

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

www.rcourladywhitstable.org.uk



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SVP Group:	Mrs Jane Hill	07842 550998
Parish School:	St Mary's School, Northwood Road	01227 272692
Parish Website:	www.rcourladywhitstable.org.uk	
Notices for the Bulletin:	To be submitted please by 7.30 pm on Wednesday	

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT: LAETARE SUNDAY (Yr A) Mass Book page 164 **15th March 2026**

SATURDAY: 14th Mar: Confessions: 11.30 to 12 noon & 5.15pm to 5.45pm 6.00 pm: Private Intention (G & B Tighe) SUNDAY: 15th Mar: Fourth Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday & Mothering Sunday 8.30 am: All Our Parishioners 10.30 am: Norman Brown, RIP (Abina & Mary) <i>Followed by refreshments in the Hall</i> 3.00 pm: <i>Stations of the Cross</i> TUESDAY: 17th Mar: St Patrick 12.30 pm: Ann Bryson, RIP (J Austin) WEDNESDAY: 18th Mar: <i>St Cyril of Jerusalem</i> 12.30 pm: Private Intention (A Willey)	THURSDAY: 19th Mar: St Joseph <i>Spouse of Blessed Virgin Mary</i> 9.30 am: Madeleine Kavanagh RIP (M & C Berry) <i>Please note earlier Mass & no adoration today as Canon Philip attending Council of Deans meeting.</i> FRIDAY: 20th Mar: 7.00 am: Holy Souls, (Fr White) 10.00 am: Norman Brown, RIP (Parish) SATURDAY: 21st Mar: Confessions: 11.30 to 12 noon & 5.15pm to 5.45pm 6.00 pm: Betsy Boyle, RIP (A Flannery) SUNDAY: 22nd Mar: Fifth Sunday of Lent 8.30 am: All Our Parishioners 10.30 am: Henry & Ann Rau, RIP (A Willey) <i>Followed by refreshments in the Hall</i> 3.00 pm: <i>Stations of the Cross</i>
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LAETARE SUNDAY: This weekend, the 4th Sunday of Lent is sometimes called *Laetare* Sunday, from the Latin for 'rejoice', the start of the Entrance Antiphon of Mass. It is the effective mid-point of Lent and so the Church allows us to briefly lift a little of the season's sternness; for example, flowers are permitted at the altar. It is also **MOTHERING SUNDAY**, when, historically, Christians visited their mother church – the church where they were Baptised. For those who worked far from family they could make a visit especially to their mothers. A 1920's booklet advocated Mothering Sunday as a day for recognizing Mother Church, 'mothers of earthly homes', Mary mother of Jesus, and Mother Nature. Let us give thanks for all who have given us maternal care: we give thanks for their love, patience & faith. We pray that the Lord bless them abundantly.

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

STATIONS OF THE CROSS: Catholics traditionally pray the **Stations of the Cross** in Lent, reflecting on Our Lord's journey of love to his crucifixion. A prayerful way in which we honour and worship His passion & death. Please join members of the parish community for Stations at 3pm Sunday this week and next.

HOLY WEEK MASS & SERVICE TIMES

Palm Sunday: Saturday 6 pm, Sunday 8.30 am and 10.30 am
Maundy Thursday: 8 pm – *Mass of the Lord's Supper*
Good Friday: 3 pm – *Solemn Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord*
Good Friday: Ecumenical Walk of Witness 9.30 am (Swalecliffe); Stations of the Cross 10 am (church)
Holy Saturday: 8.30 pm – *Easter Vigil Mass*
Holy Saturday – 9 am to 12 noon (Church flowers and cleaning)
Easter Sunday: 8.30 am and 10.30 am

PRAYING FOR PEACE: In his weekly Sunday Angelus last week Pope Leo invited those present to pray that “*the roar of bombs might cease, that weapons might fall silent, and that a space for dialogue might open, in which the voice of the peoples may be heard.*” We join in prayer for peace in our world.

