

Liturgy - and more

*“Welcoming all into
the joy of Jesus”*

As Catholics, we are all aware of the importance of the Mass—weekday and weekend. We must ensure that **our churches are places of genuine welcome**, where each person is greeted with warmth and respect. It is crucial that our readings are delivered prayerfully, allowing the Word to resonate deeply with the community, and that the sacraments are distributed with reverence, mindful of their sacred significance. **We are also conscious that music is crucial to our liturgy.**

Our churches unite joyfully in worship for Christmas and Easter services, coming together as one faith community to celebrate the greatest mysteries of our belief. In this spirit of unity and devotion, may we continue to foster environments where **participation in the liturgy uplifts, inspires, and draws all closer to Christ**. But our Parishioners long for even deeper engagement and spiritual growth. Many have expressed a keen desire for opportunities that reach beyond the liturgy itself: **Bible studies** to help them explore the richness of Scripture; **discussion groups** where faith can be examined, questioned, and strengthened in fellowship; and the chance to embark on **pilgrimages and retreats**, stepping away from daily routines to encounter God in new and transformative ways.

Young Families and Youth Formation

One of the core priorities of our Parish is to support and engage young families. We are fortunate to have the affiliation with St. Paul's Primary School. This provides a unique opportunity to foster faith and community among families. Recently, we welcomed a dedicated Parish Youth Worker – Pamela Thompson - who is planning exciting programmes for various ages including **Young Vincentians, Fun Fridays, Youth Groups and Faith in Action**.



We are also committed to ensuring that **all children feel welcomed and supported**, including those who attend other local schools. Parents are actively encouraged to participate in their children's spiritual development, including joining them in Sacramental preparation and community activities that foster a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. We are dedicated to helping children recognise the importance of these milestones not only in their personal faith journeys, but also in their roles as members of the wider community. Through thoughtful catechesis, we continue to **emphasise awareness of social issues**—including homelessness—and encourage active engagement with those in need and with local charities

Pastoral

We are a community, and Parishioners can remain after Mass both at weekends and during the week to meet and socialise in the halls next door for **coffee and cake** and sometimes for something stronger monthly at one of our weekend evening Masses!

We have many volunteers who lead great ministries. Our Sacramental programmes are shared between the our churches – **Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage preparation**. We also have a **Bereavement team** that offers friendship and counselling. For housebound Parishioners, we have a **team of Ministers who can bring the Eucharist to them in their homes or care homes**.

Each church has **Adoration teams, flower teams, readers, welcomers, choirs** and more and we always welcome more Parishioners to join these teams! We offer courses and opportunities to people wishing to explore the possibility of joining our churches or building their faith including the **Alpha** and **RCIA** courses.

We come together to raise funds for local and other charities through a number of **social events**, and each church holds traditional annual events such as **Summer Open Air Masses** and **Blessing of the Easter baskets**

Parish Pastoral Council

Our Parish has two churches, a school and a weekly attendance of almost 500. But we only have one Priest. The PPC was formed a year ago under the leadership of Chris Bourne an experienced long-time Parishioner, and the team includes representatives from both churches.

The Parish Pastoral Council's role is to:

- **Promote the mission** of the Church within the Parish
- **Be responsible together** with the Parish Priest for the management and operation of the Parish.
- **Communicate regularly** with the Parish community to ensure its views are being heard.
- **To represent the Parish** in discussions with the Diocese, the Moderated Parish and other groups, as appropriate.

Our communication meetings have established our priorities as being: Liturgy, Pastoral and Young Families. We also want to be an outward looking church that's very much part of our local community.



Money!

Our Parish's offertory income is around £190,000 each year, most of which comes from Standing Orders received from about 40% of Parishioners. This is spent on liturgical costs, maintaining the premises, utilities, staffing and contributing to the funding of the Diocese.

We urge more Parishioners to donate by Standing Order and would ask those already doing so to increase these. **After all - a 20% increase on a monthly Standing Order of £50 equates to only 3 cups of coffee!**

We have not appealed for an increase to Standing Orders for many years. We have managed until now by having only one priest and presbytery and from renting the presbytery, by renting out the other presbytery and by only doing repairs when critical. Parish activities are increasing, with an accent on Youth, and we have a backlog of building maintenance (some of which we need to undertake by law).

Inflation does not go away, and as costs have risen so must our income - utility bills on four buildings have to be paid. So, please help us:

HOW TO PAY

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The Catholic Parish of Esher & Thames Ditton

www.holyfamilyelbridge.church



Holy Name
Esher



Our Lady of Lourdes
Thames Ditton

I have been a priest for 20 years and have many reasons to give thanks to God. At the top of my list are the people of The Parish of Esher & Thames Ditton. Our spiritual journey together during the last three years has made me realise how much we need each other and how it is easier to experience God's love through church's practices and as part of a Parish community.

This pamphlet highlights many of the good things that are taking place in our Parish. These include the services we provide, the devotions, Parish courses and Bible groups, children's and youth activities, and a variety of charitable and social events. Thank you for participating in the mission of our Parish where we strive to bring people closer to God and "Welcome all into the joy of Jesus".

May I ask for your prayers and ongoing support so that we can continue in our mission of sanctification of our community and bringing the light of God's love to all.

Fr Sebastian Paul, Parish Priest