

together

ISSUE FOUR: SUMMER 2008
news from your West Berkshire Pastoral Area

This edition of 'Together' brings you details of the Pastoral Area Celebration at Douai Abbey Church on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The theme of the event will be Growing Together.

The Gathering at Douai Abbey on Sunday afternoon, 29th June 2008 is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate some significant and important events in our local Catholic history. The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Thatcham was consecrated 30 years ago. The Church of St. Francis De Sales, Wash Common was opened 40 years ago. The Church of St. Bernadette, Pangbourne was opened 50 years ago. Blessed Hugh Faringdon Secondary school, Reading was opened 50 years ago. The Church of St. Joseph's, Newbury was opened 80 years ago. The Church of St. Mary's, Woolhampton was opened 160 years ago.

These are remarkable anniversaries. And when we gather at Douai, we must remember in thought and prayer, those people who worked very hard to establish and build these churches. It took generosity, hard work, dedication, vision, a deep sense of prayer and faith. Despite many hardships and difficulties, they overcame them. The result is that we are blessed with so many places to worship. We must remember and thank all those who brought this vision about, both lay, religious and clergy. They were men and women of faith, who desired to bring about their own local church and community. Thank you for all your efforts. In this constantly changing church and times, the simple expression of a thank you is sometimes forgotten. That should not happen. These people were 'a stone of witness, a precious cornerstone, a foundation stone'. (Isaiah 28:16).

But our Gathering should not only be about looking back in time. We are people of faith and we must look forward to the future.

We must remind ourselves that we are above all else a sacramental church and these buildings where we are celebrating anniversaries and all our other churches, are the places where the sacraments of the church are celebrated. We remember the baptisms, the first holy communions, the times when we sought reconciliation and forgiveness in the confessional, the weddings, the funerals of family or friends, the conferring of the Holy Spirit at confirmation, maybe even in some parishes, the ordination of a priest. The sacredness of the Christmas, Easter and Pentecost celebrations. The prayer and peacefulness of a daily Mass.

These need to continue in the future, but we need ministers of the sacraments for this to happen. We need priests, and ideally from our own communities, as it shows that the faith has taken a deep root in this area. As St. Luke simply put it in his Gospel, 'so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest' (Luke 10:2).

In all our plans, discussions, meetings about the future, the need for ministers of the sacrament and the word has not been foremost in our thoughts. That should not happen. As well as remembering the past, we must pray for the future, that we will have those ministers to continue to celebrate the sacraments. If we fail in that, we betray the inheritance that our predecessors worked so hard to build and pass on to us. Their efforts may seemingly be in vain.

We can talk, discuss and make many plans, but there are important and urgent issues that need to be dealt with. Hopefully today, we have the people of faith, vision and a willingness to work to make this happen. Just like those people who built up those churches all those years ago.

Happy anniversary to you and God bless you all.

Fr. Padraig Faughnan



St Francis de Sales - The church opened in 1968. A plan to expand the housing in South Newbury caused Bishop Derek Worlock to set up the parish in 1966. The Government decided a few months later to move the proposed development further from London, but the Parish remained.

From the outset, at the wish of the Bishop, the Parish had, and still has, lay involvement in all aspects of its pastoral activity as envisaged by the fathers of the Vatican II Council. Existing buildings, Warren Lodge and the adjacent barn, were purchased for conversion to the present Presbytery and church, the latter being brought into service for Christmas 1968. In this way, the Parish acquired a permanent centre for worship sooner than might otherwise have been possible.

Over the last 40 years, the Parish has been blessed with the guidance of eleven priests, in each of whose care valuable contributions to its pastoral development have occurred. The parish is at present enjoying the stewardship of Fr. Eamon Walsh.

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Our Lady of the Assumption - Our Lady of the Assumption was founded in 1954 with Father John Garlick as its first Parish Priest. The present incumbent, Father Ignatius Maddineni, is the eighth to have held the role. The first Mass was celebrated in the Thatcham Memorial Hall, then transferred to a re-built Scout Hut and later to the new Parish Hall which had a dual role as a church and a meeting place. The Presbytery followed and finally the new church was completed in 1973. Due to the remarkable fund-raising efforts of the then parish priest, Father Seamus Gillooly and his parishioners, the church was paid for within 4 years and was duly consecrated in November 1977 by Bishop Emery.

The church itself is a very modern building which enjoys a prominent position on the north side of the A4 set in the middle of a town which has grown considerably in recent years. The site includes the Presbytery, the Parish Hall and the Club. The Hall itself is one of the biggest in the area and is used by a large number of parish and community groups.

The Parish is well served by over thirty ministries and maintains strong links with St Finian's Primary School. It is an active participant in the ecumenical group, Churches Together in Thatcham, and has well-developed relationships with the other churches in the town.

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St Joseph's parish was established in 1853 when the priests of St Mary's College Woolhampton bought 105 London Road Newbury to establish a Mass Centre for a few Catholic families in the town. A school was then started and a new church (now the church hall) was built in 1854 for £800. In 1925, 61 years later, Canon Francis Green had plans drawn up to build the current church and in 1928 this church was opened and blessed by Bishop William Timothy Cotter. 24 years after the opening of the church Canon Green died and bequeathed his church to the Catholics of Newbury.

Today St Josephs is the larger of the 2 parishes serving the Newbury area and the school moved to its present site in 1965. It has a large multi cultural congregation who support a variety of ministries and works closely with the school and the other worshipping communities in the area.

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St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is in the heart of Newbury, set in 3 acres and housed in light, airy buildings. It has 197 children on roll drawn from the parishes of St. Joseph's, St Francis de Sales and the Sacred Heart, Lambourn. The school family are proud of their Catholic Faith and the fundamental part it plays in their daily lives. It is by being on faith journeys but within a strong community that everyone is able to grow and develop. There is a true sense of community within the school family and also a true sense of belonging to our local parish communities too.

The Headteacher, Mrs Alison Webster, and her deputy, Mr Jamie Carroll, lead a team of dedicated caring staff, working in partnership with the Governors and parents to educate the children, by living the school's mission: Following in Jesus' footsteps, recognising the Holy Spirit in ourselves and each other, nurturing our God given gifts in a community with Christ at its centre.

The school also offers before and after school care at the Link Club which is open to St Joseph's pupils and is situated on the school site. The school holds an annual visitors' mornings but welcomes visitors at other times of the year.

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St Finian's Primary School is a one form entry Catholic Primary School situated in a rural setting to the north of Thatcham. The school forms part of the convent of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and is located on three floors.

The beautiful grounds include two playgrounds, a large grassed area and a spinney which can be used for playing, for reflection, quiet time and lessons. A large sports field is located 100metres from the school. The School also has the use of the beautiful convent grounds which offer peace, tranquillity and a wonderful backdrop to outdoor liturgies, performances and art lessons.

There are currently 182 children on the roll with average class sizes of 26. The school community which supports and cares for each other lives up to the school motto "Love by Truth" in their actions and in their words and certainly recognises what a unique and special situation they enjoy. The School is due to continue in its present accommodation until 2011 when it is hoped that the new premises will be available. The future is full of hope for St Finian's and the past has much to build on. Meanwhile it continues to thrive in the present.

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Society of Franciscan Pilgrims (SFP) is a new initiative in the Church. It has the support of the Diocese of Portsmouth having passed the scrutiny of Canon Law and granted a Decree of being a Public Association of the Faithful i.e. all we do is approved by the Church. SFP tries to meet modern pressures by its flexible life-style working within a framework, making for unity of purpose. In SFP each person's desire is to offer themselves to God all else radiates from this.

Therefore SFP gives women or men, celibate or married, young or more mature, the opportunity to consecrate their life to God in a supportive community, where they make Vows or Promises, whether they live alone, at home or in a group. With the other Franciscan aspects of their Mission, SFP's special charism is to pray and work for Christian Unity. We do not have the financial resources to subsidise members' needs so each person retains ownership and charge of their personal assets.

Contact details: Phone either: Sr. Margaret or Sr. Janet on 01635 552240

FMM Spirituality Centre is based in Cold Ash and offers Retreats, Conferences, Meeting Space for Ecumenical and Inter-Faith groups. Sisters Philomena, Maureen and Kumari have recently come to Cold Ash to form the new Core Community for the Centre. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary's presence in Cold Ash dates from 1915 when the sisters were invited by Lady Alice Fitzwilliam to make a foundation. Lady Alice wished to offer facilities for the care of orphans. St. Gabriel's convent was founded and the 'care of orphans' developed into St. Finian's School which is now a local Catholic Primary School. By 1936 two wing extensions and the Chapel had been added to the original house which was the family home of Lady Alice Fitzwilliam. This marked the beginning of the Novitiate, accepting novices from England, Wales and Scotland. During the War the Novitiate wing provided accommodation for the Sacred Heart Teachers Training College which had to be evacuated from London. On war-time rations, the kitchen catered daily for approximately 300 young women and children.

In 1978, the Cold Ash Retreat and Conference Centre was opened in the novitiate wing. For the past 30 years the Centre has offered retreats, conferences and available meeting space for a wide variety of groups. At the last Provincial Chapter in 2007, it was decided to look into the possibility of further developing the Centre as a source and resource for Spirituality.

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Growing together

St Cassian's Centre is situated in Kintbury in rural West Berkshire between Newbury and Hungerford and specialises in offering retreat experiences to young people throughout the year. In an explicitly Christian context, all visitors are welcomed and invited to become more aware of themselves, others, their environment and the place of God and Jesus in their lives. Those who come to St Cassian's are encouraged to recognise and be more at ease with the difficulties they encounter and, as they leave, are encouraged to be the "good news" to those amongst whom they live.

The Centre also welcomes Confirmation Groups from parishes, individuals and families for weekend retreats and adults for Advent and Lent weekend retreats. There are facilities at the Centre for groups wishing to meet at St Cassian's for day events and occasional residential sessions. The Retreat Team consists of two De La Salle Brothers, three senior lay staff and nine young people in their late teens or early twenties who are spending a volunteer gap year with the Centre.

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Douai Abbey Church of Our Lady and St Edmund, King & Martyr is a community of monks of the English Benedictine Congregation situated between Reading and Newbury, in Berkshire, about one hour west of London. The community, founded in 1615 in Paris moved to Douai in Flanders in 1818. In 1903 the community had to leave Douai and the Bishop of Portsmouth offered them St Mary's seminary in Woolhampton. The Abbey Church, the construction of which began in 1929, was finally completed in 1993. The old school buildings were redeveloped as private housing, and many new neighbours have now moved in. The monastery, built in 1966, is being refurbished, and a new refectory and extra guest accommodation was opened in 2006: an appeal to build a library has also been launched.

The community of 29 monks continues its activities in parochial ministry, the giving of retreats and lectures, study and hospitality. Remaining at the heart of our life, as for all Benedictines, is the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Mass and lectio divina. Douai Abbey offers a variety of opportunities for spiritual development through a programme of retreats, days of recollection and workshops. Further details are available from the Programme Director.

Contact details: Phone: 0118 971 5300 Email: info@douaiabbey.org.uk

St Mary's was opened in 1848. The village of Woolhampton gets an honourable mention in the Doomsday Book (as the farm of the delightfully named Wulflaf). The church of St Mary's is of more recent origin. There are records of both church and school on the present site through most of the 19th century. A new church was opened in May 1848 by Cardinal Wiseman, described in breathless prose by the Reading Mercury as 'the prelate in full pontificals' who preached to a 'crowded but reverential congregation, in a discourse abounding in eloquence, piety and paternal exhortation'.

With the arrival of the English Benedictine community from Douai in 1903, the school - St Mary's College with over 100 boys - and church passed to their care and were gradually adapted to a new role. St Mary's itself served as the Abbey Church for the first 30 years of the century, and reverted to that role during WW2 blackouts. As the focus of both community and school shifted to the new and much grander Abbey Church, St Mary's was relatively neglected. But it bounced back in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, was refurbished in 1974 and now serves as the focus of a lively congregation that takes a full part in delivering the many functions of a modern parish.

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Our Lady and St Bernadette's was opened in 1958 it is a small, thriving community; one of the four churches in St. Mary's Parish, Woolhampton. Mass is celebrated on Sundays and Tuesdays. Preparation for other Sacraments takes place on a Parish-wide basis.

Ministers of Communion assist in church and take Holy Communion to the housebound; there are numerous other ministries, i.e. Altar servers, Choir, Readers, etc.

The children's liturgy group guides pre-school and primary-age children. St. Bernadette's has a Safeguarding officer and a Health and Safety officer. St. Bernadette's supports an annual charity, CAFOD, APF boxes, Friday self-denial group, 100 club and Lent lunches. There is an active SVP conference.

The Dorman Rooms host social events throughout the year. There is a Parish Pastoral Council and Church Committee. Representatives sit on the Pangbourne All Churches Together (ACT) committee and are involved in ecumenical activities such as Lent discussion groups and the annual Worship in the Willows following the village Fete.

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St. Paul's Catholic Primary School - St Paul's School is in Tilehurst, which is west of Reading. The school is 39 years old and comprises well maintained and resourced buildings. St Paul's is an innovative school where staff and governors are very committed and dedicated to the needs of their delightful children. There is a close co-operative relationship between the Headteacher, Ms Julia Feeney, and her Deputy, Mrs Angela Hartley-Kane, working with the staff, parents and governors to build a community based on the love of Jesus in which all can flourish spiritually, morally, emotionally and academically.

It enjoys an excellent reputation in the locality and development work to extend the number of teaching areas and associated facilities continues in order to meet the demand for places at the school. St Paul's also offers before and after school care for their children.

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St Luke's is one of the four churches forming the parish of Woolhampton which is served by the Benedictine monks of Douai Abbey. Theale has always retained its small village identity in spite of being so close to Reading.

The church was consecrated in 1969 by Bishop Worlock and was the culmination of the efforts of the monks, especially the late Fr. Oswald Dorman OSB, and the parishioners, who at that time, were a small but determined group. Before St Luke's church was built, Mass was said in the hall of the Lamb Public House, the Railway Hut opposite Theale station and in the Parish Hall of the Holy Trinity Church.

In the 1970's there was an influx of young families to the village and they worked with the older members of the community people to form a Parish Council and a Social Committee. St Luke's were fortunate to have people of all ages who turned their hands to all the work of running the parish from cleaning and maintaining the church and gardens to providing organists, catechists and the lay ministries. In the past there was also a tremendous ecumenical spirit between the village churches. We were all friends and supported each other's activities.

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St Oswald's is a Catholic community meeting regularly for Mass in the Burghfield area since 1915. The current community is regarded as welcoming and hospitable with a relatively large proportion playing an active role in its pastoral, liturgical and social life. It is active in the local Churches Together ecumenical group.

The current church building dedicated to St. Oswald of Worcester was opened in 1976 by Bishop Derek Worlock on 28th February, his last act in the diocese before he was translated to the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Key features include the altar, originating from Buckfast Abbey, and Stations of the Cross, on plates made at Aldermaston Pottery, depicting a non-traditional sequence of scenes commencing with the Last Supper. The Leonard room, dedicated to Fr Leonard Vickers OSB a former parish priest, was completed in 1993 and has become a resource for the wider local community with a number of groups hiring the hall for their activities.

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Blessed Hugh Faringdon School was founded in 1958 to serve the families of the Reading and West Berkshire areas by providing Catholic education for students of all abilities. A very popular school with a well-established sixth form, it was designated a Performing Arts College in 2005.

A special Mass was held earlier this year at English Martyrs Church to mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the School. The congregation were treated to dance, singing from the Gospel choir and accompaniment by the lower school orchestra. The Mass, led by Monsignor John Nelson, was a celebration of the gifts of the current students and the contribution made in the past by generations of dedicated staff. He said Blessed Hugh Faringdon School played a very important part in the Catholic life of Reading in bearing witness to the values of the Gospel. Its presence is testimony to the great sacrifices made by previous generations of Catholics. The recent Diocesan inspection and the Mission Week showed the School's depth of commitment to carrying forward those traditions.

The reception afterwards gave an opportunity for teachers from earlier years to mingle and share their memories with current students, parents and staff.

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The West Berkshire Pastoral Area communities come together on Sunday 29th June the Feast Day of SS Peter and Paul at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton to celebrate the presence and work of all the Pastoral Area communities both now and in the past and to mark the following anniversaries:

160 years of services at St Mary's Church, Woolhampton opened in 1848

80 years of services at St Joseph's Church, Newbury opened in 1928

50 years of services at St Bernadette's Church, Pangbourne founded in 1958

50 years of education at Blessed Hugh Faringdon, School Reading opened in 1958

40 years of services at St Francis de Sales Church, Wash Common opened in 1968

30 years of services at Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Thatcham consecrated in 1978

Programme for the day

1:00 pm onwards Picnic Lunch in the Abbey Grounds. (A marquee is available in case of bad weather and hot and cold drinks will be available).

2:00 - 2:30 pm Drumming Workshop for young people with Temple Beat.

3:00 pm Mass in the Abbey Church celebrated with Bishop Crispian and Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB, Abbot of Douai.

'Prayer and Reflection' will take place in St. Mary's Church focusing on the Area Anniversaries and the 150th Anniversary of Our Lady's apparition at Lourdes.

There will also be a Liturgy Group for children of the appropriate age.

Community Displays will be on view all afternoon and memories of earlier times will be recorded in interviews taken by the young people of Blessed Hugh Faringdon School.

Other activities available on the day will include informal football on the lower field and a Bouncy Castle (free for the younger children).



Rachel Green, Lucy Kay and Hannah Green after their Confirmation at Douai Abbey

Confirmation 2008 - May 2nd at Douai Abbey

Take a glorious spring evening in the beauty of the Abbey Church, a church filled to capacity with proud and happy confirmation candidates with their families, sponsors, godparents and friends, an excellent group of musicians and singers, an inspirational homily from Bishop Crispian and you end up with a truly marvellous celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

On Friday 2nd May, 36 of our young people from across the Pastoral Area were confirmed at a beautiful, enjoyable and well-organised service presided over by the Bishop with support from Father Eamon, Father Pat, Father Boniface and Deacon John Foley. The "Adoramus te Domine", played and sung during the anointing with chrism was particularly moving.

Our thanks go to all involved in the preparation of the candidates over the last six months including the Catechists, Sponsors, parents and families. Our thanks also go to those who assisted in organizing such a wonderful ceremony.

Taking 'Together' forward

Since its launch last Autumn, 'Together' has played a part in bringing together the several worshipping communities, schools and religious houses serving the Pastoral Area and enabled a sharing of information and activities. The Communications Steering Group feels that there is now the opportunity to develop this further, perhaps as a Pastoral Area newsletter which could include news and events from all communities, or by other means.

Please let us have your thoughts and suggestions.

If you would like to help with the development of this pastoral ministry or if you have something of interest for the next edition please contact Francis Connolly at fjcon@clara.co.uk