



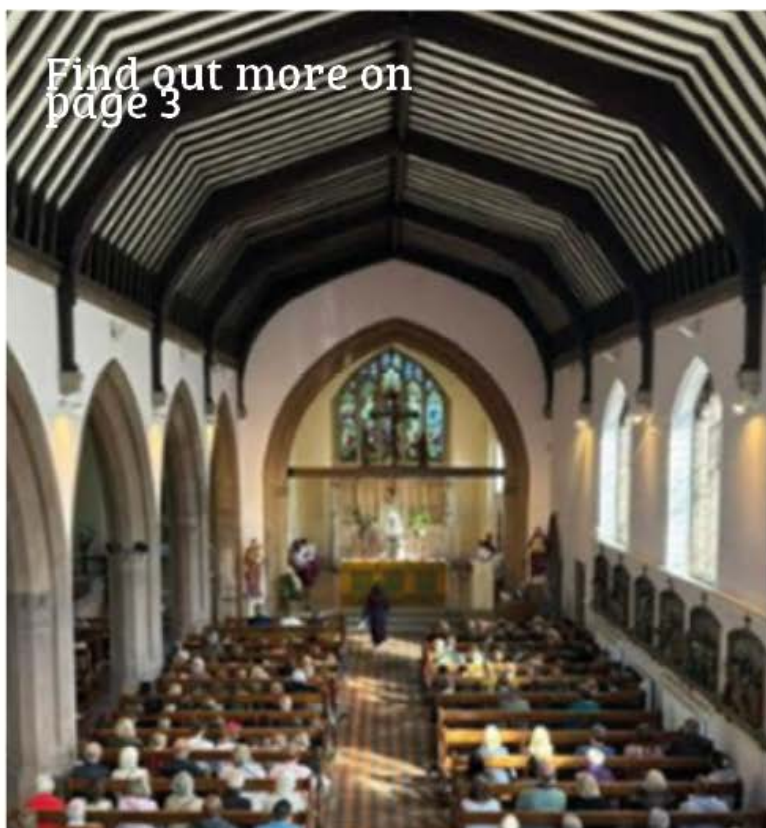
A Community called to love one another as Christ loves us.



**Institution to the Ministry
of Lector and Acolyte**

See page 9

St Joseph's Primary School Handsworth, Marks 150 Years



Find out more on
page 3

An Invitation to join Bishop Ralph for a time of
prayerful reflection at the beginning of Advent



29 November 2025

2:30-5:30 PM

Hallam Pastoral Centre,
St Charles Street, Sheffield, S9 3WU

Book using this QR code or hyperlink to the
Formation & Mission Eventbrite Page

[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hallam-format
ion-and-mission-46212155433](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/hallam-format
ion-and-mission-46212155433)



Upcoming Events

15 November, Reading Group and then third Saturday of the Month Pastoral Centre

10:00 am - 12:00 noon and subsequently 20 December, 17 January, 21 Feb, 21 March, 18 April, 16 May, 20 June, 18 July – They will be reading *Imagination, Discernment and Spiritual Direction* by Rob Marsh. The group is open to anyone. If you would like to join the group please contact formation-mission@hallam-diocese.com

29 November, 6 & 13 December CCRS Pastoral Centre

29 November Advent Afternoon Recollection Pastoral Centre

Jubilee Events in the Diocese

15 November Jubilee of Volunteers Immaculate Conception, Rotherham



Appointments

Rachel Rouse, currently Deputy Director of Education for the Diocese of Leeds, has been appointed as the new Diocesan Director of Education

Welcome to the October edition of Hallam Bridge

As the Synod Coordinator Team prepares for the Jubilee of Synod Coordinators in Rome this October, we remind diocesan friends that we are now in the Implementation Phase of the Synod. Please review your parish's progress in adopting synodal practices (see Page 12 for details). Across England and Wales, synod coordinators report a range of attitudes among parish priests—from enthusiastic and active, to indifferent, reluctant, or resistant. This diversity is reflected among parishioners, with many expressing frustration about how to advance synodality. To support you, we will soon distribute a questionnaire to gather feedback and identify areas where further assistance is needed. We encourage parishes to discuss implementation strategies and support requirements with their priests.

Jubilee Celebrations

Recent Jubilee events have highlighted the Catholic ethos in our diocese. Read about the pilgrimage experiences of McAuley School and St Joseph's Primary (page 3), the Jubilee of Altar Servers at Holy Rood, Barnsley (page 6), and the commissioning of new ministries at St Paul's, Cantley (page 8-9). Training sessions on Ministries and Catechetics will be available in the New Year. The Annual Thanksgiving for Married Love at St Peter's, Doncaster will return next year (page 5).

Formation and Mission

Pastoral Formation graduates were celebrated at the Pastoral Centre. For those interested in Catholic studies, CCRS modules—especially Catholic Social Thought—are available; contact Kevan

Follow all the Hallam news and stories on:



Diocese of Hallam



@HallamDioceseCC, @SynodHallam1



Hallam Diocese



@HallamDiocese

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CONTACT

Grady for details. Catholic Social Teaching and the impact of poverty and environmental issues are ongoing priorities, with recent reports focusing on ocean protection (page 7). The review of "Forty Years of Faith in the City" will soon be available from the Hallam Diocesan Library (page 13).

Pastoral Ministry

The Pastoral Leadership course at Liverpool Hope University is no longer available, but the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies continues. The Emerging Pastoral Ministries group remains active in planning and support.

Spirituality

The Diocesan Spirituality Group recently reviewed formation offerings in Holy Listening and Spiritual Conversation. Due to low participation, Phase 2 will not proceed; your feedback will be sought in the Autumn Review Questionnaire. For assistance in finding a Spiritual Director or training opportunities, contact the Formation and Mission Team. The Spirituality and Theology Bookclub will begin reading "Imagination, Discernment and Spiritual Direction" by Robert Marsh SJ, meeting monthly at the Pastoral Centre.

Communication

The Communication Group is planning updates to the diocesan website and welcomes volunteers with media expertise. The Autumn Questionnaire will include questions about creating a diocesan communication database.

Advent Afternoon of Reflection

Join us for an Advent Afternoon of Reflection on Saturday, 29 November, led by Bishop Ralph. The event begins at 2:30pm and concludes with Mass at 4:00pm. Registration is required; contact formation-mission@hallam-diocese.com for details.

What you can do:

Reflect and Engage: Discuss with your parish and parish priest how you are implementing synodality. Identify what support or resources you need and prepare to participate in the upcoming questionnaire.

Participate in Jubilee Events: Look out for future celebrations and training sessions on church ministries and catechetics. Consider joining or supporting these events to deepen your involvement.

Explore Faith Formation: If you're interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, consider joining CCRS modules, especially those on Catholic Social Thought. Contact Kevan Grady for details.

Support Pastoral and Spiritual Growth: If you need a Spiritual Director or wish to train for this ministry, reach out to the Formation and Mission Team. Join the Spirituality and Theology Bookclub for community and learning.

Volunteer for Communication: If you have skills or interest in media and communications, consider joining the diocesan Communication Group to help improve outreach and information sharing.

Share Your Views: When the Autumn Questionnaire arrives, provide feedback on diocesan communication, formation offerings, and other initiatives.

Attend Upcoming Events: Register for the Advent Afternoon of Reflection on Saturday 29 November to prepare spiritually for the season and connect with others in prayer.

Care for Creation: Stay informed and get involved with Hallam Care for Creation initiatives, especially those focused on environmental protection and social justice.

May God's love guide our diocese,
and may God's peace fill our hearts
and the Holy Spirit accompany us as we journey together in faith.
Amen.

Editor

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McAuley Students Embrace the Jubilee Spirit: A Year of Faith, Pilgrimage, and Renewal



In this Church's Year of Jubilee, a time of renewal, mercy, and joyful hope, McAuley Catholic High School in Doncaster has truly lived out the call to "Pilgrims of Hope." The school community has embraced every opportunity to walk in faith, offer service, and grow closer to God, reflecting the core themes of the Jubilee across all aspects of school life.

Pilgrimage has been a powerful thread woven throughout the year. Students from Years 10 and 12 joined the Hallam Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, walking in solidarity with the sick, the elderly, and other pilgrims seeking healing and peace. Their commitment to humble service and deep prayer during this sacred journey made them witnesses to the Jubilee message of compassion and encounter.

Closer to home, spiritual retreats gave students the space to reflect, reconnect, and renew their hearts. Year 7 began their McAuley journey with day retreats in the local parish hall and then were offered a special time away at Savio House, laying spiritual foundations for their life at secondary school. Year 10 and 11 students also returned to Savio for their own times of retreat as they prepared for their GCSE years, each tailored to their stage of life and faith. Year 8 students journeyed to Teen Ranch in Scotland, blending outdoor adventure with times of reflection, scripture, and silence—experiences that echoed the Jubilee's spirit of joy and interior renewal.

The rhythm of daily prayer and liturgy within the school has remained strong and central. Whether through form prayers, weekly liturgical celebrations, or powerful moments of reflection during Advent and Holy Week, students have continually been invited into the mystery of God's mercy. The Year of Jubilee has especially encouraged deeper engagement with reconciliation and personal renewal, and students have responded with sincerity and openness.

In the spirit of the Jubilee's call to charity and justice, McAuley students have taken part in wide-ranging fundraising and service initiatives. The Million Minutes campaign challenged them to give not just money but time—through silence, service, and solidarity. Throughout the year, students have shown themselves to be young people who don't just speak about faith, but live it out through compassionate action.

The Catholic ethos of McAuley has shone brightly in every corner of the school this year. Inspired by the call to Jubilee, the community has found strength in tradition, hope in prayer, and joy in service. As the universal Church celebrates this sacred year of grace, McAuley stands as a vibrant witness to what it means to be a pilgrim school of hope. **Polly Witter**

St Joseph's Primary Marks 150 Years at the Heart of the Community



This year, St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy proudly celebrates a remarkable milestone – its 150th anniversary. Since first opening its doors in 1875, the school has been a

cornerstone of the community, shaping and inspiring generations of young people.

Headteacher, Mrs Debra McFarlane, who has led the school since 2016, shared her pride in the occasion:

"Our children are at the heart of everything we do – they are curious, kind, hardworking, and a true credit to their families and our community. It is both a privilege and an honour to lead such a wonderful school."

St Joseph's has continued to thrive over the decades and is now oversubscribed each year – a reflection of the strong bonds between the school, its families, and the wider parish community. "The support of our parents and carers plays a vital role in all that we achieve," Mrs McFarlane explained. "Together, we give every child the very best start in life, nurturing not only academic success but also confidence, creativity, and compassion."

The 150th anniversary is a time to reflect on the school's enduring legacy. From its humble beginnings to its place today as a thriving and inclusive academy, St Joseph's has always been more than just a school – it has been a family.

"It is our duty – and our privilege – to honour the legacy of those who came before us by ensuring that today's pupils leave with happy memories, strong foundations, and a love of learning that stays with them forever," Mrs McFarlane said.

As St Joseph's celebrates 150 years of faith, learning, and community, the school looks ahead with excitement to the next chapter in its proud history. **Debra McFarlane**

Caritas Diocese of Hallam Deaf Service NEEDS YOUR HELP



caritas

diocese of hallam

promoting care and social action

Caritas is proposing with the support of the Bishop and Trustees to host some signed Masses for the deaf and hard of hearing in the Diocese.

This is part of efforts to include all with disabilities in our church services.

Signers are needed. We would like to hear from any signers who are willing to volunteer their time at arranged Masses. If you are able to help, please contact Mandy at Email: achapman@hallam-diocese.com

One Hundred and Seventy Five Years Since the Restoration of the Hierarchy



Bishop John Briggs
First Bishop of Beverley

The Dioceses of England
and Wales 1850



Bishop William Ullathorne
first Bishop of Birmingham
and Apostolic Administrator of
Nottingham

Monday, 29 September 2025 marks an important anniversary for the Catholic Church in our countries. On that day 175 years ago, Pope Pius IX through the Papal Bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* restored the Catholic hierarchy in

Around the Diocese

England and Wales creating 13 new dioceses. There was still strong anti-Catholic sentiment in the country at the time, and to avoid contention the name of Westminster was chosen for the new Metropolitan See rather than the ancient title of London. On 29 September 1850, Nicholas Wiseman was appointed as the first Archbishop of Westminster and elevated to the rank of cardinal the following day. He was the first English cardinal since the Reformation. Catholic emancipation was a long-running movement in the 19th century spearheaded by Daniel O'Connell, an Irish barrister and MP who set up the Catholic Association in 1823 to bring an end to religious discrimination against Catholics in the UK. The so-called Catholic Emancipation Act, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, allowed Catholics to sit as MPs and hold most public offices. 21 years later, in 1850, Pope Pius IX restored the hierarchy.

On this day Bishop John Briggs was appointed as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Beverley and Bishop William Bernard Ullathorne was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham. In 1878 the diocese of Beverley was divided into the dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough and in 1980 parts of the dioceses of Leeds and Nottingham became the diocese of Hallam.

John Briggs was born in Barton Moss, Lancashire on 22 January 1833, and was ordained priest in 1814. He ministered in the North of England, becoming President of St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw in 1828. He was consecrated as Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District in 1833 and in 1840, he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Yorkshire District. He became the first bishop of the new see of Beverley on 29 September 1850.

Bishop William Bernard Ullathorne

was born in 1806 in Yorkshire. He became a Benedictine of Downside and was ordained priest in 1831. Two years later, he went to Australia. On his return to England in 1841, he served in Coventry and was consecrated Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District in 1847. The following year he was transferred to the

Central District, and in 1850, he became first Bishop of Birmingham and was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham for the first nine months of its existence.

We clung to the vision of past greatness, and would not believe it could come to nought; but the Church in England has died, and the Church lives again. Westminster and Nottingham, Beverley and Hexham, Northampton and Shrewsbury, if the world lasts, shall be names as musical to the ear, as stirring to the heart, as the glories we have lost; and Saints shall rise out of them if God so will, and Doctors once again shall give the law to Israel, and Preachers call to penance and to justice, as at the beginning.

The Second Spring: A Sermon Delivered to the First Provincial Council of Westminster, 1852 St John Henry Newman who will be formally declared as a Doctor of the Church on 1 November 2025

Celebrating over Five Hundred Years of Married Love



Couples from Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield and Worksop Deaneries came together with Bishop Ralph to give thanks in the Annual Thanksgiving Mass for the Sacrament of Marriage, which took place on 11 October at St Peter's in Doncaster. The couples ranged from three couples who had just married this summer to four couples who were celebrating 60 years of Marriage together with others celebrating various anniversaries. In total the celebration gave thanks for over 500 years of married love. Following the Mass, the couples

had the opportunity to socialise in the Parish hall and talk with Bishop Ralph. A number of them commented on the beauty of the celebration, which was enhanced with the support of Chris Edge who played the organ. Thanks are also due to Fr Darren Reid and the parish community of St Peter's who made us welcome. It is hoped that as this celebration becomes part of the diocesan calendar, more couples will participate. We would like to hold it in different parts of the diocese so if any parish would like to offer to host next year's celebration, please get in touch with the Formation & Mission Team.

Jubilee of Altar Servers



On Saturday 20th September at Holy Rood, Barnsley, the diocese celebrated a Jubilee of Altar Servers at a Mass with Bishop Ralph presiding, and attended by Paul Briers, Honorary President of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen.

Up to one hundred altar servers gathered, with Masters of Ceremony, from across the diocese for this celebration of service. The Mass commenced with a solemn procession from the Hall into the Church. During the Mass the altar servers present recommitted themselves to serving Christ, his priests, and all his people in ministry at the altar.

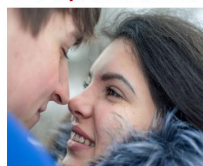
The Archconfraternity recognises the generous and loyal service of its members with various awards due based on the length of service and merit. At the Jubilee Mass the Guild's Gold Medal was awarded by Honorary President Paul Briers to Edward Hawley, the longstanding MC at Holy Rood, for his over 50 years serving at the Lord's Altar. It was the altar servers of Holy Rood parish who served in the Sanctuary at the Jubilee Mass,

and they were sufficient testimony to the dedication of their highly respected MC. Edward was serving when Cardinal Arthur Roche, the Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, was an assistant priest in Holy Rood - and trained some of our current priests when they were altar servers themselves.

The Guild of St Stephen is the international organisation of Altar Servers, recognised by the Holy See. It was established in Westminster in 1905. The Holy Rood parish church foundation stone was laid in 1903 with the opening of the Church coming two years later in 1905. Not only do the Guild and the Church share a birthday, but Holy Rood was the first parish in the diocese to affiliate to the Guild in 1946. Fr Damian Humpries and the parishioners of Holy Rood provided the orders of service, catering and hospitality to help make the day a great success and a blessing for all involved.

The Guild is committed to bringing servers together, encouraging high standards of serving and providing servers with a greater understanding of what they do, so they may come to better understand their vocation in life. The Diocesan Director of the Guild of St Stephen is Deacon Tony Strike, who assists MCs and clergy in growing and managing the Guild in their parish. He can be contacted at astrike@hallam-diocese.com **Tony Strike**

Marriage Preparation



Getting married?
Need some formal preparation?

Join us for a journey of discovery and celebration of all that you will both share during the rest of your lives together.



The Engaged Encounter experience is for all couples looking to get married, especially in the Catholic Church. It is a precious time together, away from all the distractions of the wedding preparations.



Time together to really talk about your future life as a married couple
To deepen your existing relationship
To be happier and closer as a couple
To look forward to a lifelong adventure together
Give you precious time together, away from distractions of the wedding preparations
An opportunity for some quiet quality time together

The Weekend course fulfil the Catholic Church's formal requirement for "personal preparation to enter marriage". Couples will receive a certificate of attendance that will be required by the priest who will officiate at their wedding.

Find out more at:

www.engaged-encounter.org.uk



Our next weekend :
Hallam Centre - Sheffield
22nd & 23rd November 2025

EE Weekend | 22nd - 23rd November 2025 | Sheffield Tickets, Sat 22 Nov 2025 at 09:00 | Eventbrite

Care for Creation update October



A Call to Protect Our Ocean Poster Hallam BridgeDownload

A Call to Protect Our Ocean

In September, parishioners at St. Joseph's Dinnington gathered for a screening of *Ocean*, the latest documentary by Sir David Attenborough. In what he calls his greatest message yet, Attenborough reminds us that we do not live on a planet of land—but a planet of water. Over 70% of Earth's surface is ocean. The seas produce half the oxygen we breathe and absorb a quarter of all carbon emissions, yet for many of us, they remain out of sight and out of mind. As he powerfully says, "What happens beneath the waves affects every breath we take, every meal we eat, and every future we hope to build." This message is not only for scientists or world leaders—it is for each of us in our diocese.

The film reveals the astonishing beauty and diversity of marine life: dazzling coral reefs, the haunting songs of whales, and swaying kelp forests alive with fish, seabirds, and seals. It shows that the ocean is not only wondrous but vital to life on Earth.

Coral reefs support a quarter of all marine species and act as natural breakwaters, protecting coasts from storms and erosion.

Kelp forests, the underwater woodlands of the sea, shelter young fish and marine mammals, absorb carbon dioxide, and buffer our planet against climate change.

Yet *Ocean* also exposes the serious threats

beneath the surface—warming seas, plastic pollution, overfishing, and destructive practices like bottom trawling. Bottom trawling drags weighted nets across the seabed, flattening coral reefs, sponge gardens, and seagrass meadows. It kills indiscriminately: up to 90% of what is caught is discarded, often dead.~

Despite this, Attenborough leaves us with a message of hope. "It's hard not to lose hope," he admits, "were it not for the most remarkable discovery of all—the ocean can recover faster than we ever thought possible." When marine areas are protected, life returns. Fully protected "no-take zones," where fishing is banned, have shown extraordinary results. In Lyme Bay, England's own coral garden, bottom trawling once devastated the seabed. Since becoming a Marine Protected Area in 2008, reef species have increased by 95%, and fish populations have soared nearly 400%. Even fishermen outside the reserve now enjoy better catches. The benefits ripple far beyond the boundaries of protection.

There are signs of global progress. The UK is proposing a ban on bottom trawling in nearly one-third of English Marine Protected Areas—about 30,000 square kilometres. Meanwhile, the United Nations High Seas Treaty, which aims to safeguard 30% of the world's ocean, has been ratified by 60 countries and will become binding international law in January 2026.

Attenborough's message is clear: a healthy ocean is essential for a healthy Earth. His hope is that we come to see the sea as the lifeblood of our planet. If we save the ocean, we save our world. Let us be the diocese that chooses to protect the sea—our shared home and God's magnificent creation. **Christine Parrott**

Welcoming a newly ordained Deacon



On Saturday 13th September hundreds of people gathered at St. Paul's, Cantley, for a vibrant celebration at the ordination of Ken Agwuh as a new permanent deacon for the Diocese of Hallam.

Ken was ordained into the permanent diaconate by Bishop Ralph at a joyful ceremony attended by his brother deacons, priests and religious of the diocese, and hundreds of family, friends, and parishioners.

We were also treated to music and singing provided by a Yorkshire Nigerian choir.

The Rite of Ordination involved an Examination of the Candidate and a Promise of Obedience, before the entire congregation of St Paul's was called upon to pray to all holy men and women through the Litany of the Saints. Bishop Ralph then proceeded with the Laying on of Hands and Prayer of Consecration, during which the grace of Holy Orders is both requested and conferred through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Deacon Ken was then vested with the diaconal vestments of a stole and dalmatic and presented with the Book of the Gospels with the words, "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are." The existing Deacons present then followed Bishop Ralph in greeting Deacon Ken with the Kiss of Peace before Mass continued with the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The occasion was one of great joy and spiritual significance for the diocese, as the Church continues to grow in its mission, through the dedication and witness of its ordained ministers.

As he begins his new life of ministry, Deacon Ken is immediately called into service - he will serve in his parish - and has a particular dedication to the diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage - living out his diaconal call of charity, liturgy and word.

Please join us in wishing Deacon Ken the very best as he begins his ministry and by keeping him, and all our permanent deacons, and this growing ministry, in our prayers. The diocese currently has four men in formation for this ministry. **Tony Strike**

Celebration of Pastoral Formation in the Diocese



Students who have recently completed the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and the Loyola University Certificate in Pastoral Ministry and their families and friends, came together for a thanksgiving liturgy and celebration at the Hallam Pastoral Centre earlier this month. The evening began with Bishop Ralph presiding over a liturgy during which he presented certificates to Jenny Marshall and Madeliene Sliwinski who have recently completed the CCRS. Speaking at the liturgy, Jenny spoke about how she had come to appreciate the value of listening in prayerful silence as part of the course. She said that this was not only helpful personally, but something she could share in leading children in prayer in her role as teacher at St Anne's, Deepcar. Dominic Maloney spoke movingly about how the Loyola programme had helped him to think more deeply about his faith and how he might put it into action. David Bellamy is going to write about his experiences in the next

issue of the Hallam Bridge. The Loyola students had previously had certificates presented at an event in Liverpool with other students from the Northern Dioceses who had completed the programme.

If you would like to find out more about opportunities for formation please contact the Formation & Mission Team: formation-mission@halla-diocese.com 0114 256 6410

Institution to the Ministry of Lector and Acolyte



At a vigil Mass on the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time on 4 October at Sacred Heart, Hillsborough, Bishop Ralph presided at a Mass for the Institution of the ministries of Lector and Acolyte.

Lucas Borges and Michael Watkins received the ministry of Lector following their first year in formation leading towards ordination as Permanent Deacons.

Bishop Ralph presented them both with Bibles, asking them to be faithful in handing on the word of God, so that it may grow in the hearts of the people. The rite itself informed us of the meaning of each ministry. At the Institution of Lucas and Michael as Lectors, Bishop Ralph instructed the candidates that they will not only proclaim the Word in the sacred liturgy, but that they will teach and catechise in various contexts, including preparing those approaching the sacraments. They must meditate on, and grow in love for, the sacred scriptures.

Peter Holland received the ministry of Acolyte following three years of formation, and he now enters his fourth and final year of formation. Bishop Ralph presented Peter with a ciborium containing bread, and asked him to make his life worthy for service at the table of the Lord. Acolytes serve at the Altar, assisting the Bishop, Priests and Deacons, and assist in distributing communion in Church and in taking the Eucharist from the Altar to the sick and housebound.

Those who gathered asked God to pour out his grace and blessings on these servants of his who desire to give their lives to the ministry of the Church.

Deacon Ken Agwuh attended the Ministries Mass, as our most recent ordained permanent deacon in Hallam, and he proclaimed the Gospel. Father Michael Umameh, Director of Deacons, concelebrated at the Mass, with Bishop Ralph presiding.

The Ministries of Lector and Acolyte designate the students in formation as one who carries out significant tasks in divine worship. Announcing the Word of God and assisting the Bishop, Priest and Deacon in the Holy Sacrifice are of such importance that being formally designated to take on these roles is a sign that they are moving closer to Holy Orders.

Students for the diaconate receive formation from the Northern Diaconal Formation Partnership (NDFP), a Roman Catholic charity and a multi-diocesan training programme in the North of England, that provides formation for men aspiring to become Deacons. In the Northern Province, the seven dioceses in the North of England, and the Diocese of Wrexham, offering a four-year programme of academic, spiritual, human, and pastoral development, including residential weekends in Leeds.

Congratulations are offered to Lucas, Michael and Peter. We pray for them as they take on these new Ministries. We give thanks for all those who come forward and offer their lives in service to the Lord. **Tony Strike**



Parents in work are sometimes on such low wages that they are having to choose between fuel or food for their families, the Chief Executive of anti-poverty charity the St Vincent de Paul Society told a Catholic Union meeting. Kate Nightingale was speaking on the hidden depths of poverty today at the latest pub talk organised by the Catholic Union. Members and supporters of the Catholic Union gathered this week for a fascinating Pub Talk given by Kate Nightingale, CEO of The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP). Chaired by journalist Catherine Pepinster, Kate's talk identified the changing needs of people, highlighting the depths of invisible poverty. The discussion focused on several interrelated issues including in-work poverty, refugees and asylum seekers, mental health and loneliness. Much debate centred on a recent SVP report, 'The Hidden Crisis of In-Work Poverty – A Frontline Perspective', which drew on first-hand accounts from over 200 of its frontline workers and volunteers who had supported individuals and families facing in-work poverty in the last twelve months. It shone a light on how many, despite being in work, remain trapped in poverty and must choose between essentials such as fuel or food. Related issues were also discussed, such as instances of workers being exploited and being unable, or too afraid to, access support services. Loneliness and disenfranchisement particularly amongst young adults are a huge cause for concern. The SVP is embedded in the communities across England and Wales and uses its frontline experiences to advocate for change. Kate Nightingale, CEO of SVP, says: "The SVP is about turning concern into action, our staff and members are committed to seeking those in need and tackling poverty and hardship in all its forms. Invisible poverty can be difficult to detect, but through our networks we can take practical steps to help alleviate it. We must not lose heart but instead act wherever we see need." The SVP has over nine thousand volunteer members and they reach over eighty thousand people each year, from all walks of life and regardless of faith and background. The SVP runs

a range of services according to local need, including a befriending service, food banks, support and advice for asylum seekers, community centres and shops. Its geographic spread and reach enable it to gain insight into the issues creating poverty and hardship which it uses to campaign into Government at all levels, providing a strong informed voice for those they help. Catherine Pepinster, Journalist, says: "Kate offered some very practical examples of how the SVP can help those in need, including those stuck within the system. There are many different models for people to follow and volunteer for the SVP including those with little time to spare as well as children and students who wish to get involved. In-work poverty is clearly an issue that needs more joined up thinking and the Catholic Union is well placed to facilitate discussions and thought between policy makers".

The Catholic Union's Pub Talks have proved a popular series of events with people in public life exploring a subject of particular interest to Catholics. Previous speakers include Lord Alton, Ruth Kelly, Catherine McKinnell, Jon Cruddas, Sir Iain Duncan Smith, Ann Widdecombe, Lord Glasman, Andrew Hawkins and Andy Keen-Downs. The Catholic Union's next Pub Talk is on Monday 19 January with Sojan Joseph MP, booking details to follow. **Louisa Collyer-Hamlin**



There is a free online course exploring divorce and faith in a safe and non-judgmental place, on Thursday, 6 November 2025 at 7:30 pm. The course is run by Deacon Roger Carr-Jones, Marriage and Family Life Coordinator for the Diocese of Westminster, and Rob Hornby, pastoral volunteer on the Restored Lives course for people who have experienced relationship breakdown.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/exploring-divorce-and-faith-autumn-2025-tickets-1422515475079> **Katharine Ryan-Murray**

Book Reviews

Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City



Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City, Price £19.99 from Sacristy Press (sacristy.co.uk)

Edited by Terry Drummond, a Church Army evangelist who has focused on actively responding to social issues and Dr Joseph Forde, a Roman Catholic who is Honorary Research Fellow in Historical Theology at the Urban Theology Union in Sheffield and chair of Sheffield Church Action on Poverty.

FOUR decades ago the streets of major English cities were in flames as racial tensions, inner city decline, poor housing and high unemployment caused anger to turn into violence. Margaret Thatcher's government called in a Law Lord, Lord Scarman, to report on the Disturbances. Meanwhile the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, set up the Faith in the Cities commission to look at how church and state might act to improve employment, policing, housing, education and urban regeneration. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the publication of the 400-page Faith in the City report. Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City, by Terry Drummond and Joseph Forde is a collection of essays that examine the impact the report had and the changes it prompted in society, the Church of England and its urban

mission, ministry and welfare activities. Contributors range from members of the original commission like the Revd. Dr Alan Billings, who was Deputy Leader of Sheffield City Council at the time, to Jenny Sinclair, founder of the charity Together for the Common Good and a commentator on Catholic Social Thinking. They also include Bishops, researchers and practitioners involved in church welfare projects.

Celebrating Forty Years of Faith in the City is a powerful and highly readable tour d'horizon, spanning historical background, the development of urban mission and ministry and the contemporary challenges, not just for the Church of England, but for all Christian churches. The original report found "an evident and apparently increasing inequality in our societies". It was attacked as 'wicked' by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and condemned as 'Marxist', yet, Thatcher's chief policy adviser, the economist Brian, now Lord, Griffiths later admitted it was a 'trigger' for a raft of inner city reforms.

Forty years on, Faith in the City and its aftermath still sparks controversy, as the opinions voiced by contributors to Drummond and Forde's book reveals. To some, the approach was paternalistic and commissioners lacked the 'lived experience' which is today seen as essential when developing policies and practical action for fighting poverty and social exclusion. Others highlight the way that, as time passed excitement over Faith in the City dissipated and it literally slipped down agendas, while control over funding grass roots initiatives was clawed back from parishes to dioceses. Meanwhile, inequality has grown and deprivation has increased in peripheral estates and smaller towns, despite the initiatives prompted by Faith in the City. Susan Lucas, Archdeacon of Chelmsford, says poverty in Britain is persistent and growing. Nearly half of all working families in Britain are supported by benefits topping up wages that are insufficient and work is no longer a route out of poverty.

the full article is available on our website

News on the Synod

What is the implementation phase and what are its objectives?

The implementation phase aims to examine new practices and structures that will make the life of the Church more synodal, starting from the overall perspective outlined in the FD (*Final Document of the Synod on Synodality October 2024*) with a view to more effectively carrying out the mission of evangelisation. This work includes the necessary theological and canonical study and, above all, a commitment to discern what is most appropriate and potentially fruitful in different local contexts. Concretely, the priority is to offer the People of God new opportunities to walk together and reflect on these experiences in order to reap their fruits for the mission and share them.

Emphasis on the importance of experience does not mean that the implementation phase consists of some sort of exercise or additional task demanded from Rome: it is part of the ordinary life of the Churches and inspires their daily practices. Every local Church, every parish community will be able to practise synodality within its ordinary pastoral ministry, improving the way it carries out its mission through the ecclesial discernment that the Holy Spirit asks of us today. The FD invites local Churches to also identify «formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts» (FD, no. 9). The implementation phase therefore aims to have a tangible impact on the life of the Church and on the functioning of its structures and institutions. If it were to be limited to the formulation of abstract hypotheses, it would not achieve its purpose and, above all, it would dissipate the enthusiasm and energy that the synodal process has generated so far.

An extract from PATHWAYS
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE
SYNOD 2025-2028 page 7 This document can be
accessed here:

<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/process/implementation/pathways/250102---ENG-Pathways-for-the-implementation-phase.pdf>



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

