world? Well, everything really... it teaches us first that joy is wholly bound up with sacrifice, dying to self, with self-giving love, as the Lord himself reminds us when speaking about the pain for a woman of child-bearing giving way to the joy of the birth of a child. The two are not contraries, not complete opposites but wholly bound up with each other.

It is important to remember this. Sacrifice and disciplined self-giving are not 'ends' in themselves but always stepping stones, to help serve a greater and fuller purpose of love, love for God and so for our fellow human beings. In Christian understanding, they are intricately bound up with joy and the happiness that the sacrificial love secures and achieves for its beneficiaries, our fellow human beings.

sacrificial love but are its very fruit.

This joy that is intrinsic to religious life was confirmed for me recently when an article on the religious life was sent to Root, written by a parish priest in the south-east. His earliest encounter with this life in the Church of England had been through some Sisters working in London's East End, and his memory of those experiences was that the norm was laughter and humour. There had clearly been for him a drawing of warmth and friendship and the sense of a wholesome conviviality that had remained with him all his life.

"The first thing I noticed was how jolly the Sisters all were: lots of smiles, good humour and laughter. They were also a great cross-section of society, from a wide variety of backgrounds." The life for him is truly incarnational in linking closely the spiritual and sacramental, that have their natural outreach and expression in pastoral care: Holy Communion was quite literally the centre of their lives and very being, and that they went out into the East End of London and ministered to the poorest of the poor and to those who had fallen through the gaps of the NHS and Social Services.

Such should be the mark of genuineness and authenticity in religious life wherever it is found, whether religious are working in food banks on a council estate, in shelters for the homeless or within the confines of the walls of an enclosed convent or monastery. The sacrifice is the same for all and the joy also is the same.

The author corrects a common fallacy about those taking vows of religion – the thought that separation and consecration is somehow 'escaping' the world, rather than actually becoming more deeply committed to that world through the life of the Church: "Far from 'running away' from the real world, as some might think, the Sisters knew the real world only too well with all its joys and sadness. No-one was too smelly, too dirty, too 'difficult' for them."

The experience in fact became formative in the end for the priest's own vocation and eventual ordination:

As I grappled with my emerging vocation to the priesthood, I found the Sisters' example very moving. I also came gradually to discern a connection between our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and our care of other people, which goes right back to the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. Jesus gives us His Real Presence in order that we may go and wash the feet of other people, just as the Lord washed his disciples' feet on the night he was betrayed.

Religious life and the priesthood are both rooted in the understanding of sacrifice, of that self-giving that is at the heart of Christian witness, reflecting the self-giving of Christ Himself for the human race. They both require the discernment, and encouragement, of new young vocations to pass on the baton of the faith in the race for which we are all running to reach the finishing point.

Once again, we are planning to hold a Taster Day for anyone who would like to mull over a possible vocation to religious life, or even just consider it as a possibility, later this year in the 'steel city' of Sheffield at St Matthew's, Carver Street. For enquirers, please e-mail: nunsandmonks@gmail.com

**HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT BECOMING A MONK NUN or FRIAR in the Anglican Church?**

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**SATURDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

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The lives of the desert fathers and mothers who were the precursors and exemplars of a life consecrated to God, in remarkable lives of prayer and sanctity, were yet noted for their humanity, their laughter, sense of warmth and care for one another, and also for those visiting them. The article I referred to earlier mentions one visitor to Antony who was a hunter very disconcerted at what seemed to him a lightness of approach to the seriousness of ascetic life. He somewhat reproached Antony for this. Antony asked him in return to shoot his bow and arrows continually. He responds: 'if I bend my bow so much I will break it.' And for the same reason, Antony replies: 'it is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break' (as Benedicta Ward quoted in The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection).

These valiant warriors of the faith knew that their purpose of drawing closer to God through the sacrifice of their lives, in self-renunciation, would mean also the sharing of the joy that such sacrifice involves. For joy and happiness are not incidental to

# Holy hands to consecrate, bless, absolve and anoint

In ordination season, Rebecca Swyer offers a reflection on the life and work of a priest

Probably one of the most famous pieces of religious art is a pencil and ink drawing of a man's praying hands by the Renaissance artist, Albrecht Dürer. It's part of a series of drawings he did as preparation for an altarpiece and is sometimes called 'The Hands of the Apostle'.

Many people believe the model of the praying hands to be his younger brother Albert. They came from a middle-class, but poor, family of eighteen children. Both boys wanted to be artists, but their parents couldn't – for obvious reasons – afford to send the pair of them to art school.

One night the two brothers decided they would toss a coin, and the loser would go to work in the coal mines near their home to support the other brother during his years of study. Four years later, they would reverse roles: the brother who went to school would then be able to work and make money to support the other brother as he studied and pursued his dreams of becoming an artist.

Albrecht won the coin toss and flourished, becoming a gifted artist. When four years passed, Albrecht came home and found Albert weeping. Albert showed his brother his working hands that had been damaged during the previous four years, becoming rough, disfigured and arthritic, meaning he couldn't become an artist.

Albrecht was said to be so moved by his brother's sacrifice that he asked Albert to pose for him and so it is Albert's hands that we have captured in the famous sketch. They symbolise the love, sacrifice and generosity of Albert for his brother.

As a deacon at the altar, I have a privileged view of a priest's hands. With some very enthusiastic priests I do a liturgical sway to avoid their hand hitting my face! I've been deacon for newly-ordained priests with hands shaking with nerves as they say their first mass. With those I deacon for regularly, I know exactly what their hands will do and when. I find it very moving to see human hands – sometimes old and a bit arthritic, and sometimes young and unlined – reverently touching and consecrating the bread and wine; God working in and through a human being.

Whether young or old, all priests share in the ministry of Jesus Christ. When a priest presides at the altar for the eucharist, Christ works through him in the power of the Holy Spirit and bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ. The priest's hand that makes the sign of the cross to bless us is in a very real way Christ's hand.

When a priest sits hearing someone's confession, it is Christ who hears through his ear. When that priest pronounces absolution for our sins, he's pronouncing Christ's absolution.

When a priest anoints the sick with oil, it is Christ offering the ministry of healing. As a priest looks out for those in need and offers pastoral care and compassion, that too is Jesus Christ working in and through him.

When ears hear, hands touch, eyes see, lips speak it is Christ working in and through the priest.

Whilst the apostle Thomas is now celebrated in July, his feast day used to be celebrated in December, which alongside Pentecost and Michaelmas it's been one of the traditional times for ordination. It's significant that both Peter and Thomas were disciples with obvious human frailties. Peter often got the wrong end of the stick or said stupid things –



even denying Christ three times. Thomas is known as 'Doubting Thomas' who refused to believe in Christ's resurrection until he'd touched Christ's wounds.

Yet both Thomas and Peter became apostles and proclaimed the gospel fearlessly, constantly and with clarity. We have those wonderful words in John's gospel when Thomas encounters the risen Lord he proclaims: 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20.28) The doubter becomes the believer.

It is a timely reminder to all ordained as deacons, priests, or bishops of our own human frailty. The ministry to which we're called isn't our own and we can't do it in our own strength. That's a route that will lead to disaster for our own souls as well as others. Ordained ministry is the greatest privilege, but Christ works in and through us human beings. Sometimes indeed he must work round our human frailty. Pope Benedict spoke of the Apostle Thomas as being an important role model to us for at least three reasons. 'First, because it comforts us in our insecurity; second, because it shows us that every doubt can lead to an outcome brighter than any uncertainty; and, lastly, because the words that Jesus addressed to him remind us of the true meaning of mature faith and encourage us to persevere, despite the difficulty, along our journey of adherence to him.' (General Audience, 27 September 2006)

Late last year, I joined in the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of priesthood of Fr Gordon Bond SSC (pictured above) at St Richard's, Hayward's Heath. It was not merely to celebrate a special anniversary for Fr Gordon, but to celebrate the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in which he has shared in for these past 50 years, and counting. As with all the new deacons and priests this summer, and all others who mark their anniversaries, Father Gordon shares in the ministry of Jesus Christ, following generations of priests who have been called to do the same. The genealogy or family tree of Jesus in Matthew's gospel (1.1-17) reminds us of the importance of

rooting events and people in history. The continuity of God's relationship with human beings since the beginning of time to the very end of time and for all eternity. The three-fold order of ministry has clear links to the apostles – the apostolic succession. God continually calling out people to serve him in ordained ministry, sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

We shouldn't talk about 'my ministry' as it belongs to Jesus Christ, who calls us through his body the Church. It is public ministry and yet there's an intensely intimate dimension also. The incarnation means a priest isn't merely a host to Jesus Christ, but rather changes at their deepest ontological level. We must never forget that Mary wasn't just a host, but her genes were fully part of Jesus. Just as we'll look at a child and comment on how they look like their mum or dad, Jesus would have looked like Mary and probably had some of her human mannerisms. So when a man is ordained, priesthood permeates his whole being, but he's still an individual, unique human being. Indeed, when we answer God's call and follow him, we become more fully the person we were created to be.

Dürer's drawing of the praying hands remind us of the hidden sacrifices that are part of human life, but which are certainly central to priestly ministry. Aside from the visible service at the altar, we give thanks today for the hidden service and devotion of all priests that proclaim and reveal Jesus Christ.

This is a daily calling and has been so for Fr Gordon for 50 years and countless others, the daily work of Christ in and through them. May those who have received the grace of holy orders in recent weeks go on to have such long and fruitful ministries. After the ordination service, it is customary for people to kneel, kiss the newly-ordained priest's hands and ask for a blessing. This isn't about worshipping the priest, but about recognising and reverencing Christ who will work through the priest's hands in consecrating, blessing, absolving, anointing. We give thanks for this priestly ministry and pray too for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and diaconate. For it is through the priestly ministry and these men of God we might come to know, love, and follow Jesus, praying for them as they pray for us.





# As we have received it

Tom Middleton offers some Forward in Faith Ramblings

When it was kindly suggested I might contribute a piece for this edition of Together, I did warn the Editor that my submission would be rambling both in the variety of its content and its geographical diversity. Nonetheless, he urged me on and so here goes.

I shall start at home. I worship on Sundays and major feast days at the church of All Saints, Lincoln. I am the independent examiner for the parish (I had a former life as an accountant), and my wife Libby lends a hand with the floral arrangements for special occasions (recalling an earlier existence as a professional florist).

It has been a joy to see the parish flourish in recent years – my arrival has been entirely coincidental – to the point at which there are not only growing groups of musicians and of servers but also two full-time pastoral assistants currently. All of this has been achieved under the wise guidance of our parish priest, Fr Paul Noble, who sadly has to retire next year (shortly after Easter in fact). So, this represents a rather unsubtle plug – and an early alert – for any Society priests who might be interested in applying...

My working base – outside of my office at home in a village close to Grantham – is the church of St Andrew, Holborn. The Forward in Faith office there is admirably run by Louisa Thomas, whose husband is now the Bishop of Oswestry, and when we are able to we benefit from attending the lunchtime Mass at St Andrew's.

My working life at Forward in Faith is varied, both in terms of content and location. The Forward in Faith Trustees tend to meet as an Executive four times a year and the bishops of The Society – for whom the

Director of Forward in Faith acts as secretary – on a similar number of occasions. Zoom calls can and do fill any gaps in the schedule as and when conversations are required between meetings.

Society parishes and priests contact me for support and advice when the occasion demands it. This is often to do with the resolution – renewing it, getting the right wording, dealing with the diocese etc. – and more recently there has been (unsurprisingly) enquiries regarding diocesan proposals for pastoral and parish reorganisation in the light of the financial pressures they almost all face. We have tended to opt for affinity groupings of parishes, where possible, as they provide a better chance of a future appointment of a Society incumbent than a geographical alignment of a mixed group of parishes would do.

Another key aspect of Forward in Faith's work is for advocacy of the Catholic position across the Church of England, including through the work of the Catholic Group on General Synod and through the work of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors (known as PEVs and occupying the three Sees of Beverley, Oswestry and Richborough) and of the Bishop of Fulham through the London Plan.

Critical current issues revolve around promoting our received understanding – and that of the wider Church – of the nature of the sacraments of holy matrimony and of confession. There will be further statements on both those issues – either in the name of Forward in Faith or of The Society – in due course.

Readers will appreciate the importance of going out to meet people and I accept all invitations to speak to, and answer questions from, gatherings of Forward in Faith members at a local level (often in a single diocese or in a few dioceses joined together). Covid inevitably had an impact on such get togethers, but it is good to see them make a return.

At certain times of year, most notably at the Christ Masses celebrated by Society bishops and at Society ordinations (for which we include a definition on the Society website as there are more permutations and combinations than you might initially think possible!), there are ideal opportunities to go out and support the work of The Society and meet its clergy and laity. I was fortunate to attend Society Christ Masses in Sunderland, Lichfield, Holborn and Walsingham this year and Petertide Society ordinations in Manchester, Holborn and Bristol.

While each of these services has its own character, as you would expect, it is tremendously heartening to see such high standards of liturgy, music and preaching in place across the country. Speaking of which, I recently attended Bishop Philip North's installation as the diocesan bishop in Blackburn. It was wonderful that the installation could take place in the context of a Sung Mass and also that so many young people could be there to witness it.

