



April 2024

Dear Fathers and Headteachers,

Each Sunday at Mass we sing the song of the angels ('Glory to God in the highest') and the song of the heavenly chorus (Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts). Singing is an important part of our Catholic tradition: indeed, Saint Augustine said, 'To sing is to pray twice'.

As a result of our Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan calling for us to 'become a Church where young people and young adults flourish', resources have been increased in developing the engagement of young people through music within the Archdiocese.

Our Archdiocesan Schools' Singing Programme leads over 2000 children in Catholic schools in Knowsley and Liverpool. Through weekly singing sessions, Archdiocesan music staff seek to develop our young people as evangelists, exposing them to the beauty, goodness and truth of Jesus Christ as revealed through music and poetry, in order to prepare and transform them for their future role in society. It was a great joy to celebrate the Good Shepherd Mass in the cathedral last year with a choir of over 1000 children from our Singing Programme!

As part of the development of the Singing Programme, a network of local area choirs for children are being formed. The first of these is the Knowsley Catholic Children's Choir. Since its formation in 2022, the choir has sung at Sunday Masses in churches in Huyton, participated in liturgies and concerts at the Metropolitan Cathedral and acted as ambassadors at civic events in Knowsley. Plans are in hand to expand the Schools' Singing Programme and create new regional Catholic children's choirs across the Archdiocese.

Young people are at the forefront of music at the Metropolitan Cathedral. The Cathedral Choir sings at seven choral services each week, leading the congregation in the singing of hymns and psalms, and offering repertoire from the treasury of sacred music to enhance the liturgical celebrations and raise the hearts and minds of those present to God. It is through their ministry of music that many people who enter the cathedral come to know the beauty of God.

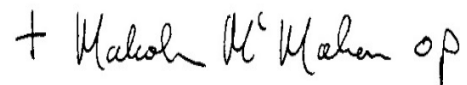
The Metropolitan Cathedral is the only Roman Catholic cathedral in the UK that offers both boys and girls an equal opportunity to undertake a full choir school chorister experience – at no cost to parents. Children are recruited from Liverpool and surrounding areas, with choristers coming from as far afield as Widnes, Southport and St Helens. Opportunities to sing are offered to young people from age 7 to 18 and beyond.

Being a chorister is a unique opportunity for a boy or girl in our Archdiocese, allowing them to engage with music, to live the Catholic faith in the daily celebration of the liturgy, and bring joy and hope to many. The high musical standards that the choir achieves on a daily basis do not happen without sacrifice: many hours are spent in rehearsal, with liturgies taking place almost every day. But for those who are fortunate enough to have the experience of being a chorister, it is a life-shaping one.

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I ask you, as those responsible for the parishes and schools of our Archdiocese, to share information attached about cathedral choristership opportunities widely across your community. This mutual generosity of spirit will serve to create a transformative opportunity for a young person and their family, enabling the wider Church to benefit from their God-given talent.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm McMahon OP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool