

OUR LADY OF RANSOM

11th September 2022 24th Sunday Year Psalter Week 4



Calling all parents. Would a respectable manual on good parenting encourage giving fabulous and extravagant gifts to your teenage child who has just returned home having blown thousands of pounds on parties, wild living, and, on top of it all, wanting you dead? Might a good parenting manual advise a little differently...!? Should the child not be punished? Reprimanded? Is that not logical? And fair?

This is the famous story we hear today. A boy mocks his father, wastes huge amounts of money on a life of lechery, but then is lavishly rewarded. No sense! Unfair! Illogical. But God's grace is *not* fair, not logical. Forgiveness and grace assault our very sense of fairness and logic and are never open to reason or intellect. Parables like the Prodigal Son are not meant to make rational sense, they are meant to agitate us, challenge our most basic assumptions and beliefs about ourselves, others and God.

Forgiveness is a final assault on human logic. God's forgiveness and love are disturbing, wild, ferocious, and beyond all human imagining. Being open to that truth means we must let go of our judgements and criticisms about people and reality. *Then we start to forgive and find freedom ourselves.* It's a call to stop keeping score of everyone around us – even those we dislike most for whatever reason.

Our logical minds often get stuck in “rights”, “entitlements” and “merits” - what we think ‘we’ and ‘they’ deserve. This kind of keeping score prevents us from moving into God's generosity and love - the stuff of the older brother in the story. “It's not fair! How dare you”! So the older brother is left outside the party, the eternal party - heaven. But the Father pleads with him (us) to come in. But these judgements and criticisms always prevent us from entering and enjoying this eternal party – heaven.

The compassionate father (God) runs out to meet us where we are, not where we should, ought, or must be – but where we are right here right now and just loves and forgives us with wild abandon, a forgiveness beyond all imagining. Can we be open to this like the younger son and find profound joy? That is good news – Gospel. Or like the older son, do we keep score, criticise, judge, and remain bitter, which leaves us, by our own choices, outside God's eternal party? Jesus calls us to look more deeply, more closely at ourselves. Which son might we more resemble?

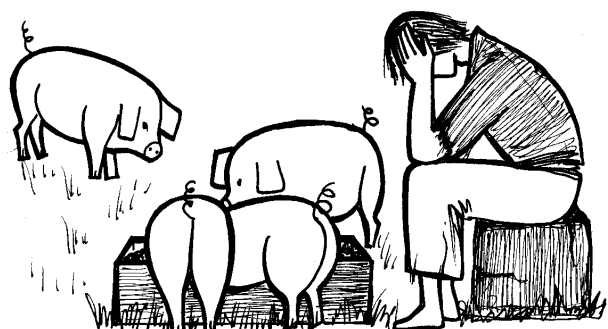
God Bless, Fr. Paul

First Reading: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalm: 50(51):3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32



MASS INTENTIONS	
Saturday 10th September	
5.30pm Mass	Tim Rooke RIP (Anniversary) (Barry Rooke)
Sunday 11th September	
8.00am Mass	Safa Ashkuri RIP (Maureen Ashkuri)
10.00am Mass	Parish Community
Monday 12th September	
7.15pm	Thomas Holmes RIP
Tuesday 13th September	
St John Chrysostom	
10.00am	Eugene Madden RIP (Eileen McSweeney)
Wednesday 14th September	
Exaltation (Triumph) of the Holy Cross	
8.00am	Teresa Cracknell RIP (Shelagh Mesher)
Thursday 15th September	
Our Lady of Sorrows	
Fr Martin Joyce Ints	
Friday 16th September	
Ss. Cornelius and Cyprian	
No Mass or Eucharistic Service.	
Saturday 17th September	
5.30pm Mass	Doreen Derrick RIP (Gwyn Derrick)
Sunday 18th September	
Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time	
8.00am Mass	Parish Community
10.00am Mass	Cecilia Macaulay Ints

All Masses and Church Services are now Live Streamed.

***To take part please go to <https://stream.seccomgroup.com/channel/olor>
Masses can be watched "live" or later as a recording.***

<p>PARISH PRIEST Father Paul Fox 50 London Hill, Rayleigh Essex SS6 7HP 01268 38.24.99 www.olorchurch.org email: rayleigh@dioceseofbrentwood.org</p>	<p><u>Public Mass times:</u> Saturdays 5.30pm Sundays 8am & 10.00am Mondays 7.15pm Wednesdays 10.00am Fridays 10.00am <i>Please be aware - Times and days of weekday Masses are subject to change.</i></p>
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Sacrament of Reconciliation: 4.30pm – 5pm Saturday evenings (not in the confessional box).

Our Parish is part of The Brentwood Diocesan Trust, Registered Charity Number 234092



ANNIVERSARIES †

Kindly pray for Anthony Rickard, Terence Foreman, Dennis Whitewick, and Doreen Derrick whose anniversaries occur about this time.

May they rest in peace.

NEWSLETTER ITEMS:

Please ensure all items for the parish newsletter are submitted to the office by **11am on Thursdays** at the latest.

Please see the Bishop's letter at the back of this newsletter.

Please note: the Bethany Room lock has changed in order to make it easier to open the door. Please see Fr. Paul for a new key. A new key will only be given if considered needed. This new lock will be put on a new door when it is installed. (Apologies in advance if any inconvenience has been caused by this change to any of our groups).

Please note: For church insurance purposes and our records, church keys must NEVER be lent out under any circumstances, never given to another person to use and never cut, all unless express permission is given from the Parish Office. Thank you.

Next Week's Newsletter: Please note that next weekend's newsletter will be issued slightly later than normal; Friday evening or Saturday morning instead.



Kids' Bulletin

A children's version of the gospel is available weekly. This can be accessed on the following website: www.thekidsbulletin.com and is aimed at primary school children. It can be downloaded and printed out.

Sunday Coffee Mornings

If you are interested in hosting a Coffee Morning after 10am Sunday Masses to raise money for a charity of your choice, please contact the parish office by 11am on Thursdays.



Sunday Coffee Mornings

£30.86 was collected at last Sunday's coffee morning.

£30.00 will be donated to CAFOD, with the 86p remaining in the bank account to build up the world disaster fund again.

Donations received from this Sunday's coffee morning will go towards CAFOD.



Sunday 18th September



The parish garden (at the back of the church) will be open after 10am Mass on **Sunday 18 September** for the children during the coffee morning. Come and meet your friends and make some new ones. Please bring some spare change for cakes for the ushers' fundraising.

Wednesday Coffee Morning – 14th September

No coffee morning after mass this Wednesday due to mass being at the earlier time of 8am. Coffee mornings will resume the following week, 21st September.

St. Bernadette's Relics are coming to Britain. Have a look at this video. [Be part of the St Bernadette Relic Tour this autumn - Brentwood Diocese \(dioceseofbrentwood.net\)](#)

The relics will be visiting Brentwood Cathedral on 16/17 October and Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead on 18 October. Those wishing to attend should register through the tour website in order to manage numbers safely: (<https://stbernadette.org.uk>) [Registration - St Bernadette](#)

The Parish Choir will start up again after the summer break. We intend to sing at the



10am Sunday Mass twice a month (normally 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month) and have a **choir practice at 7.30pm** on the Thursday prior to the Sunday we are singing. Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Bases all needed. No previous experience needed but it would be helpful. Why not come along and give it a try? The practice will be only an hour long and will be in the

organ loft. Please consider joining us, as we are greatly depleted in number since the pandemic. Just contact Isobel Kennedy 01702 230578.

SHARING THE CHURCH'S STORY CONFERENCE aims to bring people together for an experience of profound personal renewal and to be equipped for mission. With world-class speakers, including Bishop Robert Barron, panels, and moments of powerful prayer and worship, we are excited for what God will do through this event. The Conference takes place on Saturday 17th September in London, to find out more about this important conference and to book go to www.sharingthechurchsstory.com

Retrouvaille: A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages

Help Your Marriage – Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage.

Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about 'Retrouvaille' or to register for the next programme commencing with a Virtual weekend on 13 - 16 October 2022 or a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 24 - 26 February 2023, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

Adventure in Faith – journey towards World Youth Day, Porto and Lisbon, July 26th – August 9th 2023

This amazing opportunity is for anyone who will be aged 17 – 27 in August 2023. Find out more at <https://bcys.net/events/wyd23/>. Express your interest with an email to WYD@dioceseofbrentwood.org.

The Universe – Catholic Paper:

The Universe Catholic Weekly is thrilled to announce that we have launched our new online newspaper with the full support of our first subscriber none other than His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols. Order your Digital 4 weeks FREE trial supply by calling Michelle on 0743 661 7650 or email: michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

THINKING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC FAITH? ...

The next RCIA meeting will be **Monday 19th September** in the Bethany Room (no meetings in August).

If you are interested in joining the programme, please contact Fr. Paul for more details. (01268 382499 / rayleigh@dioceseofbrentwood.org)



THE PARABLES OF LUKE

A Gidea Park Faith Talk on the Parables of Luke will be broadcast by live stream on Wednesday 21st September from 7 pm. Our distinguished speaker is Deacon Sean Loone, well-known in the diocese of Birmingham for his work in education and in evangelisation. Sean will speak about the parables in the Gospel of Luke, which we shall be hearing at Sunday Mass as we continue through Year C of the lectionary. To listen to the presentation live simply go to www.whatgoodnews.org. There is no charge and no booking is needed. The recording of the talk will be available on the same website in due course.

New Evangelisation Course

Would you be interested in studying evangelisation - the theory and practice of how to share the Catholic faith with people who are not yet followers of Jesus? 10 hours of teaching is being offered by Sion Catholic Community for Evangelism, leading practitioners in this field since 1985. You can access the module by attending two in-person days at Brentwood, Essex, on Saturday 10 September and Saturday 12 November. Or you can access the same teaching through five Zoom sessions on Thursday evenings 3 November to 1 December inclusive. For more information go to www.sioncommunity.org.uk/ccrs/

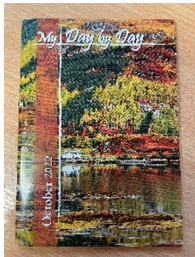
Hong Kong Catholic Community Mass in London

"Hong Kong Catholic Community in London: Archbishop Savio HON Tai-Fai, the Apostolic Nuncio to Greece and Fr. Lawrence LEE, the Chancellor of the Diocese of Hong Kong will be celebrating Sunday Holy Mass (2:00 PM, 18th Sep) and hosting talks (3:30 PM, 17th and 18th Sep) in St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 21A Soho Square, London (W1D 4NR). For details,

please look for the event poster on the webpage of diocese news or contact the community at: hkrclon@gmail.com

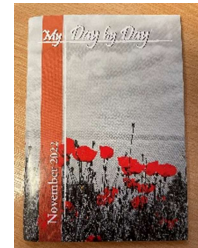
STUDY DAY – ST CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

Charles de Foucauld was one of ten new saints canonized by Pope Francis in May 2022. His journey in faith, preaching the Gospel to all with his life, ended with his death in his hermitage in the Sahara in 1916. Little Sister Kathleen McKee will lead a study day on 'St Charles de Foucauld – universal brother' on Saturday 8th October from 11.00 to 13.00 BST. You may attend this free event in person at Gidea Park Catholic Church – RM2 6DH – from 11 am (Coffee available at 10.30). Please book your place by email to gideapark@dioceseofbrentwood.org The event is also live-streamed. Go to www.whatgoodnews.org on the day. No booking necessary. A recording will be made available after the event on www.whatgoodnews.org



My Day by Day Books

My Day by Day Books for October and November are available to purchase at the back of church.



