



Published online only

The JOURNAL

The newspaper of the Parish of St John the Baptist, Andover.

Including: St John Fisher, Whitchurch and
The Chapel of St Theresa of Lisieux, Farleigh

Issue
No 383
September
2026

Parish Barbecue

On Sunday 23rd of August, the Andover Catenian Circle held what has now become their annual parish barbecue. The weather was kind, with a clear sky and gentle breeze to make the day more comfortable than had been the case during the unusually hot weather the country had experienced for several weeks.

There was a good turn out of parishioners, and they were treated to delicious burgers and sausages served in fresh buns with side salads available for those who wanted to ease their conscience over so much protein!

With parishioners tending to be habitual attendees at one or other of the weekend Masses, the event was a happy occasion which allowed parishioners who don't regularly see each other to catch up with old friends and to make new ones.

The members of the Andover Catenian Association are to be congratulated on organising a successful and highly enjoyable parish event.

The Catenian Association was founded in Manchester in 1908, at a time when there was still active discrimination against Catholics in the United Kingdom. The association aimed to further the interests of Catholic lay men through the mutual support and friendship its members espoused, and to encourage Catholic professional and business men to associate for mutual self-help, and to develop social and family bonds. Groups were set up in local areas. The local groups are frequently known as Circles and the association's logo, a circle of chain links, reflected that idea of mutual bonds and help.

As British society evolved, the Catenian Association adapted. It is now open to all Catholic men to join the global community of members and their families, offering a genuine sense of belonging and connection. Catenian Circles can be found in places as diverse as Australia, Ireland, Malta, Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Zimbabwe and the Holy Land. In the United Kingdom there are 256 local Circles with nearly 6,000 members.

The Association welcomes applications from all Catholic men, and membership can be applied for through the local Circle or Group.



Farewell and God Bless

Teresa Lynam, who has been our Parish Administrator for some 22 years, has retired from that post. Teresa has been associated with the parish all her life—she was Baptised, made her First Holy Communion and was Confirmed in our parish church. She was married in the parish and her son was baptised in the parish.

She has been active in all manner of parish events, and many organisations within the parish have relied heavily on her support and assistance. She has tackled the duties of the Parish Administrator with cheerfulness and patience, helping families with preparations for so many events from baptisms to funerals.

Over the years she has helped four parish priests to settle and cope with the work of the parish. There is no doubt that she will be sorely missed—not least by those who compile the Parish Journal who owe her a debt of gratitude for correcting our clumsy typing and providing information on items needed for publication.

We wish her God speed and a happy, well earned, retirement.

Vandalism in Medjugorje

The Medjugorje Parish Office has condemned the acts of vandalism that damaged several of its places of prayer overnight and has invited the faithful to respond with “prayer, fasting, and forgiveness.”

Medjugorje is a popular religious Marian shrine some 140 kilometres west of Sarajevo in Bosnia. During the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s, Medjugorje became a



wartime sanctuary where daily prayers for peace persisted despite the surrounding violence.

Recently, just days ahead of a youth festival in the town, the local people woke to find statues desecrated and an altar set on fire.

A statue of Our Lady on what is known as Apparition Hill was splashed with black paint across the face and torso with the words “Devil in a skirt” scrawled on the statue’s pedestal. A stone slab near another statue had the word “Evil” written on it and an altar near the parish church of St James was set on fire.

The Medjugorje parish office said in a statement: “We received with great sadness the news of the act of vandalism that damaged the places of prayer in our parish.” It added that cleaning and repairs had begun immediately so the affected areas could once again be properly prepared for prayer, and thanked everyone assisting with the work, saying their efforts were helping the shrine to remain “a place of encounter with God, a place of peace.”

The Blessed Virgin Mary is honoured as Queen of Peace at the Shrine in Medjugorje, and the statement asked that rather than responding with anger, it urged Catholics to pray for those responsible. “We pray for the conversion of the hearts of those who committed this act,” it said, asking that the Lord may touch them with His grace and lead them on the path of goodness.

The parish also appealed for peace in every human heart. It encouraged the faithful “not to return evil for evil,” but to bear witness through our lives to love, forgiveness, and hope.

Police later confirmed through local media that a suspect had been arrested. Nothing is known about the suspect or about his motive for these sacrilegious acts.

The story of Medjugorje began in 1981, when six local children reported that Mary had appeared to them. The first appearance was reported on 24th June 1981, and the children, now adults, claim Our Lady continues to appear on a regular basis. It was reported that the Virgin Mary had said: “What I started in Fatima, I will complete in Medjugorje. My Heart will triumph.”

Over the years there has been considerable scepticism over the claims, but in September 2024, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the approval of Pope Francis, issued a *nihil obstat* regarding the spiritual experience connected with Medjugorje. The decision recognized the positive spiritual fruits associated with the shrine and permitted public devotion, without making a declaration on the supernatural character of the reported apparitions.

A Vocation and a Life of Service

Many in the parish will remember Fr Peter Codd who served this parish until his retirement in September 2010. In this article, which he wrote for the Diocesan Vocations Newsletter, he gives a truly interesting account of his journey from a mechanical engineering apprenticeship to ordination as a Catholic priest.

All Shapes and Sizes

They say that the camera never lies! My first glimpse of this photo (on the right) challenged my belief in this saying. I could have sworn that in past years we three were more or less the same height. I can only conclude that my fifty seven years of priestly ministry has taken its toll.

Possibly the effect of standing in the Jordan, spiritually speaking, to minister so many baptisms caused a certain degree of shrinkage, compared to my two younger brother priests (Canon Simon Thomson & Canon John Cooke), either side. Also, the photo was taken in the Sacristy of St Edmund's, Southampton, quite an old building; possibly the floor is somewhat uneven, even sunken in some places.

However, passing years bring certain advantages: you learn not to take yourself too seriously and enjoy recognising how amazing God's Creation is and just how wonderful we are, because God is making us to be so. Each and every person has the dignity of being called into being, to become an image of God, simply because God loves us, as his beloved children.

Learning to look beyond myself is a grace gained by the witness of others.

For example, while in Cameroon, on one occasion I was driving to a remote village along a narrow track. A vehicle was parked blocking the way. Despite long blasts of the horn, no driver appeared for several minutes. Finally, the young Cameroonian man sauntered into sight, smiling broadly! Exasperated, I yelled a torrent abuse in his direction. He looked puzzled. When I stopped, he said [in pidgin] "*How, you no de greet man whe you meet him?*" He was genuinely shocked. In their culture, I should have given the usual greeting, asked of his wellbeing and that of his family and allowed him to greet me likewise. Only then, should I have challenged his conduct in parking the vehicle so. He, then, should apologize, admitting he had made a mistake.

I offer this simply to emphasise the importance of truly appreciating the dignity of every person to whom we minister as priests, and to avoid developing a habit of rushing around with so much to do that self-importance blinds us to our true mission.

But I suppose, I have been invited to write this article in order to offer something of my own experience in the search for my vocation. There were challenges. I left secondary school, St Brendan's Grammar School in Bristol, aged sixteen, and took up an apprenticeship to mechanical engineering, served partly in the workshop and partly in the drawing office. My ambition was to become, eventually, a design engineer. Two Years National Service was still obligatory, although mine was deferred to allow completion of part-time study at the Technical College. I was twenty-one and had a year before I would have to do National Service, when a chance conversation with a priest in the local Franciscan Parish, deeply disturbed me. I had become an active member of the Parish, including attendance at daily early Mass, and a member of the Legion of Mary and of the Youth Club and Parish Tennis Club (though useless at tennis!). I did enjoy sport and I had absolutely no thought of becoming a priest. I enjoyed dancing, probably crippling a number of young ladies along the way. Vague ideas of marriage lay low in my priorities for the future. Then occurred this few minute's chance walk with Fr Harrold, OFM, wherein he asked if I'd ever thought of being a priest?

"Oh no," I said and added confidently! 'I can't become a priest.' He asked, 'why not?' and I began to list barriers: I gave up Latin in the lower fifth, without taking my G.C.S.E. in Latin, as back then, O-Level Latin was required to gain entry to a Seminary; my birth was illegitimate; I'm due for National Service; anyway, my widowed foster mother, with whom I lived had no means to support me in further education.

I added a couple more reasons, which I've forgotten. Fr Harrold responded to each; you've studied Latin and could easily get your G.C.S.E. at night school; the Canon Law, regarding illegitimacy, can be dispensed by a bishop; entry into seminary gains release from National Service, or could follow after National Service; family is not required to contribute to Seminary training, if circumstances don't allow; and so on.

At that point we reached the Church, towards which we had been heading. I was suddenly aware that there were really no absolute barriers to my becoming a priest. The idea began to invade my mind, growing day by day. I prayed about it; had one or two further conversations; mulled over the idea and found it more and more attractive. I applied to Clifton Diocese, but was advised to apply elsewhere because of my birth circumstances. As yet, I still had no Latin G.C.S.E. and the time for National Service arrived. I elected to join an Infantry Regiment, in preference to engineering, to gain space to reflect and try to listen to God in prayer.

The two years, one spent in Cyprus on active service, were a formative time, including opportunity to do a correspondence course in Latin. With an additional couple of terms in Night School after "demob", I gained the Latin qualification required. Even then, obtaining entry into Seminary proved difficult. Eventually, I was accepted by Portsmouth Diocese, with the help of priests, whom I'd met during National Service and, after a year in Campion House, was sent to Lisbon Seminary for six happy years, before being ordained priest at the age of thirty-four.

(Continued on the next page)



Caring for God's Creation

Tuesday 1st September was the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It opened a 'Season of Creation' which runs from 1st September to 4th October (the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi).

Pope Francis established this Day of Prayer and this season in order to encourage the Catholic community to pray for, protect and share our common home. The day is inspired by his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, which calls on "every person living on this planet" to care for our shared Earth.

For 2026, Pope Leo XIV has chosen the theme based on the text "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (*Is* 2:4). In the statement from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development making the announcement, the Dicastery states that the Holy Father's Message for the Day highlights the connection between armed conflict and environmental degradation. Such degradation, it underscored, constitutes both a serious violation of our duty to care for creation, as well as a long-term threat to the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Moreover, it said "the now widespread awareness of the impact of war on natural resources has not led to the creation of adequate institutions or to responsible decisions aimed at preventing conflicts and resolving disputes peacefully." Finally, the statement concluded that the title, the passage in which the Prophet Isaiah prophesies the transformation of weapons into agricultural tools, "is an explicit invitation to prioritize development and sustainability over violence and destruction."

Last August 2025, Pope Leo XIV approved for use the Decree for the *Missa pro custodia creationis* – 'Mass for the Care of Creation'. This new formulary of the Roman Missal is included in the *Masses pro variis necessitatibus vel ad diversa* ('for various needs and occasions') and has been approved by the Holy Father through the *Decretum de formulario et lectionibus adhibendis in Missa pro custodia creationis*. The decree of the Mass for the Care of Creation was published in Latin. The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has provided working translations for Bishops' Conferences to use and adapt for local settings where appropriate. The proposed translations are "intended simply as an aid to facilitate the work of translation, with a view to possible use on the next World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (1 September 2025)."

In every Mass, we bless God for the bread and wine we receive; they are both "fruit of the earth ... fruit of the vine ... and the work of human hands". And every Sunday and Feast Day, our proclamation of faith begins: "We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." God's gift of life, from the beginning, is completed or fulfilled by Christ's life, passion, death and resurrection.

The *Missa pro custodia creationis* begins like this: 'The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork' (Psalm 18:2). The Gospel speaks of 'the lilies of the field and the birds of the air' (Matthew 6:24-34) or else recounts Jesus calming the storm at sea (*Matthew* 8:23-27). With this Mass, the Church is offering liturgical, spiritual and communal support for the care we all need to exercise of nature, our common home. Such service is indeed a great act of faith, hope and charity. This Mass is a reason for joy. It increases our gratitude, strengthens our faith, and invites us to respond with care and love in an ever-growing sense of wonder, reverence, and responsibility. It calls us to be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us – not only in daily choices and public policies, but also in our prayer, our worship, and our way of living in the world. (*This article first appeared in the Diocesan Newsletter on 11th August 2026*)



(All Shapes and Sizes Continued from previous page)

At that time, 1969, it was usual for newly ordained to spend at least seven or eight years as 'curates' [assistant priests] under the supervision of a parish priest. That, again, was beneficial for me. Whilst in Basingstoke with Brian Scantlebury and Ron Hishon at first, and working with four or five other priests, I had a second "apprenticeship". There were some fine lessons to be learnt and numerous mistakes made, but so benevolently smoothed over by clergy and parishioners with whom I began my priestly ministry. Happy times to look back on.

Then, I volunteered for service as a 'fidei Donum' priest, [Fidei Donum is Latin for "the Gift of Faith". It is the title of a 1957 papal encyclical by Pope Pius XII that launched a movement allowing diocesan priests to serve temporarily in mission territories outside their home regions] to serve six years in Cameroon: again, an experience to treasure. Adapting to the culture back home was harder than the adapting required in going to Africa. However, most people were patient and made allowance for the 'bush man' lately returned from Africa and I survived.

My years in ministering in the Diocese as a parish priest and subsequent years of retirement have been so blessed, I can only be amazed and thank God and all who have ministered to me. I pray daily for candidates for priestly and diaconate and religious formation; and, also, for vocations for good Christian marriage. God bless you all. *Peter:*

(The 1983 revision of Canon Law, no longer gave illegitimate birth as an impediment to ordination.)



Frs. Ron Hishon, Peter Codd and Frank Isherwood RIP

Wisdom Centre

The popular 'Community and Creative Cafes' begin again on Friday 18th September. Whether you come for the lunch, craft or both, the cafes are a lovely way to connect with others and meet new people, or simply to have an afternoon to yourself. The craft session is guided and is a lovely calm way to end the week - tea, coffee and biscuits are included.

The Community Café: This friendly cafe aims to bring groups and individuals together for an informal lunch. The small requested donation of £6.75* covers your lunch choice, including soft drink, dessert, tea and coffee. At Wisdom's Café, we value including everyone, we have a disabled lift, a food allergy/ intolerance friendly menu and a warm welcome whether you are looking to meet new people, spend time with friends in a safe accessible space or sit and enjoy your lunch in a peaceful spot, perhaps in the garden, or at a designated 'quiet' table.

Times: 12.00 – 2pm

*Suggested donation £6.75. If you feel this is unaffordable, please give what you can. If you feel you can give a little more you will be supporting those of lower means.

The Creative Café 18th September: Decopatch photo frame: Mindfulness through painting | weaving | collage papercraft and upcycling. **To book this event email: reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk / Tel:01794830206 (leaving a message if we are unable to take the call).**

We will be making a decopatch photo frame. This craft session aims to bring people in the community together in a calming environment. Mindful creativity invites those who have never tried art before, and accomplished artists alike to 'dab' about with various materials and silence their inner critic by detaching from the idea of a 'perfect outcome.' No artistic ability is required. Each month there will be an organised activity. We will also experiment with repurposed materials. This is not a formal 'art class,' although an artist and creative facilitator will be on hand. The small requested donation includes tea/ coffee and biscuits/ cake.

Suggested Donation £5.75

Programme: 1.30-3.30pm with tea/ coffee and biscuits or cake



Medaille Trust Art Roadshow

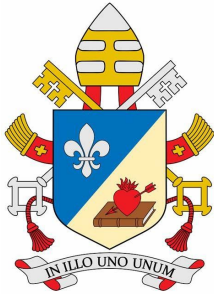
Caritas Portsmouth Diocese is delighted to be hosting the Medaille Trust at St John's Cathedral on **Saturday 12th September**, from 11am to 2pm, as part of their Arts Roadshow, which is dedicated to raising awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. The Medaille Trust is one of the UK's leading providers of support for survivors of modern slavery and they run safe houses and community projects across the country.



To mark 20 years of Medaille Trust, they have launched "20 Years, 20 Stops: The Medaille Trust Art Roadshow", a powerful touring exhibition celebrating creativity, resilience, and community connection. This unique roadshow will travel across multiple locations, showcasing artwork and storytelling created by survivors of modern slavery and exploitation. Through art, reflection, and shared experiences, the exhibition aims to raise awareness, inspire conversation and highlight the impact of survivor-led voices over the past two decades.

This event will see the venue transformed into an exhibition space, displaying artwork created by survivors of modern slavery. Alongside this exhibition, there will be an opportunity for discussion with the aim of creating a better understanding of the realities of exploitation in the modern world.

For more information please contact Jenny LeLean: jlelean@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



The Pope's Prayer Intentions for September

At the beginning of each year, the Holy Father sets out the intentions for which he asks us to pray. For July the intention is particularly appropriate for this time when so much of this country and the whole of Europe has endured excessive heat, wild fires and lack of rain. He asks that we pray for the care of water:

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

Reflection on the Pope's Prayer Intention

This month, the Pope asks us to pray for the just and sustainable management of water. Among the recurring symbols used by the biblical authors, water maintains a dynamic position. It serves as a symbol of chaos and destruction, as seen in the Great Flood, but also a symbol of purification and new life, in the waters of baptism.

I have been thinking about water's purifying role a lot since I started working as a chemist at a wastewater treatment plant in Maryland. Using various chemical analyses, I ensure our plant is effectively removing pollutants, nutrients, and harmful bacteria from the incoming sewage before it is discharged into a receiving stream.

This is a crucial process for maintaining public health that often goes unnoticed by society . . . except when we get odour complaints from our neighbours! I find great fulfilment in this role, since the water we discharge not only impacts the wildlife that depends on the river, but also cities downstream from us, who source their drinking water from the same river.

Before I started working here, I never thought about where the water came from when I turned on my faucet, or where it went after it had been used. Seeing the complex systems of screens, pumps, biological reactors and filters that all require 24/7 monitoring to function made me recognize the profound luxury it is having access to developed water infrastructure.

This month, let us pray with Pope Leo for those who work to keep water pure and flowing, and that all may have access to clean water. Let us be good stewards of the people and ecosystems downstream from us through a responsible use of our water, and let us pray that all might come to drink the living water of Christ—that which will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Edward McGillicuddy

Edward McGillicuddy is a chemist at a wastewater treatment plant in Westminster, Maryland who takes great inspiration from both St. Francis of Assisi's love of nature and animals and St. Joseph's humble dedication to his work and family.

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St John Chrysostom

St. John was named Chrysostom, “golden-mouthed” on account of his eloquence. He was born in about 344 AD, the son of Christian parents, in Antioch. Intending to follow a career as an advocate, John studied rhetoric under Libanus who was both a pagan and the acknowledged master of the art of oratory. At the age of twenty-three he was baptised and ordained as a ‘Reader’.

John decided to lead a life of solitude and he withdrew from the world, secluding himself in the mountains near his home town of Antioch. The life did not agree with him, but he persevered for over ten years before his deteriorating health forced him to return to Antioch where he was ordained a priest. His eloquent and earnest preaching secured for him a reputation as one of the finest orators of his day.



In 398, he was made Bishop of Constantinople and was soon recognised as one of the luminaries of the Church. He bestowed most of his revenues on hospitals, tried to reform the too often errant lives of the clergy and financed missionary expeditions to other lands including Scythia and Persia. However, he had enemies among the aristocracy and the religious hierarchy. Notable among his opponents was Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who despite being a bitter enemy of John for many years repented his enmity before he died.

John’s chief enemy, however, was the empress Eudoxia who was incensed by his zealous attacks on the vices of the rich and powerful. Eventually, despite John having the support of the Pope, she contrived to have him removed from office and exiled, first to Nicaea, then Tarsus and finally to the Black Sea town of Pityus. John was compelled to make this final journey on foot, and the heat of the journey proved too much for him. It is said that, like the apostle St. Paul, whom he so greatly admired, he found the greatest peace and happiness in his suffering. He became ill and died near Comana in Pontus on September 14th 407.

His body was eventually taken back to Constantinople and buried with honour some thirty years later.

St. John left numerous works including books of homilies and a detailed commentary on the Bible.

We welcome Mrs Kasey Longman as our new Parish Administrator, and we take this opportunity to remind all parishioners that there is a need to be registered so that the parish has an accurate and up-to-date list of all individuals and families in the parish.

You can register on line via the Parish Website where there is a link on the first page to Adult and Child registration forms. In addition, there are QR codes in the church porch and on the office window that take you straight to the form. You can, if necessary collect a hard copy from the Parish office.

It is vital that the parish know you and your contact details, a benefit of that is that you are able to receive the Newsletter and Journal by email.



Gerald Kingsley at ARK Hair Design

7B High Street Andover

Telephone 07472 801 978

No need for an appointment, just walk in

Seminarian Deacon Eric Lobsinger

Deacon Eric Lobsinger is a former Anglican Minister and convert to the Catholic Church. His path to formation for the Catholic priesthood has not been a simple one, and his story makes interesting reading.

Deacon Eric writes:

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom - Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home -

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene - one step enough for me.

'Lead Kindly Light' by St John Henry Newman

This opening verse of St John Henry Newman's well-known hymn speaks to me in and has given me reassurance countless times in my journey from serving as a vicar in the Church of England to my discernment for ordination to the priesthood in the Catholic Church.

Like Newman, I am grateful finally to be in the safe harbour of the Catholic Church, even if the journey has at times traversed through rough waters and challenges. I am now thankful to be 'at home' in the Diocese of Portsmouth, where, God willing, I will serve as a priest.

I served for twelve years in Anglican ministry - three years in the Episcopal Church in the United States and nine years in the Church of England. Most of these years were filled with a real joy in service to God and to the parishioners under my care. Increasingly, though, I found it harder to reconcile questions I had about the nature of the Church, particularly with regards to the Church's authority on matters of faith and morals, with my ministry within Anglicanism. Finally, I reached a point where I could not in good conscience continue to serve in ministry that placed myself and those under my spiritual care outside of the Catholic Church. In 2022, on the Memoria of St Therese, 1 October, I was received into the Catholic Church.

Becoming a Catholic presented a pivotal change for my family and me. My wife, our two toddlers at the time, and I had to move out of the vicarage that had been our home. Of course, I also had to give up my stipend from the Church of England. We moved from the suburbs of London to Oxford. For the first year after I had been received into the Church, I was a full-time stay-at-home dad, which was incredibly difficult work, but also profoundly rewarding! Because of my Anglican background, I had entered the Catholic Church through the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. About a year later, the Ordinariate sponsored me as a part-time seminarian at Allen Hall Seminary in London, where I undertook a course for former Anglican ministers.

I then spent three years commuting to Allen Hall from Oxford for my studies. The commute and the time away from my family - especially after our third child was born - took a toll on my family and me, however, the formation I experienced at Allen Hall was very good. In addition to learning from lecturers about specifically Catholic teachings that were not part of my Anglican formation, I met and became friends with priests and other seminarians, from whom I developed a deeper understanding of Catholic culture, ethos, and piety. It was in this environment where I developed a clearer understanding of diocesan priestly ministry, as well as the life of faith within the Diocese of Portsmouth. By my final year of seminary, I discerned that diocesan priestly ministry would be a better fit for me. I am very grateful that Bishop Philip Egan welcomed me and approved of my transfer into the Diocese of Portsmouth.

This past June, I was ordained to the diaconate at Westminster Cathedral with other Allen Hall seminarians. Being a deacon has opened up exciting opportunities to minister as well as many more ways to learn about parish life and ministry. During the summer, I am serving in Abingdon and in Oxford. During the autumn months, I will have the chance to serve at a parish in the United States before I return to serve in Abingdon again. God willing, my ordination to the priesthood will take place at Portsmouth Cathedral next summer.

The past several years have taught me that a life of discernment to follow God's call can lead to unexpected places, but one can always trust God to lead in the right direction. I look forward to what God has in store over the next few years. I am grateful for the ways in which He has always provided spiritually and materially for my family and me through all the changes we have experienced. I am also thankful to Bishop Philip Egan and the clergy and laity of the Diocese for welcoming me and encouraging me in this vocational discernment.

