



# Growing in Faith

Our parishes • Our priests • Our place in the world

## SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER

### Good News & Thanks! Eight Parishes Complete Their Growing in Faith Pledge Phase!

It has been five years since the first eight parishes completed their Growing in Faith fundraising campaigns and we are happy to announce that these parishes have now finished their five years of pledge redemption! These eight parishes include Commercial Road, Cricklewood, Edgware, Graham Park, Hemel Hempstead parishes, Kentish Town, Our Lady of Victories in Kensington and Royston parish.



*Our Lady of Victories parish, Kensington, used some of their Growing in Faith funds to redesign the entrance of their church to make it more accessible, more open and inviting to all.*

A huge thank you to all those who have completed their Growing in Faith pledges in these parishes, and for all those donors across the Diocese continuing their generous support. Your ongoing generosity is helping to support our sick and retired priests, the training of new priests, the social outreach work of Caritas Westminster and helping to fund the respective parish projects.

#### Allen Hall Seminary

Over the last few years, through the generosity of so many throughout the Diocese to the Growing in Faith campaign, Allen Hall has been able to embark successfully on a number of much needed repairs and renovations.

Allen Hall's origins date back to 1568, making it our oldest seminary institution, occupying the site of St Thomas More's home. Thanks to funds from Growing in Faith, Allen Hall has been able to renovate its Chapel, bringing it back to life after many years of lacking the necessary resources. Effective heating has been installed for the first time, meaning that staff, seminarians and parishioners can now pray in the warmth. Even more significant, was the installation of the Chapel's first permanent altar, consecrated by Cardinal Vincent in December 2015. When the staff and seminarians of Allen Hall gather each morning for their community meditation, the chapel now feels fitting and prayerful.

The second Allen Hall project supported by Growing in Faith funds was to renovate the library, where most of the ceiling had already collapsed! As well as major structural repairs, new lighting was installed and the walls freshly painted to make the room a place constructive for real study. The library is now perfect for

large lectures, and for the first time is somewhere friends, family and parishes can be welcomed and entertained when they come to visit the seminarians, or to learn more about seminary life.



*Repaired and refurbished library at Allen Hall*

Thirdly, it was time to rebuild Allen Hall's classrooms, long overdue. For the last 30 years, classes have been located in portakabins. These cabins were only ever a temporary solution and last year it became clear that they were in real danger of collapse. Having obtained planning permission to replace them with modern facilities, work is now happily underway and shall be completed in time for the beginning of the new 2017 academic year.

As you would expect in an old building such as Allen Hall, there are always new challenges. Nevertheless, the financial support provided through the Growing in Faith campaign has brought about renewed confidence for the future. All the staff and students of Allen Hall are deeply grateful for the generosity and support shown for the work of the Seminary, in training and supporting men called to the vocation of the Priesthood.



*The 30 year old portakabin classrooms*



# Parish Project Highlights

## St Thomas More, Swiss Cottage

Fr Stefan Hnylycia, parish priest of St Thomas More Church, explains how the money from Growing in Faith is helping to build a new parish hall and restore a parish building of local historical importance.

The first Mass at St Thomas More Church was celebrated in 1938, just three years after the canonisation of its patron saint. The first Mass was celebrated in a building known as the De Laszlo Studio, sat in the grounds of Hyme House. This was the London home of society portrait painter Philip de László. In 1925 and 1931, the Duchess of York (later The Queen Mother) sat for portraits in the studio at Hyme House, accompanied by Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth. In 1933, Princess Elizabeth had her portrait painted by De László, with part of the sitting done in the Hampstead studio.

In 1953, an extension was built to the original building, forming a larger church that was very soon found to be too small! The present elliptically planned church was completed in time for Christmas 1968. The 1953 extension became a church hall, while the original Studio eventually became a parish social club.

For several years, we have been trying to get planning permission to demolish the church hall and replace it with facilities more suited to our requirements. Construction work began in July 2016 and is expected to take 12 months to complete. We shall be using funds raised through Growing in Faith to help us fund this important project.

What we will gain is a larger gathering space in the Church entrance; wheelchair access throughout; a small parish office; a repository and a small lending library. More rooms and amenities will be built to facilitate our many catechetical activities such as our church runs, pre-Communion, Communion and post-Communion classes, as well as our popular and oversubscribed marriage preparation courses 3 or 4 times a year. Up until now we have had to give catechesis in cramped and inadequate spaces. We are looking forward to being able to do more with the extra facilities!

Our overall parish project also includes the restoration of the Studio. It cannot be demolished as we are in a conservation area. This building needed substantial remedial works due to subsidence and tree root invasion. We have already begun this work and should finish by Easter 2017. Our plan is to lease this building out, which will bring in much needed income to help with our overall parish project.



Architect plans for St Thomas More parish

## St Mary's Parish, Hampstead

St Mary's parish, Hampstead, used their Growing in Faith funds to hire a pastoral assistant, Mary Stanier. Mary is responsible for the sacramental programmes and CCD classes for the children and young people of the parish, and leads the baptism classes for new parents. She has now been in the role for five months, and it has been a busy period, but full of fun!

St Mary's has a large group of children enrolled in their sacramental programmes and CCD classes. There are thirty children preparing for their First Holy Communion in June. They come each week for an hour after the Sunday Family Mass. There are also twenty children enrolled in the post-First Holy Communion class, and a further ten in the pre-Confirmation class, both of which take place on Sunday mornings.

Mary and Sr Doris of St Dorothy's Convent are introducing a structured, text-based course for all these groups, so that the children can follow a defined curriculum. Doing this will ensure excellence of teaching, and make it easier for catechists to step in to take a class if the usual catechist is away.



Some of the confirmation group outside the Marcelina Sisters convent in Hampstead

St Mary's also has twenty-seven young adults enrolled in their Confirmation course, which is wonderful news! The enrolment Mass at the beginning of February was a very moving occasion, seeing so many young people eager to receive this Sacrament. At the start of the course, a group of experienced catechists took them for a two-day retreat to the wonderful Kairos Centre in Roehampton. There they enjoyed a mixture of games, videos and thought-provoking talks. They also got to know one another better, and hopefully made some life-long friends.

The parish of St Mary's is very thankful to their Growing in Faith donors for helping to fund this important Catechetical work in their parish.