Diocese of Shrewsbury

Department of Education

RE and CATHOLIC LIFE

NEWSLETTER

Autumn Term 2026 No.1

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues

Welcome back to a new academic year. Hopefully you return well rested after the summer break. The weather has certainly been kind!

It is almost a year since Pope Leo XVI published his apostolic letter, '*Drawing new maps of hope*'. Written to mark the 60th anniversary of Gravissimum Educationis (the Second Vatican Council's declaration on education), it uses the beautiful image of constellations to suggest orientation. Just as travellers navigate by the stars, we too need guiding points to help us discern where we are going. Led by the Gospel, Catholic education should provide these guiding points as we accompany our children and young people on their journeys.



'*Drawing new maps of hope*' reminds us of our mission as Catholic educators, to educate the whole person, to place relationships at the centre, to teach with love and joy, to cultivate the interior life, to form critical and truthful thinkers, to advocate the responsible use of technology, to prioritise the vulnerable, and to build communities of hope. Pope Leo's letter urges us to ask ourselves, are we *choreographers of hope*: competent professionals and credible witnesses who accompany our children and young people, who connect learning with life, who protect their dignity, who encourage their gifts and who help them become responsible contributors to society?

Cardinal Nichols offers a summary of Pope Leo's letter and highlights the three priorities Pope Leo adds to the seven commitments already identified by Pope Francis in his Global Compact on Education. These three priorities should underpin all our endeavours in the classroom, in the shared spaces and in the wider Catholic life and mission of our schools:

a) 'The first regards the inner life. Young people ask for depth; they need spaces for silence, discernment, and dialogue with their conscience and with God.'

b) 'The second regards the digital human: let us educate in a judicious use of technology and of AI, placing the person before the algorithm and harmonizing technical, emotional, social, spiritual and ecological intelligence.'

c) ‘The third regards unarmed and disarming peace: let us educate in non- violent languages, reconciliation, bridges and not walls. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt 5:9) becomes the method and content of learning.’

Perhaps ‘*Drawing new maps of hope*’ might provide a map, a guide for you and your school community as you journey through this year to ensure our Catholic mission is lived out. For as Pope Leo says,

“*be servants of the world of education, choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty. Fewer labels, more stories; fewer sterile contrasts, more harmony in the Spirit. Then our constellation will not only shine, but it will also guide us: towards the truth that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32), towards the fraternity that consolidates justice (cf. Mt 23:8), towards the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5).” ‘Drawing new maps of hope’, Saint Peter’s Basilica, 27 October 2025*

1. THE SEASON OF CREATION (1st September to 4th October)



The *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation* is celebrated on 1st September and marks the official start of the Season of Creation, a time of sustained prayer and action lasting a month and four days and ending on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi.

During this season we are encouraged to pray and engage in community events in order to deepen our relationship with God, our neighbour and the earth we share, being ever more attentive to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

The theme that Pope Leo XVI has chosen for 2026 is taken from Isaiah 2:4

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares

and their spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2:4)

Pope Leo highlights the links between armed conflict, environmental destruction, and human suffering. War, he argues, creates *“a vicious cycle, which destroys ecosystems, contaminates essential resources, such as air and water, and undermines food security. This fuels poverty, inequality, and new social tensions that can contribute to the emergence of further conflicts”*.

To break this cycle, he suggests that authentic ecological conversion and a peaceful world demand that we *“renew our hearts.”* This inner transformation allows new possibilities to be opened. *“What has been used for destruction,”* he reflects, *“can be redirected toward life, toward the care of the poor, the nourishment of the hungry, and the safeguarding of creation.”*

Pope Leo concludes his message for this start of the Season of Creation in prayer saying, "*May the Lord grant us the courage to walk along this path, so that in our time, swords may indeed be beaten into ploughshares, and the promise of the Gospel may take deeper root in our world, and the peace of Christ may reign over all of creation."*

Click here for CAFOD's resources for the season which include prayer resources and a novena to St Francis of Assisi CAFOD resources for the Season of Creation

Resources can also be found on the Bishops' Conference website: https://www.cbcew.org.uk/season-of-creation/

2. POPE LEO'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Every month Pope Leo entrusts his Worldwide Prayer Network with prayer intentions that express his great concerns for humanity and for the mission of the Church. His monthly prayer intention is a global summons to transform our prayers into "concrete actions"; it is a compass for the mission. https://www.praywiththepope.net/popes-intentions/

Pope Leo XVI's prayer intention for September chimes with the Season of Creation as it is *For the care of water*. He prays, *"Water is a symbol of your grace and love that renews us through Baptism. We beg forgiveness that it has been turned into a commodity, forgetting that it is a universal gift, a right without borders"*.

Pope Leo has repeated Pope Francis's call for us to live simply. He asks us to denounce waste and pollution and to defend the right of every person to drink without fear and without inequality.

How can our school community's increase our care for water this month and beyond? How can we encourage our children and young people to advocate for clean water access to all people?

"Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it."

You can watch a video of Pope Leo's prayer intention here: https://www.praywiththepope.net/video/

3. MASS TO CELEBRATE THE START OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

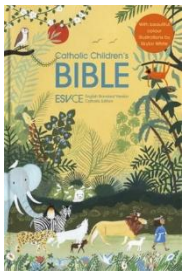
We have organised 3 Masses to mark the start of the 2026-27 academic year on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of September at differing locations across the Diocese. All Masses will begin at 4.30pm.

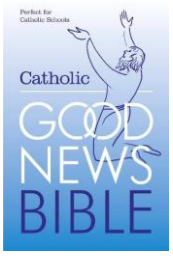
Tuesday 22nd September at St Patrick's, Wellington
Wednesday 23rd September at St Peter's, Hazel Grove
Thursday 24th September Christ the King, Bromborough

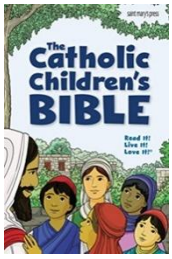
Detailed car parking and hospitality arrangements will be emailed to schools, and we very much hope that you and your staff are able to join us to celebrate Mass on one of these dates.

4. BIBLES

I am often asked which Bible translations would be best for schools to purchase. The start of the year seems an apt time to remind schools that the Bishops' Conference have a list of approved versions of Scripture:







- Revised Standard Version
- Jerusalem Bible
- New Jerusalem Bible
- New Revised Standard Version
- Good News Translation: Catholic Edition
- English Standard Version: Catholic Edition (ESV-CE)

Further information can be found on the Liturgy Office website here.

As the ESV-CE is currently used in the liturgy it is advisable for this version to be used for prayer and liturgy in school. For religious education, the Good News Bible *Catholic Edition* may be appropriate for primary pupils. Many schools have acquired the Catholic Children's Bible from St Mary's Press which is the Good News Translation.

NB: *To love You more dearly: The Prayer and Liturgy Directory* and accompanying documents from the Diocese, and *To know You more clearly: The RE Directory* offer more detailed direction for the use of Scripture in prayer and liturgy and in RE.

5. LITURGICAL CALENDAR AND THEMES FOR 2026-7

With thanks to Jane Porter, School Chaplain and Trust Leader of Chaplaincy at the St Thomas Catholic Academy Trust, for sharing a liturgical calendar with themes for this academic year shared here in case it is of help to schools.
The calendar is offered in a Word and Excel format so it can be easily adapted for each context.
Liturgical Calendar 2026-27 – Word Doc
Liturgical Calendar 2026-2027 Excel

6. MASS SETTINGS

A reminder that *To love You more dearly: The Prayer and Liturgy Directory* highlights the importance of prioritising the singing of the Mass over the singing of hymns during Mass.

You will know that we currently sing the *Mass of Christ the Saviour*, Dan Schutte, during our celebrations of Mass. The score can be purchased by OCP here https://www.ocp.org/en-us/collections/dg/23/mass-of-christ-the-savior-misa-cristo-salvador

We are planning to introduce another Mass setting over the course of this year beginning with the Eucharistic Acclamations at the Masses celebrated to mark the start of the new

academic year. We will be singing the *Mass of St Bernadette*, CJM. This can be downloaded for free on their website. https://www.cjmmusic.com/resources-ideas/mass-of-st-bernadette/

NB: the presentations from our formation opportunities focusing on music in prayer and liturgy can be found on our website.

7. GOD WHO SPEAKS

Fleur Dorrell and the team at God Who Speaks have chosen Creation as their theme for September. These may be helpful resources for teaching Branch 1, Creation and Covenant, as well as supporting the wider Catholic life and mission of the school.

Creation Care - www.godwhospeaks.uk/creation-care/
Jubilee Bible Garden Project - www.godwhospeaks.uk/bible-garden-project/
Gardens in the Bible - www.godwhospeaks.uk/gardens-in-the-bible/
Biblically Wild - www.godwhospeaks.uk/biblically-wild/
Run Your Own Noah Day in schools - www.godwhospeaks.uk/run-your-own-noah-day/

8. SPECIAL DAYS OF PRAYER DURING SEPTEMBER

There are a number of Sundays in September nominated for particular prayer intentions, including **13th September**, which is **Education Sunday**, and 27th September, which is Disability Awareness Sunday.

God Who Speaks have resources to support these special days of prayer. Perhaps they might offer a focus for the weekly Celebration of the Word (Gospel Assembly).

13th September: **Education Sunday**.
www.godwhospeaks.uk/scripture-for-assemblies-and-meditations/

20th September: Home Mission Sunday – Scripture, AI and Magnifica Humanitas.
www.godwhospeaks.uk/biblical-response-to-magnifica-humanitas/

27th September: Disability Awareness Sunday
www.godwhospeaks.uk/inclusive-catechesis-resources/

Further resources for Education Sunday on 13th September can be found on the Bishops' Conference website https://www.cbcew.org.uk/education-sunday/

9. BUILDING ON THE LEGACY OF WOMEN'S PIVOTAL ROLE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The CES (Catholic Education Service) are pleased to share with you an upcoming conference organised by the Thea Bowman Research Centre at St Mary's University, marking **60 years of women at the University**.

