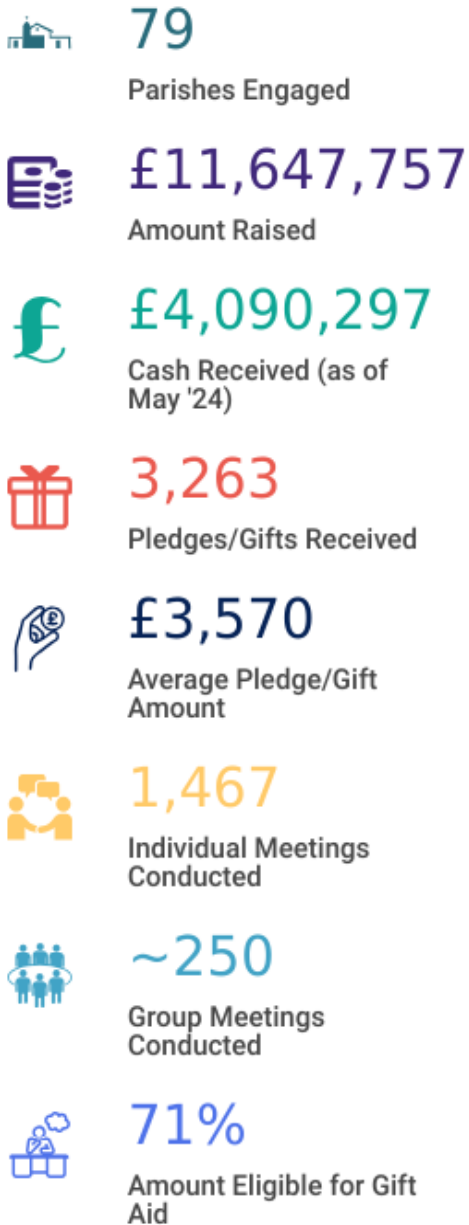


A Lasting Impact in Our Diocese for Generations To Come!



Newsletter #96



Closer to Christ Campaign
Diocese of Portsmouth

The Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth's **Closer to Christ** initiative, launched at an important time for the Diocese – both pastorally and financially – has been successful in drawing a close in parishes after three years of active campaigning. Closer to Christ has been an inclusive initiative, receiving generous support from parishioners at all levels with gifts ranging from £5 to £500,000. The Campaign's overarching objectives have been to support Diocesan Priests through all stages of their ministry and to revitalise our local parish communities. These aims include funding Seminarians through their formation for the Priesthood, supporting the wellbeing of Priests in active ministry, providing support for our retired Priests in recognition of their life of service to the Church, and simultaneously rejuvenating our parishes resources after the impact of the Covid pandemic, ensuring that they have the necessary resources for parish life and mission.

We are enormously thankful to Priests and parishes right across the Diocese who have entered into this Campaign with generosity reflecting their love for the Church and their hope for the future. A total of 3,263 pledges have been received, with households giving an average pledge of £3,570. Three out of every four parishes that have taken part to date have not only achieved their goal but surpassed it, some by significant amounts.

By any standards, **Closer to Christ** has been tremendously successful with parishioners from every corner of the Diocese answering the call to support the clergy and contribute towards local parish priorities.



The Priest's Perspective

The congregations of St. Mary and St. Columba, Gosport, led by Fr. Matthew King, set out to raise £65,000 in pledges. Father Matthew, keen to realise the Parish's share of money raised, championed the cause from the front and due to his dedication and the generosity of individuals and families throughout the worshipping community, over £70,000 was pledged.

This funding has been earmarked by the Parish Finance Committee to be used for various works across the two churches and to augment their outreach to the community at large.

Father Matthew remarked: "I am amazed at the immense generosity of parishioners in Gosport raising up these mighty pledges in response to this appeal for the future of the Diocese and the ongoing mission of the Church. I look forward to working with the Gosport Finance Committee and parishioners in exploring how best to put these funds to work for the mission of the parish and bringing people closer to Christ."



Fr Matthew King

"I conducted the Closer to Christ Campaign at St Joseph's, Newbury in spring 2023 as part of the cohort of parishes in Group 5.

Given my relatively recent appointment at that time, I was still getting to grips with parish life, and the thought of embarking on this initiative certainly filled me with a sense of dread. However, given that I and the other Priests that serve our Diocese are the main beneficiaries of this fund, I recognised that it was important that I played my part.

I was also encouraged by the fact that our parish would be guaranteed to receive a share of the funds if we reached our target of £85,000, as I knew this would help convince the worshipping community of the value of engaging with the Campaign and help us as a parish to conduct any projects we wished to carry out.

I was absolutely delighted with the final outcome as we have been able to raise over £200,000 which far exceeded what I thought we would reach when we set out on this journey. I'm grateful for the support provided by the Campaign Team and for everyone in the Parish who has contributed to the success, whether this be through prayer or through making a pledge."



Fr Michael Fava

“ It has been a pleasure for us to donate a principal gift in memory of Barry Burns to encourage the priests of our Diocese, whether in the seminary, actively serving or in retirement, who have dedicated their lives to bringing people closer to Christ. Knowing pledged funds of £10 million will be used to ensure that our Diocesan priests receive the support they need for the different stages of their vocation is heart-warming. ”

Angela Nunn, Closer to Christ donor.

Diocese Publishes Annual Report

The Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth has just published its Annual Report for 2022 – 2023, as well as one for its predecessor entity, the Portsmouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust, and a special supplement showcasing the Catholic Mission in the Channel Islands.

The Reports detail a year of purpose and achievement across the Diocese following final publication and implementation of the Ten-Year Mission Plan *You Will Be My Witnesses* and the establishment of 24 new or amended Pastoral Areas, highlighting uplifting examples of how parishes across the Diocese have responded to the Mission Plan's threefold call for deeper faith, for works of mission and service, and for wise stewardship.

Read the Reports here:

[Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Annual Report & Accounts 22/23](#)

[Portsmouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust Accounts 22/23](#)

[Channel Islands Spotlight Supplement](#)



Closer to Christ Campaign Prayer

O God our Father,
we thank and praise you for the many blessings
you give to your people in this Diocese of Portsmouth.
We come before you now, seeking again your favour,
humbly asking you to reinvigorate this mission and service
the Church in this place.

Through the prayers of Mary Immaculate and St Edmund of Abingdon,
fill our hearts with the fire of the Holy Spirit
and stir up anew great generosity in the hearts of all
that the Closer to Christ campaign might flourish
and that many people may come closer to you through your Church.

Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen

