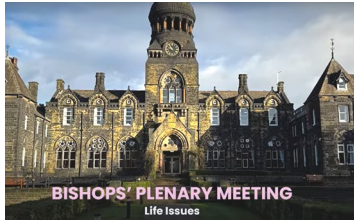


Assisted Suicide and Abortion – Life Issues Statement

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales gathered at Hinsley Hall in the Diocese of Leeds for their autumn plenary meeting from 10-13 November 2025.

The dignity and protection of human life was central to the bishops' discussions during the week, particularly parliamentary moves to legalise assisted suicide and decriminalise abortion up to birth in some cases. The bishops issued this post-plenary statement.



Statement

2025 is marked by an assault on the value of human life.

The Bishops of England and Wales express deep sadness at the continued passage through Parliament of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill which could legalise assisted suicide. If passed by both Houses, this act would devalue life and put the lives of the vulnerable at risk. We have expressed our concerns on many occasions, highlighting the danger of coercive control and the pressure that will be put on vulnerable people who are ill, as well as the threat to the survival of care homes and hospices who oppose this legislation, especially where the mission and values of those institutions would prevent them from facilitating assisted suicide.

We are also alarmed by the amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill which proposes to decriminalise abortion up to birth in some circumstances. This amendment will further endanger the life of the unborn child.

The laws of our country should give special attention to the vulnerable, especially the unborn child and the terminally ill patient. They should protect life, preserve human dignity and promote the common good. Assisted suicide and the proposed decriminalisation of abortion up to birth in some circumstances are directly contrary to these aims.

We would like to thank wholeheartedly all those who continue to work to prevent these laws being passed, whether by letter-writing, lobbying or prayer. We ask Catholics and others who share our values to continue to work and pray for the defeat of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. We also ask you to offer support to those parliamentarians who are attempting to overturn the amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill which decriminalises abortion up to birth in some circumstances.

We commend the work of those who endeavour to rebuild a culture of life in England and Wales, and we pray for the success of that work. This includes those who care assiduously and with love for the terminally ill and the dying.

We will continue to stand up for the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death. We will accompany the most vulnerable, whatever circumstances or challenges they face, for "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Corinthians 5:14). *Source: Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales*

Kingdom of the Son

Week by week, the Liturgy has been preparing us for the revelation to be made on this, the last Sunday of the Church year.

Jesus, we have been shown, is truly the Chosen One, the Messiah of God, the King of the Jews. Ironically, in today's Gospel we hear these names on the lips of those who don't believe in Him—Israel's rulers, the soldiers, a criminal dying alongside Him.

They can only see the scandal of a bloodied figure nailed to a cross. They scorn Him in words and gestures foretold in Israel's Scriptures (see Psalm 22:7-9; 69:21-22; Wisdom 2:18-20). If He is truly King, God will rescue Him, they taunt. But He did not come to save Himself, but to save them—and us.

The good thief shows us how we are to accept the salvation He offers us. He confesses his sins and acknowledges he deserves to die for them. And he calls on the name of Jesus, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

By his faith he is saved. Jesus "remembers" him—as God has always remembered His people, visiting them with His saving deeds, numbering them among His chosen heirs (see Psalm 106:4-5).

By the blood of His cross, Jesus reveals His Kingship—not in saving His own life, but in offering it as a ransom for ours. He transfers us to "the kingdom of His beloved Son," as today's Epistle tells us.

His kingdom is the Church, the new Jerusalem and House of David that we sing of in today's Psalm.

By their covenant with David in today's First Reading, Israel's tribes are made one "bone and flesh" with their king. By the New Covenant made in His blood, Christ becomes one flesh with the people of His kingdom—the head of His body, the Church (see Ephesians 5:23-32).

We celebrate and renew this covenant in every Eucharist, giving thanks for our redemption, hoping for the day when we too will be with Him in Paradise.

Scott Hahn



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

PARISHES OF
THE ENGLISH MARTYRS, Didcot
ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Wallingford

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OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE YEAR C

Entrance Antiphon:

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and divinity,
and wisdom and strength and honour.
To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
Alleluia.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 122

Let us go rejoicing to the house of the LORD.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:12-20

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

Communion Antiphon: Ps 28:10-11

The Lord sits as King for ever.
The Lord will bless his people with peace.