My advice to anyone thinking about a vocation to the priesthood, including former Anglican clergy: Trust God to lead you on through surprising twists and turns, all of which will form you to become the person you were created to be!



Youth Gathering in Cameroon

After six days of prayer, formation, fraternity, and testimonies, the sixth National Youth Days of Cameroon concluded last Sunday in the Diocese of Bertoua. The Apostolic Nuncio to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt, who presided over the closing Mass, delivered a message of hope to the youth, inviting them to discover Jesus, the hidden treasure.

The closing Mass gathered a large assembly of young people accompanied by bishops, priests, religious men and women, civil leaders and regional administrative authorities.

Speaking to the thousands of young people, Archbishop Joseph Atanga of the Archdiocese of Bertoua reflected on the extraordinary week's gathering. He emphasised that the assembly of young people in Bertoua was a true moment of encounter with Christ, spiritual renewal, catechetical formation, cultural sharing, sports, and fraternity. He urged young people to remain courageous, steadfast, dynamic, and to become, wherever they live, artisans of peace, joy, love, and reconciliation.

In his homily, Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt revisited the theme of the week-long gathering, taken from the 16th chapter of the Gospel of John: "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). This is also the theme for the World Youth Day 2027 to be held in Seoul, South Korea.

Archbishop José Avelino told young people to consider their faith as the most precious of treasures, a wealth that no difficulty should cause them to abandon. Illustrating with the example of young King Solomon, he encouraged Cameroonian youth to emulate the search for wisdom, which can only come from God. Many young people, he said, unfortunately seek only material success. The Apostolic Nuncio called upon young people to build on a future anchored in the Christian faith.

"The treasure of Jesus Christ is you, dear young person. You are precious in His eyes," declared the Apostolic Nuncio, before inviting each young person to entrust God with their academic, university, professional, family, or health-related difficulties. Just as the man who sells everything to acquire the field containing the treasure, he said, young people are called to stake everything on Christ, the only one capable of truly fulfilling their lives.

Bishop Mbarga of the Diocese of Ebolowa, the Vice-President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, on behalf of the bishops of the country, praised the quality of the youth-organised national week. He thanked the leadership of young people, as well as individuals and organisations who contributed generously to the success of the event.

The singing of the official World Youth Day theme song, followed by the apostolic blessing given by the Nuncio and other bishops, marked the final moment of this great national gathering.



The Priest who stayed in Gaza

In the heart of Gaza City — amid broken buildings, relentless bombardment, and the anguished cries of the displaced — a single cross still hovers in the sky. Beneath it stands the intrepid Church of the Holy Family. And inside is a priest who refuses to depart.

When war erupted after October 7, 2023, Fr. Gabriel Romanelli could have remained safely in Jerusalem. Instead, he returned immediately to Gaza, to his parish, to his people, to the frightened families who had nowhere else to go.

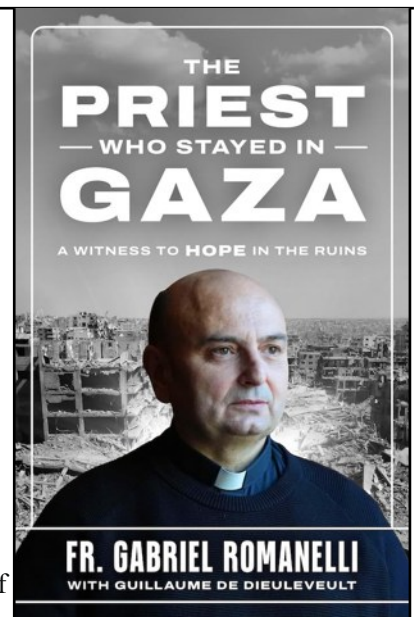
Today, hundreds crowd into the small church seeking shelter from missiles, hunger, and despair. Water is scarce. Food is rationed. The future is uncertain. And yet, each and every day, Fr. Gabriel greets them with a smile, a blessing, and a word of hope. The people call him *Abouna* — "our father."

In the pages of this book, Fr. Gabriel opens his heart and reveals what it means to shepherd souls in the devastated ruins of a modern conflict. He shares the hidden strength of the "little-great" light that emanates through the ruins, that secret source of joy that no bomb can destroy: union with the suffering Christ.

This is not a political account of a conflict. It is something far rarer. It is the testimony of a modern-day priest who chooses service over safety, presence over self-preservation.

For eighteen months — up until Holy Saturday 2025 — Pope Francis called Fr. Gabriel daily to thank him and encourage him in his mission. Pope Leo XIV continues that contact today. Even after being injured when an explosion struck his church, Fr. Gabriel remains in place with his people.

At a moment when the Middle East stands at a historic tipping point, this memoir offers something the headlines cannot give you — the human face of faith under fire. In a world overwhelmed by noise, anger, and division, Fr. Gabriel's voice will remind you what courage looks like, what spiritual fatherhood truly means, and why hope will always be stronger than destruction.



The Odyssey (2026)

This film is not a masterpiece but is pure cinema and very good. Directed by Christopher Nolan it's his take on Homer's epic. In the tale, Odysseus (Matt Damon), after the sack of Troy, wants only to return to his wife Penelope (Anne Hathaway) in mainland Greece. It takes him 10 years to do so. He and his ship's crew are bounced around from one (unfortunate) adventure to another, and his men keep getting killed. By the time he gets to home, he is - literally - the last man standing. And then he has to deal the bunch of his wife's suitors who have pretty well muscled in and taken over his palace. Big, big, fight. Once again, he's last man standing.



Whatever else, this is a film that the gods of Capitalism have already smiled upon. Costing \$250 Million to make, to this point it has taken just over \$1 Billion (that's cost and 3 times over). Cinema performances are sold out, and people decidedly want to see it. As a film it's obvious it works. However, it just does not all click into place as smoothly as *Oppenheimer* certainly did. The reason is quite straightforward. "Oppy" was a bio-pic to its heart and soul. The focus was on the man and what made him tick and what that caused him to do and achieve, especially the Atomic Bomb. *The Odyssey* is different.

Director Mr Nolan has attempted to do another simple bio-pic with the focus once again on the central human in the tale and them generating the drama that supports the emotion of the film and moving it from start to finish. It's an excellent attempt but it just will not stick to the wall – despite Matt Damon giving it his all as Odysseus. So, why is this? Well, it's all Homer's fault.

In the story, as in the Greek culture of the time, humans are at the whim and caprice of the gods on Olympus. Anger them or any of them and they will come for you and Odysseus has so done. What this means is that whilst Christopher Nolan is selling us the story that Odysseus is the lead actor and the heart and emotional core of the film, the director has then dropped that story into an alien cultural context where his hero, at best, has only the agency of a walk-on extra. Owing to the scale and expanse of the film and skill of Mr Nolan, it does work but throughout you can hear the grinding of parts.

Thankfully, despite his cultural obtuseness, the director redeems himself somewhat in how he structures the film. It's put together as start and finish bookends of action sequences. That is, it ends with Odysseus killing the suitors and starts with the Trojan Horse and sack of Troy. This puts the human Odysseus front and centre and it's all good. The middle bit of the film is Odysseus and his (diminishing) crew banging around the Aegean from one monstrous encounter to the next. They are all there: Cyclops, the Sirens and so on. All visually highly impressive but it all becomes a touch tedious; a sort of greatest hits of unpleasant things not to run into. No wonder Odysseus has problems getting home.

What is to be commended is the depiction of the Trojan Horse episode. In most film accounts the Horse is rolled in on wheels and at nighttime the Greeks drop out of their hiding place, saunter over to Troy's city gates and quietly open them. Not so in this one.

Once the Trojans understand what is happening, they go all out to kill the Greeks and stop the city gates being opened. And they get s-o-o close to doing it, it is really edge of the seat stuff. Well, the city gates get opened, Troy burns and the slaughter starts. The camera does not look away and neither does Odysseus. He's appalled and he understands his own complicity in the carnage and killing. Is this Christopher Nolan making a point and for whom? Yes, this reviewer thinks he is and for anybody that agrees with him. Check it out for yourself.

John Newland

Healing Prayers Group



The Healing Prayers Group meets in the parish church each Tuesday evening between 6.30pm and 7.00pm. If you would like to choose a theme, scripture reading and music, or would like a copy of the El Shaddai Healing Prayer or if you would like any further information, please contact the parish office.



From the School

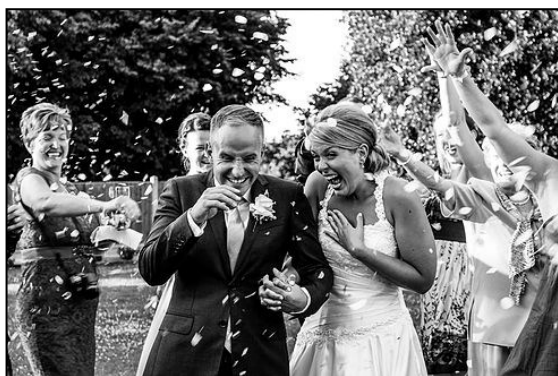
Each term the school awards the Caritas Cup to a child whose actions demonstrate the key values of our faith and those of our school in everyday life. Sometimes the award recognises some outstanding act, though more often it celebrates a pattern of humble and compassionate choices made day by day. This term the recipient is a wonderful example of this spirit, showing a selfless and consistent attitude to the school community and inspiring others through their example. The recipient, Nicola, is in Year 4, and she has demonstrated leadership, compassion, commitment and a willingness to help, contributing positively to the school community.

A highlight at the end of term was the Key Stage 2 production of "Peter Pan". The children performed with confidence, joy, and enthusiasm whether singing, acting or working backstage. The cast and crew worked as a team, encouraging each other and striving for excellence. The performance delighted the audience. Thanks are due to the children, the staff and the families whose efforts made the production a memorable success.

To celebrate a significant milestone, Year 6 joined other schools at The Lights Theatre to take part in their graduation ceremony. Dressed proudly in their caps and gowns, the children received their certificates in a ceremony with inspiring contributions from special guests including the Mayor, the Deputy Headteacher of John Hanson School, and a representative from the University of Winchester. The afternoon ended with a celebratory family picnic on the school field.

Year 3 enjoyed an exciting Roman Day, filled with fun activities. Dressed as Roman, they created beautiful mosaics and explored the fascinating world of Roman baths, some of which can still be seen today. In the afternoon, transformed into Roman soldiers and bearing their home-made shields, they took part in military training activities. To end the memorable day which had so dramatically brought history to life, they held a Roman banquet.

As the academic year drew to a close, the school took the opportunity to pause, reflect and give thanks for all that God had enabled them to achieve together. It was a time to give thanks for all that the pupils at our parish school have achieved, and for the partnership between home and school which has supported their growth.



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Please pray for those who have died recently

**Teresa Kearley, Katherine Johnson, Pat Judge, Ann Mattews and Horace Herst
and for those whose anniversaries occur in September**

Cecily Plowden, Ursula Reid, Michael Gavin, James Lowry, Gladys, Vickery, Agnes Smith, Fr Joe Connell, Margaret Scott, Patrick Monaghan, Cecilia Connelly, William Green, Tiggy Eldridge, Nora Smith, Kathleen Lee, Kevin Marchant, Edith Bush, Fr Jean Marie Vincent SMM, George Lynn, William McLamey, Margaret Symon, Matthew Everett, Florence Coleman, Br Joseph, Max Double, Guiseppe Ardolino, Pat Copeland, Laura Pearson, Gordon Ross, Doris Baulk, Mary Field, Patsy Hynes, Lilly Collins, Eric Ramsden, Nan Bootyman, Brian Fleming, Almuth's Father Wilhelm, Sheila Collins, Harold Fowler, Bill Green, Fr Isherwood SMM, George Platt, Esther O'Hanlon, Pauline Badman, Angus Glen, John Cremins, John King, Thomas Saywell, Annie Hynes, Ruth O'Shea Gwendolyn Dodsley, Patrick McDonnell, Dorothy Bennett, Kathleen Bowen, Mary Reeve, Staistawa Danisz, Eileen Watts, Catherine Thornton, John Tschuk, Cecil Mundy, Annie Howlett, Finbar Howlett, Sandor Zalavolgyi Hyde, Carlos Cabral, Mary Simmon, Fr. Patrick O'Donnell, Norah Kimmet, Mary Snelling, Sybil Evelyn Murphy, Ivor Palmer, Bridget Pierce, Dorothy Robinson, Paul Coady, Sean O'Connell, Jean Lloyd, Elizabeth Scanlan, Kathleen Copleston, Fr Danny Burns, Virginia Geary, Teresa Moss, Laurie Fisher, Maria Ardolino, Dorothy Lomax, Baby Dominic Quaresama, Daphne Channing, Frances Egglestone, Pam Nolan, Geraldine Beetham, Geraldine McCaulder, Mary Hanifin, John Mills, Peter Henley, John Hodge, HM Queen Elizabeth II, Rita Binsley, Kathleen Ineson, Elizabeth Stanbridge, Conal O'Kelly, Sheila Muir, Vichithra Vijayan, and Agnieszka Daniel

**During the month to come please remember in your prayers
the following who are sick:**

Esme Coveney, Rita Lane, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Fiona Hilleard, Bernard Ivinson, Tony Fabian, Helen O'Connell, Douglas Manning, Diane Mahoney, Rita Casey, Carol Keenan, Eileen Wharton, Oran Keenan, Margarita Hardiman, Tom O'Regan, Robert Colledge, Eileen Price, Concepta Cuddihy, Frank Hinds, Clan Furtado, Lisa Rammage, Susanne Church, Sandy Saunders, Margaret Blair, Pat Middleton, Angelo and Angela Alvarez, Lillian Da Silva and all those in need of prayers.

If you know that anyone on this list is now happily recovered, or if you would like a name added to this list, please contact the editors.

PLEASE NOTE

Articles printed in *The JOURNAL* are printed in good faith and are not necessarily the views of the editors. Contributions must be accompanied by full name and address, which may be withheld on request. The editors reserve the right to amend all contributions. Please support our advertisers, they support us.

ENDPIECE

Many thanks to the various contributors to this month's *The JOURNAL*. The next edition will be issued on 3rd & 4th October. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 28th September. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com