

Viva

Voce



**Mini
Vinnies**
shine in
vibrant
parish

► Page 8



Our vision is to deliver on four priorities

MAY I wish you all the joys and holiness of the Easter season. I would first like to say how delighted we are to see such great love for Christ and his church being expressed in so many evangelising and missionary endeavours which are being undertaken throughout our Diocese at the moment.

In these pages we highlight the work of the Adoremus Centre which is vital because the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of everything that we do. This is an important project for the renewal of the church through prayer dedicated to the work of the New Evangelisation.

Our ecclesiastical exchange with the Archdiocese of Bamenda is so important to us and we pray at this time especially for the peoples of Cameroon in the light of the current tensions in that country, remembering especially Archbishop Cornelius and the clergy and the faithful of the Archdiocese.

We look forward to the ordination and priesthood of Deacon Johnpromise and Deacon Mohanraj in the summer.

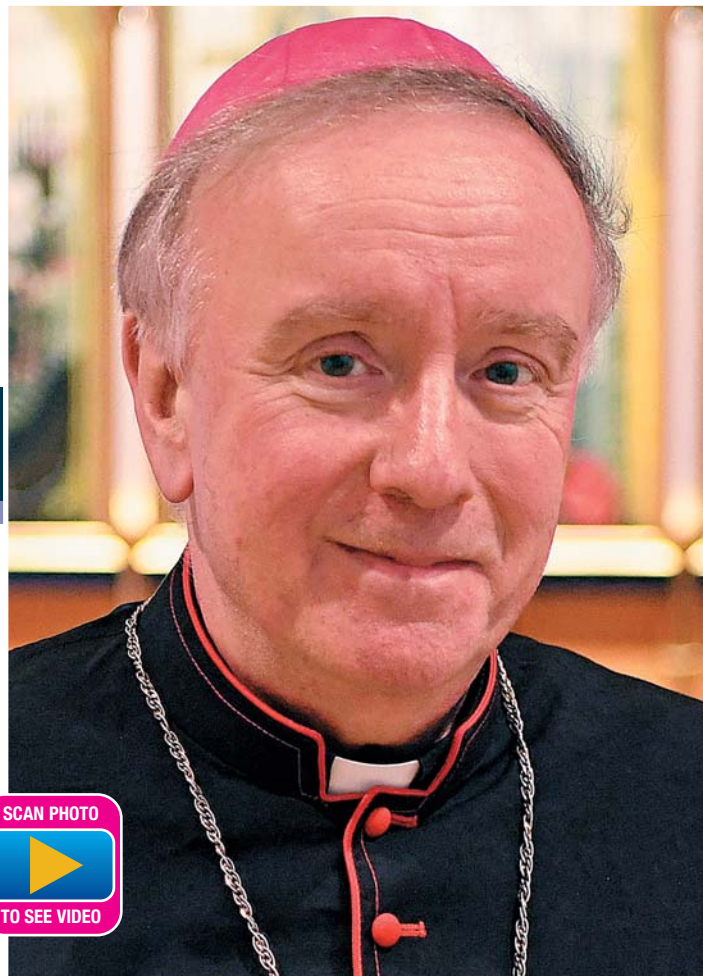
BY BISHOP
Philip Egan

As you know, as the shepherd of the Diocese I wish to commit us all to "Bringing People Closer to Jesus Christ through his Church."

My vision revolves around four priorities: mission to all, converting Catholics, being totally dependent on the Holy Spirit and being outward looking servants of the Lord. These four priorities lead to three areas of special attention: focusing on youth, promoting vocations and focusing on prioritising our resources.

The central endeavour of all of these hopes and aspirations is that we seek deeper holiness through communion.

Finally, Pope Francis has talked about digital technology and communications being a "gift from God" so I am delighted we are launching an innovative new app



alongside this magazine, which will bring pages to life when scanned with a mobile phone or tablet.

Readers can launch interactive augmented reality content, like videos, animations, weblinks and much more.

You can see instructions on how to use the app at the foot of this

page, and if you scan the photo of me above it will launch a video message.

Philip

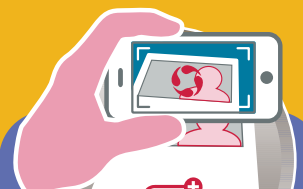
Tap into bonus content

with the **VivaVoce** Augmented Reality app

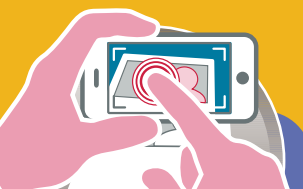
The app, called VivaVoce AR, will bring photographs to life in this magazine using the power of Augmented Reality. To access the bonus interactive video content, simply follow the three easy steps:



Download the VivaVoce AR app from App Store or Google Play.



Scan the photo on the pages where you see this AR icon.



When the video starts double tap your screen for a full-screen view to take away.



Missionaries from America pictured on the University of Southampton campus are, left to right, Anthony Thompson, Sarra Stanley, Kaitlin Gilday and Shea McMahon.

Pioneering team reach out to students at university campus

FOUR American missionaries have taken Southampton university students by storm, in a pioneering way of bringing Christ's love to campus.

Amidst an ever more disorienting environment, where binge-drinking and "no-strings-attached" are the norm, the quartet from Denver-based FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) have touched the lives of so many students since their arrival last June.

Their success? Investing in the individual. They meet the students where they are, in every corner of campus, to share their time, their interest and their love.

"We hope to encourage students to deepen their relationship with God through authentic friendship," said Missionary Team Director, Kaitlin Gilday, "help them build up their faith and send them out on one-to-one discipleship missions of their own."

A vibrant community has now formed, with 40 students even involved in bible study groups and setting up bible classes of their own.

Attached to the Faith and Reflection Centre on campus and liaising closely with the Catholic Chaplaincy, the first representatives of FOCUS in the UK comprise Kaitlin Gilday, aged 28, Shea McMahon, aged 30, Sarra Stanley, aged 29, and Anthony Thomas, aged 25.

After encountering students in friendship, the missionaries invite them to take part in chaplaincy activities, bible study, Eucharistic adoration,

outreach events, mission trips and fun. The effectiveness of their mission is entrenched in their approach to the notion of evangelisation itself. It's "incarnational evangelisation", and the aim of the game is not to tick off events or hand out leaflets, but something much simpler and more beautiful: "it is actually becoming the Word incarnate," Kaitlin explained, "becoming Jesus Christ to others, through our love and time with them, listening to them."

"All you have to do is share your life with these people, enter into their lives and invite them into your life."

The group have all undergone intensive formation in scripture, Catholic doctrine and pastoral theology to aid them in their mission. They also have training all year round, including Team Development meetings and a five-week summer posting to the USA.

"FOCUS has helped me become much more grounded and given me insight into my faith journey," said student Toby, who was first attracted to the missionaries' "innate sense of joy"; something he wanted to experience for himself.

"They were always welcoming and supportive while having a strong value in the community and family-like aspect of their mission," he continued, "and got me to think more about my actions, life choices and what I really need to be happy." ■



Sarra talks with student Iliana Adjoumani in the university's Faith and Reflection Centre.

Blessed Virgin Mary statue goes on display in Cathedral

A Holy House was created inside St John's Cathedral in Portsmouth to display the renowned Statue of Our Lady of Walsingham shortly before Easter as it criss-crossed England on the Dowry Tour.

