



The Official Newspaper to the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 379 + May '26

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PENTECOST 2026

Veni Creator Spiritus!

As we prepare for this great feast of Pentecost, we are invited to reflect on the presence of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. Just like the Apostles, we may have moments of doubt, weakness, or fear, but Pentecost reminds us that God strengthens us through His Spirit. The same Spirit that empowered them is alive and working within us today, guiding us, comforting us, and inspiring us to live our faith boldly.

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest, and in our souls take up Thy rest; Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid To fill the hearts which Thou hast made

O comforter, to Thee we cry, O heavenly gift of God Most High, O fount of life and fire of love, and sweet anointing from above.

(Hymn words: Attr. Rabanus Maurus (776-856); tr. Edward Caswell (1814-1878).)

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Daniela & Denis and Leonardo & Rosalba with their son Francesco at St Cuthbert's Church, Blackpool.



Sharing The Gifts of The Holy Spirit – From Italy to Blackpool – two powerful personal experiences of joyful witness and service to the church through the Neocatechumenal Community with Leonardo Pontrandolfi & family and Denis & Daniela.

Dear readers of The Catholic Voice of Lancaster,
I would like to introduce myself and my family to you all. My name is Leonardo Pontrandolfi, I am 71 years old and I come from Italy where I lived and worked as a doctor, neurologist and psychiatrist. I have been living in Blackpool with my wife Rosalba De Feo and my eldest son Francesco for about two and a half months on a missionary experience.

We have joined and been warmly welcomed by the Neocatechumenal community of Saint John Vianney Church and the pastoral life of Guardian Angels Parish in Blackpool.

This is not our first experience as family in mission. About 50 years ago Rosalba and I, who were engaged to be married at the time, and experiencing difficulties in our relationship, had the opportunity to listen to a preaching sermon about Jesus who died and rose again for us and who destroyed the fear of death that prevented us from loving each other. We believed this Good News, and started a long journey in a little community in our parish in Italy, to rediscover the grace of our baptism as a new life in Jesus Christ. We got married, we had six children and two grandchildren (with two more on the way), following always a little Christian community that helped us in the faith and in our life.

More than thirty years ago we started for the first time as family in mission and went to Africa; Zambia in 1992 and Ethiopia in 1995, where we returned many times until 2013. Our experience has been that Jesus has always accompanied us and that true poverty is the lack of faith and meaning in life.

Now we are here in Lancashire, grateful to the Lord for His faithfulness and mercy, to share with the Neocatechumenal Community of the Guardian Angels Parish, the Faith, Love and Unity that come from Jesus Christ.

We meet once a week with the brothers and sisters of the community, young and old, to listen to the Word of God that illuminates our lives. We also celebrate the Eucharist on Saturday evenings, presided over by the parish priest or another priest. Finally, one Sunday a month, we have a retreat day in which we pray together and share a meal and life experiences, enlightened by the Word of God and accompanied by fraternal help for those most in need. This helps us rediscover the roots of our faith, to experience a new life in the Risen Christ who destroyed the barriers, social, economic, cultural, political and the class differences, which separate us and prevent us from loving each other.

To conclude - this Way of Faith is not a closed group but on the contrary it is always striving to evangelize and welcome all those that the Lord calls.

This year, from the beginning of the month of May there will begin a new catechesis for young people and adults, Mondays and Thursdays, in the day chapel of Saint John Vianney Church, Blackpool, to encounter the Risen Jesus Christ in his preaching and to experience His gratuitous love.

Thank you to all the parishioners, priests and Neocatechumenal community who have reached out to my family during our time here - what a blessing you all are!

Leonardo

Hello Lancaster Diocese!

My name is Denis, I am from London and I am married to Daniela who is from Rome. We are from the Parish of St Charles Borromeo in London, where we met and where we got married in 2014. We both belong to the Neocatechumenal communities and sharing the same Faith was important to us.

We moved to Blackpool in 2024 to support the Neocatechumenal community in The Parish of Guardian Angels. We offered ourselves to go as a family in mission from 2020 every year at our meetings with the leaders of the Neocatechumenal Way in England. We gave our availability to go anywhere in the world to support a community and a church. This would mean leaving our home and our jobs in London, which was difficult, but we are grateful to God for His actions in our lives and we were sure that He would provide for us as He has always done in our lives with wonderful actions.

When I was younger I thought I would never get married and I would suffer the deep loneliness I was feeling at that point for the rest of my life. People in my church and priests I knew, told me that only God could fill this empty hole I had, with His Love. But I was looking for something else and I couldn't find God which left me empty.

However, God did not abandon me and gave me a community of Catholics to walk with on a journey of Faith. We would meet twice a week for the mass on Saturday evening and during the week for a liturgy of the Word of God with readings from the Bible. Sometimes I would help prepare these liturgies. Doing the stages of rediscovering my Baptism as an adult, brought me close to the church and I have started to learn the riches the church has and in return I started to see the action of God in my life. My wife met this Way through her parents in Italy and walked many years in a similar community in her Parish in Rome.

When we moved to Blackpool, I changed my job within the company from a job in London to a job that takes me all over the country. My wife could keep her job and work from home. We are often asked by people we work with and our family and friends, what we do here in Blackpool and why did we make such a big change to our lives. That is a hard question to answer as we are not doing anything special here. Using the word mission is the easiest way to describe, but that sounds like we have come to do some big work of God. We leave this to God. We have moved here to serve the Parish and the community in particular, which means attending the community twice a week. We can see God's action here in small ways, the fact that there are people of all ages in the same group, who share this time together listening to the Word of God, looking for His Love, helping each other to see His action in our lives, experiencing His Mercy and His forgiveness which might help us to forgive each other.

This community is a gift open to everyone who is looking for God. At the beginning of May, they will start a series of Catechesis in the Parish that will explain in more detail and all are welcome to attend.

Denis

Anyone who is interested is welcome to come along and join in the new Catechesis starting Monday 4th May 7.00pm, at St John Vianney RC Church day chapel, Glastonbury Avenue, Blackpool. Contact Tony: **07772 185892**. For more information visit: www.neocatechumenaleiter.org



Make May About Mary

May is a special time to connect closer to Mary our heavenly Mother. Take time out to visit your local parish May Rosary Groups, Prayer time with Mary & May crowning events. Think of the beautiful flowers in your garden and make a May Queen crown with your family and a garden shrine.

Our Lady of Fatima Feast Day
Wednesday 13th May

May Procession & Crowning
Sunday 17th May, after 10:30am Mass
in Lancaster Cathedral

Feast of Pentecost Sunday May 24th 2026

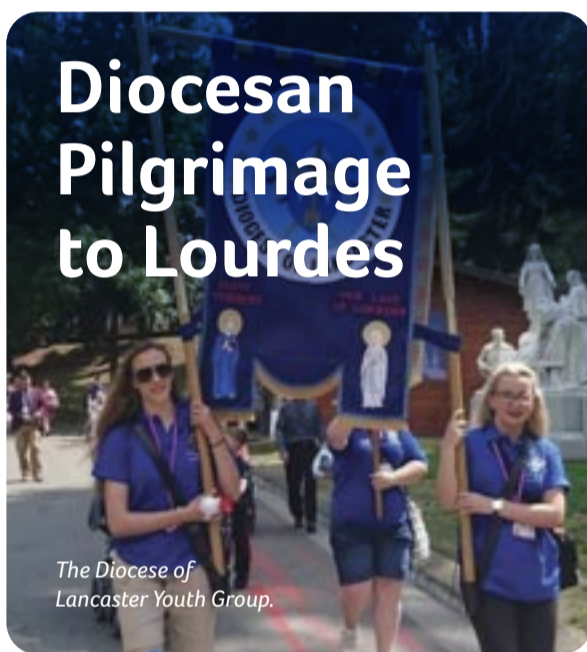
In the Holy Spirit, your soul's dearest Friend, you will find a Helper and Comforter in sorrow, strife, dangers, and death, one who pleads for you with inexpressible groanings (Rom. 8:26).

As you grow in loving union with the Vivifier, He will help you attune the spiritual gifts and dispositions of your interior life and fill you with an abundance of His divine fruits as you strive toward eternal bliss.

This coming Pentecost is also a beautiful opportunity to renew our hearts. We can prepare through prayer, asking for the gifts of the Holy Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts help us grow closer to God and become better witnesses of His love in our daily lives.

Let us not just mark the date, but truly prepare spiritually. May this Pentecost be a moment of renewal—a time to be set on fire with God's love once again.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love. *Pearl Mina*



Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

The Diocese of Lancaster Lourdes Pilgrimage

The Diocese of Lancaster Lourdes Pilgrimage will take place on 23–30 July 2026 led by the Bishop of Lancaster Rt. Rev Paul Swarbrick.

If you haven't yet booked - please do so soon as places are nearly booked up. A full religious programme has been organised by the Diocese of Lancaster and the Joe Walsh Tours team, including visits to the Grotto, Baths, Basilicas, and the beautiful Stations of the Cross. Book your place: <https://joewalstours.co.uk/pilgrimages/group-diocesan-pilgrimages/diocese-of-lancaster-lourdes-pilgrimage/>

Calling all musicians and singers to join the Pilgrimage choir:

Please contact Deacon Stephen Pendlebury: stephen.pendlebury@lrcd.org.uk / 07376562305
There will be a rehearsal on Tuesday 7th July, 7pm at St Joseph's Church, Slyne Road, Lancaster LA1 2HU.

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Our Lady of Fatima Statue and Relics to Visit Lancaster Cathedral in June

The Jubilee Cathedral visitations are taking place across the country, showcasing the beauty and significance of our Lady's message at Fatima with a visit to Lancaster Cathedral on Saturday June 20th 2026.

The World Apostolate of Fatima (WAF) team is organising the visitation of the two National Pilgrim Statues and the Relics of Saints Jacinta and Francisco to all Cathedrals and Catholic shrines in England and Wales. All Lancaster Diocese parishioners are invited to join in as the World Apostolate of Fatima celebrate and spread the message of Fatima.

Further details and times of mass will be available soon and on the Lancaster Cathedral website: www.lancastercathedral.org.uk

Prayer to Our Lady of Fatima

O Most Holy Virgin Mary, Queen of the most holy Rosary, you were pleased to appear to the children of Fatima and reveal a glorious message. We implore you, inspire in our hearts a fervent love for the recitation of the Rosary.

By meditating on the mysteries of the redemption that are recalled therein may we obtain the graces and virtues that we ask, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer.




MAKE PRAYER THE FIRST STEP

In anything worthwhile that you attempt. Persevere and do not weaken in that prayer. *Saint Benedict.*



Metanoia Project's Walk of Faith with Jesus

Catholic writer Natalie Nadine joined in the journey and shares her inspirational experience.

On 21st March 2026, the Metanoia Project hosted a Stations of the Cross Walk from St Wilfrid's Church, Preston to Ladywell Shrine, Fernyhalgh. With over 60 walkers of all ages (and one very well-behaved dog!), there was a sense of expectation as we gathered outside St Wilfrid's, receiving a blessing from Fr Chris Pedley before setting off into the spring sunshine.

Over the course of three hours, the Cross, the powerful symbol of love, sacrifice and salvation, was carried across the city in a public act of worship, following Jesus' journey to His death. Along the route, each of the Fourteen Stations was marked with prayer, reflection and the singing of the Stabat Mater, creating a moving rhythm of contemplation as we walked.

A particularly poignant moment came at the Second Station, Jesus Receives

His Cross, outside St George's Shopping Centre. The Cross had been carried there by a man visibly moved by the weight of Christ's sacrifice, assisted by a young boy proud to help bear it. As we knelt in prayer before the Cross, in full view of busy shoppers, I was struck by the reality of our personal relationships with Jesus, and the different paths that had led each of us to follow Him. In that moment, faith became something visible and tangible.

This powerful public witness, taking the Gospel beyond church walls and into everyday life, felt as though it might plant even a seed of curiosity or hope in those who paused to watch.

Though many of us began as strangers, we were united in faith. A deep sense of solemnity and love accompanied us as we followed the Cross through the changing landscape; from the Flag Market, past terraced streets and businesses, by the

football stadium and golf course, through Moor Park and outside Fulwood Hospital, and finally along the tranquil paths of the Guild Wheel, transforming ordinary spaces into places of prayer.

Between Stations, Joe White invited reflection and conversation, connecting Christ's Passion with our lives. We prayed for our relationships with our mothers as we meditated on Jesus meeting Mary; reflected on those who have helped us carry our crosses; and prayed for peace in the Holy Land. At the Station where Jesus is stripped of His garments, we prayed for the homeless community served by Metanoia, reflecting on the dignity that is so often stripped from those on the margins. As we marked Jesus being nailed to the Cross, we were reminded of the need to allow ourselves to be liberated from our sins and failings, trusting in the freedom won for us through His sacrifice.

At Ladywell, we were warmly welcomed by Fr Francisco Ulogu, where clergy from the Jesuit community celebrated an open-air Mass, with beautiful music ministry led by Ruth White. Over a shared lunch, there was time to reflect, to speak with friends old and new, and to explore the Shrine before returning to Preston.

While Christ's journey to Calvary was one of suffering and loneliness, the walk revealed something profound: when His Passion is carried into the world, it draws people together. In walking with Him, we had allowed His sacrifice to shape us, sending us back into our daily lives renewed and resolved to carry His love to those around us.

Natalie Nadine

For more information on the Metanoia Project and their events, based at St Wilfrid's Catholic Church Preston, go to: www.metanoiaproject.co.uk

With Mary in May: Rediscovering the Rosary

For Catholics, the month of May brings with it a familiar and welcome rhythm. As spring reaches its fullness, the Church turns in a special way to Mary, honouring her as the one through whom new life entered the world. In parishes and homes alike, this devotion often finds its clearest expression in the Rosary.

There is something deeply appropriate about praying the Rosary in May. The beauty and renewal of the season reflect the life and hope that Mary's "yes" made possible.



125 Years of Faith and Friendship Celebrated at Lark Hill Reunion

“Ever choose, do and love what is right.”

Former pupils of Lark Hill Convent are being warmly invited to Preston this summer to mark a remarkable milestone — *the 125th anniversary of the Lark Hill Association* — in what promises to be a joyful celebration of faith, friendship and shared history.

The reunion will take place on Saturday 27 June at Cardinal Newman College, beginning with Holy Mass at 12 noon in the College Chapel. The day will offer past pupils an opportunity to reconnect with one another, revisit familiar surroundings, and give thanks for the enduring legacy of their school and its community.

Lark Hill Convent was founded and staffed by the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), the international Catholic congregation established in 1820 by Marie Madeleine d’Houët. For generations, the FCJ sisters dedicated themselves to the education and formation of girls and young women in Preston, nurturing not only academic excellence but also a deep sense of faith, confidence and moral purpose.

At the heart of school life was a simple yet powerful motto: *“Bien faire et laisser dire”* — translated in the school hymn as *“Ever choose, do and love what is right.”* Worn proudly on hat badges and lived out in daily life, these words left a lasting impression on countless pupils. Today, they continue to resonate in the lives of former students, shaping values and guiding choices long after their school days ended.

The Lark Hill Association itself was founded 125 years ago to preserve the bonds formed within the school community. Over the decades, it has remained a vital link between past pupils, meeting annually and continuing to foster friendship and shared purpose. Its work also extends to supporting the next generation: a notable initiative is the annual bursary awarded to students from Cardinal

Newman College, enabling them to take part in a pilgrimage to Lourdes through the College Chaplaincy. In this way, the spirit of Lark Hill — *faith lived out in action* — continues to flourish.

The FCJ sisters, now based in Manchester, remain closely connected to the Association. Sister Beatrice, who once served at Lark Hill, is an active member of the committee and continues to strengthen these longstanding ties.

The anniversary gathering will include time for past pupils to explore the former school buildings, share photographs and memories, and renew friendships across generations. Whether they left Lark Hill decades ago or more recently, all are assured of a warm welcome.

The Association has also expressed its gratitude to Nick Burnham, Principal of Cardinal Newman College, for his generous support in enabling the continued use of the historic Lark Hill site, helping to preserve an important part of Preston’s Catholic educational heritage.

Following Mass, the celebrations will continue with a light finger buffet, offering further opportunity for conversation and reminiscence.

As organisers note, this 125th anniversary is not simply a commemoration of the past, but a living celebration of a community built on faith, friendship and shared values — a legacy that continues to inspire today.

Event details: Saturday 27 June 2026, 12 noon – Holy Mass in the Chapel, Cardinal Newman College, Preston. Followed by a light finger buffet (£10 per head). All former pupils are most welcome. Contact Janet Metcalf by calling: **07713 300192** or emailing: janet.metcalf53@icloud.com

But more than that, the Rosary itself draws us into the heart of the Gospel. It is not simply a repetition of prayers, but a meditation on the life of Christ—his birth, ministry, suffering and resurrection—seen through Mary’s eyes.

This is expressed through the different Mysteries of the Rosary.

The **Joyful Mysteries** [Mondays and Saturdays] invite us to reflect on Christ’s birth and early life; the **Luminous Mysteries** [Thursdays] on his public ministry; The **Sorrowful Mysteries** [Tuesdays and Fridays] on his passion and death; The **Glorious Mysteries** [Wednesdays and Sundays] on his resurrection and the promise of eternal life.

In moving through these mysteries, we are led step by step through the whole story of our salvation. This is why the Rosary has remained such an important devotion in the life of the Church. It is simple enough for anyone to begin, yet profound enough to sustain a lifetime of prayer. Its steady rhythm helps to quiet the mind and open the heart, allowing us to reflect more deeply on the mysteries we proclaim.

In parish life, May often brings a renewed commitment to this prayer—before Mass, during the week, or at home. Above all, the Rosary leads us to Christ. In praying with Mary, we learn to follow him more closely.

This May, the invitation is simple: to take up the Rosary, and to walk with Mary—one decade at a time. *Andrew Wygladala*

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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Caring for God's Creation in the Year of St Francis at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Great Eccleston

During the Year of St Francis, the St Mary's school community has been proud to take practical action to care for God's creation, inspired by St Francis of Assisi's love for the natural world and respect for all living things.

As part of this commitment, our PTFA organised the Great Eccleston Litter Pick, where our children joined other local volunteers to help clean up the streets of our village. The pupils worked enthusiastically, showing pride in their community and understanding the importance of looking after the environment God has entrusted to us.

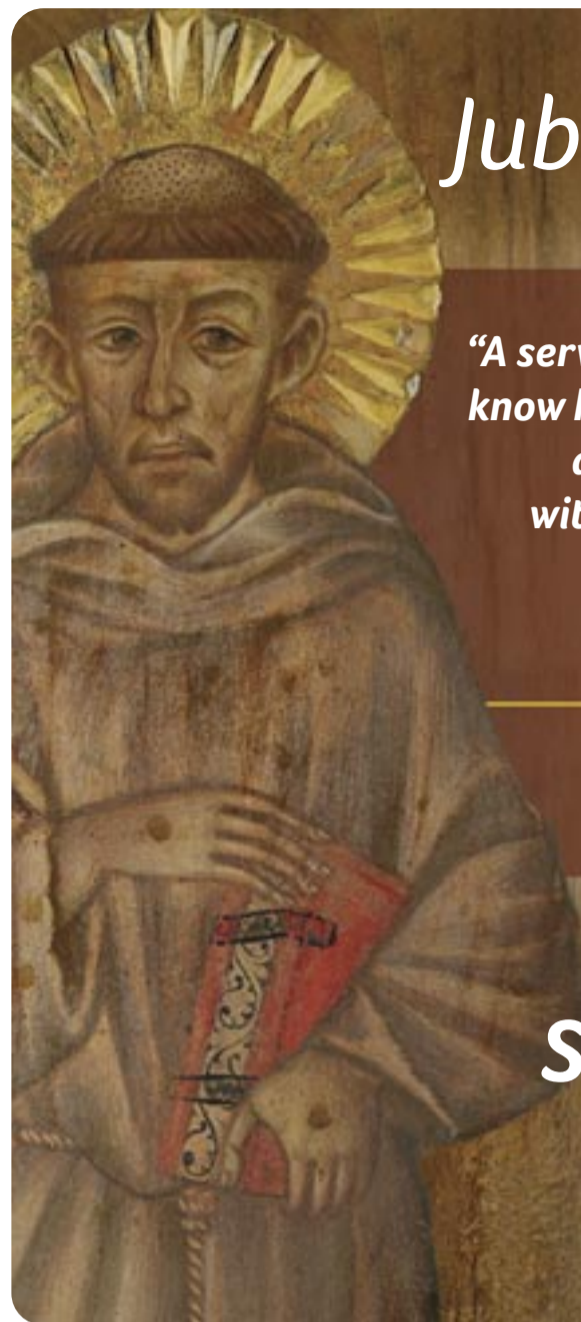
It was wonderful to see them living out our school values through teamwork, responsibility and care for others. In addition, some of our children were invited to take part in an exciting tree-planting project, working alongside Lancashire County Council, Wyre Borough Council and Great Eccleston Parish Council. The children began by sowing seeds into

a micro-forest, helping to create new habitats for bees and other pollinating insects.

