

ON EAGLES' WINGS: FROM OBEDIENCE TO ABUNDANCE

Celebrating 50 Years of Faith, Family & Mission

"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up." — Psalm 91:11–12

A Golden Jubilee Closing Pastoral Message from Fr Anthony Lobo SDB, Parish Priest



10 October 2026

Dear Parish Family and Friends of OLSD,

Fifty years of faith. Fifty years of families. Fifty years of mission. Fifty years of God's unfailing love!

As we bring our Golden Jubilee to a close, my heart overflows with gratitude, affection and hope. What a beautiful journey these fifty years have been! A journey woven together by countless acts of faith, quiet sacrifices, generous hearts, joyful celebrations and moments of sorrow.

Today, we celebrate not simply what we have achieved, but **what God has accomplished among us**. Through every chapter of our parish story, one truth has remained constant: God has never stopped carrying us.

Our closing theme, **"On Eagles' Wings — From Obedience to Abundance,"** expresses something very close to my heart: when we listen to God, trust His providence and courageously say YES to His will, extraordinary things become possible.

A Church Renewed — A People Called to Shine

Our Jubilee began with the renewal of our church and sacristy, repainted entirely in white, bringing fresh light, simplicity, and beauty to our sacred space.

The redesigned sanctuary lighting, thoughtfully conceived by our parishioner David Vician, speaks a profound language of faith: the Cross, the letter **M** symbolising Mary who carried the Light of the World, and the twelve altar lights representing the Apostles.

There is something deeply personal I wish to share with you.

Whenever I celebrate Holy Mass, especially when I elevate Jesus in the consecrated Host, my eyes are drawn upwards. Through the beautiful flow of light above our sanctuary, I experience something profoundly moving. It is as though heaven opens and the angels join us in that eternal hymn: *"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!"*

In that sacred moment, I am reminded that **the Eucharist is where heaven touches earth, where the visible opens onto the invisible, and where Christ draws us into the worship of heaven.**

We did not simply renew our church to make it brighter. **We renewed it so that we might become a brighter Church!**

Three Cards. One Story. One Mission.

Throughout our Jubilee, three beautiful cards have helped us contemplate the mystery of God's love: **Bread Given at Christmas, Bread Broken at Easter and Bread Shared at Pentecost.**

CHRISTMAS — BREAD GIVEN

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." — Isaiah 9:6

Our Christmas card celebrated the wonder of the Incarnation: The Creator becoming a child, the Infinite becoming an infant, heaven entering our humanity. At Midnight Mass, I called this extraordinary mystery **"STRANGER THINGS!"**

And it all began with Mary's obedient YES to the Angel Gabriel.

From the wood of the manger to the wood of the Cross, God gives Himself completely. Christmas reminds us that **obedience opens the door to God's abundance.**

EASTER — BREAD BROKEN

"Whoever believes in me, shall live, though they die ... Do you believe this?" — John 11:25–26

Through Samuel Lobo's beautiful artwork, *"He Is Risen,"* we discovered Easter as **The Re-Creation Story**: the God who reached towards Adam at creation now reaches towards every wounded heart through the Risen Christ.

And who could forget our young altar server Adam and our visitor Eva, bringing that story wonderfully to life!

But Easter leaves us with one deeply personal question: **DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?**

Do you believe that your wounds can be healed, your failures forgiven, and your life renewed?

Through Christ's loving obedience unto death, the Bread Given becomes the Bread Broken, opening the way to abundant Resurrection life.

Fr Anthony Interviews Samuel: Youth Easter Card Artist – OLSD

PENTECOST — BREAD SHARED

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." — Matthew 7:7

Throughout our Jubilee, our parish has been united in prayer for the healing of Michael John Harden, journeying through three novenas: to the Immaculate Conception, St John Bosco and Mary Help of Christians.

Then came a remarkable gift from eleven-year-old Emily Rose: a painting of stars, a river, a door and a key, accompanied by three words: **ASK • SEEK • KNOCK**.

What began as a child's imagination became a parish prayer, made even more touching that Michael is Emily's uncle.

Her artwork carried another beautiful symbolism: **40 dots + 9 within the key + ONE = 50**, recalling the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost.

As Pope Leo XIV's episcopal motto reminds us, *In Illo Uno Unum* — **In the One, we are one.**

The Bread Given and Broken must now become the **Bread Shared**, through the generosity of our lives.

[When a Child's Painting Became a Prayer – OLSD](#)

Psalm 91 - Carried on Eagles' Wings

Reflecting on our three Jubilee cards, I discovered a beautiful connection: the numbers in their Scripture references add up to **91**, leading us to the promise of Psalm 91:

"On their hands they will bear you up."

What a beautiful image for our Golden Jubilee!

For fifty years, God has carried this parish, often through the loving hands of ordinary people: priests and deacons, parents and grandparents, catechists and volunteers, families and friends, those who comfort the grieving, accompany the sick and quietly care for others.

