

## Bishop's Column

**March already! It doesn't seem like five minutes since *Auld Lang Syne* was being belled out. The good thing about March is that January and February have passed us by, so we can really begin to look ahead with some hope. And there are lots of signposts for us.**

As the month begins, so does Lent. Ash Wednesday falls on March 5 and we "begin with holy fasting the campaign of Christian service...so that we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint."

On the First Sunday of Lent, March 9, we celebrate in the cathedral the Rite of Election, when we solemnly welcome those who are to be baptised and received into full communion with the Church and we promise to accompany them with our prayers, as we all prepare for the celebration of Holy Week and Easter.

Also on March 9, we join the nation in a Day of Reflection to remember those who lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. This day provides an opportunity to reflect, pray and support one another as we honour the resilience of our communities. You are invited to light a candle, offer a prayer and remember all those who died as a result of the pandemic. Let's also give thanks for the strength and compassion shown during those challenging times. May we continue to offer love, hope and kindness to all.

This year there will be another Flame event for the young people of our national Church. It will be held on Saturday March 15 at Wembley Arena and will be the largest ever, with more than 10,000 young people attending. Let's remember to pray with and for our young people on that day.

More locally, on the feast of St Joseph, Wednesday March 19, the choirs of our Middlesbrough and York schools will gather at the cathedral to celebrate Mass at around 1pm. They are all part of the National Schools Singing Programme, of which we should be very proud.

Just in case you think the Lourdes Pilgrimage is still far away, there will be a full day's preparation and formation on Saturday March 22 for all those who have volunteered as helpers.

Then at long last we can say that we are definitely on the way to better days as British Summer Time begins during the night of March 29/30. Don't forget to put your clock forward. It's for that reason that the Easter Vigil should not begin until 9pm as it will still be light, and as we all know, the Vigil should begin in the darkness.

In blessed hope,

*+ Long*

## What's Inside

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# Celebrated quartet's homecoming among new season highlights

**A performance from world-renowned classical music ensemble the Brodsky Quartet on Friday May 16 is among the highlights of St Mary's Cathedral's spring and summer 2025 season that follows a highly successful debut programme last year.**

Formed in Middlesbrough in 1972 as the Cleveland Quartet, the award-winning group was later renamed in honour of Russian violinist Adolph Brodsky.

They have performed in the world's greatest concert venues and collaborated with some of the biggest names in music, including Paul McCartney, Sting, Elvis Costello and Björk.

The current line-up is founder members Ian Belton (violin) and Jacqueline Thomas (cello), Paul Cassidy (viola) who joined in 1982, and violinist Krysia Osostowicz.

"We're thrilled to welcome music lovers to our cathedral for another season of outstanding performances," said dean of St Mary's Cathedral Canon Paul Farrer.

"Our lineup showcases a rich tapestry of talent, from world-renowned ensembles to local favourites.

"The Brodsky Quartet's return to Middlesbrough is a homecoming we're particularly excited about. Their legacy and connection to our town make this concert a unique highlight of our season."

The quartet are known for performing while standing up, with Jacqueline adjusting her positioning by sitting on a podium to match her colleagues' head height.

The many honours they have received over the years include the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for an outstanding contribution to



**The Brodsky Quartet was formed in Middlesbrough in 1972 and has since gained a worldwide reputation**

innovation in programming and the Edison Prize for the Juliet Letters, written with Costello. They received an honorary fellowship at Teesside University in 1999.

The quartet also champion new works and have commissioned many contemporary composers. They have released more than 70 recordings, ending their recording career in 2023 after releasing three albums to mark

their 50th anniversary.

St Mary's spring and summer 2025 season is now underway and continues until June.

Other highlights include critically acclaimed singer-songwriter Boo Hewardine, with support from Teesside's own Elaine Palmer, on Friday March 28.

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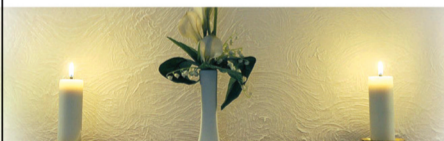
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NEWS

Celebrated quartet’s homecoming among new season highlights

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The Cathedral Series of concerts by St Mary’s own choir and musicians continues on Saturday April 5 with a Come & Sing recital of Handel’s Messiah, and the Band of the Royal Yorkshire Regiment will perform on Saturday May 3.

Simon & Garfunkel Through the Years, considered one of the world’s greatest tribute shows, conclude the season with a performance on Friday June 20.

“St Mary’s Cathedral has always been a place where the community can come together to experience the joy of music,” said Canon Paul.

“This season, we continue that tradition with a diverse range of events that promise something for everyone.”

Tickets for all shows are available now from [ticketsource.co.uk/middlesbroughcathedral](https://ticketsource.co.uk/middlesbroughcathedral).

- The return of the popular Rocking in the Aisles show, which was to have been this month, has been postponed because of roadworks taking place around the cathedral and will now be on Friday September 26. Tickets are on sale now from Ticket Source.

BISHOP TERRY’S MARCH ENGAGEMENTS

- 1-2 Parish Visitation, the Parishes of St Charles Borromeo, Hull, Ss Mary and Joseph, Hedon and Ss Peter and John Fisher, Withernsea
- 5 Celebrates Mass for the Feast of Ash Wednesday at St Mary’s Cathedral 7pm
- 6 Attends DTEC Meeting at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough 10.30am
- 9 Celebrates the Rite of Election at St Mary’s Cathedral 3pm
- 11 Attends Bishop’s Council via Zoom 10.30am
- 12 School Visitation to St Mary’s Primary, Richmond 9am
- 18 Attends the Trustee Board Meeting at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough 10.30am
- 19 Celebrates Mass for the National Schools’ Singing Programme, St Mary’s Cathedral 1pm
- 22 Attends the Lourdes Formation Day 9am
- 26 School Visitation to St Augustine’s, Scarborough 9am
- 27 Attends Northern Church Leaders Meeting via Zoom 4pm
- 28 Celebrates the Consecration Mass of Our Lady’s Parish, Acomb 7pm

How Lenten music reflects solemnity of the season

As we once more prepare for Lent, musicians across the diocese will be preparing for the coming season.

During Mass, the Gloria (Glory to God in the highest) is no longer sung, other than on solemnities and feasts. The Alleluia is no longer sung as the Gospel Acclamation, or in any of our hymns, chants or songs.

Alternative Gospel Acclamations can be found in many of our hymnals, and simple settings composed for the diocese are available from the diocesan music office.

There is also an instruction in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which states: “In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only in order to support the singing” (other than on Laetare Sunday, solemnities and feasts).

This can have a dramatic change on our worship and how we all prepare for Mass: keeping silence before and after Mass, for example.

These musical changes, of course, make the Easter Vigil all the more dramatic, with the return of Alleluias aplenty, the Gloria, and as celebratory music!

There are help pages which can be accessed from the music section of the diocesan website, including a page specifically about Lenten music, as well as for those preparing to sing the Exsultet during the Easter Vigil.



Steven Maxson explains how the music we have in church changes during Lent

In addition, settings of Responsorial Psalms for Lent, Holy Week and the Triduum for this year have all been granted a Concordat and can be made freely available to any parish within the diocese.

Renewed thanks for the work of musicians across the diocese, who do so much to enhance our liturgy.

Steven Maxson  
Diocesan Director of Music

Parishes invited to join in Covid-19 Day of Reflection

Every parish church in the UK is invited to take an active part in the annual National Covid-19 Day of Reflection.

The year, March 9 (the first Sunday of Lent), is set aside for this commemoration.

Given that the day falls on a Sunday, parishes are being encouraged to observe a special period of silence at an appropriate moment during the liturgy and include the day of reflection in the prayer of the faithful.

Parishes may also like to prepare a liturgy for the day or extend the opening of the church so people can light candles.

Canon Paul Farrer  
Episcopal Vicar for Spirituality and Worship

Suggested intercession

*We pray for all affected by the pandemic.*

*For those who lost their lives to Covid-19 and all who mourn.*

*For healthcare workers and essential staff who served tirelessly, bless them with strength and renewal.*

*For those still suffering from illness, loss, or hardship, bring healing and hope.*

*For our communities, that we may continue to support one another with love and kindness.*

*Lord, in your mercy:*

*Hear our prayer*

Study day explores care of historic churches

The Diocesan Historic Churches Committee hosted a study day at Ampleforth, bringing together clergy and parishioners to explore key aspects of caring for historic church buildings.

More than 40 delegates attended the event, which featured expert speakers covering a broad range of topics – from the role of the committee itself to practical guidance on planning and delivering projects.

Funding opportunities and grant support were also discussed, offering valuable insights for those responsible for maintaining these treasured places of worship.

Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting a shared commitment to safeguarding the heritage of our churches.

It is hoped the study day marks a significant step towards greater understanding and effective stewardship of the historic assets in parish care.

Dan Woodgate



Presentation by Sylvia Johnson and Rory Wardroper of the Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust

# Bishop Terry recalls Father Neil's life of service

**Bishop Terry was the principal celebrant at the Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Father Neil McNicholas at St Mary's Cathedral.**

Father Neil died peacefully at the Butterwick Hospice in Stockton on the morning of Friday January 24.

