

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS - THANK YOU! Fr James, Fr Carlos and Fr Stuart thank you for all of your cards, greetings, prayers and financial offerings made during the Christmas season. Your prayers are vital, and the financial offerings go towards funding the priestly ministry to the parish for the whole year. Thank you indeed for your generosity and commitment. We will publish a provisional total for this next week. (Fr Stuart hasn't been with us for some time because of a time of recuperation from surgery. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.)

CHRISTMAS CRIB APPEAL: As usual, the Christmas Crib Appeal is in support of the *Catholic Children's Society* in our diocese. The most important thing is to come to pray at the Christmas crib in church. If you can in any way support the Crib Appeal, your donation goes to immediate help of families in crisis around London. The CCS also does invaluable work throughout the year with families and supporting very young lives in extraordinary circumstances. The cribs of course remain in church until the end of the Christmas season at Candlemas on 2 February.

WESTMINSTER DIOCESE ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2021: A copy is available in the Parish Office, and a summary at the back of church. If you wish to read further the details financial report for the diocese, and an activity report, see the poster in church for a QR code link, or visit www.rcdow.org.uk/about-us.

GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK CAMPAIGN INFO: GCN have sent their 2022 Review (copy on the noticeboard at St Bernard, which amongst other things lists the names of lives saved with your support during the last year. GCN writes: *"Please also pray that the plans to introduce national buffer zones around abortion centres in the UK will not come to pass. In GK Chesterton's epic poem, The Ballad of the White Horse, Our Lady tells King Alfred, "I tell you naught for your comfort, Yea, naught for your desire, Save that the sky grows darker yet And the sea rises higher." Things may seem very dark indeed and the tide seems to rise higher but it is Christmas, and this is a season of hope. We do have a reason to hope. And the children that will celebrate their first Christmas this year because of your support, are a witness to this hope and this Christian joy!*" To be a regular supporter or get involved in peaceful prayer vigils, write to info@goodcounselnetwork.com.

"There have now been over ten **million abortions** in Great Britain since the Abortion Act was passed 55 years ago, in October 1967. With this terrible number of lives lost, please pray and fast for the end of abortion in this country. GCN have sent a link to an article about the 10 million abortions that have taken place in Britain since the Abortion Act was passed on 27th October 1967. Also see what you can do to help end abortion. Please also share the article, <https://mariastopsabortion.blogspot.com/>. There are cards in the foyer to help you get involved.

BISHOPS ASK FOR HELP FROM CATHOLICS IN THE LEGAL AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS: Bishop Sherrington writes to alert everyone, and to ask the active assistance of all in legal and medical professions. The House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee has launched an inquiry into assisted suicide and is inviting individual members of the public and interested organisations to comment, and also to suggest what actions might be helpful for the debate. Options include a 'Citizens' Assembly', further independent research, or a referendum. The bishops ask legal and healthcare professionals to respond from their expertise.

Assisted suicide presents profound dangers to public safety and the common good, and so it is crucial that as many people as possible engage with the Parliamentary Inquiry and oppose the introduction of assisted suicide into UK law. It is especially important that those who respond should oppose the idea of a 'Citizens' Assembly' or referendum on this issue, as these are easily abused to try to legalise assisted suicide.

The Catholic Church is clear that we can never assist in taking the life of another, even if they request it. All life is sacred from conception until natural death, and we reiterate our call for investment in high quality palliative care. Our call is one for assistance in living and not assistance in committing suicide.

Statements of the Bishops' Conference can be found at <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/category/cbcew/life-issues/assisted-dying/>

The Anscombe Centre can also help the response. They have produced a statement and resources about this Inquiry: <https://bioethics.org.uk/news-events/news-from-the-centre/anscombe-centre-statement-on-commons-hsc-committee-inquiry-into-assisted-suicide/>.

The timeframe for answering the consultation is a short one. Submissions must be in by Friday 20 January but happily the format of the Inquiry is simple, and not time-consuming – just six questions. To aid public engagement, the Anscombe Bioethics Centre has produced a short two-page Briefing (as above). Or just visit www.bioethics.org.uk.

Anyone with any questions can contact the Anscombe Centre at admin@bioethics.co.uk.

VOLUNTEER FOR CAFOD: CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, are looking people join us in our mission here in the Westminster diocese. Could you volunteer and help us raise awareness in either parishes or schools about our work across the

developing world tackling poverty and injustice. Find out more by joining one of our volunteer meetings in Lambeth London on Saturday 21st January or Oakwood, North London on Wed 1st February. Please contact Tony at CAFOD for further details. westminster@cafod.org.uk or 0208 449 6970

COLD WEATHER: Whilst the extremely cold weather persists, remember that the underfloor heating at St Gabriel's means that the church is warm at all times and open Monday - Friday 09.30am-2.30pm.

[The following link is offered by the organization "Warm Welcome" to locate other warm spaces:](https://www.warmwelcome.uk/#find-a-space)
<https://www.warmwelcome.uk/#find-a-space>

FOUNDATION GOVERNOR VACANCIES: Sacred Heart Primary School in Ruislip have several foundation governor vacancies on their Governing Body. They would be extremely grateful for any volunteers interested in joining and supporting the school. If you would like more information or to apply for a role please email the clerk on clerk@shpsruislip.org.

ESCORTED PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE, IRELAND: 15th May 2023. £699.00 per person sharing. Price includes flight, all transfers, 4 nights' in Knock House Hotel with full board. All entertainment and excursions included. Day trips to Westport, Ballintubber Abbey, Croagh Patrick, Fr. Peyton Centre & National Museum. Single supplement £150.00. Contact Patricia on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com. See poster in church.

CONTACTLESS MACHINES: We, like other parishes have been experiencing problems with the contactless payment consoles. We have made a little progress with determining the problems, but not yet as far as getting a solution. *Thank you for your patience.*
Thank you to everyone for your commitment and generosity in hard and uncertain times.

CALLING ALL SINGERS/MUSICIANS! MUSIC FOR SUNDAY MASS: During August there's less music at Sunday Mass. That reminds us how important music is to our worship and how, like anything valuable, it needs to be constantly renewed and developed. For the foreseeable future our Sunday Mass schedule is remaining as it is now, and we want to build up the music especially at 9am, 10am and 11am Mass. A GREAT WAY TO OFFER A MINISTRY TO YOUR PARISH IS TO COME AND JOIN THE SINGERS TO LEAD MUSIC AT THESE MASSES. Speak with the clergy or with Simon (Director of Music) if you can offer your talent in this way...and don't be shy!

CARITAS WESTMINSTER: The umbrella department for all social outreach have written to share a film that was produced to show the impact of our social justice work across the Diocese. It is a celebration of what we have achieved together across the Diocese. Here is a link to the film: <https://youtu.be/Vgxvakd-8Ug>

CARITAS HOMES FOR UKRAINE MATCHING SERVICE: See the poster in church. Caritas, in partnership with St John of God Hospitaller Services have launched a service to bring together displaced Ukrainians with those in the Catholic community willing to host them for 6 months. If you have room in your home in these difficult times to consider welcoming a stranger displaced by the evil war, visit <https://sjog-homesforukraine.uk/> for information.

YOUNG CATHOLICS (AGE 18-35 YEARS): Keep in touch with the Youth Ministry website at www.dowym.com for many resources. Particularly now "Words of advice for Catholic Young Professionals".

NEWS FROM "RETROUVAILLE"; A Programme for Couples Struggling in their Marriages: Help Your Marriage – Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille is a programme to support couples who have difficulties in their marriage. It brings a positive focus, new hope and helps nourish and grow your marriage. Tens of thousands of couples headed for divorce have successfully saved their marriages by attending and using the tools provided. The programme helps spouses uncover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together. It helps them through difficult times whether they are disillusioned or in deep misery. There is no group therapy or group work. For confidential information about 'Retrouvaille' or to register for the next programme: a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 24 - 26 February 2023, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

FOR THE ATTENTION OF NEW STUDENTS IN LONDON THIS YEAR: Based at Newman House, Gower Street, the Catholic chaplaincy also has campus-based chaplains at many of the universities and colleges. For any students other than freshers there is also an opportunity to live in at Newman House, a catered lodging with attractive rates and its own chapel. The application form is available on the Chaplaincy website www.universitycatholic.net. ***Families whose young people are going off to college elsewhere, encourage them to find the Catholic Chaplaincy. We can help with contact details. University and college chaplaincies are important parts of the mission of the Church.***

HELP EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR UKRAINE: The Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London and community organisations have united to work with accredited and registered Ukrainian charities to provide medicines, food and critical services to support the most vulnerable to overcome the consequences and trauma of war. Donations can be made by cheque (payable to AUGB LTD - Central Appeal Fund and sent to Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, Chancery Office, 21-22 Binney Street, London W1K 5BQ), directly to the central appeal fund (AUGB Ltd, Account Number: 80038237, Sortcode: 20-65-89, with reference HelpUkraine) or online: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/helpukraine>. Alternately, donations can also be made to Cafod, who are a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee at <https://cafod.org.uk/News/Emergencies-news/Ukraine-crisis>. There's a poster in the foyer with a QR code and the above details, or just put cash in an envelope marked "Ukraine" and it will be forwarded.

NEWS FROM CARITAS WESTMINSTER: POVERTY CHALLENGE - SEE, JUDGE, ACT: Following the Pandemic many households face new hardships as prices rise. Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) the Catholic agency addressing poverty and injustice in England and Wales has released a new booklet to increase awareness of Catholic Social Teaching on poverty. This can be downloaded at www.csan.org.uk

COST OF LIVING HUB: The Mayor of London has launched a new Cost of Living Hub to help people access information, support and advice about claiming benefits, dealing with debts, financial management and mental health support. Visit <https://www.london.gov.uk/cost-living-hub>

GRANTS TO HELP WITH ENERGY DEBTS: Possible help from a charitable trust plus links to other advice providers at <https://fuelpoverty.org.uk/focus-on/fuel-debt-and-trust-funds/>

THE CATHOLIC NETWORK: See the poster in church advertising this free digital on-line service, a point of contact and interaction for Catholics seeking to interpret the world we live in. Each week the network welcomes guests, commentaries, reflections and instruction, as well as news items about work being done by Catholic organisations. More information at www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk.

INTRODUCING CATHOLIC LISTENERS: Catholic Listeners; Diocese of Westminster, a new confidential listening helpline launching this month, has been set up for those who are returning to the faith. The number is 0800 448 0704.

This service is based on the Landings ethos of compassionate listening. Although not a counselling service, they have a professional team trained on signposting to other services and agencies. They aim to help those in need of a safe space to talk. For further information please contact Ade at Catholiclisteners@gmail.com

BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON SUNDAY & HOLY DAY OBLIGATION: The bishops of England and Wales have issued a new statement about the obligation of Sunday Mass for those who wish to be practising Catholics. The text is available in the foyer and on the parish and diocesan websites. In essence they say: *"We therefore believe that the reasons which have prevented Catholics from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation no longer apply"*. The statement is called an "Invitation" for all to be putting Sunday and Holy Day worship in first place as of Pentecost Sunday. If you have any questions or queries about this please ask one of the clergy. Also available in the foyer is Fr James' digest of the previous statements by the bishops, called *"Sunday - It is our day."*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IN OUR PARISH: As we emerge from the Covid period to a new reality, so too our approach to preparation for the sacraments needs to change. We don't have an official line on this in our diocese as yet, but Cardinal Grech, Chair of the European Conference of Bishops, memorably said in 2020 that if after Covid the Church went back to doing what we did before it would be suicide!

There are some radical new ways of thinking on this unfolding in some parishes around the UK as we wait for the bishops to take a lead. We will be a little less radical.

As Parish Priest I ask families and candidates not to come with particular expectations or sense of entitlement to what should happen when: candidates should come to the sacraments when they are ready, and the first step to being ready is that habitual Sunday worship in line with the "Obligation" should be the *established* norm for the families of small children - and the children be part of this - or chosen personally by those of teenage years and above. After that, we can start to look at the base on which to build. If you have any questions or observations, contact Fr James. (Notice issued March 2022)

(Copies of the bishops statement on Sunday and Holy Day worship of May 2022, and Fr James' digest of the previous statements by the bishops are available in the foyers of our churches and on the website. This will help to give context to the above.)



Support our parish.

You can make a donation to the parish by scanning the QR code or making a card payment on the card machine at the entrance of both of our churches.