



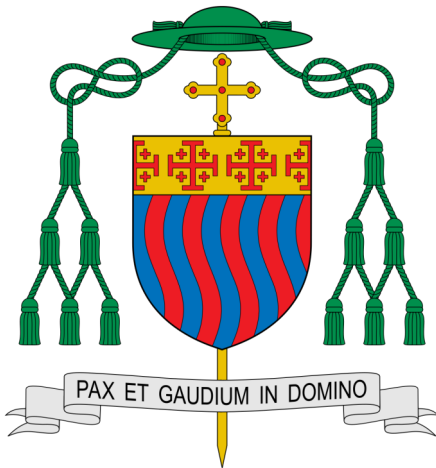
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The newspaper of the Parish of St John the Baptist, Andover.
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New Archbishop of Westminster



On the 14th of this month the Right Reverend Richard Moth will be installed as Archbishop of Westminster. His appointment was announced by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in December. Archbishop Moth takes over from Cardinal Vincent Nichols and will be the 12th Archbishop of Westminster.

Richard Moth was born in Zambia, and his family immigrated to the United Kingdom when he was two. He was educated at Catholic schools in Kent before training at St John's Seminary, Womersley. He was ordained to the priesthood in July 1982. He has served as Vicar General of the Diocese of Southwark from 2001, and as the Catholic Bishop of the Forces from 2009 to 2015, before being appointed as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton.

The Archbishop-elect, on hearing of his appointment to Westminster said, "I am moved greatly by the trust that Pope Leo has placed in me, in appointing me to the Diocese of Westminster. As I prepare to move to the Diocese, I am so grateful for the support being given to me by Cardinal Vincent Nichols at this time. He has given dedicated service to the Diocese and will be missed greatly. Serving the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton has given me the wonderful opportunity of sharing the Church's mission with lay faithful and clergy, and I give thanks for the many blessings of these last ten years. My first task will be to get to know the priests and people of Westminster and I look forward, now, to serving them. With them, and building on the firm foundations that have been laid by so many down the years, I look forward to continuing the great adventure that is the life of the Church and witness to the Gospel."

Cardinal Nichols has expressed his delight at the appointment, saying, "I am delighted at this news. Archbishop-elect Richard will bring to our Diocese many gifts and considerable episcopal experience from his years of ministry in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and before that as Bishop of the Forces. I look forward very much to his Installation as our new Archbishop on Saturday, 14 February 2026. It is, of course, St Valentine's Day, as well as the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, co-Patrons of Europe. "I remember being present in Westminster Cathedral on 29 September 2009 for the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Richard as Bishop of the Forces. So today I can say: 'Welcome back, dear Bishop Richard. You are most welcome indeed.'"

News from Cameroon

The archdiocese of Bamenda in Cameroon, has strong links with our own diocese of Portsmouth. At the conclusion of the Cameroon Bishops' Annual Seminar, the Archbishop of Bamenda and President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya, praised and thanked his brother Bishops, priests, the religious, and the Christian faithful of Kumba for the success of the Seminar on the theme of "Communion and Collegiality."

Archbishop Nkea emphasised the importance of fostering episcopal unity and exploring ways to exemplify genuine pastoral leadership within a spirit of collaboration. He said that pastoral leaders may not always find immediate solutions to every challenge, but by they can consistently support one another with love and compassion.

In an address to the Christians of Kumba Diocese, the archbishop expressed deep gratitude for the generous hospitality shown by the people and their steadfast commitment. "We may not possess gold or silver to offer, but we promise you our unceasing prayers. Your Diocese, blessed under the guidance of your chief shepherd, Agapitus Nfon, stands as a beacon of faith, hope, and love, marked by unity and resilience," he said.

Referring to the ongoing social and political crisis in the Anglophone region of Cameroon, Archbishop Nkea delivered a message of hope, assuring the faithful that "God is the master of time, and with Him, all things are possible. Peace will prevail in Kumba and throughout Cameroon."

The Apostolic Nuncio to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, Archbishop Avelino Bettencourt, commended the faithful of Cameroon for their faith and active participation in the Holy Year events. While acknowledging the hardships many people are facing, he emphasised that "the Church is on the ground and present with the people." He further expressed gratitude to God for the numerous graces received during the Jubilee Year.

The Nuncio also underlined some of the central tenets of "Communion and collegiality." He affirmed that "Our communion and collegiality links us to Christ Jesus with a close bond to the Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Christ, and to the Bishops of the Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church."

Recalling that 2026 marked the 60th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Cameroon, the Nuncio thanked the Cameroonian Bishops on behalf of the Holy Father for their tireless work, and for being a source of hope and guidance for the Church.



New Parish Registration for Everyone!

The Diocese is now using a new system called ChurchSuite, 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, please make sure you have filled out a new Registration Form.

There is a separate adult and child registration form.

Adult Parishioner Registration Form



You can use the QR codes on your smart phone to bring up the form, and it's a very simple form.

Child Parishioner Registration 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 or a relative who could help you complete the form?

(The old database had 1,839 entries and many details were out of date!)

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.

Mosaic of Pope Leo

The Basilica of Saint Paul Without the Walls is built over the tomb of St. Paul. It is noted for its splendid marble columns, beautiful mosaics and ornate golden decorations. Notable among the mosaics are the portraits of the popes which form a frieze high up on the walls. In the old basilica each pope had his portrait in a painted frieze extending above the columns separating the aisles from the nave. When the basilica was rebuilt in the 19th century, the paintings were replaced by mosaics.

It is now traditional for a mosaic portrait of each new pope to be produced and erected in the basilica. Pope Leo XIV has had his portrait produced by the Vatican Mosaic Studio of the Fabric of Saint Peter's. The portrait is traditionally created at the request of the Basilica's Archpriest, Cardinal James Michael Harvey. It seems appropriate that the cardinal who currently has the see of St Paul's Basilica is an American.

The mosaic roundel, with a diameter of 137 centimetres, was created using glass enamels and gold on a metal structure at the studio of the Fabric of Saint Peter.

The tesserae, the individual pieces of glass or tile, were produced using the ancient cut-mosaic technique and were set with the traditional oil-based mastic.

The mosaic is based on a preparatory oil on canvas painting, the same size as the proposed mosaic roundel, by Rodolfo Papa, a member of the Theatine Order, otherwise known as the Congregation of Clerics Regular. The painting will be kept, together with the entire series of portraits of the popes, in the Vatican. The roundel will be installed in the space next to the portrait of Pope Francis, in the right nave, at a height of about 13 metres.

There are a limited number of vacant spaces available for future popes, so this has almost inevitably led to the legend that the end of the world will happen once all the spaces are filled!

The Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls is the conventual church of the adjacent Benedictine abbey. It is one of the four major basilicas in Rome and is designated as a UNESCO World heritage Site. Second in size only to St Peter's Basilica it was founded by Emperor Constantine outside the Aurelian Walls of ancient Rome, over the burial site of St, Paul.

The original basilica, built in the fourth century, was altered, added to, and rebuilt over the years, suffering various structural failures, collapsing roofs and damage by fire. In 1823 a fire, believed to have been started by a workman repairing copper work on the roof, more or less destroyed the building.

Pope Leo XII ordered its rebuilding and in 1840 Pope Gregory XVI consecrated the high altar and the transept. The building was finished about 14 years later and was consecrated by Pope Pius IX.



Diocesan Publications

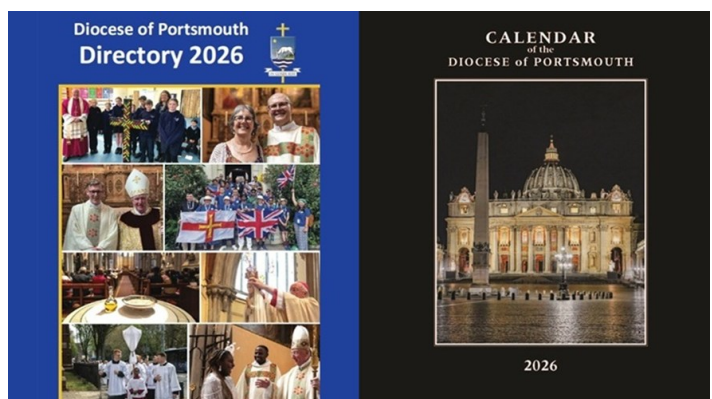
Each year the diocese issues two useful publications, the Diocesan Ordo and the Diocesan Directory. The Ordo outlines the celebrations of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours in the Diocese of Portsmouth for each day of the year. It also provides a diocesan prayer intention for each day.

The Portsmouth Diocesan Directory gives contact details for the Bishop's Office, the Curial departments, parishes, clergy, schools and religious communities. It also contains other information including Sunday Mass times across the Diocese.

Print copies of both publications may be ordered from the Bishop's Office. The Ordo costs £12.50, and the Diocesan Directory is priced at £15.00.

Bank Transfer details are available by email directory@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk, or if paying by cheque made payable to *CDP Episcopal Administration* and sent to Deacon Craig Aburn, Bishop's Office, Bishop Crispian Way, Portsmouth PO1 3HG

If you would like our bank details to pay by bank transfer, simply email: directory@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.



Seminarian Francis Ezeani

This month's Seminarian in Focus is Francis Ezeani who is studying at Allen Hall Seminary, London. He writes:

Relecting on my vocation story or priestly formation journey, I find myself in deep gratitude to God for his mercies and faithfulness. He has always been with me through the joyful moments and the painful, difficult ones. He has equally sent many wonderful people along my path to communicate something of his love to me at various points in life. His love has been steadfast even with my many faults and sins. I am grateful for seminary formation which often presents occasions for deeper reflection and self-knowledge and a rediscovery of my identity as a beloved child of the Father.

As I continue my 5th year of seminary formation, I am struck again with the many wonderful opportunities that I have been presented with here in the seminary. The highlight for me was the opportunity to visit Italy for the first time ever in the summer for the seminary annual retreat and pilgrimage for the Jubilee of Seminarians! I remember myself as a teenager in Nigeria watching the funeral Mass of Pope St. John Paul II and the post-conclave announcement of Pope Benedict XVI and dreaming of a time when I may visit the Basilica of St. Peter. In the summer, my prayer was answered double fold as not only did we visit St. Peter's and the other 3 major Basilicas in Rome, but we also had catechesis with Pope Leo XIV just for seminarians. It has been a huge source of blessing for me and to have been able to share those moments with my fellow seminarians was remarkable.

The seminary community, the house jobs and pastoral placements in addition to the rigorous studies have in various ways challenged me to step out of my comfort zone and grow in pastoral charity and zeal for the service of God's people, moulding my weak humanity more into the image of the Good Shepherd. While of course there are challenging moments that may often arise with communal living with people from all walks of life with various personalities, gradually I am beginning to see some of these inconveniences as a path to holiness if I can accept them and present my emotions to the Lord in prayer. I am learning to trust more in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring about this transformation in me.

As with the start of each new year, resolutions are made, may I kindly request if you would consider offering a little prayer each month for more love in our world, for those who feel isolated and for places where there is a dearth of love while conflicts and violence thrive. May Christ whose birth we celebrate at Christmas fill our hearts with his joy, peace and love and may his Virgin Mother intercede for us all."

Please remember all our Seminarians and pray for Vocations to the Sacred Priesthood in your daily prayers.



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Things to Come (1936)

At 90 years of age this is one of those films that not only still has legs but moreover has legs that stride purposely forward from first screen to last frame. This is the 1936 screen version of H. G. Wells's 1933 book vision of the future, *The Shape of Things to Come*. Coming in at 150,000 words, the book might be thought beyond being able to be put on the screen. Not so. Directed by William Cameron Menzies and produced by Alexander Korda, it's a film that draws out the dramatic core strengths of the book and then deploys them on the screen in the format of the classic 3 Act structure. That Mr Wells worked closely on this adaptation also helped.



The film begins in 1940 and concludes in 2036 with a very optimistic look to the future. Based in the town of "Everytown" it is Christmas, but the world is on the brink of war.

War duly comes and goes on, year after year after year. On the screen the banners come up, 1945, then 1950 and so on. Worse to come. With this forever war comes the Wandering Sickness. Individuals are driven to wander and then just die. Half the world's entire population die off. End Act 1.

Act 2 opens in 1965. The Wandering Sickness has burnt itself out and vanished. Everytown is now the tribal kingdom of a warlord, Ralph Richardson, "the Boss". Into this arrives aviator Raymond Massey. A fighter pilot in the War, he now represents Wings Over The World. All of the pilots and techie people have created a new order based on science and frankly, are going to impose it by force on everybody. No more petty tribal kingdoms or warlords. This they do. The Boss dies and his world with it.

Fast forward to 2036 (Act 3) and Everytown has changed into clean bright and shiny plastic. Science and technology has banished hunger, want and all material needs are taken care of. Space is the final frontier and the way to conquer it is to fire off volunteers in a capsule from a large space gun. All well and good - except it ain't. A sculptor, with an unpronounceable screen name (Cedric Hardwicke), raises a mob to go and destroy the space gun. Thankfully they don't manage this and 2 volunteers get shot off into Space. The film ends with a slightly mawkish oration by Raymond Massey (now playing the great grandson of the 1940s aviator) about onward and upward because this is Mankind's destiny.

At about 96 minutes running time, this film packs in as much of Well's book as could be achieved and puts it on the screen in chunks as digestible a manner as can be served up. For audiences in 1936, less than 20 years after the carnage of the First World War the carnage of another possible conflict was not beyond reality. Hitler was German Chancellor. Civil War in Spain. However, in the end, all of us would be saved by Science and especially the Technocrats that controlled it. Worth finding and watching and plenty to think on – then – and now.

John Newland

Vocations - Discernment

The Diocesan Vocations Promotion Team invites those discerning a calling to the priesthood, the diaconate or religious life to join them for a Seeker Saturday. These days take place every month at the Sacred Heart Church, Fareham, PO16 0NQ from 11am to 3pm.

If you think the Lord might be calling you to a religious vocation, spending time with like-minded people can prove very beneficial. The day is spent in prayer, discussion, Mass, and Adoration. There is some less spiritual sustenance as there is a break for lunch!

Pope Francis once reflected on the significance of discernment, "Discernment is demanding and requires listening to the Lord, to oneself, and to others. It is a process that calls for 'prayer, reflection, patient expectation, and, ultimately, courage and sacrifice'." The Pope also highlighted the joy that comes from making good decisions, stressing that "making a good decision, a right decision, brings us much joy."

He urged that we especially help young people understand that "being free means risking to embark on a particular path, with wisdom and prudence of course, but also with boldness and a spirit of renunciation, in order to grow and advance in self-giving, and thus to find happiness in loving others in accordance with God's plan.

Seeker Saturdays will be held on 28th February, 21st March, 25th April, 16th May and 13th June.

Ordination to the Diaconate

On Saturday 20th December in Portsmouth cathedral, Bishop Philip ordained Seminarian Jack Ryan as Deacon, an important step on his journey towards priestly ordination next summer. Jack comes from Park Gate parish and is currently working with Fr. Paul Keane and the chaplaincy team at Fisher House, Cambridge.

Jack's parents, Jay and Clare Ryan were present together with his brother Alex and sister Grace. They were joined by numerous other relatives and friends, including schoolfriends from St George's and St Anne's, friends from Rome and students from Fisher House.

Jack has been studying at the Venerable English College in Rome, and the Rector of the College, Fr Stephen Wang attended the ceremony together with Fr Paul Keane and members of the clergy from Portsmouth and further afield.

Bishop Philip told the assembled congregation that Jack had expressed a desire to be a priest when he was only four. Unlike many others who express such a wish in their childhood Jack had followed through on that wish and was now so close to his final goal. In his homily, the bishop said that: "Each one of us has a vocation in life. In the words of St. John Henry Newman, *God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another* and it's a key part of our spiritual development to discern how it is God wants me to serve Him. This is why today Jack thanks all of you for helping him discern his vocation, not least Canons John Cooke and Chris Heaps, the Vocations team, Fr. Edmund from Shrewsbury, the staff and students of the VEC and the members of Fisher House".

Concluding his homily, Bishop Philip said: "In this Mass, we pray for you Jack. We call on the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary: with Her at your side, you can be sure your prayers and endeavours will never fail. So, may the Lord bless you. May He fill you with His Holy Spirit. May He keep you *in Corde Iesu*, in the Heart of Jesus. And may you persevere life-long in good works and one day be found worthy of a place with Christ in heaven."



Lent

You might be wondering why you are being regaled with information about Lent and Easter when there are still a few mince pies and a bit of Christmas cake wanting your attention. The Easter season is closer than you might think – Ash Wednesday is on 18th of February, and we then begin the six weeks of Lent leading up to Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Lent is a period of preparation for Easter, a time when as Catholics we are encouraged to practice penitence and self-denial. That sounds pretty gruesome, but it is simply an opportunity for focussing on our spiritual life, accepting that we are all sinners and acknowledging the supreme sacrifice which Jesus Christ made on our behalf. It has long been traditional for Catholics to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation sometime during, just before or just after Lent.

Lent covers the forty days before Easter, reflecting the forty days which Christ spent in the wilderness, fasting and rebuffing the temptations of Satan. The numerically literate among us may well say that from Ash Wednesday to Easter is more than forty days, and they would be quite right. However, this is because Pope Gregory the Great moved the start of Lent back from a basic forty days before Easter to Ash Wednesday so that Lent covers forty days without counting Sundays.

Lent used to be taken rather more seriously in the past, than it seems to be today. At various times Lent has seen all legal proceedings being banned, theatres closed, hunting prohibited, and even military manoeuvres curtailed. In times past, it was also customary to fast throughout Lent, and people were encouraged to "give-up something for Lent". Those of us whose childhood included the bleak war and post-war days of rationing may well remember giving up sweets for Lent – which wasn't that much of a sacrifice as we hardly ever saw sweets anyway! Today, there is more emphasis on doing something extra, something positive, for Lent rather than giving something up.

The day before Lent begins, is known as "Pancake Day" or "Fat Tuesday" i.e. *Mardi Gras*, a day when many countries have a carnival, a joyous celebration before the austerity of Lent. Elsewhere, households used up the sort of food they would not be eating during Lent and enjoyed a good time before the serious stuff began.

In liturgical terms, we start the season with the smearing of ashes on Ash Wednesday. The ashes are made by burning the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday. As the cross of ashes is smeared on to our foreheads by the priest, he says "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return" a reminder of our mortality.

All in all, Lent is a useful time for us to reassess our spiritual life and seek a closer relationship with Christ.

St. Saint Scholastica

Saint Scholastica, like her brother St. Benedict, consecrated her life to God from a very early age. After her brother had founded the first Benedictine Monastery at Monte Cassino, she took up residence in neighbouring Plombariola where she founded a convent of nuns under St Benedict's direction.

As Scholastica was not allowed to enter Benedict's monastery, the brother and sister would meet once a year in a house some distance away. They would spend the day in worshipping together and discussing sacred texts and spiritual issues.

The most commonly repeated story about her relates that one year she was particularly anxious to continue their discussions and begged her brother to stay till the next day. Benedict, who had never spent a night outside of his monastery since its foundation, refused. Scholastica closed her eyes in prayer and a few moments later a violent storm broke out over the area, such a storm as made any thought of travel that night impossible. When asked what she had done, Scholastica replied that she had asked Benedict and he would not listen, so she had asked God and He did listen. So she got her way, and the discussions continued into the next day.

According to St Gregory's Dialogues, three days after that event Scholastica died and Benedict, from the window of his cell, saw his sister's soul leaving the earth and ascending into heaven. He sent some of his fellow monks to bring her body to the monastery at Monte Cassino and laid her in the tomb which he had prepared for himself. When he died, St Benedict was entombed beside her so that as St. Gregory says, "death did not separate the bodies of these two, whose minds had ever been united in the Lord".

Saint Scholastica died in 547 at the age of 67, and her feast day is celebrated on February 10th. It is believed that her relics were moved from Monte Cassino to a rich silver shrine in Saint Peter's Church in Le Mans, France, which may have been at the same time that St. Benedict's remains were moved to Fleury.

Both St. Benedict and St. Scholastica appear on the obverse of the Austrian €50 coin, one of a series depicting *The Christian Religious Orders* issued in 2002.

St Scholastica is the patron saint of children suffering from convulsions, as well as the patron saint of nuns and of the town of Le Mans. Not surprisingly, she is invoked for help in times of storms.



Winchester Catholic History Society

Winchester Catholic History Society has published its list of speakers and events for the next six months.

On Thursday 5th February, the Historian and broadcaster Professor Anna Whitelock will be speaking on her latest book "The Rising Sun: James I & the Dawn of a Global Britain". Her talk is at Winchester College at 6.30pm.

On Wednesday 18th March at St Peter's Parish Centre in Jewry Street, Anna Withers will be talking about the importance of Monastic Gardens which were carefully planned to serve as a source of food and medicine as well as places of peace and spiritual reflection.

On Friday 24th April 2026, to celebrate the centenary of St Peter's Catholic Church in Winchester, the Society's Honorary President, Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, will be speaking on "Smashing Images during the Reformation: Why did they do it and why did they stop?" His talk examines aspects of the Reformation which tore the Medieval world apart. This talk will be at Winchester College.

On Wednesday 20th May at the Parish Centre, Professor Maria Hayward of Southampton University will explore fashionable dress at the Court of Charles II by focussing on the clothes of the King, his Queen and his mistresses, drawing on accounts in the Royal Collection and portraits by leading court artists.

On Wednesday 17th June at 6.30 in the Parish Centre, Professor Michael Wheeler will be speaking on his new book on "William Gladstone: the Heart & Soul of a Statesman", exploring the spiritual dimension of Gladstone's complex life.

For further information or to book tickets please go to the Winchester Catholic History Society website or email win.cath.history@gmail.com



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.



Remembering the Holocaust

It is eighty-one years ago that, the Auschwitz Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp was liberated by the soldiers of the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front. Auschwitz, located in southern Poland, was a massive complex of 40 concentration and extermination camps operated by the Nazi regime during the Second World War. In this camp more than one million people were murdered, the majority of them Jews.

In the Main Camp and Birkenau, the Soviet soldiers discovered the corpses of over 600 prisoners who had been shot by the retreating SS or who had died of exhaustion or starvation.

To mark the historic moment when the survivors were freed, the date—January 27—was chosen by the United Nations in 2005 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The United Nations was born following the revelation of the horrors of the Second World War and the determination of nations to maintain peace, as well as to provide humanitarian aid to people in need, to safeguard essential human rights and to uphold international law.

In 1948, with those aims in mind, the United Nations adopted two vital documents: the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*.

Writing on his Pontifex Instagram account Pope Leo stressed that “the Church remains faithful to the unwavering position of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate** against every form of antisemitism. The Church rejects any discrimination or harassment based on ethnicity, language, nationality, or religion”.

In 2005, the UN resolution creating International Holocaust Memorial Day set out to ensure that the Holocaust “will forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice.” It urged member states to “develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to prevent future acts of genocide”. Twenty-one years after this summons, countries have responded in their own way.

In this country, the Centre for Holocaust Education seeks to look at how and why the Holocaust took place, seeking to ensure the Holocaust does not fade from memory as the remaining survivors die. The Centre aims to see that the lessons of history continue to be taught to succeeding generations.

At the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York, diplomats and members of the public came together to observe the International Day with Holocaust survivors and their families. Doing so, they helped to keep alive the voices of those who lived through the horrors, preventing the full impact of the Holocaust from being reduced to words in a history book, stressing that remembrance “dignifies the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. It keeps alive their memories of the communities and traditions and loved ones the Nazis sought to erase,” challenging us all to reflect on the “deadly consequences of antisemitism and hatred, dehumanization and apathy left unchallenged.”

It is sobering to realise that after more than eight decades since the Holocaust, people today face daily attacks around the world. Antisemitism has been on the rise and the denial and distortion of the Holocaust continue. The UN noted that remembering the Holocaust, “defies denial and distortion, rejects falsehoods, confronts hatred, and insists on the humanity of the victims”.

Universal rights for everyone—no matter their ethnicity, religion, or background—is essential for achieving peace. It is also a central part of the UN’s mission.

The UN stated, “in honouring the victims of the Holocaust, we reaffirm our common humanity and commit to defending the dignity and human rights of all people.”

Holocaust Remembrance Day is a timely reminder to pray and reflect on the past in order to prevent such atrocities ever happening again.

(**Nostra Aetate*, translates as “In Our Times”, and refers to the opening sentence of the Vatican II “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”. It was seen as a landmark document initiating a positive approach to other religions)





The Pope's Prayer Intention for January

At the beginning of each year, the Holy Father sets out the intentions for which he asks us to pray. For this month of February we are asked to pray for children with incurable diseases.

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

Reflection on the Pope's Prayer Intention

I'll never forget that first seizure. I turned around to find my sweet baby – who just seconds before was happily playing on the floor – folded in half, jerking, and turning blue. That was the first of countless seizures. For our family, this month's intention is deeply personal. Our ten-year-old daughter Anna suffers from Dravet Syndrome, a rare, severe, and lifelong form of epilepsy. Her first seizures began when she was just six months old, setting us on a road marked by deep uncertainty, but also by astonishing grace and love.

Dravet Syndrome is more than just seizures. It touches nearly every part of daily life. Anna has developed more slowly than her peers, deals with restricted mobility, and struggles with limited communication. Even her body temperature and sleep are affected.

Children like Anna require constant care and vigilance. Yet through every challenge, Anna radiates joy, courage, and peace. She is a light to everyone she meets. Next to the sacraments, Anna is the greatest source of grace for our family. Through the gift of Anna, we have learned so much: patience, compassion, and the strength that comes from surrendering everything to God. In short, Anna has taught us the way of trust and love.

As we join Pope Leo in prayer this month, may we hold all children with incurable diseases close to our hearts. May we honour their dignity, uplift their families, and allow their lives to remind us that every person—no matter their abilities—is willed, loved, and necessary; each one reveals something sacred about the heart of God.

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, You came into the world to heal our infirmities and to endure our sufferings. You went about healing all and bringing comfort to those in pain and need.

We come before you now in this time of illness asking that you may be the source of our strength in body, courage in spirit and patience in pain. May we join ourselves more closely to you on the cross and in your suffering that through them we may draw our patience and hope.

Assist us and restore us to health so that united more closely to your family, the Church, we may give praise and honour to your name.

Amen.

Events at Douai

The Spring Pastoral Programme of events at Douai Abbey starts off on Saturday 14th February with exploring “Wider Horizons of the Spirit (II) Encounters of a 1980s Indian Journey” led by Fr Peter Bowe OSB. From a year in India in 1983, with Bede Griffiths at Shantivanam & on extensive journeys, questions arise for our Christian & spiritual journey today. How does Christ relate to Hinduism & Buddhism? Can we encounter him in other faiths? How to live by faith, Christian & otherwise, in a secular world?

