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Fr Pat Cleary (centre) at his farewell gathering.

Thetford's beloved priest Fr Pat retires

The Parish of Thetford gathered on Friday, 5 September, to honour and celebrate the ministry of Fr Pat Cleary, who is retiring from full-time service, with a wonderful display of food, humour and friendship.

■ Fr Pat was greeted with a round of applause as he entered the parish hall and was completely taken aback by the generosity and goodwill of the parish community in providing such an array of food for the occasion. The evening was made even more special when Deacon Justin Cross read out a letter that Bishop Peter Collins had sent to the parish regarding Fr Pat's achievements during his ministry within the Diocese of East Anglia, and also highlighted the work that Fr

Pat undertook with the Missionary Society of St James in Peru and as assistant director of the society.

Bishop Peter remarked that in his file, those responsible for Fr Pat's training as a priest noted that he 'was a good type' and a man of 'excellent character,' 'trustworthy and a man with a resounding sense of humour.' At this point, the congregation cheered and clapped, as this was the very person standing before them.

Fr Pat was ordained as a deacon in June 1978 and to the priesthood in December of that year. He often mentions in his homilies that, during his time of ordination as a deacon and a priest, he saw three Popes — St Paul VI, John Paul I, and St John Paul II — as 1978 was the year of three Popes.

Fr Pat served in various parishes as an assistant priest, beginning in Cambridge at OLEM and St Mary's in Ipswich, where he was also the priest chaplain to St Alban's

Catholic High School, and later at the Cathedral. He was appointed Parish Priest of Thetford in 1985 for his first tenure. He left the diocese to join the Society of St James and returned in 1999, being appointed to Lowestoft, followed by St Neots in Cambridge, Wymondham, and finally being re-appointed to Thetford in 2022.

Among his parish duties across the diocese, Fr Pat was appointed to several roles, including rural dean in two deaneries, serving as vocations director, and being part of the diocesan safeguarding team. For many years, he also helped organise the annual children's pilgrimage to Walsingham, which started during his first tenure at Thetford. Bishop Alan recognised Fr Pat by making him a Canon of the Cathedral in 2020.

Following the letter, tributes were paid to Fr Pat by Paul Gilbert, who served as Chair of the Parish Council. He thanked him for his

■ **story continues on page two.**

Bishop blesses new Chapel and music block at St Bede's

■ The community of St Bede's Inter-Church School, Cambridge, gathered on Wednesday 17 September to celebrate the official blessing and dedication of its new Chapel and Music Block.

The special occasion was led by Bishop Peter Collins, Catholic Bishop of East Anglia, together with Bishop Sam Corley, Anglican Bishop of Stockport.

The visit was particularly poignant as Bishop Sam is himself a former pupil of St Bede's. He attended the school in the 1980s, arriving during its final year as a Catholic school and witnessing its transition to an Inter-Church School — a place where Catholic and Anglican traditions have flourished together ever since.

Representing the wider student body were Chaplaincy Representatives, Music GCSE students, Senior Students, and Media GCSE students, who recorded the event. Governors, staff, and other invited guests also joined the celebration. Both bishops joyfully blessed the new buildings — and those gathered within — with holy water, praying for God's presence and guidance in the learning and discipleship that will take place there.

The new Chapel will serve as a dedicated space for worship, assemblies, Masses, and other liturgies. It will also provide opportunities for creative expressions of faith, such as prayer spaces and reflective activities. Importantly, it offers a quiet sanctuary in the midst of a lively school environment, where students and staff alike can pause for prayer and contemplation.

The adjoining Music Block will further enrich the life of the school, supporting both academic music studies and the vibrant musical tradition that plays an important role in St Bede's worship and wider school life.

The new facilities are a sign of the school's ongoing mission to nurture faith, creativity, and community.





Fr Pat Cleary's final Mass in Thetford.

Thank you Fr Pat

■ **story continued from page one.** friendship, kindness and generosity towards the parishioners, and for his dedication in always supporting others, before inquiring if there could be a third tenure. Deacon Justin Cross also paid tribute to Fr Pat's dedication and commitment to serving the parish and diocese with joy.

Shortly afterwards, Fr Pat spoke about his ministry and how his time in Peru influenced his future work. During this speech, parishioners caught a further glimpse of the well-known humour that he has become famous for.

A priest will always hold a special fondness for their first and last parish; in this case, Thetford will always be meaningful in Fr Pat's ministry, and his tenure was extended by a year, surpassing the church's retirement age. The parishioners of Thetford will cherish and hold him in their hearts and souls for many years to come.

Fr Pat has always had a keen interest in sport, so there is no doubt that he will attend the cricket match in Nottingham and watch football in Ipswich. He is also looking forward to returning to Peru in January for a reunion with those he worked and ministered with in the Society of St James.

Fr Pat was not just a parish priest; he became a close friend to everyone. He also promised that he would return to the parish to celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2026.

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Diocese invites healthcare ethics input

■ **The Diocese of East Anglia invites doctors, nurses, pharmacists, researchers and other professionals to contribute to a new initiative exploring the Church's recent teaching on human dignity and the challenges of living the Catholic faith in healthcare and the life sciences.**

Following successful workshops at the Catholic chaplaincies of the Universities of Cambridge and East Anglia, participation is now open through a short online form, accessible via the QR code.

All reflections will be anonymised and will assist a forthcoming panel of expert ethicists and theologians in considering these lived challenges and how best to support those facing them. Beginning in spring 2026, the panel's insights will be shared through further workshops and published materials.

The project, "Human Dignity and Moral Decision-making in the Life Sciences", aims to apply the insights of *Dignitas Infinita* to the experiences of Catholics working in medicine, pharmacy and research — including students and recent graduates. The

Vatican document *Dignitas Infinita* teaches that "every human person possesses an infinite dignity,

inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter." The project will focus especially on issues such as abortion, end-of-life care, gender theory, surrogacy, euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Funding is provided by ECLAS (Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science) through a Scientists in Congregations

grant, supported by the John Templeton Foundation.

Human Dignity and Moral Decision-making in the Life Sciences Online Form



Young people celebrate success in competitions

The winners of this year's Easter Knights of St Columba (KSC) National Youth Competitions have been honoured with cash prizes, personal trophies, and certificates signed by Supreme Knight Bro Michael Akinrele.

■ Jissa Thankachan achieved outstanding success, winning second prize (£20) in the Painting Competition and first prize (£30 plus a trophy) in the Prayer Competition. Her achievement also secured a £200 award for St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Costessey, during her final term before moving on to high school.

Altar servers from the Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Lowestoft, also excelled, claiming three national first prizes (£30 and trophies) and two second prizes (£20) with their winning provincial entries in the Photography Competition.

In the Paschal Candle theme, Graciela da Costa triumphed in the 8–11 age group, while Kirushanya Yokithan won the 11–14 category. Noela da Costa achieved second place in the



Jissa Thankachan won second prize of £20 in the Painting Competition & first prize of £30 with a personal trophy.

14–18 group.

Meanwhile, in the '13th Station of the Cross' theme, Kirushanya secured first place in her group, with Noela taking second place in hers.

Enquiries about the forthcoming Christmas and Easter competitions, which have been publicised to schools and parishes across East Anglia, can be made to the KSC Provincial Youth Officer on 01502 563208 or by email at christopherbrooks631@gmail.com.



Graciela and Noela da Costa with their prizes.



Kirushanya's winning entry.

Healthcare professionals: Our Lady needs you

The Diocese of East Anglia, in partnership with the Catholic Association (CA), is inviting healthcare professionals and students to serve on the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes next summer (21-28 August 2026).

■ It's a unique opportunity to practise truly person-centred care for our Assisted Pilgrims (APs) — attending to their biopsychosocial and spiritual needs in a place of prayer, friendship and hope.

The CA Healthcare Team brings together doctors, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals, healthcare assistants and students. Most recently (2025) the team was led by Dr Adrian Hayter, Chief Medical Officer; Tina Quinn RN, Chief Nurse; and Christopher Daubney RMN, Deputy Chief Nurse — experienced clinicians who support and mentor volunteers throughout the week.

Working as one team with Handmaids and Brancardiers, we provide 24-hour care in the Accueil (Lourdes' dedicated facility for those who need extra support). A small number of experienced CA nurses also offer light-touch support in the hotels to APs who are largely self-caring.

We welcome volunteers from a wide range of clinical backgrounds. UK NMC-registered nurses from all fields are invited to apply, including those currently working in the NHS at Bands 2, 3 or 4 and recently retired colleagues; students are also welcome and will work under supervision. Doctors in training and consultants from diverse specialties, including General Practice, will join a multidisciplinary team to support Assistant Practitioners (APs) in the Accueil and the hotels, following and contributing to care plans for children and adults with needs that



Healthcare volunteers.

range from basic support to complex presentations, including co-morbid physical and mental health conditions. Allied Health Professionals — such as Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Paramedics and Pharmacists — play a vital part in promoting mobility, independence and overall wellbeing for our pilgrims. Healthcare students, including medical, nursing and paramedic students, are invited to undertake a tailored elective within a rich, supervised clinical environment, and lecturers and Practice Educators are equally welcome.

Across the week you can expect a broad spectrum of clinical presentations, with advance care plans in place for pilgrims with significant conditions. You will work closely with the French healthcare system, advocating for pilgrims and liaising with local pharmacies, primary care and hospital services when needed. First-time doctors will also spend time at the Lourdes Medical

Bureau, becoming part of an international community of pilgrimage clinicians. Above all, you will have the privilege of getting to know each person more deeply — attending not only to physical health but also to companionship, prayer and the rhythms of pilgrimage life.

Volunteers are asked to provide the usual professional registration and licensing details, along with a current DBS. Medical indemnity is usually offered pro bono by the defence organisations, as the work is undertaken in a voluntary "Good Samaritan" capacity.

For general Healthcare Team and student enquiries, email healthcare@catholicassociation.co.uk. For nursing information — including students, Bands 2-4 and retired nurses — email chief_nurse@catholicassociation.co.uk. For medical enquiries and expressions of interest, email cmo@catholicassociation.co.uk.



Community spirit shines at St Henry Morse, Diss

■ Parishioners at St Henry Morse RC Church have enjoyed a lively programme of social events in recent months, bringing people together in friendship while raising welcome funds for the parish and wider charities.

Most recently, a Macmillan Coffee Morning with tombola drew strong support and raised £412 for the cancer charity. Earlier in the summer, June and July saw a Strawberry Afternoon Tea and the annual parish barbecue, which contributed £200 and £700 respectively to church funds.

Behind the scenes, the parish Social Planning Group has been hard at work curating a thoughtful mix of activities that both strengthen community ties and support important initiatives. Their efforts have helped ensure each gathering offers a warm welcome, good conversation and refreshments — alongside tangible benefits for the parish and those in need.

The calendar continues to offer something for everyone, with a fun quiz on 11 October inviting parishioners and friends to test their general knowledge in a friendly, social atmosphere.

The parish extends sincere thanks to the many volunteers who plan, bake, set up, serve, tidy and run stalls — along with those who donate prizes and spread the word. Without their generosity of time and talent, none of this would be possible.

St Henry Morse's recent events are a heartening sign of a community flourishing in fellowship and service — living out faith in practical ways that make a difference locally and beyond.



Restoration of St Felix's Rosary window

■ A major £78,000 project to restore one of Felixstowe's most striking church treasures — the Rosary Window at St Felix Roman Catholic Church, Gainsborough Road — has been successfully completed, thanks largely to the generosity of parishioners.

