



# **St Cecilia's Catholic Life Newsletter Autumn Term 2025**

**St Cecilia's**  

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**R. C. High School**



## *Year 7 Welcome Mass*

At the start of the term, we celebrated our Year 7 Welcome Mass—a wonderful occasion attended by the entire Year 7 cohort along with some of their parents. A special thank you goes to Fr Benjamin, who celebrated the Mass with us and kindly brought a bag of treats, sweets, and cakes for the pupils. Our readers and musicians did an excellent job, making the Mass feel truly special. As always, we are grateful to our altar serving team, who continue to grow in confidence and skill as they support the priest during the Holy Mass. The readings were carefully chosen to reflect our mission statement, focusing on the Parable of the Talents. Fr Benjamin's homily effectively conveyed the message that all our pupils are made in God's image and have been gifted with unique talents by Him. It is St Cecilia's role to help them discover these gifts and learn to use them wisely. The ceremony featured our processional cross, acolytes, thurible, and boat. In fact, the team did such a great job that a few people found the incense quite powerful! We are proud to maintain the traditional practice of using the thurible to provide incense during the Mass. In Catholic tradition, incense symbolizes prayers rising to God, purification, and sanctification—the smoke cleanses the sacred space and signifies the presence of the divine. This practice brings a sense of mystery and reverence to the worship experience. During the Mass, the thurible was used to incense the altar, which represents Christ; the Gospel book, as it contains God's Word; the bread and wine, which will become the Body and Blood of Christ; and the priest and congregation, symbolizing that the entire Church is lifted up to God in prayer. A special thank you to Maggie and Skye Luke for fulfilling this important role. Mr Duffy and Mrs Hall also spoke at the Mass, warmly welcoming our pupils into the Catholic community of St Cecilia's. It was a fitting and beautiful way to begin the term and our pupils' journey at St Cecilia's.



# Sacred Art

This term, we are delighted to launch our Prayer Programme—a key part of our school’s spiritual life. This programme is thoughtfully designed to offer pupils a variety of meaningful opportunities to experience and encounter God, helping them to grow in their personal faith journeys. Central to this is the understanding that prayer is not limited to words alone. Our aim is to show students that there are many different ways to pray—through silence, scripture, music, reflection, and even art. Each term, we begin by exploring Sacred Art, using our beautiful school chapel as a sacred and peaceful setting. In this unit, pupils are invited to reflect deeply on religious artwork paired with scripture. This creative approach helps students to connect visually, emotionally, and spiritually with the stories and teachings of our faith. By examining the rich symbolism and emotion captured in these works of art, pupils are encouraged to enter into a meditative space where prayer becomes a personal and imaginative encounter with the Divine. This term, our Year 7 pupils focused on the powerful Gospel scene of The Calming of the Storm. Through both scripture and artistic interpretation, students explored what it means to place their trust in Jesus, especially during life’s challenges. The story served as a beautiful reminder that, no matter how turbulent the waters may seem, we are never alone. Jesus remains with us, asking us—as he asked his disciples—“Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (Mark 4:40). In their reflections, pupils were invited to consider their own “storms” and to hear the calming voice of Jesus speaking directly to their hearts: “Be calm, be still.” It has been moving to see how this experience has helped our students begin the term with a renewed sense of peace, faith, and connection with God.



# Sacred Spaces

This term, we enter into Ordinary Time according to the Church's liturgical calendar.

Our sacred spaces are therefore adorned in green, the traditional colour for Ordinary Time.

