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Bishop Peter Collins meets Pope Francis during the "Boot Camp" for new bishops at the Vatican in September. © Vatican Media

# Encounter with Pope Francis

**Bishop Peter Collins met Pope Francis during a formation conference for 230 new bishops in Rome during September. Here he gives his thoughts on the experience.**

■ From September 2 to 11, I was in Rome participating in the Formation Conference for New Bishops, an event that is jointly organised each year by the Dicastery for Bishops and the Dicastery for Evangelisation: the Dicastery for Bishops convened 120 from Europe, North Africa, North, Central and South America whilst the Dicastery for Evangelisation convened 110 from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia

and Oceania. The two groupings meet separately, though we convened together on one of the conference days.

There were three addresses every day of the conference, presented by the Cardinal Prefect of each Dicastery – these being the departments of the Roman Curia that advise the Pope and assist the bishops across the world in disciplines of doctrine, policy and administration. The scope of the content was broad and deep.

The range of topics was interesting and challenging. For example there was an address from Archbishop Paul Gallagher, who was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Liverpool and is now deputy to the Secretary of State with responsibility for Relations with States and International Organisations. He spoke on a variety of global scenarios and the chal-

lenges faced by the Church as it strives to exercise its mission across the world.

Cardinal Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, spoke on the Promotion and Transmission of the Faith and on the Juridical Protection of Persons (Safe-guarding).

Cardinal Arthur Roche, who was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Leeds and is now prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, spoke on Ecclesial Communion and the recent Papal Motu Proprio 'Traditionis Custodes' which addresses issues relating to the celebration of the Latin Rite.

Alongside the intensive schedule of daily input, the conference provides the

■ **Continued on page two.**

## Cardinal set to visit

■ St Peter and All Souls Church in Peterborough will host a special Mass to welcome His Eminence Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo of East Timor (Timor-Leste), marking a significant spiritual and cultural exchange between UK and East Timor Catholic communities.

St Peter and All Souls is set to host the special Mass on November 10 at 6pm to welcome the leader of the Catholic Church of East Timor, His Eminence Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo. His visit has received strong support from Bishop Peter Collins, and serves as a part of the dignitary's visit to various communities in the UK.

In a letter to Bishop Peter, His Excellency Joao Paulo Rangel, Ambassador of East Timor to the UK, requested support and authorization: "As a Catholic, I deeply appreciate your dedication to serving our community in Peterborough through Fr Adam Sowa. Your commitment to spreading God's love and compassion is an inspiration to us and many others. Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo will be conducting his first ever pastoral visit to our communities in the UK, starting in Oxford and continuing as far as Northern Ireland. We sincerely value your kind authorisation for such activities to take place in the parish."

The day will commence with a meeting with the East Timor community from 11am to 1pm, followed by a luncheon with the Peterborough Deanery Clergy at All Souls Presbytery at 1.30pm. There will also be a visit to Peterborough Cathedral from 3pm to 5pm before the special Mass for the East Timor community at St Peter and All Souls Church at 6pm.

The occasion promises to be an enriching spiritual and cultural exchange, enhancing ties between the Catholic communities in the UK and East Timor.

■ **Picture of His Eminence Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo by José Fernando Real.**





## Encounter with Pope

■ Continued from page one.

immensely important and enriching opportunity for the participants to meet each other and share their experience from a diversity that is truly global. In coming to East Anglia, I have often mentioned how long it takes to travel from Norwich to Peterborough or St Neots. Such thoughts gain a proper perspective when hearing from a bishop in Canada that his furthest outstation is accessed by a four-hour flight in a turbo-prop aircraft. It was a great privilege to encounter, and a most encouraging experience to engage with, episcopal colleagues from across the world.

Bishop Philip Moger, former Rector of the Shrine at Walsingham and now Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Southwark, and myself, were the only new bishops from the UK. We were both delighted to be invited to 'English Tea' one afternoon by a group of seminarians on the university campus where we were residing. The group of eight were drawn from Central and South America and they provided delicious fare and a most entertaining assembly. Our confreres 'protested' that the English were receiving special treatment, which I am happy to say was quite true. I am sending all eight seminarians a certificate declaring them to be 'Honorary Englishmen'.

The highlight of our gathering came on September 9 and was entitled 'The Encounter with Peter'. Our grouping of 120 celebrated Mass in the Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican and then proceeded to the Apostolic Palace to be received in audience by the Holy Father.

Pope Francis addressed us without notes and asked for questions from the new cohort of bishops, engaging us in animated conversation for the next two-and-a-half hours. The audience concluded with Pope Francis greeting each and every one of us. I spoke to His Holiness in Spanish and told him that I came from the 'Far East' of England!

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**EDITOR:** Keith Morris  
tel: 07712 787762  
Pear Tree Farmhouse,  
Wymondham Road,  
Wrenningham, Norwich,  
NR16 1AT.  
[keith.morris@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:keith.morris@rcdea.org.uk)



Articles and photographs for the next edition are very welcome and should be sent to the editor, ideally via email, by Monday November 27.

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## Parish says farewell to Fr Michael

■ Parishioners from St Jude's, Whittlesey and Sacred Heart, Ramsey, have come together to mark the retirement of Fr Michael Vulliamy, who had been their Parish Priest since 2016.

The celebration took place together at Childers Club, Whittlesey, on Friday September 15, reports Eilish Storey.

"Fr Michael, who will be living in Peterborough, thanked parishioners for their kindness over the last seven years and for their generous leaving gift. We wish Fr Michael a happy and peaceful retirement."



Pictured above is Fr Michael with parishioners from Sacred Heart church in Ramsey and, left with Bishop Peter and Fr Arockiya Seelan at Sacred Heart & St Oswald's in Peterborough where he has retired to live.

