



MASS TIMES & INTENTIONS



Saturday 11TH May 2024 – Saturday after the Sixth Sunday of Easter

9.00am	Morning Prayer	
9.20am	Mass and Rosary	Kevin Patrick Wall RIP
10.00am – 11.00am	Confessions	
6.00pm	Vigil Mass	Teresa Vines RIP

Sunday 12TH May 2024 – SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (World Communications Day)

9.00am	Mass	Kerina Lord RIP
11.00am	Mass	John Manning RIP
5.00pm	Holy Hour	

Tuesday 14th May 2024 – ST MATTHIAS, Ap

7.00pm	Novena to Anthony of Padua	
7.30pm	Mass	Henry & Herman Hernandez RIP

Wednesday 15TH May 2024 – Wednesday after the Seventh Sunday of Easter

9.00am	Morning Prayer	
9.20am	Mass and Rosary	Mary Harrison RIP
10am until 5pm	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	

Thursday 16TH May 2024 – Thursday after the Seventh Sunday of Easter

9.00am	Morning Prayer	
9.20am	Mass and Rosary	Benedict & Ethel Doyle RIP
10am until 4pm	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	

Friday 17TH May 2024 – Friday after the Seventh Sunday of Easter

9.00am	Morning Prayer	
9.20am	Mass and Rosary	jonathan Hernandez Thanksgiving
10am until 5pm	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	

Saturday 18TH May 2024 – Saturday after the Seventh Sunday of Easter

9.00am	Morning Prayer	
9.20am	Mass and Rosary	
10.00am – 11.00am	Confessions	
6.00pm	Vigil Mass	

Sunday 19TH May 2024 – PENTECOST (B)

9.00am	Mass	Joseph Rodgers RIP
11.00am	Mass	Clelia Greco RIP
5.00pm	Holy Hour	



OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL



Parish Priest: Fr Britto Belevendran

61 London Road, Wickford, Essex SS12 0AW ~ Tel 01268 733219

Website: www.wickfordcatholic.com ~ Email: wickford@brcdt.org

Hall Bookings: email: wickfordcatholicalls@gmail.com / Tel: 01268 733219

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B) 12TH MAY 2024

World Communications Day

In the Gospel, Judas is one of the disciples whom the Father gave to Jesus and whom Jesus guarded, but he is also “lost”.

How could the Good Shepherd lose one of his sheep? Judas is literally called the “son of destruction” (translated “the one destined to be lost”), a phrase used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, in parallel to “the lawless one”, whose coming reveals the working of Satan (2 Thes 2:9). Satan had infiltrated the heart of Judas (Jn 6:70; 13:2, 27). He was not merely lost – he was snatched away.

Jesus’ plea to the Father to “keep them (his disciples) from the evil one” thus takes on more urgency. Because Christ prayed for all his future disciples (John 17:20), we know that we too are included in his prayer and likewise receive the gift of the Spirit as described in the second reading.

This brings us back to the Acts of the Apostles. Choosing an apostle by lot might make it seem that the disciples were leaving it to chance. In the first-century Church, however, using lots indicated utter reliance on God’s power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ tender and loving prayer for unity among his disciples, which mirrors his unity with the Father, is his prayer for us today. Guided by truth of God’s Word, we strive to love one another as God loves us. Let us praise God for his love as we faithfully remain in Christ, knowing that the joy of life in him is ours.



PARISH NEWS

Confirmation Programme 2023/24

The next Confirmation class will be on **Thursday 16th May 2024** in the back hall (7:30pm-9:00pm). Please attend without fail if you wish to be confirmed this year.

Teas and Coffees

Our next Teas & Coffees will be held on **Sunday 19th of May** after the 9AM Mass; are all welcomed to join.

Women's Group OLOGC

The next women's group meeting will be held in the back hall (St. Peter's) on **Friday the 24th of May** at 7:30pm.

All are welcome!

The First Holy Communion Session

The next Session which will be a Rehearsal is to take place on **Thursday 30th May 2024**.

100 Club Winners

Congratulations to the winners of our 100 Club April Draw.

1st Winner – **Maureen Hyatt**

2nd Winner – **Elizabeth Brewer**

3rd Winner – **Theresa Dodd**

Thank you all for your continued participation!

Parish Repository

In the next few weeks, some of our young people and children will be making their confirmation and Holy Communion. The repository has a lovely selection of gifts and cards to commemorate these wonderful occasions. Please come and visit us. The shop is open after all the weekend masses, and by appointment. Please contact Kathleen, (761195), and Sheila, (767064), for details.

Booking in Mass Intentions

This is a kind reminder – When booking a Mass, please clearly specify what the intentions will be for. Many Thanks.

PAX CHRISTI

Many Thanks to all who have made a donation towards PAX CHRISTI – we have given **£271.71** in total for Peace Sunday.



Parish Bake Off Winners

A tremendous Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Bake Off! And Congratulations to our Lucky Winners, **Angela Leper** who came first place & **Martin Doyle** who came second.



Thank you to our judges Aaron, Jane & Bob who did an amazing job scoring all the Fabulous cakes!



Sick Friends and Relatives - Please pray for Jonathan Fabri, Jayne & Danny Balaam, Beniamina Bilewycz, Arthur Brittain, Mary Caruana, Theresa Eldred, Patricia Gammell, Johnny Gee, Celine Guckian, Sharon Guckian, Gabrielle & Ralphie Langridge, Margaret Livesey, John Maguire, Bridget Mahoney, Carmella Micella, Elizabeth Mooney, Cecile Narbeth, Olivia Nazareth, Diane Neale, Margaret O'Doherty, Joy Orrock, Carmelo Piazza, Maureen Price, Conchita Prime, Carol Rushbrook, John Sheridan, Gerry Smyth, Maria Weedon, Elizabeth Arnold, Jane Williams, Gomez, Patricia McEvoy, Maureen Sullivan, Susan Freeman, Jane Davenport, Nathalie Ah-key, Amparo Thorogood, George O'Boyle, Pat McEvoy, Ann Parkinson, Valerie Robinson, Nelly Prada, Michael Fitzgerald, May and Chris Carey, Doreen Green, Conrad Gomes, Peter Turner, Sr. Sior Cosgrave Una, Clairin Molloy, Celine Wells, Patricia Graves and Keith Bottjer, Robert Turner, Patricia Price, George Ross, Paul Grayston, Frank Daniels, Geoff Ebdon.

Anniversaries –We pray for Albert O'Brien, Marjorie Ann Browney, Elizabeth Emily Jessop, Michael Fenton, Sharon Deal, Margaret Johnson, Fr. John Hawes, Maria Gavin, Beatrice Blanche Ann Harty, Henry George Ardley, Esme Edith Mattin, Christine McStay, Maisie Berry.

DIOCESAN NEWS

1. Events:

NATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE NETWORK

AGM and Open Networking Day

Saturday 11th May 10.30am—4pm

Taking place at CAFOD, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Rd., London SE1 7JB.

We will hear about the 'New definition of extremism 2024', what it will mean in practice, and how it affects climate activism. There will be time for discussions and networking. Tea/coffee will be provided, but please bring your own lunch,

For more information, contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk.

Thy Kingdom Come - Pentecost Prayer Novena 2024

There will be 24/7 prayer running from **2pm on Sunday 12th May** to 10pm on Saturday 18th May at the Sion Community Chapel. You are welcome to join us any time from 6am to 12 midnight. It would be very helpful if you could book an hour slot in the prayer room by visiting this link: <https://signup.24-7prayer.com/signup/75e411> or you can join us for Praise & Worship at 8pm which is taking place each evening. We look forward to welcoming you for this special prayer time.

For more information, please contact admin@sioncommunity.org.uk
Sion Community, SENT, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9BX

Pentecost Prayer Novena

The original novena (nine days) was prayed by the apostles in the upper room on the days in between the Ascension of the Lord and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We are all invited to pray this novena, for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our Church, but also on those we hold in our hearts who don't know the Lord.

Why not join with the Sion Community in Brentwood, to pray this novena in a special way this year?

There will be a launch event for the Pentecost **Novena at 8pm on the evening of Ascension Thursday, 9th May**, with Praise & Worship and a short talk. There will then be a 24/7 interactive prayer room running

from **2pm on Sunday 12th May to 10pm on Saturday 18th May**.

