

Diocese of
Shrewsbury
Ad Clerum

2024/01 January





Dear Fathers and Deacons,

FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS

We are grateful to Cardinal Fernandez, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, for further clarifications regarding the Dicastery's declaration *Fiducia supplicans*. The Cardinal explains what he had in mind: "These blessings lasting a few seconds, without an approved ritual and without a book of blessings" should never take place in "a prominent place within a sacred building, or in front of an altar ..." If a couple approach together to seek blessing, "one simply asks the Lord for peace, health and other good things ... at the same time, one asks that they may live the Gospel of Christ in full fidelity and so that the Holy Spirit can free these two people from everything that does not correspond to his divine will and from everything that requires purification." The blessing, "with the simplicity and brevity of its form does not intend to justify anything that is not morally acceptable" (Press Release on the reception of *Fiducia supplicans* 4th January 2024).

The Cardinal's request that the Dicastery's declaration not be considered "heretical, contrary to the Tradition of the Church or blasphemous" indicates the level of controversy in recent weeks. I have received correspondence over Christmas from concerned members of the Diocese some sadly with an angry tone. My main concern is of course to dispel confusion among the faithful already living in confusing times. It seems strange the controversy surrounds a question I have never encountered in my pastoral experience and has been quickly seized upon (as newspaper headlines bore witness) by those who have an agenda to challenge or change the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Local bishops are now being asked to exercise discernment and prudence regarding blessings.

An early reflection came from Bishop Erik Varden of Trondheim. Some of you will remember Bishop Varden as the Abbot of Mount Saint Bernard. I was struck by the calm and supernatural perspective which you may find helpful <https://coramfratribus.com/archive/on-fiducia-supplicans/>

I am sure in our own context we can proceed with serenity in our pastoral practice, faithful to what the dicastery indicates with its recent reflections and in the *Responsa* of 15th March 2021, both confirmed by the Holy Father, that we cannot bless sin or a sinful state of life, but we always bless the sinner (including you and I) where there is a right disposition to seek God's grace and salvation. In our context blessings are invariably offered individually and with the sign of the Cross simply made. We see blessings offered in this way at Holy Communion or in the distribution of the blessed ashes at the beginning of Lent or more generally at Benediction. The wider controversy apart, I cannot foresee this practice leading to confusion or misleading souls.

FREEMASONRY: A WARNING

Cardinal Fernandez has also signed a document reaffirming Catholic teaching on Freemasonry and membership of Masonic Lodges (13th November 2023). It is a question which occasionally arises in the Diocese, perhaps not requiring the recommended catechesis in all our parishes "regarding the reasons for the irreconcilability between the Catholic Faith and Freemasonry," yet, it is helpful to be reminded that it is forbidden for any of the faithful to engage in Freemasonry as it is incompatible with being a Catholic Christian.



CLERGY

FATHER PAUL LOMAS R.I. P

Following the death of Father Paul Lomas on 22nd December 2023, I have written with the funeral arrangements which have been made to receive his mortal remains into Christ Church, Heald Green on Thursday 1st February with a Vigil Mass at 7.00 pm and for his Requiem Mass to be celebrated at Christ Church on Friday 2nd February at 12 noon. If you wish to concelebrate, please bring an alb and a purple stole. Please also keep Paul and his family in your prayers. May he rest in peace.

CANON PHILIP MOOR VG

Canon Phil Moor was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Arrowe Park Hospital a week ago and remains seriously ill. However, I am very happy to report we have seen signs of progress in the past few days including Phil being taken off the respirator. Please continue to pray very much for his recovery and remember his mother, family and parishioners at this anxious time.

We can be thankful for the care Canon Phil is receiving at Arrowe Park in the face of multiple health problems and the support of the prayers of so many across the Diocese. I will keep you updated on Phil's progress.

LENT 2024

I am conscious Lent begins in less than four weeks' time and there are three dates to note:

LENTEN CLERGY DAY OF RECOLLECTION

The Clergy Day of Recollection will be at Wistaston Hall on Shrove Tuesday 13th February and led by Father Anthony Chantry, National

Director of Missio. A letter of invitation and booking form from Canon Michael Gannon VG will be sent by email in the coming days.

MISSION AT SAINT JOSEPH'S STOCKPORT AND AFTERNOON FOR CLERGY

Our Diocesan Eucharistic Shrine at Saint Joseph's, Stockport has a Parish Mission from 4th to 6th March, with Sister Briege McKenna, well-known to many of you through the *Intercession for Priests Retreat* together with Father Pablo Escriva De Romani (poster attached if you wish to publicise this event).

The Mission will focus on reconciliation, prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist as the source and summit of our faith. A special afternoon for priests and deacons as part of the year of prayer, has been organised following the very happy gathering for the Eucharistic Hour with the Apostolic Nuncio. This will take place on **Tuesday 5th March from 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm** and will consist of a time of Eucharistic Adoration, a talk by Sister Briege McKenna, followed by tea and coffee in the Parish Hall. Sister Briege will be happy to pray with members of the clergy and to receive particular prayer intentions. Parking in the school car park is very limited (as this will be in term time) but there are plenty of parking options in Stockport Town Centre.

MASS OF THE SACRED CHRISM

We look forward to coming together in Holy Week for the celebration of the Chrism Mass. This year the Mass will be celebrated on Wednesday 27th March at Saint Michael & All Angels, Woodchurch at 7.00 pm.

Deans are asked to collect the sets of Holy Oils for distribution to their parishes from the sacristy half an hour after Mass. If any Dean has yet to



return their Deanery box to Canon Christopher Matthews, please can they do so at the next Council of Priests meeting.

DIOCESAN JUBILARIANS 2024

The Jubilarians' Celebration and Chapter Mass will take place at the Cathedral on the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, Friday 24th May 2024 at 12 noon. Invitations will be sent nearer the time. Congratulations to all our Jubilarians:

Diamond

14 June 1964 - Fr Denis Maher

Golden

8 June 1974 - Fr Martin Riley

9 June 1974 - Fr Peter Phillip

13 July 1974 - Fr John Joyce

Ruby

7 July 1984 - Fr Michael Hartley

14 July 1984 - Fr Peter Dutton

28 Sept 1984 - Fr David Long

Silver

11 July 1999 - Fr Iain Griffiths

DIocese

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CATECHESIS AND PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

From Mrs Jane Deegan:

❖ Marriage Week runs from February 7th to 14th 2024. A *Loving 4 Life* Marriage Enrichment Retreat for couples has been organised by the Mission for Marriage Team to take place over the weekend in the middle of Marriage Week from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon on

February 9th to 11th, at Wistaston Hall in Crewe. The flyer has already been sent to parishes and is also attached for your convenience. Please do encourage couples to book. Booking can be done either online via the website www.loving4life.co.uk or by contacting Jane Deegan. Contact details below.

The Bishops' Conference Marriage and Family Life Team have also produced a booklet for couples for Marriage Week (which the Shrewsbury Diocese were invited to contribute to). The Mission for Marriage Team will have this printed and distributed to parishes shortly. A copy is attached and will also be available to download from the Shrewsbury Diocese website.

- ❖ The Betrothed Marriage Preparation Course which runs over two consecutive Saturdays, will take place on the 2nd and 9th of March 2024 at Westleigh, St Vincent de Paul Parish Hall, in Altrincham. Couples can still book to attend (flyer attached).
- ❖ For the Year of Prayer called for by Pope Francis in Preparation of the Jubilee Year, the Mission for Evangelisation and Catechesis Team have already run two Retreat Days on prayer, one in Wallasey and one in Romiley. The third one has been organised for the Chester LPA for the 3rd of February 2024 (flyer attached). If any other parish would like the team to run a Retreat Day in their parish, please contact Jane Deegan.
- ❖ The *Prayer and Life Workshops*, which is a service to the Church as a work of evangelisation, is coming to the Diocese. The Workshops were devised by Fr Ignacio Larranaga, a Spanish Capuchin priest and they are led by trained prayer facilitators. It has reached all five continents and is to be



piloted in Shrewsbury Cathedral Pariah Room, with a taster session taking place on Saturday January 13th from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. The workshops will then run for fifteen weeks thereafter with the final session being a full day retreat. Participants will learn and practice a variety of ways of praying; become more familiar with the Word of God, as a source of a living dialogue with the Lord; be challenged to live like Christ, seeking to do as the Lord would do in their place and become more fully the living presence of Christ. A second pilot is planned to take place at St Albans's parish in Macclesfield later in the year.

- Also for the Year of Prayer, the Bishops' Conference Team for Evangelisation and Catechesis, have produced a resource (with the help of the Southwark Diocese Team) on the *Our Father* to be used in parishes, for small groups run by Catechists or the Parish Priest during Lent. It is a well-produced resource, and this has already been made available electronically to be printed/published by each diocese/parish as they see fit.

For bookings and further information, please contact Jane Deegan:

jane.deegan@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

Mobile: 07517 906435.

OTHER COURSES AND EVENTS

THE LORETO CENTRE

The Loreto Spirituality Centre in Llandudno is a Catholic retreat centre run by the IBVM/Loreto Sisters, who follow the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Three flyers will be sent to you separately. For all information see: www.loretocentre.org.uk or contact: loretocentre@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 01492 878031

PACT MASSES

18/23 Died 22/12	Rev Father Paul Lomas (Shrewsbury)
19/23 Died 16/12	Rev Father John Lungley (Birmingham)
20/23 Died 20/23	Rev Father Christopher Greaney (Birmingham)
01/24 Died 09/01	Rev Father Alexander Brown (Birmingham)

ENDNOTE

I hope you were able to find some restful days after the Christmas celebrations. By mid-January preparations are well underway for the celebration of Lent in our parishes and in preparation for the events discussed in the deaneries to mark this year of prayer to which Pope Francis has called us. I hope the events detailed in the Ad Clerum will also be of encouragement and assistance in this preparation.

May the new year 2024 be a year of prayerful renewal in all our lives and communities.

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury

Enc.

- *Catechesis & Marriage:*
 - *Loving 4 Life flyer*
 - *Marriage Week Booklet*
 - *Betrothed flyer*
 - *Retreat Day on Prayer*
 - *Prayer and Life Workshops flyer*