

Sacred Heart Church Feast Day – Weekend celebrations

We welcome everyone present today and thank all who have had a part in preparing for this weekend's celebrations. We rejoice as a parish within the Westminster Diocese and The Sons of Divine Providence Congregation rejoice as a Religious Congregation ministering in parishes in the diocese, including The Sacred Heart Teddington (& Hampton Wick).

We are celebrating one year since the reopening of the church to which we belong. A year ago, there was some trepidation moving from the hall that was small and intimate and returning to the big space previously occupied. We left the hall with a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, and we reminded ourselves the focal point is not the enormous space of many benches, but the Tabernacle that houses the Blessed Sacrament. Our focus is the Presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in us and around us.

After the pandemic, weekend church attendance had dropped from approx. 400 to a nucleus of 35 at a Sunday 1.30pm Mass. On a good weekend we have bounced back somewhat to an attendance of 200 over three Masses. If we talk about numbers there is still a long way to go, but Rome wasn't built in a day, and we can be proud that as a parish we have come a long way.

We have grown in numbers and as a community we have grown in Spirit. We are a welcoming community and the revival of tea and coffee after Mass seems popular, even if "just grabbing a biscuit on the way home." It proves a great opportunity to stop and chat and to get to meet new people and exchange stories and life experiences.

We are grateful for parishioners coming forward to help in various roles: welcoming, setting up for Mass and clearing away, preparing for tea/coffee and clearing away, cleaning of the hall and church, altar servers, playing musical instruments and singing at the weekend Masses and on special days, gardening – maintenance and watering. We are grateful for those who periodically bring Holy Communion to the sick, and to those who offer transport to accompany parishioners to Mass. We are always grateful for new catechists to prepare children for Holy Communion and Confirmation. We need someone from the parish to come forward to teach the RCIA programme. We are grateful for an enthusiastic parish finance committee and for help with general maintenance around the presbytery, church and hall.

Thanks to our current office staff Pippa and Juste and thanks to Traci who has retired and to Concepcion who has recently stepped down for health reasons. Thanks also to the volunteers who give an extra hand in the office, bookkeeping related.

Trying to remember everyone. Thanks anyone I have forgotten for your contributions.

One year-on, the snagging has still not been completed! We are chasing, but there is now so much going on that other things take priority ...

We were very grateful to receive a donation from the National Lottery grants award for communities. The work has now begun, and this will greatly benefit the hall and related repairs. We hope this will give an impetus for making better use of the facilities from

within the parish and wider local community. We are delighted that as with the building works contractors, the decorators and carpenters were passionate about their work.

The pipe organ was restored after the building works. We are grateful to Bernie Whitmore for a great job. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and aside from everyday hymns being played, the organ can really blast out with gusto and pride!

We are open to new blood regards playing the organ, and also to having recitals etc that will help raise funds for the church.

Once again, we wish to congratulate Rebecca Diaper on the recent celebration of her 100th birthday, that was also marked with the celebration of Mass and a reception afterwards in the parish hall. Thanks to her family and parishioners for making that such a wonderful event for Rebecca.

Congratulations to those who have received sacraments over the past year – Marriage, Holy Communion, Confirmation, and being received into the Church at Easter. In addition, during the year some have received the anointing of the sick and availed from the grace and strength of this powerful sacrament.

During the year, the AA group, Alpha and, Padre Pio reading group have all availed of the hall premises. Ideas for widening the portfolio can include: Spirituality:- Saturday morning exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and confession, Prayer groups, Bible study, study of the Pope's encyclicals, retreats in the church or locally at the Kairos centre etc. There is still a dream of mine: prayer/spiritual themed or social, to hold café slots hosting people and families with disabilities; cancer and dementia prayer groups.

Social outreach such as Kingston Street pastors, KCAH Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness, Richmond Housing Accommodation for Migrants, The Passage, Modern slavery and lots more. Social outreach as listed can be called Home Mission, whilst some may feel called to World Missions, helping the needy abroad; financially or going in person. There are many opportunities. Whatever social outreach, commitment is essential and be prepared for challenges. Whether in-church, home or abroad missions there can be great satisfaction and a possibility to meet new people and encounter new realities. These are all ways of expressing and deepening our faith as well as opportunities to evangelise – learning more about Jesus and making known his Love.

Attending Alpha is a wonderful way to learn about Jesus. It's an opportunity for people of all faiths and non to discover more about him and to allow Jesus to awaken within us realities / behaviours that need correcting. It's an opportunity to learn about the Holy Spirit and to let the Holy Spirit lead and guide us. Alpha is hospitality, sharing, open conversation.

Alpha is recognised and promoted within the Catholic Church. We have completed two courses and already the parish has benefitted with some attendees being touched and going through life changing results. This includes me – priests are encouraged, not just to promote Alpha, but to experience it first-hand. Listening to videos, hearing / reading scripture and invoking the holy Spirit, praying over others or having others praying over

them is very powerful. Alpha has changed my life as a person and as the priest I am. Some fruits of Alpha and/or our spiritual journey, are being open to let God take hold of us, and to let go, allowing him to prune us, like a vine (John 15:1-2) – he will cut away our sin and vices and we will bear healthy fruit reaching out with love and goodness to others.

As I encountered Alpha, I began to hear about Divine Renovation which speaks about ‘from maintenance to Mission’. I was interested in Alpha for many years, but at the same time sceptical. Having attended an Alpha taster day, I knew immediately it was right for our parish. I wasn’t sure about Divine Renovation because I didn’t know about it. Then I was given a 342 page book about it. I started to read it and couldn’t put it down, so I went away for a few days to the Kairos Centre and ate the contents! Kairos means ‘a time of grace.’ For me it was a real moment of grace consisting of reading, prayer, good company, good food and sleep!

I feel for the Sacred Heart parish, Teddington, this is “Our Time.” We have journeyed together, through woundedness and struggles, to growth in parish life. We have certainly experienced maintenance with so many jobs being done, and then the building works... We have journeyed together through the intimacy of liturgies in the hall in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and now is ‘the time’ to explore further the sense of mission, asking ourselves the meaning of mission for our parish and how to ‘do mission.’ Scripture invites us ... ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.’ (*Hebrews 10:24-25*)

Please consider how we can promote Alpha even more ... home grown Catholics take the plunge – ‘come and see’, listen to what God/Jesus have to say to you. Please invite friends and family and ask them to invite non Catholics to come along ... Let God do!!!

I asked church goers for more than a year to reflect on their God-given gifts and talents, how they have been used and to ask what God what he wants us to do now, individually and as parish. We focussed on being a beacon of light at this end of Teddington, working together with the Churches Together in Teddington (ecumenism.)

From maintenance to mission – maintenance also means staying where we were, not budging, but mission is growth, expansion of ministries, and moving forwards. It’s not a quick fix, but we have started, we are on the road ... Remember when I was in Stanwell clearing the presbytery garden, I dug out a child’s scooter having removed the buried contents of a young family, and on the foot plate it read ‘on a mission!!!’

Divine Renovation is a program to train clergy and other parish leaders. ‘Jump on board’ with a life-long parish programme: **Jesus, evangelisation, witness, mission.**

Fr. Stephen Beale fdp
12-14 June 2026