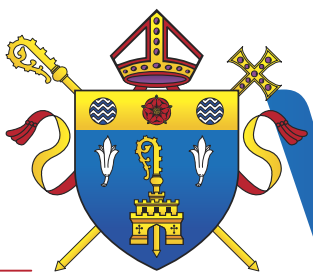


The Catholic



VOICE

of Lancaster

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The Official Newspaper to  
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 375 + December '25

INSIDE: Story & pictures on page 3  
St Joseph's & St Peter's Ukulele  
Orchestra Christmas Carol  
Charity CD Launch



# Christmas Blessings

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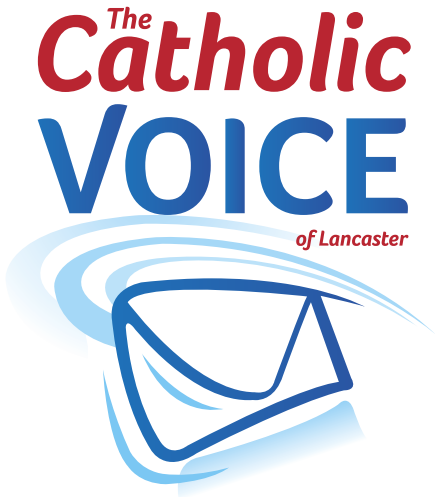
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**I**t's the end of the year, the last month. Up here in the northern hemisphere these days are more full of darkness than light, and the sun – when it does shine – shines cold. That can be a bit of a puzzle if you are from somewhere warmer, but give it time and it will change.

I can't presume everyone who reads this will be someone full of rock-solid faith. Some may be but some may be struggling for one reason or another.

Likewise, you may have done something special to mark the Diocesan Centenary, or perhaps it passed you by without even a nod. Well, it has happened even if you missed it – or even if it missed you! Likewise with the Jubilee Year of Hope, which will come to an end on 6th January.

It may have made a difference to you or just not quite 'ticked your box'. For others, it may have been a special year, one to look back on as a gift to be treasured. We are all different.

God found a way into our world through the simple 'Yes' of a young girl planning to get married. He nearly ruined her plans

by asking her to give His plans first place. Once in the world He is looking for a way into the life, heart and plans of each of us. Our Centenary celebrations have been about how we are trying to let Him do just that. This Jubilee Year of Hope has been about letting go of our good plans in order that His better plans may succeed – not easy, but we are trying.

Whatever your personal circumstances, may Christ's light and warmth find a way into the poor stable of your heart this Christmas, so that you know He has heard your cry and comes to lift you up.

*May He reassure you that He answers your prayers – even the badly prayed ones and desperate ones – as He knows best, and that even though He seems to take too long to answer, you will not be disappointed with the end result.*

*May the Faith of the Church be there for you when your own personal Faith is just not strong enough, and when you are strong may you share your strength with those who struggle. When you look forward may you know a confident hope because it is given to you by Jesus, and may your life be held close to Him and be*

*led by Him always towards the place He has prepared for those who love Him.*

*When you look back, may your memories – even the dark ones – be filled with His light, and cause you to have no fear of failing.*

*May your loved ones rest safe in His care as this year of Grace ends and a new one begins.*

*May you keep alert, watching for the dawn of His Second Coming, and His New Day.*

*May you be there to share His Victory over sin and death, and have the best rest you've ever known.*

*May the Blessing of the newborn Christ be in your homes this Christmas. May the blessing of the Risen Christ be in your hearts to drive out all darkness.*

*May the blessing of the Christ who is to come again give you the gift of joyful hope for the new year.*

**+Paul Swarbrick**  
Bishop of Lancaster



**Christmas Peace and Blessings of joy to all our readers, contributors, volunteers, deliverers, clergy and parishioners. Thank you for all your support!**

**We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and Blessed New Year in 2026.**

**May the light of the newborn Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, shine in your hearts and your homes this Christmas and always.**

**The Catholic Voice of Lancaster Editorial & Creative Team – Pearl, Fran, Andrew, Rob & Father Stephen Pearson**







The SJP and SP Ukulele Orchestra recreate the Abbey Road famous crossing outside St Joseph's Church, after their rehearsals. (Left) Father Peter Clarke (Right) Ann Zammits.



# Sharing the Christmas Spirit

## St Joseph's & St Peter's Ukulele Orchestra Christmas CD launch

### St Joseph's and St Peter's Ukulele Orchestra bring the Spirit of Christmas alive with new album

**T**he sound of music is alive and well in the parishes of St Joseph's Ansdell and St Peter's Lytham this Christmas as a new Christmas CD with a difference has been recorded and launched for local charities.

The St Joseph's and St Peter's Ukulele Orchestra, together with the angelic voices of the children of the parishes, have recorded a very special Christmas CD filled with beautiful ukulele versions of favourite Christmas carols and classic singalongs. The bespoke Ukulele Christmas CD and tracks have been produced and recorded professionally by local music producer Mark Brocklesby.

SJ and SP Ukulele Orchestra leader Ann Zammits is delighted with the result: "After weeks of rehearsals We have created a beautiful, high quality Christmas themed CD. These are all original recordings of Christmas favourites and classics, but with the twist of our wonderful Ukulele Orchestra playing.

We also have a track with our lovely solo vocalist Lise Cross, who performs a stunning version of 'What Child Is This' accompanied by Ed Shakespeare on flute, in an enchanting medieval style.

Other classic favourites on the new album includes Jingle Bells, Silent Night and We Wish You A Merry Christmas. It's the perfect stocking filler and really

enjoyable to listen to over Christmas time. I am grateful to everyone who took part and got involved, not only has it been great fun to record and organise but we really did share the Christmas spirit and feelgood factor!

We will be performing in various venues & events over Christmas to raise money for two local charities, StreetLife and Brian's House Children's Hospice, so look out for us.

The Ukulele Christmas Album CD is £5.00 and can be purchased at St Joseph's Ansdell and St Peter's RC Church Lytham, after mass, or you can download a copy if you email me: [ann.zammits.me.uk](mailto:ann.zammits.me.uk)

Father Peter Clarke parish priest at St Joseph's Ansdell rehearses every Monday evening with the SJ and SP Ukulele Orchestra: "It's a great social activity between parishioners and we all regard the rehearsal time as a very 'happy hour' each week. The SJ and SP Ukulele Orchestra will be performing at the Christmas Eve 5:30pm Children Mass, where children are encouraged to dress up as Nativity characters. All are welcome to attend."

Should you like to book the SJ and SP Ukulele Orchestra for a parish or social event, or are interested in joining in or to purchase the Christmas CD please contact: **Ann Zammits / [ann.zammits.me.uk](mailto:ann.zammits.me.uk)**

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# Fueling Faith & Fellowship: A Look at the Life of Castlerigg Manor

by Jack Regan



**As the leaves change and the year draws towards its close, the life of faith continues to flourish with energy and purpose at Castlerigg Manor.**

**O**ur mission to serve the young people and families of the diocese through encounter, formation, and fellowship has never been more vibrant.

