



St Benedict's Newsletter 336

10 July 2026



1 - Year 12 Cambodia Trip

Catholic Social Teaching

This week our focus has been on the Catholic Social Teaching theme of Dignity of Work and Participation, reflecting on the idea that work is not something to be endured but a gift from God that helps us grow, contribute to society, and become the people God created us to be.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens (Through Work)*:

"Work is a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes 'more a human being.'" (*Laborem Exercens*, §9)

These words remind us that work has a deeper purpose than simply earning money or completing a task. Through work, we develop our gifts, learn new skills, build relationships, serve others, and discover more about who we are. Whether we are studying, helping at home, learning a new skill, playing sport, volunteering, preparing for future careers, or simply embracing new experiences, every worthwhile effort helps us grow in character and contributes to the common good.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 13:1–23, Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower. A farmer scatters seed onto different types of ground. Some seed falls on the path and is lost, some on rocky ground where it cannot develop strong roots, some among thorns where it is choked by distractions, and some falls on rich soil where it flourishes and produces an abundant harvest.

Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of God, but His parable also invites us to reflect on our own lives. It asks us a challenging question: What kind of soil am I? Am I allowing the gifts God has given me to grow and flourish, or are distractions preventing me from becoming the person God created me to be?

During assemblies we reflected on the thought-provoking book *Four Thousand Weeks*, which reminds us that if we are fortunate enough to live to around eighty years of age, we have around 4,000 weekends in our lifetime. It is a striking reminder that time is one of God's greatest gifts. Once it has passed, we cannot get it back.

In today's world it can be easy to lose hours scrolling through social media or watching life unfold through a screen. Whilst technology has many benefits, we should not forget that authentic human encounter cannot be replaced by the digital world. Catholic Social Teaching encourages us not simply to consume life, but to participate in it.

Every hour spent learning something new, serving others, exploring God's creation, building friendships, developing our talents, or making memories is like tending the rich soil of our lives so that God's gifts can flourish.

As St John Paul II reminds us, work helps us become "more a human being." When we choose to use our time well, we grow not only in knowledge and skill but also in wisdom, compassion, generosity, and faith. We become the people God is calling us to be.

He also encouraged young people with these inspiring words: "Life with Christ is a wonderful adventure." God does not ask us to watch life from the sidelines. He invites us to step into it

with courage, purpose, and hope, making the most of the precious time and opportunities He has entrusted to us.

As we reflect on this week's theme, we are invited to live this out in simple ways:

- **Wisdom:** Recognising that time is one of God's greatest gifts and choosing to spend it in ways that help us grow, learn, and become the people He created us to be.
- **Compassion:** Using our gifts and talents to help others, giving our time generously, and recognising that our participation can make a real difference in our school and wider community.
- **Resilience:** Being willing to step away from what is comfortable or familiar, embracing new opportunities, persevering when things are difficult, and having the courage to live life actively rather than simply watching it pass by.

This week we might reflect and ask ourselves how am I choosing to spend the time God has given me? Am I participating fully in life, or am I allowing opportunities to pass me by? What new adventure, challenge, or act of service could I say "yes" to this week/ over the summer holiday?

Each day is a gift. Each moment offers an opportunity to grow, to serve, to learn, and to encounter God in new ways. When we choose to use our time well, we not only enrich our own lives but also become a blessing to those around us.

Lord God,

Creator of all things,

You have called us to "fill the earth and subdue it," granting us the privilege of being stewards of your creation.

I offer You today the work of my hands, my mind, and my heart.

May my labour be a reflection of Your divine creativity and an instrument of service to my neighbour.

When I encounter the sweat, the toil, and the frustrations of daily work, let me not grow weary or resentful.

Instead, grant me the grace to unite these daily crosses with the Passion of Christ, knowing that every effort offered with love participates in the redemption of the world.

Guide our society to recognize the absolute priority of human labour over profit.

Protect the dignity and rights of all who work,

and provide meaningful labour for the unemployed.

May all work whether in an office, a factory, the fields, or the home be valued as a path to holiness and a contribution to Your eternal kingdom.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Physics Challenge

The Intermediate Physics Challenge is an online set of problems and general knowledge questions aimed at Year 10. Achieving a Gold certificate puts students in the top 18% of students in their age group.

Gold - George Butler, Eliza Rowley, Jacob Gurrell

Silver - Sean Roberts, Wiktor Konopka, David Smith, Mya Georgestone, Philippe D'Mello, Hannah Thomas, Nina Siarkowska, Annabel Ellison, Sebastian Siarkowski, Leja Lukoseviciute, Lyra Reimann,

Bronze - Ella Ferdinand, Alexis Rose Josy, Jake McConnell, Edwin George

Mr D'Mello

Stella Maris Award

On Friday 3 July, Mr Spiller awarded 50 year 12 students the Bronze Stella Maris Award. To achieve the **bronze award** students completed two full virtue reviews, had excellent attendance in Core RE, and completed at least one hour of volunteering, which included activities such as being year 8 mentors and litter picking. Some volunteered for local charities in their own communities. A number of students completed a project reflecting on how their actions helped fulfil the school values of wisdom, compassion and resilience as well as Catholic Social Teaching.

The Stella Maris Leadership Award has been introduced as a sixth form specific programme to help students cultivate the habits and virtues necessary to be a fully rounded person able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Students are asked to reflect deeply on specific virtues they want to acquire as well as record the different ways they have demonstrated the school's values of compassion, wisdom, resilience and service, either in school or in the community. For our mission at St Benedict's is to provide an excellent broad balanced education to help young people grow to their full human potential, focused as it is on the formation of the whole person. *Here we do not just develop knowledge and skills but also help students develop their character, as this is crucial to helping them to flourish. One awardee said 'reflecting on developing the virtue of confidence, and how to go about it, has actually helped me become more confident'. Another student said, 'by encouraging the virtue of service through volunteering, I find I now want to volunteer more, as I can see what the school has done for me, so I want to give back to the school'. Mrs Herring who*

introduced the award to St Benedict's said, ' *in an age of AI, the key factor will not be how much we know or can do, it will be the person we are that will help us in the future*'. *Character is not something AI can do, only humans.*'

The Stella Maris Leadership Award is delivered and awarded in partnership with Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College Leeds, St Mary's University Twickenham, Birmingham Newman, Leeds Trinity and Liverpool Hope and has been recognised by both OFSTED and the Association of Character Education.

If you want to read more about the Stella Maris Leadership Award – please see our website [St Benedict's Catholic School - Stella Maris Leadership Award](#) and for further information, see [Stella Maris Leadership Award and PTE | Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College, Leeds](#)

Mrs Herring



Reading Week

As we come to the end of our last Reading Week for this academic year, I would like to remind students and parents/carers of the importance of continuing to read over the summer. In fact, it is the perfect opportunity to catch up on some reading! If you would like some recommendations on what to read over the summer, try the Book Trust website <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/book-recommendations/booklists/summer-reads-for-teens/> or speak to Mrs H-G in the library.

During Reading Week, students were given the opportunity to win a book in the tutor time competition and on Thursday, we had a visit from Dominic Kingston who works for Hachette publishers. Dominic spoke to classes in Year 7 and Year 8 about the importance of reading and brought in some recommended reads to show students.

Finally, congratulations to all the students who completed the Reading Challenge this year:

- Clara Needham, 8C
- Ishaan Jeby 7A

- Chloe Schorer-Nixon 7L
- Elsie Brandon 7L
- Iris Gurrell 7P
- Amelia Selfoss 8L
- Angus Palmer 7C

Mrs Oakes

Mobile Phone Policy Update

We have long been a school where mobile phones are **not permitted to be used during the school day** and continue to hold that expectation.

Our updated policy now includes greater clarity and more stringent sanctions. The term mobile phone will now include smartwatches **and other smart devices**, as a community we wish to strengthen our mobile phone-free school environment. Therefore, no mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones are to be seen or heard during the school day, this includes storing of such devices in pockets or waistbands. From September, should your young person have their mobile phone or smart device confiscated, Parents/Carers will be expected to collect the item from the main office. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in promoting a mobile phone free school environment

Book Return



St Benedict's Library

July 3rd 2026

A Library Request

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we approach the end of term, we would be very grateful if you could please have a quick look around your home and check with your child for any school library books that may still be with you. Returning books helps us keep our library fully stocked and ready for our students.

We would appreciate any books being returned as soon as possible. The books can be brought to the library desk or placed inside the wooden returns box.

We are looking forward to returning in September and to all that our library has to offer, with a wide range of opportunities for reading, learning and leisure.

Thank you very much for your support. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me using the email address below.

Mrs Hayter-Gare

Contact: rhayter-gare@st.benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Welcome to St Benedict's Library

Our library is a safe space to read, play chess, play games, chat with your friends, study and research.

Whether you are looking for your next favourite book, help with research, a space to study, chess pieces or activity sheets we are here to help.

Food and drink are allowed in the **lower area** but please keep it clean and tidy.

No food or drink to be consumed in the **upper (computer) area**. **Computers for academic purposes only.**

Go to the main desk to check out/return books or, if Mrs HG is absent, use the forms provided on the desk.

Uniform Checks and Donations

With the Summer holidays imminent, please take a moment to check your St Benedict's students uniform fits. Uniform that is too small and in good order can be donated to our school stores. Uniform skirts that have been altered need to be returned to their original length as skirts with altered lengths are not permitted as our uniform. Please do take a moment to check uniform and our expectations (further details are on our website) prior to 2nd September.



Reporting Absences



Reporting your child's absence

If your child is unwell or has an appointment e.g. dentist/doctor could you please leave a message by 9.00am including the reason for the absence via:

Phone: 01284 753512 and Choose option 1:

And then choose option 1 for students in year 7-11 and option 2 for students in the sixth form

OR

Email: attendance@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Just a reminder that if you do not inform us by 9.00am using the above phone/email address, you will receive an email requesting the reason for your child's absence. All unexplained absences will be marked as unauthorised and there will be a follow-up phone call from the Attendance Officer. Please note the school operates a first-day response to absences.

If, in exceptional circumstances, you need to request permission for your child to be absent from school during term time, you should complete a **leave of absence application form (please see link below)**, at least three weeks in advance, stating the reason why the absence must be taken in term time. Please note that the Fixed Penalty Fine is now £80 per legal guardian for unauthorised absences of 10 sessions (5 days) or more.

<https://www.st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=74&type=pdf>

Thank you very much.

Mrs Wesley - Attendance Officer

Data Collection Sheet Updates



It is important that the information we hold about your child is kept up-to-date.

Please remember that as a parent/guardian/carer, you can check, amend and update most of your child's information on Arbor, including changing your mobile number and address or

adding information such as religion, family contacts, medical information and transport method.

If you are struggling to do this please email Arbor@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk where we will be able to help you.

Thanks

Mrs Defew

Dates for your Diary



13 July - Years 7 & 8 Rewards Day

17 July - Break Up for Summer

13 Aug - A Level Results

20 Aug - GCSE Results Day and Sixth Form Enrolment

1 Sep - PD Day

2 Sep - Students return to school

9 Sep - Year 11 Information Evening

10 Sep - Year 13 Information Evening

[Term Dates](#)

Contact Us



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