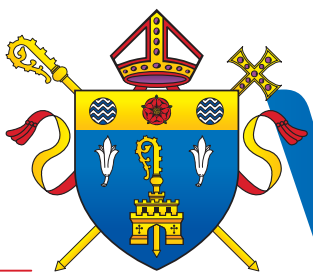


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VOICE

of Lancaster



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

Issue 365 + December '24

INSIDE:

pg2 Ladyewell Pilgrimage
pg8 New Priest for the
Diocese of Lancaster



“

**This Christmas let us ask
Mary, Mother of Jesus and
our Mother, to help us see
in our neighbour the face
of Jesus, God made man**

Pope Francis

”

“

**Only if people change
will the world change,
and in order to change,
people need the light that
comes from God, the light
which so unexpectedly (on
the night of Christmas)
entered into our night**

”

Pope Benedict XVI

Peace on Earth & Goodwill to All Men

“

**Only if in the face of hatred and anger of the world we must bring
the gentleness and the smile of the Infant Jesus of Bethlehem.
In face of the pride of the world we must bring the littleness
and powerlessness of the tiny newborn baby in the crib**

”

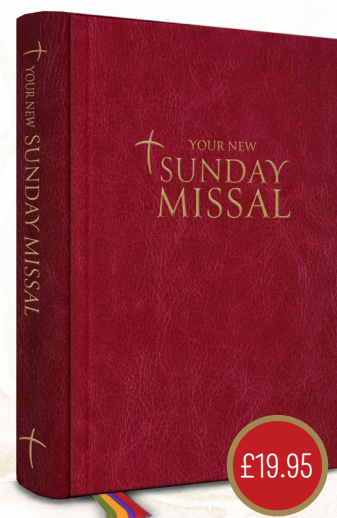
Little Sister Magdeleine

POPE JOHN XXIII'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER

*O sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we
may share with all our hearts in this profound
mystery of Christmas. Put into the hearts of
men and women this peace for which they
sometimes seek so desperately and which you
alone can give to them.*

*Help them to know one another better, and
to live as brothers and sisters, children of the
same Father. Reveal to them also your beauty,
holiness and purity.*

*Awaken in their hearts love and gratitude for
your infinite goodness. Join them all together
in your love. And give us your heaven. Amen.*



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20 adults and young people were confirmed by Bishop Paul in October at St Mary's, Egremont. Thank you to the parishioners at St Mary's who made us all feel very welcome and produced an amazing spread for us to enjoy afterwards. *Veni Sancte Spiritus!*



On Sunday 13th October, the parish of Our Lady & St Edward in Fulwood, Preston held special celebrations to mark the feast of St Edward. In addition to the usual Sunday Masses, an extra Mass at 12 noon saw the whole community come together.

Thanks to the hard work of our Headteacher and staff team, children from our primary school joined in with

Mass as well as having contributed to the decorations in church. They were joined by representatives from our Scout Group - 8th Fulwood (Our Lady & St Edward), as well as parishioners from our linked parish of St Mary's (Newhouse).

After Mass, we enjoyed a Jacob's join in the parish centre, which included songs performed by the primary school...there was even dancing involved too!



On Saturday 21st September, 2024 people from around the Diocese including many altar servers gathered with Bishop Paul for the Annual Pilgrimage to Ladyewell.

Holy Mass took place in St. Mary's, Fernyhalgh, which had been especially decorated for the occasion. A Blessed Sacrament procession to Ladyewell followed and included Benediction.

A number of diocesan priests, deacons and religious sisters took part and children strew petals and rang bells in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Scouts from 8th Fulwood Scout Group (Our Lady and St. Edward's, Preston) prepared a superb barbeque for the Altar Servers after the ceremonies and it was a great opportunity for altar servers from across the Diocese to meet socially.



Time to say Goodbye!



When Bishop O'Donoghue and Mgr. Mulvany persuaded, (*is that a strong enough word?*), me to accept the commission of Editor of the *Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, (or, simply the *Voice*, as it was then known as in 2006), it was a daunting prospect. The publication in those days was only 12 pages but the production costs were a drain on central diocesan funds running to well over £10,000 annually and growing year on year.

The *Catholic Voice* is now a bigger publication of 16 pages and well supported by advertisers so there is now only a very small marginal cost, (less than £5,000 pa), to the Diocese ensuring that each month the Paper continues to land in every parish from West Cumbria to Fleetwood.

After 18 years I feel the time is right to hand over the reins. With, the approval of Bishop Paul, a new Editorial team has been appointed and they will take over from me from the first Sunday in Advent. I will not rain on their parade by announcing their names here, I will let them introduce themselves in the next edition, February 2025, so make sure you pick up your copy then. All I will say is that I am grateful to each of them for volunteering to maintain the publication of the *Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, I am sure the new team will take the Paper from strength to strength.

Over the years, as Editor, I have been supported by lots of people, too many to name individually, who have served on the Editorial team as assistant editors, proof readers, ecclesiastical advisors, guest writers, Deanery Centre drop off points and volunteer drivers. I owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. All have provided stalwart service.

To Rob Hotchkiss, Graphic Designer, who has been on this journey, almost throughout the whole time, thank you for staying the course and coming up with the goods, sometimes at short notice as I have had a last-minute change of mind on editorial content or emphasis. And, to our Publisher CathCom, who source all the advertising, arrange printing and distribution to our Deanery Centres thank you. The fact that we have such an economic and smooth-running system is because we have such a solid backroom operation. Finally, to you, the readers of our Diocesan Publication thank you for your support and regular contributions, (*please keep them coming for the new team, send them to voicenews@hotmail.co.uk*), without your input there wouldn't be any news to publish!

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve the Diocese in this special role of Editor of the *Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, I know that I will miss it!

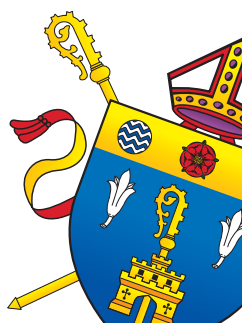
God Bless, Edwina Gillett, Editor

“

*For everything
there is a
season, and a
time for every
matter under
heaven*

”

Ecclesiastes 2:1



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Jack Regan provides an update on the happenings at Castlerigg:

As I write, it's the day after Storm Ashley and amazingly we seem to have survived unscathed. Obviously, all of the trees in our garden that were going to come down, already have!

We are now much closer to Christmas than the summer. Keswick is very wet, but it's still lovely being in the Lakes and we're having an amazing time at Castlerigg. What's more, we're even getting more team members. It turns out, prayer works!

Just recently, we had a quick look at some of the feedback we've been getting lately. At the time of writing, 100% of the schools who have submitted evaluations since the summer have rated us as 'good' or 'excellent,' which is amazing news.

Here are some of their comments:

"The team were very attentive and welcoming"

"We liked having a chance for the young people to be gathered together and focus on their faith journey, away from the distractions of their everyday life."

"Everything was well planned and engaging."

"All the staff were amazing."

"The team were the best to date."

What else is there to report..?

Open Weekends and Quiet Retreats // A New Venture

This year, we are starting an exciting new initiative aimed at adults and families. Sometimes, when we have a free weekend, we will open it up as either a 'quiet weekend' or a 'family weekend.' Quiet weekends are there for individual adults who want to have a reflective, peaceful weekend in the Lakes. A single room and breakfast is provided.

Open weekends are similar, but not as quiet! They're also open to families and if we get enough people, we'll put on a quiz in the evening too! These weekends open up with about 6 weeks notice, so keep an eye on our website and social media.

Would You Like to Join the Team?

Don't forget that, we are always looking for young Christians (usually aged 18-22)

to join our Youth Ministry Internship Scheme. It's a great chance to get some brilliant training, qualifications, and experiences.

We now operate a rolling recruitment system for interns (formerly called Gap Year volunteers) which means that suitable people can start at various different points in the year.

We are also looking for a paid Programme Leader to join our leadership team. Ideally someone with some relevant experience.

For more information contact jack@castleriggmanor.co.uk or check out our website – castleriggmanor.com - or out Instagram channels [@castleriggmanor](https://www.instagram.com/castleriggmanor) and [@team_castlerigg](https://www.instagram.com/team_castlerigg)

What's Coming Up?

Advent Retreat // Dec 13-15
// Bookings now open!



Creative Youth Ministry Activities: Sparking Engagement and Faith

When it comes to dealing with today's youth, creativity is not just an option; it's a necessity. Engaging teens requires activities that are not only spiritually enriching but also captivating and relevant. Creative youth ministry activities can be the bridge that connects young people to their faith in a way that is both meaningful and enjoyable. This article aims to give a few examples and tips:

One innovative approach is to utilize interactive storytelling. This could involve re-enacting biblical stories or contemporary faith-based scenarios. By participating in these narratives, young people can explore biblical themes and moral lessons in a hands-on manner. This method not only makes the stories more relatable but also encourages active participation and deeper understanding. Another powerful tool is the use of arts and multimedia. Organizing workshops where youth can express their faith through painting, music, drama, or dance offers an outlet for creative expression. Similarly, digital projects like creating faith-based videos, podcasts, or blogs can engage tech-savvy young people. These activities not only nurture their artistic talents but also allow them to explore and express their faith in diverse ways.

Outdoor adventures and nature-based activities can also be highly impactful. Organizing camping trips, hikes, or eco-friendly projects can teach young people about stewardship of the earth, a concept deeply rooted in Christian teachings. These activities also offer a break from the digital world, allowing for reflection and connection in the tranquility of nature. Service and mission projects are another cornerstone of creative youth ministry. Engaging youth in community service, whether through local outreach programs or international mission trips, instills a sense of responsibility and compassion. These experiences can be life-changing, providing

a first hand insight into the practical application of Christian values like service, love, and empathy.

Social and cultural nights can celebrate diversity within the faith community. Events like international food nights, cultural exchange evenings, or discussions on global Christianity can broaden young people's perspectives and foster a sense of global unity and understanding within the faith. Game nights and faith-based scavenger hunts can also be effective, especially for younger youth. These fun activities can incorporate elements of faith and scripture in an engaging way, making learning about faith an enjoyable experience.

Discussion groups and faith forums offer a platform for young people to delve into deeper topics. Facilitating discussions on contemporary issues, faith challenges, and moral dilemmas can help in developing critical thinking and a deeper understanding of their faith in the context of the modern world. Finally, retreats and spiritual workshops offer a space for reflection and spiritual growth. Activities during these retreats can range from silent meditation and prayer to group discussions and workshops on spiritual themes. These events can be pivotal moments in a young person's faith journey, providing a respite for spiritual renewal and deeper connection with God.

In conclusion, creative youth ministry activities are essential in engaging and nurturing the faith of young people. By offering a variety of activities that cater to different interests and learning styles, the church can create a dynamic and inclusive environment where young people feel valued, engaged, and spiritually enriched. Through these creative endeavors, youth ministry can become a vibrant and life-changing part of young people's journey of faith.

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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A Pilgrimage with a Difference



by Fr Philip Newbold

A priest is to offer prayer and praise to God and to intercede for the people and to administer the Sacraments. A priest dispenses the mercy, the forgiveness and the gentleness of Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He is to continue the work of Christ in the Church. — Fr Philip

A number of readers may be acquainted with my name through previous articles I’ve written for the *Catholic Voice*. Firstly, a little background. I am a retired priest living in Freckleton and occasionally I supply in local parishes. My thanks to Bishop Paul Swarbrick for allowing me to administer the Sacraments and say public Masses in the Diocese of Lancaster. This year I engaged in a pilgrimage to Lourdes with a difference and I would like to share the experience with you.

Earlier in the year I had applied to be a chaplain to English speaking pilgrims for a period of two weeks. The application had to be made to the Coordinator of the English-Speaking Chaplains and also a check would be made concerning my DBS (Safeguarding) being current and my Safeguarding and Child Protection courses were valid and up to date.

So, my role as a Chaplain involved being available at the Shrine as a Confessor, to celebrate Mass for the English-speaking Pilgrims and on occasion, to lead prayers in English and Latin at the Torchlight procession. There was yet another difference. I decided to travel by train to Lourdes, something I had not done since the 1980s – but how travel by train has improved! Also, this year, 2024, was something of a family anniversary as it was 90 years since my mother’s first pilgrimage to Lourdes with Diocese of Westminster in September 1934.

I had chance to visit Notre Dame Cathedral which is still undergoing repair and will not reopen until December 8th. Nevertheless, outside on a very tall pedestal was a replica of the 14th century statue of Our Lady of Paris.

Around the work compound hoardings there were a series of black and white beautifully executed photographs of all the men and women who have been involved in the restoration work. Some of the photographs show the sculptors, carpenters, stone masons, electricians, lift operators, scaffold workers, stained glass window cleaners and restorers to name some. These men and women shown on this page are immensely gifted people who, with the aid of their tools and technology have rendered beauty and marvel once more to Notre Dame Cathedral. We praise God for such gifts and talents he has given to men and women.

... continued on pg 14 >>



Bring true Christmas joy



Christmas can be a lonely and tough time of year for seafarers. But you can bring true Christmas joy.

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Stella Maris brings true Christmas joy to seafarers and fishers

Imagine seafarers and fishers, working at sea on Christmas day, thousands of miles from home.

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“Seafarers can find it tough, no matter how long they’ve been at sea. It’s common to hear that a seafarer has not had Christmas at home for four or five years, or even longer,” says Charles Stuart, Stella Maris Regional Port Chaplain for Southampton and Southern Ports.

Throughout December, Charles, as well as other Stella Maris chaplains and their teams of volunteers all over the United Kingdom, will be visiting dozens of ships in ports across the country. They will take with them Christmas presents to give to seafarers and fishers they meet, who will be at sea on Christmas Day. These can be simple gifts like woolly hats, socks, phone cards, and chocolate. Sometimes, Stella Maris chaplains bring seafarers to Mass when their ship is berthed in port. “Some manage to attend but not many. We will help with lifts where we can,” says Charles.

Seafarers often improvise Christmas decorations on board their ship, and Charles has seen Christmas trees made from plastic water bottles. “The cook will prepare a special meal, and the shipping company may give an

extra allowance for this. People of all faiths will come together to celebrate a feast day. Some that have time and can afford it will buy festive food and drink from the supermarket. Our gifts add sparkle to the table and offer a link to the world from which seafarers and fishers are so often isolated, and they will remember us for this. One ship master told us we seem to be the only ones who care. I also heard from another master of a tanker who told me his company offered only a chocolate bar for each crew member. He said he had them in his cabin, but he was too embarrassed to give them out. It’s hardly believable,” said Charles.

Charles explains that Stella Maris in Southampton and Southern Ports run a Christmas appeal with all the local parishes and some schools, and the response is marvellous. “People organise well in advance and are very generous. Without this support we would struggle to contribute,” he says. Charles says that because ships are often out of sight, many people are unaware of how important seafarers are to their daily lives. “People know there is a port, but they cannot see the detail the work seafarers do or appreciate the lives of seafarers. We work to make the public more aware.”

If readers would like to find out about 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 their families at this special time of the year.



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*Come Holy Spirit and fill their minds with your Wisdom
Their mouths with your Words
Their hearts with your Love
And their souls with your Grace
So that they hear your Voice and do your Will
Amen*



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Centenary Prayer

God our Father, we thank you for all the graces and blessings You have bestowed on our Diocese since its foundation one hundred years ago on ground made fertile by the blood of the martyrs.

Nourished by your Son, Jesus Christ, in Word and Sacraments, and led by your Holy Spirit, may we move forward with hope and trust, helping future generations to discover the “pearl of great price” which will bring them eternal life. And when time shall be no more, may our Diocese rejoice as the “mother of countless children,” and be given her place in heavenly glory.

This we ask of you who live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen*

*Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.
St. Cuthbert, pray for us.
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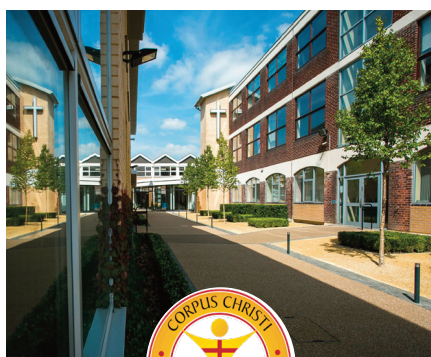
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Congratulations Fr Simon Marley Newly Ordained to the Priesthood



Lancaster Diocese's newest priest has one message for any man mulling over the priesthood – “reach out to the Diocese”.

“We need priests; young men or older men,” said Father Simon Marley after his first mass at St Peter’s Cathedral, Lancaster.

“It is never too late,” added Fr Simon, who was ordained on 19 October by Bishop Paul Swarbrick in the cathedral where he had been based as a Transitional Deacon.

Fr Simon, 59, was speaking from lived experience as he was close to entering the seminary when he was younger. He did not follow through and enjoyed a successful career in accountancy.

However latterly, his life as an accountant did not add up and he became increasingly disenchanted with the world of money – the embers of his vocation were rekindled.

“It never really left and I lived the life of a faithful Catholic,” said Fr Simon.

“I just want to serve the people and show them the Love of Jesus Christ,” he added.

Nobody was prouder of him on his ordination day in the cathedral than his parents Rev Deacon Paul and Sylvia.

Rev Paul Marley was the cathedral’s first Permanent Deacon in the 1990s while his wife played the organ at the cathedral.



“We were absolutely overwhelmed that one of our four sons was being ordained a priest,” said Deacon Paul.

“My wife and I felt such an incredible grace as he was being ordained,” he added. “My father, who was very devout, was the first extraordinary minister of the eucharistic in his parish, I was called to be a deacon and now my eldest son is a priest – why did the Lord choose our family?”

Deacon Paul moved to Blackpool in the mid ‘90s buying his former family home and is serving as Deacon for St Cuthbert’s, now part of the parish of the Guardian Angels.

A group of parishioners from the Fylde

“It is never too late, reach out to the Diocese, we need priests; young men or older men.”

” Fr Simon Marley

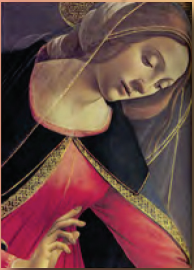
coast took a coach trip to support their local man.

Manchester-born Fr Simon is believed to be the fifth priest from the resort since 1972 following Canon Alf Hayes, the late Fr David Elder, Fr Jim Allen and Fr Robert Billing. His first appointment will be as assistant priest at Holy Trinity & St George, Kendal.





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Photographs courtesy of
Mike March Pilgrim Photography.

Adoramus 2024 Fraternity to Heal the World

Adoramus 2024 was held at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham, in September. It was attended by pilgrims from all the Dioceses in England and Wales. The Diocese of Lancaster was represented by over 30 pilgrims from many of our Parishes.

The theme of the 53rd Eucharistic Congress was 'Fraternity to heal the World' An Icon, commissioned from an Ethiopian Artist, Mulugeta Araya for the Holy Year 2025 was on display. The Icon was blessed by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, prior to the Opening Mass.

For Lancaster attendees it was an early start as the coach left Workington at 4am! Further pickups from a dark and drizzly Carlisle and a dark secluded area of Lancaster where Bishop Paul Swarbrick joined the coach. And, finally a post sunrise pickup in Preston.

The coach arrived in Oscott shortly after 10am where Vice Rector Fr Andrew Allman greeted some tired travellers.

It was an eventful day, including a series of talks, Holy Mass led by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Eucharistic adoration and a procession around the stunning seminary grounds with over 2000 pilgrims.

Some Lancaster pilgrims share their reflections of the day:

"The day at St Mary's college, Oscott for the Adoramus National Eucharistic pilgrimage and congress was a memorable occasion for me. The Holy Spirit was tangible in the welcome from the young seminarians, the keynote speakers, the Mass celebrated with Cardinal Vincent Nichols in the marquee. The college with its beautiful chapel and museum echoing the adoration and joyful

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history of the faithful students past and present. The adoration and procession of the Eucharist was a display of true faith, and love was certainly in the air that day” – Maureen

Marta said “When I heard about the Eucharistic Congress I immediately thought I must go, and here I am! It was truly amazing to be there with so many people of the same faith and belief. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend. It’s not that I didn’t know what I heard during the congress, but we all need to hear it again and again to carry it with us wherever we go, bringing Jesus to those who don’t know that true peace and life are found in him. In the everyday disturbances of our life, it is so easy to get distracted. I also learned a few things, one of which is now on my mind, sacrifice isn’t about giving up, it’s about giving. I must listen to that conference again. I really felt the presence of God there, and when we left, I felt hungry for more! I know it wasn’t just me! It was my

mini pilgrimage/retreat, and I would recommend it to everyone”.

“After being in the UK for one year, I desired to integrate myself in to the universal Church here. Adoremus was a good chance for me to unite myself with other churches and parishioners. I had joined Cebu Eucharistic congress in 2016 which has given me so much grace so I desired once again to adore my Lord Jesus together with other parishioners. I am so blessed to meet friendly parishioners from St Clare’s, Preston, and hope I have made more and can be part of a spiritual community and family. A pilgrimage is always the best event for me to root myself in a stronger faith” – Kiko

Sadly, the day had to end and as the coach headed back north Canon Luiz Ruscillo led the Rosary (the Mysteries of Light). The pilgrims were tired but content after such a long day.

Helen Mackay, Carlisle

The Catholic VOICE

would like to hear from you!

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Jewish Living Experience Exhibition

- hosted by St Benedict's High School, Cumbria

St Benedict's school has recently played host to the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition, which has been enjoyed by students and staff as well as some special guests.

The exhibition helps to educate non-Jews about the Jewish way of life and enables students to gain an insight into Judaism as a living faith. Designed by education experts, it covered areas including the Jewish calendar and festivals, lifecycle events and diversity within the community both ideologically and geographically.

There was a special preview evening which was attended by St Benedict's staff and invited guests including the High Sheriff of Cumbria, Christopher Holmes; Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, David Allen; Mayor of Whitehaven, Cllr

Graham Roberts; Imam Rashid, Carlisle Imam; Aftab Kham, AWAZ and Laura Goad, Director of Cumbria Development Education Centre.

"Community events, such as this Jewish Living Experience exhibition, that develop religious literacy and understanding, are vital, it is through knowledge and education that we develop a greater understanding of different faiths, cultures and ways of life."

— Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, David Allen

Leading the exhibition was Rabbi Adam Zagoria-Moffet, who introduced students to the various festival and holidays within the Jewish calendar, and also explained the diverse groups within the Jewish

community. He commented: "Community visits like this are very important. Many of these students will never had met a Jewish person, but they are studying it in their RE lessons. It is a way of bringing something they are studying to life, and helping them to understand more about different cultures."

The students were privileged to listen to a testimony of Holocaust survival from second-generation survivors; Peter and Moira Hart told students about the experiences of Peter's mother, Kitty. Hearing such testimony allowed the students the opportunity to put a human face to one of the darkest periods of world history.

Miss Coan, History teacher at St Benedict's said: "The students impressed Peter and Moira with their thoughtful and

insightful questions, and they expressed their profound gratitude to our guests for coming to our school and telling Kitty's story. I would like to thank all our guests for spending the time with our students and staff and we look forward to welcoming them back to St Benedict's in the future."

Moira & Peter Hart commented that: "We believe that telling Kitty's extraordinary story of survival, and educating young people is one of the most powerful ways to combat anti-semitism. Focusing on what happened to an individual when hatred got out of control is a compelling way to illustrate why we need to develop tolerance and empathy."

We were delighted to be welcomed into St Benedict's school, and appreciate the dedications and commitment of all the staff. We have been so impressed by the



quality of the students' questions and their response to and interest in the Holocaust."

Headteacher of St Benedict's School, Emma Jackson, said: "Developing an understanding and respect for all cultures within our school, community and beyond is a priority and we were honoured to host this event."

Over 400 of our students visited the exhibition which offered them the opportunity to learn about Jewish beliefs, customs, and practices." Their interest and enthusiasm was evidenced by their engagement and their many questions."

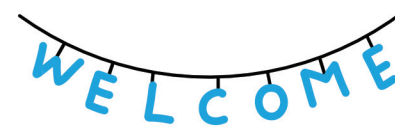
Abigail Mann, who organised the exhibition, said: "The importance of this exhibition feels more poignant these days than ever before, as we find ourselves in a

world where we are increasingly seeing the lessons of the past being forgotten, in an environment where hate, intolerance and mistrust are once again on the rise.

"It has never been more important that as many young people as possible have the opportunity to partake in the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition, which shows them that Jewish people, of whom many pupils would never have met before in Cumbria, are ordinary people just like them.

"By taking this exhibition into a school, we are able to provide staff and pupils the opportunity to learn about Judaism from a Rabbi and to hear first and second-hand accounts of Holocaust survivors which has a far greater impact on young people than reading about them in a book."

Lucy Hardy, Press Officer
St Benedict's High School



BEBCMAT Welcomes Three New Schools

On 1st November we welcomed into the Trust The Willows, Kirkham; Holy Family Warton and St Joseph's, Wesham. As our Trust continues to expand, we are seeking dedicated and passionate individuals to join our team of governors across a range of our schools. This is a unique opportunity to make a significant impact on the education and future of our students.

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Arriving in Lourdes I made my way to the Chaplaincy. This houses the priests who come to Lourdes on a permanent and temporary basis, which would number 40-50 priests. I was met by Fr Martins, the English-speaking chaplain coordinator and I was allotted ensuite accommodation. The house is named after Fr Bertrand – Marie Pomian who was the assistant priest in Lourdes at the time of the Apparitions. He later became Confessor to Bernadette.

Next day I went to the Chapel of Reconciliation and found my allotted confessional cubicle. Penitents had a separate cubicle and confessor and penitent saw and heard each other through a glass panel which was smaller than the partition. Most days there were four English speaking priests at their confessional booths.

The daily routine for Confession was from 9.00am to 11.00am and from 3.30pm to 6.00pm. Mass was celebrated at 11.00am in the chapel of SS Cosmas and Damian for the English speaking which most days numbered 250 plus.

Each of us took it in turns to be principal celebrant and preach. On Fridays after Mass the Sacrament of the Sick was administered. On Saturday evening there was a Vigil Mass and then Sunday Mass at 11.00am. Lunch at 12.30pm was preceded on Sunday by aperitifs. After lunch there was a welcome “Siesta”. There was a time for relaxation after 6.00pm before supper.

Why did I undertake this?

A priest is to offer prayer and praise to God and to intercede for the people and to administer the Sacraments. A priest dispenses the mercy, the forgiveness and the gentleness of Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He is to continue the work of Christ in the Church. Indeed, it is a great privilege and a joy to have been called to such a life. A life with Jesus the Christ is a fulfilling and happy life.

Another noticeable feature is the globalisation of the Shrine. Former decades saw Lourdes as a Eurocentric place. So many, in Europe now no longer believe or practise any faith. Hence the pilgrim map has been redrawn. Among the English-speaking pilgrims were peoples from the United States which included hundreds of Philippino émigrés, pilgrims from Kerala, India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Borneo, Africa, Singapore, Hong Kong as well as Ireland and Scotland. In September there are very few British.

A further effect on me was the number of penitents. Even with four priests in the Confessionals, there was a continual number of people waiting during each session. We may recall scenes from the Gospel when the people clamoured to meet and to be uplifted and healed by Jesus. So, all of these humble people

... Even with four priests in the Confessionals, there was a continual number of people waiting during each session ...



waited patiently to meet Christ the healer, the one who forgives, the one who is so merciful and who accepts each broken individual in their need, their sorrow and their frailty.

I noticed that at the beginning of a penitent's Confession many a heavy heart and flowing tears but these turned to joy and a smile when the priest acting as Christ pronounced the words of forgiveness. There was sometimes a touch of humour on both sides as the penitent left the Confessional.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an excellent way to review our journey of discipleship. What it is on my journey that inhibits me from growing in love of God and others? Why do I keep repeating the same sins time after time? Why do I stay away from the Sacrament when Jesus the Christ, through the priest, calls me to himself to heal and to express once again his immense love for me.

My 13 days as a chaplain were all too soon at an end and it was time to say farewell to the wonderful priests I'd met and bid farewell at the Grotto and to thank God for giving me this opportunity for grace and growth in my spiritual life on my own journey as a disciple of Jesus.

A Pilgrimage with a Difference

>> continued from pg 6



... my role as a Chaplain involved being available at the Shrine as a Confessor, to celebrate Mass for the English-speaking Pilgrims and on occasion, to lead prayers in English and Latin at the Torchlight procession ...

Fr Philip

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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,
St Clare's**

Tuesday 24th December
6pm: First Mass of Christmas
11:30pm: Carols & Midnight Mass
Wednesday 25th December
The Nativity of the Lord
Mass at 10am
Thursday 26th December
St Stephen Mass at 10am
(Mass for altar servers)

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

**Christmas Eve Tuesday 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 Wednesday 25th
December**
9.15am St Joseph's
- Morning Mass of Christmas
10.30am St Peter's
- Morning Mass of Christmas

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