









News from Caritas Westminster for priests and parishioners

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Dear Fathers,

As we send our March newsletter, in the second week of Lent, we are particularly thinking about those who are seeking sanctuary on our shores.

All people should be able to live free from fear, and in conditions of dignity which enable them to fulfil their God-given potential. But many thousands of people, who have already endured the trauma of war, persecution and danger, could be denied their rights to a safe sanctuary, if the Government's latest anti-refugee plans are allowed to go ahead. People who have escaped from perilous situations should be treated with compassion and listened to, and given a home within a community. We fear that the Government's announcements will result in traumatised people being detained and refused asylum without having their cases looked into at all.

Those working with refugees and people seeking sanctuary, both within the catholic Church and secular charities, are likely to make announcements and plans to fight these new laws. Sarah Teather from the Jesuit Refuge Service has already spoken strongly, describing the proposals as "draconian". Read what they said before the details were announced, here:

<https://www.jrsuk.net/news/illegal-migration-bill/>

At Caritas Westminster we are keen to amplify the voices of people seeking sanctuary in the Diocese. This week Rosa Lewis from Caritas Westminster accompanied an asylum seeker Maimuno Jawo and Stephanie White to speak on the panel at the Commission for the Integration of Refugees at their hearing in Croydon.

As Bishop Paul McAleenan, the Bishops' spokesperson on migration, repeatedly reminds us, the causes of migration, and of people becoming refugees, are war, persecution, and natural disasters, including those related to the man-made climate crisis.

Speaking at a refugee week event last summer Bishop Paul said: *"We always keep in mind that it is not illegal to seek asylum. Anyone whose life is threatened has the right to protection.*

Persecution, danger and displacement cause people to migrate and seek asylum by crossing borders without documents and passports. It is the right of human persons to migrate so that they can be safe and achieve a better life for themselves and their children."

I'm sure you will join us in prayer for all those travelling across land and sea, or stranded in Calais, and for our country's leaders, that wise, just and compassionate decisions will be made.

Warm Regards,

Meriel Woodward

Assistant Director, Caritas Westminster

This bulletin contains information on how Caritas Westminster can support the work you do in your parish community. If you ever want to get in touch, please email caritaswestminster@rcdow.org.uk or your own Development Worker, whose details can be found here: www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/our-development-team.php

Emergency Supermarket Vouchers

Caritas Westminster's Emergency Supermarket Voucher Scheme's Spring 2023 round for parishes is now open.

This Spring parishes can once again request £300 of vouchers from the above scheme. You can distribute these vouchers as you wish amongst your community.

Applications are **open until end of day Friday 17th March**

The form to request vouchers is here: <https://forms.office.com/e/6YnzA1jquh>

In order to receive the £300 of new vouchers you must have distributed all vouchers from your previous round, completed and sent back your spreadsheet to cfc@rcdow.org.uk. **Please take a moment to do this before applying on the form above.**

(If you have never received vouchers before, you may ignore this)

We are aiming to send the vouchers via email in the week commencing 27th March.

For any questions and support, please contact Niki: cfc@rcdow.org.uk

Cost of Living Crisis

News about the Warm Spaces in the Westminster Diocese (which, going by today's weather, could be needed for a little while to come) has crossed the Atlantic! If you have a few minutes, take a look at this news video, featuring Fr Richard Nesbit from White City: [CBS "Warm banks" open doors to people struggling to stay warm in U.K. - YouTube](#)

For any members of your community struggling with fuel bills, this might be useful - Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis has created a handy tool for anyone who would like to calculate their likely energy bills from April 1st:

www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/what-are-the-price-cap-unit-rates-/#epgcalculator

Parish Volunteer Recruitment

As you know, the Caritas Volunteer Service is available to help you encourage more parishioners to get involved in the life of the church. This lent, alongside the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, we are encouraging parishes to ask people to give their time. Look out for some posters arriving in the mail in the next few days, alongside the usual fundraising materials, which you can use to help you encourage volunteering.

