

October  
2025



# Catholic East Anglia

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Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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The former United Reformed Church in Norwich.  
Image © Copyright Graham Hardy.

## Trinity Church saved for worship & community use

**The Catholic Diocese of East Anglia has acquired the former Trinity United Reformed Church which neighbours the site of St John's Cathedral in Norwich, subject to contract.**

■ The Grade II listed church, designed by the celebrated architect Sir Bernard Feilden, who was also the consultant architect of the University of East Anglia, and built in 1956, will continue to be used for worship, including being offered as a sustainable base for the Syro-Malabar (South Indian) Catholic community in the area. With its associated

buildings, it will also provide clergy accommodation, a new home for the Diocesan Archive, offices, new teaching and meeting spaces, as well as expanding the Cathedral's car parking offer, and will be available to the wider community.

As recognised by the official listing, Trinity church has group architectural value with the Cathedral and, when integrated into the wider site, will complete the fourth side of the Cathedral's gardens making them a full cloister-style quadrangle.

Works to upgrade the church and its associated buildings for their new purposes will take some time and will be led by the Cathedral's architect, Nicholas Warns.

St John's Cathedral, a grade I listed major

Norwich landmark commissioned by the then Duke of Norfolk in 1882 and designed by George Gilbert Scott, is currently used by over a thousand people every week for worship, offers guided tours and events, and has a welcoming café that is open to all from Monday to Saturday offering breakfasts, refreshments and lunches. The Cathedral recently received a significant grant from Historic England as part of a projected major programme of repair works.

The purchase of Trinity church is being funded by proceeds from the sale of unused Diocesan properties and does not represent a charge on the Diocese's day-to-day budget.

## Jubilee of Migrants Mass in Peterborough

■ The Diocese of East Anglia will mark the Jubilee of Migrants with a special Mass at St Luke's, Peterborough, at midday on Saturday 4 October 2025.

The celebration will be led by Bishop Peter Collins, with the support of Fr Peter Wygnanski, and organised locally by Fr Jeffrey Downie, parish priest of St Luke's and dean.

The Jubilee Mass is an opportunity for the whole diocesan family to gather in thanksgiving with and for the many migrant communities who continue to enrich the life of the Church in East Anglia. From the earliest centuries, the Christian faith was carried into this region by missionaries and travellers from abroad. The pattern has never ceased: throughout history, people on the move have borne the Gospel with them, planting it anew wherever they settled.

Today, migrant communities remain vital to the Church. They bring vibrancy to parish life, sustain devotions and traditions from many cultures, and witness powerfully to the universality of the Catholic faith. In a society often marked by division, their presence is a living reminder that the Church is one body, made up of many nations and peoples.

This year's Jubilee echoes the message of the late Pope Francis for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which highlights the courage and faith of those who journey in hope: "Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible. Migrants and refugees remind the Church of her pilgrim dimension, perpetually journeying towards her final homeland, sustained by a hope that is a theological virtue."

The Jubilee of Migrants will therefore be both a moment of gratitude and a call to solidarity – recognising the richness that migrant communities bring to our parishes, and recommitting ourselves to welcome, encouragement and shared hope.

All are welcome to attend this diocesan celebration. If you plan to be present, please e-mail [caritas@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:caritas@rcdea.org.uk) for further information.



## Standing together against modern slavery

■ On Friday 10 October 2025, the Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund will host a Modern Slavery Conference at the Salvation Army Citadel, Norwich.

Running from 10.00am to 4.30pm, the event will bring together leading voices in the fight against one of the gravest human rights abuses of our time.

The conference aims to shed light on the true scale and nature of modern slavery and human trafficking, while offering practical insights into how individuals, communities, and institutions can play their part in eradicating this global crime.

A distinguished panel of speakers will share their expertise and experience, including:

**Major Heather Grinsted**, Deputy Director, Salvation Army Modern Slavery and Anti-Trafficking.

**Karen Anstiss**, former Metropolitan Police officer and current Manager of Bakhita House, London.

**Andrew Wallis OBE**, Chief Executive of Unseen, the UK's national Modern Slavery Helpline.

**Simon John**, Co-Lead of the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia's initiative against modern slavery.

**Carol Metzker**, author, speaker, and volunteer at Dawns Place, a trafficking shelter in Pennsylvania.

**Mark Little MBE**, Founder Chair of the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery.

The event will be chaired by **Caroline Evans**, an experienced educationalist and former headteacher.

Conference tickets are £15, which includes a light buffet lunch. Funds raised will support the Salvation Army, Unseen UK, Bakhita House, and the Rotary Foundation — organisations at the forefront of supporting survivors and challenging the structures that allow slavery to persist.

This promises to be a moving and informative day for anyone wishing to learn more and to act in solidarity with victims and survivors of modern slavery.

Tickets available at: <https://fundraising.rotaryeastanglia.co.uk/event/modern-slavery-conference-2025>

**Catholic East Anglia**

Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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Articles and photographs for the next edition are very welcome and should be sent to the editor, ideally via email, by Friday, 10 October.

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## Lifesaving gift for St John of the Cross church

■ Parishioners at St John of the Cross Catholic Church in Aylsham have welcomed the installation of a new defibrillator, generously donated by the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA).

The STA, the world's largest swimming teaching body and one of the UK's leading authorities in lifesaving, first aid and pool safety, presented the defibrillator to the parish at a special handover ceremony.

Fr Peter Raj, Parish Priest, received the device on behalf of the parishioners from John Holden, STA Tutor and North Norfolk Vikings Swimming Coach. Mr Holden emphasised the vital importance of having such equipment readily available: "Defibs can make all the difference in a life and death situation. Unfortunately, some people believe you have to be qualified to use one. This is not the case."

Until now, the nearest defibrillator was almost a kilometre away — a delay that could prove critical in the event of a cardiac arrest. Parishioner and Chair of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, North Walsham, Parish

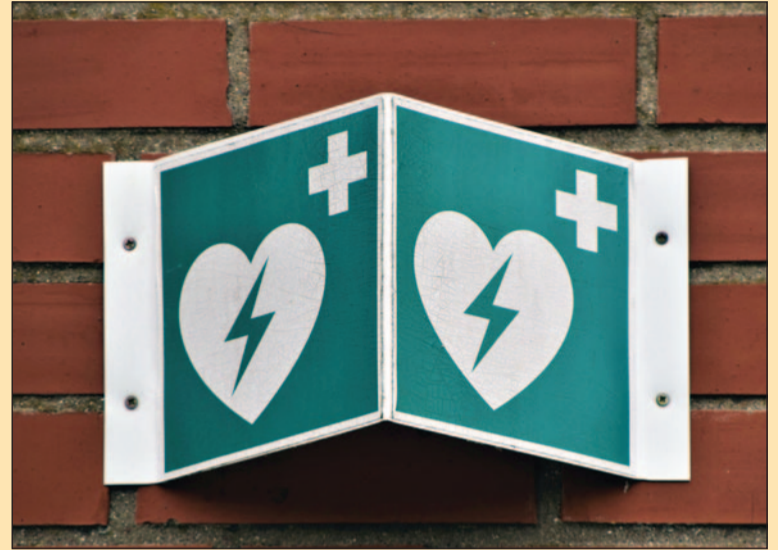
Pastoral Council, Fran Ludden, expressed her gratitude: "We would like to thank the trustees of the STA for their kind generosity. Having a defib on site will eliminate any delay should there be an incident."

To ensure parishioners are confident in using the equipment, the parish has already hosted three CPR and defibrillator training workshops, all led by Mr Holden. Another session is planned for September.

Encouraging wider community involvement, Mr Holden added: "I would urge the public to come forward to learn

CPR and have a look at how to use a defibrillator."

The new device is now available at St John of the Cross, offering reassurance and potentially lifesaving support for both parishioners and the wider Aylsham community.



## African Mass brings joy to St Peter's, Gorleston

**St Peter's Parish in Gorleston has long been a lively worshipping community, bringing together people from many ethnic backgrounds, united in our common humanity and Christian identity.**

**Chibuike Mbanefo reports.**

■ The diversity within the parish has always been a strength and an opportunity to evangelise, emphasising our unity in diversity. Through this richness, we are continually reminded of the love of Christ, which knows no boundaries and extends to all peoples and cultures of the world.

It was therefore with great joy that the African community in the parish held the first-ever African Mass, with the theme: "Celebrating Our Community and Culture." The event, which brought together African and non-African Catholics from Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, and beyond, took place on Saturday, 30 August 2025, at 2pm. Its aim was to foster the joy and happiness that comes from expressing African culture through the unique features of its liturgical celebration. The Mass, which had been eagerly anticipated for several weeks, was celebrated by Rev. Fr Anthony Nwankwo and concelebrated by Rev. Frs Alvan Ibeh and Desmond Agomuo.

In his homily, Fr Alvan encouraged those present to use the gifts God has given us to work fruitfully for His kingdom. Reflecting on the Gospel reading of Matthew 25:14–30, he highlighted the importance of stewardship and accountability. He emphasised that God has entrusted each of us with gifts according to our abilities, and we are expected to use them wisely and fruitfully. He pointed to the African community in the parish as an example, noting how they have chosen to use the gift of their culture in praise and worship of God, and in bringing the parish together to foster unity in diversity. He reiterated that our

unity in diversity should ultimately be shaped by God's love for us.

The Mass reflected the unique character of African liturgical celebrations. From lively music sung in several African languages with traditional instruments, alongside piano and saxophone; to the blend of English and African languages during the intercessory prayers and throughout the liturgy; to the colourful traditional attire; and the vibrant dancing and offertory procession. All of this created a deeply participatory atmosphere and gave fresh meaning to the liturgy of the day, making everyone present feel warmly connected to Africa, while still very much in the UK. During the Mass, prayers were offered for the Church, the continent of Africa, those in need, those in government, the sick, and the faithful departed.

Before the conclusion of the Mass, the priests expressed their gratitude to all who had contributed to making the day a success, particularly the African Choir of the parish for their dedication throughout the preparation, as well as the entire parish for their support and presence.

Following the Mass, parishioners and guests enjoyed a joyful reception in the parish hall, filled with community spirit, love, and sharing. A vibrant buffet was served, offering no fewer than ten different African dishes — truly a feast of flavours. The highlight of the reception was the music and dancing to melodious Afro-Highlife rhythms, with everyone joining in to celebrate the richness of African food, music, culture, and community.

This inaugural celebration not only met but exceeded expectations. The parish looks forward to hosting more such occasions in the future, using them as opportunities to evangelise and strengthen community bonds. It is hoped that the

joy of this celebration will continue to unite and inspire the parish community.

In every sense, the first African Mass at St Peter's was a reminder of how faith, culture, and fellowship can be woven together to enrich parish life. It showed that when communities embrace their diversity and share their gifts, they not only honour their own traditions but also strengthen the bonds of unity that hold them together. The celebration highlighted the richness of African spirituality and culture, while also affirming the universal message of the Gospel, which transcends languages, customs, and borders.

Beyond the colour and vibrancy of the day, the Mass served as a call to continue building a parish that welcomes, celebrates, and learns from the unique contributions of all its members. It affirmed that diversity is not something to be merely tolerated but cherished, for it reflects the fullness of God's creation and His boundless love.

As the parish looks ahead, this celebration will remain a beacon of hope and encouragement — a testament to what can be achieved when hearts and voices come together in joyful praise of God. It is hoped that the spirit of this gathering will inspire further opportunities for cultural exchange, deeper unity in faith, and a renewed commitment to sharing the Good News with all. In doing so, St Peter's will continue to grow as a community rooted in love, strengthened by diversity, and guided by the light of Christ.



African Mass at St Peter's, Gorleston.



Portrait of St John Henry Newman.

# St John Henry Newman: Doctor of the Church

**Jean M Johnson reflects on her decades-long journey with St John Henry Newman's Cause, from his declaration as Venerable through Beatification and Canonisation, to the joy of seeing him named a Doctor of the Church.**

■ It was a wonderful July day when I opened the Birmingham Archdiocese News and read that Pope Leo had announced St John Henry Newman was to be declared a Doctor of the Church. The news filled me with joy, though it came at the end of a journey I had been privileged to follow closely for many years.

Although I was received into the Catholic Church at St Mary's, Ipswich in 1977, I spent 35 years living in Birmingham, within walking distance of the Oratory in Edgbaston. My spiritual home was my parish church, but I was also deeply involved with the Oratory community. Like Newman himself, my own journey had begun in the Church of England, and I recognised in him a kindred spirit.

When I shared the news of Newman's recognition as a Doctor of the Church, the first to reply were Anglican friends from our ecumenical Guild of Our Lady of Grace. Newman is truly a saint for both Catholics and Anglicans. His hymns, such as Praise to the Holiest, are sung regularly in Anglican churches, including my sister's village parish. The Oxford Movement, led by Newman, drew many to Rome, but also left a deep and lasting influence within the Anglican tradition.

At the Oratory, we spoke of him affectionately as Our Cardinal. To us he was a familiar

and guiding figure, whose holiness and wisdom continue to illuminate the Church today. I was fortunate to learn from Fr Gregory Winterton, the first Postulator of Newman's Cause, and from many authors and speakers who came to the Oratory. We prayed earnestly for Newman's canonisation, in many languages, and I remember even carrying copies of that prayer to Poland during the Communist years.

The long path towards sainthood began to quicken once Newman was declared Venerable. When the first miracle was recognised, we welcomed Jack Sullivan, the American deacon cured of a spinal disorder, to the Oratory. I had the privilege of speaking with him. Then in 2010 came the Beatification, celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI at Cofton Park, just a few miles from the Oratory. I will never forget arriving before dawn, sitting for hours in the rain, and then seeing the sun break through as the helicopter carrying the Holy Father appeared. Most moving of all was seeing elderly Fr Gregory kneel at the Pope's feet – a moment of reward for his tireless dedication to Newman's Cause.

In the years that followed, I served on the committee preparing for the Canonisation. We rejoiced again when news came of a second miracle, this time involving the safe birth of little Gemma Villalobos, despite her mother Melissa suffering a life-threatening bleed during pregnancy. Meeting them both was unforgettable.

Travelling to Rome for the Canonisation in 2019 was one of the highlights of my life. The days were full: Mass at the Venerable English College, where all three of Newman's hymns were sung; encounters with pilgrims from Birmingham, Anglicans as well as Catholics; and precious time with Deacon Sullivan, still in good health.

The Canonisation Mass on 13 October was a moment of deep joy, though not without challenges — for us in Rome, much of it was in Italian, so we missed parts of Newman's words which those at home enjoyed with English translations. Afterwards, at a reception attended by bishops and dignitaries, I listened to Prince Charles (now King Charles III) speak movingly about Newman's legacy. His words, clearly written from the heart, revealed a genuine devotion to "our Cardinal".

The crowning moment for me came the next day at the Lateran Basilica, when I found myself in the second row, just behind Melissa and Gemma. When Cardinal Vincent Nichols greeted them, he also recognised and greeted me from his Birmingham days. The service, this time entirely in English, was magnificent — with the Oratory School choir singing to perfection, Catholic and Anglican bishops side by side, and the sense of a historic moment for the Church in England.

Now, as St John Henry Newman is named the 38th Doctor of the Church, our country has gained another great teacher of faith. He follows in the footsteps of St Bede the Venerable and St Anselm of Canterbury. Here in East Anglia we can claim our own connections too: Bede's history mentions King Raedwald of Sutton Hoo, and we are blessed with Newman scholars such as Professor Eamon Duffy of Cambridge and Fr Michael Rear of Walsingham.

I encourage all parishes to celebrate Newman by including his hymns in worship and by reading his inspiring words. If you do not already know it, seek out his beautiful prayer beginning "God has created me to do Him some definite service." It is a prayer that never fails to strengthen faith and purpose.

St John Henry Newman, pray for us.

## Norwich Catenians celebrate 100 years at gala dinner

■ The Norwich Circle of the Catenian Association marked its 100th anniversary with a Gala Dinner at the Top of the Terrace, overlooking the pitch at Norwich City Football Club.

The celebration brought together more than 160 guests, including clergy, civic leaders, and Catenians from across the country, who joined brothers, wives, families, and friends in a joyful evening of fellowship and thanksgiving.

Among the distinguished guests were the Bishop of East Anglia, Rt Rev Peter Collins; the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Paul Kendrick and GBNC President Gerry McCormack.

Before the loyal toast, Vice President Tony Baker read out messages of congratulation received from Catenians across the world. Particularly moving were papal blessings. His Holiness Pope Francis, shortly before his death in February, sent his prayers and apostolic blessing. Just days later, a further blessing arrived from his successor, Pope Leo XIV — believed to be a unique occurrence, with two Popes sending greetings to the same Catenian event.

Warm wishes were also received from Buckingham Palace. King Charles III expressed his hope that members of the Norwich Circle would enjoy "a most enjoyable gathering" on this landmark occasion.

The Norwich Circle of the Catenians was inaugurated on 21 May 1925 at the Café Royal in London Street, Norwich. Dinner on that first evening cost seven shillings and sixpence. Among the 21 founder members was Louis Marchesi, who later went on to establish the Round Table movement.

The Circle's early meetings were held monthly at Mortimer's Hotel in St Giles. Supper was priced at two shillings and sixpence, with a levy of one shilling for the first drink, surplus funds going towards entertaining visitors. By 1948, meetings were recorded as being held without ritual or regalia — and smoking was permitted!

Over the past 100 years, the Norwich Circle has welcomed generations of Catholic men committed to faith, friendship, and support for one another and the wider community.

The centenary dinner was not only a chance to look back over a century of history, but also an opportunity to give thanks and look forward. With messages from the Pope, the King, and fellow Catenians across the world, it was a night that will long be remembered by all who were present.



# New young leaders formation programme

**Are you aged 16–22 and looking for a new challenge in your faith journey? Do you want to grow in confidence, deepen your relationship with Jesus, and make a real difference in the lives of others? The Ignite Team is excited to be launching a brand-new Young Leaders Formation initiative – and you're invited to be part of it.**

■ This new programme is all about equipping and empowering young people across the Diocese of East Anglia to live out their faith with joy and courage. Through regular formation opportunities, you'll have space to reflect on who God has called you to be, discover practical ways to share your faith, and be encouraged by others who are on the same journey.

There will also be opportunities to get involved with youth retreats and diocesan events supported by the Ignite Team. These are great moments to put your gifts into practice, build friendships, and experience the joy of serving. But don't worry – there's no



The Ignite Festival 2025.

expectation to attend everything. The heart of the initiative is about helping you grow at your own pace.

Luc Wallace, Ignite Team Leader, shared his hopes for the project: "Our prayer is for more young people to be empowered, ready to share the love of Christ with the world."

The adventure begins with the very first Young Leaders retreat, taking place at Clare Priory from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 October. This weekend will bring together faith, formation and fun in a beautiful setting, with plenty of time for prayer, learning, and community.

It's the perfect opportunity to start the journey and meet others who are passionate about their faith.

If you're ready to take the next step, or even just curious to find out more, the Ignite Team would love to hear from you. To apply, or to find out further details, simply email [igniteteam@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:igniteteam@rcdea.org.uk).

This is your chance to be part of something new, something exciting, and something that could transform not only your own faith but also the lives of others around you. Why not give it a go?



## Young Leaders

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# East Timor community's future

**Leaders of the East Timor Community in Cambridge (ETICC) recently met with Fr John Minh to discuss key aspects of the community's spiritual life, including Mass scheduling, preparations for Baptism and First Holy Communion, and their hopes for the forthcoming Jubilee Year. Adrito Do Nascimento reports.**

■ The meeting was marked by a spirit of collaboration and mutual support. At the heart of the conversation was the challenge of arranging Masses in a way that both reflects the needs of the growing East Timorese Catholic community and fits alongside the existing liturgical life of the local parishes. Various possibilities were explored, from adjusting the timing of Masses to introducing a rotating schedule across different churches in the Cambridge area.

Another central theme was the preparation of children and families for the sacraments of Baptism and First Holy Communion. The community leaders and Fr John stressed the importance of catechesis

and pastoral accompaniment, ensuring that candidates are supported not only in faith instruction but also in their sense of belonging within the parish family. Plans under consideration include catechetical workshops, retreats, and community gatherings.

ETICC expressed deep gratitude to Fr Robin Mampallithadathil CRM, Priest-in-Charge of St Laurence's Parish in Cambridge, his Assistant Priest, Fr Alex Vadasseril CRM, and the parishioners, for their generosity in welcoming the East Timorese community and providing St Laurence's as a home for their liturgical and pastoral activities.

Looking ahead, the Jubilee Year was also discussed with enthusiasm. ETICC members are eager to take part in the diocesan cel-

ebrations and to contribute actively to the spirit of renewal through prayer, charity, and reconciliation. The community also hopes to extend its support to East Timorese living in surrounding areas, helping to strengthen both faith and fellowship.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continue building up the life of the Church in Cambridge. It was a moment of encouragement, reflecting both the vibrancy of the East Timorese faithful and the strong bonds of communion being forged with the wider diocesan family.



Fr John Minh with representatives of the East Timor community.

# Talk in Bury St Edmunds to aid restoration of vestments

**A fundraising talk in Bury St Edmunds last September celebrated the life of a much-loved priest while raising money for the restoration of historic parish vestments.**

■ On Monday 15 September 2025, local historian John Saunders presented an illustrated talk entitled *The Life of Bryan* at the Crypt of St Edmund's Church, Bury St Edmunds, with performances at 3pm and 7pm.



Fr Bryan Houghton.

The subject of the talk, Fr Bryan Houghton, had served as parish priest at Slough before moving to Bury St Edmunds, where he ministered for 19 years until his retirement in 1969. Remembered as a man of faith, vision and eccentricity, his initiatives brought growth to the parish, the building of schools, and respect from the wider community.

John explained, "This was a fundraiser for an ongoing project which had already raised £6,000 of a target of £10,000 to restore some of our vestments which were over 100 years old and priceless. It was hoped that the talk would add to this money for a project which Fr Houghton would have fully supported. As a young altar server, I had been greatly influenced by his piety which combined with his somewhat eccentric and amusing character. His life was so interesting to research and there were so many wonderful stories within the talk – the title was well-chosen to reflect a life that at times resembled the humour of a Monty Python sketch. So, I did hope that people would come along, enjoy the talk and share their own stories. For those who never knew him, I promised they would feel that they did by the end of the talk!"

Proceeds went towards the vestment restoration fund, which had so far raised £6,000 of its £10,000 target, helping to preserve these priceless garments for future generations.



The vestments which are a part of the restoration project.

## Parishioners invited to share local social action

■ Through notices in their parish newsletters, parishioners in the deaneries of Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough are being invited to share details of their local charitable social actions or organisations.

These include initiatives where people come together to improve lives and address issues important in their communities, as well as ideas of what they would like to see represented at the forthcoming Caritas Festivals in their deaneries.

David Livesey, Administrator of Caritas East Anglia, said: "The previous Festivals in their other five diocesan deaneries have each in their own way celebrated the work of organisations involved in social outreach with which they are engaged often in partnership with other faith groups, like foodbanks or night shelters, or by volunteering with charities such as Citizens Advice

or Hope into Action. I hope that all those involved in such social actions will e-mail your ideas to [caritas@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:caritas@rcdea.org.uk). This will ensure that we can properly celebrate what is being achieved locally, thank our partners and encourage more parishioners to become aware and involved in activities aligned with Catholic Social teaching."

The Peterborough Deanery Festival will take place on Saturday 1 November 2025 at John Fisher High School, Park Lane, Peterborough, PE1 5JN. The Bury St Edmunds Deanery Festival will follow on Saturday 6 December 2025 at St Edmund, King and Martyr, 21 Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1QG.

Both Festivals will begin at 10.00 am with Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter, followed by refreshments and opportunities to discover local projects. The events will conclude at 12.15 pm with prayer and reflection.



Bishop Peter at previous festival in Norwich.

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## A fountain of hope: Day of renewal in Diss

■ On Saturday 6 September, around 80 people from across the Diocese and beyond gathered at the Catholic Church of St Henry Morse in Diss for a Day of Renewal, organised by the Charismatic Diocesan Service of Communion (CDSC). Pam Smith Reports.

The day began with Mass at 10am, as parishioners and visitors came together to celebrate Communion and to proclaim the Hope of the Gospel.

Fr Alvan Ibeh encouraged those gathered: “do not let this day pass you by without experiencing something special.” He spoke of the worry and anxiety that can keep us awake at night, that we may pray but wait and wait on the Lord, and an answer may not seem forthcoming, yet we know that “Hope does not disappoint.” He prayed that we all be “transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2).

Fr Alvan’s talk took us through the scriptures, focusing on people who hoped in the Lord to see if they were disappointed, showing that against all odds, God has the power to uphold his promises. They held firm in their belief and hoped in the Lord. Jesus never fails. The evil one has no access to our minds if they are renewed in Christ. He urged us to remember that “when you are down to nothing, God is up to something”. God has a plan for each of us and like Peter when he walked on the water, we have to focus on Jesus, then we can walk on our problems, but when we focus on our problems, we sink.

During the day Fr Alvan shared testimonies from his life and from his two books entitled A Fountain of Hope. The theme of his talks, the prayers he offered up for us all, and the Praise and Worship encouraged those gathered to trust in the Lord and His plans for each of us.

Thanks to Fr Alex, Deacon David and the parishioners of St Henry Morse parish. Their participation, welcome and hospitality throughout the day were much appreciated both by the team and by those attending the Day of Renewal. St Henry Morse church, on Shelfanger Road, Diss, opened in 2012, is full of light and has a wonderful atmosphere of worship. Many described it as “the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in the field.”

We extend our thanks also to Fr Alvan Ibeh for leading the day and encouraging all those present to embrace the promises of God, our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who is with us always: “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5).

For more information about Charismatic events, please email [renewaleastanglia@gmail.com](mailto:renewaleastanglia@gmail.com) or visit [www.renewaleastanglia.org](http://www.renewaleastanglia.org)

# Pilgrims from East Ang Jubilee Pilgrimage



**The Diocese of East Anglia has joyfully completed its part in the National Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope, which culminated in a Solemn Mass for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross at St Barnabas’ Cathedral, Nottingham, on Sunday 14 September. Charlie Bohan-Hurst reports.**

■ The pilgrimage began in Norwich, where Bishop Peter Collins celebrated 10am Mass at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist before blessing the group as they set out on St Luke’s Way. Eighteen faithful — undeterred by rain and buoyed by high spirits — stepped off from the cathedral shortly after a prayerful briefing in the narthex. Their first destination was Cawston, home to a magnificent medieval church that has welcomed travellers for centuries.

The diocesan pilgrims were accompanied by Fr Peter Wygnanski, who served as their spiritual leader. Fr Peter had made a timely recovery from illness in order to begin the pilgrimage with the group, offering prayer, encouragement and guidance in the first days of the journey. Sadly, the challenges of the road took their toll, and painful blisters forced him to return home a couple of days before the end. Even so, his witness and support remained an inspiration as the pilgrims pressed on to complete the route.

St Luke’s Way carried the group over 158.7 miles, threading through some of East Anglia’s

most cherished holy places, including the National Shrine of Our Lady at Houghton St Giles and the ancient pilgrimage site of Walsingham. These halts offered not only rest but also opportunities for prayer and reflection, linking their footsteps with centuries of Christian devotion in the region. The route is dedicated to Julian of Norwich, whose timeless assurance — “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well” — resonated deeply as they faced both

joys and hardships along the way.

The Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope is more than a walk; it is a living catechesis. Pilgrimage strips things back to essentials: prayer, companionship, and trust in God’s providence. The rhythm of the road invites silence, and the shared effort forges unity. The East Anglian pilgrims’ journey embodied these gifts in concrete form — blisters and blessings alike — reminding us that the Christian life is itself a pilgrimage that asks for perseverance, humil-





# Anglia complete e of Hope



ity and mutual care.  
This national initiative forms part of the Church's preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025. Pilgrimage, as the Church teaches, is a "fundamental element of every Jubilee", a practical way to rediscover simplicity and the deeper meaning of faith. By setting out on foot, the East Anglian pilgrims joined their prayers with those travelling along three other routes across England and Wales, converging in a shared witness of faith, unity and renewal.  
For our diocese, the pilgrimage has been a sign that hope grows when it is carried together. The miles covered, the hospitality

received, and the prayers offered in parish churches and shrines along the way all speak of a community walking in step with the Lord. The completion of the route stands as a quiet but eloquent testimony: that God continues to guide His people, step by step, towards renewal in Christ.  
Please continue to keep the pilgrims in your prayers, offer encouragement when pilgrims pass through your parish in future stages or local walks, and consider joining a section yourself. May their witness inspire many across East Anglia to walk in faith, hope and joy as we look towards the Jubilee Year.

## Bishop Peter's engagements

### SEPTEMBER

- Sept 25, Thurs**  
Bishop to Diocesan Board of Trustees Meeting at 10:30, Poringland.
- Sept 25, Thurs**  
Bishop to celebrate Confirmation Mass at The Sacred Heart, North Walsham at 19:00.
- Sept 26, Fri**  
Bishop to celebrate Jubilee Schools Mass at the Cathedral at 12:00.
- Sept 27, Sat**  
Bishop to celebrate Mass for the Annual Gathering of Deacons, Wives and Students in Formation for the Diaconate at 11:30 including Conferral of the Ministries.
- Sept 27, Sat**  
Bishop to celebrate a Jubilee Mass for Catechists in Newmarket at 16:30.
- Sept 28, Sun**  
Bishop to celebrate Mass at St John the Baptist, Mildenhall at 09:00 followed by Mass at St Thomas of Canterbury, Brandon at 11:30.
- Sept 29, Mon**  
Bishop to celebrate Confirmation Mass at St Jude the Apostle, Whittlesey at 19:00.

### OCTOBER

- Oct 2, Thurs**  
Bishop to the Walsingham Trustees Meeting.
- Oct 3, Fri**  
Bishop to attend the Bishops' and Staff Meeting combined with the College Feast Day at St Mary's College, Oscott.
- Oct 4, Sat**  
Bishop to celebrate Jubilee Mass of Migrants in Peterborough at 12:00.
- Oct 5, Sun**  
Bishop to celebrate Mass for the Friends of the Cathedral at the Cathedral at 11:00 followed by the AGM.
- Oct 7, Tues**  
Bishop to attend Bishop's Council Meeting in Poringland from 11:00.
- Oct 9, Thurs**  
Bishop to attend the Meeting of the Deans in Poringland at 11:00.
- Oct 11, Sat**  
Bishop to lead the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham for Jubilee of Marian Spirituality.
- Oct 13 – 16, Mon – Thurs**  
Bishop to attend 'The Owned by All' Conference in Nottingham.
- Oct 17, Fri**  
Bishop to attend Vocations Committee Meeting in Poringland at 11:00.
- Oct 18, Sat**  
Bishop to Lancaster for the 100 year celebration of the Diocese of Lancaster.
- Oct 20 – 21, Mon – Tues**  
Bishop to lead a retreat for the newly ordained of the Diocese.
- Oct 23, Thurs**  
Bishop to attend Council of Priest in Poringland at 11:00.
- Oct 23, Thurs**  
Bishop to attend the second Norfolk Christian Communications Awards marking the 20th Anniversary of Network Norfolk to be held in the Narthex at the Cathedral at 19:00.
- Oct 25, Sat**  
Bishop to celebrate Mass with the Listening and Prayer Ministry Team in Newmarket at 10:30.
- Oct 26, Sun**  
Bishop to Birmingham for the 60th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's declaration, Nostra Aetate with Sung Vespers at Chad Cathedral, Birmingham at 16:00.
- Oct 27-28, Mon-Tues**  
Bishop to attend EWARC (English and Welsh Anglican Roman Catholic Commission) Meeting in Northampton.

# Interfaith dialogue in East Anglia and beyond

■ On 28 October 1965, Pope Saint Paul VI proclaimed the Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate*. Sixty years later it remains a ground-breaking and transformative document, challenging the Church to reflect on her relationship with non-Christian religions.

Although at the time it was overshadowed by other Council documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, the years since have shown clearly the importance of dialogue — with other Christians (ecumenism), with people of other faiths, and even with those who describe themselves as having no religion or as being “spiritual but not religious”.

For Catholics in East Anglia, this is lived experience. Across the diocese, priests and parishioners are involved in dialogue and cooperation with friends and neighbours of different traditions. The Commission for Dialogue and Unity, led by Brian Keegan of Peterborough, carries responsibility for this work locally, and many towns and cities have interfaith groups working together on projects such as food banks and debt advice centres, as well as gathering for study or to share in one another's feast days.

Older generations will remember the language once used in Catholic prayer. In the Good Friday liturgy of older missals, we prayed “for the conversion of the Jews” and “for the conversion of infidels”. Today, those prayers have been reshaped, and we now pray “for the Jewish people”, “for those who do not believe in Christ” and “for those who do not believe in God”, with words that better reflect God's loving care for all.

*Nostra Aetate* begins with words that remain striking: “In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions... she considers above all... what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.” Concerning Hinduism and Buddhism, the Council teaches that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions”. About Muslims, the declaration affirms that they adore “the one God, living and subsisting in Himself... who has spoken to men”, revere Jesus as a prophet and honour Mary, await the day of judgement, and value

the moral life expressed in prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

A central theme of the document is the “bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock”. It acknowledges that the beginnings of Christian faith are found among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. Importantly, it declares that “God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers” and insists that “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God”. The message is clear: there is no place for antisemitism in Christian life. The declaration concludes: “The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life, or religion.”

Successive Popes have called us to put these words into practice. Saint John Paul II said in 1990: “Dialogue is not so much an idea to be studied as a way of living in positive relationship with others.” In East Anglia, this spirit is lived out daily, whether through interfaith committees, parish-based initiatives, or local cooperation on issues that concern us all — justice and peace, the environment, or the protection of life. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales produced *Meeting God in Friends and Strangers* (2010), a helpful guide for parishes and individuals which offers practical advice, including on praying together and interreligious marriages.

This October there will be several events marking the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. At a national level, a commemoration will take place on Sunday 26 October at St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. The programme begins at 1.30pm with a panel discussion, followed by an address from Lord Khan of Burnley, Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement, and concludes with Sung Vespers at 4.00pm. Bishop Peter, together with representatives from East Anglia, is expected to attend. Closer to home, in Peterborough on Tuesday 21 October at 7.15pm, Brian Keegan will give an introduction to *Nostra Aetate* at St Oswald's Church (PE4 6AE), an excellent opportunity for parishioners in our diocese to engage with the document directly.

If you would like to learn more about interfaith work in East Anglia — or to get involved — please do get in touch. Priscilla Barlow: [priscillabarlow79@gmail.com](mailto:priscillabarlow79@gmail.com) Brian Keegan: [brian@keeganpeterborough.com](mailto:brian@keeganpeterborough.com)



Dr Ian Watson and fellow pilgrims.

## Unity Corner with Dr Ian Watson

**Unity Corner is a regular feature on Christian unity by Dr Ian Watson, County Ecumenical Officer for Norfolk and Waveney. This month he reports on the Catholic Parish of Walsingham's 'Pilgrimage of Hope', which was a joyful ecumenical journey through the Gospel of John on Saturday 30 August 2025.**

■ On a bright and beautiful day, I had the great joy and privilege of joining a truly special pilgrimage by the Catholic Parish of Walsingham. It was organised by the Parish Priest, Fr Keith Tulloch SM, and inspired by the 2025 Jubilee Year themed ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. The pilgrimage was much more than just a walk from Wells to Walsingham; it was a living and breathing symbol of Christian unity and shared hope, built around the enduring words of the Gospel of John.

We gathered at Wells Methodist Church at 10:00 am, which was our starting point for what turned out to be both a physical and spiritual journey across the beautiful North Norfolk countryside. Although the majority of pilgrims were Catholic from the parish, we were delighted to be joined by a Methodist lay preacher and an Anglican brother. In the gentle coastal town of Wells-next-the-Sea, united by a shared love of Christ and his Word, we began our sacred journey.

What made the pilgrimage so profoundly moving was its foundation in Scripture. Over the course of our walk, we read aloud the entire Gospel of St John. The first chapter was proclaimed before we set off, and the final chapter was saved for our arrival at the Church of the Annunciation in Walsingham. In between, we paused nineteen times at carefully chosen locations to read each chapter in turn. The joy of the pilgrimage was

a deep engagement with the Gospel as a whole, something few of us experience in one sitting. It reminded us that the Word of God, when read whole and in depth, offers a powerful lens to encounter Jesus anew.

With the many twists and turns involved in visiting the multiple stopping points, and according to our official pacemaker Maria and her dog, the walk itself was 11 miles in total. As with most pilgrimages, as each day passes the distance (apparently) becomes somewhat longer and more heroic! Whatever the case, it never felt that long, no doubt due to the good company and relaxed pace as the route took us to several different denominational churches, a meeting house, two cemeteries and a village green. At each location we read aloud a chapter of the Gospel.

Stops in Wells included the Congregational Church, Our Lady Star of the Sea, the Quaker Meeting House, St Nicholas's Church, and Wells Cemetery. Next on our journey, we visited Wighton Cemetery followed by the village church. One of the most delightful moments came at Wighton, where we stopped for lunch and (for some) a refreshing brew at the Carpenters Arms. In the simple joy of shared food and conversation, we embodied the very essence of Christian fellowship, which was one of the most wonderful aspects of the day.

Some who were unable to make the full journey joined us at Wighton, proving that even partial participation in pilgrimage is spiritually enriching. I have to give a special shout-out to those pilgrims who were in their eighties and nineties, and those less mobile using walkers and sticks, who were determined to join us on the way to share in the spirit of unity. I was very impressed (especially since, as I write this, nursing my own aches and pains). Their presence, effort and contribution on the day were very much appreciated by all. At one time we had just under 30 pilgrims, which was a superb turnout from across the parish.

Lunch was followed by more

readings and the continued journey towards Walsingham through countryside roads, and under a sky that seemed to bless our steps. The weather was great all day. Rain, however, did arrive but only after the final chapter was read at the end of the pilgrimage — we all thought that a blessing and wonder; our prayers were truly answered! At Great Walsingham we visited the Church of the Holy Transfiguration, where we were greeted by the Orthodox priest, Fr Christopher. He gave us a blessing, emphasised the importance of Christian unity, and talked about his own love of St John's Gospel — the most theological of all the Gospels. At every stop, a different voice proclaimed the Gospel, symbolising the beautiful diversity within the body of Christ. It was a pilgrimage in which we were unified in the love of Christ and bound by the words: “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

The final stretch into Little Walsingham brought us to St Peter's, the House of the Little Sisters, the Anglican Shrine, St Mary's, the most amazing Methodist Chapel, and then (finally) to the Church of the Annunciation in Walsingham. At each of these holy places, the Gospel continued to resonate, reaching its climax in chapter 21, where the risen Christ appears to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee. The theme of hope, renewal, and divine love echoed powerfully through those final verses, reminding us why we had come.

To conclude this extraordinary day, and for those able to, we returned by transport to Wells where we celebrated the Sunday Vigil Mass. It was a fitting end to a pilgrimage of hope and unity that had drawn people together across denominational lines and spiritual backgrounds. The pilgrimage reminded us that the Gospel of St John is not just a book to be studied, but a journey to be lived. And on that Saturday, under bright skies, and in the fields and footpaths between Wells and Walsingham, we truly lived it together.

# Come and sing on 22 November

**As part of the Diocese of East Anglia’s celebrations for the 2025 Year of Jubilee, a special Jubilee of Choirs will take place in St John’s Cathedral, Norwich, on Saturday 22 November 2025, the Feast of St Cecilia, patron saint of music.**

■ The event will coincide with an international gathering of choirs in St Peter’s Basilica, Rome, marking a joyful link between the Diocese and the wider Church.

Choirs and individual singers from across East Anglia are warmly invited to take part. The programme is designed to welcome participants of all abilities, offering an uplifting day of music and prayer.

**Programme for the day**

- 2.15pm–2.45pm – Registration
- 2.45pm–4.45pm – Rehearsal
- 5.00pm – Sung Vespers (Evening Prayer)
- 6.00pm – First Mass of the Feast of Christ the King

To help participants prepare, music will be sent out in advance, and an optional rehearsal will be held at St John’s Cathedral on Tuesday 18 November at 6.30pm.

The Cathedral Café will be open throughout the day, and the Cathedral Hall will be available for those bringing their own packed lunches or snacks.

Whether you are part of a choir or attending

as an individual singer, you are warmly encouraged to register by heading to the Music section of the diocesan website.

For further information, or if you have any questions, please contact David Grealy, Diocesan Director of Music, at: [david.grealy@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:david.grealy@rcdea.org.uk).

This promises to be a wonderful opportunity

ity for the Diocese to come together in song and prayer — do join us in making it a truly joyful celebration.



The choir at St John the Baptist Cathedral, Norwich.

## Communities unite to support historic church

**St Peter and All Souls RC Church in Peterborough received a welcome boost in its campaign to save its historic building, thanks to a vibrant fundraising event that brought parishioners and friends together in faith and fellowship.**

■ The church is currently undergoing a £1.5 million restoration project after major subsidence left the Grade II listed building in urgent need of repair. Built in 1896 by local Catholic families on the site of a former fishpond, the church’s foundations have become unstable. Its walls are leaning outwards, cracks are appearing in the structure, and scaffold buttresses now hold the building steady while constant monitoring takes place.

At the weekend, the parish hosted a special community cookout to raise funds for the project. The day began with Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter Collins, followed by the blessing of food lovingly prepared by parishioners. What followed was a joyful celebration of the parish’s cultural diversity, with music, entertainment and traditional dishes from eight different communities.

The food itself told the story of the parish’s richness: Filipino spring rolls, rice and beef stew; Portuguese churrasquinhos, Feijao de tropeiro, Empada, Esfirra and Brigadeiro; African Pilau, Mukimo, Jollof and Chicken, Tempura Prawns, meat pies and fried fish;

and English favourites such as Shepherd’s Pie and Blackberry and Apple Crumble. Parish children also delighted those gathered with song, adding to the sense of joy and togetherness.

The cookout comes after the church received significant encouragement last month in the form of a £218,000 grant from

The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This support marks the beginning of a larger effort to secure the future of St Peter and All Souls, ensuring that its legacy of worship, service and community can continue for generations to come.

Events such as these remind us that the Church is not only built from stone but from

living communities of faith. The people of St Peter and All Souls, in their unity and generosity, show us the strength of the Body of Christ at work today. As the restoration project moves forward, their witness offers hope that, together, we can preserve our sacred spaces while building up the living Church for tomorrow.



Bishop Peter Collins and parishioners in Peterborough.

# St George's prepares for Christmas outreach

**St George's Catholic Parish in Norwich is once again preparing to take part in Operation Christmas Child (OCC), the well-known outreach ministry run by Samaritan's Purse.**

■ Mark and Debra Watkins, who serve with the Church and Community Relations team for OCC, have been walking alongside local parishes as they support this mission. Mark, a long-time member of St George's, and his wife Debra, who also worship in an evangelical church, bring with them a breadth of experience from across the Christian denominations. "We are very fortunate to witness at first hand God at work across the county, in all the churches that we get to visit," Mark said. "We see the giving heart of these churches to be missional and share the Gospel in a variety of ways, all valued for what they give."

Last year, St George's joined with St Boniface and Our Lady Mother of God parishes in supporting OCC for the first time. With the encouragement of Fr Walter, the parish community has agreed to participate again this year. The Chat and Craft group has raised funds to purchase pre-printed shoeboxes, which will soon be distributed across the three churches.

After Mass on 17 August, parishioners

gathered to assemble the flat-packed shoeboxes, sharing in a joyful afternoon of tea, coffee, and fellowship. "What a joyful activity, making up the boxes," Mark reflected. "All ages joined in and it was evident the fun this was giving. It showed a parish pulling together, to have a heart to serve. It was lovely to hear one of the servers say, 'I have met people today that have not been in for coffee before.' We see in this ministry so many other benefits alongside the sending of shoeboxes to children and young people in the name of Jesus."

Both pre-printed and traditional shoeboxes can be used, though the latter need to be wrapped in a way that allows the lid to be removed easily before filling. The shoeboxes, often the first brightly-coloured gifts a child has ever received, are filled with small toys, school

supplies, and hygiene items – simple gifts that bring great joy.

This year's National Collection Week runs from 10–17 November, with drop-off points across Norfolk listed on the Samaritan's Purse website.

For more information about how your par-

ish, school, group or business can get involved with Operation Christmas Child, please contact Mark and Debra Watkins at: [markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com](mailto:markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com)

More details can also be found at: [www.samaritans-purse.org.uk](http://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk)



Fr Walter and parishioners at St George's.

## Notre Dame high school holds vigil

■ Notre Dame High School in Norwich marked the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 with a special prayer vigil on 11 July.

The school chapel was transformed into a place of profound stillness and beauty, illuminated by candlelight. Students lit candles of hope, each representing personal intentions entrusted to God. At the heart of the chapel stood a striking icon crucifix, generously lent by St John the Baptist Cathedral, which became a powerful focus for reflection, silent prayer, and adoration.

Around the chapel, the Stations of the Cross took on a renewed significance, each one reflecting a theme of hope for people in need across the world: for the homeless and those living in poverty, for victims of war and conflict, for the sick and vulnerable, and for the safeguarding of creation, that all may live as faithful stewards of God's gifts.

Throughout the vigil, pupils and staff wrote prayers of hope which they placed in a petition box. This collection of heartfelt intentions was later presented during the offertory procession at the school's end-of-term Mass on 18 July, a visible sign of the community's shared faith and desire for a more hopeful future for all.

The prayer vigil provided a precious opportunity to encounter God through silence, reflection, and communal prayer. It was a reminder of the strength that flows from prayer, described so beautifully by the late Pope Francis: "Prayer leads us forward in hope."

## Major boost for 'At Risk' church in Peterborough



**A multi-million-pound restoration project to save one of Peterborough's most historically significant churches has taken a vital step forward this week, with the announcement of support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.**

■ St Peter and All Souls, a Grade II listed Roman Catholic church in the heart of the city, has secured an initial grant of £218,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, marking a crucial milestone in its ambitious restoration plans.

Designed by renowned Victorian architect Leonard Stokes, the church was built between 1895 and 1904 in the Gothic Revival style. A striking city landmark and the spiritual home of a thriving parish community, the building has suffered from serious structural issues for decades. Shortly after construction, large cracks began to appear due to unstable ground conditions beneath the site, eventually placing the church on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register.

Detailed structural surveys commissioned by the parish revealed extensive subsidence, with engineers warning that without urgent intervention the building faced the very real threat of collapse. The full restoration and stabilisation works are expected to cost in excess of £2 million.

In response, the parish launched an ambitious programme of fundraising and community engagement events, temporarily shoring up the structure with external scaffolding while planning for the future.

To date, nearly a quarter of the required funds have been raised through local efforts.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund's support represents a major step forward. This development phase grant will fund the next phase of the project, enabling the appointment of specialist consultants to develop a detailed restoration plan and move the project towards delivery. Major works are hoped to begin in 2026.

Fr Karol Porczak, Parish Priest at St Peter and All Souls, said: "This church is not just a building – it is the heart of our community and a place where generations have come together in faith, celebration, and support. We are deeply thankful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and to all who have helped us reach this point. This is a moment of hope for us and for the city."

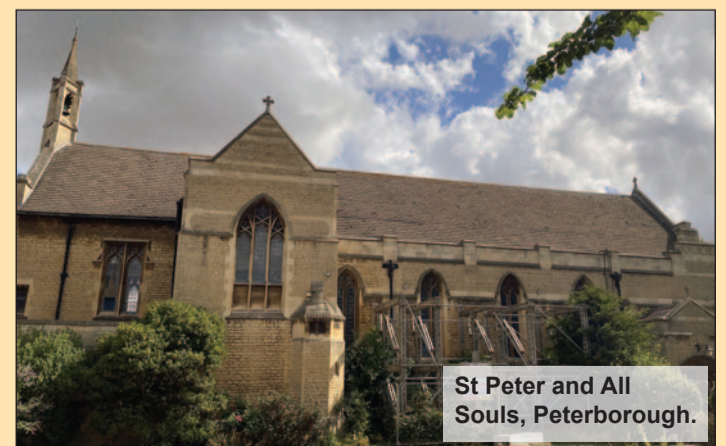
Matthew Champion, Heritage Officer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia, added: "St Peter and All Souls is a fantastic building in the heart of the city that represents a significant part of Peterborough's heritage, as well as acting as a centre for the vibrant local community. However, the building is suffering a number of very serious structural issues that pose a very real threat to its survival. The parish has worked tirelessly for many years to plan and raise funds to undertake

the much-needed repairs to this cherished building, and we are all very grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting us in our hour of need."

Angelo Cuenca, Parish Council Chairman said:

"The historic church of St. Peter and All Souls is a home of our faith as parishioners. We may have come from different nationalities, cultures and speak a range of languages but under this one roof we express a universal Catholic Faith in praise and prayer. We would love for future generations to have what we have, a place of worship. We are grateful for all the support from the Diocese of East Anglia, our parish community, and the National Lottery for working with us towards its fruition."

Since 1994, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded £9.5 billion, raised by National Lottery players, to over 53,000 heritage projects across the UK, making it the largest dedicated funder of heritage in the country.



St Peter and All Souls, Peterborough.

## Faith in the Home

### St Carlo Acutis

■ In this edition of Faith in the Home, Dr Antonia Braithwaite explores how St Carlo Acutis offers a powerful model of holiness for young people living in today's digital world.

In a world increasingly shaped by digital technology and shifting cultural values, young Catholics may often wonder how to live a life of holiness in the modern age. One teenager who offers a powerful answer to this question is St Carlo Acutis — a modern-day saint whose deep love for Jesus in the Eucharist, joyful faith, and skill with technology continue to inspire people across the globe.

Born in London in 1991 to Italian parents, Carlo spent most of his life in Italy. Though his life on earth lasted just 15 years, he made a lasting impact through the way he lived his faith with sincerity, simplicity, and joy. From an early age, Carlo demonstrated a remarkable spiritual maturity. After receiving his First Holy Communion at the age of seven, he began attending daily Mass, praying the Rosary, and spending time in Eucharistic adoration — all on his own initiative.

What made Carlo particularly relatable to his peers, however, was how naturally he integrated his faith with everyday teenage life. He loved football, spent time with friends, enjoyed video games (but limited himself to just one hour per week!), and had a special gift for computers. He taught himself to code and used his talents to design websites that shared the Gospel, most notably a digital catalogue of Eucharistic miracles from around the world. That website remains online — [www.miracolieucaristici.org](http://www.miracolieucaristici.org) — and continues to draw people closer to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Carlo once said, "To always be united with Jesus, this is my life's plan." He never shied away from living out his beliefs, even when it meant facing teasing or standing alone. He understood that technology could be a force for good, commenting, "The internet is not bad, but we must know how to use it correctly." This message rings especially true for today's teens, many of whom spend significant time online. Carlo's life shows that holiness isn't about rejecting the modern world, but about living virtuously within it.

In 2006, Carlo was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukaemia and died just days later. Before his death, he offered his suffering for the Pope and the Church. He was buried in Assisi, and today, pilgrims can visit his tomb, where his body is visible and dressed in jeans and trainers — a striking image of a modern teenager whose ordinary life was lived with extraordinary faith.

On 7 September 2025, Carlo Acutis was canonised by Pope Leo XIV, becoming the first millennial saint. His feast day

In the words of St Carlo himself: "Our goal must be the infinite, not the finite. The infinite is our homeland. Heaven has been waiting for us forever." is celebrated on 12 October.

May his example continue to light the way for young people in our diocese and beyond.

# Sacred Heart church hall opens door to accessibility

■ Earlier this year, the late Pope Francis I opened the Jubilee Holy Door in St Peter's, Rome — a tradition observed every 25 years to mark each Jubilee. Meanwhile, in North Walsham, a very different kind of door has been opened, one with a lasting impact on local parish life.

At the Sacred Heart Catholic Church hall, the town's Mayor, Cllr Bob Wright, officially opened a newly widened fire exit. The project was initiated by parishioner Cathy Watkins, who recognised the need for wheelchair users to be able to leave the building safely in the event of an emergency.

The work was made possible thanks to a £500 donation from the North Walsham Community Shop. After presenting the cheque, Cllr Wright said: "We are pleased to help fund the project by bring it up to fire

regulations and improve accessibility."

Cathy explained her motivation: "We felt that the exit was too narrow for wheelchair users so we acted upon it."

Unlike the Holy Door in Rome, which Pope

Leo XIV will close at the end of the Jubilee year, the Sacred Heart's widened exit will remain open for a lifetime — a practical sign of welcome and safety, especially for disabled members of the parish community.



Cathy Watkins first left receives a cheque for £500 from Cllr Bob Wright third left on behalf of the North Walsham Community Shop with the hall management committee looking on.

## It does not cost to smile



**In his regular column Fr Alvan Ibeh reflects on the power of a simple, sincere smile to uplift others and express inner joy, encouraging us to share this small but profound gift — even in the face of life's challenges.**

■ Just a few weeks ago, I went to celebrate Sunday evening Mass at one of our Mass centres. During the liturgy, I noticed a young lady who kept smiling — especially during my homily. After Mass, as usual, I stood by the door greeting those who had attended. After a few minutes, the young lady appeared, still smiling. She was with her father, and it turned out they were staying at a nearby holiday park and had decided to join us for worship that Sunday. It was, of course, their first time attending Mass in our church. They are Catholics.

When she came out and I reached out to shake her hand, she said something that

touched me — and inspired this month's article. It wasn't that I'd never heard it before, whether sincerely or not; what moved me was that it came from someone who had just met me for the very first time. As I shook her hand, she looked straight into my eyes and said, "You are such a happy person."

To be honest, I wasn't expecting that from a teenager. Many young people are often shy when it comes to speaking to a priest, especially one they've never met before. But the confidence this young lady showed was exceptional. It was clear she genuinely wanted to share how she felt. Her words made me pause and reflect.

I know I tend to smile a lot — it's something I'm used to, so I don't usually think much of it. But you can imagine the impact that simply smiling during Mass had on this young lady. She left not just feeling happy, but truly joyful. I was even tempted to ask if it was the first time she had seen a priest smile — it certainly felt like it, judging by her reaction. She looked quite amazed.

Do you know that just your smile — without saying a word — can make a real difference in someone's life? You don't need to be happy to smile. You don't need everything to be going perfectly in your life to offer one. There's a saying: "Smiling doesn't always mean you're happy — it means you're strong." It takes real strength to smile when it feels like your world is falling apart. That's why the prophet Nehemiah declared, "The joy of the Lord is my strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

In a world full of chaos, pain, and uncertainty, one simple but powerful act remains universally accessible: a smile. Smiling is more than just an emotional expression — it's a sign of God's joy flowing through us. As Proverbs 17:22 tells us, "A cheerful heart is

good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." For the Christian, a smile is often an outward sign of an inward joy rooted in faith and trust in God.

Though Jesus was known as a man of sorrows, He was also someone who welcomed children, dined with friends, and brought joy to weddings. His presence brought peace, and surely, in those moments of compassion and healing, He must have smiled. A genuine, heartfelt smile — not a forced or artificial one — can be a reflection of divine love.

Of course, life doesn't always make it easy to smile. Illness, loss, financial struggles, broken relationships — these can make joy feel distant. And yet, some of the most inspiring smiles come from those who choose hope over despair. Think of someone battling illness who still welcomes visitors with warmth. Or the exhausted mother, working long hours, yet smiling at her child at the end of the day. These smiles don't deny pain — they rise above it. They are signs of resilience, faith, and the remarkable strength of the human spirit.

In your family, your community, your school or workplace — and even on social media — wherever you find yourself, let your smile be a source of joy. In a time when negativity spreads so easily, be one of those who spreads warmth and encouragement, not with arguments or debates, but with a simple, sincere smile.

So — smile today. Smile often. Smile at strangers, at loved ones, and even at yourself in the mirror. It may just be the miracle someone else is waiting for.

Shalom.

Follow me on social media: TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram: @voiceofhopefamily And on YouTube: Fr Alvan Ibeh SMMM

# Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese



■ The parish of St Edmund King & Martyr in Bury St Edmunds marked the start of the season of creation with a Mass celebrated outside in the beauty of the presbytery garden on 5 September. With a first reading taken from the Book of Genesis, parish priest, Fr Sean Connolly, reminded parishioners of their unity with the rest of creation and the call to be thoughtful stewards, thinking not only of how actions impact the immediate environment but also how, on a larger scale, they can disadvantage some of the poorest people of the world. The congregation shared lunch together afterwards.

■ Three determined tricycle riders, Haley Dossor, Philip Hill and Rosemary Chilcott, from St Felix Catholic Church in Felixstowe took to the roads on 13 September in support of Suffolk's historic churches.

