

THE VINEYARD

PARISH MAGAZINE OF ST. VINCENT'S RC CHURCH, ALTRINCHAM ISSUE 58 SUMMER 2026



GOD'S HEALING POWER

Personal faith stories

PAPAL BLESSINGS

Volunteers receive special awards

LET'S CELEBRATE!

Sacraments, outstanding schools,
plus the Canon's big birthday!



THE VINEYARD TEAM

CONTENTS

- 3 REFLECTION
- 4 GOD’S HEALING POWER
- 5 UNITED IN PRAYER
- 6 CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS
- 8 MY FAITH JOURNEY
- 8 FIRST CLASS SERVICE
- 9 UNITED NATIONS
- 10 PAPAL BLESSINGS
- 11 THE SPIRIT OF CARMEL
- 12 POPE LEO’S FIRST YEAR
- 13 FAITH AND FRATERNITY
- 13 CAN YOU HELP THE SVP?
- 14 PARISH IN PICTURES
- 16 PARISH SCHOOLS
- 20 50 YEARS OF CANON JONATHAN
- 21 WHAT’S ON
- 22 ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE
- 23-27 ADVERTISING

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WELCOME TO THE VINEYARD

As summer unfolds, our parish is invited, once again, to notice the quiet gifts of God: longer days, time with family and friends, the beauty of creation, and the chance to pause, pray and be renewed.

The Vineyard brings together stories and reflections from across our community and is a celebration of the people, ministries and small acts of generosity that help our parish grow as a place of prayer, friendship and mission. Whether you are a regular parishioner, a visitor, someone returning to church, or simply curious about parish life, you are very welcome.

During the summer, may we take time to rest in God’s presence, give thanks for the blessings we often overlook, and remember those for whom this season may be difficult or lonely. In the spirit of Pope Leo XIV’s call for a peace that is “unarmed and disarming,” may our parish continue to be a sign of Christ’s love: open-hearted, hopeful, attentive to human dignity and ready to serve.

Pope Leo’s message speaks especially clearly to our times. From the beginning of his ministry as Bishop of Rome, he has invited the Church and the world to receive the peace of the risen Christ: a peace that is not imposed by force, but offered through humility, courage, dialogue and love. His call to build bridges, encourage encounter and proclaim the Gospel without fear is also a call to every parish community. In our own parish we can answer that invitation in simple but powerful ways: by welcoming one another, listening generously, caring for those in need, praying for peace in our homes and in the world, and becoming signs of hope.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this edition of The Vineyard particularly the editor, the parish secretaries, those who prepare it for delivery and those who distribute it across the parish.

With prayers and best wishes for a peaceful and blessed summer.

Canon Jonathan

MASS TIMES
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:30pm
SUNDAYS:
8:30am, 10:00am,
11:30am and 6:30pm

Note: Children’s Liturgy:
10:00am Mass on the
2nd and 4th Sundays
of the month

WEEKDAYS:
Monday - Saturday: 12:15pm
Friday: 7:00pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays:
10:00am at Bowdon Vale
SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:
Friday immediately following the 12:15pm Mass
Saturday: 11:00am to midday
and 4:30pm - 5:15pm

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION AND BENEDICTION
Monday - Saturday: 11:00am to midday
Monday and Thursday: 6:00pm - 7:00pm

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SUMMER REFLECTION

In 2025 we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. The council had been called by Pope John XXIII in 1959. It met in four sessions every autumn from 1962-1965. It was concluded by Pope Paul VI. The pope had called the council because he wanted to renew the Church so that she could speak to a quickly changing world. Pope John’s inspiration was not to change the doctrine of the Church to fit in with the modern world, but to present it afresh so that it could be applied to the problems of the modern world.

One of the last documents of the council was *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. It is more commonly known by its opening Latin words *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope). Faithful to Pope John’s intention, this sought to situate the mission of the Church in the world. The pilgrim church on earth is not of the world, but as she journeys to the promised land of heaven, she is very much in the world and has a responsibility to the world. The Second Vatican Council and *Gaudium et Spes* specifically offer us a key to understanding the social teaching of the Church from the nineteenth century to the present day. It provides the wider context for us to understand Pope Leo’s first encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (Magnificent Humanity) and how it fits with the mission of the Church in the contemporary world.

Gaudium et Spes begins by teaching: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1) In *Magnifica Humanitas* Pope Leo applies this teaching to the questions raised by AI and the rapid development of new technologies. He recognises that these new technologies have the capacity to do great good for humanity, but he also recognises that they also bring with them great dangers. This is one of the joys and the hopes, but also one of the anxieties of our age. Given this, it would be very strange if the Church had nothing to say. The pope is concerned about how this technology may impact negatively particularly on the poor and afflicted and how it may increase rather than decrease the division and tension that we see in the world today.



“We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendour of which no machine can ever replace.”

Pope Leo



Sometimes the Church is criticised for intervening in ‘politics.’ We saw this recently when a world leader sought to criticise the pope for calling for peace and disarmament. In response, the pope made it clear that he is not a political leader. Another quotation from *Gaudium et Spes* may help us to see what the role of the Church is in these issues. “...the church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4) In continuity with his predecessors in his encyclical on AI Pope Leo does precisely that. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On New Things) which point out the benefits and dangers, particularly for workers of the new situation. Since this first social encyclical every pope has applied the social teaching of the Church to the new situations in which we find ourselves, just as Pope Leo XIV does for the world today in his first encyclical.

As the title suggests, *Magnifica Humanitas* points to the unique and irreplaceable importance of the human person amid the AI revolution. He writes: “Whenever humanity is in danger of marring its true identity, we Christians lift our eyes to the Incarnate God.” He then goes on to quote another important teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22)

I encourage everyone to read *Magnifica Humanitas* not simply because it is a beautiful and timely teaching document, but it reminds us that our ancient faith is as relevant today as it ever was because Christ is our contemporary who walks with us and is the same, yesterday, today and forever. (*Hebrews 13:8*)

Canon Jonathan

PARISH RETREAT: GOD’S HEALING POWER

“For the first time, I truly understood that God exists. He is my God, and He communicates with me in a way that I now understand. I realise that He has always been there, speaking to me and guiding me; I simply did not know how to listen.” These are the powerful words of parishioner Anthony Roylance reflecting on the parish retreat.

Led by the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal, the parish retreat during Lent featured daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Vespers, Rosary and talks, plus evening events including a healing service, Holy Spirit Mass, a reconciliation service, plus a shared table supper.

Anthony admitted that he was searching for answers and reassurance to support his faith. He said: “I realised that I compartmentalise God. I bring Him out in times of need and then put Him back. I knew I needed spiritual guidance. I wanted to know how to really pray rather than just recite the familiar words. I wanted to understand the secret of how the clergy speak to God and really feel His presence. Without God to talk to I know I would feel quite alone, but I often felt it was a one-way conversation. Was He listening? I hoped the retreat would provide some answers.”

Anthony and best friend, Mike Jeacock, decided they would “give the retreat a go” after a chat in the gym about faith challenges. Mike said: “We weren’t sure what to expect. We’re not holy retreat goers, but just normal practicing Catholics wanting a few answers and thought we’d try something new.

“I wanted to move from a ‘can do’ to a ‘will do’ Catholic. I felt that I was simply going through the motions with my faith – attending Mass etc – and needed a new approach to re-boot my relationship with God. I also wanted to put my faith into action. I believe in the importance of the power of prayer and tolerance. We live in very troubled times where beliefs are used as weapons of hate and discord.



“The Eucharist ... draws us into the dynamic of unity, offering a powerful antidote to the forces of division that undermine our world, our communities, our families, and our hearts”

Pope Leo

What will heal our broken society is open to debate, but I believe that respect, care and prayer is a strong starting point.” Having attended a couple of the retreat events, both Mike and Anthony said the healing service had a profound impact on them. Mike said: “The Sisters of the Renewal were brilliant! They shared their vocation stories, challenges to their faith and importance of having God on their side. They created a powerful atmosphere of hope and belief and when I was presented with the Eucharist in the monstrance I experienced a wonderful moment which will stay with me forever.”

Anthony agreed: “Listening to the discussions I began to feel a change in me. When presented with the Host I prayed for the healing of others but felt that God healed me. I have never experienced a feeling so powerful. I was overcome with emotions that I struggle to describe even now. The feeling was so intense that I was unable to return to my pew and had to walk out of the church. I had tears in my eyes, and Father Jonathan, who was at the rear of the church, asked if I was all right.”

Mike and Anthony say that the retreat has had a lasting effect. Mike said: “I’d like to thank the Sisters of the Renewal for reopening my eyes and mind to God’s love. Rather than just being a passenger on the ‘Catholic bus,’ I realise I need to help others and be proactive in my faith. Religious insanity is to do the same things every day and expect different results!”

Anthony added: “I am no longer placing God in a box to be opened when I need something. Instead, I am trying to walk each day with Him by my side, trusting in His presence and guidance.

“If you have questions about your faith, doubts that you struggle to resolve, or a desire to deepen your relationship with God, I would strongly encourage you to attend next year’s retreat. Go with an open mind. Give it a whirl. You may discover a deeper awareness of God’s presence in your life.

“We attended the retreat searching for answers and left with something far greater - a renewed faith, a new understanding of God, and the certainty that He had been beside us all along.”

UNITED IN PRAYER

Hundreds of parishioners joined Catholics from more than 550 parishes across the globe for the first ever worldwide Marian procession on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Father Joseph led the procession through Altrincham which began with Mass and concluded with Eucharistic Adoration and the re-consecration of the parish to the Sacred of Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He described the event as “very moving.”

Carrying a statue of Our Lady through the town, parishioners prayed the Rosary and sang hymns. Mary Dillon was part of the procession. She said: “It was an incredibly joyful and prayerful occasion. It reminded me of the emotion of the torchlight procession at Lourdes when we join with thousands to proclaim ‘Ave’ with hope and love in our hearts.”



People supported the parishioners as they processed through Altrincham. Mary said: “Some joined us as we sang and when we stopped to pray. I saw one man clap and several step forward to touch the statue and make their own silent prayer. Many people were smiling and I felt that people of all religions were united in a moment of faith.”

Father Joseph also spoke of the impact of the procession. “Everyone was respectful. Quite a number of people seemed interested, and others joined with us in prayer. I saw one person lean from an upstairs window to take a moment and pray with us.”

“Our Mother Mary always wants to walk at our side, to remain close to us, to help us with her intercession and her love.”

Pope Leo

He added: “This was a moment to joyfully and publicly witness to our hope. Mary is our mother and shines before all of us, giving us hope in the various and challenging events of our lives. The Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary celebrates the cause of our joy: the human heart which was free from any stain of sin, selfishness, violence or greed; a heart that gave glory to God in every moment of her life, in profound humility, but in great joy.

“Our Lady is my closest ally and the one I turn to confidently every day of my life. She has always been there for me. Her love is unconditional and eternal, and she will never fail any of us.”

Mary Dillon added: “I have always had a deep devotion to Mary. This was such an uplifting and calming event. Parishioners, and the people we met, could not stop smiling. I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone if a future event is organised. A truly wonderful day!”



CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS

More than 85 children received the Eucharist for the first time this year with many describing their “very special” milestone as “one of the best days ever.”

Molly said: “I was so excited when I woke up on May 16th. I had butterflies in my tummy. Mum did my hair and I slipped on my special dress and shoes. All the family arrived and we drove to St Vincent’s. Sharing the day with my family and friends was wonderful and having the bread and wine felt very special. At home we had a party tea, cake, and I even had some presents! This was one of the best days ever.”

Eight-year-old Orla said she was “buzzing with excitement” on her special day. “I rushed downstairs for breakfast and jumped on the couch with excitement! Mum made my hair very curly and I put on my dress, high heels and veil. I went to Westleigh where we sang hymns, listened to readings and had time for reflection. It was special to receive Jesus’ body and blood at Mass, and then we had photos and a big party.”

Clara said she “raced down the stairs” and “ate breakfast very fast” on the day of her first holy Communion. She said: “We went to the local hairdressers, and a lovely lady curled my hair. It was so nice. I put on my dress, socks and shoes and went to Westleigh. All my friends wore lovely dresses. Having the bread and wine was a very special moment. Later we had a big party with a big cake. My cousins and relatives were part of the celebrations. It was the best day ever. I went to bed that night with a huge smile on my face.”



“The Sunday Eucharist is indispensable for Christian life... It is there that our faith is nourished and grows.”

Pope Leo



Debbie McDuff, RE Lead at St Vincent’s Primary School, said: “It’s such a joy to support our children as they prepare for the sacraments. These are important milestones in the life of our school community.

“I am very proud of the thoughtful and respectful way the children received the sacraments for the first time.”

Thanking Canon Jonathan, Father Joseph, and Father Mathew from Holy Angels, she said: “Their continued guidance, support, and work with the children is greatly appreciated.

“A shared effort also added to the joy of the day. School staff supported families and served refreshments, children and siblings served at Mass, parishioners and clergy ensured everything ran smoothly ...it really was a wonderful community celebration.”

Young parishioners received the gifts of the Holy Spirit at a “powerful and prayerful” Mass celebrated by Bishop Mark in May.

Suzanne Edwards leads the confirmation programme supported by a team of 13 catechists. Monthly sessions are held in Westleigh on Sundays from 4:30pm until 6:30pm followed by Mass in church.

She explained: “Our programme is based on the Sycamore series - an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today – which enables young people to explore their faith through honest discussions and group activities. We consider the ‘big questions’ in life – from the existence of God to the power of prayer and what makes true happiness – and candidates are encouraged to share their beliefs to deepen their understanding of their faith.



“It is very beautiful to receive this sacrament because the fullness of the Holy Spirit gives us enthusiasm, strength, and the ability to follow Jesus Christ, to say “Yes” to the Lord always, and not to be afraid to follow courageously, to live the faith in a world that so often wants to lead us far from Jesus.”

Pope Leo

“Group work combines faith and fun activities - one team made a snakes and ladders game with Heaven as the winning goal – and friendships also deepen throughout the programme as we talk together, eat together, play and pray together.”

A day at Welsh retreat centre, Pantasaph, saw the team enjoy outdoor Stations of the Cross, a Rosary walk and Mass. Suzanne added: “Father Joseph provided a non-stop Confessions service in the sunshine which proved so popular that we nearly missed the coach home!”

Confirmation Mass was celebrated by Bishop Mark and Suzanne said: “It was such a powerful and prayerful occasion with wonderful music from our young people. I would like to thank our catechists for sharing their knowledge of the Church, and supporting our candidates. Thank you too to Father Joseph for his guidance, humour and patience.”

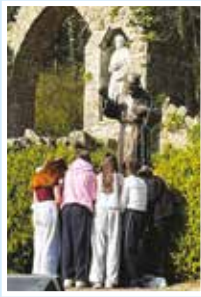
Simon Belderbos, sponsor of Eddie Kilburn, added: “With all that is going on in our world at the moment, my mood was lifted by witnessing the courage, faith and commitment of young people who confirmed their belief in God, their love of Jesus and their openness to the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s Church is in good hands.”



Eddie Kilburn described his highlights of the confirmation programme. “It was good to spend time with friends I hadn’t seen for a while. I enjoyed the retreat day most - the coach journey was fun, plus outdoor Stations of the Cross, and playing rugby at lunchtime. I chose Ignatius as my confirmation name – inspired by the Jesuit founder’s life and my House at school – and enjoyed the Mass with my sponsor, Simon, who I don’t see very often.”



Louisa Smith, who chose Teresa as her confirmation name, said: “I really enjoyed taking part in the confirmation programme. It was nice to catch up with friends from primary school and also to make new friends. I liked all the different activities that we did in the group sessions and had lots of fun on the retreat day. Confirmation Mass felt very special and it was good to spend time with my Godmother, Sinead, who was my sponsor.”



MY FAITH JOURNEY

Lewis Wooding-Smith said that a combination of curiosity, research and joining his wife at Mass prompted him to join the RCIA programme at St Vincent’s. Having been welcomed into the Church at Easter, Lewis said: “I now feel more in touch with God and believe I am on the path to living a better life through Christ.”



Originally from Liverpool, the 32-year-old engineering buyer is married to Grace. The couple moved from London to Altrincham in June 2024 and become first time parents in December 2025. Lewis said: “It’s been quite a year – welcoming a beautiful baby daughter, and an opportunity to truly connect with God by joining the Church.”

Describing his faith journey, he said: “As a child I was taken to a Methodist church and attended a Church of England school, but I was not deeply in touch with my faith.

“My wife’s a Catholic and joining her at Mass increased my interest and need for answers about my faith. After much reading and research, I spotted information in the parish newsletter inviting those who wanted to learn more about Catholicism to step forward. After speaking with Father Joseph, I joined the RCIA programme.”

Lewis said: “The programme was very welcoming, informative and uplifting and I was able to ask any questions to better understand and deepen my faith and knowledge of Catholicism.



“Friendship with Christ, which forms the basis of faith, is not just one aid among many others for building the future; it is our guiding star.”
Pope Leo

“Highlights of the programme were the catechists and the personal experiences they offered - particularly Gerry Murphy’s great sense of humour recalling his personal struggles and how God helped him in those times. Canon Jonathan and Father Joseph were very present, approachable and offered knowledge and understanding to the more difficult questions from the group. I felt very nervous at the Easter Vigil and even stood up with the wrong cohort of people, but it was a very special moment in my life to share with my wife and family.”

Lewis added that he now feels his “prayers are clearer” and he is “much closer to God.” Asked what he would say to someone thinking about becoming a Catholic, he said: “Come to Mass, speak to parishioners, read the newsletter, get to know the community and consider ‘To use this life well is the pathway through death to everlasting life’ (St. John Almond, 1612).”

FIRST CLASS SERVICE

Would you like to join the army of altar servers who support the clergy during Mass and on special occasions?

All newcomers will be fully trained, supported, and will learn ‘on the job’ with existing expert servers. A particular invitation is extended to all those who have recently made their first holy Communion to be part of the welcoming group of servers.



The Croughan brothers are part of the current team. For children and young people considering serving, they explained that the role is enjoyable and an opportunity to support the clergy and serve God.

Dominic, age nine, said: “I enjoy altar serving. It helps me concentrate during Mass and it keeps me busy because there is always lots to do. Ringing the bells is my favourite role, but there’s also treats for servers at Christmas and Easter which is good!”

Eleven-year-old James added: “I enjoy serving God and serving with my brothers. It’s good to be part of the church community. Receiving a St Stephen’s medal to mark my years of service was a special milestone.”

Gabriel, a pupil at St Ambrose College, started serving in year 4 and was trained by Father Robert and Father Godlove. Also a recipient of the St Stephen’s medal, he said: “I love serving at Mass, but the Easter Vigil is particularly special. Staying up late as a very young server was an extra bonus!” He urged anyone thinking about it to not be nervous: “Just sign up. Everyone’s welcoming and you’ll love it!”

If you are interested in altar serving, please contact the clergy after Mass or email the parish office on parishoffice@stvincentsaltrincham.org.uk

UNITED NATIONS

Describing the recent International Mass, Canon Jonathan said it “celebrated our beautiful diverse parish community and our unity through faith.”

The celebration featured readings in myriad languages including Arabic, Korean, Mandarin, Xhosa, Tagalog, Cantonese, Czech, Spanish and Italian, plus traditional music. Involving more 40 volunteers from 30 countries, it culminated in a shared feast with dishes from across the world.

Angelo Bassanino was part of the organising team. He said: “In the current climate, with increasing discrimination and polarised ideologies, it is important to celebrate inclusivity. The Mass was a joyous, uplifting and colourful reminder of our wonderful multi-cultural parish. There were 22 languages from across the globe united in praise. It was a fantastic opportunity to share the rich traditions and heritage that each nation brings to our shared faith.”

He said that reviving the International Mass - last celebrated in 2018 - was a huge team effort. “It could not have been possible without the tremendous support from the organising group, especially Ruth Holland. The enthusiastic polyglot choir, including Mary MacKenzie on piano and Gerry Murphy on bagpipes, met for the rehearsals at least four times, and the Mass featured hymns in 14 languages. There were also contributors who facilitated the printing of orders of service, liaised with Canon Jonathan, dressed the church, procured posters and flags, organised the offertory and readers, set up and managed the feast at Westleigh, and ensured everything was cleared up afterwards. So many people brought this special celebration to life.”

From the Nigerian family reading the Gospel, to bidding prayers in 15 languages, and a world map cake baked by Jina Peiris from Sri Lanka, Canon Jonathan said the Mass was “a wonderful example of global unity that also reminds us that at the banquet of heaven there will be ‘a great multitude from every nation, all tribes and peoples and languages...’ (Revelation 7:9).”



“...historic and cultural differences represent a wonderful mosaic of our shared Christian heritage, which is something we can all appreciate.”
Pope Leo

Angelo was born in Brazil, spent his youth in South Africa, and is also Italian. His wife, May, proclaimed the second reading in Arabic, advised on the singing of the hymn, Ta’al Beynana, and prepared Maklubi, a traditional Iraqi dish, as part of the ‘global banquet’ after Mass. The couple described being part of the multi-cultural celebration as “joyous and uplifting.”

Those involved in the organisation are hoping the International Mass can be an annual parish celebration. The team is also exploring additional opportunities to enable parishioners of all ages to come together and celebrate their cultures and shared faith.



PAPAL BLESSINGS FOR LONG-SERVING VOLUNTEERS

Eight parishioners recently received a papal blessing for their decades of dedicated support for CAFOD.

Long-standing volunteers, John and Maureen Muholland, Terry and Brenda Morris, Tom and Carole Curry, Val Hotter, and Christine Cochrane have supported CAFOD for a combined total of more than 350 years.

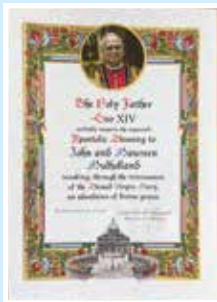
From campaigning on climate change and injustice, to raising money for those in need, and organising community events and appeals, John, Maureen, Christine and her late husband Will, have been involved from 1980 with the establishment of a ‘Third World Group’ to support CAFOD.

John said: “I was aware of the immense poverty, deprivation and the suffering of millions in our developing world and felt Christ’s call to reach out to them as brothers and sisters.”

He and Maureen said they were “surprised, embarrassed, humble and grateful” to receive the papal blessing. “We never dreamed of receiving such an honour. What we have achieved in St Vincent’s parish has been through a group effort, and thanks to the support of successive parish priests and the generosity of parishioners.



Christine Allen, CAFOD Director and CEO, said: “It’s such an honour for anyone to receive Pope Leo’s blessing and this highlights the significant role that volunteers play in strengthening communities and building a better world. Our volunteers continue to inspire all of us through their service. Their example reminds us of the importance of working for the common good.”



St Vincent’s combined CAFOD/Justice and Peace group is part of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) which is instrumental in supporting peace issues; human rights; prisoners; asylum seekers, migrants and refugees; poverty at home and overseas; international development; fair trade; caring for creation and climate change.

Terry added: “To continue loving our neighbours near and far, and supporting peace issues, we will need to pass the baton on to new members. I would appeal to anyone wanting to put their faith into practice to build a world of justice and peace to join one of our meetings. Everyone is welcome.”



To learn more about the team’s work please follow the CAFOD/Justice and Peace group’s Facebook page www.facebook.com/cafodjpaltrincham/

“Helping the poor is a matter of justice before a question of charity. As Saint Augustine observed: ‘You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better if none were hungry, so that you would have no need to give it away. You clothe the naked but would that all were clothed and that there be no need for supply this lack’ (In I Ioan., 8:5)”

Pope Leo



“We expected no reward, like others in our close-knit CAFOD group, other than knowing that we were providing practical help for some of the poorest in the world and doing so in response to Christ’s teaching.”

Tom and Carole Curry agreed with John’s sentiments, with Terry and Brenda Morris also adding that they felt “overwhelmed and privileged” to receive the blessing.

Terry said: “As Christians we are called to love our neighbour. Through sharing our prayers, efforts and worldly goods, we can compensate against global systemic inequalities and help to raise awareness of poverty and injustice.”

Christine Cochrane was also honoured with a papal blessing for more than 45 years of volunteering and said: “It’s wonderful. I can hardly believe it.”

The papal blessings were presented at a special Mass which was dedicated to Christine’s late husband, Will, and other deceased members of the group. Richard Cochrane said he was “very proud” of his parents’ support for CAFOD across so many decades. He added: “I will be showing mum’s papal blessing to all the family with pride.”

Canon Jonathan said: “Congratulations to those who received the richly deserved papal blessings. They have all made an outstanding contribution to the Church’s mission for the poor globally, and indeed, at home. On behalf of the whole parish – well done and thank you.”

Local CAFOD representative, Kathryn Keenan, presented the awards at Mass and paid tribute to the volunteers: “All the members of the St Vincent’s group, past and present, are truly inspiring. Their long-standing dedication to fundraising, campaigning and prayer for CAFOD’s work, guided by their faith, has impacted countless lives and given hope and practical support to communities overseas. I would also like to thank the priests and parishioners of St Vincent’s for their incredible support and generosity over the years.”

THE SPIRIT OF CARMEL

The Manchester Secular Carmelite (OCDS) Group moved to St Vincents at the beginning of 2026 and has been described as “a wonderful little family” by parishioner Sarah Scott.

The Secular Carmelites, a Catholic lay movement within the Discalced Carmelite Order, are devoted to learning how to pray and serve the Lord in the spirit of Carmel. This involves shared prayer, local group study, and a commitment to a personal prayer life.

“It is love alone that gives worth to all things.”

St. Teresa of Ávila

Sarah Scott and her daughter, Maria, are two of the current members of the group which meets monthly at Westleigh. Sarah explained that a life-long love of St Thérèse of Lisieux and the Carmelite saints led her to the OCDS. She said: “This lay vocation group has become like a little family. We encourage each other in prayer, share thoughts on the spiritual texts, and pray for guidance as we work towards our formation.”

Maria Scott, age 21, added: “The group is most beneficial to my spiritual life. I have always struggled with a busy, overactive mind and thought that this was my greatest fault; however the group has shown me that this ‘fault’ can be refocused on contemplative prayer and a continual conversation with God.”

Cyprian Blamires, part of National Council of the OCDS since 2015, helped to establish the Manchester group which meets at St Vincent’s. He explains: “Those interested in becoming Secular Carmelites attend for six months before being entitled to ask to be taken in formation. After two years members make their first promise and, after a further three years, their final promises which involve a commitment to living in allegiance to Christ, to be worked out through contemplative prayer and apostolic activity in the service of the Church.”

Added Sarah: “Carmelite saints have become my friends, and I find their teachings provide my life with hope, peace, inspiration and purpose. I would encourage any adults to join our friendly group. You don’t have to make a commitment, but if you don’t explore the possibilities, you’ll never know if you are being called.”

For further information please contact Canon Jonathan via the Parish Office



POPE LEO'S FIRST YEAR

More than a year on from the election of Cardinal Robert Provost as St Peter's successor, we asked people for their memories of 8 May 2025 and their thoughts of Pope Leo XIV's first year.

Father Theo Sharrock, a parishioner at St Vincent's since he was five-years-old, arrived in Rome following his grandmother's funeral and joined seminarian friends in St Peter's Square. He said: "I'd missed the black smoke at 11:51am and joined the crowds in the square from 4:00pm. By 6:00pm we were convinced that the afternoon ballot must have been unsuccessful, but at 6:07pm, we heard a shout of "Bianca!" (It's white!) We all stormed towards the front, waving flags, and the shared joy was tangible. People were shouting "Viva il Papa" (long live the pope). We were all very excited when Pope Leo arrived on the balcony, resplendent in his papal cassock and red mozzetta, and spoke so kindly to the world. What a moment! Little did I know that a year later I would meet Pope Leo in person, to tell him a bit about myself, and to give him a prayer card from my ordination. The private audience at Castel Gandolfo was for members of the Roman Association (the alumni of the English College). Pope Leo encouraged us in the way that we minister with people, reminding us that we are called to help people to "do the good that they are able to do" no matter what their circumstances might be. Shaking the hand of a successor of St Peter and having him both congratulate me on being ordained, and assure me of his prayers, is also something which will never leave me. I thank God that I was blessed with this wonderful opportunity."



"Peace be with you all!...God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail! All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another other! We are followers of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs his light. Humanity needs him as the bridge that can lead us to God and his love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace."

Pope Leo (First Blessing, 'Urbi et Orbi,' 8 May 2025)



Canon Jonathan said: "My initial reaction to the announcement on 8 May 2025 was surprise - the received wisdom was that it would be a long conclave because the College was the largest it had ever been and that there would never be an American pope while the US was a superpower! I was in the sitting room in the presbytery when the papal announcement was made. Between the white smoke, the ringing bells and the revelation of the new pope's name, I had a meeting with a couple preparing for marriage. I apologised for being so distracted with excitement! Twenty years before I was in the same room when Pope Benedict was elected and I was a deacon preparing for ordination on placement in St Vincent's. Pope Francis often said that God is a God of surprises, and the election of Pope Leo proves this to be true. In retrospect, he was a prime candidate. Very few cardinals had his wide range of gifts and experiences - a facility with language, an American education and upbringing, experience in Rome and as a missionary priest and bishop in Peru, head of a religious order

and experience in the Roman Curia as head of the Dicastery of Bishops. It seems that, given the divisions in the Church and the world, the cardinals were looking for a pope of unity. To my mind Pope Leo is one who points us to unity in Christ and the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel today amid the world's joys and sorrows."

Aidan McCann, a teacher from St Vincent's School, spoke with four Leos to discuss their thoughts on Pope Leo XIV. Two Leos in Year 5 said they were proud to be called Leo because "it means 'lion' in Greek and courageous." They added "Courageous actions lead to great things." The children agreed Pope Leo needed to be brave in his role. Leo in Year 3 felt that Pope Leo has been "doing a really good job" and said, "it must be hard to have to travel all over the world." Leo in Reception said he felt special to have the same name as the Pope. Mr McCann added: "The children said they would like Pope Leo to work on ensuring greater equality round the world, and to help to feed the hungry. They all offered a prayer to give Pope Leo the courage to continue to lead the Catholic Church."



FAITH AND FRATERNITY

"We are all on a journey of faith and these meetings are a powerful way to aid us on our path to God." This is how Adam Donne described the fraternity led by Father Joseph to deepen men's knowledge of the Catholic faith.

Father Joseph established the group in November 2025 and hoped to "create a fellowship of honest discussion and provide personal reflection in a safe, supportive space." He said the men's group would offer an opportunity to learn, question and "truly understand" Catholicism. He added: "If we don't understand what we believe, how can we live our lives in faith?"

Focussing on *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the group meets on Thursday evenings starting with Eucharistic adoration at 6:00pm, confession, the Rosary, and catechesis. Father Joseph added: "Men across all decades - from early 20s to 80s - are part of the group. I think fraternity and moral support has emerged as a special fruit of gathering together. It has enabled men - some of whom are young and/or new to the faith - to not feel isolated and be part of a welcoming Christian fellowship."

Adam Donne is part of the group. He said: "I had felt for some time that there needed to be an opportunity to learn more about the Catholic faith from a Church source rather than simply reading or listening to podcasts. There is a real joy in being able to discuss Catholic teaching with a priest."



"When we teach the faith, we do not merely give instructions, but we place the word of life in hearts, so that it may bear the fruits of a good life. To Deacon Deogratias, who asked him how to be a good catechist, Saint Augustine replied: 'Explain everything in such a way that the one who listens to you, by listening may believe; by believing may hope; and by hoping may love' (Instructing Beginners in Faith, 4, 8)."

Pope Leo



"Father Joseph encourages us to ask questions throughout the sessions which can spark interesting discussions. The sessions have certainly deepened my understanding and knowledge of Catholicism and increased my ability to defend my faith to non-Catholics."

"It seems to me that all the men attending the group are on a spiritual journey and it clearly gives them value as they keep coming back. I'm so grateful to Father Joseph for creating this special group."

Having joined St Vincent's Church with his family more than a year ago, Adam was asked what he would say to anyone considering joining the fraternity. He added: "If you are inquisitive about the group, it might be a signpost for you on the road to increased knowledge about the faith."

CAN YOU HELP THE SVP GROUP?

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is calling for people to step forward to help the group.

James Judge, a member of the SVP for 17 years, said: "We would really welcome extra support with our work, whether that is offering parishioners lifts to Mass, assisting at the monthly Friday Club, visiting parishioners or helping with administrative tasks."



Active in St Vincent's Parish since 1910, the SVP's vision is "inspired by Christ's message to love our neighbour as ourselves" with a mission "to give hope and restore the dignity of individuals and families, empowering them to live more fulfilling lives in a fairer world." The parish SVP team is part of a membership of more than 8,000 across England and Wales supporting those in need.

"Love for the poor - whatever the form their poverty may take - is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God"

Pope Leo

James added: "We pray together at fortnightly meetings called conferences and offer practical support in the parish community. This includes facilitating lifts to Mass and visiting those who may be sick, lonely, struggling with hardship, living with disabilities or addiction issues. After the pandemic highlighted the impact of isolation and loneliness, we created the monthly Friday Club providing free, fun afternoon gatherings to boost our community spirit and we would be grateful for help to continue this."

To find out more please contact James on 0161 941 3498 or email jamesjudge@talktalk.net



THE PARISH IN PICTURES



- 1. All you need is love! Jacqui Casson and Paul Drinkwater celebrate their wedding.
- 2. Florence and Florence with their Holy Spirit creations.
- 3. Marking Ash Wednesday. Sandra Luby, Jo Roscow, Karen Ackerley and Nicola McConville.
- 4. A special occasion for father and son, David and Teddy Tyson, who were baptised at Easter.
- 5. Elizabeth Newsham proclaims the Word of the Lord.
- 6. Sisters in the sun - Cathy Isles and Mary Casson.
- 7. All smiles. Martin and Kate Ashley.
- 8. Crowning glory. Celebrating the month of Mary at St Bede's.
- 9. Patrick leads the way to Westleigh for Children's Liturgy.
- 10. Tea time in Westleigh with Mia and Holly.
- 11. Gorgeous! Erin Monica Maher's baptism day.
- 12. Gavin McBride strikes a chord at Mass.
- 13. Children's Liturgy in action.
- 14. The light of Christ.
- 15. The baptism of beautiful Gracie Marie Brocklehurst.
- 16. Celebrating Ambrose O'Connor's Communion day.
- 17. On the run! BTHCC Head, Clare Hogg, and staff will be racing for CAFOD in the London Marathon 2027.
- 18. Love is in the air for newlyweds Charlotte and Clifford Ellis.
- 19. Dancing queens commemorate St Patrick's day.
- 20. A warm welcome to the 8:30am Mass.
- 21. Confirmation Mass musicians.
- 22. First class delivery! Etta Fixter delivering The Vineyard to parishioners.
- 23. Sleeping Beauty. Canon Jonathan with Penelope.

PROTECTING OUR PLANET



Photograph: Gavin Thurston

Pupils at St Vincent’s Primary School celebrated Sir David Attenborough’s 100th birthday by reflecting on his inspirational work to protect the planet.

Year 5 teacher, Maria Lawrence, is Geography and Sustainability Lead. She said: “Sir David’s message of environmental stewardship so beautifully reflects Catholic Social Teaching and, in particular, Pope Francis’ call in Laudato Si’ to care for our common home.”

To mark Sir David’s birthday the children watched documentaries, enjoyed animal quizzes and crafts, and wrote cards to thank Sir David for his work. They also learned that there are more than 50 species named after him, including a Madagascan dragonfly and a prehistoric marine reptile.

Clara, age 8, said: “He’s amazing! I love him talking about dolphins – their conversations sound so happy – so we need to protect our oceans too. Just walking to school can help the environment. If we all do a bit, we’re protecting the world God made.”

Isaac added: “I’ve learned interesting animal facts through Sir David’s programmes such as how bees pollinate every three bites of food we eat, and how often sloths go to the toilet! My favourite animal is the leatherback sea turtle. It’s the biggest type of turtle in the world and its family has survived since the age of the dinosaurs! Sir David has inspired us to protect our planet and I regularly pick-up litter to help.”

Mrs Lawrence added: “Environmental stewardship is at the heart of our curriculum. We have been awarded the Geography Quality Mark Gold Award and the Geographical Association’s Centre of Excellence (Hub) status for our commitment to sustainability.

“Our Eco Leaders have supported projects in Stamford Park, such as creating habitats for local



“God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that he created for the benefit of all and for future generations, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters - what will be our answer, my dear friends?”

Pope Leo



wildlife and creating Vinnie, a 10ft willow duck. Their leadership inspires younger pupils and strengthens environmental awareness across the school.

“Our pupils live out the Gospel values, showing respect, stewardship, and love for the world God has entrusted to us. Initiatives such as Travel Tracker and litter-picking provide practical steps to protect our planet and help our children understand their role as global citizens. It is wonderful to see how these experiences connect learning to faith, reminding us that caring for the Earth is not only a responsibility but a vocation.”

TOP MARKS

St Ambrose Preparatory School has been graded ‘outstanding’ in the recent Catholic Schools Inspectorate Report. The school secured top marks for the overall quality of Catholic education and across all areas of Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship.

Inspectors highlighted the school’s “rich and imaginative opportunities for prayer and liturgy,” the pupils’ “great enthusiasm for religious education,” and the consistently high-quality teaching.

The report also noted the “authentic and inspirational leadership” of the headteacher and senior leaders and stated that “pupils have a very keen sense of social justice and know that they have a responsibility to be advocates for change.”

Inspectors observed that the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice permeates all aspects of the school’s life, shaping the pupils’ moral and spiritual development. Headteacher, Sara Heron, said: “This is a tremendous achievement for our whole school community. I am immensely proud of our pupils, staff and families. The judgement reflects our shared commitment to ensuring every child thrives academically, spiritually and personally in a caring Catholic environment.”



NATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



St Vincent’s Nursery has been named the best in the UK for supporting children with additional needs, after scooping a prestigious prize at the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Awards.

Manager, Ivana Butterworth, who this year celebrated a decade of working at St Vincent’s Nursery, said: “We are absolutely thrilled to receive the Excellence in Additional Needs Award. To be recognised as one of the top three settings in the UK was a fantastic achievement alone, but to be named the winner is testament to the dedication, compassion and expertise of our entire team.”

The award recognises the nursery’s inclusive approach to childcare, which combines close work with families, tailored learning plans and collaboration with external professionals to ensure every child is supported as an individual.

Judges praised the nursery’s “clear commitment to dignity, belonging and participation for every child” with support that “is proactive and personalised, based on careful observation and assessment. There is a strong focus on removing barriers, nurturing independence and truly understanding each child’s strengths, interests, communication styles and sensory needs.”

“The joy of children makes their parents’ hearts leap and opens up the future. Children are the joy of the family and of society...They are a gift. Each one is unique and unrepeatable...”

Pope Francis



Ivana added: “Every day our staff work tirelessly to ensure that all children feel valued, included and supported. This award recognises that commitment.” She added: “We are incredibly proud of what we do at St Vincent’s and would like to thank our families, children, staff and governors for their continued support. This award belongs to everyone who contributes to making our nursery such a special place.”

The NDNA Awards recognise outstanding practice and innovation across the early years sector, and Anita Harrop, Headteacher of St Vincent’s Primary School, added: “This award is a wonderful recognition of the exceptional work that takes place in our nursery every day. I am incredibly proud of the whole nursery team for their dedication to ensuring every child feels valued, supported and able to thrive. Their commitment to inclusion makes a real difference to the lives of our children and families, and this achievement is thoroughly deserved. Well done to Ivana and the team.”





The Sunshine Club

at St Vincent’s Catholic Primary School
Orchard Road
Altrincham WA15 8EY

Breakfast club between 7.40-8.45
After school club between 15.25-18.00
Holiday club during school holidays
For pupils from Reception to Year 6 at St Vincent’s
Trips, workshops, extra-curricular clubs included
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Contact: Ivana Butterworth or Karen Wilkinson
Phone: 0161 928 7581
E-mail: sunshine@stvincentsnursery.com
Website: www.stvincentsnursery.com



OUTSTANDING

Loreto Grammar School and Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College have both been declared ‘outstanding’ in recent Catholic Schools Inspectorate reports.

Both schools achieved top marks in all areas of Catholic life and mission, collective worship and religious education, with Loreto’s report showing a full set of perfect scores with no suggested areas for improvement.

Loreto staff were praised as “exemplary role models” in promoting the values of Mary Ward which “ensures students can demonstrate and clearly articulate Catholic social teaching principles through these values.” The report also highlighted headteacher, Jane Beever, for supporting students with “great compassion.”

Inspectors commended Loreto’s inclusivity as a “priority for all with the school celebrating the uniqueness of the individual,” and the “caring and positive environment that is synonymous with Loreto, ensuring all students are known and held in high esteem.”

The report stated that RE at Loreto is taught by “a dedicated team of expert practitioners. Students appreciate this, talk with enthusiasm about their lessons, and make the most of the support offered by their teachers. Consequently, academic outcomes are outstanding.” The subject leader for religious education was also praised for “creative efforts culminating in lessons which offer a wide variety of activities that stimulate students and develop curious minds.”



“And addressing you, dear teachers... children, teenagers, and young adults will look up to you as models: models in life, models of faith. They’ll look to you particularly as to how you teach and how you live. I hope that each day you will nurture your relationship with Christ, who gives us the pattern of all authentic teaching (Mt 7:28), so that, in turn, you may guide and encourage those entrusted to your care to follow Christ in their own lives.”

Pope Leo

Inspectors praised Loreto staff in their planning of prayer and liturgy activities: “They are skilled in their delivery and promotion of student participation and consequently students are able to make connections between prayer and their own lives.”

Headteacher, Jane Beever said: “The report is a joy to read, and I am proud of the recognition of the commitment of the girls and my colleagues. I am grateful to our Lay Chaplain, Mrs Davison, and to Father Ned for his unfailing support. The passion, effort and dedication of the RE department shines out. This is a school with a deep history and gospel mission, and I am certain that Mary Ward and Teresa Ball would be thrilled to know that this spirit has been recognised and is alive today. The charisma and mission of the Loreto sisters remain a beacon of hope and possibilities in today’s world.”

Inspectors at Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College said that “students feel inspired by the mission of the College” and they praised headteacher, Clare Hogg’s “passionate commitment” to staff and students, adding that her “servant leadership is an inspiration for all.”



The April report noted that BTHCC’s leaders ensure “Catholic social teaching principles are at the forefront of their strategic thinking and policy formation which motivates students to act on the principles of service, justice and charity.”

Inspectors highlighted the use of technology as part of prayer and liturgy as “outstanding” and praised the college’s RE leader as having an “inspiring vision” for the subject. The report also stated that the chaplaincy team’s “creative provision forms the backbone of a rich and full Catholic experience.”

