

BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES AUTUMN PLENARY RESOLUTIONS

Environmental Matters

Friday Abstinence

The Bishops' Conference urges all Catholics to refresh their weekly observance of Friday abstinence by refraining from eating meat on that day. In this way we dedicate to God the pressing need for us all to live more simply.

A recent study at Cambridge University published research suggesting that this penitential act has a considerable impact on lessening carbon emissions by 55,000 tonnes each year. This is equivalent to 82,000 people taking return flights to New York from London.

In abstaining from meat on Fridays, we also act in solidarity with those who face hunger and poverty every day, with the care of creation by recognising the environmental impact of meat production and in memory of the death of Christ, by which our broken relationships with each other and with God's creation are healed.

Carbon Emissions

The Bishops' Conference asks dioceses of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to declare target dates for a stated reduction of carbon emissions or report on how close they are to having the information necessary to set such a target. These may be informed by the current research undertaken by the project Guardians of Creation. The bishops will report on the progress of the dioceses at the Easter season and November Plenary Assemblies in 2023.

LiveSimply Award

The Bishops' Conference commends the LiveSimply Award as a response to Pope Francis' invitation in *Laudato Si'* to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us". Recognising that some schools and parishes may already have similar projects on-going, the bishops encourage all remaining schools and parishes to consider signing up to this award as a sign of their solidarity with the poor and their desire to live in harmony with God's creation.

Buffer Zones

Proposals to impose buffer zones outside abortion facilities raise concerns about freedom of religion, belief, association and expression.

Clause 9 of the Public Order Bill as amended currently seeks to criminalise a range of activities within a 150m radius of an abortion clinic. Its broad formulation is disproportionate and unnecessary. Its implications extend beyond the perimeters of an abortion clinic and raise questions about the state's powers in relation to the individual in a free society, both those with faith and those without.

This legislative proposal extends trends at a local level, which have seen Public Space Protection Orders banning prayer and the recitation of Scripture. We express concern with these moves at local level too.

There is a risk, despite any other intent, that existing and proposed measures constitute discrimination and disproportionately have an impact on people of religious faith.

We condemn all harassment and intimidation of women. It was accepted in a 2018 Home Office Review that there are already laws and mechanisms in place to protect women from such behaviour.

Religious liberty is essential for the flourishing and the realisation of the dignity of every person. It is a foundational freedom for any free society.

Visit of the Relics of St Bernadette

Following the fruitful visit and pilgrimage of the Relics of St Bernadette in the autumn of 2022, the Bishops' Conference desires to express its thanks for all concerned with the promotion and execution of the tour, and especially to Bob Lavery and Gerry O'Malley who took care of the relics.

Upgrading the memorial of Our Lady of Walsingham to a Feast in England

The Bishops' Conference asks the Department for Christian Life and Worship to prepare the necessary texts and other materials to petition the Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments to grant the recognitio for the memorial of Our Lady of Walsingham to be celebrated as a feast in England.

Note: The memorial of Our Lady of Walsingham is celebrated on 24 September.

Women@theWell Report

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales notes the publication of 'I am real, I am here'; a letter to Catholic bishops from women@thewell. It recognises that prostitution violates some of the most fundamental human rights to security, physical and psychological integrity and health. We value the work of women@thewell and we encourage Catholic communities to pay attention to the plight of prostituted women and to work for change.

Culture of Vocation

The Bishops' Conference notes the importance of promoting a culture of vocation in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Conscious of the specific need to encourage vocations to the priesthood the bishops invite families, parishes, priests and schools to renew their efforts to support possible candidates for ordination, prayerfully and practically, in hearing and responding to the Lord's call. Those who come forward often testify that, as part of their journey, it was the example of priests that drew them towards the priesthood. The bishops are grateful for the work of the National Office for Vocation and of diocesan directors and promoters of vocation. The bishops ask that prayer for vocations finds a regular place in the life of every Catholic parish and community.