They then helped to plant over 300 new trees at the recreation ground off Pennine View. These trees add to the 800 already planted by volunteers over half term, making a lasting contribution to the local environment. These activities provided meaningful opportunities for our children to put their faith into action. By caring for their surroundings and helping to protect God's creation, they are learning the importance of stewardship — understanding that the world is a gift to be cared for and shared with future generations.

We are incredibly proud of our pupils for the enthusiasm and care they have shown. We look forward to watching our trees grow and continuing to work together as a school community to protect and cherish God's world.

Jen Birch, Headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Great Eccleston

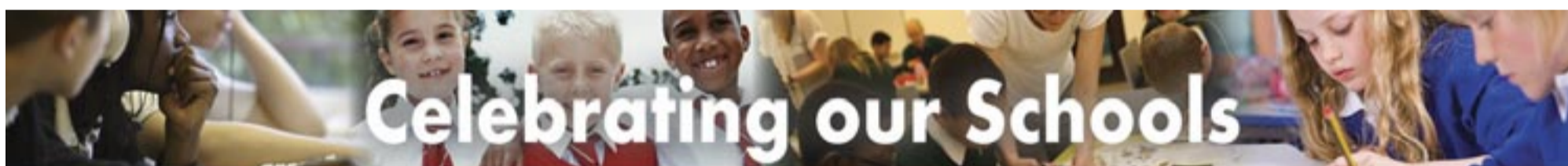
Jubilee Year

“A servant of God cannot know how much patience and humility he has within himself as long as he is content.”


- St. Francis of Assisi

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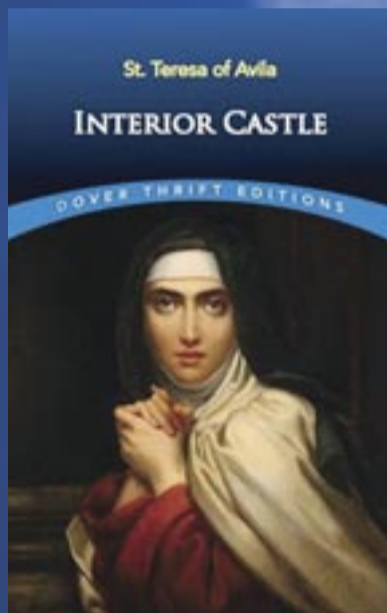
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A prayerful reflection on *The Interior Castle* by St Teresa of Avila

By Jenny McLaughlin

Catholic writer and artist Jenny McLaughlin encourages spiritual reading, prayer techniques, podcasts or websites to enjoy at home in our own 'Inner Room'. Inspired by the Catholic spiritual classic, here she shares her thoughtful review with *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster* readers:

Reflecting on the book: '*The Interior Castle*', by Saint Teresa of Avila.

When you think about God, where do you visualise God to be?

Perhaps you think about God on His throne, far above us, in Heaven.

Perhaps you think of Him in a Church, Cathedral, Shrine or on a Pilgrimage, perhaps God comes to mind when you meet someone religious, or when something hard happens in life, or perhaps you think about God when you sit in a park or on a beach ... but what about recognising God dwelling within us, in the centre of our souls?!

This book introduces us to the concept of God residing within us all, within our souls. It's a very good way to think about God and brings a great sense of peace.

Perhaps it is similar to the experience an expectant mother, when the pregnancy quickens and she becomes aware of the new life, with her everywhere she goes - a very close companion and a miracle.

The scriptures show us that God is within all of His creation:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1: 15-17 New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition)

Also, *"For 'In him we live and move and have our being.'" Acts 17:27a NRSVCE)*

And... *"...nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."* (Luke 17:21 NRSVCE)

I found the location of God a really good spiritual concept to think about and reflect upon as one ponders the deep questions of our existence.

If however, God is indeed within us all, why then can't we sense God all the time, why does God feel so far away from time to time? Also what about those trapped in mortal sin? Where is God in these situations? I'd always felt that God is very far from me from time to time, but not according to Interior Castle.

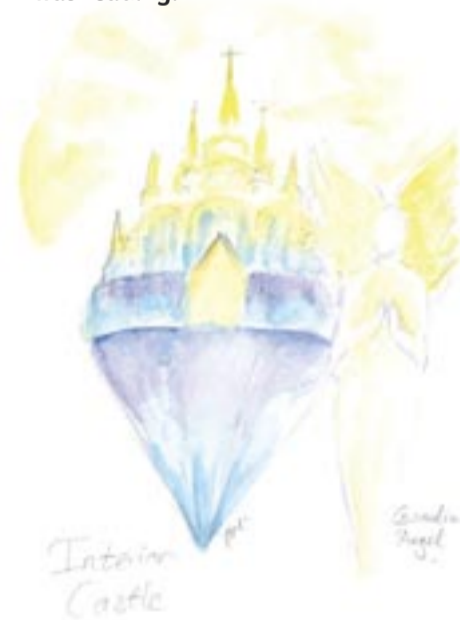
St.Teresa of Avila explains it this way:

"I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions..." "Let us now imagine that this castle, as I have said, contains many mansions, some above, others below, others at each side; and at the centre and midst of them all is the chiefest mansion where the most secret things pass between God and the soul." (Saint Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle, First Mansions, Chapter 1*)

So we have the soul like a Diamond as well as a Castle, containing many mansions, but at the centre is the most important dwelling where God resides... and our task whilst here, is to make our way towards God.

Here's a little sketch I made whilst reading the book, to assist me to

assimilate and visualise what I was reading:



St.Teresa discusses how the soul has to progress through different mansions, from the outer towards the centre to come to know God and explains the difficulties one encounters. Initially, in the outer mansions, the soul is unfortunately accompanied by monsters - demons - bad habits - things which obscure our view of God and threaten to pull us back or prevent us from moving forward in our spiritual walk.

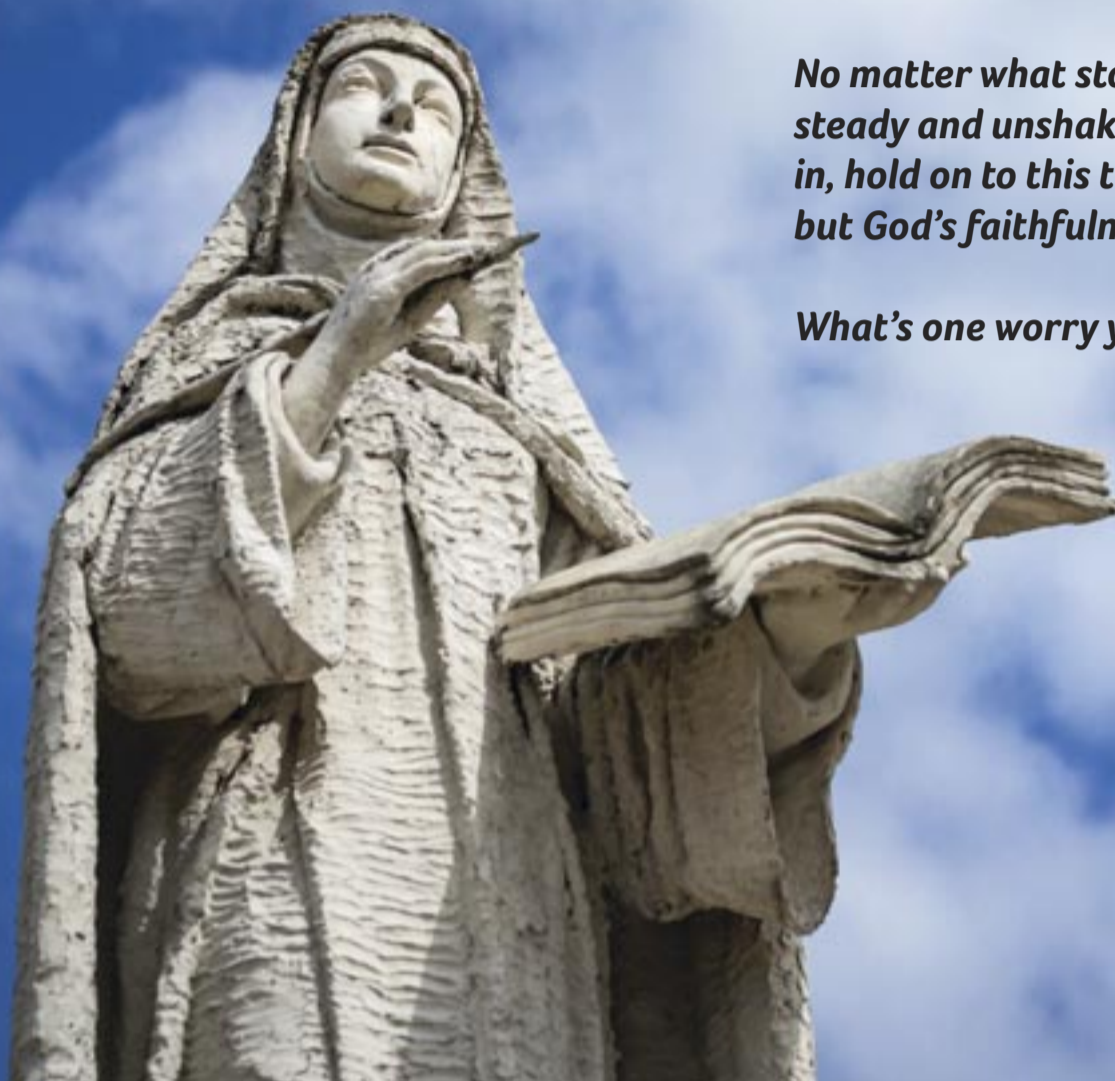
“Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, all things pass away, God never changes.”

– St. Teresa of Avila

In a world full of uncertainties and change, St. Teresa reminds us that God is our constant.

No matter what storms we face, His love remains steady and unshaken. When fear and anxiety creep in, hold on to this truth: Everything else will pass, but God’s faithfulness is eternal.

What’s one worry you can hand over to Him today?



In the case of mortal sin, the Saint explains that though God is still at the centre of the soul, the mortal sin separates the soul from God and there is an extreme darkness to the soul.

This reminds me of the Our Dear Lord’s words:

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

(Matthew 6:22-23 NRSVCE)

But we have hope – the Lord is there, we only have to stop and turn to him; repent; He waits for us with open arms and seeks us out, like lost sheep, caught up in brambles...there is hope for everyone.

The book progresses into interesting observations about religious life and unexpected dangers and difficulties the Saint encountered – the challenges

of different personalities, temptations of the Devil towards certain habits and perfectionism, harshness, pride, judgementalism, misunderstandings...

Often St. Teresa of Avila emphasises the incredible importance of humility; the one virtue the Devil cannot impersonate. Humility is essential if the soul is to progress towards the Lord within the centre of the soul.

St Teresa explains how reflecting upon the Glory of the Lord can assist the soul to realise how lowly and helpless it truly is and how it cannot do anything without the assistance of the Lord. She gives some advice that is very helpful:

“Oh, my sisters, how little one should think about resting, and how little one should care about honours, and how far one ought to be from wishing one ought to be esteemed in the very least if the Lord makes His special abode in the soul.” (Saint Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, Chapter IV)

This reminds me of Our Lord’s advice to his disciples:

“Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But

they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:33-35 NRSVCE)

In both cases, the advice for both the sisters and also Our Lord’s Disciples and I think, for all of us... is to put others first, to not seek honours, or esteem, to serve, rather than seeking to be served.

It reminds me of those humbling jobs one sees people doing; there is a little lady who works as a cleaner in our local Morrison’s supermarket toilets. She smiles whilst doing this unpleasant job – I think perhaps this little lady is a quiet little saint – cleaning toilets – not just any toilets – public toilets! and smiles whilst doing this!

It also reminds me of God in the film ‘Bruce Almighty’ (2003) – God is portrayed by Morgan Freeman and at one point, He – God – is simply the janitor, sweeping up... serving others, assisting others – whilst actually being God...there is such a strong message there about humility and the value of a simple life, such a contrast to all we are usually taught is important.

St. Teresa of Avila also emphasises how suffering brings about great spiritual benefits for the soul, though the experiences are so difficult to live through. The reason these trials are so very beneficial for the soul is that they remove from the soul all certainties of this temporary existence and cause the soul to rely totally on God; though of course it would be incredibly inappropriate and insensitive to say to anyone experiencing the trials of life – “Oh how wonderful for your soul!” – of course we must truly become a friend in need when people go through trials.

I would recommend Interior Castle as a wonderful spiritual book. It is a bit tricky getting into the language – I found it initially a bit like reading Shakespeare – one has to tune into the language and customs of the writers so stick with it, it is well worth it.

The ultimate destination for the soul in the book is union with God.

This is a real treasure of a book, for personal reflection. I’ve highlighted lots of little paragraphs as I read this and I must re-visit the book from time to time.

*Peace Be With You My Friends
Jenny McLaughlin*



Called to Holy Orders?

How does the Church know if I am being called to be a priest or deacon? By Deacon Bernard Farrell-Roberts



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christiancreativedirectory.com/rob-hotchkiss

Have you ever wondered how the Church knows that God is calling someone to be a priest or a deacon? Also, why does the Church only ordain men, and how do I know if I am being called?

The Catechism tells us that:

"The divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests, and deacons." CCC 1554.

It was at the Last Supper that Jesus made known his desire to have the apostles share in his priesthood when he explained that they needed to be consecrated, and what their mission was to be, when he said:

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me." John 17:18-20.

Then, during their lives, the Apostles gave others: *"the order that, when they should have died, other approved men would take up their ministry... bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing." Lumen Gentium 19*

At his ordination the priest or deacon receives the sacrament of Holy Orders which causes an "ontological" change in the recipient, and by which his soul is eternally sealed with a sacramental character that is indelibly impressed on it. Ordination confers "configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister" (CCC, 1585).

