

Diocese of
Shrewsbury
Ad Clerum

2022/11 June





Dear Fathers and Deacons,

A SUMMER FAREWELL TO THE SACRED HEART FATHERS

On Sunday 26th June the Sacred Heart Fathers announced they will be leaving the parish apostolate at Saint Joseph's, Stockport after almost 40 years. The parish was entrusted to the Sacred Heart Fathers by Bishop Joseph Gray in October 1983. On 1st September this year Saint Joseph's will return to the care of the Diocesan Clergy. I will be writing to the people of Saint Joseph's next Sunday concerning the future of this much-loved church of our Diocese.

I am sure we will all understand the decision made by the Provincial Council and know it is never easy to make these choices with a declining number of priests. I know you would wish to record with me our gratitude to Father Jim Matthews SCJ, Father Blaise Nsangou SCJ and all the members of the Congregation who have served the parish with great devotion across the past four decades.

I hope we will have the opportunity to give thanks to God with the community for all their work and witness. We have known a long association with the Sacred Heart Fathers in the work of the Diocese and hope this connection may continue through availability for supply support in our parishes.

LAUNCH OF THE DIOCESAN SCHOOLS SINGING PROGRAMME

I have written previously of this initiative to be opened to the children and young people of the Diocese. The launch has been long delayed by the uncertainties and restrictions of the pandemic. However, I am delighted that Jon Barton, who has done such excellent work at the Cathedral and is well-known in many of our parishes, has now been appointed Diocesan Director of Music with special responsibility for delivering the *Diocesan Schools Singing Programme*. The initiative is supported by a generous grant and the aim is for the programme to become self-funding within the first five years.

This programme has proved an effective way to engage young people in the life and liturgy of the Church and to reinforce the connection between Catholic Schools and Parishes. Many of you will be aware that the programme has been running for some years in the Diocese of Leeds. It is my hope that the programme will be as effective in our own Diocese.

Jon will begin working with children in our Primary Schools. This will involve initially 10 to 20 of our schools in

one geographical area of the Diocese and will eventually encompass all our primary schools as additional choral directors are recruited. Sessions will involve support for the National Curriculum with a mix of sacred and secular music. As the scheme unfolds a number of after-school choirs will be formed for which children will be encouraged to audition. These choirs will be able to contribute to liturgical music in the parishes and at diocesan celebrations.

I have been impressed by the accounts of how this initiative has helped to deepen and strengthen the Catholic faith and commitment of young people. Parents and teachers have also told of the considerable benefits this choral initiative has brought not least in areas of social deprivation to the confidence, engagement and academic attainment of young people. I ask you to support and encourage this *Diocesan Schools Singing Initiative* and pray that similar fruits will eventually be seen in our own Shrewsbury Diocese.

CLERGY

FATHER PAUL HUGHES R.I.P

Anthony Timothy kindly circulated the funeral arrangements for Father Paul Hughes:

Reception and Vigil Mass at Saint James, Hattersley on Thursday 30th June at 7.00 pm

Requiem Mass at Saint Mary's, Duckinfield on Friday 1st July at 11.45 am followed by the interment at Duckinfield Cemetery.

Please bring an alb and a purple stole if you wish to concelebrate. Refreshments will be served following the Requiem Mass at Oaklands Hall, Beech View, Hyde SK14 3DE.

CLERGY WILLS

We are asked to ensure that a copy of your current will is held at the Curial Office. Also, you may wish to consider if your own Will needs updating, particularly if there has been a change in circumstances such as death of beneficiaries or executors or indeed changes to your own circumstances.

BURIAL PLOTS

It has come to light that in years gone by parishes have purchased burial plots in local cemeteries for Parish Priests, or former Parish Priests. We are trying to collate a list of such plots in the event of either clergy deaths or burial



requests by those making or updating their wills. If your parish has such a plot (or plots) please send the details to Carol Lawrence for recording. If you would prefer the Diocese to hold the deeds rather than retaining them in the parish, please forward them to Pauline McCulloch for safe keeping.

DIOCESE

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

We will be returning to Lourdes at the end of next month for the first Diocesan Pilgrimage since 2019. Thank you for your promotion of the pilgrimage following the uncertainties with which this year began. I am conscious there has been a very limited time to prepare and publicise the pilgrimage this summer. The re-start of this great, annual tradition will inevitably be much reduced in numbers. However, I was pleased to hear from Father David Long that people have responded from across the Diocese and would be grateful if you could remind parishioners of this opportunity as the time for final bookings approaches.

FOLLOWING THE DIOCESAN LISTENING PHASE

Since the completion of the Diocesan Listening Phase, a national synthesis of diocesan reports has been brought together. The bishops will be meeting this week to reflect on our shared discernment to be offered to the continental phase of this process eventually leading to the October 2023 Synod of Bishops in Rome.

SHROPSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Shropshire Historic Churches Trust was able to make a grant to Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Newport earlier this year. It was the first grant they had made to a Catholic church since their foundation. I have been told they would look favourably on any application for a grant for work on our church buildings. If any of the Shropshire parishes have a project suitable for such a grant application, then please contact the Curial Offices.

HYMN BOOKS AVAILABLE

Our Lady & Saint Christopher's, Romiley has a number of hymn books: "Liturgical Hymns Old & New" to donate to any parish happy to receive them. The hymn books are used but in sound condition. If interested, please contact the parish at stchris52@gmail.com

FINALLY ...

On Thursday, it was good to see so many clergy and people come together at Bromborough for the Requiem Mass for Monsignor Chris Lightbound. We remembered his love and service of the Diocese and his fascination with its past which led him to write on many historical subjects from the conversion of the Wirral Vikings to the Recusant Missal of Lyme Hall. However, in an article he sent me that had been published at the turn of the century in *Priests and People* he looked to the future ending with these words about priestly vocations: *"We wring our hands over the lack of priestly vocations. Are we presenting too respectable an image of the priesthood? I believe that there are many generous young people 'out there' who would respond more readily to a call to radical self-sacrifice in imitation of the Master. Their contemporaries are lost without Christ. Will they come to their aid? They need to hear this kindly but challenging voice: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow me."* Chris's reflection reminded me of a similar point made in Father Stephen Rossetti's book *"The Joy of the Priesthood"* published some years later where Father Rossetti writes: *"Priesthood is difficult. Ironically, we might actually have more vocations to the priesthood if our young people realised how challenging this life really is ... Young people want a life of meaning and challenge. Priesthood, when lived with integrity, is such a life."*

It is a good custom of the Diocese to print the prayer for new vocations in the Mass booklet at each Requiem Mass. As so many devoted priests of our Diocese go before us, let us renew this prayer and whenever possible offer the Votive Mass for Vocations to Holy Orders especially on Fridays. From this wellspring of prayer and intercession the grace and encouragement will surely be found for many to respond generously to this call.

United with you in this prayer,

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury