

The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, June Edition 2021



Crowning of Our Lady



Promoting Radio Maria on Mariathon Week
With Lucia and Maria Rosaria



Gabriel & Bishop Alan
Confirmation June '21

Parish Life Starts to Return to St Laurence's

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What's New?

Confirmation 2020 and 2021

Sarah Sykes

On 17th May, Bishop Alan joined us for 6pm Mass to confirm last year's group of 17 Confirmation candidates. The church was decorated with flowers from the garden and lace voile and the candidates dressed to look their best. Families and sponsors gathered after waiting one long year and the Ablaze music group lead the live music. We are grateful that Bishop Alan was able to come and celebrate this special sacrament as our young people choose the Catholic Faith for themselves and take on their baptismal promises. Please keep them in your prayers.

At the time of writing, we are also looking forward to Bishop Alan's return to us on 1st June, when he will celebrate a second Confirmation Mass for the candidates who have been prepared during this year. A different sort of preparation done during lockdown with limited ability to meet freely out of full lockdown. Much of the preparation has been done online through Zoom meetings.

With grateful thanks to all who have been involved with preparation of both sets of candidates and congratulations to all who have decided to say yes to Jesus and their Catholic faith.

We also said farewell to Chioma Ubajaka and her family who are leaving the Parish for further adventures abroad. She was presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers and thanked for her wonderful work catechising the young people of the Parish.



Zara Ubajaka with Bishop Alan Hopes



Features and Opinions

The Gift

Michael Allan

On 24th June 1914, the writer Edward Thomas, and his wife Helen, were travelling by train to visit his friend the poet Robert Frost, when the train unexpectedly stopped at Adlestrop, a village in the Cotswolds. In the moment of stillness, while the train stood there, steam hissing, the sometimes elusive beauty of our world came to him.

Six weeks later the First World War broke out. Thomas, at the of age 37, chose to enlist, and in January 1917, as a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, he embarked for France.

In his letters home he often noted signs of the ‘natural world’ surviving, or trying to, in the midst of war: ‘We have had one or two more lovely days, mild and clear too. Yesterday a west wind blew and the rooks in their nests made things more like normal. Today actually I heard a blackbird trying, but it has turned into a cold dull day with no particular charm. The orchard is all mud now except one corner where snowdrops are flowering.’

On Easter Monday, 9th April 1917, in the early hours of the Battle of Arras, he was shot fatally in the chest.

Amidst the horror and waste of war, and with the increasing belief that he would not survive it, he must have often looked back to the beauty and peace of the British countryside that he loved, and which he had sought to honour and evoke in his poetry.

We all need some peace and beauty, some healing, to say the least, after all we have been through (and many are still going through). The world is still beautiful, still a gift – yes, even in the face of so much death and suffering – just as it was for Edward Thomas.

Adlestrop

Edward Thomas

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.

No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop— only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Cardinal Points – Pessimism & Perfection

Ronald Haynes

‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’ This famous (for some infamous) declaration from Jesus, found in Matthew 5:48, is surely among the most misunderstood verses in the Scriptures. Of the various translations, it might be better rendered as ‘Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ – to highlight the meaning from the early Greek texts, in that ‘be perfect’ is an infinitive, and the sense conveyed in that we are called to act and live our lives on the path to perfection. There are of course many cross-references for this call and command, including in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament – e.g. Leviticus 19:2, Deuteronomy 18:13, 2 Samuel 22:31).

Peering a bit more steadfastly into that all-encompassing challenge often reveals the extremes of either the deepest of pessimism about our human nature, with a lingering and crippling fear of perdition (present or future), or a vast hope and extreme confidence about our Divine creation, with persistent attention to and action for the promise of paradise (again, present or future). A darker focus on original (and other) sin, and a kind of ‘Good Friday’ model for the suffering penitent, may be complemented or counter-balanced by a brighter highlight on what has been called the original blessing – being made in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei) – and a kind of ‘Easter Sunday’ model for the rejoicing saints.

It is not always easy to talk about perfection, not least because either it seems such a neglected and, in many ways, an unknown subject, or because some react to the topic as bordering on arrogance or presumption. However, a meaningful response to this call from Christ surely must not be either in ignorance or arrogance. Gifts from God, and the ever-present Providence on which our lives depend, are a constant reminder that we are being invited into a larger world of grace, of kinship and lively relationship, and of deeper Love.

G. K. Chesterton helpfully (and famously) insisted that ‘if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly’! While this may appear as wit and whimsy, some comments from the [Chesterton Society](#) point out that some of the insight conveyed ‘is not an excuse for poor efforts ... It is perhaps an excuse for poor results’ – with the idea that worthwhile things should be done out of love, and for their inherent good.

Talking about perfection, trying to understand and follow its path, is similarly worth doing, however imperfectly we may approach it (at least initially). In fact, our main ideas about development, about progress, and more broadly about education rely on this idea that we can and should improve, we should strive to get better over time, and that it is worth learning more, ideally as a life-long commitment, as well as living out the results and implications of that learning.

John Henry Newman, in his *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, neatly combines some key and related themes: ‘to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.’ Gregory of Nyssa, in his writing ‘On Perfection’ further clarifies this for us: ‘let no one be grieved if he sees in his nature a penchant for change. Changing in everything for the better, let him exchange “glory for glory” [2 Cor. 3:18], becoming greater through daily increase, ever perfecting himself ... For this is truly perfection: never to stop growing towards what is better and never placing any limit on perfection’.

Elsewhere, in his ‘Life of Moses’, Gregory also points out that: ‘Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none’ – a potent insight included in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§2028).

In these reflections, we may encounter an apparent paradox, contrasting the common sense of perfection – too often seen as a static state, a completion of a process or journey or life – with the dynamic sense inherent in change and development. Is perfection a final resting state, an end to growth and development, or can we not see it as also dynamic?

In one epistle (James 1:17) we are told that: ‘Every good gift and every perfection comes from above, from the Father of lights.’ This gives some hint of plurality, and often we read, hear and make reference to a perfection of one aspect of life or another, rather than necessarily all things at once, with of course a special call to the perfection of charity and the overarching call of Jesus’ laws of love.

John O’Donohue, in his enlivening work *Anam Cara*, references Newman (above) and further suggests that ‘Perfection is not cold completion. Neither is it avoidance of risk and danger in order to keep the soul pure or the conscience unclouded. ... Perfection is the fulfilment of the fully lived and inhabited life.’ For many of us there linger questions

about how to go about discerning the life we are called to live, and about discovering more of the special individual with particular gifts we are created to share in our communities.

In his wonderful way of turning things around for greater clarity, Meister Eckhart suggests another seeming paradox about our natures (and wittily addresses an ancient puzzle), as a kind of contrasting complementarity between our divine and earthly formation (from *On the Noble Man*, trans. Oliver Davies): ‘nature begins her work at the weakest point while God begins his at the point of perfection. Nature makes a man or woman from a child and a chicken from an egg, while God makes the man or woman before the child and the chicken before the egg.’

This ‘chicken and egg’ contrast speaks to a perceived tension about how we develop into the unique person we are meant to be, whether we need to discover our ‘true self’ or become our ‘new self’ – what some mystical theologians suggest is a contrast and apparent choice between the conceptual models of archaeology (uncovering the hidden true self) and architecture (building up the unrealised new self). Like many such apparent paradoxes, it is possible to see benefit and perhaps important truth to both approaches, however it also helps to keep clear the impact of each (and the possible loss of limiting to only one model, or not fruitfully engaging with the powerful combination of both).

Concerning a dynamic model for perfection, despite the Divine revelation that we are created as immortal beings, part of a challenge we too often face is the limitations we also feel as temporal beings with mortal bodies formed in three-dimensional space. Even given the ancient and persistent belief that God became human so that humans could become divine, understandably we have to try to gracefully navigate ourselves in the physical world.

To stretch our imagination to grasp more of the infinite, we may find a little help from the German mathematician Georg Cantor, the creator of set theory. Although this may be an area less known (or of interest) to some, there is a brilliant, and, thankfully easy to paraphrase and relate, principle which is worth sharing here. If you consider a group (set) of all the positive counting numbers (so 1, 2, 3, etc.), you will know that you could keep counting forever – there are an infinite number of positive counting numbers, and so this is an infinite set. Putting that set to one side, let us now consider a set of all the negative and positive counting numbers which have been combined in one group (so -1, -2, -3, etc. AND 1, 2, 3, etc.). This too is an infinite set, however it would seem to be a much larger one, or about *twice the size* of the first set!

This astonishing, powerful, yet simple example (part of a larger project by Cantor to order infinite sets and catalogue them by size) can provide some insight into how perfection can be both seemingly bounded and static (an end point) but also unbounded and dynamic (an eternal state, but always pointing to something even more). However complete an aspect of life (or life itself) might seem, there is more room for growth. Conversely, change and growth is part of our call and hope for improvement and perfection – and further and greater perfection. Maybe this was part of the insight expressed by the character of Mary Poppins, when she confidently proclaimed that she was ‘Practically Perfect in every way’. We have such great phrases for this never-ending journey and adventure: ‘*in saecula saeculorum*’ – which we often render and recall as either ‘forever and ever’ or ‘unto the ages of ages’.

Returning to some pessimism too often associated with perfection, there is an understandable concern that people might focus too much on themselves, either to their own improvements or to their own flaws, which may be too self-centred and to the exclusion of our sisters and brothers around us. Either would be missing several points, in fact the whole point, of the call for each of us to develop our authentic self and unique gifts, as well as our call to share these with each other, for the good and growth of the community.

Kierkegaard helpfully puts this concern in perspective, grounding it in the great call and command of Love (from the *Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. George Pattison): ‘For those who want to think of their own perfection do not love, and those who want to keep account of their imperfections do not love. ... But love takes all, and those who exclude themselves will either be pleased with themselves but displeased with love or will grieve over themselves and still not take pleasure in love.’

We have such great and varied examples of those who have either sacrificed themselves, or in other ways committed and shared so much of their time and energy for the good of others. There are so many great exemplars available to us, including among the myriad of Christian saints and Buddhist bodhisattvas, that we can find guidance on the many ways and aspects and unbounded extensiveness to perfection – and much like favourite aunts and uncles, among such saints we are sure to find those whose lives can speak compellingly to our experience and concerns, helping us out of any spiritual silo and back into our spirited society.

The great Aelred, 12th century Abbot of Rievaulx, Yorkshire, and champion of spiritual friendship, expresses this call to perfection together and through love in a beautiful passage from his sermon for the Feast of St Benedict: ‘Almighty God can immediately bring to perfection anyone he pleases and bestow all the virtues on any one person. But in his caring way of dealing with us he causes each person to need the other and to have in the other what one does not possess in oneself. Thus, humility is preserved, charity increased and unity recognized. Therefore each belongs to all and all belong to each.’

In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Canto 13 of the Paradiso includes a brief hint of these notions of conditionality, of the need for the combined work of Love, of relationship with God, and the fullness of perfection (trans. Robin Kirkpatrick):

If Love, though, in its fervent warmth arrays
and prints the clear regard of Primal power,
entire perfection will be here acquired.

There was a time, perhaps yet to return, where even marketing efforts might exclude unabashed claims of evidently false perfection, instead including a bit more hope and humour and humility, and a sense of ongoing effort to improve and develop toward a more perfect state – all good spiritual characteristics (and, one hopes, likely better for marketing). A nice example, especially in mind, is one which we might recall when considering the many aspects and ideas of an ongoing path to perfection (or perfections even) – a kind of phrase which might apply to so many aspects of our lives, which is the old understated and punning slogan for British Rail: ‘we’re getting there’!

Often people talk about visions, but what exactly are they?

Charles Whitehead

(An extract from an article by Charles Whitehead, 2012, from Sandy Hobson, with kind permission of the author)

Having a vision for our lives is one of the key ways we receive Divine guidance. As the Jerusalem translation of Proverbs 29:18 says: ‘Where there is no vision, the people get out of hand’. Today we seem to be surrounded by people who are out of hand and running wild. If we are to help them it’s important that we have the Lord’s guidance, and a spiritual vision contains revelation from God. It shows us the direction we must take, the plans to follow, the goals we have to reach along the way, and reassures us that with the vision comes the Divine power to make it all possible.

How it comes is not important, but what it tells us is very important. It will change lives, but we cannot assume that it will happen immediately – a vision is a piece of eternity, so time is not the most important thing. Habakkuk 2:2–3 reminds us to ‘write the vision down, inscribe it on tablets to be easily read, since this vision is for its own time only: eager for its own fulfilment, it does not deceive; if it comes slowly, wait, for come it will, without fail.’ (Jerusalem Bible)

So, we write it down and check it out with God’s revelation in the Scriptures and in Church teaching. We share it with those spiritual friends who know us, love us and will speak the truth to us, and we need to talk to those who have spiritual responsibility for us. We mustn’t forget to count the cost of sacrifice and of course, talk to those whose lives will be most affected by it, our families.

So, what does a vision do?

- A vision brings us life – it’s a call to do something specific with God.
- A vision is motivating – it’s something we will be able to do.
- A vision is constraining and restricting – we will concentrate on it to the exclusion of other things.
- A vision helps us check our use of time and resources, to say NO to some things and to set some goals and objectives.
- A vision can fill us with joy and excitement, helping us to cope with the frustrations and disappointments we are certain to encounter.
- A vision stops us just pleasing ourselves or other people, being driven by demand, or following the latest novelty.
- Above all else, a vision gives us peace and helps us to know that we are doing God’s thing, in His time and place, and for His glory. It’s His vision – the amazing thing is that He entrusts it to YOU.

Creativity and Christianity in Music

Riq Willitts

Creativity in music starts with composers – obsessives scribbling away masterpieces on their own, which are then handed to publishers and performers as sacrosanct texts. Only this simple image is not really true. Composers only started to define completely what they wanted during the 18th century. Performers of earlier music need to know the conventions, and need imagination to perform it effectively in a modern context. Modern composers often collaborate with performers, establishing what works and what does not; this enables them to be more adventurous in unusual combinations of instruments and unorthodox ways of playing them. Thus the creation of music is a shared experience.

To me, perhaps the most important aspect of Christian life is the way Christ influences the way we interact with each other. He brings an extra dimension to our relationships, something outside the material, the practical. This is very evident in the fruitful collaboration of musicians, where beautiful music results. In contrast, playing music by oneself, with no one to listen, could be seen as a selfish activity. A professional would be practising in order to give a good performance, to please his audience. But can an amateur be a good Christian? Often as not he is playing for his own pleasure, and possibly feeling guilty that he is not doing something more related to other people. But, even in these circumstances, he is trying to make a beautiful sound, his mind is being lifted out of the everyday, so it can be seen as a form of praise of God, though not every musician would see it so explicitly.

But, for me, the best musical experiences are playing with others. Then we are communicating closely with each other, which is a powerful form of love of one's neighbour. It is an interesting example of the principle that, though we must love our neighbour, we do not have to like them. It is hard to have a conversation with someone one dislikes, but one can play music with them.

Amateur musicians do not often perform for an audience (the terrified playing to the horrified), but when we do, frequently we collect money for a charity.

Making music is not just playing the notes, it also needs inspiration, which comes from God. We create something beyond our experience, which widens our world. There is more scope for inspiration in chamber music, where you have your own part to play, than in the back row of the large cello section of an orchestra. There, you do, or try to do, exactly the same as your fellow cellists. You are taking part in a group working

to a common purpose; there is a feeling of mutual support, which must be a form of love of one's neighbour. Another aspect of orchestral playing is the discipline of following the conductor – it is a form of humility that one overcomes one's own, probably differing, views on how the music should go.

Can a conductor be a good Christian? It is easy for a conductor to want the audience to believe that he is the star, that the composer would be nowhere without him, and the instrumentalists are just his instrument. But there are conductors who work hard encouraging the musicians, who then give of their best.

Music is the most ambiguous of the arts; it needs no words, no visual images, no known sounds. Some of the most expressive moments in music can be silence – the ultimate experience of ambiguity. Thus music allows our minds to escape our everyday lives, it stimulates our imaginations and can take us closer to God, more than any other art. It helps us to see the infinity of God beyond the religious images or the bible stories. Sometimes it does help to have some context in which to place the music. I remember, as a relative beginner, struggling to make sense of a Dmitri Shostakovich orchestral piece. It all began to be very meaningful when our Polish conductor evoked the difficulties Shostakovich had to suffer in Soviet Russia – all the more emotional as our conductor had himself lived in Communist Poland.

Music can be quite specific, as in a song or an opera. Here it leads us into sharing the emotions of the characters. There is no morality in music – we can be uplifted singing a hymn, or we can completely empathise with a character in an opera, who may be doing something very wrong indeed. But I can think of no opera where the composer is promoting evil.

So music, and particularly the performance of music, adds a great new dimension to our Christianity.

So what is a person, then?

Karen Rodgers

'people ... are walking around, shining like the sun.'

'In Louisville, on the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I was theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. ... It was like waking from a dream of

separateness... There is no way of telling people that they are walking around, shining like the sun.'

Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948)

C S Lewis, picks up on this theme in *The Weight of Glory* (1941):

'it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.'

As John Rist highlights in his timely new book, the key issue of our time is how we answer the question 'What is a person?'

Some facts about the human person may be regarded by some as inconvenient but can only really be obscured by muddying the waters; they cannot be denied. Any materialist biologist worth their salt will tell you that a human life begins at conception, that gender is determined at that instant and hardwired into every cell of the body in such a way that we can determine by examination for certain whether an individual was male or female centuries after they died, that the effect of male and female hormones on the person is profound and lifelong, that our human prefrontal cortex is unique.

Psychologists will tell us that there are certain characteristic abilities which appear to be unique to humans such as grammar-based, complex language, advanced planning and decision-making, humour, appreciation of beauty, the capacity to both produce and enjoy art and literature and the awareness of death.

Our Lord acknowledges all of these truths as he deepens our understanding of their profundity and their significance for the human person by revealing to us that each one of us is not merely a highly complex mammal among many mammals but a creature; i.e. a being created by God and called to love Him. We learn that we each have a unique design fitted to our unique purpose, that we are made male and female for a reason, that becoming what we were made to be involves a conscious individual choice for which we are personally responsible and that many of us are called to enter into a life-long exclusive covenant with a spouse to co-operate in an extraordinary way with the Almighty in the genesis and education of the next generation.

At the heart of life, we learn from our Lord, lie not concepts or institutions but rather individual human

persons; we are personally called by God to acknowledge our uniqueness, to discover our true identity, worth and role through loving others in the same way as we love and respect our own humanity and in this way we are called to honour and adore our Creator.

'...humanity is merely the name we apply to a concept; the collection of characteristics we identify in individual human beings... the people we know are, in a serious sense, the human race...we are more than members of the human species, we are individually differentiated persons (page 234) ...our worth is defensible in a universe governed by God' (page 24) ...Agnostics and atheists who speak of human dignity ignore the fact that the claim rests on the authority of the Almighty creator; in order to assert human dignity and therefore human rights we need to recognise that; we are not autonomous but contingent dependent on others [and on] God' (page 254), taken from *What is a Person? Realities, Constructs, Illusions* (2019) by John M Rist.

'We are, through and through, creatures, not created, derived beings living not of ourselves but from Christ [yet] the collective is mortal and has no right to an excessive claim on us...There will come a time when every culture, every institution, every nation, the human race, all biological life is extinct and every one of us is still alive... personality is eternal and inviolable, it will be attained from a development from within outwards. It will come to us when we occupy those places in the structure of the eternal cosmos for which we were designed or invented', taken from C S Lewis' essay, *Membership* (1945).

Crucially we mediate, foster and celebrate our inter-dependency through face-to-face contact with each unique individual whom we encounter and in the process we learn to fulfil our vocations of loving God, loving our neighbour and truly loving ourselves.

Dominic White O. P. writes in his book *How do I Look? Theology in the Age of the Selfie* (2020): 'The initial experience of receiving the face of the other is a conversion of heart... it is only the beginning of a relationship by which the divine Word will progressively break the idols we make of the other person and of creation (page 57), how I look... the shine of my gaze, reveals who I am (page 65), Fear is bad for us... we need to touch and be touched... We need to sing together (page 134), "This [broken self] is just how I am" is simply not true... With Christ's love dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit, we will live without fear... Our gaze will then be a healing gaze; our breath a healing breath' (page 137).

Henri Nouwen (1932–1996), the Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian, explains: 'Christian

discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options; maybe we list the pros and cons of each possible choice; and then we choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God's desire. As discerning people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which ones lead us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people and which ones lead us further away.

Discernment reveals new priorities, directions, and gifts from God. We come to realize that what previously seemed so important for our lives loses its power over us. Our desire to be successful, well-liked and influential becomes increasingly less important as we move closer to God's heart. To our surprise, we even may experience a strange inner freedom to follow a new call or direction as previous concerns move into the background of our consciousness. We begin to see the beauty of the small and hidden life that Jesus lived in Nazareth. Most rewarding of all is the discovery that as we pray more each day, God's will – that is, God's concrete ways of loving us and our world – gradually is made known to us.'

The 'collective' does not define who we are; God does. The 'collective' is not the object of our love, our loyalty or our obedience; God is. Reality is not defined by public opinion but by God. Authority comes not from the 'collective' but from the Almighty. Decision-making is not the prerogative of government or of society but of the individual.

Moral responsibility for what we do, the decisions we take and what we consequently ultimately become, does not lie with any public body, with members of our family, with friends or even, with our local Bishop.

'Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1782). 'Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened.' (paragraph 1783). 'A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience.' (paragraph 1790).

The personal responsibility for who we, and to some extent, our neighbours, become, lies with us.

We will indeed 'build back better' **if** we face and embrace both the person God has made us to be in all our uniqueness and, in the same spirit, the person of our

neighbour, whatever their view of the world and whatever their choices; **if** we pray for the courage and insight to combat fear, to see the world as it really is and to discern in each situation what we are called on to do and say; **if** we start to rebuild that face-to-face communion and fellowship of which we have been deprived and without which we wither.

With such a flourishing, Thomas Merton's vision will become more generally manifest; in a dark world, we will become beacons of God's grace.

Book Synopses

What is a Person? Realities, Constructs, Illusions, John M Rist

John M Rist offers an account of the concept of 'person' as it has developed in the West, and how it has become alien in a post-Christian culture. He begins by identifying the 'mainline tradition' about persons as it evolved from the time of Plato to the High Middle Ages, then turns to successive attacks on it in the 17th and 18th centuries, then proceeds to the 'five ways' in which the tradition was savaged or distorted in the 19th century and beyond. He concludes by considering whether ideas from contemporary philosophical movements, those that combine a closer analysis of human nature with a more traditional metaphysical background, may enable the tradition to be restored. A timely book on a theme of universal significance, Rist ponders whether persons matter, and how we have reached a position where we are not sure whether we do.

How do I Look? Theology in the Age of the Selfie, Dominic White

We live in the age of the retouchable selfie. For those navigating the world of social media, the issue of how one presents oneself to the world has never been more critical. Psychological studies have shown the high impact of this selfie culture on the mental health of young people especially. How might the long tradition of the Christian gaze, found in scripture, art, theology and philosophy speak into this selfie generation? What, in this context, might be the significance of the doctrine of humankind's creation in God's image, or of the incarnation? On a more practical level, how might the monastic tradition of the 'chaste gaze' challenge or reinforce the selfie-culture? Putting such theological and ethical questions into dialogue with psychological studies and philosophical understandings, the book offers an important pastoral and scholarly resource for anyone seeking to understand theologically one of the most profound developments of the digital age.

On Silence

Fr Bob Eccles

If any reader can tell me who wrote today's poem, I promise you an ice cream!

A word is dead
when it is said
Some say.

I say it just
begins to live
that day.

A little book of stories on my shelf is called *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. One of its stories concerns Shoichi, a one-eyed teacher of Zen, sparkling with enlightenment. He taught his disciples in Tofuku temple. Day and night the temple stood in silence. There was no sound at all. Even the recital of sutras was abolished by the teacher. The students had nothing to do but meditate.

When the master passed away, an old neighbour heard the ringing of bells and the recitation of sutras. Then she knew Shoichi had gone.

Another story shows how the path of silence may be harder than it looks. Four novices promised one another to observe seven days of absolute silence. It began auspiciously on the first day but as soon as it grew dark, one of them forgot himself and said to his neighbour, "Light the lamps". The other said, "We were not supposed to say a word". "You two are stupid, why did you talk?" asked the third. "I am the only one who hasn't said anything" called out the fourth novice!

Heureux deux amis qui s'aiment assez pour (savoir) se taire ensemble, happy two friends who love each other enough to be silent together. Who said that? A favourite poet of ours. This must explain why we like to adore silently before the Blessed Sacrament, a silence that is not empty but the quietness of a friendship. 'I call you friends' the Lord told his disciples, and also tells us. What are you doing before the Blessed Sacrament? they asked St John Vianney – "*je le vise et il me vise*", "I look at Him and He looks at me," he said.

We are hardly ever face to face with silence unless we are in the library and maybe not even there, because we need to strain to hear what the other readers are whispering to one another! But the time of worship is that grateful space where we ought to be able to taste the silence and be at peace. Because even with the fulfilment promised in the Apocalypse, the very silence of heaven only lasts a bare half an hour, I'm afraid. Even the heavenly host *will* fill up the time with words!

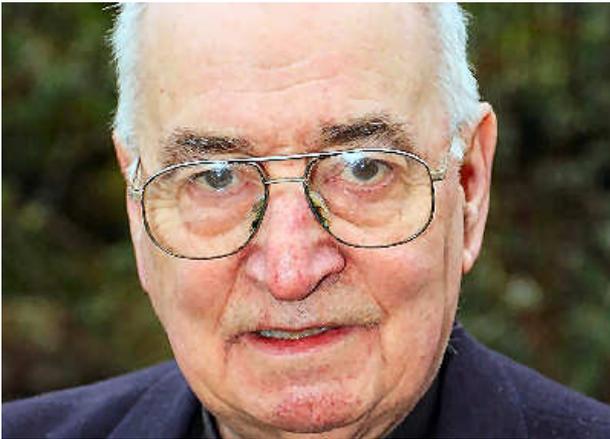
The opening pages of the Missal on the altar are full of instructions about how to say Mass well. For those who dare to look they are full of surprises! It has so much about silence. We never knew! There are many words given the celebrant to say no-one is meant to hear at all. There are words for all to say but only a single voice is to be heard. And there are times when nothing is to be said, nothing at all.

These times are described as sacred silence. That is sacred is not common or negligible, it really must not be overlooked or dispensed with then. The introduction to the Missal says: 'in the course of the Liturgy periods of silence are appropriate', so that under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by heart and a response through prayer may be prepared", so for example the Liturgy of the Word is always to begin in a moment of recollection, at "Let us pray", "all pray silently with the priest for a while". After the first reading at Mass the reader does well to leave us to ourselves to meditate for a minute or two before breaking in with the Responsorial Psalm, the psalm that expresses our response to the Word of God.

Unless there is that welcome silence, the flow of words just batters us. We do need moments of silence if we are to stop and think, give the readings a chance to sink in before we respond in praise. Whoever has the Son, has life, St John assures us; and then, O praise the Lord, Jerusalem, we hear ourselves exult in the psalm. "The word is dead when it is said, some say". But the Word of God when it is spoken begins to live, it has a life of its own. Whoever has the Son, has life. I take this to mean, whoever makes silence in the heart to hear the voice of the Son of God, finds life in Him. I love the story of how when they brought the woman 'caught in the act' to Our Lord and battered Him with angry words, He just shut up and bent down and scribbled in the dust, no-one knows quite why. But in that silence people came to themselves, thought twice about what they were doing and sloped off, beginning with the Elders (I suppose the most experienced and sensible). Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord has the Word of Life for us, and we do need to open our hearts to hear it. So, let's consider our ways and be glad to be quiet together sometimes.

Dear old Dick! Memories of Fr Dick Wilson

Fr Simon Blakesley



[Image of Fr Wilson from Network Norfolk](#)

I have been asked to provide a slightly lighter, more humorous article for this edition of *The Pilgrim*, perhaps more focussed on St Laurence's Parish. In order, to respond to this, I thought I would share a few memories of Fr Dick Wilson (no relation to our current parishioner of the same name), who was Parish Priest here from 1977 to 1982, so he will be remembered by some of you, all too well. For readers of *The Universe* during the 80's and 90's you may recall the humorous weekly column 'The secret diary of Hadrian Mule' loosely based on Sue Townsend's format about the anguished teenager Adrian Mole, but given the twist of an equally tortured soul of a Parish Priest 'Fr Hadrian Mule'. This was entirely Dick's creation, and he was often found at his steam-powered typewriter in the finance office at Poringland creating more of his 'Mulings', as he described them.

Dick served as the 'Episcopal Vicar for Finance' for our Diocese for many years, given his sound pastoral experience and record of being, by his own admission, something of a 'drain brain', ie. he could sort out a blocked sewer in the blinking of an eye and was used to casting a friendly eye over any and many parish properties all around the diocese. He sometimes lamented the dated and unfriendly décor of visitors' parlours where priests would receive marriage preparation couples, or grieving relatives arranging a funeral. I remember his description of one such room as "just like a downstairs toilet, but only missing the toilet!"

He had some wonderful takes on our liturgical practices with occasional suggestions for 'improved wordings' as in his suggestion for the formula for the imposition of ashes on schoolchildren – quote "Remember squirt that thou art dirt, and unto dirt thou shalt revert". He once described the setting up of the 'Diocesan Pastoral Council' as "the greatest advance in ecclesiology since the abolition of the maniple".

He was accompanied in his pastoral placements by the ever faithful, Gracie Sadd, who was, along with Maureen Harding who cared for Canon Paul Taylor, the last of the generation of live-in housekeepers within the Diocese. When I find at the back of cupboards in the presbytery slightly faded gentility in the remains of old dinner services etc., I often think to myself 'shades of Gracie...!'

He was renowned as a great preacher but with his gift for self-deprecation, he always insisted that 'a priest's purgatory would be to have to listen through every sermon he had ever preached', knowing that some priests' purgatory would be a lot longer than others! He had done his National Service in the late 1950's and had then trained at the Beda College in Rome, as he was in his late twenties when he applied to the Northampton Diocese for the priesthood.

He was also someone who worked for the Diocesan Tribunal since its inception in 1986, having worked previously for the Westminster Metropolitan Tribunal. His one liner comments during judgement sessions were legendary. He was a brilliant confessor both to his faithful parishioners but also for his brother clergy who were always keen to seek his counsel. He retired to a flat near St George's in Norwich and filled his last years with some more reflections on his life as a priest. And on his journey to Heaven, I am sure that he will have enjoyed listening to his sermons again!

Parish Organisations and Activities

News from Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology

Sue Price

We are planning how we, gradually and safely, open up so that we can welcome people in person, back into the Institute. This is taking time and as there are still many uncertainties, we are taking it slowly. However, in the meantime, there is still plenty on offer, via Zoom, that is worth considering. One of the benefits has been how we have been able to engage with so many people from all corners of the world – the States, Ireland, Honduras, Kenya, and Hong Kong. Despite the restrictions, there has also been great enrichment.

Do consider joining one of our online courses for your own enrichment.

You could join the MA Spirituality students for a week, working with Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ, exploring **Spiritual Direction in the Ignatian Tradition**, 7th – 10th June 2021 cost: £230.

Dr Louise Nelstrop is facilitating an **online study day on Evelyn Underhill** on 12th June, cost: £45.

You would be very welcome to take part in the **Diocesan Certificate of Catholic Studies**, running on three Wednesday afternoons, 9th, 16th, and 23rd June, 3pm – 6pm. This course gives, an introduction to the Bible, The Church, Sacraments, The Person of Christ, and Morality, cost: £40 per afternoon.

Dr Christine Lai, all the way via Zoom from Hong Kong, is running her second **study day on aging and spirituality** – looking at aging as a process of spiritual growth, cost: £45.

To book on any of these courses please email mbitadm@hermes.cam.ac.uk – we look forward to welcoming you.

Lent Pilgrimage

Kay Dodsworth



In Lent, I took part in the month of accompanied prayer. These weeks, or months, or occasionally days of accompanied prayer were started by Sister Anna and we miss her participation in them but it is a privilege to be part of keeping her vision alive. Being one of the prayer guides is as nourishing as being a pilgrim and this Lent I was conscious of feeling as if we were with Jesus and his followers walking in company towards Jerusalem in anticipation of the Passion and Resurrection. A pilgrimage presupposes walking together and although I was able to walk with one pilgrim, most of our ‘walking’ was virtual via the great gift of Zoom!

In these more distanced days, it was particularly enriching to be able to reflect with each other on where and how we encounter God in our daily experience, through creation perhaps, or liturgy, people, scripture, art and books. Also, to help each other ‘listen’ to how God is ‘speaking’ to us, drawing us or encouraging us, in often very subtle but always life-affirming ways.

We began the month with a virtual meeting of the pilgrims and prayer guides at which we reflected together on a scripture passage in a led meditation and prayed together. Each pilgrim then met with their guide for about half an hour once a week at a mutually convenient time and in a mutually convenient way for the four weeks. A follow up meeting was held a few weeks after Easter in which we again prayed together and this time did a Lectio Divina (prayerful listening exercise) on a scripture passage.

Spiritual companionship is for me very enriching, and it enhances my experience of prayer, scripture, liturgy and community life. Also, it is an ecumenical initiative. Pilgrims and guides were from a variety of Christian communities. This was very dear to Sister Anna’s heart as it is to mine.

Gardening help?

Joe McWilliams



Lilium album a beautiful white flowered plant. A monocotyledon, dying back to a bulb every year. Long associated with Our Lady, lilies can be seen in lots of historic paintings of Mary. Monastic herbal or Physic gardens are some of our oldest gardens in the UK.

On **6th June** I will be putting some lilies that I have grown in pots next to the statue of Mary in the Parish garden. Anyone who would like to help tidy and plan our own garden to make it a place of meeting and solace please meet at 1pm.

Picture of the Annunciation by Martin Schongauer, 1472
Public Domain
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/martin-schongauer/annunciation>

Catholic Women's League

Janet Scally

We are still together even if we haven't met as a group for over a year. Our members talk on the phone or in gardens and some of us are now thrilled to meet for a few moments before Mass. Where people haven't got internet, members have shared by putting the phone near their computer so those without could hear Mass.

If anyone wants to join us, please just contact me, Janet Scally on 01223 365330 or Angela Stocker on 01223 424024. Of course, we haven't been donating as much to needy charities as we'd like, but have given to the Cambridge Food Bank and the Cambridge Women's Refuge. We're hoping to be able to offer our Friday lunches again in July, but of course that may be just a dream, so if you enjoy meeting people for a light lunch, watch the newsletter for the date.

St Laurence's Church – Financial results for 2020

James Dore

Despite the church not being open for much of 2020, and restrictions on numbers when it was, the Parish has maintained a healthy financial position.

Income - many thanks to all those who switched to pay their regular offertory by bank transfer. This helped maintain our collection income at about 90% of 2019 levels. And although we weren't able to open the repository or fund-raise in other ways, receiving over £32K in legacies during the year meant our total income went only £9K down compared to 2019.

Cash – we want to minimise the amount of cash being handled so please use bank transfers wherever possible. **Our team of cash counters / bankers needs strengthening so if you have some spare time on a weekday morning, please consider helping out.** Contact me for more details. Gift-aid – if you are a taxpayer and giving regularly to the Church, please consider gift-aiding your offering, which increases its value by 25%. For details, please contact giftaid@saintlaurence.org.uk

Second / retiring collections – many of the regular retiring collections didn't take place in 2020 with the restrictions in place and this will have impacted significantly on those charities' funds. So please keep an eye out for newsletter announcements about any upcoming collections and make your donation by bank transfer wherever possible.

Expenditure - as you'd expect, our day-to-day running costs were somewhat lower during the year than previously, especially as we somehow operated without a parish secretary for a few months until Reece joined us in August. Our planned repairs for the presbytery and the church (following the re-roofing in 2019) were also put on hold and so we ended up generating a surplus of £53K for the year.

Balances – all this has meant our balance of reserves grew to over £200K by the end of last year. A professional survey of the buildings commissioned by the Diocese set-out a suggested programme of works to be undertaken over the next five years, some of which are more urgent to prevent further deterioration. This programme, along with funds earmarked for the possible re-ordering of the sanctuary, might account for a half of these reserves. **Some assistance in dealing with contractors (obtaining quotes and monitoring progress of work) would be appreciated – basic organisational skills are more important than detailed knowledge of electrical circuits! This could be offered on a project-by-project basis so needn't involve overseeing the whole programme or demand a great deal of time. Please contact the Parish Office if you can help in any way or contact me at the email address below.**

I'm thankful for the assistance and guidance given by the Finance Committee (which meets quarterly) and especially to Joanne Kerrigun for ensuring all the payments and receipts are properly recorded in the accounts. If you would like any more detail or have any questions about the parish finances, please feel free to contact me: James Dore, Parish Treasurer, 07980 467534, treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk

ST. LAURENCE'S PARISH ACCOUNTS 2020					
INCOME			EXPENDITURE		
	2020	2019		2020	2019
	£	£		£	£
Offertory Collection (Gift Aided)	57,972	58,134	Church/Hall/House upkeep	25,343	86,879
Offertory Collection (not Gift-Aided)	23,617	33,242	Priests Salary & Housekeeping	11,883	18,091
Gift Aid Claims	12,907	13,670	Priests & Deacon Car Expenses	2,128	1,935
Alive in Faith parish allocation	17,311	10,272	Staff Salaries	10,915	13,897
Legacies and donations	32,493	12,000	Printing/Postage/Stationery/Telephone	5,730	6,414
Candles/Flowers/Repository/Papers	1,380	4,883	Candles/Flowers/Repository/Papers	2,846	4,655
Interest	997	1,146	SVP	1,000	2,000
Other income, including Stole Fees, Pilgrimages, Outings etc	10,056	10,731	Diocesan Levies	36,951	36,614
			Other expenditure, including Liturgical, Pilgrimages, Outings etc	6,690	8,916
Total	156,734	144,077	Total	103,487	179,402
			Surplus / (deficit) of income over exp	53,247	35,324
				156,734	144,077

POSITION STATEMENT AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds	
	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1st January		175,474		20,733
Income for the year	156,734		9,073	
Expenditure for the year	103,487		3,800	
Surplus / (deficit) for the year		53,247		5,273
Balance as at 31st December		228,721		26,006

SECOND COLLECTIONS FOR NON-PARISH FUNDS 2020

	£	£
RECEIPTS	2020	2019
Second Collections		
Diocesan	761	2,023
Christmas & Easter Offerings	2,857	5,465
CAFOD	1,994	3,846
Other	1,318	5,019
TOTAL	6,930	16,353

Gift Aid - the good way to give to your Church

Jim Scally

Gift Aid is an arrangement that allows charities, including churches, to reclaim tax on donations made by a taxpayer. It covers regular weekly or monthly giving as well as one-off donations. This means that every donation you make can be worth 25% more to your church, at no extra cost to you. For example, if you donate £20, we will be able to reclaim an extra £5 from the government. If you are already paying tax on earnings, pensions or income/capital gains from investments, the government gives back to the church some of the tax you have already paid. We don't need to know your personal details such as income, nor your National Insurance Number. Your donations will qualify as long as they are not more than four times the tax you have paid in that tax year (6 April to 5 April). All you have to do is complete a simple form called a Gift Aid Declaration with your name and address.

You can find this form on the St Laurence's webpage under 'Gift Aid'. There are two versions; one you can complete online and submit, the other can be printed off, completed by hand, signed and returned to the Parish Office. Please help us to make the most of this scheme to benefit our Church.

CAFOD Update: What a Parish!
(a reflection on our Walk for Water project) - 10,000 steps a day!

Serga Collett, Parish CAFOD rep

Thank you to Jim Infield and Mary Watkins for their photos of their 'Stations of the Cross' walk

Thank you to Susan O'Brien who sent in the photos from her walks

And of course we are grateful To Father Simon and Bentley For adding to our steps.

WE MADE IT:

Our current grand total is **11,956,714** steps, or about **5,978** miles (roughly 2000 steps per mile).

We're 2,432 miles into our fourth leg, from Afar to Jerusalem, and we've reached Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem!

Please enter your latest steps here and click "Submit".
 Your steps:

Yours, Lord is the Glory in everything I see; a country scene, mountain stream, sunrise, sunset, rain and snow.
Yours, Lord is the Glory wherever I might go
Yours, Lord is the Glory in everything I hear; a roaring sea, bumblebee.
Yours, Lord is the Glory wherever I might go
Yours, Lord is the Glory in everything I feel; a special place, warm embrace,
Yours, Lord is everything!

That was the challenge that CAFOD had set us for Lent – 10,000 steps a day for forty days! That’s a tall order I thought – can I do it? I’m always complaining about my three dogs taking me for way too many ‘exciting adventures’ every day but how many steps could I manage? I had no idea but I doubted that it would be 10,000 steps every day with work and other commitments. And if I couldn’t manage, how many people would want to take part in such an ambitious challenge?

I desperately wanted to help the plight of people in Ethiopia! I thought of them every time I made a cup of tea, washed my hands, had a shower and thought about how fortunate I was, the water splashing out of my tap, whenever I wanted it to, just by turning it on. And all the while knowing that so many of my sisters and brothers were suffering water shortages, having no access to clean water and walking for miles each day just to carry back two jerry cans full of water for their daily needs.

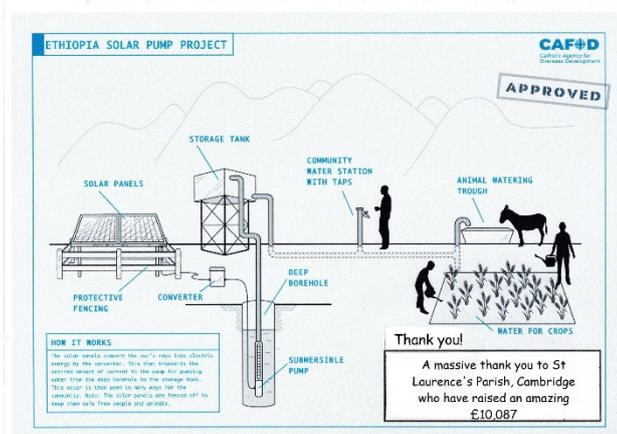
I mentioned my worries to the wonderful CAFOD supporter team here at St Laurence’s. “Let everyone do the walking” and “Let’s walk virtually to Ethiopia” were some of the clever suggestions and “Let’s raise £5,000”. Well, hmm, maybe? I thought it was a tall order but I really should not have underestimated **this Parish!**

So, the project was born – everyone in the Parish irrespective of how many steps they could do a day was invited to join and

what a fabulous response there was – over 70 people joined in to add their steps to the step counter on the website regularly and it started to become a daily obsession with me to track how quickly we were racing across the globe. Our wonderful tech team had made it possible not only to add our steps together but to monitor our progress across the world Calais, Reims, Brindisi, Alexandria, Wadi-Halfa, Luxor, Khartoum and many more I learned so much as I put the towns we visited into Google – did you know, for example, that Luxor is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world and is characterised as ‘the largest open-air museum in the world’ with its famous temples and tombs?

Whilst all around me, lockdown was isolating many people, my daily walking kept me going and every day I found I wanted to do more ... I cannot count how often every day I got my step counter out on my phone and was starting to have competitions with myself, can I do even more steps today? As I reached my goal each day, my phone encouraged me with celebratory messages – this was great – I had been making way too many trips to our ‘treats’ cupboard especially during lockdown and this was helping me and helping others – what a win-win situation! And the messages come flooding in from many parishioners, how much they were enjoying their walking, getting back to nature, listening to the bird song and marvelling at the beauty God has created for us, as nature began coming back to life with the first signs of spring. And with the walking

came the incredible sponsorship – I had been sceptical that we would reach £5000 until the day we had to review the goal upwards was this possible people were so generous, it was unbelievable. Before I knew it, we had even



RADIO MARIA ENGLAND – broadcasting from Cambridge across the country

Sarah Sykes

After a late winter set-up in 2019, Radio Maria England had its official launch in March 2020 and following a year of full-broadcasting, Radio Maria England sent out its volunteers into Cambridge and the surrounding area last month, to let parishes know a very special radio station is broadcasting in our area and growing from strength to strength.



Radio Maria has something for all ages. Mass and prayers, a youth programme, panel discussions, magazine shows, a children's hour, programmes exploring and explaining our Faith. If you have only recently discovered RME, you can also catch up on our back catalogue through podcasts which you can search out on your favourite podcasting platform or find direct links to on the RME website.

Mass is broadcast from Blackfriars, St John's Cathedral and Walsingham. There is a daily prayer hour praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the Rosary and prayer intentions. Programmes for children, programmes explaining our Faith – why we do what we do and believe what we believe. You can phone in and ask questions, or share your experiences, plus programmes of poetry, music and testimonies. Tune in and be inspired! You can listen on a DAB radio, on our website player, or through the Radio Maria World Family app.

And, if you would like to join us by volunteering your time and talents, we would love to welcome you onto the team. Whether you want to help with broadcasting, reading prayers live on air, or providing links between programmes, recording bible readings or books – we need voices! Or developing programme ideas, or

helping with promotion work or just answering the phone and taking messages, or helping keep the studio and offices clean. The opportunities are many and varied. We need YOU!

Our website: <https://radiomariaengland.uk/>
Volunteer: volunteers@radiomariaengland.uk
Enquires and information: info@radiomariaengland.uk

Introduction to Pax Christi

Arn Dekker



Pax Christi is an international Christian peace-making movement, based on the gospel and inspired by faith. Our vision is of a world where people can live in peace and without fear of violence, in all its forms. After the Second World War, it was founded in 1945 by some French and German Catholics wanting to work towards reconciliation between former enemies.

We believe in the power of prayer, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice and nonviolence and of the right to live in a culture which promotes these values and treats the whole of God's creation in a respectful and just manner.

Pax Christi works within the Church and wider community to bring about such a culture of peace, through its experience and ideas, and especially through the prophetic witness and actions of its members. We do this by

- taking a stand against violence;
- promoting the option of nonviolence as a means of resolving conflict in our homes, communities, in and between nations;
- providing peace education materials and practical programmes for children and adults;
- ensuring the message of peace is heard by the Church, by governments, decision makers and leaders in our local communities.

The network of Pax Christi International is now active in over 50 countries. We are always keen to collaborate with other individuals and organisations to bring the Peace of Christ to all who long for a better world.

In this country, the small team of Pax Christi staff, assisted by volunteers, has skilfully responded to the challenges of this last year with plenty to inspire and encourage individuals, parishes, schools and youth groups in peace-making.

Find us on the web at www.Paxchristi.org.uk and we are on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Flickr](#).

Summary of Parish Open Meeting. April 2021

Present: Fr Simon, Geoff Cook, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

Total present at start of meeting 16 rising to 21.

The Chair offered Fr Simon the opportunity to say a few words about when we might expect the appointment of a new bishop for our Diocese. Fr Simon confirmed that the official consultation process has now taken place. Our Diocese has joined the queue of those requiring a replacement bishop. However, he does not know what effect the pandemic and various lockdowns will have had on the speed of this process. It had been hoped that there would be a handover of the position in July, but this now seems unlikely, and he suspected that it won't happen until the autumn at the earliest. When the time comes Bishop Alan will retire to the Rectory at OLEM.

Mass arrangements

Review of Easter Services

The Chair asked for comments on ticketing and arrangements in general.

Nora Darby thanked everyone who volunteered as stewards, readers and Eucharistic ministers and the Chair echoed this with thanks to all who were involved in the organisation of the Masses and particularly to Nora for organising the rotas. It was felt that Fr Simon's ideas for Good Friday worked well. The candles in front of the Cross on the altar steps were lovely, services were a complete joy and we were grateful for what there was rather than worrying about what was missing. Jeanette Milbourn suggested that if we have to do this again that battery powered tealights would be nice to have at the Vigil. Jim Infield reported that the children's liturgy on Good Friday had been really special and very well attended.

Stephen Warde said that the ticketed Triduum Masses were all fully booked and most who booked had attended. The few extra people who arrived without tickets were able to be accommodated in the Parish Room and he thanked the Tech Group for the set up in there.

Current Arrangements

Since the Easter weekend, we have returned to a first come, first served seating arrangement and there is plenty of space at most Masses, with the exception of the 11am Mass.

Altar servers: Fr Simon said that he had tried to get in contact with Stephen Chapman to organise the return of altar servers and possibly do some extra training for COVID awareness and what they can/can't do on the altar in the current circumstances.

Music and participation: Charles Nisbet who normally attends the Vigil Mass, said that he feels more excluded in participation in the Mass when present in the church, rather than watching the livestream from home because we are not able to sing the Gloria and other Mass parts. He would like to have four hymns and the rest of the Mass spoken. Fr Simon said that on asking for a show of hands at 11am Sunday Mass, people also preferred this and he would ask for a show of hands to gauge feeling at the Vigil Mass also.

Mary-Jane O'Sullivan suggested that the clapping Gloria could be used for the occasional Sunday

Sandy Hobson suggested that speaking words over background music would be an effective way of participating and retaining the music of the Mass.

Serga Collett suggested that signing some hymns could also be away of participating.

We were also reminded that humming is permitted and maybe the message played at the start of Mass could be amended to mention this.

Seating in the church

The Meeting was asked how they would feel if the spacing of seating was reduced from 2m to 1m? The question was posed to gather a feel for the general opinion of the Parish and not because it is something that we are currently planning to do.

It was felt that if we move too quickly to reduce distancing that those who might be thinking of returning might be put off coming back. Any changes that we decide to implement in the future should be done bearing in mind the feelings of those who are clinically vulnerable, particularly as people sometimes do not wear masks correctly, and with clear communication.

We could consider having 2m spacing on one side of the church and 1m spacing on the other side, or having 1m spacing at one Mass and 2m spacing at other Masses.

Jim O’Sullivan reminded us that free lateral flow tests are available in the community which can be done half an hour before attending Mass.

Although there are many reasons why there will be coughs and snuffles in a congregation from asthma, to hayfever, to the dryness of wearing a mask, it was felt that it would be useful to remind parishioners not to attend Mass in person with any cold symptoms through a note in the newsletter and some signage.

Parish Social Life

How can we rekindle this side of Parish life?

Fr Simon indicated that he is more than happy to facilitate group events within the government guidelines which are currently meetings outside of up to 6 people.

Coffee after 11am Mass from 17th May.

Fr Simon wondered if it would be possible to do this in the Parish garden with a maximum of 30 people able to attend and include those who are doing a Zoom coffee & chat at home by having a laptop running the Zoom meeting up in the garden. There would need to be someone policing numbers and some volunteers for the coffee rota.

Garden tidy up days would be an ideal outside Parish activity and could be easily social distanced.

Parish picnic in the school grounds after 21st June was suggested by Jeanette Milbourn.

Parish Groups

CAFOD – Serga, thanked all who took part in and donated to the Lent Walk for Water campaign which raised over £10,000. She said that she hoped to be able to share pictures of the final build of the solar pumps which will provide water for many.

On Friday 7th May at 7.30pm, the CAFOD group will be making plans on how we can look after our common home and will be holding a Zoom meeting to gather ideas for this and for renewing the Parish LiveSimply award this year

Confirmation – Bishop Alan is coming to the Parish on 17th May to administer the sacrament of Confirmation to the candidates. The Mass will be held at 6pm, and the church will be full with the candidates’ families. Fr Simon encouraged the Parish to support the candidates in prayer by joining the Mass from home via the livestream.

Readers’ training sessions

Nora Darby proposed that the Parish organise some reader training sessions. She suggested 2 x 4 hour sessions which could take place sometime after 21 June to which both those currently reading and those interested in joining this ministry could attend. Both spiritual preparation and practical considerations – such as the use of the microphone and moving around the church – will be covered.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 9th June

Tuesday 13th July

RE Quality Mark Award (REQM) for St Laurence's School

Congratulations to St Laurence School which was reaccruited with the REQM award in April. The assessor, Sandra Teacher said:

“St Laurence help their children develop their journey of faith in a positive learning environment. The school has a strong consideration of pupil wellbeing and pupil voice. St Laurence promotes children’s spiritual development and offers opportunities for high quality reflection.

Within the school there is a celebration of diversity and pupils are strong in their identities and knowing where they came from. St Laurence provides high quality teaching based on a quality curriculum with a particular emphasis on self-assessment and sequencing and progression.”

Our Lady of Walsingham

Our Reception children have been thinking about Mary during her special month. They listened to the story of Our Lady of Walsingham and drew pictures of the Our Lady of Walsingham statue. Illustrations below provided by **Isla-Rose, Eliana, Aleah, Hanna, Lena, Marion, Joseph, Christiana and Bill.**



PIC•COLLAGE

The Crowning of Our Lady

Year 3 and 4 celebrated the end of May with a Marian procession and crowning. The children prepared reading and prayers and processed around the school singing 'As I Kneel Before you' to each year group. Together with Fr Simon they said a decade of the Rosary and Fr Simon blessed each year group and staff members.

The children returned to the hall where they crowned Our Lady with flowers.

Mary, you are the joy of those in heaven, the help of those on earth, the consolation of those still burdened by their sins. Accept our May blossoms, accept each flower as a symbol of praise and thanksgiving.

Fr Simon has taken some of the flowers to place at the statue of Our Lady at St Laurence's Church.



Personal Stories and Experiences

Dick Wilson and *The Pilgrim*

Nora Darby

Many readers of *The Pilgrim* magazine will recognise the name of parishioner Dick Wilson.

In 2013 he decided to revive the Parish magazine, *The Pilgrim*. It had been out of print for some time due to changing circumstances. He pulled together a group of volunteers; I was one of them. In fact, the core group is unchanged! The plan was for four editions a year, Lent, June, September and Advent and it was in Advent of that year the first edition was published.

Dick continued to edit until the summer of 2014 but then stepped down due to other commitments, but these were never allowed to interfere with his contributions to each, and every edition. He submitted articles on a wide variety of subjects, I particularly remember – ‘What does it take to be Human’, which covered quite a few editions. The time taken and research done by Dick was amazing.

He was also a regular contributor to Tailpiece (his idea) which contains, cartoons, snippets of Parish memorabilia and in Dick’s case tales of his childhood escapades, of which there were many, in Carlisle, his hometown.

Dick has been unwell for some time but continued his contributions, I would get a call – I’ve got something for you – after which I would receive a sheaf of papers, or the odd email.



He was very aware and very frustrated by the advance of his dementia but was coping until disaster struck some weeks ago. During the night he had a serious fall and was admitted to Addenbrooke’s where two fractures to his left arm were found. He has had a slow, painful and difficult recovery period. He is now in a rehabilitation unit in Bottisham. Here he is with his wife Judy in the garden.

His ongoing medical problems mean he can no longer contribute to *Pilgrim* and so for the first time in seven years and after 28 editions we do not have a Dick Wilson article. A sad moment for the Pilgrim Team and for those who know him at St Laurence’s.



‘Out of the mouth of babes’ by Pat Ward

When my son was three, we went to the seaside for the first time. He was in heaven, absorbedly digging sandcastles and paddling, and remarked: “I bet God wishes he was here”. I didn’t think in time to tell him: “But He is”.

We had just finished reading the book *Bible Stories for Children* and he said: I wish there was a book called ‘The Further Adventures of Jesus’.

Poetry Corner

PAINTED IN BOLD RED by Wally Moscuza

A long climb

To a spiral stair

Ready to act

My own ideas

A tarnished vision

The birth of Art

The eclipse of the sun

St Nicolas and the child

The fresco of a friar

Listening to a prayer

The meaning of man

He paints his soul

Black and white

Truth and lies

To decipher life.

A game of dice

Motivation for life

Man's as old as the world

He ripens with pride

With a thirst for life

On canvas

Painted in bold red

The image of man

Appearing on earth

Perplexed by his greatness

Sculptures his castle

A track to follow

A pathless walk

A balcony in the air

And a door leading to light.

Tailpiece

And he saw that it was good

Most seniors never get enough exercise. In His wisdom God decreed that, seniors become forgetful so that they have to search for their glasses, keys and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made seniors lose co-ordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach, and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good.

Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good.

So if you find, as you age, you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest even though you mutter under your breath.

Some points to ponder:

Death is the number one killer in the world.

Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.

Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe years.

All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism

Life is like a jar of jalapeño peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow.

One liners!

Why are atoms Catholic?

Because they have mass.

En-route to church to make his first confession, my nervous seven-year-old grandson asked me what he could expect. "Confession is where you tell all the bad things you've done to the priest," I told him. He looked relieved. "Good, I haven't done anything bad to the priest.

Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

Because Noah was always standing on the deck.

Before beginning the service, our priest read aloud a note he'd been handed moments earlier. "It says here that I should announce that there will be no B.S. tomorrow morning." He tucked the piece of paper into a pocket and added, "I'm hoping they mean 'Bible Study.'"

Why didn't Noah ever go fishing?

He only had two worms!

Editorial

Nora Darby

Easter came with the welcome news that our Church would reopen to parishioners with obviously all the guidelines in place. The first Mass was the 6pm Vigil for Palm Sunday and there were 16 services throughout the Triduum, Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. These included the excellent idea of the reimagining of the Good Friday experience from Fr Simon starting with a full reading, which was livestreamed only, of the Passion at 12noon. This was followed at 1pm by hourly reflections and veneration of the Cross with placing of the tea lights and finally receiving of Communion. All services were fully booked and well-attended. All the preparations and planning worked very well. Many thanks to everyone who was a part of this great effort.



Finally, all good wishes and prayers for Deacon Mike Smith who will be returning from Rome for ordination to the priesthood at St John's Cathedral, Norwich on Saturday 3rd July. We are very excited to hear that he will celebrate his first Mass as a priest at St Laurence's on Sunday 4th July at 11am.

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

The deadline for the next edition is

Friday 6 August 2021 for publication on 4/5 September

The production team:

Editors: Nora Darby, Sarah Sykes

Sub-editors: Alex Dias, Carol Williams, Nora Darby, Sarah Sykes

Commissioning Editor: Nora Darby

Cover: Leonie Isaacson

Proofreaders: Caroline O'Donnell & Sarah Sykes

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

All members of the Pilgrim team can be contacted at pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk

Some Regular Events

The Parishioners Open Meeting is where **ALL** parishioners can come together to discuss and debate Parish matters, and decide when and where things need to be done. The Agenda is planned in advance and the meeting is led by the chairman and Parish Priest. Meetings commence at 7.30pm and currently are held online as a Zoom meeting.

The Zoom link is published in the Newsletter and sent via the Keep in Touch email during the week before the meetings.

You can raise a topic at the meeting but it helps if you send a short note about 10 days before the next meeting Stephen Warde at **openmeetings@saintlaurence.org.uk**, which can then be circulated.

The Pilgrim by Email

You can receive a pdf version by email. If you are not already on the distribution list, send a request to **pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk**

Pilgrim on the Web

The most recent back editions are now available on the Parish website

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

ABLAZE

The St Laurence Youth Mass is known as ABLAZE. It is designed to encourage our youth to build their confidence in running the Mass for the benefit of us all. It is held Sunday 5pm on the first Sunday of the month. It is vibrant and fun. We encourage young readers, Eucharistic ministers, budding musicians of all ages, and the only requirement is an 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!

Parish Virtual Coffee and Chat

held after 11am Mass

Zoom details:

<https://zoom.us/j/93748136619?pwd=eUZLZkRiQXIZQWZndFdzci8wZnp6Zz09>

Meeting ID: 937 4813 6619

Passcode: 222496

Upcoming Parish Events

First Holy Communion	12th & 19th June
Next Parishioners Open Meeting	Wed 9 June Tues 13th July 7:30pm
Ordination to the Priesthood of Mike Smith at St John's Cathedral, Norwich	Saturday 3rd July
Mass of Creation and garden tidy up	Sunday 11th July 11am Mass
Confessions Currently heard in the parish room/garden only	After Mass on Saturday morning until 10.30am Before Saturday evening Mass 6pm



Follow St Laurence's on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/stlaurencecambridge>

ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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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.

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Service Times

Saturday 9.30am

6pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am

9:30am (sung)

11am (sung)

Join us afterwards for virtual coffee and chat after Mass on Zoom (details on inside back cover)

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am

Wed, Fri 12.30pm

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

St Laurence's School

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