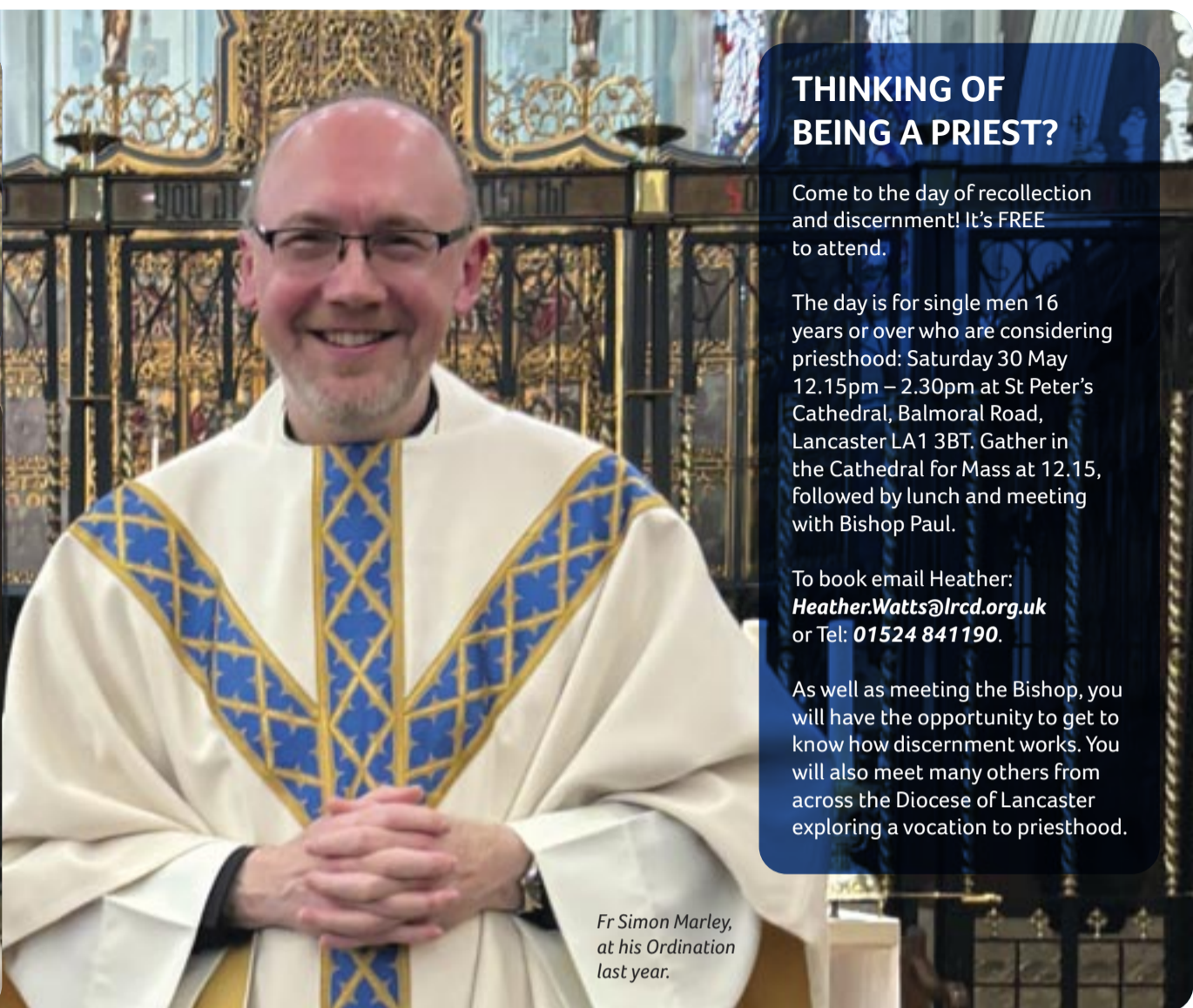
A bishop receives the Spirit of governing which God the Father gave to his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he, in turn, communicated to the holy apostles. During the ordination of a priest God bestows on them the gift of the Spirit by which the new priest becomes worthy to stand without reproach before God's altar, proclaim his kingdom, carry out the ministry of his word of truth, offer him spiritual gifts and sacrifices, and renew his people by the bath of rebirth. And deacons?

Deacons are ordained "to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funerals and burial services." (Lumen Gentium 29). The life of the deacon is one of service, just as Christ came to serve, and not to be served. All priests are also ordained deacons.

In order to be ordained a candidate must be a baptized male. Christ only ordained



Friends and family celebrate Fr Simon Marley's Ordination.



Fr Simon Marley, at his Ordination last year.

THINKING OF BEING A PRIEST?

Come to the day of recollection and discernment! It's FREE to attend.

The day is for single men 16 years or over who are considering priesthood: Saturday 30 May 12.15pm – 2.30pm at St Peter's Cathedral, Balmoral Road, Lancaster LA1 3BT. Gather in the Cathedral for Mass at 12.15, followed by lunch and meeting with Bishop Paul.

To book email Heather: Heather.Watts@lrcd.org.uk or Tel: 01524 841190.

As well as meeting the Bishop, you will have the opportunity to get to know how discernment works. You will also meet many others from across the Diocese of Lancaster exploring a vocation to priesthood.

men in spite of the fact that among his followers there were also women who on various occasions showed greater fidelity to him than the men did!

Our Lord's example here has been the norm of the Church throughout her life and cannot be considered merely circumstantial, since the apostles followed this practice and ordained only men even when the Church spread to areas where women priests would have caused no surprise.

The Fathers of the Church followed the practice of the apostles, aware that this was a binding tradition. Consequently, the Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination." (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 2).

However, the role and importance of women in the church has always been recognised and promoted, headed by the most perfect human of all time, Our Mother Mary herself.

For an ordination to be legitimate and fully fruitful it is also necessary for the man to have a truly supernatural vocation, and that this is confirmed by the Church, the competent authority. The Church insists on celibacy for bishops, priests, and deacons. In this way clerics share in the celibacy that Christ embraced when carrying out his mission.

As the Catechism states: "They adhere to him more easily with an undivided heart, they dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God

and men. By the total surrender of their lives to the mission they have been given, those ordained evoke the mysterious marriage established by Christ ... in which the Church has Christ as her only Spouse." (CCC, 1029-1042).

This obligation does not apply to men already married who are to be ordained as permanent deacons, but should their wives die before they do, then they are ordinarily obliged to remain celibate. The ordained men must have specific internal and external dispositions, be of the required age, have carried out specific studies, and not have any of the impediments or irregularities named by the Church.

As recently as March 25th of this year, when addressing pilgrims in St. Peter's Square, Pope Leo XIV reflected on why only men can receive Holy Orders in the Church. He stated that the Church "is founded on the Apostles, whom Christ appointed as the living pillars of His mystical Body". He went on to say that the Church "possesses a hierarchical structure that works in the service of the unity, mission and sanctification of all her members". He stressed that this structure "is not a human construct, functional to the internal organisation of the Church as a social body, but is a divine institution".

If, having read this, anyone feels that God may be calling them to participate more fully in the Church, and would like help in discerning this calling, please do not hesitate to send an email to: vocations@lrcd.org.uk

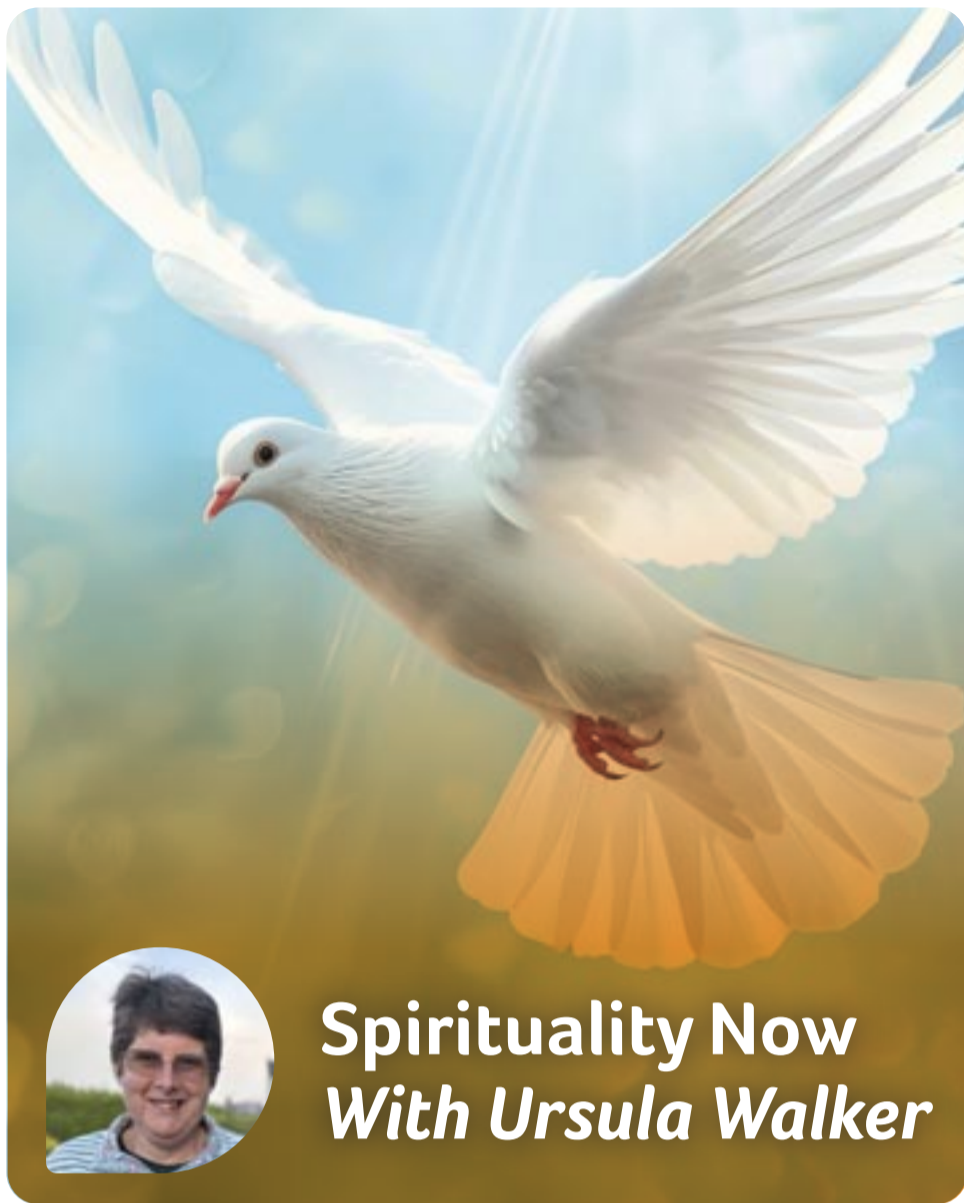
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Spirituality Now With Ursula Walker



The gift of the Holy Spirit Pentecost

“Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together but fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.” Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21-23).

The disciples had gathered together; are fearful; have locked all the doors in the house. They are clearly frightened and hiding from the Jewish leaders – expecting any moment for them to come and put them to death as they had Jesus. Then Jesus appears (through closed and locked windows). He breathes into them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus (God) breathes His spirit into them. On Pentecost Day we see a very different group of apostles. They are not gathered together, they are not fearful and they are certainly not locked up behind closed doors. They are out preaching that Jesus has risen from the dead, that He is the Messiah and that those listening must repent and be baptised.

One of the symbols used in the Bible for the Holy Spirit is a dove. Noah sent a dove out to see if the floodwaters had receded. In the gospels a dove descends on Jesus at his baptism. The dove is gentle and peaceful and that perhaps is its limitation. In the Celtic tradition the Holy Spirit is not represented as a white dove, tame and pure but as a wild goose.

Geese are uncontrollable. They make a lot of noise and have the habit of biting those who try to contain them. Geese fly faster in a flock than on their own. They make excellent “guard dogs!”

Our ancient Christian ancestors were making a very pertinent statement. God’s spirit is like a goose. His presence comes to us not in quiet conformity but demanding to be heard and His song is not always sweet. His Spirit drives people together, demanding they support and travel with one another and He often asks

those on whom He rests to become noisy, passionate and courageous.

Peter on that first Pentecost Day was certainly demanding to be heard and not everyone was willing to listen: ‘These men are drunk.’ After the Ascension the disciples started living together in communities so that they could support each other. They became courageous and bold laying, hands on people and healing them.

Are you a little white dove – gentle and calm or are you a noisy goose? Do you “honk” when you see injustice being done; or “honk” for the poor (CAFOD)? Do you “honk” against abortion, the Assisted Suicide Bill? How loud do you “honk”? Do people hear you? How good a “guard dog” are you?

For a slightly longer version of this article go to www.lancasterspirituality.uk
Ursula Walker, Spiritual Rep
Spiritualrep@lrtd.org.uk

Key Aspects of the “Wild Goose” Symbolism

- **Untamed Power:**
Unlike the serene dove, the wild goose represents the loud, fiery, and uncontrollable aspects of the Holy Spirit.
- **Unpredictable Guidance:**
It symbolizes how the Holy Spirit moves in unexpected directions, disrupting plans and challenging the status quo.
- **Movement and Action:**
Just as wild geese migrate, the Spirit is seen as a force driving Christians to move, change, and act, similar to the experience of the disciples on Pentecost.
- **Community and Support:**
Geese fly in formation to support one another, paralleling the role of the Spirit in encouraging community among believers.

While the dove represents peace and serenity, the “wild goose” highlights the empowering, sometimes daunting, and active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world.

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What's On May 2026

There is a new website where you can see what is coming up and read slightly longer articles (by Ursula), new blogs, and other interesting things that are happening in the Diocese of Lancaster:

www.lancasterspirituality.uk

If you want to go on the mailing list for what is happening in the Diocese of Lancaster, please send an email to Ursula at this email address: SpiritualRep@lrcd.org.uk

Upcoming Events at Hynning Hall, Warton, near Carnforth

Prayer is for Everyone

Saturday 9th May – 9.30 Coffee/Arrivals – Finish at 4.00. More details to follow.

Contact Sr Mary Bernard for more information – hynningbookings@yahoo.co.uk

Website – www.hynning.org

Upcoming Events at Boarbank Hall, Grange-over-Sands

Craft Weekend

1-3/4 May 2026. Bring your own arts or crafts, enjoy working and sharing.

Two Wings and Some Prayers

9th-14th/16th May 2026. Prayer, walks, birdwatching, and learning birdsong.

Day of Recollection

18th July 2026. for parish Laudato Si' representatives or those interested in Care for Creation. 10.00am-3.30pm (including Mass). There may be help with travel costs.

For more information or booking, email margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or visit the website at: www.boarbankhall.org.uk

Celebrate the Feast of Pentecost and pray the Golden Sequence Prayer



The "Golden Sequence" (Veni, Sancte Spiritus) is a renowned 13th-century Latin hymn sung at Pentecost to invoke the Holy Spirit. Known for its lyrical beauty, it serves as a prayer for comfort, cleansing, guidance, and spiritual growth, asking for the sevenfold gifts and eternal joy.

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!
Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.*

*You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;
In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.*

*O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!
Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thoughts,
Nothing free from taint of ill.*

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away.
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.*

*On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end.*

Amen. Alleluia.

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A light of hope on campus

By Paulyne Anthony (Exchange student at Lancaster University)

On an ordinary weekday afternoon, the quiet chapel at Lancaster University hums with a stillness that speaks louder than words. Before the Most Blessed Sacrament, students kneel — some weary from study, others radiant with newfound faith — and in that moment, the light of Christ shines on campus.

In a world that often feels restless and uncertain, the Catholic Chaplaincy at Lancaster University has become a sanctuary of peace and purpose, a place where the next generation of Catholics are finding their faith, their friends, and their calling.

Each day, the heart of the Lancaster University Chaplaincy beats with prayer. Daily Mass anchors the rhythm of student life; Eucharistic Adoration, three times a week, draws hearts deeper into the mystery of God's love; confession is offered almost daily, a sign of mercy always available. Every week, Canon Michael Docherty, the university Catholic chaplain, also offers thoughtful spiritual direction, helping students recognise how God is speaking and guiding them. From quiet reflection to joyful socials and chapel lectures, the Chaplaincy is a living sign that the Church is young, alive, and growing.

This growing hunger for God among young people is part of a wider story of hope across the UK. The Bible Society's Quiet Revival report has found that church attendance is rising again, especially among young adults. Many are rediscovering a faith that gives meaning and peace in uncertain times. Here in Lancaster University, that revival is visible every day — in the stillness of prayer, the sound of laughter after Mass, and the quiet courage of students who choose to follow Christ.

For me personally, coming to Lancaster University as an exchange student has been an unexpected grace. Being able to visit the Chaplaincy Centre several times a day, to sit before Jesus in the tabernacle, to attend daily Mass, to simply rest in His presence, has taught me to trust in God's plan in a deeper way. In those quiet moments before the Most Blessed Sacrament, I

have discovered that Jesus is truly enough. No distance, no time zone, no uncertainty can separate us from Him. His love crosses borders, campuses, and hearts.

What happens at Lancaster University today shapes the Church of tomorrow. The students who gather to pray, to study, and to serve are the future of the Church — tomorrow's teachers, parents, priests, and leaders. Their faith is being nurtured right here, through the quiet but powerful work of the Chaplaincy.

And yet, this mission depends not on noise or numbers, but on grace, and on the generosity and prayers of those across the Diocese who believe in the hope of the Gospel. The Chaplaincy is not funded directly by the university; it relies on generosity of the faithful who support the work through the parish contribution to the Diocesan Grant [*thank you!*], and of those who share in its vision.

If you feel called to support the Catholic Chaplaincy at Lancaster University, whether through prayer, financial help, or by joining our Friends of the Chaplaincy group, we would love to hear from you. Your support helps keep the chapel doors open, the sacraments available, and the light of faith burning brightly in young hearts.

Together, we can ensure that Christ remains at the centre of our universities, our communities, and our lives. For in the midst of a restless world, Jesus continues to whisper to each heart: "*Come to Me, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28)

If you are interested in becoming a 'Friend of the Catholic Chaplaincy' please email lucc@lrcc.org.uk

If you would like to make a financial contribution to support the work of the Catholic Chaplaincy at Lancaster University you can donate through the following link:





Our Lady Star of the Sea, St Annes celebrates World Day of Prayer 2026 - Nigeria

"I will give you rest. Come!"



The 2026 International World Day of Prayer this year was Friday 6th March. Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish was delighted and privileged to host the ecumenical service for all the local churches in Lytham St Annes.

Deacon John Chantry warmly welcomed over 100 local women and men, representing all ages and denominations, to share our worship and respond, with Christians worldwide, to the call *"I will give you rest. Come!"*

Everyone present was enchanted and blessed as 25 pupils from Our Lady Star of the Sea Primary School Choir, led by their Head Teacher Mrs Gregan, enthusiastically and beautifully performed the traditional Nigerian Igbo song, *"Give Him Thanks"*. The school children also participated in the service in many other ways, giving a superb rendering of their school song *"My Lighthouse"*. Their joy, love and harmony thrilled everyone in the hall, and seemed to reflect the spirit of the event – *"I will give you rest. Come!"*

It was also a delight to receive the Mayor and Mayoress of Fylde, Mr and Mrs Frank Andrews, the Mayor of St Anne's, Mrs Karen Harrison, and our MP for Fylde, Mr Andrew Snowden. Our dignitaries proved to be amiable and flexible guests who participated fully, and clearly appreciated the sense of oneness among our congregation.

The Our Lady Star of the Sea World Prayer Day *"Team"*, consisted of 15 volunteers from Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish. We were prayerfully and ably assisted throughout the service by another 12 volunteers who came from a variety of local Christian churches and communities. Their faith and love gave our team much appreciated encouragement and support. We all felt deeply at one with our local Sisters in Christ as together we planned and shared the truly amazing service which had been prepared by our Nigerian Sisters.

Enormous thanks must go to our WDP Band and Choir, led by Kate Cave, who master-minded the melodic and harmonic delivery of every single hymn, so that the congregation raised the roof in a joyous and fulfilling chorus of worship.

The Holy Spirit felt very close indeed.

The Nigerian ethos around the hall was exceptionally fitting to the occasion. Everything from bunting and flags, to iconic Nigerian images and colourful Nigerian clothing, accessories and hair clips. One of our primary school pupils, along with one of Kate's singers, added to the Igbo spirit, arriving in their full Nigerian traditional dress. Within the congregation, around 50 boys and girls, women and men, wore hair wraps, cravats and bows, all in colourful Ankara fabrics which had been made for us by Debra, a specially gifted member of our team (*who thankfully was an accomplished seamstress*). Another volunteer researched a recipe for Chin Chin, a traditional Nigerian snack.

Following the service, the parish centre lounge area was filled with laughter and love as we all scoffed delicious home baked cakes, scones and biscuits. The refreshments were impeccably presented by an incredible group of volunteers from our church, and the feast was enhanced by contributions from members of other local churches, turning our *"nibbles"* into a banquet. Such a perfect end to a truly ecumenical sharing of prayer and faith.

One final mention must go to the many generous benefactors who subsidised so many of our expenses. Their kindness was very much appreciated and meant that every penny of the £495 which our congregation raised in the collection was ploughed back into the World Day of Prayer funds to further promote the wonderful work they do.

Best of all, in Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish Hall, on March 6th 2026, there was a deep sense of unity and faith among all present. Christians from so many diverse traditions, all in equilibrium, not only with each other, but with so many thousands of worshippers right across the globe. Thank you everyone. Thank you Lord!

Next year's WDP event is on March 5th, 2027. It has been prepared by the women from the USA, and commemorates the World Day of Prayer Centenary. We're already looking forward to it!
Ann Higginson, Our Lady Star of the Sea RC Church, St Annes-on-Sea, World Day of Prayer "Team Member"

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.

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