

January  
2017  
FREE

# Catholic East Anglia

Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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## Bishop Alan closes Holy Door at Cathedral



# Closing act of Year of Mercy

**The Year of Mercy came to an end in the Diocese of East Anglia on Sunday November 20 when Bishop Alan closed the Holy Door of Mercy at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich as Pope Francis closed the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Keith Morris reports.**

A second Holy Door was also closed at the Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham in North Norfolk. Both were opened on December 13 last year, at the start of the Year of Mercy.

In a pastoral message delivered to the 650-strong congregation at the Cathedral, and also read out at Catholic churches across East Anglia, Bishop Alan said: "The closing of the Holy Doors of Mercy across the world does not

mean that we can forget about the real challenges this year has set us!

"Today prompts us to reflect on how we might keep those doors open in our own lives – how we can go on receiving God's forging love – how we might continue to extend that mercy and love to our neighbours. In doing so we shall keep alive the vision that Pope Francis has of a Church brimming over with God's love and mercy. For this is the ongoing work of evangelisation – that of ourselves and of the wider community."

As a reminder of the Year, families from each parish across the diocese were invited to the Mass in Norwich and were given Mercy candles to take back with them to be lit throughout Advent and Christmas.

"A real fruit of this year, has been a rediscovery and a fresh application of the seven works

and the seven spiritual acts of mercy," said Bishop Alan: "giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick and those in prison, burying the dead; helping the doubtful, sharing faith with others, loving wrongdoers, comforting the afflicted, forgiving others, being patient with those who hurt us, praying for the living and the dead."

King's Lynn Parish, for example, took on a year-long series of acts of mercy which included gathering food for the local Foodbank, raising money for the Water Aid charity, collecting clothing and other items for babies and young mums, visiting prisoners and raising funds for emergency cold weather packs for the homeless.

During the year, Bishop Alan visited each of the 11 prisons

■ Article continues on page 16.

## Christmas is not an idea but an historical event

**Bishop Alan reflects on the Christian approach to Christmas.**

■ Christmas, like every other great feast in the Church's calendar, is not based on a philosophy or an idea, but on an historical event: God actually became man for the love of us. The Apostle John wrote:

*Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard and we have seen with our own eyes, that we have watched and touched with our hands... we are giving our testimony. (1 John 1: 1-3)*

As Christians, we are the successors of this apostolic testimony. The weary world around us has heard rumour of it, and we are here to say, "Yes, it's true! God really has been here!"

Without this event, nothing at all would be different. History would remain a perpetual defeat. The best policies and aspirations of countless centuries could not remove the burden of iniquity that Adam and Eve laid on the human race by their decisive rebellion. But the birth of the infant Christ – and his subsequent life, death, resurrection and ascension – has taken that burden and smashed it to pieces. The Fall of Adam is broken by the fact of God taking flesh.

This is why the Christian approach to Christmas is so much more real than the remnants of that festival celebrated by modern society. For us, it is not a socially-constructed, historically-determined opinion, for which we happen to have a certain nostalgia and which is a convenient pretext for a midwinter holiday. Rather, this feast reminds us of what has actually taken place.

And because it is real, its effect on us must be real. We must be fashioned after this feast, different people than we would otherwise be. The whole history of the Church is based on this logic: in the wake of the manger, sinners become saints, and cynics become witnesses!

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## news in brief

### Peterborough is inter-faith model

■ Peterborough hosted a nation-wide inter-faith meeting on October 19 and was hailed as a model of how various faiths group work together.

The Diocese of East Anglia Inter Religious Group, and the Wisbech Interfaith Forum, was represented by Sean Finlay, who said: "Over 100 delegates from all over the country converged on Peterborough to explore the topic Faith and Cohesive Communities. The day was introduced by Richard Atkinson, the Bishop of Bedford who is co-chair of the Interfaith Network. Jaspal Singh, chair of Peterborough Interfaith welcomed us and declared that his city was a model of how the various faiths got along.

Among the speakers was Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, from the Department for Communities and Local Government, who said that the spike in hate crime following the Brexit vote in June, had now returned to pre Brexit figures.

Sean said: "It was encouraging to see how people of faith see no contradiction between being faithful members of their own tradition and also serving joyfully their fellow men, particularly those who are struggling."

Jenny Kartupelis, from the Congress of World Faiths, summed up the mood of the meeting, saying: "When faiths work together, hatred and division meet their greatest challenge and individual identities can flourish."

### Students entertained

■ Norwich Circle of the Catenian Association members attended the 6pm Mass at the University of East Anglia on Sunday October 16 and afterwards entertained students with food, wine and soft drinks.

It has been the custom, since the UEA opened in the early 1960s, for Norwich Circle to do this and the Catenian contingent was led by its current President, Roger Hayes from Bradwell.

The Mass was celebrated by Fr Pdraig Hawkins assisted by Rev Deacon Andrew Eburne. Students were accompanied by the President of its Catholic Society, Dari Paul.

**Catholic East Anglia**

Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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# An incredible year with more to come

Six parishes led the way with *Alive in Faith* in summer 2015. Since then, this special initiative has spread even further across the diocese.

As the Group 3 parishes complete their efforts, Fr David Bagstaff said: "It has been an incredible 12 months. Together we have made tremendous progress. The generosity and commitment of our people is overwhelming. *Alive in Faith* is helping to bring us closer together in so many ways."

A few of the highlights include:

■ Over 6,700 individuals and families across 34 parishes have learnt about the changing needs that the Diocese faces in the next 10 years, as well as the plans identified to address them

■ The numbers of people stepping forward and investing in the future of the Church is encouragingly high with 60% of a parish community making a gift or pledge, in some instances

■ Fr Michael Vulliamy who moved to Whittlesey in September is getting to know his parishioners very quickly through personal meetings

■ Ely and St James, Ipswich had a great finish to their campaigns, raising 177% and 126% of their goals respectively

■ Over £40,000 has been disbursed for a variety of parish projects

■ Clergy and laity have come together to share their experiences of *Alive in Faith*.

"The 17 remaining parishes are now preparing to share the vision with more



## Sharing experiences

■ Anthony Asomugha is one of two seminarians currently on parish placement. Based at King's Lynn for the next 12 months, he has been assisting Fr Peter Rollings with *Alive in Faith* in Hunstanton. Anthony, pictured above, shared his experiences of life at the seminary with parishioners and took the opportunity to thank them, on behalf of all the seminarians, for their continued prayers and support.

parishioners in the coming weeks. Working together we can build up confidence for our future and also enable good work to be done now. Please keep *Alive in Faith* in your prayers over the coming

weeks and months," said Fr Bagstaff.

■ To keep updated on the latest campaign news and to watch the new *Alive in Faith* video, please visit: [www.rcdea.org.uk/alive-in-faith](http://www.rcdea.org.uk/alive-in-faith)

## March parish raises funds for Aleppo

■ Catholic churches and schools in March are raising money during Advent to help the work of Franciscan Sisters in Aleppo in war-torn Syria

Fr Paul Maddison from March is in touch with one sister from Aleppo, Sr Brygida Maniurka. Some of her fellow Franciscan Missionaries of Mary sisters live in March.

The convent in West Aleppo is run by five sisters from Lebanon, Syria, France and Poland

"We desire our home to be oasis of peace and hospitality for everyone regardless of his ethnicity or religion," said Sr Brygida. "We have some Christian and Muslim families living with us as their houses were destroyed.

The Jesuit Refugee Service kitchen prepares 10,000 meals every day and people living near to our convent come to take their meal. For further districts meals are provided by the vans."

The convent also provide psychological support for local women and a centre for autistic children

"Of course our modest help is like a drop in the sea of needs," said Sr Brygida. "People are already exhausted by this war. Visiting families we meet many sick people needing treatment they can't afford to buy. Prices constantly increase and people become poorer and poorer. "Each family we visit has lost their loved one fighting in the war's frontline or in the bombing and shooting.

"We experience all atrocities of war from one side but a lot of beautiful



A meal being served by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Aleppo.

attitudes from other. We meet many people attentive to others in need sharing with them the minimum they have. A lot of people with beautiful, brave personality.

"Our mission here is our presence. Sharing daily life with the people. To be for everyone. To be close to suffering people. I think particularly in our reality we are called to live the priority we chose in our Chapter: 'To hear the cry of those who surround us, 'here and now' and to discern how to respond to it by all resources we have – prayer, presence

and action'."

Fr Paul said: "We were all moved by Sr Brygida's email which was read at all Masses in the parish. Since we are blessed by the presence and work of the FMM sisters here, it seemed so appropriate to assist brave sisters from the same order doing such inspirational work in a very challenging environment. We are working with our ecumenical brothers and sisters, and indeed the wider community, to try to make a small difference for people caught up in the horror of Syria's civil war."



# From Gangland to Promised Land

■ 'From Gangland to Promised Land' was the title of a memorable Parish Mission at St Peter and All Souls, Peterborough, in early November.

St Patrick's Community, based in Carrick on Shannon, Co Leitrim, in Ireland, led the five-day mission. The Community is made up of lay people, who have made their commitment to the Church and are helping parishes take a breath of fresh, new life by preaching the Gospel message in a very personal way, based on testimonies and witnesses.

Fr Adam Sowa said: "People loved John Pridmore, Niall Slattery and Catherine Leigh, who were the lead missionaries and were helping us to enter into the mystery of God's love, God's Mercy, God's healing, God's gift of Mary and the Holy Spirit. Over five nights hundreds of people flocked to the church to listen to talks on the theme, with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as well as music and Scripture readings.

"Students from St Thomas More Primary and St John Fisher High schools also took part and were so happy to listen to the uplifting and



inspirational testimonies on God's love. They came to the church to listen to more talks, especially from John Pridmore and met them in person afterwards. Peterborough HMP also was visited with more than 50 inmates inspired by John's words of humility and sincerity.

"The people of my parish still talk about it and I can see some faces of

those who have not been at Mass for long time, as well as increase in our RCIA class. This charismatic mission attracted many young men and women, which is more surprising to me and I know that we will have a spiritual and tangible project as follow up mission sign of a new parish. I would recommend the St Patrick's Mission team to any parish."

# Diocese plans to open new schools

The Diocese of East Anglia is to be among the first to open new Catholic schools after the proposed removal of the 50% faith admissions cap, with plans for up to eight in the pipeline.

East Anglia has some of the most severe shortage of places in Catholic schools in the country due to the demographic changes that have taken place in the region over the past decade.

Since Prime Minister Theresa May announced the proposed removal of the 50% cap on faith admissions, the Diocese has been progressing with a number of bids. Should the policy be lifted after the Government's consultation on the issue, which closed on December 12, the Diocese is in a position to act straight away to move towards the opening of new schools.

The areas of East Anglia where the new schools are being proposed are those with some of the highest need for places and where possible sites for the schools have already been identified.

In Cambridgeshire, the Diocese wants to establish a high school and a primary school in West Camboorne and another primary in the Cherry Hinton area. The Diocese also wants to establish a new primary school in Peterborough.

A new Catholic primary school is also being proposed in Thetford within the significant new housing development planned to the north of the town, whilst two primaries and possible sixth form provision are hoped for in Norwich. In addition, the Sacred Heart Convent School in Swaffham is also considering proposals for a new free school as well as possible expansion plans.

Assistant Director for the Schools Commission for the Diocese of East Anglia, Helen Bates, said: "It is a very exciting time and we are really looking forward to opening new schools which



are desperately needed to meet the demand we already have here in East Anglia.

"For the Catholic Church, the cap has meant it has been unable to open any new Catholic schools in case it results in Catholic children being turned away from a Catholic school. In East Anglia we have some of the most severe shortages of places, which is why we want to bid for so many new schools."

Brian Conway, Chief Executive Officer of the St John the Baptist Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, which currently covers six primaries and a high school in Norfolk and north Suffolk, said: "The possibility of new Catholic schools is hugely exciting. Catholic schools have a long history of providing a successful education to widely diverse pupil populations. For example, our current primary school in Norwich, St Francis of Assisi, has more than 40% of its pupils whose first language is not English.

"We also have a real need for Catholic primary school places in north Norwich and this is growing as large housing developments in places like

Sprowston and Rackheath are planned. A school in north Norwich could serve a Catholic need from this housing as well as an existing need across north Norfolk where there are no Catholic schools. We are also considering the possibility of new sixth form provision in central Norwich, which could be linked to extra 11-16 places at Notre Dame High School."

Director of the Catholic Education Service, Paul Barber, said: "This is fantastic news from the Diocese of East Anglia and we warmly welcome their announcement. Up and down the country we are seeing pockets of high demand for Catholic education and if the cap is lifted we will be able to answer that call. Catholic schools are the most ethnically diverse in the country and consistently outperform the national average when it comes to KS2 and KS4 results. We are excited at this opportunity to give more children an outstanding Catholic education."

If the applications are successful, it is expected that the earliest a new school would be open would be September 2019.

## news in brief

### Syrian peace vigil prayers in March

■ Catholics in March parish have joined a worldwide prayer for peace vigil for Syria following a call from Pope Francis.

Across the world, Catholics and Christians from other traditions held vigils on October 31 as part of a global day of prayer for peace called by Pope Francis while he visited the Lutheran church in Sweden.

In March, the parish invited Christians from across the town to an hour of prayer at 4pm - the same time that vigils were taking place in London.

Sister Judy Lynch of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary read a letter from her sisters living in Aleppo which described the increasing dangers for people in the city and the daily difficulties faced by families there.

The sisters wrote: "The news is not good, violence is everywhere, but we are at peace. We are in the hands of God."

The vigil included scripture readings and prayers for peace in Syria: for those affected by the wars in the region and for those who have the means to make a difference. There was time for silent prayer and an opportunity to share individual prayers with the congregation. Everyone was encouraged to light a candle and pray for peace.

The vigil has led to a parish-wide discussion to explore how to offer practical help to the people of Syria.

### Ecumenical canons in show of church unity

■ In a show of church unity, the Dean of St John's Catholic Cathedral in Norwich is set to be appointed as an ecumenical canon of the city's Anglican Cathedral by the Bishop of Norwich, alongside a senior Methodist minister and independent church pastor.

The appointments will take place during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on January 22, when Bishop Graham will welcome the Very Rev David Paul, Dean of St John's Catholic Cathedral, the Rev Julian Pursehouse, Chair of the East Anglia Methodist District and Pastor Jon Norman of Soul Church.

Fr Paul said: "I am very pleased that Bishop Graham has appointed me as a canon. It shows a strong friendship and ecumenical heart. We have very good relations between the two cathedrals and this gesture cements and builds on that good relationship."

In a further link between the two cathedrals, the Anglican cathedral has recently given some wooden stalls to be installed in the newly-named Canons Chapel at St John's.

Pastor Jon, Dean David and Rev Julian, will be installed at Evensong in Norwich Cathedral on Sunday January 22 at 3.30pm. The choirs from the two cathedrals will sing in each other's venues during services in the week for Christian unity.

### Anointing of the sick

■ In mid-October, Gorleston and Great Yarmouth SVP arranged a Mass for the Sick at St Peter's Church.

During the Mass, celebrated by Parish Priest Fr Philip Shryane with the assistance of Fr Anthony Nwankwo, the priests performed the Laying-on of Hands followed by Anointing with holy oil. For the sick who were there it was a comforting service, beautifully done, and for some, quite emotional.

Afterwards everyone went to the Parish Hall for a buffet meal.





# NEW EVANGELISATION

## New Year's resolutions

### Fr Sean Connolly offers a reflection on the practice of making New Year's Resolutions.

■ A new year will soon be upon us and with it the possibility of making (and most likely breaking) new year's resolutions. Gym memberships are often boosted in the first weeks of January with the treadmills becoming noticeably busier until about mid-February.

Presumably by then the dark, dank month has got the better of us and we realise we'd be much happier just eating and sleeping in our spare time.

Sober-January and/or sober-February have also caught the popular imagination. The effects of our Christmas over-indulgence (hangovers and expanding waistlines) seem to encourage us to delude ourselves into thinking we might eat and drink more healthily in 2017.

Actually, the promise to live differently at the start of each new year has its roots in ancient religion. The Babylonians promised their gods that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans made promises before one of their gods too: Janus, who gives his name to our

### Some suggested resolutions for 2017

**Pray:** the rosary each day, thereby spending time with Mary looking upon her son, Jesus Christ. The rosary is a great way to pray when out walking.

**Study:** the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy and find out which texts in the Bible have inspired them. How could you try and live out each of these in 2017?

**Give:** to charity by de-cluttering your house for the new year and send any unwanted clothing and possessions to a charity shop.

**Share your faith:** by committing yourself at the very start of 2017 to bring a friend, family member, or work colleague who doesn't attend church to an event at your parish sometime in the year ahead. It might be a social event, such as the parish fete or quiz and chips. It might be a service such as a Mass of Remembrance or a blessing of graves. It might be a talk on a topic you think they would appreciate. Share with them afterwards about the experience.

month of January. The Christian knights of the medieval period would take the 'peacock vow' each new year, re-dedicating themselves to a life of chivalry.

Janus is an interesting god. Evoked by the Roman high priest at the start of the new year, this god is depicted as having two faces: one looking forward into the future, and one looking back upon the past. Janus sums up the sort of

media coverage we will find as we approach the start of 2017.

Programmes will reflect on 2016 with its political upheavals, pop-song successes, and the unusually high number of celebrities who have died. They will look forward too, trying to predict what is yet to come.

I find it telling that in our Christian calendar, we start the new year with the Feast of Mary, Mother of God. To my

mind this suggests there ought to be something different about a Christian who makes a new year's resolution. Whereas Janus looks back, nostalgically over the past, and at the same time looks forward, hopefully (or perhaps with trepidation) towards the future, Mary looks only at her son Jesus Christ. He is the future that actually matters. So if, as Christians, we plan to make a resolution this January, why not make it something to do with Him?

The medievals re-dedicated themselves to living the chivalrous life. We can try to embody God's merciful love. The Babylonians gave back what was borrowed and repaid their debts.

We can recognise that, in one sense, all we have is merely borrowed and start passing on to others the things we don't really need or use. We can recognise our debt to the love and kindness of those around us by resolving to be more kind and loving back.

Most resolutions these days seem to centre around getting physically fit. We can add to this a determination to become spiritually mature. Not under our own steam, of course: this tends to run out within about 30 days anyway. Rather, by opening ourselves to God's grace and looking always to God's Son.

### How to share your faith

■ Parishioners from the Cambridge, St Ives and St Neots parishes met on Saturday November 5 to discuss how to share their faith with others.

The day in St Ives was led by Fr Sean Connolly and Rebecca Bretherton of the Commission for the New Evangelisation.

Fr Sean explained to the group that the New Evangelisation calls each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. He said: "In a special way, the New Evangelisation is focused on 're-proposing' the Gospel to those baptised Catholics who have experienced a crisis of faith or who have never lived their faith as disciples."

Rebecca said: "With humility, we need to consider the many reasons why people aren't joining us in church. Are there ways we can help them return? We each need to think, 'Is there something I can do myself or something I can help the parish to do to guide non-churchgoing Catholics back?'"

The day gave an opportunity to consider the ways people can encounter Jesus Christ in a parish.

One of the aims of the day was to begin to create a Proclaim! Team in each parish. The Parish Proclaim! Teams will plan some simple evangelisation projects to give everyone opportunities to share their faith for the rest of this year and through 2017.

## How to... run a parish book club

### All you really need to start a successful book club is a book and a teapot, says Rebecca Bretherton.

■ When we decided to start a book club, the advice we found most often on the Internet was "Avoid serving alcohol at meetings". So we serve tea and cake!

With this helpful tip, we worked out our own way to run the club. The first decision: is this a club to read Catholic or religious books together or is it a group who read everyday books with other Catholics?

Both have advantages. Reading Catholic books together gives an opportunity to read something thought-provoking about our faith and to share those thoughts and learn more from others.

We decided to read mainstream books rather than to concentrate on religious books. Maybe this seems unusual for a group of Catholics parishioners. By widening our choices, we have found sharing any book gives us a rare opportunity to explore an everyday topic with other Catholics.

Our criteria for choosing books: The book must be easily available. We try to reduce costs by sharing the book around and using the local library. The book needs to be quite short so we can read and share a copy in a couple of months. We try a



mixture of styles through the year. But any book can be considered by the group as the next one to be read.

Details of the chosen book and practicalities are circulated mainly through email to anyone who is interested.

When we meet we make sure we discuss

the book before the tea is made. The conversation starts with the person who recommended the book sharing a thought or two, then others contribute their ideas. Reading a book, knowing you are going to talk about it with friends, allows your thoughts to focus on the characters and

the themes of novels or the ideas in non-fiction books. Everyone has something to contribute. As a Christian group, all our discussions naturally include our faith. It is sometimes surprising how the discussions show that all literature can be viewed through a Catholic perspective in the same way as our everyday lives are influenced by our beliefs. Most books keep us talking for an hour.

Once the tea flows the book may be discussed again but news and chat take over.

Membership is open to all. A book club can be an evangelisation initiative if it gives people the chance to share their faith with others. We have some people who read the book but don't come to meetings. Others choose to come for books which interest them. People are welcome if they have listened to an audio version, seen a film adaptation or even if they haven't completed the book in time for the meeting! Our style of club has attracted non-Catholic members. Our fellowship allows them to explore the themes of the book and this enriches us all.

Our only other rule is flexibility: an acceptance that we have busy lives. The club shouldn't become a burden. We break for the summer and December when the Parish Posada and other events take priority.

So really, all you need to start a successful book club is a book and a teapot!



# Church and police join slavery battle

By Keith Morris

Catholic church leaders, senior Police force officers and ethnic chaplains have met the UK's Independent Anti Slavery Commissioner to discuss solutions to tackling human trafficking taking place within East Anglia.

The meeting, organised in collaboration with the Santa Marta Group and the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia, was held at Sacred Heart & St Oswald in Peterborough on November 29.

The regional meeting echoes the international initiative of the Santa Marta Group – an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society in a process endorsed by Pope Francis, to eradicate human trafficking and modern day slavery.

Calling the meeting, Santa Marta Group chair, Bishop Patrick Lynch, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, said: "We strongly believe that through building trust, creating effective partnerships and collaboration between the civil society, the Catholic Church, law enforcement agencies and local businesses we will take steps to eradicate this horrific crime.

Independent Anti Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland, said: "The issue of modern day slavery is active in every community. We know that Pope Francis has made this a priority and Prime Minister Theresa May has made it a priority, so it is important that we get the communities that can actually respond to the suffering and the vulnerability. The Santa Marta group is all about bringing the church and Police leaders together. The meeting in Peterborough was about bringing these people together, talking about ideas and seeing how the church can influence this area and work hand-in-hand with the Police.

"The partnership between the church and the Police is an unusual one but it is the perfect match because the Police are there to deal with vulnerable communities and to protect them and to bring people to justice. The church is there for the same thing, to look after vulnerable



Pictured left are Sir Matt Baggott (left), Kevin Hyland and Bishop Alan in Peterborough and, above, Kevin Hyland (second right) addresses round table meeting.

communities, to promote equality and to promote justice across the world," said Kevin.

Sir Matt Baggott, adviser to the Santa Marta Group and retired chief constable, also addressed the meeting. He said: "The partnership between the church and Police is one of the most powerful and effective ones that you can have because both are caring organisations with a heart for people, particularly the vulnerable, and want to make sure that justice is delivered. The partnership has the potential not just to save people from a life of misery but to change the whole mind-set of our country towards modern day slavery.

Paul Broadbent, chief executive of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, also spoke to the gathering: "Parishioners can be our eyes and ears, picking up the subtle signs of labour exploitation and what could

be modern day slavery.

The meeting also heard from chaplains for the Slovak, Romanian, Lithuanian, Polish, African and Portuguese communities and from modern slavery lead Police officers from Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs, Beds, Essex and Kent as well as Catholic parish priests, sisters and parishioners.

Reflecting on the meeting, Bishop Alan said: "There was a degree of optimism, hope and enthusiasm which will take us forward to tackle these sad situations. I think the most important thing is that trust and confidence will grow from this meeting.

"The partnership between the Catholic church and the Police is a very powerful relationship and I have come to understand that more fully today. The church can help make a real difference when working with the statutory authorities."

## news in brief

### Diss parish marks Home Mission Sunday in style

■ The parish of Diss celebrated Home Mission Sunday in style with a Coming Home Weekend supper and concert. Sixty parishioners and their families and friends tucked into fish and chips in the church's community room before a dozen more joined them for the musical performance.

Maureen Costello, who organised the event with the parish's Crossing the Threshold group, said: "We asked parishioners to invite family and friends, including those who are 'resting Catholics' and do not come to church. We hoped that for some people coming to share a meal and enjoy music would help them feel more welcome and confident about being able to come back to the practice of their faith. And others might want to find out more about what it means to be part of a Christian community.

"We also invited neighbours living near the church to help develop our relationship with the local community.

"Putting on a concert was a great way to showcase the musical talent among our parishioners both here in Diss and at the Carmel at Quidenham."

Parish priest, Fr David Bagstaff, said: "When I came to this parish just over two years ago, I very quickly noticed two things: how welcoming the community here is, and how talented. It's wonderful to bring some of those musical talents together for this concert."

The free concert, on September 16, raised £207 for the East Anglian Children's Hospice. It was the first to be held in the Church of St Henry Morse since it opened in 2012, and more performances are planned for the future.

### Craft fair raises £8,000

■ Donations totalling £8,000 from this year's Clare Priory Craft Fair held in Suffolk in July have been presented to 15 charities.

They included donations of £1000 each for the St Nicholas Hospice in Bury St Edmunds, the East Anglian Children's Hospice is based in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, the East Anglian Air Ambulance, and for Lotty's Leg - a new charity set up to help pay for a prosthetic leg which for a young local woman.

Presentations, which were made by Fr Ian Wilson OSA, Prior of Clare, on October 21 also went to:

CAFOD, Cavendish Care, CLASP (Clare Liaison and Support Project) Clare Seekers, Clare Playing Fields, Cole Green football team, Clare Priory Garden Fund, My Wish and schools Stoke College, Samuel Ward and Stour Valley.

"The annual Craft Fair, with much hard work from our parishioners, pays for itself," said Fr David Middleton OSA, parish priest at Clare Priory. "It also gives us at the Priory the opportunity to say thank you to the very many people who work so generously for the surrounding community.

Next year's 25th anniversary craft fair will be on July 8 and 9.

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## OBITUARY

## Dedicated parish priest

Parish priest Fr Anthony Slack will be remembered for his dedication to parishioners in Whittlesey and Ramsey and a dry sense of humour. Bernard Whyte pays tribute.

■ Fr Anthony (Les) Slack retired in August 2016 at the age of 75 after 16 years as the Parish Priest of St Jude's Whittlesey and The Sacred Heart, Ramsey.

In November, he had a sudden brain hemorrhage and died within a very short space of time. His funeral was held at Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire where he had spent many years as a tutor. Requiem Masses were also celebrated at Whittlesey and Ramsey.

Fr Slack was born in Manchester, and at the age of 13, became a student to Ratcliffe College which was run by members of the Rosminian Order, (Institute of Charity). At the age of 18 he was inducted into the Order and was ordained into the priesthood at St John's, Womersley at the age of 23.

After a short time as an assistant priest in Cardiff, he returned to Ratcliffe where he became a tutor for the next 30 years. Having served the Whittlesey/Ramsey parish as a locum for some years, he was appointed Parish Priest in 2000 where he remained till his retirement. He was one of a number of Rosminian Priests supporting the Diocese at that time.

He was well known by his parishioners for his love of Latin, and for the singing of hymns at every opportunity. When not looking after the needs of the parish, he followed a deep interest in railways and would spend his free time exploring the rail routes of the British Isles. His knowledge in this



respect was outstanding. He was beginning to enjoy a newfound interest in bridge before he died.

In his latter years in the parish, he did not enjoy the best of health, but looked forward to a more peaceful time at the Rosminian retirement home at Derryswood, Surrey. His retirement Mass was concelebrated by a number of Rosminians as well as priests from our diocese, and a most thoughtful homily was given by Fr David Myers. Canon David Bagstaff paid tribute to the dedication of Fr Slack to our parish and the diocese. He was also joined by clergy from other Christian denominations who had come to share in the service.

Fr Slack will be remembered for his dedication to his parishioners, and a dry sense of humour which he shared over coffee after weekday Masses.

He will be fondly remembered in our prayers.

## Parish celebrates creation season

■ Parishioners in Diss celebrated the season of creation – which ran from the World Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1 to the Feast of St Francis on October 4 – with their first Livesimply week.

Responding to Pope Francis's special request "to take good care of creation – a gift freely given – cultivating and protecting it for future generations" during this season,

they took part in a range of events and activities that showed their care for our common home, and, at the same time, took them closer to becoming a Livesimply parish.

The week began with a refugee solidarity pilgrimage from the Carmel at Quidenham to Diss, a 10-mile countryside walk, stopping for prayer and reflections along the way using CAFOD resources, and ending with Stations of the Cross.

Next day, a session entitled Tread Lightly on the Earth invited parishioners to share what they were doing in their daily lives to reduce their carbon footprint, and what their next steps might be. Their pledges for action, written on green hearts, included flushing the loo less, using a renewable energy provider, eating less meat and writing to their MPs to call for action on climate change.



Diss parishioners carried a Lampedusa cross on their pilgrimage.

The Medaille Trust's diocesan representative, Gillian Spatcher, and manager of its new safe house in the diocese, Karen Thomas, came next day to talk about their work providing safe housing and opportunities for physical and psychological healing, rehabilitation and protection to victims of human trafficking.

Also included were: a day-long prayer vigil for creation care; the parish youth group spent their monthly meeting clearing an area of the church grounds ready to sow wildflower seeds to benefit wildlife, there was a visit; a visit to some local beehives with parishioner and beekeeper Mike Grant; and a visit to the local foodbank.

"It was a really successful week, engaging and inspiring many parishioners," said Judith.

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## The unbridled joy of the Christmas mystery

Fr Henry Whisenant reflects on Christmas.

*Sing, sing all earth!  
Sing, sing all earth the eternal praises  
sing,  
to our Redeemer, to our Redeemer  
and our Heavenly King!*

■ This is the refrain to my favourite Christmas carol – and one that deserves to be better known – called Shepherds Arise. The refrain expresses the unbridled joy of the Christmas mystery. Incidentally it seems to me that the joy of Christmas is somehow different in character from the joy of Easter.

That of Easter is grand, solemn, and salted with the bitter experience of the Cross and mankind's cruelty to God. It is a mystery that already has a foot in the formidable realm of eternity. But the joy of Christmas is like a childlike riot of colour and wonder, happy to stay up all night and sing in the child who changes human history forever. Perhaps that's why carolling has become such an integral part of this season's customs, and why it's the custom that the secular world clings to longest and most fondly.

At the heart of this singing is something other than just joy at the birth of

a baby. It is adoration of the incarnate God. It is wonder that the Creator of the Universe has entered into his Creation. Christmas carols recall us to our primary role of being adorers.

When Jesus was born into the world, the sophisticated and the clever did not adore him, for they did not know him, and they had forgotten how to adore. "Too much to do! Too many things going on! How should we have the time?" This is how the world today lives. Adoration, our main purpose as human beings, has been squeezed out of our schedules.

But adoration will never be silenced. The great and the worthy do not come to worship the child, but the single star in the heavens bows over his abode, and the animals of the stable bend the knee. And you, stars of the heavens, O bless the Lord!... And you, beasts wild and tame, O bless the Lord! To him be highest glory and praise forever!

The world sings a silent song to its creator that we, if we are canny, can pick up. And what about us? Will we take our place in that great paean to the Almighty born of the Virgin? Or will we be the only section of the orchestra that refuses to play?

*Sing, sing all earth the eternal praises  
sing,  
to our Redeemer, and our Heavenly  
King!*



# Pilgrim Mary walks 2,000km to Rome

Suffolk Catholic, 69-year-old Mary Kirk, has successfully completed an epic 2,000km pilgrimage from Canterbury to Rome, shedding tears of emotion and relief as she walked into St Peter's Square on Friday October 21.

Mary, who lives near Halesworth, spent 75 days on the road walking through five countries - England, France, Switzerland, Italy and the Vatican. A knee injury forced her to take a break mid journey to recover, but she finished the route known as the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome on Friday October 21, walking the final kilometres with two fellow pilgrims from Switzerland.

"To be with people with whom one can without embarrassment shed tears of emotion and relief as one arrives in St Peter's Square was a privilege," said Mary, who worships in Harleston in the Catholic Parish of St Edmunds (Bungay).

"I did the pilgrimage as a Catholic in this Year of Mercy, mindful of my need of mercy, but knowing in my heart that pilgrimage is in the journey, and that the trappings of arrival are but symbols of what has gone on inside oneself.

"It is too soon to know what I feel, what if anything has changed, what perspectives shifted. I have experienced the incredible kindness and generosity of strangers. I have seen faith and love in action. I know how dependent I am on others, and how much we are all interdependent.

"It has, I hope, taught me trust, for so many angels attended me in my travels,



Mary Kirk reaches St Peter's Square in the Vatican City.

and came to my aid when I was lost, miserable, in pain or need. More than anything, perhaps, it has provided proof yet again that bonds become swiftly strong when we are stripped of what in "normal" life defines us - our jobs, cars, houses, possessions, clothes, accents. With none of the factors that cause us, even unconsciously, to judge, we relate to the other within the moment, and intensely. Is this perhaps 'the kingdom of God'?"

Mary received a Latin certificate, the Testimonium, awarded to those who have

walked the final 100km or more to the tomb of Peter, after providing proof with a pilgrim passport stamped every day in churches, ostelli (pilgrim hostels), convents, town halls, and even bars or hotels as proof of passage.

Mary was walking in support of refugees "who are travelling in the opposite direction to escape war and horror", and for the homeless in the UK, and she raised around £1000 for Refugee Action and Shelter.

You can read a blog of Mary's journey at: <http://quovadis-walkingtorome.uk/>

## Top historian's medal honour

■ The leading historian of Catholicism in East Anglia for nearly 60 years, Joy Rowe, has been honoured for her huge contribution to the Diocese of East Anglia with the presentation of a Diocesan Medal on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

Joy was presented with the medal at Ixworth Abbey in Suffolk by her parish priest Fr David Finegan on September 17.

In the 1950s, Joy Rowe taught History at a convent school run by the Religious of the Assumption at Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, and she produced a brief but ground-breaking history of Catholicism in the Bury St Edmunds area in 1958.

In the 1960s she worked on the life of Thomas Cornwallis, a controversial Suffolk recusant, and served as mentor to the well-known church historian Prof Diarmaid MacCulloch.

In the 1970s, Joy saved important Catholic parish records. Having been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Joy made important contributions to the journal of the Catholic Record Society.

In the 1990s she authored important chapters on eighteenth-century Catholicism in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Joy Rowe contributed chapters on recusants to historical atlases of Norfolk and Suffolk and, in 2004, eight of her articles on East Anglian Catholics appeared in the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Most recently, Joy contributed a chapter on Elizabethan recusants to the recently published history of the Diocese, Catholic East Anglia.



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# n stories



Sr Michaela Switaj is welcomed to the Daughters of Divine Charity at a public Mass in Swaffham.

## Second year seminarian at the Beda College in Rome, Paul Spellman, tells of his experience so far.

As someone who has thought about the priesthood for many years, and has tried his vocation in a monastic setting, I was both apprehensive and excited about heading off to seminary; not least because it was in Rome.

My first year was full of new opportunities; living abroad, going back into study after quite a while, examining my own personal development, living in community and sharing the common desire to serve God and the Church. Living in community, which I wasn't looking forward to, has brought both its ups and downs.

However, the support the students give each other most definitely outweighs any of the downsides. I have experienced the many riches that living with others offers a community-minded group of people. During my first year I was able to attend lectures/talks/reflections outside of the seminary given on several different topics and presented by different people, including Cardinal Tagle of the Philippines and an amazing retreat day by Pope Francis.

During my summer break, I did my first pastoral placement at St Peter's and All Saints in Peterborough, which was superb; visiting the hospital, becoming more actively involved in the 'Alive and Faith' campaign and spending time experiencing the day-

to-day life of a busy city parish was a true gift. I then flew out to Poland with the Diocesan Pilgrims to World Youth Day. As a '45-year-old' this was probably the most daunting experience I faced all year. I really wasn't looking forward to it. However, it was a true eye-opener to the way God works through all our lives.

I was deeply moved by the whole experience. I found the prayers we shared, the laughs and the tears, the long walks and the spiritual nourishment so rewarding. The experience of spending almost 36 hours with over two million young people in a field was truly humbling. Listening to the experiences of other Christians from around the world, together with the inspiring words of the Holy Father, moved me to tears during the Saturday night vigil. I felt so moved by the whole experience that I have already volunteered for WYD 2019 in Panama.

I am just starting my second year back in Rome. The second year brings new challenges, mainly because of the house jobs that we are given during this year. I am one of the MC's for the college, which I am looking forward to being a part of. Although we are a large year group (15 students returning for their second year), I know that the opportunities and experiences ahead will help me to grow and develop in ways that I never thought possible. The time to reflect on 'who I am' and 'how God wants me to be' are wonderful and I look forward to the year ahead with a new sense of excitement, knowing that God is always there to offer us guidance and reassurance.



Tony Arthurton in the Memorial Chapel at St John's.

## Research to honour soldiers from parish

**A teenage member of St John's Cathedral in Norwich has spent the past year painstakingly researching the stories of the 53 soldiers killed during WW1 listed on plaques in its Memorial Chapel. Keith Morris reports.**

■ A Level student Tony Arthurton's research has resulted in a file of information on each man and he was also asked to read the 'Roll of Honour' at St John's on Remembrance Sunday.

Tony, aged 18, who has been an altar server at the Cathedral for the past seven years, said: "I frequently walked past the Memorial Chapel and looked at the three black plaques bearing the names in gold lettering of soldiers lost to our parish during WW1 (1914-1918). Every Remembrance Day, during the reading of the roll of honour, I thought it was a shame more wasn't known about the people behind the names and regiments. This became more poignant given the current centenary of WW1.

"As a result I decided to use the 'skills' sector of my Norwich School, Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award doing what I could, to conduct research into the names of the 53 soldiers listed on the plaques, starting in October 2015.

All the soldiers have a link to the parish and Tony found details via online research, using sites like the War Graves Commission, British Army Database and the 1911 Census.

"It was all about pulling threads together. The most difficult part was having the determination to keep trudging through until I found the right person," said Tony. "It took about a year."

Tony was impacted by what he found: "It all brought home to me, loud and clear, the huge sacrifice these men and their families made. Many of the soldiers killed were little older than myself and my two brothers, some even younger. When names are read out it is hard

to feel as strongly for them if you know nothing about them, their lives, what they gave up and what they died for.

"I can't imagine the loss within families when notified of deaths or the uncertainty of 'not knowing' when loved ones were reported missing. The extent of the loss also struck me, when you read the list you notice there are brothers and fathers. It must have been terrible."

Tony's work, which was supervised by Cathedral librarian Peter Thorn, threw up lots of interesting facts.

Two of the soldiers, Colonel Egbert Napier and Private Edgar Burton, both died in the Somme, France, exactly 100 years before Remembrance Day, on November 13, 1916. Colonel Napier is the highest ranked soldier on the plaques and served as Norfolk Chief Constable before the war.

Two of the fallen are buried in the cemetery at Earlham – Private Walstan Tann and Gunner Frederick Howett – in graves forgotten by the parish over the passage of time. Walstan left his Norwich home to travel alone to Montreal, Canada on the Megantic to seek a new life at just 17 years of age. At some point he joined the Canadian Regiment and seven years later he died in Bradford War Hospital and his body was taken to Norwich for burial.

"One of the most moving parts of my research was trudging through Earlham cemetery and finally finding Frederick Howett's grave, his inscription barely readable. Laying a poppy on his grave on the anniversary of his death was a very small gesture marking my appreciation for his sacrifice," said Tony.

"I hope to return to this research at some time in the future because it is one of the most important things I've ever done," said Tony.

If you know or are related to anybody listed on the memorial plaques, you can read Tony's research either by visiting the memorial chapel or online here.

Tony would love to hear from anybody who is related to the soldiers to find out a bit more about them to add to his research. Contact him at [anthony\\_arthurton@hotmail.com](mailto:anthony_arthurton@hotmail.com)



## DIOCESAN SCHOOLS IN FOCUS

### Students create winning designs

■ St Benedict's school students in Bury St Edmunds have produced winning designs for a new town market logo, a shopping bag design and a descriptive strapline for the market.

The winners were chosen from over 100 entries by the mayor of St Edmundsbury, Ms Julia Wakelam, when she visited the school on November 14.

Year 7 students were given a brief to work to from Darren Old (on behalf of local market traders) and Sharon Fairweather (Market Development Officer) and 14 entries were shortlisted to be viewed by the mayor.

Art teacher, Louise Gridley, said: "Both Darren and Sharon were delighted with the designs and felt that the brief was more than answered by our capable students. From the shortlisted entries the mayor chose three winning designs to combine.

"Congratulations go to William Russell for his exciting bag design, Louise Ollett for her market brand logo and Joseph Bidewell for his strapline.

"Well done to all students who undertook the design brief, including Sam Macey who received 'highly commended' recognition from the mayor. The other finalists who made the shortlist included: Emma Buckley, Madeleine Runciman, Bridget Martyn, Sienna Drage, Vivian Tedder, Connor Chacksfield, Noah Blackden, Rhian Li, Alex Cooper and Nancy King.

"Special thanks to St Edmundsbury Council in providing our students with this amazing opportunity for students to learn from a live brief," said Louise.



Above, Senior School students dress as The Incredibles for St Mary's School, Cambridge annual charity Fun Run and, inset, Headmistress Charlotte Avery and Head of Juniors Matthew O'Reilly join in the fun.

## An 'incredible' event

■ Students and staff from St Mary's School, Cambridge students dressed as well-known Disney characters to run laps around Lammas Land in Cambridge on October 21 to raise an estimated £6,000 for several charities.

The annual Fun Run saw Micky and Minnie Mouse, Nemo, the Incredibles, Elsa, Snow White and the Seven

Dwarfs and Cruella de Vil and her Dalmatians run up to 5km

The school's '20 campaign' encourages each student to gain sponsorship of just £1 from 20 different people, so that by each student's commitment to raising just £20 the school can raise an impressive sum for charity.

Selected by the school's charities prefects to receive a proportion of the funds raised were: Sr Christopher and the CJ Community in Zimbabwe; Arthur Rank Hospice; Educaid (Sierra Leone); Friends of the Earth UK; Emmaus; Mines Advisory Group (MAG); Pilgrimage People (Palestinian parishes).

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## DIOCESAN SCHOOLS IN FOCUS



### Walking to celebrate St Julie

■ Notre Dame High School celebrate the life of St Julie Billiart by holding its annual St Julie's Day Sponsored Walk on Friday October 21, reports **Mary Nobes**.

The day started with the whole school community celebrating Mass together in the Sports Hall. The Mass was a joyous occasion as students gathered in a variety of costumes to set off on their walk inspired by the spirit of St Julie and the Year of Mercy. A new song celebrating the life of the saint was sung with the rousing chorus of 'Qu'il est, Le Bon Dieu' – the school's motto.

The school's assistant chaplain, Mrs Teresa Richards, and RE teacher Joanna Sell constructed a beautiful ornate 'Door

of Mercy' that every student walked through to begin their five-mile sponsored trek. Each form presented a heart containing spiritual messages and every student's name which produced a very fine display for the doorway.

The entire school community walked the long way around Whitlingham Broad with immense enthusiasm to raise funds for charities which this year reflect the Corporal Acts of Mercy.

In previous years the students of Notre Dame have raised approximately £16,000 for charity and it is hoped that this year a similar amount will be collected by students by walking and the sale of cakes at the half-way point.

## First RE leaders day of new year

■ The first Primary RE Leaders' Day of the new academic year, took place on October 14 at the Poringland conference centre and was very well attended, report Jan Southgate and Margaret Stewart.

It was a lively and thought-provoking day led by Helen Matter, the Schools' Adviser for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

The day included the theme "Making a difference in RE" which looked at the nine key Christian ideas within a new approach to teaching RE through the Emmanuel Project.

The project centres on raising the level of pupils' religious literacy, based on enquiry, how pupils engage and express their knowledge and understanding, and how they share and evaluate their learning. There were some excellent resources supporting the taught themes.

The following theme "Deeper Learning in Christianity: Resurrection" was a stimulat-



ing and lively session, and encouraged great discussion as well as a sharing of useful resources to support pupils' understanding of life before and after death. It included aspects of identity and belonging, values and commitments, practices and ways of life.

The final theme "Working on Worship" encouraged leaders to evaluate collective worship in

their schools in light of worship being the "heart" of the school.

They considered transforming, engaging and inspiring current practice, and Helen gave examples of useful resources and ideas in relation to living out values and sharing beliefs.

The next Primary RE Leaders Day is on Friday February 24, 2017.

### School rises to Bake Off

■ A first-ever Bake Off event at St Mary and St Peter in Gorleston was a huge success thanks to the amazing contributions from parents, children, staff and other members of our community writes Headteacher Vicky Long.

The event was put together by staff in partnership with school sports providers, East Coast Community Healthcare, to raise money for a local charity raising funds to support three local children (attending other schools) who are suffering with brain tumours.

We had a fantastic day with everyone pulling together to make it a success. School governor Maureen Dunhill, school kitchen assistant Mags Wade and a past parent who has her own cake business, Alison

Shaw, made up the team of judges who had their work cut out.

In total, there were nearly 100 cakes donated and entered into the Bake Off competition – they filled the school hall!

Together, children and staff, parents and other local friends of the school pulled together to create an event that has so far raised a whopping £450 with more still coming in! Thank you so much to everyone who was involved, we know that the money raised will really help support the medical care costs of these children living in our school community.

It was really great to have the school hall full with our families enjoying a drink and a slice of cake and even reading a book together thanks to the Travelling Book Fair that was also open for business.



## Schools sports partnership boost

■ St Mary's School all-girls Catholic school in Cambridge, is partnering with the University of Cambridge's Homerton College to see a substantial regeneration of the school's sports ground and provide unlimited access to the enhanced facilities to students from both institutions.

Owned by St Mary's, and leased to Homerton College, the site will feature two new Astro-Turf pitches - for hockey, and for rugby and football; new netball and tennis courts; athletics facilities comprising a grass running track and field events facilities; practice nets for all ball sports; a new pavilion, including physio room, kitchen, and changing facilities; and floodlighting.



An artist's impression of the new pavilion.

St Mary's headmistress, Charlotte Avery, said: "The link between physical activity and the way girls learn and feel about themselves is clear – in terms of both physical and mental well-being – and girls' school-aged experiences of sport have a defining impact on their life-long attitudes to, and enjoyment of, physical activity.

"Our 'sport for all' mantra ensures that every girl has the opportunity to take part, for the benefit of their health and fitness, as well as to learn valuable lessons of leadership, motivation, team work and respect

"We are proud to boast elite sportswomen alongside willing amateurs."

### Big church live visit

■ On November 16 a group of Year 7s and 8s from the Liturgy Group at St Benedict's Catholic School, Bury St Edmunds, along with two RE sixthform ambassadors, went to Cambridge for the Big Church

Live Gig. They saw Hillsong Worship and Worship Central perform, led by Reuben Morgan and Tim Hughes. This is the third year the group have been to the event. Participant, Joey Law, said: "Going to the Big Church Live Gig was the best experience I've ever had and I would do it again in a heartbeat. I was so lucky to be able to share this experience with my friends and I thank all the teachers for making this possible."





## St Nicholas and his horse feature at cathedral fair

■ St Nicholas and his horse thrilled children and adults at the annual St Nicholas Fair in St John's Cathedral in Norwich on Saturday December 3.

St Nicholas' feast is popular in many countries at this time of the year and a St Nicholas Fair has become a popular annual event in the Narthex at St John's.

Several parish groups offered a wide range of craft, foods and other goods for local and national charities and the cultural diversity of the parish was evident in the variety of stalls and activities on view.

The Fair was formally opened by the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Cllr Marion Maxwell, who is a supporter of the Cathedral community and several of its ambitions.

During the day visitors were treated to dance and musical performances by children from the parish, and finally the arrival of St Nicholas and his horse bearing gifts.

## OBITUARIES

# Unique priest was also a family man

Fr Mark Hackeson pays tribute to Fr Paul Mercer who retired as a priest in Bury St Edmunds last year and died on September 8.

■ Jeremiah Peter Paul Mercer was born in the farming town of Tralee in SW Ireland on June 27, 1938, the eldest of two brothers, with an English mother and Irish father. Coming from a strong Catholic family, the young Paul attended St John's Church and the Dominican School of the Holy Cross in Tralee.

Paul's father was recruited to the Royal Airforce in 1946 with postings as far away as Rhodesia, modern day Zimbabwe. By 1958 the family had moved to England and Paul spent the next 10 years with his father, mother and younger brother Jim, moving between RAF stations, culminating in a final move to RAF Honington, where his father had gained the rank of flight sergeant. For his work as physical training instructor (PTI) and rehabilitating aircrew his father was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1976.

Around this time, Paul and his friends from the station would come to Bury St Edmunds for a night out, and this is where he would meet his future wife, Marie. At a dinner dance around 1963 he casually asked an attractive young trainee nurse where she was from, as he detected an Irish accent. When told Tralee, he of course said he too was from the same town. Marie, suspecting a line, was having none of it, until he was able to recount the street and place names familiar to them both. Marie continued her nursing and midwifery training and they were married in St Edmunds in February 1966. Peter was born later that year followed by David, John and Paul all of whom were baptised and served as altar boys at St Edmunds.

Paul and Marie worked hard to raise their four sons in a happy and loving



Fr Paul Mercer

home. They continued to follow their faith in St Edmunds and when the opportunity to explore entry to the permanent Diaconate arose, Paul discussed this with the then Parish Priest Mgr John Drury and was accepted to train at St Edmund's College Cambridge. He was ordained along with 19 other men by the first Bishop of East Anglia, Alan Clarke, at St John's in Norwich in 1991.

With Marie's help and support, Paul's Diaconal ministry brought him great fulfilment and was much appreciated by clergy and parishioners alike. He grew into the role beautifully, and his homilies came very much from the heart as he became more at ease with this aspect of his ministry.

Marie's untimely death in 1998 was a great blow to Paul. He felt the loss keenly following 32 years of loving and happy marriage, and each year since 2001 he would celebrate Mass for her and in thanksgiving for their marriage on their wedding anniversary.

Throughout his life, Paul had often expressed his wish to explore his vocation to the priesthood, which dated back to his childhood. After discussions

with the then Bishop, Peter Smith, he was offered the opportunity to test his vocation to the Priesthood at St John's Seminary Womersley. In 2001 he completed his studies, no small undertaking for a man in his 60s, and was ordained Priest in Bury St Edmunds where he continued to practice his ministry both at the Parish Church and as Chaplain to the Benedictine Sisters of Grace & Compassion at 'Montana' in Great Barton.

Paul delighted in being a priest and in priesthood he found the personal fulfilment that he had not found in his working life. He continued to balance the demands of the priesthood and fatherhood, providing support to both his parish and four sons in equal measure. In 2001, Paul was delighted to welcome his first grandson Charlie to the family, followed by Henry in 2007 and George in 2009.

In the last two years, ill health continued to afflict Paul - but he bore it bravely and it is good to know that he celebrated the Wednesday morning Mass at St Edmund's only days before the stroke which took him from us.

Paul was a 'unique' priest - he has received all seven sacraments and in the two Sacraments of Commitment, as Marriage and Holy Orders are sometimes called, he found great happiness and fulfilment. His experience of married life, certainly informed his ministry both as deacon and priest. In a conversation with Paul's sons after his death it was concluded that Fr Paul "felt very blessed, humbled and privileged to have been married, have a family and be called to the priesthood." We have all benefitted from that.

Paul died peacefully at West Suffolk Hospital on September 8, surrounded by his sons, having fully participated in the reception of the Sacraments. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

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## Sandy had uncompromising love of God

Cambridge priest Rev Fr Arthur (Sandy) Phelps, known for his uncompromising love of God and the Catholic Church, has died at the age of 95. Mgr Eugene Harkness pays tribute.

■ Sandy was born on 6 September 1921 in New York City and baptised on 23 October, 1921, as an Episcopalian. His father, Arthur Korth, was a first generation American whose parents were German. His mother was the daughter of Franz von Rottenberg and Marian Phelps.

Sandy's maternal grandmother, Marian, was the daughter of the American ambassador to Germany and his maternal grandfather, Franz von Rottenberg had a very distinguished career in the German government under Bismarck but retired to become Rector of Bonn University before the outbreak of World War I.

Sandy spent his early years in fashionable parts of America, but when his parents divorced the ensuing scandal led his mother to leave for Europe and she settled in Bournemouth. She subsequently reverted to using her mother's maiden name and also changed the surnames of her two sons



Rev Fr Arthur (Sandy) Phelps.

Arthur (Sandy) and William to Phelps.

Sandy's education started at his prep school St Wulframs, then Sherborne, ending up at Arosa in Switzerland. After the war he went up to Sidney Sussex, Cambridge to read theology with a view to becoming an Anglican clergyman, but conversion to the Catholic faith changed the direction of his life.

He was accepted for the Diocese of Portsmouth and was sent to The Beda College, Rome. Ordained on 26 March

1955, Sandy had some parish assignments in Portsmouth.

An hiatus in his diocesan ministry took place and he went off to spend some time in Switzerland at a monastic hermitage of the Camaldulense Order. Eventually he returned to a live in England and made his home in the Diocese of East Anglia where Bishop Peter Smith permitted him to function in a minor capacity.

Devotion to Our Lady and The Cenacle movement figured large in his life along with that to the Divine Mercy. These elements formed his future years as a priest in Cambridge and led him to an active and much cherished life at St Philip Howard Parish.

He was fortified by the rites of the Church on the Feast of St Philip Howard (October 19) and then went into a coma. He died on the Feast of Pope St John Paul II the promoter of The Divine Mercy on October 22, quietly and surrounded by parishioners.

He will be remembered for his humility, his brilliant mind, his enjoyment of music, both sacred and secular, but most of all for his uncompromising love of God and the Catholic Church which manifested itself daily. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



## YOUTH MATTERS

# Audience spellbound by White Rabbit drama

■ The Narthex at St John's Cathedral was packed out to watch White Rabbit - an original play by Rise Theatre on Saturday November 19. **Review by Jo Graham.**

The play tells the story of how two lost souls reconnect with their childhood hopes and dreams and through encounters with the mysterious WR experience the power of eternal love and boundless forgiveness.

The audience is invited into the lives of the two main characters, Tom and Jenny, beautifully played by Stephen Newbury and Hannah Parker. Each encounter with WR (superbly played by John Bosco) whetted the appetite for more, until we were sitting on tenterhooks, watching the drama unfold and wondering when we would see WR again.

The story flowed effortlessly with Charley Pinfold taking on the role of narrator, combining engaging story-



telling with compelling lyrics and soulful tunes to create the perfect backdrop for each scene.

It's almost hard to believe that there

were only four actors in this play given the diverse characters that traversed across scene after scene.

The White Rabbit, an original play written by Charley, reminds us all of that child-like trust and wonder that comes from knowing and experiencing God's love, which give us hope and enables us to dream.

The next morning there was a buzz around St John's Cathedral as those who had attended the play shared the story with fellow parishioners - the question on everyone's lips was "When will Rise Theatre come back to Norwich?" The answer is soon - look out their new play based on the life of Blessed Oscar Romero in February 2017.

For me, the White Rabbit was a fitting end to this Year of Mercy and I am grateful to Rise Theatre for coming to Norwich for the Feast of Christ the King to share this amazing story with us.

# Youth group retreat

**T**he St John's Cathedral youth group from Norwich embarked on a five-day retreat at Buckden Towers during October half-term.

The theme of the retreat was from John 10:10 "I come so that they may have life and have it in abundance". There were talks on God's love, the history of Salvation and the dignity of the human person. In addition to daily mass, talks and evening prayer, the group enjoyed a range of focused "sense" activities like; a silent meal, guided blindfold walks, visiting the famous herb knot garden at Buckden, making Matzoh bread for a Seder meal and putting together a mosaic that reflected theme. The creation mosaic was on display at the Cathedral on November 27 for the launch of the Live Simply campaign.

In between times, there was football, roasted marshmallows on a camp fire, some wicked manhunt sessions and some cool Pentatonix songs. Special thanks to Cat Williams from Ignite and Chris Storman who came along help run the camp.

Cat said: "Buckden Towers was a great experience. They were a wonderful group of young people and I had so much fun spending five days getting to know them as well as helping to lead games, small groups and times of prayer. It was also



The St John's youth group at Buckden Towers.

really lovely to watch them grow closer as a group throughout the week and discover their views and perspective on being Catholic and life in general as well as to help answer questions they had

about their faith. One of the highlights for me was getting to lead evening prayer one night and watching how willingly and deeply many of them entered into prayer."

## Youth chaplain

■ Bishop Alan has appointed Fr Karol Porczak as chaplain to the youth service. Fr Karol is a member of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Our Salette (MS). He was ordained in Poland in 1991, then after pastoral experience in Poland and England (London), he graduated in 2003 with a Doctorate in Theology specialising in Mariology. Since January 2015, he has been parish priest in St Ives.

■ November 20 was 'National Youth Sunday' - a special day to celebrate the gift of young people to the Church, to welcome, involve and empower them. Throughout the diocese, parishes celebrated the day in different ways - some using ideas from nationally produced resources which explore a particular theme each year. This year the theme was 'Celebrating Mercy'. See [www.nationalyouthsunday.org.uk](http://www.nationalyouthsunday.org.uk)



## Ignite Lite

■ Ignite Lite is an exciting new initiative for young people (age 16 - 30) to take part in youth ministry and evangelisation as occasional or part time volunteers.

Whereas the Ignite Team is set up for people to join the team full time, and live in community together, Ignite Lite is for people who are not currently able to do this but would still like to be involved. Training will be provide. Contact us for more information.

## Summer pilgrims

■ During summer 2017, the Diocese will be organising a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, walking the Camino. For people age 18 - 30. Full details will be sent out in the new year but to register interest, please email [dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk)

## Key 2017 dates

■ **January 8** - Epiphany Candlelight Mass, Poringland,

■ **March 11** - 'Flame III' (National Youth Event), Wembley

■ **April 29-30** - Ignite Diocesan Youth Festival, Swaffham and Walk to Walsingham

■ **May 1** - Pilgrimage Walk to Walsingham

■ **June 3-4** - Celebrate East Anglia Family Conference, Bury St Edmunds

■ **July / August** - Youth Pilgrimage (location and dates to be decided)

■ **July 31 - August 5** - New Dawn Family Conference, Walsingham

■ **August 17-26** - Pilgrimage to Lourdes

■ **August 24-28** - Youth 2000 Prayer Festival, Walsingham

■ **August 25-28** - Summer Camp (age 8 - 14), Norfolk

For more details of each event, please see [www.rcdea.org.uk/youth](http://www.rcdea.org.uk/youth)

## Youth contacts

**Tel:** 01508 486236

**Email:** Ignite Team enquiries [ignite@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:ignite@east-angliadiocese.org.uk)

All other enquiries [dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/igniteyea](http://www.facebook.com/igniteyea)

**Twitter:** @igniteyea

**Web:** [www.rcdea.org.uk/youth/](http://www.rcdea.org.uk/youth/)

**New Year Epiphany Candlelight Mass**

**Followed by hotdogs, a bonfire and fireworks**  
For all young people across the diocese

5pm - 7pm Sunday 8th January 2017  
at The White House, 21 Upgate, Poringland, Norwich, NR14 7SH.

This year, we are collecting gifts for children who are refugees. Please bring a wrapped gift, indicating on the outside whether it is for a boy or girl or either, and the approximate age it is suitable for.

Organised by East Anglia Diocesan Youth Service. Tel: 01508 486236 Email: [dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk](mailto:dys@east-angliadiocese.org.uk)



**"Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things."  
- Psalm 119:18**



## **"Blessing is 5. If we do nothing, Blessing will be blind for the rest of his life."**

**Dr Aliraki Lisbon, Ophthalmologist at Mengo Hospital, Uganda.**

Dear Catholic East Anglia Reader,  
As a fellow Christian, I wanted to share with you how incredibly powerful it is to witness a child seeing for the first time, after eye surgery.

As I carry out my work with Christian Blind Mission in East Africa, I am constantly moved by the astonishment and wonder on the faces of children when the bandages are removed and they get their first clear look at their smiling loved ones.

Five year old Blessing was born with cataracts. He has been barely able to see. But his doctor said that his sight can be restored through a simple 45-minute procedure.

Just think, in under an hour his entire life could be transformed.  
Instead of living with darkness,

frustration and exclusion he could have light, colour and a future filled with opportunity. He could do well at school and find a way out of poverty.

The cataract removal surgery costs £95, but his family can barely afford even basic necessities, so I am turning to you in the hope that you can help.

If you could send a gift of £95 today, you could pay for a child like Blessing's surgery. You could open his eyes to the beauty of God's creation. And we'll send you an update on how Blessing's surgery goes.

God bless you,

Laura Gore  
Programme Manager CBM UK



**Blessing's cataracts mean he has been living in darkness.**



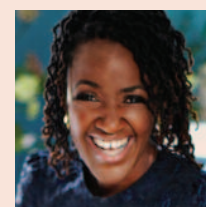
**He can hardly see objects more than 50cm away.**



**Your gift could open a child's eyes and transform a life.**

Christian Blind Mission is a huge inspiration to me. It works in more than 60 countries, including some of the world's poorest communities, to restore sight, mobility and independence to people living with disability. It's putting Christ's love into action for the most marginalised people. Will you join Christian Blind Mission by supporting this amazing work?

**Diane Louise Jordan**



**Yes, I will give £95 to make a blind child see the wonder of God's creation.**

**I will give:** ☐ £95 ☐ My choice amount of: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I enclose a cheque/postal order/CAF voucher made out to CBM or

☐ Please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro Card/CAF Card

Card holder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date: MM / YY

3-digit security number: \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**We will send you an update on how Blessing's surgery goes.**

We like to contact our supporters with updates from the projects we support.

If you do not want to receive such messages from us in the future, tick here: ☐

In the event of there being insufficient funds to carry out a project, or in the event of a surplus arising on a project, any unspent funds will be used wherever the need is greatest.

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BUILDING BRIDGES

A world of care, compassion and love

After ten years of visits, Bob Maidment from North Walsham Parish says that entering the space of the Battambang Diocese in Cambodia is to find a world of care, compassion and love.

■ ‘Choom reap soo-a’ is the formal greeting in Cambodia, meaning ‘may I enter your space?’. East Anglian visitors are always greeted with enthusiasm and smiles from young and old alike: ‘welcome to the family’, ‘join the celebrations’, ‘enter our space’.

Entering the space of the Battambang Diocese is to find a world of care, compassion and love. Large centres such as Battambang, Svay Sisophon, Siem Reap and Kompong Chhnang are on the few main roads that exist in the region. From these centres there spreads a network, enabling the smaller rural communities to see and experience the caring work of the church.

After ten consecutive years of visiting Cambodia, I am still amazed to discover many new places where needs have been identified and help is being given or planned.

Although each community has its own problems, there is a willingness to work with the Church to benefit all the people of the area, irrespective of faith or none. And all done with a great smile and ‘orgOOn’ [thank you].

The priests of our twin diocese work with the Sisters, Brothers and other organisations to show the true meaning of Christianity through practical support.

The bridge that has been built between the Dioceses of East Anglia and Battambang makes us all part of that process of faith in action.

Education, hygiene, medical help, housing, employment, cultural develop-

ment and food are all concerns of the dedicated people who give so much of themselves to help the poorest of the poor.

This is perhaps best illustrated by the comment of one priest [sadly no longer with us]. Father Heri said: “I didn’t come here to convert people, I came to love them”.

That love stems not only from unshakeable faith in Christ but also from some of the basic Buddhist principles: Right Thoughts, Right Goals, Right Words, Right Deeds, Right Effort. Combined with ‘Love God’ and ‘Love Thy Neighbour’ our Cambodian friends offer us a great blueprint for daily living in peace and harmony.

East Anglia may give much to Cambodia but we receive so, so much more in return.

‘OrgOOn charan Kampuchea’ [Thank you very much, Cambodia]

Can you help build bridges?

The two current Diocese of East Anglia Building Bridges projects are support for the salary of a kindergarten teacher in the Holy Land and a new formation centre for children, youth groups and adults at Battambang in Cambodia.

If you would you like to support these projects, cheques should be made payable to the “RC Diocese of East Anglia”.

First

Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

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Amount enclosed

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Anything you give will be divided equally between Cambodia and the Holy Land unless you indicate by tick-ing the box below that all your money should go to that project.

☐ Cambodia ☐ Holy Land

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Signature:.....

Date:.....

**Please send to:** Building Bridges, 21 Upgate, Poringland, Norwich, NR14 7SH

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Bethlehem students make big impression

■ Students and staff from Bethlem University made a big impression on a group of visitors from Diocese of East Anglia-linked charitable travel company Pilgrimage People recently.

The group of trustees and supporters from Pilgrimage People visited the only Catholic university in Palestine to find out more about the institution for which it has helped to provide student sponsorship funds.

They met 90-year-old Brother Joseph Loewenstein, the university’s first-ever Principal when it opened in 1973, Vice Chancellor Brother Peter Bray, Guest Relations Officer Demitri Awwad and a number of current Christian and Muslim students.

The 3,000 students at the university are 75% female and 70% Muslim and they study in the main faculties of Arts, Education, Business Studies, Nursing and Health Sciences, Science and Hotel Management and Tourism.



The Pilgrimage People group with students and Br Joseph Loewenstein, left, at Bethlehem University.

The students told their visitors that the university feels like home for them and is the only one where you get the mixture of Muslims, Christians and non-faith groups. It also gives them very good job opportunities, despite a 35% unemployment rate in Palestine.

Br Peter told the visitors: “Our aim is to keep hope alive. The hope that what we are going through, we are not going through alone.

“We welcome people visiting us because it means that they are standing in solidarity with us and our students are being listened to. When I see the young people’s energy, then I can put up with all the stuff that is going on around us.

“We are an unashamedly Catholic

university and, like Jesus, we are here to help provide opportunities for people to live life in all its fullness.”

Fr Paul Maddison, from Pilgrimage People, and parish priest in March, said: “A lot of our pilgrimage groups visit the university with us and it shows the reality of life in Palestine. Is important for the students to feel that their stories are being heard.

“We have in the past been able to provide some student sponsorship and would like to do so again in the future.”

In the last year over 80 students have benefitted from the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Scholarship programme,

supported by Pilgrimage People, which last year sent over £2,500. The students were able to attend universities in Palestine, Jerusalem and Jordan, including a number at Bethlehem University.

LPJ administrator Fr Imad Twal, said: “Your assistance in the programme created a meaningful difference in the lives of the Christian communities of the Holy Land. Your contributions will allow the students to reach their dreams in order to become successful professional-ism which means so much for them and their families.

[www.bethlehem.edu](http://www.bethlehem.edu)





# Year of Mercy comes to end

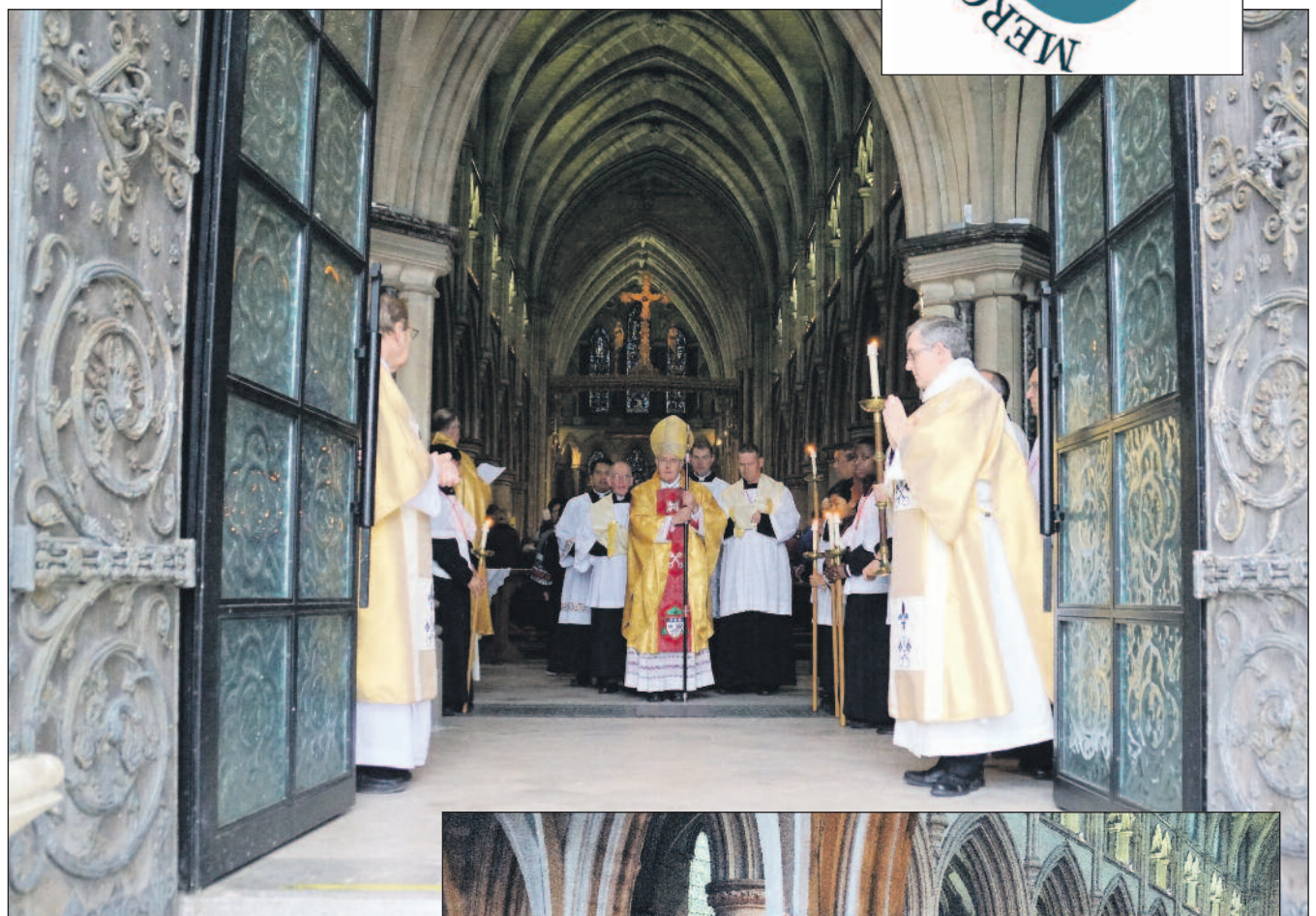


■ Article continues from front page.

across the Diocese to celebrate Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the prisoners. "One of the most beautiful things that Pope Francis said was that prisoners, who are obviously not able to make a pilgrimage to a Holy Door, could treat the door of their cell as the door of mercy," he said.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of people have walked through the Holy Door at Norwich Cathedral from right across the Diocese of East Anglia and from around the world, with visitors recorded from Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Croatia, Poland, USA, Canada, Argentina, Ecuador, Australia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and India among other locations.

■ For a full picture gallery visit: [www.flickr.com/photos/dioceseofeastanglia](http://www.flickr.com/photos/dioceseofeastanglia)



Pictures from the Closing of the Door of Mercy at St John's Cathedral in Norwich on November 20.