

Winter 2023 - Issue No. 27

No 9

A magazine for the Local Missionary Area

The Fall
of the Nantwich Wall

A Blessing

The Trek
of a Lifetime!

The Mind
of Mark

A Thousand Years
of Church History

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in Orkney

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The Lollipop Man

Many Blessings at St Anne's

On a lovely, bright spring day, as part of his visitation to St Anne's Parish in May, Bishop Mark visited St Anne's School.

After visiting each of the classrooms and meeting with Fr Tony, Mrs Ferguson the headteacher, her senior management team and governors, Bishop Mark blessed a cherry tree in the school's prayer garden, which will be planted in the Our Lady garden in memory of our former pupil, Mary Stanway, who died unexpectedly, aged only 17.

In Bishop Mark's prayer of blessing he prayed that:

'Those who grieve a loss, will know that promise of life and resurrection and the glory that is to come... let us remember Mary, praying for the repose of her soul.'

In the blessing of the cherry tree, which the Bishop dedicated to Mary's memory, he expressed the hope that:

'As those who come to this prayer garden to pray, they will be awakened to the hope of resurrection and to the life that is to come.'

After blessing the tree, Bishop Mark went to the new Parish Hub, which is sited in the school grounds, serving as a multi-purpose classroom facility for the school and as a parish centre available for meetings and for hire by the local community.

The building is a prefabricated construction, brought to site from the manufacturers in Liverpool and craned into place earlier this year. It has been equipped with tables and chairs, projection and sound equipment, as well as all the kitchen facilities that you would need for a self-catered celebration.

Before the blessing of the hub, children sang, 'Santo, santo, santo', as clergy, staff and representatives from the parish gathered with the Bishop for a formal opening and blessing.

Mrs Ferguson, in her welcome and introduction, explained that during the school day the hub is used for many things, including interventions, therapies



Bishop Mark blesses the Cherry tree, which is to be planted in the school prayer garden.



St Anne's parish hub.



Bishop Mark pictured with parish clergy, staff and parishioners following the blessing of St Anne's new parish hub.

and music lessons, which make use of a piano donated by Deacon Peter Mascarenhas and his wife Jo.

The Hub now provides the school and parish with a perfect facility for staff training, governing body meetings, and sacramental preparation.

Mrs Ferguson thanked Fr Tony for his hard work in making the construction of the community hub possible. In finding funding from parish donations and

benefactors, Fr Tony has, with the help of the diocese, made 'this wonderful dream come true.'

During his visit to the classrooms, Bishop Mark was asked by one of the children: 'What are you doing when you bless the Hub?' The Bishop explained that we are doing many things when we bless something - we are giving thanks, praying that the good will be protected, and asking for the flourishing of this project.

Following a hymn sung by the children and prayers lead by deputy head teacher, Mrs Catchpole, Bishop Mark blessed the hub. In his prayer of blessing, he prayed that Christ will be at the centre and in the hearts of all the people that the Hub will serve, and that it will be of service to all people, and especially to those who are in any kind of need.

**Deacon John Penny:
St Anne's, Nantwich**

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Deacon Mike - The Lollipop Man

In January 2022 I retired from the Royal Mail after nearly 42 years of service. On the advice of a former colleague, I then went to the Job Centre in Crewe to check that my national insurance stamp was fully paid towards my state pension - it wasn't!

The advisor told me I could claim the new jobseeker's allowance and get my stamp paid, if I started looking for work. On one visit to the Job Centre, I was informed that ANSA were holding an open day in Middlewich. ANSA (an environmental services company owned and controlled by Cheshire East Council) provide staff for various roles all over the local authority.

Because my wife and I look after our granddaughter three days a week, I had to find something that would fit in with my other commitments. One such role that caught my eye was for a school crossing patrol person. It involved working for 45 minutes each morning and afternoon as child come and go from school. I took some information home to think about the role.



A little while later, a chance conversation over a coffee after Mass with a fellow St Winefride's parishioner brought the subject back to my mind. The person I was talking to was Sam Corcoran (who is, as I now know, the Head of the Council).

Sam was very friendly and chatty with me and Angela as we were welcomed into the church community. We talked about how we had ended up moving to Sandbach and the facts of my retirement, the job centre trek and the ANSA open day.

Sam was happy to hear of my interest in the school crossing patrol job and asked if it was something I would do, as the council were in need of people to fill this role. I asked him which schools in particular were in need, and found that my local primary school, Offley, was one of them, as the last person to do this job had retired some time ago. 'Can I put your name forward for the role?' Sam asked. 'Yes,' I said.

It took quite a while to get things in place, with interviews, DBS checks and training. But eventually all was done, and a start date was arranged.

On a bright Tuesday morning in May, I donned my new uniform for the first time and walked to school. Sam and Mark from ANSA were there to greet me, and they took a couple of photos for the occasion. So far it's all going very well! The parents and pupils are glad to have someone back in the role.



The sweetest thing, though, was that on my first day, a little girl who goes to the school and lives nearby saw me and made her parent take her back home so that she could make me a welcome card, which I still have.

One final thing: 47 years after leaving school and starting work, I now get to have all the school holidays off all over again!

**Deacon Mike:
St Winefride's, Sandbach**

Editorial

In editing this magazine, I am always struck by the number of celebratory occasions I am reading about: Weddings, Baptisms, First Communions and such. Alongside these are all the accounts of trips and tours, which have brought people such great enjoyment and pleasure.

We like to share happiness, don't we?

I know that, at times, we can all be miserable too; and sometimes we want to share that misery with others. But I'm not sure it's always wise or helpful to write it down, read back over it, put it in print, and keep remembering it. Talk about it if we must, let it go, and then move on – hopefully, to better things.

We would all say we want to be happy. Happiness lights up not only our own life, but also the lives of those we mix with. In this issue, Sheila offers us the thoughts of Robert Louis Stevenson on Ways to be Happy. Please read through them. Can we do them all? I think not, but you may find something there that resonates with you.

The very first piece of advice felt meaningful to me: Make up your mind to be happy. Learn to find pleasure in simple things. I intend that to be my resolution for 2024.

It is also useful to share our ideas too, particularly about our faith. There are a number of thoughtful articles here that reflect on different aspects of Catholic history and belief. I am sure you will find them interesting and rewarding.

Remember, this is your magazine. It offers you the chance to write about the things that give you happiness, the activities you find rewarding, and the



ideas you find interesting. Please keep your articles coming.

Finally, a Happy Christmas to you all and best wishes for a Happy 2024.

**Ann Stone:
St Winefride's, Sandbach
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The Italians were placed in camps on one of the many small islands called Lamb Holm. They were given two Nissan huts for recreation. Originally, they brightened the dull Nissan huts with pathways and flower beds; and one prisoner, Domenico Chiocchetti, even made a statue of St George from barbed wire and cement. Being Catholics, however, they wanted somewhere to celebrate Mass.

Chiocchetti was something of an artist. Under his inspiration, the POWs decided to join the two Nissan huts together and create a proper chapel. They set about decorating it in an Italian style, using scrap metal, camouflage paint and concrete, all of which they could scavenge.

The Italian Chapel in Orkney

Cathie Smith:

I first visited the Italian Chapel in Orkney in 2014. Kirsteen, my friend and colleague from the school where I taught in Tunstall, had recently moved to the island, and my husband Tony and I went to visit her. Since then, we have visited Orkney for a holiday another four times. We both fell in love with the place, and happily go back every two years or so.

Orkney is a stunningly beautiful island, and there are lots of interesting places to visit if you like history. Of course, there are the famous neolithic sites, like Skara Brae and the Ring of Brodgar. There are also a number of much more recent sites that date from the 2nd World War.

Fr Nick Kern:

I have now been to Orkney three times. The first time was on retreat in November (!) with my friend, Father Simon O'Connor (now at Winsford). We saw a bit of the island, but there wasn't a lot of daylight, and the weather wasn't brilliant. But I did see the Italian Chapel for the first time. I've since been back twice with my sister, Cathie, and brother-in-law, Tony – this time in the summer!

The story behind the chapel is an inspiring one. The Italians were there as prisoners of war. They arrived from Libya in 1942 to help build the so-called Churchill Barriers. These were to stop U boats getting into the great bay known as Scapa Flow, and they are still very dramatic to see.

On the floor of the chapel there is a metal heart. One of the prisoners fell in love with an Orcadian woman and left the heart for her when he went back to Italy... to his wife!



Cathie:

We planned our fifth visit to Orkney to coincide with three significant events: the end of the puffin season, the start of the archaeological dig at the Ness of Brodgar, and Mass in the Italian Chapel, which is always on the first Sunday of the month. So we fixed the date for the first week in July.

I wrote to Fr Colin, the parish priest of the Catholic church on Orkney, to check that there would definitely be





a Mass in the chapel on that Sunday. I got a lovely response from Philip, the sacristan, who suggested that my brother, Nick, might like to say Mass instead of the parish priest (we later found out this was a huge help to Fr Colin, who has to come by ferry from Thurso in mainland Scotland each Sunday - so the Italian Chapel Mass is a bit of a rush if the ferry is late).

Fr Nick:

Of course, I felt guilty about missing Mass at St Mary's! But I have to say it was a tremendous privilege being able to celebrate Mass on the sanctuary in front of the lovely fresco of the Madonna that Chiocchetti had painted.

Having seen the chapel as a tourist, it felt right that we were using the chapel for the purpose for which it had been created, the worship of God. Behind that fresco is the sacristy, which – surprise, surprise – looks like the back end of a Nissan hut!

Once you process out from the screen, it was tremendous to see a full chapel of some thirty people. I asked where people were from. There were about ten who lived on the island and regularly came to that first Sunday Mass.

The rest were tourists, mostly from Scotland and England; but there were also people from America, Canada, Australia and one family from Genoa in Italy.

Cathie:

Obviously, it was very moving for me and Tony to be in the congregation of such a special chapel, at a Mass said by my brother.

Whenever I am in an international congregation, I am struck by how soothing the rhythm of the Mass is. We all know when to respond, when to stand, sit and kneel, and there is no difference between us. My friend Kirsteen, who worships in the Church of Scotland, had also come along, because Nick was saying Mass, so that was very special for me as well.

I got chatting to some of the other worshippers afterwards. We met one of the islanders later in the week – she was a tour guide at the Ness of Brodgar, and it was lovely to have that bond with a fellow Catholic, although Nick and Tony had to drag me away in the end!

Fr Nick:

Fr Colin did wonder whether he might join me for Mass, but, in the event, it had been a very choppy crossing on the ferry after a very full Saturday, and he texted me to say he was grateful to be able to rest before celebrating his regular Mass at Kirkwall on Sunday evening. I was especially glad to have eased his load somewhat.

Philip, the sacristan, is also a tour guide to the chapel, and very knowledgeable. The ingenuity of the prisoners was amazing. They made votive candle-holders out of bully beef tins, cut to look like filigree metalwork.



When they couldn't scavenge materials, they made things and sold them, in order to buy paint and other items they needed. Stood by the door, Philip warned me not to lean on the baptismal font. It had a beautiful spiral base, but Philip informed me that it was a suspension spring from an army truck, coated in concrete and painted. Sure enough, if you touched it, it bounced!



Decades after the war ended, the islanders came to realise that here was a real artistic treasure. In 1960, Domenico Chiocchetti returned to visit the chapel, and even restored the internal paintwork.

These days an art expert from the Vatican makes sure that it is maintained. The chapel is a monument to peace and reconciliation: the artist made sure that this was a theme in the frescoes that he painted. It is typical of the Italian genius to create a thing of beauty and hope in a desperate situation.



Fr Nick Kern and Cathie Smith

World Youth Day (WYD): 1st – 6th August 2023



“Stand up. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen”

My parents and I were so blessed to participate in World Youth Day (also known as the **Jornada Mundial da Juventude de 2023**), which was held this year in Lisbon, Portugal. My experience of WYD was surreal, spiritual and spectacular; to be in the presence of Pope Francis and around 3,000,000 Catholics will change me forever. I have never felt such a surge of grace, faith and love all at once. The experience has taken my faith to another level. I was thankful that I could share it with my parents, who were with me every step of the way.

The first day of WYD was extraordinary. I always knew how strong our Christian faith was, but seeing Catholics from different nations astounded me, I was truly filled with joy and happiness.

My parents and I went to Oriente, Lisboa, where the City of Joy (Cidade de Alegria) was held. The sun was shining at its highest. “There’s a Rush in the Air”, the theme song of WYD this year rang out loudly for everyone to hear. It was amazing.

I met Catholics from Indonesia, South Korea, Italy, Portugal, Nepal, Zimbabwe and many other countries. I was given souvenirs by some groups, one from South Korea, which had a prayer dedicated to the people of South Korea who are still at conflict with North Korea.

I was touched at how approachable everyone was. There was kindness and smiles on everyone’s faces. There were workshops and stalls with missionaries and national groups. I had the opportunity to have a conversation with two Sisters who were from the organisation ‘Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver’. This organisation is worldwide



and focuses on young people who are neglected and lost; they have not heard the Voice of God calling their name.

As everyone prepared to go to the opening Mass of WYD, in Parque Eduardo VII, Rossio, the roads and pathways were filled with thousands of Christians. We settled down, waiting for the Archbishops and Bishops of Lisbon to commemorate the first Mass of WYD. Seeing everyone pray was very moving; as all the areas were filled and packed, big screens were scattered about and we worshipped Christ together.

On the second day, we explored Rossio, witnessing musical performances and gospel readings. The speakers were so loud; it was as though the heavens would hear our celebration of WYD. Performances by Catholic bands and singers incorporated faith into their music.

One female rapper had composed a song, expressing her grief and feelings of abandonment, when she had lost her faith due to the reality of life not being perfect. However she then realised God was always by her side, and now she spreads the Word of God through her music. It was refreshing to



see composers and singers adapt and incorporate their faith into music that were upbeat and relatable.

I had made new friends from France and two from a group called Militantes based in South America. Victor and Eleanor, who were our friends from France, had shared their stories of their faith and what their community do to maintain their faith in Christ, and were very generous. They had come to Lisbon with their group and had kindly given their hat, which was personalised to their group as a souvenir.

The third day was the Welcome Ceremony held by Pope Francis in Parque Eduardo VII and I will always cherish this day. It was very intense as we waited with groups of family, friends and communities for the arrival of Pope Francis. The moment I saw Pope Francis at such close proximity, brought me close to tears. To have seen our Pope in the flesh was unreal and special.

Pope Francis had started the Mass and everyone could follow on the big screens, praying with one another, responding in our own languages and celebrating this extraordinary experience together. Hearing the homily and words of wisdom from Pope Francis made me realise how lucky we are, and we need to grasp whatever opportunities come our way.

The moment he said "Todos, todos, todos," everyone knew we have to strengthen our faith and continue our vocational work. I felt so lucky at that moment to have laid my eyes on our Pope, the physical presence of our Lord our God.

The fourth day was the Stations of the Cross (Via Sacra) and I had initially thought the Pope would announce each station and give the blessing for each of the 14 stations. This was not the case Rather than travelling to the

different stations, he was led out onto the stage in a wheelchair and watched as a performance troupe choreographed each of the 14 stations that incorporated dance, theatre and singing. An estimated 800,000 young people attended.

At every two to three station there was a speaker, who told their life story and expressed their moments of grief and vulnerability. It was very touching how each speaker was different, yet their stories so similar. I remember an American speaker had expressed their drug and alcohol addiction and the performers incorporated his story into a masterpiece.

The acting was impeccable and we were all captivated. The stations were spoken in English; however native speakers spoke in their native language. For each station, where the Hail Mary and Our Father were said, my dad and I were surrounded by an Italian group, and we would join hands in prayer as one. The Stations of the Cross was a sensational captivating piece; everyone was emotional.

The fifth day was the Evening Vigil, where pilgrims would stay overnight in Parque Tejo and witness the beautiful sunset and Candle Light service, which was also followed by another enthralling piece of art. It was

an amazing piece of theatre that was prepared in advance, focussing on faith, heartbreak, love and humility. I admired a piece, with no words, which still spoke to us all.

The next day was an early morning start for my parents and me, when we travelled to Parque Tejo and were lucky enough to meet a group from South America, who made us feel so welcome and comfortable. The Vigil and Closing Ceremony were held outside and by the time we arrived most people had woken up. There had been a priest DJ, who played upbeat music to wake up the pilgrims.

Pope Francis celebrated Mass on Sunday morning, with an estimated 1.5 million people in attendance. Once again my family and I were lucky to have seen



Pope Francis within close range. I genuinely felt love and compassion from everyone and eternally grateful to have experienced WYD. The Mission Mass was a beautiful ceremony and during the bidding prayers, a volunteer from each continent had said a prayer.

The sun shone once again on a hot day and its light and glory seemed to represent the presence of God and the power of our Catholic faith. We witnessed the announcement of the next World Youth Day in 2027 which will take place in Seoul, South Korea.

It was heartbreaking saying goodbye to all the people I had met, but realising the distances they had travelled to attend WYD in Lisbon will always astound me. I

am sure that the love and generosity of all the pilgrims present there will make its mark of the Christian faith.

I was blessed with the experience of WYD and the reminder of how loving people can be. WYD will mark my life and will be an unforgettable and life changing experience and I wish that every Catholic could experience this special week.

I would like to say a big thank you to the SVP and Lourdes group who had donated money for my experience of WYD. I am forever grateful for the love, thoughts and support St Mary's parish has given me for my trip to Lisbon.

**Cristina Lemos-Martins:
St Mary's, Crewe**



First Holy Communion St Winefride's: 23rd of July, 2023

Our son Ugo received his First Holy Communion with Kayandra and Kamani in July. We are extremely proud of Ugo for this great feat and achievement in his Catholic life.

He worked hard to prepare for his first Holy Communion and looked forward to that.

We thank God for the success of that day and pray that Jesus whom he received (and will continue to receive) will bless and guide him always. Amen.

**Kelechi, Akunna and Obi
(Dad, mum and brother)**



The Fall of the Nantwich Wall

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 was widely reported, dominating the international news for many weeks. In comparison, the fall of the Nantwich Wall was a much quieter affair!

On the 27th May 2023, Deacon Peter was locking up St Anne's church after the Saturday evening Mass. He had parked his car by the entrance and got out to lock the church door, when he was startled by a loud bang. He turned round to see that a tractor and trailer had ploughed through the church's surrounding wall and come to a halt only 3-4 yards from him. Even closer to him were the scattered bricks and timber from the wall and the notice board.

Peter, in his usual caring way, first checked that the driver was okay. Once reassured on this point, he asked what had happened. The young driver said that he had been driving the tractor over the level crossing and had banged his head, possibly due to the anything but 'level' nature of the crossing.

He had then lost control of the vehicle, which had crossed over the pavement and driven through the wall, taking the notice board with it. The driver had been heading back to a local farm. His boss was contacted and promptly provided insurance details.

For the next few weeks the parishioners had to make their way round the debris of the wall, which was restricting the parking area.

Once the initial excitement had died down, there followed a lot of negotiation with the insurance company, which wanted to repair the wall with cheaper bricks than had been used in the original construction.

Fr Tony objected to this. Finally, he insisted that the wall was repaired to the original standard. We now have our wall rebuilt; and the notice board is back in place, announcing the times of mass at St Anne's church and ensuring that visitors to the town can join our parishioners at services.



Although this was an unfortunate event, we are all very grateful that no one suffered any personal injury. Thankfully, neither Deacon Peter nor our church building was actually hit.

Had the incident occurred a little earlier, several cars would have been parked in the area where the tractor ended up. They would probably have been written off, along with any parishioners getting

into their cars at the time. Even though the tractor had crossed the pavement, no passing motorists or pedestrians had been injured. So we can all count our blessings.

The Berlin Wall was brought down and not replaced; happily, the Nantwich Wall is back!

Carol Turner: St Anne's, Nantwich

A Blessing



On November 12th at the end of the 9.00am Mass in St Winefride's, Sandbach, Robert and Christine Barclay received a Prayer of Blessing on their sixty years of Marriage. Before Fr Morton and the congregation, they thanked God for the strength and support they had received throughout their life together, and they asked for His continued blessing in the years ahead, as they renewed their vows.

This was not just a special moment for them, but also for all those present who shared it with them. It was a privilege to witness not just sixty years of commitment, but sixty years of happiness in each other's love and companionship.

Robert and Christine met in 1959. At that time, Christine was living in Crewe and Robert in Norley, on the outskirts of Delamere Forest. One Saturday, Robert and a pal were heading to a dance in Chester, but then they heard that Ronnie Aldrich and the Squadronaires were performing at Nantwich Town Hall. They turned round, made for Nantwich, and that was where twenty-year-old Robert met seventeen-year-old Christine. Ronnie Aldrich worked his magic!

They went out together for four years, because Christine's father said that she could not marry until she was 21. Christine says that these were wonderful years of courtship, friendship and fun.

They were both young, they had no responsibilities, and they had a good time dancing and going out to places. This period also gave them the chance to really get to know each other and to talk about what they considered important in life. Christine was Catholic and Robert Methodist, so they shared the same Christian values.

They were married by Fr Bergan on the 26th October, 1963, at St Mary's church in Crewe. There was no great fuss about the wedding, Christine said. Her mother organised it all, and she just remembered enjoying the day.

Robert had worked in his father's building firm, but decided it wasn't what he wanted to do all his life, so in March 1963 he joined the police force. After his training, he was stationed in Manchester and, three weeks before the wedding, they were allocated a police house in Sale.

They lived there for nine years, and this was where their two daughters, Jane and Alison, were born. They both remember it as a happy time. Although they were living some distance from their own families, they were among a community of other police officers with young families, so they had a good social life, with babysitters close at hand. Being away from immediate family meant they

had to rely on each other for support, and this strengthened their partnership.

Robert later moved from traffic control to motorway policing. When asked to choose between Manchester and Cheshire, they decided to come back to Cheshire, and moved into the house in Sandbach where they still live.

They quickly settled into the life of the town. Christine, who had originally been a hairdresser, worked in schools and care homes, loving the involvement with people and the opportunity to help them. Robert, although he retired from the police at 55, continued to work and volunteer in the community.

They have always enjoyed an active social life together, much of it involving dancing, which is what had drawn them together in the beginning. They would dance either in the Town Hall in Sandbach and the surrounding areas, or on the cruises which they have been able to enjoy in retirement.

They have asked for a church blessing for each of their big anniversaries, and this has been a major part of any celebration – a way of thanking God for all that He has given to them in their life together.

They have taken none of it for granted, seeing marriage as a commitment and

a responsibility to each other and to their children. They value each other; they love and are loved by their children and grandchildren; and they have both enjoyed the jobs that they did and the life that they now live. There has always been so much to celebrate.

For their 25th Anniversary, it was Fr Munro who gave the church blessing, and afterwards they went on holiday together to Cyprus,

For their 40th Anniversary, Fr Downey gave the blessing, and they went with all the family to London.

For their 50th Anniversary, Fr Morton gave the blessing, and they had a lunch with family and friends.

For this 60th Anniversary, Fr gave the blessing, and they set off on a cruise together.

They are very proud of their daughters, their four grandchildren and their two great grandchildren, although they live away in Essex and Australia, they remain a constant in their lives. But day in and day out, they have each other.

While talking with them, I was aware that, sixty years on, these two people know each other so well, still like each other, and still enjoy doing things together. They say that they often find they are sharing the same thoughts and reactions.

I asked them for their recipe for a happy and successful marriage. This is what they said:

- Get to know each other well before you marry.
- Have the same aims and values for what you both want in life.
- Talk about things and share decisions.

- Learn how to compromise and how to defuse situations rather than make them worse.
- Be grateful for what you have, and don't be resentful for what you haven't got.
- Do things together socially.

It is wonderful to see how people can co-exist happily for sixty years in this institution called marriage, and how, with God's help, support and blessing, a couple can grow, flourish, and become better as two rather than one.

Many congratulations to them both.

**Ann Stone:
St Winefride's, Sandbach**



A Thousand Years of Church History

The Relationship of Christians with God (A Response to the Lenten talks)

It strikes me that the Second Vatican Council was a very important stage in the Church's history, and, in particular, in the relationship that the Church encourages us to have with God; and that what happened to the Church at that time is analogous to what happened at the splitting of the kingdom of Israel into two during the reign of Rehoboam, the less wise son of Solomon, as recounted in 1 Kings 11:14 to the end of chapter 12.

Rehoboam became King on the death of his father Solomon. At his coronation the ten northern tribes requested certain reforms in the policy followed by Rehoboam's father, Solomon. The older men counselled Rehoboam at least to speak to the people in a civil manner. However, the new king sought the advice from the young men he had grown up with, who advised the king to show no weakness to the people, and to tax them even more heavily, which Rehoboam did. Jeroboam and the people rebelled, with the ten northern tribes breaking away and forming a separate kingdom, which continued to be called the Kingdom of Israel. The realm of the two tribes Rehoboam was left with was called the Kingdom of Judah. There was civil war between the two kingdoms for the rest of his reign.

The Reformation:



There were many reasons for the Reformation. The Church was severely wounded by the Great Schism with Orthodoxy in 1054, mostly fuelled by differences in practice, prejudice and minor issues being blown out of all proportion. The Church was overstepping its bounds by claiming total secular power and universal juridical authority, as well as religious authority.

These issues led the Church into political and military struggles, where they played the roles of emperors, monarchs and even petty lords. Practices such as granting indulgences and privileges such as awarding appointments were overused and corrupted. Monastic orders were changing as society changed, with initially zealous orders losing the fire of their calling, and others starting out with different charisms, often reflecting changes in society around them.

Politics amplified the struggle between the Eastern and Western Roman Empire (and the fall of the poorer Western half), which fuelled the Great Schism. It also amplified the later struggle of local potentates for freedom from the Holy Roman Empire and other secular constraints. These rulers found the Reformers' rejection of Roman authority to be very supportive of their political causes, so they fuelled the religious

divisions to the point of instigating the Thirty Years War. The Church was reformed internally many times and in many places, not least by the Papacy, but with a success that was limited in both scope and durability. However, the focus of this article is our relationship with God.

God had always wanted our relationship with him to be both personal and communal. He taught us to address him as Our Father, to talk with him at all times, to hold him in our hearts as he holds us in his, to trust him totally, to ask for all we need and desire, and to make a personal commitment to serving him. At the same time, he set up the Church, defined the roles of its leaders, taught us to resolve our differences before coming to him in regular communal prayer, and gave us sacraments to be celebrated with the entire community.

The Medieval Mystics:



After the great heresies of the first millennium, which many times threatened to destroy the Church, and after the Great Schism, the Catholic Church sought to regulate our worship and service to God by ensuring doctrinal correctness and preventing further divisions. These changes started to move the practice of our faith away from the personal towards the communal and organisational.

To counterbalance this, God sent the great mediaeval mystics, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, Jan

THE REFORMERS

• WYCLIFFE • HUSS • ZWINGLI • ERASMUS • LUTHER •



Huss, Julian of Norwich, John Wycliffe and Catherine of Siena, to inspire Christians to increase our individual relationship with him, through private prayer, meditation and service.

As many of these were women (including Julian of Norwich) as men, and they were devoutly loyal to the Church. But the Church remained deaf to their entreaties and challenges, just like Solomon. Indeed, it doubled down: having condemned some, and fearing further heresies and schisms, in 1199 it banned the reading of the Bible in private gatherings – though it never banned personal Bible reading.

The Reformers:

The Church was deaf to that aspect of their challenge, continuing in its increasingly authoritarian and centralising ways. So, God raised up stronger, more discontented voices: the Anabaptists, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Calvin, and so on.

They again emphasised personal prayer and relationship with God, and personal reading of the Bible. John Wycliffe was the first to translate the Bible from Latin into English about 1384, shortly before his death – he was declared a heretic and his writings were banned in 1415. Others continued to translate it into other languages.

These translators (especially Martin Luther) initially saw themselves not as splitting from the Church, or even changing any doctrines, but as seeking to reform it by drawing attention to

abuses of practice. Just as Solomon's son Rehoboam (the following chapter in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles) remained deaf to his more emollient advisors and listened instead to the hard-liners, so did the Church. Just as Rehoboam responded by condemning the complaints and those who put them to him, so did the Church. Heresies and apostasies were declared; all had to toe the official line, and individualism in faith was anathematised. So just as Israel was split asunder, so was the Church.

The Reformation

The heresies of the Reformation started during the quarrels with the reformers, but only really got going after the splintering of the Church. Just like Jeroboam, the (initially schismatic) rebels swerved away from the true faith and dumped lots of it. First, having found the authority of the Church wanting, the reformers rejected all notion of a central authority and interpretation, throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Then some of the key articles of the faith were jettisoned. After which, to justify their new positions, some of the canon of Scripture (in particular, some of the books of the Old Testament) were abandoned; then, the practice of the Mass itself.

And the communal nature of devotion, worship and service was de-emphasised to an extent that mirrored the previous de-emphasis of the personal, erring as far in the opposite direction as the Church's practice (not its doctrines) had previously erred. Another consequence was that without authority, and having split before, there was little reason not to

split again whenever any disagreement cropped up. Consequently, the Protestant (and then the Free) Churches have been splintering ever since, right down to house-church level.

Then, just as Rehoboam raised an army to invade the northern tribes of Israel, so Europe endured the terrible Thirty Years War, and intermittent warfare thereafter, building much prejudice against, and resentment of, each other's religious practice.

The Ills of Today's Society

Many of the ills of today's society in developed countries across the world can be traced back to the Reformation. Society as a whole now increasingly rejects authority, with each deciding for themselves how they think fit to believe and act. Common mantras of today include: 'be true to yourself', 'authenticity' (defined solely in relation to oneself) and 'it's my truth'.

Communal groups such as clubs, societies and even political parties have seen their membership shrinking fast. The state finds a need to impose increasingly authoritarian laws to corral the people into a mutually acceptable way of living. This can be seen as a natural consequences of the Reformation's jettisoning of the communal and of authority.

The Church Comes Round

At last, starting in the late 19th Century, the Church started encouraging private reading of Scripture. It gradually opened up, tolerating and then encouraging faith-based groups (especially those engaged in charitable works) to set up and meet. Eventually, Vatican II formalised the process whereby an individual faith, devotion and practice complemented the communitarian; individual interpretation and guidance were accepted, provided they didn't stray against true doctrine. In these matters it was merely reaffirming what had been its doctrine all along, as opposed to its practice.

The Church's ecumenical dialogues with other denominations with a view to reunification had never been absent. Indeed, Catholics and Orthodox agreed Decrees of Union twice, in 1439 and 1595; both were scuppered by rulers for

political reasons. But one of the results of these agreements is that there are a number of Orthodox rites within the Catholic Church. This was given new emphasis after Vatican II, when Catholics were encouraged to mix with other Christians and even to pray, study and worship together provided we don't compromise our faith.

So what is needed in the future, and what may develop? God alone knows. But this movement by the Church is matched by movement among many of the other denominations, with the World Council of Churches bringing most together in some way, and with other Churches re-uniting, such as the Congregational Church and the Presbyterians, which merged in 1972 to form the United Reformed Church.

Society is slowly realising that too much individualism destroys it, making authoritarian regimes and the quasi-theological intensity and conformity of the culture wars look attractive. The world's authoritarians and culture warriors are gleefully stirring the pot at every opportunity. It is to be hoped that society draws back from the brink of excessive individualism before it's too late - just as it's starting to draw back from an excess of sexual liberalism, where even feminists express opposition to gender self-identification.

How Does the Future Look?



The growing recognition by all denominations that, despite our differences, we have infinitely more in common than separates us is very promising, especially when combined with increased respect for each other's forms of devotion and worship. I hope, pray and believe that the time will soon be ripe for full reunification of the Church, however messily it takes place. And that will contribute to a great renewal of the Church. Amen to that.

**Mark Howitt:
St Gabriel's, Alsager**

Twining with Ikutha (Kenya)



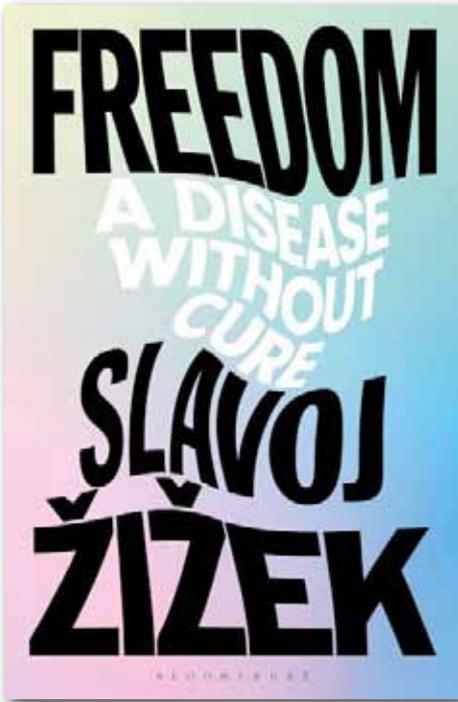
Many thanks to everyone who supported the Coffee Morning on Saturday the 18th November at St Winefride's, Sandbach. It was in aid of the Holy Spirit Parish in Ikutha, Kenya, the parish twinning project. £643 was raised through donations and those who were present on the day.

Freedom

A Disease Without Cure

by Slavoj Žižek

Bloomsbury Academic 2023 £15-99



The conservative American magazine, *New Republic*, recently called the Slovenian writer Slavoj Žižek 'the most dangerous philosopher in the West'; our own *Observer* newspaper called him a 'superior messiah'. Whatever he can be called, he is certainly a radical intellectual and an outspoken public figure. Having gained his reputation as a polemicist, his philosophical concern is with a wide sense of impending world breakdown and its underlying ideological causes. And his current concern is with the important liberal-democratic notion of freedom.

Perhaps we are all afraid that new dangers pose a threat to our hard-won freedoms, so what deserves attention is precisely the notion of freedom itself. The concept of freedom is deceptively simple. We think we understand it; but the moment we try and define it, we encounter contradictions.

In this new philosophical exploration, Slavoj Žižek argues that the experience of true, radical freedom is transient and fragile. Countering the idea of libertarian individualism, Žižek draws

on the philosophers Hegel, Kierkegaard and Heidegger, as well as the works of Kandinsky and Agatha Christie, to examine the many facets of freedom and work out what we can learn from each of them.

The allusion to Agatha Christie, in case you are interested, is a cheeky postmodernist reference to a mouse which witnesses a killing in the TV version of 'Hickory Dickory Dock'. So the mouse knows the identity of the murderer, while the police are baffled. And the presence of the mouse exposes a side of reality that is indifferent to human concerns, which is how postmodernism works.

Today, with the latest advances in digital control, our social activity can be controlled and regulated to such a degree that the liberal notion of a free individual becomes obsolete and even meaningless. How will we be obliged to reinvent (or limit) the contours of our freedom? Tracing its connection to everything, from capitalism and war to the state and environmental breakdown, Žižek takes us on an illuminating and entertaining journey that shows how a deeper understanding of freedom can offer hope in dark times.

It is not an easy read - Žižek never is. But does a dense read make a bad book? Not at all. And really, you do not need a degree in philosophy to read it through. This is perhaps the fifteenth



book by Žižek that I have read. I am also more or less familiar with Jacques Lacan, Hegel, and Marx, which means I am familiar with many of the names Žižek references, so it makes sense why he is including them in his arguments.

I also thought the book was quite entertaining, even if Žižek, who is something of a showman at heart, reuses some of his jokes and examples. It's fascinating to see him continue bringing out new work at the rate he is. It seems as if he is, perhaps, trying to clarify his stances on a variety of ideas.

**Michael Morton:
St Winefride's, Sandbach**





Understanding the Recent Synod in Rome

The General Synod of the Catholic Church was first set up in 1967 as a direct result of the Second Vatican Council. It was agreed that it was a good idea for the Pope to meet with bishops from all over the world on a regular basis. However, it couldn't be like the Council itself, which involved thousands of bishops. Instead, it was decided that each region would send two bishops every three years to a Synod, a meeting of bishops (from the Greek word for an assembly).

When the Synod meets up, it concentrates on just one topic. In 1971, the topic was Justice in the World. In 1974, it was Evangelisation - and so on. Up to now, there have been sixteen ordinary meetings since the General Synod was first established. Ordinary Catholics may not have been very aware of them, but they have been regular events.

The General Synod is a relatively new thing in the Catholic Church, and the bishops have learned as they went along. From 1974 onwards, the Synod has presented its findings to the Pope of the day. He looks at it, reflects upon it, prays about it, and then produces a document (technically known as an Apostolic Exhortation).

In 1990, the topic was the Formation of Priests. I had just been ordained and had to return to my university in Rome to complete my License in Canon Law. The Synod uses young priests to 'run and fetch' for the bishops, and I was privileged to be asked to do this, along with many other young priests from the different national colleges in Rome. It meant that I got to witness the process of the General Synod at first hand!

First of all, every bishop was allowed to speak on the topic if they wanted to, which gave them a good overview of what the issues were. They then split into different language groups, dividing the ground they thought they should cover between the different groups. In a final stage, they put all the different pieces together into one text.

The whole Synod then voted to amend that text and approve a final version, which was handed over to Pope John Paul II. Later on, the Pope wrote an apostolic exhortation, called in Latin 'Pastores Dabo Vobis' ('I will give you shepherds'). As an example of the sort of thing the General Synod can achieve, this document has been a kind of manifesto for seminary formation ever since it was published in 1991.



These photos were taken by Bishop John Wilson inside the Synod, and are used with his blessing



I said that the General Synod has learned as it went along. In 2015, the topic was the Family, and it was felt that laypeople with families should be allowed to speak, so that it wasn't just bishops talking among themselves! In 2018, the topic was Young People. Even more so, it was felt that young people themselves should be allowed to express their views at various points, and the bishops would listen to them.

The General Synod has been meeting for over fifty years now, and Pope Francis thought it was about time we reviewed the whole process. This is good business practice! So, the topic chosen for the Synod in 2023 was 'Synods Themselves'.

In doing this, Pope Francis realised that the way the Synod was run was just as important as the content of what was being discussed. In 2001, when he had just been made a Cardinal, the future Pope Francis had been a chairman at the tenth General Synod, and he saw that sometimes the process is not as open as it might be!

What has hit the headlines are some of the novel features of the process. They began by meeting in small groups. It is still substantially a meeting of bishops, but there were lay people and members of religious orders in those small groups. At the end of the meeting, these people even had a vote on the content of the final document. But it is still the case that this document will be handed over to the Pope.

What the Synod was not doing was deciding on matters of doctrine by a

simple vote (even though a small group of retired Cardinals are worried about changes in doctrine and have publicly expressed their doubts).

Another way that Pope Francis has changed the process is that the Synod meets for two autumn sessions over the space of two years. This allows a whole year between one session and the next, for him and his experts to think and pray about what was said. In doing this, Pope Francis is following a pattern that was typical of the Second Vatican Council itself. A number of its final documents were much improved by allowing time and space between the different discussion sessions.

We must wait and see what comes out of the process. There is another meeting in 2024, and then the Pope will certainly produce an Apostolic Exhortation and probably make some decisions. He might, for example, change the structure of what has been happening every three years, formally to include

other members of the Church than just the bishops. Fundamentally, it is based on a belief that the Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church.

I've not talked about the content of the discussions here. I've also avoided using the word 'synodality', which is not an everyday English word. In the past decades, we have often talked about the importance of 'collaborative ministry' between priests and people in our churches, and this is probably a good way to translate 'synodality' in your own head!

There are 1.2 billion Catholics in the world. It is very hard to engage on a process which wants to involve as many members of the Church as possible when the numbers are so large! If you have been kind enough to read my article, my humble hope is that it means a few more of us will have some idea of what is going on!

**Fr Nick Kern:
St Mary's, Crewe**



Can you spot Fr Nick?

Barbara Pym

1913 – 1980



I first became interested in Barbara Pym when I was branch librarian in Nantwich, and a smiling borrower returned one of her novels with the comment: 'Wonderful!' I was always open to readers' recommendations, so I borrowed it myself. And fifty years on, I am still re-reading all her work - fourteen volumes in total.

So what is the attraction? In Pym's own words, they delight, instruct and comfort us. Comedy is her special gift; but her satire can be both shrewd and bitter. She writes comedies of manners about educated, middle class people in the academic world or the Anglican Church, usually set in suburban London or English villages. Her characters are spinsters, curates, dons, vicars and their wives. Her books are keen social commentaries, and we can all recognise people we know in her characters. You may even recognise yourself.

Barbara Pym was born in Oswestry in 1913. Her secondary education was at a boarding school in Liverpool, and in 1931 she went up to St Hilda's College, Oxford, to read English, graduating in 1934. During the next few years and her war service in the Wrens, she saw herself as a budding author, although her first novel was not published until 1950.

Evidence of her tenacity is shown by the number of manuscript drafts produced during the 30s and 40s (now lodged in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for posterity). Between 1950 and 1963 she brought out six novels; but in 1963 her publisher turned down the seventh as not being trendy enough for the

60s. She then remained unpublished until 1977, when the Times Literary Supplement ran an article based on a survey of writers who had been asked to name an underrated author. Pym was the only one nominated twice, by Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil.

After a change of publisher, her later novels were produced, creating new readers and admirers. To sustain interest, her friend and sister put together a biography, *A Very Private Eye*, from her journals and letters. It is interesting to note that some of her work was also published posthumously, as her appeal never lessened.

How did she write? She was continually observing people and listening to snippets of conversation. She carried little notebooks everywhere to jot down anything of interest. These also can be seen in the Bodleian, often containing her shopping lists too! She did not rely on writing for a living, as she worked as an editor of an anthropological journal at the International African Institute in London. After her retirement, she moved to the village of Finstock, Oxfordshire, with her sister. She died of cancer in 1980.

In the early 90s, several devotees met at St Hilda's and decided to form a Barbara Pym Society. It goes from strength to strength, and there is also a North American branch. The Spring Conference is held at the church of St Alban in Holborn, London, where she worshipped. The Annual Conference is held in August at

St Hilda's and is great fun; we do not take ourselves too seriously!

The American Conference is held every March at Harvard University. The subjects alternate at each conference: one year, a novel will be the topic, and the following year a theme will be explored. I have been privileged to attend the last ten conferences at Harvard, where there is always a very English element, such as an afternoon tea, a sherry party or a jumble sale. Our American friends relish these. There is something for everyone, and membership ranges from teens to those in their nineties.

Barbara Pym loved the Anglican Church, which was a very rich source of strength to her all her life. She enjoyed every aspect of the buildings, clergy, hymns, services, garden parties, jumble sales and the congregation with all its varied members. She has a commemorative plaque in the church at Finstock, where she worshipped and is now buried.

After her death, her personal library was available for sale at Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford. Pym Society members were granted a preview, and we delighted in buying items that had belonged to and been read by her. For me, that was the ultimate treat.

Her books are still available from libraries and are still in print. You might like to try the following: *Jane and Prudence*, *A Glass of Blessings*, *Some Tame Gazelle*, or *Quartet in Autumn*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The first one that fired my interest was *Excellent Women*.

Sheila Kane: St Mary's, Crewe



How to be Happy

Make up your mind to be happy. Learn to find pleasure in simple things.

Make the best of your circumstances. No one has everything, and everyone has something of sorrow intermingled with gladness of life. The trick is to make the laughter outweigh the tears.

Don't take yourself too seriously. Don't think that somehow you should be protected from misfortune that befalls other people.

You can't please everybody. Don't let criticism worry you.

Don't let your neighbour set your standards. Be yourself.

Do the things you enjoy doing but stay out of debt.

Never borrow trouble. Imaginary things are harder to bear than real ones.

**Since hate poisons the soul, do not cherish jealousy, enmity, grudges.
Avoid people who make you unhappy.**

Have many interests. If you can't travel, read about new places.

Don't hold post-mortems. Don't spend your time brooding over sorrows or mistakes. Don't be one who never gets over things.

Do what you can for those less fortunate than yourself.

Keep busy at something. A busy person never has time to be unhappy.

Robert Louis Stevenson:
Submitted by Sheila Evans: St Mary's Crewe



A Way through the Old Testament



In late September and early October, I offered a short series of four talks on the subject of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) to the parishioners of St Winefride's in Sandbach. Now, I have no expertise in power-point presentations with computers and screens to illustrate the subject, so what I gave was an old-fashioned affair of notes and informal talk. But I wanted to share some of the insights that I have picked up about the Old Testament writings (henceforth OT) over the past thirty years and more.

So I spoke about:

- The Torah (the Instruction), formed by the first five texts in the Bible.
- The Law and the Prophets.
- 'The People of the Messiah'.
- The Wisdom literature – which, in my account, is the easiest part of the OT to read.

The primary and most important reflection concerned what was once a revisionist view of Judaic history, but is now coming more and more into the mainstream of Biblical scholarship. And it goes like this:

We have reached the end of 'biblical archaeology' - archaeological research

guided by, and trying to confirm, biblical history. The whole enterprise has been as big a mistake as it would be for British archaeology to be dominated by a need to prove the historicity of Malory's King Arthur. And if we let the archaeological evidence speak for itself, what does it say? Visitors to Jerusalem can get an idea by going to the Israel Museum.

The Israelis have had the very strongest motives for digging up and putting on show any materials that confirm the belief in a long Jewish occupation of ancient Palestine. And they have indeed found a great deal of material from Hellenistic and Roman times (400 BC - 150 AD). But of the main OT period there is startlingly little.

What all the world came to think of as 'the Jewish people', their religion and their epic history, now seems to have come into being as a result of the fifth-century BC Persian policy of building temples to the local gods around their empire. So, in biblical terms, history starts not with Abraham, but with Ezra and Nehemiah. Over a period of two or three centuries, the Temple and the Torah were established, and the welding of various local peoples into a New Israel was achieved.

The biblical writers collected local traditions and worked them up into the Bible's great story - of an Old Israel that had been chosen by God, but had repeatedly been unfaithful, and finally was destroyed.

One consequence of this revisionist history is that the great unified kingdom of David and Solomon never existed historically. Another is that the new chronology allows Greek philosophy to have had a much bigger influence on the biblical idea of God than used to be thought. There comes a gap between the highly volatile and anthropomorphic Yahweh of the oldest traditions, and the transcendent, ineffable Creator of Isaiah 40-55. And the difference is Greece.

We need to listen to the human author's voice as well as to the voice of God. And because that voice is Jewish, God does not always get the best of the argument. Not by a long chalk. Western Christianity has always narrated a great epic history of salvation, based on the Bible: Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Patriarchs, Moses, the Exodus and the Law, the Conquest, the Judges, the Kings and Prophets, and the promised Messiah.

We are now invited to see the whole story as back-projected and mythical. If we continue to practise religion, we shall have to do so in the full knowledge that it is a human imaginative construction.

However, take away the history, and there are powerful themes that run throughout the forty-odd 'books' of the OT, with much to teach us. I chose to explore and emphasis three of these themes.

Firstly, the notion of the 'two ways' - the way of the 'ashre' (or blessed), and the way of the wicked. These two ways are set out in Psalm 1, but they are present in the contrast between figures such as Abel and Cain, Jacob and Esau, David and Saul, Ephraim and Judah, and, of course, old Israel and the new Kingdom of God.

The second theme was the contrast between those two Kingdoms of Israel. The old Israel had been unfaithful and sinful, and had been destroyed by the Babylonians - a story told throughout the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles 1 and 2, which actually

bridges the two testaments. Because Isaiah ch 40 onwards looks to the new Kingdom of God, which is the subject of the first words of Jesus in St Mark, the earliest of the Gospels: 'The Kingdom of God is close at hand...'

And thirdly, there is the whole notion of social justice, found chiefly in the teaching of the prophets. Especially Isaiah, where God constantly tries to tell his pathologically cultic people that true, genuine worship is caring for one another. Indeed, God is a non-God (his name cannot even be spoken), until

widows are fed and housed, children cared for, and the sick find healing. God was concerned about the welfare of the poor and needy in a way that the pagan deity was not, at all.

Looking back, there was really too much subject matter for four 45-minute talks. But part of my purpose was to send the listener back to the text, to see if what I had explained rings true. A new understanding of the Biblical history will be an affront to conservatives, both in Israel and in the Church. Faith tends to create its own facts, and to become

heavily invested in them. Bishops and writers will continue to say that the Jews and their religion are 4,000 years old. And pilgrims will continue to visit the holy places and regard them as genuine.

The gap between the study and the pew grows steadily wider, and most people are not greatly concerned. But they really should be.

**Fr Michael Morton:
St Winefride's, Sandbach**

Baptism of Corelia H G A Herbert-Jackson

We felt truly blessed on the Saturday 2nd September, to have our daughter Corelia baptised by Deacon Eddie, at St Gabriel's church in Alsager.

We met with a small number of our closest family and friends at quarter past twelve. It felt incredibly intimate, and Deacon Eddie put everyone very at ease and feeling welcomed. Deacon Eddie had chosen to read 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10 and Psalm 27. Anais read Psalm 91:9-16, and Connor read Psalm 121, a song of ascent.

**"I rescue all who cling to me,
I protect whoever knows my name,
I answer everyone who invokes me,
I am with them when they are in trouble;
I bring them safety and honour,
I give them life, long and full,
And show them how I can save."**

We felt that these readings best expressed our wish for our daughter to find peace, support, and shelter through her faith. For the baptism, Deacon Eddie invited everyone to gather with us around the font.

As the baptism rites followed, and we looked up to see the dear faces of her god-parents and our friends gathered around Corelia in this church, we all felt the presence of God, Jesus and the Virgin Mary.

It was so humbling and moving, and it is hard to put this experience into words, but we were transported in God's grace. Thank you Deacon Eddie.

**Anais and Connor Herbert-Jackson:
St Gabriel's, Alsager**



Arundel Cathedral



The West Front

The story of its construction, the man who made it possible, and the struggle to restore Catholicism in Britain

Arundel Cathedral was begun in 1868 and finally completed in 1873 and although built on the scale of a cathedral, was originally a parish church dedicated to an Italian priest, St Philip Neri (1515-1595). He was known as the Apostle of Rome, and founded the Congregation of the Oratory or the Oratorians.

This church was far more than just a building; it was a symbol of Catholic emancipation in Victorian England. The Act of Uniformity, passed in the reign of Elizabeth I in 1559, effectively removed most civil rights from Catholics.

The Catholic Mass and worship were made illegal and the hierarchy and clergy were proscribed as recusants (i.e. people who refused to attend Anglican services), as were many of the laity; and all were subjected to strict penalties, including torture and execution. Catholicism remained illegal for the next 232 years, except during the short reigns of Mary I (1553-1558) and of James II (1685-88).

The Catholic Relief Act of 1791 restored the right to worship and allowed Catholics to open their own schools,

to hold junior civic offices and to live in London. The building of Catholic churches also resumed after the Act of 1791. But it was not until the Catholic Emancipation Bill, championed by Home Secretary Robert Peel against fierce opposition from his own party's MPs, was finally passed by Parliament that restoration really began.

During its reading in the House of Lords, the Duke of Wellington had to threaten to resign as Prime Minister before the Bill was given royal assent by King George IV. The Act of 1829 restored most civic rights to Catholics, including

the right to become an MP, and gave them access to high civic office. It also facilitated the restoration of the clerical hierarchy in 1850 by Pope Pius IX and the reconstitution of the Roman Catholic dioceses. Before this the construction of a Catholic cathedral was unthinkable.

It was Henry Fitzalan-Howard, the 15th Duke of Norfolk (1847-1917), who was the mastermind behind the construction of the cathedral. He was styled the Earl of Arundel and Surrey in 1856 at the age of nine. One of the ancestral seats of the Duke of Norfolk is Arundel Castle, which in its present form is the legacy of the Howard family dating from the end of the eighteenth century, but the site itself dates back to the 11th century.

Duke Henry was educated at the Birmingham Oratory under the tutelage of (St) John Henry Newman. At the age of twenty-one in 1868, the Duke established his family as prominent leaders of the Catholic laity in England.

Over 230 years of legislation in favour of the Church of England had left Catholics with few material structures of their own. Duke Henry's prime ambition was to build a Catholic cathedral in Arundel. To this end he engaged the architect Joseph Aloysius Hansom to draught the plans for a cathedral in the French Gothic style.

The building was to be a symbol of the re-emergence of the previously proscribed Roman Catholic religion, an 'expression of a spirit of renewal'.



Henry Fitzalan-Howard

It was also the Duke's intention that Catholicism should be re-established as a mainstream faith, and that it would become a highly respected force for societal good and gain prestige in public opinion. It would also demonstrate its practicality by establishing and supporting several charities.

The Duke's life was filled with tragedy: his only son was born blind and epileptic and died at the age of twenty three; his first wife also died young at the age of thirty-four. The Duke appears to have sublimated his grief into an obsession with building in support of the Catholic Church. He donated a large percentage of his income to this end. Arundel Cathedral was totally financed by him alone.

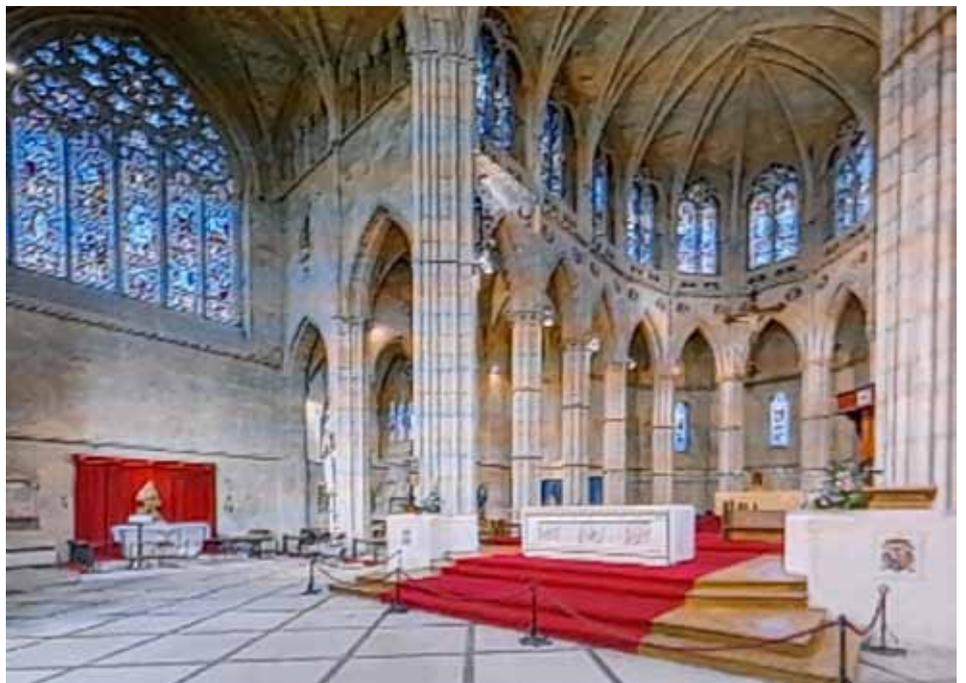


The Nave

He also financed the construction of a church in his ancestral seat at Norwich in Norfolk. He initiated the project with a donation of £200,000 in 1882, but construction was not completed until 1910. This church later became the Cathedral of St John the Baptist when the Diocese of East Anglia was re-established in 1976.

Arundel Cathedral, although it displays the majesty of the French Gothic style circa.1400, has a much warmer and more welcoming exterior than the great medieval Gothic cathedrals, being constructed in brick and clad in Bath stone.

The west facade is impressive, featuring the figure of Christ and the Twelve Apostles; and over the west portal the Blessed Virgin and the Divine Child are splendidly featured. Above, the great rose window provides a classic Gothic element which greatly illuminates the interior. Inside, the nave replicates the French Gothic style as do the high pointed arches.



The Nave

The windows display outstanding examples of stained glass. Arundel Cathedral also houses the most beautiful statues including a large statue of the Sacred Heart and an impressive sculpture of Our Lady of Sorrows holding the crucified Christ.

Almost a hundred years later the original church built by Duke Henry was chosen to serve as Arundel Cathedral, when the new Diocese of Arundel and Brighton was created in 1965. The dedication was then changed to Our Lady and St Philip Neri.



The Nave

There were three important shrines to the Blessed Virgin in Arundel that were destroyed during the Reformation: Our Lady of the Gate, Our Lady of Calceto (the Way), and Our Lady of Arundel. The shrine to Our Lady of Arundel was housed in a chapel close to the site of the present cathedral, and the rededication embraced the spirit of the reconstitution of the medieval shrine.

The cathedral was later rededicated to include and to pay tribute to St Philip Howard (the 13th Earl of Arundel: 1st of the Howard line) one of the Duke's own ancestors, a martyr who died for the Faith in the reign of Elizabeth I.

In 1970 Philip Howard was canonised along with 39 other British martyrs of the Reformation. A year later the remains of St Philip Howard were transferred from the private Fitzalan Chapel in the grounds of Arundel Castle and entombed in the Cathedral. Due to his canonisation, the dedication was changed again to Our Lady and St Philip Howard in 1973.

The Howard family today are known as the Fitzalan-Howards and, as the Dukes of Norfolk, are the highest ranking non-royal family in Britain. They are hereditary holders of the title of Earl Marshal, responsible for arranging coronations, investitures and state funerals since 1386. They are still considered the most prominent Catholic family in Britain today. The present 18th Duke of Norfolk, Edward William Fitzalan-Howard (b.1956), a current member of the House of Lords, is recognised by the Vatican as England's senior lay representative of the Faith.

Missio

Dear Fr Tony Grace,

I have written this letter to report that my Pastoral work is going very well. I am trying the best I can to travel and administer the sacraments to the sick, the old, the needy and those who want the sacraments in their own home.

Thank you to Missio which sponsored me for a motor bike to visit my 64,000 parishioners with 10 mission churches.

So far the people are also happy here, because most of the time they want the Sacraments, a priest is there for them.



Carpet of Flowers for Corpus Christi

Arundel to this day remains a town and has never been granted city status by the monarch. This situation dates back to the Reformation, when only towns with Protestant cathedrals were recognised as cities. It does appear that Catholic cathedrals are still being discounted by the establishment in spite of the Equalities Act (2010).

For a hundred and forty years the Cathedral has been celebrating the Feast of Corpus Christi with a Festival of Flowers, which features a magnificent carpet of flowers placed in the central aisle of the cathedral church.

The Corpus Christi Mass is followed by a procession of the Blessed Sacrament to Arundel Castle, where Benediction takes place. The present Bishop of Arundel and Brighton is Bishop Richard Moth.

The cathedral adds a striking Gothic flair to Arundel as it towers over the town. This cathedral is well worth a visit, and Arundel is easily accessible from the south coastal resorts, from Hastings to Bognor Regis.

**Alison Cotter:
St Anne's, Nantwich**

Just a plea: if you have some intentions for Masses, feel free to ask me, for I am ready to assist. I am always ready to give, and I will be grateful as your Son.

Lastly, receive my greeting and greet the Christians there in your parishes.

I would like to remind you that every Friday, I remember you (Fr Tony) and all your parishioners at Mass.
Your Son,

**Fr Innocent Mlongoti:
St Theresa-Tsangano Parish, PO Box
12, Ntcheu, Dedza Diocese**



The National Memorial Arboretum

Situated in Alrewas in Staffordshire and standing on 150 Acres where the Rivers Tame and Trent meet, with 400 memorials set amid 25,000 trees, the National Memorial Arboretum welcomes some 300,000 visitors each year. Throughout the year, around 250 events take place on site, from small intimate services of Remembrance to set-piece events like Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, a summer prom and Armed Forces Day.

On the 11th September, parishioners from St Anne's in Nantwich and St Gabriel's in Alsager travelled by coach, organised by the SVP St Anne's, to visit the Arboretum. On arrival we were greeted by a guide who gave a short but informative introduction about the memorials and the various talks that were being presented during the day.

There was a restaurant providing hot and cold food and drink, and a well-stocked shop with gifts and souvenirs. A cup of coffee and a slice of cake were a welcome treat for those of us who took up the invitation to use the restaurant before exploring the site.

At the entrance to the main path of the arboretum was a large, illustrated map showing the memorials and their locations.

It immediately became obvious that we would not be able to see all the memorials in a single day, but many of us boarded the land train which journeys around the site, giving an in-depth commentary on the memorials visited and allowing the passengers on board to appreciate the purpose of the Arboretum and the history it displays. It takes about an hour, covering nearly the whole of the site, and offering the chance to see many of the memorials.

The centrepiece of the site is the Armed Forces Memorial, which is a tribute to over 16,000 service personnel who have lost their lives in conflict or as a result of terrorism since the end of the Second World War. At 11am on 11th November each year the sun shines through two slits in the outer and inner walls of the memorial, casting a shaft of light across a wreath in the centre.



A memorial which many people visit is entitled 'Shot at Dawn' and commemorates the 306 British Army and Commonwealth soldiers executed after court-martial for desertion and other capital offences during World War I.

The memorial portrays a young British soldier blindfolded and tied to a stake, ready to be shot by a firing squad. The memorial was modelled on the likeness of 17-year-old Private Herbert Burden, who lied about his age to

enlist in the armed forces and was later shot for desertion.

It is surrounded by a semicircle of stakes, on each of which are listed the names of the soldiers executed in this fashion.

The day was informative and enjoyable. By helping us reflect on the memory of those who died, we learned to recognise and appreciate better the high cost of the freedom we all enjoy today.

Rev Eddie Miller: St Gabriel's, Alsager

LMA Summer Trip

The Shrine of Blessed Dominic Barberi Apostle of England

On Saturday, 1st July, approximately sixty people from the parishes of LMA9 set out to visit the resting place of Blessed Dominic Barberi, situated in St Helens on Merseyside.

Nestling in Sutton, a suburb of St Helens, is the church of St Anne and Blessed Dominic. In the time of Blessed Dominic, Sutton was heavily industrialised by mining, chemical processing and glass manufacturing and, with the Liverpool to Manchester railway cutting through its boundaries, it was also the centre of major railway infrastructure. Today, the scars of industry are hidden by various greening projects.

The modern church, built in 1973, replaced the existing church and monastery, built in 1851, which was demolished due to mining subsidence. In this church are buried the mortal remains of Blessed Dominic Barberi, known also as the Apostle of England and instrumental in the conversion of St John Henry Newman.

It is also the shrine of two other important figures of the revival of the Catholic Church in Victorian England - the Venerable Ignatius Spencer, considered to be the pioneer of ecumenical prayer, and the Venerable



Mary Prout, founder of the order of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion.

Mass was celebrated in the church, and afterwards Sister Eileen O'Riordan CP gave a short talk on the life of Blessed Dominic and the establishment of the order of the Cross and Passion in St Helens. Following the talk, we had time to walk around the shrine, to look at the artefacts on display and to pray.

The establishment of the new monastery at Sutton started in 1849, when John Smith, a wealthy Railway magnate, decided to build a church. Following advice from Cardinal Wiseman, Smith approached the Passionists, a religious order founded by St Paul of the Cross.

Smith went to see Fr Dominic Barberi at Aston Hall in Stone, Staffordshire, and invited him to undertake the work, offering him the land to build the church and monastery which Smith would design.

This was accepted and, seeing the site where the Church would be built, Dominic declared, **'Here I have chosen to live. This will be my resting place forever!'** He agreed to lay the foundation stone on the 30th August 1849, but died three days earlier on the 27th August at the Railway Hotel in Reading, after suffering a heart attack on a train.

Fr Dominic Barberi was born in 1792 in Viterbo, a small city in Italy, just north of Rome, to a poor family of farmers. Orphaned at the age of eight, he was raised by an uncle and aunt in the nearby village of Merlano. Young Dominic was not sent to school, but instead was trained to be a shepherd.

As a child, he always found time to pray as he tended his sheep, and he also taught himself to read and write. He was ordained into the Congregation of the Passion in 1814, and devoted his whole life to the conversion of England. This became his prime vocation.



Barberi, who proved to have great intellectual gifts, taught philosophy and theology to the students of the Congregation for a period of ten years, first in Sant'Angelo and then in Rome, and produced many theological and philosophical works.

In 1830, at the English College in Rome, he met **Fr George Spencer**, an Anglican Priest who had recently converted and was now studying for ordination to the Catholic priesthood. On the 26th May 1832, Fr Spencer was ordained as a Catholic priest, going on to become another key figure in the English Catholic revival.

George Spencer had been born on December 21, 1799, in Admiralty House, London. He was the son of the second Earl Spencer, at that time First Lord of the Admiralty. George was the youngest of seven children whose descendants include Winston Churchill and Diana, Princess of Wales.

In 1840, Fr Barberi received an invitation from Bishop Wiseman, the head of the English mission, to start a Passionist foundation in England at Aston Hall, arriving there in 1841. In 1845, during a visit to Littlemore near Oxford, he met **John Henry Newman**, an Anglican priest, who knelt, made his confession before him and asked to be received into the Catholic Church. Following further studies in Rome, Newman was ordained a Catholic Priest on May 30th, 1847.

On January 5, 1847, Fr George Spencer, the Italian priest's former pupil and longstanding friend, received the Passionist habit from the hands of Father Dominic. George received the

religious name Father Ignatius of Saint Paul, the name he would now be known by. Ignatius threw himself into Passionist life and, after making his religious profession in 1848, began preaching sermons throughout Britain and Ireland, always calling for prayers for the conversion of England. In August 1849, Ignatius was preaching in Belgium when he heard of Father Dominic's sudden death. As a result, he was now Provincial of the Passionist Congregation in England and Belgium.

Father Ignatius's health had always been precarious at best. Worn out with continual work, preaching and begging, he finally suffered a heart attack and died on 1st October 1864. He was buried alongside Dominic Barberi in St Anne's in Sutton, on October 4th. When his body was exhumed in 1973, it was noted that Father Ignatius suffered from horrific arthritis, but that his tongue had not suffered any decay since the day of his death over a hundred years earlier.

The Catholic Church in England had been destroyed at the Reformation, and everyone assumed it was dead. But now the Church had come miraculously back to life. After the dead years of winter, there was now a second spring. Using images from Scripture, Newman speaks lyrically of this re-born Church, but he warns that it may provoke a reaction from the hostile world and that persecution may lie ahead.

J. Brodrick SJ, in his work on the 'Second Spring' of Catholicism in England, says of Father Dominic's arrival in England:

"The second spring did not begin when Newman was converted or

when the hierarchy was restored. It began on a bleak October day of 1841, when a little Italian priest in comical attire shuffled down a ship's gangway at Folkestone.

From small beginnings the Church in England began to grow again. It is from the examples of Blessed Dominic and the venerable Ignatius Spencer and Elizabeth Prout, that we can take strength and courage to make Christ known in our own neighbourhoods and communities, simply by being Christian in the way we live.

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Mt25:40

Elizabeth Prout was born in Shrewsbury in 1820. Her parents baptised her in the Anglican Church. Elizabeth, in her mid-twenties, was living in Stone, Staffordshire, when she met Fr Dominic Barberi. Under his influence she became a Catholic at a time when Catholicism was viewed with suspicion in England. In 1848 she entered the convent of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus at Northampton.

After six months, she developed a tubercular knee and had to return home. Nursed by her mother, she eventually recovered. Forbidden to go to Mass when she was at home, she was forced to make a choice between her family and her faith. So Elizabeth left home and made her way to Manchester looking for work. Here, in September 1849, with the help of Fr Gaudentius Rossi CP, she got a job teaching in St Chad's school in Angel Meadows, a very poor area of Manchester. Touched by the misery and deprivation of the poor, she and a few companions came



together to form a community to help the voiceless, downtrodden workers in the large industrial towns of nineteenth-century England.

The community was directed and helped by two Passionists, Father Gaudentius Rossi and Father Ignatius

Spencer. The rule was based on that of St Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionists. Elizabeth recognised that the Passion of Jesus is the great sign of God's love reaching out to those in pain.

Now known as Mother Mary Joseph, Elizabeth continued to meet the

challenges presented to her in her life of suffering, and to grow in solidarity with the crucified of the world. She died on 11th January 1864 at Sutton, St Helens.

**Rev Eddie Miller:
St Gabriel's, Alsager**

That's My Boy!

Paul, our son, was raised in Kinsey Heath, Audlem. He attended Buerton Primary School and then Brine Leas School in Nantwich.

He started learning the trumpet at the age of eleven and quickly progressed to playing in the Co-op Brass Band in Crewe. Then he moved to the Whitchurch Brass Band, followed by the Royal Doulton Band in Stoke at fourteen years of age. He also joined Cheshire County Youth Brass Band.

He left home at sixteen to continue his musical education in the Army, and soon entered the Royal Military School of Music, based at Kneller Hall in Richmond upon Thames. The first military band to which he was assigned was The Band of the Prince of Wales at Ternhill, and he played in many local concerts there. After another period at Kneller Hall, Paul was selected to attend a bandmaster's course, before moving to Edinburgh as Bandmaster (after being promoted to Captain) to the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

He has had many moves in his career, including Gibraltar Barracks at Minley in Hampshire, and MOD St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan. His last posting to date was to Windsor, where he was appointed Director of Music of the Band of the Household Cavalry. For two years running, he took part in the Trooping the Colour ceremony on Horseguards Parade.

Unfortunately, this appointment coincided with the Covid outbreak, so many events were either cancelled or scaled down. But afterwards he had the honour of leading the Band at the Windsor section of the Queen's Funeral. This was followed by the most prestigious occasion of all - the King's Coronation earlier this year, when his band led the procession to Westminster Abbey and back.

Jenny Collis-Smith: St Anne's, Nantwich



LMA Youth Day

On Saturday 25th November young people from across the local missionary area gathered for a day of fun, prayer and reflection. The theme for the day was Christ the King. It was the feast of Christ the King on Sunday 26th November. Christ the King is a fairly new feast day; it was only established in 1925 to affirm the sovereignty of Christ.

We appreciated that the Shrewsbury Youth Mission Team had agreed to run the event, held at St Thomas More Catholic High School. Their expertise and enthusiasm meant they packed the day full of activities, which were aimed to teach us something new about the feast of Christ the King, whilst still having fun.

The group loved creating their Good Shepherd mazes and guiding their blindfolded teams to the finish line, as well as creating freeze frames of the key messages from the gospel of the day.

“I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome;



Naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.”

During the day, the group created posters of crowns, to display in their local parishes.

The crown had thorns which represented the problems we face, such as hunger, loneliness, or poverty. Then the gold part of the crown was filled in with all the things we can do to help people solve these problems; living examples of how we can see the works of Christ the King in action today, using cut outs from newspapers and magazines.

The day culminated with a Mass in the school Prayer Room. Led by Fr Nick the group offered their thoughts, prayers and creative activities to honour and be inspired by Christ the King.

Asking the Youth Team about the day they said:

“This group of young people were a pleasure to work with. They were eager to learn and they got involved in all of the activities. This was a great opportunity to spend time reflecting on Jesus as a great leader - a good shepherd, and how we can all respond to his words.”

Jenny Forti: St Mary's, Crewe



The Trek of a Lifetime!



Mrs Katherine Packham (Acting Headteacher at St Thomas More and a St Anne's parishioner), and Mrs Hogg (ex-Headteacher at St Thomas More, new Head at Blessed Thomas Holford, Altrincham and a St Mary's parishioner) vowed to trek the Sahara desert to raise vital funds for St Luke's Hospice. This October half-term, the trek began!

We set off from Manchester airport and travelled to Frankfurt, where we then took a connecting flight to Marrakesh. We were so excited to arrive at our hotel in the early evening in time to enjoy a wonderful traditional Moroccan dinner. After a good night's sleep, we had an early start on Monday morning, getting on board our minibus to drive for 120 hours over both the low and high Atlas mountains.

Eventually we stopped for a picnic lunch in the beautiful Atlas hills. Mrs Hogg bought a shesh, and was taught how to put one on by our minibus driver.

It was colder than we expected and, as we set off again, it started to rain. This came as a total surprise for everyone;

as the rain became torrential, our tour guide told us the region hadn't seen rain like this for 38 years. We had to stop in another village to buy raincoats!

On arrival, we set off for our first evening trek in the dunes. Thankfully, the rain came only after we got back to camp and lasted only ten minutes. From this point on, the weather was glorious and hot, hot, hot!!!

We were well looked after by our Berber cooks, the camel handlers, and our wonderful Sahara guides. We slept that night in our tents, really excited for the next day, which would be our first full day of walking.

Day 3: Tuesday – we woke very early at 5.30 am, as we were all too excited to sleep any longer. After a Berber breakfast, we packed our overnight bags for the camels to carry, and put on the day walking packs we carried ourselves, well stocked with fluids.

The trek was long and hot, but it was so interesting. There were twenty-two

members in our group, all raising funds for St Luke's Hospice. I met many new people, but I was also there with a number of my own friends, including Mrs Hogg.

We laughed and we journeyed together, fully supportive of all the other team members. The terrain was varied; we passed through dunes, dried-up earth, ancient dried-up river beds, clay-like soft ground, and back to dunes again! This day we passed through two villages and met with the village elder of the Berber people. We heard the call to prayer each of the five times that day, from sunrise to sunset.

The picture below, taken on the Tuesday, included all the trekkers involved with St Thomas More: ex-pupils, teachers, ex-parents, and the Chair of the FSTM and St Anne's parishioner - Mrs Waskett.

I bought myself a shesh in the local village, as they were excellent at keeping our heads cool and took the sun off our necks and faces.

After a full day trekking, we arrived late in the afternoon at our beautiful camp, where we watched the magnificent sunset. It was at such moments of beauty that we really felt the presence of God - the sunrise and the sunset, the stars in the night sky, the vastness and beauty of the desert plains, the camaraderie and friendship during the treks. God was with us each step of the way in this moving, spiritual setting.

We woke the next day - Wednesday – and packed up camp again. We loved breakfast today, as the Berbers had made us pancakes! What they were able to make in the desert was incredible. And trying foods like sweet potato jam was really interesting. Off we trekked for another full day in the dunes and the heat. We were a really close group by





now, thoroughly enjoying each other's company. We didn't know it yet, but we were about to climb a very steep, tall mountain that would take us to overlook the Algerian Border.

The climb was hot, intense and quite scary in parts, as, carrying our heavy backpacks, we scrambled over shingle with steep drops right next to us!

But the view from the top was incredible.

Whereas I was content to admire the camels from a distance, Mrs Hogg actually had a go at riding one. It was only for a sort trip around the camp, though – there was no cheating on the distance we walked! We all completed our 50K trek for St Luke's hospice.

On the last evening, many of us slept out under the stars. It was a cold night, but the stars put on a phenomenal display - God showing his mighty craftsmanship again!

On **Thursday**, our last morning in the desert, we trekked out early and climbed a huge dune. There, we stood

in silence, as we watched the beautiful sun rise in front of us. We prayed, we thought about our loved ones, and we shed a few tears at the majesty and glory of this beautiful country.

We completed our trek on Thursday morning, and set off on the journey back to Marrakesh, arriving about 7pm in the evening, in time to take our first shower for four days before a trip into town for a celebration feast.

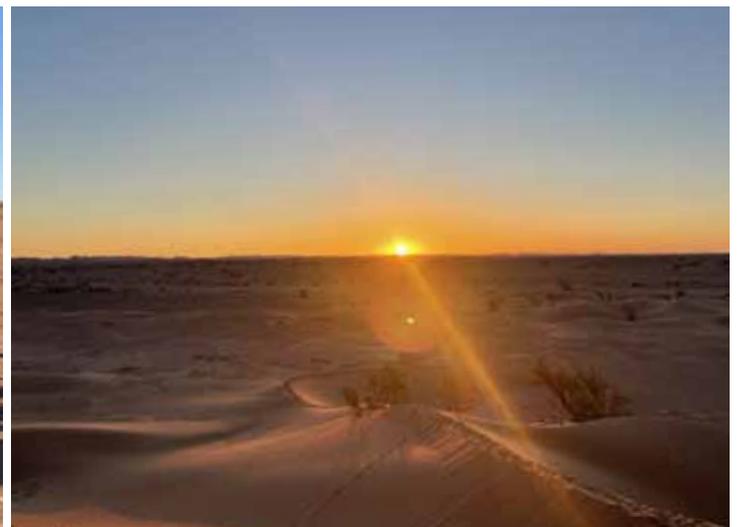
We woke again very early on **Friday** to begin our journey to Marrakesh airport and the flight back to Frankfurt. We had a stopover that night in Frankfurt before taking our return flight to Manchester early on **Saturday** morning. Coming home to our loved ones was amazing, but we all missed our new-found, life-long friends, the beautiful desert, and the warmth of the Sahara sun.

As a group, we have so far reached about £47,000 in total profit for the hospice, with still more money coming in. A huge thank you to Debra Sloan at St Luke's, and to Ruhbia Akbor at the Different Travel Company for all the

organisation of the trip. Mrs Hogg and I are totally blessed to have been able to fundraise for St Luke's and experience the gruelling and relentless beauty of the Sahara. Anyone who wants to donate, please use my justgiving page: Katherine Packham is fundraising for St Luke's (Cheshire) Hospice.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/katherine-packham>

Katherine Packham:
Acting Headteacher, St Thomas More





St Mary's Caritas Centre



Hello. I am Becky Hurst and I am a worker with Caritas in the Diocese of Shrewsbury, based at St Mary's Caritas Centre. I have been involved in church and church activities all my life. I followed in the footsteps of my parents and grandparents, who were active members of St Andrew's Anglican Parish Church on Bedford Street in Crewe.

I have lived in Crewe for most of my life, bar a few years away for university and a period working in Liverpool and Warrington. I spent fourteen years working for Christian Aid as a Regional Coordinator, working on fundraising, campaigning and volunteer management.

I have always been passionate about my faith and the impact that has on my engagement with the world, and working with the Anglican parishes in Crewe since autumn 2018 has been a further opportunity to link my faith and work life. I have really enjoyed working with Caritas and getting to know the parish of St Mary's over the last sixteen months.

Caritas is an inspiring organisation to work for, and it has been a privilege to get to know colleagues across the Diocese and learn more about the organisation.

Caritas is the new social action and social justice agency of the Diocese of Shrewsbury, seeking to develop the Church's social mission in the years ahead.

Caritas actually means 'Christian love of humankind', and we express this in loving service. This is the motivation at the heart of all the work we do here at Caritas Shrewsbury.

We encompass the work of the former Catholic Children's Society and, with the invaluable support from the

diocesan-wide 'Our Mission Together' initiative, we have also extended our portfolio to include: intergenerational work, helping young people at risk of becoming homeless, creating accessible community hubs, and working with those seeking refuge and asylum.

Caritas Vision: All children, families and communities are empowered to experience a fullness of life.

Caritas Mission: In the Spirit of the Gospel, we work with children, families, communities and parishes to build stronger, more supportive communities wherever there is current disadvantage.

We've come a long way since I started as the community builder at the beginning of June 2022. The building has welcomed LATH (Looking after the Homeless) as our first regular users, and the centre was officially launched in January 2023, when we were able to share the joy of the new building with the parish and the local community.

As the Mayor of Cheshire East, Cllr David Marren said about the opening in the local press: **'I was delighted to have been invited to support the opening of the new centre in Delamere Street - alongside the Rt Reverend Mark Davies. It will make a massive difference to the lives of some people who might be struggling.'**



The Rt Reverend Mark Davies, pupils from St Mary's Primary School and Cllr David Marren outside the centre at the launch



LATH making good use of their pool table in the new centre



Members of St Thomas More High School Eco Club planting trees donated to St Mary's Church for the Queen's Jubilee at the centre

As well as being well used by the Parish and parish groups such as SVP, CWL, the Sunday refreshments group and the youth group, there are a diverse range of other groups using the centre, including: Catherine Fraser Irish Dance, Funky Choir, Crewe Chess Club, Afternoon Club dementia café, Marriage Care, and Maximus (Refugee Employability Programme). And within the last few weeks we hosted a women's wellbeing conference.

We are constantly complimented on the design and layout of the new centre, and accessibility is great. The facilities are well used by the groups currently involved, and word is spreading, as more groups are enquiring about using the space.

I have also been building links with other local organisations, including: Crewe Town Council, who have provided a defibrillator and bleed kit on the outside of the centre, the Cheshire East Food Alliance, YMCA, Everybody Health and Leisure and Cheshire East Council.

We are recognised as a Connected Communities Centre through Cheshire East, which has provided us with some grant funding to purchase audio visual equipment for the centre.

We are also working with Incredible Edible and volunteers from LATH to develop the outside space into areas for growing food, with raised beds and edible hedgerows due to be installed

over the coming months. Pupils from St Thomas More School have already planted some trees on the site, and there will be a bench designed by local school children installed in November.

We are always looking for new ideas and suggestions and, of course, volunteers, especially for our garden project; some new ideas around supporting people seeking asylum and community café activities would be welcome.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to enquire about booking the hall, please contact me at becky.hurst@caritasshrewsbury.org.uk or 07394 568 255.

SVP Coffee Morning



An enjoyable and successful SVP Coffee Morning at St Winefride's on Saturday 7th October. £530 was raised. Thank you to all of those who worked so hard and also to those who supported so enthusiastically.

St Mary's and St Anne's Parish

Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2023



After two years missed because of Covid, we were delighted to go back to Lourdes in 2022, although the Shrewsbury Diocesan Pilgrimage was necessarily a smaller and more low key affair than usual. It was great, therefore, to be back in full swing in 2023.

The group from St Mary's in Crewe and St Anne's in Nantwich was larger and more diverse than ever, with families, older people and people from the many communities of Crewe.

Our fund-raising activities are legendary, particularly the Smartie Tubes and Parish Barbecue. This allows us to subsidise our young people and our families and allows more people to come to Lourdes. Many thanks go to all our parishioners for their spiritual, practical and financial support. The Catenians must also be thanked for their bursaries for the young people.

Our group took a full part in the Pilgrimage, with our young people making up a large proportion of the Youth Group. James Todd played the

organ at services and masses (including accompanying a soprano from La Scala in Milan), and our singers joined the choirs.

We are already planning and fund-raising for 2024 and anyone from any of our parishes is very welcome to join us. Let's get the LMA mingling and getting to know each other.

The stories that follow are just two of the voices from our group.

Martin Massey: St Mary's, Crewe.

The Lourde's Experience

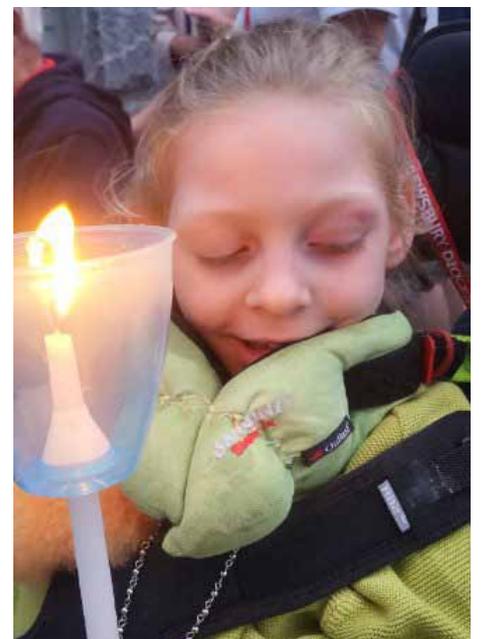
I was a little worried about going to Lourdes, I wasn't sure that I'd fit in, what people would think about me. We love Rosie in a very special way that not everyone would understand, and I knew that I really wanted to go for her.

I didn't need to be at all worried, because everyone was so welcoming, helpful, supportive, and caring, in a way that I had really not felt for a long time. I learned that I can trust people, and that there are genuine people who truly want to help. They have made a real difference to me.

As for Rosie, she absolutely loved every minute of the trip to Lourdes. She just

got more and more animated and vocal as the days went on. She loved it. Since our return, so many people have commented that she is so much more alert and taking in her surroundings.

Louise Robertson, mother of Rosie





Going on the Parish pilgrimage to Lourdes was an experience that we will cherish forever. I had wanted to take my daughter Lilia there for a long time, but especially after she was diagnosed with terminal Sanfilippo syndrome in 2021. However, the journey seemed too difficult, and the timing was never right.

When we heard that the parish was organising a trip from Liverpool airport

and that all arrangements would be taken care of, we knew it was the perfect opportunity for us to go as a family.

From the moment we arrived in Lourdes, we felt a sense of peace and serenity. The atmosphere was filled with love and compassion, and it was evident that everyone there understood the struggles we were facing. Our daughter was treated with the utmost care and

kindness by the volunteers and other pilgrims, which made us feel really supported and welcomed.

Lourdes provided us with a space to come together as a family and create lasting memories. Besides participating in the deeply moving religious processions and services, we found the time to explore the beautiful area surrounding the town.

We also enjoyed exchanging stories, prayers and reflective moments with the rest of the group. There was a lot of socialising, which enriched our experience and helped us to form deeper connections with each other. My non-Catholic husband, Jon, has also come away with a deeper appreciation of the Catholic faith and a desire to pursue his own spiritual path.

We feel incredibly blessed to have been on the pilgrimage and to witness first-hand the power of faith and transformative spirit of Lourdes. We would not hesitate to go again and encourage anyone who is thinking of it to seize the opportunity and go!

Natasha Clarke and Family

Shrewsbury Youth in Lourdes 2023



Having already experienced Lourdes with St Mary's Parish in Summer 2019, I felt I knew what to expect from my week there. I knew how packed our schedules would be, how changeable the weather could be, and how tired we all inevitably would be. We all walked for hours on end and came back to the hotel either soaked by the rain or drenched in sweat, but somehow still bustling with energy

and excitement for the next day. I was completely right in expecting all of this, and yet I was somehow still blindsided by the most important part of Lourdes - the people.

Our Youth team travelled together by coach and had a 28-hour drive to Lourdes. A lot of us had never even met each other beforehand. No matter how hesitant and nervous we all were at first, by the end of the 28 hours we had managed to get to know everyone, building up a good foundation for our growing friendships throughout our week in Lourdes.

As a result of spending all our time together, the thirty-odd young people were singing and having fun together in no time at all. This, I feel, was in a large part thanks to the very talented musicians we had with us, who brought their musical instruments to play at services and also to relax during our down time.



The pilgrimage volunteers we met during our time there were amazing. I was mostly helping at the Accueil Notre Dame, so I got the chance to get to know the hospital team.

The staff and volunteers were so dedicated and such genuinely compassionate people who clearly loved what they were doing, and their enthusiasm was infectious. One of the volunteers, Tony, was telling me Lourdes was the only place you saw people cleaning with a smile on their face and, by the end of the week, even I was an example of this!

The Assisted Pilgrims I got to meet throughout the pilgrimage were all so lovely. All of us in the youth team were happy to be helping them as best we could, and everyone was dedicated to this task.

I specifically remember one of us, Ellie, came running to the Hospital during one of our rare breaks, after I put up a message in our group chat saying one of the Hospital Assisted Pilgrims was hoping to go out for a few hours. The pure commitment she had to help all the Pilgrims was just beautiful to watch.

James, a member of the Youth Team, told Bishop Mark that his favourite part of the week was the Assisted Pilgrims remembering our names, and I absolutely agree with him. Just knowing that something we did was important

enough for that Assisted Pilgrim to remember us showed how much it meant to them.

What I got from Lourdes this year was the joy of service to others. No matter how exhausting the days were, the satisfaction I received in my soul from being able to help the Assisted Pilgrims, even in the smallest ways, always revitalised me for the next day.

Not once was I frustrated to be getting up so early because I knew my every second in Lourdes counted for something and helped someone. For me, this is the reason I would like to keep taking part in our diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Angel Ann Cyriac



Adoration

I gazed upon my Lord
And watched in silence deep,
My mind without a word
The loving watch to keep.

No form I saw, nor face
Distracting mind and eye,
Yet in this holy place
He bade me clear, draw nigh.

Stray thoughts ran through my mind
Of life, of dreams, of fears,
Well-formed or undefined
With laughter, sighs or tears.

I offered him these things
In pleading hope and trust,
Whatever future brings
To meet with faith robust.

I felt acceptance, love,
Received his blessing given
Descending from above,
A touch so brief of heaven.

Mark Howitt: St Gabriel's, Alsager

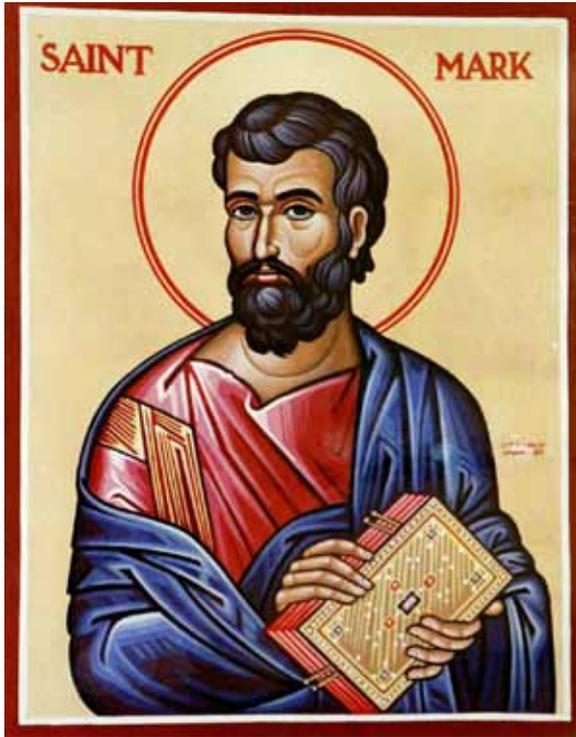
Bishop Mark's visit to St Winefride's Parish



On the 11th June Bishop Mark visited St Winefride's parish, Sandbach. He concelebrated Masses with Fr Morton and Reverend Michael and met parishioners.

The Mind of Mark

A Reading for Year B of the Lectionary



In the best detective stories, the reader is given all the clues, but fails to spot the murderer. This is because we fail to see the complete pattern and all the connections.

Familiarity is also a great dampener of critical appraisal, because, if we are used to things, we tend to accept them without much question. Critical thought is something that challenges our preconceptions, whatever they may be; and even sacred texts should not be considered exempt from its probing.

St Mark's Gospel begins with an infusion of good energy, worked out in healings and lives restored. Mark, in the beginning, has no account of the birth or the origins of Jesus, like the other three Gospels.

His narrative begins simply with a title - 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' [Mk 1, 1]. And the story is told as if from elsewhere. Into the landscape of the imagination in the desert of Judah and the river Jordan comes a series of voices: the voice of the Prophet, the voice of the Baptist, and the voice from heaven.

Then Jesus himself speaks, and makes his declaration that the time has arrived,

the Kingdom is near you, repent and believe the Gospel. And so the story begins, as Jesus is driven into the desert and his temptation.

In every good story, there is something that is known and something that is unknown. The author plays hide-and-seek with the truth. St Mark's Gospel is a pre-orthodox Christian book, which tells us things that have to be remembered.

Sometimes Jesus conceals his identity as the Son of God, but sometimes he displays important truths. We will read a book, if we have been told something, but not everything.

The writer juggles ignorance and knowledge, and we wonder what he will display next. From the point of view of theology, this can be confusing; but from the point of view of narrative, it is essential. In the same way, the scene is sometimes set in wild places (the desert and the river Jordan), and sometimes in places of culture - the synagogue, Galilee and Jerusalem.

The sense that we make of the world is pretty precarious - we live on the edge of the wilderness. We may feel secure; but an unexpected illness or misfortune could happen; or a weekend in the hands of the secret police or Special Branch could change things drastically.

In St Mark too, the sick, the insane and lepers are around and about on the street all the time, as a threatening presence. At the beginning of the Gospel, the Old Testament gets the narrative going, and John the baptist takes it up.

When the Gospel was first read (aloud), everyone would have known the Old Testament far better than we do now. And they were eager for intelligent entertainment and stimulation (which is why we still read the Gospel aloud at Mass, rather than just give out the printed text. There is a real 'truth of presentation').

The narrative progression of the Old Testament is that the Jewish people leave Egypt, journey through the wilderness, cross the Jordan river, enter Judea and go up to build Jerusalem. If you reverse this, then you have the beginning of St Mark: the people leave Jerusalem and Judaea, cross the river and return to the wilderness. When Jesus crosses the river, the heavens are torn open, and the Holy Spirit descends, for religious power was always seen to be strongest at crossings or rites of passage (as it still is).

Thus, the story begins where a Christian's life begins, which is at Baptism (and not, where you might expect, at birth, as St Matthew has it). And there are many examples of rites of passage - or crossings over, for religious power is strongest at these times of transition.

But in the end, the whole story written by our anonymous scribe revolves round a kind of riddle. The solution to the riddle will be Christ himself, as his identity is made manifest. He is shown to be David's Lord by what he has done with the bread.

The loaves are numbered as twelve at the feeding of the 5000, with seven baskets of pieces left over. Seven is a gentile number, twelve (the tribes of Israel) a Judaic number, and five is the number of books in the Torah. Jesus has become more than David (Psalm 110, 1-2); he has gone beyond the Torah and Judaism; there is now just one bread, Christ himself (Mk 14,22): 'Take and eat, for this is my body.' If you follow the story, you will find the solution in the mind of Mark.

The hearer or reader has to become immersed in the story: parable, miracle and Passion - for they all have one purpose, which is revelation. Or else you will remain as the disciples were at first: 'Because they did not understand about the bread, their hearts were hardened.' (6, 52) This verse is the key to the entire Gospel.

**Fr Michael Morton:
St Winefride's, Sandbach**

Hearts on fire, Feet on the move

World Mission Sunday Theme 2023

'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today!' (Mt 21:28-32)

The Universal Church keeps the month of October as Missionary Month. For this year's theme (2023), 'Hearts on fire, feet on the move,' (cf. Lk 24:13-35), Pope Francis makes reference to the disciples on the road to Emmaus after the Lord's resurrection, their hearts on fire 'while He opened the scriptures to us.' The Word of God enlightens and transforms the heart within the mission.

In his message for World Mission Sunday (WMD), the Holy Father Pope Francis says: 'Today, as then, the Risen Lord remains close to His missionary disciples and walks beside them, particularly when they feel disoriented, discouraged, fearful of the mystery of iniquity that surrounds them and seeks to overwhelm them.'

The Lord is greater than all our problems, above all, if we encounter them in our mission of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. For in the end, this mission is His and we are nothing more than His humble co-workers, 'useless servants' (cf. Lk 17:10).'

In the Gospel, the Lord Jesus draws our attention to doing God's will and to the struggle with oneself. The son, who says 'no' to his father, but carries out the task, is better than the one who says 'yes', but disobeys. For a human being worthy of the name is judged by his actions, not by his changing intentions. Indeed, faith is more an 'acting right' than a 'thinking right'. With these words, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today', Jesus invites us, through mission, to be a Church that welcomes sinners who have been touched by conversion.

Also, a Church that invites everyone to work in the Lord's vineyard! This year, Pope Francis gave a series of catecheses on an urgent and decisive theme for Christian life: the passion for evangelization; in other words, apostolic zeal. It is a vital dimension for the Church: the community of Jesus's disciples was in fact born apostolic, born missionary. Without apostolic zeal, faith withers.

Mission, on the other hand, is the oxygen of Christian life: it invigorates and purifies it. During Missionary Month, let us embark, then, on a process of rediscovering the evangelizing passion, starting with the Scriptures and the Church's teaching, to draw apostolic zeal from its sources.

Then, let us get closer to some witnesses who have reawakened the passion for the Gospel within the Church, like Therese of the Child Jesus, Francis of Assisi, John XXIII, John-Paul II, so that they may help us rekindle the fire that the Holy Spirit wants to keep burning within us.

I, as Diocesan Director for Shrewsbury Diocese for Missio, The Association of the Propagation of the Faith (APF), was one of twenty-four participants from four continents who came together for a four-day course for Missio Diocesan Directors at CIAM's centre in Rome on the 24th -28th September, (Centro Internazionale di Animazione Missionaria).

The course was designed to further participants' knowledge of the workings of Missio, The Holy Childhood, St Peter the Apostle and Pontifical Missionary Union, and the founders and founding of each of the pontifical societies. Fr

Dinh Anh Nguh Nguhen from Vietnam is Secretary General of the Pontifical Mission Union (PMU) and director of CIAM, and he steered us through the four days of reflection, tours of Propaganda Fide offices assisted by Fr Tony Chantry, director of Missio UK, and Sister Roberta Tremarelli, Secretary General of The Holy Childhood.

We were privileged to make visits to libraries and archives of the offices of the Propagation of the Faith, as well as a number of seminaries and institutes of further learning. It was an eye-opening and captivating experience, giving us time to visit St Peter's Basilica and to take in the usual religious sites in Rome's Capital. We have been truly inspired to honour Pope Francis's theme for World Mission Month: 'Hearts on Fire, Feet on the Move' as we return to our respective ministries, in the four continents from which we came, as we re-join Christians, to evangelise a broken world.

For more information, please go to Missio.org.uk and missiontogether.org.uk

**Fr Tony Grace:
St Gabriel's and St Anne's**

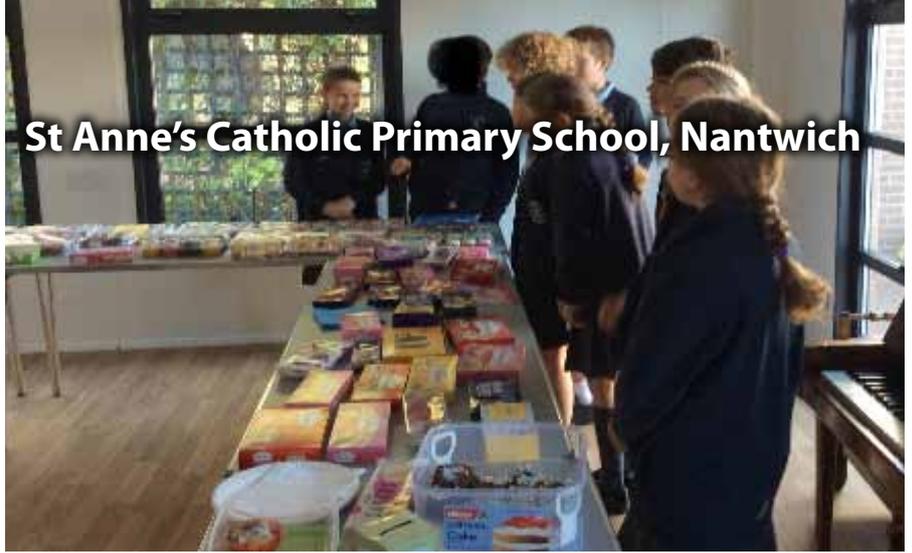


This was the Church of the Three Magi where St John Henry Newman was ordained on the 30 May 1847 in the Propaganda Fide pontifical seminary founded by Pope Urban VIII over 400 years ago. Fr Ambose (front row, far left) is rector of 200 seminarians in Uganda and is preparing the future missionaries of Africa.

School Reports



St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Nantwich



St Anne's Call to Serve

'God is faithful, he has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.' (1 Corinthians 1:9)

God is faithful to us all, and He calls each and every one of us to eternal life with Him in heaven. Through His son Jesus, we know how to live and how to love each other, and God calls us into this special relationship with Him through Jesus. It is through this fellowship with His Son, that we can answer God's call.

We have been blessed with so many opportunities to serve God during this first half term here at St Anne's Catholic Primary School. We have opened our ears and our hearts to God's call and reached out to those who need our help - in the local community, the country and across the world.

St Anne's Mission Day

'Christ at the heart of all we do' is at the centre of St Anne's, and we strive to live out this message every day.

We took part in a special 'Mission Day' this half term where we celebrated our St Anne's Mission Statement and we reflected upon how we can best live out the St Anne's values and thus serve God and others.

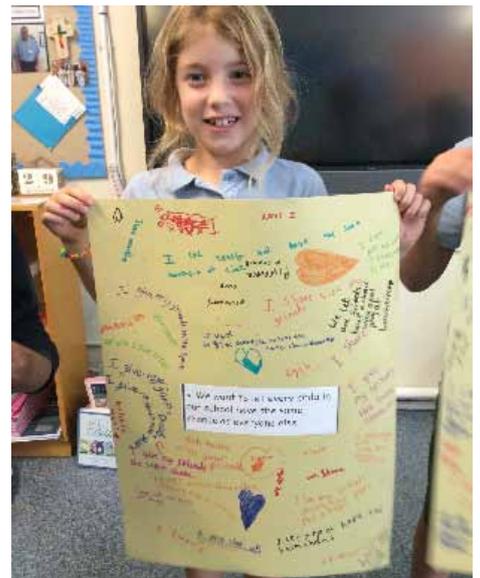
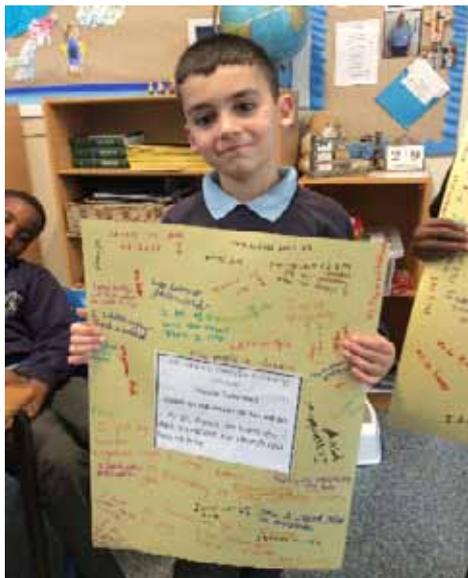
As a school community, we spent time creating pieces of art, prayers and class promises to represent our mission as one community here at St Anne's.

Macmillan Coffee Morning

We began our fundraising journey this year with a special coffee morning to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support. Children across the whole school donated cakes to sell to parents, children, the parish and the local community.

We held the cake sale in our new community hub. Lots of families,

parents and local residents joined us for a wonderful morning of tea, coffee and cake - even games too! Our Year 6 children, who are working hard towards their Faith in Action Pin Award, served drinks, cakes and led the games. We are incredibly proud to have raised over £330 to support a charity so close to many of our hearts at St Anne's.



CAFOD Family Fast 'Pyjama Day'

Our staff and pupils at St Anne's are incredibly passionate about the words of the Holy Father in his encyclical, **Fratelli Tutti**, in which he reminds us of the words of St Francis, who called for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance.

In our response to God's call to serve, St Anne's showed our dedication to the Holy Father's message through our CAFOD fundraising. As part of CAFOD'S Family Fast Day, we raised money by



hosting a 'pyjama day' in school! Children and staff gave a donation to CAFOD and wore their pyjamas to school. We raised

over £370 towards to work of CAFOD to support our global neighbour.

'Wear Yellow for Mental Health Day'

Raising awareness is just as important as raising money, and we are proud to have joined schools and organisations across the country to raise awareness for World Mental Health Day.

St Anne's 'blue' was replaced for the day by a wash of yellow! By wearing yellow, children, staff and parents showed their solidarity and support for those in need.

Jesus showed love and compassion to everyone he met, and we too follow in his footsteps by recognising that we can help anyone in need.



Serving Others in School

Our Year 6 pupils have begun their Faith in Action this year. They aim to achieve their 'Pin Level Award' through recording the ways they live out their faith in school and the local community.

So far this year, our pupils have led a whole school Mass, supported the cake sale, organised an upcoming litter pick, and led a whole school assembly. We are

excited to see where their faith in action takes them this year.

Our pupils have been busy presenting to the whole school throughout the half term. Year 6 led an assembly all about what it means to be a good friend, and Year 5 talked to the whole school all about helping all those we meet.

Our wonderful parish priest, Fr Tony, joined us to celebrate the work of

Mission Together. Children helping children is our special mission from Jesus.

God calls us into a fellowship with His son and Pope Francis appeals for peace and fraternity; through our acts of service, we share in the devotion and trust in God of our patron saint, Anne, and through our acts of service, we mirror our servant king, Jesus.

Emma Catchpole: Deputy Head

St Anne's Community Hub

In September 2022, the St Anne's community was overjoyed to finally open the new community hub on the school site. It has been a fantastic addition to the school and wider Parish which will be used by the children and community for years to come.

Throughout the school day, the community hub is used by the children of St Anne's. It is a fantastic space, and has been thoroughly welcomed by teachers, staff and children.

The children take part in music lessons, art classes, dance classes, drama activities and use it for many other educational purposes. St Anne's also use the hub for fundraising events such as Macmillan Coffee morning and for their annual scholastic book fair.

The community has also benefitted greatly from the hub. Members of the Parish and community have been able to hire it out for birthday parties, baptism parties, knitting groups, evening dance classes, scout meeting, SVP meetings



and many more. St Anne's have received some lovely feedback on the facilities of the community hub. If you have a special occasion coming up and would like

to hire out St Anne's community hub, please access the booking website on <https://hallbookingonline.com/stanne/>

Platinum Play at St Anne's!

St Anne's have developed their play offer over the last two years and are delighted to have achieved the highest OPAL award, Platinum! We are the only school in the local area who have achieved this award.

OPAL stands for Outside Play and Learning and the programme has revolutionised the way our children play at St Anne's! Playtimes are now a place of creative expression where every child is supported by knowledgeable staff to endlessly create and challenge themselves.

OPAL has changed our whole school life! It's a joy to see the children at play; rolling in the tyres, building dens, dressing up, pushing each other in wheelbarrows, climbing inside a suitcase or racing past on a scooter.

From wheelbarrows, buggies, scooters, water play, swings and tyres to tree climbing, den building, mud baths and so much more – our children are totally immersed in play.

The introduction of OPAL has had such great benefits for all children and staff. Children are encouraged to risk benefit in play, explore new realms, challenge themselves and enjoy all aspects of play.

Play is crucial to the health and wellbeing of children and OPAL supports this wonderfully at St Anne's.

Our pupils are so excited about OPAL and can't wait to play every day. One pupil said, "Play time at St Anne's is so good! We have so much to do and so much to choose from. We know how

to risk benefit and make informed decisions. I love to climb trees in the forest and have suit case races!"

We are so proud of our platinum award and our play offer at St Anne's.

"We are absolutely delighted to achieve the OPAL Platinum Award. I am so proud of the pupils, staff team and community for working (and playing) so hard to achieve this award over the past 2 years. We have totally transformed the quality of our play provision and it is wonderful to have this recognised. We are very much looking forward to continuing to develop our OPAL provision; to provide the best play experiences for the children here at St. Anne's." Nuala Ferguson (HeadTeacher)



'Let Creation Sing'

On Wednesday 11th October, we celebrated all of God's creations with One Life Music. The whole school joined together to celebrate God's gifts in the 'Let Creation Sing' retreat day. Taking its inspiration from Pope Francis's letter 'Laudato Si', the retreat was a day of celebration and thanks for all of God's creation.

Through music, sharing, prayer and activities, the children gave thanks and celebrated the beauty, wonder and the glory of creation. Our day started with a collective worship, where we were led in song and prayer by Dan and Emily. The children learnt new songs and prayers which added reverence to the day.



Mission Day 2023

On Monday 18th September, as a whole school we took part in our first Mission Day. This was an opportunity for us to celebrate the lives of our four house saints: St Teresa, St Mary, St Joseph and St Oscar Romero.

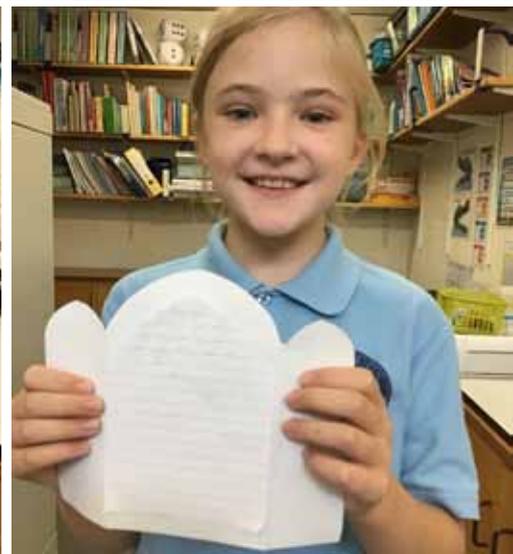
This day was launched with us being joined by Fr Tony and Deacon Eddie, who shared the Holy Eucharist with us during Mass.

