

February 2026

EDGEWAYS

Sacred Heart Parish Magazine

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Canon David reveals his ... cool talent (pp.6-7)



Lenten messages from Canon David and Pope Leo (pp.2-3, 16-17)



Sacred Heart featured in *The Tablet* (pp.8-11)



Young adult parishioners launch 'Catholic Events' app (pp. 20-21)

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Friday Penance

How can we witness to our faith? Many Catholics have lost touch with their faith, or their faith is not firmly rooted in a personal relationship with Christ, and consequently, they may lack confidence in their spiritual life and question how they can witness to their faith.

The Bishops recognise that simple acts of witness, accompanied by sincere prayer, can be a powerful call to faith. Traditional Catholic devotions – such as making the Sign of the Cross with reverence, saying grace before meals, and such like – both dedicate those moments to God and demonstrate our trust in his goodness and providence. Sunday Mass attendance must always be at the heart of our lives as Catholics.

In Lent, we would do well to reflect on one act of witness in particular. Many Catholics are still unaware of Friday Penance, despite the Bishops of England and Wales reintroducing the ‘no meat on Fridays’ rule in 2011.

What is Friday penance?

The Bishops wish to remind us that every Friday is set aside as a special day of penitence, as it is the day of the suffering and death of Our Lord. They believe that it is important that all the faithful are united in a common, identifiable act of Friday penance; this act strengthens the individual’s resolve to observe the penance and gives a common witness to the world.

The law of the Church (Canon 1251) requires Catholics to observe some form of penance laid down by their Bishops. In 2011, our Bishops re-established the rule



that this penance should be fulfilled by abstaining from meat and uniting this to prayer.

What if I never or rarely eat meat?

The Bishops ask us to abstain from meat as a common act of penitence – a common witness and sacrifice. Those who cannot or do not eat meat should abstain from some other food of which they regularly partake.

Do I have to eat fish on Fridays?

No – and clearly, eating an expensive lobster thermidor with caviar lunch would contravene the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. The point of the no meat rule is not to avoid meat, but to make an act of self-denial and a common witness. Eggs, dairy products, and food made from animal fats are permitted in the Latin Rite Church, if not in most Eastern Rite Churches.

What should I do if I am invited out for a meal on a Friday?

If friends and colleagues value us they will not be offended or upset if we tell them – in good time – that we do not eat meat on Fridays. This simple act permits us to witness to our faith, to explain politely the reason for not eating meat on a Friday, and to show that our faith is important to us.

Are all Catholics in England and Wales obliged to abstain from meat on a Friday?

Canon 1252 exempts those under the age of 15 from the law of abstinence, and those aged 60 and over from the law of fasting.

However, it goes on to say that those not bound by these laws should still know the ‘true meaning of penance’. The health of growing children and the elderly comes first, but within that qualification, it is good for children and the elderly to abstain and fast if their health permits.

Also, prudence dictates that the sick and frail, pregnant women, manual workers according to need, guests at a meal where refusal to eat meat would cause offence, and those in other situations of moral or physical impossibility are also excused.

Is it a sin to eat meat on a Friday?

When asked this question, the Holy See replied that it is not so much a failure to observe the specific rule that is a sin as a failure in one’s intention to do penance as prescribed by the Church. Eating meat on a Friday when one has forgotten it is a Friday – as I myself did recently – is not itself a sin; however, deliberately eating meat on a Friday because one is disregarding the general teaching of the Church about the need for penance on Fridays would constitute a sin.

Canon David



Holy Week and Easter 2026

For the details of all our services this Holy Week and Easter, please visit the parish website or take home with you a copy of the ‘Holy Week and Easter 2026’ booklet from the church.

10.30am	Saturday 28 March	Lenten Penitential Service with Confessions
11.30am	Spy Wednesday 1 April	Chrim Mass (at St George’s Cathedral)
8.00pm	Maundy Thursday 2 April	Mass of the Lord’s Supper
10.00am	Good Friday 3 April	CTWW Walk of Witness (in Raynes Park)
11.00am	Good Friday 3 April	Children’s Stations of the Cross
3.00pm	Good Friday 3 April	The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord
6.15pm	Good Friday 3 April	Younger People’s Stations of the Cross
7.15pm	Good Friday 3 April	Traditional Stations of the Cross
12 noon	Holy Saturday 4 April	Święconka (Polish blessing of Easter baskets)
8.00pm	Holy Saturday 4 April	The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

A packed issue!

Author Julian Barnes was recently asked on Radio 4 if he had really written his last book at the age of 80. He replied cheekily, 'Sorry, I was only joking!' So, I modestly admit my threatened editorial resignation in January *Edgeways* (p.4) was ... a joke and I am not actually giving up. Sincere thanks, though, for the welcome feedback and compliments (p.5) – do keep them, and your stories, coming!

We present a packed issue for you this month, leading with **Lenten messages from Canon David** (pp.2–3) and **Pope Leo** (pp.16–17), and an **article from The Tablet** (7 February issue) by Elena Curti on the reordering of our church in 1990 and Canon David's plans for the future.

After getting to know Fr Edwin in November (pp.6–7) and Fr Peter in January *Edgeways* (pp.6–7), we wouldn't want our parish priest to feel left out, so this month, we get to learn about **Canon David's former career** before he joined us in September 2023 (pp.6–7).

The latest **Youth 2000 retreat** in January had over 250 young Catholics in attendance, and Anna Jordan from Youth 2000 gives us her uplifting report (p.14).

After inviting articles written by parishioners, Simon Potter has gallantly stepped in with a detailed report of the joint **Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School Carol Service** (pp.12–13). Simon joined the College staff in 1972, was Head of English from 1981 to 2002, and produced the College's plays and musicals from 1972 to 2022. He is still there part-time, preparing pupils for OxBridge applications and facilitating A-level English Literature revision sessions!



Following Dr Philip Hopley's talk from the pulpit about the **Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre**, we include details of the Order and Philip's appeal on behalf of Christians in the Holy Land (p.15).

I am also delighted to include the story of two young adult parishioners, Ben Alain de Araujo and Sam McKibben, and their initiative and website promoting **Catholic Events**. Where has this been hiding until now?! (pp.20–21)

Finally, where would *Edgeways* be without reporting on music in the parish? And this month is no different as we present John Stone's excellent photographs of the latest pantomime from Wendy Tansey and Terry Marsh, **Puss** – plus 100 others on stage – **in Boots**, of course, with Bob Rathbone as musical director (pp.18–19).

Truly something for everyone in this month's magazine so, read on!

David Hurst

We welcome your letters, feedback, and article suggestions! Please email the editor at wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk.

Production credits: David Hurst (Editor, wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk) and Matteo Baccaglioni (design and layout).

Letters to the Editor

Edgeways is **YOUR** parish magazine! If you find an article inspiring or lacking, why not let us know? Send your thoughts to wimbletonedgeways@rcaos.org.uk!

(Almost) goodbye?

 Dear David, I always enjoy reading *Edgeways*, and was sad to read in the latest edition (January 2026, p.4) that it was feeling like a bit of a millstone round your neck. Please know that I really enjoy it, and it has helped me to know so much more about the parish, having only joined a couple of years ago.

– A

 Dear David, I read with interest the whole magazine but especially your article. The whole issue reflected the richness of your parish and the activities it fosters. Seeing the brochure entitled *Called to Bear Fruit* – such a perfectly worded discipleship clarion call – I am persuaded that the life of the parish is alive and well and sounds on track. Be assured you are doing a truly great job.

– N

 Every edition is emailed to me by my niece. I always look forward to a good and very interesting read. So, please keep up the good work with *Edgeways* which is greatly appreciated!

– B

Mental health rules

 I wanted to say how much I appreciated the article on mental health (September 2025, pp.8–9). It is an important and timely subject, and as a Psychology PhD student, it is heartening to see our church engaging so openly with the community on this matter. Thank you.

– L

Getting to know our parish clergy

 Dear David, thanks for an interesting *Edgeways* November 2025 – always a good read. I enjoyed the 'Getting to know Fr Edwin Raj' (pp.6–7) and his background. Will there be similar 'Getting to Know Fr Peter Frank' or have I missed that *Edgeways* read? Also, I do enjoy the opening month liturgical context by Canon David.

– T

 My only criticism was that the life of Fr Peter (January 2026, pp.6–7) laid too much emphasis on his life within church roles but neglected his personal background, life experience, and reasons for his calling – as well as what he thought of life in England as compared with life in Nigeria.

– A

Article ideas (could you write one?)

 Other content that I thought might be interesting: a piece from an alter server or reader, a piece from one of the choir or musicians about the music at Mass, a piece from a parishioner about the Latin Mass, a piece from the young people at No. 9, a piece on the Winter Night shelter initiative, a piece from those who run the Children's Liturgy, pieces from staff or pupils at the associated schools, and a piece on some of the wonderful Catholic online platforms available, to encourage people to seek them out for prayer, scripture or teaching.

– A

Meet Canon David – secret bellringer!

After front cover fame and personal interviews with Fr Edwin and Fr Peter in the last two editions of Edgeways, your editor was concerned that Canon David might feel left out! So, to put that right, this month, we interview Canon David Gibbons KCHS, our parish priest since September 2023.

Born in Warwick, Canon David is from a practising Anglican family. He has one younger sister, who went on to set up a dance school in Wormley, Sutton Coldfield.

Canon David went to Warwick School, the oldest boys' school in the country, which was founded in 914 AD during the rule of Æthelflæd, the eldest daughter of Alfred the Great and Lady of the Mercians from 911 to 918.

Canon David went on to study BA Classics (Latin, Greek, and Ancient History) at Durham University. He then trained for the Anglican ministry, first studying for an MA in Theology at St Stephen's House, part of the University of Oxford.

After being ordained as an Anglican minister, he spent three 'seasons' in Blackpool at the Church of St Stephen on the Cliffs, also known as The Actor's Chapel. Many famous performers passed through the church doors, including Ken Dodd, Les Dawson, and the Roly Polys – remember them?!

In the late 1980s, he was Minister at St Peter's Church in London Docks, where he witnessed the Wapping newspaper unions dispute. From 1990 to 1994, he was the Vicar of St Luke's in Gillingham, Kent.

Dissatisfied with the direction in which the Church of England was going (I think



Canon David as part of a team in a ring of bells at the Queen's Jubilee river pageant, 2012

we can guess what he means), Canon David converted to the Catholic faith and was received into Full Communion in 1994.

In 1996, he was 'incardinated' into the Catholic Church at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, by Archbishop Michael Bowen, Archbishop of Southwark from 1977 until 2003. (Incardination means being formally recognised and accepted by one diocese from another in order to perform religious duties in the former.)

His first role in the Catholic Church was as Assistant Parish Priest at St Francis in the centre of Maidstone – where our previous Parish Priest, Canon John Clark, had been before he moved to Wimbledon in 2013.

From 2000 to 2011, Canon David was Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart Church in Camberwell (nice coincidence!), a large parish with over 1,000 regular worshippers and the highest annual number of baptisms.

He then spent five years as the Director of the Diocesan Formation Centre in Tooting Bec, which has since closed. For over fifty years, this centre provided talks, lectures, courses, and events to support the ongoing formation of lay Catholics. It has now been replaced by the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis at Bowen House, Westminster Bridge Road.

While serving as Parish Priest of St Thomas of Canterbury in Sevenoaks from 2016 to 2023, he was Dean of the Tunbridge Wells Deanery, which comprises thirteen churches. It was from Sevenoaks that Canon David came to Wimbledon in September 2023 to succeed Canon John.

Canon David became a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre in 2017 and was promoted to Knight Commander in 2022. In 2025, he was appointed Prior of the Southwark Section by Cardinal Filoni, the Grand Master of the Order.

On St George's Day 2024, Fr David was made an Honorary Canon in recognition of his impressive work in service of the Catholic Church and his parishioners.

Canon David is pleased with our growing Mass attendances since lockdown (remember that?), especially over the recent Christmas period, causing him to paraphrase the line from Jaws: 'We need a bigger church!'

My regular interview question about a secret hobby was an easy one for Canon David to answer: 'I am (was) a passionate bellringer,' he told me, emphasising that he is **not** a campanologist (someone who has knowledge of but does not ring bells).

As a student, he was Master of the Durham University Society of Bellringers. He describes bellringing as a 'team sport'

and is proud to claim that he is the first and only Catholic priest to have rung more than 1,000 peals - and he has rung the bells at St Paul's (Anglican) Cathedral! (The term 'peal' denotes a performance of a minimum of 5,000 changes, each one with a different ringing pattern.)

Following the transfer last March of the legal ownership of our church's grounds from the Jesuits to the Archdiocese of Southwark, and as 2027 will mark the 150th anniversary of the church, Canon David now plans to seek grants and launch an appeal to carry out repairs, to clean, to redecorate, and to make the church watertight.

He also wants to restore the Stations of the Cross, the murals in the St Ignatius Chapel, the rood, and, finally, to install new lighting and PA systems.

Canon David knows about church restoration, having chaired the diocesan Art and Architecture Committee from 1999 until 2020. Since then, he has been the Chair of the Southern Historic Churches Committee, covering five southern dioceses, during which time he has overseen works including the repairs to the tower at St Raphael's, Kingston, and the reordering of the sanctuary at Our Lady Immaculate, Tolworth.

He quipped that our church needs 'more than a lick of paint' before the Archbishop, possibly with the Jesuit Provincial, celebrate a **special Mass at 6.30pm on Wednesday 8 December 2027**, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. So, save the date!

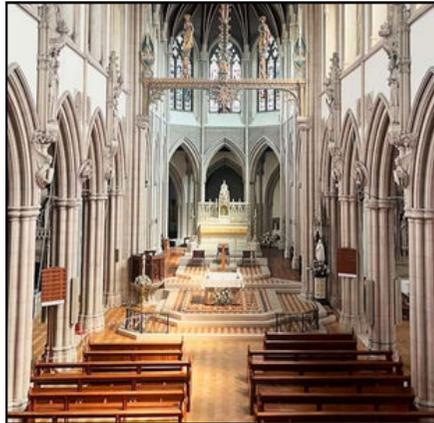
On behalf of all parishioners, thank you for your dedicated ministry, Canon David!

More overleaf on Canon David's exciting plans for our church!

Making Good: Architecture and Vatican II

THE TABLET

This article on our church is adapted from the original featured in *The Tablet*. We are reproducing it here with kind permission from the editor. To subscribe and receive *The Tablet* weekly from £21.50 quarterly online, please visit thetablet.co.uk or email thetablet@subscription.co.uk.



Redecoration and restoration work in historic churches reordered to reflect the liturgical changes mandated by the Second Vatican Council can raise sensitive issues for parish priests, parishioners and architects.

Walking around the sanctuary at Sacred Heart Church, Wimbleton, is a precarious business. There are so many levels and steps that one incautious move back and you are liable to take a tumble. Fear of falling is on my mind as I listened to the parish priest explain what he sees as the shortcomings of a reordering done more than 35 years ago in probably the grandest Catholic church in the south London suburbs, which created a vast, bare space out of what had previously been an ornate sanctuary.

Sacred Heart was built by a Courtauld heiress, Edith Arendrup, for the Jesuits in 1887. She roped in another wealthy widow, Caroline Currie, to finish it off when her funds ran low. The building is a splendid Gothic confection set amid greenery, with flying buttresses and pinnacles. The flint glitters in the sunshine, while inside, stone

vaults soar to a dizzying height. The architect, Frederick Walters (1849-1931), also designed the former seminary at Womersley, Buckfast Abbey, Devon and many other ecclesiastical buildings.

I am here as part of research for a book I am writing about the reordering of churches that followed the liturgical changes mandated by the Second Vatican Council. The parish priest, Canon David Gibbons, is well-versed on the subject. He headed the Art and Architecture Committee at the Archdiocese of Southwark for 21 years until 2020, when he became chair of the Southern Historic Churches Committee, which covers four dioceses in the south of England.

Sacred Heart's reordering was carried out in 1990, late in the career of Austin Winkley, a Catholic architect who adapted several churches for the new liturgy. Winkley removed the altar rails and greatly extended the Sanctuary so that an apron juts deep into the nave. A new stone forward altar by David John was installed,

incorporating a bronze reliquary containing relics of Roman and English martyrs.

The main casualty was a huge, elaborate baldacchino, which was taken out and destroyed. Unusually, the pulpit survived: it was moved from halfway down the nave to the Sanctuary. So did the magnificent rood on a beam, with Our Lady and St John on either side and Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross. A few altar rails have been put back on either side of the new Sanctuary boundary.

The Jesuits left Sacred Heart in 2014, but formally handed over the church to the diocese last year. Now, Canon Gibbons is planning his own changes. There is plenty he would like to do to the reordered sanctuary. 'The Jesuits only seemed to think about the Mass when they changed things. They forgot about baptisms and weddings', he says.

The font is still in a small baptistry at the west end of the church, designed for occasions when only a small group attend a baptism. These days, the Sacrament is usually conferred on the Sanctuary, sometimes during Mass, using a portable font. There is more space, the Gospel is proclaimed on the ambo, and everyone can see what is happening.

Regarding weddings, Canon Gibbons points out that since the bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament, they should be on the Sanctuary, but there is nowhere for them to sit.

Another difficulty, he told me, concerns the very narrow forward altar. With Sunday congregations of 200 to 600 per Mass, several ciboria are needed. There is not enough space for these and other essentials, so, he says, an endless juggle goes on.

'The altar is narrow because it is so far forward. The sightlines dictate that the further forward you bring the altar, the narrower it has to be.'

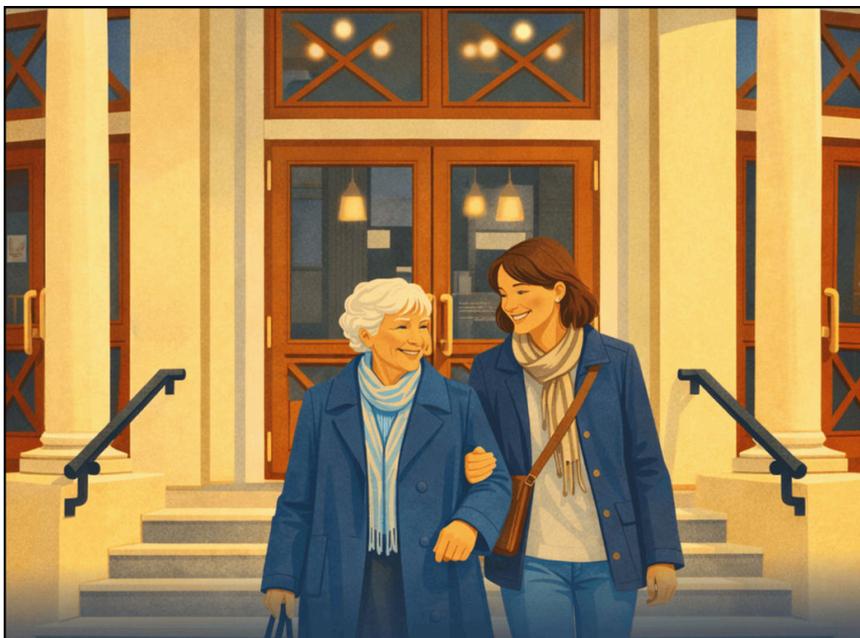
The Victorian tabernacle on a modern base remains in its original place to the rear of the Sanctuary. This, says Canon Gibbons, is becoming the preferred position in line with the current General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Earlier, the instruction was for 'a worthy place' to the side or rear of the altar. This is why the modern tabernacle installed behind the chancel, when the Sacred Heart Chapel was reordered in 1990, is no longer used.

Sacred Heart has been Grade II*-listed since 1987 and Canon Gibbons thinks a reordering today would be done with a lighter touch. 'The general principle for a building like this is the least intervention and destruction of the fabric the better, though there has to be an element of compromise.'

Well before the introduction of the new rite Mass in Advent 1964, change was in the air and churches were being designed with altars closer to the people to encourage their active participation in the liturgy. The reordering of existing churches was often destructive, with high altars, pulpits, altar rails and other fittings ripped out. Colourful murals and stencils were painted over, and marble floors and encaustic tiles broken up or carpeted over. Victorian churches bore the brunt of the damage at a time when architecture from the period was despised and Modernism favoured.

At the time, the Sacred Heart reordering divided parishioners, but today, the controversy appears to be forgotten.

continued overleaf...



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Parish sister Sr Dorothy Perrott, who remembers what the Sanctuary was like before the changes, much prefers the way it is now. Many of the church's traditional features remain and are appreciated by parishioners. A group of mostly young Catholics packed the unaltered Lady Chapel last December for Rorate Masses, which are celebrated in Latin before dawn during Advent.

Some historic churches, and cathedrals in particular, have been 'reordering the reordering' and returning sanctuaries closer to how they originally were. There is no appetite to do that at Sacred Heart, but Canon Gibbons is about to launch an appeal for a programme of repairs and improvements, including new lighting: 'A sanctuary is not lit like a stage, you have to light the liturgy so the altar has to be lit, and the reader has to be lit so people can see their faces.'

Redecorating and restoring are also on the Canon's to-do list. He shows me features that will benefit, including a Baroque chapel dedicated to the Jesuit founder St Ignatius of Loyola, and a series of darkened paintings that depict episodes in his life, including a visit to England in which he is shown standing in front of a Tudor house.

According to the Jesuits in Britain website, St Ignatius came to London in 1530 as a student, to beg for alms. The site says generous Londoners gave him enough money to keep him for a year. Canon Gibbons will be hoping for a similar response to his appeal. If all goes according to plan, the restoration works will be completed by December 2027 in time to mark the 150th anniversary of the start of the Jesuits' mission in Wimbledon and the beginning of the parish.

Elena Curti



Ecclesiastical Glossary

Ambo: the raised stand or lectern from which Scripture is proclaimed during Mass.

Apron: an extension of the sanctuary platform projecting into the nave.

Baldacchino: an ornate canopy over an altar, often supported by columns.

Beam-mounted rood: a large crucifix (rood) mounted on a beam across the sanctuary entrance, often accompanied by statues of Our Lady and St John.

Buttress: a stone or brick structure built against a wall to support it.

Chancel: the part of a church around the altar, including the sanctuary and often the choir, and often separated from the nave.

Encaustic tiles: decorative ceramic tiles in which the pattern is made from different colours of clay inlaid into the surface.

Modernism: an architectural movement of the 20th century favouring simplicity, minimal ornamentation, and new materials.

Nave: the main, central part of a church where the congregation sits.

Pinnacles: decorative pointed features on top of Gothic buildings.

Pulpit: an elevated platform from which preaching traditionally took place (distinct from the ambo).

Sanctuary: the area around the altar, reserved for the clergy and servers during the liturgy.

Vatican II: an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church (1962-65) that introduced significant liturgical and pastoral reforms.

'Each year, it seems to reach new heights'

The Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School Carol Service has always been popular, but each year, it seems to reach new heights, writes Simon Potter.

Ten minutes before the 8.00pm start on Monday 15 December, it was no surprise, after last year, to find the Sacred Heart Church absolutely jam-packed for this event – standing-room six deep, and main aisle and side aisles full to bursting.

As in the past, the two headteachers shared the welcome and the homily, and pupils from both schools shared the readings between the carols and prayers. The Ursuline girls sang from the altar, accompanied by the Steinbeck that lives at the top of the side aisle, and the College Choir sang from the choir loft, with organ accompaniment from the talented Sixth Former Louis Griffiths. This was a change: for some time, Lorenzo Bennett OW has been on the pipes. Another change was the addition of more Ursuline girls to the Choir, both as members of a joint choir, but also to supplement boy trebles.

Following the first congregational carol (*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*), Adrian Laing's (WC) welcome address stressed that this service was one of the highlights of the year and that it was wonderful to see so many parents, pupils, alumni, and friends of both schools.

The Opening Prayer and the Lord's Prayer were followed by the first reading from Isaiah, *'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light'*. An Ursuline pupil gave a brief prologue, and a College boy read the verses. Then, the junior choir of Ursuline girls – forty in all – filed up from the back of the church and took their places in front of the altar.



There, they gave a plangent performance of *Hark, how the bells* (Wilhousky and Leontovych).

Once again, a Ursuline preliminary was followed by Luke's *'In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God'*, read by an Ursuline girl. After this came a choir carol, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* (Durante), followed by the third reading, also from the Gospel of Luke. Two College pupils introduced and read.

A huge mass of Ursuline girls (43 in all) led by Paul Williams (UHS) filed up the side aisle to join the girl choir already in place, to the congregation's amused amazement. The choirs and congregation then sang *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks*, with extra Wimbledonian input: Ben Rajpold (Grammar) played the organ and Tate's famous words were arranged to music by Lorenzo Bennett OW. *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, with an interesting variation on the traditional music by Bob Chilcott, with the well-known old tune appearing as an underlying melody.

The Fourth Reading was from the Gospel of Matthew: the visit of the three wise men. Two Ursuline girls introduced and read it. During it, candles were brought up the central aisle to the altar. This was to go on until the altar was a glowing mass of candles.

Once in Royal David's City came next. This is always a nerve-racking challenge for the soloist who alone sings the first verse of Alexander's memorable work to Gauntlett's music. This year, the honours went to Ursuline pupil Maeve Meabh, who sang beautifully from the choir loft.

A choir carol followed, namely Christina Rossetti's *In the Bleak Midwinter* to music by Harold Darke. Trebles alternated with basses and tenors to give an interesting variant to the familiar tune.

As has happened many times before, James Potter (WC Chaplain) had a well-organised troupe of chaps to disseminate the hand-held candles to all in the aisles for the second part of the event. As I have commented before, one wished that the church's nave lighting could have been turned off to make the candlelight even more striking. Perhaps health and safety considerations prevent this!

After the Fifth Reading, from St John's Gospel, given by two College pupils, came *A Christmas Lullaby* (Rutter) from a large Ursuline choir on the Sanctuary.

Unusually, there followed a modern poem, *All I See is the Mess* by Andrew March, introduced and read by Ursuline girls. I don't recall a new poem being read at this service, although in 2024, a 17th-century George Herbert poem featured – also unusual. *Away in a Manger*, sung unaccompanied by the joint Sixth Form choir and directed by them, followed.

It was then time for the evening's reflection, this year given by Eoin Kelly (UHS). He spoke about the Nativity and the person of Jesus, and how He acted must pattern how we should behave, doing acts of kindness in the Christmas light in what would otherwise be a universal darkness. Prayers led by six prefects from both schools led to the final lay blessing given by Adrian Laing. *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* finished the carol service, and the congregation filed out to Vierre's *Organ Symphony* played by the College's Louis Griffiths.

Very pleasant was the usual diaspora of the large gathering and the greetings from many OWs and ex-Ursulines and their parents. The Heads said goodbye at the door as the crowd made its way up the hill for mulled wine and mince pies in the College Hall. It was nice seeing OWs Elton Araunjo, Raphael Maurin, and Lorenzo Bennett among others returning to sing in the Choir.

The service remains an attractive *hors d'œuvre* before the Christmas hols. The two schools are given a joyful opportunity to share song, and worship.

Simon Potter

(Wimbledon College staff since 1972)

Photographs: Ursuline High School on Instagram (@uhswimbledon)



Youth 2000 Retreat



'The retreat has really strengthened my faith and given me a greater desire for Catholic community and to pray every day.'

– A young adult attendee

The Youth 2000 London Retreat took place in the parish again this year, with over 250 young adult Catholics from across the country gathering for a day of prayer and fellowship. They explored this year's theme of 'Returning to the Source of Love' (John 13:34).

The day included inspiring talks from Edmund Adamus and Fr Pius Collins O.Praem, small group discussions, panel sessions on the theme of 'ordinary spirituality', and plenty of social time.

The high point of the day was the celebration of Holy Mass. The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, visited us from his residence on Parkside – a joyful beginning to our evening together.

Following Mass and dinner, we moved into a time of reconciliation and Eucharistic Healing. Priests from across London joined us to hear Confessions.



It was a beautiful time of prayer and worship as we closed our day together, bringing ourselves and all our burdens before the Lord, seeking His forgiveness and healing.



'During the Holy Mass and silent prayer, I felt the Lord truly in my heart for the first time ever.'

– Another young adult attendee

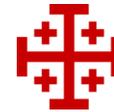
We pray that the retreat will continue to bear fruit in the lives of all who attended, and in the wider parish community!

Anna Jordan
Youth 2000



Would you like to write for Edgeways?

Do you have an article that you think would be a great addition to YOUR parish magazine? We're always open to contributions! Please contact the editor at wimbletonedgeways@caos.org.uk.



Christians in the Holy Land: A peaceful crusade



At Masses on Sunday 8 February, our parish welcomed the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, commonly known as the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre.

Dr Phil Hopley, the Section President (*pictured*), was joined by other Knights and Dames, including parishioner Corrado Amari, who was invested into the Order last year. Our own Canon David is an Ecclesiastical Knight and is the Prior for the Southwark Section.

