

The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 374 + November '25

INSIDE: Story & pictures on page 4
Lancaster Annual Diocesan
Pilgrimage To Ladyewell –
The Shrine of Our Lady and the Martyrs



Living To Make Christ Known

Jubilee Year Celebrations of Joy and Friendship with Jesus at Cardinal Allen Catholic High School

**From Fleetwood
to Rome ...**

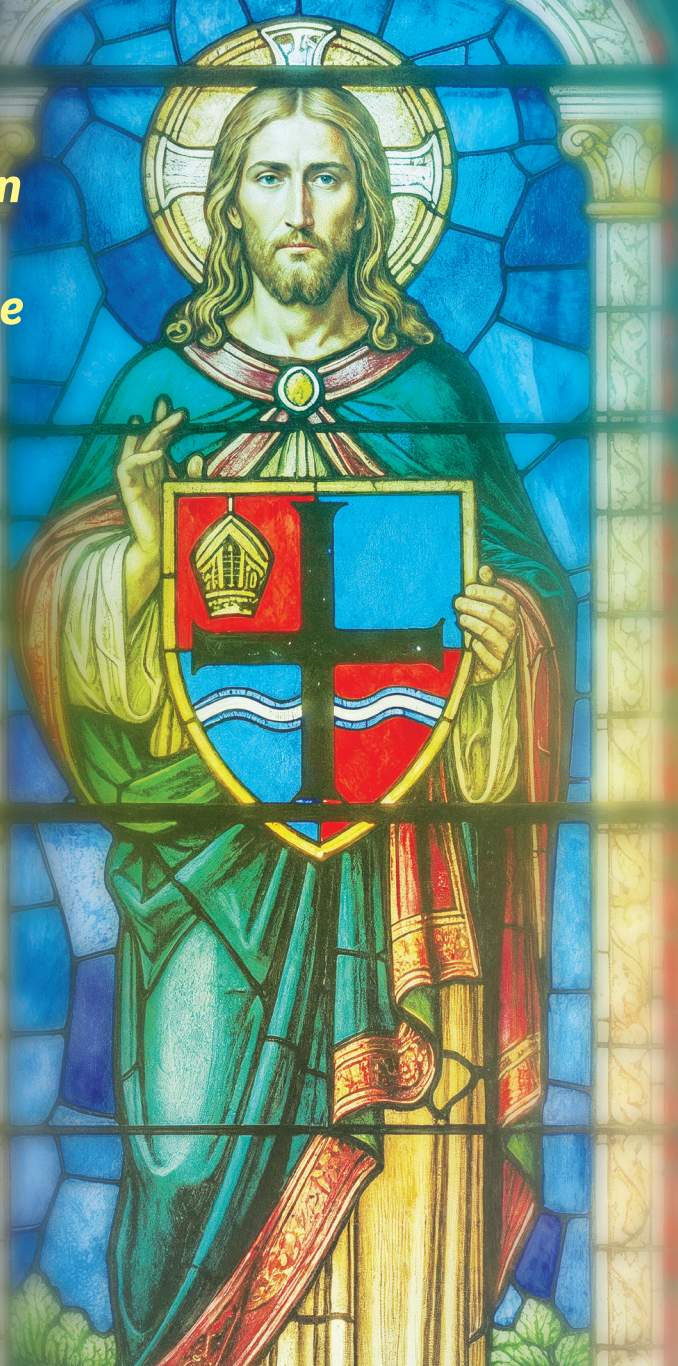
**The new generation
of young Catholics
making a difference
in the world!**

**Full story
pgs 8,9,10 >>**

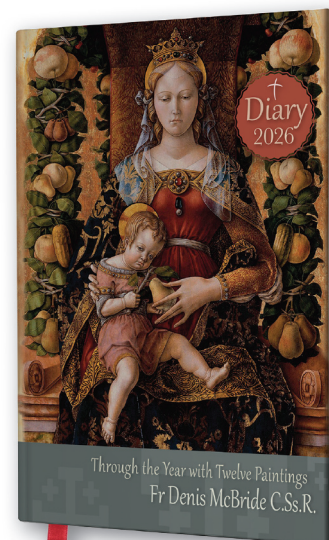


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prepare ourselves to
become courageous
witnesses to Christ.**

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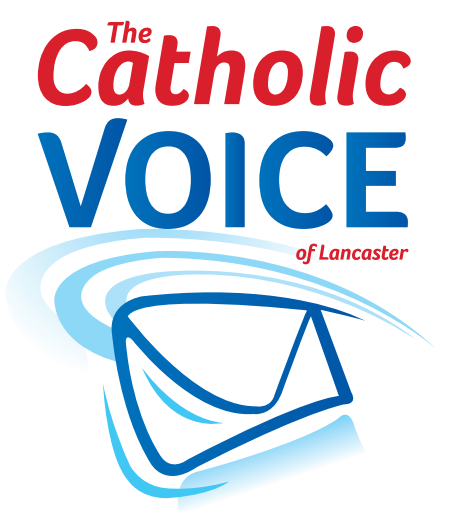
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WORLD YOUTH DAY – 23 November 2025



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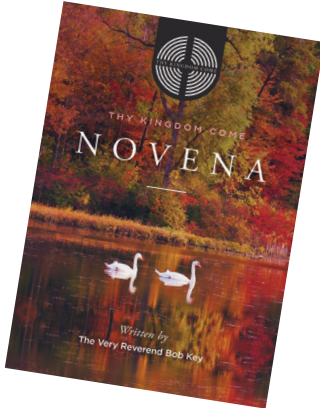


Dear Catholic Voice

I was inspired to contact you following the article about “News of Synodality”, in last month’s edition. I have been recently reading a wonderful booklet called “Thy Kingdom Come” by Rev Bob Key - which contains some lovely prayers and a beautiful Novena which is very fitting for theme of Synodality. Especially relevant is the Novena Prayer for Day 6 which I will quote:

“Living the Kingdom of God, must mean building churches where we love one another not merely for people who are like us, we are called to something much more radical and something much more attractive. We are designed to be a community of servants, serving and being served by each other across all the man made barriers that often divide and discriminate.”

It is a lovely booklet and novena prayer and I recommend it for a good read for all parishes during a time of change in our churches. I would like to thank Fr Hugh and Fr Simon Marley for always helping myself and all our parishioners and they are good examples of how we can all help each other in the parish together.



Jenny Davies
Holy Trinity & St George’s RC Church, Kendal

Dear Catholic Voice

How wonderful to read in October’s The Catholic Voice of Lancaster of the ordination to the Catholic priesthood of Fr Robert Hannaford in June this year - a married man with four sons and two grandsons.

This year the Pew Research Centre reported that 63% of US Catholics say the church should allow priests to get married, although weekly mass attenders were more split on the issue with 49% supportive but 48% opposed. A similar poll of Catholics by Saint Leo University in the US in 2019 showed that 70.4% said that they “strongly or somewhat believe the church should allow priests to marry”. An Irish Survey commissioned by the Association of Catholic Priests (Ireland) as far back as 2012 showed that 82% of respondents agreed that “catholic priests should be allowed to marry” - and in this survey 69% of respondents attended mass every week. This looks very much like the Holy Spirit speaking. Celibacy is a discipline, not a doctrine. The priesthood is conferred by the sacrament of holy orders, not by the state of continence. Presbyterorum Ordinis : ‘Decree on the ministry and life of priests’ December 1965 section 16), states that celibacy is “a gift...not required by the nature of priesthood”. Thus, when the church discerns a pastoral need that does not endanger the sign-value of celibacy, it may dispense from the rule.

With falling numbers of priests in many cases contributing to the closure of Catholic parishes, the evidence of such ‘pastoral need’ is surely self-apparent. The current preference of the church to limit married priests, and to not widen the dispensations already available to Anglicans is apparently privileging a choice not shared by the whole body of Christ - that is the whole people of God’s church on earth. This is reducing local access to the sacraments and contributing to a decline in faith. We are all encouraged to recognise and see the ‘signs of the times’ and to listen carefully to what the holy spirit is saying to us. Perhaps next time we pray for vocations we could also pray that the church may be granted the spiritual equivalent of new glasses and a hearing aid!

Dominic Harrison

Dear Catholic Voice

I was interested in “My Vocational Journey” Fr Robert Hannaford, in the Catholic Voice October edition. While I congratulate him on his ordination and wish him and his family well, I am puzzled as to why married men are not made welcome to be ordained. As we insist on a vow of celibacy and our priestly ordinations are diminishing, could this step be at least considered?

Finally it is with sadness that priests who later marry, have to step down from their priestly role when they have so much to offer.

Sincerely, Mrs Elizabeth Alty
Our Lady & St Edward’s Church, Fulwood, Preston



Thank you to Karen McKay for sending in this beautiful new poem about bereavement, for All Souls Day this November, especially written for our readers. It is called ‘Left Behind’.

Gather them in, O Lord,
these lonely hearts,
Who long for lovers not to come-
but lost –
Sole love and lovers of a life
Who loving – lost and losing –
Lose themselves in lamentation.

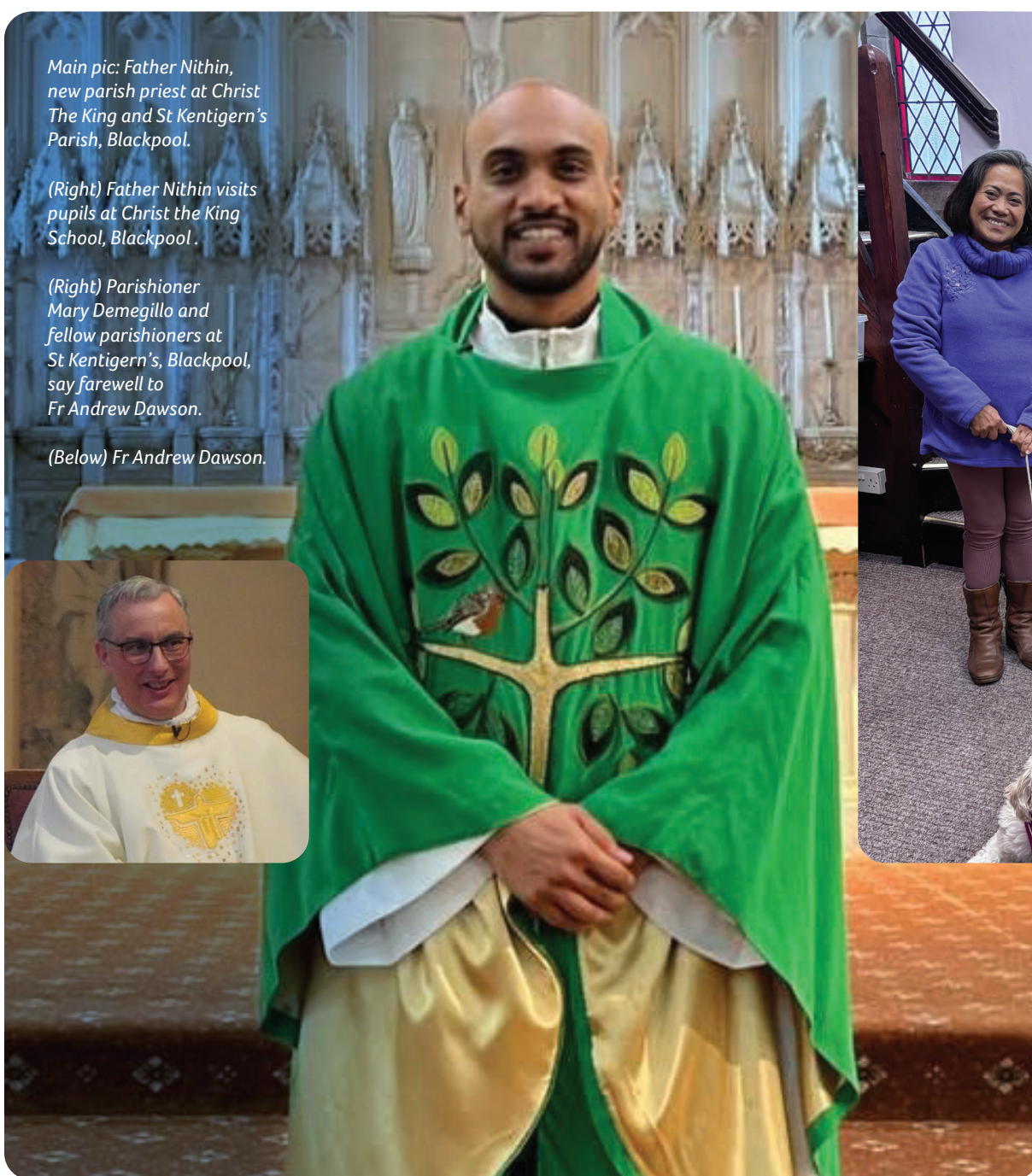
Gather them close, O Lord,
into your Sacred Heart
And love them into light and
sweet salvation
Where all love leads and lights
The ways to Our Beloved –
Losing and finding in
everlasting restoration.

Main pic: Father Nithin, new parish priest at Christ The King and St Kentigern's Parish, Blackpool.

(Right) Father Nithin visits pupils at Christ the King School, Blackpool.

(Right) Parishioner Mary Demegillo and fellow parishioners at St Kentigern's, Blackpool, say farewell to Fr Andrew Dawson.

(Below) Fr Andrew Dawson.



Farewell Father Andrew... Welcome Father Nithin

'I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do'. Luke 4:43.

Autumn is here, a season of change and it's all change at the diocesan stations of Christ the King and St Kentigern as after almost 8 years parishioners bid 'au revoir' to Fr Andrew and welcomed aboard Fr Nithin as their new 'priest in charge'.

Parishioners gave a big thanks to everyone who assisted Fr Andrew and Fr Nithin with their moves as helpers got stuck in and were busy moving boxes, cleaning, driving, packing, unpacking and trips to the tip! Moving clergy is not a small operation!

A Mass of Thanksgiving for Fr Andrew and his ministry will be arranged for the near future at St Kentigern's Church.

The parishioners thanked Fr Andrew for all his good work within the parish and particularly with the school and as the hospital Chaplain.

In his last mass they applauded him and said farewell and God Bless, as he begins his new ministry in Preston.

Together they warmly welcomed Fr Nithin as their new Parish Priest. After celebrating his first Mass in the parish, Fr Nithin visited every class in Christ the King school.

Fr Nithin Antony is a native of Kerala, India, and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Changanacherry in 2013.

He has served in diverse pastoral and diocesan ministries, including assistant parish priest, parish priest, chief editor of the diocesan family magazine, and coordinator of the diocesan pre-marriage course.

In 2023, he was sent to the Diocese of Lancaster, where he began his ministry as assistant parish priest in Barrow-in-Furness.

Alongside his pastoral work, Fr. Nithin has taught Media Studies at Mahatma Gandhi University and has taught Pastoral Communication in several seminaries across Kerala. He also served as the online editor of a secular daily, managed by the Catholic Bishops of Kerala, and has led media literacy training programmes supported by the Google News Initiative and BBC Young Reporters India.

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On Saturday 20th September, 2025 many people from around the Lancaster Diocese including altar servers from different parishes and members of St Stephen's Guild, gathered with Bishop Paul Swarbrick to begin the annual pilgrimage to Ladyewell Shrine.

Holy Mass took place in St. Mary's, Fernyhalgh, which had been especially decorated and due to the rain, Benediction also took place there. Also taking part were priests, religious sisters and children assisting with the strewing of rose petals and parishioners from parishes near and far.

Following the conclusion of Benediction, Scouts from 8th Fulwood Scout Group (Our Lady and St. Edward's, Preston) prepared a superb barbeque for the Altar Servers and their friends and family down at Ladyewell.

It was a great opportunity for Altar Servers from around the Diocese to meet socially. Ian Mulholland, St Stephen's Guild

Lancaster Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage To Ladyewell – The Shrine of Our Lady and the Martyrs

After the initial greeting by Bishop Paul, asked Keith from St Wulstan's in Fleetwood, to give a brief resume of his time as a server.

Keith started serving in 1950, he was appointed by Father Francis Xavier Whiteside.

Keith spoke about his love for the liturgy and serving, always making himself available when asked.

This is echoed in the commitment all servers make when they are enrolled into the Guild.

"I offer myself to God almighty, to blessed Mary, our Mother and to our holy patron St Stephen. And I promise to do my best to serve regularly with reverence and understanding, for the glory of God, the service of his Church, and my own eternal salvation."

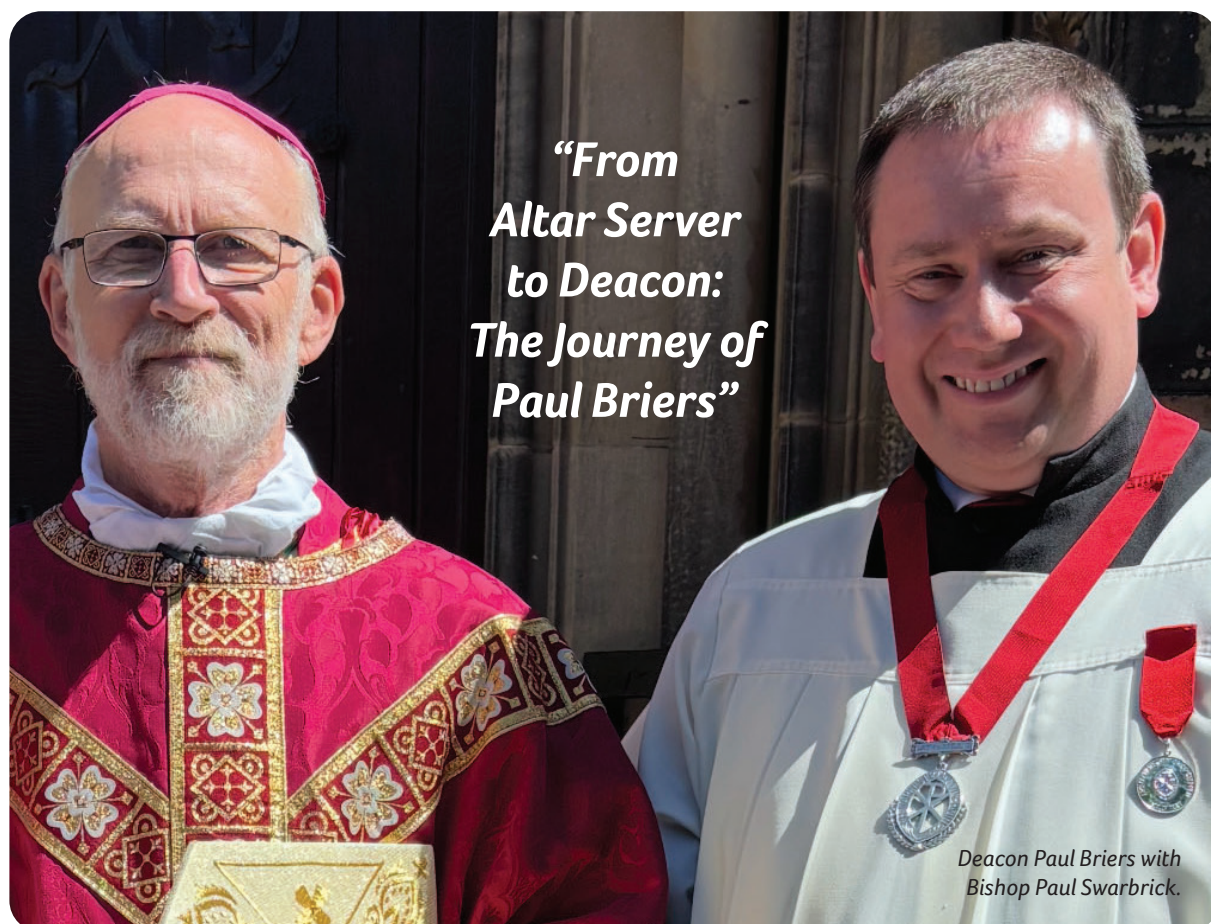
Bishop Paul, in his homily, mentioned that being committed to something often carries a sacrifice. He said that often there will be distractions and it will be hard to navigate around them. He added that "your commitment as servers is essential, and I thank you for your ministry".

In his message to the altar servers Bishop Paul said:

"Be Encouraged and Persevere! I say to all the boys and girls, men and women altar servers here today, that you are growing in fidelity, growing in ability to serve well and in confidence and with reverence. Well done, you are a credit to your parents, your parishes and your grandparents."

St Stephen, pray for us; Our Lady of Fernyhalgh, pray for us; The Lancashire and Cumbrian Martyrs, pray for us; St Cuthbert, pray for us.

More photos on the Guild of St Stephen Flickr page: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCuKkj>



**“From
Altar Server
to Deacon:
The Journey of
Paul Briers”**

Deacon Paul Briers with
Bishop Paul Swarbrick.



Our Congratulations
go to Paul Briers who
recently received
the ministry of
Lector (Reader) at
Lancaster Cathedral,
a significant milestone
on his journey to
ordination to the
diaconate in
the summer.

Paul Briers: A Life of Service at the Altar and Beyond

For Paul Briers, a candidate preparing for ordination to the permanent diaconate, the journey has been anything but straightforward. Born in Liverpool but raised in Lytham St Anne's, his early years were marked by family breakdown and loneliness. Yet, out of that difficult time, seeds of faith were planted.

“I was about nine or ten when, with some mates, I wandered into Our Lady Star of the Sea, St Anne's,” Paul recalls. “It wasn't mischief, just curiosity. But for me, a seed was planted. I found myself going back, first for morning prayer before school, then for Mass. Parishioners began to talk to me and welcome me and before long I spoke to the priest as I wanted to become Catholic.” I had not been baptised and did not come from a religious or practising family. The feeling I was being called, was very strong.

By the age of thirteen, Paul was baptised, confirmed, and received First Communion. He was soon serving at the altar. *“The week after my baptism, I was an altar server. From then on, the liturgy became central to my life.”* At one point, St Anne's had 45 altar servers on the books. *“It gave me a real sense of community and belonging,”* Paul says.

At sixteen, Paul briefly considered the priesthood. Bishop Brewer advised him to *“go and live life for a few years”* before making such a commitment. Paul did exactly that. He met Liz, who later became his wife and they have two children, Joey (17) and Izzy (14). Paul pursued a varied career in management, but his involvement in parish life never faded.

When work brought the couple to Cumbria, Paul was delighted to find his new parish was also dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea. *“Again, I felt it was Our Blessed Mother nudging me,”* he says. It wasn't long, in fact less than four weeks, before there was a knock at the door and there stood Fr Michael Phillips OSB, the local parish priest (PP). From day one I was back at the altar, helping to build up the serving team.

That work with servers never stopped. Paul has spent years training and encouraging altar servers locally and nationally. His dedication led to his appointment as National Honorary President of the Guild of St Stephen, with the bishop's blessing, as this meant taking a couple years out from his studies. *“Serving has always been central to my life,”* he says. *“Everything else is secondary.”*

Alongside supportive clergy, one lay parishioner played a particularly important role in his journey. *“I always call her ‘Mum,’ though she wasn't my biological mother,”* Paul fondly remembers. *“Her name was Rose Moss, a parishioner at St Anne's. With the family breakdown, we grew very close, sharing our faith, praying together and spending many happy times together. She always believed there was something different in me. She'd say, ‘You were quoting Psalms at ten years old — there's something about you.’ She encouraged me all the way.”*

The call to the diaconate came gradually. *“I've never had a big metanoia moment,”* Paul admits. *“Instead, it's been gentle promptings, not being fulfilled in what I am currently doing. The feeling there is more... parishioners saying things, priests calling me ‘a man of the Church.’ I've doubted it many times, but the call always comes back.”*

Spiritually, Paul draws strength from three particular sources:

“The Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady, and Ignatian spirituality — seeing God in all things. At the same time, I have a traditional streak. I love the reverence of High Mass. But faith must also be lived, rooted in real life and real experience.”

As ordination approaches, Paul admits to some nerves and continuing doubts. But his outlook remains steady: *“The Lord is extremely patient. My first thoughts of ministry were when I was sixteen. Now, in my forties, I can see God's hand guiding me gently, all in His own time.”*

Andrew Wygladala

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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Teddy Jones, Year 8 pupil at Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston, writes about the historic Our Lady of Lourdes Statue Tour Centenary Mass



(Photo Above) Teddy Jones and pupils from Our Lady's Catholic High School at the Our Lady of Lourdes Centenary Mass. (Photo Right) The Pilgrim of Grace statue was passed to Mr Peter Duffy, CEO Mater Ecclesiae Trust.

Pupils and staff from Our Lady's Catholic High School were privileged to take part in the Centenary Mass at St Mary's, Fernyhalgh, celebrated by Fr Augustine and attended by schools from across the Diocese.

A highlight of the celebration for our school community was Year 8 pupil, Teddy Jones, who read the First Reading with clarity and reverence. Reflecting on the experience, Teddy shared:

"After the Mass I felt closer to God and closer to the other pupils in our group."

Earlier this year, our school had the honour of welcoming the Centenary statue at the very beginning of its journey around the Catholic schools of Lancashire. Pupils helped to receive the statue into Our Lady's with great joy and reverence, before carrying it on to St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

to continue its pilgrimage. For many of them, to see the statue once again at the Centenary Mass – after it had travelled faithfully around our schools – was a deeply moving and uplifting moment.

Following Mass, pupils visited Ladyewell Shrine, where they prayed the Stations of the Cross and spent time at the Holy Well. This provided a quiet and prayerful conclusion to a day filled with thanksgiving and joy, one which brought our young people closer to God and to one another.

Teddy said, *"the Centenary celebrations remind us that we belong to a wider Catholic family, bound together in faith and mission."*

Our Lady's pupils and staff were proud to play their part in this historic occasion.

*Richard Charnock, Headteacher
Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston*











Regional Mass for Our Lady of Lourdes Centenary Statue Tour at St Joseph's, Ansdell

St Bede's Catholic High School Head Teacher Mr Marsden, Lay Chaplain Mrs Jenny Ball and pupils from St Bede's Catholic High School attended the Regional Diocese Mass at St Joseph's in Ansdell.

Written by Imogen Everton & Aurelia Cunningham-Kay, pupils from St Bede's Catholic High School.

St Joseph's looked beautiful with the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes on the altar surrounded with flowers – it reminded us of when the statue came to our school and we had days of prayers to her in thanks for our Diocese. It was good to think of that special time we had when the statue was with us and how it helped us in our devotion to Our Lady who we rely on to take our prayers to Jesus.

It was our job to welcome all the different schools from the local area as they arrived, and this brought on some emotion for me to see my old favourite teacher from my primary school. I can't remember all the schools that were there but it was a lot! All the schools looked so smart and ready for Mass. Fr Peter was full of life, happy and taught us how to sign the 'Holy, Holy'.

It was wonderful to see so many people there and it reminded us that we all have the same faith, and Mass is a great time to come together and pray. The readings and parts of the Mass were also done in sign language, this was lovely to see and made sure all were included and showed spirit of great service (from the Cardinal Allen pupils).

It was great to hear the hymns sung loudly. At the end of the Mass the Mary statue was passed on with prayers and a blessing. We will carry on praying for the Lancaster Diocese here at our school.



(Right) Pupils from St Bede's Catholic High School, Lytham at the Regional Centenary Mass at St Joseph's RC Church, Ansdell.

(Below) Fr Peter Clark celebrant, passes the The Pilgrim of Grace statue to Mrs Helen O'Neill, CEO Blessed Edward Bamber Trust.



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Being A Young

Living To Make Christ Known at Cardinal Allen Catholic High School, Fleetwood.



The Jubilee Year of Hope has been filled with faith and friendship as Cardinal Allen School Chaplain Sarah Morton celebrates the many faith filled activities with pupils. The incredible Jubilee journey has been documented and showcased by Year 11 students Eva Brooks and Amelie Murphy- Henry.



Pupils from St Wulstuns, St Edmunds & St Mary's with Father Stephen Talbutt and The NET Ministry & Mission Team.



Cardinal Allen Yr 10 Boys with the NET Scotland Ministry Missions Team.



Bishop Paul at St Theresa's RC Church with confirmation candidates.



School Chaplain Sarah Morton, right hand side with scarf on and Head of RE Mrs Wilson 3rd on the right (long camel coat) at St Theresa's Church Cleveleys and the Confirmation pupils.

The introduction of our revised school Mission at the start of the school year brought us a fresh challenge. As a Catholic school our mission has always been to make Jesus known throughout Fleetwood and the wider community, but we can only do that if we first get to know Him ourselves.

This year has been full of opportunities for us to grow in our faith and understand more about what it means to know Jesus.

We've taken part in lots of different events and visits that have helped us feel closer to God and more confident

in being young Catholics. These experiences have helped us realise that faith isn't just something you learn about, it's something you live.

NET Ministries Scotland: School Retreat Day

One of the first big things at the start of the school year was when NET Ministries Scotland came to our school for a retreat day. We took part in various activities such as games, prayer time and prayer ministry, confession, and personal reflection. These activities helped us understand our physical connection to God, that we can all have a relationship with Him no matter what our previous

connection has been with Him. The team performed two short pieces of drama which not only entertained us but had a powerful message, which helped us understand how to build this relationship with Him. Spending time in the evening with them too in the Parish and chatting and laughing over fish and chips (thanks Fr. Stephen Talbutt) gave some of us time to really get to know the Missionaries who were so inspiring.

They were young people like us, which made it easier to listen to them and feel like they understood us. This experience was so joyful and fulfilling, and made a big difference to how we see our

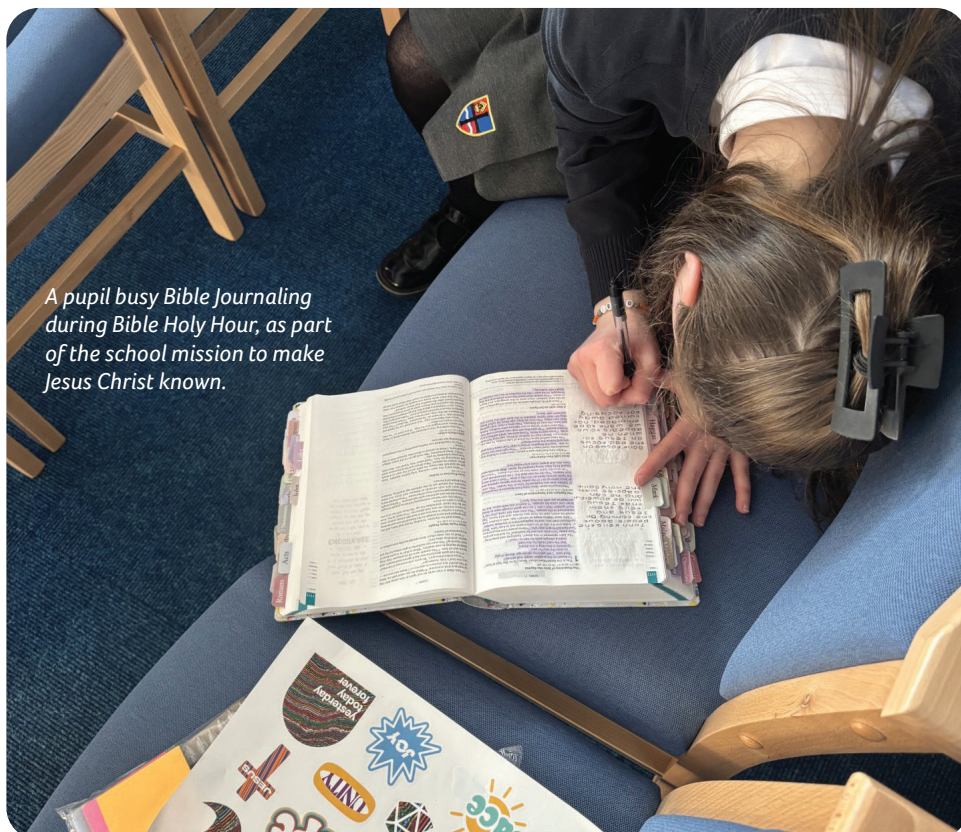
faith, encouraging us to open up in to prayer and think intentionally about our relationship with God.

Confirmation

For those of us that were Confirmed this school year, it was a really powerful moment in our journey of faith. Preparing for Confirmation helped us take our beliefs to the next level. It wasn't just something school or our parents influenced us, it was a decision made on our own account.

Receiving the Holy Spirit in this way made us feel stronger and more ready to live out our faith in everyday life. It also

Catholic Today



A pupil busy Bible Journaling during Bible Holy Hour, as part of the school mission to make Jesus Christ known.



Pupils at The Flame Conference interviewing Cardinal Nichols.



reminded us that we are part of the wider church and that we are not alone.

Youth 2000

During Advent a group of us went to a Youth 2000 retreat in Preston which was another amazing retreat experience. While there, we had plenty of time for prayer, praise, worship, adoration and introducing ourselves to other younger Catholics of our generation. We were also introduced to new worship songs which we have brought back to school.

Later in the day, we listened to a few people's testimonies including Sarah's, who is our Chaplain at Cardinal

Allen. After these testimonies, we gathered into small groups to discuss what we had heard and how we are going to take it into our lives. The retreat closed with a healing service and Benediction, which helped us to feel God's presence in a new way. This was such a peaceful, joyful experience that we will never forget.

