



# A Celebration of Catholic Life in the Saint Thomas Catholic Academies Trust

## 2023-2024

Cardinal Newman  
Catholic School  
Luton

Our Lady's Catholic  
Primary School  
Chesham Bois

St Ethelbert's Catholic  
Primary School  
Slough

St Joseph's Catholic  
High School  
Slough

St Martin de Porres Catholic  
Primary School  
Luton

St Louis Catholic  
Primary School  
Aylesbury

St Edward's Catholic  
Junior School  
Aylesbury

St Michael's Catholic School  
Aylesbury

St Michael's Catholic School  
High Wycombe

St Anthony's Catholic  
Primary School  
Slough

St Joseph's Catholic  
Infant School  
Aylesbury

St Margaret of Scotland  
Catholic Primary School  
Luton

St Mary's Catholic  
Primary School  
Caddington

St Vincent's Catholic  
Primary School  
Houghton Regis

St Peter's Catholic  
Primary School  
Marlow

**Welcome to our newsletter featuring some of the wonderful events that have taken place in the Catholic Schools within our Trust over the course of the last academic year.**

**As we celebrate Education Sunday, Bishop Marcus Stock, Chairman of the Catholic Education Service, writes these words to us all:**

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. As 'the way, the truth, and the life' Christ is both the object and subject of Catholic education. A Catholic educational institution seeks to root the Gospel of Christ in the minds and lives of students, providing a holistic formation that promotes human flourishing, inspiring a lifelong love of learning, and fostering the virtues that will assist children and young people to discover in themselves and in others the Truth, Goodness and Beauty of God.

**Please continue to pray for our Catholic schools and in particular for the children and young people we serve.**

**It is not enough to love the young;  
they must know that they are loved.**

Saint John Bosco



## Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Luton



In the autumn term, every Year 7 tutor group goes offsite to a local church to spend a retreat day together, led by the Chaplain and the form tutor. The day begins with icebreaker games helping students to get to know each other better and make new friends. There are further activities exploring our school's ethos and helping them to recognise the gifts and talents they bring that will build up our community.

The day is punctuated with prayer, whether with a sung grace before lunch or moments of reflection and gratitude as part of the activities. One of the highlights of each day is where students choose different picture postcards to represent who God is for them. In our final time of prayer, students share their images with the whole group and we build our image of God together. The way these young people share so beautifully their experience and understanding of God is both inspiring and humbling.

One student wrote afterwards 'I made more friends by talking to them in the activities and being with them at lunchtime. I learned that God made us to be unique but we are all created in God's image. The day helped me to know that God is with me no matter what!'



## Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Chesham Bois



Life as a chaplain at Our Lady's Primary school in Chesham Bois has been pretty amazing over the past year and I regard it as a beautiful and undeserved gift that I continue to unwrap and treasure, day after day. One of the fruits of this academic year is the formation of the 'Soul Beat Band' consisting of a bunch of very enthusiastic kids, mostly from Year 3 and Year 5. It all started when they saw me spending my lunchbreak on the playground with my guitar so they joined me with any instruments they could find in school (maracas, bongos, tambourines...) What seemed to be just a fun and noisy spell, became regular practices arranged by the kids themselves who designed the posters, gathered the instruments and rounded up their friends from the playground at the right time. We all bring something we are passionate about: some like to add their own actions to the songs, some love adding their dance movements, some like to play the percussion instruments or the guitars. Whether in school or in the parishes, during the celebration of Mass we have found our way to express and spread the joy of the Gospel!

## St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School

Slough



This year our Faith Ambassadors have worked hard to enhance the Catholic life of our school. They have prepared and led liturgies at specific times in the year such as Remembrance and Advent. They supported Slough Foodbank during Harvest time, collecting tins and goods to help the needy in our local area. They encouraged each class to create a class Advent wreath for prayer tables. In December, they thoroughly enjoyed organising a 'Travelling Crib' for our youngest children in Early Years and Key Stage 1 where they took a beautiful knitted crib, a gift from a governor, around classes whilst telling the story of the Nativity.

They eagerly took part in the Trust Faith Ambassadors' training day in February where they enjoyed learning different ways to pray. They have then taught St Ethelbert's children these ways to pray in our weekly prayer club over the year. Our pupils particularly love playdough prayers!

At Easter time, the Faith Ambassadors ran a successful drawing competition entitled 'What does Easter mean to you?' They took their judging of the entries very seriously! In May, they taught the whole school how to be a part of a Living Rosary during our Crowning of Mary celebration. Thank you to our Faith Ambassadors for their work and dedication to their role. They really have made St Ethelbert's a wonderful place to pray!



