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Catholic **South West**

Serving the Church in the South West

FEBRUARY 2026

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CONTACTS & DETAILS

Catholic South West is a monthly newspaper for Catholics in the Plymouth, Clifton and Portsmouth Dioceses. It is published by Bellcourt Ltd

AIMS

To build community in the South West by sharing stories relating to Catholic life around the South West.
To encourage readers to get more involved in - or start - projects and initiatives in the local area.
To provide thought-provoking articles to help readers deepen their Faith.

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The Catholic South West is looking for a Parish Correspondent in your parish to send in local news for publication in this newspaper.
All items to be emailed to csw@cathcom.org before 10th of the month

A period of joy and celebration for the diocese

We look back over Bishop Nicholas' first month, a period of joy and celebration for the diocese. Please keep the Bishop in your prayers as we move into 2026.



EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

1) **Think of the readers:** If you are writing about an event, think about the readers that don't know anything about it. Outline what happened, but focus on why people go, why it is important to them, or some teaching that was given. Make sure readers learn something from your article - they don't just want

to know who was there and what snacks were available!
2) **Keep it brief:** Make sure you make your point - but keep it brief and punchy.
3) **Pictures:** Send pictures as they are - even if they are very big to email. Don't reduce them in size or put them inside a Word document. They look fine on the screen but terrible in the paper!

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A commitment to Inter-Faith Friendship and Solidarity



On 17 December 2025, the Plymouth Jewish Community CIC hosted its Chanukah celebration, a festival of light that this year took on an added and deeply poignant significance. Against a backdrop of global uncertainty and recent violence, the gathering became not only a moment of celebration but also a powerful expression of unity, hope, and shared humanity.

In a visible and heartfelt demonstration of inter-faith solidarity, Bishop Nicholas attended the event, alongside the diocesan Head of Safeguarding and the Head of Caritas. Their presence was a clear sign of support for the Jewish community and for people of all faiths during a time of heightened anxiety and grief. It conveyed a message of compassion and resolve, standing firmly against hatred and violence in all its forms. This solidarity was especially meaningful in the wake of the recent terror attack at Bondi Beach in Sydney,

Australia, where a Hanukkah celebration was targeted, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries during what should have been a joyful festival of lights. News of the attack reverberated across faith communities worldwide, intensifying feelings of vulnerability while also strengthening the resolve of many to stand together against antisemitism and extremism. In this context, the Plymouth gathering served as a reminder that acts of violence will not have the final word, and that light can still shine even in the darkest moments.

The attendance of Christian leaders reflected a shared commitment across the Southwest to stand together in the face of the growing challenges confronting faith communities, both locally and internationally. It acknowledged the pain felt by many within the Jewish community while affirming that they do not stand alone. The presence of Caritas, the Catholic

agency for social action, further emphasised the importance of practical solidarity, compassion for those who suffer, and a collective responsibility to work for peace and justice.

At the event, faith leaders, community leaders, charities, and members of the wider community gathered to watch the giant Menorah being lit by Rabbi Mendy. As the candles were kindled, prayers for peace were shared and a collective stand was reaffirmed against antisemitism, intolerance, and all forms of hatred. The lighting of the Menorah – a central symbol of Chanukah – resonated strongly as a sign of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of faith.

The diversity of those in attendance underscored a shared belief that faith, hope, and community resilience must prevail over fear and division, particularly at a time when many around the world are seeking courage and comfort. The

gathering highlighted the strength that comes from standing together across traditions, recognising common values, and refusing to allow violence or prejudice to fracture community bonds. In a statement this week, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales have talked about the importance of joy, hope, peace and love and the celebration of Christmas as “our lived response in opposition to those who seek division”.

Ultimately, the Chanukah celebration in Plymouth was more than a single event. It was a profound expression of inter-faith friendship across the Southwest, reinforcing relationships that transcend individual traditions and affirm shared values of respect, dignity, and mutual support. In lighting the candles together, those present bore witness to a simple but powerful truth: that solidarity itself can be a light, offering hope and reassurance in difficult times.

Success after Bishop Philip Egan invites men considering a vocation to join him at Mass

Bishop Philip writes:

Just before Christmas I invited any man in the Diocese who was thinking about a vocation to the priesthood to meet me in the Cathedral on Sunday 4th January. There was an amazing response: over 50 men came along! Thank you to everyone for your prayers and encouragement. The meeting began with Solemn Vespers. Here is the short reflection I gave after the Reading.

Last November, I went to a conference of bishops in Madison NJ. The theme was: Preparing for the Year 2033. 2033 is the 2000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the 2000th anniversary of Pentecost, the Sending of the Holy Spirit, and the 2000th anniversary of the birth of the Catholic Church. But the message of the conference was that 2033 is also the 2000th anniversary of the Great Commission. The Great Commission is those last recorded words of Jesus on



earth before He ascended into heaven: Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. In other words, 2033 not only reminds us of the beginning of the Church's mission: it invites us to renew that mission today to the peoples of the 21st century.

thought of giving your life to God resonate with you? Does the idea of being a priest seem strangely thrilling, awesome, a bit out of reach yet tempting, unlikely but perhaps possible? Today, you're in the right place. You've come to the Cathedral, the Mother Church. You've come to be before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. You've come to be with me, the Bishop, to spend some moments discerning God's will.

My dear brothers, thank you for being here this afternoon. The Great Commission is our context: the new evangelisation, an evangelisation, in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, that is new in its ardour, new in its methods, new in its expression. Every Christian is called to this task, but this is why the Church needs priests. We need priests to lead the faithful, to inspire them, to pray for them, to guide them. We need priests to celebrate the sacraments, to teach the faith and to shepherd the flock. We need priests to be spiritual fathers, men who are holy, men in love with God, men at the service of others. That's why we're here: to discern if God is calling us to this. Does God want me to give my life to Him? Does God want me to be a soldier for Christ, a sentinel in the watchtower, a lowly man called to greatness? Does God want me to be His priest? Don't be afraid or hold back. Let me ask you: Is your heart touched when you hear this? Does the

Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, that we have seen with our own eyes, that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word who is life - this is our subject. After our prayers, we'll go into Bishops House for time together, for refreshments and conversation. All I ask of you today, is to be open. Be open to the Holy Spirit. Be open to Christ's call: Come, follow me. Be open to listen, to learn, to love and above all, to dream. What does the Lord want of me? What does He wish me to do? What does He want to ask of me in my life? Could it be - that He is calling me to be His priest?

If you are interested in vocation, please contact your diocese.



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Bishop of Plymouth opens church in Gillingham, Dorset, to serve growing Catholic communities



Image: Ben@nativemultimedia

In response to increasing Catholic congregations and housing growth, one of the first episcopal acts of the new Bishop of Plymouth, the Right Reverend Nicholas Hudson, was to celebrate a Mass for the Dedication of the new church and altar of St Benedict's, formerly a Methodist chapel, in Gillingham, Dorset on Tuesday 9 December.

The Gillingham church project was identified against the background of the area's local plan, with 1,800 new homes planned in Gillingham (increasing the town's dwellings by 30%). These developments would exacerbate the need for a bigger Catholic church to serve a growing community. Even before the redevelopment, there were not enough spaces for parishioners, who had to arrive early to get a seat.

Bishop Nicholas Hudson said: "I am delighted that one of my first acts as the new Bishop of Plymouth is to celebrate a Mass for the Dedication of the new church of St Benedict and its altar in Gillingham, Dorset. This new church, along with developments in the parish of Tiverton, reflects our commitment to supporting growing Catholic communities and to serving local communities across the diocese. I am grateful to the Methodist community in Gillingham for their

generous collaboration and support in this project."

The priest-in-charge of Marnhull and Gillingham, Father Cletus Ibeka, moved into his new home in September 2025. He shared his excitement about the project: "This new church represents not just a physical expansion, but a spiritual one as well. The growth is not only in our faith community, but in our commitment to serving the people of Gillingham." This timing coincides with the tercentenary of the parish's founding with the Marnhull Mission in 1725, marking a significant milestone in the local Catholic community's history.

The new church includes a highly unusual design feature: natural light will shine in the confessional. Very few confessionals have natural light, but the new confessional in St Benedict's has windows to provide natural light and ventilation, as well as sound proofing. The focus on light is central to the renovation project, with the new parish church taking advantage of natural light for a parish community which will seat up to 200 people. In addition to natural lighting, solar panels are on the presbytery roof and there are energy-efficient systems throughout. The renovations also include: a unifying timber floor that respects the building's

history and the integration of stone sanctuary furniture from the former military Catholic chapel in Bulford Camp, including the altar, the ambo, the font and the presider's chair, thereby preserving a piece of Catholic heritage from Salisbury Plain; a new sanctuary with stone steps and a solid wood block floor; the conversion of the former Sunday School into modern living quarters for the priest; with an emphasis upon accessibility throughout. Additional facilities also include a hall, parish kitchen, and meeting rooms.

Deacon of Marnhull and St Benedict's parish, Gillingham, James Mackain-Bremner, who has been actively involved in the project, said: "This innovative approach to lighting, especially in the confessional, highlights our wider vision. We're creating a space that's not only larger to accommodate our growing parish, but also spiritually uplifting. Our aim is that when somebody comes in, they'll look up and feel there's something here that's greater than themselves – something beyond what we see on a daily basis." Deacon James highlighted the project's emphasis upon sustainability: "It's about repurposing; reusing, employing local artisan and using local suppliers, and community integration." Revd Lin Francis, Superintendent Minister

of the Yeovil & Blackmore Vale Methodist Circuit said: "A chance conversation over Hot Cross Buns on Good Friday 2022 with members of the congregation from St Benedict's RC led to both churches exploring the possibility of the sale of the Methodist building to the Roman Catholic Church. There were a few dilemmas along the way, but God had his hand in all of this.

"The aims of the Methodist Society weren't all met, but two out of three is amazing; keeping Christian worship and mission and keeping the church as it is on the outside, no developers changing it. The Catholic church has a bigger base and the opportunity to envisage a mission for the next 100 years."

The diocese is very grateful to the Methodist community for entrusting this historic building to its care. This project not only preserves an important local landmark but reimagines it for a new era of worship and service within the local community.

To view more images of the day scan the QR code right.





Jubilee 2025:

A Year of Hope, A Church Renewed



Opening of the Holy Door, by Pope Francis. ©Vatican Media

On Christmas Eve 2024, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, inviting the Church into the Jubilee Year of 2025. "This is the season of hope in which we are invited to rediscover the joy of meeting the Lord," he said. "The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation."

Jubilee 2025 will be remembered as a year in which the global Church walked together through grief and joy, continuity and change, discovering that hope, rooted in Christ, as St Paul reminds us, "does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5).

A Jubilee That Surpassed Expectations

As the Jubilee concluded on the Feast of the Epiphany, the Vatican confirmed that more than 33 million pilgrims travelled to Rome from 185 countries, far exceeding expectations. The scale of participation made the Jubilee a visible expression of the Church's universality.

35 major Jubilee events were celebrated,

each dedicated to a particular vocation or group within the Church. These were not merely large gatherings, but moments of encounter where faith was shared, deepened, and renewed.

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday left an indelible mark during the year, followed by the conclave and the election of Pope Leo XIV on 8 May. But the convergence of these events transformed the Jubilee Year into a powerful witness of a Church in communion; a Church able to mourn, to gather in prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to move forward together with renewed hope.

Signs of Spiritual Renewal

Beyond the numbers, the Jubilee's most enduring legacy lies in its spiritual impact. Unprecedented attendance at Rome's major basilicas and traditional pilgrimage sites were reported and priests highlighted a surge in Confessions, particularly among pilgrims seeking to participate fully in the Jubilee indulgence.

This renewed return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation was one of the clearest

signs that the Jubilee touched hearts as well as minds. For many, the Holy Year was not simply an event to attend, but a moment of personal renewal, a genuine opportunity to begin again.

The Jubilee of Youth

Among the most striking moments of the Jubilee was the Jubilee of Youth, drawing more than one million young people to Rome. Confessions were offered at the Circus Maximus, a site associated with the witness of early Christian martyrs. The sight of thousands of young people quietly queuing for the sacrament became one of the defining images of the Holy Year.

Reflecting on the moment, the Prefect of the City of Rome, observed: "To see those young people in confession, the atmosphere that was felt, it was something unique that remained engraved in everyone's eyes."

For many observers, the Jubilee of Youth challenged prevailing assumptions about faith among younger generations. It revealed a generation not indifferent, but searching, open to depth, meaning, and

belonging.

Saints for Our Time

The Jubilee Year was further enriched by the canonisations of Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, the first saints canonised by Pope Leo XIV. Their witness proved especially resonant during a Holy Year centred on hope.

