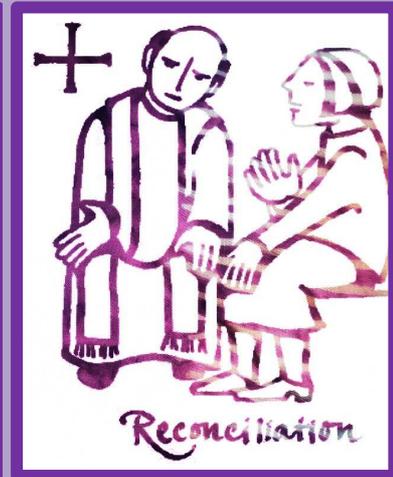
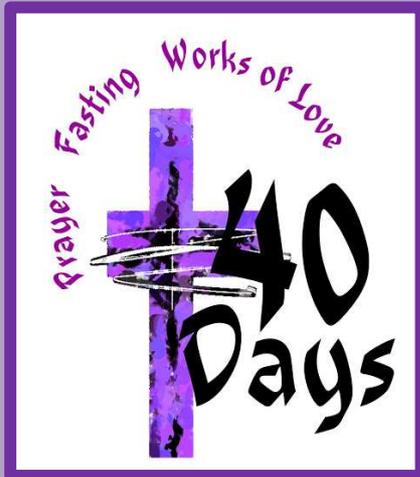


# The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, Lent Edition 2020



## We say goodbye to Fr Johane

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## **From the Editors**

### **Farewell Fr Johane and something about the Dowry of Mary**

**Nora Darby and Sarah Sykes**

At the beginning of February we said goodbye to Fr Johane Nguluwe with a farewell Mass con-celebrated with Fr Simon, followed by a presentation in the Parish room. In the traditional St Laurence way it was accompanied by drinks and nibbles.

Fr Johane came to us from his native Zimbabwe for a peaceful sabbatical year. This, of course did, not happen. After only a few months he was sent by Bishop Alan to Bury St Edmunds to help Fr Jay due to Fr Mark's illness. He returned to St Laurence's on August Bank Holiday Monday, too hot for him, he said, it was 28C. Hotter than Zimbabwe? From then on, he was a part of our Parish life, always around, and often helping with the garden which was something he really enjoyed.

We will remember his Homilies, delivered in that rich baritone, using an orange and a nut, among other things, to illustrate the Gospel of the day. He spent Christmas with us, helping Fr Simon to celebrate lunch with a number of parishioners who would have otherwise been alone on Christmas day. It was something, he said, he would always remember.

It was sad to see Fr Johane go. He will be remembered with affection by many parishioners. He welcomed everyone always smiling, always ready with a word of advice or just to chat for a minute or two.

\* \* \*

This month, on 29th March, our country will be rededicated as the Dowry of Mary. The rededication is both a personal promise of the people and a renewal of the entrustment vows made by King Richard II in 1381. The original dedication was made in Westminster Abbey when, giving England as a gift to Our Lady, King Richard sought her protection in the face of great political turmoil. England received the title 'Mary's Dowry', meaning that the country was set aside as a gift/dowry for Our Lady under her guidance and protection.

The rededication will take place at 12 noon on Sunday 29th March in cathedrals, churches, schools and homes throughout the country.

As King Richard II once gave England as a gift to Our Lady, so we are invited to give ourselves to Mary. We can respond to this invitation on the day of rededication in two ways; by making a personal promise, and by joining in with the communal entrustment. The personal promise brings us closer to Mary and we unite with her by following her openness to God's call. The communal entrustment unites us as the people of our country in prayer.

**The Angelus promise** is the prayer of commitment in which we proclaim our own "Yes" in union with Mary through the words of Annunciation.

**The Act of Entrustment of England to The Virgin Mary** is a prayer of profoundly historic and spiritual nature, bringing together the prayers of surrender and dedication that have echoed through our history. You can find it, and more information, on the website: [www.behold2020.com](http://www.behold2020.com)

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The production team: Editors: Nora Darby, Sarah Sykes; Sub-editors: Alex Dias, Carol Williams, Susan O'Brien, Nora Darby; Commissioning Editor: Nora Darby; Cover: Leonie Isaacson; Proofreaders: Stephen Warde & Caroline O'Donnell; Layout (preparation for printing): Sarah Sykes, Nora Darby.

**The deadline for the next edition is 8 May 2020  
for publication on 6/7 June**

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

## What's New?

### **Fr Bob: 80th Birthday Invitation**



You are all very warmly invited to help Fr Bob celebrate his 80th birthday on Monday 4th May upstairs in The Castle pub, Castle Street. Absolutely NO presents, please! But if you would like to mark the occasion, why not just up your usual donation to CAFOD for our Colombia project, says he.

THE CASTLE  
MONDAY 4 MAY  
7.30 – 10.30pm  
BUFFET SUPPER

RSVP by May 1st to [robert.eccles@english.op.org](mailto:robert.eccles@english.op.org)  
(to help with catering)

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### **Greetings from Fr Joe Inguanez**

Dear Parishioners

I have now been living at St Laurence's RC Presbytery for almost a month. So it is more than fair to say a big thank you to Fr Simon for his great and generous hospitality. I want to say thank you also to you all, who made my settling in very smooth and easy.

Having been asked to introduce myself to you, I will do this by telling you something about my life so that we can get to know one another better.



As some of you might have heard, I come from Malta: born in 1943 in a small village called Ghaxaq (*read: Asciak*), the eldest of a family of eleven children. I am fortunate to have known my four grandparents. My father was a builder in the construction industry, while my mother was a housekeeper...

Imagine yourselves taking care of nine children! It was like running a small playschool. After receiving my First Holy Communion I became an altar boy. That, together with catechism lessons, was really fun. From kindergarten I went to my village's Government Primary School, which was next door to my grandmother's house. These were some of my happiest years in life.

When I was in the third class of the Primary School, my parents sent me to St Augustine's College, which was run by the Augustinian Fathers. However, because

I felt a desire to join the priesthood, after two years I moved to the Minor Seminary where I received my secondary education leading to "O" levels, and the Sixth Form, leading to "A" levels. I sat for both the "O" and "A" levels of the University of Oxford and the Matriculation of the Royal University of Malta.

Then came the time of the big 'to be or not to be?' question which every teenager (at least in my days) had to face: what do I want to do with my life? After prayers and spiritual direction, I decided to enter the Archbishop's Seminary to prepare myself for the priesthood. The Seminary did not offer Philosophical and Theological Studies. So, seminarians all went to the Royal University of Malta to study Humanities, Philosophy and Theology. During this time my father died at the age of 49, during my third year at the University. On the other hand, I was blessed because my mother died at the age of 91.

On 15th March 1970, I was ordained Priest. Then my Archbishop sent me to the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome) from where I obtained the degree of Licentiate in Social Sciences.

On my return to Malta, I was assigned the role of Co-ordinator of Pastoral Training at the Seminary, while at the same time I started teaching Sociology as a Visiting Lecturer at the University. In the meantime, I was also a Chaplain to the Young Christian Workers, while offering pastoral services in my parish, where I was in charge of the Youth Centre.

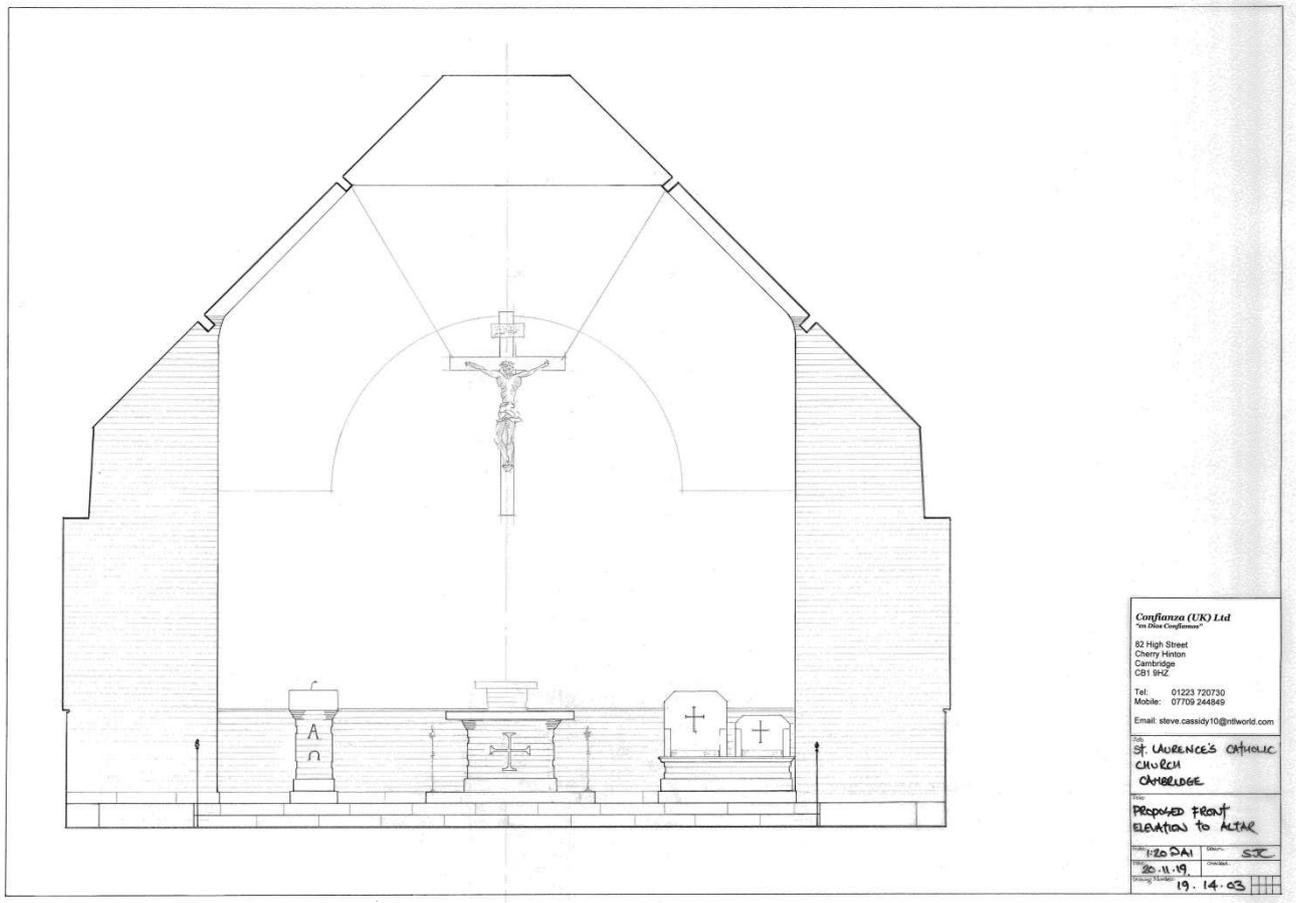
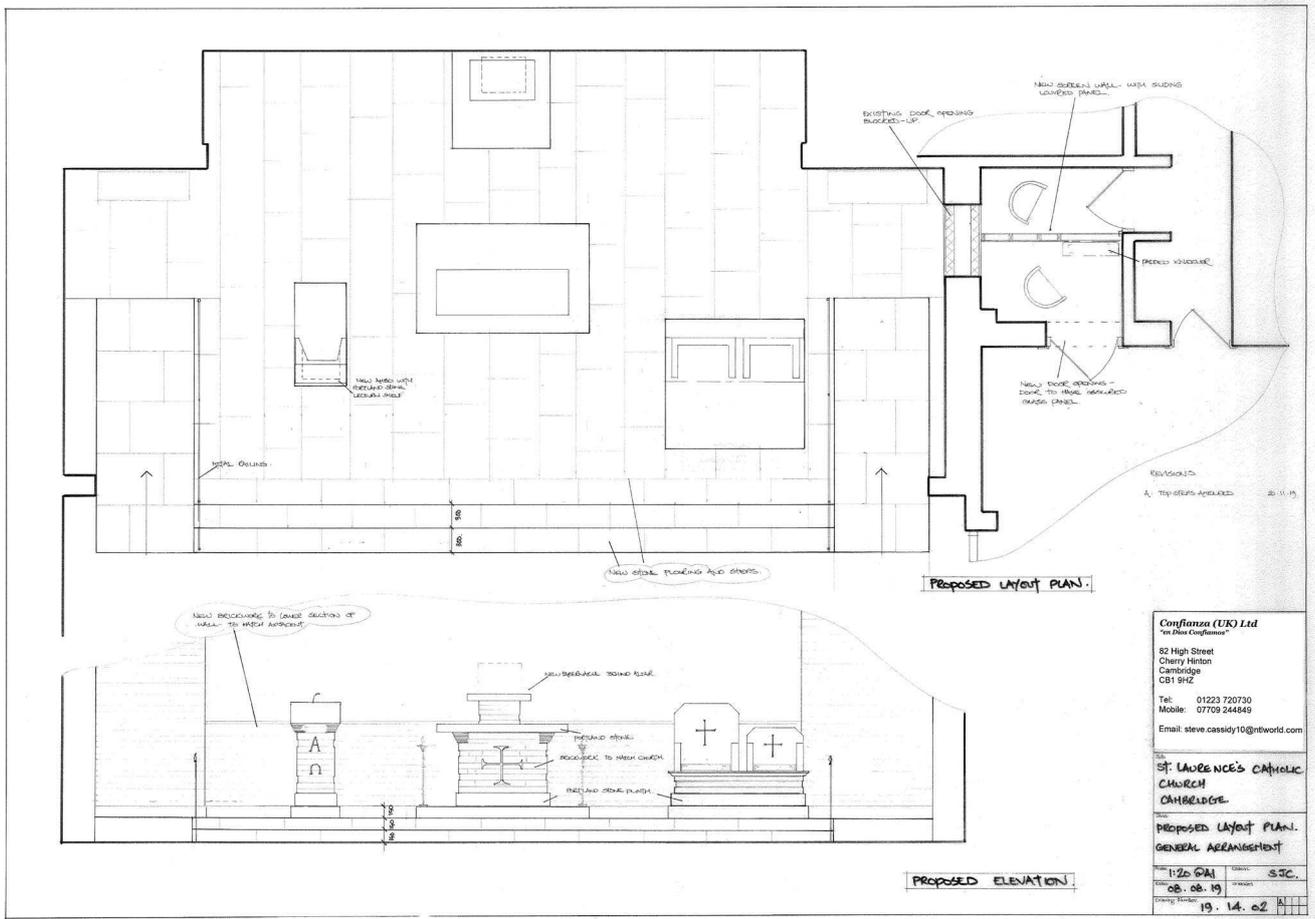
Then I read for a PhD at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. On my return to Malta I was appointed part-time Assistant Lecturer in Sociology in the Faculty of Theology. A year later I was selected to become a Lecturer of Sociology in the Faculty of Arts and then Head of the Department of Sociology.

When I reached 61 (the pensionable age!), I decided to resign from the University. However, as they say, there is no peace for the wicked! The Archbishop appointed me Chair and Executive Director of DISCERN – the Diocese's Institute for Research on the Signs of the Times. When I reached 75, I submitted my resignation. After three months, the Archbishop accepted it.

Hence I decided to have a break. Hence my presence in Cambridge. This is in fact my third time here: twice as a Visiting Scholar at St Edmund's College, and now I am a Visiting Academic at Magdalene College for the Lent Term. Guess what? I am researching on secularisation and anticlericalism. I pray that my presence here will not turn you into anticlericals! On the contrary I hope to be of support to Fr Simon and to those who would need my help. I will be very glad to help anyone who would need my pastoral assistance.

God Bless you all

# Plans and Parishioners' Open Meeting Report on Re-ordering the Sanctuary



The plans for the re-ordering of the Sanctuary have been on display for a couple of weeks in the Parish Room. At the Parishioners' Open Meeting, Fr Simon opened the discussion by informing the Meeting that plans and costings had been sent to the Diocese for approval and he would present these at the April meeting, with a view to beginning the work this summer. He explained that the design has been put together to tie in with the look and feel of the rest of the church building. The stone to be used for the new priest/deacon chairs and the lectern is coming from the stone of St Laurence's original altar and credence table. The altar stone will provide the backs of the priest and deacon's chairs and the top of the lectern. The credence stone will be used to make the base of the chairs. The tabernacle is to be replaced with a donated square-shaped one, placed on its own pillar and will be a little higher than it is currently. The crucifix would move to be suspended by wires above the altar and the tapestry could come down on either side of the tabernacle. The new steps and flooring will be made of stone (Ancaster limestone) and will not be carpeted, but the steps will have a non-slip tread. On either side of the Sanctuary, access would be up a stone ramp rather than steps and brick would be added around the wall up to dado level to match the brick in the body of the church. The current door into the Sacristy and Confessional will be blocked up, and a new glass door to the confessional would be created from the Narthex area; the new layout would provide for a properly screened-off confessional, including the addition of a sign indicating when confessions are being heard and a red/green light to show whether the confessional is occupied.

Fr Simon would also like the church to be redecorated, including adding a layer of plasterboard across the ceiling to cover the tiles with a layer of insulation (in addition to the insulation added during the retiling of the roof last year). He suggested that this could be done in three phases with costs spread over two years.

Fr Simon informed the Meeting that the plans had also been sent to the Diocesan Liturgical Commission – headed by Mgr Tony Rogers – who will be considering the plans at their February meeting. He plans also to invite them for a site meeting.

### **Questions from the floor included:**

Where would the keyboard set-up move to?

Fr Simon answered that the keyboard would ideally move to the area where the black chairs currently sit in front of the front bench. The keyboard player would face the cantor. However, he indicated that it would be possible to build in a plug-in point by the newly positioned lectern to use if necessary, i.e. the keyboard could move temporarily to the side of the Sanctuary for a particular Mass, but not remain in that position all

week. Fr Simon also believes that the PA system could be slimmed down and put in a purpose-built cupboard underneath the statue of St Laurence, along with the mechanics for the live streaming.

What are the benefits of suspending the crucifix over the benefits of its current position?

Fr Simon answered that the relationship of the cross to the altar is an important correlation in the arrangement of the Sanctuary. There was extensive discussion, with opinions for and against bringing the cross forward off the wall. Frances Stafford commented that, at a meeting in the church many years ago, the idea had been discussed and the conclusion drawn that this would not be a popular move. Mary Walsh expressed that she liked the idea of the suspension representing the resurrection. In reply to a query about the visibility of the wires, Veronica Harvey commented that the wires suspending the cross in the church at Newmarket cannot be seen. Another parishioner questioned whether, with the Sanctuary not being particularly deep, the cross needed to go forward.

There was some discussion about the tapestries currently hanging on either side of the cross and how they would fit into the new design. Some comments:

Could alternative or seasonal tapestries be used in the design?

The tapestries are complementary to the cross and work well with it, but the painted arch above was not popular with those at the meeting, particularly the colour.

Moving the tapestries lower down to the level of the tabernacle would not work well, as the tapestries are too big. Fr Simon pointed out that if the tapestries were placed there they would be partly hidden by the altar.

Some parishioners expressed their opinion of the sanctuary design in general:

Mary Walsh: The new design is cleaner, crisper and plainer with few distractions from what should be the focus of what is happening (i.e. the Eucharist). It doesn't have a staged feeling and she felt that it is better not to have personal art on / around the altar. The new design feels more prayerful, but the tapestries are a distraction.

David Brierley: Liked the new design and said it would be nice without the tapestries. In the same way as the icon of The Trinity had replaced the cross for a time, maybe the tapestries had had their day and could be used /displayed elsewhere.

Karen Rodgers: likes the tapestries but wondered if the current position was the right place for them.

Susan O'Brien: welcomes the use of the materials and likes the simplicity and harmony of the design. She would welcome a change in the paint colour at the back of the sanctuary to something more neutral.

Fr Simon said that he would accept the guidance of the Liturgical Commission about the design as an objective voice.

There was then some discussion as to whether ramps were needed on either side of the Sanctuary or whether just one ramp to the right would suffice, as we have limited space in the Sanctuary area. Fr Simon explained that ramps on both sides of the Sanctuary will bring symmetry to the area. It will also facilitate the flow of movement around the altar. It was queried whether there would be space for chairs to be placed for the Readers to sit while waiting to read.

Stephen Chapman who heads the team of altar servers, was not able to be present, sent the following comment read by the Chair: He is not against the renovation but only if there is value in it long-term for the Parish. We need to get it right as we will have to live with it for years to come. Clergy will change but parishioners stay a lot longer. Altar Servers' changing room – at present the confessional area is used. It is a good and safe place providing privacy. If the confessional will have doors that are glass and open into the Narthex would this mean people could watch the servers changing? Access from Sanctuary to Sacristy – when this first went in it was a relief to no longer have to go through the congregation to set up and clear up. It's very useful for quickly fetching forgotten items or take things out of the way (like at Easter). If you try to get through the Narthex to the Sacristy on a Sunday it is very difficult. So please can the direct access from the Sacristy to the Sanctuary be kept. An additional comment to Stephen's was that the changing area is already very tight and would not be practical if more space was lost.

James McQuillan queried why brick was to be used as a pedestal for the altar and why the shape of the altar needed to change. Fr Simon replied that brick is more substantial and in line with the design of the rest of the building. He could see that there is an argument for using some of the existing limestone but brick will make the whole structure stronger with simpler lines. There was some discussion of this issue, with some comments in favour of the current altar.

Looking more closely at the new seating arrangement, the question arose whether there was a need for such a substantial priest's seat and what would happen when there were more celebrants than just priest and deacon. Would there be room for extra chairs when there were additional priests, deacons, readers, singers using the Sanctuary? It was also pointed out that there might be

a lack of space to move between the stone seats and altar, with potential pinch-points developing there.

It was questioned how the extra steps up and down to the altar, seats, and lectern would work (these are included in the scheme to compensate for the lowering of the level of the floor required to accommodate the ramps). There was some concern that these might complicate the appearance of the Sanctuary and movement around it during the liturgy. It was suggested that these levels might be looked at again.

Jeanette Milbourn asked where the cantor would lead the singing from, and Fr Simon explained that the cantor would use the same lectern as the Readers. Jeanette wondered whether there would be room for the music sheets and books and lectionary on the same lectern, how the interaction between cantor and readers would work, and also queried the wisdom of having a stone lectern which cannot be height-adjusted for shorter/taller people. She also pointed out that communication between the cantor and the priest would be very difficult with them being on opposite sides of the altar. Fr Simon believed that a large, Perspex ledge attached to the lectern would give enough space for both. There is remaining concern, particularly from those involved in the music group, about the impact of the scheme on the functioning of music during the liturgy.

As the discussion drew to a close, it was asked whether these many changes were necessary – apart from the renewal of the flooring, which had been the original plan, agreed before the arrival of Fr Simon?

It was suggested that an additional meeting should be arranged when samples of materials, colour charts, final costings and more detailed drawings were available, around the time of the next Parishioners' Open Meeting in April. Opinions and questions could then be further explored.

The Chair took a quick show of hands on 2 aspects of the discussion:

The suspension of the cross got a 50/50 split on whether this would be a welcome change and the retaining of the tapestries showed no strong feeling either way with only a few hands going up.

For those who are unable to attend the planned additional meeting but who might like to comment there will be a comment sheet provided in the porch.

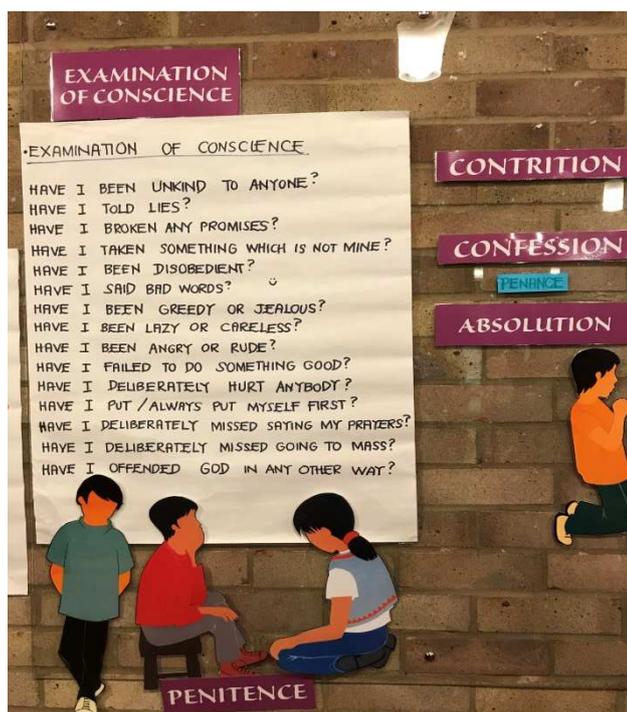
**An extra Planning Meeting will take place, but for those unable to attend but who wish to comment there will be a Comment Sheet available in the porch. [Since the minutes were published the meeting has been scheduled to take place on 13th May at 8pm].**

## Lent

### Sarah Sykes

Lent is a time for turning back to God. A time of Penance and Repentance.

Our children, who are preparing to make their First Holy Communion in May, will be making their First Reconciliation this month. Many of us will also make a special effort to go to Confession during Lent. At St Philip Howard Church I came across this display on the church wall reminding the children how to prepare for this. I think it can be helpful to children and adults alike.



## The Year of the God who Speaks

Pope Francis has made the third Ordinary Sunday in each year a Sunday for the Word of God, and the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales have designated 2020 as *The God who Speaks the Year of the Word*.

On Sunday 26th January (3rd Sunday), Bishop Alan asked that Readers from parishes throughout the Diocese were re-commissioned into the Ministry at all Masses in their own parish church which, of course, included St Laurence's. This coincided with the celebration of 'The Year of the Word' when we were asked to engage more deeply with the Scriptures with special emphasis on the role of the Bible.

Others parishes had a visual presentation on why reading the Bible could enhance/change their lives and were encouraged to bring their bibles to Sunday Mass the following weekend to have them blessed, others reflected on the importance of reading scripture and understanding its context.

The Year of the Word is for EVERYONE; a time to reflect, read, watch and listen to the Word of God. There are so many things available as well as the Bible itself which, of course, is the most important.

- Listen to the Word, perhaps by following a Bible podcast like the Daily Audio Bible. (<https://dailyaudiobible.com>)
- See Bishop Robert Barron on Facebook / YouTube discussing the Gospel of the day. There are many other religious programmes available, just search for them.
- Set aside time to read and reflect, not only the Bible, in your own home at your own time, or go upstairs into our well stocked library; you can sit up there and browse. Maria Santos Freire will help if needed.
- Go to Fr Bob's Bible Study on Wednesday evenings where you will be made very welcome.
- Try a different edition of the Bible and see if different wording brings new enlightenment.
- Choose a reading plan either for the year, or for special times of the year such as Lent or Advent.

## Radio Maria England

Radio Maria England has been having regular monthly volunteers' evenings, rotating the venue across the 3 main parishes in Cambridge. At these evenings, you can catch up on developments and learn about potential volunteer opportunities.

The next one is due to be held in St Laurence's Parish Room on 21st March 2020, at 7pm.

There is also a Facebook page which you can follow, and a website: <https://radiomariaengland.uk> where you will find the *Listen Now* button!



## **Features and Opinions**

### **Intercession**

#### **John Conlan**

When you say a prayer for the repose of the soul of a dead relative, do you ever find yourself half-jokingly asking them to put in a good word for you?! It is probably a very human response to losing a loved one ever since humans began to believe in heaven, gods or God.

Praying is part of being human. There are written records going back 5,000 years of humans composing prayers to deities, and in the Old and New Testaments we can see how forms of praying developed, culminating in how Jesus taught us to pray to the Father and for others. In this article I want to talk about a particular type of communication with God: asking someone to intercede with God for us. It is a concept that has split opinion among Christians.

As Catholics, we pray for one another when alive, so why not pray for the dead or ask those in heaven or close to heaven to pray for us? When we talk about intercession we should be focusing mainly on Our Lady and the saints. We should be careful to remember that we are asking for prayer, we are not praying to a relative or saint. Only God is worthy of prayer. Our primary obligation to our deceased relatives, and to all the holy souls, is to pray for them.

What are the Catholic beliefs that guide the way we should ask for intercession? The main point to bear in mind is that we Catholics are a family, a mystical body headed by Christ, and its members are both alive and dead (in purgatory or heaven). Christ urged us to pray for one another. Death does not break up the Catholic family. Even in death we can all help one another with our prayers. This belief in intercession has grown out of oral and written tradition, especially via the writings of St John, St Paul and the Church Fathers.

According to the catechism of the Catholic Church (956): 'Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus . . . So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.'

I came across a useful article on the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury website. It says that we believe the Church is a 'communion of saints above all in the Eucharist, which unites believers in Christ. But the term communion of saints refers too to those who live in Christ who 'died for all', so that what each one does

or suffers in and for Christ bears fruit for all. It follows that those men and women who lived virtuously on earth enjoy the fruits of their labours in heaven. The communion of saints is made up of the Church in heaven, the Church on earth, and the Church in purgatory. The Church Triumphant (those in heaven) prays for the Church Militant (the Church on earth) and for the Church Suffering (those in purgatory), since all are bound together in ties of charity.'

Pope Paul VI wrote in 1968: 'We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are attaining their purification, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion the merciful love of God and His saints is ever listening to our prayers, as Jesus told us: Ask and you will receive.'

A potential danger is if one strays towards necromancy. The sin of necromancy is not merely 'speaking to the dead'. Necromancy is the attempt, through occult practices, to contact and communicate with a deceased person in a way that brings that person back from the dead. Speaking to a saint or to a deceased relative or friend is not necromancy, because Christian prayer relies upon Jesus, as intercessor between God and man, to facilitate the communion. And this is the vital point to remember! One reason why it is a sin to use a medium as a go-between to the dead is that it is a denial of Christ as the one true mediator. Thus, it is wrong to hold a séance. But a reasonable person can tell the vast difference between holding a séance to have the dead speak through you and someone asking for a deceased parent to intercede. One is an occult practice bent on getting secret information; the other is a humble request for a loved one to pray to God on one's behalf.

The Catholic doctrine of intercession and invocation is set forth by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which teaches that 'the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their own prayers to God for men. It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our redeemer and saviour. Those persons think impiously who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us is idolatry, or that it is repugnant to the word of God, and is opposed to the honour of the one mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ.'

The early Christians practised intercessory prayer on behalf of others after Jesus' death. St Ignatius of Antioch exhorted Christians to continue to pray for others, and especially for heretics. St Ignatius and the

other Church Fathers, such as Paul the Apostle, who were keen on intercessory prayer, based this practice on Jesus' own teachings which required that one pray for others, especially one's enemies: 'But to you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.' (Luke 6:27–28)

One of the greatest of the Church Fathers spoke of intercession and invocation. 'But not the High-Priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels . . . as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep' (Origen of Alexandria). St Cyprian, writing to Pope Cornelius, said: 'Let us be mutually mindful of each other, let us ever pray for each other, and if one of us shall, by the speediness of the Divine vouchsafement, depart hence first, let our love continue in the presence of the Lord, let not prayer for our brethren and sisters cease in the presence of the mercy of the father.'

'May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benignant countenance' (St Ambrose). St John Chrysostom frequently spoke of invocation and intercession in his homilies on the saints. 'At the Lord's table we do not commemorate martyrs in the same way that we do others who rest in peace so as to pray for them, but rather that they may pray for us that we may follow in their footsteps.' (St Augustine)

The chief objections against the intercession and invocation of the saints are that these doctrines are opposed to the faith and trust we should have in God alone; that they are a denial of the all-sufficient merits of Christ. Article 22 of the Anglican Church says: 'The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping, and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.' Calvinists reject both intercession and invocation as an imposture and delusion of Satan, since thereby the right manner of praying is prevented, and the saints know nothing of us, and have no concern as to what passes on earth.

The Catholic Church disagrees and says the doctrine of one mediator, Christ, in no way excludes the invocation and intercession of saints. All merit comes through Him; but this does not make it unlawful to ask our fellow creatures, whether here on earth or already in heaven, to help us by their prayers. The same apostle who insists so strongly on the sole mediatorship of Christ, earnestly begs the prayers of his brethren: 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Spirit, that you help me in your prayers for me to God' (Romans 15:30); and he himself prays for

them: 'I give thanks to my God in every remembrance of you, always in all my prayers making supplication for you all' (Philippians 1:3-4). If the prayers of the brethren on earth do not derogate from the glory and dignity of the Mediator, Christ, neither do the prayers of the saints in heaven.

Intercessory prayer to saintly persons who have not yet been canonised is also practised, and evidence of miracles produced as a result of such prayer is produced during the formal process of beatification and canonisation.

To conclude, let us take inspiration from the words of St Thomas More in a letter to his beloved daughter, Meg, on the eve of his execution in 1535. Henry VIII's condemned former Lord High Chancellor of England wrote: 'Farewell, my dear child, and pray for me, and I shall for you and all your friends, that we may merrily meet in heaven.'

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## **Course Opportunities at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology**

**Sue Price, AFHEA**

**(Pastoral Outreach Coordinator, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology)**

'Pay Attention! Listen to what you hear...' was the phrase that hit home from one of the weekday readings recently. It seems to fit with this Year of the Word – what is it that we hear, what is it that we are being asked to pay attention to and as a result what are we being called to do? There are so many ways and opportunities around for us to listen to God's Word. At Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, we have the following on offer, which may be a way of listening to what you hear for you.

*Lenten Quiet Day – Judged by Love* on 21st March 2020. Arrivals from 9.30am, input sessions 10am – 12.30pm, opportunities for one-to-one sessions and private prayer from 1– 3pm. Bring your own lunch, tea and coffee provided. £15 pay on the day or by bank transfer in advance.

*Creation: God, the planet and us* is the title for the next module in our popular 'Catholic Theology and Practice' Thursday Afternoon Series, a learning space for Catholic women. This will be led by Dr Férdia Stone-Davis. Thursday afternoons 23rd April – 14th May 2020. Cost: £170 by bank transfer or cheque.

*A Study Day celebrating seven years of Pope Francis* led by Dr Peter Coughlan, 22nd April 2020 10.30am – 4pm. Bring your own lunch, tea and coffee provided. 13th March 2020 is the seventh anniversary of the

election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio as Pope Francis. That event marked the beginning of what has already been an extraordinary, and in many ways unexpected, pontificate. This study day will look at the significance of these seven years for the Church and the world. Bring your own lunch, tea and coffee provided. £15, by pay on the day or bank transfer in advance.

*A Study Day on Children's Spirituality* led by Sue Price. Join the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies students for the day, 25th April 10.30am – 3.30pm. Bring your own lunch, tea and coffee provided. Cost: £15 pay on the day or by bank transfer in advance.

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## Caritas East Anglia

### An extract with permission from the Diocesan Magazine with postscript by Christine Knight

Caritas East Anglia is the latest addition to the worldwide federation of Caritas Internationalis, an international Catholic humanitarian organisation – and was commissioned during the morning Mass at the cathedral in Norwich on the World Day of the Poor.

In his homily, Bishop Alan said: “In all that we do for the poor, we must always remember that we are taking the Lord and his message to them – doing so often without words for it is the Lord Himself, working through us, who is welcoming and listening, who loves them and brings them his message of hope and reassurance.”

Caritas East Anglia will be focussed specifically on those within the Diocese of East Anglia who are in need of help. Bishop Alan went on to say: “The Alive in Faith campaign has raised a significant sum of money which is already being applied to projects across the Diocese which seek to assist those who are undergoing severe hardship. The St Edmund's Fund also seeks to assist individuals who find themselves in a crisis or emergency situation.”

After the homily, members of the Commission, drawn from priests and laity within the diocese, were called up to the altar for a blessing of their work and a crystallisation of the preparatory work which has been going on for over a year.

Mass was followed by a lunch in the Narthex for representatives of every parish in the diocese along with clients of St Martins Housing Trust who have benefitted from the remarkable work that the charity does. One of their members remarked “This place is my safe haven”.

Caritas East Anglia is led by its development worker, Jacinta Goode, who will now be busy organising ‘festivals’ in Norwich, Newmarket and Peterborough. These festivals will bring an opportunity to make contact with individual parishioners around the diocese and encourage everyone to be involved.

Speaking on Radio Suffolk, Jacinta said: “Today is World Day of the Poor, which Pope Francis has designated as a special day for us to think about what we can do for the poor. Not just to pray for them but to do something for them. In Caritas East Anglia we are looking at where the Lord is working in our churches and our communities and discerning where the Holy Spirit may be leading us to share God's love with others through our actions and through prayer. Social outreach is already happening across the diocese and there are many people working with the poor, the homeless and the marginalised – working in night shelters, visiting those who are isolated, working with ex-offenders for example. We are looking at where that is already happening, bringing people together and highlighting where people might get involved and serve.”



### Postscript

I attended the Caritas East Anglia Launch, on behalf of our Parish. I was invited specifically because I represent the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) on the Caritas Commission. There are various other charities represented including the Catholic Women's League (CWL), the Foodbank, CAFOD, Justice and Peace, Emmaus and the Catenians. All these organisations support people locally and abroad in a spirit of friendship and humanity.

You can find out more on the Caritas East Anglia website: [www.rcdea.org.uk/caritas](http://www.rcdea.org.uk/caritas) or contact me via the office for a more personal view.

## Our Man in Europe

### Fr Bob Eccles

I have lived long in the flatlands now. It wasn't always like this. I really belong in the hills. My heart is in the Highlands. My old university mountaineering club will tell you. Latterly I'd walk the hills with Buchanan and after his fatal accident on Lochnagar, with Malcolm, the other Buchanan.

In those years I walked the hospital in the morning, the prison in the afternoon. Another 20 years and I'd have earned my slippers by the fire. Coming home one evening, Isidore said, "Malcolm's on the phone for you, take it in the kitchen." "*Ciamar a tha thu?*" I asked the other Buchanan cheerily. "What do you say to a day out on Ben Starav? Or would Cruachan suit you better? *Dè as fheàrr leat?*"

There was a pause and the voice said, "This is Malcolm. I'm in Edinburgh." (Just where he ought to be). "Shall we use the bothy and make for An Teallach?" There was some more of this conversation until it dawned on me that this just might not be the other Buchanan at all. "This is Malcolm", the voice said testily, "the Prior Provincial. I need to find someone to go to Europe. We have only three brothers who speak French and two of them have important jobs. Will you go and have a look and see what you think?"

Life was different, being our man in Europe. The Brussels priory was in the heart of the *quartier européen*, close to the Parliament and the Commission. It was the home of a think-tank or study centre on cultural, social and political issues concerning the Union. So we were to serve the nerve centre of the European project in all the ways we could, setting up or sharing in courses of talks, conferences, discussions, debates. There was a handsome church in need of restoring. We opened our library to the public. We put on concerts and exhibitions. We got to know politicians, diplomats and civil servants, lobbyists and journalists, and lots of children. We were an art historian, a poet, a political philosopher, an exegete, a prison chaplain, a TV producer, a musician or two, several linguists. We were Dutch and French and Walloon and Flemish and German and Italian and Polish and British and Portuguese. We provided an international Mass, chaplains to different language groups, we gave hospitality, we published books and articles, we broadcast, we shared our stuff with the Sisters and, being Dominicans, we talked.

Dominicans are at home in Europe. Our roots are in Spain and France and Italy, in Germany and the Low Countries. After the Reformation, English friars started again in Flanders. There's a scholarship waiting for us

still in Louvain. One of us was in Rome as Master of the Order. Like most of the other 1.2 million people born in the UK who live in the Union, ones who don't have a vote here, I benefited from freedom of movement, trouble-free residency, a plump social security cushion and a very adequate pension. The health service was brilliant; they literally crawl all over you looking for things to operate. My language skills were soon up to scratch and I was in demand for interpreting and translating. And, of course, the Belgian state gave me a job. Since Napoleon's concordat, the Ministry of Justice employs the pastors and chaplains.

So I retrained as a prison chaplain, in a new country, a different penal system, different rules. A fresh start aged 60. A new top security prison, state of the art, all steel and glass, doors opening at the touch of a button. In Britain where there's an official religion, the Church of England, chaplains are responsible to the governor. You are meant to follow him about. The Belgian chaplain is a free agent. The prison owes him nothing, he has to fight his corner, make friends and influence people if he can (not just he – the division by gender is about half and half). Prisoners see the chaplains as listening, caring people who stand up for their rights. We have to be forthright, honest and open. In the British system I'd learnt to care for everyone equally, staff as well as prisoners.

So it was freer really, no more ticking boxes. I was to select, train and deploy volunteer assistant chaplains, having them visit in cells. I worked from the same desk as the Imam, the evangelical pastor, the secular humanist visitor (curiously we had such a lot in common!) and these were often rewarding collaborations. We had visiting choirs to sing at Mass. We could be asked to accompany inmates on day release. I had a man on parole to me for six months, living in the priory with the agreement of the brothers. Did they like him? Yes. Did he go straight afterwards? No!

A prison chaplain is there to visit and to listen, perhaps with people no-one else wants to hear, to receive confidences as no-one else can. He or she is there for Christ, responsible to none but the Saviour who was taken for a sinner. He is not there to pass judgement or be shocked, or to find excuses: he is there as a sinful man among sinful men.

Every prisoner who asked for one had his Bible and prayer-book and a copy of Magnificat for those who would like one. We could help students, artists and musicians with materials. Men who had left the prison would keep in touch and we were able to help some of them resettle; friends of ours sometimes helped them out. A lawyer friend rang the United Nations in New York to speak to the woman who keeps the blacklist of

terrorists who are not allowed passports. It worked. Of course, there's lots more I could tell you, but there are many things a priest in a prison keeps to himself.

I'm glad I had the chance of being our man in Europe. I'm glad that the English Dominicans have been able to welcome so many men and women from abroad to study and to work with us for shorter and longer periods, without hindrance until now. Belgian, Dutch, Spanish, French, Irish, Italian, Croatian... And I'm glad my Province scatters its sons abroad. Just as the Queen likes to wear that startling blue hat with the golden spangles when she opens Parliament, and no doubt thinks no-one notices, I am fond of my European flag that greets me as I open my door at Blackfriars. It reminds me, if reminder were necessary, that though you may take the boy out of Europe, you cannot take Europe out of the boy.

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## What does it mean to be human? (Part 4)

**Dick Wilson** (with Sarah Sykes)

In a previous issue of Pilgrim, I looked at how some parts of living beings – called genes – replicate. Mostly they produce new genes exactly the same as the previous. But, in some cases, a very few become altered, or joined together, and have been passed on as bundles of atoms (molecules) made of the strings (helix) called DNA.

And here we come to the purpose of this article: if a change in a gene is passed on into a new DNA molecule then the new molecule will usually kill the new gene, but sometimes the new gene is instead passed on. This is what is called a 'mutation in the next generation'. The piling up of mutations culminates in particular creatures surviving many millions of years. I am thinking of beings like frogs, or, over a shorter period of time, even kinds of human like our own. The whole process is called evolution and has given us the living creatures of today.

Before we understood the science of gene mutation, people studied humans, as well as animals, since the time of the Greeks but knew little of how we became what we are today. They usually put it down to the gods, or God! One such person was the Rev'd William Paley (d.1805), who believed in creation but not in evolution. His theory of Natural Theology argued that intelligent design seen in nature proves the existence of an intelligent creator, and that creator is God. The argument is set out in the famous watchmaker's analogy which begins with him imagining himself

walking across a heath and stubbing his toe on a stone....

With Darwin it was the other way around. He believed in evolution and was agnostic on his views about the existence of an intelligent creator. His scientific observation of nature, seeing how species had developed and evolved, led him to infer that where one being is more efficient at survival than another in any way, the better being will survive. This idea is commonly known as the 'survival of the fittest'.

So, we have two men who, having studied and observed the natural world, have drawn completely different conclusions! Maybe we can conclude for ourselves that being human is a divine gift which can be appreciated both philosophically and scientifically?

Finally, as an aside, let me mention one or two things about Paley. For 20 years of his life he was Archdeacon of Carlisle and, I think, also vicar of Dalston, a smallish village near Carlisle. The picture below shows the heath in the area where he lived (of watchmaker analogy fame, perhaps!). It was given to me by the novelist and historian Margaret Forster, who cycled a lot round there. I could not help but wonder if this heath ever interested Paley in his walks. I myself, on a visit nearby, aged 9 or so, set out to cross such a heath and turned back overawed.



## The Trees of Life

Michael Allan

‘Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. *And God saw that it was good.*’ Genesis 1:11–12



Fig tree in fruit. Reproduced with permission.

Trees preceded us in Creation. They have been here some 370 million years. We, *Homo sapiens*, only appeared about 300,000 years ago. We are latecomers in their world. In a sense, the forests gave birth to us, feeding and sheltering our ancestors. They are where we came from. We owe them. They are essential for the future well-being of the earth.

### The Garden of Life

Life of every kind has been bursting forth in the western Amazon for possibly millions of years. Diversity of life there is greater than anywhere else on Earth. In one hectare there can be over 600 different species of trees, more than in all of North America. The same is true for insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, microbes, fungi, plants...an extraordinary, extravagant Garden of Eden.

The life Earth brings forth is still largely a mystery. Of an estimated nine million species of life on Earth about seven and a half million are still unknown, unidentified. We are in profound ignorance of the life we are destroying – and we are currently causing the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth. The indigenous peoples of the Amazon are not the ignorant savages. We are.

Those who have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years do so with respect. It is a sacred place. A divine

gift. To be cherished, protected. Where indigenous peoples live, biodiversity of species is higher. Their sense of the sacred Earth around them is the wisdom we have lost. When they and their lands have been invaded by ‘civilised’ people – oil companies, military, some missionaries – disaster usually follows.

### Trees Save Lives

We sometimes think Nature is only about competition – survival of the fittest – but that is untrue. There are complex networks of communication, dependence, and cooperation within a forest. That includes us. We have always depended on and cooperated with trees. They have fed and nourished us with, for example, hazelnuts, figs, and olives, amongst many other foods, and we have tended and planted them, and scattered their seed. Life feeds life.

Trees clean and cool our world: New York’s approximately five million trees, for example, yearly remove around 2,000 tons of air pollutants. Asthma rates in neighbourhoods with abundant trees are better than in more treeless ones; urban trees help cool the environment around them.

Forests and forest soils absorb and store carbon. (The excess release of carbon by human activity is the main cause of climate change/chaos.) A rainforest absorbs about a ton of carbon per hectare each year, adding up globally to around one billion tons.

### The Burning Garden

The Amazon is shrinking. 20% has been lost in the last 50 years, and this is accelerating – 3,769 sq. miles was cleared between August 2018 and July 2019 (Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research [INPE]). Scientists warn that it could go into a death spiral. Threats to it include agribusiness, oil extraction, and wildfires:

Large areas of the Amazon – and its abundant life – are being destroyed for the production of palm oil, soya, and beef (some supplying well-known fast food outlets). This is to profit the rich, not feed the poor – who remain poor and hungry, and who already suffer most from climate chaos and the destruction of the environment.

Tragically, rainforests in Ecuador, for instance, are not only extraordinarily rich in biodiversity, they also have large oil reserves underneath them. The Ecuadorian Government, due to international debt and acute levels of poverty, is under intense pressure to allow further oil extraction – with all the environmental and human degradation that entails.

Wildfires – destroying forests and releasing vast quantities of carbon – are increasing worldwide, due in part to climate chaos, with an increase in hot, dry conditions. Fires have also been started deliberately. More than 100,000 fires burned across the Amazon in 2019 (INPE), many set illegally by loggers and cattle ranchers. (Many Amazonian activists have been murdered by loggers and ranchers.)



Amazon fire, 2019

Copyright Greenpeace. Reproduced with permission.

## Coming Home

Our overconsumption of goods and food (especially meat), and overuse of fossil fuels, is driving this madness. Can we learn to live more simply, more sustainably? (If all the world were to live as we in the so-called ‘developed’ world do, we would probably need four more Earths.) We cannot wait for politicians or scientists to sort it out. We need to change.

Future generations depend on what we do now. Our deep-rooted secular myth of continuous material growth is literally consuming the planet – and the lives of the poor. We act like masters, little gods, towering high above nature, immune from consequences. It’s a fantasy. We need to get real. We are part of Nature, indeed we *are* Nature – it is our life, our home.

Hope is needed, not fear or apathy. That hope may be found in following the wisdom of the indigenous peoples: by relearning dependence and cooperation, by rejoining the community of life from which we are made, by falling in love with the sacred living world:

“We live in the world when we love it.” Rabindranath Tagore

“We must learn to love the mutilated world. We’re trying to swim in gasoline. It’s impossible, but we swim on.” Barry Lopez

“Rivers are alive and sing. This is our politics.” Amazonian Sarayaku activist

‘And in this He showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, “What may this be?” And it was answered generally thus, “It is all Creation.”’



From *Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich.

Creator  
of rocks and stars  
mountains and oceans  
trees and people  
open our eyes  
at last  
to sister earth  
– content to be  
the work of  
Your hands

## St Oscar Romero – Part Two

### Joe Tucker

Continued from *The Pilgrim* Advent Edition 2019

In response to Rutilio’s murder, Romero announced that the following Sunday there would be just one Mass in the archdiocese and that Catholic schools would close for three days beforehand, so that students could reflect about the situation in the country. The Papal Nuncio was fiercely opposed to these decisions but Romero reminded him that as archbishop, he had full authority to do this.

The single Mass – a supreme act of solidarity and defiance, was attended by every parish within the archdiocese, 136 of them. Romero appeared nervous at the start of his homily, but the crowd exploded into applause when he praised Fr Grande’s “maximum sacrifice” and proclaimed “he who touches any one of my priests will have to deal with me”.

He chose to live with the nuns who ran the Divine Providence Hospital, caring for patients with terminal cancer, where he slept in a corner of the Sacristy for a year (until the nuns insisted he move into a small house they had built).

For radio listeners, his Sunday homily and Wednesday interview programme were a weekly highlight and

inspired many people to visit his office, some to offer their services and others to disagree with everything he was doing. For poor people who felt forgotten, Romero's homilies were a reminder that a father figure was looking out for them.

He put a lot of trust in lay leaders, to the annoyance of conservative clergy who continued to oppose him, including four out of six bishops in El Salvador. His priorities were clear to all, as when he set up a Legal Aid project and invested in the archdiocesan radio station. *Campesino* letters flooded in, addressed to 'Monseñor Romero' and hand-delivered by parish priests. Replies were delivered by seminarians, which got them familiar with life in the remotest villages.

Government supporters distributed flyers outside churches with the stark message 'Be a patriot, Kill a priest' and a free weekly newspaper appeared, dedicated to disparaging Romero's sermons. Any priest brave enough to stand with the poor was accused of being a communist and (therefore) became a target for death squads.

After National Guardsmen desecrated a church, Romero led a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets, forcing his way past a cordon of soldiers. When a delegation of young people invited the Papal Nuncio to visit *campesino* villages, he retorted "the Church has no reason to be in those places".

Against the wishes of the Vatican, Romero was awarded an honorary doctorate by Georgetown University in Washington DC, which he dedicated to the Salvadoran people.

The election of Pope John Paul II led to staff changes at the Vatican and it quickly became clear that private letters to Rome (critical of US foreign policy) were being copied to the US embassy in El Salvador. At the 1978 Latin American bishops' conference in Puebla, Mexico, the official representative of the Salvadoran bishops blamed Romero for the conflict in his country, even saying that the disappeared were just people who were hiding so they could make the government look bad.

