

*"I plead with you!
Never, ever give up on
hope, never doubt,
never tire, and never
become discouraged.
Be not afraid"*
St. Pope John Paul II



UCM News

The
Newspaper
of the Union
of Catholic
Mothers

www.theucm.co.uk

Spring 2025



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Pilgrimage of Hope: Join other Jubilee pilgrims in September

CBCEW

The Hearts in Search of God project has announced a new walking pilgrimage for England & Wales during the Jubilee, called The Pilgrimage of Hope, on Saturday 13 September 2025.

It is a national walking pilgrimage, with four main Ways converging at the Cathedral of St Barnabas, Nottingham, on Saturday 13th September 2025, the eve of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The Ways start at the Catholic cathedrals in Cardiff, Leeds, Norwich and London and will bless our nations with a Sign of the Cross. The routes use established hiking routes and are off road as much as possible. A small group of 'perpetual pilgrims' will walk the full distance of each Way, with day pilgrims joining for stages.

There are potential feeder routes to the four main Ways from all the other Catholic cathedrals of England & Wales.

The 2025 Jubilee has the motto 'pilgrims of hope' and the logo shows people coming from the four

corners of the earth in solidarity.

Pope Francis has written:

"Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life. A pilgrimage on foot is a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life. In the coming year, pilgrims of hope will surely travel the ancient and more modern routes in order to experience the Jubilee to the full."

The Hearts in Search of God project lead, Phil McCarthy said:

"We live in times when despair would be easy.

The Pilgrimage of Hope will be a way for Catholics and other Christians to witness to their faith and hope in the crucified and risen Christ across England & Wales. It will be an opportunity to experience walking a sustainable pilgrimage on foot as pilgrims of hope."

For more information visit:

<https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/national-pilgrims-of-hope-walking-pilgrimage>



Jubilee Year » » Pilgrimage of Hope

King and Queen to make State Visit to the Holy See and Italy

Source: Buckingham Palace, Archbishops House

Buckingham Palace has issued the following statement today, announcing that 'their Majesties The King and Queen will undertake State Visits to the Holy See and the Republic of Italy in early April 2025.

'During Their Majesties' State visit to the Holy See, The King and Queen will join His Holiness Pope Francis in celebrating the 2025 Jubilee Year. Traditionally held once every 25 years, the Jubilee is a special year for the Catholic Church; a year of walking together as 'Pilgrims of Hope'.

'During Their Majesties' State Visit to the Republic of Italy, The King and Queen will undertake engagements in Rome and Ravenna, celebrating the

strong bilateral relationship between Italy and the United Kingdom.'

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has warmly welcomed the news. "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. It presents a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate the close relationship between the UK and the Holy See," he said.

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.

A more detailed itinerary will be announced in due course.



King Charles and Cardinal Vincent in front of St Peter's Basilica, Rome.
Image: Mazur/CBCEW

Photos, copy and distribution queries for The UCM News should be sent by email to ucmnews@yahoo.com. For further details about the Union of Catholic Mothers please contact the National Secretary at ucmnatsec@yahoo.co.uk

Congratulations

80th BIRTHDAYS		
Joyce Armitage	St.Ignatius Foundation	Leeds Diocese
90th BIRTHDAYS		
Teresa Channing	Sutton Foundation	Southwark Archdiocese
GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY		
Bill and Pat Rogers	St Gregory's Foundation	Birmingham Archdiocese
Diane and Michael Whitehead	Filey Foundation	Middlesbrough

Editorial

HAPPY NEW YEAR

We are well into 2025 already and it looks as if this year will be as busy as 2024.

Let us travel in Hope as Pope Francis has asked us to do and if you are going on pilgrimage this year then don't forget to send in photos and text so that we can all share in the journeys of the UCM.

We still need two National Vice Presidents urgently please consider putting yourself forward for this work.



'Fastest Nun in the West' on the way to sainthood

Jan 8th, 2025 ICN

Sr Blandina Segale
A religious sister who befriended Billy the Kid, calmed a lynch mob, testified against human trafficking, opened hospitals and schools in New Mexico and gave refuge to immigrant children, is one step closer to canonization.

Servant of God Sister Blandina Segale - an Italian immigrant who served during the days of the Wild West, is close to being named "Venerable," said Allen Sánchez, the petitioner of her cause, at a press conference on 3 January in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Maria Rosa Segale was born on 23 January, 1850, in Cicagna, Italy, and moved with her family to the United States in 1854. After leaving school, she joined the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, who trace their roots to St Elizabeth Ann Seton. Segale received the name Sister Blandina in honour of St Blandina, a martyr during the Roman persecution.

Throughout her life, Sister Blandina founded numerous institutions, including public and Catholic schools and hospitals in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. In Cincinnati, she and her biological sister, Sister Justina, founded a resettlement home for newly arrived Italian immigrants called the Santa Maria Institute.

Her life was filled with larger-than-life feats, many of them captured in her diary. The diary was meant to be an account for her sister. At the urging of New

Mexico's governor, Sister Blandina's diary was published in 1932 as 'At the End of the Santa Fe Trail.'

Once, Sister Blandina persuaded a dying young man to forgive his killer, whom she publicly escorted past an angry mob so he could beg forgiveness in person. Her courageous efforts prevented the mob from executing the man and allowed justice to take its course instead.

Another time, she provided medical care to a member of Billy the Kid's gang. Later, when the notorious outlaw attacked a stagecoach Sister Blandina was in, he recognized her and let the travellers go in peace.

She frequently was an advocate for people who were disadvantaged. She saved many young women that had been trafficked by criminal gangs for prostitution. They became the first women to testify in the United States Congress on human trafficking.

Since she died in 1941, stories of Sr Blandina's life have featured in books, magazines and TV programmes.

Santa Fe Archbishop John Wester told reporters Sister Blandina reached out to the peripheries. He said, this was the first time the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has petitioned for a person to be declared a saint. "Jesus was her everything," he said. "Human trafficking, saving girls from prostitution, building settlement houses for immigrants. "We're proud of her, and we're proud that she was here, and she loves us, and that she worked so hard in this part of

the world."

The late Archbishop Michael Sheehan started the Cause of Sr Blandina in June 2014. Since the cause was opened, there have been 49 miracles attributed to her.

The news comes as President-elect Trump vows mass deportation of migrants when he moves into the White House on 20 January. It's been reported that many Catholic groups are preparing to assist immigrants going into hiding. Bishop Wester said that one day when she is declared a Saint, "as an immigrant child, she will be the patron saint of immigrant children.



Dates for your Diaries

National Council and AGM	19-21 May 2025
Walsingham	1-2 July 2025
Catholic Women Praying Together	7 June 2025

Urgently Required - Vacancies

Applications are invited for the following:

2 National Vice Presidents
Start date National Council 10th May 2025

These are elected Positions; elections will take place at National Council IMMEDIATELY and successful candidates will start posts at close of National Council 2025

National Secretary
Start date National Council May 2026

This is an elected position; election will take place at National Council October 2025 and the successful candidate will start at close of National Council 2026.

Please send CV's with completed Nomination Forms to ucmnatsec@yahoo.co.uk As soon as possible - LATEST 28TH MARCH 2025.

Please seriously consider putting your name forward for these positions

Job Descriptions and Nomination Forms are available from your Diocesan President or Secretary or National Secretary Mrs Cath Lydon ucmnatsec@yahoo.co.uk
Opportunities to work shadow and for training are available.
If you require further information, please contact National Secretary as above or any member of the National Committee



Submitting copy for next issue
The deadline for articles and photos for the next edition of the UCM News is 3rd June 2025
Please send copy to ucmnews@yahoo.com
Thank you
(GDPR) General Data Protection Regulation
Anyone sending photos to be published in the UCMnews newspaper, it is your responsibility to make sure you get permission from all in the photos.



FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Friends in UCM,

I would like to thank you for all your cards, masses and wishes that I received for Christmas, it means so much to me. It is a lovely way to keep in touch with, not only family, but friends. We must continue to pray for peace in so many different parts of the world where they were not able to be with friends and family at this time.

As we start a new year, I am looking forward to meeting you at our Pilgrimage to Walsingham, where we will be hoping for better weather. Let us try to get as many of you to attend our Pilgrimage to Walsingham this year as Our Lady of Walsingham it has been raised to the rank of a Feast. I am also looking forward to attending your Diocesan Pilgrimages. We have

our National Council, to be held in May, where I will be handing over to your new President Eileen Priest.

Over the last year I have enjoyed meeting so many of you at your meetings and AGM's. It is so nice to see that the UCM is still thriving. However, it would be nice if we could get some new Foundations started!

Love and prayers

Joan Hodge
National President

Bishops to travel to the Holy Land for pilgrimage of solidarity

CBCEW

Nine bishops, including two bishops from England and Wales, will travel to Jerusalem from 18-23 January 2025 for the Holy Land Coordination.

The Holy Land Coordination, organised by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales through its Department for International Affairs, is an annual meeting that is defined by four Ps – presence, prayer, pilgrimage, and pressure. Bishop Nicholas Hudson, who will serve as Moderator, and Bishop James Curry will attend.

The bishops go to be present to the Christians who remain in the Holy Land, to let them know they are not forgotten; to pray with them; to encourage pilgrimage to their land; and to advocate on their behalf at home.

As a result of the tragedy of the attacks on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent humanitarian disaster in Gaza that has led to death, suffering and displacement on an immense scale, the Holy Land Coordination could not take place in January 2024. The bishops of the Coordination now feel all the more urgently the need to go and be in solidarity with Christians of the Holy Land and all who have suffered since the escalation of violence.

Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Chair of the Department for International Affairs and Moderator of the Holy Land Coordination, said:

"As the visit planned for 2024 was not possible due to the outbreak of war, this upcoming Holy Land Coordination visit feels all the more significant. We look forward to returning, just weeks after Christmas, to the cradle of our faith, the land where Jesus was born and walked, died and was raised to new life, a land which will always remain of profound significance for all who form a part of Christ's body.

"The devastation of war and suffering in the Holy Land is heart-breaking. The trauma felt in the region, especially that of children, is beyond measure; and the need for prayer, support, and to find ways to end the violence has never been more urgent."

He added: "The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, emphasised to us, when he visited the United Kingdom last month, the particular vocation of Christians to help bring about peace. He stressed the need for prayer and the use of language which speaks of reconciliation. He spoke of the special vocation of Christians in the Holy Land to work to bring people back together. In times of war, he explained, hatred can often block out empathy and any understanding of the pain of the other. As Christians, we are called to be in solidarity with those who suffer and to say, 'We are with you. You are not forgotten'.

"Our visit in January 2025 will be a moment to stand again alongside those who have endured unimaginable hardship. It will be a time to reaffirm our bond of communion with the Church in the Holy Land, and with all who suffer and are without hope."

Bishop Hudson offered a prayer focussed on peace and reconciliation:

"Heavenly Father, we pray this Christmas for all who suffer in the Land which your Son made Holy by his birth and life and dying and rising for us.

"May the Lord Jesus hold them in his Sacred Heart. Send forth again your Spirit to renew the face of the Holy Land and guide its people into the ways



of peace and truth and reconciliation.

"We make this prayer through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Bishop Delegates

The following bishops are due to attend the Holy Land Co-ordination 2025.

Right Revd Nicholas Hudson
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster
England and Wales
Moderator of the Holy Land Coordination

Most Revd Udo Bentz
Archbishop of Paderborn
Germany

Right Revd Pierre Burcher
Bishop Emeritus of Reykjavik
Iceland

Right Revd Christopher Chessun
Anglican Bishop of Southwark
Church of England

Right Revd James Curry
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster
England and Wales

Most Revd Antoine Herouard
Archbishop of Dijon
France
Co-President of Justice & Peace, Europe
Vice-President of COMECE

Most Revd William Nolan
Archbishop of Glasgow
Scotland

Most Revd Joan Enric Vives Sicilia
Bishop of Urgell
Spain, Principality of Andorra

Right Revd Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy
United States of America

CATHOLIC WOMEN PRAYING TOGETHER ANNUAL MASS

Saturday June 7th 2025 12 noon

St Dominic's, the Rosary Shrine, Southampton Road London NW5 4LB

Celebrant and Preacher: Fr Toby Tees OP (of Radio Maria)

Mass, refreshments, a visit to the Luminous Mysteries Rosary Garden, an opportunity to meet and network with Catholic women from different groups and organisations affirming the Church's teachings and sharing ideas and information.

Come and celebrate the Faith!

Bus routes 24, 46. Nearest tube: Belsize Park

CATHOLIC WOMEN PRAYING TOGETHER

links Catholic women from various Catholic groups in Britain: www.catholicwomenprayingtogether.com

Café in the crypt – venue beneath well-known W1 Church where rough sleepers are treated as restaurant diners

CBCEW

In the crypt of a striking Gothic Church in Marylebone, is a catering secret – a twice-weekly cafe for the homeless which has run for the past decade. It can host more than 80 diners in an evening; there are tablecloths; cutlery; waiters and waitresses, and a baby grand piano plays in the corner. Those coming in to eat are quite deliberately referred to as “guests”.

The Companions Café, at St James's Catholic Church in Spanish Place, opens its doors at 6pm but a long queue outside has already formed on the street outside by 3.30pm. As they head down the steps, homeless visitors became guests, and for the next two hours are waited on and referred to by their first name.

People from all ages and backgrounds mix and sit together. One man arrives wearing a city gentleman's black tailcoat and bowler hat.

Companions Café London coordinator Kate MacKenzie, a former matron at a London hospital, gives the pre-service pep talk to volunteers just like the manager of any restaurant. More than 30 volunteers will make this night run – from kitchen staff to those on the door, to the volunteers who amass and stock donations of clothes like coats, thermal long johns and toiletries.

Kate then sits at a baby grand piano and plays selections from Debussy to Abba and the Sinatra anthem My Way as around 80 diners tuck into Polish potato and beef stew (donated by a Polish café) with vegan sausage as a vegetarian option. Peaches and cream follow, and endless refills of tea and coffee ferried to the tables in mugs branded with the Maltese cross.

Kate explains the philosophy is a distinct one – homeless people here are guests, and as important as the food and free clothes and toiletries, is the companionship – it is a chance to regain dignity, sit with friends, listen to music while you eat, and read a book from the mobile library on a trolley. Nobody is rushed out when they have finished.

Kate says: “Of course the food is important, but



the Companions Café is about so much more – it is about sociability and people being together, especially after lockdown when they literally lost their voice from no social interaction.

“Our approach is the people who come in here are our guests – they sit at tables with tablecloths, proper cutlery and glasses and are waited on. We know them on first name terms. They sit with their friends and for the two hours with us they can talk, listen to music and catch up with friends.

“The majority of people who come here are homeless; many are in difficult circumstances like small or cramped rooms with leaks and no cooking

or washing facilities. We point people to other services like Connections St Martin or The Passage, or the NHS – I see our job as providing dignity and companionship over dinner.”

Supporters of the Order of Malta, which run the café, pay a monthly subscription to support this kind of work across London. Kate MacKenzie says there are around 300 “Companions” volunteers who work across the capital.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Robert Rigby, who recently visited and helped out said: “We know that across Westminster there are amazing groups of volunteers helping our

communities, and the Companions Café is a great example of that – giving dinner, dignity, and the chance to be treated as guests to a group of people who live in incredibly hard circumstances.

“It is amazing to think that for the past decade this restaurant underneath a Westminster church has been running a unique restaurant for people who desperately need the help. Well done to the Order of Malta and its Westminster volunteers for an inspirational project.”

Thanks to Westminster City Council for images and words.

Cardinal Parolin to inaugurate Church of the Baptism of the Lord in Jordan

CBCEW

Pope Francis has written a letter to the Vatican Secretary of State as he prepares to travel to Jordan to inaugurate the Church of the Baptism of the Lord.

“God wished to sanctify and save men not individually and without any bond among them, but He wanted to form them into a people who would acknowledge Him in truth and serve Him in holiness,” the Pope wrote quoting, from Lumen Gentium, to Cardinal Pietro Parolin who has been appointed Pontifical Legate for the consecration of the church.

The ceremony, scheduled for Friday, January 10, marks the 25th anniversary of the Catholic Church's annual pilgrimage to Jesus' Baptismal site.

The Cardinal will preside over the Mass of Dedication and inauguration of the new church at the Baptism site on the Jordan River (Al-Maghtas). Among the concelebrants will be Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Participating in the Mass will also be the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries in the Holy Land for all Latin and Catholic churches.

In his letter, the Pope highlighted how Christians in Jordan eagerly await the solemn consecration of the Church of the Baptism of Jesus, whose construction spanned nearly 15 years, a testament to the Church's love for this community of believers.

Pope Francis then invited Cardinal Parolin to encourage Jordanian Christians to increasingly imitate Christ, bearing witness with renewed



strength to the living hope that springs from faith and to love their neighbours.

Finally, he asks Cardinal Parolin to convey his greetings to all participants in the event, not only the Catholics present but also civil authorities, believers of other religions, and all those who promote the

Church's mission, religious freedom, world peace, and the dignity of the human person.

The church's foundation stone was laid by Pope Benedict XVI on May 10, 2009. It was s constructed following the supervision and donation of “Knight of the Holy Sepulchre” Nadim Muasher,

who built it in memory of his son Ayman, who tragically passed away in a car accident near the Baptism Site.

Source: Vaticannews.va

Global warming has reached dangerous levels

Source: CAFOD

Liz Cronin - Climate Change Policy Lead at CAFOD writes:
According to numerous sets of data, including NASA, the 10 most recent years are the warmest years on record. The rate at which warming is occurring is also speeding up. The temperature dial has been turning three times faster per decade since 1982, than in the pre-industrial era.

We are seeing the devastating impacts of this temperature rise - through droughts, floods, hurricanes, and many other natural disasters. Many of the low-income countries where we work are on the front lines of the climate crisis.

The communities CAFOD supports, particularly in the Horn of Africa, Bangladesh and Colombia, are finding it increasingly difficult to cope as they find their ways of life turned upside down by ever more violent and unpredictable weather events.

Bareesh Hasan Chowdhury, Campaign and Policy Coordinator of a CAFOD partner, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), says his country feels the injustice of living at the forefront of global climate change, "while being a miniscule contributor to carbon emissions, Bangladesh already experiences the multi-pronged hazards of global temperature rise." He said: "There are many people living in the developed world who will face similar consequences."

According to a recent World Bank study, Bangladesh has already seen a temperature rise of 1.1 degrees between 1980 and 2023, and in the heat index - or 'real feel' - that equates to a drastic rise of 4.5C. This is even more pronounced in the capital, Dhaka, a metropolitan area of around 20 million people, where the temperature rise in Dhaka is 65% higher than for the rest of the country.

By some accounts up to 2000 people move to Dhaka every day, to escape climate induced impacts in the rest of the country. The city has become a global hotspot for urban heat and the 'heat island' effect. The rapid urbanisation causes a chain reaction that traps heat: population growth leads to a loss of green space, waterbodies, and vegetation.

Mr Chowdhury warns developed countries against complacency: "This type of temperature rise and heat will not be limited to poor countries like Bangladesh. There are many people living in the developed world who will face similar consequences to our casual approach to climate catastrophe."

In 2023, Dhaka had its hottest day in more than a generation when temperatures crossed the dreaded 40C mark. A year later, Bangladesh experienced a

continuous heatwave for 30 consecutive days of April 2024, and at least 15 people were confirmed to have died from heat related stress.

The UK's hottest summer, in 2022, hit the same benchmark - a supposedly 'once in a lifetime' event made much more likely by climate change, resulting in some 200 wildfires and around 3,000 all-cause excess deaths associated with a heat episode. As temperatures continue to climb, these events become more frequent and more dangerous.

Apart from reducing the emissions that are destabilising the climate, richer countries have a responsibility to help those suffering the worst consequences.

Pope Francis, in his message to the 2024 COP climate summit in Azerbaijan - given on his behalf by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin, said: "a true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global North and South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time."

The international community must act now to support climate-vulnerable people with the money they need to adapt to a crisis they have done the least to cause. How can we start to do this? If the biggest polluters had to pay the kind of taxes often proposed but not implemented, there would be plenty of funds to start to compensate the victims of their pollution.

That is just one example. Reducing the debt burden owed by developing countries to rich-world institutions is another. But the essential requirement is for the most vulnerable countries to have a real voice in the process.

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley is the current chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, which represents 70 countries at most risk from climate change. In a dialogue at the recent COP29 summit with Britain's Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, she said: "It is clear that unless we have discussions with all players at the table, we're not going to change the system." Ms Mottley was speaking the day before she was due to discuss debt with Pope Francis in the Vatican.

Can 2025 - a Jubilee Year - change things?

In Old Testament times, a jubilee meant the forgiveness of all debts, and she made clear that debt relief should be seen as a moral issue, adding: "If the UK and the Vatican can say it's time for a jubilee moment again, then we will be doing the right thing by those who come to be on the front line, not by their own making, but by the actions of others."

The Barbados premier and others are calling for debt relief to be extended not only to the poorest countries, but also to those which have emerged to



Dry riverbed in Bangladesh. Photo by Kabiur Rahman Riyad

middle-income status, only to be threatened with being dragged back into poverty by climate disasters. "We need to change the rules of the game," Ms Mottley argued. "When the rules were set, our countries did not even exist ... in many instances, decisions are made without reference to whether the impact on us is positive or negative."

At the recent COP summit in Baku, Mr Chowdhury went further. "Responsibility has been not only shirked by the developed countries, but instead passed down to developing countries," adding that it's time to develop a 'new normal' in

managing our world, "our cities and ways of life must be fundamentally reworked", he said. "While the images of climate change are often floods and natural disasters, slow onset events like heat must also be given due attention."

The recent wildfires in California and other natural disasters continue to highlight our total dependence on the natural environment - our Common Home.

This year will see the 30th COP on climate, in Brazil, and as Mia Mottley concluded at COP29: "We can't keep doing things the same way, when everything else around us has changed."

World Meeting on Children’s Rights: Bring a smile to children suffering

By Kielce Gussie

On February 3, the Vatican will host the meeting with panellists advocating for children’s rights, including the Queen of Jordan and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

64 million children of elementary school age are not able to attend classes. 1 in 3 children under the age of five face extreme food poverty. 12 million girls were forced into child marriages in 2022 alone.

Rather than stand in silence, Pope Francis announced he will dedicate a day to helping and “protecting millions of children who are still without rights, who live in precarious conditions, who are exploited and abused, and who suffer the dramatic consequences of wars.”

Bring a smile to suffering children

On Tuesday, the Holy See Press Office has released the schedule for the first-ever World Meeting on Children’s Rights. Speaking at the press conference, Marco Impagliazzo, President of the

Community of Sant'Egidio, calls this meeting “an event of hope.” He states that “too many children die from war, violence, sexual and labour exploitation,” and the Pope wants to “bring a smile” to these suffering children.

Dedicating a day to children

The World Meeting on Children's Rights will be held in the Vatican on February 3 with the theme, “Love them and protect them.” Pope Francis is scheduled to open the event by welcoming 10 children from various countries, who are due to share a message with the Pope.

Seven panels will be held, each with a specific topic focusing on the rights of children, including access to education, rights to a family, protection from violence, and access to resources. Advocates from all over the world and walks of life will come to Rome. The list includes Queen Rania al-Abdullah of Jordan; Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, CEO of Mary's Meals; Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate; and former U.S. Vice President, Al Gore.



Press conference presenting the World Meeting of Children's Rights

Sixty Years in UCM!

Reaching this milestone has got me thinking both backwards and forwards. Every one of us is surely a link in life's chain, sometimes strong, sometimes not, but always important to each other. Looking back, I can see just how important my UCM life has been for Faith, growth in understanding of others, Friendship, and Fun plus - dare I say it? – Fatigue too!

Moving on marriage to St. James' Reading (Portsmouth Diocese) I only had my non-Catholic in laws nearby. The parish was large, the parish priest elderly with a high turnover of curates so despite regular Mass attendance it took 5 years and 3 baptisms before I was noticed, then virtually pounced on and invited – more like ordered –to come to UCM. Obedient soul that I was I came along, formally welcomed by gloved and hatted ladies who never used Christian names. Being the Catholic half of a mixed marriage (as happily I still am) I was glad that my children would meet other Catholics and know Mum wasn't the only one going to Sunday Mass and eating fish on Fridays!

A few weeks went by before orders to bake were given as we would be hosting the Diocesan Meeting. I had thought it was just a parish group – but I know better now, don't I?!! Soon after the baking I took time off to welcome baby no. 4 but soon I found myself on The Committee. You all know how it goes, a year later I had a pen in one hand as Secretary and sleepy baby on my knee while a slightly older Mum combined Treasurer duties with restraining her very lively toddler and we at least addressed each other as Eileen and Jill despite the formalities of our elders!

And so the pattern progressed, never looking for another “post” but somehow going via Diocese to

National as International Officer and onwards to become English Board Member on the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations where 5 years later I was press ganged into becoming WUCWO Secretary General interacting with women worldwide. At the time I thought I was just a stop gap until a more linguistically able person could be found. Thirteen memorable years elapsed before my resignation was accepted!

This chain of 60 years has given me some exceptional memories to share with you before they are lost to living memory. UCM was founded as a section of CWL in 1913 at the request of Cardinal Bourne aimed at helping poor mothers of large families. The significance of 8th December 1913 was proudly remembered by Pauline Keane, the International Officer before me, as it was also the date of her birth. In 1938 (coincidentally my year of birth) UCM became an independent organisation and, rather like an adult daughter, left its parent organisation CWL though many good links remain.

In Reading it was Mrs. Murphy O'Connor, mother of the future Cardinal Cormac, who was the founder President at St. James' and saw that once large foundation expand and sub divide into five or six foundations in and around Reading flourishing for many years. When St. James sadly closed two or three years ago, I was given a small linen cloth embroidered with her name and many others probably in the 1940s/50s. Another name on it is Mrs. Kathleen Church who had been an Army wife in Hythe before she moved to Reading so I have now had the pleasure of passing this cloth to Hythe UCM – just a small but tangible link with shared histories.

During the 50s and 60s and beyond we had Jacquie Stuyt and Elspeth Orchard who had been

among the Co-Founders of CAFOD in the late 40s. With Cardinal Griffin's permission they began with a collection in the Westminster Diocese – I think it was for pennies – and I remember Elspeth mentioning that three of them worked making little brown envelopes – kneeling on the floor cutting, folding and sticking them - a reminder of post war shortages. As this initiative grew so it was adopted by the Bishops' Conference and became CAFOD. There is a room at Romero House dedicated to Jacquie and Elspeth.

So many wonderful women have touched my life in UCM – names on old lists now but to me still vivid in memory. There was Val James of Clifton. Back in 1973 at the Festival Hall 60th Anniversary celebration tableau she was the young Mum “Trolley Dolly” in mini skirt with shopping trolley; and later became a forward thinking National President. In the 1980s the “Three Hail Marys” – Mesdames Johnson, Dobbin and Derbyshire at the helm – three strong northern ladies. It was Mary Johnson who ensured that UCM was properly represented at WUCWO.

My first experience at National level was attending a Study Day. I would not have gone to what I imagined was a high-level intellectual event had I not been persuaded by someone who was only in Reading for a short time but who had attended from another Diocese. A little link – with big consequences for me. My second time was as an observer at National Council and at the end I was asked to give my impressions. Unfortunately, during the meeting there had been a big row so I said that although I had enjoyed most of it very much I was sad that disagreements over one major matter had become personally acrimonious. It was whispered to me that if looks from the protagonists could have killed, I would have been turned to stone and I assumed that would be my last appearance at National. Wrong!

Going back to 1973 the celebration began with Mass in Westminster Cathedral which left three deep impressions on me. First there was the wonder of seeing the Cathedral packed and hearing that some groups had travelled overnight to be there. Secondly word had come that the son of a member had been very seriously injured in a car accident the previous day and was unlikely to survive. The power of the prayers for him was almost tangible and he made a good recovery Thirdly, part way through the Mass I had a sensation that the walls of the Cathedral had dissolved but that our Mums and their faith remained standing strongly in the void. I've never forgotten that image.

Whilst in the World Union of Catholic Women I have been privileged to have some exceptional experiences of our Church as a whole and with women of many countries. Assemblies and



Gillian Badcock
60yrs in UCM

Meetings in different places brought many challenges and stresses. Yes I have enjoyed Papal Audiences, some wonderful behind the scenes experiences, a lot of work, sleepless nights, and the ordinary realities of discovering church halls are the same the world over. My first Board meeting found us in a dusty Mexican basement with chairs stacked high so in true women of UCM (and CWL, CWAs, Guilds and all sorts) style our first task was furniture removal, setting up and dusting. And so, it continued - my husband called me a tap to be turned on 24/7 with principal officers

needing to communicate between Mexico, Canada, Australia, Italy and UK so it was always midnight – or early dawn – for someone. Some came from elite high-status positions in their countries without grass roots understanding of the realities of the ordinary lives of their countrywomen and I felt out of my depth at times. It underlined the importance of having representatives from organisations like UCM at international level. Aside from official work I saw wonderful examples of individual links between organisations from different countries and lovely individual initiatives to give direct help where needed and secretary general though I was I think these acts were far more important than reports etc. One such was started by Pat Durrant (past National Secretary) whose parish funded a water pipeline in an African village.... there were many more examples of this quiet goodness.

Throughout this time the down to earth support of my home foundation sustained me, and I continued to attend local meetings as often as possible. When our foundation hit a low of 8 members and closure seemed inevitable in the early 2000s, I reluctantly took on the Presidency and together we had the joy of achieving a membership of 40 which continues under younger leadership to this day.

Now what matters most in the chain of UCM life is growth in the future. From the days of young mothers in the 1960s the pattern has changed and our – still excellent – new recruits tend to be “young” retirees who benefit their cheerily hatless and gloveless elders with fresh ideas and much good will. Sometimes we have been seen as just “the tea ladies”. That's fine – the caring ministry of the teapot has untold benefits, but we must not underestimate the power of our voices on the major moral issues of the day and we should not be afraid to become more involved at diocesan and national level. Please hold on to the image of each one of us being a link in a long chain of faith. After a gap of several years 2024 saw a few of our members managing to go to Walsingham in July and returning inspired and sharing their joy with all of us – surely a sign that our beloved Lady of Walsingham continues her work for all UCM.

Gillian Badcock,
Hythe, Southwark

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SOUTHWARK DIOCESE

UCM Anerley Christmas meal and festivities

In December we all met at a local restaurant for our annual Christmas festivities. We were allocated our own dining area where we could catch up with old friends, share news and chatter away into the night. After saying Grace lead by our President Marie Louise Muir, we enjoyed a tasty meal followed by secret Santa presents. We ended the evening gathered in front of the magnificent, bejewelled tree for some photos and our final farewells.

Marie O’Gorman
Media Officer Anerley Foundation



New President for Anerley

In January we said a big thankyou to Marie Louise Muir who stepped down as President after 6 years. She has guided us through many highs and lows, working tirelessly to lead by example and develop a diverse group of women, prepared to support each other and those in need around us. She is seen below handing over the badge of office to Janette Jacobs who has taken up the post and already rolling up her(sparkly) sleeves. Good luck Janette.

Marie O’Gorman
Media Officer Anerley Foundation



Sheppey Foundation UCM Renewal of Commitment



The members of Sheppey Foundation renewed their Commitment to the UCM at our Mass on Sunday 8th December. It was a lovely way to come together in our churches and highlight the UCM as a women's group and the importance of our work in the Parish. Our priest Father Aklilu made it a very special occasion, he is very supportive of the UCM and appreciates all we do.

Joanne Pavitt
Media Officer Southwark Archdiocese

Quiz night at St John Fisher



In November UCM members Kate Boyle and Marie O’Gorman (media officer) from St Anthony of Padua Anerley were welcomed at the annual quiz night at St John Fisher church, Bexley . This was a lively brainteaser challenge hosted by our Southwark Diocesan Spiritual Adviser Fr Doug Bull and his very hospitable parishioners. A great evening was had by all.

Maria O’Gorman Foundation Media Officer

New UCM Foundation



The new UCM Foundation at St Teresa of Avila parish Ashford Kent, met for their first official meeting on Sunday 3rd November 2024 and they will be meeting on the first Sunday of each month after the 10.30am mass.

At the meeting officers were elected and it was decided that each of the committee member roles would be shared between two members. The enrolment mass and celebration is planned for Sunday 2nd March.

Margaret Whitham
Kent Area Leader

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ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON DIOCESE

Molesey 90th Anniversary



Eileen Harris MBE (A&B Diocesan President), Jill Mitchell (East Molesey Foundation President) and Joan Hodge (National President who presented the 90th Anniversary Certificate)

We were delighted to celebrate our 90th Anniversary with the A&B Diocesan Committee when they held their Autumn meeting in our parish on 26th October 2024. Our foundation St. Barnabas, East Molesey, started on 12th July 1934 with nineteen members. There were gaps in continuity from 1937-1948 and the period of covid lockdown from 2020-2021 but apart from those we are still going strong. We have raised funds for charities as well as UCM by various means: a yearly tombola stall at Molesey Carnival, fashion shows, musical evenings and bring and buy sales to name but a few. Our "foremothers" raised funds by holding whist drives and jumble sales. Can't help feeling ours were more fun! However, some things don't change, catering for Parish events for instance. From its inception until 2015 when a traditional party fell out of favour, our group provided a Christmas Party for the younger school children. As well as party food, drinks and crackers we provided a gift for each child and roped in a willing male to act as Father Christmas. We currently have 14 members and although our gallop has somewhat lessened, no more carnival floats and sponsored walks, we still adopt a charity each year, collect items for the local food bank and of course air our catering skills when necessary. Five of our members have celebrated 80th Birthdays in the past 18 months so of course together with Christmas and other events we've been able to exercise our alter egos as "ladies who lunch." We often think about past members and currently support each other, sharing both the difficult and happy times. Being part of the UCM is truly a blessing.

Text by Clare Parkin (Molesey Foundation Secretary)
Photos by Cecilia Thuy Cameron (A&B Media)

HALLAM DIOCESE

New members for St Joseph's Handsworth



On Sunday 2nd February 2025 seven ladies of the Parish of St. Josephs, Handsworth in Sheffield, in the Diocese of Hallam were enrolled as members of the Union of Catholic Mothers. This took place during Holy Mass celebrated by the Parish Priest, Father Mark McManus and attended by other parishioners. It was a lovely occasion with refreshments and friendships made and renewed.

Dorothy Anderson (Diocesan President)

Hove Foundation – New members

St Peter's Hove Foundation has recently welcomed two new members, marking a continued upward trend of membership increase in recent years. New members, Iris Elliott and Anne Murphy were officially inducted into the group after mass, led by our parish priest, Canon David Parmiter on Tuesday 19th November 2024. Congratulations to our new members and we wish them a long and happy association with the Hove Foundation. The foundation, known for its commitment to spiritual growth, charity work, and community support, has seen rising interest from women across the parish. The group has announced upcoming initiatives for the Spring term including outreach programs, prayer and social meetings and fundraising. Membership remains open to those interested in joining.

Reporter: Trish Colley, Hove Secretary
Photos: Eileen Harris MBE



Trish Longley (Hove Foundation President), new members: Anne Murphy and Iris Elliott and Canon David Parmiter.

SHREWSBURY DIOCESE

St Peter's and St Raphael's Foundation



Representatives the Willow Wood Hospice were welcomed to the December meeting of St. Peter's and St. Raphael's foundation. A cheque for £1500 was presented to Lucy Ta'ati head of the fund-raising team and a further cheque for £450 was presented to Julie Moran the team leader of the wellbeing team. The ladies gave the members an account of what the money would be used for, the £1500 would be used to set up a fund-raising training course and the £450 will be used to purchase their own indoor curling set for use at the hospice. The ladies were absolutely delighted with the donations and thanked the members for all their hard work in raising the money throughout the year.