While our social media feeds are buzzing with photos and stories capturing the laughter, deep prayer, and joyful community of recent weeks, the real stories are etched in the hearts of those who have passed through our doors.

Lately, we've been blessed to host countless individuals and groups for crucial moments of faith formation. From dynamic school retreats that introduce young people to Christ's love in a new way, to dedicated training weekends that equip our leaders for mission, the Manor has been a powerhouse of the

Holy Spirit. We have seen young lives transformed as they step away from the daily noise and embrace a weekend of prayer, reflection, and community, strengthening their relationship with God and with one another.

The energy and commitment we witness—be it in a lively discussion around a bonfire or in quiet adoration in the chapel—is a powerful reminder of the deep hunger for faith among the people of our diocese. This ongoing work forms the bedrock of our ministry, ensuring that the seeds of faith planted today will yield a bountiful harvest tomorrow.

The momentum generated by this recent activity carries us forward, and we are excited to announce an inspiring programme of upcoming events for the rest of the year and into 2026.

## Mark Your Calendars

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

Join us for the next chapter of retreats and formation weekends:

#### Faith & Fitness Weekend

(Women Only, Adults Only) (December 5-7, 2025): Led by Trish Morgan, this unique retreat blends spiritual reflection and physical well-being, focusing on nurturing the whole person—body, mind, and soul.

#### Past Team Retreat

(December 12-14, 2025): An open invitation for past members of the Castlerigg team to return to the Manor for a weekend of reconnection, reflection, and fun.

#### Training Weekend: The Holy Spirit

(January 9-11, 2026): Dive deeper into the life of the Trinity. This in-depth weekend focuses on how we can get closer to the third person of the Trinity and explore the vital part the Holy Spirit plays in our lives and mission.

#### Training Weekend: Theology of the Body

(Feb 6-8, 2026): One of the leading experts on TOB will be coming to Castlerigg to lead a retreat on this important topic.

#### Faith & Fitness Weekend

(Adults Event) (March 13-15, 2026): Trish Morgan returns to lead another invigorating Faith & Fitness retreat for adults. Women only.

#### Training Weekend: Apologetics

(March 20-22, 2026): Our final training weekend of the year will focus on Apologetics—the art and practice of defending your faith and clearly explaining why we believe what we believe.

#### Family Retreat

(March 27-29, 2026): A dedicated retreat for the whole family, including mums, dads, teens, and young children, offering a shared experience of faith and fun. (Please note: family pets, sadly, are not allowed!)

For more information, including booking details for these and other events, please visit the official Castlerigg Manor website at:

[castleriggmanor.com/events](https://castleriggmanor.com/events)

Come and see how a weekend at the Manor can renew your spirit and strengthen your journey of faith now and in the New Year ahead.





(Left) Anne Culkin-Smith - Curator of Crib-Fest. (Top left) A Crib imported from Venezuela.

## O Come All Ye Faithful to Crib-Fest!

**C**ovenant Books, the specialist Catholic Book and Gift shop is hosting a very special Crib-Festival event this Christmas & is inviting people to come along and enjoy and even bring a crib to display as they celebrate the Nativity of the Lord in a creative way.

The eclectic book shop is based at Holy Family Church, Ingol Preston and is warmly welcoming different styles of cribs from all over the world. Covenant Books sells the widest selection of cribs and Catholic themed gifts from all corners of the globe.

It was the idea of manager Anne Culkin-Smith to host a mini Crib Festival celebrating the Christmas nativity in all its creative forms after being inspired by the global collection she has curated.

*"We have so many beautiful styles and cultural variations on the theme of the Nativity and I have hand-picked beautifully crafted Cribs that are unique from all over the world. It is a delight and joy to see so many lovely versions."*

*"I had the idea to hold a special Crib Fest this year, as we have such a lovely and quite distinctive range of bespoke Cribs and Christmas decorations, gifts, candles, cards and calendars from France, Italy and many different countries that I thought we could all gather for a Crib Festival and make a nice display."*

*"We have some Cribs imported from the Monastere de Bethleem in France. The statues are made by the sisters there from crushed Dolomite stone. We import from Europe and the USA. Also have rare finds like a very special crib from Venezuela. If you have an unusual crib from around the world, or even just a special or unique crib, all shapes and sizes, you think would be nice to feature you are welcome to come along and take part and we will add it and feature it in the display."*

*"Please get in touch in advance or pop into the shop and bring your crib and any history and description. It's free to come along and take part. All are welcome to come and see our wonderful variety of Cribs here in the Holy Family Church Parish Hall."*

The dates for Covenant Crib Festival are:  
Every Thursday & Friday starting on 28th November until 20th December from 10am to 4pm. Every Saturday from 30th November until 21st December 10am until 12 noon.

Please contact: Anne Culkin-Smith – 07396 796969 or email: [covenantbookspreston@gmail.com](mailto:covenantbookspreston@gmail.com)  
Visit Covenant Book & Gift Shop at: Holy Family Church, The Pastoral Centre, 34 Whitby Ave, Ingol, Preston, PR2 3YP. Opening times: Thursday–Friday 10am to 4pm; Saturday 10am to 12 noon and Sunday after Mass until 12 noon.

## Christmas Books

Anne has a beautiful variety of Catholic Christmas Books that make great gifts or if you want to boost your spiritual reading over Christmas. Some recommendations & ideas:



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# CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 14th December at 6.30pm | St. Wilfrid's Church Chapel St, Preston PR1 8BU

Led by the choirs of St. Wilfrid's Church including The African Choir, Cardinal Newman College and Our Lady's R.C. High School choirs.

Readings and reflections from St. Wilfrid's Church, Cardinal Newman College staff and Our Lady's R.C. High School staff.



# Jingle All the Way this Advent and Christmas at Cardinal Newman College

**E**ach Christmas, Cardinal Newman College welcomes elderly guests from the local community to attend the annual Christmas party.

They enjoy a traditional Christmas meal prepared by the catering team, musical entertainment from our student band, bingo, a visit from Santa and attentive service from the Business Studies students who organise and host the event. Each guest receives a Christmas hamper which the students raise money to buy, and staff and students deliver hampers to those who are unable to attend in person.

The BTEC Business students also plan and host the Foundation Learning Christmas Party, where students participate in a range of Christmas-themed activities, including bingo, pass the parcel, and "Pin the Nose on Rudolph." Each student takes on a designated organisational role, demonstrating strong teamwork and event management skills.

Throughout the Advent season, students increase their fundraising efforts through a wide variety of events, including sports competitions, bake sales, craft fairs, "teachers dress as students," film screenings, food and toy drives, and physical challenges.

Christmas Jumper Day raises funds for Christian Aid, and students and staff across the college support the Luv Preston Winter Food Drive (which requires a van to collect donations each year), the Metanoia Project at St. Wilfrid's, Mission Christmas, and Emmaus House. Food, gifts and hampers are donated to all of these causes by our generous college community.

The Christmas Tree outside the Chaplaincy is decorated with gift tags each year, each naming a person in need, including children living in emergency family hostels, homeless individuals, and teenage care leavers living independently in supported accommodation.

Students and staff take a tag and buy an appropriate gift, ensuring that the community demonstrates their care for others at Christmas.

The college hosts a number of Carol Concerts, including a concert led by the Music Department and Chaplaincy, and a multicultural Carol Concert led by the Modern Foreign Languages Department, during which students share music and Christmas traditions from around the world.

In addition, the annual Carol Concert at St. Wilfrid's brings together the college choir, the Our Lady's Catholic High School choir, and the St. Wilfrid's African Band. The events foster community spirit, celebrates shared faith and tradition, and raises funds for charitable causes. All are warmly welcome to attend the Christmas Carols concert at St. Wilfred's, Preston on 14 December at 6.30pm.

*Carol Gregson*

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# Corpus Christi Catholic High School rated 'Outstanding' across the board by Ofsted

Corpus Christi Catholic High School is celebrating a landmark achievement following their latest Ofsted inspection, which took place on 8 and 9 July. The final report, published in September, confirms that the school has been rated 'Outstanding' in all areas - a rare and prestigious recognition of excellence. The inspection judged the school as outstanding in the following categories:

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

This full graded inspection followed a highly positive Section 8 inspection in 2024, where Ofsted had already noted that "evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (Section 5) inspection were carried out now." That prediction has now been confirmed.

Inspectors were deeply impressed by the school's provision, describing it with terms such as "extraordinary," "exceptional," and "impressive." The report highlights the staff's deep understanding of how best to support pupils to learn and achieve well, calling it "truly remarkable." Notably, no areas for improvement were identified, and that section was omitted from the final report.

John Hankin was appointed as Headteacher in 2021 and the school has been on a considerable upward trajectory of improvement over recent years.



Mr Hankin commented:

"Our provision and success have been recognised nationally in recent years, and we support many schools across the country. This report is confirmation of the highly effective work carried out by our skilled and committed staff body. However, we are most proud of the way in which all visitors, including the inspectors, describe the conduct and attitudes of our pupils. They are a credit to their parents and carers, and to our school."

**Rachel Edwards**

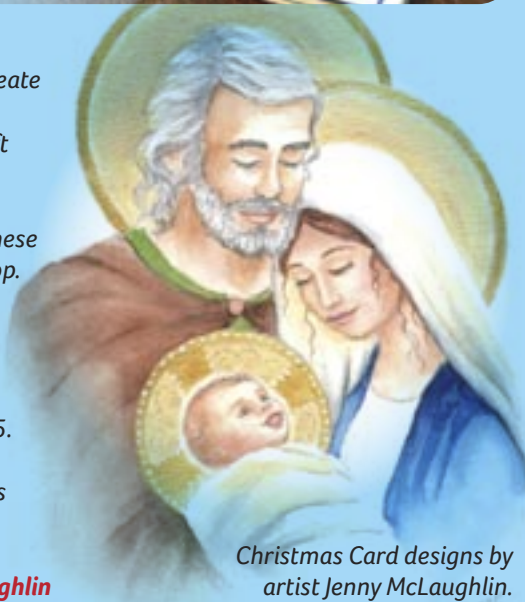
## The First Christmas – Catholic Artist Jenny McLaughlin launches new Christmas Cards

Catholic artist Jenny McLaughlin, based at The Parish of The Guardian Angels, Blackpool has created and designed a heavenly set of beautiful new Catholic Christmas cards.

"The First Christmas design was inspired by a beautiful inspiration I believe I had from Jesus several years ago to create a "make it yourself" nativity set. This was a fun project and I'd always loved Nativity Sets as a child. I'd also enjoyed craft projects and making model theatres too. This special card can be a Nativity circular style or it makes a nice Christmas Decoration, whilst also being a Nativity Set. I always have these available for sale in the lead up to Christmas on my Etsy shop.

I hope the Cards can raise some much needed funds for the Parish and I would like to thank Linda Wisdom for all her hard work making this possible to assist the Parish. There are three different designs available, in two sizes: A6 and A5. They are available at the back of St John Vianney's and St Cuthbert's Churches, Blackpool, after Mass and all proceeds will assist the Parish." For more information visit my blog: [catholicartbyjenny.com.wordpress.com](http://catholicartbyjenny.com.wordpress.com)

**Happy Christmas to all and God Bless, Jenny McLaughlin**



Christmas Card designs by artist Jenny McLaughlin.

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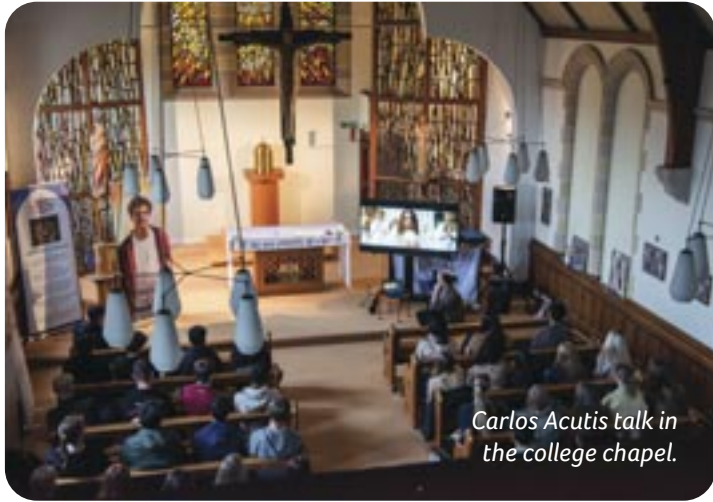
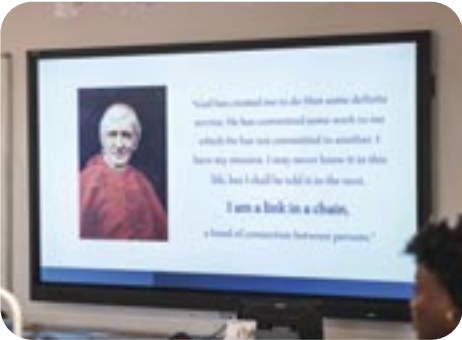
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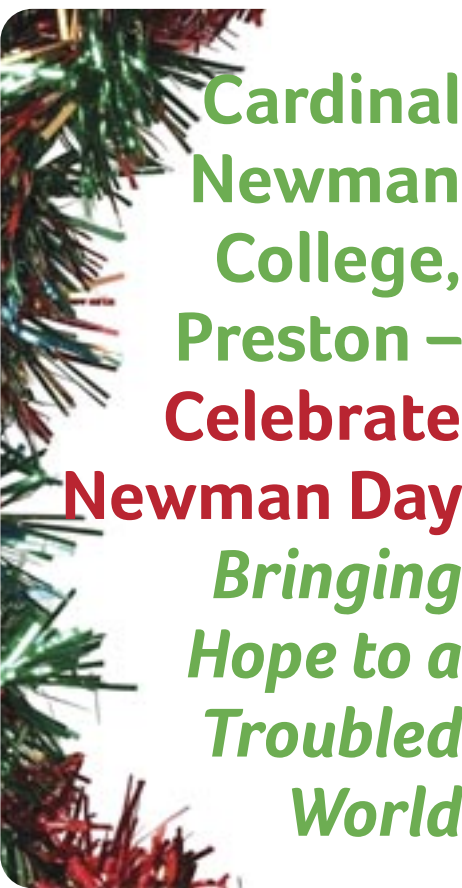
Carlos Acutis talk in the college chapel.



Students signing up to the Anthony Nolan stem cell register.



Students engaged in a 'Mindful Pause' Workshop.



**T**he declaration of St John Henry Newman as co-patron of Catholic education marks a historic moment in the life of the Church, and prompts us once again to ask the question: what distinguishes a Catholic college from its secular counterparts?

Cardinal Newman College, Preston responds to this question by bringing together students, families, clergy as they celebrate Newman Day 2025

To celebrate the Jubilee Year at Cardinal Newman College in Preston, the current Year 13 in May and Year 12 in October, were invited to step beyond the classroom and into a powerful day of reflection, action, and engagement.

Rooted in the College's mission — to “contribute positively to the world in which they live, to challenge injustice and to seek out more co-operative, just and peaceful forms of human existence” — the days, themed Bringing Hope to a Troubled World, resonated deeply as part of the wider Jubilee 2025 celebrations.

Newman Day offered an extraordinary tapestry of workshops and talks from local and national organisations and college staff, each one empowering students to consider their role in shaping a more hopeful and humane future.

**Living the Mission**  
CAFOD reminded students that even in the face of global poverty, every act of compassion counts. Similarly, Christian Aid challenged them to engage in activism around climate, rights, and peace, while CND offered a hands-on campaign workshop — teaching students how to become agents of real social change.

Castlerigg invited students to reflect on their identity and purpose, while Pax Christi led sessions on building peace through human security. The Chemistry Department connected scientific understanding with human connection through their “Link in a Chain” session, inspired by Saint John Henry Newman himself.

**Stories of Struggle and Resilience**  
Workshops from organisations like Recycling Lives, Red Rose Recovery, and THOMAS offered heartfelt testimonies on recovery and transformation. Through these personal stories, students saw the power of hope in overcoming addiction, reoffending, and despair.

Global perspectives also featured prominently. A moving refugee awareness session by Global Link included first-hand stories from Ashkan, a refugee from Iran. Eileen McNamara spoke about marginalised communities in India and the work of Mary's Meals and Sue Lucia Grubic invited students to respond to Pope Francis' call to action in Laudato Si. Each reminded students of the human face of global conflict and injustice.

**Creativity, Compassion and Connection**  
Not all hope is loud. In calmer spaces, students discovered how quiet creativity can heal. Mindful art sessions, origami peace cranes to be sent to Hiroshima,





Students in Chemistry make glue as part of a workshop exemplifying the words of Saint John Henry Newman 'I am a link in a chain'.



Foundation Learning Students enjoy a drumming workshop.



Origami Peace Cranes to be sent to Hiroshima.



A Fairtrade Stall on Newman Day.



Students enjoying The Trading Game.

crochet, and the uplifting “Mindful Pause” room allowed space for emotional well-being and restoration.

The Art Department invited students to create typographic artwork, while the RE Department’s Newman Escape Room encouraged team-building and critical thinking whilst deciphering clues about the college patron. Others explored sign language, The Trading Game, homelessness with Emmaus, or the dignity of restorative justice.

#### Action through Knowledge

Informative sessions from organisations such as Shelter, St Catherine’s Hospice, and Aid to the Church in Need showed how understanding real-world issues — housing, end-of-life care, religious persecution — can lead to tangible change. Workshops on modern slavery, the Lasallian projects, Fairtrade and talks about stem cell donation (with sign-ups at the Anthony Nolan Trust stall who ran out of donation packs, such was the interest from students in joining the stem cell register) added

practical pathways for students to live out their values.

Jacqui from The Carlos Acutis Apostolate, introduced the students to the life and legacy of the ‘Saint in sneakers’, both through his spirituality and The Eucharistic Miracles. Her inspirational testimony offered students a new insight into how they can follow in the footsteps of our first Millennial Saint. And in the spirit of joy and unity, lunchtime saw the campus come alive: student bands created a festival atmosphere, while the Trick Dogs display reminded everyone that sometimes hope looks like laughter and community.

#### Hope as a Verb

Newman Day 2025 wasn’t just a celebration — it was a call to action. In every workshop, the unspoken message was clear: hope is not passive, and it is needed now more than ever. By offering students both the tools and inspiration to live differently, the day brought the mission of the college and the themes of the Jubilee year to life. **Carol Gregson**

#### Reflections from Some of the Visiting Organisations:

“It was a genuine privilege to engage with the lively young minds of Newman College in the course of studying our common heritage. Each one of them was a credit to themselves and those who have helped shape their characters and careers so far- in their courage, in their determination to learn and in their kindness and courtesy. I have no doubt that every one of them will, as the prophet Micah asked “Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God”. – Jeremy Dable, Judaism.

“It was wonderful to see our young people responding creatively to the call of Pope Francis, and daring to dream of a world in which we acknowledge the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth. It really was an amazing day”. – Sue, LF&JC.

“A beautiful, vibrant college offering students the opportunity to engage with and experience so many aspects of life beyond education”. – Mary’s Meals.

“In these times, it’s encouraging to see Cardinal Newman College taking the initiative to engage students in activities that allow them to consider their own values, with a view to turning out a generation of positive, caring members of society”. – Animal Aid.

“Newman Day provides a powerful opportunity for students to have their minds and hearts opened to the lives of so many others, in the community and world. Every student was engaged and seemed open to what they could do to reach out to older people, especially those living with dementia. Thank you. You are an exemplar for other colleges to follow”. – Jimmy O’Donnell, Lancashire Memories.





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Pope Leo XVI  
Greets Deacon  
Stephen Bamber  
at The Vatican.



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**Assisting the  
Holy Father at  
the Proclamation  
of St John Henry  
Newman as  
Doctor of  
the Church**

**O**n Saturday 1 November, I had the great honour of assisting the Holy Father, Pope Leo, at the Mass and Proclamation of St John Henry Newman as Doctor of the Church in St Peter's Square. It was an extraordinary privilege—one that almost didn't come to pass.

Because St John Henry Newman is an English saint, the Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations invited members of the two English Colleges in Rome—the Pontifical Beda College and the Venerable English College—as well as the Pontifical Scots College—to provide deacons and servers for the Mass. Lots were drawn among our ten deacons for the two places assigned to the Beda. My name wasn't drawn in the first round; a little disheartened, I quickly made my peace with it.

Then, on the Monday morning before the Mass, I received a call from Canon Marcus Holden, our new Rector:

*"Excuse me, Stephen, I wonder if you could help me? We've been asked to supply an additional deacon for the Newman Mass. We've drawn another lot, and your name came up. Would you be willing to assist?"*

I didn't need time to think about my response. We had a rehearsal in St Peter's Square on the Friday before the Mass. It was fascinating to witness the finely tuned organisation of a papal liturgy under the careful direction of the Papal Masters of Ceremony. Around forty cardinals were expected, along with hundreds of bishops and concelebrating priests, and thousands of the faithful from all walks of life.

St John Henry Newman is a beloved figure—not only for the Church in England and Wales, but for the Church throughout the world. He grasped the crucial importance of revealed religion in an increasingly secular age, so his words continue to speak with remarkable vitality and relevance today.

On the morning of the Mass, Rome basked in the radiance of an unusually warm autumn day. It felt as though St John Henry Newman and all our

English saints were smiling benevolently upon us. In another historic moment that week, King Charles III had visited Rome—including a visit to the Beda—and prayed alongside Pope Leo in the Sistine Chapel. There was an air of joyful anticipation among all involved: a sense that we were standing at the threshold of a moment of real significance for the Church in England and Wales. We had, quite literally, a front-row seat as history was being made.

Those assisting at the liturgy were privileged to greet the Holy Father beforehand, in front of Michelangelo's sublime Pietà in St Peter's Basilica. When I told him I was with the Diocese of Lancaster, his face lit up as he recalled Bishop Paul's predecessor:

*"Ah yes," he said, "I remember Michael Campbell—he is an Augustinian too!"*

It was a memorable day in so many ways. One of the great highlights was the procession out of the Basilica to the sound of the St Peter's Choir singing the entrance antiphon and looking out over a full St Peter's Square. Ministering as a Deacon of the Altar during the Eucharist, I had the privilege of handling the sacred vessels with the Holy Father and incensing both him and the vast congregation during the preparation of the gifts.

The most moving moment of all came at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. The Holy Father handed me the chalice, which I elevated alongside him as he raised the paten and intoned the great Trinitarian doxology. As the choir's great Amen resounded through St Peter's Square, time itself seemed to stand still. I have never been so present in a liturgy as I was in that moment.

After the dismissal, we processed back up the steps into the timeless beauty of the Basilica. St Peter's was empty, bathed in the golden light of that magnificent autumn morning. I was filled with joy, relief (*that everything had gone smoothly!*), and a profound sense of gratitude. In the stillness of that sacred space, I wondered whether I was in heaven. Perhaps, in some way, I was. *Deacon Stephen Bamber*



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Wendy Craddock  
& Sr Little Rose.

## O Come Let Us Adore Him!

**T**he Sisters of The Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Mary's Church, in Lea Town, Preston are busy promoting a new daily prayer time and Adoration of The Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters are inviting parishioners across the Diocese to spend Christmas in the presence of Jesus, as they launch their weekly Adoration and Prayer time during December.

Their hard work and dedication in promoting this far and wide means they will be hosting this from Monday to Friday in December and into January and all of next year.

Sister Little Rose of the SABS, who originate from Kerala in India is delighted to bring this new opportunity to all in the Diocese and has distributed over 10,000 flyers and posters to all our churches. She is passionate about sharing the love of Jesus to all this Christmas and invites us all to come and visit during this special time.

*"Do you long to hear the Voice of God? St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta reminds us how, for 'In the Silence of the Heart, God speaks. Come and spend time with Jesus with the SABS\* Sisters this Advent and Christmastide!"*

*"He waits for you to come and adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament where He is truly present. He just longs for your company so He can love you, heal your wounds, and pour out His heavenly blessings on you and all your near and dear ones."*

*"Time is never wasted when we adore Jesus. Just like any friendship, it begins with time spent in each others company. Every moment we spend with Jesus brings Him closer to us and we can truly experience the depths of His great love for us and be blessed with true joy and peace in our souls."*

*"Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame"(Ps.34v5)"*

*"Isn't it wonderful to contemplate that not only does Jesus come to us every day during the Mass in Holy Communion but He is also truly present to us whenever we come before the Blessed Sacrament!"*

*"Often people worry about what to 'do' in adoration? The answer is that there is no set formula. We can silently pray, read the Bible, pray the Rosary or simply look at Jesus and enjoy His company, for He sees our hearts and knows our thoughts and prayers without us needing to utter them.... and if we listen intently for His voice, He really will speak to us!"*

*"...the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words, and God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8v25-26)*

\*The Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) focus on 3 main aims during their hours of adoration at St. Mary's Church:

1. To praise the Eucharistic heart of Jesus in reparation for the outrages against Him in the Blessed Sacrament.
2. To pray for Lancaster Diocese, for the Bishop's intentions, for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and for the specific intentions of parishioners in the diocese and anyone who asks for prayer.
3. To pray for the conversion of sinners, the salvation of souls, and for world peace.

This will be on every MONDAY to FRIDAY (All year round and all ages welcome!) in December, January and all Year Round. Please come and join us at any of the following or all!

10am-10.30am – Communal Prayers  
10.30am-3pm – Silent Adoration  
3pm-4pm – Divine Mercy Chaplet, Intercessions and Evening Prayer.

If you would like to discern if you are called to a vocation to Religious Life then please contact Sr. Little Rose, SABS at St. Mary's Convent, 19 Darkinson Lane, Lea Town, Preston. PR4 0RJ.  
Tel: 01772 720158  
She would love to speak with you!

**Wendy Craddock & Sister Little Rose Sisters of The Adoration of The Blessed Sacrament**

**[adorationstmarysleatown.wordpress.com](http://adorationstmarysleatown.wordpress.com)**



## O Come Let Us Adore Him! Monday-Friday 10am-4pm St. Mary's Church

**19 Darkinson Lane, Lea Town, Preston PR4 0RJ.**

*"Remaining in silence before the Blessed Sacrament, it is Christ totally and really present whom we discover, whom we adore and with whom we are in contact."*

St Pope John Paul II



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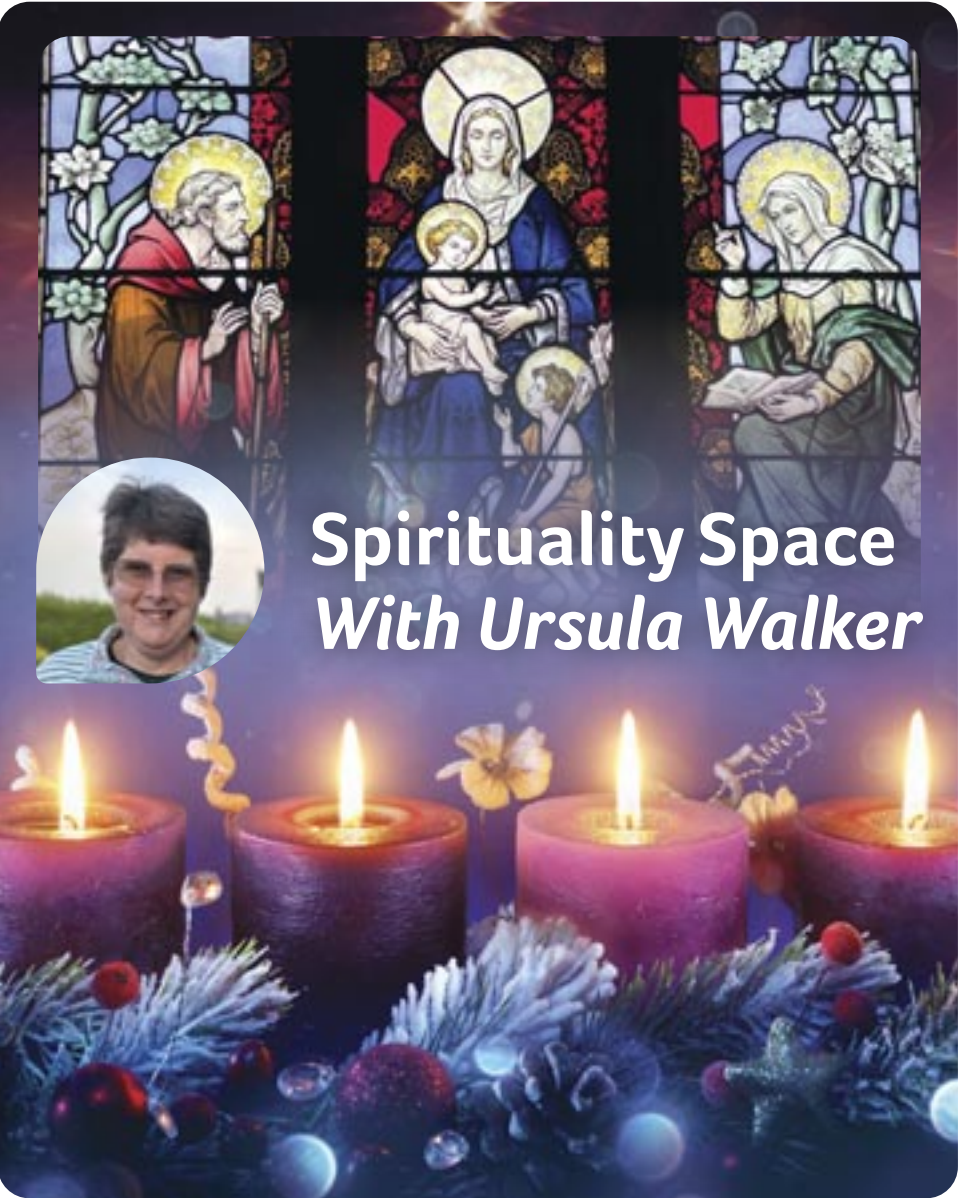
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## Spirituality Space With Ursula Walker



**A**s far as the secular world is concerned Christmas is about buying presents; watching the latest shows on TV; buying more food than they can eat and being with friends and family for one day. Once Christmas Day is over that is Christmas done for another year and it is time to buy more food in for New Year. Looking forward to a party on New Years Eve.

Christmas could be a time of being really busy with family calling or a very quiet time when everything stops and you are left on your own. It could be your first Christmas on your own after a loved one has died! Whatever sort of Christmas it is for you I hope you can find some joy and peace within it.

Most people are on holiday and have time on their hands. What do you do at Christmas – watch TV; go for a walk or cycle; travel to see family away; catch up on things around the house or just relax and take it easy? We all “Do” Christmas in our own way. I hope you have a lovely Christmas however you “Do” it.

At the heart of Christmas, we believe, is Jesus, Our Saviour, being born for us. Becoming a human like us! WOW. This is quite a thought – that God should take on flesh like ours. Taking on flesh and blood like ours. If we only contemplated this for the rest of our lives we would never come to fully understand it and get to the depths of it.

There were many people over the centuries who could not believe this and became heretics. The Church has been defending our faith over the last 2000 years and we need to still do it today.

**How many people no longer see a connection between Christmas and God?**

**How many think it is just about spending a lot of money (that they may not really have) on presents?**

Christmas is a time when we can remind people what Christmas is really about – the coming of Jesus to show us how to live in peace and harmony with each other – something that is very much

needed these days. This does not have to be through talking. This year have you thought of:

- Sending religious Christmas Cards to everyone whether they believe or not;
- Asking for Christmas stamps at the Post Office because if we stop asking for them they will soon stop printing them and secularism takes over again;
- Putting a Christmas Parish Bulletin in someone’s letterbox;
- Putting the Christmas Poster in your window
- Do your Christmas decorations have a holy theme to them
- Do you have a crib and is it in prominent position?
- Do you have candles or angels in your decorations?
- When you are making plans for Christmas letting friends/family know that Church is first and then meeting up?

Maybe you do some or all of these things already. I hope that this Christmas you can find some time to think about the true meaning of Christmas and do not get lost in the secular world.

Maybe this website will help inspire you: <https://christian.art/todays-reading/> This website gives you the gospel of the day, a picture that is linked to the gospel and then a reflection. I know not everybody is into to art but the reflections on the gospels are short and insightful. This is the Christmas period and what better way to keep your mind on the true meaning of Christmas.

As we are still in the Christmas season, I thought I would quiz you on your Carols and Christmas songs.

**Wishing you a very blessed Christmas.**

**Ursula Walker, Spiritual Rep for the Diocese**  
**07312 129900 / uwalker@uwclub.net**



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**A**s we come together in prayer to prepare ourselves for Christmas, there are many Advent Holy Hours & Special Advent Talks as well as Advent Reconciliation Services happening – there is so much to get involved with around the Diocese! Please check with your local parish websites and newsletters for special Advent Events, Talks & Christmas Carol Services and of course Christmas Mass Times. *Don't lose the true meaning of Christmas!* Highlights include:

#### Advent Sunday Readings

The English Martyrs RC Church in Poulton, near Blackpool. Each week we will look at the Readings for the following Sunday. We will read, reflect and share. Come for all or just one of Wednesday evenings. 7.00pm – 8.00pm at English Martyrs, Poulton on:  
Wednesday 3rd December / Wednesday 10th December / Wednesday 17th December



#### The Parish of The Guardian Angels, Blackpool

**Advent Evening Prayer of The Church & Benediction.** All welcome. Sunday, 3.00pm at St John Vianney's Church, Blackpool on:  
30th November / 7th December / 14th December / 21st December

**Advent Service of Reconciliation.** All welcome. St John Vianney's Church, Blackpool on Friday 12th December at 7.00pm.



#### Christ The Good Shepherd, Workington

**St Patrick's Christmas Carol Service.** At Our Lady & St Michael Church on Friday 12th December at 10:00am.

**Oswald Singers Christmas Concert.** At Our Lady & St Michael Church on Friday 12th December at 7:30pm.

**Chilcotts Oratorio – Family & Children's Candlelit Carol Service.**

At Our Lady & St Michael Church on Sunday 14th December at 3:30pm.

**Dawn Rorate Caeli Latin Mass.** At Our Lady & St Michael Church on Saturday 20th December at 7.30am.



For Christmas at Lancaster Cathedral events, Mass times and information please go to the website: [www.lancastercathedral.org.uk](http://www.lancastercathedral.org.uk)



### Step into History: Exclusive Christmas Opening of the Stonyhurst Museum and Historic Libraries

**T**he Stonyhurst Museum and Historic Libraries will be open to the public for one night only during the upcoming Christmas holidays, offering a rare opportunity to experience the College's remarkable collections after hours.

On Thursday 11th December 2025, guests are invited to an exclusive evening event featuring a special presentation by Dr Jan Graffius, Stonyhurst's Curator of Collections, on Catherine the Great. This light-hearted yet insightful talk will explore the life, art, politics and enduring mystique of Russia's most formidable Empress, all within the

historic surroundings of the Stonyhurst Collections. Guests will be invited to wander through candlelit galleries, where centuries of history come alive in stone, wood and story. Limited places are available, and early booking is strongly encouraged to avoid disappointment.

**Date:** Thursday 11th December 2025  
**Time:** 19:00 / **Tickets:** £35 per adult  
**Venue:** Stonyhurst Museum, Stonyhurst College, Clitheroe, Lancashire.  
**Booking and more information:**  
[www.stonyhurst.ac.uk/about-us/stonyhurst-college-historic-collections/exhibitions](http://www.stonyhurst.ac.uk/about-us/stonyhurst-college-historic-collections/exhibitions)

## Christmas Carol Quiz

Compiled by Ursula Walker

Can you guess the names of the Carol?

#### CLUES

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1/ By, by, lully                        | 11/ Oh, yes! Believer                 |
| 2/ Th' incarnate deity                  | 12/ Come sailing in                   |
| 3/ You would even say it glows          | 13/ Above they deep & dreamless sleep |
| 4/ I would bring a lamb                 | 14/ O and A and A and O               |
| 5/ Glories stream                       | 15/ Go Santa go, go, go               |
| 6/ Five gold rings                      | 16/ The world is solemn stillness lay |
| 7/ The playing of the merry organ       | 17/ When sin departs                  |
| 8/ Come with gifts in great plenty      | 18/ Winds for the spices              |
| 9/ Hail Redemptions happy dawn          | 19/ Wondrous childhood                |
| 10/ Wing your flight o'er all the earth | 20/ In the new old-fashioned way      |

Answers: 1/ Coventry Carol, The 2/ Hark the Herald Angels Sing 3/ Rudolph the Red nose reindeer 4/ In the Bleak Mid Winter 5/ Silent Night 6/ 12 Days of Christmas 7/ Holly and the Ivy, The 8/ Eastern Monarchs, Sages Three 9/ See Amid the Winters snow 10/ Angels from the realm of glory 11/ Virgin Mother had a baby Boy, The 12/ I Saw 3 ships 13/ O Little Town of Bethlehem 14/ Unto Us is Born a Son 15/ Rock and Roll Christmas 16/ It Came Upon the Midnight Clear 17/ Sussex Carol 18/ Bethlehem Down 19/ Once in Royal David's City 20/ Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree.



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**Father Stephen will be hosting  
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well as an Advent Reconciliation  
Service all are welcome – just  
come along and experience  
some spiritual joy and light  
this Christmas. Held between  
St Wulstan's and St Mary's churches.**

**Sunday 30th November – 4pm**  
Advent Holy Hour and Vespers  
St Wulstans. With talk on 'Mary and  
the Christmas Miracles'.

**Sunday 7th December – 4pm**  
Advent Holy Hour and Vespers  
St Mary's. With a talk on "the  
Annunciation".

**Friday 12th December – 7pm**  
Advent Reconciliation Service.

**Sunday 14th December – 4pm**  
Advent Holy Hour and Vespers.  
St Wulstan's. With a talk on on 'Joseph,  
Man of Faith and Justice'.

**Sunday 21st December – 4pm**  
Advent Holy Hour and Vespers. St  
Mary's. With a talk on "the Birth of  
the Saviour".

### Christmas Mass Times

**Christmas Eve**  
Vigil Mass – 6:30pm at St Mary's.  
Vigil Mass – 6:30pm at St Wulstan's.  
Choir at Vigil.  
Midnight Mass – 8:30pm at  
St Wulstan's.

**Christmas Day**  
Mass of the day – 10am at St Mary's.



(Below) A young Father  
Stephen Talbutt - middle  
with gold crown on and  
family at Christmas.

# A Christmas Reflection By Fr Stephen Talbutt, Parish Priest at St Mary's, St Wulstan's & St Edmund, Fleetwood



I have very fond memories of Christmas as a child, it would start in the middle of December – we would unpack the plastic tree and baubles, untangle the tree lights hoping that all the bulbs would still work, and then decorate the tree with tinsel. When all was done we would await that glorious moment when we would turn the living room lights out and wait for the Christmas tree lights to be switched on and the room would light up with all the colours of the rainbow.

Then the anticipation of Christmas would really begin, each week another candle would be lit on the Advent wreath, every day another window would be opened on the advent calendar.

After what would seem a lifetime, Christmas Eve would arrive and the entire family would gather at Grandma and Grandad's house. We would sit around their Christmas tree, Grandad would put on his Santa hat and hand out all the presents, it was all so exciting, so much fun. As a child, Christmas time was magical, a time of great joy and happiness surrounded by love and laughter.

That has all changed now, my grandparents have both long since gone home to the Lord, followed a couple of years ago by my mum. The extended family have moved away and now aunties and uncles tend to stay in their own immediate family groups. For me now, especially as a priest, Christmas looks very different, it brings with it a new layer of activity, more to do and think about and increased demands on time and energy – the childhood fun and excitement of Christmas seems long gone.

But the joy of Christmas hasn't disappeared, it just comes from a new appreciation of what happened all those years ago.

In a small town of Bethlehem, in a dirty, smelly cave, God became man. When the baby Jesus opened his eyes the creator looked out on the world from within his creation. That in itself is an incredible thing, but what is more important, is the reason he did it, he did it out of concern and out of love for each and every one of us.

We had strayed so far from the light of God that we had become lost in the darkness and despair of the world. So he sent his Son to set it right, to restore the relationship that we had lost, and to lead us back to his Father.

In his life, Jesus shows us the way home, he reminds us of our purpose, he shows us how to find true peace and happiness in this life. Through his birth he shows us that we are not alone.

In his passion and death he demonstrates that there is nothing that we need to be afraid of, as long as we keep our eyes and hearts focused on the Father. In his resurrection he unlocks the gates of heaven telling us that we were made for eternity, a never ending life of peace and joy that can be found through him.

After the morning Mass on Christmas day I'm looking forward to travelling to the Midlands for a visit with my brother and his family, there will be Christmas lunch, tinsel, trees and gifts, and the usual trappings of the festive period – I'm sure we'll have a grand time.

But the real joy of Christmas is in the knowledge and love of God made man, the baby Jesus in the crib, who has come to set all things right and bring us back to his Father, to bring us home.

*Amen.*





### Fr John Baron: A Life of Service

Born in Lancashire, Fr John Baron was ordained for the Diocese of Lancaster, where he served faithfully for over five decades.

He began his ministry in education, first at Underley Hall Junior Seminary, and later as a much-loved Classics teacher at Upholland College, inspiring generations of students with his enthusiasm for Scripture, language, and liturgy.

In the 1980s he served for five years in Chivuna, Zambia, in the Diocese of Monze, as teacher and chaplain at St Joseph's Secondary School, before returning to parish ministry in Carlisle at Our Lady and St Joseph. Renowned for his kindness, humour, and creativity, Fr John combined pastoral warmth with a deep spiritual joy. His life and ministry were marked by love, generosity, and a priestly heart open to all.

*"Pray for me, as I will for thee, that we may merrily meet in heaven."*  
— St Thomas More

## The Catholic Voice of Lancaster would like to hear from you!

If your parish or school has any news or if you would personally like to submit an article for publication, please send us what you have. Contact details can be found on page 2.

## A Life of Joyful Service: Funeral Mass for Fr John Baron

**A** large congregation gathered at Our Lady and St Joseph, Carlisle, on Friday 10 October 2025, to give thanks for the life and ministry of Fr John Baron, a much-loved priest of the Diocese of Lancaster whose influence reached far beyond the parishes he served.

The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Paul Swarbrick and many priests from across the diocese, joined by clergy who had travelled from other dioceses and from the African missions where Fr John had once ministered. Family members, former colleagues, and many who had been taught or inspired by him gathered to celebrate a priest remembered for his kindness, humour, and deep love of the Gospel.

The homily was preached by Fr Anthony Keefe, who recalled a friendship stretching back almost fifty years to their time together at Upholland College, where Fr John taught Classics after earlier years at Underley Hall.

*"In those nineteen years,"* Fr Anthony said, *"hundreds of boys and young men benefited from John's unique style of teaching and of celebrating the liturgy—from his enthusiasm, from his ability to bring the Scriptures to life, and from his unfailing kindness."*

That kindness, he observed, was at the heart of Fr Baron's vocation and the reason so many former pupils responded to news of his death with an outpouring of affection. *"No one had a bad word to say about him,"* he said, comparing

Fr John's gentle, patient spirit to St Paul's description of love in the First Letter to the Corinthians.

Fr Baron was also remembered for his creativity and flair for drama, which he often used in both teaching and liturgy. Fr Keefe described memorable Easter Vigils and imaginative sermons in which Fr John made Scripture vivid through gesture and performance—sometimes even surprising his congregation by arriving at the lectern in a steel helmet on Remembrance Sunday to lead a chorus of Keep the Home Fires Burning.

*"He was different,"* said Fr Keefe, *"sui generis—one of a kind. You couldn't say they broke the mould when they made John Baron, because he would never have fitted into a mould in the first place."*

After his years in teaching, Fr John served for five years on the missions in Chivuna, Zambia, in the Diocese of Monze, where his exuberant and joyful approach to ministry was warmly received. On news of his death, the Bishop of Monze sent a moving letter of condolence to Bishop Swarbrick and the people of Lancaster, assuring them of the prayers of the faithful in Zambia.

*"We fondly remember his generous contributions in serving the life of the diocese, particularly in Chivuna as teacher and chaplain at St Joseph's Secondary School,"* the letter read. *"May God console, strengthen, and give hope to the bereaved family, friends, and the entire diocesan family during this time of grief. Eternal rest*

*grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him."*

Returning to Carlisle, Fr John became a much-valued assistant at Our Lady and St Joseph, where he continued to share his faith with a distinctive humour and a prayerful heart. Reflecting on the Gospel of the day, from St John, Fr Keefe spoke of the Lord's promise of peace and of the Holy Spirit's guidance:

*"Is it fair to suggest that the Holy Spirit, always unpredictable, worked through John to give people a deeper insight into the Scriptures, and into that description of love issued by St Paul?"*

Fr Keefe also paid tribute to Fr John's sister Margaret, and to Tamsin, *"a generous, loving and dedicated friend whose friendship and care sustained John in his latter years."*

He concluded with characteristic warmth and humour:

*"I am confident that the heavenly liturgy, with John taking part, will be a lively affair. I suspect too that John will wish to make his own the prayer of St Thomas More:*

*'Pray for me, as I will for thee, that we may merrily meet in heaven'*  
—with an emphasis on the 'merrily'."

As the congregation joined in the familiar words, *"Eternal rest give unto him, O Lord..."*, there was a palpable sense that Fr John's joyful faith and gentle humour had left a lasting mark on all who knew him.

Andrew Wygladala

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# Christmas Mass Times

**St Annes-on-the-Sea**  
**Our Lady Star of the Sea**

**Christmas Eve:**  
4.00pm Mass (Family Mass)  
8.00pm Mass

**Christmas Day**  
9.30am Family Morning Mass  
of Christmas  
11.00am Morning Mass  
of Christmas

**Preston,**  
**St Clare's**

**Wednesday 24th December**  
6pm: First Mass of Christmas  
11:30pm: Carols & Midnight Mass

**Thursday 25th December**  
The Nativity of the Lord  
Mass at 10am

**Friday 26th December**  
St Stephen Mass at 10am  
(Mass for altar servers)

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