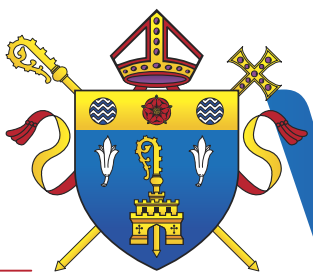


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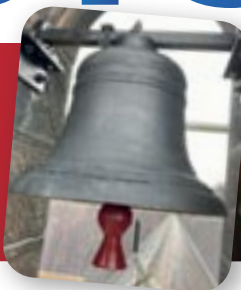
VOICE *of Lancaster*

**The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster**

Issue 355 + December '23

INSIDE: pg10

**Church bell reinstated
thanks to a legacy**



The Coming of Our God

“

**We might say that Advent is
the season in which Christians
must rekindle in their hearts the
hope that they will be able, with
God's help, to renew the world**

Pope Benedict XVI

”

**A reading from
the second letter
of Peter 3: 8-14**

There is one thing; my friends, that you must never forget: that with the Lord, 'a day' can mean a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises, as anyone else might be called slow; but he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody brought to change his ways. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the earth and all it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that he will find you at peace.

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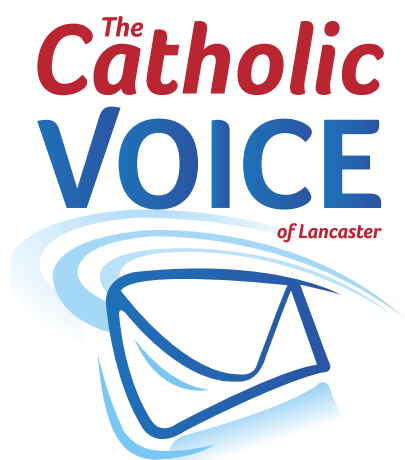
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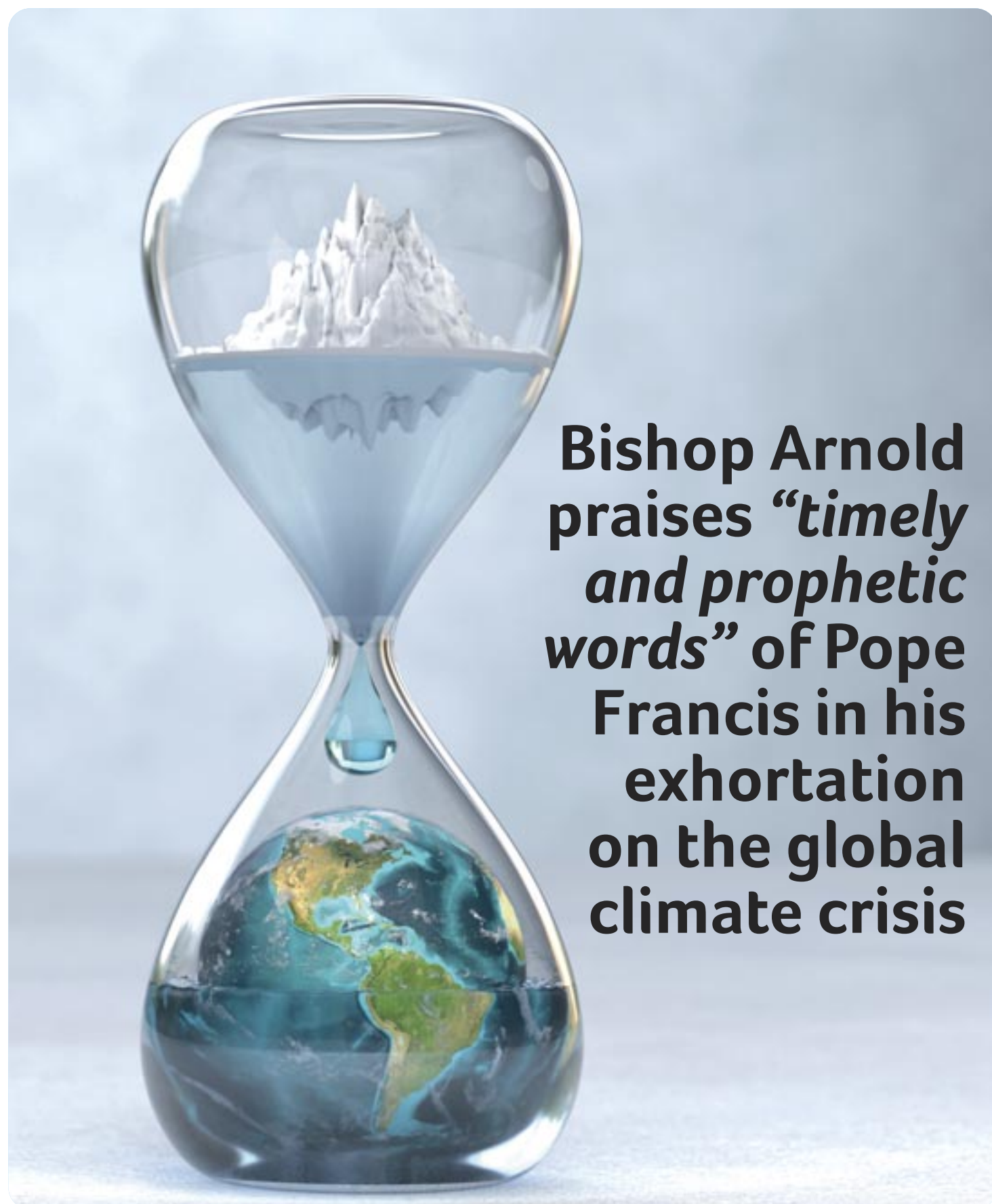
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Bishop Arnold praises “timely and prophetic words” of Pope Francis in his exhortation on the global climate crisis

Lead Bishop for Environmental Issues for the Bishops’ Conference, Bishop John Arnold, praises the Pope’s intervention as ‘timely’ and ‘vital’:

“I thoroughly welcome the timely and prophetic words of Pope Francis in Laudate Deum who once again implores the international community to alter the path of destruction down which we are heading.

“He reminds us that we should praise God for all His creatures and that our care for our common home is intimately connected with our care for each other.

“As Pope Francis explains, the decisions we make can have grave consequences, not only for those who are still living, but the generations to follow. We have a duty to take action to look after our planet.

‘What is being asked of us is nothing other than a certain responsibility for the legacy

we will leave behind, once we pass from this world’ (LD18)”

In Laudate Deum, the Pope describes climate change leading to drought, extreme weather and global high temperatures as a “*silent disease that affects everyone*”. The Exhortation frequently defines the climate crisis as a ‘*global societal issue*’ where the impact and consequences are often felt by the world’s poorest people.

Laudate Deum argues that humans are a part of nature, but that we are currently abusing this position, exploiting natural resources and minerals.

Pope Francis writes: “*Humans must be recognised as part of nature.*” He adds: “*Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler but more fruitful way.*”

Bishop Arnold echoes these thoughts, arguing that the climate crisis gives humanity a good opportunity to consider our relationship with the rest of creation.

Bishop Arnold says: “*Clearly, the way we are currently living our lives is unsustainable. We need urgent political action, on a global scale, to address this crisis before it’s too late. But it’s also right that we ask ourselves certain questions.*

“What is our relationship to God’s creation? Is it a resource for us to make profits from, or a precious gift that we are to protect? Are we stewards of the earth, or exploiters?”

Pope Francis also focuses on international cooperation, calling for a new global framework to establish effective rules to safeguard the environment and promote human flourishing. He addresses the lack of

Pope Francis has released his Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum, 'Praise God', to "clarify and complete" what he started in 2015 with his Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' on how we care for our common home. It was released at the end of the Season of Creation on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, 4 October.



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progress at the COP international climate conferences and looks ahead to COP28 in Dubai. He urges delegates to "move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned" and to have the "courage needed to produce substantial changes", for "we barely have time to prevent even more damage."

Bishop Arnold also laments the lack of progress since the release of Laudato Si' in 2015:

"The unfortunate thing is that eight years on, several COP meetings later, we really have not been achieving the targets that those meetings have agreed, and the damage is not being reduced. In fact, in some ways, it's increasing."

The Pope does recognise that "every little bit helps" and suggests that efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste, and to consume responsibly,

“

'Praise God' is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies.

Pope Francis

”

has created a "new culture" and is transformative. He writes: "Let us realise, then, that even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society."

Bishop John Arnold agrees and says we can go further: "There's certainly more we can be doing. The first point of focus is education. Parishes, schools, and Catholic organisations are, on the whole, committed to being good custodians but we need a more joined-up effort to make sure that we are doing our best to repair the damage we've done."

"We've got to press ahead and make sure that we are a voice – a voice to our democratic nation that says we must change our policies and our life as a nation."

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Golden Charter  



It's always fun at Castlerigg when Autumn kicks in properly. We know Autumn is with us because everyone complains that they are cold and we realise that we need to put the heating back on. Before all that though, we need to have our annual refresher on how our ridiculously complicated heating system actually works! Luckily, we've got it sorted now.

Yes, the Lake District is very much in Autumn mode now. It's raining most days, the nights are drawing in, and there are some beautiful colours to see. The Lakes are falling a little after being incredibly high and, amid all of this, our building is holding up quite nicely and we are still managing to take groups out to see the beauty of what God has created around us.

Our Building

Talking of the building, we have recently had a heck of a lot of work done. The South wall of Castlerigg (the bit that faces the road) has had a complete facelift and now looks amazing. The work crew are continuing round to the West side of the building (the right as you look at our front door) and work will probably be completed by the time you read this.

We've got a few more major works planned for the site in the months ahead too!

Schools

Fairly recently, I was asked who exactly we work with and where they all come from, so I thought it might be fun to write something about it all. Basically, we deal with parishes, schools and a few other

entities here and there such as youth groups and new movements.

Last year – academic year 2022/23 – we ran retreats at Castlerigg with 44 schools. As of October, we already have 45 booked in for this year, with more to come no doubt (summer bookings don't all land just yet!). So where are those 45 schools from? Good question...

Eighteen of the schools we've got booked in are from our own Diocese of Lancaster. We've seen a huge increase in bookings from our own diocese this year, particularly from Primary schools.

The other twenty-seven schools are from beyond our diocese. Thirteen of those come from the wider Northwest, five from Yorkshire, and three from the midlands. If you're counting as we go, you'll probably realise that leaves six schools.

One of those is from outside the Catholic sector – a new venture for us which we're quite excited by! – and the other six are from Scotland, where we seem to be growing in popularity at an alarming rate.

Two years ago, we only had two schools from Scotland. Now we have five, with more enquiring all the time!!

For me as the Director, this is a happy picture. We are working with more schools than we have in a very long time and our calendar is starting to get very full!

Catholic Student Retreat

By the time you read this, the first

Catholic Students Retreat at Castlerigg will have taken place. We already have some people signed up and we're expecting more. Expect a full report. If it's a success, expect it to happen again too. Follow our socials for more details.

Advent Retreat – December 8-10

We have changed our general open retreats slightly this year (by which we mean the retreats that aren't targeted at a specific group like students or altar servers) in a few key ways. They are now open to anyone in Year 7 or above. And, there are going to be three of them.

The first general open retreat is the Advent retreat and it's open to anyone in Year 7 or above, up to age 25. That means that anyone who is interested in deepening their faith can come. You don't have to go to a Catholic school, you don't have to have been to Castlerigg before, and you don't need to live in the diocese.

The Advent retreat is a chance to make some new friends, have some fun, and journey together through Advent.

The cost for the Advent Retreat is £65, but we don't want that to put anybody off. If you want to come but can't afford it, please get in touch. There is more information on the website.

Altar Servers Retreat – January 12-13

Back by popular demand, our annual retreat for Altar Servers is happening this January. It's a one-night retreat, ending on Saturday so that attendees can be back in their parishes, and on the altar, for Sunday Mass!

The retreat is open to servers in Year 5 or above and costs just £35pp. As above, we don't want the cost to be prohibitive, so get in touch if you can't quite stretch to that.

Easter Retreat – March 28-31

The Easter Retreat is our oldest open retreat at Castlerigg and literally thousands of people have taken part over the years.

The retreat starts on Holy Thursday and those taking part journey together through the key liturgies of the Triduum to Easter Sunday. Yes, there is a lot of praying involved, but it's not just about time in the Chapel, important and awesome though that may be! There are socials, talks, trips out and a few other things besides.

Like the Advent Retreat, it's now open to anyone in Year 7 or above whether you're from the diocese, or you've been to Castlerigg before, or not. Bookings will open in the new year. Check our website and socials for more details.

Summer Retreat – May 24-26

The Summer Retreat is the new kid on the block. Our newest general open retreat will hopefully complement the Advent and Easter Retreats by giving people who have been to Castlerigg a chance to come back and take the experience that little bit deeper. Like those retreats though, it's not restricted to those who have been before.

It's in May, and bookings will likely open in the Spring.

Advent & Xmas Word Search



advent	angel	baby
birth	carols	christmas
donkey	elizabeth	gabriel
gifts	god	herod
incarnation	jesus	john
joseph	joy	love
magi	mary	nativity
peace	shepherds	silentnight
snow	stable	star
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Hope in Health

Rest for your Souls

8th-10th December 2023

Is caring for others part of your daily routine? Maybe you are a healthcare professional, social worker, or teacher? Maybe you care for a sick member of the family or friend? Maybe you just spend a lot of your time supporting others in need?

If this is you then you may wish to consider taking some breathing space for yourself. Think about it, a time to rest, reflect, pray and enjoy the company of others, in the beautiful Guest House at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria.

Speakers: Sr Margaret Atkins, an Augustinian Sister and Fr Richard Taylor of Boarbank Hall.

Cost: £80 per night full board, plus voluntary donation for the course.

Bookings and further information:
Email margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk
For more about Boarbank, see www.boarbankhall.org.uk

Thinking Faith - Time Out for Working Catholics 2023-2024

We are a group of professional Catholics who meet together on zoom and live retreats hosted by Sr Margaret Atkins and Fr Richard Finn, a Dominican at Blackfriars, Oxford (and at times other Dominicans).

Our Thinking Faith summer weeks began for Catholic students and young professionals nearly 20 years ago.

They have grown and developed into something that provides for that ‘post-youth’ group who are trying to live out their Catholic faith in responsible positions at work and also perhaps in their families. At the same time, a regular core of participants has developed, who meet at Boarbank for the residential summer week and keep in touch with zoom retreats in between.

Boarbank warmly welcomes anyone who might enjoy either the zoom or the residential week to get in touch. You can just dip your toe in by joining either the Advent or Lent retreat. If you are looking for friendly, fun but also serious and thoughtful support from fellow-Catholics in living out your faith in daily life, this could be for you. And you might get a week’s break in Cumbria into the bargain!

For more information, contact Sr Margaret on margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or visit our website www.boarbankhall.org.uk

This year’s programme:
Advent Zoom Retreat:
15-17 December 2023 Evening sessions only - Comfort and Joy

Lent Zoom Retreat:
8-10 March 2024 Evening sessions only - Fasting and Feasting

Summer Residential:
27th July - 3rd August 2024 summer residential - *What Catholics Really Believe*.

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- Include your full name and address
- Letters should not include any personal criticism or attacks
- The editor reserves the right to:
 - Amend or shorten letters or to refuse to publish them (no correspondence to discuss decisions taken will be entered into)
 - Publish a response if deemed appropriate

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Dear Editor,

I write in praise of the three priests at St Walburge's in Preston. I have been attending the church for about seven years during which time these three men have created a vibrant community and have been there for myself at great times of joy and sadness. They truly walk in the footsteps of Christ.

Yours in prayer, Carl Balshaw, Cottam



**We would like to thank
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“Go tell the priests to build a chapel here and that people should come in procession”

Mary Mother of God to Bernadette Soubirous on 2 March 1858”

Come with us to Lourdes in 2024 Save the dates 23rd to the 30th July

In 2024 we will be breaking with tradition, departing on a Tuesday from Liverpool John Lennon Airport. We are hopeful that the new travel date will be more appealing to teachers and young people.

Our travel agent is Joe Walsh Tours website:- www.joewalshstours.co.uk/pilgrimages or call Freephone: 0808 1890468 and they will be happy to answer any questions.

The Catholic Voice will carry fuller details in the February edition, meanwhile get the dates in your diary and join us on pilgrimage in 2024.

Our care for the sick pilgrims is paramount and reliant on volunteers.

We therefore at this early juncture appeal for nurses and carers across the diocese to consider joining us. Nikki Wisdom at: chiefnurse@lancasterlourdes.co.uk and Sean McMahon at: chiefbrancardier@lancasterlourdes.co.uk (for males over the age of 23) would be delighted to hear from you.

Linda Wisdom, Director of Operations

The Broughton Catholic Charitable Society and the Fylde Branch of the Unite Union enabled the residential week-end for the Impact Youth Groups at Castlerigg Manor.

Aisling an Education Worker from PAX CHRISTI was in attendance and Fr. Mark Assistant National Chaplain to YCW/IMPACT in England and Wales attended as Chaplain. They were supported by the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace Nottingham & David a Justice Worker with the Sisters.

Terry Mattinson said “the theme of the week-end was ‘Being Yourself’ and all the workshops were youth led, giving our young people the real opportunity of being themselves and having a real voice, which is important for our Church and for our young people, as Pope Francis once said “ Stir it up, adults really listen to the voices of our young people”.

The young people were drawn from St Bede’s High School in Lytham and Our Lady’s High School, Preston.

Edie and Amelia ran a workshop on ‘Body Image’, Ava and Izzy a workshop on ‘Dreams and Aspirations’ and Molly led one on ‘Being Ourselves’.

The weekend included Mass, a boat trip on Derwent Water as well as evening prayer and reflection in the Chapel.



“It was a fun weekend making new friends”

“My confidence has had a boost”

“Refection time was important to remember our friends and families”

“Time to be yourself”

Being Yourself



a priest. Early on he went to the junior seminary, but that did not work for him. Afterwards there was a time at Ushaw. Later still, after gaining his degree he went to the seminary of S. Sulpice in Paris but again, he and the time were not ready. It was only after hearing the kerygma preached at a catechesis of the Neocatechumenal Way, (NCW), and entering into that 'Way' that Fr Joe could set his face for Rome and studies at the Pontifical Beda College where I met him in 1981. It was that kerygma, that news of the love of God evidenced in the death and resurrection of Jesus that made possible Fr Joe's entry into the priesthood.

That is why after labouring in the vineyard of this diocese and on reaching retirement age, he served the NCW virtually up to his death proclaiming the good news of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Bringing life and refreshment to 'dry bones,' as it said in the second reading. Joe was plagued by all sorts of trials but only to prove his faith like gold. For, in the words of St Paul again, he believed and was sure of the end to which his faith looked forward, that is, the salvation of his soul. Today we give back to God his great gift to us of Fr Joe: your brother, your relative, your friend, your priest. A precious gift: and if this is the gift, oh what must the giver be like?

Eternal rest give unto Fr Joe O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him, may he rest in peace, Amen.

Fr Joseph O'Connor RIP

Homily preached by Canon Chris Loughran at the Requiem Mass for Fr Joseph O'Connor on Friday 3 November.

John, let me begin my few words by saying to you how sorry I am that we have to be here today. Fr Joe's death in many ways was a great blessing and a merciful release, but non-the-less it leaves a hole, an emptiness. So, we offer you and all the family our love, sympathy and support at this time.

No eulogy, no panegyric – Fr Joe, absolutely and utterly demanded this. Preach on the Word, that was his wish. And that is why we have given you a brief biography of him in the Funeral Booklet. Besides, you all have your stories to tell about Fr Joe, and the reception after his burial is a good place to do that.

Brothers and sisters, at the very centre of our Faith there is a death; the death of Jesus Christ. Not all the Gospels record his birth, but none of them omit his death. His death is absolutely central. Everything that Jesus Christ said and did: every sick person restored, every sin forgiven, every teaching delivered, every miracle performed were leading inextricably to his death.

His death was the central act of his life,

his death was the reason that he came to earth, his death was the price paid for our sins, his death crushed eternal death and ushered in eternal life. That was the paramount gift that Christ wanted to bestow: eternal life. You heard it in the Gospel; almost with his dying breath he gave eternal life to the repentant thief. That thief who at the 11th hour 'stole' into heaven. Christ forever coaxing people into life. You know, it is said that his head, in the repose of death was facing the thief who did not repent. Even in death willing the unrepentant into his kingdom.

For Jesus Christ the cross was an unavoidable necessity; without the cross there could be no resurrection, no new life, no chance of heaven.

But Jesus Christ is in fact risen from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.

This is the central tenet of our faith, and it is a belief that Fr Joe accepted and lived. He accepted the cross, the pain and sufferings in his life, he united those sufferings to those of Jesus Christ. And therefore, united with him in suffering he will be united with him in Resurrection. Through the cross to the crown. *Per crucem ad coronam.*

Fr Joe had many 'attempts' at becoming

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good and true,
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Bell being hoisted
into the tower.



Bell installed
4 hours later.



Blessing
by Fr John
Winstanley.



Paul Harper
tolling the
bell for the
first time.

Church bell reinstated thanks to a legacy

After a gap of over 40 years, St Catherine's, Penrith once again have a functioning bell in their belfry. Since arriving 5 years ago, parish priest Fr John Winstanley had a wish to repair the bell to allow the church to proclaim its presence in the town after such a long break and this was made possible thanks to a legacy from parishioner, Patricia Bille.

The project started in 2019, with the parish Practical Management Group taking on the responsibility of finding out what was needed by commissioning a report and obtaining estimates. They quickly found out the costs were much higher than anticipated and it was only after the legacy was received that they could go ahead. These funds allowed St Catherine's to use internationally renowned, Taylor Bells from Loughborough

to repair the bell and use stainless steel fixings to ensure the bell has a long life with minimum maintenance. Taylor's used the services of volunteer Ron East who is the Bells Adviser for the Anglican Diocese of Carlisle, a good example of partnership by the Churches Together in Cumbria. Paul Harper was the project manager for the parish, picking up a new skill in the process, that of a campanologist!

The bell was blessed by Fr John on 17 September and is now in use at all services. After his prayers were answered, Fr. John says, 'I am delighted that the bell can be used again to call people to prayer and give glory to God. It is great we can ring our bell once again in good company with our friends at neighbouring Christ Church on Drovers Lane and St. Andrew's whose bells are a welcome sound across our town.'

Paul Harper

Fr John Dobson 1930-2024 RIP

Fr. John Dobson was born in Barton, near Preston in January 1930 and attended Bonds primary school, Garstang, Xaverian College, then on to Ushaw from where he was ordained at the English Martyrs Preston in July 1956.

He served as a priest in many Parishes in the diocese from Carlisle to Claughton. He told me that when he was just ordained, fourth curate at Our Lady's Carlisle, He'd visited every house in his area by Christmas. He said *"They don't want to see me again,"* so he went and played golf. He was a very good golfer. I met him once in the early '60s at Royal Lytham and St Annes, where he'd come to see the British Open, and he said to me *"the difference between the way these professionals play, and how we play is like the difference between professional footballers and children in the school yard."* It was a realism and humility which are characteristics of him. At first as a young priest he was



attracted by the stylish things in life...for a while he owned and drove a Bentley... but he grew from being interested in the superficial to a becoming a true pastor of souls.

His gifts were pastoral; he was humble, approachable, a good listener and truly interested in people. His smile was welcoming.

In more ways than one, while he was a pastor at Carnforth, he bought two sheep to keep the grass under control! And he was earthed in reality, with his name inscribed on a tombstone here, with a space left for date of death! He retired to Catterall, St. Winifred's, then to McCauley Mount Care Home, and was grateful *(as the diocese is)* for the care he received there.

Fr. John was *"not a servant but a friend of Christ"* and as we mourn his death, he would tell us, in the words of the opening hymn *"Fill your hearts with joy and gladness". May he rest in peace.*

Canon Aidan Turner



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Lancaster Diocese Cares for Creation!

Lancaster Diocesan Faith & Justice Commission hosted an ecumenical 'Care of Creation' day at St Bernadette's RC church in Lancaster to mark the end of the Season of Creation. The theme of the event was *'Let Justice and Peace flow'*. Speakers included:

- Sr Margaret Atkins who did an amazing job of outlining Laudato Si in relation to Catholic Social Teaching
- Dr Stephen Garsed (*Our Environmental Lead*) who spoke about the 'War on Nature' we are currently experiencing

- Dr Paul Kelly who explained the concept of *'Living Simply so others can simply live'*
- John Paul De Quay from the Ecological Conversion Group who led an interactive 'Let us Dream' activity to facilitate future planning within our communities.

Many thanks to all our wonderful speakers for making this day such a success, St Bernadette's Faith & Justice Group for all their support and to Canon Hugh Pollock who led us in prayer, and did a fantastic job of facilitating the day.

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Rise Up and Walk Mission in Workington

There was a time when missions were not only de rigeur in parishes, but also renowned for their fire and brimstone messaging, designed to frighten the living daylights out of people. Those were the good old days (so I'm told). But what would happen if we could rediscover the good things about those missions and repackage them for our contemporary world?

For the past year and a half, Christ the Good Shepherd parish in Workington has been asking the Holy Spirit to renew our parish. We used the Synod as a springboard to reflect upon how our parish is working or not working, looking at our strengths and weaknesses, and trying to understand the opportunities and threats around us. And then we began to dream what we wanted our parish to look like. The parish priest set up a leadership team to work with him to establish a vision for the parish, a picture of the future that invited passion. We wanted a parish with open doors, growing and vibrant with young families, centred around the Eucharist, no longer living for itself but reaching out to those beyond, a parish that joyfully lives out the Gospel and serves our wider community, a parish of missionary disciples.

This vision then became the aim of our parish mission which we ran in October 2023. The mission took as its theme, 'Rise Up and Walk' (Acts 3:6) and it was led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal from Bradford. Our four schools reflected upon the theme and prepared some fantastic artwork and learnt about St Francis, his encounter with the Gospel

and how it transformed his whole life. All the parish prayed our mission prayer each day in the months before and we enlisted the prayers of all the housebound parishioners and various religious communities to surround the event with grace.

St Francis used to cry throughout the streets of Assisi, "Love is not loved", calling people to conversion. The Friars who visited our parish shared that message with us too, bringing us all into a living encounter with Christ, speaking of Jesus's unconditional love for us, His immeasurable mercy and the gift of salvation.

The power of the Word of God and the sacraments broke into people's lives, with one participant saying that they felt as if they had been born anew, and another exclaiming that they had just experienced the most amazing spiritual spa!

The Friars ventured into all our schools, sharing their testimonies, talking about their life, their service of the poor, and leading the young people in prayer. The week's events concluded with a Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, followed by a Meal of All Nations, with parishioners from different backgrounds and countries all bringing some of their favourite foods to share. The laughter, joy and sense of fellowship were a real sign of what has been achieved over these days. As one participant said, the mission had ended, but now the real mission begins. We pray that the seeds of this mission may now inspire all of us to Rise Up and Walk.

Fr Philip Conner





Rwanda Group Trust

The Catholic Voice has previously reported on the fundraising activities of this Trust and have recently been sent a report from Fr Fabian in Rwanda. He writes:

While reiterating our gratitude for the rapid assistance sent to help those affected by the floods, we would like to tell you how the aid was shared. The disasters are immense. Waves throughout the country with more than 135 dead. And in Nyundo we mourn 13 persons deceased with many houses and schools destroyed. Our 'minor seminary' hosting 400 young people was completely flooded.

With your help we have been able to provide uniforms for the seminarians, men's, women's and children's clothing, blankets, beans, rice and cornflour. We give thanks to God for this support. We give thanks to God because all of our young seminarians survived but some caught sleeping lost their clothing. Your help provided them with 50 uniforms.

The Trust continue their fundraising with a Table Top Sale in St. Anthony's Annexe, St. Anthony's Drive Preston on 9 December where it costs £10 to hire a table.



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Greg Watts and the Stella Maris team - 15/11/2023

Remembering those separated from family this Christmas



Light up Christmas for hundreds of seafarers and fishers.

Look around you: 90% of the things you use has been brought here by sea. It's extraordinary to think how much we depend on the shipping industry. But so often, men and women of the sea are forgotten.

This Christmas, the port chaplains and ship visitors of Catholic charity Stella Maris will welcome many seafarers and fishers in ports around the UK, bringing them gifts, and ensuring Mass is organised for them, where possible, at this special time.

And it's all thanks to you. Your gift to Stella Maris helps us to share God's love with seafarers and fishers and make their Christmas special.

Please visit www.stellamaris.org.uk for more information about how you can light up Christmas for seafarers and fishers. Please also keep them in prayer. Thank you, in advance, for any support you can kindly give.



“The first time I dressed up as Santa to go on board a ship and take gifts to the crew, I felt a bit embarrassed,” admits Deacon Peter Barrigan, Stella Maris regional port chaplain in Tees, Hartlepool and Seaham.

“But when I arrived in the mess room, singing Christmas songs as I went in, the crew were waiting like eager children. You should have seen the joy on their faces. They carefully put each parcel under their small tree and told me they'd wait until Christmas morning to open them. Later that month, I had a 'thank you' email from the captain.”

The presents the seafarers received meant that someone had thought about them, says Peter. *“The gifts may have been simple things like toiletries, socks, woolly hats, chocolate or phone cards. But when you give to seafarers, it sends a powerful message: you're not alone, we care for you, God loves you.”*

“It's the same with Christmas cards. I met a captain one time who showed me a card he received last year. He'd kept it all this time! When you show kindness towards seafarers at Christmas, it means everything to them.”

For most of us, Christmas is seen as a time to relax with family and friends, but for many seafarers it is business as usual. They are likely to be working on deck hundreds or thousands of miles out at sea, or unloading or loading a vessel in a port somewhere.

Many of the items that fill the shelves of our shops over Christmas will have

arrived here by sea, everything from the latest mobile phones and Play Stations to clothes and fruit.

Even on the largest container ships, such as the MSC Irina, which is 400 metres long and can carry 24,000 metal containers, a crew might just consist of up to 25 seafarers. Working on such a huge ship with so few other seafarers can be a lonely experience and exhausting work.

The majority of seafarers are from countries in the developing world, such as the Philippines and India, and join a ship to earn enough money to support their family back home. Many seafarers are Catholic.

The maritime world still remains a largely hidden one. While lots of us are familiar with airports, we know nothing about what goes on in a port. We might know that Heathrow and Gatwick are the UK's busiest airports, but we would struggle to name the busiest UK ports.

Through small gestures, Stella Maris port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors around the UK, will make Christmas special for seafarers. And they understand just how important these small gestures are.

If readers would like to find out more about helping a seafarer this Christmas, the work of Stella Maris and opportunities to volunteer or donate to support it, go to www.stellamaris.org.uk Let us also pray for seafarers and fishers and their families at this special time of the year.



Here are two examples of how the Catenian Association help others. The Association has two charities, its Bursary Fund for assisting young people and its Benevolent Fund for assisting its own members and their families. As well as these each group (Circle) tends to raise monies for worthwhile causes.

Garstang Circle held a charity concert by Pilling Silver Band at Garstang Country Hotel and Golf Club recently and raised £1335.00 for MacMillan Cancer Support. The photograph above, shows the Circle President Gerard Power presenting a cheque to the local fundraising group in Preston to Dorothy Bonser, the treasurer of the group. Standing on the right and watching is Jill Armer their fundraising coordinator.

Preston Circle made a Bursary Award presentation to a former altar server of St. Clare's, Isaac. The presentation of the award was performed by the Trustee/ Secretary of the Fund, Terence Donnelly, who is also a member of the Circle. Isaac had applied for an award from the Fund to help his individual project in taking part in a challenging and cultural project between Stonyhurst College and St. Ignatius' college in Sydney, Australia

for a nine - month period. This will involve teaching in the junior school on a full-time basis both in the academic and sporting activities offered by the college in Sydney. Terence suggested to Isaac that with the help of his supportive parents and the Bursary Fund he was being given the opportunity to go where he wouldn't normally be able to go and to do what he wouldn't normally do and in that way he would find out what he was truly capable of doing. Everyone gave their best wishes to Isaac as he set out to carpe diem (*seize the day*) or in the words from Stonyhurst Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

The Catenian Bursary Fund receives its donations from money raised by the members of the Association and it supports young Catholics between the ages of 16 and 25 who wish to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes or who wish to help others, like Isaac, to make a difference in our world.

Catenians meet monthly to enjoy each other's company and support one another through faith, friendship and family life. Visit thecatenians.com for more information or email Robert Thompson at candr.thompson@btinternet.com

Catenians Helping Others



Bro Terence Donnelly, Isaac, Fr. Stephen Sheffield. And Bro. President Barry Clayton at St. Clare's Fulwood. (Right) Bro. Terence presenting the Bursary Award to Isaac in front of the new Bursary Banner in the narthex of St. Clare's Church, Fulwood.



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Catenian Mike O'Malley Celebration

The presentation of a scroll to acknowledge his fifty years in the Catenian Association was done in an unconventional way recently. Normally the National President would talk about the recipient before handing over the scroll but in the case of Past Grand President (PGP) Mike O'Malley of Lytham St Annes (LSA) Circle the accolades were given by his two fellow PGPs Tony Godden and David Rowley also of LSA Circle prior to the presentation.

Mike joined the Oldham Circle whilst a practising GP and took on various roles at a local and provincial level before being elected to the governing body of the Association and ultimately became Grand President. In his retirement he and Anne-Marie moved to St Peter's parish, Lytham where he again has taken on various roles and is currently Provincial President. Mike's life has been one of service to the Church, to Medicine and the Catenian Association combined with love and support for his family.

Christmas Mass Times

St Annes-on-the-Sea
Our Lady Star of the Sea

Christmas Eve:
4.00pm Mass (Family Mass)
8.00 p.m.

Christmas Day
9.30am Family Morning Mass
of Christmas
11.00am Family Morning Mass
of Christmas

Preston
The Parish of
St. John XXIII

Christmas Eve
4.00pm English Martyrs

6.00pm St Joseph

Christmas Day
at St. Joseph's Church Christmas
morning Mass at 10am

St. Joseph's Ansdell
and St Peter's, Lytham

Christmas Eve Sunday 24th December
6.00pm St Joseph's
- Children's Mass
of Christmas
8.00pm St Peter's
- Candlelit Mass of Christmas with
Carols and Readings from 7.30pm

Christmas Day Monday 25th December
9.15am St Joseph's
- Morning Mass of Christmas
10.30am St Peter's
- Morning Mass of Christmas

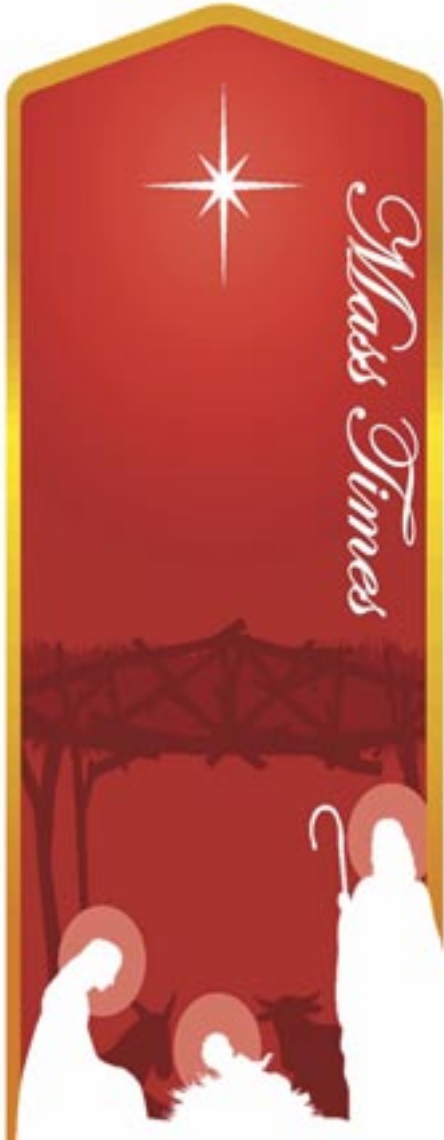
Preston,
St Clare's

Sunday 24th December
6pm: First Mass of Christmas
11:30pm: Carols & Midnight Mass

Monday 25th December
The Nativity of the Lord
Mass at 10am

Tuesday 26th December
St Stephen Mass at 10am
(Mass for altar servers)

*Wishing all the Catholic Voice of
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