So often, God's angels have carried us through the goodness of one another.

And now, Psalm 91 invites us to trust the God who is leading us into the future.

OBEDIENCE OPENS THE DOOR TO ABUNDANCE.

Not obedience born of fear or pressure, but obedience born of love: listening, trusting, and surrendering ourselves to God's providence.

Mary said, YES, and the Word became flesh. Jesus embraced the Cross, and death gave way to Resurrection. Don Bosco trusted Divine Providence, and countless young lives were transformed.

Their obedience became a gift of love to others. And so must ours.

Fifty Years of Faithful Shepherds

With profound gratitude, we remember the priests who have shepherded our parish and helped build the community we cherish today.

Our Founding Parish Priests

- Fr Philip Connolly — 1973–1978
- Fr David Quarmby — 1978–1983

The Benedictines of St Michael's Abbey (1983–1995)

- Dom David Higham OSB — 1983–1986
- Dom Magnus Wilson OSB — 1986–1990
- Fr Michael Fava OSB — 1990–1995

The Salesians of Don Bosco (1995–Present)

- Fr Tony Sultana SDB — 1995–2023
- Fr Anthony Clifford Lobo SDB — 2023–Present

With particular affection, we honour **Fr Tony Sultana SDB**, whose twenty-eight years of devoted pastoral ministry have left an enduring legacy of faith and love.

To every priest, Benedictine monk, and Salesian confrere who has served this parish, thank you. We stand today upon the foundations of your faithfulness.

Our sincere gratitude also goes to our three deacons who have served at OLSD, **Paul Pole-Baker, Peter McWilliam and Paul Evans**, for their faithful ministry and generous witness to Christ the Servant and for helping their priests.

Fifty years. Many faithful shepherds. One loving God. One continuing mission.

Remembering Our Angels of Light

As we celebrate fifty years of God's faithfulness, we also lift our hearts to heaven in loving remembrance of **the Angels of our Parish** — our deceased brothers and sisters, priests, religious and deacons who have faithfully served, prayed, sacrificed and loved within our parish family.

Though no longer physically among us, their faith, love and witness continue to shine in the life of our community. They are **our Angels of Light**, whose memory illuminates our journey and whose legacy continues to inspire us.

We remember those who built this parish, passed on the faith, nurtured our families, celebrated the sacraments, comforted the grieving and quietly served God and one another.

We entrust them to the loving embrace of our Heavenly Father, praying that they may rejoice in His eternal light and peace.

As Psalm 91 reminds us of the angels who bear us up, we remember those beloved members of our parish family who have gone before us in faith. Their earthly journey has ended, but their love remains woven into the very heart of OLSD.

We are one parish family, united not only with those gathered here today, but also with those who have gone before us in faith.

One parish family. One communion of love. United across heaven and earth.

A Heartfelt Thanksgiving — One Church, One Family, One Mission

A particularly resounding **BIG THANK YOU** to our **Diocese of Portsmouth**, to which we proudly belong, and to **Bishop Philip Egan**, our shepherd, for his constant love, encouragement and unwavering pastoral support.

Thank you, Bishop Philip, for affirming our Salesian identity and encouraging our parish to flourish within the wider diocesan family.

We are also especially blessed to receive a wonderful message from Bishop Philip for our Golden Jubilee. His words of encouragement and pastoral affection are a beautiful reminder that we are not celebrating these fifty years alone, but as part of family of the Diocese of Portsmouth to whom we belong. We receive his message with gratitude, joy and a renewed commitment to our shared mission in the Church.

To our **Salesian Provincial, Fr Gerry Briody SDB**, my profound gratitude for your trust, fraternity and encouragement in the pastoral mission entrusted to me. Your presence as principal celebrant of our Jubilee Closing Mass is a special blessing.

To my Rector, **Fr Pat Sherlock**, and my Salesian confreres of the Farnborough Community, thank you for your brotherhood, prayers and generous companionship in our shared mission.

And from the depths of my heart, a very personal **THANK YOU** to my **Salesian Pastoral Organic Team, Salesian Pastoral Core Group, Parish Finance Committee and Parish Pastoral Council**.

Thank you for walking alongside me with patience, honesty, generosity and love. Your commitment to the Salesian pastoral vision entrusted to me by my Provincial and affirmed by our Bishop is a tremendous source of encouragement.

To **every single volunteer**, especially those whose countless acts of service remain unseen, thank you! Your kindness, dedication and generosity make our parish the vibrant, welcoming and loving family it is today.

No ministry is insignificant. No act of love is wasted. No contribution goes unnoticed in God's eyes.

We belong to the Diocese of Portsmouth. We live the spirit of Don Bosco. Together, we serve the mission of Jesus Christ.

To Every Parishioner — Thank You for Being OLSD!

And to **every single parishioner**, I want to offer a deeply personal and heartfelt **THANK YOU!**

Thank you for being part of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Dominic Savio. Thank you for making OLSD your spiritual home, for bringing your faith, your families, your gifts, your prayers and your love into the life of our community.

Whether you have belonged to this parish for fifty years or joined us only recently, whether you serve visibly in a ministry or quietly live your faith in the ordinary moments of daily life, **you are precious, you belong, and you matter.**

Our parish is not simply a building, a collection of ministries, or a programme of activities. **Our parish is YOU — the living stones of God's house, the family of faith gathered around Jesus Christ.**

It is your presence, generosity, kindness and willingness to journey together that make OLSD a living, loving and welcoming community.

As your Priest, I thank God for each one of you. You are not simply part of our parish's history. **You are its heart, its present and its future.**

My prayer is that nobody ever feels like a stranger in our parish, but that everyone discovers a home where they are welcomed, a family where they belong and a mission in which they have a part to play.

Thank you for being OLSD. Thank you for being my parish family. Thank you for allowing me the immense joy and privilege of being your priest.

Our Jubilee Gift — A Renewed Eucharistic Heart

What more fitting conclusion to our Golden Jubilee than the generous gift of our beautiful new **Exposition Tabernacle!**

To our benefactors, my deepest gratitude for this precious gift of faith, which will bless generations to come.

Yet its greatest beauty is not in its craftsmanship, but in the invitation it offers us: **to place Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, at the very centre of our parish life.**

The Eucharist is the **source and summit of our Christian life.** Every ministry, every celebration, and every pastoral initiative must flow from Christ and lead us back to Him.

May this Jubilee gift renew our love for Eucharistic Adoration, deepen our intimacy with Jesus and transform the way we welcome, forgive and serve one another.

We kneel before Christ in the Eucharist so that we may rise to recognise and serve Him in one another.

Our Salesian Future — From MY Ministry to OUR Mission

As your Priest, entrusted with the pastoral care of the parish, my deepest desire is that our Jubilee becomes not simply a cherished memory, but **the beginning of a renewed, loving and missionary parish.**

A parish where children and young people feel welcomed and valued; where families grow in faith; where the elderly are cherished; where the sick, lonely, and vulnerable are accompanied with tenderness; and where every person discovers they belong.

This is Don Bosco's dream:

A home that welcomes.

A school that prepares for life.

A playground where friendship flourishes.

A church that evangelises.

Rooted in our three pastoral pillars of **Evangelisation, Catechesis and Formation**, I dream of a parish where every ministry flourishes, not as a separate island, but as part of one loving family.

This invites all of us, me included, to a gentle but necessary conversion of heart: moving from **"MY ministry" to "OUR mission"**, from preserving what is familiar to preparing what we will lovingly hand on to future generations.

Change is not always easy. But love does not possess. Love makes room, empowers others and gives life.

I do not invite you simply to follow a programme. **I invite you to share a dream:** a parish united around Jesus Christ, alive with the joy of the Gospel and committed to making God's love visible, especially among our young people, our families and reaching out to the poor and the needy.

Not simply maintaining a parish, but becoming a living, loving, missionary Church.

Our Jubilee Closes — Our Mission Takes Flight to become a Missionary Church

As we close our Golden Jubilee, we return to the promise that inspired our entire celebration: *"I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance."* — John 10:10

A-BUN-DANCE! True abundance is not measured by what we possess or achieve, but by how generously we love, how courageously we believe, and how joyfully we serve, especially the poor.

My dear parish family, I love this parish, and I thank God for the immense privilege of being your priest. Thank you for your affection, your prayers, your encouragement, and even the challenges through which we continue to grow together.

May Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes and Help of Christians, teach us to say YES with courage. May St Dominic Savio inspire our children and young people to embrace holiness with joy. May St John Bosco keep our hearts young, our homes welcoming, and our mission alive.

And when our strength grows weak or our wings grow tired, may the angels of Psalm 91 lift us up, reminding us we **have never walked alone, and we never will.**

Fifty years ago, others planted in faith so that we might flourish today. Now it is our turn to plant with love so that future generations may flourish tomorrow.

So let us not simply look back and say, *"Look what we have done!"* Let us look forward with gratitude, faith, and hope, and proclaim: **"LOOK WHAT GOD HAS DONE — AND IMAGINE WHAT HE CAN STILL DO THROUGH US!"**

Our jubilee closes, but our journey continues. Our Eucharistic commitment is renewed. Our Salesian mission takes flight to become a missionary church.

Together, sheltered beneath His wings and carried by His grace, let us embrace the abundant future God has prepared for us.

With all my affection, heartfelt gratitude and prayers,

Fr Anthony Lobo SDB

Parish Priest

Our Lady of Lourdes & St Dominic Savio, Farnborough

10 October 2026