Clare Hogg, Headteacher, said: “Achieving outstanding in every category is a testament to the dedication, faith and commitment of our entire school community. Our staff work tirelessly to ensure that every child is known, valued and supported to flourish academically, spiritually and personally.”

Thanking the clergy for their support, she added: “I am delighted the inspectors noted that ‘links with parishes and families are strong and regular visits from the parish priests enhance these.’ This underlines the wonderful relationship we share. The celebration of weekly Mass in college, offering the sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent, is deeply valued by our students and staff. Our chapel, known as ‘the Heart of BTH’, is open throughout the day for those who need it, and your presence and ministry has created a wonderful place of prayer, reflection, and encounter with Christ.”



ALL ONE IN CHRIST

St Ambrose College marked National Diversity Week and Refugee Week by recently holding their annual Advocacy and Inclusivity Week.

Chaplain, Tom Murray, explained: “As a Catholic community it is vital that we celebrate diversity as we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Our theme for the student-led week, “All One in Christ,” drew prayerfully from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians. This inspired and underlined the importance of inclusion, acceptance, respect and appreciation for all those in our community.

He added: “It is our responsibility as Catholics to celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity in an increasingly fractured world, and we encourage our students to be outspoken upstanders for Gospel values.”

The week included the Edmund Rice International Justice Group delivering workshops on human rights and advocacy, the college’s Anti-Bullying Ambassadors leading discussions on how to create a safe and loving learning environment, and sixth-form students speaking about their identity and ethnicity.



“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:28

Gene McBride, a sixth-form student, spoke of how he experienced bullying and was able to work through it. He said: “Educating and promoting inclusion is vital. People need to understand and listen. Everyone should feel valued, respected, safe and accepted regardless of their background, culture, or abilities. It’s important that we encourage people to learn from different perspectives, allowing students to feel safe and supported.”

Asylum Link Merseyside’s Refugee Choir, which brings together asylum seekers, refugees, and local volunteers, shared stories with the students and Sara Saigol, from Altrincham and Hale Mosque, spoke about the importance of interfaith dialogue. Year 12 student, David Ajayi, said: “We all want to be part of a society where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and empowered to be themselves.”

Year 10 student, Harrison Beckett, added: “Inclusivity Week helps to shape our understanding of other cultures and to embrace our differences in tradition, race, religion and all other aspects that gives each and every one of us the face of Christ.”

50 YEARS OF FATHER JONATHAN IN HIS OWN WORDS



My earliest memory is of crawling. At the time, we lived on a main road. My mum was distracted for a moment, and I headed out onto the road. Fortunately, the traffic stopped – or this would be a very different article. I caused a minor tail-back and my mum rushed out apologising to the drivers and swept me up.

I was a cute, blond haired and blue eyed baby. But I was a lively terror who would not sleep! My dad still says that if I had been their first child, I would have been the last! Mum and dad were in their 30s when they found out that I was on the way. This was considered old at the time and due to medical complications, my mum was not supposed to have more children. I remember asking my dad if I was an accident. He replied: "more of a surprise!" I have always thought this was a beautiful response.

I was not a very well-behaved toddler and the Parish Priest called me the church wrecker! My mum had to bribe me to be good with the promise of a lollipop after Mass. During my brother's confirmation (he is 10 years older than me), I was so noisy I had to be taken out. As I was being carried out, I shouted at the top of my voice "Bye, bye priest, bye, bye!" At least I had good manners! Given this, I have always had patience with the noisy toddlers in Mass. Noisy adults - not so much!

I was born in August in the sweltering summer of 1976. I hated infant school so much that in today's education culture it probably would have merited an intervention! When my mum expressed concerns, my teacher said that I was spoilt due to having an older mum and being the youngest child! I cannot imagine teaching staff today making such a response.

I began to enjoy school as I got older, but despite encouraging teaching, I always had a lifelong terror of maths. When I got a B in maths GCSE, I remember rushing to tell my mum. Despite scoring As across the other subjects, the B in maths was my biggest achievement – and relief!

The 1990s were an exciting time to be young and the world was in much better shape. The Berlin wall was torn down; Germany united; democracy triumphed and the world economy grew. I studied German and English at Liverpool University and spent a year abroad in 1996-1997 working as a teaching assistant in east Germany. It was a privileged time to be there. Germany had only been united for six years, and the Communist era was very much a living memory. It was a powerful education to hear the stories first hand.

While I was at university, I was consciously discerning a vocation to the priesthood. Only a small circle of family and a couple of priests knew because I did not want to be treated any differently at university. After a year working in an employment department, I applied for formation for the priesthood and Bishop Brian Noble sent me to Ushaw. Seminary is a challenging place, and so it should be, which is something I try to convey positively to the current generation of seminarians! The highlight - apart from my pastoral placements at St Vincent's of course - was being able to study at Durham University. It was, and still is, one of the top places to study theology.



I was ordained on 11th June 2005 - which makes me 21 this year - and I felt at peace. It was a day that marked the beginning of the rest of my life. I served as a curate to St Peter's, Hazel Grove, for four years where I learned a lot about the practical reality of being a priest.

I then enjoyed further studies in Rome. This was a wonderful experience, and it was interesting studying theology at a church university. Durham was excellent, but in Rome the academic was more integrated with faith. Faith and reason went very much hand in hand. When I returned from Rome, I was appointed Parish Priest for the first time at Holy Angels in Hale Barns and then St Columba's in Chester.

In September I will have been Parish Priest of St Vincent's for seven eventful years which have passed very quickly. Just seven months after arriving the COVID pandemic changed our world. I found it extremely hard to lock people out of their own church, their place of sanctuary, hope and peace. But it was so much harder for others. Thanks to the technological expertise of Deacon Robert, we were able to broadcast Mass from an empty church via Facebook. Since then, it has been a great joy to get to know the people and characters of this wonderful, diverse and lively parish. Every parish forms you as a person and a priest and as I begin my 22nd year as a priest and mark my 50th birthday I feel happy, blessed, and thankful.



WHAT'S ON

- **Children's Liturgy:** 10:00am Mass on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.
 - **Tea and Coffee** after 10:00am Mass every Sunday with video games (FIFA, tennis, etc), table tennis and other games. All are welcome.
 - **Youth Mass** - 6:30pm Mass (monthly). 19th July is the next one. Any young musicians welcome, please arrive at 6:00pm.
 - **Bridge** - every Monday at 2:00pm in Westleigh.
 - **SVP** - fortnightly meetings on Mondays at 6:30pm in Westleigh.
 - **Emmaus Prayer Group** – 7:00-8:00pm Mondays in Westleigh. Everybody welcome, please just come along.
 - **Brownies** - Tuesdays in term time at 5:45pm-7:15pm in Westleigh.
 - **Secular Carmelites** - 1st Wednesday of every month at Westleigh from 6:00pm-8:00pm
 - **Craft & Coffee Club** (previously Knit and Natter) – fortnightly on Thursdays at 10:00am in Westleigh.
 - **Mothers' Prayers** - every Thursday 11:15am in Westleigh.
 - **Study Group for Men** – fortnightly on Thursdays from 7:15pm-8:30pm in Westleigh: Please email Father Joseph for dates. Joseph.Fawcett@stvincentsaltrincham.org.uk
 - **St. Vincent's Parish Choir** - rehearsal every Thursday at 8:30pm in church
 - **Friday Club** - first Friday of every month, 2:00pm in Westleigh. Entertainment and refreshments organised by SVP.
 - **Playgroup** - every Friday in term time from 9:30am – 11:30am in Westleigh.
 - **Windows Group** (for widows) – 3:00pm-4:30pm on Fridays in Westleigh.
 - **Young Adults Group** (18-35 years) - Saturdays. Come to the 5:30pm Mass followed by Adoration, Reconciliation, talks, food, and time to socialise etc.
- Please note that these are some of the regular activities. Please see the newsletter for additional events – from the parish quiz to social evenings and pilgrimages.**

If you have any queries, please contact the Parish Office on 0161 928 1689 or via email parishoffice@stvincentsaltrincham.org.uk



ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

When Bishop Mark celebrated the Diocesan Mass for Marriage last summer for those marking a special anniversary, it was an opportunity to renew wedding vows and celebrate love.