Forward in Faith recently staged its National Festival, which Louisa so ably organises. It is held in May each year at the church of St Alban, Holborn and we combine a joyful Sung Mass (which includes high quality choral music) with a good lunch and some afternoon talks on matters of interest, concluding with Benediction. The Festival is open to any member of Forward in Faith and so please look out for the advertisement for next year's event and join us on the day if you can. If you are not a member, then please join!

Another benefit of joining Forward in Faith is that you will receive the excellent New Directions publication ten times a year. We have invested heavily in New Directions in every sense of that word, and I am sure new members will find much of interest in it. There is only one way to find out...

I shall close by wishing you well in your endeavours in your parishes. The Forward in Faith chaplain prays for all Society parishes by name at Mass in the English Chapel in Gordon Square. I ask that you pray for our work in supporting and promoting the Catholic Faith as we have received it in the Church of England and as we intend to pass it on to the next generation.

*Tom Middleton is the Director of Forward in Faith.*



*Confidence in ministry, sacraments, and episcopal oversight*

**The Society, under the patronage of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda, provides a wealth of resources and statements for the ongoing assurance of sacramental order and doctrine within the life of the Church of England.**

**Information includes: the registration of priests, deacons and ordinands on the About Us pages; names and contact details of Bishops' Representatives in each diocese; lists of affiliated parishes; publications such as the Together newspaper; brand pack and logo resources.**

[www.sswsh.com](http://www.sswsh.com)

**In addition, the Forward in Faith website ([www.forwardinfaith.com](http://www.forwardinfaith.com)) offers a number of resources covering material about women bishops and women priests, information on Mutual Flourishing and the House of Bishops' Declaration, articles, addresses, statements, and the Forward in Faith brand pack with logos.**

St Andrew Holborn, 5 St Andrew Street, London EC4A 3AF ✦ 020 7388 3588 ✦ [admin@sswsh.com](mailto:admin@sswsh.com)

# Adore, Proclaim, Be

*Fr Paul Hutchins ssc celebrates the Blessed Sacrament in our lives, and how it calls us back into the living presence of the Lord*

In a recent telephone call with the Superior General a while ago, towards the end of the conversation I asked in passing who was preaching at the National Festival this year. Bishop Glyn, as Superior General said that he and the Treasurer General had decided that the Secretary General was preaching, as I am the Secretary General, it was news to me! That's the problem with too many generals!

There will be times when we hit the wall, we feel like we just cannot go on, maybe physically or mentally, or spiritually. We have an example of this in the Book of Kings (particularly 18.25-46) with Elijah, who has hit the wall. He is on the run. After his encounter with the Priests of Baal in which they wanted a showdown between their gods and Yahweh, Elijah had been successful in receiving a sign of fire from God and then after that he had the throats slit of the priests. Queen Jezebel is rather upset about all of this and sends her army after him.

Elijah runs and after forty days he gives up in the desert, he cannot go on and he takes shelter under a broom tree. He just gives up. He prays that he will die. He has hit the wall and he cannot go on. However, God has other ideas and sends an angel. The Angel of the Lord brings food and drink, he encourages Elijah to nourish himself and he then has the strength to move on. Elijah carries on to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. And Elijah can carry on because he has partaken of food and drink from heaven.

There will be times when we feel like Elijah, when we hit the wall spiritually. The desert that we find ourselves in can be arid, dry, and indifferent; and ultimately we usually end up there because of sin. Maybe that sin is habitual, maybe we are stuck in a pattern of it, and it could be pride, envy, resentment and addiction or an attachment, anger... the list goes on! Sometimes because it is habit or



attachment we just are not aware that we are in that wilderness, we just go on as if everything is normal and we don't need sustenance. But we are not heading to the Mountain of God, we are heading to our own self-made mountain; we have lost our way.

In gathering for the CBS festival, we came to adore the Lord Jesus in his real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. We came to adore him and show him the love and respect which is his due. The solution to our 'hitting the wall' is to eat and drink the heavenly food that comes down from heaven to feast spiritually on him, the Christ. We need to feast on the Bread of Life because this is where we get the necessary sustenance that we need to live, to have real life.

We do not need to put our trust in physical food that we eat each day that sustains us, we do however need to trust in the spiritual food, the bread of the angels that gives us eternal life. It is essential to partake of it; it is after all required to give us life; 'whoever eats this bread will live for ever.' The bread that Jesus gives us is the fullest, the truest source of life: 'I am the bread of life,' he tells us, we must eat of this bread always. If we eat of this we will live forever, our moments under the broom tree are shattered as we partake of this life giving bread, our daily bread.

