

SEDE VACANTE

The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

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To be read at all Saturday evening and Sunday Masses in Walton, Esher, Thames Ditton, Molesey, and Hersham on 22/23 August 2026

My dear brothers and sisters
in the eastern cluster of churches in the new Parish of Weybridge,

I am very conscious that you have been living with a great deal of uncertainty for over a year now. The whole of the Diocese has been praying with you for Father Sebastian and his family. I know that you have been helped to keep the sacramental and pastoral life of your churches alive during these months through the ministry of a variety of priests who have joined you as ‘supply priests’.

In the pastoral reality of the new Parish of Weybridge, in accordance with the vision set out in ‘The Word Who is Life’, the group of priests spread across the whole of the parish is, effectively, the pastor for each of the churches of the former Deanery.

Within these new parishes, it is necessary for those priests to discern how most effectively to serve the Faithful of the church communities entrusted to them.

After prayer and reflection, and in conversation with Canon Chris Spain (Moderator of the Parish of Weybridge) and Monsignor Tony Barry (Delegate for Surrey), Father Ruslan Kurdiumov and Father Richard Biggerstaff have devised between them a plan for the pastoral care of the five churches at the east end of the parish.

Father Sebastian, who remains a member of the clergy team, will continue, for now, to live in the presbytery at Esher. Please God, in time, he will be able to exercise his priestly apostolate once again. Meanwhile, though, his illness prevents him from being able to do very much in terms of the pastoral round.

Father Ruslan will, therefore, be the principal point of contact for the churches of Walton, Esher, and Thames Ditton and, to all intents and purposes, the parish priest who has specific pastoral oversight of those three churches. It will, generally, be him who celebrates the Sunday Masses there. Father Richard will be the principal point of contact for the churches of Molesey and Hersham and, to all intents and purposes, the parish priest who has the specific pastoral oversight of those two churches. It will, generally, be him who celebrates the Sunday Masses there. Between them, under the direction of the Moderator of the Parish, these priests will take on responsibility for those other areas of pastoral care that are such a strength of our church communities

This kind of pastoral provision will inevitably bring some changes, but also a degree of stability. Similar things are beginning to happen right across the Diocese. The details of Mass provision and pastoral cover will be fleshed-out with you by Father Ruslan, in consultation with the existing pastoral councils. Both he and Father Richard are ready to take on these new and additional responsibilities and are looking to the start of the new academic year to inaugurate the new arrangements.

I know you will keep them in your prayers, just as they will surely be praying for you. I am certain, too, that together with them, you will continue to grow and flourish as communities of faith and schools of Christian discipleship.

With the assurance of my prayers for you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first letter of "Jonathan" being a large, looped capital 'J'.

Canon Jonathan Martin
Diocesan Administrator