



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

ST PHILIP HOWARD CENTRE, 4 SOUTHGATE DRIVE, CRAWLEY, RH10 6RP

January 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this finds you safe and well. Equally, I hope you managed to enjoy some rest over Christmas, even though the holidays already feel a very long time ago. As a new year begins to unfold and we consider the year that was, it seems salient to reflect on the fact that the month of January is named after Janus (Ianuarius), the Roman god of the doorway, with January being the door to the year. Janus is usually depicted as having two faces, since he looks both to the future and to the past. There will be few if any among us who have not reflected at length on the past year, before turning our eyes to the future. This year, our looking back surely involves an element of disbelief. None of us could have conceived that churches would be closed for Easter! A year ago, we had no inkling that we would have to close our schools to all but keyworkers' children and the most vulnerable; spend time in isolation; wear masks in public; or worry about whether the NHS could cope with the pandemic. But January is the time to look forward and the celebration of the Epiphany reminds us to seek the light, especially during times of darkness. By virtue of our faith in Jesus we are people of light. Therefore, despite the darkness which enshrouds much of our lives as present, let us remember to walk in faith with Christ as our light and salvation, providing our path out of darkness and into the light. Further, we are called to share this light with those who dwell in darkness. Let us strive to always bring light into the lives of those with whom we interact in this new year.

In a Homily reflecting on people of light earlier this week, Pope Francis offered us three phrases from the Epiphany Gospel for contemplation: *"to lift up our eyes"*, *"to set out on a journey"* and *"to see"*. So, as people of light, setting out both on a new term and a new Lockdown, we must lift our eyes to see what may at first glance be hidden from view.

First, to *"lift up our eyes"* does not mean denying reality. On the contrary, it is the belief that the Lord is aware of our troubles, attentive to our prayers and not indifferent to the tears we shed. This trust in the Lord gives rise to gratitude and opens our hearts to worship. When we lift up our eyes to God, our problems do not go away, but the Lord grants us the strength to deal with them.

Second, this January we must once again *"set out on a journey"*. In order to worship the infant Jesus, the Magi had to undertake a lengthy journey. There is always something new (or renewed) about those who have undertaken a difficult journey; they have learned new things; encountered new people and situations; and found inner strength along the way. Each of us has a role to play in Catholic education and, like the Magi, we learn from the journey of life, marked by its inevitable hardships. The past year has been especially punishing but we must try not to be discouraged. By lifting our eyes and setting out, once again, we will find the strength needed to experience interior spiritual growth and persevere with renewed joy.

And lastly, as Catholic educators, each of us is called upon *"to see"*. Matthew says that the Magi *"saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him"* (Mt 2:10-11). Worshipping was an act of homage reserved for sovereigns and high dignitaries.

EDUCATION SERVICE

SCHOOLS@ABDIOCESE.ORG.UK | 01293 511130

WWW.ABDIOCESE.ORG.UK | REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 252878



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

ST PHILIP HOWARD CENTRE, 4 SOUTHGATE DRIVE, CRAWLEY, RH10 6RP

Yet the wise men looked beyond lowly surroundings and recognised in that Child a royal presence. They were able to “see” beyond appearances, with the opening of the treasures they had brought as gifts symbolized the offering of their own hearts.

Continuing the Epiphany theme of bringing gifts and talents, we welcome Karen Head as interim Headteacher at St Pancras, Lewes for the rest of the school year. I know school, deanery and diocesan colleagues will make Karen very welcome. Likewise, welcome to Carol Scanlon who has just started at St Mary’s Crowborough as Headteacher. Carol joins St Mary’s from St Joseph’s Redhill and again, I know her school, deanery and diocesan colleagues will make her very welcome. We all hope Karen and Carol will be very happy and fulfilled in their new schools. If you can find five minutes in your incredibly busy days, please do pick up the phone and introduce yourselves to Karen and Carol.

Here at the DES, I am delighted to let you know that Emma Sharp, Anna Flood and Claire Franke have joined the Diocese as Primary and Secondary Advisers respectively for Catholicity and RE and are already making a very positive impact! We have exciting plans afoot for how they can support schools and families in practical ways during Lockdown and will reveal all in our forthcoming Alpha Beta, so watch this space! Sarah Feist will be working with and supporting Emma, Anna and Claire on this, and a range of other projects. As ever, for any questions regarding CPD or to book places, please contact Claire Martin (claire.martin@abdioocese.org.uk)

Equally exciting is the news that Bernadette has made a wonderful recovery over the past few weeks and is even well enough to return to work on a limited basis this term. Sincere thanks to all those who sent cards, prayers, gifts and messages of support. Your unstinting kindness meant a great deal and supported Bernadette and her family through a very difficult time. Understandably, Bernadette now wishes to focus on her family, her health and on staying well and has therefore made the difficult decision to retire from the Diocese at Easter. I write this therefore with a mix of emotions; happiness that Bernadette is well, and sadness that she is leaving us! Bernadette has been part of Catholic education in Arundel and Brighton for more than forty years and has been a much-loved colleague and friend to many. I hope that, by Easter, we may all be able to celebrate her wonderful contribution together in person, and I know you will want the opportunity to do so in person if at all possible!

Lastly, and mindful of the Kings’ presentation of their gifts at this week’s Epiphany, I know I speak on behalf of all at the DES when I say how blessed we feel to work with such gifted school leaders and governors. Your talents, and the way in which you use them to bring light into the lives of others are constant sources of inspiration. Thank you, as ever, for all you so in the service of Catholic education. Warmest wishes,

Marie

Marie Ryan

EDUCATION SERVICE

SCHOOLS@ABDIOCESE.ORG.UK | 01293 511130

WWW.ABDIOCESE.ORG.UK | REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 252878