



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 5 - March 2024

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

It is hard to believe that we begin Holy Week on Sunday! I am happy to share this latest edition of the *Ongoing Formation Newsletter* with you, and to draw your attention to the events listed in the calendar on the last page. In particular, I would like to highlight two events for priests which are taking place in the summer months, and two for deacons in the autumn.

The residential **Synod for Priests** has now been finalised for **Tuesday 11th to Thursday 13th June at Woodland Grange** in Leamington. We have chosen to call this a *Synod* to reflect this being a time for sharing and listening to each other. During this time together, we will build on the positive experiences of our last two events which were held in 2022 and 2023. We will explore together the joy of the priesthood and how we can experience this joy, even amidst the pressures of our parishes and chaplaincies. It will be a wonderful opportunity to relax in each other's company in the familiar setting of Woodland Grange. Booking for this is essential as places are limited.



Woodland Grange, venue for The Synod for Priests.



Archbishop Kevin McDonald.

In the summer, we look forward to welcoming **Archbishop Kevin McDonald** to lead our annual **Retreat for Priests at St. Mary's College, Oscott from Monday 15th to Friday 19th July**. This year is particularly significant for Archbishop Kevin, as he celebrates his Golden Jubilee shortly after the retreat ends.

Looking to the autumn, the annual **Ongoing Formation Day for Deacons** is currently being planned for **Saturday 28th September at St. Mary's College, Oscott** and **Bishop David Evans** will lead the **Retreat for Deacons at Douai Abbey from Friday 18th to Sunday 20th October**. More information about these will be shared in due course.

Booking for all events is crucial to avoid disappointment. This 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 as we approach the Season of Easter.

Fr Craig

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

www.vocations.org.uk/ongoing-formation



UPCOMING...

DISCOVERY DAYS - SUMMER 2024

Discovery Days offer an opportunity for priests to enjoy a relaxed day out, in the company of other priests, exploring places of interest within - and beyond - the Archdiocese, accompanied by Professor Judith Champ. Each day involves a small group, and they are limited to priests only.

The schedule for each day includes a visit to one or two places of interest, and a pub lunch. We organise our own transport (perhaps sharing a car with a fellow priest), and meet at the first venue. There is no charge for the day, but each of us pays any entry fees, lunch costs and parking etc.

Wednesday 15th May: Pershore Abbey and Holy Redeemer Church



Pershore Abbey

The Abbey has survived fires, storms, earthquake and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in its thousand years, leaving a mixture of Norman, Early English, Decorated Gothic and Victorian architecture. What remains of the Abbey is the best part: the monks' quire (which is now the nave) with its unique vaulting, the combined triforium and clerestory, and the magnificent tower and lantern. One of the finest examples of Norman and Early English architecture in the country.

Because the Abbey was dedicated to the Holy Cross, Mgr. James Crichton (1907-2001) chose to remind people, in his Church of the Holy Redeemer, built nearby in 1958, that the Cross leads to Redemption. It is known as 'a Conciliar church before the Council', and reflects both the Liturgical Movement of the first half of the 20th century, and the artistic skills of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Thursday 6th June: Coughton Court

Coughton Court is one of the most famous surviving Recusant houses, occupied by the Throckmorton family since 1409. The family were notorious Recusants, involved in a plot named after them to kill Elizabeth I and secure the throne for Mary Queen of Scots, and the house was the refuge of the Gunpowder Plotters. It contains many items of Catholic interest, and both the medieval church and the Victorian church on the Throckmorton Estate can be visited, along with the walled garden. Sir John Throckmorton, in the late 18th century - famous for the bet he laid to produce a coat from the sheep's back to his own back in a single day - was also a well-known controversial political figure, involved in the campaigns for Catholic Relief Acts.



Coughton Court



Tuesday 2nd July: Mount Saint Bernard Abbey, Coalville and St. Mary & St. Hardulph Priory Church, Breedon on the Hill (Leicestershire)

Mount Saint Bernard Abbey was founded in 1835 on land provided by Ambrose de Lisle, who was eager to re-introduce monastic life into this country. A small group of monks took possession of a half-ruined cottage in Tynt Meadow. Their leader, Fr. Odilo Woolfrey, wrote: "Here we are. I with my little company, already established in a little cottage on this land in Charnwood Forest, which we have named 'Mount Saint Bernard.'" The monks soon set about cultivating the wild and barren land and the first monastery was opened in 1837. Then the great benefactor of the Church in the Midlands, the 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, gave a donation for a permanent monastery to be built. Augustus Welby Pugin offered his services for free, and in 1844, the new monastery was opened on the site where it still stands today. In 1848, Mount Saint Bernard was raised to the status of an Abbey with the first English abbot since the Reformation, Dom. Bernard Palmer. In 2017-18, the refectory, kitchen, and laundry were relocated to provide space for the installation of a new artisanal brewery. The volume of production is relatively small, just enough to meet expenses and support the Abbey's charitable commitments. The brewery is now the principal field of labour. All the work, from brewing to bottling and packaging, is done by the monks.



Mount Saint Bernard Abbey

St. Mary and St. Hardulph Priory Church is one of the most important churches in the Midlands, if not in the whole of the UK, and is dramatically sited on a limestone hill being cut away by the quarry below, and can be seen for many miles. The hill has been occupied for thousands of years and the present church is not the first. In 675, a monastery was founded on the hill with Hedda as the first abbot. The monastery is mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and due to its importance, various saints were buried here. The monastery fell into decline after the Danes ransacked the region including probably Breedon itself. The church is famous for the Saxon carvings around the church that date from the 8th-10th centuries, when the Kingdom of Mercia was at its height and one of the most powerful in England. They originally were on the inside and outside walls of the previous Saxon Minster church and there are various types.

There is a large, fine set of monuments to the Recusant Shirley family. George Shirley 1st Bt. (1559-1622) commissioned all three monuments within a space of 13 years. His grandfather, Francis Shirley, had bought the priory and its lands during the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, with the express purpose of using the church as a resting place for the family. At the same time, the priory church replaced the adjoining parish church, which was in a 'ruinous state', and the priory buildings were used as a school, all funded by the Shirleys. The family had had connections with the priory since the twelve century and buying the lands consolidated an already large land ownership. The Shirleys were able to claim a family lineage back to the Norman Conquest, when a Norman knight married a local Saxon Lady.



FATHERS IN FAITH

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

MONSIGNOR HENRY PARKINSON (30th January 1852 - 22nd June 1924)

The centenary of the death of Mgr Henry Parkinson, on 22nd June 2024, is a moment to give thanks for the extraordinary contribution of this largely forgotten priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He was the first 'Rector' of St. Mary's College, Oscott, following the closure of the Oscott school, succeeding a century of 'Presidents', and the only Rector of the short-lived Central Seminary. His record of lifelong service as Vice-Rector and as Rector of Oscott is unlikely to be rivalled, and he might well be regarded as the patron of priestly formation in this Archdiocese.

Parkinson was the last of the Victorians. He was one of the last boys educated at Sedgley Park, before its transfer to Cotton College. His education was completed in Douai, at St. Edmund's Benedictine College, before he was one of the first to enter Ullathorne's 'new model seminary' at Olton in 1873. Parkinson completed his studies at the English College, Rome, and was ordained priest on 26 May 1877, having obtained a doctorate at the Gregorian University.

He returned to Olton as Vice-Rector and professor of philosophy, and apart from a brief time working at St. Chad's cathedral (1887-9) spent the rest of his life within the seminary. When Archbishop Edward Hlsley succeeded Ullathorne in 1889, he immediately closed the school at Oscott and the seminary at Olton, consolidating all seminary formation at Oscott. He took on the role of rector himself, appointing Parkinson as philosophy professor and vice rector, effectively in charge of the college.

Four years later, Parkinson was appointed Rector, and in 1897, collaborated with Hlsley and Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, to create the Central Seminary at Oscott. Even though the Central Seminary was short-lived, it prompted Parkinson to think broadly, and he set out to ensure that the seminary engaged with the wider world, and vice versa. The University of Birmingham was in its early days, and he built contacts with eminent scientists including the physician Sir Bertram Windle, whom he received into the Church, and the physicist Sir Oliver Lodge, a leading Spiritualist. They visited Oscott, and discussed the possibility of Oscotians attending courses at the university.

Parkinson's influence on Oscott, and on the generations of priests ordained in the first decades of the twentieth century, was wide-ranging. He was the leading advocate and organiser of two influential twentieth century movements, the Catholic Social Guild and the Apostolic Union of Secular Priests. He absorbed the teaching of Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, and was keen to inspire English Catholics with its teaching. As Rector, Parkinson remodelled the seminary to reflect his passionate advocacy of Catholic Social Teaching, which was at the heart of his pastoral and theological programme at Oscott. In 1909, he became the founding president of the Catholic Social Guild, working closely with Fr. Charles





Plater SJ and lay advocates, including Margaret Fletcher and Virginia Crawford. Parkinson spoke on Catholic Social Teaching at international Catholic conferences, and addressed public meetings at home, often alongside non-Catholics including Henry Russell Wakefield, later Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, and Sydney and Beatrice Webb, renowned socialist economists, and founders of the London School of Economics.

In 1913, he published *A Primer of Social Science*, which became the textbook of Catholic Social Teaching. It was frequently quoted with approval by his friend and ally, Fr. Charles Plater SJ, whose name is indelibly associated with Catholic Social Teaching. In his *Primer of Peace and War* (1915), Plater commended Parkinson as one of the few priests who had actually written about Catholic Social Teaching, and suggested that his *Primer* should be required reading for every priest. It went through six editions by 1936.

Parkinson's other passionate concern was with the ongoing formation and mutual support of priests, and he was the founder and president of the Apostolic Union of Secular Clergy in England and Wales. This had grown from the inspiration of Bartholomew Holzhauser's Institute of Secular Clergy, founded in 17th century Bavaria, and revived in the 1860s. It was Ullathorne's inspiration for his seminary at Olton, and was close to the heart of Pope Benedict XVI.

Parkinson encouraged Oscotians to join the Apostolic Union in seminary, and kept in regular correspondence with members after ordination. Young priests in particular valued Parkinson's ongoing support. Fr. Walter Amery, an Oscotian Westminster priest, ordained in 1905, wrote to Parkinson: "I know that you have very much at heart the welfare of those who are but recently set to do the work of missionary priests, and I rely on your prayers and those of my other friends to help me always". Parkinson kept in contact, as far as possible, with men like Amery, particularly those who served as chaplains in World War I, and surviving wartime letters to him reflect their gratitude for his consistent support. The Apostolic Union did not take root in the other English seminaries, but reports from diocesan branches, including Birmingham, Westminster, Hexham and Newcastle, Southwark, and from Scotland, flowed in to Parkinson at Oscott and the Birmingham branch survived until about 1960.

In June 1924, Parkinson fell ill with peritonitis, and underwent surgery, but he died on 22nd June, aged 72. He was buried close to the chapel at Oscott College. His loss was sudden, and devastating for Oscott. The Apostolic Union never quite flourished again, as in his day. Coming soon upon Charles Plater's death in 1921, it was a blow to the Catholic Social Movement. The mantle was left to one of his Oscotian proteges, Thomas Leighton Williams, who became a much-admired Archbishop of Birmingham five years after Parkinson's death, and president of the Catholic Social Guild in 1937.

Professor Judith Champ

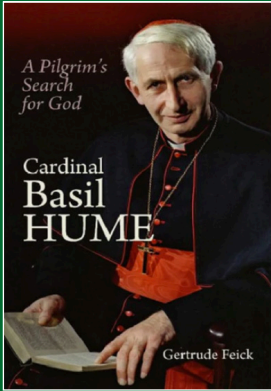


Right: Mgr. Henry Parkinson's grave at Oscott.



Book Review

A Pilgrim's Search for God: Cardinal Basil Hume



A very accessible read, which has its origins in what is said to be the first doctoral study on the writings of Cardinal Basil Hume.