Among those invited were Nicola and Chris McConville and Pilar and Ashley Stratford who between them have more than 55 years of wedded bliss.

Pilar and Ashley Stratford married in Spain in July 1995 and joined St Vincent’s in 2004. Pilar said: “It wasn’t love at first sight, but three decades – and five children – later, we have a deeper love built on faith, trust and mutual respect.”

Pope Francis said that marriage “calls you to steer a tiny boat – wave-tossed yet sturdy, thanks to the reality of the sacrament – across a sometimes stormy sea.” Pilar added: “Obviously there are ups and downs along the way, but I’ve no doubt that the grace received through the sacrament of marriage plays an important part, particularly in the challenging times.



“You have to share and compromise and sometimes do things you do not want to do for the benefit of the other. Children are a unifying force, but they bring their own challenges, especially in teenage years! It’s important to be consistent and be on the same page as your other half. Sometimes the best bits are simple - sharing time together doing ordinary things, like going for a walk, meeting up with friends, travelling, seeing the children growing up and finding their way in life...”

“It is the most important decision you will make in your life and you need to work at it every day, but it is joyful and deeply fulfilling.”

Asked about the secret to a happy marriage, the Stratfords said: “We would definitely recommend a good sense of humour!”

“...let us pray that the vocation of marriage may be rediscovered in all its truth and beauty by every generation to come”

Rt Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury
Diocesan Mass in Celebration of Marriage 2026

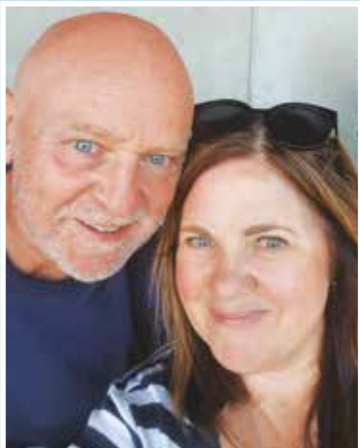


Nicola and Chris McConville first met at a joint Loreto/Ambrose event in 1981, then met in a bar in Altrincham in 1994 and have been together ever since.

Remembering their wedding day at St Vincent’s in August 2000, Nic said: “I loved walking into church with my dad and seeing all the family; everyone was so happy. Friends from the south were stuck in traffic, had to change into their wedding outfits in the car queue and slipped through the door as I was about to head up the aisle! It was such a hot day, and we were melting posing for the photos!”

With two daughters in their 20s, Nic added: “So much has changed over the last 25 years, but Chris and I have faced everything together, coping with challenges along the way as well as enjoying the happy times. We feel blessed to have two wonderful daughters who make us very proud, and we’re looking forward to the years ahead.”

Nic’s advice for a happy marriage? “Patience, shared values, ongoing communication, an adaptable mindset that allows for change, communication, common interests and space to do your own thing too!”



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For children aged 0-5 years
Places available during term time and all year round
Early Education funding available

Contact: Ivana Butterworth or Karen Wilkinson
Phone: 0161 928 7581
E-mail: office@stvincentsnursery.com
Website: www.stvincentsnursery.com

Altrincham Handyman

Altrincham Handyman is a local family business and we pride ourselves on giving personalised attention to all our clients.

We are aware that every project is unique and we take the time to listen to your needs and provide tailored solutions. Our friendly team is always ready to assist you and ensure your satisfaction.

Whether you need help with small handyman jobs around the house, or larger jobs like kitchen refits, plastering jobs or roof repairs, we've got you covered.

No job is too small or too large for our experienced tradesmen to handle.

If you would like to discuss your requirements with us, please call us on 0161 669 9085 or email us at info@altrinchamhandyman.com

If you quote 'The Vineyard' we will give you 10% discount.

For more information, please visit our website at www.altrinchamhandyman.com

FREE DAY OUT IN ALTRINCHAM WITH MATCH OF THE DAMES

Introducing women & girls to local football

Meet like minded women, enjoy the matchday experience and discover non league football in a relaxed and friendly environment.

We'll run 8 events throughout the season, starting in September 2026. Check out the dates and sign up below to get your free ticket and collectible scarf.

- ✓ Free ticket
- ✓ Free refreshments
- ✓ No football knowledge needed

Get your free ticket at matchofthedames.co.uk

Hope to see you soon,
Anne Morris

www.matchofthedames.co.uk

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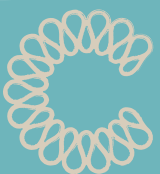
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PLEASE MENTION THE VINEYARD WHEN SPEAKING TO OUR ADVERTISERS



A calm, personal approach to funeral care

Independent, family-run funeral directors in Altrincham

Owned by Jeremy and Sara Fixter, parishioners of St Vincent's, we're proud to support families locally and across South Manchester with compassionate, flexible, and professional care.

From 2022 to 2025, we operated under the name Full Circle Funerals Partners as part of an independent franchise network.

We've always been locally owned and run, and now continue that same trusted service as Circle Funerals - the only independently owned funeral directors in Altrincham.

How we support families

We support families with care, attention & understanding in every detail.

- Person-led and fully tailored to each family we support
- Light, calm, welcoming spaces designed to help you feel at ease
- Award-winning, trusted by families and recognised nationally



"We as a family were so lucky to find Jeremy and Sara. They made the whole traumatic time so peaceful and calm, and the way they looked after mum was such a comfort to us all. They worked with us on the most beautiful service at St Vincent's Church and afterwards too. Your kindness, empathy and help will never be forgotten." *Hugh, Kate, Sarah & Anna*

We offer a free Funeral Wishes service and pre-paid funeral plans through Golden Charter.



Circle Funerals
23 Ashley Road, Altrincham, WA14 2DP
circlefunerals.co.uk | jeremy@circlefunerals.co.uk

Available day or night: 0161 928 6080



PLEASE MENTION THE VINEYARD WHEN SPEAKING TO OUR ADVERTISERS

"The capacity to gaze with wonder at the sun, the moon, and stars is a gift given to every human being, regardless of station or circumstance. It awakens in us both awe and a saving sense of proportion. Contemplating the heavens invites us to see our fears and our failings in the light of God's immensity. The night sky is a treasury of beauty open to all – rich and poor alike – and in a world so painfully divided, it remains one of the truly universal sources of joy."

Pope Leo

