

**St Francis of Assisi, Llay**

## **PARISH NEWS**

Mid-April 2024



*The content in this Parish News is in addition to that in the Parish Bulletin, the Parish Website and the Diocesan newsletter, The Wrexham Clarion. If you have news or opinions of interest that you'd like to share here, would you please let our parish secretary know of them.*

### **LOURDES APRIL 2024**

One of our parishioners joined the Wrexham HCPT pilgrimage for disabled and disadvantaged children to Lourdes between 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> April 2024, with a group of eight children and fourteen adult helpers. Seven of the children were from St Joseph's High School and one was from St Christopher's.

The outward journey by coach to Manchester airport, flight to Bordeaux and four-hour coach ride to Lourdes took eleven hours, but the children were all very well behaved.

On Tuesday the group travelled to the Betharram Caves, 15km from Lourdes, where they walked deep underneath the Pyrenees, crossed an underground lake by dragon boat and returned by train back to the surface. The group spent the afternoon at Hosanna House where there were goats, sheep, chickens, geese and guinea pigs, as well as craft and sport activities, followed by Mass and a candle-lit procession in Lourdes.

On Wednesday following a Welsh Mass, the group visited the grotto and a helper explained to the children how Mary had appeared to St Bernadette there. After lunch, several sang songs by the river and then Welsh groups had a party with activities such as face painting, making bracelets, football and dancing.

The Trust Mass was held on Thursday in the Underground Basilica, and over 2000 people attended. That afternoon the group took a train ride tour around Lourdes followed by ice cream at a nearby café, and there was a fancy dress party in the evening.

On Friday following Mass in the hotel chapel, the group went to the Pyrenees Animal Park and after lunch said prayers in the grotto lit by candles, then stopped at the baths on the way back to the hotel. There is no longer full immersion, but the group took advantage of the many taps to gather water, and to drink and bless themselves before visiting the marvellous wall mosaics depicting the different Mysteries of the Rosary in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, where they had an explanation about how to pray the rosary.

Saturday was the last day and after Mass in the morning, the water they'd gathered and the gifts that they'd bought, were blessed, before the groups had another wander around the town. Helen's group visited the house where St Bernadette had lived, a single room that used to be the town's prison! There was time for another ice cream before they left by coach for the journey home via Lourdes Airport to Liverpool and a coach back to Wrexham where they were picked up, very tired, by their parents.

Wrexham hadn't sent a group on the HCPT Lourdes pilgrimage since 2018 but are now planning their 2026 trip and are looking for adult helpers to assist in looking after the selected children.

### **EASTER JOY IN HMP BERWYN**

Easter Saturday brought a joyous event to HMP Berwyn. Some months ago, on one of the pastoral care visits to the cell, Phil (not his real name) asked her and her colleague if he could be baptised. He was given a booklet of instruction to work through, together with a Bible, and he completed it very eagerly. Bishop Peter, who regularly says Mass in prison, decided to baptise him at Easter.

The ceremony of Baptism and Confirmation was witnessed by many volunteers and the choir of Anglican Church prisoners who were invited specially to make the occasion memorable. There was a palpable feeling of joy and peace during the Mass, accompanied by the reflection that sin and failure can be an opportunity for the transformation and the enlightenment of the offender.

May the Lord keep Phil in His loving and merciful care for ever and change his life. Our prayers and good wishes will always be with him and his family in Liverpool.

## ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL

**St Joseph's Day Mass March '24** Twice a year our school Sports Hall is transformed into our church for the day to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. As a shared-faith school one of these celebrations is an Anglican Eucharist and the other is a Catholic Mass. Over 800 pupils, staff and invited guests were present at the celebration of our Catholic Mass for our beloved patron St Joseph on the Feast of Joseph, husband of Mary. The celebrant was Fr Nicholas from the Cathedral Parish.

The pupils are well prepared in their roles and they started the celebration by welcoming everyone to the Feast of St Joseph through a beautifully enacted reflection about St Joseph and the influence he had on the life of Jesus, his foster son. More pupils led the Penitential Rite through a prayerful reflection and a group of Year 7 pupils used sign language to lead the singing of the Gospel Acclamation "Here I Am Lord". All the readings and intercessions were read beautifully by the pupils in Year 10, and Fr Nicholas' lovely homily encouraged the pupils to pray often.

Our school band and choir led the singing and everyone joined in with joyful enthusiasm. At Holy Communion it was a real privilege to see all the pupils, staff and guests line up to receive Holy Communion or a Blessing, depending on their Christian tradition.

## TCC – TOGETHER CREATING COMMUNITIES

Our Church is a member of TCC which works for social justice through community organising, equipping people to argue their own case to the authorities to alleviate social injustice and distressing circumstances in our community. Two of our parishioners are trustees, but anyone from the parish is welcome to become involved in the groups which tackle a wide variety of issues.

Christopher Graffius writes that "I recently had the privilege of attending a strategy day at a community centre in Wrexham where I met organisers from other faiths and denominations as well as some of those, such as youth groups, that TCC works with. It was a fascinating and eye-opening experience, and I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to carry their faith into public life. If you'd like to join us, please speak to Peter Burke or to me".

As an aside, you may be interested to know that the North Wales Pilgrim's Way from Holywell to Bardsley Island, which is subject of a recent TV series which started with Bishop Peter's blessings in Holywell, was defined and set out in the book with that name by The Rev. Chris Potter, ex-Dean of St Asaph's diocese, who until recently was a trustee and chairman of the TCC.

## OUR PARISH and UKRAINE

In 1997 our parish created ties with the Church of The Annunciation in Sumy, Ukraine, by inviting a group of their parishioners to come and visit us here, and by 2014 we had received ten such visits and groups of our parishioners had visited Sumy nine times. During that period, we provided funding towards their parish, orphanages and special school and provided support for a bedridden invalid parishioner, much of which is documented on our parish website in the section "Sumy".

When Russia invaded Ukraine and initially surrounded Sumy which is near to their border, we immediately offered assistance to potential refugees, and so far, have hosted six in the parish:

- Yaroslav and Oksana from Sumy who were in the first group from Sumy to visit our parish and who are now in their own accommodation in Queensferry
- Yaroslav and Natasha from Kiev who now live in Coedpoeth
- Nadiia from Kiev who later moved to Krakow
- Julia from Dnipro who now lives in Nantwich

Now Anna, Yaroslav and Oksana's daughter, plans to come to the parish as a refugee guest in June.