For his part, Romero openly supported the right of *campesinos* to organise, saying "social and political demands cannot be made by individuals". When a Basic Housing project (consisting of 530 families) invited him to their 10th anniversary celebration, he visited every house for a bite and a drink.

Once again, in January 1979, Romero lost a long-time friend to military thuggery, Fr Octavio Luna, the first priest he ordained after becoming a bishop. He then requested an audience with the Pope with the intention

of using photographs of this atrocity to illustrate the reality for priests in El Salvador. However, the Pope waved away this unwelcome information, repeatedly stating that Romero should "work for harmony with the Salvadoran government".

The collapse of the Somoza dynasty in July 1979 (in nearby Nicaragua) scared the Salvadoran government, who increased their violent repression before themselves being forced out by an Armed Services revolt. Romero initially supported the new regime (to the consternation of *campesino* leaders), believing that their promises of reform were genuine, but when the killings continued he withdrew his support and strongly criticized the junta, invoking the Magnificat as an example of God's promises for rich and poor.

Soon after, in his acceptance speech for another honorary doctorate (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium) he spoke about sin – "sin is what killed the Son of God and sin is still killing the children of God". He publicly asked the US president (Jimmy Carter) not to send military aid to the Salvadoran government. The government responded by destroying the archdiocesan radio station.

His advisors told him to start taking basic personal security measures, to no avail. All he would say is "when what I'm expecting happens, I want to be alone, so it's only me they get".

At the same time, the junta announced plans for an Agrarian Reform law and decreed a state of martial law throughout the entire country.

As soon as the radio station was working, Romero appealed directly to the killers "no soldier is obligated to obey an order that is against the law of God", to deafening applause from the Cathedral congregation. The following day, Monday before Palm Sunday, Romero was scheduled to celebrate a Mass for the Dead, despite several threatening phone calls. The Gospel reading was the parable of the grain of wheat falling to the ground and multiplying, then at the start of the Offertory prayers, a hidden sniper fired a single shot, killing Romero instantly.

The next day, 54,000 passed by his open coffin to say goodbye to their pastor and the Cathedral walls were covered with flyers saying 'Archbishop, talk to God for El Salvador'. On the day of his funeral, 30th March 1980, 250,000 people from all around the world jammed into Plaza Libertad and the nearby streets, carrying pictures, flowers and palms.

Mgr Romero was declared a martyr by Pope Francis in 2015 and canonised in 2018. Outside of Catholicism, his life and legacy are honoured by the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran liturgical calendar.

## Issues in Parish Reorganisation – or the Bishop as ‘the Vinedresser’ – Part Two

Fr Simon Blakesley

In the last edition of *The Pilgrim* (Advent 2019), we had part one of Fr Simon’s article on *Issues in Parish reorganisation*. If you’d like to remind yourselves of part one you can find it in the pdf copy of *The Pilgrim* Advent Edition 2019, pages 5–7, on the Parish website.



Many bishops will identify with being vinedressers, having to prune those parts of the vine that have become redundant, but where any prospect of the wielding of Episcopal secateurs is greeted with howls of panic and accusations of betrayal. While the closure of a Mass centre is not technically an alteration of a parish, i.e. if the parish boundaries do not change, this nevertheless is quite often the element of parish rationalisation that evokes the most upset. The problem is not so much the building (it may have been a Mass celebrated in the church of another denomination) but the perceived demise of an integrated ‘Mass Community’ and the forcible joining of such a group to another, even in the same parish, that crystallises the issues. These might be: how do the two choirs or music leaders get together? Will the other lay ministers get to read or minister the chalice as regularly?

The situation can almost be easier if the vitality of a given Mass Community is waning, i.e. it has become a struggle to maintain the lay ministry rotas, or there is no longer an organist or anyone to be a key-holder and open the place up and run the Sacristy. If, however, all these aspects are running like a well-oiled machine then the bishop (secateurs at the ready) will no doubt have got a very strong ‘hands-off’ message during the preliminary consultation process and the pertinent question may be which branch to lop off – the smaller yet vibrant side-shoot or the woodier, more established and yet possibly less prolific main stem?

In this situation, does the introduction of a numeric target for a ‘viable’ Mass Community help in the discernment process? It may well be necessary in encouraging realism in the debate, but it would be clumsy if it were used as a sole decisive criterion. One aspect that should be suggested is the ‘trial merger’ plan (although this already may happen during Holy

Week for the Triduum) as it has been the experience where two Sunday Masses have merged that after initial misgivings the people really appreciate the sense of worshipping in a church that is almost uncomfortably full. It is inevitable that there may have to be some adjustments, particularly when different styles of liturgical music (or none at all) have developed in a deliberately incompatible way. Those used to Mass in 35 minutes find anything over an hour intolerable as has been hinted at before. Unless there is a strong catechesis about the central reality of the Eucharist people will tend to be put off by what are truly superficial changes. We are, however, creatures of habit, and a greater tolerance of differing worship patterns needs to be fostered.

The process of change invariably affects the dedication (name) of the parish and the challenge to combine or abbreviate dedications in a way that keeps everyone happy. Well, almost everyone. Tradition expects the parish dedication to be that of the main parish church, and those of Mass centres to be entirely secondary. That there is some room for innovation here surely does not demean the established principle that a titular dedication once given to a church is fixed, but a parish which is effectively a grouping of churches might have an over-arching dedication that encompasses all those within it. For example, we have the recent merger of one parish dedicated to Our Blessed Lady and one dedicated to St Joseph and the suggestion was made that the new parish could be called ‘Holy Family’ so that neither took primacy on the headed notepaper.

Anticipating a shortage of ordained clergy, the model which might be applied is to have a ‘mega-parish’ or pastoral area for which a parish team is responsible. The advantages of this may be found in the possibility of employing administrative staff or specialised lay ministers (catechists or musicians) that individual Mass Communities would not have been able to afford or utilise fully by themselves. In fact, it might help to deconstruct the notion of money freely given to the church still being ‘our money’ by a small clique of parishioners. From a practical point of view it may not be feasible to have the priests in the team living in community, but it may reduce the isolation that some priests experience. It would also mean that priests who were near retirement age could adapt their schedules according to their energies and that a team of priests (with one supernumerary) could be ‘self-covering’ in terms of holidays, retreats and study leave.

In focusing on ‘Mass Communities’ as the base unit of pastoral organisation, the key is to encourage a strong sense of community at each viable Mass where the people themselves provide important strands of pastoral continuity. This may be an area where permanent deacons in their ministry of service can help to ‘keep all the flock in view’. It also helps to

avoid the development of groups that have semi-regular Liturgies of the Word and Holy Communion simply as a way of maintaining the existing ‘Mass-time structure’, which many now see as a blind alley in pastoral adaptation to a reduced number of priests. The undoubted success of the ‘house church’ movement among freelance evangelical churches which meet on Sundays in sports halls or community centres should alert us to the fact that the one ‘worshipping family’ that prays together, stays together. The Mass is the kernel of our identity as community. The only danger I can see, and it is a predictable one, is that our Mass Communities may begin to compete against each other if their viability seems threatened and this should be assiduously avoided (every Mass should be an ‘Alpha Mass’), and all should be encouraged to grow. When it becomes inevitable that two have to merge this should be seen as an opportunity for growth and enrichment.

Many Catholics, particularly in our cities have grown up with the convenience of having Mass ‘round the clock and round the corner...’ and we know that this reality is changing rapidly. Many parishes have been invited to ‘cluster’ precisely in anticipation of providing catechetical, administrative and social organisation on a more realistic scale. Where there have been joint meetings of parish pastoral councils the shape of future realities has surely been glimpsed. My one suggestion is that every parish should ensure that a representative from each current viable Mass should attend, with a clear sense of being the means of communication between the cluster and the community they are a regular part of. To suggest a maximum size for such an aggregate I would put it in the region of ten Mass Communities and this might need further adjustment downwards in rural areas.

Whenever any structure is made larger there is the anxiety that it then becomes more impersonal. If Mass Communities are truly centred Eucharistic groups then the larger grouping should feed off, express and strengthen the deepened personal involvement of *all* the members. If we can navigate well enough to avoid the negative dynamics of the ‘clique’ then the strength and dynamism of vibrant Mass Communities should be a positive way forward for the pastoral life of our Eucharistic communities.

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## Father Forgive

### Serga Collett

As I watch the antics of my seven week old pups born just before Christmas, I marvel at how their playful antics suddenly spill over into serious aggression, snarling and snapping and in many cases all ganging

together to attack the runt of the litter (not that there is anything wrong with him, he is just notably different because of his size). It reminds me of ‘Piggy’ in *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding) – if you have not read this tragic book, a very worthwhile read attempting to portray what happens when society breaks down.

So, when I hear about the aggression worldwide amongst human beings – having recently grappled with the violence that is everyday life in Colombia – I ask myself how we – the human race – differ from animals. Our aggression and testosterone-laden activities, that often cause harm to others, can be offset by only one thing, the ability to forgive and reconcile! And to pray!

It is with this in mind that I thought I would share the following prayer with you. It is the prayer from which, following the bombing of the medieval Coventry Cathedral in 1940, Provost Richard Howard had the words ‘Father Forgive’ inscribed on the wall behind the altar of the ruined building.

These words are used as the response in the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation, which is prayed in the new Cathedral every weekday at noon (in the Ruins on Fridays), and is used throughout the world by the Community of the Cross of Nails.

*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

*The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,*

**Father, forgive.**

*The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,*

**Father, forgive.**

*The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,*

**Father, forgive.**

*Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,*

**Father, forgive.**

*Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,*

**Father, forgive.**

*The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,*

**Father, forgive.**

*The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,*

**Father, forgive.**

*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

I feel this prayer is as relevant today as it was over 70 years ago, which begs the question, have we learned anything? Therefore, I ask you today to pray for the world, for wisdom, for peace, for forgiveness and reconciliation. The world sure needs it!

## Cardinal Points – Trust and Truth

### Ronald Haynes

“‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer.’ Francis Bacon incisively rendered this most infamous of conflicts, taken from the Gospel of John (John 18:38). We have often heard Jesus’ challenging clarification, earlier in the same Gospel (John 8:31:32): ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples’ which is directly coupled with a vital promise: ‘and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ There is something both personal and communal in this understanding, as disciples are transformed individually, they also are called to minister to others, and told that the greatest commandments are all about Love. Truth, instead of simply being seen as ‘relative’, in this context is offered more as relational – amongst the community of friends, along with all neighbours everywhere, and a relationship which Jesus says is with the living, loving, Divine Person (God).

Community matters here, as does the company we keep – which may help us to be more or less communal – and which help mutually support or shape our key beliefs, which largely guide our lives. Regrettably, at times we seem too easily drawn to and distracted by a group’s confusion, and too often subject to deception (including the too-common temptation for self-deception).

*The Washington Post*, whose keen motto is ‘Democracy Dies in Darkness’, started a Fact Checker database at the start of the Trump presidency, and regularly awards one or more Pinocchio heads to indicate how extreme a lie or misleading claim is found to be. To be fair, they record false or misleading claims from other public figures, including those found in the Democratic Party presidential primaries. Their recent report had the title ‘One president, three years, 16,241 wrong claims’, to mark the fact that Trump had completed three years in office on 20th January 2020. Averaging 15 erroneous claims per day, over those three years, one TV commentator rightly called it an astronomical number, with a record of nearly 7,000 more entries in their database than there are visible stars in the night sky!

In a 2017 *National Geographic* article on *Why We Lie: The Science Behind Our Deceptive Ways*, the author Yudhijit Bhattacharjee shares some ideas about what tempts us away from the truth: ‘That human beings should universally possess a talent for deceiving one another shouldn’t surprise us. Researchers speculate that lying as a behaviour arose not long after the emergence of language. ... “Lying is so easy compared to other ways of gaining power,” notes Sissela Bok, an ethicist at Harvard University ... “It’s much easier to

lie in order to get somebody’s money or wealth than to hit them over the head or rob a bank.”

Yet, the article also notes that: “‘The truth comes naturally,” says psychologist Bruno Verschuere, “but lying takes effort and a sharp, flexible mind.”” This is reminiscent of the famous verse from Walter Scott ‘O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!’ Mark Twain makes a related, humorous point: ‘If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.’ Scott rightly suggests that lying takes practice, in fact that we learn to lie – and must ask, why do we learn this and who are our teachers. In the *Why We Lie: The Science Behind Our Deceptive Ways* article, Bhattacharjee also reports that: ‘Lying is a part of the developmental process, like walking and talking. Children learn to lie between ages two and five, and lie the most when they are testing their independence.’ That said, why we learn to lie might have something to do with different types of lies, which would seem to have different purposes. In an episode of the 1950s *Sherlock Holmes* TV series the actor Ronald Howard playing Holmes memorably declares that: “Human beings lie to gain, to cover, or to protect.”

In an article on *How Misinformation Spreads – and Why We Trust It*, in *Scientific American* last year, the authors Cailin O’Connor and James Owen Weatherall point out that ‘We develop most of our beliefs from the testimony of trusted others such as our teachers, parents and friends.’ This is natural, and understandable, and vital to our wider interactions, since: ‘This social transmission of knowledge is at the heart of culture and science. But... our ability has a gaping vulnerability: sometimes the ideas we spread are wrong.’ The effects of misleading or false claims have accelerated by their extensive circulation which has accompanied the rise of public communication. O’Connor and Weatherall continue to say that: ‘Misinformation shared on social media websites has fueled an epidemic of false belief, with widespread misconceptions concerning topics ranging from the prevalence of voter fraud... to whether vaccines are safe... [which] have now intensified – and, in some cases, led to a profound public mistrust of basic societal institutions. One consequence is the largest measles outbreak in a generation.’

The article adds a key insight into how we unwittingly can make these matters worse: ‘part of what makes propaganda and disinformation so effective in an age of social media is the fact that people who are exposed to it share it widely among friends and peers who trust them, with no intention of misleading anyone. Social media transforms disinformation into misinformation.’ This brings to mind another related and prescient quote from Mark Twain: “Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.” The traditional hypochondriac has even had an updated term to reflect

the extensive use of health references online, and so some now refer to those who inordinately worry about illnesses found via online health references as ‘cyberchondriacs’. What has emerged even more over the years is that while we have learned so much about ourselves and the world and our health, there still is so much more we do not know, and with that we rely on certain beliefs to help us navigate through the unknown territories – and we tell many tales, and perpetuate many myths.

While previously derided, it is vital to note that the placebo effect is being taken much more seriously – along with its negative counterpart the nocebo effect, where a patient’s negative expectations result in some negative effects with a treatment – because it effectively demonstrates the wondrous ability for our beliefs to powerfully participate in the outcome of our illnesses (and overall health), and indicates that (at least to some extent) we can be part of either healing or hurting ourselves based on our outlook and frame of mind.

Returning to the idea that truth is relational, as well as connected with an interactive and engaging community, there is something about truth – certainly as described by Jesus – which calls us to action. The Franciscan Richard Rohr, who writes and speaks on spirituality and contemplative practice, develops some of this in his booklet *What Do We Do with the Bible?* If we read the Bible, or any spiritual text, as if it were plainly presented, perhaps as literal or dry facts, or as chronological reporting – well, we have missed the point, its purpose, and our promise. Rohr makes this personal: ‘That something supposedly happened in one exact way, in one moment of time, does not, of itself, transfer the experience to *now, me, or us.*’ He goes on to say that ‘such transformation is precisely the function of any spiritual text – or it is not a spiritual text or, at least, a spiritually broadening text.’

Most people have a problem with the Bible and spiritual texts when they treat it as a different and more restricted type of communication, especially as a straightforward history, or science, or legal directive. ‘Such a narrow approach largely creates an antiquarian society’ says Rohr, and follows on to suggest that: ‘It idealizes individual conformity and group belonging over love, service, or actual change of heart.’ Instead of a text that is to be taken literally (curiously, there is no injunction or indication in the Bible to do so!), Rohr reminds us that ‘The Gospel says, ‘He would never speak to them except in parables’... and to expand on, he points out that: ‘Almost all of Jesus’ parables begin with the exact same phrase: ‘The Reign of God *is like...*’ Jesus fully knows he is speaking in metaphor, simile, story, and symbol. We do not grant him that freedom in recent centuries and thus we miss or avoid

many of his major messages. We are much the poorer for it.’

What we need, says Rohr, is ‘the ability to teach deep truth in a spiritual way – which must maintain *its inherent mysteriousness and evocative nature.*’ How would we do so? Rohr turns to St Paul for some helpful guidance, which perhaps could apply to how we read anything, not just spiritual texts – he invites us to ‘Read the Apostle Paul’s *Sermo Sapientia*, or sermon on wisdom, in 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16, where he says the believers have an alternative way of knowing that prayerfully *contemplates a text* instead of using it as... ammunition to protect our opinions or attack others.’

Will this approach rid us of lies, deceit and misunderstanding? We might consider what would happen if we started experimenting with and spreading such an approach to truth amongst the community, and start taking time to help discover, share and live the truth, thus engendering more trust and confidence in each other. On a similar note, Rohr ends his booklet: ‘Only love can be entrusted with the Truth.’

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## Cross+Talk – a bit of Philosophy in the Pub!

### Ronald Haynes

Cross+Talk is an open, lay-lead group that tackles topics of mutual interest, held in a friendly and convivial atmosphere, connected with Cambridge Catholic parishes (OLEM, St. Laurence, St. Philip Howard) but welcoming people of any faith or none. It is for anyone interested in an informal yet sincere exchange of views on a variety of vexed questions ... matters of faith and morals, and the great range of issues that present themselves to us in the Scriptures, in Society and in our Selves.

There is something to interest everyone, so if you or someone you know would like to join us sometime, do come along when you can. Meetings are most **Thursdays from 7.30pm** in The Carlton Arms. The pub has good food, is easy for travel, parking and conversation. It is a divided pub, and we meet on the left-hand/restaurant side (entering via the fenced off beer garden area in the front).

Occasionally there will be a pause for holiday, Holy Day or other special liturgy on a Thursday, so please check [thesecretnote.com/crosstalk](http://thesecretnote.com/crosstalk) for updates, or for further information contact Ronald Haynes on Tel.: 07954 436393, or e-mail [RonaldHaynes@yahoo.com](mailto:RonaldHaynes@yahoo.com). Hope you can join us soon!

## Youth & School

### Youth Round-up

#### Helena Judd

##### **Ablaze Mass:**

A healthy Parish is one in which the congregation can share a smile with each other due to the familiarity established whilst working on a common project. With this idea in mind, St Laurence's has linked directly the Confirmation classes to the monthly Ablaze Mass providing opportunities for the Confirmation candidates to experience the range of 'positions' involved in Mass. Lectors, musicians, singers and hospitality are all positions that are often overlooked by the youth of the congregation. The candidates this year have enjoyed the responsibility of taking on those roles. They've also enjoyed building relationships with the adults that help prepare the Mass. The congregation enjoys the lively skits that the youth bravely perform as well as the bidding prayers written by the candidates.



The Ablaze band members, Charles and Joe, have also enjoyed the new addition of Angela on guitar. Sharing their love for the music ministry, Charles and Joe are passing on their gifts by supporting Angela as she builds her confidence performing at Mass.

The Ablaze Mass team is always open and welcoming to new musicians, shy lectors or anyone that would like to try bringing their talent to Mass. Please contact [gailosman@aol.com](mailto:gailosman@aol.com) to learn more.

##### **Living Faith Kids:**

The new Junior Youth Group for St Laurence's has had four sessions and the children are loving it. Connecting with other children that share their faith has been the main focus of the group. They've explored creating a prayer with dance, acting out the parable of the Prodigal Son and creating their own version of the nativity story. Not only are the kids having fun, the parents have enjoyed the children's excitement at seeing their new friends at Mass and in Children's Liturgy.



The group is open to children 8 – 12 years old. Children receiving First Communion this year are very welcome to join as well. The group meets once a month on a Friday from 6 – 7:30pm. The next meeting is on 13th March. If you would like to help or would like more information, please email [Helena@plai-theatre.org](mailto:Helena@plai-theatre.org).

##### **GIFT:**

Growing in Faith Together is the Youth Group for St Laurence's Parish. We meet monthly on a Friday from 6:30 – 8:30pm. The next meeting is a special Youth Stations of the Cross on 20th March from 6 – 8pm. The group has enjoyed spending some social time together. They created Christmas cards for SVP to distribute, as well as their own shirts to wear at the upcoming Ignite Festival. The group also helped prepare the Christmas drama for the Family Christmas Eve Mass.



## Mini Vinnies

### Rachel Chalklin and Felicity Tanvir: Mini Vinnies School Coordinators



**KS1 2019 Nativity Play “Lights, Camel, Action. It’s strictly the Nativity!”**

Each week the Mini Vinnies renew their pledge not only to support others by fundraising but also through charitable works. Over the past year the Mini Vinnies group have made regular trips to a local residential home for the elderly and have invited the parishioners of St Laurence’s to enjoy the KS1 Nativity play followed by afternoon tea.

The Mini Vinnies group at our Parish school has continued to grow over the past four years. This year so many of our Year 3 and 4 children wanted to join Mini Vinnies that Miss Tanvir, who teaches Skylarks Class in KS1, has kindly agreed to join me in coordinating the group. Extremely enthusiastic children meet each Friday lunchtime. They set up their own meeting room with a focus on a small prayer table. Sessions begin with a moment of prayer, the group pledge and a reflection on the importance of the Gospel. This is an invaluable moment as all the children at school take home the primary school version of The Wednesday Word the previous day, giving families an opportunity to share the forthcoming Sunday Gospel at home, focusing on the most significant word in the reading. The Mini Vinnies use the Wednesday Word to consider how they can put their thoughts into action.

Our Parish school set up the first primary-aged Junior Vincentian group in our Diocese. ‘Mini Vinnies’ are children aged from 7 to 11 (or younger) who, with the permission of their parents and the support of the school, are encouraged to embark on their first steps as possible ‘Vincentians for life’. As Mini Vinnies, the youngsters have their own ‘treasured’ Prayer, pledge and badge, a dedicated website and a range of bright and colourful documents which guide them in their formative steps – helping and enabling them to become in every sense, young Vincentians – or ‘Mini Vinnies’.



Over the past few months the Mini Vinnies have been very busy raising money. In November they raised over £100 selling hot chocolates after school to support Children in Need. In December the children ran a Winter Shop and sold a range of Christmas-themed items. The children worked extremely hard making and preparing items to sell both at lunchtimes and after school over several weeks in December. As well as helping others, the Winter Shop had the additional benefit of helping the children to understand basic trading; applying their maths knowledge in a social context.



The money raised was used to purchase 50 Vinnie packs. Each pack contains cold weather essentials including a hat, gloves and socks which are all thermal, an emergency foil blanket, toothpaste, toothbrush, pen and information card.



Thank you to Barbara Quail, Petra and Joe Tucker for arranging the distribution.



As we move towards Easter the children are busy organising more events to support those in need. Our next event is our Shrove Tuesday pancake races. Last year we were blessed with some early spring sunshine and the whole school, including the staff, participated in the pancake races. The children are asked to pay a small fee to enter; the money raised this year will be used to help support the annual HCPT children’s pilgrimage to Lourdes, which several children, staff and past pupils are attending this Easter.



It is great fun to work with such an enthusiastic and caring group of children. Well done St Laurence Mini Vinnies!

## The season of Lent at St Laurence School

Veronica Harvey



As we approach half-term, the school looks ahead to begin the preparations for the season of Lent. We will be celebrating Ash Wednesday Mass during our first week back and have invited a member of the CAFOD team to host our Family Fast Day assembly on the 6th March. The school will invite parents to take part in the child-led collective worship –‘Stay and Pray’ – and there will be a whole school reconciliation service. This will be the first school led reconciliation our First Communion children will take part in.

We will have our annual almsgiving with the Lenten Fundraising morning and later in March the school will join in with the Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary. In our final week of term we will look together as a school to Holy Week, as we present our Liturgy for Maundy Thursday and our poignant Passion Play. Lent is a time we hold with reverence at the school, made all the more special by sharing Christ’s journey with the children.

*Set Your Faith Alight*



**A DYNAMIC DAY OF  
FAITH FOR TEENS**

**15 MARCH 2020**

**9:30 AM - 5 PM  
INCLUDES 9:30 AM PARISH MASS**

**ST. LAURENCE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**ARBURY ROAD,  
CAMBRIDGE, CB4 2JX**

**REGISTER AT:  
[WWW.RCDEA.ORG.UK/YOUTH/EVENTS](http://WWW.RCDEA.ORG.UK/YOUTH/EVENTS)**



Join the Ignite Team for **dynamic talks, music and workshops** for those **aged 12-18** to be held at St Laurence's Primary School, Arbury Road, Cambridge. The day starts with **9.30am Parish Mass** and concludes at **5pm**. For more info email Ciaran: [igniteteam@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:igniteteam@rcdea.org.uk)

## ABLAZE Mass



Sunday **5<sup>th</sup>** April & **3<sup>rd</sup>** May, **5pm**

@ St Laurence's Church, Milton Road.

A joyful, lively and upbeat Worship

For Youth and the Young at Heart

With treats to share afterwards

## Parish Organisations and Activities

### St Laurence's SVP Conference: summary for the year October 2018–September 2019

#### Christine Knight

This report is to help you understand some of the work that your St Vincent de Paul (SVP) group (conference) has undertaken in the twelve months from October 2018 to September 2019.

#### Fundraising up to 30/9/2019

During the year St Laurence's SVP conference received £9,900 of income from donations, fund raising and grants, as follows:

- £2,600 was received from the Parish for the Sudan and South Sudan appeals to be passed directly on to those appeals (more has since been received, thank you – see total below).
- £1,000 came from the Alive in Faith fund at St Laurence's to be spent directly on families and others in need locally within Cambridge.
- £1,600 has been received as grants relating to work our group has been doing with Cambridgeshire County Council to reach out to those in need identified by their services. It is focused on 2 projects that the SVP is administering for the Council to the benefit of Traveller education.
- £900 has been donated from SVP members, who have also contributed generously with their time throughout the year.
- £2,700 has been donated from other individuals, mainly parishioners, directly to our SVP conference to help with our work.
- £1,100 has been donated from other grants or donations, some of this for specific purposes and some to be spent more generally.

#### *Activities and expenditure beyond Cambridge*

The second collections for Sudan and South Sudan appeals finished in 2019 – from these and all the fundraising events, a total of £5,154 has been raised in 2019, for which we are very grateful. The SVP's work in Khartoum and Juba continues and we will continue to support them with prayers and fundraising in 2020.

In addition to the Sudan/South Sudan appeals, our conference has a longstanding commitment to help three overseas Indian SVP groups: two in Kerala and one in Orissa. We pay over a total of £450 each year to help these SVP conferences who undertake similar works to UK conferences in helping those in need locally.

The Parish conference has donated £250 to the SVP's new house in Sheringham, North Norfolk, an exciting new project for the SVP in England and Wales to help people who are temporarily homeless: Bishop Alan was accompanied by the Papal Nuncio earlier this year to bless the house and the work to be undertaken by the local SVP conference there. Finally, £500 was transferred to the National SVP to assist in the general running of our Society and supporting other conferences or projects around the country.

#### *Local activities and expenditure*

Over the year our conference visited over 120 different individuals/couples/families, making over 850 visits (estimated at about 1,300 hours of volunteer time). About half of the people we assist tell us they are Catholics. Most visits are to elderly people but we have also visited and helped people with mental health issues, ex-offenders, individuals who are homeless, and families, including Traveller families and asylum seekers.

The majority of the money raised locally by the SVP in St Laurence's is spent locally on families or others in need, amounting £6,400 during this period. The financial help we provided included:

- Help with heating and other utility costs.
- Assistance with transport costs including helping some parishioners to Mass, taking sick parishioners to Walsingham and buying some second-hand bicycles for one family.
- Groceries and white goods for families with benefit problems or homelessness.
- Support to families with new babies, where not covered by donations of nappies, milk etc.
- We have been working closely with Cambridgeshire County Council, and specifically their Gypsy/Traveller team, to assist Travellers struggling with a variety of issues including benefit issues, ill-health related problems and poor literacy. We have been able to help recently with an education-related project aimed at adult literacy and by assisting Traveller children to access local schools. Education remains a barrier to improved welfare for many poor families, so we are pleased to be able to volunteer alongside the professionals, offering support to the individuals.
- Over Christmas parishioners generously donate gifts to the Giving Tree. In December 2018 the SVP distributed 10 hampers as well as 39 gifts to children and 47 to the other charities. In addition to the donated gifts, the SVP gave grocery vouchers totalling £280 to the families, to help them celebrate on Christmas Day.

In the forthcoming year we expect to continue our activities largely as this year. We are blessed with several new members who will help us continue and grow this volunteering with visits and the offer of practical support when needed. We will continue our outreach work with the Travelling community, supporting the County Council, and we will continue to help those within our parish and local area. Much of this work is undertaken following referrals from parishioners. If you are aware of anyone who needs help – financial or a friendly face – please do contact one of the SVP members. There are members at each of the four weekend Masses or you can contact them via the priests or the office.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our local SVP conference. Without your prayers and support (financial or donated items) we would not be able to help as many people as we do.

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## Lunch Club

### Anne Maddocks

Our Club has been established successfully for several years. In the early years we met at OLEM's hall for lunch prepared by Ann Joyce and her team of helpers, myself included. Then it became too big to cope with, so research was necessary to find another venue. Bernard Townshend was running the Club at the time and we met at the old site of Cambridge Regional College, Newmarket Road. Now we meet at the Regional College, King's Hedges Road.

We meet every month from October – June at 12 noon for 12.30pm, usually on the first Thursday of the month. The cost is £10 for a two-course meal followed by tea or coffee. We also go to other eating places from July– September while the College closes for the summer break. We also have a raffle to raise funds to invite guests to come free, like our priests etc.

I'd like to take this opportunity to invite anyone to join us. You have to book with me, Anne Maddocks (01223 351499), or Joél Fernandes (07805 402 869) a few days before. One of us will usually telephone you. Also, there will be a notice in the Parish bulletin. We look forward to welcoming new members so do come along and give it a try. You don't have to come every month and I will try to arrange transport. For more information don't hesitate to telephone me or Joél.

## Hands on Colombia

### Serga Collett



CAFOD's 'Hands on Colombia' project has been adopted by St Laurence's Church for the coming year. Second collections will take place four times this year and all money collected will go to the project. So, **why** did we choose this project and what is CAFOD actually doing with the money we raise?

- There is vast **inequality** in Colombia. According to the World Bank, Colombia's top 10% earners received 40% of the wealth that was generated in 2017. After Brazil, it is the second most unequal country in Latin America.
- Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced people, according to the United Nations (2017). Syria, the second country on the list, has an internally displaced population of 6.2 million.
- Colombia has a long history of drugs, crime and violence. The conflict was deepened by the use of drug trafficking as a means of financing the conflict.
- The lucrative nature of illegal gold mining has led to **increased violence** as different groups try to control land.
- Add to that Colombia's **internal conflict** which has lasted for more than 50 years, with its root causes linked to inequality and a desire to redistribute land. Left wing guerrilla groups claim to fight for the rights of the poor while the Colombian government claims to fight for order and stability and the paramilitary groups claim to react to perceived threats by left-wing guerrilla groups.

All armed groups in Colombia's conflict have committed human rights abuses and the consequences of conflict and violence have meant that:

- More than 280,000 people have been killed.
- Over 60,000 have been forcibly 'disappeared'.
- A large percentage of the population in Colombia has been directly affected by the armed conflict, due to forced displacement, enforced disappearances, killings, sexual assault, threats, etc. Last year, someone was forced to flee their home every 4 minutes.
- 2.3 million children have been displaced from their homes, and 45,000 children killed.
- Although killings have fallen since the signing of the peace deal in 2016, this is not the case for human rights defenders.

The area our project will concentrate on is called **Magdalena Medio**. It is an area plagued by conflict and many people there have lived through violence directly. Because of its location and abundance of oil and natural resources such as gold and emeralds, Magdalena Medio has been subjected to illegal armed groups for decades and to the particular risk these groups pose to teenagers and young people. Many people in Magdalena Medio will have experienced:

- loved ones being killed
- violence, including sexual violence
- fear and repression
- forced recruitment of someone in their family.

Now we know all the **bad news**, what about the **good news...** what is CAFOD actually going to do?

**CAFOD's Aim** is to contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation at an individual and collective level in nine municipalities in the Magdalena Medio region affected by the armed conflict.

The project seeks changes in behaviours and attitudes and to transform communities by prioritising young people and women, the two groups most at risk of violence. In the project's own words it will aim 'to empower women and the young to fight for peace not with weapons but by shooting knowledge and training and learning!'

"If we can ingrain these values into the minds of our students while they are still young, if we do our bit as a school and the family do their bit too, then our young people will become part of a society that will try to transform our country."

Eligio Gomez Peinado, Head teacher.

It may sound like just a **drop of water** in the ocean, but changing an individual's life and behaviour can ripple outwards to affect the lives of those around them and transform whole communities.



We made a wonderful start at St Laurence's on Saturday 25th January with our '**Hands on Colombia**' launch. It was a

very jolly social occasion attended by about 35 of our parishioners and our own Father Simon, Father Bob and it was lovely to see Father Joe too. Petra cooked a fabulous meal of black bean stew and a delicious Colombian cake (full of rum, yum, yum). Thank you to Jess Michelmore who gave an interesting presentation and Jane Crone, the local area coordinator, for being present. Although it was

essentially an informative occasion, we even managed to raise £98.87. Many, many thanks to all those who worked so hard to make this event a success.

Please be 'a drop in the ocean' – let's make a difference to these people who have suffered so much!



## Catholic Women's League

### Janet Scally

We have continued providing lunches on the second Friday of every month and weekly in Advent and Lent. There is a list of our activities on the right-hand noticeboard, just inside the porch door of the church. All are very welcome to come along, both to our lunches and to our meetings or talks.

Since I last wrote for the Pilgrim, we have sent donations to EACH, the East Anglia Children's Hospice and, one of our favourites, the Diocesan Children's summer camps. The camps offer children a week's prayerful and exciting holiday. They used to be hosted by Catholic Women's League members and their families and now continue under the auspices of the Diocese.

In October of last year, some of us went to the Annual General Meeting of the League, which is now held in the Hayes Religious Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. It is a beautiful setting with a lake, where cows and sheep graze in the countryside. Unfortunately, this year, it rained almost non-stop while we were there and on both journeys. The A14 was a pain as well, but the weekend was interesting and spiritually uplifting: it was enjoyable enough for us all to say that we'll go again next October!

### Gift Aid benefits our Parish

This scheme allows parishioners who are taxpayers to increase their donations without further cost to themselves. We can reclaim a further 25 pence for every £1 you donate under Gift Aid.

Want to know more?  
Contact the Parish Office or Jim Scally (e-mail: [jj.scally@ntlworld.com](mailto:jj.scally@ntlworld.com))

## Summary of Minutes of Parishioners' Open Meeting

28 January 2020

Chair: Stephen Warde

Minutes: Sarah Sykes

In attendance: Fr Simon, and 32 parishioners

### Sanctuary plans

The plans for the re-ordering of the Sanctuary have been on display for a couple of weeks in the Parish Room. Fr Simon opened the discussion by informing the Meeting that plans and costings had been sent to the Diocese for approval and he would present these at the April meeting with a view to beginning the work this summer

**The discussions, questions and answers on this point on the agenda were quite lengthy and Fr Simon requested the plans should be published in this edition of Pilgrim. Therefore, the plans and the discussions etc can be seen on pages 2 to 4.**

An extra Planning Meeting will take place, but for those unable to attend but who wish to comment there will be a Comment Sheet available in the porch.

### Parking Scheme – 6-month review

Fr Simon reported that as Saturday evening is not included in the Sunday exclusion, making sure that visitors and non-regular attenders of 6pm Vigil Mass have registered their cars has been a challenge. We are asking the provider whether it is possible to exclude Saturdays from the scheme. [Since the Minutes became public, Fr Simon has agreed with the company that the cameras will not be recording from 5.30pm on Saturday evenings].

Feedback received in advance from a parishioner unable to attend was read out by Nora Darby: lack of consultation with the Parish was disappointing, signs are unwelcoming and bewildering for visitors. What kind of message does this send to the local community? Are we making money from the scheme? The parishioner would like the scheme to end, but appreciates the annoyance of not being able to access parking especially for funeral services.

Further comments from the floor were of a consensus that the car parking scheme was necessary, simple and appropriate.

Fr Simon stressed that the Parish makes no money from the scheme.

Overall the Meeting felt that the benefits of being able to use the car park to attend Mass and other church business without fear of being unable to park or being

blocked in outweighed any negatives. Meeting attendees were asked to spread the word that anyone who had received a charge while correctly using the car park should contact Fr Simon.

Also mentioned – some of the bike racks have been attached to the wall of the church: the bikes cannot be made to stand upright against the rack. They tend to fall over because there is not enough rack protruding against which to rest the handlebars and the crossbar/frame. Other cyclists at the Meeting agreed with this. Fr Simon explained that this had been done because bases had been torn out and bikes stolen. He would consider concreting them into the ground if there was a strong opinion that this should be done.

### Catechesis and Youth Activities

Veronica Harvey (joint head of St Laurence's Primary School) introduced herself to the meeting. She has taught at St Laurence's for 18 years and wants to forge closer links between the church and school and plans to attend more Parishioners' Open Meetings.

Helena Judd informed the meeting that the Diocesan Youth Team (Ignite) will be leading a retreat for teenagers (Glow Retreat) in the Parish on 15th March. It will be held at the school starting with Mass at 9.30am. She also said that there are plans for youth groups at St Laurence's to connect with those at St Andrew's Church Chesterton in the new school year. The children who are preparing for First Holy Communion will be making their First Reconciliation and praying the Stations of the Cross in March. Fr Simon thanked Helena for all her hard work with the young people of the Parish and said how much he appreciated her skills and energy.

Leonie Isaacson spoke about Children's Liturgy. The group have recently put together new guidance for new and current volunteers. She said that due to safeguarding requirements and practicalities was imperative to have more than one adult in each session. Jeannette Milbourn added that children attending the Children's Liturgy for the younger children during Mass must be accompanied by an adult or sibling over 12yrs. Fr Simon said he would arrange for this message to be brought to the attention of the Parish once again via announcements at Mass, in the newsletter, in Pilgrim magazine and on the Parish website. He also added that additional CCTV cameras and signage are due to be installed around the corridor area accessing the toilets.

### Liturgy

Lent and Easter – Fr Simon announced that house Masses could be booked on either Tuesday or Thursday evenings during Lent. Easter Vigil Mass would start at 9pm.

GianLuca Savini said that a Pilgrimage Stations of the Cross would take place, probably on 27th March, with others from the Cambridge Catholic community joining us at St Laurence's.

Helena Judd asked whether an international Mass followed by a picnic could be held on Pentecost (31st May). She and the youth would help to run and organise it but she would appreciate help from other parishioners. The Meeting agreed this suggestion.

### **Finance and Parish Management**

Joint Treasurer, James Dore, sent in a short report which the Chair read in his absence. Provisional figures for 2019 showed that receipts exceeded payments by £8–9,000. The final figures will be available next month once we have information from the Diocese. The roofing work will come to a total of £55,000 once final bills are paid. The cost will be covered by accumulated funds built up over the years and supplemented recently with Alive in Faith donations, which together stood at over £200,000 at the start of 2019. We therefore have £145,000 in reserve. The Parish Finance Committee has approved a budget for this calendar year, which anticipates a small loss on day to day activities of a few thousand pounds. One of the main reasons for this is the expected increase in maintenance for the church and presbytery resulting from the work that needs to be done as advised by the quinquennial survey of the church. The estimated cost of the proposed changes to the Sanctuary have also been considered by the Finance Committee and it was felt that these were affordable given the high level of reserves still available to the Parish.

### **Building and grounds**

Roof: The tile replacement on the roof of the main body of the church has been completed and there are no longer any leaks.

Extension of CCTV: (see Catechesis and Youth Activities)

Electrical distribution: some electrical wiring is currently being updated.

Garden Clean up: The next date for gardening work by the parishioners is taking place on 17th May 3–5pm.

### **Updates from Parish Groups**

Serga Collett, CAFOD rep was unable to attend but had sent a short report read by Sarah Sykes. In October the contactless donation machine was trialled and worked perfectly. There is an evaluation taking place as to its national success and we will be informed in the future, so for the forthcoming Lent appeal cash or cheques only can be received. The total raised for the Harvest appeal was just over £1300. The Unwanted Xmas gift sale held over two weekends early in January raised £502 in total. This is shared with SVP,

therefore £251 will be sent to CAFOD. There will be a Lent preparation meeting taking place on Sunday 16th February at 3pm for volunteers from across the Diocese at St Laurence's – all are welcome to attend who would like to help with the Lent appeal. Family Fast day is on 6th March. Pre-appeal announcements will take place on the weekend before (29th Feb/1st March) and the collection at all Masses on the weekend of 7th/8th March.

Last Saturday saw the launch of our 'Hands on Colombia' project. This was an information evening with a speaker who told us about the problems Colombia faces. This was followed by a Colombian meal beautifully cooked by Petra Tucker. The evening was well attended and a lovely social occasion. We also managed to raise £98.87 for CAFOD funds. Finally, Serga asked whether the Parish would support a 'Live Simply' week in the summer. The Meeting was happy to agree in principle would like to have more details given at the next meeting.

Frances Stafford also reported that the art sale she had organised last year had raised £140 for CAFOD.

### **AOB**

Deacon Geoff spoke about ecumenism and mentioned that the week of prayer for Christian Unity had recently ended marked with a prayer in the Parish's bidding prayers. He was pleased to hear of the work planned with St Andrew's youth, but felt that the North Cambridge Council of Churches was pretty much in hibernation. In order to perhaps galvanise it back to life he asked that we organise an informal social at St Laurence's inviting all ministers from the NCCC. Other parishioners at the meeting also mentioned that although there wasn't much shared worship there was a lot of shared action with projects such as the Foodbank and the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project.

Thanks were expressed for Fr Johane's work at the Parish while on sabbatical. He will be leaving us on 5th February and returning to Zimbabwe. Fr Simon concelebrated with him on Sunday 2nd February at 11am Mass with drinks and nibbles to follow. A leaving collection for him was organised.

Fr Joe Inguanez: Fr Simon introduced Fr Joe from Malta who is staying with us for a few months while studying and who will be helping Fr Simon out with celebrating Mass.

### **Dates for next Meetings (all start at 8pm)**

**Thursday 23rd April**

**Tuesday 7th July**

**Thursday 8th October**

## Personal Stories and Experiences

### Our visit to the Cambridge Central Mosque

Chris Avery



Twenty-five of us met outside Cambridge Central Mosque on Mill Road on a beautiful sunny Saturday morning. Our guide, Kal, welcomed us to the mosque, and showed us first the garden area outside the building. As well as the more formal Paradise garden, there is a garden area which gives directly on to the street, which can be enjoyed by local people even at times when the mosque is not open. When it is open, anyone is welcome to come into the Paradise garden to sit and read, eat lunch, or to take time out just to be. Inside the mosque itself, there is a cafe which is open to all, and a spacious atrium, which can be hired. We saw the washing areas for both women and men, and finally were taken into the prayer hall. The entire building is visually stunning, full of subtle colouring, decoration and natural wood. The visit was inspirational on many levels – the architectural beauty of the building, the many environmentally friendly measures which have been employed in its construction, the respect and consideration for the locality and its residents, and the friendliness and openness of the welcome which is there for all.

#### **Here are comments from some of the people who took part in the visit:**

*What to say – the mosque is a beautiful building which enhances the local area. The welcome was very warm indeed. Clearly a central part of its mission is to build relationships and break down barriers.*

“My first impression was the whole ambience of the mosque site. The young and older volunteers working together to make a beautiful garden inside the site of the mosque for the use of the whole community, different faiths and none. Then with the further thoughtfulness – the external garden on the street available for all of the neighbourhood to gather herbs for free whenever they wish. The beauty of the building itself was striking, set back from the road and created with every decision and design inspired to bear the whole community in mind – sustainable materials, solar panels, recycled water, unobtrusive parking, café open to the public. The space: peace and light inside the building, the women of the Muslim community having input into how their space should be designed, the needs of the older generation taken into consideration – those who prefer to be more private. For the younger people who wished for more inclusion and facilities, also for young children, breastfeeding etc. Kal was the perfect Tour Guide.”

*We had a welcoming and informative guide. It is an amazing and beautiful building. There is impressive attention to green energy with a zero carbon footprint, attention given to local sensibilities, eg set back from road, no minaret, community garden and cafe, availability to rent atrium. It was a fascinating visit!*

“I was very impressed with the inclusiveness of the project. Every care and effort has been put into creating not only a beautiful and environmentally friendly mosque but also a welcoming one. The Mill Road community have use of the gardens with benches and tables and also a cafeteria to be opened shortly.”

*I was struck by the mosque's integration in the Romsey community; entering through the Islamic paradise garden at the front, open to all, to which people come and eat their sandwiches. Inside: the peacefulness, the stunningly beautiful use of wood – simplicity along with intricacy.*

If you were unable to join us, but would like to visit the mosque, there are tours each Saturday and Sunday morning, which can be booked online at [cambridgecentralmosque.org/guided-tours/](http://cambridgecentralmosque.org/guided-tours/). There is no charge for the tour, which lasts around an hour.

### **This final comment speaks for all of us:**

Thanks for a lovely visit to the Mosque yesterday – it was extremely interesting – and uplifting in these present times when there is so much discord among different groups in society.

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## **Creative Writing**

### **Please Don't Go**

**Mary Gullick**

“My Lord, I'm scared. Help me, please!”

“I'm here.”

“Where? I can't find you...”

“I'm right by your side, child. I will never leave you.”

“Lord, my burden, it's too heavy. I can't carry it all alone. What do I have to do to ask for help?”

“Nothing, for I have always been by your side. You have never been left alone. I am with you now as I was when you were born. I love you and will never abandon you in your times of trial and fear.”

“You promise me? Never?”

“Yes – you called me; I was there. I have been there in the good as well as the bad. Even when it appears that I am not there, you can sense my presence. I am always in the place, no one can take me away. You can see me in everything. The sun that governs the day, the moon that watches the night. The seasons that change, the wind that blows, the rain that falls, the animals that roam the land. There you will find a piece of me. Every time you need me, call me. I will answer. I will be by your side always, every day till the end of time. Ready to meet you with love, unconditional love.”

### **I Could Not Lie**

**Wally Moscuza**

A fat worm crawled,  
From the deep grass,  
Pink like a skinned snake  
It triumphantly came up.

I spotted it as I was  
Idling in the sun  
Indulging as in a trance,  
Determined to search for luck,

Between dream and reality,  
Floating in a sea of grass  
There, waiting on my knees, asking...  
As I gazed the white daisies

That faintly kept their heads up  
Just above the grass,  
Clinging to life as man...  
The marvel of creation!

The air was filled with sounds  
Sang in falsetto –  
Delightful creatures,  
Maybe they knew the secret

And all doing their part  
Whereas I knew not  
I paused  
Like a thin layer of dust.

There I saw a child  
I heard his cries  
There I was afraid for,  
To him I could not lie.

## Some Regular Events

**The Parishioners Open Meeting (formerly the Parish Forum)** 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. It meets every 3 months.

To go on the list to get the agenda in advance and the full minutes after the meeting, email [forum@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:forum@saintlaurence.org.uk)

*You can raise a topic at the meeting but it helps if you send a short note about 10 days before the next meeting, again, to [forum@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:forum@saintlaurence.org.uk), which can then be circulated.*

### The Pilgrim by Email

Away for the week-end? All copies taken? Don't miss the Pilgrim on publication day! You can receive a pdf version by email. Send a request to [pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk)

**Extra Pilgrim copies:** Do you know anyone who has difficulty coming to church but would like to receive the Pilgrim? Please feel free to take an extra copy.

### Pilgrim on the Web

The most recent back editions are now available on the Parish website  
<http://www.saintlaurence.org.uk/pilgrim>

### ABLAZE

The St Laurence Youth Mass is known as Ablaze. The Mass is designed to encourage our youth to build their confidence in running the Mass for the benefit of us all. It is held approximately once a month, is vibrant and fun. We encourage young readers, Eucharistic Ministers, budding musicians of all ages and 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 your courage and join in.

**Youth and Young Adult Fellowship groups** all meet in the Parish Rooms. See dates on right.

**Living Faith Kids:** 8–11yrs

**GIFT (Growing in Faith Together):** 12–18yrs and Confirmation candidates of all ages. Please bring £2 for nibbles/materials.

## Upcoming Parish Events

Reconciliation for teenagers and families	20 March 7.00pm
GLOW retreat – Young People's Retreat day	15 March 9.30am – 5pm
Lent Stations of the Cross - Confessions available	Fridays during Lent 7.30pm
ABLAZE Youth Mass 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month	5 April 5pm 3 May 5pm
<b>Holy Week Masses</b> Maundy Thursday: Mass Good Friday: Children's Stations of the Cross Passion Mass Stations of the Cross	9 April 7.30pm 10 April 10am 3pm 7.30pm
Easter Vigil Easter Sunday	11 April 9pm 12 April usual times
CWL Lent Light lunches	Fridays after 12.30pm Mass
Holy Hour	Every Weds 6-7pm
Living Faith Kids 8-11yrs	Fridays: 15 May, 19 June 6-7.30pm
GIFT Youth group 12-18yrs Parish Room	Friday 22 May 6.30–8.30pm
Combined Youth Group 8-18yrs Easter Games!	24 April 6 – 8pm
2020 - The Year of the Word, Scripture study with Fr Bob in the Upper Room	Every Weds 7.30 – 9pm
Soulfood Prayer Group	Every Tuesday 8pm
<b>Parishioners Open Meeting Dates for 2020</b>	Thurs 23 April Tues 7 July Thurs 8 Oct 8pm
<b>Meeting to discuss Re- ordering of the Sanctuary</b>	13 May 8pm Parish Room
International Mass & Picnic	31 May 11am Mass
Confirmation Ceremony	22 June 6.30pm
First Holy Communion	16,17 & 23 May

# ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

91 Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 1XB

Tel/Fax: 01223 704640

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

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

## Parish Priest:

Fr Simon Blakesley  
07946 390060

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

## Assistant Priest:

Fr Bob Eccles O.P.  
01223 741265

[robert.eccles@english.op.org](mailto:robert.eccles@english.op.org)

## Deacon:

Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cook  
01223 351650

## Secretary:

Pat Cook  
01223 704640  
[office@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:office@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Treasurer:

James Dore & Joanne Kerigun  
07980 467534  
[treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Safeguarding Coordinator:

Petra Tucker  
01223 704640 (messages)  
[safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk)

## Service Times

Saturday 9.30am

6pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am

9.30am (sung) with children's liturgy

This Mass is held at St Laurence's School, Arbury Road.

11am (sung) with children's liturgy

Join us for coffee in the Parish Room afterwards.

Mon - Thurs 9.30am

Wednesday/Friday 12.30pm

*Check the weekly newsletter for changes to the above times*

## St Laurence's School

Heads of School  
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