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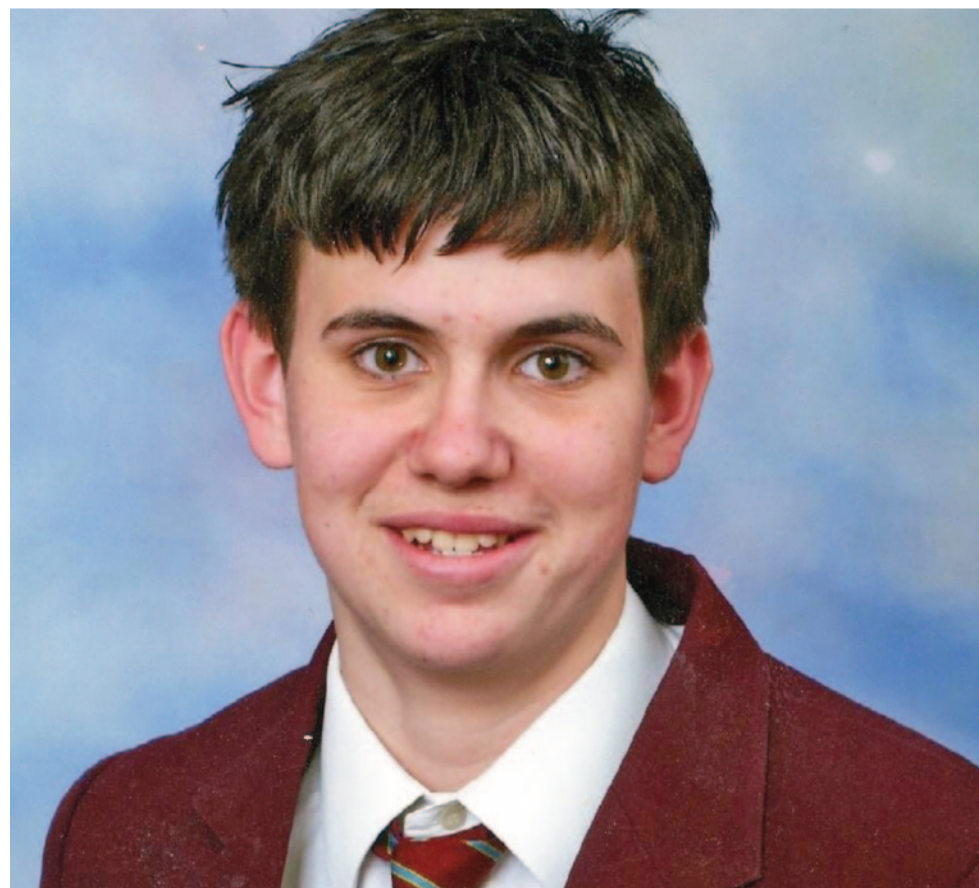
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A story of forgiveness

MIZEN FOUNDATION

Promoting the Good in Young People



mizenfoundation.org

“For me forgiveness is about not wanting revenge and not being angry”

In May 2008, Jimmy Mizen, a 16 year old boy from South London, walked into a local bakery with his older brother. After a few minutes somebody else entered the bakery. Jake was known to the brothers as he had been cautioned by the police years earlier for harassing the older brother and on this occasion brushed past the brothers which

resulted in a scuffle. During the scuffle, Jake hurled a glass dish at Jimmy and the result was fatal.

Immediately following the incident in the bakery, Jimmy's parents, Margaret and Barry spoke to the media with a message of peace and compassion and not revenge. Jake is now

-serving a life sentence for the murder of Jimmy Mizen and Margaret and Barry have travelled the country sharing their message of forgiveness and compassion.

Margaret says, “For me forgiveness is about not wanting revenge and not being angry” This message of love has been shared with thousands of young people and adults over the last 15 years. They began the ‘Mizen foundation’ to help young people across the UK become those changemakers for peace we know they can be and, in the process, go on to help to make our streets and our communities so much safer for everyone.

‘I meet a lot of families who have lost loved ones to murder, who are driven with anger. But it’s so destructive to the family. People blame each other and argue - but anger is so damaging. The pain it causes on top of the pain of losing a child can destroy families.

The day Jimmy died I promised him two things; one, I would keep his name alive and two, I would dedicate my life to working for peace.’

Margaret Mizen MBE

People can book a talk by visiting the website mizenfoundation.org/contact or email directly talks@mizenfoundation.org



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The Catholic Post is published by its owners Bellcourt Ltd and is wholly independent of and separate from any previous newspaper. The Catholic Post is published on the last Sunday of the month previous to publication date.

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01440 730399

charlotter@cathcom.org

DESIGN & LAYOUT:

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PUBLISHED BY:

Bellcourt Ltd. N2 Blois Meadow Business Centre, Blois Road, Steeple Bumpstead, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 7BN
01440 730399

ARTICLES TO:

The Catholic Post
email: editor@catholicpost.co.uk or davidl@cathcom.org

Please send articles for publication by email, supplying any photos separate to the text. We welcome contributions.

Here are answers to some basic questions about writing for The Catholic Post.

How long should articles be?

Usually it seems to work out best if contributors simply say what they have to say and let us worry about finding a spot for it in the paper.

What is the submission procedure?

Please send as a Word file attached to an e-mail. To submit articles for publication, send to editor@catholicpost.co.uk. Charts, graphs, and photos should be submitted as separate PDFs. Electronic photos should not be embedded or pasted into a Word document as this reduces their quality.

Photographs and Illustrations

Photographs and Illustrations should be supplied electronically as high resolution JPEG (*.JPG) files. Photographs and illustrations should be sent in colour with a resolution of 300 dpi and a minimum size of 100 mm x 100 mm when printed (approx. 1200 pixels wide on-screen).

Computer print-outs are not acceptable. Screen captures are not ideal as they are usually not very high.

Parental permission should be sought before submitting photographs of minors. Source information -

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ICN = Independent Catholic News

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Last date for copy is the LAST DAY of the month prior to publication.



Amalgamating Parishes

From the presbytery..... by Fr Neil McNicholas

The dictionary defines amalgamation as:
“to mix so as to make a unified whole”.

My diocese, was formed in 1878. The earliest set of statistics that I can find are for 1930 when we had 137 priests serving 87 parish churches. Almost 100yrs later we have about the same number of churches (80), but now being served by just 56 priests of whom 33 are diocesan (as opposed to religious or visiting priests). The situation we are in becomes clearer still whenever the clergy of the diocese gather for the Chrism Mass or on retreat. There's hardly a dark-haired head amongst us and an increasing number are struggling with health or mobility issues. References to “Last of the Summer Wine” or “Dad's Army” are often overheard! And yet, back in our parishes, we are trying to function as if we are still in our prime.

The thoughts that follow are the fruits of some twenty-four years experience of managing, and ministering to, amalgamated parishes. The dictionary defines amalgamation as: “to mix so as to make a unified whole”.

There are usually three basic factors that influence consideration being given to amalgamation: falling numbers of priests to adequately staff the existing number of parishes; declining parish populations and therefore numbers at Mass; and, often as a consequence, insufficient financial support for the number of churches currently in use. If the number of churches throughout a diocese is no longer sustainable, there may also be the need to consider closing a church as part of that process. Understandably this is the one thing in particular that doesn't go down well, but an empty church before amalgamation is still an empty church afterwards.

It would be an extremely enlightened, perhaps extraordinary, parish community that would see and accept without question the need for their parish to lose its independent identity. For most, quite the opposite will be the case and even the prospect is likely to generate opposition and criticism, ill-feeling and division. To try to soften the blow, sometimes a parish will be twinned (rather than amalgamated) with a neighbour, but this is often just the first stage in a process that will eventually lead to amalgamation anyway.

My experience has been that doing one and then the other doesn't make the process any

easier for people; twinning causes just as much angst and upset as amalgamation because people experience the loss of their parish identity either way. I am personally convinced that it is better, more just, and certainly more honest, to get the whole process over with in one go. If we know that's what's going to happen eventually anyway, then let's say so, explain why it's happening and what will be involved, and so give people the opportunity to “own” the process. The alternative merely creates a situation of double loss and therefore double grief and it takes that much longer for real healing to begin and for the whole parish community to come together.

