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Who Needs to be Careful?

There is an old adage, probably derived from Proverbs 17:28, that it is wiser to keep quiet and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt. That is a message that has clearly bypassed the Vice President of the United States, J D Vance.

The Vice President took issue with Pope Leo after His Holiness had spoken out against the use of religion to justify war, saying that the King of Peace “does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, those whose hands are full of blood.”

The pope said that in the crucified Christ “we can see a crucified humanity,” “In his wounds, we see the hurts of so many women and men today. In his last cry to the Father, we hear the weeping of those who are crushed, who have no hope, who are sick and who are alone. Above all, we hear the painful groans of all those who are oppressed by violence and are victims of war. Christ, King of Peace, cries out again from his cross: God is love! Have mercy! Lay down your weapons! Remember that you are brothers and sisters!”

The Pope criticised the threats of targeting civilians, particularly in the context of US policy towards Iran. He condemned statements proposing the destruction of Iranian civilisation, calling such threats totally unacceptable and in violation of international law, while urging leaders to pursue diplomacy rather than war.

J D Vance, speaking at an event in Georgia, argued that the pope should ‘be careful when he talks about matters of theology’. Drawing a parallel between his own role as vice president where he said he must carefully apply moral truths to public policy and the Pope’s role in discussing theology, he opined that the pope should ensure his theological statements are “anchored in the truth.” Mr Vance attempted to justify recent actions by the United States on the basis that they were part of a just war. Comparing recent American actions with events in World War II, he questioned whether God was on the side of the Americans who liberated France and the Holocaust survivors. It could be no surprise to learn that this statement aroused angry responses from his audience. The Vice President seemed to think that the actions and threats issued by the Trump administration could be justified under the concept of “a just war”.

Vance, a one-time self-proclaimed atheist, and recent convert to the Catholic faith (but one who evaded participating in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) had decided that his was a more authoritative voice on matters of theology than that of the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, who is incidentally the holder of a Master’s degree from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, as well a Licentiate and a Doctorate from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

Bishop James Massa, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Doctrine, responded with this statement:

“For over a thousand years, the Catholic Church has taught just war theory and it is that long tradition the Holy Father carefully references in his comments on war. A constant tenet of that thousand-year tradition is a nation can only legitimately take up the sword ‘in self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2308). That is, to be a just war it must be a defence against another who actively wages war, which is what the Holy Father actually said: ‘He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war.’

“When Pope Leo XIV speaks as supreme pastor of the universal Church, he is not merely offering opinions on theology, he is preaching the Gospel and exercising his ministry as the Vicar of Christ. The consistent teaching of the Church is insistent that all people of good will must pray and work toward lasting peace while avoiding the evils and injustices that accompany all wars.”

Vance’s comments came at a time of some tension between the Trump administration and Pope Leo, particularly over the actions of the United States in the Middle East, with President Donald Trump bizarrely claiming that he was “not a fan of Pope Leo” who was “not doing a very good job” and was “weak on crime”. The president further demonstrated what the Pope described as an illusion of omnipotence, by posting an AI image of himself as a Jesus-like figure appearing to “cure” a man.

Let His Holiness Pope Leo XIV have the last word; he did not want to get into a debate with President Trump but would continue to promote peace. “I’m not afraid of the Trump administration or speaking out loudly of the message of the gospel, which is what I believe I am here to do, what the church is here to do.”

Our Lady of Grace

Henry VIII's reformation led to the dissolution of the monasteries and the destruction of many beautiful shrines. Among the shrines which were desecrated were some of those dedicated to Our Lady. England had been regarded as "Our Lady's Dowry", and the Marian shrine of Our Lady of Grace in Ipswich was second only to that of Our Lady of Walsingham, attracting vast numbers of pilgrims – including in the past King Henry himself.

In 1550, following Henry's declaration placing himself as head of the Church in England, Thomas Cromwell raided the Marian Shrines of Our Lady of Walsingham, Our Lady of Willesden, and that of Our Lady of Grace, and had the revered statues carted off intending to burn them on a bonfire in front of his house in Chelsea, the former home of the martyr Thomas More.

Somehow, the statue of Our Lady of Grace, carved in oak over 300 years ago, was spirited away from the proposed bonfire. How that happened is a mystery, though some believed the rumour that Cromwell had taken a huge bribe to allow the statue to be removed. What is known is that an Italian ship set sail along the Thames and carried the statue away.

Before it had completed its journey, the ship was wrecked in a storm off the coast of Italy close to the town of Nettuno, a site where four hundred years later allied troops landed as part of the invasion of Italy. Fortunately, although suffering damage by the seawater, the statue was recovered from the waves and taken to the local church.

The townspeople installed the statue, which is still referred to as La Madonna Inglese, in their church where it is treated with the respect and reverence denied her by the Tudor iconoclasts. Each year the statue is carried on a bier in the form of a ship, a reminder of her voyage and her escape from the fire and the shipwreck, and taken in procession through the town.

There are now plans being formulated to bring the statue back to England for a tour of about a month. The Catholic Military Association, made up of serving members of His Majesty's Armed Forces, has been instrumental in making arrangements for the statue to return along the Thames and to be taken under a protective honour guard to several locations, possibly including Westminster, and finishing at her ancient place of honour in Ipswich.

This will, of course, only be a brief visit and the event can only take place with the permission of the Italian government and the cooperation of the people of Nettuno who have cared for the statue for the last 500 years. If all goes well, our country may once again be blessed with the presence of a statue that meant so much to so many when England could be hailed as "Our Lady's Dowry."



A Modern Copy of
Our Lady of Grace by
Robert Mellamphy

Mass Attendance

Each year, every parish is asked to count the number of people attending Mass on four Sundays in early Autumn. From this an average is calculated forming the "Mass count" for each church. This statistic has been collected across the Catholic Church for decades and gives a snapshot of Mass attendance patterns overtime. Each Diocese must send its figures to the Catholic Bishop's Conference for England and Wales (CBCEW) who in turn send the aggregate figure for the country to the Holy See.

Like many others, Bishop Philip has expressed concern about the continued decline in Mass attendance the Church has experienced over the last few decades. It is a decline many of us have experienced first-hand as habits, faith and priorities change, and it is reflected in the "Mass Count" figures.

However, the bishop believes that there are also signs of hope. Looking at the figures, most pastoral areas in our Diocese have experienced an increase in Mass attendance over the last year, and some have even experienced growth over the last 10 years.

Mass attendance figures are not everything; there are many other indicators of engagement with our faith and parish sustainability. Some are easier to measure than others! But it is a measure, which used in combination with others can give a good indication of sustainability and change in a particular parish and the wider Church.

In the Diocesan Newsletter, Bishop Philip wrote: "Each year, the Board of Trustees and I consider these figures as an indication of the impact of our Diocese's mission and also to help inform long-term strategic decisions. A paper was prepared for the last Board meeting presenting the 2025 Mass attendance figures for each pastoral area.

This paper inspired me to commission a similar paper to share with our wider Diocesan community through e-News, so that we can all have visibility of this important metric. I asked for a few additions, such as a sustainability index to help each local community see how it compares to others across the Diocese. How the metric was calculated is explained in the paper."

The total Mass count for 2025 was recorded as 30,304. The bishop and the Board will look at Mass figures by Deanery, hoping that the figures will support local planning and response to the diocesan Mission Plan, *You Will be my Witnesses*.

Food Bank 20th Anniversary

The Andover Foodbank has become a vital part of the town's efforts to help people in need. Many thought that such an organisation was not really necessary in what is often seen as a generally prosperous area, but fortunately there were far-sighted people who recognised something of what lay beneath that veneer of prosperity.

Andover Foodbank has been in existence for 20 years, and the Foodbank's manager has recently issued this statement;

"The Foodbank thanks everyone who has supported us over the last 20 years and in particular you, our volunteers. We're here to help people today and until no one needs a food bank.

With the generosity of our donors we can give food and other essential items to people in our community and provide them with support and advice so they're less likely to need a food bank in the future.

We cannot help people without our you, our donors, committee, managers, partner agencies, Citizens Advice Test Valley, Trussell and the support of St John the Baptist RC Church and Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth. Together we make a difference – thank you all."

The Foodbank organises regular food collections at four of Andover's major supermarkets. In addition, each of the supermarkets has a permanent collection point in the store where people can donate items at any time. Many local churches, youth organisations, schools and businesses also collect items for the Foodbank, so support for the Foodbank is genuinely a community effort.

(Seeing the late Pat Lavelle – third from the right - in the photo reminds us that not only was he instrumental in starting the Andover Foodbank, but he was a regular contributor to The Journal with his charming and thought-provoking articles "Praying with Hector." Ed.)



Opening of the Foodbank

Pilgrimage to Turin and Assisi

This summer, the diocese is planning a pilgrimage to Turin in northern Italy and Assisi in central Italy to learn about and experience the lives of our two newest saints - St Carlo Acutis and St Pier Giorgio Frassati.

The pilgrimage will leave from Gatwick on Monday 20th July flying to Turin, and will return to Heathrow via Perugia on Sunday 26th July.

Pilgrims will start in Turin where St Pier Giorgio Frassati was born, lived and died at the age of just 24 in 1925. The group will visit his parish church and the family summer house in the foothills of the alps very close to the Marian shrine at Opora. There will be an opportunity to visit the chapel in the Royal Palace where The Shroud is located.

Travelling by coach, the pilgrims will go to Assisi to visit the tomb of St Carlo Acutis. St Carlo is very much a modern day saint, noted for his skill in using the internet to spread the Good News of the Gospels. He died in 2006 when just 15 years old.

Included in the cost of the pilgrimage are return flights, accommodation in central Turin and Assisi with breakfast and dinner, local transfers in and around Turin and Assisi, visit to the Royal Palace Chapel to see The Shroud, long distance coach journey with stops en route, a visit to the Marian Shrine in Opora, and visit to the tomb of St Carlo Acutis in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

For further details, including how to reserve a place, please contact Canon PJ Smith by email at

fatherpj@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Saint Matthias, Apostle

The first act of the apostles after the Ascension of Jesus was to find a replacement for Judas, and so with all the questions, doubts, and dangers facing them, they chose to focus their attention on finding a twelfth apostle. Why was this important? We have to remember that twelve was a very important number to the Chosen People: twelve was the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. If the new Israel was to come from the disciples of Jesus, a twelfth apostle was needed.

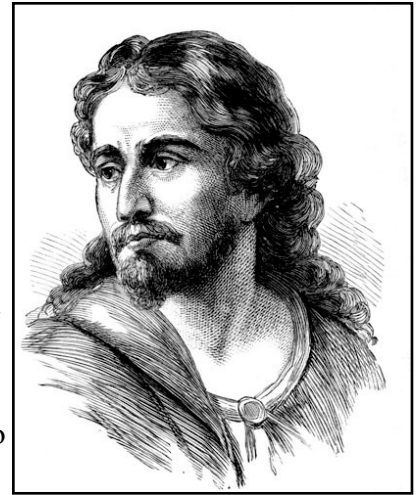
But Jesus had chosen the original twelve. How could they know whom he would have chosen?

One hundred and twenty people were gathered for prayer and reflection in the upper room, when Peter stood up to propose the way to make the choice. Peter had one criterion, that, like Andrew, James, John, and himself, the new apostle should be someone who had been a disciple from the very beginning, from Christ's baptism by John until the Ascension. The reason for this was simple, the new apostle must become a witness to Jesus' resurrection. He must have followed Jesus before his fame had spread, stayed with Him when He made enemies, and believed in Him when he spoke of the cross and of eating his body - teachings that had made others melt away.

There were two men who matched these criteria - Matthias and Joseph called Barsabbas. They knew that both these men had been with them and with Jesus through His whole ministry. But which one had the heart to become a witness to the resurrection? The apostles knew that only the Lord could know what was in the heart of each. They cast lots in order to discover God's will and Matthias was chosen. He became the twelfth apostle and the group was whole again as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

As with most of the apostles, there is little information about Matthias in Scripture. Traditional stories testify to Matthias' enthusiastic embrace of all that being an apostle meant including evangelization, persecution, and death in the service of the Lord.

Clement of Alexandria says that Matthias, like all the other apostles, was not chosen for what he already was, but for what the Spirit and the apostles foresaw he would become. He was elected not because he was worthy but because he would become worthy. Jesus chooses all of us in the same way. Perhaps we should all be asking ourselves: What does Jesus want me to become?



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Clergy Training Fund

The Second Collection for the Clergy Training Fund took place on the weekend of 25th & 26th April, the National Day of Prayer for Vocations, especially to the Sacred Priesthood.

The Clergy Training Fund supports our seminarians, including the 11 men currently in formation for the priesthood, for the duration of their six or seven-year journey to ordination.

Each seminarian brings to his training his own life experience, and then participates in a comprehensive programme of formation pastorally, intellectually, humanly and spiritually.

These are the men who will baptize and catechize the coming generations, and care for us on our pilgrim way: our generosity today is a legacy to the Church of tomorrow.

To sustain a single seminarian costs around £30,000 each year, so generous support to this Fund is of vital importance. If you missed the collection or would like to make a further donation you can donate at:

<https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/campaign/clergy-training-fund-2026>



Bishop Philip with Portsmouth Diocesan Seminarians

CAFOD and Sudan



A Camp for Thousands of Displaced Persons in Sudan

Over many years our parish has generously supported the St Vincent de Paul Society appeals for the work of members in Sudan and later South Sudan. CAFOD Portsmouth's Community Participation Coordinator, Andrea Hoyland has highlighted the third anniversary of the horrifying war in Sudan. That war has made it impossible for the SVP to continue their work in that country. It is a crisis that may not be in the headlines, but it continues to devastate millions of lives.

“CAFOD is still there, working through the local Catholic Church to provide food, safe water, and vital support to families forced to flee their homes.

Kayode Akintola, CAFOD's Head of Region in Africa has written to us, asking us to stand in solidarity with our neighbours. He shares this message: *“Families are still on the move, often for days and weeks at a time in search of safety, walking through bush paths because the main roads are controlled by armed groups. Mothers carry children on their backs, young women and men search desperately for water where wells have long run dry. Many children and women have lost their lives during these weeks of walking without food and water.”*

Our sisters and brothers in Sudan feel abandoned. The gap between overwhelming needs and available support is massive. This is why regular monthly giving is so vital – so that we can stay present and keep saving lives until peace is restored. When we give monthly, we show that love of neighbour is stronger than violence, stronger than despair, stronger than ever.

For more information, to give regularly, to donate today and to pray for Sudan, go to the CAFOD website. Thank you for your prayers and solidarity.

Knights of St Columba and the Campion Pilgrimage

In 1581, during the persecution of Catholics in the reign of Elizabeth I, the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion had printed and distributed his book "The Ten Reasons" (for being a Catholic) which denounced the Protestant faith. He travelled round the country preaching to Catholic families in secret and, on the order of his superior, Robert Parsons, he left Oxford and travelled to Lancashire to retrieve notes and manuscripts which he had left there. He planned to journey to Norfolk, to go into hiding with a lay-brother called Ralph Emerson.

He changed his plans when he received a letter from a Mr Francis Yates who had been imprisoned in London for being a Catholic. Yates begged Campion to visit his family home, Moore Place – later known as Lyford Grange – and preach to the family and a number of Bridgettine nuns being sheltered there. Robert Parsons warned Campion that the house was a well-known Catholic house, and so not very safe; "You are too easy-going by far. I know you, Father Edmund. If they once get you there, you will never break away," Parsons warned.

Edmund Campion went none the less, and he spent two days at Moore Place before setting out for Lancashire. The entreaties of many Catholics in the Oxford area for Campion to remain a while longer persuaded him to return to Moore Place.

The following Sunday, Campion preached to a congregation of some sixty people, but one of those present was a government spy by the name of George Elliott who had already betrayed two priests at a Catholic house in Oxfordshire and who now sent for reinforcements. Campion was hidden in one of the many secret places in the house, but in the middle of the night he apparently responded to a request to preach one more time, despite guards being posted in the house.

As he finished his sermon, one of the congregation seems to have fallen over in the dark and caused a commotion which roused a guard. Campion was arrested, as were two other priests staying at the house and several others. The Sheriff sent to London for instructions as to what he should do. Eventually word came back that he was to take the priests to London under heavy guard.

For the first part of the journey the prisoners were treated with respect, possibly because the Sheriff had been an admirer of the lectures he had heard Campion give when he was a student. When the party reached Colnbrook things changed when fresh orders arrived. It was ordered that the prisoners were to be bound, their feet fastened under their horses and a note to be pinned to Campion's hat reading "Campion, the Seditious Jesuit".

Campion was held in the Tower for several months. He was questioned many times, sometimes in front of the Queen herself, and savagely tortured, before being tried at Westminster and condemned to death for inciting sedition and plotting to dethrone the monarch. He was hanged drawn and quartered at Tyburn on 1st December 1581, together with Alexander Briant and Ralph Sherwin. Edmund Campion was beatified in 1886 and canonised in 1970, one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

Lyford Grange still stands within the remains of its moat, though much reduced in size since Campion's day. Made of timber and stone, it is mostly 16th century in date, though the western range dates back to the 13th century. It is a private residence, but the Knights of St. Columba are allowed to hold Mass there every July.

John Lynn, Pilgrimage Coordinator for the Thames Valley Knights of St Columba, has announced that this year Fr Kevin O'Driscoll recently retired from Holy Family Parish, Langley is the main celebrant for the St Edmund Campion Pilgrimage Mass to be held at Lyford Grange (OX12 0EQ), near Wantage on Sunday 10th May at 4.00pm.

This Mass is one of the main events in the annual St Edmund Campion Pilgrimage which follows Pope Paul VI's canonisation of St Edmund Campion as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. After the canonisation of the martyrs, it was decided to carry on this act of worship for Christian Unity and Peace. The Knights of St Columba were asked to organise the annual pilgrimage with the Relic resting at churches overnight following as near as possible the route Campion took on his way from Lyford Grange in Oxfordshire, where he was captured, to Tyburn in London where he was put to death. Over 60 Masses are celebrated on this annual journey which this year started at Stonor on Sunday 3rd May where there is a priest's hole and Campion famously hid his printing press. With a Mass at the Oxford University students chaplaincy next to Campion Hall on 17th May and additional Masses this year celebrated at Banbury, the pilgrimage ends with the Tyburn Convent Mass on Sunday 19th July at 4.00pm. The pilgrimage will pass through the Portsmouth, Northampton, Birmingham, Arundel and Brighton and Westminster Dioceses. For any queries, please contact John Lynn on 01628-636668 or 07931-292934.



Seminarian at the Beda College

Not all seminarians will have recognised their vocation to the priesthood while still in their teens or early twenties. Some men are a little, or in some cases a lot, older. The Beda College in Rome is a seminary where courses are tailored to those who have a “late vocation”. One such from our diocese is Sean Barnes. He writes about the college and about his progression on the path to ordination.

I started my second academic year in the eternal city of Rome after a really happy summer parish placement with Canon John Cooke in Fareham. Canon John and the staff of this parish provided me with much learning and insight, which was also a very happy and positive experience. As I approach the end of my second year in formation at the Pontifical Beda College, I continue to confirm the good Lord’s call and purpose in my life with clarity and confirmation that I am being called to the Sacrament of Priesthood. The formation at the Beda Seminary in Rome consists of a four-year programme, designed for men over thirty-five: with previous third level education, experience of life from corporate and professional careers, therefore shortening the normal seven-year formation itinerary.



Sean Barnes in St Peter’s Square with the Rector of the Pontifical Beda College Canon Marcus Holden.

I was born in Winchester, Hampshire, in September 1980, into a devout, practicing Irish Roman Catholic Family, where faith, hope and charity were fundamental in the roots of my upbringing. I was baptised at St Edward the Confessor Roman Catholic Church in Chandlers Ford and received First Holy Communion and Confirmation, while attending St Swithun Wells RC Primary and Thornden Schools in the same parish.

The sense of vocation has been in my heart since adolescence, and I have remained disciplined and consistent in practicing the faith throughout my life. I attended Barton Peveril Sixth Form College in Eastleigh, before university and then spent periods of my life living in London, Melbourne, Sicily and Dublin; working in various corporate sectors; Public Relations, Property Development and Real Estate. Although I enjoyed a very prosperous career, I still felt the good Lord tugging on my heart strings. I concluded that I would create space in my life for God, to explore and discern with integrity, what I felt was the seed of a vocation to the Sacrament of Priesthood.

After much prayerful discernment, contemplation, Spiritual Direction and regular Adoration, I applied to the Diocese of Portsmouth, to make a formal application. In conclusion, the discernment conference committee recommended to Bishop Philip Egan that I should be accepted. Bishop Egan sent me to the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, to commence my studies in September 2024.

As I reflect upon the conclusion of my second academic year, I am very happy and sincerely feel that I have grown in the academic, pastoral, human and spiritual dimensions of seminary formation and further deepened my relationship with Christ. I have been extremely blessed and fortunate to meet the late Pope Francis and more recently Pope Leo, truly amazing moments on my vocational journey. I have been truly inspired by the new Rector of the Pontifical Beda College, Canon Marcus Holden and the seminary staff, brother seminarians and my formation program at the Pontifical Beda Seminary in Rome. Canon Marcus Holden has brought an extreme positivity to our community, enhancing what was already a vibrant and happy seminary of formation. Among these qualities, Canon Holden has participated in our weekly seminary football training and matches, along with starting a seminary tennis club. These sporting attributes have projected a great fraternal vibe among my brothers in seminary and across other seminaries in Rome. The Beda Seminary will be hosting the biggest football tournament in Rome on 25th April called the ‘Coppa di San Paolo’, which will be hosted by the Catholic network of EWTN. I look forward, along with our Rector Cn Marcus Holden in participating in this tournament and hopefully bringing back the silverware to the Pontifical Beda College.

I look forward to the remaining three months of the academic year, with my admission to Acolyte that took place on Wednesday 25th March and a summer parish placement within the diocese in the coming months, before returning to the eternal city to commence my third year.

Please be assured of my prayers for our Bishop Philip Egan, our clergy, diocese and future vocations to the priesthood.

One Battle After Another (2025)

This film got Best Picture at the recent Oscars. Did it deserve it? The Members of the Academy that voted for it clearly thought so. So; done deal in that respect. What of it as a film, though? Well; it is over-hyped, over-heated and as a declared piece of political satire it has all the nuance and grace of a pig rooting for truffles.

And – yet – as a piece of cinema it's also quite enjoyable and it does work on the screen very much more than enough to keep you both awake and interested in what is coming up next. And THAT is the keynote and most of the why of why it does work. Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, it only remains glued to the screen by the sheer unremitting pace of the delivery of its narrative. Slow it down and you have a train wreck.



Still; that doesn't quite get to the heart of why it's a good film to watch. This comes from what it's about and the acting thereof. The Story: In the mid-2000s, in the US, a band of left-wing revolutionaries calling themselves, *French75* [don't ask me] run riot in Southern California before being violently suppressed by the US Federal Authorities. A decade and a half later, their chief oppressor, Colonel Lockjaw (Sean Penn) returns to eliminate the “loose end” of a teenage daughter he fathered with an African-American woman revolutionary of the Group. The daughter, Willa, lives, off-grid, with Bob Ferguson (Leonardo DiCaprio). He's the former armourer for *French75* and believes he is Willa's father.

There is abduction, flight and chase as Sean Penn uses his position and the resources of his Office to discover, chase down and have killed his daughter, Willa. Why? He's been offered membership of a shadowy White Nationalist elitist club, very rich, very powerful and very ruthless. Having a “mixed-race” daughter is not the look he needs. That's one part of the equation. On the other side, Leonard DiCaprio, once he sees “his” daughter is at risk; he puts aside all else and chases after her to rescue her. To facilitate *his* pursuit, he has to re-connect with his former revolutionary colleagues and is himself at great personal risk. This is the second half of this film and where its dramatic and beating heart lies.

This second half - and at 161 minutes running time you do get good value for your ticket - is held together dramatically by the central performances of Sean Penn, Leonardo DiCaprio and the young actress playing Leonardo's screen daughter. All enmeshed together, they are in an emotional triangle that takes in more than a nod from King Lear as envisioned on the screen by Quentin Tarantino. Both Mr Penn and Mr DiCaprio are excellent actors and in this film each gives of their very best. Whatever the other shortcomings of this film, when on screen, their presence drives the story forward. This especially true of Sean Penn. He may come over as half-crazed – oh, yes – but he also comes over as a crazie that's completely in charge and well able to get the job done. That's what is truly scary and why he deserved and got his Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. Film much recommended.

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.



Religion on YouTube

YouTube is a platform used by all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons. You can use the app on a computer or a “Smart” TV to watch a video explaining how to replace a tap washer or build a sailing boat or work out what the buttons on the side of your mobile phone do. You can watch and listen to all sorts of music, find out what people think of certain politicians, get information on sporting events, historical figures, or so-called celebrities.

You can also watch videos explaining aspects of religious belief, ceremonies, or iconography. There are also numerous ways you can watch Mass from around the world, join in praying the Rosary, learn about the lives of saints or the work of charitable organisations. However, there are also innumerable ways of being led astray by so-called religious experts.

Among the thousands of sometimes somewhat dodgy “religious” videos you can also find some gems, such as videos by Fr Mike Schmitz, official Vatican News or EWTN articles. One priest who has made a remarkable selection of informative videos is Pastor Robin Scharzw. This Catholic priest has become something of a YouTube phenomenon whose short videos are informative and entertaining. He is not afraid to tackle tricky subjects, and you may be intrigued by one twenty-minute video in which he asks: What happens in the first three minutes after you die?

What his video revealed was something most of us would never have considered or heard about, yet he suggests that according to Catholic teaching, something very specific unfolds — and most Catholics have never been told the full truth. Not from a movie. Not from a near-death story on social media. From 2,000 years of Catholic doctrine — the Catechism, the saints, and Scripture — this Catholic priest explains exactly what happens the moment your heart stops beating. In this video you'll learn:

- What the Particular Judgment is and why it happens immediately after death;
- The three possible outcomes the Church teaches — and what determines each one
- Why Purgatory is not punishment but purification
- How to prepare for your own death starting tonight with four practical steps.

What St. Therese of Lisieux said about dying that changed everything.

The information he imparts is based on New Testament passages, the writings of St Catherine of Genoa and St. Therese of Lisieux, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. He claims that the video can put your mind at peace when we think about facing eternity. Sounds as though it might not be a bad idea to watch this and see what he has to say!



Unity Christian Theatre

Unity Christian Theatre was founded in 2005 with the intention of bringing people together to enjoy performing and to raise money for charity. Over the years what started as a small concert-party with minimal musical accompaniment, grew into a larger group which welcomes anyone and everyone irrespective of age, creed or ability. The group grew in numbers and ambition, putting on musicals including “Jerusalem Joy”, “Snakes and Ladders”, and “Rock”. The group presented Andover with a Passion Play performed in the streets of Andover for three years, and went on to develop pantomimes based on Scripture stories.

After a short break, the group is back. It performed “While Shepherds Watched “ in St John the Baptist Catholic Church last December. They are currently rehearsing for “Jonahman Jazz”, meeting in St John the Baptist Church Hall each Sunday from 3.00pm to 5.00pm. All are welcome; for further information contact Sharon on

New Parish Registration for Everyone

The Diocese is now using a new system called Church Suite, to manage our parishioner database and our communications like the newsletter. To do this we need to renew all the information we hold about parishioners. To ensure you remain registered as a parishioner and to continue to receive communications from the parish, including the newsletter and journal, please make sure you have filled out a new Registration Form.

There are separate adult and child registration forms. You can use the QR codes on your smart phone to bring up the form, and it's a very simple form. Or you can use the link on the website to register.

We understand if you are not smartphone or internet users - we can provide a hard copy form, but the idea is to reduce the work needed to enter the details on a database. Maybe you have a friend of a relative who could help you complete the form? (The old database had 1,839 entries and many details were out of date!)

