



# St Mary's Magazine

Dec 2025

This year has certainly been an eventful one in the parish, if I have missed anything, I apologise. If there is anything that should be included, please let me know.

It has also been an eventful year for us in Catholic Church, with the death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday and the election of the first American as Pope Leo XIV.



*Donne PP. XIV  
8 maggio 2025*

## Welcome

St Mary's Parish welcomed Wayne into full communion with the Church. He had been attending instruction with Fr Peter and Deacon James in Fleet and came to St Mary's when Fr Peter returned here.

At Mass Wayne was Received, Confirmed (with permission of Bishop Philip), and then Communicated with the rest of the Parish Community. Deacon James Snyder, from Fleet parish, was Wayne's sponsor and helped in his formation for three years. Fleet Parish.

A lovely service and a great welcome to Wayne.

After the service members of the parish were able to meet Wayne and congratulate him.

At Easter, in St John's Cathedral, we also welcomed Oscar into the church. He then went on to be a helper at the diocesan tri to Lourdes and wrote a diary of his experience.

### Lourdes with the Diocese of Portsmouth.

**Day 1:** I awoke very early and made it to the airport, where I met up with the pilgrimage group. Making it to Lourdes was unproblematic; I spent most of the time reading and listening to French podcasts. Bishop Phillip led us through the rosary on the coach from Toulouse airport, which disposed us well for a prayerful and spiritual experience. We made it to the hotel without issue, unpacked, and spent most of the rest of the day exploring the town. After we had mass in the afternoon, I settled down for a time of private prayer and French study, before going to bed early due to being exhausted.

**Day 2:** Straight after breakfast, we had a pleasant morning mass. Shortly thereafter, we split into two groups: one to take a tour of the town, and one to visit the famous baths with the miraculous water. I was part of the former group. Firstly, we visited the tiny house where Saint Bernadette used to live, learning more about her life and the apparitions she experi-



enced of Our Lady. Throughout the trip, we always asked for their intercession at the end of our prayers. We then visited the gorgeous cathedral where Saint Bernadette was baptised. I made use of my strength pushing a

lovely pilgrim by the name of Georgette's wheelchair. The two groups then swapped; I headed for the baths with mine. Unfortunately, they had closed down for the day, so I went and made my confession at the Reconciliation Chapel instead, which brought me so much peace. In the evening, we had vespers, praying many Psalms. Then, after dinner, we attended a wonderful torchlight procession. I once again assisted Georgette while we all carried candles and prayed the rosary in multiple languages. It was a spectacular experience. To end the day, I helped Georgette back to the hotel, buying her a burger along the way.

**Day 3:** In the morning, the Bishop led an Anointing of the sick. I helped Georgette to the chapel, then she and other elderly pilgrims received the sacrament, accompanied by our prayers. I also took the opportunity to purchase a French Bible, to nourish my spirit and enhance my fluency at the same time. Straight afterwards, we attended the international mass led in multiple languages. It took place in the massive underground Basilica of Saint Pius X, and there were thousands of people from all over the world. It was quite surreal.



My faith and hope were certainly strengthened by seeing so many faithful Catholics all gathered in one place. It reminded me that we are not alone, even if the world so often seems against the truth of Jesus Christ. Later, we hopped on a coach and went down to the small town of Gavarnie, near the Spanish border. We saw beautiful snow-capped peaks as well as the largest waterfall in Europe. I took some time to pray in a little Church as soon as we had arrived.

**Day 4:** After morning mass, we went and prayed the high stations of the cross, gazing

upon immersive icons of each sorrowful event. I felt this was a time of penance and reflection on the suffering of Our Lord, and I tried to open my heart to everything he suffered for us all. In the afternoon, we prayerfully lit some candles and offered them at the stands (Georgette and I shared one, since it's quite hard to hold a candle while pushing a wheelchair)! We then enjoyed some time for adoration at the Blessed Sacrament Procession in the underground Basilica. I visited the grotto where Our Lady appeared to Saint Bernadette, taking some time to pray and seek her blessed intercession. In the evening, we enjoyed our last big event together by having a Catholicism-themed quiz and some song performances, which was very nice.

**Day 5:** The last day was largely uneventful. We had mass in the morning, but after that, I was exhausted from a busy week. I spent most of the day resting and trying to sleep on the coach and plane back (but I was unsuccessful!) On said coach, the Bishop led us through the full rosary, which was a lovely way to conclude our time in Lourdes.

### **History of the Church in Alton (cont)**

*We finished last issue with the diaries at Douay on young men who went there to train for the priesthood.*

When priests returned home to bring the Sacraments to those who had remained faithful to the old religion, they had to hide for their own safety. In one of the houses of Alton, 'Chandos Lodge' - the home of Lady Richardson, a secret compartment for hiding priests still exists. The priests worked in secret hearing confessions, giving the last rites, saying Mass and baptising infants.

The old registers at Tichborne, the ancestral home of the Tichborne family, give details of some of the baptisms at Alton. Jacqueline Stubbington, daughter of James and Martha, was baptised at Alton in July 1786 by Fr Francis Leigh. Six pages later in the same register there is an entry for a John Stubbington, born 29th March 1789 and baptised in the April of the same year.

Graveyards are also a valuable source of historical evidence. In the 'Monumental Inscriptions and Sexton's Book' from St James' cemetery at Winchester (unique in England as

a burial ground used exclusively by Catholics since the reign of Elizabeth 1st) there are entries from the Wells family of Alton in 1737 and 1747 among many others.

When religious freedom was permitted towards the end of the 18th Century, the old faith came to life. Slowly people began to build churches again. The Portsmouth Diocese was formed in 1882.

In 1891 a priest and 6 La Sagesse sisters lived in Alton. They had come after a request for help by Philip Abraham who ran a private mental hospital at Westbrook House. They stayed only a short time due to the animosity they experienced. A 2nd group of nuns arrived to work in the asylum and in 1892 they opened their chapel, St Augustine, to the public.

In 1899 Benedictine nuns bought Normandy House, renamed it St Saviour's Chapel and opened it to the public.

Later, a Mrs Mangles of 'Kitcombe' organised an appeal to build a church. Donations came from all over, including Lady Arundel, the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Henry and Lady Tichborne. The new church designed in a plain gothic style, was built in Albert Rd and opened in 1911.

The Church, which accommodated 100 people, soon became too small for the congregation and in 1938 a larger temporary church was opened on the site of our present church.

#### *Editor's note*

*When the church in Albert Rd was sold, the proceeds went into a trust to provide money for the benefit of St Mary's parishioners. And there it sat until Fr Peter discovered its existence and the money was used for the building of the Church Hall as we see it today. The Oct 2006 magazine mentions this and the many fundraising events being held such as Sales of goods, Curry night, Christmas flower demonstration, Bridge night and many more. We were very busy that year!*

#### **Birthday wishes**

It was a significant birthday for our own Deacon Steve this April.



#### **Pilgrimage to Rome**

This year I went on my second pilgrimage with the diocese, this one to Rome. There were 35 of us, led by Canon PJ, who set off before sunrise from Gatwick on Monday, 28th July, to Rome's Fiumicino airport. We took minivans from the airport to Hotel Lancelot, a few roads away from the Colosseum. We had our first Mass of the week said by Bishop Philip at the English College, where 2 of the seminarians in our group are studying, and is where Fr. Peter was a student.

On Tuesday, we went to Santa Maria Maggiore (St Mary Major), which is one of the four major basilicas in Rome and my favourite one. During the jubilee year, every 25 years, the holy doors are opened at all four of them, and it is tradition to go through them. In the afternoon, we went to see the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel, which were stunning.

On Wednesday, we went to Santa Maria Sopra Minerva to pray at the casket of Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who is set to be canonised in September. Throughout the afternoon, we went to





see the touristy spots of Rome: the Pantheon, the Spanish Steps, the Trevi fountain, and Piazza Navona, where we stopped for lunch. We also went to St Peter's Basilica, which was the largest of the 4, to go through the holy doors and explore.

On Thursday, we started the day by going to the basilica of St Paul's, outside the walls, to walk through our 3rd set of holy doors of the pilgrimage. We then went to Tre Fontane, where St. Paul was martyred. In the afternoon, we went to the catacombs of St. Callixtus, where we had Mass.

On Friday, we went to a very old church (a 12th-century church with a 4th-century church inside it) called San Clemente, which was a very short walk from our hotel. We had mass at the high altar. Later in the day, we went to St John Lateran's and walked through the final set of holy doors. Then we went to Circus Maximus, which was filled with hundreds of tents for confession.

The weekend started with mass at the Irish College, then a long walk to Tor Vergata, a massive sports complex on the outskirts of Rome. At the overnight vigil, we met people from all over the world. We were next to an American group, a Polish group and a Spanish group. But as we explored the rest of the areas, we met people from Australia, Lebanon, Malta, Argentina and many more countries from every corner of the globe.

On Saturday evening, Pope Leo held a vigil of prayer, and then on Sunday morning, we had mass with the Pope as well. After mass, we



hiked back to our hotel and spent our last day

in Rome. We returned to England the next morning.

I had an amazing time during the pilgrimage, met some amazing people and made some great friends. The entire pilgrimage was very well organised and planned, and everyone made sure everyone else had a great time. I'm very happy I went to Rome, and I highly recommend, if you can, to go on the next pilgrimage with the diocese.

Josh

Our amazing flower ladies and gardening team



enjoyed a summer get-together strawberry tea and they would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining either team. All

Do you have any old, unwanted tool?

If so, you can take them to Alton Men's Shed, Anstey Park, any day between 10am and noon.

Items they cannot use will be passed on to the charity 'Tools with a mission'

helpers welcome regardless of experience. Please get in touch with either Patsy Clark or Caroline Cochrane.

**45th Celebration**

20 years ago many parishioners will remember celebrating Fr Peter's 25th Anniversary as a priest. At that time he shared the day with the first communion children who were receiving their certificates, after which there was a celebration to which many of us stayed.

I don't know of any other parish who has been able to celebrate their parish priest's 25th and 45th anniversary as we did last July. It was a



great day, full of joy and happiness. The hall was full, the food was amazing and the atmosphere was wonderful.

Even the ice cream machine made a welcome re-appearance.

### St John Henry Newman

From time to time the Church recognises holy men and women whose teaching not only is important for their contemporaries but still inspires and instructs us today. They are known as Doctors of the Church

St John Henry Newman has recently been named the 38th Doctor of the Church. Canonised in 2019 and acclaimed by many popes over the last century, his teachings cover many aspects of the faith,

Newman is only the 2nd English Doctor of the Church after St Bede the Venerable.

### Reminiscences

*Many of you will remember Morris Hopkins, a long-standing member of our parish, who moved to Devon a few years ago, he has sent some observations on the changing language and practice of Catholics he has known. (slightly abridged)*

Recently a Catholic relative of mine used the phrase 'joining the priesthood' and I thought, obviously I know what that means, but it's not the way I would have put it. The expression I grew up with was 'going into the Church', which was frequently heard when I was a child learning about the family, on either the Hopkins or the Parker/Morris side, I have counted nine ordained priests and five nuns in my grandparents and great grandparents generation, so 'going into the church' entered the conversation regularly.

There have been many changes in the language and practices of English Catholics in my lifetime, for instance, since the abundance of religious vocations in my family in previous generations there have not been any!

A study of the two family trees up to the time of the last recorded birth in 1971, shows not a single case of divorce. In fact, there were no

second marriages following a divorce until 1970.

About 25 years ago, I led a small study group at Alton U3A: Christian traditions in the secular world today. Examples ranged from Catherine Wheels to Michaelmas Terms, from the Pilgrim's Way to the Grey Friar pub. However, the topic of greatest interest on that course was Christian names.

There are several groups which compete when today's parents come to choose names for their children : a) those taken from classical times- Hector and Penelope b) heroes from history - Stewart, Nelson, Florence and Victoria c) Old Testament names - Adam, Daniel, Ruth d) saints names

In spite of the plentiful choice of Christian names there have been some extraordinary names given at the Christening of Catholic children.

The Penny Catechism taught me that grace was chiefly obtained through prayer and the sacraments. Therefore Confession is valuable, so why does it appear to me that many practising Catholics fail to take the opportunity to top-up with this precious fuel? This is yet another aspect of Catholic practice which has seen some change in my lifetime.

In my experience, ecumenism was higher on the Christian agenda in the late 90s than it has ever been since and I have heard no regrets from the Catholic Community.

I am not at all pessimistic about the future of the Church. I may have observed some changes but we are still blessed with that guarantee which Jesus gave to St Peter: the Church will prevail and the keys of the kingdom await us.



Morris Hopkins

### Macmillan Afternoon Tea

Many thanks to those who came and congratulations to the organisers.

### Foodbank Donations

Thanks to all those parishioners who continue to donate goods to the Foodbank it is greatly appreciated. Thanks also to the parishioners who are wanted to help clean the Church and Hall. They gather up all the donations and deliver them to the Foodbank. Donations are collected on the 1st weekend of the month. This every 5th week

Please contact the Parish Office if you can help.

### 70th Birthday

What a year for celebrations. We joined together for a Parish Shared Lunch in honour of Fr Peter's 70th birthday. Again the hall was full of parishioners and some said it was the



best get together ever. Grateful thanks must go



to the Joseph family and all those who helped on the day and supplied such wonderful food as always, especially our resident Subway and



Domino's suppliers, not forgetting our cake-maker.

**Breaking News**  
 From Fleet and Jersey, all of whom he had seen through the Diaconate programme. A had called Rocky in a Penguin over the head with a Club.  
 Looking forward to the next shared lunch. He tied him to a Waggon Wheel with a Blue Ribbon and made his getaway in a Taxi!!  
 What a great way to celebrate.

Police say Rocky was last seen in Maryland with a Ginger Nut known to police as Rich T. They didn't leave a crumb of evidence so the Jammy Dodger got away with it!

*For all of us who remember the old biscuits.*

### Our Lady of Victories

Catenian Association members assisted the Catholic Military Association to finance the purchase an Icon of "Our Lady of Victories" from Ukraine. The two associations have been affiliated since 2022. Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) masterminded the transportation to the UK. The icon was acquired from St Anthony's Iconography studio in Lviv, Ukraine, close to the monastery of St Clement, where it was written. Under the guidance of artist Oksana Zhuravska, the studio continues the centuries-old traditions of well-known Ukrainian iconographers. As an association the Catenians are proud to link with two other Catholic organisations to bring this icon from the Ukraine. The Catholic Military Association was founded with a devotion to Our Lady of Victories.

The icon has been 18 months in the making. Delays resulted from problems connected with the war. Key Ukrainian staff were called up to the front line before returning to this project, with some suffering injuries and needing hospitalisation.

The icon's journey out of Ukraine took place against a backdrop of bombardments and other war-related security scares. For all concerned, it came as a relief when the icon made it out of Ukraine, arriving in one piece at ACN's UK national office in Sutton, Surrey.

The Icon was blessed at the Cathedral church of St Michael and St George in Aldershot by Rt Rev + Bishop Paul Mason (Bishop-in-

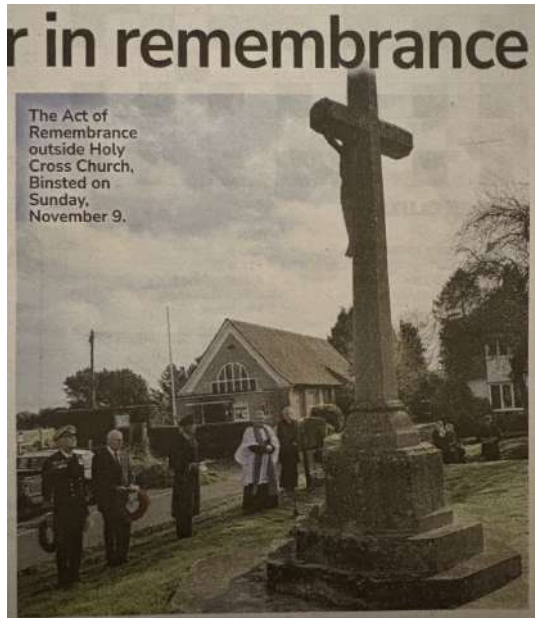


ordinary to His Majesty's Forces) and Rt Rev + Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski (Eparchial Bishop of the Ukranian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family). Many Catenians were present at the for the ceremony which included a choir from Ukraine. It was a very memorable occasion.

### **Remembrance Day**

We had our 2 minutes silence and the Last Post at the start of our Mass for Remembrance Day. It's always a poignant way to begin Mass.

But we are also grateful to Pam who has laid



the wreath on behalf of St Mary's at the Town Service for many years. It is always a moving ceremony and this year she was able to talk to family members of VC Horton and hear about his life.

Chris, another of our parishioners, laid a wreath at the Binstead Memorial of behalf of the Anglican Church, in full Navy uniform.

Cathie posted this beautiful poem on the parish whats app group but I thought you might be interested to know how it was 'discovered' fairly recently.

The poem itself was written in about 1936, before *The Hobbit*, and only rediscovered in 2013 when two Tolkien scholars researching a

1936 edition of *The Tablet*, found mention of 2 Tolkien poems published in the *Abingdon Annual of Our Lady's School*.

The School directed them where to find the 80 year old edition and in it they found this poem. How wonderful that it has been rediscovered and enjoyed once more.

## **Noel**

**by J.R.R. Tolkien**

Grim was the world and grey last night:  
The moon and stars were fled,  
The hall was dark without song or light,  
The fires were fallen dead.  
The wind in the trees was like to the sea,  
And over the mountains' teeth  
It whistled bitter-cold and free,  
As a sword leapt from its sheath.  
The lord of snows upreared his head;  
His mantle long and pale  
Upon the bitter blast was spread  
And hung o'er hill and dale.  
The world was blind,  
the boughs were bent,  
All ways and paths were wild:  
Then the veil of cloud apart was rent,  
And here was born a Child.  
The ancient dome of heaven sheer  
Was pricked with distant light;  
A star came shining white and clear  
Alone above the night.  
In the dale of dark in that hour of birth  
One voice on a sudden sang:  
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth  
Together at midnight rang.  
Mary sang in this world below:  
They heard her song arise  
O'er mist and over mountain snow  
To the walls of Paradise,  
And the tongue of many bells was stirred  
in Heaven's towers to ring  
When the voice of mortal maid was heard,  
That was mother of Heaven's King.

### **Christmas Mass Times**

#### **Christmas Eve**

5pm Family Mass

Vigil 7.30 Carols followed by Mass 8pm

**Christmas Day** 10am