# New Rector of Walsingham National Shrine is inducted

**Fr Robert Billing was inducted as the new Rector of the Catholic National Shrine at Walsingham on Sunday September 24, during a Mass led by Bishop Peter Collins.**

■ In a moving celebration on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Walsingham, Bishop Peter led a solemn Mass to usher in a new era for the Catholic National Shrine. Concelebrating with Bishop Peter were Bishop Emeritus Alan Hopes, Bishop Emeritus Michael Campbell OSA and an assembly of 14 priests, including the newly inducted Rector.

Also present was Fr Kevin Smith, the Administrator of the Anglican Shrine.

Fr Robert officially assumed his appointment as the Rector of the shrine during this special Mass, succeeding in a position that carries significant responsibilities and expectations within the Catholic community.

During the homily, Bishop Peter expressed his heartfelt sentiments and affirmed the significance of the appointment. "As bishop of the diocese and as guardian of the National Shrine, it has been my responsibility and privilege, with the approbation of the Standing Committee of the Bishops' Conference of



Fr Robert Billing (left of centre) with Bishop Peter Collins and others at his induction as Rector at Walsingham.

England and Wales, to nominate and appoint Fr Robert Billing as our new Rector here at the National Shrine," said Bishop Peter.

He continued: "I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Bishop Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster, for his generosity in releasing Fr Robert for this great service. I also thank Fr Robert for his steadfast fidelity to the fullness of faith, to the ministerial priesthood, and to

the vital mission of evangelisation."

Bishop Peter then invoked divine blessings upon Fr Robert's new ministry. "Ever obedient to Christ and allegiant to His Church, ever devoted to the Mother of God and her powerful intercession, may Fr Robert's service to God's holy people prosper a rich and abundant harvest," he concluded.

[walsingham.org.uk](http://walsingham.org.uk)





Pictures of the Penfrancia Pilgrimage, courtesy of Tribu Bicolandia.

# Penfrancia takes to water on the Broads

**The 13th Annual Pilgrimage and Feast celebrating the Philippines' devotion to Our Lady of Penfrancia took place in the twin Norfolk villages of Hoveton and Wroxham on September 17, reports Nick Walmsley.**

■ The pilgrimage is based on the huge celebrations that are held at Our Lady's Minor Basilica at Naga, Bicol Province in the Philippines, which is said to be the biggest Marian gathering in SE Asia. Remarkably, the Diocese of East Anglia holds two such events on the third weekend in September: at Ipswich on Saturday and at Hoveton on Sunday.

The Hoveton Pilgrimage has grown year-on-year (apart from the Covid years) with around 400 pilgrims from all over the east of England now taking part, including communities from Norwich, Dereham, King's Lynn, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Colchester, Boston, Louth and Lincoln, with visitors from as far away as Manchester and Birmingham attending.

It is the culmination of the Our Lady's own 'Pang-sunka' (visits) when her statue goes to Filipino communities in East Anglia and the East Midlands throughout the summer. This year Our Lady's statue



was first taken in a 1914 Model T Ford to the boats, and then on a 'fluvial procession' on the Norfolk Broads from Wroxham when the Rosary was recited.

On return, the statue processed with banners and singing through the village of Hoveton to St Helen's Catholic Church where a Festival Mass was concelebrated by Fr Jude

Belnas and St Helen's Parish Priest Fr Peter Raj and a feast followed.

This year, all three of Broads Tours fleet of passenger boats, each holding 100 people, were full, and the procession stretched back through the major tourist centre, with the front reaching the church almost before the end of it had crossed the ancient bridge between the twin villages.

The pilgrimage is organised by the Tribu Bicolandia in the Norwich area, under the direction of Fred Venzon who says that the Tribu has great ideas for the pilgrimage in 2024, which marks the centenary of Our Lady's shrine at Naga being granted Minor Basilica status.



## news in brief

### Charity walk for leprosy centre

■ Cambridge priest Fr Colin Carr OP, has been marking his 82nd birthday during October with an 82-km sponsored walk to raise crucial funds for Zimbabwe's Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, supported by the John Bradburne Memorial Society.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society was founded in 1995 to support the residents of the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe. This society was established in memory of John Bradburne, who went to school



in Norfolk and who has been nominated for canonisation to become Zimbabwe's first saint.

John dedicated his life to caring for society's most vulnerable individuals, including those with leprosy, providing ten years of selfless physical and spiritual care. He was murdered in 1979. The society raises funds for the leprosy care centre and educates the public about Bradburne's saintly life and his extensive poetic writings.

During October, JBMS supporter, Fr Colin Carr OP, who resides in Blackfriars, Cambridge, has been celebrating his 82nd birthday by undertaking the sponsored walk to raise funds for the people at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe. The centre has become a beacon of hope and healing for countless individuals affected by leprosy and other diseases, providing essential medical care, rehabilitation, and support. JBMS continues to aid them through donations.

Fr Colin has had a long-standing association with Zimbabwe; he taught at St Ignatius College and, during a visit to Silveira House, met John Bradburne and observed the swarms of bees in his room.

All the money raised from Fr Colin's walk will go directly to supporting the patients and families living at Mutemwa, whom JBMS assists through housing, medication, and food, aiming to improve their quality of life.

The donation page is available at: [justgiving.com/campaign/jbmswalk](https://justgiving.com/campaign/jbmswalk)

### Harvest celebration

■ King's Lynn Parish celebrated its Harvest Festival on Sunday October 1, reports Pauline McSherry: "Generous parishioners came laden with their gifts which were placed on the sanctuary step. On the altar were bread and grapes, symbolic of the Holy Eucharist. Our Canon told us that the fine black grapes had been harvested from the rectory garden. Our offerings, with gratitude, will be distributed to the Foodbank, the Night Shelter and families in need. It is in giving that we receive," said Pauline.



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# May the Lord hear your cry today

In the second part of his latest Voice of Hope article, Fr Alvan Ibeh asks "Does God hear me when I cry?"



■ Many people today have given up on God because of the feeling that God does not hear the cries and groans of His people. This may be because of one experience or the other, in which they must have passed through in life, in which they prayed and prayed and asked for God's intervention. But after praying and asking God for this very thing they felt was so important to them and didn't happen just the way they wanted, they concluded that God is deaf and insensitive to the cries of His people, and that is them done with God.

Let me not just be using "them" as if I am an exception. I have also been in such a situation when I gave up on God because I felt He didn't answer me right at the time I cried to him.

But one big question we need to ask here is, "Does God hear the cry of His people? Is He like one of those other man-made gods, who Psalm 135:16-18 describe as "the idols of the nations which are silver and gold, made

by human hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths." Do you feel God is like that?

Well, let us look at some Bible passages; maybe the examples we get from there will help convince us that God has never at any point stopped listening to the cries of His people. I firmly believe that the God of the scriptures is still the God of today who never changes, for He says in Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I changeth not". If the God of the scriptures heard the voice of His people when they cried out, and if He is still the same God we call on today, then that means He still hears our cries even till this moment as you are reading this. Let us now look at these few passages from the scripture:

"The Lord hears those who cry out, and he delivers them from all their distress" (Psalm 34:17)

It came about in those days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out, and their cry for help because of their bondage rose to God" (Exodus 2:23)

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became terrified; so the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord" (Exodus 14:10). We all know what the fate of the Egyptians became when the Lord of host, the mighty man in battle, arose against them in answer to the cries of His people, the Israelites. We see the testimony in the book of Deuteronomy 4:7, "For what nation is so great as to have a god as near to

them as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call on Him?" They testified that God always heard them whenever they cried out to Him.

Even when we cry to God, we must do that with trust that He will hear us and wipe away our tears. Crying with faith means investing our tears, while crying without faith will be wasting our tears.

The Bible is also filled with examples of times when God answered the cries of His people. Below are a few examples of occasions on which individuals cried out to God, and God heard their cries and delivered them: Elijah cried out, and God revived a dead child (I Kings 17:20-22).

Jehoshaphat cried out, and God delivered him from death (II Chronicles 18:31).

Hezekiah cried out, and God gave him victory (II Chronicles 32:20-21).

Hannah cried out, and God answered her and gave her Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1-20).

Jabez cried out, and God granted his request and changed his fortune (1 Chronicles 4:10).

The scripture says in the book of Isaiah 30:19, "He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you" (Is 30:19). This promise to the suffering Israelites reminds us of God's steadfast response to His people's cries for assistance. We might also cry out to God in our circumstances, pleading with Him to be near, lead, and instruct us (Is 30:20-21). May the Lord hear your cry today and wipe away every tear from your eyes to the glory of His name. Amen.

## Bishops help churches celebrate

Bishop Peter Collins took part in an ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving for 50 years of Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, held at St Edmundsbury Cathedral on Sunday September 17.

■ With choirs, music, readings, prayers and a message from Griff Rhys-Jones, the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust (SHCT) celebrated 50 years of supporting historic church buildings of all denominations in Suffolk. Over the years they have awarded thousands of pounds of grants, for church restoration and improvements, that were raised through legacies and sponsored events – principally the annual Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride.

Invited to the special cathedral service, by the Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare, Countess of Euston, the Patron of the Trust, were two representatives from every historic Suffolk church, chapel and meeting house. 450 people representing 300 churches came – 270 Church of England parishes along with other denominations, including representatives of important historic buildings like Clare Priory, the Unitarian Meeting House in Ipswich and St Benets, Beccles. In total 700 people from every corner of Suffolk filled the cathedral.

The service began with a procession led by cyclists responsible for most of the £10m (in today's money) raised and distributed by the SHCT over the last 50



Bishop Martin and Bishop Peter giving a blessing at the SHCT service. Picture by Chad Cox.

years, and included church historians, church architects, SHCT Trustees, Ride and Stride organisers, the cathedral choir, children from Sexton's Manor School, and ecumenical and clergy representatives.

The service was opened by a trumpet fanfare and a welcome from the Dean and included a sermon by the Rt Rev Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, prayers by priests of three denominations and a joint blessing by Bishop Martin and Bishop Peter Collins.

Geoffrey Probert, Chairman of Suffolk

Historic Churches Trust said "I am so grateful to the Cathedral for hosting the service and would like to thank Bishop Martin for his sermon, Griff Rhys Jones for allowing us to show his film 'my church' and all those who made it all happen. Above all, I would like to thank the churchwardens and treasurers who came in numbers from all over Suffolk to celebrate the Trust's 50th but who are the real heroes of the story in their loving care year-in and year-out for our wonderful church buildings."

[shct.org.uk](http://shct.org.uk)



# Rome Synod of Bishops begins

**As the 2023 Synod of Bishops in Rome began in early October, England and Wales representatives Fr Jan Nowotnik and theologian and former Cambridge academic Prof Anna recorded a preview.**

■ Prof Anna Rowlands was previously Director of Studies at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge and, along with CBCEW representative and voting member Fr Jan Nowotnik, will be in Rome, and both will have a key role in proceedings.

Two years after Pope Francis invited Catholics to walk together on a synodal path, offering every member of the Church the right to make their views known, we stand on the threshold of the first of two big meetings in Rome on the theme 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission'.

There has been intense speculation as to what will happen when the Synod of Bishops gathers for almost all of October – historically, for the first time, with non-Bishop voting members.

The official opening and Solemn Mass for the Opening of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place on October 4 in St Peter's Square, led by Pope Francis.

## Delegates from England and Wales

■ The Catholic Church in England and Wales will be well represented. Archbishop John Wilson, the Archbishop of Southwark, and Bishop Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds, were elected by their brother bishops to attend.

Joining them will be Bishop Nicholas Hudson, an Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Westminster, chosen by Pope Francis, and Professor Anna Rowlands



**Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby at an ecumenical prayer vigil in Rome ahead of the Synod. Picture by CBCEW/Mazur.**

and Dr Austen Ivereigh chosen as expert facilitators.

Father Timothy Radcliffe, a Dominican preacher, led a retreat for all Synod members prior to the official opening.

In a 20-minute conversation, Fr Jan Nowotnik, whose doctoral thesis focused, in part, on the preparation for a Synodal Church, joined theologian Professor Anna Rowlands to talk about the Synod.

## The 'who' not the 'what' of the Church

■ Professor Rowlands stresses that the Synod will be concerned with the 'who' of the Church rather than the 'what' of the Church:

"It's not sorting out doctrinal issues, that's not what this will do. There's a fear of that in some quarters, that this is a Synod that's going to make big doctrinal changes – some fear that, some desperately hope for it. I think both groups will be quite disappointed if they're looking for big doctrinal change because the Pope's focus is on the 'who' of the Church, on the question of the way in which our life itself is focused on mission to the world.

"The Church is the only institution that exists not fundamental for its own members, but for the sake of the conversion and the salvation of all. So [we need]

a renewal in that focus on mission. But you don't get to that mission if you haven't done your housekeeping – thinking about the kind of community that we are, and that we would be drawing people into.

"It's that question of participation, the 'who' question again. Who belongs? How do they belong? Who participates? How do they participate? How is all of that being held by the inspiration of the Spirit

who pours out on the Church the gifts, skills and talents? This is how the Church is different from any other institution.

## Renewed mission

■ "So [the focus is on being] renewed for mission to the world, renewed in the 'who' question and the 'how' question of participation, and renewed in communion – in a way of being together.

"What could be more important for the world to hear right now in the fractured, brittle, divisive times that we live in, the friend/enemy constant distinction? Who are you for? Who are you with? We are for Jesus Christ together as brothers and sisters."

Fr Jan Nowotnik agrees:

"I'm often saying to people that I think what the Synod is, in Pope Francis' mind, is about drawing all the members of the Church – and those beyond the Church – into a deeper relationship with God and a deeper relationship with each other.

"The Church exists to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, and to bring his healing mercy to the Church."

[www.cbcew.org.uk/synodal-church](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/synodal-church)

## River trip and long-service award

■ The St Vincent de Paul Conference at the Sacred Heart Parish in St Ives recently organised an annual boat trip for the elderly and disabled who were collected from their homes and nursing homes by the SVP members and Fr Tom.

It was a fine sunny afternoon to enjoy the sail on the Lady Bird boat, specially adapted for the elderly and disabled. The boat left Hartford Marina at 2pm sailing to Brampton and returning via St Ives to Hartford Marina at 4.30pm. During the sail tea and cakes were served to those on board by SVP members.

The President, Elizabeth Barker, said that it was a wonderful outing for so many who are unable to leave their homes unaided and a good time was had by all.

■ The highlight of the July meeting of the Norwich Circle of the Catenian Association held at the George Hotel in the city was the presentation of a scroll to John Flynn certifying his 50-year membership of the Association.

Director of Province 2, Mike Evans, made the presentation to John who is an old boy of West Park Catholic Grammar School, St Helens and Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, and a graduate in law from Cambridge University.

His career revolved around his work as a solicitor for Norwich Union (Now Aviva) insurance company.

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## Bishop Peter engagements

- **Oct 30, Mon:** Confirmation Mass – at St Henry Morse, Diss
- **Oct 31, Tue:** Confirmation Mass – Our Lady and St Peter, Aldeburgh
- **Nov 1, Wed:** All Saints Solemn Pontifical Mass – St John's Cathedral
- **Nov 2, Thur:** Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed – Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass, St John's Cathedral, 7pm
- **Nov 3, Fri:** Head Teachers Autumn Conference
- **Nov 4, Sat:** Caritas Festival, St Laurence's, Cambridge, from 9.30am
- **Nov 5, Sun:** Mass at Cambridge University
- **Nov 5 – 10:** Canonical Visitation to the Convent Community at Quidenham
- **Nov 9, Thur:** Council of Priests in Poringland, 11am start
- **Nov 11, Sat:** Bishop's Council for Laity in Poringland, 11am
- **Nov 12 – 16:** Autumn Plenary Session of Bishops' Conference
- **Nov 17, Fri:** Walsingham Trustees Meeting
- **Nov 23, Thur:** Diocesan Schools Service Commission Meeting, 9.45am
- **Nov 23, Thur:** Mass for the Margaret Beaufort Institute in Cambridge to celebrate Pearl Anniversary and the year-end, 5pm
- **Nov 24, Thur:** Deputy Assistant Head Teachers Autumn Conference, from 9.45am
- **Nov 26, Sun:** Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe – Solemn Pontifical Mass at St John's Cathedral, 11am
- **Nov 27, Mon:** Norfolk & Waveney Church Leaders meeting, hosted by Bishop Peter at Poringland
- **Nov 28, Tues:** Bishop's Council
- **Nov 30, Thur:** Creating Connections meeting organised by Religion Media Centre at the Norwich Cathedral, Weston Room, 2-7pm
- **Dec 1, Fri:** St John's Cathedral Trustees Meeting 10.30am
- **Dec 2, Sat:** Formation Day at St Mary's, Twickenham
- **Dec 7, Thur:** Diocesan Board of Trustees Meeting, Poringland, 10.30am
- **Dec 8, Fri:** The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Solemn Pontifical Mass at St John's Cathedral, 7pm
- **Dec 12, Tues:** Vocations Committee Meeting, Poringland, 11am
- **Dec 13, Wed:** University of East Anglia Carol Service at St John's Cathedral, 7pm

# Mass marks start of

Pictures of the Schools Mass at St John's Cathedral by Keith Morris. To see full picture gallery visit: [flickr.com/photos/dioceseofeastanglia](https://www.flickr.com/photos/dioceseofeastanglia)



**Around 750 pupils from all 28 Catholic schools across the Diocese of East Anglia gathered at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich on Friday September 29, to celebrate the start of the academic year with a special Schools Mass led by Bishop Peter Collins. Keith Morris reports.**

■ Director of Schools, Andy Stone, said: "We had over 750 pupils from every single Catholic school in the diocese here today. "It is the first time we have been able to hold this annual school Mass since before the Covid pandemic, so back in 2019. It was a lovely occasion and the chance for every-

one to be together with our new Bishop Peter.

"Bishop Peter has a good rapport with children and young people and he enjoyed the celebration itself and he enjoys coming to visit schools across the diocese and has said that he aims to try to visit them all.

"It is a wonderful way to start the school year and it gives a sense of being a whole diocesan family of pupils and staff and everyone involved in our schools, that we are very proud of," said Andy.

"We had many pupils taking part, playing music, singing, speaking and praying. Director of Music, Daniel Justin, rehearsed with all the pupils before Mass began, so they all knew the words and joined in with great enthusiasm, which was great to hear.

"It is really important for us all to gather together, though it is difficult because the diocese is so geographically widespread and a real effort for schools. But it is a

really important occasion, especially as it is the first one in several years. So it will continue to be an annual event and we look forward to the next one," he said. "We thank everyone at the St John's Cathedral, our mother church for welcoming us."

On the Feast of Archangels, Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Bishop Peter gave an engaging homily, talking about angels and dragons whilst walking about amongst the gathered students. He also assured everyone present that they had their own guardian angel looking out for them.

The musical content included young cantors and musicians from across diocesan schools, and a special choir was conducted by Director of Music Daniel Justin, in one of his final duties before leaving the diocese to head for his new role as Director of Music at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, Australia.



# school year



Bishop Peter Collins, Dean Fr Alan Hodgson and the rest of the St John's Cathedral clergy, choir, staff and parishioners bade a fond farewell to Daniel Justin as Diocesan Director of Music at the start of October, as he left to take up the role of Director of Music at the prestigious St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, the "mother church" of Catholicism in Australia.

## Shoebox plea to Norfolk churches

**Churches and families across Norfolk are being urged to pack shoeboxes with Christmas gifts for needy children across the world in partnership with Operation Christmas Child.**

■ Mark Watkins, a parishioner at St George's Catholic church in Norwich and his wife Debra who attends Servants Church, are Church Relations and Community Relations team members with Operation Christmas Child.

They are calling on churches and families in the Norfolk area to pack more shoebox gifts than ever before for the Samaritan's Purse project, which is committed to its mission of reaching millions of children across the globe with hope. Mark said: "The campaign seeks to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Operation Christmas Child (OCC) has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts – filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys – to children worldwide for three decades. Since 1990, the project has collected and delivered more than 200 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 160 countries and territories. Last year alone Samaritan's Purse UK was able to gift 252,000 shoe-

boxes to needy children around the world.

"To support this ministry to collect shoeboxes," Mark explained, "in Norfolk we have what are called Drop of Locations and Church Collection Centres. We are fortunate to have in Norfolk a number of Drop of Locations which have their doors open to the public to receive filled shoeboxes."

Mark and Debra have also been looking to find more church collection centres in Norfolk.

Servant's Church in Norwich has recently agreed to partner with Samaritans Purse and become a Church Collection Centre.

Mark and Debra attended their church services on Sunday September 24 and, along with Annie, a member of the church, who has taken on the role of project leader, showed a video and outlined how central this ministry is to share the Gospel and give children hope, by interrupting their brokenness.

Mark said: "The Church gave such a positive response and it highlighted how much this church has a heart to share God's love. The Collection week this year is from the November 13-20 when boxes can be dropped off at locations throughout Norfolk."

Those interested in more information on Operation Christmas Child for your church, school, group or business can contact Mark and Debra Watkins at [markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com](mailto:markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com)

Visit: [www.samaritans-purse.org.uk](http://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk)



## YOUTH MATTERS

# Youth club trip away from seaside

The Faith Club for children at St Peter's Gorleston and St Mary's Great Yarmouth Parish visited Thetford for its annual summer outing in late August reports Chris Storman, who was so pleased that they did.

■ The day began with two mini-buses filled with children, parents and helpers and Fr Alvan Ibeh, setting off happily on Bank Holiday Monday when most people were driving to the seaside not away from it.

We arrived to a warm welcome from Fr Pat Cleary and Paul Gilbert. Kettles were on and the church and facilities open and ready for us.

Fr Alvan had been offered full use of the church and we began with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament before the Parish Mass, which was changed to 12 noon to enable us to celebrate with



Above are the Yarmouth Faith Club members with Fr Alvan, Fr Pat and Thetford parishioners and, below right, an ice-cream stop.

the parishioners.

Faith Club provided the music, a young cantor, readers and server and Fr Alvan was the celebrant.

It was the feast day of St Augustine and he spoke to us about him and his life and that of his devoted mother, St Monica who 'never gave up', praying for him

constantly during some difficult times on his journey to God.

It was joyful and lovely to meet with St Mary's very welcoming and interested community.



A picnic lunch and play in the garden, in sunshine was next and then a very special guided walk

through Thetford town to the Castle Mound and park. Fr Pat was our guide, sharing his knowledge of and snippets about the town, its history and buildings with us on the way.

At the park, we first climbed the historic mound, which is the tallest Medieval earthwork in Britain, once topped with a timber castle, built in the times of the Icen Queen Boudica, with a new motte and bailey design castle built later, in the 1100s. There was a great view from the top and a few breathless climbers!

Football, swings, exercise equipment, sunshine and being on a day out together having fun, filled the rest of our park visit.

We walked back to the Parish church, with an ice cream stop by the mill stream, a peaceful little oasis although close to the town centre.

Once back, Fr Pat was thanked for his time and hospitality and he blessed us on our way back to the coast with lots of happy travellers who had experienced faith, food and fun along with friendship from another parish in our diocese.

Would you like to sponsor this newspaper and help to support it?

**Catholic East Anglia**

The Diocese of East Anglia is seeking a sponsor for its monthly Catholic East Anglia newspaper, which reaches 52 parishes and up to 7,000 readers each edition with the latest news and features about the local Catholic community.

Editor Keith Morris said: "Print and distribution costs associated with the well-read newspaper have been increasing and we now need to find one or two sponsors who would like to appear regularly in the paper to help us subsidise the cost.

"If you are an organisation or business which would like to reach the East Anglia Catholic community, I would be delighted to discuss details with you about how we could promote your work or services, whilst helping us continue to produce the newspaper in both print and online editions."

If you would like to discuss this opportunity, please email Keith at [keith.morris@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:keith.morris@rcdea.org.uk) or ring 07712 787762.



## Bishop's school blessing

■ Bishop Peter Collins visited St Martha's RC Primary School in King's Lynn to celebrate its Gospel Assembly on Monday September 18, reports head-teacher Rachel Edwards.

"Following the Gospel, he spoke to the children about the Gospel value of forgiveness and how important it is for us to carry out this value in school and at home.

"Bishop Peter blessed all the pupils and staff for the start of the new academic year (pictured above).



"He then had a tour of the school and visited the new Reception children in their classroom."



## YOUTH MATTERS



Adam, left, and Alexander, right, with Youth Services Director Hamish MacQueen.



### Schools quartet to run marathon for CAFOD

■ Four staff members from two Diocese of East Anglia schools are set to run the London Marathon in April 2024 for Cafod and are asking for your support.

In April, Chelsea Crowe (pictured below), Jack (pictured bottom), Imogen and Lindsay from St Mary's Catholic Primary School, and St Benedict's Catholic School, are taking part in the London Marathon

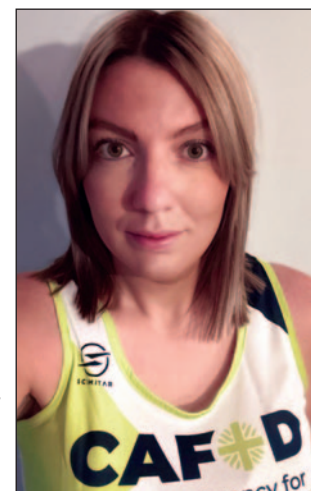
in order to raise funds for CAFOD and its work to support those in need around the world. If you are able, they would be so grateful for any donations you can make to support them and this vital charity. They are going to be training hard all the way to the race date to make everyone proud and to raise as much as possible for CAFOD.

Chelsea, School Secretary at St Mary's, Lowestoft, said: "Working in a Catholic school has really opened our eyes to the magnificent work that CAFOD does around the world to support those in need. We have been fortunate enough to work with CAFOD in school and were hugely inspired by the work they do. We wanted to do our small bit to help their marvellous work and believed

that completing the London Marathon would be a great way for us to challenge ourselves and support this great cause.

"We are not professional runners and so we are working hard to get race-ready for April. We know it will be a gruelling day (the training is already pushing us) but it could not be for a more worthwhile cause and we are determined to do CAFOD proud on the day. If you were able to support us in this it would be greatly appreciated – no donation is too small and it all goes to a fantastic cause!"

You can support them at: [justgiving.com/fundraising/JackChelsea](https://justgiving.com/fundraising/JackChelsea)



# Adam and Alex join the new-look Ignite Team

**Two new members have joined the Ignite Youth Team from September for a year. They are UEA master's student Adam Dodd and Peterborough parishioner Alexander Thanickal, who introduce themselves here.**

■ **Adam writes:** "I am originally from Salford, but have spent most of my life living in Wales. I moved to Norwich in 2021 to begin my Master's in Medieval History at UEA and loved the city so much that I decided to stay.

"I am a 'cradle Catholic' but come from a lapsed family and so did not regularly attend Mass or have any kind of involvement with parish life until a few years ago.

"In my faith journey, I have had to learn a great deal about what it means to be a Catholic. The thriving community at the cathedral in Norwich has done a great deal to encourage me to really engage with my faith in a way that I had never attempted

before.

"I first encountered the Ignite Team at the Young Adults' Rosary Group at St John's Cathedral and, after learning more about their work, found myself drawn to the idea of committing a significant length of time to serving God in a unique and involved way. I am also discerning a vocation to the priesthood and felt that joining the Ignite Team would be a fantastic opportunity for spiritual growth and learning about how to engage with young people and evangelise effectively.

"My hope is that I can make a tangible positive impact on the diocesan community, inside and outside of schools, and continue my own formation and discernment process."

■ **Alexander writes:** "I've been a part of the Diocese of East Anglia all of my life. I am from the Parish of St Luke's in Peterborough. Growing up I was always involved in the church, regularly serving on the altar for many years.

I had first come into contact with Ignite as a teenager, going to the Ignite Festival and other events that they had running at the

time but I never saw it as something I could ever do. As I got older my faith began to become lukewarm, I began turning my back on God and this lasted for a couple of years.

"In August I went to World Youth Day in Portugal, a world-wide gathering of hundreds of thousands of young Catholics from across the world. I went there as a person who was seeking fulfillment and happiness in everything but Jesus. Throughout the course of the pilgrimage, I began exploring how Jesus could change my life. I asked many challenging questions, engaged in all the programmes and really searched for a purpose in my life.

"Thankfully whilst there, I began finding peace in holiness, living in a community, daily Mass, lots of prayer and understanding my faith more. I wanted to continue living in communion with God. Suddenly, Ignite appeared to me as a place where I could continue to practice living in holiness and, more importantly, deepen my faith and understanding of God, and to be able to share the meaning of God's love with others, especially young people. I look forward to serving God and the Diocese of East Anglia over the next year."



# Paul tells of his vocation journey to the diaconate

**Rev Paul Raynes is not only the Director of Operations and Finance for the Diocese of East Anglia but also, since July 29, its newest permanent deacon. Here, he describes the path to his vocation.**

■ You meet plenty of people who have a plan for their lives and careers. I'm one of the people who never did. As a result, I have managed to see and do a huge variety of apparently random things, from washing up in a restaurant, to selling double glazing, to running a Cabinet minister's office, through journalism, teaching, and working for the local council, to being a husband and father of a family, a charity trustee, and diplomat. And now, ordination.