POOR PARISHES COLLECTION: Next weekend there will be Diocesan second collection to contribute towards the fund the Archbishop uses to support poor parishes, especially to enable grants to poorer churches for their various maintenance and other projects. Please support generously, thank you.

CALLED TO BEAR FRUIT (C2BF): *Reflecting on the 15 C2BF “action points”.* AP9: “**Promote resources on prayer**”. The consultation report speaks of there being “...lots of excellent resources on prayer available today. The Archdiocese of Southwark Spirituality Commission offers information and resources on ways into prayer via its website: www.southwarkdsc.org.uk”. The report also mentions that “Smartphone apps have become increasingly popular, such as Universalis, Hallow and Pray As You Go. Christian Art offers a daily Gospel reading and art reflection.” It concludes its reflection on AP9 by stating “The **need** for prayer must also be articulated often and with love.”

What areas of **prayer** might you interested in focusing on? How and when could this be done with other parishioners? How do we best communicate with one another (and Canon Philip) what help we would like?

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 15th March, then 22nd March.

BENCHES IN CHURCH: The sharp-eyed among us will perhaps have noticed a new ‘gap’ in the benches in the centre section of the church. As an experiment a “Priority Seating Area” has been set up to allow wheelchair users, as well as those with baby buggies etc, to have a place (if they wish) nearer to the sanctuary.

Thank you to the Gardening Group for their work tidying up the church grounds recently; next session Saturday 11th April 10am to 12noon. Donations of shrubs, bulbs etc most welcome. Please contact me or leave them in the Parish Office nearer the time. *Winston Waller*

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES: 21 - 28 August 2026: Bishop Paul Hendricks warmly invites you to join him this year for the Southwark Diocesan Pilgrimage. Visit the Diocesan website for more details (rcaos.org.uk/news-events/events/catholic-association-pilgrimage-to-lourdes-2026/) or for specific questions contact Canon Edward Perera edwardperera@rcaos.org.uk or Deacon John Fogarty johnfogarty@rcaos.org.uk

RECENTLY DIED: Please pray for the repose of the soul of Rosanna Barnett, who sadly died last week. We offer our deepest condolences & prayers to the family members.

ANNIVERSARIES: Please remember in your prayers those whose anniversaries occur about this time: Robert Weller, Sybil Baartman, Rose Williams, Michael Harris, James Lucey, Olive Powell, Ted Churhley, Kathleen Holness- Hodds, Joseph McDonald, Norah Lane, David Bryson, Bernard Howell, George Francis, John Pattmore, Rose Mann, Kevin Ranson, Thomas Love, Mary Cavanagh, Madge Astle, Mayt Wiltcher, Norah Ash, Randhall Godfrey, Win Hertridge and Audrey Sullivan.

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, Patrick MacNally and David Amis. We pray for all who are sick or in hospital, their carers and all staff.

Collections	Gift Aid	Non-gift aid	Total
7 th & 8 th March	£313.20	£207.74	£520.94
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 weekend second collection for Poor Parishes.

*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

STATIONS OF THE CROSS: 3pm Lent Sundays (Started 1st March), 15th March Canon Philip, 22nd March SVP, 3rd April Good Friday 10 am led by Carmel Digman. Thank you to Mary Rowe & church carers group for leading on 1st March; the Flower group & Mercy Associates on the 8th March.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday: Saturday 6 pm, Sunday 8.30 am and 10.30 am

Maundy Thursday: 8pm Mass of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday: Ecumenical Walk of Witness 9.30 am (starting at Swalecliffe);
Stations of the Cross 10 am (in church)

3 pm Solemn Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord

Holy Saturday: 8.30 pm: Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord: 8.30 am and 10.30 am

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

- **SUNDAY BREAKFAST after 8.30 am Mass:** 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.
- **Barn Dance – Saturday 25th April 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm.** Enjoy a fun evening of music and dancing with family and friends. No experience necessary. All age groups welcome including seniors. Tickets £5, bring your drinks. More details to follow.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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 quizzing with raffle prizes. Tickets £5, bring your own nibbles. More details to follow
- **Christmas Fayre: Saturday 28th November 10 am to 1 pm.** Various Christmas themed stalls to browse and pick up some very good bargains for Christmas presents. More details to follow
- **Christmas Wreath Workshop: Saturday 5th Dec from 2 pm to 4 pm.** Create your own Advent Wreath. Tickets £25. Includes seasonal refreshments. More details to follow.

POPE'S MARCH PRAYER: For disarmament & peace: that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, & that world leaders choose the path of dialogue & diplomacy instead of violence.

CANTERBURY PARISH: PENITENTIAL SERVICE: St Thomas', in Canterbury, have a Penitential Service, offering an opportunity for prayer, reflection & confession, on Wednesday, 25th March at 7pm.

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!

GARDENING GROUP: Thank you to the group for the recent tidying up of the grounds. The next session is Saturday 11th April 10am to 12noon. Donations of shrubs, bulbs etc most welcome. We have lost a few regular gardeners, so please do come along & give us a hand. We usually garden for about two hours, followed by bring and share refreshments in the hall. Future dates: Wed. 6th May, Sat. 20th June, Mon. 27th July, Tue. 8th September and Sat. 7th November 10am to 12noon. *Winston Waller*

QUIZ / RACE NIGHT: Michael Robinson (one of our parishioners) has a request... he needs help to organise a quiz night / race night to raise funds in aid of HCPT taking disabled children to Lourdes. He needs lots of help, to coordinate: bookings, licences, equipment's (video/film of horses or dogs), insurance, catering etc. Please contact Michael to offer help: Mobile 07935 516612, landline 01227 263300.

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.

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

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES: 21 to 28 August 2026: Bishop Paul Hendricks warmly invites you to join him this year for the Southwark Diocesan Pilgrimage: "A pilgrimage is a great opportunity to refresh and renew our relationship with the Lord Jesus, with the help of Our Lady's prayers. I have also found it a blessing to be able to accompany and to be inspired by other pilgrims, some of whom are sick, elderly or disabled. If you are interested a short presentation in parishes, can be arranged.

Visit www.tangney-tours.com/diocese-pilgrimages/diocese-ca/ for details of booking accommodation & travel. We also ask pilgrims to complete a form with details, including medical requirements (if any) at www.catholicassociation.co.uk/join2026 For more information, please contact Canon Edward Perera (edwardperera@rcaos.org.uk) or Deacon John Fogarty (johnfogarty@rcaos.org.uk) or myself, Bishop Paul Hendricks (paulhendricks@rcaos.org.uk)"

ARCHDIOCESE LENT REFLECTIONS 2026: There are a number of retreat centres in the Archdiocese – all are offering opportunities for prayer and reflection this Lent:

- *In London -St Andrews* - Lewisham, London: sisters-of-st-andrew.com
- *Taizé prayer evening* (31st March Holy Week) - sisters-of-st-andrew.com/event/tuesday-meditative-evening-prayer-including-taize-chants-22
- *Lent Individually Guided Retreat in daily life* (22nd Feb - 22nd March) - sisters-of-st-andrew.com/event/lent-retreat-a-four-week-individually-guided-retreat-in-daily-life
- *Kairos Centre* – Richmond, London: www.thekairoscentre.co.uk/event-list
- *Preached Retreat* (16th to 23rd March) - www.thekairoscentre.co.uk/event-list/preached-retreat-have-you-ever-been-in-the-belly-of-a-whale-8kml7
- *Introduction to prayer* (21st March) - www.thekairoscentre.co.uk/event-list/introduction-to-prayer-day-gdw6r
- *Holy Week Retreat* (29th March – 5th April) - www.thekairoscentre.co.uk/event-list/holy-week-retreat-passiontide-to-resurrection
- *Kent - Aylesford Friary* – Aylesford: www.thefriars.org.uk/Pilgrimage+%26+Retreat or email reception@thefriars.org.uk for details of the pilgrimage programme during lent. Visit or call in for your own time of quiet and prayer
- *Sanctuary Quiet Garden* – Swanley quietgarden.org/gardens/sanctuary-quiet-garden
 - *A reflection on the Sunday Gospel for Lent* - Every Friday during Lent at 1.30pm
 - *Lenten Reflection Day* 28th March for more information email sanctuaryakwaaba@gmail.com
- *Online Lent Bible Reflections* - from the Catholic speaker Mauro Iannicelli, looking at the upcoming Sunday Gospel, with in-depth teaching and stimulating questions. Register for free via comeandsee.org - starts Tues 17th Feb 7pm to 8.15pm, & then the following six Tuesdays.

FIRST FRIDAY ROSARY: Pupils from St Mary's School will lead the rosary on Friday 1st May at 9.30am. The prayers are offered particularly for the children and staff of the school, & their families.

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.

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*

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.

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?

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.

"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:

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.

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

Items from past newsletters

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	also: Fr Richard Calcutt MHM
Fr Tim Forbes-Turner,	Fr Jack Pledger,	whose mother lived in the parish.
Fr Barry Grant,	Fr Maurice Pledger,	possibly also: Fr Tony Hughes?

2025 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 Summer 2025. 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

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.

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.

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.

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)

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?

Long Term Parish Items – for information

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.

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.

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** 01/02/26
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** 08/02/26
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.
5. **Encourage parishes to move from welcome to invitation** 15/02/26
AP4 reflected on "**Mission**". Part of this is being a welcoming community... but the challenge is not just to wait for "them" to walk through the door, but actively reach out. How do we and how can we, as a Parish 'invite'. We are asked by the Lord Jesus to extend **His** invitation on His behalf: to newcomers, to the lapsed, to those who may not know Jesus is calling them. The Holy Spirit is entrusting YOU with ideas of how we as a Parish can do this. Don't ignore His inspiration, share them with each other & with Canon Philip. Who do you know that needs a personal invite to come to meet Jesus?
6. **Share good practice from across the Archdiocese** 22/02/26
We are challenged to have "**Mission**" & "**Invitation**" at the heart of who we are as a Parish community. Sometimes the 'how' of this does not need *reinventing* but to be learned from the success of others... or us sharing our successes! The Diocese have offered examples, and will continue to do so, but have you heard or experienced something our Parish can take up? May the Holy Spirit guide us!
7. **Celebrate and equip catechists and parents** 01/03/26
One of the blessings in the 'Rite of Baptism of Children' speaks of how parents *"...will be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith."* Then asks God to help them *"...be also the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do in Christ Jesus our Lord."* As a faith community it is important that we support parents in the calling to pass on the gift of Faith, as C2BF asks that we 'equip' them, provide help, support and the necessary 'tools' to teach the faith. Catechists are volunteers *"who echo the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, facilitating religious education and formation for children, young people, and adults"*. **Thank you** to our Catechist and the parents of the parish – how could the parish better support and equip you for the beautiful task the Lord Jesus has entrusted to you?

8. **Build on the foundation of sacramental preparation by offering ongoing formation** 08/03/26
Our parish, and the Church as a whole, rightly puts a focus of time and energy into preparing people to receive the Sacraments; our Holy Communion group is meeting at the moment, and our Confirmation Group recently had their 'going forth' Mass. This action point is encouraging us as a parish, and a diocese, to recognise that there is a *need* for a process of 'ongoing' faith development. Something that is very appropriate for those who have recently 'finished' preparation... but also for all those who finished some while ago – that includes us all! What areas of faith development are you interested in focusing on? When could this be done? How could it be done so that large numbers of parishioners could benefit? How do we best share the answers to these questions?
9. Promote resources on prayer 15/03/26
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