The night before the funeral his body was received into St Mary and St Romuald's Church, Yarm, the parish he had served before his retirement in 2023.

Father Neil, who was 76, had been ill in James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough for several weeks before going into the hospice. Born in 1948, Father Neil grew up in Redcar, originally in the Sacred Heart Parish, and attended St Mary's College in Middlesbrough from 1959 to 1964, when it was the Marist grammar school.

After leaving school he worked for five years as a lab technician with Dorman Long and ICI and also became involved in the establishment of the new parish of St Alban's in Redcar.

Father Neil spent some time in the seminary at Osterley before working with the Jesuits as a lay-missionary, teaching and coaching sport in Zambia.

He studied at the Jesuits' Portland novitiate for 18 months, which included working at a parish on an Indian Reservation in Washington State.

In 1978 he left the seminary and spent five years working in the Middle East, where he helped organise the catechetics programme in a community parish, even though Christian churches were officially banned.

He then did a degree in social sciences at the University of South Florida before returning to the Middle East to work.

After coming home in 1988, Father Neil went to Ushaw College to train for the priesthood. He also worked in hospital chaplaincy and joined the religious broadcast team at BBC Radio Cleveland.

He was ordained priest in July 1993 – Bishop John's first ordination for the diocese – and was appointed assistant priest at Christ the

King, Thornaby, also serving as a prison chaplain.

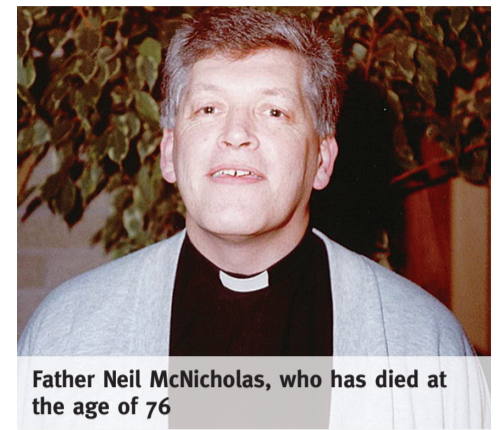
In 1995 he became priest-in-charge at St Peter's, South Bank, and was also asked to take on the ministry of port chaplain with the Apostleship of the Sea.

In 1999 he was appointed as parish priest at St Andrew's, Teesville, in addition to his responsibilities at St Peter's, the two parishes eventually being amalgamated in January 2000, along with St Anne's, Eston, two years later. He was also "in-store chaplain" at the local Asda supermarket.

His next posting was to St Hilda's in Whitby before a move to St Gabriel's, Ormesby, Middlesbrough, also serving Corpus Christi, Middlesbrough, and St Alphonsus, North Ormesby.

In 2014, he moved to the parishes of St Patrick's and Christ the King in Thornaby and he served in Yarm until his retirement in 2023.

Father Neil was a talented writer and he updated Canon Bob Carson's Centenary History of the Diocese to mark its 150th



**Father Neil McNicholas, who has died at the age of 76**

anniversary and Father Anthony Storey's History of the Lady Chapel.

He was also a regular contributor to newspapers including the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Catholic Post*.

Please keep Father Neil's family and friends in your prayers.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

# Volunteers needed for thriving St Vincent's shops

**As part of our Catholic Social Teaching we are asked to consider our stewardship of the environment, and yet we live in a throwaway consumer society and we all love a bargain.**

One way to reconcile these imperatives is to support your local charity shop. We are blessed to have two thriving St Vincent's shops in our diocese, at 430 Marton Road, Middlesbrough, and 273 Melrosegate, York.

Each shop is managed by a paid manager supported by a group of volunteer assistants. They sell a wide range of quality pre-loved goods at reasonable prices.

With a shopping experience that is about the person as well as the product, our St Vincent's shops focus on community.

Donations of clothing and other smaller household goods are always welcome, but if you have a boot full it helps to phone ahead of your arrival, as neither shop has much storage space.

You can also Gift Aid your donation and a share of the shops' profits is returned to SVP to be used to meet local needs in our diocese.

The success of these busy shops is because of the leadership of our two shop managers and hard-working volunteers, but we always need more help.

Volunteer roles are rewarding and the hours are flexible to suit you. Typical volunteer tasks include:

1. Handling cash and serving customers
2. Displaying stock on the shop floor
3. Working on creative window displays
4. Preparing, sorting and pricing donations

By joining one of our friendly shop teams, you can give back to your local community and gain valuable retail customer service skills, as well as meeting new people. No experience is necessary, as each volunteer receives induction and training.

If you'd like to volunteer at the Middlesbrough St Vincent's shop, please pop in and have a chat with the manager, Ruth, or call 01642 821816.

To volunteer in York please chat to manager Kevin or call 01904 923010. Those are also the numbers to call to arrange for a larger donation.



**Middlesbrough St Vincent's shop volunteer Marie Leach (in pale blue) with relief manager Catherine Allen**

# Haircut added to services at busy Upper Room

**The Upper Room with Middlesbrough SVP has now been open every Saturday for over a year, offering those who are homeless or destitute breakfast in a warm, welcoming environment and a lunch to take away.**

The sessions are lively and getting busier every week, with 65 attending on a recent Saturday.

New faces are welcomed each week, and we signpost to further help where needed.

The Christmas gift bags containing gloves, hat, socks, essential toiletries and festive treats were greatly appreciated.

Podiatry services are offered and Mike Loudon has recently joined and gives free haircuts most weeks.

The basic cost of £500 per month is increasing, with more visitors attending and the need to supply more emergency items.

Sleeping bags, emergency clothing, trainers and tents are given out to those in crises and continue to be needed.

To help with funding or donation of emergency items, please email [FrancesG@svp.org.uk](mailto:FrancesG@svp.org.uk) or [teresa\\_lyth@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:teresa_lyth@hotmail.co.uk) or call 07885 599810.

Thank you to everyone who is supporting this project.



**The Upper Room team, including hairdresser Mike Loudon, prepare for another busy Saturday**

SCHOOLS

# Westminster ceremony highlights global efforts

St Mary's College in Hull has been awarded the British Council's prestigious International School Award for the sixth time in recognition of its work to bring the world into the classroom.

The college is a truly diverse community where more than 65 languages are spoken, with a global outlook that embraces the world around us: a global community within four walls.

The 2025 award ceremony took place in Westminster and was attended by MPs. Two staff representatives joined schools around the UK to collect the award in this impressive location.

St Mary's College's international work includes a bespoke International Week filled with extracurricular activities and events to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of our global community, educational visits across the globe and international film clubs.

The college also has a strong partnership with the Kingston Junior Academy (KJA) school in Kenya.

St Mary's has fundraised to enable KJA to get hooked up to the electric grid in Kigali and have new classrooms built. Almost 50 students have their education sponsored by people in Hull.

On hearing the news, head of school Maria Stead said: "We are once again so proud to have received this prestigious award, which highlights our work to be recognised as a truly international community, one that is globally outward-looking.

"Our students come from all over the world and yet we all understand what it means to be a community. This award only serves to highlight this and once again places St Mary's College in the spotlight.

"I am especially proud of the work we do with KJA school in Kenya. Our children love to communicate with their children and understand that young people all over the world have wonderful hopes and dreams of a future where we are connected across the world."



St Mary's College in Hull has again been awarded the British Council's International School Award

# Catenians hold 94th annual charter and clergy dinner

Almost 109 years since its inauguration, Middlesbrough Catenians were delighted to host their 94th Annual Charter Dinner and Clergy Night at the Leonardo Hotel.

The dinner aims to recognise the inauguration in 1916 of Middlesbrough Circle's Catenian Charter and bring together fellow Catenians and non-Catenians and their guests, both from around Province 5 of the association and from our local area.

After an excellent meal, guests were entertained by John Thompson, of Durham Catenians Circle, who delivered a fascinating talk about his experiences serving as a prison officer in the notorious Wormwood Scrubs prison.

A charity raffle raised £700 and cheques will be handed over to circle president Chris Rhodes' chosen charities, both of which aim to support young people in our diocese.

The first is to help towards transport costs to the Flame Congress, the largest gathering of some 10,000 young people in England and Wales, at Wembley Arena this month.

Financial help will also be given to those helping at the Diocese of Middlesbrough Pilgrimage to Lourdes in May.

On behalf of Middlesbrough Circle, Chris sent his thanks to all who attended and contributed generously towards these causes.

Pictured, from left to right, are principal guests Mark Taylor (Lourdes pilgrimage director), Knights of St Columba grand knight Keith Tillotson, Province 5 brother director Ian Calvert, Brother Gavin Robinson (vice president), Brother Chris Rhodes (president), main speaker and Province 5 past president John Thompson, Canon Alan Sheridan (parish priest of St Thérèse of Lisieux, Ingleby Barwick) and past Province 5 director Donald Austin.



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Head of School: Miss H Lickess

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**St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School**

Part Of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust

South Bank, Middlesbrough TS6 6TA

Tel 01642 835370

Headteacher: Miss C McNicholas  
email: enquiries@smc.npcat.org.uk



The principal guests at Middlesbrough Catenians' Charter Dinner

# Baptism in focus at national conference

Clergy and catechists involved in all areas of sacramental preparation are invited to take part in a national conference called Reimagining Baptism.

The Sacrament of Baptism is transformative and the gateway to life in Christ. Yet organisers say those who come requesting baptism often have a distinct lack of formation in their faith.

Their relationship with Jesus can be fragile and they may not know how to share the Good News with their children.

The conference is designed to help parishes avoid passing up these opportunities to share about life as a child of God by learning new strategies to build a baptismal mindset.

There will be chances to share the difficulties we encounter and explore practical suggestions that will enable parents to be the best teachers in the faith.

The conference will be hosted by the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis from the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Baptism Collaborative.

Day one, Friday May 9, is primarily for clergy and costs £50, including a cooked lunch.

Day two, Saturday May 10, is aimed at catechists, who are asked to bring their own lunch.

Book your place at [aec.rcaos.org.uk/baptism-reimagined](http://aec.rcaos.org.uk/baptism-reimagined)

There will be a keynote talk on Preparing for a lifetime in Christ by Abbot Hugh Allan O'Praem, plus workshops run by catechists and clergy.

The conference takes place in Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral, Lambeth Road, London SE1 7HY. To book, visit [aec.rcaos.org.uk/baptism-reimagined](http://aec.rcaos.org.uk/baptism-reimagined)

If you would like to advertise your school please contact Charlotte Rosbrooke on 01440 730399 or email [charlotter@cathcom.org](mailto:charlotter@cathcom.org)

# London adventures are lessons in democracy

**Children from St Hedda's Catholic Primary School in Egton Bridge and St Aelred's Catholic School in York experienced days to remember when they visited London to learn how our democracy works.**

The focus of the educational visits for the two schools, which are both part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT), was to build upon the children's understanding of parliament, but the groups packed much more into their exciting days.

Democracy has been a key focus at St Hedda's during UK Parliament Week and the children are given regular opportunities to vote and debate in the school.

The children were privileged to sit in the public gallery in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons and witness democracy in action.

And they were delighted that Scarborough and Whitby MP Alison Hume took time to meet the children and answer their questions about issues that matter to them, including education and healthcare in our area.

Later, the children built upon their classroom

studies of A Midsummer Night's Dream with a drama workshop at Shakespeare's Globe.

The pupils were awe-struck as they stood on the famous stage and delivered lines to an audience of visitors from around the world. The children will perform their own version of this famous comedy play in the summer term.

They also visited the Natural History Museum where they earned their Natural History Degree in Volcanoes and Earthquakes.

Visiting this iconic museum enabled them to build on their science work in school and the incredible blue whale in the hall of mammals was a favourite exhibit.

Trust associate senior leader and trip organiser Amie Bartoli said it's vital to enrich the curriculum and bring the children's studies to life.

"Our school is committed to the highest quality of education and for us that includes exposing our children to a wide range of educational, cultural and sporting activities," she said.

"Being in London was amazing. For many of

our children this was their first visit and experiencing the Tube, black cabs and spotting so many famous landmarks alongside their friends was incredible."

NPCAT CEO Hugh Hegarty added: "The decision to invest in this historic and remarkable school at the heart of the Esk Valley epitomises the values of our trust. The school has such a long and proud tradition and continues to serve our community and is the focal point for our continued success as a family of 38 schools."

Meanwhile, ten Year 5 and 6 children from St Aelred's, which is also part of NPCAT, were given a special tour and workshop, learning about how the country is run and giving them plenty of food for thought as they go about their own important roles in school.

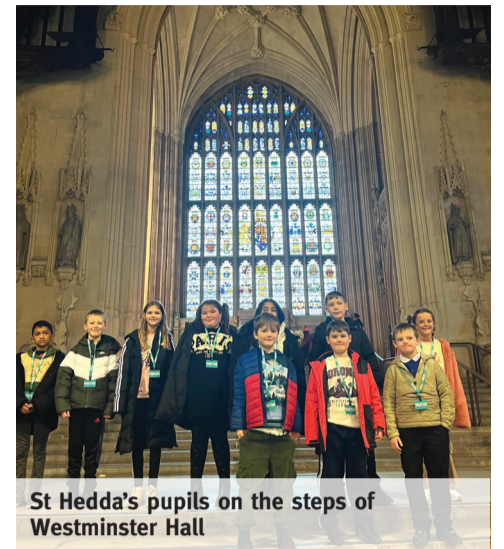
They were joined by York MP Rachael Maskell for a question-and-answer session and to discuss issues affecting their local area.

Travelling to London by train, the party also included visits to Buckingham Palace, the Natural History Museum, Downing Street, St James' Park and Westminster Abbey.

Headteacher Claire Hughes, who accompanied the group along with deputy headteacher Ryan Deakin, said everyone enjoyed a wonderful day in the capital and thanked Rachael for taking the time to meet them.

"It was good for the pupils to witness first-hand how democratic decisions are made in our country and the children were thrilled to visit the House of Commons and House of Lords to see parliament in action," she said.

"Our pupil ambassador groups play a very significant part in the school life at St Aelred's



**St Hedda's pupils on the steps of Westminster Hall**

and include roles such as Well-Being Ambassadors, School Council, Eco Council and Anti-Bullying Ambassadors."

Rachael said: "It was a pleasure to meet with St Aelred's pupils. I'm always keen to see that children have access to learning about our democracy and to understand what Westminster and MPs do in their day-to-day work. The pupils were very keen to ask questions that were really thoughtful and aware of the current affairs that are part of what MPs are debating and voting on. I hope St Aelred's had a great day out and visit to London."

The MP hoped to make a return visit to St Aelred's to meet the children and tour their school.



**The St Aelred's party inside the Houses of Parliament with their MP, Rachael Maskell**

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SCHOOLS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former convent pupils invited to reunion

Calling all former pupils of the Convent of the Ladies of Mary, Scarborough! A group of ex-pupils are organising a reunion to mark the 50th anniversary of the school's closure in 1975. The reunion will be held at Scarborough Rugby Club from 1pm on Friday July 11 and will include a buffet lunch and the opportunity to meet up with classmates and friends. Tickets are £10 and partners are welcome. Find the group on Facebook by searching for Friends of The Convent of the Ladies of Mary, Scarborough. For more information contact Pat Straughan 07960 686933, Jo Claughan 07795 247822 or Anne Smith 07792 730958.

Course offers Catholic Social Teaching introduction

Caritas Social Action Network is launching Catholic Social Teaching: An Introduction, an online course for parish staff and volunteers. The programme will be over five one-hour Zoom sessions on Tuesdays in March and on April 1. The course fee is £95 for all five sessions, which includes a copy of Raymond Friel's book, Catholic Social Teaching: An Introduction for Schools, Parishes and Charities. Email bernadette.durcan@csan.org.uk for more details.

Report highlights benefits of supporting young dads in prison

A new study aims to shed light on the experiences of some of the most marginalised young fathers in the UK. Published by the University of Lincoln's Following Young Fathers Further project in partnership with Catholic charity Pact, Care in the Prison Estate identifies the challenges facing dads aged 25 and under who are separated from their children due to imprisonment and explores how inclusive support can benefit the entire family.

England call for talented T6 trio

Three members of the highly successful T6 Football Academy set-up are celebrating after being called up to represent England Under-18 Schoolboys in this year's Centenary Shield.

Goalkeeper Joel Neale, centre-back Patrick McGowran and midfielder Joe Kennedy came through a series of trials with flying colours and will take part in the four-game tournament, starting against Scotland at Truro on Friday February 28.

This will be followed by games against Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Wales over the coming months as they battle it out for the historic trophy.

All three players are part of the elite T6 Academy, run in an exclusive partnership between Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT) and Middlesbrough Football Club.

The academy enables footballers who just miss out on joining professional clubs as school leavers to stay in the elite game with a full playing and training schedule alongside their studies.

Joel is a second-year player and student at T6, while Patrick and Joe are first years.

Six-foot-four-inch Joel, who is studying Double Engineering and Sport, has excellent distribution with his feet and is very commanding with crosses into the box.

Sport, Business and English Language student Patrick is an excellent passer who reads the game well and is extremely competitive in aerial duels as well as in one-v-one situations.

Joe, who is equally comfortable in centre midfield or on the right wing, is quick and powerful when travelling with the ball and has all-round technical ability.

"This is a fantastic achievement for the boys and the academy," said head of the football and sporting academy David McTiernan. "We are incredibly proud of Joel, Patrick and Joe. Being called up for the England Under-18 Schoolboys squad is a remarkable achievement and their dedication and hard work in training every day are really paying off.

"Their success is a testament to the hard work they've put in, both on and off the pitch, but this is just the beginning, and we look forward to watching their journeys unfold as they continue to grow and develop in their football careers."

The trio – who are among several T6 players being regularly watched by professional clubs



The three England players visiting St Edward's Catholic Primary School in Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, to pass on some tips to the school team ahead of what turned out to be a successful Utilita Cup tournament at the MFC Foundation – Photo by Chris Booth

– came through three trial stages, starting among 60 players picked from the north and 60 players from the south of England.

All three made the cut down to 30 players from each region and then for a North v South trial game, from which the final 18-player squad was selected.

Joel has been given squad number 1, with Patrick taking the number 6 shirt and Joe number 7.

They were all chosen in the starting line-up as England lost 3-1 to Australia at Hednesford Town FC on Friday January 24.

NPCAT CEO Hugh Hegarty said: "Representing England at this level is an extraordinary accomplishment that highlights the vision and commitment we have at NPCAT to nurture the potential of every student, on and off the field.

"Our T6 Football Academy was founded with the ambition to provide young athletes with opportunities to thrive in their chosen sport while excelling academically. Seeing these young men reach the pinnacle of national selection is proof that this approach is

working.

"I would like to thank our dedicated staff at the T6 Football Academy and across the trust, whose tireless efforts and belief in the students have been integral to their success.

"Equally, we must acknowledge the invaluable support of their families and the wider community, who have played a crucial role in this journey.

"We will all be cheering them on as they represent our nation and show the values of NPCAT on a national stage."

Backed by NPCAT and Boro, the T6 Academy boasts impressive facilities at its Phoenix Park home on Lacy Road, including high-quality grass and 4G pitches, a strength and conditioning suite including weights and cardiovascular areas and a video analysis room.

As well as their football training, T6 students also study for qualifications including A-levels and BTECs.

England's Centenary Shield games will be live-streamed via the ESFA's YouTube channel.

A Letter From Madonna House – “Beauty will save the world”



There is a quote from Dostoyevsky that says, “Beauty will save the world”.

Beauty has the power to move our souls and to turn us from the mundane to the spiritual. It can lead us to prayer. Likewise, taking part in artistic, creative works can lift the soul and open our hearts to God, engaging both body and soul.

During the time of Lent, many of us in Madonna House make pysanky, a traditional art form using wax and dyes (wax relief) to decorate eggs. This technique was developed long ago in many Eastern bloc nations, even during pagan times, but took on new meaning and expression in those countries which became Christian.

Pysanky is a Russian/Ukrainian word whose root means “to write”. One “writes” on an egg with melted wax, using a special instrument called a kitska, which looks like a pen with a little metal funnel tip. Usually, you begin working with the natural colour of the egg, applying melted wax on the part of

the design you wish to remain that colour. Then you dip the egg into a light-coloured dye solution and apply wax to the part of the design you wish to keep that colour. This process is repeated until all the desired colours are applied and covered with wax. Finally, the wax is removed (by melting and wiping it off), and all the colours of the egg burst forth!

So, why do we do this during Lent? The egg is an ancient symbol of nature's rebirth in spring. During Lent, which takes us into spring, we journey with Christ towards rebirth through his passion, death and resurrection. In fact, in the Eastern Churches, this time of repentance and preparation before Easter is often referred to as the “Lenten Spring”. It is the renewal of our own journey from death to life in Christ. The egg we use for pysanky can symbolise the tomb from which Christ arose from the dead. We decorate it with the colours and symbols of life to represent the resurrection. The

traditional designs used in the motifs express our faith. For example, a triangle represents the Trinity, a fish is a symbol for Jesus, waves signify eternity and ladders are prayers going up to God. We usually make these pysanky in silent meditation, praying perhaps for the person to whom we will give the decorated egg as a gift. There is a tradition that holds that making pysanky helps to “push back the darkness” in our world. We give the pysanky as an Easter gift, or use the pysanky for decorating our homes, hanging them on strings or displaying them in bowls or on little stands as part of our Easter decorations.

Here in Madonna House Robin Hood's Bay, we offer the possibility of learning how to make pysanky. There is no need to be an artist, but it is surprising how a little effort to master this technique will produce something beautiful. If you are interested, do come and see!

Jeanne Guillemette

# Prestigious geography honour puts St Edward's on the map

**A Teesside school has put itself firmly on the map for the teaching of geography by winning a prestigious national award.**

St Edward's Catholic Primary School in Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT), is one of just 103 schools in the country to be awarded the prestigious Gold Standard in Primary Geography Quality Mark.

The honour, given by the Geographical Association, recognises St Edward's outstanding commitment to delivering an inspiring and innovative geography curriculum, alongside exceptional teaching and learning practices.

"The Gold Standard award celebrates St Edward's dedication to developing its pupils' geographical knowledge, global awareness and sustainability values," the citation says.

Key achievements highlighted include delivering an engaging and inspiring geography curriculum based on curiosity, exploration and discovery.

Geography lead Elizabeth Brady said the way children are involved in planning, risk assessing and evaluation from an early age was another factor that impressed the judges.

"We provide opportunities for fieldwork, exploration and hands-on learning to enhance children's geographical skills, beginning in early years through to Year 6," Mrs Brady said.

"We also have a strong focus on Catholic Social Teaching values, linked to our CAFOD Live Simply Award, which encourages pupils to take meaningful action in our local community as well as developing global awareness.

"We hope to build on this success by continuing to enhance our geography curriculum, creating even more opportunities for pupils to explore their role as responsible, eco-aware citizens in an ever-changing world."

Headteacher Mary Brown said the whole school community had played its part in gaining the award but gave special praise to Mrs Brady and to trust standards officer Owen Browell for his support with humanities.

"This honour reflects the hard work, passion and dedication of our staff and pupils," she said.

"Our goal is to inspire curiosity about the world, equip our children with essential skills and nurture a sense of responsibility for the



**St Edward's head Mary Brown and teacher Elizabeth Brady with pupils**  
– Photo by Chris Booth

environment and their community."

Achieving the Gold Standard places St Edward's among a select group of leading institutions across the country.

NPCAT CEO Hugh Hegarty said: "This is a testament to the dedication of the staff, the enthusiasm of the pupils and the strong leadership within the school. Geography is a vital subject that inspires curiosity about the world and fosters a deep understanding of our responsibility to care for it.

"This recognition highlights the exceptional standards of teaching and learning at St Edward's and reinforces our commitment as a trust to delivering excellence across the curriculum."

St Edward's was rated outstanding for behaviour and attitudes, personal development and early years provision and good overall in its recent Ofsted report.

The report said governors know the school well and praised the "clear oversight" given by NPCAT.

"Pupils who attend this school speak proudly of being part of the 'St Edward's family'," the report added. "All are welcome at this inclusive school. Staff have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils receive a strong start in early years that quickly establishes routines.

"Children in the early years swiftly rise to adults' high expectations. Older pupils model

exemplary behaviour. Classrooms are purposeful and focused. The school has designed a curriculum that prepares pupils well for their future education."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Cardinal welcomes news of royals' state visit

Cardinal Vincent Nichols warmly welcomed the announcement that King Charles and Queen Camilla will undertake state visits to the Holy See and Italy in April. "I am delighted King Charles and Queen Camilla will visit the Holy See and meet with Pope Francis during this special Jubilee Year when so many will gather in Rome as pilgrims of hope," said Cardinal Nichols. "It presents a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate the close relationship between the UK and the Holy See." A more detailed itinerary will be announced in due course.

### Pope's book focuses on true happiness

Hodder Faith has published the English translation today of Ti Voglio Felice by Pope Francis, which quickly became the Pope's best-selling book in many years when it was published in Italian in 2022. In I Want You to Be Happy, Pope Francis explains the characteristics of true, lasting happiness, no matter your circumstances or situation. The short, accessible chapters distil the message into bite-sized readings, which can be read in succession or in daily segments.

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# Golden celebrations for Diane and Michael

**Congratulations to Diane and Michael Whitehead, who recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.**

Diane and Michael have been part of the fabric of St Mary's Parish in Filey and the wider community.

Michael worked in Filey and was a volunteer coastguard, while the couple were both valued members of the St John Ambulance.

Both have also given many years of dedicated service in the parish as Eucharistic Ministers, Ministers of the Word and are involved in pastoral activities, including welcoming visitors and parishioners, making tea and coffee and cakes and soup lunches.

Judith Quirk



**Golden couple Diane and Michael Whitehead**

FUNDRAISING

# Supporting our parishes: Embracing

**Our churches are not just places of worship – they are at the heart of our communities, providing spiritual guidance, social outreach and a place of belonging.**

However, maintaining these historic buildings and ensuring their sustainability requires ongoing financial support.

Across the diocese, parishes are embracing new opportunities to strengthen their financial position, from digital giving to securing vital grant funding.

Recent developments in the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme also highlight the importance of continued support for these cherished buildings.

**Embracing digital giving**

In an increasingly cashless society, digital giving is becoming a key part of parish fundraising. Across the diocese, 36 churches now have card donation facilities, with new installations in Bridlington, Filey, Eastfield and Teesville.

More than 40 parishes also offer QR code donations, allowing parishioners to contribute easily via their smartphones.

The impact has been significant:

- 2022: £35,000 donated digitally, including Gift Aid
- 2023: £88,000 donated digitally, including Gift Aid
- 2024: £140,000 donated digitally, including Gift Aid

Across the diocese, 49% of all digital donations are Gift Aided, and the average donation is £11.19. By embracing digital giving, parishes are reflecting wider changes in society and making it easier for parishioners to support their church.