Flame

One of the most exciting parts of the year was going to Wembley Arena for the CYMFED Flame event. There were thousands of other young Catholics included in this experience. It made us feel like we were a part of something



Eva Brooks & Amelie Murphy-Henry and pupils in Rome. (Far left)

big, and that we were all united. To start the day off, we listened and watched Christian artists on the main stage, which created an entertaining atmosphere!

We heard a talk from Bear Grylls about his own religious journey, and we were all gifted a copy of his new book *"The greatest story ever told"*. During our breaks, we explored Wembley Arena finding interesting people to interview for our chaplaincy social media accounts, from a range of regular Catholic laity to monks, nuns and even Cardinal Vincent Nichols! We left feeling inspired and full of energy to make a difference back at school and at home.

Pilgrimage to Rome

Just before Easter, some of us were lucky enough to go on a Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome. This trip was filled with various activities including visiting the special landmarks of Rome, including a walking tour of the city in which we saw the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps, a guided tour of the Colosseum, and, of course, the Vatican itself where we visited St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museum.

One of our friends was so moved by the beauty of St. Peter's that she cried! We also visited the Venerable English College, and celebrated Mass there.

Our Patron, Cardinal William Allen helped found the college and so the seminarian very kindly took us down to his crypt where Cardinal Allen’s remains are.

During our free time we enjoyed shopping, football, relaxation and creating memories which will last us a lifetime. It was amazing to be in the city where so much of the Church’s history has happened! But also, the Church’s present and future. These experiences also made watching the news coverage of Pope Francis’ death and funeral, and then the Conclave, really moving. Seeing the places we had been like St. Peter’s and the English College, and Cardinal Nichols too.

This school year has really helped us grow our faith in ways we didn’t expect. We’re extremely grateful for all the chances we have had to be a part of something bigger than our school and parishes.

Overall, our school mission of “Living to make Christ known” has been brought to life. It’s something we’re trying to live out every day.

Each individual experience has helped us to know Jesus Christ more personally, which flows out of us so that we make Him known to others. We can’t wait to see what next year brings!

By Eva Brooks & Amelie Murphy-Henry
Year 11 pupils, Cardinal Allen High School



Pupils at The Venerable English College in Rome.



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Fr Derek Turnham,
St Anne’s Parish

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I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know the hope to which he has called you. Ephesians 1:17-18

The pupils who attended Flame were asked to host a standalone programme on Radio Maria England, sharing their highlights of the conference. They had a great time, and whilst the Presbytery in Fleetwood isn’t the most glamorous studio, we were very proud to be broadcasting live to the nation!

You can listen again on Spotify

Broadcast live on Friday 20th June, this special programme looked back at the unforgettable moments of Flame 2025, the largest gathering of Catholic young people in England and Wales, held earlier this year at the OVO Arena in London.

Students from Cardinal Allen Catholic High School in Fleetwood hosted the programme sharing their personal highlights from the day. From the powerful testimonies and inspiring speakers to the incredible energy of the crowd, uplifting musical acts, and the joy of connecting with thousands of other young Catholics across the country – it was a day of deep faith, fun, and fellowship.

We were also joined by Mary Maziva, one of the event organisers and an MC for the day, who gave us a glimpse behind the scenes – offering reflections on how the event came together and what it meant for the team to witness the Spirit moving among so many young people.

For more pictures you can follow the students on Instagram:

@cardinalallencatholiclife
Instagram photos and videos and all can be accessed through scanning the QR code:



Father Augustine
celebrating
Creation.

Our Lady & St Edward and St Mary, Newhouse, celebrate The Season of Creation

The Heavens declare the
Glory of God and the
firmament proclaims the
work of His hands

“
As I walked into the
church last Sunday for
our parish celebration of
the Season of Creation, my
heart was filled with joy.”

Fr Augustine Obiagwu



**Stephen Garsed, Diocesan Environmental
Lead, reports on the special celebrations.**

Our Lady and St Edward (OLSE)
in Preston and its sister parish,
St Mary Newhouse in Barton, celebrated
The Season of Creation with a special
Mass of Thanksgiving and gave thanks
for the generosity of God.

Our-priest-in-charge, Fr Augustine
and our Parish Sisters, Sr Shienrose,
Sr Monique and Sr Teresa all embraced
the celebration with joy and worked
hard to make the Masses special.

In a short post-Communion talk the
previous weekend, parishioners at
both churches were invited to be active
participants in the celebrations and to
bring something that spoke to them of
the glory of Creation. The children (*and
some adults*) brought soft animal toys to
remind us of the wonders of nature – just
as statues remind us of Jesus, Mary and
the saints.

At the start of Mass, children brought
up earth, water and seeds whilst a
reader gave thanks for each in turn and
expressed the need to care for them
and to share them all justly with our
brothers and sisters. Instead of the
usual Penitential Rite we had a blessing
with water from our diocesan shrine
at Ladyewell. After the Sunday morning
Mass at OLSE we planted fruit trees and
daffodil bulbs in the parish garden.

A number of parishioners contributed
decorations and produce at OLSE. One
prepared a beautiful tableau by the
entrance doors. The children produced
artwork which was displayed on the
pillars alongside quotes from Popes
Francis and Leo on the importance of
caring for Creation.

At St Mary Newhouse, the Church was
decorated by Sr Shienrose with a lovely
display of nature pictures and flowers.
Members of the congregation brought
a wide variety of home-grown fruit
and vegetables.

Sr Shienrose even harvested pears
from the parish tree! These offerings
were brought up at the offertory by
children from the junior school who also
participated in the bidding prayers.

So, what did parishioners think?

“I very pleased with the spirited singing
of creation hymns”, said the Musician; “The
Mass was a joyful celebration of God’s
marvellous creation. It was a joy to see so
many children participating in the Mass”
Mike; “Indeed, the Mass was beautiful”.
Sr Shienrose.

Why did we celebrate Creation?

Firstly, to give thanks and praise to God
for His immense love and generosity.
Popes Francis and Leo have made clear
the link between gratitude and respect.
If we care for something, we will cherish
and care for it. During the Mass we heard
the parable of the rich man who came
unstuck because of his indifference
to Lazarus at his gate. It was a stark
reminder that we too will come unstuck
if we are indifferent to God’s great gift
of Creation.

Fr Augustine summed it up thus:
“As I walked into the church last Sunday
for our parish celebration of the Season
of Creation, my heart was filled with joy.
The altar, beautifully decorated with
natural objects, flowers, drawings, and
even animals like the tiger, reminded
me of the richness and beauty of God’s
handiwork. It was a visible sign that
Creation itself praises the Lord.

The blessing of holy water from Ladyewell
and the sprinkling over the congregation
in place of the penitential rite brought a
deep sense of renewal and unity with
creation and with God. As a priest, I felt
truly grateful to see the parish family
for embracing this season with such
reverence and creativity. It reminded me
that caring for Creation is not just an
option but an essential expression of
our faith”

Stephen Garsed



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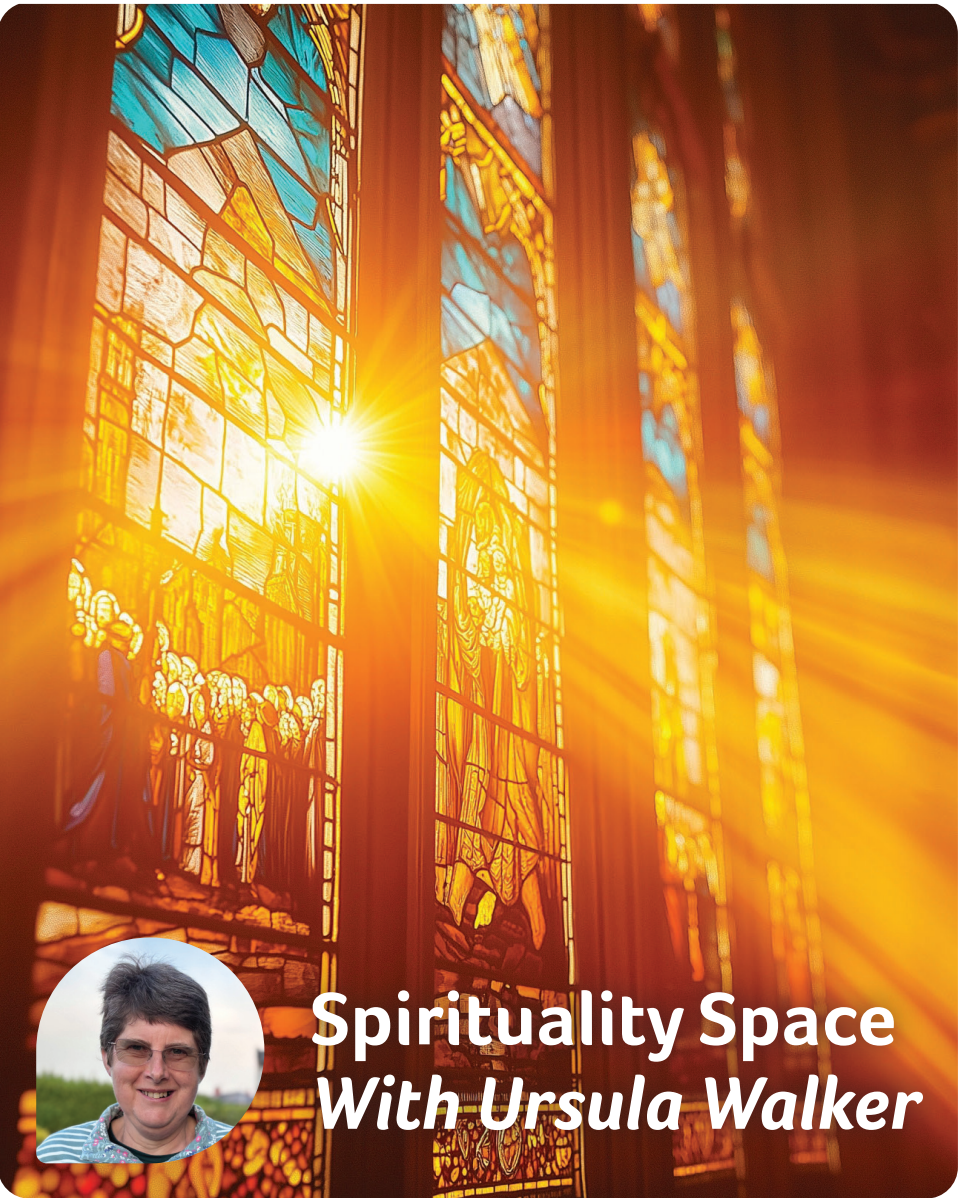
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Spirituality Space With Ursula Walker



Take Time Out for Advent Prayer

The Season of Advent begins on
Sunday November 30th 2025

Happy New Year - for our Churches!
Christianity is based on a relationship with God as a person. It involves a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Christianity begins with God's initiative – the Incarnation – God becoming man. Christians believe that, as perfect God and perfect man, Jesus Christ is the link to bring God and people together.

We start to prepare for this great event as we prepare for Christmas in Advent. Advent is a time of "waiting"... We are waiting for the coming of Jesus. It is also the start of the Church's year. When we think of the New Year we tend to think of New Year resolutions and why not start one this New Year. Here are two ideas that may appeal to you.

Have you ever thought "I would like to read the Bible all the way through starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation?" The first few books may be OK, Genesis, Exodus, etc. but when you get to Leviticus and all the laws, you sort of lose heart and every day it becomes harder to motivate yourself... Luckily for you, a priest has devised a way of taking you through the Bible but not from start to finish in that way. He takes you through the Bible but with linking things from the Old Testament to things in the New so that you get an understanding of how Jesus fulfils the Jewish law (as He says he does).

Fr. Mike Schmitz has called this "The Bible in a Year". It is to be found on YouTube and you can do it at your own pace. Do a little bit and then it does not matter if you have to miss a day or two you can pick up where you left off..... just don't leave it too long before you go back to it. Then by the end of the year you can say to yourself "I have read the Bible in a year." What an achievement.

Type into Google "Bible in a Year" then choose: Fr. Mike Schmitz. If the "Bible in a Year" does not grab you, how about the Catholic Catechism in a Year? Type in "Catechism in a Year" and then choose: Fr. Mike Schmitz. The good things about these is that you can do them whilst you are doing something else, e.g. knitting, crocheting, cleaning the windows, ...things that don't need a lot of brain power. Things you might do regularly.

If you do not finish it by next Advent what does it matter? You can finish it by Christmas.

I found that I became quite animated and at times challenged by what Fr. Mike was saying. He makes it come alive and challenges us to see if we are really living out what we believe.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church came about after Vatican 2 and the aim of it was to: "Present an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's tradition. Its principles sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy and the Church's Magisterium..." Prologue of The Catechism of the Catholic Church (pg 9).

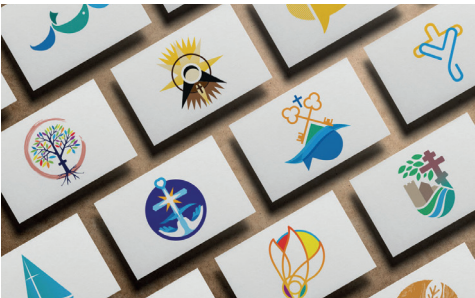
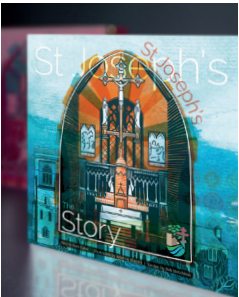
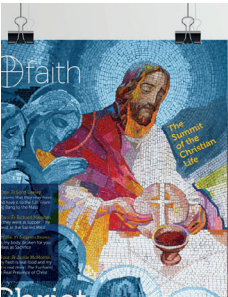
Sometimes we can feel at a loss when we are asked something about our faith and so often we stay quiet and don't say anything. Having the Catechism at home can help us to be more confident at defending what we believe. It is a great source and is easy reading. It is not heavy going and you can dip in and out. Knowing what we believe is important so when we get into discussion with people about our faith we have the confidence to say "this is what I believe" and to be able to back it up with scripture and the Church's teaching. Read it online: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM or buy the book – Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition.

The Nicene Creed that we say on Sunday is a summary of our beliefs. It is a set of statements of what we believe. This year is the 1700 Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

The Nicene Creed is the foundation of our faith and the source of prayer and theology. Some years ago I used a reflection on the Apostle's Creed at one of the House Groups I was leading so I thought I would share this with you. It is not as long as the Nicene Creed but covers all the main points.

I hope I have given you some things to consider for the New Year ahead. Wishing you a very blessed Christmas when it comes. *Happy New Year.*

Ursula Walker, Spiritual Rep for the Diocese
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The Apostles Creed Advent Reflection

We believe... In God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth...



The first stories in the book of Genesis (*the first book of the Bible*) reveal God to be a creator. The being who, from his own imagination and power, brought the universe into being. He is also seen as more than that. The language used does not picture Him as remote but rather that he cares intimately for the world he has made.

[Genesis 1: 1-3; Psalm 145:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6.](#)

In Jesus Christ, God's only Son, Our Lord – God's power is shown in creation but his character is revealed in the man Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus was God come to earth as a person. This was the only way we would ever be able to understand what the invisible God is like. The use of the word "son" is used to describe the unique relationship between Jesus on earth and God in heaven – 2 equal persons in one.

[John 10:30 36-38; 2 Peter 1:16-18.](#)

Jesus Christ was Conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary – The Holy Spirit (*the third equal person in the Trinity*) represents God's continuous presence of earth and His power to affect events in time and space. He acted to bring Jesus into the world through an ordinary girl – Mary. Jesus' supernatural conception marked the beginning of His unique life as God as God and man, fully human yet fully divine. We use the word "incarnation" which means to, 'take flesh'.

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Jesus Christ Suffered Under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified and was Buried... Jesus' whole life on earth is taken as read here because the events of his death and resurrection are so important to the Christian faith. Jesus' death was for a purpose and all the events of His life led towards it. The earliest Christians were keen to emphasise the death of Jesus because his resurrection was so amazing that the people doubted he had actually died.

[Luke 23:13-25, 32-34, 44-46; Matthew 27:57-60.](#)

Jesus Christ Descended to the Dead... Jesus was physically dead for three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection. We have no knowledge of what happens to those who die but we believe that Jesus also experienced something of that state during his three days in the tomb...

[Matthew 12:38-40; 1 Peter 3:18-19.](#)

Jesus Christ Rose Again on the Third Day... this is the crucial historical event upon which Christianity is founded. Before Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection they were a defeated, frightened, a group of deserted followers. Then everything fell into place. Jesus had conquered death and was alive forever. Everything He had taught them was true.

[Matthew 27:62-66; Matthew 28:1-9; Luke 24:44-47.](#)

Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father... The first disciples were eye witnesses to the fact that Jesus left the earth in a miraculous way. One minute He was with them on the mountain, the next He was gone. The phrase 'seated at the right hand' is picture language to express the position of honour given to Jesus because of His unique relationship with the Father.

[Luke 24:49-51; John 20:17; Hebrews 12:2.](#)

"All the troubles of life come upon us because we refuse to sit quietly for a while each day in our rooms." *Blaise Pascal*

Trivia Quiz – Which statement is true? The Bible contains:

- a) 72 books (45 in OT and 27 NT)
- b) 63 books (51 in OT and 12 NT)
- c) 78 books (49 in OT and 29 NT)
- d) 73 books (46 in OT and 27 NT)

Answer on page 14 >>



Thinking of Becoming A Priest

Come to the Day of Recollection and Discernment! The day is for single men 16 years or over who are considering priesthood: Saturday 22 November 10am-4pm at Lancaster Cathedral. The day will include Mass, adoration, guided prayer, talks to assist discernment & lunch. To book call: Heather Watts on: **01524 841190** or email: Heather.Watts@lrcd.org.uk

Spirituality Space in November What's On Guide

First Saturday
1st November

Miraculous Medal Novena & Mass at St John Vianneys RC Church, Blackpool. 9:30am All Welcome.

First Friday
7th November

Healing Mass & Sacrament of The Sick at St Joseph's RC Church, Ansdell. 2pm. All welcome.

First Friday
7th November

Eucharistic Holy Hour at St John Vianney's RC Church Blackpool. 7pm. All welcome.

Friday
14 & 28th Nov

Unveiled. Prayer, praise and worship and Exposition at St. Wilfred's, Preston. Metanoia Group (Free). 7.30-9pm.

Saturday
15th November

Blackpool and North Fylde Deanery Discerning Day at St Mary's RC Academy, Blackpool. 10am-4pm. A day for clergy and laity to come together to look at the future of our Deanery in the light of the changing times we are living in. All welcome. Bring a packed lunch.

Saturday
30th November

Medjugorje Prayer Group at St. Kentigern's RC Church, Blackpool – Upper Room. 7pm-8pm. All welcome.

Every Mon & Thu
Weekly

Adult Catechesis at St Clare's RC Church, Preston. 7pm-8pm. Led by the Neo-catechumenal communities of Blackpool and Preston. Everyone over 13 is welcome. More info call Tony on 07772 185892.

Every Tue & Fri
Weekly

Adult Catechesis at Our Lady of The Assumption RC Church, Blackpool. 7.30pm-8.30pm. Led by the Neo-catechumenal communities of Blackpool and Preston. Everyone over 13 is welcome. More info call Tony on 07772 185892.

RE-IMAGINING PASTORAL COUNCILS by the School for Synodality

Following on from pg15 - These sessions give you more information and guidance about how to set up a new Pastoral Council or how to adapt your current one. This is a joint Project between the RC Archdiocese of Liverpool and the Dioceses of Hexham & Newcastle and Northampton. Webinars are Tuesday evenings from 7-8pm UK time. Registration is free at <https://buytickets.at/northamptondiocese/1861328>. A one-time registration for all webinars. A link will be sent on the day to each person. Join us on 11th November for *The Importance of Relationships and Keeping the Meetings Spiritual* and the 16th December for *Who does what (and why it matters): Roles, Remit and Recruitment?* There are more courses throughout 2026.

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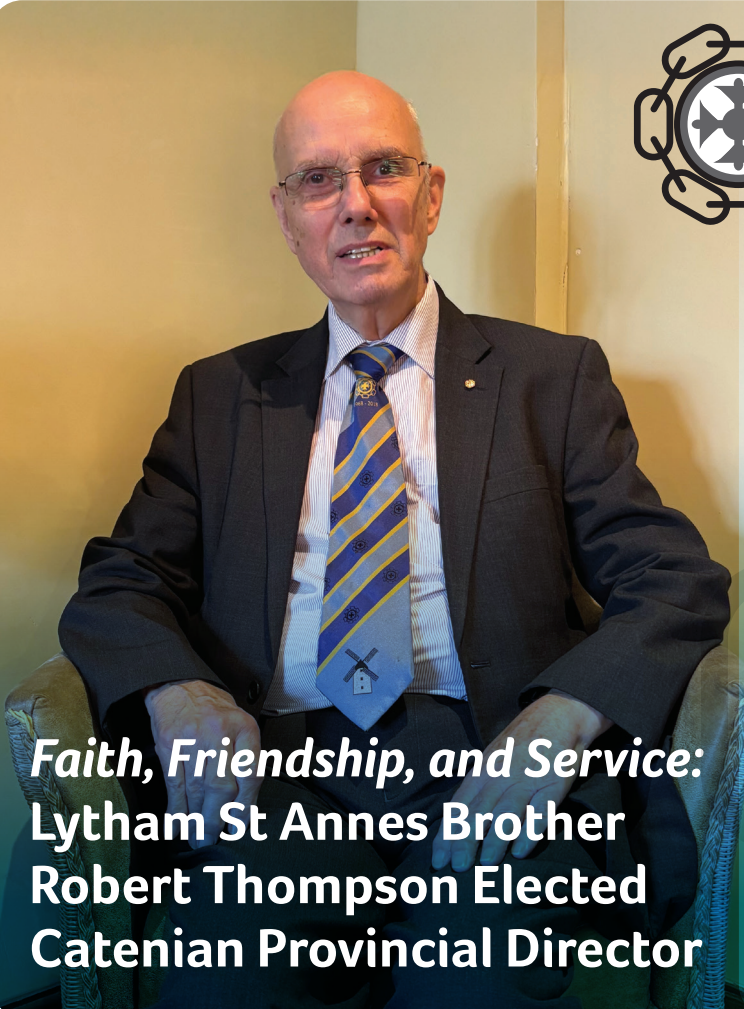


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Faith, Friendship, and Service: Lytham St Annes Brother Robert Thompson Elected Catenian Provincial Director



The Catenians

Stengthening family life through friendship and faith

How to Get Involved with the Catenians:
The Catenian Association welcomes new members who wish to share in Catholic friendship, faith, and family life. Here in Lancaster Diocese, there are active Circles in: Lytham St Annes; Preston [3 Circles]; South Ribble; Garstang; North Lancashire & Westmorland. There are also neighbouring Circles in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Diocese of Salford, and the Diocese of Leeds, all of which together form Province 10.

To find out more, speak to your local Circle. Visitors are always welcome or ask your parish priest, who may be able to put you in touch with a local member. Alternatively, visit our website www.thecatenians.com. The Catenians are open to Catholic men of all ages and walks of life – single, married, widowed, or retired. Why not come along to a meeting or social event and experience the fellowship of this worldwide Catholic brotherhood?

The Catenian Association is a fellowship of Catholic laymen united by friendship, faith, and family. Founded more than a century ago, it provides support and encouragement to Catholic men as they live out their vocation in family life, parish involvement, and wider society. Members, known as “brothers,” meet in local groups called Circles. These are organised into Provinces, each with its own council and leadership, and together the Provincial Directors form the National Council of the Association.

Province 10, to which Lytham St Annes Circle belongs, is home to 13 Circles. Half of these fall within Lancaster Diocese, with the remainder spread across the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Diocese of Salford, and one Circle in the Diocese of Leeds. Each province elects a Director for a three-year term, renewable once. These Directors play a vital role in shaping the life of the Association nationally.

It is therefore a source of joy for our diocese that Robert Thompson of Lytham St Annes Circle has been elected Provincial Director of Province 10. He follows in the footsteps of the late Brian Hargreaves KSG, KGCHS, FIMI, of the North Lancashire and Westmorland Circles, the last member of Lancaster Diocese to hold this position.

Robert brings with him a lifetime of service and commitment. Born in Leeds, he attended St Augustine’s Primary School before completing his education in Sheffield at De La Salle College. After school he joined the Civil Service in Post Office Telephones, which later became BT, where he spent his entire career. Alongside his professional duties, he studied part-time, eventually qualifying as an Associate Chartered Management

Accountant. His work took him to Sheffield, Nottingham, London, and Derbyshire before he and his late wife Colleen settled in Lytham St Annes in 1996.

Outside of work, Robert has long held interests in canal boating, family history, and diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes. His personal life was marked by sadness in 2010 with the death of Colleen after 30 years of marriage. In the years that followed, the Catenian Association became an ever-greater source of fellowship and support.

Having joined the Catenians in 2001, Robert quickly became involved in the life of his Circle. He has served as Circle President on three occasions, as Secretary, Vice-President, and Membership and Marketing Officer. At provincial level he has held office as Councillor, Membership and Marketing Officer, and Provincial President (2016-17). He also plays an important role in “Province Pals,” a group offering support and companionship to Catenian widowers, and continues to serve actively in his parish.

Robert’s election as Provincial Director is both a recognition of his faithful service and a call to lead others. His journey shows how the Catenians provide not only friendship and fraternity, but also a way of living out Catholic faith in visible and practical ways.

As he begins this new role, we wish Robert every blessing. May his leadership inspire others to consider the Catenian Association, where Catholic men can find encouragement in their faith, strength in their friendships, and support for their families.

Andrew Wygladala

Robert looks forward to his new role:

“Whilst the Catenians were formed to help one another through faith and friendship they now financially support the National Vocations Office. We have two priests in this Diocese in training at the moment, and the development of youth and their faith. In a recent edition of Catholic Voice there was an extensive coverage of Flame 2025, an event sponsored by the Catenians and others. We also provide bursaries to young people going to Lourdes with Diocesan Pilgrimages or HCPT and also on individual projects abroad. I have been assigned to this Faith & Youth work group and look forward to what challenges it may bring. Another initiative with regard to youth is our very successful National Speaking competition. Following regional competitions fifth and sixth form students in Catholic education meet in Manchester for the annual competition. It is held there every September. To date this is the only Province that does not send a competitor, I am hoping to rectify this next year and look forward to a busy year ahead.”



A shorter version of the talk given to the Sacred Heart Church parishioners and various parishes in Blackpool & Wyre. By Canon Alf Hayes

By way of introduction, this talk came about from a Blackpool and Thornton Deanery Conference, in a discussion about the usual matters occupying minds today – lack of priests, surplus buildings etc – which we decided to take to our individual parishes for a full parish consultation on the way ahead.

My talk, given in several parishes, is simply a conversation starter for what we hope will have a fruitful outcome for the life of our Church today. The results of each Parish discussion will be sent to Vron Smith, a Facilitator with the Jesuit Institute in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, who will lead a Deanery Assembly on **Saturday November 15th at St Mary's, Layton Hill, Blackpool, 10am-4pm. All are welcome.**

"To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often"
(St John Henry Newman)

My dad died at the age of 92. In his lifetime, he went from living as a little boy in Dublin, where there were hardly any cars, man-powered flight was just beginning, most people had an outside toilet, you got your milk ladled out of a churn from the back of a cart, and watched silent movies, to seeing a man walk on the moon, flying to America with 300 others in a steel tube, and taking a call from Australia on a mobile phone no bigger than a biscuit. Think how many more changes, in the way we live, have taken place since he died.

Many changes have also taken place in the Church. 50 years ago, in my first parish, St Joseph's, Preston, we had four priests, and 1800 people, over six Masses every Sunday, which would be more or less the same for all the Preston parishes. When I went back as Parish Priest 30 years later, we had 100 people, over 2 Masses, and I was on my own.

Huge reduction in the number of Mass-going Catholics, and the lack of priestly vocations, has been a fact of life for some years now, and is a cause of great concern for those who think the Church is doomed. But is the situation really as depressing as some would like us to think? For too long, the health of the Church has been assessed purely in numeric terms – numbers at Mass, numbers of priests and Religious, numbers of vocations, etc. However, the obsession with numbers misses the point of what the Church is for.

The Church exists to evangelise, to spread the Good News. Pentecost doesn't celebrate the birthday of the Church fully

formed and ready to go, as many people think. So, far from being depressed by "rumours of our demise", I firmly believe that God is doing a new thing, as he tried to do through the Holy Spirit, at the Second Vatican Council, 60 years ago.

Now, at last, things are beginning to happen in our Church, where the Priesthood of the Laity, thanks largely to Pope Francis in recent years, and Pope Leo today, is finally coming to fruition, as Vat II always intended it to, as you can see in these quotes from Lumen Gentium:

Although they differ essentially, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, are nonetheless ordered to one another; each in its own proper way shares in the priesthood of Christ. (Lumen Gentium 10)

This apostolate belongs to absolutely every Christian. The Laity can be called, in different ways, to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy, just like the men and women who helped the apostle Paul to spread the gospel, labouring much in the Lord. (Phil 4,3. Rom 16,3) (Lumen Gentium 33).

The Holy Spirit lavishes diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts on all the baptised, calling them to be, each in an individual way, active and co-responsible. (Christifidelis Laici 21).

You can see the effect of this in the latest figures: there are 1.9 billion Catholics but only 450,000 priests. What does that tell us?

That the Laity have always done a fabulous job, otherwise the Church would have gone under long ago. And, in today's smaller, but more mature Church, the Laity, in my experience anyway, is showing ever greater positive and effective signs.

Faithful Mass-goers, Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, dedicated teachers, parents and grandparents who nurture their Children's faith, people who look after our finances and buildings, all play a vital part, as leaven in the dough, making our parishes alive with the life of Christ.

To quote St Irenaeus of Lyons: *"The glory of God is man, fully alive,"* bearing witness to the light and life of God, by producing in his life the fruits, gifts, charisms and blessings of the Holy Spirit.

But, remembering why the Church exists, it's also important not to restrict the use of our God given gifts, to the narrow confines of parish life. God is at work in the hearts of all people of good will, of all faiths.

Undoubtedly there is a great deal wrong in our society, but little is gained by passively moaning about it. Our task as Christians is not to condemn the world, but to bring light and life to it, as Jesus did.

So, our pastoral priority today, in the short term, is, not so much to repopulate our seminaries, and draw in crowds to fill our churches, but to move from maintenance to mission, from watching our parishes slowly slide into oblivion, to the divine renovation of the early Church. We do this through intensifying the commitment of the few, ie those of us who have heard the call of Christ and are still with him. This is how Christ himself did things.

To effect this change of attitude and adapt to the new way of being Church in our time, will mean a great deal of discernment, discussion and prayer, and must include thinking outside the confines of our own individual parish. I personally think it's a good time to be alive and part of all that's going on, and it's not like we're starting from scratch. Nor are we alone. Added to your own many collective years' experience of giving life to this parish, is the collective experience of many other parishes, throughout the land and the world, who are in the same boat as us, looking for reinvigoration and trying to discern where the Holy Spirit is taking us in these changing and exciting times.

"Everyone has been blessed with gifts by God, which they should use as part of their baptismal commitment to Make Christ known. And that's better done when parishioners join forces together" Canon Alf Hayes

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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Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for the 40th World Youth Day 2025

Dear young people,

As I begin my first message to you, I would like to say thank you! Thank you for the joy you brought when you came to Rome for your Jubilee, and thank you to all the young people who were united to us through their prayer from every part of the world. Rather than being an isolated event, I hope the Jubilee encounter marks for each of you a step forward in Christian life and a strong encouragement to persevere in witnessing to your faith.

That same dynamic is at the heart of the next World Youth Day, which we will celebrate on 23 November, "Solemnity of Christ the King, with the theme: 'You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me.'" (Jn 15:27).

As pilgrims of hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we prepare ourselves to become courageous witnesses of Christ. Let us begin a journey that will lead us to the international World Youth Day in Seoul in 2027. With this in mind, I would like to focus on two aspects of witness:

Our friendship with Jesus, which we receive from God as a gift, and our commitment to be builders of peace in society.

Friends, therefore witnesses

When Jesus tells us, "Be witnesses," he is assuring us that he considers us as his friends. He alone fully knows who we are and why we are here; young people, he knows your heart, your indignation in the face of discrimination and injustice, your desire for truth and beauty, for joy and peace. Through his friendship, he listens to you, motivates you, and guides you, calling each of you to a new life.

Witnesses, therefore missionaries

Let us recall the wise advice of Saint Paul: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom 12:21).

So do not be discouraged: like the saints, you too are called to persevere with hope, especially in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

Fraternity as a bond of peace

From friendship with Christ, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit within us, there arises a way of life that bears the character of fraternity. Young people who have encountered Christ bring the "warmth" and "flavour" of fraternity wherever they go, and anyone who comes into contact with them is drawn into a new and profound dimension. **Pope Leo XIV**

A full version can be read at:

<https://www.vatican.va>

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