Catholic Parish of Eastbourne & St Leonards

Families & Youth : Autumn 2025

Special edition for children and families served by Sacred Heart, St Mary Magdalene's, St Mary Star of the Sea and St Thomas a Becket Primary Schools, and St Richard's Catholic College

Welcome from the Parish clergy

Dear Parents and Carers,

As your local Catholic parish priests, we would like to warmly welcome you and your families into this new school year. Whether you are Catholic, belong to another Christian denomination, practise another faith, or are simply open and curious, please know that you are very much part of our wider parish and school family.

Our parishes are here to serve and support all families — not just in moments of worship, but also in the joys and challenges of everyday life. This newsletter shares opportunities for faith, community, and growth — including sacramental programmes, children's liturgy, youth events, and ways for families to engage with parish life.

Even if you are not Catholic, we encourage you to read on. You may find something that speaks to your heart, helps you feel more connected, or offers a way for your child or family to explore faith in a gentle and welcoming environment.

We look forward to walking alongside you and your children in the months ahead and pray that this year will be filled with peace, joy, and God's blessings.

With every good wish,
Fr Kevin

On behalf of all the clergy of the Parish of Eastbourne & St Leonards

Growing in Faith as a Family

Every Catholic parent made a promise at their child's baptism: to bring them up in the practice of the faith. One of the most powerful ways to do this is through regular Sunday Mass attendance as a family.

The Eucharist is the centre of our Catholic life — it feeds us, strengthens us, and unites us. Bringing children, even little ones, to Mass helps them grow naturally into the rhythm of prayer and worship.

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Children's Liturgy is a special part of the Mass where children hear the Sunday readings and Gospel explained in age-appropriate ways through story, creative activities, and prayer (sometimes called *Godly Play*). These sessions help children grow in their understanding of the faith and are an important step in their Catholic formation.

At baptism, Catholic parents promise to bring their children up in the practice of the faith, and regular Mass attendance is a vital part of this. Children's Liturgy helps make that possible by giving children a chance to engage actively in the liturgy, while parents participate in the main celebration of the Mass.

Image from Godly Play Foundation

Children's Liturgy and/or Child-led masses on Sundays

Opportunities in the West Hub:

- St George's, Polegate – 9:00am
- St Gregory's, Eastbourne – 9:00am
- Our Lady of Ransom – 10:15am
- St Wilfrid's, Hailsham – 10:30am

Opportunities in the East Hub:

- St Martha's Little Common – 9:00am (See the church's own newsletter for details of child-led masses at St Martha's)
- St Thomas of Canterbury – 1st/3rd Sunday 11.00am
- Holy Redeemer – 1st Sunday 9.00am
- St Mary Star of the Sea – TBC see church newsletter
- St Anthony of Padua – TBC

Children's Liturgy is open to all children who are able to go out with the youth leaders, up to and including those preparing for First Holy Communion.

Helping and Volunteering: A Role for Parents

Children's Liturgy is made possible entirely through the dedication of volunteer catechists and youth leaders — and there's no one better suited for this than parents!

Parents are often the best leaders and role models in this setting, as they already understand the needs, attention spans, and spiritual

curiosity of children. Whether you have experience or are simply willing to learn, we would love you to come along, see a session in action, and consider joining the team.

New helpers are always welcome, and full support and training will be offered. It's a rewarding way to deepen your own faith while helping children grow in theirs.

Youth in Action – Encourage your child to get involved!

Has your child made their First Holy Communion? Whether recently or some years ago, now is a wonderful time to encourage them to take a more active part in our parish family. Volunteering helps young people live out their faith, grow in confidence, and discover their gifts.

There are many ministries open to children and young people, such as:

- Altar Serving
- Music Ministry
- Reading at Mass
- Welcoming (with you as parents)
- Helping at Children's Liturgy
- … and more!

Perhaps your child is joining a Confirmation group this year, planning to in the future, or has already been confirmed and is looking to deepen their journey of faith. Serving in the parish is an excellent way for them to strengthen their spiritual understanding while giving something back.

Volunteering can also contribute towards the **Duke of Edinburgh Award** or the **Faith in Action Award**, making it a valuable experience for both faith and personal growth.

Please take some time to talk with your child about where they might feel called to serve — and if they are interested and able, speak to your priest or a member of the church team for further details.

First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion 2025/2026 – A beautiful step in faith

First Holy Communion is one of the most special moments in a child's faith journey — when they receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the very first time. Along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), it marks a joyful and grace-filled stage in growing closer to God and becoming more fully part of the Church. This preparation is for baptised Catholic children in Year 3 and above, and it's not just about learning facts — it's about discovering the love of Jesus, learning how to pray, and becoming more aware of God's presence in everyday life.