Deep down in our hearts and souls we want this life, this eternal life. If we want this life we need to eat this bread. We need to rediscover this proclamation by receiving Holy Communion, Sunday by Sunday and day by day and not just eat and walk away but proclaim Jesus who is the bread of life. Elijah had to eat to get up and move towards Horeb and we do

too, but when we do, we receive life when we eat him who is the bread of life. Jesus offers us this life-giving bread.

The Eucharistic bread that we receive is required for eternal life, Jesus who is the source of this life gives us himself in the Blessed Sacrament. If we are starving spiritually, it is because we stay away from him and we have to be ready to realise that and make the effort to meet him to go to Horeb. We have to get up and move away from our broom tree as tempting as it is to remain. In the Blessed Sacrament, we have to adore, proclaim and be. We adore Jesus by frequent, regular communion. We need to have reverence and fear for Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament. We can also achieve this by adoration, by spending time in prayer before the Lord in Exposition or in front of the tabernacle, knowing the awesome presence of him who is life.

Proclaiming Jesus. He is the bread from heaven the bread of life. In the Blessed Sacrament, we have no mere morsel; we have him who is real and true. We need to be bold in our proclamation of Jesus's real presence. We need to proclaim that this is required sustenance, not an optional extra but the means by which we are saved; the means by which the bread of life gives us eternal life.

Being. You are what you eat. We need to become the Eucharist, be the Eucharist, live the Eucharist, the living bread from heaven. We have to be open to the Lord having an effect in our lives. We need to journey to the Lord to Horeb, the broom tree is tempting and when we hit it we need to get up. The bread of heaven is there for us at the altar of the Lord and that is where we need to be. That is why we are here today, to adore, proclaiming and being.

*The CBS Festival was held at St George's, Preston, on Saturday 17th June.*



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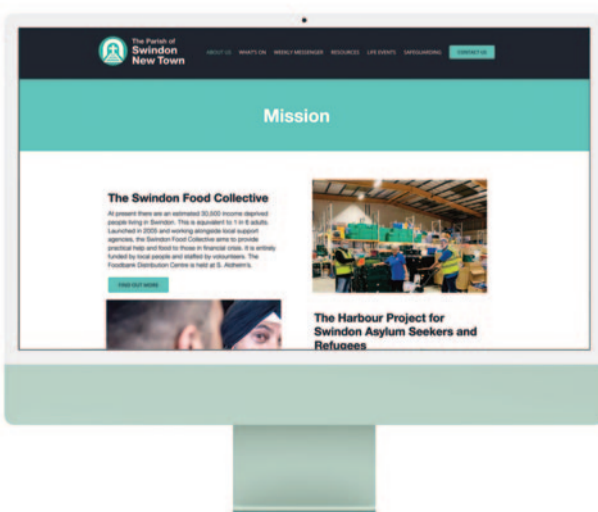
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**We're proud to have created and manage websites for:**

- Forward In Faith
- The Society
- Additional Curates Society
- See of Oswestry
- See of Richborough
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# Getting to know the Mother of Our Lord

## The Society of Mary is off to Lourdes this summer



I had been driving through deep, dark countryside just after Christmas many years ago. This was before cars had sat navs. I eventually pulled up at the house of the grandparents of a good friend of mine. I'd never met her family. I parked feeling slightly bothered by the ordeal of not knowing where I was and having struggled to find where I was going. Before I had a chance to knock on the door, her grandma appeared with a large gin and tonic in her hand and the first words she said to me were, "I'm sure you need this." Oh yes, I did!

The Society of Mary exists so that we as God's people can get to know the only person in the Bible biologically related to Jesus, his Mother. It is perfectly natural during the course of our friendships that we meet their family; relationships with boyfriends or girlfriends are entering a deeper phase often when we meet our loved one's parents. So it is a beautiful part of the deepening of our relationship with Jesus that we meet his Mother.

The Society has been around since 1931 when two Anglo-Catholic organisations merged: the Confraternity of our Lady and the League of our Lady. It is overseen by our Superior General and is organised by the Chaplain General. It's been a year of transitions as at the May Devotion Bishop Robert Ladds stepped down to be replaced by Fr Graeme Rowlands and I in turn replaced him. Bishop Robert had been Superior General since 2000. He's much loved and respected within and without the Society of Mary, as many readers will know. I've been struck on some of my travels across the country by how keen people are to see him and chat with him. He's always celebrated Mass for us beautifully, teaching us how to handle that which is sacred, and needless to say never knowingly under-dressed. Fr Rowlands was the obvious choice to succeed him as Superior General. It's been a real joy over the last few years to accompany him on trips to Lourdes and Walsingham and to be infected with some of his love for and knowledge of Our Lady and those places she holds dear. I'm hugely aware of the big (and buckled) shoes I step into.

I first went to Lourdes in 2008 when it was my privilege to be one of the deacons at the Mass celebrated by Cardinal Walter Kasper at which the then Archbishop Rowan Williams preached. I proclaimed the Gospel in front of some twenty five thousand people! In his opening comments at the



Mass, Cardinal Kasper reminded us that Lourdes is known for its miracles and it was beyond the reckoning of many that an Archbishop of Canterbury would be preaching at a Mass in Lourdes celebrated by a cardinal. Mary wants to see the followers of her son united and she will have been very happy to see it.



Some 50 of us are off to Lourdes in August this year (there may still be spaces available even by the time this has gone to print if you ask Tangney Tours).

especially for the renovation or creation of Marian shrines. We organise pilgrimages (not just to Lourdes) and financially support other groups going to places where Our Lady is honoured. Our biannual publication, Ave, is expertly brought together by Fr Sam Cross, sent to all members and available on our website. We organise two national festivals each year, one in May in the south of England and one in October further north. On 7th October this year we look forward to gathering at St George's, Preston.



A few years ago the Society of Mary decided that its liturgical offerings would be overseen and celebrated by priests who are Chaplains of Mary, Mother of the Church. These are priest members of the Society of Mary who are also members of the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda. You can see these 'stormtroopers of our Lady,' as I've heard them known, at events wearing their medals. We currently have 156 chaplains and admission continues to be administered by Bishop Robert.

One great blessing I find through my

We usually go every other year, participating in the liturgies of the Shrine, especially an evening torchlight Rosary Procession and a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. We also gather as a group for Mass across the Sanctuary domain and in beautiful places such as Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges. A contingent of



twelve-to-eighteen-year-olds attends and they're always greatly changed and touched by the pilgrimage, as the adults are by their presence among us.

The Society of Mary seeks to encourage devotion to the Mother of God. As well as our national association there are local wards, overseen by a Ward Superior who is appointed by the Executive. These wards can be good ways to get people from different parishes together or be a means for folk to come together in a small group within their parish community. The Executive makes financial grants,

membership of the Society of Mary is an awareness of the great heritage of faith of which we are called to be part. It's all too easy to think about the practise of our faith as being simply what is easiest for me and what makes most sense in my circumstances. And while there needs to be a wisdom seeking to live out our faith grounded in reality, it is also comforting to see how others have witnessed to the saving love of God – often in difficult circumstances – and their perseverance has meant we reap spiritual benefits today. I think especially of those who have supported the Society of Mary and the Shrines of our Lady over the decades, often thankless tasks. Few initially believed St Bernadette; many would have liked Fr Hope Patten not to have bothered. I continue in the Church of England in part because of an awareness of this heritage, costly won for us by others, and which I hope to pass on so still more can enjoy it in the future. May the world come to know Jesus and Mary, his Mother!

**Fr Simon Morris is the new Chaplain General of the Society of Mary.**



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**Sunday** - 1030 Solemn Mass.

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**Weekday Masses:**

Monday 1200, Tuesday 1200, Wednesday 1000, Friday 1100, Saturday 1000

Rector: Fr. Michael Gill SSC  
0208 897 8836.

[www.saintdunstan.org.uk](http://www.saintdunstan.org.uk)

### ST. ANDREW'S, KINGSBURY, NW9 8RZ

**Sunday**

Sung Mass 10.30am followed by refreshments

**Thursday**

9.30am Rosary or Exposition, 10am Low Mass followed by refreshments

Priest: Fr Jason Rendell  
020 8205 7447

[www.standrewskingsbury.org.uk](http://www.standrewskingsbury.org.uk)

### HOLY TRINITY

WINCHMORE HILL, N21 3JF

**Sunday**

10.30am Sung Mass & Junior Church.

**Weekday Mass** - 12 noon

Wednesday and Friday.

**Saturday**

10am Mass.

