



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 11 - May 2026

I cannot write the introduction to this edition of our newsletter without paying tribute to Professor Judith Champ, whose funeral we celebrated earlier this month. Judith was well known among the clergy of our Archdiocese: whether it was as a lecturer at St. Mary's College, Oscott; as an historian; as a regular speaker at clergy gatherings; as a valued contributor to this newsletter; and above all as a friend.

In the five years since I took on the responsibility of Director for Ongoing Formation, Judith was an immense source of support to me and a trusted sounding board for ideas and possible discussion points. I remain profoundly grateful for her wisdom, encouragement and friendship, and I will greatly miss her guidance. May she rest in peace and rise to eternal life with Christ.

I was struck by these words from her book, *The Secular Priesthood in England and Wales: History, Mission and Identity*, which offer us much to reflect upon as we prepare for our Synod for Priests in Leamington Spa from Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June:

*"Like our Recusant forbears, we all need fresh incentive to 'put out into the deep', and to make the spiritual and pastoral choices that enable priests to lead people through the uncharted territory."*

Those words speak powerfully to the moment in which we find ourselves: a time that calls us to renewed confidence in the Lord, openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and generosity in our priestly ministry.

*Fr Craig*

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



Professor

JUDITH FRANCES CHAMP

*Dame of the Pontifical Order  
of Saint Sylvester*

12<sup>th</sup> December 1953

5<sup>th</sup> April 2026

✠ REQUIESCAT IN PACE ✠

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



## UPCOMING...

### THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS

*"A Fidelity to Living the Priesthood in the Life of a Changing Diocese."*

This year's **Synod for Priests at Woodland Grange from Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June** will be rooted in the reflections of Pope Leo's Apostolic Letter 'A Fidelity that Generates the Future.' Our time together will be led by His Grace, the Archbishop and the Vicar General, together with priests of our Archdiocese.

Opening with a reflection on the gift of a priestly vocation - remembering the God who calls us - we will then look to the ways in which we can remain faithful to the mission entrusted to us. The Holy Father urges *"that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world."*<sup>1</sup> As we look to the future of our Archdiocese, we will then explore how this might look and how we can work co-responsibly with each other and those within our parishes.



*Woodland Grange, venue for The Synod for Priests.*

Residential and day delegate places are available to book now.

<sup>1</sup>From Pope Leo XIV's Homily for the Beginning of the Pontificate.

### THE RETREAT FOR PRIESTS Led by Bishop Peter Doyle *"The Parish of My Soul."*



We are looking forward to welcoming Rt. Rev. Peter Doyle, Bishop Emeritus of Northampton, (pictured left) to lead our annual **Retreat for Priests at St. Mary's College, Oscott, from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> to Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July.**

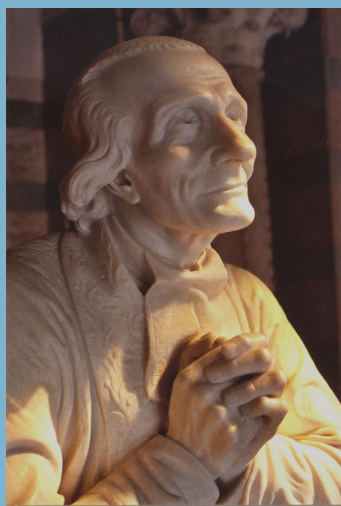
Bishop Peter's title for the retreat this year is *"The Parish of My Soul"* and all priests who live and minister in the Archdiocese of Birmingham - whether in active ministry, or living in retirement - are welcome to join us in the familiar, picturesque setting of our diocesan seminary.

Places are limited, so book now to avoid disappointment.



“OPEN TO ME  
THE GATES OF  
HOLINESS”

PRIESTLY  
CHRISTLIKENESS



A RETREAT FOR PRIESTS IN ARS

23rd - 27th November 2026

LED BY CANON JOHN UDRIS  
(Diocese of Northampton)

This retreat is for English-speaking priests and is being offered by the Society of St. John-Mary Vianney (*Société Jean-Marie Vianney*), a clerical association of Pontifical Right, so as to give priests the opportunity to come to Ars, the place which witnessed the ministry of St John-Mary Vianney.

Each day of the retreat, there will be two meditations given by Canon Udris, a concelebrated Mass with homily (there is the opportunity for priests to celebrate privately), a Holy Hour and other times of Eucharistic Adoration. Each day, silence will be kept for a good proportion of the day. There will be the opportunity for Reconciliation or a consultation with Canon Udris. One of the concelebrated Masses during the retreat will be in the Basilica, near to the shrine of the incorrupt body of the Curé. There will also be the opportunity to visit the sites associated with the Curé.

Full travel package, en suite room **£595**

For more information, contact **Fr. Julian Green**  
fr.julian@gmail.com 01782 782121

**Catholic Association of Preachers Conference**

Wistaston Hall (Crewe), 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2026

**PREACHING HOPE IN A HOSTILE WORLD**



Speakers include:

Archbishop John Sherrington,  
Jenny Sinclair and  
Fr Rob Esdale.

Visit to Liverpool cathedral.



Cost: £395

Deposit: £150 to be paid by 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

For further details please, contact:  
admin@catholicassociationofpreachers.org.uk



## MAIN EVENT

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2026 - THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS - Woodland Grange \***  
"A Fidelity to Living the Priesthood in the Life of a Changing Diocese"<sup>1</sup>

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2026

### JUNE

- Sat 6<sup>th</sup> - **MASS TO RENEW DIACONAL COMMITMENT** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX \*
- Tues 16<sup>th</sup> - Thurs 18<sup>th</sup> - **THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS** - Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN  
- £395 residential / £200 day delegate \*
- Sat 20<sup>th</sup> - **ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS: PRINKNASH ABBEY VISIT**  
- Prinknash Abbey, Gloucester, GL4 8EX - Free

### JULY

- Mon 6<sup>th</sup> - Fri 10<sup>th</sup> - **THE RETREAT FOR PRIESTS** (Rt. Rev. Peter Doyle, Bishop Emeritus of Northampton)  
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £395

### OCTOBER

- Sun 18<sup>th</sup> - Tues 20<sup>th</sup>  
- **FRATERNITY OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED**  
- Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN  
- Free\*
- Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> - Sun 25<sup>th</sup> - **THE RETREAT FOR DEACONS**  
- Belmont Abbey, Hereford, HR2 9RZ  
- £200 individual / £300 married couple

We are currently planning a formation event in preparation for the ordinations to the priesthood in the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Rites which will take place in July.

More details will be shared in due course.

\* 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.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Pope Leo's Apostolic Letter 'A Fidelity that Generates the Future'

## 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.

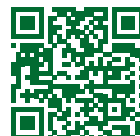


THE ARCHDIOCESE of BIRMINGHAM  
DIOCESAN VOCATIONS OFFICE  
Ask · Invite · Pray



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.