



The Beda Review 2024 - 2025



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The Beda Review

Pontificio Collegio Beda

Viale di San Paolo 18

00146 Roma

Tel: + 39 06 5512 71

Fax: + 39 06 5512

Website:

www.bedacollege.org

Twitter:

www.twitter.com/@pontificalbeda

Editor

Deacon Benwen Lopez

Associate Editor

John E. John

Photography

Beda Review Team

Design and print

Pixelpress Ltd

Publishing Consultant

Fergus Mulligan Communications

www.publishing.ie

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From the Editor's Desk

The Beda Review 2025

Dear Friends,

As *The Beda Review* team set pen to paper for this edition, there was little doubt where our gaze would turn: to the grace-laden threshold of the Jubilee Year. And so, as the five Holy Doors swung open—one by one—across the Eternal City, drawing pilgrims in their steady tide, few could have foreseen the parallel unfolding of another transition, quieter yet no less profound: a change of guard, both within the Pontifical Beda Seminary and across the wider face of the Universal Church.

Thus, what began as a solemn rite—the unlocking of ancient doors—soon revealed itself, in God's gentle and joyful irony, to be a deeper sign: a heralding of new beginnings. New shepherds step forward; fresh vision stirs; and the enduring mission of Christ's Church is once again entrusted to hands both steady and willing.

I offer heartfelt thanks to the Lord for the many graces that have accompanied us in bringing this issue to life—to the ever-dedicated *Beda Review* team, to John E. John, and to all who have shared their gifts and labours, including Fergus Mulligan and Karl O'Sullivan, whose care in design and publication makes these pages sing.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have graced us with their generosity and upheld the mission of the Beda in such abundant charitable and faithful ways.

May the reflections that follow stir your spirit as they have stirred ours.

In Christ,

Deacon Benwen Lopez
Editor

From the Rector's Desk

Canon Philip Gillespie



Friends,

Welcome to this edition of *The Beda Review*.

At the outset, I extend my thanks not only to your good self for reading these words but also to those who have worked so hard to bring this edition of the *Review* to birth. Thanks to Benwen and to John, as Editor and Assistant Editor respectively, and to our contributors – from near and far.

The purpose of *The Beda Review* is to offer snapshots of life in the College and in Rome over the past year, to introduce readers to the work of this place, and to revive happy memories for those who have studied here at the Beda over the years and who are now living out their vocations – ordained and lay – across the world.

You will notice that one of the articles is an interview with myself and Fr John Carlyle – two members of the Formation Team who are moving on to new pastoral pastures during this past summer: Fr John Carlyle into what I am sure will be a very active retirement in Stafford, and myself to the (relatively) newly erected

Co-Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Liverpool in Douglas, on the Isle of Man. For me, it is actually a return to the parish which I left ten years ago to come here to the Beda College as Rector – which led one person to suggest that my first reflection, inspired by Tolkien, should be *There and Back Again – a Canon's Tale!*

This year is a Jubilee Year – a Jubilee of Hope. We were led into it by Pope Francis and we shall close it with Pope Leo; there is a beautiful continuity in this fact, that although there is a change of Holy Father, there is unity in our one Hope, Jesus Christ – the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Those who have been fortunate enough to visit the resting place of Pope Francis at the Basilica of St Mary Major would have been struck by the noble simplicity and dignity of his tomb. At the centre of attention is the depiction of the Good Shepherd – the image from his pectoral cross – and it is an invitation not only to pray for Francis himself, who was called to be a shepherd for the Universal Church, but also a reminder that we, in our respective callings, are to be imitators of the Good Shepherd – for

our families, our parishes, and our dioceses.

My past ten years as Rector here at the Beda have been richly blessed, and I count it a great privilege to have played a small part in the initial formation of deacons, priests, and lay faithful who are today working in the Lord's vineyard – for indeed, the harvest is rich and abundant. I am deeply grateful to those who have shared with me the task of formation over these past years and whose friendship and dedication have not only inspired and at times challenged me, but above all supported me, sharing a deep sense of dedication and responsibility to the work of formation. When the most recent *Ratio Fundamentalis* was published in 2016, it laid great emphasis on the creation of an *équipe* – a team of formators who would, while maintaining their own individuality and perspectives, be supportive of one another and united in their work. I am very fortunate to be able to say that this is precisely what I found ten years ago, and what I have continued to experience throughout my mandate – and again, this is a cause of great gratitude.

A word must be included for the dear Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM), who physically left the College in 2022, but whose importance – not only over these past ten years, but over the 62 years of their ministry at the Beda – cannot be overstated.

I wish Fr Marcus Holden and his new team all the wisdom, strength, and gentleness needed in this important work for the good of our dioceses. He will be richly supported by Orietta and Annalisa – the Rector's PA and the College Bursar respectively – both of whom are generous and unstinting in their service of the College, and whose contribution to the life of the community, in so many ways, should never be underrated or taken for granted.

May we all serve the Lord with gladness – and with generosity.

Blessings to you all!

Canon Philip Gillespie

Interviews with Canon Philip Gillespie and Fr John Carlyle

Canon Philip Gillespie, the outgoing Rector of the Pontifical Beda College, reflects on a decade of formation, vocation, and the priesthood today in a chat with Deacon Benwen Lopez

Q: Canon Gillespie, thank you for your time. As you look back on your ten years at the Beda, which moments stand out most vividly for you?

It's been a remarkable journey. One early memory that stands out is simply being invited back into seminary formation. I had already served eight years at St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, before moving to parish ministry on the Isle of Man. Then, out of the blue, Archbishop Bernard Longley called and asked if I'd consider returning to seminary life. I was surprised—but also delighted. That invitation brought balance to my 36 years of priesthood: 18 years in parishes and 18 in seminaries.

Arriving at the Beda, which I'd only known from occasional visits as a student during my formation years at the Venerable English College, I discovered a community unlike

any other. Its ethos is shaped by the diversity of its students—men from all over the world, coming later in life, each with a unique story of vocation. That first year, 2015–2016, was a time of great learning, not least about how generously both the students and their dioceses had responded to the call.

Another unforgettable period was the COVID-19 pandemic. We allowed those whose bishops requested it to return home, while others remained in Rome. With roughly half the house still here, we adapted swiftly to online learning. The community showed extraordinary flexibility and generosity, especially the staff who kept daily life going—particularly in the kitchens. Despite the challenges, we managed to sustain formation and life together.

And of course, the recent weeks have been momentous in the life of the Church. We witnessed the illness and



Canon Philip Gillespie meets Pope Leo XIV at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls
(Photo: Courtesy Vatican Media)

passing of Pope Francis, followed by the conclave and the election of Pope Leo XIV. Being present for the white smoke, the inauguration Mass of his pontificate, and praying at Pope Francis' tomb in the Basilica of St Mary Major—these are some significant moments I shall treasure always.

Q: In looking back at these significant events and experiences during your time at the Beda, how would you say they have shaped you on a personal level—particularly in your understanding and living out of the priesthood? In what ways have they deepened your vocation, enriched your spiritual life, or perhaps challenged you in unexpected ways?

When you're ordained, you can't quite predict what shape your ministry will take. I recall my first parish priest back in 1990—he was 76, I was 26. He was deeply devoted to St Martin of Tours, who, even in old age, once said, "*Non recuso laborem*"—"I refuse no work." That phrase has stayed with me. It speaks of availability and trust: we go where we're called, even if it's unexpected. That's what the Beda has been for me: a stage in ministry I hadn't foreseen, but one which I've embraced with gratitude. Priesthood is not a job; it's a way of life. And wherever the Lord asks us to abide, we strive to do so with openness. In a way, it's living out Christ's call: Abide in me.

I never applied for this role—it was entrusted to me. And that’s often how the Spirit works in priestly life: through the discernment of others. Our response must be generous, even when we feel unready. That’s a lesson I hope seminarians take to heart.

Q: As a formator entrusted with the guidance and accompaniment of seminarians at the Beda, what insights or lessons have you personally drawn from them over the years? In what ways have their journeys, struggles, and growth in their vocations enriched your own perspective on priestly formation and ministry?

Far more than one might expect! Often in seminary, it’s assumed the students are receiving, and the staff are giving—but it’s very mutual. Being on a formation team allows time to reflect, to integrate past experiences in parish ministry, and to grow in wisdom. Sometimes parish life moves at such a pace that we, as T.S. Eliot said, “have the experience but miss the meaning.”

One particular lesson I’ve learned is the value of hospitality. And by that, I don’t mean just welcoming people to meals—though that’s important. I mean the hospitality of the heart: making time to truly listen. The stories our students bring—their joys, their wounds, their vocations—are profoundly enriching. At the Beda, people don’t leave their lives at the gate; they bring everything with them.

That richness of human experience has been a deep well of grace for me.

Q: In a world increasingly marked by shifting cultural values, secular pressures, and evolving ecclesial challenges, how do you believe priests can remain deeply rooted in their identity? What interior foundations or spiritual disciplines are essential for them to remain faithful to their vocation and resilient in their mission amidst such complexities?

That’s a central question. I would say this: whatever part of formation you’re engaging in—academic, spiritual, pastoral—do it with the heart of a shepherd. Pope St John Paul II’s *Pastores Dabo Vobis* reminded us that priesthood is a participation in Christ’s own pastoral care for his people.

We’re called to imitate the mystery we celebrate. At ordination, we act *in persona Christi capitis*—in the person of Christ the Head. And the head lays down his life for the body. That’s the model we follow. In a culture that often prizes self-fulfilment, the priest is called to self-gift. Fulfilment in ministry isn’t always emotionally rewarding. At times, we’ll feel poured out rather than fulfilled. But this generous love—what Cardinal Newman called “O generous love!”—is the wellspring of our joy. It’s a joy that comes from giving, not from keeping.

Holiness, too, is never about being “holier than thou.” It’s about growing in communion—first with Christ, and then with those he sends us to serve.

Q: Canon Gillespie, as you prepare to pass the baton to Fr Marcus Holden, what message would you like to leave for the current seminarians and those who will join in the future? What wisdom would you offer about the nature of formation, and the deeper purpose of the seminary in shaping future priests for joyful and generous service?

Every seminary, like every parish, undergoes change. Even though the staff may move on, the mission remains. No seminary is an end in itself—it’s a place of preparation. And the goal is not to stay within its walls, but to be formed for ministry in the Church and in life.

To the current students: treasure this time. Even if you only realise its depth later, trust that the Lord is working through it. Formation is not merely about acquiring skills—it’s about being shaped for joyful service.

And to those who will come: take inspiration from St Bede himself. He once wrote that it was his delight to learn, to teach, and to share with others what he had found valuable. That’s the key—delight in your vocation. There will be days when the tasks seem unwelcome. But if we remove the “I” from the equation and look instead to the needs of the community and of the Gospel, we begin to see things differently.

So delight in the learning—not just from books, but from hearts. Delight in the Lord who calls you. And always seek to carry the generous heart of the Good Shepherd to all whom you serve.



Canon Philip Gillespie greeting His Majesty King Charles III during the royal visit to Rome

“From Finance to Spiritual Direction”: A Decade of Service at the Beda

An interview with Fr John Carlyle by John E. John on the occasion of his return to the Archdiocese of Birmingham

Q: You were a former student at the Beda. Can you reflect on the biggest changes you’ve seen from your time as a student to now?

The four pillars of formation that Pope John Paul II introduced – academic, spiritual, human and pastoral – are still here. But the one that has changed most dramatically from when I was a student at the Beda is the rigour of academic training. When we were students, we had it a little easier than you do today. The expectation is that a priest will be a man of learning. People expect you to be an expert in what you talk about on Sunday from the pulpit.

So today you are now expected to follow a degree programme, the majority of students do. We didn’t. We just wrote essays about every fortnight or three weeks, which were assessed and marked, but at the end there was no degree. I remember one student from Ghana, whose bishop asked him, when he returned home, what degree he gained and when he said there wasn’t one, the bishop sent him back to Rome to get a degree.

There’s also been a major social change. There was no internet, no

email, no mobile phones. On Sunday afternoons, I used to write letters home to my parents. You were rather more cut off from family life at home in those days. We did a lot more exploring of Rome and Italy during holidays instead of flying home, which could be more expensive.

Q: You were called back to the Beda as Spiritual Director in 2015. What were your thoughts then?

I had been a parish priest for about 20 years, while simultaneously handling a desk job at the diocesan offices for the finance department. One day my Archbishop rang and said: “I want you to go to the Beda as Spiritual Director. You’d like that, wouldn’t you, John?” I said: “Yes, of course!” I was absolutely delighted. I had grown stale in my previous job, and he knew it. I’d even commented to senior clergy, at the time, that I felt I was getting tired in my work.

Q: What are some common challenges seminarians face in the discernment process?

I think the most difficult challenge you have to face, as a seminarian, is yourself – the thoughts going on



Pope Leo XIV at the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls. Photo: Courtesy of Vatican Media

in your head, the doubts that can sometimes arise, the negative feelings that we all experience at one time or another. You know how seminary life can be quite an emotional seesaw. You can be very happy and feel you're really succeeding, and yet at other times think: "This is terrible, I should go home tomorrow."

The atmosphere here is not the same as an ordinary day school, is it? You're here all the time, day and night. Sometimes, a man can feel too shut in as a result. It's at that sort of time that the devil might have a go at you and try to make you feel low by exaggerating your problems. Beware: the devil is an expert at making people

feel depressed. After all, he's utterly depressed himself. He can start on us with a little, niggly thing and help it to grow slowly over time into a great, big, black, threatening cloud, unless we talk to somebody about it.

When a student is having difficulties, he needs to talk it over with someone he can trust. If it's a spiritual problem, or doubts about one's vocation, he needs to meet his Spiritual Director to discuss it. I do wish people would come to an appropriate member of staff, depending on the type of difficulty, and talk about it early on. Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy, so we need to find the courage to talk to the right person at the right time.

Q: How has your financial background helped you to relate to students making the transition from professional life?

There was one particular student. He had been a bus driver. He didn't think he was going to succeed, because he had never done any studies after leaving school. He could be quite in awe of other students who came with their university degrees already lined up. He struggled, but he is something of a hero of mine because he just kept going. We were all delighted when he was ordained. I greatly admire that man and I'm sure that he is doing well as a priest. Sheer perseverance is a key virtue.

My banking background taught me something about making clear decisions by following logical thinking. I watched managers responsible for making financial decisions with customers. When it was a question of deciding whether to approve a loan or not, it had to be either a yes or a no, you could not go halfway, with a well, maybe. When it comes to the priesthood, you have to pursue clear thinking. Either the Lord wants you to be ordained, or he doesn't. Which? And I don't need to tell you how big a decision that is! But then: "Lord this is your decision, really, isn't it? Not mine. I'll just follow you, but give me enough light to see the right road ahead."

If you can strip away your fears and anxieties when asking "Should I be a priest?" things are much easier. We need to be clear in our thinking and then turn to the Lord. Of course, it

should be the right mix between a logical and an emotional decision – you need both the head and the heart! At the same time, we have to be careful of negative emotions so that they do not dominate the decision-making process too much. As St Ignatius of Loyola cautioned: "Never make an important and life-changing decision when you're feeling low."

Q: What sparked your interest in developing the Beda garden?

I was simply asked to do the job! The person who took care of the garden before me asked if I had any spare time. I knew nothing about roses, I did not really know one end of a rose bush from another! My father had been a very keen gardener, and he and my mother used to talk endlessly about the garden during meals. I was bored stiff. Put me quite off, that did.



Fr John Carlyle hard at work in the Beda garden

When I came here, I didn't know how roses worked at all, but gradually I learned how to prune and when to do it, and how roses behave in the Mediterranean climate. I get great satisfaction from it. In a way, when you're working in a garden, your brain is thinking about a different part of life – your daily concerns aren't there, you've just got these flowers to look after. So, for the moment, it's roses and I concentrate on that, but don't ask me to look after anything else in the garden!

Q: For a Catholic man thinking about serving God as a priest, what would you say about the Beda experience in shaping life and the outlook for future ministry?

You know well how life at the Beda is different from that of normal seminarians who enter seminary straight from school or university. I remember, from many years ago, a young man who came to our parish straight from ordination in his mid-twenties. He seemed happy and settled, until one day he simply left to get married! Our parish priest said: "The trouble with these handsome young curates is that the beautiful young women can go for them." In an all-male environment from the age of eleven in those days, that young priest had had little experience of discovering women attractive, he was ill-prepared.

The Beda man doesn't have that sort of problem. He has held down a job,

knows how to run a household, pay bills, and put in a hard day's work. He has experienced employment (possibly unemployment too) and has developed responsibility. He brings all that wealth of experience to his future ministry – dealing with people, structures, and possibly different types of problems from different past experiences.

You have to adapt to the spiritual life of a priest. Many priests work on their own nowadays, so self-discipline needs to be strong. The discipline of community living – tolerance, getting on well with all the people around you, which is not always easy, is excellent preparation.

In seminary, you do have more time for prayer, contemplation, growing closer to God, discussing your choice with him and developing that trust. If you leave the Beda after four years, having spent enough time in contemplation and prayer, you will have grown spiritually.

And Rome, too – your bishop has sent you here for a reason. He wants you to experience Rome. I find it difficult when students rarely go out the front gate because of fear that they might get lost and don't understand enough Italian to ask for help. Overcome that. The happiest students are the ones who make the most of their time here, exploring churches, art galleries, the history, the Vatican, and so on.

Experience all that the Beda has to offer!

A Note of Appreciation from Cardinal James Harvey

As they bring to a close their priestly service at the Pontifical Beda College, I wish to congratulate Canon Philip Gillespie and Fr John Carlyle on ten years of generous and effective leadership.

The past decade brought with it numerous challenges, not least of which was the prolonged COVID pandemic. Welcoming the Pontifical Scots College to share in an appropriate way the Beda's physical facilities also took considerable creativity, organizational skill and pastoral sensitivity, much to the merit of the Rector and his staff.

I willingly assure Canon Gillespie and Fr Carlyle of my prayers as they take up their new assignments at home, with grateful recollections of our many pleasant interactions and fruitful collaboration.

Most cordially,

Cardinal James Harvey



Cardinal James
Harvey, Archpriest of
the Basilica of St Paul
Outside the Walls

An Autumn of Harvest: A Tribute to Philip Gillespie Fr John Breen

Philip has been Rector of the Beda College for ten years, his third formal involvement in seminaries: first as a student at the VEC, then as Vice Rector at St Cuthbert's College, Durham—where I first met him—and finally here. His leadership at the 200th anniversary of St Cuthbert's in 2008 already showed his gifts, and when he was appointed Rector of the Beda in 2015, I knew we were in safe hands.

Reflecting on his departure, Shakespeare's words in *Anthony and Cleopatra* come to mind: "There was no winter in 't, an autumn 'twas that grew the

more by reaping.” Philip’s care has never been winter; always a harvest, growing richer by his generosity. His delights, like dolphins, rise above the ordinary—glistening moments of kindness, humour, and beauty.

His eye for elegance has shaped our surroundings: the reconfigured vestibule, renewed liturgical life, restored artworks, and new additions such as the crucifix now gracing the 2025 Diaconate booklet. His thoughtfulness touched us in smaller ways too: Lindt chocolates, St Nicholas’ cards, Prosecco to lighten an evening. He has worked with and valued collaborators—Annalisa, Orietta, Larry, Rosella, and Bibos—with fatherly warmth that was no mere theory but lived reality.



We know his aversions—greenery on a plate, hills better admired than climbed, gymnasiums for others—and his preferences: long liturgies, unhurried lunches, weighty books, and a gentle fondness for Inspector Barnaby or Vera. His scholarly spirit, shared with his late brother Vincent of Oxford, enriched our community.

As he leaves, I think again of the dolphin’s back rising above the water: Philip’s ordinary presence always lifted by unexpected delight. I end with Paul Murray OP’s poem *Threshold*, reminding us that in the everyday, patiently lived, the doors of the present open onto new beginnings.

Not at the pointed hour of ecstasy
nor at the furthest edge of being,
but here, in the even close-knit hours
among the weekday goings-on of wind and weather,
here is our hidden threshold of perception
here we must wait
until the doors of the present
swing open on new hinges.

Tenacity in Formation: A Tribute to Fr John Breen

Beda Review Team

As the Pontifical Beda College turns a new page in its distinguished history of priestly formation, it does so with deep gratitude for Fr John Breen, who



retires after more than two decades of faithful service. Since 2002, he has been a steadfast presence, serving as Vice-Rector and guiding seminarians in the vital pillars of Human and Pastoral Formation.

In an age when priestly formation must navigate a complex and fragmented culture, Fr Breen's approach has gone far beyond psychological or emotional accompaniment—though he offered both with rare sensitivity. He sought to nurture the whole person, drawing each man towards configuration with Christ, the Good Shepherd.

In 2024, marking his golden jubilee of priesthood, he was asked to summarise fifty years of ministry in one word. His reply, at once understated and revealing, was: *"Tenacity."*

He viewed each seminarian not as a project to be managed, but as a mystery to be reverently encountered—as a man in whom the Spirit was already at work. With patience and discernment, he formed pastors who could serve with truth and tenderness.

Fr Breen has embodied what Pope Benedict XVI called the "intelligence of the heart"—that synthesis of reason and compassion, truth and love, so essential to priestly formation.

Now, as he hangs up his tie—not in resignation, but in the quiet confidence of a race well run—he leaves behind not an empty office and the red room, but a memory rich with the fruit of his labour. The Beda community—staff, students, alumni, and friends—offers him heartfelt thanks for the lives he has shaped, the vocations he has nurtured, and the Gospel he has quietly lived.

May the Lord, who began this good work in him, bring it to fulfilment with joy.

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a dedicated, experienced staff team waiting to
help you plan your tailor-made stay with us



Change of Guard: Welcome to the new Rector and Spiritual Director

As we look ahead to a new chapter in the life of the Pontifical Beda College, we extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to Fr Marcus Holden of the Archdiocese of Southwark, who will assume the role of Rector from September 2025.

Fr Holden brings with him a rich pastoral and theological background. Until recently, he served as parish priest of St Bede's Church in Clapham and held the roles of Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation and Catechesis, as well as Dean of Lambeth. A passionate advocate of the New Evangelisation, his priestly ministry has been shaped by the call to "preach the Gospel in season and out of season" – a motto that speaks to both his missionary zeal and his theological depth.

We are also delighted to welcome Fr Steven Billington from the Diocese of Leeds, who will take up the post of Spiritual Director. Prior to his appointment to the Beda, Fr Billington served as parish priest of the Church of SS Peter and Paul in Wakefield. He brings with him a wealth of experience in parish life and spiritual accompaniment, and we look forward to the wisdom, prayerfulness, and pastoral insight he will offer our community.



Our incoming new Rector, Fr Marcus Holden of Southwark



Fr Steven Billington

Together, these appointments mark a new season of leadership and grace for the College, and we assure both Fr Holden and Fr Billington of our prayers and support as they prepare to begin their ministry among us.

The Jubilee Year as a Personal Reset:

Encouraging individuals to embrace the spirit of the Jubilee for personal growth and renewal

Professor Amelia Manjate

Spes non confundit, says the Papal Bull of Indiction of this Jubilee year. Not to confuse means, precisely, not to disappoint, not to lead the pilgrims on their existential journey off the main road. As “Pilgrims of hope” we are invited to grasp the extraordinary grace accompanying the Jubilee Year. The three Hebrew words from which the word “jubilee” is derived – *jobel* (ram), *jobil* (call) and *jobal* (remission) – call us to repent, to be vigilant and to convert.

From a biblical perspective, the term “Jubilee” – celebrated every 25 years in the Christian tradition – is rooted in the

sounding of the *shofar* (ram’s horn), a practice that has its theological origins in the story of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18). This connection emphasises faith and deliverance. In the Catholic tradition, the opening of the Holy Door marks the start of a time of grace and reconciliation, symbolising the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34). This rite has a rich symbolic value, signifying the invitation to the faithful to embark on an extraordinary journey of spiritual renewal, of grace and salvation, which transcends the ordinary rhythm of spiritual life.

Pope Francis declared that the indulgence reveals the limitless mercy of God, closely tied to forgiveness and healing through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. While confession erases sin – every sin leaves its mark – indulgence purifies the lingering effects of sin, it opens our hearts and minds, freeing the soul by Christ’s grace. Experiencing God’s full forgiveness invites believers to forgive others, enabling a future of



peace and hope beyond the wounds of the past,¹ and enables a new beginning (cf. Luke 15:11-32). The door of God's heart is always wide open, waiting for us to enter. Passing through the Holy Door takes on its full meaning when we are able to make an inner journey, to recognise that only God can give full meaning to our lives.

In this Jubilee Year that calls us to live the hope, we can ask ourselves: Have I heard the call of the jubilee horn of hope? From what do I want to be liberated? How will I live hope here where I am? What hopes have failed me?

The virtue of hope is a gift and a task, said Pope Francis, a gift from God and a task for Christians. It is not mere optimism, but the confident expectation of salvation already offered through God's eternal love. Hope means welcoming this love daily. At the same time, hope is a duty: Christians must remain faithful to God's faithfulness, it is a choice, a daily choice which entails discernment.²

Sabino Chialà identifies three key areas for discernment: self-knowledge (understanding one's personal history and wounds); discernment of good and evil (recognise what expands or

paralyses freedom); and knowing God's will (freely aligning one's life with God through love and responsibility).³

By doing so, a person has the possibility to generate meaningful relationships, and strive for personal growth. Here we see the reason why this hope endures in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nourished by charity, it enables us to go forward in life.

In the book of Isaiah, we find this question: "Sentinel, how much remains of the night?" The sentinel answers: "The morning comes, then also the night; if you want to ask, ask, convert, come!" (Is 21:11-12). There is, therefore, a before and an after, a moment of waiting, a moment where we feel that the darkness of the night is infinite and that the day does not come. And here, arriving in this Holy Year, a moment of extraordinary grace, is the sound of the horn announcing in this darkness the presence of the light and of the hope that we are called to kindle, personally and as a community. It is a call that not only questions us, but also awaits an answer: "Convert, come".



Professor Amelia Manjate is a visiting faculty member at the Beda

¹ Pope Francis, *Spes non Confundit*, in https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/20240509_spes-non-confundit_bolla-giubileo2025.html, accessed in 02.04.2025.

² Pope Francis, *Hope is a gift and a duty for every Christian*, in <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-11/pope-francis-hope-is-a-gift-and-duty-for-every-christian.html>, accessed 12.04.2025.

³ Cf. Sabino Chialà, *Discernimento Degli Uomini e Giudizio Di Dio* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2018), 19–24.

God's Open Door Policy: Holy Doors in the 2025 Jubilee

Christopher Sumner

During this Jubilee Year large crowds have made their way through the four Holy Doors located at St Peter's Basilica, St Paul's Basilica, St John Lateran and St Mary Major. Close inspection of a British passport will reassure the holder that they can expect to move from one country to another without let or hinderance. As a pilgrim people we are used to being on the move, and doorways, airport lounges, passport queues and national borders mark significant thresholds on our journeys.

Holy Doors are sources of grace that make our life easier. Car enthusiasts will debate which make and model marks the first hatchback appearing on the market but it is clear that the five-door design has proved a popular alternative to the traditional saloon car with a separate boot. Anyone with dogs or wheelchairs or pushchairs to get into the boot of a car will testify the usefulness of an accessible tailgate; doors can make a difference to our quality of life and a well situated and well designed door can make life a lot easier.

Holy Doors are places of encounter. There is something special about the

front door of a house. An evening stroll around a town during the Christmas season may include a survey not only of Christmas trees in the bay windows but also Christmas wreaths on the front door and some accompanying fairy lights. The front doors of homes are places of meeting, of catching up and of welcome. Doors are places of communion and encounter.

During the period of Jubilee, the Church endows simple actions such as walking through a door with a moment of grace. God's free and lavish grace is available to us through simple and easily accessible ways; encountering God is literally as easy as walking through a door! In Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians we discover that God's response to us in Christ is always "yes". In this sense, through the gift of Jesus, God's door is always open to us because Jesus tells us he himself is the door. When we respond to the invitation from God we are pushing on an open door and we are sure of being allowed in because God has left the door open for us.

Encountering the Holy Door leads us to reflect on how open we are to God. In



I SARTI DEL BORGO

Via del Mascherino, 31
00193 Roma (RM) Italy
Tel. + 39 06 68192169
info@isartidelborgo.com
www.isartidelborgo.com



Keble College, Oxford, one can encounter the masterpiece by William Holman Hunt, “The light of the world” which is inspired by the text of Revelation in which Jesus tells us: “I stand at the door and knock.” In this painting, Jesus stands at the door of our souls but there is no handle on Jesus’ side of the door. In our passing through these open and unlocked Holy Doors, we are invited to open the doors of our heart to the Lord who desires to dwell with us and in us.

The Holy Door is a sign of Our Lady. In the Litany of Loreto one of the titles through which we invoke the help of Mary is that of *Porta Caeli* or “Gate of Heaven”. In Mary we encounter the perfect creature who is totally open to God’s grace and who helps others to encounter her Son. Through our encountering of the Holy Door, we are drawn in to the mystery of Mary who is a sign of the Church in leading us to Jesus. On entering through the door of Mary and the Church we encounter Jesus just as the Magi and the shepherds did as they entered the stable at Bethlehem and fell to their knees in adoration. Perhaps part of our understanding of the whole concept of the Holy Door is how we then become the means for others to encounter the same free gift of God’s grace and to experience his loving mercy and embrace.

In the Holy Door we encounter Jesus who is the door of the sheepfold. In John 10 we hear how Jesus teaches us that he is the only door through which sheep may safely pass to enjoy safe-keeping and nourishment. In the Old Testament we see this prefigured in the blood of the

lamb which was placed on the doorposts of the People of God and which enabled them to escape death and to pass over through the waters of the Red Sea to be fed in the wilderness with manna from heaven. The Holy Doors remind us that we have passed over from death to new life through the blood of Jesus and the water of Baptism. The Holy Doors lead us to meditate on the doors of paradise which were once closed and locked after human sin, but which have now been opened by Jesus, the second Adam, who slept in death and unlocked the doors of the underworld.

In the Holy Doors we encounter God’s “open-door policy” in the person of Jesus. It is Jesus whose heart was opened with the lance on the cross and from which flowed blood and water. On the first Easter morning the women discover that the doorway to the tomb had been opened and doors, locked out of fear, pose no barrier for the risen Jesus. The Holy Doors are invitations to us to cross the threshold of hope and to rejoice in the welcome we find in the Father’s house.

O salutaris hostia quae caeli pandis ostium.

O saving victim opening wide the gate of heaven to us below.



Christopher Sumner is a seminarian at the Beda for the Diocese of Lancaster (UK)

From Grief to Glory: The Church's Journey from Pope Francis to Pope Leo XIV

Rapportage by Deacon Benwen Lopez

A Shepherd's Final Dawn

It was a dawn like no other in the Eternal City. On Easter Monday, in the quiet hours of morning, Pope Francis, the 266th Successor of Peter, peacefully passed away just hours after offering what would become his final *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on Easter Sunday.

On 22 April, as his mortal remains were borne from his residence to St Peter's Basilica, the deep toll of a single bell echoed through the square—a solemn death knell, like the final heartbeat of a shepherd's soul returning to God. Mourners gathered in reverent silence, their final farewell to the Pope who had walked with them in mercy and truth.

A Pontiff Mourned by Princes and People

Amidst the royal company of kings and princes, presidents and prime ministers – leaders who momentarily set aside political differences to stand shoulder to shoulder – lay the mortal remains of a humble shepherd whose life had been spent tirelessly bridging those very divides through the Gospel of peace.

As the Requiem Mass resounded, the square overflowed with tears and reverence, a poignant testament to a man who led not with might, but with mercy.



"At last, all-powerful Master, you give leave to your servant to go in peace, according to your promise..."
(Nunc Dimittis)

The Smoke of Joy

After days steeped in mourning, prayer, and the sacred rites of conclave, the evening of 8 May broke forth with new light. At 6:10 PM Rome time, white smoke billowed from the most-watched chimney in the world. Joyous cries erupted in the square, and the bells of St Peter's pealed triumphantly. Seminarians from the Beda and Scots Colleges stood among the crowds, witnesses to a moment that made history.

An hour later, a visibly emotional Pope Leo XIV stepped out onto the Loggia of Blessings. His voice rang out, full of gentle strength: "*La pace sia con tutti voi!*" (Peace be with you all).

The Servant of Joy

On 18 May, Pope Leo XIV inaugurated his Petrine ministry with a Mass that felt like Easter renewed. Amid a vast assembly of heads of state, religious leaders, and faithful pilgrims, he received the pallium and the Ring of the Fisherman. As with Pope Francis's funeral, the world's diversity stood united in faith and fraternity.

His homily, pastoral and unadorned, struck a chord of deep humility:

"I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one family."

The address wove together the pillars of his vision: humble service, a Church of unity-in-diversity, authority rooted in charity, and a missionary outreach to the world's peripheries. It was the beginning of a papacy grounded not in image, but in encounter – with Christ and with the wounded world.

From Sorrow to Resurrection

In the days that followed, Pope Leo XIV began the traditional rites of taking possession of the major papal basilicas – St John Lateran, St Paul Outside the Walls, and St Mary Major – thus symbolically embracing his ministry to the Diocese of Rome and the universal Church.

From a week of mourning to a season of joy, the Church has walked a Paschal path. In the words of one pilgrim in the square:

"We wept. We waited. And now, we walk with Peter again."



Deacon Benwen Lopez is a seminarian at the Beda for the Diocese of Sindhudurg, India



Docility to the Spirit: A Cardinal's Journey Through the Conclave

Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão



Habemus Papam. The moment when white smoke billowed from the Sistine Chapel

For most of us Cardinal electors, this conclave was a first-time experience. What aided us most in navigating this entirely new experience were the numerous General Congregations (meetings) held prior to the beginning of the conclave. During these

congregations, all the Cardinals — both electors and those over the age of 80 — were able to share their insights on the various challenges the Church was facing in our times, as well as the qualities required in the new Pope to lead the Church at this moment in history.

The spiritual atmosphere, both before and during the conclave, was greatly enriched by the thought-provoking meditations offered, alongside moments of prayer in which we fervently invoked the light of the Holy Spirit and sought the assistance of all the saints, our heavenly intercessors. In this way, the Cardinal electors were led into a profound inner disposition of total docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.



Front row, second from the right, Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão standing on the balcony soon after the Conclave

To my surprise, the entire conclave proved to be a deeply spiritual experience for all of us — a serious process of prayerful discernment and attentive listening to God's will, revealed to each Cardinal through the inner voice of the Spirit. Through that process, it became abundantly clear to me that the Church is not merely a human institution; it is a community of faith, established by Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is worth recalling that the Apostles did not choose Peter to be their leader; it was Jesus himself who appointed him to lead the incipient Church.

My experience of the conclave has deepened my conviction that it is God who, in his eternal design, chooses and prepares a person to lead the Church at a particular moment in history. The role of the Cardinals, therefore, is to discern, in complete docility to the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord has set apart for this demanding mission.

Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão is the Archbishop of Goa and Daman and was one of the papal electors



A detachment of Swiss Guards assemble below the Loggia delle Benedizioni to welcome Pope Leo XIV



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle bestows the Fisherman's ring on Pope Leo XIV at the inaugural Mass of his Petrine ministry.



Hearts Formed in Silence: Pope Leo XIV to Seminarians at Jubilee Gathering

Vatican City – Jubilee for Seminarians

The Beda Review Team

In a heartfelt and spiritually charged address at the Vatican’s Jubilee for Seminarians, Pope Leo XIV offered a bold and tender challenge to those preparing for the priesthood: *cultivate your interior life and learn to love with the Heart of Christ.*

Speaking before a packed St Peter’s Basilica, the Holy Father addressed the seminarians as “witnesses of hope,” thanking them for their joy, courage, and enthusiasm. “With your energy,” he said, “you feed the flame of hope in the life of the Church.”

But the Pope quickly moved beyond affirmation to formation. His message, steeped in theology, pastoral insight, and psychological depth, was a clarion call to deeper conversion, urging future priests to become “bridges, not obstacles” to Christ.

“You have accepted the Lord’s call to become gentle and strong preachers of

his saving word,” he said, “and servants of a Church that is open and pressing ahead with missionary zeal.”

Speaking briefly in Spanish, he encouraged Hispanic seminarians to be “strong and unafraid” in their vocation.

A Call to Friendship

Citing the Gospel of Mark, Pope Leo reminded the young men that priesthood begins not with function, but with friendship, first with Christ, then with one another. “This experience will continue to grow, even after ordination,” he said. “Indeed, nothing of your personal uniqueness should be put aside, but taken up and transformed like the grain of wheat in the Gospel.”

The goal of formation, he stressed, is not mere competence, but joy. “A joyful man, a joyful priest,” he said, “a bridge, not an obstacle, for those who come to you to find Christ.”



"Become a joyful man and a joyful priest" - Pope Leo XIV.

The Engine of the Journey

At the heart of the Pope's address was an appeal to interior formation. Drawing on *Dilexit Nos*, the encyclical of Pope Francis, he described the heart as the "engine" that drives the priestly journey. In a fragmented, self-centred world, he said, seminarians must learn to love as Jesus did.

"To love with the Heart of Christ!" he declared. "That is the art you are called to learn and for that, you must work on your interior life."

He echoed the wisdom of St Augustine: *return to the heart*, for it is there that God speaks and decisions take shape. "Sometimes descending to our depths

can be intimidating," he acknowledged, "but don't be afraid. Your wounds, when faced honestly, will make you more compassionate."

Without a cultivated interior life, he warned, "no real spiritual life is possible."

Silence, Culture, and Discernment

The Pope turned next to the practical dimensions of discernment. "In a world of hyper-connectivity, silence and solitude are harder to find," he said. "Yet without them, we will never encounter God, or truly know ourselves."

He urged seminarians to develop habits of daily silence, prayer, and meditation, noting that discernment is not about fleeting emotions but learning to interpret the lasting movements of the heart.

“Our hearts often overflow with desires and dreams,” he said. “But like the Blessed Virgin Mary, learn to ‘hold all things in your heart’ (Lk 2:19). Ask: what is my life teaching me? Where is the Lord leading me?”

Seminarians were encouraged to embrace beauty, culture, and study as part of this formation. “Pray to the Holy Spirit to mould in you a heart that listens,” he said, “even to the voices of nature, art, literature, music, and the human sciences.”

He also noted the importance of engaging with the modern world, including challenges posed by artificial intelligence and social media, with a well-formed conscience and an open, discerning heart.

The Human Element

Pope Leo did not neglect the human and emotional dimensions of formation. He called for growth in maturity and authenticity, warning against hypocrisy or emotional detachment.

“It is necessary,” he said, “to learn to express your fears, sadness, anxiety and even indignation and bring them into your relationship with the Lord.”

Crises, far from being signs of failure, can be doors to grace. “Your limitations are not things to hide,” he said, “but to offer. They allow you to share more deeply in the Paschal Mystery.”

He urged seminarians to live with gratitude and to allow the Holy Spirit to “anoint” their humanity even before sacramental anointing at ordination.

“In a world marked by ingratitude and the thirst for power,” he said, “you are called to be witnesses of mercy, joy, and selfless generosity.”

No to Minimalism

Toward the end of his address, the Pope turned to the seminarians’ role in their own formation. “Do not be content with the minimum,” he warned. “Do not be passive recipients. Be passionate about your preparation for priestly life.”

Living fully in the present, he said, with “a prophetic heart,” is essential for embracing the future. He encouraged them to bring their full humanity – wounded, joyful, questioning – to Christ, allowing him to shape it into something beautiful for the Church and the world.

“The Heart of Christ is compelled by immense compassion,” the Pope concluded. “Make your entire life a gift of love.”

With fatherly tenderness, he gave his final blessing. “Keep pressing forward,” he said. “I accompany you on your journey and I give you my blessing.”

Light from Light: A Paschal Offering in the Spirit of Nicaea

Deacon Seth Harsh

It was decided that this year, instead of relying on the candle-design expertise of others for our Paschal candle, select students at the Beda College would try their hand at this time-honoured tradition. The only flaw in this otherwise ingeniously conceived idea was that, apparently, there is a distinct lack of experience in candle design among the current student body. Yes, there are some here who have dabbled in this rare art form, but the exquisite designs found in the churches of Rome provided lofty – yet seemingly unattainable – goals to us poor amateurs, who, despite the best of intentions, hoped to replicate the intricate beauty of such examples.

A colour scheme was chosen, and paint suitable for the purpose was purchased. All that remained was a design and a method of application – and therein lay the challenge. One morning, over breakfast, I was informed that it had fallen to me to devise the design that would adorn the College's Paschal candle, which stands in full view of all who enter the chapel for the duration of the liturgical year. No pressure.



The Paschal candle designed by Beda students

I began by reflecting on the obvious themes of 2025: the Jubilee Year, and the slightly less obvious 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. The Jubilee element would take care of itself, as someone had already designed an official Jubilee logo. It was the Nicaean theme that would provide much food for thought and direction for the design.

Nicaea evoked Byzantine imagery, and so it was decided that the cross element would be shaped and proportioned according to the Greek rather than the Latin style. Dom Hugh Nichols OSB, one of the Benedictine monks residing at the Beda, insightfully chose colours inspired by Iznik pottery, which originates from the same region as the Council. Burnt orange contrasted beautifully with lapis blue, while green was used to create visual interest in the space around the cross. The four circular elements were modified with added geometric features that helped



Top Element



Bottom Element

integrate them with the outline of the cross. These would also serve as a guide for the celebrant inserting the incense grains during the Easter Vigil. A large Alpha and Omega were added in their traditional placements, thus completing the design of the cross element.

The lower element of the design presented an opportunity to further emphasise the themes drawn from Nicaea. Given the candle's inherent symbolism of light, and the explicit reference to this in the Exsultet chanted at the Vigil, it seemed fitting to seek additional imagery of light associated with the Council. It did not take long to find one. The Creed established at the Council of Nicaea includes the phrase "light from light" (in Greek, φως εκ φωτός), in reference to Christ's consubstantiality with the Father. These words were incorporated into the lower section of the design, though the first word (φως) was cleverly integrated into the Omega at the foot of the cross, making use of the shared middle letter in the

Greek word for “light”, thereby uniting the two elements.

The current year was added to the lower design, with its numerals positioned in the four quadrants created by the negative space of the cross at the centre. Finally, to complete the Nicaean reference, small crosses were placed beneath each of the Greek words. Providentially, the first word has three letters, the second has two, and the third five—together forming a symbolic representation of the year in which the Council took place (325). The lower element’s colour scheme is predominantly green, leaving the dramatic orange and blue highlights to lend visual impact to the cross above. A restrained use of orange in the lower element subtly ties it to the upper section.

The final challenge lay in finding an effective method of applying the design to the candle. After a valiant attempt at painting it by hand, we realised that combining a hydrophobic surface with

a cylindrical shape was too much for our modest skills (though it may have been the intricacy of the design, coupled with our feeble brushwork, that truly defeated us in the end).

Fortunately, we discovered a method whereby the design could be printed in colour onto tissue paper and then transferred directly onto the candle using a heat gun. It worked a treat. And though we are now the proud owners of several tubes of specialised candle paint that will serve no future purpose other than to remind us of our inadequacies in wielding a brush, they remain mementoes of an experience that brought with it discovery, growth, fellowship, teamwork—and, most importantly, the glory of God.



Deacon Seth Harsh is a seminarian from the Diocese of Wollongong, Australia and a resident at the Beda



Fr Mark Cassidy preparing the Paschal Candle (Lucernarium)

Easter Week of Hope

Deacon Dan Howarth

There has been something rather poetic about Eastertide 2025; the Jubilee Year; pilgrims of hope.

As my tradition has been, the Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust (HCPT) visit to Lourdes started on Easter Sunday, where I met up with a group of 180 from Widnes. This was my first time with this group, not as a nurse, but as a chaplain. Seconds before we entered the *cachot* (St Bernadette's accommodation at the time of the apparition) with me "leading" the walking tour, I received a text with a few missed calls. "The Pope has died" was the first I opened. Shock. Emptiness. Sadness. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has been a true inspiration for me. I like to think that every priest, every Catholic, looks at the washing of feet by Jesus and thinks: "Yes, that's for me". And seeing the different people whose feet Pope Francis has had the honour of washing allowed me to affirm that my vocation is one of humble service. Despite the heartache of losing an inspiration such as Francis, the week in Lourdes continued. The songs on the way to Mass, the joy that flows through the streets when HCPT are in town, the bright colours and the costumes. We were still filled with Easter joy. The torchlight procession is a weekly

highlight as thousands of pilgrims, many of whom have disabilities, raise their lights to heaven with salutations to the mother of God.

The joyful embraces of seeing people whom I hadn't seen in a year at the Trust Mass topped off the happiness and wonder in the children's faces as the Eucharist was celebrated. The private miracles of Lourdes were affirmed by the emotions and expressions of love by all present. This could have been written about any HCPT week, but under all of this, for me, were thoughts of the Holy Father. As an example of the way Christ lived, at many of these HCPT moments, I thought how Francis would have preferred to see me take part with joy rather than to mourn. I found the quiet alone times of Lauds and Vespers the space to offer thoughts to Francis and then use those thoughts to take part in the fun of, not just HCPT week, but Easter week. I had to remind myself that we are in a week of great joy, liturgically.

Upon return to Rome and the College, there was a slightly sombre atmosphere on the streets of the Eternal City. I got back at 10 pm on Friday and planned to wake up early and attend the funeral at St Peter's

Square. Public transport was difficult to navigate due to road closures, so I decided to walk the 1.5 hours from the Beda College to St Peter's Square, even stopping at an espresso bar to combat the fatigue too. The streets were vehicle free mostly, which can be novel for Rome. People raising a smile or a nod of greeting seemed more obvious and can be quite unusual for Rome. Getting closer to the funeral route, I noticed something I had seen earlier that week, but different: groups of pilgrims, neckerchiefs or flag leaders and lanyards around their necks, and all young people.

The weekend coincided with the jubilee for teenagers. Although the canonisation of Carlo Acutis has been postponed, the teenagers from around the world continued to flock to the great pilgrim sites of Rome and attend the funeral of the Pope. The sombre streets of Rome started to be filled with joy, and as I noticed more and more groups, I couldn't help but think, it's what Francis may have wanted.

