



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 3 - July 2023

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

It was lovely to welcome so many priests to The Conference for Priests which took place at Newman University in June. It was a wonderful opportunity to spend time together and – with Bishop Oakley's help – to begin reflecting on the need to form ourselves so that we can help others.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September, I look forward to gathering with permanent deacons from across the Archdiocese for the annual **Ongoing Formation Day for Deacons**. The day at St. Mary's College, Oscott is entitled *The Importance of Ongoing Formation in our Service of God and Our Neighbour*. We will begin exploring the need for continuing formation, post-ordination, within the context of diaconal ministry.

This autumn, we are hosting three informal afternoon gatherings at St. Mary's College, Oscott. These sessions will be: **Being a Spiritual Director** led by Fr. Rob Taylerson, **Using History and Tradition in Preaching on the Scriptures** led by Dr. Sarah Boss and **Looking after Ourselves** led by Paula Mitchell. I commend these to you.

In this edition of the *Newsletter*, you will also find a few reflections from priests on recent OGF events. I am pleased to introduce the first in an occasional series on the lives and legacies of priests of the Archdiocese of Birmingham called **Fathers in Faith**. This month we start with Canon Drinkwater.

As always, please do check the calendar of events at the end of this newsletter for dates of upcoming events. Booking is essential to avoid disappointment – it also allows us time to make arrangements with venues and speakers.

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.

Rev. Fr. Craig Szmidt  
Director for Ongoing Formation

### 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.**

[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

### CANON FRANCIS DRINKWATER

(3<sup>rd</sup> August 1886 - 11<sup>th</sup> December 1982)

Francis Harold Drinkwater was born in Wednesbury, and like many Birmingham priests of his generation, was educated at St Wilfrid's College, Cotton (1898-1903), and went on to Oscott College (1903-1910). During his time at Oscott, Francis came under the influence of the rector, Henry Parkinson, first president of the Catholic Social Guild, founded in 1909. From Parkinson, he imbibed a lifelong interest in social issues. He was one of three brothers who went to Oscott; John was also at Cotton and Oscott, and went on to be a devoted and much-loved parish priest of St. Michael's Wolverhampton. Oscar decided not to pursue a priestly vocation, and left Oscott, married, and joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1917. A year later, he was killed in action.

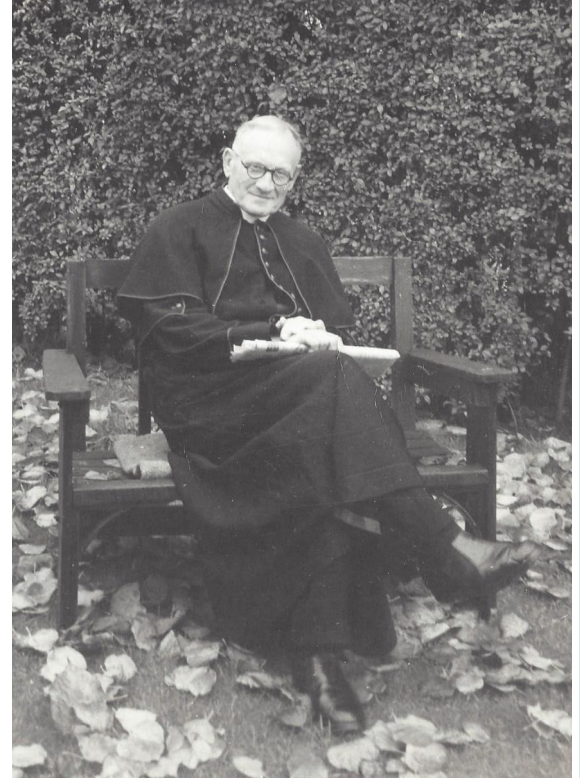
In 1915, Francis Drinkwater offered himself for chaplaincy service, and served on the Western Front until 1919. His experience as an army chaplain brought him into contact with many young Catholic soldiers, who helped to shaped his own future ministry. His exposure in the trenches to the failings of the young soldiers' experience of religious instruction through learning by rote led him to conclude that "religion should be presented to children as something to be done, something to be lived". Drinkwater reflected deeply on the quality and character of Catholic education and catechesis, and put his thoughts and ideas into practice. His remarkable work was all developed while he served as parish priest of Holy Family, Small Heath, from 1921 until the end of the Second World War, despite the church being bombed in 1941. In 1945, he moved to Lower Gornal.

In 1922, Drinkwater became Diocesan Inspector of Schools in Birmingham, and two years later, secretary to the National Board of (Catholic) Religious Inspectors. Both appointments provided the opportunity to put his reforming ideas into practice. In 1929, the Archdiocese of Birmingham adopted his catechetical scheme, as outlined in the journal he founded, *The Sower*.

Drinkwater's pioneering work in religious education remained a central part of his life and, was recognised as groundbreaking. It brought him international recognition, and at the International Congress of Catechetics in Antwerp in 1956, he was hailed as the "patriarch of the catechetical movement in Europe".

