



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Newsletter No.4
March 2026

A message from the Director of Education

Dear Colleagues

I hope that you have all benefitted from the holiday and that the children and staff in our diocesan schools have returned refreshed and ready to start the next half term. Please be assured that the dedication and commitment to all involved in Catholic education is greatly appreciated. This was acknowledged recently when Alison and I attended a parliamentary reception where Bishop Marcus Stock, Chair of the Catholic Education Service, addressed those present. He stated,

'Today, there are over 2,000 Catholic schools and colleges in England, educating more than 800,000 pupils and students. This represents around ten per cent of the state-funded education sector. The Catholic Church is the largest single provider of secondary education and the second largest provider of primary education in England...None of this would be possible without the dedication and professionalism of those who work within the Catholic education sector. I want to express sincere thanks to teachers, school leaders, governors, support staff, chaplains, and volunteers, and to the diocesan education services and schools' commissioners who sustain and support this work every day.' It is hoped that these words will inspire you as you move into the second half of this academic year.

The Members' Meetings held during January and February were a great opportunity for the Diocesan Members to meet with our Catholic Education Trust (CET) Directors and Executive Teams. The Members listened to the joys, successes and challenges that each of the CETs are experiencing. All four trusts are facing similar experiences and have plans in place to ensure that the children in our schools receive the very best education. Furthermore, members heard from each CET that there is a real willingness to work more closely together sharing skills and expertise. This echoes the words of Pope Leo XIV in his recent apostolic letter, 'Each "star" has its own brightness, but together they chart a course. Where in the past there was rivalry, now we ask the institutions to converge: unity is our most prophetic strength.' Indeed, these are exciting times.

During our headteacher meetings last term, Amy Cameron (Director of Formation and Mission) and I shared details relating to our diocesan pastoral strategy. Many of you will be aware that Bishop Stephen has asked all parishes to discern about our mission in the light of the forecast reduction in the number of clergy, smaller congregations and the maintenance of our church buildings. Bishop Stephen's pastoral letter read at all Masses on the first Sunday of Lent stated,

'The Holy Spirit is evidently at work in our parishes, schools and communities. There is so much holiness in our worship of the Lord and in the service of others. We have so much to learn from one another and share with one another. The joys and hope outweigh the challenges. Our mission is to walk with the Lord and enable others to encounter Him in our communities centred on the Eucharist. We are called to live justly, caring for our common home and especially for the poor in it. We are called to grow as one diocesan family which will necessarily mean working more closely together in new ways. Finally, we are called to be formed by Christ for mission. To be a baptised Christian is to have a mission. We are called to help every person flourish in the love of the Lord and flourish in their service of others.'

Along with this newsletter, we have emailed you a letter from Bishop Stephen identifying where schools can get involved. Please can you send any thoughts with your local parish by 20 March 2026. Please see the link below to enable you to access the link to the documents sent to parishes.

<https://diocesehn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/HN-Discernment-toolkit-2026-V14-FINAL.pdf>

I therefore invite you during this Lenten season to work in partnership with our clergy and parishes to support this vital work. Thank you for your service.

Wishing you all every good wish,

Catherine



Bishop's Day Conference

Bishop Stephen warmly invites you to attend this day specifically for all school and Trust leaders. It is an opportunity for us to come together in prayer and celebration.

We are also delighted to welcome Father Eamonn Conway

This will also be an opportunity for Bishop Stephen to thank headteachers, deputy headteachers, primary and secondary RE subject leaders and lay chaplains who are retiring from our schools after years of service to Catholic education within our Diocese.

Please can you ensure that you send names of these people to: education@diocesehn.org.uk as soon as possible. We will then ensure that these people are invited to the Mass at 12 noon in good time and receive an episcopal blessing.

We hope that you will make every effort to attend this special day.

“Educating for a Hopeful Future: Understanding Pope Leo XIV’s Vision for Our Schools”

Catholic schools are uniquely positioned to help young people look to the future with hope in a world undergoing rapid transition. In this session, Fr Eamonn Conway presents Pope Leo XIV’s Apostolic Letter as a roadmap for how schools can nurture this hope in concrete ways. The session will help leaders discern how to form communities that cultivate resilience, spiritual depth, and a hopeful worldview in young people. Leaders will reflect on curriculum, culture, pastoral care, and formation practices that align with the Letter’s vision of integral human development and missionary discipleship.

Biography.

Father Eamonn Conway is a priest of the archdiocese of Tuam (Ireland) and Inaugural Professor of Integral Human Development, University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA). He previously served as Head of Theology & Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College, Ireland’s largest teacher education college, for twenty three years. His doctoral work was in Systematic Theology on the writings of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs Von Balthasar. His current areas of interest include Integral Human Development as the form that wellbeing and human flourishing take in Catholic educational and ministerial settings and the renewal of the Catholic Church through synodality. He was co-founder of the international Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education G.R.A.C.E. Project and has served as an expert adviser to the Synod of Bishops. Most recently, he was appointed by Pope Francis to the Synod on Synodality 2021-2024. Previously, he served as President of the European Society for Catholic Theology and the Peter Hünemann Foundation for Catholic Theology in Europe. His current work at Notre Dame is largely involved in providing integral human development programmes to staff. He also works with staff, systems leaders, directors, and trustees of Catholic bodies, mainly in Australia and Europe, anxious to re-position their distinctive mission and identity in dialogue with secular culture.



Thanksgiving Mass 2026

We would like to invite Catholic Education Trust Directors and Foundation Governors to attend a Mass of Thanksgiving, for their dedication and service to Catholic education on **Thursday 9 July 2026**.

This special Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Stephen Wright followed by refreshments in the courtyard.

To reserve a place, we would be grateful if you could email: education@diocesehn.org.uk by **Wednesday 1 July 2026**.

Directors and Governors
are invited to attend a
Mass of Thanksgiving
for their dedication and service to Catholic education,
celebrated by
The Right Reverend Bishop Stephen Wright
to be held at
Cathedral Church of St Mary
Clayton Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5HH
Thursday 9 July 2026
at 6.00pm
RSVP - education@diocesehn.org.uk
by 1 July 2026
DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

Governance Conference 2026

We are inviting Diocesan Trustees, Members, Trust Directors, Trust Executive Teams and representatives from Local Governing Committees to join us at this informative conference on **Wednesday 1 July 2026** which is entitled, **"Drawing New Maps of Hope, Wisdom, Accountability and the Governance of Catholic Schools."**

We are thrilled to have David Wells and John Hardy, lead writer for the Diocesan Religious Education resource as keynote speakers. Bishop Stephen will be celebrating Mass for your intentions.

It would be great to have representation from all our Catholic schools. We believe that it will be a very useful day for you all.

We look forward to seeing you there.
To confirm your attendance please email:
education@diocesehn.org.uk by
Wednesday 17 June 2026.

**Members, Directors, Governors
& Catholic Education Trust Leaders**
are warmly invited to attend the
Diocesan Governance Conference

Wednesday 1 July 2026 at 9.30am
(Refreshments served from 9.00am)
Lunch will be provided
Day closes at 2.30pm

The Durham Centre,
Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham DH1 1TN
RSVP education@diocesehn.org.uk
by 17 June 2026

Bishop Stephen Wright
David Wells
John Hardy
Lead Writer, RED Resource

For any enquiries please contact us;
education@diocesehn.org.uk
0191 243 3313

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Catholic Leaders and Clergy Conference

Bishop Stephen would like to invite you to attend this important yearly event, hosted at the Ramside Hall Hotel on Thursday 3 December 2026.

The day will also include a commissioning Mass for all school leaders celebrated by Bishop Stephen.

Booking details will be available in the summer term.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Catholic Leaders and Clergy Conference 'I chose you'

John 15:16

With Guest Speaker



Danny Curtin

03
December
2026

**Ramside
Hall Hotel,
Durham**

ONE DIOCESAN FAMILY - WELCOMING - WORSHIPING - SHARING - GROWING



New Governors' Welcome

This session will welcome new foundation governors to their role and discuss the statutory and canonical responsibilities of the foundation governors in a Catholic school.

We would encourage all new governors to attend this training session.

If you would like to attend our Foundation Governors welcome session on **Tuesday 21 April 2026**, please contact Rebecca Daglish at: **education@diocesehn.org.uk** who will be happy to book your place.

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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION



New Foundation Governors' Welcome

Welcome Session for New Foundation Governors
Tuesday 21 April 2025
5.00pm - 6.00pm
Online

Register Now

<https://diocesehncourses.org>



NATIONAL SCHOOLS SINGING PROGRAMME

Choir Members



Diocesan Children's Choir

The Diocesan Children's Choir has now officially launched - pictured are some of the Girls' and Boys' Choir members. During rehearsals with Choral Director, Eimear Hurley, children from schools across the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust build on the skills they have been learning in weekly school sessions and also learn some new sacred repertoire. They are already sounding wonderful! As the choirs develop, they will sing at Sunday Masses at the Cathedral Church of St Mary and at other Diocesan events.

We are still looking for volunteers to act as chaperones to support choir rehearsals. Chaperoning entails being present at hour-long rehearsals and ensuring all children are safe; no musical experience is necessary. If you would be interested in volunteering, please contact Choral Director Eimear Hurley via email: **eimear.hurley@diocesehn.org.uk** or by calling/texting 07814 461448.



Religious Education Directory training dates

It has been a pleasure to welcome all of our primary colleagues to the Religious Education Directory training sessions that have taken place since January. We would like to express our gratitude to all the secondary schools who have hosted the training sessions so far; we are looking forward to welcoming the remaining primary schools during this half term.

The remaining dates and venues are as follows:

04-March-26 Our Lady and St Bede's Catholic Academy, Stockton

09-March-26 St Michael's Catholic Academy, Billingham

11-March-26 Carmel College, Darlington

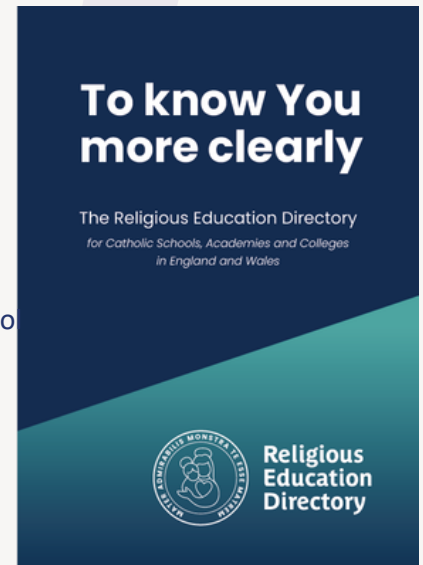
16-March-26 St Bede's Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Lanchester

18-March-26 St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Bedlington

23-March-26 The English Martyrs' Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Hartlepool

25-March-26 St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn

If, for any reason, staff have not been able to attend the training, or staff are unable to attend their upcoming allocated date, please contact the Diocesan Education Department to book an alternative session:
education@diocesehn.org.uk



Religious Education Directory Launch

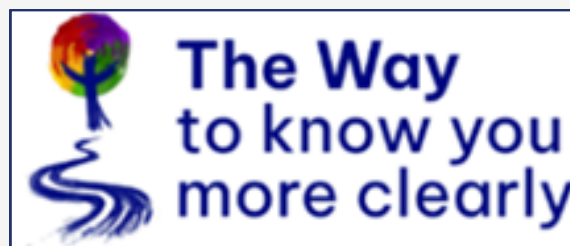
We are holding two resource launch days on **Friday 1 May and Thursday 21 May at The Durham Centre, Belmont** 9.30am– 3.30pm.

During these sessions we will be launching our online platform where schools will be able to access the website hosting resources needed to deliver the new curriculum. You will receive your school's username and password and will have the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the site.

Places can be booked via <https://diocesehncourses.org/>

Please note that there are limited numbers of places for each day which we will not be permitted to exceed, due to health and safety.

Please contact education@diocesehn.org.uk if you are unsure if your place has been reserved.





Good Shepherd Mass



Each year, we support St Cuthbert's Care with their annual Good Shepherd Mass, and they are looking forward to welcoming schools at the Masses.

St Cuthbert's Care have arranged two Masses this year,:

Wednesday 29 April, 10.00am Newcastle venue TBC

Wednesday 6 May, 1.00pm, at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Hartlepool

If you are able to attend and support our diocesan charity on either of these days, please contact:

Nicola Milne via nicolaj.milne@stcuthbertscare.org.uk to let her know your school name and the number of pupils who will be attending.

*Compassion,
dignity and
respect are
at the heart
of our care.*



We look forward to seeing you there and continuing to support St Cuthbert's Care.

Catholic Schools Inspectorate

Bishop's directives

Diocesan directives make clear what a bishop expects of all his Catholic schools.

From September 2026, the Catholic Schools Inspectorate will only inspect local diocesan requirements that have been formally promulgated as directives as part of its compliance check.

This will ensure that Bishop Stephen can be confident that inspection reports are accurately reporting whether schools are doing as he has instructed.

If schools are not compliant with the Bishop's directives, then they will not be able to receive an outstanding judgement for their CSI inspection.

Catholic Self Evaluation Document (CSED)

As you are aware, we ask that CSEDs are sent to us at the beginning of the academic year so that we can share these with inspectors 10 days prior to schools receiving their CSI inspection. As the academic year goes on, many of you update your current CSED. It would be very helpful, and we ask, that any changes or updates made to the original document are recorded as tracked changes.



Admissions Policies

Thank you for returning your Admission Policies. The policies have now been verified and forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority. The policies will be published on the Local Authority websites by **15 March 2025** and then must be made available on your school website.



Leadership Courses

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

MIDDLE LEADERSHIP IN A CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

A two half-day course exploring the "why" of Catholic Schools and what it means to lead with a Catholic identity

13 March 2026
20 March 2026
1.30pm to 3.30pm
Durham Centre, Belmont

☎ 0191 243 3313 ✉ education@diocesehn.org.uk

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

MIDDLE LEADERSHIP IN A CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

A one day course exploring the "why" of Catholic Schools and what it means to lead with a Catholic identity

10 June 2026
9.30am to 3.30pm
The Copthorne Hotel, Newcastle

☎ 0191 243 3313 ✉ education@diocesehn.org.uk

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Aspiring School Leaders Aspiring Deputy Headteachers

Wednesday 25 March 2026
A mock recruitment session will be held
at:
The Durham Centre, Belmont Industrial Estate,
Durham DH1 1TN
9:30am - 3:30pm

Please register at the email below:

Register Now education@diocesehn.org.uk

**National Catholic
Leadership Programme**
2026-2028

A course for aspiring and serving headteachers

- ✓ National programme developed by Formatio
- ✓ Supports the formation and recruitment of headteachers
- ✓ Focuses on Catholic leadership

For further information please contact
Diocesan Education Department
Education@diocesehn.org.uk

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION
One Diocesan Family - Welcoming - Worshipping - Sharing - Growing

Middle Leadership in a Catholic Primary School

This is a two half-day programme exploring the "why" of Catholic schools and what it means to lead with a Catholic identity. The course runs on **Friday 13 March 2026 and Friday 20 March 2026**, from 1.30pm to 3.30pm at the Durham Centre, Belmont, and can be booked via our booking site: <https://diocesehn.org.uk>

Middle Leadership in a Catholic Secondary School

A one day course for secondary teachers who are interested in middle leadership in a Catholic school. This will be on **Wednesday 10 June 2026** at the Copthorne Hotel.

Aspiring Deputy Headteachers

On **Wednesday 25 March 2026** our Aspiring Deputy Headteachers course continues, giving delegates the experience of the full recruitment process to support the participants in preparing for senior leadership recruitment tasks and expectations.

National Catholic Leadership Programme (NCLP)

On **Thursday 5 March**, we look forward to working with the Wave 4 participants of the NCLP where they will experience a mock interview.



Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies

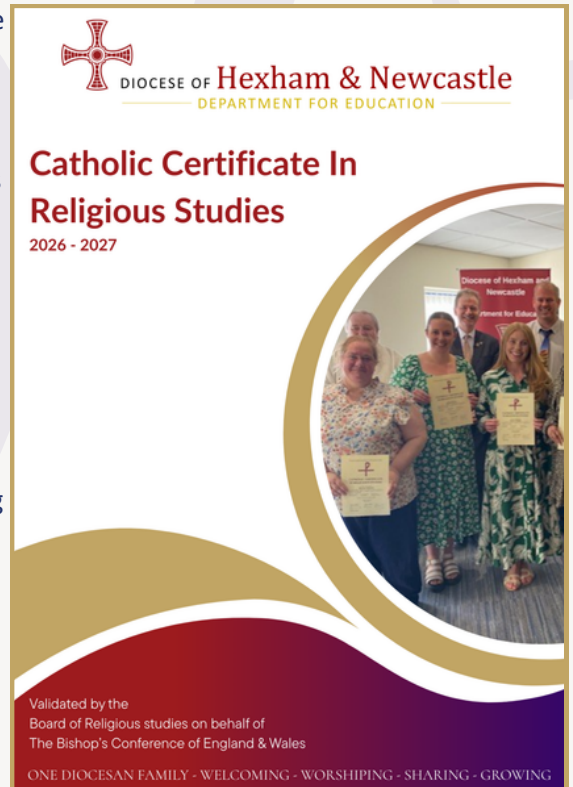
The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) programme for 2025-2026 continues this term. Attendance has been outstanding, and delegates are enjoying the modules while making strong progress in their studies. We are beginning preparations for next year's CCRS provision, and the programme booklet will be available in due course.

As we draw near to the launch of the Religious Education Directory, CCRS is particularly relevant and can support and deepen staff subject knowledge. CCRS is also highly valuable for those considering leadership opportunities in Catholic schools or pastoral roles.

Whether you choose to complete all modules for the full certificate or take individual modules for personal development, there is an option to suit everyone. If you have previously studied CCRS modules and are yet to complete the qualification please contact us so we can support you moving forward.

We are very grateful to our dedicated and committed tutors, who generously give their time to deliver this important and invaluable professional development.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Registration forms will be accepted until 27 April 2026, so it is not too late to begin your CCRS journey. Tel: 0191 243 3313 or email: education@diocesehn.org.uk



School Lay Chaplains

We are looking forward to welcoming all of our school lay chaplains on **Monday 16 March 2026** at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Stanley.

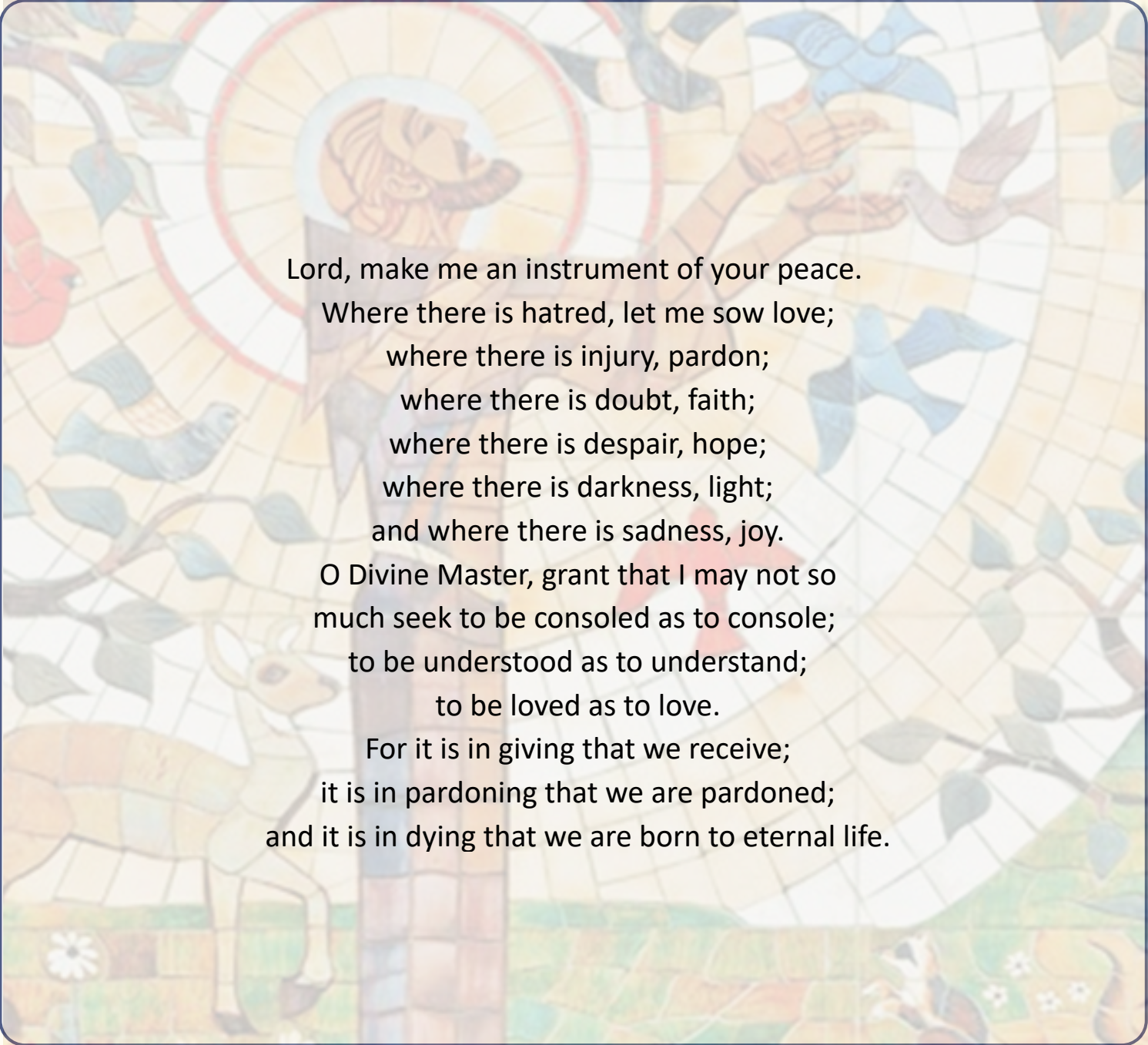
We are pleased to be joined by Tom Baptist, Director of Chaplaincy at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, Nottingham, who will be leading us in discussions about discipleship and mission in the role of school lay chaplains. Fr Shaun Purdy will be celebrating Mass and there will be opportunities for reflection and discussion during the day.

We are now taking bookings for the summer retreat from **Thursday 11 June - Friday 12 June** which will be held at The Grand Hotel Gosforth Park. We will be joined by the Daughters of Divine Charity, who will be leading us in prayer and reflection.

To book a place on either of these days please contact Michelle Ross at michelle.ross@diocesehn.org.uk or education@diocesehn.org.uk



During this Year of St Francis we encourage you to pray this prayer both personally and in your school communities.



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.