Building on the Legacy of Women's Pivotal Role in Catholic Education will bring together practitioners, researchers and educators to explore the historical and contemporary contributions of women to Catholic education in the UK and beyond.

Friday, 6 November 2026 | 9.30 am–4.30 pm
St Mary's University, Twickenham, UK

The event will feature keynote contributions from **Sr Dr Marie-Kolbe Zamora OSF** and **Dr Maureen Glackin**

NB: The organisers are also inviting researchers, school and college leaders, and Catholic education practitioners to submit proposals exploring *the legacy and ongoing role of women in Catholic education from historical, educational, theological or cultural perspectives*.

Call for Papers – Key information:

- 20-minute presentations
- Abstracts of up to 300 words
- **Abstract submission deadline: 5 September 2026**
- Full conference registration: £75 (£55 unwaged/concessions)

PRIMARY

10. EYFS

In addition to *the Support for implementing and teaching the RE model curriculum in EYFS* session at St Hugh's and St John RC Church Parish Hall, WA14 5NB on 15th September 12.00-3.30pm, there will be a shorter recording shared with schools afterwards highlighting the main messages given on the afternoon.

11. OPEN FOR CREATION – ONELIFE MUSIC

OPEN. for Creation begins on the 1st September and continues throughout the wonderful season, as we give thanks for the world's beauty and creation.

Join with Dan and Emily each weekday throughout the Season of Creation, for these short times of prayer and song to celebrate the Season. The popular resource of OPEN will be

used in primary schools across the country each day as we celebrate the gift of God's creation together.

12. THE MARK 10 MISSION CONFERENCE

The Mark 10 Mission are hosting a day for Catholic primary school leaders, teachers and chaplains to build knowledge, confidence and understanding of prayer and liturgy.

The Mark 10 Mission and special guests will explore the best ways to help children encounter Jesus at school.

CONFERENCE DETAILS

Venue: All Saints Shrine, Redclyffe Road, Trafford Park, Urmston, Stretford, Manchester, M41 7LG

Date: Wednesday 16th September 2026 Time: 9.15am-3.15pm

Price: £75 Lunch and refreshments provided.

To find out more and to book click here: https://www.themark10mission.co.uk/conference

SECONDARY

13. MEETING WITH THE SECOND IN RE

As indicated before the summer holidays, I have scheduled an opportunity for our Seconds in RE to meet as I recognise that a number of them have the responsibility for KS3.

We will meet 9.30am to 12.00pm on Wednesday 18th November. Venue TBC.

To book please follow this link Booking Form

RSHE

14. RSHE CONSULTATION

As previously detailed, from 1 September 2026, when the revised RSHE statutory guidance is introduced, schools are required to use this to plan their delivery of RSHE. Similarly, Ofsted inspectors will be required to draw upon the revised guidance in their evaluation of the appropriateness of the curriculum for RSHE.

We have been informed that inspectors will be proportionate in their approach to evaluating the implementation of recent guidance, and inspection is not a compliance

check but a broader evaluation of the quality of provision for pupils. Inspectors will take into consideration the process, thought and steps the school has taken to ensure that the curriculum is moving in the right direction to fully comply with the statutory guidance and that this is a work in progress; the issue would be, if there was no evidence of this. **Schools are therefore advised to keep a timeline and track the steps they have and are taking to implement the revised statutory guidance in readiness for inspection, should any concerns be raised.**

15. LIFE TO THE FULL

Looking at the updates page on the Life to the Full website it appears that virtually all the new content is available for both primary and secondary. The final KS2 element, 'Made for Love', is due to be uploaded in October. This should enable schools to go out to consultation

2026 Updates – Ten Ten Resources

CPDF

We have published our CPDF offer for this year on the website, which can be accessed here
To attend any of our CPDF sessions, please follow this link or use the links in the table

And finally,

In advance of Education Sunday on 13th September, I leave you with the letter sent from Rt Rev Marcus Stock, Chair of the CES, to all Catholic schools in England and Wales,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This year, the Catholic Church in England and Wales will observe Education Sunday on 13th September, the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.
The Gospel reading this year for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, is taken from St Matthew's Gospel:

At that time: Peter came up and said to Jesus, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-35)

As the new academic year begins in our Catholic schools, colleges and universities, and rejoicing in the overflowing forgiveness of Our Heavenly Father which is revealed to us in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, we place before Almighty God in prayer all the pupils and students, staff members and leaders, governors and directors of our educational institutions.

During this special Jubilee Year of St Francis of Assisi, proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the Saint's death, we also pray that we will be inspired to imitate the Poor Man of Assisi to work for peace, live simply, be of service to the poor, and trustworthy stewards of God's creation.

On Education Sunday, we give thanks to the Lord for the vocations of all who work within the Catholic sector: the teaching and support staff, chaplains, school leaders and governors. It is through their commitment and hard work that pupils and students in our schools, colleges and universities can thrive and contribute to society, through their formation and education.

In the academic year ahead, let us endeavour to give witness to the message of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace in the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to pray that our Catholic schools, colleges and universities will be beacons of His good news in our communities.

With every blessing, I remain

The Rt Rev Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds
Chairman of the Catholic Education Service

God bless,

Julia