

Diocese of
Shrewsbury
Ad Clerum

2024/11 October





Dear Fathers and Deacons,

ENCYCLICAL LETTER FROM THE HOLY FATHER

Today with special joy we have received the fourth Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis's pontificate *Dilexit Nos* – "He has loved us" on the human and divine love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Holy Father describes his letter as bringing together precious reflections of previous magisterial texts and a long history that goes back to the Sacred Scriptures to re-propose to the whole Church, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pope Francis has written this Encyclical Letter amid the 350th anniversary celebrations of the apparitions to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.

I was asked to write an introduction for the Bishops Conference website and this can be accessed by this link: [Bishop Mark Davies on Dilexit nos - Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)

ASSISTED DYING BILL

The Bill tabled by Kim Leadbeater MP to remove legal safeguards to allow medically assisted suicide has been introduced into Parliament and is expected to be debated and voted upon in principle at Second Reading on **Friday 29th November**. It looks as if this day in November will be a crucial point of decision for our parliamentary representatives, conscious that only nine years ago the House of Commons overwhelmingly rejected a similar proposal due to the dangers posed to some of the most vulnerable members of society.

Please continue to encourage parishioners to contact their Member of Parliament to make their opposition known. I have been grateful to clergy and laity who have shared with me the responses from around the Diocese. It seems that some of our MPs are undecided in the face of this historic decision, so it is even more urgent that constituents put the argument for life and the protection of the vulnerable in a calm and reasoned way.

Regrettably the timetable allows many of our new Members of Parliament little time to reflect on the moral question and the vast societal change which this legislation would bring about.

It is significant that among the voices raised in warning now includes the Editorial Leader of 'The Times' newspaper on 17th October 2024 in an article titled 'Pandora's Box':

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/3e1c545d-95ec-405e-a1e9-9da94afadd69>

It is reported the Health Secretary has changed his mind and warned Labour MP's that the palliative care system is not able to support assisted dying.

This decision, however, rests not with government ministers but with backbench MP's, many of whom are in their first months in the House of Commons. We are told a significant number are or remain undecided hence the importance of speaking now before it is too late.

EUCCHARISTIC HOLY HOUR FOR LIFE ON WEDNESDAY 13th NOVEMBER

During the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of England and Wales there will be a **Eucharistic Holy Hour** to pray and intercede that the dignity of the human person and the culture of life be upheld in the face of the assisted suicide legislation being brought before Parliament.

The Bishops Conference begins each morning with Eucharistic Adoration but this additional, dedicated hour of prayer will take place at 5.30pm on Wednesday 13th November 2024.

Cardinal Nichols invites every diocese and parish to be united with the bishops in this powerful prayer of intercession on the same evening of Wednesday 13th November. I would ask you, wherever it is possible, to have a period of Eucharistic Adoration on this day of November and to encourage the faithful to be united in this prayer.



CLERGY

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF

Father Denis Maher ordained on 14th June 1964

who died on the evening of Thursday 17th October at Tameside Hospital.

Monsignor Peter Walton ordained on 4th June 1961

who died on the afternoon of Monday 21st October at Lighthouse Lodge Nursing home in New Brighton.

Please remember Denis and Peter in the Mass and in your prayers. May they rest in peace.

My office will be writing with the funeral arrangements very shortly.

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

I am grateful to *Father Mathew Thomas CMI* who has accepted my invitation to serve as Parochial Administrator of Holy Angels, Hale Barns; and to our Judicial Vicar and Chancellor, *Father Tom Cunnah VJ*, who will be enabled to serve full time during the year ahead in the Diocesan Tribunal and Chancery. The appointments take effect from the first Sunday of November.

RECENTLY ORDAINED CLERGY

Last Tuesday, the recently ordained priests of the Diocese joined me at the Cathedral for the first day of the 2024/2025 programme.

SEMINARIANS

I was happy to visit our seminarians at Saint Mary's College, Oscott in parallel with a bishops meeting. Adam Bamber and Joseph Fawcett Wood are making their ordination retreat as I write, in anticipation of being ordained Deacons before Christmas. They will be the first to be part of the extended formation proposed by Pope Francis by

returning to the Diocese at Christmas for a period before ordination to the Priesthood.

DISCERNERS

At the beginning of next month, we will have four men in residential discernment at Saint Joseph's, Stockport and the Cathedral and a Vocations Group with up to ten men regularly meeting under the direction of Father Tony McGrath at Saint Teresa's Wilmslow.

Please keep all our recently ordained priests, our ten seminarians and all our discerners in your prayers. It has without doubt, been a source of many graces that you have been able to offer one Mass each week for the intention of new and generous vocations to the Priesthood in our Shrewsbury Diocese.

LECTIONARIES NEW AND OLD

CTS are distributing the new Lectionaries to parishes ready for the Season of Advent 2024 when they will become the only permitted Lectionary in England and Wales for the ordinary form of the Roman Rite.

At the recent meeting of Deans, I was asked about the most appropriate way to dispose of the Lectionaries which go out of use at the end of next month. One route would be through the *Guardians of Creation* project in Salford Diocese, who have been asked to help with the environmental disposal of the old lectionary books. They have been in discussion with various environmental initiatives to look at ways of collecting the JB Lectionaries and greenly disposing of them.

It is hoped that this work can begin in January/February 2025 with central collection points being established across the Diocese. I will circulate the details of this scheme when more information becomes available.



DIOCESE

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF THE CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral will be closed from 4th to 8th November to allow the completion of the repair and restoration work to the floor of the Cathedral. We hope the present phase of works will all be complete by the beginning of Advent.

PETER'S PENCE

I have received a letter from the Apostolic Nunciature thanking the Diocese for a donation of £5,281.39 towards the Peter's Pence collection, in support of Pope Francis in his evangelising and charitable mission.

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES 2025

For forward planning and notifying parishioners, the 2025 Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes will be 25th July to 31st July (by air); 24th July to 1st August (overland) and the Youth Pilgrimage will be from 23rd July to 1st August.

The 2025 Pilgrimage will be launched officially on Saturday 7th December, when more information will be sent directly to parishes.

MIDDLE EAST HUMANITARIAN APPEAL ~ CAFOD

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) have launched an emergency appeal in response to the worsening crisis that we see in the Holy Land. CAFOD is a member of the DEC. Thanks to the support of the Catholic Community here in England and Wales, they have already been supporting partners providing essential and life-saving responses to the huge need in Gaza to many thousands of people over the last year and have been able to allocate £60,000 out of core funds to Lebanon partners to support their immediate response.

Due to the proximity to Harvest Family Fast Day and World Mission Sunday, support for this appeal is not a small ask, but if you would like to promote the appeal in your parishes, you will find all the information and a donation form here:

<https://cafod.org.uk/give/donate-to-emergencies/middle-east-humanitarian-appeal>

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2025

The Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity has produced, alongside and together with the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025.

The theme for next year is: *Do you believe this* (John 11:26), and resources specific for England and Wales will be available and circulated in the autumn. The week will be celebrated between Saturday 18th and Saturday 25th January 2025.

OTHER EVENTS

A PILGRIM WAY

I recently received a message from Doctor Phil McCarthy (formerly the National Director of Caritas) who has completed and published 'The Shrewsbury Way', a pilgrim walk from Shrewsbury Cathedral to the Shrine Church of Saints Peter & Paul and Saint Philomena, New Brighton. He writes:

'The route includes stretches along towpaths with easy access for people pushing buggies or with limited mobility. The section along the Sandstone Trail is as beautiful as any in England and the last part through the Wirral is rich in Catholic history and includes a fascinating walk through Port Sunlight.'

Details of the 'Way' including maps can be found here: <https://www.pilgrimways.org.uk/st-philomena-s-way-is-ready-to-walk>



BUCKFAST ABBEY GUIDED RETREATS 2025

Buckfast Abbey are delighted to announce their Group Guided Retreats for 2025.

'We are delighted to offer this coming year both a retreat for priests and a retreat for religious sisters, details of which can be found here':

<https://www.buckfast.org.uk/retreats/>

PUBLICATIONS

JUBILEE COMPANION BOOKLET 2025

Alive Publishing have been working closely with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales's Jubilee Committee on a *Jubilee Companion Booklet 2025*.

This booklet is only available as a print edition and will help pilgrims ponder and pray, focusing on the great themes of the Holy Year. It has numerous articles on the Jubilee, prayers and hymns and highlights the Jubilee Icon.

For more information visit:
<https://alivepublishing.co.uk/>

Tel: 01782 745600

PACT MASSES

07/24 *Rev Father Denis Maher*
Died 17/10 (Shrewsbury)

08/24 *Rev Monsignor Peter Walton*
Died 21/10 (Shrewsbury)

ENDNOTE

I will be travelling to Valladolid on the day of the decisive vote in Parliament on 29th November to lead a retreat for the men from England, Wales, Ireland and Scandinavia engaging in the propaedeutic year.

I will also have an opportunity to accompany the seminarians on a day pilgrimage to Avila on the last day of the retreat to ask the prayers of Saint Teresa for our Diocese, for vocations and especially to give thanks for

our Carmelite Monastery of the Annunciation dedicated to prayer for priests and for all sinners.

I hope to have the traditional Pastoral Letter with you for the First Sunday of Advent which the calendar reminds us, is now only five weeks away.

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury

Enc.

- *Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis's pontificate Dilexit Nos – "He has loved us" on the human and divine love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*