Each class took part in a range of activities to look deeper into the lives of our saints and gain a better understanding of the work undertaken by them during their lives, as well as why we have chosen them for our school.

Activities ranged from creative artwork to the writing of poems and prayers, as well as drama scenes being acted out and hymns being sung.

At the end of the day, we finished our day of reflection with a special assembly, where each class presented their beautiful, finished activities from the day. We also shared with our school our special tag line for the year: 'Be Kind Anyway', taken from St Teresa's prayer, 'Do It Anyway'.

It was a wonderful day, full of love and prayers for our very special house saints,



CAFOD – Catholic Social Teaching

On Monday 25th September and Tuesday 26th September, we welcomed Phil Mayland, a volunteer from CAFOD, to deliver a whole school assembly about the work of CAFOD and Catholic Social Teaching workshops to each class.

This was an opportunity for each class to explore the nine Catholic Social Teaching Principles that underpin our curriculum, and to delve deeper into the principle for their class for this term.

The children were all thoroughly engaged in the workshops, which have allowed them to understand the importance of living out the Catholic Social Principles in our daily lives.

Mrs Claire Stevenson:
Deputy Headteacher



School Reports St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crewe

Success in OFSTED Inspection



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School received a 'Good' OFSTED inspection rating under the new framework. This incredible achievement is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the exceptional staff, as well as the remarkable attitude, progress and behaviour of the pupils.

The Inspectors recognised several outstanding aspects, including exceptional pastoral support and care for the children with special educational needs.

Head Teacher, Mrs Wright expressed her pride and delight in the school's

achievement, stating, 'We are absolutely thrilled with the Good judgement in all areas by OFSTED, and this is a result of the amazing efforts of our staff and pupils.'

This achievement reflects our commitment to providing a nurturing and ambitious learning environment, where every child can thrive.'

Mrs Wright further acknowledged the hard work of the entire school community, saying, 'Our success would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of our incredible

staff, who go above and beyond to inspire and support our children.'

We are immensely grateful for the support and trust of our parents, whose engagement plays an important role in fostering a positive and inclusive school community.'

Congratulations to St Mary's Catholic Primary School! For the full report, please visit the school's website.

<https://stmaryscrewe.co.uk/ofsted-pupil-premium-pe-and-re-reporting/>

Sweet Success at the Macmillan Coffee Afternoon

On Friday 22nd September, St Mary's Catholic Primary school welcomed families into school for an enjoyable Macmillan coffee afternoon to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

The day before the event, the children had a non-uniform day and came to school dressed in their own clothes in exchange for bringing cakes and biscuits into school.

It was a very successful event, where families enjoyed cake and refreshments with the children and generously made donations. Members of the school council took on a prominent role in organising the many cakes across the school, as well as helping collect the donations.

In total, the school raised £843.74, contributing to the important work of Macmillan.



Embracing Peace on Peace Day

The 21st September marked a day of reflection and unity at St Mary's as they celebrated Peace Day. The pupils explored the meaning of peace in their own lives, the community and the wider world.

The children took part in a variety of peace-related activities, from thoughtful discussions about resolving conflicts to creating peace-themed art work.



Year 3 children enjoying peace day activities and writing their own personal messages of peace.



A dove collage made by children in lower Key Stage 2.

The children put their creativity to work and produced some beautiful art work that depicted their vision of peace. Vibrant colours, symbols of doves, and heartfelt messages were all

a reminder of the importance of peace. The children embraced the spirit of harmony, kindness and understanding across the school.

Shining a Light on World Mental Health Day

The 10th of October was a day of awareness and compassion, as children came to school wearing something yellow to mark World Mental Health Day. The theme, 'Make mental health and wellbeing for all a global priority' inspired meaningful discussions and activities throughout the day.

The whole school community affirmed their commitment to promoting mental health as an essential part of the school's mission of 'Working Together through Faith and Education'.

Children in Early Years had a wonderful time in the school's beautiful woodland 'Shady Hollow', and did a spot of Forest Bathing! The children explored their feelings whilst surrounded by nature. They reported that the experience made them feel relaxed, happy and good.

Children in Year 2 enjoyed finding out about mental health and wellbeing. The children listened to the story 'Breathe and Be' by Katie Coombs, and relaxed to some soothing music to help create a calm and peaceful space. Then, using a range of materials, the children created their own 'Forest of Calm' picture collages, and finished the day with some breathing activities.



Reception children enjoying Forest Bathing.



A Harmonious performance at Sandbach Town Hall

Music has the power to bring people together, and on the 4th October, members of the choir did just that. Under the guidance of talented choirmaster Mr Plant, and featuring four exceptional members of the choir, the pupils took centre stage at Sandbach Town Hall.

They captivated the audience with a repertoire of peace-themed songs. This special performance was a recognition of the school's outstanding work in welcoming and supporting Afghan refugees into the school community.

The choir members sang beautifully, symbolising the unity and compassion that defines St Mary's school community. It displayed how the school comes together, regardless



of background or origins, to create something truly special.

The performance at Sandbach Town Hall was more than just a musical event - it was a celebration of hope and unity in diversity.



Mr Plant and members of the school choir.

Outstanding Results

St Thomas More Catholic High School pupils and staff enjoyed exceptional GCSE results this summer. We are so proud of our staff, pupils and parents for their commitment to academic learning, and we celebrate all the personal journeys of success from our Year 11 cohort.

The results gave a Progress score of 0.63, which means on average our pupils achieved over a half a grade better per subject per pupil than the national average. This score was the best

progress score in all of Cheshire East and the second best score in the whole of Cheshire. Our success extended to those pupils who face some barriers to learning, whose progress score was also the best in the county.

Our English team secured outstanding results, coming first in Cheshire East for top results for girls and second in Cheshire East for top results for boys. Our Maths team made significant gains in results and RE, Geography, History, Art, PE, Science and Business Studies all achieved outstanding progress scores.

All other departments were delighted with their attainment results and their contribution to the personal development and love of learning of all our pupils.

We move into 2023-2024 with huge celebrations of our past achievements, and a determination to ensure that our children continue to enjoy the best possible opportunities in their journeys forward. Each child is known and cherished as we nurture their God-given gifts and talents.

The Dignity of Work and Education

On Wednesday 4th October, our wonderful Year 8 pupils had a very busy day out and about in Crewe with a strong focus on Catholic Social Teachings.

The Dignity of Work and Education aspect of our fundamental school values was explored with a trip to South Cheshire College, where some fantastic tour guides led teams of our Year 8 pupils around the college to explore what courses are on offer and to inspire conversations about future prospects and potential GCSE options.

The tours were really varied, depending on what was happening at that particular of time of day. Some pupils were able to watch some bricklaying and car repairs taking place in real time; others were shown practical areas such as the college's medical and healthcare practice ward and airplane simulator; and some of our pupils were even lucky enough to be invited to watch an A-Level dance rehearsal in the college theatre.

The second visit of the day had a spiritual focus, with all Year 8 pupils walking to St Mary's church, along with a visit to the adjacent Caritas centre.

The visit offered pupils the opportunity to explore and become familiar with the parish church for Crewe. Deacon Peter Lafferty and Mrs Kilkeny led presentations where they explained the history and specific features of the church.



Pupils were offered an opportunity to light votive candles for their prayer intentions at the end of the presentation.

Following their visit to the church, pupils and staff went to the Caritas centre. Here pupils began planning for the Year 8 charity, St Luke's Hospice, in line with our school commitment to helping the poor

and vulnerable. We hope to have many more opportunities throughout the year for pupils and staff to attend both St Mary's church and the Caritas centre.

Both the staff at the college and the church were delighted to meet Year 8, and commented on how excellent they were on both trips. Well done, Year 8!



The Year 11 Mission Team

The Year 11 Mission Team have been working hard this Rosary term on many different projects. They began by supporting our Open Evening. However, they wanted a project which they owned and lead themselves, so they decided on Remembrance Day; in school this will be November 10th.

The team are planning a two minute silence, led by Lewis who will play the last post on the trumpet. They will gather all form reps to the Peace garden, and the whole school will stand and mark the occasion. They are then planning lunch-

time activities to raise funds for the Royal British Legion, including a poetry competition. The Mission Team are also working on a side project on how to promote our Building the Kingdom which weaves throughout our school day and our Catholic Social Teachings. They are being very resourceful and are exploring multi-media tools for this task.

This group of pupils are real leaders, and are outwardly showing their faith and desire to ensure all our school and community understand and take part in spiritual formation.

Macmillan Coffee Morning

On Friday 29th September, the Faith in Action team hosted a Macmillan Coffee Morning.

Pupils donated many cakes and biscuits to be shared by the school community. The whole school community came to take part, with each year group having a time slot to join in and choose a cake and juice.

This event raised a fantastic £426.24 for the Macmillan appeal.

It was inspiring to see so much kindness, fun and laughter in the school hall.

This was a heart warming example of Catholic Social Teaching being lived.

Saint Thomas More community stood in solidarity to ensure the human dignity of those in our community who are suffering.



Family Mass

On Wednesday 11th October, we welcomed the families of our year 7 pupils to our Family Mass. It was a lovely evening, with our pupils showcasing their talents in singing and public speaking. This was the final stage of their transition and of building our Year 7 family. There was a great atmosphere of calm and belonging.

This year pupils and staff walked from St Thomas More school to St Mary's Catholic Church in Crewe, where our mass was held. Despite the rain, our pupils walked in a quiet, respectful manner, and the weather did not dampen their spirits for Mass.

We are very proud of our Year 7s and feel blessed to have them with us at St Thomas More.



Inset day October 2023

How wonderful that our schools were able to have a shared Inset Day in October. St Mary's and St Thomas More joined together to collaborate on Catholic Social Teachings and Curriculum planning.

At two o'clock, St Anne's and St Gabriel's also joined us for a shared mass at St Mary's in Crewe, celebrated by Fr Nick. All our staff came together in prayer and worship, and were refreshed and filled with the spirit for our Advent term ahead.



Conway Residential

On Wednesday 4th October, 120 Year 7 pupils and ten members of staff boarded two buses and headed off to Wales. We were on our way to the Conway Centre to spend three days together, taking part in team-building activities and creating a form Family Tree for our Family Mass. The day started cold, but by the time we arrived, the sun was out to greet us.



We then split into three groups. One group began the team-building exercises. This involved low ropes, communication tasks and trust-building activities.

The second group went with their forms to start working on a Family Tree to represent them, which is now displayed in our form rooms.

The third group did a range of activities, from canoeing to mountain biking.

Once our activities were done, pupils discovered their dorm rooms, and went there to get ready for their evening fun, which involved board games and BINGO!

The following morning, we completed some more of our form Family Trees and our outdoor activities. We spent the evening at DJ Eaton's St Thomas More Famous Disco. Pupils also had the chance to play some more board games and go on a night-time walk.



On our final morning, while waiting for the coaches, we spent our time reflecting on our experience at Conway,

and how we had grown as a year group from this fantastic opportunity. Both

staff and pupils had a great time, and all are full of entertaining stories!

Careers Opportunities at St Thomas More in the Rosary Term

As we start the new academic year, we continue to develop our careers programme here at St Thomas More. With the support of The Crewe & Nantwich Pledge and Cheshire College South & West, pupils throughout our school have been able to develop their understanding of the opportunities available to them once they leave our school.

Year 8 - Visit to the College

Year 8 spent half a day visiting Cheshire College South & West. The purpose of the visit was to support them in developing their understanding of the courses and routes available to them after their GCSE exams. As they will need to start thinking about options and beginning their GCSE courses in the next few years, a stronger understanding of where these options will take them will support them in making strong and informed decisions.

Year 9 – Higher Horizons

Higher Horizons came into school for a day to deliver two sessions supporting Year 9 pupils with developing their understanding of post-16 choices.

They were given an introduction to the different types of courses and qualifications that can be studied after their GCSEs, as well as the general requirements needed to access these courses. They were also given an introduction to attending University, in order to raise aspirations and goals.

Year 10 – Crewe Careers Fair

After the successful introduction of 'The Pledge Crewe Careers Fair' last year, Year 10 were taken to this year's even bigger event. At the Fair were local Higher and Further education establishments, as well as a range of training providers and employers. Having so many different contributors in one room gave the pupils easy opportunities to gather information and contact details which could support their post-16 options or even their work experience placements later in the year.

Year 11 – Careers Interviews

Our Careers advisor, Mrs Snee, has started this year by meeting our Year 11 pupils. These conversations have been undertaken to support the pupils in making applications to post-16 courses, as well as supporting them in achieving their



future aspirations. As course applications start opening throughout this term, Mrs Snee will be available for further appointments to support this process.

Year 11 – Pledge Explore Group

After the successful implementation of this programme last year, a further 10 Year 11 pupils have been selected to join the Pledge Explore group. The aim of the programme is to ensure that these pupils have a clearer understanding of the areas available to them after high school, through visits and interactions

with different providers. The first visit was to Crewe Hall, looking at the leisure industry and all that it has to offer.

The group visited the departments for maintenance, housekeeping, event planning, hospitality, kitchens, leisure and management. With some great first-hand stories of the career progression from this industry, as well as the additional perks of the job, the pupils' eyes were opened to the opportunities available to them in their local area.



German Exchange 2023

St Thomas More pupils had an amazing trip to Bavaria in July 2023, as part of the German Exchange.

This year, the pairings were incredibly successful and many life-long friendships were formed. In Germany pupils got to experience time in Frankfurt, Würzburg, as well as spending some time in our partner German school.

In September, our German partners stayed with us in Crewe. They also had a day in school and enjoyed trips to Liverpool, Chester, Nantwich and Styal Mill.

Over the weekend our German guests were entertained by their partners; some even went down to London, to Manchester, Alton Towers and other local attractions.

On their last day, all those involved in the Exchange (staff, parents and pupils) met at Crewe Market Hall, for something to eat and even some speeches by the pupils.



Parish Mass Times



Alsager - St Gabriel's:

Sunday (Sat 6:30pm), 11:30am
Holy Days As announced
Weekdays Mon 7:30pm (Exposition 7pm)
 Fri 10am Mass (Exposition 9:30am),
 10:30am Rosary

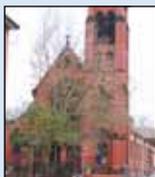
Deacon: Rev Eddie Miller
Contact: Fr Tony Grace, St Gabriel's Church
 Lawton Rd, Alsager ST7 2DE
 01270 877736 or 01270 625494



Nantwich - St Anne's:

Sunday (Sat 5pm), 9:30am
Holy Days As announced
Weekdays Tues & Thurs 10am Mass
Deacon: Rev Peter Mascarenhas
 Rev John Penny

Contact: Fr Tony Grace, St Anne's Church
 Pillory St, Nantwich CW5 6SS
 01270 625494 or 01270 877736



Crewe - St Mary's:

Sunday (Sat 12pm, 5:30pm, & 7pm (Polish));
 9am, 11am, & 12:45pm (Polish)
Holy Days 12 noon, 6pm (Polish), & 7:30pm
Weekdays Tues 7pm, Wed & Thurs 12 noon
 Fri 12 noon followed by adoration
 of the Blessed Sacrament until 4pm

Deacon: Rev Peter Lafferty
Contact: Fr Nicholas Kern,
 St Mary of the Immaculate Church
 13 Gatefield St, Crewe CW1 2JP
 01270 212533



Sandbach - St Winefride's:

Sunday (Sat 6:30pm) 9am, 10:30am
Holy Days 7:30pm
Weekdays Wed & Fri 12 noon
Deacon: Rev Mike Birchall

Contact: Fr Michael Morton,
 St Winefride's Church
 Middlewich Rd, Sandbach CW11 1HU
 01270 762198