I suppose I knew at the time that I was just taking what God sent. Because of course, although I didn't have a plan, I am absolutely certain that He did, and that He has led me to where I am now. A cousin, herself a religious sister, said 40 years ago that I was the member of the family most likely to have a vocation; I don't think she was right by chance.

Looking back, and knowing that the diaconate is, purely and simply, service (that's what the word means), the fact that so much of what I have done in the past has been service of one kind or another – and for a lot of the time, I was already called a (civil) servant – does make it look like a carefully planned rehearsal for what lies ahead.

When I told my wife I was exploring becoming a deacon, her instant response was, "I thought you would do that." She and God both knew something I didn't.

During my time in formation, I spent a while studying and worshipping at St



Rev Paul Raynes is ordained by Bishop Peter Collins.

John's, Wondersh. Over the altar, there is a large Latin inscription that says, "You didn't choose me, I chose you." That just about sums it up.

This is probably a good foundation for a deacon. It's a ministry that can take many forms, and most deacons get used to being asked to do the unexpected. I am

sure God will have some more surprises in store for me.

If anyone were to ask me for vocations advice, I could only build on my own experience and say that God is inevitably in the driving seat: so trust in Him, and embrace the adventure that comes to you.

## Your chance to join the East Anglia Posada

■ Small Posada statues of Mary and Joseph and the donkey will be travelling around the parishes of the diocese this Advent and you have the chance to host them.

In Mexico, the Posada tradition has a young couple dressing up as Mary and Joseph and then spending the days of Advent travelling from house to house asking for a room for the night and telling their hosts about the imminent arrival of Jesus at Christmas.

Our modern-day Posada uses a statue of Mary and Joseph and the donkey instead of a young couple to travel from home to home.

Posada provides an opportunity for hospitality, a time of prayer with others and a sharing of our

Christian faith with family and friends. By hosting the statue you can join this simple but effective form of evangelisation.

Rebecca Bretherton, Coordinator of the Commission for Evangelisation, said: "Since 2020 we have had to find ways to celebrate Advent without visiting each other. During the lockdowns, some parishes came up with ingenious socially-distanced ways to do the Posada. But now we can return to the original idea of simple hospitality and prayer. Everyone can join in the Posada this year by signing up to host the statue.

"It's time to get ready for Advent and to start preparing for your parish's Posada Journey. Every parish in East Anglia has a Posada statue. Posters, a handy rota, prayers and other resources will soon be available on the Diocesan website's Evangelisation pages."

[www.rcdea.org.uk/posada-journey](http://www.rcdea.org.uk/posada-journey)



# SVP celebrates growth and community

**East Anglia SVP hosted Festival Days in Norwich and Newmarket on September 30 and October 1, focusing on the organisation's growth, spirituality, and community outreach. Joan Wall reports.**

■ East Anglia SVP held Festival Days at St George's, Norwich on September 30 and at Our Lady Immaculate and St Etheldreda, Newmarket on October. The Festival Days were designed for existing SVP members, anyone interested in learning more about SVP, and supporting clergy. Each day began with Mass, followed by welcome refreshments and opening prayers.

Christine Knight presented on behalf of Elizabeth Palmer, the SVP CEO, who was unable to attend. The presentation centred on SVP and Synodality, emphasising the need to "enlarge our tent" to accommodate more people in need, ensuring that the organisation remains robust.

Jon Cornwall, the Membership Director, discussed Spirituality within the organisation, focusing on personal growth and mutual support to become better individuals. He highlighted the efforts of St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederick Ozanam in their personal journeys of self-improvement. Jon also posed thought-provoking questions that engaged the members.

Christine Knight, Financial Director, highlighted the significance of fundraising and the judicious management of

finances. She elaborated on the role of treasurers and provided other relevant information.

Other presentations were delivered by Barbara Quail and Sarah Barber about Mini Vinnies and Young Vincentians. Aiden Cornwall joined them to discuss his role as a Mini-Vinnie. Beth Muldrew and Tony King spoke about twinning with other nations and the impact of our donations on local communities.

Conference members shared their activities, all rooted in the Vincentian spirit. Angela Stone (St John's) was honoured with the Benemerenti medal. Teresa Richards (St George's, Norwich) discussed its Baby Essentials Project. Joan Donahoe (St Peter's, Gorleston) described her work with asylum seekers. Both Neil Culley (St George's)

and Petra Tucker (St Lawrence, Cambridge) spoke about their prison outreach. Ciaran Ward (St Laurence, Cambridge) detailed the new drop-in centre, initiatives for the lonely, and support for travellers. Michael McMahon (North Norfolk) discussed various conference activities, including its soup run and the temporary emergency accommodation project. The St Ives Conference covered its activities such as the Autumn Club outings and collaborations with the local council.

Everyone who attended enjoyed the day, gaining knowledge and engaging in heartfelt conversations. It was enriching to experience Vincentian friendship and camaraderie, as well as to put faces to email addresses.

A heartfelt thanks to all attendees, and those that provided refreshments.





## Pope gives a triple blessing

■ At the end of the Mass on Sunday September 10 in the Church of Our Lady and King St Edmund, Hunstanton, Fr Michael Stokes presented the Pope's Blessing to mark three special occasions.

On June 15, Michael and Hillary Rhodes (on the right) celebrated their Diamond Jubilee of Marriage. On July 25, Tom and Elizabeth Koning (in the centre) celebrated their Golden Anniversary of Marriage. On Monday August 28, Sr Mary Gonçalves FDC (on the extreme left) pronounced her vows as she made her Final Profession as a Religious Sister in the Daughters of Divine Charity.

Pope Francis "invoked an abundance of divine graces" upon them all. The congregation was enthusiastic in its expression of congratulations.

# East Anglia's own patron saint

In his occasional series on saints with East Anglian connections, Nick Walmsley looks at our own former Patron Saint of England.

■ November 20 marks the Feast Day of St Edmund, King and Martyr, one of our Diocesan Patrons.

Perhaps not so familiar now, except in the East Anglia he once reigned over, he was – until the Crusaders came back with their new Patron (a Turkish soldier quickly rebranded as 'St George') – once Patron Saint of England.

At the invitation of the House of Uffa, in danger of extinction following the murder of King Ethelbert, Edmund came from Germany and landed at Hunstanton in Norfolk to rule the Kingdom of the East Angles: his coronation took place at Bures, near Sudbury, on Christmas Day 855 AD in a chapel that still stands today. He was a mere 14 years old.

The main reason for Edmund's election was for him to spearhead a resistance

against the Danish piracy that plagued the eastern coast of England: the many village names of Scandinavian origin in Norfolk and Suffolk testify to the success of these raids. After gains in the north of the country, the Danes finally launched a huge attack on East Anglia in 869, intent on taking the kingdom and disposing of Edmund.

At this, Edmund in his palace at Reedham near Gt Yarmouth rapidly moved inland to Thetford where there was a battle. He and some of his men escaped, but this is where the

story becomes confused. The traditional version has them going south, with Edmund finally being captured at Hoxne in the Waveney valley.

More modern scholarship points to them going north, to a place then called Haglisden – the modern Hellesdon near Norwich. There was a final battle there in the marshes between the River Wensum and Drayton Low Road.

Edmund was captured and executed by being tied to a tree and shot full of arrows. Legend has it that he died with the name of Jesus on his lips and this so incensed the Danes that they cut his head off and threw it into a thicket.

Later, when Edmund's followers were searching for the head it is said to have cried out "Here! Here!" and was found between the paws of a wolf. This might

seem far-fetched unless it is considered that the 'wolf' was possibly Edmund's own wolfhound, guarding his master's head and barking for attention.

What happened after this is well documented. Edmund's body was taken to Boedericsworth – the modern Bury St Edmunds – and enshrined in the Abbey there.

However, his relics, having been kept in London between 1009 and 1013 to be safe from continued Danish raids, had disappeared from Bury by 1200 and are now believed to be in France, at the Basilica of St Sernin in Toulouse.

There is an active movement to have St Edmund restored as Patron Saint of England, especially from his old kingdom, but recent appeals have sadly not found favour with HM Government.



Stained glass window of St Edmund with his crown and arrows in Blakeney Church, Norfolk. By Nick Walmsley.

## WOMEN & DIAKONIA

The Ministry of Women & Diaconal Ordination in the Catholic Church

Friday, 24th November

Saturday, 25th November

University Of Cambridge  
Faculty of Divinity



Margaret Beaufort  
Institute of Theology



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### The legacy of Women

Since the inception of the Church, women have played pivotal roles in various ministries, enriching the spiritual tapestry of our faith.

Join us to explore the history of women deacons, how women's diakonia might be restored to meet the needs of the Church's mission today.



# Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese

■ An annual Macmillan Coffee Morning was held in The Narthex at St John's Cathedral in Norwich on October 6. "We had a wonderful morning and raised £818.93 for Macmillan," said Celia McKenna. "It was an amazing amount raised for a very worthy cause."



■ Wisbech Catholic parishioner Sean Finlay and friends have shown the gardens at Peckover House in Wisbech to asylum seekers living in the town's historic Rose and Crown Hotel.

Wisbech, like a number of towns, has been selected to host asylum seekers as they await a chance to present their case to be recognised as refugees and begin the road towards a permanent home in the UK.

Wisbech Interfaith Forum member, Sean (pictured centre below), took a party of eight young asylum seekers to look at the National Trust gardens at Peckover House.

"On the way we passed the memorial to the anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson. On arrival at our destination the 'guests' from Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Kurdistan, while initially intrigued at what might be in store, were quickly captivated by the beautiful shrubs, trees, flowers and fauna and immersed themselves in the experience. Phones were clicking all over the place as they shared their pleasure with friends and relatives far afield," said Sean.

"We had no idea that such a beautiful place existed in Wisbech, was one of the responses. It was evident that this blaze of colour and beauty captivated minds whose horizons are so occupied with the fear that any day they will receive the summons to

leave the UK and go, God knows where!

"Siavish, a shy Iranian car mechanic, kept snapping the sights of this intriguing town garden. 'Why can't we see more of Wisbech?' said another, who must be tired of looking at the furniture of the historic former coaching house, his present if temporary home," said Sean.

"We did not dwell greatly on their present reality or what the future holds for them. One has to hope that whatever the outcome they will remember that besides the trying and uncertain times ahead they have had a taste of the beauty of this country and that kindness and hospitality have also featured in their experience."



■ Congratulations to Chumdiuto Kenechukwu of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Costessey, Norwich, pictured on Monday September 11, receiving her National Winner's Certificate, £30 prize and personal trophy for her winning prayer in the KSC Prayer Writing 2023 competition. Chumdiuto also won a £200 award from the KSC to the school, gratefully accepted by Head Teacher Miss Rachel Swindell, pictured with 'Diuto' and PGK Bro Jason Wickard (left) and PPGK Bro Chris Brooks.



■ Bishop Peter Collins met with Lay Chaplains to Diocese of East Anglia Catholic Secondary Schools, and the Chaplain to St Bede's Inter Church School, on Friday October 6.

School lay chaplains were also present from Notre Dame, St Benedict's and St John Fisher high schools.

Bishop Peter, who has a background in education, spoke of the challenges of being a school chaplain and free-flowing discussion followed which was very fruitful.

Also at the meeting were Dr Andy Stone, Director of Diocesan Schools and Hamish MacQueen, Director of Diocesan Youth Service.

There will now be three meetings a year, including an opportunity for training and formation, as the Diocese develops this valuable ministry in its schools.