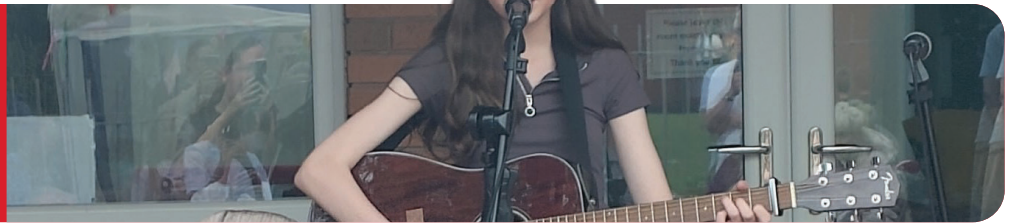


The Official Newspaper to  
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 372 + September '25

**INSIDE: Page 11**  
Centenary Celebrations  
& Family Fun in Blackpool



# Sow Seeds of Peace and Hope



Let's Celebrate  
The Season of Creation  
September 2025  
*Peace with Creation*

*"I pray that Almighty God will send us  
in abundance his "Spirit from on high"  
(Is 32:15), so that these seeds, and others  
like them, may bring forth an abundant  
harvest of peace and hope."*

September 1st - World Day of Prayer for The Care of Creation  
Pope Leo XIV

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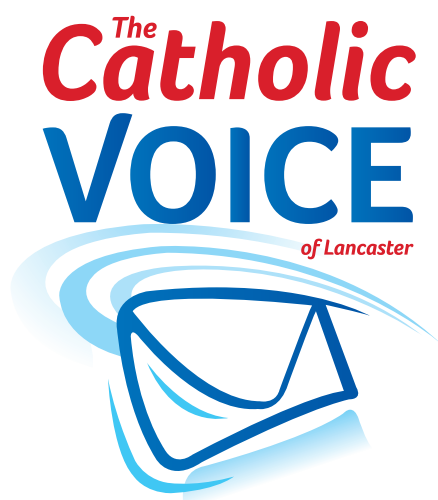
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*"The heavens declare the glory of God and the  
firmament proclaims the work of his hands"*

Psalms 19:1-2





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By Sister Philomena Grimley SHCJ



## PEACE WITH CREATION SEASON OF CREATION 2025

### How have the summer months been for you this year?

**H**ere in Blackpool we have not had the extremes of hot weather that they had elsewhere, so the pots of flowers in our small garden have been thriving.

As I write this article for the September issue of *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster* I found myself looking back to the summers when I returned to live in Blackpool ten years ago and the changes that have happened since then. I became more aware of how climate change and our lack of care for our environment is affecting us. Only this week on the news there was a feature about pollution affecting the sea on the Fylde coast.

When I went to visit my brother on the edge of Dartmoor in June I delighted in watching the swallows which we never see here now. What signs have you noticed that worry you? What losses sadden you? This month, once more, in our Christian communities all over the world, we are invited to mark the SEASON OF CREATION from September 1st to October 4th, Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

The theme for this year is PEACE WITH CREATION. The logo shows how we are living in a world that is becoming a desert.

It is primarily our way of life in the so-called developed world that has caused and continues to cause drastic climate change, deforestation, pollution and loss of biodiversity. In addition there are the effects of the human and ecological devastation being caused by wars waging right now. But the logo also shows hope: God has entrusted this earth to us to care for, protect and conserve, so care for the whole of creation is not an option, but our duty and responsibility and a living expression of our faith and our humanity.

Perhaps there will be some prayer service in your community you can attend to mark this season. Maybe you will discover ways you can take action locally to support peace with creation in your area of the diocese. Try to find some way to truly celebrate the SEASON OF CREATION this year!

*God, our loving Creator, we pray for our suffering world. We pray for help and strength to take action to heal our relationships with one another in this human family and with all your creation.*

*Sister Philomena Grimley SHCJ, Sisters of The Holy Child Jesus*

Pope Leo's message: [www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/creation/](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/creation/) Season of Creation: [seasonofcreation.org](http://seasonofcreation.org)





## Season of Creation Prayer

*Father, Lord of all creation, we praise you with all your creatures and the whole universe that comes forth from the work of Your hands.*

*We acknowledge the privilege and responsibility that You give us as stewards of Your creation.*

*In our ignorance we have done damage to our common home and our brothers and sisters are suffering.*

*Through faithfully following your Son guide and direct us to prepare for a better future.*

*Teach us to contemplate You in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of You.*

*Give us the grace to recognise, respect and protect all You have created, using wisely all that you have entrusted to us.*

*Holy Spirit, who first hovered over the dawn of creation and drew order out of the chaos help us to build your kingdom of justice, love, peace and beauty where the poor of the earth are crying out.*

*You, who live and reign, world without end, Amen.*

# Catholics called to prayer by sowing seeds of peace and hope

**I**n a statement to mark this year's Season of Creation, the Lead Bishop for the Environment for the Bishops' Conference, Bishop John Arnold, has called for Catholics in England and Wales to take action to address the environmental crises of our times. This action, he says, needs to take place at every level in society – from the personal to the parish, in politics and in business.

Bishop Arnold also urges Catholics and people of goodwill to be challenged by Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical letter on Care for our Common Home, Laudato Si, to change our lifestyles, build healthy communities, and to educate ourselves and others on integral ecology – the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world.

### STATEMENT:

*"This year marks the 10th anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis's encyclical, Laudato Si. Building on a long tradition of Catholic teaching, this encyclical served both as a call to conversion and a call to action.*

*"As we enter the Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September to 4 October, I call on all Catholics to honour Pope Francis's legacy by taking heed of his teaching in this area. We only have to observe the many extreme weather events, conflicts over natural resources and destructive environmental practices that have been taking place in recent times to understand the importance and urgency of this task.*

*"In the first place, we are called to prayer. The World Day of Prayer for Creation is on 1st of September and the theme, chosen by Pope Francis, is: 'Seeds of Peace and Hope'.*

*"Pope Leo has reminded us that the face of the earth is being ravaged, including increasingly by war, and*

*therefore environmental justice 'can no longer be regarded as an abstract concept or a distant goal'.*

*"However, as he also notes in his own message for the season of creation: 'by working with love and perseverance, we can sow many seeds of justice and thus contribute to the growth of peace and the renewal of hope. It may well take years for this plant to bear its first fruits, years that, for their part, involve an entire ecosystem made up of continuity, fidelity, cooperation and love, especially if that love mirrors the Lord's own self-sacrificing love.'*

*"I urge Catholics and people of goodwill in England and Wales to be challenged by Laudato Si to change our lifestyles, build healthy communities, and to educate ourselves and others on integral ecology.*

*"Prayer and education should be part of a wider process of conversion which I hope will lead all Catholics in England and Wales to take action to address the environmental crises which are linked to the other great crises of our time. If our seeds of hope are to bear fruit, we need action at every level in society – from the personal to the parish, in politics and in business.*

*"I invite you to join the events that we are organising to mark the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si. The first of these is on Wednesday, 3 September: 'The 10th Anniversary of Laudato Si, Sustaining the Impact'.*

*"I also hope that parishes will use the text of the Mass for the Care of Creation during this season of creation. Most importantly, I ask you to follow Pope Leo by planting seeds of hope."*

**Bishop John Arnold, Lead Bishop for the Environment Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

For more info, visit the CBCEW website: [cbcew.org.uk](http://cbcew.org.uk)

**"All things were created through him and for him."** Colossians 1:15-20

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YOUTH  
MATTERS

# A new season begins for our Catholic Youth Service this September

## Exciting things are happening in the Youth Service!!

**O**ver the summer, we said goodbye to a few team members. Always a sad moment. Anna, Lucy, Lily, and Grace left us, with Daniella, Jamie, and Jonathan joining us as new starters!

It looks like 2025-26 will see us break a lot of records in terms of our bookings. We will have well over 50 schools on residential retreats

This year, we are massively changing and expanding the things that we offer at what we call the 'deepening stage' – that's the stuff for folks who have maybe been on a school retreat or something similar, and want to take things a little further.

We will be offering three dedicated training weekends at Castlerigg, a new award scheme, help for parishes with sacramental preparation, as well as a few other things. Here's a summary of what's coming up soon...

**SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 14TH // OPEN DAY**  
Doors open at Midday. Mass with Bishop Paul at 2pm. Your chance to come and see Castlerigg, meet the new team, find out about the work that we do, and even try your hand at a few of our activities. No need to book. Just roll up on the day.

### **SEPTEMBER 26-28TH // THEOLOGY OF THE BODY WEEKEND**

A dedicated training weekend for those 18+ on this important area of Church teaching. Join the Castlerigg team for a high quality retreat led by one of the leading people in the field. Accommodation and meals at Castlerigg. For more info, go to [castleriggmanor.com](http://castleriggmanor.com) and check out the events page.

### **NOVEMBER 21-23RD // CATHOLIC STUDENT RETREAT**

A weekend retreat for anyone in full time higher education who is over 18. People who have finished university in the last year are also welcome to come. There will be social times, meals, a trip out to Keswick, and some high quality talks.

For more details, check out:  
**[castleriggmanor.com](http://castleriggmanor.com)**

### **What else..?**

#### **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

This year, we will be offering to run days for parishes preparing their young people for confirmation or First Holy Communion. This is a new initiative which we suspect will be very popular.

Please do get in touch if you're interested and here's to a new season of events and activities.



# Ladyewell Shrine, Fernyhalgh hosts Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope

By Natalie Duymun



**S**ince Pope Francis declared 2025 a Jubilee Year with the theme “Pilgrims of Hope,” the ancient Marian Shrine of Ladyewell at Fernyhalgh has welcomed a surge in pilgrims from across the UK.

On the midsummer evening of 25th June 2025, however, a more local gathering took place for the Feast of Our Lady of Fernyhalgh.

Fr Augustine Obiagwu and Fr Francisco Ulogu, priests of the Nigerian-based Order of Holy Family Fathers, Brothers and Youth, invited parishioners from Our Lady and St Edward’s, Fulwood; St Mary’s, Newhouse; and St Mary’s, Fernyhalgh to journey on their own Pilgrimage of Hope.

The evening began with a rosary procession along the peaceful country lane from St Mary’s Fernyhalgh to Ladyewell. A joyful open-air Mass followed in the grounds of the Martyrs’ Chapel, with the sounds of birdsong and prayer blending with the songs of the faithful. Afterwards, pilgrims connected in the Shrine’s tranquil grounds over shared food and fellowship. Fr Augustine and Fr Francisco generously served their much-anticipated Nigerian Jollof Rice

and Chicken (*not too spicy!*) – drawing comparisons to a modern day “Feeding of the 5000”.

As dusk fell, pilgrims were led in a time of reflection on Jubilee, Pilgrimage, and Hope. Our Lady’s own Pilgrimage of Hope was held up as a model, her Fiat at the Annunciation a quiet, courageous yes to a future she could not yet see. The words of Pope Francis’ *Spes non confundit* were shared:

*“Hope does not disappoint... it raises up those who have fallen, heals hearts that are broken and sets us free from every kind of bondage.”*

Patrick Gardner from CAFOD reminded all that hope must become action. He spoke of the Diocese’s role in standing with the world’s poorest, echoing the Jubilee call for debt cancellation, a dream both St John Paul II and Pope Francis carried close.

Finally, pilgrims were invited to write a hope for the future and a step they would take to live it out. One by one, prayers were hung on the magnolia tree – a living symbol of faith, love, and the quiet courage to journey in hope. *Words & Photos by Natalie Duymun*

**David Pope** dip FD MBIFD

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### OPEN EVENING

Thursday 2 October 2025 at 6pm until 8.30pm

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what it means to be

*One of Ours*

## St William's Catholic Primary School Celebrate Centenary History

**S**t William's Catholic Primary School in Pilling launched a very special photo gallery celebrating the history of the school pupils.

Head Teacher, Heather Hogarth was delighted with the success of the event and all involved:

*"To enhance our Centenary History project for our diocese, we decided to welcome past and present pupils into our school to look at photos from the late 1940s to the present*

*day. This event was very successful with around 70 people visiting the display over the 4 days that it was on.*

*The children thoroughly enjoyed looking at the photos, artefacts and registers and finding familiar people to them, including Great Grandparents, old teachers and some of our governors in their younger years. It was a fascinating and interesting way to celebrate part of the Centenary events in the diocese."* **Heather Hogarth, Headteacher St William's Catholic Primary School, Pilling**





# Bishop Paul Marks 30 Years at St Mary's

**S**t Mary's Catholic Primary School, Fleetwood, recently welcomed Bishop Paul to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their school building, a milestone filled with gratitude and joy.

His visit was a joyful occasion, marked by prayer, reflection, music, and a strong sense of community among staff, pupils, and families.

Bishop Paul was given a guided tour by the school's dedicated Mini Vinnies, who proudly shared how

the school's mission and values come alive each day through acts of service and kindness.

Pupils led a special Mass and liturgies, reminding everyone of their dignity as children of God and the importance of living out their faith in daily life.

The day concluded with Bishop Paul Swarbrick officially opening the new Peace and Prayer Garden, a sacred space for prayer, quiet reflection, and moments of stillness for all who visit.



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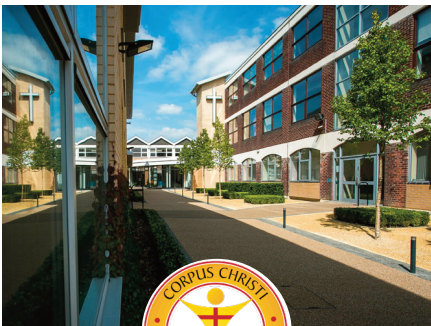
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<<< Olivia Holdens stunning artwork in full on the left hand side: The Story of Salvation.

