



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 2 - May 2023

Welcome to the second Ongoing Formation for Clergy Newsletter!

Thank you for the really positive feedback we have received following the first Newsletter in February. I hope that it becomes a way for us to communicate upcoming opportunities for Ongoing Formation, but also a way to share our experiences of recent events.

The Conference for Priests will soon be upon us. It is entitled *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Forming Ourselves to Form Others*, which is taking place on Monday 26th June at Newman University. This one-day event will be a wonderful opportunity for the priests of the Archdiocese to spend time together, whilst exploring the importance of forming ourselves so that we can help the people we serve. Bishop David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton, is very much looking forward to returning 'home' for this event.

In preparation, Bishop David writes:

"To busy or not to busy and the quality of mercy."

With a nod to William Shakespeare, some musings on how we might live the priestly life and exercise the priestly ministry in more life-giving ways. An exploration of the four compass points of formation to help us navigate our way through it all.

We are also looking forward to our annual **Retreat for Priests** at St. Mary's College, Oscott, from Monday 17th to Friday 21st July. This year, the retreat will be led by Abbot Paul Gunter OSB of Douai, well known within the Archdiocese and parish priest of Alcester until his election as Abbot in 2022.

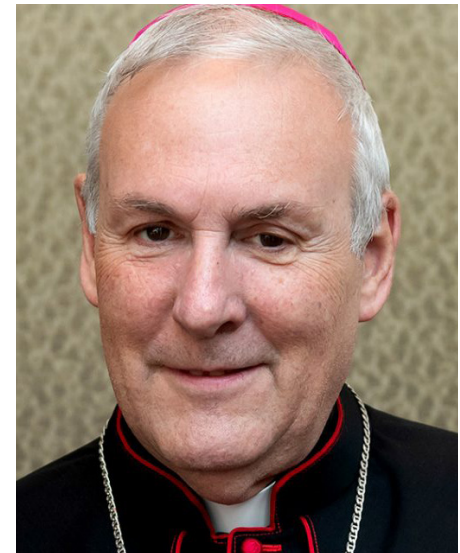
Please do look at the calendar of events at the end of this Newsletter for dates of other upcoming events. Booking is essential to avoid disappointment – it also allows us time to make arrangements with venues and speakers.

Once again, I continue to encourage us all to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate and the religious life.

Please be assured of my ongoing prayers for you.

Fr Craig

Rev. Fr. Craig Szmidt
Director for Ongoing Formation



Bishop David Oakley of Northampton, who will be leading The Conference for Priests in June.

www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation



UPCOMING...

DISCOVERY DAY 2: RECUSANT STAFFORDSHIRE



The Catholic churches of St. John the Baptist, Great Haywood (left) and Our Lady of the Assumption, Swynnerton (right).

Our next Discovery Day will focus on sites associated with some of the Recusant families whose faith and courage helped to maintain and support Catholic communities in Staffordshire after the Reformation.

We will visit the church of St. John the Baptist in Great Haywood and hear the remarkable story of how the church was moved, stone by stone, from its original site on the Clifford estate at Tixall, when the family moved to Yorkshire, to land given by the Cliffords for this purpose. The resilience, and the generosity, of the Aston and Clifford families were vital to the survival of Catholicism in Staffordshire, and the estate at Tixall was a centre of Catholic life.

We will then visit Swynnerton, where we will have lunch and visit the church of Our Lady of the Assumption. This church was built by the Fitzherbert family (now Lord Stafford), whose family home is Swynnerton Hall. The Fitzherberts were staunch Catholics throughout the Recusant period, losing the original castle on the site for their support of the royalist cause in the Civil War. Members of the family joined religious orders in exile, including the Jesuits, and Lord Stafford was executed on false charges under the Titus Oates Plot, in 1680.

Professor Judith Champ

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.



Deacons Under 5s - January 2023

Having studied Canon Law in initial formation, the January day was an opportunity for those deacons ordained under five years to revisit this topic.

Mgr. David Cousins shared his wealth of experience working for the Marriage Tribunal, using examples and anecdotes from his years in this ministry to bring to life how and when we might apply this knowledge of Canon Law in sensitive pastoral situations.

Once again, the opportunity to catch up with fellow deacons and their wives and the celebration of Holy Mass together were essential aspects of this formation day.

Thank you to Mgr. Cousins for his time and wisdom, and to Dcn. Tim Anthony for arranging the day.

Dcn. Owen Gresty

Lent Day of Recollection - March 2023

A number of priests and deacons of the Archdiocese gathered at St. Mary's College, Oscott for a day led by Fr. Richard Reid, the Provincial of the Redemptorist Congregation. Father communicated in a lively and engaging manner on the joy of our ministerial priesthood and diaconate. Quoting St. Alphonsus, he said, "After Creation and Redemption, your Vocation is the greatest gift God can give you."

