



Lent 2021

Your acts of kindness are like pieces in God's mosaic of hope in action around the Diocese

“Life is hard. It is really difficult for us to make ends meet. These vouchers are a Godsend. Thank you!”

In homes all around us, the fridge is empty, the cupboards are bare, and the radiators offer no warmth. Through your support of the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, you're helping families survive this time of crisis, grow stronger, and find hope of better times ahead.



who are at crisis point. Thanks to your support for the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, we've continued to provide food vouchers. Unlike hampers or food packages, all the money goes directly to families who can buy exactly what they need.

At the time of writing, vouchers had been distributed to more than 6,000 people with the number increasing daily. They receive them from parish priests or teachers in our schools, and they mean so much.

*“One family, recently been made homeless, had been placed in very difficult living conditions. When I sent the mother vouchers and gave her some supplies from our foodbank, she cried.”*

David O'Farrell, Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School, Kenton

For this year's Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, the focus turns to putting people on the Road to Resilience – that might mean providing help finding work, support to mend broken relationships or simply continuing to be there to offer short-term emergency support until people get back on their feet.

Since the last Cardinal's Lenten Appeal a year ago, many people's lives have undergone a dramatic change. Some families were already struggling and, as a result of the pandemic, they can no longer meet essential costs such as rent, utilities and food. Others are facing poverty for the first time.

With the changing restrictions disrupting services, we have had to find new ways to offer fast, effective support to people

Since the pandemic began, the number of people turning to foodbanks has sharply increased as job losses have taken their toll.

**In our Diocese:**

**Finchley Easy Foodbank:** 400% increase in demand since the first lockdown in March 2020.

**Bow Foodbank:** an average of 172 users per week in March 2020 more than doubled to 376 by September 2020.

**Hayes parish:** started delivering emergency food parcels to 15 families in March. Supporting 75 each week by the end of 2020.

With your generous support, the Church is uniquely placed to provide support through our network of around 200 parishes and 200 schools. We are here for everyone regardless of their faith.

**Find out how you're helping to reach the most vulnerable people through our parishes and schools.**

**Contents**

- 2-3 Your support reaches far through our parishes and schools
- 4-5 See how your gifts help change lives
- 6-7 Behind the scenes at Palmers Green foodbank
- 8 Your messages of hope



# Our doors are open...

During the first lockdown, you helped provide food and hot drinks for 250 people per day who were homeless and living on the streets of central London. As their needs have changed, so has the support we've offered.

Being homeless has never been more dangerous. In 2019, a record number of people living on the streets, across England and Wales, died on the streets.



In 2020, vulnerable people, already struggling with the cold, loneliness, addictions and mental health problems, faced a pandemic that put them at even greater risk. As you may remember, the churches of central London joined forces to provide food and hot drinks in Trafalgar Square.

Father Dominic, from Farm Street Church, explains what happens next: "Throughout the pandemic, we've worked closely with Westminster Council. At their request, we moved on to offering people the chance to get a shower, and also food, through to the end of August 2020"



After that, the focus changed again. "We approached restaurants and hotels and they were extraordinarily generous. Even though many are struggling themselves, they stepped in to prepare and cook meals for 40 people, twice a week, which are served here at Farm Street," explains Father Dominic. "I'm grateful to everyone who is making this support possible, including our 70 volunteers."

With help from the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, this vital work will continue. The plan is to make mental health services available to those who need them as they try to build a life off the streets.



Sadly, as job losses start to take their toll, the number of people who are homeless in central London is rising once more.

## Standing with the most vulnerable in our society

During this pandemic, those people who have no recourse to public funds have been among the most vulnerable. They have no access to housing or Universal Credit. Father Dominic is part of the campaign calling for a temporary reprieve, so everyone can have food and a place to stay for the duration of the pandemic, regardless of their immigration status.

# With your support, schools are playing a vital role in ensuring no child goes hungry



Our schools are a place where children play, learn and grow, but increasingly they're providing vital support for children and families facing hunger. They are a visible sign in society of the Church's call to love and serve.



Even before the pandemic, families in our Diocese were struggling. A small, additional cost – like shoes for a child or the cost of a school outing – could leave them with impossible choices. Food or rent?

As a result, some Catholic schools had already started running foodbanks. Others were working with partners such as The Felix Project to distribute unwanted, mislabelled or surplus food. However, since the pandemic, they've had to deal with a shocking increase in the need for help.

Danny Coyle, Head teacher of Newman Catholic College in Harlesden, north west London, is one of many to take on the task of ensuring children don't go hungry.

When the pandemic first closed schools to the majority of students, his initial focus was on ensuring children could continue their studies, but it soon became apparent that families needed more support. During lockdown, local volunteers used the school kitchen to cook emergency meals. With your

support, they were delivering up to 200 meals a day. During the second lockdown, this work resumed, and the team at the college remain committed to doing whatever it takes to support struggling families.

*"It has been a privilege to serve our community in this difficult time," says Danny. "It's inspiring to see so many people come together to help."*





# Through the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, you support vital work to make people, families and our communities stronger



## CARDINAL'S LENTEN APPEAL

### Education Service

**Catholic schools have a particular care for the poorest and most vulnerable in society and have rightly been concerned about the effects of a prolonged absence from school for these and other children.**

True to their vocation, leaders, teachers and support staff in our Catholic schools and colleges have worked selflessly to remain open for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Providing home-learning resources, teaching lessons remotely, maintaining spiritual and pastoral care of pupils, keeping in touch with families and so much more, our education workforce have rendered a great service to their communities in this time of need.

Schools have gone above and beyond to ensure particularly vulnerable pupils and their families have access to food and basic needs, providing meals during holiday periods, and many opened their kitchens (when rules allowed) to support communities to ensure all children have access to food.

Catholic schools play an important role in supporting young people's mental health. Schools have reported a significant increase in pupils needing support as school closures took away structure, routine and a stable and safe education environment. Young people have missed out on contact with trusted adults and peers who provide support and guidance in terms of both academic progress and emotional wellbeing.

Remote learning has also presented challenges in terms of accessibility. This has particularly impacted the most vulnerable pupils and families. Providing equipment to enable digital learning, pastoral support and wellbeing resources continues to be a significant challenge.

Our educative ministry focuses on building a better future, sowing seeds that will flourish. This is more important now than it has ever been. To emerge from this crisis and co-create a better future for all, Catholic schools will focus on the virtues embedded in Catholic Social Teaching, to build sustainable relationships and resilience in our society for the benefit of all.

### Marriage and Family Life

**Coronavirus is not just a threat to health. The pandemic has impacted our personal lives, placing unprecedented stress on relationships.**

Without warning, millions of previously interdependent spouses were sharing living and work space with each other and their children. For some, this was a welcome disruption to routine. For others it brought into sharp focus the abrasive edges of their relationships.

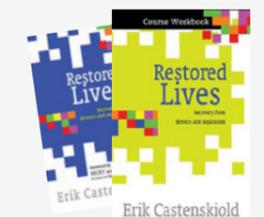
In this time of crisis, Marriage and Family Life Westminster responded:

- We invited groups including Marriage Week teams, Care for the Family, Two in One Flesh, and Smart

Loving to share insights to help support and nourish marriage and family life.

- Marriage Care's counselling and marriage preparation service moved online. Their donation-only service means anyone can access the support they need regardless of financial circumstances. Engaged couples enduring delayed wedding plans also found a listening ear.
- In May 2020 we sadly cancelled our Mass of Thanksgiving for Matrimony. We remain united in prayer, and are investigating ways to celebrate marriage anniversaries at a local level when it's safe to do so.

- In September 2020 Roger Carr Jones led Restored Lives, a resource that embraces people struggling with the painful experience of separation and divorce. It has enabled thousands of people to



explore the emotional and practical challenges of relationship breakdown. It takes courage to take part, even harder gathering virtually, when reassuring words can't be accompanied by a handshake or a hug.

### Caritas Westminster

**Caritas has continued to respond to the needs of people who require direct support and advocacy during the pandemic.**

St Joseph's lifelong learning for people with learning disabilities, and the SEIDs start-up programmes for social entrepreneurs, moved their support online, and the Deaf Service live-streamed events, gatherings and direct counselling.

We continue to provide relief through foodbanks and supermarket vouchers across our parishes. Bakhita House remained open, providing a place of belonging and support.

Galvanising volunteers and discussing themes and collaboration online has also proved invaluable, cutting out travel to meetings, allowing broader participation.

Our development workers continue to support social action in parishes, taking on lead responsibility for our key themes of food, shelter, finance, social inclusion and employment, working with parish groups and schools as well as community organisations to develop individual and community resilience.

Our priority is now to assist communities to develop resilience strategies in these key areas, not only responding to direct need but also examining the issues which

lie behind our response. For example, the issue is not that there is no food for people, rather that they do not have the means to buy it. Consequently, under our theme of finance we are developing champions who can sign-post beneficiaries to trusted organisations who can help them maximise their income, manage debt and develop financial resilience.

Throughout 2021 and 2022 we'll work closely with our partners as part of the solution to increased absolute and relative poverty. We add value to our networks, bringing in expertise to develop skills and capacity, mobilising resources and encouraging parishes and schools to get involved.

### Youth and Evangelisation

**Westminster Youth Ministry (WYM) provides young people with the tools and support they need to be great, to be the saints and role models of the 21st century.**

The pandemic has meant many young people are disengaging with church, deprioritising faith-related activities, and yet experiencing increased mental health issues. Without visiting schools and parishes, it's hard to minister to young people, especially those who may be questioning their faith and less likely to voluntarily sign-up for events online that would give them a different experience of faith.

We've had to cancel all residential retreats to our SPEC Retreat Centre, and the day retreats we led in the autumn required us to adapt the programmes, meaning a need for more staff due to working in smaller groups.

As we emerge from the pandemic, WYM is getting ready to support parishes to encourage greater involvement from young people. During the first lockdown we reviewed our model for engagement and established a Youth Worker Network, and we'll recruit and train more volunteers. At SPEC the new model will mean having a non-residential team and volunteers supporting retreats, giving greater opportunities for young

people to volunteer and contribute to better links with parishes and schools.

We're also launching a youth leadership programme 'Rise Up', aimed at 15-21 year-olds to equip and inspire young people in leadership skills and faith formation. We'll also train youth workers, focusing on youth mental health.

We'll keep a strong online presence for young people who may be struggling or reluctant to attend in person. Despite 'Zoom fatigue', participation in our training and Music Ministries increased and we'll build on this, eventually having a hybrid way of working where online and in-person will complement each other.

# “Running a foodbank has been a humbling experience...”

During the first lockdown, Gerry and Jackie responded to a call to set up a foodbank at St Monica's Church, Palmers Green. Nearly a year on, they're continuing to support local families with the help of the parish, the community, Caritas, our partner organisations and the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal.



“During the first lockdown, the schools in our local area closed, so there was an urgent need to find a new way to distribute food,” explains Gerry. “We were asked if we'd set up a pop up foodbank. Neither my wife, Jackie, or I had ever done anything like it before, but we wanted to help. I never imagined our foodbank would still be going close to a year later.”



“To keep our foodbank users and ourselves as safe as possible, we did as much as possible ourselves although there was no shortage of people offering to help. Father Mehall generously allowed us to use the hall and the whole parish has greatly supported us.”

“Running the foodbank is a humbling experience. We have a better understanding of the challenges our neighbours face in their lives. You realise how isolated some people are. There have been some joyous moments when users of the foodbank have come back to tell us they've got back on their feet and no longer need our help.”



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“To anyone who has a vision of how they want to help others, I'd say this. Talk to your friends and neighbours, and the offers of help will come. Start small. Learn from what you do. Link up with others in your community.

“We've worked with St John the Evangelist, a nearby C of E church, to help them set up their own project. We work with the parish Soup Run. At Christmas, Rosie, a local mum with children at the nearby St Monica's primary school, organised 448 Christmas hampers for local families, including those using our foodbank, with the unbelievably generous support of parents from the school, church parishioners and local companies.

“It's heartening to see what can be achieved when we work together with the common aim of helping our neighbours.”

## “You took me in when I had lost hope.”

**With your support, women who escape sexual exploitation and modern slavery have continued to find a warm, welcoming and caring place to stay at Caritas Bakhita House.**

This message comes from a guest who, during a yearlong stay, gained the strength to restart her life. The simple gift of a birthday cake was one of many acts of kindness that helped rebuild her belief in herself and others.

You took me in when my dignity had been stripped away and I had lost hope. You gave

me a roof over my head, food on the table and a smile on my face.

You have walked with me all along. You have seen my worse days and my better days. Gradually I have risen.

I have learnt so much. I no longer cover my head in order to hide my shame, because you have taught me that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

I say special thanks to Anna who made my first ever birthday cake when I turned 40. No words can explain how much I appreciated that.

God bless you all and thank you. Through you so many women can have a second chance in life.



# Your support has never mattered more...

Thank you for understanding how quickly illness, the loss of a job or reduced working hours can devastate families, pushing them to the brink.

Once you've finished reading Mosaic, we'd love to hear back from you. On the back of the form enclosed, you'll see there's a space to share your thoughts, and we'd love to hear what you'd like to see on the pages of future editions. Please take a moment to let us know.

Last year, many people were kind enough to share their thoughts on Mosaic and the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal. Here are some of the comments we received:

**I am so delighted to know the amount of good works being done. This is what the Church is all about!**

*I have been impressed reading about what you have been doing lately. I am 87 but for as long as I am able, I want to be part of this, so I would like to set up a direct debit please.*

**I can only say this little help is from the bottom of my heart, and I wish happiness for whoever the recipient will be.**

*I have enjoyed reading about the different projects going on in the Diocese and how my contributions are being used.*

*As a pensioner, I am usually irritated to see charities I support spending money from donations on publicity but I must say that I think the Mosaic newsletter is a very good six penny worth of information!*

**We are deeply impressed with all the work to help disadvantaged families in the Diocese. It is so easy in today's society to turn away, but you have shown how we can all do better with God's help.**

Please share your thoughts today. Thank you.



## Another mosaic of hope...



By donating to the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, you put another piece in the mosaic of hope we're building as we support the most vulnerable people in our communities. As a thank you, we like to share on these pages some of the beautiful mosaics you can see in churches across our Diocese.

This stunning mosaic is in Notre Dame de France, in central London, one of the parishes involved in the Trafalgar Square project to feed homeless people, mentioned on p2. The mosaic in the Lady Chapel by Boris Anrep, who also created mosaics for Westminster Cathedral, depicts the birth of Christ. On the surrounding walls, there are murals painted by Jean Cocteau and dedicated to the Virgin Mary.



**The Cardinal is leading the Diocese in frequently remembering those who have died and their families in prayer. He is also regularly saying Mass in the Cathedral for them and their loved ones, like this one in January which was livestreamed.**

Each copy of Mosaic costs around 6p to print and helps us to raise even more precious donations. Donors often tell us they appreciate hearing how we have used the gifts entrusted to us, and we are conscious of our duty to be wise stewards of the funds you donate. When you have finished reading, please put Mosaic into the recycling, or pass it on to someone else.



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