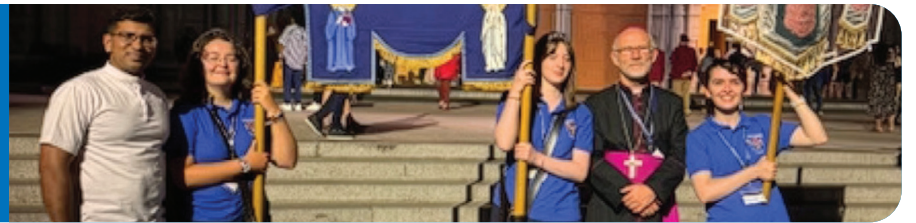


**The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster**

Issue 376 + February '26

INSIDE:
Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage
to Lourdes Returns in 2026
Full story & pictures on page 3 >





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World Day of The Sick – February 11th 2026
*“The compassion of the Samaritan:
loving by bearing the pain of the other.”*

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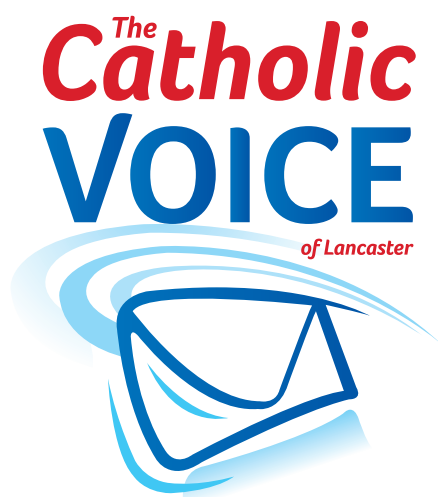
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PLEASE
RECYCLE
OUR PAPER



WORLD
DAY OF
THE SICK
11 FEBRUARY 2026

Image: © Vatican Media

**The compassion
of the Samaritan**

*loving by
bearing
the pain of
the other*

POPE LEO XIV

**World Day of
the Sick 2026**



Pope Leo XIV has chosen the theme for the 34th World Day of the Sick, which will be celebrated on February 11, 2026, to coincide also with the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing the pain of the other" is the theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 2026 World Day of the Sick.

The theme, centred on the Gospel figure of the Samaritan who manifests love by taking care of the suffering man who has fallen into the hands of thieves, is intended to emphasize this aspect of love for one's neighbour: love needs concrete gestures of closeness, through which we take on the suffering of others, especially those who are ill, often in a context of fragility due to poverty, isolation and loneliness.

Today too, Jesus Christ, the "good Samaritan", draws close to wounded humanity to pour out, through the sacraments of the Church, "the oil of consolation and the wine of hope" (Preface "Jesus the Good Samaritan"), thus inspiring actions and gestures of help and closeness for those who live in conditions of fragility due to illness.

The Holy See Press Office also communicates that the Holy Father has appointed His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, as his special envoy to the 34th World Day of the Sick, to be held on 11 February 2026 at the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Paz, in the diocese of Chiclayo, Peru, which has significant meaning for the earlier episcopal ministry of Pope Leo XIV.

The World Day of the Sick, established by St. John Paul II in 1992, is a privileged moment of prayer, spiritual closeness, and reflection for the entire Church and for civil society, who are all called to recognize the face of Christ in our sick and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

With the solemn celebration in Chiclayo, the Universal Church looks to Latin America and its rich tradition of solidarity. Like the Good Samaritan that bent down to help the injured man along the road, the Christian community is also called to stop and help those who suffer and be evangelical witnesses of closeness and service to the sick and most vulnerable.

Source: Holy See Press Office



Our Lady of Lourdes Feast Day

11th
February
2026

Check your
parishes for
Mass times.

LOURDES
— SANCTUAIRE



Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage Returns for 2026

Pilgrims from
Diocese of
Lancaster at
Lourdes
last year.

The annual diocesan pilgrimage is returning to Lourdes under the leadership of Bishop Paul Swarbrick on Thursday 23rd – 30th July 2026.

The theme for Lourdes pilgrimages in 2026, which is set by the Sanctuary, is the Annunciation, centred on Mary's greeting: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28), focusing on welcome, listening, and Mary's "Yes".

This is the first year in a three-year spiritual journey with Mary, guiding pilgrims through the Gospel of Luke towards the Visitation (2027) and Magnificat (2028).

This year, we'll let ourselves be guided by the story of the Annunciation. Our purpose is to follow Mary on the threshold of her incredible adventure of faith, at the very beginning of her absolute trust in God's will.

This is the year of the welcome, of listening and of the 'Yes' that changed everything.

Key Aspects of the 2026 Theme:

- Verse: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Lk. 1:28).
- Focus: A year for welcoming, listening, and embracing the transformative "yes" of Mary.
- Part of a Journey: It's the start of a spiritual path exploring Mary's story over three years.

Posters and booking forms will be in all parishes. Booking is now open for travel and accommodation – see information on the pilgrimage website.

www.lancasterlourdes.co.uk or joewalshtours.co.uk

Linda Wisdom, D.o.L. Lourdes Pilgrimage Director

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More News of Synodality Working at the Grassroots



“Behold, I am doing a new thing.”

By Sister Philomena Grimley SHCJ

Isaiah 43

Over the late summer months in the Deanery of Blackpool and North Fylde our parishes held meetings bringing people together to begin to think, talk, listen and pray about the future shape of our parishes and ministry. We want to secure the future of the Catholic faith and communities in our area. We know that similar processes have been happening in other areas of the diocese.

But first, and above all, we wanted to discover, priests and people together, what God is asking us to be and to do in the light of the changes that are already affecting us: we called the process: *“God’s new thing!”*

These meetings were in preparation for a Deanery Day which was held in St Mary’s Catholic Academy on Saturday 15 November, About 130 attended.

The Day was facilitated by Vron Smith, a member of the Jesuit Institute, who does extensive work with parishes in the Hexham and Newcastle Diocese. On three consecutive Sundays in preparation for the Day, Vron sent scripture reflection sheets for distribution in each parish.

We were asked to ponder God’s love for us, individually and as a deanery;

We were asked to pray for a deeper understanding of the purpose for which our deanery is uniquely created and to discover what are God’s dreams and hopes for our deanery and the people God wants us to serve.

We were asked to note down our responses in readiness to share on the Deanery Day.

Unfortunately some people who came to the day had not received the reflection sheets. They were expecting to deal with practical issues immediately as we address the changes already happening in our area of the diocese. Sadly, some people left early because of this misunderstanding. But for those who stayed it was a day of deep listening to each other in small mixed groups after

personal reflection on scripture and our own experience.

We were introduced to *“Conversation in the Spirit”*, a practice used throughout the Synod on Synodality and now widely in the Church.

We learnt about discernment and all this to be better able to hear what God is saying through our shared reflections on experience. We did not address in any detail the actual factual aspects of our deanery, though those concerns were in our minds, but we were learning that we need to begin with attentiveness to God communicating to us through all that we are experiencing.

We needed to spend some time listening to God and one another instead of rushing into developing a new management structure for the local Church, using good democratic methods, but forgetting to put God at the centre of his Church!

As our Dean Father Peter Sharrock, said: *“The work we did today will be a basis for the future in faith... The good news is that as we learn more about hearing God in our own day the more exciting our faith becomes – and we grow in strength, faith and joy.”*

The question we were left with is *‘where do we go from here?’* – a task of discernment and decision-making which will need far more of us to be involved.

So another whole Deanery gathering, after further consultation in each parish, is now being planned to take place at:

**St Mary’s Catholic Academy,
St Walburgas Road,
Blackpool, Lancashire.**

**Saturday, 7th February,
from 10am till 1pm. All welcome.**

We hope that as many people as possible who care about the future of our Blackpool and North Fylde Deanery will attend. WATCH THIS SPACE!

Tagalog Mass in Blackpool

From shared prayers to shared hearts our Filipino community continues to grow in love and faith.

The year-end Tagalog Mass, St Kentigern's RC Parish Blackpool, 2025 was a huge success, celebrating the thriving Filipino Catholic Community in Blackpool.

*God Bless our Filipino Community.
Father Edson Paguntalan*



(Above, right) The Filipino Catholic Choir performing.
(Inset) Some of The Filipino Catholic Community at St Kentigern's RC Parish, Blackpool.

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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New Centenary Publication in Development



Over recent months, a small and dedicated team has been working in the Cathedral and around the Diocese in preparing a Centenary and commemorative book to celebrate our achievement in propagating the Faith in Cumbria and Lancashire.

The book is targeted for publication in 2026. It consists of two parts:

- 1 An introductory history of the Faith in Lancashire and the Lake Counties from the beginning of Christianity to the present day.
- 2 This introduction is to be followed by a history of the Diocese of Lancaster and its parishes from 1925 to the present day, including appendices on such subjects as prison chaplaincies and Religious Sisters, with suggestions for further reading.

The Centenary book will be handsomely produced and will be fully illustrated with relevant images, to be retailed at an affordable price. There will be a further announcement in 2026 as the publication progresses.

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Mr Richard Charnock and pupils celebrating the award.



Our Lady’s Pupils Shine in *Faith in Action Award*

Our Lady’s Catholic High School, Preston is delighted to celebrate the achievements of a group of our pupils who have successfully completed the *Faith in Action Award*, a national programme run by the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation that encourages young people to put their Catholic faith into practice.

The *Faith in Action Award* provides pupils with the opportunity to explore and live out their faith through service, reflection, and community engagement. It is a vital part of nurturing a living Catholic faith, allowing young people to experience first-hand the joy and responsibility of serving others.

At Our Lady’s, this aligns perfectly with our Being One of Ours virtues, which encourage pupils to be compassionate, generous, discerning, and active in making a positive difference in their communities.

The pupils received their Bronze Awards following a beautiful Mass celebrated by Fr Peter Sayer in the school chapel. Several pupils are already making great progress towards their Silver Award, demonstrating continued dedication and commitment.

Hannah, one of our award recipients, said: “I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of the *Faith in Action* group.

This has been more than a school activity, but a place where I can grow in my Catholic faith, serve others, and discover the joy of living out my faith in a meaningful way.”

Sarah Lee, our School Chaplain who leads the group, added: “Working with these young people is truly inspiring. I have the privilege of guiding and motivating them as they explore ways to live out their faith in practical, meaningful ways. Seeing their commitment and care for others reminds me how important it is to nurture a generation who are not just learning about their faith, but actively putting it into action in the world.”

Mr Richard Charnock, Headteacher, said: “We are incredibly proud of our pupils for putting their faith into action. Their commitment to serving others and living out their faith is inspiring. We have many more pupils currently working towards this award, and it is wonderful to see our young people growing in confidence, compassion, and courage as they embrace the values of our Catholic community.”

The *Faith in Action Award*, part of the nationally recognised CYMFED programme, continues to empower young people across the country to deepen their faith, develop leadership skills, and contribute positively to their communities.

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

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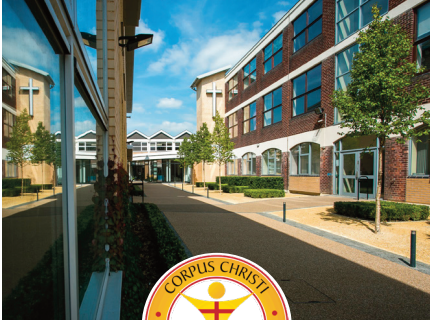
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My Unusual Road to the Diaconate by Deacon Bernard Farrell-Roberts

I can only describe my journey to the diaconate as being highly unusual, and probably quite unique! But there again, I imagine that most deacons would probably say something similar!

I was born in Kent, to parents Kathleen and John who met in the RAF. My Mother was an Irish Catholic, and my father a devout convert to the Catholic faith, so regular Mass, Benediction, daily family rosary, and prayer, was a familiar way of life for me, and was clearly the foundation that my vocation to the diaconate was built on.

I became an altar server, then in my early teens I became heavily involved in caring for others, leading a youth movement in south-east England that cared for the elderly, the handicapped, and the disabled, doing menial tasks for them, such as reading to the blind, filling coal scuttles from difficult to access cellars,

helping prepare meals etc. At one stage I had over 900 young volunteers!

From an early age my parents had told me that my duty as a Catholic was to see if I had a vocation to the priesthood. So, at the age of 18, I was interviewed by the Archdiocese of Southwark, and to my astonishment was sent to Valladolid in Spain for this formation! I shall never forget my arrival in Valladolid, where we stopped in front a large dusty building and massive oak doors were unbolted, then bolted again behind us. Inner doors were then opened, and we saw figures in long black 'gowns' and strange hats, who appeared to glide along. I had clearly arrived in another world! I have many happy memories of my next two years or so there, as I became another of those figures!

However, I returned to England still unsure about my vocation, and two years

later found myself entering another seminary, this time in Womersley, Surrey, where everything slowly became much clearer to me, until I realised that I didn't have a vocation to the priesthood, and left that idea behind when I left that seminary in 1975.

Returning to Spain, I commenced my teaching career in a primary school, and also in a university college. Seven years later I returned to England, taught in St Albans, Hertfordshire, and then met my wife to be, Jeanie, at that time a Senior Ward Sister in the Royal Preston Hospital. It was Christmas Eve, 1984, and the void that had caused me to leave the seminary was instantly filled.

I moved to Preston, and two years later our wonderful marriage commenced. We settled there, I completed an honours degree in Accounting and Finance at the University of Central Lancashire, and we



became active members of our parishes and Catholic schools. Not having been blessed with our own children, we adopted a total of six, three boys and three girls!

In 2004 we moved to Staffordshire, having formed a small religious community, the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, with a Scottish priest. I had been offered the post of Finance Director of the Maryvale Higher Catechetical Institute, and whilst working there, I took the opportunity to complete a Masters Degree in Personal, Moral and Spiritual Development. It was then that I discovered Medical Ethics, a subject that was to become a passion in my life. Wanting to know more and more, I gained a Masters degree in Research Ethics at Keele University, and then a Pontifical teaching licence in Moral Theology in Leuven, Belgium. At Maryvale I was asked to take over the formation

programme for Deacons, and by doing so I commenced the discernment of my own vocation to the diaconate.

My love of Spain continued to figure strongly in my life, and that of my family. In Spain on holiday in 2010, Jeanie drew my attention to the way that many English Catholics living there were drifting away from the practice of their Catholic faith. We wrote about this to the two local Bishops, and to our great surprise one of them, the Archbishop of Tarragona, rang the Maryvale Institute a few weeks later, asking us to visit him on our next trip to Spain.

We did so, with the result that we were asked to move to Spain to set up a Catholic chaplaincy to English Speakers. We did this in 2011, having been offered accommodation in a dilapidated former Franciscan house in a village named Riudecanyes.



We commenced our new ministry there, renovated the house, studied the Catalan language, and following the sudden death of the local parish priest, ran three Catalan parishes as an emergency measure for nearly seven years!

In May of 2013, having completed the required formation, the Archbishop ordained me to the diaconate in Tarragona Cathedral.

Having completed my doctorate in Bioethics I taught theological and medical ethics in the Tarragona Archdiocesan Seminary, and directed international courses on the dialogue between faith and science for the Pontifical University San Pacia in Barcelona.

Our chaplaincy and parochial work continued until 2018 when a Bishop friend of the Archbishop asked us to move to southern Spain as there was

a greater need for our chaplaincy work there. We did this, and also carried out some work for the Diocese of Gibraltar.

In 2022 we finally returned to England, back to the Diocese of Lancaster, where I became Director of Diaconal Formation, and am currently deacon to several local parishes.

My road to the diaconate was very, very, unusual. It is far more common for men to be called whilst in their parishes; to discern their vocation for a year; to be formed over a four year period; to be ordained; and then to work in their own parish or parishes.

If having read this you feel that God may be calling you to the diaconate, or any other ministry in the Church, just email your name and phone number to me at: vocations@lrcd.org.uk, and I shall contact you.



CAFOD Lent Appeal: Help families put food on the table

This Lent, as we deepen and enliven our faith, we can reflect on Jesus' call to *"love your neighbour as you love yourself"* (Mark 12:31) and pray that we can give more help to families facing hunger today due to floods and droughts.

Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD says: *"Last year I travelled to South Sudan. I would like to tell you about one person our local experts have been working with there, a young mother named Rejoice. Rejoice fled conflict twice to protect her children. Imagine losing everything and starting from scratch, only to be forced to do it all again. Then, after all she'd been through, Rejoice's new home was hit by severe flooding."*

"The farmlands were submerged underwater," Rejoice told us. *"Everything including livestock was completely destroyed."*

With support from our local experts, Rejoice and her community created floating gardens. These are simple beds

that rise above floodwaters, so amazingly, they can grow food even when the land is underwater. Whether there is too much rain, or too little, crops around the world are being destroyed. In Zimbabwe, drought left Shorai and Hamunyare with nothing.

They told us how the solar-powered water pump, funded by donations from people like you, allowed their community to grow a thriving, drought-resistant eco-garden. Now they can feed their family year-round and share food with neighbours. Shorai reflected that, *"A good neighbour is someone who can help me in periods of need."*

By fasting and giving this Lent, you'll be a good neighbour helping families find ways to grow enough food to eat.

Donate online at cafod.org.uk or call 0303 303 3030 to help parents put food on the table today. Thank you for your support and prayers for Family Fast Day (Friday 27 February) this Lent.

Preparing for Lent: From Ashes to Resurrection

As parishes across the Diocese of Lancaster move through February, the Church invites us to prepare for the Season of Lent. Lent is a time of honesty and renewal, when we pause to reflect on our lives and allow God to draw us back to what truly matters. It is not a season of gloom, but a journey that leads somewhere—to Easter, and to the heart of the Christian faith.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when ashes are placed on our foreheads and we hear the words, *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel,"* or *"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."* The ashes remind us of our human frailty and our need for God's mercy. Made from the palms blessed on the previous Palm Sunday, they hold together praise and repentance, joy and suffering. What once symbolised triumph is reduced to ash, teaching us that human achievement cannot save us—only God can.

From Ash Wednesday flows the Church's Lenten observance of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These practices are not punishments, but pathways to freedom. Prayer restores our relationship with God; fasting helps us recognise what enslaves us and loosens its hold; almsgiving turns us outward in love of neighbour, especially those in need within our own communities. In parishes throughout the diocese, Lent is marked by Stations of the Cross, opportunities for Confession, weekday Masses and

charitable action, reminding us that conversion is a shared journey.

Lent reaches its depth in Holy Week, when the Church walks with Christ through his Passion and death. Yet the Cross is not the end of the story. Lent exists because of what happens at Easter. On Easter Sunday, the Church proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of his mission and the definitive victory over sin and death. The Resurrection reveals that Christ's self-giving love is stronger than the grave and that God's promise of new life is real and lasting. Every act of Lenten discipline is ordered towards this moment. We fast and pray not to dwell on death, but to be ready to receive life. We repent not out of fear, but in hope. As the Easter Vigil proclaims, Christ is the light that no darkness can overcome.

As the Diocese of Lancaster prepares for Lent, we do so with our eyes fixed on Easter. From ashes to alleluia, the Church journeys together, trusting that the God who calls us to conversion also leads us to resurrection.

Dates for the Diary (2026)
Ash Wednesday – 18 February 2026
Palm Sunday – 29 March 2026
Holy Thursday – 2 April 2026
Good Friday – 3 April 2026
Holy Saturday – 4 April 2026
Easter Sunday – 5 April 2026



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Fr Derek Turnham,
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St Joseph's Lancaster Celebrate Altar Servers

It's always a joy to celebrate and congratulate our Altar Servers especially on the Feast of St. Stephen.

This year at St Joseph's we were joined for Mass by the Dean of the Lancaster Deanery - Fr David Branford VF, and we celebrated the enrolment of two new servers, Mason and Shannon. We were also privileged to acknowledge Patrick Hilton for 10 years of serving as a member of the Guild. Patrick was presented with a Silver Medal for his service at the Altar.

Father John Paul



Father Peter Foulkes RIP

The Diocese of Lancaster has learned with sadness of the death of Father Peter Foulkes, a retired priest of the diocese, who died in January 2026 at his home in Lytham.

Father Peter was ordained to the priesthood on 4 July 1966 and served the Church faithfully for almost sixty years. Throughout his long ministry he was known for his quiet dedication, pastoral generosity and steady commitment to parish life. His final appointment before retirement was as Parish Priest of St Bernadette's, Lancaster, where he was valued for his reverent celebration of the sacraments, thoughtful preaching and gentle pastoral care.

The youngest of three brothers, Father Peter belonged to a remarkable family of priests. He was brother to Father John Foulkes, also a priest of the Diocese of Lancaster, and to Father Anthony ("Tony")

Foulkes, whose earlier and much-lamented death was a deep sorrow to the family and to those who had known his ministry. Together, the Foulkes brothers offered an enduring witness of faith, service and vocational generosity within the life of the diocese.

Those who knew Father Peter remember a priest who carried out his ministry without fuss or self-importance, attentive to the everyday needs of his parishioners and faithful in prayer. His vocation was lived with constancy and humility, reflecting a deep love for Christ and the people he was called to serve.

As we commend Father Peter to the mercy of God, we give thanks for his long and faithful priestly life. United now with his brothers in the hope of the Resurrection, may he share in the joy of the Lord whom he served so faithfully.

May he rest in peace.



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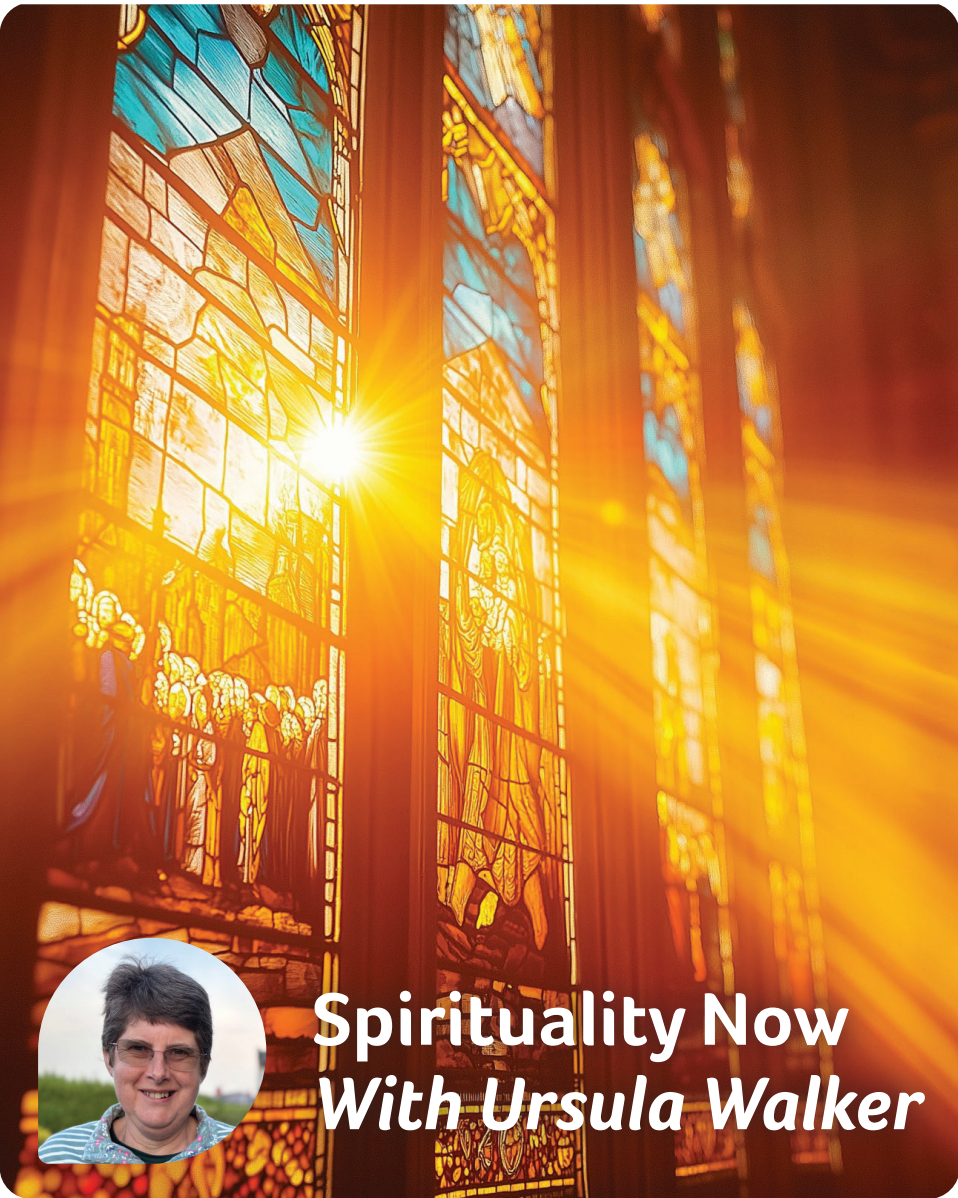
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Spirituality Now With Ursula Walker



Living Out Our Baptismal Promises in 2026 ... and Beyond!

We were all baptised either when we were babies or when we converted to Christianity (*Catholicism*). We were baptised which means we are baptised. It is not a thing of the past. We are called to live out our Baptism every day. When we were baptised Jesus’ life, His Holy Spirit came within us. We became his brothers and sisters – adopted by the Father. Families are about relationships and building and maintaining them. We are all called to have a relationship with God/Jesus. This is the essence of our Baptism calling – to live in relationship with Jesus.

The mission of the Church is to “go out and baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. (Mt 28:19)

Our mission then is to go out and live this call – to be missionaries. We don’t have to do anything extraordinary just be a true witness to Jesus by living the commandments out in our daily life.

As lay people we take Christ into our places of work – schools; hospital; office; working on the roads; window cleaning, etc. whatever our work is. A priest cannot and is not called to go to these places, but we are.

All else that we do for others should come from this relationship with Jesus. This should be our driving force for doing anything. We take Christ with us. As we receive Jesus in our hands at the altar, so we carry Him with us during the week to everyone we meet.

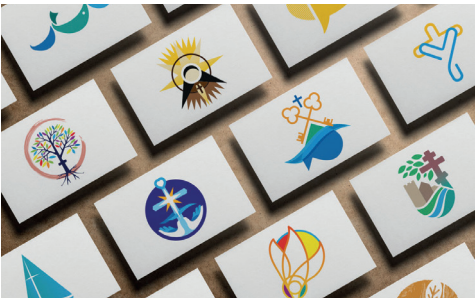
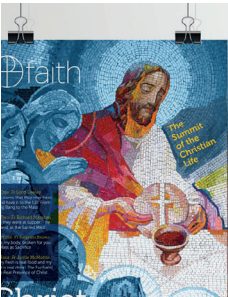
Now is an important time in the Church. We are being forced to think differently about our church structures and what it may look like in the future. God is “Doing a new thing.” By our Baptism we are full participants in the Church. We all have our role to play and each is unique. I cannot fulfil what you are called to do and you cannot fulfil mine.

By not participating in the Church’s mission we are saying “No” to the call God asks us to fulfil and the Church is weaker for this lack of participation.

Another way of looking at this, is to say that the Church (*your parish*) is like a garden. It has lots of lovely flowers in it but there are gaps in the flower bed. Are you ready to listen, to hear and let your flower grow in the garden? We are all members of this wonderful family/garden and we all have our role to play.

God called and is still calling each one of us by name – “I have called you by your name, you are mine.” (Is 43:1)

Ursula Walker, Spiritual Rep for the Diocese
07312 129900 / uwalker@uwclub.net



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Our Baptismal Promises Refresh and Renew

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?

Do you reject the glamour of evil and refuse to be mastered by sin?

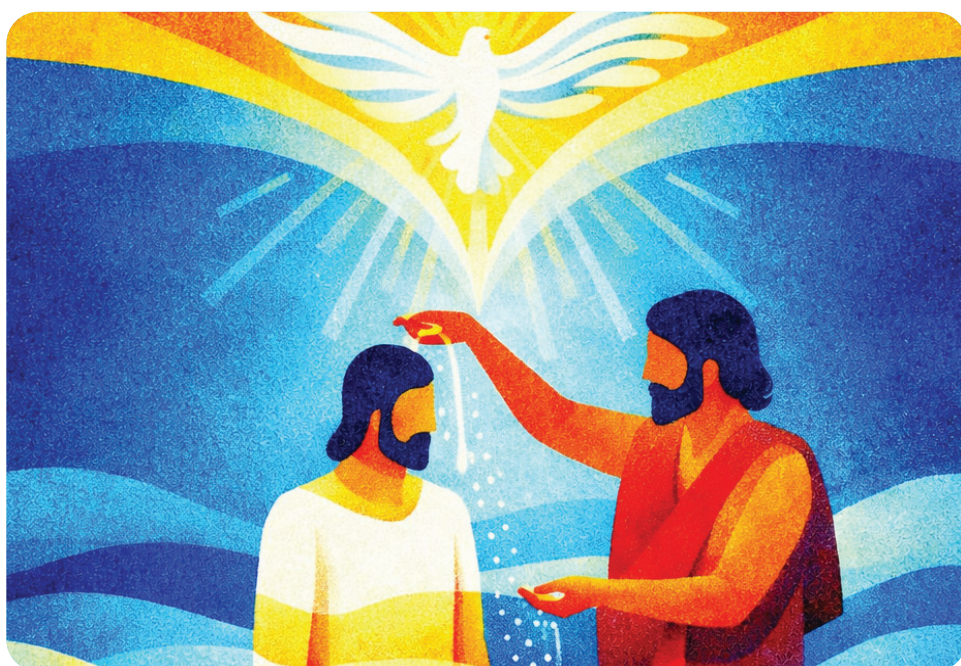
Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

Do you believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting?

This is our faith. It is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Taken from Sacred Heart, Catholic Church, Ilkley)



St Gregory of Nazianzus describes Baptism as:

"Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift.... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal and most precious gift.

"It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty;

"Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it radiate light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washed, and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship."

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Pictured are past National Grand President Andrew Sowerby (nearest the camera) and his wife Maria. To the left of Maria, Peter Welsby.



The Catenians

Stengthening family life through friendship and faith



An Important Milestone – Lytham St Annes Circle Marks a Special Anniversary

On Wednesday the 1st October 2025 Lytham St Annes circle marked a momentous occasion, namely 100 years since the foundation of the Circle.

Brother Catenians and their wives travelled from various parts of the country to observe this special occasion. One hundred and twenty Brothers and guests joined together at The Glendower Hotel, North Promenade, St Annes on

Sea for a special meal to celebrate this their 100th anniversary of the first inauguration of the Lytham St Annes Circle 89 in the presence of Great Britain National President Gerry McCormack and his wife Anne.

Master of Ceremonies for this special was Past Grand President Mike O'Malley; the loyal toast was given by Brother Tony Godden – Past Grand President. The toast

to Lytham St Annes circle was proposed by Brother President Peter Welsby, before a champagne toast was proposed by Great Britain National President Gerry McCormack following his very interesting speech. This was a significant event for the Lytham St Annes Circle and all brothers were grateful for the interest, care and fellowship shown.

Peter Welsby, President Lytham St Annes Catenian Circle 89

New Blackpool Prayer Group invites all to Join in Spiritual Warfare and Welcome!

A new prayer group The SWW - Spiritual Warfare and Welcome has been set up following the recent local Parish Synod meeting in Blackpool. Inspired by the encouragement for laypeople to get actively involved in their parish life, Sacred Heart RC Church parishioner, Andrea Gherman has rallied many parishioners together in the aim of sharing a new prayer group that will focus on meditations, bible readings, prayers, special themed talks and also fellowship and friendship in the coming year.

Andrea welcomes all who may be interested in coming along and joining in: "Dear all, we are organising a bible study & prayer group here at the Sacred Heart Church in Blackpool. It is early days but we would like to grow into something more substantial but will start small and aim to develop as we go. I want to get an idea of what works for people as I know there are some people that work different shifts, some are busy mothers and some are away at various times so we want to make something fit at a good time that people can come along and still continue their day to day lives. All ages are welcome. These are the days and times that we will tentatively keep: Monday, or Saturday after 10 am Mass, or Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday after 12 noon Mass. This would be held weekly in the church. If interested please email: andreagherman1@gmail.com. Jesus said: "If two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst."