# New Artwork Brings the Story of Salvation to Life in Schools

**Geoff Chapman, Director of Formation at the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service launches new artwork display.**

**I**n preparation for the Centenary of the Diocese, last year the Education Service commissioned a piece of artwork for schools from Lancaster-born artist Olivia Holden.

Olivia worked closely with Fr John Millar as a theological advisor and created a beautiful narrative frieze depicting the history of salvation. It begins with the creation of the world, moves through the Old Testament, the life of Christ, the Apostles, and the history of the Church, and concludes with a depiction of the Diocese of Lancaster today.

The artwork is a vibrant and engaging piece, visually appealing to children with recognisable characters, yet rich in theological symbolism that invites inquiry, meditation, and prayer. It also powerfully illustrates how our own Diocese and the churches within it are connected to the one great story of our faith.

To accompany the artwork, the Education Service has produced a high-quality

50-page booklet containing a detailed commentary on the picture in nine panels, complete with cross-references to Holy Scripture.

We hope this booklet will be especially useful for schools. With this in mind, the booklet contains detailed year-group cross-references to the RE Directory's model curriculum, from Reception right through to Year 9.

It also includes a table linking the artwork to the liturgical year and nine examples of Ignatian Visio Divina for use in schools.

The salvation history artwork is currently on display at the Education Centre, Lancaster.

Digital copies of the artwork will be available to schools through the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service website.

For any enquiries about the artwork or accompanying booklet, please contact the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service: [educationservice@lrcd.org.uk](mailto:educationservice@lrcd.org.uk) or Telephone: **01524 841190**.









**Deacon Stephen Bamber continues his journey towards a priestly ordination.**

The moment I first proclaimed the Gospel in my home parish after ordination, I felt the joy and responsibility of the ministry to which God is calling me. Since that weekend, life has been a joyful whirlwind. I began my first weekend back serving in St John Henry Newman, Morecambe, before starting a four-week placement at the cathedral. The placement, though short, was packed with memorable moments, from witnessing Fr Robert Hanaford’s ordination to celebrating the Diocesan Education Mass, honouring teachers and governors from across the diocese.

As a deacon, I have been privileged to administer baptisms, celebrate marriages, and preside at funerals. My first baptisms were for twins, a slightly nerve-racking challenge, making sure I kept their names the right way round! It was a joy to help welcome new life into the Church.

At the end of July, I joined around 200 pilgrims for the annual diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage. Fr Frank, Linda, Nikki, and the team coordinated everything beautifully, and the liturgy was enriched by uplifting music from Deacon Stephen Pendlebury, Anna, and their ensemble. A particularly special moment was celebrating Mass alongside Bishop Paul in the grotto, which, unusually, we had entirely to

ourselves. Later, I was humbled to proclaim the Gospel at the international Mass presided over by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, attended by six bishops, 174 priests, 17 deacons, seminarians, and 4,000 pilgrims from around the world.

The day after returning from Lourdes, I travelled to the Jesuit retreat centre in North Wales for a ten-day course on spiritual accompaniment. Having completed the 30-day Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius there last year, it was wonderful to reconnect with this oasis of prayer. After the pace of Lourdes and the cathedral placement, it was a welcome shift to reflection and prayer.

Following a brief return to the cathedral for the Solemnity of the Assumption, I enjoyed a short break in Scotland with friends. September will see me assisting Fr Darren in Morecambe and continuing to accompany those in recovery from addiction. At the end of the month, I will return to the Beda College in Rome to complete the final stage of my priestly formation, and God willing, I look forward to returning to the diocese next year for my priestly ordination.

I hope to share more of that journey with you in future updates for The Catholic Voice, reflecting on the joys, challenges, and grace-filled moments along the way.

*Andrew Wygladala*



# CARDINAL ALLEN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

## OPEN EVENING

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Section 48 Report

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# Centenary Celebrations and Family Fun in Blackpool



## *Sister Philomena Grimley SHCJ reflects on how parishes & families joined together to celebrate the Centenary of Lancaster Diocese.*

**O**ne of the ways we decided to celebrate the centenary of our Diocese of Lancaster here in our Blackpool and north Fylde Deanery was to have a **FAMILY FUN AFTERNOON!**

We just wanted families to come together and enjoy a happy time and experience community as they are the living members of the diocese now and into the future.

Our small organising group asked for help from the parishes and on a wing and a prayer we were able to put together the ingredients of a very happy afternoon on Saturday, June 21st.

One of the group was going on pilgrimage to Medjugorje so we told her to get Our Lady to help us and she certainly looked after us!

We were generously given the use of the well-equipped St John Vianney parish centre and field belonging to the parish of Guardian Angels. There we set up a variety of games outdoors, BINGO and a craft stall indoors as well as refreshments that included hot dogs and an assortment of delicious home baked cakes donated by parishioners and Cardinal Allen School.

We organised two donkeys to give the children free rides all afternoon and a prolonged visit by an Ice Cream van

whose owner did a fantastic trade! Although the weather turned showery, nothing deterred everyone from enjoying themselves.

We had a great programme of live music throughout the afternoon, beginning with a wonderful selection of rousing tunes from Park School Brass Band, followed by the THE JAGS group, including Canon Alf Hayes, who are famous in our diocese.

Then a group of young people from St Mary's Catholic Academy Choir sang a summer medley for us. One of that group had recently won the schools 'POP IDOL' competition, so she sang a solo and accompanied the winning song she had composed herself.

Meanwhile under the trees Face Painting was busily in progress, always so popular with the children.

We were also able to get a voucher for a family of four to have a day at Blackpool Zoo as the first prize in the raffle and we sold out all the tickets!

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of the organising group and the many good volunteers who helped on the day to prepare and to clear up afterwards, our deanery families enjoyed a memorable and happy afternoon.

*Philomena Grimley SHCJ*



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As I said in my original article when I took on this post, Sr. Micheala from Hyning is on the National Committee and we have been networking with various people that

Please get in touch if you feel you can contribute in any way or want to promote an event you are putting on in the diocese.

Thank you and God Bless you. Ursula.  
uwalker@uwclub.net / 07312 129900

## Trivia Quiz

**In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) which Section is on Christian Prayer? Is it the:**

- a) First
- b) Second
- c) Fourth
- d) Third

Answer on page 15 >>



Spirituality Space in September // What's On Guide

What is a Retreat?  
(And why go on one?)

September is a great time to start a new chapter and make some personal Spirituality Space for YOU!

A retreat is about taking a little “time out”. Re-treating from our everyday activities and putting some time aside for God. In today’s world we can feel that we are on a hamster wheel going round and round and not seeing a way out.

Our worlds can be full of stress, anxiety and worries and taking some time can help us to put things in perspective. Going on retreat or taking some time out can help us get off the wheel for a bit and step back from our lives and allow God to come in.

Often when you hear the word “retreat” you may hear people saying “I am going away for a weeks or a day’s retreat.” These are good things to do if you can afford them and have the time.

We are blessed to have to wonderful Retreat Centres in our Diocese – Hyning Hall and Boarbank. Here you can go and just have some quiet days praying on your own and joining the Communities for their prayers.

Or if being on your own feels a little daunting why not try one of the organised themed retreats at Hyning Monastery, Warton (Nr Carnforth) (<https://www.bernardine.org/hyning-programme>). These include flutist retreats, gardening retreat, day retreats on different themes – the Rising of Lazarus and the Wonder of Stories.

Or at Boarbank (Allithwaite, Grange Over Sands) (<https://boarbankhall.org.uk/whats-on/>). These include Celebrating Creation and Hope in Health.

We may not always have the time or money to make a retreat although some retreat day’s (sometimes called Days of Renewal) can be as little as £10 and can be local so not a lot of travelling costs. St Clare’s at Preston offer such days. The next one is the 19 October.

Sometimes it is good just to take a little “time out” each month or each week to re-connect with God, our Creator.

In Blackpool (and I am sure up and down the Diocese) there are many opportunities

to pray before the blessed sacrament and spend some quality one to one personal time for both locals and visitors in the busy holiday resort.

Including:  
**Holy Hour** – Monday’s at 6pm St Kents;  
**Medjugorje Prayer Group** – Last Sunday of the month at St. Kents; Medjugorje Holy Hour every first Friday at 7pm St John Vianney Blackpool; **Private quiet prayer** – first Tuesday at Our Lady of the Assumption, South Shore.

Find out in your own parish or church where Holy Hour or Exposition is on and take the first step to healing graces and improving your personal relationship and friendship with Jesus.

Why not step out of your life for a few an hour/a day (or longer) and reap the benefit of some stillness, quietness and prayer and let God come in and calm the anxiety and stress. You may say “I haven’t got the time, I am too busy”.

My reply to this would be that if you give God a little time, you will still get everything done and feel so much better for having given God your time. Try Him and see!

September is the time of getting back into a routine again after the holidays. Would it be possible to add a little extra prayer time into your routine?

If you feel that you would like to do on any of these but are feeling a bit nervous or apprehensive that is fine. It is not unusual to feel a bit nervous before a retreat.

If you have any questions/queries/ hesitations and would like to discuss them please get in touch and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have (by email or phone).

A note to those who live further north in the Diocese – apologies for only talking about the things in the South. These are the things I know about. If you want me to mention things nearer you then please do get in touch.

God bless and happy re-retreating.  
Ursula Walker, Spiritual Rep for the Diocese  
07312 129900 / [uwalker@uwclub.net](mailto:uwalker@uwclub.net)

“God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn... God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself because it is not there.” C.S. Lewis – Mere Christianity

Date/Time	Event/Venue	Details
3 Sept 7-8pm 1st Tuesday of month	<b>Hour of Quiet Prayer</b> Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Blackpool	Just turn up
5 Sept 7-8pm 1st Friday of month	<b>Medjugorje Prayer Group</b> St John Vianney Church, Blackpool	Just turn up
5 Sept 10-4pm 1st Tues. of month	<b>Finding ... God in Eden &amp; God in Creation</b> <a href="http://jesuitinstitute.org/events/finding-god-in-eden">jesuitinstitute.org/events/finding-god-in-eden</a>	Book online
6 Sept Saturday	<b>John Bradbourne Memorial Society</b> 10am Mass at St John the Evangelist Ch, Skirwith	07979 187498 Call Kate
7 Sept 2.15pm Sunday Afternoon	<b>Join the Bishop for Prayer &amp; Mass</b> St Mary's Priory - Cleator Pilgrimage	Just turn up
12 Sept 7.30-9.00pm	<b>Prayer &amp; worship with Metanoia Group</b> St. Wilfred's, Preston	Just turn up
30 Sept 10.00-4.00pm	<b>The Raising of Lazarus – D. Worthington</b> <a href="http://bernardine.org/hyning-programme">bernardine.org/hyning-programme</a>	Need to book Contact Hyning Hall
4-10 Oct	<b>Celebrating Creation – Talks and Walks</b> <a href="http://boarbankhall.org.uk/whats-on">boarbankhall.org.uk/whats-on</a>	Need to book Contact Boarbank
18 Oct 10.00-4.00pm	<b>Day of Renewal – Mass, Talks &amp; Prayer</b> St. Clare's, Preston	Just turn up
16 Oct 6.00pm	<b>Evening Prayer with Papal Nuncio</b> Lancaster Cathedral	Need to book Contact Cathedral
18 Oct 11.30am	<b>Centenary of the Diocese Closing Mass</b> Lancaster Cathedral (Ticketed event)	Need to book Contact Cathedral
20-24 Oct Weekend	<b>Pilgrimage to Walsingham</b> Full program of events (£475-550)	07895 742732 Call Deacon Charlie



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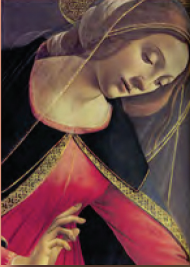
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**Cumbria, LA11 7NH**  
**Telephone: 015395 32288**  
**Website: [www.boarbankhall.org.uk](http://www.boarbankhall.org.uk)**



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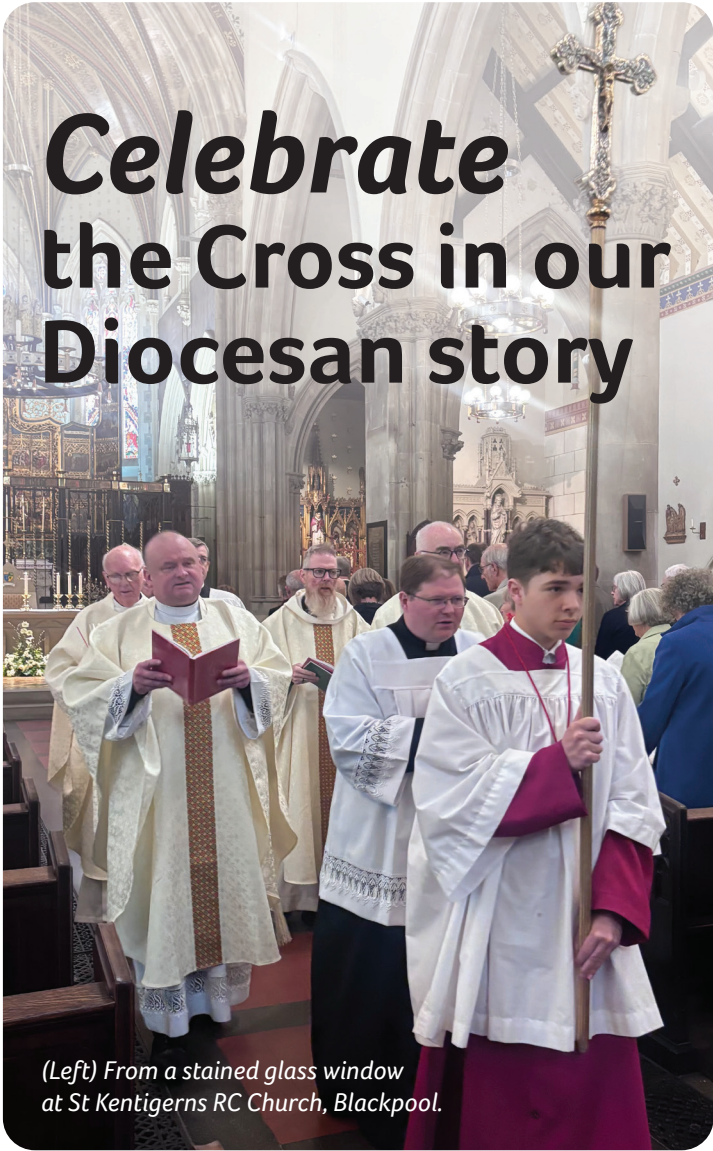


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(Left) From a stained glass window at St Kentigerns RC Church, Blackpool.

## Father Stephen Pearson, The Catholic Voice of Lancaster's Ecclesiastical Advisor and Parish Priest at Holy Family Church, Freckleton, reflects on the forthcoming historic Diocesan Centenary Mass at Lancaster Cathedral.

**S**aturday October 18th...a significant date in the life of our Diocese of Lancaster. Even with other local and diocesan events celebrated in the months leading up to this date, this is the date when we will gather for the Centenary Mass offered in our Cathedral church of St Peter with our Bishop Paul Swarbrick, his clergy, people and invited guests. A chance for us to reflect and learn from one hundred years of recent history in this, our part of The Lord's Vineyard.

Truly a celebration to treasure within our hearts. But as we let our hair down (*more difficult for some of us!*) and glow with hope filled pride, let's take stock of the cross of Christ present in the story of our Diocese, and it continuing to be the driving force for so much that has been achieved and will be achieved in the coming one hundred years.

Our first one hundred years included the almost universal hardship of the economic depression of the 1930s, the challenges of World War Two, the boom and bust times of economic life after the war, the great social changes of the 1960s onward, the presumptions of personal freedoms that began to defy Christian, especially Catholic, moral and social understandings, and most recently the rise of "aggressive secularism", a form of Atheism so subtle that many of us don't always realise how we are influenced by it.

All that, and more, in just one hundred years of western civilisation...in one hundred years of the Diocese of Lancaster.

And yet the cross of Christ has been powerfully present in our diocesan life. We can see this in the number of new parishes opened up, especially following World War two. The sacrifices people made to raise money and support a new neighbouring parish is notable.

The influence of so many religious sisters brothers and priests in helping to found schools across the Diocese to advance education for our Catholic people.

The number of charities that have arisen, for example, charities that help women to choose life for their unborn children and those charities which encourage our connection to life within developing nations, especially for us in the Diocese of Monze in Zambia.

So many opportunities taken and challenges met full on through faith and the power of the cross...the power of love and self sacrifice.

In this Centenary year, as we look back and appreciate something of our story, let's also have the faith and courage to look to the future, even though the challenges before us seem daunting and perhaps, for a while, too challenging.

Steps are being taken for new models of priests supporting parish communities, very different to those we have enjoyed historically.

Steps taken to form our Catholic schools into Academy trusts so we can defend the faith and culture that they presume. To advance the appropriate leadership of faithful lay-people within our parish communities, which can foster growth in faith and collaboration.

To let go of precious buildings which have meant so much to us as our diocesan story has emerged, and yet which now stand in a wilderness of indifference and neglect.

The Cross of Christ gives us the hope that as our circumstances change, faith will continue and deepen because Christ is there with us in the necessary changes and developments which surround us.

As we live through these coming years and decades may the glow of our centenary celebrations allow the cross of Christ to be fruitful within us. *Our Lady of Lourdes and St Cuthbert...pray for us.*  
*Fr Stephen Pearson*



Clergy join John McAuley at the conclusion of the special Retirement Mass.  
From left, Fr John Winstanley (Penrith), Fr Anthony Gaskin and Canon Luiz Ruscillo (Carlisle), John McAuley, Bishop Paul, Fr Norman Johnston(Carlisle).



# Respected headteacher John McAuley retires



**The Catenians**  
*Strengthening family life  
through friendship and faith*

**O**ne of the Diocese of Lancaster’s longest-serving headteachers has retired after nearly two decades at the helm.

John McAuley began work at what is now St John Henry Newman Catholic School in Carlisle as Deputy Head in January 2006. The school was struggling at the time and had been placed in Special Measures, while it was also recovering from the city flood of 2005. Not long after, the serving Head took sick leave and governors appointed John as Acting Head.

In January 2007 the school was taken out of Special Measures, with inspectors describing the leadership and management as good. John was soon formally appointed as Headteacher, and this was followed by a growth in pupil numbers, an indication of the impact of his leadership.

However disaster struck on the weekend of 4th to 6th December 2015 as Storm Desmond wreaked havoc on Carlisle. Newman School, then located on the city’s Lismore Place, suffered catastrophic damage and the site was condemned.

In January 2016 the school relocated to the former Pennine Way Primary School on Silverdale Road, with additional space in temporary cabins. The challenge John faced was enormous, with initially no WiFi and no library, and with some classes being held in corridors. Unsurprisingly, given the conditions, the school once again found itself in Special Measures.

However a new dawn came with the finding of the school’s current site in Carlisle’s Scalegate Road, and the construction of a fine new building with every modern facility.

The new school had no provision for a Chapel, but John was determined that there should be one, because, in his own words, “a Catholic School without a Chapel is just a school.” With significant assistance from The Knights of St Columba, The Catenians, and others, sufficient money was raised to provide the splendid Chapel that is now at the heart of the school.

OFSTED now designate St John Henry Newman Catholic School as “Good”. Meanwhile a rigorous Diocesan Inspection of the school’s Catholic ethos classed it as officially “Good” with certain aspects described as “Outstanding”. “John has steered the school through some unimaginable situations with great confidence, courage and compassion,” said Chair of Governors Tina Battle. “He has always put the students first in any decision-making process. We, as governors, owe him a huge debt.”

To mark John’s retirement at the end of the Summer Term, a special Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Lancaster, Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick, at the school. John’s enormous contribution to the current success of St John Henry Newman Catholic School will long be remembered, and Governors have wished him a long and happy retirement. John has been succeeded as Headteacher by Declan McArdle, who was previously Deputy Head.

*Don Austin & Jack Johnstone, Carlisle and Penrith Catenian Circle*

**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.

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# Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi-Academy Trust Celebrates Third Anniversary with a Joyful Celebration of Faith and Unity

Schools across the Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) came together in a spirit of joy and thanksgiving to commemorate the Trust’s third year of serving Catholic schools in Preston. The celebration took place in the beautiful surroundings of Our Lady and St. Michael’s in Alston Lane, bringing together pupils, staff, and leaders from across the Trust for a special day of prayer, reflection, and unity.

Bishop Paul Swarbrick joined the MAT family to lead the celebration mass and share a heartfelt message, blessing the



occasion further. He was joined by Canon Michael Docherty, Fr Daniel Etienne and Fr Stuart Chappel. Bishop Paul reminded everyone gathered of the profound purpose behind Catholic education, emphasizing that Catholic schools exist to ensure that we understand God’s love for us all.

He encouraged everyone to embody that message in their daily lives.

The event provided a unique opportunity for the Trust community to unite as “one family in Christ.” It served as a powerful reminder that Catholic schools are more

than just educational institutions; they are places where faith is lived and shared. Today, we remember that we are all part of one big family – the family of God. In coming together, we are just like in a real family, we support, pray for, and love each other.

Canon Harry Doyle and Headteacher Mark Fitzgibbon worked diligently to ensure that this was a joyous occasion. The day was a fitting tribute to the Trust’s mission and a celebration of the strong bonds that unite its schools through faith, love, and shared purpose.

Anne Charnley



## Join Our Catholic Leadership Team

Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust is seeking two inspirational Headteachers to lead:

### Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, Blackpool

-Closing Date: 8th September 2025  
Interviews: 23rd & 24th September

### The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham

- Closing Date: 15th September 2025  
- Interviews: 29th & 30th September

We welcome applications from practising Catholics with a passion for faith-led education, strategic leadership, and community engagement.

This is an exciting time to join our growing and thriving Trust of 17 Catholic schools.

We look forward to hearing from you if you are interested in either of these roles in two of our wonderful primary schools.

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## OPEN EVENING

**Wednesday 17 September 2025**  
**6.00 – 8.30pm**

Following our inspection in July, our latest Ofsted report is expected to be published in September. We encourage you to visit our website to read the report once it becomes available.

**[www.ccc.lancs.sch.uk](http://www.ccc.lancs.sch.uk)**  
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