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The JOURNAL

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

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

First Holy Communion

Forty-eight children from our parish received their First Holy Communion at two special Masses, the first on Saturday 6th June and the second on Saturday 13th June. On the first occasion the weather was windy and rain threatened, but on the second occasion we were blessed with warm sunshine.

On both occasions the families gathered to be shown to their allocated places, while the First Communicants gathered in the hall. From there they were led into the church by Canon Chris following the processional cross, and took their places in the front rows of the church.

The procession was welcomed into the church by the hymn "One more step along the world I go", before Canon Chris welcomed them and reminded them of the significance of this special day.

During the homily Canon Chris addressed the parents, family members and children, saying how the memory of our First Holy Communion remains with us. He showed the children an enlarged photograph taken on the day of his First Holy Communion. He encouraged the parents and families to bring the children to Mass, so that this would be the first of many Communion received during Mass attended with other members of Christ's family. Each child was given a certificate to keep as a reminder of their special day.

Throughout the year's instruction, the children and their families have been ably supported and taught by our parish team of catechists: Mrs Pam Brown, Mrs Margaret Cullen, Mrs Helen Harvey, Mrs Andrea Pinnick, Mrs Rita Harrington, Mrs Denise Lloyd, Mrs Anne Tydeman, Mrs Gillian Saguna, and Miss Margaret Scicluna. The team deserve our grateful thanks for the time, effort and dedication given so generously. Thanks also to Mrs Catherine Whatley and St John the Baptist School for the important part they play in nurturing the spiritual life of the children in the practice of their faith. We pray that the families will continue to support the children on their spiritual journey.

For both Masses the church was beautifully decorated with flowers arranged by Mrs Pat Franklin, Mrs Fran Rae, Mrs Peggy McAuley and Mrs Pip Cotter. Sincere thanks to them.

Mrs Elizabeth Benedetto accompanied the first Mass, playing the organ and encouraging the singing. Canon Chris's guest, Mr Luke O'Donnell, Director of Music in the Guernsey parish, played the organ for the second Mass. The music at both Masses was joyous and uplifting - thanks to both musicians.

Throughout the year our Parish Administrator Mrs Teresa Lynam has given generously of her time, using her experience and expertise to keep the technical and digital side of the programme running smoothly, a vital task as our parish becomes more and more diverse. Thank you Teresa.

Thanks too to Canon Chris and Deacon Michael who both have spiritually and sacramentally supported all those involved in the First Holy Communion programme throughout the year.



Excommunication of SSPX Members

The Society of St Pius X, founded in 1970 by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in opposition to the reforms begun by the Second Vatican Council, has gone a step too far in its refusal to cooperate with the Pope and the Catholic Hierarchy.

Despite attempts by the Vatican to hold meaningful dialogue with the Society, usually referred to by its initials SSPX, some 15,000 people attended a Mass at which two of the breakaway bishops consecrated four new bishops. The Vatican excommunicated the four new bishops and the two celebrants. It declared the consecrations to be a “schismatic act” and declared that the society had created a schism, that is it had caused a wilful separation from the Church through refusing to submit to the pope’s canonical authority.

In addition to the excommunication of the bishops involved, the Vatican warned the faithful who attend the society’s Masses to stop doing so; it declared that the sacraments of confession and of marriage administered by priests of SSPX are invalid and that all who adhere formally to the society are considered to be schismatic and are also excommunicated.

For the last fifty years the Vatican has tried to bring the SSPX back to union with the Church, and in recent years has granted SSPX concessions in attempts to reach out to the group and bring it back within the fold. The harshness of the response to the unauthorised consecration of the four bishops would indicate that the Vatican has had enough of nearly fifty years of negotiations with a group that refuses to actually negotiate.

In 1988 Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated four bishops without papal consent. He was deemed to be in schism and was promptly excommunicated along with the four bishops, but the group as whole were not subject to that ultimate sanction. Pope Benedict XVI, as part of his long attempts to reach out to SSPX, lifted the excommunications. This latest break means that SSPX now has no legal standing in the Church.

The situation must be particularly painful for Pope Leo who has placed great emphasis on church unity, reaching out to conservative and traditionalist wing of the Church which had been somewhat alienated since the 1960s and particularly during the pontificate of Pope Francis.

The growth of SSPX, while still representing only a tiny right-wing fringe minority within the Catholic Church, has been a cause for concern. According to its own figures, it now has six bishops, 751 priests, 264 seminarians training in its five seminaries, plus some 400 religious brothers, oblates and religious sisters from fifty nationalities.

The SSPX must not be confused with other Catholic traditionalists who love the Latin Mass, enjoy its celebration and remain in communion with the Holy See. The writer of the blog *Messa in Latino*, meaning “Latin Mass”, Luigi Casalini was quick to state that the excommunication of the bishops was correct in canon law, though he expressed the view that the extension of the excommunications to SSPX priests and faithful was unusually severe.

Meanwhile the SSPX superior, Rev. Davide Pagliarani, preaching at the non-canonical consecrations claimed: “We are accused of not respecting the pope but it is precisely because we love the pope as the Vicar of Christ, as the head of the Church, that we don’t want to see the pope humiliated anymore on the side of false shepherds representing false religions.”

Despite what Pagliarani might claim, the papal authority supported by canon law makes it clear he is one of the false prophets.

In a twist to the story, it has emerged that SSPX have made a formal response to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. This causes an immediate suspension of the penalties as according to canon law “An appeal or a recourse against judgements of a court or against decrees which impose or declare any penalty has a suspensive effect.”

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith now has to make a response within thirty days, and if no response is made SSPX has the right to make a fresh appeal.

By appealing the excommunications and beginning a formal process under canon law, SSPX has in effect acknowledged the validity of the penalties, and in doing so seems to be accepting the authority of the Pope.

The SSPX statement says: “By this recourse the Society intends to exercise the right which the Church recognises to any person who considers himself harmed by an administrative act to seek its correction, in a spirit of respect for ecclesiastical authority and of faithful attachment to justice, truth and the good of the Church.”

We should all pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the members of SSPX, and the Vatican, to find a way reconciling their differences without diminishing the authority of the Church or causing doubtlessly devout people to fall into a permanent state of error.

Celebration of the Feast of Saint Thomas

Sunday 5th July saw the Syro Malabar Community hold their annual celebration of the feast of St Thomas the Apostle. The community gathered for Mass at 3.15 which was followed by a procession around the locality. The faithful then gathered in the hall for the traditional agape meal.

The event is always a lively and visually brilliant one, with traditional Indian dress, drumming and colourful parasols much in evidence as the Blessed Sacrament and the statues are processed around Croye Close. The celebrations are among the most powerful displays of Faith in this town.

The Syro Malabar Catholic Church is the second largest of the Catholic Eastern Churches and the largest of the St. Thomas Christian denominations with 4.6 million believers. It is a Major Archiepiscopal Church and is in full communion with Rome. Traditionally, the faithful of this Church are known as Mar Thoma Christians or Mar Thoma Nazranis, tracing their origin to the preaching of the Apostle Thomas. During the colonial period they were also known by other names such as Syrian Christians, Christians of Serra/Malabar, Chaldeans etc. to distinguish them from the new Christians. The name Nazranis is traced to the fact that they followed the path of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Catholic Thomas Christians are born and brought up in an indigenous Church which shares its liturgical, theological, spiritual, and disciplinary patrimony with the Church of the East or East Syrians. Thanks to stable, deep-rooted faith and spirituality, the Syro-Malabar Church is blessed with an abundance of vocations to priesthood and religious life and the Church is considered the most vibrant of the Christian communities in the world.

The Apostle Thomas has famously been known as “Doubting Thomas”. He was not present when the risen Christ appeared to the apostles after his Resurrection, and Thomas said he would not believe Christ had risen unless he could place his fingers in the wounds made by the nails and his hand into Christ’s side which had been pierced by a lance. Christ appeared again when Thomas was present, and on seeing the wounds Thomas proclaimed the wonderful words “My Lord and My God”.

When the apostles scattered to various parts of the world to proclaim the Good News, Thomas went east, first to the Persians, then to Jewish settlements in far-away India. From those settlements, tradition has it that he eventually reached the Malabar coast (present-day Kerala). There, the “St. Thomas Christians” trace their origins to the apostle whose mission, as St. Ephrem the Syrian wrote in the fourth century, was to “espouse India to the Only-Begotten.”

Thomas was martyred in Chennai in 72 A.D., but his legacy of Faith lives on in the Catholic Churches that he founded.



Ordination of Deacon Ryan Hawkes

On Sunday 5th July at Palazzola, Ryan Hawkes was ordained a deacon by Cardinal Arthur Roche. The photograph shows Deacon Ryan, accompanied by his parents, grandparents and brother.

Bishop Philip sent his congratulations and prayers to Deacon Ryan and asked that we all pray for him, and for all those studying for ordination.

A number of people from the Diocese were present to support Ryan with their prayers, including Fr. Edward

Hauschild, Fr. Ryan Browne, Canon Michael Dennehy, Deacon Jack Ryan, Deacon Tony Darroch and a group of parishioners from Basingstoke on a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi.

This coming year, Deacon Ryan will be assisting in the Cambridge University chaplaincy at Fisher House, following in the footsteps of Deacon Jack Ryan. Please pray for him that he has a good break over the summer and that all goes well over the weeks and months ahead.



Parish International Day

Once again the parish showed the richness of its diverse heritage as parishioners celebrated the Parish International Day on Sunday 12th of this month.

The church forecourt was decorated with flags from various nations to welcome parishioners for the Sunday Mass. The Mass itself had a truly international flavour. Colourful national costumes were much in evidence and singing from four choirs representing different parts of the world added to the joyous nature of the occasion.

The Filipino group welcomed the congregation at the start of the Mass. They were followed by singing from members of our Syro-Malabar Community. The Communion hymn was sung by the Goan Community and some of our African parishioners sang the closing hymn.

Following Mass celebrated by Canon Christopher, there was a splendid array of food which had been prepared by representatives of over twenty nationalities. Curries and stews, assorted vegetables, sauces, breads, delicacies and fruits, cakes and sweetmeats from all over the world were laid out in abundance and were enjoyed by parishioners old and young.

The day was bright, the sun was shining and a gentle breeze helped to lessen the effects of yet another day in the current heatwave. We are part of the Catholic and Universal Church and this day showed so clearly that we are a truly universal parish.

Sincere congratulations to all those involved in preparing this event. Masterminding the event was James Saviour who expressed his thanks to all who helped in preparing and serving the food and Lorie, Dianne and the Filipino community for the beautiful decorations, and Elizabeth and Buchi for organising the successful raffle. He also thanked Tony, Jack, Patrick and Michael for the tremendous help and support they had given him throughout the preparations.

After the event James declared it had been a truly joyful occasion that reflected the unity and diversity of our parish family.



Another Step Towards Priesthood



The community at Allen Hall Seminary in Chelsea, gathered in celebration on Saturday, 23rd May 2026, as three seminarians took significant, formal steps forward on their paths toward the priesthood.

During a beautifully celebrated Mass, Bishop Gerard Bradley, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Southwark, instituted Farvin Gonsalves (Diocese of Portsmouth, on Bishop Gerard's left) and Julian Pinto (Diocese of Plymouth, next to Farvin) into the Ministry of Lector. In the same liturgy, Eric Lobsinger (Diocese of Portsmouth, on the bishop's right) was formally admitted as a Candidate for Holy Orders.

In his homily, Bishop Bradley focused on the spiritual reality of the formation journey. He reminded everyone present of the deep importance of pausing to mark these "moments of grace." In the midst of rigorous study and preparation, it can be all too easy to focus on daily challenges or negative hurdles, inadvertently skipping past the joyful milestones that God provides along the way.

The bishop also highlighted a profound scriptural coincidence in the day's liturgy. The readings marked the conclusion of both the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John. He noted the spiritual significance of these endings, which do not represent a final stop, but rather a launching pad for the Word of God to go out into the entire world.

Turning his attention to the wider seminary community, Bishop Bradley offered prayers of fortitude for the other seminarians as they continue their formation. He also expressed sincere gratitude to the seminary staff and formation priests for selflessly giving themselves to the vital work of nurturing future shepherds.

The liturgy beautifully illustrated the reality of these ministries through the symbolic rites:

The Ministry of Lector: As Farvin and Julian were instituted, Bishop Bradley placed the Bible into their hands, instructing them:

"Take this book of Holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the Word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of his people."

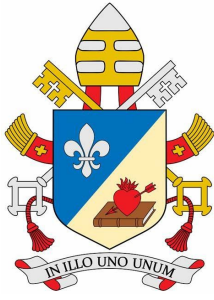
Admission to Candidacy: Marking a deepening of his vocational commitment, Eric publicly declared his resolve to complete his preparation, formally offering himself in service to Christ and His Church.

Following the beautiful liturgy, the celebratory mood moved outdoors. Seminarians, clergy, family, and friends enjoyed a wonderfully joyous reception, complete with excellent food, drinks, and a perfect afternoon of warm sunshine.

Farvin Gonsalves

We also offer prayerful congratulations to Ryan Hawkes, one of our Portsmouth Diocese Seminarians studying at the Venerable English College Rome, who was Ordained a Deacon by Cardinal Roche on the 5th July. We also look forward to the Priestly Ordination of Deacon Jack Ryan at St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth on Saturday 18th July at 11am.

(Please keep Jack, Farvin, Julian, Eric, and all our seminarians in your prayers as they continue to respond to the Lord's call)



The Pope's Prayer Intentions for July & August

At the beginning of each year, the Holy Father sets out the intentions for which he asks us to pray. For July the intention is for *respect for human life*:

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

The Pope's intention for August is for *evangelization in the city*:

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

Reflection on the Pope's Prayer Intention: Formed by the Same Hands

When I think of pro-life Bible verses, my mind usually goes to Jeremiah 1:5 or Psalm 139:13–16, because what could be more pro-life than being known, knit together in our mother's womb, and created with purpose? But the other day, I came across a verse I haven't seen used in a pro-life context before.

Job 31:15 says, "Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One form us both within our mothers?"

In this verse, Job is talking about how he treats other people and what shapes that. It is not based on their status, their choices, or their circumstances. It goes deeper than that: they share the same origin, for the same God formed them all.

Job understood that human value is not something we get to assign to one another. It's something we receive from our Creator. Before we are ever known by the world, we are known by God. Before we are seen as wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, we are formed with intention.

And that truth reaches all the way into the womb.

The unborn child is not outside of this reality, but right at the centre of it. Formed by the same hands, bearing the same image, and carrying the same dignity as you and I. There is no real distance between us and the lives we are called to protect.

After more than seven years since starting the pro-life organization *Let Them Live*, I've seen over 1,000 lives saved from abortion. It never becomes ordinary because it never stops being a miracle. The same God who formed us is still forming them.

Every life is known, deeply loved, and formed by the same hands.

Emily Berning, Co-Founder & President of Let Them Live

(Let Them Live was founded by Nathan and Emily Berning in 2019 after they were connected with a woman who was homeless and abortion-minded because she couldn't pay her bills.

They emptied their bank account and gave her the financial assistance she needed to keep her baby. After saving her and her baby from abortion, they realized that many other women were getting abortions due to financial burden often caused by the father of the baby or from lack of support from immediate friends and family. And so Let Them Live was born – with a mission dedicated to financially and emotionally supporting these moms so that they can confidently choose life for their babies)

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Ann Widdecombe RIP

The news that former MP Ann Widdecombe had been murdered in her own home was surely met with shock and disbelief by so many people. Miss Widdecombe, a convert to the Catholic faith, had a varied political career, and at times her strong moral compass made her a controversial figure.



She was born in Bath in 1947. Her father was a civil servant who worked for the Ministry of Defence, and following a spell as a pupil at the Royal Navy school in Singapore she attended the Catholic La Sainte Union Convent School in Bath, though she had at that time no strong religious views. Indeed she claimed to be an agnostic till she joined the Anglican Church at the age of 30. She converted to Catholicism in 1993 when she explained in an interview that: “I left the Church of England because there was a huge bundle of straw. The ordination of women was the last straw, but it was only one of many. For years I had been disillusioned by the Church of England's compromising on everything. The Catholic Church doesn't care if something is unpopular.”

Ann Widdecombe studied Latin at Birmingham University before reading Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. After leaving Oxford she worked for Unilever and then as an administrator at the University of London, before entering politics as a Councillor on Runnymede District Council and unsuccessfully contesting parliamentary seats in Bolton and Devonport while working for Conservative members of Parliament. She was elected to Parliament at the 1987 general election as Conservative Member for Maidstone. She served as Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, and for Education before being promoted to Minister of State for Prisons. While in that post, she made personal visits to every prison in the kingdom. In opposition she held several shadow ministerial posts

She often held unpopular views. She opposed abortion legislation and was a member of the All Party Pro-Life Parliamentary Group. She opposed “assisted dying” as she had deep concerns for those who might be threatened by any euthanasia law. She also spoke out against gender self-identification.

Ann Widdecombe retired from politics in 2010, but supported Brexit in the 2016 referendum, joining the Brexit party as a candidate in the European parliamentary elections in 2019 when she was elected MEP for Southwest England, serving till the UK withdrew from the EU in 2020.

In 2023 she joined Reform UK – the successor to the Brexit Party – as the party's immigration and justice spokesperson.

Her death has been made more shocking by the strange way in which her agent and the police have handled things. The original statement from her political agent made no mention of the cause of death; the initial police report from Devon and Cornwall Police did not say that the death was suspicious. Later they announced they were launching a murder investigation and were seeking “a white male”. They arrested a suspect for murder, only to release him and then arrested a 28-year-old male for murder, only to reveal that they had new information and that counter-terrorism police were now leading the investigation, which raised suspicions that her death may well have been terrorist related or politically motivated.

Ann Widdecombe, who had been honoured as a Dame of the Order of St Gregory by the Vatican, was a controversial figure, an uncompromising defender of what she believed to be right and honourable, a devout believer in Our Lord, and an opponent of whatever she felt diminished the human condition. May she rest in peace.

St. Elizabeth the Peacemaker

Military historians will know the city of Coimbra as the site of an important, but not decisive, battle in Arthur Wellesley's Peninsular campaign against Marshal Soult's French forces. Those who have been on Pilgrimage to Fatima may well have made the brief journey north to the university city of Coimbra for a different reason. Nestling in the hillside above the city is the convent of the Poor Clares, and in the highly decorated chapel the mortal remains of St. Elizabeth of Portugal lie above the altar in a gilded casket.



Elizabeth, daughter of King Pedro of Aragon, was a devout girl of twelve when she was given in marriage to King Denis of Portugal. Although he professed to love her, Elizabeth was soon saddened by her husband's lascivious and adulterous ways.

Ironically, the king, being told by an evil-minded page that Elizabeth was having an affair with another page – a young man as devout as the queen herself – believed the lies and ordered the young man to report to a lime-burner. The lime-burner was commanded to throw into his furnace the first page who came from the palace. The good page set out, but as he was in the habit of attending daily Mass, he stopped at a church to hear Mass. In the meantime, the king sent the wicked page to the lime-burner to find out if the other had been killed. The wicked page was thus the first to arrive, and the lime-burner duly threw the wretch into the furnace. The king realised that God had protected the innocent and punished wicked, and he made a vow to lead a better life.

They had two children, Constantia and Alfonso. Alfonso became so resentful of the favours shown to his father's illegitimate sons that he gathered an army and declared war on his father. Elizabeth rode out and placing herself between the opposing armies she managed to reconcile father and son, and averted the civil war.

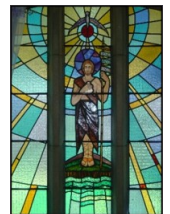
Elizabeth outlived her husband and she retired to the convent of Poor Clares which she had founded at Coimbra. She took the Franciscan Tertiary habit, and she determined to devote the rest of her life to helping the poor and sick. But she was called from obscurity once again to act as peacemaker when her son marched his army against the King of Castile, to whom he had married his daughter Maria and who had ill-treated and neglected her. Despite her age and her failing health, Elizabeth journeyed to Estremoz where the opposing armies faced each other. She again prevented a battle and arranged peace terms acceptable to both sides.

But the effort proved too much for her; she developed a fever and died. She was interred in the chapel at Coimbra and many miracles were attributed to her. She was canonized by Pope Urban VIII in 1625. Her feastday is on the 8th July, and as well as being the patron saint of Coimbra she is patron of Franciscan Tertiaries, charities and charity workers, widows and peace.



**The following JOB VACANCY is 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/

PARISH FINANCE ADMINISTRATOR

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World Day of Prayer for Grandparents

On Sunday 26th July the Church will celebrate the sixth World Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly. The special day of prayer always takes place on the Memorial of SS. Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grandparents of Jesus.

The theme chosen by Pope Leo XIV for this year is: “I will never forget you”, words taken from the prophet Isaiah. It reminds us that God’s unwavering love is the ultimate answer to the isolation and neglect so often experienced by the elderly. It brings comfort and hope, assuring us that the Lord knows each of us personally, forgets no one, and loves us unconditionally, even through the frailties of old age.

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was established by Pope Francis in response to the prayers and devotion of Irish grandparents, and it is celebrated annually to honour the role of grandparents in passing on faith, wisdom, and life experience to younger generations. The day emphasizes the importance of family, intergenerational bonds, and the spiritual contributions of the elderly, encouraging families to pray together, visit elderly relatives, and celebrate their presence in the Church and society.

Since its creation in 2021, the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly has grown into a cherished tradition that teaches our communities to truly value the elderly, not through occasional gestures, but as a permanent, central part of our lives. This celebration helps us appreciate older generations as vital keepers of our history, witnesses to our faith, and teachers for our lives.

Let this Day be a tangible opportunity for everyone — especially young people —to spend time with their grandparents, the elderly in their families, and most importantly, those who are completely isolated.

Caritas News

Jenny LeLean, Head of Charity, Caritas Diocese of Portsmouth shares news of a Parliamentary Reception - Flourishing Communities: Building Communities of Dignity and Solidarity.

On Wednesday 1 July, Mike Kane MP (Wythenshawe and East Sale) invited the members of the Caritas Social Action Network and MPs to a parliamentary reception. The purpose was to both highlight how the Catholic Church in England and Wales already helps local communities flourish and to discuss opportunities for collaboration to do more.

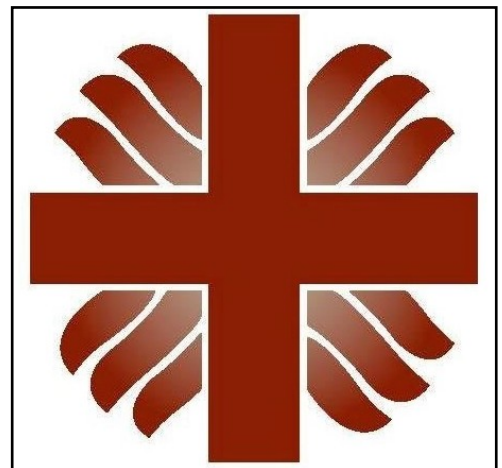
The evening started with Mass, celebrated at the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft followed by the reception which was attended by a range of CSAN members including SVP, Stella Maris, JRS, Million Minutes, Medaille Trust and other diocesan Caritas'. Attendance by MP's was perhaps a little lower than hoped (it also clashed with the England football match), but well worth going to (live updates were given through the evening!).

After being welcomed by Mike Kane MP, we heard from Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, Chair of CSAN and Raymond Friel, CEO of CSAN, who highlighted the significant contribution that the Catholic charities within CSAN make on supporting the common good and the relevance of the new encyclical, *Magnifica Humantis* by Pope Leo XIV, to our work at this time.

Ana Franca-Fierra, from the Centre for Theology and Community shared the story of the three fishermen in Guaratinguetá, Brazil. The fishermen, when casting their nets for fish one day, found a statue of the body of Our Lady. The men, who had been praying for a good catch, continued to fish, and with the next casting of the net pulled up the head of the statue. Casting their nets again, the fisherman caught an abundance of fish. Ana wanted to share that our actions can start simply, as with these three fishermen, but with persistence and prayer, can both grow and flourish.