The Blessed Virgin Mary's statue left the Slipper Chapel of the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk last June and by March next year it will have visited all the Catholic Cathedrals of England.

Until the Reformation England was known for centuries as the Dowry of Mary, a dedication formalised by Richard II in 1381.

The Dowry Tour is a mission of prayer for re-evangelisation and conversion culminating in the 2020 Re-dedication of England as the Dowry of Mary.

The four days of Masses, Eucharistic healing and Angelus from April 4-7 in St John's Cathedral were experienced by countless people as an inspiring prelude to the Easter Season.

A shrine containing the statue and a travelling exhibition were opened on Thursday evening at 5pm followed by Holy Mass with the Crowning of Our Lady and his Divine Son by Father P. J. Smith Dean of the Cathedral.

The programme over the following days included a Rosary for the Conversion of

England and a talk on the Dowry of Mary by Monsignor John Armitage, the Rector of Our Lady's Shrine (Friday); Adoration with Divine Mercy and an all-night vigil (Saturday); and Angelus and Holy Mass with an act of consecration (Sunday).

Our Lady's residence in Portsmouth was longer than at any other Cathedral – fittingly given that the Dowry Tour connects so readily with many aspects of the Diocese.

The Diocese contains the ancient see of Winchester, capital of Alfred the Great who secured the Christian identity of England after defeating the Great Heathen Army.

The Oxford area has strong connections with notable Catholics Cardinal Newman, Jesuit priest Edmund Campion and Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Blessed John Henry Newman is patron with Our Lady of Walsingham of the Ordinariate (for Anglicans who wish to be in communion with the Holy See) which includes St Agatha's in Portsmouth and has a presence in St Mary's in Ryde, the Isle of Wight, the first church in England to be dedicated in honour of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Isle of Wight

holds the only secondary school in England named after the Shrine, the Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham in Whippingham.

"There are so many connections in the Diocese with the shaping events of English history," said Edmund Matyjaszek, school Principal and author of *The Rosary: England's Prayer* (published by St Paul's Publishing Westminster with a Foreword by Bishop Philip Egan).

"The visit of the Statue of Our Lady of Walsingham is of supreme historical and spiritual importance," he continued. "We were and remain a country set apart for the mother of God alone."

The exhibition displayed in the Cathedral told how the description of England as Mary's Dowry is thought to date back to Edward the Confessor.

The devout Lady Richeldis in 1061 was led in spirit by the Virgin Mary to the house of annunciation and at her request set up "England's Nazareth" in Walsingham.

"More and more people are beginning to realise the spiritual importance of Our Lady of Walsingham for our times," said Antonia Moffat, Outreach Co-ordinator of the Dowry Tour.

"During the Triduum (the three days of Easter recalling the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Christ) of intense prayer at the Cathedrals a two-fold invitation is going out, asking people to focus on their own relationship with God and the Blessed Virgin Mary and through the new prayer, the Angelus Promise, to meditate on the annunciation." ■



Monks carry the statue into the Cathedral for the Holy Mass.



Dean of St John's Cathedral Father P. J. Smith crowns the statue.



Monsignor John Armitage places the Relic of St Alban, Britain's first recorded martyr which was in Cologne Cathedral for 800 years.



Adam Wlasak, Alpha team member at English Martyrs, Reading, talks with participant Aaron Franklyn at the weekly Alpha get-together.



Alpha team member Sen Buhay serves a meal to participant Cyndy Hamerston.



Participants Saffi Bangura, left, and Terry Harris, right sing worship songs with Alpha team member Chin Hamerston.

Parishes embark on journey from maintenance to mission

SHORTLY after assuming office six years ago, The Holy Father set out his vision for what has become known as Divine Renovation.

"I dream of a missionary option," Pope Francis revealed. "That is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, languages and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."

The challenge had been laid down – and parishes around the world enthusiastically embraced it. It also led to a best-selling book by Father James Mallon, a parish priest of Saint Benedict in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which provides guidance on how parishes can move from what he refers to as, maintenance to mission.

The vision has certainly been proactively seized upon by the parishes in the Portsmouth Diocese with many now looking to embark on a maintenance to mission journey.

Others have already taken strides down the road in fulfilling their mission of evangelisation and bringing more people closer to Jesus Christ through the Church.

Initiatives are already up and running in St Joseph and St Margaret, Clitherow near Bracknell; English Martyrs, Reading; St Joseph and St Edmund Parish, Southampton, and St Peter and The Winchester Martyrs.

Through the senior leadership teams in the parish, specific programmes are co-ordinated and projects tailored to the needs of the local community are agreed upon – all aimed at expanding the Church's reach and appeal.

Tracey Gurr, who is a member of the Parish Leadership Team at English Martyrs, said: "We have been looking at parish renewal for around 2 years. As a team we meet once a week and after a prayer and gospel reading we discuss strategy.

"We use Father Mallon's book *Divine Renovation* as our guide but do not follow the model exactly as we look to focus on the issues that are relevant to this parish, the needs of the people in it and the resources that we have available.

"One of the first things we did was to agree a vision for our parish: 'English Martyrs is a welcoming community, inviting, encouraging and supporting all to have an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus. We are inspired to show God's love to the world with joy and hope.'

"This guides all aspects of our renewal and provides the soil from which the seed of a mission focused parish can grow.

"The team is working with many different groups within the parish to move closer to the vision.

For instance, we're working with the Welcome



Reverend Canon Michael Dennehy pictured in the newly refurbished Bethlehem chapel at English Martyrs – an example of the Parish's physical commitment to divine renovation.

Co-ordinators for each of our four weekend masses, to really think about what welcome means and how we can make it a part of everything we do, beyond a warm greeting at the church door."

The parishes that are taking the journey towards mission also use the 'Divine Renovation' five-system model to help achieve their goals. The pillars of this are – evangelisation, ministry, community, worship and discipleship.

Tracey added: "We are holding meetings with the leaders of all our parish teams, bringing everyone together under these five broad headings, to look at everything from hospitality, finance and music, to baptism, youth groups and Eucharistic ministry.

The aim is to develop connected processes of evangelisation and discipleship rather than individual programmes or projects.

Key to this is Alpha, an initiative that encourages us to voice our questions about the Christian faith and to share our understandings and experiences.

Running for eight weeks at a time, 20 to 30 guests meet to share a meal, watch an informative film about an aspect of Christianity and then gather into small groups for discussion and fellowship.

One recent participant said: "For me, this is what the life of the church should be about. It's given me a wonderful opportunity to deepen my relationship with Jesus and to get to know people I hadn't met before. It's given me more confidence to share the joy of my faith with

others inside and outside the church."

The fruitfulness of Alpha is shown by the desire of guests to join the Alpha Team and to form discipleship groups after it has finished, as well as the enduring relationships that help to build community.

Young people are also central to the journey from maintenance to mission in the Diocese. Everything from youth groups to youth Alphas and new junior choirs have been set up to help reinforce a strong bond.

Regeneration and restoration of buildings and facilities are also important aspects of parish renewal. These physical manifestations demonstrate a commitment by the Church to divine renovation and can lead to an expanding role in the community.

For example in English Martyrs parish, not only has refurbishment work been carried out on the church but the leadership team is now looking at major improvements to the parish hall and other facilities, in consultation with parishioners.

Tracey explained: "We have drawn up architectural plans and are very excited about what we could do with better facilities.

Everything from more youth groups and social activities to initiatives which reach out and help people in the wider community, such as the homeless, as Jesus would have us do.

"So while there are challenges ahead as we continue our journey, there are so many things to be positive about, as we see the Holy Spirit at work in our parish, bringing us together and making a real difference to people's lives." ■



Bishop praises vibrant Parish's energy

BISHOP Philip praised the Parish of Our Lady of Abingdon and St Edmund as a "vibrant Christian community with real energy and enthusiasm" following his pastoral visitation in February.

Taking time out from the packed programme of his canonical visit to meet representatives from the parish, he received an update on the dynamic activities of service and mission underway.

A key focus of the day was the Bishop's five-yearly inspection of the Eucharistic ministry, administration and pastoral service within the parish – all required under Canon Law.

Bishop Philip also preached to three packed Masses and a special Adoration was held at 5pm. "After the morning masses we had coffee in the parish centre and Bishop Philip spoke to a post-confirmation group of young people," said Father Jamie McGrath who along with Father Rob Stewart hosted the visitation.



Mini Vinnies at St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Abingdon, left to right, Arno, Nina and Evie pack a backpack for needy children in Milawi in support of the Mary's Meals charity.

"Later he asked to meet a representative group of about 10 parishioners including the head teachers of both Catholic schools in the parish. Bishop Philip is very keen on the schools and the parish sharing the Church's mission."

Parish groups meeting at church or in people's homes include Charismatic Prayer Meeting, Support for the Homeless, a baby and toddler group, a Wednesday "cake and conversation" session, Called and Gifted, Pre-Discipleship, ecumenical activities and Justice and Peace.

There are two Alpha groups in the parish, based on hospitality, sharing and conversation

leading to an exploration of Christian faith around a personal relationship with Jesus.

At St Edmund's Catholic Primary School pupils have been inspired by the local Saint Vincent de Paul Conference to become young members of the charity.

The Mini Vinnies have raised money themselves, or collaborated in fundraising ventures to support the Mary's Meals Backpack Project, the Dar Mariam Salesian School in Sudan, Helen and Douglas House and CAFOD.

The youngsters have also made Christmas cards for the homeless and created Stations of the Cross frames at their school to be used during Lenten celebrations.

In a collaborative project for the Caritas "Dragon's Den" competition, the Mini Vinnies joined students from Our Lady's Abingdon to create an enormous "Heart of Light" which raised more than £6,000 to be shared between two charities selected by the young people.

Pupils at Our Lady's Abingdon junior and senior schools have been prolific in raising money for charities including Food Bank for Harvest, Helen and Douglas House and the Cats' Protection League.

Year 7s raised £171 for Macmillan Cancer Support and their cake sale proceeds went to Be Free Young Carers while the Lower School disco raised £1,338 for Uganda. The Year 10s raised £300 by collecting old textiles for recycling for Stem4 teenage mental health charity.

The Our Lady's Abingdon sewing bee consists of groups of parents, teachers and pupils who have made shorts and dresses for the children in schools in Uganda. ■



Mini Vinnies at St Edmund's Catholic Primary School Amélie and Mark with two of the Stations of the Cross they made for Lenten celebrations. Amélie is also pictured on Viva Voce front cover.

Sisters harness technology to spread faith awareness

A congregation of Dominican Sisters at the centre of New Evangelisation in the Diocese of Portsmouth is using the power of technology to spread faith awareness.

Sister Hyacinthe Defos Du Rau at St Dominic's Priory on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire holds a weekly web-based seminar.

So far through her webinars – also available in audio versions as podcasts – she has helped around 200 people discover more about God, themselves and the Church through the Gospels.

Sister Hyacinthe is head of the Formation For Mission Team, comprising 10 sisters who live in the Priory and 14 lay people based at different locations around the Diocese.

The aim of the voluntary team is to help baptised members of Christ to fulfil their mission of evangelisation by offering faith formation at all levels.

The Webinar and the team's use of social media, posting on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, have been introduced as a way of communicating relevant and widely accessible topics.

The Sisters combine their active work of "preaching and teaching" –



Sister Hyacinthe Defos Du Rau delivers one of her weekly Webinars at the priory at Sway.

consistent with their charism as Dominicans, the Order of the Preachers – with a daily pattern of contemplative prayer, monastic observances, sung liturgy and study. "We were approached by Bishop Philip to help with catechesis and formation

throughout the whole Diocese," said Sister Hyacinthe, who was born in France, has a Masters Degree in Applied Theology and is a published translator. "We were very grateful because this apostolate completely complements our mission in the Church. It is a

wonderful opportunity to be doing what we are supposed to do in the service of our Diocese.

"It is a genuine Grace for us to be able to do that together."

Where possible the Sisters travel as a group from their Priory in the village of Sway to visit other parishes to run courses and share teaching resources.

For catechists (religious teachers) the Formation team offers a five-session essential training course and more specialist courses run in partnership with the Maryvale Institute and the Diocesan Diaconate Department.

For all adults, the team offers the Anchor faith formation programme and a Certificate in Parish Mission and Ministry. Also on offer are training for children's liturgy leaders, First Holy Communion Catechists and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Catechists.

This year, a retreat is being held for catechists in Basingstoke while an Annual Day for Catechists takes place in Portsmouth Cathedral with talks, testimonies and discussions. ■



Sisters Carino Hodder, left, and Veronica Brennan with Postulant Elena Cahill in the chapel next to the priory at Sway.



Pre-Discipleship Team Leader Clare Simpson, left, talks about Ananias training with Abingdon parishioners Alex Contreras, centre, and Laura Williams.

Ananias Training is preparing people to be faith journey guides

AN inspiring initiative to support people on their faith journey is underway in the Diocese. Ananias Training by members of the Pre-Discipleship Team is equipping parishioners in the “art of spiritual accompaniment”.

Named after the disciple who played an important role in accompanying St Paul on his journey to Christ, Ananias Training was recently developed by the Catherine of Siena Institute in the United States, which also originated the Called and Gifted process. The training is designed to form parishioners as Ananiases, who will travel alongside their friends, family and work colleagues during their spiritual journey.

Since last autumn the team have been training people in the parishes of Abingdon, Hook, Winchester and Farnborough as well as the Avon Stour pastoral area. Already around more than 100 lay Catholics across the Diocese have taken up the call to be Ananiases.

“Being an Ananias is about building trust with a person and listening lovingly to their real questions and opinions about God in order to guide the discovery of how God is present in their life”, said Clare Simpson, leader of the Pre-Discipleship Team. “Our desire is to train many parishioners in accompaniment which teaches us to remove our sandals before the

sacred ground of another, and relate to them more intentionally and prayerfully.”

Ananias Training can be given in a parish or home setting and it includes scripture reflections, video, and small group discussions.

“Some people lack confidence and we help them to be more intentional about accompanying their friends and family,” said Clare. It’s about breaking the cultural silence that tends to exist around Jesus, giving parishioners the tools to accompany others in their journey to a meaningful life in Jesus.”

The Ananias Team spoke at the recent Annual Conference of Diocesan Deacons at Marwell Conference Centre near Winchester, giving them a flavour of Ananias through four sessions delivered over a weekend.

■ Part of the training is a six-hour retreat called The Great Story of Jesus, presenting the history of salvation and giving time for participants to make a personal response. The team will be running this day on June 8 at St Bede’s in Basingstoke, primarily for catechists and local parishioners. Anyone who would like to find out more about Ananias should contact Clare at csimpson@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



The evocative artwork which has been adopted as the “logo” for Ananias Training.

Parishes send emergency aid to sister Diocese in Cameroon

KIND-HEARTED people from the parishes are sending emergency help to clergy and residents in Portsmouth’s sister Diocese who are under threat from political unrest.

The Archdiocese of Bamenda in Cameroon is caught up in spiralling violence following initial peaceful protests by English speakers over their alleged marginalisation by the French speaking Government.

Following harsh military intervention, groups of English-speaking insurgents have since been agitating for an independent break-away state and their demand for the population to observe “ghost days” where businesses and services are shut down is being regularly observed for fear of reprisal.

In a disturbing incident Bishop Michael Bibi was recently abducted by the so-called Amba Boys for travelling during a stay-at-home protest and held for four hours at gunpoint in a forest clearing.

The brave Bishop has revealed on a subsequent visit to Portsmouth Diocese that he was “waiting for the worst” when the separatists threatened him and his two travelling companions with their lives and prepared to burn their car.

He was released only after one of his captors said he used to be an altar boy and they all accepted a gift of rosaries, with the Bishop “gently”



Chairman of the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee Colm Lennon with posters spreading the news about the emergency in Bamenda.

explaining to them that he was on his way to celebrate Mass. Children are at the centre of the crisis because the majority of schools have been closed for three academic years.

The Portsmouth Bamenda Committee has launched special projects for 2019 – funded by the Bamenda Sunday Collection – with the crisis in mind.

A youth project is set to divert children from involvement in the troubles by providing a church youth centre and the opportunity to learn some computer skills.

A further donation is funding the purchase of a vehicle enabling the healthcare co-ordinator to provide outreach to the health centres throughout the north-west region of Cameroon which is adversely affected.

An emergency meeting of the committee has agreed to send an extra £10,000 to support the work of an Ad Hoc Commission which has been set up by Archbishop Cornelius in Bamenda.

“We are supporting its provision of food, clothing, medical outreach and access to justice for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs),” said Jo Overton, vice-chair of the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee.

“The Archdiocese is facing huge challenges at this time. The Catholic Church in Bamenda finds itself caught between two stools. There

are atrocities on both sides and we are taking a human rights stance.”

Bishop Philip has asked parishes to support a Lenten appeal in support of Bamenda Archdiocese and the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee is keeping regular contact with friends in Cameroon, assuring them of solidarity and prayers. The Committee is asking people to urge their MPs to seek assurances that the UK Government is taking all reasonable steps to seek a peaceful resolution of the troubles.

■ Portsmouth has been twinned with Bamenda since 1974 with the Diocese supporting projects in the areas of Faith, Health, Education and Social Welfare. These include youth education, clean water, health equipment and church construction.

Donations for the appeal can be made via cheque to The Bamenda Commission co/the Treasurer Deacon Gerard Dailly or on the donate button on the website bamendaandportsmouth.com.



Bamenda Bishop Michael Bibi pictured during a visit to the Portsmouth Diocese.



Sisters at the Church of St Anne and St Mary Magdalene.



The seven Sisters pictured outside their convent.

THEIR days are spent largely in silent prayer and adoration in a remote island parish. As Marian Franciscan sisters they observe the rule of poverty and live in "total consecration" to the Virgin Mary.

But the seven sisters of the Adoremus Centre at the Church of St Anne and St Mary Magdalene on Alderney in the Channel Islands are far from "cloistered".

They have integrated themselves into the 2,000-strong community on the three mile-long island and they also have a key role in the Diocese of Portsmouth.

Their work in the convent by the church has been called by Bishop Philip Egan a "powerhouse of prayer" for the future.

He has described their devotion as vital to this salvation and sanctification of all the people of the Diocese.

Through begging and obtaining God's grace and blessings for the clergy, people, schools and ministries of the Diocese in their work of proclaiming the Gospel, the sisters have a role of wide-ranging significance.

At the same time the sisters are working with parish priest Canon Michael Hore, who is responsible for the Adoremus Centre (Adoremus means "let us adore"), to renew the Church's mission on the island and in the south of England.

They visit people, especially the old and sick in their homes in the capital St Anne, and they go out to walk and pray in the more isolated parts of the island.

"Alderney is an island with a strong community feel, like one big family, and we have been welcomed into the family," said Sister Maria Veronica.

"We find ourselves in a special relationship with not only the Catholic faithful, but also with non-Catholics, really with all the islanders."

In fact it is thanks to the generosity of the community that the sisters are able to continue their mission.

Sharing in the poverty of Jesus and Mary opens them to God's spiritual riches, but it also puts them under the care of those around them who are inspired by God to sustain them in their physical needs.

"Here on Alderney, from the moment we arrived, the people have been eager to take care of us in



The sisters go out to walk and pray in more isolated parts of the island.

Alderney Sisters give glory in a powerhouse of prayer

every way," said Sister Maria Veronica.

"Not only Catholics, but people of all kinds of beliefs have been drawn to us and inspired to look after us in different ways."

The sisters are aged between 20 and 40 and hail from Europe, North and South America and Asia.

Their desire for a second, more withdrawn house, in addition to their house in Bridgemary, Hampshire, coincided with the Bishop's inspiration to establish a special place

of prayer in the Diocese. Thanks to the Sisters of Mercy on Guernsey they were granted the empty convent on Alderney which was already equipped for their needs.

Built after the devastation of World War Two, the convent is connected to the church by a covered passage – and it is in the church that the sisters pray.

"It struck us as very fitting for a community of adoration that in this church the tabernacle is in the centre, behind the high altar. And this is our

focal point in prayer, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus," said Sister Maria Veronica.

As a religious community the sisters have a daily timetable and a balanced rhythm of life which alternates the prayer of the liturgy with meditation, study, work, evangelistic activity, personal prayer, community recreation and the right care of bodily needs.

"The 'Liturgy of the Hours' gives us the different moments during the day to pray the Divine Office, and we also

have a special commitment to praying very much the Holy Rosary," said Sister Maria Veronica.

"We conserve our silence within the enclosure of the convent at all times, except for during recreation, to maintain a constant spirit of loving prayer and adoration.

"But the early morning is for us a specially privileged time of prayer, and the Holy Mass each morning is the pinnacle of our day, while then in the afternoon we are given in a special way to Eucharistic Adoration, led by Canon Hore, with daily Exposition and Benediction, holding the Bishop, his priests and the whole Diocese before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

"But our whole lives, in the mystery of the consecrated life, are an offering to God in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, one with Jesus on the altar. Everything that we are, our being and our actions, becomes a loving prayer to God in Mary's Heart."

The sisters have a further connection with the community through the Adoremus webmail, receiving frequent prayer requests from around the Diocese.

They pray for each intention that is entrusted to them, whether these



Led by Canon Hore the sisters take part in Eucharistic Adoration.



Faith journey to priesthood gave profound contentment

J OHNPROMISE Umeozuru was living a comfortable life with a great job and financial security – but he felt something was missing.

After acting on an early ambition to become a priest, inspired by a religious teacher, and completing two pontifical degrees as a seminarian in Nigeria he had travelled to England to get experience of the “real world”.

But despite taking a Master's Degree at Cardiff Metropolitan University, and enjoying widespread travel in his social worker job, Johnpromise found that his spiritual thirst was still unquenched.

“I was not fulfilled in my comfortable life because my heart was yearning for something higher,” said Johnpromise, aged 37, who grew up as a practising Catholic in South-East Nigeria.

“I later discerned through the guidance and support of my long-time spiritual director that God was calling me to dedicate myself totally to Him in the Catholic priesthood.”

During his subsequent faith journey Johnpromise felt a “profound sense of consolation, happiness and contentment” as he looked forward to a life with no material possessions.

“On the other hand, there was a deep sense of desolation, sadness and emptiness when I considered hanging on to all I had with all the trappings therein.”

The sense of happiness and contentment has stayed with him ever since he enrolled in 2017 for two years’ training at St John’s Seminary, Wonersh, near Guildford in Surrey.

“There is an inner peace that has enveloped me ever since the Lord came calling once more and that has never left me in my journey of discipleship with the Lord,” he said.

“Like St Paul, I count every other thing including the great job, salary and life I had as rubbish for the sake of Christ and his Church.”

Johnpromise’s ordination as a Deacon last year has enabled him to examine on a daily basis his thoughts, words and actions in line with the life of Christ and the teachings of the Church.

“I find it liberating to be a servant to all without ulterior



Seminarian Johnpromise Umeozuru pictured at the entrance to the Chapel at St John’s Seminary in Wonersh.

motives,” he said. He has also found it “profoundly enriching” to carry out two practical placements while at Wonersh, helping and assisting at Alcoholics Anonymous and attending to the spiritual needs of the female Catholics in HM Prison Send.

Johnpromise, whose home parish is Sacred Heart and St Peter the Apostle, Waterlooville, Havant, looks forward to his priestly ministry when he will “serve the people of God and minister God’s love and mercy to them through the sacraments of the Church”.

He invites people in the Diocese to be present at his ordination on July 20 at 11am in St John’s Catholic Cathedral in Portsmouth.

“I humbly request the people of God to pray that God moulds me into an instrument of His love and mercy to soothe the spiritual hunger of his people,” he said. ■

Johnpromise on his Philosophical Graduation Day in Nigeria in 2005 flanked by his parents Marcel and Elizabeth.



Bournemouth Oratorians, left to right, Brother Francisco Hintikka, Father Dominic Jacob, Father Peter Edwards, and Brother Andrew Wagstaff outside the French Gothic-style Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Inspiring Oratory is beacon of hope and shining light of faith

IT’S a beacon of beauty and hope on the south coast of England – and its spiritual origins are unique.

Bournemouth Oratory, one of seven such in Britain, is a community of secular priests and brothers living the life of St Philip Neri, the sixteenth century “Apostle of Rome”.

Based in the imposing French Gothic-style Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the centre of the resort, the Oratorians have daily times for communal silent prayer and silent meals with readings.

As with every Oratory, daily life is guided by the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Oratory established as an institute of secular clergy by St Philip in 1556.

Since their arrival in 2017 – at Bishop Philip Egan’s invitation – Father Peter Edwards, Father Dominic Jacob (co-founder of the Oxford Oratory), Brother Francisco Hintikka and Brother Andrew Wagstaff have enthusiastically pursued the Oratorian way of life. There are daily familiar discourses on the Word of God, daily opportunities for Confession, Sacred Liturgy and music which is both beautiful and devotional, and a distinctive

pastoral apostolate in the parish. On four nights every week they host “Hope for Food,” with SVP and other volunteers feeding up to 100 homeless rough sleepers.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous use the Oratory’s halls alongside the church and parishioners hold regular tea parties for the elderly and lonely.

The “Little Oratory” (the original foundation of laymen, integral to any Oratory) already comprises a dozen men being formed in the spirituality of St Philip, while passers-by pop in for the daily Oratory prayers with many being drawn by the warmth and welcome, and taking repose in stillness and silence of the Oratory church. “Oratorians are ‘fishers rather than hunters’ who draw people to the Oratory by their availability, the cheerfulness and joy for which St Philip was renowned and by beauty in liturgy and music,” said Father Peter.

There is now an additional Mass on most mornings, extended periods of Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction on Sundays.

As part of the Confederation of Oratories of St Philip Neri, Bournemouth Oratory-in-Formation (to give it its full title)

venerates Blessed John Henry Newman who in 1849 established the first English Oratory in Birmingham. Oratorians refer to the famous theologian as “Our Cardinal” and welcome his forthcoming canonisation which will deepen awareness of his universal influence, not least on the Second Vatican Council.

The Oratory provides the Catholic Chaplaincy to Bournemouth University, with Sunday evening CathSoc meetings in the Oratory, and one of the Oratorians being on campus each week.

With the Oratory House currently under renovation, a subsequent redevelopment of the halls and subterranean areas is planned.

The Bishop’s vision for Bournemouth Oratory as ultimately a state-of-the-art centre for catechetics, formation and evangelisation is a fitting destiny for what is already recognised as a shining light of faith in the Diocese.

In the words of Father Peter: “In the midst of much homelessness, and the attendant problems of alcohol and drug abuse and loneliness, the Oratory is increasingly recognised as a much needed powerhouse of prayer.” ■

Major youth event focuses on impact of social media

MORE than 300 young people from around the Diocese were among an audience of 8,000 who enjoyed a day of prayer, adoration, catechesis and celebration at the UK's biggest annual Catholic youth event.

The theme for Flame 2019, which took place at the SSE Wembley Arena in March, was #Significance – and looked at the underlying role social media can play in shaping people's self esteem.

It was based on the concept that in today's society young people often feel constrained to measure self-worth simply by Twitter and Instagram "likes", and responses to Facebook status updates and Snapchat conversations.

Instead, Flame explored the deep Catholic truth of our being – that people are God's work of art and can only ever understand ourselves in relationship with Him.

Tom Sellars, Diocese Youth Ministry Team Lead, said: "It was very good at getting to the root of contemporary issues to do with social media and addressing them while exploring the core fundamentals of faith."

Throughout the day there were speakers alongside world class music and drama.

They included Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland, US gospel speaker Robert Madu, Christian rapper Guvna B and his wife Emma Borquaye, founder of the Girl Got Faith lifestyle blog.

Music and worship were led by award-winning composer Tim Hughes, who has written worship songs including *Here I Am to Worship*, *Happy Day*, *The Way* and *Hope & Glory*.



Service User and musician Mark Caruso shares a meal with Volunteer Andrea Gosztonyi.



Caritas Director Kevin Gallagher talks with Volunteer Claire Groves at the night shelter.

Caring support to help rough sleepers rebuild their lives

CHURCH communities in Windsor have been working together to help rough sleepers get off the streets and rediscover a better quality of life through a pilot night shelter project.

Five churches in the Berkshire market town, including the Catholic, Anglican and Baptist places of worship, opened up their community halls during the winter to allow homeless people to spend the night in comfort and with a bed to sleep in.

Volunteers cooked up hot evening meals and supplied breakfast and, importantly, also provided advice, support and a listening ear to the people who turned up for the night.