The Order supports the Church and Christians in the Holy Land, and this work has never been more relevant or desperately needed. As Dr Hopley explained in his talk from the pulpit, the number of Christians in the Holy Land (known as the 'Living Stones') has fallen significantly. In 1948, they made up 10% of the population, but now they make up only 1–2%. Of course, their plight is incredibly challenging as a result of the destruction of Gaza and the West Bank.



The Order started around the time of the First Crusade, when a tradition developed of appointing Knights of the Holy Sepulchre (Jesus' tomb) in Jerusalem. In 1847, Pope Pius IX re-established the Order in its modern form.

Today, prayer, pilgrimage to the Holy Land and financial support have replaced swords, armour and Knights on horseback. At its heart, the Order is committed to personal spiritual development, as well as the collective endeavour to support those in need.

Dr Hopley asked us to pray for the Order and invited anyone interested in supporting their work to visit their website, eohsj.org.uk, or to email the Southwark Secretary, James Barton, at southwarksecretary@eohsj.co.uk. The Order remains keen to identify suitable candidates for the Order from Southwark.



Knights at a procession in Paderborn, Germany
Dirk D. via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Listening and fasting: Lent as a time of conversion

Canon David has recommended to Edgeways readers Pope Leo XIV's message for Lent for spiritual reading. You can read the full text on the Vatican's website at tinyurl.com/pbjastr5.

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the centre of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the Word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry' (Exodus 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord

calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today, he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognise and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. To foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does. We must recognise that 'the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church'.

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognise what we 'hunger' for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our 'appetites', keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbour.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the

future fulfilment that characterises this custody of the heart. He observes that: 'In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.' Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because 'those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly'. As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since 'austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic'.

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in

Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasises the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah (cf. 9:1-3) recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God.

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups, and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God – as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth – becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognising what truly guides our desires – both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity's thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilisation of love.

EHP presents ... *Puss (and 100 others) in Boots!*



This winter's pantomime by Edge Hill Players was *Puss in Boots*, running four performances in the Upper Hall on Saturdays 31 January and 7 February. The original panto was written and directed by Wendy Tansey and Terry Marsh.

Photographs by John Stone

Parishioners launch Catholic Events app

Your editor meets parishioners **Ben Alain de Araujo** and **Sam McKibben**, who have recently set up the excellent application catholicevents.co.uk ... do check it out!

We're Catholic Events – a group of friends from Wimbledon with a deep love for community and a big heart for the Church. Over the years, we've come to believe that faith flourishes best when it's lived together, side by side, in real life.

Having been part of the Catholic scene in London for quite a while, we've seen the incredible impact that good community and meaningful events can have. Whether you're exploring the faith for the first time or have been Catholic your whole life, we want to help you discover events that speak to where you are right now.

After countless conversations with friends and newcomers alike – many of whom asked, 'Where do I even start?' – we knew there had to be a better way. So we built this app to make discovering Catholic events easy, personal, and inspiring.

The Mission

A few years ago, I stumbled upon community in London and it felt like I had discovered this invisible world that I didn't know existed for the six years I lived in the city before then. My experience until then was semi-empty church buildings with very few young people in them.

We believe it shouldn't be that hard to find vibrant Catholic life in your city. It should be simple, visible, and accessible – without needing to scroll endlessly through WhatsApp groups or Instagram just to figure out what's happening.



This app is our way of opening that door for others: to show young Catholics that there is a living, breathing community around them – and to highlight the amazing events happening every week that they might otherwise miss.

And we're not just here for attendees. We want to support event organisers too – giving them tools and insights to create events that truly meet the needs of their local communities.

Featured on Radio Maria

We're thrilled to have been featured on Radio Maria England, where we had the opportunity to share our vision for helping Catholics discover vibrant community life.

During our conversation with radio show host, Fr Toby Lees OP, we discussed the inspiration behind Catholic Events, the challenges young Catholics face in finding local events, and how technology can serve the Church's mission of building authentic community in the digital age.

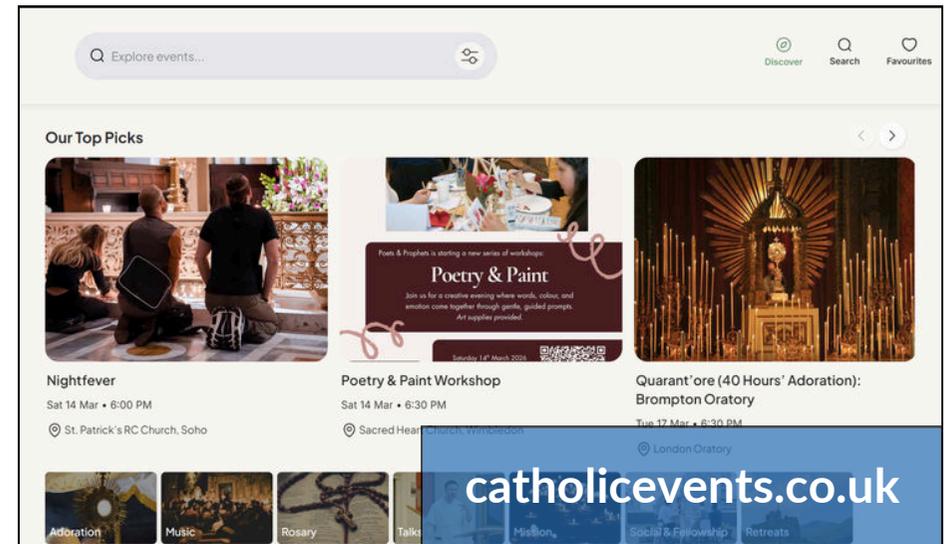
Radio Maria has been an incredible supporter of our mission. We're grateful for their commitment to providing a time for prayer and cultivating Catholic culture across England.

Come and join us!

We would love for you to join us in this mission to help Catholic community life flourish. You can do this by spreading the word about this app with your friends or sharing event links with them.

Are you running Catholic events yourself? We'd love to connect and support you however we can. If you're passionate about growing the Church and want to get involved in any other way, please reach out. We'd genuinely love to hear from you. Please get in touch with us at contact@catholicevents.co.uk.

Together, we can help the Catholic community not just exist – but thrive!



NHS Mental Health lead meets Be Well Hubs



Following her attendance at the South London Citizens' Health and Housing Assembly (see October 2025 Edgeways, p.14), the CEO of South West London St George's Mental Health Trust, Vanessa Ford (see November 2025 Edgeways, p.12), asked to meet some of the people behind Merton's Be Well Hubs to get more familiar with the work on the ground.

And so on Thursday 8 January, more than forty people from Merton braved cold and wet conditions to gather at St Barnabas' Church in Mitcham and share their stories.

Rachel Perera from Mitcham Parish Church summarised the history. Merton Citizens was set up in April 2018 as an alliance of local organisations, including our parish and Wimbledon College. The group ran an extensive listening campaign to identify issues of importance to local people. High on the list was mental health: many respondents felt isolated and did not know where to go for help.

Our very own Graham Kennedy, who is our parish's Be Well Hub Coordinator, then explained the purpose of Be Well Hubs. These spaces assist the early diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems by providing a safe place for anyone to go and talk with a trained person who may be able to help, first by attentively listening, and then by referring them to a local service, such as a talking therapy or group.

The NHS is interested in this community-provided service: it recognises that the interface of Be Well Hubs may overcome some of the current barriers to mental health diagnosis and treatment, and thereby could help to reduce pressures on the service's limited resources.

The friendly and productive meeting closed with a group photograph. Vanessa agreed to meet with Merton Citizens again in the spring to learn more about the progress of our Be Well Hubs and to identify further opportunities for collaboration between Merton Citizens and the NHS.



The Place of Beauty

6.00pm Monday 20 April via Zoom



The Catholic Union is delighted to hold this webinar to explore the place of beauty, amongst the other transcendentals, in the moral formation of the person and of society. Chaired by **Catherine Pepinster**, well known journalist, attendees will hear from Father Patrick van der Vorst and Stefan Kaminski.

Father Patrick van der Vorst is a Belgian and British priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster and former entrepreneur, dealer, art expert and winner on BBC's *Dragons' Den*. Father Patrick is the Founder of Christian Art, which provides daily Gospel Readings paired with a related work of art and a short reflection.

Stefan Kaminski is the Director of The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst, where he has been creating and delivering Catholic formation content for a wider audience. He gained a licentiate from the John Paul II Institute in Rome, having focussed his studies on theological anthropology. Inspired by Stonyhurst's collection of relics, artefacts and books, The Christian Heritage Centre exists to form the intellect and spirit of Catholics in the tradition of the English Martyrs.

Those wishing to register for the webinar must email info@catholicunion.org.uk and a Zoom link will be provided. Booking is essential.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

We welcome into the family of the Church those who have recently been baptised:

Aria Aitken • Brady Aleksander Adam • Conrad Palmer Cuevas
Lara Mei Li Summersall-Skalley • Phoebe Lei Li Summersall-Skalley

We offer sympathies to the families and friends of those who have died recently:

Clare Eluned Frances Gummett • David John Moffat • Timothy John Terence Hayes
Thomas Michael McGovern • Marcella Marie Celine Caldwell
Nicholas John Hogarth • Michael John Hamilton
Sheila Michaelas • Jennifer Margaret Harris

MORDEN PARK CHORAL SOCIETY

80th Anniversary Celebration

(1946–2026)

ROSSINI
PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE

FRIDAY 27th MARCH

at 8pm

St John the Divine, High Path,
South Wimbledon, SW19 2JY

with guest soloists

Katy Lees (soprano) Helena Cooke (contralto)

James Botcher (tenor) James Bartlett (bass)

David Gammie (piano) Robert Rathbone (organ)

Conductor David Coram

Admission £12 at the door

Interval refreshments

Easter raffle