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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Jubilee of Hope Highlights & Reflections – Walsingham 2025 Relived “Pilgrims of Hope”

My pilgrimage was somewhat of an unexpected journey. I was asked on the Saturday (18 October) if I'd like to join as a lady was unable to attend, so I had just two days to prepare.

Monday was cold but clear as I boarded the bus in Workington. Though initially nervous, seeing the other eleven familiar pilgrims and praying a joyful decade of the rosary after each pick-up helped me feel calm.

When we arrived at Elmham House in Walsingham, a beautiful village set in the Norfolk countryside, we received our rooms and attended Mass at the Church of the Annunciation, noted for its serene beauty and stained-glass windows. After eating, we returned for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and prayers, with the hymn, “Go, tell everyone the news that God’s kingdom has come,” stuck in my head!

Each day began with a holy hour, with silent prayers and exposition, followed by the morning prayer of the Church. Following breakfast, we walked the Holy Mile to the Slipper Chapel, praying 24 decades of the Rosary, with Fr Augustine carrying the statue of Our Lady on his head. At noon, we attended Mass in

the Reconciliation Chapel; some stayed for The Divine Mercy Chaplet and Benediction. I was grateful to finally go to confession with Bishop Swarbrick, which brought me tears of joy. Each evening, the Bishop gave a short reflection in which he encouraged Mother Mary to come into our lives: past, present and future.

On Wednesday, a few pilgrims began a “great glasses hunt” because one of our fellow pilgrims had lost her specs the previous day. Our young driver was quite puzzled as people were crawling around the bus searching for them. To our delight, they eventually turned up. We later attended Mass at Oxburgh Hall, a notable moated mansion, along with its own priest’s hiding hall behind the master bedroom wall. I also visited the Anglican Centre, which was even more beautiful and ornate than I had expected. That evening, we attended Exposition again and participated in a reconciliation service followed by a torchlight walk to the Garden Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. It was so peaceful, still and memorable.

On Thursday, we visited the Abbey in Walsingham, the site of the Holy House. This was built by the Norman

noblewoman Richeldis de Faverches after she had a vision of Our Lady in 1061, during which she was instructed to construct a replica of Mary’s home in Nazareth. Afterwards, we went back to the Reconciliation chapel for Mass, followed by tea and cakes enjoyed by several in our group. Later, many of us toured the Old Jail in Walsingham — thankfully, everyone left without incident! That evening, there was a really beautiful Eucharistic healing service. Those present were touched profoundly by grace!

Friday was our final day, and we returned home. Reflecting on the week, I believe this pilgrimage was meant for me, especially with the hymn “Go Tell Everyone” constantly in my mind — I feel compelled to share my experience. I rediscovered that the Holy Spirit gave Mother Mary the courage at the Annunciation to say the perfect Yes, making God’s plan possible. I was reminded that God is living, kind, gentle, and forgiving - His arms are always open, waiting for us to welcome Him. In short, participating in this pilgrimage was a real blessing — religious, peaceful, enjoyable, fun and uplifting. I am looking forward to next time!

By Lorraine

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St Benedict's Catholic High School Student Named Deputy County Cadet of the Year for Cumbria and Lancashire

A student from St Benedict's Catholic High School, in Whitehaven, has been awarded the prestigious title of Deputy County Cadet of the Year for Cumbria and Lancashire, following a challenging competition held in Preston.

The competition, organised by St John Ambulance, brought together cadets from across the region to complete a series of practical and leadership-based tasks. These included a first aid scenario, an interview on St John Ambulance's HEART values, a presentation based on GCSE coursework, and a team-building exercise.

Ava-Jane Saunders in Year 11, entered the competition after being encouraged by youth leader and former St Benedict's student Joshua Groggins, aiming to strengthen the voice of young people in smaller units like Whitehaven, where

engagement opportunities can be limited compared to larger city-based units. She said: "I wanted to take part to represent Whitehaven and help improve youth involvement across Cumbria. This role gives me the chance to make a real difference and ensure our voices are heard."

The top title of County Cadet of the Year was awarded to Arabella Grint, with Maja Szargut joining as the second deputy. Together, the trio will work throughout the year to enhance youth engagement and enjoyment within St John Ambulance across the county.

Mr Stevenson, Ava's DT teacher commented: "Ava has shown incredible creativity and confidence, not only in her DT coursework but also in applying those skills during the competition. We are extremely proud of her achievement and the leadership qualities she has demonstrated."



Ava-Jane Saunders pictured with her certificate of recognition.

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