The project called More Than A Shelter is all about relationship building – the aim being that by working with the homeless people and showing their care and compassion it may help them to look for the kind of support that will help them rebuild their lives, such as drug recovery or alcohol rehabilitation.

This even runs as far as their pets as it is one of the only homeless projects in the country where rough sleepers are allowed to bring their dogs along with them to encourage them to get involved.

The project is run by a number of agencies including Caritas Portsmouth, the social action arm of the Diocese, as well as Foodshare and Churches Together in Windsor.

Caritas Director Kevin Gallagher said: "The pilot project was initially set up to provide a night shelter during the coldest months of the year. At least one of the five churches was open every night of the week and so there was always somewhere for people to stay the night.

"It is a purely voluntary led project, providing a high level of hospitality in terms of the cooked meals and a warm bed. We were overwhelmed by the level of response from the community. When we first sought volunteers we expected, maybe, 20 to 30 –



Service User Kevin McNally pictured at the night shelter with his Staffordshire Bull Terrier Diamond.

around 160 actually came forward from all walks of life. The main aim of the project is to get people back into a more stable way of life by encouraging them and giving them the confidence to seek expert advice.

"One of the main causes of people becoming homeless is relationship breakdown and this can isolate people and make them feel very lonely. So one of the things the volunteers look to do is to build new relationships with them, which helps restore faith in people and community."

Caritas is now looking at the possibility of rolling out the project to other deaneries – but to also play a bigger role in getting to the root cause of rough sleeping.

Kevin added: "Windsor is no different to any town around the UK in that rough sleepers can be found on the streets. That is why a project such as this is so welcome and why we are already looking to bring it back next winter.

"But we also have a responsibility to look at the origins of the problem and try to resolve the issues that lead to rough sleeping.

"So we want to play our part alongside local councils, the police and other agencies in coming up with the solutions." ■



Street Angel Volunteer Yvonne Conroy, left, and Project Co-ordinator Emilie Chana.

Innovative communicators are needed locally

THE communications department invites the people of Portsmouth diocese to take part in three key initiatives to be developed through the year.

Firstly, a network of communications ambassadors will be formed. "We intend to hold a series of training sessions for anyone interested," said Communications Director Chris Smith. "Our major focus is to share the stories of ordinary people leading extraordinary lives, so we need to support them locally through a network of communications representatives, who can identify, communicate and cultivate these witnesses of faith."

The second initiative is to offer training to anyone interested in speaking on specific topics regarding Church teaching and the challenges of society.

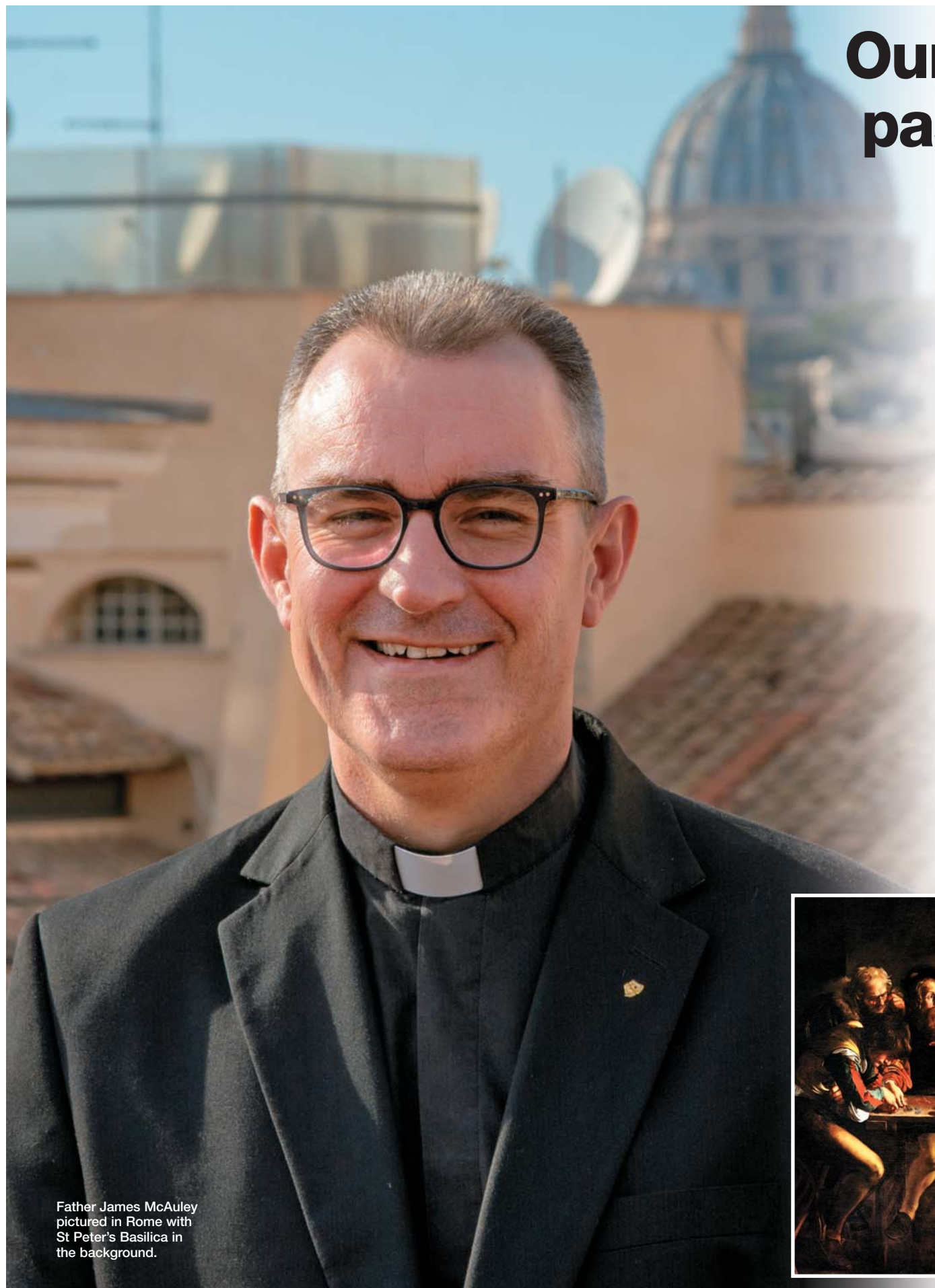
"We need people to speak on behalf of the Church," Chris asserted, "especially in areas of controversy where issues can be highly emotive and pushed aggressively by secular society."

"The Church has a real contribution to make" he continued, "therefore we want to offer our faithful the training to enter this dialogue on the secular stage".

Thirdly, the department invites those working in the areas of communications, media and creative design, to form part of a think-tank. "We're seeking innovative ways of telling the stories of the people of the diocese because ultimately it's people who inspire other people."

"We recognise that across the diocese there are many with charisms and gifts who, through their professional skills, could be a vital help in generating ideas and new ways forward, to fulfil our vision of 'bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through his Church'."

To get involved with any of these initiatives, please contact the communications team: media@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk ■



Father James McAuley pictured in Rome with St Peter's Basilica in the background.

Our man in Rome's key role as pastoral tutor for seminarians

VISITS to the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome provide Father James McAuley with recurring inspiration in his faith journey.

Within the walls of the holy building – close by the Venerable English College where he is Academic Tutor – hangs a painting by Caravaggio.

The Calling of St Matthew, depicting Jesus Christ summoning the tax collector Levi to follow him, speaks to Father James personally because St Matthew is the patron saint of accountants – and that is his own profession.

"I visit San Luigi dei Francesi no less than once a month and it is a tremendous privilege to be able to look at this wonderful work of art which reflects the call to priesthood," he said. "A priest is first and foremost a disciple, a follower of Christ and with every other disciple he shares the vocation to holiness."

Father James' admiration for the 1599 masterpiece reflects his absolute commitment to his work in assisting in the formation of future priests of England and Wales.

As a member of the formation staff at the Venerable English College he has oversight of the academic component of the formation of the seminarians who all attend classes at

one of the Pontifical Universities in Rome.

The Northern Ireland-born specialist in Biblical Theology also has responsibility for the overall formation of one-third of the seminarians as their pastoral tutor.

He meets each of the seminarians at least three times a semester for a formation tutorial, and also teaches first-years Latin as part of their philosophy course.

"I discuss the four aspects of their formation with them, set goals and assist them in their development and progress," said Father James, who has a Law Degree from Oxford University and worked as a chartered accountant before being ordained as a priest in 2010.

"My primary responsibility as a seminary formater is to be as good a role model as possible, and I can only do this with the help of God's grace."

"When I arrived in Rome two years ago it was a bit like coming back to my old school as a teacher because I had spent seven happy years as a seminarian at the Venerable English College starting in 2003."

In fact the summons to become Academic Tutor in Rome came as a surprise to Father James, who had spent three years as a priest in Jersey and then four years working

at St John's Catholic Cathedral in Portsmouth as well as being the Bishop's Secretary with never a thought that he would return to Italy.

He is in Rome for a maximum of five years after which he will return to his pastoral work in the Diocese.

In his current role he finds the commitment of many seminarians to personal prayer and to study "both edifying and personally challenging," while he also admires their sense of mission exemplified by periodic "Nights of Light" inviting people on the streets of Rome to light candles and pray.

A high point of his time so far in the Italian capital was meeting Pope Francis when the Pontiff received the College in an audience last April.

He was introduced to the Pope by the College Rector and His Holiness spoke words of encouragement for the important job with which Father James has been entrusted.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to be able to encounter in a direct way the successor to St Peter," he said.

"To hear words of encouragement from the Holy Father and to meet priests and seminarians from all over the world trying to follow God's will for them have both enriched my own personal life of faith and challenged me to respond more radically to the call to follow the Lord."

"Faith is a gift. In order for it to grow, it needs to be shared with others." ■



Caravaggio's masterpiece painting *The Calling of St Matthew* which Father James regularly views.



The Venerable English College in Rome where Father James is an Academic Tutor.



Mentoring support for married couples is based on Christ's love

ABA Shields and her team have put into place a dynamic, multi-faceted initiative, providing much needed support to married couples and family life throughout the diocese.

The team have been far and wide, inviting everyone from engaged couples, to seasoned married couples, couples trying for a child and even grandparents, to take part in the programme, which finds its roots firmly in the love of Christ.

A series of ministries have been established looking at all the different aspects of family life – all of which are critical to the Church.

They start with a sacramental marriage preparation programme called Smart Loving aimed at those getting ready for a life together.

"In an age where one in two marriages end in divorce we bring people back to the start to the origins of love and marriage," explains Aba, the Marriage and Family Project Worker for the Diocese. "We look at it from the perspective of God's ideas on the subject rather than man's.

"We look at Jesus on the cross and the intense love he demonstrated when he died for us. Married Christian love is based on Christ's love for the Church and for us and that is what we convey."

The programme is delivered at regular sessions which take place at parishes around the diocese. As well as being able to attend face-to-face people can also get involved online via webcam.

The programme is split into seven different sections which are mission to love, dialogue, knowing me-knowing you, building unity, sex as a sacred embrace, soulmates for life and natural fertility awareness and planning.

Aba said: "We use mentor couples to deliver the sessions – so they can draw from their own experiences to help other couples as they begin their journey.

"The wonderful thing is that those who deliver the course are strengthened too simply – by talking about the things which made their



“The wonderful thing is that those who deliver the course are strengthened too – simply by talking about the things which made their marriage strong in the first place.

Marriage and Family Project Worker Aba Shields pictured in St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth.

marriage strong in the first place."

In addition to Smart Loving, a marriage enrichment programme has been set up to help couples get the most out of life together. This includes enrichment days, retreats and support groups.

Aba added: "This may help couples who are in difficulty, where there is a gridlock in communication or where one party feels there is a problem but the other doesn't.

"We encourage self-examination and discussion of what brought the couple together in the first place

and other ways of making the bond stronger."

Other programmes include natural fertility awareness and planning, which helps couples understand further the physiology of their bodies and enjoy intimacy and sexual embrace in line with the scriptures.

There is also the Catholic Grandparents Association, which aims to unite people by the same goal – doing the very best for their children and grandchildren.

Aba added: "Grandparents' vital

contribution to the family, Church and society are as important now as they have ever been.

"They have a huge role in their families in terms of praying, showing the way and passing on our faith."

■ Courses for all the different programmes are held regularly around the diocese. To find out more visit portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/marriage or email Aba at mandfl@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Diocesan pilgrims drawn to LOURDES



A bird's eye view of the Lourdes basilique set in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Photo courtesy of Père Igor.

Young people to play pivotal role on spiritual journey

FIFTY young faithful have taken up the invitation of Bishop Philip to host this year's diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The young people themselves are tasked with inviting everyone in the diocese to join their journey to the grotto of Massabielle, where Our Lady appeared to little Bernadette all those years ago. The invitation goes out in particular to the VIPs – those carrying Christ's cross through sickness and infirmity.

The customary activities of the pilgrimage will be on in full force: liturgies, baths, torchlight procession, Eucharistic procession etc. But in addition, there will be a time of daily catechesis for all the pilgrims, led by the young people.

This youth-focused pilgrimage is "based on the vision for new evangelisation" said Father PJ Smith, Head of Educational Chaplaincies.

"While it contains all the elements of the traditional pilgrimage that we all know and love, it also has this notion of incarnational relationship, namely, that the relationship we have with the Lord strengthens the relationship we have with our neighbour.

"The young people's desire is to serve the Lord by serving their neighbour."

The aim of the pilgrimage is twofold. "We hope that it will allow the young people to grow in their love of the Lord, of the Church, and give them a greater understanding of the commandment 'Love Thy Neighbour,'" Father Smith explained.

"Also, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we hope that the pilgrims will recognise Christ in their young neighbours who are reaching out to serve them, and experience a strengthening and renewal in the vibrancy and joy that our youth will bring to the liturgies."

So far, around 60 people have booked on to this summer's pilgrimage which takes place from July 24 to 30 and includes travel, hotel accommodation and meals. The pilgrimage will be led by Bishop Philip and Father PJ and supported by members of the Youth Ministry team and as well as several members of the Fellowship of Christian University Students.

■ For more details or to book a place contact Father PJ Smith on **07780 221686** or email lourdes@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



Grotto of Massabielle at Lourdes. Photo courtesy of Manuel González Olachea y Franco.



Chance to help shape the future issues of Viva Voce

WE would like to know your thoughts on the first issue of Viva Voce to help shape the content of future issues of the new magazine.