Sr. Gertrude Feick is an American Religious Sister who was a Benedictine and has now become a Cistercian.

One of the fascinating things that this book has in common with the biography of *Cardinal Hume: the Monk Cardinal* by Anthony Howard published in 2006, is that neither author ever met Cardinal Hume. Both also have in common that they capture the person that many of us admired for his spiritual insights in his years as Archbishop of Westminster from 1976 until his death in 1999.

This book combines elements of biography and spiritual reading, bringing resonances of some of his better known spiritual writings with other insights that might not have been so widely known.

Within the book, there are Cardinal Hume's tips for how to pray, making it a most reflective read and one which gives the basis for a priest to be nourished and to share these tips with parishioners and anybody who needs encouragement in prayer.

I happened upon this book in a bookshop in the village of Walsingham, and I had not heard about it. The scholarship which has brought it together is carried lightly, and perhaps the passage of time is a reminder of what a remarkable person Cardinal Hume was for the Catholic community in this country. Sr. Gertrude has weaved together many themes very skilfully so that the corpus of Cardinal Hume's writings are presented in a way that draws us into prayer, rather than making it something that he was good at and we are not.

Monsignor Canon Timothy Menezes

Days of Recollection for Priests & Deacons

Last issue, we commended to you these days, led by **Fr. Andrew Byrne** of Opus Dei, at **St. Mary's Convent, 98 Hunters Road, Handworth, Birmingham, B19 1EB.**

The programme is as follows:

11:00 a.m. Coffee
11:30 a.m. Spiritual Conference
12:30 p.m. Lunch
1:30 p.m. Exposition
2:30 p.m. Spiritual Conference
3:00 p.m. Benediction,
followed by tea & departures.

The remaining dates for 2024 are:

Tuesday 23rd April
Tuesday 28th May
Tuesday 25th June
Tuesday 24th September
Tuesday 22nd October
Tuesday 26th November

The cost of each day is **£30. Please note these days are not organised by Ongoing Formation for Clergy.**

For more information and to attend, contact: **Fr. Philip Griffin • 01384 395308 • olas.stourbridge@rcaob.org.uk**



MAIN EVENTS

Tuesday 11th - Thursday 13th June 2024 - THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS - Woodland Grange *
The Joy of the Priesthood

Saturday 28th September 2024 - ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS - St. Mary's College, Oscott *

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2024

MARCH

- Weds 27th - **CHRISM MASS** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX *

MAY

- Weds 15th - **DISCOVERY DAY 1: PERSHORE** - Pershore Abbey WR10 1BL & Holy Redeemer Church, lunch in Pershore

JUNE

- Thurs 6th - **DISCOVERY DAY 2: COUGHTON COURT** - B49 5JA (National Trust), lunch at the Thockmorton pub
- Sat 8th - **MASS TO RENEW DIACONAL COMMITMENT** - St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX *
- Tues 11th - Thurs 13th - **THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS** - Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN
- £395 residential / £200 day delegate *
- Sat 29th - **DEACONS UNDER 5s: SOCIAL OUTREACH** (Mgr. Cn. Timothy Menezes & Abigail Martin)
- St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, B4 6EX - £30 *

JULY

- Tues 2nd - **DISCOVERY DAY 3: LEICESTERSHIRE**
- Mount Saint Bernard Abbey LE67 5UL,
St. Mary & St. Hardulph Priory Church,
lunch at the Holly Bush Inn
- Mon 15th - Fri 19th
- **RETREAT FOR PRIESTS** (Abp. Kevin McDonald)
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - £395

SEPTEMBER

- Sat 28th - **ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS**
- St. Mary's College, Oscott, B73 5AA - Cost TBC *
- Sun 29th - Tues 1st Oct
- **FRATERNITY OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED**
- Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN
- FREE *

OCTOBER

- Fri 18th - Sun 20th
- **RETREAT FOR DEACONS** (Bp. David Evans)
- Douai Abbey, Reading, RG7 5TQ - Cost TBC

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

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.

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

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.