

The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 371 + July '25

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National Altar
Servers Mass at
Lancaster Cathedral



Bishop Paul Swarbrick presents the
Bene Merenti Award to Edwina Gillett at a
special mass & presentation celebration
at St Peter's Cathedral, Lancaster.

Congratulations Edwina!

"Well done good and faithful servant!"
Matthew 25:21



The prestigious Bene Merenti Medal has been awarded to
Edwina Gillett by Pope Francis for her outstanding service
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highest honours in the Catholic Church.

Full story and pictures pages 8 & 9 >

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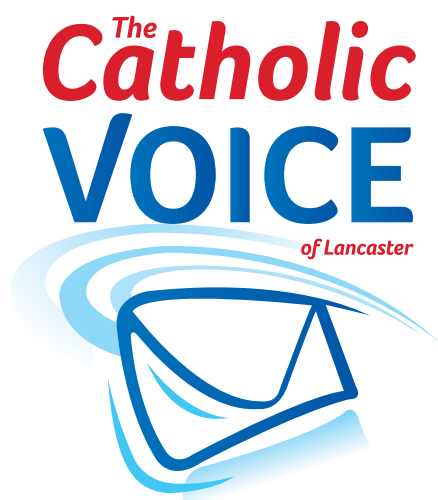
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Feather & Flame

St Mary's Pupils celebrate on The Mount Fleetwood.



Catherine Sewell, Class Teacher/RE Lead, St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Fleetwood celebrates the gifts & joy of the Holy Spirit with pupils – “We had a lovely day hosting our first Feathers and Flames Festival. The whole school joined in and it was an event to remember!”

Feathers & Flames Festival

On Thursday 5th June, we held our very first Feathers and Flames Festival to celebrate two significant events in the Christian calendar: The Ascension and Pentecost. The Mini Vinnies beautifully led liturgies for both feasts, helping us enter into the spirit of these special moments before we continued with our own class reflections and activities.

Ascension

To celebrate the Ascension of Jesus, we began with a thoughtful liturgy led by the Mini Vinnies. After this, we released balloons carrying our personal messages – a symbolic reminder that Jesus has

returned to His Father in Heaven, yet remains with us always. Next, we played “Jesus Hide and Seek,” where each child received their own small Jesus figurine to keep.

This activity helped us remember that even though we cannot see Jesus in the same way, He is still with us every day. We ended our celebration by taking a special photo to answer the question: “Where is God?” The children’s beautiful responses included: in the sky, in my friends, in my heart, and in nature.

Pentecost

In the afternoon, we celebrated Pentecost

– often referred to as the birthday of the Church. We started with a joyful liturgy, then created handmade birthday cards, which we took to church for parishioners to enjoy.

We were delighted to meet Fr Stephen, to whom we presented a birthday gift – generous donations collected from our families. Back at school, we finished the day with a mini birthday party to celebrate this joyous occasion.

Come Holy Spirit

Fill Our Hearts With Your Divine Will!

*Catherine Sewell, Class Teacher/RE Lead
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School*

First Holy Communion celebrations in Cumbria

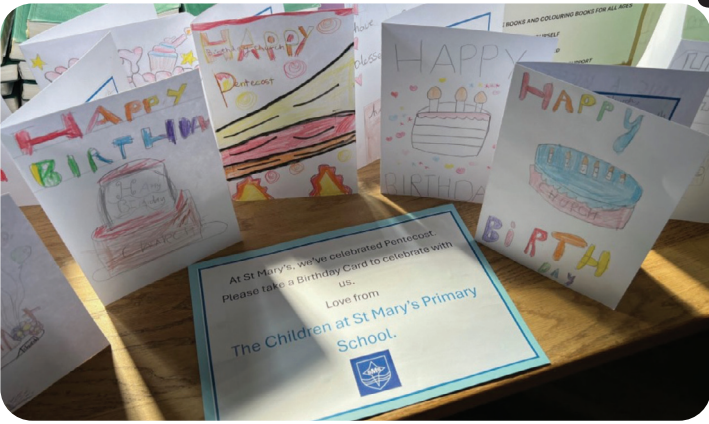


Pupils in the Parish of Christ the Good Shepherd have made their Holy Communion at Our Lady & St Michael Church, Workington, Cumbria. Father Philip Conner, parish priest shared the joy:

“Congratulations to the 22 children who made their First Holy Communion together today. The heavens poured down their blessings today upon these children. Our thanks to their parents, teachers and catechists who prepared them for this day.”



Festival Joy



Father Stephen Talbutt receives birthday cards made by the pupils at The Feather & Flame Festival.



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Star Worthington, Altar Server representing the Sacred Heart Church Blackpool, Bishop Paul Swarbrick and Paul Briers, President of St Stephen's Guild.

(Photos left) Bishop Paul Swarbrick meets and greets Altar Servers from parishes all over the Diocese and the UK.



National Altar Servers Mass celebrated at Lancaster Cathedral

On Saturday 17th May, 2025 the National Altar Servers Mass took place at Lancaster Cathedral.

Two hundred altar servers attended from all parts of our Diocese and servers also attended from Leeds Diocese, Liverpool Diocese, Salford Diocese and Westminster Diocese.

They were also joined in the Cathedral by family members and friends.

Prior to Mass, all were welcomed to the Cathedral by Fr. John Millar, Cathedral Dean. The Bishop of Lancaster celebrated Holy Mass, with many other Priests and

Deacons in attendance. Thirty altar servers from our Diocese served at the Mass.

The Mass was also attended by the Fr. Dennis Touw, National Director of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen and Mr. Paul Briers, Honorary National President of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen.

Damian Howard, Director of Music at the Cathedral and the magnificent Oswald Singers provided music for the Mass.

Information was also displayed about the Saints and Martyrs of the Diocese and

one of the Souvenir cards given out at the end related to, Living the Communion of Saints featuring reflections prepared by Fr Philip Conner.

It was an incredible day filled with joy and celebration as so many young people embraced their roles as Altar Servers in parishes across the UK. It is encouraging and inspirational to see so many enthusiastic young people join together and continue the great legacy of St Stephen in and around our Catholic communities today.

Well done to all our Altar Servers and all in the St Stephen's Guild for your

continued service in building our Catholic faith through your dedication, time, good works and efforts in your parish.

Thank you to all who travelled to Lancaster Cathedral and took part to make this a very memorable day for the Diocese.

Refreshments were provided for all following Mass and a great atmosphere of friendships and convivial conversation enjoyed by all.

Ian Mullholland, Director of The Lancaster Diocese branch of the Guild of St Stephen

Photos courtesy of Paul Woodhouse, Press Officer, Guild of St Stephen and Pearl Mina.



Bishop Paul Swarbrick with pilgrims praying outside Lancaster Castle.



During the period 1584-1646 fifteen Catholics were executed in Lancaster for their faith. The law at this time made it illegal to convert or be converted to Catholicism, to say or hear Mass or to help or conceal the presence of a priest. To be a priest ordained abroad was classed as treason.

+++

We remember them in our prayers. They were:

Blessed James Bell (d 1584)
Blessed John Finch (d 1584)
Blessed Robert Nutter (1557-1600)
Blessed Edward Thwing (1565-1600)
Blessed Thurston Hunt (1555-1601)
Blessed Robert Middleton (1571-1601)
Venerable Lawrence Bailey (d. 1604)
Blessed John Thules (1568-1616)
Blessed Roger Wrenno (1578-1616)
St Fr Edmund Arrowsmith (1585-1628)
Blessed Richard Hurst (d 1628)
Saint Ambrose Barlow (1585-1641)
Blessed Edward Bamber (1600-1646)
Blessed John Woodcock (1603-1646)
Blessed Thomas Whittaker (1611-1646)



Fr John Millar, Dean of Lancaster Cathedral reflects on the recent Walk of The Lancaster Martyrs and how precious the Catholic faith was to the courageous martyrs, who gave their lives because of their faith.



Almighty, ever living God, by whose gift the Lancaster Martyrs fought for righteousness's sake, even into death, grant that through their intercession, that we may bear every adversity for the sake of your love, and hasten with all our strength, towards you, who alone are life. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

During the 16th and 17th centuries 15 men were killed for the profession of the Catholic faith in the city of Lancaster, two of whom are saints and 13 beatified. They were imprisoned in Lancaster Castle before being led to the moor, behind where our cathedral now stands, to be executed."

Our pilgrims heard from an account of the life of one of the Lancaster Martyrs, St Edmund Arrowsmith, before invoking the martyrs' prayers. We concluded with Mass in the cathedral."

"In June, Bishop Paul Swarbrick led a group of pilgrims on a Walk of the Lancaster Martyrs, as part of the Diocesan Centenary themed prayer & pilgrimage community events."

The pilgrimage group prayerfully followed in the footsteps of the Lancaster Martyrs, on a 1.5 mile walk and extremely steep hills along the Martyrs route to Lancaster Castle and the Martyrs Memorial on the moor."

O God, our Father, who has made the blood of the Martyrs the seed of the church in this City of Lancaster, by so great a cloud of witnesses, Keep us strong in our faith, that we may share in the joys of their sacrifice. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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By Claire Colleran, Education Outreach Officer at Missio



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One of Ours

What a wonderful time we had at the first Mission Together Mass in Lancaster Diocese!

Pupils and staff from local Catholic schools gathered at Sacred Heart Parish, Preston to pray, play and learn about an inspiring Preston-born priest, whose charitable efforts have helped thousands of people around the world for over a century.

Canon Paul Embery VG and Fr Sam Ofia MSP led the liturgy, along with Deacon Chris Barwise. Scripture and prayers were delivered by pupils from Blessed Sacrament Primary, while students from Our Lady's High School worked hard with Head of Music, Mr Robinson, to provide exceptional music and singing.

A Box of faith and love

At the start of Mass, pupils learned about Fr Thomas Jackson MHM. Fr Thomas was born into poverty in 1846. As a young man, this poverty prevented him pursuing his vocation to the priesthood. Thankfully, a few generous donors stepped forward, enabling Thomas to train to become a Mill Hill Missionary.

Fr Thomas MHM spent many years serving as a missionary in Afghanistan and Borneo, but he never forgot the people who had enabled his vocation to the priesthood. When he returned to England, he created the Red Box.

A joyful message

The joy resulting from Fr Thomas' efforts

was echoed through a moving Gospel drama performed by Our Lady's students. Supported by their Chaplain, Ms Lee, the students based their drama on John 15:9-11, emphasising the joy that faith in Christ brings.

This joyful message was expanded upon in Canon Paul's homily. Canon Paul encouraged pupils to recognise the difference between fleeting happiness brought by things, and the lasting joy brought by Christ. Canon Paul also spoke about the hope offered by Missio and its children's branch, Mission Together, which both help to share Christ's love through practical help and pastoral care, in places of poverty and turmoil.

A special 'thank you'

At the end of Mass, a long service medal and certificate were presented to Mr Paul Thompson, the Red Box volunteer in St Anthony's Parish, and Chair of Governors at St Anthony's Primary, for volunteering with Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries for almost 15 years. Then English Martyrs' Primary led everyone in a rousing rendition of the Pilgrim's Calypso – a hymn which was specially written for Mission Together in the Jubilee year.

St Anthony's Headteacher, Mrs Jane Barnes, who attended the Mass with her pupils, said of the event:

'How lovely the Mass was this morning. The children and I really enjoyed taking part. The additional activities you provided for the children were a real success and it was

great to see them all interacting together. Thank you so much for organising – it was clear to see the effort that went into making it such a success.'

Thank you for coming together for Mission!

We want to say a huge 'Thank you' to all the schools who attended, and to the staff who practised and rehearsed with pupils to ensure the Mission Together Mass was a great success. Thank you also to Sacred Heart parishioners who came along to join us in prayer, then hosted the schools in the parish hall, putting on a wonderful spread of treats!

About Mission Together

As the children's branch of Missio – the Pope's official charity for world mission – the aim of Mission Together is two-fold. We enable and empower young supporters in England and Wales to support Missio's overseas children's projects, through fundraising and prayer.

We also support the mission of Catholic schools in England and Wales, through provision of free classroom and worship resources.

We also deliver assemblies in schools. For more information please visit MissionTogether.org.uk or email claire@missio.org.uk

(Photo right): At the end of Mass, a long service Missio medal and certificate were presented to Mr Paul Thompson, the Red Box volunteer in St Anthony's Parish, and Chair of Governors at St Anthony's Primary, for volunteering with Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries for almost 15 years.



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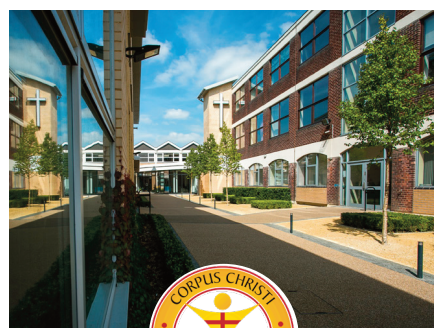
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Edwina Gillett awarded the Bene Merenti Medal for exceptional services to the Catholic Church



The Bene Merenti Medal Design

The medal is a gold cross depicting Christ with His hand raised in blessing, featuring the papal symbol of the crossed keys on one side and the coat of arms of the current Pope on the other. It is suspended from a yellow and white ribbon.

Edwina Gillett, former editor of the Catholic Voice of Lancaster, the official Diocesan newspaper, been awarded the Bene Merenti Medal, by Pope Francis.

Edwina was presented the Bene Merenti Medal and Papal Bull, by Bishop Paul Swarbrick, to coincide with Communications Sunday, at a special mass and celebration at Lancaster Cathedral.

Edwina who has been editor for the last 25 years until her retirement earlier this year, was delighted with the surprise and celebrated with friends and family:

"The award of the Bene Merenti came out of the blue, but I wanted to share the event with as many people as I could, especially those who have helped me in producing the Catholic Voice of Lancaster.

The date was fixed for Saturday 31 May (the closest date to World Communication Day on 1 June) and the venue was to be St Peter's Cathedral, Lancaster with Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul.

Over 80 people travelled to Lancaster for the event, arriving in time for Exposition and Benediction before Mass at 12:15pm. Everything at the Cathedral was perfect and Bishop Paul was very patient as endless photos were taken of the medal and scroll received.

After Mass a reception was held at Lancaster Golf Club.

On the same evening at the vigil Mass back at St Joseph's Andsell, Fr Peter Clarke presented me with a lovely hanging basket and on Sunday led a service of Evening Prayer in honour of the Sacred Heart and in celebration of the Bene Merenti award.

All in all, a wonderful weekend of spiritual blessings. I cannot thank everyone enough for all the wonderful letters and cards, Mass offerings, gifts and flowers that I have received.

The Catholic Voice of Lancaster was a big part of my life for many years and it brought me into contact with lots of people from all over the UK. It really was a privilege to be entrusted with the role of Editor and serve the Diocese in such a special way."

Congratulations & Thank You Edwina!

On behalf of all the editorial & creative team at *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, our heartfelt congratulations go to Edwina Gillett, for her selfless contribution and commitment to the Catholic churches communication mission and outreach to the Diocesan communities.

We extend our grateful thanks for her generous and dedicated work writing, editing and continuing *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster* for future generations to read and enjoy!

Edwina and her medal following Vespers and Benediction on Sunday afternoon.



The Bene Merenti Medal Award

The Bene Merenti medal is an honor awarded by the Pope to recognize exceptional service to the Catholic Church. It can be awarded to both clergy and laity for their contributions to the Church's mission. The award is typically given for long-standing service, extraordinary acts of faith and charity, or for outstanding work for the Church.



Bishop Paul's words of thanks to Edwina

In his congratulations speech to Edwina, Bishop Paul spoke of his deep gratitude of her service and dedication:

"I am deeply grateful for your professionalism and the way you have so generously worked almost single-handedly, to keep *The Catholic Voice* relevant and interesting. Although I know Rob Hotchkiss has also been very instrumental in supporting your work, and making it such a popular read.

"And now with your retirement, you have overseen the continuity of quality and standards. This is what the Voice does,

it continues to make a difference and particularly on this day of the Visitation, this message of hope is relevant to what you have created with this newspaper.

"To share and hear the word of God, in a lovely way. It shares not just joy of God intervening like at the Visitation, but perhaps more powerfully right now after the election of Pope Leo, it shares the Easter message of hope and peace.

"Peace Be With You. Words we all need to say, read and hear in our darkest hours. This is what you and the Voice have been doing, bringing this message of peace, bringing

this little something to those people who read it that is not of this world. Something that comes from beyond, it comes not from the created order, but from the creator. So, let us continue to thank you and do what we can to retain the place of the Catholic Voice of Lancaster in the life of this Diocese especially in this our Centenary Year and Jubilee Year of Hope.

"Edwina you have made an incredible difference to the lives of our Catholic community & parishes and especially so relevant to receive this honour, on World Communications Weekend, we thank you."
+ Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick Bishop of Lancaster



“If you hitch your life to Jesus, incredible things will happen.”

Deacon Stephen Bamber Reflects on his Vocational Journey in a candid interview with Andrew Wygladala.

In a frank and candid interview with *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, Deacon Stephen Bamber spoke just days after his ordination to the diaconate at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Wall on 18th June 2025. Stephen is one of two seminarians currently preparing for priesthood from the Diocese of Lancaster, and his vocational story is one marked by depth, service, and the quiet, persistent voice of God.

Raised in a devout Catholic family in Prestwich, North Manchester, Stephen describes faith as the “centre of our family life.” His father was a Catholic headteacher, and both parents were deeply embedded in parish ministry. “I was blessed,” he says, “to experience what I call the ‘tripod’ of Catholic life—faith at home, in school, and in the parish. That’s the greatest gift my parents gave me.”

After Catholic sixth-form college, where he discovered a passion for music and

studio engineering, Stephen briefly worked in the music industry. But a deeper calling stirred within. His early vocational discernment included time exploring monastic and religious orders, but it was not yet the right season. He moved into a career in drug and alcohol recovery services, where he became a national figure in therapeutic programme development.

He co-wrote “*Foundations of Recovery*” and worked to shift the system from quick fixes to long-term transformation—training staff, supporting peer mentors, and embedding a culture of sustainable healing.

By his forties, having moved to Lancaster and Morecambe, Stephen remained active in the Church and the SVP’s national prison group. At the same time, he began sensing that “*God wanted more*” for his life. Seeking spiritual direction, he hoped to discern once and for all whether

the priesthood might be his calling. A pivotal conversation with Canon John Watson challenged his hesitations.

“*The grace of baptism ripens at different times in different people,*” Canon Watson said. That insight proved decisive.

Stephen entered his formation year at St Wulstan’s, Fleetwood, under Canon Alf Hayes, a year he describes as “*immensely formative*” across the four pillars of priestly formation: human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral. He later commenced his studies in earnest at the Beda College, designed for older candidates, where he is now preparing for his final year.

Recently ordained as a deacon, Stephen now begins a summer pastoral placement whilst residing with Fr Darren Carden in Morecambe, and he will serve at Lancaster Cathedral with Fr John Millar and Fr Philip Wrigley and is looking

forward to the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. He anticipates returning to the Beda in October for final preparations before priestly ordination.

He draws deep inspiration from the Lancaster Martyrs—especially Blessed Edward Bamber, a namesake and spiritual role model—and from the writings of the Desert Fathers and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

Humbly, Deacon Stephen insists, “*I’m the last person I thought would be suitable for the priesthood. But if you say yes to God, He will do marvellous things.*” Quoting Canon Alf Hayes, he adds with a smile, “*If you hitch your life to Jesus, incredible things will happen.*”

Deacon Stephen will be a regular contributor to *The Catholic Voice* in the coming months, as he continues his journey towards priestly ordination.

Andrew Wygladala

Marmalade marvels!



Standing: Brian Porteus, Moira Wilson SVP, Pat Porteus, Paul Desborough SVP Chair, and below seated: Mary Whittaker SVP, Teresa Kennerley SVP and Sister Anne Stewart SHC.

We are delighted to share the good news that Pat Porteus and her husband Brian presented a cheque for £1000 to the SVP in the parish of Christ the King and St Kentigern's in Blackpool. For the past nine years Pat has been making her, now famous, Seville marmalade and donating the proceeds to a particular charity.

It all began in 2017 when she was inspired and encouraged by a friend to do something to help to raise money for a special machine needed in Victoria Hospital. She saw Seville oranges, those very bitter ones that are essential for good marmalade, and some lemons, for sale in a shop on Whitegate Drive.

She found a trustworthy Delia Smith recipe and so the operation that has grown over the years began. Each year the quantity has increased as family, friends and parishioners were keen to purchase the jars and her reputation grew. Each year, therefore, Pat has been able to donate generously to various charities:

2018 to Trinity Hospice;

2019 to Watuma, Kenya, a village for deprived children; **2020** to Edale Mountain Rescue in Derbyshire as they came to her aid after a nasty fall;

2021 to Blackpool Lifeboats;

2022 to Manchester Maternity Hospital where her daughter in law and new baby granddaughter had been wonderfully cared for;

2023 to Brambles Wildlife Rescue;

2024 to Blue SkiesCharity in Blackpool's Victoria Hospital.

Each year the amount raised has steadily grown. Pat now uses Mary Berry's recipe and for six weeks, beginning in early January, when Seville oranges become available, until the second week of February, she makes batches of marmalade almost every day. As the demand has grown Pat now obtains her oranges and lemons from a wholesaler in Preston. When she began the 18 kilos of oranges cost £40 to buy; they now cost £90.60, as wholesale prices have more than doubled. Pat is ably supported by her husband Brian in the lengthy process involved in making each batch. Each jar sells for £3 or £3.60 for a larger jar. This year she made and sold 338 jars. Pat says there is never any left. She also makes a small amount of whisky marmalade for special orders she receives!

Would you believe it, but she and her husband do not eat marmalade themselves!

Philomena Grimley SHCJ



Carlisle & Penrith Catenian Circle Clergy Dinner serves Fellowship and Faith

The Catenians in North Cumbria welcomed six priests and two deacons to a joint Clergy Night hosted by the Carlisle and Penrith and Cumberland West Circles at The Auctioneer venue in Carlisle in April. 35 brothers, ladies and guests attended in total.

It has long been the custom for every Catenian Circle to invite the Clergy (and more recently all deacons) of their respective districts, to be our guests at an annual dinner in their honour as a way of showing our appreciation of their work. The Association takes the issue of vocations as something that we wish to assist - every Circle is required to sponsor one Mass a year (with over 350 Circles, this equates to one per day); we recite a prayer for vocations at every one of our monthly meetings, publish prayer cards and in addition, give financial support to the National Vocations Office and run our own Vocations Initiative programme.

Although the Association's original purpose was primarily simply to bring

together Catholic men and their families, to enjoy socialising together, foster friendships and strengthen each others' faith, it has grown way beyond that with the setting up of our two main charities.


There is a Benevolent Fund to support members, widows and dependants who may be in difficulty or need and a separate Bursary Fund to provide grants to young Catholics of either sex and aged between 18 to 25 when they carry out voluntary work for the community, both at home and abroad and when travelling to Lourdes on diocesan pilgrimages.

Although fund raising is not our main function, nevertheless, individual Circles collectively donate in excess of £200,000 each year to various



From the left: Deacon John Scanlon, Keswick; Fr. Jerome Ainsworth, Penrith; Fr. Oliver Siandele, Carlisle; Canon Luiz Ruscillo, Carlisle; Deacon David Greaves, Penrith; James McPake, President Carlisle & Penrith Circle; Fr. Paul Dadson, Maryport; Fr. Kevan Dorgan, Whitehaven; Fr. Norman Johnston, Carlisle; Peter Kendall, President Cumberland West Circle.

charities, usually being at the choice of their Presidents.



One initiative that we are delighted to be involved with is the provision of financial and volunteer support of Flame, the bi-annual gathering of Catholic youth and the printing of leaflets such as one on how to pray The Rosary.

This month the Carlisle and Penrith Circle has given £200 to help pupils from St John Henry Newman Catholic School to visit the Castlerigg Youth Centre.

We look forward to continue working within our vibrant Catholic community and reaching out to support a variety of our Catholic Faith themed events and activities in 2025.

Jack Johnstone

If you would like to get in touch, please contact The Catenian Association President, Don Austin, from The Carlisle and Penrith Circle at:

Email: donpaustin@aol.com
Phone: 01228 529218
07851 661788



The Catenians
*Strengthening family life
through friendship and faith*



Dominic Standing experienced a once in a lifetime visit to Rome, to pay his respects to the late Pope Francis – here he shares his unique tale of a whirlwind trip to Rome and the joy of living in the moment:

This journey started with a 'No.' 'No' I said to myself when my partner asked 'Shall we go to Rome?' "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to see him Dom!'. "No."

I heard once again. I was lucky enough to have seen Pope Francis during his weekly papal address last year. I'd seen him in life, and so I didn't need to see him in death.

I returned to work back in Manchester later that day. I justified my decision in terms of finance, being a logistical nightmare, and whatever else I could muster to tell myself I didn't need to be in Rome to see Pope Francis lying in state. When I eventually arrived at work, my boss immediately told me she'd thought of me. She had been to Rome, by coincidence, for the death of Pope John Paul II and described it as a profoundly moving experience. And so with that, the first domino had fallen...

After a quick search on SkyScanner, I was able to find flights, which gave me around 24 hours in Rome.

I'd keep the cost to a minimum by doing an 'all nighter', seeing some of the sights under cover of darkness.

After half an hour or so, my very good friend, Emily, sent me a message saying she had to be in Rome. She is studying History at UCLAN. This was history in the making, and we wanted to be a part of it.

'Yes', I said. 'Yes, Lord, I will come to Rome'.

In Rome...

It was also Emily's first time in Rome. We joined a queue from the East, just outside St. Peter's Square. Imagine our surprise when we were slowly but consistently moving forward. Surrounded by people from every corner of the globe.

The mystery and majesty of the church was starting to unfold right before us. Religious orders en masse. Priests of all nations. Young and old. Rich and poor. We even saw a Cardinal emerge from a papal building and join the crowds at one time. We made it through security and now joined the main queue in the square and moving towards St. Peter's Basilica.

For those of us who are lucky enough to have been on pilgrimage to places such as Rome, Lourdes, Fatima, any religious shrine in fact, we know some people don't unfortunately treat these places with the reverence and prayerful atmosphere they warrant. I tried hard to forget the people to my left and my right who were taking telephone calls, selfies, and live streaming on TikTok. I was quietly tearful. I'm always mesmerised and rendered speechless by the beauty and gravity of

the heart of our church here on Earth.

Our time had come. The waiting was finished. We were in the final queue. We were now in the Basilica, inching closer to the Holy Father in his eternal rest.

Emily and I were walking next to a solitary nun. She had her rosary beads clutched tight and was praying a decade almost silently through her gentle tears. We found beauty and peace in this moment. Amongst the unbelievable hustle and bustle, we found our sanctuary. The embodiment of the church. Now at the barriers, we were directly in front of Pope Francis. As a mark of respect, we blessed ourselves with the sign of the cross and moved on.

Seemingly as soon as it had begun for us, it was over. We went to sit in the chapel to the left within the Basilica. We shared a few moments of private prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament and decided to make our exit.

A Vatican official very kindly stopped and handed us a simple prayer card. It was adorned with the smiling face of Pope Francis and his signature. Only then was I able to appreciate the intrinsic beauty of what I was fortunate enough to witness that day, immortalised in this simple prayer card.

This is now one of my most treasured personal possessions and I endeavour to keep this for the rest of my days.

After an emotional 84 minutes we were free with a whole day to fill in Rome! What better to do than catch up with one of the seminarians of our Diocese, Chris Sumner? It was Emily and Chris's first meeting, which was a real pleasure to witness. There was rich conversation and some fruitful relationships born in terms of planning the utilisation of Emily's gift for archiving and passion for local history, particularly that of Preston.

This meeting took place on the rooftop of the Pope John Paul II hotel, which was quite one of the most beautiful places I'd ever been in my life.

When I think back to my answer being 'no', I'm sad. I experienced life changing and affirming events on this pilgrimage. I may have said no, but God said yes. I was pulled to Rome on this particular day at this particular time. It was easy for me to think of excuses and it was far too easy for me to say no.

Following these experiences, I am reminding myself of what Our Lady advised about listening to Jesus, that we should 'Do whatever He tells you'.

Dominic Standing, Parishioner & Organist at The Parish of The Guardian Angels, Blackpool

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Calling all super sleuths – Can you help solve the Chingle Hall mystery?

(Left to right)
Cllr James Hull,
Fr Mark Harold,
Naseem Kirkham,
Bishop Swarbrick,
Prof Trevor Kirkham,
Sir Bernard de Hoghton,
Mr Jim Burscough.



A beautiful spring day saw Bishop Paul Swarbrick visit the medieval moated manor house of Chingle Hall in Whittingham, north of Preston.

The 13th century hall, with its own chapel, is the supposed birthplace of the Lancashire martyr St John Wall – who some believe was born there in 1620. What isn't in doubt is the fact that he was executed in the most cruel fashion of being hanged, drawn and quartered for his faith at Worcester in 1679.

Professor Trevor Kirkham and his wife Naseem welcomed the Bishop to Chingle Hall along with Sir Bernard de Hoghton of Hoghton Tower, Father Mark Harold, Parish Priest of Browndge St Mary's in Bamber Bridge, Councillor James Hull of Preston city council and keen local historians Mr Paul Addison and Mr Jim Burscough. After a tour of the house and afternoon tea the assembled group discussed in detail the connection between St John Wall and the ancient house. Professor Kirkham has spent many years trying to definitively place Chingle Hall as the birthplace of the martyr and saint, but concrete evidence is difficult to find. Some sources think that St John Wall is of the Wall family of Norfolk and not a Lancastrian at all.

A relic of the saint on display at Lancaster Cathedral (a small piece of cloth with his blood on it from his execution) was sent to the diocese in the very early part of the 20th century from Erdington Abbey in Birmingham and on the back of the relic it does state, "John Wall born Garstang 1620."

The mystery looks set to continue but Professor Kirkham would be delighted to hear from any *Catholic Voice of Lancaster* readers who may be able to shed any light on St John Wall (or the Wall family of Garstang) particularly any connections with Chingle Hall, Garstang or Lancashire. Those who can help could they please email Trevor at: Trevor760@btinternet.com or write to: Trevor Kirkham, Chingle Hall, 760 Whittingham Lane, Near Preston, PR3 2JJ.

(Left to right)
Bishop Swarbrick,
Jim Burscough,
Sir Bernard de Hoghton,
Prof Trevor Kirkham.
In the main hall
of Chingle Hall.



100 Objects Commemorative Book pictures required – can you help create history?



Tools used by the Sisters in Preston Carmelite Monastery for making altar breads used at Mass throughout the diocese. Picture sent in by Mary Ibison of Preston.

Those with good memories will recall that Bishop Paul in his Advent letter of this year mentioned his aspiration to celebrate the centenary of our Diocese in 100 Objects, to be published in book form.

It is pleasing to say that he formed a small working group who, meeting monthly, are now taking this forward. We are taking a quick look back at pre 1925 to the formation of the diocese, how it looks today, building it with illustrations of items that represent our distinctive Catholic faith. More importantly how they can help our faith flourish for the next 100 years or longer. The diocese is very rich in its diversity of people from all walks of life, all also contribute in its societies, Orders, groups, nations, educational settings and so many more too.

We welcome the opportunity for you to contribute too, perhaps by letting us have

a note or photograph of an object which is both memorable to you and how it helps you to celebrate our faith. We will be delighted to consider these for inclusion in the final publication, quite a challenge.

Supporting this initiative parochial exhibitions will be occurring, starting this month at St Mary's, Hornby, to coincide with the Garden Party on 5 July, so please keep your eye open for others too in September. We will keep you posted!

We want you to be part of this wonderful 100 Objects of our Diocese Celebration and we will have more information coming soon about displays & exhibitions around the parishes. Please forward any ideas for inclusion in the book, by email and a separate jpeg picture to:

CatholicVoiceNews@lrcd.org.uk

Thank you for your support
The 100 Objects Centenary Team

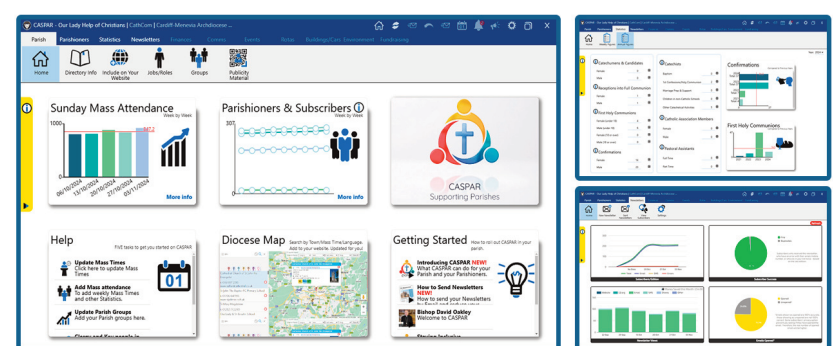
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A joyful day for the Diocese: Fr Manny Gribben and Fr Michael Docherty installed as Canons

Thursday, 15 May 2025, was a day of celebration, gratitude, and solemnity in the Diocese of Lancaster, as two devoted priests, Fr Manny Gribben and Fr Michael Docherty, were installed as Canons of the Cathedral Chapter during a special service held at the Cathedral Church of St Peter, Lancaster.

The ceremony was conducted by Bishop Paul Swarbrick, who formally installed the two priests into the Cathedral Chapter – a body of clergy who assist the Bishop in the spiritual and pastoral governance of the Diocese and who play a central role in the liturgical and ecclesial life of the Cathedral. The rite of installation was marked by dignity and reverence, as both priests were vested and welcomed into the Chapter before a congregation of clergy, family, friends, and parishioners from across the Diocese.

Following the installation, the Chapter prayed Midday Prayer together – an opportunity for shared reflection and thanksgiving as the newly appointed Canons began this next stage of their priestly ministry.

The celebration continued with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which was presided over by Canon Chris Loughran, a long-serving member of the Chapter. Canon Loughran also delivered the homily, offering a thoughtful and heartfelt reflection on the Acts of the Apostles. Focusing on the passage in which St Paul addresses the Jews in the synagogue, he reflected on the call to proclaim the Gospel with courage, clarity, and humility. He reminded those gathered that all Christian ministry and especially that of a priest, is founded in self-giving service and the proclamation of Christ.

The Cathedral was filled with family members, fellow clergy, and faithful from across the Diocese. Among them was a large and enthusiastic group from Fr Manny Gribben's parish of Sacred Heart, Barrow-in-Furness, including schoolchildren and parishioners who had travelled to Lancaster to support their much-loved parish priest. Their presence added a special joy to the occasion, demonstrating the close bonds between priest and parish community.

Fr Michael Docherty, who serves as the Diocese's Episcopal Vicar for Education, was also warmly supported by friends and colleagues. His leadership in the field of Catholic education across the Diocese has been marked by a deep commitment to the formation of young people and the strengthening of Catholic schools. His installation as a Canon is a recognition not only of his pastoral ministry but also of his ongoing service to the educational mission of the Church.



Canon Luiz Ruscillio, Provost of the Chapter, congratulated the duo: *"The role of Canon of the Cathedral is to be of service to the Bishop of the Diocese and the Mother church of the Diocese, the Cathedral. In our Diocese there are 11 Canons in the Chapter. Due to recent retirements there have been two vacancies. We are pleased that with the appointment of Canon Manny Gribben and Canon Michael Docherty our Chapter is complete. They join the rest of the Canons in working to support Fr John Millar, the Dean of the Cathedral, and his team; also in serving and supporting the Bishop in his role of Shepherd of the Diocese."*

As Canons, Fr Manny and Fr Michael will now take on new responsibilities in service to the Diocese, supporting the Bishop and contributing to the spiritual, liturgical, and pastoral mission of Lancaster Cathedral and the wider diocesan Church.

The day concluded with many warm congratulations and joyful conversation among those gathered. It was a grace-filled moment for the Diocese – a celebration not only of two priestly vocations, but of the shared faith and unity of the diocesan family.

Prior to posing for photographs with friends, family and parishioners the 2 newly installed Canons said they were both delighted to have been asked to join the Chapter and were looking forward to serving the Bishop in their new roles.

We thank God for Canon Gribben and Canon Docherty, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to bless and guide them in their ministry as Canons of the Diocese of Lancaster.