SATURDAY 22nd November ... St Cecilia

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confession after Mass** ... Margaret Ewen RIP (H & T Cooper)
4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford
5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Ronald Almeida RIP (Mary Almeida)
5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot
6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Our Parish Musicians on the Feast of St Cecilia (Carolyn Fishwick)

SUNDAY 23rd November ... Our Lord Jesus Christ, King Of The Universe

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Kathryn Murray & Billy McCarthy RIP (June Wells)
11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... David Watson RIP (Anke Watson)

MONDAY 24th November ... NO MASS ... St Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions

TUESDAY 25th November ... St Catherine of Alexandria

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford ... Mothers & Pregnant Women

WEDNESDAY 26th November

9:30 am NO MASS

1:30 pm Requiem Mass Anne Johns ... English Martyrs Didcot

THURSDAY 27th November

9:30 am Mass St John Wallingford ... The Terminally Ill

FRIDAY 28th November

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... All Immigrants Seeking Settlement In Our Country

SATURDAY 29th November ... Our Lady on Saturday

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confession after Mass** ... Kathleen McCartney RIP (Helen & Tony Cooper)
4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford
5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Nelly & Lawrence DeSouza Anniversary Thanksgiving
5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot
6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

SUNDAY 30th November ... First Sunday of Advent

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot
11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Margaret O'Conner, Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, Annie Furlong, Laura Falavina, and all the sick and housebound.



DEATH/FUNERAL NOTICE

Anne Johns RIP ... Requiem Mass @ 1:30pm, Wednesday 26th November, Didcot.
**NO flowers please.



Discover Portsmouth Gregorian Chant Course 2026

The Portsmouth Gregorian Chant Team is delighted to invite all at English Martyrs to the Portsmouth Gregorian Chant Course 2026, to be held at St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth UK. This unique series of workshops offers an opportunity to immerse yourself in the timeless art of Gregorian Chant, guided by expert instructors and supported by the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

The Chant Course Highlights: Three one-day workshops: 10 January, 14 February, and 14 March 2026, suitable for beginners and experienced singers. Learn history, notation, Latin pronunciation, semiology, liturgical context, modes, rhythm, performance, and chant leadership.

The course is led by Dominic Bevan, professional music director, alongside Monastic instructors. Each session concludes with a live liturgical performance in the Cathedral. Open to adults and children (7+), of all backgrounds and faiths. To find out more details, visit <https://portsmouthgregorianchant.blogspot.com/>. To apply scan the QR Code provided or refer to the poster on our noticeboard.



From Your Heart this Christmas

In the Diocese of Portsmouth, our annual Christmas Crib offerings are given alternately one year to the Friends of the Holy Land and one year to the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. This year, 2025, our Christmas Crib offerings will go to the Friends of the Holy Land (FHL). Friends of the Holy Land is a non-political charity, whose mission is to secure a resilient and enduring Christian community in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan - the part of the world that Christians call the Holy Land. At the start of the 20th century, Christians made up roughly 29% of the overall population of the Holy Land. Today they account for less than 2%.

Friends of the Holy Land works directly with Christians living in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel and Jordan. Their team of local Christians have an in-depth knowledge of the area and a better personal grasp of the rapidly changing situation than most international charities. Therefore, despite the deteriorating conditions in the West Bank resulting in displacements, tight lockdowns and travel restrictions now being in place; over the past year, they have been able to keep children in school, get young people into work, provide medical care and trauma therapy, build wells, install solar panels, and restore the dignity of those unemployed through temporary jobs in the local community. Please scan the QR code provided or access the website: <https://www.friendsoftheholylnd.org.uk/Appeal/christmas> to donate.



Give a gift from your heart to the heart of Christianity this Christmas



Cathedral 150 Appeal

The Cathedral 150 Appeal will be launched on the First Sunday of Advent (30th November) at 4pm with sung Vespers in the Cathedral, followed by a short reception in the cathedral hall at which the Bishop and Cathedral Dean will speak. There are a limited number of spaces at the reception so if you would, like to join us please book your place via email to Cathedral150@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.

The buildings on the Cathedral site, which include the Cathedral, Bishop's House, the Aula, and the Discovery Centre (Cathedral Hall, shop, and St Edmund House), need major repairs due to their age. Updating is also required to comply with the latest building regulations (e.g. accessibility). Priority will be given to urgent repairs to the Cathedral, which will cost in the region of £2.5 million. The Cathedral parish is situated in the poorest part of the diocese and the burden of maintenance of the buildings is beyond its limited financial resources. Consequently, we will be seeking the support of Catholics across the diocese for our mother Church.



Parish Safeguarding

Our Safety Officer for all adults and children safeguarding issues is Stefania Harford. Please contact Stefania via the parish office on 01235 812338. If there is no response and in an emergency, dial 999.

New Parking Spaces for Sunday Mass at Didcot Girls' School

We are glad to announce that our parishioners who attend 9am mass on Sunday at English Martyrs Didcot can now choose to park your cars at the car park of our neighbour – Didcot Girls' School. The School has agreed to open up to 30 parking spaces for our parishioners to use on Sunday morning between 8:30am to 11:00am. This helps us cope with the wet weather during autumn and winter months when the ground becomes wet and muddy in our church car park. Please continue to use our church car park as your top priority for parking when attending Sunday mass and consider the Girls' School car park as an alternative for traffic overflow and when the ground is too muddy for safe parking. YOU are responsible for your own belongings and safety at all times no matter where you choose to park. Thank you.



Children's Liturgy Christmas Cards

Thank you for donating your old Christmas cards back in January. The good news is you can now buy them back! The children have been busy making new cards and these will be on sale at English Martyrs and St Johns from this Sunday. Please remember to bring cash. All monies raised are being donated to a very good cause.



The English Martyrs Holy Journey – Joseph & Mary travelling in Didcot

Joseph and Mary, our knitted figurines of English Martyrs Didcot, are ready to set off their journey to Bethlehem. Just like in previous years, they are looking for warm welcomes from Didcot Parish family homes this Advent. You can take photos with them and drop a line in the diary provided during their visit to your home. Photos may be shared on our parish website and social media. Please let us know if you do not want to be published. Please sign up with Anne-Marie Kershaw or contact the Parish Office if you and your family are ready to welcome Joseph and Mary to your home this Advent.



Seniors Christmas Luncheon

We are delighted to advertise the Parish Seniors Christmas Lunch taking place on 11th December at Noon. Festive Fayre will consist of Turkey, all the trimmings, Christmas Pudding and Mince Pies. As usual, all dietary requirements will be catered for and lifts can be arranged. The 'Sign Up' sheet can be found at the back of both churches. Please note: Numbers are limited due to space.



Confirmation Preparation Class 2025-26

Our Confirmation Preparation Classes are still open for application for young people in our parish aged 13 and above. Parents can download, print and complete the Confirmation Form from [here](https://www.didcotandwallingfordcatholicchurches.org/forms) or visit the parish website at <https://www.didcotandwallingfordcatholicchurches.org/forms>. The 1st Session of the Confirmation Preparation Class is going to be on Sunday 7th December from 4pm to 5pm at English Martyrs Church Didcot. Applications should be submitted with a copy of your Baptism certificate on or before the commencement of the 1st Session to the Parish Office. Please make sure the name of Sponsor/Godparent is put on your application form. Bishop Philip Egan will confer the sacrament for all 11 Churches in our Pastoral Area here in our parish of the English Martyrs Didcot on Friday 5th June 2026.



Parish Fire Drills

We would like to thank everyone in the parish of Didcot last Sunday for participating in the first annual fire drill of the parish during the Sunday mass. All went on well in the fire drill and we look forward to suggestions and advice in improving our fire and emergency evacuation. Thank you in particular to the Sunday stewards at English Martyrs and Achilles our Fire Marshal, who had spent their precious times to attend training and to coordinate the fire drill. Thank you everyone. A similar fire drill will be organized in Wallingford soon.



Thursday 18th December is Pastoral Area Confession Day

English Martyrs Church Didcot will once again be the host parish to the Oxfordshire Pastoral Area End-of-Year Advent Confession on Thursday 18th December at 7pm. We will welcome all the priests and parishioners from all the eleven parishes of our pastoral area this evening. This will be the last Confession Day for our parishioners. Saturday confessions sessions in Didcot and Wallingford will not be opened until February 2026.