In a twinned situation, one parish will retain its priest as he serves both communities from that base. On the surface at least, twinning is often more acceptable to the people of both parishes because they haven't actually “lost” anything other than, perhaps, in terms of a slight adjustment to their Mass schedule. Both still have a priest albeit that he is living in one parish and not the other. However this does create an inequality between the two communities and resentment can develop as people realise that it isn't a situation of actual twinning because they are not identical twins. The perception will be that “they” have a priest and “we” don't. And from the priest's point of view it is also more difficult than an amalgamation because he is serving two canonically independent parishes and both communities have a right to equal provision of Masses, confessions, and so on. In the normal course of events the system may be difficult though workable, but at Christmas and Easter which community gets which celebrations given that one priest can't possibly provide a full schedule in each church?

For the priest, twinning is also an administrative nightmare because both sets of parish registers have to be maintained as well as two separate banking, accounting and filing systems. By contrast, amalgamation offers the opportunity for a more practical and hopefully more efficient system of administrative management, as well as - and more importantly of course - in the carrying out of his spiritual and pastoral ministry.

There is also the question of terminology and the need to reinforce the “corporate identity”

of the new single parish. This effort is essential in helping people to understand and accept that they are now members of a new faith community rather than continuing to identify with the previously separate parishes. It seems to me that full amalgamation right from the start, rather than twinning, is the only way to achieve a single faith community, again returning to the dictionary definition that I started with: “to mix so as to make a unified whole”. Anything that detracts from that, even the inadvertent use of previous parish names in referring to those areas of the new parish, has to be very deliberately avoided.

It is often proposed that a process of consultation should precede any move to twin or amalgamate parishes, but there can be considerable confusion over exactly what this means. People generally understand the word “consultation” to mean that a proposal, still in its initial stages, is going to be presented and that their views and comments and criticisms will not only be invited, but will also be listened to and incorporated into the decision-making process. What they may not understand is that because of the pastoral circumstances driving the process - fewer priests, falling numbers at Mass and so on (circumstances beyond anyone's control) - there really isn't any alternative. I think people need to know that this is the case and that however disappointed they may feel, this is how things have to be in order to provide the best possible spiritual and pastoral care for the majority, given the constraints of the situation. Of necessity the process isn't one of **consultation** so much as **information** and therefore perhaps a better word than consultation should be used in the first place so as to avoid any misunderstanding.

There is still the danger that, whilst people may accept the inevitability of change, the “not in my backyard” syndrome will make its presence felt, but fighting such decisions, writing letters, signing petitions, going to the media, even demonstrating against them, is pointless in that people's objections won't change the contributing factors that made the decision necessary. People being more aware, or better informed, in the first place might help to make the changes that have to be made a less bitter pill to swallow. Meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people of our dioceses cannot be about “me, myself and I”, but “we and us”, having an eye and a concern for the bigger picture, and a corporate concern for all the members of the body of Christ.

Join together and Pray the Rosary through Lent for Peace

When we pray the rosary we can call on all the Angels and Saints to pray with us. We can also request that they continue praying as we sleep. But do we ask them?

The world most urgently needs peace, it needs divisions healed and hatred put aside. Through the humble prayer of the rosary, together, we can help to make this possible. Our Lady waits for our prayers!

The promotion of the Holy Rosary for world peace has been the main principle of Crown of Thorns. The charity's rosary cards have travelled far and wide and, along with items donated through the generosity of parishes and individuals, support the work of priests and chaplains in a multitude of circumstances, continuing to reach out to comfort and console the downtrodden, the imprisoned, the sick and those at sea.

In recent months we have also sent five main shipments to needy diocese. We have been asked to thank all donors who have contributed items and funds to make this assistance possible.

Bishop Emmanuel of Oyo diocese writes: "I repeat my appreciation for the consignments you have sent me. The charity has been a constant reminder of the resurrection to us. Thank you for everything."

Sr. Beatrice of Ekiti diocese writes: "Sincerely words are not enough to express my heartfelt gratitude. I appreciate and thank you so much."

We thank all those who make the work of Crown of Thorns possible through the support of financial donations, no matter how small, and through the gifting of items into our care for rehoming. We continue to run the charity through skilled volunteers, allowing donations to be used in their entirety for the work in hand.

www.crownofthorns.org.uk
email: office@crownofthorns.org.uk



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Supporting priests and chaplains in their ministry, outreach and welfare.

"I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day."
(Our Lady at Fatima)

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Nicolas Barré House Welcomes First Residents

birminghamdiocese.org.uk

The doors of a former presbytery house in Willenhall were finally opened to welcome its first three new residents

In late December 2023 a partnership project between Brushstrokes, a Community Project of Father Hudson's Care, and the St John Henry Newman Parish of Walsall and Wolverhampton finally came to fruition.

The doors of a former presbytery house in Willenhall were finally opened to welcome its first three new residents, all young men who had recently received refugee status in the UK and could finally start their journeys integrating into UK society.

Back in the late spring of 2023 the St John Henry Newman Parish, led by Fr Craig Fullard, had generously decided that the vacant presbytery in Walsall would be best used as a property to support some of the UK's increasingly vulnerable refugee population.

The parish approached Brushstrokes, a charity organisation based in Sandwell who specialise in advice and support matters for asylum seekers and refugees across the West Midlands, to help set-up, find suitable residents for and to take over the day-to-day running of



the house. Brushstrokes gratefully accepted the offer.

With considerable assistance from the volunteers of the parish the next six months were spent fitting the five-bedroom house to Local Authority standard, furnishing it and agreeing where the residents should come from.

The first three residents, all of Middle Eastern descent, moved in in December. They had all spent considerable time (up to two years) in asylum accommodation while waiting for their refugee status and once they'd received that

status, they would normally have spent a long time living in often quite squalid temporary accommodation, had the offer of a room in this house not come about. They are responsible for their own rent and living costs and Brushstrokes will spend the next 12 months working with them to understand the responsibilities of living in the UK, integrate with the local community, gain full-time employment and eventually find their own properties.

One of the residents said: "This is such a lovely house and so much nicer than the asylum accommodation I lived in before. I will be able to carry on with my volunteer work from here and also look for a job I am qualified to do in IT. Thank you to Brushstrokes and the Newman Parish for this wonderful opportunity."

The house was blessed by Archbishop Bernard Longley in a small ceremony on Tuesday 16 January.

This was followed by Persian singing and cakes and an enjoyable time of getting to know our new guests even more!

A tree was also planted to commemorate the occasion as part of the Parish 'Live Simply' campaign.



Ash Wednesday peace prayers outside Ministry of Defence

ICN

“The human heart is weak and impulsive; if we find instruments of death in our hands, sooner or later we will use them”.

Around 50 Christians gathered outside the Ministry of Defence in Central London on Ash Wednesday to take part in the annual Ash Wednesday procession and prayer vigil. They called for the UK government to repent holding nuclear weapons and support the International Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The service was led by Pat Gaffney, an organiser of Pax Christi in London.

Since 1982, Christians have assembled on Ash Wednesday at the Ministry of Defence to pray for peace and a conversion of hearts and minds away from nuclear war preparations, the destruction caused by nuclear testing and the wasted resources that are invested in nuclear weapons and in all weapons.

On Wednesday, there was a reading from the 2023 'Urbi et Orbi' message of Pope Francis where he said: "The human heart is weak and impulsive; if we find instruments of death in our hands, sooner or later we will use them. And how can we even speak of peace, when arms production, sales and trade are on the rise? Countries remembered included Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia. There was a call for peace in the Holy Land and a prayer to repent worshipping "the false god of security and nationalism."

Organised by Pax Christi, Christian CND, Columbans in Britain, London Catholic Worker and Westminster Justice and Peace, participants included members of the National J&P Network, J&P Religious Links, Passionists, Columbans Sisters, and peace campaigners from as far afield as Arundel and Brighton, Birmingham and Hallam Dioceses. Japanese Buddhist monks and nuns from the Battersea Peace Temple also took part.

Several diocesan priests were among those standing in front of the building carrying placards bearing quotes from Pope Francis. These included words of Pope Francis at

Nagasaki in Japan: "Turn to God with trust, to teach us to be instruments of peace."

Some participants also attended the earlier gathering nearby, outside parliament, of hundreds of Christians, drawing attention to the climate crisis. They were launching a ten-day, 240-hour vigil outside the Palace of Westminster under the title, 'No Faith In Fossil Fuels,' calling on the UK government to stop issuing new licences for fossil-fuel exploration in UK waters. Increasingly, the carbon footprint of military activities is receiving attention. Military emissions account for more than the greenhouse emissions of aviation and shipping combined.

Pax Christi Ash Wednesday witness events were also held in Coventry, at the Coventry Cathedral ruins, and on the streets of Liverpool where Merseyside peace activists were joined by SMA fathers and parishioners and clergy of local churches. In Coventry, there was a visit to the Council House to hand in a letter protesting against investment in the Arms Trade. The Catholic Worker in Scotland and Pax Christi Scotland held a vigil at the nuclear submarine base on the Clyde.



Fausta Valentine and Pat Gaffney

In the evening Pax Christi England and Wales organised an online Service of Lament, Repentance and Witness. Around 40 people joined in from dioceses including Westminster, Birmingham, Leeds and Shrewsbury.

Many participants in the vigil outside the MoD had taken part in an ecumenical Ash Wednesday service for creation at St John's Church in Waterloo. Afterwards they walked to Parliament, where they joined the ten day 24 hour vigil for the environment. (further reports to come).

Community based charities in the North West are key to tackling regional inequalities, say the St Vincent de Paul Society

svp.org.uk

This report amplifies our belief that successful levelling up intervention lies in a wraparound and person-centred approach that can be delivered locally

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) today published a new report that highlights the faith-based charity's vital role in delivering locally-based support to 'left behind' communities.

The research - From the Frontline - Tackling Regional Inequalities from the Ground Up - provides a snapshot of the St Vincent de Paul Society's (SVP) community-based 'levelling up' work in 10 regional centres and through locally-based volunteer members, working in 17 of the 20 most deprived communities in England.

The report highlights:

- A 49 percent increase in the number of requests for help to SVP's support line, nearly 2300 in the last 12 months, showing an alarming trend of reliance on charities like SVP to deliver frontline services.
- In 2022-23 we provided 80,000 meals in our St Vincent's centres and supported 19,000 people through our foodbanks - an unprecedented level of need.
- The need to adopt a long-term, bottom-up, rather than a top-down, approach that is rooted in local communities' lived

experiences and social and cultural contexts, if tackling regional inequalities is to be successful.

- Government action to rethink its model of delivering local services, through an evaluation of who is delivering local services and how that is being funded.

Elizabeth Palmer, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society said: "This report amplifies our belief that successful levelling up intervention lies in a wraparound and person-centred approach that can be delivered locally. As a faith-based organisation that is rooted in communities across the country, our blend of tailored local services boosts equality, provides opportunities, supports wellbeing and promotes a sense of community."

The recommendations in the report, released in an election year, calls on policy makers to tackle regional inequalities in the following ways:

- **Strengthen the social security system and help people meet their aspirations.** A strong and reliable social security safety net is essential to address regional inequalities and

support people in 'left behind' neighbourhoods.

- **Recognise the role charities play in delivering national and local services and review the current model of delivering services for communities.** Charities are increasingly delivering services previously provided by state agencies, Local Authorities (LA) and the National Health Service. If national and regional inequalities are to be tackled, the role charities play in tackling poverty must be acknowledged.
- **Devolve power and funding to local decision-makers.** We believe that the key to the success of a long-term strategy to address national and regional inequalities is to help local stakeholders deliver what's needed by working closely with them - drawing on their knowledge and insight of local challenges and solutions.

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) is part of an international Christian voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty. For the last 180 years we have been working to tackle poverty and its causes by bringing a blend of services and support to people in need in our local communities.

SVP Chorley Buddies, based in Chorley, Lancashire, are a community group run by SVP staff, members and local volunteers. They provide a food poverty support service by running five weekly Good Food Clubs in different areas of the town that help around 1,100 people each week. Clubs' members pay £10 to join and £5 every time they visit one of

the clubs. Every week the club offers an affordable shopping basket that includes a wide range of products such as fresh fruit and vegetables, frozen and tinned food, rice and pasta, bread, cereals, personal hygiene products, and clothing and household items.

St Vincent's Newcastle, based in the Byker area of the city, provides wraparound support for local people, including food clubs, a warm space that provides hot meals and mental health and wellbeing activities.

The centre also help people gain the confidence and workplace skills needed for paid employment, by hosting people referred to them by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Jobcentre Plus, on job placements. The placements are shaped around individuals' strengths, interests and development. The centre tries to give people the opportunity to work in different areas and tasks that enable self-development and confidence-building tailored for them.

A copy of the report From the Frontline - Tackling Regional Inequalities from the Ground Up can be downloaded from our website: <https://svp.org.uk/levelling-up>



Urgent Appeal for Mount St Josephs' Care Home

dioceseofleeds.org.uk

Hire and installation of the girders and other works to allow continued safe use of less than half the building until all the residents are re-homed, have so far cost more than £200,000

The Little Sisters of the Poor have launched an Urgent Appeal for funds to keep Mount St Joseph's Care Home in Headingley open and safe until all the residents have been settled in new homes.

The sixty-two elderly residents at Mount St Joseph's Care Home have been facing an uncertain future since RAAC concrete was found throughout 95% of the roof. To ensure the safety of the 40 people receiving residential care and 22 residents in independent living apartments, the upper floors of the building were evacuated. With strengthening girders now put in place, one of the UK's leading RAAC specialists, and architects and insurers have pronounced the lower floors safe to use on a temporary basis.



Hire and installation of the girders and other works to allow continued safe use of less than half the building until all the residents are re-homed have so far cost more than £200,000. The Little Sisters are urgently fundraising to assist with the spiralling costs, which are expected to be well in excess of £500,000.

The Sisters' mission in the Diocese of Leeds to support low-income elderly men and women of any faith or none has continued for 158 years. The present building, which was constructed in 1971, is set to close within months and will be demolished, with the intention to rebuild Mount St Joseph's and maintain this long tradition of care with a uniquely Catholic ethos in Leeds.

Please continue to remember the Little Sisters and all the Residents of Mount St Joseph's and their families in your prayers.

The situation is so urgent that the Little Sisters have ensured there are several ways to donate, which include

By cheque:

Little Sisters of the Poor – Urgent Appeal
Shire Oak Road,
Leeds LS6 2DE

Via the Website:

Little Sisters Of The Poor » Donate Here

Via the Crowdfunding page:

URGENT CARE HOME APPEAL – a
Community crowdfunding project in
Leeds by The Congregation of the Little
Sisters of the Poor (crowdfunder.co.uk)

Contact the Sisters for their Bank Details
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Eight children from the parish of Gaza receive First Holy Communion



Eight children from the parish of Gaza receive First Holy Communion. The war has not prevented divine graces from happening. We note from the images shared on the parish Facebook page, that the parish of Gaza continued to celebrate daily Mass. Many of those who are sick have been taking refuge in the walls of the Church, which also enables them to receive the Church's Sacraments daily. We continue to pray for our people in Gaza so that God would give them strength and patience during these tough times. And we continue to plead for a cease fire and hope for a comprehensive plan of peace and justice to take place.



Our Synod Day at St Mary's Cathedral last November – Photo by Johan Bergstrom-Allen

What can your parish community achieve in 2024?

Diocese of Middlesbrough

“If our church closed tomorrow, who would know, other than those of us who worship there?”

As we are now nearly three months into 2024, I wonder if it's worth us asking ourselves the question, “What do I hope 2024 will bring to our parish community?”

What would your immediate answer be? More vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life? More young people returning to Mass? More parishioners actively involved in parish life? More Holy Hours? A pastoral parish council? The list is probably endless.

These are all important questions but are primarily “inward looking”. Yet one question that has arisen repeatedly during the synodal discussions in our own diocese is, “If our church closed tomorrow, who would know, other than those of us who worship there?”

When reflecting upon this question, it springs to my mind that there is a struggle felt at parish level over how we make the Church relevant to those who may have been baptised Catholic, received First Holy Communion, Confirmation and later in life the sacrament of marriage and even now are raising their own families, yet no longer come to church or take part in the parish community.

Our response may be that people don't have the time to come to Mass or get involved. Attending Mass on Sunday is not the priority it once was. People still have the faith, but it is different to when I was young, and so on.

These all have some validity. However, we must be careful not to over-generalise. Church attendance is not in decline everywhere!

There also remains a great hunger among people for the faith. This is not to ignore the fact that many people continue to leave the Catholic Church for all kinds of reasons, many being highlighted in our Diocesan Synod Synthesis in 2022.

So what can we do to make our parish more relevant to the wider community? Some parishes have found creative ways, such as supporting a food bank with donations and volunteers, visiting the elderly and the sick at home and in care settings and outreach to those struggling against poverty or loneliness. Other have supported projects aiding refugees and asylum seekers, providing soup and warm rooms in church halls once a week during winter and spring, volunteering in charity shops or providing play activities for young people during school holidays.

There are also the many catechetical programmes that reach those who want their children to receive the sacraments.

It's so easy to overlook the valuable contributions many of our parishes make, often while struggling themselves to keep their own heads above water.

So what's the answer? For me, it's all about love! And it's about our calling to share the Good News of God's love and forgiveness made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection.

So where do we begin? Today's world looks very different from what it did in the years of

Vatican II, in the 1970s, 80s, 90s and 2000s. The Church has provided several vital resources to help us proclaim the Good News anew:

- The body of social doctrine of the Catholic Church, such as *Laudate Si'* and *Laudate Deum*
- The Synod on Synodality, which above all speaks of what it means to be a synodal church and the missionary dynamic it involves.
- 2025, Pilgrims of Hope – Jubilee Year, with 2024 being a year of prayer in preparation.

If the key word is love, then the next word for us must be evangelisation. This seems to have gone out of use in recent years. Pope Francis has raised its profile, particularly through the synodal process.

We know from our very own experiences as people of faith that evangelisation is a lifelong process. In fact, we could say it's the lifeblood of the parish. God's Word doesn't change, but our ability to hear it changes, depending on our age and circumstances.

This is a kind of signpost to help us understand how others hear the Word and accept it.

The process of Evangelisation takes on the synodal dimension of listening more readily and openly to one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word, Tradition and Magisterium of the Church as the things that help us plot the right course for ourselves, parish communities and the wider Church.

These should help us live out our mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in a way that enables us to be more outward looking and optimistic about the future and ensuring our relevance to our modern world.

It's now common for political parties to produce a pledge card listing priorities on which they will act. For us Christians, we have our own pledge card – the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). What solid ground on which for us to begin 2024.

So, why not...

- Re-engage with the synodal process or engage with it if you haven't already? Our Diocesan Synthesis is available, as is the synthesis of the General Assembly of October 2023 (free online at vatican.va).
- Find out more about the Jubilee year (2025) and think about what your parish can do to prepare? Information is available at cbcew.org.uk.
- Pick up *Laudate Si'* or *Laudate Deum* and give some serious thought and prayer to what you and your parish could do during the year to care for our common home? It's free at vatican.va.
- With your parish priest, think about the needs of your parish and wider community in the coming year and what can be done to address some or all of them?
- Establish a pastoral parish council.

A final thought: “Rather than saying that the Church has a mission, we affirm that the Church 'is' mission, 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you'.” (John 20:21 – from the Synthesis Report of XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops).

Please keep in you prayers all those planning to be received into the Church. Why not support them with your presence at their Rite of Election? There's plenty to do. Good Luck!

**Deacon David Cross,
Adult Formation Coordinator**

Big Bocs Bwyd: Community Food Hub Blossoms at Resurgent Cardiff Catholic Primary School

rcadc.org

“We are sharing what we have with our community. Because one day we might need that help ourselves.”

There are some truly wonderful teachers, pupils, and staff in our Catholic community, and in this post, we will take a closer look at one such example: St. Alban's Catholic Primary School in Tremorfa, Cardiff. The school faced the imminent threat of closure in 2019 and received feedback from Estyn, stating that significant improvement was necessary. However, by 2021, the school had made remarkable progress, and enrolment numbers had surged to 176.

Rachel Woodward, the headteacher, is the driving force behind this transformation. Two weeks ago, she graciously invited me to explore the Big Bocs Bwyd Scheme and discover other exciting initiatives at this Cardiff primary school.

What is Big Bocs Bwyd?

Back in 2022, Rachel felt that the school and the local community around Tremorfa needed support, particularly with the cost of living and how to live sustainably and healthily. One of the schemes that Rachel looked at was Big Bocs Bwyd.

The Big Bocs Bwyd is a Welsh Government project that has been introduced to help alleviate poverty in local communities, reduce food waste and provide hands-on learning opportunities for pupils. The BBB hubs, as they are called, comprise of a shop created from a modified shipping container and additional secure storage (2nd smaller container). St Alban's "shop" consists of a couple of fridges and shelf space for tinned products, vegetables, fruit and other household essentials. The 2nd container has been temporarily converted into a donation station where people can donate clothes, toys and other items that can be put to good use by the community.

Rachel's BBB arrived on New Years Eve 2022 and, in addition to this, Rachel also applied for, and was successful in getting, a £10,000 lottery grant which helped in developing the area around the BBB. It now has planters, tables and parasols to make the area look quite attractive. The school groundsman also helps children grow vegetables in the edible garden. These vegetables are then donated to the BBB for families to use.

This part of the school land houses the BBB donation station mentioned earlier, and an outbuilding currently used for making teas and coffees. Furnished with tables, chairs, and even some playful garden lights, Rachel envisions



transforming this space into an educational hub for cooking, basic life skills, and financial literacy.

The Big Bocs Bwyd is held every Thursday and food is donated from Fareshare Go and also from Splott volunteers, with one of their volunteers dropping food off. Cardiff Food Bank also supports them and Rachel mentioned that other food outlets have stepped forward to supply them with frozen food. Around 30 families regularly use the BBB, whilst some others use it when they need to. The school also distributes vouchers from Cardiff Food Bank for those who might want to go to the local food bank.

Big Bocs Bwyd also runs through Summer holidays which, incidentally, is when the school operates a Summer holiday club. Information about the BBB is put out on social media or as text to parents in summer. It has been very well received by everyone and ensures that children can have at least a good breakfast and lunch during the summer holidays.

Making a difference to young lives

Rachel says that the school has become more of a community. I could see that on the Thursday I when there with young children staffing the clothes donation station and others making you [lovely] cups of tea and coffee. The parents and local community are encouraged to come in, collect food if they need, and have a chat with the teachers and, as importantly, other parents or people from the community over a cuppa. This is great for developing community.

St Alban's staff have also observed that people have become more open and willing to share their problems or worries. Interestingly, Rachel said that children are now more aware of each

other's social situations and support them – they are not judgmental, but supportive and empathetic.

Jennifer Livingstone, one of the other helpers I met, explained how the scheme had helped give the children life skills from communicating with people to helping people and giving back to the community.

Rachel and Jennifer acknowledge that they are very lucky in that they know their families very well and can identify those who might need support. And by getting parents to come in and have a tea/coffee they start developing relationships and will begin to support one another, too.

As Rachel says, “We are sharing what we have with our community. Because one day we might need that help ourselves.”

The St Alban's Senedd and the Mini Angels

Aside from the wonderful Big Bocs Bwyd the school arranges for books to be displayed in the foyer, from which children can take (keep if they want) books. The school also has its very own Senedd committees where the youngsters get to vote which committees they want to be on. On these committees they get to decide which school improvement tasks they would like to do.

One of the committees, comprising 15 children, is the “Mini Disciples” and these children, as on the other committees, decide what they would like to do to be Good Samaritans. Activities involve going to Masses in hospital and delivering cards to the patients or visiting the local St Alban's Care Home. The school collaborates closely with St Illtyd's chaplaincy, and at Christmas they link up with the S.V.P., St

Alban's Parish and Boomerang who deliver food hampers, toys and in some cases, give them meat vouchers. As Jennifer says, “It's very much about offering support beyond the school gates.”

Looking to the future

The team at St Alban's will now be looking for further grants to create cooking facilities in the outbuilding and develop the donation station more. They have this wonderful idea of developing something like a market street and trying to get the parents to run more of these initiatives.

It's worth repeating that St Alban's school was threatened with closure in 2019 and numbers had plummeted. However, the head teacher, staff, children, governors, parish and the community came together to stop the closure. It was a school that was found to require significant improvement in May 2019 yet by the end of 2021 the school had made, “sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.”

