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Hallam Bridge



ISSUE

11

December 2023

A Community called to love one another as Christ loves us.



St Joseph's Dinnington gets Cafod's Live Simply Award *Page 4*

Resources for the Christmas Season



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Our Lady and St Thomas, Sheffield holds a parish bake off *Find out more on page 4*

Cantley Neighbourhood Centre receives King's Award for Voluntary Service



Read all about it on page 5

Guidelines for work in view of the 2024 Assembly released

At the end of their meeting on 5 December, the members of the Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops adopted a Document for the work to be engaged by the Catholic Church until the celebration of the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2024).

Find out more on Page 3 and plans for the diocese on page 9

Upcoming Events

7 January 5.30pm - 7pm Constitution on the Liturgy (Liverpool Hope Online)
 10, 13, 17 January 7:00-8:30 pm Living with the Spirit of the Synod Online
 20 January, 9:30 - 11:30am A Synodal Church in Mission in Pastoral Centre
 3 February, 10am - 12pm Becoming Synodal- Retreat at Home - Pastoral Centre
 17 February SAT 9:00 am - 5.00 pm Reawakening the Catholic Vision Leeds Trinity
 24 February, 2&9 March 9:00 - 12:30pm CCRS Hallam Pastoral Centre
 2 March, SAT 11am - 4pm Lent Retreat Day Hallam Pastoral Centre
 12-14 June 2024 Catholic Parish Summit- Harrogate

Upcoming Pilgrimages

Lourdes Pilgrimage 28 June-4 July 2024
 Padley Pilgrimage 7 July 2024

Welcome to the December edition of Hallam

Bridge

As we journey through Advent, how do we balance our joy and anticipation of the baby born in Bethlehem with the sadness about the war, death and destruction in the Holy Land? Christmas lights are cancelled in Bethlehem this year. Pope Francis urges us to continue praying for peace, individually and with groups in your parish; find time for extra prayers for peace. Pope John Paul II entrusted the great call for peace to the prayer of the rosary "which appeals to God's grace but also sows in the one reciting it the seed of good from which fruits of justice and solidarity in personal and community life can be expected." (Pope John Paul II, 2002) See also the link to the CAFOD website for some prayers you might use: cafod.org.uk.

There is a sombre but important item in December Hallam Bridge about Safeguarding. The ongoing wounds of abuse within the Church are being faced and confronted. There are links to explanations about the serious work that is being done in the diocese, and in the country. In place are robust policies and procedures to protect the vulnerable, opportunities for training and a link to the salutary lessons from other dioceses about what can be learned about safeguarding. It may seem heavy going, but safeguarding is everyone's business and being able to say with knowledge and confidence that the Catholic Church continues to act justly towards survivors and towards present and future generations is part of evangelising. See page 6.

On a more cheerful note, December perhaps brings a glimmer of good news from COP28 of an acknowledgement from world leaders of the need to aim for zero use of fossil fuels. Of course, there is much to be done. Here in Hallam, another parish joins the prized endeavour for a Care for Creation award. Read about St Joseph's, Dinnington journey on page 4. Watch this space for the news from St Vincent's parish in the next newsletter.

More good news comes from the good people of Cantley, living out their Christian call and providing witness of the Good News see page 5. And good news also from the bakers of Our Lady and St Thomas may inspire you to begin baking up a storm in time for Christmas.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, a call to pilgrim journeys and charisms of historical, investigative, and generous mindsets, the Friends of Padley Chapel group has taken on the task of reinvigorating the opportunity to pilgrimage and learn more about Padley Chapel and other Pilgrim Ways in the locality. If you have never been to Padley, perhaps one of your aims for the New Year might be to make this the year you join the Padley Pilgrimage. Read the fascinating article which is a trailer for some very interesting pilgrimage news and articles to come and if you feel called to join this group, you would be most welcome. There are links to various Advent and Christmas resources. If you need help accessing these, talk to your parish priest and parish council about how they can support everyone to stay in touch with the digital world.

And finally, there is plenty of news from the Synod on Synodality, from Rome and locally. There are lots of interesting resources online which will provide you with insights into the gather in Rome. If you feel it's time you caught up with what it all means, now it is clear that synodality is here to stay, consider gathering a group in your parish and following the Retreat at Home, which embeds the synodal ideas firmly in prayer and practicing synodal conversations. If you and your parish are ready to continue your synodal journey further, consider sending a delegate and/or joining the group who will be looking at the 'Synodal Church in Mission' summary document and worksheet from the Synod in Rome together, and thinking about the direction for the diocese. See pages 3 and 9.

As always, send your news, articles and ideas to the Hallam Bridge. Deadline for the January edition is 10 January. Wishing you all a blessed Advent and Christmas. Editor.

This is a publication by Hallam Diocese.
 Please send your articles or feedback to communications@hallam-diocese.com or to Hallam Pastoral Centre
 St Charles St, Sheffield
 S9 9WU

CONTACT

Appointments

Fr Basil Ugochukwu will become Parish Priest of the parishes of Sacred Heart, Balby, St Mary, Edlington and St Mary Magdalene, Maltby, on the 1 January 2024.

Fr John Adikwu will remain in residence as Assistant Priest.

Formation & Mission Team

Arthi Fernando has recently joined the Formation and Mission team covering maternity leave for Catalina Cacia. She is a parishioner at St Paul's, Cantley, Doncaster where she is also the Parish secretary/ administrator. Besides her work, she is a freelance artist and enjoys cooking Indian food. She is very passionate to support the work of formation in the parishes across the diocese.



LIVING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE SYNOD

'Dear brothers and sisters, let us have a good journey together! May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit. Let us not miss out on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening and discernment.' Homily of Pope Francis 10th October 2021

Pope Francis encourages us to not only to engage in the Synod process but also to become living expressions of being Church. How might we respond to that invitation in our own lives and context that we might catch those grace-filled opportunities?

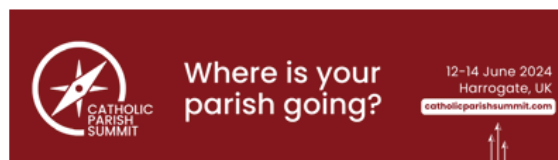
Over this short online course of two evenings and a full day, we will explore these synodal expressions of mission, participation and community through shared experience, prayer, reflection and discussion. We hope that this will help us grow more as pilgrims of love, changed through encounter, listening and discernment.

Come willing to be open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit!

Days/times:

10 January 2024	19:00 - 20.30 Session 1
13 January 2024	10:00 - 16.00 Session 2
17 January 2024	19:00 - 20.30 Session 3

Closing date for registrations: Wednesday 3rd January 2024



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<https://hallam-diocese.com/bridge/>

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Around the Diocese

How to be a synodal Church in mission?



Guidelines for work in view of the 2024 Assembly released

At the end of their meeting on 5 December, the members of the Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops adopted a Document for the work to be engaged by the Catholic Church until the celebration of the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2024).

These are guidelines with a concrete roadmap in which the deepening of synodality in a missionary perspective and the broadening of experiences of synodality at the local level are the cornerstones on which the local communities are called to reflect, beginning with the Synthesis Report adopted at the end of the First Session of the XVI Assembly on 28 October. As the Holy Father recalled when approving these work guidelines, “the Synod is about synodality and not about this or that theme... The important thing is how the reflection is done, that is, in a synodal way”.

“Building on the experience of last October’s assembly, and especially on the Synthesis Report that the members approved, the Ordinary Council decided on a unified yet differentiated path depending on the competencies and possibilities within local ecclesial realities,” says Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, adding, “This is already a synodal way of working in the Church where each person cooperates for the good of

all according to his or her vocation”.

In fact, keeping the two main themes or guidelines in mind, the dioceses are asked:

1) with regard to deepening: to promote a reflection that focuses on the theme of differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all members of the People of God (cf. Synthesis Report, chapters 8-12, 16 and 18). The local Churches are asked to carry out a further consultation, involving people and groups (parish priests, participation bodies, synodal teams, etc.) who express a variety of experiences, skills, charisms, ministries within the People of God and whose point of view is of particular help in focusing on “how” to grow as a synodal Church. In this sense, the involvement of experts and academic institutions present in the area seems indispensable, so that the contribution of theological and canonical expertise, as well as the relevant human and social sciences, can be present;

2) regarding the broadening of experiences of synodality: to continue or promote new initiatives to grow as a synodal church on mission, with training and listening experiences that also involve those who have not been touched by the process so far, groups living in conditions of poverty and social marginality as well as Christians of different denominations and people of other religions; to collect and transmit testimonies and best practices to be sent to the Synod Secretariat through the Bishops’ Conferences or the Eastern Hierarchical Structures.

In order to facilitate the work of the local communities, the General Secretariat has prepared a possible work sheet to help the work of receiving the fruits of October’s synod assembly and of continuing the synodal journey of conversion in the local Churches.

the full article is available on our website

Around the Diocese

St. Joseph's, Dinnington - CAFOD Live Simply Award



St. Joseph's Parish received the CAFOD Live Simply Award at a special celebration mass on Sunday 19th November 2023. The award was presented by Paul Kelly, a CAFOD Assessor; he congratulated us for all of our achievements on our Live Simply journey. The mass was beautiful, a special letter of congratulations from Bishop Ralph was read and the school choir sprinkled a touch of stardust when they sang their hearts out at the end. Receiving the award was a very proud moment for the parish, one that will live on in our memories for a very long time.

We began our Live Simply journey in the autumn of 2021, there had been many events that year caused by climate change - devastating floods, fires, storms and unprecedented high temperatures. The effects of climate change were all around, it was very clear that we were facing a crisis affecting each and every one of us, a crisis that was, and still is, damaging our world, our common home; God's creation.

St. Joseph's were deeply moved by Pope Francis' call to hear the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor and took up his challenge to take action. We began searching for something that we could do and decided that the CAFOD Live Simply Award was perfect for us. Parishioners took on the challenge with great enthusiasm, in our action plan we built on things that were already being done and also took on new challenges.

Bad news about the environment, pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change and the plight of the poor are featured on the news and in the media night after night and we often feel powerless to help but don't know how. Working

towards the Live Simply Award brought the whole parish together; it addressed our deep felt need to do something, gave us a focus for action and motivated us to go further. The challenges and triumphs along the way culminated in an enormous sense of achievement when we were presented with the Live Simply Award.

Our Lady & St Thomas Bake Off



On Saturday, the 18th of November, the Parish of Our Lady and St Thomas Of Canterbury met together to enjoy our first Parish Bake Off competition. The scene was set with bunting, cake stands and tablecloths, ready for the judging to begin. Bakers were invited to enter their creations into categories including Best cupcakes, Best traditional cake, Best birthday cake (well we had to celebrate Father Steven's birthday!), Best cake made by a child under eight years, Most humorous cake, Best international themed bake, Most unusual Cake, and the Best ecclesiastically themed cake (admirably judged by Father Geoff). Parishioners and friends, young and old, rose to the occasion and produced a spectacular display of baking delights. Many star baker awards were given, notable entries included a tomato soup cake in the most unusual cake category and a spectacular tiered cake by one of our younger parishioners. Many star baker awards were given, with the overall standard of entry being extremely high. With the judging complete, there was nothing left to do but allow the assembled spectators to devour the creations and judge for themselves which bakes had been worthy of an award. It was a hugely enjoyable

Around the Diocese

afternoon with thanks to our bakers, organisers, judges, tea-makers and in particular, thanks to those who did the washing up! Angela Holman

Kings Award for The Cantley Neighbourhood Centre



Just under twelve years ago, a Parish Council meeting, at St Paul's, took a slightly different turn. It was the Pope's wish that the year should be dedicated to prayer for the EVANGELISATION of the world.

The group discussed how, when and why this should be high on the agenda for the parish. Various ideas were put forward until one person asked, "Are we going to pray for this or are we going to do something or are we going to do both?"

"What could we do?"

This question, asked by another member, was answered in a way that would have consequences which could never have been envisaged.

A shop, in a small complex near the Church of St Paul's, had been vacant for a long time. It was owned by the Council and they really wanted tenants. The idea was formed. If the council would rent it to them, St. Paul's could become the tenants, have a place where the underprivileged, the homeless, the poor and the lonely could get a drink, have a chat, purchase clothes which would have been donated and get help with their problems.

It took a couple of years to get started but, ten years since its opening, this special place has flourished and is planning expansion. Tea, coffee, a biscuit and a chat has become the

norm for so many. Food, donated by various companies and shops is freely available for those who need it, as are toiletries and household goods. The income from the sale of clothes, books, household goods, jewellery and ornaments has enabled the Centre to expand and grow.

People with any problems can get advice and assistance with filling in forms, understanding the complexities of the legal system or finding out whom to approach with health problems and family matters. And all this is from volunteers who give their time, their expertise and their knowledge.

The volunteers have, over the years, formed friendships which include not only the workers themselves but all who visit the Centre. Their welcome is all inclusive and genuine. The Centre is a place where anyone can find support, understanding and unquestioning acceptance.

Recently, much to the delight of their supporters, the Centre was awarded

The King's Award for Voluntary Service.

This is equivalent to receiving the MBE.

Congratulations to Angela Fox, the former Parish Priest, Fr. Bernard O'Brien, R.I.P. and all the volunteers who work at or donate to the centre.

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"What could we do?"

the full article is available on our website

Around the Diocese

Safeguarding News



A lot has been happening in the world of safeguarding over the last year. We thought it would be helpful to share some of it with you.

CSSA Audit

Following our initial audit in June 2022, (which was part of a pilot project by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency), the Diocese achieved an overall compliance grading of 'Early Progress' against the eight national standards set by CSSA. More information about the eight standards and the audit process can be found here:

<https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/the-eight-national-safeguarding-standards>

The audit highlighted many strengths in each of the standards, which clearly demonstrates the good work being done by the team. However, as is the expected outcome of an audit, there were some areas identified as requiring development and a number of recommendations were made.

We have been working tirelessly during the last year to implement the recommendations and our second audit is due to take place in February 2024. We hope to have made significant improvements in the areas where further work was required and achieve a higher overall compliance grade. Updates will be available after the audit has taken place.

Parish Safeguarding Representatives

The role of the Parish Safeguarding Rep is to help promote a culture of safeguarding, where the parish community is aware of safeguarding issues, and to help ensure that safeguarding is understood as an essential part of the life and ministry of the Church.

They act as a point of contact for anyone who has concerns about safeguarding or may wish to speak to someone confidentially, and together with the parish priest ensure that any concerns or issues are brought to the safeguarding office to be dealt with.

If you are interested in finding out more about the role then please contact the safeguarding office on 0114 2566453.

CSSA National Learning Portal – Online Training

The Catholic Church has developed its own learning portal offering national safeguarding training for parishioners and volunteers. The training is available for you to learn the importance of safeguarding in relation to your ministry or role within the parish.

The free training can be completed by anyone who may wish to obtain a certificate in safeguarding. It has now been made a mandatory requirement for all volunteers working in roles with children and adults who may be vulnerable, to complete Level 2 as the national requirement.

You can access the portal by typing the following link into your web browser:

<https://training.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/>

Hexham & Newcastle Safeguarding Review

You may/may not be aware that Hexham & Newcastle Diocese have recently been subject to a safeguarding review by the CSSA, (the independent regulatory body), as commissioned by the Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, after concerns were raised since the resignation of Bishop Byrne in December 2022.

The investigation and the purpose of why it took place was reported in the local media in Newcastle and surrounding areas.

The full report into the investigation and the executive summary can be found here: <https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/audits-and-reports/cssa-audit-reports/>

The investigation highlighted huge failings in safeguarding practices and as a result, all Dioceses in England and Wales were briefed on the findings and required to review their own policies and practices to ensure the same

Around the Diocese

failings are not repeated throughout our churches and parishes.

Catherine Bailey (Diocesan Trustee and Chair of the Hallam Safeguarding Committee) has delivered a number of presentations to Staff, Clergy and Parish Safeguarding Reps on the review, and areas for learning for us. This has resulted in us reflecting on and changing some of our own practice and processes. Jo Pearson

The safeguarding office can be contacted on 0114 2566453 or via email: jpearson@hallam-diocese.com

Walking the Hathersage Pilgrim Ways



Early Christians were known as 'followers of the Way'

People from a number of parishes from across the diocese have met to form the latest 'Friends of Padley Chapel' group. We have been exploring Padley Chapel's history and are indebted to the work of Barbara M. Smith. Her skilled, tenacious commitment, in researching the role of Hathersage, and the surrounding area, in the preservation of the Catholic faith tradition in post reformation England, is of national importance.

Her commitment was also linked, to her family heritage, being related to the Furniss family, who gave the land, for a Seventeenth century, Catholic Chapel in Hathersage. It is largely due to her research, that we can feel more 'secure', in exploring this precious history, once again.

Barbara's research on the church of ' St Michael, The Archangel', 'Padley Chapel' and 'North Lees Hall /Holy Trinity Chapel', are 'spiritual

treasures', recording the faith commitment of the peoples of the Hope Valley. She also identified the commonality of faith commitment and mutual respect, despite 'time influenced' political pressures, between the post-Reformation Christian traditions.

So, a series of articles called, 'Walking the Hathersage Pilgrim Ways', will draw heavily, from her written legacy. Plus, the benefits of chatting with the people of the Hope Valley and accessing information via local studies libraries and the internet.

People have walked 'in faith' to Padley Chapel, for many centuries. The example of the 'Hearts in Search of God' project*, has been an inspiration.

We aim to make Padley Chapel more available to the public (more volunteer guides are needed) and longer term, explore the possibility of improved 'visitor facilities'. We're blessed with access to beautiful countryside and are currently developing local pilgrimage routes, 'to celebrate our Catholic cultural heritage, with peoples of all faiths and none'.

More articles will follow in 2024. If you would like to get involved or join the Friends of Padley Chapel then contact formation-mission@hallam-diocese.com

Gerard Bonner 'Friends of Padley Chapel'
* Hearts in Search of God

aims to promote walking pilgrimage in England & Wales by developing Pilgrim Ways between the cathedral of each Catholic diocese and one or more shrines within the same diocese. The Ways are an opportunity for Catholics and other Christians to deepen their faith, and for people of all faiths and none to share in the experience of walking a pilgrimage in a Catholic context. The hope is that walking pilgrimage will contribute to the common good of our nations through encouraging encounter with others, hospitality, and respect for the environment.

Looking Ahead

Resources for Advent and Christmas



Advent and Christmas

Our December focus is on the coming of Christ. We have lots of resources to help you journey from Advent to Christmas.

Articles, videos and family activities.
<https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/>

Advent - The God Who Speaks Christmas - The God Who Speaks Angels - The God Who Speaks Archangels - The God Who Speaks Christmas donkey - The God Who Speaks

The Feast of The Holy Family- Sunday 31 December 2023



The Feast of The Holy Family is a Solemnity, a feast day, where we are given the beautiful

opportunity to reflect on Jesus, Mary and Joseph, God's Holy Family. The Holy Family are a model for every family; it is in them we can find inspiration and guidance, through times of happiness, joy and when we go through hardship, asking for their intercession in prayer. On this Feast Day, we pray in thanksgiving for the vocation to marriage, for all families and each member, for those discerning marriage, those who have recently married, those celebrating special anniversaries, and for the graces that family life can bring.

The Gospel today comes from Luke (Luke 2:22-40) and

'invites us to reflect on the experience lived by Mary, Joseph and Jesus, as they grow together as a family in mutual love and in trust in God

' (Pope Francis, Feast of The Holy Family, 2017).

Parents love to see their children flourish and grow and '

to acquire knowledge and receive the grace of God, just as happened to Jesus

' (Pope Francis, 2017). Mary and Joseph had the wonderful experience of seeing Jesus grow, filled with the grace of God. Pope Francis ends his address by stating that:

'this is the mission to which the family is directed: to create conditions favourable to the harmonious and full growth of its children, so they may live a good life, worthy of God and constructive for the world'

As we spend the Christmas Season with our families, let us pray in thanksgiving for them, asking for the guidance of The Holy Spirit. We also pray for those families who cannot be together or who struggle at this time, that through the healing power of God, there can be peace and unity. We call to mind the deceased members of our families, that they have their eternal reward with You in Heaven and give thanks for their inspiration. As we journey with The Holy Family to the stable and beyond, we hold in our hearts the importance of God's will for our families, and may we be open to hear His call, just like Joseph and Mary.

Looking Ahead

A Synodal Church in Mission in Hallam



Come and learn how to continue the synodal journey here in the diocese. A gathering for those who would like to embed the synodal way of working in their parish community over the next year. You will need to read the synthesis document here or the simplified summary here before the meeting at the Hallam Pastoral Centre 20 January 2024 9:30-11:30 am

Book on the diocesan Eventbrite site here

Becoming Synodal- Retreat at Home



The Diocese is inviting every parish to a "retreat at home" on becoming synodal. This retreat is designed to introduce the practice of synodality, and uses the April 2022 diocesan syntheses report which reflected the reports from each parish. Material is available on understanding what it means to be synodal and then applies that to the different themes in the report. It is an ideal way to prepare for the second part of the Synod in October 2024.

The retreat was trialled in St Patrick's and St Catherine's parish and will be reported in the January edition of the Hallam Bridge. On the morning of the 3rd of February a taster session at the Pastoral Centre will be held for those who are interested in running the retreat in their parish situation.

Andrew Crowley

Trinity Conference: Reawakening the Catholic Vision

at
Leeds Trinity University
 on
Saturday

17 February 2024

9am-5pm

"Brothers and sisters, Christendom no longer exists!"

Pope Francis

How can the Catholic Church understand and respond to the post-Christian era? What is the future of our Catholic parishes, schools and homes when much of what we see appears in decline? How does the Church evangelise, form, teach and catechise adults in a

Looking Ahead

post-Christendom age? How, in a world of competing social agendas, can the Church reclaim the narrative for true justice in the world? Speakers include keynote from Monsignor James Shea, President of the University of Mary (North Dakota, USA) and co-author of:

From Christendom to Apostolic Mission

", and Archbishop Mark O'Toole (CBCEW), Dr Hannah Vaughan-Spruce (Divine Revelation UK), Claire Fernandes (Celebrate) and more.

Ticket price includes access to all the talks, lunch, refreshments and a hard copy of the conference publication including written papers from all of the speakers.

For the full timetable and booking info see

: www.trinityconference.co.uk

Questions

: Email: h.hayward@leedstrinity.ac.uk

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

Catholic Parish Summit



Every parish leader wants to feel their parish come alive and bring people to Jesus.

But the reality is, engagement in our churches is declining. People are leaving. Congregations are aging. Even some parishes are closing. And with the daily demands of parish life, a sense of stagnation often makes leaders feel overwhelmed and discouraged. It's difficult to imagine that this is what God wants for parishes.

As a Church, is it enough to simply maintain the models that have worked in the past, or is the Holy Spirit inviting us to put all our trust in him and set off on a path of renewal? Yes, renewal can be difficult. This is why the Catholic Parish Summit is gathering priests and lay leaders to inspire and equip them to embrace the mission of Jesus — and to provide connection and encouragement for those on this journey.

Here's what you need to do: Visit catholicparishsummit.com today

Looking Ahead

Register and be a part of CPS in Harrogate on 12-14 June 2024

See what's behind a growing movement of parishes coming to new life and learn how your parish can do it, too.

So, register today and join Sr. Miriam James Heidland, Archbishop Mark O'Toole, Fr. James Mallon and more in this impactful gathering of parish leaders. In the meantime, learn more about the Summit and see why CPS is the event to look forward to in 2024: visit catholicparishsummit.com today.

Pope prays Bethlehem song can inspire solidarity, reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land this Christmas



Report from CBCEW

There will be no Christmas tree or traditional festivities in the place of Jesus Christ's birth this year in response to the thousands killed in the conflict in the Holy Land. Instead, the focus in the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square in Bethlehem will be on praying for peace.

Hear Angels Cry

Amidst the rubble and ruins, a poignant voice rises to declare that the light of hope will persist in the small West Bank town where the Christmas story unfolded.

Youstina Safar, a resident of Bethlehem and a student at Bethlehem University, has collaborated with the London-based band Ooberfuse to deliver a powerful message through their Christmas song,

Hear Angels Cry

. The song resonates with the belief that hope

for a better future, born in the hearts of humanity.

Papal support

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has not only heard about the song, but has sent a message to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Bishops' Conference, commending it for drawing attention to "the sublime significance of the city where Jesus Christ was born."

Communicated by the Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Pope Francis' message holds up the Holy Land as the place that was home to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and called to be a place of encounter, dialogue and hope for all. The Pope wrote that his hope was that the song "will inspire many people this Christmas to pray for a new flourishing of fraternal solidarity, reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land."

Listen

You can watch

Hear Angels Cry

on YouTube. The song is also streaming on Spotify and Apple Music.

You can also support fundraising efforts for the suffering in the Holy Land by buying the song via Amazon.

Singer Youstina Safar hopes

Hear Angels Cry

will provide a shard of light in the darkness:

"In the midst of despair, our song

Hear Angels Cry

stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of hope in Bethlehem. While the traditional Christmas displays may dim this year in remembrance of lives lost in Gaza, our voices unite to affirm that hope will never succumb to darkness."

Cherrie Anderson, from the band Ooberfuse, remarks:

"As we embarked on this music project in June, we never anticipated the cancellation of Christmas displays in Bethlehem. The dimming lights in Manger Square honour those who tragically lost their lives in the Holy Land. The full article is available on our website