On Saturday 21st February, Fr Gervase Holdaway OSB will examine the passages from the Gospel of St Matthew which we will encounter during Lent.

A week later, on Saturday 28th February, there will be a Lent Reflection facilitated by Susan Smith & Br Christopher Greener OSB. We are invited to hear the history of Medjugorje and the messages of our Lady, testimonies of love and grace, to hear music of the Croatian Mass, to pray the rosary, come to confession, celebrate Mass followed by Adoration. Invite friends to come and taste the fruits.

On Saturday 7th March, there will be a gentle, contemplative day, “Cave – Refectory – Road” led by Barbara Priest exploring our Lenten pilgrimage and its three monastic elements: the solitude of our cave, the hospitality of our table, and our journey of faith

On Saturday 28th March, Clare Carlisle & John Cottingham will lead a day reflecting on the reality of loss, ageing, sickness and death, examining attempts to come to face the fragility of life, our inevitable decline and eventual demise. Do today's solutions measure up to what older philosophical/spiritual traditions offer us?

For further information see the Douai Abbey website: www.douaiabbey.org.uk

From the School

The Spring term began with a whole school Mass Celebrated by Canon Chris to mark the feast of the Epiphany. This feast commemorates the visit of the Magi, who followed the star to Bethlehem where they found Jesus, the light of the world. The school welcomed the families and parishioners who had come to join in the celebration.

Deacon Michael was joined by the prefects for the annual blessing of the lintels, a school tradition marking both the new year and the Epiphany. The group began in prayer beside the Christmas crib before visiting each classroom. At each door Deacon Michael marked the lintel with this year's blessing: "20+C+M+B+26". The traditional inscription represents the names of the Magi, Casper, Melchior, and Balthazar, and the Latin phrase *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, meaning "May Christ bless this dwelling".

The school's Eco Councillors enthusiastically took part in a morning climate learning, creativity and action. They began by joining the Global Youth Perspective session to learn about the Eco Council projects, listening to other young people explain how they are tackling climate issues in their schools and communities. They heard from a wildlife foundation educator and an African Park manager – live from Zimbabwe. This helped them to understand the real-world challenges facing endangered species, and the conservation work that goes on behind the scenes. They explored the Small World Art Exhibition and created artwork to highlight climate change, and they joined the Final Straw Foundation, helping them to understand how everyday choices affect our world. This involvement can act as a springboard to improving eco initiatives, improving biodiversity in our school grounds, reducing waste, saving energy, and inspiring others to take action.

Year 3 proudly showcased their gymnastic skills, which they had worked hard to develop, including a range of travelling skills and refining individual balances and shapes, shoulder stands and bridge positions. The visitors who came to support were impressed by the children's confident and enthusiastic performance.

Year 4 also held a performance to demonstrate their hard work during Gym Week. Focussing on symmetry, the children explored creating lines of symmetry with their bodies, reflecting poses with a partner and working in groups of four to develop a sequence of balanced symmetry. Year 4 were not afraid to challenge themselves and achieve new skills.



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Events at Wisdom House

Friday February 20th from 1.30pm to 3.30pm there will be the first of this year's Creative Cafés.

Mindful creativity invites those who have never tried art before, and accomplished artists alike to 'dab' about with various materials and silence their inner critic by detaching from the idea of a 'perfect outcome.' On this day we will be making a garland using simple origami. No artistic ability is required. Each month there will be an organised activity. We will also experiment with repurposed materials. This is not a formal 'art class,' although an artist and creative facilitator will be on hand. The small requested donation (suggested donation £5.75) includes tea/ coffee and biscuits/ cake.



Saturday 21st February from 10.00am to 4.00pm. We present *Into the Silent Land: Reflections on the Traditions of Meditation*.

We have borrowed the title of a book by Martin Laird to describe this day. Aimed at complete beginners and more experienced practitioners, we explore diverse traditions found within meditation and contemplative practice including wisdom from Buddhist, Sufi, Celtic and other traditions.

Facilitated by leaders from the two meditation groups meeting at Wisdom Centre, we share how sacred breath, silence, music, poetry and other words can inform our practice and how meditation, although not a form of therapy, can offer a respite from busyness, disquiet and emotional struggles for many of us.

We begin with the role of breath in the spiritual life, the nature of awareness, inner silence and connection with the sacred. We explore how a "prayer word" is used in some traditions to still the mind. We also develop our understanding of contemplation using readings, poetry and music.

Our programme will begin with arrivals from **9.30am for coffee** with a 10.00am start. **Lunch will be available from 12.30pm**. Refreshments will be available all day. We will serve afternoon tea at about 3.30pm

We will have 4-5 taster sessions through the day. There will be a brief explanation for each and then a chance to try each practice.

Wednesday 4th March. 10.00am to 1.30pm. The Encounter: A morning reflection on Jesus and the Woman at the Well. (With lunch)

Jesus was on His way, a journey to an encounter...with an unnamed woman who needed Him; Was he expecting such an encounter when he set out on his journey? That we will never know. Whoever we are, Jesus sets out to have an encounter –with all of us. Sometimes that is a re-encounter, a deepening of an existing relationship. Sometimes, we meet Jesus for the first time, or meet him in a different way.

The story of the woman at the well is a rich example of love, truth and acceptance. And best of all, not only does Jesus accept her, but He accepts us, too. The Samaritan woman, an outsider and sinner to Jews, probably wasn't expecting a meeting with the Son of God. Yet, Jesus not only meets with her but offers her "living water" (John 4:10) to satisfy her deep spiritual thirst.

In this passage, Jesus not only accepts the woman, he invites her to reject her past and the script others have written for her.

For further information about activities and the Centre itself, or to book an event email: reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk / Tel:01794830206 (leaving a message if we are unable to take the call).

Please pray for those who have died recently

Philip Kane

and for those whose anniversaries occur in February

Minnie Brown, Nellie Cook, Mark Grennan, Tessa Simpson, Mary Bernadette Willmont, Lucy Sellors, Teresa Williamson, Valence and Mary Muir, Eucharist Scicluna, Jack Haynes, Donald McAllister, Diedre Hatton, Mrs Abenda, John Barber, Audrey Bisson, James Russell, David Owen, Jean Otter, John Creaven, Lilian Creaven, Vincent Scott, Bill Bolton, Frank Wozniak, Muriel Hall, Cissie Dwyer, Kath Speller, Madeleine Morgan, Paddy Gallagher, Robert Coquet, Maria Karol, Noel Kidney, Madeleine Morris, Carl Eisel, Father Pat McKeever S.M.M., Rowena Glynn, Frederick Samuels, James Sutcliffe, J. Coleman, Susan Stockley, Josephine O'Haire. James Coyle, Maureen Riorden, Catherine Watkins, Nora Winston, Winifred Weldon, Mary Conarford, Helen Gallagher, Ivor Roach, Walter Newland, Nancy Fenlon, Tom Hanifin, Maureen Blaney, Julia, Michael Webber, Richard Bradley, Ken Fifield, Nora White, Eugene Cogan, Mary Turner, Gertrude Hilliard, Karl Eisele, Nerissa Cauldery, Margaret Lambert, Mary Murphy, Kitty Dee, Maud Dwyer, Kathleen Page, William Mattia, Michelle Mattia, Laura Joselle, John Bruff, Nancy Steiber, Michele Minieri, Christina O'Brien, Beryl Manley, James Turner, Josephine Wilson, David Cave, Stan Krauze, Margaret Burwell, Rose Sweet, Fr Danny Keenan SMM, Mary Rafferty, Cyril Stephens, Stephen Kangethe, Patrick O'Shea, Roy Hurcombe, Ann Walker, Margaret Brookes, Elizabeth Teresa O'Reilly, Arthur Drugan, Irene Coveney, Trevor William, Eileen Owen, Colin Silcock, Vincent Bithell, Barbara Rychlik, Elezabeth Wasniewski, Peggy Purtill, Lila Fewtrell, Pat and Mona Lavelle, Colin Clarke, Cathy Thompson, Eleanor Denman, David Treacy, Patrick Fisher, Jennifer Gurr Michael Kirby, Tony Jackson, Ulic Alen-Buckley, Beryl Bolt, Guy Lawrence, David Henderson, Zbigniw Rozanski, Dennis Mutton, Sister Maura Fewtrell, Cath Goodwin, Abbot Patrick Barry OSB, Rev Dom Aelred Burrows OSB, Babs Hughes, Anne Gurr, Maureen Humphreys, Sean Hourgan, Gertrude Colgate, Patricia Dwyer, John Barber, Mary Smith, Corinne Paesano, Gilbert McCorry, Zena Terry, Ann Smith, Terry O'Sullivan, Chris Kirby, Gilbert McCorry, Zena Terry, Norman Thrower, Ann Smith, Josephine Kane, Lyvette Hicks, Rose Edgecomb, Baby Eliza Grace, Kevin Creavan & Judith Polley

**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, and Clan Furtado 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 7th & 8th March. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 2nd March. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com