

## **Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Dear Parishioners,

Next Tuesday the clergy of all the Christian churches in the Caversham area meet for an hour. This is a monthly meeting which runs throughout the year and this month it is the privilege of Our Lady & St. Anne to host it. There will be about a dozen of us and, having consumed a modest lunch together and said an opening prayer, we catch up on what has been happening in our various church congregations over the past month and share plans we have for the autumn season. We will also look ahead to Advent and Christmas. Plans for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were made early in the summer and OL & St. Anne features. We provided the guest preacher for the Unity Service last January at St. Peter's and it is we who are organising and hosting the liturgy on Wednesday 23 January 2019. We pass over what divides us in silence. We focus on what unites us: our commitment to kingdom values, our faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, our collective witness to God's love for our world and our concern for the welfare of the society of which we are an essential part as well as for the wellbeing of all our neighbours.

It is natural that our focus should be local and our jointly-owned newspaper *The Caversham Bridge* acquaints not only our home constituency with the issues of our area but reaches a wide readership among people on whose radar the Church does not feature. I believe that ecumenical co-operation and dialogue at local level is of immense importance to me as a Catholic parish priest and, more importantly, I firmly believe that my parishioners who have an even greater vested interest in the wellbeing of Caversham than I – a bird of passage, after all – firmly expect me to build amicable and fruitful relations with our sister churches on the north bank of the Thames. The wonderful summer school for children, which I visited in my shorts and t-shirt on one of the hottest days of July, was one of the fruits of ecumenical co-operation and, even if that were the only fruit, it was so worthwhile and deserving of investment so that it can be repeated in 2019.

What might be important as we launch into a new season and a new working year is to discover the strengths of the various communities, capitalise on them, so that each church can offer something different in our joint pursuit of the common good. Here at OL & St. Anne we will be having an Advent Course and, not only have I issued an invitation to parishioners from the Portsmouth Diocese communities on the south bank, but I will also invite my clergy colleagues from Caversham to encourage some of their congregations to attend. In that way we explore our common faith story, we prepare for Christmas together and we get to know one another a little better in a setting which casts in high relief our common identity. Random thoughts these may be, but they articulate a strong and enthusiastic commitment to working, sharing and praying together with fellow Christians so that kingdom values may shape the world in which we live.

**Father Patrick**