

**From:** [Communications Assistant](#)  
**To:** [Churches Together in Cornwall](#)  
**Subject:** Plymouth Diocese Newsletter May 2024  
**Date:** 31 May 2024 12:00:05

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Welcome to this month's Diocesan newsletter. May was liturgically dedicated to Mary, Our Blessed Mother, and the month in which we also celebrated Laudato Si week. We are delighted to share some lovely contributions on these themes, including photographs and artwork celebrating nature and the beautiful coastal and rural landscapes of our diocese.

Earlier this month the 5th anniversary of Caritas Diocese of Plymouth also took place, and our Diocesan Administrator Canon Paul Cummins has recorded an inspiring video message to honour the occasion, which you can access by clicking on the button below.

**Video Message from Canon Paul  
Cummins**





## What's On!

**Saturday June 8th Annual Mass For Marriage** at midday at Plymouth Cathedral. Please send wedding anniversary dates of yourselves or loved ones, whether you have been married for 60 years or are about to marry. If you are engaged please let us know the date you plan to marry. 'Light refreshments and (not so light) wedding cake will be provided! For further information please contact Deborah at [deborah.vanKroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:deborah.vanKroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk)

**Wednesday June 12th- Faith Beyond Expectation-** an illustrated talk by Deborah Van Kroonenburg about her recent visit to the Diocese of Orlu. 6 PM, St Joseph's Parish Hall Newton Abbot.

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 6-7pm: Welcoming Refugees Online Event.** The Pope's video for June highlights the importance of responding with welcome to those who are refugees and migrants. Join Caritas Plymouth for reflection and discussion. Please register for Zoom details <https://forms.office.com/e/18ddAqE40F>  
Learn more about refugee week here:  
<https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/caritas-plymouth-celebrates-refugee-week/>

**W/C June 17th- The Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) has teamed up with Tozers Solicitors who have a long history of being legal advisers to the Diocese of Plymouth and CCSP and will be holding**

**their first ever Wills Week w/c 17 June**

**2024.** Tozers have offices in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Teignmouth and they have kindly offered us 10 appointments for our parishioners to make a simple will to provide security for themselves, their loved ones, and the children of the future. Tozers have suggested a small donation be made to CCSP and they will then waive their usual fee which is considerably more. They have suggested a donation of £300 and this payment would be made to Tozers during the appointment and then they will ensure the payment is sent to CCSP.

To request more information, or to book an appointment to make a simple will with a member of the team from Tozers, please email [enquiries@tozers.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@tozers.co.uk) or call **01392 207020**. Appointments during Wills Week will be offered on a first come first served basis although if you are unable to make w/c 14 June 2024, Tozers can offer a little flexibility in their appointment schedule.

**Wednesday 26th June- THE SHAPE OF AUTHENTIC HOPE** Bill Keimig, Deputy Director of the Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University of Steubenville, in his visit to the UK, will be speaking to us on the document on the Church (Lumen Gentium: A light to all peoples). Come and join us at Schiller Hall, Buckfast Abbey on Wednesday June 26th 6-8pm. The event will begin at 5pm with tea/coffee and chance to connect and chat with Bill and his team. To reserve a place contact: [deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk)

**Saturday 29th June-'JESUS IS IN THE HOUSE'- 10 am- 6pm Buckfast Abbey.** An event organised by Plymouth Diocese Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Experience joyful praise and worship, ways of connecting to God's voice, prayer from the heart, with workshops, prayer

ministry, and Mass. All ages welcome.  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/jesus-is-in-the-house-mark-21-tickets-871769073767>

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June: Torbay Deanery**

**Volunteers Celebratory Event:** Our Lady and St Patrick, Teignmouth Light lunch included. Caritas Plymouth is organising a half day event to celebrate the great contribution made by volunteers in our parishes and communities. Registration essential  
<https://forms.office.com/e/8GR7GBGCxZ> or email [caritas@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:caritas@prcdtr.org.uk).

**Saturday June 29th, Youth event- Wet obstacle course, Devon Activity Centre, Ottery St Mary -Aged 10-16** *Do not be anxious about anything Philippians 4:6*  
Please contact Saskia at [youth@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:youth@prcdtr.org.uk) for booking and information.

**28th July - 2nd August, Senior Summer Camp-** Please contact [summercamps@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:summercamps@prcdtr.org.uk) for booking and information.

**4th August - 8th August, Junior Summer Camp-** Please contact [summercamps@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:summercamps@prcdtr.org.uk) for booking and information.

**SAFEGUARDING:** Please see the following articles for the latest from our inspirational Safeguarding team: <https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/catholic-safeguarding-standards-agency-audit/> <https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/parish-safeguarding-reps-conference-2024/>

**VOCATIONS:** Please pray for our two new seminarians and for current seminarian Hugo Lomax who will be travelling to Africa as part of his formation. You can visit the official vocations

page [here](#)

Images in *Laudato Si* themed collage below : Poole, Dorset, courtesy of Deacon Nick Johnson, *Laudato Si* themed art work courtesy of Cathy Blatchford and children from St Nicholas School Exeter, Flowers in Central Park Plymouth courtesy of Fiona Hutchings, Celtic Cross at Padstow courtesy of Isabella Rose, Cornish coast and cliffs courtesy of Colin Bentley, picture of pupils from St Boniface Catholic College enjoying time in nature on retreat at Buckfast Abbey courtesy of Fiona Hutchings, care for creation artwork courtesy of Cathy Blatchford and children from St Nicholas school, Exeter.



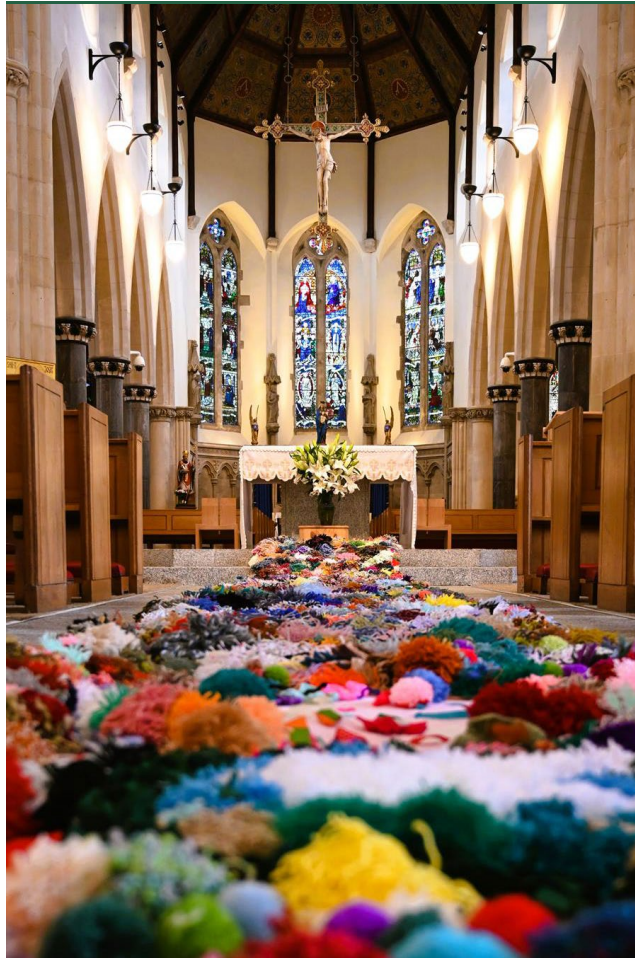
## LAUDATO SI WEEK 2024

Caritas Diocese of Plymouth hosted a series of events at Plymouth Cathedral for Laudato Si' Week to focus on how we can look after the world around us. This year's

Laudato Si' Week theme was inspired by the symbol for Season of Creation 2024, "first fruits." The events included art work from young people in our schools about care for our common home which formed the backdrop for a self-guided prayer walk around the Cathedral. There was also a Creative Workshop with the Art and Energy collective to foster conversations about how we look after our environment. Our guest speaker, John Paul de Quay, delivered a talk about integral ecology and how we are called to respond to the climate crisis.

***'Many hands across our diocese  
contributed to a carpet of creativity  
in honour of our Creator God'***

Quote and photography courtesy of Tanya Trevena, Caritas Development Worker.



## Why Mary Matters

By Canon Mark O'Keefe

From the earliest days of our childhood, the image and the prayer surrounding the Blessed Virgin Mary, has in many ways been the backdrop of our lives. Catholic homes made a special place for her and honoured her through the recitation of the rosary and “May processions” culminating in the crowning of her statue in our schools and in our churches.

Trying to explain why she matters is like saying why breathing matters! Because for us she is the Mother of Our Blessed Lord, she is the smiling face of joy and serenity, she is by her son’s command, our mother given to us on the cross by Jesus who looked down and saw his mother below.

Read more

**Photography and illustration  
courtesy of Plymouth based  
photography student and member of  
Holy Family parish Isabella Rose..**



## **Abbot Anscar Vonier and Our Lady of Buckfast**

**By Steve Roach**

In last August's Newsletter, I described the occasion when Our Lady of Buckfast's statue (pictured here) was transferred to the new Abbey church in August 1922. In this article, I'd like to share a fascinating incident from the personal correspondence of Abbot Anscar Vonier, one which provides an intriguing insight into Marian devotion at Buckfast.

Writing to Abbess Marie Cronier of Dourgne on 9 March 1907, Abbot Anscar asked her to pray for one of his young monks who was suffering from a 'stomach ulcer'. However, when he wrote again two weeks later, Br Matthew Haffner's health had deteriorated rapidly, and he was close to death. It was at this point that something extraordinary took place: 'We gathered around Br Matthew's bed, invoking the Holy Virgin, and helping him with every spiritual means possible. Holy Communion was brought



to the dying brother, and gradually calmness returned. Suddenly, his face lit up: "The Holy Virgin; oh how beautiful she is. Oh Holy Virgin.... Give me the water which she sent me, and I will be healed!" Nobody understood what he meant, until I suddenly remembered that in the evening, after Compline, the Brother Porter had handed me a small bottle of water from Lourdes. I'd put the bottle in the corner of the Infirmary, at a time when the brother was unconscious. So we gave him this water to drink, and at that exact moment he sat up with a radiant look, and said: "I am healed; I will serve two Masses this morning, one at the altar of the Holy Virgin and the other at the altar of St Joseph." We exchanged looks with each other which said: "He's in a state of delirium; this is the end." I even said this openly. Ten minutes passed, I was still staring at him, waiting for his last breath, but the brother was laughing and joking: "Give me my habit, I'm getting up."... This very day, the main newspapers in Plymouth have sent their reporters, and the doctor is openly declaring it to be a miracle. The event is attracting an enormous amount of attention in the area; everyone is talking about it. The Bishop of Plymouth, who arrived on the very day of the miracle, is talking of nothing else.'

The personal letters of Anscar Vonier are so special because they provide access to the private thoughts of the public Abbot. What was his own reaction to this amazing turn of events? 'So, my dearest Mother Abbess, the Holy Virgin has been in our midst! You know what this means. I am overwhelmed by the weight of such a favour, and I beg you to thank the Beloved Lady with me. I don't know what to say to you, except that I feel supremely unworthy of being the Superior here.' Some 15 years later, when his monks placed the statue of Our Lady of Buckfast in the new Abbey church with such solemnity and devotion, Abbot Anscar had the perfect opportunity to express just how grateful he was.



## **May Rosaries at The Barbican:**

### **The Legion of Mary in our Diocese**

**By Mark Mesley**

Our Founder, the Servant of God, Frank Duff, drew on St Louis Marie De Montfort's Treatise on the "True Devotion to Mary" as the inspiration for many of the principles adopted by the Legion of Mary. We rely on Our Lady to aid us by her prayers in our work and witness. As we place ourselves at her disposal, we allow Our Lady to "accomplish her maternal work for souls" (Handbook, 2014, p. 24) through our humble efforts.

During Our Lady's month of May we have been

reciting the Rosary publicly on the Barbican in Plymouth every Sunday afternoon at 3.00 pm. This act of witness to Our Catholic Faith was supported by a number of Catholics who are not members of the Legion of Mary but who are sympathetic to our Marian Spirituality. Last month we gathered for our annual Acies Ceremony at the Shrine of St Cuthbert Mayne in Launceston, to renew our consecration to Our Lady. We try to emulate Mary's faith and obedience in saying "yes" to God at the Incarnation. We are grateful to Canon John Deeney for his hospitality. Fr Anil Gundabatina, our Spiritual Director, gave an address on the importance of Marian Consecration. Just as all Catholics are encouraged to renew their baptismal promises at Easter, we are required to renew our act of Entrustment to Mary on the Saturday nearest to the Solemn Feast of the Annunciation. As part of our programme of ongoing formation, we also offer our members a Lenten Day of Recollection, which was held at St Edward's, Peverell, Plymouth this year, thanks to Fr Ian Hellyer. We also hold a short residential Retreat at Rita's, Honiton every September, which is led by Fr John Peyton, from the Birmingham Senatus of the Legion of Mary.

If anyone would like more information about the Legion of Mary, please see our local website for the Plymouth Curia: [legionplymouthcuria.com](http://legionplymouthcuria.com) (which is still work in progress) or they can email me direct on: [mesley@virginmedia.com](mailto:mesley@virginmedia.com)

*Illustration of rose courtesy of Chloe Patrick, Grants and Property Assistant, Diocese of Plymouth.*



## **Celebrating Flores De Mayo in our Diocese**

### **An interview with Merlyn McGuire**

**Hi Merlyn so lovely to talk with you!  
Thank you so much for taking the time to chat. Please can you tell us a bit about the history of the Flores De Mayo festival?**

'Flores de Mayo' – Spanish term for (Flowers of May ) has been a very traditional, religious and cultural activities in the Philippines, which started in 1867 as introduced by the Spaniards after the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. The Spaniards came to the Philippines in 1521 and for centuries, they have introduced Christianity and devotion to the Catholic Faith. The Spanish Conquistadores and Friars

introduced the festival in 1800 to pay tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Filipinos therefore took this activity by heart and every month of May, all over the Philippines and in many little villages/towns, this particular festivity is celebrated. Young children gather in the church daily for prayer, then offer flowers to the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary and in most cases, these young children are given some snacks or food/drinks after prayer and offering.

'Santacruzán' – Spanish term for (Holy Cross) – is the other feature of Flores de Mayo. In the Philippines, this event is normally celebrated at the end of 'Flores de Mayo' which is a month long celebration of flower offering. Santacruzán is the culminating event and this festivity depicts the searching of the True Cross by Queen Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great who was converted to Christianity. They went looking for the True Cross where Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem and when they found the cross, they then went back to Rome. There was obviously some festivities once this Cross was found. In the Philippines, this is very popular among young girls and boys. They are dressed in many colourful costumes and gowns, many of them representing some Biblical personalities or historical figures i.e. Reyna (Queen) Samaritana was the woman who was a social outcast and spoke to Jesus by the well. Reyna Veronica was the woman who wiped Jesus's face and three faces of Jesus was imprinted on the cloth used to wipe His Face. These are just one of the examples of Reynas (Queen) who are part of the pageantry during the procession.

In the Philippines, to participate in this event, is very prestigious. Some of the young ladies become a representative of their little village or town.

These young ladies and men go on a parade along the town with music playing basically a hymn for the Blessed Mary, - 'Dios te Salve' meaning 'Hail Mary'. After any of these events and pageantry, there will always be food to share

normally provided by Hermano/Hermana Mayor meaning they sponsor the food provided and can be the whole town will come and join.

**Read more of the story of Flores De Mayo in our diocese [here](#)**

Collage below features images of the recent Flores de Mayo and Santacruzán held on May 12, 2024 in the Cathedral grounds after the Procession from Plymouth City Centre. Nigerian, Indian and Ghanaian ladies participated and it became a more diverse celebration, originally initiated by the Filipino communities.



## **Making Hope & the Common Good Manifest During the General Election**

The Catholic Bishops Conference have issued guidance on the General Election [General Election 2024 - Catholic Bishops' Conference \(cbcew.org.uk\)](#)

The following is an article by Simon Giarchi, from CAFOD Plymouth.

***“The Christian community should be at the forefront in pointing out the need for a social covenant to support and foster hope, one that is inclusive and not ideological”. (Spes Non Confundit)***

As Christians we have a long tradition of being actively involved in the big issues of our time. From Catherine of Siena to Oscar Romero, the lives of many saints show us that the greater their devotion to the Lord, the deeper their commitment to addressing the social problems of their time. With the General Election approaching, CAFOD and SVP have come together to produce resources to help Catholics and their parishes reach out to local candidates from all political parties.

It is hoped that through these resources, we can share our Catholic faith perspective on some of the key issues of the day with all of the candidates in our constituencies, and therefore let our faith influence the wider debate.

***“All citizens, therefore, should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good”.  
(Gaudium et Spes)***

We have a responsibility as Catholics to ensure political parties commit to taking action to tackle poverty and injustice. By raising our voices and contacting our parliamentary candidates, we can ensure they hear our faith-filled hope for the needs of our country and the world.

CAFOD and SVP have put together a guide which suggests three main ways to engage with candidates: contacting them by email as a parish group, by attending a hustings and by being ready

to ask questions if candidates knock on our doors.

Our actions must be filled with Christian hope. In his recent Papal Bull for the Jubilee 2025 [Spes Non Confundit](#), Pope Francis says:

***“All the baptized, with their respective charisms and ministries, are co-responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God’s presence in the world”.***

In their joint resources, CAFOD and SVP have prepared eight suggested issues to raise with all candidates standing in the election. These points provide us a great opportunity to share our hope for the world.

The eight issues focus on the impacts on vulnerable and marginalised people, including the cost of living crisis, global food system, debt, climate change and migration. This is not about political affiliations, but rather about sharing our Christian hope and perspective with all candidates and political parties and practising the culture of encounter that Pope Francis talks about.

As the Bishops of England and Wales recently said:


***“This is not just about leaders, it is about us. We are not merely the passive recipients of politics but active citizens. An election is the best time for us as Christians to speak out, to get involved, and to lead”.***

There’s not much time! The more of us raise these issues, the more that our faith and the voices and experiences of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters will be heard. For resources and more information click [here](#).






Bookings are now open for this years diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Please see below for some details and stay tuned for more information.

 **LOURDES PILGRIMAGE**  
**2024**

**WHEN?**  
26th July to 1st August

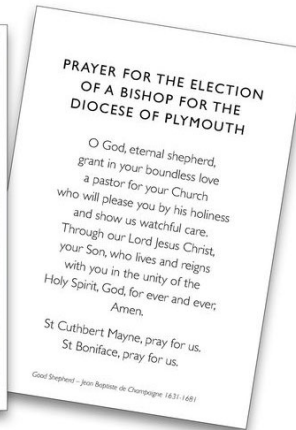
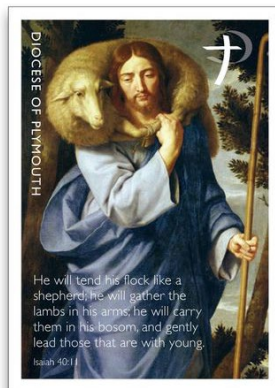
**WHO?**  
Led by Reverend  
Christopher Findlay-Wilson

**WHAT? (IS INCLUDED)**  
Flights, Transfers, Luggage,  
Accommodation, Meals,  
Guided tour / visit



*Please continue to pray that a bishop will soon be appointed to shepherd our diocese. These prayer cards will be available in parishes to help us.*

*And continue to pray for Canon Paul Cummins who, as Diocesan Administrator carries his responsibilities with compassion, kindness and good humour. We are very blessed.- Fr Jonathan Stewart.*



## COME AND WORK WITH US

There are regular opportunities to come and work for the Diocese in a variety of roles and you can find all our vacancies on the careers page of our [website](#)



Warmest thanks to all of the contributors to this month's newsletter: Canon Paul Cummins, Canon Mark O'Keefe, Fr Jonathan Stewart, Mark Mesley, Deborah Fisher, Steve Roach, Merlyn McGuire, Simon Giarchi, Chloe Patrick, Colin Bentley, Tanya Trevena, Fiona Hutchings, Deacon Nick Johnson, Isabella Rose, Vicki Dunstone, Cathy Blatchford and children from St Nicholas school, Exeter.

Please encourage others to sign up to receive our monthly newsletter [here](#) You can find links to our social media pages below.

*If you'd like to get in touch about our newsletter, have information about a Diocesan event or an idea for an article to be featured please contact [caitlin.miller@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:caitlin.miller@prcdtr.org.uk)*



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