For occasional services and enquiries contact The Parish Office;

Tel 020 8364 2724; email [holytrinityn21a@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinityn21a@gmail.com)

[www.holytrinitywinchmorehill.org](http://www.holytrinitywinchmorehill.org)

### ST LUKE'S, JERSEY.

**Sunday**

0830 Said Mass

1000 Solemn Mass

1800 (1st Sun) Solemn Evensong & Benediction

For daily Mass times see website:

[www.stlukesjersey.com](http://www.stlukesjersey.com)

Fr Nick Barry

### ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, TONBRIDGE ROAD, MAIDSTONE ME16 8BS

The Society Church in the County Town

**Parish Mass** Sunday 10.30am

**Low Mass** Thursday 10.30am

For all enquiries please contact Eleanor Relle 01622 679551

### ST.AUGUSTINE, GRIMSBY.

Sundays - Parish Mass 10am, Solemn Evensong & Benediction 6pm (First Sunday). Weekday Mass Wednesday 10am

### S. PAUL'S

Hasland, Chesterfield

**Sunday** - 10.30am

Sung Parish Mass

**Wednesday** - 10.30am

Low Mass

### S.JAMES THE APOSTLE

Temple Normanton, Chesterfield

**Sunday** - 9.00am Parish Mass

**Thursday** - 7.15pm Low Mass

Fr Geoffrey Borrowdale SSC  
01246 232486

[frgeoffrey@stpaulshasland.com](mailto:frgeoffrey@stpaulshasland.com)  
[www.stpaulshasland.com](http://www.stpaulshasland.com)

### THE PARISH OF SWINTON & PENDLEBURY MANCHESTER

**Sunday**

8am & 5.30pm Mass,  
St Peter's (M27 OWA)

Sung Mass 9.30am All Saints' (M27 9UG), 10.30am Saint Peter's, 11am Saint Augustine's (M27 8UX)

Fr Jeremy Sheehy, 0161 794 1578  
Parish Office, 0161 727 8175 e-mail - [paroffsandp@btconnect.com](mailto:paroffsandp@btconnect.com)  
Weekday and festival information on our [achurchnearyou.com](http://achurchnearyou.com) pages

### SS. PETER AND PAUL, BURGH-LE-MARSH AND ALL SAINTS, WAINFLEET, LINCOLNSHIRE

(5 MILES FROM SKEGNESS)

**Sunday**

Sunday Sung Mass with Sermon at 9.30am  
Sunday Choral Evensong with Sermon at 6pm

We welcome all visitors, including those with well-behaved dogs.

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Call Fr Aiden for details 01754 450815  
[www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/21-075BT/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/21-075BT/)

### ST.AUGUSTINE'S, Thicketford Rd.,Tonge Moor, Bolton, BL2 2LP.

**Sunday** - 8am Said Mass, 9.15am Said Mass (St.Aidan's), 10.30am Sung Mass. 3rd

**Sunday** - 6.30pm Evensong and Benediction.

Parish Priest, Fr.Tony Davies  
01204 523899.

### ST GEORGE'S PRESTON

A church of The Society under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Blackburn.

[www.sgp.org.uk](http://www.sgp.org.uk) or  
[www.facebook.com/stgeorgethemartyrpreston](https://www.facebook.com/stgeorgethemartyrpreston)

**MIDWEEK**

12.30pm Mass  
(except Wednesday and Saturday)

**SUNDAY**

10.30am Sung Mass

Confessions by appointment.  
Parish priest: Fr David Craven SSC  
01772 755125  
[dacraven@hotmail.com](mailto:dacraven@hotmail.com)

## THE POLLARD TRUST

The Pollard Trust was set up under the Wills of the late Fr Harry Pollard and his wife Katie. The Wills, which were made in the 1950s, established a Trust to offer financial support to the unmarried daughters over the age of 50 once their father had passed away. I imagine in those days it was more common for spinster daughters to care for their elderly parents and, in so doing, face a lifetime of hardship with little or no support from the State. However, hopefully, in the last 70 or so years things have moved on and so the Trustees applied to the Charity Commission to widen the terms of the Trust so grants can be made to retired clergy and any unmarried dependents who were dependent upon them. The Trust is administered through the Church Union and priority will always be given to Church Union members as well as all Traditionalists.

An application can be found on the CU website ([www.churchunion.co.uk](http://www.churchunion.co.uk)). We are not able to offer grants to help with day-to-day living expenses but can help with the provision of items such as carpeting, repairs to property, and furniture including white goods. If you are aware of anyone who might be eligible to apply for assistance, please ask them or help them to complete an application form which will be considered at the next meeting of the Trustees (we normally meet three times a year). If you would like more information or to make an application then just get in touch with us at the Additional Curates Society, telephone number 0121 382 5533 or email address [info@additionalcurates.co.uk](mailto:info@additionalcurates.co.uk).

Claire Epsom, Chair



## THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY

The Prayer Book Society has been actively campaigning for the wider use of the Book of Common Prayer for more than 50 years. The Society with its members and Corporate Member churches strives to fix this "revolutionary" text at the heart of the worshipping life of the Church of England.

