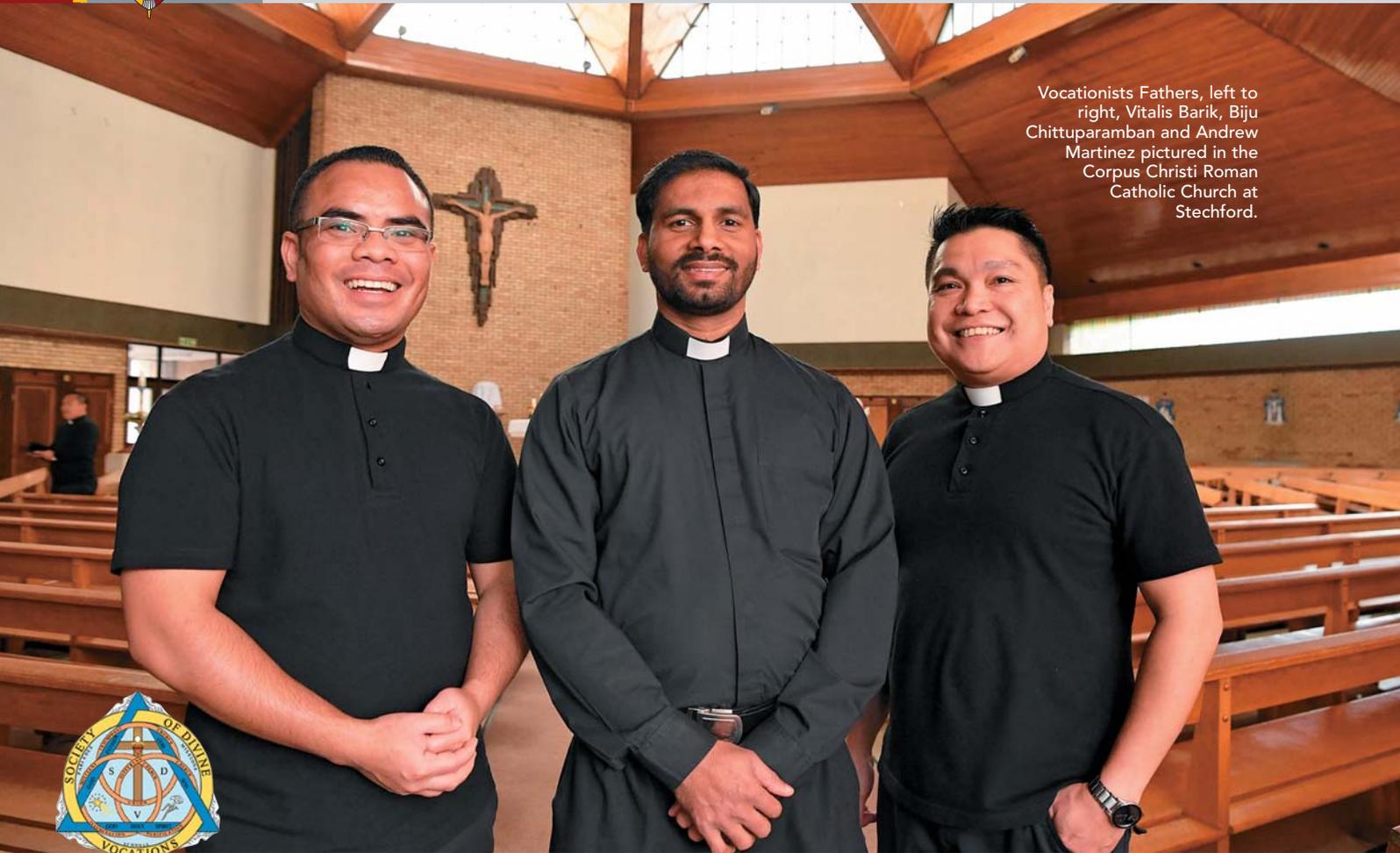




VOCATIONIST FATHERS



Vocationists Fathers, left to right, Vitalis Barik, Biju Chittuparamban and Andrew Martinez pictured in the Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church at Stechford.



Missionaries encourage people to take wondrous path to holiness

THE three members of the Vocationist community in Stechford, Birmingham, are examples of the wide global reach of their Religious Congregation. The Society of Divine Vocations (SDV) serves God's people in a wide range of countries including Italy, Brazil, USA, Nigeria, South Africa, Argentina, Columbia, Chile, France, Madagascar, India, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia.

The Vocationist Fathers see themselves as missionaries and the Stechford community comprises Father Andrew Martinez, originally from the Philippines, Father Vitalis Barik, from Indonesia and Father Biju Chittuparamban, from India.

Based in the Presbytery alongside Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church they observe community life and take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience with the Charism to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially among the underprivileged, promoting Universal Sanctification and Divine Union.

"Our order is missionary and we carry out missionary work in any country or community to which we are sent," said Father Martinez,

whose first mission was in Indonesia.

"We all came from different cultures to the UK and at first it was challenging but everyone has been very welcoming and supporting so that we don't feel like strangers or foreigners here."

The Society of Divine Vocations is a Religious Congregation founded by Blessed Father Justin Russolillo in Naples in 1920, and next year marks the centenary of their Foundation.

In England and Wales there are four communities – Stechford (looking after two parishes), Walsall (three parishes), Holywell, North Wales and Heston, London.

Stechford Community recently welcomed the Vocationists from the three other locations when they hosted their annual regional meeting with their Superior General Father Antonio Nascimento present.

Father Andrew, Superior of the Stechford Community, and Father Vitalis, Vice Superior, carry out their ministry in the parishes of Corpus Christi and St Wilfrid's while Father Biju, the Treasurer of the Community, serves four days a week at St Mary's College, the seminary at Oscott.

Fathers Andrew and Vitalis celebrate Mass in the Churches of Corpus Christi and St Wilfrid and deliver frequent homilies on the theme of vocation.

"We try to encourage an awareness of one's vocation as the path to holiness, whether people are called to priesthood, religious life, married state or to single blessedness," said Father Martinez.

"To live the vocation to holiness and striving for eternal life is something that has to be nurtured."

Parish pastoral work includes celebrating the Sacraments, visiting Catholic primary schools of the Parish, giving talks about vocation and their missionary work, supporting the children in their sacramental preparation and visiting the sick and housebound of the Parish working alongside with the Parish Sisters, Sisters of Mercy and Carmelite in Corpus Christi and Holy Spirit Sisters and Sisters of the Infant Jesus in St Wilfrid's.

The Vocationists in Stechford also act as Chaplains to Heartlands and Solihull Hospitals in an on-call capacity.