



THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM  
ONGOING FORMATION for CLERGY

*"I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you"*



NEWSLETTER

Issue 7 - January 2025

**Welcome to the January edition of our Ongoing Formation for Clergy Newsletter!**

It is hard to believe that we are already halfway through January and the Christmas celebrations perhaps already seem a distant memory. I hope that you had a blessed Christmas and have been able to find a moment to relax and rest following the festivities.

Since our last *Newsletter* in the summer, a number of Ongoing Formation events have taken place and it has been good to meet many of our priests and deacons on these occasions. The afternoon on the new Lectionary, with Fleur Dorrell from the Bishops' Conference, offered much to reflect on and allowed a moment to think about how we can enable our parishioners to grow in their understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. The Care of Creation Committee led an informative afternoon about how we can strive to care for God's creation through our daily lives.

The Ongoing Formation Committee has been busy in the past few months planning events for the coming year and, as you will see from the Calendar of Events, there are a number of exciting opportunities for you. The main event for priests will be the **Conference For Priests** which will take place on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June at Birmingham Newman University**.

This Conference will build on the synodal conversations that we had last year at Woodland Grange. We will explore how co-responsibility – at all levels – affects our need for formation and how this relates to the final document of the Synod on Synodality in Rome, which has now been released. With the help of guest speakers, we will spend time reflecting on the implications of the Synod on our lives as priests and how we can relate this to the call to co-responsibility.

We are also looking forward to our annual **Retreat for Priests at St. Mary's College, Oscott, from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July**. This year, we look forward to welcoming Abbot Cuthbert Brogan OSB of Farnborough, who will be leading the retreat.

We are also hoping to offer a couple of additional informal afternoon gatherings in the spring. These will, hopefully, reflect on Sacred Scripture and preaching, and on how we can continue to respond to the call to care for God's creation.

With my prayers and every good wish.

*Fr Craig*

Rev. Fr. Craig Szmidt  
Director of Ongoing Formation for Clergy

DIOCESAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father,  
we ask you to send labourers  
into your harvest.

Inspire, in the hearts of your people,  
vocations to the priesthood, diaconate  
and religious life.

Bless our families with a spirit of generosity,  
so that those whom you call  
have the courage to give themselves  
to your Church in faith.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS OFFICE

Ask · Invite · Pray



[www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation](http://www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation)



## FATHERS IN FAITH

An occasional series on the lives and legacy of priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham

### FATHER ANDREW BROMWICH (1652 - 21<sup>st</sup> October 1702)

Among those convicted for Recusancy in the parish of Handsworth in 1667 was William Bromwich, listed as 'a yeoman' living at Oscott House. The Bromwich family had owned land in Castle Bromwich since the twelfth century, but by the sixteenth century, they were settled at Oscott, and were known as Catholic Recusants. William and his wife Joan had a daughter (Elizabeth) and a son, Andrew, born at Oscott House in 1652. Joan's two brothers, Daniel and Francis Fitter, were secular priests, and another priest, Harfield Pretty, was their uncle. Andrew followed his uncles' example. He is not on the 1667 list of local Recusants; by then he was *en route* to the English College, Lisbon, to train for the priesthood.



*Bromwich's home, Oscott House - now known as Maryvale House.*

Andrew Bromwich was ordained in 1672, and took the precaution of swearing the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance before returning to England. This did not protect him from arrest during the Popish (or Titus Oates) Plot, a conspiracy to implicate Catholics in an alleged plot to murder King Charles II. Staffordshire had its own local 'informer' working for Oates, a corrupt estate steward of the Aston family of Tixall, the leading Catholic family in south Staffordshire. He falsely implicated the Aston and the Howard families, prompting close scrutiny of Catholics in Staffordshire.



Following ordination, Andrew Bromwich, returned to his family home at Oscott. His father had died, and he is listed in the register of Recusants, with his widowed mother, as "Andrew Bromwich, gentleman". From Oscott House he began his priestly ministry, and was soon arrested - though not charged - with involvement in the Oates plot. This was unnecessary, as an Act of Parliament of 1585 made it treason simply to be a priest in England. In August 1679, along with a Jesuit priest, William Atkins, Bromwich was tried for treason at Stafford Assizes.

The Lord Chief Justice of England, Sir William Scroggs (*pictured left*), travelled to Stafford Assizes to try the two priests himself. He was violently prejudiced against Catholic priests, and described Staffordshire as "riddled with popery, as other places were with scurvy". Scroggs ordered the court to get him a 'good' jury; one juror was reluctant to find anyone guilty just for being a priest. Scroggs promptly had him imprisoned. Atkins and Bromwich were condemned to death and imprisoned at the King's pleasure, to await execution.



Bromwich prepared his speech for the scaffold, which records his love, not only for his faith but for his country, and concludes:

*Every one, the very worst of my enemies... I forgive them from my heart... I humbly beseech God to bless the King's Majesty... God bless the whole nation, and not lay my blood to the charge of it, or to any person in particular, and bring all persons to the true Church, by Faith, Hope and Charity.*

This speech was never delivered. Bromwich produced proof that he had taken the Oaths, which entitled him to a reprieve. Despite this, he remained in prison, and was only released when James II ended the persecution of Catholic subjects (c. 1685-88). Bromwich returned to his home at Oscott, where he lived out his days protected by the second Lord Aston, who was able to shield his Catholic tenants and neighbours, and raise his children as Catholics. Until his death in 1702, Bromwich ministered to the few Catholics in the area, and was "much commended for his diligence and prudence" by the Archdeacon of Staffordshire, Thomas Fitzherbert. He was buried in the family vault in Handsworth parish church.

Andrew Bromwich left his estate in perpetuity to the Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District "for the maintenance of a secular priest belonging to Staffordshire, to live at ... Oscott", and to "help the poor Catholics in and about Handsworth parish". He was, however, more than a humble missionary priest on a small farm in south Staffordshire; Andrew Bromwich planted the seeds of a much larger enterprise. Oscott House continued to be a mission under the care of a series of secular priests throughout the eighteenth century, until, in 1794, it became the first home of Oscott College (dedicated to St. Mary from 1808). The 'seedbed' of the seminary, sown by Andrew Bromwich, still flourishes after two hundred and thirty years. The future of Oscott House is, sadly, less certain.

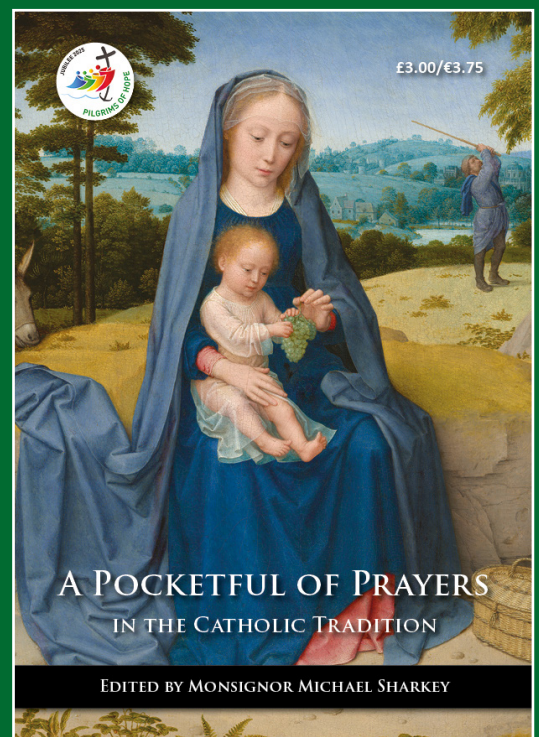
**Professor Judith Champ**

## A POCKETFUL OF PRAYERS

This is an attractively-produced booklet of prayers ranging from the basic - *Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.* - through the traditional (including the *Five Wounds, the Seven Sorrows*) concluding with the prayers before and after Holy Communion. It is a sort of repertoire for personal use, produced for the Holy Year of Mercy, Jubilee 2025 - *Pilgrims of Hope*.

Edited by Mgr. Michael Sharkey, the Introduction is by Archbishop Bernard and the short Exhortation is from Pope Francis.

It is published by Alive Publishing and costs just £3, with bulk discounts available. To order, contact: [booksales@alivepublishing.co.uk](mailto:booksales@alivepublishing.co.uk)





## REVIEWS

We are always happy to receive reviews for the *Ongoing Formation for Clergy Newsletter*. This could be of events, courses and retreats you've participated in (whether organised by ourselves or hosted by others), books you have read or podcasts you have listened to.

In this issue, alongside some reviews of two deacons' events we have hosted, we are grateful to Bishop Timothy for his words about the recent Clergy Conference hosted by the Kenelm Youth Trust.

To contribute, send any reviews to: [ongoing.formation@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:ongoing.formation@rcaob.org.uk)

### Kenelm Youth Trust Clergy Conference - October 2024

*At our last residential Synod for Priests at Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa in June of last year, the staff of the Kenelm Youth Trust (KYT) invited us to a Conference for Priests and Deacons, focussing on Youth Ministry.*

*The last such gathering was pre-COVID, when we met with KYT and a number of young voices from around our Archdiocese to reflect on the extensive conversations that had preceded the Synod of Bishops in Rome on Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment in October 2018, followed by the Post-Synodal exhortation Christus Vivit.*

*In October last year, the guest speaker was Dr. Julia Sadusky, a licensed Catholic Clinical Psychologist from Denver, Colorado in the United States. The topic was Gender Identity and deepening our understanding of issues and concerns especially among young people today.*

*What made this day different from many Ongoing Formation days is that most of the clergy who attended were, by their own admission, not confident or knowledgeable in this subject area and so we approached it wishing to know more and mindful of our need to learn both the vocabulary and the sensitivity surrounding Gender Identity. Julia's presentation - both in style and in content - was appreciated and the feedback from clergy has been overwhelming in its positivity.*

*The input on this subject was complemented by afternoons sessions presented by Kenelm Youth Trust staff on two very pertinent issues: mental health and young people, and approaches to youth ministry in parishes.*

*The day gave us as clergy a renewed confidence in our desire to accompany young people in their faith and invited us to engage with the professional staff of the Kenelm Youth Trust from whom we learn and who are willing to support us in the Church's mission to strengthen faith in others in our Church which is called to be forever young.*

+ Timothy Menezes  
Chair of Trustees, Kenelm Youth Trust





## The Retreat for Deacons - October 2024

*On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October, Bishop David Evans, 13 deacons and eight of their wives gathered at Douai Abbey for the annual retreat. Those who arrived in time joined the sung Latin Vespers in the Abbey Church - quite an enriching experience. Over the next few days, we enjoyed moments of sharing insights, personal reflection and devotion as well as social engagements, all framed by participation in Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and Mass.*

*The retreat was led by Bishop David, but did not follow a strict didactical plan. At every session, he surprised us with his insights on a variety of topics, consistently linked to the Bible, opening up new perspectives into both the Old and New Testaments, and covering plenty of fertile ground for further personal reflections. Each of those present came away with their own personal points to ponder. It all made for a retreat with opportunities for deep reflection, meaningful participation and a renewed passion for our calling.*

*Not to forget the opportunities to just learn more from each other, to share our life stories and strengthen the bonds of fellowship. We are all grateful for the generous hospitality of our hosts, but in particular thank Bishop David for having led us in this very inspiring - but at the same time peaceful and quiet - time away from our busy daily lives.*

Dcn. Dirk Hermans

## Ongoing Formation Day for Deacons: Preaching - November 2024

*The presentation by Dr. Christine Dodd on St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles I found extremely informative: for example, she highlighted how they are underpinned by hope and the mercy of God in bringing about the fulfilment of salvation history. In Luke's Gospel, the emphasis that was drawn out was that salvation is a for all and in particular it pays attention to those who would be considered on the margins. Whilst we may have heard the parables many times - for example the Prodigal Son - Christine's presentation not only put the scenario into an historical context (such as highlighting the extravagance of the father's love by running to meet his son), but also that the parable is not solely about forgiveness and mercy, but also about the son being reinstated and given back his dignity as a son by giving him a cloak and having a ring put on his finger. This reality is therefore what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.*

*What was also discussed was the centrality of prayer in Luke's Gospel and how Jesus throughout His ministry would spend hours in private prayer with His Father and how our relationship with God and ministry should reflect the same.*

*An excellent and informative day!*

Dcn. Andrew Foster

## INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

The **Institutum Liturgicum**, based in London, offers courses in Liturgy, Syriac, Biblical Hebrew and Latin in the summer.

<https://liturgyinstitute.org/courses-summer-2025/>

The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst, Lancashire runs courses, conferences and events - some of which are specifically for clergy.

[www.christianheritagecentre.com](http://www.christianheritagecentre.com)





## MAIN EVENTS

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025 - THE CONFERENCE FOR PRIESTS - Birmingham Newman University \***  
*Exploring the Importance of Co-responsibility in the Life of the Priest*

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2025 - THE CONFERENCE FOR DEACONS - St. Mary's College, Oscott \***  
Topics & Speakers: Inclusion (Dcn. Mark Paine), Mrs. Claire Reay (Safeguarding)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2024-2025

### FEBRUARY

- Sat 1<sup>st</sup> - **ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS: ETHNIC CHAPLAINCY** (Mgr. Cn. Daniel McHugh)  
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £30 \*

### MARCH

- Sun 23<sup>rd</sup> - Weds 26<sup>th</sup> - **FRATERNITY OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED: PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM** - £50 deposit \*

### APRIL

- Weds 16<sup>th</sup> - **CHRISM MASS** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX \*

### JUNE

- Sat 7<sup>th</sup> - **MASS TO RENEW DIACONAL COMMITMENT** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX \*
- Tues 10<sup>th</sup> - **THE CONFERENCE FOR PRIESTS** - Birmingham Newman University, B32 3NT - £90 \*
- Sat 21<sup>st</sup> - **ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS: PILGRIMS OF HOPE**  
- Immaculate Conception & St. Egwin, Evesham, WR11 4EJ - £30 \*

### JULY

- Mon 7<sup>th</sup> - Fri 11<sup>th</sup> - **THE RETREAT FOR PRIESTS** (Abbot Cuthbert Brogan OSB - Abbot of Farnborough)  
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £395 *Note earlier dates from previous years.*

### SEPTEMBER

- Sat 27<sup>th</sup> - **THE CONFERENCE FOR DEACONS** - St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £40 individual / £60 with wife \*

### OCTOBER

- Fri 31<sup>st</sup> - Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov - **THE RETREAT FOR DEACONS** (Bp. Timothy Menezes) - Wistaston Hall, Crewe, CW2 8JS  
- £195



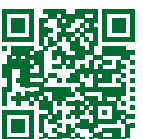
*\* Attendance at these events is highly encouraged by His Grace, the Archbishop.*

*Fraternity of the Recently Ordained events are for diocesan priests ordained under 10 years.*

*Deacons ordained under 3 years are expected to attend Ongoing Formation Days for Deacons, but all are welcome.*

For further details on these events and to book, visit:

[www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation](http://www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation)



We are able to accept payments online by debit or credit card, via BACS, or by cheque. All Ongoing Formation for Clergy events are legitimate parish expenses. They are free-of-charge for retired clergy.