Adult Parishioner Registration Form



As a ‘last resort’ do contact the Parish Office and we will endeavour to help you.

Thank you in advance for your help and co-operation.

You will only receive the newsletter and Journal by email if you have registered!

Child Parishioner Registration Form





The Pope's Prayer Intention for April

At the beginning of each year, the Holy Father sets out the intentions for which he asks us to pray. For this month of May he asks that everyone might have food. Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

Reflection on the Pope's Prayer Intention

Br. Henryk Cisowski is a Capuchin Franciscan friar from Kraków, Poland. He is a co-founder and long-time director of St. Padre Pio Charities in Kraków, a nonprofit organization accompanying people experiencing poverty and homelessness on their path toward a dignified life. Since 2021, he has been ministering at Capuchin Community Services in Milwaukee, which provides food, shelter, and outreach to those in need. Since 2024 he has been a Ministry Director of this Capuchin Ministry.



There is an old monastic story about a monk who received a gift and quietly passed it on to another brother, setting off a kind of chain reaction. The gift moved from brother to brother, until it finally returned to the one who had set it in motion.

This story, which I heard years ago, came back to me recently when we received a bread slicer from On the Rise, a Capuchin bakery in Detroit. They had two, so they shared one with us. It turned out to be a providential gift. Not long afterward, a bakery in Milwaukee began donating bread they were unable to sell — beautiful loaves of high-quality, artisanal bread.

Once sliced, the bread made its way to the tables of our soup kitchen and into the hands of our guests, many of whom took it home with them. Still, there was often far more bread than we could use. So I loaded my entire car trunk with loaves and brought them to another food pantry we work closely with, wondering whether they would be able to manage it — after all, bread does not keep for long.

As it turned out, they in turn collaborate with many other soup kitchens and food pantries, all of which are glad to receive and make good use of any surplus.

Unlike in the monastic story, nothing came back to me — except a deeper gratitude and a clearer understanding: that interdependence, that mutual connectedness, is not a “chain” that binds or restricts us, but one that protects and multiplies what is good. It is good to take part in the mission of the Apostles, to whom Jesus says: “Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.” (John 6:12)

Brother Henryk

The Trussell Trust

The Andover Foodbank is part of a nationwide organisation known as The Trussell Trust, an anti-poverty charity and community of food banks. The food banks work together providing food and practical support to people without enough money to live on. The Trust aim to ensure that no one in the country needs a food bank to survive. One could say that their aim is to reach a point where the Trust is no longer needed.

The Trust has 1,400 food banks around the country which have 40,000 volunteers supported by hundreds of thousands community groups and schools. In 2025, the community food banks distributed 2.6 million emergency food parcels.

When the UK's social security system was created some eighty years ago to protect people from hardship and hunger, there was far less need for people to turn to charities to provide the essentials for life. Sadly, that is not the case today. Recent times have seen the need for food banks increase.

Elsewhere in this edition we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Andover Foodbank. It is reassuring to know that it exists so that those in crisis have support. It might be even more reassuring when, at some time in the future, there is no longer a need for it and the Trussell Trust to continue their work.



From the School

As the new term began, the school took as their focus the words of Jesus when he appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection – “Peace be with you”. Listening to the story of Thomas, doubting Jesus’s appearance, the children reflected on how doubt can make us stop, think, and with faith and prayer make good, thoughtful choices.

The children have also reflected on the Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus, asking the important question: why didn’t the travellers recognise Jesus straight away? They may have been focussed on their own thoughts and sadness, and they didn’t expect to see Jesus. Sometimes we too fail to notice Jesus because we are too busy, upset, or distracted. Yet Jesus is there all along, listening and helping. All were reminded that the whole school community firmly believes Jesus walks alongside every day through the people around us. The focus is to recognise Jesus in one another.

Years 2 to 6 took part in a special lesson where they considered what makes a mathematician. The aim was to feel more like one in the end. They learned about famous mathematicians, from Leonard Euler to Andrew Wiles, Florence Nightingale to Luke Littler, before tackling problems in class requiring pattern spotting, reasoning, and perseverance. This was challenging but provoked interesting discussions and conclusions.

St John the Baptist School wishes to give early notice of a small change to the school’s mobile phone policy, taking effect from September 2026. Smart phones will no longer be permitted on school premises. Children will be allowed to bring a basic “brick phone” for calls and texts only.

During the month of May, a month traditionally dedicated to Our Lady, the school is taking part in the Rosary Challenge to pray a decade of the Holy Rosary each weekday. *Mark 10 Mission* have created videos to guide through all twenty Mysteries of the Rosary.

Following the last very successful Colour Run, the PTA are holding another in mid-May to celebrate the end of Year 6’s SATs. This time parents and carers will be given the chance to take part too.