Families are encouraged to attend Sunday Mass regularly, as this helps children grow into the rhythm of faith and feel at home in the worshipping community. Parents also play a vital role throughout the programme by supporting their child's prayer and understanding at home.

If you have a child who is ready to take this step, we invite you to register for your church's First Communion programme. It's a beautiful opportunity for the whole family to grow in faith together.

Programmes running in the Parish's West Hub:

- St George's, Polegate & St Wilfrid's, Hailsham – now full but you can join the others…

- Our Lady of Ransom, St Gregory's & St Agnes, Eastbourne – Deadline: Friday 19 September
- Christ the King, Langney & St Joachim's, Hampden Park – Deadline: Sunday 12 October

West Hub application forms are available in church or from church offices

Programmes running in the Parish's East Hub:

- St Mary Magdalene Bexhill and St Martha's Little Common – Deadline: Tuesday 30 September

Bexhill & Little Common application forms available on the church website

- St Thomas of Canterbury & the English Matyrs and Holy Redeemer St Leonards – Deadline: Friday 19 September
- St Mary Magdalene Hastings— Deadline to be confirmed, but apply as soon as possible
- Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael or St Teresa of Lisieux— contact Fr Richard direct

St Leonards & Hastings application forms are available in church or from the church offices

Confirmation 2025/2026 – Say Yes to the Holy Spirit

Confirmation is one of the great Sacraments of the Church — a moment when young people are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to live their faith with confidence, courage, and purpose.

For baptised Catholics, Confirmation is not just a "next step" — it's a personal "Yes" to the gifts received at Baptism. It deepens their relationship with God and prepares them to live as adult Christians in the world.

Young people preparing for Confirmation should already be attending Mass regularly and have a willingness to explore their faith more fully. The preparation journey

is not just about learning — it's about growing in relationship with Jesus, discovering what it means to be part of the Church, and being open to the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

If you have a child who is in Year 10 or above, now is the time to consider enrolling them in this year's preparation programme. It's a chance to ask big questions, grow in faith, and step more deeply into the life God is calling them to.

A combined programme runs in the Parish's West Hub:

- Lumen Christi – Deadline: Friday 3 October *(Year 9 children may also be accepted subject to discernment)*

Programmes running in the Parish's East Hub:

- St Mary Magdelene Bexhill and St Martha's Little Common – Deadline: Friday 10 October
- St Thomas of Canterbury & the English Matyrs and Holy Redeemer St Leonards and St Mary Star of the Sea Hastings – Deadline: Friday 19 September
- Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael and St Teresa of Lisieux: Please speak to Fr Richard who will direct you to join the St Leonards programme – Deadline: Friday 19 September

Application forms for each Hub's programmes are available in church or from your church office.

Becoming a Catholic

Interested in becoming Catholic or completing your sacraments?

RCIA – The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The RCIA is the process by which adults are welcomed into the Catholic Church. It's for anyone who is:

- Not baptised, but interested in exploring the Catholic faith
- Baptised in another Christian tradition, and wishes to become Catholic
- Baptised Catholic, but never received First Communion or Confirmation

This journey is not a course or class in the usual sense — it's a time of discovery, prayer, and personal reflection. You'll have the chance to learn more about the Catholic faith, ask questions, and grow in relationship with God in a supportive, welcoming environment.

Many parents begin this journey because they want to understand their child's faith more deeply, or because they were never Confirmed and feel called to take the next step.

If you're curious, interested, or feel a gentle nudge to find out more, we warmly invite you to speak to your parish priest. There's no pressure — just a chance to explore what God might be saying to you at this moment in your life.

"Come and see!" — John 1:46

Image of First Holy Communion children by Sebastian Czapnik via Dreamstime.com; image of Bishop Richard and a confirmation candidate from St Joseph's Specialist Trust; image of St Carlo Acutis and St Pier Giorgio Frassati from Aleteia.

Two new Saints for young people

We're thrilled to share that two young people were canonised as saints on 7 September in Rome — a joyful moment for the whole Church, especially for children and teenagers!

St Carlo Acutis (1991–2006) was a tech-loving teen who created a website about Eucharistic miracles before dying of leukaemia at 15.

St Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901–1925) was an adventurous, mountain-climbing, faith-filled young man who served the poor and lived the Beatitudes with joy.

These saints remind us that young people can be holy too — right now, in ordinary life.

Why not share this exciting news with your children?

Prayer honouring St Carlo Acutis

O God,
who gave St Carlo Acutis the grace
to unite his love of the Eucharist
with his joy in everyday life,
help us to walk close to Jesus
as he did.
May we always seek You
above all things. Amen.

Prayer honouring St Pier Giorgio Frassati

Loving Father,
through the example
of St Pier Giorgio,
may we live with courage and charity,
bringing Your light
to those most in need.
Help us to climb
the mountain of holiness with joy.
Amen.

Our Parish: A Community of Communities

We cover a large geographical area of East Sussex, from Eastbourne to Rye, consisting of fifteen churches, five schools, and around 3000 parishioners. We are one parish but work in two centres (Hubs), the West Hub in Eastbourne and the East Hub in St Leonard's.

See our Parish Website for details of all the churches and other information about the Parish: www.eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk

Our Clergy

E **East Hub:** Fr Max McKeown, Deacon Simon South (Rye); Fr Eamonn Monson, Deacon Duncan Brown (Hastings); Fr Miceal Beatty, Deacon Ian Moon (St Leonards); Fr Richard Blythen (Battle & Northiam); Fr Stephen O'Brien, Deacon Simon Kirkdale (Bexhill)

W **West Hub**: Fr Kevin Dring, Fr Charles Ezejide (Eastbourne); Fr Neil Chatfield, Deacon Eugene Adams (Langney & Hampden Park); Fr Rory Kelly (Polegate & Hailsham)

Our Hub Leadership Team

Fr Kevin Dring is the Moderator of the Clergy Team (Team Leader) and in each Hub the clergy work closely with a representative group of lay people (Hub Leadership Group) drawn from across the churches and schools. See the Parish Website for further details: www.eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk

Our Parish Schools

We are blessed with five wonderful schools, four Primary and one Secondary:

Primary: Sacred Heart (Hastings), St Mary Star of the Sea (St Leonards), St Mary Magdalene (Bexhill), St Thomas a Becket (Eastbourne);

Secondary: St Richard's Catholic College (Bexhill)

Our Diocese

We are part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel & Brighton, founded in 1965, under the care and leadership of Bishop Richard Moth.

We cover the counties of East and West Sussex and Surrey. Soon this extensive area will be served by just eleven large parishes like our own.

Our Diocese is part of the worldwide Catholic Church under the spiritual leadership of Pope Leo XIV.

Useful contacts

Parish: www.eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk
Diocese: www.abdiocese.org.uk
Catholic Church in England & Wales: www.cbcew.org.uk
Vatican: www.vatican.va

E East Hub Secretary: **Liz Fitch**
stleonards@abdiocese.org.uk
01424 602077
W West Hub Secretary: **Cheryl Wood**
eastbourneolor@abdiocese.org.uk
01323 723222

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

The Arundel & Brighton Diocesan Trust is a Charity registered in England, number 252878
Each church has its own safeguarding representative. The diocesan team can be contacted on 01293 651148

Churches in our two Hubs

W **St Agnes:** 10 Whitley Road, Eastbourne BN22 8NJ: 01323 723222

E **St Anthony of Padua:** Watchbell St, Rye TN31 7HB: 01797 222173

W **Christ the King:** 3 Princes Road, Langney BN23 6HT: 01323 760048

W **St George's:** Eastbourne Road, Polegate BN26 5DF: 01323 841504

W **St Gregory's:** Victoria Drive, Eastbourne BN20 8QY: 01323 723222

E **Holy Redeemer:** 24 Upr Church Rd, St Leonards TN37 7AS: 01424 602077

W **St Joachim's:** 106 Broderick Road, Hampden Park BN22 9NY: 01323 760048

E **Our Lady Immaculate & St Michael:** 14 Mount St, Battle TN33 0EG 01424 773125

W **Our Lady of Ransom:** 2 Grange Rd, Eastbourne BN21 4EU: 01323 723222

E **Our Lady Star of the Sea:** 1 High St, Hastings TN34 3EY: 01424 421263

E **St Martha's:** 77 Cooden Sea Road, Little Common TN39 4SL: 01424 210263

E **St Mary Magdalene's:** Sea Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 1RH: 01424 210263

E **St Teresa of Lisieux:** Horns Cross, Northiam TN31 6JQ: 01424 773125

E **St Thomas of Canterbury:** 31c Magdalen Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6ET: 01424 602077

W **St Wilfrid's:** South Road, Hailsham BN27 3JG: 01323 841504

Church websites are linked on www.eastbourne-stleonards.org.uk

All are welcome at any church!