

## The Post Covid Church

The Post – Covid Church: Let us Dream” is the title given to the Clergy Gathering in Southampton which will take place on the 29th and 30th of November 2021. It will be the first major stage in the development of a ten-year strategy for the diocese. All the clergy, who are actively engaged in parish ministry, have been asked by Bishop Philip to attend. There will be separate and specially arranged gatherings, with the same title, for the retired clergy and for those who are studying in preparation for Ordination. Then there will be meetings for people in the parishes across the diocese.

This will be the first major residential conference for clergy since before lockdown and it will provide an opportunity for the clergy to reflect on our diocesan priorities for pastoral development over the next ten years. During lockdown, like so many others, the clergy have largely been working in isolation and this conference provides an opportunity for the priests and deacons to share in person the challenges and experiences which invite us to renew and refresh our vision for the future. It will also be a time to recharge spiritual batteries.

## Christmas at the Oratory

CHRISTMAS IN ROME – a unique experience – is recaptured at the Bournemouth Oratory, whose Founder, St Philip Neri – ‘Apostle of Rome, and Saint of Joy’ – loved Christmas, and inspires us by his personal devotion to the Infant Jesus.

With Bournemouth’s Christmas Market in The Square, and Winter Wonderland Ice Rink (both just a few steps down Richmond Hill from the Oratory), it’s the “go to” place this December.

Bournemouth’s Oratory-in-Formation reopened its doors at the earliest opportunity after the Covid lock-down, during which we were (and continue) live-streaming daily Mass, thrice-daily Angelus, the weekday evening Oratory Exercises, Holy Hours of Eucharistic Exposition, and Benediction. At the height of the lock-down we had 60,000 live-stream



viewers per month (ie. 2,000 per day!), many of whom still tune in, and some come to visit or holiday in Bournemouth as a result of their live-stream experience, and now come on pilgrimage to this Eucharistic Shrine Church (as designated by Bishop Philip), and to view our Exhibition of World-wide Eucharistic Miracles. Others come to the Oratory for the opportunity of daily Confessions (half-an-hour before every Mass every day, and extended mid-morning times on Wednesdays and Saturdays).

The Oratory Shop does a roaring trade in Christmas Crib in response to our “Every Catholic home should have a Christmas Crib”

[bournemouthoratory.org.uk](http://bournemouthoratory.org.uk)

how we use our finances and buildings, and the way we collaborate in our pastoral areas.

The conference will also include some work on the implications of the ‘1000 voices’ survey of the laity, which was completed earlier this year.

The conference will aim at making a major contribution to a ten-year strategy for the diocese which will shape our use of resources and give new energy to the Bishop’s vision and our mission.

Once the work of the Southampton conference for clergy is complete, people in parishes across the diocese will be given an opportunity to contribute to the strategic process.



Canon Paul Townsend  
Vicar for Clergy

Fr Peter Edwards  
Bournemouth Oratory

campaign. The Baby Jesus is brought to be blessed at Mass on Bambini Sunday (Advent 4) – another Roman custom (now widely celebrated) – and then carried back home to be enshrined in the family Crib after Midnight Mass. Meanwhile the Oratory Crib graces St Joseph’s Chapel, and the Magi make their stately progress around the Church during the Christmas Octave until they reach the Crib on their feast of the Epiphany. The Crib remains in place, of course, until Candlemas (2nd February, Feast of the Presentation in the Temple) – a continual focus of devotion, as in all the Roman Churches.



## St Dominic Savio Wokingham

We are marking Advent!  
We have three main activities:  
**A Nativity Trail**  
Each class makes and displays part of the Nativity story. Classes have a trail to follow to find all 14.

**Advent Photo Challenge**  
Pupils to create an image or take a photo that is inspired by daily theme. Place photos on Twitter.

**Seven travelling posadas**  
One for each year group. A child takes it home and sets it up with their families. They pray together and then write in the shared book.

<https://twitter.com/StDomSavioRC>



Sr Hyacinth  
Formation Team

Have you ever wondered, during the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, about the meaning of one of those first readings from the Old Testament with an extraordinary storyline? (Think Jonah and the whale) Or, as a church reader, have you ever struggled to understand what an obscure text from the Prophet Malachy (not to be confused with the ‘prophet malarkey’) could possibly signify? Then the Wednesday Communion is for you!

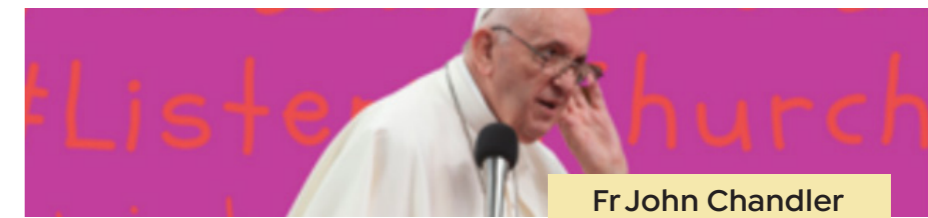
Every Wednesday evening at 7.15pm the Dominican Sisters are inviting you to join them online for a ‘Wednesday Communion’ – (<https://www.pffm.org.uk/wednesday-communion>).

Although it is online, and although it is not strictly speaking Eucharistic, it is an invitation to a real time of communion nonetheless:

A time of communion with the Word of God, as we’ll read together the first reading of the coming Sunday and prayerfully ponder its meaning through Lectio Divina.

A time of communion with each other, taking time to listen to each other, get to know each other, and share our own stories of grace.

A time of communion with the Church and the



Fr John Chandler  
Synod Coordinator

## The Synodal Pathway

You will have heard by now that Pope Francis has asked the whole church to engage in a new approach and to begin to develop a new attitude. The Holy Father is asking us to listen and to be part of an important conversation about transmitting our faith.

This new approach is called the ‘Synodal Pathway’ and this process is already well underway across the diocese of Portsmouth.

The word ‘synod’ is a Greek word meaning ‘to walk together’ and that is exactly what Pope Francis is wanting us to do; to walk together and to listen to one another along the way, sharing our faith. One of our top priorities for the Synodal Pathway here in the Diocese is to make sure we reach out and include as many people as possible, especially groups and communities we usually struggle to hear from.

It’s important that we hear from everyone and that each person is given the chance to join in the conversation and make their own contribution to the Synod.

Sunday 21st November, the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe, provided an ideal opportunity! Almost 100 university students from across the Diocese joined Bishop Philip, as they do every year, for their annual Mass and get-together at the Cathedral.

I was invited to speak to the students about the Synodal Pathway and to guide them through the feedback process. It was a great evening and I now have some really insightful feedback helping us to unpack the question: “What changes need to be made – in myself, in our parish & in the Diocese – to make the Church’s mission today more vibrant and effective?” Their feedback, and your feedback, will form the response we will make to the Holy Father at the end of this initial stage.

It’s really important that we go the extra mile to include everyone and to encourage those who are less likely to take part to do so.

We only have until 1st March 2022 to collect all the feedback which isn’t much time at all, so we really do have to work hard to make sure we hear from as many different people as possible.

The best way to be involved will be to speak to your parish priest, or, alternatively, if you’d like to be part of one of the specific groups I am forming please do get in touch and let me know.

Whatever you do, please do make sure you have your say! Please do get involved and most importantly please pray that this Synodal Pathway may lead us to a renewed faith and devotion to the Lord.

## Communion with the Word

rest of the world through common prayers of intercessions offered together.

A time of communion with Jesus in the Eucharist, as we’ll end each session with an invitation to join the Dominican Sisters in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament through their livestream.

Coming together in that way on Wednesdays, we hope to prepare together for the great moment of communion which is Sunday Mass in our parishes. We hope that this time will strengthen our own communion with Jesus and his people in the Church.

Join us for this wonderful opportunity to mark the Year of the Eucharist in our diocese, starting on the 1st December 2021. The sisters are looking forward to welcoming you, to discover together the treasure of the Word of God as it is proclaimed every Sunday in the first reading and to rejoice in our common fellowship with Christ in his Church.





SCAN ME



At St Joseph's RC Primary in Bracknell, we will be welcoming in the season of Advent through our Christingle Celebration which will be led this year by our Year 2 class. All pupils will be making Christingles and will explore the symbolism and Scripture links as they do this. Due to Covid, we will be celebrating together live on MS Teams as we did last year.

We have been reflecting on Pope Francis' message in Fratelli Tuitti this term, so we are collecting in Christmas food items to help our local food bank

so that all our brothers and sisters can share in some Christmas treats. We are also making up Christmas hampers for fund-raising with one hamper being donated to a local family in need.

Laudito Si and COP26 have also been at the fore-front of our minds and because of this, the School Council has organised a 'Big Christmas Jumper Swap' to help make our school more sustainable. Any festive jumpers, clothes or accessories which we may have grown out of but still have plenty of use left in them, can then be traded for a larger size. We will

be having a Christmas jumper and art day, making things to share with our local parishioners.

The School Council are currently busy designing and making a large school Advent wreath using recyclable and natural products only which will then lead us through our journey of Advent. They are also doing daily light checks every lunch and breaktime to make sure we are not wasting electricity to protect our environment.

Any monies raised over this Advent will be donated to Mission Together.



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Fratelli Tuitti, Laudato Si and Christingle

### All Hallows Farnham

We are marking Advent with a series of events here at All Hallows; liturgical and charitable. As well as holding our regular weekly masses in the school chapel, where we light the candles on our Advent wreath as we move through the season, we will be ending the term with a special Advent liturgy for each year group, inviting local clergy to celebrate each one. We are beginning Advent with some house liturgies in our chapel which are also part of our Advent preparations. Every day begins with prayer and reflection, either in form groups or in assemblies, and our lay chaplain has prepared a series of reflections and prayers for these occasions.

In assemblies just prior to Advent, our Student Council launched this year's advent appeal, after selecting three charities to support. We will be supporting Mary's Meals as an international charity and then two local / national charities that have links with staff and students here at school - McDonald House at Southampton Hospital and SSAFA, the armed forces charity. Every form group will be organising a fund-raising activity and these will be running throughout Advent.

### St Peter's Winchester

St Peter's have a range of liturgies and advent services for the children across

### Liturgies and Charitable action!



the school to engage with this year. It is great to be able to have parents attending school events once again. This Year Key Stage Two will be celebrating our Advent Liturgy together in St Stephen's Church, with Y6 parents invited. Our Y6s will be leading us in prayer and readings, as well as creating a tableau of the nativity scene, as well as beautiful singing from all the children.

Meanwhile our Key Stage One are going to support Reception children with their Nativity Service, with Reception parents attending. Here the Year 2 will be leading the readings and prayers and all the children will be singing songs to support the Reception children's re-enactment of the Christmas story. Finally, our Little Fishes pre-school will be having their own nativity, with their parents attending. The school is currently filled with singing and rehearsing for what look to be wonderful Advent celebrations.

We also look forward to using our noticeboard to share the Good News.

### St John's Andover



We will begin this Advent by joining the CAFOD national assembly followed by reflection time to consider how we too can be lights for the world this Advent. We will write our Advent promises which we will refer to every time we gather together in prayer - keeping us on track during this important time of preparation. The whole school are collecting Advent Calendars for local families in need on behalf of the Andover Foodbank - so far we have collected 128 and we are trying to reach 200 before the start of Advent.



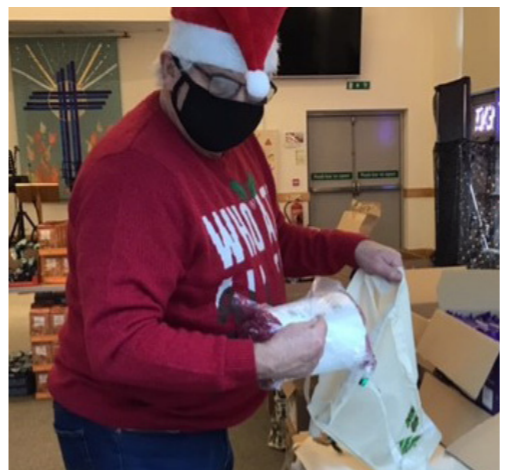
Merry Christmas! As we celebrate the amazing Mystery of the Lord's Incarnation, I wish you, your family and your friends, a joy-filled Christmas with God's love.

Just before Advent, the Bishops of England and Wales issued a beautiful statement called 'Honouring Sunday.' It is about the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. It says: "The central appeal of the Mass, its beauty and its transcendence, raises our minds and hearts to God in an unambiguous and compelling manner. Here we stand together before our heavenly Father, offering our thanksgiving and prayer, through our Saviour, in the Holy Spirit. Here we receive Christ in his Word. Here, we are nourished by Christ in his precious Body and Blood. This is our primary joy, for which there is no substitute, and from which we draw our strength"

### Christmas Day Hampers

This year St. Edmund's parish, Abingdon is leading a town-wide project to deliver large Gift Bags to 100 people who will be on their own on Christmas Day. The project is supported by all the churches in Abingdon. Recipients will be a mixture of people known by various churches, and those recommended by various charities and agencies in the area. The key criteria is that they are very unlikely to see anyone else on Christmas Day.

A pair of parishioners will deliver the gift bags in the late morning and try and have a chat on the doorstep if recipients would like that. Clare Simpson, organiser, commented: "last year many people said that we were the only people they would see on Christmas Day, and they were very happy that someone had bothered to come out and see them. The human interaction was almost more important than the gifts. We were privileged to get a glimpse into their life and bring some Christmas cheer and the Lord's love to them".



News from the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

### Come Home for Christmas

(see <https://www.cbcew.org.uk>).

Come home for Christmas! I very much hope that those who have stayed away from Mass in recent times will find a way now to return. Indeed, over the next twelve months our Diocese of Portsmouth will continue to keep a special 'Year of the Eucharist.' I am inviting everyone in the Diocese to undertake by God's grace a period of intense, spiritual renewal that we will all be better equipped for service and mission. The purpose ultimately is to help us realise our diocesan ambition of Bringing People Closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

Over the last year, the pandemic



About 35 parishioners will be delivering the gift bags. Some will be families taking an hour out of their own Christmas Day. All the volunteers say that they want to look outwards on Christmas Day and not just think of themselves but have a chance to show love for those who are by themselves. All volunteers have been "safely recruited".

The cost of the gifts have been covered by various charities, the town council and parishioners. They include items such as a fleecy blanket, food treats, a succulent plant, "Why Christmas" booklet by Nicky Gumbel, puzzle book, hand cream, Christmas decorations, a couple of which have been homemade by parishioners.

Clare Simpson  
Abingdon



continuously unsettled and disrupted our lives. We pray to God for an end to it. Let us pray too for all those who are unwell and for the medical staff caring for them. Now, as we enter the New Year 2022, I pray He will hear these prayers and grant you many blessings. Happy New Year!

In Corde Iesu

+ Philip

Bishop Philip Egan  
Bishop of Portsmouth

### A Christmas Tradition (That you may not know)

#### St Bede's Catholic Primary Basingstoke

**Las Posadas** Las Posadas, (Spanish: "The Inns") is a religious festival celebrated in Mexico and some parts of the United States between December 16 and 24. Las Posadas commemorates the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a safe refuge where Mary could give birth to the baby Jesus. When they were unable to find lodging in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary were forced to seek shelter in a stable, where the Christ Child was born. Las Posadas is celebrated from Wednesday, December 16 to Thursday, December 24, 2020. During our remaining time in school, we will celebrate Las Posadas. Mary and Joseph will travel around the school and spend a couple of days in each year group bubble, have a day's rest and then continue on their journey to the next bubble.

This Advent, St Bede's primary school in Basingstoke will be recreating this tradition. Mary and Joseph will be visiting each classroom!

The school will also be sharing a weekly newsletter with all families, focussing on Advent and the children will be making ornaments to go on the Jesse Tree.

