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Year of the Family launched at Mass

Pope Francis has proclaimed a Year of the Family, starting in March, and it will be marked across the Diocese of East Anglia with Masses, retreats, prayers and social events. Eldred Willey reports.

■ Pope Francis has proclaimed a Year of the Family within a year that also marks the 150th anniversary of St Joseph as the Protector of the Church.

The year of events began with the Mass of St Joseph at the Cathedral of St John's in Norwich on Friday March 19.

This Mass included a blessing of the new diocesan icon of the Holy Family – which was created by Fr Luke Goymour from the St Thomas of Canterbury parish in Brandon.

The icon will travel to each parish during the year and return to the Cathedral for a final Mass on St Joseph's Day 2022.

In his homily for the Feast of St Joseph, Bishop Alan Hopes asked people to remember three things.

Firstly, that Joseph was a worker, a carpenter. "Jesus must have stood often by him, and in his apprenticeship the Son of God blesses all human work and gives it a great dignity," said the Bishop.

Second, he is a family man, one who had a deep love and concern for Jesus and His mother Mary. And third, St Joseph was a "great model of faith", someone who did not speak in the Gospel, but listened to God.

May Joseph guard us all



Fr Luke Goymour with his icon of the Holy Family which will be travelling across the Diocese of East Anglia.

with his prayer," concluded Bishop Alan.

Talking earlier about the year of celebrations, Bishop Alan said: "During this past year, we have seen just how important the family is. So many have experienced how vulnerable relationships within our families can be. Children who no longer live at home have been unable to visit their parents.

"Grandparents have not been allowed to hug or see their grandchildren. Journeys to visit friends have not been possible. Like our faith, our family life was not intended to be lived in isolation.

"So this will be a year, when the pandemic is over, for coming together once more and renewing those essential and close family ties.

"Plans are underway for each Diocese and each parish to be able to mark this important year. Our Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Commission have already been discussing how we might assist in this renewal of the Family. Over 20 people are being trained across the Diocese for a Prayer and Listening Ministry to discuss problems big and small," said Bishop Alan.

"There will be Masses and retreats to celebrate Marriage and the Family during the course of the year, together with occasions when those who have lost a child, or who cannot have children, can come together to share their griefs and hopes.

Every parish will need to reflect on how it might cele-

brate this year, helping to strengthen family life and assisting those who have gone through difficulties.

"Renewing those essential and close family ties will also be vital for the Family of God – the Church."

Talking about the icon he has created, Fr Luke said: "The icon is of the Holy Family, which depicts St Joseph standing very slightly forward of Mary and Jesus. The image of St Joseph breaks out of the border and approaches us at the bottom of the icon. This is to show that St Joseph is the protector of the family.

"In approaching us the icon also shows us how in the Year of St Joseph, St Joseph now draws us into the Year of the Family."

■ See events to mark the Year of St Joseph – page 3.

An Easter message from Bishop Alan

All of us have been walking a long way of the Cross this year, says Bishop Alan Hopes in his Easter reflection.

■ On the way of the Cross, blood is mingled with tears – the Blood of Christ, and the tears of the Virgin Mary, of St Mary Magdalene, the women, and St John. With the saints leading us, by faith we know that we ourselves have walked along that way of the Cross.

It is part of the Christian mystery that our own lives are caught up in the life of Christ. Our own passion is absorbed by his compassion. Not a drop of our tears, blood or sweat falls to ground without being touched and transformed by those of Christ. Nothing is wasted by God. His guiding hand draws us through the valley of darkness into the brightness of the empty tomb, where he weaves human thorns into crowns.

All of us have been walking a long way of the Cross this year. And we continue to walk it. Suffering brings strong reactions, whether to those of Christ on the Cross, or of my own personal suffering, that of my neighbour or of the whole human family. As was the case with the saints, we can be left incoherent, confused and lonely.

Looking at our wounds, however, we can never forget that Jesus, once suffering and once dead, is now alive and present to us, not only in our sentiments, but in reality – his real, sacramental Presence before us.

At Easter, and every day in the celebration of the Mass and in the Church's whole life of worship, proclamation, and love, we are reminded that the horror of Calvary is not the end of our story.

The mystery of the Resurrection breaks into our confusion with a bright and radiating change for the better. Nothing can ever be the same again. Men and women can never remain exactly the same. The truth and brightness of the Resurrection shattering our prison bars is not a distant theory, but our real, Christian experience of a life of faith in the Risen Lord. Our co-operation with God's guiding hand over time gradually changes the way we act, and how we read the signs of the times within and around us. After tragedy, God re-creates. Wounds remain, but with eyes of faith focussed in hope on God's promises, we may see the vitality of his new creation.

We have received the gift of new life through, with, and in Jesus Christ for a particular purpose: to enable us to see his guiding hand in our lives, that no wound is wasted, and that always and everywhere, we may give thanks to him, as we sing, Alleluia!

news in brief

CAFOD asks supporters to walk for water

CAFOD supporters from across the Diocese were walking for water this Lent to support those who must walk for water every day. Jane Crone from CAFOD in East Anglia reports.

This year's CAFOD Lent appeal features the story of 23-year-old Abdella who lives in a remote and mountainous part of Ethiopia and has no choice but to walk ten hours a day collecting water. He says his life is being wasted as he has no time to do anything else.

Moved by his story, communities in East Anglia are finding ways to support CAFOD's 2021 Lent appeal by Walking for Water.

Lowestoft parish set up a JustGiving page and invited other parishes in their deanery to join them. Mairead Perkins, CAFOD deanery coordinator, explained for motivation for joining the Walk for Water.

"Walking in solidarity has to be done! God calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. I see the Walk for Water campaign as a way of acting out my faith together with my neighbours in my deanery and my neighbours worldwide."

Norwich supporters have also taken up the challenge. Sarah Ebelewicz from St John the Baptist Cathedral parish was aiming to raise £750 which will pay for the work involved in installing solar panels, pumps and irrigation channels for a village water supply for clean safe water.

St George's parish team of Fr Sean, Joyce, Heather and Mary have signed up to walk 10,000 steps for the 40 days of Lent as they walk the dogs, Dylan, Susie, Blue and Bertie. If you'd like to sponsor them through JustGiving donate through the St George's Just Giving page.

St Laurence's Parish in Cambridge had an ingenious plan to virtually walk the 5,640 miles from Cambridge to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. It's a long way so they invited other parishes in Cambridge to join them.

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Care home team are honoured

Sr Thaya Moses OSB, Manager of Montana Care Home in Great Barton, has been awarded the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk's special Certificate of Merit for her work, and that of her team, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The award from Clare Countess of Euston, the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk and Bridget McIntyre, High Sheriff of Suffolk, was made in recognition of outstanding service to the community in Suffolk during the pandemic.

The Lord Lieutenant wrote: "As Her Majesty the Queen's personal representative in Suffolk, I would like to thank you for the contribution you have made during the extraordinary and difficult circumstances caused by the Covid-19 crisis. Your selflessness and sense of duty are a credit to you."

"The innovation, collaboration, courage and generosity shown by so many across the county during this time has been truly inspirational and uplifting. Our care homes have been at the forefront of the battle. Thank you for the huge amount of work you have all done to care for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. You are a shining example of all that is best

in this county."

Montana Care Home has excellent facilities to care for 19 residents and is rated Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission.

Sr Thaya said: "I am very honoured and humbled by the award and it is really for the whole team comprising of the Sisters, lay staff and volunteers who work very hard

at Montana."

Sr Thaya Moses also acknowledged the guidance and support she received regularly from Sr Kathy Yeeles, Prioress General, and Sr Carmel Murtagh, Vicaress at the Generalate of her Community, the Grace and Compassion Benedictines and the assistance she received often from Friends of Montana and other well-wishers.



Sr Thaya Moses and her team at the Montana Care Home

Celebrating the gift of consecrated life

At a Mass for Religious in St John's Cathedral on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Bishop Alan spoke of the role of obedience in Religious life.

Bishop Alan began the celebration on February 2 with a word of appreciation. "I want to thank all you Religious," he said, "for the generous offering of your lives and the many gifts at the service of the Church which you have given: lives of dedicated service and prayer and witness."

"So many of you have been involved in teaching, in mission and healthcare, in pastoral care in the parish and in prison. Many of you have worked in very difficult circumstances and in many other parts of the world. Today your generosity and courage are recognised and acknowledged by the Diocese and the Church."

The occasion was the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas. There was a special section of the ceremony for the blessing of candles, representing the light of Christ.

In his homily, Bishop Alan focussed on the theme of obedience which ran through the readings. "Today's feast reminds us that Jesus came to do not His own will but that of the Father," he said. "For the Son of God obedience meant first of all a life of humbling Himself."

The Bishop went on to explore what this meant for his listeners: "We must all



set out on the path of obedience in imitation of the Lord. This new and vigorous way of living, radical as it is, is something which you dear Religious brothers and sisters have taken up in one of its most radical forms – poverty, obedience, chastity. It is the way in which you are invited to continue to tread with joy and perseverance as you present Jesus to the world.

"So we join you in thanksgiving for the precious gift of consecrated life. May the

Lord renew in you're a joyful response to His freely given and faithful love."

Pictured above are the concelebrants at the Mass, with Sr Camilla Oberding COLW, the new Vicar for Religious Women. From left to right: Fr Keith Tulloch MS, Fr Leszek Rygiewicz SChr, Bishop Alan Hopes, Fr Waldemar Śmiałek MS, Fr Karol Porczak MS, Fr Gregory Pearson OP and Fr Charles Fitzgerald-Lombard OSB.

Bishop marks Silver Jubilee of ordination

Bishop Alan Hopes has celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his ordination to the Priesthood with a Mass at St John's Cathedral in Norwich.

■ Also celebrating priesthood jubilees, and con-celebrating with Bishop Alan on December 4, were Fr Dick Healey (40 years), Fr John Barnes (25 years) and Fr Luke Goymour (10 years).

Other diocesan priests celebrating jubilees last year include Canon Simon Blakesley (30 years) and Canon David Paul (25 years).

Many diocesan priests and a socially-distanced congregation joined Bishop Alan at the 10am Mass and it was also broadcast live online.

“Bishop Alan said: “There is so much for me to be thankful for and so much for which to ask mercy. I thank the Lord for the great joy and privilege of this wonderful vocation in which the Lord has called me to share in his own priesthood.

“I thank God for all amongst whom I have ministered and all those who have inspired and encouraged me throughout these years and also for my parents. I also offer this Mass that many will hear the call of the Lord to serve him as a priest and especially in our Diocese of East Anglia.”

In 1968, Bishop Alan was ordained for ministry in the Church of England and served until 1994 when he was received into the Catholic Church.

He was ordained a Catholic priest on December 4, 1995, by Cardinal Basil Hume in Westminster Cathedral, and for three



Bishop Alan Hopes receives a gift from Fr David Bagstaff during his Silver Jubilee Mass.

years served as Assistant Priest at Our Lady of Victories in Kensington, London, before becoming Parish Priest of the Holy Redeemer and St Thomas More Parish, Chelsea.

