



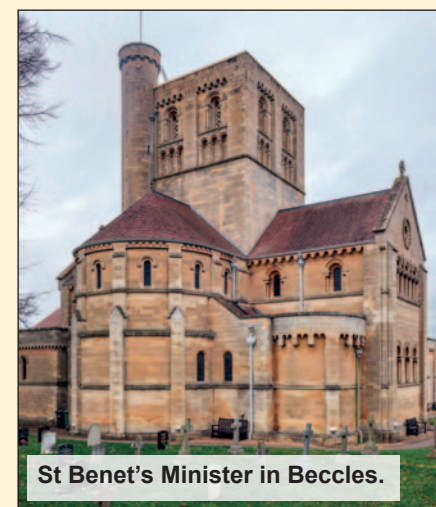
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St Benet's Minister in Beccles.

Bishop's future hope for parishes

Bishop Peter Collins has expressed his hopes for the future as the parishes of Beccles and Bungay formally transferred to the Diocese of East Anglia on January 1.

■ The parishes of St Benet in Beccles and St Edmund in Bungay, including the church of St Thomas More at Harleston, formally transferred from the Benedictines of Downside Abbey with effect from January 1.

Bishop Peter said: "Parishioners will undoubtedly feel that this brings a necessary close to a long drawn-out process, and ends the discomfort of uncertainty that many will have experienced.

"I should express my thanks to the monks of Downside for their long stewardship of the faith in Bungay and Beccles, and my grateful recognition of the many ties that parishioners will feel to the important part of England's Catholic heritage which that represents.

"At the same time, it is my hope and prayer that we will now be able to begin, with this new year, a new chapter for the parish communities and their schools as an integral part of the Diocesan family, with all the support that can bring in the future.

"With my blessing as we prepare together for the next phase of the Great Mission."

Seminarians gather with Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter Collins celebrated a special gathering with Diocese of East Anglia seminarians this Christmas, highlighting the unity and spiritual journey of East Anglia's future priests. Joshua Clovis reports.

■ On December 22, the special event took place at Our Lady of the Annunciation and the Bishop's White House in Poringland, where seminarians congregated with Bishop Peter. The occasion was marked by a Mass celebrated by the bishop, followed by a shared lunch.

Fr Peter Wygnanski, Private Secretary to the Bishop, reflected on the importance of these assemblies. He stated: "It is always such a joy to join together at these Christmas seminarian gatherings, which I remember fondly from my own time as a student for the priesthood.

"As our seminarians are discerning and preparing for the priesthood in many different places, the chance to spend time together is most precious. It is a chance to encourage each other, encourage those who are applying for formation for the priesthood, and reconnect with the newly ordained.

"It was a particular gift to speak via Zoom, as a group, with Dominic Nyathi in South Africa this year.

"The Holy Spirit evidently continues to stir the hearts of young men towards the

gift of priestly vocation and we all pray that more will be open to the possibility of receiving it," said Fr Peter.

The gathering in Poringland stands out as a poignant reminder of the communal and spiritual bonds that hold the Church together, particularly among those preparing for the priesthood. It underscores the role of such gatherings in fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among seminarians, especially during the festive season.

■ Pictured above, from the left, are Fr Jude Belnas, Fr Pat Cleary, Adam Dodd, Anthony Reilly, Dcn Anthony Asomugha, Matthew Allen, Bishop Peter, Peter Ho, Fr Bienn Carlo, Fr Mark Ashwood, Thomas Dobson and Fr Peter Wygnanski.



Rosary crusade is launched

■ The parish of St Pancras in Ipswich launched a rosary crusade to pray for the conversion of souls in Ipswich and beyond on Friday December 8.

Fr Joseph Welch said: “Beginning on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, when the Church celebrates the fact that Our Lady was filled with grace from the moment of her conception, and continuing all the way up to the feast of Our Lady of Ipswich, which is also the feast of Our Lady of Grace, on May 15, rosaries will be said for this intention by parishioners and visitors alike.

Gathered together into a spiritual bouquet, the prayers will be presented to Our Lady in May on the same day that Bishop Peter will come and bless the new statue of Our Lady of Ipswich.”

Pictured above are parishioners saying the first rosaries of the crusade before the statue of Our Lady of Ipswich in St Pancras church. (Picture credit: Stephen Griggs)

Catholic EastAnglia

Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

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Special visit from St Nicholas

■ St Nicholas and his angel helpers paid a special visit to St Joseph's Church, St Neots, on Sunday December 3. The children were given gifts of sweets, fruit and holy cards. One little girl very sweetly gave her present to Fr Tibor Borovsky, parish priest (pictured right).



Eco-move for church in ‘Sunny Hunny’

In an eco-conscious move, Hunstanton's Our Lady of Perpetual Succour & St Edmund church has invested £27,000 in solar panels, demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and long-term economic savings. Joshua Clovis reports.

■ In a progressive step towards sustainability, the church, located in the well-known seaside resort known locally as “Sunny Hunny”, has embraced solar energy, underscoring its commitment to environmental stewardship and economic foresight.

Stuart Grant, parish treasurer, who is involved in the initiative, explains the dual motive behind the investment: “To simply reduce the electrical costs to the church and the church house, and also from an environmental standpoint, as encouraged by Pope Francis, we believe it is right that we make whatever contribution we can to the achievement of Net Zero carbon emissions.”

With a total investment of £27,000 — without any grant assistance — the parish demonstrates its confidence in the long-term viability of solar energy. “We have the finances available,” added Chris Davey, Parish Civil Engineering advisor and a member of the Parish Steering Group. “we felt this was the best way to use the available finances.”

The project includes 27 solar panels, which will greatly contribute toward the



Pictured are Stuart (left) and Chris (right) with some of the solar panels.

electrical usage of the parish. The innovative addition of battery storage enhances the system's flexibility, a key feature given the church's variable energy needs.

“That gives us the opportunity to store any power when the excess is there, and then use it as and when, particularly for the church,” Stuart notes, highlighting the system's adaptability.

The planned transition from gas to electric heating is a strategic move towards greater energy efficiency and cost savings. Chris points out the practical aspect of this shift: “Our intention is to try to maximise the way that we use whatever power is available.”

Despite its commitment to solar energy, the parish has retained a pragmatic approach by keeping the gas heating system as a backup, ensuring no disruption

to church services.

The financial aspect of this venture is equally promising. Stuart reveals: “The calculations that we made so far indicate that we should get a return of our investment over about 10-12 years.”

Funding for this significant undertaking has come directly from parishioners' contributions over the years, without specific fundraising efforts for the solar system. Stuart says: “our parish has a relatively elderly demographic and they are incredibly generous towards the church and the local community.”

Installed by Solar Energy Solutions Norfolk, the solar panels are expected to last around 25 years, potentially even longer. This longevity ensures sustained benefits for the parish, both environmentally and financially.



Cathedral Dean, Fr Alan Hodgson, with children at the Family Mass and, bottom, Bishop Peter celebrates Midnight Mass.

Christmas Masses at St John's Cathedral

Over 1000 people packed into St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich on Christmas Eve for the Nativity of the Lord Family Mass.

■ Popular with families, it is the Mass when the baby Jesus is taken and placed in the crib in the Cathedral's St Joseph's Chapel.

Cathedral Dean Fr Alan Hodgson called all the children to come forward and then to follow himself and the Baby Jesus to the crib.

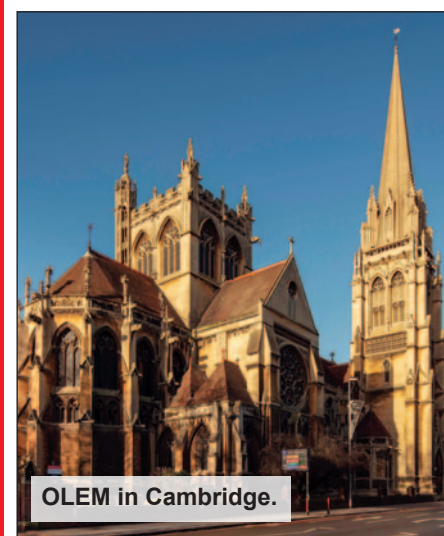
In his homily, Fr Alan talked about his favourite Christmas things, which included mince pies and Christmas pudding. But his favourite thing is that is it about the birth of Jesus.

"It is so important that we remember what Christmas is all about in the busyness and excitement of Christmas," said Fr Alan.

"It is also important that we all gather together as one big community tonight, before Christmas actually starts to celebrate the birth of Lord Saviour Jesus Christ."

Later on Christmas Eve, at the Midnight Mass, just over 600 people attended as Bishop Peter Collins celebrated the traditional Christmas Mass.

Pictures by Keith Morris and Douglas Lewins.



OLEM in Cambridge.

Grants boost for dozen East Anglia churches

■ Around a dozen East Anglian Catholic churches are among 5,000 across the United Kingdom that have benefitted from a £42 million Government conservation fund in the past 12 months.

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPW) supports the protection of religious buildings representing all faiths and denominations, benefiting local communities and 4,900 places of worship have benefited from Government support over the last year to ease the cost of essential conservation and maintenance work.

They include: Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge (£55,476.37), Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich (£25,606.57), Our Lady of Consolation and St Stephen, Lynford, Thetford (£27,027.25), St Mary's, Great Yarmouth (£12,149), St Nicholas, Pakefield (£3822), St Peter and All Souls, Peterborough (£7323), St Peter the Apostle, Gorleston (£797).

Diocese Historic Churches Support Officer, Matthew Champion, said: "Almost a dozen Catholic churches across the Diocese of East Anglia have recently benefitted from this scheme, including the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich, and the grade one listed Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge, as well as many smaller sites.

"The Listed Places of Worship grant scheme offers a real helping hand to many of our parishes and makes a significant contribution to ensuring the ongoing preservation of the Catholic heritage of East Anglia. Without this scheme, many of the programmes of repair and conservation would be so much harder, and we are continually grateful for the support of the government for these important places of worship."

Arts and Heritage Minister, Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay, said: "As churches across the country filled up for Nativity plays and Christmas services, it's a reminder of the huge role that they and other places of worship play in the lives of their community.

"The Listed Places of Worship Scheme supports these precious buildings, which are cherished by people of all faiths and none. With nearly 5,000 supported over the past year alone, I'm glad to see the difference it has made to visitors, worshippers, and the people who look after them for the benefit of future generations."

Make up your mind to spread joy this year

In his latest Voice of Hope article, Fr Alvan Ibeh asks how 2024 has been for you so far?



■ Well, I know it's still early to ask such a question at this point as we are still in the beginning of the year. But nevertheless, I still wish you all the best and hope we all land safely together at the end of the year.

While I was reading the gospel of Matthew 2, which was the gospel of Epiphany Sunday, the tenth verse of that chapter spoke to me in a special way. I believe this is what we all need to hear at the beginning of a new year.

In Matthew 2: 10, it says that when the three kings from the east saw the star, they were filled with great joy. Let's have a look at

how different versions of the Bible present this. The New International Version ("When they saw the star, they were overjoyed"), the New Living translation ("When they saw the star, they were filled with joy"), International Standard Version ("When they saw the star, they were ecstatic with joy").

Reflecting on these took me back to what happened when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth in Luke chapter 1. In verse 44, Elizabeth exclaimed, "as soon as the sound of my greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy". Jesus' star brought exceeding joy to the three kings and Mary's greeting made John leap for joy. He felt the presence of Jesus and I believe this was what made him become excited in his mother's womb.

Like Jesus our Master, we are also called to spread joy. Our presence is meant to bring joy to others and not sadness. Our presence should bring hope and not hopelessness. People should encounter us and look forward to seeing us again, not the opposite. People should come to us with broken hearts and leave feeling healed and mended. This is

what we have been commissioned to do through the spirit of Jesus that has been given to us in the sacraments we have received.

It may look insignificant, but it is always a blessing to be able to bring joy and happiness to others.

This should not just be to those known to us, but also to those we do not know. Kindness to those unknown to us can often open an unexpected door of blessings.

We remember what happened to Abraham, when in Genesis 18, he welcomed angels unknowingly. He brought joy to them, and a blessing came with it. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".

Some people, unfortunately even Christians, can be unnecessarily very nasty to others especially if they are unknown to them. Yet we will pray and ask God to reveal himself to us, when He does that in the different people we come across every day of our lives. There is no doubt that most of the people we come across in our everyday lives,

may be battling with a lot of things unknown to anyone, which they find difficult to share with anyone. So, the best thing we can do is to be nice to people for any reason and be a source of joy and happiness in their life.

I have encountered a lot of patients in the hospital, that notwithstanding their health condition, radiate so much joy that you cannot but be infected. Of course, we all know that joy can be contagious. If you are a joyful person, everyone around you will be infected but if you are always miserable, you can imagine the type of negative energy you will be spreading around.

So, dear friend, you must make up your mind to spread joy this year and always, no matter what is going on around you. One thing is sure, "it is far better to be joyful than to be miserable". I pray that your year will be filled with so much you that there will be no space for any negative energy.

