

Bishop Paul Mason reiterates the importance of palliative care on World Day of the Sick



Hope does not disappoint (Romans 5:5) but strengthens us in times of trial!

On this Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, we mark the 33rd World Day of the Sick and call to mind all those who experience physical and mental suffering in our communities and those who care for them. In this Year of Jubilee, in which we are invited to be “pilgrims of hope”, the Holy Father Pope Francis recognises three ways in which God remains close to those who are suffering.

A time of suffering can be time of close encounter with God as “the solid rock to which we can hold fast amid the tempests of life”. We can see from Scripture that Christ and his disciples spent much time with those who were sick in different ways. For us, too, it is often in those times of illness that we can find a particular and unexpected intimacy with God as we learn to rely fully on Him.

Secondly, whilst recognising the gravity of pain and suffering, our experience of suffering can become a gift by which we receive a deeper understanding and experience of God’s faithful love for us in all circumstances. In the middle of our pain and distress, our struggles can create an opportunity for us to carry our cross alongside Christ and experience the tender care of a loving God. As Pope Francis writes, “we can share with him our anxieties, concerns and disappointments, and listen to his word, which enlightens us and warms our hearts.”

Also, times of sickness can create space for the sharing of love and care that can deepen our relationships with others. Pope Francis has emphasised that “we are ‘angels’ of hope and messengers of God for one another, all of us together: whether patients, physicians, nurses, family members, friends, priests, men and women religious”. By loving others in their time of need, we also grow in hope of the possibility of experiencing love and finding strength even during dreadful suffering.

As we celebrate this 33rd World Day of the Sick at a time of significant public debate about care at the end of life, we particularly remember the importance of hospice care and palliative care. Genuine compassion for those approaching the end of their lives means walking with them, sharing in their suffering, and together living out the hopeful possibility of finding love and strength in even the most difficult times. — The Right Reverend Paul Mason, Catholic Bishop of the Forces Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (Excerpt from: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/>)

Rich in Poverty

The blessings and woes we hear in today’s Gospel mark the perfection of all the wisdom of the Old Testament..



That wisdom is summed up with marvelous symmetry in today’s First Reading and Psalm: Each declares that the righteous—those who hope in the Lord and delight in His Law—will prosper like a tree planted near living waters. The wicked, who put their “trust in human beings,” are cursed to wither and die.

Jesus is saying the same thing in the Gospel. The rich and poor are, for Him, more than members of literal economic classes. Their material state symbolizes their spiritual state.

The rich are “the insolent” of today’s Psalm, boasting of their self-sufficiency, the strength of their flesh, as Jeremiah says in the First Reading. The poor are the humble, who put all their hope and trust in the Lord.

We’ve already seen today’s dramatic imagery of reversal in Mary’s Magnificat. There, too, the rich are cast down while the hungry are filled and the lowly exalted (see Luke 1:45–55, also 16:19–31).

That’s the upside-down world of the Gospel: in poverty, we gain spiritual treasure unimaginable; in suffering and even dying “on account of the Son of Man,” we find everlasting life.

The promises of the Old Testament were promises of power and prosperity—in the here and now. The promise of the New Covenant is joy and true freedom even amid the misery and toil of this life.

But not only that. As Paul says in today’s Epistle, we’re to be pitied if our hope is “for this life only.”

The blessings of God mean that we’ll laugh with the thanksgiving of captives released from exile (see Psalm 126:1–2), feast at the heavenly table of the Lord (see Psalm 107:3–9), “leap for joy” as John the Baptist leapt in his mother’s womb (see Luke 6:23; 1:41, 44), and rise with Christ, “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Scott Hann



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

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6TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME YEAR C

Entrance Antiphon: Ps 30:3-4

Be my protector, O God, a mighty stronghold to save me. For you are my rock, my stronghold! Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name.

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 40

Blessed the man who has placed his trust in the LORD.

Second Reading: Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Gospel Acclamation: Lk 6:23

Alleluia, alleluia.

Rejoice and leap for joy, says the Lord, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

Alleluia.

Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26

Communion Antiphon: Ps 77:29-30

They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved.

SATURDAY 15th February ... Our Lady on Saturday

9:30 am NO MASS

4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Sonia Fernandes & Jorge Valente RIP (Cristina Yepez)

SUNDAY 16th February

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Stanislaw Nagorka RIP (Jaroslaw)

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

MONDAY 17th February ... NO MASS ... The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order

TUESDAY 18th February

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford ... Glenys Downing RIP

WEDNESDAY 19th February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Mrs Picta RIP

THURSDAY 20th February

9:30 am Mass St John Wallingford

FRIDAY 21st February ... St Peter Damian

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Eric Fishwick RIP (Carolyn Fishwick)

SATURDAY 22nd February ... The Chair of St Peter

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Confessions after Mass ... Eric Fishwick RIP (Carolyn Fishwick)

4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SUNDAY 23rd February

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Anne O'Brien, Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Annie Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



Catholic Men: Looking for Faith, Friendship, and Fun?

The Catenians could be your perfect match! We're an international network of Catholic men who meet regularly to support each other, strengthen our faith, and – most importantly – have a great time together.

Think: Family events, social gatherings, sporting activities, and more! We offer: Strong friendships, support for your faith and family, a chance to give back to the community

Ready to learn more? The Oxford Catenians will be visiting English Martyrs after mass on Sunday 16th March if you want to know more please chat to one of us or email enquiries@oxfordshire-catenians.uk. Scan the QR code below or visit our website: <https://www.thamesvalleycatenians.org.uk/>. We look forward to welcoming you!



Church Parking

This is a gentle reminder that parking in front of the church should be reserved for parishioners with mobility difficulties at all times. You are kindly advised to park on the field car park if you are not or you do not carry passengers with mobility difficulties. This applies especially during our weekend masses with a larger amount of attendees. Thank you all for your understanding and cooperation.

Cardinal welcomes announcement that The King and Queen will make a State Visit to the Holy See

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, has warmly welcomed the announcement that Their Majesties King Charles and Queen Camilla will undertake State Visits to the Holy See and Italy in early April 2025.

"I am delighted King Charles and Queen Camilla will visit the Holy See and meet with Pope Francis during this special Jubilee Year when so many will gather in Rome as pilgrims of hope," said Cardinal Nichols after the news was announced by Buckingham Palace. "It presents a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate the close relationship between the UK and the Holy See."

The UK Ambassador to the Holy See, His Excellency Chris Trott, posting on X, said he was "absolutely delighted" that The King and Queen will be visiting the Holy See this year. (Source: cbcew.org.uk)



Mass attendance rises in the UK, though still far below pre-pandemic levels

Though not yet near pre-pandemic levels, Mass attendance numbers are on the rise in England and Wales, according to figures from the national bishops' conference. In 2023, an estimated nearly 555,000 people attended Sunday Mass in England and Wales, a roughly 50,000-person increase over 2022, a spokesman for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales told CNA via email.

The spokesman described the figure as "not a full return to pre-COVID levels, but it is an improvement on recent years." He also noted that the figure may be a "slight underestimation as some parishes may not have given their figures when their diocese requested them."

Stephen Bullivant, director of the Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St. Mary's University in Twickenham, London, told CNA he is "tentatively hopeful that this trend for modest (re)growth will continue in subsequent years." He pointed to a 2024 article he wrote for the Tablet in which he noted that while Mass attendance in the U.K. has significantly decreased over the past several decades — leading to projections of a near-extinction of Catholicism — such dire projections seem unlikely due to signs of growth in some areas of U.K. Catholic life.

That said, Mass attendance stood at roughly 829,000 across England, Wales, and Scotland on a "typical Sunday" in 2019, Bullivant wrote, meaning attendance still has a long way to climb before it reaches pre-pandemic levels, if ever. In addition, a late 2024 study showed that the sexual abuse crisis deeply affected Catholics in Britain, with a third of Mass-goers saying they have reduced their Mass attendance because of concerns about the child sexual abuse crisis. In his article, however, Bullivant pointed to signs of renewed vigor and new growth in some areas in the Church in the U.K., such as anecdotal reports of increased attendance at Easter services and relatively large numbers of adult converts, thriving university chaplaincies, and vibrant diasporic and immigrant communities, suggesting that while secularization has deeply impacted the Church, it is unlikely to result in complete disappearance. (Source: Catholic News Agency, by Jonah McKeown)



Our 2025 First Holy Communion Sessions Begin on 23rd February

First Holy Communion preparations 2025 begin on 23rd February at The English Martyrs, Didcot after the 9am Mass. This first session is primarily designed for the parents of our lovely candidates for the sacraments. Please every parent is encouraged to be at this session. During this session, preparations booklets and workbook shall be given out. Forms and other necessary documents that need to be submitted for verification would be considered. It will also be a special session where parents would meet our team of catechists and volunteers who would be preparing our children for the sacraments. If you have questions or you need clarifications, please come prepared.



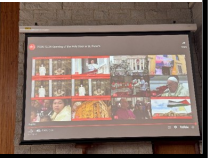
2025 First Holy Communion Celebration is Corpus Christi, 22nd June

Our children being prepared to receive our Lord in Holy Communion will be on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, 22nd June at the English Martyrs, Didcot. After our children's baptism, they will be receiving two sacraments after this preparation: the sacrament of Reconciliation and the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. These two sacraments are important in the life of everyone. It will be a commendable effort to get involved. If you are a godparent at any child's baptism, here is your chance to continue your role and support your godchild in understanding and arriving at a deeper faith in God and humanity.



Young Volunteers Needed! — Sunday Mass Projector Slides Operator

We are recruiting young volunteer operators for our Sunday mass projector slides at English Martyrs Didcot. If your children are secondary school ages and interested in operating slides on a laptop computer in our Sunday masses, please nominate them to help support our projector slides operation during the mass. This role requires the operator to move the slides as we sing or pray along. No experience required. Trainings will be provided. Please let the Parish Office or Fr Dominic know if your children are interested. Thank you.



World Day of Prayer Service 7th March at St John's

The 2025 World Day of Prayer Service will be held on Friday 7th March. This year the Wallingford Group of Churches service will be hosted by the Methodist Church (situated in St Leonard's Square) at 7:00pm on that day. The service has been prepared by the Christian women of the Cook Islands and the theme is "I made you wonderful". The service is an ecumenical service and is open to all men, women and children.

St John's Church hosted the service in 2022 and was attended by men & women from the other churches in Wallingford, so it would be lovely if parishioners from our church were able to attend this 2025 service at the Methodist Church. (Cecilia Wheeler, St John's representative for the WDP Service)

Relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, the First Millennial Saint, to Visit Cardiff-Menevia Ahead of Canonisation

The relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, who will become the first millennial saint, will visit the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia from 14 to 17 February 2025. Preparations for his canonisation by Pope Francis in Rome on 27 April 2025 are currently underway. The relic, a fragment of the membrane surrounding his heart, offers the faithful a unique opportunity to venerate this inspiring young figure who has been hailed as a patron saint for the digital age. His relic, which is kept in an ornate reliquary, will arrive at the Metropolitan Cathedral Church of St David, Cardiff, on the morning of Friday 14 February before moving on to four other locations across the Archdiocese.

The visit is expected to draw thousands of pilgrims, following the success of previous visits of the relic to other Dioceses across the UK and Ireland.

Born in London in 1991 and raised in Milan, Blessed Carlo Acutis was an ordinary boy with an extraordinary love for the Eucharist. Despite his parents not being religious, he insisted on visiting churches to "say hello to Jesus," inspiring their return to faith. Passionate about technology and Catholicism, he created a website cataloguing Eucharistic miracles, believing that if people understood Christ's presence in the Eucharist, they would turn to God.

The relic will be accompanied by Monsignor Anthony Figueiredo from the Diocese of Assisi, who is responsible for bringing Blessed Carlo's Pericardium Heart Relic to different nations and sharing first-hand insights about this remarkable millennial. For extra information, visit <https://rcadc.org/>. (Source: cbcew.org.uk)

Blessed Carlo Acutis
 Visitation of the Relics of Carlo Acutis to
 Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia

14th-17th February

Friday 14th February Cathedral, Cardiff	Saturday 15th February Belmont Abbey
Sunday 16th February Cathedral, Swansea Sacred Heart Church, Merton	Monday 17th February Blessed Carlo Acutis School, Merthyr