Sophie Cartwright from JRS followed with a summary of the joint campaign with SVP and CSAN, Welcome the Stranger, with the need to support those arriving in this country to integrate into the community. Sir John Battle finished the speeches with the focus on the 1 million young people who are currently unemployed and urged action to create meaningful opportunities for them.

We had invited all the MP's with constituencies in our diocese and while many had previous engagements, we did have the opportunity to chat with Sir Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East, discussing local needs and potential impact of the proposed local government reorganisation for those in his constituency. We look forward to taking our discussion further.



Vital Article 18 Petition

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”



Aldo Do Rozario, Community Outreach Manager for the South-east at Aid to the Church in Need (UK), writes has drawn attention to a petition which highlights the necessity for those basic freedoms to be defended:

Around the world, millions of people are denied a fundamental human right: the freedom to believe, worship and live out their faith without fear.

For many of us, religious freedom is something we can easily take for granted. Yet for countless Christians and members of other religious minorities, faith can come at a great cost. People face discrimination, harassment, imprisonment, violence, forced displacement and even death simply because of what they believe.

The consequences can be devastating. In June 2025, more than 250 Christian internally displaced people were massacred in Yelewata, Benue State, Nigeria. Many of those targeted had already fled violence and were seeking safety. Tragically, this was not an isolated incident, but part of a much wider global crisis.

According to Aid to the Church in Need’s Religious Freedom in the World 2025 report, more than 5.4 billion people—almost two-thirds of humanity—live in countries where serious violations of religious freedom occur. Christians and members of other religious communities continue to experience persecution, oppression and discrimination across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and beyond.

This is why Aid to the Church in Need has launched its first-ever global Article 18 Petition, calling on governments and the United Nations to take meaningful action to defend freedom of religion or belief.

As Christians, we are called to stand alongside our suffering brothers and sisters and to be a voice for those whose voices have been silenced.

By signing the petition, you can help send a clear message that religious freedom must be protected everywhere, for everyone.

To learn more and to sign the petition go to the Aid to the Church in Need website <https://acnuk.org>

CAFOD: Pope and World Cup

CAFOD shares why Pope Leo is championing sport this World Cup:

The World Cup is one of the few events that truly captures global attention, with billions of fans cheering for their teams. Among them is an unlikely sports fan: Pope Leo, who sees sport as far more than competition. For him, it has the power to unite people, build understanding and promote peace. He says, “*In a world thirsting for peace, we need tools that can put an end to the abuse of power, displays of force and indifference to the rule of law.*”

Pope Leo believes the lessons learned on the pitch—rules, teamwork and shared goals—can strengthen relationships off it. Sport becomes a way to communicate, collaborate and build peaceful communities.

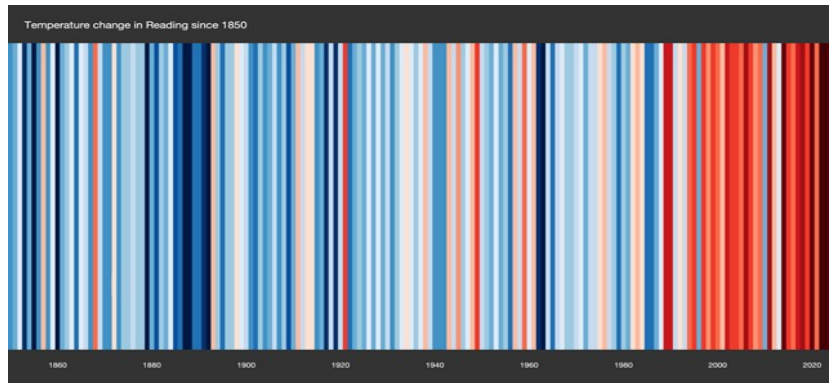
This idea is reflected in initiatives like a recent *Sports for Peace Day* in Harare, Zimbabwe, organised by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace with CAFOD’s support.

Vimbainashe Chiweshe, Justice and Peace Coordinator, explained the context: “*The absence of war is not the presence of peace. Our communities are polarised.*” In response, sport has been used as a tool to bring young people together, helping them develop life skills and a sense of shared purpose. As she emphasised, “*We build peace... where they participate together... we win together and we lose together.*”

Ultimately, the message is clear: sport is so much more than winning – it’s a unifier of peace. By supporting initiatives like these, people can help young communities overcome division and put Pope Leo’s words into action. Thank you for your support and may peace, hope and love ultimately win.

Show Your Stripes

Jenny LeLean, Head of Charity, has circulated information about Show Your Stripes Day, an annual global event which takes place in June. The event uses climate stripes to visually communicate rising temperatures and raise awareness about human-caused climate change. The image below shows the climate stripes for Reading from 1850-2024.



The purpose is to start conversations of how temperatures have changed over time. Each stripe represents one year, with blue indicating cooler-than-average years and red indicating warmer-than-average years. The stripes illustrate the dramatic warming trend since the Industrial Revolution.

To help stimulate conversations, The Dicastery's for Promoting Integral Human Development and for Laity, Family and Life have produced "Integral Ecology In The Life Of The Family", a resource for families to have age-appropriate conversations as well as practical actions to help people understand and respond to *'the cry of the earth and cry of the poor.'* (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #49)

Climate stripes were developed by Professor Ed Hawkins at the University of Reading. To find out climate stripes in your local city, or around the world, visit [#ShowYourStripes](#)

Ebola Virus in DR Congo

CAFOD is actively supporting clinical efforts to combat the spread of the deadly Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo. With no vaccine currently ready for use, there is a vital window of opportunity to contain the virus and save lives. CAFOD is supporting trusted local Church partners as communities work to prevent infection and protect the most vulnerable.

Donations to CAFOD can help by funding life-saving information on precautions against the virus, as well as providing hygiene kits and food for quarantined and vulnerable families, Personal Protective Equipment for healthcare workers, and offering guidance on safe and dignified burials.

CAFOD'S Church partners are deeply rooted in their communities and can reach remote and conflict-affected areas where others often struggle to work. Their trusted local presence helps families access accurate information and adopt practices that reduce the spread of infection.

As Bishop Théophile Kaboy says: "The involvement of faith groups ... remains among the best weapons for convincing the people to adopt good practices."

Jesus calls us to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). By supporting CAFOD today, you can help communities stop the spread of Ebola and protect those most at risk. Please donate today and keep families in the DRC and our Church partners in your prayers.

Bishop Philip recently met with Andrea Hoyland, our diocesan CAFOD leader and also with Jenny LeLean from Caritas Diocese of Portsmouth. During the conversation, the Democratic Republic of Congo came up and the terrible situation there with the outbreak of the Ebola virus. The bishop asked if there was anything the diocese can do to help. "Certainly, we must offer earnest prayers for the victims and for an end to spread of the virus," said the bishop, "but I also know that many of us would like to do something practical too. After all, the Catholic Church is one of the most trusted institutions in the DRC and operates around 45% of the country's health facilities. Anyone wishing to help, could put some money in an envelope marked CAFOD Ebola Virus Response and place it in the Offertory basket at Mass."

Are You There God? It's me, Margaret.

(SPOILER ALERT: The question does get answered)

On one level this is a warm and engaging film that rises, almost, to the “Feel-Good” category. That is, watch, enjoy, then walk away from with no regrets and a pleasant emotional after-feeling. Those that created it, that was probably what it was meant to be. And yet, it's so much more. Not to overstate it, it has the depth and gravitas of a true Parable.

The Story: It's 1970 and Margaret is the 11-year old daughter of professional parents that are kind, loving and who care and protect her fully and completely. The family live in an apartment in New York City. As the film starts, Margaret has just come back from Summer Camp and is looking forward to returning to School and her friends. Arriving home, she learns that her father has been promoted and they are moving to the suburbs within days. This means losing her friends, leaving her paternal Jewish grandmother and having to fit in to a new School. It all happens and the film tracks her life over coming School year and how things and Margaret herself, change.



So; on a straightforward narrative level this is a simple “coming-of-age” story with Margaret having to negotiate fitting in and her relationships with her parents, with others and with herself; both emotionally and physically. By the end of the film, she is not the same girl she was at the start of the film. She's grown up where she's needed to. As she enters her teenage years it's all looking positive for her and even her parents have relaxed into their new life.

That's what comes over on screen and is all perfectly good. What really doesn't compute is the attempt to bring God in as the boogy-man hiding in the shadows. The background of the family is that Margaret's father is Jewish and her mother is Christian of Evangelical Protestants. He walked away from Judaism (Synagogue: too long/couldn't understand the Hebrew) and she's been disowned by her parents (“Marry him and you'll go to Hell”). So, to (ahem) “protect” Margaret, nothing about God or Religion allowed in their home.

To move the Plot along, the mother attempts to reconcile with her parents (Margaret's maternal grandparents). They come for the weekend. However, Margaret's Jewish grandmother on her father's side gets wind of this and turns up as well. It's not alright on the night. Margaret is caught in the middle. All the grandparents get sent away that same evening and Margaret has had enough of God and of everything.

The film could have ended there but couldn't really. For this type of film, the ending would be too downbeat to work for the audience. What to do? To get to the correct upbeat ending, the central character (that is, Margaret) has to start acting independently and decisively in the universe (she's only 11) she's in. And she does. She leaves the clique of girls she's part of and reconciles with a girl she verbally abused to that girl's face. And – she keeps praying. Last scene, she realises that God has truly answered her. So, logically speaking, that means He is there. Question answered.

John Newland

Healing Prayers Group



The Healing Prayers Group meets in the parish church each Tuesday evening between 6.30pm and 7.00pm.

If you would like to choose a theme, scripture reading and music, or would like a copy of the El Shaddai Healing Prayer or if you would like any further information, please contact the parish office.



Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Back in the fourteenth century, pilgrimages were undertaken by all manner of people for all manner of reasons, and they were such an integral part of the lives of Christian people that when Geoffrey Chaucer published his first work in English rather than in French or Latin, he chose as his subject the tales of a disparate group of pilgrims heading to Canterbury.

Early this month a group of pilgrims from various parts of Portsmouth Diocese, including our own parish of St John the Baptist, set out for the Shrine of Our Lady in Lourdes. Meeting up at Heathrow at the crack of dawn, all managed to make their way safely to the correct Departure Gate and on to the aircraft for the flight to Toulouse. A long coach journey then saw them arrive at the Hotel La Solitude, and after a brief respite the group crossed the road to the Chapel Doleurs for Mass celebrated by Bishop Philip with Canon P.J. Smith and Fr. Paul Dzwig.

After an evening meal the group paid their first visit to the Grotto to watch the torchlight procession. Although it was high summer and the sun was nowhere near setting, the evening torchlight processions were immensely moving, especially when, at the chorus of "Ave, Ave Maria" several thousand candles were raised in salute to the Blessed Virgin.

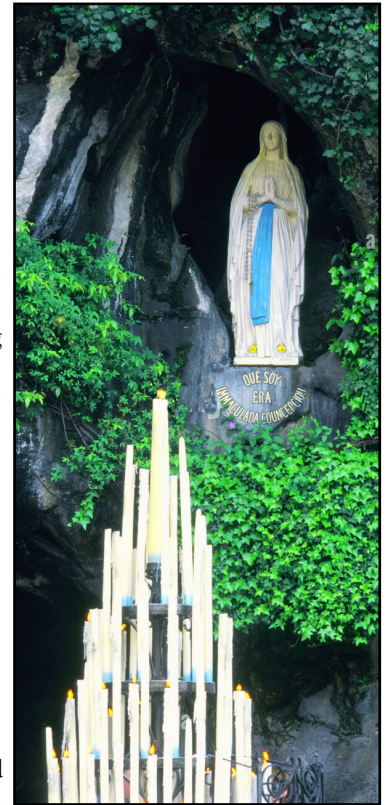
Despite the hot weather the group managed to take part in all the main pilgrim activities: the Torchlight Procession, the Stations of the Cross, a visit to the Baths, the International Mass and Blessed Sacrament Procession in the underground basilica, a tour of the town, and a visit to Bartres to the beautiful small chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist.

There was a full programme of Prayer, Mass, visits to the Sanctuary area, with plenty of time for individuals to find places to meditate quietly, to wander through the souvenir shops, to explore the Lourdes Domain, to visit the "Water Gesture" where instead of immersing oneself in the Baths one could have Lourdes Water poured over one's hands, sip the water and bathe one's face in it.

One of the highlights was undoubtedly the International Mass, when the Basilica of Pope Pius X, a vast underground building, was packed to its 25,000 capacity with pilgrims from every continent. The number of bishops and priests taking part reflected the strength of devotion which the Shrine generates. It was an enormous pleasure to see so many young people taking part – and indeed to see so many young people actively involved in the processions, carrying banners, pushing wheelchairs, distributing water and taking part in the services.

The pilgrimage only lasted from Monday to Friday, but in that time the group bonded into a cohesive band all prepared to help one another, to share prayers and conversation, to encourage and support. Two of the Diocesan seminarians, Owen and Adam, were among the pilgrims, as were two Permanent Deacons, so together with the bishop and the two priests there was plenty of liturgical knowledge to be spread.

The diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes has become an established annual event, and it was clear that many of those taking part this year have made it a regular part of their liturgical year. It is to be hoped that the tradition will continue many years into the future.



PORTSMOUTH DIOCESE

LOURDES 2026

Ukranian Archbishop Prays for Peace

The Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, recently visited Ukraine. He was accompanied on his travels round the war-torn country by Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, the archbishop of Lviv who commented that the war continues and there seems no hope for it to end. Speaking to Vatican media, the archbishop said: "The entire population of Ukraine is very tired. And unfortunately, at the moment, we see no hope for the end of the war."

The Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, was visiting Ukraine as the Pope's special envoy for the celebrations marking the 35th anniversary of the restoration of the structures of the Latin Rite Catholic Church. During his time in Ukraine, Archbishop Gallagher visited some of the areas which had suffered from air raids. Among them was St. Nicholas Church in Kyiv, where he was welcomed by the parish priest, Fr. Pavlo Vyshkovsky, OMI, and members of the congregation. The church had been struck by a Russian missile in December 2024. The blast shattered its windows and caused extensive damage to the interior. It is now undergoing restoration and, thanks in part to diplomatic efforts involving the Holy See, has recently been returned by the Ukrainian authorities for the use of the Latin Catholic community.

Archbishop Gallagher received a special gift. A married couple and another woman, all dressed in white, presented him with two bouquets of sunflowers—"flowers that symbolize Ukraine and so many of its dead," they explained—along with an icon of the Holy Family.

Two weeks earlier, their apartment had been destroyed during one of Moscow's heavy air raids. The icon, however, had remained untouched. "For us, this is a symbol of hope," they said.

Archbishop Mokrzycki, speaking to Vatican journalist Roberto Paglialonga, said that the entire Ukrainian population is exhausted because everyone has been affected by the war. Either family members are fighting, or neighbours and colleagues are. There have also been many deaths, he said.

However, the people still have hope. "Even here in Lviv, although there is no fighting every day, we frequently hear air raid sirens. People have to go down into shelters, work is interrupted, and so are school lessons. Yet people continue to go to church, they pray, and they place their hope in God alone. Only He can bring this terrible war to an end."

Life is not easy in Ukraine. Every attack causes more deaths, more injuries, more homes destroyed, more factories or businesses wrecked. Despite these troubles, said Archbishop Mokrzycki, the people are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the visit of St John Paul II who told them: "Do not be afraid. Even in these times you will encounter difficulties, but with Christ you will overcome them." The people's only hope is prayer, and people go to church, they attend Mass and after Mass they chant prayers of supplication and pray for God's mercy and for peace to return to their country.

Archbishop Gallagher travelled to Berdychiv, the Ukrainian national shrine, a place to which Ukrainians travel to seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Those pilgrimages, said Archbishop Mokrzycki, "provide unity, strength, solidarity and hope. The Envoy's visit will fill our hearts with peace, joy, and hope, because he represents Pope Leo, who remains close to our country through his prayers and his appeals for peace. During the Angelus, the Holy Father often remembers us and gives us his blessing. We hope that this visit, which also includes official meetings with the Ukrainian government, will bear fruit for peace in our country."

After four and a half years of war there seems to be a complacency among people in the West who have perhaps become accustomed to the war, seeing it as anormal state of affairs. But the Ukrainian bishops and priests do their best to make appeals whenever and wherever they can, going abroad and visiting bishops' conferences, speaking to fellow priests, addressing parish communities. Despite their own plight, Archbishop Mokrzycki went on to say: I believe we must never become indifferent to the suffering of other countries, including the Holy Land. Above all, we must show our unity as Christian brothers and sisters and always remember one another. We ask people to support us through prayer and through humanitarian assistance, which remains urgently needed here in Ukraine."

That is surely a plea to which we should all respond.



From the School

The school community recently gathered together for a special Mass to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi. We welcomed Canon Chris who led the school in a reverent and prayerful celebration of the Eucharist. The pupils played an important part in the liturgy, which was enriched by joyful singing to deepen the understanding of Christ's presence.

During the Mass, the school's First Holy Communicants were congratulated on the important step they had taken in their faith journey, as they received a special blessing.

There are plans for a new holiday club at the school for this summer, when children can enjoy a wide range of activities including sports, creative projects, outdoor adventures, science experiments, and themed days. Spaces are limited so early booking has been advised.

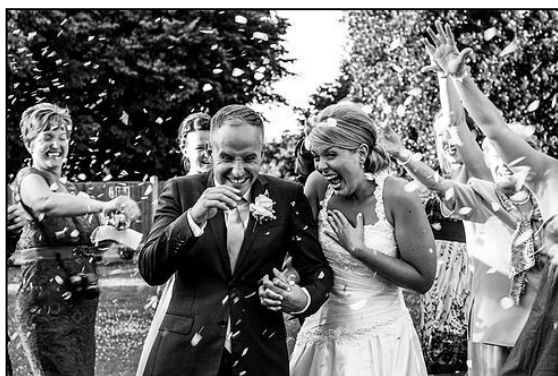
The Andover and Winchester Community Public Health Nursing Team are excited to announce they are now running community clinics to support families with primary-age children with concerns such as behaviour, sleep, emotional health and a healthy lifestyle. Booking is via a QR code on the school's website.

The school sports day was held on June 25th when we celebrated the patronal feast of St John the Baptist. Families were invited to join the annual family picnic before the sports day began. The weather was kind, and the school field was filled with happy families enjoying their picnic lunch.

Following OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) validation in May, the school was delighted to be awarded the highest possible OPAL accreditation – Platinum! This award reflects the exceptional achievement, commitment and hard work of the whole school community. St John the Baptist is the first fully accredited OPAL school in Andover, and the Platinum status recognises the outstanding play opportunities provided for the children and confirms that play, well-being and childhood are truly at the heart of the school.

Schools typically progress in OPAL through Bronze, Silver and Gold status before reaching Platinum, but the validators recognised the exceptional play provision already deeply embedded throughout the school's life and awarded Platinum immediately. Very many congratulations!

Mrs Foley asks that as you tidy and clear out over the summer holidays, please do consider keeping items which can be of use for developing the school's OPAL resources: wood offcuts (without any nails!) pallets, cable reels, piping, guttering, buckets, spades and sand toys, tyres, suitcases, plastic boxes, water play items such as spoons, measuring jugs, paintbrushes – and any other objects which your creatively ingenious minds think might be of use! Wishing everyone a joyful summer break.



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Please pray for those who have died recently
Michael Pearson, Ann Widdecombe
and for those whose anniversaries occur in July and August

JULY

Winnifred Gwillim, Caroline Wingate-Morris, Harold Hanlon, Charles Church, Anne Scicluna, Mary McIvor, Micheal Gavin, William Clary, Baby Robert McPleesaw, George Henderson, Joan Dorothy Boyton, William Melling, Dennis McConville, Kathleen Williams, Thomas Roach, Thomas Reagan, John Carver, Fr Littlefair SMM, Jane Mason, Geoffrey Acres, Anne Cunningham, Nancy Phelan, Brian Dixon, Percy Saddler, Eileen Welsman, Tony Mullins, Donald Pringle, Ernie Baddeley, Andrew Clark, Cecile Dunn, Shiela Gadsden, Alice Malyon, Bertram Hollard, Robert McPhearson, John McLaughlin, Francois Bedier, Noreen Carter, Clement McGuinness, Charlie Rogers, Monica Mullen, Mary Baker, Ellen Smith, Gerard Monks, William Green, Kathleen O'Loughlin, Rev Mother Eugenie Kendall, Winifred Howell, James Kelly, Robert McCumiskey, Patrick Drugan, May Jones, Bishop Michael Evans, Otto Fiedler, Lottie Rowley, Michael Malone, Jean Kladko, Sally Luxton, Violet Larkin, Peggy New, Janice Clarke, Lily Kelly, Bertie Ayres, Julian Maslinski, Edwin Wasniewski, Esther Murphy, Jo Brazier, Brian McAuley, Nikita Montague-Evans, Joseph Giraud, Tony Downing, John Glasspool, Peter Calderley, Rosemarie Harris Samuel James Webber, Margaret Henley, Kakai Haig, Mary Bullough, Mary Daws, Emily Byrne, Alan Cotter, Eileen Church & Muriel Arkwright

AUGUST

Tracey Hodgson, Doreen O'Dowd, James Connor, Theresa Anthony, Leonard Sandiford, John Regan, Larry Gitten, John A. Fyle, Hanna Maria Kirby, Margaret Bamett, Maureen Marchant, Agnes Kidney, Mrs Douglas, Patience Gardiner, Marion Isherwood, Dorothy Bennett, Mrs Ackers, Tony Baulk, Alan Trimble, John Moorat, Dennis Fuller, Sid Viret, Raymond Fox, Edmund Plowden, Joan Mostyn, Rex Pontet Picollomini, Alan Green, Nita Wilson, Andrew Clark, Terence Colleno, Milton Judge, Francis McSwiggan, Pauline Chuter, James Drugan, Mary McKeever, Margaret Mulligan, Michael Murphy, Lillian Walton, Francis Gwillim, Loretta Thorn, Elise Tanburn, Vincent Gallagher, Janine Armstrong, Anne Wain, Winifred Newth, Starlight LeGarde, Ernest Tricker, Angelique Quinton, Peter Coquet, Mrs Easterby, Beatie Kidney, Peter Monaghan, Elizabeth Ellwood, Lily Collins, Joan Mills, Fr. Vincent O'Connor, Mrs. E. Smith, Patrick Guihan, Kathleen McCann, Eileen Fox, Bridget Hunter, Jan Rychlik, Isobel Coquet, Pat Campbell, Maureen Kennedy, Jane Risdale, Ivy O'Connor, Patrick O'Toole, Sarah Higgins, James Sweeney, Peter Byrne, Mr Gardener, Eddie Shroff, Patrick Mackie, John Monaghan, George Walsh, Nita Wilson, David Pike, Shirley Owen, Jim Church, Suzie Simpson, Frank Flaherty, Jessie Jamieson, Michael Padgham and Joe Goble, Bishop Cesare Mazzolari, Fr. Martin Laker, Dave Holdway, Fr. Owen Cannon SMM, Thomas Hourigan, Bill Dennahay Patrick Everard, Janet Franklin, Constance 'Tommie' Hill, Laurence Holden, Des Warren, Urszula Pomian, Patrick Kane, Florenza Chandler, Victoria Orr, Eileen Owens, Michael Lynch, Audrey Bulner Fr Boniface Moran OSB, Dorothy Nash, Brian Nolan, Sally Coffey, Jill Maddocks, Hazel Ronayn, Joseph Hayward, Doris Stubbs, Eileen Edmunds, Sheila Muir and Mary Atrill

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

Esme Coveney, Rita Lane, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Fiona Hilleard, Bernard Ivinson, Tony Fabian, Helen O'Connell, Douglas Manning, Diane Mahoney, Rita Casey, Rose Bull, Carol Keenan, Eileen Wharton, Oran Keenan, Margarita Hardiman, Tom O'Regan, Robert Colledge, Eileen Price, Concepta Cuddihy, Frank Hinds, Clan Furtado, Lisa Rammage, Susanne Church, Sandy Saunders, Margaret Blair, Angelo and Angela Alvarez 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 5th and 6th of September. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 1st September. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com