■ Don't forget to follow me on my social media handles:

Facebook page: ibeh Chukwuemeka
Tiktok: voice of hope family

Variety concert staged in aid of ACN charity

■ Parishioners from St Thomas of Canterbury in Woodbridge supported a Variety Concert in aid of ACN, under the auspices of Framlingham Churches Together reports Wendy Hardinge.

It was the idea of Catholic Deacon Mike Vipond and took place at St Clare's in Framlingham. Several local musicians played saxophone, violin, piano and organ. There was also some singing and community singing and raised £400.

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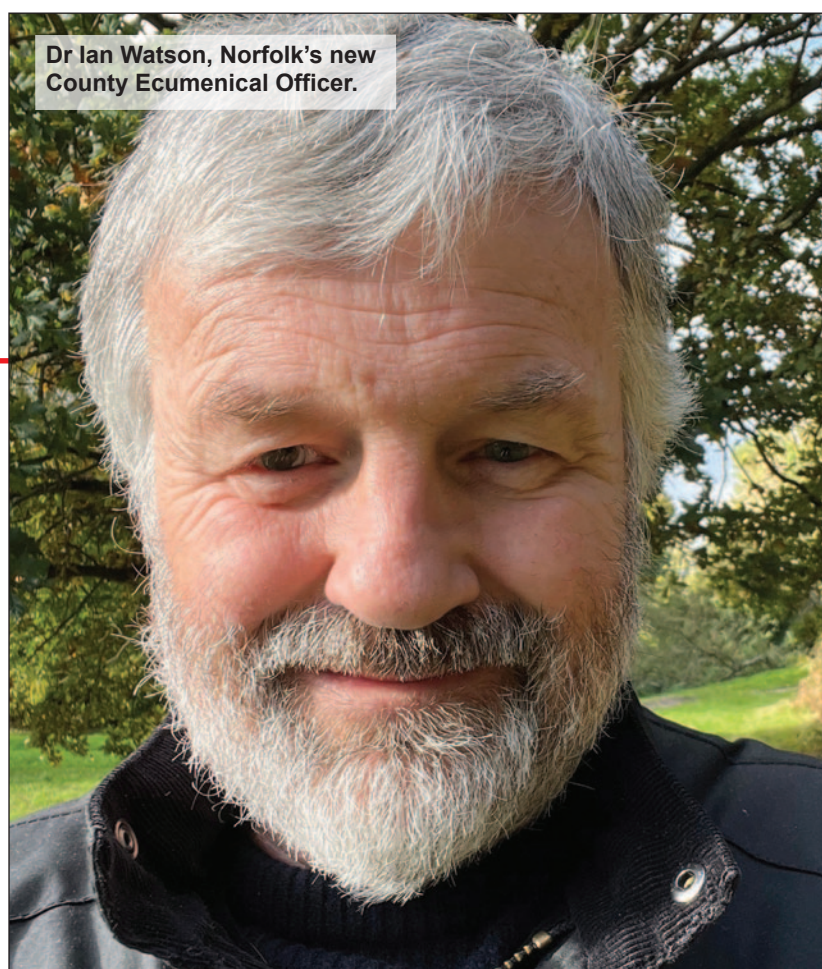
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Norfolk and Waveney Churches Together has appointed Walsingham and Wells-based Catholic Dr Ian Watson as its new County Ecumenical Officer.

■ Ian said: "I am eager to embark on this exciting journey of promoting unity and cooperation among the diverse Christian communities in our area. As a committed Christian, my passion for this role is deeply rooted in an unwavering belief that Church Unity is not just a lofty ideal but a vital mission that resonates with the very essence of our faith. "My religious life started as a Junior Covenanter and a member of the Boys Brigade. I was confirmed into the Anglican Church after military service when I first went to university aged 25.

"More recently I have become a Roman Catholic, not for any doctrinal reason but as the best way for me to personally express and strengthen my faith. My wonderful wife is Sue, and we are blessed to belong to two beautiful church communities in an inter-church marriage.



Dr Ian Watson, Norfolk's new County Ecumenical Officer.

"I am so excited about becoming the County Ecumenical Officer. It is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the different traditions and wonderful forms of worship across our region. I am the type of progressive Roman Catholic who recognises the beauty and truth that exists in all the seven denominations that

make up Norfolk and Waveney Churches Together. It will be a privilege to learn from these and to support the effort for greater visible unity whilst respecting and honouring our differences," said Ian.

"Church unity is not merely an abstract concept but a powerful force for good in our communities and beyond. It allows us to pool our collective resources, talents, and spiritual wisdom to address the challenges of our time. In a world marked by division and strife, a united Christian front can be a beacon of hope, showing the transformative power of faith, love, and reconciliation.

"Moreover, when we unite as Christians, we bear a more compelling witness to the message of Christ. Our unity amplifies our impact, making our faith more accessible and relatable to those seeking spiritual guidance and meaning in their lives. It is our collective responsibility

to demonstrate that the love of Christ knows no bounds and that we are all called to live out His message of love and compassion," said Ian.

You can contact Ian at: nwct-watson@outlook.com

nwct.org.uk

Brain tumour shock family appeal

A Catholic parishioner from Peterborough was told he only had weeks to live due to an inoperable brain tumour, just after his baby daughter was born last summer, and the family are now appealing for help to raise funds for treatment. Keith Morris reports.

■ Sacred Heart & St Oswald's parishioner Sam Bravo-Hibberd, aged 34, was diagnosed with an inoperable glioblastoma (GBM) in September, two months after welcoming his only daughter, Alejandria, into the world.

The father-of-three had been experiencing personality changes for at least a year and had suffered from headaches, taste auras and confusion for about two weeks prior. He was given just eight to 12 weeks to live and was referred to palliative care.

However, after seeking a second opinion privately, he underwent an open biopsy during which around 30% of his tumour was debulked. He is now waiting to start radiotherapy whilst his family are crowdfunding in the hope of sourcing alternative treatments not yet available on the NHS.

Sam's wife Mauricee said: "In July, I gave birth to Alejandria. I had a long recovery due to a few complications which meant numerous trips to the hospital but Sam was there to support me throughout and did most of the driving without any issues.

"We were just enjoying the baby snuggles when, two weeks after giving birth, Sam's physical symptoms started. At first he got headaches lasting just a few minutes, but then these were accompanied by a metallic taste, which we now know to be seizures."

"On August 20, I found Sam on the floor with Alejandria. He said he'd had to sit down after changing her nappy because he felt faint and had a headache. Again, he refused to go to A&E but I'd had enough, so the next day I took him to the GP.

Soon after, son Theo had a swollen jaw and ended up in A&E and Mauricee also booked Sam in and he was given an MRI scan.

"The truth was much worse than I'd ever expected," said Mauricee. "We were eventually told that Sam had a very large brain tumour.