Joan Starr Diocesan Media Officer



Submitting copy for
next issue

The deadline for articles and
photos for
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MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE

A Stellar Maris Christmas



The Holy Name of Mary foundation decided to collect for the seafarers for Christmas 2024. We decided to fill 8 shoeboxes with toiletries, gloves, socks, sweets and a card. We joined local the churches of St Clares, St Francis and the Cathedral with this endeavour. Our boxes were delivered to St Clair's Church on the designated day where we experienced a very warm welcome from St Clair's Friends Group. We enjoyed a chat and afternoon tea with a small glass of Fizz. Monsignor Dasey and Peter Barrington from Stellar Maris joined us He was delighted with the collection of bags and shoeboxes and said how much they would mean to all the sailors away from home and family at Christmas. It was fun to join with other churches with such a worthwhile cause and we intend to repeat the experience next Christmas.

Petra Micklethwaite Diocesan Media Officer

My Journey in Faith



Sarah Sheils, Sarah Allen, and Barbara Cookson.

My Journey in Faith, an occasional series of talks to St. Aelred's UCM York. In keeping with our role in the local Churches Together initiative, over the last few years we have hosted several speakers from other faith traditions as well as our own. This is a good way of getting to know our neighbours and developing a better understanding of what we have in common and what we keep as our individual beliefs. In November we had a talk by Sarah Allen, a member of York's Quaker Meeting at Friargate. She told us of her interesting childhood. She is the eldest of five children in a devout Anglican family and attended a Catholic Convent junior school in south Africa, followed by a Baptist Grammar school in Australia and finally an Anglican Boarding School in Botswana. A devout Anglican, she lost her faith in her late teenage years but continued her journey by studying Theology and Philosophy at Kings College, London. She later became a Quaker, and she says they acknowledge the Holy Spirit, the idea that there is that of God in everyone, and she told us of her teaching career in a Quaker School, where the idea of Contemplative Prayer and the development of ways of achieving it is fundamental to Quakerism. As Head of RE in the school she has had an important role in introducing young people to the idea of faith, ethics and how human beings should treat one another. This talk encouraged many interesting questions. It is good to have an open, free and friendly discussion with another member of our local community who is involved in inter-faith activities.

Petra Micklethwaite Diocesan Media Officer

St Aelred's Christmas Party



For the last meeting before Christmas St. Aelred's Foundation had a Christmas Party and Carols. Members supplied the food for the buffet, and they certainly excelled themselves with all the delicious food produced. Our treasurer Rose Cartledge had persuaded five members of the parish music group to join us to provide the music for the singing of the carols which Rose had displayed on the large screen in the Parish Centre. We were delighted that Fr. Bill Serplus was able to join us. A wonderful evening enjoyed by all.

Petra Micklethwaite Diocesan Media Officer

Wonderful evening at Thicket Priory



St. Aelred's Foundation and Guests had a wonderful evening with the Community of the Carmelite Monastery at Thicket Priory. Sister Rosemary and Sister Therese providing the music for the Mass which was celebrated in their wonderful chapel by Fr. Bill Serplus our Spiritual advisor. Following Mass the Sisters provided us with most welcome refreshments and we had the opportunity to have a good chat with members of the community who always like to hear what is happening in the parish and in our families.

Petra Micklethwaite Diocesan Media Officer



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BIRMINGHAM ARCHDIOCESE

A big day at St Gregory's



Not only were they celebrating 100year anniversary of their Foundation with memories and cake they also celebrated Angela Johnson being a member for 50years. Then add in a Golden wedding anniversary for Bill and Pat Rogers it was a wonderful day Fr Conley and Fr Edwards celebrated Mass, presented certificates and they all joined together for 'a bit of a do' afterwards.

Miriam Cunliffe Diocesan Media Officer

Birmingham Christmas Social



Today we held our Christmas Social in the Grimshaw Room. Although reduced in number due to the storm. We played bingo, had stand up bingo, quizzes and monologues. We then had a shared lunch together and finished with carols.

**Eileen Priest
National President Elect**

St Marie's Parish Christmas Market

Our UCM covers the Bottle in a Bag stall at the annual St Marie's Parish Christmas Market. The UCM raised £281 for the church funds. Please see a photo of the stall.

**Margaret Butler
St Marie's Rugby UCM
Archdiocese of Birmingham**



NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE

Christmas Wreath making



At St Mary of the Annunciation Foundation during our last meeting before Christmas Liz Abell one of our newest members guided us through the intricacies of Wreath making. Liz provided all the makings as well as giving advice to us novices. We were busy little bees, and the room smelt of fir, pine, oranges and cinnamon. There was also, dare I say it, mulled wine and nibbles. It was, needless to say, a very enjoyable afternoon, and we went home proudly bearing our prizes.

Jean Lopez Lopez

PORTSMOUTH DIOCESE

Windsor Foundation celebrate their 60th Anniversary in style



On 4th December, Windsor St Edward's Foundation marked their 60th Anniversary with a wonderful celebration with Mass with many of their former Parish Priests (including Bishop Emeritus, the Rt Rev Peter Doyle, the Diocesan Spiritual Director Jozef Gruszkiewicz, as well as the current PP, Canon David Hoggood. The Windsor President, Mrs Theresa King, kindly invited members from each of the Diocesan Foundations so there was a Parish Hall full of 50+ guests. The members of nearby St Mark's Foundation served (and cleared) a gracious buffet. Importantly, Father Jozef was asked to enrol a further 8 new members into St Edward's Foundation after the Mass in the glorious surroundings of St Edward's. This parish has been amalgamated recently into one large parish, joining two others in Windsor and Ascot, being at the forefront of the Bishop of Portsmouth's vision and initiative for the future of the Diocese with fewer priests and diminishing funds.

Maureen Meatcher Diocesan Media Officer

Pack for a Purpose

I was going to be 70 and it was our Coral (35) wedding anniversary and so we'd planned a special holiday of five and a half weeks to South Africa and Botswana. We'd put it together ourselves.

The 1st week, Cape Town, Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch Garden, City Tour, Cape of Good Hope and the wild penguins. The 2nd week, 4 days on the Garden Route and in our 3rd week 4 days in Kruger National Park on 3 safaris and a Panoramic Tour. The 4th week would be in Botswana. On the trail of Alexander McCall Smith's No.1 Detective Agency looking at sights and locations of the stories and history and culture of Botswana. Our 5th week and final days, back in Cape Town were to include Robben Island, exploring the winelands and a bit of whale watching.

During the planning I came up with the idea of perhaps trying to support a couple of charities along the way - one in South Africa and one in Botswana. I'd read of a charity 'Pack for a Purpose' in my magazine 'The People's Friend'. This 2 page spread highlighted how easy and straightforward it was to add some extras in your luggage to support a charity.

Almost 35 years ago we'd gone on a holiday to South America and thought of taking spectacles with us which were very much in demand there. So, already going to Peru and Lima on our holiday we took a suitcase with 212 pairs of spectacles in it.

At our hotel in Lima our taxi driver was quite emphatic; he didn't want money as payment, he wanted the spectacles. So in the boot of his car we opened the suitcase and after he'd tried on 4 or 5pairs he settled on one pair. He was more than happy with those! It brought it home to me how something small and ready to be thrown away (at that point they weren't being collected in Britain) could be so useful to someone in need.

'Pack for a Purpose' has a global list of charities they support. In Cape Town this is

'Friends of Child Protection'. Tourists and locals can drop off donations at 'The Silo Hotel' on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town or as we also discovered they will collect from where you are staying.

Working together with Social Services and the Police they support children of all ages who have been sexually abused. Every other month they make up 1,000 comfort packs.

These are handed out to children at police stations, in the courts, care centres and hospitals. We were astounded by that number. The charity has

a list on their website of what is needed. New underwear was a top priority. Each of the comfort packs have a snack, drink, colouring pack with stickers, a small cuddly toy and a few other basics.

Through the parish newsletter I put out a request for donations and was overwhelmed with the amazing response of items given plus the £405 donated.

This meant that we could buy more items to donate once we were in Cape Town and this is what we did. Two members of the committee of 'Friends of Child Protection' Bev and Viv came to collect the donations and towards the end of our holiday we took a 2nd lot of donations to the Silo Hotel where we were warmly welcomed. It couldn't have gone smoother and there was much gratitude all round. It was that simple to do.

So to Botswana. Now in Botswana 'Pack for a Purpose' is supporting charities in the north and we were going to be based in the south.

I came across the charity 'Lady Khama' named after Lady Ruth Khama, the former President's wife who did much work for the community. The charity's focus is on improving lives of vulnerable women, children and people living with disabilities.

So I got in touch with the charity and one of their members Oneile was in touch ready to give me information about a school where they supported vulnerable teenage girls and orphans.

Like Pack for a Purpose there was a list of priorities. All items of stationary were needed but particularly pens, pencils and coloured pencils. Oneile went into the school on the last Friday of each month. This happened to coincide with the week we were in Botswana and so she arranged for us to visit the school and children.

We were delighted at that news. We were driven out to Molepolole, Botswana's largest village, about an hour from Gaborone. It was very, very hot!

The girls and one boy in the group were excited to meet us. They introduced themselves one by one telling us about their hobbies and their aspirations for their jobs in the future.

A number wanted to become doctors, teachers and nurses and you need pens to be educated! All the black pens we took were very, very welcome. They sang us a song about gender equality and we did a little dance from our folk dancing group back home. They were very interested in that.

The monthly comfort packs they received had basic necessities such as soap, sanitary pads, deodorant and shoe polish. Our donations which also included hair slides, socks and underwear they



Linda & Jeff with the team at The Silo Hotel

were thrilled to bits with. There were many smiles and a lot of joy.

Both in South Africa and Botswana we were amazed by how happy folk were with these donations and both myself and my husband Jeff would encourage anyone going on a similar holiday

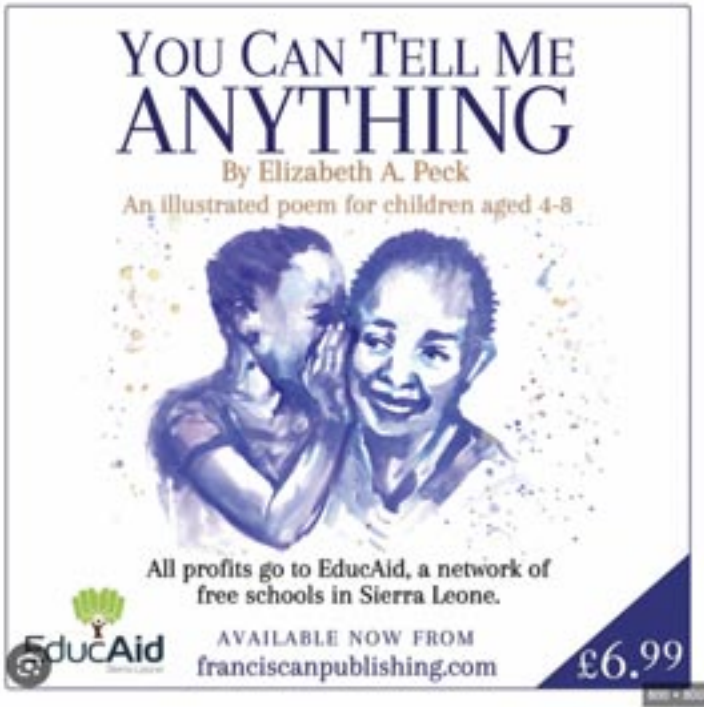
to support the local charities. It really does make a difference to people's lives.

My name is Linda Marsden and I am a member of St. Hilda's UCM in Tottington under the Salford Diocese banner.

Book Review

You Can Tell Me Anything

This is a beautifully illustrated book explaining about worries. It could be used for children in all years in primary school, providing comfort and enabling children to reflect and communicate better with others.

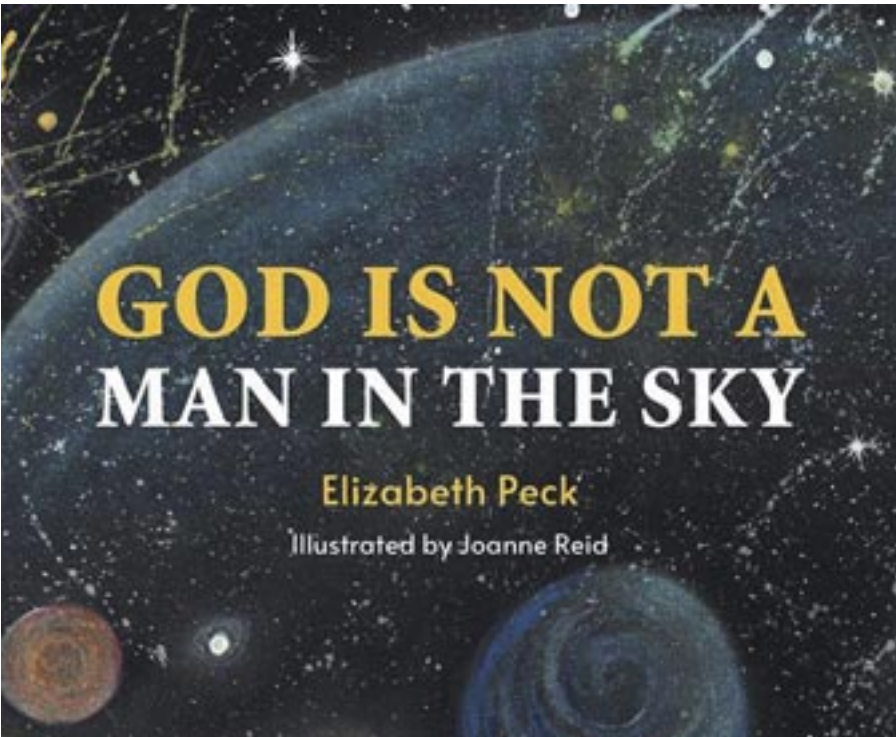


God Is Not a Man in The Sky

It is again beautifully illustrated and discusses a very sensitive belief. It does explain the chronology of scriptures well and the meanings of words are very useful – particularly for RE teaching. The wording is simple with small chunks of information and pictures to explain.

It is more suitable for upper Key stage two, particularly Years 4, 5, 6 children due to the subject content and a deeper understanding of belief.

Priscilla Jordan Headteacher St Mary's Catholic Primary School



“Good teaching paired with good food and even better people”

CBCEW

As we come towards the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we are publishing the testimony of Tenny Antony, a fifth year seminarian for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, from when he did a three week summer school went to Centro Pro Unione in Rome with help from The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund.

The Centro Pro Unione is a place of meeting, study, research, ecumenical dialogue and formation run by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

As a Catholic, I knew the popular side of the Church, which is focused on evangelisation. However, the spirit of the Second Vatican Council also reinvigorated the lesser-known side of dialogue. My curiosity about this led me to apply for the summer course in Rome at Centro Pro Unione. The objective of the three-week course was to build a foundational understanding of the Church's inter-denominational (ecumenical) and interreligious relationships from a Catholic perspective. It wasn't long after starting the course that I realised that it would enrich my future ministry by informing my understanding and broadening my perspective in ways I had not anticipated.

We opened the first week by learning about other Christian traditions, their beginnings and current direction. In the second week, we explored the journey of ecumenical dialogue with specific Christian traditions since Vatican II. In the third week, we explored our interreligious relationships. The course was led by Fr. Jim Loughran of the Franciscans of the Atonement. He was supported by other guest lecturers who specialised in their respective areas. It was a blessing to sit amidst Christians from Methodist, United Reformed, African American Baptist, Lutheran, Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Anglican traditions as well as those of Jewish faith. The varied group hailed from various countries and was a mix of students, pastors and leaders within their respective contexts. Studying and socialising with such a diverse group was a blessing. The Eternal City provided a beautiful



backdrop for nurturing great friendships. Our afternoons were occupied with tours to the various basilicas, the Jewish synagogue, the Islamic centre and mosque, the Dicastery of Christian Unity and Interreligious Dialogue, the Roman Ghetto and attending Holy Mass with the Holy Father for the feast of St. Peter and Paul, which I came know is the 'birthday' of Rome as well.

While the classes opened a space for important questions to be asked, what strengthened our bonds even more so was the ecumenism of food that occurred during lunch and dinner. We could freely ask probing questions to one another, which broadened our understanding and clarified any gaps in our knowledge of the other. I realised that this open and willing sharing of our traditions is the essence of dialogue that we were being taught during the course. Good teaching paired with good food and even better people enriched my learning experience.

The classes explored in depth the Catholic Church's dialogue with other Christian traditions. I became aware that my existing knowledge of these focused on difference; I actually knew very little about the common gifts we shared, for example, the tradition of fasting on Fridays as encouraged by both the Methodist and the Catholic Church. I was humbled to face my ignorance, and the need to be better informed about the common ground we share with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters was evident. It was an eye-opener for me to realise that the same inner tension between evangelisation and dialogue that the Church carries in her ministry was also reflected within me – it was clear that it can be tricky to hold both simultaneously.

What I have gained from this rich experience is a new horizon to my Catholic life. The spirit of dialogue is Trinitarian; the Second Vatican Council document Unitatis Redintegratio was the spine that held our three weeks together. A key teaching that edified my mindset was the emphasis in the

documents that “While it is true that many Christians understand the moral teaching of the Gospel differently from Catholics, and do not accept the same solutions to the more difficult problems of modern society, nevertheless they share our desire to stand by the words of Christ as the source of Christian virtue.” (23)

The course has inspired me to nurture deeper relationships in the local context beyond the annual occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. There might be a temptation to think that ecumenism only matters at the highest level, but I believe that the same work at the local level enables others to encounter Christ through actions that display love for the neighbour. Thus, I'm grateful for this unique opportunity. Just as Christ chose to embrace all of us, he teaches us to embrace unity with all. Therefore, without unity, there is no sense of community. “God wills the Church, because He wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his agape.” (Ut Unum Sint, 9)

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Jubilee of Communication: A story is the shortest distance between people

By Kielce Gussie

Ten thousand communication professionals inaugurate the first jubilee event of the Holy Year with a three-day program for the Jubilee of the World of Communication.

Ten thousand people – from young adults to high-profile business CEOs – from all over the world are gathered in Rome for one weekend. They've travelled many miles - not for a concert or a conference - but for a Jubilee dedicated to communication.

Pilgrims making the journey to the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (Vatican Media)

Celebrating communication

Being the first jubilee event of the Holy Year, the Jubilee of the World of Communication kicks off with a penitential liturgy at the Basilica of St. John Lateran on the feast of the patron saint of journalists and writers – St. Francis de Sales.

The three-day event (January 24-26) continues with a pilgrimage to the Holy Door on the morning of January 25, followed by an audience with Pope Francis in the Paul VI Hall in the Vatican. The jubilee event ends with the "Sunday of the Word of God" Mass presided over by the Holy Father in St. Peter's Basilica on January 26.

Starting the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication explains that this hope is not an illusion or something abstract. Rather, he says it is "the drive that moves each of us to believe that the things we tell, through any means – writing, words, images – reach somewhere to build a relationship with those who read, listen, and watch."

Pope Francis often speaks about the importance of good communication and sharing messages of hope. In the past, he has encouraged communication professionals to see their mission as threefold: to make people less lonely, give voice to the voiceless, and educate themselves to communicate truthfully.

Storytelling is fundamental to democracy

At an event to open the Jubilee of the World of Communication in Rome, the Dicastery for Communication brought two well-known personalities and communicators together to bring their insights and ideas: Colum McCann, an author of numerous works and co-founder of Narrative 4 – a global non-profit which uses storytelling to better communities, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, advocate for freedom of expression, and CEO of Rappler, Maria Ressa.

For McCann, the Jubilee of Communication is important because telling stories brings people together. "The shortest distance between any people is a story," McCann explains, "so our ability to tell our story and our ability to listen to somebody else's story is actually paramount to who we are and how we continue."

Listen to Colum McCann discuss the role social media plays in communication

He describes how bringing people from all walks of life and backgrounds to this Jubilee event is a great example of how people do not have to share the same beliefs to share stories. It is "the ability to understand somebody else's story" that is "fundamental to notions of democracy and belonging," he notes.

Influencers and journalists have a role in communication

Ressa agrees with McCann's analysis of democracy and communication. She explains the reason she wanted to participate in this jubilee event is that at the center of everything is "to talk to real people in a shared reality with values that we hold dear."

Maria Resa speaks on the role of influencers and journalists in communication

In an ever-growing technology-driven world, Ressa argues both social media influencers and media professionals have a role to play in being sources of communication. Journalists, she adds, should "operate under standards and ethics"; whereas influencers are good at translation or repackaging information for different audiences.



Pilgrims making the journey to the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (Vatican Media)



The Jubilee of the World of Communication kicks off in Rome

Cardinal welcomes landmark agreement between UK Muslim and Jewish denominational leaders

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Bishops' Conference, has welcomed an historic accord signed by senior Muslim and Jewish denominational leaders in the UK, which marks a defining moment in interfaith relations.

The agreement, The Drumlanrig Accord, was presented to His Majesty The King at Buckingham Palace, on Tuesday, 11 February.

The Accord sets out a new framework for engagement, built on mutual respect, dialogue, and practical collaboration. It champions the principle of disagreeing agreeably, ensuring that differences do not lead to division but instead foster deeper understanding. It is a call to action committing both communities to working together on practical initiatives that support the most vulnerable, tackling societal inequities such as discrimination, isolation, and poverty.

Cardinal Nichols said:

"I welcome this initiative by Muslim and Jewish leaders to work together for the common good. In my experience, developing friendships and close relationships between faith leaders is an essential part of encouraging social cohesion and good interfaith relationships more widely in this country.

"I look forward to continued collaboration with all leaders to ensure faith continues to play an integral role in a healthy society."

This is a non-political initiative that represents a deep and enduring commitment from the UK's Jewish and Muslim communities to strengthen



relationships, promote understanding, and work together for the common good.

The Accord is the outcome of a year-long series of high-level meetings convened by Imam Dr Sayed Razawi, culminating in a private retreat from 14-16 January at Drumlanrig Castle in Scotland hosted by the Duke of Buccleuch. For the first time in UK history, senior representatives from eleven major Muslim and Jewish denominations gathered to shape a future founded on shared values, reconciliation, and social responsibility.

The signatories of the Accord are:

- Muslim Leaders**
Chief Imam Dr Sayed Razawi
Shia
Senior Imam Qari Asim MBE
Sunni, Barelwi
Imam Sheikh Muhammad Ismail DL
Sunni, Deobandi
Head Imam Dr Sheikh Khalifa Ezzat
Sunni
Naushad Jivraj
President of His Highness the Aga Khan National Council for the UK, represented by Aliya Nasser
His Excellency Kinana Jamaluddin Bhai Sahib
Ismaili, Bohra

- Jewish Leaders**
Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE
Senior Rabbi Josh Levy
Reform Judaism
Senior Rabi Jonathan Wittenberg OBE
Masort
Senior Rabi Charley Baginsky
Liberal Judaism
Senior Rabi Moshe Rubin
Orthodox
Senior Rabi Joseph Dweck
S&P Sephardi

The Faith is good for your family: Some evidence and encouragement

CWR

Most Americans do indeed care about their children’s spiritual development, but there is still a thread in modern society that is hostile to “imposing” your faith.

Research consistently shows that religion is good for you and your children. The importance of passing on the faith to your children may not be a controversial point to readers of a Catholic website, but parents may be encouraged to know that the evidence broadly supports Catholic parenting. While the data is compelling, our obligation to pass on the faith is based on research.

As discussed below, the Bible explicitly admonishes us to raise our children in the faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is emphatic about our duties: “Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children.” (paragraph 2225; emphasis original). The positive outcomes associated with successful evangelizing our own children are well documented.

Professor Christian Smith undertook the National Study of Youth and Religion, surveying a large group of young people multiple times over several years, and spawning a number of books and academic articles. When Smith examined Catholics aged 18 to 23, in his 2014 book *Young Catholic America*, he details how practicing Catholics were more likely to be physically healthy and more likely to be happy.

Professor Kendra Creasy Dean’s 2010 book *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* also uses some of that study data to conclude:

While religious youth do not avoid problem behaviors and relationships, those who participate in religious communities are more likely to do well in school, have positive relationships with their families, have a positive outlook on life, wear their seatbelts—the list goes on, enumerating an array of outcomes

that parents pray for. Mormon researchers have reached similar conclusions. Other researchers note that: A substantial body of literature exists in the social and behavioral sciences on associations between religion, spirituality, and well-being in adulthood. Depending upon the types of measures of religiosity and spirituality utilized and the outcomes assessed, results with adults support low but significant positive associations between religiosity and components of well-being, including substance abuse, mental health, physical health, and general life satisfaction.

Stephen Cranney, a lecturer at The Catholic University of America and a data scientist puts it simply: “Religion is almost always associated with being happier.” Cranney notes that we know actually know a lot about “whether religious or non religious people are happier” from the perspective of “statistics and empirical evidence.”

When analyzing hundreds of “articles on the relationship between health and measures” of religion and health or happiness, the overwhelming majority of studies show that religious people are happier. In reviewing data from 25 countries, Professor Ryan Burge found a link between being religious and self-reported well being, particularly among religious folks in the United States.

Popular writers, or famous ones like now Vice-President J.D. Vance also refer to this kind of research. While media stereotypes may portray people of faith as miserable, the evidence shows the opposite.

Of course, the evidence that passing on the faith leads to good outcomes is not the reason I teach the faith to my children. I raise them as Catholics because I believe that is the truth. I find nothing in the Bible or in our tradition that recommends that kids should make up their own mind about faith.

In Deuteronomy, for example, just after the famous Shema (Hear, O Israel) verse, the Israelites



are instructed that “these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” (Deut 6:4-7.)

Psalms 78 rejects hiding the faith from one’s children and instead encourages parents to “tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.” God “commanded our fathers to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. . . .” (Psa 78:4-7).

This thinking is not limited to the Old Testament. Saint Paul exhorts fathers to bring their children “up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph

6:4.) Most Americans do indeed care about their children’s spiritual development, but there is still a thread in modern society that is hostile to “imposing” your faith. Now and then you encounter people, sometimes even smart people, making the claim that parents should not push their religion on their kids.

This modern idea of letting your kids pick their religion is not a part of our faith, where the Bible and the Catechism make it our responsibility to raise our children up in the faith. It is also an unhealthy approach. You would not feel like you are manipulating your children if you serve them bagels instead of frosted brownies for breakfast; you should not feel bad in giving them the faith.

The world might disagree, but the world is wrong.

Global agencies call for renewed partnership in fight against FGM

On the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), humanitarian organizations have encouraged collaboration from all stakeholders in the fight against FGM to safeguard women and girls from the harmful practice.
By Sr. Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, FSSA

For centuries, several communities in various parts of the world have practiced Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a cultural, religious practice or ritualistic tradition, which humanitarian organizations have opposed as a human rights violation that causes severe physical, emotional, and psychological harm to girls and women.

In a co-signed statement, the UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, marked annually on February 6, stressed the need to strengthen alliances to accelerate change.

“This requires strengthened partnerships among leaders, grassroots organizations, and across sectors of health, education and social protection, as well as sustained advocacy and the expansion of social movements with girls and survivors at the centre,” the statement read.

Leadership of the global agencies also highlighted that, in order to successfully end FGM, it is essential to strengthen accountability at all levels, ensuring that human rights commitments are upheld.

Policies and strategies must be also effectively implemented to safeguard at-risk girls and offer necessary support for survivors, including access to justice.

We all have a role to play
Each person in society can contribute to a world

where every girl and woman is free from harm and has the right to make choices about their bodies, according to the UN agencies.

In this case, the 2025 International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM encourages each individual to play his or her role to ensure “that every girl is protected and can live free from any kind of suffering.”

Saying it is time “to step up and act urgently to end FGM,” the agencies noted that some countries, such as Gambia, have attempted “to repeal the ban on female genital mutilation persist, even after an initial proposal to do so was rejected by Parliament last year.”

“These efforts could seriously undermine the rights, health and dignity of future generations of girls and women, jeopardizing the tireless work done over decades to change attitudes and mobilize communities,” read the co-signed statement.

Glimmer of hope
Since the launch of the Joint UNFPA-UNICEF Programme in partnership with WHO on the Elimination of FGM in 2008, nearly 7 million girls and women have accessed prevention and protection services. Additionally, 48 million people have publicly declared their intention to abandon the practice, and 220 million people have been reached by the media on this issue.

In their Thursday statement, the officials note that “there is hope as many countries have seen a decline in the prevalence of female genital mutilation.”

Continued collaboration
Motivated by the 2025 international event themed, “Stepping up the pace: Strengthening alliances and building movements to end female genital mutilation,” the UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO reaffirm their commitment to work together with



Former excisor holding a tool for performing the procedure of FGM (ANSA)

countries and communities to end this harmful practice, once and for all.

They note that over the past two years, nearly 12,000 grassroots organizations and 112,000 community and frontline workers have mobilized to achieve change at this critical juncture.

Nonetheless, even though FGM continues to be performed in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and

Asia, “efforts to eliminate it have increased globally due to its recognized violations of human rights and harmful health consequences.”

The global agencies appreciated the generosity of donors and partners who support the life-changing work and called on more people to join efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation.

Source: Vatican

OBITUARIES

SHREWSBURY DIOCESE Peggy Logan LEEDS DIOCESE Brenda Raynor Rosemary Simpson Christine Ripley Maureen McGuigan	President of Sacred Heart and St Peters Foundation, Baguley St Benedicts Foundation Garforth St Benedicts Foundation Garforth St Benedicts Foundation Garforth St Ignatius Foundation, Ossett	SOUTHWARK ARCHDIOCESE Eileen Kinsella SALFORD DIOCESE Eileen Glenholme MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE Doreen Smith Anne Pitman	Sutton Foundation Guardian Angels Foundation Filey Foundation St Aelred's Foundation
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Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord

Your memories linger, Your smile that cared , Your listening ear Your goodness shared. In God's deepest love. In God's gentlest care This is my prayer.

Marriage is the key foundation for a happy, healthy society

CBCEW

Ahead of National Marriage Week, celebrated from 7-14 February, Bishop Bosco MacDonald has said that marriage is a vital building block for a flourishing society.

In a message for the week, Bishop MacDonald, the Lead Bishop for Marriage and Family Life, said we should all be working towards a society that values marriage.

"We can offer our contribution towards a culture that respects and values marriage, knowing that it's the foundation for a happy and healthy society," he said. "National Marriage Week is a time for all of us to think about this special sacrament and how it can change lives. It's a chance for married couples to strengthen their bond by being kind to each other, talking openly, and sharing experiences.

"And for all of us, as we celebrate the beauty of marriage this week, let's make sure that we support and encourage couples in their journey."

In December 2024, UK charity Marriage Foundation found that just over half of all Gen Z men and women, 57%, will ever marry (those born in 1997 or afterwards). This is why we must speak up for marriage and uphold the theme of the week – 'Hope in Marriage'.

Bishop MacDonald said that in a time of division, happy and functioning marriages can be an encouraging sign of God's love:

"As we mark National Marriage Week 2025, these resources aim to help us to think about the huge importance of marriage in our lives and society.

"In a world that can be confusing and divided, hope shines brightly especially in this Jubilee Year. And the hope of marriage is that it becomes a source of stability and happiness, showing us the endless love that God has for all of us."

Bishop MacDonald explained what makes a Christian marriage special, and why it is much more than just a 'legal agreement':

"For Christians, marriage isn't just a legal agreement, it's a special promise between husband and wife, like the covenant between God and humanity.

"And God's promises are always fruitful. Pope Benedict XVI once said, 'Marriage is a way to save ourselves and our society', because marriage is a source of hope, strength, and new beginnings for everyone involved."



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CONVENT OF OUR LADY OF FIDELITY

1 Our Lady's Close, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3FA Telephone 07760 297001

Nottingham nun speaks at United Nations

Source: Diocese of Nottingham

Last week in Geneva, Sister Liz Dodd CSJP, a young sister of St Joseph of Peace, whose order was founded in and continues to minister in the Diocese of Nottingham, addressed the United Nations on the issue of migration and the ministry she undertakes with her sisters in the City of Nottingham.

Her intervention formed part of a panel discussion which preceded the UN premiere of the award-winning film Cabrini at the Palais des Nations.

Addressing an audience of some 450 people, Sister Liz took the opportunity to highlight the witness of her Sisters and said: "I am not the 'Cabrini' in my home; my two sisters are. Both nearing 90, with health conditions, they are the first ones to say 'yes' to a guest; yes to the disruption, the change, and the challenge.

"They have been in religious life for a long time, and I think they have learned that saying yes- to the things that scare us or make us uncomfortable- is usually saying yes to God."

The film focuses on Cabrini's arrival in New York City in 1889, where she is greeted by disease, crime and impoverished children.

Mandated by Pope Leo XIII to tend to the needs of these children, she tried to convince the hostile mayor to secure housing, education and housing for society's most vulnerable. With broken English and poor health, Cabrini used her entrepreneurial mind to build an empire of hope.

Sister Liz's intervention not only showcased the important work of her Congregation in the diocese and city of Nottingham but was also showed that Cabrini is not just a historical figure in the life of the Church but that Catholic women are still choosing to follow Christ in a similar way.

Sister Liz also shared about her Congregation's 'House of Hospitality' in Nottingham and her life and ministry in this house alongside two other Sisters,

asylum seekers, refugees and young homeless women.

The Sisters, she said, welcome women with "no recourse to public funds", which means that they do not have settled status, as well as women who are appealing a decision about their asylum claim.

She spoke of her own desire to still "be saying yes" to God when she is 90 years old. Sister Liz then concluded her remarks by challenging those gathered with these words:

"I have a hope for today, a prayer, maybe. Many of you here in this room have the power to say yes and no; in the Church and in the world. My hope is that this film would inspire you to say yes- to God and to God, particularly in the poor- and to keep saying yes."

Whilst set nearly one hundred years ago, the film touched on many issues relevant to multilateral Geneva and to the Church today, including human dignity, human rights, migration, health, equality of women and education.

During the panel discussion themes and remarks were given by a number of people including the lead actress Cristiana Dell'Anna, the Director General of the United Nations Office, Geneva and HE Archbishop Ettore Balestrero, the Holy See's representative to the UN.



This film premiere and panel discussion was organised by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations and supported by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See within the cultural framework of the work of the United Nations.

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The Union of Catholic Mothers 78th Annual Walsingham Pilgrimage

Monday 30th June & Tuesday 1st JULY 2025


Led by the Diocese of WESTMINSTER

Diocese:		No. of Pilgrims badges @ £5 each:		No. of pilgrims for the Sacrament for the Sick:		TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:	
Foundation Name:							
No. of Cars:	No. of Coaches	No of Mini Buses		Organiser's Name:			
Tel. No. of Coach Company [Inc. Area code]				Address:			
No. of Pilgrims proposing to take part in the Monday Evening Service		Do you require a map with directions to the Shrine		YES/NO		Post Code:	
No. of Deacons or Acolytes who wish to participate		No. of Priests who wish to concelebrate				Tel No: Email:	
Signed				Date:			
<p>Bookings cut-off date is Friday 16th May 2025</p> <p>Fees for Priests/Deacons: <i>Please remember that the Foundation/Diocese is responsible for paying and booking your Priests/Deacons. It is important that you indicate their number when making your bookings as facilities for them have to be made at the Shrine.</i></p>				<p>All Bookings to be sent ASAP to:</p> <p>Mrs Sam Canning 156 Chartridge Lane Chesham Bucks HP5 2SE Tel: 07824386804 Email: ucmwsctreasurer@gmail.com</p> <p>Please include a SAE of adequate size and postage.</p>			

Booking Form: All Cheques should be made payable to: "The U.C.M. Walsingham Sub-committee"

Monday 30TH June
SERVICE OF LIGHT
8pm
In Chapel of Reconciliation followed by the TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

Tuesday 1st July
MASS 12 Noon



Concelebrated Mass with Bishop Alan Williams, Westminster Auxiliary Bishop Paul McAleenan and Diocesan Priests.

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