Join us as we celebrate our 50th anniversary  
11.00am Saturday 7 October 2023  
St Margaret's Church, Westminster

Sung Holy Communion,  
Preacher The Rt Revd & Rt Hon The Lord Chartres  
Lunch at Church House, guest speaker The Bishop of Oswestry  
Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey

Booking  
[www.pbs.org.uk](http://www.pbs.org.uk)

### SEAHAM: COUNTY DURHAM:

Parish of The Society in the Episcopal Care of the Bishop of Beverley.

S John Seaham Harbour (SJ)

SR7 7SA with All Saints

Deneside (AS)

& S Mary's Seaham (SM):

**Sunday** 11.00am Solemn

Mass & Sunday School SJ:

9.30am Sung Mass AS

(9.00am 1st Sun) 10.00am

Sung Mass SM (1st Sun)

5.00pm Solemn Evensong &

Benediction S Johns (2nd

Sun) Mass:

**Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat**, 9.30am

& **Tues** 6pm SJ – **Thurs**

9.30am AS & **Sat** 10.30am

SM (Confessions by

arrangement).

Priests: Fr Paul Kennedy SSC

0191 3665496 5816774

Fr John D' Silva 07309669680

Fr Chris Collins 0191 5817186

<http://www.stjohns-seaham.org.uk>

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Or contact

Mary Snape (Registrar) [mary@college-of-readers.org.uk](mailto:mary@college-of-readers.org.uk)

Robin Whitehouse (Chairman) [robin.wh@college-of-readers.org.uk](mailto:robin.wh@college-of-readers.org.uk)

Annual membership costs £15.00 per person

# ALMIGHTY GOD, GIVE US PRIESTS!

For almost 190 years, the mantra here at the Additional Curates Society can be summed up in those five short but powerful words "Almighty God, give us priests". They remind us that as desperate as we are for more priests, vocations begin with God and not with or need. Be in no doubt there has never been a time more than now when priestly vocations are necessary. You only need to look on any of the Society Bishop's websites to see the huge number of vacancies to realise how great our need is.

Once again, we have arranged a conference for those who wish to explore the possibility of ordination in the Church of England, whether that be self-supporting or stipendiary ministry. The conference will take place at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, a beautiful oasis of peace, lovely modern single bedrooms, all en-suite, and excellent homemade food. Importantly there is a chapel right at the heart of the centre where we can worship and listen to God speaking to us as together we try and discern what is being asked of us. We are delighted to be joined by the Bishop of Beverley, Bishop Stephen Race, a former Director of Ordinands as well as a training incumbent himself. Bishop Stephen comes with considerable experience and will be joined by several guests to give keynote addresses on some of the important topics for anyone considering ordination and needing to have thought through. They include: What is the process? Is God calling me? How should I order my life? How can I improve my spirituality? As well as equipping attendees with some of the necessary tools out of the vocations toolbox that will help navigate through selection, the conference brings likeminded people together who can share stories and may well arrive strangers but leave as friends.

So do get in touch with us as ACS Birmingham to book your place. Or, if you know of somebody in your congregation who is possibly being called to priestly ministry, then why not suggest it to them? I always say that when I was first feeling called to priestly ministry, I longed for somebody to say to me "Have you ever thought of ordination?" Because I knew that this would help to validate that call when somebody else saw it.

Finally, can I just challenge every reader of Together to play their part in the resourcing of the Church's ministry for future generations? I started by reminding us that vocations begin with God, and it is for that reason every one of us needs to constantly, fervently and faithfully pray for more vocations to the priesthood. And although I would of course say it, there is no better prayer than the ACS Prayer.

*Fr Darren Smith, General Secretary*

Almighty God, give us priests:  
to establish the honour of your holy name;  
to offer the holy sacrifice of the altar;  
to give us Jesus in the holy sacrament;  
to proclaim the faith of Jesus;  
to baptise and to teach the young;  
to tend your sheep; to seek the lost;  
to give pardon to the penitent sinner;  
to bless our homes; to pray for the afflicted;  
to comfort mourners;  
to strengthen us in our last hour;  
to commend our souls;  
Almighty God, give us priests!  
Holy Father, you gave us Christ  
as the shepherd of our souls;  
may your people always have priests  
who care for them with his great love.  
We make our prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen



## VOCATIONS CONFERENCE

20-22 October 2023

*for men considering a  
vocation to the priesthood*

A weekend of talks, worship,  
study and discussion with  
fellow discerners and clergy.

And an opportunity to ask  
questions, receive guidance  
and pray about the next step.

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