"On September 22, we went for our first appointment with Sam's neurosurgeon only to be told there was nothing that could be done.

"I had prepared myself for a really long journey of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy but the neurosurgeon told us Sam's tumour, a glioblastoma (GBM), was inoperable and it was unlikely an oncologist would take his case on because of how aggressive his cancer was and how poor his baseline function was. This ruled out radiotherapy and chemo.

"I wasn't prepared to be told my husband, my best friend and the father of my children, had just eight to 12 weeks to live and was being referred for

Pictured are Sam and Mauricee Bravo-Hibberd with their children. Picture courtesy of the family.



palliative care."

The couple went for a second opinion at a private hospital in London and were told about some alternative treatments.

Mauricee has now launched a fundraising campaign and is hoping to raise £100,000 to fund immunotherapy treatments offered by CeGat, a genetic research clinic in Germany.

Mauricee said: "I didn't want to go down the route of asking other people for money but, after she suggested it, my sister persuaded me to swallow my pride for the sake of my children.

"People have already been very generous and we are very grateful, but we are still a long way off where we need to be in order to pursue treatments privately without compromising our children's future and financial stability.

I'm currently selling our car and a few more significant possessions and investments to raise money for Sam's treatments, but anyone wishing to help us can donate at gofund.me/f85273b5.

Sacred Heart parish priest, Fr Arockiya Seelan Poobalan, said: "The couple are very loving parishioners. They are regulars to the church and support the parish of Sacred Heart and St Oswald. Please keep this family in your prayers and support the Gofundme page if you can."

The Brain Tumour Trust says: "Brain tumours are indiscriminate; they can affect anyone at any age. What's more, they kill more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer... yet just 1% of the national spend on cancer research has been allocated to this devastating disease since records began in 2002. Brain Tumour Research is determined to change this."

If you have been touched by Sam's story you may like to make a donation via www.braintumourresearch.org/donate

Live – in Community Worker

Opportunities in the Ipswich Community
Life sharing can be life changing

Considering how to use your gap year before university? Just graduated and unsure what's next? Contemplating a career break?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then sharing your life in L'Arche alongside people who have a learning disability might just be the thing for you!

It's a great way to do something impactful and make a positive difference in someone's life. And as well as learning some key life-skills, sharing your life in L'Arche could change your whole outlook on the world too.

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As a Live-In Community Worker, you will be making your home in a L'Arche house, alongside people who have a learning disability.

You'll be building relationships of mutuality, community and spirituality, enabling people we support to be independent within a network of relationships and friendships. And where appropriate, you'll be helping L'Arche Support Workers who are employed to provide ongoing care and support to people with learning disabilities.

Living in a L'Arche Community is an intense experience that requires a big commitment. It asks you to immerse yourself in a lively community and to slow down at the same time. It brings routine and the unexpected.

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Read about Danny's experience of living in L'Arche, and watch the video below to see what L'Arche Live-Ins love about the role. Go to: <https://www.larche.org.uk/dannys-gap-year>

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Bishop Peter’s engagements

- **Jan 30 & 31:** Bishop to attend the Ecumenical Gathering of Catholic and Anglican Bishops, Norwich
- **Feb 1, Thur:** Bishop to attend the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, Department for Dialogue and Unity Meeting, London
- **Feb 2, Fri:** Annual Meeting of Religious and Mass, St John’s Cathedral
- **Feb 3, Sat:** MFL Commission, Poringland, 11am
- **Feb 4, Sun:** Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass and preach at St Edmunds College, Cambridge, 10.30am
- **Feb 8, Thur:** Bishop to attend the Diocesan Liturgy Commission, Poringland, 10 am
- **Feb 9, Fri:** Meeting with Andy Stone, the Bishop and Lay Chaplains, Poringland, 10am
- **Feb 10, Sat:** Bishop to the Annual Mass to celebrate Our Lady of Lourdes with Anointing of the Sick, St John’s Cathedral
- **Feb 13, Tue:** Bishop to St Edmunds College, 6pm, to be admitted as an Honorary Fellow. Ceremony begins 6.15pm
- **Feb 14, Ash Wednesday:** Bishop to Solemn Pontifical Mass, St John’s Cathedral, 7pm
- **Feb 15, Thur:** Bishop holding the Meeting of the Deans, Poringland, 10.30am, 11am start
- **Feb 15, Thur:** Bishop to Commission for Catechesis and Formation, 6.30pm
- **Feb 16, Fri:** Bishop to Walsingham Trustees, Walsingham
- **Feb 17, Sat:** Bishop to attend the KHS Annual Mass, Cambridge, Our Lady and the English Martyrs
- **Feb 18, Sun:** Bishop to Rite of Election, St John’s Cathedral, 3pm
- **Feb 20, Tue:** Bishop to Lenten Station Mass, St Peter and All Souls, Peterborough, Fr Adam Sowa, 6pm Exposition, 7pm Mass, 8pm Light buffet or soup
- **Feb 22, Thur:** Bishop to attend the Cathedral Trustees meeting, Cathedral, 10.30am – 1pm
- **Feb 23-25:** Parish Visitation to St Mary’s, Ipswich
- **Feb 23, Fri:** Bishop to visit St Mary’s Primary School, Ipswich, details still to be finalised
- **Feb 24, Sat:** Bishop to say Mass, 9.30am, followed by the Caritas Festival, St Mary’s, Ipswich, until 2.30pm
- **Feb 25, Sun:** Bishop to say Mass, St Mary’s Ipswich, 10am
- **Feb 27, Tue:** Bishop to Lenten Station Mass, Church of the Holy Family, King’s Lynn, Exposition, 7pm Mass, 8pm Light buffet or soup
- **Feb 29, Thur:** Bishop to attend Diocesan Schools’ Service Commission Meeting, 10.30am, 10.45am start
- **Feb 29, Thur:** Bishop to Lenten Station Mass, St Mary’s, Ipswich, Fr Jude Belnas, 6pm Exposition, 7pm Mass, 8pm light buffet or soup
- **Mar 1, Fri:** Bishop meeting with the Ignite Team, White House, Poringland, 6pm
- **Mar 2, Sat:** Annual Safeguarding Event in Newmarket, training day
- **Mar 5, Tue:** Bishop to Lenten Station Mass, St Edmunds, Bury St Edmunds, 6pm Exposition, 7pm Mass, 8pm light buffet or soup
- **Mar 6, Wed:** Bishop to Ecumenical Pilgrimage, Walsingham
- All future dates at: www.rcdea.org.uk/bishop-peter-collins/bishops-diary/

Creating faith and me

Creating connections and a better understanding between the local media and faith communities in Norwich was the aim of the Creating Connections Conference at Norwich Anglican Cathedral recently, organised by the Religion Media Centre, which heard from Bishop Peter Collins and communications director Keith Morris.

■ An audience of around 60 from many of the local faith communities, heard RMC executive chair Michael Wakelin introduce the day on November 30.

Former BBC Radio Norfolk broadcaster Tony Mallion gave an insightful view of the local media landscape comprising TV and radio stations, daily and weekly newspapers and independent Christian news website Network Norfolk – “an exceptional digital Christian news service”, said Tony.

“The media has changed but, although fragmented, the opportunities are still there for the local faith communities. The challenge is to find out what is there and which ones will reach the audiences you want to engage with.

“Despite the changes in technology and the bewildering and ever-increasing media outlets, the media still thrives on the one thing that never changes – your stories. You’ve got them and they want them – it is as simple as that,” said Tony.

Dean of Norwich Cathedral, Very Rev Andrew Braddock, gave an overview of the religious landscape in Norwich, dubbed in the 2011 Census as the “least religious city in the country” with 42% having No Religion (up to 53% in 2021).

Dr Braddock went on to partly dismantle the figures which still said that 45% of people were Christian (down to 34% in 2021), totalling almost 60,000 people, compared to a mere 131 Atheists, 61 Humanists, along with 12 Druids and 10 Heathens, all vastly outnumbered by the 783 Jedi Knights.

Dr Braddock went on to say that the religious nature of Norwich went way beyond the bare statistics, encompassing the city’s very identity and the deep-rooted engagement and influence of the local faith communities in the city.

Attendance at Anglican services in Norwich, according to 2019 figures, stand at 2% — just shy of the national figure of 2.2%. Dr Braddock said there was a significant growth in evangelical churches in Norwich, and he highlighted the social action of numerous faith groups, saying that the number of working hours clocked up by volunteers was 20% higher than the national average.

The cathedral was all-important to the city’s identity, said the dean. “We are the largest visitor attraction in Norfolk and Norwich by some way,” he said. “There’s a strong sense of relationship between the cathedral and the civic life of the city. I think we are pretty religious in spite of what the headlines might say in some newspapers.”

A panel of third-year broadcast and multimedia journalism students from the University of East Anglia then spoke to the conference. Introduced by their lecturer Barnie Choudhury, a former BBC journalist and editor-at-large and columnist at Eastern Eye, the group screened a series of TikTok videos they had made on religion for the event. They covered the Census “no religion” question, the Quaker community in Norwich, the Norwich Buddhist Centre, the story of the increasing number of Muslim converts in Britain and the small Jewish community of West Norfolk who regularly meet in people’s houses because the nearest synagogue is 40 miles away.

Bishop Peter Collins briefly gave his thoughts on the importance of communication and religion and the media and said he was a part of bodies creating dialogue with both the Anglican Church and other faith communities.

Former BBC faith producer Kirsteen Thorne then hosted a panel of media professionals. The aim was to introduce the local media to the city’s faith and community groups and to build a better understanding of how they can co-operate.

Ian Clarke, executive editor of the Eastern Daily Press, said much had changed since he started work in the industry in



the 1980s, but added: “The way that we tell news is very different but the number of eyeballs that are on stories that we read and pictures that we take is probably more than when I first started.”

Everyone on the panel agreed that communicating about people was vital to storytelling. Robert Thompson, editor of BBC East, said: “In the heart of every journalist they want to make a connection with the story and the interviewee who is telling that story because that is what turns it into a great story. For all of us, it’s about how we build those connections.”

When questioned about the lack of trust that some may have in journalists, Simon Wright, Anglia TV’s programme and digital editor, said: “We all live and work in this community. There’s no great benefit to us in getting things wrong and sensationalising things. We are all regulated, but more importantly, we are all dependent on our viewers who are people in this region.”

Keith Morris, director of communications for the Diocese of East Anglia and publisher at Christian news website Network Norfolk, said that while his website’s audience was smaller than the media giants, his reporters were in closer contact with them and provided “inspiring and engaging”

dia connections

Pictured left is Bishop Peter Collins addressing the Creating Connections conference at Norwich Cathedral and, below, the media panel, including diocesan communications director Keith Morris (right), facing questions from the floor. Pictures by the RMC.

Religion Media Centre



content for readers. In particular, they were able to focus on faith stories, he added.

Dean Tucker, manager of Future Radio, a community station based in Norwich, said its focus was on music, but “we are all about giving people a voice, certainly people who wouldn’t necessarily get their voice heard anywhere else”.

The panel was followed by a time of networking amongst participants and media representatives.

Afterwards Michael Wakelin said: “After all the other cities we have visited, Norwich was the climax to our Creating Connections project. With all

the lessons learnt from other venues we feel we got this one just about right – the best in the series. This is thanks largely to the wonderful cooperation and support we received in setting up the event and the quality of the participants on the day. We have had excellent feedback and shall look forward to following up with you.

“The conference was such a successful event. It really couldn’t have gone any better. My RMC colleagues were all of the same opinion that this is the best one we have ever done.”

religionmediacentre.org.uk



Betty Hastings pictured with Bishop Peter and, below with Bishop Graham.

Bishops’ honour for special Betty

A Norfolk Christian, who two years ago was presented with Royal Maundy Money, has met and been congratulated by both an Anglican and a Catholic bishop for her work with her church community in Cromer.



■ Betty Hastings, who turns 98 on February 21, was awarded the Royal Maundy Money in April 2022 by Queen Elizabeth II and presented with it by the then Prince Charles, in a centuries-old tradition.

Betty is a member of St Martin’s Anglican church, Suffield Park, Cromer and during the Covid pandemic she put together a book on the church.

The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, received a copy of it and nominated Betty for the Maundy award in. Betty got to meet with Bishop Graham on December 19. She then met Bishop Peter Collins

on January 9, arranged by her daughter-in-Law, Laura Hastings, who is Bishop Peter’s PA.

Laura said: “Betty is a very special lady and her life has been dedicated to the Lord. She has been playing the organ for the church for over 70 years and is still involved in the flower arranging at St Martins and is still a very active member of the mission of the church.”

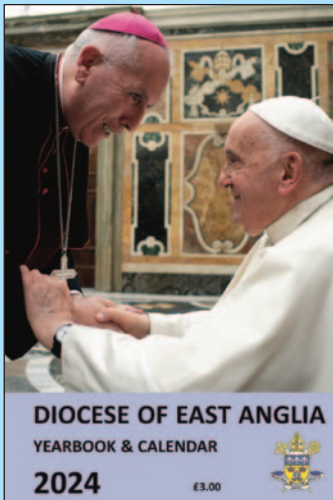
Speaking at the time of her nomination, Betty said: “I am overwhelmed and excited at being given such an unexpected and once-in-a-lifetime honour.”

