



## **MERGER NEWS – Edition No.3**

**Parish Consultation: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

### **What are we asking you to do?**

On the accompanying slip, there are two questions. Please pray about the questions during Mass and then complete your answers in the slot in the Mass which we have reserved for that purpose. Please hand your answers to the members of the Merger Advisory Group and Parish Council who will collect them from you before we leave Church. You will see that there is space for you to add a question or comment of your own, if you wish to do so. If you would like to speak to a member of the Merger Advisory Group or the Parish Council about any aspect of the Merger, please do so after Mass.

### **Background on the new Parish Name**

Our newly merged parish must have a new name. The name of our newly merged parish is NOT the same as the dedication of the constituent Churches within it. Across our two parishes are the dedications: Christ the King and Our Lady of the Assumption. These can only be changed with the approval of the Pope which we are not going to divert time and energy into seeking. Thus, the Notice Board outside the places of worship in the newly merged parish would read:

Archdiocese of Birmingham  
Parish of [whatever name eventually is approved]  
Christ the King Catholic Church/Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church

The names for which we are asking you to indicate a preference are: **Sacred Heart and St John Henry Newman** OR **Blessed Dominic Barberi**

Sacred Heart and St John Henry Newman draws upon the history of the Maryvale area. It was St John Henry Newman who first coined the name “Vale of Mary”. His association with the Maryvale Institute and the Sacred Heart Chapel there is also well known.

Blessed Dominic Barberi was the Passionist priest who received Cardinal Newman (as he then was) into the Catholic Church. He is a fitting patron saint for us. He set off for England as a missionary barely able to speak English, yet he fulfilled his vocation. He is a fitting patron saint for us because he is a good example of someone who stepped outside his comfort zone to follow the call God was making to him.

As we begin the new venture of moulding ourselves into a fully united Catholic community, his intercession will certainly be powerful.

Changing the Parish name does not mean we have to change the name of the Cluster. We will still be the Newman Cluster of Churches.

### **Background on Buildings**

The parish Church at OLAM has a number of problems which prevent the fullest utilisation of the building. We cannot carry on using the Church at OLAM as it stands for much longer. The Archdiocese currently has two possible solutions under review with the aim of reaching a definitive conclusion by the end of 2025. They are:

(a) Allow our newly merged parish to occupy as its own dedicated place of worship the ground floor chapel at the Maryvale Institute. With this would also come responsibility for the Sacred Heart chapel on the floor above. The specialist property investment advisers retained by the Archdiocese, Savills, have suggested that by designating the chapels and ancillary offices as under the care of our newly merged parish, the remainder of the site would be easier to market. Savills are currently undertaking what is known as soft marketing. This means that instead of general advertising, they approach specific potential purchasers directly to gauge interest. It is worth noting that when the Parish Council was consulted on whether the Parish could use the Maryvale Chapel during the summer to keep it occupied, we said that we could only do so for the Saturday Vigil Mass because the Sunday congregation would not fit into it. In the end, we decided to keep Masses in the Church. The capacity of the Maryvale Institute Chapel is for a congregation of 50. It must be noted that a considerable sum of money will have to be raised to fund the works necessary to bring the grounds up to modern building standards.

(b) Sell the current Church building at OLAM to Cardinal Wiseman who would use it as a 6th Form Centre. They would construct one or two additional floors. The place of worship would be on the ground floor with ancillary offices. The actual worship space would be designed for 200 people and so half the size of the current one.

I stress, again, that all votes are consultative. The only two **decision-takers** in this matter are Fr. Thé, who must decide whether to submit the Petition a very first draft of which was given with Merger News No. 2, and Archbishop Bernard. However, all voices heard during the consultation are contributing to **decision-making**.

In Christ,

*Deacon Gary*

Rev Mr Gary O'Brien MA JCL PGCE DipDS

Parish Deacon: Christ the King, Kingstanding and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale

Clergy Coordinator: the Newman Cluster of Churches

Deanery Secretary: Birmingham East and North