



Bishop's Column

Happy New Year! We pray and hope that 2024 will be blest and peaceful for all.

Whenever we move into a new phase or life, a new project, a new year, we are, to a certain extent, entering the unknown. However, one thing we do know 2024 is that by this time next January, a General Election will have been called. I know that some of us have a rather jaundiced view of politics and politicians, but using our vote wisely is almost a moral obligation. May I present some subjects that we might want to place before our potential electoral candidates before the next election. I am sure that there are many more questions you can think of. Why not invite candidates to your parishes, deaneries and local areas. See what they have to say on these and other matters.

- The innate dignity of every human being; defending both the child in the womb, the good of the mother and an understanding of the immeasurable good of a child not yet born?
 - The dignified care for those who are terminally ill and dying while resisting the false compassion of assisted suicide or euthanasia?
 - The needs of those who are frequently neglected or discarded by society such as people with disabilities, older people, those who are homeless, those in prison and those trapped in modern slavery?
 - The process of integration of migrants and refugees who have made their homes here, challenging the global rise of xenophobia and racism that is so radically incompatible with our faith?
 - The rights of those in our own communities and overseas who can see no end to the tunnel of extreme poverty, providing them with assistance and confronting the structural injustices that compound their suffering?
 - Care for our common home and tackle the climate emergency which threatens the future of our entire human family and is already having a profound impact upon the world's poorest people?
 - Freedom of religion and belief, ensuring that everyone has the right to exercise their conscience and practise their creed freely without fear?
 - The cherishing of marriage, recognising the essential place of the family in the service of life and of society?
 - The right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their faith and support the work of Catholic schools in their contribution to society and their promotion of the common good?
- Jesus tells us, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." Informed by the work of our parishes, schools and charities, we should all approach this election as an opportunity to promote life, dignity and human flourishing for all.

In blessed hope,

+ Long

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Bethlehem song echoes 'enduring spirit of hope'

There was no Christmas tree or traditional festivities in the place of Jesus Christ's birth this year, in response to the thousands killed in the conflict in the Holy Land.

Instead, the focus in the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square in Bethlehem was on praying for peace.

Amid the rubble and ruins, a poignant voice declared that the light of hope will persist in the small West Bank town where the Christmas story unfolded.

Youstina Safar, a Bethlehem resident and a student at Bethlehem University, has collaborated with London-based band Ooberfuse to deliver a powerful message through their song, Hear Angels Cry. The song resonates with hope for a better future.

Pope Francis not only heard about the song but sent a message to Cardinal Vincent Nichols commending it for drawing attention to "the sublime significance of the city where Jesus Christ was born".

Communicated by the Holy See's secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Pope Francis' message holds up the Holy Land as the place that was home to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and called to be a place of encounter, dialogue and hope for all.

The Holy Father wrote of his hope that the song "will inspire many people this Christmas to pray for a new flourishing of fraternal solidarity, reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land".

Youstina hopes Hear Angels Cry will provide a shard of light in the darkness.

He said: "Our song stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of hope in Bethlehem. While the traditional Christmas displays dimmed this year in remembrance of lives lost in Gaza, our voices unite to affirm that hope will never succumb to darkness."

Cherrie Anderson, from Ooberfuse, added: "As we embarked on this music project in June,

we never anticipated the cancellation of Christmas displays in Bethlehem. The dimming lights in Manger Square honour those who lost their lives in the Holy Land. "Hear Angels Cry embodies Jesus' message of love, prevailing even in the face of hopelessness.

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Hear Angels Cry resonates with hope for a better future

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NEWS

Pope prays Bethlehem song can inspire Holy Land peace

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“All proceeds from the song will directly benefit those suffering in Gaza, particularly the children reconstructing the fragments of their lives.”

John Handal, a music producer from Bethlehem, played a crucial role in bringing this collaboration to life, sharing a vision of using music as a beacon of hope and healing in the region.

“It’s an honour to be part of a project that transcends borders and brings together artists from Bethlehem and London,” he said.

“Hear Angels Cry is a testament to the enduring power of music to convey messages of peace and resilience. Through our collaboration, we aim to shine a light on the indomitable spirit of Bethlehem and support those affected by the conflicts in the Holy Land.”

Hear Angels Cry is a heartfelt plea for unity, compassion and the enduring power of hope, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Proceeds from the song go to Friends of the Holy Land (FHL), a UK charity which is also registered in Palestine. Through its office in Bethlehem, it is well-placed to get urgent, personalised aid to the families most in need in Gaza and the West Bank and will make sure the most in need are helped quickly by the proceeds from the song.

You can watch Hear Angels Cry on YouTube, stream on Spotify and Apple Music or support fundraising efforts for the suffering in the Holy Land by buying the song on Amazon.

To find out more, visit friendsoftheholylan.org.uk.

BISHOP TERRY'S JANUARY ENGAGEMENTS	
7	Attends Confirmation Mass at St Charles Borromeo, Hull 10am
9	Attends meeting of the Diocesan Trustee’s Education Committee 10.30am
13-14	Parish Visitation to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Market Weighton
16	Attends meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales via Zoom 10am
17	Attends meeting with the President of Middlesbrough Central Council via Zoom 11am
18	School Visitation to St Benedict’s Primary School, Ampleforth 9am
20-21	Parish Visitation to St Benedict’s, Ampleforth
23	Attends Bishop’s Council Meeting, Middlesbrough 10.30am

World leaders implored to act now as Pope looks for talks ‘turning point’

As we begin this Year of Prayer leading up to the Year of Jubilee in 2025, we reflect on the year just passed and the needs of the world, our common home.

Although illness prevented Pope Francis from attending COP28, the Holy Father’s message was read by Cardinal Parolin, the Vatican’s secretary of state.

Pope Francis urged leaders attending to ensure the UN climate talks were a “turning point” in the fight against the climate crisis. He called on governments to put the global common good ahead of national interests.

His message placed responsibility for tackling the climate crisis on political leaders, reminding governments that “the purpose of power is to serve” and that it is “useless to cling to an authority that will one day be remembered for its inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so”.

The Pope warned that the destruction of the environment “is an offence against God, a sin that is not only personal but also structural, one that greatly endangers all human beings especially the most vulnerable in our midst and threatens to unleash a conflict between generations.

“Climate change is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life.”

He asked: “Are we working for a culture of life or a culture of death? To all of you I make this heartfelt appeal: Let us choose life! Let us choose the future! May we be attentive to the cry of the earth, may we hear the plea of the poor, may we be sensitive to the hopes of the young and the dreams of children! We have a grave responsibility: to ensure that they not be denied their future.

“The poor are the real victims of what is happening: we need think only of the plight of indigenous peoples, deforestation, the tragedies of hunger, water and food insecurity and forced migration.”

“Please let us move forward and not turn back. Now is the time no longer to postpone but to ensure and not merely talk about the welfare of your children, your citizens, your countries and our world. “You are responsible for crafting policies that can provide concrete



CAFOD director Christine Allen meeting Pope Francis at the Caritas International Assembly 2023 – Photo courtesy of Vatican Media

and cohesive responses and in this way demonstrate the nobility of your role and the dignity of the service that you carry out.”

Pope Francis also used the address to call for an end to war in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as in Ukraine.

He declared that “conflicts will not solve problems but only increase them” and argued that resources spent on weaponry “that destroys lives and devastates our common home” should be used to fight hunger and climate change.

In his closing remarks he said: “I bear the name Francis, with the heartfelt urgency of a prayer I want to leave you with this message: Let us leave behind our divisions and unite our forces and with God’s help, let us emerge from the dark night of wars and environmental devastation in order to turn our common future into the dawn of a new and radiant day. Thank you.”

Negotiators at COP28 agreed the new loss and damage fund would be run by the World Bank in its first years of operating, with funding provided by rich countries who have contributed the greatest volume of greenhouse gases in recent decades.

Governments agreed to set up the fund at

COP27 in 2022, but details of how it would operate were left to be decided.

The agreement to set up the fund was in recognition of the need for rich countries to provide financial assistance to the low-income countries, where communities are suffering irreversible destruction from the climate crisis, such as damage to homes and ways of living.

CAFOD’s climate policy lead Liz Cronin said: “The UK has pledged up to £60m, which is a really welcome recognition of how important the fund is and the country’s historic responsibility for climate impacts.

“While this is a great start to COP, the fund now needs filling up with new and additional climate finance that isn’t just moved from existing climate finance commitments. CAFOD are calling on the UK and all developed countries to step up and contribute their fair share to the fund.”

Let’s hope the coming year will see the hopes expressed by Pope Francis realised, as we continue to work to bring about a better world for all.

Carol Cross
Community Participation Coordinator

Environment and Gaza on agenda as bishops converge for autumn plenary

Resolutions released after the Bishops’ Autumn Plenary include their environmental concerns, the conflict in Gaza and the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress.

The bishops welcomed Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*.

“We ask Catholics to consider how they can respond to the Pope’s urgent call to action by deepening their relationship with Christ and, through doing so, resolve to undertake and promote practical action to respect and nurture God’s creation and the natural world,” they say.

“We recognise the wonderful work that Catholics, and many others, are doing to change our culture in relation to how we view and act towards the environment.

“We echo Pope Francis’s call for our political leaders to take decisive action at COP28 and to create energy transition targets that are efficient, obligatory and readily monitored, and we ask them to consider how such

targets can be enforced.

“We commend for further study the intellectual resources of the Church in this area, including Pope Francis’s letters *Laudate Deum* and *Laudato Si’* and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s publication, *The Call of Creation*.

“We also commend the practical work that is being undertaken through the Guardians of Creation project, which provides practical guidance and resources to support transition in dioceses and parishes, and through CAFOD’s Live Simply programme.”

The bishops condemned the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Israel on October 7 2023 and said they weep for the innocent victims of violence, especially the children, whose lives are traumatised by the escalation of violence in the region.

They said: “We pray earnestly that the regional instabilities created will not lead to a wider conflict, fuelled by antisemitism,

xenophobia and terrorism.

“We call on all in England and Wales to find the good in others. No one should live in fear in their community, or school or workplace because of their faith or because of events taking place in this conflict. Our support for one another will be our strength, both in these difficult times and in the future.

“We pray that the violence will cease ... we pray that Christ the Prince of Peace will guide all devastated by this conflict into the ways of truth, reconciliation, and respectful co-existence.

“We echo the appeal of a First World War veteran who, at the age of 100, said that ‘In war nobody wins. You might as well talk first. You have to in the end.’”

The bishops also committed to supporting the National Eucharistic Congress at Oscott College in September 2024, encouraging at least one coach to attend from each diocese.

Sharon’s Santa rally charity ride is all for a good Claus

Our diocesan property manager, Sharon Westcough, once again took part in the annual Boundary 500 Santa Ride around Teesside to raise funds for Zoe’s Place baby hospice.

Dozens of bikers dressed as Santa took to the road for the iconic charity event, with crowds lining the streets to cheer them on.

The ride began at the Pavilion Shopping Centre in Thornaby and carried on through Stockton, along Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, past Middlesbrough Town Hall and on to Redcar.



Photo by Karen Harland

Sharon said: “Zoe’s Place is such an integral and much needed part of the community of Teesside and it’s a great pleasure to take part in this event.

“It’s a joy to see the crowds lining the streets and we hope to remind all the onlookers that Zoe’s Place is entirely funded by voluntary donations.”

Curial office staff sponsored Sharon’s efforts for such a worthwhile cause.

Sharon added: “Last year the group raised £31,000, which was our best ever amount. We are hoping to beat that this year and my Just Giving page will remain open until the end of January. If anyone reading this would like to contribute, any amount is most welcome.”

To donate, visit justgiving.com and search for “Sharon Westcough”.



Sharon Westcough at the Santa Ride – Photo by Debra Butler

Campaign to have Mary Ward beatified gathers pace

Followers and supporters of Yorkshire woman Mary Ward (1585-1645) are launching a campaign to raise awareness and provide evidence for the ongoing case to have Mary Ward officially recognised as a saint by the Catholic Church.

The campaign will launch as part of Mary Ward Week 2024, which takes place from January 23 to 30 to mark the anniversaries of her birth and death.

This annual global celebration sees her followers around the globe pay tribute to her life and achievements, including those who work at the 200 schools worldwide founded in her name.

Mary Ward is the foundress of the Congregation of Jesus. They reside at the Bar Convent in York, which is the oldest living convent in the UK.

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto), a sister congregation, founded from York, also counts Mary Ward as founder.

Sister Elizabeth Cotter IBVM, canon lawyer and postulator for the cause of Venerable Mary Ward, said: “As part of our case, we need to provide evidence that Mary Ward remains relevant today.

“Key to this was her passionate belief that ‘women in time to come will do much’, which has always been the driving force of followers who brought her vision to 42 countries from her time and up to the present day.

“This recognition by the Church would provide the women of our time with a fine example of the Church’s willingness to promote the dignity of women in a world which badly needs such witness.

“For the hundreds of thousands of Mary Ward followers worldwide, recognition by the Church would validate the belief that Mary Ward is a saint for the modern world; she is needed as much by our 21st-century world as she was in those dark days of opposition to women in the 17th century.

“Support for and belief in Mary Ward has never waned in more than 400 years and her beatification and canonisation by the Church is long overdue.”

Sister Ann Stafford, sister in charge at the Bar Convent, said: “Here at the Bar Convent we have been contributing to the ongoing global campaign to have Mary Ward officially recognised by the Church as a saint.

“As someone who campaigned for the dignity of women all of her life, we truly believe that Mary Ward is a vital role model for our time.

“Please help our cause in any way you can. You can sign the petition, join the conversation across the social media platforms using #MaryWardForSaint, visit us at the Bar Convent to discover more about Mary Ward, help us to raise awareness about this local woman who made international history or let the cause office know if you can

help us in other ways by emailing causemaryward@gmail.com.”

Highlights during Mary Ward Week and until February 17 to highlight this important cause include a talk on Tuesday January 23 and the annual ecumenical service on Sunday January 28, when Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell will give the homily.

You can also visit the permanent exhibition to discover more about Mary Ward and her legacy.

Visit barconvent.co.uk for more details.

Prayer for Mary Ward’s Beatification

*God, Creator of all that is good,
we thank you for giving Mary Ward
to the Church and to the world.
Impelled by the fire of your love
she did not shrink from risks,
labours or sufferings.*

*She lived and worked for your greater glory
for the good of the Church,
for the nurture of faith,
and for the dignity of women.*

She was a pilgrim,



*who spread the joy of the Gospel,
a woman of our times.*

*Grant that through the solemn
testimony of the Church the example
of her life may be a light for all
who seek God’s will.*

Amen



A campaign will raise awareness and provide evidence for the ongoing case to have Mary Ward officially recognised as a saint

Trinity pupils turn concern into action

The 25 members of the Youth SVP team at Trinity Catholic College in Middlesbrough raised £100 through two cake sales and invited members of the adult SVP conferences at St Thomas More, St Joseph’s and St Bernadette’s to receive their gift.

Ana Preddy received the money on behalf of the St Thomas More and St Joseph’s conference and explained they would use the funds to supply emergency Christmas food bags in the parish, as well as giving a little extra to families in need.

The Youth SVP group members led us in prayer for those we help, and we thanked college chaplain Peter Tucker for facilitating the group.

**Susan Gardiner,
President,
St Bernadette’s SVP**



Members of the Youth SVP team at Trinity Catholic College

SCHOOLS

Outstanding Ofsted report for 'joyful' Hull school

Endsleigh Holy Child VC Academy in Hull has been judged to be Outstanding after its visit from the Catholic Schools Inspectorate.

This inspection looks on behalf of Bishop Terry at RE, prayer and liturgy, as well as the Catholic life of the school.

The visit was overwhelmingly positive, and the inspectors concluded that the provision in all three of these areas was Outstanding, with an outstanding judgement given overall.

On the school's RE provision, the report said: "Pupils produce high-quality work in books and take great pride in their work. Pupils make consistently good progress. They have a clear understanding of what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve."

"They use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively to reflect spiritually and think ethically."

On the subject of prayer and liturgy, the inspectors commented: "Pupils show a heartfelt response to experiences of prayer and liturgy. They understand a variety of ways of praying, show an excellent knowledge of traditional prayers, and pray reverently. Communal singing is both prayerful and joyful."

And on Catholic life and mission, they said: "All members of the school community embrace the school mission and live this out faithfully in the care, welcome and commitment shown by all and to all. Staff are strong role models for the pupils."

"This is demonstrated in their relationships with each other and the care they clearly



Endsleigh Holy Child VC Academy in Hull has been judged to be an Outstanding Catholic school

demonstrate to the pupils, including the most vulnerable. Chaplaincy provision is strong and is held in high regard by both staff and pupils."

Executive head Angela Spencer warmly welcomed the report.

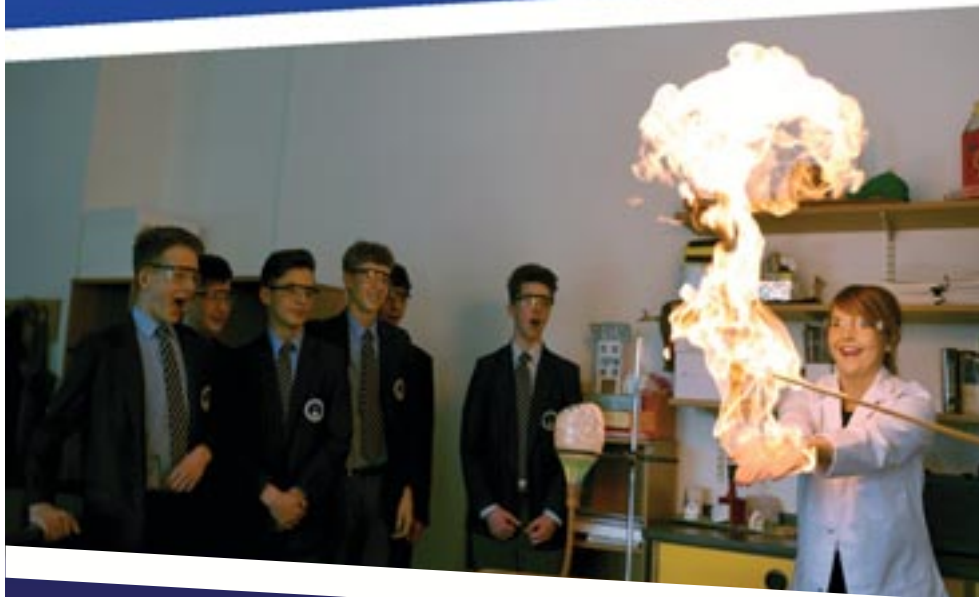
"This is a true moment to remember for all of our staff and students," she said. "We reflect on the fact that our rating isn't achieved by just a small group of people but is a collective effort from the whole community: our staff, parents and carers, students, local parish churches, governing boards, the chaplaincy team and all who support us."

"Endsleigh Holy Child is a place where

everyone is welcome to come and share their talents and efforts. This inspection rating and the wonderful feedback in our report are moments to reflect on this achievement."

Karen Siedle, interim CEO of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust, added: "We are delighted for the community of Endsleigh Holy Child and would like to thank the staff and governors for everything they do every day to give the pupils the best Catholic education and care."

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St Wilfrid's children hit the right note with singing programme

Children from St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School in York have been enjoying their partnership with the Diocesan Schools Singing Programme.

Each week, Andrea Maxson has delivered engaging singing sessions to pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5, which not only support the school's liturgical life but also deliver many aspects of the music curriculum.

With expert tuition, children have learnt to control their voices to sing in parts and as an ensemble, as well as performing songs from around the world.

They have been introduced to different genres of music and operatic works by great composers. Lessons have been particularly successful in developing children's musical vocabulary and their increased use of Latin

terms to describe tempo and dynamics has very impressed everyone!

All this hard work culminated in a wonderful celebration on the Feast of St Cecilia, when class 5/4 from St Wilfrid's joined other children from across the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust to honour the patroness of music during a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Terry.

The pupils sang joyfully throughout the Mass, showcasing the responses and hymns they had learnt under Mrs Maxson's skilful guidance.

The combined voices of children from around the trust singing together in worship was powerful and proved to be an experience they will never forget.



Children from St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School in York at St Mary's Cathedral

ST AUGUSTINE'S

SCHOOL

SCARBOROUGH



LOVE & SERVE THROUGH CHRIST

Rated 'GOOD' by Ofsted (October 2023)

“Every pupil is treated as an individual at St Augustine’s School. Staff know pupils well. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are safe and cared for well. They want to meet the school’s high academic expectations.”



“Staff are proud to work at St Augustine’s Catholic School. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, place a high priority on managing staff’s workload and ensuring their well-being. Staff are happy in their work. Leaders engage with parents and carers regularly. Many parents appreciate the way the school supports and nurtures their children.”



NEWS

How the Pastoral Cycle can help us develop a plan

May you and your loved ones be blessed with good things throughout 2024 and may your faith continue to grow and blossom.

No doubt you have made your New Year's resolution or maybe you're already on your second or third? I wonder if our resolution includes things such as...

- Being a peacemaker in our families and wider world
- Taking more care of the environment, locally and globally
- Advocating on behalf of the poor, the refugee or those seeking asylum
- Becoming a "good listener"
- Being a missionary – taking the gospel everywhere we go.

If we made it our aim to do at least one of these few things to the best of our ability, it's probably safe to say we would at some point touch on each one of them.

Each point requires something of us if we are to make an impact, but the one thing they all require is that we begin with our faith, and our presence, asking what might God want my resolution to be. What might make the most difference in bringing about God's will in my life and those of others?

How we go about this might be called a process of discernment. But where do I begin is often the defining question and may even be the real reason behind whether we'll keep working towards our resolution when the novelty has worn off.

One good method for helping us to begin this process of discernment is the Pastoral Cycle. This is used in businesses and all kinds of situations, often under other names, as a tool for developing plans and strategies. However, it's also useful to us as individuals and in parish groups. In years gone by it was termed See, Judge and Act, which today continues to be a sound model of discernment. Similarly, the Pastoral Cycle provides us with an excellent model for lifelong learning – and it's synodal!

The important thing about the Pastoral Cycle is its five stages or steps:



We should not seek to shortcut the process in the temptation to move quickly. The whole method needs to be founded on our prayer

life and faith.

Some suggestions of where to begin

Become conscious you are in God's presence and that God wants you to do some work to help bring about the Kingdom.

You may have a favourite piece of scripture or a prayer that's special to you. Read and pray with it. Don't rush!

Give praise and thanks for all the spiritual and material gifts you possess and ask God to guide you in using these gifts for the benefit of others.

Be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and in Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid". Think about how you are being moved by the Spirit.

Is it something from within the very depths of you, or is it something that has just come to mind as you pray and meditate?

Check it out!

Ask yourself what's happening around you or in the wider world that is of concern. This is where the Pastoral Cycle comes in. Whatever situation you have identified, and it may be something that affects you, begin by listening to the experiences of those who are affected. For example, just imagine you feel moved to take more care of the environment, locally and globally. This is very topical! Where do I begin? There's so much information.

Do some research, find out as much as you can from CAFOD, Operation Noah, the UN, the Ecological Conversion Group and, of course, *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*. While doing this, make sure you find ways of listening to people most affected by the climate crisis.

Who is affected here at home and how?

What is all this saying to you?

Take time to pray and then analyse why a particular thing has happened. A simple question to ask is: Who is doing what to who and why? Try to articulate it or even write it up for yourself. Check your analysis against the evidence and people's experiences, just to make sure it's not just what you want to say.

As your analysis develops and begins to reveal the causes of the situation, you can move on to stage three, Reflection.

This is where we begin drawing on the teachings of our faith to guide us in our response and to help us develop our plan of action.

Perhaps there is a New Testament passage that can help us or maybe a particular piece

of Catholic Social Teaching or a spiritual writer who may offer a lens through which to view the situation. This is where we bring together elements of the three stages we have worked through. *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum* will help and can be downloaded free from the Vatican website.

So we move on to implementing our plan. We should not see this as something we do to people but with them. As Pope Francis says, "We journey with people."

Our plan might comprise several strands:

- What can I do with my family or with my community to begin tackling the climate crisis now?
- What longer term things can we work towards?
- Who can help me/us or who can I/we work with?
- How can we bring about a change in attitudes?

The old saying, "Think globally, act locally" is still a powerful mantra, but Pope Francis tells us we need to find ways of encouraging national leaders to work together in the interests of our common home and humanity – how might we help to bring this about?

Whatever you decide, you need to review and celebrate your achievements before embarking on the next part of your Pastoral Cycle – hence it becomes our way of life, rooted in the faith and experience of God's people.

The Pastoral Cycle is a useful tool and can be used by individuals, groups and parish communities. It doesn't provide a "quick fix", but it offers a sound method, helping us come up with action to tackle the issues in front of us. And it can also help us grow our faith communities in a synodal way.

Deacon David Cross
Adult Formation Coordinator

Events for 2024

Saturday January 20: RCIA Retreat day at Our Lady's, Acomb, from 10am to 3pm, led by Father Tony Lester.

Sunday February 18: First Sunday of Lent and our Rite of Election in the cathedral at 3pm. Bishop Terry will preside and we ask those wishing to be received into full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil to come along with their sponsors and families, presenting themselves to our bishop. Please let me know of those from your parish who will be attending by Monday February 5.



Discussing pastoral planning at St Mary's Cathedral

Listeners left full of admiration for Servant of God

Middlesbrough-born Angela Wills recently came from the Diocese of Portsmouth to talk to the Cleveland Newman Circle about Dorothy Day.

The talk came 43 years to the day since the death in 1980 of Dorothy, who is now a Servant of God, the first step towards canonisation.

Dorothy Day was an American journalist, born in Brooklyn in 1897. In 1917 she attended a Votes for Women demonstration, where she was arrested and imprisoned – for the first of many times in her life. Prison was a dehumanising experience, but she found comfort in the psalms, which “echoed in her heart”, and she began attending Mass.

In 1920 she terminated a pregnancy, something she later bitterly regretted. By 1925 she was intensely happy, but her partner refused marriage and was opposed to baptism so, bravely, she left him. She chose God, and in 1927 she and her daughter, Tamar, were baptised and became Catholic.

A single parent, Dorothy always struggled for money: she once even pawned her typewriter! In 1932, covering the Hunger March to Washington, the police brutality shocked her. She prayed she might work for

the poor and, supported by Peter Maurin, began her life’s work for social justice.

Dorothy was an agitator and a writer, an anti-segregationist and a pacifist. Following strictly the gospel imperative for non-violence, wars and the Holocaust horrified her.

“I cannot see the difference between throwing people into ovens and throwing ovens onto people,” she said.

During Vatican II, she fasted and prayed with others in Rome that the council would condemn nuclear war – they succeeded.

Dorothy’s legacy is the Catholic Worker newspaper she co-founded and the Catholic Worker Movement that still runs more than 100 houses of hospitality.

She gave hospitality to, and lived among, poor people, drug-users and prostitutes – she felt that was every Christian’s responsibility.

She said: “What a delightful thing it is ... to ignore the price of coffee and to go on serving good coffee and the finest bread to the long line of destitute who come to us.”

Angela offered Dorothy as an inspiration. Dorothy recognised Jesus in the poor and worked tirelessly with and for them.



Angela Wills gave a talk on American Catholic journalist Dorothy Day

She said, “All are called to be saints. The only answer in this life to the loneliness we are all bound to feel is community, the living together ... loving God and loving our brother.”

Angela left us full of admiration for Dorothy. For further information about the Cleveland Newman Circle, email

p.egerton123@gmail.com or call 01642 645732. They hold six talks each year, usually on Wednesdays at 7.45pm in St Mary’s Cathedral hall, Middlesbrough.

Bishop Terry will speak on St John of the Cross on Wednesday February 21. All are welcome.

Patricia Egerton

Ampleforth monk meets Pope Francis at Benedictine congress

Father Chad Boulton, monk and oblate master of Ampleforth Abbey, met Pope Francis when he travelled to Rome to take part in the International Congress of Benedictine Oblates.

He was joined by two of the abbey’s oblates who were among 150 Benedictine oblates from around the world who came together for the fifth International congress, where they explored how to embody the wisdom of the Rule of St Benedict.

Benedictine oblates are lay people who live by St Benedict’s Rule, supported by a monastic community.

“It was a demanding and inspiring week, involving talks and workshops, eating and praying together, pilgrimages to Subiaco and Monte Cassino, and a final, private audience



Father Chad meets Pope Francis at the Oblates Congress in Rome

with Pope Francis at the Vatican,” said Father Chad.

You can read more about Oblates and Pope Francis’ message to those who took part in the Congress at ampleforthabbey.org.uk/oblates.

Tribunal service launch follows review recommendation

A National Tribunal Service (NTS) for the Catholic Church in England and Wales was launched at a Mass in Westminster Cathedral celebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

The purpose of the tribunal is to enhance impartiality, transparency and consistency in the application of canon law across its jurisdiction in penal cases. Canon law is a code of ecclesiastical laws – laws relating to the Church – that govern its administration. It will be involved in many aspects of penal law affecting clergy, religious and lay people.

Bishops proposed the tribunal in response to the recommendations of the Elliott Review into Safeguarding Structures and Practice in the Church.

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NEWS

Online sessions look at copyright in church music

During diocesan director of music Steven Maxson's first two years in post, he has received requests for assistance from parishes, musicians and priests across many areas of music ministry.

The most common issue raised, though, has been the potentially complicated area of copyright in music, licensing of copyright music for use in worship and the legal implications of live-streaming for copyright.

A summary document was sent out to all clergy last year, but it is clear people would

value opportunities for further support and guidance.

To this end, there will be two online sessions early in 2024, one during the afternoon of Tuesday January 30 and one the same evening.

The idea is that each session would be identical, notwithstanding the individual needs of those attending, such that you would choose to attend one session or the other, not both.

The sessions are open to anyone with an

interest in this area, be they clergy, musicians or others.

As well as information sharing, including some practical steps of what is needed and what to do, there will be an opportunity for questions to be answered.

The sessions are online, such that people from all parts of the diocese can easily access them.

If you would like to sign up for one or other of these sessions, please contact Steven Maxson by emailing

musicdept@rcdmidd.org.uk and he will be in touch with the sign-on details.

Sessions on the musical implications of the new lectionary will be arranged and publicised as the year progresses, and as materials become available – watch this space!

If you would like support, help or guidance on any aspect of music ministry, contact Steven via email or call 01642 850505, extension 266.

Peace is theme as All Saints elves get to work

A group of All Saints, Thirsk, parishioners nicknamed the Christmas Elves struck again by contributing to this year's St James Methodist Church Christmas Tree Festival.

Our sustainable Christmas tree was created by Christmas elf Sara and decorated with doves to represent the theme of peace.

We chose the universal symbol of a dove as across the world in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, plus in the military and pacifist settings, the dove is a symbol of peace, freedom and love.

All Saints recently welcomed Father Anil Narisetti as our new parish priest after Canon Pat Hartnett's retirement in September.

Father Anil visited All Saints School during his first week, where the children and staff warmly greeted him.

The parish then welcomed him with our favourite baker Katherine Tulloch's black forest gâteau and apple cake.

Father Anil has provided opportunities for additional Masses, which has been welcomed by the congregation.

Cathryn O'Donovan



All Saints' sustainable Christmas tree was decorated with doves to represent the theme of peace

Parish steps up with generous response to shoebox appeal

The Rotary Club sent grateful thanks to everyone at St Aelred's Parish, York, after receiving 112 shoeboxes for its appeal.

Because of the war in Ukraine, it's not clear which country they will be sent to, but they will soon be on their way to Eastern Europe by sea.

Once there, it will be decided whether they can be taken directly into Ukraine or via

Romania. Alternatively, they may be distributed to Ukrainian refugees along the border with Romania, hopefully in time for Christmas.

Our picture shows UCM member Kath Duckworth, who has organised the shoebox collection for the last few years, with Jean Goodridge and Anne Rochester.



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NEWS

Applications open for Catholic Theology course

Applications are now open for Durham University's Centre of Catholic Studies' distance learning programmes in Catholic Theology for October 2024.

The programme, led by the Centre for Catholic Studies (CCS) and the university's world-leading Department of Theology and Religion, is designed so participants can work through material at their own pace, studying

in any time zone and in many life situations, alongside work, ministry, family or caring obligations.

Students can enrol for a postgraduate certificate, a postgraduate diploma or the full MA.

The programme is suitable both for those who have studied theology before and for

those who have a background in a related discipline, including, for instance, history, English, law or philosophy.

The CCS offers a bursary fund to support students on these programmes in 2024-25.

Modules include Catholic Theology: A Preliminary Tour (core module), Catholic Social Thought, The Thought of Thomas

Aquinas in Context, Conceiving Change in Contemporary Catholicism, 20th-Century Catholic Theology, High Medieval Franciscan Theology and Faith and Reason.

Further details are available at durham.ac.uk/study/courses/v8k8o7/, or email theresa.phillips@durham.ac.uk with any queries.

Garden funds pay for new defibrillator

St Paulinus Parish, Guisborough, worked with their school to provide a public access defibrillator, which is on the wall outside the school reception.

A cardiac arrest can affect anyone at any time, from young children at school to adults when they're at home, work or out in public places. However, the chance of surviving jumps from six per cent to 74 per cent if the casualty is in a shockable rhythm and a defibrillator is deployed within three minutes.

If you call 999 you will be directed to your nearest public access defibrillator.

Funds raised at Mike and Gel Heagney's Tudor Croft's open days have paid for the box and installation for use by the wider community.

Brian Gleeson



David Aspin from St Paulinus School with Mike and Gel Heagney from Tudor Croft – Photo by Brian Gleeson

Shopping scheme offers free cash windfalls for parishes

Did you know that the leading supermarkets, including Tesco, Morrisons, ASDA, Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Iceland and Ocado, will all donate money to your church when members of their congregation shop with them?

Customers buy their food shop as usual and the supermarket then sends the church a free donation as a thank you.

Most supermarkets offer a flat donation of up to £5, while others pay a percentage of what the online shopper spends.

On average, easyfundraising says just one person could earn £97.50 a year for their church by doing their food shop.

"With many people choosing to order their food shop online nowadays, it's an easy and accessible way to fund running costs, projects and more," it says.

Churches can register at easyfundraising.org.uk/funding-for-faith to book a call with an expert who can offer advice and tips to help them get started.

They then encourage parishioners, their family and friends and the local community to sign up, with pre-written text and downloadable images available to make this task easier.

Record-breaking Jesus film project unveils new animation

Jesus Film Project, an initiative dedicated to engaging the watching world with Jesus, has announced the launch of its latest cinematic undertaking, Jesus (2025).

The ground-breaking animation, which will hit theatres worldwide in December, brings the story of Jesus to life as depicted in the Book of Luke, introducing his story to a new generation through innovative film technology.

Jesus (2025) is a remake of the 1979 Jesus film, which holds a Guinness World Record as the most translated film of all time.

Fusing visual effects and computer graphics, the film benefits from the expertise and talent of a stellar technical and production team, whose credits include Pixar, Disney and Star Wars.

People across the world have decided to follow Christ because of the original 1979 film and the makers hope the new animated version will introduce a new generation to the hope and truth of the gospel message.

Director Dominic Carola said: "We are working towards presenting the true story of Jesus beautifully animated and making his story more accessible to the world."


Executive director Josh Newell added: "Just like the original, this animated, experiential film will ultimately touch lives in over 2,000 languages, spreading the hope of Jesus to people around the globe.

"It's amazing to be a part of the continued dispersal of the story of Jesus. Even still, in 2023, we're sharing the gospel in new languages and new ways."

Visiting jesus.film for more information.

A Letter From Madonna House - Celebrating Epiphany with the Christian east

This year, the Feast of the Epiphany will be moved to Sunday January 7, and the following day, Monday, will be the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord.



Although it may feel jarring to jump immediately from the Wise Men at the crib to Christ's baptism in the Jordan, historically, both events were commemorated together on Epiphany. This makes some sense when we recall that the word epiphania means "manifestation". With the Wise Men, it is the manifestation of Christ, the newborn King, to the gentile nations.

With his baptism, it is the manifestation, above all, of Christ as the Son of God; for, at Christ's baptism, the voice of the Father was heard, "Behold, you are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11), and the Holy Spirit is likewise made manifest in the form of a dove, descending upon Christ.

Sometimes in western Christianity, as is the case this year, it seems as if the baptism of the Lord is celebrated almost as an afterthought, but in the Christian east, on Epiphany, his baptism is celebrated with almost as great a fervour as Christmas!

In Madonna House, we incorporate such eastern traditions into our celebrations. This is largely due to the fact that our foundress, Catherine Doherty, grew up Russian Orthodox before becoming Catholic.

I myself have been personally blessed to have been given "faculties" from Rome to be able to celebrate the Byzantine (Eastern Christian) liturgies. It is a deep joy to celebrate Christ's baptism with solemnity. At the end of the Liturgy, I will bless all the waters of the earth. Then, to better express such a blessing, we will process down to the shore at Robin Hood's Bay, where I will toss into the sea a blessed cross, which will eventually be found by some fortunate passer-by.

This gesture reminds us that when Christ entered the Jordan river, he blessed its waters and all the waters of the world, imbuing them with his power to cleanse not just the body, but the soul!

At our baptism, all stain of sin was washed away, and we were made temples of the

Holy Spirit; our "old self" died with Christ, and we were raised to new life in him.

Thus, when we celebrate Christ's epiphany, we don't just remember that he "showed up". Rather, he manifested himself so that he could restore to us the divine life for which we were created.

How often do we marvel at the reality of our baptism? I hope that, as we remember Christ's Baptism, we receive the grace to cherish more deeply the mystery of our own baptism.

I hope we can almost hear the trickling of those cleansing waters that were poured over our head, washing our soul, and filling us, by no merit of our own, with Christ's own divine life and love.

And, indeed, those words that our Heavenly Father spoke at Christ's baptism have become our own: "Behold, you are my beloved son/daughter, in you I am well pleased."

Father Michael Weilt

Summer run for writer Mary’s new play

Dismayed at the lack of the usual semi-professional York Mystery Plays in the coming summer, author F Mary Callan has scripted a new play, *Fresh Passion*, based on Bible stories. Featuring patriarchs and prophets, matriarchs and women of every social status, *Fresh Passion* will be performed in the Spurriergate Centre from June 24 to 29. Mary hopes parishes will take part.

“We need everyone from Adam and Eve to Mary and Joseph and voices around Jesus’ crucifixion, thieves, pharisees, soldiers, mourning women,” says Mary.

“We also need many kinds of support, from tech and costumes to ticket-sellers.” You can invite Mary to your parish for a taster of the show. View Mary’s work on her website notsodeadpoet.com or search “fmarycallan” to view her performances.

For more information and to take part in *Fresh Passion*, email blazinggrannies@gmail.com.



An angry brother complains about Joseph’s amazing coloured coat in Mary’s show *Families in Crisis*

Please remember in your prayers the following clergy from our diocese whose anniversaries are this month. We list here them along with their final resting place.

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3	2000	Rt Rev Mgr Canon Peter Storey	Osmotherley
5	1887	Rev William Brown	York
7	1981	Rev Michael McCarthy	Scorton
7	1991	Rev Christopher Pattison	Eston
9	1956	Rev Charles Heslin	Redcar
11	1965	Rev Cuthbert Clifford	Hull
11	1995	Rev Leo Dennett	Egton Bridge
13	1964	Very Rev Canon James Knowles	Hull
16	1908	Rev Michael Aylward	South Bank
16	1965	Rev Bernard Pears	Everingham
17	1978	Very Rev Canon T Lynam	Westmeath
18	1957	Rev Alphonsus Van den Bossche	Ulshaw Bridge
20	1939	Rt Rev Mgr Canon Richard F Sullivan	Middlesbrough
21	2005	Very Rev David Fitzgibbon	Castlebar
21	2007	Rev James Hughes	Hessle
25	2010	Rev Joseph O’Brien	Hull
27	1993	Rev Edward Glynn, RN	Sleights
29	1975	Rev Denis Manley	Hull
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31	2021	Rev Peter Egan	County Clare

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NEWS

Research reveals devastating impact of imprisonment for families and children

With the prison population now at an all-time high, new research shows how prisoners' families are facing their own hidden sentence of financial hardship and emotional strain.

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) is the national Catholic charity supporting people in prison and their children and families.

Its new report, *Serving a Hidden Sentence*, documents how families, already on low incomes and affected by rising prices, are being hit by additional costs and are struggling to cover the basics for themselves and their children.

In addition, families describe suffering from a widespread social stigma associated with imprisonment and say their mental and physical health suffers.

A double blow of the loss of a partner's income often hits prisoners' families, coupled with the extra costs associated with staying in touch with and supporting their loved one through a sentence.

Government research shows that prisoners who stay in touch with family and partners are 39 per cent less likely to return to crime after prison – so nurturing family relationships where appropriate is important for the common good of our communities.

However, 56 per cent of families said money had affected their ability to stay in touch with a loved one in prison.

Justice secretary Alex Chalk recently announced a series of measures, including greater use of community sentences and an early release scheme, which should bring a fall in the prison population.

Almost 90,000 people are in prison – and the prison population has grown by 80 per cent in the last three decades.

In response to the findings, Pact is calling on the government to:

- Review its Help with Prison Visits scheme, which aims to support people on low incomes with the cost of prison visits. One in three respondents were unaware of the scheme.
- Continue taking steps to ensure prisoners are held as close as possible to families and partners.
- Review prison officer training to ensure frontline staff understand the importance of keeping people in prison in touch with their families.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said: "This research lays bare the devastating impact the

imprisonment of a loved one has on hundreds of thousands of families and children.

"Extra costs and a loss of household income are heaping extra pressure on people already affected by the cost-of-living crisis. But the impact stretches well beyond financial problems, as family members struggle with the social stigma associated with imprisonment and their physical and mental health deteriorates.

"The government has announced welcome new measures that should lead to a reduction in the prison population. However, right now, the number of people behind bars has never been higher and that means record numbers of families and children suffering the consequences.

"Maintaining family ties plays a crucial role in reducing re-offending. If we are serious about cutting crime and delivering safer communities, we must support prisoners to stay in touch with family.

"By working together, the prison service and a range of partners have made huge progress in recent years, but this research shows that there is still much that could be done."



