

OUR PARISH NEWS

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS - THANK YOU!: Fr Raja and Fr Alexis, 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.

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.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS: We will have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on every first Friday of the month starting from 5 January 2024. We will adore the Lord who is in the Blessed Sacrament and offering him special prayers immediately after Friday mass at St Gabriel's Church. Please join to adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus and receive the blessings.

CALLING ALL SINGERS/MUSICIANS! MUSIC FOR SUNDAY MASS: *"Be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, 20 always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."* **(Ephesians 5:19-20). The one who sings with love prays twice.** 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!

MISSIO" RED BOXES: We thank Linda Roxas - our parish representative of MISSIO, for volunteering to take Missio Red Boxes for the parish. You may wonder how you can help. For more information visit missio.org.uk or speak with one of the clergies. We have more Red Boxes in stock. Ask at the office or at the sacristy at St Bernard's. Thank you for supporting *Missio*. See posters in church for details. Envelopes for Gift Aid donations are in the foyer. All donations go to the Universal Solidarity Fund to support developing or impoverished Catholic communities around the world. For more information about World Mission Sunday, visit <https://missio.org.uk/wms>

SOME FINANCE MATTERS:

1) THANK YOU! GIFT AID TAX RECLAIM: We have now received all our Tax Reclaims for 2023, coming to a total of **£16,076.53**. Thanks to everyone who has signed a Gift Aid Declaration which makes it possible for us to claim this money. If you are a taxpayer and don't currently Gift Aid your donations, please consider this. Forms are available in the foyer of church and on the website <http://parish.rcdow.org.uk/harrowsouth/donate>. (Also, should you cease being a tax payer, please let the office know).

2) DONATE BY STANDING ORDER: Would you consider donating your offering by Standing Order instead of cash? If so, there's a form in the foyer or just ask for advice from the office or the clergy. Standing Orders make it easier to keep track of your outgoings, easier for the parish to plan what our income is, and easier and more secure as we handle less cash.

3) CONTACTLESS MACHINES: The contactless machines at both churches are working with Wi-Fi changes. You can contribute your offertory now with Dona app. ***Thank you to everyone for your commitment and generosity in hard and uncertain times.*** We would like to invite parishioners to use our contactless (DONA) machine for your contributions.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IN OUR PARISH:

Families and candidates should not 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 Raja Sebastian.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE PARISH: As things move on from the Covid period, it is important to keep an eye on all the nuts-and-bolts things that keep our churches running:

Cleaning and grounds care: Church cleaning is a really useful gift to offer your parish, and is also a great aid to spiritual life as we care for the place of worship. Cleaning teams currently meet for an hour on occasional Saturday mornings at 8.30am. There will also be occasional cleaning sessions on Fridays at St Gabriel's after 10am Mass. Can you join? Many hands make swift and light work. Please contact the Parish Office to be added to the contact email list. Similarly, there is now an enthusiastic team to give occasional care to the grounds of our sites. This provides a time of fellowship and a real sense of achievement! Could you join the team? Contact Parish Office as above.

Reading at Sunday Mass: The best way to serve the church community is to come forward to read at mass. We invite volunteers who are interested to offer themselves for reading at weekly masses and Sunday masses both St Gabriel's church and St Bernard's churches to give their name. Please call the parish office to give your names.

Altar servers: We will soon start the training for Altar servers Sunday masses. You can offer yourselves serving the Lord and community. Those who are interested, please give your names calling the parish office.

OTHER NEWS

WESTMINSTER DIOCESE ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2022: 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.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING FOR LIFE: ““On Friday 12th January, the eve of the 27th anniversary of the founding of The Good Counsel Network, please pray and fast for the end of abortion in this Country. Through God’s grace we have seen thousands of Mothers in our counselling centre continue their pregnancies in very difficult circumstances. Please help us to help save lives with your prayers, fasting and support. www.GoodCounselNetwork.com”

GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK CAMPAIGN INFO: “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.

MEDJUGORJE APOSTOLATE ANNUAL RETREAT: The Medjugorje apostolate annual retreat will be conducted from Friday 23 February to Sunday 25 February 2024 at the Kairos Centre, Roehampton, London. Fr. Svetoza Kraljevic OFM an English speaking Franciscan who spent 16 years serving the parish of Medjugorje will lead the retreat. The retreat is a residential retreat but there are places for day participants. For more information and to book please contact Paul Spencer at pilgrimsomary@hotmail.com or on 07710567183.

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 commencing with a Virtual weekend on 8 – 11 February 2024 or a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 14-16 June 2024, call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443 or email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com – or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CARD OUTREACH PROJECT To support your evangelizing mission, we would like to help each worshipping community create and deliver Christmas cards to a new housing estate, or the whole parish. For full details, resources, costs & ideas go to: Outreach Projects - Diocese of Westminster (rcdow.org.uk)

CELEBRATE Trust is a Catholic ministry that inspires and equips people of all ages to live an authentic Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit, in support of the family, to form the next generation and encourage local community. Just download the Advent Family & Matchbox Manger and share the joy.

THE SECRETS OF ST PAUL: reflection on life of St Paul: An opportunity to reflect on the life of St. Paul, as a model missionary disciple via a 10-WEEK Zoom course run by Mission Northampton from Wednesday **10th January 2024 to Wednesday 20th March 2024** (7.30-9pm) <https://northamptondiocese.org/courses/secrets-of-paul-online/>

HOME FOR UKRAINE MATCHING SERVICE: Caritas Social Action Network, in partnership with St John of God Hospitaller Services, an international Catholic charity with many services for the vulnerable in the UK and Ireland, are matching Ukrainian people displaced by the brutal war with people in the Catholic community willing to host them in their homes for six months. If you have room in your home and in your heart to consider welcoming a stranger displaced by war, then we'd love to hear from you. Please visit <https://sjog-homesforukraine.uk/> for more information.

ESCORTED PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK & Co Mayo, 10th March 2024. £899.00 pps. Price includes flight, 10kg hold luggage, 5 nights' in 4* Castlecourt Hotel, Westport with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Lunch on three days. All entertainment, excursions and transport included. Visit Knock, Galway City, Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick & Ashford Castle. Single supplement on Enquiry. Contact Patricia or Natali on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com.

SPREAD THE PRO-LIFE MESSAGE: SPUC: We need your help to broadcast the pro-life message loud and clear across all platforms and to everyone you meet. We want to build a culture of life. People need to know the facts about abortion and to hear the pro-life case.

- 1. Leafleting Teams:** Could you join one of our leafleting teams? To make sure everyone gets the pro-life facts, we have to go back to what every political organisation or campaigning charity does and deliver them to people's doorsteps.
- 2. Social Media:** Could you be one of our online advocates? Follow @SPUCProLife and @SPUCScotland on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube and don't be shy about standing up for what you believe in. Are you a content creator? If you are, why not create something that speaks for the pro-life cause and share it with us?
- 3. White Flower Appeal:** Every year hundreds of churches across Britain take part in the SPUC White Flower Appeal, making it one of our largest and most important educational and fundraising events of the year. Many appeals take place in January, but they can be held at any

time of year. A pro-life educational talk is given, campaigning postcards distributed, and generous volunteers collect donations to help us carry out our life-saving work during the coming year. We rely primarily on volunteers for this appeal and are always in need of new speakers, local area contacts and collectors to help the appeal run smoothly.g

“RIGHT TO LIFE UK” NEED OUR HELP: RTL writes: You may have heard about the recent tragic case of a woman being sent abortion pills by the abortion provider, BPAS, who had not accurately established the gestation of her baby, Lily, who was then aborted at between 32 and 34 weeks, which is around 8 months gestation. Rather than take responsibility for sending out abortion pills 22 weeks beyond the legal limit for at-home abortions, BPAS is running a major campaign to fully ‘decriminalise’ abortion, which would introduce abortion up to birth!

Right To Life UK has launched an easy-to-use tool on our website which makes it simple for you to send an email to your MP asking them to oppose the introduction of abortion up to birth and instead ask the Government to reinstate in-person appointments to ensure babies like Lily are protected in the future. For more info, AND TO FIND AN EASY AID TO WRITING TO YOUR MP, go to:

www.righttolife.org.uk/noabortionuptobirth

COULD YOU BE A FOUNDATION GOVERNOR AT A CATHOLIC SCHOOL? Foundation Governors are appointed in the name of the Archbishop and form the majority of the governing body of a Catholic school. They have a legal duty to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school and to ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with its trust deed.

Governing boards have three core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

The ministry of Foundation Governor is an important one, because the Catholic character of our schools depends on committed Catholics being willing to undertake this service. The Archbishop is therefore very appreciative of all those who offer to assist him in this vital task. Because of our baptism, all Christians are all called to serve the Church’s mission.

General Criteria: To become or remain a foundation governor, a person must be and remain: a practising Catholic; providing education for his or her own children, if of school age, in a Catholic school or college (unless exceptional circumstances apply); able to give priority of attendance at meetings of the governing body to ensure representation of the Archbishop; in possession of a valid DBS disclosure certificate. To become or remain a foundation governor, a person must not be disqualified from becoming or remaining a governor in accordance with: the current School Government Regulations (or the college’s Instrument of Government); the Charities Acts; and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

Specific Criteria: In respect of the school or college for which a person is or is to be a foundation governor, he or she must not at any time be: related to any member of the school or college staff,

teaching or non-teaching; related to any governor whether elected, appointed or ex-officio, of the school or college; employed (whether as a teacher or otherwise) at the school.

A person (other than the parish priest) will not normally be re-appointed as a foundation governor of a particular school or college if he or she has just completed three consecutive terms on that particular governing body.

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.

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.

WELCOME TO YOU CAN UK: We are a religious group for practicing young Catholic adults in the UK, and stay in touch through a network of WhatsApp Groups. Our simple mission is to connect all young Catholic adults with one another. No one can practice their Faith on their own! Within the YouCAN "family" are: **YouCAN** for young Catholic adults between ages 18 and 35; **YouCAN+** for Catholics between ages 30 and 45; **YouCAN Families** for Catholic families with children under 18 years. For more information you see <https://youngcatholicadultnetwork.uk/>

NEWS FROM CARITAS WESTMINSTER:

1. SNOOP DOGG TEAMS UP WITH LONDON HOMELESS FILM DIRECTOR FOR CHRISTMAS

SINGLE: Sleeping rough on the streets of London (or any major city for that matter) can be hazardous. David Fussell, a homeless film director, had glass bottles smashed in his face seeking shelter on London's park benches and in shop doorways. That is, until David was handed a pop-up tent by street workers concerned for David's safety. David, with London band Ooberfuse, have joined forces with rap royalty's Snoop Dogg to challenge hidden prejudices around homelessness. These prejudices recently erupted in UK when former Home Secretary, Suella Braverman promised to crackdown on tents and said that rough sleeping in a tent is a 'life-style choice'.

2. Finding a way through the Energy Crisis: Thursday 18th January 2024, 18:00 - 19:15 Online

A look at the current situation, what it means for us now, and how to help ourselves, and those in need: including ways to ensure people stay on top of the situation, how to maximise income, how to find help if needed and finally some ways to save energy and money in general. The session will be led by Olivia Mackay, National Energy Action Project Development Co-ordinator for London, and will include - How to help people deal with the increased cost of living, and of energy bills; Available energy discounts; Where to find support and financial assistance; Energy tips to save money in the home This online session will be delivered via Zoom, and is being organised and hosted by Caritas Westminster, on behalf of our communities throughout London, Herts and Spelthorne. Please sign up on Eventbrite.

COST OF LIVING HUB: The rising costs of fuel, food and other essentials are combining with existing disadvantage and vulnerability within our communities to put many households at greater risk of both immediate hardship and reduced opportunity and wellbeing. Councils and local partners have delivered remarkable services and support and will continue to do what they can to protect people against higher costs, targeting help at those facing the most complex challenges. This hub has been designed to share best practice and help councils to support their residents with the rise in the cost of living. Examples of the work of councils and resources can be found for each topic area in the pages below. We will be updating the hub on a regular basis. If you would like your council's work featured please email welfare@local.gov.uk.

INTRODUCING CATHOLIC LISTENERS: Catholic Listeners; Diocese of Westminster, a new confidential listening helpline 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 Last month Catholic Listeners launched a website to respond to people, who are searching for answers about the Catholic faith online. Catholic Listeners: <https://www.jesuit.org.uk/news/catholic-listeners-launch-next-phase-with-new-website>



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.