

# The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Catholic Church Magazine, Lent 2016



## Lent 2016

### Contents

#### What's New?

What is the Extraordinary Year of Mercy?	1-2
Response to the Bishops' Synod Report	2
Laudate si'	2-3
Refugee Crisis	3

#### Features and Opinions

The importance of good role models	4
Peacemaking in the Year of Mercy 2016	5
Comment on Bishops' Synod	5
Cardinal Points	6
Christian Faith among African Cultures	7-9
Integrated Catholic Communities ...	9
The Society of Friends	9-10
Ruth Flores CAFOD talk	11

#### Parish Organisations and Activities

CAFOD's hopes and challenges for 2016	12-13
Children's Liturgy – God's Good News	13
School - Questions to biblical characters	13-14
Minutes of the Parish Forum 4 Feb	15-16

#### Personal Stories and Experiences

My Mother's Writing Desk	16-17
Lyn's House – a Cambridge Community	17-18
In Remembrance of John Dunn	18

#### Youth

Power of God's word ...	19
The Confessional From the Other Side	20-21
Poem - Open Your Heart	21
Patriarch Kirill & Pope Francis meeting	22
Wordsearch/Colouring page	23

#### Upcoming Events

24

#### Reviews

Rediscover Catholicism	24-25
Amahl and the Night Visitors	25-26

#### Tailpiece

27

#### Editorial

28

**STOP PRESS**

**STOP PRESS**

**STOP PRESS**

### **New Evangelisation - update**

After the national Proclaim! conference in July 2015 and three successful diocesan events the focus for New Evangelisation in the diocese shifts this year. The commission for New Evangelisation will be supporting parishes to develop local Parish Proclaim! Teams.

Realising that the size of the diocese makes it difficult to grow the diocesan events into events for everyone, the emphasis is shifting to diocesan to local deanery level. The New Evangelisation Commission will focus on each deanery in turn with parish representatives from these parishes becoming members of the New Evangelisation Commission during this time to focus on the deanery events. It is hoped that 5-6 parishes that are close together will support each other to create local opportunities to evangelise. The first of these events will be on 27th February in Bungay.

A New Evangelisation web page on the diocesan website [rcdea.org.uk](http://rcdea.org.uk) has been developed and launched this Lent. You will find ideas and resources to download and use in small groups or at parish level.

## Some Regular Events

### The Parish Forum

The Parish Forum is there to help parishioners to develop the life, worship and witness of the parish community, to build up the Body of Christ, to foster pastoral and missionary action and to advise the parish priest. It meets every 3 months. All parishioners are welcome.

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

*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.com](mailto:forum@saintlaurence.org.com), 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. About forty people already get it by email. To go on the list, email [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.** *Pilgrim back numbers will shortly be on the Parish website*

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

## ABLAZE

The St Laurence Youth Mass is known as ABLAZE and is an opportunity for youth in the Parish to come together and celebrate Mass. It is held at regular intervals on Sunday evening at 6pm in the church, followed by a shared supper. The next Ablaze Masses will be on 3 April and 1 May.

## Upcoming Parish Events

<b>Easter Week Masses</b>	
Palm Sunday	20 March
Maundy Thursday	24 March 8pm
Good Friday	25 March 3pm
Easter Vigil	26 March 8pm
Easter Sunday	27 March
	Usual mass times
<b>Service of Reconciliation</b>	18 March 7.30pm
Lenten Study Groups	6 weekly sessions
1 <sup>st</sup> group focusing on the Year of Mercy	Thursday 8pm
2 <sup>nd</sup> group focusing on the Psalms	Friday 11am
ABLAZE Youth Mass	3 April 1 May
Lenten House Mass	14 March
Scripture Study	Every Weds 7.30 – 9pm
Chrim Mass, Norwich	22 March 7pm
Coach leaving St Laurence's	4.15pm
Holy Hour	Every Weds 6-7.00pm
Confirmation Mass	28 April 7pm
Soulfood Prayer Group	Every Tuesday 8pm
1 <sup>st</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues: St Laurence's	
2 <sup>nd</sup> / 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues: OLEM Parish Hall	
Next Parish Forum	18 April

# 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 Patrick Cleary**  
01223 704640

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

**Assistant Priest:**  
**Fr Bob Eccles O.P.**  
01223 741265

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

**Assistant Priest:**  
**Fr Alex Ibeh**  
01223 704640

[ibealexander650@gmail.com](mailto:ibealexander650@gmail.com)

**Deacon:**  
**Rev. Geoffrey Cook**  
01223 351 650

**Secretary:**  
**Pat Cook**  
01223 704640

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

## Sunday Masses

Saturday 6pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am  
9.30am (sung) with  
Children's Liturgy

11am (sung) with  
Children's Liturgy

This Mass is usually held at St Laurence's School,  
Arbury Road. During holidays, it is often held at the  
Church.

Coffee is usually after 11am in the Parish Room.

## Usual Weekday Mass times

Monday 9.30am  
Tuesday 9.30am  
Wednesday 9.30am  
Thursday 9.30am  
Friday 12.30pm  
Saturday 9.30am  
6.00pm Vigil Mass as above

Check the weekly newsletter for temporary changes of time or location

## St Laurence's School

Head Teacher  
Address

Telephone

Website

Mrs Clare Clark  
St Laurence's School  
Arbury Road  
Cambridge  
CB4 2JX  
01223 712227  
[office@stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk)  
[www.stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk](http://www.stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk)

## What's new?

### What is the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy?

Sarah Sykes



Last year Pope Francis declared a Jubilee Year of Mercy, in a papal bull entitled *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV), which started on 8th December 2015 and runs to 20th November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

When I first heard that this had been announced I wondered what this was and what it would mean for the Church.

I discovered that the tradition of a Jubilee Year reaches back into Jewish tradition when a Jubilee Year was a time of forgiveness, a time to remember God's providence and mercy, and a time to come back into a right relationship with one another and with God. Jubilee Years can be called every 25 or 50 years, but on this occasion our Jubilee Year is an Extraordinary one as it has been called outside these dates.

#### Why has the Pope called a Jubilee Year of Mercy now?

In the Pope's words, from his homily for First Vespers for Divine Mercy Sunday he explains:

'Here, then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because this is the time for mercy. It is the favourable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation'

#### What is happening during this year?

The Jubilee Year began with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica,

'The Holy Door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instils hope.' (MV, 3)

and was followed by Doors of Mercy being opened around the world, in local cathedrals and shrines, including the Diocese of East Anglia where Bishop Alan has opened the Holy Door at St John the Baptist Cathedral in Norwich, and the 500-strong congregation, made up of representatives from every

parish in the Diocese, were invited to walk through it with him.

Bishop Alan said: "The Year of Mercy is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the whole idea of mercy, both in the scriptures and in the liturgy of the church. And particularly the way in which compassion, love and mercy should be part of the church's pastoral care of the people of God and those on the margins.

"The main Holy Door within the Diocese at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich will be open all year for people to make pilgrimage and walk through it."

A Holy Door has also been opened at the Walsingham shrine and a spiritual pathway of devotions has been established, including the Stations of Mercy with special prayer cards for each of the seven elements of the pathway.

These doors are symbols of God's mercy and everyone can take up the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to their local Holy Door during the Jubilee. This pilgrimage is to be a journey of walking closer with God and discovering "moment[s] of grace and spiritual renewal." (MV, 3)

There are several other Vatican-led events throughout the year including:

4th March, '24 Hours for God' a time for returning to the sacrament of reconciliation, which includes a penitential service led by the Pope.

5th May, Prayer vigil to 'Dry the tears' for all those in need of consolation, presided over by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Basilica.

and Jubilee days for, among others:

- Sending forth of Missionaries of Mercy (10/2)
- Priest and deacons (1/6, 27/5)
- Youth (26/7)
- Catechists (23/9)
- Prisoners (6/11)

The Pope also wants us to reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. He hopes that it will be a way to "reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy." (MV, 15)

What are the corporal works of mercy? To feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked,

welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.

What are the spiritual works of mercy? To counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

By the time this article is published we will be a quarter of the way through the Year of Mercy, what will our contribution have been both personally and as a Church?

### **Some ideas mentioned at the Parish Forum last week:**

A Mercy Tree?

A prayer wall where parishioners are invited to write a brief description of a project they are taking on for the year, with the possibility of including their contact details if they are looking for others to join them.

A buddy system for new families?

Using our Parish Rooms for the community, trying to ensure that they are used as much as possible by community groups at affordable community rates and hence bringing the wider community into the embrace of our Parish?

Arrange regular group visits to particular local retirement homes?

A regular group inviting whole families to come together to pray the Rosary / or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, with children welcome and at its heart.

Launch an initiative to present new parents with ideas for strategies to help their child participate in the worship of the Mass with their family, at their own level, as they grow, helping them get together a special bag to take to Mass full of resources to engage, rather than entertain, the child.

---

## **Response to the Bishops' Synod Report**

### **Dick Wilson**

Pope Francis is expected to give his response to the Bishops' Synod in March. This is the way the Synod works; it gives five yearly reports, with occasional extra meetings, which offer advice and suggestions to the Pope. It doesn't make decisions on practice and doctrine, though it discusses them. This is one reason why it was agreed that there should be no attempt to

alter the current position with regard to contentious issues, such as the admission of remarried people to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. As explained in the last Pilgrim, it was agreed only that further consideration should be given to this matter. This means that this advice just scraped home - by a huge 2 to 1 majority, which is the normal ratio for bodies like the Church, as in the election of a new pope, or the ordination of women bishops in the Church of England (hence the delay). Only 60% is enough to stop a filibuster in the US Senate. The rather frosty acceptance, "receiving" rather than welcoming homosexual people, was going to be as far as a sufficiently large minority was prepared to go.

The attempt by traditionalist bishops to close the matter without discussion is clearly regarded by the Pope as a kind of filibuster, and at the preparatory Synod and the general meeting in Oct 2015 he repeatedly said that people should be prepared to see change. The advice to give further consideration to remarriage and communion was the only one to be formally retained.

On all these matters the advocates of no change are on strong ground in claiming that a substantial change in practice implies a change in doctrine. The ordination of women would be such a case. Allowing priests to marry would not. The barrage against any movement is considerable. But changes have often happened – about changing interest on loans, on the place of natural selection in the world of living things, and about the right of the Church to persecute non-Catholic Christians. In fact, the most recent example was the endorsement, during the Second Vatican Council, of the principle of religious freedom, which a century earlier had been officially declared anathema. Above all, it is now recognised that the accounts in Genesis of creation, a first "Adam and Eve" and a worldwide flood are not literally true. You don't want to fudge – a tolerated change in practice in defiance of the doctrine. The Church's business is to see whether the insights of a particular age are closer to the truth than what went before, and if so, to say so. As with the paragraphs which were included because they were very close to the necessary votes, the Pope's hands are not tied by his advisers.

---

### ***Laudate si'***

The Encyclical *Laudate si'* covers a wide range of ideas. Its general thesis is that there is a duty on human beings to live in and use our common home, the earth, in a way that does not destroy it. The argument that the Church should not attempt to intervene in scientific issues is absurd. Certainly, it should not attempt to

adjudicate between one scientific theory and another. When the Christians use the Bible as a source for the age of the earth, or to suppose that each species is separately created rather than derived from the constant pressure of natural selection, it is venturing beyond its competence. When it asks whether our use of fossil fuels is a bastion against poverty (fossil fuels are cheaper at the moment; they won't be for long), or a careless and potentially lethal threat to human survival, or when the Church reacts to the handling of new possibilities in genetics, it does what it has always done – it sets out to create a morality in human behaviour that is in accordance with the will of God. A view on whether or not unwanted global warming is actually taking place, and is in any significant way caused by human activity, can only be argued from science. What we can do about it also relies on the science. What we ought to do about it is a matter of a moral judgement.

The outcome of the Paris conference reflects this. The evidence that recent global warming is largely caused by human activity is overwhelming, though like any other such evidence it can be varied and reviewed, one way or the other. The agreement at the Paris conference requires both developed and developing countries to control carbon emissions so that they do not lead to increases in average temperature of more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels – with the hope of restricting them to 1.5°C. Poorer countries should receive help in controlling emissions and with the effects of extreme weather.

The catch is that not all of the agreement is legally binding, so future governments of the signatory countries could still go back on their commitments. Already, for example, the British government has removed its subsidy on new solar panels to produce electricity, years earlier than expected. And it is permitting, encouraging and subsidising exploration for new sources of fossil fuel.

Reducing global warming, like any other measures (see *Laudato si'*) requires individual action generating clean energy; good science to rebut the sceptics who advance their own profit; and then, the political will of governments and voters.

---

## Refugee Crisis

As the Syrian crisis gets ever deeper, there is on-going pressure for the UK to accept more Syrian refugees. Over 13.5 million Syrians need help in their country, of which 6.6 million are internally displaced. 4.3 million Syrians have fled abroad, mostly to neighbouring countries in the region. The Government

is planning to resettle in the UK up to 20,000 Syrian refugees from countries near Syria by 2020. The Government has committed over £1.1 billion to helping refugees in Syria and the region, in preference to resettlement in the UK. Cambridge City Council has agreed to host 50 Syrian people over the next year.

## How Can We Help?

Cambridge City Council was one of the first councils in the country to welcome refugees. In spite of the tiny proportion the Government proposes to admit, there are many ways in which individuals in Cambridgeshire can help. Anyone who wants to help the Syrian refugees can learn more about different ways to help at: [www.cambridge.gov.uk/Syrian-refugees](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/Syrian-refugees). UNICEF is working inside Syria, as well as delivering humanitarian aid across the region. Your support will help children get access to clean water, medical care, protection and warm clothes. Other organisations working there include the British Red Cross Appeal, Oxfam, Save the Children's Child Refugee Crisis Appeal, the Refugee Council Crisis Appeal, UNHCR's Emergency Appeal, the World Food Programme and Refugee Action's Emergency Appeal. All welcome donations to help their work for Syrians.

## Local support groups

The Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (CECF) is providing advice and practical help to asylum seekers and refugees in Cambridge. CECF is an umbrella organisation for Cambridge and district that also provides racial equality services to individuals and groups. The Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign is recruiting volunteers and linking up community initiatives to assist refugees. For general enquiries contact Margaret Loescher – [maggie466616@yahoo.com](mailto:maggie466616@yahoo.com); for press and media enquiries contact Amy Lee – [amylee.m.a@googlemail.com](mailto:amylee.m.a@googlemail.com) or Aslan Shand – [aslanshand@yahoo.com.au](mailto:aslanshand@yahoo.com.au)

The Cambridge Calais Refugee Action Group is supporting people at Calais. They are looking for donations of cash and specific foods, as well as volunteers.

## Fostering and adoption (Cambridgeshire County Council)

One of the priority groups is likely to be unaccompanied children and young people. Cambridgeshire County Council will consider providing fostering arrangements and encourages anyone interested in offering support in this way to find out more information. Freephone 0800 052 0078

## Features and Opinions

### Why it is crucial for children to be surrounded by good role models in life and in literature

#### Karen Rodgers

“One has only to look at the recent winners of the Carnegie Medal, the UK's most prestigious prize for children's writing, to know that something is wrong.” says children's author Lynn Reid Banks. It is often remarked that classic fiction is not that different from contemporary fiction as both contain difficult material.

It is true that Greek myths and legends, stories from Shakespeare contain plenty of gore, horror, monsters, death, murder, dysfunctional families, that classics such as “The Secret Garden” and “The Railway Children” have challenging content. The way in which these classic books present and handle negative behaviours and characters, is a world away from how such themes and characters are presented and handled in contemporary fiction, especially those written for young adults and older children. The frightening aspects of both “The Little Match Girl” and “The Red Shoes” cause the redemptive and hopeful endings to shine even more brightly in a child's consciousness.

“A Landscape With Dragons: The Battle for Your Child's Mind” by Michael O'Brien explains why contemporary literature is so different. Around 1980 there was a marked change in publishing policy for children's books in favour of the materialist and the utilitarian, which is why it would be hard for many of the classics to get published if they were written today. The same holds for films and there is now routinely a dramatic difference between a classic book and the angle taken by a contemporary film version of the same. One of the starkest illustrations of this for me personally was talking to an 8 year old friend after she had watched the film version of “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe”. I asked her which character she most admired. She declared that the most attractive and memorable character for her was the White Witch. Poor C. S Lewis would be devastated.

And this is the point; few people come away from Shakespeare's Macbeth, bursting to emulate the wife of the main protagonist. Classic books pre-1980 contain many negative characters and behaviours, but these are almost always set within the moral context which makes it evident to the reader that such behaviours make for bad associates and miserable lives. This is in stark contrast to much of post-1980 fiction, in which it is routine for the hero or heroine of the book to engage in very negative behaviours and yet to appear glamorous; to be portrayed in fact, and often very

effectively and seductively, by the writers as someone to be admired and emulated.

Technology has changed over the last 200 years but human nature has not and does not. Human beings still have and will always have a visceral need in all of their formative years (and formation does not stop at 18, see “The Myth of Maturity: What Teenagers Need from Parents to Become Adults” by Terri Apter) of the company of those who experience and share love, empathy, joy, self-discipline, discernment, commitment, integrity and hope. The ages from 12-18, form a critical period for building a sense of identity, of society and of a person's place in that society. Adults both in person and via books have a crucial role to play for good or ill in shaping the outlook and sense of identity of young people; feeding a craving is a world away from providing nourishment.

If a 14 year old is surrounded by role models, in life and in literature, who do not seem to know what is kind and what is not, who have a despairing view of life, who are malicious, cynical, materialistic, addicted, jaded, aggressive towards parents and other figures of authority and towards siblings, he or she is not merely inclined to adopt similar attitudes; in addition, such role models are highly likely to adversely affect the young person's mental health. I worked in the school attached to an adolescent psychiatric unit (one of my best experiences in conventional schooling by the way, excellent support for both students and staff) and I have no doubt that it was not mere coincidence that the most disturbed and depressed children read the most disturbing and depressing books.

If, on the other hand, the young person finds the very thing which each one is internally and passionately seeking; i.e. positive role models in life and in literature who understand, love life and other people, who have hope for the future, joy in the beauty of life, an understanding of what is good and what is not, and a keen sense of direction, they too will very likely develop this positive outlook.

As adults, especially as Catholic parents, we have a huge and crucial responsibility and also opportunity to supply our children with such role models.

I hope that this Year of Mercy will be a turning point but it will only be this turning point if we do the turning and that starts most crucially with our own children and with the books we choose to give them.



## Peacemaking in the Year of Mercy, 2016

**Arn Dekker**

Pope Francis has asked the Catholic community to live 2016 as a Year of Mercy, inviting us to ‘contemplate the mystery’ revealed in Jesus Christ. He reminds us that Jesus’ parables of mercy show the nature of God to be ‘that of a father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy’ and that Jesus personified that mercy in his dealings with all, friend and foe alike.

Fr. Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton, Surrey, and a Pax Christi member, says that it is our task to make God’s mercy visible in our world and to show the creative power of that mercy, as ‘the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope’. As a first step, everyone who visits a Christian home, parish, school or community should find there ‘an oasis of mercy’. But then, says Pope Francis, we have to take that mercy out beyond the confines of Church life, by opening our eyes to see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and to recognise that we are compelled to help them. And we must extend the quality of God’s mercy to the natural world as well; by the way we revere creation in both its beauty and its fragility. The way of mercy must be a seamless robe, affecting all of life.

Fr. Rob says, ‘I hope you can hear the urgency in Pope Francis’ appeal, his ‘burning desire’ that we re-engage with the need around us, ‘re-awakening our conscience’ by practical actions and prayer. On Sunday, January 17th, the Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrated Peace Sunday, our annual day of prayer for peace, using the theme chosen by Pope Francis, ‘Overcome Indifference and Win Peace’. That title shows the same sense of urgency as the Pope’s more general appeal that we may become bearers of God’s mercy to the world. For how can we hope for peace if we do not reject the ‘destructive cynicism’ which says that nothing can be done to change the world? Yet this is an urgency born out of hope: Pope Francis sees Peace as a ‘prize’ that is there for the winning; and the way to gain the prize is to choose (individually and collectively) a way of life dedicated to doing justice, God’s justice, a justice rooted in love.

The Catholic peace movement, ‘Pax Christi’, which facilitates the Peace Sunday celebrations each year, works with a similar urgency to secure the ‘prize’ of a peace which is both merciful and just. This it does locally by linking together people who are committed to the work of making peace, providing resources, and fostering prayer and reflection regarding the meaning

of the Gospel of Peace. But it works also internationally to build trust in troubled areas of the world and to speak out on issues of war and peace, on the basis of Catholic ethics.

If you are interested in receiving regular updates of the work of Pax Christi, please consider joining and getting involved in its work. You can also join the Cambridge based network and receive occasional email messages. Just let me know your email address.

Arn Dekker  
[arn@nlgb.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:arn@nlgb.fsnet.co.uk)

---

## Comment on the Report of the 2015 Bishops’ Synod to the Pope

**Charles Nisbet**

Three cheers for Dick Wilson’s article in the previous issue of The Pilgrim! But what a sorry tale he tells of the leaden hand of the Bishops’ Synod in their report to the Pope after he sought their advice on the Church’s approach to Christian marriage in the 21st century. The Pontiff made it clear that he believed that change was needed: the bishops of England and Wales recommended that nothing should change. So the most remarkable, far-sighted and generous-minded Pope we have had for centuries is to be defeated by gatherings of stubborn, blinkered men, determined to maintain their grip on a doctrine of which none of them have any practical experience. And if the other dioceses approached their duty of consultation in the same secretive way as did ours, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the bishops and their close advisers did not wish to have their self-righteous certainty troubled by the opinions of anyone who might have had real experience of the subject.

As you may gather, I am one who, in the words of an earlier priest of this parish, “has married unwisely or too often”. I have been coming to Mass as a non-communicant for over 40 years. For the first time, I begin to wonder why.

## Cardinal points

### John Hobson

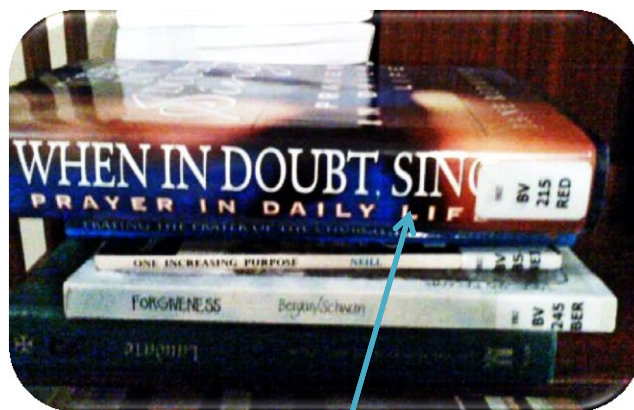
Just recently my mind has been diverted by thoughts of leadership and how this is differently perceived or understood in different nations and cultures. The Tablet, that well-known Catholic magazine, recently published an article which pointed out that in 7 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the presidents have been in office for longer than 20 years (this neatly misses out Mr Mugabe further South in Zimbabwe who has been around since 1987!). Furthermore five of these presidents are re-writing their constitutions in order to remain in power - Kagame (Rwanda), Nkurunziza (Burundi), Sassou Nguesso (Congo Brazzaville), Kabila (former Zaire), Museveni (Uganda). The late Omar Bangor of Gabon holds the record having held power for 41 years, crikey! There seems to be no fuss about any of this, neither within the individual nations, nor across Africa. How come? To our way of thinking just to amend the constitution to stay in power as a president is quite an unacceptable, even corrupt, way of behaving.

The answer may be that we in the West have a differently developed view of what is an acceptable implementation of a constitution and what actually makes the democratic process worthwhile. Many parts of the world have been “gifted” an implant of a western style of a constitution and democracy but one that did not necessarily meld properly into the recipient cultures’ views of what was really needed or desired or even workable. At times the US foreign policy mantra seems to be that whatever it takes just bring the internet and democracy to all and everything will be OK. The British approach was to export bewigged judges and two houses of parliament and a new international border to solve all manner of problems. However it is true to say that in the western mindset the democratic process is the way we choose not only our own national leaders but also district and county leaders, local leaders and local parish committee leaders. Democracy was and is the tool we eventually used to remove the lifelong office of feudalism and the direct rule of monarchs and despots. All our democratic levels of leadership or management are subject to the electoral process and the elected persons have their powers defined and limited as well as their terms of office - we see this as key to the limiting of power.

The historical norms of family or any other form of leadership being a patriarchal/matriarchal or elder led structure has all but disappeared and in those areas of life where it is still in place it is largely frowned upon. This way of things is not the same all over the world. This is the story of social evolution in the

industrialised world. Many cultures, and certainly in large parts of Africa, family and other forms of social leadership are very much a patriarchal or elder led, matter. Leaders are not elected at each and every level of society and in those levels where they are elected they often see no earthly sense or reason in submitting to re-election. Power is power after all, why would one voluntarily relinquish it. To have the power and not to use it is weak - so, change the constitution, hold on to the power, after all you are already the chosen person, how can you become “unchosen”. It is a very different way of thinking. So we must realise that leadership and absolute power are often interconnected. What is leadership though? How is it defined? There are as many definitions as there are leaders but I like the definition suggested by Kevin Kruse in his contribution to Forbes, “Leadership is a process of social influence which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal.” (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership>)..

I would add to that the concept of an agreed goal. Kruse goes on to emphasise that leadership stems from social influence and emphatically not from authority or power and that it actually requires “others”. There is no mention of personality traits, attributes, or even a title; there are many styles, many paths, to effective leadership but it must include agreed goal(s). Leadership without agreed intended outcomes is nothing more than naked authority which simply becomes a command driven process - we do it because the boss says so. Society deserves better leadership than that and we should be glad that Pope Francis, through declaring a year of mercy, reminds us of how Jesus influences us to embrace an agreed set of goals and also showed us, through his life, how to achieve them - now that is leadership, and it’s also cross cultural.



Advice we should probably not follow?? - spotted by an eagle-eyed parishioner!

## **The Christian Faith amidst African Cultures**

### **Fr. Alexander Ibe, SMMM.**

Over a hundred years of history, the Church in Africa is still unable to arrest the problems arising from the fusion/coming together of the Christian faith and the cultural beliefs and practices of some customary beliefs. Seeing the increasing growth in the number and splendour of the African Church over these years, the increase in number of people baptized, the multiple numbers of church services on Sundays, the almost daily para-church activities such as the choir, scripture unions and pious societies, any visitor to African countries, perhaps, may see it as a sign of fruitful evangelization. In this sense, the “successful” assignment of the European missionaries, in spite of diverse, trying and difficult situations in which they had to operate, must undoubtedly be acknowledged.

But taking a critical look at the fundamental Christian practices, one finds embarrassing contradictions. In some cases, Christians at critical moments seem to resort to their local divinities, seek sorcerers and other ungodly ways of solving problems; they take refuge in sects and seek miraculous solutions thereby making a shift from their Christian way of life. This situation of double belonging (to religious beliefs), of syncretism and flight towards sects is something abnormal, something uncomfortable that disturbs the unity and uniqueness of the African. A typical African person is faithful to the basic features of his/her traditional religion and respects the culture of the land. But to some “converted” Christians, a similar fidelity to their Christian habits is somewhat lacking which suggests that the gospel message has not penetrated to the depth of the soul; it is still a “guest” not a family member.

Culture, simply put, is the people’s way of life. Culture, however, has intellectual and aesthetic connotations and indicates learning, refinement of spirit, and artistic and literary advancement. Thomas Pazhayampallil, SDB., commenting on culture quoted Pope John Paul II (Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*) in Pastoral Guide. He made it clear that: “Culture is the way of life of a people with all values, customs, languages, music, art, food habits, dress, dwellings, dances, etc. It is the way of being human, the way in which human beings express and develop their relationship with creation, with one another and with God.” [1]

### **Conflict between faith and culture**

One of the greatest challenges to faith in the African context is the popular attachment to the traditional culture. Some problems experienced by the pastors of souls and some pastoral agents emanate from the crisis

between faith and culture. Some spend the whole period of their pastoral experience fighting one form of cultural practice or the other. This battle began with the early missionary and it continues even till today. The Church has been accused, from some quarters, of being out of tune with current realities and, from another dimension, some cultural revivalists accuse her of being a chief agent in the destruction of the traditional culture. Nowadays, cultural identity has become the “in thing” and now that the contemporary world is moving on the axis of globalization and global cultural unanimity, many cultures feel like endangered species and are ever on the war path to preserve their cultural identity. All these have posed a lot of challenges to the Church and the Christian faith.

However, the conflict between faith and culture is normally encountered in Africa on three grounds. Number one is the “complete dichotomy between the life of faith and the cultural life with an ideological disdain for the cultural life.”[2] The second is the “exaggerated and secularist fascination with modern culture which brings about conflict with some of the cherished values of the Christian Faith.”[3] The third is the “unwholesome or the syncretistic combination of the Christian faith and the cultural life without due attention to the intrinsic values of the Christian gospel thus resulting in a shallow practice of the Christian faith.”[4]

### **Syncretistic Combinations and Double Allegiance**

Most of the conflicts between faith and culture are encountered on the level of the syncretistic combination of Christian faith and religious practices of the traditional culture. The American Heritage Dictionary defines syncretism as the recognition or fusion of differing systems of belief. “It often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced to an indigenous belief system and the teachings are blended. The new heterogeneous religion then takes a shape of its own.”[5] At the coming together of these two religious systems, one of them, if not both, loses its identity and/or fundamental structure. If this definition is applied in the Christian context, syncretism occurs when its interaction with any other religion (or culture) results in the loss or compromise of the basic structure or identity of the Christian faith. With the loss of the basic structure or identity of the Christian faith, the outcome is essentially the emergence of a new reality that is not Christian. We see this syncretistic approach clearly in Catholic missionary history. For instance, in the Igbo Nigerian context, we see so many cases of conflict and dispute as a result of a fusion of the Christian faith and the customary laws of the community. Some significant cases may be examined.

