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FREE

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Wave of joy and peace as Emma's life is consecrated to love of God

People from across the diocese and beyond gathered in St Mary's Cathedral to celebrate as I was consecrated to the Ordo Virginum by Bishop Emeritus Terry.

I was particularly grateful for the support of people attending from my current parish of St Paulinus in Guisborough and our wider Coastal Cluster (including the parishes of Blessed Nicolas Postgate in Redcar and Marske and Our Lady of Lourdes, Saltburn), as well as those who joined the celebration from my home parish of Sacred Heart in Northallerton.

The consecrated vocations were well represented too, with the presence of the Benedictine sisters from Stanbrook Abbey, Wass (who have supported the diocese with my formation), and many consecrated virgins and women in formation for this vocation from across the country, and even one from Poland!

I was also deeply moved by and incredibly grateful for the effort the team at St Mary's Cathedral put into the day: from the flowers, to the catering, to the altar servers and the smoothness of the liturgy itself, I was so humbled by how the diocesan community came together to make the day such a joyful and memorable celebration.

Before Mass, on the morning of the consecration, I felt joyful that we had finally arrived at the day, excited about what graces the consecration was going to bring, but also nervous and a bit daunted by the magnitude of the commitment I was, with God's help, about to make.

That combination came with me as I processed into the cathedral. However, one of the most poignant moments in the liturgy was during the litany of saints, while I was lying prostrate and the congregation were praying for the intercession of many powerful men and women, I felt a wave of peace come over me and experienced a moment of real intimacy with the Lord.

Many people in the weeks leading up to my consecration, and indeed since, have asked me, "What is consecrated virginity about?". During his homily, Bishop Terry explained wonderfully who consecrated virgins are, and about the history and meaning of this vocation.

If anyone is curious about consecrated virginity and wants to know more, I would encourage you to listen to the homily from the recording of the Mass on the diocesan YouTube channel.

I was also deeply encouraged by Bishop Terry's reflections on the prayer of consecration, and on the graces and the strength I would need to continue living out this vocation, and which the Church was about to petition the Lord for on my behalf.

The high point of the consecration Mass is of course the prayer of consecration itself, which ends with the beautiful lines (addressing God the Father): "Be yourself her glory, her joy, her whole desire… She has chosen you above all things; may she find all things in possessing you." As I have been allowing all the events of the day to settle, and to process everything that took place, the first grace I have noticed is a growth and a deepening for my desire for the Lord – an increase in that "single-heartedness" for the things of God, which we see described in St Paul's encouragement to virgins in the church in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 7:34), and exemplified so perfectly in Our Lady's virginity.

Please pray that I will continue to grow in whatever graces God has in store through this consecration, and that these graces will continue to build up our diocesan community and serve God and the Church.

Please know also that I will be praying for each of you – and if there is any particular way that I can pray for you, or our parishes, please reach out via email or letter to let me know.

Dr Emma Morrison



Dr Emma Morrison during the consecration service – Photo by Chris Booth







NEWS

In the company of three great saints in Assisi

Pilgrims from Teesville, Middlesbrough and York enjoyed a five-day pilgrimage to Assisi in the company of three great saints: St Francis, St Clare and St Carlo Acutis.

After a delayed flight due to the air traffic control disruption, the 22 pilgrims landed at Rome and undertook a two-hour journey to Greccio, where they visited the hermitage that is one of the four shrines in the Sacred Valley founded by St Francis.

In a cave here in 1223, he staged the world's very first nativity scene, with villagers playing the parts of Mary and Joseph and a rag doll as baby Jesus. It is said that St Francis even brought along an ox and a donkey to complete the image of Jesus being born in a stable.

After spending some reflective time in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, we enjoyed a delicious meal with magnificent views of the Rieti Valley and surrounding Apennine mountains.

Afterwards, we made the two-hour drive to Assisi and were dropped off at the bus station before making a long trek through the city's steep streets to our accommodation at the Casa di Ospitalita, a convent run by a community of nuns.



The pilgrims from Teesville, Middlesbrough and York pictured at San Damiano – Photo by Paul Terry

Our pilgrimage leader, Canon John Loughlin, parish priest of St Andrew's, Teesville, gave us the option of attending evening Mass in the convent chapel. And then, after a long day that started at 4am for some of the pilgrims, it was off to bed for a good night's sleep.

After a simple breakfast the next morning, we made the 15-minute walk to the Basilica of St Clare, where Canon John celebrated Mass in the Chapel of St George under the original San Damiano Crucifix. This was the sacred icon before which St Francis heard the voice of Christ command him to "rebuild my house" in 1205. The Poor Clares brought the crucifix here from the original San Damiano church in 1257.

After Mass we could go down into the crypt to visit mortal remains of St Clare and to light a candle at her shrine. Some of her original garments are displayed as sacred relics, including her simple habit, veil, cincture and a hand-stitched linen alb she made.

We then walked to the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore to visit the shrine of St Carlo Acutis. Carlo had a deep spiritual connection to St Francis and viewed him as a primary spiritual role model. He is known for his devotion to the Eucharist and his use of computers and digital media to promote Eucharistic miracles and spread the word of God.

Carlo died at the age of 15 on September 26 2006 after battling an aggressive form of leukaemia. He offered his pain for the Pope and the Church, telling his mother that death is a passage to eternal life.

He was canonised by Pope Leo XIV on September 7 2025, becoming the Church's first millennial saint, and his tomb is at the Shrine of the Renunciation within the church.

After a quick refreshment break, we made our way down to the magnificent Basilica of St Francis, where our guide explained frescoes of the saint that adorn the walls.

St Francis, who renounced his wealth, devoted his life to the poor and founded the Franciscan Order, is one of the most venerated figures in the Church. He is also the patron saint of animals and the environment. The Feast of St Francis is celebrated on October 4, the day of his death in 1226. After lunch we gathered once again at the basilica for a holy hour at his tomb.

Our third day began with Mass in honour of St Carlo Acutis and for the Feast of Padre Pio, celebrated by Monsignor Gerard Robinson. The rest of this day was free for us to explore.

On our final day, we visited Eremo delle Carceri, which translates as Hermitage of the Prisons. The word "carceri" comes from the Latin "carcer", a secluded, solitary place that is suitable for the life of prayer.

This ancient Franciscan site on Mount Subasio is where St Francis spent long periods of seclusion and prayer. We could understand why he chose the beauty of this place.

Our final Mass was celebrated by Canon Michael Loughlin deep in a small crypt chapel and was dedicated to St Francis. We all left feeling we had experienced a very special place.

We continued to San Damiano where, surrounded by olive trees, St Clare and St Francis experienced important moments of their consecrated lives.

St Jerome's Chapel here is the site where in 1205 St Francis heard the crucifix speak, commanding him to "repair my house". St Clare, who founded the Poor Clares, lived there for many years until her death on August 11 1253 and you can see the shrine on the spot where she died.

We then headed to Santa Maria degli Angeli, home of the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli (Basilica of St Mary of the Angels). Here we could visit the Porziuncola, a small chapel where St Francis formed the Franciscan order, and the infirmary, where he died in October 1226.

When St Francis moved to the Porziuncola, it was in a wooded area that had been abandoned and neglected for many years and he set about restoring the chapel. Today it is in the same spot, but the forest has long gone and the massive basilica has been built around it.

The pilgrimage passed too quickly, but we all experienced a deeply spiritual and prayerful time in this holy city. It is an experience we will always remember and recommend.

If any of the pilgrims would like a print or a jpg of the group photo, please email officestandrews@rcdmidd.org.uk.

Paul Terry

Animals take centre stage for Feast of St Francis

The Coastal Cluster of Redcar, Marske, Saltburn and Guisborough celebrated the Feast of St Francis and his 800th anniversary with great joy.

In addition to celebrating the feast day Masses, families also gathered in the morning at St Bede's Church in Marske for Bede's Brunch – a St Francis-themed party with breakfast, bible bingo and cake.

Later in the day parishioners and the local community gathered for the blessing of the animals at St Paulinus in Guisborough.

There was an excellent turnout, including service and therapy dogs, the Wildlife Trust, dogs, cats and even two tortoises. My dog even signed up to the Franciscans!

Thank you so much to Maureen Bourke who organised the event and for everyone who helped, took part and, of course, our four-legged friends.

St Francis, pray for us!

Deacon Tom Rolfe



Deacon Tom's dog joined the Franciscans for the day



Helpers at the St Francis-themed party

NEWS

Pope Leo joins Torchlight Procession in Lourdes

The daily Torchlight Procession in Lourdes took on extra significance when Pope Leo joined pilgrims praying the Rosary and walking around the domain.

The Holy Father followed in the footsteps of thousands who have travelled from our diocese to the French shrine since our pilgrimage began in 1953, and in smaller groups even before that.

All have carried in their hearts their hopes, sorrows and struggles in this beloved Marian shrine known for being a place of healing.

In his address, Pope Leo said: "How moving it is to see the faithful, from one generation to the next, respond with love and trust to the tender invitation of the Virgin Mary.

"How consoling it is to hear Christians sing hymns filled with fervour and faith, and to see them walk, with a light in their hands, towards their mother in Heaven, the mother whom Jesus gave us from the Cross.

"I give thanks to the Lord that I, too, may respond this evening to the call of our mother, becoming a pilgrim among pilgrims."

Pope Leo led the procession as it began at the Grotto of Massabielle, where the Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette, and was followed by the papal delegation and then a large crowd made up of bishops, priests, volunteers and their families.

In front was the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, which is always used in this procession, often carried by Middlesbrough brancardiers during our pilgrimage.

Thousands of pilgrims recited the Rosary, carrying their candles. Many were in wheelchairs with blankets wrapped around them.

Pope Leo said: "The light that guides us and draws us onward is the light of hope, which never abandons us even as we journey through this life."

The Holy Father's visit included Mass on the prairie opposite the Grotto, where around 150,000 pilgrims gathered.

He also visited sick pilgrims and staff in the Accueil Notre-Dame, telling them: "Life is beautiful and precious. Do not be discouraged: Our Lady of Lourdes is holding you by the hand."

Speaking to carers and volunteers, he added: "Is not the first miracle of Lourdes, for them, that they have met you, that they have experienced your generosity, your dedication and your closeness?"



This fantastic picture, captured by Alex Wright, of Photo Durand, our official diocesan Lourdes photographers, shows Pope Leo taking part in the Torchlight Procession

Deacon Peter retires as Stella Maris Chaplain

Deacon Peter Barrigan has hung up his hard hat and hi-vis jacket as he retires from his role as Stella Maris Regional Port Chaplain for Teesport.

The 74-year-old had ministered to seafarers and fishers for the last 22 years (12 as chaplain and 10 as a volunteer ship visitor) and is a familiar and friendly face in the port and the diocese.

Peter said: "I think the time is right to step back from the gangway and enjoy a change of pace. I have enjoyed many happy moments with the seafarers, and unfortunately, been involved in a few sad ones.

"It's a hard life for many of those away at sea and thanks to the support of many parishioners we have been able to help them and their families.

"Stella Maris is an international organisation, and this allows us to get help to seafarers' families, many thousands of miles away who may be struggling with medical bills or having their homes destroyed in bad weather."

Peter also expressed his gratitude to his dedicated team of volunteers who board ships in all weathers and at various times of the day, taking with them the gifts received from parish groups, individuals, knitting groups and businesses.

"A big thank you to all those who have donated clothes, toiletries, knitted hats and for the support we receive in the Sea Sunday collection. One of the most enjoyable times has been at Christmas, distributing gifts to ship crews which are donated by churches and social groups. The delight on the faces of grown men and women when we hand them a Christmas gift wrapped often with a card inside is very moving.

"I remember delivering Christmas presents during the pandemic. We had to leave the gifts on the quayside as we weren't allowed on the ships. On one ship, two crew members went running up the gangway taking the gifts for all the crew. Halfway up, he turned back, came down and said: 'Thank you for not forgetting us'."

In 2019, Peter and his team of volunteer ship visitors won the Shoreside Team of the Year Award at the IHS Markit Safety at Sea Awards. The win was a great testimony to and recognition of the good work that Peter and his team do day-in, day-out caring for crews in crisis and providing spiritual, pastoral and practical support to many seafarers, fishers and their families in need.

Peter looks forward to spending more time with his family and to what the Lord might have in store for him.

"We owe a great thanks to Our Lady Star of the Sea for her intercession and care for seafarers," he said.



Deacon Peter Barrigan, who is retiring after 22 years with Stella Maris



Deacon Peter distributing gifts to seafarers at Teesport



Dressed as Santa for a Christmas visit

NEWS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Caritas hosts World Day of the Poor prayer day

Caritas Diocese of Middlesbrough invites all to a Day of Prayer, Reflection and Solidarity to mark the 10th World Day of the Poor, at St Mary's Cathedral on Saturday November 14 from 10.30am to 3.15 pm. Father Chris Hughes will speak on the theme "No justice, no peace", exploring how communities can work towards justice and peace. The event reflects Pope Leo's message encouraging Christians to become a refuge for the poor, promote dignity, and walk in solidarity with those experiencing hardship. Organisations supporting people in need will be present, creating space to share stories and foster understanding. All are welcome. Tea and coffee will be available. Please bring a packed lunch. Visit csan.org.uk/world-day-of-the-poor-2026-resource/ to download resources produced by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) for schools, parishes and individuals.

Fund supports students facing crisis pregnancies

The Alma Mater Fund provides financial and practical support to university students facing crisis pregnancy, enabling them to continue their education while embracing motherhood. The fund is administered by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) and has already supported several students in the dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam. SPUC's Abortion Recovery and Care Helpline (ARCH), started by women who experienced abortion and struggled in the aftermath, provides free, confidential, compassionate and non-judgemental support for those who may be carrying similar emotional and psychological effects. For more details, visit spuc.org.uk/support-hub/alma-mater and archtrust.org.uk.

Thousands attend Archbishop Fulton Sheen Beatification Mass

More than 50,000 people attended the Beatification Mass for Blessed Archbishop Fulton Sheen at the Dome in the America's Centre, St Louis, Missouri. They included 90 bishops, 1,000 priests and 1,600 women and men religious. Chief celebrant Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle conveyed the greetings of Pope Leo XIV, who, he said, "rejoices at the beatification of his fellow countryman, his fellow Illinoisan and brother bishop".

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Visitor speaks of climate crisis effects

We were delighted to welcome CAFOD's country representative for Kenya and Uganda to York to tell us about the work of our partners and the impact of the generous support given in the diocese.

Catherine Ogolla spoke of projects that are helping communities minimise the impacts of the climate crisis, encouraging environmental stewardship and regeneration and empowering women and girls.

She thanked people in the Diocese of Middlesbrough for their valuable support and for thinking of our global brothers and sisters.



Young helper Mason with Family Fast Day envelopes

This Harvest, I had the pleasure of visiting Sacred Heart Church in Middlesbrough to talk about our appeal for Family Fast Day.

We have an opportunity to thank God for all we have received and to share those blessings with others. As one global family, we are called to put our faith into action by supporting our neighbours who don't have enough food or safe water.

We learned about this through the eyes of 12-year-old Tayla, from Zimbabwe, discovering how support from her community, our parishioners and CAFOD's trusted Caritas partners has made such a positive difference.

This theme was echoed in the pastoral letter from Bishop Marcus, who asked us to reflect on our interconnected nature with one another and with God's wonderful Creation.

During the Season of Creation, we stop to give thanks for the good things in our lives, and we remember that God's riches are to be shared by all.

By sharing in the work of creating better opportunities for our sisters and brothers around the world to have access to what they need to flourish, we are responding to the "cry of the earth" and "the cry of the poor", thus experiencing a deeper realisation of our mutual need, and in doing so, becoming closer to God.

Another way in which we can do this is by


Rachel Blaylock during her visit to Sacred Heart, Middlesbrough, to talk about CAFOD's Harvest Family Fast Day appeal

taking part in CAFOD's Live Simply Award, which enables Catholic communities to care for God's creation and stand in solidarity with our global family.

If you would like to find out more about this or any aspect of our work, please do not hesitate to contact me on rblaylock@cafod.org.uk or 07779804243.

Rachel Blaylock
Community Participation Coordinator

Classic album comes to the cathedral

Scottish singer/songwriter Gary Stewart and his versatile six-piece band will bring their faithful rendition of Paul Simon's classic album, Graceland, to St Mary's Cathedral on Friday November 6.

Formed in 2015, Gary and his band have been steadily performing shows at venues and festivals across the UK and beyond for almost a decade, including a sell-out performance at York Barbican.

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of Graceland, and the York-based troubadour and fellow musicians are gearing up for a busy year of commemorations, delighting audiences old and new with the beloved South African rhythms, melodies and harmonies that made this album a universal classic.

Tickets are £22.50 plus booking fee. Call 0333 666 3366 to book or visit cathedralevents@rcdmidd.org.uk for more details.

Upcoming events at St Mary's Cathedral

Friday November 6, 7:30pm: Gary Stewart Presents Graceland: A 40th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday November 7, 7:30pm: Bootleg Eagles – Unplugged

Saturday November 21, 7pm: Lux Aeterna with Newcastle University Chamber Choir

Saturday November 28, 4pm/7:30pm: The Cathedral Series – Come and Sing Handel's Messiah

Tuesday December 1, 6:30pm: Christmas Wreath Making

Wednesday December 2, 6:30pm: Christmas Wreath Making

Saturday December 5, 7:30pm: Simply Dylan – Acoustic

Saturday December 12, 7:30pm: Ruby Jubilee Christmas at the Cathedral with Cantabile

Tuesday December 15, 1pm: The Nice List Panto – School Performance

Tuesday December 15, 6pm: The Nice List Panto – Public Performance

Wednesday December 16, 10:30am: The Nice List Panto – School Performance

Friday December 18, 6pm and 8:30pm: The Christmas Orchestra


Gary Stewart and his band are coming to the cathedral for their acclaimed performance of Paul Simon's Graceland album

Pope rallies million-strong child army for prayer

Pope Leo joined 700 children at the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens to pray the Rosary for peace and launch a worldwide week of prayer.

The gathering marked the start of One Million Children Praying the Rosary, a global initiative organised by Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

The Holy Father told the crowd of youngsters: "I am truly happy to be with you. This evening and during these days, it is not just us praying. Throughout the world, a million children are praying with us. A million!"

The initiative brought together children, families, schools, parishes and communities worldwide to pray for peace.

Thanking ACN "for having promoted this initiative and for the great work it does", Pope Leo invited children to pray especially for youngsters living through conflict.

He added: "Let us ask together for a special gift – peace for all the children of the world, especially for those who live where there is war."

He then invited them to imagine "fifty million Hail Marys" rising to heaven "from everywhere and in all the languages of the earth".

Each of the five decades of the rosary, which was offered for countries affected by conflict and instability, was recited in a different language – Italian, Arabic, Urdu, German and Spanish.

Data collected by ACN's online campaign platform recorded 313,938 participants from 94 countries. But many schools, parishes and communities took part without registering, particularly in areas where internet access is limited.

Registered participants came from countries including Bangladesh, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Sierra Leone and South Africa, with particularly high turnouts in Brazil, India, Poland, the Philippines and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in the UK, data showed around 22,000 people took part across 27 UK cities.

Greeting the Pope, Cardinal Kurt Koch highlighted children facing war, persecution or humanitarian crises in Ukraine, the Holy Land and Middle East, Pakistan, South Sudan, Cuba and Venezuela.

He asked the Pope for his blessing so that children might learn, with Mary, to be "little peacemakers".

He said: "Prayer also educates our hearts towards peace, forgiveness and caring for others."

Before the Holy Father arrived, the children had prepared for the Rosary through music, testimonies and interactive activities.

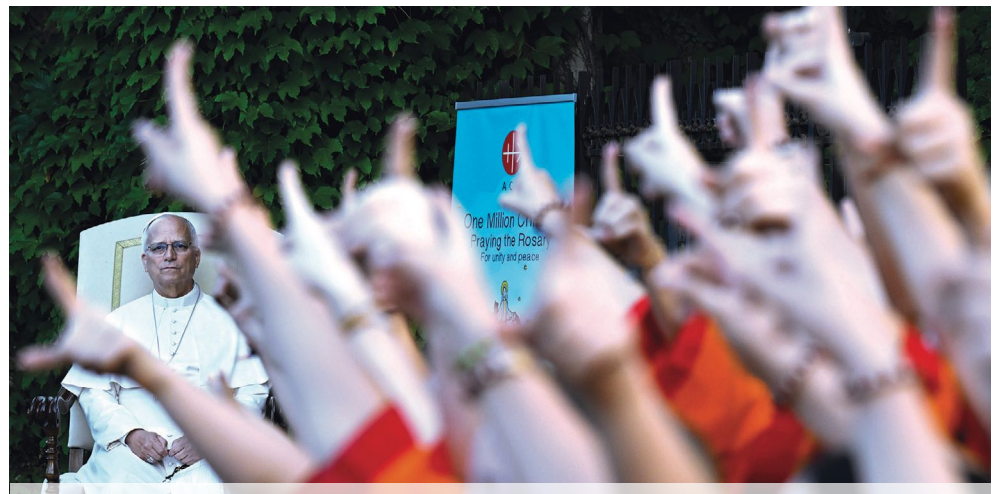
Children from four countries performed alongside a choir and musicians from the Shalom Community during the event.

Pope Leo concluded by telling the children that prayer should lead to action in their daily lives, encouraging them to do good at home, at school, during catechism and while playing and taking part in sport.

He said: "Prayers must always be accompanied by good deeds, by acts of love. This is how peace grows."

Anyone wishing to join the One Million Children Praying the Rosary campaign can register their participation and download campaign materials at acninternational.org/millionchildrenpraying.

Nathalie Raffray



Hundreds of children joined Pope Leo for the launch of the Rosary campaign – Photo © Vatican Media



Pope Leo and Cardinal Kurt Koch with a child at the launch of Rosary campaign – Photo © Vatican Media

New chapter for charismatic renewal in our diocese

Change was in the air as Middlesbrough Charismatic Diocesan Service of Communion (CDSC) held its eighth day of renewal since its formation in 2022.

During the day, I handed over the role of coordinating the service to Gerry Connor from Darlington, who will lead the service until a new coordinator is appointed.

In 2020, coordinators were appointed for each diocese by CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service) England and Wales and called to form a service team to establish the CHARIS mission in the life of the Church.

CHARIS was entrusted by Pope Francis with a threefold mission: to share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone, to serve the unity of the body of Christ and to serve the poor and those in greatest need.

The day of renewal, at St Paulinus Church in Guisborough, began with praise and worship music, facilitated by Anne Connor, Frances Redmore, Julie Coburn, Bernard Clarke and Michael Coughlan.

Michael introduced the theme of the day, "By his wounds, we are healed", with a powerful testimony and inspirational talk about inner healing.

Attendees from across the diocese and beyond – one couple travelled from Manchester – were given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Father Peter Taylor and Father Steven Leightell, while Eucharistic adoration accompanied by worship music took place. There was also the opportunity to receive prayer ministry from the team.

A delicious lunch was provided by St Paulinus' parishioners, who worked tirelessly all day to make everyone feel welcome and cared for.

Father Dominique Minskip, from St Joseph's in Middlesbrough, celebrated Mass in the afternoon, with a moving homily about healing and the mercy of God.

Mass was followed by an opportunity to receive prayer for awakening the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which all Catholics receive at Confirmation.

Middlesbrough CDSC has a mailing list that you can join to be notified of future events. We are building regular charismatic prayer groups in each deanery to enable people to grow in the fruits and gifts of the Spirit.

We also need volunteers to transport people to our days of renewal and to be a point of contact between the CDSC and their own parish.

I would like to encourage those who have not yet attended one of our events to come along to our next one.

We are planning a day of prayer and reflection for Lent 2027 in York (date and venue to be confirmed).

If you would like to know more about the CHARIS National Service, visit charisuk.com. To find out more about local events, contact Gerry on 07877 185219 or myself on 07932 420809, or email cdscmiddlesbrough@gmail.com.

Sharon Daniel



Outgoing Middlesbrough Charismatic Diocesan Service of Communion coordinator Sharon Daniel with her interim replacement, Gerry Connor

LOURDES

Details unveiled for 74th pilgrimage to Lourdes

Arrangements have been confirmed for the 74th Diocese of Middlesbrough Pilgrimage to Lourdes as we once again respond to Our Lady's call to journey in faith, seek spiritual renewal and pray for healing and peace.

The pilgrimage will take place from Saturday May 29 to Friday June 4 2027 and will be organised in partnership with Joe Walsh Tours, whose representatives will be on hand to offer assistance.

We will travel by plane from Teesside Airport and prices will include full board in a hotel of your choice, transfers and one check-in bag and one cabin bag.

There will be the usual full religious programme plus guided walking tour of Lourdes visiting places associated with St Bernadette and guided visit to the sanctuaries, Grotto, Baths and Basilicas.

Each year, pilgrims from our diocese travel to this small town in the foothills of the Pyrenees that has become one of the most important places of prayer and pilgrimage in the Catholic world.

In 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette Soubirous, a poor local girl, calling people to prayer, conversion and trust in God's mercy. From those quiet encounters grew a worldwide pilgrimage centred on healing – not only of the body, but of the heart and soul.

Everyone is welcome to join priests, religious, volunteers and fellow pilgrims from our own parishes.

At the heart of our pilgrimage is prayer: daily Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Rosary, the Torchlight Marian Procession and Blessed Sacrament Procession and time at the Grotto.

Lourdes is especially known for its care of the sick and vulnerable. Pilgrims who travel with illness, disability or deep personal burdens often speak of being carried by the faith of others.

Those who come as helpers frequently discover that they receive far more than they give. Lourdes has a quiet way of re-ordering priorities and restoring perspective.

People go to Lourdes for many reasons. Some seek physical healing, while others come with grief, questions or exhaustion. Many simply come because they feel drawn, even if they cannot yet explain why.

What unites pilgrims is the experience of the Church as a living family – praying, serving and walking together in hope.

If you have never been, a diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes is a chance to step out of routine and into something deeper, alongside your own diocesan family.

We always need doctors, nurses, brancardiers and handmaids (male and female helpers) and musicians to assist with our pilgrimage. If you would like to join us or would like to know more, please give me a call on 07776 115160.

Our Formation Day is on Saturday March 6 and our Formation Evening is on Tuesday May 4. All helpers must attend one of these events if they wish to serve in Lourdes.

Mark Taylor, Pilgrimage Director



Pope Leo in Lourdes this year – Photo copyright Alex Wright, Photo Durand

PRICES

Mediteranee £995
Agena £995
St Sauveur £1,069
Padoue £1,069
Eliseo £1,069
Roissy £1,069
Accueil Notre-Dame £975
Seat-Only £645

Single supplements apply. Travel insurance is available and proof of insurance must be given when booking. For more details and to book, visit joewalshtours.co.uk.

Supported pilgrims should contact Pat Ling on 01642 760105 for an Accueil or hotel application form.

Lourdes Christmas party dates for your diaries

York:
Saturday November 28 from 1pm to 3pm, English Martyrs Parish Hall

Hull:
Saturday December 5 at 2pm, Sacred Heart Church Hall

Middlesbrough:
Saturday December 12 at 1pm, St Gabriel's Parish Hall

THE LIVING WORD – Exploring the biblical notion of Spirit

LUCA SETTIMO, Professor of Theology at the University of Nottingham and currently living in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, continues his series of reflections on the meaning of some key biblical words.

The Greek word in the Bible for Spirit is Pneuma. This word appears 379 times in the New Testament; like the Hebrew equivalent ruah, it has at its core the meaning of "breath" or "wind".

The Latin word anima (which in English translates as soul) has its roots in the Greek ánemos, meaning "wind". On Easter evening, the risen Christ says to his disciples: "'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' [Pneuma Hagion]" (John 20:21-22).

Christ immediately thereafter grants them the power to forgive sins: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). The Holy Spirit – whom he had promised to the apostles gathered in the upper room a few hours before his arrest (cf John 13-17) – is not only creator but also redeemer.

The Holy Spirit is also the source of new life through the salvation offered in baptismal rebirth, as Jesus taught Nicodemus during that famous nocturnal encounter: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

And Jesus used the analogy of the Spirit as wind, following the meaning of the word pneuma: "The wind [pneuma which means both wind and spirit] blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [pneumatos]" (John 3:8).

Given the affinity between the Spirit and the wind, we can understand the scene of Pentecost described by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles when the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room: "Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability" (Acts 2:2-4).

St Paul, then, always in the wake of this interior "breath" that the Spirit infuses into the baptised, giving them new life beyond physical life, concludes: "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15).

Thus, within us we experience an inner spiritual breath which unites our soul with God himself. It is an intimacy that enables us to enter into dialogue with him using the affectionate Aramaic expression Abba, meaning "Dad", the expression Jesus himself used in addressing God as Father.

The role of the Holy Spirit is also evident within the Trinitarian vision of the Christian faith: for example, Matthew explains that when Jesus had been baptised by John the Baptist: "suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him" (Matthew 3:16).

I wish to acknowledge Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi for granting me permission to use his material. A YouTube video entitled "The biblical notion of Spirit," which explores this biblical concept in greater detail, is available on my YouTube channel (youtube.com/@LucaSettimo-7).



Professor Luca Settimo



El Greco, Pentecost, ca 1600, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid – Public-domain image

NEWS

Come to the Well: A day of reflection for catechists

Catechists from across the Diocese of Middlesbrough are invited to step away from the busyness of parish life and come together for The Well: A Day of Reflection for Catechists.

The event, from 10.30am to 3pm on Saturday January 30 2027, will be held in the peaceful surroundings of Thicket Priory, Thorganby, York.

Catechists give generously of their time, gifts and faith as they accompany children, young people and adults on their journey with Christ. Yet those who serve others also need opportunities to pause, reflect and return to the source of their ministry.

Inspired by the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well, the day will offer catechists space for prayer, reflection and fellowship with others who share in this important ministry. The programme will include reflective sessions, refreshments and conversation, and the celebration of Mass with Canon John Lumley.

Joining Nicola Sweetman in leading the day will be Bernadette Murray, who will share her wealth of experience in Ignatian spirituality and offer practical guidance for deepening our lives of prayer.

Whether you are an experienced catechist or have only recently begun serving in your parish, The Well offers an opportunity to be refreshed in faith, encouraged in your vocation, and reminded that our ministry always begins with our own encounter with Christ.

Come to the well. Take time to rest in the Lord's presence and receive afresh the living water that Christ offers.

To book your place, email adultformation@rcdmidd.org.uk.

Nicola Sweetman
Adult Formation Coordinator



Thicket Priory is the venue for our day of reflection for catechists

Steven joins music directors for annual conference

Our diocesan director of music, Steven Maxson, joined colleagues for the annual conference of Catholic music directors at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich.

Topics for the day were wide-ranging, including consideration of music for evening prayer, in which Steven led practical sessions singing psalms from different cathedrals, including Middlesbrough, along with one on vocal health for singers.

In the year of the 100th anniversary of the longest running outside broadcast, Choral Evensong, now on Radio 3, the series producer, Ben Collingwood, was interviewed.

Bishop of East Anglia Peter Collins presided at morning prayer along with the dean of the cathedral, Father Martin Hardy.



Attendees at the Conference of Catholic Music Directors at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich



A Letter From Madonna House – Finding renewal as we journey towards Advent

The consecration of Dr Emma Morrison to a lifetime of perpetual virginity was a beautiful event with a liturgy that seemed like a mix between a wedding and an ordination.



During the service Emma received a veil and a ring and prostrated herself before the altar as we prayed the Litany of Saints for her. She radiated joy on that day.

Reflecting on this later, I came across a passage from St Paul's epistle to the Romans, which reads: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

It reminded me of my experience of joining Madonna House. When I was 17 years old, I went to a youth conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Through the many inspiring talks and liturgical events that weekend a thirst and a longing for a Christian-based lifestyle grew in me, along with a conviction that I was called to some sort of religious life.

Eventually, this led me to Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario, where I stayed for nine months. At the end of that time I felt called to join, so I began a time of formation and made First Promises on June 8 2017.

One day, I was in conversation with a fellow member of the community and I asked her why she wasn't coming to a movie that was being viewed that evening. She answered that when she watches a movie, she ends up thinking about it for several days and recalls the various scenes without really wanting to.

She felt she needed to live out what we call in the community "the Poustinia of the heart"*, the practice of remaining in contact with God wherever we might be or whatever we might be doing.

She found it necessary for herself to do without movies, TV shows or even certain novels. I was moved by her dedication to her vocation.

Our foundress often quoted this line from Paul Evdokimov: "Absence of the need to have becomes a need not to have."

For me this involves any mental blocks or distractions from our connection to God. I've often found that the more I desire to connect with God, the more I need to be rid of distracting thoughts and memories.

A consecration of the mind to God is a continual journey of self-discipline and surrender to the will of God in the present moment, letting go of our old selves and striving to achieve this "newness of life" in Christ.

St Paul's life certainly demonstrates this renewal of life in Christ in his own conversion from a persecutor of the faith to one of its most fervent defenders. I hope you can find this renewal in your own life as we journey on towards Advent.

*For further explanation, see Poustinia, by Catherine Doherty

Mathieu Dacquay

NEWS

Holy Father prays for peace after five die in airstrike

Pope Leo XIV has expressed his sorrow and assured Gaza's Christian community of his prayers after an Israeli airstrike killed five civilians and injured many more.

The attack struck a residential building in the Rimal neighbourhood of western Gaza City in the early hours of Saturday October 3.

Among those killed were Maysa Khader Ibrahim Abu Daoud and her daughter, Mary Hafez Michel Najjar. The two Greek Orthodox women had recently found a new place of refuge and were trying to rebuild their lives.

In a message to Father Gabriel Romanelli, parish priest of Holy Family Church in Gaza, Pope Leo prayed for the victims and thanked him for his ministry.

"Since learning the painful news of the deaths of Maysa and Mary, I have been praying to God for them, for their families and for the entire community of Gaza. How long, O Lord?" he wrote.

"Thank you for accompanying the parish and so many people who wish to live in peace. Blessings and an affectionate embrace."

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, expressed his condolences on behalf of the clergy and the diocese, condemning the loss of innocent lives.

The women's funeral took place at St Porphyrius Church in Gaza City, where Metropolitan Alexios, the Greek Orthodox patriarchal vicar, prayed for their eternal rest.

According to medical sources at Al-Shifa Hospital, those wounded in the attack were in serious condition.

The Israeli military said the strike targeted a Hamas command centre or leader.

The local church, led on the ground by Father Romanelli and the Missionaries of Charity, continues to assist hundreds of displaced people with nowhere safe to go.

Although the intensity of the fighting has diminished, Cardinal Pizzaballa warned that everyday life and humanitarian conditions may be worse.

"Reconstruction has not begun, living conditions have not improved; indeed, in some respects, they have even worsened."

With winter approaching, Cardinal Pizzaballa voiced particular concern for displaced families.

"The rains will be an enormous problem for all those living in tents," he said.

Amid these difficulties, the reopening of Gaza's parish school has offered the community a sign of hope.

"Reopening was an important sign to give. A sign that, despite all the difficulties, we want to begin again: we are not giving up. There was great joy that day; everyone was crying."



The school attached to the Gaza's only Roman Catholic Church has proudly reopened its doors to its 1,000 pupils after three years of war – a sign of hope as the death toll in the strip rose to 73,789 – Photo © ACN

CATHOLIC HISTORY FOCUS – Pillar of the Church – the life of St Augustine

SHAWN RAS, a Dutch-born historian and parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Peter Chanel in Hull, continues his series of articles about Church history...

On Sunday November 13 534, joining the roster of lovely people born on that day (the author included), was born one of the most important minds in Christendom.

His mother, St Monica and father Patricius had both been converts from Algeria, likely being of Berber descent. This meant they looked not unlike modern-day Tunisians and Algerians, and were culturally a mix of local, Roman and Phoenician cultures, all of which had been present in the region for centuries around the time of his birth.

Being born into a relatively upper-class family, the young Augustine relied on the Roman cultural systems of education to be taught rhetoric, one of the most respected Roman skills.

In his famous autobiography, Confessions, Augustine tells of his youthful exploits, many of which included hedonistic pursuits and minor bouts of crime, which he admits were committed out of youthful, upper-class boredom.

Augustine turned to teaching in his hometown and in the urban hub, Carthage, the second city of the Western Empire. Unsatisfied with the area, he packed his things and moved to Rome but was equally disappointed with the attitudes to education there. Augustine, who believed in Manichaeism at that time, was introduced to the Prefect of Rome, who had been invited to the court of Emperor Theodosius in Milan.

There Augustine and his mother discovered how deep the Christian faith ran in that city. His mother Monica was already a devout believer, and when in the 580s Augustine encountered future saint Ambrosius, Bishop of Milan, he began to turn to Christ.

In Ambrose, Augustine found a teacher, a mentor and a friend, a fellow rhetorician and orator. His mother had arranged for him to marry a respectable girl, and Augustine started on a difficult road to Christianity, famously praying: "Give me chastity and continence, O Lord, but not yet."

At the age of 31, Augustine entered the Church and became a Christian. In 587, his friend Ambrose baptised him in Milan, and Augustine began writing his first work, On the Holiness of the Catholic Church, and in the following year, his mother Monica passed away.

In 591, having returned to Algeria, Augustine was ordained a priest and preached famously against his former faith, Manichaeism. Augustine's preaching was unorthodox, as he would walk into the church and among the congregation, leading to his rise in popularity.

In 595 he became the coadjutor bishop of Hippo Regius, earning him his epithet "of Hippo". He started work on Confessions at this time and was inspired to write his other famous work, The City of God, after hearing of the Visigoth sack of Rome in 410. He famously lived a life akin to a monk while desperately trying to convert the pagans of Roman North Africa.

Augustine reposed in the Lord in 530, in the middle of the Vandal siege of Hippo. He had begged his caretakers to hang the penitential psalms of David on the walls so he could read them as he slowly passed away. He died at age 75.

Being a prolific writer with an iconic prose and great mastery over rhetoric, he was sainted and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298.

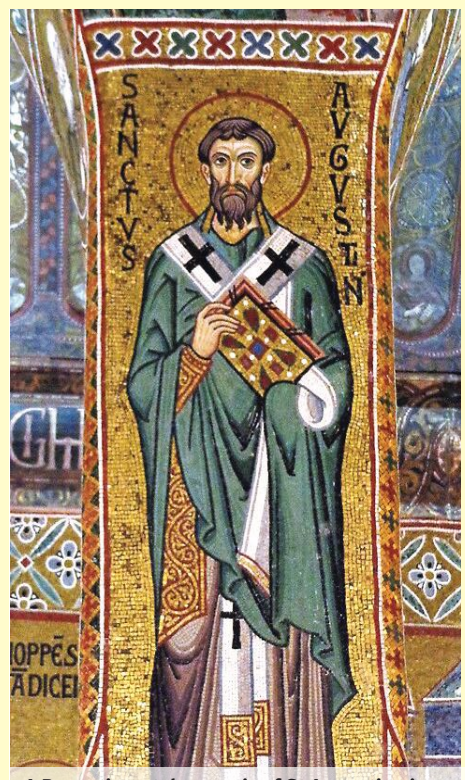
Augustine's writings are considered among the most influential of any in Christendom, inspiring saints, scholars and popes alike, from Thomas Aquinas to Pope Benedict XVI, the latter being arguably his most ardent admirer and scholar.

Augustine's life started as one of sin and scepticism, surrounded by Christian love and aware of it, but wilfully rejecting it.

Personally, I find him one of the most relatable and sympathetic saints in the litany. A man choosing to reject Christ but ultimately becoming one of his most important followers and a pillar of his Church, being one of the four Western Church Fathers.

His writings about sin, repentance, the structure of the Church and most recently his newly refuted ideas about "just war" have been keystones for Western philosophy through the ages.

His life and conversion remind us of the promise of Christ's unconditional love. Truly, St Augustine of Hippo remains an inspiration to us all.



A Byzantine-style mosaic of St Augustine in the Palatine Chapel of Palermo: note the Greek style but Latin text

A new way to remember loved ones this month

November is traditionally a time for prayer and reflection, when we remember family and friends who have gone before us.

In his first Mass for the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, Pope Leo said: "Christian faith, founded upon Christ's Paschal mystery, helps us to experience our memories as more than just a recollection of the past but also, and above all, as hope for the future."

Across the country, people remember those they've lost. Some have set up a Candlelight Fund with aid agency CAFOD in memory of their loved ones.

For one bereaved mother, the Holy Father's powerful words resonate with her journey from overwhelming grief to finding a sense of peace. Nina lost her beloved daughter Annabel to Covid in 2022, leaving her utterly bereft.

She said: "Annabel was my greatest ally and kept me young and constantly challenged. Her 'why' questions started young and continued throughout her short life.

"Every Christmas she donated generously to her special charities for refugees and the homeless. However, she also thoroughly enjoyed life and enjoyed a glass of bubbly. She spoke five languages and worked for a UN agency absolutely refusing to admit it was anything special."

Through her faith, Nina now feels a sense of hope. Setting up a CAFOD Candlelight Fund was part of her path to peace. The fund, whereby friends and family can donate to mark special moments such as a birthday or important milestone, felt like the perfect tribute to Annabel.

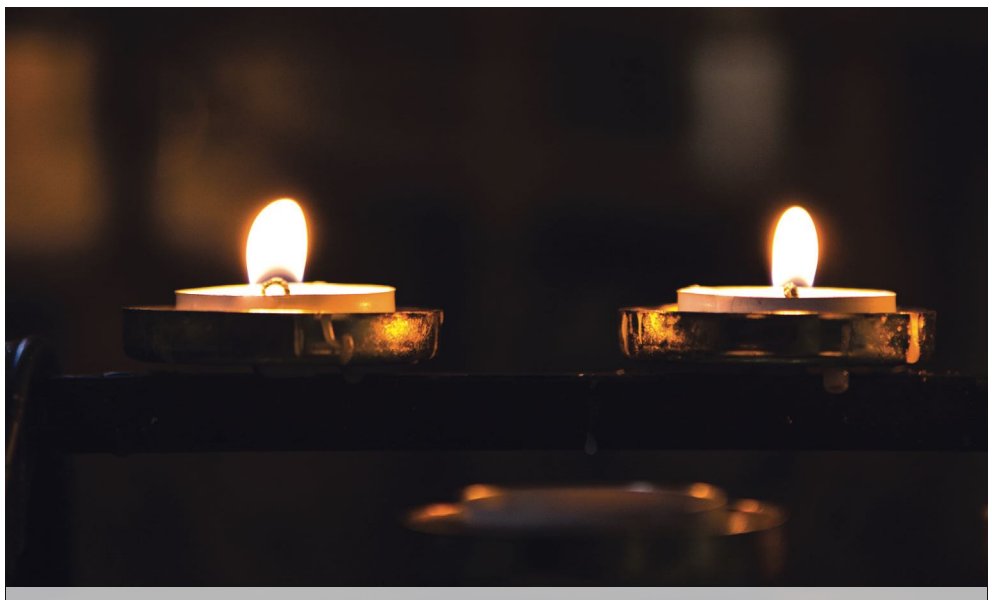
"We have survived. Somehow, we've come through it and achieved a kind of acceptance and peace. Being an advocate for CAFOD has helped enormously.

"The Candlelight Fund has shed warmth and light on our experience. So many mothers in poorer countries lose many children to conflict, hunger and disease.

"I'm grateful for organisations like CAFOD who are attempting to right this wrong. And through Annabel's Candlelight Fund, we want to be part of this change, in her memory.

"I can now feel gratitude for Annabel's 39 years with me and how the world benefitted from her presence. And now on that solemn feast of All Souls in November, when the weather's dark and cold and generally wet, I remind myself that she is there with them. I suspect she's brightened it up no end. She's humanised heaven for me."

For more information on the CAFOD Candlelight Fund, visit cafod.org.uk/candlelight.



CAFOD Candles in St George's Cathedral, Southwark – Photo by Thom Flint



The Westminster UCM visitors at York Minster

UCM members and friends meet up in York

A group of ladies from Hounslow Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) in the Diocese of Westminster visited York for a day at the invitation of the city's St Aelred's Foundation.

After lunch at the Bar Convent and a visit to the chapel with its relics of St Margaret Clitherow and its association with Mary Ward, two of York's indomitable Catholic women from the 16th and 17th centuries, the group explored the city walls and had a guided tour organised by Rose and Brian Cartledge.

Rose is currently national vice president of the UCM and the visit was organised by Ione de Souza from Westminster.

It's great news that women from across the country can enjoy such hospitality and get to know each other better.

Sarah Sheils

VIEW FROM THE VALLEY – A time that brings us closer to our departed loved ones

In a new regular column for the Voice, a Yorkshire countryside parish priest offers an insight into his experiences of the Church...

People sometimes talk about "thin places", where the boundary between the heavenly and earthly realms seems very porous.

In these places, prayer seems easy, and the glory of God is unusually visible to the mind's eye.

Lourdes is a place like that, as is Walsingham (they're the only two Marian shrines I've been to but do write to our editor and tell us your experiences!).

There is a place in the Lake District where I almost expect to see a "stairway to heaven", and the district around Holy Island in Northumberland is soaked in the prayers of the saints.

I want to suggest, though, that there can be "thin seasons" as well as "thin places". Christmas is one, as is the Easter Triduum. We might not think of November as being particularly "thin" – but the Month of the Holy Souls focuses our minds on our loved ones who have died.

Parishes have their "November Dead Lists" – I have my own private one where I remember teachers, mentors and priests who have helped me on my Christian journey. I call to mind relatives who may not be at the top of my prayer list elsewhere in the year.

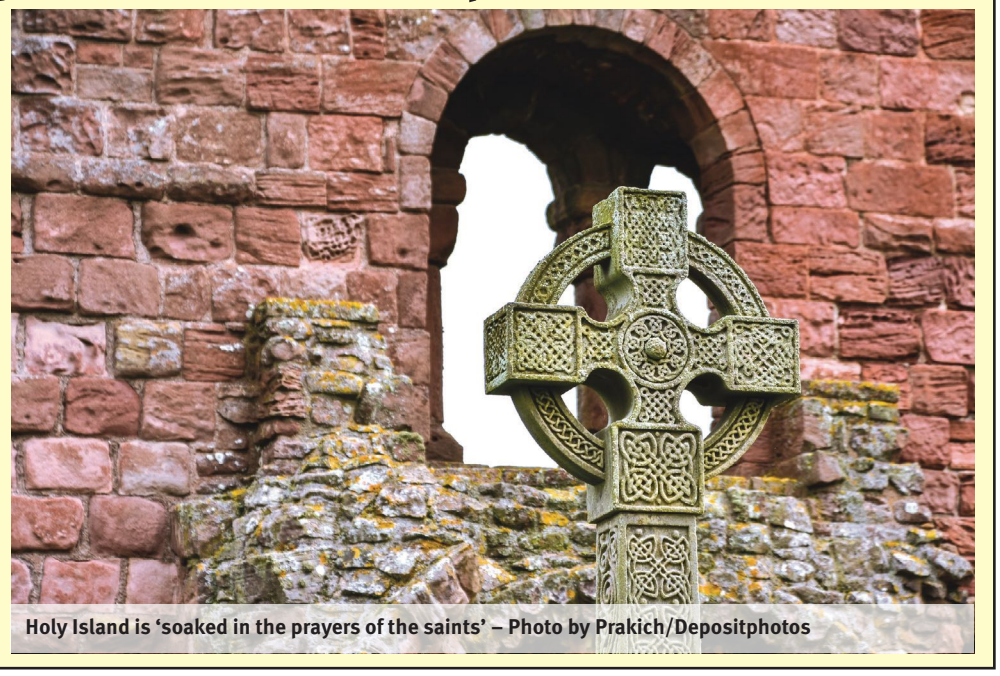
As a convert, I love the Catholic attitude to death. We are all saddened to lose loved ones, but as a prayer says, "They have only gone as far away as Christ, and Christ is very near".

We may not seek to contact them, but we can pray for them and their "onward journey" into the love and mercy of God. And they can pray for us.

May this season be a "thin one" for you, and for the Holy Souls who are dear to you.

Your fellow pilgrim in Christ

Raphael Postgate



Holy Island is 'soaked in the prayers of the saints' – Photo by Prakich/Depositphotos

NEWS

Study examines future direction for social action

A unique four-month study involving 73 church leaders, theologians and frontline practitioners has concluded that Christian social action has reached a critical crossroads.

A report of the study reveals a widespread consensus that to tackle entrenched poverty effectively, current charitable models must evolve.

The Crossroads study from Christian charity Together for the Common Good tested a provocative framework identifying three critical disconnects, described as the "three sins" of Christian social action – the disconnect between charity and justice, the problem of deepening dependency and the disconnect with empowerment and the problem of secularism and the disconnect from distinctive Christian roots.

The study engaged leaders from across the major Christian traditions, including Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Salvationist and Evangelical denominations, and from more than 30 organisations, including Caritas, Trussell, Ascension Trust and Feeding Britain.

A report of the study's key findings highlights the importance of these three "sins", which were first formulated by Jon Kuhrt, whose challenge to the Christian social action sector was published on the Grace+Truth blog.

There is no "silver bullet" to the issues of poverty in the UK but the study found a consensus that these three issues need grappling with.

Frontline charity workers expressed a strong desire for deeper systemic change. They felt a prophetic voice was needed from the Church and this is largely absent. There was a fear among some that asking questions risks being "political", and this needed to be addressed. Most felt that systems are broken but that there is no clear voice setting out clearly what the Church should be doing or asking for.

There has been significant growth in social action projects that focus on providing food and other resources. Overcoming the trap of long-term dependency emerged as the highest priority. Many felt that the dependency questions often go unasked at the grassroots level and that these urgently need discussing.

Senior leaders and funders voiced significant concern over a fading theological vision, warning that "mission drift" threatens the distinctiveness that inspired Christian social action in the first place. There was a desire for greater confidence in the distinctive Christian story.

Together for the Common Good founder and director Jenny Sinclair said: "For too long we've measured Christian social action by how much we deliver. The challenge this study puts to the church is not whether we care, but how we do it: whether the disposition of the church is one of solidarity or as a service provider.



Jenny Sinclair, founder and director of Together for the Common Good

"We are at a crossroads. The appetite to discern a different way is real and broad. We must find a way that integrates justice, empowerment and a confident Christian distinctiveness. Our task now is to walk that good way together. We invite people to read the report and comment."

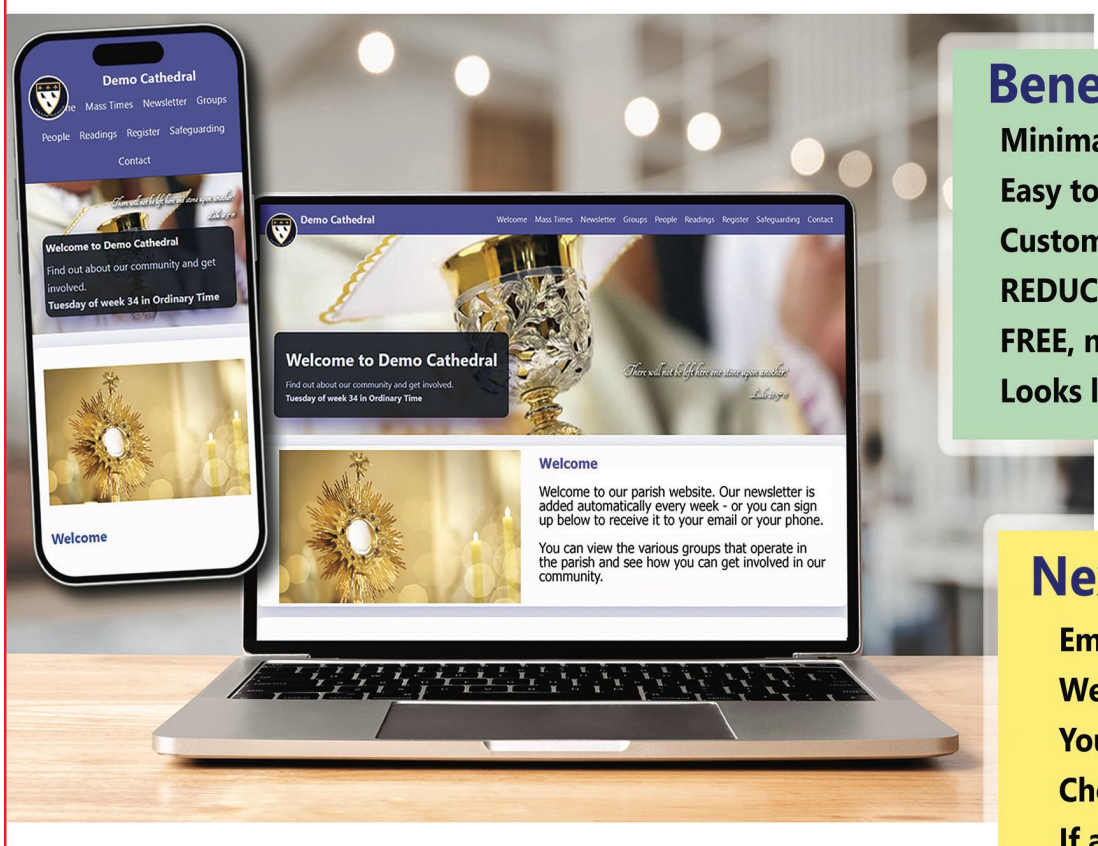
The next phase of the Crossroads initiative aims to bring together cross-denominational working groups to design practical frameworks.

These will help Christian social action across churches, schools and charities make the shift from temporary crisis management towards sustainable, relational community transformation.

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Dioceses unite for first joint Walsingham pilgrimage

Pilgrims from parishes across the diocese joined friends old and new from the Diocese of Leeds for a joint pilgrimage to Walsingham.

Bishop Marcus led the one-day pilgrimage, which began with Mass and confessions in the Chapel of Reconciliation amid glorious sunshine at the Catholic shrine.

After a picnic lunch there was a Rosary procession along the Pilgrim Way from the village into the grounds of Walsingham Abbey.

Students and parishioners took turns carrying the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham.

Afterwards, Bishop Marcus celebrated Benediction and Vespers in the abbey grounds, with several hundred people kneeling reverently before the Blessed Sacrament.

Clergy from both dioceses attended, including pilgrimage director Father Benjamin Griffiths.

Walking pilgrims who had completed the Leeds to Walsingham Way, 250 miles in 14 day-stages from West Yorkshire to Norfolk, were among those taking part.

The walk was a joint Leeds and Hallam Diocesan Camino, part of the environmental celebrations to mark the Year of St Francis, and included stops at St Marie's Cathedral in Sheffield and the Shrine of the Padley Martyrs in the Diocese of Hallam.

A small group of perpetual pilgrims walked the full distance, with day pilgrims from Hallam, Leeds and Middlesbrough joining for individual stages.



Bishop Marcus celebrating Benediction in the abbey grounds



Bishop Marcus with people from Middlesbrough and Leeds during the two dioceses' joint pilgrimage to Walsingham

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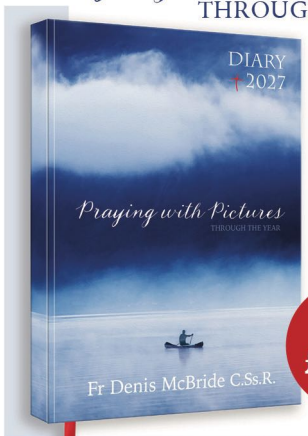
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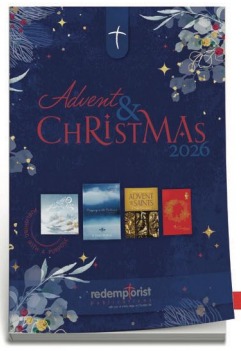
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Deadline Friday November 6 for December edition.

Where possible please send articles in Word and photographs as jpegs. Please confirm when you send in your photographs that those who appear in them have given their permission for publication.

NEWS

Out & About

2 Monday

9.45am-10.25am Beverley Christian Meditation Group meets online. Further information from christianmeditation.beverley@gmail.com. This takes place every Monday.

7pm Catholic charismatic prayer group meets on first Monday each month at St Bede's Pastoral Centre, Blossom Street, York. For more information, contact Sharon on cdscsmiddlesbrough@gmail.com or 07932 420809.

3 Tuesday

10am Coffee at the Cathedral. Tea, coffee and treats every Tuesday after 9.30am Mass. A warm welcome and friendly atmosphere. Make new friends and enjoy some fellowship. Those who are alone especially welcome.

10am Christian Meditation Group meets online. Further information from Terry Doyle terry-doyle@live.co.uk. This takes place every Tuesday.

6.30pm Knights of St Columba Council 29 meets at St Mary's Cathedral.

4 Wednesday

Noon Mass for Deceased Clergy, St Mary's Cathedral.

5.30pm Sung Evening Prayer and Benediction at St Mary's Cathedral. Join us every Wednesday for a time of prayer and quiet reflection before the Blessed Sacrament (term-time only).

6 Friday

7.30pm Gary Stewart's Graceland at St Mary's Cathedral. Tickets for this and all cathedral events listed available from Cathedral Box Office on 01642 597750 or cathedralevents@rcdmidd.org.uk.

Events, articles and photographs for December's *Voice* are due by this day.

7 Saturday

11am Catholic women are invited to share an hour of feminine communion including meditation, via Zoom. Text Barbara on 07796 117704 with your mobile number and email address so she can add you to the WhatsApp group, or email catholicwomenmdl@gmail.com for Zoom link.

6pm Mass in Italian in the Father Kelly Room, Our Lady, Acomb, York, followed by refreshments. All welcome.

7.30pm The Bootleg Eagles acoustic show at St Mary's Cathedral.

8 Sunday

3pm Mass for LGBT+ community, family and friends at the Chapel of the Bar Convent. Doors open from 2.30pm.

9 Monday

2pm Music for the Mind, an hour of fun and music for people living with dementia, their friends and carers with Trish McLean. All welcome.

420809.

10 Tuesday

Catholic Women's Luncheon Club meets at St Charles Borromeo for our annual Mass, followed by lunch at the Kingston Theatre Hotel, Kingston Square, Hull. All ladies in the Hull and East Riding area welcome.

11 Wednesday

6.30pm Candles before Mass at 7.30pm An Evening for the Bereaved at St Mary's Cathedral.

7pm Hull Catenians meet at the Lazaat Hotel, Cottingham, followed by a meal. Email Charles Cseh at hullcirclesecretary@gmail.com.

12 Thursday

7.45pm Middlesbrough Catenians meet at Middlesbrough Cricket Club, Green Lane, TS5 7SL. Contact Peter Carey on 01642 317772 or Chris Rhodes on 01642 319161.

14 Saturday

10.30am to 3.15pm Day of Prayer, Reflection and Solidarity for World Day of the Poor, organised by Caritas Diocese of Middlesbrough, St Mary's Cathedral. All welcome, please bring a packed lunch.

15 Sunday

3pm Catholic Fellowship Mass at the Holy Name of Mary, Middlesbrough

21 Saturday

7pm Lux Aeterna, with Newcastle University Chamber Choir, at St Mary's Cathedral.

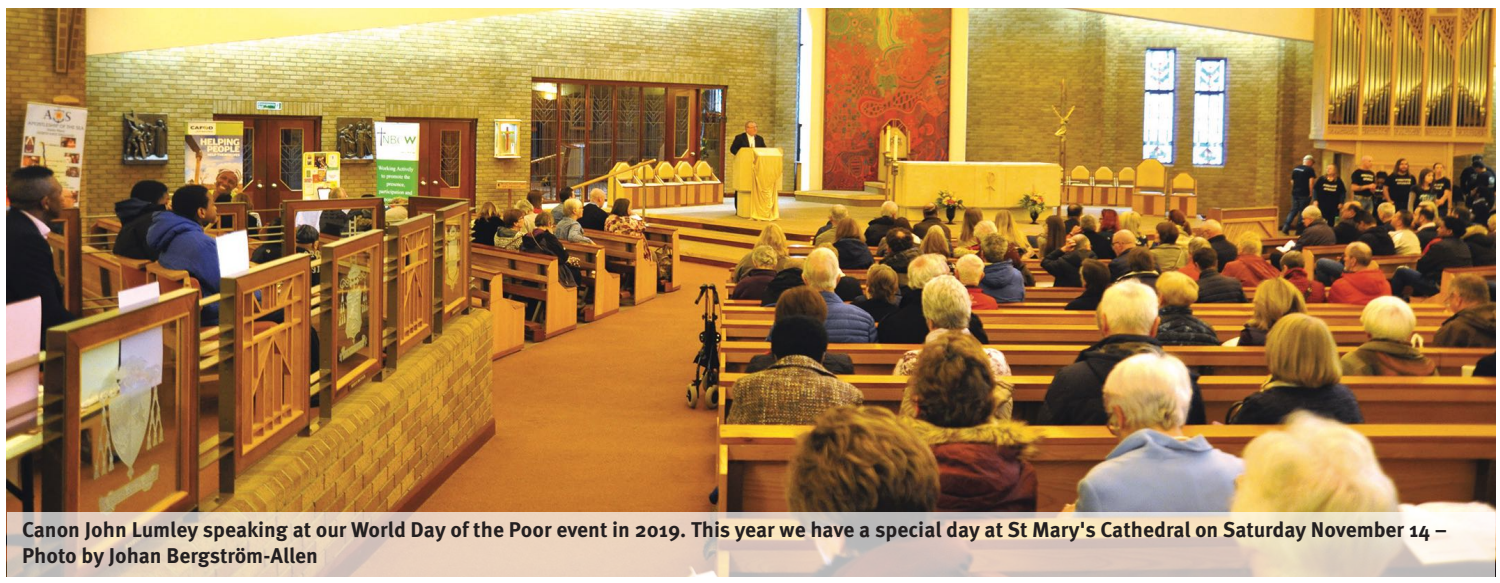
7pm Irish dance with Pat Jordan at the Erimus Club, Cumberland Road, Middlesbrough TS5 6JB. Contact John Brown on 07871 958412.

28 Saturday

Noon LGBT+ social gathering at the Bar Convent, York. All welcome.

4-6pm Rehearsal, 7.30pm Performance, Come and Sing Handel's Messiah at St Mary's Cathedral, Middlesbrough.

If you have any events that you would like to include in the Out and About section, please email heidi.cummins@rcdmidd.org.uk.


Canon John Lumley speaking at our World Day of the Poor event in 2019. This year we have a special day at St Mary's Cathedral on Saturday November 14 – Photo by Johan Bergström-Allen

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The Diocese of Middlesbrough would like to point out that while every care is taken with advertisements placed in the Catholic Voice, publication does not suggest an endorsement of any views expressed.

Emails sometimes go missing. If you have sent an item for the Voice and it has not been used, please email the editor at communications@rcdmidd.org.uk.

Help needed to keep our special newspaper talking

The Talking Newspaper started in the early 1980s when a group of SVP members in Hull saw there was a need to support people with visual impairment and decided to do something about it.

At one time, they were sending out 500 cassettes to people all over the UK and Ireland. They contained articles from all kinds of sources, but mainly the Catholic press.

However, the Talking Newspaper is more than just a newspaper: it is a source of spiritual nourishment, hence there are reflections, prayers, spiritual readings and hymns.

There are poems, several written by local poets, and people send in items which they have found interesting and enlightening. There are also light-hearted items and jokes to make it more enjoyable and varied. The hymns have all been recorded by Rosa, a parishioner in Hull who has a beautiful voice.

The Talking Newspaper is still active. Chris Cuthill of St Charles Borromeo SVP has been responsible for its production since about 2006, when the local SVP group running it decided they were getting too old to continue and the technology was moving from cassette tapes to CDs. Chris was teaching at St Mary's College at the time and thought it would be a great opportunity to involve the students in producing and sending out the CDs. This continued until he retired. Without the links to the students, it looked as though the Talking Newspaper would fold. This was unthinkable, so Chris formed a group of local SVP members and parishioners to continue this apostolate.

Through the good offices of the chaplaincy at St Mary's College, they were once again able to involve the students in production. This is very important to the continuation of the project, although it is becoming increasingly difficult due to the importance of safeguarding considerations and the demands of the curriculum.

Currently, a group of 15 SVP members and Hull parishioners choose and make the recordings. They endeavour to send out an edition every six weeks or so, working in harmony with the Church's year and feast days. A member of the project group visits a contributor's home to make recordings or articles are emailed to people who can make the recordings on their own computers and then email them back to Chris.

During Covid, many people were left isolated in their own homes, so they were sent CDs in addition to those with a visual impairment.



Frances Whitehead recording an article for the Talking Newspaper

The Talking Newspaper CD is now sent out to 62 people throughout the UK. The numbers have dropped significantly as people die or some don't have a CD player.

Chris feels it should move online in addition to the CD format, but none of the group has the expertise to make that happen. He receives beautiful and encouraging feedback from time to time, as well as donations throughout the year, which help to cover the costs of buying and packaging the CDs and, of course, postal expenses. Postage is free for the visually impaired, but the group must pay postage for the rest.

Those involved in the production and distribution of the Talking Newspaper are totally committed to this essential Vincentian work and would love to be able to send it out to more people.

If you feel you can help this valuable project or know someone who would appreciate the Talking Newspaper please contact Chris at presidentc13@svp.org.uk.

Patricia Nobbs
Middlesbrough SVP Central Council President

ENVIRONMENT CORNER – A call to action for COP 31

This month, the world will turn its attention to Antalya, Turkey, where representatives of almost every country will gather for COP31 – the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

It might seem a long way from our own lives, but the decisions made there will affect all of us, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable people across the world.

For Catholics, climate change is not simply an environmental issue: it is an issue of justice, human dignity and our responsibility for creation.

Pope Francis reminded us in *Laudato Si'* that "the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor." Care for our common home is inseparable from care for our neighbours.

COP31 is intended to be a COP of implementation – a time when governments must turn promises into practical action. We need governments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, accelerate the transition to clean energy, protect nature and provide adequate support for countries and communities already suffering the effects of climate change.

But governments will respond to the pressure they feel from their citizens. That means COP31 is also an opportunity for us.

We should not leave climate action to politicians and diplomats. We can contact our MPs and councillors, support organisations campaigning for climate justice, raise the issue in our parishes and communities, and ask our Church leaders to continue giving a strong voice to those most affected.

Pope Francis called for an "ecological conversion" – a change in the way we see our relationship with creation and with one another. Our personal choices matter, but so does collective action for changes in the systems and policies that shape those choices.

COP31, which takes place from November 9 to 20, is therefore not someone else's business. As Catholics, we are called to be people of hope – but also people who act on that hope.

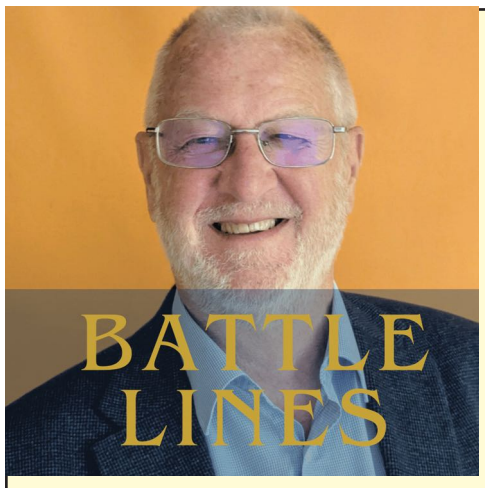
The question for us is not simply, "What will happen at COP31?" It is: "What can we do to make sure that our leaders act – and that justice and care for our common home are at the heart of what they decide?"

Barbara Hungin



COP31 is taking place in Turkey this month – Photo copyright UNclimatechange

NEWS



The real cost of slashing overseas development spending

SIR JOHN BATTLE, MP for Leeds West from 1987 to 2010 and a minister in Tony Blair's government, continues his regular column. Sir John, who was made a Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great by Pope Benedict and was knighted in the 2022 New Year Honours, is chair of the Diocese of Leeds Justice & Peace Commission and has a deep commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.

Societies, like individuals, tend to turn inwards under pressure and recent energy price increases are certainly putting pressure on family budgets at home.

But can we neglect to think and act globally as well as locally in an increasingly interconnected world?

The tensions and conflicts of the whole world, including immigration pressures, are already present in our cities, towns and communities.

So while there is a focus on rising petrol and diesel bills, it was disappointing that the Prime Minister's conference speech made no mention of aid and international development.

Yet, as both Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* and more recently Pope Leo XIV in *Magnifica Humanitas* insist, we must be more practically conscious that we all on earth "share a common home".

Moreover, the global energy shock is hitting many of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries particularly hard, even though they consume far less than rich countries.

Very low-income countries such as Burundi, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Malawi and Somalia have all suffered huge increases in fuel prices. In Afghanistan petrol has gone up 32% in three months; in Malawi it is $3.24 a litre, more than twice the current world average of $1.49. Here in Britain, petrol is now an average of $2.32 a litre.

Countries such as Burundi and the Central African Republic only have 11.6% and 17.6% access to electricity. Only 15.6% of the population of Malawi has electricity access, compared with 100% in the UK. Higher oil, gas and fertiliser prices are creating real risks for households, for food security and employment in poorer countries.

UN Trade and Development estimates that nearly one million people live in countries highly exposed to rising fuel costs and that includes many in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Nor are energy prices the only pressure point. There have recently been major cuts in international aid programmes to developing countries. The world's largest bilateral donor, the USA, cut its official USAID development assistance budget by 56.9% in 2025. Total aid from all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development donors dropped by 23.1%, the largest annual fall on record. This has meant interruptions to health programmes for malaria and HIV and AIDS treatments. Maternal and child health clinics have lost funding. Some water and sanitation projects have been closed. There is less humanitarian food and agricultural support and the loss of schools and youth programmes. Consequently, it is estimated 14m people will die due to the USAID cuts, 4.5m of them children under five.

Here in the UK there have been substantial cuts in development aid in recent years. In February 2025 the aid budget was cut from 0.5% of Gross National Income to 0.3% by 2027/28.

Funds were switched to Ukraine support and tackling illegal immigration. Development aid spending is down to £9.2bn, a cut of £6.2bn a year and well down from when it was 0.7% of Gross Domestic Product for most of the early 21st century. Bilateral aid is down by 37% and regional and country programmes are down by 36%. Aid to African countries dropped from £1.5bn to £675m in 2028.

In practice this all means that aid to health and education programmes in the DR Congo, Mozambique and Ethiopia has been reduced. There has been a focus shift to multilateral institutional and humanitarian crisis support, but this is far removed from the integral local development work of the former Department for International Development, which was merged into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2020.

Coordinated, long-term, sustainable development work has been cancelled and downgraded. Yet surely a strategic approach leading to sustainable local community development was meant to ensure that people and whole communities were not condemned to future poverty and forced to migrate to survive?

Perhaps returning to integrated international development work could actually lead to "stopping the boats" of illegal migrants by enabling young people to develop livelihoods where they are born.

Cutting international development aid could prove in future to be a costly, short-sighted failure of investment.

Our Catholic Church at least has its own aid agency, CAFOD, which has itself suffered from government aid cuts and the reduction of partnership programmes.

CAFOD, funded mainly by donations from Catholic parishioners, is struggling to maintain its quality programmes, which focus on developing food security and livelihoods, helping communities grow food and incomes, build resilience and empower local people. CAFOD works particularly in DR Congo, South Sudan and East Africa.

In Old English, autumn used to be known as "harvest", and the harvest festival tradition is still maintained. CAFOD now urges us to contribute what we can at harvest time to support its international development work.

The theologian Professor JB Metz said: "Theologians will be the last universalists in a highly differential world, in an age of post-modern fragmentation, and will have to remain so for God's sake and for humanity's sake."

We need to remain committed to the universality of one world of one people of God. Support CAFOD as best you can this

How planting trees can help us sow seeds of hope

Naturalist, author and well-known contributor to The Tablet and The Times Jonathan Tulloch gave a challenging talk to the Cleveland Newman Circle with the theme of "Hope".

The title of the talk, chosen before this summer's heatwaves, was "Our home is on fire… time to act" but despite the problems of global warming Jonathan was keen to be positive, sharing ideas to help us build hope for the future.

Jonathan began with a recent experience in Soho, London, when he heard crowds shouting with wonder at a huge screen showing pictures of a forest scene featuring birds and butterflies. He felt near despair at such emotions directed at artificial images: would these people ever know real nature?

Jonathan believes that God expects us to help create the world. Living through a summer of drought and heat, we can choose to help Creation since "it's better to light a candle than to curse the dark".

He shared his own contribution, which focuses on trees. Over the years he has planted a kilometre-long row of trees near his house, watering them as necessary from a spring. He encouraged us to consider doing this: maybe planting a tree in a garden, near a church, in wasteland – perhaps as a community endeavour.

With great enthusiasm Jonathan discussed the ecological importance of trees. They support our atmosphere, provide shade and give shelter to birds and insects. Bees collect nectar from their flowers and many species – including us – eat their fruit.

They are great travellers! Oak seedlings grow beneath parent trees, but an acorn carried off by a jay can germinate miles away. The seeds of a beech can be blown for two miles and a willow's seeds can travel 30 miles in a gale. An alder's seeds can survive in water for a year, then germinate far from their parent. However, human management, both urban and agricultural, tends to limit trees' spread.

The "spirituality of evolution" should be considered, since humans evolved among trees. We are part of nature but self-aware, so we can think about our relationship with it. Many people, focused on technology, just seek wealth and power. However, we should foster actions to support nature and prioritise contacts between people. Above all, we should cherish a sense of hope!

We can plant trees rather than contribute to our planet's degradation. Jonathan's final advice: "Go plant a Victoria plum!"

All are welcome to Newman talks, which are held at 7.45pm in St Mary's Cathedral Hall, Middlesbrough. On Wednesday November 25, Mission to Seafarers' chaplain Shane Moore will speak on "For those in peril on the sea". For further information email p.egerton123@gmail.com or phone 01642 645732.

Patricia Egerton



Author and naturalist Jonathan Tulloch was the latest speaker at Cleveland Newman Circle

Prayers for Pope Leo after successful lung surgery

Catholics around the world have been praying for Pope Leo XIV after doctors removed the lower lobe of his left lung.

A statement released by the Holy See Press Office said tissue examined during the operation confirmed the diagnosis of lung cancer.

Archbishop Richard Moth, Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said: "It is with gratitude and relief that we learned that Pope Leo's surgery was successful. We entrust his recovery to the maternal care of Our Lady Health of the Sick.

"I ask that Catholics in England and Wales, and indeed all people of goodwill, pray for Pope Leo – in our homes and in our parishes – that he may be restored to full health."

Father Richard dies after short illness

Father Richard Saksons, who until recently served as chaplain to the chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament in Marton near Hull, died on Friday September 11 after a short illness.

The son of Lily and Edward Saksons, Father Richard was born in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, on June 16 1957 and was baptised into the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church. He remained proud of his Latvian heritage.

He was received into the Catholic Church at the age of 23 in 1980 and shortly afterwards tested his vocation with the English Benedictine Congregation at Fort Augustus Abbey.

He was with them for three years before spending five years working in administration for Bradford City Council.

He was clothed in the habit of the Canons Regular of Premontre (Norbertines) at Storrington, West Sussex, during first vespers of the Nativity of Our Lady on September 7 1987.

He made his simple profession on September 8 1988 and studied for the priesthood at the Beda College in Rome.

He was ordained to the priesthood on Shrove Tuesday, March 3 1992, meaning his first Mass was on Ash Wednesday. After ordination, he was appointed assistant priest in the parish of Spalding, Lincolnshire.

In 1995, he asked to have some time outside the community and ministered in parishes in the Diocese of Baker, Oregon, USA, before returning to the community in 2002.

After a year as parish administrator of Sacred Heart, Gorton, Manchester, he served as chaplain to the Sisters of Jesus and Mary in Felixstowe, Suffolk. In 2006 he briefly returned to life in community before going to serve as chaplain to the Dominican Sisters in Lymington, Hampshire, where he remained until 2023.

He then moved to his native Yorkshire and spent three very happy years in Marton.

However, his health deteriorated during this last year and, after a month in hospital, he moved to a care home where he died with Abbot Hugh Allen praying at his bedside and administering the last sacraments.

Father Richard's funeral took place at the Norbertine Priory of Our Lady of Sorrows, Peckham, before he was laid to rest at a Norbertine cemetery in Essex.

Please pray for the repose of his soul and for his friends and fellow Norbertine canons.



Father Richard Saksons remained proud of his Latvian heritage throughout his life

Ampleforth mourns woodwork-loving monk

Father Edgar Miller OSB, monk of Ampleforth Abbey and a former priest-in-charge of the Chapel of Ease at Oswaldkirk, died at Ampleforth on Wednesday September 23.

Born James Miller in Preston in 1943, he was educated at Ampleforth College and taught at a prep school in his hometown before joining the monastic community at Ampleforth Abbey in 1963, taking Edgar as his religious name.

Father Edgar was ordained priest in July 1970. He was estate manager from 1972 to 1986 and warden of the hospitality accommodation in The Grange from 1986 to 1989.

Father Edgar's great love was carpentry, which he taught for several years, first at the Junior House of Ampleforth College and then at the prep school, St Martin's Ampleforth. Each of his pieces was engraved with his signature, a windmill – a reference to his own surname but also the integration of manual work and the spiritual life.

In September 1990 Father Edgar became priest-in-charge at the chapel of ease St Aidan's, Oswaldkirk, and much of the woodwork around the altar was made in his workshop. Father Edgar served this church and community until the closure of the church in 2021. In recent years he also assisted at the parish of St John the Evangelist, Easingwold.

His Requiem Mass took place in the Abbey Church on Friday October 16, followed by burial in Monks' Wood.

Please keep Father Edgar's family and the Ampleforth Community in your prayers.



Father Edgar Miller OSB

Death of Hull-born priest and monk

Father Andrew Henson, who died on Saturday September 12, was a Cistercian monk at Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire for 76 years.

Baptised Paul (Andrew was his religious name), he came from a well-known Hull family.

His sister Kathleen emigrated to Canada and his sister Margaret taught for many years at Endsleigh College and worked tirelessly for the Hull branch of the Catholic Children's Fellowship.

Father Andrew initially went to Ushaw to train for the diocesan priesthood but while there he discerned that the Lord was calling him to the monastic life.

A musician and composer, he played the organ at divine services and was also the monastery tailor.

He was predeceased this year by both Kathleen and Margaret – all of them reached their 90s and Father Andrew was 96.

May they rest in peace.

Canon David Grant



Father Andrew Henson with his sisters Margaret (left) and Kathleen (right)

Book of condolence opened for Sister Ann

A book of condolence has been opened at the Bar Convent in York for Sister Ann Stafford CJ, who died on Thursday September 24 while visiting family in Ireland.

Sister Ann, who was superior of the Congregation of Jesus community at the Bar Convent, was a much-loved figure in the diocese and will be sadly missed.

A spokesperson for the Bar Convent said: "Sister Ann had a unique ability to make everyone feel welcome and important and her warmth, kindness and joyful spirit touched countless lives across our community.

"She was a cherished friend to so many of us, and her loss will be felt deeply by all at the Bar Convent and in the Congregation of Jesus.

"Although we are deeply grieved by her loss, we take great comfort in knowing she was surrounded by her beloved family, whom she was so looking forward to seeing."

Sister Ann's Requiem Mass took place in the Dominican Church in Newbridge, County Kildare, where she was buried alongside her beloved parents

You do not need to book a time or speak to anyone to sign the book of condolence, which is in the Bar Convent chapel.

A service to celebrate Sister Ann's life will be held in York at a later date.



Sister Ann Stafford, who has died at the age of 80

New book tells the volunteer missionary story

A new book has been published telling the story of the Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM), which trained, placed and supported more than 2,500 volunteer lay missionaries, including several from our diocese.

The authors of The Volunteer Missionary Movement 1969-2020: A Short History are both former VMM volunteers, Martin Desforges and Mark Wiggin.

The book is £10 plus P&P, with all profits helping maintain and develop the VMM Archive.

For more details or to order, contact Martin at Desforges@blueyonder.co.uk or 07746 752052 or Mark at m.wiggin@btinternet.com or 07921 211961.

NEWS

Missio Mouse finds new home in two more schools

Since Mission Together welcomed their new and very tiny team member, schools across the country have been welcoming our mascot, Missio Mouse, into their communities to help share God's love with everyone, everywhere.

Inspired by the idea that small things can make a big difference, Missio Mouse (or MiMo for short) has been encouraging children to see how even the tiniest acts of kindness can have a lasting impact.

In recognition of their longstanding support for Mission Together, children at two of our schools were each presented with their own Missio Mouse to inspire them in their mission of love and service.

A welcoming home at St Aelred's

MiMo has certainly found a welcoming home at St Aelred's Catholic Primary School in York. The chaplaincy team shared how prayer is at the heart of all they do, supported by practical acts that put their faith into action. Their enthusiasm and commitment are a wonderful example to others.

Headteacher Claire Hughes said: "We are delighted to have received Missio Mouse and have many exciting plans for him next year. I heard one of the children whispering in the corridor yesterday and saying to their friend they needed to be quiet for Missio Mouse!"



Children at St Aelred's in York with Missio Mouse



Missio Mouse has also found a home at St Augustine's in Middlesbrough

Little actions, big impact at St Augustine's

Meanwhile, children at St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in North Ormesby, Middlesbrough, also welcomed MiMo.

Deputy headteacher Charlene Dunning said: "This year we are having a huge focus on how little actions can have a big impact and MiMo would be the perfect advocate for this mission."

MiMo will support the school in its fundraising and prayers for missionaries around the world. Through prayer, children grow in friendship with Jesus and stand in solidarity with God's children everywhere. Through sharing, they help support children in some of the world's poorest communities, providing access to education, healthcare, faith formation, nutritious meals and safe places to call home.

Find out more about Missio Mouse – and who else has received a visit – at missiontogether.org.uk/missio-mouse.

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