People can book an hour slot in the prayer room at a convenient time for them by visiting this link: <https://signup.24-7prayer.com/signup/75e411> or you can join us for Praise & Worship at 8pm each evening.

For more information, please contact admin@sioncommunity.org.uk
Sion Community, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9BX

Knights of St. Columba Youth Competitions - Easter Grand Draw

Please see the notices in the porch for the 3 current Youth Competitions. The categories are Painting, Photo, and Essay, for different ages and with cash prizes. Any problems please contact Brother Martin Doyle.

Walsingham

Saturday 25th May is the date of the annual diocesan pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. I remember in our centenary year some forty 50-seater coaches disgorging thousands of pilgrims from all over the diocese. I dare to dream big that I will see this again in my lifetime. My immediate dream is smaller. I would love to see the serving team from every parish have 1 person serving at Walsingham this year. It is important that we engage our young people with the Shrine. Pilgrimage is an important part of our spiritual wellbeing and giving that to our youngsters will ensure that the future of our faith in their hands will be fruitful. The shrine is a wonderful place both spiritually and for the wonderful countryside which surrounds it. I know this is half-term but if you want to get-away for a few days why not choose Norfolk and start at Walsingham.

Nicola Christmas, Walsingham pilgrimage MC for the Diocese of Brentwood

DM Pilgrimage to Walsingham 2024 Brentwood Diocese

The Divine Mercy Apostolate, London is holding a First Saturday Divine Mercy Recollection Day at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, on **Saturday 1st June 2024 from 11 am to 4:30 pm**. The Recollection Day will include teachings on the Message of Mercy, Holy Mass, Stations of the Cross, Hour of Mercy with Adoration and Benediction and Veneration of the Image of Merciful Jesus. All welcome.

Pls call millie on [07957594646](tel:07957594646) for more information. Coaches from Ealing Broadway and Victoria/

Youth Mass, Thursday 6th June 2024, Brentwood Cathedral

This may be a busy and stressful time for many of you, particularly those taking exams.

The Cathedral and Parish Hall will be open for you to socialise, pray and celebrate Mass with us, or pop in for a break from revision, change of scenery or quiet personal prayer.

Pizza from 6pm in the Parish Hall, Mass at 7:30pm in the Cathedral.

Catholic Parish Summit:

The Catholic Parish Summit is taking place in Harrogate from the 12th to the 14th of June with over 1,000 parish leaders from across the country.

Our diocese has booked some places for the Summit which are available to anyone who is interested in attending. These places are free but they are limited and you will need to make arrangements for accommodation while you are in Harrogate. For more information about the Summit please visit their website: <https://catholicparishsummit.com/>

If you would like to find out more please email Father Dan Mason, the Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal at billericay@brcdt.org

BCCS 40th Anniversary Newsletter and invitation to Anniversary

You are warmly invited to attend our Anniversary Mass celebrated by Bishop Alan, on Friday 14th June at the Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Billericay at 6pm: There will be light refreshments after Mass in the pastoral centre and so it would be very helpful if you could RSVP to this email address to let us know if you plan to attend.

'Revive; Discover; Empower' a young adults retreat

Walsingham House are hosting a young adults retreat on the weekend of 22nd – 23rd June. The retreat is open to those who are 19+. It will be a weekend of prayer and friendship and a wonderful opportunity to take a break from work or university. The cost of the retreat is £45 and more information, including how to book, can be found at www.bcys.net/events

Lourdes Pilgrimage

Join Bishop Alan on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes (**Friday 19 – Friday 26 July**). To book, please go online: [Brentwood Lourdes - Lourdes - Tangney Tours \(tangney-tours.com\)](http://Brentwood Lourdes - Lourdes - Tangney Tours (tangney-tours.com)) If you wish to discuss any aspect of the pilgrimage, please e-mail Kathryn Young: kathrynyoung@mail.com

The Campion School

Would like to warmly invite parents/carers and year 5 boys to our Open Evening on **Wednesday, 26th June** from 4.30pm to 7pm.

The Headteacher's talk will be at 5pm and repeated at 6.30pm. Please visit our school website for more details www.thecampionschool.org.uk

BCYS SUMMER LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE – Last week of July 2024 (exact dates TBC)

Bookings are now open online for the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service pilgrimage to Lourdes in July.

Serve the main Diocesan pilgrimage, assist the elderly and infirm, with times of retreat, reconciliation, visit the baths, take part in the beautiful Processions, as well as an afternoon in the mountains, party and social nights - all with other young Catholics from around our Diocese.

The pilgrimage is open to all those in school year 10 – 13, with all those of school leaver age (18+) invited to join us as young leaders (subject to attending a training weekend). All details and applications can be found on the website www.bcys.net/events/sl24

40yrs of Walsingham House Teams

2024 marks 40 years of retreat teams at Walsingham House. There will be a celebration Mass with Bishop Alan on **Saturday 31st August 2024** at Walsingham House at Abbots wick. Please save the date as it would be wonderful to see Walsingham House and BCYS alumni and friends gather to mark this milestone. More information to follow in the new year.

A Day with Mary pilgrimage to Fatima & Italy

A Day with Mary 2024 Pilgrimages to Fatima (7-14 June) and Italy (4-12 September).

For more information, email: adwmary.uk@gmail.com, web: www.adaywithmary.org or phone +(0)20 8641 6418.

Booking forms are available at any DWN venue.

FLAME 2025 “Unstoppable” – Fan the Flame of Hope

Although it may feel like months away, we are excited to be preparing for Flame in March 2025, following on from the incredible experience that

1000 young people from the Brentwood Diocese had at the event earlier this year.

Once again, the BCYS will purchase a block of early bird tickets on behalf of the Diocese, to enable us to allocate seats together, in a very desirable area as close to the front as possible.

These early bird tickets are £29 each, a saving of £5 per ticket on the full price of £34, and will be purchased in January, which is why we are asking for your ticket requests now!

Caritas Diocese of Brentwood

is inviting you to take part in several activities during Lent. We have a photo challenge for all ages, Stations of the Cross for teenagers, a Giving Calendar to help collections for local foodbanks, suggestions on how to raise awareness for the homeless within Essex and East London and some great resources from charities such as SVP and CAFOD. All information and resources can be found at

www.caritasbrentwood.org/lent or by emailing sianthomas@brcdt.org.

Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre – St Patrick’s Way Pilgrimage 2025

The Community is organising a pilgrimage on 22-27 April 2025. We will be journeying along the newly-established St Patrick’s Way in the North of Ireland. The pilgrimage is open to all faiths and none and is aimed at being accessible to everyone - walkers and non-walkers.

If you are interested in joining us, please find further details and booking form on our website <https://canonesses.co.uk/pilgrimage-st-patricks-way-april-2025/> or email projects@canonesses.co.uk. Closing date: 10 May 2024.

2. Programme:

Retrouvaille – Do you need help in your marriage?

Retrouvaille has helped many couples find new hope, nourishment, and growth in their marriages. If you want to uncover or reawaken the love, trust and commitment that brought you together and work through difficult times in your marriage contact Retrouvaille confidential for more information about our 2024 programmes. There is no group therapy or group work. Our next programme commences with a weekend in Welwyn Garden City on **14-16 June 2024**. Call or text 07887 296983 or 07973

380443, email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR LENT

Commentary on every Scripture reading from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday by Fr Adrian Graffy, parish priest of Gidea Park and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, is available free of charge on www.whatgoodnews.org Click on ‘Scripture Readings’ and ‘Lent Readings’. The commentaries are also available in book form from Darton, Longman and Todd www.dartonlongmantodd.co.uk

Apprenticeships at Walsingham House

Walsingham House are offering a two-year apprenticeship course in Youth Ministry and Chaplaincy (Yr13 school leavers). Participants will live and work at Walsingham House, running retreats for young people across the diocese whilst studying with St Mary’s University, Twickenham. For more information please email clairebailey@brcdt.org or visit the website www.bcys.net/apprenticeship-opportunity-at-walsingham-house/

Bishop’s Certificate in Catechesis and Youth Ministry

is an online course is designed to be an entry level qualification to help in the ongoing formation of adults involved in sacramental preparation (First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation) or youth ministry in the Diocese of Brentwood. It includes both the development of practical skills & the deepening of theological knowledge. For more information or to register your interest please email clairebailey@brcdt.org or see the website <https://bcys.net/bishops-cert/>

BCCS FREE SELF-HARM WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES

Brentwood Catholic Children’s Society (BCCS) is aiming to deliver free Self-Harm support groups to both parents/carers and their teenagers should they wish to attend. The workshops will be held on a Wednesday evening for four consecutive weeks at their premises at 133 High Street, Billericay between 6.30 and 8pm. The parents’ group will run alongside a separate group for the young people and will be an opportunity to think about how self-harm is affecting you, your child, and your family. The young people will attend a separate group session with a BCCS Child and Adolescent Therapist. Parents will come together with their teenager at the end where they will be supported to communicate, reflect, and connect. Parents are welcome to attend without their child or young person if that is

a more comfortable option. To book your space, please contact Catherine Munns asap; places are likely to fill quickly: cmunns@bccs.org.uk (A Flyer of the event is displayed on the Church Notice board).

'BISHOP ALAN LISTENS' RESEARCH REPORT

Understanding why Catholics in the Diocese of Brentwood no longer come to Church.

Last summer Bishop Alan invited Catholics who no longer regularly come to Church to get in touch so that he could seriously listen to their stories and experiences and begin to understand why so many Catholics no longer feel as though they belong in the Church.

This report presents a moving and challenging insight into how our Church and the covid-19 pandemic have contributed to a movement away from a regular practice of faith for many Catholics and offers our Church a rich repository of wisdom that might enhance and inform our ongoing journey of renewal in the diocese.

Thank you to all those who so generously and thoughtfully participated in this research. Please share this link/report with those whom you know have participated in this research. Go to the home page of <https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/> to see the responses of hundreds of Catholics across our diocese and hear what Bishop Alan heard.

3. Appeals:

Caritas Diocese of Brentwood

In the Gospel narratives, we hear of the family displaced from their home, finding solace in a humble stable, cradling their newborn amidst the simplicity of their surroundings. This Holy Family, vulnerable yet resilient, resonates profoundly, urging us to reach out to those facing hardships during this Advent season. It prompts us to remember that amidst the festivities, there are individuals and families across Essex and East London experiencing great difficulties, requiring our support, kindness, and care. Numerous charitable organisations persist in their efforts to aid the most vulnerable in our communities, and they rely on our collective support. Please visit the Caritas website to access links to the many charities in need of generosity and volunteers.

[Caritas Diocese of Brentwood \(caritasbrentwood.org\)](http://Caritas Diocese of Brentwood (caritasbrentwood.org))

CAFOD Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal

Donate to CAFOD's Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal at cafod.org.uk/ipc or call 0303 303 3030 to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts in Gaza and southern Israel who have been working alongside communities helping those most in need. Your donation will help support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid including food, water, and emergency shelter to those in need. Thank you for your prayers.

4. Job adverts:

Health and Safety Co-ordinator

A vacancy has arisen for a Health and Safety Co-Ordinator to work full time from Monday to Friday. They will be based at Cathedral House and will be required to travel around the Diocese.

Candidates must have H&S experience and H&S qualifications including NEBOSH.

Please send your CV and cover letter by email to hr@brcdt.org

Full job description is available on the Diocese website.

Closing date for applications: **14th May 2024**

"Revive. Discover. Empower."

Retreat for Young Adults, **22nd – 23rd June** at Walsingham House at Abbotswick

This young adult retreat is an opportunity for spiritual growth and reflection, to **revive, discover** and **empower** you in your faith. *This retreat is aimed at those aged 18+, having left school, to roughly 30.*

All details can be found at www.bcys.net/events

Retreat Manager for Walsingham House at Abbotswick

Walsingham House are seeking to appoint a Retreat Manager for Walsingham House. The Retreat Manager will work to ensure the smooth and efficient running of retreats and leading the volunteer team. This is a live in position and ideal for someone with previous experience in youth ministry. Full details, including background information and how to apply, can found at www.bcys.net/news/vacancies/ The closing date is **Friday 24th May**.

Programme Leader for Walsingham House at Abbotswick

Walsingham House are seeking to appoint a Programme Leader. The successful applicant will work alongside the Retreat Manager helping to

lead retreats for the schools and parishes of our diocese. Full details, including background information and how to apply, can be found at www.bcys.net/news/vacancies/. The closing date is **Friday 24th May**.

St Vincent de Paul Society - Work Experience

The St Vincent de Paul Society and CAFOD are working together to offer residential work experience for 20 young adults in England and Wales. The experience will run from **7th- 13th July** in London. Candidates must be aged between 20-30 years old and have a passion for social justice.

The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre

are recruiting a couple/two adults to support the nine elderly sisters who live in the main house. The role is residential in a two-bedroom bungalow, adjacent to the main home in Colchester. Precise role, and salary are dependent on the skills of the successful applicants.

For further information please contact: crssuk@canonesses.co.uk

Cleaner - Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

16 hours per week cleaning vacancy. Please see the website for details <https://www.olorcps.net/school-info/vacancies>. All positions are subject to statutory safeguarding checks.

VOLUNTARY TREASURER NEEDED

Do you have financial experience and a couple of hours per week to spare?

If so, the National Justice and Peace Network would like to hear from you. Due to the sad passing of their Treasurer, they are now in urgent need of a new one. If you are looking for some voluntary work, and share their passion for social action, please email: - admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

Supply Teachers - Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

We are also looking to build a team of Supply Teachers
Please Contact Mr Parascandolo via info@olorcps.net for further details.

Vacancies for Foundation Governors

have arisen at several Catholic schools across the Diocese and expressions of interests are being sought from practising committed Catholics for the ministry.

The term of office is for four years from the date of appointment.

Foundation Governors are personally appointed by the Bishop to Diocesan schools to represent his interests and those of the Catholic community.

Our schools would benefit from people with a range of skills and experiences including Finance, Education, Special Needs, Legal and Administration.

Anyone interested in the role and mission of Foundation Governor should not be put off by a lack of experience. Appropriate training is available during the period of service.

If you are interested in becoming Foundation Governor please email your expression of interest to governanceappointments@brcdt.org or call: 01277 265216



This Week's Article:

Parish priests had a synod meeting with the Vatican. But will they be included in October's assembly?



Colleen Dulle May 08, 2024



Priests work in an English-language small group April 30, 2024, with facilitator Sister Maria Cimperman, a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as part of a meeting of parish priests from around the world gathered at Sacrofano, outside of Rome, to share their experiences and contribute to the ongoing synod on synodality. (CNS photo/Courtesy of the Synod of Bishops)

Around 200 parish priests met outside Rome last week for an official synod meeting, which the Vatican's synod secretariat and Dicastery for Clergy set up after some members of the 2023 synod assembly said **not enough parish priests** had been included.

The synod and clergy offices, in collaboration with the Dicasteries for Evangelization and the Eastern Churches, hosted the meeting from April 28 to May 1 in Sacrofano, Italy; it concluded May 2 with an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican. The 193 parish priests who participated were appointed by their bishops' conferences based on their "significant experience" with synodality, according to synod secretariat guidelines. The secretariat also requested that the priests come from diverse pastoral backgrounds, like working in urban or rural contexts or with specific socio-cultural groups.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sent five priests from the dioceses of Little Rock, Ark.; Stockton, Ca.; Arlington, Va.; Boston, Mass.; and Green Bay, Wis. The Little Rock delegate, the Rev. Joseph Friend, is the pastoral administrator of three different churches—a situation that is becoming increasingly common in the United States. A sixth American priest, the Rev. Clifton Ressler of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, was chosen by Pope Francis.

The small group reports from the meeting reveal a joyful exchange between priests from vastly different cultures. Throughout the meeting, the theme of moving parishes "from maintenance to mission" caught on among the priests, and several groups reported that they were returning home with a new resolve to implement synodality in their parishes and dioceses.

"It has allowed us to start dreaming about the Church again" after the abuse crisis, one group wrote. "In fact, the synodal journey pays attention to overcoming the logic of abuse of individual power and gives us the antibodies to overcome the contagion from some oppressive and controlling dynamics."

The feedback gathered from last week's meeting will be used to help draft the working document for the final general assembly of the synod in October 2024.

How many parish priests took part in the October 2023 assembly is a topic of some confusion: A spokesman for the Vatican's synod secretariat was unable to confirm whether any of the full voting members of the October assembly were working as parish priests at the time of the meeting, although, he said, some of the facilitators may have been.

James Martin, S.J., editor at large at **America** and a member of the October synod assembly, said he heard complaints about the absence of parish priests there: "Many delegates saw this as a problem: After all, parish priests are on the front lines of the church. So [last] week's meeting of parish priests from around the world, organized by the synod, was a real example of listening on the part of the Vatican. Not only was the Vatican listening to the parish priests; it was also listening to the delegates who had asked them to listen."

There is no indication, however, that any of the priest-delegates from this latest meeting will be invited to participate in October.

Day 1: How synodality is playing out in parishes

The first day of the meeting, Sunday, April 28, was primarily a travel day, with the priest-participants convening in Sacrofano in the evening to celebrate Mass together. On Monday, the conversations began in earnest, following a similar structure as the October general assembly: Participants first heard introductions to the day's theme by theologians and experts, then broke into 18 small groups sorted by language (three Spanish, three French, seven English and five Italian). Like at the October meeting, they were seated at round tables and used the "[Conversation in the Spirit](#)" method of discussion and listening.

The first conversation day focused on "The Face of the Synodal Church"—essentially, taking stock of the delegates' experiences of synodality in their ministry, both positive and negative, and reflecting on how their understandings of synodality evolved through those experiences.

According to the [small group reports](#) published on the synod's website, the priests almost unanimously said their experiences of synodality thus far had been positive, notwithstanding some obstacles in the 2021-24 synodal process. "Synodality has proved to be a joyful experience for every member of our group, overcoming difficulties (context and culture) and

considerable resistance at all levels (faithful, priests, bishops)," one French-language group wrote.

One English-language group said that the listening sessions were "often used on the parish level as a place to vent, complain about the perceived state of the church, or to bring up the ways in which [participants] felt they have been hurt by the church. But again, all in our group found that these were occasions to walk with the people and listen. To accompany them in their hurts. It was brought up that it was a beneficial opportunity to hear them out."

Several groups mentioned the difficulty of communicating what synodality is. The same English-language group added:

In some of the participants' countries, the term "synodality" has been difficult to get across. It's often met with blank stares. Or some have looked upon it as just another program to implement. Giving parishioners a proper understanding of it has been challenging, but this concept of "journeying" has been easier to get across and seems more accessible. Some participants mentioned how they don't use the word synod, but "journey."

The discussions at the priests' meeting focused more on the synodal conversion of the church than on the 2021-24 process specifically. Many of the priests at the meeting stressed that incorporating synodality into their ministry would require more time with parishioners, which they wanted to give but did not feel they could because their resources are already stretched thin. "As a common denominator," a Spanish-language group wrote, "we have an overload of work." Another group spoke about burnout on the first day.

To that end, the priests stressed the importance of formation in synodality at all levels of the church—among bishops, priests, religious, seminarians and lay parishioners—so that laypeople would be better prepared to take on some of the responsibilities that priests have often had, and so that bishops would enable priests to shift their focus from "maintenance" to evangelization and building relationships in their parishes.

Day 2: What does a synodal parish look like?

The second day of discussion deepened that theme, focusing on "All Disciples All Missionaries." The priests were asked to reflect on how they had seen different charisms, vocations and ministries at play in their

parishes and dioceses, as well as what their parishes had contributed to the mission of the diocese. In the afternoon, most groups discussed what it meant to be a “synodal priest.”

Taken together, the small group [reports from day two](#) paint a picture of how the pastors hope synodality will play out in their parishes long-term. A “synodal parish” is described as being a home for evangelizers—laypeople and parish priests alike—where they can discern together their various charisms and missionary callings. “Trusting the charisms given our community frees us from the burden of undertaking everything ourselves,” an English-language group wrote.

Another English-language group summarized what most said: “In order to move forward as a synodal Church, we have to find a way to bring our people into new roles, including leadership roles in the parish. We need to help form and catechize our faithful so they can thrive and be evangelizers in their community.”

“Our role [as priests] is to be available to walk together,” an Italian-language group said. “This attitude is needed for the laity to feel that they are protagonists in the church, responsible, and thus actually called to mission.” Another added: “This is possible if we reach the maturity of letting the laity cooperate with us. It is not a concession that pastors make to some people, but rather the appreciation of their dignity as baptized persons and the recognition of their charisms.”

This shift in parish dynamics led to some practical questions. A French-speaking group asked, “How can we make catechesis a school for charisms, so that everyone can play their part in the score?” An English-speaking group asked: “How do we help people discern their gifts and charisms? This is a question we all have. Do there need to be structures in place to give synodality a foothold in parishes beyond parish councils? If so, what should these structures be?”

The parish priests mentioned some models they had already implemented, like evangelization courses, prayer groups and welcoming “new spiritualities” and lay movements that reach out to those on the margins of society. They “help to go where the pastor cannot go,” one Italian-language group wrote. “This is how Pope Francis’ call to go to the ‘existential peripheries’ is fulfilled.”

One English-speaking group wrote about the contributions of women religious to their communities that “often bring a maternal touch to the parish that none of us can give, and that is appreciated by the faithful. But they are becoming increasingly less common,” the group said, pointing out that since most religious orders are national, they sometimes are not as involved at the parish or diocesan level as they “may feel called to be.”

The same group continued, “There is a need to find roles for women in the parish that go beyond the stereotypical roles of linen washing or flower arranging, as important as those are. We think that perhaps we need to discuss a ministry for women at the diocesan level.”

Group discernment and decision-making was also highlighted as a necessity, but one whose practicalities needed to be worked out.

Reflecting on the question of a “synodal priest,” the pastors highlighted two main needs for their own personal “synodal conversions.” First was the centrality of prayer:

The need to pray with parishioners, for parishioners to see their pastors praying and for priests to ground their work in prayer.

The second, which was mentioned throughout all three days of the meeting, was the need for priests to enact synodality among themselves, building strong networks of relationships among priests. Several groups mentioned the positive impact this could have on the men’s mental health.

Summing up concisely what many groups said, one English-speaking group wrote: “Priests must gather regularly for prayer and mutual support. Bishops must make care for their priests a priority so that they can care for their people. This is not always the case and it shows.”

Day 3: Discerning together

The third day focused on the priests’ experiences of “the dynamics of ecclesial discernment”—group discernment that happens in existing synodal groups, like pastoral councils.

Several groups mentioned that moving from “maintenance to mission” could be a challenge for parish and diocesan groups that were primarily

used to planning and organizing. Introducing communal discernment could be seen as a distraction from their work, but one English-language group wrote that “these existing structures need to be imbued with the life-giving grace of the Holy Spirit through which spiritual discernment takes place. Otherwise the meetings and gatherings attached with such structures and bodies become stagnant and routine.”

In addition to revitalizing existing synodal groups, several groups indicated the need for new synodal structures, while at the same time warning that structures are a means to evangelization and not ends in themselves.

There was a concern expressed repeatedly that the parishes, and indeed the whole church, needed to re-focus on mission and evangelization. Multiple groups also acknowledged the need for synodal structures in the parish that could continue a parish’s mission work through multiple changes of pastors and through multiple generations within the parish.

The other primary concern expressed was the need to teach both pastors and parishioners how to discern together. “A major challenge is to teach all the faithful the importance of community discernment, which does not mean mere human reasoning,” an Italian-speaking group wrote.

Some groups raised questions in their reports about how to differentiate between the Holy Spirit’s movements and their own ideas. One English-speaking group sketched out some guidelines:

In the context of building an ecclesial community, we felt that if an idea is pitched and there’s some joy, that’s a good sign of a positive discernment taking place. If something is being forced, it won’t have that. It won’t be life giving. We’ll run into walls.

If there’s joy, it’s a sign of life giving energy since the missionary experience stems from a spirit of joy.

On the third day, the priests wrote yet again about the need for greater cooperation among priests and bishops. One group suggested that diocesan councils of priests could be a way to “rectify any misinterpretations among the clergy about what this [synodal] journey is.” Another group wrote that they wanted their bishops to be more present: “Bishops need to visit their parishes, and not just for fleeting visits or one-

off events like Confirmations. Truly pastoral visits over several days, building relationships with parish priests and lay leaders.”

Two small groups, one Spanish-speaking and one French-speaking, explicitly requested that parish priests be added to the October synodal assembly.

Correction 05/08/2024 4:44 p.m.: A previous version of this story stated the U.S.C.C.B. sent six delegates to the meeting; the conference sent five and a sixth was chosen by the pope. The story has been updated to reflect this correction.

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