**New initiative: My Parish, My Mission**

To encourage greater engagement, a new diocesan initiative, My Parish, My Mission, will soon launch across our parishes.

This three-week programme focuses on Time, Treasures & Talents, inviting parishioners to reflect

on:

- Offering their time through volunteering
- Sharing their talents to enrich parish life
- Providing financial support to help sustain their church

Similar initiatives in other dioceses have strengthened parish communities and renewed involvement in church life. More details will be shared in the coming weeks.

**Grant funding: Opportunities for parishes**

Securing external funding is crucial for maintaining and improving parish buildings and community facilities. A new Grant Funding Directory will soon be available to help parishes identify suitable funders and work with me to prepare strong applications.

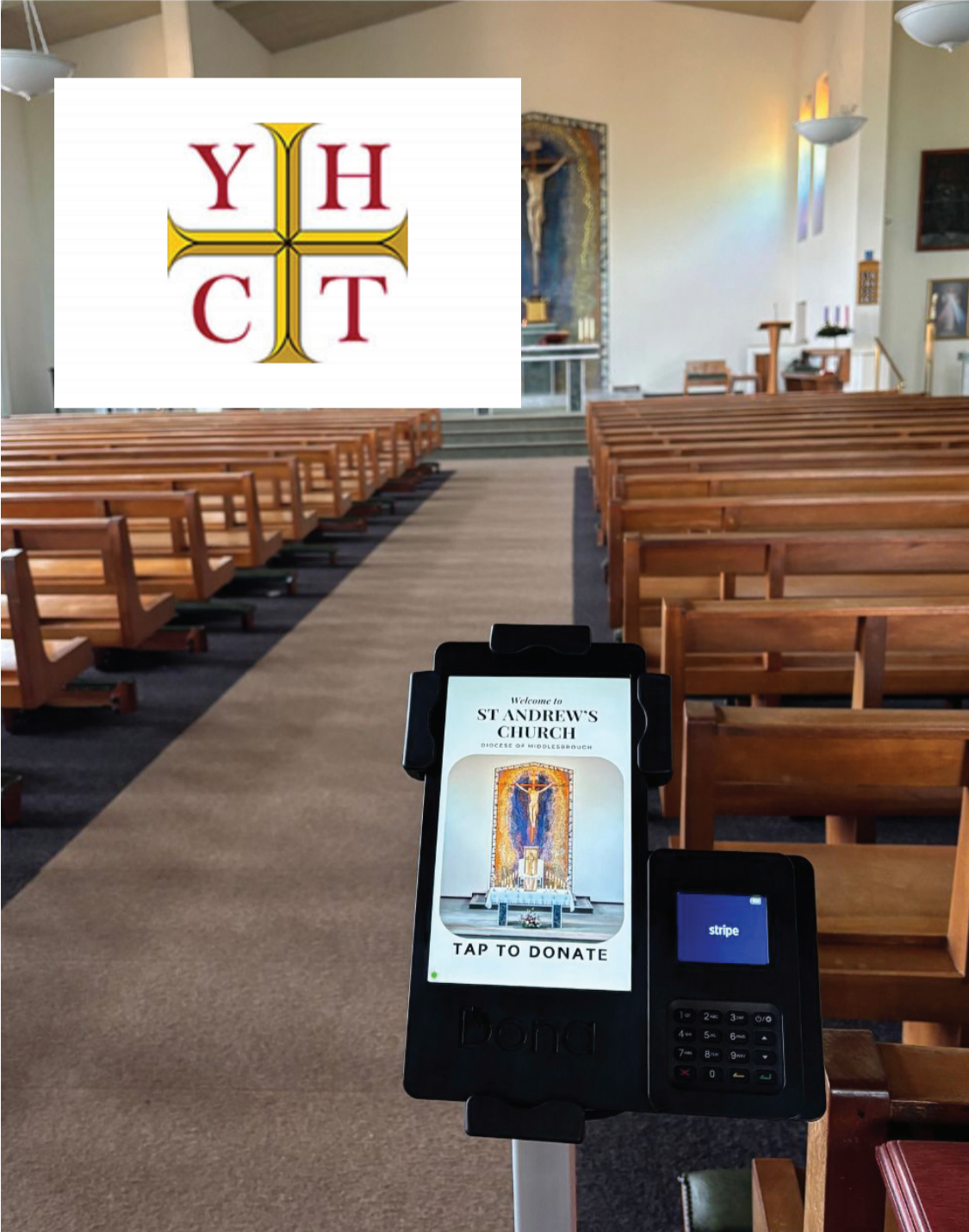
Some key funding opportunities available now include...

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF): Recognising the challenges faced by places of worship, the NLHF has pledged more than £100m in funding over the next three years. The diocese is working with the NLHF to ensure parishes can access this support.

National Lottery Awards for All Fund: Several parishes have already benefited from grants of up to £20,000, enabling them to improve church halls and community spaces. Upgraded facilities can also generate additional income through hall hire.

Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust: This charity provides grants for the repair and maintenance of historic churches. Applicants must demonstrate active fundraising efforts and have the necessary permissions in place before applying.

Stagecoach Community Fund: This fund supports initiatives promoting health and wellbeing, tackling loneliness and improving accessibility. If your parish runs projects aligned with these aims,



# ng change and securing our future

this could be a valuable source of funding.

Over the coming months we'll share with you other funding opportunities that may be beneficial to your parish needs.

## Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme: An update

Since 2001, the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) has allowed churches to reclaim VAT on repair works, providing crucial financial relief for historic places of worship.

In a Westminster Hall debate on January 22, heritage minister Sir Chris Bryant announced the scheme will be extended until March 2026. However, the extension comes with reduced funding and:

1. The total budget will decrease from £29m to £23m
2. A new funding cap of £25,000 per place of worship will be introduced

Bishop Philip Moger, chair of the Patrimony Committee of the Bishops' Conference, welcomed the extension but warned of its limitations: "While we are grateful for the scheme's continuation, reduced funding is a setback.

"It will limit essential repairs, put more buildings at risk and impact the skilled workforce needed for restoration. We remain committed to working with the government to secure the long-term future of our historic churches."

The extension follows strong public and parliamentary engagement, with MPs receiving thousands of letters from

concerned parishioners.

This campaign has highlighted the growing challenges faced by historic churches and the need for ongoing support.

For more details on the government's announcement, visit <https://shorturl.at/anpXQ>.

## Looking ahead

As we navigate these financial challenges, embracing digital giving, securing grants and engaging parishioners will be key to ensuring the sustainability of our churches.

Every contribution – whether time, skills or financial support – plays a vital role in strengthening our parishes and ensuring they continue to serve future generations.

Together, we can preserve these sacred spaces and keep them at



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**Dan Woodgate**  
Fundraising Officer



# Moving Holocaust service brings message of hope

*“We do not want our past to be our children’s future.” Roman Kent, Auschwitz survivor*

**Catholics joined Christians from other denominations for an ecumenical service at St Cuthbert’s Church, Ormesby, on Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27).**

The service was the idea of parish priest Reverend Dr Robert Opala, who was assisted by Father Pat Keogh from our diocese.

We were privileged to witness an extraordinary event in which a German doctor, Michaela Weingarten, known to many of us through her support for several parishes and her work in Lourdes, took part. Michaela and Reverend Robert both apologised for the German and Polish

atrocities committed during the dark days of World War Two.

It was the most moving remembrance service many of us had ever attended. Robert and Dr Michaela showed such courage in sharing their honest admissions.

Such acts as these remind us of the power of facing up to persecution and conflict. Reconciliation and a willingness to understand the past are powerful tools for us all. We do not want our past to be our children’s future.

Here we share a message from Reverend Robert and Michaela’s testimony.

**John Hinman  
Diocesan Caritas Group**



Father Pat Keogh with Reverend Dr Robert Opala of St Cuthbert’s Church, Ormesby

# Dr Robert’s tribute to courageous Bronia

**I strongly felt in my mind and heart that it was important to organise this special service commemorating all the victims of Holocaust.**

Many kinds of Jewish people in Europe suffered for so many years not only during the time of the Holocaust but also before the World War Two from the hands of Polish,

Ukrainian and Russian people.

Among them was my great-grandmother, Bronia, who was forced at the age of 18 to marry a Christian man 20 years older than herself to avoid persecution against Jews.

Her family lived in western Ukraine (Russian Empire) and emigrated to western Poland (German Empire) at the end of the 19th

century because of pogroms in Ukraine at that time.

She survived the German Holocaust only because she was baptised and married a Christian, my great-grandfather Stefan Opala, from a Silesian Lutheran family.

I know from other members of my family that he did not treat her well and always

mentioned her Jewish background with anger.

In my view she was a different kind of Holocaust victim, though she never experienced the horror of Auschwitz or lived in a Jewish ghetto. This service was also a kind of tribute I could pay to her.

**Reverend Dr Robert Opala**

# ‘Peace, peace at all costs’ is Michaela’s prayer

**I was born in Cologne in the 1970s. I cannot recall a time that I was not aware of the war, Auschwitz, the Holocaust. I saw the photos of the dead as well as rescued survivors at a very young age, at home as well as at school.**

I grew up listening to my grandmother’s experiences during the challenging times leading up to and during the war.

My grandmother was extremely outspoken when the Nazis took over. She continued going to her Jewish GP – as long as he was there – she continued greeting Jewish neighbours on the street and listening to her favourite singer, who happened to be Jewish.

She found a way not to join the Bund Deutscher Mädchen, the Association of German Girls, and that was by pleading with her parents to allow her to get married before the age of 21, which they eventually allowed.

She was never a member of the party. She spoke her mind on several occasions and was only very lucky not to have been arrested. My grandfather, her husband Georg, was a student of chemistry from Vienna who was forced to join the army in the later stages of the war.

They had got to know each other in the east of Germany, what is Poland now. After my grandmother survived the “night of a thousand bombers” in Cologne, her father, who worked in the east, recommended his family to move to where he was, as it was quieter.

My grandmother and Georg married in the registry office but intended to “properly get married” in Vienna’s St Stephen’s Cathedral when the war would be over.

And then my mum was on the way. In January 1945, however, my grandmother had

a dream that the Russians were coming. She decided to flee together with her parents. They made their way to the West in overfilled trains, on open lorries and by foot. Sometimes they threw themselves into the mud when deep flying planes shot at them.

When they reached Bavaria, my grandmother went into labour. It was a very long labour for 48 hours. The doctors didn’t want to do a caesarean section as my grandmother was a refugee and was meant to be back on the road as soon as possible.

This is when a telegram from the frontline was delivered to the labour room informing her that Georg was injured at his left arm and was brought to a lazarett (quarantine station) in Gdansk.

My grandmother’s relief that Georg was safe

was immense. She thought to herself, “Now it makes sense to bring this child into the world” and gave it her all, and my mum was born.

However, this was unfortunately the last message she received from Georg. He was declared “missing” after many attempts to find him remained unsuccessful.

After the Berlin Wall came down, a Jewish friend encouraged my mum to start another search for her father. Thus, only about 30 years ago, we found out that my grandfather had died from tetanus in the lazarett just a few days after my mum was born.

In school, as well as at home, we grew up in the spirit that the hate, horror and inhumanity of the Nazis and the Holocaust should never ever be allowed to happen

again. Peace! Peace at all costs should be aimed for.

I have to say one aspect I thoroughly enjoy here in Britain in the NHS is working peacefully together with people of so many nations and religions. I wish and pray that the whole world could reach such state of harmony.

I would like to use this opportunity of the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz to apologise on behalf of my country. I bow my head in front of all those who lost their lives during the Holocaust and all who survived these unimaginable sufferings.

**Dr Michaela Weingarten**

# Tickets on sale for CAUSE fundraisers

**As well as the Christmas Hamper Campaign, CAUSE Foundation also provides support for Teesside families with food and vouchers during school holidays and year-round support with a crisis referral system.**

The charity relies on personal and business donations and fundraising. This year’s events include:

**Saturday May 10:** Spring Event, Middlesbrough Golf Club, details to be announced.

**Friday April 4:** Kenny Rogers tribute act plus 1970s party set, disco

and raffle, Synthonia Suites, Billingham, tickets £12.

**Saturday October 18:** Charity Night, North Ormesby WMC, George Williamson, disco, bingo and raffle, tickets £10.

Tickets for all the above events are available from [cause-foundation.org.uk/current-events-i20](http://cause-foundation.org.uk/current-events-i20).

If you can donate raffle prizes, please call 0845 891 0816 or email [office@cause-foundation.org.uk](mailto:office@cause-foundation.org.uk) to arrange collection/drop off.

# Divine Mercy Sunday in York

**Divine Mercy Sunday on April 27 will again be marked with a day of prayer at St Aelred’s in York.**

There will be Eucharist Adoration from 11.30am, with confessions from around 1pm and available throughout the afternoon.

The Holy Hour of Great Mercy will begin at 3pm and there will also be blessing and veneration of the Divine Mercy image, Diary of St Maria

Faustina readings, Chaplet of Mercy, individual consecration to the Divine Mercy (with lighting of candles), a Eucharist procession and benediction.

All are welcome and tea and biscuits will be served afterwards in the community centre.

# Praying together, we can make a difference

**The vastness of the night sky or the immensity of the ocean reminds us of the infinite possibilities when we work together with faith and purpose.**

The World Day of Prayer (WDP) is a testament to this transformative power – a movement that connects people across nations and denominations in a wave of prayer and hope.

As Carole Bourne, president of WDP, reflects: “We meet God in the strangest ways and among the most unexpected people – even through older women of different races, nationalities and Christian traditions.”

This ecumenical initiative, led by women, has been a beacon of unity, strength and prayerful action for nearly a century.

The origins of the World Day of Prayer date back to the early 20th century in the United States and Canada, where women sought to

transcend traditional roles within the Church.

No longer content with simply arranging flowers or serving tea, they envisioned a global movement of prayer. Today, their dream continues to flourish, with more than 150 countries joining in this annual event.

Each year, the World Day of Prayer focuses on the lives and stories of women from a different region.

This year, on March 7, the theme is drawn from Psalm 139:1-14, “I made you wonderful”.

The service, written by women from the Cook Islands, invites us to lift our spirits and embrace hope amidst a world grappling with uncertainty.

It’s a poignant reminder that God’s love is present even in the face of challenges like war, poverty, climate change and lingering

pandemic effects.

The Cook Islands’ women also draw attention to the pressing issue of climate change. Their communities are acutely affected by rising sea levels and environmental degradation.

As stewards of creation, we are called to respond not only through prayer but also through action, inspired by the Paris Agreement and the urgency underscored at COP29.

This year also marks a significant milestone for the Catholic Church, whose very name means “universal”, with Pope Francis declaring it a Holy Year of Jubilee.

Themed “Pilgrims of Hope,” this Jubilee calls Christians across the globe to rekindle their faith and embody hope in a fractured world.

This universal invitation aligns beautifully with the mission of the World Day of Prayer, to

pray, act and foster unity amidst diversity, reminding us of our shared belonging in the global body of Christ.

The World Day of Prayer is more than a single day of worship – it is a movement that inspires informed prayer and prayerful action.

It reminds us that together, we can face challenges, celebrate our shared humanity and make a meaningful difference.

Join us as the wave of prayer begins in Samoa, travels across continents and concludes in American Samoa.

Let us stand as one global community, united in faith, hope and love.

To learn more, visit [wwdp.org.uk](http://wwdp.org.uk). Together, we truly can make a difference.

**Margaret Clark**  
WDP National Committee

## Canon Paul is next Newman Circle speaker

Canon Paul Farrer, the dean of St Mary’s Cathedral and former rector of the Royal English College, Valladolid, will speak on *The Journey to Priesthood* at the next Cleveland Newman Circle meeting.

The talk, entitled *The Journey to Priesthood*, takes place in the cathedral hall on Wednesday March 26 at 7.45pm, with coffee and tea from 7.30pm.

All are welcome. For more details call 01642 645732 or email [p.egerton123@gmail.com](mailto:p.egerton123@gmail.com).

## Gold award for long-serving Adrian

On the Feast of the Holy Family, Adrian Crummay was presented with the gold long-service medal of the Archconfraternity of St Stephen, the guild of altar servers.

The gold medal is for those who have served on the altar for 50 years or more. In Adrian’s case this is 62 years, and he is now serving in the Church of St Vincent de Paul, Hull, under his fifth Bishop and fourth parish priest.

Please pray for continued good health and many more years of faithful service.



Adrian Crummay has served on the altar for 62 years

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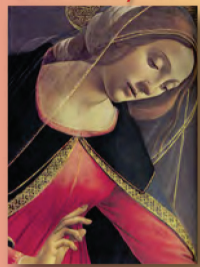
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Tel (01642) 850505, email catholicvoice@rcdmidd.org.uk  
Deadline Friday March 7 for the April edition.

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.

## NEWS

# Out & About

### 1 Saturday

**11am** Catholic women are invited to share an hour of feminine communion including meditation, via Zoom. Text Barbara on 07796 117704 with your mobile number and email address so she can add you to the WhatsApp group, or email catholicwomenmdl@gmail.com for Zoom link.

**6pm** Mass in Italian in the Father Kelly Room, Our Lady, Acomb, York. Followed by refreshments. All welcome.

### 3 Monday

**9.45am-10.25am** Beverley Christian Meditation Group meets online. Further information from christianmeditation.beverley@gmail.com. This takes place every Monday.

### 4 Tuesday

**10am** Coffee at the Cathedral. Tea, coffee and treats every Tuesday after 9.30am Mass. A warm welcome and friendly atmosphere. Make new friends and enjoy some fellowship. Those who are alone especially welcome.

**10am** Christian Meditation Group meets online. Further information from Terry Doyle at terry-doyle@live.co.uk. This takes place every Tuesday.

**7pm** Mass for Knights of St Columba Council 29, followed by a meeting at St Mary's Cathedral.

### 5 Wednesday

**5.30pm** Sung Evening Prayer and Benediction at St Mary's Cathedral. Join us every Wednesday for a time of prayer and quiet reflection before the Blessed Sacrament.

### 7 Friday

**1pm** Lenten course at St Mary's Cathedral – Christian Hope.

Events, articles and photographs for the April edition of the *Voice* are due by this day.

### 9 Sunday

**3pm** Mass for LGBT+ community, family and friends at the Chapel of the Bar Convent. Doors open from 2.30pm.

### 10 Monday

**2pm** Dementia Friendly Communal Singing, Music for the Mind is an hour of fun and music for people living with dementia, their friends and carers, provided by Trish McLean on the second Monday of the month. All welcome.

### 11 Tuesday

**12.45pm** The Catholic Women's Luncheon Club meets every second Tuesday of the month at the Kingston Theatre Hotel, Kingston Square, Hull. Gather at 12.45pm, lunch at 1pm. All ladies in the Hull and East Riding area welcome. Call 01482 446565 or email jayne.wilson24@ymail.com.

### 12 Wednesday

**7pm** Hull Circle of the Catenian Association holds its monthly meeting at Lazaat Hotel, Cottingham, followed by a buffet-style meal. If interested, email Charles Cseh at hullcirclesecretary@gmail.com.

### 13 Thursday

**7.45pm** Middlesbrough Catenian Circle, sharing faith and friendship with kindred spirits throughout Teesside, meet at Middlesbrough Cricket Club, Green Lane, Middlesbrough TS5 7SL. Call Peter Carey on 01642 317772 or Chris Rhodes on 01642 319161.

### 14 Friday

**1pm** Lenten course at St Mary's Cathedral – the Decision to Hope.

### 15 Saturday

**7.30pm** St Patrick's Day Irish Dance with Michael Coyne, Erimus Club, Cumberland Road, Middlesbrough TS5 6JB. Contact John Brown 07871 958412. Admission by ticket only.

### 16 Sunday

Catholic Fellowship Mass at St Andrew's, Teesville, with Canon John Loughlin.

### 21 Friday

**1pm** Lenten course at St Mary's Cathedral – the Prayer of Hope.

### 26 Wednesday

**7.30pm for 7.45pm** Cleveland Newman Circle meet at the cathedral hall, for a talk by Canon Paul Farrer, "The journey to priesthood".

### 28 Friday

**1pm** Lenten course at St Mary's Cathedral – Hope against Hope  
**7.30pm** Music from Boo Hewerdine and Elaine Palmer, St Mary's Cathedral.

### 29 Saturday

**Noon** LGBT+ social gathering in the café at the Bar Convent, York. All welcome.

If you have any events that you would like to include in the Out and About section, please email heidi.cummins@rcdmidd.org.uk



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# CAFOD's Lent Appeal: Build hope and a safety net for the future

**This Lent, we will mark CAFOD's Family Fast Day on Friday March 14 – an opportunity to share hope with our sisters and brothers around the world through our fasting, prayer and almsgiving.**

In his decree for the Jubilee Year 2025, "Hope does not disappoint", Pope Francis reminds us of the theological virtues at the heart of Christian life – faith, hope and charity.

He tells us that Christian "hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life".

This Lent, CAFOD invites Catholic parishioners across England and Wales to embody these virtues by supporting the Lent appeal in Family Fast Day collections or by giving online.

The Lent Appeal demonstrates the power of hope in action through the story of Lokho, a farmer and mother in northern Kenya.

For nearly four years, her community experienced an unrelenting drought and was supported by CAFOD during the East Africa food crisis. Livestock perished, crops failed, and Lokho was left with no means to provide for her children.

Yet, amid this trial, hope persevered, nurtured by the faith and charity of her neighbour, who shared what they had with each other to

survive.

Supported by CAFOD and local Caritas expert Wakera, Lokho and her community found strength in unity. With training, tools and seeds funded by donations by parishioners in England and Wales, they planted kitchen gardens.

Innovative shade nets protected the plants from the harsh sun while allowing rain to nurture the young crops. Now, Lokho not only feeds her family but also sells the extra produce, saving money and ensuring a safety net for future climate challenges.

In this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis has invited us to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind.

Parishes in the Diocese of Middlesbrough can respond to the Pope's call by holding a collection for the Lent Appeal, supporting local experts to provide effective solutions to the biggest problems facing people all around the world.

Our schools and parishes can also support our sisters and brothers around the world by taking part in CAFOD's Big Lent Walk, an opportunity to join in a symbolic pilgrimage of solidarity and hope during this Jubilee year.

The money you raise by taking part in the Big Lent Walk helps CAFOD support families in



**Lokho with Wakera, an agroecology expert from Caritas Marsabit who helped establish the shade nets in Lokho's community and provided them with training – Photo by Zachary Lenawamuro**

extreme poverty around the world.

"We are about to make a pilgrimage marked by great events, in which the grace of God precedes and accompanies his people," Pope Francis writes in his decree for the Jubilee Year. Let us make this Lent a true journey of faith, "active in charity and steadfast in hope".

Please email me at [rblaylock@cafod.org.uk](mailto:rblaylock@cafod.org.uk) to find out more about how to get involved in CAFOD's work this Lent and throughout this Jubilee year.

Find out more about the Big Lent Walk at [walk.cafod.org.uk](http://walk.cafod.org.uk). To give in a virtual envelope visit [cafod.org.uk/envelope](http://cafod.org.uk/envelope).

**Rachel Blaylock**  
Community Participation Coordinator

## Young people prepare for Flame

**A group of young people from our diocese will travel to Flame, the largest Catholic youth event in England and Wales, on Saturday March 15.**

Filled with inspiring speakers, live music, prayer and adoration, it's always a very special event.

This year's speakers at the OVO Wembley Arena include TV adventurer Bear Grylls OBE, who has also written more than 100 books, including his autobiography, *Never Give Up*.

Bear has often shared how his Christian faith has been a true backbone to all he does, referring to his faith as a "light to a dark path and strength to a failing body".

There will also be performances from World Youth Dance Crew, a Catholic dance movement born at World Youth Day in Panama, 2019, and MOBO award-winning rapper Guvna B.

We'll have a report from some of our young people in next month's *Catholic Voice*.



**Middlesbrough pilgrims at Flame 2 in 2015**

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Sometimes emails go missing. If you have sent an item for the Voice and it has not been used, please email the editor at [communications@rcdmidd.org.uk](mailto:communications@rcdmidd.org.uk).

# The communities where families face daily threats from settlers

**Neil Irving, from Thirsk, recently served for three months as a human rights monitor with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).**

The programme was established in 2002 in response to a call from the heads of churches in Jerusalem and is coordinated by the World Council of Churches.

Here he tells us about his experiences...

I was based in the Jordan Valley and recorded hundreds of human rights violations by Israeli settlers and security forces, all designed to intimidate and force innocent Palestinian families to flee their homes.

One of the Bedouin families I visited lives in the small community of Al Farisiya. Where the track leaves the road there are two Israeli flags on poles, one on either side of the track. Around the family's tents are three more Israeli flags.

Together they appear to be intended to create a virtual boundary around the camp. The family said the flags were put there by two Israeli settlers on quad bikes who told them they will be in trouble if the flags are removed or damaged.

The family pointed out a chair and bench

placed alongside one of the flags by settlers and described how settlers visit almost daily on quad bikes, drinking coffee, watching and videoing the family. Settlers or the Israeli army enter the camp most days, sometimes several times a day, often driving fast and directly towards children and animals.

Settlers and soldiers have stopped the family from taking their sheep to graze on the surrounding open land, meaning the family has to buy in large amounts of animal feed and water. Settlers have also destroyed the barley the family had been growing for animal food.

The family's children go to school a few miles away. The children have learnt not to stand near the road while waiting for the bus, to avoid harassment from passing settlers and soldiers. Sometime the bus doesn't arrive because it hasn't been allowed through an Israeli military checkpoint. Teachers are often delayed or detained at checkpoints on the way to school, and some have been severely beaten at checkpoints or inside their school by soldiers.

Human rights violations are not confined to Al Farisiya. Similar incidents and many others occur frequently throughout the Jordan Valley

and the wider West Bank.

Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, successive Israeli governments have pursued various measures to appropriate the West Bank.

In violation of international law, Palestinians are prevented from developing their communities, their homes are systematically demolished, they are denied access to water and their freedom of movement is severely restricted.

The first Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley were built soon after the 1967 Six-Day War and there are now 37 settlements in the Jordan Valley, all illegal under international law.

In addition, there are many settler outposts; dwellings established "unofficially" by ideological settlers on Palestinian land.

These are supposedly illegal under Israeli law but receive military protection and financial help from the Israeli government and are connected to Israel's main electricity and water supply and access roads.

Bedouin communities are particularly vulnerable to harassment from settlers because their presence hinders the further expansion of settlements in the Jordan Valley.

Settler farms now control a vast area that Palestinian herding communities have been using as pastureland for decades, both before and after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967. Other parts were declared military firing zones or nature reserves by Israel between the late 1960s and 1980s, and with the proliferation of settler farms, the majority is now effectively completely closed to Palestinian herding communities, jeopardising their livelihoods.



**Neil Irving, from Thirsk, who spent three months as a human rights monitor**

Settler violence against Palestinians is well documented. The UN records around 100 incidents every month in the West Bank, initiated by settlers, that result in casualties and/or property damage.

Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem has documented how settler violence forms part of a "two-track" system, alongside Israeli government policies to forcibly displace Palestinians. Israel has taken over some Palestinian land for military purposes or as "nature reserves".

Other areas have been effectively taken over by settlers through daily acts of violence. Settler violence against Palestinians serves as a major informal tool at the hands of the state to take over more and more West Bank lands.

• While in the West Bank, Neil was challenged by Palestinian communities to tell their stories to churches and other groups in the UK. If you would like Neil to speak to a group or meeting in your church or community, please contact him at [neilirving2024@outlook.com](mailto:neilirving2024@outlook.com).



**Settlers and soldiers have stopped families from taking their sheep to graze on the surrounding open land – Photo by Neil Irving**

# Bishops call for lasting Holy Land peace

**Auxiliary bishops of Westminster Nicholas Hudson and James Curry, Anglican Bishop of Southwark Christopher Chessun and Archbishop of Glasgow William Nolan were among those who took part in the latest Holy Land Co-ordination earlier this year.**

Afterwards, the eight-strong group issued this message...

**“A lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:19**

We came to the Holy Land, this Jubilee Year, as pilgrims of hope. We came in hope that a fragile ceasefire agreement, announced as we travelled here, would hold.

We came looking forward to those, in both Israel and Palestine, who have suffered the atrocities of violence and war, being able to rebuild their shattered lives, to mourn the loss of their loved ones, to come together again as families and to start on the long, uncertain road to recovery.

Joy at the return of Israeli hostages and the release of Palestinian prisoners is marred by the knowledge that so many will not return – hostages, prisoners, countless dead.

We note widespread concern at the fragility of the ceasefire; that it may bring respite but not the sustained and lasting peace for which the Holy Land cries out.

An online meeting with the parish priest of Holy Family Parish in Gaza impressed upon us the devastation being experienced by the whole population.

The impact of war on the whole West Bank is

rarely reported at home. We have been privileged to listen first-hand to several communities of Christians in the West Bank. To them we wish to say: “Thank you for the most generous welcome you extended towards us; for helping us understand the extraordinary efforts being made in the fields of healthcare and education to preserve the dignity of all those living in the West Bank.

“Your communities are a light in the darkness of a suffering land. We were moved to hear how often Christians expressed their commitment to stay and rebuild the lives of their people.

“Thank you, as well, for sharing all the struggles you experience: the severe restriction on movement; the sudden road closures which add hours to short journeys and so inhibit normal daily life but most especially urgent medical assistance; the lack of water and electricity; the impossibility of constructing new buildings; the high level of unemployment after so many work permits were cancelled with the start of war.

“We recognised the need for the respective governments to work together to resolve these vital issues.

“We saw how settlements, illegal under international law, which were once enclaves have grown to surround you to make enclaves now of your communities. We hear your cry for peace with justice and your anxiety at what will happen when the focus turns away from Gaza; what will happen to your land.



**The Church of the Nativity, or Basilica of the Nativity, Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine – Photo © Mazur/cbcew.org.uk**

“There is a clear need for the international community to act together to facilitate realistic and radical development assistance, as part of a process towards achieving a lasting peace.

“We came to tell you that you are not alone; that you are not forgotten. Your faith and resilience strengthen our own faith.

“We hope that our coming among you encourages you and will inspire Christians from our different countries to return to the Holy Land on pilgrimage.

“We hope pilgrims will journey not only to the Holy Sites of Jerusalem, Galilee and Bethlehem, but that they will also come to visit communities like Aboud, Ephraim-

Taybeh and Ramallah, so they too can draw inspiration from your faithfulness to the land in which Jesus was born.

“We join with Patriarch Pizzaballa and the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land in their hope that the ceasefire amounts to more than a pause in hostilities and marks the start of a genuine and lasting peace.

“We share their conviction that this can only be achieved through a just solution that addresses the origin of this long-standing struggle; (that it will require) a long process, a willingness to acknowledge each other's suffering and a focused education in trust that leads to overcoming fear of the other and the justification of violence as a political tool.”

# Make sure you're ready for Lourdes!

Attendance at one of our Formation sessions is a mandatory requirement to be able to work in Lourdes. Both take place at Trinity Catholic College, Middlesbrough.

**Formation Day:** Saturday March 22, registration 8.30-9.30am. Lunch provided. So we can make a timely start, we ask people to arrive as early as possible and we will arrange for ID badge photographs to be taken if required. The day will include various training sessions to enable us to look after our supported pilgrims in Lourdes.

**Formation Evening: Tuesday May 6,** registration from 5.30pm, prompt start at 6pm. Finger buffet provided. Finish around 10pm.

Book using the Eventbrite online registration system – no need to print tickets. Please note, the cut off time for registration is seven days before the event. Visit [eventbrite.co.uk](https://eventbrite.co.uk) and type "Lourdes" and "Middlesbrough" into the two search boxes.

## More dates for your diaries

**All In, All Out Social:** Saturday April 5 at St Francis Social Club, Middlesbrough. The night will include games, entertainment, a raffle and a luxury hot and cold buffet, including dessert. Tickets £12, with raffle and games prizes included. Please book by Thursday March 27 at the latest so we can organise buffet numbers.

**Lourdes Race Night:** Saturday May 10 at St Francis Social Club, Middlesbrough. Doors open 7pm, first race 7.30pm. Tickets £5, including pie and peas. Race and horse sponsors needed.

To book tickets for both events, please email John Brown at [john.brown160@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.brown160@ntlworld.com) or text 07871 958412. Vegetarians are asked to let us know when they book to enable us to arrange catering.

**Lourdes Pilgrimage:** Saturday May 24 to Friday May 30.



Attendance at one of our Formation sessions is mandatory for anyone wishing to work as part of our hospitalité teams in Lourdes

## Book now for Lourdes pilgrimage

Bookings are being taken for our 2025 pilgrimage (Saturday May 24 to Friday May 30). Visit [joewalshtours.co.uk](https://joewalshtours.co.uk), email [info@joewalshtours.co.uk](mailto:info@joewalshtours.co.uk) or call 0808 189 0468 for more details.

Application forms for supported pilgrims are available from Lourdes secretary Pat Ling by calling 01642 760105 or emailing [lourdessecretary@rcdmidd.org.uk](mailto:lourdessecretary@rcdmidd.org.uk).

Could you be interested in joining our pilgrimage as a helper? Volunteer doctors, nurses, handmaids (women) and brancardiers (men) are always welcome! Executive director Mark Taylor will answer questions you may have. Email [pilgrimagedirector@rcdmidd.org.uk](mailto:pilgrimagedirector@rcdmidd.org.uk).

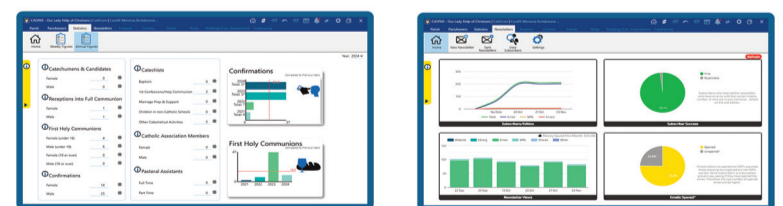
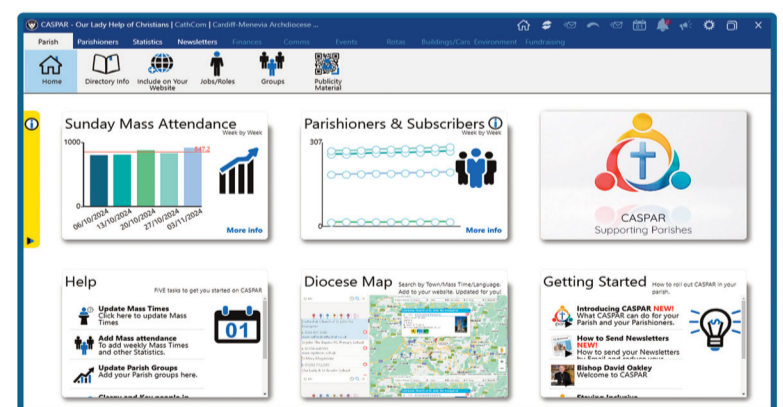
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## NEWS

# Touring rugby squad drops in for Mass

It was lovely recently to welcome staff and students from Oakhill Catholic College in New South Wales, Australia, for weekday Mass at St George's in York.

Parishioners were honoured to spend time with the group during their rugby tour of England and Italy.

It's a testament to the positive power and evangelisation potential of the internet that the pastoral lead from Oakhill found St George's Church website and Facebook page and contacted Father Jose Michael to ask if the school party could join us for Mass. Father Jose spoke passionately in his homily about how the power of faith and a positive outlook can drive sporting achievement.

We wish them a safe and enjoyable tour.

David Harper



Staff and students from Oakhill Catholic College in New South Wales, Australia, attended weekday Mass at St George's in York

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