Words & Photos by Andrew Wygladala



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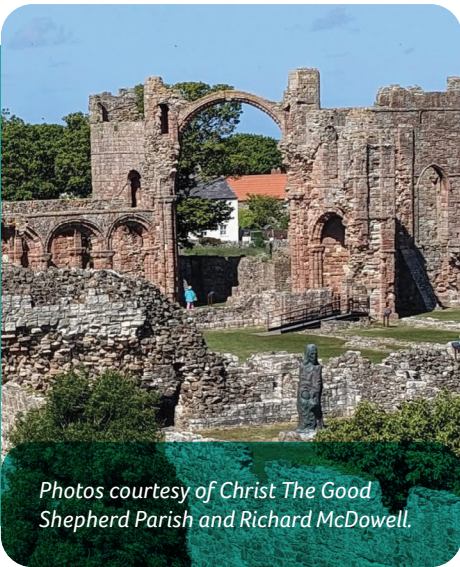
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Lancaster Diocese Centenary



A Centenary Pilgrimage:



Photos courtesy of Christ The Good Shepherd Parish and Richard McDowell.

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Left to right: Canon Paul Embery, Canon Michael Docherty, Canon Chris Loughran, Canon Peter Hart, Bishop Paul Swarbrick, Canon Bob Dewhurst, Canon Manny Gribben, Canon Adrian Towers, Canon John Watson and Canon Peter Draper.

The Catholic Voice of Lancaster would like to hear from you!

If your parish or school has any news or if you would personally like to submit an article for publication, please send us what you have. Contact details can be found on page 2.



(Left) Canon Gribben and family. (Inset) Canon Luiz Ruscillo - Provost of The Chapter. (Below) Pupils and families from the Sacred Heart Primary School, Barrow-In-Furness with Canon Gribben.

Congratulations to Fr Docherty who has been made a Canon of the Diocese alongside Fr Gribben, parish priest of Barrow. The Canons are members of the Cathedral Chapter and the College of Consultors which advises the Bishop on certain matters.



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Following in the footsteps of St Cuthbert

Richard McDowell shares the joyful journey and Northumbrian Saints Pilgrimage.

In May 2025 to mark the jubilee year and the centenary of Lancaster Diocese, people from across the diocese embarked on a pilgrimage journey into the story of some of the Northumbrian saints: St Cuthbert (one of the patrons of our diocese) and St Aidan and St Bede.

Staying at Ushaw Historic House, and blessed with sunshine throughout the 3 days together, the group visited Hexham Abbey, with its associations with St Wilfrid, and travelled to Bamburgh on the north east coast, to see the places where St Aidan worked, and where he is said to have died in 651AD.

The group then crossed to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne to visit the medieval Priory, some making the journey across the sands on foot, very much following in the footsteps of the pilgrims of old. The pilgrimage ended at Durham Cathedral

where prayers were said at the tomb of St Bede, and at the shrine of St Cuthbert, which dates back to 995AD.

It was interesting to hear about the fascinating lives of these saints, and to consider what lessons they can teach us about how we might live our lives some 1300 years later. Like the medieval saints, we too face challenges, but if we follow their example, we can, as pilgrims of hope in this jubilee year, be faithful to their memory by living the Gospel every day.

Huge thanks are due to the pilgrimage organiser, Fr Philip Conner, and to Bishop Paul Swarbrick and the priests on the pilgrimage for their spiritual guidance and support throughout. As one pilgrim said: 'A wonderful pilgrimage, a real taste of heaven, all peoples together and helping each other'.

St Cuthbert pray for us

Richard McDowell

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David Gibson Memorial Charity Fun Run raises record amount



Over £9,000 has been raised in memory of St Mary's Academy wonderful Chaplain, David Gibson.



The staff and friends & family at St Mary's Catholic Academy Blackpool.

During the last few weeks, after the loss of our beloved Chaplain David Gibson, the St Mary's Academy, Blackpool school community rallied together to honour him by raising funds for his chosen charity, Trinity Hospice.

David lived with a brain tumour since age 19, but that didn't stop him from dedicating himself to serving the Diocese, first with the youth service based at Castlerigg Manor, and then

at St Mary's Academy, Blackpool, for over 15 years. Dave spent the last few weeks of his life at Trinity Hospice, and greatly valued the care he received there. So in his memory, St Mary's Academy chose Trinity as our fundraising focus this Lent.

In total, students from Y7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & Sixth Form have raised £1,345 for Trinity, and Y8 on their own have raised a further £2,135 for Brian House, the children's hospice on the same site.

On 11th May, it was the staff's turn to say "thank you and rest in peace" to Dave as a team of 34 of us embarked on Trinity's 10k run. Wearing t-shirts with the logo "Doing it for Dave," they braved some very warm and challenging conditions. One of our site team even completed the 10k inside a Bloomfield Bear costume!

In total, the staff raised £9,008 through their incredible efforts. We can't think of a more fitting way to honour the life of a

man who impacted the lives of so many young people, both in Blackpool and beyond, and taught us so much about trusting in God, accepting suffering with humility and remaining steadfast in faith.

*In loving memory of David Gibson
Eternal Rest Grant unto him O Lord and
Let Perpetual Light Shine Upon Him
May He Rest In Peace, Amen.*

Christine Smith, Chaplain, St Mary's Academy

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