In 2001, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor appointed him Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Westminster and in 2002 he became a member of The Bishops' Conference Committee for Liturgy and Worship.

The following year on January 4, 2003 he was appointed by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II as an Auxiliary Bishop of

Westminster with the title of Titular Bishop of Cuncacestre (Chester-le-Street) successor to Saint Cuthbert.

This appointment made him one of the most senior members of the Anglican clergy to have converted in the 1990s.

On January 24, 2003, he was ordained to the Episcopate in Westminster Cathedral by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.

On June 11, 2013, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Hopes as the fourth Bishop of East Anglia and he was duly installed on July 16, 2013, at St John's Cathedral in Norwich.

news in brief

Lenten Station Masses held across Diocese

■ At the first of a series of Lenten Station Masses in Peterborough in late February, Bishop Alan spoke of how the cross is a new beginning for each one of us.

The Lenten Station Masses across the Diocese took place in each deanery at 5pm for Exposition and Confession and 6pm Mass.

Bishop Alan celebrated that first of the series at St Peter and All Souls in Peterborough. In his homily, he spoke of how the cross is the centre point of the Incarnation.

“God comes into the messiness of our human lives,” said Bishop Alan, “locking eternity into time and space in order to redeem us and the whole of creation from sin.”

He went on to speak of how that had to be a total self-emptying of God in Jesus Christ: “Jesus emptied himself down to the last dregs...He faced all the human experience of fear, pain, dereliction, yes, and even the depths of hell itself.”

Yet it was on the cross that the Incarnation was completed and accomplished, said the Bishop. “The ending on the cross is a beginning...The cross which we celebrate this Lent is the centre point and purpose of the Incarnation. It is the centre point in the salvation of the world and the wonderful love and mercy which God has for each one of us.”

Shrine needs a financial controller

■ The Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham is looking to recruit an experienced accountant to work part-time in the role of Financial Controller.

Reporting to the CEO, this role will provide efficient and effective operational financial management to the organisation.

The key duties will include managing the finance team, produce the financial and management accounts, produce the budget, develop a suite of consistent and concise management reports and analyse the financial performance of operational areas.

You will help to optimise and manage banking arrangements, maintain appropriate financial controls, help to develop financial systems which support operations, provide robust reporting capability and deliver confidence to senior management. Undertake regular pricing and financial performance analysis to enable informed decision making. Prepare annual statutory accounts.

Ideally you will be a qualified accountant ACA/ACCA/CIMA and have proven experience as a Financial Controller/Head of Finance/Company Accountant.

This is a two-day a week permanent role in a friendly setting offering a mixture of home and office working. Charitable experience would be advantageous but by no means essential.

Interested applicants should contact Justin Murray at Big Sky Additions at justin@bigskyadditions.co.uk

Events to mark Year of St Joseph

■ Throughout the Year of St Joseph in the Diocese of East Anglia, there will be Masses and retreats for everyone, explains the Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Co-ordinator.

On June 12 at 11am our annual Mass for Marriage and Family will take place at the Cathedral; this year with the addition of livestreaming. Later in the year there will be Masses for miscarriage (Sunday October 10 at noon in Newmarket) and for infertility (Saturday November 6 at 11am).

Retreats will be available for men (July 3 in Walsingham), for women (January 2022 in Cambridge) and for both men and women, Rachel's Vineyard will be running an abortion-recovery retreat in Norfolk.

Throughout this year, Bishop Alan is inviting everyone to participate in renewed prayers, especially the novena and consecration to St Joseph. The pandemic has isolated so many of us from each other, so the Marriage and Family Life Commission are also encouraging parishioners to take part in an online Smart Loving marriage



enrichment retreat. You are also invited to join one of the family groups operating in the diocese, or to start a diocesan branch of an existing organisation.

In Newmarket we already have a CANA group who meet regularly for weekend or online retreats. For more information email: richard.burnford@btinternet.com. TEAMS also operate throughout the UK but do not yet have a diocesan group. If you want to

know more about this international network of families, please email: centralgb@teams-transatlantic.org.

For mothers and daughters, we will be offering a number of Cycle Prep afternoons throughout the year. These events enable mothers and daughters to work together on the general practices of charting fertility in a relaxed atmosphere. To participate please email: famc.eastanglia@rcdea.org

This year, the diocese will also be launching its new prayer and listening ministry. Around 20 listeners are being trained to offer prayerful help to any parishioner needing assistance for any reason.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we are being encouraged by Pope Francis and Bishop Alan to renew our faith in a Church whose quiet worker and protector, St Joseph, listens to our needs and seeks to secure and enrich the ties that hold us together as families and parishes.

May we remember how much we need each other and reach out for any help we may need as we begin to rebuild our lives.

Read the latest Diocese of East Anglia news at www.rcdea.org.uk

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Ministers of Religion



Chance to do evangelisation course

■ The Diocese of East Anglia has entered a partnership with colleagues in the Diocese of Plymouth to offer the Mission Made Possible evangelisation programme.

The seven-week programme includes reading and praying with the bespoke resource Mission Made Possible at home and joining weekly Zoom meetings with five other participants. The course is led by Fr Jon Bielawski and Michele Thompson of the Diocese of Plymouth Evangelisation Team.

The course timings are flexible. When there are five participants, the Diocese of Plymouth team will run the course. So enquirers might be offered a course which

is waiting, or might or have to wait for others to join. The advantage of the Zoom-based programme is that you don't need to find five participants in your parish; the others may be from other areas of the UK or abroad.

You are invited to learn, from your home, how to have conversations about faith: with friends, family or in everyday encounters that don't make anyone feel awkward.

Rebecca Bretherton, Diocesan Co-ordinator for the Commission for the New Evangelisation says, "I encourage anyone



who is wondering how to answer the call of the Gospel to take part in this course. Learning with others will build your confidence and strengthen your commitment to share your faith with people you meet every day."

To take part and for more details, please send your tele-

phone number in an email to: info@genesismission.co.uk. Your message will reach Michele Thompson of the Diocese of Plymouth Evangelisation Team.

There is more information about the programme at genesismission.co.uk

Diocese makes progress in its key aims, says report

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Diocese of East Anglia have been published online and show that, in 2019, it made good progress towards its key aims focused on spreading the Catholic faith, while also showing a small excess of income over expenditure.

■ The report for the year to December 31, 2019, was published at the end of October 2020 and showed that the Diocese ordained a record number of priests and deacons, made a successful bid for a new Catholic primary school in Peterborough and 70% of parishes started projects funded under the Alive in Faith appeal.

The annual report outlines that the key aims of the Diocese are to further the progress of the Diocese by increasing the number of clergy able to support the Catholic population of East Anglia, increasing the number of children able to access Catholic education and reaching out to the wider community, particularly the marginalised and vulnerable.

■ Key achievements

Significant charitable activities undertaken to achieve these objectives include:

■ The continued maintenance and improvement of places of worship and other parish facilities

■ Continued recruitment, education and training of priests and deacons, which resulted in the ordination of seven priests, one deacon and three permanent deacons during 2019, a record year for this Diocese. A further two priests and two permanent deacons were ordained during 2020.

■ Encouraging local communities to make use of parish facilities

■ Participation in community life through our Catholic schools including support of religious education, leadership and management in our schools

■ A successful bid to the Department for Education to establish a new primary school in Peterborough and the opening in September 2019 of a voluntary aided primary



school in Norfolk

■ Administering school building programmes and providing advice to school governors.

■ 70% of our parishes have now started to draw down funding for projects established as a result of the Alive in Faith appeal. These range in scope from refurbishment and repairs for church buildings, to installation of photovoltaic panels in schools, to supporting our young people and the elderly, to helping the homeless or to support family life. The total amount pledged to Alive in Faith stands at over £6.3 million.

■ The support of a growing number of retired clergy (currently 22)

■ Statistics

The total Catholic population of East Anglia now stands at an estimated 108,000. First Holy Communion remained stable at 1,051 (1,050 in 2018) as did Confirmations at 405 (396 in 2018). There was a decrease in baptisms from 1,005 in 2018 to 807 in 2019 and a fall in marriages from 242 to 197. Sunday Mass attendance is counted each September/October and was 22,975 which was a drop of 985 compared with 23,960 in 2018. This represents an average attendance rate of 22%.

At the end of 2019, the Diocese had 73 active priests, 24 active permanent deacons, five seminarians and 72 curia and parish employees (of which 14 were employed in the Diocesan curia).

■ Finances

The total income of the Diocese increased from £6.98m to £7.48m during the year. Total expenditure for the Diocese increased also,

from £6.74m in 2018 to £7.33m in 2019. Costs of raising funds have decreased from £0.25m in 2018 to £0.23m in 2019. The Diocese's investment properties were revalued as at the year end with an increase to the valuation of £0.73m (2018 increase: £1.34m)

The activities of the Diocese are largely undertaken through its parishes. Of the overall diocesan finances, parishes account for over 71% (2018: 78%) of income and approximately 68% (2018: 58%) of expenditure with some 65% (2018: 69%) of the Diocesan charity's net assets being held at parochial level.

The main expenditure headings are provision of worship (£2,237,529), clergy and parish support (£3,736,374), pastoral care and community support (£450,550) and schools programme (£677,782).

The main sources of income are donations, legacies and grants (£6,246,975), charitable activities (£280,986), income from other trading activities (£498,972) and investments (£451,490).

■ Future finances and Covid-19

To address an overspend on unrestricted funds, the Diocesan Trustees agreed that central Diocesan budgets for 2020 should be reduced by 10%. The medium-term financial strategy depends on increases in offertory collections to balance the budget over the medium term.

There was a reduction in the real value of offertory collections and work to increase income levels has begun and will develop further during 2020 and 2021. Nine parishes are now able to receive donations via their websites and two large parishes have been piloting contactless payments. The Diocese has appointed a Stewardship and Fundraising Coordinator to work with parishes who will start in 2021.

In view of the developing Covid-19 situation, it was decided to close the Diocesan offices in March 2020 for the period of lockdown, with staff working from home. Parish employees were placed on furlough leave, as were two employees working across the Diocese. The government twice instructed all places of worship to shut completely or partly. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on parish offertory has been assessed and further work on the budget to cope with this unprecedented situation is ongoing. This has resulted in revised budgets for 2021 and new projections for future years.

Bishop Alan prays for Covid victims

■ Bishop Alan Hopes joined bishops celebrating a chain of Masses across Europe during Lent to pray for the victims of the Covid pandemic.

The bishops of England and Wales united to pray on Tuesday March 2. In East Anglia, Bishop Alan celebrated the 10am live stream mass from St John the Baptist Cathedral.

"Today we offer this Mass for all those who have died from the Covid pandemic," said Bishop Alan. "We also pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones. We pray for an end to the pandemic.

"And we pray for our doctors and nurses and carers, who work in hospitals, hospices and care homes, and all our priests who work among them."

The continent has suffered over 770,000 deaths from the virus.

The initiative, promoted by the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), aims to offer a sign of communion

and hope for the entire continent.

Each nation came together to celebrate Mass on a designated day to be part of this continental prayer network and to create a Eucharistic chain.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Vice President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, celebrated a special Mass in Westminster Cathedral.

Bishops across England and Wales also celebrated Masses in their own dioceses.

Since the start of the pandemic, bishops from across Europe have added their voices to that of Pope Francis to reiterate the Church's closeness to all those struggling with coronavirus – the victims and their families, the sick, health and social care workers, the volunteers and all those on the front line at this challenging time.

"Together, we have assessed the opportunity, or rather the need to remember in the Holy Mass in a particular way during this season of Lent, the victims – the

numerous victims – of the pandemic," said CCEE President Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco in his message to launch the initiative.

"Each European Bishops' Conference has engaged in the organisation of at least one Mass. It will be like creating a prayer chain, a Eucharistic chain in memory and in suffrage of so many people. In this prayer we also want to remember the bereaved families and all those who are still suffering from the virus and whose lives remain in uncertainty.

"We, the Bishops of Europe, are all united alongside our Christian communities and our priests. We are grateful to all those who continue to devote themselves to those most in need. We support them with our words, and above all, with our prayers so that their commitment and their hope that we must all have, maintain and increase can help us to look forward together to a better future."

Welcome for those on their journey of faith

At the Rite of Election at St John's Cathedral, Bishop Alan welcomed Catechumens and Candidates from across the diocese who will be received into the Church at Easter.

■ "I especially welcome those of you who are not yet baptised," said Bishop Alan. "You are now entering that final and more intense stage of your preparation, to receive the sacraments of initiation at Easter, and be welcomed into the family of God, the Church. I also welcome those of you who are already baptised, who are being welcomed into the full communion of the Catholic Church at Easter."

Bishop Alan spoke of the opportunity which the 40 days of Lent provided to "journey with Jesus to the cross". He said that the Rite of Election was "a celebration of your hope and trust in Jesus Christ to whom you are turning for salvation".

The word 'election', he explained, was "a translation of the Latin word for 'chosen'. Today you are being elected. You are being chosen. You are being called to salvation. And that is why the Church rejoices with you." "During the days of Lent," he added, "you are being called to become saints of God...the Lord is calling you to become His witnesses."

The Rite of Election, held on February 21, marks an important stage along their journey as they undergo the final stages of RCIA (Rite of Catholic Initiation of Adults) and prepare to be baptised and confirmed, or to be received into the full Communion of the Church and confirmed. They will also receive the Eucharist for the first time, both of which take place at the Easter Vigil.

Catechumens are adults who have never been baptised and seek to become



■ **The desire to learn about God has been the glue bonding an RCIA group at Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge. Mgr Eugène Harkness reports.**

Here at Our Lady of The Assumption and The English Martyrs, Cambridge, we have turned to the use of Zoom for our weekly sessions of instruction for the RCIA programme.

We have three who have been elected as Catechumens and six who are Candidates for Reception. Our sessions usually last about an hour and we are able to find time for a question-and-answer period. Although we cannot meet personally at the moment,

members of the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. After being greeted by Bishop Alan, they were invited to write their names in the Book of the Elect.

Candidates are adults who have been

we have found that a bond has been established even through this medium.

The desire to know about God and his Church and the work of salvation and Christian living has been the glue keeping this group of enquirers together. The joy will come at Easter when, please God, they will be able to meet each other for the first time in the context of the Sacred Liturgy of Holy Saturday.

For us as priests, it has been a learning experience using this modern medium but one which along with Live-Streaming we have come to appreciate.

Pictured above is one of RCIA sessions at Our Lady and the English Martyrs.

baptised in one of the Christian denominations and now seek to become members of the Catholic Church through the Rite of Reception, whereby they will receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

news in brief

Parish records lockdown music

■ The parish of St Edmund at Bungay was distressed to learn that it could have no singing at Masses during lockdown, so recorded its own collection of favourite music.

Clare Seabrook, organist and music director in the parish, enthusiastically took up a suggestion from a parishioner of making an album.

It is a recording by the parish choir of familiar pieces from its repertoire, to be played before, during and after Mass to fill the spooky silence.

Clare wrote a short introduction for the sleeve and after several recording sessions settled on no fewer than 21 short pieces.

One stroke of luck was that the son of one of the parish's leading families, Leo Altarelli (who lives in Australia) had the necessary equipment to master the recordings into a coherent collection with an attractive sleeve and brochure.

The CD has now covered its costs and is available from the parish at £7.

Hamish on Radio 4

■ Hamish MacQueen, Diocesan Director of Youth Services, featured recently in a Radio 4 service from a new community for young people at Ditchingham.

Hamish read the Gospel from St Luke, which described the finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple by his parents.

The broadcast focussed on the With community in Ditchingham, Norfolk. The ecumenical community will be living on site all year round and will be committed in prayer and mission to supporting and serving the UK's young people.

www.bewith.community

Retreats to restart

■ The Community of Our Lady of Walsingham have been running a series of online retreats, and it will be gradually opening for visitors as the year goes on.

As lockdown hopefully eases, self-catering retreats for households and bubbles will begin on April 12. From May 17 individuals will be welcome to come and stay for between two and five nights. The retreat house will open to parish groups on June 21.

There will also be both residential and online retreats for young adults.

For more information, ring 01328 801018 or visit: www.dowryhouse.org.uk

Martyr's 100 poems

■ John Bradburne, the Norfolk schoolboy who became a Franciscan missionary and martyr, is having his centenary marked this year with 100 days of readings of his poetry.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Charles Moore, and Gyles Brandreth are among well-known figures who are taking part in the readings. They join Fr Colin Carr and Brother Charlie Annis from Cambridge and Anthony Purvis from Walsingham.

On July 1, 2019, the cause of beatification of John Bradburne began.

www.johnbradburne.com

600-year-old Psalm manuscript found at Oxburgh Hall



Pictured above is a fragment of the manuscript being examined by curator Anna Forest. Picture (c) National Trust/Mike Hodgson.

An archaeologist working alone through lockdown in the attic rooms of Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk has uncovered one of the largest underfloor archaeology hauls of its type in a National Trust house, including a 600-year-old illuminated manuscript of Psalm 39. Keith Morris reports.

■ A page from a rare 15th-century illuminated manuscript was among the items recovered, many dating back to the Tudor period. Finds range from fragments of late 16th century books to high-status Elizabethan textiles, as well as more mundane modern objects such as cigarette packets and an empty box of Terry's chocolates that date to the Second World War – which may have been hidden after the chocolates were eaten.

The discovery was made during a project to re-roof Oxburgh Hall, a moated manor house, which includes lifting many of the floorboards in the attic rooms to repair floor joists. Independent archaeologist Matt Champion agreed to continue through lockdown on his own and carried out a careful fingertip search.

The house was built by Sir Edmund Bedingfeld after he inherited the estate in 1476. The family still live in part of the building today.

Anna Forest, the National Trust curator who is overseeing the work, said it was the first time anybody had searched under the floorboards in centuries.

“When the boards came up, we could see a wave pattern in the debris which showed it had been undisturbed for cen-

turies,” said Anna.

“The peak of each wave of dust, debris and objects was highest under the crack between the boards. In was often inches thick and lay on top of a layer of lime plaster, which drew out the moisture from the debris and resulted in much of it being perfectly preserved over the centuries.”

Anna continued: “One particular challenge was in areas with south-facing windows, where hundreds of pins were found, so Matt had to use thick gloves when searching. The rooms, being well lit, had clearly been used for sewing, and for organising correspondence, with evidence of wax seals and fragments of late 18th-century handwritten documents in English and French.

“The value of underfloor archaeology to our understanding of Oxburgh’s social history is enormous.”

The star find was the 15th-century illuminated manuscript fragment on parchment spotted in the rubble of the eaves by one of the builders. Despite centuries amongst debris, the glimmer of gold leaf and bright blue of the illuminated initials was still vibrant.

Anna said: “The text is distinct enough for us to identify it as part of the Latin Vulgate Psalm 39, “Expectans expectavi” [I waited patiently]. We contacted Dr



Factfile

■ The £6m roof project was already underway when the first lockdown began and is supported by funds from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Wolfson Foundation, as well as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development through the LEADER programme, the Sylvia Wadilove Foundation UK and The Constance Travis Charitable Trust, as well as ongoing support from National Trust members and donors.

■ More information is available on www.nationaltrust.org.uk/oxburgh-hall

James Freeman, Medieval Manuscripts Specialist at Cambridge University Library, who explained that the leaf may be from a Psalter, but its small size – just 8cm x 13cm – suggest it once was part of a Book of Hours. These portable prayer books were for private devotion.

“The use of blue and gold for the minor initials, rather than the more standard blue and red, shows this would have been quite an expensive book to produce. It is tantalising to think that this could be a remnant of a splendid manuscript and we can’t help but wonder if it belonged to Sir Edmund Bedingfeld, the builder of Oxburgh Hall.”

The Bedingfeld family at Oxburgh Hall were once rising stars of the Tudor Royal Court but Sir Henry Bedingfeld refused to sign the Act of Uniformity in 1559 – which outlawed Catholic Mass. The devout Catholic family stayed true to their faith over centuries despite being ostracised and persecuted and even had a secret priest

hole at Oxburgh to shelter Catholic clergy.

The manuscript parchment and other objects found may well have been used in illegal masses and hidden deliberately by the family.

Some tiny pieces of books have been identified including extracts from the 1590 edition of book one of “The ancient, famous and honourable history of Amadis de Gaule”, a chivalric romance from the Iberian Peninsula, first written c.1420. It is noted that Catholics of the period tended to read the romances set in Spain, especially since the books mention the Mass.

The most recent discovery, spotted in an attic void by a builder, is a complete book called the King’s Psalms dated 1568. Complete with its gilded leather binding, it is almost intact – a few fragments from it had previously been found in a rats’ nest. Research into the book has just started.

Russell Clement, General Manager at Oxburgh Hall, said: “We had hoped to learn more of the history of the house during the re-roofing work and have commissioned paint analysis, wallpaper research, and building and historic graffiti recording. But these finds are far beyond anything we expected to see. These objects contain so many clues which confirm the history of the house as the retreat of a devout Catholic family, who retained their faith across the centuries. We will be telling the story of the family and these finds in the house, now we have reopened again following lockdown.

“This is a building which is giving up its secrets slowly. We don’t know what else we might come across – or what might remain hidden for future generations to reveal.”

Fr Denis welcomed into the Diocese

Fr Denis Gallagher was formally welcomed, or incardinated, into the Diocese of East Anglia by Bishop Alan Hopes at a Mass at St Thomas of Canterbury in Wymondham on Sunday December 6.

■ It was witnessed by a socially-distanced congregation of around 50 people, plus an online audience on the church's brand new video and live-streaming service.

Fr Denis made a profession of faith and took an oath of loyalty and an oath of obedience to Bishop Alan and his successors.

"I am delighted that Fr Denis has decided to join us in East Anglia," said Bishop Alan, "and I know that he has endeared himself to your hearts in Wymondham."

"I know he will also do so when he moves on in the future to a different parish."

Fr Denis has spent the last year in the diocese in Wymondham alongside Parish Priest Canon Pat Cleary. He now becomes assistant priest in the parish.

Fr Pat said: "I'm very pleased that Fr Denis has been incardinated into the Dio-

cese of East Anglia and I look forward to continue ministering with him here in the parish of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury Wymondham.

Fr Denis comes from Achill in County Mayo and was ordained in 1993 and moves from the Irish Archdiocese of Tuam.

He said: "I am very happy to be here in East Anglia and am most grateful to Bishop Alan, Fr Pat and to the parishioners in Wymondham for their welcome and the kindness and support they have shown me."

To change dioceses, canon law requires diocesan priests to get permission to transfer from the bishop at the diocese he's moving to. This is known as incardination.

Abbey 1000th anniversary

■ Both St Edmund's Church and St Edmundsbury Cathedral have held services to celebrate 1000 years since the founding of St Edmund's Abbey.

Many events that were planned for the anniversary in 2020 have been moved forward to 2022 due to Covid-19.

John Saunders, a member of the Abbey 1000 coordinating group, said: "Whilst we have had the disappointment of 2020 being marred by the Coronavirus, this has led us to even greater determination to roll the year forward. We will be providing a large programme of events that will be enjoyable and memorable whilst recognising the significance of the history and heritage of the Abbey."

Amongst those events will be a gathering of Benedictine monks and nuns, exhibitions of Abbey manuscripts, modern sculptures,

musical performances, a community weekend and a lighting spectacular.

For the celebration in 2020, pupils of St Edmund's Primary School participated in Mass on November 20, which was live streamed, attracting over 300 views.

The celebrant, Fr Mike Brookes, preached on the words of the Lord's Prayer 'Deliver us from evil' and their relevance to the life and martyrdom of St Edmund. He also highlighted Edmund as being one of the patron Saints for times of pandemic.

As has become customary, a relic of St Edmund was exposed on the altar, this having been generously given to the parish by the former Parish Priest, Rev Canon Mark Hackeson.

A chalice that is thought to date back to the 16th century was also used during the Mass.



Pictured, from the left, Fr Pat Cleary, Fr Denis Gallagher and Bishop Alan Hopes.

news in brief

Plague priest is remembered

■ Parishioners in Diss gathered on February 1 for a virtual celebration of the feast day of St Henry Morse, known as 'The Priest of the Plague'. Judith Tooth reports.

Their church, built in 1912, is dedicated to the local saint who became known as 'The Priest of the Plague' for his work caring for the sick.

Parishioners also gave thanks and prayed for the repose of the soul of Joan Westwood, the parish's eldest parishioner, who had died, aged 101, just a few days earlier. Over many years Mrs Westwood had researched the history of the Henry Morse, shared her findings and encouraged wider devotion for the saint within the parish.

Henry Morse was born in 1595 in the village of Brome, near Diss, and raised nearby in the Tivetshalls, at a time of violent persecution towards Catholics. Despite the dangers he became a Jesuit priest. When plague broke out, he persevered in nursing the sick and dying, undeterred by spells in prison and in exile.

In 1645, without trial, Henry Morse was found guilty of treason for being a Catholic priest, and executed on February 1, at Tyburn in London. He is among the 40 Martyrs of England and Wales canonised in 1970.

Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology

Catholic House of Cambridge Theological Federation

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Contact mbitadm@hermes.cam.ac.uk
to arrange for an informal discussion with Dr Louise Nelstrop

www.margaretbeaufort.cam.ac.uk
12 Grange Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DU, 01223 741039

Caritas workshop on putting social action into practice

A Caritas online meeting has provided practical advice about how to launch a social outreach project, especially to support isolated older people. Edred Willey reports.

■ Caritas Development Worker Jacinta Goode led the meeting, which was joined by some 20 people from around the diocese.

"We are here because lots of people are in need," said Jacinta. She recalled an earlier webinar which had taken place in November, focussing on 'The Richness of Many Years of Life'. "Honour your father and mother is the first of the commandments dealing with love of other people," she said, reminding participants that many older people were feeling isolated at the moment.

Fr John Warrington, Chair the Diocesan Caritas Commission, opened the webinar in prayer. He prayed that we would all be able to reach out with some small act of love to older members of the community.

Jane Crone, Community Participation Coordinator at CAFOD, then gave a reflection on Fratelli Tutti, the October 2020 encyclical by Pope Francis on social friendship.

The Pope wrote that this was 'a time for bold and renewed hope'. The second chapter of his letter is a meditation on the parable of the Good Samaritan. We make ourselves vulnerable, he says, when we respond to the needs of a stranger. But rather than thinking what will happen to us if we help, we need to think of what will happen to the other person if we don't help.

Jane then gave a presentation illustrating the message, drawing on a young doctor in Beirut who had volunteered her services after the explosion there last August.

The next speaker was Jon Cornwall, Director of Membership of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP). He began with a quotation from St Vincent de Paul himself: "Love is creative to infinity."

"Last year we were posed one of the biggest obstacles," he said. "Our ministry could not happen face-to-face." However, he had found ways around this by suggesting five things people could do every time he had to tell them there was something they couldn't do.

He describes how he attracts volunteers to this work, not by giving history lessons or by making the work sound easier than it is, but by demonstrating how rewarding it is to meet genuine needs, and by emphasising the truth that "together we can give so much more".

Jon has discovered that an effective way to get people signed up is to give them a questionnaire which has three options to tick: 1) I am interested and have time 2) I am interested and would like to pray 3) I am not really interested.

He has found that most people tick the second option.

SVP, he said, puts the focus on early intervention. It's a case of "How can we help you before you need food hampers or suicide advice?" Many SVP volunteers were previously beneficiaries, so are very committed to the cause.

Carol Hill from Catholic Care in Leeds then spoke, drawing on 25 years of working for the charity. "No barrier is too big to get around," she said. She gave examples of how her project had adapted to the pandemic, organising exercises on Zoom and taking hot meals to people rather than inviting them to a lunch.

Carol gave a very useful step-by-step guide on how to set up a new project, in which she emphasised the importance of talking both to the parish priest and to the leaders of existing groups when starting a new initiative.

Carol also spoke of the Toolkit which Catholic Care Leeds produced in collaboration with CSAN (the Caritas Social Action Network). The Toolkit contains a huge amount of information about how to set up new projects and can be found at: www.csan.org.uk/embrace-downloads/

Hamish McQueen, Director of Diocesan Youth Services, added some comments about getting younger and older people together. "I've never come across an example of it not being fantastic when you get young people involved inter-generationally," he said. He advised connecting with catechists, leaders of confirmation groups and headteachers so as to link with a ready-made group of young people.

A time of open discussion followed, and Jane Crone came back with a comment on Zoom chat which attracted a lot of interest:

"When I was teaching in a village school, we invited older village members in to share their memories and the children interviewed them. It was fantastic, the children came up with questions and wrote up the results. Once the pandemic is over...."

In terms of funding, Jacinta informed participants that two funds were available in the diocese: the Alive in Faith fund, which is for long-term projects, and the St Edmunds Fund, which is more orientated towards emergencies. She invited people who have an idea which needs funding to contact her on caritas@rcdea.org.uk

If you would like to set up a new project you can contact Jacinta for support, or go directly to your parish priest. Parish priests can also provide the necessary forms to request funding from the St Edmund's Fund and the Alive in Faith Fund.

■ If you would like help from Caritas in setting up a new project to support the elderly and isolated, or any other social action project, please contact Jacinta: caritas@rcdea.org.uk

Heroic nur

Tributes have been paid to devoted Norwich nurse, mother and St John's Cathedral steward Estrella Catalan, who died on February 5 at the Norfolk and Norwich hospital where she worked, after a month-long battle against Covid-19. Keith Morris reports.

■ Emergency Department Staff Nurse Estrella, aged 52, worked in Accident & Emergency and was also an important member of the acute stroke team. Altogether she had worked at the hospital for nearly 20 years, since arriving from the Philippines. Colleagues and friends flooded social media with touching tributes as her death and funeral was widely featured in the media and on local TV.

An active member of the St John's Cathedral parish, where she served as a steward, Estrella leaves behind a husband, Melvin, and sons John and Josh. Their middle son, Vince, sadly died two years ago.

The Duke of Cambridge paid tribute to Estrella. Speaking during a video meeting of the East of England's NHS leadership team, Prince William said: "I also want to just sort of pass on my thoughts to all of you and your teams about Estrella Catalan, who I believe was a much loved member of most of your teams and had been in the region for a long time at I think King's Lynn and the N&N.

"And I imagine that's hit everyone very hard so I'm very sorry to hear that, and my thoughts from my family are all with all of you who knew her and her family."

A Requiem Funeral Mass was celebrated at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich on March 5 for 30 family and close friends, joined by many other via the cathedral live-stream service.

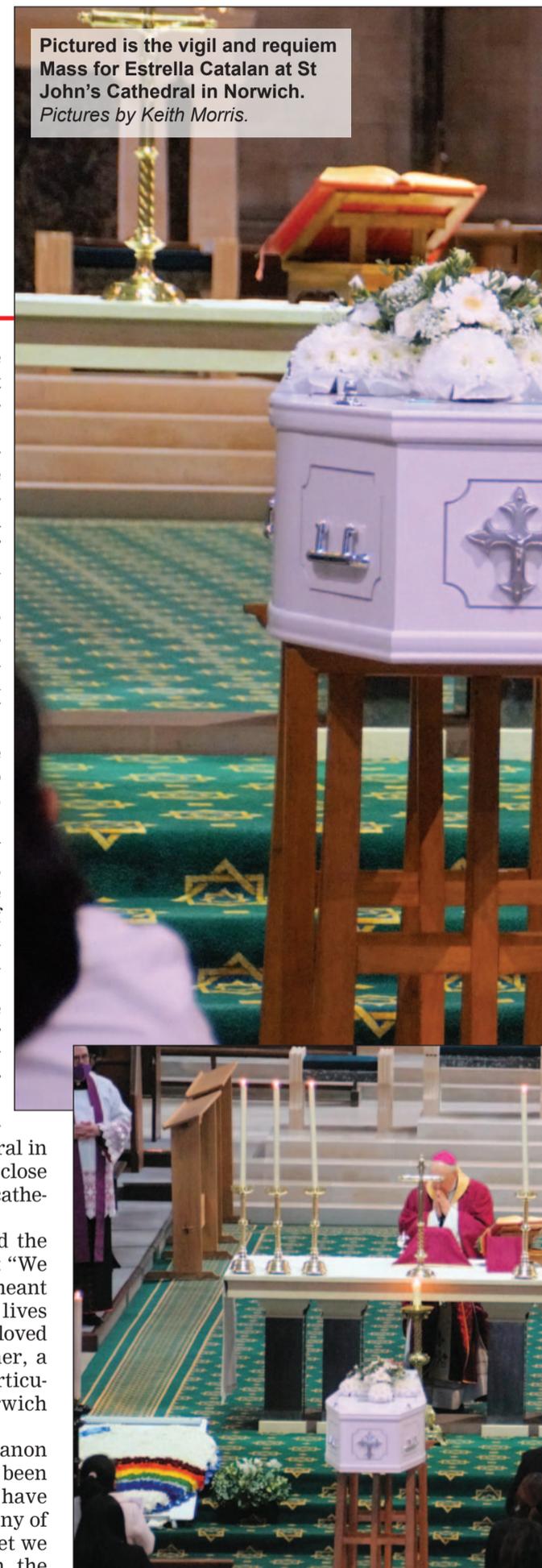
Bishop Alan Hopes who celebrated the Mass, paid tribute to Estrella, saying: "We give thanks for all that Estrella has meant to each one of us. She has touched our lives in so many different ways – as a much-loved wife and mother, a fellow parishioner, a friend, a sister, a colleague, and in particular as a nurse at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital."

In his homily Cathedral Dean, Canon David Paul, said: "Many tears have been shed over Estrella's death. Hearts have been filled with sadness and grief. Many of us have felt the pain of separation. Yet we can rejoice because we can see in the Estrella the seed of eternal life.

"Estrella's life was one of service. She loved being a Catholic. She loved worshipping in the Cathedral. She loved being a steward to welcome people as they came in. Her vocation as a nurse was not a job or a profession. For Estrella it was a vocation given to her by God.

"During these awful times of the

Pictured is the vigil and requiem Mass for Estrella Catalan at St John's Cathedral in Norwich. Pictures by Keith Morris.



pandemic, we have been distressed by the suffering we have seen in so many people. Yet in the midst of this we have seen glimpses of great goodness. I think Estrella has brought out the best in us, for we see in her life of service someone touched by God. We feel we are better people for having known her."

Canon Paul read out tributes from

se Estrella



Estrella's family during the Mass.

Josh, Estrella's son, wrote: "I will miss you chanting from the sidelines, cooking in the kitchen, jamming to songs, the list goes on about the things you would do for me. You are one of the strongest people I know. You could never see a day without your bursting energy and smile. I will love you forever and always."

John, Estrella's son, wrote: "Mama, you and Papa have shaped me into the person I am today. You have taught me how to be strong in the lowest periods of our life. A mother and son bond is unbreakable even in death. You were taken away from us too soon by this cruel and awful virus. I was hoping and praying for a miracle. God has other plans for you and for us Ma. God loves you so much that he did not want to see you suffer any longer.

"I will miss your vibrant and joyful energy, I will miss everything about you. I will make you proud and follow in your footsteps by becoming a nurse like you. You are my hero and my inspiration."

Estrella's husband Melvin, said: "I am very proud of what you have achieved. It is a testament how many people had their lives touched by you. You are our hero, God's gift but your legacy will remain."

Afterwards, the funeral procession visited Estrella's home and the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital, where colleagues paid a final tribute, before a committal at Earlham Crematorium.

You can watch the funeral Mass on the Cathedral YouTube channel.

Sandra to focus on time, talent and treasure

The Diocese of East Anglia has appointed Sandra Portas as its new part-time Stewardship and Fundraising Co-ordinator to help parishes with these two important areas.

■ Sandra joined the Finance and Stewardship Team in January in the new role which has been created specifically to help parishes undertake stewardship campaigns and to be a key initial point of contact for colleagues seeking help with fundraising.

Sandra has lived in North Norfolk for 20 years with her husband and two sons. Prior to joining the diocese, she worked in the City of London in the banking sector and more recently in both a national and regional charity in fundraising roles. She also has several years' experience of investigating external funding sources and of writing successful grant applications.

She has spent her first few weeks being inducted and learning (remotely) about the very successful stewardship and fundraising methodology in use in other dioceses. The tried and tested methodology, which is rooted in biblical stewardship and respect for the individual, has delivered impressive results in different dioceses with over 100 volunteers coming forward in one parish alone.

The programme seeks to invite parishioners to share the gifts that God has given them, be that prayer, time and talents and their financial blessings.

Above all else, it focuses on stewardship and it has delivered impressive results with an increase in the Gift Aid and offertory income of over 30% in parishes in which it has been adopted.

Sandra's ability to get out and about and meet people in order to understand each individual parish has been limited by the Covid-19 rules, but she is keen to hear from any parish in the diocese that would like to find out more about the Time, Talents and

Treasures approach to stewardship. She is currently busy learning about each parish in order to prepare a schedule of the first tranche of parishes she will be working with.

Sandra's support will be carefully planned and delivered over the next three years so that all parishes are able to participate in the programme. She said: "I am really keen to work with all parishes so that this proven methodology can deliver results that really make a difference for them.

"The feedback from parishioners in other areas is that, as a result of implementing this programme, they gain a greater understanding of the needs



Sandra Portas.

within their local church and more importantly, gain an understanding of how they can help, be that with their time, prayers or treasures or a combination of these.

"I plan to share the stories of parishes that I work with through our diocesan website and newspaper so that the work can be more widely understood within the diocese and everyone can gain an awareness of the benefits of this new approach."

Increased offertory resulting from this approach will remain in the parish for their general use. This is different from Alive in Faith which is focused on the priorities of supporting retired priests, seminarians and social outreach along with specific parish projects.

If you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Sandra by email at stewardship@rcdea.org.uk.

Diocese takes stock of church heritage

A comprehensive architectural and historical review of Catholic churches across the Diocese has been published online as part of the major Taking Stock project.

■ Taking stock is an architectural and historical review of Catholic churches and chapels in England and Wales. The project is a partnership between the Patrimony Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, individual dioceses, and Historic England.

They range from the spectacular architectural glories of churches like St Benet's Minster in Beccles and Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge to the Diocese's many humbler yet much-loved church buildings.

Cedric Burton, Secretary of the Historic Churches Committee, said: "This audit of the Catholic churches and chapels in the Diocese is an important tool. It will help to enable to proper preservation, and appropriate development, of the Church's patrimony. In particular it will provide the committee, and the new Historic Churches Support Officer, with a base line from which to assess the needs and proposals of parishes."

The review was carried out by Andrew Derrick, Director of the Architectural History Practice, who carried out the Taking Stock review. He said: "We are all familiar with the great legacy of medieval church buildings in East Anglia," he said "but not so well known is the modern heritage of Catholic churches. By modern I mean those built after 1791, when Catholic church building once again became legal in England.

"There are 25 listed churches in the diocese, including a couple of medieval outliers (the Slipper Chapel at Walsingham and the church at Clare Priory). The most recent is Eric Gill's 1939 church at Gorleston. Many other churches, while not listed, are of local value and, of course, important to those who worship there. Taking Stock has assessed the architecture and history of all of them and aims to ensure that heritage considerations are given their proper weight when changes are proposed."

The listings for the Diocese can be found at: taking-stock.org.uk/diocese/east-anglia/

St Peter and All Souls wins grant

■ **With the help of the Diocese, St Peter and All Souls in Peterborough has won a grant of £20,000 for vital repairs on the church. Parish Priest Fr Adam Sowa explains the significance.**

For some years, the parish of St Peter and All Souls, with the assistance of the Diocese of East Anglia, have embraced the costly and onerous task of repairing the subsidising church building. The Diocese appointed the construction engineers, Canham Consulting, conservation architects Caroe Architecture as well as a fundraising consultant, to assist the parish in raising the funds and keeping the

momentum going.

The total project cost would be over £1 million, and it would completely surpass the resources of the parish; therefore, it needs to come to completion in little steps. The recent Covid-19 period did not completely stop many efforts to realise this worthy project, but slowing it down gave the parish time to think it through more deeply. Also, the Steering Group and the diocese made more applications for funding.

I am delighted that we have been successful with our grant application to Historic England, which awarded our parish with £20k in January.

This generous grant will pay for an asbestos refurbishment survey to enable future necessary works to the church. It will also pay for clearance of rainwater goods as well as for a surface water drain survey to identify location and condition. Remedial works to drains, as identified in the survey, will be covered by the grant, too.

The Parish Steering Group is meeting via Zoom online to consider the next steps and how our parish can help to further the reparation of our beautiful church building. The parish Finance and Resources Committee is also meeting on regular basis to keep the parish solvent and plan for the future.

Church raises the roof

■ **St Mary's parish in Great Yarmouth has received a grant of £148,598 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for repairs to a leaking roof. Eldred Willey reports.**

■ The grant comes from the Culture Recovery Fund and is specified to be used for the re-roofing of the sanctuary, both side chapels and the old sacristy. The contribution that St Mary's parish must raise towards the repairs is £37,150.

The Grade II* listed building dates from 1850 and was designed by the acclaimed Catholic architect, JJ Scoles. The roof has deteriorated, and water has seriously damaged a mural painted by Archibald Jarvis in 1921.

The building not just has broken and missing tiles, but also displaced beams, cracks in the walls and internal damage due to leaks. Some of the tiles which have come off are above the organ loft, and water has been coming in, threatening the valuable organ.

The original slate tiles over the nave, as well as over the chancel and side chapels at the western end, were replaced by concrete tiles in the 1960s. The excessive weight of these has displaced beams supporting the roof.

The current repairs, being made in partnership with Caroe Architecture, are dealing with the eastern end of the building. To protect all the beams of the church, the concrete tiles across the whole roof would need to be replaced with slate. A 2019 report from Nicholas Warnes architects put the cost of a complete repair at £1,500,000.

"The past couple of years we've been doing concerts, race nights and raffles," said Brian Lafferty, chair of the finance committee at St Mary's. "The parish are very committed and enthusiastic. We had everything planned for last year, and then along came Covid."

The parish has launched a "buy a candle and save our church" appeal. You can support this appeal at: www.stmarysgy.org.uk



Conservation work underway at St Mary's in Great Yarmouth. Picture by Brian Lafferty.

■ **Taking the opportunity of roof repairs, St Mary's parish in Great Yarmouth is planting a time capsule to capture a moment in history.**

"It's 60 years since we had the roof off," explained Brian Lafferty, chair of the parish finance committee, who came up with the idea. "It will be 60 or 100 years before it needs replacing, so I thought, why not put a time capsule in there?"

He has received contributions for the time capsule from the SVP, the Knights of St Columbo, and nurses in the congregation, who have helped to capture the experience of the pandemic. Bishop Alan has also added a letter and a photograph.

St Mary's currently has three Nigeran priests. "That could be of great interest when the capsule is opened," comments Brian. He commissioned a report from them "on how they have settled, pleasures and pains of serving us here, freezing weather and all".

The parish asked children to share the

experience of being apart from their friends in this unusual time and asked catechists to invite offerings from their groups. Members of the congregation were invited to send photos as well as stories to capture their present experience.

At the last count, the congregation had members from 48 nationalities, and an earlier project involved inviting them to obtain their national flags. "We hung them around the church," said Brian, "and it brought a real sense of belonging. Pictures of these flags are now going into the capsule, with comments from people about how they are feeling."

He explained that the purpose of the project was twofold: "We are trying to create a record of where we are and where we have been, so that someone who comes along in 100 years' time can understand. We are also raising awareness of our current situation: that we need £1,500,000 to preserve the church building for future generations."

Hospital role in a pandemic

Fr Mike Brookes recently spoke on Radio Maria England about his work as a chaplain at the West Suffolk Hospital, and how it has changed in the face of Covid-19. Eldred Willey reports.

■ Fr Mike is relatively recently ordained. Prior to that he was a nurse for 25 years, which gives him great empathy with staff and a developed understanding of the needs of patients and their loved ones.

He is also an assistant priest at St Edmunds parish in Bury St Edmunds. "Here in the Diocese of East Anglia you tend to be a bit of a generalist," he said. "There are only half a dozen clergy who specialise in a chaplaincy."

In normal times, he told listeners, the chaplain's routine would consist of Mass in the hospital chapel and visiting people on the wards when a request had been made. He worked with a large number of volunteers, who were bringing communion and supporting patients and staff.

"The volunteers carried out their work with great energy and prayerfulness," he said.

The other side of his work was admin-



istering sacraments – rarely baptism and confirmation, and more commonly confession and the sacrament of the sick. Patients awaiting a serious operation often took the opportunity for confession and the sacrament of the sick the night before.

Since the Covid pandemic began, much has changed; Fr Mike only managed to fit in one Mass between lockdowns, and the role of volunteers is in abeyance. "It's not a good

idea to be inviting people into the hospital at the moment," he said.

Fr Mike and the rest of the team are still on call for urgent admissions 24 hours a day. Much of his role, however, has moved to talking to people on the phone or through a tablet. There is, though, frequently a relaxing of rules – both for him and for families – when a patient is near death. If a dying patient is unconscious, he can offer an apostolic pardon rather than normal confession.

"It's still a wonderfully powerful and providential ministry," he said.

He is concerned that some people – including staff – are neglecting themselves because they take the view that others have it harder. "We have to allow people to be stressed and unhappy at the moment," he said.

In the moments of drudgery, he said, "you just keep going and offer it up. I do what I have to do."

All the same, he questions the way in which we all too often focus on the negative when we think of hospitals. "There is also great news in a hospital," he pointed out, "the birth of a baby, and the salvation of so many people through the professionalism of the staff. People are being cured, hope is coming, and it's wonderful to be part of that."

Help for those in need

St Vincent de Paul Conferences across East Anglia have excelled themselves over recent months, assisting those in need during the lockdowns.

■ The variety of social action work which Conferences and volunteers have been doing across the Diocese during the pandemic gives an idea of the continuing creativity of SVP.

In North Norfolk a Conference has helped temporarily house a man and support him with essential groceries. The Dereham Conference has helped several families referred via housing and debt support officers. In both of these cases, the St Edmunds fund has helped with grants.

Meanwhile debt relief orders, funded by the SVP, have been paid to help families struggling with a financial crisis.

St Laurence's in Cambridge has helped with parish-donated items, such as a bicycle, items for babies and gardening tools. The Conference helped an ex-offender, who was recently relocated to Cambridge, with heating costs and continues to offer regular support to an elderly couple. Additionally, a large number of donations were received from the parish for Christmas, which were distributed to families (as well as some to other local charities) during the festive period.

Over on the east coast, the Great Yarmouth Conference has been keeping in touch with people by phone and this year offered modified Christmas hampers to over 30 families and elderly parishioners, including grocery vouchers and help with



A member of St Laurence SVP Conference sorting out donations from the parish's Giving Tree.

heating costs.

Similarly, Ely Conference helped a family with a donated tumble drier and Christmas gifts for the children and have undertaken some other fundraising for children at Christmas. Other Conferences across the region have also been busy supporting beneficiaries with Christmas hampers, gifts and grocery vouchers.

Conferences have been holding meetings mostly via Zoom and helping those in need via the phone or socially distanced visits.

Christine Knight, National Treasurer for the SVP, adds: "The SVP National Office has agreed to purchase a second

property in East Anglia, this time in Cromer. It will have a similar function to the one currently operating in Sheringham, but it will support single men who are temporarily homeless. A suitable house has been identified and it is hoped that the purchase will be completed within the next couple of months. Local SVP members are crucial to the success of this venture, and to support those who will benefit from this housing.

"SVP members across East Anglia have demonstrated resilience, determination and kindness throughout the year, and particularly during these most challenging of times."

news in brief

Virtual craft fair donations

■ The parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Clare Priory in Suffolk marked the beginning of Advent with a charity donation of £3,000 from the proceeds of its first-ever virtual summer craft fair, which will be held once again on 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The money went to a range of charities working across East Anglia in the frontline of the Covid-19 crisis. Recipients included SVP homelessness projects in North Norfolk, Gatehouse, REACH, Foodbank, Ormiston Families, EACH, St Nicholas Hospice and some local charities.

Robin Hughes, Craft Fair committee member said: "I'm delighted that as a first attempt our virtual craft fair this summer was such a success. We had no idea when we started that we would attract visitors from across the globe or help generate sales for our crafters as far afield as the US and Singapore."

Each July, Clare Priory in Suffolk usually hosts a Craft Fair in its beautiful grounds, featuring a range of quality artisan arts and crafts items.

Garden adoration

■ Fr Luke Goymour from St Thomas of Canterbury in Brandon has been arranging adoration and Benediction in the gardens of some of his parishioners.

Not someone to be wrong-footed by Covid restrictions, Fr Luke has been taking the Blessed Sacrament to the homes of his parishioners, and blessing them after a short prayer time, either at the front door or in their garden.

Some of his parishioners prepared an altar in their garden and he came to their back door for the ceremony.

Grotto dedicated

■ On All Saints Day Fr Philip John from St Philip Howard in Cambridge dedicated a new grotto to Our Lady in the grounds of the church.

It replaces an older grotto which was already a place. The new grotto, built by parishioners, faces the road.

Like the cross, which likewise faces another road, the new grotto is a visible symbol of faith. It invites people to come in. Created just before the second lockdown, it offers a place to pray, even when the church building is not open for private prayer.

Sr Camilla's role

■ Sr Camilla Oberding, from the Community of Our Lady of Walsingham, has been appointed by Bishop Alan Hopes as Vicar for Women Religious for the Diocese of East Anglia. She is looking forward to working with and supporting religious, consecrated virgins and consecrated widows and to promoting consecrated life in its many forms in the diocese. In the light of this Sr Theresa is now the new director of Dowry House and Sr Gabi is to become the local servant from January.

SCHOOLS IN FOCUS

School pupils create opera about pandemic

■ Pupils at St Augustine's Primary and St Francis of Assisi Primary in Norwich have collaborated with children at four other city schools to share a message in song about the coronavirus pandemic.

Internationally renowned composer Will Todd and Into Opera collaborated with the schools to develop a major artistic song cycle, called 2020: You Won't Hold Me Back?, that captures a slice of social history and encourages the children to share their thoughts and feelings about the impact of Covid-19 on their lives.

Mr Todd, who has previously worked with the Halle Orchestra and BBC Concert Orchestra said: "It's been incredibly moving to work with the words which the children have shared with us. Their words are heartfelt, thoughtful, kind, grateful, frustrated, funny, sad and utterly brilliant. I hope the music we've created with their words can help them express their thoughts, feelings,



fears, and hopes as they move forward into the next part of their journey. I hope that what these children in Norwich have to say

can be an inspiration to everyone who hears them singing these songs."

During lockdown in July, children at home

and in school participated in virtual workshops with Into Opera producing poetry, letters, journals and artwork about their lockdown experiences.

These went on to be curated into lyrics by Into Opera's artistic director, Genevieve Raghu and performance poet Adisa the Verbalizer then set to music by Mr Todd.

Ms Raghu said: "The public response to the pandemic seems to have been dominated by adults and politicians. We've not heard very much from children at all. I wanted to develop a project which would give children a voice and encourage them to dig deep emotionally."

St Francis of Assisi deputy headteacher Claire Furness said: "The children are so excited that their words, their feelings, their emotions have been put on to paper...it's not only increased their self-esteem but it's shown them that their thoughts are valued." It premiered on YouTube in December.



Chili is named a World Changer

■ A student at Notre Dame High School in Norwich has been named as 'World Changer of the Year' for her efforts in helping young people with their mental health during the pandemic.

Year 10 student Chili Tozer won the Pearson accolade after teaching herself to use an electric sewing machine in lockdown with the help of her grandma on Facetime.

Chili created and sold over 1,500 colourful facemasks for her community, through her @Chilis_facemasks Instagram account. She succeeded in raising £4,000 for young people's mental health – a cause close to her heart.

Her entrepreneurial efforts helped fund vital twice-weekly counselling sessions for young people struggling with their well-being over lockdown, as well as education and sport courses that work to increase confidence and motivation among young people through local mental health charity Inspire Suffolk.

"Chili is an inspiration and well-deserved 'World Changer of The Year'," said Chantel Carpenter, Director at Pearson & World Changer Awards judge. "She defines what a world changer is all about. She has learnt a new skill for the good of her community and used her facemasks to affect real change for a cause that is close to her heart - all while studying for her GCSEs!"

An architect's representation of the new school, courtesy of DLA Architecture.



Peterborough school reveals its new look

The team behind the new St John Henry Newman Catholic Primary School, set to open in Peterborough in September 2022, has reassured residents that any local child wanting a place at the school is expected to get one.

■ Answering common questions, the Shadow Governing Body have also set out the timetable for school applications and reiterated that the school will be following the National Curriculum, as do all primary schools.

They have also reassured residents that traffic is not expected to be any more than for

any other primary school and that drop-off parking will be provided.

The school is set to open in September 2022 and building work is expected to start on site in early summer 2021.

Details of what the school building and site will look like, were revealed in a planning application submitted at the end of January and are on the new school website

Providing details on schools places, the Shadow Governors said: "We know that this is the biggest concern for parents, especially those living close to the new school. Even though this is a Catholic school, we still expect that every child who wants a place at the school, where St John Henry Newman School is their closest school, will be able to get a place.

"The admissions process for this school will follow the same timetable as for all pri-

mary schools and you can find more information about this on Peterborough City Council's website."

Addressing resident concerns over traffic levels, Shadow Governors said: "We don't think this school will cause any more traffic than any other primary school of this size. We don't believe that lots of pupils will be driven to school from a very long way partly because distance from the school will be a factor in deciding who gets a place in the school."

Catholic schools have to teach the National Curriculum just like non-Catholic schools, say Shadow Governors: "Religious Education is an important part of the curriculum in Catholic schools but only accounts for around 10% of the timetable."

st-johnhenrynewman.org.uk

YOUTH MATTERS

Hamish's rock band revelation

Over 25 years ago, Hamish MacQueen, Director of the Diocesan Youth Service, founded a full-time Catholic rock band called Revelation. They have just released a new album.

■ Hamish started the band in 1995 with the aim of sharing the Gospel message through music. They toured extensively throughout the UK and Europe.

For a time, they were based in Hamish's mum's bungalow in North Walsham, and they played several gigs in East Anglia.

At the height of their success, they played a stadium in Germany and at World Youth Day in Paris. They stopped touring full-time in 1998 and in recent years have rarely played together.

"We never officially split up and have stayed good friends," said Hamish, "but we all moved onto different things and in different parts of the UK, so it just became impractical to play together very often."

A few years ago, some of the band started meeting up occasionally and jamming together. This led to recording new material and re-recording some old material with different arrangements.

With the advances in technology compared to 25 years ago they have also been able to contribute parts of songs and send them to each other without always meeting.

Then the lockdowns happened, and it meant the keyboard player, David Wood, was able to work on the songs to the extent that they now have a new album – the first in over 20 years.

"I guess there is something quite cringy about a band getting back together when they are much older, but then again, why not?" commented Hamish.

The question now is, will they tour again? "We're talking about it," said Hamish. "I think we'd all like to, but it's so difficult to find a time when we are all free enough, and at the same time, for it to happen, but maybe one day."

You can order copies of Revelation's new CD 'Thank you Father' and stream it for free at www.revelationband.co.uk

Where are they now?

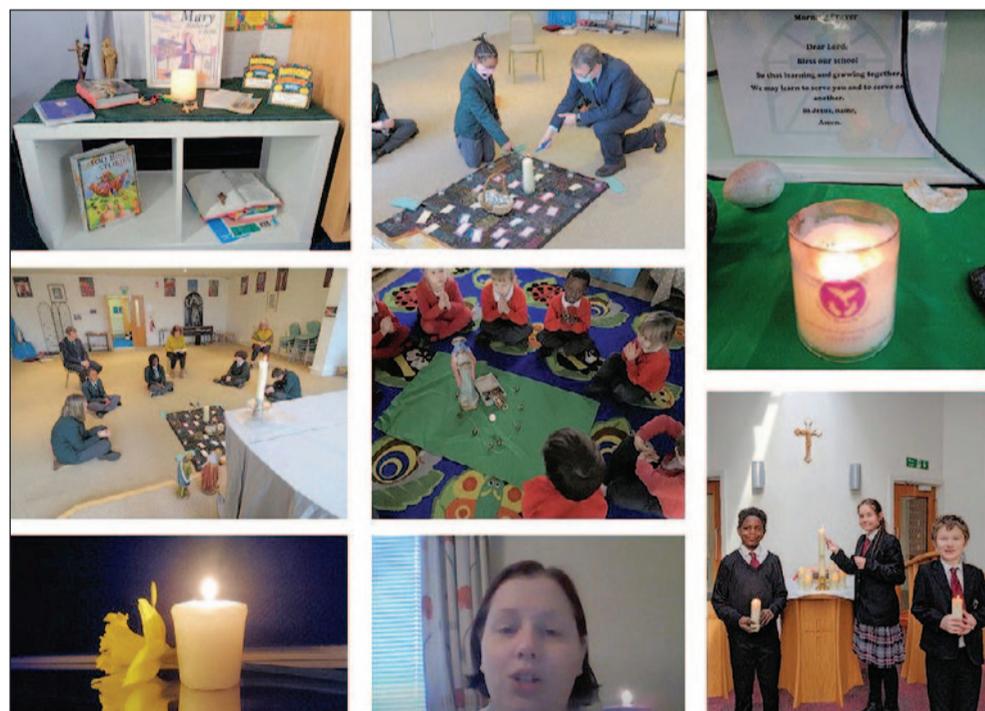
■ Pictured right, the Revelation band as it was in 1995. From left to right, Ian O'Shea is now a guitar teacher; Lubosh Uchityl became a policeman; Hamish MacQueen is Diocesan Youth Service Director in the Diocese of East Anglia; Claire Altamura (née Gunton and also originally from East Anglia) works at a Christian performing arts conservatoire in America; Andy Bunting works for the Sion

Community for Evangelisation; David Wood works for his family business; and John Bain works with adults with learning disabilities. Also (not pictured as they



joined Revelation when the line-up changed), Sarah Darcy works with people with special needs; Carol Cade works with the Cor et Lumen Christi Community; Donna-Marie Povey is

an educational welfare officer but also recently had an album in the Top Ten UK Classical Charts; and Andy Jaxa-Chamiec is a priest in the Diocese of Westminster.



Celebrating Candlemas

■ Pupils and school staff right across the Diocese of East Anglia joined together in celebrating Candlemas on February 2, spreading candle light and using prayers in many school and home settings.

Candlemas takes place forty days after Christmas day to mark Jesus' presentation at the temple, forty days after his birth. During Mass, the priest blesses all the candles in the church and then the community spreads the light by lighting each other's candles.

Notre Dame High School lay chaplain, Alex Savage, said: "This year, for the first time, the Ignite Team with the Secondary

School Chaplains in our Diocese, wrote special prayers which were sent out to schools to enable us all to prayer together. Staff lit candles and with their pupils said the special prayers in school, or at home online. This gave a powerful message of support to us all. Where ever we are, we are one community in Christ, thinking and praying for each other... Together we give each other hope of brighter days ahead.

"Thanks to the school communities of St Thomas More, St Alban's, St Mary and St Peter's, St Francis of Assisi, St John Fisher, St Benedict's and Notre Dame for sharing their candle photos."

School Calendars



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2020-2021 Calendar



St John's School
2020-2021 Calendar



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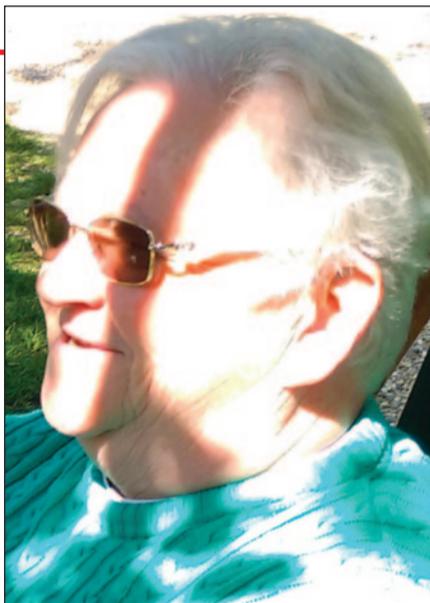
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OBITUARIES



Suffolk Catholic prisons chaplain, and pastoral assistant, Antoinette Askin died recently at the age of 73. Fr Tony Rogers pay tribute.

■ Until her death on January 11, Antoinette (or 'Tonie' as she was known), was Catholic Chaplain at HMP Warren Hill and HMP Hollesley Bay on the Suffolk coast. She had been in post for nearly seven years, and was a wonderful and caring friend to the residents. She took up her post at the age of 66, and her niece said at her funeral in Perth that it had taken her that long to settle in her 'dream job.'

She was a Dublin northsider, who tried her vocation with a religious order in France, before coming to England, where she worked for many years in London with Social Services. But a change came about when she took the decision to come to the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge in the 1990s to study for a degree in theology. When she graduated, she was appointed as Pastoral Assistant at Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge, where she stayed until 2013.

Her inter-personal skills were soon evident as she began to minister to a great number of individuals – many of whom were people on the margins. It was among these people that Tonie was most at home – something that was also characteristic of her prison ministry. She also did great work with groups and in the Anglia Ruskin chaplaincy.

Tonie delighted in sharing her love of scripture with others, and was always taking initiatives in faith development in the parish. These interests and skills were honed and refined and used to the full in her work at Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill, where she devised programmes for those in bereavement, rosary and scripture sessions, and helped to set up a scheme for men who were not receiving any visits. She worked in an ecumenical and multi-faith chaplaincy team, playing her full part in all the statutory duties which chaplains had to undertake.

As well as her work, she gained a Master's degree, and embarked on a doctorate on prison chaplaincy. But, for some time, her health has not been good, and in the autumn of 2020 she had to give up her prison work, and spent a good while in Addenbrooke's Hospital, before recently moving to Scotland where she was lovingly cared for by members of her family. May she rest in peace.

An entrepreneur and inventor

Eric St John Foti, a Norfolk Catholic entrepreneur and inventor, has died at the age of 94. Sr Francis Ridler FDC pays tribute.

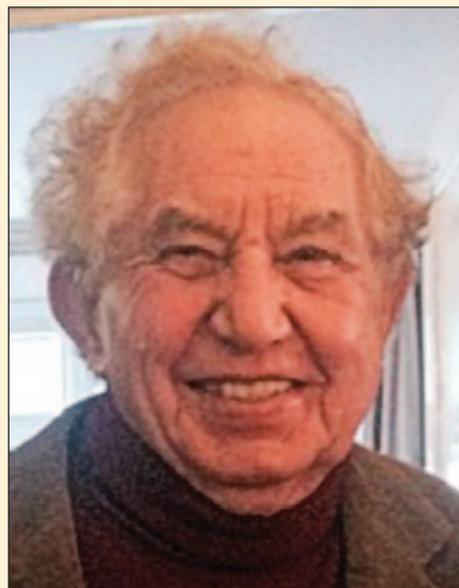
■ Eric was a man of faith and someone who made things happen. With his wife, Marion he raised 8 children of his own and fostered another 24 children.

He was born on January 13, 1926 and when he died, on January 4, was nearly 95.

My relationship with Eric began when his family were adults and he was living at Downham Market, and Collector' World was his brain child. It was a truly an eccentric place with an eclectic mix of collections that he had hoarded and that people had donated to him, a museum that appealed to children and the young of heart.

Eric was an inspiring and generous character who loved nuns and had brought up his large family in Arundel Priory, part of Arundel Castle. So, in Downham Market, he soon made friends with the Sisters from Sacred Heart Convent, Swaffham. He had a small chapel with the Nativity always on show and we would sometimes go to the Tuesday Masses.

Eric's faith was deep and strong and he used to explain the existence of God by talking about the workings of a watch. This fascinated the teenagers who we took for retreat days at Hermitage Hall. Eric would take fantastic photos of the Year 11 leavers'



groups, rush them to be printed and present them to the pupils at the end of their extraordinary retreat day.

We formed a partnership with Eric and for years we brought children to perform at a carol concert interspersed with small dramas given by our speech and drama group in the Nelson Room. It was like a theatre with an upper room leading out onto a balcony and the audience below. Eric believed that anything was possible so, with only an hour's practice, these performances took place. Afterwards we were all treated to mince pies and the famous non-alcoholic Norfolk Punch.

Eric involved the school in his many proj-

ects and called the children to be guards of honour or just to have an extraordinary experience. They came to hand roses to Dame Barbara Cartland and experienced the opening of the Pink Room dedicated to her. They met the actress Lisa Goddard and drove around the premises with her in one of his famous Sidley Armstrong cars.

Freddie and the Dream Makers was another time we celebrated together and heard one of the band perform. The children were able to visit the magical Dickens Museum which culminated in a Christmas World of wonder. Eric with all his ingenuity and innovation had a child-like heart and the real meaning of Christmas was something he wished to make known and celebrate all year round.

He loved Our Lady and on one of his trips to Turkey he and Marion visited the house at Ephesus where Mary lived with St John until her assumption into heaven. In order to build a replica of their home he brought back photos and a stone to be the foundation of the building. This was a shrine dedicated to peace and a place where Christians and Muslims would meet in prayer. It was blessed by our Bishop Peter Smith and the children were privileged to attend.

Together we organised a Diocesan Youth Day on the grounds of Hermitage Hall with Bishop Michael Evans taking part and being the main celebrant at the Mass. It was a truly special day for our young people who were inspired by Eric's enthusiasm and love of God and teenagers.

Cambridge chaplain and Westminster Administrator

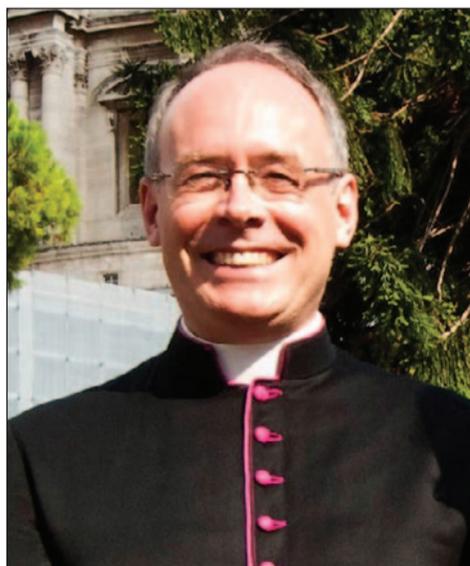
Catholic Chaplain to the University of Cambridge, Mgr Mark Langham, a former Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, died on January 15, after a long battle with cancer.

■ From 2013 to his death, Mgr Mark served as Catholic Chaplain to the University of Cambridge – a place he studied Classics in 1979.

A few weeks before his death, he wrote to the community at Fisher House, the university's Catholic chaplaincy, thanking them for their support and prayers and insisting he didn't want any "fuss" as he moved into a hospice for end-of-life care:

"I have had a wonderful and varied ministry and priesthood, and undertaken extraordinary tasks, but none has thrilled and delighted me like the chaplaincy at Fisher House. The opportunity to encounter and influence the young people, to be fired by your enthusiasm and holiness, and to build the wider community, has given me great hope for the future of the Church and of our society."

Bishop Alan Hopes paid tribute, saying: "The Diocese of East Anglia has reason to be grateful to Mgr Mark for his wonderful and



fruitful work at Fisher House among the Catholic and many other students of Cambridge University. Also for his support and encouragement for many of our clergy in the work of spiritual direction and assisting in the work of ongoing formation. Our prayers and thoughts are with his family and the members of the Cambridge Catholic Chaplaincy at this time. May he rest in peace."

On learning of Mgr Mark's death, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster

said: "Since March 2020, 18 priests of Westminster Diocese have died. The latest sad death is that of Mgr Mark. Each of these priests contributed mightily to the work of the Church, as did Mgr Mark. We pray for them all, and today we pray especially for Mgr Mark. May they rest in peace and rise in glory."

Diocese of East Anglia Chancellor, Mgr Eugène Canon Harkness, paid tribute saying: "Mgr Mark has left a huge legacy of pastoral care throughout his priestly life. He is now called on to continue his work of intercession for us as we will for him. We thank God for the gift of his life and commend him into His care that he may rest in peace and rise in glory."

A staff member of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from 2009-2013, Mgr Mark retained his great interest in ecumenism when he returned from Rome to join the chaplaincy team at Cambridge University.

Before his death, Mgr Mark thanked Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge for their "wonderful treatment" that enabled him to "lead a full and active ministry" towards the end.

Mgr Mark died peacefully at the Hospice of St John and St Elizabeth, St John's Wood, London where he received end-of-life care since January 6.

Newmarket food box project is honoured

The Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk has awarded a project in Newmarket a Certificate of Merit for its work to bring food parcels to needy families.

■ The Countess of Euston, who is Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, sent the Certificate of Merit to Deacon James Hurst from Newmarket Parish. In a covering letter she writes: "As Her Majesty the Queen's personal representative in Suffolk, I would like to thank you for the outstanding contribution you all have made to the County during the extraordinary and difficult circumstances caused by the Covid-19 crisis. Your selflessness and sense of duty are a credit to you."

The project has provided food parcels to families whose children are eligible for free school meals. It has recently moved its base into the parish church, as the church hall is now being used as a testing centre.

The project is a partnership between the SVP Conference at Our Lady and St Etheldreda parish and Newmarket Community Church. It has been built on the existing Make Lunch project, in which volunteers cooked and served hot lunches one day a week during school holidays for families whose children were eligible for free school meals.

The project in its new form began dur-



Volunteers at Our Lady and St Etheldreda parish church.

ing the first lockdown and initially continued until the end of August. It delivered parcels again in the October half term and Christmas holidays, and relaunched on January 12 when the third lockdown was imposed. It is currently supplying 95 families, including 156 adults and 233 children.

Over 70 people have volunteered for the project, of whom 35 are Catholic parishioners.

Most of the remaining half belong to other churches in the town. The volunteers give their time the use of

their cars and fuel free of charge.

Local businesses as well as wealthier families from the local school have provided the bulk of funding for the project, and a national Catholic fund named after Albert Gubay has also made a significant grant.

Parish hall becomes Covid testing centre

■ Our Lady Immaculate and St Etheldreda parish in Newmarket has supported the wider health effort by making its church hall available as a Covid rapid testing centre.

Fr Christopher Smith, parish priest in Newmarket, said: "The parish was approached early in the New Year by the NHS to see whether it would be possible to use the parish centre as a Covid testing centre. The finance committee readily gave their consent to this proposal. It was felt that as a Christian community, we should in the name of the Common Good offer this facility for the people of Newmarket and the surrounding villages.

"The NHS set up the testing centre on February 8. The centre is open seven days a week, from 7am until 6pm and people can make an appointment online or simply turn up during quieter periods. On average 80 to 100 people use the

centre each day."

The centre is for people who are asymptomatic. As around one in three people who contract Covid display no symptoms, the government is encouraging people to get tested regularly.

The tests take a swab from the nose and throat, and the process takes around 15 minutes. The person tested will then receive a text message giving the result within an hour.

This is the fifth of such rapid testing centres to open in Suffolk, as the government seeks to control the spread of the disease. Appointments can be booked online or by ringing 0333 772 6144.

Anyone who is showing symptoms, or who may have been in close contact with someone who has, should not visit the centre. Instead, they should ring 119 or go to the NHS website to book a test at a symptomatic testing centre.

news in brief

Triplets and SVP spread cheer

■ In King's Lynn triplets Angel, Nigel and Rachel created a nativity scene as part of a fundraising drive by SVP which raised almost £1000 for those in need.

Donations in kind have been made to the Foodbank, the Night Shelter, and the Purfleet Trust, a local charity providing help to the homeless. A turkey and Christmas puddings were delivered to residents at Merchants Terrace to ensure they had a happy Christmas.

Pupils quiz scientist

■ A Level Biology students at Notre Dame High School in Norwich interviewed "Naked Scientist" Cambridge Medical Consultant Dr Chris Smith, via Zoom about the challenges faced by scientists in creating a Covid-19 vaccine.

Chris is Medical Consultant at Cambridge University and Addenbrooke's Hospital and specialises in clinical microbiology and virology. He also co-presents the Naked Scientists and 5 Live Science on BBC Radio 5 Live.

The students were amazed to discover the challenges faced by scientists in understanding Covid-19.

Dr Smith also answered their questions on the science behind the latest vaccines being developed by Pfizer/BioNtech, Moderna and the University of Oxford.

A Polish crib

■ Jurek Oleszko, A Polish artist in Bury St Edmunds, made a beautiful outdoor crib to celebrate the coming of Christ in an unusual year. He constructed the stable of pallets and boards, and the figures from chicken wire and papier-mâché.

"It has been such a holy message to passing people and is much appreciated by so many," said parishioner Anji Fuller. "Let's create cribs round the diocese next Christmas and bring back the tradition of outdoor cribs. All the family could get involved."

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News picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese



■ Students, parents and staff from St Alban's Catholic High School in Ipswich have been collecting food and Christmas treats for deserving families in its community.

Deputy Head, Simon Corless, said: "Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, mince pies, Christmas puddings and Christmas crackers are amongst the items that have filled 103 hampers, being delivered by our dedicated staff on the last two days of term after work.

"We would specifically like to thank the local firm Stokes Sauces (Woodbridge), who supplied a significant amount of beautiful jam. We hope that this brings a little joy and happiness to those families, as well as shine a light on the good that we can bring to each other in challenging times. Deo gratias."

Pictured left are some of the team at St Alban's School in Ipswich packing some of the 100+ Christmas hampers.



■ An amazing 230 tubs of chocolates have been given to prisoners at HMP Peterborough, thanks to St Luke's Parish in the city.

Every year, there is an appeal for tubs of chocolates to be shared with the prisoners at HMP Peterborough. Although this year has been filled with uncertainty because of the current pandemic, this did not hinder the parishioners of St Luke's Parish and the friends of Fr Jeffrey Downie, Fr Jude Belnas and seminarian Bienn Carlo (pictured above) in making possible this annual act of kindness.

Led by Bienn Carlo, the parish was able to collect 230 tubs of chocolates for the chaplains to share with inmates over Christmas. Bienn Carlo said: "We keep in our hearts the words of our Lord that whenever we do acts of kindness to our brothers and sisters: 'Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it to me,' (Matthew 25:40). Many thanks to those who have helped and contributed to this endeavour and may the new born Saviour bless us all."



■ Parishioners at the Church of St Henry Morse, Diss, gathered at sunset on the Sunday before Christmas for socially distanced 'Carols in the Car Park'.

The gathering of around 30 people was led by members of the church choir – who hadn't sung together, or even necessarily seen each other in person, since March.

Parish priest, Fr Alex Anaman, offered an opening prayer, and parishioner Anne Steel read the Christmas story from the Gospel of St Luke between a selection of favourite carols.

"A fire was a lovely welcoming touch, and the Christmas lights gave an extra festive feel," said choir member Judith Tooth. "We even had Saturn and Jupiter lighting our way! It was lovely to be singing together again."

Picture by John Hutton.



■ Our Lady of the Annunciation in King's Lynn lit up the church in red in solidarity with Christians and others who are suffering persecution. Stephen Farr reports.

This is the second year running that the parish has supported Aid to the Church in Need's campaign to draw attention to the ongoing human rights tragedy of persecution. Parishes across the country similarly lit up their churches on November 25.

While we had hoped to do more this year towards Red Wednesday, the current lockdown restrictions prevented this.

However, we were fortunate to have had the church open for an extra hour in the evening for private prayer and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

A number of parishioners were in attendance throughout the hour, and all social distancing measures were strictly adhered to. This proved to be a very thought provoking and yet peaceful time spent with The Lord.

Picture taken by Deacon Shaun Morrison.