

# The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, Advent 2022 Edition



**Celebrating St Laurence's Feast day 10 August 2022**

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# What's New?

## Thank you, everybody

### Bob Eccles OP

Once upon a time I was twenty years old and not too sure what I was for. Well, I loved books, and beer, and the stage, and all my friends, and practising my French, and of course jazz; but life had no clear purpose. One morning I was with the Dominicans at Spode where there was an interesting conference of the Catholic peace movement – that must have been the year we had Dorothy Day – and I was serving Mass for Illtud Evans early in the morning in the sunny little chapel of the house. When I knelt down at the beginning I had no idea what I was for, but at the moment of the last blessing I did know something. I knew I had to go to the Dominicans and offer myself to them for life. So when I got up that's what I did. Had they said, "do be sensible, go away and get on with your life", I'd have happily done so, no problem.

But curiously they didn't; they let me in. So here I am. I made profession on 28th September 1962, sixty years ago now. Men a lot holier and more useful have joined and not always stayed. Did I ever think of leaving? Oh yes, for five minutes in the morning when I was shaving. But then I stopped shaving, was taught by Herbert McCabe and Edmund Hill and Cornelius Ernst. I worked at different university chaplaincies for twenty years, had a parish in the Highlands, served as a priest in a great London teaching hospital at the time of AIDS, visited shanty towns and a leper colony, was asked to care about adult formation in faith, and gay Catholics, and the separated and divorced, and inter-church families, and spent my time walking the rounds in prisons and keeping up with the ex-offenders. To praise God, to bless, and to preach, as Dominicans do. And then of course I met you lot. Never a dull moment, was there?

This is really to say a big and heartfelt Thank You for giving thanks to God with me for sixty years, and for all the expressions of kindness – and the party, it was magic – and the lovely little book of mementos that I shall treasure. Thank you so much for thinking of that. How rich you are in all sorts of sweet gifts and how many ways you find to serve one another and Cambridge! God bless you all, today and always.

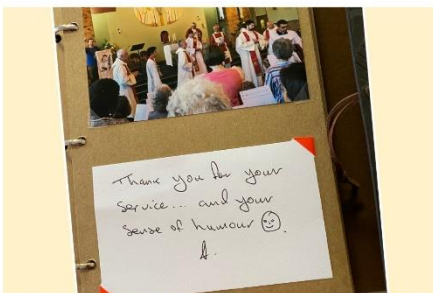


Dear Father Bob,

We would like to thank you for services and preachings over the past years, and we appreciate all the visits to Mr Da Costa.

May God bless you for your life of dedicated service.

Maria Da Costa and family



You have contributed in many ways to the work of St Laurence's SVP.

You already knew and visited/still visit a number of parishioners that the SVP is in touch with, at home and in care homes. You respond quickly to emails and made yourself available to minister at the SVP Masses of Anointing.

Good to see photos of you among the celebrants at the SVP annual pilgrimage of the Sick to Walsingham in 2022.

Thank you, on behalf of the members of our Parish SVP, for your affirmation and support.

Catharine Warren, SVP President



## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

### Monica Underwood

On Monday afternoons in term time, you will find that the Parish Room at St Laurence's looks rather different. It has been transformed into an 'Atrium' for young children to learn about and practice their faith. More than a classroom, it is a Montessori environment, in which children are invited to enter more deeply into the life of the Church. If you walk through the Atrium you will see a model altar, a prayer table, materials telling the stories of Christ's life and His parables, a baptism corner, an art area, a 'practical life' shelf, and more. Through these handmade, beautiful materials, the children and catechists in this Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) programme do more than learn about the Church; we spend time in contemplation and enjoyment of the faith. We pray and sing, work and play.



The Church seasons provide the framework for most of our lessons in the CGS atrium, beginning with Advent, in which we explore the Infancy narratives and Advent prophecies. We decorate with liturgical colours and learn their meanings. In ordinary time, we focus on words and gestures from the Mass, and parables about the Kingdom of God such as the Mustard Seed, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Leaven. As we approach the season of Lent, we ponder the mystery of death and resurrection through the Paschal narratives and the words of the Good Shepherd: 'I lay down my life for the sheep' (Jn 10:15b). At Easter we sing, 'Christ is Light, in him there is no darkness...'. We light our own Paschal candle and Fr Simon leads us in a 'Liturgy of Light' adapted from that of the Easter vigil.

We welcome new children and families to join us throughout the year. If you are interested in finding out more, please write to Monica Underwood: [monicaaway@gmail.com](mailto:monicaaway@gmail.com).

In the centre of the Atrium, you will find a small table with a sheepfold on it, enclosing a shepherd and ten sheep. The Good Shepherd parable, told simply in the words of Scripture, is at the theological and physical heart of the CGS environment. Young children respond most deeply to the message that, 'the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.... the sheep follow him, for they know his voice' (John 10:3b,4b). To be known and loved so deeply, protected, called by name. These are the images which take root in a child's heart and nurture their relationship with Jesus for a lifetime.



## **The XVI Synod: in Rome, throughout the Church, and in our Parish**

### **Roberta Canning**

This autumn the Church is coming to the end of the first year of conversations at parish, diocesan and national level in preparation for the XVI Synod of Bishops in October 2023. All Catholics were invited to “walk together”, that is to come together to listen to one another as we shared our experience of our faith, of being a member of the Church and the parish community. We were invited to share our hopes and dreams for becoming a listening Church more able to witness to Christ in word and action. The Synod journey continues at all levels. The Synod secretariat has received the Synthesis documents from Bishops’ Conferences from across the world and other submissions from religious congregations and movements. They are now preparing the working document for the next stage. This continental stage will be when groups of Bishops’ Conferences such as CCEB, the Council of the Conferences of European Bishops, will come together in reflecting on what has already been shared.

Cardinal Hollerich, the General Rapporteur of the Synod, said this at a press conference in August:

‘We are facing an ecclesial dialogue without precedent in the history of the Church, not only for the quantity of the responses received or the number of people involved.....but also for the quality of the participation’ and he went on to quote Fr Michael Ryan, parish priest of St James’ Cathedral, Seattle, who wrote:

‘Reading over the reports and reflecting on them, I found myself thinking how blessed I am to be pastor of a parish that is full of people who love the Church so much that they embrace it, affirm it, celebrate it and thank God for it, but at the same time are not at all afraid to criticise it, challenge it, question it and express anger, disappointment, and frustration.’  
[<https://www.synod.va/en/highlights/the-continental-stage-resources.html>]

In October this year, Pope Francis announced that there will now be two sessions of the Synod – in October 2023 and in October 2024. This serves to emphasise the Pope’s commitment to the fullest possible conversations at all levels.

The Synthesis prepared for England and Wales from the submissions from the dioceses describes our Synod journey as ‘a *Kairos* moment for the people who have engaged in this process, allowing them to dream of a better future.....what emerges is a dream of a loving,

merciful, familial and missionary Church in which all are involved, a synodal Church open to the guidance of the Spirit that is better able to build the Kingdom of God in these islands.’ You can read the Synthesis and the Bishops’ response on the Catholic Bishops’ Conference website – <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/>.

While the journey of the Synod continues internationally, we do not have to wait to follow up on our conversations in the Parish. Pope Francis’ vision is that conversations for the Synod will have helped us to walk and talk together at all levels of Church life so we are living Church life in a different way. We can hope and pray that our new bishop will encourage a fruitful diocesan response.

The St Laurence’s parishioners who took part in our consultation were open, honest and generous in sharing their experience of faith and life in the Catholic Church and in our Parish. As a member of our Synod working group, I felt very privileged to be part of those conversations. Parishioners identified several areas for us to work on and the informal Synod working group has been meeting and liaising with Fr Simon and the Parish Open Meeting.

The immediate areas for action were:

- 1 Organising social activities to renew our Parish community after the Covid-19 pandemic
- 2 Outreach, communication and welcome
- 3 Adult religious education and faith sharing and support for families in bringing up their children in the faith.
- 4 Encouraging parishioners to be actively involved in Parish life

The Parish survey was repeated in June this year and parishioners were invited to sign up for particular areas and a good number have done so.

Social Activities: the Parish Open Meeting agreed to aim for one social event a month and Parish community life is flourishing. There was an enjoyable barbecue for the Feast of St Laurence in August and the celebration for Fr Bob in September.

The Saturday Coffee Hub started again in September and is a great way to catch up with fellow parishioners and there is coffee after 11 o’clock Mass on Sundays as well as online coffee and chat (bring your own coffee!).

Helena Judd has started Family Fridays on the second Friday of each month.

The Synod working group has been looking at how to take other actions forward and met informally at the Coffee Hubs on 10th September and 1st October. Parishioners have volunteered to help the Communications and Tech Group to be part of a social outreach group and a group looking at improving lay participation in Parish life.

In our Synod conversations there were many requests for faith education and faith sharing groups, and there was good interest in the summer round of the Parish survey. A small group agreed to begin by hosting such a group after the 12.30pm Mass on Wednesdays. We will be looking at St Matthew's Gospel and we hope it will be an opportunity for parishioners to come together. We are beginning on Wednesday 16th November and will meet throughout Advent. Do bring your lunch and we'll make tea and coffee.

We have contacted everyone who expressed an interest in faith sharing and education to find out what they would like and when they would be able to come to meetings. There has been a notice in the newsletter. We need to know what you think you would find helpful. When is a good time for you to meet? Are there areas of our Catholic faith and practice you would like to explore?

To finish on a personal note, my experience of the Synod conversations in the Parish and beyond has led me to study for a Certificate in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care with Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology and Anglia Ruskin University. Part of the course will be a pastoral placement in the Parish. Part of this will be theological reflection on our Synod journey as a Parish and I hope it will enable me to support the Parish in the next stage of that journey.



### **We Have a New Bishop**

Pope Francis has appointed Canon Peter Williams from Cardiff Archdiocese as the fifth Bishop of East Anglia. We at St Laurence's welcome the news and look

forward to the ordination of Bishop to be Peter at St John's Cathedral in Norwich on 14th December at 11.30am. It is to be a ticket only invitation but the ordination will be broadcast live on the Diocese YouTube channel – search RCDEA.

## **Features and Opinions**

### **Sourire avec Soubirous!**

#### **Fr Simon Blakesley**

(Smiling with Bernadette...) In my many journeys to Lourdes I have always been impressed by the quiet humanity of Bernadette Soubirous. As you know, her relics have just been on a 'Grand Tour' of England and Wales, and I am sure that she would have had something suitably droll to say about this exercise in high tech piety. The four members of the travelling team was comprised of two van drivers and two social media technicians – a sign of the times!

Even during the time of the apparitions when she was going to report to the parish priest she was challenged by him and accused of blessing rosaries! She explained that she had raised her *chapelet* (rosary) towards the lady and that all the townspeople who had gathered with her to pray had lifted theirs up as well, and that was all! She explained passionately in her defence, "Well, I wasn't wearing a stole!" Perhaps the ordination of women was a live issue even then?

Later on, after the apparitions had ceased, she was often paraded before various dignitaries, bishops and theologians to speak of her experiences, and she was told by the parish priest to kiss the floor as a sign of her humility and willing self-abasement. When the Bishop of Orleans came to see her she was introduced as per usual and Mgr Peyramele noticed that she hesitated slightly before duly kissing the floor. When asked afterwards why this was so she explained, "Well Monsignor, I was looking for a part of the floor I hadn't ever kissed before."

As she was only 14 during the year of the apparitions (1858) she was still at school with the Sisters in the Convent and they were teaching her French, because, of course, her mother tongue was the local patois. The complexities of French grammar however were beyond her and even though the grammar primer was a very small leather-bound book she explained in some distress to her ever-patient teacher that, "The only way I am going to learn those verbs is if you push that little book inside my head..."

When she arrived at Nevers and entered the community, she was not welcomed by some of the sisters who were suspicious of her. One, however, who was originally from the same part of the Pyrenees as Bernadette, became a close friend. One day, as they were leaning out of a first-floor window overlooking the kitchen garden and close to the strawberry patch, she asked, "If I dropped my sabot (wooden clog) down into the



garden, would you go down and fetch it for me? “Of course I would!” was the answer, so Bernadette quietly added, “Would you bring some strawberries with you on the way back?”

St Bernadette was a wonderful illustration of the principle that genuine religion is far too important to be taken too seriously!

## Advent Hope - Bad but Also Better

### Michael Allan

Covid-19, cost-of-living, war, climate change, refugees, extinction of species, even divisive and deceitful world leaders ... is everything just doom and gloom, or are there any causes for hope? We need hope.

For several decades now the living conditions of most people on Earth have been getting better. Most people have become less poor. Around 75% live in middle-income countries. (Global ‘middle-income’ is defined as living on between \$2 and \$32 a day.) People in those middle-income countries have largely the same *range* of living standards as people in Western Europe and North America had in the 1950s. The world has been getting better but our view of it generally hasn’t.



The Doe family lives in Liberia in a rented 3-bedroom house. Monthly income approximately £76. Their dream is to buy a car someday. (Middle-income category.)

Extreme poverty is defined as living on \$1.90 or less a day. In the year 1800 approximately 85% of humanity lived in extreme poverty – today it is around 9.3%. In 1981 about 1.92 billion people lived in extreme poverty, by 2017 this had fallen to 690 million. (690 million is still an appalling number, which shames us all, because we are all involved.) This means about 1.2 billion people moved upwards out of extreme poverty into ‘middle-income’. Of course, many of the people in middle-income countries are still poor but they have left extreme poverty. This makes a real difference, as the photographs here illustrate.



The Kabore family live in Burkina Faso. They own their home and have lived there for 50 years. Monthly income approximately £35. The next big thing they plan on buying is a bicycle (Extreme poverty category)

One of the most tragic effects of extreme poverty is the number of children dying. Worldwide around 14,000 children die every single day. This terrible reality (far worse than Covid-19) is in most cases an avoidable one – the solutions are known, they just need wider implementation. 14,000 deaths a day is a terrible tragedy but also a triumph.

**Changes in global child mortality** (as the percentage of children dying before the age of five) since the year 1800:

- 1800: 43%
- 1960: 19%
- 1990: 9.3%
- 2017: 3.8%

3.8% is still far too high but is so much better. If global child mortality was still at the estimated 43% of 1800 there would be around 166,000 children dying every day. These are real children dying or not dying. This achievement includes all countries at all income levels, not just the richer ones. Of course, countries in extreme poverty have child mortality rates that are still far too high but they are less than they were. Tragedy and triumph. Things are bad but also better.

**Examples of improvement in child mortality by country** (as the percentage of children dying before the age of five) from various dates up to 2016:

- Sierra Leone: 40.6% (1956) to 11.4% (2016)
- Kenya: 30.7% (1950) to 4.9% (2016)
- Iran: 33.9% (1958) to 1.5% (2016)
- UK: 25.1% (1841) to 0.4% (2016)

Young children are fragile, many things can kill them. Improved child mortality means that other things must also have improved in those countries, such as better sanitation and housing, greater availability of food and clean water, wider access to education, women more in control of their own fertility, and especially, better primary healthcare, including child vaccination, saving

an estimated 2 to 3 million lives per year. (Promising new malaria vaccines are now on the horizon.)

The figures for maternal deaths have also improved. Maternal death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days after the end of gestation. Between 2000 and 2017 maternal deaths worldwide fell from 342 to 211 per 100,000 live births. Every maternal death is a tragedy, devastating the remaining family, more so if that family is poor. Yes, things are bad – very bad in some places – but also better.

The Covid-19 pandemic, and now the global cost-of-living crisis, have halted and partly reversed some of this progress – appallingly, an estimated 120 million people have gone back into extreme poverty – but it cannot undo it all. In fact, the progress already made may have helped many countries weather the storm.

The media does not always help, feeding us mostly bad news that grabs our attention, and makes us gloomy. Good news is largely unreported. We end up thinking everything is bad and getting worse. But that is not true, and it drags us down. When we hear bad news, we need to remember that there is probably good news we are not hearing.

Not everything is our fault, or not wholly our fault. The current state of climate change chaos is principally the fault of the fossil fuel companies and their decades of deliberate inaction and obstruction, which is still happening, and for which there is clear evidence. Climate chaos – increasing heatwaves, droughts, famine and floods – is harming and killing the poor most of all and right now, and is pushing many millions back into extreme poverty and migration. But climate change, like other problems, can be tackled. We need to get on with it.

In Advent and Christmas, hope becomes flesh and comes to meet us: the Son of God born outside in the cold, beyond the walls of comfort and security, laid in a rough manger among the beasts. The Almighty small and vulnerable, another baby on the margins striving to live, joining our struggle.

The reality of change for the better, and of real, active goodness in our world, is the incarnate God working through our efforts and those of countless others, including groups like CAFOD and the St Vincent de Paul Society. Progress happens by commitment and hard work, not by chance. Our efforts, including our efforts to live more simply and responsibly, work. They bear fruit.

Doom and gloom are overcome by hope, prayer and action. The birth of our saviour and brother Jesus in our midst gives joy and hope even in the face of suffering.

Things are bad, sometimes very bad, and need our continuing efforts. But many other things are so much better.

The photographs above (licensed by Creative Commons license 4.0) come from [www.gapminder.org/dollar-street](http://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street). Visit it for more photographs and details of the two families, and of many other families across the world and how they live.

This article was inspired by the book *Factfulness* by Hans Rosling (1948-2017), Swedish doctor and professor of International Health. Statistics cited are from <https://ourworldindata.org>, based on data from the United Nations and other institutions. Figures quoted are predominantly from before the pandemic. Some figures will therefore have changed.

Note: The figures in international dollars for extreme poverty and middle income were current as of August 2022

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## More news from Stella Maris

### Mary Watkins

Since I last wrote about Stella Maris we had the annual appeal in the Parish which resulted in a very generous response. Thank you very much.



Back in the summer I was invited to visit and see for myself some of the work done by our ‘local’ Chaplain Julian Wong, who is based at Felixstowe and also covers the Port of Ipswich. Having been kitted out with regulation dress for going on board, I visited a smaller vessel discharging dry goods such as grain and sugar. It had been detained by the Ipswich port authorities as being unseaworthy. The Turkish Master spoke English and explained that this had necessitated a long list of specialised tasks to be carried out. They had been in port for some weeks and the delay had been exacerbated by the end of Covid when restrictions were only recently being lifted. Julian explained that some owners and



Masters were still unwilling to release crews to go on shore. The crew were pleased to see us as Julian had already visited several times. He often helps crew contact families they have been away from for many months by providing portable Wi-Fi and SIM cards. Not all ships have Wi-Fi and those that do often charge high rates for its use.

The cook is someone Julian always calls on as they rarely get to get a break ashore as someone has to feed whatever crew is on board. The meal I saw looked very good and is very important to maintain morale. Julian has a programme on Radio Maria saying the rosary and this is a popular devotion among many crew – rosaries are always in demand. I was touched that some crew asked Julian to pray for them there and then. I saw the modest rest room alongside the docks in Ipswich allowing seafarers somewhere to go to relax, watch television and use the Wi-Fi, and the more extensive building in Felixstowe, which contains a bar, function room and chapel. This is shared by a number of seaman's welfare groups.

Security is very strict in the huge Felixstowe docks and I was unable to go aboard one of the gigantic container ships this time although I hope to do so on a return visit.

Julian describes below a couple of examples of some of the activities he has been involved in since I visited.

### **Practical help to get away from the ship for much needed respite**

‘During the first strike at Felixstowe Port, a couple of vessels were stuck at the port and one vessel allowed its crew off so I provided transport for them to go into Felixstowe town to do their shopping. So, they were happy. Other than that, seafarers continue with their duties on board. During the recent second strike, there were again two vessels at the port, but the dock workers were working every other two hours to load and unload containers. Again, the seafarers were able to come off their vessels.’

### **The importance of Wi-Fi access**

‘The current war in Ukraine obviously has a massive impact on Ukrainian seafarers. Many of them still have families in war-torn parts of Ukraine. The seafarers are not able to go home, and they can only call them on their mobile phones. The Merchant Navy Welfare Board managed to get Vodafone to supply free SIM cards for Ukrainian seafarers to help them contact their families. These data-only SIM cards are for use only from the United Kingdom, but it is a help to many. Yesterday, I called on one vessel and this Ukrainian officer was on the phone talking to his grandparents in Kherson which is Russian occupied. His family is still there too. I

handed him a free SIM card for himself and another Ukrainian on board. I even managed to say good morning to his grandmother. On another vessel there were 16 Ukrainians on board, and I handed them 16 SIM cards. They were very happy with these SIM cards especially when they realised they were free!



Alan Bernabe, cook, and friend, holding the MiFi (portable Wi-Fi) unit

Their vessel had just berthed when I arrived at the Port of Ipswich yesterday morning. As soon as it was safe to board, I went on board and into the crew mess room. There I met the Filipino cook and was immediately joined by the other guy in uniform. We were already friends on Facebook. (Julian keeps in touch with many seaman in this way and when in port they can recognise each other from the photos they post.) They were very pleased to see the MiFi unit which I had taken on board as the SIM cards had finished. So, the crew will be able to have unlimited Wi-Fi for the next few days while they are at the Port of Ipswich. This will help them maintain contact with the families and friends at home.’

### **Webinars**

Stella Maris have also been holding a series of online webinars which provide fascinating insights into the lives of seafarers and those who work with them. A recent one was on ‘Ship Abandonment’, which has become increasingly common before, during and since Covid. It takes various forms, from leaving a ship in port without food, water or any means of heating or air conditioning to leaving crews without wages or any contact with owners. Two Stella Maris chaplains in Africa and Scotland gave extraordinary accounts of having to step in and provide the bare necessities, sometimes for months at a time, and acting over and above what might reasonably be expected. A lawyer for one of the international agencies responsible for the conduct of shipping took part in an illuminating discussion with an investigative journalist and Stella Maris, and raised the dilemma faced by all charitable works – does the emergency help given by Stella Maris

let those responsible off the hook? Martin Foley, the Chief Executive of Stella Maris, was quick to assure us that they are in as regular contact with such agencies as possible!

If you would like to learn more about Stella Maris, how to donate, collect rosaries, knit a hat for a seafarer or buy a Christmas gift please go to: <https://www.stellamaris.org.uk/>. Also, you will find details of their recent webinar there. If anyone is interested in joining me in a fundraising activity, please contact me via the Parish Office.



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## St Jerome – 30th September 2022

### Fr Bob Eccles

It was 1947 or 1948, and I was between seven or eight years old, when I knew that mine was a jealous God. It was not to be suffered that a Catholic child should be exposed to religious instruction of the Protestant kind under the Butler Act. And I was the only such in the whole class, as I would be almost all my schooldays. The problem must have puzzled my teachers. A solution was found. Whilst the rest of the class had RI (whatever that was) I was put to sit by myself in an empty classroom, the sunlight streaming through the windows, in front of me on the desk, an unfamiliar square brick of a book, endless closely printed pages of tiny print in a language strange to a reader of Enid Blyton. It was the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible and we were to spend a school period together once or was it twice a week, this fair-headed little boy and it. My class teacher Miss Jarville had left the room, and the book and I were alone together. So I opened at the beginning, in the beginning, and began. It was my introduction to Holy Scripture and the original qualification that lets them put me up to give the homily on St Jerome's day.

What did we make of one another? The Bible interrogates us, throws us back on ourselves, it is the word that speaks to us and opens our ears. It was a knobbly read but I knew it was mine. I cannot remember

receiving much elucidation from anyone. I can remember how it drew me in, how I lingered on some pages and rather scamped others, first of all Genesis with some eye-stretching events, then Exodus, Leviticus (boring but that is how education is), on through the books of Moses to the histories and the psalms. It was a private communion with a Word that delivered itself only slowly.

What did I make of it? God had walked in the garden with Adam in the cool of the evening, he was everywhere and in all events, he would speak to you as to his friend. I was convinced of this pervading mystery and the often unbearable weight of his presence, I don't think I could really distinguish this otherness from the impenetrability of the Jacobean language that often stumped me. What are these foreskins that you could be told to collect? The lessons, and there were plenty, entered into my mind in an unstated way, they just came to be part of a mental furniture. There is a jealous God who shows his love to whom he wills, he who brought a vine out of Egypt. There is a world of human passions, people are deeply attracted or repelled by one another. Blood ties run deep. Humans are passionate and they are possessive. Regulations and ritual instructions are obsessively necessary but so is sacred violence, I cannot tell you whether it came home to me at eight or whether the ideas grew in my mind. Many meanings of the texts are lost forever (may as well learn that lesson early). Some of it could well be written for a dreamy little boy. There was much sex though I didn't know the word, clearly lots of human possibilities here, but I knew it could wait. Who reads the Bible at any age finds a robe of many colours and infinite variety, the sweetness of honey and the roar of the lion, the lover is at the lattice, Job accepts his sorrows from God's hand, and David loses his son.

Father Thornhill's Sunday readings from the pulpit sometimes matched mine in the empty classroom, only he did repeat himself so. I eventually came to the end of the Bible with the triumphant reading of the Apocalypse and told Miss Jarville (to whom I owe my success at 11 Plus). I asked hopefully if I could read the next in the series but that was it. It wasn't until the novitiate that I next attempted the serial reading of the Bible, this time in a more coherent and recollected way. But I was already Jerome's man. The Word of God alive and active that cuts more finely than any double-edged sword. Amen.

## Time to Light a Fire

### Karen Rogers

What do you love about autumn?

The great classical poets have spoken so movingly on this theme, Keats with his 'seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness', RS Thomas with his sense of wonder:

'Let the mind take its photograph  
Of the bright scene, something to wear  
Against the heart in the long cold.'

And dear John Clare:

'Burning hot is the ground, liquid gold is the air;  
Whoever looks round sees Eternity there.'

All connect with something timeless, deep and beautiful about the interaction of the natural world and the human spirit and the opportunity the season affords for reflection.

It would be unfortunate if we let such apparently effortless expressions of the beauty of the season dull and overwhelm our own. How many of us have golden memories of the autumns of former years, each earlier memory overlaid and given greater depth and resonance by the next one, until the whole glows with inner fire like well-varnished oak?

Who does not look forward each year to the great pleasures of sharing seasonal vegetable soup and pumpkin or fruit cake with friends and family, looking out a favourite woolly jumper to snuggle in or to planning a rustle through the red, golden leaves at a local park?

Who among us, I wonder, would envisage writing about such things in a language other than our mother tongue, say in Mandarin Chinese, Turkish or Polish?

Every Tuesday in term-time in the Parish Room here at St Laurence's there is a pleasant buzz of cheerful chatter and much laughter and companionship. Speakers of other languages from all over the world meet with enthusiastic and dedicated local teachers to improve their English at what is known as the ESOL Café, because tea and cake are also on the agenda, alongside all the sharing of resources, themes and ideas.

Our second session of term was focussed on autumn; we shared thoughts, memories and poems connected with the turn of the year, analysed grammar to construct creative and novel sentences, looked at native trees, demonstrated playing conkers and discussed recipes. As the culmination of the morning's activities several

members of the group surprised and delighted us all with the haikus that they had been inspired to compose. We thought them too good not to share and so they are copied here with kind permission of the poets themselves.

Autumn will begin.  
All trees will change their color.  
Winter slowly comes.

The birds are singing.  
Heavy raindrops on the roof  
sunset leaves slowly.  
*Ebru*

The misty mornings  
chestnuts and oak trees swaying  
calm and peaceful sounds  
*Larissa Egger*

Cold autumn welcome.  
Cozy evenings by the fire.  
Shall we drink mulled wine?  
*Kyoko, Caroline and Sufia*

Snuggle up in bed  
with my little sweetheart;  
share stories with her  
*Ashley Chueng*

Time to light a fire.  
Spend time with my children.  
Enjoy tasty food.

Time to light a fire.  
Spend time with my children.  
Enjoy each other.  
*Emi, Chie and Nataliya*

As I reread them, I can dream of autumn days and companionship and who knows... maybe one day some of us will even attempt something similar in Mandarin or Polish? On Tuesdays, life seems full of glowing possibilities.

As Emi, Chie and Nataliya reflect, it is time indeed to light a fire.



## Cardinal Points – Mundane and Mystical

### Ronald Haynes

‘The devout Christian of the future will either be a “mystic”, one who has experienced “something”, or he will cease to be anything at all.’ (*Christian Living Formerly and Today*, 1971). This famously prophetic and helpfully provocative thought comes from Karl Rahner (1904-1984), the great German Jesuit theologian, and one of the key contributors to the Vatican II work and follow up. This may seem a surprising claim, especially where people think of mysticism as being very negative or even dangerous. For instance, some influential figures (such as the popular human-potential leader Jean Houston) have shared witty warnings, including versions of the catchy phrasing: ‘Mysticism begins in mist, has an I in the middle, and ends in schism.’

It is unsurprising that there can be misgivings or misunderstandings about what is meant by mysticism, given a variety of representations which may be found in a community, including a sharp contrast too often made with some nebulous notion of what we presume must be ‘normal’ or taken for granted as decidedly mundane. Yet determining what is ordinary or usual (whether for more localised or more global communities) is in many ways either constrained by limitations to experience and reflection and comprehension, or more fully developed by suitable study and community engagement and reporting. All said, there are communities and traditions which believe mysticism should not be seen as somehow rare or uncommon, but rather integral and part of everyday life.

The great writer and wit GK Chesterton asserts (in *Orthodoxy*, 1908) that: ‘Mysticism keeps men sane. As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity.’ That is a superb assertion of the necessity of coupling, rather than contrasting, the mundane and the mystical aspects of our life. Chesterton uses an imaginative and dramatic explanation in support of this rich and promising idea:

‘The ordinary man has always been sane because the ordinary man has always been a mystic. He has permitted the twilight. He has always had one foot in earth and the other in fairyland. He has always left himself free to doubt his gods; but (unlike the agnostic of today) free also to believe in them. ... His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight: he sees two different pictures at once and yet sees all the better for that.’

Embracing the twilight (and ambiguity), acknowledging doubt alongside faith, and having an eye (and a foot) in each of the two camps of earth and the spirit world are all recognisable aspects of the dynamic

of spiritual development. Growing up spiritually has parallels and similarities to the challenges of physical development, leading to some naturally sharable insights (and caveats).

It is a common enough experience to see some claims about the spiritual life being presented as an alternative to or even a cure for the ills of ordinary life, and versions of this idea can be found in some types of lively church groups and some so-called ‘New Age’ groups. While there may be attractive claims among some such groups, including the intoxicating sense of the ‘sweetness’ of fresh spiritual encounters, there are historical warnings about impediments to spiritual development. In addition, attempting to disconnect spiritual life from practical living risks neglecting the sharing of God-given gifts and interference with the intended work of the Spirit acting through us.

One obstacle which has stopped many from progressing spiritually was an early concern for St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), as she experienced what she came to call aridities and which a number of spiritual advisers of the day pronounced with the standard conclusion – it was her fault (much like the dreaded ‘comforters’ in the Book of Job, during his afflictions). An insightful and supportive Franciscan spiritual guide, Francisco de Osuna (1497-1541), helped her see instead that this was a natural aspect of a developed spiritual life, and that it was as much to be expected as the wonderful sweetness of the initial spiritual encounter with God.

St John of the Cross (1542-1591) picks up on these expected contrasts, between the sweet spiritual heights and the dark night depths, and both Church doctors creatively combine metaphoric images of the intimacy which is shared with God. The soul is sometimes described like an infant who is to be spiritually fed by Mother Christ, but then again elsewhere Christ is presented as the divine groom who is to wed our soul as his bride. The philosopher Nelson Pike (1930-2010)<sup>1</sup> describes these two key metaphors about the intimate spiritual relationship of some souls with God as nursery metaphors and bridal metaphors, which sometimes are used individually, but are occasionally surprisingly used together. This provides a kind of ‘gender jangle’ in which Christ is nursing mother and also courting groom. Pike further illustrates these points with the related passages from the Benedictine spiritual writer Blossius:

‘Speaking to God of those enjoying the Prayer of Full Union, in part 8 chapter vii, of his *Instructions in the Ascetic Life*, Venerable Blossius says this: “... The tender embraces, the delicate kisses that a mother gives to her dear child or the bridegroom to his beloved bride, are but the feeble image and shadow of those that Thou bestowest upon the chaste soul that loves thee.” In this passage, the nursery metaphor is juxtaposed with the bridal metaphor in such a way as to suggest that the two

are, as it were, pictorially equivalent as regards their facility to provide an image of the mystical moment. Such juxtaposition is common in the mystical literature more generally.’

As a natural progression of these models of self and spiritual relationship, there is a need to be weaned, metaphorically, and to take on solid spiritual food – which also involves some suffering, and taking up the cross. In his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, St John of the Cross warns of those who try to maintain their spiritual sweet tooth – who do not want to grow spiritually:

‘It happens that, when some of this solid, perfect food ... is offered them in dryness, distaste, and trial, they run from it as from death and wander about in search only of sweetness and delightful communications from God. Such an attitude is not the hallmark of self-denial and nakedness of spirit but the indication of a spiritual sweet tooth. Through this kind of conduct they become, spiritually speaking, enemies of the cross of Christ [Phil. 3:18].’<sup>2</sup>

Because of the great spiritual purpose of the kind of suffering indicated here – that of growing up, of maturing spiritually, there are many imaginative attempts to convey the process. From the 19th century Danish philosopher and spiritual writer Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), we find in a collection known as the *Gospel of Suffering* that he adds another loving image of the child soul and parent Christ, again in the image of Mother:

‘When a child is allowed to hold on to his mother’s dress, can we say that then he is walking along with her, just as his mother walks? Nay, we may not say so. First must the child learn to walk alone and on his own, before he can go the way his mother goes, and go as she is going. And when the child is learning to walk alone, what must the mother do? She must make herself invisible. That her tenderness towards him is the same and remains unaltered, that indeed it probably grows greater, just at the time when the child is learning to walk alone, we know very well; the child, on the other hand, may not always understand it. But what is meant by the child having to learn to walk alone and to walk on his own, is, in a spiritual sense, the task set anyone who is to be somebody’s follower—he must learn to walk alone and to walk on his own.’<sup>3</sup>

Kierkegaard channels many of the insights from St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, and their influences, in this very familiar, yet often forgotten, but also most fundamental of experiences:

‘Strange, is it not? Although it is almost as to something comical and always with a smile that we refer to the anxious efforts of the child to walk alone, yet language has no more forceful expression, and none more

touching or more true, than this description of the deepest sorrow and suffering: to walk alone and to walk on one’s own. That heaven’s care for us is unchanged, and is indeed, were it possible, still more solicitous in this hour of danger, we know very well, but perhaps we cannot always understand it, when we are learning.’<sup>4</sup>

Here he embodies in the child a hint of some of the initial sense of abandonment which they and so many have felt, while clarifying why there is a kind of unavoidable suffering to gain the urgent growth awaiting us in the spiritual life. Kierkegaard returns to this learning to walk metaphor to further reflect and expand on it:

‘So then to follow means to walk alone and to walk on one’s own, the way the teacher went: to have nobody in sight with whom to take counsel, to be compelled to choose for oneself, to cry out in vain, as the child cries in vain, because the mother dare not seem to help; to despair in vain, because nobody is able to help, and heaven dare not appear to help. But to have invisible help, this is precisely learning to walk alone, for it is learning to transform one’s mind to the likeness of the teacher’s, though the teacher has passed from sight.’<sup>5</sup>

All of these passages and writers are trying to prompt us – or at least anyone who would hope to become more spiritually proficient – to grow up, spiritually speaking. None of these models and metaphors are calls for artificial hardships, or for excessive ascetical practices, but for necessary preparations for the transformative action of divine love. Returning to Chesterton to help gather many of these lively thoughts, he neatly conveys the stereoscopic experience of earth and heaven with some unifying and perhaps oddly clarifying paradoxes:

‘The whole secret of mysticism is this: that man can understand everything by the help of what he does not understand. The morbid logician seeks to make everything lucid, and succeeds in making everything mysterious. The mystic allows one thing to be mysterious, and everything else becomes lucid.’

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Pike, *Mystic Union: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Mysticism*, 1992 Cornell University Press, p. 74; (Pike indicates that the Blossius quote was from Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer*, 110; pt. II, chap. VI, extracts)

<sup>2</sup> St John of the Cross, Chapter 7, Book Two, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*

<sup>3, 4, 5</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Gospel of Sufferings* (Christian Discourses, 1847), tr. Aldworth & Ferrie, 1955 (reprinted in the series *The Classics of Mysticism*, James Clarke, Cambridge, 1982), pp. 15-16

## **Parish Organisations and Activities**

### **Catholic Women's League Update**

**Janet Scally**

**Lunch is on the 2nd Friday of every month after the 12.30pm Mass**

**All are welcome to join us**

We meet at 11am before Mass, do join us.

We are especially keen to raise money for the needy in such difficult times; last month we sent £50 to our local Cambridge City Food bank. This month we are proud to announce that we raised a massive £140 for the Macmillan coffee morning charity. Not only was it good to raise money for an important cause but also it was such a pleasure to sit and chat for a few minutes with fellow parishioners.

Janet Scally 01223 365330

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### **SVP UPDATE**

**Ciaran Ward**

Dear Parishioners,

We would like to share with you our news and activities over the coming months. We hope you will enjoy reading about them:

#### **New President**

Firstly, the SVP Conference would like to thank Catharine Warren for serving a total of 5 years as our wonderful Conference President – she has been a great support to me as the new President of the Conference and to Melanie De Souza, our new Conference Vice President (a new supporting role for the President). Thank you, Catharine, and we are grateful for continued service.

#### **Increasing demand for SVP services**

We are entering into a difficult period for some with respect to the cost of living crisis. I would like to draw your attention to a national SVP campaign which is one of our many avenues of support:

The UK cost of living crisis refers to the ongoing increase in prices combined with the decline of household incomes. This is something which began in 2021. Now,

however, inflation is in double-figures for the first time in 40 years and relative wages have fallen at their sharpest recorded rate. The impact of this will be felt across the UK, but it will most affect the poorest members of society who have experienced a decade of austerity, and most recently two years of a pandemic and its associated financial fallout. This has left individuals and their support structures fatigued and under resourced.

This autumn the crisis will become worse with rising heating costs, increasing food prices, rising inflation, uncertainty around job security and parents unable to buy school essentials as children return to school. For many their coping strategies are already stretched and it will likely mean making the agonising choice between heating and eating.

The SVP's frontline services have provided increasing support to those affected, with the number of people requesting support doubling in comparison to last year. Additionally, the number of people accessing the SVP's other services, such as food banks, kindness kitchens and debt advice, has seen a marked rise. Indeed, the increase in the price of food, fuel and transport will continue to squeeze household budgets further as winter approaches meaning the number of people requesting support will continue to rise sharply as temperatures drop. Help us raise vital funds.

As the true extent of the crisis unfolds, people on low incomes will be hit hardest. Requests for our help have already doubled nationally.

We've launched a £500,000 Cost-of-living Support Fund to help our local groups support individuals and families across England and Wales through this difficult time.

Know someone who needs help? Contact your local SVP:

- Ciaràn – 07540842078
- Email: [svp@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:svp@saintlaurence.org.uk)) or the Parish Office
- Request help on our website: [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)
- Join the SVP

Received a winter fuel payment you don't need or want? Then you can help by donating the money to our fund. To donate, visit our website ([www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)) or contact a member of your local SVP conference.



## Local offering

As I am sure you are aware, we are entering into a busy period with respect to people in need. Our members continue to take Communion to those unable to attend Mass as well as visiting people who are lonely or isolated. We have also been helping people struggling with the increases in the cost of living, with basic needs and with the expense of children going back to school. Some of the things we have been doing include:

- Supporting people with Foodbank vouchers
- Releasing specific funds to meet the cost of children's school shoes
- Setting aside funds for household fuel costs
- We are responsive and can act quickly to various requests

Please do consider all our people in need in your prayers.

## Giving Tree

Once again, due its great success in previous years, we will be organising a Giving Tree in the Parish. It will include gifts for children, hampers and Food Vouchers. The Tree will be available from the first week of Advent, which is Sunday 27th November. Further details on deadlines for submissions will follow. The Giving Tree is always very well supported and as always we appreciate the generosity of our Parish.

## Donations

If you wish to donate to support our local actions, we are able to receive electronic bank transfers.

- Account number: 46077618
- Sort Code: 60-60-04
- Account Name: E060102 St Laurence  
(Note: if you have limited character spaces start left and fill in as much as you can)

Please do find further details on making payments and Gift Aid on the Parish Website (<https://www.saintlaurence.org.uk/ministries/svp.html>) or email: [svp@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:svp@saintlaurence.org.uk).

The St Laurence SVP Conference would like to thank you for your continued support and generosity.

## New SVP Members

As always, if anyone is interested and would like to join, or help in any way you can, then please do contact me on 07540 842 078.

## Lifts to Mass

Some parishioners who regularly go to a particular Mass might like to help by giving lifts to those without transport. If so, please do contact me.

On behalf of your local SVP Conference members, we wish you every blessing for 2022.

God Bless.

Ciaràn Ward (President)

Melanie DeSouza (Vice President)

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## More SVP

### Melanie de Souza

Mourning the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II, yet remembering a happy time. Below is a photo of St Laurence SVP member, Tony Ashdjian, with our late Queen at a Reception at St James' Palace for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, in May 2013. This was in recognition of Tony's voluntary work at Jimmy's, the homeless shelter in Cambridge.



For some background, Tony has a stellar volunteering history. He has been a member of the SVP, both in London and Cambridge since the mid-60s. While recuperating from a heart operation in 1996, he saw a request for volunteers for Jimmy's and didn't think twice about

offering his help. He has volunteered at Jimmy's from its inception that year to the present day. We are also so grateful for all the work he does on behalf of the SVP.

### On a lighter note:

Members of the St Laurence SVP enjoyed a social evening at a fundraising event, for the homeless, at St Barnabas Church, Mill Road. The meal and quiz were organised by the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project (CCHP) and Wintercomfort. Our Team had the dynamic name 'Black Lightning', chosen by Catharine Warren; a reference to the motorbike "Vincent Black Lightning" and a nod to our patron St Vincent de Paul. Fortified by a drink and a delicious meal prepared by Petra Tucker, our SVP member and her husband Joe, we were set to roll. We did not quite end up bottom of the

class, but we were pleasantly surprised by the range of knowledge in our team. We also came away with some raffle prizes. It was a very enjoyable, rewarding event with over £1608 raised, to be shared between CCHP and Wintercomfort.



**Peace** flat hands facing forward, bring apart making a circle with forefinger and thumbs

**Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous** was your response to our Harvest Fast Day 2022 campaign to support the food crises. We heard about people in many parts of the world that do not just face a downturn in their standard of living but have **NO FOOD** to put on the table. It is predicted to be the worst food crisis in living memory. We were told about those living in East Africa who are fighting for their very survival and you came up trumps! We raised the most we have EVER raised: a stunning total of **£2003.12!** A very big thank you from all of those who will benefit from your generosity!



## CAFOD Update

### Serga Collett

Another big thank you for all your support for **CAFOD** over the last 3 months – we had several fabulous celebrations. ‘Laudato Si’ Sunday at the end of September saw us praising the world that God has given us and we renewed our vows to look after the Earth and live sustainably. It was wonderful to witness the enthusiasm with which you supported this weekend to help those less fortunate than us.

This included thinking about those with disabilities and communication difficulties and we used Makaton signs to ensure understanding and communication. It was lovely to see so many of you join in – it would be even better if we could use some signs in our worship every weekend. Don’t forget we say or sing the word alongside the sign. In case you have forgotten them or were not at St Laurence’s, here are three important signs:



**Alleluia** start with hands at chest level, keep twisting them upwards and when you reach head height spread fingers.



**Amen** fists apart, thumbs pointing up, bring fists together

**Next CAFOD events:** Traidcraft (charity) Christmas cards and Advent calendars for sale mid-November!

Unwanted Christmas gifts sale 8th and 15th January – bring all those unwanted gifts and turn them into aid for others!

## Advent Giving Calendar

This ADVENT give more than you receive. This Christmas **‘work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us’**. (*Laudato Si* – Pope Francis)

It is time for us to give back to the Earth but it does not have to be a penance, you will be surprised how much fun it can be: there are 24 ideas below, not numbered 1 – 24 because you may wish to do them in a different order. Just cross them off as you go:

*Make up a Christmas hamper/bag with food and groceries for a family in need this Christmas – check on the Cambridge City Foodbank website to sign up and get the list of what to include in your hamper. Drop off dates are 4th and 6th December at Unit 2, Orwell House, Cambridge CB4 0PP*

Christmas isn’t Christmas without a Christmas tree! True but can you rent, recycle or reuse your tree. Even better buy a tree with roots and plant it in the garden for next year (if you keep it in a pot and restrain its root growth it will not grow super big). If you do buy a ‘cut’ tree make sure it is an FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified tree and recycle it by turning it into chippings. Plastic trees have double the carbon footprint of a real tree, but if you already have one, keep using it.

*Ditch the outside Christmas lights – they create so much light pollution that NASA can see them from space! Go for solar powered lights inside and remember to turn them off at night (decorative lights cost the UK £3.75 million a day to run over the festive period) and avoid batteries which leak as they corrode.*

Choose who you send your Christmas cards to wisely. Can you send an electronic Christmas card or can you make your own Christmas cards e.g. use photographs of something meaningful that has happened to you this year. At the very least buy cards for charity or made from recycled paper, and recycle your cards. One billion Christmas cards don't get recycled – that's the equivalent of cutting down 350,000 trees.

*If you are shopping for groceries, make sure it's local – support an independent retailer/buy something made or grown locally. Local shops help your local community to survive, and you are avoiding travel miles for your product.*

Make your own Christmas crackers – many stores have DIY crackers – just cardboard – no plastic! – fill them with a little something that actually means something to the other person.

*Sit together as a family/with your loved one, turn off the lights, light an Advent candle, say a prayer of thanks and tell a story about something you were thankful for from your past! If you live on your own, get some old photographs out and remember the good times.*

Visit a second-hand shop and if you are buying gifts make them second hand – refurbished technology and vintage clothes can make great gifts.

*Buy a gift for the Giving Tree this Christmas – take a tag, buy and bring back the gift specified for someone who will not have any gifts this Christmas.*

Gift an 'experience' for your loved ones – a day out to a National Trust or Wildlife location or an IOU for a homemade meal. Theatre shows or cinema tickets also make great gifts.

*Make sure that the items you buy are sustainable – ensure that wood and paper products are made from recycled paper or at least are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified materials and avoid single use plastic items.*

Plan ahead and cut your food waste, and be realistic about how much food you actually need (at Christmas an incredible 5 million Christmas puddings, 2 million turkeys and 74 million mince pies succumb to the scrapheap. The UK is known as the highest food waste producer in Europe!).

*Eat less meat! Go veggie or at least go organic or free range – having a meat-free diet is the single biggest way to reduce your impact on the Earth! If that seems a big ask, maybe consider reducing your meat consumption. Added bonus is, it reduces your risk of dying from heart disease, stroke or diabetes!*

Each Sunday of Advent check the groceries in your cupboard and share anything you do not use on the

OLIO app – an app that pairs you with neighbours who might need the items that are superfluous to your needs. *Go for a walk (don't take the car – if you need to, take public transport, and go and see, for example, the Christmas Lights). Take your own snack and drink or at least take a reusable cup if you really need to buy that coffee. You will be surprised how enjoyable these family outings are.*

Keep the thermostat down to 18 C – if you are cold put on last year's Christmas jumper and get in the spirit.

*Do you all need to be in different rooms – this evening huddle together – switch your electronic gadgets off – turn off the lights and heating in the rest of the house and play a game together.*

Use an ethical search engine to look for gifts (e.g. Ecosia – 80 per cent of their advertising revenue funds reforestation efforts in countries like Brazil and Indonesia (also they don't save your searches, track the websites you visit or sell your data – a real bonus). It takes about 50 searches to plant a tree (there is a counter in the top right-hand corner). Ecosia is part of the Microsoft Network and uses Bing and Yahoo search engines.

*Make your own Christmas decorations – air drying clay, FIMO or salt dough, some biscuit cutters and a piece of colourful string and you too can make beautiful decorations. Paper chains too are popular with children.*

If you MUST buy a commercially produced product, is it something the receiver actually wants? Keep any eye on whether it is recyclable and the airmiles travelled (e.g. do you really need that decoration produced in China?). Make sure you buy the next gift 'with care'.

*Make your own wrapping paper – brown wrapping paper decorated with your own stamps or tissue paper and a bow can look every bit as festive as commercially bought wrapping paper which often can't be recycled (especially if it is shiny). Use sticky paper tape – not Sellotape or better still just ribbon. (Each year the UK throws away enough wrapping paper to go around the Equator nine times!)*

Rather than get your kids to buy unnecessary gifts – (oh no yet more candles!) – have a Christmas baking day with them. No kids – no problem – do you have a dog/cat, rather than buy lots of Christmas shaped gifts full of additives make some bone shaped treats for them. No dogs or kids – make some for your neighbour's children! Decorate a box for your biscuits to make your baking look festive! Use a box you have previously received and wrap it in pretty recycled paper.

*Buy a CAFOD 'World Gift'. A range of 'virtual' charity gifts such as clean water or planting a vegetable garden can cost less than £10. These are gifts that are sure to be popular with the people you give them to and help transform the lives of families living in poverty.*

Plant a tree this Christmas for someone you love and give them a 'homemade' certificate, you could even



name the tree after the person who you are giving it to. If you do not have enough space for a tree, consider planting a tree by donating money to for example the Ecosia tree store. They have a range of tree projects e.g. trees that empower women, trees for wildlife, etc. Trees are crucial in supporting wildlife and fighting climate change.

*Christmas Day* Make sure everyone feels they have a job/purpose – lay the table, help with the cooking, take the dog for a walk – this will lead to less time for family confrontations and will give you more time to have fun with the family. And don't forget 'be happy' and rejoice in the Lord's birth. Don't forget to say a prayer for those less fortunate than ourselves.



This Christmas you will have done your bit to make the world just that little bit better!

Most of all when buying anything this Christmas think **less but better**, put time into picking a quality item that will last a long time. Ask the recipient what they would like! You will find that this reduces the chances of gifts going to waste and can be better for your wallet!

**After Christmas** – if you did you receive an unwanted gift – don't throw it away – bring it to the CAFOD Unwanted Christmas Gift sale on the weekends of 8th and 15th of January and the money we raise will directly help others.

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### Summary of Parishioners' Open Meeting 20th September 2022 at 7.30pm Hybrid meeting

Present: Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes) plus 14 in person and 7 online

**The Chair introduced Sandra Portas** who has been working part-time for the Diocese since 2021 to introduce the Stewardship Initiative, which encourages people to really think about the giving of themselves to benefit the work of their Parish whether it be in time, talent or money. The programme which she is introducing has been tried and tested for over 10 years in other dioceses in England.

Sandra introduces parishes to the programme by explaining it to a small team of parishioners who then take it out to the parish. The programme is introduced to the parish over the course of 3 weekends. A short talk is given at Masses usually in the Homily slot. The first talk is given by the parish priest, the second talk is given by someone from the parish finance team and the third talk can be given by either the parish priest or a lay

leader where parishioners are asked to pledge time, talents and treasure. The talks are tailored to each individual parish. Parishioners are asked to reflect in a gentle way about the parish, our responsibilities within the parish community, the state of the parish in terms of needs, time and talents, plus financial. So far 10 parishes in our diocese have run the programme. St Ives and Downham Market are currently in the process. The programme takes about 3 months to complete after the talks have been given.

It was felt that, as a Parish, we have already done a lot of work getting volunteers recently, so maybe this programme could act as a follow up, possibly in Spring 2023. It was suggested that, although the talks usually take place during the homily slot, they could be given at the end of the Mass.

### Parish news and Mass arrangements

Fr Simon said that over the next four weeks numbers of attendees at Mass would be counted. This will give an indication of the numbers of people coming to Mass. However, he does not expect the levels to be back to the pre-pandemic levels.

**9.30am Mass** at school – Fr Simon said that the school's new Head, Jenny McGhee Wallace, has now started with the new term. They have discussed whether Mass on Sunday should return to the school. They will look at the County Council's lettings policy and revisit the risk assessment. A few points to note: the school no longer has a caretaker and therefore no key person for security opening/closing issues. Also, the Children's Liturgy group has built back to good numbers within the church, would this transfer to school? With one priest covering all the Parish Masses on Sunday, would the logistics of crossing between two sites be workable? Could we go to two Sunday morning Masses with the start time of the 9.30am Mass put back to 9am? Whatever the final decision the 9.30am Mass will remain in the church for the foreseeable future.

**Offertory** – the question of restarting the offertory collection by passing baskets through the church was discussed, and there were no objections to it.

**Energy costs:** heating the church and helping people in need – James Dore (Treasurer) confirmed that the Parish has plenty of funds to heat the church as we would normally do. Our annual cost is about £8,000. He assured the Meeting that even if this doubles, then it is still affordable for this year as well as going forward over a few years or until energy prices stabilise.

A new heating system for the church is still to be considered and decided upon, including whether we should increase our use of solar panels. However, there is currently an administrative problem with reclaiming

the feed-in tariff, which needs to be sorted with the power company.

**SVP** – the Parish SVP group’s new president is Ciarán Ward, after Catharine Warren’s 5-year term ended. He said that the SVP national campaign re the cost-of-living crisis is due to be launched to help people through the winter, particularly if they are struggling with heating costs. He reported that locally they are taking things on a case by case basis. He urged people to look out for the older people in the Parish community.

**Coffee Hub** – There was some discussion about extending the Saturday morning Coffee Hub into the week, for a couple of mornings or afternoons. It was suggested that after 9.30am on Mondays and Thursdays, 10am–12pm might work if there were no other regular bookings at this time. Additional volunteers would be needed for this. We could also consider setting up a Parish Community Fridge such as the one in Wyndmondham parish which opens twice a week. The local council is looking to set up warm hubs around the city and have approached Fr Simon. They were looking for a facility that could be open 6 days a week, which is not feasible with several local groups using the room for meetings during the week and with the First Holy Communion classes starting shortly monthly on Saturdays at 11am.

**Foodbank** – The area where the collection boxes were based has been closed off by the office table in the Narthex, but food can still be dropped off there. Fr Simon suggested having a ‘Foodbank Sunday’ on which people are encouraged to bring something to donate.

**Synodal Pathway** – The action group continues to meet on 1st Saturday of the month at 11am. They plan to start faith-sharing and catechesis through Advent. The sessions are planned to start after 12.30pm Mass on Wednesdays, which was a time which worked well during the Synodal consultations.

The filling of the post of pastoral worker is important to implement the Synodal actions.

### **Social activities**

**10th Aug** –The Chair expressed thanks to Nora Darby and all who had helped organise our Parish Feast Day celebrations. Lots of people appreciated the party, which was well attended by over 80 people. There was a nice spread of people from all Masses and the Wednesday evening rather than a weekend party was successful.

**24th Sept** – Fr Simon said there will be a party after 6pm to celebrate Fr Bob’s 60th Anniversary.

**Family Fridays** – take place on 2nd Friday of the month, 6:30–8:30pm. Helena said that she has set up

this social occasion as an extension of Communion and Confirmation groups inviting full and extended families to enjoy a mix of arts, crafts, games and chat. Meeting dates are on the noticeboard on the front of the church.

**Radio Maria** is celebrating its 3rd birthday at the beginning of November. They have a new Priest Director, Fr Toby Lees, a Dominican based in London but in Cambridge two days a week. Radio Maria staff recently met with the SVP group to reach people who would like a DAB radio in order to listen to RM programmes.

### **Parish Groups**

**CAFOD** – Serga reported that the planned 60th birthday celebrations had been cancelled due to lack of volunteers. However, the Laudato Si’ Masses will all take place. She appealed for anyone who would like to volunteer to support the Harvest Family Fast Day (7th Oct) as an appeal reader or collector, please get in touch. The talks about the world food crisis will take place on 1st/2nd Oct and the donations will be collected on 8th/9th Oct

**SVP** – Ciarán Ward reported that the group will arrange for the Giving Tree to run in Advent with the tree placed in the Narthex. An online version will also be available.