What do you like about the publication? Is there anything you do not like? Is there anything not covered that you would like to see included?

For example, would you like to see more space given to the analysis of the Catholic faith, or news and events, or human interest stories from the parishes, or news for young people or stories from Catholic schools throughout the Diocese?

Also if you have news stories for us or suggestions for features, let us know.

Please send your comments and ideas by email to media@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk by Friday May 10.

School forges closer ties with communities

THE all-girls Beaulieu Convent School on Jersey is forging ever-closer ties with communities through an inspiring combination of Catholic formation and mission.

The Beaulieu Institute of Theological Literacy has been established on-site as a response to Bishop Philip Egan's call to place schools at the heart of the New Evangelisation.

Parents, family and friends at the St Helier school are being given the chance to study at the Institute for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

The Institute has been set up as a hub for resourcing and exploration, combining theological and philosophical expertise with wider educational research and practice in the context of schools, colleges and parishes.

"Through the Institute, Beaulieu Convent School hopes to be both a greenhouse to nurture faith and

a huge, open, expansive field where faith can grow and flourish and equip people for their role in the home, the parish, the school and the public square," said the Director, Rev Dr Paul Rowan.

"We look to engage people on the island and further afield with guest lectures during the year from figures of international standing in the fields of education, philosophy, ethics, theology and other associated disciplines."

In other initiatives, parents at the school are regularly invited to retreats and days/mornings/afternoons of reflection offered by the Chaplain and Director of Catholic Life, Further Education and Skills.

A close liaison with Caritas Jersey helps Beaulieu Convent School to identify those in need in the community including the poor, homeless and elderly.

A "Giving Tree" project ensures

items such as tinned food goods are collected and handed over to the local St Vincent de Paul Society team for distribution to those in need. Through the Mustard Seed Appeal the students put together shoe boxes containing basic essentials which are driven to Romania.

Money is raised for CAFOD especially during their Fast Days in October and throughout Lent with soup and bread lunches on Fridays during these periods.

"Our students are always reminded that they go out into the world to make a difference with the education they have received at Beaulieu," added Dr Rowan.

"Liturgically this is symbolised by the giving of individual candles and the anointing for mission during the Year 13 Leavers' Mass, as they take the flame of God's love, enkindled and nurtured by Beaulieu, out into a world badly in need of Christ." ■

Dr Rev Paul Rowan, Director of the Beaulieu Institute of Theological Literacy, is pictured with Beaulieu School Chaplain Marta Pugsley, left, and Primary School Teacher Amber Risebrow.



Missionaries go out on streets to extend arm of friendship to strangers

THROWING open the church doors and extending the arm of friendship to strangers may seem like a simple metaphor for promoting the Catholic faith, but in Gosport it has become a very real and tangible way of encouraging people to join parishioners in worship.

Through the Nightfever project, the team at St Mary's Church literally walk out onto the adjacent high street armed with lanterns, tea lights and prayers and invite those walking by to come into the venue to pray or join the adoration.

Street missionaries join parish priests and other voluntary members of the congregation to reach out to passersby, accompanied by the gentle sound of choral music emanating from the church which is lit with the warm glow of candles.

The approach appears to have an inspirational effect on lots of people – many who were simply going for a night out in Gosport find themselves kneeling in front of the Blessed Sacrament writing out a prayer card or lighting a candle to remember a departed loved one.

Father Serafino Lanzetta, parish priest at St Mary's, said: "We run Nightfever on one Saturday evening every other month; it is something I call a Eucharistic outreach. It has been a very successful way of inviting people into the church and joining us in adoration – we can get 60, 70 or even more people coming into St Mary's, lighting candles, praying.

"Often the people who take up our invite are lapsed Catholics who have not been into church for sometimes, but we also get people

who have never been to church before or only ever attended a wedding ceremony or funeral.

"I think the attraction starts with the initial approach. The conversation is as simple as 'our church is open tonight, do you wish to come in and light a candle?'

"Many write something or ask for prayer – a small number request to stay a little longer, which is great. There are also practicing Catholics who take the opportunity to go to Confession.

"Afterwards we give them a newsletter containing our contact details and encourage them to keep in touch. For some it is a one-off visit but for others it is the start of a new way of life. We have even had people who have gone on to be baptised after joining us through

this process." Based on the success of the project, it has now been extended to daylight hours.

Father Lanzetta said: "We now run a similar project called Dayfever, which takes place every Thursday afternoon and, if anything, is proving even more effective in

encouraging people to come into the church. I think it works so well because it gives people, often with no Church connection, an 'experience' of a sense of the holy place – a prayerful space and a church that is open." ■



Street Missionary Aidan Joseph helps Gosport resident Beryl Cattle light a candle in the church.



Opening the door of St Mary's to passers-by – Street Missionary Anne Berger.



Pictured with lambs they are tending at St Michael's Abbey are, left to right, Brother Gorazd, Brother Dom Benedikt and Brother Ambrose.

Lambing runs in harmony with Paschal preparations

Ora et labora – pray and work – is the motto of the monks of St Michael's Abbey, Farnborough, Hampshire, and at springtime their manual work runs in harmony with Paschal preparations.

In the hours between regular devotions they are busy with the lambing season on their small monastery farm, making sure the new arrivals survive and flourish.

It's a labour of love for the Benedictines who look after a flock of about 30 rare breed Wiltshire Horn sheep as well as chickens and numerous colonies of honey bees.

"In lambing time, we bring the ewes into the barn and check on their enclosure hour by hour," said the Abbot, Right Reverend Dom Cuthbert Brogan. "We check on them early in the morning and late at night to make sure the new-born are suckling properly, and we also deliver new lambs."

It is a poignant coincidence that during this springtime of attending carefully to the arrival of new life in the abbey, the community also

prepares spiritually for their personal renewal in the Resurrection of Our Lord at Easter.

The spring Equinox, March 21, also marks the Feast of St Benedict, and is a time during which postulants become novices and first vows are taken.

"Whether it be lambing or new brothers beginning their time, or monks taking their first vows, for us the spring and the Easter season is about leaving behind the darkness and dullness of winter and coming into radiant freshness," said Abbot Brogan.

Monastic life was first established in 1895 as part of the largest Congregation of the Benedictine Confederation, which includes St Benedict's own monasteries in Italy as its members.

As well as manual work within the enclosure of the monastery, life at the abbey has a special focus on beauty in the liturgy and the chanting of the office. The liturgy is celebrated facing East, in Latin, and sung to Gregorian Chant. "This is a strict tradition and a central

part of our life," the Abbot explained.

The pendulum swings between the various duties, with the monks moving between prayer (signalled by the ringing of a bell) and work on the farm, in the apiary, the shop, guesthouse, craft bookbindery and publishing and printing house.

There are also the daily duties of cooking, cleaning and administration.

Due to a high reputation for beauty and depth in its liturgical tradition and music, people travel from far and wide to attend the Sunday Conventual Mass at the Abbey.

"I come to this place because in the silent beauty of the sacred music, in the peace and reverence in the Holy Mass, my heart is literally lifted to heaven. I experience a deep joy whenever I come here," said Karen from Cheshire.

Others visit the Shrine of St Joseph on site which is cared for by the monks, and still more make a springtime visit to watch the lambs leaping in the fields. ■