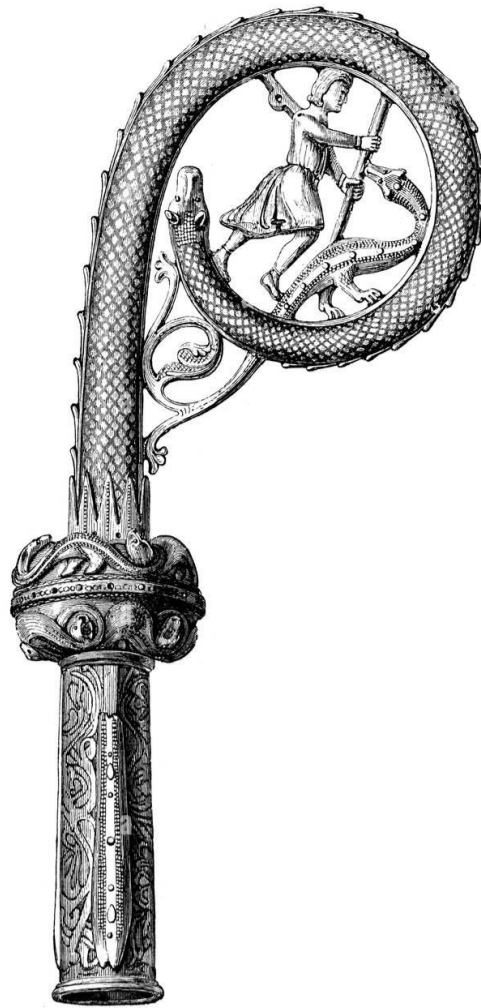


# A Bishop for Christ's Church

A novena of prayer as we prepare for the  
consecration of the first Bishop of Oswestry



**Wednesday 25 January to  
Thursday 2 February 2023**

## Introduction

On Thursday 2 February 2023, Father Paul Thomas SSC will be consecrated as the first Bishop of Oswestry in Canterbury Cathedral. Father Paul will need our prayers as he prepares for his consecration and new ministry as a bishop, and this novena of prayer in the days leading up to the service will surround him with our love and prayers. Particular prayers are required as the See of Oswestry, based in the Diocese of Lichfield, represents a new arrangement for Traditional Catholics in the western half of the southern province of the Church of England (the area was formerly known as the See of Ebbsfleet).

Please do pray too for Father Paul's wife, Louisa, and for other members of his family. Pray too for the priests, people and parishes of the See of Oswestry amongst whom Father Paul will serve and minister.

This novena of prayer is not limited to the period prior to the consecration. All of the bishops of The Society need your prayers every day. Please do pray for our bishops each and every day. You might want to consider praying this novena in the nine days leading up to the anniversary of consecration of your bishop, that he may be renewed and refreshed in the ministry that he undertakes on behalf of the Church. Within the fellowship of all the baptised, bishops play a distinctive and important role within the Church. Bishops lead priests and people in following the rules of the Church and in worshipping God well. They help the Church to navigate through many difficulties in our modern world and to fight against the attacks of the devil on the unity of the Church.

Bishops must deal with conflicts within the Church and do their best to deal with the problems that arise because of our fallen human nature. Bishops often face challenges as they strive to lead their flocks faithfully and diligently. Bishops are in need of our prayers as they seek to care for their flock pastorally. This novena of prayer is based on the ordination service for a bishop and focuses on the elements of ministry which are particular to bishops.

As you spend time in prayer, I hope that you will also have a greater understanding of the role of the bishop and the part that you can play in supporting and upholding bishops in their office and in their ministry.

I offer you my prayers and blessings at this important moment in the life of The Society.

**+Tony Wakefield** - Chairman of The Society's Council of Bishops

## The Society's statement on the announcement of Fr Paul Thomas as the first Bishop of Oswestry:

Fr Paul's service to the Church has been rooted in parochial ministry in and around the capital and he has been the parish priest of his current church - St James, Sussex Gardens in Paddington, London which is a parish under the episcopal oversight of the Bishop of Fulham - for the last 11 years. Fr Paul became well known during lockdown for his innovative use of social media, providing content which was both entertaining and evangelistic. Fr Paul also spent a couple of years as the acting Archdeacon of Charing Cross in recent years which will provide him with invaluable experience for his new role.



Bishop Tony Robinson commented:

“Fr Paul has served the Church faithfully and with imagination and good humour over the last 20 years. He is a talented communicator and he has much to offer the parishes of the See of Oswestry. We very much look forward to his episcopacy starting in early 2023.”

### How to pray the Novena

A novena (from the Latin for nine) is an ancient practice of prayer in the Church. A novena consists of a series of prayers for a particular intention or theme over a period of nine days. The tradition of having a novena started with that period of prayer between the Ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when the disciples were gathered in prayer.

In this novena we are praying for the new Bishop of Oswestry, as he prepares for his consecration, over a period of nine days between **Wednesday 25 January** and **Thursday 2 February 2023**.

You may also want to use this novena at other times of the year for other Society bishops, especially in the lead up to the anniversary of their consecrations. On each day there will be a different intention for which to focus our prayers on, which looks at a different aspect of the ministry of the bishop as included in the service of ordination.

For each day, we start the prayer by making the sign of the cross and then there is a section from the charge that the bishop receives as part of the ordination service, followed by some information on the theme of prayer for that day. The time of prayer ends each day with the Hail Mary, Our Father and two prayers for the bishop.

## Day 1, Wednesday 25 January The Bishop as Shepherd

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Bishops are called to serve and care for the flock of Christ. Mindful of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep, they are to love and pray for those committed to their charge, knowing their people and being known by them. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

Today we pray for Fr Paul as he prepares to take on the role of shepherd. May his heart be daily enlarged, through prayer, with love for God, and the people committed to his care.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

**Day 2, Thursday 26 January**  
**The Bishop as Minister of Word and Sacrament**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*As principal ministers of word and sacrament, stewards of the mysteries of God, they are to preside at the Lord's table and to lead the offering of prayer and praise. They are to feed God's pilgrim people, and so build up the Body of Christ. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

We pray today for Fr Paul as he prepares to enter into a new relationship with the sacramental ministry of the Church. Praying that the celebration of the Mass will continue to sustain and strengthen his ministry. Praying for him as he prepares, as a Bishop, to administer the sacraments of Confirmation and Ordination. We pray to for his priests who share in his sacramental ministry.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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**Day 3, Friday 27 January**  
**The Bishop as nurturer of God's people**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*They are to baptize and confirm, nurturing God's people in the life of the Spirit and leading them in the way of holiness. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

We pray today for all people across the See of Oswestry who will benefit from Fr Paul's ministry as a Bishop. Praying that the Holy Spirit will guide, nurture and sustain him in a life of holiness; and that this life of prayer and dedication to Jesus will strengthen him as he nurtures and leads us on the path of holiness.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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**Day 4, Saturday 28 January**  
**The Bishop who ordains Priests and Deacons**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*They are to discern and foster the gifts of the Spirit in all who follow Christ, commissioning them to minister in his name. They are to preside over the ordination of deacons and priests, and join together in the ordination of bishops. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

The Bishop shares his oversight and ministry with his Priests. We pray today that Fr Paul's example as a Bishop will inspire men to consider whether God is calling them to the Priesthood. That he will foster vocations with enthusiasm and gentleness, that more Priests may bless God's Church with their ministry. We pray for those preparing for ordination, who will receive this sacrament at the hands of the Bishop of Oswestry.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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**Day 5, Sunday 29 January**  
**The Bishop as Chief Pastor**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*As chief pastors, it is their duty to share with their fellow presbyters the oversight of the Church, speaking in the name of God and expounding the gospel of salvation.  
(From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

We pray today that as Bishop of Oswestry, Fr Paul will be given the courage and words to speak out in God's name, may the Holy Spirit guide his preaching and teaching. We pray that he will be sustained and supported in his ministry by his Priests and Deacons, with whom he shares his ministry.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)



## Day 6, Monday 30 January The Bishop's role in discipline

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*With the Shepherd's love, they are to be merciful, but with firmness; to minister discipline, but with compassion. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

The Bishop's role is not always an easy one. At times they have to say difficult things, both to the Church and wider society. We pray that Fr Paul will be sustained by the Holy Spirit in these times, that he may approach this task through the courage and love of the Good Shepherd.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

**Day 7, Tuesday 31 January**  
**The Bishop for those in need**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*They are to have a special care for the poor, the outcast and those who are in need. They are to seek out those who are lost and lead them home with rejoicing, declaring the absolution and forgiveness of sins to those who turn to Christ. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

In all of our parishes, we do not have to look far to see people in poverty, isolation or need. We see the need of people for the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. May Fr Paul model his ministry on Jesus, the Good Shepherd; that he may seek out the lost, and care for the poor and needy.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

## Day 8, Wednesday 1 February

### The Bishop as Teacher

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Following the example of the prophets and the teaching of the apostles, they are to proclaim the gospel boldly, confront injustice and work for righteousness and peace in all the world. (*From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship*)

The role of the Bishop as a teacher is an important one. We pray for Fr Paul that he will preach the Gospel boldly and teach the Catholic faith with passion and clarity. We pray that his example will lead the whole See of Oswestry to confront the unjust structures in society and that we may be known for our work to build up peace and justice.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

**Day 9, Thursday 2 February**  
***The day of Father Paul's consecration***  
**The Bishop as Guardian of the Faith**

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission. Obedient to the call of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are to gather God's people and celebrate with them the sacraments of the new covenant. Thus formed into a single communion of faith and love, the Church in each place and time is united with the Church in every place and time. (From the Ordination Service for a Bishop – Common Worship)*

We rejoice today at the consecration of Fr Paul as Bishop of Oswestry. We pray for his wife Louisa and all his family. Today is a day of great change in Fr Paul's life and ministry; at the ordination service, these words will be spoken to Fr Paul as he prepares to have hands laid on him – and they form part of our prayer for him today and throughout his Episcopal ministry: You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. Pray therefore that you may be conformed more and more to the image of God's Son, so that through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit your life and ministry may be made holy and acceptable to God.

Our Father.....

Hail Mary.....

God, eternal shepherd,  
you tend your Church in many ways, and rule us with love.  
Help your chosen servant Paul as pastor for Christ, to watch over your flock.  
Help him to be a faithful teacher, a wise administrator and a holy priest.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)