



MASS TIMES & INTENTIONS



Saturday 09TH March 2024– Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer
9.20am Mass and Rosary
10.00 – 11.00am Confessions
6.00pm Vigil Mass

Charley Mcnamee RIP

Sunday 10TH March 2024 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B) ('Laetare' Sunday)

9.00am Mass
11.00am Mass
5.00pm Holy

Ann Fitzgerald RIP

Tuesday 12TH March 2024 – Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

7.00pm Novena to Anthony of Padua
7.30pm Mass

Clive Sage RIP

Wednesday 13TH March 2024 – Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer
9.20am Mass and Rosary
10am until 5pm Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Elizabeth Sweeney RIP

Thursday 14TH February 2024 – Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer
9.20am Mass and Rosary
10am until 4pm Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Victor and Ethel Dragoni RIP

Friday 15TH March 2024 – Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer
9.20am Mass and Rosary
10am until 5pm Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
7.30pm – 8.30pm Stations of the Cross with Mass

Suzanna, George, and Brian Grayston RIP

Saturday 16TH March 2024– Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer
9.20am Mass and Rosary
10.00 – 11.00am Confessions
6.00pm Vigil Mass

Charles Tiquis and Christopher Lumbera RIP

Sunday 17TH March 2024 – FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B)

9.00am Mass
11.00am Mass
5.00pm Holy

Deceased members of Lee & Hanks Families



OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL



Parish Priest: Fr Britto Belevendran

61 London Road, Wickford, Essex SS12 0AW ~ Tel 01268 733219

Website: www.wickfordcatholic.com ~ Email: wickford@brcdt.org

Hall Bookings: email: wickfordcatholicalls@gmail.com / Tel: 01268 733219

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B)

'Laetare' Sunday

10TH MARCH 2024

"We are" God's handiwork in Christ Jesus"

Three things are presented in the first reading. The conclusion of the Second Book of Chronicles contains a condensed account of the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's exile in Babylon, and the possibility of Israel's return to Judah. The Persian defeat of the Babylonians under King Cyrus brought an end to the exile and ushered in the period often referred to as "the restoration".

Psalm 137 provides insight into the exilic experience that was glossed over in the first reading. As the psalmist tells us, the Judeans were taunted by the Babylonians, who asked the exiles to sing songs from their homeland. The exiles refused to sing for their captors & instead held fast to their fond memories of Jerusalem as expressed in today's refrain: "Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!" This psalm is a lament, a song of longing for the world that the exiles had known prior to their defeat by the Babylonians.

Today's New Testament readings broaden our understanding of what it means to believe in Jesus, the Christ. Ephesians reminds us that God's mercy and grace are freely given to all who believe in Jesus and that our faith is a gift of God. While we know from the very first chapter of Genesis that we are made in the image and likeness of God, in Ephesians we hear that, in addition to being God's "handiwork", we are created "in Christ Jesus" for good works. Meanwhile, the Gospel reminds us that the life we have in Jesus is eternal. If eternal life is desired, we must choose to walk in the light of God.

When we are unfaithful to God, God remains faithful to us. We can always make our home in God, for he never abandons us. His mercy is strong, and his love deep and broad. May we turn to God now and acknowledge those times and ways we have forgotten God, when we have diminished our relationships with family, friends & neighbours.



PARISH NEWS

To all the Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunts, Sisters & other women in our lives that care for us & love us unconditionally, **HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!**



100 Club – FEBRUARY WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of last month's 100 Club draw.

1st Winner – Chris Tisi

2nd Winner – Maureen Hyatt

3rd Winner – Claire Clark

Thank you all for your continued support & participation!

Confirmation Programme 2023/24

The next Confirmation class will be on **14th March 2024** in the back hall (7:30pm-9:00pm). Please attend without fail if you wish to be confirmed this year.

Stations of the Cross

The next Stations of the Cross with the Liturgy of the Eucharist will be on **Friday 15th March from 7:30pm to 8:30pm** led by the Eucharistic Ministers.

Children's Reconciliation Service

If you are in school years 3-7, we are holding a special reconciliation service for you in the lead up to Easter on **Saturday 16th March at 10:30am**. It aims to be a different experience for you, with some activities that will help you to prepare for Easter and to say sorry for things you have done or for the times when you should have done something but didn't. We all make mistakes and do things that would upset Jesus and our Father in heaven and the most important thing is to be able to say sorry.

Children's Liturgy

The next Liturgy session will be held on Sunday **17th March**.

The Brentwood Catholic Children's Society (BCCS) is celebrating its 40th anniversary and to mark the occasion they have an anniversary draw taking place. BCCS will be available at the end of the weekend Masses of the **16th and 17th March** selling their draw tickets if you would like to buy some and support their work with children's mental health around the Diocese. Thank you.

Parish Reconciliation Service: Monday 18th March at 7 pm on we will have a parish reconciliation service. All are welcome to make use of this opportunity to make our confessions before Easter.

The First Holy Communion Session

The next Session will be on the **23rd of March 2024** followed by the obligatory Mass Attendance on the **24th**.

To all participants, please regularly bring the booklets that were issued to you for signing by the Parish Priest.

Singers and Musicians in our Parish

Welcome to you all.

Following a very successful introduction recently, we are extending the invitation to everyone to join us for this fun time to learn some new tunes and hymns that we can then use in our church services.

Everyone who attended said It was such good fun and that meeting people for the first time who attend different Masses was an added bonus.

We have agreed to meet for our next session at 10.00am on Saturday **23rd March 2024** in our Back Hall.

It is our intention to rehearse the entrance hymn we will be singing for the procession at each Mass on Palm Sunday.

We will also begin learning another new hymn.

This is also a great opportunity to invite more musicians to join us. Whatever instrument you play, whatever standard you are, please don't be shy or hold back. We would love it if you could join us.

Teas and Coffees

Our next Teas & Coffees will be held on **Sunday 24th of March** after the 11AM Mass; you are all welcomed to join.

Church Cleaning

We kindly ask for your help with cleaning the Church on **Tuesday 26th of March** from 10am – 12pm in preparation for Holy Week; please write your name on the sheet provided in front of the church should you be interested to volunteer – Thank you!

Sick Friends and Relatives - Please pray for Jonathan Fabri, Jayne & Danny Balaam, Beniamina Bilewycz, Arthur Brittain, Mary Caruana, Theresa Eldred, Patricia Gammell, Johnny Gee, Celine Guckian, Sharon Guckian, Gabrielle & Ralphie Langridge, Margaret Livesey, John Maguire, Bridget Mahoney, Carmella Micella, Elizabeth Mooney, Cecile Narbeth, Olivia Nazareth, Diane Neale, Margaret O'Doherty, Joy Orrock, Carmelo Piazza, Maureen Price, Conchita Prime, Carol Rushbrook, John Sheridan, Gerry Smyth, Maria Weedon, Elizabeth Arnold, Jane Williams, Gomez, Patricia McEvoy, Maureen Sullivan, Susan Freeman, Jane Davenport, Nathalie Ah-key, Amparo Thorogood, George O'Boyle, Pat McEvoy, Ann Parkinson, Valerie Robinson, Nelly Prada, Michael Fitzgerald, May and Chris Carey, Doreen Green, Conrad Gomes, Peter Turner, Sr. Sior Cosgrave Una, Clairin Molloy, Celine Wells, Patricia Graves and Keith Bottjer, Robert Turner, Patricia Price.

Anniversaries – We pray for Fr. Edmond Myer, Mary Hynes, Bridget Tuite, Fr. Maurice Roche, Gertrude Brockbank, Ruth Flexman, William Kinsella, Stanley Duligall, Stanley Dodd, Fr. William Luby, Theresa Pharoan, William Foley, Janet McEvoy, Kathleen Caffrey, Canon Martin Horkan, Eileen Orrock, Hannah Ingham.

DIOCESAN NEWS

1. Events:

Knights of St. Columba Youth Competitions - Easter Grand Draw

Please see the notices in the porch for the 3 current Youth Competitions. The categories are Painting, Photo, and Essay, for different ages and with cash prizes. Any problems please contact Brother Martin Doyle.

CAFOD – INVITATION TO JOIN PARLIAMENARY LOBBY

CAFOD invites you to join its Parliamentary Lobby on **Thursday 14th March 12-4PM**; Ask your MP to call for an immediate ceasefire in GAZA, in the name of our humanity, STOP the violence & destruction. Full details are on the CAFOD Website cafod.org.uk or tel. Ann on 01268 767138.

“AWAKE LONDON”

A Catholic Bible convention and Healing ministry on Saturday 16th March 2024 from 11am to 5 pm led By Fr. David Waller and Anointing Fire Catholic Ministry UK at Catholic Parish of Christ The King, 455 Chingford Road London, E4 8SP. Convention includes: Praise and Worship, Holy Mass, confession, Healing service and Eucharistic Adoration, spiritual sharing, sessions for children (www.afcmuk.org). Free car parking available.

The National Novena to St. Joseph

will take place from **10th - 18th March 2024** at St. Joseph's Church in Maidenhead.

Every year, the Mill Hill Missionaries prepare for the Feast of St. Joseph, their Society Patron, with a special Novena of Masses and prayers to ask for God's blessing on their Society's missionary outreach, and for the intentions of all those who support their work.

If you are able, and if it is possible to attend, Masses are at 10.00am every day of the Novena except Sunday, when it is at 11.00am. These Masses will be available to follow on Zoom, via the Mill Hill website: www.millhillmissionaries.com/novena. Also available on Zoom will be Evening Prayer together with the Novena Prayer at 6.00pm every day during the Novena.

This year, a special Novena Prayer Booklet has been prepared, and is available on request for a suggested donation.

You are welcome to send in your petitions and/or to request a Novena prayer booklet. Please write to the Novena Director at 6 Colby Gardens, Maidenhead, SL6 7GZ, or email novenamhm@gmail.com.

TALK ON THE READINGS AT THE EASTER VIGIL

On **Wednesday 20th March** at 7 pm, in preparation for Holy Week, Fr Adrian Graffy, parish priest of Gidea Park and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, will give a talk entitled 'The Readings at the Easter Vigil - the four nights of salvation'. The talk will take place in the parish hall at Gidea Park (410 Brentwood Road, RM2 6DH) and will last about 40 minutes. Refreshments will be available from 6.30 pm. No booking necessary. The church is 5 minutes' walk from the station (Elizabeth Line). Ample free parking is also available at the church. All are welcome, especially Readers, Special Ministers of the Eucharist and Catechists.

Pray & Fast – End of Abortion in this country

On **Saturday 23rd March**, the Vigil of Palm Sunday, please pray and fast for the end of abortion in this Country. Through God's grace we have seen thousands of Mothers in our counselling centre continue their pregnancies in very difficult circumstances. Please help us to help save lives with your prayers, fasting and support.

www.GoodCounselNetwork.com

SAHARA DESERT RETREAT IN MOROCCO - 26 February to 11 March 2024

Including a day visiting Marrakesh and 9 full days in the Desert. With Fr Arnaud and Deacon Vladimir from St Antony's in Forest Gate. Designed for young adults, open to all adults able to hike 4 - 6 hours a day for 9 full days in the desert. £952 (plus flight). www.desert-retreat.com or phone Catherine at 07807 348223.

40 hours Devotion

40 hours of Continuous Eucharistic Adoration during Lent (night and day except during Mass) will take place on the weekend of **16-17 March** at St John Vianney Catholic Church, 1 Stoneleigh Road, Clay Hall, Ilford IG5 0HE, starting with Mass of Exposition and Procession of the Blessed Sacrament at 7am on the Saturday and ending with Benediction at 11pm on the Sunday. All are welcome to take part in this very special devotion.

Escorted Pilgrimage to Knock & Co Mayo, 7th April 2024.

£899.00 per person - Price includes flight, 10kg hold luggage, 5 nights in 4* Castle court Hotel, Westport with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Lunch on three days. All entertainment, excursions and transport included. Visit Knock, Galway City, Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick & Ashford Castle. Single supplement on Enquiry. Contact Patricia or Natali on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com.

2024 Caritas Networking Day

Interested in the Catholic response to homelessness, welcoming refugees and migrants, assisting with the Cost of Living Crisis, or tackling the causes and effects of climate change?

You are invited to the 2024 Caritas Brentwood Networking Day, Saturday **27th April, 10am – 2.30pm**, at the St Edward the Confessor Church Hall, Romford (10-minute walk from Romford Station on the Elizabeth line, Bus routes from London are regular, parking is available but limited and a bike rack is also on site). This day is a chance to be sustained, share ideas and good practices with people from parishes across Essex and East London and hear about charities and resources available. Details and Registration (for free!) at www.caritasbrentwood.org/network

Catholic Parish Summit:

The Catholic Parish Summit is taking place in Harrogate from the 12th to the **14th of June** with over 1,000 parish leaders from across the country. Our diocese has booked some places for the Summit which are available to anyone who is interested in attending. These places are free but they are limited and you will need to make arrangements for accommodation while you are in Harrogate. For more information about the Summit please visit their website: <https://catholicparishsummit.com/> If you would like to find out more please email Father Dan Mason, the Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal at billericay@brcdt.org

Lourdes Pilgrimage

Join Bishop Alan on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes (**Friday 19 – Friday 26 July**). To book, please go online: [Brentwood Lourdes - Lourdes - Tangney Tours \(tangney-tours.com\)](http://Brentwood Lourdes - Lourdes - Tangney Tours (tangney-tours.com)) If you wish to discuss any aspect of the pilgrimage, please e-mail Kathryn Young: kathrynyoung@mail.com
The Champion School

Would like to warmly invite parents/carers and year 5 boys to our Open Evening on **Wednesday, 26th June** from 4.30pm to 7pm. The Headteacher's talk will be at 5pm and repeated at 6.30pm. Please visit our school website for more details www.thecampionschool.org.uk

BCYS SUMMER LOURDES YOUTH PILGRIMAGE – Last week of July 2024 (exact dates TBC)

Bookings are now open online for the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service pilgrimage to Lourdes in July.

Serve the main Diocesan pilgrimage, assist the elderly and infirm, with times of retreat, reconciliation, visit the baths, take part in the beautiful Processions, as well as an afternoon in the mountains, party and social nights - all with other young Catholics from around our Diocese.

The pilgrimage is open to all those in school year 10 – 13, with all those of school leaver age (18+) invited to join us as young leaders (subject to attending a training weekend). All details and applications can be found on the website www.bcys.net/events/sl24

40yrs of Walsingham House Teams

2024 marks 40 years of retreat teams at Walsingham House. There will be a celebration Mass with Bishop Alan on Saturday 31st August 2024 at Walsingham House at Abbots wick. Please save the date as it would be wonderful to see Walsingham House and BCYS alumni and friends gather to mark this milestone. More information to follow in the new year.

A Day with Mary pilgrimage to Fatima & Italy

A Day with Mary 2024 Pilgrimages to Fatima (7-14 June) and Italy (4-12 September).

For more information, email: adwmary.uk@gmail.com, web: www.adaywithmary.org or phone +(0)20 8641 6418.

Booking forms are available at any DWN venue.

FLAME 2025 “Unstoppable” – Fan the Flame of Hope

Although it may feel like months away, we are excited to be preparing for Flame in March 2025, following on from the incredible experience that 1000 young people from the Brentwood Diocese had at the event earlier this year.

Once again, the BCYS will purchase a block of early bird tickets on behalf of the Diocese, to enable us to allocate seats together, in a very desirable area as close to the front as possible.

These early bird tickets are £29 each, a saving of £5 per ticket on the full price of £34, and will be purchased in January, which is why we are asking for your ticket requests now!

Caritas Diocese of Brentwood

is inviting you to take part in several activities during Lent. We have a photo challenge for all ages, Stations of the Cross for teenagers, a Giving Calendar to help collections for local foodbanks, suggestions on how to raise awareness for the homeless within Essex and East London and some great resources from charities such as SVP and CAFOD. All information and resources can be found at www.caritasbrentwood.org/lent or by emailing sianthomas@brcdt.org.

2. Programmes:

Retrouvaille – Do you need help in your marriage?

Retrouvaille has helped many couples find new hope, nourishment, and growth in their marriages. If you want to uncover or reawaken the love, trust and commitment that brought you together and work through difficult times in your marriage contact Retrouvaille confidential for more information about our 2024 programmes. There is no group therapy or group work. Our next programme commences with a weekend in Welwyn Garden City on **14-16 June 2024**. Call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443, email retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retrouvaille.org.uk

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR LENT

Commentary on every Scripture reading from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday by Fr Adrian Graffy, parish priest of Gidea Park and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, is available free of charge on www.whatgoodnews.org Click on 'Scripture Readings' and 'Lent Readings'. The commentaries are also available in book form from Darton, Longman and Todd www.dartonlongmantodd.co.uk

Apprenticeships at Walsingham House

Walsingham House are offering a two-year apprenticeship course in Youth Ministry and Chaplaincy (Yr13 school leavers). Participants will live and work at Walsingham House, running retreats for young people across the diocese whilst studying with St Mary's University, Twickenham. For more information please email clairebailey@brcdt.org or visit the website www.bcys.net/apprenticeship-opportunity-at-walsingham-house/

Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis and Youth Ministry

is an online course is designed to be an entry level qualification to help in the ongoing formation of adults involved in sacramental preparation (First Holy Communion and/or Confirmation) or youth ministry in the Diocese of Brentwood. It includes both the development of practical skills & the deepening of theological knowledge. For more information or to register your interest please email clairebailey@brcdt.org or see the website <https://bcys.net/bishops-cert/>

BCCS FREE SELF-HARM WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society (BCCS) is aiming to deliver free Self-Harm support groups to both parents/carers and their teenagers should they wish to attend. The workshops will be held on a Wednesday evening for four consecutive weeks at their premises at 133 High Street, Billericay between 6.30 and 8pm. The parents' group will run alongside a separate group for the young people and will be an opportunity to think about how self-harm is affecting you, your child, and your family. The young people will attend a separate group session with a BCCS Child and Adolescent Therapist. Parents will come together with their teenager at the end where they will be supported to communicate, reflect, and connect. Parents are welcome to attend without their child or young person if that is a more comfortable option. To book your space, please contact Catherine Munns asap; places are likely to fill quickly: cmunns@bccs.org.uk (A Flyer of the event is displayed on the Church Notice board).

3. Appeals:

Caritas Diocese of Brentwood

In the Gospel narratives, we hear of the family displaced from their home, finding solace in a humble stable, cradling their newborn amidst the simplicity of their surroundings. This Holy Family, vulnerable yet resilient, resonates profoundly, urging us to reach out to those facing hardships during this Advent season. It prompts us to remember that amidst the festivities, there are individuals and families across Essex and East

London experiencing great difficulties, requiring our support, kindness, and care. Numerous charitable organisations persist in their efforts to aid the most vulnerable in our communities, and they rely on our collective support. Please visit the Caritas website to access links to the many charities in need of generosity and volunteers.

[Caritas Diocese of Brentwood \(caritasbrentwood.org\)](http://Caritas Diocese of Brentwood (caritasbrentwood.org))

CAFOD Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal

Donate to CAFOD's Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal at cafod.org.uk/ipc or call 0303 303 3030 to support those affected and get funds to local trusted experts in Gaza and southern Israel who have been working alongside communities helping those most in need. Your donation will help support aid workers providing urgent humanitarian aid including food, water, and emergency shelter to those in need. Thank you for your prayers.

4. Job adverts:

St. Joseph The Worker School – Head Teacher Vacancy

St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School is a popular, nurturing and outstanding school whose Catholic ethos is at the heart of all that we do. The Governors of St Joseph the Worker are delighted to be in a position to offer the opportunity to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Head Teacher to our successful and caring school. Applications are invited from experienced, enthusiastic, and suitably qualified, practising Catholic leaders to play a key role in building on the success of our friendly school. The successful applicant will work with governors to shape the strategic direction of the school and will be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school, leading a team that strives together for the good of the pupils. Applications are invited from existing Headteachers and experienced Deputy Headteachers with great leadership experience who are capable and interested in driving whole school improvement. Full details of the post and application form are available on www.st-josephworker.essex.sch.uk/Key Information/Vacancies. Completed applications should be sent to recruitment@st-josephworker.essex.sch.uk

or to the school office marked CONFIDENTIAL FAO MRS L WILLATS
Closing Date: 11 March 2024 at 12 Noon.

Housekeeper -Ongar

The successful applicant will prepare meals for the Parish Priest and effectively manage the routine cleaning of the Presbytery to ensure that it provides a comfortable living space for the Parish priest.

Hours: 6 Hours per week

Salary: £10.90 per hour

Start Date: ASAP

Apply by sending a CV and covering letter (no longer than A4) to hr@brcdt.org

Closing date for applications is 15th March 2024

The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre

are recruiting a couple/two adults to support the nine elderly sisters who live in the main house. The role is residential in a two-bedroom bungalow, adjacent to the main home in Colchester. Precise role, and salary are dependent on the skills of the successful applicants.

For further information please contact: crssuk@canonesses.co.uk

Cleaner - Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

16 hours per week cleaning vacancy. Please see the website for details <https://www.olorcps.net/school-info/vacancies>. All positions are subject to statutory safeguarding checks.

HCPT Easter Lourdes Volunteers Wanted

Are you, or do you know anyone who is 18 - 30 years old and would like the opportunity to travel with The Brentwood Group on Pilgrimage to Lourdes this Easter? HCPT Group 709 are an all-adult service group who are looking for enthusiastic, hard-working individuals to join us between **1st-6th April 2024** in Lourdes to help facilitate an unforgettable week for disabled and disadvantaged children from all over the world. If you would like more information or think this is something you may want to get involved in, please contact us at group709@hcpt.org.uk or via Instagram by searching HCPT Group 709. Sign up deadline for new group members is February 7th, 2024.

VOLUNTARY TREASURER NEEDED

Do you have financial experience and a couple of hours per week to spare?

If so, the National Justice and Peace Network would like to hear from you.

Due to the sad passing of their Treasurer, they are now in urgent need of a new one. If you are looking for some voluntary work, and share their passion for social action, please email: - admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

Supply Teachers - Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

We are also looking to build a team of Supply Teachers

Please Contact Mr Parascandolo via info@olorcps.net for further details.

Vacancies for Foundation Governors

have arisen at several Catholic schools across the Diocese and expressions of interests are being sought from practising committed Catholics for the ministry.

The term of office is for four years from the date of appointment.

Foundation Governors are personally appointed by the Bishop to Diocesan schools to represent his interests and those of the Catholic community.

Our schools would benefit from people with a range of skills and experiences including Finance, Education, Special Needs, Legal and Administration.

Anyone interested in the role and mission of Foundation Governor should not be put off by a lack of experience. Appropriate training is available during the period of service.

If you are interested in becoming Foundation Governor please email your expression of interest to governanceappointments@brcdt.org or call: 01277 265216


Catholic Dictionary

Laetare Sunday

(Latin for "Rejoice")
/leɪˈtɑːri/

is the fourth Sunday of Lent. The counterpart of Gaudete Sunday or third Sunday of Advent. This Sunday gets its name from the first few words (incipit) of the traditional Latin entrance (Introit) for the Mass of the day. "Laetare Jerusalem" ("Rejoice, O Jerusalem") is Latin from Isaiah 66:10. The priests wear rose vestments to express encouragement and joy.

Catholics@Work



This Week's Article:



Pope Francis greets participants in the conference (ANSA)

Pope Francis highlights women's role in Church and society

Pope Francis addresses an international conference on women in the Church and emphasises the importance of recognising women's contributions while calling for unity and education to promote women's rights and dignity.

By Francesca Merlo

In his address to the participants of the International Conference titled "Women in the Church: Builders of Humanity," Pope Francis extended a warm greeting to all attendees, expressing gratitude for their presence and the organisation of the event.

"The Church needs to keep this in mind, because the Church is herself a woman: a daughter, a bride, and a mother," said the Pope.

He highlighted the significance of recognising and valuing women's contributions within the people of God, and he called for unity, discernment, and collaboration to achieve this goal.

The conference, which gathers individuals from all over the world, focuses on highlighting the exemplary holiness of ten women: Josephine Bakhita, Magdeleine de Jesus, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Mary MacKillop, Laura Montoya, Kateri Tekakwitha, Teresa of Calcutta, Rafqa Pietra Choboq Ar-Rayès, Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, and Daphrose Mukasanga.

Pope Francis underscored the significance of their charitable, educational, and prayerful initiatives, which exemplify the unique reflection of God's holiness through the feminine genius.

"The contribution of women is more necessary than ever," emphasised Pope Francis, acknowledging the challenges of hatred, violence, and ideological conflicts in today's world. He spoke about the urgent need for women's contributions, which he said are characterised by tenderness and compassion, in order to foster unity and restore humanity's true identity.

On the topic of education, Pope Francis commended the collaboration between the conference and various Catholic academic institutions.

"Every effort to present students with testimonies of holiness, especially of feminine sanctity, can encourage them to aim

higher," he said, stressing the importance of presenting role models to inspire future generations.

Pope Francis concluded his address by highlighting the ongoing struggles faced by women worldwide, including violence, inequality, and injustice.

He called for concerted efforts to address these issues, emphasizing the transformative power of education for girls and young women in promoting overall human development.

Bringing his address to a close, Pope Francis entrusted the outcomes of the conference to the Lord and imparted his blessing upon the participants before urging continued commitment to the advancement of women's rights and dignity.