Retirement from parish life in 1964, gave him greater freedom to write and speak on social matters as well as education. He published on a range of social issues. In the 1930s, it was on the financial system in *Money and Social Justice* (1934); in the 1950s it was on the nuclear threat in *Conscience and War* (1950). During the 1960s, he turned his attention to current debates in *Birth Control and Natural Law* (1965), and in the 1970s, he discussed scripture in *The Fact of the Resurrection* (1978).

Francis Drinkwater died on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1982, and his lifetime of remarkable service was summed up in the 1983 edition of *The Sower*: "He was a man of truth and courage, of deep prayer and humanity. He was a man of God".



Professor Judith Champ

**Discovery Days - Summer 2023**

*One of the more recent initiatives by the Ongoing Formation team is that of Discovery Days. These comprise of visits to places of historic significance within the Archdiocese which could easily be overlooked. I have attended two such days, with the most recent to the church of Ss. Peter and Paul in Lower Brailes, on the Warwickshire-Oxfordshire border.*

*The chapel in this picturesque village is the upper storey of a medieval malt barn with access via a staircase. The Bishop family lived in the original house and, like other recusant families, maintained a secret Mass centre throughout times of persecution. I am grateful to Professor Judith Champ who accompanied us and who gave detailed historical information on all aspects of our visit. We concluded our day with an enjoyable lunch in a local pub. I look forward to further Discovery Days and seeing more of our rich Catholic heritage in the Archdiocese.*

Canon Brian McGinley

**The Retreat for Priests - July 2023**

*I am sorry to say that in the eleven years since my priestly ordination, I have never attended the annual retreat for priests at Oscott. I had fallen for perennial comments that it is not a 'proper retreat': that the bar is open each evening, that talking is permitted, that the food is questionable. The bar was open each evening, there was talking and the food was excellent. Abbot Paul Gunter offered a series of conferences that spoke to the questions raised by the world, the response that the liturgy offers to those questions, and spoke profoundly to the experience of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, which Abbot Paul knows intimately and fondly. These provided the foundation and atmosphere for a wonderful week of prayer and authentic priestly fraternity offering refreshment for mind, body and soul. It was a proper retreat.*

Fr. Michael Glover

**The Conference for Priests - June 2023**

*At the end of June, the priests of the Archdiocese were invited to attend The Conference for Priests at Newman University entitled The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Forming Ourselves to Form Others. It offered an exploration of the Ratio Fundamentalibus (released in 2016 by the now Dicastery for Clergy) with regard to the place of ongoing formation in the life of priests.*

*It was a delight to be joined by Bishop David Oakley, who offered two reflections in his witty and self-effacing style, on the Church's vision for the life and ministry of priests in a rapidly changing world. He emphasised the necessity to guard with courage the things that enable priests to grow as men and in ministry, namely: prayer, study, and fraternity. This personal formation allows us to offer a rich formation for the people we serve.*

*The Conference at Newman was a tangible example of the points he made: to be together as brothers, to pray for each other and our ministry in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament, to grow through our interactions and the talks we received.*

*"Extremely encouraging and uplifting."*

*"Encouraging to spend the day with so many priests of our Archdiocese."*

*"It was actually enjoyable!"*

*"Very positive and helpful."*

*"A great day of reflection and fraternity."*

*"I'll be careful about saying I'm too busy anymore..."*

*"The sound of over 100 priests singing in the chapel was fantastic."*

**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.

Send them to: [ongoing.formation@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:ongoing.formation@rcaob.org.uk)



## MAIN EVENTS

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September - ONGOING FORMATION DAY FOR DEACONS - St. Mary's College, Oscott \***  
*The Importance of Ongoing Formation in our Service of God and our Neighbour*

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 - THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS - Woodland Grange \***  
*Forming Ourselves and Others Together*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2023

### SEPTEMBER

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

### OCTOBER

- Sun 1<sup>st</sup> - Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> - **FRATERNITY OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED** - Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN - FREE \*
- Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> - **AFTERNOON GATHERING: USING HISTORY AND TRADITION IN PREACHING THE SCRIPTURES**  
(Dr. Sarah Boss - Lecturer in Dogmatic Theology at Oscott) - St. Mary's College, Oscott B73 5AA - £15  
*(This is an event for priests only)*
- Sat 21<sup>st</sup> - **DEACONS UNDER 5s: PREACHING** (Dr. Christine Dodd) - Our Lady of the Angels, Aldridge, WS9 0JD - £30 \*

### NOVEMBER

- Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sun 5<sup>th</sup> - **RETREAT FOR DEACONS** (Sr. Ann Donnelly) - Wistaston Hall, Crewe, CW2 8JS - £170
- Thurs 9<sup>th</sup> - **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 28<sup>th</sup> - **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.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 - THE SYNOD FOR PRIESTS**

Building on the themes of this year's Conference for Priests, we will be gathering for a longer time together next summer for our **Synod for Priests**, entitled *Forming Ourselves and Others Together*. This will be a chance for priests to spend time together, exploring catechetical accompaniment.

More details of this event at Woodland Grange will be published shortly. Put the dates into your diary now!



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.