



The Official Newspaper to the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 380 + June '26

INSIDE: Sacred Heart Church Blackpool, celebrates 170th anniversary Full story & pictures on page 8 >



# June is for Jesus

Celebrate The Solemnity of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Friday 12th June 2026

Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you and with a lively sorrow for my sins. I offer you this poor heart of mine.

Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will.

Grant me, good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you.

Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions; give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.

Within your heart I place my every care. In every need let me come to you with humble trust saying, Heart of Jesus, help me. Amen.

**“ We must never be discouraged or give way to anxiety... but ever have recourse to the adorable Heart of Jesus**

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque ”

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# The Catholic VOICE

of Lancaster



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(Main) Cancel The Debt - Flame Youth March in 2025. (Below) Campaigner signing at St Anthony of Padua, Preston. Bishop Paul signs the petition. Petition signing at Christ The Good Shepherd, Cumbria.



# The campaign to tackle the global debt crisis continues

Last year, 500 parishes in England and Wales joined with the global church campaign to tackle the debt crisis that's having a devastating impact on low-income countries.

This includes a wonderful response in Lancaster Diocese with over 40 parishes taking part. Pope Francis called repeatedly for action on this debt crisis in the Jubilee Year, and 35,000 people signed CAFOD's petition in response. This year we want to build on the momentum of 2025, when we saw some hopeful signs. All countries borrow money. But due to a complex set of factors, low-income countries are being pushed into a deepening debt crisis, forced to pay ever higher interest rates to wealthy lenders. Often, they have paid their original debt back, but spiralling interest means they will never break the cycle. Money that should be spent on food, healthcare, and education is flowing out of countries that can least afford it. Governments across the Global South have an impossible choice between serving their people or paying their creditors.

Wesley Chibamba, Caritas Africa's Policy and Advocacy Officer, explains why this is causing terrible suffering: "We have to find a solution. At the moment people are dying because they can't access healthcare. Children cannot go to school. People are going hungry and children are sleeping on empty stomachs because the governments have debt obligations. Governments don't have the capacity to respond to any kind of humanitarian crisis, like a flood or drought – they don't have the funds."

In the Jubilee Year, as a result of campaigning efforts around the world, the debt crisis was firmly on the agendas of international summits, with decision-makers agreeing that urgent action is needed.

According to Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia: "The current debt crisis represents a profound failure of our global economic system... If a mother cannot access prenatal care because the government has cut healthcare spending to service debt, if children are sent home from their classroom when the teachers are not paid, and if communities cannot rebuild after disasters because the resources are diverted to foreign creditors, we must acknowledge that there has not just been a serious economic failure but a moral one."

The whole debt system needs to change, to make it fair and sustainable for low-income countries. Our government has the power to play a key role in bringing that change about, because it is hosting the G20 in 2027 - a crucial gathering of the world's 20 most powerful economies. These leaders have the power to fix the global debt system.

That's why we must keep building the call for debt justice throughout this year, and why CAFOD is inviting parishes to sign a new petition this spring, and build on the momentum of 2025.

Please join us — let's make real change happen. The stakes couldn't be higher, as the lives of millions of our sisters and brothers around the world are being ravaged by this crisis that is only worsening.

As Wesley Chibamba says: "It is not an issue of compassion, it is an issue of justice. If you care for humanity and development, we urge you to support the debt justice campaign."

Please see [cafod.org.uk/cancelthedebt](http://cafod.org.uk/cancelthedebt)  
Thank you for your support. Patrick Gardner, CAFOD (Lancaster)

## Bishop Paul Swarbrick invites us to implore and explore the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June

**The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is the focus for our prayer and devotions this month. Jesus says of Himself that He is 'meek and humble of heart'. He shows us the heart of the Father who sent His Son as Saviour of mankind, sent to reveal the love of God to fallen humanity.**

As I look around me in the month of June, so much cries for my attention. So many are also crying for an end to fear, violence and intolerance. The feeble efforts we make to try and put things right hardly inspire hope for a better future.

But rather than sink into a permanent state of gloom, I notice the heart of Christ, beating away within that strong frame, sometimes faster, sometimes more steadily, but always beating, doing its job to keep Him alive, keeping Love alive.

And perhaps that is the thing we should recall in these times; We are the Body of Christ, He is the Head, and the Heart. He continues working in order for the Body to function.

I look around and see all that the Church is doing in spite of so much discouragement. Yes, there are those who have given up and it might be said of them that their heart wasn't in it.

But, His is, beating as a steady echo to our own often erratic heart-beat.

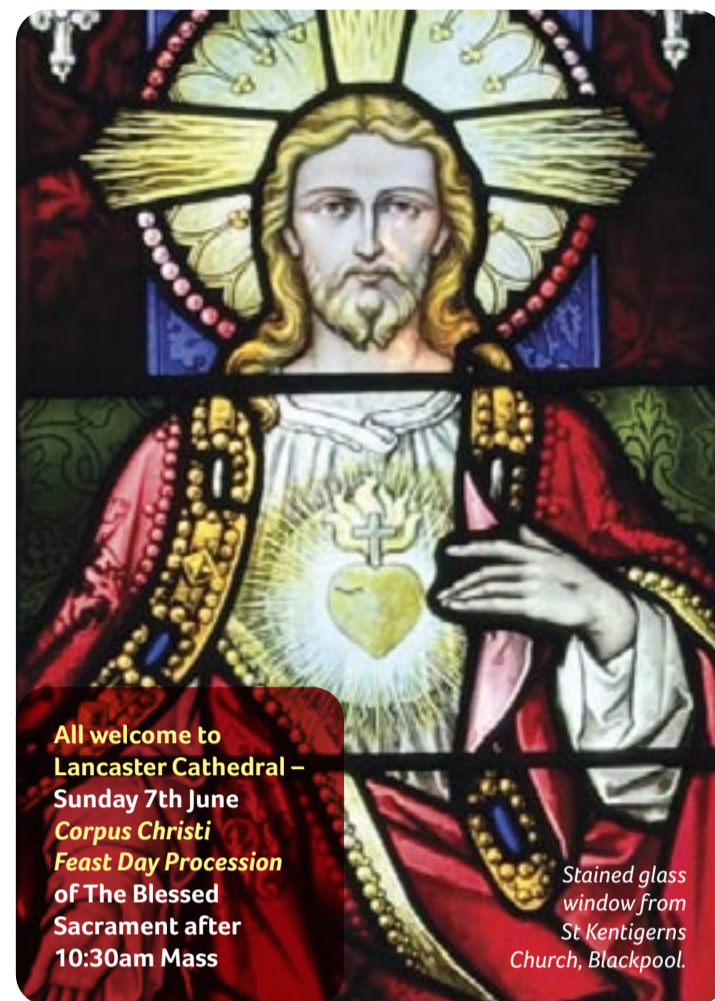
In the strength of the Spirit we draw breath and offer ourselves to the Lord, that He might do with us whatever He wishes to bring about His reign. All is not lost, His heart beats in you. Remember how He said: "Make your home in me as I make mine in you."

His heart beats in you through Baptism, through Holy Communion, through the Gift of the Spirit, through your call to follow Him in so many ways, through anointing, through contrition and forgiveness.

*With My Prayers & Blessings*

**+Paul**

**Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster**



**All welcome to Lancaster Cathedral – Sunday 7th June Corpus Christi Feast Day Procession of The Blessed Sacrament after 10:30am Mass**

*Stained glass window from St Kentigerns Church, Blackpool.*

## Bringing flowers of the rarest and fairest at the Crowning of Mary at St Williams Primary School



*Pupils at St William's Primary School at the Crowning of Our Lady, Queen of the May.*

**St William's Catholic Primary School warmly welcomed its community into school for a beautiful and prayerful Crowning of Mary celebration. Parents, grandparents, governors, staff and children gathered together in the hall to honour Our Blessed Mother in this cherished Catholic tradition.**

The service was filled with reverence and joy as pupils led the community in prayer, hymns and reflection. A number of children were chosen for this special occasion to take part in a procession, reverently making their way through the hall as they carried flowers to place before the statue of Mary.

The highlight of the celebration was the crowning itself, when selected children carefully placed a crown upon the statue, symbolising Mary as Queen of Heaven and a model of faith, love and humility for

all. The atmosphere was one of calm reflection and shared devotion, as those present joined together in gratitude and prayer. Following this special moment, the community continued in procession outside to the school's prayer garden, where a new statue of Mary has recently been installed. This provided a further opportunity for prayer and reflection in a peaceful outdoor setting, deepening the sense of shared faith and unity.

It was a truly lovely occasion, strengthening the bonds between school and home, and offering a meaningful opportunity for the whole community to come together in faith.

St William's continues to nurture spiritual growth and celebrate traditions that lie at the heart of Catholic life.  
*Heather Hogarth,  
St William's Catholic Primary School, Pilling*

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## Prayer, retreat and youth mission in the Lake District

### James Gallagher reflects on faith, vocation and helping young people encounter Christ at Castlerigg Manor.

**F**or many young Catholics across the Diocese of Lancaster, Castlerigg Manor is a familiar place of faith, friendship and retreat. Situated above Derwentwater near Keswick, the Manor has for many years welcomed school and parish groups from across the region for prayer, reflection and outdoor adventure through the work of the Castlerigg Manor Youth Service.

Behind the retreats, discussions and activities is a dedicated team of young Catholic leaders helping to accompany visitors during their stay. One of those currently serving at Castlerigg Manor is James Gallagher, originally from Aberdeen, whose own journey of faith eventually led him to youth ministry in Cumbria. Speaking to *The Catholic Voice*, James reflected warmly on his upbringing and the gradual deepening of his faith during his teenage years.

Born in Aberdeen, James spent part of his early childhood in Louisiana in the United States before eventually returning to Scotland, where he grew up. Although his family attended Mass regularly, he explained that faith was not always something openly discussed at home.

*“My dad is Catholic and my mum is from the Free Church tradition,”* he said. *“We always went to Mass and said grace before meals, but faith wasn’t really talked about a huge amount.”*

As he grew older, however, James began asking deeper questions for himself. *“At around twelve or thirteen I started thinking more seriously about things,”* he explained. *“I was already serving at*

*the altar, but I started asking myself: do I actually believe this? Am I really Christian, or am I just going because it’s what we do?”*

A turning point came when he returned to the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time since childhood.

*“I decided to go to confession one day when I was about fourteen or fifteen,”* he recalled. *“I hadn’t been since my first confession. But after that experience something really changed for me. I found real love and mercy there, and from that point I genuinely wanted to live my faith.”*

That renewed commitment continued during his years studying Economics at the University of Edinburgh, where he became involved in the Catholic chaplaincy.

*“I wanted to meet other young Catholics,”* he said. *“At school I’d often felt quite alone in my faith, so getting involved with the chaplaincy at university was important for me.”*

Alongside his studies, James became increasingly interested in evangelisation and youth ministry, eventually leading him towards Castlerigg Manor.

Initially, he joined as an intern — effectively volunteering while receiving accommodation, meals and a small stipend — before later being offered a permanent role as a programme leader. *“I absolutely loved it,”* he said. *“You’re accompanying young people, leading discussions, helping on retreats and building relationships. Then eventually I was encouraged to apply for a full-time role.”*

Today James is one of the leaders helping to oversee the day-to-day running of retreats at Castlerigg. His role now includes organising programmes, supporting younger team members, working with teachers and helping shape the experience of visiting groups. *“It’s definitely more than just a job,”* he said. *“There’s a sense of vocation about it. You’re trying to help young people encounter Jesus, but you’re also supporting your team, accompanying teachers and trying to create a welcoming atmosphere for everyone.”*

Each year, schools from across the Diocese and beyond visit Castlerigg Manor, with retreats combining prayer, worship, discussion and outdoor activities in the unique setting of the Lake District.

James believes many young people today are far more open to conversations about faith than people sometimes assume.

*“There really does seem to be a growing openness,”* he said. *“Not every young person is suddenly ready to become deeply involved in the Church, of course, but many are genuinely curious and willing to listen.”*

He explained that ministry often begins simply through authentic relationships and positive encounters.

*“Sometimes the first step is simply meeting Christians who are joyful and sincere,”* he said. *“Young people can recognise authenticity very quickly.”*

Alongside his work at Castlerigg Manor, James is also involved in discipleship and evangelisation initiatives outside

the retreat centre, balancing additional commitments with the busy retreat schedule.

*“It can be tiring at times,”* he admitted, *“but it all comes from the same mission. It’s ultimately about helping people grow closer to Christ.”*

Reflecting on the wider importance of youth ministry, James emphasised the value of accompaniment and patience. *“We try to do everything we can practically, but ultimately we hand it over to God,”* he said. *“You pray for the young people, you offer things up for them, and you trust that the Lord is working in ways you may never fully see.”*

He also encouraged young Catholics who may be considering ministry or volunteering within the Church not to be afraid to explore where God may be leading them.

*“My advice would be to take your time and get involved somewhere,”* he said. *“Find a community or ministry where you can learn and grow alongside others. You don’t have to have everything figured out immediately.”*

As the Diocese of Lancaster continues to place renewed emphasis on youth ministry and evangelisation, places such as Castlerigg Manor remain a vital part of that mission — offering young people not only activities and retreats, but also opportunities for prayer, friendship and encounter with Christ in the beauty of the Lake District. *Andrew Wygladala*

For more information on Lancaster Youth Service visit: [www.castleriggmanor.com](http://www.castleriggmanor.com)



(Middle Photo) Left to right: Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop of Liverpool Rt Rev Tom Williams, Dr Eric Bolton, Incoming Vice president Mark Conroy and his Wife Maxine, Rt Rev John Arnold Bishop of Salford, Mrs Ann Dean Guest Speaker former High Sheriff of Lancaster, Ken Dennis and his wife Ann, Incoming President Rt Rev John Sherrington Archbishop of Liverpool, Outgoing President Paul Briers and his Wife Liz. Front row: Tom Ibbotson Chairman of the Society.

## Broughton Catholic Charitable Society continues a tradition of charity, fellowship and prayer at annual Whitsun Gathering

**F**or almost 240 years, the Broughton Catholic Charitable Society has quietly continued a tradition of Catholic charity, fellowship and prayer rooted deeply in the history of Lancashire. Founded in 1787 at the Golden Ball Inn near Preston, the Society is believed to be the oldest Catholic charitable society in England.

The Society traces its origins to the aftermath of a devastating smallpox epidemic in the Fylde area during the eighteenth century. Local Catholic farming families came together to support widows and children left in hardship, offering financial assistance and practical help in working the land. From these acts of Christian charity emerged a permanent Society dedicated both to helping those in need and to praying for the living and the dead.

Those founding principles remain at the heart of the Society today. Its aims continue to be *“the spiritual benefits of its members, both living and dead, and the relief of hardship, wherever it is encountered, by making grants of money.”* Members share in Masses offered throughout the year, while charitable grants are distributed to individuals, families and organisations experiencing hardship.

Those enduring traditions were once again evident as clergy and lay members gathered for the Society’s Annual General Meeting and Whitsun celebrations in Garstang following Mass at St Mary’s Church, Newhouse.

This year’s AGM welcomed a distinguished gathering of guests and church leaders including the Archbishop of Liverpool, Archbishop John Sherrington, the Bishop of Salford, Bishop John Arnold, and Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Liverpool, Bishop Tom Williams.

Principal speaker Ann Dean DL, former High Sheriff of Lancashire and Deputy Lord Lieutenant, reflected on her year as High Sheriff of Lancashire during 2013-14 and the traditions associated with the historic office. Drawing on her background in public relations and business leadership, she also spoke about the importance of networking, encouraging innovation and supporting early-stage businesses in developing their *“big ideas.”*

Mrs Dean reflected on her experience as a woman serving on major company boards, including the Institute of Directors in London, and stressed the importance of service, philanthropy and giving back

to local communities. Her address highlighted how charitable work and strong civic leadership can bring about real change in both Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

The meeting also marked an important transition in the leadership of the Society. Paul Briers completed his year as President and members warmly welcomed Ken Dennis as the Society’s new President, with Mark Conroy becoming Vice President.

Ken, who joined the Society as a Life Member in 2011, is well known throughout Catholic and civic life in the North West. A convert to the Catholic faith, a member of the Catenian Association and Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, he currently serves as Diocesan Property Manager for the Diocese of Lancaster.

Although no cheque presentations took place during the AGM itself, members heard how the Society has continued its long tradition of almsgiving throughout the past year. A total of £14,500 has been distributed through five grants, all funded through donations and legacies from members. Among those supported were Stella Maris, which ministers to seafarers and fishers in ports across the North West and around the world; Tender Nursing Care, which provides overnight home care for people with life-limiting illnesses; Castlerigg Manor’s Youth Service Internship Scheme; and the IMPACT Youth Group, helping young people grow in faith, confidence and leadership. Support was also given to young Alfie Ganley and his family following major heart surgery and ongoing rehabilitation.

Throughout the afternoon there was a strong sense that, despite changing times, the Society remains faithful to the vision of its founders.

Alongside the formal business of the AGM came the familiar warmth of shared meals, conversation and traditional after-dinner speeches which have characterised Broughton Society gatherings for generations.

As another Whit Tuesday gathering concluded, the Broughton Catholic Charitable Society once again demonstrated how a tradition born out of hardship nearly two and a half centuries ago continues to provide a living witness to Catholic faith, generosity and community life in Lancashire today.

*Andrew Wygladala*

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Ffion, Rosie, Bella and Neveah from Year 10.

(Above & right) Pupils in the Saint Bede's Rosary Group pray the Rosary.



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## Saint Bede's Catholic High School celebrates Rosary Group success

*Saint Bede's pupils Thomas Evans and Joseph Obazee write about their weekly Rosary Group and how important it is for the students to pray together.*

**A**t St Bede's we have a rosary group that meets every Thursday lunchtime but in May it was even more important to gather together, because May is the month of Mary.

Catholics don't worship Mary but we honour her. The prayer comes from when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and Jesus was brought into our world, there are mysteries that we think about as we pray the rosary and we repeat the prayers over and over. These mysteries are about the lives of Jesus and Mary.

We get around 15-18 students that come to our Rosary and many of them are involved in the Society Of St Joseph, but we get a big range from year 7 all the way up to year 11.

Sometimes I can lose concentration when we get to the 5th mystery of the rosary, but most of the time I would say that lots of the students keep focused

and do really well. If a small amount of people attend the rosary group, then we always carry on because no matter how many people come, the prayers are still important and are still listened to. We know that Mary takes our intentions to her Son, Jesus. When I finish the Rosary I feel like there has been a big weight taken off my shoulders, because you can pray for the things that have gone wrong or what you have done wrong and you feel a sense of relief. I also feel quite proud of myself because, for me, completing the rosary is a big thing and I cherish that feeling.

Many pupils pray the Rosary because they say it helps them with worries and anxiety, and some just find it a relaxing experience. Whatever the reason everyone is welcome and our school has a great devotion to Our Mother Mary.

*By Thomas Evans and Joseph Obazee (yr 7)  
 Mrs J Ball, School Chaplain,  
 Saint Bede's Catholic High School, Lytham*

# Diocesan “Year of Listening” launches at St Mary’s Primary School & St Wulstan’s and Edmund’s Catholic Academy

**O**n Friday 15th May, children and staff from St Mary’s Catholic Primary School and St Wulstan’s and St Edmund’s Catholic Academy came together in unity and faith to launch the diocesan “Year of Listening,” as directed by Bishop Paul Swarbrick.

As the two Catholic primary schools in Fleetwood, this special gathering provided an opportunity to strengthen our shared mission and reflect together on how we are called to live out the Gospel in our everyday lives.

The launch centred on reflecting upon Dilexi Te (“I Have Loved You”), the first apostolic exhortation of Pope Leo XIV, building upon the work initiated by Pope Francis.

In this powerful message, Pope Leo reminds us of God’s deep love for the poor, the vulnerable and those who can often feel forgotten. Through

prayer, scripture, discussion and shared activities, the children explored what it means to truly listen — to God, to one another and to the voices of those most in need.

The Year of Listening encourages all members of our school communities to grow in compassion, understanding and action. Together, both schools are committed to continuing this journey throughout the year by finding ways to serve others, stand up for justice and live out the values of Catholic Social Teaching within our local community and beyond.

Together with Father Stephen Talbutt, this shared celebration was a wonderful witness to the strength of the Catholic community in Fleetwood and the importance of working together in faith, hope and love.


*Catherine Sewell, Class Teacher/RE Lead,  
St. Mary’s Catholic Primary School*



*Fr Stephen Talbutt and pupils at The Year of Listening launch day.*



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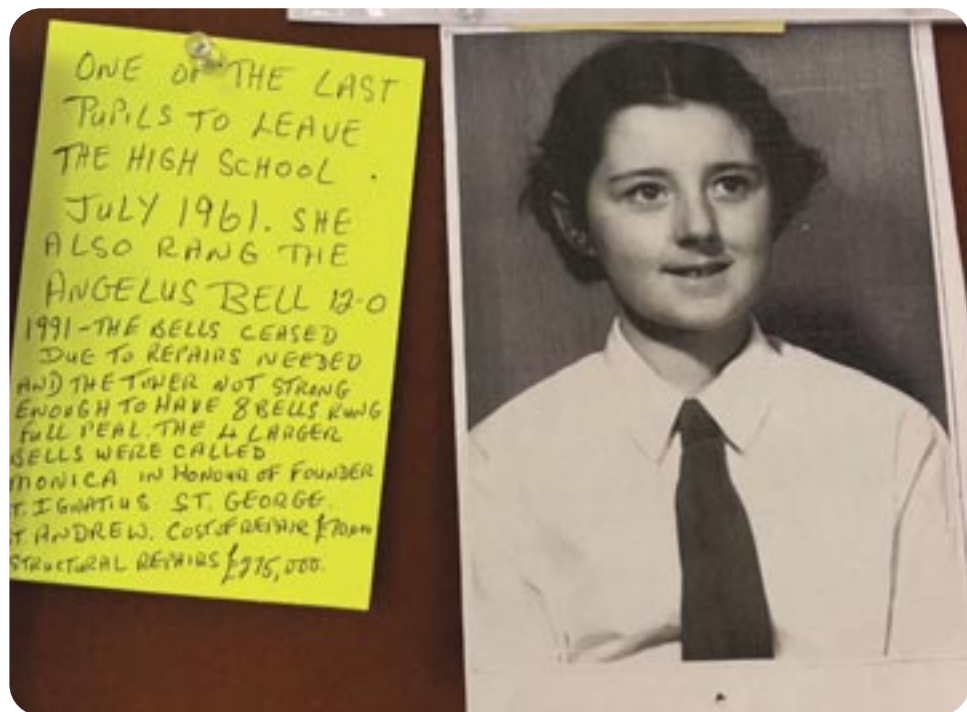
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(Left) Ann Hutchinson at The Sacred Heart Church Blackpool, and a photo of her as one of the last pupils to attend the school there in 1961.

(Below) The stunning stained glass window depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus appearing to St Margaret Mary Alacoque and dedication to The Sacred Heart Church Blackpool underneath.



# Sacred Heart Church Blackpool celebrating 170th Anniversary with rare picture gallery

**A**s part of the 170th Year celebrations at Sacred Heart Church, Talbot Square, Blackpool Town Centre, parishioner Ann Hutchinson, one of the last pupils to attend the beloved and iconic Sacred Heart School next to the church, is part of the team that has created and collated a beautiful and rare archive photo gallery of treasured memories of the parish and school.

Ann is pictured above and has a rare photo of herself as a schoolgirl at Sacred Heart School Blackpool. Ann was also a bell ringer and remembers fondly ringing the bell as well as walking with the other

pupils up Talbot Road for their lunch. So many incredible pictures have been gathered by Ann and other parishioners and the colourful display boards are well worth a trip down memory lane if you are visiting The Sacred Heart Church in Blackpool. You may even see yourself in some of the photos. There are poems, news stories, interesting detailed history of the parish building and fascinating stories of the founders and the church's stunning architecture.

**Mass on The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus will be celebrated on Friday 12th June at 12 Noon.**  
All welcome. *Pearl Mina*





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These formal events make up only a part of our visitors. Individuals and families of all faiths and none visit our well - we are busy at all times of the day. Hindus come to pray for fertility. Muslims come because of the many references to “*Mary the Mother of Jesus*” in the Koran. People who are troubled come to reflect and find peace. It really is a place for everybody.

Yet this amazing place is run and cared for by a very small band of volunteers who, like many of us, are getting on a bit. Furthermore, there is an increasing need to invest in the shrine's future.

Whilst we are patching the potholes on the access road, we will need costly repairs if we are to maintain safe access in the longer term. Furthermore, we need to repair the benches and upgrade the pathways. Besides the need for maintenance, we are also looking at ways of enhancing the shrine. Ideas include:

- a “welcome board” inviting walkers on the adjacent public footpath the “come and rest

*awhile in our garden*” so that passers-by can appreciate our special place and learn something about it

- labelling the plants to help visitors appreciate the variety of nature
- placing, close to the well, some reflections on the importance of water in faith and on the practical need for safe water across the globe
- a “*Way of the Magnificat*” to complement the existing Way of the Cross

We hope that visitors would find these reflections helpful as an additional aid to prayer. Because of the number of visitors who do not share our faith but draw spiritual strength from the well and its surrounds, such information, speaking of our beliefs and values, gives an opportunity to understand something of our faith - a quiet evangelism.

To ensure the future of the shrine and its place in the spiritual life of people in the diocese and beyond, we need support, in particular benefactors to help us with the capital costs of the upgrading.

We would also like to set up a diocesan “*Friends of Ladyewell*” to help with the continued running of the shrine. Please pray that our efforts may be successful and that, by playing our small part, alongside past and future generations, our lovely shrine can look with confidence to its Millennium and beyond. **If you would like to help us, please contact: Stephen Garsed at [stephen.garsed@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.garsed@gmail.com) or Fr Augustine at [augustineobiagwu@gmail.com](mailto:augustineobiagwu@gmail.com)**

*Stephen Garsed*

**Paul Briers reflects on the spiritual journey:**

*“The Benedictine monastery in the mountains of Montserrat is such a special and very beautiful place. We experienced eleven reflective talks with deep discussion. Prayer, silence and fraternity along the way. Many laughs and sharing of anxieties and questions.*

*Thanks be to God for a truly grace filled week and being able to share time with my fellow candidates and also the hospitality of the Monks and to meet with the Abbot too.*

*A lovely high point was to spend time in Manresa in the cave where St Ignatius of Loyola wrote the spiritual exercises.*

*Deo Gratias.”*

# Finding peace in prayer on a Spanish mountain

**By Deacon Bernard Farrell-Roberts**

(Main) The Monastery in the mountains of Montserrat. (Right) From left to right: Deacon Bernard Farrell-Roberts, John Bennett, Paul Briers, Chris Houghton and Fr Stephen Talbutt.



## Website, Graphic & Logo Design for Parishes & Charities

[christiancreatedirectory.com/rob-hotchkiss](http://christiancreatedirectory.com/rob-hotchkiss)

**O**n 1 May 2026, three men set off for Manchester Airport and their diaconal pre-ordination retreat — with a difference. Paul Briers, John Bennett and Chris Houghton were heading for Spain and the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, high in the mountains of Catalonia, far from the usual setting for a diocesan retreat.

The idea came about after Deacon Bernard Farrell-Roberts, Director of Diaconal Formation for the Diocese, shared memories of making his own pre-ordination retreat at Montserrat many years earlier. His love for this famous Marian shrine quickly became infectious, and before long Paul, John and Chris wanted to experience it for themselves. Fr Stephen Talbutt joined Deacon Bernard in leading the retreat.

Montserrat, situated around 30 kilometres from Barcelona, attracts more than two million visitors every year. The monastery is home to the famous statue of Our Lady of Montserrat, known affectionately as La Moreneta — “the Black Madonna”. According to tradition, the statue was discovered in the year 880 after local shepherd children saw mysterious light and heard heavenly music coming from a cave on the mountain.

The retreat focused on the eight actions proper to the deacon during Mass, and how each reflects the deacon’s vocation as a servant of Christ and His Church. Reflections centred on proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, leading the

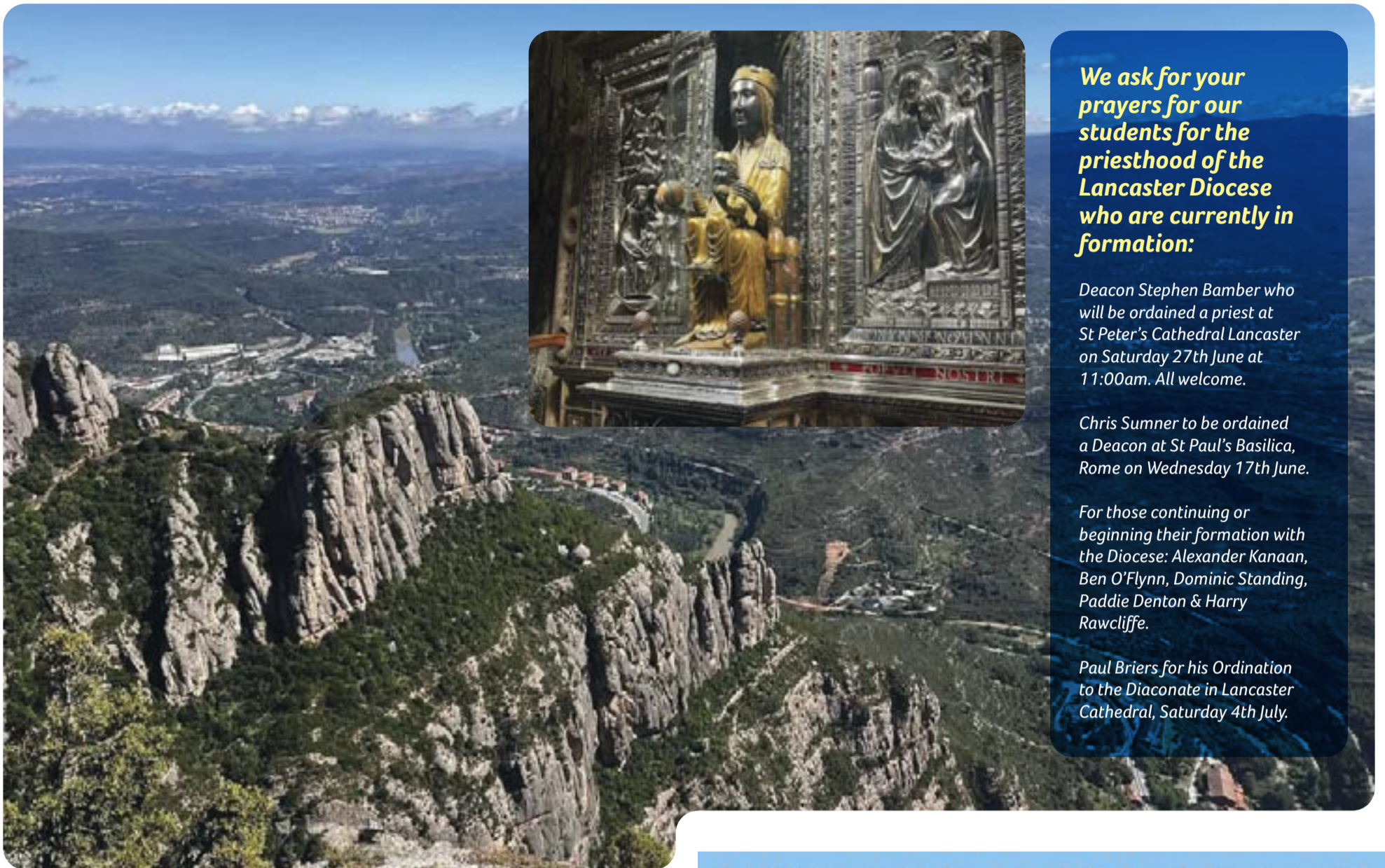
intercessions, preparing the chalice, assisting at the altar, inviting the sign of peace, distributing the Precious Blood and giving the dismissal at the end of Mass.

Each day included the Divine Office, Eucharistic adoration, silence, spiritual conferences and shared meals with the Benedictine monks. There was also time for conversation, walking in the mountains, and visits to places associated with St Ignatius of Loyola, who spent time praying and writing at Montserrat before founding the Jesuits.

The retreat also gave each of the candidates time to reflect on the very different paths that had led them towards ordination.

John Bennett, a lifelong parishioner of The Willows Catholic Church, first sensed a calling to the diaconate more than twenty years ago during conversations with Fr Paul Johnstone. After careers including work as a police officer and truck driver, John now serves as a prison chaplain. Following a serious motorbike accident and long recovery, he says his faith deepened and his vocation became clearer. Encouraged by Fr Andrew Broster and Canon Adrian Towers, and supported throughout by his wife Joanne, John hopes to serve the Church especially through pastoral care and chaplaincy ministry.

For Paul Briers, the journey towards ordination began in childhood following a difficult period of family breakdown



**We ask for your prayers for our students for the priesthood of the Lancaster Diocese who are currently in formation:**

Deacon Stephen Bamber who will be ordained a priest at St Peter's Cathedral Lancaster on Saturday 27th June at 11:00am. All welcome.

Chris Sumner to be ordained a Deacon at St Paul's Basilica, Rome on Wednesday 17th June.

For those continuing or beginning their formation with the Diocese: Alexander Kanaan, Ben O'Flynn, Dominic Standing, Paddie Denton & Harry Rawcliffe.

Paul Briers for his Ordination to the Diaconate in Lancaster Cathedral, Saturday 4th July.

while growing up in Lytham St Anne's. As a young boy he wandered into Our Lady Star of the Sea Church and found himself continually drawn back. Though he came from a non-religious family and had not been baptised, Paul says he felt strongly called towards the Catholic faith. By the age of thirteen he had been baptised, confirmed and received into the Church, and soon afterwards became an altar server. Over the years he has remained deeply committed to serving at the altar and encouraging younger servers, eventually becoming National Honorary President of the Guild of St Stephen.

Reflecting on his vocation, Paul describes it not as one dramatic moment, but as a series of gentle promptings from God over many years.

Alongside the times of prayer and reflection were moments of simple joy and fraternity. The group travelled on the mountain funicular railway and the cremallera rack railway, explored the mountain paths, listened to the famous boys' choir, and celebrated private English Masses with Fr Stephen Talbutt in beautiful chapels overlooking the breathtaking scenery.

Christopher Houghton, from Keswick, describes himself as a "cradle Catholic" whose return to regular practice of the faith began during the COVID lockdown.

Working as a dispensing supervisor in a local pharmacy, Christopher rediscovered prayer through the Divine Office and experienced what he describes as a

profound moment of spiritual renewal while praying Morning Prayer at home. That experience eventually led him towards formation for the permanent diaconate.

Christopher has continued serving his parish as a sacristan, altar server and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and says he is looking forward to living out "the ministry of Christ the servant".

One morning, Paul opened his bedroom window to discover a mountain goat staring directly back at him.

Yet perhaps the most moving moments came each evening after Vespers, when the tourists had left and silence returned to the mountain. The retreatants would gather in the organ loft of the basilica to listen to the monks singing Night Prayer in near-total darkness, with only the illuminated statue of Our Lady visible at the far end of the church.

As the week drew to a close, Paul, John and Christopher each spoke of a profound sense of peace and calm which had helped prepare them spiritually for ordination to the diaconate at Lancaster Cathedral on 4 July.

Please keep Paul, John and Christopher in your prayers as they continue their final preparations for ordination, that they may become faithful servants of Christ and His people, following the example of the One who came not to be served, but to serve.

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## Spirituality Now With Ursula Walker



## The Sacrament of the Sick

**O**ver the winter months from mid November to March, I was struggling with illness. The doctors could not find out what the cause of it was. All the blood tests came back normal and apart from feeling exhausted I felt perfectly fine. My body just wanted to close down and sleep. I could go to bed at 8.00pm at night and not wake up until 9.30am in the morning. I would potter around the house and some days would need to go and have a lie down in the afternoon just to get through the day. Other days I would be fine. It was very unpredictable. The hardest thing about this was that I had no idea when it would end and my body would return to normal.

For the most part of this I felt quite at peace about it and felt that I just had to “ride it out”, that my body would sort itself out again at some point in the future. However, at one point I did get very down and went to see a friend and had a good chat about things. This made me feel much better and lifted my spirit.

During His public ministry, Jesus healed people—the blind, the lame, etc. His healing touched both body and soul. In most of the accounts of the healing miracles, the ill person comes to a deeper conviction of faith.

The healing ministry of our Lord continues through His Church. Jesus instructed the apostles and sent them out:

*“They expelled many demons, anointed the sick with oil and worked many cures” (Mk. 6:13).*

St. James provided a clear teaching regarding the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:

*“Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the priests of the Church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” (Jm. 5:14-15).*

The Church offers us something much more than a chat with a friend. The Anointing of the Sick is special because it offers spiritual strength, peace and courage to overcome the anxiety and worry that often accompany serious illness or old age. Rather than only being for the dying, it brings God’s grace for healing—physically or spiritually—and forgives sins, uniting the sufferer with Christ’s passion.

Two key aspects make this sacrament special are spiritual healing. The primary effect is to give spiritual strength by providing peace and courage to face suffering. The sick person is anointed with oil to give them strength to endure their suffering.

The second aspect that makes this Sacrament special is the forgiveness of sins. If a person is dying and is unable to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation this sacrament removes those sins. This can be especially comforting when somebody is dying.

This Sacrament used to be only given to those who were at the point of death and you may remember it as Extreme Unction (*Extreme Anointing*). This meant it was kept for those who were at the point of death and the priest was called in at the last minute.

Now it is seen as being needed by those who are not just at the point of death but for anybody who is in need of healing/ strengthening. It is given to people who are about to have a serious operation; those struggling with old age and the physical and mental struggles this brings and those with long term illness.

It is much more beneficial than just a chat with a friend!

For a slightly longer version of this article go to [www.lancasterspirituality.uk](http://www.lancasterspirituality.uk)  
**Ursula Walker, Diocesan Spiritual Rep**  
[Spiritualrep@lrcd.org.uk](mailto:Spiritualrep@lrcd.org.uk)

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# What's On June & July '26

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](http://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](mailto:SpiritualRep@lrcd.org.uk)

## Our Lady of Fatima statue and relics to visit Lancaster Cathedral Saturday 20th 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 are 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. More details on page 16.

## The Relics Tour of St Gerard Majella visit Lancaster Cathedral Monday 15th June

This year is the 300th anniversary of the birth of St Gerard Majella. As part of the celebrations, his relics will be touring around England and Wales. In June, his relics will be visiting Lancaster Cathedral on and St. Walburges Preston as part of the tour. For timings and information check on: [www.lancastercathedral.org.uk](http://www.lancastercathedral.org.uk) / Tel: 01524 384820.



More details on pg16.

## Shrine Church of St Walburge's, Preston Institute of Christ The King, Sovereign Priest

There are lots of beautiful events to take part in over at St Walburges and help raise money for their restoration fund.



**Corpus Christi Deanery Procession** Sunday 7th June, 2pm:  
The Hall will remain open after Mass. Bring your packed lunch and your own flower petals. All welcome.

**St Walburge's Summer Fair** Sunday 14th June 12-3pm:  
Summer Fair in the hall in aid of the church roof restoration project. Lots of fun for all ages. Please come along and invite your friends and family. Raffle tickets will be on sale. We are in need of quality raffle prizes, bottles of any kind for the tombola, unwanted gifts and bric-a-brac. We also need cakes on the day. If you would like to help please contact [preston@icksp.org.uk](mailto:preston@icksp.org.uk)

## Day of Renewal St Clare's Church, Preston

**Saturday 27 June** from 10am-4pm at St Clare's, Sharoe Green Lane, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 9HH. The guest speaker will be Philip McParland speaking on "Love, not Fear – The Good News of Jesus" Philip is a retreat director, workshop facilitator and spiritual guide. He provides a service called Soul Space which helps people to discover their true selves and to experience soulful conversation in their relationships. Please note we will be starting the day with Mass in the church at 10am. After Mass we will meet in the Parish Hall for tea and coffee, followed by our usual programme of praise and worship, inspiring talks and adoration. Please bring a packed lunch - tea and coffee will be available.

## Looking forward to July...

**Boarbank Hall – Our Lady in Latin**  
10th - 12th - 13th July 2026. Learn about the Latin and the music of our best known hymns to Our Lady. Beginners welcome.  
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Mon, Jul 20 - Friday, July 24th, 10am to 4pm each day. Led by Sr. Mary Stella.

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STARTING AT  
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*"The Sacrament of the Sick is not simply about anointing those who are physically ill. It is a sacrament for the whole Church, reminding us that every one of us needs the strength, healing and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Through this sacrament, God draws close to us in weakness, fear and suffering, bringing grace, peace and hope."*

**Healing Mass with the Sacrament of the Sick**  
First Friday 3rd July at 2pm.  
St Joseph's RC Church, Ansdell.  
**All Welcome.**

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**Qualifications needed:**  
• Experience in complex care, paediatrics, or similar clinical settings (preferred).  
• Competency or willingness to be trained in tracheostomy, ventilation, PEG care, and cough assist.  
• Reliability, patience, and a child-centred approach.  
• Ability to communicate clearly and work well within a team and family environment.

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Nafisa.Cutlerywala@candhealthcare.co.uk



## Preston Society For the Protection of Unborn Children unite to raise awareness of the horror of abortion

*Defending human dignity begins with protecting the unborn*

**O**n Saturday 25th April around 20 people from around the Lancaster Diocese gathered beside London Road in Preston to make a silent witness to the horror of abortion.

We would like to say a big thank you to our dedicated team at the SPUC Preston Branch for the well-attended Pro-life Chain.

We were joined by many people from parishes across the Diocese and people came from as far as Kendal, St Edward's parish and we had lots of support from St Walburge's Preston joining in with prayers and raising awareness.

With recent disturbing political developments, such witness to the sanctity of life and the evil of abortion is needed now more than ever before.

Since the passing of the Abortion Act in 1967, almost 11 million babies have been lost to abortion in England and Wales. Almost three quarters of these abortions now take place at home with no medical supervision.

With the gruesome decriminalisation of self-induced abortion up to birth being passed by parliament recently, the number of babies lost and women harmed is set to get worse. It is increasingly crucial that we bear witness to the sanctity of life.

The Pro Life Chain event was organised by the Preston Branch of SPUC which re-formed a year ago and we are gaining momentum. So far we have conducted letter writing campaigns and delivered leaflets door to door.

We meet on the 2nd Saturday of the month in Lancaster Room at St Joseph's Church, Skeffington Road, Preston, PR1 5IQ. Our next meeting is on Saturday June 13th at 1:30pm for Prayers and 2:00pm the meeting begins. All are welcome to come along and help support the campaign.

If you would like to find out more and if you would like to join the Pro Life Chain for next year please email: [spucpreston@gmail.com](mailto:spucpreston@gmail.com) or call **07523 183758** and leave a message for one of our team to get back to you.

Maria Platt, Preston SPUC

SPUC is the world's first and UK's largest pro-life campaigning and educational organisation

At SPUC, we value every human life, from conception to natural death. Since 1967, we've united communities across the UK to protect and stand with the most vulnerable among us.

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## March for Life

Will you join the March For Life in September 2026. Get in touch with Preston SPUC for more details. Led by Bishop Paul Swarbrick with 13 Bishops from across the UK joining in. Contact: Nicola Randall, Preston Branch Secretary, Society For The Protection of Unborn Children.

**The 2026 March for Life UK in London is scheduled to take place on Saturday, September 5, 2026.**

Preston SPUC are arranging a coach from Lancaster. To register your interest please contact: [spucpreston@gmail.com](mailto:spucpreston@gmail.com) or call Tel: **07523 183758**

The annual pro-life event is a full-day gathering typically featuring speeches, family-friendly events, and training summits prior to the main march. *Key details for the day:*

- The March: takes place through the streets of central London
- Pre-March Events: Activities often include the Pro-life Family Summit and a Youth Summit

[www.marchforlife.co.uk](http://www.marchforlife.co.uk)



Centre Father Philip Conner, former Parish Priest, Left Keith Beattie, Chair of Hill Pipe Organ Project Group and Representatives from Co-op Funeralcare, Workington; Hobans Funeral Service with Andrew Richardson; John Sandelands Funeral Directors; Tom Edgar Funeral Director. And Bosco the Parish Dog. (Below right) Dedication Book for those requesting dedications to the Hill Pipe Organ Restoration Appeal.



## The Hill Pipe Organ Restoration Project receives support from local businesses at Our Lady & St Michael's Church, Banklands, Workington

**We** are delighted with the wonderful support we have received from numerous local businesses and would like to thank them all. Recently, we have received support from all our local funeral directors and providers of funeral services: **Co-op Funeralcare, Workington; Hobans Funeral Service with Andrew Richardson; John Sandelands Funeral Directors; Tom Edgar Funeral Director.**

Our wealth of historic Parish Journals, dating from January 1922 to April 1950, demonstrate how the church and life of the whole of Workington are integrated and how local businesses have always been a part of this.

The days and weeks that follow the death of a loved one, whether it be a member of our family or a close friend or colleague, can be one of the most emotionally difficult and traumatic times in our lives. When the responsibility of organising the funeral of that person is added to this, our anxieties can be substantially increased.

At these times, the strong support provided from the priest/celebrant and the support from the funeral directors' guides this process through every step of the way, with understanding, warmth, and integrity.

We know that each of our local funeral service providers offer top-class specialist services, providing sympathy, compassion, kindness, and dignity, as well as meeting modern day requirements.

The Hill Pipe Organ, once restored, will once more be able to provide music for these important services and will sound as magnificent as when it was first installed in 1906.

Having almost reached our target, we continue our fundraising with the "Dedicate A Pipe" initiative and our events programme.

We greatly appreciate all efforts from external grant funding organisations, many members of our wonderful congregation, local businesses, and local organisations, who have helped us raise the necessary funds to undertake the work. We are also incredibly grateful for the support given from the public from various sources, following press releases, through generous donations and interest shown in our project and activities.

If you are interested in helping this restoration project, we welcome any donations through our Just Giving at [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) – search for Lancaster Diocese and then Stella Maris Pipe Organ Restoration.

"We are incredibly grateful to the local businesses who are helping to support and retain the Hill Pipe Organ, a significant part of the town's patrimony. It's really heartening to see how so many townfolk and local businesses and local charities have recognised the importance of music, the arts, drama, faith and liturgy, and how these things help to carry all of us through the ups and downs of life, and build up a healthy culture in our town."

Fr Philip Conner, former Parish Priest



For more information about this project, please contact: Ann Diamond on **0775 934 1295**, or Keith Beattie on **07711 268688**. Alternatively, you can email: [Pipeorganappeal@stellamarisproject.co.uk](mailto:Pipeorganappeal@stellamarisproject.co.uk) Our "Dedicate A Pipe Programme," donations can be gift-aided, where appropriate in the normal way.

Ann Diamond, Our Lady & St Michael's Church, Banklands

"We are delighted for the support our local Undertakers have given to our appeal. They are all very aware of the comfort music brings to funeral services and their contributions take us a further step towards our final target. We still have a little way to go but we are confident that with help like this we will get there."

"The organ features 1092 pipes and the church of Our Lady and Saint Michael is offering the opportunity for people to dedicate a pipe in memory of a loved one, or to mark a special occasion. For donations of £200 and above, your name and short intention will be inscribed in a special leather bound and handmade dedication book. This will be part of church records for years to come."

Keith Beattie, Chair of Organ Restoration Project

# 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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AND THE RELICS OF SAINTS JACINTA AND FRANCISCO

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**Sat 20<sup>TH</sup> June 2026**

**Programme**

10:00 – 10:15	Welcome.
10:15 – 11:00	Rosary & Fatima Prayers.
11:00 – 12:00	Holy Hour / Reconciliation.
12:15 – 13:30	Mass followed by Procession, Consecration of Diocese of Lancaster & Crowning of Our Lady Statue.
13:30 – 14:30	Break (bring your own pack lunch).
14:30 – 15:50	Fatima Film & Talk.
16:00 – 16:15	Enrolment & investiture of the Brown Scapular.
16:20 – 16:30	Final Blessing.

For further details, please contact the Cathedral Office.  
Tel: 01524384820 or email: cathedral@lrcd.org.uk  
limited car parking space at the Cathedral.  
City Centre car parking is available nearby.  
Tea, coffee, and soft drinks provided, please bring a packed lunch.  
Lunch, film & talk incl Book Table in the Cathedral Hall

Arranged by the World Apostolate of Fatima (England & Wales)  
A Public Association of the Faithful  
Registered Charity 1198986

Contact the World Apostolate of Fatima  
Mobile no. 07788473210 (9 am to 5 pm only, Mon to Fri)



Redemptorists




**VISIT OF THE RELICS  
OF ST GERARD MAJELLA**

**MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE AT 7PM**

- Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul Swarbrick
- Relics available for prayer for an hour before Mass
- Blessings with the relics after Mass
- St Gerard is the Patron Saint of mothers, couples trying to conceive, those looking for work, and making a good confession

**LANCASTER CATHEDRAL (LA1 3BT)**

@stgerard300

# NEW Parish Website

Get a new website in days - with no hassle





**Benefits:**

- Minimal work
- Easy to manage
- Customisable design
- REDUCES your workload!**
- FREE, no obligation, set up**
- Looks like you update it every day!**

**Sections**

- Welcome
- Contact Us
- Mass Times
- Newsletters
- Parish Groups
- Daily/Sunday Readings
- Library photos or add your own
- Donations with accounts/Gift Aid reports
- Text sections to layout how you want

**Next Steps:**

- Email us your last 4 newsletters
- We'll send you a link to your website within 2 days
- You can customise it for as long as you like for free
- Choose your website address.
- If and when you are ready, you can publish it.
- Only then, do you start paying for your site.
- And if you want to, you can add the ability to take donations online.

**£25 per month**

includes VAT, hosting, website address, security certificates

FREE SET UP

send 4 newsletters to [websites@caspar.church](mailto:websites@caspar.church)  
or go to [www.caspar.church/site](http://www.caspar.church/site)