I don't think the jubilee for teenagers or youth is a marketing ploy, hoping to engage this age group and bring faith to them. It's a space for all the young people to live their faith and share with their counterparts. We don't need to do this to bring young people to God, clearly, the youth are already present.

HCPT and the Jubilee for Teenagers took place at a moment of profound contrast: a time of mourning within the wider Church and yet a week

marked by Easter joy. This paradox captures the heart of Christian faith. We are an Easter people. We grieve in the face of death, but grief does not have the final word. On Maundy Thursday we keep silence, on Good Friday we long for Christ's presence, and on Holy Saturday night we break into Alleluia and Gloria as the light of the Resurrection fills the Church.

It was in this same rhythm that we found ourselves both shocked and saddened by the passing of the Holy Father, and yet, almost in the same breath, singing worship songs in the streets of the Pyrenees and joining in joyful Masses with other young people. The juxtaposition was striking: lining the streets in sorrow to bid farewell to the Pope, then losing ourselves in crowds of teenagers in green T-shirts, laughing and smiling beneath the spring sun. Together, mourning and celebration revealed the strange but beautiful way faith holds together loss and hope, death and resurrection.

We are pilgrims in hope. Our life's journey should be one of service in love - that's what Jesus showed us throughout the Gospels and further shown by the late Pope Francis and by Br Michael Stroude, founder of HCPT. It was shown by Bl. Carlo Acutis in his internet evangelisation of the Eucharist. And it is shown by all our young people who desire to live their faith, to bring their corporal works of mercy into the influencing ways of modern life, who through pushing

wheelchairs, cutting someone's food for them, holding a hand on the streets, or proudly wearing their diocese T shirt and silently praying at a great saint's tomb... the young people have faith, and demonstrate it well. The resurrection of Our Lord, the day before Francis died, gives us hope for eternal life with him. The people across the world who love their faith and live it wholeheartedly give us hope for the days and years to come.

Pope Francis was a big proponent of hope. Seeing the actions of charity and the pilgrims in hope certainly draws

us back to this ambition. Linked so perfectly with the resurrection a few days ago, Christ's church and his people are grounded in this hope. Grief may stir up hopelessness, but even during that time, we can still experience the fullness of hope.



Deacon Dan Howarth is a seminarian at the Beda for the Archdiocese of Liverpool (UK)



The Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust visit to Lourdes

Some Considerations for Intellectual Formation for our Times

John E. John

“Sanctify them by the Truth, Your Word is Truth.” (John 17:17)

Before commencing a reflection on intellectual formation, it might be relevant to step back for a moment and try to foresee the world within which the priest who completes his formation will soon find himself. Globalisation is a term that has echoed across our world for over two decades, denoting swiftly eroding boundaries: national, cultural, social, technological, and ideological alike. In our times, we are also able to experience two contradictory phenomena: a simultaneous amalgamation and polarisation among peoples and within nations, social structures, and institutions.

What will the Europe of the near future look like? According to projections based on current demographics and evolving migration patterns by Claude (Anthropic’s AI assistant), the Europe of 2025-2050 will be characterised by a decline in native European majority (60-70%), and an increase in the number of

first (15-20%), second and third generation immigrants (15-25%), and EU internal migrants (5-10%). The professional, service, public sectors and entrepreneurial class will be marked by diversity and growing immigrant participation. The religious landscape will display a declining (yet still significant) Christianity and a growing Islamic and non-religious affiliations. Cities will have multilingual environments, hybrid cultural practices, religious pluralism, and neighbourhood segregation patterns. The priest of the future will find himself caught between intergenerational tensions around cultural identity, integration pressures around education, employment and housing, political realignments around immigration and identity, and economic dependencies around migration for workforce sustainability.

According to ChatGPT, OpenAI’s AI chatbot, “intergenerational collaboration,” “prioritising people and planet over profit,” “mobilising local action with global vision,” “promotion of dignity in the digital

age” and “embracing truth, dialogue and responsibility” are presented as strategic messages for leaders of the future. As a leader in his community, the future priest is called to be someone who has a vision for the future, can articulate it and sign on the members of the community into it. No doubt the vision must be high and lofty, and be capable of embracing, fulfilling, and yet transcending and transforming the hopes and aspirations of the modern generation.

If one attempts to examine the core values that are projected to resonate within men and women of the near future, we find that all of these bear on a vision for either the human person or the world. How far can our intellectual formation help to equip ourselves to attain and work for such an integral vision? The intellectual formation of the priest firstly attempts to lay a solid philosophical foundation in order to understand the world of created reality within which his service will be rendered. Secondly the formation aims at crowning this metaphysical vision with a theological superstructure, which aims to provide him with that transcendental vision which fills humanity with hope for existence here and now, and for the future (1 Timothy 4:8).

In his famous address to La Sapienza University in 2008, Benedict XVI warns us against the dangers confronting *the lived practice* of both philosophy and theology in the public sphere. Could philosophical

arguments for the shaping of public policy and the way we and our future generations are supposed to live our lives steer away from the “love of the truth” and end up by *bowing* to the pressure of interests and the attraction of utility? Could the message of theology, which is addressed to reason, be *limited* to being merely a “comprehensive religious doctrine” and thus relegated to the private sphere? Only when theology is understood as a “purifying force for reason itself” in the public arena, can it be courageously given its place in the public square and engage in fruitful dialogue with modern systems and currents of thought.

The truth of God is the highest and deepest truth which is to be proclaimed to the world, a message which encompasses the entire truth about the human person and his or her ultimate destiny. The world awaits the revelation of the ultimate truth. Can we match the great thirst of humanity to know this truth with our abilities to proclaim it? “In him was created everything visible and invisible, all that was created was created through him and for him.” (Colossians 1:15-16). “Put nothing before the love of Christ” (St Benedict); “My God and my all” (St Francis of Assisi); “My God, take away from me everything that leads me away from you, and grant me everything that brings me to you” (St Nicholas de Flue); “finding God in all things” (St Ignatius of Loyola).

God has expressly forbidden that we *bow down* to idols which constantly reappear in various guises and *refuse* to confine the beautiful and all-encompassing message of the Gospel to the private sphere instead of proclaiming it in Word and deed to every creature under the heavens.

Intellectual formation challenges us to engage with the truth with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, so that we can not only know the truth, but also love the truth. Thus we in our turn can also experience *being loved* by the truth and lead others into this experience. Only by embarking on the journey of intellectual formation with courage and generosity can the priest be at the service of the pastoral vision of the Church in the modern world: to

be a force which enables modern men and women to live out authentically their “dual citizenship” of both the heavenly and earthly cities (Gaudium et Spes, 43), to live out their lives to the full and achieve purpose and meaning in life.

In this journey of the mind unto God, the Ultimate Truth, the source and end of all things, we trust not in ourselves, but in the One who has called us and loves us always.



John E. John is a seminarian at the Beda for the Diocese of Miao (India).

An AI-ota of Discernment: The Church in the Age of Algorithms

Deacon Benwen Lopez

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes embedded in daily life, shaping economies, influencing culture, and even predicting desires, the Church stands at a pivotal crossroads. This is not a choice between technological rejection or blind enthusiasm, but one of theological discernment and pastoral vigilance. The question is not what can AI do, but what ought it to do, in light of who we are.

In a 2025 address to the Italian Episcopal Conference, Pope Leo XIV warned that AI, biotechnology, and data-driven systems risk reducing the human person to functions and simulations. “The person is not a system of algorithms,” he said, “but a creature, relationship, mystery[sic].” This echoes Pope Benedict XVI’s enduring claim: human dignity is not defined by cognition or utility, but by our relational identity as *imago Dei*.

Andreas Widmer, a former Swiss Guard to Pope John Paul II and now founder and director of the Art & Carlyse Ciocca Center for Principled Entrepreneurship at the Catholic University of America, echoes this



concern: “AI challenges how popular culture perceives the human person,” especially in relation to our nature as bearers of the divine image. Machines may simulate thought, he notes, but they lack love, communion, and moral agency, the true hallmarks of humanity.

Theology and Ecclesiology in a Digital Age

For the Church, our engagement with AI must be grounded by a theological anthropology. Assigning spiritual or moral value to machines, Widmer warns, is a “theological misstep”. AI lacks conscience, cannot bear guilt, and is incapable of grace. “Humans should never abdicate moral agency”, he insists. Those who programme AI are accountable for its actions.

Pope John Paul II consistently taught that human worth is not functional but spiritual. This truth is increasingly urgent in a world where intelligence is equated with value. The Church must resist the reduction of the person to data and code.

And yet, AI will inevitably permeate Church life. Widmer insists technology must remain a tool, never a replacement for the incarnational mission of the Church.

Forming Priests in the Digital Desert

AI affects not only theology but also priestly formation and identity. “Seminary formation must include digital literacy and AI ethics,” Widmer states, “but always framed by moral theology and pastoral care.”

Understanding technology is now a pastoral responsibility. Yet the danger lies in allowing it to define priestly identity – turning shepherds into managers and/or content curators.



Andreas Widmer

“Too much focus on technology risks overshadowing the priest’s identity as a shepherd,” says Widmer. The priest is not a technician; he is *Alter Christus*, present, compassionate, and sacramental.

Pope Francis echoed this on the World Day of Peace 2024: “No machine can replace the warmth of human touch, the tear of compassion, or the silence of presence.” Formation must deepen discernment, prayer, and pastoral judgement, not technocratic efficiency.

In an age of misinformation, the priest needs to be a lighthouse for the truth. “The priest must grapple with the challenge of truth in an age

of misinformation,” Widmer affirms. Formation should cultivate spiritual wisdom, enabling pastors to ask of AI: Does this serve the common good? Does this reflect Christ?

Designing with Dignity

AI not only delivers information, it invariably shapes ethics. Algorithms encode values and worldviews. “We should build algorithms that reflect natural law and the common good,” Widmer urges. The Church must not merely critique from the sidelines but participate in forming the moral architecture of technology.

Pope Leo XIV, addressing the 2025 UN AI for Good Summit, called for “ethical clarity and coordinated governance of AI, based on the shared recognition of the dignity and fundamental freedoms of the human person.” His words demand ethical leadership—boldly shaping AI to uphold human worth.

The Church must now do for AI what she has done for bioethics and ecology—speak clearly about intelligence, personhood, and community. “Imagine Catholic developers creating algorithms rooted in human dignity,” Widmer muses. “What a witness that would be to the world!”

Yet with such promise comes peril. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence has also ushered in a deluge of fabricated content, deepfakes and manipulated

videos that often target the papacy itself, sowing confusion and distrust. In this climate, it becomes imperative for both pastors and the faithful to proceed with discernment. A simple yet vital guideline is to verify all such material through trusted sources, such as the official Vatican News portal, before sharing it further.

Evangelisation in the Age of Machines

AI also brings new opportunities for mission. “AI can be a powerful instrument of evangelisation,” says Widmer. It can reach digital spaces previously untouched. But if used merely for efficiency, it risks presenting a “Synthetic Gospel” stripped of sacramentality and relationship.

“The danger is we may become more ‘efficient’ but less ‘incarnational,’” he warns. This echoes Pope Francis’ insistence: true evangelisation must prioritise encounter over broadcast. The Gospel is not information, it is invitation.

Still, the Church should not fear the digital frontier. With prudence, she can use AI to create spaces of formation, dialogue, and contemplation. Widmer cites a Catholic entrepreneur who built an AI-driven platform for spiritual reflections. “It’s a great start,” he says, “but it must always lead to an encounter, either with Christ in the Sacraments or with the Church.”

To the Disoriented

To those disoriented by the speed of technological change, Widmer offers pastoral wisdom: “Your worth is not tied to what you create, but to who you are – a child of God.” He encourages withdrawal into silence, where God still speaks.

“Reflect on whether your work with (or without) AI serves the common good,” he adds. “Always discern whether your tools align with your vocation.” The Church must keep asking: Do our tools serve us or do we serve them?

This is not just a technological question, it is a theological one. The future of AI will be shaped not only by

engineers but by those who dare to ask: What does it mean to be human?

The true measure of progress is not precision or power, but wisdom. And wisdom begins not in data – but in the fear of the Lord.



Deacon Benwen Lopez is a seminarian at the Beda for the Diocese of Sindhudurg, India



Pope Francis addresses world leaders at the G7 summit in Borgo Egnazia, Italy, on the benefits and dangers of artificial intelligence, June 14, 2024. (Photo Courtesy: Vatican Media)

Beda Diary 2024-25

Deacon Benwen Lopez

Our Year at the Beda: Tales from the Eternal City (2024–2025)

It all began with a knock, not of doom, but of destiny, as on 27 September, the Beda College flung open its doors (and hearts) to three fresh-faced seminarians from the far-flung lands of Penang, Malaysia, Portsmouth, and Liverpool. Alongside them came two brave souls from the Anglican exchange, proving once again that unity starts with a suitcase and a smile.

Our spiritual gears kicked into motion from 11 to 13 October, when Fr John Carlyle (yes, him again!) led us through a period of recollection on the priesthood. Imagine deep thoughts, stirring silence, and a fair bit of tea – standard Beda fare.

On 20 October, we threw open our newly spruced-up halls to mark the anniversary of the current Beda College building. Guests galore poured in for an evening of warm fellowship and finer dining, Rome's version of a house party.

Then came 5 November, and with it, our beloved jubilarian priests from England and Wales. Over lunch, they regaled us with stories of ecclesiastical escapades and parish pitfalls – a

reminder that holiness and hilarity can indeed go hand in hand.

On 10 November, the Beda teamed up with our sister seminaries, the Scots and the Venerable English Colleges, for Remembrance Sunday at San Silvestro Church. With Fr Mark Cassidy presiding and our choirs in full voice, we honoured the fallen with solemn beauty. Afterwards, the local parish hosted a reception, showing again that remembrance and refreshment pair rather well.



Canon Mark Cassidy, Rector of the Scots College, preaching at the Remembrance Day Mass at San Silvestro

Later that month, on 18 November, we welcomed Richard Solomon, CFO of St Mary's University, Twickenham. He joined our annual academic Mass, where our graduates were duly applauded.

And then – sport! On 23 November, our seminarians joined their Scots counterparts for the annual football tournament hosted by the Pontifical Irish College, in honour of Servant of God, Fr Ragheed Ganni. Let's just say... what we lacked in trophies, we made up for in sportsmanship (and bruises).



Archbishop John Sherrington admits ten Beda and two Scots seminarians to Candidacy for Holy Orders

27 November brought something far more solemn: ten Beda and two Scots seminarians were admitted to Candidacy for Holy Orders by Bishop John Sherrington, now Archbishop of Liverpool. The post-Mass reception ensured the evening was both sacred and satisfying.



The Scots College students and staff in the College chapel



Celebration of the Scots' national feast day, St Andrew

We rounded out the month with a Vespers celebration on 30 November, St Andrew's Day, with the Scots College, where Bishop Frank Dougan presided and Mgr Denis Carlin delivered a golden jubilee homily that could melt the hardest Presbyterian heart.

As Advent tiptoed in with its quiet charm, so too did our preparations gather pace. From 7–8 December, Fr Tony Lusvardi SJ made an appearance to lead the Beda and Scots seminarians through the Advent recollection. Then, on 11 December, the first-year students, ably joined by the fresh faces from the Scots College, staged an Advent concert that was equal parts heart-warming and hilariously unrehearsed. (Let's just say what we lacked in harmony, we made up for in enthusiasm.)

On 18 December, gratitude took centre stage as students and staff came together over lunch to present thoughtful gifts to the *personale*, a small gesture of appreciation for the many unseen ways they keep the Beda running smoothly. That evening Fr John Breen led us in a serene and stirring Advent service, complete with Vespers and silent adoration. This was followed by a shared meal where silence, though initially encouraged, gave way to good cheer and clinking cutlery – Advent reverence, after all, need not exclude second helpings.



The hilariously unrehearsed Christmas concert



Further high jinks at the Christmas concert



Presenting Christmas gifts to the Beda *personale*



Fr John Breen leading the serene Advent service



Ecumenical prayer service in the College chapel

On 6 January, some of us trotted off to the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls to celebrate the opening of the last Holy Door. Cardinal James Harvey presided, and we duly soaked in the grandeur – and the incense.

Christian Unity Week kicked off on 18 January, with ecumenical guests and a splendid homily from Archbishop Ian Ernest. He bid Rome adieu soon after, leaving behind memories and many a good quote.

By 25 January, we joined Pope Francis for Vespers at St Paul's again, this time for the feast of the Conversion of St Paul. Our own deacon, Rev. Dom Max-Romeo Louis Kwadwo Osei, OSB, served at the altar, proving once more that monks can multitask.



Archbishop Ian Ernest delivers the Christian Unity homily



Pope Francis leading the Papal Vespers at the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls

From 17–25 February, the seminarians were off on retreat. Years I and II headed to Nemi (no lake swims, sadly), Year III ventured to Bagnoregio for their pre-diaconate retreat, and Year IV basked in Rocca di Papa.

From 7–9 March, Years II and III had a weekend seminar on sexuality with Fr Brendan Callaghan SJ – less awkward than expected, and more enlightening than some of our textbooks.

Then came the bishops, descending on the Beda from 16–19 March for their annual overseas seminaries visit. It was all very friendly, with one-on-ones and receptions galore. They left smiling, which we took as a good sign.

Lent brought its own rhythm. On 26 March, eight seminarians (seven Beda, one Scot) were admitted to the Ministry of Acolyte by Canon Philip Gillespie. The following week, we joined in the annual Station Mass at St Paul's, where Cardinal Harvey once again led us prayerfully into the heart of Lent.



The bishops' annual visit to the College



Staff and seminarians of the Beda, Scots and VEC meet for the traditional Lenten Oasis



Seven Beda students and one Scots College student receive the Ministry of Acolyte



Fr Philip Gillespie washes the feet of the 12 on Maundy Thursday



The Coppa San Paolo tournament



The winners of the annual San Paolo football tournament 2025

On 5 April, the Beda and Scots hosted a thrilling inter-seminary football tournament at San Leonardo Murialdo. Redemptoris Mater won the day, and it was an event marked by fraternity and sportsmanship. This parish holds special significance because some of our seminarians also teach English and support community and liturgical events.

As Holy Week neared, Fr David Glenday MCCJ offered a Lenten recollection (12–13 April) and a Palm Sunday homily that stirred the soul. Triduum followed with shared liturgies between the Beda and the Scots. On Easter Sunday, some of our choristers joined others to sing before the Papal Mass in St Peter's Square – talk about vocal chords for the Kingdom!



Fr David Glenday, a Comboni Missionary priest, preaching the Palm Sunday homily



Our annual participation in the Easter Sunday choir at the Papal Mass in St Peter's Square, along with our friends from the Venerable English College.

On 7 May, our first year brethren were admitted to the Ministry of Lector.

On 13 May, we welcomed members of the Beda Association who were in Rome for their annual meeting. A solemn Mass was celebrated followed by a fellowship meal.

May 24 saw us celebrating our patronal feast of St Bede in full splendour: solemn Mass, hearty vespers, and a dinner that left no one fasting.

On 9 June, we said a fond farewell – not only to our fourth-year students, but to Canon Gillespie and Fr Carlyle, both returning to their dioceses. There were speeches, tears, and parting gifts (all of them heartfelt).



Three first-year seminarians were admitted to the Ministry of Lectorate.

From 12–14 June, we took our Rector's Gita to Padua and Venice, a relaxed outing. Culture, spiritual activities, gondolas, and gelato formed the unofficial curriculum.



Three seminarians of the Pontifical Scots College who were ordained to the Diaconate along with the Archbishop Leo Cushley, Bishop Joseph Toal, and their formators



The Nine Beda College seminarians ordained deacons with Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP (Archdiocese of Liverpool) and Bishop Karol Kulczycki SDS (Diocese of Port Pirie), joined by the formation team.



A fitting end to the year, the Diaconate ordinations



Deacons-to-be prostrate themselves in the Basilica of San Paolo

The year closed on 18 June with the diaconate ordination of nine third-year students (the tenth was ordained a week later in his home diocese). Archbishop Emeritus Malcolm McMahon OP presided, and we feasted afterwards like it was the Wedding at Cana.

And so, with grateful hearts and sun-warmed souls, we look back on a year that was rich in prayer, fraternity, and the occasional kickabout. To all who've supported, prayed, visited, sung, preached, or simply cheered us on – thank you. You're part of the Beda family too.



Diaconate ordination of Stephen Baxter of the Diocese of Derry by Bishop Donal McKeown



Wistaston Hall is a welcoming holistic spiritual life centre that is an oasis of peace, care and comfort. At Wistaston Hall we welcome all people who are searching. We strive to offer a place where you will find peace, rest, and an opportunity for prayer away from the stresses of daily life. Coming from the Catholic tradition we sponsor a range of events throughout the year.



2025

- Enneagram Weekend – 7th – 9th November
- Advent Weekend – 5th – 7th December
- Advent Days – 9th & 11th December

2026

- Woman at the Well – 10th – 12th February
- Lent Days – 18th and 25th February, 11th March
- Lent Weekend – 6th – 8th March
- Triduum – 2nd – 5th April
- Individually Guided Retreats – 12th – 16th January and 14th – 21st September
- Celtic Spirituality Weekend – 10th – 12th July
- Adult Faith Formation Workshop – 26th – 29th May
- Advent Days – 9th and 10th December
- Advent Weekend – 11th – 13th December

Wistaston Hall: Oblate Retreat and Spirituality Centre
 89 Broughton Lane, Wistaston, Crewe CW2 8JS
 01270 568653
rachel.challoner@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk
www.orc-crewe.org



The
OBLATES
 ALWAYS CLOSE to the PEOPLE

Homily for the Mass of Ordination to the Diaconate: “You will have to touch the wounds of their hearts...”

On 18 June 2025, the Most Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, ordained nine men from the Pontifical Beda College to the diaconate. What preceded was a stirring and thought-provoking homily, rich in challenge and encouragement, delivered to mark this sacred milestone.



My dear Brothers,

You are being ordained at a time when the world is in turmoil with many wars going on about us.

Whether we like it or not we are all affected by them to a greater or lesser degree. These battles are essentially for power and possession. Power over people: individuals and nations, and possession of their minds, and land. The political and economic effects are pressing down on the people we are preparing to serve. In some of our countries faith is weak, and we can sense the tension between belief, or faith, and the lived experience of life. And the deacon can be right at the

point of conflict, or resolution. Despite great advances in science, medicine and international relations, human pain and disillusionment remain.

The deacon's role in the Church is to bear that kind of disappointment as the peace he prevails on us to share is thwarted in its acceptance beyond the pews, and the gospel he proclaims and preaches falls on deaf ears. It sounds so hopeless but I believe that this is the moment for the church to SERVE one of its fundamental purposes, sometimes forgotten. The world is full, of tears. In the liturgy, the deacon has a special care of the chalice – maybe that is why!

The chalice that you are accepting in this ordination to the diaconate is not a cup of privilege. You would think that to drink from the same cup as the Lord would ingratiate you with him and give you a special place at his table, the table of the Lord. No, the cup which you will have a special responsibility for in the liturgy is nothing less than the cup of our spirit's grief – to quote from Fr Kevin Nichol's most beautiful of modern hymns. That is the focus of the ministry you are accepting today. The cup for which you have a responsibility is the cup that is full of the tears of humanity: tears of sadness and joy, disbelief and faith. The cup that you will hold is the cup that contains the blood of Jesus, our Lord and saviour, which was poured out for us and for the many. It is the cup of the blood that dripped from the dying Jesus into the earth beneath to sanctify it and redeem it. That cup is your responsibility as a deacon. That chalice holds the Word and the Love of God: two aspects of the one Christ and the two elements of your ministry as deacon.

The symbolic functions which you will carry out in the sanctuary are but a reflection of the ministry you will conduct as you serve God's people in your community. That is the reason for your ordination. You are ordained to service, and it is in the case of a deacon a very special service amongst the people of God: when the community gathers in church you will have your liturgical role – a special care for the

chalice amongst other things. When the community disperse into the world you are to be there as one who serves: exercising a ministry of love, exercising a ministry of the Word. You will reach out to those who need human contact, the lost and forgotten, and bring to them a taste of God's concern for them. You will have to touch the wounds of their hearts and by so doing help those who have not seen believe. You will be able to show them that God's love is not simply the love of a God who is with us in sorrow and in our loss, but a God who brings us the joy of the resurrection of his Son. You are to be Christ to God's people as well as your brothers. You are to break God's word with them: show them how reflection on the word of God contained in Holy Scripture is life-giving and transforming. The ministry you are undertaking is principally a ministry of service amongst God's people, your Breda community is part of that – that is where the emphasis should lay. Your liturgical functions fall into place naturally as a celebration of your role amongst the holy faithful people of God. It is a ministry in its own right, and I would exhort you to enjoy it for what it is and not as a stepping stone to priesthood. Rather it is the foundation stone of ministry upon which the sacred ministry of priesthood can rest with stability.

You have taken this step because of your love for our Lord. You take it because you want to witness to

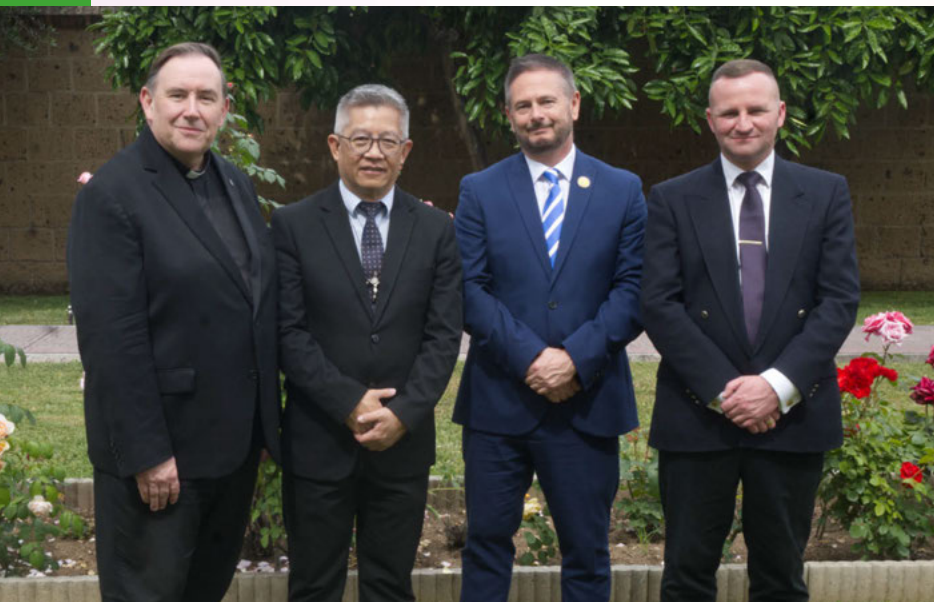
the presence of Christ as Servant. Your ministry is a sign for the whole community (not just the Beda community) of what it means to serve. You will bring those acts of service and the people they represent to the altar and through your prayer unite them with the sacrifice of Jesus in the Mass. In your hands you will hold the ultimate meaning and end of service: Christ's blood poured out for all.

In taking it in your hands and guarding it and offering it to the Lord alongside the priest you will be holding in your hands and heart the redeeming blood of the Lord which draws us closer to the Father through Jesus and through his people. This can only lead to one thing: resurrection, life and more life, life in abundance.

My brothers, you have shown enormous fidelity and perseverance so far but to have the courage to share in the cup which you are charged to guard will fulfil all your natural hopes and desires when you realise that God's love – his life – is alive in you. Helping others through liturgy, the Word, and charity is good. As a deacon others will come to recognise this truth in you and as a result draw closer to Christ who came not to be served but to serve.

May Mary who gave the greatest service of all by bearing Jesus, giving birth to him and being his first and most constant disciple, pray for you during your time as a deacon.

House Photographs



First Year Seminararians

(L to R): Canon Philip Gillespie, Clement Lee, Dominic Redcliffe and Sean Barnes



Second Year Seminararians

(L to R): Dom Hugh Nicholls OSB, John. E. John, Uldarico Galeste, Canon Philip Gillespie, Kingsley Madubuike, Martyn Jones, Christopher Sumner and David Stott



Third Year Seminarians

(L to R): Benwen Lopez, Andrew Vaitiekunas, Seth Harsh, Matthew Allen, Anthony Duns, Canon Philip Gillespie, Daniel Howarth, Stephen Baxter, Stephen Bamber, Andrei Illies, and Thomas Hampton



Fourth Year Deacons

Standing (L to R): Rev. Dom Louis Kwadwo Osei OSB, Rev. Philip Thornley **Seated (L to R):** Rev. Anthony Kerr, Canon Philip Gillespie, and Rev. Eamon Salmon



Formation Team and Residential Staff

(L to R): Msgr Peter Fleetwood, Fr John Carlyle, Canon Philip Gillespie, Fr John Breen, Sr Patricia McDonald, and Fr Andrew Unsworth



Staff and Seminarians of the Pontifical Scots College



Beda Group Photo



Ordinations

Diaconate Ordinations: 18 June 2025

Matthew Allen	Diocese of East Anglia
Stephen Bamber	Diocese of Lancaster
Stephen Baxter	Diocese of Derry
Anthony Duns	Diocese of Port Pirie
Thomas Hampton	Diocese of Down & Connor
Seth Harsh	Diocese of Wollongong
Daniel Howarth	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Andrei Ilies	Diocese of Brentwood
Benwen Lopez	Diocese of Sindhudurg
Andrew Vaitiekunas	Archdiocese of Kaunas

Priestly Ordinations

Philip Thornley	28 June 2025	St Anne's Cathedral	Diocese of Leeds
Eamon Salmon	29 June 2025	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Ballygarrett	Diocese of Ferns
Philip McMahon OFM	22 June 2025	St Mary's Church, Navan	Irish Franciscans
Dom Kwadwo Osei, Louis OSB	9 August 2025	St Joseph Catholic Church, Kintampo	Kristo Buase Monastery, Ghana
Anthony Kerr	TBC		Diocese of Meath



Fr Eamon Salmon, Diocese of Ferns, ordained on 29 June 2025



Fr Philip McMahon OFM, Irish Franciscans, ordained on 23 June 2025



Fr Philip Thornley, Diocese of Leeds, ordained on 29 June 2025



Dom Louis Kwadwo Osei OSB, Monastery of Kristo Buase, Ghana, ordained on 9 August 2025

New Men's Testimonies

Clement Lee

The death of my loving wife on 20 September 2020 turned my life around for the worst. I was in a state of shock, despair and desolation. Physically, I was a shadow of myself. My blood pressure went up to 190/98. Why am I living? What is the meaning of life? These were some of the burning questions that continued to ring in my mind.



In this challenging time, however, I had a deeply spiritual encounter. At 3:15 am, after having gone through my first ever Triduum Mass, after Easter Sunday, I dreamt that I was near the place of Christ crucified, under the cross. I saw the cross and Christ crucified, and I saw and felt the streams of blood and water flowing over me in its totality, purifying and making me, as it were, a new person; a baptism of sorts, and I experienced the forgiveness of my past sins. It was this experience that I had in this vision that led me into a journey of discernment.

From this point, my vocation began to evolve, and I began to realise and

become more aware of God's call to discipleship. At first, I was somewhat reluctant; I felt unworthy and asked God why I was "picked", and also why now, at this stage of my life. But after much soul-searching, I came to realise that the life I have is not my own and the material things I collect are not my own. In some way this made me want to weep, for what purpose, I do not know. It was as someone who experiences a deep loss and sorrow, yet on the other hand realising that God's love is pure, true and simple.

My journey of discernment was not without its challenges, especially those caused by rejection, personal struggles, and uncertainties. But at the same time, it was marked by perseverance, prayers, trust in Christ, and the great support and guidance of His Eminence Cardinal Sebastian Francis and my Vocations Director Fr Louise Loi, my Spiritual Director Fr Augustine Wong and my former parish priest Fr Anthony Liew who journeyed with me and facilitated my priestly formation and discernment. This led me to Penang College General, with the Rector Fr Simon Labrooy and Spiritual Director Fr Eugene and the other priests there to begin my seminary formation. I came to understand that

vocation is not about self-discovery but rather understanding God's will for us. As I engaged in pastoral work, I encountered Christ's presence through the encouragement, wisdom, and compassion of others which further affirmed my calling.

During this time at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome where I continue my formation for the priesthood, I am conscious of the great responsibility and privilege of this vocation to which God has called me. The road to discernment is demanding and graced; it requires perseverance, humility, and an abandonment of self entirely at the disposition of God's holy will. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV). As I continue to walk in his path, confidence is assured in God's divine providence.

Dominic Redcliffe

"Why have you never come to see me?", I was asked by Fr Ron Johnson, Vocations Director in the Archdiocese of Liverpool.



Fr Ron asked me this question one afternoon in a large seminar room in the archdiocesan offices in Liverpool. The room was full of donations for

the Aid to Ukraine appeal which the Archdiocese had set up. At one end of the room there was a mountain of nappies waiting to be boxed as well as clothing, toiletries, sleeping bags, medicines and many other items generously donated by parishes and schools from across the Archdiocese. A few weeks earlier, Fr Sean Riley had asked for volunteers for the Ukraine appeal and on that afternoon I was alone packing boxes.

Fr Ron's question was to the point and at the time, I do not think I gave an especially articulate answer. However, this question absolutely stopped me in my tracks and for the first time I had the courage to wonder if the Lord might be calling me to work for him in a way that I did not think I was capable of.

I had taught in two Catholic primary schools for most of my life and the thought of the priesthood had been loitering in my mind for many years. I had convinced myself that being in Catholic education was where *I should be*. Whenever the priesthood was mentioned, my go-to answer was that I had a vocation teaching primary school children (which was true), but as I look back, this was perhaps more likely a way of avoiding the question. At the same time, passing on the faith to children and being in a Catholic community was a joy. This was the faith passed onto me by my parents and through my own Catholic education.

However, in hindsight I believe that the Lord thought it was time for me to move on and unexpectedly I left the bubble of a small Catholic primary school and found myself flying for TUI Airways as part of the seasonal cabin crew. No more lesson prep, teaching, marking and playground duties. Teaching was replaced with “days out” and “trips” (as crew called them) to sunny holiday destinations across Europe, North Africa, Egypt, Orlando and Cancun. I met all sorts of people and gained a wealth of experiences as a result. Whilst waiting for the new holiday season to begin, I had time to volunteer for the Ukraine Appeal in Liverpool. Being in the Archdiocesan offices just felt ‘right’ and before I knew it, I left the airline and started working in the Finance Department for the Archdiocese.

The question that Fr Ron asked me just would not leave me and an awareness of being in the “right” place grew stronger and stronger. This feeling just seemed to grow, which I believe was reinforced by working with amazing colleagues and also getting to know clergy who inspired me. I finally faced the question: “Was the priesthood where *I should be?*”

I started to attend monthly Vocation Days in Liverpool and subsequently applied for formation. Archbishop Malcolm McMahon accepted my application and I arrived at the Beda in September 2024. One reason that I used as an “excuse” for remaining in the teaching field was that the

priesthood would mean a loss of freedom. By seeing priests in action I began to realise that their lives and service in fact offered the opposite. The opportunities to serve the Lord and his people are endless.

The words of St Francis de Sales, “*Be who you are and be that well*” reassure me that the Lord sees qualities in us that we might not realise for ourselves. Formation at the Beda allows seminarians to build on the qualities they have in a community of encouragement, learning and prayer.

Upon reflection, I think the question, “*Why have you never come to see me?*” had been asked several times in my life. I feel blessed that being a seminarian has allowed me to finally see *him*.

Sean Barnes

I was born in Winchester, Hampshire, in September 1980, into a devout, practicing Irish Roman Catholic family,



where faith, hope and charity were fundamental in the roots of my upbringing. I was baptised at St Edward the Confessor Roman Catholic church in Chandlers Ford and received First Holy Communion and Confirmation in the same parish.

The sense of vocation has been in my heart since adolescence, and I have

remained disciplined and consistent in practicing the faith throughout my life. I attended university and then spent periods of my life living in London, Melbourne, Sicily and Dublin working in various corporate sectors, public relations, property development and real estate. Although I enjoyed a very prosperous career, I still felt the good Lord tugging on my heart strings. I concluded that I would create space in my life for God to explore and discern with integrity, a vocation to the priesthood.

After much prayerful discernment, contemplation, spiritual direction and regular adoration, I applied to the Diocese of Portsmouth, to make a formal application to the sacrament of priesthood. In conclusion, the discernment conference committee recommended to Bishop Philip Egan that I should be accepted. Bishop Egan sent me to the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, to commence my studies in September 2024.

As we approach the conclusion of the academic year, I sincerely feel that I have grown in the academic, pastoral, human and spiritual dimensions of seminary formation and further deepened my relationship with Christ. I have been truly inspired by the seminary staff, brother seminarians and my formation programme in Rome. I look forward to my summer parish placement in Hampshire, before spending a few weeks in the north-west of Ireland trout and salmon fishing and mountaineering.

Thereafter, I look forward to flying back to the Eternal City to commence the second year of formation!

Marc Voase

What could be better on entering one's final year in college formation than the prospect of an expenses-paid trip to Rome, I mused?



For me, having made the significant decision not to renew my profession vows as a brother of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield in July 2024, this opportunity has come at a germane time as I prepare to complete this phase of my theological education reading for a Master's in theology and ministry at Cranmer Hall, Durham, to be made deacon in the Anglican diocese of Leeds next June.

My interests in languages, culture and Catholicism have made this an obvious placement choice, and I am grateful for the concord between the Ministry Team at the Church of England and the Beda College that has fostered it. The utter genuineness of the hospitality in this place lies at the heart of its charism, and I feel fortunate to have been able to immerse myself in the life of the community here for an extended period, to imbibe the Roman culture so widely and not least, to have bonded with the *fratelli* so closely. There was

a discernible moment during a recent celebration of Mass during which I thought: "These are my brothers and I am going to be leaving them soon." Yet, the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that, "a threefold cord is not quickly broken", and as I prepare to take my leave of the Beda shortly after the time of writing, I feel firmly assured of this.

It has not been difficult for me, as someone who has lived the dual life of a religious and a theology student within a seminary context previously, to give myself to the life offered here: that context has undoubtedly enabled me to flourish in this one – albeit with much more consistently clement weather! And although I was slightly concerned about keeping up the substantial nature of my study commitments back home – this has not been overly difficult and I hope that I have been able to make a full contribution to the academic programmes with which I've been able to engage as a first-year here. I have been glad of this engagement.

I am indebted to the brethren of the senior cohorts who have given lavishly of their time to be with us, showing us sights and hacks and thoroughly embracing us as confrères in the common life of the College. It was a particular joy to be enabled to serve the liturgy as crucifer, and to offer my love of singing to the opus Dei as a member of the schola.

Regular Tuesday worship with the thriving Anglican churches of the city has been an important feature

of my visit. It has been important to my spiritual wellbeing to establish a link with the ministry of the Anglican centre and to receive its ministry of welcome and sacrament consistently.

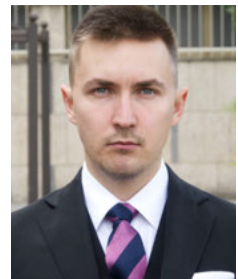
I am also very glad to have enjoyed numerous days (and meals!) out that have offered an increased facility with Roman culture and tradition, empowering me to negotiate the city and its inexhaustible riches. I am already thinking about my next visit – what to do and where to go!

As the late Jo Cox MP wisely observed: "We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us." The best thing about my placement remains the several warm relationships that have made the entire Beda experience life-giving and memorable; I hope this is reciprocated such that *Fratelli Tutti* may radiate the enduring oneness that is the spirit and body of our Lord Jesus Christ: "For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes."

Pontus Bramberg

Having spent eight weeks at the Beda as a Church of England ordinand on an ecumenical exchange programme, I

am very grateful to have been welcomed and included in the community during my brief



time there. My time at the Beda was deeply enriching, and I am certain it will continue to shape my ministry for many years to come. The friendships formed are treasured, and the conversations shared, from theological reflection to everyday matters, will be fondly remembered. I am already considering when I might return; the friendships and the experiences will stay with me throughout my ministry.

There were many excellent experiences during my stay, but a few stand out particularly. The visit to the Catacombs of St Callixtus was a powerful moment of connection with the early Church. To walk among the tombs of early Christians, where faith was lived out in the face of persecution, was very significant. The trip to Bracciano and the audience with Pope Francis were also moments of great significance.

One of the most valuable aspects of my time at the Beda was the experience of being part of a more international community of Christian ministerial formation than I am accustomed to at my own theological college. The rhythm of life at the Beda, shaped by gathering daily for liturgical worship, provided a strong sense of structure that grounded me in ways I had not anticipated. Though there were elements of the liturgical worship that were different from what I am accustomed to, I found the rhythm to be spiritually helpful and to provide a sense of rootedness in the common prayer. The communal meals

were also enriching, as they offered a space for fellowship and reflection, fostering a strong sense of community that has not been nearly as evident in any other context in which I have found myself.

Living in Rome itself added another dimension of significance to my time at the Beda. The city's immense history and spiritual significance were always present, making each day feel like an encounter with the past and the ongoing story of Christianity. My time at the Beda has been an invaluable part of my formation, and I leave with a deep sense of gratitude for the experiences and relationships that will continue to shape my calling.

Pontifical Scots College

Michael Ward

My name is Michael Ward and I am a 24-year-old seminarian from Giffnock in the Diocese of Paisley in my first year at the Pontifical Scots College, while we reside at the Pontifical Beda College. I study philosophy at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas.



Any vocation starts in the context of the family: I come from a faithful Catholic family of seven, with two brothers and two sisters with whom I

prayed the Holy Rosary every Sunday, to which I attribute both my vocation and the fact that I didn't fall away from the faith.

My great-uncle was a priest and as a young boy I looked up to him, as well as being influenced by good and holy priests that I was blessed to know, both from my parish and in the Prelature of Opus Dei. As I grew up, I harboured an ambition to be like them, fostered by serving Mass and the Sacraments. This waned during high school, however, as I focused instead on playing football, and perhaps forging a career in sport. I subsequently attended the University of Glasgow to study physiology and sports science, but providentially I found a real Catholic community of young people my own age and a fantastic chaplain at the University Catholic Chaplaincy, Turnbull Hall.

I began to speak to and listen to God in mental prayer for the first time and study the teachings of the Church, making the faith passed on to me from my parents my own, as I started to discern a vocation to the priesthood. As I experienced the richness of the Catholic liturgy and the impressive example of other young Catholics, the desire to be a priest I had had as a young boy began to return, and I could picture myself being like those holy priests I knew.

I discerned this call over my four years of university, aided by good priests and friends, and the Lord

convinced me that I should apply to seminary as I finished university. I worked for a Pro-Life organisation in London for a few months after finishing up university, a cause which is close to my heart, before beginning seminary formation at the Royal Scots College, Salamanca, where I did my propaedeutic year. I moved to Rome in August 2025, and feel blessed to call the Eternal City my home.

Daniel Siversson

I am a seminarian from Stockholm, Sweden, with an interest in football, music, and philosophy. I have played both football and



bandy, a sport primarily played in Northern Europe. Bandy is similar to ice hockey but is played on a rink the size of a football pitch and uses a ball instead of a puck. In terms of music, my primary instrument has been the drums, which I studied in upper secondary school. I have also played in two bands, developing my passion for music.

I was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran Church of Sweden, but through God's guiding hand and grace, I was led to the fullness of his one true faith. Sweden is a highly secular country, and although most people are baptized in the Lutheran Church, many do not actively believe in God. I was once in that position

myself but eventually developed a strong interest in Christianity.

Apologetics played a significant role in my journey. Initially, I believed there were no rational reasons to believe in God or Christianity, but as I explored the subject, I discovered compelling arguments in its favour. The existence of God is well-supported by philosophical arguments, and the resurrection of Christ by historical facts.

At first, I assumed that if Christianity were true, the natural choice would be to remain Protestant in some form. However, as I deepened my understanding of history, I realised that the early Church looked nothing like Protestantism. The writings of the Church Fathers, along with historical evidence, led me to recognise the Catholic Church as the one founded by Christ. Through study and prayer, I came to see that the Catholic Church has preserved the fullness of the Christian faith from the beginning, and I was drawn to enter into full communion with her.

Gabriel Cavallin

On the day I was to be confirmed, my parish priest told me: *"Now it's your turn to teach others about God."* When I thought about what this could mean, the Bishop came up to us and asked: *"Are you*



ready to die for your faith? Are you ready to give your whole life to God?" I felt at that moment that this was something I wanted and should do.

However, I still had no idea how God wanted me to give myself in service. So I ended up trying different things. I registered as a catechist in my parish. It was a joy to teach others about God and to see them in turn teach others about God. However, I sensed that God wanted something more from me, but this was still not clear for me. I tried many things but that the call to become a priest was something that took time for me to understand and accept. After nine years of trying different things, including religious life, I decided to send in my application to the diocese.

If there is anything that I would tell other people searching for their vocation in life, it is that you should try and not be afraid – God takes care of you as long as you search for him.

Jakob Fredestad

"I am nothing, but I am yours." That's what was written on the memorial card for a Carmelite priest who meant a great deal to me during my upbringing. Meeting him, whether in the confessional or outside of it, was always to encounter a gaze that could



see and understand me more deeply than I could understand myself. That's why I was never afraid of this priest; I could be completely myself and I knew that what he said to me was also true. For what he said came directly from his contemplative heart, a heart united with Christ.

You can speak in two ways. You can learn a passage from the catechism and rephrase it in your own words. Or you can speak the same truth from your heart, where you live its meaning in Christ. When one heart speaks to another heart, then one listens.

This Carmelite priest was a major inspiration for me as a young person to live for God, and to remain Catholic. He, together with the Carmelite sisters, revealed to me in a special way that our faith is greater and deeper than anything else out there in the world.

I believe my vocation may have been awakened sometime between the ages of five and seven. I am convinced that my father was a great inspiration for this, as he showed me that God was the only thing that truly mattered in life. He ran a Catholic publishing house – which was nearly impossible in secular Sweden – and he was a Catholic deacon. He prayed the Divine Office and the Rosary every day, and began each morning from six to seven with an hour of silent prayer according to the Carmelite tradition.

My mother, of course, plays an equally

vital role in all of this. Her quiet sacrifices allowed my father to live almost like a monk. As time goes on, I continue to discover more about her profound spiritual influence and realise how much I still have to learn from her. In truth, I cannot say that one of them is more important than the other.

When I was around eight years old, I met a Swedish Benedictine monk who, after I had asked, explained that he never wore anything except his religious habit. This made a deep impression on me. The habit became a clear sign to me that this person belonged entirely to God and belonged to him 24 hours a day. I longed to belong to God just as radically.

After high school, I made an important visit to a Benedictine monastery in France. A few years later, I returned to that same monastery. It now became completely clear to me that I had a vocation—that it came from God and wasn't just a childhood dream. But I didn't yet have the answer as to how or where.

I tried out the Benedictine life, but eventually realised it was not for me. I ended up, by God's providence, in a place where it seemed there was no path forward for me. At the same time, I fell deeply in love with a wonderful woman. But in the end, after almost a year, I realised, deep down, the vocation could not be removed and that something essential

within me would always be missing if I were to continue developing the relationship and get married.

Then, again through God's providence, I spent four years together with a priest and a few other young men discerning what we believed to be a call to a Bridgettine priestly society. We met regularly, often waiting for a solution that at times seemed near and at other times far off.

In the end, God's providence helped me understand that I was to apply to the Swedish seminary in order to study for the secular priesthood in the Diocese of Stockholm and now here I am, in the Scottish Pontifical Seminary.

When it comes to my spiritual life, the Sacred Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Our Lady Queen of Carmel, and the saints of Sweden are of particular importance. My favourite saint is St Jean Marie Vianney, whose name I also took as my confirmation name.

David Järleström

My name is David and I come from Sweden. I was baptised in the Swedish Lutheran church but we were never active Lutherans. As

I got older my interest in religion and philosophy grew and I began to look into different religions of which



Catholicism distinguished itself the most with its emphasis on apostolic succession, tradition and teaching authority. The Blessed Virgin Mary has especially been a great help in drawing me to the Church.

I converted a few years ago and the possibility of priesthood has always been present in my mind and so in 2023 I contacted the Rector of the Swedish seminary. I and my fellow Swedish seminarians were first sent to the Royal English College in Valladolid, Spain, for our propaedeutic year and then for our first year of philosophy in Rome, where we live and study with the Pontifical Scots College together with the Pontifical Beda College.

Christopher Bruce Clements

Salvete, my name is Christopher. Currently, I am quietly pursuing a possible vocation to the priesthood for my home diocese. I am in the early stages of the discipleship phase of formation in the Scots College.



Before Seminary I led a relatively conventional life with no consideration of priesthood – I didn't even know the process. I left school after sixth year to study computer science at the University of Strathclyde and received a B Sc

Hons. I then started work briefly as a software engineer before leaving to become a client services manager, working within client management and internal services. It was a fantastic company to work for, lovely people that I got on well with and the work was very enjoyable, so I was happy and everything was going well.

However, in parallel, my faith was growing. I was learning more about what it truly means to be a Catholic. There are many around me, family, friends, priests and others that educated me and I take elements from them but nobody deserves as much credit for my development as St Carlo Acutis. He is similar in his interest to me and so became very quickly a role model.

From there I continued to read about Carlo – his life, philosophy, what he did, what he said etc. Carlo used his technological abilities to evangelise. He wanted to help those who doubt the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist because they do not see him

physically. As it was with Thomas in the Gospel, Carlo knew they needed to see. Carlo then gathered over 100 eucharistic miracles where Jesus showed himself by turning the bread into real flesh, real blood coming from the host and presented them in an exhibition which could be accessed on a website. He included photographs and information as to where you could go to see them and the scientific studies that proved this was a miracle. He did the same for Marian apparitions, angels and more.

One day at work it was made clear to me by the Holy Spirit that God wished me to pursue this path so like my College's patron saint, St Andrew, I immediately put down my fishing nets (or keyboard in my case) to follow him on this path and I will see where it goes.

St Andrew pray for us

St Carlo Acutis pray for us

St Ninian pray for us



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The Beda Association



President Canon Philip Gillespie
Vice President Canon Michael Buckley
Secretary Fr John Peyton
Treasurer Canon John Weatherill

Diocesan Representatives

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
To be appointed

Archdiocese of Birmingham
Revd Fr John Peyton
St Dunstan's Presbytery
Kingsfield Road
Kings Heath
Birmingham B14 7JN
fr.john.peyton@rcaob.org.uk

Diocese of Brentwood
Revd Fr Joseph Tan
Most Holy Redeemer Presbytery
Petersfield Ave
Harold Hill
Romford,
Essex RM3 9PB
haroldhillmhr@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Archdiocese of Cardiff
To be appointed

Diocese of Clifton
Revd Fr Michael Thomas
8 Tyndalls Mansions
Tyndalls Park Road
Bristol B58 1PN
mjpthomas@usa.net

Diocese of East Anglia
Revd Fr Paul Spellman,
St Mary's Presbytery
322 Woodbridge Road
Ipswich
IP4 4BD
paul.spellman@rcdea.org.uk

Diocese of Hallam
Revd Fr Patrick Harrigan
St Joseph's Presbytery
2 Carr Road
Wath upon Dearne
S63 7AA
harriganpat@gmail.com

Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle
Revd Mgr Andrew Faley
St Edward's Presbytery
Coquet Ave
Whitley Bay
Tyne & Wear NE26 1EE
ajfaley@yahoo.co.uk

Diocese of Lancaster
Revd Fr Andrew Broster
St John the Evangelist Presbytery
The Willows
Ribby Road
Kirkham
Lancs PR4 2BE
andrewbroster@gmail.com

Diocese of Leeds
 Revd Fr Michael McLaughlin
 Our Lady of Mount Carmel
 Presbytery
 Carmel House
 7 Wesley Place
 Silsden,
 West Yorkshire BD20 0PH
 michaelmclaughlin5@gmail.com

Archdiocese of Liverpool
 Revd Fr Anthony Kelly
 Our Lady Queen of Martyrs
 & St Swithin Presbytery
 Stonebridge Lane
 Croxteth,
 Liverpool
 L11 9AZ
 akelly2809@gmail.com;

Diocese of Menevia
 To be appointed

Diocese of Middlesbrough
 Revd Canon Gerard Robinson
 St Mary's Cathedral
 Dalby Way
 Coulby Newham
 Middlesbrough
 TS8 0TW
 gerard.paul@btopenworld.com

Diocese of Northampton
 To be appointed

Diocese of Nottingham
 Revd Fr John Kyne
 St Philip Neri Presbytery
 3 Chesterfield Road South
 Mansfield
 Notts
 NG19 7AB
 frjohnkyne@gmail.com

Diocese of Plymouth
 Revd Fr Brian Kenwrick
 St Mary's Presbytery
 Killigrew Street
 Falmouth
 Cornwall TR11 3PR
 brian.kenwrick@prcdtr.org.uk

Diocese of Portsmouth
 Revd Fr David Sillince
 St Boniface House
 413 Shirley Road
 Shirley
 Southampton, Hampshire
 SO15 3JD
 davidsillince@yahoo.co.uk

Diocese of Salford
 To be appointed

Diocese of Shrewsbury
 To be appointed

Archdiocese of Southwark
 Revd Fr Stephen Wymer
 St Simon Stock Presbytery
 5 Bleakwood Road
 Walderslade
 Chatham
 Kent
 ME5 0NF
 frswymer@hotmail.co.uk

Revd Fr Philip Seed
 Peveril
 Fordoun Road
 Broadstairs
 Kent
 CT10 2BN
 philipseed@yahoo.co.uk

Diocese of Wrexham
 To be appointed

Archdiocese of Westminster
Rev'd Fr Tom Montgomery
St Matthew's Presbytery
32 Hallowell Road
Norwood
Middlesex HA6 1DW
tommontgomery@rcdow.org.uk

Archdiocese of St Andrews &
Edinburgh
Rev'd Fr Jeremy Milne
St John the Baptist Presbytery
37 St Ninian's Road
Edinburgh
Lothian EH12 8AL
jeremymilne@googlemail.com

Diocese of Argyle & the Isles
To be appointed

Australia
Rev'd Fr Geoffrey McIlroy
Parish of Melton
10 Unit Street
Melton 3337
Victoria
Australia
geoffmcilroy@gmail.com

Update on the Beatification of Mgr John Hawes

A former Beda man, Mgr John Hawes spent some 24 years in Western Australia, designing and building numerous churches across the mid-west of Australia.

In June 2023, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Geraldton was advised by the Roman Dicastery for the Cause of Saints that there are no objections from the Dicastery to progress the Diocesan Enquiry into the life of Servant of God John Cyril Hawes, including evidence of his life of heroic virtues, holiness and of intercessory prayer.

On 14th September 2024, during the Centenary Celebrations of the Laying of the Foundation Stone at Our Lady of Mt Carmel church in Mullewa, a prayer card for the beatification of the servant of God John Cyril Hawes was distributed.

Annual General Meeting of the Beda Association

***The meeting was held on
13 May 2025 at the Pontificio
Collegio Beda, Rome***



Agenda

1. Opening Prayer, prayed by Canon Philip Gillespie

2. Apologies

Fr Bob Devaney, Fr Michael Thomas, Mgr Patrick Daly, Fr Michael McLaughlin, Fr Keith Evans, Fr John McHugh, Peter and Margaret Lymington, Fr Michael Thomas, Fr Kevin McLoughlin, Canon David Goodwin.

Fr David Savoury had travelled to Rome to attend the Beda Association AGM but had been taken ill that day. Prayers were requested for him.

Prayers were also requested for Fr Darren Carden of Lancaster Diocese who is presently very ill.

3. Attending

Canon Philip Gillespie, Mgr Roderick Strange, Fr John Peyton, Canon John Weatherill, Canon Douglas Lamb, Canon Michael Buckley, Mgr Brian Dazeley, Fr Andrew Broster, Fr Tom Montgomery, Fr Pat Armstrong, Fr Bill Bowder, Mrs Caroline Bowder, Fr Paul Smith, Fr John Carlyle, Fr John Kyne, Fr John Breen.

4. Remembrances

Fr Martin Nott, Brentwood, June 2024; Fr Bernard McGilloway, July 2024; Fr Anthony Carlo Cogliolo, Shrewsbury, 8th July 2024; Fr George Hutcheon, Aberdeen, 26th June 2024; Fr Terence McGuckin, Westminster, 14th August 2024; Fr Vincent Naylor, Salford, 5th November, 2023; Fr Colin Wright, Salford, 25th August 2024;

Fr Peter Blundell, Birmingham, 24th August 2024; Fr Christopher Brannan, Aberdeen, 13th September 2024; Fr Michael D'Mello, Clifton, 21st September 2024; Fr Christopher Hogan, Nottingham, 23rd September 2024; Fr Fred Sheldon, Birmingham, 14th December 2024; Fr Joseph Carter, Westminster, 16th December 2024; Sr Cuthbert Mulligan FMDM, 25th March 2025.

5. Minutes of AGM May 2024

The minutes were approved by the meeting and signed by President Canon Philip Gillespie

President's Signature



Fr Rector as chief celebrant at the Mass with Beda Association members in the College.

6. Rector's report

As he approaches the end of 10 “very happy years” as Rector of the Beda, Canon Gillespie was able to report that the house is “buoyant.” There are 24 Beda seminarians, 4 resident formation staff and 4 external students. There is also the presence of the Scots College, as they pursue their own base in Rome.

Canon Gillespie highlighted three significant “moments” during his 10 years as Rector.

- i) The COVID pandemic. Its effects are still with us. At the time, 16 seminarians stayed in Rome, 16 went back to their dioceses. This was the time when the relationship was formed with Bibos caterers, who are now providing an excellent service.
- ii) The departure of the FMDM community in 2022. The College still feels the lack of their presence. They did invaluable work, especially in the library and helping seminarians whose first language was not English. Their former convent now provides accommodation for the Scots College.
- iii) The arrival of the Scots College. Their stay was originally for one, now two and probably three years. The Scots want a place they can call their own. Their former premises on the Via Cassia is still not sold. There has been a glitch with a property where they planned to take a tenancy. This is now likely to go to the Knights of Malta.

Canon Gillespie commented on the Filmer Fund, which can be used to provide bursaries for seminarians from less financially well off dioceses to study at the Beda. £170,000 is presently held by the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom. This gives the Beda an income of £7,000 per year. £10,000 is a reduced bursary for a Beda seminarian for a year; the standard fee is £25,000.

It was suggested that transfers could be made to this fund throughout the year, without having to wait for a decision to be made at the AGM.

The Beda presently bears the cost of *The Beda Review*. Canon Gillespie asked could the Beda Association pay for copies to be sent to Beda Association members? Presently, 215 copies are sent out, this figure is down from 300 copies.

There is a need to increase the membership of the Beda Association. One member organises a collection every year in his parish for the Beda Association, maybe other Beda priests could imitate his example?

The solar panels have taken one third off the Beda's electricity bill.

The St Cuthbert Wing, with refurbished guest rooms, is proving very popular.

There is a need to create more space for seminarians to relax together, maybe a kitchen with the stillottos on each floor?

Larry is to retire in January 2026, his work area will be put to use.

Comments

Fr Bowder suggested that *The Beda Review* could be sent out in digital format. Fr Peyton offered to email the Beda Association members, to find out which members would accept a digital copy of the *Review*.

It was suggested that there should be gatherings organised by Diocesan reps for former Beda men around Bede's Day. This is already happening in some dioceses.

Perhaps Diocesan representatives could be drawn together to discuss/plan Beda celebrations on a wider scale. Maybe trips to Bede's country in the north-east could be arranged?



A visiting Beda Association member at prayer in the College chapel

7. Treasurer’s Report

Income and Expenditure
1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

INCOME	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
AGM Receipts	1,335.80	1,100
Donations received (Note 1)	95,267.20	6,752*
Legacies		
Subscriptions		
Life	750	500
Annual	230	80
Bank interest	381.36	111.89
Total INCOME	£97,964.36	£8,543.89
EXPENDITURE	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
AGM Expenses	1,395	1,888.90
Donations given (Note 2)	7,600	2,000
Bank charges		
Total EXPENDITURE	£8,995	£3,888.90

FUNDS AT BANK				
Opening balance	£8,907.97	(1.4.24)	£4,252.98	
Net income	88,969.36		4,654.99	
Closing bank balance	£97,877.33	(31.3.25)	8,907.97	(31.3.24)*

*£5,600 Restricted for Beda Bursary Fund

Monsignor Canon John Weatherill, Hon. Treasurer
14th April 2025

Note 1 - Donations received comprise:

- £93,333.33 Bequest from Fr Gerry Thornton RIP (Beda 1992-1996)
- £1,508.87 St Bede's Day collections (2024 & 2025) at Silsden parish (Fr Michael McLaughlin)
- £425 representing members' donations

Note 2 - Donations given

- £2,000 to Beda College, as agreed at 2024 AGM
- £5,600 to Beda Bursary Fund (administered by The Guild of Our Lady of Ransom); paid from specific donations (restricted funds)

Comments

The late Fr Gerry Thornton very generously left £93,333.33 in his will to the Beda Association. It was suggested that £80,000 should go to the Filmer Fund and the remainder could be used

to pay for *The Beda Review* and its postage. This proposal was made by Canon Douglas Lamb and seconded by Fr Tom Montgomery. It was carried.

A further proposal was made: That the funds in the Filmer Fund can be used at the discretion of the Beda Association officers, without having to wait for the AGM for decisions to be made. This proposal was made by Mgr Brian Dazeley and seconded by Fr Andrew Browster. It was carried.

The generosity and initiative of Fr Michael McLoughlin was acknowledged, in his organizing of a collection in his parish for the Beda Association 2 years running.

Canon John Weatherill suggested that the Beda Association should give a gift to Canon Philip Gillespie, to acknowledge his 10 years' excellent service as Rector of the Beda.



The Beda Association Secretary, Fr John Peyton, at the Beda Association Mass in the College.

8. Secretary's Report

In commenting on the list of remembrances, Fr Peyton drew attention to Fr Fred Sheldon. Fr Fred was parish priest in a neighbouring parish to Fr John's home parish, before Fr John went to the Beda. He used to take his elderly parents to Mass in Fr Fred's parish. Fr Fred was always very kind to them.

It was made known that there are Beda cuff-links available, at £70 a set.

Fr John hopes to update the Beda Necrology shortly.

The following set of anniversaries was then read:

Anniversaries this year

2000 – Silver Jubilee	Diocese	Ordination date	Death
Chinnappan, Vanathayan	India		
Clark, Basil	St Andrews & Edinburgh		
D'Silva, Lorens	India		
Di Rocco, Louis	USA		
Edwards, Derek	Birmingham		8th November 2010
Fernandes, Alex	India		
Godwin, Zane	Cape Town, South Africa		
Hughes, Michael	Leeds	1st July	
Meo, Peter	Archdiocese of Perth	30th June	
Otto, James			
Purcell, Hugh	St Andrews & Edinburgh		6th October 2020
Robinson, Gerard	Middlesbrough		
Smith, Peter	Leeds	1st July	
Taylor, Roger	Westminster	3rd July	
Vicente, Ramoncito	Philippines	9th December	11th October 2018
Waddell, Charles	Australia	12th December	

1985 - Ruby Jubilee	Diocese	Ordination Date	Death
Galvon, Stanley	Vancouver	29th June	
Garrett, Anthony	Liverpool	23rd June	3rd September 2020
Gunning, Thomas	Clifton	22nd June	
Healey, Kevin	Salford		
Kelly, Paul	St Andrews & Edinburgh	28th June	
Lawlor, Edward	Basseterre, West Indies	15th August	
Matthews, Ronald	Salford	13th July	2nd October 1999
Mount, Roger	Papua, New Guinea	29th June	
O'Connor, Joseph	Lancaster	22nd June	Oct-23
Power, Vincent	Leeds	9th June	
Quigley, Paul	Westminster		
Quirke, Thomas	Lancaster	29th June	
Scofield, Terence	Salford	6th January	20th September 2016
Smith, Philip Joseph Thomas	Lancaster	14th September	

1975 - Golden Jubilee	Diocese	Ordination date	Death
Bourne, Nigel	Northampton		26th June 1990
Ellerton, Francis	Plymouth		3rd April 1989
Lopeman, Roy	Portsmouth		5th January 1982
Martin, William	Salford		7th October 1995
Murray, Michael	Shrewsbury		22nd June 2019
Nolan, Patrick	Westminster	April	9th January 2014
O'Connor, Edward	Leeds	16th April	15th October 2006
Sullivan, Michael Anthony	Clifton	31st March	20th August 2018

Causes: As well as the Cause for the Beatification of Monsignor John Cyril Hawes, another cause of a former Beda priest that we should be aware of is that of Fr Thomas Byles of Brentwood Diocese. He was the priest who was still carrying out his ministry on the sinking *Titanic*.

8. Election of Officers

President *Canon Philip Gillespie*

Vice President *Canon Michael Buckley*

Secretary *Fr John Peyton*

Nominated by:

Fr Thomas Montgomery

Fr Andrew Brewster

Canon John Weatherill

Seconded by

Fr Pat Armstrong

Fr Bill Bowden; carried.

Treasurer

Canon John Weatherill nominated by:

Canon Michael Buckley, seconded by

Mgr Brian Dazeley; carried

9. Venue and approximate date for next year

It is planned that the 2026 meeting of the Beda Association should take place on 5th./6th. May. It was suggested that Hinsley Hall in Leeds might be a possible venue.

10. Closing Prayer.

Mass was celebrated by Canon Philip Gillespie at 6.15 pm.

The votive Mass of St Bede was prayed, remembering those of our family who have died, those who are ill and in need of our prayers, the membership of the College and those who support the College in any way.

Mass was followed by a reception and a delicious dinner.

New Member of the Beda Association

Fr Paul Smith, Nottingham Diocese (Life Membership)



Beda Association members relax over dinner after the rigours of the AGM.

Left side left to right: Canon Michael Buckley, Canon Douglas Lamb, Fr John Peyton, Fr Pat Armstrong

Right side left to right: Fr Bill Bowder, Caroline Bowder, Mgr Brian Dazeley, Fr David Savoury

In Memoriam:

Honouring those whom we lost

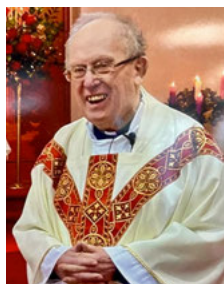


Fr Martin Nott

Fr Martin Nott, a priest of the Diocese of Brentwood, prepared for the priesthood at the Beda between 1986 and 1990. He died on 1 June 2024 at Broomfield Hospital.

Fr Knott was born in Braintree, Essex, on 5th December 1939. After travelling widely, he was ordained on 14 July 1990 at St James the Less and St Helen, Colchester.

He served as assistant priest at the Cathedral (1990) and Rayleigh (1993). He also served in the Diocese of Dundee, South Africa (1995) and was parish priest at Great Bardfield (March 1998- October 1998), Stanford-Le-Hope (1998) and Dunmow (2006).



Fr Anthony Carlo Cogliolo

Anthony Carlo Cogliolo was born on 30th December 1935 in Liverpool. He died in his 89th year and in the 56th year of his sacred priesthood

Anthony Cogliolo attended Manchester University where he gained a BA Degree in Politics and Modern History, then went on to teach at St Anselm's College, Birkenhead from 1958 to 1965. During this time, he also worked as a part time tutor for the Workers' Educational Association. He was accepted to begin his training for the priesthood at the Pontifical Beda College in 1965 and was ordained in Rome on 22nd March 1969.

Father Anthony served as an Assistant Priest at Christ the King, Bromborough (1969 – 1975), SS Peter & Paul, New Brighton (1975 – 1976) and St Vincent's, Altrincham (1976 – 1980). Father Anthony then served as Parish Priest of St Thomas Becket, Tarporley (1980 – 1986); as Parish Priest of Our Lady & St Christopher, Romiley (1986 – 1994) also serving as Dean of St Anselm's Deanery from 1987 to 1992; as Parish Priest of All Saints, Ashton on Mersey (1994 – 1997); as Parish Priest of St Bede, Weaverham (1997 – 2005) and finally as Parish Priest of Sacred Heart & St Teresa's, Wilmslow (2005 – 2024). During this time, on 6th December 2012, the University of Wales awarded him a PhD, Doctor of Philosophy.

In June 2024, Father Anthony moved to Woodend Care Home, Altrincham where he died peacefully on 8th July 2024. May he rest in peace.



Fr George Hutcheon

Fr George Hutcheon died on 26th June 2024. A priest of the diocese of Aberdeen, he was ordained priest in April 2005, after studying for the priesthood at the Beda.



Fr Terence McGuckin

Fr Terry, who was on the staff at the Beda, died peacefully on Wednesday 14th August 2024, in hospital.

Fr Terry was born in Cork, Ireland on 18th May 1950 and ordained to the priesthood in Dublin on 8 June 1980. He had been living in retirement in Coventry.

Condolences are extended to Fr Terry's family and to friends and colleagues and all who knew him in the parishes where he served in the Archdiocese of Westminster and in the seminaries where he taught in London and Rome.



Fr Christopher Brannan

Fr Christopher Stephen Brannan, priest of the Diocese of Aberdeen who studied at the Beda from 1979 to 1983, died at the Tor-na-Dee

Nursing Home outside Aberdeen on 13th September 2024. He was ordained a deacon at San Paolo on 5 June 1982 and a priest in Aberdeen Cathedral on 30 June 1983.



Fr Michael D'Mello

Fr Michael D'Mello of Clifton Diocese studied at the Beda between 1997-2001. He had been parish priest of Christ the King, Knowle West, Bristol and died on 21st September 2024.

Fr Christopher Hogan

It was with great sadness that Bishop Patrick McKinney of Nottingham Diocese heard of the death on 23rd September 2024, of Fr Christopher Hogan. He died at the Mercy Care Centre, Derby, where he had been anointed recently and is kept in prayers by his brother priests there. Bishop Patrick was able to visit him before he died and spent some time with him.

Chris was born in Tralee, in the Diocese of Kerry, Ireland, on 29th December 1943, moving to England when he was one year old. He met and married Marian in St Patrick's Church, Corby, on 1st October 1966,

having begun working for British Steel, with whom he was to stay for 12 years. He changed roles to become an office manager, working then for the NHS in the supplies authority, rising to become a Divisional Equipment Officer, before resigning and going to work in hospital administration.

Chris continued his faith journey by becoming a Lay Dominican, as well as an Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion. In his spare time he enjoyed reading, cycling, and studying Jungian philosophy. He was accepted to study for the permanent diaconate in 1994, but due to the illness of his wife, Marian, he paused these studies, nursing her until her death in July 1997. Bishop James McGuinness accepted Chris the following year for priestly studies, sending him to the Beda for four years' formation, before he was ordained priest by Bishop Malcolm McMahon OP on 6th July 2002 in Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Sleaford.

Fr Chris was appointed as assistant priest to St Philip Neri parish, Mansfield, in 2002, and a year later was priest in charge of the parish of Sacred Heart, Skegness with Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Spilsby, where he stayed for three years. In 2006 he moved to Boston, becoming parish priest of St Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary parish, before moving three years later to briefly take on the role of parish priest of the Immaculate Conception and St Norbert, Spalding, and Holy Trinity, Holbeach.

Fr Chris retired due to ill health in 2009, when he was 65, and spent the next years living near Bury St Edmunds. He returned to the diocese, taking up a place at the Mercy Care Centre in Derby, and enjoying the conviviality of the growing priestly community there. At age 80 the Lord called him into eternal life, and we pray for Fr Chris, that the Lord might have mercy on his soul, and grant him the rewards of his labours. May Chris, a good and faithful priest, rest in peace and rise in glory.

Fr Fred Sheldon

Fr Fred Sheldon, who was ordained from the Beda in 1972, died on 14th December 2024, at the age of 88, fortified by the rites of Holy Mother Church.

Fr Fred was ordained on 18th March 1972 for the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He ministered at St Chad's Cathedral, St Joseph's Bidford on Avon, St Augustine's Solihull and St Mary's Utoxeter from where he retired in 2015. In retirement he lived in Solihull, before moving to St Joseph's Care Home in Coleshill.

Fr John Peyton noted he used to bring his elderly parents to Mass at St Augustine's, Solihull, when Fr Fred was parish priest and he was always very supportive of them.



Fr Joseph Carter

Fr Joseph Carter was born in Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland on 14 May 1936 and attended St Colman's College, Newry, as a boarder. After school he studied book-keeping and accountancy at Belfast College of Technology while working in accounts in Portadown and Belfast before moving to England in 1968 to work at a pharmaceutical company.

Aged 46 he approached the Archdiocese of Westminster and after completing the selection process began his studies for the priesthood at the Beda in 1982. Cardinal Basil Hume OSB ordained him to the priesthood on 12 July 1986 at St Bernadette's, Hillingdon and he was appointed assistant priest at Our Lady and St Joseph's, Hanwell, followed by a period as parochial administrator at St Vincent de Paul, Osterley from 1989-93.

He was parish priest at St David's, Stanwell from 1993-95, then Our Lady Immaculate and St Frederick, Limehouse, St Joseph's, Bedwell, also of The Transfiguration and Christ the King, Stevenage. Brief periods as assistant priest followed in St Joseph's, Wembley and then SS Sebastian and Pancras, Kingsbury Green.

When some health issues arose Fr Joe moved to Marian House Nursing Home, Hillingdon in 2006, as resident chaplain where he ministered to staff and residents before moving to Nazareth House, East Finchley. He always wanted to return to Ireland and after 31 years service in Westminster Archdiocese in September 2017 at the age of 82 he moved back to Lurgan where he lived independently with support and provided welcome supply ministry in the locality.

He died on 16 December 2024 in Craigavon Area Hospital and his Funeral Mass was at St Peter's church, Lurgan on 20 December 2024.



Sr Cuthbert Mulligan FMDM

Sr Cuthbert Mulligan was for a number of years a valued member of the FMDM community at the Beda. She moved from Rome to the Order's convent in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway and died on 25 March 2025.



Pontifical Beda College - Staff and Students (2024-2025)

Formation Team

Name	Role	Diocese / Congregation
Canon Philip Gillespie	Rector	Liverpool
Fr John Breen	Vice Rector	Hexham and Newcastle
Sr Patricia McDonald	Academic Programme Director	SHCJ
Fr John Carlyle	Spiritual Director	Birmingham

Resident Lecturers

Fr Andrew Unsworth	Liverpool
Mgr Peter Fleetwood	Liverpool

First Year Students

Meng, Lee Clement	Penang
Redcliffe, Dominic	Liverpool
Barnes, Sean	Portsmouth

Anglican Exchange

Voase, Marc	Church of England
Bramberg, Pontus	Church of England

Second Year Students

Galeste, Uldarico	Manila
John, John	Miao
Jones, Martyn	Clifton
Madubuike, Kingsley	Stockholm
Dom Nicholls, Hugh OSB	St Michael's Abbey, Farnborough

Stott, David	Derry
Sumner, Christopher	Lancaster

Second Year – External Student

Panyako, Stanslaus	Institute of Charity (IC)
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Third Year Students

Allen, Matthew	East Anglia
Bamber, Stephen	Lancaster
Baxter, Stephen	Derry
Duns, Anthony	Port Pirie
Hampton, Thomas	Down & Connor
Harsh, Seth	Wollongong
Howarth, Daniel	Liverpool
Ilies, Andrei	Brentwood
Lopez, Benwen	Sindhudurg
Vaitiekūnas, Andrew	Kaunas

Third Year – External Student

Dom Niima, Honorius OSB	Sant’ Anslemo
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Fourth Year Students

Kerr, Anthony	Meath
Dom Kwadwo Osei, Louis OSB	Kristo Buase Monastery, Ghana
Salmon, Eamon	Ferns
Thornley, Philip	Leeds

Fourth Year – External Students

McMahon, Philip OFM	Irish Franciscans
Dom Shayo, Cassian OSB	Sant’ Anselmo

On Extended Pastoral Placement

Abasolo, Oliver	Southwark
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Based in Rome, the Pontifical Beda College was established in 1852 as a seminary for the formation of diocesan priests. The College welcomes English speaking men over 30 and has students from 12 countries. It is under the guidance of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The Beda Association's

Prayer for Seminarians

Jesus, we thank you for the great gift of priesthood in the Church.

We pray for all priests and those in formation for priesthood.

Form their hearts to be more like your own, the Heart of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

Draw them to your Heart, bless them with your zeal as they serve you and your people.

Give them great joy as they proclaim the good news of your Resurrection, give them wisdom, hope and trust as they discern your will for them.

With confidence in you we ask this.

Amen

The Beda Association's

Daily Vocation Prayer Calendar

Monday

Vocations from your own parish

Tuesday

Vocations ministry in your diocese

Wednesday

Applicants for seminary and prospective seminarians

Thursday

Those in seminary at this time

Friday

The professors teaching in seminary

Saturday

Those preparing for ordination to the diaconate

Sunday

Those preparing for ordination to the priesthood

Pontificio Collegio Beda, Viale di San Paolo 18,
00146 Roma, Italy. Tel: + 39 06 9799 1200
www.bedacollege.org