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Catholic East Anglia

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Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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Fr Alan Hodgson celebrating the principal Ash Wednesday Mass at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist. Picture by Charlie Bohan-Hurst.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent

Ash Wednesday, the solemn day that marks the beginning of Lent, was observed on 5 March, with special services held at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich and in parishes across the Diocese. Charlie Bohan-Hurst reports.

■ The day serves as a powerful reminder of human mortality and the need for repentance, ushering in a season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in preparation for Easter.

At St John the Baptist Cathedral, the faithful gathered for Masses throughout the day, where ashes were blessed and distributed in a centuries-old tradition. The ashes, made from the burnt palm branches of the previous year's Palm Sunday, were applied to the foreheads of worshippers in the shape of a cross, accompanied by the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." These words serve as a profound call to spiritual renewal and a reminder of the transient nature of earthly life.

Fr Alan Hodgson celebrated the principal Ash Wednesday Mass at the Cathedral, urging the congregation to embrace the Lenten season with sincerity and devotion.

Similar services were held in parishes across the Diocese, from Ipswich to Peterborough and from King's Lynn to Cambridge, as Catholics of all ages came together to begin their Lenten journey. Many schools also held special liturgies, ensuring that young people were engaged in the meaning and traditions of this sacred season.

Lent, which lasts for 40 days (excluding Sundays), is a period of spiritual discipline and preparation for the celebration of Christ's resurrection at Easter. It is a time when Catholics are encouraged to deepen their faith through acts of penance, charitable giving, and personal sacrifice. Many choose to give up certain luxuries or take on additional acts of service as a

way of growing in holiness.

As the Diocese of East Anglia embarked on this Lenten season, the faithful were invited to participate in the various opportunities for prayer, reflection, and reconciliation. With hearts renewed and strengthened by God's grace, the journey through Lent leads ultimately to the joy and hope of Easter Sunday.



A packed Cathedral on Ash Wednesday.



Jubilee Mass for Deacons

■ The Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich was the setting for a special Jubilee Mass for all Deacons, including retired Deacons and their families, on 22 February 2025.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Peter Collins, who led the congregation in giving thanks for the vital ministry of the permanent diaconate.

The occasion brought together Deacons from across the Diocese, along with their wives and families, in a celebration of service and dedication. In his homily, Bishop Peter expressed deep gratitude to all Deacons, both active and retired, acknowledging their invaluable role in the life of the Church.

He also extended his appreciation to the families of Deacons, recognising the essential support they provide in sustaining this ministry. "The ministry of a Deacon is not undertaken alone," he said. "It is lived out within the family, supported by loved ones who share in this vocation."

The Bishop also took the opportunity to encourage and affirm those currently in formation for the permanent diaconate. "We look forward with great joy to welcoming our candidates into this ministry," he said, noting that the call to serve as a Deacon is a profound commitment to both the Church and the wider community.

Following the Mass, there was an opportunity for Deacons and their families to come together in fellowship, sharing stories and experiences over refreshments. It was a chance to celebrate the many years of service given by those ordained to this ministry, as well as to look ahead to the future of the diaconate in the Diocese of East Anglia.

The permanent diaconate continues to grow and flourish within the Diocese, with Deacons serving in parishes, hospitals, prisons, and communities, embodying the Church's call to service. This Jubilee Mass was a fitting tribute to their dedication and a reminder of the strength found in faith, family, and community.



Notre Dame High School embraces Jubilee year

■ Notre Dame High School in Norwich has joyfully welcomed the Jubilee Year of Hope, embarking on a journey of faith through prayer and service.

To mark the beginning of this special year, students have composed their own heartfelt prayers, asking God to shine His light and hope upon those in need across the world. These prayers, written in the shape of candles and open doors, serve as powerful symbols of light and joy, reflecting the spirit of hope that the Jubilee represents.

The students' artwork has been arranged into larger rainbows, inspired by the official Jubilee icon created by Ethiopian artist Mulugeta Araya, commissioned by CAFOD. Through this, they have demonstrated a deep awareness of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the call to show preferential love for the poorest and to stand in solidarity for the common good.

As the season of Lent begins, the entire school community is coming together in a spirit of generosity, raising funds for CAFOD World Gifts. Each class has chosen a life-changing gift from CAFOD's selection, ensuring that their fundraising efforts bring real and tangible support to those in need. This initiative not only strengthens their commitment to social justice but also puts faith into action in a meaningful way.

The Jubilee Year of Hope began with a joyful yobel, a traditional sign of celebration, as students embraced this time of renewal and reflection.

Notre Dame High School warmly invites everyone to join them on this pilgrimage of hope, sharing in their mission to bring God's love, light, and hope to the world.

Catholic 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 Monday, 14 April.

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Lunar New Year celebrated in Sawston

■ On 15 February, the Cantonese community at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Sawston gathered for a special Mass to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

This was the first Cantonese Mass following the Lunar New Year, making it a significant and joyous occasion for the faithful. The Mass was celebrated by Canon John Minh, who led the congregation in prayer and reflection, invoking God's blessings for the year ahead.

Upon entering the church, the congregation was immediately immersed in the festive atmosphere. The entrance and walls were adorned with traditional Lunar New Year Fai Chun inscribed with auspicious messages. The vibrant decorations created a warm and welcoming environment, setting the tone for a solemn yet celebratory liturgy.

During the Mass, Fr John bestowed a solemn blessing upon the congregation, filling hearts with gratitude and hope for the new year. At the conclusion of the Mass, the faithful sang *May You Be Blessed with His Love* as the recessional hymn, a beautiful

expression of faith and unity. This hymn is an adaptation of a popular Cantonese melody traditionally sung during the Lunar New Year. The congregation left the church with a profound sense of peace, joy, and divine grace.

Following the Mass, the celebration continued in the parish hall, where attendees gathered to share festive snacks. The atmosphere was filled with warmth as friends and families exchanged greetings and well wishes. The highlight of the gathering was a lively lion dance performed by parishioners, adding excitement and energy to the occasion.

The Lunar New Year Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes was a meaning-

ful and unforgettable event, bringing the community together in faith and celebration. As everyone departed, their hearts were filled with renewed blessings, happiness, and a strengthened sense of fellowship in Christ.



Canon John Minh celebrating the Lunar New Year Mass at OLOL, Sawston.

Ignite team travel to Plymouth to evangelise

In early February the Ignite Team headed to Genesis House in Plymouth to learn different ways to evangelise. Rebecca Bretherton joined the team and reports.

■ We learnt that speaking to people on the street about Jesus Christ requires a bit of courage to start with but that many people are happy to stop and talk if approached respectfully. After prayer and learning some methods for listening we had three different experiences of different styles of mission. On our first trip into the city we asked people to complete a short survey about their belief in God and the big issues of life and death. When it was appropriate, we shared our belief that God loves them and is waiting to share His eternal life with them. We prayed with some people after listening to their stories and worries.

On Saturday morning we joined the weekly 'bacon butty fry-up' outside the Catholic church. Here we met some regular guests and talked to people who were experiencing homelessness and loneliness.

That evening we lit lanterns in church for a time of prayer; some local students sang Taize chants; and the Blessed Sacrament was on the altar. We invited anyone who was walking past to come in and light a candle. We offered to pray with them and spent time



The Ignite Team with Hamish and The Genesis House team: Michele Thompson and Fr Jon Bielawski before setting off into Plymouth. Photograph by Rebecca Bretherton.

talking about our faith with those who wanted to chat. I was surprised how many people took up the invitation. The experience showed me that many people are open to talking about God if they are given the chance.

One encounter has stayed with me. We invited a young man to light a candle. He was a bit reluctant but stayed for a long time in church. He took some photos on his phone as if to capture a special moment. He chatted to the team outside and explained he was exploring spirituality. He shared that he had

recently prayed that God would show Himself and then was intrigued to meet us on a chilly February night. I am still praying that the time he spent with us will help him to encounter Jesus Christ in his life.

Our hosts for the weekend were Michele Thompson and Fr Jon Bielawski who founded the Genesis Mission to prepare disciples for mission in the Catholic Church through prayer and practical experience.

To find out more go to genesismission.co.uk.



The Caritas Ambassadors with Bishop Peter Collins.

Faith in action at St John Fisher School

St John Fisher Catholic High School in Peterborough has been actively engaging students in faith-led social action, with Caritas Ambassador training, a visit from Bishop Peter Collins, and the prestigious Oscar Romero Award recognising their commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.

■ On 9 December 2024, students from St John Fisher Catholic High School (Years 9-13) and Year 5 pupils from St Thomas More Primary School gathered for an inspiring Caritas training session led by Sister Judith Russi. This initiative, in partnership with Caritas, aimed to equip young people with the knowledge and motivation to become Caritas Ambassadors, championing Catholic Social Teaching and making a tangible impact in their school and local community.

Throughout the session, Sister Judith encouraged students to put their faith into action, focusing on key social justice issues, particularly food waste. As part of their response to this call, students have already started implementing plans to reduce waste and redirect savings towards community needs.

Students were deeply moved by the training, with Year 13 student Sean O'Shea sharing, "I found my experience with Sister Judith inspiring and motivational; often we talk about ideas of change, but she got us

thinking, as Caritas Ambassadors, how we could put those changes into action."

Kate Pereira, Headteacher of St John Fisher, reflected on the impact of the session, saying, "The greatest highlight is how the students feel so empowered to lead this and other projects themselves, knowing exactly why they are doing it. Having Caritas Ambassadors at two Catholic schools in Peterborough means that there is the potential for even more involvement in the local community."

On 24 January 2025, St John Fisher students participated in the annual Mass commemorating Katharine of Aragon, a significant historical figure in Catholic history. The Mass, a tradition in Peterborough, serves as an opportunity for reflection on faith, perseverance, and the historical legacy of Catholicism in the region. Students and staff gathered in solemn remembrance, honouring her unwavering faith and commitment to the Church.

On 4 February 2025, St John Fisher Catholic High School had the honour of welcoming Bishop Peter Collins, for a special visit. The day was marked by a beautiful Mass celebrated in the school chapel by Bishop Peter alongside Fr Karol Porczak. During the service, Bishop Peter commissioned the newly trained Caritas Ambassadors from St John Fisher and St Thomas More Primary School, blessing each ambassador individually and presenting them with official diocesan Caritas certificates. David Livesey, the Diocesan Coordinator for Caritas East Anglia, and Dr Andy Stone, Diocesan Director of Schools' Service, were also present for this momentous occasion.

The Bishop blessed the school's new Sta-

tions of the Cross, a stunning installation crafted by Mrs Goodfellow and Mr Griffin and approved by the Chaplaincy Ambassadors. These Stations will now serve as a focal point for prayer and reflection, especially as the school community prepares for Lent.

During his visit, Bishop Peter engaged with students and pupils from both schools, discussing the significance of their roles as Caritas Ambassadors and their responsibility to be instruments of justice and peace in their communities.

In an exciting recognition of the school's dedication to Catholic Social Teaching, St John Fisher High School was awarded the Oscar Romero Award at Participant Level on 10 February. This prestigious accolade acknowledges Catholic schools that actively put faith into action through curriculum, policies, and charity work. St John Fisher is proud to be the first Catholic school in the Diocese of East Anglia to receive this honour, and the school community is now committed to working towards the next level of the award.

Headteacher Kate Pereira expressed her pride, stating, "We are delighted to receive this award because it celebrates the work of every member of the St John Fisher community in putting our school mission into practice through our everyday work."

The recent events at St John Fisher Catholic High School reflect a vibrant and active faith community, committed to social justice, prayer, and service. As the school moves forward, the Caritas Ambassadors, staff, and students continue to embody the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, striving to make a meaningful difference in their school and beyond.

Smartphone Free Childhood

■ In this *Faith In The Home* column, Adriana Lyons, member of St Edmund's parish, highlights the Smartphone Free Childhood initiative which focuses on the growing concern over children's smartphone use.

Statistics from Ofcom reveal the extent to which smartphones have become embedded in the lives of even our very youngest, with a fifth of 3- to 4-year-olds owning one. That rises to a quarter for 5 to 7-year-olds and by age 12, almost all children – 89% – own one.

When children first started owning smartphones a decade ago, there was little research about the impact they might have, but today the evidence is overwhelming: smartphones are fuelling a global mental health crisis.

Against this context Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement bringing parents together to stand up for healthier and happier childhoods.

Giving children access to online content that they aren't yet equipped to deal with can cause a whole host of problems, from triggering anxiety and eating disorders to opening the door to cyber-bullying and sexual predators, according to the latest research. When children are given access to the whole world in their pocket, we give the whole world access to our children and the consequences for them, for families and our society are profound.

"When kids are on their phones all day, it's not just what they're doing that matters, it's what they're not doing. They're missing out on crucial experiences that help them grow into healthy adults" says Jonathan Haidt, Professor of Social Psychology, NYU.

Childhood is precious and fleeting and children should be allowed to grow up free from the influence of addictive algorithms and inappropriate content. While technology brings opportunities and advantages, children should benefit only when the time is right – and if it is safe.

Parents face an almost impossible choice: many know that smartphones are harmful but the pressure from peers is strong. Across the world, governments are thinking about how to legislate to protect childhood, but proper regulation will take years and for many that will be too late.

Smartphone Free Childhood believes that together we can reject the narrative that a childhood spent staring at a screen is harmless, and by working collectively to choose to wait before buying our children smartphones, the pressure will surely diminish.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may probe what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." St Paul, Romans 12.

To express your support contact the Marriage and Family Life Coordinator at mflcoordinator@rcdea.org.uk.



Day of Renewal celebrated at St Laurence's Church

On Saturday 1 March 2025, up to 100 people gathered at St Laurence's Catholic Church in Cambridge for a Day of Renewal with Fr Matt Anscombe and Caroline Sadd from Clifton Diocese. Pam Smith, Coordinator - Charismatic Diocesan Service of Communion for East Anglia reports.

■ Despite numerous parish activities taking place simultaneously, the day began with Mass in celebration of the Feast of St David. During the morning session, both Fr Matt and Caroline shared their personal experiences of how the Holy Spirit has transformed their lives. Fr Matt spoke about his return to the Catholic faith and his journey to the priesthood, culminating in his ordination in 2010. Caroline recounted her profound experience of making a 'proper confession', describing how the burden of unforgiveness was lifted from her. She reflected on the stark difference between her life before and after that day. Two priests were initially available for an hour to hear confessions, which many attendees sought. Due to the overwhelming response, additional priests stepped in, and by the end, a total of five priests were hearing confessions. Attendees were encouraged to be patient as queues formed. Many also took the opportunity to receive prayer ministry during this time. Fr Matt led the congregation in a renewal of their baptismal promises, followed by a period of Eucharistic Adoration in the final hour of the event. Those who wished



The Worship Band: Jim Allen (guitar), Oscar Lyons (keyboard) Anna Allen (vocals), Nancy Allen (vocals) Luc Wallace (base) Karen Wain (keyboard/vocals) Kevin Pugh (hand drummer).

received prayer for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit's graces. Praise and worship throughout the day was led by a group of musicians brought together specifically for the occasion. After Fr Matt imparted a final blessing, the day concluded with a song of blessing based on the

Aaronic Prayer (Numbers 6:24-26). Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the experience. One participant, Maria, shared: "I felt very blessed by this powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the Most Holy Sacrament of the

Eucharist, confession, worship, and prayer, united in Him who loves us all. Thank you!" A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended, as well as to the parishioners who assisted with setting up and refreshments. Special thanks go to the priests who generously gave their time to hear confessions.

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Day of prayer for engaged couples

On 9 February, the Diocese of East Anglia held its annual Day of Prayer for Engaged Couples.

■ To support couples on this sacred journey, the Diocese of East Anglia holds an annual Day of Prayer for Engaged Couples every February - a special occasion dedicated to seeking God's blessing and guidance for those preparing for the sacrament of marriage. On this day, engaged couples are invited by their parish priest to attend a designated Mass together, where they are surrounded by the prayers and encouragement of their faith community. The highlight of the celebration is the Blessing for Engaged Couples, a special prayer offered by the priest, asking for God's wisdom, strength, and grace as the couple prepares to enter into their vocation of marriage. This blessing serves as a profound reminder of the spiritual foundation of marriage, encouraging couples to place God at the heart of their relationship. It is an opportunity to seek His guidance in their decisions, to nurture their love with faith, and to strengthen their commitment to one another. Beyond receiving this blessing, the Day of Prayer for Engaged Couples provides a

precious moment for couples to pause, reflect, and deepen their understanding of the vows they will soon exchange. It is a chance to step away from the busyness of wedding planning and focus on the deeper meaning of their union - one built on faith, love, and a shared journey with God. For many engaged couples, this day becomes a significant milestone in their preparation for marriage. It is a powerful affirmation that their love is not only a per-

sonal commitment but also a divine calling. By seeking God's blessing, they take an important step towards building a marriage rooted in faith, hope, and love. The Diocese of East Anglia warmly encourages all engaged couples to take part in this special day of prayer, embracing the grace and spiritual support that will accompany them on their path to a blessed and fruitful marriage.

Fr Alan Hodgson blessing engaged couples at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist.

Word on Fire conference 2025

The Evangelisation and Culture conference this February saw a gathering of 1500 Catholics including some from East Anglia. The conference, one of the largest Catholic events to be held in the UK, was organised by the Word on Fire Catholic ministry. Founded by Bishop Robert Barron, Bishop of Winona-Rochester, USA, Word on Fire has a growing membership in this country. The theme of the conference was the Bible and how Catholics can read it within the context of the great chorus of voices from across the centuries of the Church's tradition. One of the attendees, Rebecca Bretherton, reports.

■ Bishop Barron has inspired countless people, including me, on their faith journey. In his keynote speech, he explored four great Biblical themes – creation; the God of Israel; right praise and kingship: showing how each theme leads through the Old Testament to its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Word on Fire's UK Director, Brenden Thompson, reminded us, "To proclaim Christ in the culture, we must know Christ; and to know Christ, we must know Scripture". Throughout the day, inspiring speakers from the UK and across the world uncovered the spiritual and theological meaning of the Bible and offered us a rich mix of formation and inspiration to show us how Sacred Scripture fuels evangelisation.

One session which particularly interested me showed how to use Biblically-focussed music and art to help people encounter the beauty of God. Fr Patrick van der Vorst, founder of the Christian Art ministry, returned to one of the Biblical themes highlighted earlier as he described God the Creator as an artist. He shared some thoughts on Michelangelo's beautiful statue Pietà. His fellow panellist, Jo Boyce, a co-founder of cjm music ministry, led everyone in singing the hymn The Lord's My Shepherd. It was a beautiful moment of shared prayer with much-loved scripture.

For more information about Word on Fire go to: www.wordonfire.org

For more information about Christian Art go to: <https://christian.art>

For more information about cjm music: www.cjmmusic.com.



The main conference stage. Picture by by Danny Daley, Word on Fire Institute member.

Polish Cubs and Brownies gather in Cambridge

■ Polish Cubs and Brownies from Cambridge and Norwich came together for their annual overnight camp on 1 March 2025, strengthening their bonds of friendship and faith.

This year's gathering had a special focus on earning an environmental badge, encouraging the young scouts to take responsibility for caring for the planet.

During the weekend, the Cubs and Brownies pledged to become 'eco-gnomes', committed to helping clean up litter, learning about recycling, and making small but meaningful changes to protect the environment. The event provided an opportunity for the young people to reflect on their role in caring for God's creation.

A highlight of the gathering was the celebration of Mass, with Fr John Minh, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes & St John Fisher, leading the liturgy. The Mass was said in English, with readings and hymns in Polish, ensuring the children felt connected to their heritage while worshipping together. In his homily, Fr John encouraged the children to become 'good fruits' from their family trees, inspiring them to grow in faith and kindness.

The Cambridge Polish Pack is led by Barbara Sterecki, Brown Owl, alongside a dedicated team of leaders who guide and support the young scouts on their journey of learning and faith.

This special weekend was not only a time of adventure and friendship but also a meaningful experience of stewardship and faith for the Polish Cubs and Brownies of East Anglia.



The Cubs & Brownies with Fr John Minh.

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Bishop Peter’s engagements

April

- **Apr 1, Tues:** Bishop to celebrate Lenten Station Mass at St Mary’s, Great Yarmouth at 19:00.
 - **Apr 3, Thurs:** Bishop to celebrate Lenten Station Mass at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 19:00.
 - **Apr 5, Sat:** Bishop to celebrate Jubilee Mass of the Sick and Health Care Workers with the anointing of the sick at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 11:30.
 - **Apr 12, Sat:** Bishop to celebrate Mass at the Day of Renewal for CHARIS at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 11:30.
 - **Apr 13, Sun:** Bishop to celebrate Solemn Procession and Pontifical Mass at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich for Palm Sunday at 11:00.
 - **Apr 15, Tues:** Bishop to celebrate Chrim Mass with Blessing of the Oils at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 11:30.
 - **Apr 17, Thurs:** Bishop to celebrate a Solemn Pontifical Mass of the Lord’s Supper for Maundy Thursday with Washing of the Feet and Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 19:00.
 - **Apr 18, Fri:** Bishop to celebrate Good Friday Solemn Liturgy of the Passion at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 15:00.
 - **Apr 19, Sat:** Bishop to celebrate First Mass of Easter, with Baptisms and Confirmations at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 20:00.
 - **Apr 20, Sun:** Bishop to celebrate Solemn Pontifical Mass for Easter Sunday at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 11:00.
 - **Apr 20, Sun:** Bishop to celebrate Solemn Pontifical Vespers for Easter Sunday at Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich at 16:30.
- All future dates at:
www.rcdea.org.uk/bishop-peter-collins/bishops-diary/



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Fr Anthony Foreman marks Diamond



Fr Anthony Foreman celebrated Mass on the 60th anniversary of his ordination to the Ministerial Priesthood. Pictures by Charlie Bohan-Hurst.

On 12 March, Parishioners, clergy, and friends gathered in great numbers at Our Lady and St Etheldreda, Newmarket, to celebrate a truly momentous occasion – the 60th Anniversary Mass for Fr Anthony Foreman. Charlie Bohan-Hurst reports.

■ The Mass, held to mark six decades since Fr Anthony’s ordination to the Ministerial Priesthood, was not only a tribute to his dedicated service but also a celebration of the

priesthood of all the baptised. Additionally, the congregation took the opportunity to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone of St Etheldreda’s, which took place on 27 August 1964.

The church was filled with a joyful and reverent atmosphere as clergy and parishioners gathered to give thanks for Fr Anthony’s long and fruitful ministry. Many who attended were from the Newmarket parish, but a number of familiar faces had travelled from Fr Anthony’s former parishes, a testament to the deep and lasting impact he has made throughout his years of service. The Mass was an occasion not only to honour one man’s journey but also to acknowledge the wider vocation to the priesthood shared by all the baptised in the Church.

The liturgy was enhanced by the beautiful music provided by organist Christopher Moore, FRCO, and the accomplished singing of Charles Boyle, which added to the solemnity and joy of the celebration. The Mass was concelebrated by numerous clergy who have worked alongside Fr Anthony over the years, many of whom he counts as dear friends. Their presence was a visible sign of the bonds of fraternity that have been nurtured throughout his ministry.

Following the conclusion of the Mass, Fr Anthony addressed the congregation, offering a heartfelt and engaging reflection on his sixty years of priesthood. His speech was filled with gratitude, warmth, and humour as he recounted key moments from his journey in the service of God and His people. He spoke of his baptism at the Church of St Edmund in Bury St Edmunds, his ordination as a priest on 12 March 1965 at the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs (OLEM) in Cambridge, and his very first Mass, celebrated in Newmarket. His words painted a vivid picture of his dedication to the priestly vocation and the many lives he has touched along the way.

Fr Anthony also took time to reflect on the parishes he has served over the years. From 1965 to 1974, he was Assistant Priest at OLEM, Cambridge, followed by a period as Assistant Priest at St George, Norwich, from 1974 to 1976. His first appointment as Priest in Charge came in 1976 at Our Lady and St Etheldreda, Newmarket, a role he held for a decade until 1986. Later, he became Parish Priest at Our Lady, Stowmarket, where he ministered from 1989 to 1995. Throughout these years, Fr Anthony’s pastoral care, wisdom, and kindness have been deeply valued



reman Jubilee



by his parishioners, many of whom still cherish his presence in their lives today.

The celebrations did not end with the Mass. A buffet lunch was provided in the parish centre, where attendees had the opportunity

the vital role of the priesthood – not just for those ordained but for all the baptised who share in the mission of the Church.

At the end of the Mass Fr Anthony was presented with a congratulatory message from



to continue sharing memories and expressing their gratitude to Fr Anthony. The gathering was filled with conversation, laughter, and a profound sense of community, reflecting the very spirit of the priesthood he has embodied throughout his ministry.

The 60th Anniversary Mass was more than just a commemoration of Fr Anthony's ordination; it was a heartfelt expression of thanksgiving for a life devoted to service, faith, and community. It was a powerful reminder of

Pope Francis.

As Fr Anthony looks back on his 60 years of priesthood, he does so with a heart full of gratitude and a deep appreciation for the journey he has travelled. And as those who gathered to celebrate with him returned to their homes and parishes, they carried with them the enduring legacy of his ministry – a ministry defined by faith, friendship, and unwavering commitment to the service of God and His people.



In his regular column Fr Alvan discusses fasting during Lent.

Spiritual benefits of Lenten fasting

■ **Fr Alvan Ibeh reflects on Lenten fasting, rooted in Jesus' 40-day fast, a spiritual practice that deepens Christians' relationship with God by fostering self-denial, prayer, repentance, and reliance on His grace, ultimately preparing believers to embrace the hope of Easter.**

Another Lenten season has begun, and we thank God for granting us the opportunity to participate in this holy time of the year. Lent is a period of preparation, reflection, and penance, with fasting playing a significant role in this journey, as emphasised by the Church. However, fasting is not solely about abstaining from food; it is about creating space for prayer and charity.

Many religious traditions incorporate fasting for various reasons, but for us as Christians, fasting - particularly during Lent - holds profound spiritual significance. Rooted in Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), Lenten fasting is not merely about denying oneself food or comforts; it is about aligning our hearts with Christ's sacrifice and resurrection.

Some may view fasting as an opportunity to eat healthily to lose weight or to reduce their intake of sweets to regulate their sugar levels. While these may be physical benefits of fasting, which anyone can pursue regardless of faith, our primary goal as Christians is spiritual growth and a closer relationship with God. This is why fasting should not be confined to Lent or practised merely because the Church calls for it during this season. Instead, it should be a consistent discipline, an expression of our desire to strengthen our relationship with God throughout the year.

Do you cherish your relationship with God? Do you long to grow stronger in faith day by day? Here are some key spiritual benefits of fasting as a Christian, especially during Lent:

Following Christ's Example – By fasting, we follow Jesus' example of self-denial and reliance on God. His fast in the wilderness prepared Him for His ministry and victory over temptation. Lenten fasting allows us to "walk as He walked" (1 John 2:6), uniting us with His suffering and obedience.

A Call to Spiritual Conversion – Lent is a season of metanoia (spiritual transformation). Fasting helps us confront sin, acknowledge our dependence on God's grace, and turn away from habits that distance us from Him. As the prophet Joel

urges: "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity" (Joel 2:12-13).

Deepening Prayer and Intimacy with God – Fasting creates space for focused prayer. By temporarily setting aside physical cravings, believers redirect their hunger towards God. This intentional 'emptying' makes room for the Holy Spirit to work, fostering a deeper connection with Him. As James 4:8 reminds us: "Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Detachment from Material Comforts – Lenten fasting teaches us how easily material comforts can become idols. By letting go, we learn to seek "the food that endures to eternal life" (John 6:27), prioritising God over temporary gratifications.

Recognising Our Dependence on God – Fasting reminds us of our frailty and our need for God. As we experience physical weakness, we acknowledge our spiritual dependence on Him, echoing Jesus' words: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Sharpening Spiritual Awareness – By quieting the 'noise' of indulgence, fasting enhances our spiritual senses. Many Christians report a heightened awareness of God's voice, increased clarity in decision-making, and greater freedom from distractions during Lent.

For Christians, Lenten fasting is a sacred rhythm of emptying and filling - emptying the soul of sin and excess while filling it with God's presence, love, and purpose. It is a pilgrimage of the heart, preparing believers to fully embrace the hope of Easter - the resurrection that transforms sacrifice into eternal life. As St Augustine rightly pointed out: "*Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity.*"

May our Lenten fast this year draw us closer to God, that we may know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. Wishing you a spiritually enriching Lenten season. God bless.

Bishop celebrates Mass for East Timorese community

■ On 2 March 2025, the Bishop of the Diocese of East Anglia, Rt Revd Peter Collins, together with Canon John Minh (Chaplain) and Fr Bienn Carlo Manuntag (Master of Ceremonies), celebrated Sunday Mass for the East Timorese Community in Cambridge (ETICC) at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs (OLEM).

The visit was warmly received, with over 100 people in attendance. A particular highlight of the celebration was the use of multiple languages, including Tetum and English, with the choir singing in Tetum and Portuguese. This beautifully reflected the community's deep enthusiasm and strong sense of belonging to the Diocese.

During his homily, Bishop Peter acknowledged the rich heritage of the East Timorese community and encouraged the younger generation to cherish their cultural and spiritual inheritance. He recognised the challenges of building a new life in a foreign country but praised the community for its courage, contributions, and steadfast faith.

"True recognition of your heritage is essential," the Bishop said. "To the young people, I urge you to treasure all that is passed down to you from your rich inheritance. It is never easy to start anew in a different country, but with great courage, you have come, and you are building great lives while contributing so much to society."

He also reflected on the dangers of losing faith in an increasingly secular world and

emphasised the importance of integrity and staying true to the Gospel. Quoting from the Book of Sirach, he urged the congregation to test what is true and remain faithful to Christ.

"Western cultural and social norms often challenge the fundamental principles of our faith," he noted. "It takes conscious effort to navigate this environment while remaining faithful. We must test ourselves and support each other to ensure we hold fast to what is true and right in Christ. If we do, all things become possible, and we will bear good fruit."

Bishop Peter concluded his message by blessing the East Timorese community and encouraging them to continue their mission of faith and evangelisation in their new home. He reminded them that their faith is a vital contribution to society and urged them to stand firm in their beliefs while helping to shape a more faithful and just community.

"May God bless you as a community, may He bless your journey, and may He bless your mission to re-evangelise the culture you now inhabit."

The visit was a moment of unity, reflection, and encouragement for the East Timorese community, reinforcing their commitment to faith, culture, and contribution to wider society.

The community also expressed their gratitude to the Parish Priest, Rt Revd Mgr Provost E. Harkness, OSB Obl, for providing the hall where they shared traditional snacks. He also joined the community for cake and coffee, demonstrating the Church's support, love, and care for the East Timorese community.



Matthew Hardy playing the organ at St Peter's, Gorleston.

Organist celebrates 55 years of service

Matthew Hardy, a dedicated church organist has been recognised for 55 years of faithful service at St Peter's Church, Gorleston.

■ Matthew first played the organ at St Peter's on the First Sunday of Lent in 1970 (age 12). Over half a century later, on Sunday, he was presented with a Certificate of Honour by Fr Alvan Ibeh accompanied by a well deserved round of applause in appreciation, celebrating his incredible dedication to the parish and its music ministry.

The Mass procession was accompanied in fitting fashion by the hymn "Praise to the holiest in the height", which was the first hymn Matthew played for the same Mass 55 years ago.

The Mass procession was accompanied in fitting fashion by the hymn "Praise to the holiest in the height", which was the first hymn Matthew played for the same Mass 55 years ago.

St. Peter's has been fortunate to rejoice in its musical worship for the past 55 years. In the present day the Parish remains active and blessed to have a very talented (and growing) Parish choir, a roster of cantors, instrumentalists, two additional organists and an enriched musical liturgy organised and held together by its Director of

Music - Janet Rust. The Parish also benefits from its own composers. Matthew has himself composed music for Mass settings as well as fellow friend and parishioner, Chris Whiting, who continues to compose music for the Parish.

The Parish is fortunate to have Fr. Alvan who himself is an active musician who both supports and actively participates in the musical life of the Parish. The Parish also embraces its international cultures with musical contributions from its Syro-Malabar, Filipino and Nigerian communities (among others).

Of course much of the music in the Parish, as in any Parish, is in need of rich accompaniment from the organ, which requires an organist. An organist is a rare luxury in 2025 and St. Peter's remain blessed and thankful to have Matthew as a good and faithful servant in its midst to pull out the stops and shepherd the pipes. Long may it continue.

However, after nearly 30 years, the organ is reaching the end of its life, and urgent funds are needed for a £40,000 rebuild.

To support this cause, Matthew is preparing for an extraordinary 10-hour sponsored Organ Marathon on Thursday, 10 April, playing continuously from 8:30 to 18:30 at St Peter's Church. The church will remain open throughout the day, and everyone is warmly invited to drop in, listen, and offer support.

There will also be an opportunity to request hymns, either in person on the day or via WhatsApp in advance.

Anyone wishing to contribute towards the organ rebuild can do so via Online Banking or Cheque

Account Name: St Peter's Parish

Sort Code: 40-22-34
Account Number: 81003879
Reference: Your Name / ORGAN

For further information, please contact 07786 165690.



Bishop Peter Collins with East Timorese community at OLEM.



A young Matthew Hardy.

Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope

Join the National Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope from Norwich to Nottingham in September 2025, a faith-filled journey uniting Catholics in prayer, fellowship, and pilgrimage to mark the 2025 Jubilee Year.

■ Catholics across the Diocese of East Anglia are warmly invited to take part in a unique and historic journey – the National Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope. This significant pilgrimage, marking the 2025 Jubilee Year, will see four national routes converge at St Barnabas’ Cathedral in Nottingham for prayer and celebration. One of these major routes, St Luke’s Way, begins right here in Norwich, making this an unmissable opportunity for our diocesan community to witness to faith, hope, and unity.

The Pilgrimage of Hope embodies the values of compassion, faith, prayer, and community. Set to begin on Tuesday 2 September 2025, pilgrims will embark on a 158.7-mile journey over ten walking days, with a rest day built in before reaching Nottingham. Along the way, walkers will visit some of East Anglia’s most sacred and historic sites, including the National Shrine of Our Lady at Houghton St Giles and then onto Walsingham. The pilgrimage will culminate in a Solemn Mass for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross at 11:15 am on Sunday 14 September 2025 at

St Barnabas’ Cathedral.

Pope Francis has encouraged Catholics to embrace pilgrimage as a means of rediscovering silence, simplicity, and the deep meaning of faith. Whether you walk a single day or the full route, this journey offers an opportunity to experience the richness of pilgrimage, share fellowship with fellow Catholics, and deepen your relationship with Christ.

“Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life.”- Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, Bull of Indiction of the 2025 Jubilee.

It is a momentous occasion for our Diocese that one of the four main national routes begins in Norwich. As the easternmost pilgrimage route, St Luke’s Way brings together the ancient tradition of pilgrimage with a modern call to witness and faith. The route, dedicated to Julian of Norwich, the great English mystic and theologian, invites us to reflect on her timeless words: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to walk in faith, witness our Catholic heritage, and be part of a national movement of hope



Join the pilgrimage for a single day or the entire 10-day journey.

and renewal. Mark your calendars, prepare your walking shoes, and let us journey together in faith and fellowship!

There are several ways to get involved in the pilgrimage.

Walk the Pilgrimage – Join for a single day or the entire 10-day journey. Registration for day pilgrims opens in April 2025.

Support the Pilgrimage – Not walking? Be

part of the support network! Pilgrims will need hospitality, encouragement, and prayer along the way.

Pray for the Pilgrims – Unite in prayer for those undertaking the journey, offering spiritual support and intercession.

For more information and updates visit the Pilgrim’s Way website and stay tuned to the Diocese of East Anglia website.

Join Us for Upcoming Events



SCAN ME

8 April

3-4:30 PM

26 April

2-5 PM

Saturdays: 3,10,17 May 2025

7 May

5-7 PM

14 May

1-6 PM

11 June, 24 September, 15 October, 12 November

POSTGRADUATE OPEN AFTERNOON

Explore our postgraduate programme in Christian Spirituality (East & West) with Dr. Sean Ryan and the academic team. Featuring a taster lecture on Christian Spirituality by Dr. Gemma Simmonds.