The Grade II listed church's great east window, a centrepiece of the original design, has long been admired for its vivid stained glass depicting the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. Over more than a century, however, the coastal weather had taken its toll on both the delicate glass and the stone tracery, leaving the window in urgent need of repair.

Specialist conservators Devlin Plummer, based near Norwich, carefully removed and restored the panels before returning the newly conserved window to its rightful place.

The parish launched an imaginative fund-raising campaign inviting parishioners to "sponsor a mystery". Each of the window's fifteen panels represents one of the traditional mysteries of the Rosary — meditations on Christ's life, death and resurrection — and sponsors were encouraged to dedicate their chosen mystery for a personal

reason. Many shared moving testimonies about why a particular mystery resonated with their faith and life experience, creating a living spiritual link between the historic window and today's parish community.

Parish priest Fr Michael Smith expressed his gratitude and delight at the project's completion, paying tribute to his predecessor, Canon John Barnes, who launched the appeal before retiring.

"A very big thank-you to everyone who supported the renovation of our beautiful Rosary Window, which is now back in its rightful place," said Fr Smith. "This includes all those who so generously sponsored a mystery."

With the work now finished, the restored Rosary Window once again fills St Felix's sanctuary with colour and light — a visible reminder of the parish's heritage, devotion and shared generosity.



Restored Rosary window.

Men's retreat calls for bold evangelisation

“Matthew, Peter and Mark are no longer here – so it is up to us to evangelise.” With these words, Fr Alvan opened a recent retreat attended by around 25 men from parishes across the Diocese of East Anglia.

■ The weekend gathering focused on the call of every baptised Catholic to share the Good News of Christ. Fr Alvan reminded participants that the Church exists to evangelise and that each of us has both the responsibility and the authority to do so. Evangelisation may come through words, he said, but perhaps more powerfully through the witness of how we live our lives. Our task is to be people of hope, always ready to explain boldly the source of that hope.

At the heart of this mission is prayer and the sacraments. “Evangelisation begins on your knees,” Fr Alvan emphasised, encouraging the men to let the Holy Spirit be their “senior partner”. Genuine witness, he added, comes from remembering the wonders God has done for us and living with integrity so that our lives reflect the Gospel.

The retreat also highlighted the importance of knowing our faith. Catholics, Fr Alvan stressed, have a duty to be familiar with the teachings of the Church, particularly through the Catechism, so that they can explain not only what they believe but why. Evangelisation, he noted, often involves risk and stepping outside our comfort zones. While few of us are called to the ultimate sacrifice faced by some Christians across the world, we are all called to courage and boldness – encouraged by the assurance

that our Heavenly Father is always with us.

Fr Alvan pointed to the example of the early disciples, who often worked in pairs. Likewise, he encouraged participants to support one another in their endeavours. Though evangelisation can lead to indifference, rejection or hostility, the fruits will be great. “Jesus never said it would be easy,” he reminded the group, “but when we pass through the fire, we will not be burnt.”

The day's programme included Mass, lunch, prayer and discussion led by Fr Alvan together with Luc Wallace of the Ignite Team. Luc shared practical insights drawn from his experience of working with young people, while Damian from St Edmund's parish spoke with enthusiasm about their new parish initiative – a church stall at the Bury St Edmunds Market, which they hope to repeat throughout the year.

The retreat concluded with the Rosary, prayed while walking the Holy Mile – a fitting close to a day of faith, fellowship and encouragement.

Participants expressed deep appreciation for the retreat, with heartfelt thanks offered to Fr Alvan and the Ignite Team for their guidance and inspiration.



Fr Alvan and participants of the men's retreat.

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Pilgrimage unites communities

The annual Ipswich ecumenical pilgrimage walk took place on Sunday 14 September, drawing clergy and laity from both Anglican and Catholic parishes across the town. Jean M Johnson reports.

■ The pilgrimage traces the historic route once planned by Cardinal Wolsey, who was born in Ipswich. Beginning near the site of Wolsey's college, the walk concludes at Lady Lane, where the original Marian shrine once stood.

Despite the threat of heavy rain, participation remained strong, with seven clergy and many parishioners joining the walk. Along the way, pilgrims paused at five points — including outside the town hall — to pray a decade of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, accompanied by the relevant New Testament passages. Marian hymns were sung with joy, offering a moving witness of Christian faith in the heart of a busy town centre.

Traditionally, the pilgrimage concludes with a recommitment to the Guild at Lady Lane. This year, however, the final act of devotion took place at St Mary Elms church, where pilgrims found welcome shelter from

the rain. During a short service, all present were invited to light a candle before the beautiful Marian statue carved by a parishioner of St Pancras. This statue is a faithful copy of the one in Nettuno, Italy, which is believed to resemble Ipswich's own pre-Reformation image of Our Lady.

The day concluded with excellent refresh-

ments, time to meet friends from different churches, and an opportunity to hear about the ongoing programme of monthly talks.

The pilgrimage continues to be a cherished annual tradition — combining prayer, history, music and fellowship, while giving witness to Christian unity in Ipswich.



Marian statue carved by a parishioner of St Pancras.

Brighten Up day crowns year of generosity at Notre Dame Prep

Notre Dame Prep School marked its annual 'Brighten Up' day on 3 October 2025, rounding off a year of charitable action that saw the school community raise a combined £2,707 for CAFOD.

■ The total includes £2,441 from the Big Lent Walk earlier in the year and £266 from Brighten Up day itself, when pupils and staff embraced colour and creativity to support CAFOD's work with communities around the world.

Alongside fundraising, the school continued its local outreach by partnering with Norwich Foodbank, donating 12 crates of food to help families in the community.

The celebrations coincided with the school's Harvest Assembly, during which children gave thanks in prayer and marked the season through poetry, artwork and a lively sing-song.



Brighten Up day at Notre Dame Prep School.

Visit from Cambodian twinned Parish

■ Parishioners at Our Lady & St Walstan, Costessey, were delighted to receive an unexpected visitor at Sunday Mass on 28 September.

Rodrigo Barba, who lives and works in the parish of Taken in Cambodia – twinned with St Walstan's – joined the community while staying in Huntingdon for work. Although Spanish by birth, Rodrigo has spent several years in Cambodia, where

he has become the main point of contact between the two parishes.

Many parishioners knew Rodrigo only through emails, Christmas cards, and photographs, so it was a joy to meet him in person. His visit was brief, but warmly welcomed.

Rodrigo shared that his work will involve more travel in the future, and he hopes to return to Costessey for a longer stay on another occasion.



Pauline Stephenson (chair of the parish council), Nick Walmsley (director of music), Fr David Ward (parish priest) and Rodrigo Barba (left to right).

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The March for Life 2025

■ The 2025 March for Life took place in Westminster on Saturday 6 September. Laurette Burton from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Southwold was in attendance and reports.

The 2025 March for Life took place in Westminster on Saturday 6 September. The first UK March for Life was held in Birmingham in 2013, moving to London in 2018. Since then, the number of participants has grown considerably, with more than 10,000 people taking part this year.

The day began with Mass at 10.30am in a near-capacity Westminster Cathedral. The Chief Celebrant was the Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald of Clifton Diocese, who was joined in concelebration by six other bishops and sixteen priests, all of whom later took part in the March. At the end of Mass, Bishop Bosco read a message of support from the Holy Father, who offered an Apostolic Blessing to all present:

“Pope Leo prays that, through your common witness to the God-given dignity of every person, without exception, and to the tender Christ-like accompaniment of the seriously ill, all in society will be encouraged to defend rather than undermine a civilisation founded on authentic love and genuine compassion.”

Preparations for the annual March are made months in advance, but this year the organisers faced unexpected disruption. The banned group, Palestine Action, announced their intention to protest in Parliament Square, forcing last-minute changes. Their presence in Westminster from around 1pm delayed the start of the March and meant the usual route through Whitehall and Trafalgar Square had to be abandoned. Instead, marchers followed a shorter route along quieter roads, with less opportunity for the message to reach passers-by.

Traditionally, the final rally with music, speakers, and prayer has been held in Parliament Square. This year, however, the location had to be moved. Instead, speeches and testimonies were broadcast from a large screen on an adjacent street. In the end, this alternative setting gave the March greater visibility to people passing by.

Participants travelled from across the country. Families with young children marched alongside groups of students, parish communities, clergy, and many elderly supporters. All were united in their commitment to defending life and ending abortion in the UK. The March was, as always, a good-natured, peaceful, and powerful witness: some prayed the Rosary, others sang hymns, and many simply walked together in solidarity.

The afternoon’s speakers included Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, Carla Lockhart MP (Chair of the Pro-Life Parliamentary Group), and midwife Sarah Spencer, who described the discrimination she faces at work when expressing her opposition to abortion. A moving personal testimony was given by Josiah Presley from Korea, who survived an abortion attempt by his mother. Adopted by an American family, Josiah struggled with the truth of his past when he learned of it at the age of 13, but later dedicated his life to advocating for the unborn.

Flags, faith and fellowship for Migrants



Bishop Peter Collins delivers his Homily to a packed St Luke’s in Peterborough. Picture by Charlie Bohan-Hurst.

The vibrant diversity of the Catholic Church was joyfully celebrated on Saturday 4 October as Bishop Peter Collins presided over the Jubilee Mass for Migrants at St Luke’s Catholic Church, Peterborough. Charlie Bohan-Hurst reports.

■ The celebration brought together parishioners from across the Diocese of East Anglia, offering a powerful witness to the universal nature of the Church.

The Mass opened with a striking procession of flags from around the world, each one carried with reverence to symbolise unity in Christ and to highlight the extraordinary cultural diversity found not only in Peterborough but throughout the diocese. The colourful display set the tone for a liturgy marked by joyful song, heartfelt prayer, and deep solidarity.

Throughout the Mass, hymns and prayers were offered in a rich array of languages — including Hindi, Spanish, Polish, Shona, Igbo, Hausa, Bulgarian, Slovakian, Portuguese, Malayalam and Tetum — a reminder that though we may pray in many tongues, our worship rises together to one God.

The Scripture readings carried profound meaning for the occasion. The first reading, Isaiah 61:1–3a, 6a, 8b–9, proclaims the Lord’s anointing to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives and comfort to the broken-hearted — a message of hope to those who have left their homelands seeking

security, opportunity, and freedom from injustice. The Gospel reading from Luke 4:16–21, in which Jesus reads this same passage from Isaiah in the synagogue and declares its fulfilment in Himself, echoed the call for liberation and dignity for all people. Both readings resonated deeply with the lives of migrants and refugees, who often embody the struggle for justice, hope and belonging.

In his homily, Bishop Peter reflected on the importance of diversity in the Body of Christ. He spoke of how Jesus Christ upon the Cross

stands as the one true symbol that unites us all, transcending every language, culture and border. He encouraged all present to build communities rooted in love, welcome and faith.

At the front of the church stood the CAFOD-commissioned Jubilee icon, created by Ethiopian artist Mulugeta Araya. The image, inspired by the day’s Gospel, was chosen to reflect both Ethiopia’s strong tradition of iconography and the Jubilee’s focus on liberation for those enduring poverty, captivity,



ip: Jubilee Mass ts



oppression and inequality. Its presence added a profound spiritual depth to the celebration, inviting all to contemplate Christ’s mission to bring freedom and hope.

The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Peter Collins with the support of Fr Peter Wygnanski, and was organised locally by Fr Jeffrey Downie, parish priest of St Luke’s and dean. Both Bishop Peter and Fr Jeffrey expressed heartfelt thanks to everyone in the parish and across the diocese who had worked so generously to make the event a success.

Following the liturgy, the celebration con-

tinued in true community spirit as parishioners and visitors shared a variety of food and drinks, reflecting the global flavours of the Church. Laughter, conversation and friendship filled the church — a living sign of the unity and joy found in Christ.

The Jubilee Mass for Migrants was not only a celebration of cultural diversity but also a moving reminder that the Catholic Church is truly universal. Rooted in Scripture and centred on the Cross, it offered a powerful message of welcome, solidarity and hope for all who journey far from home yet find belonging in the family of God.

Bishop Peter’s engagements

OCTOBER

- 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 St Chad’s Cathedral, Birmingham at 16:00.
- Oct 27-28, Mon-Tues**
Bishop to attend EWARC (English and Welsh Anglican Roman Catholic Commission) Meeting in Northampton.

NOVEMBER

- Nov 1, Sat**
Bishop to attend a Caritas Festival to be held at St John Fisher High School, Peterborough starting with Mass at 09:30.
- Nov 2, Sat**
Bishop to celebrate All Saints Solemn Pontifical Mass at the Cathedral at 11:00.
- Nov 3, Mon**
Bishop to celebrate Mass for Commemoration of the Faithful Departed at the Cathedral at 17:30.
- Nov 4, Tues**
Bishop to attend Bishop’s Council Meeting in Poringland from 11:00.
- Nov 6, Thurs**
Bishop to attend Diocesan Liturgy Commission Meeting held in Poringland at 11:00.
- Nov 7, Fri**
Bishop to say Mass for the Headteachers Conference at 12:00 in Poringland.
- Nov 8, Sat**
Bishop to attend the Caritas Steering Committee Meeting held in Poringland at 11:00.
- Nov 9, Sun**
Bishop to attend the Norwich Civic Service of Remembrance from 10:15.
- Nov 9 – 13, Sun – Thurs**
Bishop to attend the Autumn 2025 Plenary Assembly of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.
- Nov 14, Fri**
Bishop to celebrate Mass for the Deputy Headteachers Conference in Poringland at 12:00.
- Nov 16, Sat**
Bishop to attend Bishop’s Council for Laity Meeting to be held in Newmarket with 10:00am Mass, 10:30 Coffee for 11:00 start in Newmarket.
- Nov 20, Thurs**
Bishop to attend the Diocesan Schools Service Commission Meeting at 10:45.
- Nov 22, Sat**
Bishop to attend the Commission for Dialogue and Unity Meetings in Poringland at 11:00.
- Nov 23, Sun**
Bishop to attend the Norfolk & Waveney Church Leaders Meeting at the St John the Baptist Cathedral, Norwich followed at 15:30 by Solemn Vespers for the Solemnity of Christ the King at the Cathedral with a Reception afterwards.
- Nov 26, Wed**
Bishop to Westminster with the Norfolk & Waveney Ecumenical Church Leaders to meet the MPs of the County.
- Nov 27, Thurs**
Bishop to attend the Safeguarding Commission Meeting held at the Cathedral at 10:00.
- Nov 28, Fri**
Bishop to the Walsingham Trustees Meeting.
- Nov 29, Sat**
Bishop to attend MFL Commission Meeting held in Poringland at 11:00.

Women's retreat

■ Women from across East Anglia are warmly invited to take part in a three-day Catholic retreat, "Beautiful," hosted by Transform Ministries UK this autumn. The retreat will run from Friday 14 to Sunday 16 November 2025 at the peaceful Clare Priory Retreat Centre, Sudbury.

Centred on the words from the Song of Songs – "You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" (4:7) – the retreat seeks to help women rediscover their true dignity and worth in the light of Christ's love.

"Our hearts are naturally drawn to beauty," say the organisers. "Yet while we may easily see beauty around us, we often struggle to recognise the beauty within ourselves. This retreat invites you to step back, rest in the presence of God, and allow Him to reveal His love for you – a love that heals, restores, and calls you beautiful."

Over the weekend, participants will be guided through inspiring talks, times of prayer ministry, praise and worship, and reflection on our identity as beloved daughters of God and brides of Christ.

There will be opportunities to receive the Sacraments, including Holy Mass and guided Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Outside of sessions, guests can enjoy the tranquillity of Clare Priory's grounds, take nature walks, spend time in silent prayer, or share fellowship with other women.

The retreat will be led by Fr Emmanuel Aresseril OSA, who will serve as Retreat Master and Chaplain. Though rooted in the Catholic faith and Sacramental life, the event is open to all women, regardless of denomination.

Dates & Times: Arrivals from 3pm Friday 14 November; retreat concludes Sunday 16 November around 2pm (after lunch).

Location: Clare Priory, Ashen Road, Clare, Sudbury CO10 8NX.

Cost: £170 – £220 (depending on accommodation choice). Full board, including meals and refreshments.

What to bring: Bible, notebook, pen, comfortable clothes (layers), walking shoes, and any necessary medication.

Booking: Advance booking is essential as places are limited. Sign up at transformministries.uk/events.

Contact: For further details, email info@transformministries.uk.

Free parking is available on site, and dietary requirements (including vegetarian and vegan options) can be accommodated when booking.

This is a special opportunity for women to step aside from daily life, encounter Christ's healing love, and rediscover their true beauty in Him.



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. Here he reports on what inspired him at this year's Churches Together in England (CTE) All-Ecumenical Representative Conference.

■ The All-Ecumenical Representatives Conference 2025, held at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick from 29 September to 1 October, gathered those working in local and regional ecumenism under the theme *Ecumenism: Journeying Together*. The programme wove worship, prayer, and reflection with sessions exploring pilgrimage, Orthodox church perspectives, human sexuality, interfaith dialogue, racial justice, and fresh approaches to ecumenical organising. Stories from across England and Wales showcased creative local initiatives, while opportunities for shared meals, prayer, and fellowship deepened connections.

What struck me most, and what I carried away from the conference, were not so much the explicit themes set out in the programme but two insights that arose in our conversations and reflections together. The first is that at the heart of Christian unity lies the idea of pilgrimage and journeying. The second is that God can be found in the 'grey' areas of our ecumenical life – those difficult and unresolved spaces where unity is not straightforward.

The image of pilgrimage is a profoundly Christian one. It is, for many of us, embedded in our spiritual imagination. As I set out in my last report about the Wells to Walsingham ecumenical pilgrimage, pilgrimage itself is never only about the destination. It is about the fellowship on the road, the prayers spoken along the way, the unexpected challenges, the learning and discovery, and the growth that comes through the very act of journeying together. At the conference, this understanding of pilgrimage emerged time and time again, not always explicitly, but through the way we spoke about our different Christian traditions and our shared hopes. It is in this sense that ecumenism is best seen as a form of pilgrim journey.

Many people talk about the ultimate goal of ecumenism being 'visible unity' – whatever that actually means in reality? I am not too sure how helpful this term now is. In my experience as County Ecumenical Officer I feel that a better goal is 'reconciled diversity' – which basically means we want to be one but not necessarily the same. For me, this is a much more realistic view. Reconciled diversity (something both Walter Kasper and the late dear Pope Francis championed) is about unity not uniformity. Here, the move towards Christian unity is not something with a clear finish line (uniformity), but an unfolding journey of togetherness towards Christ (unity) that calls for patience, humility, and trust.

We all know that typically pilgrims may come from different starting points but, eventually, their paths converge as they move toward a common horizon. This is true



Photo courtesy of Churches together in England.

of our different Christian traditions. We may differ in worship styles, theological emphasis, or ecclesiastical structures, but we walk the same road of discipleship to follow Christ who calls us to walk together as one.

Pilgrims must always be willing to adapt the pace of the journey. They know there will be detours, delays, and days when the road is hard. So too in our ecumenical journey. Progress can be slow, sometimes frustratingly so, yet the very act of walking together, of praying side by side, sharing stories, and sharing one another's burdens, is itself a witness to the unity Christ desires.

The second theme that emerged from the conference was, at least for me, perhaps more surprising – the realisation that God is often encountered in the 'grey' areas of our ecumenical life. These are the spaces where agreement is hard, where questions of theology, culture, or practice are messy and resist easy answers. This is not, of course, a new insight. The Christian mystical tradition has long spoken of encountering God in obscurity and uncertainty. The anonymous 14th-century author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* insisted: "By love He may be gotten and holden, but by thought never." In other words, God is not fully grasped by clarity or certainty, but by love that abides even when the way is unclear.

St John of the Cross likewise described the 'dark night of the soul' as a privileged place of divine encounter. He wrote: "In the dark night of the spirit, God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in the perfection of love." For John, the presence of messiness and the absence of clarity was not a sign of God's distance but of His most intimate presence, hidden yet transformative. Indeed, more recently, Rowan Williams reminded me that the work of Christian unity will often be found in the 'messy middle' where answers are incomplete, and disagreements remain. This is in line with Pope Francis who frequently pointed us to the margins and to life's ambiguities, saying God's grace works not only in neat solutions but in the unfinished and uncertain places of our common life.

In light of these thoughts, the 'grey' areas of ecumenical work take on a different meaning. Rather than seeing them as obstacles to unity, we can view them as places of grace, namely, difficult but fertile ground where God invites us to deeper listening, humility, and trust. The focus here shifts us from viewing the other person wrong or refusing to cooperate, to collaboration and being present with them as a mystery animated by divine breath. It means listening from a place of quiet attention, holding the other in love, and being soft enough to carry another's perspective without defensiveness.

In my role as County Ecumenical Officer, I

encounter these grey areas constantly. They appear in conversations about ministry, liturgy, sacraments, and in questions of authority and governance, as well as in contemporary debates about human sexuality, the right to life, or social justice. Sometimes these are not easy conversations. If we are not careful, they can end with tension unresolved. Yet the more I reflect, the more I believe that God is present precisely there, in the wrestling, the patience required, and the compassion we must extend to one another.

'Grey' areas force us to acknowledge our limitations. They strip us of the illusion that we can engineer unity by clever arguments or careful plans. They remind us that true unity is God's gift, not our achievement. In the very act of staying at the table together, of continuing to walk the journey even when we disagree, we provide witness to the faithfulness of Christ, who never abandons his Church.

When I place these two themes side by side, I see how they illuminate each other. Pilgrimage teaches us that unity is a journey, not a destination. The 'grey' reminds us that the journey is not along a straight and sunlit path, but it meanders through valleys of ambiguity and stretches of difficult terrain. I think here of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35) who were confused and uncertain, unable to see the meaning of recent events. Yet it was precisely in their confusion (in the 'grey' of their grief and doubt) that the risen Christ drew near and walked with them. They did not recognise him at first, but in the breaking of bread their eyes were opened. I see that story as a parable of ecumenism: Christ walks with us even when we are uncertain, and often it is only after journeying together, that we glimpse his presence.

Ecumenism, then, is not about erasing 'grey' areas or rushing to the premature goal of 'visible unity'. It is about walking patiently with others, trusting that the Spirit is at work even when progress seems slow. It is about daring to believe that God can be encountered not only in the light of agreement but in the shadows of difficulty. That is what struck me and what I take away from the conference – a renewed confidence that in travelling patiently and faithfully with others, even when the path is hard, we are already participating in the unity for which Christ prayed.

At the conference I was delighted to meet Fr Marc Homsey, a priest of the Diocese of Leeds, who has been appointed as our new Catholic National Ecumenical Officer for England and Wales. Congratulations to Fr Marc! I hope you can join me in praying for him in this challenging national role.

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.

This promises to be a wonderful opportunity

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.

Surprise guest at Cathedral heritage talk

The Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich, was delighted to once again to take part in the national Heritage Open Days in September.

■ With a full schedule lined up, volunteers and staff of the Cathedral geared up for a week of tours, talks and displays, one of which ended with a pleasant surprise.

Dr Richard Maguire, Heritage Officer, gave a talk on one of Norwich’s most mem-

orable events. This well attended talk entitled “Nothing fills a hole like a double decker – The Site of the Cathedral of St John the Baptist”, used the famous incident on the 3 March 1988 where the No. 26 double decker bus fell into a sinkhole only a few hundred yards from the Cathedral, as the basis for examining the history of the Cathedral site from the medieval period to the present day.

Dr Maguire was astonished to learn that the very bus driver of the no.26 double decker, Jim Pightling, had attended his talk. Mr Pightling was delighted to finally understand what caused the incident 36 years ago.

The Cathedral was very grateful for Mr Pightling’s attendance and the support of all those who attended the events during Heritage Open Days 2025.

Around 90 people attended

this talk over two sessions, and a further 50 took part in the exclusive Hidden Places Tour, which took in areas of the Cathedral site that are normally inaccessible to the public.



Dr Maguire delivering his talk at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist.



Dr Maguire and Mr Pightling.

Pupils inspire via Operation Christmas Child

Pupils at St Mary and St Peter's Primary School in Gorleston have once again shown compassion and generosity by supporting Operation Christmas Child, a project that delivers shoebox gifts to children in need around the world.

■ Operation Christmas Child (OCC) has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts — filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys — to children worldwide for three decades. Since 1990, the project has collected and delivered more than 200 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in over 160 countries and territories.

Mark and Debra Watkins, Church and Community Relations team members, were invited to meet the Mini Vinnies at St Mary and St Peter's Primary School in Gorleston. Last year the school took part in sending shoeboxes to children and young people across the world. Natasha Hardman, teacher and leader of this group, planned the visit so the children could learn more about OCC and what happened with their shoeboxes last year.

Mark had previously met with Helen Armstrong, Executive Head, to explain more

about the ministry of OCC. Mark said, "It has been a delight to meet with this school, pray and see how OCC could also benefit the school by using our resources and showing an additional way to bring out the mission heart in the children."

Mark and Debra received a very warm welcome from all the staff and children. The pupils spoke excitedly about the shoeboxes they filled last year and fully engaged in discussions about what it might be like for children in other countries. They reflected on how a simple shoebox can bring joy to a child who feels alone and without hope. The children recognised that, unlike some children across the world, they do not have to share pencils and have access to books and learning opportunities. It was clear that Natasha and the children showed compassion in their responses and enthusiasm to help again this year.

Debra said, "What a lovely way to start our visit — the children all saying their prayer, the Mini Vinnies prayer. At the heart of this prayer, we heard the children say,



Pupils at St Mary and St Peter's Primary School in Gorleston.

'Let us use our gifts and talents to show love and concern for others.' Whilst we come to give and support those who partner with us, we are constantly blessed by what we hear and see. Today was no exception. With great delight we gave the children certificates of thanks for their help, which they proudly held, as shown above."

Mark and Debra wish to express their thanks to St Mary and St Peter's for their support of Operation Christmas Child.

Those interested in more information about Operation Christmas Child for their church, school, group or business can contact Mark and Debra Watkins at markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com.

Heritage open days in Beccles

■ St Benet's, Beccles opened up again this year and generated a lot of interest in the local community. Mike Ellwood reports.

The highlight was an exhibition of the plans for the church dating from 1897-1902 along with a display of photographs of the construction of the nave around 1900 and the interior of the temporary church built in 1881, which had never been seen in public before.

As part of the week celebrating architecture there was a visit by 7 of the great grandchildren of the architect, Francis Banham, who also designed St Felix, Felixstowe, along with the current occupants of his house in Beccles and another designed by him. Some of them had travelled from as far as Milton Keynes and London for the occasion, turning it into a family reunion.

Bringing together descendants, neighbours, and curious visitors, the reopening week became more than a look back. The previously unseen images and carefully preserved plans stirred pride and fresh interest, while the Banham family's presence added a human thread that linked past craftsmanship to present care.

Photograph: The great grandchildren and partners with Fr Simon and Mike Ellwood from St Benet's behind the family graves.



Stella Maris: Remember the hidden heroes of the sea

Seafarers and fishers live and work at the periphery of society, spending days or months at sea.

■ Their lives are hidden and yet they play a crucial role in bringing us so much of the food, fuel and goods we consume. From clothing to digital devices, to bananas and tea, almost 90% of goods are transported on cargo ships crewed by thousands of seafarers from all over the world.

Seafarers and fishers make enormous sacrifices just to bring us the basic things in life that we enjoy. Their work is tough, and the shifts can be gruelling — six hours on, six hours off, day after day. They have to eat, sleep, wash and speak with loved ones in a six-hour window before they're back on shift.

Most shipping companies provide for crew welfare, but working at sea has its own unique challenges. Life on board can be lonely and isolating, shore leave is becoming less frequent, and sailing in dangerous shipping routes is part and parcel of the job.

Seafarers and fishers also miss their family back home. They miss out on important moments that many of us take for granted — births, graduations, celebrations, funerals.

But their sacrifices and hardships don't go unrecognised, and seafarers and fishers are not forgotten. Stella Maris' chaplains and volunteer ship visitors are present in ports around the UK to provide friendship, care, practical and spiritual support.

In Ipswich, a major grain port located in East Anglia, Stella Maris regional port chaplain Julian Wong received a call from a seafarer on a ship requesting Holy Communion for the crew. Julian visited the ship, prayed with the crew and distributed Communion. He also gave out SIM cards so that the crew could keep in touch with their family back home.

On another occasion, Julian transported some crew members from another ship from Ipswich port to St Mary's Church in Ipswich town for Mass. After Mass the men got a special blessing from parish priest Fr Jude Belnas. Julian then took them for

lunch before taking them back to their ship.

The care shown by Julian towards these seafarers may have only been small gestures, but they meant a lot to them. It showed them that they are not forgotten and that their sacrifices are recognised. It made them feel visible.

As we celebrate the season of harvest, of abundance, please remember the hidden heroes of the sea and say a prayer for them. Your kindness and support mean a lot to them.

More information about Stella Maris' work can be found at www.stellamaris.org.uk



Julian with the boat crew after receiving their blessing.

Faith in the Home

Praying for the Holy Souls in November

■ In this Faith in the Home article, Dr Antonia Braithwaite discusses how the whole of November is traditionally devoted to praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, encouraging families to offer Masses, prayers, sacrifices and cemetery visits as works of mercy for the dead.

In the Church calendar, 2 November is celebrated as the feast of All Souls, but the entirety of November is traditionally dedicated to the Holy Souls; that is, it is a month in which we specially remember and pray for all the souls in Purgatory.

As humans we are a body-soul hybrid, and at death our bodies die but our souls live on. While there is no way of knowing for definite whether our deceased loved ones are in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory, we pray for them anyway. It is wiser to assume they are in Purgatory and therefore we will pray for them, rather than assuming that they are already in Heaven, and not to pray for them.

The “holy souls in Purgatory” are the souls of people who have died in God’s grace but still need to be purified before entering heaven.

Just like we help our friends and family here on earth, we can help the souls in purgatory by offering our prayers, sacrifices, and Masses for them. The Church calls this one of the spiritual works of mercy — to pray for both the living and the dead.

In the month of November families can visit a cemetery and pray for the dead, create a list of loved ones who have died, display photos of loved one, light candles for them at Church, dedicate the rosary for them, have masses said for them and pray the traditional Requiem Prayer for the dead:

“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”



Annual gathering of Deacons marks a joyful day

■ The Diocese of East Anglia came together on Saturday 27 September for the Annual Gathering of Deacons, their wives, and students in formation for the diaconate, held at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich.

The day was centred on the celebration of Holy Mass at 11.30am, during which Bishop Peter Collins presided and conferred the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte upon those preparing for ordination to the permanent diaconate. The liturgy was marked by joy and reverence, as families, clergy, and parishioners gathered to pray for those called to this ministry of service.

In his homily, Bishop Peter reflected on the call to serve Christ in humility and faithfulness, encouraging the candidates to deepen their love of Scripture and the Eucharist as they continue their journey towards ordination. He also thanked the deacons already serving across the diocese, together with their wives, for their generous witness and dedication.

Following the Mass, there was an

opportunity for fellowship and sharing among the deacons, their families, and students in formation, strengthening the bonds of prayer and mutual support within the diocesan community.

The annual gathering stands as a reminder of the diaconate’s vital role in the life of the Church — a ministry of charity, word, and liturgy that brings Christ’s love to those most in need.



Bishop Peter Collins with Deacons, both ordained and in formation. Photograph by Andrea Cope.

What happens when God closes one door?



In his regular column Fr Alvan Ibeh discusses how when God closes a door, it is never to leave us hopeless, but to redirect us towards a greater plan we cannot yet see.

■ “God is faithful; thank you so much for everything, Father Alvan. Be sure to use my story to encourage someone! Thanks so much.”

This was the message I received from a young woman who was once part of my parish community.

Her testimony has deepened my conviction that there is power in prayer, and that when God closes a door, He always opens another — often a better one. With her permission, I now share her story.

“Mirian” (not her real name) was a migrant living in the UK. She lost her job and went for months without work. With a young son to care for, bills to pay, and a relationship under strain, her mental health also began to suffer. I often wondered how she managed to keep going. The answer, I believe, was her faith. Even at her lowest point, when she felt tempted to give up on life, she held on, encouraged by prayer and the assurance that God had not abandoned her.

Yet things grew worse. After much waiting and disappointment, she received a letter from the Home Office demanding that she either find work or leave the country. Distraught, she phoned me straightaway. We prayed together, but Mirian decided to go further. She committed herself to three days of prayer and fasting without food, from 30 July to 1 August, and asked me to accompany her spiritually in this effort.

I encouraged her, reminding her that God would not allow her tears to be wasted. She remained steadfast, even though she only had nine days left to secure a job and stay in the UK. In her own words: “If God doesn’t answer my prayers the way I have prayed for, you will see us come and say goodbye before we leave the country. But we are still hoping for a miracle.”

I reassured her: “Never give up. I have seen God act at the last hour before. Let His will be done.”

On 15 August, Mirian sent me a message: “Hello Father Alvan, you said it, Father. God bless you.” She soon called to explain that, although her prayer had not been answered as she expected, God had answered in a different way. She would not be staying in the UK after all — she was moving to Canada, where she has since been reunited with her mother, thanks to support from family and friends.

Mirian had prayed for a new job in Britain. Instead, God was saying: “No, my daughter. I have a better plan. I will close this door, but another — far greater — will open.”

So, what about you? Are you ready to give up because you think a door has closed? Remember: God does not close a door to leave us stranded or hopeless. He closes doors to redirect us towards something greater, something we cannot yet see.

The Lord, who knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), sees what lies beyond every doorway. When a door closes, it is an invitation to trust Him more deeply, to shift our gaze from what we think we have lost to what He is preparing for us. Closed doors teach patience, strengthen faith, and

So, when you encounter a closed door, do not despair. Pray. Wait. Trust. For the One who holds the keys of David (Revelation 3:7) — who opens and no one can shut, and shuts and no one can open — is guiding your steps with love, refine character.

A closed door is never the end of the story. It is simply the start of a new chapter; a new beginning.

Shalom.

Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese



■ Flags adorn St Luke's in Peterborough for the Jubilee Mass for Migrants.

■ Mark and Debra Watkins, Church and Community Relations team members, were invited to meet the Mini Vinnies at St Mary and St Peter's Primary School in Gorleston.