Rachel said that today they want to be seen as a beacon in the area and it's fair to say that they are really doing a great job at being a shining light. They believe that what they are doing will help to inspire the young people who they teach. As Rachel says, “we want children to have high aspirations and for them to go on to vocational courses, university or apprenticeships and become who God intended them to be.” Amen to all that!

Written by Alun John,
Communications Manager –
Archdiocese of Cardiff



Wael Suleiman, director of the Catholic Charity Caritas Jordan

His own Grandfather fled Palestine

It is part of belonging to the Church, of being an active Catholic

In the country that has taken in Palestinian refugees more than any other since 1948, where there are “more Palestinians than in Palestine”, the pain of the ongoing massacre in Gaza is part of everyday life. Caritas Jordan is the country’s largest humanitarian organisation, set up in 1967 following the invasion of Palestine by Israel. It came about following an official request from the (Jordanian) government to the Vatican.

They have 400 employees, 26 centres across Jordan. They help about 200,000 people every year providing all kinds of services; health centres, clinics, activities in schools, psychological support. They believe that it is not a job, but a mission. The mission leads to taking on more responsibility. It is part of belonging to the Church, of being an active Catholic.

The relationship between Caritas Jordan and UNRWA goes way back when Caritas was also present in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. For the Caritas director, halting funding to the Agency by the United States, and ten other countries (eight in Europe, including Italy), is a “senseless” act.

This is very strange, especially coming from Europe, home to countries that have taught the world about the importance of rights, justice. Today, Europe is failing to be what it has taught the world; it does not have a position of its own, it follows others. In doing so, it betrays its roots.” Even if it were true that 12 UNRWA people did something wrong, the decision (to cut funding) destroys the only hope Palestinians have; they have been suffering injustices for 75 years.

Established in 1949, the agency is the largest humanitarian organisation in Gaza, employing 12,000 people; 150 of them have been killed in Gaza since the start of Israel’s offensive.

Although UNRWA, with its 30,000 employees, supports almost six million Palestinians, in the West Bank and Jordan, as well as in other neighbouring countries, it is the two million Gazans who are suffering the worst.

For Wael Suleiman, the situation in Gaza is a priority; everything else in the Middle East “can wait”. “Right now, we have to think about these two million people, not about the others who are at least in countries with a minimum of stability, like ours,” UNRWA is the only channel that can give some hope to people who have been dying for four months. You are taking away even the little you can give. Much more is needed, however.”

Those who work in Gaza also put their lives at risk. Viola al-Amash and Issam Abedrabbo, employees of Caritas Jerusalem, were killed by Israeli troops in recent weeks, along with all their families.

Wael Suleiman’s grandfather fled Palestine in 1948 for Jordan. He made the decision to save his life as the Jewish militia killed any who resisted. He was never allowed back along with over 700,000 who fled the terror. All his relatives who stayed are dead.

During his 24 years of service for the Church in Caritas, he has always “dreamt and worked for peace”, but now, he has changed his mind. “Now I want to work for life because making peace by force only causes the death of children, families.”

“What’s the most important thing?” At this point, leaving is the only possible way to save oneself from the genocide that is unfolding. “Life is a sacred thing. God created us to live, not to die.” That is what his grandfather believed when he chose to flee.

Fiducia Supplicans - A storm in a teacup

Jesuit Institute South Africa/ICN

One cannot help wondering if much of the energy given to this document is a storm in a teacup, misplaced and wasted



JESUIT INSTITUTE SOUTH AFRICA

who are in other irregular situations - like people who are divorced and remarried and haven’t managed to have an annulment and young people perhaps who are living together without any marriage or commitment - are not excluded from the pastoral care of the Church.”

He went on to explain that the fact that people come for a blessing means that they are open to God’s grace; they seek God’s grace, which should be remembered. The Cardinal said a blessing is “not a reward for perfection.”

Pope Francis has been repeatedly asked about the declaration. He has repeatedly said that the document’s heart is about welcoming anyone who comes to the Church, no matter who they are. The Church is not an exclusive club - it is for all people who seek God despite their challenges and weaknesses.

In an interview this week, the Pope said. . to an Italian publication: “The most serious sins are those that are disguised with a more ‘angelic’ appearance. No one is scandalised if I give a blessing to an entrepreneur who perhaps exploits people, which is a very serious sin. Whereas they are scandalised if I give it to a homosexual -- this is hypocrisy”.

The official ‘Book of Blessings’ has formulas for the blessings of boats, cars, factories, fields, etc. Why exclude categories of people if we have official blessings for all sorts of objects?

One cannot help wondering if much of the energy given to this document is a storm in a teacup, misplaced and wasted - especially as one considers the desperately depressing and more essential things happening in the Church and world.

But, we should face a much more crucial and revealing question: Do we really believe that every human being is ‘imago dei’ - made in the image and likeness of God? If so, any living person - a ‘God-bearer’ - should be given, without question, the blessing of their maker.

For weeks now, there has been fierce, polarising debate in the Catholic Church. At the centre of this is a declaration released by the Vatican on 18 December 2023 entitled ‘Fiducia Supplicans’ - ‘the pastoral meaning of blessings.’

In essence, the declaration gave guidance and permission for Catholic bishops, priests and deacons to bless people who were not married according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. This included those in “irregular unions” - not married in the Church, in polygamous relationships and people of the same sex.

Shortly after its release, many voices shouted, some suggesting it was too little too late, some applauding it, or some calling for its outright rejection. Many African bishops - not all - for example, reacted by saying that it should be rejected, forgotten and ignored in its totality.

On 30 January 2024, the day after the closing of their biannual plenary, the bishops of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) held a press conference. At the meeting, Cardinal Stephen Brislin, Archbishop of Cape Town and spokesperson for the bishops, joined by the President of the Conference, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of Mthatha, reported on the week-long deliberation of the local bishops. One of the issues they spoke about was the question of the local implementation of “Fiducia Supp”

Cardinal Brislin said the bishops had decided to implement the declaration and its recommendations “prudently”. Both bishops noted that the declaration reaffirms the doctrine of the Catholic Church about marriage, which is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. They also said this was not a doctrinal shift but a pastoral decision.

Cardinal Brislin explained this very carefully. “It is really a document that is talking about a pastoral practice, for example, for people

Russell Pollitt SJ

Papal blessing for ministry of East Anglian priest, aged 96

rcdea.org

We wish Fr Olindo well with thanks and prayers for his continued long life and ministry. Ad multos annos!

A 96-year-old East Anglian priest marked an incredible 70 years of ministry on January 24 with a Papal Blessing and Mass. Fr Jeffrey Downie reports.

Despite a sudden move into residential care only the day before his anniversary, Peterborough priest Fr Olindo Cramaro was able to celebrate an astonishing 70 years of priesthood. With the help of staff he was joined by friends and some of the local clergy for a simple but joyful celebration of Mass in his new home.

As well as cards, gifts and balloons, Fr Olindo also received a special Papal Blessing from Pope Francis. Cake and drinks were shared as the celebration continued. We wish Fr Olindo well with thanks and prayers for his continued long life and ministry. Ad multos annos!

A native of Italy, Fr Olindo was born in a small village near Udine on November 3, 1927. Ordained priest for the Society of St Paul on

January 24, 1954, after one year he was transferred to Northern Ireland for three years.

In 1957, Fr Olindo moved to East Anglia, eventually incardinating into what was then part of the Diocese of Northampton, serving in Norwich and Peterborough. In January 1984, he became parish priest of Southwold, enjoying 20 years of fruitful ministry there before retirement.

In retirement, Fr Olindo returned to Peterborough, settling in Yaxley close to long-time friends Bridget and Roy Day. He continued to remain very active, supporting the local Catholic community, schools and parishes, especially St. Luke's, enjoying driving around in his Fiat along with Italian food and wine.

At the age of 96, Fr Olindo takes things a little more quietly now, supporting us with his daily prayers, keeping up with the news and welcoming visits from friends.



Fr Olindo seated with Fr Tony Shrayne and Fr Adam Sowa at his 70 anniversary of ministry

St Chad's Cathedral lead prayer at #Pray24Brum

liverpoolcatholic.org.uk

The theme was 'Love God and Love your Neighbour'

#Pray24Brum 2024 has just celebrated its 10th anniversary, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

It was held on Friday 19 and Saturday 20 January at St Philip's Cathedral with prayers and services held across both days. The theme was 'Love God and Love your Neighbour'.

