

## Statement from the Diocese of Lancaster regarding St Thomas of Canterbury and English Martyrs.

Since being invited into the Diocese of Lancaster in September 2014, the Canons of the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest (ICKSP) have given themselves generously to the care of the Catholic Faithful in the area who wish to celebrate the Sacraments in the Extraordinary Form. Based at the magnificent Grade I listed church of St. Walburge's, they have done much good and brought life to this architectural gem, designated as a Shrine church within the Diocese.

In September 2017 the Canons of the Institute were further invited by the Bishop to assume-by-agreement- responsibility for the Grade II listed church of St Thomas of Canterbury and English Martyrs. This would include the regular celebration of Mass in the Extra-ordinary Form as well as other Liturgies. The hope was to increase the worshipping congregation as well as interest in the Church generally, leading to a greater commitment to its use and upkeep.

After almost seven years of dedicated work, this second task given to the Institute has been judged more than can be managed, particularly in the shadow of COVID as well as the growing burden of work at St. Walburge's. Therefore it is with sadness that the Institute have asked to be released from the Agreement of 2017. The Diocese has accepted that the Institute will be free of their responsibility to English Martyrs from the end of June 2024. The Diocese thanks the Institute for its generosity of spirit.

The care and upkeep of English Martyrs will now rest with the parish of St John XXIII. They will assist the Bishop to discern the future of this much loved church.

Ends.