

# St. Erconwald's Parish Magazine



Issue No. 52, Christmas 2025

## Contents

Editorial	Pages 3-4
CAFOD	Page 5
“From the Parish”	Page 6
Mass with Anointing of the Sick	Pages 6-7
Reconciliation Service	Page 7
Day trip to Brighton	Pages 8-9
Fish and Chips Quiz Nights	Page 9
Repository and Christmas Fair	Page 10
Christmas Preparations and Celebration	Page 11
St. Joseph’s Infant and Junior Schools	Pages 12-13
Restoration Works	Pages 14-15
Tips for a Relaxing Christmas	Pages 16-17
St. Bernadette’s Autumn Term 25	Pages 18-19
St. Francis Xavier Curry Night	Pages 20-21
The Passage Gift Bags / Live Streaming	Page 22
Blessing of Graves	Page 23
Bereavement Mass and Mass of Angels	Pages 24-25
Thank You	Pages 26-27

Cover Design: Tree and Crib, Hall Decoration



## Editorial: CAFOD's Jubilee Icon for a Pilgrim Church



Welcome to the Christmas edition of the magazine. Hope you and your families have been keeping safe and well. We offer a warm welcome to St. Erconwald's Parish to any newly-arrived parishioners.

As this Jubilee Year draws to a close, Christians across the Diocese are invited to come and encounter the Icon. This Advent, may the Icon's visit remind us of God's presence in each other, enlivening our own calling to be tangible signs of hope to those who need it this Christmas.

CAFOD's Jubilee Icon, painted by Mulugeta Araya, a 30-year-old Ethiopian artist and engineer educated at St Mary's College in Wukro, Ethiopia, offers precisely such an invitation. Commissioned to mark the Jubilee Year 2025 "Pilgrims of Hope", it depicts Jesus reading from Isaiah 61: 1-2 in Nazareth, as recounted in Luke 4:16-21: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives...'. A beautiful Icon, accompanying beautiful words. In Araya's portrayal, Christ stands in solidarity with those on the margins, his gesture evoking liberation, healing, and Jubilee hope. The Icon reflects not only the biblical announcement, but also Araya's own context: coming from Tigray, Ethiopia; a region marked by displacement, poverty, and resilience. His vision unites Scripture and lived reality into one image of solidarity.



What makes Araya's Jubilee Icon deeply effective is its rootedness in community and story. His Ethiopian tradition of icon painting, coupled with his engineering background and commitment to solidarity, give the image earthy authenticity. The Scriptures Jesus is holding are at the very centre of the Icon, just as they have to be at the very centre of our lives.



The rainbow of peace and the figures listening as a community reflect our Catholic faith across borders and cultures. Thus, this Icon becomes prayer. In its colours and composition, its gestures and symbols, it speaks the Gospel in visual language. It offers us an invitation: to see Jesus in marginal faces, to hear the scroll unrolled again, and to answer the call to proclaim the good news.

In the [Prayer and Reflection booklet](#) to accompany the Diocesan tour of the Icon, Fr Patrick van der Vorst, Precentor of the Cathedral and Founder of Christian Art, reminds us that:

*"Christian art is more than decoration. It is a doorway into prayer, devotion, and divine encounter. Icons, especially, act as windows into the heavenly realm, drawing us beyond mere words into sacred presence. When we gaze at an icon, our eyes meet scriptural truths, and our pilgrim hearts are offered a path toward contemplation."*

*When Christians pray before this icon, we do more than just look. We watch Jesus, we listen to Him read, and we reflect on the words "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The visual encounter becomes verbal encounter, communal encounter! As we meditate, we join the jubilee song of Christ for a world weighed down by injustice."*

May CAFOD's Jubilee Icon lead us deeper into prayer, deeper into the Gospel, and inspire us to live its proclamation in solidarity with the poor, oppressed and marginalised.

The Icon will be finishing its tour of the Diocese in Westminster Cathedral, where it will be from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December.

Christmas is a time of charity. A huge thank you to you, the parishioners, who continue to work hard to help others here in the UK especially through *St. Lawrence's Larder, The Passage, Mary's Meals, and Catholic Children's Society*; and abroad: CAFOD and *Mis-sio*.



*Wishing you and all your families  
a Happy and Blessed Christmas  
and a Peaceful New Year.*

*Fr. Anthony*

## What Do We Do After Jubilee Year?

## CAFOD Team

The Jubilee Year is drawing to an end, a year when we were invited by Pope Francis to be Pilgrims of Hope to renew our hope and to discover a vision that can "restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone". and to rediscover a spirituality of God's creation in which we understand ourselves as "pilgrims on the earth" rather than masters of the world. Hopefully we have responded to that call.

So as we move forward we could perhaps ask ourselves what have we done, what are we doing and perhaps, most immediately, what should we do? How, have we responded to the debt crisis? What action have we taken in relation to climate change? Have we done anything for those who live in poverty or have no settled home? Of course what we can do is limited but there are things we can do and as we move forward from the Jubilee Year we could perhaps take a few minutes to think about what next.

One thing we can all do is to pray. We could also perhaps support CAFOD in its work by contributing to it whether by one off donations, giving to its Fast Day appeals or by regular standing order. One of the focuses of the Year has been CAFOD's work in relation to debt cancellation and reductions and support for these and other campaigns is another way in which individuals can support CAFOD and respond to the invitation from Pope Francis.

These are some things we can do here in our country to help our brothers and sisters throughout the world. CAFOD supports other campaigns and is always looking for people who can volunteer whether in relation to supporting CAFOD's work in your parish or speaking in its fast day appeals or helping it generally. You can find out more about this and supporting CAFOD at

[CAFOD - Catholic international development charity](#) especially undern the tab "Get involved"

Whatever you have done, are doing or will do CAFOD and the people they serve thank you and bless you. Without your involvement and support they could not do this. So thank you and a blessed, happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.





From the Parish  
Comings and Goings  
Please remember in your prayers



We welcome and congratulate Sione Kaad who was baptised here recently, and his family.



### First Holy Communion 2025

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June was a special day for Elissa Aboagye, Reign Daramola, Darius Fernandes and Alexander Warzych as they received Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. As we congratulate these children and their families, we wish that these children will continue to receive this sacrament regularly. Special thanks go to the catechists Bernie Gillen, Rose Yip and Elizabeth Patten for their dedication in delivering this programme.

### Mass with Anointing of the Sick



### Christopher Dunn

A very special service that I look forward to is Mass with Anointing of the Sick. We have been lucky to have two in recent months – 7<sup>th</sup> October and 16<sup>th</sup> December.

One of the seven sacraments, this Mass provides us all with spiritual strength, healing and comfort via the blessed oil on the forehead and palms, and the laying on of hands. The oil also signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is a visible sign of God's compassion for us.

On both occasions, it was great to see the Church so busy, and also to welcome people from other parishes, as we gather to pray for healing for those of us who are sick or infirm.



Part of the Service is also Reconciliation and Holy Communion and a number of uplifting hymns.

It is always a busy Service for Fr Anthony, and it was lovely to welcome Fr Tony in December.



A soup lunch is most welcome after the Service when everyone has an opportunity to catch up with familiar faces - and new ones too! Thank you to the 'chefs' for the wonderful soups, and to Elizabeth and her team for organising this gathering in the hall.

### Anointing in the Homes

Fr. Anthony also visited the housebound in their homes and celebrated Mass in Kenbrook and Brook House [two of the Nursing Homes in our Parish]. The Masses celebrated in the homes are always very special as they are the only opportunity for the residents to attend Mass. It is amazing how quietness descends when Fr. Anthony starts anointing the residents. As he anoints each one speaking in a low voice he says "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up," We respond Amen. *It feels like the whole room is filled with the Holy Spirit. What a powerful Sacrament.'*

Any young man reading this please ask yourself, if God is calling you to the Priesthood. Give it serious thought and pray. It would be a shame if we lost the ability to attend Mass or have the Anointing of the Sick, to mention just two Sacraments.

### Reconciliation Service



As part of the spiritual preparations for Christmas, a Service of Reconciliation with Absolution was held on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> December, it was nice to see parishioners from neighbouring Churches joining us that evening. The Service was based on the theme "Cloth for the Crib". Before the start of the Service we were asked to take a

piece of Sack-cloth, and to place it on the bench in front of us and to forget about it. [All would be explained later]. The Examination of Conscience was based on: The Gift of Faith, of Family and Friends, of Self, and of This World. As a sign that we want to repent and change our lives and make a place and keep a welcome for Jesus in our hearts and lives, we were asked to come forward and place the pieces of sack-cloth in the trays provided. The "cloths" will form part of the Nativity display. Reminding ourselves that when he became one like us he did not avoid that frailty; instead he took it on and assumed all of its effects.

## Day trip to Brighton

Julian Dalli



Getting up 'bright-on' early (especially for my student lifestyle) is always worth it for a nice day out to Brighton and some time together as a family. It was a fresh and sharp start but soon after we arrived, we started feeling the warmth of the morning sun. Walking along the pier, a familiar smell of fried dough and fish-and-chips filled the air. We decided to stick to our traditional simple pleasure and opted for an ice cream, which, thanks to some opportune advertisement, luckily came with a free t-shirt – a lovely reminder of a lovely day.

Something new this year was paying a visit to the Upside-Down House, which felt like stepping into the pages of a Roald Dahl story. Really the stuff of childhood fantasies. Of course, it goes without saying that people queueing outside could tell that we were a very noisy group – a pity that anything usually used to drown out the noise clung to the ceiling! The staff were very welcoming, telling us how to pose and critiquing my photography skills. All in all an amusing activity for all the family, which resulted in many funny photos. But do be warned – the brightly coloured rooms and slanted floors left us feeling a bit seasick!



Of course, no trip to a seaside town would be complete without a seafood lunch, which went a long way to settling our stomachs. When I was younger, we used to joke that I was on a sea food diet – I sea food, and I eat it! Our day out was no different, and I certainly won't be quitting any time soon!





Continuing with the rather wet theme, the day ended with some flash showers. Certainly, a good day to be an umbrella salesman, and always a good excuse to do some more indoor shopping.

As usual Brighton buzzed with life and once more we were lucky to be able to wander back along the promenade taking back with us lots of beautiful memories. A big thank you to everyone involved!

## Fish & Chip Quiz Night



Following on from our first Quiz Night of the year on 5<sup>th</sup> July, we held our second one on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> October. This time we had seven teams competing in the Quiz, all eager to prove their brain power, no mobiles allowed. Each team had to pick a name, so we had Godwin's Gang; M & M's; Quizy McQuiz Face; The Crusties; The Hateful 8; Sudbury

Belles and Brook Shields. In all there were six rounds including a picture round (which can be annoying when you recognise the face but can't get the name.)

Half way through the quiz we stopped for some brain food [Fish & Chips] other options were available. All of which was delicious. Thank you to the Blue Oyster Fish Bar. Once everyone had their fill, we continued with the last two rounds.



The winners by a country mile were Brook Shields with 61 ½ points. Congratulations to John and his team. Each member was presented with a winner medal.

Thank you to Caroline who not only acted as Quiz Master she also set the questions. Also, thanks to those who manned the Bar, raffle, helped set up and clear away. It takes a team to stage these events. Helpers always welcome.

If you have not been to a St. Erconwald's Fish & Chip Quiz Night why not give it a try next time.

TEAM	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4	RD 5	RD 6	TOTAL
Godwin's Gang	10	7	7	8	8	4	43
M & M's	10	7	5	3	7	9	41
Quizy McQuiz Face	3	8	9	16	7	10	59
The Crusties	1	5	6	2	6	7	33
The Hateful 8	7	5	6	11	5	7	48
Total	7	2	3	16	8	4	35
Brook Shields	3	2	3	16	8	4	35
Score	6	8	4	26	9	10	82
							61 ½

## Repository



## Elizabeth Patten

Thank you for your patience this year due to building works we had to close the Repository for a number of weeks whilst works were being carried out. The Repository itself is still not properly opened as we have not had enough time to sort out the stock on the shelves due to other works and the Audit. It is planned to get this rectified over January.

I would like to thank you all for your support of the Repository over the last year. I personally love helping people find the right religious object or card to help them or their loved one's cope with what life throws at us. Thank you to Celia, Eva, Pauline and Eileen our Repository Helpers.

## Christmas Card and Gift Fair

This was held on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October in the Church Hall. During this weekend we display all our stock which can be a bit overwhelming but it is lovely to see it all on display. Nativity Sets for example are always a personal choice, simple or elaborate, small or big. We cater for all tastes and prices. It would not be possible to display all the items in Church so hence the Fair. Parishioners are allowed to reserve items or pay by instalments. Thank you to all who visited the Christmas Fair.



Every year I get asked will the display be there on Monday or the next weekend but the answer is an emphatic no. As Fr. Anthony announces at Mass this is the one and only time this year, the full stock will be on display. The Hall is booked during the week, plus it takes a day and a half to set up and another to clear the Hall.

*Please keep in our thoughts and prayers all the sick and the house-bound during this Christmas Season. May the Lord Jesus bless, console and strengthen all the sick, and may Mary, health of the sick, intercede for them.*



## Christmas Celebrations & Preparations



Preparations began on Friday when two Parishioners came and trimmed and tidied up the Church grounds. You did a brilliant job. Thank you.

Thank you to all who came on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> December to help set up the Church and Hall for the Christmas Celebrations. The place was a hive of activity setting up Cribs, stringing the 'Life of Light' cards so they could go on the Christmas tree and folding raffle tickets for the Christmas Draw in the evening. Cleaning the Church.

The Hall was also in full swing with Chris and his team preparing the Gift bags for the Passage. Christmas decorations and cribs including a knitted one, that have been donated to us were set up. The kitchen and bar were set up.

### Christmas Celebration and the Grand Draw

After the 5.30pm Mass people began to filter into the Hall. Once seated we started serving the Mulled Wine and Hot Mince Pies with choice of cream or custard. Custard won!! There was a nice relaxed atmosphere in the Hall as people enjoyed their pies whilst listening to the Christmas Songs. We then had the Christmas Raffle with lots of prizes to be won. The children drew the tickets. Some of the winners were present in the Hall. Following the raffle, children were asked to come forward a pick from a selection of toys and books. Thank you to the raffle donors. Two of our new parishioners who had helped with the setting up, both won prizes. **Is there a message there?**



Thank you to all who helped with the preparations and who helped set up and especially those who tidied away. Wish you all a happy, joyous and peaceful Christmas and blessings for 2026.



### Christmas Draw Raffle Results

1<sup>st</sup> Prize Crib **Ticket 0102** Augustine; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize £100 Cash **Ticket 1158** Mrs. A. Curran ; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize Goodies Hamper **Ticket 1486** Maria Pinto all other uncollected minor prizes listed on Church Boards. Winners notified.

## Saint Joseph's Infant and Junior Schools      Amanda Whelan



It has been a very busy term in Saint Joseph's and the children led by our Prayer Leaders, have continued to play an active role in growing the Catholic life of the school and living out our Mission Statement.

### Class Saints/Prayer Bags

The children began the year by researching their class saint and their feast day. Children celebrate their class saint's feast day across the year. Across the year children bring the class Prayer Bag home to celebrate collective worship as a family. They then share this with the rest of their class.



### Catholic Social Justice



The Prayer Leaders have worked very hard across the autumn term to work on the Caritas values of 'Family and Community' and 'Option for the Poor and Vulnerable'. Their first campaign was the Macmillan Coffee morning which they hosted both in the Prayer Room and outside on trollies. They raised a magnificent £593.49 for Macmillan. Prayer Leaders also organised a wonderful collection of food as part of our harvest celebration. This year they donated it to Brent Foodbank who kindly came to pick up the food.

### Remembrance Sunday

Prayer Leaders worked hard to support the Royal British legion's poppy appeal in November and arrived early each morning to sell poppies and other related items before school. Children also wrote class prayers and also took part in special Remembrance Day services across Armistice Day. The whole school held a two minutes silence at 11 a.m.



### The School Council Stewardship



Last year's School Council got some very good news at the start of the school year. The children were awarded the prestigious Eco Schools Award at the highest level of distinction. This was in recognition of our environmental projects led by the School Council last academic year.



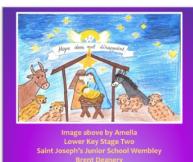
We also were delighted to receive a second award which was the renewal of our gold accreditation. This award is from TFL and is in recognition of our health and wellbeing initiatives such as encouraging cycling, scooting, road safety and promoting sustainable travel.

### Anti-Bullying Week

The children participated in activities during 'Anti-Bullying Week.' The week began as always with 'Odd Sock Day' where we wore odd socks to remember how unique we all are.



### Christmas Card Competition



Diya Year 6, Amelia Year 4, Eleanor Year 2 and Vernon in nursery won the school design a Christmas card competition. They were also entered into the Westminster Diocese Christmas Card competition and the local Brent MP's Christmas card competition. We were delighted when Vernon's (nursery) entry was the runner up in the Barry Gardiner competition.

### School Choir Events

We continue to be a part of Westminster Diocese's Singing School's Project. Our school choir have been very busy singing at school Masses, Westminster Cathedral, as well as going out in the local community to spread some festive joy with their beautiful singing. Our school choir went to Middlesex Care Home to spread some festive cheer to the residents who enjoyed their performance immensely.



### Santa Visit

We ended the year with a surprise visit from Santa himself. He read stories and poems to the children and gave them each a special Christmas gift.



*The staff and pupils at Saint Joseph's Infant and Junior Schools wish all the parishioners of Saint Erconwald's a very Happy Christmas.*

## Building Works: Church Roof and Window Restoration Project



The biggest news in 2025 was the commencement of the Church Roof and Windows Restoration Project after many years saving and suffering many false starts, it actually happened this year. Harrow Roofing and Building Limited won the contract to carry out the work and Ian Smith of Kirsop Chartered Building Surveyors to oversee the project, we also had the invaluable help of the Diocese Surveyor Keith Lidington.

Work started on 4<sup>th</sup> August with scaffolding being erected out the front of the Church and behind the Nursery. It was hard to believe it was happening at last. The following weeks Scaffolding was erected inside the Church which did lead to some restrictive use of the Church for safety reasons. Once the windows, which was the main bulk of the work, was completed, the roof was given greater attention. Unfortunately, the ridge of the Church Roof had so many holes it was necessary to attach a patch along the entire roof ridge. This was not covered by the original quote but was necessary to do.

Whist scaffolding was still in situ it was decided it was too good an opportunity and would probably save having to hire scaffolding again to restore the Crucifix above the altar, and to paint the white wall behind the altar which had been marked by water leaks over the years. The big Red Cross outside the front of the Church was also painted.



When the Crucifix was taken down from the altar wall to erect the scaffolding, we noticed that the Crucifix was in a bad state. Resin seeping out and a crack down the back. This Crucifix was donated to the Church by Fr. Connaughton mother. It was felt



we needed to repair the Crucifix whilst the scaffolding was in place. A French Polisher, Chris Harding was engaged in this restoration a labour of love. The Crucifix was cleaned, sealed, feed and then received two coats of French Polish. This was done over the course of three days as time had to be left between the different coatings to allow it to dry. The end result was unbelievable, it was so smooth and looked like new.



The white wall at the back of the altar was painted and the big red steel Cross (*donated by the architect of the Church Z. Sawiki & C. Hough*) above the Church at the front of the building by Danny the Painter one of the team from Harrow Roofing.

Finally, we had to address the strip of land that runs between the Church and the flats, it had become a dumping ground, yet again and was rat infested. The fence had been broken so it was a safety, fire risk and a hygiene problem all rolled into one. We had it replaced with a metal fence until it came level with the Church entrance and then a wooden fence as before to the front of the property.

As with all building work it is the small jobs that take the longest, we still have a few to do. Like the entrance to the Church and St. Erconwald's Window and some more repairs to the roof. It was decided to look at these in the new year.



Whilst, we have hoped to get this work done for a long time, we were full of fears as to what would happen would we have to re-locate to the Hall for Mass? Would the Nursery have to move out? In the end it was quite painless thanks to Ryan of Harrow Roofing



& Building Ltd and his crew Jimmy, Danny and Adam. They worked around our schedule. They became part of our Parish and were treated as such by our Parishioners. They showed the upmost respect for the House of God, nothing was too much trouble for them. They also had something seldom found these days, pride in their work and true craftsmanship.

The Hall became their home over the summer and again they treated the place with care and respect. It was a privilege to have them work here.

We also need to thank you the Parishioners of St. Erconwald's most sincerely, we could not have completed what we did without your wonderful contributions and donations to the project. Sincere thanks for your generosity, this is your Church, you should be proud of what you have done. We will give you all the details of costs and donations raised etc in the New Year.





The past year has been a rewarding experience meeting new family carers, offering them the opportunity to support each other and other carers and former carers I know. For example:

- John – who cares for his wife – said "I come here to listen and learn about dementia and in particular the stuff you don't find in books"; and
- Barbara – who cares for her husband – said "I look forward to come and talk about my experiences. It feels like I'm unloading my burdens onto you, and I go away feeling better as a result."

These and other comments make it worthwhile running the Dementia Carers Support Groups. However, the majority of family carers don't necessarily have access to engage with such support, and nor do they necessarily see the value such groups can offer. This latter point I know so well myself, having to be persuaded to attend my first ever meeting from which I never looked back.

Therefore, if you're supporting a family member and/or friend this Christmas here are some ideas to make the festive season more manageable:

- (a) Keep things simple. Christmas doesn't have to be stressful to be enjoyable. For example, focus on activities that bring comfort and connection, like watching old films or listening to familiar music.
- (b) It's OK to say No. It's fine to decline invitations if they feel like too much. Remember sometimes saying no is the best thing you can do to protect your own health and well-being, which will have a knock-on benefit for the person you support.
- (c) Don't compare. You might find yourself remembering how you used to celebrate and/or longing for Christmases of the past. Try not to be disappointed if the person you support shows little or no interest in decorations, cards or presents. Instead, try to stay in the present moment and focus on things to be grateful.

(d) Be kind to yourself. Let go of any guilt and perfectionism. Celebrate the season in a way that works for you, the person you support and your situation.

(e) Make time for yourself. If possible, find some moments of respite to try and unwind and relax.

(f) Ask for help or reach out if you're struggling. If you reach a *Crisis Point* remember you can always call the NHS CNWL Out of Hours Crisis Team on tel. no. 0800 0234 650 (between the hours of 5pm and 9am Mon - Fri; and at any time on a weekend and bank holidays). You can also email them at [cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net](mailto:cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net).

In the meantime if you know of anyone who is supporting a husband, wife, mother, father, .... with dementia, please feel free to share my contact details with them.

*Wishing you and your families and friends a peaceful Christmas and happy New Year.*

Frank Arrojo Mobile 07867 903917;  
email [frankj.arrojo@gmail.com](mailto:frankj.arrojo@gmail.com)



We have had a very busy term at St Bernadette's full of rich learning experiences, fun and happiness.

Our new children have settled very well into our Nursery and our Reception classes, instantly becoming very important members of our community. This was confirmed for the Reception children when they had their **Welcome Assembly** on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October, when their jumpers were blessed by Fr Hector and they were officially welcomed into our school.



As part of our health and fitness work we held our **annual Fun Run** in our park at the end of September. It is always a lovely event where so many parents join their children to run the laps around the park. It follows on from the summer holidays when the children completed activity logs so that we could keep them focused on staying fit. The children understand the importance of being healthy as they know the positive effect that this has on their education.



Just before half term our Y6 children have had their **residential trip to the Gordon Brown Outdoor Educational Centre**. They were blessed with great weather in October and had a wonderful time. They were excellent ambassadors for our school and were a pleasure to be with. They then performed an assembly to the school and their parents to outline what they got up to - this can be seen on our website; [www.st-bernadette.co.uk](http://www.st-bernadette.co.uk). We are now in the process of planning our trip to Lourdes at Easter and to Madrid to visit our link school in May.



We sent 2 teachers to a **new link school in Paris (Charles Auray School)** this term. They are developing the curriculum and our children will extend their learning of the French language with real life experiences which they are very excited about!

In November we were delighted to send our **Pupil Chaplains to Mass at St Erconwald's** where they were welcomed by Fr Anthony. We really do want close links with your Parish so we hope to have more visits in the near future.

We are now into the season of Advent and our **Christmas preparations** are in full swing. We have had Advent and Penitential services and our Infants have performed their own production with an alien theme to compliment the traditional Christmas story! The Junior children have been singing at our Carol Concerts to entertain their parents and grandparents. We have also been singing in the Harrow Catholic Schools Carol Service and the choir sung at Westminster Cathedral for the HCPT Carol service and the Catholic Children's Society Carols. We also sung at St Luke's Hospice to begin their Advent preparations. Schools are a great place to be at this time of year and it is tremendous preparation at this holy time. You are welcome to attend any of our performances or assemblies and they are listed on our website.



Also on our website we have our **Weekly News** which is always a good watch. These can be seen at; [www.st-bernadette.co.uk](http://www.st-bernadette.co.uk) I hope that you enjoy them.

*On behalf of all of us at St Bernadette's I wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas and I hope that the year ahead is a healthy one for you and your family.*



This year, we introduced a new event to help raise funds for the parish: a Curry Night held in commemoration of the feast day of St Francis Xavier, celebrated on 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

St Francis Xavier (1506–1552) was a Spanish missionary and one of the founding members of the Jesuit order. He travelled extensively across Asia, particularly India, Japan, and Southeast Asia, spreading Christianity and dedicating his life to service, education, and missionary work.

Before the evening began, Father Anthony opened the night with a prayer, blessing a new statue of St Francis Xavier as well as prayer cards, which were distributed to all in attendance. This was followed by a beautiful and well-known Goan hymn, *Sant Francis Xaviera*, sung in Konkani by our Goan parishioners, setting a meaningful and prayerful tone for the evening.



The night continued with live music from our much-loved band, **Velvet Touch**, who have performed at the church for several Pentecost (International) Day celebrations. As the music played, food began flowing from the kitchen, starting with delicious appetisers including spring rolls, samosas, and poppadoms.

These were followed by a wonderful selection of main dishes, with bowls of lamb, prawn, chickpea, and vegetable curries served alongside rice and parathas, allowing guests to sample and enjoy a variety of flavours.

Once everyone had enjoyed their meal, the evening continued with music and dancing, as many guests joined in and celebrated together.

Dessert was served shortly after, featuring ice cream, fruit salad, and sago pudding, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.





The evening concluded with a raffle that brought smiles and excitement, made possible by the generosity of our donors and the enthusiastic participation of our guests. A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who helped organise and run the event, especially the chefs who prepared the wonderful food.

A special thank you also goes to **Velvet Touch** and **Young Perry** for providing wonderful live music throughout the evening, helping to create such a joyful and uplifting atmosphere. We are deeply grateful to all who attended and supported the night, making it a memorable and successful occasion for our parish.

We hope to build on the success of this evening and look forward to creating even more events for our parish community next year.

*What an enjoyable evening and what a success for a first celebration of this very special saint. The cooks certainly excelled and feeding 80 people from our small kitchen is no mean feat. Besides honouring the great saint, Francis Xavier, the **St. Francis Xavier Committee** also wanted to raise much needed funds for our Church Windows and Roof Restoration Fund. They raised the massive amount of £1,515.44. Congratulations.*

### Advent Wreath

We would like to thank All Seasons for preparing our beautiful Advent Wreath.



## The Passage Gift Bags



Thank you to Andrew Hollingworth for coming to make the Passage Appeal. This Parish has a tradition of preparing individual Christmas Gift Bags for those who will spend their Christmas in the Passage. Money can't buy everything and it is a wonderful thing to give someone a gift on Christmas morning. This year we were truly blessed with great hand knitted blankets, scarves, hats and mittens, some even matching sets. What a labour of love, who would fail to feel cared for receiving such a gift. Thank you, Violet Ng and friends, and Sindy Harrison (daughter of Charlie Greck RIP) for using your talents for others.

Thank you also to all who have donated items or money to purchase same, to those who shopped for items, and specially to Chris and his team for preparing the bags. Finally, thanks to Andrew Hollingsworth for collecting the gits on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. He assures us that they are now in their place waiting for the big day.



## Live streaming



It is important that we remember if we are in front of the altar area we will be seen on live stream. If you wish to know the exact area covered, please consult the notices on both Church entrances and signs near the altar. To be honest nobody will see anything on live stream that they wouldn't see in Church.

For those who are housebound and for Parishioners who have moved to other parts of the country or even if you are feeling ill, it is wonderful and comforting to be able to take part in our Parish Mass via live stream. In fact, we actually have some people following regularly from outside London and they feel part of our Parish, they email to say they enjoyed joining us, they liked the sermon etc and occasionally sent us an Offertory donation. They say it seems to be a warm and friendly Church, so that is down to you dear friends. Thank you.

## Blessing of Graves



## Christine Davis

November 8<sup>th</sup> a dry day thankfully, saw a large crowd gather around the tree at Carpenters Park Cemetery for the annual Blessing of the Graves. It was certainly the largest crowd I personally have seen and my parents were buried there over 20 years ago.

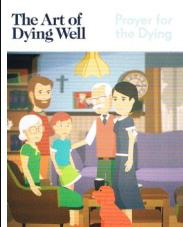
If I remember rightly (I heard this year) it was the Mothers Union at St Joseph's in Wembley that made the initial request for such an annual service.

The car park was full, the internal roadways had cars parked on them and at one point an impatient driver edged aggressively towards a group of people in order to scatter them to make room for her vehicle! Such lack of respect in such a special place.

The gathering went ahead led by the three priests, a fixture to bring us close to our departed and to honour them. Each year we are joined by newcomers to the community of the bereaved as well as old friends from previous blessing services.

After the prayers each family waited patiently for their family grave to have its personal blessing given by one of the priests. This took quite a while but thanks to the stamina of the priests and patience of each family no one was left out.

With many thanks to the priests who make the effort to undertake this annual ministry.



*The Art of Dying Well* is a web site of the Church in England and Wales that offers a helping hand to those grappling with issues surrounding death and dying. For more information visit: [www.artofdyingwell.org](http://www.artofdyingwell.org)

Our sympathies and prayers to the families of those departed: Eamon Heaphy, Michael Mallia, Charlie Grech, Mary Stella Jayawardena, Suzette de Ornelos Gomes, Sheila Mary O'Hara, Robbie Lane, Brian Wallace and Sonia Verma.

Of your charity, please remember in your prayers the priests and religious who served our parish. Those in Houses of Care: Birchwood Grange, Brook House and Kenbrook. The relatives and friends of parishioners.

## Mass for those Bereaved

## O'Reilly Family



The families of the nineteen Parishioners who had died during the period 2024 – 2025 were invited to attend the Mass for those Bereaved held on 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

There was a great attendance at the annual parish bereavement Mass. The Mass was offered for all those in our parish and Pope Francis, who departed this life in the previous twelve months, and for their families, who mourn their passing and grieve their loss.

There was a beautiful photographic display of the parishioners who had passed over the year enhanced by the Remembrance Day wreaths and candles representing the deceased as well as those who died in Birchwood Grange, Brook House and Kenbrook Houses of Care.

Fr Anthony began the Mass by welcoming everyone to the church, and the online congregation. The families of those who had died then lit a candle, beautifully scribed with their names, which were added to the display and given to the families to take home after the mass.



Fr Anthony spoke movingly about the different stages of grief and how it is important for people to be allowed to grieve in their own way and in their own time. With the recently bereaved there is still heartache, still pain, and tears continue to be shed for the loss of our loved ones. We, as a family found this extremely moving and supportive.

After the mass families gathered in the Parish Hall for refreshments and the opportunity to share memories with others.



Thank you, Fr Anthony for such a beautiful mass; the thought, care, and words that you shared with the families at this special mass were so comforting.

A huge thank you to those who arranged the displays and helped with the refreshments afterwards.

## Mass of Angels [Bereaved Parent's]



On Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> November Mass celebrated for bereaved parents. What is this Mass about? It is intended to bring the comfort of God's Holy Church to those unfortunate enough to have lost a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, complications of birth, cot death, born terminally ill, or who die very young.

It is a lonely sad time, people may not have known you were expecting, you may not feel you can tell them now. Those who knew may want to avoid talking about it as they do not know what to say.

This Mass is to acknowledge your loss, to say farewell to give back to God the Creation He made, who was ordained not to journey through life here on earth. To help us trust that God has a plan. He knew what was best, reasons unknown to us but all part of his plan for your wee one. A Mass to comfort you.

Following the Mass there is refreshments in the Hall and an opportunity to speak to others who are in the same boat. Hopefully to help one another through shared experience.

We will hold another Mass of the Angels next year around October/November time. Please keep an eye on the newsletter.

Loving God,  
As we celebrate this joyful feast of Christmas,  
a time of giving and plenty for many,  
help us remember how Jesus was born,  
without riches or comfort, surrounded by animals.  
Strengthen those who have travelled far,  
who have no place to lay their head,  
who are alone and frightened,  
just as your holy family were.  
Give us sight beyond the possessions surrounding us,  
to our wider family throughout the world,  
to those who hunger, who are weary, who fear,  
that we may reach out to them in love.

Amen

## THANK YOU

*Things happen in church because people make them happen. We thank the following who made it "happen" this year, [the fear in doing this is leaving people out, so if we leave you out please accept our apologies and above all accept our thanks.]*

### **Parish Council and the Finance Committee**

**Book-keeper:** Marie Needham [Finances, Yearly Accounts & Gift Aid]

**Hall Manager/Repository:** Elizabeth Patten and team: Celia Cover, Pauline Lane & Eva O'Connor.

**Safeguarding Reps:** Rose Yip Heung Win & Maria Rogers.

**Stewards:** Selwyn Ferrao, Pauline Lane, Patricia O'Reilly, Eva O'Connor.

### **Eucharistic Ministers - Readers - Altar Servers**

**Offertory Collectors:** Selwyn Ferrao, Pauline Lane, Barbara Hope, Jenson Santos, Agnieska Torbus.

**Choir:** Paula DeSouza, Agatha Ferrao, Yvette Remedios, Dolvy Colacco, Jenson Santos, Assis D'Cunha.

**Catechists:** Bernie Gillen, Rose Yip, Nancy Chu and Holly Cook.

**Communications:** David Pearson, Church Services Ltd

### **Social Committee - St. Patrick's Committee - International Day Committee - St. Francis Xavier Committee**

**Church Cleaning Team:** Karen Stiell, Pauline Lane, Eileen O'Connell, Pat and Eva O'Connor.

**Church Linen:** Judith Gilbert

**Flowers/Plants:** Barbara Hope

**Parishioner Contact:** to all who keep contact with our housebound parishioners.

**CAFOD Team**

**The Larder:** Anne Taylor

**The Passage:** Passage Committee, and all who helped source and prepare the gift bags for *The Passage*

**General maintenance and church refurbishment:** Patricia O'Reilly, Andrew Defontaine (AMD Plumbing), Iain Hopkins, Pat O'Connor, Maeve and John Cronin, Stuart and *The Chameleons*.

**Gardens and Grounds:** Creative Gardens.

**Sudbury & Wembley Dementia Carers Support Groups:** Frank Arrojo

## Gardens and grounds



Thank you to Selwyn and Augustine for tidying the front of the Church grounds on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December and thank you to the big numbers who turned out to 4<sup>th</sup> October to clean the car park, tend the gardens in the front of the Church and Fr. Anthony's Garden.

## Christmas Tree

*We would like to thank G. Saville & Son Ltd  
(Incorporating L. J. Butler & Son Ltd, Kenton)  
for sponsoring our Christmas Tree.*

*We would like to take this opportunity to thank Saville's  
and congratulate them on their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,  
serving the people of Wembley and Harrow.*

### Office Email Addresses:

[wembley@savillefunerals.co.uk](mailto:wembley@savillefunerals.co.uk)

[wealdstone@savillefunerals.co.uk](mailto:wealdstone@savillefunerals.co.uk)

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E-mail: [wembley3@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:wembley3@rcdow.org.uk) Website: [www.erconwald.org.uk](http://www.erconwald.org.uk)  
Microsite: <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/wembleyestonroad/sterconwald>  
Live-streaming: <https://www.churchservices.tv/wembley3>

#### **MAKING A DONATION VIA OUR WEBSITE**

<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/wembleyestonroad/donate/>

Via Dona [the company who supply our card readers].

<https://portal.mydona.com/assets/webPay/index.php?cid=268>

Donations, Mass Intentions and Repository payments can also be made via  
new card readers in Church

**[If you are a tax payer, please Gift Aid your donation]**

This Parish is part of the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocese Trustee  
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**PARISH PRIEST:** Father Anthony Psaila

**PARISH OFFICE:**

See the weekly newsletter or visit: <http://www.erconwald.org.uk>

**GIFT AID:** Marie Needham

**PARISH HALL LETS:**

Elizabeth Patten: [wembley3@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:wembley3@rcdow.org.uk)

**SAFEGUARDING REPS:**

Rose Yip [wembley3sg1@safeguardrcdow.org.uk](mailto:wembley3sg1@safeguardrcdow.org.uk)

Maria Rogers [wembley3sg2@safeguardrcdow.org.uk](mailto:wembley3sg2@safeguardrcdow.org.uk)

**SUNDAY MASSES**

Saturday Vigil: 5.30pm; Sunday: 10.00am and 11.30am

**WEEKDAY MASSES**

Monday, Tuesday ,Wednesday, and Friday: 9.30am.

**CONFESIONS:** Saturday 4.30 - 5.00pm

**HOLY HOUR AND BENEDICTION:** Wednesday 10.00-11.00am