Diocese of East Anglia Directory & Calendar – 2024

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Pictured left is Peter Ho at his degree ceremony and, below, Anthony Reilly and Peter Ho at Oscott.

Two diocese seminarians receive theology degrees

Two Diocese of East Anglia seminarians have received BA degrees from the University of Birmingham as part of their studies at Oscott College seminary.

■ On December 5, Peter Ho, a fourth-year seminarian, achieved a significant milestone by receiving a BA degree in Fundamental Catholic Theology from the University of Birmingham. Alongside Peter, Anthony Reilly also earned the same degree, although he was not

able to attend the ceremony.

This accomplishment is typically awarded to Year 3 seminarians who have completed their initial three years at Oscott College.

The event, held at the Great Hall of the University of Birmingham, was graced by numerous academics, including Fr Andrew Robinson, Oscott's Dean of Theology, and Fr Guy Nicholls, Oscott tutor in liturgy.

The attainment of this degree represents a pivotal moment in seminarians' journey, marking the half-way point towards their ordination to the priesthood. We will continue to uphold these dedicated individuals in our prayers as they progress in their vocation.



Posada gets home for the night in Advent

■ Mary and Joseph journeyed around the Parish of King's Lynn in search of a resting place, a posada, a home for the night, during the season of Advent, reports Pauline McSherry.

Wherever they travelled, an open door and warm welcome were never far away for Mary and Joseph. Families opened their doors and invited neighbours to celebrate the joy of having the couple and the donkey as their guests. I too was privileged to share my home with our blessed mother, St Joseph and parish friends.

Together we sat around the sitting room and prayed. Then we partied, it was indeed a time for party fayre and renewed friendship. It was a truly memorable occasion when Mary and Joseph found their posada, their resting place for a night in my home.

Thank you to all helping hands, it was indeed good to be together.

Transformation for Lent chance offered

■ The Ignite Team is hosting a weekend retreat for young people at Clare Priory the weekend before Lent begins (February 10-11).

Transform For Lent is open to young people between the ages of 16 to 30.

Held at the beautiful Clare Priory, the weekend will include contemporary praise and worship music, inspiring talks and passionate prayer times. Hamish MacQueen (Director of Diocesan Youth Service) said 'It's a great way to start Lent, by getting away from the busyness of life, and Clare is just so beautiful' For more information and to book a place see www.rcdea.org.uk/youth



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Painting is ‘like Jesus looking into my soul’

St Mark’s Catholic Church in Ipswich celebrated Advent with a new Divine Mercy painting, commissioned by Fr Luke Goymour and crafted by his brother, artist Ben Goymour. Joshua Clovis reports.

■ St Mark’s Catholic Church in Ipswich kicked off the new liturgical year this Advent with the delivery of a new painting of the Divine Mercy. The five-foot oil painting was commissioned for the Church by parish priest, Fr Luke Goymour and painted by his brother, professional artist, Ben Goymour.

Fr Luke explains, “I wanted to replace the small, faded image of the Divine Mercy that we had with something that was worthy and that would enhance the church building. Over the years, I have grown in my appreciation of the Divine Mercy devotion and find the celebration of the feast day of Divine Mercy pastorally very powerful. I spoke to various members of the parish and there was a lot of excitement at the possibility of getting a large image of the Divine Mercy painted. When I suggested that my brother might be able to help us out, a parish couple who were familiar with his work, came forward and said that they would like to pay for the painting.”

Fr Luke then contacted his brother who came and measured up the space and set about creating the image. Ben Goymour is an accomplished artist, who specialises in seascapes but has proven extremely versatile in painting landscapes, cityscapes, animals, and celebrities. Up until now, however, he had never tackled a religious subject and never attempted to paint Christ, for him this would be a new challenge.

Ben explained: “I spent a long time working out how to technically paint the subject as it was very different to anything I had painted before. The real technical issues were painting the very thin lines tapering to nothing on the rays coming from Jesus’ heart. I had to build a straight-line painting device, and with the help of my wife, pivot it around so that the angles looked right.”

Ben enjoyed painting Jesus but felt the



pressure of the task: “I had to get it right, it was such a famous image which is important to so many people. People pray with this image; it’s going in a church, and it’s got to look a certain way.” Ben described the task of painting Jesus as an immersive activity:

“I spent a lot of time just studying and looking at the image. You have to learn your subject. I probably looked at a thousand different images of Jesus. I had two months preparing for this, even before the brushes came out.”

The process of painting Jesus was for Ben a different experience from anything else he had done.

“I painted him in stages,” he said. “I had to be in the right frame of mind to work on him and couldn’t work on anything else whilst I was painting him. I immersed myself in what I was doing. I couldn’t, for example, paint Jesus, and then have a break and paint a seascape, I had to be completely focused on painting him.”

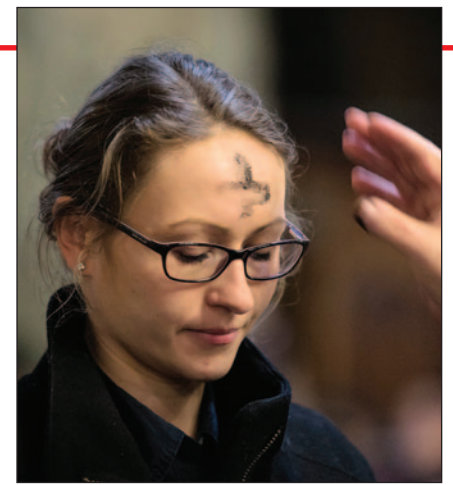
When asked what he enjoyed most about the painting Ben explained: “I absolutely loved doing the first coat, after

doing the necessary prep and making a jig for my easel (as the painting was so big) the painting seemed to flow really nicely, the first day I started at 9am and painted continuously until late and it started to look like Jesus very quickly. Throughout the day, Jesus seemed to materialise on the board, and it was really rewarding.”

Ben and his wife Kerry came to Mass on Sunday December 3 and presented the image to the parish. After a simple prayer of welcome and thanksgiving, the painting was blessed and installed on the right of the sanctuary. Ben and Kerry were around after Mass to give people the chance to meet the artist.

The painting was welcomed enthusiastically by the parish, with one parishioner remarking, “Absolutely stunning” and another, “Seems like Jesus is looking into my soul.”

Reproductions of Ben’s interpretation of the Merciful Jesus have been made into prayer cards and have been distributed to parishioners at Mass and are available from St Mark’s. More details on Ben’s work at: bengoymour.com.



Faith in the Home: living our Catholic faith each day

Lent is a period of penitence during which we are invited to bring ourselves back onto the right path in all areas of our lives and to convert our hearts and minds to God, explains Marriage & Family Life Co-ordinator, Antonia Braithwaite, in her Faith in the Home column.

■ Our Lenten practices can be divided up into Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

■ **Prayer** – helps grow and strengthen our relationship with God. Lent is an excellent time for families to pray together more; to read through one of the Gospels together; pray the rosary together (or pray one decade together); read that Sunday’s Gospel before Mass and talk about it; make an effort to say morning and bedtime prayers; to pray before meals; go to daily Mass whenever possible; attend our parish’s Stations of the Cross on a Friday; and definitely to go to confession.

■ **Fasting** – by saying “no” to something we might really want, we strengthen our will so we can resist the temptation to sin when it comes. We also strengthen our willpower to choose what is right, even when it is difficult. Just as physical exercise makes our bodies stronger, practicing self-denial strengthens our willpower.

Fasting from treats like chocolate, cake, biscuits and all drinks but water is a common way to fast. But also consider some fasting from things like TV, music, social media and computer games, or switching off phones at a certain time in the evening or on Sundays. This all helps us to foster a greater interior and exterior silence in order to hear God better and to have more time for the family to be together and to do good things together.

■ **Almsgiving** – whether we give large or small, we strive to imitate Christ, who gave His life for us on the cross so that we might have eternal life. It is the size of our generosity, not the size of our act, that makes the difference. Children can be encouraged to donate toys, spend pocket money on a Mass said for a deceased family member, raise money for their parish or some other good cause, or to give of themselves by spending time helping younger siblings, assisting their parents around the home, or doing volunteer work. Anything which involves charity and self-sacrificial love for another person will help in bringing us closer to God.

Opportunity to play key historic churches’ role

■ The Diocese of East Anglia is currently looking for a volunteer to play a key role in caring for the historic churches in its care across East Anglia.

The diocese boasts some of the finest Catholic churches in England. These range from the grade one listed Slipper Chapel near Walsingham, to the grade one listed Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich and the only church in the country entirely designed by the controversial twentieth century artist and sculptor Eric Gill – St Peter’s

church in Gorleston.

The care of these churches is undertaken by the Historic Churches Committee of the diocese, which is made up of a mixture of religious and lay members, including many experts in historic buildings and architecture.

The diocese is currently seeking a new Secretary to the Historic Churches Committee. The Secretary is at the forefront of ensuring that the Historic Churches Committee processes its business in a professional and timely manner, and ensures the preser-

vation of our historic churches for present and future generations.

The role is a voluntary one, and involves a commitment of approximately 20 days a year. If you are interested in learning more about the role in the first instance please contact the Chair of the Historic Churches Committee, Moira Goldstaub - moiragoldstaub@goldstaub.co.uk

More details can be found at.

www.rcdea.org.uk/opportunity-to-play-key-historic-churches-role/

Reflections on Vatican II – Divine Revelation

In preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2025, Pope Francis encouraged a return to the documents of Vatican II, refreshing awareness of the fruits of that Council. To encourage your own study of those documents, Fr Peter Wygnański here begins a short series of articles about the four major constitutions.

Reflecting on the Constitutions of Vatican II: 1 – Dei Verbum and Divine Revelation.

■ Not too long ago, I travelled to Camden to catch up with an old friend. During our festive dinner, we became aware, through stilted conversation, that his wife and I knew this schoolmate of mine in very different ways. I had a long, shared past with him, the sort of which she had only just begun to create. She, on the other hand, knew him more intimately than I did and had detailed knowledge of his day-to-day life.

We reflected a while about these different ways of knowing someone: imagine if someone had written a momentous, thoroughly researched, four-volume biography of my life, memorising every little fact about me, but without ever actually meeting me?

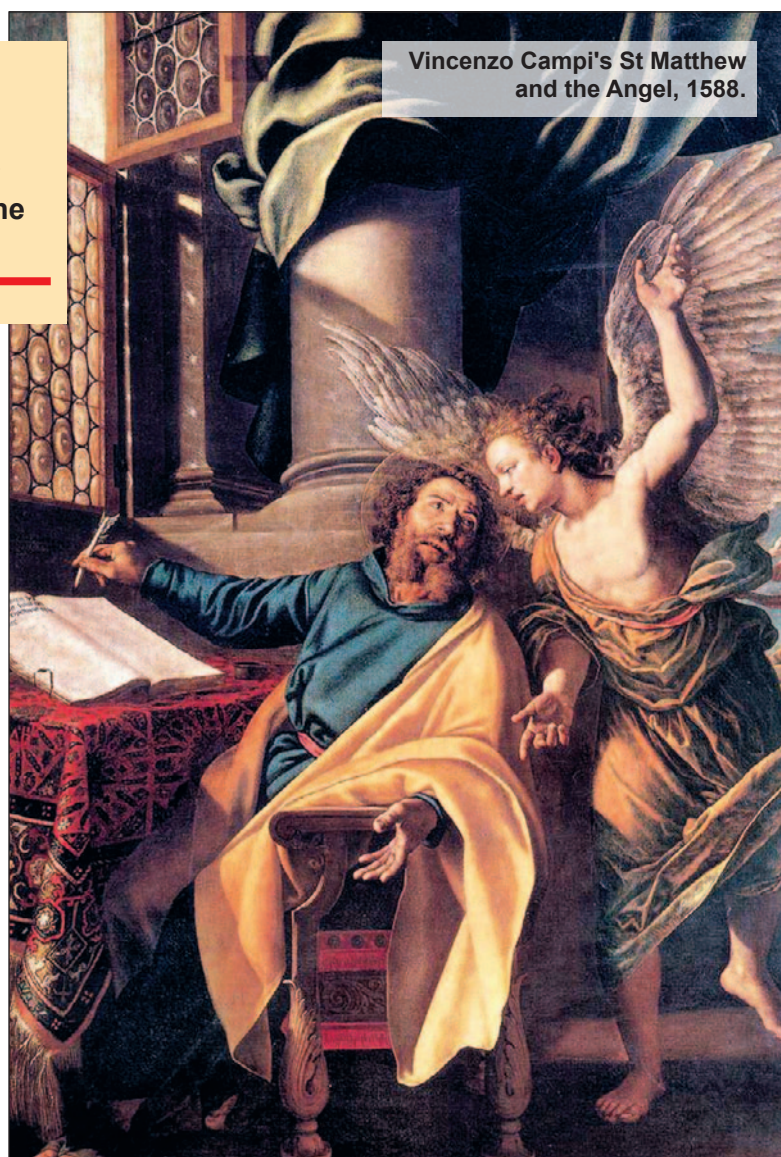
Who would know me 'better', that studious author, or my comparably ignorant childhood friend? Who would give me better advice or consolation? Who would share more in my joys and griefs? Who would be more likely to help me see a different point of view? These diverse ways of knowing can help

us reflect, as the Second Vatican Council did, about how we know God.

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, (Latin for the Word of God), was a watershed moment for our understanding of how God reveals Himself to humanity, and how we, in turn, respond.

The document takes its name, as all such documents do, from its opening words: "Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith, the sacred synod takes its direction from these words of St John: We announce to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you, so that you may have fellowship with us and our common fellowship be with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." (§1), What was different then, about this understanding of God's Revelation, and what does that mean for us today?

We can take for granted, now, that Vatican II refocused how we think about God's communication to us. In the time leading up to the council, there was fear that the modern world called the eternity of divine truths into question. The Catholic faith was easier to defend if



Vincenzo Campi's St Matthew and the Angel, 1588.

Revelation was thought of as a momentous biography of God, the list of things we know about Him, through Scripture and Tradition.

Faith, then, was largely a matter of agreeing with, or submitting to, that list of teachings which were carefully preserved.

As long as I believed what I received, and did what I was supposed to, I could be part of the Church and saved. When Revelation is a list, however, we can fall into the trap of worrying about the list more than the God it describes, and Scripture and Tradition of the Church

seem to wrestle with each other for the final word.

The Council Fathers, however, rediscovered an ancient understanding of Revelation as being more like knowing a childhood friend, a shared past. Revelation is not the content, but the process: the Living God, "out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends" (§2), to make himself known to us, most fully through the incarnate Word bursting into History in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Revelation is God's unveiling action, the "divine well-spring" from which "both Scripture and Tradition flow" (§9), we do not throw away the teachings entrusted to the apostles and faithfully handed down to us through the ages by their successors, but we receive those teachings as they are meant to be, sure knowledge which point to the true depths of our human condition and to the God who "frees us from the darkness of sin and death to raise us up to life eternal." (§4)

We believe, then, because we are able to encounter a living power who has reached out towards us by His self-disclosure, and our faith is a relationship with Jesus Christ. In friendship with God, already a fruit of the Holy Spirit, that same spirit "opens the eyes of our minds" so that we "commit our whole selves freely to God", with full submission of intellect and will." (§5)

That is how we come to know Christ, and how "the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love." (§1)

First-ever Cantonese Catholic children's group

■ The first-ever Cantonese Catholic children's group in Cambridgeshire has started and is called Jesus Hug, report Frances Tai and Elizabeth Lam.

The Cambridge Cantonese community has been able to celebrate Mass monthly in its first language, Cantonese, since April 2022, at Our Lady of Lourdes, Sawston.

Now, with the continuous support of the Diocese of East Anglia and Canon John Minh, our children's group – Jesus Hug – came into being on September 1.

In the run-up to its inaugural meeting, planning included adherence to the safeguarding process and all volunteers underwent DBS vetting.

There were 18 children enrolled at the first meeting at Sawston. Canon John opened and blessed the first meeting and, in his remarks, encouraged the children

to value their first language, whilst learning and enhancing their Catholic faith.

Jesus Hug meetings are held after the Cantonese Mass each month. Children are accompanied by their parents in the class.

The community hopes that the regular gathering will encourage the children to understand more of what the Bible teaches and to hone their praying practice. Also to follow the precious tradition of Cantonese sacred music and to take part in more Cantonese faith-based group activities, all the while focusing on integration and exchanges within the Diocese.

Many of the children attend first communion and confirmation catechism classes in their own parishes and a number are training to be altar servers.

You can enrol for the group at: forms.gle/3JhLWXnTLAm7qLME9



Pictured is the Jesus Hug group in Cambridge.

Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese



■ Sr Helen Costigane, who lectures at Allen Hall Seminary, London, led a Day of Recollection for parishioners at the Church of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham, on Saturday December 2, just before the First Sunday of Advent reports Fr Denis Gallagher.



■ Parishioners at St Pancras church in Ipswich gathered for its monthly lunch in the parish hall on December 14 and enjoyed a gourmet meal prepared by Chalotte and Lisa, reports Fr Joseph Welch.

As usual, around 20 people sat down to chat and to appreciate some wonderful cooking and, at the same time, to raise money for Mary's Meals. Each month the Thursday Lunches are free to all comers but donations are invited and the parish usually raises about £100 to help feed children around the world who might not otherwise get to eat anything that day."

Pictured: parishioners enjoying lunch. Picture credit: Rosa Patten.



■ A peace vigil to remember all those who have died in the ongoing conflict happening in the Holy Land, was held in Wisbech on December 16, sponsored by the Catholic peace movement Pax Christi, Stop the War locally and Wisbech Interfaith Forum.

Sean Finlay, from Pax Christi, said: "Despite the biting cold some 15 people came for various periods in the late afternoon. It was held at the Clarkson memorial which honours the great anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson who was born in Wisbech.

"Among the attendees was Robin Jamison from Watlington Norfolk, who is a Jew and who stated that he is appalled at the loss of life and the failure of our government and many others to demand a ceasefire now and the commencement of real negotiations," said Sean. One of the peace candles from the vigil was carried in procession at the carol service at the local parish church on Christmas Eve.

Sean has written to his MP, Stephen Barclay, who is the Secretary of State for Rural Affairs, saying: "I appeal to you to use whatever limited influence our government has to call for a ceasefire, to be followed by serious efforts by the world community to 'lance this boil' once and for ever."

On Christmas Eve, the peace candle which had been displayed at the Peace Vigil on the Clarkson Memorial in Wisbech was carried to the Parish Church for the annual Carol Service. Sean said: "A darkened church witnessed its light gradually spreading through the large congregation. At the end of the service the candle, with the prayer card, was then placed in the Orthodox shrine where it burned for the next seven days.

"Speaking after the Angelus prayer in Rome recently, Pope Francis pleaded for an end to the attacks (on both sides) and repeated what he has said before: 'War is always a defeat. Every war is a defeat'. He reminded us all that 'terrorism and war do not lead to any solution, but only to the death and suffering of so many innocent people,' said Sean.



■ St George's parish in Norwich held a Crib Festival from December 8 to 10 to mark the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi creating the first live crib.

The festival was organised by the Norwich Secular Franciscans in honour of the 800th anniversary of St Francis organising the first crib scene in Greccio near Assisi from which our crib tradition follows.

Anne Murrin, Minister, Norwich Pax et Bonum Fraternity, said: "There were posters and photos around the church detailing the story of what is believed to be the origins, 800 years ago, of our subsequent desire to have replicas reminding us of the birth of Jesus at Christmas, along with collections of cribs belonging to anyone who wanted to have their crib sets displayed."