Each hour was led by a different church, group of churches or Christian organisation, inviting those present to share in something of their own style and tradition of prayer.

On Saturday afternoon Monsignor Timothy Menezes, Dean of St Chad's Cathedral, and Archbishop Bernard Longley led an hour on behalf of St Chad's.

Photographs by Con McHugh



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View from the Pew

Only God knows ...

Dr Jay Kettle-Williams

As I stood there on the roadway outside the church, they came forward, the men grinning widely, many wearing alpaca wool chullo hats

Ours is a broad Church with a global reach. But, like any family, it has its rifts, divisions and perhaps even diversities, inconsistencies and contradictions.

I well remember a small linear settlement straddling a winding road clinging to the mountainside in the highmost highlands of Bolivia. Upon my arrival villagers came out from their modest dwellings to greet the newcomer. As I stood there on the roadway outside the church, they came forward, the men grinning widely, many wearing alpaca wool chullo hats modelled on the helmets worn by Spain's sixteenth-century élite infantrymen. The women wore their customary bowler-style hats complemented by colourful, many-layered skirts. The villagers, men and women alike, pushed and shoved, milling around me to run their fingers through my hair - its texture so fine in comparison with theirs - and to stroke my cheeks and forehead, my skin being so pale and soft in comparison with that of the indigenous population.



The church, nestling against and built into the hillside, was like a modest but musty and dusty church hall. The parish priest had either been chased away or was absent on business elsewhere in the diocese. My Quechua, the language spoken thereabouts, was nowhere near good enough to catch the full meaning or inuendo of what was being said, despite the many gestures accompanying the villagers' eager explanations. The church remained open to all and sundry.

The interior of the church was what you'd expect: stations of the cross, a framed image of the Sacred Heart, a small font and the Pietà, the statue depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary cradling the mortal body of Jesus Christ after his Descent from the Cross.

The altar itself ran almost the entire breadth at the far end of the structure. I sat on a dusty pew more or less in the middle row to take in what was in front of me. The crucifix commanded the central position, flanked on either side by items of devotion, respect and aspiration. The European or rather North-American provenance of most of the items was plain to see. A crumpled Coca-Cola can stood incongruously to one side, prompting me to think how thirsty I was. Being at such an altitude quickly makes you thirsty, if not a bit heady, and longing for a drink.

The settlement's one and only bar on the other side of the road offered the local cola, branded 'Inca-cola', or chicha, the term for a fermented



beverage made from maize (corn). The bar offered cramped seating on frail wooden-slatted chairs sufficient only for a mere handful of customers. High up on the wall, on a narrow shelf behind the bar, stood two statues positioned side by side, Jesus and Mary, above which there was a large black doll. The barman took pleasure in explaining that the two statues were Jesus and his sister Mary while watching over them from above was their mother, 'Mamá Suerte' ('Mummy Luck').

Outside on the heavily inclined roadway a lorry's brakes screeched as the over-laden vehicle shunted and slithered to a halt, having been winding its way up and down laboriously along the precipitous mountain roads. I'll never forget the words in Spanish emblazoned across its front bumper: 'Sólo Dios sabe mi destino', words which translate somewhat ironically as 'Only God knows where I'm going'.

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

Incense and why we use it...

portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

The priest takes the wounds of his people under the symbol of incense and places them on the coals transforming wounds into worship

Seminarian Nathan King who is currently on Pastoral placement at St John's Cathedral in Portsmouth recently made a fascinating video about incense and its symbolism. To watch the video, go to YouTube and search for Incense Video Catholic.

Incense calls us to prayer. It shows us how our prayer rises to God like the smoke from the thurible, purifying our worship of him. Incense reminds us of heaven and shows us that our worship of God is divine in origin.

Incense is the blood of the tree. Through repeatedly wounding the tree, its sap is brought forth. This sap is hardened and made into pellets of incense. The wounds are hardened, dead and odourless. They are placed by the priest on the coal of divine charity they melt and release a sweet fragrance that is offered in worship.

The priest takes the wounds of his people under the symbol of incense and places them on the coals transforming wounds into worship. Christ is the one who transforms wounds into worship, and this is extended to us through the Mass which is the perpetuation

of his sacrifice, continually transforming suffering into love and prayer.

The use of incense is mentioned in the Old Testament.

- Exodus 30:1 "You shall make an altar on which to burn incense."
- Leviticus 16:13 "He is to put incense on the fire before the Lord."
- 1 Chronicles 28:18 "And the weight of refined gold for the altar of incense."
- Psalm 141:2 "May my prayer be set before you like incense."

The use of incense is also mentioned in the New Testament.

- Revelation 8:4 "And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the Saints, rose before God."
- Matthew 2:11 "They saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."
- The gift of frankincense is still offered to Jesus to this day in the holy Mass.

Incense is used for purification and for blessing.

- The priest will incense the altar at the beginning of Mass to visually show the symbolic value of purification and sanctification.
- The deacon or priest will incense the gospel before reading it to show the importance of the word of God.
- The priest will incense the bread and wine before they are consecrated becoming the body and blood of Christ truly present on the altar.
- During the elevation of the Body and Blood of Christ, incense is used to create a mystical



veil joining heaven and earth. Incense visually shows our prayers rising up to God but God's mercy coming down upon us.

The visual imagery of the smoke and smell reminds us of the transcendence of the Mass which links heaven with earth and allows us to enter into the presence of God. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass transcends space and time, therefore the use of incense helps us to enter into this external reality through the use of our external senses. That is why incense, fragrant to the senses and visually compelling for the heart and mind, is such a powerful liturgical gift.

Frank Goulding



Don't forget the plight of many who are sadly forgotten

Having nearly reached a certain age, I hope to learn from my past advice as we proceed with Lent this year. "Just do your best" was the comment from one priest and in a 1970 Prayer book a further reflection was "Being a Christian is not easy - it is not meant to be." I suspect we all know that.

I was however somewhat surprised by the recent newspaper article concerning the church and bogus asylum claims. Surely it is the responsibility of the Home Office to decide who can or cannot come to our shores. It is perhaps inevitable that international issues will influence our country in a rapidly changing world. Whilst the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine have dominated the news agenda we should not forget the plight of many who quickly and sadly can get forgotten.

The earthquakes which shattered Turkey/Syria and Afghanistan last year took

away many lives and the devastation left areas with few buildings left. As I write this article there are new concerns coming out of Ethiopia and it seems a huge effort may be needed to prevent famine again. Let us never forget the plight of children and the elderly as the issue of foreign aid comes again under scrutiny. What can we do? I strongly recommend a reading of the CAFOD magazine, Side by Side last winter edition which on its front cover states "No one beyond reach".

Whilst most of us can only observe the continued changes in new technology they are affecting us all in different ways. Again it is children and the elderly who seem particularly vulnerable.

Dependent on whom you call, the difficulty in communicating by what used to be a simple telephone call can be frustrating. Despite this the scam calls and devious fraud activity

seems to be thriving with no priority given to stopping this as more bank branches close. Sadly too, we are all aware of how children can incorporate the wrong and potentially dangerous or worse activity into their young lives.

Well we have the On-Line Safety Bill in Parliament let's hope it achieves some progress.

On the feast of The Presentation of The Lord, Pope Francis gave the homily to a large congregation at Mass in the Vatican. The Pope seemed to recognise the issues facing the world! We were urged to embrace the child Jesus as Simeon had done. Pope Francis also recognised that this was "not easy but God comes in ways we do not expect." This was perhaps a special relevant help for Lent this year.

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Day of Prayer Against Human Trafficking

dioceseofsalford.org.uk

People experiencing modern slavery and trafficking should rightly see our churches and social outreach as places of sanctuary and refuge

If you have watched the documentaries into Greater Manchester Police tackling OCG's or have read an article on a young person's experience with County Lines, you are seeing the impact of modern slavery.

Modern slavery takes many forms and affects real people. From those impacted by drug gangs to those who were pushed to feel that their best option was to pay huge sums of money to a group to be transported across the world in unsafe and inhumane conditions.

It is difficult for many of us to imagine what can drive people to make these decisions. But human trafficking and modern slavery remains prevalent in our society and can be seen across our communities. It is estimated that there are 136,000 victims of modern slavery here in the UK today.

Thursday 8th February 2024 marked the tenth International Day of Prayer and reflection against human trafficking. The 8th February was chosen to host this important day as it is the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita. St Josephine was kidnapped and sold into slavery at the age of 7. After she was freed in Italy years later, she became a nun and has since emerged as a patron for all victims of

trafficking. St Bakhita's legacy remains in the work undertaken by the local anti-trafficking groups around the world.

Modern Slavery, its impact and how we as a diocese can play our part in eradicating this "crime against humanity" has been a particular focus for us in the last few years. A working group was established that includes representatives from across a range of diocesan departments, including our diocesan charity, Caritas Diocese of Salford. This has led to a number of activities and increased focus on how we can further engage and collaborate with our schools and parishes to increase awareness and action across the diocese.

In 2022, we shared our first diocesan Modern Slavery Statement. The statement was published jointly with Caritas Diocese of Salford, the Cathedral Centre Bookshop, and SDC Trading.

Marking the publication of the statement, Bishop John, said: "I welcome and endorse this Statement which acknowledges our potential complicity in human exploitation and commits the Diocese to doing everything we can to ensure that our supply chains are free of modern slavery."

"There is a global problem happening now. There are more slaves in the world currently than at the height of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The true number of people who are experiencing the trauma of modern slavery is unknown, but the Global Slavery Index estimates 40 million people worldwide and 136,000 people in the United Kingdom. This includes members of our own communities and parishes.

"People experiencing modern slavery and trafficking should rightly see our churches and social outreach as places of sanctuary and refuge. It is important, therefore, to ensure that all members of the church, clergy, parishioners, staff and volunteers are aware of the signs to look out for and how they can help survivors find protection and support."

Last year, we made another important step towards our commitment to tackle modern slavery within the diocese as we issued a new code of conduct for suppliers. We are aware of the impact we can have as a diocese by using our power to influence the practises of the businesses through our procurement processes.

The code makes clear that all businesses, charities, and organisations have a responsibility to act in the fight against modern slavery. Our Code of Conduct for Suppliers represents our efforts to purchase services and works that avoid exploitative labour practice, have the least negative impact on the environment, and uphold the principle of



human dignity. We expect suppliers not only to share our aspirations but to be taking active steps to check and audit their supply chains and their working practises.

Led by the work of the Modern Slavery Working Party, the implementation of the Code of Conduct was overseen by the Finance Department and is now in place for all new and existing suppliers.

In 2024, the group's focus moves on to how we can support our parishes and schools. The Finance Department are beginning work on developing a preferred supplier list that we can share with our parishes and diocesan communities and will be offering support to help parishes deploy the Code of Conduct locally.

Working with Caritas we will also be helping to facilitate awareness training days to put into a diocesan context some of the signs that are most associated with modern slavery within our region. Each of us has a responsibility to remain vigilant to the signs to look for in our own communities.

A Christian look at the Chinese New Year

ICN

'The New Year... is a farewell to the past to welcome the future'

This year again, the beginning of Lent coincides with the start the Chinese New Year. (Year of the Dragon). This coincidence is linked to the fact that the two events are fixed in time according to the lunar calendar.

At first glance, the two events seem contradictory: Lent is a time of fasting, abstinence and penance, while New Year is a time of joyful celebration. But in his Pastoral Letter for Lent 2024, Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu, head of the Archdiocese of Guangzhou, shows how the Christian vision can dissolve this apparent contradiction. "In reality," writes the Chinese Bishop, "all actions motivated by the intention to love are ultimately directed toward God. Thus, "as we leave the solitude of urban life behind us, we put an end to the distance which separates us from our loved ones and we return home, where the joy of being with family reigns. At the same time, we can live the Liturgy of Ashes recognizing that it is also

a call from the Eternal Father to us, a call to return home."

In his Pastoral Letter for Lent 2024 entitled "O God, create in me a pure heart" (Ps 51, 10), Bishop Joseph shows "how we, Christians, can immerse ourselves in the love and forgiveness of God in this family holiday period. The New Year, underlines the Bishop of Guangzhou, is a "farewell to the past to welcome the future". In the Christian journey, in the same way, the experience of forgiveness and repentance for one's sins is also a "farewell to the past" and a confident march towards the time to come. In such an experience, "we become full of joy and hope for life, we are made new by the love of Christ, in the grace of God."

Lent is "the time of preparation for the joy of Easter." And precisely, the time of the Chinese New Year, underlines Mgr Gan, is a golden opportunity to bear witness to the Catholic



faith to and with one's family. One can attend "the New Year's Eve Thanksgiving Mass with our families, where the whole family can come together to thank God for His protection and blessings during the past year, and to ask God's blessing for peace and the health of our family members and our work.

By praying and receiving the sacraments with our loved ones, we can also embrace, in gratitude to Jesus, the festive and grateful mood of the Chinese New Year." Thus, "we not only cherish the uniqueness of the Catholic faith while remaining fully immersed in our traditional culture, but we can show that the

Christian faith is a gift that always remains in our hearts, no matter what."

During the New Year celebration - Bishop Gan writes - Christians can pray, read and meditate on the Word of God, and take care of their neighbour.

"The Chinese New Year is an auspicious time to care for others, starting with the elderly, the sick, the lonely and those in difficulty. "We can experience God's blessing and peace during the Spring Festival by spending time with our families, praying in communion and caring for others," concludes Bishop Gan.

UK Inter Faith Network to close after government withdraws funding

ICN

Continued uncertainty regarding Government funding to the Inter Faith Network has had a hugely damaging effect on the charity

The Inter Faith Network has issued the following statement:

On 7 February, the Board of the Inter Faith Network for the UK took, with great regret, an in principle decision to move towards closure of the organisation. That will be confirmed, on 22 February and greater detail provided subsequently - unless by that time the funding offered by the Government on 7 July 2023 for work from July 2023 to March 2024, subject to conditions, is made available or funds at an equivalent level are received from other quarters.

The background to this decision can be seen in a statement issued by IFN's Board on 24 January, following a letter of 19 January from Secretary of State Rt Hon Michael Gove MP saying that he was 'minded to withdraw' the funding offered in July 2023.

Continued uncertainty regarding Government funding to the Inter Faith Network has had a

hugely damaging effect on the charity. Continuing to operate without the £155,000 offered over six months ago has not proven possible, despite other fundraising efforts and IFN's widely acknowledged importance as a trusted and effective UK-wide body working to deepen understanding about and between different faiths and inter faith cooperation and to share information and good practice.

The Board is grateful to all the many individuals and organisations who have written to MPs and Ministers, started or signed petitions, made donations, and in other ways shown deep and often humbling support to IFN across the last year. It is also grateful to those parliamentarians who, on a cross-party basis, have offered support across this period.

In preparing for IFN's likely closure, the Board will be looking across the coming weeks, with input from members and others, at whether and how particular strands of IFN's work, including Inter Faith Week, may be taken forward for the future, as part of ensuring that

positive inter faith relations in the UK can continue to be promoted effectively, particularly in the challenging environment we collectively face.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK is the UK's inter faith linking body. It has worked since 1987 to "advance public knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of the different faith communities in Britain including an awareness both of their distinctive features and their common ground and to promote good relations between people of different faiths in this country".

IFN's vision is of "a society where there is understanding of the diversity and richness of the faith communities in the UK and the contribution that they make; and where we live and work together with mutual respect and shared commitment to the common good". As part of that, it has always had a strong focus on shared values as a basis for working together for the benefit of wider society.

IFN works with its member bodies and many others to promote good inter faith relations and cooperation at every level, to highlight the importance of this work, and to ensure that the importance of religious identity and of good inter faith relations is understood in wider society. Through its major Inter Faith Week programme, which in November 2023 saw over 1,020 inter faith activities take place, it also



promotes dialogue between those of religious and non-religious beliefs.

IFN's member bodies include: national faith community representative bodies from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Druid, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Latter-day Saint, Muslim, Pagan, Sikh, Spiritualist, and Zoroastrian faith communities of the UK; national and regional inter faith organisations; local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with an interest in multi faith and inter faith issues.

IFN is funded from a number of sources such as trusts, faith communities, individual donors and - until March 2023 - Government. Government funding has been made available towards its work since 2001 and has been a vital part of what enabled that work, including national Inter Faith Week, to take place.

Debating a better world in Woolton

liverpoolcatholic.org.uk

The evening ended with everybody present invited to pledge one thing they would change in their own lives to improve the planet

On the opening day of the COP28 summit in Dubai, the twin parishes of Bishop Eton and St Mary's in south Liverpool came together to stage a BBC Question Time-style event titled 'Climate Crisis: What Can I Do?'.

Organiser Tim Walsh from the parishes' LiveSimply team assembled a discussion panel featuring the MP for Wavertree, Paula Barker; the leader of Liverpool City Council, Liam Robinson; and local Calderstones councillor Liz Makinson.

Presenting the Catholic perspective were the Liverpool co-ordinator of CAFOD, Ged

Edwards, and Deacon Paul Rooney, who is both a lecturer at Liverpool Hope University and leader of the archdiocesan environmental strategy.

Also on the top table, acting as chair, was Bill Chambers, the Pro-Vice Chancellor Emeritus of Liverpool Hope. Fifty parishioners attended the event at St Mary's church hall and contributed to 90 minutes of lively debate.

Barker was asked about the priority of climate change for Westminster and Robinson about the big things that the city and region are doing to tackle climate change.

Makinson, meanwhile, talked about local priorities, and this led to a discussion on matters such as the roles of schools and 20mph speed limits in residential areas. The impact of climate change on the global south - an issue of great interest to CAFOD - was also discussed, while Deacon Paul was asked to reflect on Pope Francis' impact on the international debate as well as how this is



Picture Credit: Alex Monkhouse

affecting local actions in parishes in the archdiocese.

The subsequent questions from the floor were wide-ranging, covering the ethics of direct action, the effectiveness of petitions to influence political leaders, economic opportunities resulting from climate change,

and the contributions of parishes to reducing climate change.

The evening ended with everybody present invited to pledge one thing they would change in their own lives to improve the planet.



For the terminally ill

The Pope Video for February is for the terminally ill and those caring for them. You can watch the Pope Video to hear Pope Francis speaking the following words for yourself by visiting thepopevideo.org

When some people talk about terminal illnesses, there are two words they often confuse: incurable and un-curable. But they are not the same.

Even when little chance for a cure exists, every sick person has the right to medical, psychological, spiritual and human assistance.

Sometimes they can't talk; sometimes we think they don't recognize us. But if we take them by the hand, we know they are relating with us.

Healing is not always possible, but we can always care for the sick person, caress them.

Saint John Paul II used to say, "cure if it is possible; always take care."

And this is where palliative care comes in. It guarantees the patient not only medical attention, but also human assistance and closeness.

Families should not be left alone in these difficult moments.

Their role is decisive. They need access to adequate means so as to provide appropriate physical, spiritual and social support.

Let us pray that the terminally ill and their families always receive the necessary medical and human care and assistance.

"I would also like to invite you to join in the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, which spreads, also through social networks, the prayer intentions I propose for the Church each month. In this way, the Apostleship of Prayer moves forward and communion grows."

Pope Francis

Be part of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.



Contribute with your grain of sand to build, along Pope Francis, a world where the human values that Jesus embodied in the Gospel prevail.

Your participation is key for making the world aware of the challenges humanity faces.

THE POPE VIDEO Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network

FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

"Let us pray that the terminally ill and their families always receive the necessary medical and human care and assistance."
- Pope Francis -

Challenge for humanity and the Church's mission – February 2024

WHO IS A TERMINALLY ILL PERSON?

A terminally ill person is someone who has an advanced, progressive and incurable illness.

The proximity of death creates a tremendous emotional impact for the sick person, their relatives and the therapeutic team assisting them.

In this type of situation, there are some countries in which the terminally ill person can choose euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Palliative care is an alternative to maintain a better quality of life for terminally ill patients and their families.

Each year, 40 million people throughout the world need palliative care, but only 14% receive it.

"Cure if it is possible; always take care."

Pope Francis

How is it possible to care for a terminally ill person?

The Catholic Church considers palliative care to be every person's right:

| Medical Care | Psychological Care | Spiritual Care |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Medicine is not only a science. It is also a "therapeutic art". This implies, above all, a close relationship with the patient in the critical and terminal phases of life.</p> <p>Therapeutic excessiveness and the reduction of the physician-patient relationship to that of a mere contract should be avoided.</p> | <p>The vulnerability of the terminally ill patient is natural. Space is necessary for the recognition of the patient's fragility and vulnerability.</p> <p>To regenerate a sense of the patient's existence when they experience suffering, illness and the fear of the unknown.</p> | <p>To recognize the innate dignity of each person as a child of God.</p> <p>To assist the sick person, like a brother or sister, supporting their relationship with God.</p> <p>In the final moments of life, spiritual accompaniment instills hope in God's love.</p> |

Why is it important that family members assist the terminally ill person?

- So they are involved in the patient's care and in making decisions.
- For the emotional and mental support of the patient.
- In some cases, appropriate accompaniment by members of the family increases the probability of positive results in the treatment process.

WHAT DOES POPE FRANCIS SAY WE CAN DO TO HELP THE TERMINALLY ILL AND THEIR FAMILIES?

- **Accompany.** The spiritual assistance provided by families is a component of palliative care.
- **Provide care for their fragility.** Therapeutic care is not only medical, but also psychological and spiritual.
- **Accept vulnerability.** We cannot leave families alone in such difficult moments.
- **Be present and available.** Always offer care and the necessary assistance.
- **Openness to hope.** A cure may not always be possible, but the sick person can always be cared for.

"When illness knocks on the door of our life, the need arises in us that someone be close us, to look into our eyes, to take us by the hand, to show us tenderness and care for us, like the Good Samaritan".

POPE FRANCIS

Primary Source:
Pope Francis (2020): Address to the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith
Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (2020): Letter Samaritanus Bonus on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life.
Pan American Health Organisation. Palliative Care

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Warsaw meeting to discuss on-going pastoral care of Poles in UK

CBCEW/ICN

Poles are welcome in our parishes and they enrich our church

Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees for the Bishops' Conference, has returned from a two-day meeting in Warsaw with the Polish Bishops' Conference to discuss the on-going pastoral care of Poles in the UK.

Father Bogdan Kołodziej, Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission, attended the meeting alongside the Mission's Chancellor, Father Artur Strzępka, and the General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference, Canon Christopher Thomas.

Bishop Piotr Turzyński, the representative of the Polish Episcopal Conference responsible for the pastoral care of the Polish community outside Poland, was happy to greet the visitors from England and Wales. "Bishop McAleenan is very kind and we can always count on him," said Bishop Turzyński. "We consult with him on all matters related to the pastoral care of Poles

in England and Wales. During this visit we discussed several important issues."

Speaking to the media office of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Bishop McAleenan emphasised the importance of the Polish Catholic Mission, which has been present in the life of the Catholic Church in England and Wales for decades. "Such pastoral care is extremely important because people pray best in their mother tongue - the language of their childhood," said Bishop McAleenan. "Poles are welcome in our parishes and they enrich our church."

Bishop McAleenan praised the Polish Catholic communities for their respect for the Blessed Sacrament during Mass and Adoration. "This piety translates into the society in which they function on a daily basis," he said. "Living among the English and Welsh, they share their values and beliefs - this is extremely valuable."



Left to right: Canon Christopher Thomas, Bishop Paul McAleenan, Bishop Piotr Turzyński, Fr Bogdan Kołodziej, Fr Artur Strzępka
© Polish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The two-day meeting was the latest in a series of ongoing meetings that take place alternately in Poland and England to ensure a high level of pastoral concern for Poles living in England and Wales.

"We share the experience of faith in exile and talk about both the needs and the difficulties that we face," said Father Kołodziej, Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission. "We have a lot of young people in the communities and you can see the hunger for God in them. There are many Poles who have left for various reasons. They are people who practiced their faith here in Poland and want to breathe it where they

live. They want to pray in the language of the heart, in their native language, but our parishes need more priests."

Throughout Lent, the relics of the Blessed Ulma family will visit Polish parishes in England and Wales. The family were martyred by Nazi soldiers for harbouring Jews during World War II.

"We have 74 parishes and we would like the reliquary to visit them all," said Father Kołodziej. "We would like this visit to renew awareness of the family values and relationships."

Friends of the Holy Land

Friends of the Holy Land EDITORIAL