**Tech Group** – Martin Avery reported that the group continues to meet monthly. They are continuing to explore options for replacing the CD player and are looking for something reliable and easy to use. They are in the process of buying an uninterruptable power supply for the Parish Office. It has been on order for a long time, so it will be chased up. There are plans to replace the projector and screen in the Parish Room so are currently getting quotes. They are also exploring ways of improving communication with parishioners so we can help them know what they can do with the website, possibly through a Q&A Session in the Parish Room, using the screen to demonstrate the website. They already show those who are housebound how to use the online streaming but would like to expand this teaching. Ways of managing data in the office are being explored. CCTV is getting old and needs updating and improving.

**AOB** Karen Rodgers reported that on Tuesday mornings, a group of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers enjoy meeting in the Parish Room.

### **Next Meeting**

Thursday 24th November at 7.30pm

## Radio Maria Celebrates 3 Years in England

Radio Maria England is a Christian voice in your home, broadcasting Christian music, prayer and teaching, on digital radio (in Cambridge and London) and online. Radio Maria England is based in Cambridge with an additional studio in London.

Many of St Laurence's parishioners are volunteers helping with the live broadcasts and promoting the radio. Sarah Sykes has created episodes for the Saint of the Day, Lucia Watson and her family lead the children's liturgy, bedtime stories and rosary programmes. Sandy Hobson and Nora Darby have shared their memories on the evening *Credo* programme. Gail Osman and Helena help host *Women Together* each month. Many other parishioners listen, call and pray with Cambridge's unique Christian Voice for your home, car, garden or wherever you need a community to pray with.



Radio Maria Promoter, Helena, with regular listener, Augusta checking out the RME phone app



**DAB RADIO AND IN YOUR CAR**  
DAB+ - Radio Maria England (Band 12A 223.936 MHz) in Greater London  
DAB - Radio Maria England (Band 11C 220.332 MHz) in Cambridgeshire and the surrounding areas

You can listen to Radio Maria on their dedicated app from your phone's app store, online at [www.RadioMariaEngland.uk](http://www.RadioMariaEngland.uk) or on DAB radio.

Do you have questions about your faith? Did you express a wish for more adult catechesis in the Parish Survey? All your questions can be answered by writing, or calling in to Radio Maria's programme *Questions of Faith*, broadcast live on Friday's 11am-12pm. Email questions in advance to [questions@radiomariaengland.uk](mailto:questions@radiomariaengland.uk) or call during the live programme on 01223375564. And if you can't listen live, you can catch up with the podcast.

## Visit of the Relics of Saint Bernadette to Cambridge

### Nora Darby

The relics of St Bernadette of Lourdes are journeying on pilgrimage through England for the first time.

We all know the background story of St Bernadette, who in 1858 saw the Virgin Mary 18 times in a series of visions. This happened in Lourdes which is now one of the busiest pilgrimage Christian sites in the world.



On the 15th October 2022 the relics arrived at the church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge. I, with many others, attended OLEM to venerate them. We queued to get into an already packed church, the relics were then carried into church and sprinkled with holy water then carried in procession to the place of

eneration while the hymn Immaculate Mary was sung. At 11am a Solemn Mass of Welcome followed after which it was time for the Veneration. After joining a long, slow moving, silent queue, I reached the beautiful shrine containing the relics and completed my own veneration. It was a truly humbling very Holy expression of my faith.

The relics were in Cambridge for a full 24hrs filled with music, Masses and veneration including a Healing Mass and an all-night vigil before the relics continued on to the next stop on their journey.



St Bernadette's reliquary at OLEM (photo from RCDEA)



## St Laurence's Confirmation Group 2022-2023

This year's group of Candidates is the largest St Laurence has had in 5 years. The format of their schedule has changed, with full afternoon sessions on the first of the month. They are going on more day trips and retreats as well to meet other young Catholics as well as have a variety of encounters with speakers and Catholic communities. The team of leaders this year has also expanded, and the parents are taking a larger role as well as supporting the candidates.

St. Laurence's Confirmation 2022- 2023	
<b>Where: Saint Laurence Parish Hall, Cambridge</b>	
September 25	1 – 3pm – Parents and Candidates Meeting
October 2 More than Man, Why Die? Why Comeback?	Why the World is Broken 1-5pm – Confirmation Session Candidates 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
November 6 More than Man, Why Die? Why Comeback?	1 -5pm Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
November 19 – 20	World Youth Day – Norwich Trip November 19 and Cambridge November 20 Estimated Price: £10 (includes coach ride)
December 4 Prayer	1-5pm Confirmation Session 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
December 24 Christmas Eve Mass	3pm – arrive to set up and prepare 4pm Mass
January 8 Holy Spirit	1 – 5pm Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
January 20 – 22	Sion Community Retreat - Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9BX £85 (includes coach ride) – <b>WE WILL BE FUNDRAISING FOR THIS RETREAT</b>
February 5 Saints	1 – 5pm – Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
March 4	FLAME – Wembley Arena, Arena Square, Engineers Way, London (9am – 11pm) Estimated Price: £25 (includes coach ride)
March 5 The Church and Vocations	1 – 5pm Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
April 2	Psalm Sunday (TBC)
April 7 Children's Stations of the Cross	10am – 11:30am
May 6 – 8 (Weekend)	Ignite Weekend – Swaffam, Norfolk Estimated price: £40 (Includes coach ride) <b>WE WILL BE FUNDRAISING FOR THIS RETREAT</b>
June 4 The Eucharist and Mass	1 – 5pm – Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
July 3 Confirmation	1 – 5pm Confirmation Session 5pm – Mass 6pm – Shared dinner and clean up
July 4 Confirmation with Bishop	5:15pm – Candidates and Sponsors Arrive 6:00pm – Confirmation Mass

## Family Fridays

All families are welcome to attend the Friday Family Events that take place from 6:30 – 8:30pm in the Parish hall. The event is perfect for a range of ages, with activities for everyone to take part in. The purpose of the events is to give families a social time to meet other families and allow children to meet peers. The first event saw the families learning about Therese of Lisieux, making Good Deed bracelets, flower brooches, and sharing fish and chips.



## St. Laurence's Family Fridays 2022 – 2023

All activities will be appropriate for a range of ages  
Saint Laurence Church Hall  
6:30pm – 8:30pm

September 9	Season of Creation	Activities (TBC)
October 14	Made in God's Image	Drawing, games
November 11	Saints Bingo	How well do you know your saints? Mix media Bingo Game
December 9	Christmas Traditions	Volunteers will share different craft / food traditions for their family Christmas
January 13	Science and Faith for the Family	2 scientists will be sharing what it is like to be Catholic and a Scientist! Some science crafts included
February 10	SCHOOL BREAK	TBC
March 10 6pm – 8:30pm	Lenten Reconciliation Service For Families	Reminder of What is Confession. (There will be a special separate session for children in the library who have not yet had their first Reconciliation). Confessions available whilst we participate in a Family Lead Stations of the Cross. Fish and Chips after the Stations of the Cross.
April 10	SCHOOL BREAK	TBC
May 12	Month of Mary	We'll be making Rosaries as well as discussing the different mysteries
June 16	Holy Spirit Fruits	Crafts and Games revolved around the Holy Spirit
July 14	God and Art	We'll be creating our own art pieces using different materials about your relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

Families are asked to bring £2 per person to help pay for costs of materials / food  
All ages are welcome – Family members will be asked to help with clean up, etc.  
Great opportunity for First Communion and Confirmation Candidates' families to get to know each other.  
Volunteer needed to help ☺ Email: [confirmation@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:confirmation@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Reviews and Recommendations

Sent in by Sarah Sykes:

### **The Holy Mass: The testimony of Catalina**

The porch is sometimes a bit of a jumble of pamphlets, posters and newsletters, but occasionally you will find a hidden gem. One such gem is a short booklet titled, *The Holy Mass* distributed by the Divine Mercy Prayer Group, Belfast ([www.DivineMercyBelfast.com](http://www.DivineMercyBelfast.com)).

One day I happened to be standing in the porch when someone came in with a pile of these little booklets. We chatted for a while and she gave me one of the booklets to read.

If you think that Mass is boring, I recommend that you read this. It is an account of a vision received by Catalina Rivas. It gave her spiritual eyes to see what is going on in Mass at a spiritual level which our mortal eyes do not have the privilege of seeing. Catalina was accompanied and guided by Mary through the vision. Mary explained everything that Catalina saw.

She explained how we should arrive in good time for Mass in order to prepare ourselves for the spiritual mystery that we are about to experience. That we should take some time to pray and ask the Lord to help leave all our cares and worries behind and be ready to focus on the Mass.

She wants us to really pay attention to the Liturgy of the Word including the Homily.

‘the Bible says that the Word of God does not return without bearing fruit. If you are attentive, something from all that you heard will remain in you.... Try to recall all day long those words....Savour them for the rest of the day and it will then become part of you, because that is the way to change one’s life, by allowing the Word of God to transform you’

Catalina describes:

Suddenly some characters whom I had not seen before began to stand up. It was as if from the side of each person present in the Cathedral, another person emerged....dressed in very white robes and they .... went towards the Altar.

And Mary explains:

‘They are the Guardian Angels of each one of the persons who are here. This is the moment in which your guardian angel carries your offerings and petitions before the Altar of the Lord.

...Ask for much, ask for the conversion of sinners, for peace in the world, for your families, your neighbours, for those who ask for your prayers. Ask, ask for much, but not only for yourselves, but for everyone else.’

And at the moment of Consecration, Catalina describes seeing Jesus enfolding himself around the priest and speaking the words: This is my body.

These few words are some examples of the things Catalina sees in her vision. I hope they will encourage you to pick up a copy of *The Holy Mass* booklet, if you see it in the porch, and read about what is happening on the spiritual plane for the whole of the Mass.

**Hallow** – A Catholic prayer app. Free to download and use, but a subscription is needed to get the most out of it.

Do you wish you had someone to pray with and to help you feel encouraged in prayer?

Hallow is a prayer app full of prayers from the Catholic tradition both old and new. From brief one or two minute prayers to full Rosary’s, Homilies, short talks and music. Many famous voices such as Jonathan Roumie (from the Chosen), Bishop Barron and Scott Hahn pray. You can listen to the ‘Bible in a Year’ with Fr Mike Schmitz. Take the daily Catholic Trivia Quiz. It is a great resource with which to enrich your prayer life.

**Dwell** – Bible app

Free trial, then by subscription

Would you like to read the Bible, but don’t have the time? The Dwell app holds multiple comprehensive narrations of the Bible in many versions, including Catholic Bibles, with a wide choice of narrators so you can find a voice that suits you. Ideal for taking a quiet moment to listen to the Word of God while drinking a cuppa, making your way to or from work, or preparing yourself for a time of prayer.

**Journey Deeper** – YouTube channel

Free

A great YouTube channel full of traditional Catholic prayers including novenas for Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Fatima, Novena to the Holy Spirit to name a few. Rosaries including Healing Family Tree Rosary, Scriptural Rosary, World Peace Rosary and the Rosary in Latin, the Divine Mercy chaplet, monthly prayers, morning and evening prayers, sleep meditations, Lent prayers. Discover some new ‘old’ prayers from our Catholic prayer heritage.



## Personal Stories and Experiences

### A Good Day on the Camino Francés

#### Joe Tucker

Get dressed, pack bags and stumble outside, to hear the local church bells chiming 6am. *Peregrinos* join the route from every angle, adjusting jackets and bags as their legs warm up.

A scented breeze as we walk through a pine forest by torchlight. We climb with a pink sunrise behind and a full moon in front. A field of sunflowers strain to catch the new day's sunshine. Our super-long shadows pointing straight down the path are reminders that we're heading west.

Superb mountain views as we cross into Spain then, 35 days later, first sight of the Atlantic Ocean.

After two hours walking, the village where we plan to breakfast comes into view. Freshly cooked tortilla with hunks of bread provide enough fuel to finish the day's walking. TV breakfast news is all about Queen Isabel II and King Carlos III.

Barrage of "buen camino's" from a passing group of cyclists. Surrounded by able-bodied *peregrinos*, Mum & Dad push their son's wheelchair up a steep slope. A wave to lorry drivers is rewarded with a friendly honk. Thumbs-up to Jaco trans driver who almost certainly has our heavy bag in his van.

Refreshed by delicious greengages given to us by a lady who was harvesting her front garden. Local men in traditional costume prepare for a day of bull running in their narrow streets.

Bright purple flowers hanging from the balconies the length of a tiny Calle Mayor. Purple heather alongside yellow gorse in Galicia reminds me of Scotland.

Duck into a café during a shower, which is lapped up by fields of maize standing tall.

Joyful cacophony of bells at 12 noon outside Leon Cathedral.

There are no strangers here – a friendly Frenchman gives Petra his fleecy top when we are caught in a full-scale thunderstorm without waterproofs.

Clear view of cathedral spires as we descend into Astorga now only 162 miles (=10 days) to Santiago.

On arrival at our hostel, we are welcomed with a small glass of Cerveza Damm Lemon – heaven! The ideal

room has a soundproof window, aircon and a full-size bath, with bonus points for a fridge, drying line or hair dryer – but you are so tired that you can just about sleep anywhere.

Chatting with familiar faces about the day's walk and relief at seeing that Leroy, guided by his daughter, has survived a tough descent. At the 3rd or 4th conversation, deeper topics emerge such as addiction or bereavement. Friendly waitress allows us to sit at a "reserved" table then serves our dinner on pottery which she has made. The menu has no desserts, so Petra buys biscuits from a nearby *chocolateria*.

Mass is in a simple 12th century church, run by a multi-national community of Benedictines. No gold or marble for decoration, just centuries of prayer coming out of the walls. Locals sing lustily as Mass is celebrated by a young Columbian priest, who adds a bidding prayer for *peregrinos*. Plenty of variety in Church music - a youth choir in Leon, a guitar duo in Palas de Rei, full throttle organ in Santiago de Compostela while the *botafumeiro* flies through the air.

As the temperature drops from baking hot to pleasantly warm, children play in the street, watched by grandparents.

Half the town fill Plaza Mayor on Sunday evening, long after *peregrinos* have hit the sack.

A different story in Santiago de Compostela where, late into the night, an enthusiastic folk group entertains a happy crowd of *peregrinos* across the plaza from the famous cathedral.



## Memories and Reflections of Walking across Spain

### Petra Tucker

On 11th August this year we set out from St Jean Pied de Port in the Pyrenees to walk across Spain, finishing in Finisterre some 36 days and 637 miles later. We walked with no rest days, averaging 17 miles a day. On days when the temperature was forecast to hit 35 degrees by 10am (all the first week) we were on the road by 6am, navigating in the dark along with many other *peregrinos*. Breakfast on day #1 was at Orisson, surrounded by mountains and as the sun rose the views were just breath taking. By late morning we had crossed over from France into the region of Navarre in Spain.

The Camino Francés takes you through the regions of Navarre, La Rioja, Castille y Leon and Galicia, each with distinct terrains. Between the cities of Burgos and Astorga lies the *meseta*, a huge raised plain where you walk through endless golden yellow fields. Here, the daily rhythm of walking means that days blur into one another and you forget the outside world as you quietly walk with just the views to enjoy and conversations with fellow *peregrinos*. It was in the *meseta* that we met Noel who we saw on and off all the way to Santiago. We also met a father and daughter from the USA, Leroy and Kate. Kate was Leroy's guide as he had a severe visual impairment. We would meet up with them in the evenings in various villages and eat our evening meals together. The region of Galicia is most like the scenery in Scotland, with some days where you ascend several hundred metres only to lose them again. By the time we got to Galicia, the temperature had dropped to 28 degrees which was easier to walk in. The largest cities (Pamplona, Burgos, and Leon) were hard on our feet – from the outskirts of Burgos to its centre was two hours of business parks, industrial parks and endless blocks of flats all mixed up in between. The accommodation in the cities could be noisy as we liked to stay close to the Camino route.

The famous big cathedrals are somewhat over the top in splendour and didn't really do much for us, whereas we loved walking through villages, some of them very small indeed and all giving a taste of a largely unchanged way of life – agricultural smells and sharing of the roads early in the morning with cows on their way to milking. The small hostels and café-bars in these villages have hosted pilgrims for centuries. We particularly enjoyed the tiny village of Rabanal which has one small bar/restaurant as you enter and one hostel as you leave. The whole place comprises of four or five streets with four *albergues* and a hostel, where we stayed. The small chapel was built in the 12th century and looks to need a lot of renovation but the quietness

and peace attracts people of all faiths and none, as the Benedictines say Mass. A highlight of our Camino for sure.

Walking from Sarria into Santiago is just over 100 km and is popular with people who want to get a Compostela with minimum distance. So, there is a noticeable influx of new faces with perhaps a slight distinction between those that have travelled all the way from St Jean and by now have well-seasoned legs together with a certain '*savoir faire*' regarding Camino etiquette. We reached Santiago in very light rain and collapsed onto the bed in our hotel, just down the street from the cathedral. Mass that night was truly a thanksgiving for such an amazing walk.

The next morning, we were up and out in the dark at 7am, heading towards Finisterre – a beautiful 3-day walk with plenty of climbs. The final day was 23 miles and left us very tired indeed. When you do long distance walking the mental preparation is every bit as important as being physically able to do the miles. Our heads were well into the zone to complete this adventure. On the last day however, when you know the walk is at an end, mentally you suddenly don't have to keep focussed and tiredness takes over – how we walked the last two miles to our lovely hotel we do not know but the lashings of hot water and deep bath at 3pm were just bliss. We took a taxi to the lighthouse at the tip of the peninsula, where pilgrims gather on the rocks as the light begins to fade, quietly watching the sun disappear into the Atlantic Ocean.





## Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Truths

### Mary Gullick

I listened to Fr Simon's homily at home on Sunday online and he talked about being comfortable in the discomfort of our faith. If the last 20 or so years of being alive have taught me anything it is about getting comfortable with uncomfortable truths even about our modern world or about ourselves.

I have watched those I live around be changed by a world that has been modernised to fit a draconian way of life, experienced and witnessed human frailty and been touched but also been so scared to be fragile or even express emotion for fear that the consequence will be severe or the fallout or wrath will be higher. I have seen and witnessed way too much suffering and pain and humiliation, been scorned, laughed at, and the centre of mocking. I have seen those I love endure those experiences and it's painful when you are on the outside looking in. In the recent years something changed and the world I see changed, inflicting more uncomfortable changes whether they are for groups or for individuals. When decisions are made we must step carefully because those people who we live around, live with, care about, have just as much care and feeling, which no one factors in when decisions are being made.

I have lived with autism now for 12 years after discovering at a most uncomfortable and harrowing part of my life's journey for myself and that of my children who are themselves on their own journeys because of painful and uncomfortable decisions made by other people with no true idea who we were, what our goals were, our strengths and sensitivities, everything that we are told makes you a person. I have lived believing I was not good enough, to live, to be human, my use was to create life and just hand that life over to other people in authority (my truth). Yet every step of the way I believed that things would change, instead, I saw more people suffer and get hurt and be triggered by the events.

No one should ever experience that kind of world, but I have, and members of St Laurence's have been there to give support at the most painful times, times a mother is forced to say goodbye to her children and it kills her inside. Times when I couldn't walk and I have been made to prove I'm ill. The hidden world is just as dark and full of mystery but not a place to be abused or maimed. St Laurence's have also recently showed up for mum even in death, the underworld a place many fear to go, but I too have also faced my own mortality and know I have a rebirth, a new time to meet my parents and those who leave this world for the next.

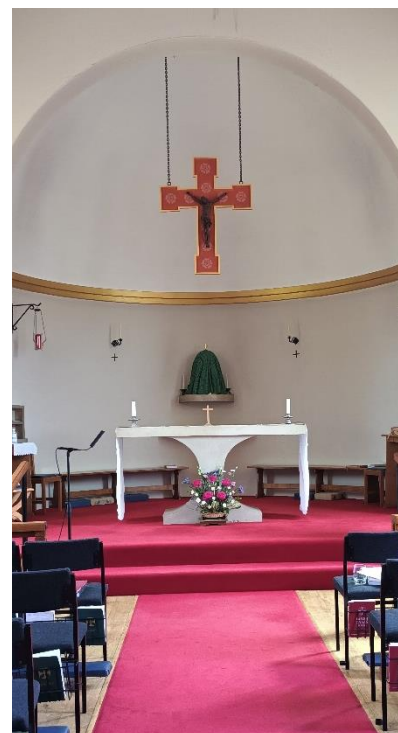
However spiritual and connected I am to my parents and ancestors before me, the mistakes I have made, I know I have made many, but I also have been left wounds and marks at times which didn't need to happen. That needs to change, autism in adults doesn't make you less of a person it gives you an extra layer to everything you do and experience. I hope both my parents are proud because as I write this, I feel them close by. Especially as we face at time of writing my brother, Paul, his wife's anniversary, her 1st year she died of breast cancer, she was only 51 years old, and was a beautiful ray of sunshine in our world. She loved life and cared for the family, six months later mum would then pass away, so clearly the support and love is needed not just for Me, but for all my family wherever they are in the world.

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## Visit to Dereham

### Nora Darby

On the 30th July, Sarah and I set off for Dereham in Norfolk, we were going at the invitation of Fr Jaylord Magpuyo to visit his Church, Sacred Heart and St Margaret Mary. (Many of you will remember Fr Jay from his time at St Laurence's). He had requested help with some Reader training and refreshing. As Fr Simon and I had done this earlier in the year at St Laurence's I said I would help.



Dereham is a small town, there are about 200 parishioners within his parish. It is a small but attractive church and you will see from the photo there is just a central aisle leading to the small Altar.

After a quick lunch and chat to Fr Jay it was time to start. I was happy to see sixteen people had arrived and were waiting! We distributed the guidelines I had taken with me and I introduced myself and then asked them to do so with a bit of background. It quickly became apparent that most of them were multifunctional. Not surprising really as there are three



weekend Masses, 6pm Saturday, 9am and 11am Sunday. Like many churches they have an organ in the small upstairs gallery at the back of the church and the lovely organist turned out to be also a reader which meant she had to get from the organ to the Altar to do her reading! They all enjoyed going through the notes with me and there was plenty of discussion and comments. It became clear they couldn't do things as we do them. With only a central aisle and steps to the Altar they could only go up to the lectern to read, one at a time and sometimes they have as many as twelve Altar Servers plus of course the Celebrant and the Deacon so it could be a bit of a squeeze? We had a good Q & A session where I discovered what else they did, some were also Eucharistic Ministers, others Altar Servers, some in the choir or others Offertory collectors. Time passed quickly but as we ended, they insisted we all had tea together and Sarah joined us. They were such a cheerful friendly chatty group; I really enjoyed my time with them. There were lots of thanks for coming and still some questions but it was time for Sarah and I to join Fr Jay and to see his new home.

Once in the presbytery we relaxed and chatted, caught up with the gossip and saw some of his beautiful paintings. He agreed to us taking a photo of his latest completed one, although he was already working on the next one!



The three of us then went into town and he took us to a favourite place where we had long cool drinks. (I forgot to mention it was a very hot day)! We wandered back through the town and I decided I could live there; it has everything but in a small space and it is close to the sea. BUT it was time to say goodbye and head for home.

## Celebrating my 33rd anniversary in the Church

### Gila Margolin

I feel very privileged this year, as Jesus lived for 33 years amongst us on this Earth. I had an unusual entry into the Church, which took place in Our Lady Immaculate & St Etheldreda in Newmarket. I was living in Burwell at the time. I was the only candidate and it was the Easter Vigil, as well as being the Feast of The Annunciation, on the 25th of March 1989.

Fr Anthony Foreman, who started life as a curate at English Martyrs', was given permission by the Bishop at the time, the late Rt Reverend Alan Clark, to baptise, confirm and give me Holy Communion all in one night! The bonfire was lit and we had all nine readings, as I wanted to reflect my Jewish heritage. There was a diverse group in the congregation of friends from the Brethren, Methodist, Baptist and Anglican traditions, and even a Rabbi who believed in Jesus but who wanted to stay within his own tradition...

I remember feeling not overcome with emotion as I was being baptised, but more relief that I had gotten thus far, and was blessed at Communion with the '*peace, which passes all understanding.*'

33 years later, on the eve of the anniversary of my reception into the Church, on the 24th of March 2022, I was in the very beautiful St Basil's Church, which is attached to the Catholic Chaplaincy at St Michael's College in the University of Toronto. I had arrived for the midday Mass but was quite early. There was only one other person in the Church, an elderly lady and we chatted a little. I discovered that not only was she from a Jewish family like me but that her father had died in Auschwitz.

It was such a grace to meet each other and she said she never thought she would meet another Jewish Catholic on that day. When the priest arrived, he asked us to keep silent in the church, but, when he heard what we had been speaking about, he was deeply sympathetic. And he paid us the honour of deciding to say the Mass of Reconciliation, which was very moving.

I went away from the Mass and into the snowy landscape with a warm heart.

## Poetry Corner

### **An Advent Offering**

**Teresa Brett**

Advent: The waiting season.  
What's the reason  
It's good to wait.  
Slowly, patiently, bate  
Our breath and await

The coming of God.  
What is God?  
'God is The Supreme Spirit, who alone exists of  
himself  
And is infinite in his perfection'.

So much for any exception,  
Our why and how deception.  
Our expectations  
Are flattened by illuminations  
Of prayerful waiting.

It's long, but so's a song  
Before it touches the throng  
With its tuneful pain.  
Like God's birth on earth  
Gives waiting its worth.

### **My St Laurence**

**Nicky Guard**

The Church of St Laurence is a wondrous place  
When Mass I attend there I feel full of grace

Is it Father Simon and his sermons so clear  
That brings us so close to the God we hold dear?

Or is it the servers, the helpers and such  
The diverse congregation we appreciate so much?

I love St Laurence and when I moved away  
It was still my first choice for my wedding day!!

## **Swarm of Thoughts**

**Wally Moscuza**

They are there to justify lives conjunction  
Names without faces come and go  
As anger, love, wars.

In the solitude of my room  
Struggling to make myself understood  
Hard ground  
A fall

Bruised skin  
Palaces have a future, life only uncertainties  
The moon rocked the boat  
Lightening of ghosts

A man overboard  
The day of understanding is yet to come  
The sea has lost its colour – dead  
Yet forgetfulness prevails

A Christmas tree  
A winter sale  
Pain and sorrow  
Purgatory

I saw blood running down the hills  
Above a cemented city that lives

I am lost in a labyrinth  
I have to find the exit  
To fulfil my destiny  
An instrument

I cause contempt  
Whispering by itself –  
Poems!

A chain of letters sprouted from the soul  
The world is moving beneath my feet  
Immobilised thoughts

Wanting to perform  
Quivering in the night  
Thoughts racing without meaning or purpose  
To have a life of their own  
Characters wanting an author.

## Tailpiece

### Advent Quiz

The name was adopted from Latin *adventus* meaning coming or arrival, and also translates from the Greek *parousia*, which is found in the New Testament, when referring to the Second Coming of Christ. Thus, the season of Advent in the Christian calendar anticipates the coming of Christ from three different perspectives: His Nativity in Bethlehem, the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer, and when He returns again.

1. When does Advent begin?
2. What is the earliest and latest date it can start?
3. Is Advent the beginning or the end of the Church year?
4. What prayer is not prayed at Mass during Advent?
  - a. The Gloria
  - b. The I confess
  - c. The Creed
  - d. The Alleluia
5. Pre-Vatican II what were you not able to do during Advent (and Lent)?
6. Which Sunday of Advent is also known as Gaudate Sunday?



Colour in the Road to Bethlehem

#### Trivia Answers:

1. The Sunday nearest to the feast of St Andrew the Apostle (30 Nov)
2. Earliest 27 Nov, latest 3 Dec
3. Beginning of the Church year
4. a: The Gloria
5. Get married
6. Third Sunday



## **Editorial**

Dear Pilgrim Readers, we took a longer break than usual between editions and a lot has happened since our summer edition. The Parish's plans to restart social events saw two parties where many of us gathered and had a good time hanging out, eating and drinking, and enjoying each other company. Our Feast plus Fr Simon's birthday which drew a big crowd on a hot summer's evening, and then to mark Fr Bob's 60 years as priest and to thank him for his work in our Parish we celebrated with a Mass and drinks and nibbles afterwards in the Parish Room.

Various Parish groups are meeting again after the summer break preparing for Communion, Confirmation, CAFOD organised a Laudato Si' Mass celebrating Creation, the Saturday Coffee Hub and the Ablaze Mass restarted and Family Fridays has sprung into being.

Dare we say things are starting to feel a bit more normal?

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this Advent edition, without you there would not be a magazine!

Advent – Coming. Let us pray together as we walk with Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem.

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Wondering where to send your article, photos or drawings? Our email address is at the bottom of the page, and you'll also find it every week on the front page of the Parish newsletter. Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition. We welcome interesting and original material for all sections in the forthcoming edition.

**The deadline for the next edition is**  
**17 February** for publication on 18/19 March

### **The production team:**

Editors: Nora Darby, Sarah Sykes

Sub-editors: Alex Dias, Carol Williams, Susan O'Brien

Commissioning Editor: Nora Darby

Cover: Leonie Isaacson

Proofreaders: Caroline O'Donnell & Miriam Santos Freire

Layout (preparation for printing): Sarah Sykes, Nora Darby

All members of the Pilgrim team can be contacted at [pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk)

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### **Gift Aid**

If you pay tax on earnings, pensions or income/capital gains from investments, and you sign up for Gift Aid, the government gives back some of the tax you have already paid. Your donations will qualify as long as they are not more than four times the tax you have paid in that tax year (6th April to 5th April). All you have to do is complete a simple form called a Gift Aid Declaration with your name and address, which you can find on the St Laurence's website.

## Some Regular Events

**The Parishioners Open Meeting** is where **ALL** parishioners can come together to discuss and debate Parish matters, and decide when and where things need to be done. The agenda is planned in advance and the meeting is led by the chairman and Parish Priest. Meetings commence at 7:30pm and are held in the Parish Room with the option to join online via Zoom.

The Zoom link is published in the newsletter, Keep-in-Touch email and on the website.

You can raise a topic at the meeting but it helps if you send a short note about 10 days before the next meeting to Stephen Warde at [openmeeting@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:openmeeting@saintlaurence.org.uk)

### The Pilgrim by Email

The Pilgrim magazine is available in paper copy or you can receive a pdf version by email. If you are not already on the distribution list, send a request to [pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk)

### Pilgrim on the Web

The most recent back editions are available on the Parish website

<http://www.saintlaurence.org.uk/pilgrim>

## ABLAZE

The St Laurence Youth Mass is known as Ablaze. It is designed to encourage our youth to build their confidence in participating in all aspects of the Mass. It is held on the first Sunday of the month. It is a vibrant and fun Mass. We encourage young readers, Eucharistic Ministers, budding musicians and singers of all ages; the only requirement is enthusiasm for God. If you are looking for 'perfection' you won't find it here, so if you fancy it, pluck up courage and join in.



Follow St Laurence's on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/stlaurencecambridge>

## Upcoming Parish Events

<b>Advent – Parish Carol Service</b> <b>Christmas Week Masses</b> <b>Times to be agreed at the Parish Open Meeting on 24 Nov 2022</b>	
<b>ABLAZE Youth Mass</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month) 5pm	4 Dec 8 Jan 5 Feb 5 Mar
<b>Family Fridays</b> 9 Dec – Making Christmas cards to support SVP gift campaign 13 Jan – Science and Faith for the family 10 March – Lenten Stations of the Cross & Confessions	Fridays 6:30-8:30pm Mthly
<b>Parishioners Open Meeting</b> 7:30pm  Dates for 2023 to be confirmed	Thurs 24 November
<b>Saturday morning coffee hub</b>	After 9:30am Mass
<b>Sunday morning coffee</b> <b>In-person and online</b> Zoom details in the Parish newsletter	After 11am Mass
<b>SVP Advent Giving Tree</b> All gifts and hamper items need to be returned to church by the third Sunday of Advent, 11th December	From 26/27 Nov in the Narthex
<b>CAFOD &amp; SVP</b> <b>Unwanted Xmas Present Sale</b>	8 Jan 13 Jan
<b>CWL monthly lunches</b> after 12:30pm Mass	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri of month



# ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

91 Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 1XB

Tel/Fax: 01223 704640

Email: [office@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:office@saintlaurence.org.uk)

St Laurence's Parish is in the Diocese of East Anglia, and covers the area of Cambridge north of the river Cam including Arbury, Chesterton and King's Hedges, and also the villages of Histon, Impington, Girton, Cottenham, Milton, Landbeach and Waterbeach.

## Parish Priest:

Fr Simon Blakesley

07946 390060

[simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk)

## Deacon:

Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cook

01223 351650

## Safeguarding Coordinator:

Petra Tucker

Mary Jane & Jim O'Sullivan  
[safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Secretary:

Mr. Reece King

01223 704640

[reece.king@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:reece.king@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Treasurer:

James Dore

07980 467534

[treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Service Times

Saturday 9:30am

6pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8am

9:30am (sung) with children's liturgy

11:00am (sung)

Join us afterwards for coffee and chat after Mass

Mon/Thurs 9.30am

Tues 8am

Wed/Fri 12.30pm

*All Masses are also livestreamed. Please watch out for any changes to this, and Mass times, on the Parish website and in weekly notices or announcements at Mass.*

## St Laurence's School

Head of School

Assistant Head

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