## St Joseph's Catholic High School

Slough



On Wednesday 1 May, all of St Joseph's Catholic High School came together to celebrate our feast day, St Joseph the Worker. Fr Kevin O Driscoll from Holy Family parish came into school to celebrate a whole school Mass before all students took part in a Faith Walk to Eton Fields and enjoyed a whole school picnic together. The purpose of the day was to come together to illustrate our School Mission Statement of 'Unlocking Belief in All' and demonstrate our school virtues of being: Learned and Wise, Loving and Compassionate, Truthful and Eloquent, Intentional and Prophetic, Attentive and Discerning, Faith-filled and Hopeful, Curious and Active, Grateful and Generous.

Our Faith Walk was to raise awareness for our international school charity, 'Access to Shine', which aims to improve access to education for a community secondary school in Ndi Uduma Awoke in Nigeria. We raised funds through the walk to contribute to the building of a new school hall and provide equipment for students to learn. As a school we are lucky enough to come together and enjoy each other's company whilst we learn and we hope the students in Ndi Uduma will be able to do the same through our fundraising.



## St Martin de Porres Catholic Primary School

Luton



Pupils were recently treated to a morning of multi-cultural theatrical story telling from the mesmerising Khayaal Theatre Company. A demon slaying heroine and a resilient cobbler were among the characters children were introduced to as they explored tales from Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

The stories explored humanitarian values common to us all and helped pupils to reflect upon virtues and ideas shared across the different faiths. Pupils were then able to ask questions and had some interesting and insightful comments to make. It was a fantastic morning that was thoroughly enjoyed by staff and pupils alike.



## St Louis Catholic Primary School

Aylesbury



St Louis Catholic Primary School hosted a competition to find out and share information about a chosen saint. The children had to research the saint and then present the information in a fun or interesting way. We had posters, booklets, clay models and even people dressing up as their saint!

The competition was judged by the Year 6 house and vice captains who found it very difficult to choose with so many great entries. The children shared the information they found out, including what made that person such a great follower of Christ. The photo shows our very worthy winners!

## St Edward's Catholic Junior School

Aylesbury



At St Edward's Catholic Junior School, we incorporate our faith into all aspects of our school life. One of the ways in which we do this is to incorporate it into our outdoor education. Every class gets four weeks of Forest School. Each session starts with a prayer, thanking God for the benefits of that day's weather, saying sorry for when we have not been good stewards of God's environment and asking God to help us be better ones, both during the session and beyond. Stewardship is something that features a great deal in our forest school sessions. Children are expected to

not only be kind to each other but also to be kind to all resources at forest school, especially the living ones, such as the bugs, the trees and the animals.

Children are regularly asked to remember that whether they are climbing a tree, looking for bugs or making a den, they should remember that all of these activities are a gift from God and that it is our responsibility to make sure the environment that these activities take place in is around for future generations to come.



# St Michael's Catholic School

Aylesbury



Our school graciously hosted an International Mass on Monday 13 May 2024. The maiden edition of the liturgical ceremony, to celebrate the beauty and splendour of the Catholic Community in Aylesbury Pastoral Area, was presided over by Bishop David Oakley.

The liturgical celebration, which formed part of His Lordship's pastoral visitation to the St John Fisher Pastoral Area, was organised by a committee headed by the area Dean, Canon John Beirne, in conjunction with some parish and diocesan representatives, including our school chaplain, Fabian Eihebhoria.

The Mass was celebrated in different languages and had an immense representation of our students who actively participated with singing in the choir, serving at the altar and leading the bidding prayers that were eloquently conveyed in French, Ghanaian, Filipino, Malayalam and English.

A great number of Catholics from the different parishes in the pastoral area attended the Mass in their various beautiful national dresses, bearing gifts, food and songs that are unique to their cultural heritage. A significant number of the school staff were also among the congregation.

In his homily, Bishop David encouraged us as God's children from various parts of the world to generously and proudly bring the richness of our faith to the Catholic community. He also stated his wish to have this replicated in other pastoral areas and hoped this event would be one of many to come in Aylesbury.

# St Michael's Catholic School

High Wycombe – Primary and Secondary



In this Year of Prayer, we have striven for greater range and opportunity for prayer, and also focussed weekly on the 'St. Michael Virtues' (Stewardship, Truthful, Merciful, Inspirational, Courageous, Humility, Aspirational, Empathetic and Loving) as well as the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. To build upon this practically in our Secondary Phase, we started our 'Fundraiser Friday' for CAFOD during Lent. This has now developed with our House Charities, choosing five local charities which have a history with our community.

Representatives of each charity lead a House Assembly. Students and staff from the House for that week donate cakes, snacks, sweets and drinks, and also help to run the sale with the support of the Mission Team. We have made £50-£115 per week.

We are looking for ways to build the relationship in other ways: student visits, newsletters, donations of items, a sleep-out and work experience or Duke of Edinburgh opportunities. The feedback from the charities has been so positive.

Each student in their particular house will stay with the chosen charity throughout their school life. Our Primary Phase has also been very active, supporting the OneCan Trust and Wycombe Food Hub.

Santa made a special visit at Christmas to collect donations. Please pray for us!



## St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Slough



At St Anthony's we are very fortunate to have our church on site, therefore we are all able to gather as a whole school to celebrate many Masses throughout the year, in particular our own feast day of St Anthony. This year however, we decided that we wanted the parents to join us for Mass. Therefore we celebrated Mass outside with both Fr Nathaniel and Fr Kevin.

As it was a day of celebration, we spent most of the day all together outside. It started with a football match between the Year 6s and staff which ended in a 5 all draw. This was followed by the gymnastic club, karate club, choir, an Irish dancer and an Indian dancer all showing off their talents. The parents of almost all the children in the school then joined us for a picnic, which finished with Mass. A day full of memories and a true celebration of our St Anthony's family.



## St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Aylesbury



Here at St Joseph's, children were very inspired by a visitor from the Legion of Mary who spoke to them about the Rosary and how to use it for prayer. Inspired by the number of questions the children had and those who wanted to pray using the rosary, we started a prayer group during the lunchtime. This was kindly led by our RE Governor and children could freely choose to attend. Many children have become involved and some pop in now and then. When asked if he went to the prayer group one child responded, 'Oh yes but not always - only when I need to chat to Mary!'

The children have been amazing and have really taken ownership of the group. They have been involved in making welcome cards for babies being baptised in the parish, leading prayer in their classes and have even held a debate about how we could make the prayer group time longer as it was interrupted by lunch! They wrote to the headteacher and put forward their solutions. They were delighted to have their request agreed to and each received a 'well done' and 'thank you' letter.

The end of the school year celebrations included a presentation to our Year 2 leavers of a rosary alongside their traditional St Joseph's medal. We are very grateful to the Legion of Mary for their work with the school and look forward to expanding the work of our prayer group next year.



**Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things.**

Pope Francis



# St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School

Luton



In December, Fr Ugo came into school to lead us in a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During the service, Year 6 explored the scripture of The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38). Just as Mary listened to God and accepted his plan for her, we too need to learn to listen to God to find out what his plan is for us.

The hall was beautifully prepared with our Advent wreath and nativity display. The pupils were given some questions to think about. This helped them to ponder deeply about their own calling and how they too can serve the Lord.

Many pupils commented about how much they enjoyed simply sitting in silence in the presence of God and how special that was.



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Caddington

The Holy Father asked that 2024 be a Year of Prayer as a preparatory year for the Jubilee in 2025. In preparation for the Jubilee, we were invited to promote initiatives to remind people of the centrality of both individual prayer and community prayer.

As such, Father Tony led assemblies at both St Mary's (Dunstable) and St Vincent's (Houghton Regis) focusing particularly on The Lord's Prayer. Following this, for half term homework, pupils were invited to respond in a personal way. This produced a huge variety of responses including paper chains, 3D crosses, prayers and homemade 'beads', along with instructions for use. Many children wrote the Our Father in their home language and then confidently shared this in our Friday assemblies, celebrating the diverse nature of our schools. Staff and children have acknowledged that this has led to a renewed understanding and reverence for prayer.



# St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Houghton Regis



# St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Marlow



Members of Year 5 and Year 6 were invited to apply to be members of the School's Mission Team, with a remit of helping spread the school's Mission Statement 'Live and Learn as Friends of Jesus' and help strengthen links with the local parish of St. Peter's. This involved applying for the position through a formal letter, outlining how they would help achieve the above. They were then interviewed by a member of STCAT's Central Team. The successful applicants attended the Education Mass to be commissioned by Bishop David. Once officially part of the team, members worked together to draw up a list of priorities and goals that aligned with the mission of St. Peter's.

Their first task was running a card competition; to design cards for those who were sick, socially isolated, or celebrating a baptism within the school and parish community. They were then responsible for making the chosen cards and ensuring they were given to the appropriate people. Additionally, they published a termly newsletter to parents. This informed parents of their priorities, work covered in RE, and an explanation of various events in the liturgical calendar. During the Advent Term, they helped with the organisation of the Harvest Appeal for the local Food Bank and our annual Christmas Fair. During the Lent Term, they played an important role in organising and participating in our Golden Jubilee celebrations.

In addition, they organised and led school assemblies, prepared the Hall for assembly, and helped with displays that promoted the virtues covered by the 'Virtues to Live By' programme. They also coordinated the weekly attendance draws and nominations for individuals who exemplify the virtues being covered.



The Mission Team has made a meaningful difference in the lives of those both in school and the parish while also growing personally and spiritually. Through their commitment to their role, the Mission Team exemplified the values of compassion, empathy, and unity that are essential for Living and Learning as Friends of Jesus.

## The glory of God is a human being fully alive!

Saint Irenaeus

