



Parish of the Holy Spirit, Great Bardfield & The English Martyrs,
Thaxted

Dear Parishioners,

We are now just 6 weeks away from the first Sunday of Advent when the new liturgical year begins and we are all asked to take time to reflect on our faith and how we prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth.

In advance of that period of preparation I wanted to reflect on some of the things that your Parish Council are looking at and thinking about in the context of the continued development and growth of our Parish community in Great Bardfield, Thaxted and beyond.

It is terrific that we are seeing new faces at both our weekend Masses. It is always wonderful to welcome new parishioners and I know you will join me in extending a warm welcome and in sharing the friendship that our parish community enjoys.

We are looking forward to supporting our 6 confirmandi as they make their final preparations for the sacrament of Confirmation. They have benefitted from a terrific youth catechism & confirmation programme led by Linda Wheeler and Confirmation Mass will be celebrated in Great Bardfield at the usual time on Sunday 10 December (Second Sunday of Advent). I am sure you will join me in extending our grateful thanks to Linda for all her work.

Sunday 10 December is not just a significant occasion for our candidates but also a chance for our parish as a whole to come together and show support for them, our parish and further our sense of local Catholic community. We are very blessed that Bishop Alan will be with us to celebrate Mass on that Sunday. More details will be shared as that date approaches.

Together with Fr Celestine, I have had the opportunity in recent weeks to meet with various members of the Diocese to discuss our plans and our future. I have found the Diocese to be open and supportive and willing to work closely with us to ensure the continuity and longevity of our local Catholic provision. Like any parish we have matters that can be readily addressed and matters that are not so easily addressed!

Like most rural church communities, a significant part of the Parish Council's time is taken ensuring that we remain financially secure. We are all aware of the increasing costs and expenses we face as individuals and families, and the Church is no different. We are now blessed to have Fr Celestine as our parish priest living in the Presbytery in Great Bardfield and therefore responsible for the associated ordinary course costs and expenses that need to be met.

The Parish Council is always considering ways in which our expenditure can be realistically reduced and these efforts will continue in earnest. However, our ordinary course expenditure does outweigh our monthly income by some margin and has done so for approaching a year now. Should any parishioner feel that they are in a position to and would like to increase their parish donations in any way this will always be very welcome and greatly appreciated.

Most of you will know that our Great Bardfield site is ageing and in need of some attention. Our Thaxted site has remained unused for some time now for safety reasons and we remain hopeful that our developed plans to sell our Thaxted site will conclude this side of Christmas (thank you to Alfred Wheater for his long-term commitment to this project). The Thaxted site was originally very kindly donated to the parish by the Latham family and its sale represents a significant legacy for the parish which will afford us the opportunity over the next 12 months to plan our future appropriately and meaningfully for the benefit of us all.

Since the closure of our Thaxted site it has been terrific to see the way in which Saturday Vigil Mass in the Lady Chapel of Thaxted Anglican Church has grown and thrived, something that is supported by the Diocese as a forward-looking approach to rural local Catholic provision.

I believe we have a lot to look forward to as we approach the new liturgical year. Yes, there is a lot to do, consider and discuss about our way forward - a focus on continued local community is central to that and will be at the heart of the plans we make, as will an increasing ecumenical collaboration with the Anglican communities in both Great Bardfield and Thaxted.

The Parish Council is always keen to hear from parishioners and we are happy at all times to share information and answer any questions. Please speak to any member of the Council and please also note that our **next Parish Council meeting will be held at Great Bardfield on Saturday 18 November @10am**. Meetings last between 60 and 90 minutes and everyone is very welcome. At our next meeting we will be looking ahead through 2024 and into 2025, plans for our buildings and the management of our financial position. Please do come.

Finally, my thanks to all members of the Parish Council for their ongoing work.

I am hoping to be at Mass in both Thaxted and Great Bardfield over the coming weeks and very willing to spend time discussing this letter or anything else!

God Bless,
Phillip
Chair, PPC