

PARISH OF OUR LADY IMMACULATE, WHITSTABLE CT5 2EY
with St. Joseph's, Chestfield CT5 3LD

www.rcourladywhitstable.org.uk



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Notices for the Bulletin:	To be submitted please by 7.30 pm on Wednesday	

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME: (Yr A) Mass Book page 133

8th February 2026

<p>SATURDAY: 7th Feb: Confessions: 11.30am to 12noon; 5.15pm to 5.45pm 6.00 pm: Marion Clegg, RIP (C Ahern)</p> <p>SUNDAY: 8th Feb: 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Victims of Trafficking</i> 8.30 am: All Our Parishioners 10.30 am: Private Intention (J Brown) <i>Refreshments after 10.30am Mass</i></p> <p>TUESDAY: 10th Feb: St Scholastica 9.30 am: Holy Souls (Fr White) <i>Change of Mass time as Canon Philip at Deanery Meeting</i></p> <p>WEDNESDAY: 11th Feb: <i>Our Lady of Lourdes</i> <i>World Day of the Sick</i> 12.30 pm: Funeral Mass: Ann Bryson, RIP</p>	<p>THURSDAY: 12th Feb: 10.00 am: Marian Ahern, RIP (P & A McCabe) <i>Followed by Adoration and Benediction</i></p> <p>FRIDAY: 13th Feb: 10.00 am: Sid Russell, RIP (C Russell)</p> <p>SATURDAY: 14th Feb: St Cyril & St Methodius Confessions: 5.15pm to 5.45pm; <u>no morning session</u> 6.00 pm: Yvonne Regan, RIP (P Regan)</p> <p>SUNDAY: 15th Feb: 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Day of Prayer for the Unemployed</i> 8.30 am: All Our Parishioners 10.30 am: Christopher McDonnell, RIP (E Bates) <i>Refreshments after 10.30am Mass</i></p>
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DAY OF PRAYER for Victims of Human Trafficking. Trafficking is a sin against human dignity, especially when people are physically, sexually and financially abused. Let us pray that politicians and people with responsibility will be inspired to act, and put a stop against this form of exploitation.

LENT: We begin Lent in about a week and a half, a time of renewal and turning back towards God. Ash Wednesday falls on 18th February, a day of fasting & abstinence; there will be Mass at 10am & 7pm, during which ashes will be blessed and distributed. This Holy Season is a time when we are invited by the Gospel of Ash Wednesday to give to the needy, spend more time in prayer, and take opportunities for fasting. Lent focuses our mind on the great offering of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the ideal time to reflect on what we each take on or sacrifice as our personal Lent devotion. There will be early morning Mass at 7am on most Fridays of Lent starting 20th Feb. There will be an opportunity for 'Stations of the Cross', details next week as 4 pm Sunday is not practical this year. There will be a daily email of a Lent Reflection, prepared by the Southwark Spirituality Commission; visit www.southwarkdsc.org.uk to subscribe.

Wishing you, your families & friends, a blessed week ahead. Canon Philip

WORLD DAY OF THE SICK is this Wednesday, held on annually on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. As we pray for all who are unwell throughout the world, we remember family & friends who are sick and pray for those who are on our Parish Sick List. The Papal reflection for 2026 contemplates "*The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing another's pain*", reminding us that we have a "...shared mission of caring for the sick" Pope Leo writes: "Let us raise our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, asking her to assist all who suffer and are in need of compassion, consolation and a listening ear." If you would like to receive the Sacrament of the Sick, please get in touch with Canon Philip via the Parish Office.

POPE LEO'S FEBRUARY PRAYER INTENTION: that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

CALLED TO BEAR FRUIT (C2BF): *Reflecting the 15 C2BF “action points”*. AP4: **“Give clarity about what mission looks like today”**. We are called by the Lord Jesus to be Missionary Disciples. However, it is quite important that, as a parish community, we have a shared understanding about what we mean when we talk about *“mission”*. Using the term Missionary can make us think of courageous people heading overseas to spread the Gospel to other nations; this is comfortable... because it is then up to someone else to do. *“Mission”* is the task of all Christians, taking a form that is unique to each person. Christ asks us to listen to Him and allow Him to use our gifts, talents, treasures, yes even our very selves, to allow His Gospel to spread. Let us ask the Lord Jesus to give our parish clarity about what mission looks for us like today in Whitstable.

DAY OF PRAY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED (next weekend). Let us keep those we know who are seeking employment in prayer in a special way and, where possible, support them in their journey to find work.

CLERGY SUPPORT FUND: *‘Do not reject me in my old age, nor desert me when my strength is falling’*.

Clergy have been there for us supporting parishes, dioceses and the global Catholic Church with pastoral care. In 2025, our Archdiocese of Southwark had to fund the care of 79 retired and sick priests, at a cost of £1.4 million. The diocese works closely with the NHS & local councils to fund any shortfall amount in care. Next week there will be second collection for the Clergy Support Fund. There are envelopes at the back of the church which can be used for gift aided. Parish Gift-aiders can use the pink envelopes in your box.



SUNDAY BREAKFAST AFTER 8.30 am Mass: For your diary: Come and join us for a social gathering with warm croissants and a nice cup of tea / coffee with the parish community on **22nd February & 12th April**. The breakfast is held during school holidays (when hall is free) so it would be nice to see many join us.

HCPT QUIZ NIGHT: Saturday 7th March at St Mary’s School Hall, 7pm for a 7.30 pm start. Fun quiz to raise money for the charity HCPT, which takes disabled and disadvantage children to Lourdes for Easter week. Tables of 8 (bring your own nibbles and drinks) £5 per person. You are all very welcome to join if quizzing is your thing! Raffle and a bit of fun to be had. Contact Colette if you would like to book a table or place and come along. Mobile: 07766665522 or Email: thornsfamily@tiscali.co.uk

CHILDREN’S LITURGY: an opportunity for young children to participate in the Children’s Liturgy during the 10.30am Mass, led by Theresa Rowstone, this Sunday 8th February, and then 22nd February.

ANNIVERSARIES: Please remember in your prayers those whose anniversaries occur about this time: Ethel Davis Alberto Farrugia, Bela Boda-Novy, Ursula Dadd, John Mioran, Luigi Penighetti, Fr Cyril Williams, Sacha Wheeler, Owen Dunne, Andrew Waller, Ron Sherman, “Chess” Cooper, June Allen, Margaret Kemp, Reginald Longman, Ernest Anderson, Dora Mara, Eileen Stacey, Walter Wilson, Grace Cozens, Dot Rose, Elizabetha Roberts, Alison Ashby, “Ena” Everett, “Gay” Swarn, Helena Willoughby, Jack McDonald, Margaret Keating, Agnes Ross, James Connolly, William Highman, Nell Breslin & Bert Rhodes

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, & let perpetual light shine upon them; may they rest in peace. Amen.

SICK: Your prayers are asked for: Claire Christie, Duncan Forrester, Suzie Fowler, Katherine Harris, Amanda Maclean, Diarmuid O’Sullivan, Oscar O’Sullivan, Dominic Punch, Pauline Summers, David Rose, Nicholas Watson, Margaret Webb, Leah Sheehan, Roman Sheehan, Colin Henson, Catherine Richardson, Reita Mugford, Jack Murphy, Gillian & David Black, Teresa Way, Nigel Bates, James Shepherd, Tina Bezer, Margaret Morgan, Gillian Lampard, Neil Lawson, Pamela Bavington-Brown, Shelia Slater, Les Hill, Graham Hill, Paul Regan, Terry & Ellie Kemp, Julliete Beaumont, Karenza Craven, Dave Chambers, Nora Vaz, Jennifer Austin, Collette MacDonald, May Dengate, Rose Link, Shirley Mayhew, and Patrick MacNally. We pray for all who are sick or in hospital, their carers and all staff.

<i>Collections</i>	<i>Gift Aid</i>	<i>Non-gift aid</i>	<i>Total</i>
31 st January & 1 st February	£218.20	£223.30	£441.50
Racial Justice Sunday – 2 nd Collection		£206.73	£206.73
Standing Order and other regular giving: Weekly average for December 2025*	£381.38	£18.46	£399.84

Thank you for your continued support of our parish.

Next week: second collection for the Diocesan ‘Clergy Support Fund’.

*This is the calculated ‘weekly equivalent’ of contributions received direct to the Parish account from parishioners for December.

ONLINE NEWSLETTER EXTRA...

Some items that we receive or find won't fit on two sides of A4 but we can still share them with you here on the e-edition of the newsletter on the website. This can be information we have been asked to share, but that may not be of immediate import to the parish; it might be interesting information, or it may be items that can be useful to look up. Additionally, some items can be repeated.

NEW TO THE PARISH? If you have moved to the parish since 2019 (when the last parish census took place) please let us know via email. We can email our 'new parishioner form' and add you onto our parish database; information provided only used for Church purposes.

Weekly Parish Email: Canon Philip sends an email each week to let parishioners know the Newsletter is on the website. If you would like to be added to the list please email whitstable@rcaos.org.uk

PARISH WEBSITE: Thank you to the several offers of help with getting a revamp of the website ready. If anyone else could like to join in the process please do let Canon Philip know – especially if you have an eye for design. More heads can lead to more opportunities for inspiration!

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION 2026: The sessions started in January. Please pray for the children who have been enrolled and their parents. May they grow in the knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ ready to receive this Holy Sacrament in June.

HEALTH & SAFETY: There is a vacancy for a Health & Safety Representative volunteer for the parish. Please speak to Canon Philip if you, or someone you know, could help the parish, especially someone with experience in the area of Health and Safety. A couple of offers gratefully received... perhaps a small team?

BANNERS FOR LENT: If you have art or craft skills our Parish Banner group are meeting Thursdays in the hall 2-4 pm. *"Please join us if you can help"*. Susan Eatock. Can't make Thursdays? Contact the Office, as you might want to join in by 'working from home'; details of the banner project can be provided.

CAMINO WALK FOR SVP: As mentioned last week, Joan Foley, a parishioner, is undertaking the Camino walk (the Portuguese coastal route) as part of a UK SVP fundraising project. Her target is £1,500 to be raised by May. ALL donations go to the work of SVP, 50% going direct to local SVP group. To sponsor visit: www.justgiving.com/page/joan-foley-4; a sponsorship form will soon also be available at the back of church. *"Thanks in advance"*, Joan.

"Save the Date" make a note in your diary or on your calendar:

- **SUNDAY BREAKFAST after 8.30 am Mass:** 22nd February and 12th April. Come and join us for a social gathering with warm croissants and a nice cup of tea / coffee. The breakfast is held during school holidays (when hall is free) so it would be nice to see many join us.
- **Bank Holiday Monday walk - 4th May – Seasalter Marshes:** Join the parish for a walk along the seafront towards the Seasalter Marshes. Starting from The Sportsman, Faversham Road at 11am heading towards the Marshes. Have a lunch break around 12 noon and then head back.
- **Bring and Share – Hot Food. Sunday 5th July 12 noon to 2 pm:** Enjoy tasty home cooked hot food from fellow parishioners on a Sunday afternoon. All welcome to join us. Details to follow.
- **Parish Dedication Volunteer Day: Saturday 5th September 2 to 4 pm.** An afternoon tea hosted by Canon Philip to thank volunteers for the support they give the parish.
- **Parish Quiz Night: Saturday 26th September 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm.** An evening of fun enjoying quiz & raffle. Tickets £10; more details to follow
- **Bank Holiday walk or cycle - 31st August- Clowes Wood.** Join us for a circular walk/cycle in this ancient mixed woodland. Starting from Clowes Wood car park at 11am heading towards the picnic spot, have a break and then head back to the car park.
- **Christmas Fayre: Saturday 28th November 10 am to 1 pm.** Various Christmas themed stalls for you to browse and pick up some very good bargains for Christmas presents.

PARISH EVENTS GROUP: Next meeting this Wednesday, 8th April 6pm to 7pm. We need more volunteers to help coordinate various parish events. Please come to the hall. Thank you. *Bernadette*

FIRST FRIDAY ROSARY: Pupils from St Mary's School will lead the rosary on Friday 6th March at 9.30am. The prayers are offered particularly for the children and staff of the school, & their families.

THANK YOU: “Warmest thanks to everyone who donated to, or volunteered for, the SVP recently; the retiring collection raised £312.16. Both the Christmas lunch & hamper deliveries were great success, and were enjoyed by all. We delivered 30 generous size hampers to local beneficiaries. The fresh food that we bought with donations, the Harvest festival donations & the gifts donated by St Mary’s School all helped to make Christmas special for so many local families. *Thank you for your continuing support.*” SVP Whitstable

WEDNESDAY TEA CLUB: meet most Wednesdays (*September to July*) 2pm to 4pm in the church hall. £1 entry gets you a raffle ticket, refreshments and cakes, plus frequent bingo, games, music, and lots more!!!!

CHURCH CLEANING: A number of our volunteers have had to hang up their dusters, as they are unable to continue with church cleaning; *thank you for all you have done for our community!* Now is the time for new volunteers: Your Parish needs **YOU!** If you are able to spare an hour to clean sometime during the week or on a Saturday morning please email the Parish Office. There is a rota & you will be paired with someone else.

CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS PROJECT FOR PARISHES & SCHOOLS LAUNCHES:

Ambassadors for Christ is a year-long video series aimed at building witnesses for Jesus and His Church. As the number of people joining the Catholic Church in England and Wales [continues to rise](#), the Archdiocese of Southwark has launched a landmark apologetics project to provide evidence-based answers to the burning questions of both new and practicing Catholics. The project, named “*Ambassadors for Christ*”, is the first of its kind in a Catholic diocese in England and Wales and is designed to equip the faithful with a deeper understanding of their faith. While the journey to faith of each person is unique, they often grapple with similar questions and doubts, and find themselves searching for answers. As more people become interested in the faith, practicing Catholics are experiencing more questions from their family, friends, and colleagues but often remain unsure where to look for evidence-based answers. These can range from fundamental questions like “Is Jesus really God?” or “How do we know God is real?” to more practical questions about the Catholic faith, such as “Why do Catholics make the Sign of the Cross?” or “What is happening during Mass?”. This project aims to not only help people find answers to their burning questions, but also to provide a reliable resource that can be relied upon when teaching about the Catholic faith. The project will consist of 52 videos, posted every Monday on YouTube in 2026. To provide assurances for the viewer that the information is from a trusted source, each video will feature a Catholic priest. To ensure doctrinal accuracy, each script draws from a foundation of Scripture, primary Church Father documents, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and official papal and Church teachings. All have been robustly checked by expert theologians prior to publication. The video format has been chosen to respond to reality that young people increasingly turn to social media for answers, including matters of faith.

Each video will follow a similar format:

- **Objection/Question:** It begins with a common objection, question, or myth
- **Scripture:** The issue is first looked at through Scripture, drawing on solid biblical teaching
- **Church Fathers:** To provide a historical understanding and demonstrate the Church’s link to the apostles, each video will then draw on the teaching of the Church Fathers
- **Church Teaching:** The final part of the video will highlight Church teaching on the subject, drawing on papal and Church documents, as well as quotes from Saints.

To find out more about this project at rcaos.org.uk/AmbassadorsforChrist.

“PARISH MASS BOOKS”: There is an opportunity to arrange a prayer ‘dedication’ in a copy of the Parish Mass books while also donating towards their cost, enabling prayer for our families, departed family or friends. Forms for dedications & donations are available, from the back of the church.

Volunteers welcome for roles in the parish...

Canon Philip writes: I am sure many of you help in many different ways of outreach; may God bless you for all that you do! However, it would be wonderful to see even more parishioners getting involved in various parish ministries and activities. There are so many things that happen to keep the Parish flourishing, and we need volunteers (existing **and new**) to keep everything going. Rather than give a long list here, there is a sheet (in church) listing (most) of the various roles, ministries & tasks of our volunteers.

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts.

Use them well to serve one another” 1 Peter 4:10.

Volunteer roles include:

READING AT MASS: If you would like to join the teams of readers at our weekend Masses, speak to Canon Philip and also contact the parish office via whitstable@rcaos.org.uk

CHURCH FLOWERS: Our teams of arrangers help us by looking after church flowers on a rota about once a month. Thank you for all you do! We are looking for new volunteers to join the rota – help and direction provided, no experience required. Also, the parish needs help with collecting flowers (twice a week) from the Whitstable High Street branch of Sainsbury's; a group willing to make a rota would be ideal; let us know!

BIDDING PRAYER Writers: Volunteers kindly help by writing bidding prayers for weekend Masses. Some new members have joined the rota and so the workload is now spread out further, but we would still be very grateful if more people would join the rota. Please contact the office if you are interested (guidance given).

ALTAR SERVERS: Our altar servers assist during Mass and at other liturgies. It is a role open to young & old, normally after making First Holy Communion. Altar Servers help prepare the church before Mass, have particular tasks during Mass, and finally assist with clearing the altar afterwards. If you would like to join in please speak to Canon Philip.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION: They assist by helping to distribute the Sacred Host or the Precious Blood. This will often be during Mass but may also be taking Holy Communion to those in the wider parish community who are housebound due to health, age or disability. If you know a parishioner who might be able help with this work (or if you might like to offer) please let Canon Philip know. There is preparation, first in the parish (including safeguarding clearance) and commissioning at the Cathedral.

CHURCH CLEANING: With so many people coming to Mass each weekend, plus visitors praying during the week, it is important for the church to be spruced up each week. Volunteers give time, an hour or two, once every four weeks to help with the church cleaning. Thank you to all involved in keeping the church so smart. Could you spare some time to help & join the rota? Volunteers are usually paired up with someone else.

SUNDAY TEA & COFFEE: Volunteers help to 'host', (on a rota basis) the T&C's after 10.30am Mass. If you are interested in helping or want to know more, contact Sarah Hinchliffe after Sunday 10.30 Mass, or by email sarahhinchliffe1610@gmail.com, or phone 07788 671213. Additionally, a different group of volunteers arrange an "occasional breakfast" after the 8.30am Mass; they too would welcome any offers of help – contact the Parish Office.

Items from past newsletters

MISSION 'RED BOXES': In England and Wales, Missio & the Mill Hill Missionaries work together through the Red Box partnership. For over 80 years now the 'Red Box' has been a symbol of faith, hope and love in people's homes. The income from the Red Box is shared 60/40 between Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries. Missio supports faith communities in dioceses where the Church is still young or poor overseas. The Mill Hill Missionaries' share supports formation and training of its future missionaries. In England & Wales there are Red Boxes in over 200,000 homes; together we have collected millions of pounds for the missionary Church. Do you remember a 'Red Box' in your home? Do you still have one? Canon Philip would like to reenergise in our parish this way of helping the missions. On World Mission Sunday, please pray that we may be inspired to help pray for those missions evangelising overseas and to support them financially. Many parishes have a 'red box coordinator' – would you be willing to do this for our parish?

GIFT AID: If you a UK Tax payer and are able to 'Gift Aid' donations, please let us know as for every £1 donated, the parish can claim 25p at no extra cost to the donor. Standing orders can be gift aided. If you need help or more information email: whitstablegac@rcaos.org.uk or the parish office.

LISTENING TO THE READINGS AT MASS: When we read or listen to the bible it is almost always in a translation – unless you are gifted enough to understand Hebrew, Aramaic and ancient Greek! We rely on the gifts and talents of translators and scholars to bring us a more widely understood text. It was been decided by our Bishops that the 'translation' we listen to during Mass would change and we will use a new version of the Lectionary (the book used to read from in Mass). This started on the 1st December 2024, the First Sunday of Advent. The Parish has received its ordered copies of the books to be used in the Sanctuary by the Readers and Clergy. Described as "*Exquisitely bound... adorned with gold-blocking, gilded edges and multiple ribbon markers, these [4] volumes are both sturdy & worthy for the proclamation of the Word of God.*" Additionally, the "Parish Mass Book" we use has been replaced. In our parish we deferred replacement of these books at the end of 2010 when the Mass prayers changed, presumably anticipating the future change of the Lectionary, and so Advent was the time to replace these books. Other options exist but, although having a significant up-front cost, the weekend 'Parish Mass Book' seem to be more environmentally friendly and financially cost effective over the long term. (updated 15th Nov '25)

ORDINATIONS, of parishioners or people associated with Whitstable: Fr Chris Benynon, a priest of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton (retired), visited the parish as he is an ‘old boy’ of the parish. In the course of a conversation he was asked how many priests had come from the parish, and he thought, including himself, about fifteen. This is an impressive number and Canon Philip would like to draw a list up of all Ordinations with connections to Whitstable. If you can supplement the list below please get in touch:

Bishop Michael Evans,	Fr Hatchard (<i>Christian name?</i>)	Fr John Slater
Mgr Pat Wall,	Fr Bruce Keller,	Deacon Dan Mulcahy
Fr Chris Benynon,	Fr Anthony Pile	<i>also:</i> Fr Richard Calcutt MHM
Fr Tim Forbes-Turner,	Fr Jack Pledger,	<i>whose mother lived in the parish.</i>
Fr Barry Grant,	Fr Maurice Pledger,	<i>possibly also:</i> Fr Tony Hughes?

ANNUAL MASS COUNT: Thank you to all who helped with during the 4 weeks of the official Mass count, and also for the work of counting during the Summer. The figures show an average of 209 attending Mass this year, slightly smaller than the 216 average in 2024.

Date	6pm	8.30am	10.30am	Total	Date	6pm	8.30am	10.30am	Total
20/21 Sept	52	52	116	220	4/5 Oct	48	38	114	200
27/28 Sept	49	48	110	207	11/12 Oct	44	58	108	210

CATHOLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: One of the early ‘missions’ the Church in this country engaged in, when Catholicism began to re-establish, was the provision of education to young people, often supported by Religious Sisters and Brothers; in our Parish the Mercy Sisters. As the State began to make more provision for education, the Church worked in partnership: State funding was provided and the Church maintained influence through its involvement in school governance. This is still the case today. The Archbishop is able to appoint Governors to Diocesan schools, and has the right to maintain a majority of ‘Foundation Governors’. He can only do this if parishioners are willing to volunteer their time for this highly important role. Our own local Catholic School, St Mary’s, has vacancies for appointments to its Local Governance Committee (LGC), as does the Ursuline College in Westgate. Would you be willing to aid the Archbishop, the Parish, the Schools, and especially the pupils by being a member of a LGC? Governors meet usually six times a year, make a few formal visits to the school each year and endeavour to keep abreast of the life of the School community. Their role is strategic – not day to day management of the School (the role of the Headteacher) – and one that has been described as being a “critical friend” to the school, with a particular focus on maintaining & developing the Catholic life and ethos. Is this something you could help with? Speak to Canon Philip in the first instance.

VOCATIONS TO THE DIACONATE: Is God calling you to become a Deacon? If you are considering a vocation to serve at the altar & profess God’s gospel ministry as a Deacon, visit rcaos.org.uk/TheDiaconate. Let us pray for all Deacons and those in formation.

Long Term Parish Items – for information

A LEGACY IN YOUR WILL: If you are kind enough to be considering making a legacy donation through your will to the parish please contact Canon Philip or the Parish Office. The Parish community is very grateful and acknowledges such kind donations which can help develop the Parish, assist with its running and support the practice of our Catholic Faith for future generations. *Thank you*

BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE: The Parish has a Book of Remembrance in the church, found in the display case in the St Mary’s Transept. If you would like names of your loved ones displayed in it then please complete our parish form, available at the back of the church, or contact the parish office for a form. These are gathered and the book updated by a parish volunteer from time to time.

REQUESTING MASS FOR A PARTICULAR INTENTION: A laudable Catholic custom is to have a Mass said for a specific intention. All Masses, of course, are offered to the glory of God and for the salvation of the whole world, but often there is also a specific intention; here in the Parish the intentions are usually printed in the newsletter. Anyone may request a Mass to be said for their particular intention and these can be offered for a variety of intentions. We often see Masses offered for the welfare of an individual or family, or for the repose of a soul. It is customary, when requesting a Mass, to make an offering as a way of being especially associated with that Mass. However, it is not necessary to make an offering. The suggested donation is £10; some give less, some give more, some give nothing. Please never feel that you cannot have a Mass said for your intentions due to lack of funds. A Mass costs nothing – except, of course, the life-saving death and resurrection of Jesus. Mass Intention envelopes and forms are available by the entrance of the church.

PARISHIONERS IN HOSPITAL: It is important to let Canon Philip and the Parish know if you or any parishioner is admitted to Hospital, or due for a stay in hospital. Due to Data Protection rules most hospitals will not pass on information about religious practice... sometimes even to an official chaplain. If you would like a visit from a priest in hospital you need to specifically ask the staff to arrange this for you. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to receive the Sacrament of the Sick before going into hospital. Please get in touch if you would like to receive this Sacrament, often appropriate before significant surgery.

SAFEGUARDING: *The Diocesan Safeguarding Team include the following in every email they send:*

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger. It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. If you are in any role within the Catholic Church in England and Wales, you must refer allegations directly to the safeguarding office for your diocese or religious congregation, or directly to the Police. If you are a member of the public, please refer allegations directly to the police and also to the safeguarding office in your diocese. You can contact the Southwark Safeguarding Office by phone 020 7261 1606 or email safeguardingoffice@rcaos.org.uk

CALLED TO BEAR FRUIT: The consultation that the Archbishop commissioned in 2025 has had a response published. The Archdiocese gives thanks to thousands of people who took part: *“We are grateful to you all for sharing so openly your hopes for the life of the Church in our Archdiocese.”* The response, which includes 15 actions points for renewal, is available at rcaos.org.uk/calledtobearfruit and a small number of hardcopies have been sent to the parish. *“The consultation revealed a burning desire within our parishes to be missionary and evangelising disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who work together to help people encounter His love. So, as we move forward on the next steps together, let’s build up the Body of Christ in Southwark with faith and confidence, becoming ever more a community of missionary disciples filled with joy and hope for the future. As an Archdiocese, we will continue to discern the process of renewal, and further updates will be provided in due course.”*

The ‘Consultation Response’ is a step on a journey, not an end in itself. It is a document for the Parish as well as for the Diocese; a ‘gift’ (and a challenge) from the Lord Jesus to each of us, not only to me as Parish Priest. I would ask you to read this with an open heart and an open mind, to talk about it in the family and with other parishioners... and to share that which the Holy Spirit inspires you, with me and others.

Over the coming weeks I will try and include one of the ‘action points’ in the newsletter, so that we can join with others in the Diocese in reflecting.

CALLED TO BEAR FRUIT (C2BF) – Consultation Report: Report in 60 seconds

Thousands of parishioners across the Archdiocese took part in the Called to Bear Fruit consultation, offering honest, hopeful and practical reflections on the life and mission of our Church in Southwark. People spoke with gratitude for their parish communities, where welcome, prayer and sacramental preparation are often sources of real strength, while also expressing a desire for deeper formation and ongoing opportunities to grow in faith. It is clear there is a profound love of the Lord Jesus in our parishes, along with a burning desire to lead people to him. That is why it was so heartening to see a strong recognition that evangelisation is central to parish life, though many asked for clarity and practical tools to help move from words to action.

Youth emerged as the most urgent priority, with a widespread call to invest in engaging and supporting young people at the heart of our mission. Across the board, parishioners highlighted the real need for collaboration - with neighbouring parishes, with clergy and among volunteers - as well as the need to value and invite new people to share their gifts. Looking ahead, people acknowledged the reality of fewer priests, but also expressed confidence that laity and clergy together can take up the challenge of renewal. The consultation revealed a Church that cares deeply for its future, ready to grow in faith, hope and love, and eager to continue to build vibrant parish communities that witness joyfully to the Gospel.

15 action points have been identified from the themes. Canon Philip intends weekly (where possible) to include one of them in the newsletter during the early part of 2026. The list of the points has been added in below. As they are published any extra thoughts will be added in... plus a summary of any feedback.

1. **Celebrate existing signs of growth**

11/01/26

There is hope in and for the Church, including our Parish. Locally we thank God for recent (Dec 2025) Confirmation of 18 young people and the baptism of two adults. Let me know other things we can celebrate, and how we might share the news.

2. **Provide a new vision and a study guide on the purpose of a parish** 18/01/26
 In due course we hope to get a 'study guide' from the Diocese, but as we wait perhaps, as a parish, we can think about what we see as the many strands of 'purpose' for our own Parish. Please share them with Canon Philip and /or your fellow parishioners. Using the language of the garden: this will help us to build on what is already fruitful, look to see what might need tender care, and also to plant new spiritual seeds which can bear fruit in the future.

3. **Encourage inter-parish collaboration** 1/02/26
 This seems easy at one level, but can be more complex in reality. If we do things together, of course it must be better and easier? But our nearest parishes are Herne Bay (4 miles), Canterbury (8 miles) with Hersden (11 miles), and Faversham (11 miles), so travel is an issue for joint ventures/events etc. Which Parish should host? *'if it isn't here I probably wouldn't go'*. Perhaps technology might help. Please think about what our parishes "should" do together, and also what we might do together; perhaps thinking at first about our links with Herne Bay? Don't keep your thoughts to yourself – share! Talk with other parishioners and pass on thoughts to Canon Philip via the Parish Office. "Subsidiarity" is a principle in Catholic Social Teaching stating that matters should be handled by the smallest, lowest, or most local competent authority, rather than a central power. Sometime two parishes are better than one.

4. **Give clarity about what mission looks like today** 8/02/26
5. Encourage parishes to move from welcome to invitation
6. Share good practice from across the Archdiocese
7. Celebrate and equip catechists and parents
8. Build on the foundation of sacramental preparation by offering ongoing formation
9. Promote resources on prayer
10. Strengthen our culture of hospitality
11. **Celebrate and thank volunteers more visibly** 25/01/26
 The Parish is blessed with many volunteers, getting involved in many aspects of Parish life and volunteering in the wider community. In September we hold a Parish Volunteer gathering; one way of 'celebrating'. How can we build on this? Share your thoughts. Canon Philip intends on highlighting different groups of volunteers over the course of the year.
12. Encourage personal invitations into service
13. Invest in youth ministry
14. Launch a Parish Renewal Course for laity and clergy
15. Pray for renewal