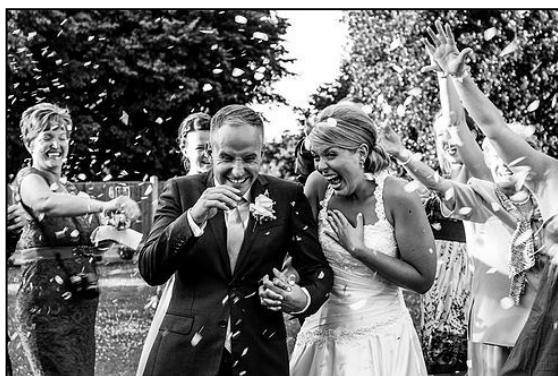
What is a Colour Run? A few, short fun laps around the school field, in year groups with paint powder being thrown into the air for the participants to run through!
There will be a BBQ and drinks sold to raise funds for the school. What a fun, colourful way to celebrate the end of SATs and to raise money for the school!



CHURCH CLEANING – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Can you help? We are in need of more volunteers to help clean our Church. Volunteers work in small groups at mutually convenient pre-arranged times. At present each group cleans once every five weeks for an hour or so.

Do give your name and details to the Parish Office or speak to Margaret Scicluna.



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Please pray for those who have died recently

Ben Dunne

and for those whose anniversaries occur in May

Anna McCracken, Joseph Cochran, Mary O'Neil, Elizabeth Hill, Annie Nottingham, Joseph Graham, Ethel Turner, Louise Girling, Montague Irwin, Kay Watson, Frank MacKrell, Dean McDonnell, Fr Francis O'Shea, Bridget Coffey, Mary Lonsdale, Fr C Mulholland, Fr D. McCarthy SMM, Kirsten Morgan, Hilda Bell, Nora Hurley, Ellen Kenny, Mary Richardson, Percy Milner, Josie Corbet, Myra Walker, Shirley Stringer, Joseph James, Mollie Stace, Edmund Plowden, Marguerite McGarvey, Mary McGarvey, Mrs O'Kelly, Peggy O'Neil, Annie and Bernard Madden, Patricia Bradfield, John Perrier, Martin Mannion, Margaret Murray, Bill Edwards, Sister Mary Damien, Mary Sainsbury, John Myles, Mary Lee, Danny Gallagher, Maramichela Holloway, Walter Stace, Fr Handley, Christine Simpson, Col. Macfee, Susan Ingram, Thomas Faye, Charles Cooke, Mary James, Catherine Fairmington, John Le Clezio, Frank Hynes, Antonio Da Silva, Sister Marie Columba, Agnes Magrath, Sister Marguerite Marie De La Trinitie, Jennifer Sutton, Arnold Baxter, Muriel Crompton, Joanna Gray, Arthur Stubbs, Mrs Sheridan, Moira Annaud, Kathleen Murray, Eugene Watson, MaryWicks, Mary Jordan, John Campbell, Frederick Wiltshire, Richard Johnson, Sarah Toland, Eileen Bell, Ethel Turner, Eamon O'Dwyer, John Monks, Margaret Monks, Debbie Tuite, Nancy Murphy, Conrad Bartosik, Madge Redish , James Leader, Catherine Farrington, Henry Davins, Lillian bell, Michael Clarke, John Sheehan, Josephine Corbett, Balbina Abreu de Jesus, Father Daniel Hogan SMM, Bob Grey, Ida Keeton, Laura Hougran, Rev. Paul Sutcliffe, Rev. Kenneth Freeman, Christiane Harivel, Philip Harris, Hazel Pereira, Alberto Michetti, Jane Thornton, Kathleen, Greene, John Trusler, Paul Wharton, Florrie Potter, Irene Lloyd, Mrs Atkinson, James Smith, Jim Cogan, William McFadden, Elizabeth Laversuch, Ros Quaife, Bridget Cartmel, William Moore, Harry Curley, Sister Celestina, James, Margaret Burrowes, George Brown, Maria Meager, Bob Hall, Kay Porter, Louise Gallagher Marjorie Baddeley, Fabienne Faulkner, Pat Adams, Dorothy O'Sullivan, Regina Fiedler, Steve Leek, Eileen Morrell, Fr. Bob Ellwood SMM, Harriet Martin, Jane Weldon, John Mulcock, Richard Hulmes, Adrian Stokes, Almuth Giebertmann-Fisher, Freddie Flood, David Bull, Graeme Ellison, Sister Eileen Ryan, Marian McFadden, Mary Bradley, Barbara Long, Frank Kilroy, John Davies, Dorothy Courtnell, Doreen Burke, Baby Emily Jane, Linda Creaven and Shirley Knight.

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, Rose Bull, 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, 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 6th & 7th June. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 1st June. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com