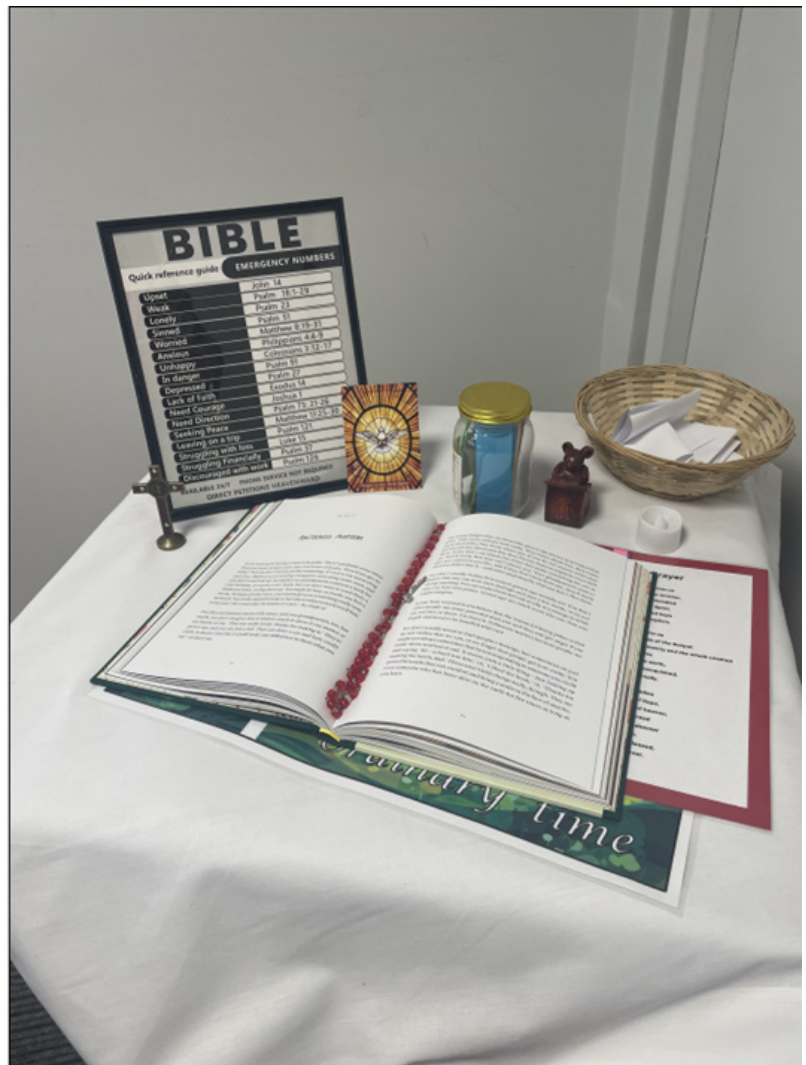
During this term, we have also celebrated the feasts of St Carlo Acutis, St Mother Teresa, and St John Paul II.

Each saint was honoured with a dedicated week of focus, which included:

- **Celebrations of the Word (our assemblies)**
- **Information shared on TV screens around the school**
- **Special prayer intentions during form time**
- **Images and displays in our sacred spaces**

To mark these special feast days, the colour of our sacred spaces was changed to white, symbolising joy and celebration in the Church.

In this article, we include images reflecting both the green of Ordinary Time and the white used during our special focus on the saints.



# St Teresa of Calcutta Week

Throughout this term, we have been getting to know our new form saints. During the week beginning 22nd September, we focused our attention on St. Teresa of Calcutta.

Each year group prepared a Celebration of the Word centred on the life and work of St. Teresa. The Gospel focus for the week was The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, helping us reflect on the importance of serving others with compassion and humility.

We saw a wonderful variety of presentations from all year groups, each highlighting why St. Teresa is such a powerful role model and an example of how to live a life of faith and service. Through her life, we also explored the clear connection to Catholic Social Teaching, especially the call to recognise the dignity and worth of every human person.

St. Teresa truly lived her faith in action. To help bring her story to life, images of St. Teresa were displayed around school, including on our TV screens and in the chapel. It is important that we cherish our saints and strive to learn from their good example as we grow in faith together.



# *St Wilfrid's Catholic Church Visit*

On Thursday, 2nd October, our Year 11 students embarked on an educational visit to St Wilfrid's Catholic Church as part of their ongoing GCSE Religious Education revision.

This enriching trip provided a unique opportunity for pupils to engage directly with the history, art, and architecture that are central to the Catholic faith. During the visit, students were able to explore the distinctive features of this beautiful 19th-century church, gaining a deeper appreciation for its design and historical significance.

The intricate sacred art and architectural elements they observed highlighted the ways in which physical spaces and symbolism play a vital role in Catholic worship and tradition. By experiencing these aspects first-hand, our pupils were able to enhance their subject knowledge beyond the classroom.

This immersive experience not only supported their GCSE revision but also fostered a greater understanding of the Catholic faith's rich heritage and cultural importance.

We are proud to offer our students such opportunities that combine academic learning with real-world experience, helping to bring their studies to life.



# St Wilfrid's Catholic Church Visit



# Macmillan Cake Sale

We were delighted to support the Macmillan Cancer Support charity once again with our annual cake sale. Pupils and staff came together to bake, donate, and enjoy a wide variety of delicious treats — all for a great cause.

Thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of our school community, we raised an impressive **£105.25** to help support those living with cancer. A special thank you to Mrs Crosby, Mrs Holt and Mrs Bell to helped to sell the cakes and organise the event.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed, organised, and supported the event. Your kindness makes a real difference.



## *Rosary : October the Month of Mary*



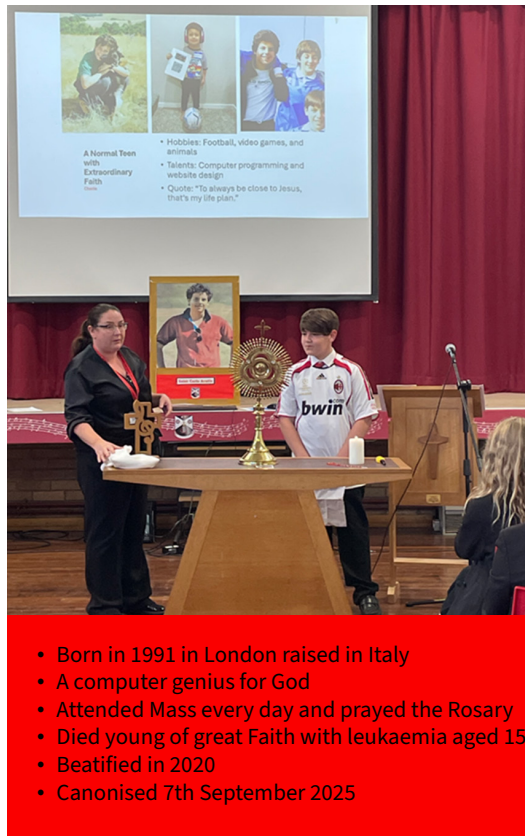
As is tradition at St Cecilia's, we highlight the importance of Our Lady during the months of October and May, which are specially devoted to her in the Catholic Church.

Throughout October, pupils and staff have been gathering in the chapel each lunchtime to pray a decade of the Rosary, focusing on the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Luminous Mysteries. These times of prayer help us to reflect on the life of Jesus through the eyes of Mary, deepening our understanding of the Gospel and drawing us closer to Christ.

To aid our meditation, we use visual images displayed on the screen and printed cards, allowing us to contemplate each mystery more fully. Pupils and staff take turns to lead the prayers, using rosary beads and prayer cards as we unite together in this beautiful tradition of our faith.

The Rosary remains a powerful form of prayer in the Church, encouraging us to pause, reflect, and trust in the intercession of Our Blessed Mother.

# St Carlo Acutis Week



## St Carlo Acutis – A Modern Saint for Our Times

St Carlo Acutis is one of the newest saints to inspire our school community. Last year, we chose him as the patron of our new Humanities block, which was officially opened by Canon Doyle and Mr Flynn, our former Chair of Governors. The building is now named the Carlo Acutis Building in his honour. We have also named one of our form groups after St Carlo, which means that each year we hold a special focus week where pupils learn about his life and reflect on what we can take from his example of faith. This year, two of our form groups — led by Mrs Holt and Miss Lucas — planned and led Celebrations of the Word (our new name for assemblies) centred on the life and message of St Carlo. Pupils learned that Carlo was a typical teenager who loved computer games, football, and spending time with friends — yet he also lived a life of deep holiness and devotion. After being diagnosed with leukaemia, Carlo was quoted as saying: "I am happy because I have not wasted a minute of my life doing things that would not please God." He had a great love for the Eucharist, calling it his "highway to heaven." Mrs Holt used a monstrance during the celebration to help pupils understand the Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament — a belief that was central to Carlo's life and spirituality. St Carlo Acutis reminds us that holiness is possible in the modern world — and even as teenagers, we can live lives of purpose, faith, and love.

# St. John Paul II Week

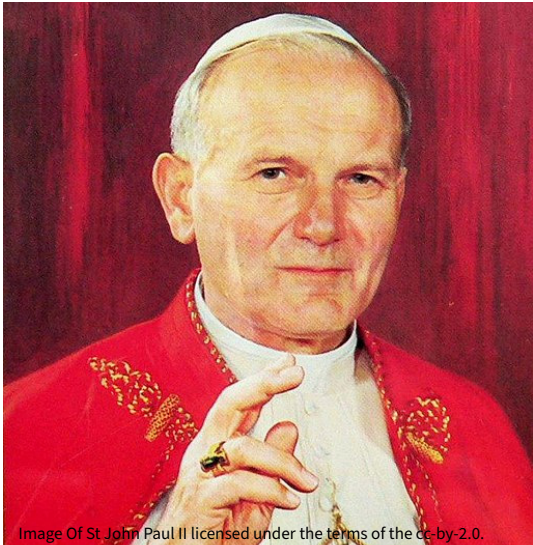


Image Of St John Paul II licensed under the terms of the cc-by-2.0.



St John Paul II is one of the newest saints to be honoured at St Cecilia's, and we are proud to include him in our community of patron saints. As a school, we are enjoying learning about the lives and legacies of these inspiring figures who help guide our faith. We recently celebrated St John Paul II Week, with a series of wonderful Celebrations of the Word, planned and led by our Paul House form groups. These assemblies helped us reflect on his life, his deep faith, and his powerful connection with young people. St John Paul II had a strong bond with Catholic youth and once encouraged them with the words: "It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness... He is the beauty to which you are so attracted... It is He who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise." He also believed that young people could embrace faith while fully living in the modern world, once stating: "Do not be afraid to be saints of the new millennium."

## 5 Interesting Facts about St John Paul II:

1. First non-Italian pope in over 450 years – He was elected pope in 1978 and was originally from Poland.
2. An accomplished actor and playwright – Before entering the priesthood, he had a passion for theatre and literature.
3. Survived an assassination attempt – In 1981, he was shot in St Peter's Square but later forgave his attacker.
4. Founded World Youth Day – A global event to inspire and connect young Catholics from around the world.
5. Visited 129 countries – More than any other pope, spreading the message of peace, faith, and human dignity.

St John Paul II's life reminds us that holiness is not about being perfect, but about offering our lives in service to others and to God — with courage, compassion, and love.

# *Weekly School Mass in Our Chapel*

Each week, we are blessed to celebrate **Holy Mass together as a school community**. All form groups, starting from Year 7, take part in preparing and leading the Mass.

This is a special opportunity for every form from **Year 7 to Year 11** to participate in a meaningful way, ensuring that **each form celebrates Mass at least once in our Chapel** throughout the year.

Our dedicated **GIFT Team** and **Altar Servers** play a key role in supporting the liturgy, helping everything run smoothly and prayerfully.

We are also extremely grateful to **Miss Berry**, who provides the beautiful music that enriches our worship.

During Mass, we join in singing the **Entrance Hymn, Alleluia, Offertory Hymn**, and conclude with our **beloved School Hymn**.

A heartfelt thank you to our priests — **Fr Benjamin, Fr Dutton, and Canon Doyle** — who generously give their time to celebrate and rotate **Masses** with us. Their presence and guidance mean so much to our school.

Together, through prayer, music, and service, we grow in faith and unity each week.



## *Fr Benjamin Visits St Cecilia's*

This term, our Year 11 pupils were treated to a special guest visit from Fr Benjamin of St Wilfred's. He joined us for an informal Q&A session, where pupils eagerly quizzed him on everything from his favourite food and football team to his vocation and work as a Catholic priest.

The Year 11s absolutely loved the opportunity to meet Fr Benjamin and appreciated seeing that members of the clergy are "ordinary people doing an extraordinary job." The conversation naturally flowed to questions about his hometown and country of Nigeria. Fr Benjamin spoke eloquently, expressing his love for Africa and his home country.

We are very grateful to Fr Benjamin for his wonderful support of our altar servers, helping to train them and encouraging them in their important role. Recently, he even shared cakes and sweets with us to celebrate his birthday!

Sadly, we have heard that Fr Benjamin will be leaving us soon. He will be greatly missed, and we wish him every blessing and success in his next venture. He is always welcome back to St. Ceciliass.



# Lectio Divina

As part of our prayer programme, we aim to show pupils that there are many different ways to pray and to experience God.

The programme is designed to grow in depth and complexity as pupils progress through the school. In Year 7, pupils explore Sacred Art; in Year 8, they experience Meditation; in Year 9, Sacred Music; in Year 10, Taizé Prayer; and in Year 11, they take part in Lectio Divina (or Divine Reading).

This ancient practice follows four stages:

- **Read (Lectio)**
- **Reflect (Meditatio)**
- **Respond (Oratio)**
- **Rest (Contemplatio)**

This time, the scripture we reflected on was The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). Pupils learned that scripture is alive and can speak to each of us in different ways.

We sat together in a circle in our beautiful chapel, listening to Taizé-style music, creating a prayerful atmosphere and an opportunity to encounter God and hear His voice through scripture.



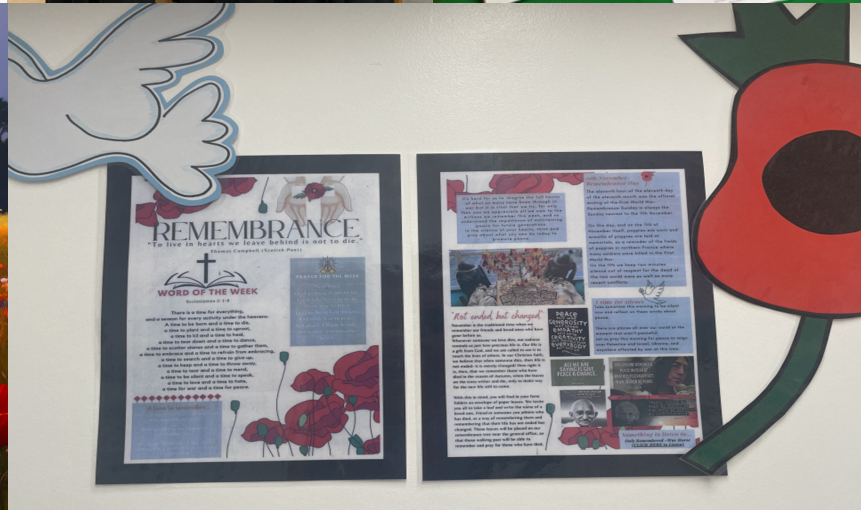
# Remembrance Week

Our school marked this year's Remembrance events with great respect and reflection.

The whole community came together for a two-minute silence, held by Mr. Nelson accompanied by a moving rendition of The Last Post, creating a powerful moment of remembrance.

We were proud to see several of our students represent the school at the local Remembrance Sunday service, where they laid poppy wreaths in honour of those who served.

In addition, our Head Boy, Head Girl, and Senior Prefects attended a special event with the Royal British Legion, demonstrating our school's continued commitment to remembering and honouring the sacrifices made by past and present members of the Armed Forces.



# Interfaith Week

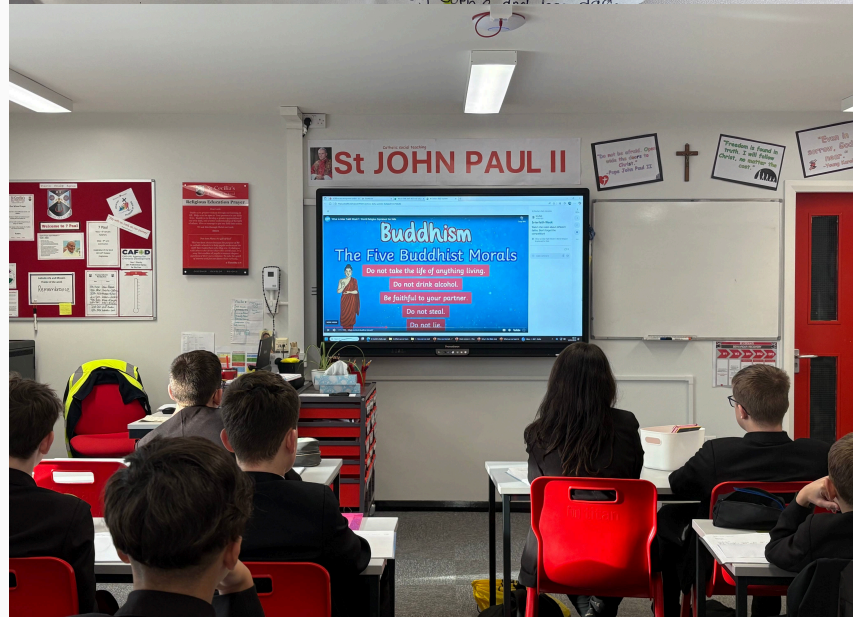
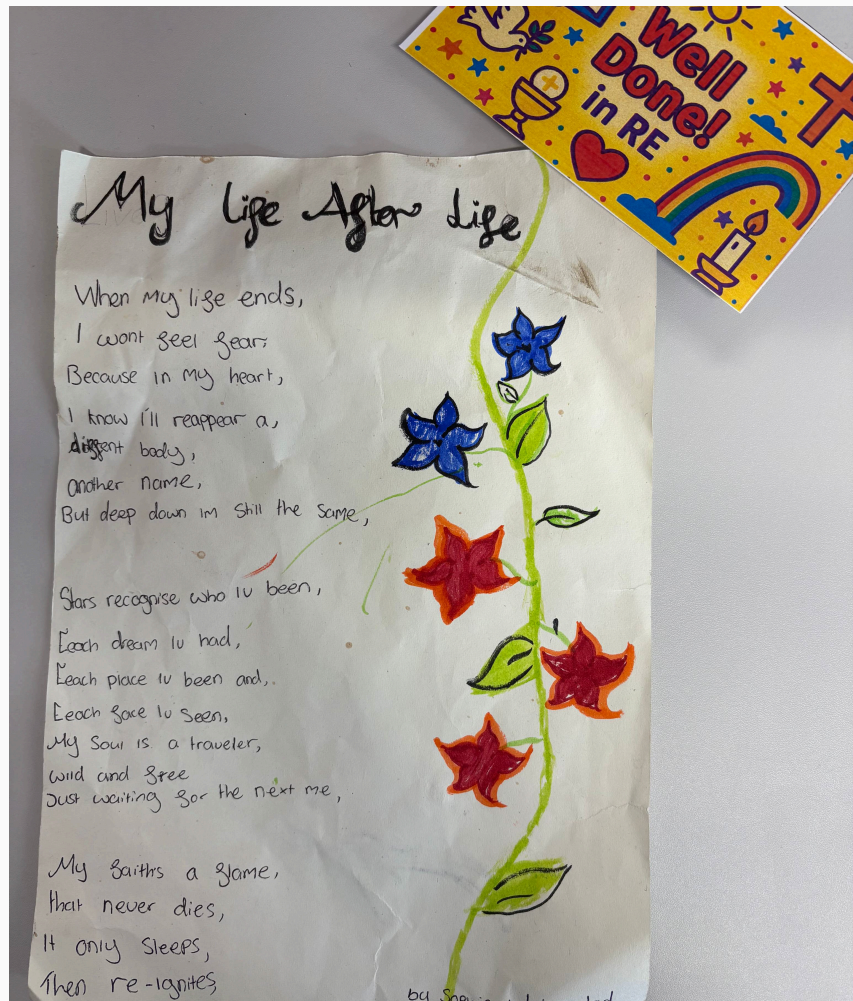
St Cecilia's RC High School recently celebrated Interfaith Week with a series of engaging activities aimed at fostering understanding and unity among students and staff.

Throughout Form-time, students explored the significance of interfaith dialogue using Padlet, presentations, and videos. They were also invited to participate in a creative competition, with entries showcasing their reflections on faith and diversity.

Staff contributed by displaying images of famous individuals of faith on classroom doors, creating a visible reminder of the week's theme.

Morning briefings featured meaningful contributions: Mr. Patel shared passages from the Qur'an, while Mrs. Bell led a prayer for Preston to become a vibrant interfaith city, drawing inspiration from the teachings of Jesus to promote peace.

These initiatives highlight the school's commitment to inclusivity and respect for different faith traditions, reinforcing the values of harmony and mutual understanding within the community.



## *St Cecilia's Feast Mass*

On 21st November, we celebrated St Cecilia's Feast Day in school (her feast is actually on Saturday 22nd).

Throughout the week, pupils took part in special form-time activities, learning about her life. St Cecilia lived in Rome in the 3rd century and was martyred for her Christian faith during a time of persecution.

Red is the liturgical colour used to symbolise her martyrdom, and this was reflected in our Sacred Spaces around school.

We celebrated Mass in the Hall with Fr Dutton, who shared a positive and inspirational homily about St Cecilia's life and the importance of the Gospel — the Good News.

We express our thanks to Miss Berry, Mr Alpin and Mrs Canavan for their wonderful work with the choir. The music, as always, was uplifting and inspiring. We also thank our dedicated team of altar servers and the pupils who read at Mass.

Finally, as is tradition, the school gratefully received a beautiful bouquet of flowers from Longridge High School, who recognise how important this week is for our community.



**ST. CECILIA**  
 Name: St. Cecilia  
 Patron Saint of Music  
 Job: Helped the poor (unemployed)  
 Married to: Valerian  
 Famous for: Standing up to the Roman Emperor  
 Year she lived: 230 AD

Write 5 facts about St. Cecilia

1. She is the patron saint of music
2. She was a Christian
3. She worked for God for poor
4. She was beheaded
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# 22nd NOVEMBER

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**St. Cecilia**

Let my heart and my body be unfiled,  
 O Lord, that I may not be confounded."

"Men call me Cecilia, but my most beautiful name is that of Christian."

To die for Christ," Cecilia said, "is not to sacrifice one's youth, but to renew it.

# CELEBRATE!

**COLOSSIANS 3:16**  
 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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Discover Develop Rejoice!

# Year 7 Retreat

## Year 7 Retreat – A Wonderful Success

The Year 7 Retreat was a tremendous success. We were delighted to take 50 pupils to the **Animate Retreat Centre in St Helens**, where they spent the day reflecting, building friendships, and growing in faith. It was a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to step away from the busyness of school life, explore their spiritual journey, and take part in activities led by the inspiring Animate team. We had a wonderful day reflecting on our theme, **“Discovering Our Gifts and Talents.”** Fr Simon and the Animate Team once again delivered an excellent programme—busy, engaging, prayerful, and reflective.

Throughout the day, pupils explored their unique God-given gifts and the important roles they play within their communities. Working in groups, they took part in a variety of simulation activities including **Crystal Maze, Egg Drop, Christmas Disaster, and Where Is Jesus?**—a faith-focused version of Where’s Wally, encouraging pupils to think about whether we make space for Jesus amid the hustle and bustle of daily life and the Christmas season.

Pupils enjoyed the tuck shop, outdoor games, and time with friends during their breaks.

We ended the retreat by learning the **Advent Five Finger Prayer**, using each finger as a symbol in place of the Advent wreath.

We thank Mr Duffy, Mr Barden and Mrs Gridley for their attendance.



# Faith Into Action

This Advent, we are focusing on Catholic Social Teaching and “Putting our Faith into Action.” We remember the journey of the Holy Family, who travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem and then fled to Egypt to escape King Herod. Their story reminds us to care for refugees, the poor, and those in need today.

- **Year 7 are supporting CAFOD, helping people around the world.**
- **Year 8 are supporting CARITAS, helping those in our local community.**
- **Year 9 are supporting Macmillan Cancer Support, showing care for people facing illness**
- **Year 10 are supporting Derian House, helping children with life-limiting conditions.**
- **Year 11 are supporting Cancer Research UK, raising awareness and funds to fight cancer.**

We have enjoyed a variety of fundraising activities, from penalty shoot-outs to volleyball games experienced from the perspective of a person with a disability.

Staff and pupils are always extremely generous with their time and efforts to care for the less fortunate in our society.

Together, our school community is discovering practical ways to put faith into action this Advent.



# Oscar Romero Award



The **Oscar Romero Award** is presented to a pupil who has made a significant contribution to our Catholic life and mission.

The recipient is someone who has visibly put their faith into action and followed the example of **Saint Oscar Romero** by being a true witness to their faith.

This term, we are recognising a pupil who has served faithfully as an altar server at every Mass, played a leading role in **CAFOD**, the **GIFT Team**, and the **Rosary Club**, and proudly represented our school in the **Salford Diocese SYNOD**.

She is not only an active member of each of our Catholic Heart groups, but consistently uses her initiative—taking the register, offering thoughtful suggestions, and showing great dedication in all, she does.

This term, the **Oscar Romero Award for Supporting Catholic Life** is proudly presented to **Sophia, Year 9**.

# Advent Service

As part of our Advent preparations, we celebrated our annual Advent Service led by Mrs Canavan and Miss Berry.

The evening was a great success, with parents and members of our local parishes and community in attendance.

This year, we enjoyed beautiful renditions of Come Let Us Adore Him, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, O Little Town of Bethlehem and God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.

The pupil and staff choir sounded wonderful, as always.

It was a fitting way to bring the term to a close and to look forward to the celebration of Christmas.

On behalf of the St Cecilia's community, we wish all our pupils, families, staff, governors and parish communities a peaceful and holy Christmas, and every blessing for the New Year.





*St Cecilia's  
RC High School*

*Advent  
Service*

*December 2025*

A large, lit red candle is the central focus of the text area. The flame is bright yellow and orange, and the candle is set against a dark red background.

# *What Dies Domini Teaches Us About Sunday*

Dies Domini (“The Day of the Lord”) is an important letter from Pope St John Paul II reminding all Catholics of the true meaning of Sunday. It teaches that Sunday is not just a day off, but a precious gift from God—a weekly opportunity to rest, pray, and grow closer to Christ and one another.

## **The letter explains that Sunday is:**

- A day of worship – Catholics are called to gather for Mass, where we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and receive strength for the week ahead.
- A day of rest – A time to step back from busyness and stress, allowing space for peace, renewal, and family life.
- A day of Christian community – A chance to share faith together, support one another, and live out the Gospel in our daily lives.

Dies Domini reminds us that attending Mass on Sunday is not just an obligation but a joy—a way to put God first, deepen our relationship with Him, and keep our Catholic identity alive. Coming to Mass each week strengthens our families, our parish, and our whole school community.

## **Sunday Mass Times — Local Churches**

- Our Lady and Saint Michael (Alston Lane, Longridge)
- Saturday (Vigil): 5:00 pm [alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk](http://alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk)
- Sunday: 8:30 am and 10:30 am [alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk](http://alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk)
- St Wilfrid’s RC Church (Longridge)
- Saturday (Vigil): 5:30 pm [diocese.cc+1](http://diocese.cc+1)

## **Weekday Mass (for those who can’t make Sunday):**

- Tuesday at 10:00 am