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL: TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUAL SUFFERING

An interactive four-session online course exploring the spiritual theology of the Dark Night of the Soul—a journey through spiritual suffering, personal transformation, and professional practice.

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

An online talk led by Dr. Peter Coughlan on Pope Francis’ new encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*. The talk will reflect on key themes in the encyclical and Pope Francis’ pontificate.

CHILDREN’S SPIRITUALITY

This course helps participants develop an understanding of children’s spirituality and consider what supports or hinders it in the complex, plural society surrounding children.



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Cantonese Children's Fellowship Pilgrimage

A group of young pilgrims from the "Jesus Hug" Cantonese Children's Fellowship embarked on a special pilgrimage to the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs (OLEM) in Cambridge on 8 March, marking the Feast of St Felix.

■ The event, attended by 10 children along with their families and mentors - around 30 participants in total - was themed "Let the Children Become Pilgrims of Hope!" As part of the Jubilee Year 2025 celebrations, the children brought along images of the mascot Luce and were warmly welcomed by Canon John Minh, who led them through a day of spiritual reflection, prayer, and learning.

Throughout their time at OLEM, the children explored the sacred architecture and iconography of this magnificent House of God. Canon John guided them in understanding the spiritual significance of the church's layout, its sacred images, and its role as a vibrant place of worship and evangelisation. He encouraged the young pilgrims to spend more time in their own local parish churches, engaging with Jesus through simple yet heartfelt prayers and conversations.

One of the most awe-inspiring moments of

the pilgrimage was the children's discovery of the stunning stained-glass windows depicting biblical stories and the lives of the Blessed English Martyrs. They were particularly moved by the large hanging crucifix adorned with flowers and leaves, symbolising the "Tree of Life." The striking image of Christ – suffering yet triumphant – resonated deeply, reinforcing the message of hope and faith.

Blessed with bright spring sunshine and a beautiful, uplifting atmosphere, the pilgrimage proved to be a deeply enriching experience for both children and parents. Through Canon John's engaging reflections and the grandeur of OLEM's sacred beauty, their faith was strengthened, and they pledged to live as true "pilgrims of hope."

The "Jesus Hug" Fellowship is a children's liturgy and music group under the auspices of the RCDEA Cantonese Chaplaincy. Parents are warmly welcomed to enrol their children and become part of the growing Cantonese faith family.

For enquiries, please reach out via email at cantonese.chaplaincy@rcdea.org.uk.



The "Jesus Hug" Fellowship with Fr John Minh at OLEM.

St Benet's School for Peace celebrates 20 year anniversary

The St Benet's School for Peace, located near Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has been providing education and hope to displaced children for two decades.

■ Established in 2005 with the support of St Benet's Church in Beccles and the wider community, the school has grown significantly, now educating 1,200 pupils aged 3 to 19, many of whom progress to higher education.

From its humble beginnings with just eight classrooms, the school has expanded to include a two-storey building, offices, and a school library - a rare asset in DRC schools. The project has raised over

£561,000 so far, with generous supporters across East Anglia, Glasgow, and Surrey.

The school is managed by Les Sœurs de Saint-Joseph Auxiliatrices de l'Église, one of the first Congolese religious orders to be recognised by Rome in the early 20th century. Sister Virginie, the current Superior, highlighted the school's vital role in the community:

"The school is in a very poor area and gives hope and a future to children who would otherwise have no education and be on the streets."

The sisters continue to pray for all sponsors, with Masses offered for those who are unwell or deceased. Sr Virginie has also requested prayers for stability in the region, as parts of Eastern Congo have recently come under the control of Rwandan forces, a situation that could impact Lubumbashi as it did in 2000 when the school was first

founded.

Despite the challenges of operating in the DRC - including a lack of postal services since the 1960s and communication barriers in French - the project remains highly effective. The advent of WhatsApp has greatly improved communication. Crucially, every penny raised goes directly to the school, avoiding concerns over corruption or administrative overheads that often hinder international aid efforts.

To celebrate 20 years of the St Benet's School for Peace a garden party with live instrumental music will be held at The Suffolk Byre, Hulver, near Beccles on Saturday 5 July.

For more details, email congoschool4peace@gmail.com or visit the website: www.schoolforpeace.org.



The St Benet's School for Peace.



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news in brief

Rite of Election celebrated at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist

■ On the First Sunday of Lent (9 March), the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich was filled with joy and anticipation as catechumens and candidates from across the Diocese of East Anglia gathered for the Rite of Election.

This important milestone marks a significant step in their journey towards full communion with the Catholic Church this Easter.

Approximately 120 catechumens (those preparing for baptism) and candidates (those to be received into the Church) were presented to Bishop Alan Hopes, who presided over the celebration on behalf of Bishop Peter Collins. The attendees, representing around 20 parishes across the diocese, were accompanied by their godparents, sponsors, clergy, and parish communities in a moving and faith-filled liturgy.

Fr Alan Hodgson, Dean of the Cathedral Church, reflected on the significance of the event; "It was a joyful affair which many people found quite moving and the first occasion given to them to express their calling to Catholicism in such a public manner. Since Covid, we as a diocese have seen a steady increase in people wishing to join our Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) courses in parishes."

This year's gathering marks a remarkable rise in numbers, with around 120 catechumens and candidates compared to approximately 80 last year - an encouraging sign of the growing faith within the diocese. As these individuals prepare to enter into the sacramental life of the Church at Easter, they do so supported by their parish communities, who continue to nurture and guide them on their spiritual journey.

As they take this important step, it is vital that existing parishioners across the diocese warmly welcome the catechumens and candidates into their parish communities. The Church is not just a place of worship but a family of faith, where each member is called to support, encourage, and journey together in Christ. By extending kindness, hospitality, and a spirit of inclusion, we help them to feel at home in their new faith community, strengthening not only their faith but also our own.

Recent developments and updates on Modern Slavery in East Anglia

■ **Modern slavery in Britain is a growing crisis, with record numbers of victims identified in 2024, including many British nationals and children, prompting urgent awareness efforts and calls for action to combat exploitation.**

Recent statistics from the Home Office reveal that in 2024, a record 19,125 victims of modern slavery were referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK's system for protecting victims. This marks a significant increase from the 17,000 referrals recorded in 2023.

However, the actual number of people found in conditions of modern slavery was even higher. An additional 5,598 individuals were identified as victims but chose not to be referred into the NRM. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 24,723 across Britain in 2024.

Alarmingly, British nationals made up the largest proportion of victims, accounting for approximately 23% of those identified. This highlights that modern slavery is not solely a migration issue. Even more distressing is the fact that nearly 6,000 of the victims were children.

Simon John, co-lead of the Diocesan Initiative on Modern Slavery, has estimated that around 1,000 of these victims were identified within the Diocese of East Anglia. "This is a shocking reality," he said, "but the number of people still trapped in slavery within our Diocese may be as high as 6,000."

Projections for the future paint a bleak picture. This year, there may be up to 200,000 enslaved individuals in Britain. If current trends continue, by 2037 this figure could reach one million.

In response to this growing crisis, awareness initiatives have been taking place across the Diocese. Throughout March, talks on modern slavery were delivered to diocesan priests during Deanery meetings. These sessions included excerpts from the Vatican's 2019 document Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking, which provides guidance on combatting modern slavery from a Catholic perspective.

Pope Francis has consistently called upon Catholics to take action on this issue. He has urged the Church to actively seek out and support those trapped in modern slavery, reaffirming our moral responsibility to help the most vulnerable in society.

When asked what can be done to tackle this issue, Simon John explained: "Modern-day slaves are not hidden away. They are

working among us, but their wages are often paid directly into their traffickers' bank accounts."

To help combat this injustice, the Diocese now has nearly 40 individuals in training to recognise the signs of modern slavery. However, many more are needed. Their efforts have already led to the identification and rescue of three victims within the Diocese.

Many victims are unable to report their condition due to fear, coercion, or lack of opportunity. As Christians, we have a duty to act. Jesus said: 'I was in prison and you visited me' - likewise, we are called to reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters.

The police, local authorities, and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) have urged the public to be vigilant. We are asked to be their eyes and ears, learning to spot the signs and reporting concerns safely and anonymously.

If you suspect someone is a victim of modern slavery, please call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700.

By working together, we can ensure that the enslaved people in our Diocese are found and freed. Please consider joining this vital mission. Further resources can be accessed via the Diocese website by searching 'RCDEA Slavery.'

St Peter's Church recognised for supporting children's charity

■ **St Peter's Church in Gorleston has been recognised for its outstanding efforts in supporting Operation Christmas Child (OCC) by filling shoeboxes with gifts for children in need around the world.**

■ Mark and Debra, Church and Community Relations team members with OCC, recently visited the parish to offer their affirmation and heartfelt thanks. Their role is to support and encourage churches, schools, businesses, and individuals who partner with Samaritan's Purse in this initiative.

During their visit on 9 March, Mark and Debra attended Mass and provided feedback on last year's campaign. They expressed their gratitude for the enthusiasm with which St Peter's embraced the mission of spreading love and joy through the shoebox appeal. Mark highlighted how wonderful it was to see the church community quickly grasp the vision of sharing the Gospel's message of love with children across the world.

The impact of St Peter's involvement extended beyond the church community, as St Mary and St Peter Catholic Primary School in Gorleston also participated in the shoebox campaign. Their contribution added to the 241,015 shoeboxes sent from the UK last year, part of a global total of 11.9 million shoeboxes delivered to children in need.

Fr Alvan, parish Priest at St Peter's, expressed his gratitude, saying: "It was a

great blessing for the parish to be involved in filling shoeboxes last year. Even more inspiring was the participation of our Faith Club and St Mary and St Peter's Primary School. It was also a joy to have Mark and Debra with us, and I know our parishioners greatly appreciated their visits and fellowship. We are looking forward to getting even more involved in this wonderful ministry, bringing hope to God's children all over the world."

The parish's involvement in Operation Christmas Child is a testament to their commitment to service and compassion,

reinforcing the power of faith in action. St Peter's looks forward to continuing its partnership with OCC and spreading joy to even more children in the years to come.

Parishes across the Diocese of East Anglia are encouraged to take part in Operation Christmas Child and join this mission of love and generosity. By filling shoeboxes with small gifts, prayers, and messages of hope, churches can make a tangible difference in the lives of children who may otherwise feel forgotten. This initiative is a wonderful opportunity to engage parishioners of all ages, fostering a spirit of giving.



Fr Alvan Ibeh, Parishioners and OCC collection volunteers.

Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese

■ Schools across the Diocese saw success in Knights of St. Columba (KSC) competitions. KSC members visited several schools to award students who had won prizes in Primary School Nativity Scene Painting Competition 2024 and at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church Lowestoft for the Christmas 2024 Photography Competition.

The winners received signed certificates, a copy of their work and cash prizes from their local Knights Council and the East Anglia & Brentwood Provincial Council 10.

Pictured are the Costessey winners from St Augustine's Catholic Primary School.

The top three Nativity Painting entries in the Provincial competition at Key Stage One and Key Stage two levels have been sent to the National Round for final adjudication with a chance of winning a national prize.

The KSC hope there will be some more great entries from schools and Parishes who have been notified about the forthcoming Easter Scene Painting, Easter Photo and Prayer Writing and Essay Competitions.

Individual entries are also welcome. If you need details of how to enter contact christopherbrooks631@gmail.com



■ On Saturday 22 February, the Jubilee Mass for all Deacons, including retired Deacons and their families was celebrated at the Cathedral of John the Baptist in Norwich.

Pictured below are Bishop Peter Collins with Deacons from across the Diocese, those currently in formation for the permanent diaconate and their families, who Bishop Peter thanked for their crucial support.

■ On 9 December 2024, students from St John Fisher Catholic High School (Years 9–13) and Year 5 pupils from St Thomas More Primary took part in a Caritas training session led by Sister Judith Russi. The session aimed to inspire and equip them to become Caritas Ambassadors, promoting Catholic Social Teaching and creating positive change in their schools and communities.

Sister Judith encouraged students to live out their faith through action, focusing on social justice issues like food waste. In response, students have begun taking steps to reduce waste and use the savings to support local needs.