Volunteer recruitment could help your parish:

- To give parishioners the opportunity to give back and to cultivate a sense of purpose.
- To build on diversity, inclusion and belonging in parishes
- To help more people access the Eucharist
- To welcome visitors and new arrivals
- To reach out to those who feel disengaged or left out

If you missed our online information event on Thursday 26th January, the video of the meeting can be seen on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZQmQ4eE_Pc

Do get in touch with the Caritas Volunteer Service if you would like to know more, including if you would like more Volunteer Service leaflets. cvs@rcdow.org.uk.

Caritas Parish Reps

We are also asking that more parishes will find someone to volunteer as a **Caritas Parish Rep**. These are our key contacts in parishes to share news of local opportunities for mission and outreach, networking, training and formation in Catholic Social Teaching. They help put up posters, raise awareness in the parish and with local schools, they let us know about local need, provide information on the amazing community outreach and share data and stories so that we can work together towards social justice.

Find all the details here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/parish-social-action.php>

The Caritas Rep might want to work alongside the Justice and Peace Rep (in some parishes they are the same person) to cover all elements of the church's teaching on social justice. Find out more about J&P contacts here: <https://westminsterjusticeandpeace.org/parish-contacts/>

Existing and New Parish Reps are invited to our workshop on Saturday 25th March 10-2pm at Vaughan House. They should sign up here: [Caritas Representative Workshop - Relaunch, Welcome & Introduction Tickets, Sat 25 Mar 2023 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Safe in Faith Domestic Abuse Response Training for Catholic Faith Leaders

In any congregation there are likely to be a number of people who are currently being subjected to domestic abuse, or who have been subjected to it in the past.

There are also likely to be perpetrators of domestic abuse.

[Safe in Faith](#), a project of Caritas Westminster, provides training and information to help you respond more safely to situations of domestic abuse.

This training is for clergy, religious sisters and spiritual directors. There are four sessions, which take place via Zoom. All are on Tuesdays from 2:30-5:30pm

- 21st March, Understanding Domestic Abuse
- 25th April, Understanding Domestic Abuse in the Context of Catholic Spirituality
- 16th May, Understanding Trauma and Trauma Informed Support
- 6th June, Practical Support Skills, Signposting and Self-care.

Go to our events page for information on how to register: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/event-list.php>

It is recommended that you participate in all four training courses. This training will be repeated in the Autumn. Email admin@safeinfaith.org.uk to find out more.

Events

Please promote these to relevant people in your parish, or include in your newsletter.

For people working with those experiencing homelessness or other hardships:

There is one more meeting in our *Stepping Stones – Dignified Work* Series. We would like to invite you to learn about the work of *Beam*, and the support they might be able to offer the people you are working with.

27th March 2023, 10:00 - 12:00

Find out more and sign up here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/event-list.php>

Animating Parish Seniors Groups - Conference

Thursday 20th April 2023, 10am-4pm at Westminster Cathedral Hall – registration required.

This Conference is for all parishes, agencies or groups who accompany or work with older people in the Diocese of Westminster.

A Collaboration between Caritas Westminster, the Agency for Evangelisation, Irish Chaplaincy, St Vincent de Paul Society and Anna Chaplaincy, this event will:

- Celebrate the older people in our parishes
- Bring together all organisations and groups who work with older people
- Inspire hope in older age
- Generate ideas and introduce new programmes to parishes
- Promote diversity and inclusion and accessibility
- Provide a legacy of support for projects with Seniors

Please call 020 7931 6077 or click here for more information or:

www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/animating-parish-seniors-groups-conference-1448.php

Mass for Migrants

Monday 1 May

The Dioceses and Ethnic Chaplaincies of Brentwood, Southwark, and Westminster invite you to a celebration of the annual Mass for Migrants on Monday, 1st May 2023, 12:00, St Antony of Padua Church, Forest Gate, E7 9QB

Find out more from Caritas Diocese of Brentwood: <https://www.caritasbrentwood.org/news/migrants-mass/>