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## Pope Leo's First Encyclical

One hundred and thirty-five years ago, Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical "*Rerum Novarum*", literally "Of New Things", a document which is generally regarded as the foundation of modern Catholic social teaching.

Pope Leo XIV has released his first encyclical, "*Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*", which builds on the work of his predecessor and seeks to safeguard humanity, promote truth, the dignity of work, social justice, and peace.

The encyclical is divided into five chapters, the first of which is "*A Dynamic Approach Faithful to the Gospel*". It traces the social doctrine of the Church and the way each pope has "interpreted historical changes according to the Gospel, bringing to light different aspects of a single heritage: the dignity of the person, the value of work, the universal destination of goods, solidarity and subsidiarity, care for creation and the centrality of peace and fraternity".

The second chapter explores the "*Foundations and Principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church*", examining the dignity of the person created in the image and likeness of God, not someone to be used or exploited. It states that the Social Doctrine of the Church is based on the fundamental dignity of the individual and the basic human right to life "from conception to its natural end." Another foundation is recognition of the rights of minorities and of women, calling for them to be heard and valued and for positive steps regarding laws, employment, and education. The encyclical makes it clear that it is "gravely immoral" to subjugate a nation, that "the promotion of the common good can never be separated from respect for the right of peoples to exist, to preserve their own identity and to contribute their unique qualities to the family of nations."

Pope Leo goes on to insist on the need to ensure that technologies are not concentrated in the hands of only a few people, which would widen the gap between those included and those excluded from the benefits of technological advances. Social justice in the digital age requires ensuring fair access and opportunities for all to safeguard the most vulnerable, combat hatred, and prevent disinformation.

The third chapter, *Technology and Dominance. The Grandeur of Humanity in Light of the Promises of AI* stresses the need to approach artificial intelligence with vigilance. He points out that the most powerful technology is not necessarily the best. AI can imitate and simulate the person, but it does not possess a moral conscience, empathy, or affective, relational or spiritual capabilities. It must be used responsibly and its use must be governed by legal frameworks and independent oversight. He also mentions the environmental impact of new technologies which need large quantities of water and energy to function effectively.

He speaks of "disarming" AI, of discrediting the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern. "To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity". Technology can relieve human suffering and open new possibilities, but it must not deny the essential aspects of what makes us human.

In the fourth chapter, *Safeguarding Humanity at a Time of Transformation. Truth, Work, Freedom*, the Pope calls for an "ecology of communication" based on truth. How content is selected, how personal data is protected and the need for serious journalism are all examined. He suggests that schools need to be places where people learn to "seek and love the truth".

During this new "industrial revolution" there is a need for the dignity of work to be protected. "The 'new ways' of working are not necessarily better," he writes, "while AI promises to boost productivity by taking over mundane tasks, it frequently forces workers to adapt to the speed and demands of machines, rather than machines being designed to support those who work". He suggests that we need to change from measuring a country's level of development through GDP and look at the dignity of work, shared prosperity, the reduction of inequalities, and environmental protection. There is, he says, an interdependence between peace and development. It calls for international cooperation capable of defining shared strategies, especially in favour of the most vulnerable countries and groups, because prosperity contributes to peace "only if it is widespread, inclusive, and sustainable."

(Continued on Page 2)



*(Pope Leo's First Encyclical: Continued from Page One)*

The encyclical warns against the exploitation of users' time and of the risks to society arising from the mass collection of data. Profiling, predicting, and directing behaviour form a new type of power which easily risks discriminating against the weakest.

The encyclical upholds the role of the family, saying it is founded on the stable union between a man and a woman. The family is the "fundamental and irreplaceable cell of every community organization", which must be supported to protect society's ability to "build the future."

The new technologies depend on those who work in mining the rare earth elements, and the conditions of those workers represent a modern form of slavery, and the Church, he stresses, renews her "firm condemnation of every form of slavery, trafficking, and reducing human beings to the status of commodities".

In the final chapter, *The Culture of Power and the Civilization of Love*, Pope Leo XIV turns his attention to war, saying "the digital revolution is changing the nature of conflict." The Pope calls for an ethical approach, without which decisions about the life and death of persons will become increasingly impersonal due to a use of force regarded as an "immediate and viable option". At the root of all this is a "culture of power" that normalizes war and rehabilitates it as an "instrument of international politics," favouring rearmament. Today, public opinion is burdened by polarizing media narratives, as well as by "a disconcerting loss of historical memory," which leaves people without a long-term vision. Consequently, peace today is no longer understood as a task to be undertaken, but as an interval between conflicts. For this reason, Pope Leo XIV reiterates that—while preserving the right to legitimate defence in the strictest sense—the theory of "just war" must be overcome, and dialogue, diplomacy, and forgiveness must instead be promoted.

The pope reflects sadly that the rule of law has been replaced by the law of the strongest, and he hopes for "profound reforms" of the UN that can overcome the current crisis of values in favour of the common good. Pope Leo calls for Peace to be at the centre of politics, he prays for "interreligious dialogue" and condemns those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence, or war. The diplomacy of the Holy See, he notes, "adopts the Gospel's principle of mercy as a concrete criterion for political action." And from this, the exhortation to prayer, since peace comes above all from God.

At the conclusion of his first encyclical, Pope Leo XIV invites the faithful to navigate this new technological era in the light of the Gospel, following "a sober yet demanding program of Christian life."

Even in the age of AI, concludes the Pope, "we may bear witness to the grandeur of humanity, in which God has made His dwelling."

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## Catholic University Helps Astronauts

**R**esearch led by Dr Dan Cleather at St Mary's Catholic University in Twickenham has been featured by the BBC for his work which has helped develop exercise technology designed for use in space.

The story focused on the High-Frequency Impulse for Microgravity (HIFIm) rowing ergometer, an innovative device invented by Physical Mind London to help astronauts combat the significant muscle and bone density loss experienced during long-duration missions in space. Astronauts can currently spend up to two and a half hours a day exercising in orbit yet still experience substantial physical deterioration during missions.

The project involves Dan Cleather, Professor of Strength and Conditioning at St Mary's University, whose expertise in exercise physiology and human performance has contributed to the development and testing of the device.

Part of the BBC filming took place at the University's Performance Education Centre, where demonstrations of the science behind the HIFIm device were carried out. The coverage highlighted St Mary's role in supporting cutting-edge research with real-world applications both in space and on Earth, including potential future benefits for conditions linked to ageing, frailty, and osteoporosis.

Also featured was St Mary's alumnus and Olympic rower Matthew Wells, who tested the equipment during parabolic zero-gravity flights. Other St Mary's graduates have also contributed to the wider research and development work surrounding the project.

The HIFIm rowing ergometer is one of only three exercise countermeasure devices selected by the European Space Agency for potential future use on space exploration missions.

The BBC coverage demonstrates how research taking place at St Mary's continues to contribute to international scientific innovation, while also creating opportunities for students, graduates, and researchers to work on globally significant projects.

*(Meanwhile, more down to earth, St Mary's alumni Ellie Kildunne, Jess Breach and Abi Burton were in the Red Roses Rugby squad which won an eighth successive Women's Six Nations title. More reasons to be proud of our Catholic Universities!)*



# Diocesan Board of Trustees

**E**arly in May, Bishop Philip chaired the meeting of the Board of Trustees which was held at Bishop's House in Portsmouth.

The meeting started with a period of prayer, formation and reflection. As usual at this time of year, our external auditors, HaysMac, presented their audit report on the Diocese's annual report and accounts. These were approved with only minor points concerning our financial controls, and they noted that all the points raised last year have been addressed.

There are some points of learning to address for parishes arising from the audit visits which will be addressed in coming weeks. Gratitude was expressed to all who have contributed to the annual audit, especially the finance team, and the parishes who were subject to audit visits.

The audited accounts form part of the Diocese's Annual Report for the financial year 2024–2025. The report does more than present the figures: it also describes some of the highlights, achievements and challenges of diocesan life during the year, as well as reflecting on the momentous events in the life of the Catholic Church: the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV.

The Annual Report also explains, in clear terms, where our income comes from and how that money is used to support the mission of the Church across the Diocese. We remain deeply grateful to the many people who give so generously, both through their financial support and through the gift of their time, skills and service, to sustain their parishes and the wider mission of the Diocese. The report is well worth reading. It will be submitted to the Charity Commission by the end of May and will then be made available on the Diocesan website. A notice, including a QR code for easy access, will be sent to all parishes for inclusion in parish newsletters. The report will also be shared through diocesan e-news. The trustees thanked those responsible for the production of the report which was all developed in house.

The Trustees noted the completion of the Diocesan Schools Mission Strategy. This document is the product of much hard work and has been developed over some time to reflect our Mission plan *You will be My Witnesses*. It provides a clear vision for what it means to be a Catholic school in the Diocese of Portsmouth, and it is hoped that it will inspire the life of schools in their work of evangelising and catechising pupils, as well as staff, governors and parents. Bishop Philip will formally commission the Plan at the annual school Mass in June.

The Chief Operating Officer's report highlighted the roll-out across the diocese of important systems, including People HR and ChurchSuite. These initiatives are aimed at making work more effective and efficient for everyone.

In addition, there was a discussion about contactless giving. Many parishes have now installed contactless devices and have reported increases in offertory. Total income through this route increased from £226,434 in 2022/23 to £698,954 in 2024/25, while the average annual parish income from contactless giving more than doubled, from £5,031 to £11,094. Those parishes which have not yet installed the devices are urged to contact the fundraising officers to obtain support as they are potentially missing the opportunity for this source of giving as fewer people carry cash routinely.

A number of new and updated policies were approved and will be made available to parishes through our intranet.

In addition to looking back at the past financial results in the audit report, Trustees reviewed in-year financial performance, which is satisfactory (spending is slightly below budget at this point in the year) although there is no complacency given economic factors such as energy costs which are rising due to global events and increased staffing costs to reflect inflationary pressures and the latest government decisions on national living wage. Trustees also noted that parishes would need to spend more on buildings, maintenance and health and safety matters. There was a wider discussion about future financial sustainability. Looking 3 years ahead, there are some significant challenges, and the need is as great as ever for good stewardship of the gifts that God has given us, and for continued generosity in supporting the Church financially.

Trustees reviewed the regular safeguarding report and commended the work of the safeguarding team, together with all those who support safeguarding in our parishes, for their continued commitment to keeping people safe in our communities. They noted the importance of maintaining the standards expected by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, and recognised the significant work being undertaken across the Diocese to ensure those standards are met.

Our next meeting will be in July 2026. It will take place at Our Lady and Saint Dominic's in Farnborough.

*Deacon Tony Darlison, Secretary to the Board of Trustees*

# Gaza Students in Italy

**A**n agreement signed in February is offering young Palestinians from the Gaza Strip an opportunity to continue their studies in Italy by providing them with scholarships, accommodation and a tailored programme of integration.

The third group of Palestinian students arrived in Italy last month, and they will join 157 students who will be studying at over 20 Italian universities for the next three or four years. The Palestinian students will be studying at San Marino University, at universities in Milan, Sassari, Cagliari and Bologna. Four of the students have been admitted to the Sapienza University in Rome. Their stay there is jointly sponsored through the humanitarian and educational initiative promoted jointly by the University, the Diocese of Rome and the Community of Sant'Egidio

On their first day at the Sapienza, the four students had the pleasure of meeting Pope Leo when he made a visit to the university. During his visit the Pope praised the university for upholding its mission to educate future leaders, shaping them to become artisans of peace. During his discourse to the Sapienza community, he also expressed his appreciation for the agreement to open a university humanitarian corridor from the Gaza Strip.

The arrivals form part of the IUPALS programme - Italian Universities for Palestinian Students - run jointly by the Conference of Italian University Rectors, the foreign ministry, and the Ministry of Universities and Research.

The transfer of students is coordinated by the Farnesina - Italy's foreign ministry - with the embassies in Tel Aviv and Amman and the consulate general in Jerusalem, in coordination with the Jordanian and Israeli authorities.

The students left Gaza via the Israeli Kerem Shalom crossing before being transferred to Jordan, where they were hosted at the Italian Hospital in Amman ahead of their departure for Italy.

The University Corridors initiative is part of the broader Italian humanitarian commitment to support the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, under the Food for Gaza programme structured around humanitarian aid, healthcare and educational efforts.

One of the students enrolled at the Sapienza University is nineteen-year-old Nada Jouda, originally from Rafah. Speaking to Vatican News, she recalled how the war abruptly interrupted her education. She had been unable to go to school for two years. Following the death of her father, her family were constantly being displaced. Nada said she carried her schoolbooks with her during every displacement, trying to continue studying despite the instability surrounding her. Her family first sought refuge in makeshift tents after the Israeli military entered Rafah. Food was expensive scarce, and water in short supply. Nada took responsibility for searching for water distribution points and carrying water back to whatever shelter the family had been able to find.

She spoke with concern about her mother's health. Having previously suffered from leukaemia, her mother has not been able to receive medical treatment because much of Gaza's healthcare system has been destroyed. Despite the suffering she described, Nada said she hopes her time in Rome will allow her not only to continue her studies but also to bear witness to the experience of Palestinians in Gaza.

Another of the students enrolled at the Sapienza University is Salem Abumustafa, originally from Khan Younis. He spoke of the devastation left behind in Gaza. The 20-year-old student said he left his family living in a tent without electricity and struggling daily to find water and other essentials after their four-storey home had been destroyed during the war. For him, studying in Rome represents an opportunity to restore hope for his family after months of hardship and uncertainty. "I came here to have a better future and to make my family proud of me," he said.

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## St. Charles Lwanga and Companions

**S**purred on by Sir Henry Morton Stanley (of “Doctor Livingstone I presume” fame) the Anglican Church Missionary Society sent missionaries to the Kingdom of Buganda, known today as Uganda. These Anglican missionaries were quickly followed by priests of The Society of Missionaries of Africa, better known as the White Fathers. These early missionaries were initially welcomed by King Mutesa, and for two years they were able to preach and teach without interference. Mutesa, however, was succeeded by the violent and perverted King Mwanga.



There was a strong Christian community, and many of the converts lived in the court. The leader was Joseph Mukasa, chief steward and friend of the king. Joseph disapproved of Mwanga’s predatory habits and did his best to keep the young pages and attendants safe from the king. When Mwanga killed a Protestant missionary and his companions, Joseph openly confronted the king and condemned what he had done. Despite their friendship, Mwanga wounded Joseph with a spear and ordered him to be executed. At his death Joseph forgave Mwanga and pleaded with him to repent and mend his ways.

The leadership of the Christians devolved to Charles Lwanga, and it seems he was all too successful at keeping the pages from harm and encouraging the converts to instruct others. One of the catechists, Denis Sebuggwawo, so angered the king that Mwanga had him brought before him and personally killed him by thrusting a spear through his throat. The king then ordered the royal compound to be sealed and called his executioners. Realising what was coming, Charles Lwanga baptized four catechumens that night. The next morning Mwanga assembled his entire court and separated the Christians from the rest saying: “Those who do not pray stand by me, those who do pray stand over there.” Fifteen boys and young men, all under 25, insisted that they were Christians and would remain Christians. Mwanga condemned them all to death. Also condemned were several others who admitted that they prayed.

The group were bound and taken on a long march. On the way they passed the home of the White Fathers, and one of the priests Father Lourdel recalled seeing a thirteen-year-old boy, Kizito, laughing and chattering to the others, showing no fear of what he knew awaited him. One of the condemned was a soldier called James Buzabaliwo. As he passed Father Lourdel he lifted up his bound hands and pointed to heaven; with a smile he called to Father Lourdel that he would see him in heaven and that what they suffered was nothing to the joys he had taught them to look forward to. The young Christians were so cruelly beaten on the journey that three of them died on the way.

When the group and their executioners reached Namugongo, they were kept prisoner for seven days. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> they were brought out, wrapped in reed mats and thrown onto a pyre. One of the young men, Mabaga, was the son of the chief executioner. The boy had refused his father’s pleas to run away and hide. As a final act of mercy, the executioners killed him before throwing his body into the flames. The rest were burned alive. Thirteen Catholics and eleven Protestants died that day. They died calling on the name of Jesus and proclaiming that while their bodies could be burned their souls could not.

When the White Fathers were expelled from the country, the new Christians carried on their work, translating and printing the catechism into their native language and secretly giving instruction in the faith. When the White Fathers returned after King Mwanga’s death, they found five hundred Christians and a thousand catechumens waiting for them. In all, twenty two Ugandan Catholics had been martyred. They were canonised, and the feast of Charles Lwanga and the Ugandan Martyrs is celebrated on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.



**The following JOB VACANCIES are posted on the Diocesan Website  
and the information is in the Church porch.  
Please pass this information on to anyone you think might be interested.**

**Full details, brochures and application details can be found at:  
[www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/about/careers/](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/about/careers/)**

### **PARISH ADMINISTRATOR**

St John the Baptist Parish, Andover – 20 hours per week (Permanent / Part Time)  
(Mon/Tue/Thur/Fri)

### **PARISH FINANCE ADMINISTRATOR**

St John the Baptist Parish, Andover – 10 hours per week (Permanent / Part Time)

### **PARISH HALL CLEANER**

Parish Hall at St John the Baptist, Andover – 7.5 hours per week (Permanent / Part Time)  
Mon to Fri: 7.30am to 9.00am



# Volunteering

**Jenny LeLean**, Head of Charity for Caritas Diocese of Portsmouth, writes about volunteering in your parish.

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of speaking to the leadership team and members of outreach ministries at St Stephen's church in Winchester about volunteering. Having been both a volunteer and involved in volunteer management, over the years I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly, yet giving of my time and energy is how I, along with the hundreds of others in the Diocese, respond to my calling in the mission of the Church.

Over the last 10 years there has been a general decrease in the number of people stepping forward to volunteer in the wider charity sector. There are a number of reasons for this, people are busy, juggling multiple calls on their time, as workers or carers, living with illness or disability and all the other things life involves. There are seasons where volunteering may not be an option. But what is often missed in the busyness of life and was so clear during the session are the multiple benefits volunteering can bring. Being part of a team, the laughter, joy, satisfaction, learning and support, seeing projects and people grow, and making a difference. People felt that, while not the original motivation for participating, what they got out of volunteering was far more than they put in.

So how to start? Catholic Social Teaching guides us to follow the pathway of to see, to judge and then to act. We need to see what is needed (and already happening), to discern if this is the right calling for us, in light of our gifts, charisms, skills and desires. Then to act, to actually sign up and do.

For parishes, there is a need to find new ways of reaching out to others to get involved. Exploring opportunities for families to volunteer together, offering micro (short sessions), virtual and ad hoc volunteering options and through personal invitation.

If you are interested in volunteering in your parish, contact your parish office. To find out more about volunteering with Caritas, contact Jenny at [caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk). For more information about volunteering more generally, email [volunteering@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk).



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## Andover Chamber Choir Concert

**A**ndover Chamber Choir will be presenting a Summer Concert featuring choral versions of some much-loved childhood songs.

The concert will be at Farleigh School, Redrice, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Among the works will be choral arrangements by John Rutter, Andrew Carter, Bob Chilcott, Eric Wallace, Eriks Esensvald, and these will be interspersed with readings from well-known, and much-loved, children's literature.

It sounds like an evening to be much enjoyed by adults and children alike!

Proceeds will be in aid of Andover Young Carers, which provides vital support and respite to young carers in Andover and the surrounding area.

Tickets are £15 on the door, or £12 in advance (under 16s free) from The Lights (in person and online) and through choir members. Refreshments are included in the cost of the ticket.

The poster for the Andover Chamber Choir concert features a central illustration of a wooden bookshelf filled with colorful books. Several musical notes are floating around the books. In the top right corner, the text "ANDOVER CHAMBER CHOIR" is written in a stylized font. Below the illustration, the title "RHYMES AND RECOLLECTIONS" is written in a large, elegant serif font, followed by the subtitle "A Choral Collection of Childhood Songs" in a smaller, cursive font. The date and time "7.30pm Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2026" and the venue "Farleigh School, Andover, SP11 7PW" are listed. At the bottom, there is a small logo for Andover Young Carers (AYC) and the text "Proceeds in aid of Andover Young Carers." and the website "www.andoverchamberchoir.org.uk".

ANDOVER CHAMBER CHOIR

**RHYMES AND RECOLLECTIONS**  
*A Choral Collection of Childhood Songs*

7.30pm Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2026  
Farleigh School  
Andover, SP11 7PW

Tickets: £15 on the door, £12 in advance, under 16s free. Refreshments included.  
Available at The Lights, Andover (in person and online)  
and through choir members.

AYC  
Proceeds in aid of Andover Young Carers.

www.andoverchamberchoir.org.uk

## *Hamnet (2025)*

**T**his is where the Academy got it spot on correct for the 2026 Oscar Awards. This film didn't get the Oscar for Best Picture but the female acting lead, Jessie Buckley, did get Best Actress Oscar for her role as Shakespeare's wife and mother to their son, Hamnet. On screen you can't avoid her and neither do you want to - in her luminosity she is transcendent. For her performance alone it is worth watching this film. Yet; there's so much more about this film that should encourage you to sit (and attentively) as it unfolds upon the screen.

It's not history as such. It's based on a novel but never mind that. Its context is all. Absolutely, you accept you are in the rural England of the late 16th Century England, and you feel the proximity of the recent Middle Ages more than any connection with our own Century. Life and death as shown are as physical – nasty, brutish and as oft-times suddenly short - as can be graphically depicted on screen. Watching Hamnet's birth scene, up front and personal, no way you don't experience the emotion and all the (ahem) “rest” of it. So; with this social background all anchored in, what of the film as a whole?

At the start of the film there's an on-screen note displayed that becomes the key which unlocks the end meaning of the film. The note is that in the 16th and early 17th Centuries the name Hamnet and the name Hamlet were interchangeable. Then we have the story. Mr Shakespeare (Paul Mescal) meets and marries Jessie Buckley and they have their family of two daughters and son Hamnet. Mr S doesn't want to be a tradesman so heads off to London and to his emerging theatre career. He's away for long periods returning when he is able.

This middle part of the film is the least satisfactory part of it. It has the vibe of being a well-appointed property but one empty and abandoned. At this juncture this film comes as near to being both dead in the water and simply dead as can be. Why? Simple to tell, this film, to work, requires that the two acting leads are on screen together or present in the same scene. It is their interaction that is the dynamo which powers the story. Fortunately, the Director does get their act together in the film's actual Third Act when they push the re-start button.

Hamnet dies of fever and his father is not there to say goodbye. Mrs Shakespeare blames her husband. Then she discovers her husband has written and is putting on a play in London entitled “Hamlet” (see note above). At this believed affront to the memory of her son, she decamps from Stratford to London and the Globe Theatre to...well...it ain't going to be pretty. As the play starts she is right at the front. Then - she gets it.

The stage actor playing Hamlet is made up as her son Hamnet would have looked and been had he grown to manhood. She is now at peace by comprehending that this is her husband saying goodbye to his own son Hamnet through writing his love for his son into the character of Hamlet and enacting it visibly on stage in the performance of the actor playing the role. It's emotional. It's powerful. And this is what rescues this film and brings it safe home. One definitely to watch.

*(John Newland)*



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## **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.



# New Recruits for Swiss Guards

In their striking varicoloured Renaissance dress uniform the Papal Swiss Guards are an impressive and popular sight around the Vatican. Established in 1506 by Pope Julius II, the Guards are among the oldest military units in continuous service anywhere in the world. While on guard duty at the Vatican and on ceremonial occasions the guards are seen in the distinctive red, blue, and yellow striped uniform and crested helmet carrying ancient weapons such as the halberd, it is often not realised that they are also a highly trained security force. In recent years, since the assassination attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, even greater emphasis has been placed on training to counter terrorist attacks and on protective measures such as evasive driving, emergency medical provision, and the use of small arms. When on protection duties, their well-cut, plain black business suits hide the automatic pistols and shoulder holsters we associate with secret service agents around the world.



To join the Swiss Guard, which prides itself on being an elite military unit, candidates must be unmarried Swiss Catholic males, between 19 and 30 years of age, at least 5ft 8in tall, have completed at least basic training in the Swiss Armed Forces, and hold an advanced education qualification.

If accepted, new guards are sworn in every year on 6 May, the anniversary of the Sack of Rome, when 147 of the 189 Swiss Guards died holding off the army of the (not so) Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and allowing Pope Clement VII to escape.

Last year, the ceremony was postponed following the death of Pope Francis on 21 April and the announcement that the conclave to elect his successor would be held in early May. The ceremony was eventually held on 4 October and was also unusual in having the Pope himself present.

This year 28 new recruits were sworn in and took their oath of allegiance. Pope Leo again decided to be present at the ceremony, when the chaplain of the guard read aloud the full oath of allegiance in the command languages of the Guard (German, Italian, and French): The English translation of the oath is: *I swear that I will faithfully, loyally and honourably serve the Supreme Pontiff (name of Pope) and his legitimate successors, and dedicate myself to them with all my strength, sacrificing, if necessary, my life to defend them. I assume this same commitment with regard to the Sacred College of Cardinals whenever the Apostolic See is vacant. Furthermore, I promise the Captain Commandant and my other superiors respect, fidelity and obedience. I swear to observe all that the honour of my position demands of me.*

When his name is called, each new guard approaches the Pontifical Swiss Guard's flag. Grasping the banner in his left hand, he raises his right hand with his thumb, index, and middle finger extended along three axes, a gesture that symbolizes the Holy Trinity and the three founding members of the Swiss confederation, and swears the oath in his native tongue.

The English translation of the words spoken by each new Guardsman is: *I, Halberdier (name), swear to diligently and faithfully abide by all that has just been read out to me, so help me God and his Patron Saints!*

At this year's ceremony, the Kommandant, Christopher Graf, welcomed the new recruits saying:

"Seldom is the traditional and the modern so tightly joined together as in the Swiss Guard. The Swiss Guard has protected the pope and his residence since 1506, and that has not changed to this day.

Today the traditional Renaissance uniform is worn by a modern, well-trained, young Swiss. What connects him to his 16th century predecessors is his firm conviction that he serves Christ's Church and his Vicar on Earth, the successor of Saint Peter. That he will sacrifice his own life if necessary to protect the pope. These men also share a sense of adventure on the international stage, camaraderie, and want to learn more about the latest developments and practise in personal security. To experience their faith more profoundly and, at the same time, to learn not only the Italian language, but also Italian culture. In this Mediterranean climate it is not only the fruit that ripens. Also faith, conviction, proficiency, friendship and the joy of life."



## The Pope's Prayer Intention for June

At the beginning of each year, the Holy Father sets out the intentions for which he asks us to pray. For this month of June the intention is for the values of sports: Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter, and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.

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### Reflection on the Pope's Prayer Intention: Where Chequered Flag Meets the Cross

There are 8.15 billion souls, and the Lord knows each one by name. He knows every fear, every dream, even every hair on their head.

Yet if we're honest, division is woven into our nature. From the very beginning, humanity has fractured along the lines of race, religion, and pride. A "me first" mentality has carved the world into competing camps, leaving chaos and strife in its wake.

And still, in his creativity, God has wired us for community. Then he gave us sports.

Sports become bridges. They draw strangers into a unified roar, collapse differences in a single moment of celebration, and remind us that we were made for something *together*. For followers of Jesus, this is more than entertainment. It is an opportunity. It is a mission.

In the world of INDYCAR Racing, our mission field, there is real chaos, real division, real heartache. Yet beneath all of it burns a shared passion for racing that no rivalry can extinguish. Week in and week out, we enter the track as missionaries, carrying the hope of Jesus into a culture that desperately needs it.

We pray with drivers before they strap in and accelerate toward 240 miles per hour. We stand with crews who change four tires in seven seconds, their hands constantly moving even as their hearts carry the sting of defeat. There is power in presence. God has opened the door. Racing is the meeting point, and his grace is what moves through it.

Now consider your seat in the stands. Whether it is an MLB stadium or a T-ball game on a Tuesday evening, what if you saw it not as a place of entertainment, but as your mission field? What if you became a bearer of the Kingdom right where you are?

The checkered flag waves. The crowd erupts. And somewhere in that roar, Jesus is already present.

Will you join him?

*Jason Holt Exec. Director Chaplain INDYCAR Ministry*

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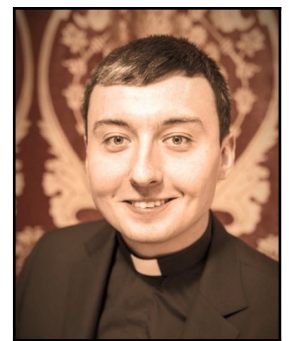
### Seminarian: Deacon Jack Ryan

Deacon Jack writes: 'Last summer, after five years, I returned from Rome, and the Bishop asked me to go to Cambridge, to work with the students at the University. This has been a very interesting experience, and a good opportunity to experience a different form of ministry to the parish placements I have been on throughout the Diocese.'

The Church's ministry to university students is very particular but also has been very rewarding. It has been great to accompany a number of students who are preparing for baptism and confirmation, and to be available to answer the many questions that they come with. Three times throughout the academic year, we hold an all-night vigil, and the students go out into the streets of Cambridge to encourage their peers to come into the Chaplaincy to light a candle, I have always been impressed by the great enthusiasm and love for the Lord that the students have.

In December, I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Philip in St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth, and, God-willing, I will be ordained a priest there on Saturday 18th July. Please keep me in your prayers.

Recently, the Church celebrated Good Shepherd Sunday, the annual day of prayer for a generous response to the Lord's call to the priesthood and religious life. Please keep praying for more individuals to respond to these calls. Please hold the students of Cambridge University in your prayers, as they enter their final term.



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### Seeker Saturday

The next Seeker Saturday for vocational discernment is on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 11am-3pm.**  
**Sacred Heart Church, Fareham. PO16 ONQ**

Pope Leo XIV recently called for the creation of communities where young people can feel accepted, listened to, and encouraged in their vocational discernment. Our regular gathering for Seekers is for exactly that purpose. If you are discerning if the Lord is calling you to the priesthood, diaconate or religious life, then spending time with like-minded people can be really beneficial to any vocational journey.

Our time together includes prayer, discussion, Mass, Adoration and lunch too.

To find out more about this regular event or to enquiry about attending (as booking is required for the hospitality we offer) please email us: [vocations@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:vocations@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

## From the School

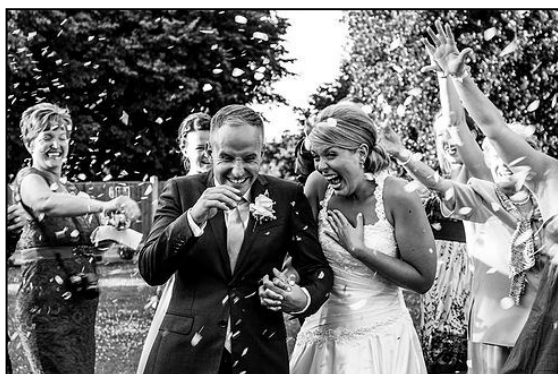
The school is warmly inviting parents, grandparents and family members to volunteer their time as regular reading volunteers in school from September 2026. This is an opportunity to make a real difference to children's confidence, enjoyment, and progress in reading. Volunteers will work with children across the school, supporting readers "one-to-one" and encouraging discussion in a calm welcoming environment. Before starting, all volunteers will need to complete the necessary safeguarding checks, followed by training, to feel confident and supported in the role. As well as helping the children to develop a love of reading, volunteers tell how much they too gain from building relationships with the pupils, rediscovering great stories and enjoying a sense of purpose and connection with the school community. So, if you have a little time to spare, the school would love to hear from you.

Thanks to some generous donations of appropriate toys, the children are having great fun in the new water play area. The children also love to play with the suitcases and if anyone is upgrading their holiday luggage, the old cases would be very welcome. The gardening projects are in full swing. The children are working hard digging, planting and caring for the outdoor spaces. To help them continue their great effort and donations of plants, seeds, compost and plant pots of any size would be really appreciated. Every donation helps the young gardeners to bring their ideas to life and to enhance the school grounds.

Year 4 Mini Vinnies will be taking part in a special sleep over fund-raising event to support an important charity, The Yellow Brick Road Project. The Mini Vinnies are part of the school's commitment to live out our faith through kindness and service, helping those in need. As well as being a memorable experience, the sleep over is an opportunity for them to make a real difference to the lives of others.

Families across the school community are invited to support the event and to contribute to the fund-raising effort. If you are able to make a donation you can do so at: <https://www.justgiving.com/charity/yellowbrickroadprojects>

Your support helps the children to grow as caring, compassionate members of our community.



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# SVP – South Sudan Update

**T**hank you once again for the support of the South Sudan Appeal held in England and Wales in 2025 which overall raised £170,000. The Society expresses its sincere thanks to all who contributed to the appeal. As a result of the generosity, support for SVP projects will be funded for another year, ensuring that some of the most vulnerable and impoverished in the world continue to receive essential help.

The National President of SVP in South Sudan is Brother Jino. As part of his Easter message, he wrote: "Truly as servants and members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, let's live in hope and spirit of togetherness, to serve the needy and vulnerable people. Thanks to all our partners for being an integral part of our mission to make a difference in the life of the needy."

Among the initiatives which the generosity of parishioners such as those of the parish of St John the Baptist support is the Infant Feeding Centres. There has been an increase in the number of children eligible for help, and the Society has been able to respond by increasing the number of children being supported from 700 to 1,000.

High inflation costs across South Sudan is a factor which adds to the challenge but the team are committed to continuing their expanded reach. The centres are not just places children come and eat, but they also usually spend the afternoon playing with each other. The centres have play areas dedicated for the children, however over the years, these have become run-down, so the SVP will also focus on refurbishing these key areas to keep bringing joy to the children during their visits.

There are still some 4,000 people living in Displaced Persons camps. The SVP delivered food items such as maize flour, beans, rice, cooking oil, and salt. In addition to focusing on providing food, the residents were also supplied with sheeting and poles to make shelters (known as Tukuls, see image to the right) that will provide shelter through the upcoming rainy season.

The Society recently held the annual meeting at which forty delegates represented thirty Conferences. The theme of the meeting was "Strengthening the Society to deliver effective service to the poor". Those Conferences too far from Juba to send delegates were furnished with a printed record of the event. Brother Jino keeps in contact with Conferences, including Twinned Conferences in England and Wales, through his regular media posts.



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## Trading Places

**T**he Carmelites at Boar's Hill Oxford have been in touch to mention a series of programmes coming up soon on Channel 5, called "Trading Places." Fr. Alexander Ezechukwu, superior, writes: "You may already be aware that our community at the Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, has been featured in a documentary series on Channel 5 called Trading Places.

The programme follows three young men as they spend a week living alongside our friars, sharing in our daily life of prayer, silence, community, and work.

The series is now airing and our episode was broadcast on Sunday 24 May at 10pm. We expect it to reach millions of viewers and see this as a providential moment — not only for our community, but for the witness of religious and contemplative life in the United Kingdom more broadly. The series can be seen on 'My5'.



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## Bishop Challoner School Anniversary

**I**t is fifty years since Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School in Basingstoke was opened. Many of the Catholic children from our parish have completed their secondary education at that school.

To round off the anniversary celebrations, the school will be holding an Alumni Celebration on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July. Former students, colleagues and supporters are warmly invited to join the school for the final celebration of the Jubilee Year.

If you would like to attend, please complete the form which can be accessed via the school's website.

Alumni are requested to share the information with others they know who have a connection with the school and so might be interested in joining the celebration.



**Please pray for those who have died recently**  
Maggie Price  
**and for those whose anniversaries occur in June**

Thomas Reed, Mary Mallon, Mary Alice Magee, Mary Gallagher, Timothy Chute, Joseph Smith, Ellen Mackrell, John McGarvey, John Toland, Chester Wisniewski, Matthew McGarvie, James Crouch, Elizabeth Holdway, Leon Antoni Danisz, Hazel Rodwell, Brenda Taggart, Mark Anthony, Douglas Tolhurst, Gerald Green, Sylvie White, John Sheehan, Margaret Connolly, James Hunter, Michael Daley, Margaret Davies, Massimo Paccini, George Sweet, Freda Marchant, Dorothy Watford, Cpt George Kitchin, James Daly, George McDermott, Mabel Tree, Catherine Henry, Maria Hubbard, Herman Eggeman, Eileen Galeno, Albert Line, Daisy Lewis, John Barlow, Alfons Majowski, Dorothy Ward, William Kavanagh, Elizabeth Parman, Alice Gilbert, Douglas Spindler, William Bennett, Kathleen Hamblett, Desmond Ryan, Nancy Clune, James Hugh Thornton, Fr Joseph Val D'Eremao, Patrick "Paddy" O'Reilly, John McCumisky, Jessica Rogers, James Meehan, Barbara McEvoy, Tony Montfort, Harry Ridley, Christina Hare, John Sayers, Henry Cummins, Reg Dredge, David Daws, Tom Connolly, William Fitzgerald, Fr. Charles Ayward, Ann Quinton, George Henderson, Olive Connolly, Valerie Greenslade, Ann Hedley, Gustavo Costi, Valerie Masser, Tom McGinty, Margaret Barrins, Fr Ronnie Mitchell SMM, Canon Brian Murphy O'Connor, Anne Chute, Brendan Hayes, Eddie Smith, Fred Crompton, Rita Hunt, Anthony Goddard, James Wheen, Margaret Jackson, Marie Allen, John Doonan, Andrew Allen, Jo Parker, Kevin O'Leary, Anita Wilders-Pratt, Fred Tarrant, Samuel James Webber, Bernadette Coveney, Garry Stockley, Dean Derrick, Mary Britten, Mary Evans, Denzil Stratton, Jane O'Kelly, Anna Ricci, Patricia Wheatley, Stephen Foster and Pete Marshall

**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, Susanne Church, Robert Colledge, Eileen Price, Concepta Cuddihy, Frank Hinds, Clan Furtado, Lisa Rammage, 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**

**A**rticles 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**

**M**any thanks to the various contributors to this month's *The JOURNAL*. The next edition will be issued on 4th & 5th July. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 29th June. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: [stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com](mailto:stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com)