The woundedness of the priest or deacon was the theme of the second talk. Father spoke of what he described as, "the gift of a Eucharistic memory." A Eucharistic memory is one that holds only gratitude in its heart, for it allows us to see the grace of God at work even in our painful and shameful memories.

We enjoyed a tasty lunch and after the third and final talk enjoyed the Holy Hour and the time and space to reflect gratefully on what we had received, and also to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thank you to the staff at Oscott and to Dcn. Owen.

Fr. Dominic Kavanagh

Fraternity of the Recently Ordained - March 2023

Priests ordained under 10 years gathered once again under our new banner of the 'Fraternity of the Recently Ordained', this time for an overnight stay at the very comfortable Woodland Grange. Despite the shorter gathering, there was still plenty of time for a good catch-up, aided in particular on the first night by a free drink courtesy of Canon Fitzpatrick – Cheers!! It was a good opportunity to voice our hopes and dreams for the future in light of the Diocesan Vision. There was a good atmosphere and honest, open discussion throughout, concluding perfectly with time before Our Lord during a Holy Hour.

Our thanks go once again to Fr. Craig and the team for a lovely gathering!

Fr. Marco Egawhary

Book Reviews Wanted!

We are looking for reviews for future issues of the Ongoing Formation for Clergy Newsletter. To contribute 200-250 words on any book you think would be of interest to others, contact: ongoing.formation@rcaob.org.uk

An Evening with St Thomas More



Saturday 17th June 2023 at St Thomas More, Coventry

18:00 'Thomas More and English Catholics'
by Professor Bill Sheils, University of York
(following the Vigil Mass at 17.00 - All welcome)

19:00 Light Refreshments

20:00 Music and readings from the time of St Thomas More

Tickets - £12 per person, advanced booking required by contacting the Parish office on 024 76411900 or stm.covty@rcaob.org.uk



THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM
History & Archives Commission





THIS YEAR'S MAIN EVENTS

Monday 26th June - THE CONFERENCE FOR PRIESTS - Newman University, Birmingham *

The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Forming Ourselves to Form Others

Led by Bishop David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton

Saturday 30th September - ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS - St. Mary's College, Oscott *

The Importance of Ongoing Formation in our Service of God and our Neighbour

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2023

JUNE

- Tues 6th - **DISCOVERY DAY 2** - St. John the Baptist, Great Haywood, ST10 0SW *(This is an event for priests only)*
- Sat 10th - **MASS TO RENEW DIACONAL COMMITMENT** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX *
- Sat 24th - **DEACONS UNDER 5s** - Harvington Hall, DY10 4LR - £30 *
- Mon 26th - **THE CONFERENCE FOR PRIESTS** - Newman University, Birmingham, B32 3NT - £80 *

JULY

- Weds 5th - **DISCOVERY DAY 3** - Details TBC *(This is an event for priests only)*
- Mon 17th - Fri 21st July - **RETREAT FOR PRIESTS** (Fr. Paul Gunter OSB - Abbot of Douai)
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £350

SEPTEMBER

- Thurs 14th - **AFTERNOON GATHERING: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION** (Fr. Rob Taylerson - Spiritual Director at Oscott)
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £15 *(This is an event for priests only)*
- Sat 30th - **ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS** - St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £35 individual/£50 with wife *

OCTOBER

- Sun 1st - Tues 3rd - **FRATERNITY OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED** - Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN - FREE *
- Thurs 12th - **AFTERNOON GATHERING: PREACHING**
- St. Mary's College, Oscott B73 5AA - £15 *(This is an event for priests only)*
- Sat 21st - **DEACONS UNDER 5s** - Venue TBC - £30 *

NOVEMBER

- Fri 3rd - Sun 5th - **RETREAT FOR DEACONS** - Wistaston Hall, Crewe, CW2 8JS - £170
- Thurs 9th - **AFTERNOON GATHERING: CARING FOR YOURSELF** (Paula Mitchell - Clergy Social Welfare Advisor)
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £15 *(This is an event for priests only)*
- Tues 28th - **ADVENT DAY OF RECOLLECTION** - Venue TBC - £45

** Attendance at these events is highly encouraged. If you are unable to attend, please write to the Archbishop explaining your absence.*

**We are able to accept payments
online by debit or credit card,
via BACS, or by cheque.**

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

www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation



All Ongoing Formation for Clergy events are legitimate parish expenses. They are free-of-charge for retired clergy.