



The Catholic Parish
of Bishop's Stortford

the CARPENTER

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Parish Office: Monday to Thursday 8:30 am to 3:00 pm Friday 8am –12pm(remote)

Administrator/ Safeguarding: Mrs Debbie Jackson | **Catechetical Co-ordinator:** Mrs Sophie Sullivan

www.rcstortford.org.uk

+The Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

6 September 2026

Our priests are:

Fr Axcel Soriano (*Parish Priest*)

Fr Marco Lazzaron (*Asst Priest*)



Welcome Fr Axcel !!

Heavenly Father, we thank you
for sending Father Axcel to be
our new shepherd.

Grant him grace as he begins this
new chapter in our parish.

Fill his heart with joy, his mind
with wisdom, and his hands with
strength to serve your people.
Protect him in times of fatigue,
comfort him in loneliness, and
renew his zeal for souls every
single day.

Open our hearts to welcome him
with kindness, and unite us as a
parish family so that we may
work together to build your
Kingdom.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
our Lord. Amen

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Lord says to us this weekend: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

We understand these words in the context of confessing our sins, being forgiven, and being called to forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven. But perhaps we can also understand them in terms of how we see other people. We can sometimes "bind" someone by the opinion we have formed of them, by what others have told us, by preconceived ideas—or even by what Google tells us about them.

And perhaps some of you are asking: Who are you, Fr Axcel? Where are you from? How many languages do you speak? Hola? Mabuti? Ciao?

So, rather than what you may have heard or looked up, it is probably best that I tell you myself who I am.

I am originally from the United States, born in Los Angeles to immigrant parents from El Salvador. When I was two, my father died. My mother and I later moved to San Francisco, where she met my stepfather, whom I consider my father because he raised me as his own. I have two half-siblings and a large extended family in California.

When I was 13, I joined the Neocatechumenal Way in my local parish. Before this, I had very little background in the faith. In fact, I had been baptised in the Episcopal Church—my parents thought it was Catholic! God certainly has a sense of humour, because today my mission is to serve the Church in this country and its people.

My family instilled in me very good values, especially the importance of hard work. But, through no fault of their own, they could not give me what they themselves had not received: the Gospel, the Good News that God loved me as I am. That Good News came to me through people God placed in my life, particularly through the Neocatechumenal Way. It profoundly changed my life and, in time, became a source of grace and help for me and my family too.

At 16, because there was uncertainty about my earlier baptism, I was baptised and received into the Catholic Church. Through all these events, God began to reveal a calling in my life, born from the gratitude of discovering that I had been adopted as a son of God, especially as someone who had lost his earthly father so young.

At 18, I found myself confronted by Jesus' question in the Gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" I had finished high school, I was in a relationship with a lovely girl, and yet something was missing. During a youth pilgrimage, I said yes to the calling and began a period of discernment. Eventually, in Rome, I made myself available to be sent anywhere in the world.

In December 2010, I arrived in London. After ten years of formation, including periods of mission in the Holy Land and Mexico, I was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Westminster on 19 September 2020. My first appointment was at St John Fisher in Harrow North. Then in Enfield.

Looking back—the loss of my father, my family, my journey of faith, the people God placed in my life, my vocation, my priesthood and now my arrival here—I can only bless the Lord Jesus, because He has been faithful.

Perhaps this is also something of what the Gospel invites us to do. We can easily decide who another person is before we really know them. We can bind them to their past, to something we have heard, to our first impression, or even to what we find about them online.

But God does not look at us in this way.

He sees our history, certainly, but He also sees what His grace can make of that history. He does not simply bind us to our past; through forgiveness, He sets us free.

So, as I begin my time here among you, I ask you to pray for me, as I will pray for you. May we learn to know one another not simply through what we have heard or what we think we know, but as brothers and sisters whom the Lord has placed together.

I am very much looking forward to meeting you and to serving all of you here in Bishop's Stortford.

May the Lord bless you all.

Fr Axcel