Stallholders needed for Christmas Craft & Gift Fair

The Brentwood Catholic Children's Society are seeking stallholders for their Christmas Craft and Gift Fair being held at The Mill Hall Arts & Events Centre, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED on Sunday 6th November from 10.30-4pm.

Pitches are **£30**.

For further information please contact Damian: ddillon@bccs.org.uk /07912 308000

PUBLIC MASSES

Please do not come if you have symptoms, sniffles, sneezes, coughs, immunity issues etc. Use common sense and think of others.

Social Distance should be maintained as much as possible – again – out of mutual respect. Please continue to follow only the directions of the Welcomers. Holy Communion only to be received on the hand for added protection. The church will continue to be both cleansed and sanitised regularly.

Wash your hands, cover your face, make space.



FACE COVERINGS:

Although the legal requirement to wear a face covering no longer applies, the government suggests you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces. *We strongly encourage parishioners to continue wearing a face covering/mask while moving around the Church. While you are in your place in Church, please feel free to remove your face covering if you so wish.*

OFFERTORY CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to all who continue to support our parish financially.

DONATIONS USING QR CODES

To avoid having too much cash lying around, it is now possible to make donations in Church using your mobile phone and QR codes.

There are notices in the porch for contributions to the parish



ONLINE DONATIONS

To make a donation online go to <https://stream.seccomgroup.com/donations/olor>

GIFT AID / ENVELOPES. If you are a taxpayer and donate to the parish online, it's worth a reminder that we could get **an extra 25%** on your donations if you sign up to the Gift Aid scheme.



Please contact Sandra our Gift Aid Co-ordinator

(olorgiftaid@hotmail.com / 01268 772998) if you have any questions. Thank you.

Beginning Experience Weekend:

If you have suffered a divorce, separation or the death of your partner, a residential weekend to help you to heal will be held from 14th to 16th October 2022 at the Sion Community, Brentwood, Essex. If you would like more details, please ring Freda 01322838415 or Maura 07795-498445 or email besouthofengland@gmail.com

Diocesan Youth Events - Dates for Your Diary!

Youth Mass returns on the first Thursday of each month, beginning from 6pm with a variety of inspiring speakers, workshops, social events, celebrations, visiting clergy and of course.... Pizza!!! Mass will then begin at 7:30pm, and we welcome absolutely anyone to join us. This coming Thursday 1st September will be a reunion for all those who came to Lourdes, and of course all friends and young people in the BCYS as we celebrate the start of the new school year.

On Thursday 6th October we will begin with a talk on vocations within the church, hearing from Fr Paschal himself, as well young married couples from the BCYS and more!

Visit of St Bernadette Relics at Brentwood Cathedral on Sunday 16th October, where we invite any young people from around the Diocese to join us for a special Youth Mass at 6:30pm on the Sunday evening in the presence of the relics.

Youth Gather will be back at Mersea Island for the first time in 3 years for a weekend of exhilarating outdoor activities (archery, climbing, high ropes and more!), youth led Mass and prayer, workshops from the SVP and a talk from the incredibly inspiring Margaret and Barry Mizen whose young son Jimmy was killed the day after his 16th Birthday. Their powerful story of faith and forgiveness is not one to miss!

Places are limited to just 100, so make sure to book in soon at www.bcys.net/events before you miss out!

World Youth Sunday is a unique opportunity to celebrate the role and significance of young people in the Catholic Church in England and Wales along with the global Church. Please save this date, as we are working to have young people speak in each Parish around the Diocese and hope that we can count on you to guide and support them over this weekend.

Flame takes place at Wembley Arena on Saturday 4th March, and we have a limited number of BCYS tickets available at the earlybird price if you book before October! The day is always filled with amazing speakers, music, workshops and so much more! If you have never taken young people to Flame before, there is a lot more info on the website:

<https://cymfed.org.uk/flame/> But do make your bookings with the BCYS (email gabriellafusi@dioceseofbrentwood.org)

World Youth Day with the BCYS will take us to Porto and Lisbon for an unforgettable fortnight, with about two million young people from across the world, together with the Pope. Part of the trip will involve staying with Portuguese families, and there will also be walking, crowds, heat, joy, energy, vibrancy and fun, all wrapped in a vision of the young Church as you have never seen it before. We'll preparing for it from October 2022, with in-person and online sessions to help everyone get the very best from World Youth Day, and to

offer fresh insights into faith, and leadership skills, to everyone who is travelling. We have just 20 places remaining, open to anyone who will be 17-27 in August 2023. To express your interest email wyd@dioceseofbrentwood.org today, and save the date of 14th September for the opening meeting.

Lourdes is always the highlight of our BCYS calendar and, despite just returning, we are already planning for our 2023 pilgrimage! The applications will open from 24th October and you can apply online where you will find all the details of next Summer's trip. Don't forget to also check our social media for plenty of photos, videos and more from this year!

PLUS For Catechists and those working with young people:

Catechist Training and Resources Day will take place on Saturday 5th November, at Sacred Heart of Mary School in Upminster – David Wells will be joining us as keynote speaker and we are working to secure more fantastic workshop providers, organisations and speakers so save the date!!!

Rite of Acceptance for Confirmation will take place on Good Shepherd Sunday on Sunday 30th April 2023.

English Martyrs Summer Fete

Saturday 17th September 2022, 12.30pm – 4.30pm ALL WELCOME

Bring along your friends and family for a fun day....

Lots of craft stalls, games, face painting & refreshments.

100% of monies raised going to charities affiliated with the church.

English Martyrs Catholic Church, 240 Alma Avenue, Hornchurch, RM12 6BJ



School Vacancies:

All Brentwood Diocesan Catholic School Vacancies (for which the Education Services Department are aware) are posted on the Diocesan website.

Please use this link address to view current vacancies.

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/vacancies/school-vacancies/>

The following are currently being recruited for:

Headteacher - St Anne Line Infant School, Basildon

Deadline for applications: 12:00 noon on Friday 23rd September 2022

Headteacher - St Teresa's Primary School, Basildon

Deadline for applications: 16:00 on Friday 23rd September 2022

Cook/Kitchen Supervisor job:

Walsingham House at Abbotswick are looking to appoint a Cook/Kitchen Supervisor. The role is part-time, with hours varying from 15-20hrs a week, including some weekend work (term time only). For more information please see the website <https://bcys.net/job-vacancy-cook/> or call 01277 373959 to speak to Joseph Beattie.

Parish Administrator, Dagenham – St Peter - Dagenham

The successful applicant will ideally be an administrator with substantial experience in office organisation. They must have excellent communication and Microsoft office skills, including Word and Excel and financial experience.

Hours: 6-8 hours per week.

Apply by sending a CV and covering letter (no longer than A4) to

dagenhamstp@dioceseofbrentwood.org Closing date for applications is 1st October 2022

Job vacancy – Cook & Kitchen supervisor at Walsingham House Abbotswick

We are looking to recruit a cook and kitchen supervisor at Walsingham House at Abbotswick (15 -20 hours/week, 39 weeks – hours will be a mix of mid-week and weekend work (Wed-Fri and/or Sat-Sun), and mainly term time only starting as soon as possible. If you or any of your family and friends are interested in this role further information and a full job description can found on our website, www.bcys.net or by emailing clairebailey@dioceseofbrentwood.org. The closing date is midday on 23rd September 2022, however applications will be reviewed as they arrive. Please note that on occasions, posts may close earlier than the closing date due to the volume of applications being received. Early applications are therefore advised.

Breakfast and After School Club Practitioner Required – St Mary's Hare Park Preparatory School

St Mary's Hare Park School in Gidea Park, is urgently looking for a reliable and motivated individual to take care of children of ages 3 - 11.

This is a fantastic opportunity for a dedicated, enthusiastic Breakfast and After School Club Practitioner, but applications are welcome from those with less experience as well.

The hours are 7:30am - 8:30am and 3:00pm - 5:30pm Monday to Friday starting this September 2022.

For all enquiries and applications please contact the school office on 01708 761220, or email the school at office@stmarysharepark.co.uk.

Mental Health First Aid Course

Thursday 17th November 8.30am – 4.30pm and continued on

Friday 18th November 10am – 5pm

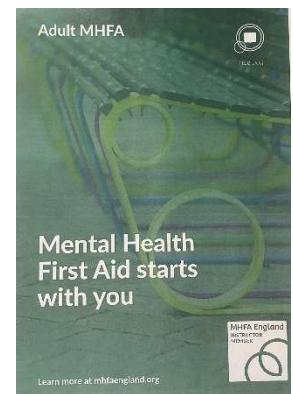
In the Bethany Room.

To learn more book onto an Adult MHFA Two Day course, please contact Fr Paul at the parish office on 01268 38 24 99 or

rayleigh@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Cost £60.00 for the two day course (elsewhere this course would cost significantly more). Please book no later than Friday 28th October 2022.

Thank you.



What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an internationally recognised training course which teaches people how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and provide help on a first aid basis.

MHFA England training won't teach you to be a therapist, but just like physical first aid, it will teach you to listen, reassure and respond, even in a crisis.

Adult MHFA England courses are for everyone aged 16 upwards. Every MHFA England course is delivered by a quality assured Instructor Member who has attended our Instructor Training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health, and is trained to keep people safe and supported while they learn.

What will I learn?

Learning takes place through a mix of group activities, presentations and discussions. What you learn will depend on the length of course you attend:

Two Day - Mental Health First Aiders

A practical skills and awareness course designed to give you:

- A deeper understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect people's wellbeing, including your own
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress
- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to appropriate support

How will attending an MHFA England course help?

Research and evaluation shows that taking part in an MHFA England course:

- Raises awareness and mental health literacy
- Reduces stigma around mental ill health
- Boosts knowledge and confidence in dealing with mental health issues
- Promotes early intervention which enables recovery

To learn more or book onto an Adult MHFA Two Day course:

Mike Thakoordin
e: mikethakoordin@yahoo.co.uk
m: 07745 026539

Other Adult MHFA England courses

In addition to the Adult MHFA Two Day course, we also offer shorter training options including a one day MHFA Champions course and a half day Mental Health Aware course. To learn more about training options, visit mhfaengland.org.



**TANGNEY
TOURS**
the pilgrims choice

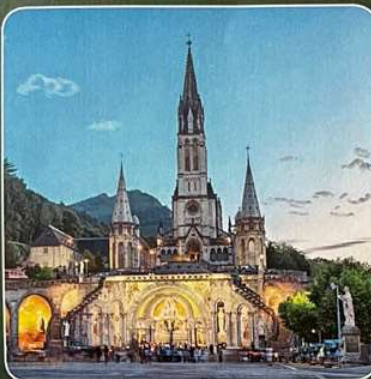
*Your Pilgrimage is
safe with us!*

Pilgrim House, Station Court
Borough Green
Kent
TN15 8AF

t: 01732 886666
e: sales@tangney-tours.com
www.tangney-tours.com



Our Lady of Ransom - Pilgrimage to Lourdes
Monday 22nd May - Friday 26th May 2023



To express an interest in joining this 4 night pilgrimage, please contact:

Mrs Shelagh Mesher

Email: shelaghmesher@hotmail.com

or contact Father Paul

www.tangney-tours.com - 01732 886666

Full spiritual itinerary for all
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Pastoral Letter from Bishop Alan.

Dear Brothers & Sisters, Learning to rely on the mercy and love of God is vital for our journey in faith. We may feel rather lost amidst the challenges of the world – especially at the moment. Like those in the parables searching for the sheep and the coin, God searches for us.

The Prodigal Son may remind us of some people we know, young and old, running away from Jesus and the Church, and immersing themselves in all sorts of trouble. Today is Education Sunday, and the theme comes from St Paul: “May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us” (Ephesians 1.17-18) . Our teachers and school support staff work with such immense dedication, and Jesus Christ is at the centre of our Catholic schools. Today I pray for everyone who works in our schools, and every family served by our schools, and I ask you to do the same. These are not easy times for young people and families, and our schools are very often a vital place of sanctuary and hope, as well as offering outstanding opportunities.

As we navigate challenges in family life, in our schools, and in the world, there is a very great deal which needs our prayer. In these weeks the relics of St Bernadette of Lourdes are visiting many places in England, Wales and Scotland, including coming to our Diocese – to Brentwood Cathedral and Wanstead – in October. The story of St Bernadette is another radical example of hope in troubled times; Our Lady appearing with grace, love and hope to a teenager who was ill, and living in poverty. This is our faith – a faith of great consolation in troubled times. Spend time with the relics if you can – to be close to St Bernadette and Our Lady of Lourdes is to be close to Saints who understand the deepest struggles and joys of our lives.

You will remember the Diocesan Vision process, and you will be aware of the International Synod – a journey for the whole Church, guided by Pope Francis, rooted in the way that we listen to each other, with hearts attentive to the Lord. Many parishes had conversations at the start of 2022, shaping our Diocesan reflection for the Synod. It contained such positive insights as this – a quote from a parishioner: ‘The Church offers the world a strong moral and ethical compass and is leading the messaging on climate change and support for refugees, the poor and marginalised’. There was great gratitude for our clergy and their efforts towards a welcoming and inclusive Church.

Along with the positives, there was also clear recognition that as a Diocese we face significant challenges. The synod conversations reflected 'Overwhelming concern for the pressures placed upon clergy and their wellbeing'. We continue to recover from the pandemic, and in some parishes as many as a third of the congregation has dropped away. How do we bring people home? As you look around, today, in your parish, do you notice a particular person who is missing? Could you be the one to invite them home, to invite them back to the welcoming arms of a loving God? Within the Synod and Diocesan Vision I have a particular responsibility. The guiding document for the Synod says, "In every diocesan synodal process the Bishop is charged with discerning, with a shepherd's heart, the next steps on the pathway of communion, participation and mission". Today, at the start of a new academic year, we move towards the next steps, even as we tread carefully knowing how fragile things are for so many people.

In the weeks and months ahead you will hear more about how the Diocesan Vision is taking shape, as Priests and Stewards of the Gospel meet together again and renew the conversations and decisions about Parish Partnerships.

Those conversations and decisions will be taking place in the midst of challenging times, for the country and for the world. It is worth remembering that previous generations of Catholics in Essex and East London also faced very great challenges; communities around the London docks were bombed in the Second World War; new town communities in Essex have often faced struggles with the cost of living, and rebuilding family life after being moved miles from where they grew up.

Nonetheless, those who have gone before us gifted us parishes and schools; in our turn, we are called to continue to develop and strengthen our Diocese, to be a beacon of hope as we spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London. Please keep the Diocesan Vision process, and the Synod, very firmly in prayer.

Through it all, lean on today's readings and Gospel; remember and be consoled by the deep truth that God never fails us even in the most difficult of times – and that he will search for us, wherever we find ourselves. In the powerful words of St Paul: 'May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us'.

With all good wishes and prayers

In Christ and Mary,

+Alan Williams, sm Bishop of Brentwood

