

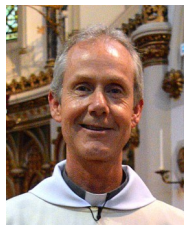


Catholic Deanery of Eastbourne & St Leonards

Deanery Magazine

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. Is 43:5

Issue 2: Summer 2026



Fr Kevin Dring,
Single Parish Moderator

Dear friends

As we move through the summer months, many of us will be looking forward to holidays, pilgrimages, visits to family and friends, and a change of pace from our usual routines. Wherever this season takes us, let's always find time for prayer and a church where we can celebrate Sunday Mass, the Lord's Day. Our greatest "rest" is always in Him!

Please also take time to browse this edition of our Deanery Magazine and share in the many encouraging stories of faith and community life across our churches along with updates on planned parish and diocese events and our journey towards becoming a single parish under the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Please keep this work in your prayers as we continue to grow together in Christ.

Over the summer, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August. Contemplating the Assumption reminds us that we are not simply projects to be optimised but sacred beings called to eternal glory, reflecting the great dignity God has bestowed upon His people.

That dignity is at the heart of Pope Leo XIV's remarkable first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*. It is a bold and timely first encyclical, a sweeping meditation on artificial intelligence, human dignity, technology, war, labour, truth, and the future of civilisation itself. It is, to use the phrase, "going viral" and touching a void that affects the whole of humanity.

It's highly recommended that everybody try to read this as it offers a beautiful overview of Catholic belief on human dignity, as well as a deep insight into the mind and heart of our wonderful Pope.

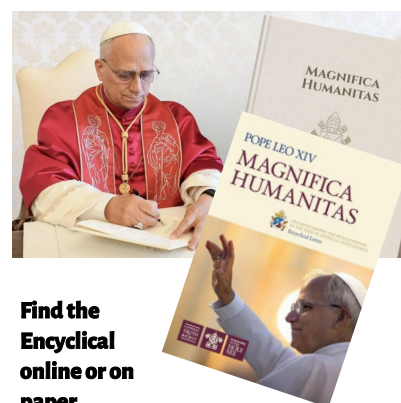
*Images:
HH Pope Leo XIV signing
the Encyclical, together
with a copy of the
document. © Vatican
News.
CTS Edition © CTS*

At the very heart of his reflection stands the dignity of the person, created in the image and likeness of God. Pope Leo warns that "the pressure of new ideologies or certain highly powerful interests can reduce the human person to a resource to be used and exploited" based only "on what they achieve or produce".

On the contrary, "the fundamental dignity of each person... is neither acquired nor earned, nor does it need to be justified". His message is not anti-technology but a profound warning that technology must always serve the true good of the human person, not the other way round.

May we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, who reveals both the greatness of God and the true greatness of the human person. Let us pray for Pope Leo and for one another, that we may grow in faith, charity, and confidence in the dignity God has given us.

Happy holidays and God bless
Fr Kevin



**Find the
Encyclical
online or on
paper**

Magnifica Humanitas is available free of charge on the Vatican website. Visit www.vatican.va and follow the links to *Magnifica Humanitas*.

It's also available to buy, eg from the Catholic Truth Society at www.ctsbooks.org.

**You may need
to take this away to read it.**

**Please bring it back,
or leave it somewhere
others can enjoy it too.**



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Regular news from our diocese
can be found on the website at:
www.abdiocese.org.uk/diocese/news

**You can also sign up
to the weekly email update.**

From the Editor

Welcome to the second edition of our new Magazine for the Deanery of Eastbourne and St Leonards

You would be forgiven for a little confusion as we now revert to using “Deanery” rather than “Parish” for this publication. The Single Parish Update on the right will hopefully help shed some light on why.

It does, however, highlight that as this publication continues to grow, we would benefit from a name that better reflects who we are and what we hope to achieve together. We would love to hear your suggestions for a title that captures the life, faith, mission and perhaps the history of our Deanery. Send them by the end of August to news@eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk

Our aim is that this magazine does more than share news and announcements. We want it to tell the story of what God is doing across our parishes, schools, chaplaincies, and communities, celebrating the many signs of faith, service, and hope that can sometimes go unnoticed.

There is much to discover in these pages. Alongside news, photographs, and reflections from recent sacramental celebrations and parish events, you will find recommendations to enrich your faith. We also share stories from across the Deanery, including the arrival of a new priest at St Mary Star of the Sea, the celebration of a marriage in one church for the first time in eighteen years, and why being a School Foundation Governor helps support the Church’s mission.

We hope there is something here for everyone.

If you have a story to share — a parish celebration, school project, pilgrimage, outreach initiative, fundraising effort, or simply an example of God’s grace at work — please send it to news@eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk for publication on the website and consideration for future editions of the magazine.

The deadline for submissions for our September edition is 1 September.

Working towards the new Single Parish

Three of the eleven deaneries in the diocese have already become single parishes — Brighton & Hove, Guildford and Weybridge. In every deanery the clergy and laity are working towards ever greater sharing and collaborating together in good and helpful ways. Our deanery is particularly large, stretching from Eastbourne to Rye, and so is centred in two hubs, West and East.

The West Hub  covers Eastbourne, Hailsham, Hampden Park and Polegate; Battle, Bexhill, Hastings, Rye and St Leonards are in the East Hub .

The diocese has created guidelines to help the transition, allowing the current deanery to form a structure which will work now and should also work well in the new Parish. Because we’re not yet a Single Parish, we need to use the title **Deanery** until such time as we become a new parish.

As allowed by Canon Law, the current parish priests will be *pastores in solidum* (jointly and equally responsible) for the whole New Parish, led by Fr Kevin as Moderator. Prior to the new bishop formally creating the New Parish, the clergy in the deanery will work closely together so that common practices can be adopted and taken forward into the New Parish. The **Clergy in solidum** are supported by other clergy within the deanery/New Parish: deacons, retired clergy and other priests.

Helping the clergy with strategic planning is a small group of lay and ordained people. Collaboration and consultation between the laity and clergy is a fundamental principle of the synodality introduced by Pope Francis. This group forms the “Parish Leadership Group” or PLG.

Implementing the PLG’s plan is delegated to each hub. The Hub Leadership Teams (“Pastoral Councils”) are supported by groups with specialist knowledge in finance, buildings and communications. There are still a lot of “teams” and some names may change.

CLERGY TEAM

All clergy: priests, deacons, active and retired

Clergy “in solidum”

Parish priests

PARISH LEADERSHIP GROUP

Strategic planning, vision building within the Pastoral Plan

Chaired by Fr Kevin

SPECIALIST TEAMS

West Hub Stewardship
(Finance, Buildings)
Gerry Palmer

East Hub Stewardship
(Finance, Buildings)
Solomon Ezobi

Communications
Sandra King

HUB ‘PASTORAL COUNCILS’ *Overseeing local implementation of the Pastoral Plan*

West Hub Council
Nick Woodall

East Hub Council
Sally-Ann Hart

WEST HUB CHURCHES

Clergy Coordinators Volunteers

EAST HUB CHURCHES

Clergy Coordinators Volunteers

The work of the Focus Groups (Prayer and Worship; Formation; Pastoral Care) has concluded and the themes they identified will form part of the work of the Leadership Team in each Hub, for churches to bring to fruition in their individual localities.

Although there is a broad hierarchy in the structures, the aim is clearer visibility, better communication and gentle collaboration.

This is an evolving mission. If you feel called to help — even in a small way — please step forward. So much of our outreach began with someone simply saying: “I could help there.”

One way it's definitely possible to help, and which everyone can do, is to pray! Our Mission Prayer asks God to help us live as a community of communities, reaching out to encourage others into the family of the Faith.

Our Mission Prayer

Loving God,
empower us through our Baptism
to live as vibrant
and welcoming communities,
centred on the Holy Eucharist.

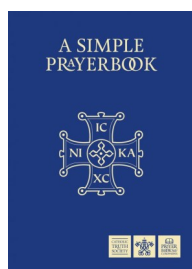
Inflame us with your Holy Spirit
to encourage others
to a personal relationship
with Jesus Christ.

Recognising all things
as your gift to us,
to be treasured
and shared with love
give us a heart for the poor,
a passion for justice,
a concern for creation,
so that all may live
with peace and dignity.

Our Lady and all the Saints
pray for us.
Amen.

The new structures will start working after the summer break, by which time we might (God willing) have a new bishop too.

Full details will appear in the next few issues of the Magazine as things fall into place.



A Time to Pray

The summer months can offer a welcome change of pace and an opportunity to refresh both body and spirit. Prayer gives us time to listen, reflect, and encounter God's presence amid the joys and activities of the season. Here are a few opportunities to pray with others across our deanery in the coming weeks outside of mass times.

Contemplative Prayer Group

"Be still and know that I am God"
Psalm 46:10

We are a small friendly group who meet weekly. We have a time of silent prayer where we aim to quieten our minds to hear God speak in the silence of our hearts; a time of Lectio Divina; and a time for discussion and questions. All newcomers are most welcome.

Our meetings are at Our Lady of Ransom Church Eastbourne Mondays 4:00–5:30pm in the Prayer Meeting Room. Access through the car park and Parish Hall. (Not on bank holidays/school holidays)

For any more details contact Liz Vegh at lizvegh51@gmail.com.

Wednesday Scripture Group

This group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 10:45am in the Parish of the Good Shepherd's St Leonards John Fisher Room. All are very welcome and encouraged to join.

See parish newsletters for any churches near you for more opportunities like these, regular adoration, rosary and church opening times.

A Pocket Full of Faith

Hands up if you own a well-thumbed Catholic *Simple Prayer Book*? Better still, is it packed and ready to travel with you this summer?

Small enough to slip into your pocket, this little book is full of familiar prayers, devotions and the complete Order of Mass. Whether you're heading abroad, visiting family, enjoying a weekend away or simply spending time in a different parish, it's a handy companion to help keep prayer and worship part of your holiday plans. Better still, when attending Mass in a non-English-speaking country, it enables you to follow the service with ease. The language may be different, but the Mass remains the same, a beautiful reminder that our Catholic faith is truly universal.

In the past two years, the Eastbourne Catenians (2025) and the local section of the Knights of St Columba (2026) have generously presented a copy to each of the *Lumen Christi* confirmands at the Certificate Masses. It is a thoughtful gift that encourages our young people to stay close to prayer and the Eucharist as they continue their journey of faith.

As summer gets underway, perhaps it's a good reminder for all of us to dust off our own copy—or pick one up if we don't already have one. A small book, easy to carry, and a simple way to keep faith close at hand wherever the summer takes us.

To find it online, search for **CTS Simple Prayer Book**. There are a number of resellers, and it's also available in other languages, including Spanish, Italian and Polish.

Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which Thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults which Thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may I know Thee more clearly,
love Thee more dearly,
and follow Thee more nearly,
day by day.

*Prayer of Saint Richard of Chichester,
Secondary Patron of the diocese*



Pilgrimages

Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation of West Grinstead

The Bexhill and Eastbourne sections of the Catholic Women's League are holding a joint pilgrimage led by Fr Neil to the Shrine at West Grinstead on **Saturday 4 July**, 10:30am–4pm. All women are welcome to join either of the sections in our deanery. They both meet monthly and welcome new faces:

- Bexhill — 7:30pm on the first Monday of the month at St Martha's Church Hall
- Eastbourne — 7pm on the first Wednesday of the month in Christ the King Parish Rooms

Diocese Lourdes Pilgrimage 2026

This year's diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes takes place from **Friday 24 July to Thursday 30 July 2026**. Many from our deanery will be joining the pilgrimage, including Fr Kevin, our Moderator Priest, as they travel alongside hundreds of other pilgrims in prayer and fellowship.

Please keep all pilgrims in your prayers as they carry our petitions with them to Lourdes throughout the week. You can also follow the pilgrimage online through their social media updates go to the diocese dedicated Lourdes page for the links: abdiocese.org.uk/Lourdes

Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage

This year's Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage, aptly named "The Roses", takes place on **15–30 August**. The route links three cathedrals, two of which are celebrating anniversaries: Middlesbrough (40th), Ripon, and Blackburn (centenary). Pilgrims are welcome to join for a day or two, or the whole two weeks.

This is a pilgrimage where the journey, walking, laughing, sharing,

praying, singing are as important as the destination.

To find out more and book, visit the Ecumenical Walking Pilgrimage website, thepilgrims.org.uk.



Poland

Christ the King is organising a seven day pilgrimage to Poland **20–26 September 2026**, including the shrine in Częstochowa and the Divine Mercy Basilica in Krakow as well as visits to Auschwitz, Wadowice and the Wieliczka Salt Mine. Masses will be celebrated by Fr Neil in different churches each day.

The cost will be around £1200. To express an interest and get more details, please contact Ilona on 07904 680885.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Join Fr David Murphy and pilgrims from across the Diocese on a prayerful journey to Walsingham, England's Nazareth, **23–25 October 2026**. Coach travel from and back to the St Philip Howard Centre, Crawley. To book or learn more, visit the diocesan website.



Harry Clarke goes to Rome via BBC iPlayer

Image of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa

Refreshments break by the Basingstoke Canal on last year's Diocesan Walking Pilgrimage. Photo by John Chenery

Read, watch, listen

From documentaries and series to books and podcasts, here are some inspiring media that encourage reflection, conversation, and faith in everyday life.



Harry Clark Goes to Rome

Rome, faith, and a search for meaning — this moving documentary follows 25-year-old Harry Clark (from *The Traitors* and *Pilgrimage: The Road to the Alps*) on a personal pilgrimage to reconnect with his Catholic faith. Along the way, he reflects on belief, identity, and even hopes to meet Pope Leo XIV. Warm, honest, and uplifting. Watch on BBC iPlayer

The Mysteries of Faith

What happens when faith meets the unexplained? This visually striking series explores powerful Christian mysteries, from the Crown of Thorns and the Holy Grail to modern stories of belief and devotion. Thought-provoking and inspiring throughout. Watch on Netflix

The Greatest Story Ever Told — An Eyewitness Account by Bear Grylls

A fresh retelling of the life of Jesus Christ, from His birth and ministry to the Resurrection. Thoughtful and accessible, it invites readers to reflect on who Jesus is today and how His story continues to shape our lives. FLAME 2025 attendees received a pre-launch copy, so you may already have one!

Universalis

Complementing the well-known app which provides texts for Mass and the daily offices is the Universalis podcast, which comes out once a week. It covers the liturgical aspects of the week ahead, with reflections on the saints and on the coming week's readings and psalms. Find it via <https://universalis.com/podcasts.htm>

Welcome to...

Fr Mike Muhia SAC

The parish of St Mary Star of the Sea, Hastings, is delighted to welcome Fr Mike Muhia SAC, who arrived on Trinity Sunday to begin his ministry with the parish.



Fr Mike at his first service in St Mary Star of the Sea on Trinity Sunday, 31 May

Fr Mike joins the parish under the care of the Pallottine Province of East Africa following several months during which the community was without a resident priest.

Parishioners have already expressed their gratitude and joy at his arrival and are looking forward to supporting him as he settles into parish life in Hastings.

More about Fr Mike will appear in a future edition of the Deanery Magazine once he has had an opportunity to settle into his new home and ministry. Reflections on a time between priests by Deacon Duncan and more photos from the parish are found on page 11.

Revd Neil Taylor

Neil, a member of the Ordinariate community at Christ the King Langney, was ordained deacon by Bishop David Waller in London on Saturday 13 June. One of the perks of sharing the day with the King's Birthday Parade was a Red Arrows flypast!



The Forty Hours' Devotion at the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury and the English Martyrs, St Leonards

Deacon Neil's first appearance in his deacon's stole, on Sunday 14 June at Christ the King.

News from churches

A Blessed Forty Hours at St Thomas'

The Parish of the Good Shepherd recently held Forty Hours Adoration at St Thomas's Church, St Leonards, from 12th–14th May 2026. Over the three days, parishioners gathered in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, creating a deeply reverent and prayerful atmosphere within the church.

Reflecting on the devotion, Fr Míceál said:

"Our recent Forty Hours' Adoration was a profound grace and a real joy for the whole parish. We are deeply grateful to all our parishioners, the Knights of St Columba, and the Catenians for their generous support, faithful presence, and commitment throughout the devotion, especially the hours of midnight to 5am. The prayerful atmosphere, reverence, and sense of unity were a beautiful witness to our shared faith. Thank you to everyone who helped make these forty hours such a special time of prayer and blessing for our parish community."

The devotion concluded on the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, giving the parish a fitting opportunity to reflect on Christ's call to remain close to Him in prayer and worship. Ending the Forty Hours on this great feast day made the celebration especially meaningful, uniting the parish in Eucharistic devotion as the Church marked Christ's Ascension into heaven.



St Joseph the Worker at Our Lady of Ransom

On the Feast of St Joseph the Worker (1 May), the community of Our Lady of Ransom gathered after Mass for a decade of the Rosary and the blessing of a newly installed statue of St Joseph by Fr Kevin Dring and Fr Charles Ezejide.

The statue has found a new home in "St Joseph's Bower", a beautiful area of the parish garden recently renovated by a team of dedicated parishioners. Special thanks go to Jean Peterken, who lovingly restored the statue, and to Mike Kelly, who created the tiled base on which it now stands.

It seems especially fitting that on the feast of St Joseph the Worker, we give thanks for the time, skill and care that so many parishioners have contributed to this project. Their hard work has created a lasting place of prayer and reflection for the whole parish community.

There is a fascinating back story to how St Joseph came to rest in our parish garden—read the full story on the deanery website.



O God, Creator of all things,
who laid
down for the human race
the law of work,
graciously grant
that by the example of St Joseph
and under his patronage
we may complete
the works you set us to do
and attain the rewards
you promise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.
Amen.

Called to serve

By Sally McMahon, Clerk to the Governors, St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School, Eastbourne

One of the greatest joys of serving in our Catholic schools is the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives and life-chances of young people. Volunteering as a Foundation Governor is both rewarding and vital, offering support, challenge, and encouragement to our school communities.

St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School, along with other Catholic schools in our deanery, is currently seeking practising Catholics who are willing to give a few hours each month to serve as Foundation Governors. This is an open invitation across our Catholic community — you may be exactly the person one of our schools needs.

Foundation Governors play a key role in safeguarding and developing the Catholic character of our schools. Appointed by the Bishop, they work with headteachers, staff, clergy and parents to ensure that Christ remains at the centre of education and school life. This is not only governance — it is mission.

As St Teresa of Calcutta reminds us, “Faith in action is love — love in action is service.” Many governors describe the role as deeply rewarding, offering the chance to see children grow in confidence, learning and faith, while supporting the wider mission of Catholic education.

At St Thomas a Becket, governors meet around six or seven times a year for approximately 90 minutes, usually on Monday evenings. Each governor also takes on a link area and visits the school a few times a year. No previous experience is needed — training and support are provided.

Governors consistently speak of the joy of seeing children thrive and of the privilege of working alongside dedicated staff. As one governor reflects, “It is a genuinely rewarding experience... contributing to the school community in a meaningful way while seeing children flourish in both education and faith.”



Across our deanery, there are current vacancies for Foundation Governors, including three at St Thomas a Becket. We warmly welcome enquiries from anyone who feels called to this important ministry of service.

If you can spare a few hours to support St Thomas a Becket School, please email Sally at clerk@stthomasbecket.e-sussex.sch.uk; or Stephen Byrne, Chair of the Local Governing Committee, at sbyrne@stthomasbecket.e-sussex.sch.uk for more information (the hyphen is needed in the address) or ring the school on 01323 737221.

For details of vacancies at other schools in the deanery, please email Fr Kevin at eastbourneolor@abdiocese.org.uk.

More information is also available via the Diocesan Education Service: <https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/education/governance> — or ring their lead officer Gill Sajnog on 01293 511130.

Photos provided by the Diocesan Education Service or in the public domain



Save the Date: FLAME 2027!

We hope to bring an even bigger group of young people from across our deanery to the next Flame gathering on 6 March 2027. Let's keep the momentum going!

flame CYMFED 2027

A joyful celebration

On 22 April, St Joachim's Church celebrated a very special occasion: the marriage of Shankar and Lincy, the first recorded wedding at the church for 18 years.

The ceremony was presided over by Fr Neil and Deacon Eugene and was a joyful celebration, attended by family, friends, and parishioners, and followed by a generous meal shared locally.

Reflecting on the sacrament of marriage, Deacon Eugene said: "Marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Church at which Our Lord oversees through his Minister, the expression of love which two people have for each other. Their love is not just a matter of exchanging rights and duties but is a sacramental act whereby the couple reflect the love of Christ and his Church which the couple make visible in their own lives and, in this way, they form the 'domestic church', the most basic of Christian communities."

He added prayers of blessing for the couple, asking that God may keep them in his loving care as they begin their life together.

For Shankar and Lincy, choosing a church wedding was a deeply meaningful decision rooted in faith.

They shared: "Marriage is one of the most beautiful and sacred commitments two people can make. For many couples, choosing to get married in a church is more than simply selecting a venue — it is a decision rooted in faith, love, and the desire to begin their journey together in the presence of God."

They reflected on the importance of beginning married life within the life of the Church: "A church wedding reminds us that marriage is a holy covenant, built on trust, commitment, prayer, and God's blessing... The church also represents spiritual guidance and a strong foundation for married life... Beginning marriage in God's house symbolises inviting Him to lead and strengthen the relationship through every season of life."

They concluded with gratitude for the support they received: "After discussing our plans to get married in church, Father Neil and Deacon Eugene gave us their continued support, encouragement, and blessing. Their guidance and prayers strengthened our decision, and we are delighted to share that our marriage was held at St Joachim's Church.

"We are truly grateful for the love and support of our church family as we begin this new chapter together in faith and commitment before God."



The parish community rejoices with Shankar and Lincy and continues to pray for them as they begin married life together.

Enquiring About Marriage in the Church

If you are considering marriage in the Catholic Church, please speak to your parish priest in the first instance. At least one year's notice is normally required to allow time for preparation, paperwork, and marriage formation.

Your parish will guide you through each step of the process and support you in preparing for this important sacrament.

We need your help: Marriage Preparation

In our diocese, the number of couples taking part in marriage preparation programmes rose by 47% in 2025, even though national marriage figures fell by 9% over the same period (ONS). This encouraging growth means there is now an urgent need for more people to help prepare couples for marriage across our parishes.

At present, only one marriage preparation course is running in our deanery at Eastbourne each year, which does not meet local demand and can be difficult for couples travelling from places such as Hastings.

Marriage preparation is delivered through a simple three-session diocesan course. Full materials are provided, no heavy theology is required, and you can sit in on a course before taking part. Sessions are relaxed, practical, and focused on relationships, communication, and faith.

Courses can be led by individuals or couples, and timings are flexible. Could you help couples prepare for the sacrament of marriage? If you feel able to support this important ministry, please speak to your parish priest.

A wonderful year for RCIA

Reflections from the deanery's West Hub

This year's programme for the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** at Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Church has been a source of great joy and encouragement for our parish community. At the Easter Vigil, twelve men and women were received into full communion with the Catholic Church, with one further candidate received at Pentecost. Their journeys of faith, prayer, and discovery have been inspiring to witness and reflect a growing hunger for faith, hope, and meaning in today's world.

Catechist Caroline Rother reflected on what has been one of the largest RCIA groups seen in recent years. By the close of registration in September, 21 enquirers had expressed interest in exploring the Catholic faith — notably with more men than women applying, something quite unusual for the programme.



On 18 October, the group gathered for their first session and quickly formed a strong sense of friendship and openness. Through weekly meetings, discussions, prayer, and Fr Kevin's enthusiastic and faith-filled guidance, the group explored the "big questions" of life and faith together. Caroline described the year as one filled with "great sharing, discussions, challenges on occasion and of course moments of humour," as candidates discovered how faith can become "the source and rock of our daily lives."

The Rite of Election at Arundel Cathedral became a significant milestone on the journey to Easter, before the group finally celebrated the Sacraments during the Easter Vigil in a moving and joyful celebration. For many candidates, the experience marked a profound turning point in their lives.



"I know I've made it home."

"It felt like I was home after a long absence."

"I felt truly blessed, at peace, and finally at home in the Catholic Church."

Ciaran Kefford shared how, after years calling himself an atheist and searching for meaning, he found himself continually drawn back to the Church after first attending Mass at Pentecost: "Receiving the Sacraments at Easter gave me a feeling of renewal. I know I've made it home and I'm so thankful to be welcomed into the Catholic Church."

Victoria Giannacaro spoke of how living in Italy introduced her to the beauty of Catholic family life and worship: "The strong family values and principles rooted in the Church deeply moved me. Attending Mass, even without fully understanding the Italian language, I still felt the presence of God in a powerful way." She concluded "Receiving the sacraments at Easter was a profound and joyful experience. I felt truly blessed, at peace, and finally at home in the Catholic Church."

Greg Potter, who had previously worshipped within the Anglican tradition for more than thirty years, described the RCIA journey as "literally life changing." He reflected particularly on the friendships formed within the group and the experience of Holy Week and the Easter Vigil: "It's hard to put into words how it felt to be worshipping alongside so many others and so welcomed by the community."

Robert Blair was first led to the church by his wife commenting "My wife had been attending Mass at St Wilfrid's and invited me to join her when she read for the first time." During that mass and subsequent ones he says he found himself "overwhelmed with emotion leaving me keen to explore my faith more deeply."

Robert recalled initially feeling apprehensive about attending the first RCIA sessions, but quickly discovering warmth, welcome, and belonging: "It felt like I was home after a long absence."

Reflecting on the Easter Vigil, he described it as: "A beautiful, moving, humbling experience, one I shall never forget."

The year concluded with follow-up gatherings and a joyful celebration shared with spouses and families, ending what Caroline described as "a wonderful RCIA year."

We give thanks for all who supported the programme — especially the catechists, sponsors, clergy, and parish community — and most especially for those who courageously answered God's call to take this important step in faith.

Please continue to keep all our newly received Catholics in your prayers. To read these reflections in full and find out more about RCIA visit the deanery website – eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk

For those aged 18 and over who sense God may be calling them to take a step closer to the Church, or who are baptised but have not yet been confirmed, the RCIA journey will begin again this autumn. If you feel ready to explore this invitation, please speak to a priest or a member of the formation team, who will be pleased to accompany you on the next step of your faith journey.

Reflections from the deanery's East Hub

This year's RCIA group in the Parish of the Good Shepherd, St Leonards-on-Sea, was made up of nine members, two of whom were from St Mary Magdalen's, Bexhill, and two from St Mary Star of the Sea, Hastings. The group met on the second and fourth Saturday of each month, from September until the last Saturday in March.

Members of the group were very thorough in their preparation for each session and were very enthusiastic and lively during the meetings. Good friendships were formed and a clear growth in the prayer life of individuals was very evident.

A high point of the programme was the Rite of Election, at the beginning of Lent, held in Arundel Cathedral. Six members of the group were able to attend with family members and sponsors. We met beforehand in St



Top to bottom:

Ciaran Kefford;

RCIA candidates in the West Hub at Arundel Cathedral;

Robert Blair, at the Easter Vigil Mass

Adoremus 2026

Mary's Gate pub and the service proved a wonderful celebration! Our group loved the cathedral and were amazed at how many catechumens and candidates were present from all over the diocese.

Finally all nine candidates were received into the Church, were confirmed and received the Eucharist for the first time at the Easter Vigil, at St Thomas of Canterbury Church. At the end of April our new group of



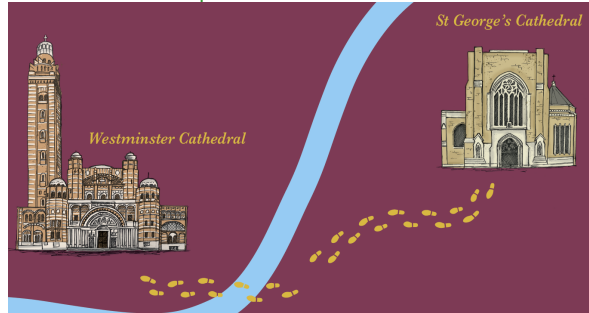
East Hub candidates at the Rite of Election in Arundel Cathedral

Catholics met up together, to reflect on their RCIA journey and their Reception into the Catholic Church. Great joy was expressed and many comments were made reflecting their spiritual growth. We plan to meet up together again, at the end of June, to give the individual members of the group whatever support they might need, in their ongoing spiritual journey.



Fr Mícheál with Lara (right) who was received into full communion

Canon Jonathan Martin, Diocesan Administrator, presided at the Rite of Election at Arundel Cathedral



Be part of our diocesan Adoremus group in London this October!

The Catholic Church in England and Wales: bishops, priests and people from all dioceses, will gather at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, and Westminster Cathedral on Saturday 10 October for a day of renewing and deepening devotion to our Eucharistic Lord.

The day will include Mass, a Eucharistic Procession from Southwark to Westminster, a keynote address from Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe and Benediction.

If you wish to be part of the diocesan representative group which will attend Mass at noon and join in the Eucharistic Procession during Adoremus, you need to book. Places are very limited.

Those attending will travel to London independently and meet at St George's Cathedral, Southwark. To book your place, visit: tinyurl.com/AandBAdoremus26

If you can't attend the Mass in Southwark, there will be space to watch the start of the Procession at St George's, to follow online, to watch the Procession as it passes (Stop and Pray) and to join the delegates for Benediction either in Westminster Cathedral or the Piazza for which a live sound stream will be provided.

There will then be Mass at 18:00 open to all, followed by Holy Hours at 19:30, 20:30, and 21:30 led by the Youth Ministry teams of Westminster, Southwark and CYMFed. These will be followed by an all-night Vigil from 12 midnight to 06:00: book for the vigil at westminstercathedral.org.uk/adoremus

Calling young artists

The Catholic Bishops' Conference are delighted to launch a national Catholic schools **Art Competition** in the lead-up to Adoremus this October. A key feature of Adoremus will be the Blessed Sacrament prayerfully processed from Southwark Cathedral to Westminster Cathedral, so we invite young people to reflect creatively on themes such as the Blessed Sacrament, the presence of Jesus, and the beauty of our cathedrals.

Entries will be judged by a professional panel of art experts, with categories for ages 6–8, 9–12, 13–15, and 16–18. A winner will be selected in each category, along with one overall winner. The winning entry will feature on prayer cards given to all at the event.

Entries are to be submitted by simply sending a photo of the artwork to artcompetition@christian.art. The deadline for entries is **15 September**.

We are especially honoured that Archbishop Richard Moth has kindly agreed to host a reception for all the runners-up and winners on Thursday 1 October at 2pm at Archbishop's House.

We warmly encourage schools and pupils to take part... to pray, to imagine, and to create!

The Adoremus Art competition is offered in conjunction with Christian Art who have generously made it possible. For any queries, please email info@christian.art

Christian Art offer a unique approach to daily Gospel readings. Each day, they select a work of art relevant to the day's scripture passage and offer a short reflection on the two. Written by Patrick van der Vorst a Roman Catholic priest for the Diocese of Westminster, and a former Director of Sotheby's London, Christian Art's mission is to draw people closer to God through the magnificent pairing of art and the Christian faith.

Youth Confirmation celebrations

This May, young people from across the deanery celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation in two joyful and faith-filled Masses.

On Sunday 3 May, 48 young people from the Eastbourne, Polegate and Hailsham parishes were confirmed at Our Lady of Ransom, Eastbourne. A further 33 young people from the parishes of Our Lady of the Rosary Bexhill, St Mary Star of the Sea Hastings, and The Good Shepherd St Leonards were confirmed on Friday 8 May at St Mary Magdalene Church, Bexhill.

These are some of the largest Confirmation groups seen in recent years — a wonderful sign of young people growing in faith across our communities. Both churches were brimming with the faithful as the candidates took this important step in their journey of faith.

Since October 2025, the candidates have been preparing monthly through prayer, discussion, reflection, and learning as they journeyed towards receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Anne Parr, one of the catechists for the St Leonards and Hastings group, reflected after the Bexhill celebration: “There was a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation as we all gathered in a packed church with families, friends, parishioners, catechists and teachers together! The wonderful music, hymns and powerful Liturgy of the Word were part of a most beautiful Mass.”

Father Stephen O’Brien (who presided) described the occasion as a time of grace for our Church communities – and indeed it was! Father Mícéál concelebrated the Mass, Deacon Simon Kirkdale assisted and Deacon Duncan Brown gave the homily. Everything spoke to our young people of the transformational power of the gifts of the Spirit they had received.”

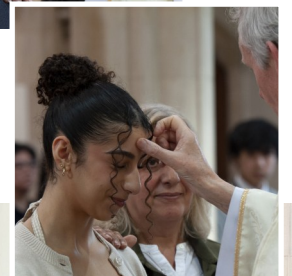
The Eastbourne service was presided over by Fr Neil, with Fr Charles giving the homily, Fr Kevin celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, and Deacon Eugene assisting. It too was a moving and prayerful celebration filled with meaningful moments for the candidates and their families.

One parent shared afterwards: “It was such a proud and emotional occasion for our family. Seeing the young people stand together to confirm their faith was incredibly moving, and the support from the parish communities made the celebrations feel very special.”

The Knights of St Columba, alongside members of the Catholic Women’s League, provided a warm ministry of welcome at the Eastbourne celebration. Bob Waters from the Knights of St Columba reflected: “It was a privilege for us to serve and welcome families and parishioners on such an important occasion in the lives of these young people. There was a wonderful sense of joy and community at the celebration.”

Many thanks to everyone who contributed in any way since October, and to all who helped before, during, and after these wonderful occasions. We especially thank our catechists and clergy who accompanied the young people throughout their preparation journey.

God bless our newly confirmed! Please keep them in your prayers as they continue their journey of faith.



Confirmants at the celebration at Our Lady of Ransom Church



Our Deanery Clergy: Deacon Duncan Brown

Keeping the Parish Going: *St Mary Star of the Sea Between Priests*

"When Fr Eamonn Monson left St Mary Star of the Sea in November 2025, I don't think many of us quite realised how much would suddenly change. You can know, in theory, what happens when a parish loses its priest. Living through it is something else entirely.

"The first thing people noticed was the silence during the week. No daily Mass. Fewer familiar routines. Then came the practical realities — baptisms taking longer to arrange, weddings becoming more complicated, the constant uncertainty of not always knowing who would be here on a particular Sunday. Parish life didn't stop, of course, but at times it did feel as though we were trying to keep several plates spinning at once and hoping none of them hit the floor.

"And yet, somehow, things kept going.

"A huge amount of that was down to the generosity of others. The Pallottine Fathers from Greenford and Barking travelled long distances time and again to make sure we had Masses and pastoral cover. Fr Stephen O'Brien from Bexhill and Fr Louis Ezelio from Horley were both extremely supportive and generous with their time.

"But to be completely honest, Fr Terry Martin helped us the most. There's no other way of putting it. He very generously, without fuss, agreed to cover almost all our weekend Masses. At several points during these months, his support gave people real confidence that we would get through this difficult period together.

"Behind the scenes, Carolyn Jones somehow managed to keep the administrative side of parish life moving forward, which at times must have felt like a full-time exercise in patience and diplomacy. And I did my best to keep the sacramental ship afloat during what could sometimes feel like very choppy waters for the parish.

"Not everything was gloomy, though. In fact, some moments were surprisingly uplifting. Holy Week and Easter were celebrated with real devotion and warmth, and the First Holy Communion Masses reminded us that the faith of a parish doesn't disappear simply because circumstances become difficult. If anything, people rallied when it mattered most.

"I think many of us also came away from this period with a renewed appreciation for the role of lay people in the Church. When there isn't a resident priest, you quickly realise how much depends on ordinary parishioners quietly getting on with things — often unnoticed, often without recognition.

"Throughout all of this, we prayed constantly for a new priest.

"We are now delighted to welcome Fr Mike Muhia SAC from Tanzania, who arrived on Trinity Sunday to begin his ministry among us. As a parish now under the care of the Pallottine Province of East Africa, we know how fortunate we are to have that connection and support.

"The parish has already begun making Fr Mike welcome as he settles into a new country, culture, and community. Hastings is very different from Tanzania, but people are eager to support him as he begins this new chapter of ministry among us.

"We also owe sincere thanks to Fr David Osbourne and Canon Jonathan Martin for their guidance and help during these past months.

"This hasn't been an easy chapter in the life of St Mary Star of the Sea. At times it's been exhausting, frustrating, and honestly a little worrying. But it has also reminded us that a parish is more than schedules and rotas and even buildings. It's people. Prayer. Persistence. And the stubborn refusal to give up on one another.

"Now a new chapter has begun, and the parish looks forward with renewed hope."

Deacon Duncan



My Path to the Diaconate

People sometimes ask how I became a deacon. The answer is that it took rather longer than expected. I was received into the Catholic Church in 1994 at Our Lady Help of Christians, Kentish Town, although my journey towards ordained ministry had begun years earlier as a Church of England ordination candidate in North London. After a long period of prayer, parish life and discernment, I began formation at Womersley in 2013 and was ordained in 2016. Along the way, my work as an undertaker taught me the importance of listening to people at difficult moments in their lives. That, together with my formation, convinced me that service and listening lie at the heart of the diaconate.

Deacon Duncan's journey is a reminder that God's call can unfold in many ways and over many years. If you are wondering whether you might be called to the diaconate, priesthood, or religious life, please do speak to a priest or explore the diocesan vocations website page <https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/faith/vocations>

St Mary Star of the Sea
Hastings



Churches in the Deanery/New Parish

Our Lady of Ransom, St Gregory & St Agnes (Eastbourne) ^W

Parish Priest: Fr Kevin Dring
Assistant Priest: Fr Charles Ezejide
Parish office 01323 723222
eastbourneolor@abdiocese.org.uk
<http://ourladyofransom.org.uk/>

Churches:

Our Lady of Ransom, 2–4 Grange Road, Eastbourne BN21 4EU
St Gregory, Victoria Drive, Eastbourne BN20 8QY
St Agnes, 10 Whitley Rd, Eastbourne BN22 8NJ

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 6:00pm at Our Lady of Ransom
Sunday 9:00am at St Gregory
Sunday 10:15am at Our Lady of Ransom
Sunday 11:30am at St Agnes
Sunday 5:30pm at Our Lady of Ransom
Polish Mass ^P is held at St Agnes—every 2nd and 3rd Sunday 6:00 pm

St George & St Wilfrid (Polegate/Hailsham) ^W

Parish Priest: Fr Rory Kelly
Parish Deacon: Revd John Truman
Parish office 01323 841504
hailsham@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://saintsgeorgeandwilfrid.co.uk/>

Churches:

St George, 110 Eastbourne Rd, Polegate BN26 5DF
St Wilfrid, South Road, Hailsham BN27 3JG

Weekend Masses:

Sunday 9:00am at St George
Sunday 10:30am at St Wilfrid

Our Lady of the Rosary (Bexhill/Little Common) ^E

Parish Priest: Fr Stephen O'Brien
Parish Deacon: Revd Simon Kirkdale
Parish office: 01424 210263
bexhill@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://stmmmbexhill.co.uk/>

Churches:

St Mary Magdalene, Sea Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 1RH
St Martha's, Little Common, Cooden Sea Road TN39 4SL

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 6:00pm at St Mary Magdalene:
Sunday 9:00am at St Martha
Sunday 11:00am at St Mary Magdalene
Sunday 11:00am at St Martha ^S

St Mary Star of the Sea (Hastings) ^E

Parish Priest: Fr Mike Muhia SAC
Parish Deacon: Revd Duncan Brown
Parish office 01424 421263
hastings@abdiocese.org.uk
<http://www.stmarystarofthesea.net/>

Church:

Our Lady Star of the Sea, 1 High St, Hastings TN34 3EY

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 6:00pm
Sunday 10:00am and 11:30am

The Good Shepherd (St Leonards) ^E

Parish Priest: Fr Mícheál Beatty
Parish Deacon: Revd Ian Moon
Parish Office: 01424 602077
stleonards@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://parishofthegoodshepherd.net/>

Churches:

St. Thomas of Canterbury, 31c Magdalen Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6ET
Holy Redeemer, 24 Upper Church Road, St. Leonards on Sea TN37 7AS

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 4:00pm at St Thomas of Canterbury
Sunday 9:00am at Holy Redeemer
Sunday 11:00am at St Thomas of Canterbury

Christ the King and St Joachim (Langney/Hampden Park) ^W

Parish Priest: Fr Neil Chatfield
Deacons: Revd Eugene Adams, Revd Neil Taylor
Parish office: 01323 760048
eastbournectk@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://christthekingeastbourne.org/>
<https://eastbourneordinariate.org.uk/>

Churches:

Christ the King, 3 Princes Road, Eastbourne BN23 6HT
St Joachim 106 Brodrick Road, Hampden Park BN22 9NY

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 5:00pm at Christ the King
Sunday 9:30am at St Joachim
Sunday 11:30am at Christ the King ^D

Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael with St Teresa of Lisieux (Battle/Northiam) ^E

Parish Priest: Fr Richard Blythen
Parish office: 01424 773125
battle@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://battlewithnorthiam.parishportal.net/>

Churches:

Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael, 14 Mount St, Battle TN33 0EG
St Teresa of Lisieux, Horns Cross, Northiam TN31 6JQ

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 6:00pm at Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael
Sunday 9:00am at St Teresa of Lisieux
Sunday 11:00am at Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael

St Anthony of Padua (Rye) ^E

Parish Priest: Fr Maximillian McKeown
Parish Deacon: Revd Simon South
Parish office: 01797 222173
rye@abdiocese.org.uk
<https://stanthonyrve.com/>

Church:

St Anthony of Padua, Watchbell Street, Rye TN31 7HB

Weekend Masses:

Saturday 6:00pm
Sunday 8:00am and 10:45am

^E East hub ^S Syro-Malabar liturgy
^W West hub ^D Divine Worship
^P Polish liturgy

Everyone is welcome
in all of our churches



New to the Parish?
Ask a welcomer for a
New Parishioner form to complete