Catholic charity the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) supports people in prison and their children and families

Copy Deadline

Copy and photographs for inclusion in the *Catholic Voice* should be sent to: The Editor, Middlesbrough Diocesan Catholic Voice, Curial Offices, 50a The Avenue, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS5 6QT.

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Deadline Friday January 5 for our February edition.

Where possible please send articles in Word and photographs as jpegs. Please confirm when you send in your photographs that those who appear in them have given their permission for publication.

- Out & About will return next month.

NEWS FROM ROME

Pope Francis announces first World Day of Children

The Holy Father has announced “with joy” that the first World Day of Children will be held in Rome on May 25 and 26 2024.

The event, which will see thousands of boys and girls from all over the world flock to Rome, is sponsored by the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

The idea of a day dedicated to children was proposed to Pope Francis in July by nine-year-

old Alessandro during Popecast, a podcast made by Vatican Media after World Youth Day in Lisbon.

“I like it very much!” the Pope replied after listening to the voice message. “We can have it organised by the grandparents. A beautiful idea. I will think about it and see how to do it.”

Preparations begin for Jubilee year

A year of prayer to prepare for the Jubilee year in 2025 has begun this Advent.

The theme of the Jubilee year is “Pilgrims of Hope” for a world suffering the affects of war, the ongoing effects of the pandemic and a climate crisis.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference is producing

resources for the year of prayer, focusing on the Our Father, as well as resources about Jubilee in the Catholic Church.

For use by parishes, priests, religious, laypeople and others, these resources will help guide you as you ready yourself for this important year in the Church’s life.

Holy Father prays for an end to war

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Francis returned to the window of the Apostolic Palace for the Angelus.

Afterwards, the Pope looked ahead to his visit in the afternoon to Santa Maria Maggiore and Piazza di Spagna to pray to Our Lady to intercede for a world without war.

He said: “I ask everyone, especially the faithful of Rome, to unite themselves spiritually to me in this act of entrustment to our Mother, praying particularly for peace, peace in Ukraine, peace in Palestine and Israel, and in every land wounded by war. Let us ask for peace, that hearts might be at peace, that there be peace!”

Group says churches should never be forced to close again

The impact of closing churches and other places of worship during the Covid-19 pandemic has been revealed in a new study.

A survey carried out by the Catholic Union found that 62 per cent of people said the closures affected their physical or mental health.

It also found that 90 per cent of people thought places of worship should be treated as “essential” services alongside food shops and healthcare facilities in any future pandemic, meaning they would not be forced to close.

The survey of almost 1,000 people is the first major study of Catholic attitudes towards the closure of churches during the pandemic and its impact on people’s wellbeing.

One respondent described the church closures as “one of the most distressing experiences of my life”.

Another said: “I became very depressed – it felt a part of me was missing.”

Someone else said: “I live alone and going to daily Mass is the most important event in my life.”

Catholic Union president Baroness Hollins described the results as “shocking”.

The cross-bench peer, who recently took over the role, said: “It’s clear from these results that places of worship should never be forced to close again.”

Other findings include:

- Only 25 per cent of respondents thought it was necessary to close churches and other places of worship by law at the start of the pandemic.

- Ninety-three per cent did not think that politicians gave enough consideration to people’s faith when making decisions.

- Nine out of ten said it was unhelpful having different legal restrictions on churches across different regions and nations of the UK.

The survey also found a resilience in Mass attendance, with less than 10 per cent of people saying they go to church less frequently or not at all since the pandemic.

The Catholic Union will use the results from the survey to inform its evidence to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

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The Mini Vinnies at St Edward’s Catholic Primary School in Middlesbrough raised £200 from their school toy sale. The school also thanked Tees and Hartlepool Port Users Association who generously matched this donation, making a total of £400 to donate to a Middlesbrough food bank.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Gaza’s only Catholic church damaged by airstrike

Gaza’s only Catholic church has been damaged in an Israeli army attack.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has confirmed to Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that shrapnel from strikes on nearby buildings destroyed water tanks and solar panels on the roofs of the Holy Family Church in Gaza City and parish buildings.

Cars and other parts of the parish complex were also damaged.

The parish has also run out of fuel, depriving the community of electricity and any stable means of communication.

A local ACN partner said: “Only a miracle prevented a big catastrophe from happening to us.”

An unexploded rocket has since been discovered on the boundaries of the parish complex.

A source told ACN: “Imagine the level of trauma among children and all the people there in case it explodes. It is impossible to dismantle it unless the Israeli army itself intervenes.”

Last month ACN reported that the congregation of the Rosary Sisters and a priest were caring for 750 displaced Christians – including 100 children and 70



Explosions around the Holy Family Church in Gaza – Photo © ACN

people with special needs.

With the situation becoming more desperate by the day, thousands of Christians in the Holy Land have benefited from support by ACN, including meals, food coupons, rent and

utility payments and medicine.

Out of the 1,000 Christians living in Gaza, 22 have died since the war began. An airstrike killed 17 Christians sheltering in the Orthodox Church of St Porphyrius on October 19 and

five others have died from the lack of medical care.

Local sources also said many Christian families have lost their homes and possessions since the beginning of the war.

Christian communities are under threat in many places throughout the world. Here are just some of the many reports from Christian charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). To find out how you can help, visit acnuk.org.

Worshippers attacked on first Sunday of Advent

A Sunday Mass in the Philippines turned into a catastrophe when extremists struck, killing four worshippers and injuring 50 others. Terrorists detonated a bomb at a gym at the University of Mindanao where hundreds of faithful had gathered. Christians make up only two per cent of the island of Mindanao’s population.

Mass exodus threatens future of Syrian Christianity

Emigration driven by misery, corruption and Western sanctions is crippling the Christian community in Syria, according to Archbishop Jacques Mourad of Homs. Syria’s Christian population declined from about 1.5m to between 300,000-500,000 since the civil war started in 2011, according to ACN’s Religious Freedom in the World Report 2023. ACN supported a programme distributing more than 3,000 gifts to children and people with disabilities this Christmas, as well as helping clergy with Mass offerings – their only source of income – and subsistence assistance.

Muslim leaders join Christians in denouncing extremism

Muslim leaders in Pakistan are increasingly speaking out against radicalism and promoting interfaith dialogue after a wave of anti-Christian riots in Jaranwala, Punjab Province, according to Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw of Lahore. A scholar of Islamic doctrine apologised on behalf of his people at a press conference the day after thousands of Christians fled their homes as a Muslim mob went on a rampage in Jaranwala in the summer. Dozens of churches and hundreds of family homes were torched and looted following rumours that two Christian brothers had desecrated the Qur’an.

Charity funds Christian schools to curb Islamist extremism

ACN is providing £2.3m in aid to help impoverished families in Syria and Lebanon educate their children and prevent the spread of extremism. More than 16,000 students in 176 schools will receive help with education costs. Families are increasingly unable to afford essentials like books, stationery and school fees. The aid programme will also supplement the salaries of 6,000 Catholic school teachers and 117 catechists working in state schools.

Two children murdered and Christians forced out

A Christian leader in Burkina Faso has said the jihadist persecution has taken a fresh turn with the summary execution of children and expulsion of believers from a village in the north-west. Bishop Prosper Bonaventure Ky of Dédougou said Islamist extremists driving Christians out of Dédé marks a new development. Terrorists targeted Dédé’s Christians, giving them a 72-hour ultimatum to leave after the killing of two boys who were caught flouting the extremists’ ban on going to school.

Churches provide refuge in new wave of civil war

Burmese rebels have launched a fresh offensive in the civil war that broke out almost three years ago, prompting displaced civilians to seek shelter in churches. Armed insurgent groups have attacked the ruling military junta in Burma (Myanmar), according to local news reports.

Imam and bishop promote interfaith harmony

A project bringing together Christian and Muslim leaders is bearing fruit in a Nigerian region known for religious tensions. The initiative in Osogbo Diocese in Osun State, south-west Nigeria encourages cooperation between prelates to defuse tensions and prevent any further deadly interreligious conflict. Supported by ACN, the project aims to help build trust, respect and friendship between different faith communities via events and media activities.

Environment Corner – Holding on to hope as new year dawns



Within Pope Francis’ tough challenge to us all through *Laudato Si’* and *Laudate Deum* is a faith-filled contemplative way at looking at Creation with an ever-deepening love.

When we come to love our earth more deeply, we will be drawn to protect it. Every molecule of creation is sacred.

The mysticism of nature is a gift for everyone. As you contemplate nature, you can grow in wonder and in awareness that every bit of creation is singing a song to you and inviting you to catch on to its melody.

God created the universe out of nothing. The Spirit of God fills the universe with possibilities and, therefore, from the heart of things, something new can always emerge.

As we begin another year, may our struggles and concerns for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

Barbara Hungin

Photo by Vytautas Markūnas, Catholicic

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Online booking available for our 71st pilgrimage

You can now book online for the 71st Diocese of Middlesbrough Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Because of a clash of dates with the Military Pilgrimage, we have altered our normal week and we will be in Lourdes from Sunday May 26 to Saturday June 1 2024.

Joe Walsh Tours is our official travel agent and pilgrims will travel in two direct chartered flights from Teesside Airport to

Tarbes Airport, Lourdes. Prices for the flight, transfers and six nights' accommodation with full board range from £845 to £895, depending on your choice of hotel. Single rooms are available for an additional charge. A flight-only option is available for £575, while there is a charge of £50 for infants under two years on the date of return.

The price for supported pilgrims staying in the Accueil de Notre Dame is £825. Travel insurance for pilgrims up to 79 years on the date of return is £49, with an additional £49 charge for those aged 80 or over on the date of return. As usual, there will be a full programme of services and a guided walking tour of Lourdes, visiting places associated with St

Bernadette, guided visits to the sanctuaries, Grotto, baths and basilicas. You can book now at joewalshstours.co.uk. Application forms for supported pilgrims are available from Lourdes secretary Pat Ling by calling 01642 760105 or emailing lourdessecretary@rcdmidd.org.uk.

Moving Lourdes water gesture inspires pupils

Hospitalité members visited St Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Primary School in South Bank for a very special Lourdes water service.

Volunteers spent two days with the children and some of their parents, giving them all the chance to experience the water gesture, using the healing waters from the springs at Lourdes.

"The children were very respectful, prayerful and attentive and such a joy to talk to and share what they had been taught about Our Lady of Lourdes, St Bernadette and the Lourdes spring water," said head of hospitalité John Brown. "Thanks to the headteacher and all the teaching staff who welcomed us with open arms and helped us to engage with

the children. St Margaret's is a wonderful school full of lovely children with beaming smiles on their faces." Headteacher Clare McNicholas said the event had a profound impact on the pupils. "The children felt so special and many of them have commented positively about the experience. "One pupil approached me and shared how much she had enjoyed having time to reflect on the moment, so much so she had written her thoughts on a Post It note. "It said, 'It was such an interesting experience and I really enjoyed the time to pray. After we washed our faces and drank the water, I felt happy and really close to Mary'.

"I hope this pupil's comment inspires the volunteers to continue with the amazing work they do – we can't thank them enough for giving their time so generously to our children." The outreach came about after the visit of St Bernadette's relics to St Mary's Cathedral last year. Some schools were unable to stay for the Lourdes water service, so hospitalité members offered to come to them. They have now been into several of our primary schools. If you would like them to come into your school, email john.brown160@ntlworld.com.



St Margaret Clitherow's children taking part in the Lourdes water gesture



Dates for your diary

Saturday January 20 2024: Lourdes Ceilidh at Holy Name of Mary Church Hall, Middlesbrough, 7pm. £5 per ticket, bring own drinks and nibbles.

Sunday February 11 2024: Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, St Mary's Cathedral, 10am, with tea and coffee in the hall afterwards.

Saturday February 24 2024: Lourdes Race Night, St Francis Social Club, Acklam Road, Middlesbrough. Tickets £5 including pie and peas.

Saturday March 2 2024: Lourdes Formation Day at Trinity College, Middlesbrough. Details to follow.

For more information and tickets, email john.brown160@ntlworld.com or text 07871 958412.

NEWS

Stella Maris spreads festive cheer to seafarers

“The first time I dressed up as Santa to go on board a ship and take gifts to the crew, I felt a bit embarrassed,” admits Deacon Peter Barrigan, Stella Maris regional port chaplain in Tees, Hartlepool and Seaham.

“But when I arrived in the mess room, singing Christmas songs as I went in, the crew were waiting like eager children. You should have seen the joy on their faces.

“They carefully put each parcel under their small tree and told me they’d wait until Christmas morning to open them. Later that month, I had a thank you email from the captain.”

The presents the seafarers received meant someone had thought about them, says Peter.

“The gifts may have been simple things like toiletries, socks, woolly hats, chocolate or phone cards. But when you give to seafarers, it sends a powerful message: you’re not alone, we care for you, God loves you.

“It’s the same with Christmas cards. I met a captain one time who showed me a card he received last year. He’d kept it all this time! When you show kindness towards seafarers at Christmas, it means everything to them.”

Most of us see Christmas as a time to relax with family and friends, but for many seafarers it’s business as usual.

They are likely to be working on deck hundreds or thousands of miles out at sea or unloading or loading a vessel in a port somewhere.

Many of the items that fill the shelves of our shops over Christmas will have arrived here by sea, everything from the latest mobile phones and PlayStations to clothes and fruit.

Even on the largest container ships, such as the MSC Irina, which is 400 metres long and can carry 24,000 metal containers, a crew might just comprise 25 seafarers. Working on such an enormous ship with so few other seafarers can be a lonely experience and exhausting work.

Most seafarers are from countries in the developing world, such as the Philippines and India, and join a ship to earn enough money to support their family back home. Many seafarers are Catholic.

The maritime world remains a largely hidden one. While lots of us are familiar with airports, we know nothing about what goes on in a port. We might know that Heathrow and Gatwick are the UK’s busiest airports, but we would struggle to name the busiest UK ports.

Through small gestures, Stella Maris port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors around the UK, like Peter and his team, will make Christmas special for seafarers. And they

understand just how important these gestures are.

If readers would like to find out more about helping a seafarer this Christmas, the work of Stella Maris and opportunities to volunteer or

donate to support it, visit stellamaris.org.uk. Let us also pray for seafarers and fishers and their families at this special time of the year.

Greg Watts



Deacon Peter Barrigan of Stella Maris dressed as Santa

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