

# the SOWER

News from



THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM



## Community in harmony for **The Journey Onwards**

MEETING THE  
Coronavirus  
Challenge

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By ARCHBISHOP

**BERNARD LONGLEY**

## To our Diocesan family,

WELCOME to the Advent 2020 issue of *The Sower* magazine.

It has been several long months since our last magazine was published due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Every single one of you has been affected in some way by this devastating disease, which shows no sign of abating.

Many of us will have lost family and friends to Covid-19, jobs and livelihoods have gone, our way of life significantly changed.

But with all the hardships we have endured, and continue to endure, we are learning to trust more in God's loving care and to care more for each other.

We are all learning to live a 'new normal'.

The threat of Covid-19 remains constant, and the restrictions imposed are ever-changing, but we are adapting our lives accordingly.

In this edition of *The Sower* there is of course reflection on how we coped during the first lockdown. It has shaped a significant part of our lives in 2020 and cannot be downplayed. But there is a message of hope and encouragement too.

During the lockdown period there were countless wonderful stories emerging across our Archdiocese of communities working together to help the most vulnerable.

Daily acts of heroism which will continue as we move forward.

Voluntary groups and schools making much-needed PPE equipment for our medical and health teams.

Foodbanks being set up and people donating what they could.

Neighbours checking on each other through phone calls, emails, online chat groups.

We saw a surge in the number of Churches offering a live stream facility, so we could continue to

celebrate Mass, and pray together, albeit online. Technology has played a huge part in keeping people connected this year and that will continue moving forward.

*I want to thank our Parishes, and the entire Diocesan school community, for keeping going during the lockdown. In such difficult times people rose to the challenge and went above and beyond to serve others selflessly.*

And when our church doors reopened that momentum continued. Helping to keep people safe and well while we pray has to remain our priority.

We are now facing a fresh beginning in a very different setting, but with the Lord always beside us.

The pandemic has focused our minds on what really matters. We have had the opportunity to get back to the basics of our faith and become acutely aware of the part we all need to play in the service of others, especially those in particular need.

We are all part of God's family, we are all brothers and sisters.

The publication of the Holy Father's third Encyclical Letter

in October, entitled *Fratelli Tutti*, couldn't be more timely. It is dedicated to human fraternity and social friendship.

We have to focus on working together for the benefit of each other and our world.

Pope Francis draws on many important themes in this publication and I encourage you to read it.

This year, despite the restrictions faced, our Archdiocese has been blessed with four new priests, who were ordained at St Chad's Cathedral.

This was a momentous occasion for Frs Clive Dytor, Alex Taylor, Benedict Skipper and Sean Gough, who had spent several years studying at St Mary's College, Oscott.

Three new Permanent Deacons have also been ordained. You can meet Deacons John Garvey, Dirk Hermans and Dominic Kerr, and their wives, in a special feature on pages 16 and 17.

We are also delighted to have celebrated the episcopal ordinations of Bishops David Evans and Stephen Wright and the appointment of Canon Richard Walker as Vicar General.

You can read more about these appointments on page 10.

There is no doubt that we will continue to face many challenges on the road to recovery from Covid-19.

But together we can overcome difficulties and continue to support the Church's mission in the months ahead.

We must do all we can to make sure the Gospel message is heard through the experience of our daily Christian lives.

When churches across the Archdiocese reopened for the celebration of public worship, numbers were of course restricted, but it was encouraging to see so many going back to be with the Lord in a building that is truly home. By the time this magazine is published I hope that we will be able to soon worship together again.

You are in my prayers always.

With every blessing for the Advent and Christmas season.

+ Bernard



# Together we can overcome difficulties and continue to support the Church's mission



As Covid-19 continues to impact the world, *The Sower* looks at how the Archdiocese of Birmingham community is rising to the challenge through innovative ways of worship, personal endeavour, technological support and Caritas – while, all the time, planning for a post-Coronavirus future...

## Medical team astonished by priest who 'died' twice

**A** PARISH priest of the Archdiocese who spent nearly 25 years as a hospital chaplain was himself given Holy Communion at his bedside as he battled to survive Coronavirus earlier this year.

Father Michael Stack "died" twice and was in critical care for five weeks before he miraculously pulled through, astonishing the medical team with his recovery.

He is full of praise for the doctors and nurses – but he also drew strength from being visited by two priests and from the support of a Baptist Minister who was acting as chaplain.

As the author of a book entitled *Lord When Did We See You Sick*, about the healing power of prayerful companionship with the sick and dying, Father Michael feels the experience has only strengthened his faith.

Prayers were said around the world for him as he lay unconscious with the most severe form of the virus in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.

He fell ill at the start of a short break from his role at Christ the King in Coventry where he had been supporting the parish and deanery in his semi-retirement.

The 69-year-old, who during his church career was hospital chaplain at four high profile hospitals in Nuneaton, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry working in critical care wards, was planning to stay with his sister in East Anglia.

*Within a short time of arriving in Norfolk he had developed a bad cough and started hallucinating. He was admitted by ambulance to hospital.*

"I was on a ventilator for 21 days and 36 days in critical care," said Father Michael. "I don't remember much because I was completely medicated – a blessing in disguise.

"When the priests came in to give me the sacrament of anointing it was quite strange because I had been independent for so long – but we all need other people. The knowledge of



Father Michael Stack who made a remarkable recovery from Coronavirus earlier this year.

having the sacrament helped me, I felt better.

"It strengthens my faith to know that we are part of the healing process of Jesus Christ."

Father Michael had a tracheotomy to help his breathing and he had to learn to walk again after his 10-week hospital stay.

He is now back on form – still

with his sense of humour intact – and he has already been back to visit the critical care ward at Queen Elizabeth's where he met other survivors.

He also returned to Christ the King in Coventry to give thanks for his recovery and show gratitude to the parishioners who offered prayers for him.

## Parishes find many new ways to stay in touch

PARISHIONERS at St Augustine's church in Solihull came together via Zoom to discuss practical ways of demonstrating their belief that prayer should be "at the start and the heart" of everything.

They pledged prayers by way of support for St Augustine's Catholic primary school, St Peter's Catholic secondary school and St Peter's sixth form college.

In a token of their support the group presented the schools with framed Prayer Bouquets beautifully produced by the Carmelite sisters of Wolverhampton.

"With parish priest Father Dominic Kavanagh frequently encouraging 'prayerful support' for

others, our parish is big on prayer," said evangelisation group member Helen Brookes.

"The hope is that the bouquets will serve as a reminder to the staff, students and families of our schools and college that the parish community cares about them and that we wish to offer them our friendship and support"

Meanwhile, St Peter Apostle parish in Leamington Spa organised a community picnic in the Pump Room Gardens near the church with others attending from the parishes of St Joseph's and Our Lady's.

Practising social distancing, those who attended the outdoor



event in September enjoyed the surroundings of the recently restored gardens while meeting up with other parishioners.

Father Dominic, left, and Father Joseph of St Augustine's church in Solihull, with one of the prayer bouquets.





# Staying connected through technology

**A** GROUP of four Catholic churches turned to technology when the Covid-19 outbreak enforced restrictions on communal worship.

The members of the St Newman Cluster began livestreaming masses via their shared website and Facebook so that parishioners could stay connected.

St Joseph's Wolverhampton, St Mary's Willenhall, St Joseph's Darlaston and Holy Trinity Bilston also launched their own YouTube channel.

The online initiatives were led by Father Craig Fullard of St Joseph's Wolverhampton who, despite having no prior knowledge of the technology, was quick to realise the potential of using webcams and Zoom.

He and the volunteers who helped with the project took inspiration from Pope Francis' description of the internet as a "gift from God".

They also followed pointers in Dr Stephen Bullivant's book *Catholicism in the Time of Coronavirus* which discusses the impact of the pandemic on ways of worship.

"I launched our live streaming at the start of the first lockdown," said Father Craig. "I got my laptop out, turned on a webcam and off we went. The parishioners really appreciated it. I asked for donations towards the project and they raised more than £12,000."

The cash enabled all four churches to install specialist cameras which allowed a close-up focus on different areas as the masses progressed.

In a parallel move, virtual school masses



Father Craig Fullard of St. Joseph's Wolverhampton taking part in a virtual coffee morning through Zoom.

were organised, incorporating videos sent in by teachers of pupils doing Mass readings and bidding prayers.

Members of all four congregations took part in Zoom discussions which were also organised, logging in individually from their homes.

Zoom bingo sessions were run on a weekly basis by volunteer Tom Hanlon, raising £700 for a local hospice, while a Zoom coffee morning brought parishioners together for chat. "We found that people who would not normally get together were taking part," said Father Craig. "Neither would they normally have used the new technology."

"The online initiatives were launched as a way of creating community, of letting people

know that their community has not forgotten them. In the livestreaming people liked to see a priest they know saying mass in a church that they know. Older people especially appreciated the online offerings if they were shielding. I am amazed at how many of them have gone on to YouTube.

"We also had teams of volunteers phoning parishioners to support them and when one of our servers for more than 70 years died we were able to livestream his Funeral Mass."

Recognising that there is no substitute for physically meeting together, the St Newman Cluster is taking steps to reopen churches once again as soon as it is safe to do so.



By **DAVID BROOKS**  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

## Adapting and responding to the pandemic

WITH the pandemic situation changing by the day there is a risk that by the time you read this copy of *The Sower* we will have entered some new phase or some new tier of risk as the country takes the necessary steps to tackle the virus and its impact.

All of us I am sure are looking forward to the day when our current difficulties and sufferings are something in our past.

However, it is fair to say that the impact of the pandemic will change certain aspects of our lives for many years to come.

Those of us who work in the curial team supporting parishes

and helping the Church in its Mission have, like many of you, had to adapt and respond. We have all got used to working remotely and meeting colleagues virtually in ways we never thought possible. For some it has meant being 'furloughed' and having to deal with feeling disconnected from our work and colleagues.

Life in our parishes has been even more deeply affected. However, in a short space of time we have shown that we can respond and find ways to still celebrate our faith – many of us will have experienced going to Mass online, and when churches

reopened with social distancing we all accepted the wearing of masks, constantly sanitising our hands, and helping with the new cleaning regimes required after every Mass.

When all this is behind us and we have put away the masks and the sanitiser there will be an opportunity to consider whether some of the things we have learnt and experienced could be of benefit to us individually and in our lives of faith.

That will be the time for us to reflect on the Archbishop's vision and determine what part we can all play in becoming "ever more faithful to the

mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ". How can we help build those "vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and others" and what we can do to be among the ever increasing number of lay people who need to be engaged in co-responsible ministry?

That is something that we can keep in our thoughts and prayers as we look forward with hope and in the knowledge that Christ is with us.





# Appeal to return to live Mass once lockdown is over

**T**HE Dean of St Chad's Cathedral is appealing to the faithful to return to attending live Mass when lockdown restrictions come to an end.

Monsignor Tim Menezes highlights the importance of experiencing sacramental life in an actual church building.

He also stresses that all churches across the Archdiocese have adopted Covid-safe procedures after rigorous risk assessments and they are among the safest of public spaces.

Safety measures include the wearing of face masks by the congregation, socially distanced seating arrangements and the use of masks and gloves by stewards.

Holy Communion is received only on the hand and the sign of peace is omitted.

Although the live streaming of Masses from churches has been a great solace, it is not a substitute for the full experience of worship provided in a holy space.

"When people returned to physical attendance at Mass after a lay-off of four months during the first Covid-19 lockdown many were moved to tears," said Mgr Tim.

"They realised how much it meant to them. We never stop being called by Christ as the Apostles were to step out in faith and have courage.

"There's something about the church that we attend that speaks to us of the other life beyond this one.

"We are called to make the life of Heaven an influence on our life today."

Mgr Tim says the Archdiocese fully understands the factors that have caused people to be absent from Mass attendance.



Dean of St Chad's Cathedral, Monsignor Tim Menezes, with a 'Stay Safe' pop-up banner.

However he seeks to reassure worshippers that Covid-safety remains paramount as they return to sacramental life.

"Our churches are safer than most other public spaces," he said. "Only by coming back to church and trying it will people realise this – they will be surprised how safe they feel.

"I would like to add from the Clergy's point of view we have missed our people.

"We would love to see them return whenever they can."

*"When people returned to physical attendance at Mass after a lay-off of four months during the first Covid-19 lockdown many were moved to tears."*

Monsignor Tim Menezes

## Environment must remain a top priority despite virus

**ENVIRONMENTAL** matters must remain critical to the Church and parishioners, despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

That is the message from the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission, which supports all efforts to bring about a "Green Recovery" as part of its agenda to create a more just and peaceful world.

It is encouraging people to step back, reflect, pray and support whatever actions are taken by governments,

councils and individuals to bring about the fundamental changes needed to save the planet.

The organisation is echoing the writing and actions of Pope Francis in which he has focused on the world's peace and justice and called everyone to experience a personal "ecological conversion".

His Holiness has made the link between ecological devastation, depletion and uncontrolled exploitation of the earth's resources, poverty

and now the Covid Pandemic. And he has called on people to focus on a new future with proper regard to the health of the planet.

The Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission has existed in different forms since the 1970s. It seeks to encourage Catholics within the diocese to put their faith into practice through action for a more just and peaceful world – which includes care for creation, Our Common Home.

Consisting of nine people

from a range of different backgrounds, the Commission advises and informs the Archbishop and is in the process of producing an Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese.

As well as supporting groups and individuals through website news and organising an annual assembly, it also hosts an annual Justice and Peace retreat day.

■ For more details about planned events in 2021 visit: [www.birminghamjandp.org.uk](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk)





**A** GROUP of parish volunteers in Tamworth have been taking to their phones to make contact with parishioners during the Covid-19 lockdowns and beyond.

The Connect scheme at St John the Baptist was devised as a means of helping to restore a sense of church community on an ongoing basis.

As well as asking people how they are coping under the stressful circumstances and offering help where necessary, the volunteers are supporting them for a safe return to church.

During the telephonic conversations, and with the consent of the parishioners, their personal details are being updated on the parish database and they are being reminded about the various services the church can offer.

"The volunteers were all given training in advance and a checklist of the topics they should cover," said lay parishioner Lisa Fahy, one of the organisers.



## Ring-around helps restore a sense of community

"The 18 volunteers make their calls from their own homes at their own expense. They have signed confidentiality agreements and they are aware of safeguarding procedures.

"The Connect scheme is a great example of how lay people can get the church moving, finding positive ways to reconnect even in difficult times."

Connect, which has the blessing of parish priest Father Michael White, aims to eventually reach all the 2,000-plus parishioners on the database.

A further five volunteers have stepped forward to assist with the administrative tasks associated with the project.

Above, Evangelisation Field Worker Alex Parker, left, with Connect scheme volunteers Trish Shaw, centre, and Lisa Fahy.

## Young performers unite to strike a chord during church services

GIFTED young performers in Warwickshire made recordings in their own homes so that they could provide music remotely for church services.

Members of the Unite Catholic Youth Group, aged between seven and 15, donned headphones to sing worship songs or play along with musical instruments.

They or their parents sent in the recordings via email or WhatsApp which were mixed together to be used at the face-to-face Saturday Masses at Our Lady's church, Lillington, as well as Sunday face-to-face and livestreamed Masses at St Peter the Apostle's church in Leamington Spa.

The scheme came about after the youth group took part in the Kenelm Youth Trust's *It's A Knockout* competition.

One of their tasks was to record a worship song and they were helped to remotely record their entry by Martin Barry, musical director of Our Lady's.

Thanks to his guidance they became so proficient in online recording that they could start contributing to the online Mass music which he was producing with remote input from the family choir at Our Lady's and the choir at St Peter the Apostle's.

"I record a piano, keyboard or guitar part and tracking vocal and send this to the youth group parents' WhatsApp chat," said Caroline Graham, music leader of the youth group.

"The young people can then listen to the music through headphones and record themselves singing along – some have also added drums, bass, flute and guitar. I then put the track together and send it on to Martin.

"Our music tracks have also been used during prayer times in our online youth group and in liturgies at our Catholic secondary school, Trinity.

*"I hope that recording the songs at home is a prayerful opportunity for the young people to praise God with their singing voices whilst we are unable to do this in church."*

The 17 young musicians and youth leaders involved were missing the youth Masses which are run by the Unite group in Leamington and Warwick and they were delighted to take part in the home-based scheme during lockdown periods.

Jacob Rayment, 13, of Leamington Spa, who sings and plays bass guitar, said: "At



Youth band leader Caroline Graham with, left to right, Chris, 13, Esther, 10 and Sophie, 7, who recorded music together. Our cover shows Unite Catholic Youth leader Emma Rayment with her children Jacob, 13, and Lucy, 12, who recorded worship songs to be used during their online Masses.

first the recording process was a bit strange but as soon as I learned how to use the software it was really fun." Jacob's sister Lucy, 12, who sings and plays the flute, said: "It was a great way of still being able to take part in the church services from home."

Blandine de l'Estaille, 10, of Warwick, said: "I made the recordings with some friends in the youth group. I especially enjoyed singing Bread of Life and Sing it in the Valleys."





A series of imaginative campaigns and initiatives are enabling organisations such as **Tabor House** and **Father Hudson's Care** to enhance the help and assistance they provide to people in society who most need it. Here, *The Sower* looks at the tireless efforts of these agencies as they aim to overcome the obstacles of Covid-19 and plan for next year...

# Support and care for the most vulnerable boosted for 2021

**S**OCIAL care charities in the Archdiocese are launching a series of forward-looking initiatives as they continue supporting vulnerable people during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

Birmingham shelter, Tabor House, has signed up to a national fundraising campaign which they hope will make a vital difference to the support given to people experiencing homelessness.

It has joined the Big Christmas Give Challenge, securing £8,000 in pledges from two local businesses who will match any donations made by the public from 1-8 December.

This generosity from the firms means that money given during the campaign will be doubled, thereby strengthening Tabor House's work with vulnerable people.

Before the pandemic, Tabor House was having great success in getting people back into work and into their own accommodation, thanks to their strength-based approach to support.

*At the height of the first lockdown, they worked with Birmingham City Council to support over 50 people at a hotel as part of the Government's 'Everybody In' scheme.*

When this scheme ended, Tabor House reopened – not as a night shelter but as a 24/7 supported accommodation project, with new measures in place to protect the health and safety of guests.

The open plan living area has been transformed by the introduction of Perspex pods, to eliminate any potential spread of infection and to meet social distancing measures.

These changes mean that



Project Manager at Tabor House Sharon Fear with Tabor House guest Carlos Moscoco.

Tabor House, one of Father Hudson's Care's collaborative projects overseen by an iShelter committee, was able to move from providing overnight support, to offering 24-hour work that supports guests with becoming independent in their own accommodation.

The funding from the Big Christmas Give will also support the development of a second building, which will allow them to work with more guests increasing current capacity from eight to 11.

Elsewhere, Father Hudson's Care continues to make strides across all its projects to rise to the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

There are plans to launch the annual Good Shepherd appeal through a series of interactive online assemblies for schools in

the New Year, highlighting the charity's work throughout the pandemic.

At St Joseph's Care Home in Coleshill, Father Hudson's has installed WiFi points and live streaming, to reduce feelings of isolation and increase residents' wellbeing.

*Staff at the home, as well as in St Catherine's Bungalows and Domiciliary Care, supported residents throughout the pandemic by helping them keep in touch with loved ones.*

Their New Routes fostering service and Family Support schools service continued providing crucial support to vulnerable children and families.

In Staffordshire, Father Hudson's Young at Heart scheme, supporting older people who are experiencing social isolation,

moved to telephone befriending for more than 300 people they were already working with.

The Sandwell-based partnership, Brushstrokes Community Project, delivered food parcels to vulnerable families in self-isolation.

St Chad's Sanctuary, a place of welcome for asylum seekers in Birmingham, and Hope Community Project, which are independent charities, provided telephone support services, online English classes and food support.

Andy Quinn, Chief Executive Officer of Father Hudson's Care said: "At a time when people needed support doors were closing.

"We were determined to keep ours open in our 17 services. Like the Innkeeper 2,000 years ago we find that God is on our doorstep."





# School is rising to the challenge of providing vital support to community

**P**ROVIDING essential support to pupils and their families while safeguarding against the threat of Covid-19 has been one of the greatest challenges ever faced by our schools.

In many cases it has not just been about ensuring education needs are fulfilled but helping with some of the most basic requirements of life – such as having enough food to eat.

Sinead Smith, Senior Executive at the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy Company, is one of the many school leaders who has found herself trying to put in place such a safety net during the unprecedented health crisis.

The response of her MAC – which comprise a secondary and four primary schools in North Warwickshire – has been to set up a regular home meal delivery system for families, a decision warmly welcomed by the local community.

Sinead said: “It has become increasingly clear that many years of austerity have seen the demise of so many public services which would at one time have supported young people and their families through periods of hardship. Instead, large numbers of families now rely heavily on charities.

“So we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented health crisis which is threatening the health and well-being of the



Pupils Mateus, James and Therese from St Thomas More School, part of the Holy Spirit MAC, with some of the donated food.

young people in our schools, not because they are at risk of contracting Covid-19 but because many families have suddenly been plunged into unexpected poverty with no access to a safety net.”

Sinead explained that since the Holy Spirit MAC was formed there has been a clear emphasis on charities and social action. So much so that in the 18 months leading up to the lockdown in Spring, they had donated over 10 tonnes of groceries to foodbanks in Nuneaton, Bedworth and Atherstone, while

tripling charitable cash donations compared to the same period three years ago.

Sinead added: “This led us to set up our own foodbank for families in the Holy Spirit MAC. From the first week of closure we advertised via social media resulting in us initially delivering over 300 food parcels to families.

“However, as our supply of food began to dwindle, we recognised that the need to support families was growing rapidly. Alongside this, there was a tangible fear in the



Sinead Smith.

community and amongst many of our families. We therefore began to consider how we could address both factors affecting many families.”

On Easter Saturday, senior leaders from every school in the MAC delivered 348 meals for families to enjoy on Easter Sunday. Included were supermarket vouchers for the following week's food shop as well as Easter eggs.

“It is hard to articulate the positive response this simple gesture evoked,” Sinead said. “Some families said they hadn't had food in the house for two or three days prior to the meal being delivered while others said they hadn't seen another person for over a week.”

The MAC now has a programme to repeat the meal deliveries and additional supermarket vouchers every two to three weeks and accepts monetary donations to support buying the food and goods.

To date they have delivered over 2,500 meals, vouchers and basic living supplies to families and collected over £10,000 in donations to support the initiative. Families can now contact Sinead directly if they need support and food and vouchers are then delivered as soon as possible.

In addition, Holy Spirit has now launched its Christmas outreach programme – this year extending the support to the five parishes serving the MAC. This will include delivering a full food shop for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and presents for all children.

Sinead added: “Unfortunately, for many of our families, the new normal is fairly bleak so the programme of supporting families with basic living essentials and food will undoubtedly be a prominent ongoing feature of provision in the Holy Spirit MAC for some time to come.

“We are hoping that those in need in our local community – not just schools – will feel that they are still not alone at the end of what has been a very challenging year.”

## Teaching resources inspire pupils with a message of hope

IMAGINATIVE teaching resources are helping pupils of all ages understand where they fit in to the Catholic global family and how they can be a powerful voice in building a better world.

CAFOD – the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development – works with Catholic schools as well as youth groups to further young people's knowledge about communities facing global injustice.

A whole range of teaching resources, activities, lesson plans and factsheets are available to schools in England and Wales through CAFOD, along with prayer and liturgy resources, themed assemblies and videos. All are inspired by the Pope's inspirational letter *Laudato Si'*, which discusses the damage being inflicted on the Earth by humans and calls on 'every person living on this planet' to make urgent changes to our lifestyles and how we consume energy to protect the planet.

In addition, CAFOD's 200 trained volunteers visit schools to deliver global-themed workshops and assemblies and the organisation also provides continuous professional development courses for teachers and chaplains as well as training for youth leaders and youth outreach teams.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, CAFOD was able to maintain its level of service through virtual and online resources that teachers could then relay to children.

The Archdiocese of Birmingham was no exception in accessing these, with many Catholic primary and



Secondary Schools CPD Coordinator Susan Kambalu with some of the information packs they send to schools.

secondary schools tapping into the host of resources available.

Susan Kambalu, CAFOD's Secondary Schools Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Coordinator, said: “We were able to adapt our teaching resources during the period of lockdown. So, for instance, we were able to provide an online assembly called ‘The World We Want’ and encouraged students to share their lockdown legacy on Twitter. We also asked younger pupils to create their very own Jars of Hope.” This was the first of many online assemblies from CAFOD which are now a regular event for Catholic schools.

Susan added: “The imagery and language we use is very important. Although CAFOD as an agency aims to work alongside the poorest of the poor we want to also convey an uplifting message of hope – that we can all help.”

The resources are available to pupils aged three to 19 and as a result the message being delivered is tailored.

Bethany Friery, CAFOD's Primary Schools CPD Coordinator, said: “The work being carried out by CAFOD very much follows in the footsteps of *Laudato Si'* – paragraph 91 – which states: ‘Everything is connected.

Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our

fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.’ This is the focus of our most popular training course, as it reflects the Catholic life and mission of our schools.

“But what is key is that the language we use to deliver this message is age appropriate. We want young schoolchildren to be inspired and inquisitive about the challenges that face the world and feel they want to learn more and contribute.”

CAFOD's work is certainly going down a storm in the Archdiocese with many schools taking action on Twitter based on what they have learned. For instance, St Margaret Mary's Primary in Erdington, Birmingham, tweeted: “Year 4 enjoyed the assembly but we were upset that so many schools across the world don't have access to clean water. We will try to help.”

They fundraised for CAFOD during Lent last year and during lockdown shared CAFOD prayer tweets on many occasions.

Meanwhile, Holy Cross Catholic MAC school group in Coventry joined CAFOD's national assembly and shared the hashtag “summer of hope” along with schools around the country.

■ For more about CAFOD and to book online training visit [cafod.org.uk](http://cafod.org.uk)

## New role will help improve children's life chances

TEN schools in the West Midlands are coming under the same umbrella under the guidance of a Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL).

Suzanne Horan is one of the first occupants of the newly-created CSEL role (the equivalent of a Chief Executive Officer) which exists to foster a spirit of community and shared purpose in Catholic Multi Academy Companies.

Holding the post of CSEL at both St Nicholas Owen MAC, which spans the local authorities of Birmingham, Dudley and Worcestershire, and St Catherine of Siena MAC in Sandwell, she has been

running the two companies in tandem while preparing to join them together as one larger MAC.

The new grouping will initially consist of 10 schools sharing the same purpose of mission and it will be called Emmaus Catholic Multi Academy Company.

Suzanne works collaboratively as a system leader with stakeholders and partners across the MACs to improve the life chances of children and young people. “The post of Catholic Senior Executive Leader is about embracing the outlook of the Church on education delivering a Catholic strategy, a Catholic

ethos and a collective approach to enable our children and our faith to thrive,” said Suzanne, who has worked in Catholic education since 2006.

“As CSELs we look to develop ourselves and our own faith formation and crucially to utilise this and the discernment it brings continually within our work and decision-making.

“Part of my role is to encourage and enable others to do the same in fulfilling their own unique vocation and working towards the common good within their academy, parish and wider communities.”



Catholic Senior Executive Leader Suzanne Horan pictured with Principal of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Andrew Carry.





# Senior appointments take on crucial new responsibilities in the Archdiocese

**F**OUR key appointments have been made in the Archdiocese this year.

Canon Richard Walker, who has been Director of Ongoing Formation since 2015, has taken up his post as the new Vicar General.

Former parish priest Canon Walker, who has a licentiate in Dogmatic Theology from the Gregorian University, Rome, has also been made a Trustee of the Archdiocese.

"My new role is a big change from my time as a priest in the parishes of St John the Evangelist and St Joseph the Worker in Banbury," he said.

"I now find myself working closely with the Archbishop and with the clergy of the Archdiocese across a range of responsibilities, but particularly as we respond to the challenges in all our parishes and institutions as a result of the Covid pandemic."

From 2003-2014 Canon Walker was a member of the Formation Staff at St. Mary's College, Oscott, for the majority of which time he was Vice Rector. From 2017-2020 he was a member of the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commission.

Canon Stephen Wright has been ordained as Auxiliary Bishop with pastoral responsibility for the deaneries in Staffordshire, Wolverhampton and the Black Country.

Until recently he was Episcopal Vicar for Religious and played a prominent role in enabling the Archdiocese to respond to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

Bishop Stephen said: "I continue to be blessed in serving the people of this Archdiocese and at this difficult time let us pray we will be wise and generous in caring for the most vulnerable in our society. St Chad, pray for us"

Canon David Evans has also been ordained as Auxiliary Bishop. He will continue to have responsibility for the deaneries in Birmingham and Worcestershire.

Bishop David served several years ago as Episcopal Vicar for Coventry, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire and he

has been caring for the Birmingham and Worcestershire parishes since last September, alongside his teaching responsibilities at the Maryvale Institute.

He said: "With St Chad and St Cuthbert to guide me, and with the prayers of priests, deacons and people, I hope to be a humble, diligent and receptive servant of the Church."

Both Auxiliary Bishops were ordained in a ceremony at St Chad's Cathedral on October 9.

Father Jan Nowotnik has taken up the posts of National Ecumenical Officer and Secretary to the Departments for Dialogue and Unity and Evangelisation and Catechesis at the Bishops' Conference in London.

Fr Jan served as a parish priest in a total of four parishes in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the last of these being St Brigid's in Northfield, before he left to study in Rome in 2015.

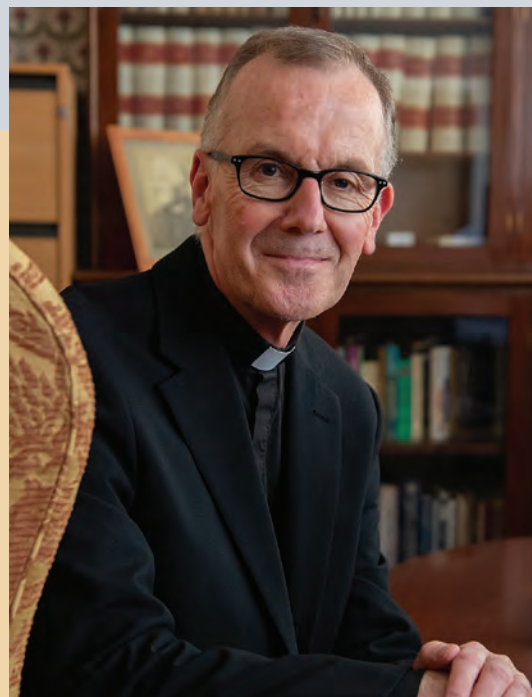
He is currently completing a doctorate in Ecumenical Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and he is a member of the Russell Berrie Foundation for Interreligious dialogue.

"It is also clear to me that both my new roles at the Bishop's Conference are concerned with the missionary activity of the Church as we strive to make Christ's message known in the world," said Fr Jan.

"It is as important to do this by drawing people to the life of faith as sharing the journey and learning from other Christians and those of other faiths."



Father Jan Nowotnik.



Canon Richard Walker.

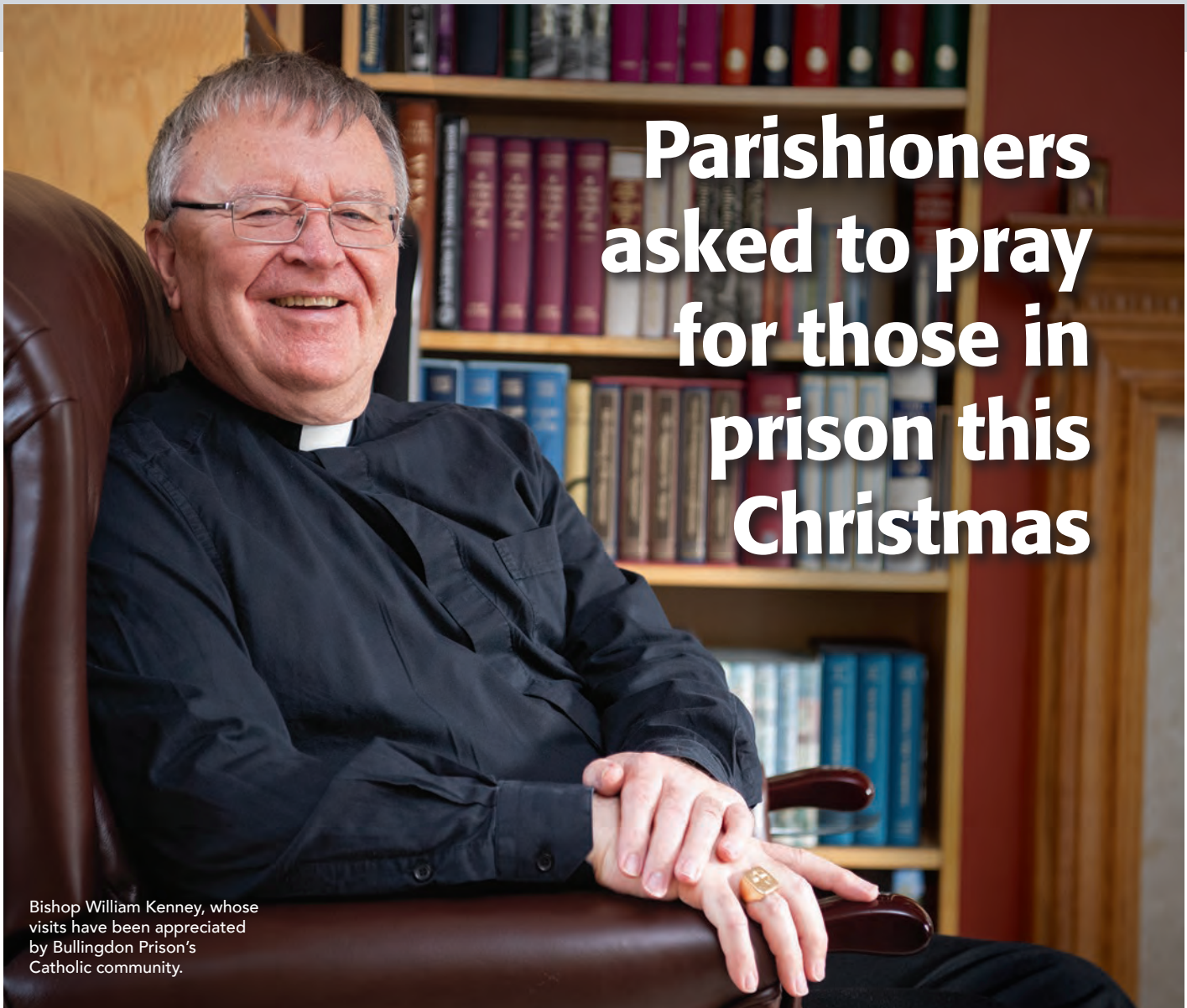


Bishop Stephen Wright.



Bishop David Evans.





# Parishioners asked to pray for those in prison this Christmas

Bishop William Kenney, whose visits have been appreciated by Bullingdon Prison's Catholic community.

**P**RAYERS for men at Bullingdon Prison in Oxfordshire will have special poignancy this Christmas as Covid restrictions prevent some of the special events which actively include them as members of the Church.

Sacraments and Mass will still be delivered by the local chaplain, but given the current situation, bureaucracy is too complex to arrange the Christmas Eve visits by Bishop William Kenney which have taken place every year since he returned to the UK in 2007 after 37 years in Scandinavia.

His visits are appreciated by the prison's Catholic community, and the attendance of a local parish choir has helped deliver the message that whatever the men have done, they are not forgotten by the Church.

"After all," said Bishop Kenney, "the Gospel tells us in the works of mercy to visit the imprisoned. We have an active group of lay volunteers who visit the men throughout the year, the chaplain will celebrate the sacraments and Mass and normally I will visit during the year for a confirmation or similar. Seminarians from Oxford also visit the prison as part of their pastoral work.

"This year we are asking parishes to pray for

*"Prison is not an attractive place to be, and Pope Francis frequently reminds us that people do not lose their human dignity because of what they have done."*

Bishop William Kenney

the men at Bullingdon, and the men will be reciprocating by including their neighbours and fellow parishioners in their prayers."

Around 1,000 men live at the prison, which is located in Bicester, Oxfordshire, and a new chaplain is currently being recruited for the job, which takes up between 20 and 40 hours a week.

Bishop Kenney said parishioners' focus on the men – especially at an important time of Advent and Christmas, when they might feel

even more separated from family and friends – are appreciated by the men.

He said: "The thought and effort bring them comfort in the knowledge that, in the eyes of the Church, they are not forgotten, nor are they written off. "They are members of the local parish and the diocese, and this is symbolised by the visit of the local choir."

Bishop Kenney urged parishes to include the Bullingdon men, and all those imprisoned, in their prayers during Advent and Christmas.

He added: "They are in our thoughts. Prison is not an attractive place to be, and Pope Francis frequently reminds us that people do not lose their human dignity because of what they have done."

Bishop Kenney is one of a number of senior figures in the Archdiocese who make visits to prisons, youth detention centres and other similar venues during the Christmas period, including Archbishop Bernard and the other diocesan Bishops.

The visits not only help to celebrate the joy of the coming of the Christ Child but also provide support and reflection on the loneliness of this time for those who find themselves in prison and the impact on their family and friends.





# My favourite SAINT

In a regular feature, *The Sower* asks people to name their favourite saint and explain why the saint is so important to them. Here, **Maggie Duggan**, Deputy Director of Catholic Education and a member of The Sower Editorial Board, chooses Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and environment.

**S**AINTE Francis of Assisi has been my favourite saint since, aged just 8, I took his name at Confirmation. My choice at the time was based on two things: a clip on television from a film about the life of St. Francis where he was fearlessly balanced on a roof top surrounded by doves, and Francis was a name which belonged to no-one else in the family.

*Whilst my decision was based on child-like reasoning, St. Francis has been a constant presence throughout both my personal and professional life in Catholic Education.*

As a teacher a favourite Literacy project was based on a book about St. Francis. Sharing with young children his story and his love and care for all of Creation was a way of opening up the idea that the saints are our role models and that we should be inspired by what they said and did (and what they continue to do).

Now some 20 years later this has been brought so sharply into focus through the Papal Encyclical 'Laudato Si'. The children and young people in our Diocesan family of schools have responded magnificently to Pope Francis' call to protect Our Common Home, and possess a much better understanding of our relationship to one another and the Earth. As a result, this generation are very aware of their responsibilities and are so active in school Eco groups and charitable works.

Alongside faith in action, St. Francis gifted us his own creative expressions of faith through sung prayer. For me music, particularly singing, has always been an important dimension and is a part of life in school I miss greatly.

His Canticle of Creation in the hymn 'Laudato Si' exudes



Maggie Duggan with a statue of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose name she took at Confirmation.

delight in God's gift to us all whilst the reflective 'Lord Make Me a Means of Your Peace' is a personal favourite, conveying the way I want to serve God and others.

*Assisi itself has been a great spiritual source. As a pilgrim I visited the places where St. Francis lived. What is striking are the many wonderful visual images which tell you more about St. Francis and how he lived his vocation.*

This gives you such a strong sense of the man that it felt that he had only just left. Even in the midst of the busyness of these

places, there were opportunities for quiet, still contemplation.

St. Francis was also a great teacher, understanding people's need to learn through their senses. He created the first Nativity crib scene so that people could gaze in wonder at 'the word made flesh'.

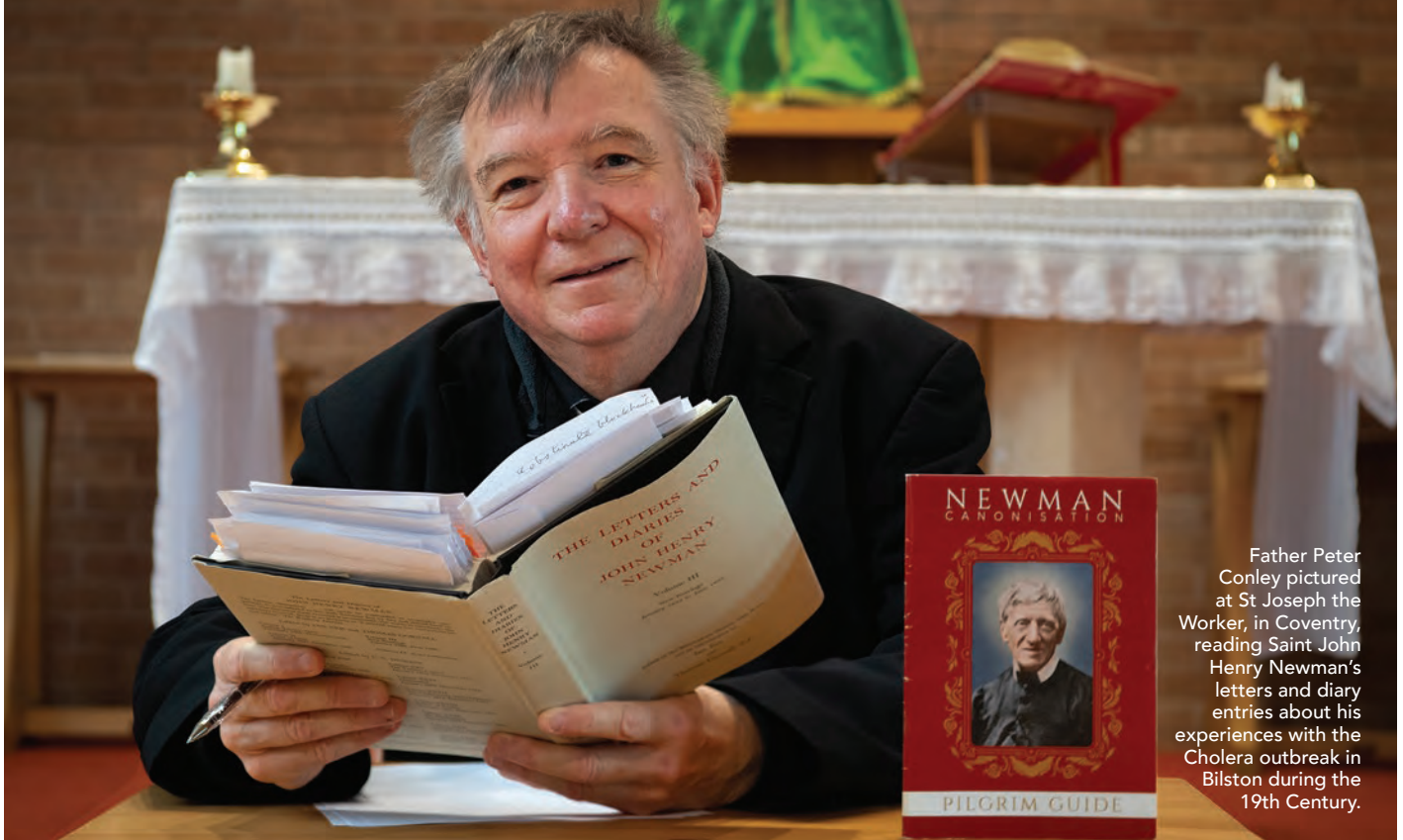
This Advent, we hope once again, to encourage the children in our schools and parishes to create their own Baby Jesus figure to be blessed on Bambinelli Sunday so that on Christmas Day they can welcome the Christ Child into their homes.

“ Sharing with young children his story and his love and care for all of Creation was a way of opening up the idea that the saints are our role models... ”

Maggie Duggan



In a regular feature, **Father Peter Conley**, Assistant Priest at St Joseph The Worker, Coventry, and author of *Newman: A Human Harp of Many Chords* reflects on Saint John Henry Newman's life. Here, he focuses on his experiences during three cholera outbreaks in the 19th century.



Father Peter Conley pictured at St Joseph the Worker, in Coventry, reading Saint John Henry Newman's letters and diary entries about his experiences with the Cholera outbreak in Bilston during the 19th Century.

# Pandemic's impact on ministry did not shake faith in the Lord

**S**AINT John Henry Newman lived through three global cholera outbreaks in the mid-nineteenth century. In anticipation of its arrival in his area, in 1832, he admits he is tempted to travel by coach while he can – but hesitates and does not do so. As soon as the epidemic surrounds him “a second and third time” in Oxford he describes himself as “living a charmed life...” because he remains healthy.

As an Anglican vicar, at the first instance of a case of the disease in Littlemore, Newman tells us he visited the house “straight away”. After becoming a Catholic priest he records how his fellow Oratorians covered London parishes “in the thick of cholera” in 1854. He also responded, instantly, when an urgent request was made to go to the Black Country on supply, travelling from the community house in Alcester Street, Birmingham, in 1849. All of which shows the bravery and compassion of Newman and his Confreres. Medical science only made the discovery that the disease was not contagious, but due to impure water, in 1854.

Newman's ministry during the pandemic had a profound impact on him. He wrote what he called a ‘Cholera Memorandum’ detailing

any time he spent recuperating away from his duties either from overwork or due to illness. His diaries mention the “Anti-Cholera masses” he said and the thanksgiving service he planned when it abated.

His most poignant and vivid reflections, however, are shared with his sister Jemima on 9th January 1850:

*“I have seen very little of severe illness but certainly the cholera is very shocking to see. We went over for a time to Bilston, where it raged so, that the priests were unequal to it. Multitudes crowded for reception into the church, and, alas, could not be received for want of instructors and confessors. They did not send for us till one priest was ill abed, and by that time the disease was abating – but the sight of the sick in the hospitals was terrible and brought before one most awful thoughts. The night calls, which were frequent, involving walks from nightfall to morning of four to (I think) seven miles were the most trying part of the toil, but I had none of that, though my dear companion had. Before we came, the priest had had in succession (the same priest) three or four journeys through the night – just getting into bed to be called out again. But I believe none died all through the country; whereas the fever the year before carried off, I*

*think, at least thirty. A new year has commenced, and a new half century – great events are before us, though we may not live to see them.”*

Newman's thought-provoking conclusion is very revealing. It indicates that the sense of trepidation, in the illness's wake, was real for him – despite his faith in the Lord remaining unshakable.

Caring for the poor was a particular priority for Newman because they were most vulnerable to disease. He helped them in practical ways: providing coal, paying bills and securing employment. He also defended their dignity when it was undermined by the Temperance Society who spoke of “drunkards”. Newman responded that this “during the prevalence of the cholera was very presumptuous and hard-hearted.”

He reassured grieving families that they now had “additional friends in heaven” and emphasised God's love for them. He encouraged those who were struggling to understand difficult circumstances, like he did Marianne Bowden: “Be courageous and generous, and give Him your heart, and you will never repent of the sacrifice.” May St John Henry Newman calm our anxieties with these words too.





## Virtual Lourdes ensures pilgrims can 'visit' sacred site

THE Archdiocese is remaining open-minded about what format the 2021 annual pilgrimage to Lourdes will take.

In light of the Covid-19 restrictions and the ever changing international picture, the pilgrimage Executive Committee are monitoring the situation in consultation with the relevant medical bodies, the Sanctuary of Lourdes and the Tour Operator.

A decision will be made in the coming weeks as to whether the 2021 event will go ahead, either with a group travelling to Lourdes or virtually.

It follows this year's decision to hold an online version of

the pilgrimage, which proved a great success.

Virtual Lourdes was held from May 24 to 29 and had the hashtag Lourdes2Brum.

Over the course of the six-day event a number of key speakers addressed viewers online. These included Archbishop Bernard celebrating the Opening Mass, and a virtual Marian Procession praying the Glorious Mysteries.

Later in the week there was a service of Healing and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a virtual celebration of Mass in the Grotto in which Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous.

The Stations of the Cross

were marked and there was a celebration of the faith of young people on the pilgrimage too. There were interviews with previous pilgrims and the Closing Liturgy was provided by Bishop David McGough, Chairman of the Lourdes Pilgrimage Committee.

The virtual pilgrimage also gave participants the chance to pray for Canon Gerry Breen who died late last year and was remembered by so many for his role as director of the Birmingham Lourdes pilgrimage.

Speaking about the desire to ensure Lourdes continued in some form despite Covid-19,

Bishop David said: "None of us could have anticipated the profound changes and loss that the coronavirus pandemic would bring into our lives.

"Nevertheless, the pilgrimage still goes on, the pilgrimage that is our shared journey into the presence of a Lord who never abandons us, and who is especially close to us in our darkest moments."

■ For the latest information about Lourdes 2021 visit the Diocesan website [www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/lourdes-pilgrimage](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/lourdes-pilgrimage). For all enquiries contact the pilgrimage office on [admin.lourdes@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:admin.lourdes@rcaob.org.uk)

## Tribute to national re-dedication of Mary's Dowry

A PRIEST of the Archdiocese issued a personal tribute to Our Lady at the height of the coronavirus lockdown.

Father John Peyton believes the recent re-dedication of England as Mary's Dowry – an act traditionally dating back to Edward the Confessor's time – is highly relevant at this time of national crisis.

His written tribute was made in the wake of a simultaneous service which he held at St Thomas More's church in Sheldon, Birmingham, to run parallel with the livestreamed re-dedication Mass at the National Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham on March 29.

Father John's personal tribute, issued in Mary's month and entitled "May in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Our Country is in Our Lady's Hands," was published on the Archdiocesan website.

He said: "I do believe that the Holy Spirit guided the Bishops to choose this year for this re-dedication – it could not possibly have been better timed.

"At the time of our greatest need, the people

of this land have been placed in the hands of our Blessed Mother. We could not be in a better place."

Father John, who is now priest at St John's and St Joseph's churches in Banbury and St Thomas' church in Wroxton, encouraged people to renew their commitment to the daily Rosary as a way of fully appreciating the significance of the re-dedication.

His simultaneous service in March involved him praying the Rosary and the Angelus along with the re-dedication prayer before Our Lady's statue in St Thomas More's church.

"I decided to carry out the service as I try to practise the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary devotion, as explained by St Louis-Marie de Montfort," he said.

■ Churches throughout the Archdiocese acknowledged the

national re-dedication which was both a personal promise of the people of England, and a renewal of entrustment vows made by King Richard II in 1381.

The statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, displayed during the Dowry tour.







# Pivotal role in widening knowledge and forming lay faithful

**M**ARYVALE Institute fulfils a pivotal role at the centre of the Diocesan Vision – and its teaching services are more vital than ever to the formation of the laity.

From enabling parishioners to widen their catechetical knowledge to forming the lay faithful to become priests, the Institute is inspired by St John Henry Newman's aspiration for "a laity... who know their religion."

Its scope ranges from Further Education courses to BA, MA, Ecclesiastical Licence and PhD level, all based on a sound adult lifelong learning methodology and high academic standards.

Laity are being encouraged to take further education courses in catechesis, parish ministry and family catechesis as well as to pursue academic degrees in theology.

All courses are now online and parishes are being urged to communicate with their parishioners via email and social media to encourage them to take part in the virtual academic forums.

Maryvale itself is set to use its wide online presence to promote the new Directory for Catechesis, guiding the Church on the ministry of faith formation, which was issued by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation earlier this year.

Pastoral workers as well as the Diocesan Bishops, Maryvale staff and the wider academic community will be involved during the Institute's work to integrate the new guidance into its teaching curriculum.

"The Directory is a really exciting and long-awaited key document, which will facilitate the revaluation and renewal of both our catechetical and evangelisation efforts within the diocese by means of a deeper integrative

approach," said Dr Birute Briliute, Dean of Maryvale Institute.

Maryvale's Further Education courses are open to all who are interested in deepening their encounter with God through a fuller understanding of the Faith.

The learning opportunities available include catechesis, the study of Sacred Scripture, Church teachings and the Catechism, the support of marriage and family life, ministry to youth, ministry to the sick and housebound, sacramental preparation, prayer and adoration, alongside different forms of charitable outreach.

Some students take the first step through a module that focuses on an area of interest to them – for example, an introduction to philosophy – and then continue on to a short course of study which can vary in length from six months to two years.

Alternatively there are students who begin with a course of studies and then look for a particular module that will help them to further develop their knowledge in an area such as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) programme.

"The different learning opportunities available through the Further Education Programme prepare the students to contribute to key dimensions of parish life," said Mary Killeen, Further Education Programme Director.

Pictured at Maryvale are, front to back, Administration Assistant Linda Beirne, Academic Administrator (undergraduate) PA Viktoria Meszaros and Accessibility Co-Ordinator and Academic Administrator (postgraduate) Melissa Pearce.

*"The Directory is a really exciting and long-awaited key document, which will facilitate the revaluation and renewal of both our catechetical and evangelisation efforts..."*

Dr Birute Briliute





# THREE of a kind

Continuing a series of regular features, *The Sower* asks the same questions of people carrying out similar service in the Archdiocese. Here, we put the questions to three newly ordained Deacons and their wives.

## Dominic and Frances Kerr

Dominic is Deacon at St Catherine of Siena in Birmingham

### What led you to become a Deacon?

Well, I'm hoping the answer to this is that it's God's doing! For most of my adult life I believe I have felt a calling, something tugging away at me, gently and persistently pulling me forward. I haven't been able to explain this and am still unable to, only to say that in the responding, I have found myself to be increasingly more at peace. Over time, I have come to see the deacon as someone who, in the name of the Gospel, witnesses to the Father's love for all, particularly in those places where people are in greater need and for those who are struggling to believe they are worthwhile or good. Perhaps this is what we are all called to do and to be in the world for in any case? Nonetheless, preparing to become a deacon now seems like something I have always needed!

### What will your new role encompass?

As a fledgling, I have imposed myself already on the good will of two parishes near Birmingham city centre and practise on them most weeks! Here, I have opportunity to learn, at least a little, how to serve as a deacon in a parish and am very grateful and happy to be doing so. I am drawn still to pastoral work in the prison and am waiting for a time when I may begin to revisit this. All the while, I continue in my various roles at school and hope to discover what it means to be a deacon here also, with the many young people I encounter from day-to-day. In prayer too, I hope that the diaconate will be a blessing on all whom I know and have known, and on my family and our lives together.

### Frances, when your husband said he wanted to become a Deacon how did you feel?

Bewildered, supportive, pleased, angry, appalled, indignant, frustrated... and now... peaceful and happy! Dominic brings such good humour, gentleness, shrewdness and wisdom when being with people and I knew he was embarking on training that would enable him to be available to more people in order to help and serve them. I also trusted Dom's sense of being called. I had to be reassured many times that our daughters' needs and my needs would come first.

All my frustrations with clericalism surged forward, and indignation that only men were being allowed to follow their calling. But I know Dom felt the same and that God



was calling him knowing our concerns and frustrations. So we embarked together and I know Dom will stay grounded.

### How do you nurture your faith as a couple?

**Dominic:** We pray together sometimes and have done many times over the years, though this is not something we've done, or perhaps felt the need to do, routinely or every day. We frequently talk about the many things of faith that matter to us: questions of belief, the Church, the things happening in the world, prayer for those in need and our hope in Pope Francis. I think that each day we try to be deeply kind to each other in all the great or small things we share and perhaps it is in this most of all that we find together our living faith in action.

**Frances:** Not having Dom beside me at Mass has been one of the hardest things about his training. I did try joining in the Daily Office for a bit so we would be together but it is not for me. I prefer meditation and more informal praying and our lives are so full-on that to do both is too much if the house is to stay standing and the cats fed.

### What do you do to relax?

**Dominic:** In the good weather, I love sitting in our garden, which Frances constantly maintains and makes beautiful without my interference. Together, we love walking out in the hills when we get a chance, sharing lovely food, meeting up after work on Fridays to enjoy the pub and a nice meal, watching films and series of anything truly funny or gripping

on TV or at the cinema and, of course, supporting the mighty West Ham.

**Frances:** West Ham. Hmmm. Not interfering in the garden. Humph! Aside from the above I love meeting up with friends, reading, oil painting, serving on the till in Harborne Oxfam and gazing lovingly at the architecture in Birmingham!



## Dirk and Marleen Hermans

Dirk is Deacon at St Edward's Parish in Selly Park, Birmingham.

### What led you to become a Deacon?

Simply put: I was led. Over the years, I was strangely drawn to articles on the diaconate, or diaconate workshops at conferences that I attended. But the notion of being a deacon was always promptly rejected by myself.

But there is no escaping from God's plan, and just when he bathed me in His Grace, at a key moment in my life, He made sure the question was put to me.

How could I say no? At first unsure how I could be His servant, the Formation Programme has helped to give confidence that the Lord will always provide what I need to do His work.

### What will your new role encompass?

As long as I'm in full-time work, not much can be added to my current commitments, but it is clear my contribution to the liturgy will change and I hope to be able, after the Covid-19 pandemic, to re-engage with some pastoral works, e.g. bringing Christ to those in nursing homes.

I will need to be conscious that, even more than at present, I will be looked upon (and judged) as a Christian in my secular workplace.

## John and Jane Garvey

John is serving as Deacon at St Nicholas, Boldmere in Sutton Coldfield.

### What led you to become a Deacon?

I would like to say that this was a slow burn over a long period but this was something that was suggested to me by my Parish Priest, Father Vann. It was a complete shock but once I had got over the 'I am not worthy' excuse (which one of us is, after all?) I felt that perhaps this was something I may be able to do. I do feel that at times, I am being dragged, kicking and screaming through formation but in doing so, I am becoming more attentive to His calling and more faithful in trusting to his designs.

### What will your new role encompass?

I am currently teaching in a secular school but have contacts with the Diocesan Prison Chaplaincy team which may be an option in the future. That being said, working with vulnerable students at this time of uncertainty is certainly God's work. I hope to be involved in parish life and my experience with young people will, I am sure, be utilised.

### Jane, when your husband said he wanted to become a Deacon how did you feel?

At first I was a bit taken aback but after our Parish Priest had mooted it we went home and discussed it at length. We have been married 30 years, together



I'm also planning to help the local hospital chaplain and the university chaplaincy team when I can. I stand ready for whatever else His Grace the Archbishop may want me to consider doing.

### Marleen, when your husband said he wanted to become a Deacon how did you feel?

Excited but also confused. This was not part of our plan. Why did God call him on this new path? I have now come to understand that our Lord is a Lord of surprises and that we are safe in His hands. We are ready for this next step in our lives. We are on this journey together.

### How do you nurture your faith as a couple?

We now have a well-established prayer routine, with Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and a Rosary said daily as a couple. Regular Mass attendance is a given.

Pre-pandemic, we used to attend a few

Catholic Charismatic Renewal events each year, to refresh our spiritual batteries, and have discovered virtual retreats during this pandemic.

We have a growing library of religious books that we are slowly working our way through and share what we've discerned with each other. We both hope to continue to find inspiration and comfort in reading the Word of God.

### What do you do to relax?

Spending time with our four children and their families, including playing about with the five grandchildren and doing some DIY around the house, plenty of projects there until well after retirement!

We like a good read, particularly anything historical, a bit of television and a Sudoku puzzle a day to keep the mind sharp.

for 33. We have both had challenging jobs, me originally as a Paediatric Oncology Nurse, John as a police officer, now both teachers, and we have both seen the stark reality of life for some people and having four children, a long marriage with ups and downs, means John has a realistic view of what life can hold for some people and offer his support. He is a wonderful father, son and husband and I know that he will give his time willingly to support those around him.

### How do you nurture your faith as a couple?

We have always had a strong faith but with a young family it was perhaps a little less structured than it is now. It is easy to lose a little focus when life is full of the beautiful chaos that parenthood brings but we have been blessed with the four year formation process which has positively impacted the whole family. Religion is a regular subject for discussion (and debate) in our house. We both passionately believe in faith in action and that does at times, result in some frustration in how our society conducts itself.

### What do you do to relax?

We run a large youth group (over 200 children) together with some close friends. Contrary to how it sounds, this is a great source of relaxation. We love spending time with our four children and also, with our four dogs and two cats. Beautiful chaos is never far away.





## A Parable for our time

Continuing the series where *The Sower* highlights how the parables of Jesus are strongly relevant in modern-day life, **Brother Andrew Ferris, SCJ**, highlights the enduring resonance of the Parable of the Good Shepherd.

# Congregation seeks to bring God's love into the lives of all – just as Good Shepherd did

**T**HE Parable of the Good Shepherd tells how a shepherd should be prepared to leave his flock of 99 sheep in open country to go in search of one sheep that is lost and needs rescuing.

Jesus describes the celebrations that would follow after the stray is discovered and says: "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (*Luke 15: 4-7*)

As a member of the Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers of Betharram (SCJ), living since 2015 in their religious community at the Holy Name of Jesus church in Great Barr, Birmingham, I believe the parable has a profound meaning.

Just as the Good Shepherd sought out the one in need, members of our religious congregation strive to bring God's love into the lives of all people – even those on the margins - that they meet.

St Michael Garicoits, the Founder of the Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers, desired his Religious Community would have the Patronage of the Sacred Heart, the Heart of Jesus.

He often spoke about the need

to not only speak about the love of God in Jesus, but to be another sacred heart, in other words to actively both bring and share God's love into the lives of each person we meet.

Each of the Sacred Heart Communities forms part of a parish, which is of great importance to me and a real blessing, to help and support the parish community in so many ways.

I also work as one of the Chaplains at John Henry Newman Catholic College, Chelmsley Wood.

It is a great privilege to witness the love, mercy and compassion of the Lord Jesus within the daily life of the school. I have recognised the presence of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

In times of difficulty, Jesus the Shepherd will leave the 99 sheep, coming in search of you and me. This is how much we are loved by God in the person and presence of his Son, Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

The parable's modern relevance is to show us how we are the recipients of acts of kindness, mercy and compassion, allowing us to recognise that we are loved and cherished by God.



**“** *The parable's modern relevance is to show us how we are the recipients of acts of kindness, mercy and compassion, allowing us to recognise that we are loved and cherished by God.* **”**

Brother Andrew Ferris

Through these acts we know that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, continually comes in search of us. Then we are called by him to share this love with others.

I have been privileged to take part in the Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes – and it was there many years ago that I had a very personal experience of the parable.

While quietly sitting in the

Grotto one night (until the early hours) I gently heard and felt the voice of the Lord saying: "I have some definite purpose for you Andrew, will you follow the voice of the shepherd?" It was at this moment I recognised the call to Religious Life. I now have the privilege of being the Vocation Guide for the Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers English Vicariate.



Monsignor Daniel McHugh celebrating Mass and recording his Reflection for the Burning Bush Vlog.

**A** TEAM of YouTubers inspired by the miracle of the Burning Bush is producing a weekly Vlog as a resource for worship at home.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh, Diocesan Co-ordinator of Ethnic Chaplaincies, Eparchies and Missions, came up with the idea of an online offering relating to the Sunday Scripture reading after the Covid-19 pandemic took hold.

Members of the Burning Bush team get together on Zoom to fine-tune the contents of the Vlog which includes a video of Mgr Daniel's Homily, a time before the Blessed Sacrament, music, pictures and scripture.

"The initiative is so-called because in the Book of Exodus we are told Moses came into the presence of God at the extraordinary miracle of the Burning Bush," he said.

"The Vlog is a resource for Chaplaincies and those on Facebook, for friends and contacts all of whom can have a 10-minute period each Sunday – or another day if they wish – to pause, reflect, pray and decide on personal action."

The Burning Bush team includes Professor Damien Walmsley, a keen amateur photographer, Dr Ian Morgan, a keen choir member, and Con McHugh, Mgr Daniel's cousin who is expert in the use of technology.

Con edits the different elements – including the Homily produced on Mgr Daniel's dining table using an iPhone – and uploads to YouTube each Friday morning.

The Ethnic Chaplaincies Co-ordinator has been using digital technology ever since he was appointed to his role.

He uses email to circulate his weekly newsletter, posts regular Reflections on the diocesan website and livestreams Masses from his home onto his Facebook page.



## Burning Bush team blaze a trail with YouTube resource for worship

He is keen to use the internet to ensure the Ethnic Chaplaincies have an enhanced place on the diocesan website.

A new complementary website has also been created entitled "Our Lady of Good Counsel Ethnic Chaplaincies" so that stories of the work of the ethnic communities can be disseminated.

Meanwhile the Monsignor planned an online celebration marking One World Week from 18 to 25 October, which featured an online Intercultural Celebration, replacing the

Intercultural Mass. This was broadcast via the diocesan website.

"The internet has contributed so much to keeping the Church community together in faith and prayer during the pandemic," he said. "It will continue to play an important part in our liturgical celebrations, education, catechesis and communications"

Mgr Daniel also celebrated and livestreamed from his home in Solihull the opening Mass of the Annual Novena to the Sacred Heart at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Maryvale, an event which he inaugurated in 1981.

■ Meanwhile, a regular YouTube broadcast set up by Fr Paul Lester of St Mary on the Hill church, Wednesbury, came into its own during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fr Paul started the channel called In Montem Sanctum (On Holy Mountain) in January with the aim of sharing prayer, hope and encouragement.

"I now realise what a blessing it was that I set up the channel, because since the Covid lockdown so many people have expressed their appreciation at this kind of sharing," he said.

"Especially in these times we need to know that whatever is happening around us, our faith is the foundation and the security that only God can give."



**BURNING BUSH TEAM:** Pictured with Mgr Daniel McHugh are, left to right, Professor Damien Walmsley, Dr Ian Morgan, and Con McHugh.





# Sending out an SOS worldwide

**L**IVE streaming has proved an international success for one parish – and earned it a mention in the Catholic news weekly *The Tablet*.

As well as daily transmissions of Mass at the Sacred Heart church in Henley-on-Thames there are devotions at 5.05pm which are called “SOS-505”, supporting people during the Covid pandemic.

Sacred Heart’s virtual congregation for Masses is around 400 with participants including

many faithful in South Africa and the USA.

The live streaming began in March as it became clear the church would be closed for an extended period.

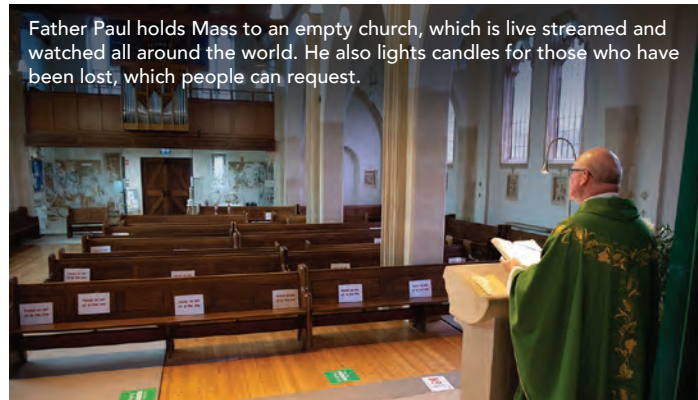
A candle is lit for those who have lost loved ones, often victims of the pandemic.

“This is how word of the live streamed Masses has spread,” said Father Paul Fitzpatrick, whose inspiring homilies and reassuring manner during the live streamings have been



Father Paul Fitzpatrick at Sacred Heart Church, Henley-on-Thames, with supermarket gift cards that have been bought with money raised through a hardship fund.

Father Paul holds Mass to an empty church, which is live streamed and watched all around the world. He also lights candles for those who have been lost, which people can request.



widely acclaimed. “I have had requests from across the country and across the world as our parishioners share the link with family and friends elsewhere.”

*The Tablet* praised the virtual worship as “good, clear live streaming” in a section highlighting resources for Catholics during the crisis.

The Sacred Heart works with a company called MCN who have installed the necessary filming equipment and software.

In another Covid-linked initiative the parish has expanded its support for those in need.

Whereas previously parishioners would leave

donations of non-perishable food and toiletries for the local foodbank, a hardship fund has been set up to allow them to give money remotely for a range of charities in the area.

Donations have exceeded £4,000 of which £1,500 has gone to the foodbank with the rest being converted to Tesco vouchers for local charity NOMAD, the homeless and recipients of free school meals at the local primary school.

All donations are given under the parish’s cashless arrangements, many by standing order with the additional option of giving under Gift Aid.

## Continuing to deliver campaign throughout 2021

ORGANISERS of The God Who Speaks campaign are continuing to deliver their programme across England and Wales in order to deepen Catholic Scripture engagement in all 22 dioceses.

Despite lockdowns and the restrictions placed on society by Coronavirus, a number of key initiatives have grown to fruition to maintain awareness and encourage participation.

They include the development of a new website, which can be found at [godwhospeaks.uk](http://godwhospeaks.uk), and is the national go-to bible portal for the Catholic Church.

New sections include Our Word at Home, resources for use during the pandemic and a rebranded education section for primary and secondary schools.

There is also a Our Dioceses section showcasing two dioceses per month and their God Who Speaks activities.

In addition, artist Peter Codling has completed his artwork commission “Little Bits of God” – a multi-panelled polyptych in Venetian mosaics telling the story of the

Bible through the life of Jesus, Mary, the Trinity, St Jerome and other saints.

The showing of this artwork around the dioceses has now been re-scheduled as part of the ongoing Scripture Tour programme for 2021. The aim is to offer at least 10 tour events and to find new opportunities to create other bespoke God who Speaks events in schools, cathedrals and in cities as well as collaborating with ecumenical partnerships.

Within the Archdiocese of Birmingham, many plans are also being looked at for potential events throughout 2021 – with a focus on Mark’s Gospel. To help with this, new material has been commissioned for schools and parishes ready for Advent.

The diocesan God Who Speaks Planning Committee is also looking into the feasibility of a conference at Newman University, potentially in response to Pope Francis’ recent Apostolic Letter *Scripturae Sacrae Affectus/Devotion to Sacred Scripture*. This celebrates the work and influence of the year’s patron, St Jerome, and reflects on the need for good translations and

interpretations of the Scriptures.

David McLoughlin, Chair of the Committee and Emeritus Fellow of Christian Theology at Newman University, explained why the campaign was so relevant during the current situation.

“The pandemic offers us an opportunity to go further in our reading of the Word of God, to find guidance in a time of suffering and distress,” he said.

“New situations always provoke us to re-read the texts in fresh ways and see things we had previously missed. Our global pandemic is one such situation, and generous pondering of the Biblical texts now will bear fruit in the years ahead and among the challenges that are yet to come.”

For the latest details visit [www.godwhospeaks.uk](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk) – with local events also featuring on [www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk)

THE  
GOD  
WHO  
SPEAKS



# Third annual talks will focus on the 'new normal'

Father Jeremy Howard helping to set up an after school club in the community room at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Hednesford, which has recently received funding for renovations thanks to the work of the Development Team.



**D**ISCUSSIONS to share best practice on adapting church life, buildings and communities for "the new normal" will be even more significant because of Covid.

The pandemic's unprecedented impact on church attendances and finance, as well as the questions it asks of a church's properties, will form the agenda of the third, day-long 'Fit for Function' event, taking place in Kidderminster on 22 April, 2021.

Organised jointly with the Church of England, this ecumenical event will provide an opportunity to join the discussion for anyone interested in their parish's future,

how their buildings are used and how we fund the delivery of community projects.

Speakers from church bodies and funders like The National Lottery will address the questions "How do we adapt to change?" "What is the new normal?" and "How can the digital church complement church buildings and how do they work alongside each other?"

Archdiocese Head of Development and Fundraising, Steve Baylis, said the event would reflect on the response to Covid, share best practice and learnings, and debate the way forward.

He said: "Since March we have done lots of

work around supporting income generation and embedding digital-giving at parish level, but there is more to be done.

"I think the 2021 event will be the most important we have done so far, given Covid's unprecedented impact on the church, attendances, finances and buildings."

Details of the event, and how to register, will be circulated widely via the Archdiocese website and also via a targeted mailing campaign.

Steve added: "It will help us answer the question of how we maintain the Church at the heart of communities in such changing and challenging times."

## Assurances for whistleblowers

**THOSE** who wish to raise concerns about alleged fraud, wrongdoing or misconduct within their parish are being reminded of the Archdiocese's Whistleblowing Policy.

Since last summer, the Archdiocese has been working with the independent charity, Protect, to provide an additional safety valve to support all whistleblowers, whether they be employees, volunteers or postholders.

This reinforces the legislation that has been in place since 1998 – called the Public Interest Disclosure Act – through which individuals are afforded protection if they flag up alleged infringements in areas such as fraud, safeguarding issues, health and safety risks, damage to the environment, miscarriages of justice or criminal offences.

People are encouraged to raise their concerns in writing, indicating the



reasons for them and setting out the background and history of the issue.

All matters are treated confidentially and measures taken to protect the individual from harassment, victimisation or bullying.

In the first instance an individual should bring the matter to the attention of Human Resources and Communications Director Gerry Dryden. He can be contacted via email at [Gerry.dryden@rc-birmingham.org](mailto:Gerry.dryden@rc-birmingham.org)

In his absence, or if the issues relate to him, contact Chief Operating Officer David Brooks at [David.brooks@rc-birmingham.org](mailto:David.brooks@rc-birmingham.org)

## Remembering all genocide victims

**PARISHES** across the Archdiocese are being invited to take time to remember and reflect on the great losses and pain many people suffered as the result of some of the world's worst atrocities.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), which takes place on 27 January, is a chance for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The theme for HMD 2021 is 'Be the light in the darkness'. It encourages everyone to reflect on the depths humanity can sink to, but also the ways individuals and communities resisted that darkness to 'be the light' before, during and after genocide.

More details about HMD along with resources for all schools can be found at [www.hmd.org.uk](http://www.hmd.org.uk)





# Sacrament of the Sick provides great solace on **journey of faith**

**M**ICHAEL Doyle has vivid experience of how administering the Sacrament of the Sick can provide the strength, peace and courage to overcome difficulties associated with a serious illness.

In 1999 his son was involved in a car collision and taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, with a severe head injury.

Due to the grave nature of the injury, Michael asked the hospital's Catholic Chaplain to administer the Sacrament of the Sick – which provided great solace to everyone gathered around the bedside.

*Fortunately, his son went on to make a miraculous recovery, for which Michael continually gives praise to the Lord.*

The experience encouraged Michael – who is retired, and lives in Walsall – to write an article on the subject for *The Faith Companion*, a two-monthly magazine aimed at accompanying Catholic parishioners on their faith journey.

Entitled 'The Wisdom of Holy Mother Church: The Sacrament of the Sick', its publication earlier this year was also a timely reminder that even in a world affected by Covid-19, Catholics can feel a great deal of hope and comfort in their faith whatever life throws up.

Michael said: "The Sacrament of the Sick gives strength, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of a serious illness.

"This assistance from the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit brings healing to the soul of the sick person and also to their body, if it is God's will. My son did make a miraculous recovery, which I shall continually thank the Lord



*“How beautiful is our Catholic Faith. It provides a solution for our anxieties, calms our minds and fills our hearts with hope.”*

St Josemaría Escrivá

for showing us His Mercy.”

During his son's spell in hospital, Michael explains in his article that he turned to St Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Albás, who founded Opus Dei and wrote *The Way*, a book which aims to encourage people to love God and live by God.

He said: "I asked St Josemaría Escrivá to intervene on my behalf to ask for the human strength to accept 'The Will of the Lord'."

In the article he also quoted from the Saint's book, stating:

"How beautiful is our Catholic Faith. It provides a solution for our anxieties, calms our minds and fills our hearts with hope."

Michael added: "These words I believe, give everyone assurance on our life's journey of Faith."

The Sacrament of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with blessed oil and saying, only once:

*"Through this anointing may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy*

*Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."*


Michael explains: "A particular gift of the Holy Spirit and a major grace of this sacrament is the strengthening, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties of serious illness or the frailty of old age."

He also says that in sharing his spiritual story with others, Michael now understands the Wisdom of Jesus in instituting the Sacrament of the Sick to help us all on our Journey of Faith.

He added: "One really needs to recall the faith of St Peter, who walked on water believing in the Lord, when he started to sink. Sometimes we think the Lord has forgotten us, but He has not.

"He is still with us even in our darkest hour helping us in ways we do not comprehend."





Team volunteers Felicity Hawley, 19, and Becky Palser, 20, are filmed at Alton Castle for a TikTok promotional video by fellow team member Lucas Weaver, 19. It was one of the things that helped them receive recognition with a Million Minutes award.

# A 'million thanks' for volunteer team providing wellbeing and faith support

ONLINE community initiatives by selfless Kenelm Youth Trust (KYT) volunteers during the first Covid-19 lockdown are set to continue thanks to a special award.

Eight members of the Trust's Mission Team were recognised by the Catholic national youth charity Million Minutes for their efforts in supporting young people's wellbeing and life of faith.

The Pier Giorgio Frassati Award, which comes with a grant, commended the way the "quaran-team" used social media platforms to proclaim the joy of the Gospel.

Volunteering to remain in a "bubble" at Alton Castle when the first lockdown took hold, the group of eight ran online sessions and created vital resources for parishes and schools.

"The awardees bravely stayed on at the Youth Trust in the midst of the gap year when the lockdown happened," said Erin Doughty, Soli Programme Director.

"They could have gone home to their family but they responded generously to the invitation to stay, so that they could continue their mission."

The Mission Team members created videos for a YouTube series on How to Pray, introduced livestreamed Wednesday

*"Lockdown was such an important and valuable opportunity to reach young people with an experience of faith virtually. I tried to be a source of energy and joy not only for the people watching but also for the team."*

Becky Palser

worship for primary school children and showcased a vibrant Youth Mass.

Going in front of camera they praised the Lord, played instruments, and sang for segments which were transmitted across YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Their dance sequences were showcased on TikTok.

One of the volunteers, Becky Palser, 20, who is in her third year with the Mission Team and is studying theology at Maryvale Institute, said: "Lockdown was such an important and

valuable opportunity to reach young people with an experience of faith virtually.

"I tried to be a source of energy and joy not only for the people watching but also for the team."

Felicity Hawley, 19, who is in her second year at Alton Castle Retreat Centre and is an education studies undergraduate at Staffordshire University, said: "I think our online worship recordings were important as they brought happiness and hope in difficult times. I helped by making PowerPoints so the young people could follow what we were singing"

All eight recipients of the award have the opportunity to apply for up to £300 to progress social action projects in their area, allowing them to continue into 2021 with their inspirational youth support.

KYT is planning new ways to support parish youth ministry next year including online training and virtual events.

Online offerings will include Youth Alpha, a monthly online Youth Mass and a virtual youth group while a comprehensive Catholic mental health resource for schools, called Quo Vadis, has been developed, based around 12 classroom sessions and a mentoring programme. For more details visit: [www.kenelm youth trust.org.uk](http://www.kenelm youth trust.org.uk)





## Pandemic has impact on funds

FOR many parishes, especially those with high cash giving, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on income.

Some costs have been reduced as buildings have been used less and some salaries were mitigated by the Furlough Scheme.

But cleaning materials and PPE for reopening of churches have cost more. Priests also missed out on Easter offerings.

In many cases general costs reduced since offices were temporarily unusable and salary costs were reduced by furloughing.

## With God's help diocese will grow

**T**HERE is no doubt that a highlight of 2019 was the canonisation of St

John Henry Newman in October. He spent much of his life in the Archdiocese and at this difficult time for us all we ask for his prayers as we live through the devastating effects of the global pandemic.

I am grateful to the many people who have given themselves in service to all aspects of our work as we proclaim the good news to those whose lives we touch. We continue to strive to ensure that our parish and school

By **ARCHBISHOP**

**BERNARD LONGLEY**

communities are fully supported as they carry out our shared Mission. One area that was the focus of much of our work in 2019 was safeguarding. The Archdiocese has committed additional resources to this area and fundamentally changed its practices and processes.

As I look forward I am very aware that the pandemic leaves us with many challenges. However I have every confidence that with prayer and God's help

we will continue to grow and become a diocese that is ever more faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of intentional disciples in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and others, where many more lay people are engaged in collaborative ministry

Whilst the 2019 Report and Accounts state our financial results, they also are an opportunity to reflect on all the work that so many do to further our Mission. I am grateful to all who have contributed in so many ways.

The objectives of the Archdiocese may be summarised as follows:

### We provide:



Maintenance and support of clergy during their active service and in retirement.



Relief of the poor and those in need.



Generally, for any such charitable purpose or purposes as in the opinion of the Archbishop may be conducive to the advancement or maintenance of the Roman Catholic Religion in the Archdiocese.

### We support:



The provision of religious services.



Maintenance and upkeep of churches, schools, presbyteries and parish buildings.



Education and youth services for children attending Diocesan schools, and young members of the Church.



Education and training for clergy and those wishing to be ordained.

THERE are many people across the Archdiocese who undertake work to benefit the public at large and the communities served by the parishes.

### These include:

- Evangelisation and Catechesis.
- Outreach work with disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society.
- Provision of support to the elderly, particularly at parish level by providing essential community gathering places, organised activities, support and advice.
- Assisting with mental health and other health issues through our hospital and prison chaplains.

- Working with those struggling financially to supply basic needs for their families such as clothing and food, by providing support through the activities of organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul and food and clothing banks.
- Family and Marriage guidance, and
- Family support.

**These objectives are achieved primarily through the parishes and schools working together with the many Catholic societies and organisations based in the Archdiocese.**



It has been estimated that volunteers contributed £10m worth of time to the Archdiocese in 2019, which does not feature in the financial statements.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### Total Income and Expenditure

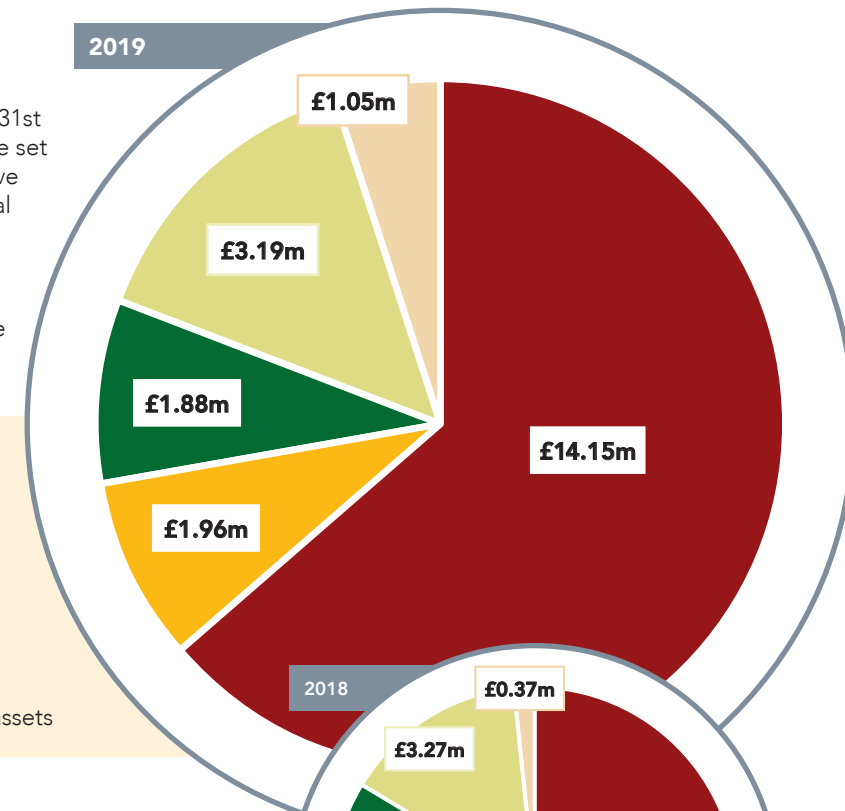
(including restricted funds)

THESE summarised financial results for the year ended 31st December 2019 have been extracted from the complete set of annual financial statements on which the auditors have expressed an unqualified audit opinion. The full financial statements are available on the Diocesan website and on the Charity Commission website under our charity reference number 234216.

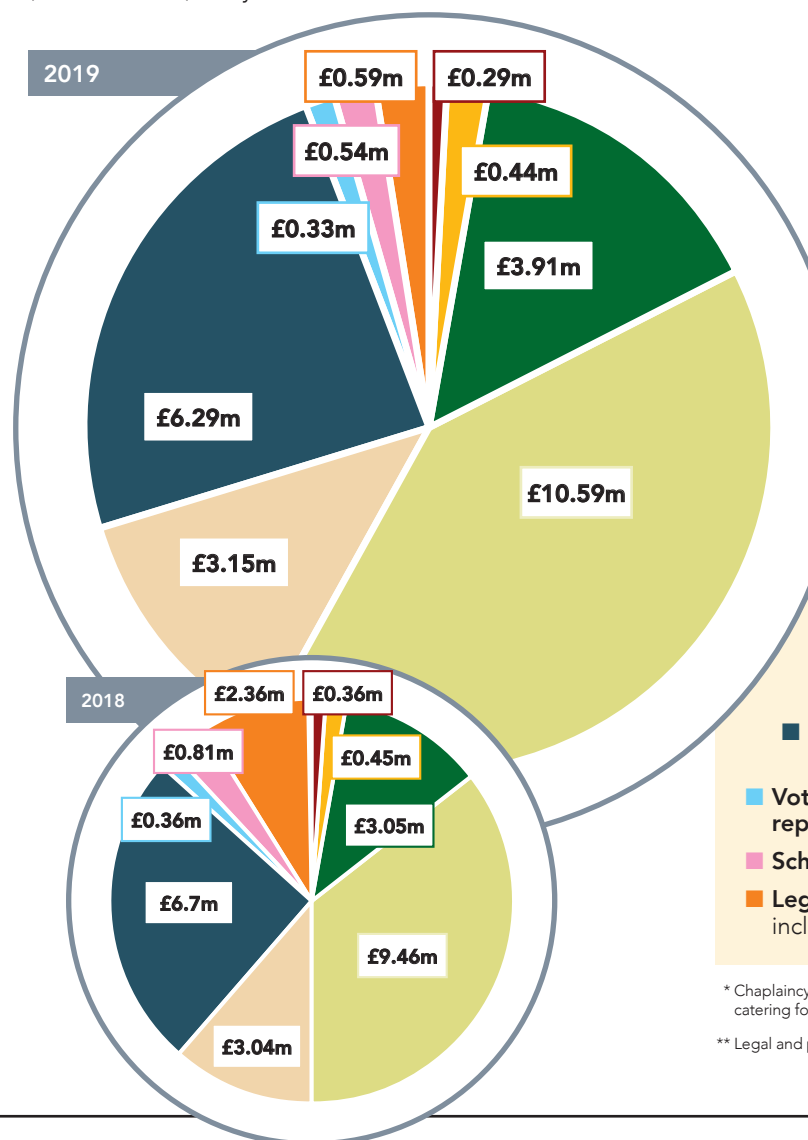
The Statement of Financial Activities of the Archdiocese for the year ended 31 December 2019 shows income of £22.23m (2018: £22.58m) analysed as follows:

- **Donations and legacies – £14.15m**  
offertories, donations, legacies, Gift Aid, etc.
- **Income from charitable activities – £1.96m**  
votive candles, repository and fees, etc.
- **Income from other activities – £1.88m**  
bazaars, etc.
- **Investment income, including interest – £3.19m**
- **Other income – £1.05m**  
including net gains on disposals of tangible fixed assets

2019



Expenditure amounted to £26.13m (2018: £26.59m) analysed as follows:



### EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS:

- Fundraising operations – £0.29m
- Investment management costs – £0.44m

### CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES:

- Liturgical, Chaplaincies, grants made etc. – £3.91m
- Curial, Parish and Chaplaincies\* etc. general and administrative costs – £10.59m
- Clergy costs – £3.15m

- Property – £6.29m  
including depreciation and impairment

- Votive candles, newspapers and repositories costs – £0.33m

- Schools costs – £0.54m

- Legal and professional fees – £0.59m  
including auditor's remuneration\*\*

\* Chaplaincy etc. general costs include Diocesan activities relating to university and other chaplaincies catering for specific communities and groups within the Archdiocese.

\*\* Legal and professional fees include costs relating to IICSA of £0.28m (2018: £2m).



# £1.1 million funding success supports 68 grants across 40 individual projects

**D**URING 2019, the Development Department secured funding valued at just over £1.1 million from 68 individual grant applications, supporting over 40 separate projects. Two of these projects were capital works valued at over £100k which resulted in new community facilities being developed at St Joseph's in Wolverhampton and the church of St John & St Martin in Balsall Heath.

In 2019, Development engaged with a number of churches to trial contactless giving schemes and embarked upon a number of planned giving initiatives, which will become increasingly important in the years ahead.

**Maryvale**

With effect from 31 July 2019 the work of the Maryvale Institute (charity number 1068634) has been absorbed into the Diocese.

The assets and liabilities of Maryvale Institute were transferred to the Diocese on that date.

Work is progressing on the integration of Maryvale's work into the Diocese with the creation of a sub-committee to oversee its activities on behalf of the Trustees. Dr. Birute Briuliute, PhD, STD, KU Leuven, FHEA was appointed as Dean in January 2020, with responsibility for developing and leading the academic programme and maintaining Maryvale's position as a centre of academic excellence. As you will know, Formation is



Father Michael Puljic points to the many new windows that have been installed at the Sacred Heart parish social centre in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

one of the four key themes underpinning the vision of the Diocese. Fidelity to the apostolic tradition leads to an emphasis on formation for the laity and for the clergy. Maryvale has an important role to play in supporting lay people to grow in faith in a parish setting.



Parish Centre Manager at St Joseph's, Wolverhampton, Angie Holder, in the newly refurbished parish centre.



The centre's old windows were rotten.

**The Diocesan annual pilgrimage to Lourdes was a wonderful success:**

- 709** pilgrims.
- 576** pilgrims travelled with the pilgrimage tour operator.
- 112** affiliated pilgrims who made their own travel arrangements.
- 21** sick pilgrims accommodated in hospital.
- 1,574** people visited the Lourdes page on the Diocesan website.

**UNRESTRICTED FUNDS – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

INCOMING RESOURCES	2019			2018		
	Parishes	Diocese*	Total unrestricted funds	Parishes	Diocese	Total unrestricted funds
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Donations and legacies	11.45	0.41	11.86	13.5	0.48	13.94
Income from charitable activities	0.96	1.00	1.96	0.9	0.69	1.62
Income from other activities	1.78	0.02	1.80	1.9	0.02	1.94
Investment income, including interest	2.49	0.57	3.06	2.5	0.65	3.12
Other income (including net gains on disposals of tangible fixed asse	0.88	0.18	1.05	0.4	0.00	0.37
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>17.56</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>19.74</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>20.98</b>
RESOURCES EXPENDED	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Cost of raising funds</b>						
Fund raising operations	0.23	0.01	0.25	0.31	0.00	0.32
investment management costs	0.43	0.01	0.44	0.43	0.01	0.45
<b>Expenditure on charitable activities</b>						
Liturgical, Chaplaincies, grants made etc.	1.72	1.95	3.66	1.87	0.90	2.76
Parish, Curial & Chaplaincy etc. general costs	6.97	3.55	10.52	6.24	3.02	9.26
Clergy	1.41	1.37	2.78	1.33	1.24	2.57
Property inc. depreciation costs	4.18	0.70	4.88	4.48	0.95	5.43
Votive candles, newspapers and repositories etc. costs	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.35	0.00	0.35
Schools costs	0.01	0.39	0.40	0.02	0.38	0.40
Legal & professional fees incl Auditors remuneration	0.00	0.59	0.59	0.00	2.35	2.35
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>15.28</b>	<b>8.57</b>	<b>23.84</b>	<b>15.04</b>	<b>8.86</b>	<b>23.90</b>
<b>INCOME &amp; EXPENDITURE SURPLUS/(LOSS) before gains and transfers</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>(6.39)</b>	<b>(4.10)</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>(7.02)</b>	<b>(2.92)</b>
Gains on stock market holdings and investment properties	5.4	2.3	7.7	1.65	(0.69)	0.96
Internal transfers (including levies)	(2.29)	2.49	0.2	(1.99)	2.44	0.45
<b>INCOME &amp; EXPENDITURE SURPLUS/(LOSS)</b>	<b>5.40</b>	<b>(1.60)</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>(5.27)</b>	<b>(1.51)</b>

\*Diocese - covers the wider diocese which includes Central Curia, Diocesan Educaion Services, Maryvale institute, Aston Hall and numerous other entities.

## Parish levy balances charity's income with vital support for clergy, bishops and communities

**A**CROSS the charity as a whole and after taking into account gains on our investments there was an overall surplus in 2019. However it is also the case that whilst parishes are in surplus, the central Diocese runs at a deficit. So it is reviewing what it spends to ensure it achieves best value for money in all the activities it supports. It has also undertaken a review of the levies that our parishes pay to support the work undertaken centrally. The table above shows the breakdown between income and expenditure between 2018 and 2019. Behind these numbers are a huge range of activities and support that are given by parishes and the diocese to the furtherance of our Mission to spread the Gospel.

**What is the parish levy?**

The parish levy (also known in Canon Law

as the diocesan tax) is a sum of money contributed by each parish to the diocese, in order to fund the wide range of services it provides for our parishes, our clergy (including our bishops) and the wider community and the church's work within the Archdiocese.

**Where does the parish levy go?**

The Diocesan Curia (the administration offices of the Archdiocese) supports the activities of clergy in our parishes, sick and retired clergy (alongside the Johnson Fund), Vocations via the Clergy Training Fund as well as providing financial support for activities relating to pastoral care such as youth formation, religious education – including the Diocesan Education Service and the Maryvale Institute, area catechists, marriage guidance and poor parishes.

Financial support is also given to Catholic national organisations together with chaplaincies and commissions within the Archdiocese such as prisons, hospitals, universities, ethnic and disability groups, ecumenism, interfaith, justice and peace, and overseas development.

The Archdiocese maintains the offices of the Vicar General, Safeguarding Team, Matrimonial Tribunal, Property, Fundraising, Finance, including Gift Aid, together with the Communications Team, Diocesan Archives and Historic Churches Committee.

In addition, it also supports the Bishops' houses together with the Liturgy Commission and the Art and Architecture Committee.

The Archdiocese works closely with, and supports, its associated charities: Father Hudson's Society and the Kenelm Youth Trust Ltd.





Evangelisation Field Worker Paul Northam holds Divine Renovation training at the home of Maureen O'Leary, right, with group participant Maria Northam.

## Programme brings Gospel to all ages around the world

**I**N 2019, Evangelisation focused on several key events which embraced people of all ages from the parishes at locations around the world. They included:

Sharing Hope in Crisis training introduced a caring approach to sharing our faith, particularly with those facing challenging situations.

Evangelisation collaboration in Midland Missioners, regular support for those involved in church mission and Fresh Expressions mission training.

The department's work continued to focus on Evangelisation training, Alpha training and courses, Divine Renovation training and Nightfever.

The first Diocesan Thanksgiving Mass for Marriage was held at the Cathedral in February 2019 and was attended by over 700 couples.



A Sharing Hope in a Crisis presentation.



Thanksgiving Mass for Marriage.

**240**

**maintained Catholic schools in the Archdiocese**

Diocesan Education Service 2019

**£7.6 million allocated for capital works in our schools from the grant assisted capital programme.**

- 79 different projects.
- 22 projects cost over **£100,000.**
- 2 were over **£200,000**

**237** schools operating under the charity's trust deed

**OF WHICH:**

**203** schools for children aged four-11.

**34** schools for those aged 11-16/19, operate under the charity's trust.

**3** operate under separate trust deeds.

**12** maintained schools converted to Academy Status.

**2** Multi-Academies merged and one new one was formed.

**114** Academy schools operate under 18 Multi-Academy trusts.

**T**HE whole purpose of our Diocesan Multi-Academy Strategy is to continue the Church's great mission in educating children as we strive to secure, protect and improve the quality of Catholic education across the Archdiocese for the foreseeable future.

Even in these difficult times with the challenges of Covid-19, the academy strategy is the major component of the Diocesan Education policy that is successfully developing.

At the time of writing, 146 schools are currently either in or about to join one of our multi-academy companies (MACs). This means that 68% of pupils in Diocesan schools will be educated in a school which is part of a MAC.

Current MACs are growing in size with the mergers of some MACs to create stronger ones. This year St Nicholas Owen and St Catherine of Siena MACs are

## Strategy develops coherent vision for Catholic education

coming together and last year the St Francis & St Clare MAC in Wolverhampton was formed from two smaller MACs.

The Diocese will also create our largest new MAC, Our Lady and All Saints Catholic MAC, bringing together 13 schools in Solihull, South Birmingham and Warwickshire. This work is enabling the development of a coherent vision for Catholic education for children aged 3-19. Key features of the MACs working together include greater opportunities for school leaders to collaborate together to improve the quality of education and to develop the distinctive Catholic mission of the schools.

The MACs are also providing new ways to both retain and prepare school leaders for the great task of educating our children now and into the future.

The leadership of our MACs is also developing through our network of Catholic Senior Executive Leaders (CSEL) and we are working partnership with Satis Education to recruit our future leaders.

### Vocations Office and Clergy Training Fund (CTF)

In the academic year 2019/20 there were three students at the Venerable English College in Valladolid, Spain, five students for the priesthood at St Mary's

College, Oscott, and five students at the Venerable English College, Rome (three of these had been ordained priests in July 2019 and were completing the final year of their STL). In this academic year there were also twelve students in formation for the permanent diaconate.

### Youth activities

All provision for young people was amalgamated under The Kenelm Youth Trust Limited (KYT) in 2016. KYT receives a significant amount of funding from the Archdiocese to maintain provision of the Diocesan youth services.



Martha from St James Primary School with her Year 8 prayer partner from St Thomas Aquinas school, Siyanda, making rosary beads together.



Oskar, 10, from St Dominic's, Rosie, 10, from Saint Anne's and Grace, 12, from Blessed William Howard school, updating the Mary's Meals totalizer at Blessed William Howard Catholic High School, Stafford.



A climbing wall activity at an Alton Castle residential weekend.





Weekly average Mass attendance was approximately  
**53,300**  
(2018: 55,700)

During the year there were:



**4,442**  
baptisms and  
receptions  
(2018: 4,971)

**504**  
marriages  
(2018: 705)



**3,233**  
funerals  
(2018: 3,440)

Parish offertories  
and other collections  
(excluding tax reclaims)  
decreased to  
**£7.7m**  
(2018: £7.8m)

The average offertory  
giving amount per head  
(including children)  
increased by  
**10p to £2.55**  
per week  
(2018: £2.45)

## What can you do?

AS we take to heart Archbishop Bernard's call for many more lay people to be engaged in collaborative ministry it is perhaps the words of Pope Leo XIII that could be the focus of our prayer – "What about you? What are you going to do?" How are you being called to play your part in Christ's Mission. Could you become a school governor? A MAC director? Or could you set up a standing order, or review your giving?



Reaching out... Elizabeth, left, and Niamh, right, are welcomed with croissants to the Church Ablaze event by Kenelm Youth Trust Volunteer Rebecca.

# Evangelisation, Formation, charity and worship at heart of local plans

**R**ELECTING on the work of the curial team during 2019 allows us a brief moment to remember a world before the impact of the coronavirus pandemic that has changed all of our lives in so many different ways.

During 2019 we made further progress in ensuring that in the vitally important areas of Safeguarding and Health & Safety we were developing and implementing improved systems and processes that would protect our parish communities and the most vulnerable within them.

There is further work to do in these areas and I would like to thank all those volunteers in our parishes who give their time so generously in so many ways but particularly to those

By **CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**  
**DAVID BROOKS**



who serve as Parish Safeguarding Representatives and Parish Health & Safety Coordinators.

Work on unfolding God's plan for our diocese continued. The Archbishop set out his Vision and has called for many more lay people to be engaged in collaborative ministry. The Diocesan Plan Steering Group has been working on how we can support our parishes in taking up this call to action and using the four themes (Evangelisation, Formation, Charity & Social Outreach and Worship & Sacramental Life) to develop local plans to help them grow as communities of faith.

In 2019 we also began to look at the activities that the curia undertakes on behalf of all parishes and the diocese, and the level of funding available to finance it.

This work has carried over into 2020 and once finalised should deliver a more sustainable outcome that balances more effectively curial activity and funding.

Of course it remains to be seen what the lasting impact of the pandemic will be on parish and curial finances and we will need to take this into account as we look forward and consider how we can best support the work of the diocese.

In thanking all the members of the curial office for their work during 2019 I would also like to remember our much-loved colleague Pat Flanagan who sadly passed away last year, may she rest in peace.



Charitable pupils... with their Mary's Meals money boxes are Olivia, left, and Daniel, right, of St Joseph's Primary, Uttroter, and Roxanne, second left, and Arthur, second right of St Mary's Primary, Leek.



Everyone was brought together in 2019 in warm rejoicing for the canonisation of Saint John Henry Newman. Pictured at the Ecumenical Vespers at St Chad's Cathedral are, left to right, Bishop of Lichfield Dr Michael Ipgrave, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham David McGough, Dean of St Philip's Cathedral Matt Thompson, Dean of St Chad's Cathedral Mgr Timothy Menezes, iconographer Noreen Thornhill, Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley, Bishop of Aston Anne Hollinghurst, Bishop of Coventry Dr Christopher Cocksworth and Bishop of Birmingham David Urquhart. At the front, is the icon of Saint John Henry designed by Noreen Thornhill. Photo courtesy of c.Mazur/cbcew.org.uk



Sunday mid-morning Mass at the Church of Immaculate Conception and St Dominic at Stone.

# Giving back to God funds the diocese Mission

**T**HE Birmingham Diocesan Trust (Archdiocese of Birmingham) receives a large proportion of its income from donations and legacies from its supporters who are generally parishioners or those who have close connections to the Church. Without this valuable support the Trust would not be able to carry out most of its mission.

The Church encourages us to be mindful of God's many blessings and of His provision for us. In so doing, our natural response is to want to give back, recognising that all good

things come from God. One way we can all do this is to remember the work of our parish in our will. This is a simple way to thank God for all His goodness to us during our lives and ensure that our faith will live on in future generations.

- Leaving a legacy to your parish is the logical continuation of a life-time of giving.
- It is good stewardship and a simple way to ensure your faith will live on in future generations.
- It is an affordable way to give. If all of us left a gift of just 1% of our estate, this would

make a big difference.

- You don't need to be rich to help in this way. Many Catholics have already done so, not just the better off.
- All gifts in wills are tax efficient, as no inheritance tax is paid on a gift to the Church.

So next time you make or update your will, please remember your local parish with a gift. It can be your gift of gratitude to God for all the blessings you have received.

Find out more on legacy giving at:  
[www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/legacy](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/legacy)

# We ARE the Church – how we can all help

**THERE is already so much valuable work done by so many people within our Church, a huge amount of selfless giving of time and resources from our people right throughout the Archdiocese. Do please consider how you might be able to serve the Lord by helping in your parish.**

Offertory giving is vital, as much of our work can only be done with the financial resources to support it. For many, the pandemic has affected their family finances, and we appreciate that many already give all that they are able.

If however you find that you are in a position to do so, perhaps you might be able to increase your regular giving – even 50p per week would make a significant difference, and

if you are not already doing so, please consider making your offerings via bank standing order.

This is easier to administer in parishes, removes the security risks of cash, reduces bank charges, and allows your priest to be more certain as to the income that can be expected.

Your parish will be able to provide you with bank details for you to set this up. If you are eligible to, please also Gift Aid your donations. This increases the value of your offertory by 25% with no extra cost to you.

You can find out more about standing orders, Gift Aid and online giving at:  
[www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/support-our-work](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/support-our-work)

**Thank you!**

## How useful did you find this report?

If you have any comment or feedback in regards to the financial report, please do contact Sue Simkiss at the Treasurer's Department.

email: [sue.simkiss@rc-birmingham.org](mailto:sue.simkiss@rc-birmingham.org)  
tel. 0121 230 6283

• For the full financial report, please visit [www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/annual-report](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/annual-report)





For editorial enquiries about *The Sower*, please contact our publisher on **01782 829850** or email **thesower@i-creation.co.uk** – the next issue is at Easter. *The Sower* is produced in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Communications Team.

# Supporting Diocese and parishes whenever help is needed in Mission

**MISSIONARIES OF FAITH:** Pictured in St Catherine of Siena Church in Birmingham are, left to right, Father Prabhakar Pamisetty from St George's in Worcester, Father Subba Rao Perumalla, from St John the Baptist in Tamworth, Father Srinu Bonthu from our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Birmingham and Father Jagadishmario Kurapati from St Catherine of Siena in Birmingham and Ss John and Martin in Balsall Heath.

**O**n most Sunday afternoons four Archdiocesan priests of Indian heritage gather together at St Catherine of Siena church in inner-city Birmingham to share a sense of community and deepen their faith (Covid regulations allowing, of course).

They have spiritual discussions, celebrate Mass, exchange ideas, chat about their respective churches across the Archdiocese and even cook together. The four devotees are members of the religious congregation of Missionaries of Faith and they are serving their vocation in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Fr Jagadishmario ("Mario") Kurapati, Fr Prabhakar Pamisetty, Fr Srinu Bonthu and Fr Subba Rao Perumalla all originally served as priests in St Peter's Province in India, where they were based in the city of Eluru, Andhra Pradesh.

It was there that they first pursued their calling as Missionaries of Faith, a religious family established by Mother Anna Maria Andreani.

She was a Carmelite nun in Italy, also known as Magdalene the Divine Martyr, who in 1982 set up a small sacerdotal community where an intense life in religious consecration aimed to help priests in crisis with a lifestyle of deep faith and fraternal reception.

Within 25 years her congregation had been

extended as far and wide as the Philippines, Samoa, Ecuador and India as priests went out to answer the need for mission in remote parishes.

The first of the four Fathers to arrive in England from the subcontinent was Fr Mario, responding in 2014 to a request for help by the Diocese and with permission from his order. On arrival he worked as an assistant in St Christopher's parish to Fr Dominic Chukka, who had acted as a link between the Diocese and the Missionaries of Faith superiors and who frequently attends the "community house" meetings at St Catherine's.

*"I am learning so many things about the English language and culture – everyone was so generous to me when I arrived in Birmingham it felt like my home town."*

Fr Subba Rao Perumalla

Fr Mario is now parish priest at St Catherine of Siena church and Ss John and Martin church in Birmingham.

"As Missionaries of Faith our charism is to help the Diocese and parishes whenever they need our help in Mission," he said.

"Alongside my priestly duties I teach and give sacraments in four schools and I am a school chaplain."

Fr Srinu, who arrived in England in 2017 and is priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Rednal, said: "We practise complete obedience to our order and we never say 'no' when we are asked to travel anywhere in the world to take up a ministry.

"My evangelisation includes work in schools and at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital."

Fr Prabhakar, assistant priest at St George's church in Worcester who arrived in England in 2018, said: "As well as my church duties I have also given sacraments to the housebound and I am helping with sacramental activities in the parishes."

Fr Subba Rao, assistant priest at St John the Baptist in Tamworth who arrived in England in 2019, said: "I am learning so many things about the English language and culture – everyone was so generous to me when I arrived in Birmingham it felt like my home town."