

Diocese of Shrewsbury *Ad Clerum*

2022/06 March





Dear Fathers and Deacons,

WAR IN EUROPE

I write as tragic events continue to unfold on our continent. These events have become an urgent invitation to prayer for the peace of the world and for care of the victims of this brutal conflict. I must apologise for not being able to communicate sooner the information below received on Friday afternoon and over the course of the weekend.

CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Pope Francis has announced his intention to consecrate Russia and the Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Friday, the Solemnity of the Annunciation. "The Holy Father intends to invite each Bishop, or the equivalent ecclesiastical superior, together with his priests, to join in this act of Consecration, if possible, simultaneously at 5.00pm Rome time, 4.00pm London time." The Pope is asking all the bishops of the world to join him in this consecration and requests that all priests associate themselves with this prayerful act. Many of you will remember participating in a similar act of entrustment by Pope Saint John Paul II on 25th March 1984. In the Diocese, I propose the following:

Friday 25th March – the Solemnity of the Annunciation

In the parishes may I ask you to make this Act of Consecration at the end of Mass on Friday and also invite you to make a special visit to church at either 4.00pm or 5.00pm (whether alone or with parishioners) to renew this consecration with the prayer of the Rosary, the prayer of Mary's heart. I will forward to you the text of Pope Francis's prayer as soon as it is received.

At 4.00pm in Rome Pope Francis's Act of Consecration will be broadcast worldwide by Mondovisione. I will privately make the consecration in union with the Holy Father.

At 5.00pm in Shrewsbury I will publicly make this same Act of Consecration in the Cathedral to be livestreamed on the internet followed by Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration.

Sunday 27th March following the Consecration – A Pastoral Letter

I will send a Pastoral Letter for this coming Sunday to mark the Act of Consecration in which we have all shared.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSECRATION

The Holy Father's initiative stands in continuity with that of his predecessors in modern times beginning with Pope Pius XII who twice made this consecration during the dark days of the Second World War in October and December 1942; and renewed this consecration amid the deadly tensions of the Cold War in July 1952 declaring "As some years ago we consecrated the whole human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, so today we consecrate and we dedicate in a very special manner all the peoples of Russia to this Immaculate Heart ..." Pope Saint Paul VI renewed this same consecration with all the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in November 1964 with this prayer, "We entrust the whole human race to your Immaculate Heart. Deliver mankind from the scourges deserved for its sins, grant peace to all the world ..." Pope Saint John Paul II renewed the consecration at Fatima on 13th May 1982 praying "From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war deliver us Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies ..." A



consecration which was renewed collegially and universally with all the bishops of the world on 25th March 1984 just a few years before the almost entirely peaceful fall of the Iron Curtain.

I have received many letters in recent days regarding our response to the invitation of Our Lady at Fatima and so it might be helpful to remind ourselves of this historical background and how Pope Francis is acting in continuity.

It might also be good to remember that this consecration flows from the Gospel message of prayer, conversion and renewed Eucharistic love received by the children of Fatima from the maternal heart of Mary at the end of the Universal Novena for Peace in 1917.

Saint John Paul II located our understanding of this act of consecration in the entrustment made on Calvary when Jesus said "Woman, behold your son" (Jn. 19:26). He explained "In a new way He opened his Mother's Heart, the Immaculate Heart, and revealed to it the new dimensions and extent of the love to which she was called in the Holy Spirit by the power of the sacrifice of the Cross." We are called to accept Our Lady's help whose heart was opened beneath the Cross to love for every human being and "to offer ourselves and the whole of humanity to Him who is holy, infinitely holy." So, Pope John Paul II explained, "Consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means drawing near, through the Mother's intercession, to the very Fountain of life that sprang from Golgotha. This fountain pours forth unceasingly redemption and grace. In it, reparation is made continually for the sins of the world."

THE BISHOPS OF ENGLAND AND WALES – A CALL TO PRAYER FOR THE UKRAINE

The Bishops of England and Wales have agreed to insert an intercession for peace during the Intercessions in the Solemn Liturgy of the

Passion on Good Friday this year. I will send the text of this prayer to the parishes as soon as it is published.

The bishops also invite every parish to set aside a dedicated time of prayer for peace during the Sacred Triduum in spiritual solidarity with all those who suffer as a result of war or violence. It is suggested that this might take place during the Solemn Watching on Holy Thursday night or on the evening of Good Friday when it might be appropriate to gather in prayer around the Cross reflecting on the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

We are presently witnessing a refugee crisis in Europe greater than any seen since the Second World War. Caritas International, represented by CAFOD in our own country, is active in the provision of aid in the countries now receiving this vast and tragic exodus. I know there has already been a tremendous response from our own parishes to the appeals being co-ordinated by the Emergencies Committee. I am also grateful for the generous offers of help and various suggestions received this past week as the UK begins its response to the humanitarian challenge of housing refugees.

I appreciate the frustration and impatience of many of my correspondents who see little happening in practical terms. I only hope what appears to be the slowness of the UK's response might arise from a desire to care for the refugees and the considerable needs of those who will eventually come to us following the trauma and upheaval of war.

Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury with its experience of working with refugees from Syria and Afghanistan is in conversation with the Catholic Social Action Network as to how we can most effectively respond in the weeks and months ahead. Individuals who are already



offering to host refugee families through the Government's matching and homesforukraine scheme are advised to link with an organisation with refugee experience. The CSAN Ukraine Toolkit is being continuously updated and this is the link: <https://www.csan.org.uk/ukraine/>

CARITAS SHREWSBURY – THE GOOD SHEPHERD APPEAL

The Director of Caritas, Ben Gilchrist writes:

“Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury are requesting help in promotion the Good Shepherd Appeal this Lent:

<https://www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk/get-involved/good-shepherd-collection/>

Caritas would greatly value any ways you can share this information with local schools to gather support for the appeal. They ask those interested to email trish.spencer@caritasshrewsbury.org.uk for more information and to let Caritas know how they can assist with fundraising activities.”

This appeal has special importance as we seek to respond as a Diocese to the growing refugee crisis.

COMPLETION OF THE DIOCESAN LISTENING PHASE FOR THE SYNOD

The Diocesan “Listening Phase” will come to its conclusion in the next couple of weeks. A team of lay people led by Barbara Davies are presently preparing a synthesis of all the written contributions that have been received from the parishes, organisations and individuals. I hope to receive this synthesis at the beginning of next week in order to present my discernment at the Cathedral on Sunday 3rd April at 3.00pm. This will be offered in the context of a Liturgy of the Word and followed by Eucharistic Adoration

and the Evening Prayer of the Church which will be livestreamed from the Cathedral.

The diocesan synthesis together with my discernment will then be sent to the parishes in electronic form in readiness for Palm Sunday 10th April, to be made available to all those who have participated in the process.

The synodal pathway will then move to its national, continental and eventually international stages. Cardinal Grech and Archbishop Lazzaro You Heung Sik have written a reflection on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph to the clergy of the world which can be found in English translation via this link: https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2022-03-19_priests/220083_Lettera-ai-Sacerdoti-INGLESE.pdf

We will await further information and details as to whether there will be further reflection with the Working Document for the Synod in the autumn.

VISIT TO THE DIOCESE OF THE RELICS OF SAINT BERNADETTE OF LOURDES – 13th/14th September 2022

I am very happy to be able to confirm the dates and venues for the visit of the relics of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes. The relics will be welcomed by the Diocese at the Cathedral on Tuesday 13th September at 1.00pm and then travel to Saint Werburgh's, Chester on the morning of Wednesday 14th September to be received at 10.00am and depart from Chester the same afternoon.

I will look forward to sharing with you further details of this historic visit of the relics of a Saint who is well-known and loved in this Shrewsbury Diocese.

I hope this can be a time of special prayer for the recovery of our parishes and communities and



for all those who suffered ill-health or the effects of isolation during the pandemic.

CLERGY

MONSIGNOR DAVID CHARTERS

Monsignor David Charters has completed his service at the United Nations in New York and is spending some time on leave with me in Shrewsbury before receiving his next appointment in the service of the Holy See.

Please remember David in your prayers and the work he undertakes as a priest of this Diocese for the Holy Father and the Universal Church.

CHANGE OF CONTACT DETAILS

Fr John Britto has a new email address: drjbritto@gmail.com

PACT MASSES

02/22 Rev David John Lloyd	
Died 22/01/22	(Birmingham)
03/22 Monsignor John Heslin	
Died 08/02/22	(Birmingham)
04/22 Rev David Craig	
Died 11/02/22	(Shrewsbury)

FINALLY ...

I have received a letter from the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, Sir Warren Smith, regarding plans to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June of this year. The Lord-Lieutenant expresses his hope that this national celebration will be an occasion to bring communities together and especially include the isolated and lonely. He also expresses his hope that every parish might be able to organise a celebration in June which will include the whole of the local

community. The Lord-Lieutenant tells us that June is to be designated as a "Month of Community." I share these details with you as the Jubilee holiday and celebrations on 2nd and 5th June are now only three months away. I am sure parishes will be giving thought as to how we can contribute and share in this national celebration and thanks for the life-long sense of Christian duty and service which has marked the 70 years of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

In the meantime, I will be united with you on Friday in the entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and as we enter the final weeks of Lent in readiness for Holy Week and Easter.

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury