

The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, Lent Edition 2023



**“Let us use
Lent to build
bridges, not
walls”
Pope Francis**



Lent: * Prayer * Fasting * Almsgiving *

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The deadline for the next edition is **9 June** for publication on 8/9 July

Wondering where to send your article, photos or drawings? Our email address is below and you will 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. Anything you send should be your own work in your own words and a maximum of 2,000 words.**

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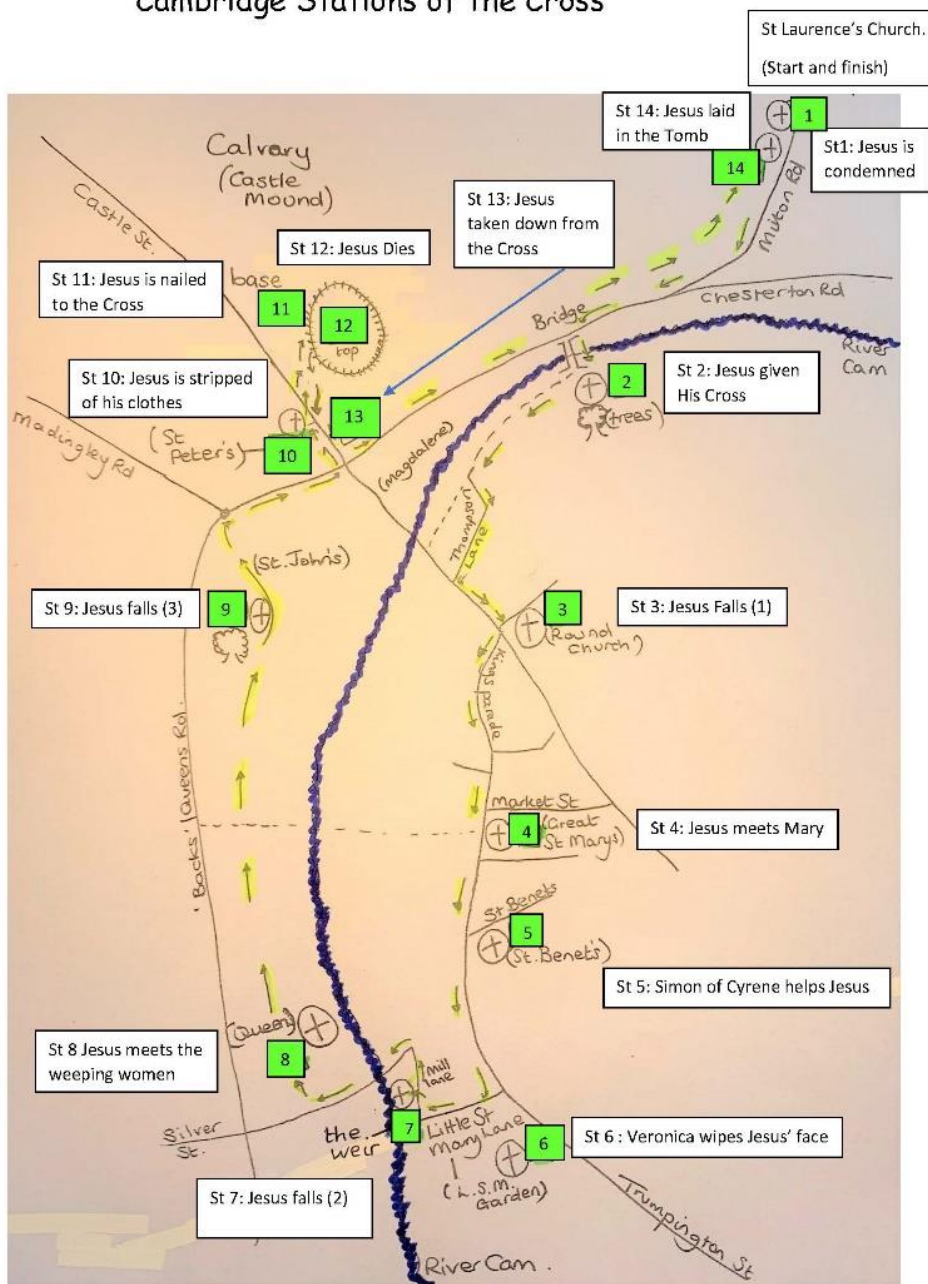
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Parish Organisations and Activities

Cambridge Stations of the Cross



Stations of the Cross, Lent 2023

Gail Osman, Nora Darby

Welcome to our wonderful **Stations of the Cross** walk in Cambridge. All locations are outside and each is chosen for its spiritual/metaphorical location. Walk on an immersive adventure where all your senses will be stimulated by this moving event. Maybe you will discover a previously unknown gem, an ancient churchyard, a spiritual haven, or be revived by the beauty of nature, but mostly lose yourself in being with God. I'm sure it is an experience you will never forget.

If you'd prefer a shorter version, all in town and minus a few thousand steps, you could start at Jesus' Bridge (station 2) and do Station 1 there. The bridge is covered in crosses!

You could also finish in St Giles churchyard – there is a bench here – next to station 13; or return to St Peter's church yard (station 10); both are beautifully peaceful. Or, walk to Magdalen Bridge or even sit in a quiet spot by the river and contemplate.

You will also need a set of reflections/ prayers. You may have your own favourites or there are options available online

The walk was originally designed for the CAFOD 10,000 step walk in Lent 2021. Now, in Lent 2023, the CAFOD BIG WALK is for rural communities in Bangladesh.

CAFOD at St Laurence's will be walking the long route on Palm Sunday, starting at St Laurence's after the 11 am Mass and coffee.

Ron Haynes will do his 'Cemetery walk' on 26th March after 11am Mass and coffee, from St Laurence's to the Ascension Burial Ground, off Huntingdon Road. There you will see the graves of many famous Cambridge names, mostly academics, but others also. I have never been there but I am certainly looking forward to it. I do like cemeteries and this sounds amazing! (Nora)

Cambridge Walking Stations of the Cross

Start and finish: St Laurence's Church (10,000 steps)

Station 1: St Laurence's Church: Jesus is condemned to Death



Station 2: Jesus takes up His Cross

Tree by bridge Jesus lock/ Jesus green



Station 3: Jesus falls the first time

Round Church/ Church of the Holy Sepulchre



Station 4: Jesus meets Mary

Great St Mary's Church



Station 5: Jesus is helped by Simon

St Bene't's Church



Station 6: Veronica wipes Jesus' face

Little St Mary's Lane / Churchyard, Little St Mary's



Station 7: Jesus falls a second time

The weir near Scudamores



Station 8: Jesus meets the weeping women

Queen's College



Station 9: Jesus falls a third time

The trees to the rear of St John's College... Still a way to go!



Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

Little St Peter's Church



Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Base of Castle Mound Now climb our Calvary



Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross

The top of Castle Mound



Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

War memorial in St Giles churchyard

Station 14: Jesus is laid in the Tomb

Return to St Laurence's Church



God Bless!



CAFOD's Big Lent Walk to Bangladesh, where Climate Change is destroying villages & communities

Jim Infield

This Lent we are pushing the boundaries even further and will be walking to Bangladesh, around 7,000 miles!! Are we going to make it? And how much can we raise to help local initiatives to counter the effects of climate change in lowland coastal areas now frequently devastated by violent storms? Last year we walked 3,158 miles to Afghanistan and raised £4,543, the year before we walked 5,700 miles to Ethiopia and back to Jerusalem, and you raised an impressive £10,067.

This year CAFOD's campaign is in support of communities living in the Sunderbans, a large area in the south of Bangladesh on the delta and near the sea. Today Bangladesh has a population of nearly 170 million people living in a country the size of England (population 56 million). About a quarter of the population live in low lying coastal areas like the Sunderbans. Life is precarious and land is scarce, but with the increasing frequency of cyclones and major storms almost every year, the situation is even more perilous. The storms destroy villages, roads and crops, the main livelihood. Climate Change is undoubtedly the cause.



But Bangladeshis are resilient, they have to be, and there is hope. A young girl, Dristy, is planting raised beds, a variety of crops and palm trees as a defence against the high winds. Her mother Rupali was trained in these new methods and says, "I hope my family will become more financially independent, but I know it's not enough if only my family is well off. It's not right if I have food on the table but my neighbour barely has anything to eat." More tools and training are needed to replicate their efforts, and this is what the money we raise will go to.

We hope to get your untiring support as we have in previous years, which raised serious money to support the efforts of some of the most vulnerable people. Lent is an opportunity to act as well as reflect and pray. Details of the walk and the usual way to record your steps are on the Parish website. Let's get walking, around the house or out in the town and countryside.

A morning with CAFOD; reflecting on 60 years of Hope, Compassion, Solidarity and Dignity through stories of women's empowerment.

Jane Crone (CAFOD community participation co-ordinator)

On Saturday 11th February, CAFOD volunteers and supporters from parishes in the Cambridge area joined together to remember CAFOD's 60th birthday in 2022 and find out more about CAFOD's work. The overall theme uniting the meeting was that of women's empowerment as a force for positive change over time and across the world.

Jane Crone, who represents CAFOD in the Diocese of East Anglia, opened the meeting with a prayer for those affected by the earthquake in Syria and Turkey and gave a brief update on CAFOD's response to the situation. She then told the story of CAFOD's founding mothers from the National Board of Catholic Women, the Catholic Women's League and the Union of Catholic Mothers, who organised the first Family Fast Day in 1960 to raise money for a mother and baby clinic in the small Caribbean Island of Domenica. Fast Days became a regular Lent event, and, two years later, the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales registered CAFOD as the official overseas development charity of the Catholic Church of England and Wales. In the words of Elspeth Orchard, one of the founding mothers:

'We weren't doing anything special; we were just doing what we thought we ought to do, remembering that we are all God's children.'

Jane shared information on CAFOD's fundraising across parishes in England and Wales in the financial year 2021–2022; for more information take a look at CAFOD's website [How we work \(cafod.org.uk\)](https://www.cafod.org.uk). She also fed back on Harvest Fast Day 2022 which focused on the World Food Crisis in East Africa. Ibrahim, a local CAFOD worker, has recorded a brief video of thanks with information and graphic images on how funds raised through the appeal are being spent.

Anne Street, ex Head of Humanitarian Policy at CAFOD, joined the meeting from her home in Bristol via Zoom to share her experience of three months as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine in 2022. Anne was monitoring violations of International Humanitarian Law and providing protective presence with CAFOD's partner organisation the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

Anne shared the stories of courageous women from Christian and Muslim communities in the occupied territories as well as stories of Israeli women opposing

the occupation. We were all struck by their courage and resilience in the face of injustice, forced occupation and the abuse of human rights. The words of one of the women summed up their experience perfectly:

'Steadfastness is our way of life. We have to have faith & steadfastness. We hope one day the ocean will expand and we will have peace'.

To end the meeting, Jane introduced the theme of the Lent 2023 CAFOD appeal which focuses on a mother Rupali, and her daughter, Dristy. You can read more about this in Jim Infield's update above.

The meeting ended with a brief look at CAFOD's 2023 Lent Stations of the Cross, which are based on the Dristy and Rupali's community [Stations of the Cross: Lent 2023 \(cafod.org.uk\)](https://www.cafod.org.uk).

Many thanks to everyone who helped make this meeting such a success, the tech team for linking us so well to Anne in Bristol and the caterers who provided coffee, biscuits and cake beforehand. It was a very stimulating, challenging and companionable morning.



Synodal Pathways Action Group Report

Roberta Canning, Ronald Haynes

Communications

The Communications working group of the Synodal Pathway Action Group (SPAG) is working with those involved in the many areas of Parish communications to try to help improve overall sharing of information within and beyond the Parish. While there are many challenges for our Parish, some of which were noted and shared in the initial synodal discussions, in response are some key principles for new communication projects to be accessible and inclusive, providing for greater ecumenical and community outreach, as part of furthering our Parish mission.

As a Lent project, the group aims to work on a brochure to introduce the parish, including with general information and main liturgies, pastoral and seasonal overviews, and basic social life details. Once complete

and printed, we will be able to share this brochure with local libraries and other welcoming spaces, as well as with family and friends. If you have ideas or any interest in contributing to the brochure, please get in touch via the Parish Office or email: synod-actions@saintlaurence.org.uk.

Social

There have been discussions about forming a Social working group, another important area identified in the early SPAG discussions, to help better communicate between existing parish social groups and, ideally, to help organise more social events in the parish. However, for that working group to form we will need additional people to volunteer. During Lent, we are aiming to arrange a social event for those already active or potentially interested in social events, as well as in the potential to form the Social working group. Stay tuned, and join in – and if you might be interested please get in touch via the Parish Office or email: synod-actions@saintlaurence.org.uk.

Faith sharing

The group reading St Matthew's Gospel has been meeting after the 12.30pm Mass on Wednesdays since mid-November. Though the numbers are quite small, sharing our responses and ideas has given us fruitful conversations. We hope that as we go into Lent and the weather improves, more parishioners will join us.

The group is responding to the wish expressed by a number of parishioners to learn more about Church teaching and find ways to explain it to family, friends and colleagues; we are offering a six week Lent programme using an online resource called *Sycamore*.

Sycamore is a series of online film talks which you can access by going to www.sycamore.fm. Once there, click onto Pathways and then to Formation Pathways and the First Formation Pathway to find the course we are following this Lent. We know that everyone is short of time so we are going to look at the film for each week in our own time and then come together to talk about it. Every week there will be two opportunities to talk about the film: before Mass on Friday at 11am in the Library Meeting Room and Tuesday evenings at 8pm on Zoom.

We are following the first Formation Pathway using Films 2 and 3 in the first week, then Films 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 in the following weeks. Obviously, we will be well into the programme by the time *The Pilgrim* is published. If you have missed us, do browse the *Sycamore* website and join one of our weekly meetings. For more information email roberta.canning@btinternet.com

First Holy Communion

Paula Hawkins

The classes are going well with a high participation from parents and children. We are more than half-way through and on 11th March we will look at Reconciliation, with the Reconciliation Mass on 25th March. This is a very important part of their journey. Then it will be preparing for the big day itself.

Introduction to Pax Christi



Arn Dekker

Pax Christi is an international Christian peacemaking movement, based on the Gospel and inspired by faith. Our vision is of a world where people can live in peace and without fear of violence, in all its forms. We believe in the power of prayer, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice and nonviolence and, the right to live in a culture which promotes these values and treats the whole of God's creation in a respectful and just manner. To achieve this, Pax Christi works within the Church and wider community to bring about a culture of peace, by being a prophetic witness to peace and standing against violence; promoting the option of nonviolence as a means of resolving conflict in our homes, communities, nations and between nations; providing peace education materials and programmes; ensuring the message of peace is heard by the Church, by decision-makers and those working in our communities; providing networks, practical skills, resources and support, and working with other individuals and organisations to bring the Peace of Christ to all who long for a better world.

Pax Christi is a Gospel-based, lay-inspired, peace-making movement. Founded in the Catholic Church, its membership is open to all those who are in sympathy with its aims and values. After WW2, in 1945, French Catholics wanted to work towards reconciliation with former enemies.

Pax Christi strives to help the Church and the wider community to proclaim and to make peace, through its experience and ideas, and especially through the witness and action of its members.

Its three major objectives are: **Reconciliation;** **Promotion** of a culture of peace and non-violence; **Providing means** to bring about peace, e.g. through peace education, resources and training.

Find us on the web at www.Paxchristi.org.uk and we are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Flickr.

CWL Update

Janet Scally

The Catholic Women's League continues to welcome parishioners to a lunch after the 12.30pm Mass on the 2nd Friday of every month, as well as every week during Advent and Lent.

We are pleased to report that during Advent we raised and forwarded £235 to WinterComfort in memory of Paul Simmons.

If you can spare an hour or so on a Friday, do join us. Contributions are of course voluntary. If there are any ladies who want to join the Catholic Women's League we have a short meeting at 11am on each 2nd Friday. We always enjoy being together.

If you want to know more, you can phone either Angela Stocker, 424024 or Janet Scally, 365330.

Children's Liturgy

Leonie Isaacson

Over the past year, the number of children attending Children's Liturgy at Sunday 9.30am Mass has grown and grown and sometimes we now have up to 35 children. It is a joy to see them all and to see them participate in learning about the Liturgy of the Word and about their faith.

We are also aware that the number of people attending Sunday 11am Mass is returning to pre-Covid levels and so we are now considering re-establishing Children's Liturgy for the 11am Mass as well. This all depends on there being sufficient interest from parishioners to help with running both sessions. Some of our current volunteers will be able to support Children's Liturgy at 11am, but this means there will be fewer volunteers at the earlier 9.30am Mass and for this to be sustainable we will need more volunteers for both Masses. The sessions are run with two adult volunteers/session on a rota basis. We would really like there to be at least eight volunteers for each Mass time so that we can take turns on a 4-weekly basis.

Guidance and training are provided as well as partnering with a more experienced volunteer. It really is a rewarding experience – come along and observe a session and see for yourself!

If you would be interested in learning more about helping with the Children's Liturgy, please contact: jim.infield1@gmail.com or nonie.isaacson@gmail.com



St Vincent de Paul Society within St Laurence's

Ciaràn Ward

Many of you will have heard of the St Vincent de Paul Society – known as the SVP – and know some of us who are members within St Laurence's. This article aims to explain briefly what the SVP does, specifically some of the work we have done here within our Parish and sets out the current finances of our conference.

The work of the SVP revolves around helping others. It is an international Catholic charity and there are groups within many parishes throughout the world – an SVP group is called a conference. Here at St Laurence's we have 15 regularly active members and a few others who volunteer their time on a more occasional basis. As volunteers our time is the main thing that we offer.

The majority of our work is befriending – visiting people to offer a friendly face and a chat. Most of those we visit are older parishioners and we know that the potential of loneliness is an ongoing problem. Sometimes our support may extend to helping with shopping or offering a lift to an appointment. Many of those we help are parishioners, but we visit and support people of any faith or none.

An aspect of our work at St Laurence's that has grown significantly over the last few years has been offering financial support, thanks largely to the Alive in Faith funding that we have received from you as a Parish. This has also allowed us to assist people referred to us by Cambridgeshire County Council who need extra help that the Council is unable to provide. As our charity is based on one-to-one relationships, we do not simply hand out money but meet and aim to build a relationship with those who ask for help so that we can offer longer term support as well as short-term financial assistance.

As a result of our desire to establish relationships rather than simply handing out cash, most of the requests for help we are able to respond to involve time from our members. Usually this involves meeting the individual or family concerned and working with them to decide how best we can help them. We usually keep in touch with them over a period of time – often they come to us with a short-term crisis but some families in particular find that certain times of the year are a struggle for them (summer holidays with children at home or winter with Christmas and fuel costs). If we are offering financial support we do not normally give out cash, but will help them buy things or help them with grocery shopping or fuel bills.

Over the last few years, some of the things we have done include: helping people moving to a new home with household items such as washing machines or beds; helping with high fuel bills; providing shoes for school children. It is worth noting that not all the people we help would be recognised as ‘poor’ – many are simply in a short-term crisis and would not normally ask for help from others.

We receive huge support from parishioners – donations (money and items) and practical help as well as prayers – for which we would like to offer our sincere thanks. Without your support the work we do would be very limited. With it, we are able to help make a difference to more people.

In the calendar year **2022, we received £6,000** from the Alive in Faith fund. A summary of our Alive in Faith spend in 2022 is:

Helping families	£3,004
Helping the elderly	£659
Helping homeless people	£440
Helping travellers	£1,348
Admin costs (mainly mileage to visit)	£1,279
Total spend in 2022	£6,730

Other income was donations from parishioners (including members): £4,570 for our local work, donations of £1,350 to our overseas appeals (Ukraine, Sudan, South Sudan) and other income including some small grants totalling £1,638.

In addition, our local conference has paid donations to SVP Houses and SVP Twinning. These areas are covered by other donations rather than Alive in Faith income (which has to be spent locally). SVP Houses – the SVP has three houses in North Norfolk for temporary emergency accommodation for

families and individuals. The SVP members in North Norfolk provide assistance to the people in these houses when needed – much as we do for those in our Parish – and we have supported their work.

SVP Twinning – the SVP is international and there are conferences in many overseas countries. Our conference helps to support three conferences in India by sending them regular donations and we also support some projects in South Sudan, primarily through appeals in church.

SVP Support – this is the final area of outgoings from our conference. Money is paid to the National SVP and helps to support the infrastructure of the SVP (such as safeguarding, finances, governance). Some of the money paid to National SVP is used for projects across the country and some is passed back to East Anglia to be spent in the diocese by SVP members in less well-off conferences.

In 2023, the amount of SVP Support we pay will increase. This is because the calculation on how much we pay is based on a percentage of certain income. In 2023, our Alive in Faith income will be included in this calculation. We estimate that our SVP Support payment will increase from £300 a year to £1,400 and will be funded by general donations.

We would like to thank you as parishioners for your ongoing support, both in prayers and donations. If you know someone who you think would benefit from our support or if you would like to consider volunteering with us, please do get in touch:

- SVP President Ciaràn – 07540 842 078 svp@saintlaurence.org.uk
- Any member of SVP known to you

One of our prayers, said at all meetings, sums up the essence of the St. Vincent de Paul Society:

‘Lord Jesus, help us to deepen our Vincentian friendship and answer the call every Christian receives: to **seek and find those who are forgotten** and to **bring your love** to the suffering or deprived. **Help us to be generous** with our time, our possessions and ourselves so that we may grow perfect in your love and learn to share your sacrifice with others, in the **Holy Eucharist.**’

Maundy Collection – Holy Thursday

This year we have agreed that the Maundy collection will be in aid of the people in need in South Sudan. We thank all parishioners in advance for their continued support and generosity.

News from St Laurence Catholic Primary



As part of our Art Curriculum, Year 5 and 6 have been exploring the art of the Italian Renaissance. Through works by Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, they have looked particularly at anatomical drawings and painting techniques as well as symmetry. They also had the opportunity of studying the frescos of Leonardo and Michelangelo and explored painting on plaster, making their own plaster discs and creating their own painted designs.



The children then studied the work of the Victorian pre-Raphaelite artists and the rejection of the idealized forms of Raphael. They looked in detail at Ophelia by Millais and Rossetti's The Annunciation, and considered how these artists wanted to reflect reality in their paintings by engaging in careful observation. They then practised careful observation themselves, by using watercolours to paint flowers.

Mini Vinnie News

The Mini Vinnies have been busy this term applying their 'Faith in Action' pledge.

We were given a donation of winter packs, which included hats, gloves, space blankets, socks and toiletries, which we have delivered to 'It takes a City' to support their work caring for homeless people during the cold weather.



This week the Mini Vinnies organised the annual fund-raising Pancake Race at St Laurence. The race traditionally marks the start of Lent. The donations collected will be sent to the St Vincent de Paul society to support families in need. The Mini Vinnies did a great job organising the races, and were supported by Mrs Harvey and Mrs Quail, the Young Vincentian co-ordinator for East Anglia. Great fun was had by all and, most importantly, money raised for a good cause.

A Colourful day in a life

Liz Campbell

On a chilly day in early December, I had an opportunity to help a parishioner with a spot of decluttering and was kindly offered some Christmas decoration for rehoming. By the time I'd left her home, the boot and the back seat of my car was filled with tinsel, baubles, candles, table decorations, tree lights, Xmas ornaments, window displays and an artificial Xmas tree. I took them all to Cottenham the next day where I knew families came for help from the Health team, who run the drop-in centre once a week. Those who filed in were amazed to see the array of glitter and thrilled to hear they could take what they liked to decorate their homes and delight their children. The session was two hours long and at the end of it I only had the Christmas tree left; I then visited another family who took it to decorate their home. In addition to the Christmas decorations, this parishioner also gave me some much-loved family games which I plan to offer before Christmas to another family who have growing children so they have a distraction before Santa comes to call.

Also amongst the decluttered items are a few choice craft items and a lady's showerproof jacket, which I am hopeful of finding a home amongst the many families we help.

On that chilly day I also visited another parishioner who had a microwave on offer (that went on the front passenger seat!), which has also been placed with a family who only had a two-ring cooking facility and will now be able to cook more creatively.

This brief story is one of many such that our SVP members are regularly called upon to provide that call on the giving and of receiving within our community. If you think you'd like to join us, please speak to Ciaran Ward, our chairperson, on 07540 842 078.



Mini Vinnies – Packing for the Parish Giving Tree at St Laurence's RC School



...and back at the Parish room from left to right: Monica King, Catherine Fullah, Christine Knight, Denise Walters, Roberta Canning & Claire Whitmore – Tony King far right getting busy with a present too

Stella Maris News: Pilgrimage

Julian Wong

In a few months' time, there will be a 'Round the British Isles Sailing Pilgrimage' celebrating Stella Maris' centenary. The boat, Stella Maris, will be stopping at Harwich and I am hoping to arrange an evening Mass to be held at the church of Our Lady Queen of Heaven on Bank Holiday, 8th May, for the crew and anyone coming to celebrate with us.

If you are free, do come and join in. If you would like to be on board sailing, this can also be arranged. People can either sail from A to B or sail around the area while it is stopping at Harwich. The boat will arrive late evening on the 7th, will be at Harwich all day on the 8th and depart on the 9th.

For more information, contact Julian Wong, Regional Port Chaplain, julian.wong@stellamarismail.org, 07758 356 372

More News from Stella Maris: HATS!

Mary Watkins



Thank you to Jo, a former parishioner now living in Ely, for her beautifully knitted woolly hats!

Jo responded to an earlier article explaining how many seamen from warmer climates are ill-

equipped for cold weather and how much warm headgear is appreciated. Jo used the pattern freely available on the Stella Maris site.



Summary of Parishioners' Open Meeting

7th February 2023

Hybrid meeting via Zoom with 10 present online and 11 in the Parish Room, including Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair) and Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

Minutes and Matters Arising

The replacement of the Sanctuary carpet is a step nearer completion. Stephen Warde showed a selection of carpet tiles to the meeting which will be on the bottom step of the Sanctuary for the next few weeks. Please give any feedback on preferred colour to Fr Simon, the Parish Office or Stephen Warde.

Parish and Diocesan news

We have a new Bishop, Peter Collins, who has come to us from Cardiff. He was ordained Bishop on 14th December last year. He will be making parish visitations across the Diocese and will be assessing, how the Diocese will minister to our communities going forward as Fr Simon's generation of parish priests retire and fewer priests are available. Sarah Sykes mentioned that the Bishop had recently visited the Radio Maria Studios in Cambridge, said Mass there, taken part in praying the Rosary and been the guest on the programme Songs in the Wilderness (a podcast is available if you missed the live broadcast). Christine Knight also mentioned that the Bishop will open and bless the new SVP house in Norfolk.

Fr Simon reported that the church's keyboard was stolen last Friday (3rd) afternoon: a man walked into the

church, picked up the keyboard and left. CCTV of this has been sent to the police. A new keyboard has been purchased, it is lightweight enough to be put away in the Confessional after Mass. Other security options such as chains and trackers are also being considered for this and the new screen in the Parish Room.

A note from Fiona Rutter was read by the Chair about the tea and coffee used after 11am Mass and the Coffee Hub. For many years, we have been using the Fairtrade brand Traidcraft. However, they have gone into administration and we will need to find another supplier. Fiona suggested a couple of options including The Daily Bread Co-operative based off Kings Hedges Road.

Lent and Easter

Chrism Mass at Norwich Cathedral: Fr Simon said that the Chrism Mass will take place on the Tuesday of Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday: Mass at 7.30pm followed by Watching until 10pm ending with Night Prayer.

Good Friday: Fr Simon suggested that we again have two services on this day. 1pm for those who would prefer to avoid a crowded church and at 3pm (the usual time for this service).

Easter Vigil Mass: Saturday at 9pm.

Easter Sunday: Normal Sunday Mass times of 8am, 9.30am and 11am.

Stations of the Cross through Lent: Friday evenings at 7.30pm. It is hoped that the Stations will be presented in a hybrid-manner with people participating both in the church and through Zoom. Fr Simon will lead the Stations, except for the first Friday of Lent, which will be led by the Justice and Peace group. On 10th March, the Stations will start at the earlier time of 7pm, when those attending the Family Friday's social group will join Fr Simon.

Rise Theatre: Helena Judd introduced the following proposal for a Lent event – she would like to invite the Rise Theatre, a Catholic group which tours around the country putting on original shows, sketches and workshops around faith-based stories, to bring this show to Cambridge to perform at St Laurence's Church on Palm Sunday at 1pm. All the confirmation candidates in the Cambridge area would be invited. There is a £700 charge so we would need to ticket the event. The play would be performed in the church. Alternatively, the play could be held in either St Laurence's, or St Alban's (which has a stage), school hall. On the whole, the Meeting thought it was a good idea and Helena will explore the logistics further.

Children's Liturgy

Leonie Isaacson reported that the Children's Liturgy at 9.30am Mass was being very well attended with numbers regularly over 35. The Children's Liturgy Team would like to restart Children's Liturgy at the 11am Mass. A number of the volunteers at 9.30am Mass are happy to support the 11am Mass but more volunteers are needed to make it sustainable. Another 6-8 people on the rota for each Mass are needed. Training will be given and shadowing will be offered while DBS checks are completed. Each session is run by two volunteers.

Synodal Pathway Action Group

Adult Education and Faith Sharing: The Gospel study group started in November led by Kay Dodsworth, with Roberta Canning and Edward Acton supporting. It takes place after 12.30pm Mass on Wednesday, numbers range between 3 and 8 people a week. The sessions give people an opportunity to talk about their faith and study the Scriptures. The sessions will continue up to Easter, excluding Ash Wednesday.

Roberta reported that there are also plans to run a faith-sharing course using resources from the **Sycamore** website. The plan is that the first session will be held on 24th February, which is the first Friday in Lent, at 11am. Anyone interested in taking part will be asked to look at the online material beforehand and then come together on 24th to share thoughts. The sessions will last about an hour. There will also be an online session on Tuesday evenings at 8pm.

Accompanied Prayer programme is planned to run through Lent. It was originally started several years ago by Sr Anna from the Brookside convent through the ecumenical spiritual advisory group run by the Diocese of Ely. It takes place over four weeks, meeting once a week with people trained in spiritual accompaniment introducing different types and ways of praying.

Social Activities: Ad hoc things are happening organically for example during the faith sharing sessions, but we do have more established social times, such as coffee after 11am Mass, the Saturday Coffee Hub, and CWL Friday lunch gatherings. Would it be helpful to bring these under a broad umbrella? Such a group could be called on to help with any Parish social activity. It was suggested that a social occasion for people interested in helping with social events could be organised.

Communications and outreach: Karen Rodgers said that outreach to the wider community is desperately needed. She would like to run a community games group on Thursday lunchtimes; however, she has not been able to recruit volunteers to help so far.

School governor vacancy: St Laurence's School is looking to appoint a Foundation Governor. Please email the School Office or contact Charlotte Woodford, the Chair of Governors, or speak to Fr Simon.

Fr Simon explained that being a Foundation Governor is a broader role than being a governor of the local school. Part of the role is to make sure Catholic education is woven into everything that the school does. The governor is there to represent the Bishop and support the purpose of having a Catholic school. Former Chair of Governors, Mary-Jane O'Sullivan, said it was a very rewarding thing to do. People with backgrounds in HR, medical, legal would be very useful.

Parish Groups

CAFOD

CAFOD's 60th birthday celebration is being held on Saturday 11th February in the Parish Room. Regional co-ordinator, Jane Crone, and guest speaker, Anne Street, will be talking at the event. Coffee, tea and cakes will be served.

Lent Family Fast Day: Appeal talks at the end of all Masses will take place on 25th and 26th February and collections on 4th and 5th March. CAFOD's money-raising event for Lent is the 'Big Walk'. Our local aim is to walk to Bangladesh. A couple of group walks are being planned – a Stations of the Cross Walk through Cambridge, based on Gail Osman's route used over the last 2-3 years, and a Cemetery Walk led by Ron Haynes. Serga also plans to organise a cycle ride.

Justice & Peace

Ron Haynes thanked the Parish for its generous donations to the Pax Christi collection which totalled nearly £500. As mentioned they are making arrangements to lead a Stations of the Cross in Lent and also organising a peace-making event.

Tech Group

Ron Haynes reported that the group, along with the Finance Group, are exploring having a contactless payment unit that could be used generically across multiple Parish groups.

AOB

Ron Haynes asked that plans to recruit a Pastoral Assistant be advanced and brought to the next meeting.

Dates of the next meetings

Thursday, 20th April; Tuesday, 4th July; Thursday, 14th September; Tuesday, 21st November

Creative Writing

Grief

Mary Gullick

Mum, Dad... can we talk?

Yes, you know you can.

I am struggling... I need you both so much and the pain of your absence is too much for me to bear...

I never thought it would feel like this. I thought I had time with both of you!

Mary, we have not left you and the family. We love you all very much.

We are still there with you and our grandchildren.

Where?

Look outside, in the trees, in the back garden, in daily life, in friends and neighbours a part of us lives on in them; it lives on in the very things we nourished and cherish the most.

We have not died, we are just in a different form.

Mary, write a letter like this. We will always communicate back to you, to those you love.

I am always in pain, not just physically.

We know you are. You will find your way through and it will transmute. We will guide you every single day. We won't leave you ever, I promise you.

Mum and Dad, I want to be with you now.

Mary, it's not the right time. You have so much to fulfil for yourself.

Grief is too strong inside. It's painful! You know I couldn't feel it before?

I can feel it all now, it's all too real! I want the pain to stop. Please, let the anguish stop. It's torture

Mary, please remember Jesus' journey to the Cross. He was tempted for 40 days and nights, He was praised with palms around his feet then mocked for who He was

His own mother had to watch all this and wept tears of her own powerlessness to stop knowing the fate that was at hand. Her own child, she had been in exile carrying him, now watching His own suffering and mocking by other people and officials. How much can one mother take?

Mary, you and your siblings will overcome the pain you all have endured and witnessed in your life and, like Christ, you will rise up from the ashes, But, in order for that to occur, be humble enough to succumb to surrender and acknowledge your pain, your wounds, that they are present – every person you meet will have their own wounds but won't always show them. You are a gift which we gave the world, and the world should be blest to have.

Let the Church help you all, however hard that can be at times. And, drop your pride – I may have passed that on to you and your siblings.

Can you pass a message on to Fr Simon for me? Tell him, thank you for everything he did for me in my final days before I came to see your father. I appreciated everything he did. I know I was not looking my best but it was kind of him to give me a final blessing. I felt at peace with my life.

Mum have I done enough for you?

Mary, you Paul and Tim are all me and your father, we could never ever be far away.
All you do is write or send out a message and we answer straight away.

I love you both so much and I miss you both.

Like you told Alicia and Kayla, you will find us in the place that can't be taken, your heart.

Memories

Wally Moscuza

So many years have gone by but my thoughts
Have been carved and still linger on _____
Ceaseless recollection of a bar
Where young girls met lads for a chat.
A little bar by the Riva facing the Grand Canal
Across a purple sea, the Lagoon lay still
Engulfed by the tall city walls.
A lover seduced by blue eyes, the sea caressing the foundations
The enticing ruffian knows not fair play.
I was not aware then in the orange glow of the sunset
That another world existed beyond
The fluffy clouds above the mountains' top
Rising up through the misty fog.
Perpetual history that runs through time, a missile
Of blurred thoughts and flashed memories
Like the whispers of a windy night,
It comes and goes...comes and goes...
I thought it was my piece of the world, my sea
For there was no other sea in view for me.
You fought for freedom in the vastness of your world
At six hourly intervals forced back
Behind Byzantine Bars.
By the lagoon there was a garden of Pine trees
A Robin was feathering its nest –
Unaware of the hidden pest,
The bolted road in a dead corner with spidery webs

Personal Stories and Experiences

The Spirit moves

Paul Robertson

It was something Fr Simon said, before Christmas, that got me thinking about the Holy Spirit.

We are fairly comfortable talking about the Spirit in abstract terms, in generalities and with much hand-waving, but we tend not to be so sure when it comes to concrete examples, about our lived experience of the Spirit and how it feels when she takes hold of us and leads us by the heart to somewhere new.

One of my earliest encounters with the living, moving Holy Spirit was 25 years ago now. At the time, I didn't just think that Catholic teaching on transubstantiation was rubbish, I *knew* it was rubbish. Totally preposterous. The very notion that this bread and wine were actually, physically, miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Jesus was just laughable. Until, at one otherwise unspectacular Mass, I realised that it was simply *true*. Of course, I believed it, it was as obvious to me as the beating of my own heart. Jesus *is here*. So, I said the words that have dragged me up the aisle on countless occasions: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I *shall* be healed."

Closer to home (for Cambridge is my home now), a few years ago a friend of my wife and I was being received into the Church at a regular 11am Mass. She was baptised in the font where our children were baptised, and we moved on to Confirmation. Prior to the anointing with chrism, the priest laid his hands on the candidate and called down the Holy Spirit. At this point, I felt a presence sweep from the back of the church all the way to the front, passing over me like a wave of air pressure. I looked at my wife and asked "did you feel that too?" Oh yes, she had. The Spirit is alive and moving in St Laurence's Church.

A more recent experience of the Spirit came at Deacon Geoff's hand. For various reasons, that particular Sunday, I did not feel able to receive Holy Communion, and I just wanted to be left alone. Undeterred, Geoff was persistent in offering me a blessing instead. *Go on then*, I thought, and I bowed my head. What happened next left me astonished. I felt God's presence pouring into me, a physical sensation that filled me up completely. I had gone to Mass that day feeling despondent and unworthy but left brimming over with the Spirit of the living God.

It is all too easy for us to get lost in the routine of our lives, and the routine of Mass once a week, for God to

be seen as just another stop on our weekly rotation. I am as guilty of this as any of us but, once in a while, the Holy Spirit drops by in a way I can physically feel, just reminding me that my faith is in a living and true God, one who is at work in our reality, one who loves us exactly where we are. I pray that we all have lived experiences of the Spirit, to fall back on in the dry times, and to tell to others when they remind us that we cannot *prove* that God exists.

Conversations with prisoners

Petra Tucker

Throughout my years of volunteering in prisons, I have had countless interesting conversations. Fine Cell Work sessions take place around large tables, which enables group-based chats while the men stitch, typically on the topics of prison life and sentencing and led by the men themselves. Other conversations are more personal as I go round and chat to each stitcher and look at their work.

Brian was released just before Christmas after serving 30 years in prison. Over the years I watched him change from a man who refused to engage with the system to a man ready for release but who found the parole board hearings incredibly stressful, in case he was knocked back yet again. He talked about how the parole board wanted to know that his risk to the public was manageable – 'how can I prove this as I am not the person I was when I came into prison?' When I asked if he was worried that he might re-offend, he told me that his family had stuck by him for his whole sentence but they made it clear that if he re-offended then he would be 'on his own'. His family was extremely important to him and he expressed great regret at having hurt them so much.

When he got his parole date, we had a long chat about his release. On the surface he was much more relaxed, however, he told me that inside he was furiously treading water as he was really frightened about his release. 'The world is a different place' now. Mobile phones and computers were just beginning when he came into prison. I asked him what his first meal would be – 'the biggest kebab ever'. He wanted to go out into the countryside and just sit in the middle of a field to enjoy the sun, wind and freedom. He hoped to get work and wanted it to be outdoors. His stitching was exquisite after stitching with Fine Cell Work for many years.

One session, I was chatting to Dean, who was always punctual for the group and always very smart and well cared for. On asking him how things had been since I'd last seen him, he talked about his wife's visit the week before. He explained how he always phoned her in the

morning of the visit to check that she was OK, but on this occasion, she hadn't answered her phone, which made him extremely distressed, as this wasn't like her. He even got one of the officers to phone her and still no answer. She did turn up to the visit and Dean said it took him a long time to calm down. It turned out that she had gone to the hairdressers and while she was waiting for the hair dye to take, she also had her nails done. Consequently, she heard her mobile phone ring several times but couldn't answer it. The anxiety levels Dean experienced were off the scale. In fact, his wife had just wanted to look her very best for him.

Stuart had served 5 years of his sentence when he got parole. His partner of 25 years had stood by him, together with his grown-up children. I last saw him two weeks before his release date and he was very down and quiet. I asked him what the matter was and he said he had received a 'Dear John' letter from his wife. He was devastated. The sentence is served as much on the outside by close relatives as it is by the men themselves. The stresses and strains are different for sure but as release approaches a whole new set of anxieties begin that for some families are too much. I had seen him at some pretty low times during his sentence but I didn't have any words I felt I could say to him. Listening was all I could do.

Gavin would quietly stitch in group sessions and didn't really join in much. He did chat more when either Anne or myself sat with him. He was nearing the end of a nine-year sentence where it was a straight release. Whilst in prison he was involved with another charity called 'Story Book Dads' which enables a prisoner to record himself reading a story then the child listens to the CD at bed time. These recordings were important for Gavin and he would spend some of the money that he earned by stitching to send presents out to his son.

As I drive to prison, I often listen to a Johnny Cash CD where two particular songs give me a lot to think about – Folsom Prison Blues and San Quentin. In the latter song the words 'You've cut me and have scarred me thru an' thru. And I'll walk out a wiser weaker man' resonate with some of the conversations I am privileged to be part of.

All names have been changed to protect the identity of the prisoners

Addressing Our Parallel Existence and Experiencing a More Meaningful Marriage.

Paolo & Una Mannu



Both Una and I recently joined the Parish of St Laurence's. We've been married for 34 years. Una is Irish and I'm Italian, so our journey together has come with all the challenges and blessings that migrant life in Britain brings.

We wanted to share with you our experience of CANA; a mission dedicated to strengthening and deepening the life of married couples or those in a long-term relationship. The best way to describe it is that it isn't marriage counselling, but it asks couples to spend time together, listening to each other and grappling with the realities of modern-day life. It's prayerful and the various activities are shared with other couples as they meet either at each other's homes or parish church. It's been running for over 40 years in 50 different countries and it is a blessing of the Chemin Neuf community: a Catholic ecumenical community based in France with Ignatian Spirituality and Charismatic roots.

Yes, 34 years of marriage. We both met at the London Hospital (now The Royal London Hospital) in Whitechapel. Una was a midwife (you should sit through 'Call the Midwife' with Una, 'it was just like that', 'I know that street', etc.) and I was a nurse but decided to go back to university to study Economics. Catholics met regularly at the Christian Union for prayer meetings and we were involved in a community that in later years fell apart. We shared a common faith and had both experienced a deep conversion and relationship with God. Prior to coming to London I lapsed from the faith, professed a vague belief in something and preferred Buddhism, New Age and science. Una just wanted fun in life but we both felt empty. Our conversions brought a new joy in our hearts. We fell in love and I would have gone to the end of the moon to do anything for Una (even becoming a DIY man for her flat in Commercial Road; I hated DIY then!).

We did well. Una and I both worked hard and we tried our best not to screw up our kids. We went to church, and we did what we had to do. Life wasn't without suffering and hardship, financially, family issues, the kids, teenage angst and working, always working. We had fun and we ended up with a comfortable existence together.

And it kind of all worked well unless of course our wires crossed. And for this, it is worth recalling those famous words and scenes from Ghostbusters, 'Don't cross the rays'. Over the years we got into our roles and led what

we both later concluded was a parallel existence. We cared for each other but there was a certain type of intimacy that was missing. Communication was very descriptive; by that I mean what we had done during the day or the events of the day but I never really knew what was in Una's heart and I certainly never revealed the emptiness I often felt and letting my mind wonder into a secret garden of 'what ifs'. And of course, as Pope Francis says, 'plates fly!' in a relationship (certainly ours, Una's Irish and I'm Italian; a volatile combination!) and the reality of life is that come difficulties with kids, finances, our immigrant upbringing (commitments to families in different countries, particularly when they became old and frail), the wires would cross and then there would be the silence, being misunderstood and misinterpreting. We simply had stopped talking and knowing how the other felt. We assumed too much and often preferred our own views. We expected so much of each other as well. We didn't appreciate as St Ignatius once described, 'one poor soul in front of the other'. There was little appreciation that neither of us was perfect unless things got out of hand, and then we really hurt each other. In many ways, we simply lost hope that the other could change or for that matter, should change, considering our own weaknesses.

Over the past 6 years, Cana was/is a life changing experience for us as a couple. So much so that we led the Cana UK mission in the UK for 3 years and have ourselves been very drawn to the spirituality of the Chemin Neuf community. Why? It's difficult to grasp because it's not as if we don't experience the same challenges; suddenly we do all the right things and it's like it was when we first got married; that's delusional. However, there are three things that I think stand out:

- 1) Accepting our imperfections. Through prayer and Grace we can accept our differences and see them as a blessing.
- 2) We know when we're just talking and when we're 'really' talking, when we're less reliant on what we think the other is thinking.
- 3) The simplest and yet the most difficult thing to achieve in modern life; simply carving out time for each other.

It has also been a blessing to meet other couples from different backgrounds who share the same joys and suffering that seem to go hand in hand in married life.

If you would like to know more about the Cana Mission come and talk to us or check out the links below.

Information about Cana Welcome <https://www.chemin-neuf.org.uk/programmes/cana>

Information about Chemin Neuf and its history <https://www.chemin-neuf.org.uk/>



Explore your working life

'God and my job' is four-day retreat for those who wish to find greater unity between their working life and spiritual life. It is based on the experience of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, with a spiritual companion, workshops and talks led by members of Chemin Neuf Community.

21st–25th April 2023 at Storrington Priory, Storrington, West Sussex. Participants are invited to contribute to the cost within a range of £260-£350 per person for the retreat, according to personal circumstances.

For more information, go to: www.chemin-neuf.org.uk and look under 'Retreats', or click here: [God and my job - Chemin Neuf UK \(chemin-neuf.org.uk\)](http://www.chemin-neuf.org.uk/god-and-my-job)

Danny's Funeral Day

Anthony King

The jingle of the doorbell heralded the success of the early morning drive and the caller stood back, composing himself on the path, beside his wife. They had been on the move since five and the printed directions had proved exact, from door to door. He felt satisfied with the accomplishment of navigating the rural back roads, south of the city and then finding ample space to park, in a leafy, tree-lined street of modest suburban, post-war 'semis'.

The door of 43 Wellington Road opened to reveal a tall, lean man, in his late fifties.

"Good morning. I'm Joseph – Anselm's son," was the caller's gambit.

"Oh, yes. Do come in. I'm Kevin – the second born," he said, opening the door wider and ushering them in. They shook hands.

"Now, I remember," said Joseph nodding. "Kevin ... I barely recognised you. It's been such a long time. This is my wife, Vivien." They also shook hands and smiled.

The visitors entered and were shown into a sitting room, where a few people were gathered, sitting somewhat stiffly. Kevin made introductions all round. The new arrivals extended their condolences and the subsequent

conversation was reserved and polite as the day's programme unfolded.

A fair young woman entered. "I'm Marie – one of the grandchildren," she said pleasantly, "Would you like some tea?" The offer was countered very quickly by an elderly woman who had appeared formidably in the doorway behind.

"They can't have tea. They'll be receiving Communion." Aunt Molly's imperative tone was strained, as she clutched a crumpled handkerchief tightly in both hands. Her remark had been more to herself than anyone in the room. There were older rules prevailing. Generations had lived by them in the old country. It was understood. A brief embrace for her nephew was followed by a handshake for his wife who curtsied respectfully, as was her custom.

The journey to the church was uneventful but finding parking had been challenging. A niche in a side street had finally revealed itself. It took them several minutes to walk back. Some pews at the front had been reserved for families. The congregation comprised mainly elderly people a gathering of age mates. It made the few younger mourners more conspicuous.

A hymn signalled the start. The celebrant entered with his entourage, which included the Bishop and dutifully, the sacrifice of Requiem Mass got underway. The priest bowled along articulately, conscious perhaps of the senior clergyman's presence. Danny's elder son and only daughter gave the readings. It was the Bishop who sounded most poignant. The late Danny had been his friend, he stated in his eulogy. They had been pioneers together in the development of the Church locally in the fifties. Physically frail, his voice floated firmly out to the congregation in a satisfyingly mellow way, like incense or the fragrant smoke from the pipe of his departed soul mate. His carefully chosen memories and the exactness of his words recounted a full and purposeful commitment to parish and community service. His oratory did not fail him. It was a profound tribute, and there was conviction and comfort in his delivery.

At the end of the service, people moved out slowly following the coffin. Some chatted in clusters in the churchyard. There was a frisson in the air prefacing the journey to the crematorium; that phase for immediate family only. In his red and white robes, the Bishop attended by two aides, mingled with the parishioners. He was much frailer at close range. Conversations were short. People exchanged greetings and moved on carefully. The undertakers orchestrated the departure of the cortege and the nephew took some photographs, forgetting the distance back to the car.

They soon lost touch with the hearse in the busy streets of the unfamiliar town. Two had become four with extra passengers in the car. Sparse directions given in haste, then repeated parrot-like from memory, one wrong turn and assistance from a helpful pedestrian eventually brought them to the crematorium. Joseph felt relieved.

Contemplating the barrack-like building with its prominent, square tower, he could not help but make a fleeting, sinister comparison with the holocaust. The ambience of the surrounding cemetery dispelled this grim connotation. "I wonder if the coffin also goes into the furnace," he said, thinking aloud.

"Don't ...," muttered Aisling, the youngest. The admonition was sharp and assertive.

Their feet crunched across the pebbled courtyard. Signs took them to the chapel where the committal ceremony had already finished and people were leaving as they arrived. The nephew remained alone looking at his uncle's coffin on a pedestal in an alcove area, guarded by full-length gilded railings. The consummation by fire would follow. A faint memory of a smiling face with a combover hairstyle fleetingly crossed his mind. There was no recollection of a pipe, mentioned several times by the Bishop. They had not conversed in over 20 years, except twice within the last decade. Both exchanges had been short, over the telephone from Africa to Donegal – funerals again; so many relatives and their progeny far removed from each other.

Had his paternal grandfather's large family, spanning four generations, ever been a tangible entity except in the imagination? "More of a clan," he thought. He recalled a line from a song evoking the experience of separation. *Now scattered like dry leaves* – the balladeer had grieved for his fellow migrant workers. It was a telling moment. Through his life, he had been more attached to his mother's people than to his father's but he had liked Danny a lot.

At the exit, he joined Vivien. They were the last. She had been chatting with the parish priest, standing nearby. The two men, who were of similar age, shook hands. "Were you related?" the clergyman asked politely.

"Yes, he was my father's younger brother," Joseph replied. "We're from Botswana ... in Africa." "Ah, so ...," said the priest nodding towards Vivien, who looked radiantly different, her dark skin gleaming in the clear light.

"Well, he's at rest now," he concluded, choosing not to pursue the geographical reference any further.

“Did you know, Father, he was in Coastal Command during the war?” It seemed like a superfluous remark, uttered spontaneously but he had wanted to say it. It had been a particularly important fact to him once; a vicarious thrill enjoyed and often shared proudly with school friends and even in later years. He had an uncle who had been a navigator in the RAF and who had seen action in ‘the war’. It had meant something valiant to him and obviously, still did.

“No, I didn't know that. It's interesting though.” There was no time or inclination for indulgence. “Well, goodbye now,” said the priest. Other duties awaited.

A light rain had started as they drove back through the town and into the now virtually empty car park between the church and the parish hall. “Danny had played a part in all of this,” he mused. “The development of a thriving parish community; lives lived out to the fullest, children raised lovingly, the pride and passion stretching over many years.”

They dashed across the slippery concrete to the spacious entrance, wiping the soles of their shoes on a large thick mat, in the porch. He was mildly surprised by the air of conviviality and companionship. The formality of the Church service had gone. The mourners were at ease. On every side there was amiable chatter. A trestle table bearing sandwiches, cakes and finger foods was located along the side wall to the left. People were seated around in small friendship groups. Some women in attendance acted out serving roles, operating strategically from behind a table, in one corner, on which a large gleaming stainless-steel urn had pride of place among an array of crockery. A few drinkers stood by a discreet hatch bar to the right. The business of physical refreshment and psychological repair had its proper place, just as the grief had been more evident earlier in the day. It was a time-honoured symphony of celebration of life, played out by experienced performers.

“Zambia, was it?” The question came from Jackie, an old friend of his father's. She had been at the house earlier. “There's a woman here whose son, Henry, works there. Remind me to introduce you, later. Eh, you're not intending to leave soon, are you?” There was a hint of concern in her voice and he reassured her. “We'll stay around for a wee bit yet, Jackie.”

Gradually, the gathering began to thin out until only a dozen or so remained. He'd managed to have a conversation with his cousin John; now well into middle age like himself. They'd gone outside for a chat and shared some distant memories of outings with parents during visits to Ireland. It established a rapport between them.

“The roll-ups don't leave as much of a smell as the Marlboro,” John had said, as he extinguished his cigarette.

“Never too late to give up, I suppose. Shall we get back inside?” It was a mutual decision.

He'd met the woman whose son worked in Africa – The Gambia, as it turned out. They had a brief conversation. She'd met Danny on a pilgrimage to Walsingham years before. They had remained friends and she'd travelled from the northeast.

Jackie had invited the remaining family members to return to the house in Wellington Road. By different means, they found their way there. A few were staying the night; among them Aunt Molly's two ailing sisters. A group sat around in the same back sitting room they'd been shown into earlier in the day. The outlook in the evening light was even more pleasant than he recalled. A mature sycamore sheltered a wooden shed in the shrubbery at the back of the garden. He imagined the older man pottering around there, tending to different tasks. It was here that he had collapsed, keeled over and died, finally giving up his spirit.

“So, you're the one that got away.” It was John's wife who spoke. She offered him a cigarette – a Marlboro – which he declined. They conversed for a while. “Why don't you have a wee drink?” she said.

“Truly, thanks for the offer. It's just that I'd feel easier not having it.

“The drive back ... you know.” The words came as an explanatory afterthought.

The alcohol began to take effect and the group loosened up. Anecdotes were exchanged; bits of information traded. It was skilled conversation. They knew the time was limited and strived to make the best of it. No one held centre stage for too long.

Some of the stories were memorable. A few he had heard before but one stood out. Whilst staying in an orphanage briefly, in childhood, thirty-six had been an older cousin's allocated number. His mother had gone to England to look for work after their father had disappeared. It stuck in his mind; the highest number on a roulette wheel – 36, red, even. In time, signals were conveyed to communicate a general departure. Those remaining needed to rest. Goodbyes were said and assurances given to remain in touch. A small cohort found themselves out on the street. They in turn briefly bid farewell to one another. “The last train to Preston for me,” said Cousin 36.

“I’m staying overnight with Aisling,” added Jackie. “God bless all now.”

Standing by the hired car, the nephew took two quick snaps of the house for the memory and before long he and his wife were on the motorway cruising south – a more direct route for their return to base. They didn’t say much. At ease with each other, both were happy to reflect. He was glad they had attended. He wondered if Vivien knew how much it had meant to him. He thought of all those he’d met whose lives, intertwined by faith and family, were linked by the past and who were audited every so often by births, deaths, and marriages. The extended family wasn’t close but still he felt it was important to remain loyal and belong. He recalled a line from the Mass: *O merciful father gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.* Overall, it had been a very fulfilling day. Strange that, to think one had enjoyed a funeral, but in truth, he had.

The traffic on the highway was sparse as the evening shadows lengthened. Once on the opposite carriageway they passed the scene of an accident with a tailback for several miles. It could take hours for the jam to clear. People often say life itself is a journey. Joseph was struck by the sudden thought that the path is really a continuum of many, many journeys. Each one was a separate link on a chain, with its own horizon, its beginning, and an end.



Parishioner, Augusta Deane, with Tony A., celebrating her 88th birthday

Features and Opinions

Walking in Paradise

Thomas Traherne (1637–1674)

Michael Allan

‘The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. The men! O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young men glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street, and playing, were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the light of the day, and something infinite behind everything appeared which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven.’

This was the vision of the fields, trees, streets and people of 17th century Hereford that Thomas Traherne, later to become an Anglican cleric and poet, had as a young child. Growing older he lost that vision and innocence, but as an adult he strove to regain it. This vision of God’s glory shining brightly through the everyday world became his life-long passion and belief: Earth – which we take so much for granted – is the Paradise of God and the Gate of Heaven.

Most of the many works of poetry and prose that Thomas Traherne wrote almost disappeared forever after his death. His now best-loved work, *Centuries of Meditations*, was discovered by chance in 1896, buried in a pile of other old manuscripts in a barrow outside a bookshop. This is the work C S Lewis called ‘almost the most beautiful book in the English language.’ Three passages from it follow:

‘The world is a mirror of infinite beauty, yet no man sees it. It is a temple of majesty, yet no man regards it. It is a region of light and peace, did not men disquiet it. It is the Paradise of God. It is more to man since he is fallen than it was before. It is the place of angels and the Gate of Heaven. When Jacob waked out of his dream, he said “God is here, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.”’

‘The Sun serves us as much as is possible, and more than we could imagine. The clouds and stars minister unto us, the world surrounds us with beauty, the air refreshes us, the sea revives the earth and us. The Earth itself is better than gold because it produces fruits and flowers.’

‘You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself flows in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because people are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world.’

The world’s beauty is a mirror to God’s beauty, yet we are blind. Sometimes it is only the arts, such as poetry, painting and music, touching our hearts deeply, that can open our eyes to that beauty. (Science and reason, though both absolutely essential, tell only half the story.) Some believe the universe is essentially mechanical, even meaningless, without purpose. But it is a living mystery, overflowing with a hidden, divine purpose. Both Heaven and Earth are God’s house. This mystery is intimately close; it nestles in the palm of our hand.

Thomas Traherne was no vision-dazzled daydreamer, thinking everything was sweetness and light. He knew darkness and suffering, personally and in the times he lived in – times far darker than most of us have known. The English Civil War raged for nine years of his childhood, with perhaps around 85,000 people killed, thousands of homes destroyed, communities ripped apart. But even in the face of sin, suffering and death the divine beauty burns brightly. After the victory of the Cross the risen glory of the Lord floods all creation: God’s beauty and love flow in and around us always, making all things well.



Snowdrops at Anglesey Abbey

Go for a walk in the beautiful world.

Walking by Thomas Traherne

To walk abroad is, not with eyes,
But thoughts, the fields to see and prize;
Else may the silent feet,
Like logs of wood,
Move up and down, and see no good
Nor joy nor glory meet.

Ev’n carts and wheels their place do change,
But cannot see, though very strange
The glory that is by;
Dead puppets may
Move in the bright and glorious day,
Yet not behold the sky.

And are not men than they more blind,
Who having eyes yet never find
The bliss in which they move;
Like statues dead
They up and down are carried
Yet never see nor love.

To walk is by a thought to go;
To move in spirit to and fro;
To mind the good we see;
To taste the sweet;
Observing all the things we meet
How choice and rich they be.

To note the beauty of the day,
And golden fields of corn survey;
Admire each pretty flow’r
With its sweet smell;
To praise their Maker, and to tell
The marks of his great pow’r.

To fly abroad like active bees,
Among the hedges and the trees,
To cull the dew that lies
On ev’ry blade,
From ev’ry blossom; till we lade
Our minds, as they their thighs.

Observe those rich and glorious things,
The rivers, meadows, woods, and springs,
The fructifying sun;
To note from far
The rising of each twinkling star
For us his race to run.

A little child these well perceives,
Who, tumbling in green grass and leaves,
May rich as kings be thought,
But there’s a sight
Which perfect manhood may delight,
To which we shall be brought.

While in those pleasant paths we talk,
’Tis that tow’rds which at last we walk;
For we may by degrees
Wisely proceed
Pleasures of love and praise to heed,
From viewing herbs and trees.

The Calling of St Matthew by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Mary Walsh



Caravaggio, *Calling of St Matthew*, image by Stephen Zucker
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‘As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth.

‘Follow me,’ He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.’ Matthew 9:9

This beautiful painting depicts the moment Jesus calls Matthew to follow Him. It was completed in 1600 for the Contarelli Chapel in the San Luigi dei Francesi Church in Rome. It is one of three paintings by Caravaggio about Matthew which surround the altar of the side chapel. The other paintings are *The Inspiration of Matthew* and *The Martyrdom of Matthew*. The paintings made Caravaggio famous and people travelled long distances to see them and still do.

This is apparently Pope Francis’ favourite painting.

Saint Matthew was one of the 12 apostles and author of the first Gospel. He was called Levi and worked as a tax collector before becoming an apostle. Tax collectors were despised as they were seen as greedy and as cheats. The Bible tells us Matthew obeys immediately and follows Jesus. He leaves wealth and the pursuit of it behind him.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, known as Caravaggio, was born in 1571 in Milan. He spent most of his life in Rome and died near Naples in 1610. He was orphaned as a child. He was wild, unpredictable and poor as a young man. He spent his time with people who lived a hand to mouth existence and many of his models were his disreputable mates and prostitutes.

He was commissioned on behalf of the wealthy owner to provide three paintings about St Matthew for his private chapel. This painting shows a group of tax collectors seated at a table and Jesus and St Peter pointing at them. There is so much more to this painting than that.

Caravaggio has painted Christ on the right of the picture with St Peter. We know which one is Jesus because of the halo of light above Him. In paintings, good people are usually on the right. Evil or unfaithful people are on the left. ‘Sinister’ is a Latin word which means ‘left’. The people at the table are separated from Jesus and St Peter by darkness. The space is almost totally black. In art, black spaces can represent sin or a broken relationship. Sin is a spoiling of the relationship between sinner and a loving God.

The people are also separated by their clothing. The people on the left are in contemporary wealthy Italian dress and Caravaggio has clothed Jesus and St Peter in robes commonly considered to be the clothing that Jesus would have worn in biblical times. This gives a timeless quality to the work and also to the message.

Which of the group is Matthew? Well, in the other two paintings of the same altarpiece, Matthew looks exactly like the old bearded man. Most people agree the bearded one is Matthew in this painting too. So do I, but I believe all the seated people are Matthew, at different moments of his life.

Caravaggio is showing Matthew as Everyman. We are all busy with our jobs and our bills and our appearances and we all get the call from Jesus. Do we do what Matthew does in the picture and point to ourselves and question “What? Me? Do you mean me?”

Do we continue to get on with our lives or do we follow? Caravaggio always tries to break down the barrier between the painting and the viewer. He invites us to get closer. There is a space for us at the table. We are just like the tax collectors. We are just like Matthew.

Sometimes paintings can be read from left to right. The group look towards the light and discover Christ. Jesus is not in the foreground nor is He in the centre. It is Christ’s pointing hand and the cruciform window that are the focus of this work. The beam of light and the pointing hand point to Matthew. The pointing hand mirrors Adam’s hand in Michelangelo’s *The Creation of Adam*. Caravaggio paints Jesus, the new Adam, who will create a new Matthew if he answers the call. The cruciform window reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice for us on the cross. The window in the painting is open as are the gates of heaven to those who follow in faith.

Light and darkness are hugely important in Caravaggio's work. He is famous for his use of *chiaroscuro*, which is using strong contrasts between light and shade in painting for a dramatic effect. It also directs the viewer's attention to whatever is illuminated. Chiaroscuro can be used for its emotional and psychological impact. Here the light represents the moment of enlightenment. Matthew sees the light actually and metaphorically.

St Peter, the apostle who was to be the first pope, is beside Jesus and half lit. He is the bridge between God and man. Infallible when he speaks the doctrine of the Church *ex cathedra* but fallible and capable of all the failings of everyone as a man. Caravaggio depicts St Peter as old and wise yet simultaneously vulnerable and fragile. Thankfully, we don't have to be perfect to follow Jesus.

Looking carefully at Matthew's hands we notice one is pointing with both its finger and its thumb. The finger points to the young man who hasn't responded to the call. He has not looked up. He is counting his money. I believe this is Matthew's younger self. Could Caravaggio be suggesting that we are called throughout our lives but just don't hear or respond at times? Is he also implying that the call is something we hear regularly and often throughout our lives – even if we do respond straightaway? The young man with his back to the viewer is ready to get up and follow. Maybe he is Matthew when he first follows Jesus. The bearded Matthew had a further calling as an evangelist and responded wholeheartedly to that call too.

In Baroque, art an antichrist is often portrayed whispering in someone's left ear. Here he is on the left of the painting, of course. The antichrist is portrayed as an old bespectacled man. He does not see things correctly hence the spectacles. He does not speak the truth so he needs to whisper. This is the voice that tells us all to focus on worldly matters and tempts us away from God.

Male and Female, He Created Them

Mark Hardcastle

I'm sure we're all familiar with the first two chapters of Genesis, where the author lays out two different creation myths that aren't entirely consistent with one another.

There are some Christian traditions that would take issue with my use of the word 'myth' here. As Catholics, however, we are able to recognise that these two accounts are inconsistent and yet both tell us fundamental truths of how we came to be, both as a

species and as a people beloved by God the creator, living in an expanding universe 13.8 billion years old (thanks to Belgian Catholic priest Fr George Lemaître for proposing what we now call the Big Bang theory).

The heart of this article, really, is about whether we view Genesis with an expansive mind or a constricting one. Whether we believe that the Father's house has many rooms, or if we are concerned that there aren't going to be enough for us and all those tax collectors and prostitutes that Jesus keeps hanging out with.

One of the Bible verses often deployed in arguments about whether trans or non-binary people really exist is Genesis 1:27, 'God created man in the image of himself in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.'

How you read this is, really, a question of emphasis. If you put the emphasis on the male and the female, you can read this to mean that, when God created humans, he created two definite and distinct sexes and that is that. This constrictive reading of the text, like much of Genesis 1 and 2, is not consistent with observable reality.

Fortunately, we do not have to believe that the universe we observe was built in six days, that women have more ribs than men do or that all of the humans on this earth fall neatly into those two boxes. There is another way to read it.

Put the emphasis on the conjunction and be astonished at the transformation of the text.

Male *and* female, he created them.

Yes, boys, God created women too. You know the Ten Commandments? Particularly the one about not coveting your neighbour's wife? It's tucked away right at the end of the list; the one about not being jealous of your neighbour's property.

Imagine, then, how people in 600BC would have read this. It wasn't just the men whom God made by his own hand. It was the women too. The expansive reading of the text pours dignity onto all humans, yes even women, who are revealed to be made in the image and likeness of God, by God himself. This text calls men from their comfortable exercise of power towards an acknowledgement that God made us all in his image and likeness, and we would do well to remember that.

Any document 25 centuries old is going to fall a little short of our modern understanding of both cosmology and biology, so maybe we can concentrate instead on the inescapable truth that we are all created in God's image, and keep that in mind as we relate to those around us.

Father Jerome and his Lion Retold to the Children

Fr Bob Eccles

'For as everyone knows, camels will always follow a donkey if he walks in front!' (They must all learn it to say at the right moments.)

Once upon a time in Bethlehem, there lived some old men in a monastery, and their abbot was Father Jerome. Every evening they gathered to hear the words of the Bible read to them from the holy book. One evening as they were listening, who should come in at the door but a great lion, limping on three legs. The monks were frightened and took to their heels! But Jerome came towards the visitor and greeted him kindly. 'Welcome in the name of the Lord', he said. Then the lion held up his paw and oh dear, there was a great thorn sticking right through it, and the wound was bleeding badly. Then Father Jerome called the monks to bring warm water and bandages as quickly as they could, and carefully took out the thorn, washed the wound, put soothing ointment and a comfortable bandage on the poorly paw. Soon the lion would be well again.

The lion was very grateful. Instead of going on his way he stayed with the monks, following them at their work and living in the monastery. They gave him a bowl to eat his food. Then Jerome said to the monks, 'What shall we do with our lion? Surely the Lord has sent him to be useful to us and to earn his keep.' Then some of the monks said, 'Let him go with our donkey who makes the trip to the forest to find firewood for us for the kitchen stove.' For they had a donkey who did that every day, and the foresters kindly filled baskets with the wood and loaded them on the donkey's back, so that he could bring them home. And the monks said, 'We are concerned lest our donkey should be stolen by robbers, or eaten by wild beasts. But if our lion were to look after him there would be nothing to fear.'

So this was agreed upon, and every day after that, the lion accompanied the donkey on the trail to the forest, looked after him and brought him safely home. And the monks were very pleased with their new servant. But one hot summer day as they came home from the forest together, there was not a breath of air, and the lion's head felt so heavy.

They came to a shady spot and the lion and the donkey stopped for a rest. The lion lay down and dropped off to sleep! Then who should appear but a band of men driving camels; they were merchants, going down to Egypt to buy oil. They didn't spot the sleeping lion in the shade, only a donkey grazing. So they said wickedly, let us steal that donkey and take him with us; he can walk at the front of the caravan and guide the

camels. *For as everyone knows...* So, they stole the donkey and made off.

When the lion woke up his friend was nowhere to be seen. He ranged up and down in great distress, roaring with all his might, but there was no donkey anywhere.

As nightfall drew on, Jerome and the monks began to worry when there was no sign of the donkey and the lion. Why were they not home by now? Jerome stood watching at the door. Then at last came the lion, creeping along with his tail between his legs, shaking his sorry head. 'Oh you wicked lion! Have you eaten your friend?' they said. In the morning Jerome sent the monks off to find traces of the donkey, perhaps some skin or some bones, but they could find nothing. The lion was in disgrace. Then Jerome said, give the lion a pair of the baskets with which to bring home the firewood, and strap them to his back. He must go by himself and take the trail to the forest to bring back the firewood and so show that he has repented of his crime. Yet still Jerome wondered whether the lion really was the culprit and had done such a wicked thing.

Then for many days our poor lion took the trail to the forest and brought back the firewood all by himself. The foresters laughed to see the king of beasts with a burden on his back. Then one morning, as he walked out, the lion paused and sniffed the air and paced up and down waving his tail. And all at once there came in sight a caravan of camels bearing great jars of oil, and men with them. And who should be walking along at the head of the procession but his friend! *For as everyone knows...*

The lion gave a great roar and rushed at the caravan and the camel-drivers panicked and ran off. As it happened, Father Jerome was at the door of the monastery when in the distance he saw coming his very own donkey leading a caravan of camels. For as everyone knows, camels will always follow a donkey if he walks in front. And at the rear of the procession came a happy lion waving his tail. Out ran the monks to see them, and the lion went from one to the other bowing and licking their feet, and the fathers patted and stroked him and said, oh you dear good lion! You have brought back our donkey safe and sound!

Then Jerome said, 'Get a good dinner ready, for there will soon be welcome guests'. And indeed before long there came to the door of the monastery some sorry-looking men who bowed low to the ground and said, 'We are the wicked men who stole your good donkey and we are very sorry and ashamed.' And Jerome and the monks pardoned them in the name of our Lord, and they sat down to eat. Then the merchants gave to the monks all the oil they needed, and more. And ever after, whenever they came back from Egypt, they brought oil for the lamps of the monastery. And the story of Jerome

and the lion reminds us of how Jesus himself was falsely accused and punished as a sinner, but he in fact was the one who rescued sinners and cared for us, and made peace. So remember the story of the lion and keep this in mind because it might come in useful one day: *For as everyone knows...*

Do This in Remembrance of Me

Serga Collett

‘Through doubt we can learn more than through naive trust, truth can be trusted. Doubt is the fire through which it passes. But when it has been tried, it will come forth as gold.’ Mark Littleton

I am not a cradle Catholic! I did not even attend a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) course! Maybe I should have done. Maybe then I would have been a better Catholic! I was born in Germany and was brought up in the Lutheran faith. When we moved to England, we lived in a rural community in Buckinghamshire and not having many churches to choose from, my mother and subsequently I, started attending a Catholic church, part of the order of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Many years passed and we became part of the community, my mother converted to Catholicism and one day, when I turned 18, the priest suggested that I too should become Catholic. So excitedly I agreed and was thrilled when a date was set for me to convert and I remember the warmth I felt, when the whole church applauded and I was taken up into their community.

On reaching adulthood, I moved to Cambridge and continued my catholic journey in faith at St Laurence’s (1988). Occasionally, I visited other churches always to return to the warm and welcoming community of our fabulous church, my spiritual home. Parishioners from all walks of life, young and old, coming together and reaching out to each other – ‘for where two or three gather together in my name, I am there’ (Matthew 18:20): I still feel after so many years, that we have something very special. But is it ‘better’?

Several years ago, I visited my brother in Germany for the Easter Triduum. We attended his Evangelical Church for the Maundy Thursday meal – a fabulous celebration in which foods reminiscent of the Passover meal were served, along with relevant passages read from the Bible. Sharing this meal amongst all denominations, to my right a Jew, to my left a Lutheran, and many others, was for me the high point of this commemoration. The mix of faiths was genuinely inspiring and gave a real sense of what it means to belong to a worldwide Church. My brother continued to take me to various other churches that Easter, many

different denominations and I learned the real meaning of what Jesus meant when he told us to ‘love one another’.

Imagine my shock on returning to St Laurence’s when a well-respected parishioner told me that as a Catholic, I was not allowed to be part of the community of others faiths and not allowed to take Communion in their churches. I could not believe it! I was so shocked that I asked an Anglican Priest across the road from where I live, whether this could be true? Yes, was the answer, the Catholic Church does not recognise Communion in the Church of England.

I had to take stock and stopped coming to church for some weeks. I read a lot and mused even more... what was my view on this? I came to the conclusion, that Communion is a very personal thing between Christ and myself. When I take Communion, it is about my relationship with Christ, my belief in him. I speculated that it is therefore similar for those of other denominations when they take Communion.

Forward yet another few years... I related this experience to someone learning to be a priest. Imagine my shock then when I told him the above story and he listened carefully, then said, yes the parishioner was right: Canon Law provides that Catholics may only receive Communion from Catholic priests. Why? Is our faith any better than anybody else’s? What does that mean for everyone who is not a Catholic or even an agnostic? Does that not fly in the face of ecumenism? The Second Vatican Council (decree on ecumenism) articulated, ‘Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalises the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.’

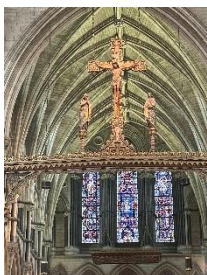
I worried and tossed and turned all that night, questioning my faith, is my faith really ‘better’ than anyone else’s? Can this be right? If it is then what do I do with that revelation?

As I have found in the past, God in His wisdom answered me. Next morning, I drove to church. As many of you who know me, this is unusual – I usually cycle. But with one of my CAFOD events that morning, I had too much to carry and on the way, again unusually, I was listening to the Sunday Service on Radio 4 and as I listened I heard the words from Isaiah, reminding us that God’s grace can’t be restricted to a faithful few, but is there to transform the whole world: ‘I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’

John 17:20–21 too reminds us that we have been invited into unity with Jesus, the son, God the father, God the spirit, and one another, ‘I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their

word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me'. Our union in Christ, our union with one another, is grounded in our union in Christ, in Jesus, in God.

Stephen Wigley finished the ecumenical service on Radio 4 with this closing prayer, 'May the love of Christ draw us closer to him and to each other, may the power of Christ strengthen us in his service and may the peace of Christ fill our hearts and this, his world. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon us all now and always, Amen.'



I started this article saying that doubt can be beneficial when you work through faith, I really think it is critical and necessary to make our belief stronger, deeper because it can be our path to a deeper faith, however crooked that path may be. I would greatly value your views!

Significance of an Anglo Saxon Christ

Joe McWilliams

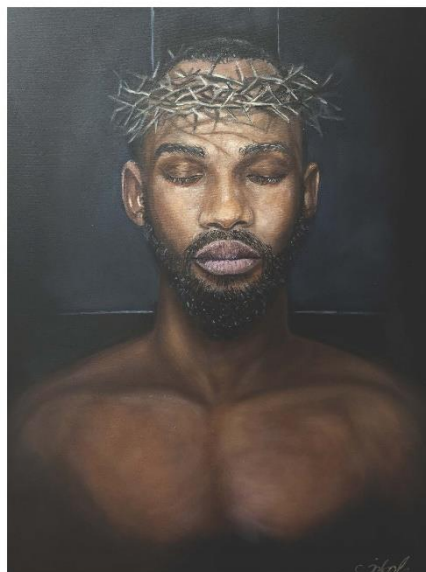


Does it matter what Jesus looked like? We can probably all agree that essentially it doesn't matter. Jesus is for all human beings. He speaks to the essential truth of mankind regardless of skin colour or culture. I think we can be fairly sure he wouldn't have looked Anglo-Saxon though. In the Middle Ages, when

they did not know any different, many of the images of Jesus and Mary were as Anglo-Saxons, with blonde hair and blue eyes. We know different now. Jesus and Mary would've looked more like modern day Palestinians. They would have looked more like the asylum seekers coming across the channel, than the images and statues we have in our church.

Should we make any changes with the images we have? I'm not suggesting this at all, but just that we should be more mindful of where His images have come from and of how our fantastically diverse congregation views these images.

If we went into a church in sub-Saharan Africa, and saw a statue of Jesus as a black man, how would we feel about this? Is there any more reason for Jesus and Mary to be depicted as white people, than them being depicted as African, Asian, South American, Aboriginal? Could all United Kingdom churches not have a picture or statue from another culture?



Martyr by Kinga Sokol Saatchi

'The legend of El Cristo Negro dates back to the late 1500s, when a Portuguese sculptor created the figure of a black Jesus as a statement against slavery and discrimination. It was adopted by indigenous people of Central America and Mexico as a symbol closer to their own image.' (Erica Hayasaki, *A Sacred Symbol Arrives*, Los Angeles Times, 20th October 2003.)





World Youth Day 2023

Miriam Santos

The World Youth Day (WYD) is an event for young people organised by the Catholic Church that was initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985. Young people from all around the world gather with the Pope in a celebration of youth which is at once a pilgrimage, an expression of the universal Church and a moment of evangelization. Although it has a clearly Catholic identity, it is an open to all event.

Diocesan World Youth Days take place on Christ the King Sunday every year, and every two to four years an international meeting takes place in a city chosen by the Pope, always in his presence. On WYD Panama 2019, Pope Francis announced that Lisbon (Portugal) would be the next host city from 1st – 6th August 2023. For one week, young people from all over the world are hosted mostly in public facilities (gyms, schools, halls...) and in parish or family homes. The highlights of World Youth Day are the celebrations (central events) attended by the Pope, such as the welcoming and opening ceremony, the Way of the Cross, the vigil and, on the last day, the Mass of Sending. From one to two million people are expected to gather in Lisbon.

A message from the Pope:

‘Dear Young People!

The theme of the Panama World Youth Day was, “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). After that event, we resumed our journey towards a new destination – Lisbon 2023 – with hearts afire with God’s urgent summons to *arise*. In 2020, we meditated on Jesus’ words: “Young man, I say to you, arise!” (Luke 7:14). Last year too, we were inspired by the figure of the Apostle Paul, to whom the Risen Lord said: “Arise! I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen” (cf. Acts 26:16). Along the route we still need to travel before arriving in Lisbon, we will have at our side the Virgin of Nazareth who, immediately after the Annunciation, “arose and went with haste” (Luke 1:39). Common to these three themes is the word: “arise!” It is a word that also – let us remember – speaks to us of getting up from our slumber, waking up to the life all around us.

In these troubling times, when our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war, Mary shows to all of us, and especially to you, young people like herself, the path of proximity and encounter. I hope and I firmly believe that the experience many of you will have in Lisbon next August will represent a new beginning for you, the young, and – with you – for humanity as a whole.”

You may read the whole message on the Vatican newsletter: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/09/12/0674/01382.html#inglese>.

The World Youth Day Lisbon 2023 theme song (<https://www.lisboa2023.org/en/official-theme-song>) is about the ‘yes’ of Mary and about her rush to meet her cousin Elizabeth. Check out the link and have a taste of Lisbon and what awaits you this Summer!

Mark your calendars for WYD Lisbon, 1st – 6th August 2023. There are numerous organised groups from the United Kingdom. Registration for the event is open and can be done directly on the WYD Lisbon 2023 website (<https://register.wyd-reg.org/Welcome/?lang=en>).

Celibacy and Priesthood – is there a future?

Fr Simon Blakesley

The moral authority of the Catholic Church as perceived to be invested in her celibate clergy has all but collapsed due to the Clergy Sexual Abuse scandals. Priests report occasional verbal insults and harassment on the streets and undeniable discomfort when these issues are brought up in general conversation. Alongside this criticism is a growing presumption that Catholic priests, whether religious or diocesan, are of a homosexual orientation which is held to be the explanation of their choice not to marry. This has been given credibility by a small but usually quite vociferous number of priests who have ‘come out’ to their friends, fellow clergy and to their parishioners; nobody is all that surprised any more.

Given that there seem to be a significant number of clergy who are emotionally and psycho-sexually dysfunctional (a load of weirdo’s...), many faithful, and even quite traditionally-minded, members of the laity are wondering whether the Church would be healthier if the clergy were allowed to marry and we would therefore follow the praxis of the established Church and of most other ecclesial groupings for their parish, pastoral clergy? The Church has already accepted this possibility in situations where an individual has been in ministerial orders in another denomination and has been received into the Catholic Church and ordained for ministry. This often poorly presented exception has caused great distress to those fair-minded Catholics who

remember in the 60s and 70s a cherished parish priest leaving the priesthood in order to get married, and they cannot see why an exception has been made for one category when it was not made for another? They might have a point, and even if the Church is technically in the right, the ‘optics’ are not good and the catechesis from bishops and priests surrounding such decisions has been seriously lacking, if attempted at all.

In this whole area of debate, however, there has been one unexamined presumption, and that is that all human beings are capable of being married, and this is something that should be subject to a more nuanced understanding, particularly in the light of the ‘Eunuch saying’ in Matthew 19: 12 – 18. (It should be clear that one is dealing with more than physical deformity or absence, but more of those who are emotionally and psychologically eunuchs). The exegesis of this passage has usually been framed in a way that supports the call to a celibate life as expressed in the footnote in the Jerusalem Bible, but I believe this has misunderstood the Lord’s meaning, mainly because of the complexity of the sentence structure. This has to do with the word ‘accept’ or ‘receive’ from the Latin ‘*capere*’ or the Greek ‘*Xorein*’ because the Lord is speaking of the ability to receive, the gift, the grace of marriage (which not everybody can receive, ergo the passage about the eunuchs), but those who are able should accept or receive it, i.e. if you can be married, by all means accept the grace of marriage. Does this however lead us to the presumption that those who are eunuchs ‘from their mother’s womb’ or ‘because they have been made so by men’ are second-class human beings? I would hope not! It is here that the insights of Dr Frank Lake into the nature of the maternal-foetal distress syndrome help us to recognise why for some people being in a deep and constant symbiotic relationship, far from being comforting, is actually chronically difficult. In addition to such trauma, the early bonding experiences of some infants, especially when there is a failure to bond with a primary caregiver, can make someone distrustful of affectionate relationships. There is a huge array of complexities to be understood in this realm of early emotional deprivation and its impact on adult relationship formation, but, suffice it to say, the Lord was aware of significant realities that caused some people to be emotional and spiritual eunuchs due to very real factors far beyond their control. For those who have had only positive experiences of a marriage bond, and the undoubted therapeutic dimensions of a healthy sexual relationship, it is hard to understand such a negative stance.

In the passage quoted from St Matthew’s gospel, the Lord concludes by adding a third category of eunuch, i.e. those who have ‘made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven’ (Again this does not mean that they have mutilated their bodies in any way...). It may well

be possible that those who are eunuchs from the first two categories, who might be recognised as being involuntary eunuchs, may then in their adult lives consecrate themselves to a public form of single life within or outside the formal canonical structures of the Church. Is this, as some I know have argued, an imperfect offering, a blemished lamb as it were, and therefore of dubious value? Or is it a practical recognition that if I cannot be fruitful within the vocation of marriage and family life, then perhaps there is another avenue of opportunity for the sharing of other gifts and talents that build up the broader family of the Church?

In years gone by, the Church has probably been an unexamined reality that many men, who have been eunuchs in the involuntary sense, have discerned a pathway towards priesthood or religious life without too much overt reflection on why they were content to recognise that marriage wasn’t for them. It is only with the eruption of a gay culture within society, mainly in the West, that this has been interpreted as latent homosexuality that should not or must not be repressed. If it is not too obvious a thing to say, this has ‘queered the pitch’ for the majority of straight or at least not homo-attracted individuals living out their lives as celibate priests. In a society where many marriages have broken down, there are many women who might consider forming an emotional ‘co-valent bond’ with a priest, not always realising that there is little to generate an ‘emotional future’ i.e. stability or certainty in such a situation because there is no public or social recognition of such a relationship.

A more serious variant of this situation currently is known to exist in Germany where a priest may have a ‘de facto marriage relationship’ with a young professional woman and they may even have children together. There is a convention however, that if they have more than two children, then the priest should leave ordained ministry and regularise the marriage. It was also a syndrome in the seminary from which I was ordained that students who entered didn’t necessarily break up with their girlfriends when they were reasonably local to the college and that ‘wor lass’ accepted the need to cooperate with a clandestine relationship and actually enjoyed the kudos of having persuaded a man in such a situation to make such a moral compromise. Such an attitude towards duplicity although surely unhealthy is just another expression of the underlying presumption of our society that normal men can’t live without ‘it’, and that a man who is sexually abstinent is inevitably a kind of emotional time-bomb just waiting to explode.

Eunuchs, however, do exist and the reason for the roots of their emotional and sexual dysfunction are not of their own making. It is quite possible that they may

exacerbate the ‘sexual untidiness’ of their adult lives through mistaken attempts at intimacy which so often end in recrimination and failure, but the original emotional pathology is not of their own making. Nor is it of the Lord’s. One often hears Christian and Catholic apologists for gay culture saying that no individuals should be ‘blamed for the way they are – that is how God made them...’, but this is not what we have been taught by the Lord in Matthew 19. Because we do not fully understand the impact of the maternal-foetal distress syndrome on the patterning and compulsivity of genital relationships, it does not mean that is any the less real. The umbilical symbiology that has received an ambivalent valuation tends to remain so and even when positive relationships can be developed, they will often break down under conditions of increased stress.

The gist of this is to say that it is not helpful to imply that marriage is morally normative for all human fulfilment, because it is a gift that needs to be accepted by those who are capable of receiving it. The rotal jurisprudence of marriage is based upon the understanding that some people, either temporarily or permanently, are incapable of undertaking the rights and obligations of marriage due to psychological causes (canon 1095:3). This was expressed cogently by a Rotal judge in the 1950s (whose sentence I cannot find) who spoke of those who are incapable *‘propter insaniam in re uxoria’* (...because of insanity in the things of spousal unity). In cases where marriage has been attempted and has failed, this of course is a judgment made in hindsight, whereas, in other cases it is an element within a discernment to choose the single life. If you cannot receive a gift then it is not by reason of ingratitude but in humble recognition of one’s own incapacity to receive and live out that same gift.

So, we might expect there always to be a pool of self-discerned celibates who may, with the help of ecclesial communities, recognise that they can offer their lives to the service of the Church in their single state. If this model of self-giving is overtaken and then supplanted by a model of gay or lesbian pseudo-relationships of variable duration, then this is evidently a clumsy misinterpretation of what it is to be a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom.

There is of course a constant undercurrent that seeks to dismantle the current expectation of celibacy for the majority of diocesan clergy in favour of the ordination of *‘viri probati’*. *‘Querida Amazonia’* was a cogent papal response to this thinly disguised stalking horse. This is not always a clamour from the ‘progressive left’ but also a reluctant conclusion of more middle of the road theologians, and pastorally engaged clergy and laity, who are rightly concerned at the homosexual ‘default setting’ of many clergy ordained within the last 50 years. Whether or not this has contributed to the

clergy abuse crisis is a matter of continuing debate, and, it must be said that the majority of sexual abuse of minors is committed by married men (and women) often in step-family relationships. However, the ‘optics’ are not good it must be admitted and the continued appointment of gay clergy as bishops, some of whom eventually retire early on grounds of ‘ill-health’ when the reality is that they know they will eventually be ‘outed’, does not help the situation.

What will I do this Lent to bring Christ to those around me

Karen Rodgers

‘The best of all is that God is with us.’

This cheerful proclamation, solidly and reassuringly engraven in the stonework of the Wesley Methodist Church, greets the traveller wearily negotiating the roundabout on the way into central Cambridge.

Pope Benedict reminded us already in 2012 that, ‘Many young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way...’ and this year Vivian Hill, of the British Psychological Society, notes that hope is currently in even shorter supply, commenting, ‘hollowness [is] the life experience of many young people...’ Many local groups here in Cambridge have responded to this challenge. One of the most cheerful places in our city is the railing surrounding Great St Mary’s Church on the market place. There posters declare, ‘Hope, peace, purpose’, ‘Chat, play, sing’, ‘Truthfulness, compassion, forbearance’, ‘Human, who are we?’, ‘Warm Space... open to anyone, free refreshments’ and invite all comers to free dinners, conversations, meditation sessions, lectures, short courses, pancake parties, discussion groups to contemplate the meaning of life or simply a listening ear and a cup of tea. Inspiringly enthusiastic and warm-hearted Evangelical Christians from Eden Baptist Church and St Andrews the Great provide a Christian response to the epidemic of loneliness and meaninglessness which has engulfed us all, especially our elderly and our young people alongside practitioners of Buddhism, Falun Dafa, Muslims and practitioners of esoteric practices such as Reiki.

Catholics are nowhere.

Yet Pope Benedict reminds us that, ‘The Church, in continuing [her] mission of evangelization, is... counting on you... We cannot be true believers if we do not evangelise... I encourage you to think of the gifts you have received from God so that you can pass them on to others in turn... Let us never forget that we are

links in a great chain of men and women who have transmitted the truth of the faith and who depend on us to pass it on to others... you need to know your faith with that same precision with which an IT specialist knows the inner workings of a computer. You need to understand it like a good musician knows the piece he is playing... Jesus sent his disciples forth on mission with this command: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptised will be saved" (Mk 16:15-16). To evangelize means to bring the Good News of salvation to others and to let them know that this Good News is a person: Jesus Christ. When I meet him, when I discover how much I am loved by God and saved by God, I begin to feel not only the desire, but also the need to make God known to others. I encourage you to make prayer and the sacraments your foundation. Authentic evangelization is born of prayer and sustained by prayer. We must first speak with God in order to be able to speak about God. Let us open our hearts to everyone... open your eyes and look around you. So many young people no longer see any meaning in their lives. Go forth! Christ needs you... Let us open our hearts to everyone. Let us enter into conversation in simplicity and respect. If this conversation is held in true friendship, it will bear fruit... Go forth and bear witness to his love!' Pope Benedict XVI, 18th October 2012.

I have Muslim friends, Second Day Adventist friends, Evangelical Christian friends and Mormon friends who astonish and inspire me with their quite routine and (to them) unremarkable accounts of how, in their communities, they routinely, often weekly, meet for fellowship, for games, to share ideas, skills and discoveries and how, in this rich context, their faith is fostered, strengthened, passed on to their children and to the wider world. These accounts fill me both with admiration and also with a sense of desolation when I think of what we are not doing as Catholics. None of these groups have access to the Sacraments and yet they are doing so much more of the work to which we are called.

I have recently had several rather heart-stopping reminders of just how pressing the need is here locally for catechesis, fellowship and evangelisation.

A friend, who is a regular attender at Mass here at St Laurence's, after much desperate deliberation had an abortion. She said she felt so alone and unsupported that she had no choice. There are over 700 abortions a year at Addenbrooke's, just down the corridor from the Rosie, evidence of many despairing young mothers.

Another Cambridge friend told me this month that her daughter, who was searching for answers in life, has just converted to Islam. I have several lovely and close

Muslim friends and it is through these friendships that I have come to realise that the superficial similarities between our Faith and Islam paper over the gulf that exists between the two faiths. Islam does not acknowledge the Trinity, the need for forgiveness or the fact that each one of us is loved unconditionally by God. In the context of Our Lord's exhortation to spread the good news that we are the sons and daughters of God and loved unconditionally, such conversions represent a disaster.

I am aware of a great tide of loneliness here locally. 20 years ago we had Mustard Seeds every Monday morning in term when the Parish Room was abuzz with families, some from the Parish and some of no particular faith but who were happy to be in a Christian group. Mothers met older members of the Parish (I remember Joan and Betty, the elderly ladies who used to volunteer to make the tea). I have been approached over the past few months by several people, mostly older people but also one young mother, asking what social meet-ups are available in the Parish during the week. The answer, is, of course, none. Jo and Denise do a heroic job of sustaining the Saturday Coffee hub and the Catholic Women's League provide an hour once a month when parishioners can get together for lunch, yet neither of these important initiatives have reached the wider community. A lot of the reason for this is that they depend on the generosity of heart of so few of us among Mass-goers. Until the tithing of our social time becomes the norm among us as Catholics, as it is among local Evangelicals, we will not see the sea change that is needed.

The most common response to my mentioning St Laurence's to local people is; "Where is that?" It is extraordinary how many people I talk to who live in North Cambridge, who use, or at least know of, Milton Road Library and yet do not know that there is a church on Milton Road. During the week, when the Parish Room is not being used by one of the wonderful U3A groups or by the Volunteer teachers, it is rather like the Marie Celeste.

We cannot provide each other with fellowship if we never meet.

As lay Catholics, we cannot consider that the job is done because we have a truly lovely Parish Priest and a kindly, dedicated and warm-hearted Parish Administrator. We ourselves are called to evangelise. We cannot evangelise if our Church is unique in our area in failing to offer any opportunity for encounter, companionship or discussion. We cannot help build up the body of Christ unless we recognise that the best thing we have to offer is ourselves and our time.

The current situation is a tragedy both for the local community and for each one of us as Catholics but we can change this and Lent is our opportunity.

As Catholics we have something unique to offer here at St Laurence's which can certainly not be offered by even the most charming and kindly Buddhist, Muslim or even Evangelical Christian; in fact, it is not something, it is 'Someone'.

I vividly remember as a child alternating between, on the one hand, Baptist Sunday school, delightful for all of its sunlight, flowers, kindly people and cheerful hymns, and on the other, Mass at the local Catholic church. Even as a small child, who had never consciously heard the word 'Transubstantiation', I had a keen sense that the two places of worship were starkly different. When I was alone at the Baptist church, I was alone. When I was the only person in the pews at the Sacred Heart, in that silence, I felt a great peace and a Presence and I knew in my heart and soul that I was not alone.

Imagine a Cambridge in which the lonely, the doubtful, the young mothers, the pregnant mothers, the isolated, the suicidal, instead of passing on by down Milton Road, turned off, came in to our Church and knelt down and experienced 'the peace that passeth all understanding'. If in addition, they found the invitation to a listening ear, a cup of tea and a place to ask questions and to hear some real answers.

We have a pressing challenge this Lent and a great Commission.

The question for each of us is: What will I do this Lent to bring Christ to those around me here in Cambridge, to proclaim in words and deeds that the best of all is that God is with us?

Cardinal Points – Beauty & Blessedness

Ronald Haynes

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty — that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." This ever-famous phrasing from Keats in his seminal poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*¹ may seem a bit confusing, perhaps bordering on incomprehensible in its equating of two fundamental ideas and values that we do not always associate with each other. Even more, Keats tells us that each is the same as, or one with, the other. This is a clue that we are in special territory with this iconic verse, language which has sparked much debate – poetic, of course, but also aesthetic, metaphysical, spiritual.

The spiritual inheritance which Keats is conveying has a long history, with a special homage to the Classical Greek understanding which he is directly evoking. Fast forwarding some centuries from that Classical era, so much of the accumulated insights were temporarily lost to much of Europe due to the tragic destruction of great collections, such as the Library of Alexandria. Providentially, scholars from the Arabic world preserved and could share substantial texts and understandings, which lead to a great resurgence of thought in the Medieval monasteries and wider communities.

St Thomas Aquinas is a key ally of the ancient teachers and the renewed acquaintance with their profound thoughts, and he is likely one source of inspiration for Keats. For instance, given the enormous influence of his magnum opus the *Summa Theologica*, in the question of 'Whether the honest is the same as the beautiful?' we find:

... Augustine says (QQ[83], qu. 30): "By honesty I mean intelligible beauty, which we properly designate as spiritual,"²

The mingling of beauty and truth, of the honest and the spiritual, soon brings us to the alliance with and affinity for wisdom:

... the honest, inasmuch as it implies spiritual beauty, is an object of desire, and for this reason Tully says (De Offic. i, 5): "Thou perceivest the form and the features, so to speak, of honesty; and were it to be seen with the eye, would, as Plato declares, arouse a wondrous love of wisdom."³

The love of wisdom, or in shorthand the root meaning of 'philosophy', is another hint that in these expressions of meaning and mysteries we are dealing with the Divine. While any attempts to describe God have naturally fallen short, much as we find when trying to express love, yet through the ages we continue to try and continue to find it an ever-fresh and inexhaustible effort. Over time, the key descriptions of God which came to be known as the transcendental properties (ones which cannot be measured) were added to by Dominicans such as Aquinas and his teacher and defender, Albert the Great, and the great Franciscan theologian, Bonaventure. Depending on the thinkers and schools of thought, among some others, these transcendentals traditionally include Being, Goodness and Truth, as well as Beauty. They are thought to be united in God, and so also interchangeable, and in fundamental ways they also apply to us as humans and beloved creations of the Divine.

St Paul, who was rightly 'all things to all people' was uniquely placed and qualified in these combined areas

of thought, in that he was a trained rabbi who also was educated in Greek Philosophy, as well as being a Roman citizen. In one of his Epistles, he asks us to consider such transcendentals: whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about (take account of) these things. [Philippians 4:8]

Similarly, the Catechism of the Catholic Church has a section on ‘Truth, Beauty, and Sacred Art’ which touches on some versions of these transcendental aspects and their interconnection:

The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendour of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. [§2500]⁴

The ‘way of beauty,’ in such a Divine sense, is shared in the concluding document of the Pontifical Council for Culture’s 2006 plenary assembly, entitled ‘*The Via Pulchritudinis ≠ Privileged Pathway for Evangelisation and Dialogue.*’ Among their pastoral reflections and insights, there is a powerful and compelling quote from Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s moving Nobel Prize speech⁵: ‘One word of truth shall outweigh the whole world.’ This helps capture an essential and age-old belief in the pivotal importance of truth, along with its eternal allies – beauty and goodness – on which Solzhenitsyn expands in another stirring piece in his speech:

... perhaps that old trinity of Truth, Goodness and Beauty is not simply an empty shopworn formula after all, as seemed to us in our self-confident materialist youth? For if the tops of these three trees converge, as the sages said they did, and the obvious and too straight growths of Truth and Goodness have been stifled, cut back and not allowed to flourish, then perhaps the fantastical, unpredictable and astonishing growths of beauty will break through and soar up to the same place and there do the work of all three?

Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that ‘beauty is God’s handwriting.’ The spotlight of beauty, as well as the litany of such attributes, so often associated with God, reveals an enduring understanding that we are made in the ‘image and likeness of God’ (*imago Dei*) – something we often hear from the Bible (Genesis 1:26–27). This astounding revelation indicates what the American Anglican priest-theologian Matthew Fox emphasises as the ‘Original Blessing’, in part a contrast to the teaching shaped by Augustine and others concerning original sin. This great blessing, this image of, and likeness to, the Divine is understood to convey the depth of love and true beauty, the source of

uniqueness and our true selves, as well as the promise of authentic community. Entered into the Divine mystery, we are seen to inherit both the individuality and the communality expressed in the three-in-oneness of the Blessed Trinity.

Earlier in the millennium, the International Theological Commission in Rome carried out a study (2000–2002) to consider the theme of *Communion And Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* with a resulting report online⁶. Much like the Medieval debates and disputations in the Church, which help convey classical thought and evolve principles such as the transcendentals noted above, this study is in some ways a combination of the classical thoughts as well as a piece of its time, and the personas involved. There are many engaging and challenging thoughts to be shared, including the emphasis on the ‘original gift’ – inclusive of all visible creation – and the misunderstandings and responsibilities that have come with such blessing:

At the root of senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Humankind, which discovers its capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through its own work, forgets that this is always based on God’s prior and original gift of the things that are ... The Christian theology of creation contributes directly to the resolution of the ecological crisis by affirming the fundamental truth that visible creation is itself a divine gift, the ‘original gift’, that establishes a ‘space’ of personal communion. Indeed, we could say that a properly Christian theology of ecology is an application of the theology of creation. [§73, 74]⁷

The study helpfully addresses those who have misunderstood the call to responsibility which comes with the great gift of Creation, the shared blessing which also binds us to obligations we have for each other and the world and its goods which we have been shared with and for us all:

... Christianity has been accused by some as in part responsible for the environmental crisis, for the very reason that it has maximized the place of human beings created in the image of God to rule of visible creation. ... But this criticism arises from a profound misunderstanding of the Christian theology of creation and of the *imago Dei*. Speaking of the need for an ‘ecological conversion’, Pope John Paul II remarked: “Man’s lordship is not absolute, but ministerial, ... not the mission of an absolute and unquestionable master, but of a steward of God’s kingdom”. (Discourse, January 17, 2001). [§72, 73]⁸

This emphasis is on Christian teaching and requirements that we have to act not as masters but as ministers and stewards of God's Creation, as creatures who are acting as we are made in God's likeness, and who are part of God's Creation as well. These thoughts may be surprising to some who have thought that the Church is not so concerned about the ecological crises, or silent about its human sources, or absent in the calls to change our ways. It may seem to some, as well, that only some of the Popes have such concerns for these crises – and their connections to other times when we have not responded to the needs and concerns of our fellow living beings. This study tries to dispel such serious misconceptions – e.g.:

A misunderstanding of this teaching may have led some to act in reckless disregard of the natural environment, but it is no part of the Christian teaching about creation and the *imago Dei* to encourage unrestrained development and possible depletion of the earth's resources. Pope John Paul II's remarks reflect a growing concern with the ecological crisis on the part of the Magisterium which is rooted in a long history of teaching found in the social encyclicals of the modern papacy. In the perspective of this teaching, the ecological crisis is a human and a social problem, connected with the infringement of human rights and unequal access to the earth's resources. [§73]⁹

In the study's conclusion, the authors knit together the uniting connections between the beauty and blessing of being made in God's image, participation in the mystery of the Trinity, and the call that brings for proper relationships with each other and the impact we have on our shared environment:

... the theme of the *imago Dei* ... helps us to present a relational – and indeed personal – conception of human beings. It is precisely this relationship with God which defines human beings and founds their relationships with other creatures. ... the mystery of the human is made fully clear only in the light of Christ who is the perfect image of the Father and who introduces us, through the Holy Spirit, to a participation in the mystery of the triune God. It is within this communion of love that the mystery of all being, as embraced by God, finds its fullest meaning. At one and the same time grand and humble, this conception of human being as the image of God constitutes a charter for human relations with the created world and a basis upon which to assess the legitimacy of scientific and technical progress that has a direct impact on human life and the environment. [§95]¹⁰

In another part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is a section on the Beatitudes, which perhaps unsurprisingly has connections with the root meanings of both beauty and blessing. The Catechism presents them as 'at the heart of Jesus' preaching', including fundamental calls and commitments for us:

The Beatitudes ... express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of His [Jesus Christ's] Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples... [1717]¹¹

Among these most-famous calls is one promising a clearer vision of the Divine: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' This promise is perhaps paradoxical, in that it offers a glimpse of God and the heavenly life, while unclear whether this must wait until more fully reunited in the spiritual realm (i.e., after death), or perhaps be available even while firmly still 'on earth'. Does it hint of the hereafter, or perhaps preview a porous and permeable passage between heaven and earth, an emergent and viable sampling of the ubiquitous Lord's prayers that plead for the God's will to be done on earth *as in heaven*? Can we find 'heaven on earth', and should we immerse more fully in the prayer shared with us directly by Jesus?

Among the many attempts to describe the life lived in heaven, there are two enduring depictions – the Beatific Vision and the Heavenly or Communal Feast. In John of the Cross' depiction of his masterful *Ascent of Mt Carmel*¹² we have a poetic and diagrammatic vision of the metaphoric and spiritual mountain to be scaled. There is a difficult and a simple route, the choice of which is largely down to the traveller and the guides they follow, while at the top of the mountain awaits the heavenly feast – the communal gathering of the faithful fully reunited with the Divine Creator. Of course, the tops of mountains are also biblically where you meet God and encounter the true beauty and blessedness of the Divine.

Dante's powerful poetic presentation of *Paradise* complements this with the culmination of the pilgrim poet's prolonged pursuit of his beloved Beatrice (a perfectly fitting name!), and the hope of the beatific vision – being with and seeing God face to face. Through all of the Divine Comedy, Dante has been inspired and carried forward by his search and efforts to find and be reunited with Beatrice. Hope you won't mind a possible spoiler for the tale's culmination, however they are reunited in due course, but in a divinely dramatic way. In the end, Dante sees Beatrice, who is entranced by the vision of God and the great

unity of all of the universe. As he follows her gaze, he too joins in the Beatific Vision, and together they are united – side-by-side – with all of the rest of the Divine Creation. In closing, we hear from a helpful commentary, which provides some clarifying context for the blessed and beautiful reunion, of the One and the Many aspects of Creation which Dante wondrously describes:

The prayer to the Virgin, uttered by Saint Bernard, requests intercession for the pilgrim that he may complete his quest to attain the ‘beatific vision’: a vision of the Transcendent Principle that holds the universe together, ‘bound by love in one volume’ (Par. 33.86).

When Dante reaches the end of his vision and is granted the sight of the universe bound together in one volume, what entrances him is not plain Oneness but all that multiplicity somehow contained and unified. His heart is set on seeing and knowing that multiplicity.¹³



Gustave Doré's image of the beatific vision, from Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

1. <https://poets.org/poem/ode-grecian-urn>
2. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q145_A2.html
3. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q145_A2.html
4. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P8N.HTM
5. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/030642207200103-402>
6. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html
7. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html
8. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html
9. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html
10. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html
11. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P5I.HTM
12. https://ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/ascent/ascent
13. <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/paradiso/paradiso-33>

What's New?



We have a new Bishop!! On 14th December 2022, Canon Peter Collins was ordained as the fifth Bishop of East Anglia at St John's Cathedral in Norwich. Spot the priests past and present of St Laurence in the photo below!



Photos from the Diocesan Flickr stream

Emeritus Bishop Alan Hopes celebrated his farewell Mass on 24th January. We wish him a happy retirement and thank him for his 9 years of service.

During Lent, we have various parish activities taking place including Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings, CAFOD's Big Lent Walk, and something new – exploring and sharing our faith using the Formation Pathway on the Sycamore.fm website. We are looking at topics such as Who is Jesus, The Bible, The existence of God. The course runs from Friday 24th February to Tuesday 4th April. Online meetings take place on Tuesdays at 8pm and in person on Fridays at 11am. Each session is self-contained, so if you miss one you can still come to the others, or the ones that most interest you.

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, Keeping-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

The Pilgrim by Email

The Pilgrim magazine is available as a 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

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 the courage and join in.

ABLAZE Masses are generally held Sunday 5pm on the 1st Sunday of the month.

NB: Please note that due to holidays the next Ablaze Masses are: 16 April & 14 May @ 5pm



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

Upcoming Parish Events

Lent Stations of the Cross Led by Fr Simon in church Also online option Zoom details in the newsletter	Fridays during Lent 7:30pm
Chrism Mass St John's Cathedral, Norwich Coach details in the newsletter	4 April 11:30am
Holy Week Masses Palm Sunday Masses 2 April Maundy Thursday Mass 6 April Good Friday: 7 April Children's Stations of the Cross <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal • Stations of the Cross Liturgy of the Passion Easter Vigil 8 April Easter Sunday Masses 9 April	Usual times 7:30pm followed by watching until 10pm 10:00am 10:30am 1pm & 3pm 9pm Usual times
Rise Theatre production <i>Faithful Companions</i>	Palm Sunday 5pm in the church
Talking about our faith: Sycamore Faith sharing https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/faith-formation-part-1/ Zoom details in the newsletter	Fri 11am Library Room Tues 8pm online until 4 April
CWL Lent Soup lunches	Fridays after 12.30pm Mass
Family Fridays Parish Room	Fridays 6:30- 8:30pm Mthly
Saturday morning coffee hub Parish Room	10-12pm After 9:30am Mass
Sunday morning coffee In the Parish Room and via Zoom	After 11am Mass
Gospel Study Group Reading St Matthew's Gospel	Every Weds after 12.30pm Mass
Parishioners Open Meeting In person in the Parish Room or via Zoom	Thurs 20 April Tues 4 July Thurs 14 Sept Tues 21 Nov At 7:30pm
Confirmation Ceremony	Mon 3rd July 5pm
First Holy Communion Mass	Sat 3/10 June 10:00am Sun 4/11 June 9:30am & 11:00am

ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

91 Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 1XB

Tel: 01223 704640

Email: 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

Deacon:

Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cook
01223 351650

Secretary:

Reece King
01223 704640

reece.king@saintlaurence.org.uk

Treasurer:

James Dore
07980 467534

treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk

Safeguarding:

Petra Tucker

Mary Jane & Jim O'Sullivan

safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk

Service Times

Saturday 9.30am

6:00pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am

9:30am (sung and with Children's Liturgy)

11:00am (sung)

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am

Wed & Fri 12.30pm

All Masses are livestreamed. Check the weekly newsletter for changes to the above times

St Laurence's School

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Assistant Head
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