Both saints offer a compelling message: holiness is lived in ordinary life, in classrooms and workplaces, on mountain paths and city streets. Their canonisations reinforced the Jubilee's central conviction that sainthood is not reserved for a few, but is the vocation of all.

A Jubilee Lived at Home

Although Rome stood at the heart of the Jubilee, participation was never limited to those able to travel. Dioceses across the UK designated Jubilee churches, promoted parish pilgrimages, and encouraged local participation in the indulgence. In this way, the grace of the Holy Year reached everyone in parishes, schools, care homes, and families across



Habemus Papam - Pope Leo XIV © Mazur/cbcew.org.uk

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For most Catholics in the UK, the Jubilee was lived quietly, through parish Masses, Confession, charitable outreach, and renewed commitment to prayer. In strengthening the ordinary, everyday life of the Church, the Jubilee reminded the faithful that renewal begins at home.

Hope for the Church in the UK

Research published during the year indicated rising Catholic practice among young adults, with Catholic church attendance among 18- to 34-year-olds surpassing Anglican attendance for the first time since the Reformation. The Jubilee's message of hope, mercy, and belonging has resonated deeply within a culture searching for meaning and stability.

Renewed leadership within the Church in the UK, most notably with the appointment of Richard Moth as

Archbishop of Westminster, ushers a sign of continuity, pastoral confidence, and hope for the future of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Looking Ahead

Rome now turns its attention to the next extraordinary Jubilee in 2033, marking the 2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jubilee 2025 has shown that the Church's future is shaped by trust in the God who continues to renew His people and lead them forward in hope. In the Book of Revelation, the Lord declares, "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5). That promise found tangible expression during this Jubilee — in new leadership, new saints, and renewed faith across the Church. It echoes the assurance of St Paul, who reminds us that "hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5), because it is grounded not in human certainty, but in God's enduring faithfulness.

Gwen is a Catholic writer and speaker who has authored devotional books on Saint Carlo Acutis and regularly presents talks on his life and miracles. She resides in Assisi, Italy, where she conducts retreats and leads pilgrimages that share the witness of Saints Francis, Clare, and Carlo. Contact: gwen@viaassisi.com

Confession during the Jubilee Year. Image source: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/>

Canonisation of Saints Carlo and Pier Giorgio Frassati, 7 September 2025.
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Scripture Focus

By Fr Jeremy Corley



Passing the Test

On the First Sunday of Lent (22nd February), we hear the gospel story of Jesus being led into the wilderness where he is tempted for 40 days. The word "tempted" here could also be translated "tested".

In other words, Jesus was being tested to see if he was ready for his mission of redeeming the world. We can view his three tests as his qualifying exams for his saving role.

Three time-honoured Lenten practices are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Here we see Jesus praying and fasting for 40 days in the desert, to be close to his heavenly Father without any distractions.

Naturally, after these 40 days, he was very hungry, so the first test was the temptation to turn stones into bread. All of us can easily feel hungry after just a few hours without food. We can

picture Jesus looking at stones and imagining scones.

But Jesus resists the devil's temptation. Scripture teaches us that our life does not come from bread alone, but through what God decrees for us and what he gives us in his word. Later, when Jesus is in Gethsemane, he will resist the temptation to walk away from his final test. Instead, he will pray to God: "Thy will be done".

Jesus' second test was the temptation to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, to display his power as the Messiah. The devil quotes the psalmist's promise of angelic protection, and in fact the angels do come and minister to him at the end of these 40 days. But Jesus does not tempt God in the way suggested by the devil.

At the crucifixion, Jesus will be taunted in a similar way: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross". But he will

continue his endurance in his extreme trial, even to the point of death.

Lastly, Jesus' third test was the temptation to gain power over all the world's kingdoms by worshipping the devil. Again, Jesus resists the devil by quoting scripture: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve".

After Jesus has suffered on the cross and risen again, he will tell his disciples to go to a high mountain, where he will tell them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me". Through the resurrection, Jesus will indeed be given absolute authority. This power will not come to him from the devil or without suffering, but rather after he has accepted suffering and death in obedience to his Father's will.

The story of Jesus being tempted or tested in the wilderness is very extreme,

but we ourselves often face lesser temptations or various testing situations. For us, the Church commends three remedies: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

In prayer, we show that we seek to obey God's will by following Jesus, relying entirely on God for everything. In fasting or self-denial, we seek to turn our attention away from our bodily needs, to focus on God. And in almsgiving, we recognise what God has given us and aim to share it with others, especially those in need.

Jesus has shown us the way by spending 40 days in the desert, praying and fasting. We ask God for the grace to keep a good Lent, so that we can better appreciate Jesus' saving death and resurrection.



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View from the Pew

By Dr Jay Kettle-Williams



Biting the hand that feeds you ...

Look Back in Anger (1956), the realist play written by John Osborne, focuses on the life and marital struggles of an intelligent, educated but disaffected young man of working-class origin, Jimmy Porter, and his equally competent yet impassive upper-middle-class wife Alison.

The play spawned the term 'angry young men' to describe Osborne and others of his generation. The play's harsh realism made Look Back in Anger one of the first examples of kitchen sink drama.

But it's not uncommon particularly these days for people to look back in anger across the broadest spectrum of human activity, on the one hand highlighting the negative as overwhelmingly irreparable and condemnatory yet only, if at all, begrudgingly recognising anything positive by way of compensation.

The case of Christianity comes immediately to mind. There are those that cry: 'Look at the number of religious wars there've been?' As if the ten basic tenets of Christianity have ever espoused war. How ironic, no?

Irony really takes root with questions like: 'What have the Romans ever done for us?' from Monty Python's Life of Brian where the characters then continue grudgingly to long-list the Romans' lasting contributions, listing such benefits as roads, sanitation, aqueducts, law, language (Latin roots), calendar systems, concrete, urban planning (grid systems, towns) and the spread of Christianity essentially laying foundations for modern Western civilization in engineering, governance and culture, despite the exploitation that came with empire. You could probably say the same for many an empire, from Arab to Zulu, over time and space. Not that exploitation need always go hand in glove with empire. But empire, notably the British empire, prompts more fervent anger than applause among a vociferous sector of the populace. Not the least for its involvement with slavery and calls for reparation. But is it right that the sins of the fathers be visited upon the children? (Exodus 20:5. JB)

Well, it's only right and just, as we would say, that Britain's role in slavery be deplored. There's no excuse, especially when we look through Christian eyes. But



Britain, in step with her neighbouring nations, only ever had a fleeting role in the long-ongoing sordid drama of enslaving one's fellows.

It was as late as the 16th century that European merchants, mainly Portuguese, launched the transatlantic slave trade purchasing imprisoned Africans from West African kingdoms for deportation to Europe's colonies in the Americas.

But evidence of slavery long predates written records with the practice dating back 1,000 years and more to settled agriculture when economic surpluses and high population densities made mass slavery viable.

Slavery occurred in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, China, Babilonia, Persia, Israel, Greece, India, Rome along with the Arab Islamic Caliphates and Sultanates, which enslaved over 17 million Africans over 1,300 years, and the pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas. The list goes on. So where do you start with passing the parcel when it comes to reparation?

It was not until the 17th century that Britain, itself a victim of slavery in past times, became heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, the first related voyage being that by John Hawkins in 1562. Matters developed until 1807 when the Slave Trade Act officially abolished the slave trade in Britain. But it was not until 1833 that slavery itself was

abolished with the Slavery Abolition Act. The advent of photography had played an instrumental part in bringing the ills of slavery to the attention of those more fortunate, proving to be a powerful weapon in the abolitionist arsenal.

The Clapham Sect, a group of Christian campaigners counted among its members the devout evangelical Christian William Wilberforce who, influenced by his Church of England upbringing and connections to Methodism, converted to evangelical Christianity in 1785 motivating him to advocate for social reforms including the abolition of the slave trade.

Outlawing and suppression of slavery followed in the 19th century to include the USA and in the 20th century to include the Ottoman Empire, Brazil, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and China. Yet slavery continues to this day, generating an estimated £120 billion or more in annual profits.

Let's not forget that, in the aftermath of Christmas, the Church returns to Ordinary Time. The watchword for the prelude to Lent perhaps suggests we all just look back and repent.



Dr J L Kettle-Williams is an experienced business communications consultant and wordsmith (tutor, writer, translator).

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Bishop Nicholas welcomes the appointment of the Rt Reverend Bishop Moth as Archbishop of Westminster

Bishop Nicholas Hudson warmly welcomed the appointment of Bishop Richard Moth on the announcement of his appointment as Archbishop of Westminster: "I would like to offer my personal congratulations and prayers to Bishop Richard Moth on his appointment as Archbishop of Westminster. I met Archbishop-elect Richard when we were seminarians still in our teens; and know him to be a man of wide experience, deep prayer, and natural wisdom. He possesses a wealth of gifts which he will assuredly harness to this new role. I look forward to working with him and my brother bishops as we strive to be more and more the Church Christ calls us to be in England and Wales.

I would ask you please to pray for Archbishop-elect Richard as he prepares for this new challenge, that the Lord guide him and sustain him.

I would also like to give thanks for the dedication and ministry of Cardinal Vincent Nichols for his outstanding service to the Church in England and Wales these last sixteen years. I have had the privilege of working closely with Cardinal Vincent and give thanks for his



generous leadership, courage and witness. Please join me in thanking Cardinal Vincent for the faithful service he has rendered to the Church in both Westminster and across our two countries these last several decades. We look forward to his continued ministry among us as Emeritus Cardinal of Archbishop of Westminster."

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JANUARY 2026 Edition 49 www.CatholicPost.co.uk

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St Thomas Aquinas 28th January

Bethlehem

Christmas lights return after three dark years

During the Gaza war all public celebrations of Christmas were cancelled in Bethlehem in the occupied west bank. The city relied heavily on tourism and the war has had a devastating impact on the city.

Now, with the ceasefire in place the celebrations are being reinstated with the lighting of the giant Christmas tree and decorations throughout the city.

Harmer Square was full of families, dignitaries and people from across the occupied west bank for the two hour ceremony to begin the festivities. Voices rang out with hymns and prayers for peace as the people of Bethlehem announced to the world that they are open for visitors. Visitor numbers have dropped by 90% since the war and an economy dependent almost exclusively on tourism is desperate for people to return.

Palestine boasts the longest Christmas season in the world - beginning with the celebrations for residents Christmas on 24th December, going through the celebrations for the Orthodox Christmas on 19 January and finishing with the celebrations for the Armenian Apostolic Church on 18-19 January.

Bethlehem's Mayor, Maher Carawell, said to have been a bad two years of silence - no Christmas, no jobs, no work, no spirit of Christmas because we all have been from tourism which was the first to be hit down to zero. But after two years of silence we have decided to re-ignite the spirit of Christmas to re-ignite hope.

THE EDITOR AND STAFF OF THE CATHOLIC POST WOULD LIKE TO WISH OUR ADVERTISERS AND READERS A VERY HAPPY, HOLY AND PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR FILLED WITH GOD'S PEACE AND HOPE.

A very special thank you from Caritas Plymouth to our wonderful Caritas volunteers and those at SVP, Plymouth Argyle, Babcock, Transforming Plymouth Together, and Project 35 for all of their hard work delivering Christmas hampers today across Plymouth. The families you have helped will no doubt be overwhelmed with the great cheer that you have brought to them

The Fool's Pilgrimage – The Wholly Family I've always loved my family.

As a child, I didn't have the language to explain it, but I knew instinctively that time spent with family was golden. Saturday nights, especially, carried a quiet kind of magical routine to them. We'd go to church, coats on, routine unquestioned. On the way home we'd stop for a takeaway - nothing extravagant, just enough to feel like a treat. Then we'd sit together, the four of us, sharing a single bar of Galaxy chocolate, my mum taking ownership and carefully breaking it into two strips each, and watch *Gladiators* on the television.

At the time, it felt ordinary. Looking back, it feels almost like a sacramental continuation of the Holy church experience.

Only now, with the clarity that hindsight brings, do I realise just how precious those moments truly were and still are. What once felt routine reveals itself as quietly sacred: presence, togetherness, enough.

All of us, whether we acknowledge it or not, live within a web of relationships. Some strands of that web are strong, elastic, and life-giving places of laughter, belonging, and shared memory. Other strands are knotted and strained. Some fray. Some snap. Some ache when we touch them. That too is part of being human.

In the Catholic calendar, the first Sunday after Christmas celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family - Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. A family often presented in soft-focus imagery: calm, obedient, serene. And yet, if we're honest - deeply honest - all families are holy and perhaps even more importantly, all families are wholly.

Because within every family lives a full cast of characters.

There is the strong one and the sensitive one.
The fixer and the joker.
The quiet observer who sees everything but says little.
The confident voice masking an anxious heart.
The peacemaker who smooths the edges.
The rebel who pushes against them.
The dreamer and the realist locked in gentle (or not-so-gentle) debate.

There are the villain and the victim.
The drama queen and the one who disappears when things get uncomfortable.



And if we're brave enough to admit it - at different moments in our lives, we are all of them.

That's not dysfunction.

That's not failure.

That's not something to be fixed or erased.

That is what makes a family whole.

Sitting in church on this feast of the Holy Family, I find myself offering a prayer of thanks not for perfection, but for presence. An intention of health and happiness for all families: For family near and far. For those bound by blood and those chosen by love.

For those we find easy to love... and those who stretch us beyond our comfort.

For those who understand us intuitively... and those who never quite do.

May this prayer gently remind us that beneath the roles we play - beneath habits, histories, and hurt - there is something deeper still.

A good spirit.

A whole spirit.

A holy spark within each of us

What often gets overlooked is that the Holy Family themselves were anything but perfect. A teenage mother. A refugee child. A father navigating fear, uncertainty, and responsibility without a roadmap. There were disruption, danger, misunderstanding, and risk woven through their story.

And perhaps that is precisely the point.

The Holy Family doesn't exist to shame our own families into comparison. It

exists to reassure us that holiness does not require flawlessness. It requires love that stays. Love that listens. Love that chooses, again and again, to remain open. Home, then, is not the place where everything is tidy and resolved.

Home is the place where we are allowed to be all sides of who we are to be every version of every vision of who we want to be to then decide which version suits us and sits with us best and still be loved while being gently invited to continue growing into the grandest version of ourselves.

That is the pilgrimage of the family. Messy. Sacred. Unfinished. And perfectly, beautifully human.

Much love And Namaste

Dan Sobey



Newsletters

- Send by Email/Text **New**
- Auto-update Website
- Creates Social Media Posts
- Reduce Costs/Time/Carbon

Sacramental Prep **New**

- Online Sign Up
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- Communicate with Parents
- Priest/Secretary/Catechist Access

Parish Census

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- GDPR Compliant

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- Email parishioners

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It can seem daunting when one is faced with all the administration that comes with running a parish, as if there is no time for anything else.

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I enjoy using Caspar because it puts the parishioners at the heart and centre of Parish Administration.

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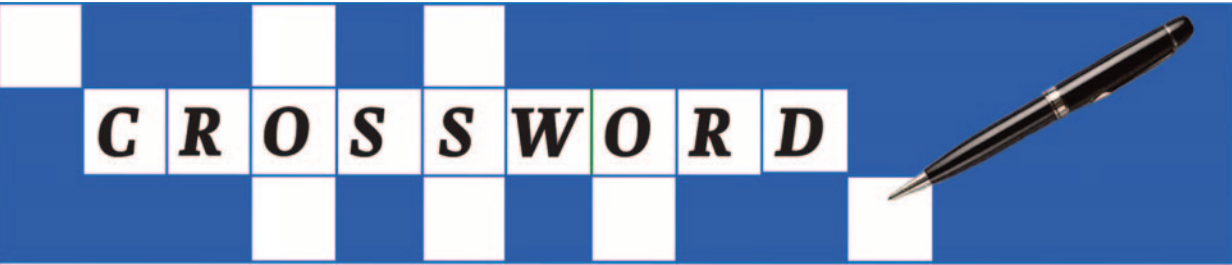
Fr Brendan Seery,
Chancellor,
Northampton Diocese

Fr Derek Turnham,
St Anne's Parish

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You can use both sets of clues to solve the puzzle: the solutions are the same.

CRYPTIC Across

- 5 German heretic Diaspora hit badly (11)
- 7 Arkwright: name of American hospital at first (4)
- 8 Its English, eccentric, retro style introduces these biblical people (8)
- 9 Barker's part of this universal UK institution (6)
- 11 Persian god, legend says, is meeting with one in Egypt (6)
- 12 Turkeys lord it in the oven? (3)
- 13 Aramaean maybe investing a Welsh girl with a little time (6)
- 14 Horse or pig meat that's served up in a Canaan town (6)
- 15 Distress bearings found in the sea off Dover (8)
- 17 Women's headgear, providing it's firm at the front (4)
- 18 Into pit come the sporting opposition (11)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 One from India to look out for, they say (4)
- 2 This recipient of a letter is a kind of record: he's a Scot (8)
- 3 Part of Malta's no-go 'zombie' sector (4)
- 4 Religious type – one to find in York, for example (8)
- 5 One Coptic play that turns out to be prophetic... (11)
- 6 ...notice Earth in turmoil? (3,8)
- 10 Fuming after Ulster's reversal over weapons (2,2,4)
- 11 Place in Gilead's a goal for leading actor's comeback (8)

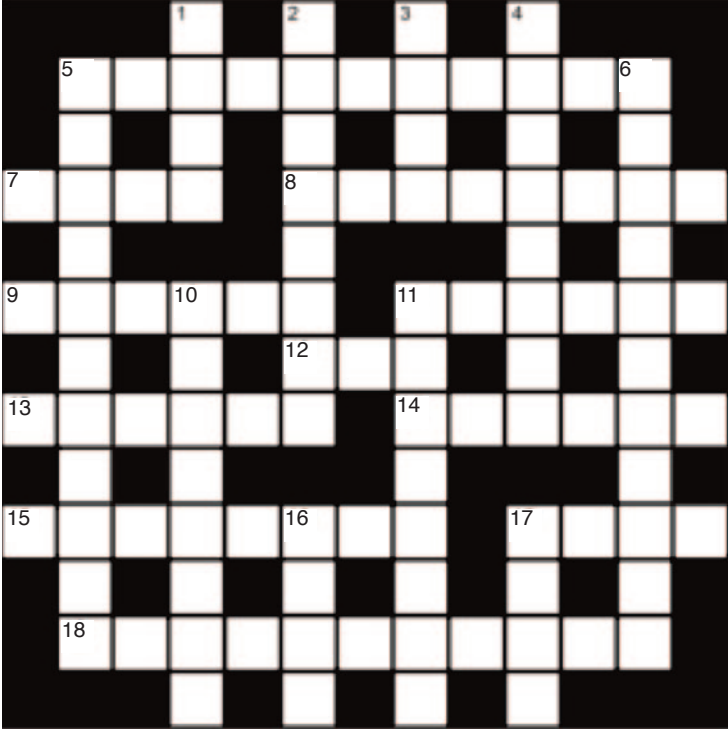
- 16 What you used to be is there – just get rid of the radical element (4)
- 17 There's a tiny number in jail, brother, for murder (4)

QUICK Across

- 5 Member of a 16th Century German protestant sect condemned as heretics by Luther (11)
- 7 Along with Daniel and Job, one of Israel's three righteous men (4)
- 8 Bible people from southern Dead Sea area (8)
- 9 Domestic dog, aka Persian greyhound (6)
- 11 Ancient Persian god of light and truth (6)
- 12 --- Khan, spiritual head of Ismaili Muslims (3)
- 13 Native of a middle eastern Arabic republic (6)
- 14 Town in Canaan which after the Conquest was given to the tribe of Judah (6)
- 15 Restrict; impoverish (8)
- 17 Cap worn by fundamentalist Mormon women (4)
- 18 Formal sporting event, tournament (11)

QUICK Down

- 1 Adherent of a monotheistic religion established in the 15th century by former Hindus (4)
- 2 Recipient of one of Paul's epistles (8)
- 3 Mediterranean home of the Giant's Tower, the world's oldest man-made religious structure (4)



- 4 Clergyman, as usually called in Protestant churches (8)
- 5 Significantly prophetic (11)
- 6 Part of Genesis featured in Haydn's landmark oratorio of 1798 (3,8)
- 10 Strongly protesting; actively rebelling (2,2,4)
- 11 Where Jacob saw angels before reuniting with Esau (8)
- 16 Biblical pronoun (4)
- 17 First child of Adam and Eve (4)

SOLUTION

Across: 5 Adaphorist, 7 Noah, 8 Edomites, 9 Saluki, 11 Mithra, 12 Aga, 13 Syrian, 14 Hormah, 15 Straten, 17 Coit, 18 Competition. Down: 1 Sikh, 2 Ephesian, 3 Gozo, 4 Minister, 5 Apocalyptic, 6 The Creation, 10 Up in arms, 11 Mahanaim, 16 Thee, 17 Cain.