1. **Sacred Day:** In Igbo culture, there are sacred days dedicated to the chief deity of the land. On such market days, funerals are forbidden including Christian funerals. There is the belief that violation of this custom is a taboo and results in innumerable misfortunes on the family of the violators which includes death. In a particular community, sweeping of the courtyard of the deity is also part of the function of all married women including Christian women. In such a community, conflicts resulting from the exemption of Catholics in such customary beliefs are bound to arise. The surprising thing there is that some Christians will be against the exemption of anybody (even the Christians) with the argument that their culture is involved.
2. **Unwholesome Burial Practices:** Many traditional burial rites are intrinsically linked with ancestral cults, either as rites of incorporation into the ancestral world or as rites of purification for the living. Some of these practices become problematic when a priest in a particular community insists on the strict adherence to Catholic principles in burials. However, some dioceses have tried combating this malaise but many a time were rebutted by the response that this is African culture.
3. **Divinatory Practices:** Practices of divinatory types are ever on the increase among many Christians. When some Christians are faced with hardships they often times resort to traditional experts to find explanations for untold hardship. As people are avid for quick wealth, quick honour, and quick breakthroughs in life, false prophets abound and the preaching of the gospel can easily be turned into fortune-telling.
4. **Oath-Taking and Covenant Making:** In Igbo traditional setting for example, oath-taking has been a veritable means of entering into solid relationship with people and a sound way of resolving disputes. Naturally there are methods of making these covenant promises which include: Igba Ndu, Igba njo ahu, Igba Oriko, Ikwa Ala, Ofo Umunne and Ofo Umunna, etc. Many of these traditional methods of reconciliation appear effective in the sense that they achieve results. Because of this many people today clamour for the revival of such methods even in the core traditional means of oath-taking and covenant-making, rejecting the Christian oath-taking as not reliable enough. In similar cases, the more radically inclined Christians and “born-again” ones will dismiss any form of oath-taking as condemned in the Bible.

An important question one will not fail to answer is whether these methods are justified theologically in the light of Christian principles. An authentically African mode of reconciliation is one thing; the idea of effective evangelization in Christian principle is another. A reconciliation effort that ends up provoking death of either party sounds contradictory; but reconciliation in the Christian sense aims at the wellbeing of all parties in the relationship, it aims at enhancing love and promoting life. Reconciliation should be based on the biblical understanding of the compassionate God who does not wish the death of a wicked person but that he/she turns from their wicked ways and lives. The continuous search for life inclines towards real dialogue that respects the dignity of each party.

### **The Church's mission**

The Church, in the will of the father to preach the Gospel message to the ends of the earth, engages herself fully in this task of evangelization. “Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity, She exists in order to evangelize” [6]. This evangelization mission of preaching the Gospel is not only by the proclamation of the word but by the witness of life, an authentic life of a concrete individual to the faith, hope and love which the disciples of Christ laid down (cf. 1 Peter 2:15). Thus, the purpose of evangelization boils down to the transformation of a concrete person, an interior change. The Church in Africa, having become ‘a new homeland for Christ’ is gradually getting itself involved in the evangelization of the continent and the world. One thing that is outstanding is that this kingdom, which the Gospel proclaims, is lived by people who are profoundly linked to a culture. Thus, there is need for the evangelization of cultures. The Gospel message through evangelization permeates these cultures with the aim of purifying, unifying and elevating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

The Church, however, responds to this in her diverse missionary approach ranging from theological discussions like adaptation, contextualization, indigenization, etc. to inculturation which were aimed at recognizing the identity of local cultures. There has been consistent and persistent re-echoing, both by the Synod fathers and Vatican II Council, of the very importance and need for evangelization of inculturation, a process that entails “bringing the power of the gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures” [7]. Consequently, “the synod considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular church for a firm rooting of the gospel in Africa” [8]. Thus “it is a requirement for

evangelization...a path towards full evangelisation” [9].

As a journey towards a full evangelization, inculturation seeks to dispose African people to receive Jesus Christ in the fullness of their personal existence: personal, cultural, economic and political. Those cultures that are worth emulating should be promoted, nurtured and allowed to bear fruits but on the other hand, those of them that are contrary to the objective morality must, for the interest of human good, be buried in historical archives. This will help the African people live a more holy and authentic life in total union with God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit.

[1] T. Pazhayampallil, SDB., Pastoral Guide: Sacraments and Bioethics, Vol. II; IV Revised Edition (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2009), p. 1160.

[2] L. E. Ijezie, The Unending Conflict between Faith and Culture, Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Paper Presentation.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The Church in Africa: Constant mission and Modern Challenges, NACATHS Journal of African Theology, (Vol. 17), 2007, p.41

[6] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Nuntiandi, (8 Dec. 1975), Makuyu: Don Bosco Printing Press, 1992, no. 14

[7] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1979, n. 53

[8] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1995, no. 59.

[9] Ibid.

Catholic; an example of the Church going with the secular flow. At every turn young people looking to find a place in adult society are told they are too young, patronised by a “special provision”, corralled into it and made to feel they should be grateful for their exclusion. They try and find answers to the big questions they have, in the course of one-to-one conversations with adults they admire and trust, only too often to have the subject changed and the time cut short. If they do not find the answers they seek in the intimacy of a personal relationship and a private conversation, they will be most unlikely to raise these questions in a group setting. And if the adults in the parish spend little or no time one-to-one with young parishioners, the kind of mentoring relationships they need will have no chance to germinate and flourish.

When I remember my time in Mexico in the 1980s I see what those Mexican young people had and ours so rarely do; an accepted and unremarkable place in their local Catholic communities (which were genuine communities not groups of people who only meet up for an hour on Sundays). In those communities most adults understood without needing a job title that it was their role to befriend and mentor and they did it without needing to be primed or prompted. Once we have 11s and up involved in the general Parish ministries (flower arranging, visiting, cleaning, ironing altar cloths, singing, gardening, organising the food banks etc.) as a matter of routine and once those adults involved in those ministries understand their role as mentors and act in this capacity, then we will begin to see a turnaround. Until then young people will look elsewhere for the mentoring, the answers to their many questions and their place in the adult world to which they legitimately aspire.

---

## **Integrated, genuinely Catholic communities are the basis for good formation in the Faith**

### **Karen Rodgers**

“Where is the area in the church reserved for young people?” This kind of question is all too common in our parishes. The mind-set behind it is often well meaning but the ghettoisation which results too often cuts off the social oxygen from the tender young plant of faith and it consequently can be the catalyst for a process through which a young parishioner gradually but inevitably drifts away from the worshipping community.

People between the ages of 12 and 21 crave mentoring by older people; they have more than enough of age segregation at school and they do not need their parishes to replicate this. Yet it is becoming routine. This is both a huge problem and also thoroughly non-

---

## **The Society of Friends**

### **Trish Cam**

Who or what are Quakers? We have nothing to do with Quaker Oats, but the familiar figure on the packet was taken from a period when Quakers or Friends dressed plainly with broad-brimmed hats that they wouldn't doff to their 'betters' because they felt all men were equal – but to start at the beginning.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) began at a time of religious ferment in the mid-1600s when many dissenting Christian groups were objecting to the established Church of England's practices and teachings. George Fox, often considered the founder of Quakerism, was frequently brought before the magistrates for religious blasphemy and not paying

tithes. According to his Journal, the magistrate Gervase Bennet 'was the first that called us Quakers, because I bade them tremble at the word of the Lord'. This term of ridicule has become a familiar nickname and is used synonymously with the term Friends. In the beginning Fox and his followers, including some women preachers, spent many months in gaol suffering greatly for their beliefs.

A basic belief is that we are guided by an 'Inner' or 'Inward Light' and so have immediate access to God. We believe in continuing revelation and view the Bible as part of this revelation. Fox preached that 'Christ has come to teach his people himself' so ordained preachers are not needed to give people access to the Divine. Many Quakers have become convinced as Quakers as adults. They may have had a previous encounter with another religion that was not right for them on their spiritual journey. In worship we can be united 'in the things that are eternal', strongly aware of the value and meaning of life. This Inner Light is also a source of guidance and strength in trying to follow Jesus' teachings of the way of love. But, we are no better than anyone else at expressing religious experience in words.

Quakers have no formal creed but rather we have testimonies of our experience in living our beliefs. The four basic ones are the testimonies to peace, integrity, equality and simplicity. The understanding of these varies with the individual and has evolved through the centuries. Quakers have always been active in helping peace building around the world, including working at the international level with diplomats and the exchanges of young people. Currently, several Quakers from Cambridge travel at weekends to Calais, to help alleviate the appalling conditions in the refugee camps. During the World Wars many Quakers were conscientious objectors. Quakers were instrumental in getting the clause allowing conscientious objection into the Military Service Act.

Our testimony to honesty and integrity leads to not swearing oaths. The Bible states in the Matthew 5: 37, 'Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil'. You cannot tell more truth than truth, therefore, we affirm that we are telling the truth rather than swearing on the Bible. Quakers were trusted as bankers and businessmen because of their integrity. From the beginning women were accepted as having spiritual gifts. They preached widely and suffered for their faith the same as the men. Our testimony on equality leads to our work in prisons, for equal marriage and to respect for all races and religions. Simplicity is the most difficult to understand, as originally it meant plain dress. Today people need to decide what it means for them – technology or not, manner of dress and so on. Our meeting rooms have no

religious symbols. We can worship anywhere as God is everywhere. This makes them acceptable as places of worship for other Christian and non-Christian groups.

Quakerism in the UK is the un-programmed form. We have 'a priesthood of all believers' (abolishing the laity) because we are all able to have unmediated access to God. With that, comes the responsibility for oversight/caring for each other as there is no paid pastor to take on the role. In other parts of the world, especially in South America, Africa and part of North America, there are Friends Churches and a programmed format. They may have paid ministers who help guide the congregation, hymn-singing and a sermon as well as silent worship; un-programmed worship is just that. No one sets hymns, no one is responsible for a sermon and we all sit in expectant silent worship until someone is moved to speak. Some meetings for worship are silent throughout; during others several people may speak, sometimes following a thread or a theme.

In the 1650s Elizabeth Williams (aged 50) and Mary Fisher (aged 30), after discussing matters of religion with students in Cambridge, were 'publicly whipped by order of the Mayor'. By 1656 Friends were meeting for worship in a hired house near Sidney Sussex College. In 1700 Ann Docwra willed her land on Jesus Lane to Friends. But, by the late 1700s Quakerism had almost ceased in Cambridge. Regular public Meetings for Worship at Jesus Lane resumed in 1884. By the 1970s Friends had outgrown the Jesus Lane premises. There is now a second meeting house on Hartington Grove and a smaller Sunday Meeting for Worship in the Outer Parlour of Pembroke College.

Today Friends in Cambridge are active in many areas such as the Quaker Congo Partnership, prison visiting in Peterborough women's prison, helping refugees both in Calais and those being resettled in Cambridge, concern about world population and working for peace in many ways.



Friends Meeting House, Cambridge

## Summary of CAFOD talk given at St Laurence's Church on 22nd February 2016

### Ruth Flores

CAFOD is the official aid and development agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and I work in the Latin America team. Last Saturday I came back from meeting our partners and visiting our projects in Peru, so I will talk a little about one of our projects there.

I visited a very poor rural community called Cruz de Mayo. It lies up in the mountains, at high altitude above the town of Caraz. In the community I heard first-hand from small scale farmers about the support of CAFOD partner CEAS (the official social education and action department of the Peruvian Catholic Church) in their struggle to defend and protect their key water source - Lake Parón. This is a glacial lake which provides water to the community, the town of Caraz and the whole river basin which includes large farms producing crops for export.

Over many years CEAS has worked with the community of Cruz de Mayo, and many other key local stakeholders, providing them with unbiased information, training, legal support on their rights and technical expertise so that they are able to protect their local environment, and water supply.

Some years back, the community faced a huge challenge as a large energy company was using the water from Lake Parón for hydroelectricity, but without consideration for the local people or environment. They would secretly let out huge amounts of water from the lake at night, flooding and ruining crops and leaving the lake at a dangerously low level for the future. The community members, worked together, protested peacefully (in 2008) and stopped the company operating.



Ruth at Lake Peron. The mountains in the distance should be covered with snow but the melting glaciers are filling the lake which is usually filled by rain at this time of year. Climate change has been rapid here.

CEAS, our partner, has supported the community through all of this. Now there is another big threat as ground beneath land belonging to the community has

been sold off [by the state] to a mining company. This poses a huge risk to the local environment because if mining takes place it will probably pollute the local water supply.

With CAFOD's support, CEAS and other partners are receiving additional technical advice from experts in water and mining at Newcastle University.

Because of this the community has started carrying out water monitoring. And now have over a year's worth of data on the quality and quantity of the water supply at different monitoring points.

During my visit, we joined community members including Adan, who has been a local leader, and Marcario, who is the elected leader of the local Water User's committee, in carrying out the water monitoring. We learnt first-hand how clean the water is currently and also how many people depend on this water for drinking, cooking, washing and farming.

The data collected from water monitoring is what many communities affected by mining do not have and so are left in a very powerless position when facing mining companies or if mining begins.

Flor, a mother of five who is very active in community decisions following participation in a women's group that our partner CEAS helped set up, explained that the community are absolutely against mining. With CEAS' continuing support the community are in a much stronger position to work together with other allies to protect their water, keep it clean and available for families to use.



Ruth with Flor, carnation grower and local environmental activist

This Lent, we have a very real opportunity to ensure more people, like Flor, Adan, and Marcario, who live in the world's poorest places, get the technical and legal support to defend their water supply and care for our common home.

On behalf of CAFOD, on behalf of the women, men, girls and boys we work with, thank you for your support and prayers for our work.

## Parish Organisation and Activities

### Climate Change, Migration and Mercy: the Challenges and Hope of 2016

Imogen Choi

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Paris, from 30 November to 12 December 2015. It was the 21st yearly session of Conference of the Signatories (Fr. Conférence des Parties signataires) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – COP21 for short. The agreement reached in Paris in December 2015 was hailed with relief by the more than two million people who had advocated a resolution that would protect the world's poorest people from the effects of climate change - among whom were the many UK Catholics who signed the CAFOD petition. The international public's eye on the COP21 summit was in large part responsible for the moral pressure on all parties participating, and the target to keep temperature rises to below 2°C between 2020 and 2030 was regarded as a significant step forward from the failures of previous summits to reach a consensus among key players.

The deal provides hope - a hope which was at the heart of Pope Francis's own appeal against despair and apathy in his encyclical *Laudato si'* - but a hope which will need monitoring, nurturing and negotiating throughout the coming decade. If changes in the domestic political climate lead to a key player withdrawing or failing to comply, the binding nature of the agreement would be brought into question. Also, the hope of lower emissions is at present at odds with the level of action pledged by individual countries - which according to the New Scientist, will at best cap warming at below 3°C - a patent gap, as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon observed, between 'aspiration' and 'action'.<sup>2</sup> The call of Pope Francis to an 'ecological conversion' on a personal, community and national level, seems less a single moment of truth, than a long-shared pilgrimage of faith over these coming years.

Singularly lacking from the COP21 agenda was any attempt to articulate a framework for defining and giving rights to 'climate refugees' - those displaced internally or externally as a direct result of environmental changes.<sup>3</sup> While climate refugees remain in the background for now, the millions of refugees at Europe's doorstep - many fleeing war and persecution, and the vast majority still precariously hosted in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt - are too visible to be ignored. In recent weeks the inevitable frictions generated by this mass movement of people have come to the fore. Long before the news stories, individual members of the Houses of

Parliament have noted that there is evidence of genocide in Syria against Christians and Yazidis, and that these two groups often cannot stay in the refugee camps.<sup>4</sup> The theme of Pope Francis's message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, on 17th January, entitled "Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us: The response of the Gospel of Mercy", is an intentional troubling of conscience in this light. While organisations such as CAFOD and Aid to the Church in Need support the immediate needs of refugees outside the UK, there are also local initiatives in Cambridge.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28663-paris-climate-deal-is-agreed-but-is-it-really-good-enough/> [12 Dec 2015]

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/27/un-urges-business-leaders-to-double-investment-in-green-energy-by-2020> [27 Jan 2016]

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.citylab.com/weather/2015/12/cop21-paris-climate-refugees/418656/> [4 Dec 2015]

<sup>4</sup> <http://davidalton.net/2015/12/17/north-korea-and-the-chilling-findings-of-the-united-nations-commission-of-inquiry-and-calls-in-parliament-for-bbc-world-service-transmissions-to-korea/>

#### CAFOD at St Laurence

Our parish has an active group of CAFOD supporters (Catholic Agency For Overseas Development). CAFOD is the official Catholic aid agency for England and Wales. It is a member of Caritas International – a group of over 160 Catholic agencies from around the world – known as 'the helping hand of the Church'. Because they work through the local Church, we can reach people and places that others can't. A meeting in January made the following plans:

There will be a Lenten Fast Day speaker for each Mass and for bucket/basket collections on the door for the weekends of Feb 13th-14th and 20th-21st, backed up by regular giving initiatives.

A Giving Tree appeal and Christmas card sales, carried out jointly with SVP (Society of St Vincent de Paul), raised over £500.

There may be a fundraising concert for refugees in the church.

Encouraging more MP correspondents: this might be mentioned at any events organised; one of the most effective campaigning tools and ideal for those who cannot commit to volunteer in other ways. Those who are interested can sign up here to receive occasional information about pressing issues to write to their MP about :

<http://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/How-to-campaign/Get-to-know-your-MP>



Prayer for Peace during Advent was well-attended, and future prayer events of a similar kind would certainly be possible.

Lenten activities may include a film evening to screen *Romero*, with a chance for discussion about the issues raised and perhaps Fairtrade refreshments and a display on Oscar Romero, with Stations of the Cross or Lenten prayer.

To find out more or get involved in local initiatives contact Imogen - [sutton.imogen@gmail.com](mailto:sutton.imogen@gmail.com).

---

## **God's Good News –Would you like to help with the Children's Liturgy?**

### **Leonie Isaacson**

Every Sunday in term time around 9.30am, small and not so small feet gather on the 'magic' carpet at St Laurence School before setting off to learn about God's Good News. As with the Children's Liturgy at the 11am Mass, the group is usually split into two smaller groups which are roughly differentiated as 'little ones' and those that can read. Children's Liturgy is held in two different locations in the school and led by a roster of parents and parishioners. Both groups start the liturgy with the singing of a simple hymn and the lighting of a candle, each child getting their turn to share in the lighting of the candle to group acclaim, 'Jesus is the light of the world'. The groups are then led through the relevant gospel reading in a way that is appropriate for their age. This may be in the form of a discussion, activities working towards something to present back to the Mass, role play or just plain colouring to illustrate and explain the meaning behind the gospel reading or event in the liturgical calendar.

Last year the Children's Liturgy team for both 9.30 and 11am masses sought feedback from parents about what they liked, what they got out of the sessions and suggestions for improvements. The June 2015 edition of the Pilgrim reported back on the responses from parents for the 11am Mass.

The feedback from parents at 9.30 Mass indicates that they appreciate the introduction of a child-oriented explanation of the Bible, supporting them in teaching their children about the Bible, our faith and good life values as well as learning from it themselves too. They liked the chance to listen to the views of the children, the attentiveness of the children to the storytelling, singing songs, remembering why we light the candle and the opportunity to worship in Mass without distraction.

We received just a few suggestions to improve the sessions, and will work to ensure we vary the activities to explain the message from the gospel; that we get the children back to Mass on time to ensure they are back for the important parts of the Mass, and ensure the gospel read is at the level appropriate for the children.

### **Would you like to help with the children's liturgy?**

Since the feedback was obtained, the numbers of children attending Children's liturgy has substantially risen, particularly with the little ones often in excess of 20 and this makes it more difficult to tailor the session. It does also mean that we really need the younger children to be accompanied.

We are fortunate to have such a vibrant and growing church community here at St Laurence's. If you would like to help out in any way please do speak to us after either 9.30 or 11am Mass or contact Leonie Isaacson, [nonie.isaacson@ntlworld.com](mailto:nonie.isaacson@ntlworld.com)

We'd love to hear from you.

---

## **St Laurence School**

### **Questions Quail class would like to ask biblical characters.**

**Joseph:** How did you feel when you first saw Jesus?

**Eve:** Why did you choose to disobey God?

**Mary:** How did you feel when you were a refugee in Egypt?

**Jonah:** How did you feel when you were inside the whale?

**King Herod:** How did you feel when you heard there was going to be a new King?

**Daniel:** How did you feel when you were in the lion's den? Did you really trust God?

**Moses:** How did you feel when God spoke to you in the burning bush?

**King David:** How did you feel when you first saw Goliath?

**Pharaoh's Daughter:** How did you feel when you found Moses?

**Goliath:** How did you feel when you were defeated?

**Bethlehem Shepherd:** How many sheep did you look after?

**Three Kings:** How did you feel when you first saw baby Jesus?

**King Solomon:** How did you feel when God spoke to you and asked you what you would like best?

**Samuel:** How did you feel when God kept calling you?

**Jonah:** Why did you disobey God?

**Jonah:** How did you feel when the whale swallowed you?

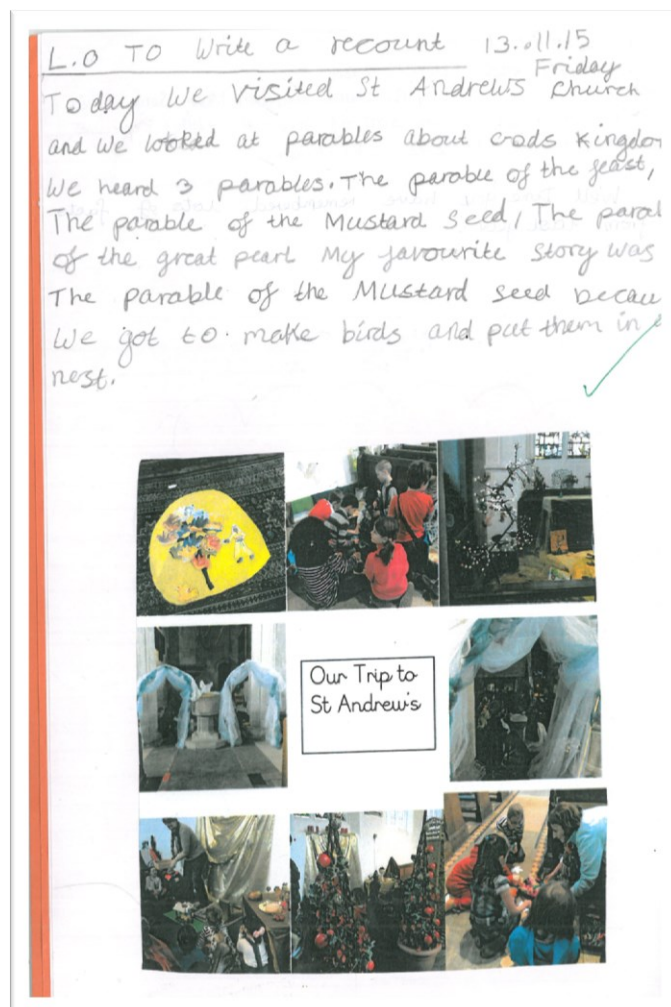
**Angel Gabriel:** How did you feel when you were asked to tell Mary that she was to be the mother of God?

**Samson:** How did you feel when your hair was cut off?

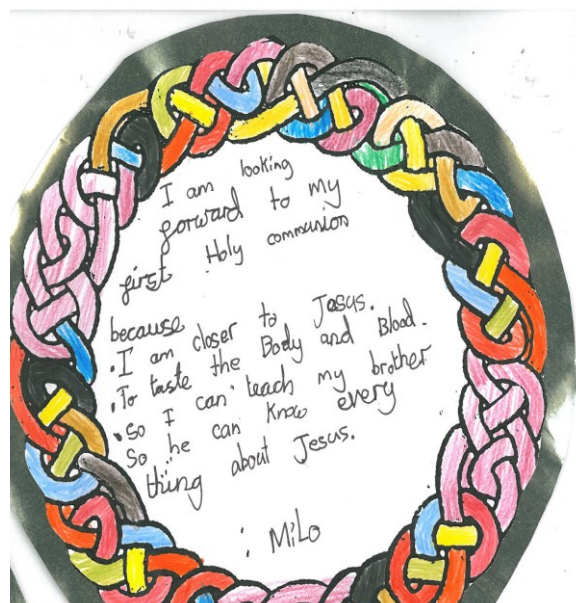
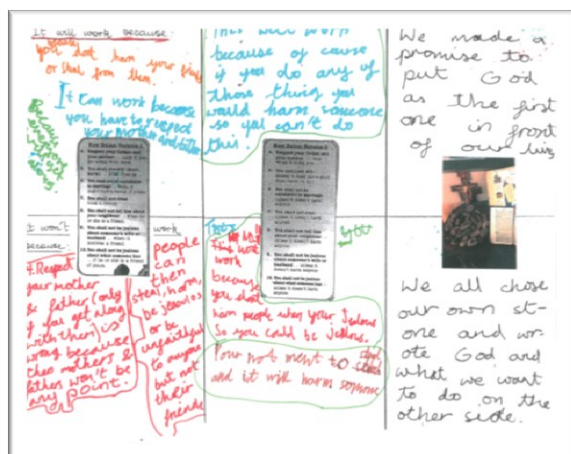
**Mary:** How did you feel when Jesus was crucified?

**Mary:** How did you feel on Easter Sunday when Jesus was resurrected?

**Joseph:** How did you know that the dream was true that told you to go to Egypt?



**Some classwork from the pupils at St. Laurence's School**



## **Minutes of the Forum of St. Laurence' RC Church held on Thursday 4th February 2016 at 20.00hrs in the Parish Room**

### **Matters arising**

Photocopier - Richard Birkett - costings seem to show that the new one in total will cover the cost of publishing the Pilgrim so everything else will show a saving. Therefore there will be a saving overall. Fr. Pat and Pat Cook have the details. It should be set up and running for the production of the next edition of the Pilgrim. (Not the one just about to go to press).

Database - Richard Birkett has this in hand with the help of Dick Wilson. There is data for the trial entry but it will be necessary to have help with main data entry. No data will be used without specific permission. The plan for data collection will be discussed at the next Forum.

Chalices - Stephen Chapman has been looking into this as sometimes the Holy Blood" runs out and the various chalices are of very mixed design and ease or not of administration. Also 2 nice chalices have gone missing. If anyone knows where it would be good to have them returned. Stephen showed the meeting various designs at all prices. Fr. Pat is keen to have a nice matching set but feels that, to be in the spirit of Pope Francis, they should not be too expensive. A very nice design, simple and fairly low in height but quite capacious, with gilded interiors, from an Italian firm were agreed. They cost less than £100 each and it was decided to buy 5 so that administration could be done at the back of the Church in very busy seasons. The current chalices will still be used at weekday Masses

### **Liturgy**

Holy Week (Easter Sunday is 27th March, the day the clocks change)

The Easter Vigil will start at 20.00

All the liturgies will take place following the usual pattern.

The diocese has new vestments for times when all the clergy are together to celebrate. The new white vestments have arrived and Fr. Pat showed the chasuble to the meeting. They have been made in Poland

It is necessary for there to be bulletins and music leaflets in the Narthex at 11am Mass when many people come in fairly late. It is also probably advisable for someone to sit there to keep an eye on the new fire alarms which can only be set off manually and have twice been triggered during Mass. Members of the Children's liturgy team usually put out chairs in the narthex so that people do not need to interrupt the

children to get themselves chairs. The speaker in the narthex needs to be turned up during Mass.

Appeals at Mass all have to go via Fr Pat. The church is asked for so many and Fr Pat keeps them to a minimum as there are a number of ones that are a diocesan requirement.

### **Finance**

The figures for this year are already in hand and will be published shortly when Deacon John Steel has completed the bits that relate to the diocese. They will be available soon.

The parish has had 2 bequests of £10,000 each and a further one from Pauline Kynoch's estate which is about £15,000.

It was requested that the music group purchase some music stands.

### **Catechesis**

The Confirmation course starts this month. It will take place on Saturday afternoons. The diocese is setting a course which will have to be used in future. It was suggested that the Ablaze Mass would be a good setting for confirmation preparation.

First Communion. Sue Price and her excellent team continue to do this

Baptism preparation carries on every couple of months A DVD is used designed for two sessions but experience has found that one longer session works better.

Marriage preparation is undertaken by Marriage Care in Newmarket at present with the theology part being done mostly by Fr Bob. The diocese is producing a 4 session programme to be used throughout the diocese next year which will make things less flexible.

Adult preparation. At present people are prepared individually. Fr Bob has done some of this. The question arises about whether people should be invited as well as those who request. This was felt to be a good idea.

New Evangelisation. See attached report. Fr Pat commented about the film "Spotlight" that the issue of sexual abuse was so serious and Virginia and he both stressed how excellent the procedures are for the Church in England and Wales now

### **Buildings**

The issue of opening up the Church during the day was discussed and it was decided this should be examined in detail at the next Forum. Issues include the need for

an electrical sanctuary lamp and prayer lights neither of which are much liked. But arson is the greatest risk. Insurance etc needs to be looked at and as well as the extent of opening, should there be people present to keep and eye on the church and welcome people etc.

An insert will go into the bulletin re the new fire alarm system with a short explanation after mass. The easy positioning of the key to reset the alarm was discussed.

Milton Road Library development. There will be a display of the plans in the library for the next month as well as a meeting on Tuesday 9th when councillors etc will be there for questions. The consultant architect will be seeing Fr Pat on Monday 8th Feb. Anxiety is still felt about the use of the car park and complaints of noise. The tenants will have both these issues addressed within their tenancy agreements.

Replacement main doors. Irial McGinley expressed reservations re the design. He also said that the balcony rail could easily be altered.

### **Social**

Christine Knight organised an excellent Christmas Day dinner for 20. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the food and the hospitality.

### **AOB**

Thanks were given to Rev David Busk from Godmanchester who preached last Sunday in lieu of during the week of prayer for Christian unity.

Karen Rodgers asked why the parish was not apparently doing anything special for the Year of Mercy though she acknowledged the New Evangelisation often addressed this without saying so. She mentioned various things that could be done including a "buddy" system for new families; teaching the Rosary to the children; a "Mercy Tree" where people could put "leaves" on to say what they are doing for the Year of Mercy.

It was stated that a Lent study group on the Year will start next Thursday and that Fr Bob will be starting study on St Luke's Gospel, the Gospel of Mercy, on Wednesdays starting on 17th February

A new minutes taker for the Forum is urgently needed. Not a very arduous task. Please see Jim O'Sullivan, Virginia Bird or Fr Pat if interested.

Dates of future Forums:

Monday 18th April – Main topic: keeping the Church open

Thursday 21st July

Monday 17th October

## **Personal Stories and Experiences**

### **My mother's writing desk**

#### **Ann Hales-Tooke (nee Petre)**

It's a fine mahogany 19th century bureau that was bought by my grandfather in the 1890s when he was furnishing the large house he had built in Essex. Eventually it was passed to my parents and stood in the small sitting room we had in the Norfolk farmhouse where I was born and raised.

When my father died in 1955 and my mother moved, it went with her to her cottage in Surrey. Then on her death in 1982 it came to me in my Cambridgeshire cottage. Today it stands beside me as I write this in my sheltered flat in Chesterton.

I love it very much, not least for its association with my parents. I remember standing beside my mother as she sat at the desk struggling with her household accounts. Aged six, I heard her say to my stern father, "William, I am overdrawn again".

I remember thinking she was rather pathetic, in today's parlance, 'a wimp'. I could hear the annoyance – barely concealed – in my father's response, "All right, how much do you need?" This conversation seemed to take place quite often.

The desk has a drop down lid that she was writing on and four long drawers. The handles are finely moulded in brass. When the desk is open there are little drawers with small brass handles and several cubby-holes. In these spaces my mother squirrelled away letters and documents she wanted to keep. Today I scan these with amazement. The assortment seems haphazard but immensely significant.

My paternal grandfather was solicitor to my maternal grandparents. He wrote to her on the 17th of August 1915 from his office in Albemarle Street in a beautiful copperplate hand:

"Dear Mrs. Bruce,

I have finally settled with your father [that's my great grandfather] that he was to give the bank a Guarantee for £250. I also discussed with him the mode of the payments to you in future. My suggestion was that he should make you an equal quarterly payment to cover them all as I thought this would be so much easier for him, but he does not altogether fancy the plan."

At that stage my great grandfather was 88 years old and my grandfather was 59.

My grandfather goes on to arrange how my grandmother will receive the allowance in the future. My maternal grandparents were always impecunious and plainly poor managers of money. My grandfather never had a job but was master of a pack of hounds, an excellent shot and fisherman.

There is further revealing correspondence in my mother's desk all about the Bruce's renting out a property in Devon. The incoming tenant's wife writes angrily to my grandmother:

"My husband took possession on September 11th, and it has taken no less than 34 days to put Fudge somewhat in order. Had he seen the state of chaos in the first instance he would never have taken it, as we were both under the impression that a week or ten days at the most would suffice to put any place in order. Of course the habits, and working abilities of the natives here are very dilatory."

I find the language of this letter unbelievable Mrs Phyllis M. Waddell goes on for seven pages:

"When my husband left hospital he was advised to go immediately into the country for rest and quietness. Fudge has not yet given it to him, for it has been under the personal supervision of the charwomen and men on his part to get the place in order."

She goes on to explain that his naval friends [so it seems he was invalided out of the navy] were going to come on visits to enjoy some shooting and to be paying guests which would afford the Waddells some extra income.

"The place was in such a state that this has not yet been able to happen."

As a postscript she has a complaint about the kitchen garden which was alleged to be "well stocked" but is a wilderness with nothing but weeds and some diseased cabbages.

The letter though possibly exaggerated does not show up my grandparents in the best light and I wonder why my mother kept it in her desk. Keeping letters about my Uncle Mike, who was my mother's favourite brother and who was killed flying in France in 1917, is totally understandable.

In another little drawer I found the Bill of Costs sent once again from the Petre solicitors' office and relating to the Marriage Settlement made on the occasion of my grandparents' wedding in 1893. It is an elegant document in fine copperplate writing on parchment with a green ribbon binding. Among the smaller items charged for is "cab hire to the South Kensington Hotel

in Queen's Gate Terrace to obtain signatures from Miss Smythe".

A fine piece of furniture linking myself in 2016 with my great grandparents back in the 1890s, it is a very special possession.

---

## Lyn's House: a Cambridge community

### Melissa Chia

Lyn's House is a community based in Cambridge which seeks to serve those with learning disabilities in the area. It was set up three years ago and offers a unique way of living and giving, inspired by the writings of Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche communities which are found worldwide. While Lyn's House has no formal ties to L'Arche, it shares a similar aim to create a space where grace and inclusion can occur amid daily, everyday routines.

At the heart of Lyn's House is a small residential community that share life together through prayer, meals and communal activities. This core group is made up of four residents who live in the house. While they pursue full-time studies and employment, each of them seeks to deepen their spirituality and bonds of friendship so as to extend this hospitality to a wider circle of friends and volunteers. Lyn's House acts as a centre of care and community, where friends with learning disabilities visit on a regular basis. They share in meals, prayer sessions and occasional tea parties on the weekend. For our friends, these activities form a part of their schedules. The House offers a place where they can engage in a friendly, ecumenical, and social environment. In addition, the volunteers and the steering committee play crucial roles in the running of Lyn's House.

As a resident at the House, I have had the privilege to witness much transformation, within myself and in others who actively participate here. Before joining the community last year, I was struggling to cope with a number of challenges. One particular struggle was my search for a more meaningful way of spending my time amid my PhD research. My work was all-consuming. Although I was active at my college and faculty, I still felt a lingering emptiness, a gap that left me asking if this was all there was to life.

Joining Lyn's House helped me to see that there is a mysterious joy in service. For me, this meant being surprised by unexpected words of wisdom from a friend. It has meant learning a great deal from someone with learning disabilities. It means rethinking the

definition of success and work, and seeing a different way of becoming human. It has been, for me, like the surprise of seeing Jesus fill up 12 baskets when there was so little to begin with: where has all this goodness come from?

Last year, two members of the steering committee, David and Debbie Ford, went to stay with Jean Vanier for the weekend. They were with Jean in the village of Trosly-Breuil, France, where the motherhouse of the L'Arche communities is based. Significantly, they heard Jean say, "This is a little place of peace in a world of war... How can we become peacemakers, people of non-violence, make places of peace, bringing down the barriers and walls that are created?" Perhaps this is a question that finds a unique answer in each individual, if we allow.

To learn more about Lyn's House or to volunteer there, email: [lynshouse.cam@gmail.com](mailto:lynshouse.cam@gmail.com)

---

## In remembrance of John Dunn

### Christine Knight



Many of you will have known John, by sight if not by name. He was a cheerful man and an active parishioner, attending Mass at both St Laurence's and Blackfriars. He died suddenly and unexpectedly, aged 74, just before Christmas having picked up an illness.

He was successfully undergoing chemotherapy treatment at the time and was looking forward to getting back into the swing of things just about now.

I knew John as a St Vincent de Paul (SVP) volunteer. He was full of compassion and worked hard to help us in our various SVP activities, including visits, offering lifts and a lot of work with families requesting help within our parish. We will miss his energy.

His widow, Sheila, shared some memories with me recently so that I could tell you some more about John's life. He and Sheila met in the 1960s whilst they lived in Manchester, learning Spanish. John had managed to arrange for himself some work as a trainee civil engineer in Spain one summer – his first overseas job. Sheila and John married in 1967 and had their first two sons (Chris and Stephen) in quick succession before leaving Heaton Mersey for Iraq! John secured a job there with Mott MacDonald (as it is now called) for three years and their third son, Laurie, was born in

Iraq. This began a family life of living abroad with their young family – Somalia and Kenya being the other two main countries where they lived for several years. John was working in irrigation by now, a specialism he maintained during his working life.

Once the children started to get older and needed more stable schooling, the family returned to England. This time they settled in Cambridge, convenient for the headquarters of Mott MacDonald. John continued to travel abroad for months at a time, including India, Nepal, Uganda and Brazil. He spent a lot of time in Indonesia, on and off, even picking up enough of the language to make himself understood.



John and Sheila at a wedding in Indonesia

Sheila and the boys would spend a lot of time visiting – it made for great holidays. When John was in Cambridge, he would invariably come home one evening and start a conversation with the phrase, "How would you like to go to..." and an exotic location would be suggested! As they got older, the boys enjoyed many backpacking holidays visiting Dad at work. John continued travelling abroad pretty much until he retired.

When he was in Cambridge, especially once retired with time, he had very varied pastimes. He enjoyed walking, attending lectures with the University of the Third Age in Cambridge (botany to economics to religion), going to the Red Lion in Histon (and other places with fine food), railways and transport issues as well as serving on the Parish Council in Histon.

I am glad to have been able to call John a friend for the last five years and I hope you will join me in praying for the peaceful repose of his soul and for strength for his family who continue without him.

# YOUTH

## Theme: Power of God's word in making a right choice (For the youth)

Fr Alvan

Beloved friends, we are already right into 2016 and the year is already fast running. Before we know what is going on, we are talking about ending the year. Time waits for nobody. The time to achieve something for the year is now. The clock is already ticking. Make a move.

Making a move requires making a choice and God has blessed us with free will and the right to make our own choices and decisions.

But there is always a time as young people, when it becomes very difficult for us to make right choices. When I talk about right choices, I mean choices that we will not regret ever making, whether now or in years to come. Sometimes we choose a particular thing because we feel we need it. But as time goes by, we may begin to regret ever making such choice. God loves us so much, that it never pleases Him seeing us in such situations. Though He has given us free will to always make choices, He still wants to see us make the right choice. That is why in the scriptures Moses told the people of Israel, "I have set before you, life and death, choose life that you may live". God always speaks to us through His word in the scriptures. One thing we need to know is that making right choices is not difficult when we follow God's biblical principles.

As Christians, God's word should always be our guide. Psalm 119:133 says, "Direct my footsteps according to your words, let no sin rule over me". God's word is a "Lamp to our feet and a light for our path" (Psalm 119:105). Certainly no one who walks in the light of God's word will ever stumble. When our choices and decisions are based on God's direction from His word, then we can never make a wrong choice in life. When we begin to choose the spiritual over the material, the eternal over the temporal, God's will over man's will, commitment over convenience, then surely we will never regret any of our decisions.

We spend time reading a lot of things which is actually a perfect thing to do. We need knowledge and to get it, we need to keep reading books. But listen to this, "Every other book we read informs us, but God's word transforms us". This is because God's word is God himself. The gospel of John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God". Because God's word is God himself, it has got power, so the more we study it and eat it like

food, the more it transforms us and gradually helps us out from making wrong choices into making right choices.

We can have knowledge but yet lack the wisdom that comes from God. We know wisdom is a gift that comes from the Holy Spirit. Without this wisdom, there will always be that tendency for us to always see ourselves making choices or decisions that we may end up regretting. Do you need this wisdom that nothing in this world can give? Then learn to study your bible at least once a day. Form it as a habit and I bet you there will be no regrets. Remember, you don't need to say, "I am too young to read the bible" or "I am too busy to read even if it is just one verse in a day". Any little time you put in for God, can never be a waste of time.

Once again, knowledge without wisdom from God may not be complete. As young people (even the old), we all need wisdom from God. This wisdom we can only get from God's word. Psalm 119:97 says, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes". God's word makes us wise - wiser than our enemies and wiser than any teacher who ignores it. True wisdom goes beyond amassing knowledge; it is applying knowledge in a life changing way. Intelligent and experienced people are not necessarily wise. Wisdom comes from allowing what God teaches to guide us.

Let our desire everyday, my dear friends, be not to please any person more than God who has loved us so much beyond our imagination. We live in a world that is full of temptations of all sorts that it can actually be difficult to please God. That is why Psalm 119:9 asks, "How can a young man/woman remain sinless?" It gives us the answer to the question, "By living according to your (God's) word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"

God's word is true and wonderful. Stay true to God and his word no matter how bad the world becomes. Obedience to God's laws is the only way to achieve real happiness. It gives you strength and wisdom more dynamic than tempting influences around us. Stick to it always. "GOD LOVES YOU SO MUCH".

## **The Confessional from the other side**

**Karen Rodgers**

I found this article most moving. I generally read it with the children before attending the Parish Reconciliation Service and I thought it worth sharing.

May God bless this lovely Priest and all Priests for the vital and irreplaceable work they do:

### **My Side of the Confessional: What Is It Like for a Priest?**

**By Fr. Mike Schmitz | November 26, 2012**

I was once riding in a shuttle-bus with a number of older folks on the way from an airport. They noticed that I was a priest and started asking questions about it. “Do you do all of the priest stuff?” “Yep?” “Even the Confession thing?” “Yeah. All the time.”

One older lady gasped, “Well, I think that that would be the worst. It would be so depressing; hearing all about people’s sins.”

I told them that it was the exact opposite. There is almost no greater place to be than with someone when they are coming back to God. I said, “It would be depressing if I had to watch someone leave God; I get to be with them when they come back to Him. The Confessional is a place where people let God’s love win. The Confessional is the most joyful, humbling, and inspiring place in the world.”

#### **What do I see during confession?**

I think there are three things. First, I see the costly mercy of God in action. I get to regularly come face to face with the overwhelming, life-transforming power of God’s love. I get to see God’s love up-close and it reminds me of how good God is.

Not many folks get to see the way in which God’s sacrifice on the Cross is constantly breaking into people’s lives and melting the hardest hearts. Jesus consoles those who are grieving their sins . . . and strengthens those who find themselves wanting to give up on God or on life.

As a priest, I get to see this thing happen every day.

I see a saint in the making.

The second thing I see is a person who is still trying - a saint in the making. I don’t care if this is the person’s third confession this week; if they are seeking the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it means that they are

trying. That’s all that I care about. This thought is worth considering: going to Confession is a sign that you haven’t given up on Jesus.

This is one of the reasons why pride is so deadly. I have talked with people who tell me that they don’t want to go to Confession to their priest because their priest really likes them and ‘thinks that they are a good kid’.

I have two things to say to this.

He will not be disappointed! What your priest will see is a person who is trying! I dare you to find a saint who didn’t need to find God’s mercy! So what if the priest is disappointed? We try to be so impressive with so much of our lives. Confession is a place where we don’t get to be impressive. Confession is a place where the desire to impress goes to die. Think about it: all other sins have the potential to cause us to race to the confessional, but pride is the one that causes us to hide from the God who could heal us.

#### **Do I Remember Your Sins? No!**

So often, people will ask if I remember people’s sin from Confession. As a priest, I rarely, if ever, remember sins from the confessional. That might seem impossible, but the truth is, sins aren’t all that impressive. They aren’t like memorable sunsets or meteor showers or super-intriguing movies . . . they are more like the garbage.

And if sins are like garbage, then the priest is like God’s garbage-man. If you ask a garbage-man about the grossest thing he’s ever had to haul to the dump, maaaaaybe he could remember it. But the fact is, once you get used to taking out the trash, it ceases to be noteworthy, it ceases to stand out.

Honestly, once you realize that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is less about the sin and more about Christ’s death and resurrection having victory in a person’s life, the sins lose all of their luster, and Jesus’ victory takes center stage.

In Confession, we meet the life-transforming, costly love of God . . . freely given to us every time we ask for it. We meet Jesus who reminds us, ‘You are worth dying for . . . even in your sins, you are worth dying for.’

Whenever someone comes to Confession, I see a person who is deeply loved by God and who is telling God that they love Him back. That’s it, and that’s all.

#### **In Confession I see my own weakness.**

The third thing a priest sees when he hears Confessions is his own soul. It is a scary place for a



priest. I cannot tell you how humbled I am when someone approaches Jesus' mercy through me.

I am not over-awed by their sins; I am struck by the fact that they have been able to recognize sins in their life that I have been blind to in my own. Hearing someone's humility breaks down my own pride. It is one of the best examinations of conscience.

But why is Confession a scary place for a priest? It is frightening because of the way in which Jesus trusts me to be a living sign of His mercy.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once told priests that we scarcely realize what is happening when we extend our hands over someone's head in absolution. We don't realize, he said, that the very Blood of Christ is dripping from our fingers onto their heads, washing the penitent clean.

The day after I was ordained, we had a little party and my dad stood up and made a toast. He has worked his entire life as an orthopedic surgeon, and he was a very good one. My whole life, his patients have come up to me at one time or another and told me how their lives have been changed because my dad was such a good surgeon.

So, there my dad was, standing in the midst of these people, and he began to say, 'My whole life, I have used my hands to heal people's broken bodies. But from now on, my son Michael . . . um, Father Michael . . . will use his hands (at this point, he got choked up) . . . He will use his hands to heal broken souls. His hands will save even more lives than mine have.'

Confession is such a powerful place. All I have to do is offer God's mercy, love, and redemption . . . but I don't want to get in Jesus' way. The priest stands in judgment of no one. In the Confessional, the only thing I have to offer is mercy.

### **I get to sacrifice for you.**

Lastly, when a priest hears Confessions, he is taking on another responsibility.

One time, after college, I was returning to Confession after a long time and a lot of sin and the priest simply gave me something like 'one Hail Mary' as my penance. I stopped.

"Um, Father?? Did you hear everything I said??"  
"Yes, I did." "Don't you think I should get a bigger penance than that??" He looked at me with great love and said, "No. That small penance is all that I'm asking of you." He hesitated, and then continued, "But you should know . . . I will be fasting for you for the next 30 days."

I was stunned. I didn't know what to do. He told me that the Catechism teaches that the priest must do penance for all those who come to him for Confession. And here he was, embracing a severe penance for all of my severe sins.

This is why Confession reveals the priest's own soul; it reveals his willingness to sacrifice his life with Christ. He sees our sins as a burden that he will take up (with Jesus!) and offer them to the Father, while offering us the mercy of God.

Remember, Confession is always a place of victory. Whether you have confessed a particular sin for the first time, or if this is the 12,001st time, every Confession is a win for Jesus. And I, a priest, get to be there. That's what it's like . . . I get to sit and watch Jesus win His children back all day.

Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

**Fr Mike Schmitz** is the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Diocese of Duluth and the chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota—Duluth. Every Sunday at Mass he records his homilies; if you want to listen they're on [bulldogcatholic.org](http://bulldogcatholic.org) or iTunes.

---

## **Open your heart**

### **Nisha De Souza**

I can see you;  
The dullness behind your eyes  
Though you smile,  
You're not quite there.  
Please know that I am here.  
I'm here for you when times are rough.  
I know that you are enough.  
Though you may feel broken,  
The pieces fit.  
I'll hold you up through all of it.  
It may not seem like it but we'll get there;  
Just trust in me, I'll hear your prayer.  
Believe me when I say:  
If you stick with me we'll find a way.  
Though the path is hard,  
We'll get through.  
Those lone footprints, that's where I carried you.  
I just need you to believe,  
I'm always here, I never leave.  
Do not fear the great unknown,  
Trust in me, I'll bring you home.

## The importance of the meeting of Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis

**John Sykes**

The meeting between the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, and Pope Francis on 12th of February in Cuba this year comes at a pivotal time in the history of Christianity. We are seeing a mass extermination of Christians in the Middle East with western leaders proving to be unwilling to either do anything about it or even acknowledge it. Christianity is being pushed further and further from public life with the secularisation of western society, and Christianity being viewed as almost archaic.



Patriarch Kirill

This event marks the first time in almost 1,000 years that the heads of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church have come together. The two leaders used this meeting as an opportunity to address the record levels of Christian persecution we are seeing today. For example, the 21 Coptic martyrs of Libya who were brutally murdered by ISIS for their belief in Christianity. This atrocity makes it ever more important to remember that martyrs are not just people who lived hundreds of years ago, whom we remember in icons, but men and women who are today still suffering for their faith. Christianity is not a religion of the establishment and clearly no longer the religion of the western establishment, but is still persecuted today in certain parts of the world as it was prior to its adoption as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

This meeting also has importance not just for Christians, but also from the perspective of an historian. As I previously stated in this article, the heads of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox

Churches have not met in almost 1000 years. The last meeting took place in 1054, when the East-West Schism took place (also known as The Great Schism of 1054), which was the precursor to the final separation between Eastern Orthodoxy, led at the time by the Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius, and the Roman Catholic Church led by Pope Leo IX. There are theological and geo-political reasons for this from the time, all of which would take a much longer article to discuss, but the main points of disagreements, were: the source of the Holy Spirit; whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the Eucharist; the Pope's claim to Papal Supremacy and the position of the See of Constantinople in relation to the Pentarchy.



Pope Francis

Putting aside these differences, Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis used this historic meeting as an opportunity to call for the unity of all Christians, regardless of denomination, to stand together against the expulsion of Christians from the Middle East and to raise “our voice in defence of persecuted Christians”. They state that, “Our Christian conscience and our pastoral responsibility compel us not to remain passive in the face of challenges requiring a shared response”. This is a point which should resonate with every Christian. Is it not our responsibility as those who strive to live our lives in the imitation of Christ, to take an active role in preventing the persecution of Christians and to help those less fortunate than ourselves? Think what you personally could do to help Christians in the Middle East and across the world, where they live as a persecuted minority.

## LENT & EASTER WORDSEARCH

B W T Q J L P U S Z E X L G P  
 C A V N L U B O W R P N N S O  
 J Q I V R S M M P Y E I K E X  
 S G A P L Z H W C H T Y N H I  
 O E L M A T P D V S Z E Q S M  
 Z E L B H G M R A Q S I X A J  
 Y X P T C A X F A I O O D Z T  
 Z S L U S T S N R Y N E E B W  
 Q M J O A O W F F C E L S D U  
 T J W H P S P F L M C R E H A  
 S U S E J O M A N C P F R S H  
 W W S V A L X L N H Z S T I P  
 D I P R G Z S I A P I U X S A  
 D O N K E Y Y A D P S J R L Z  
 E O Y A D I R F D O O G I A A

APOSTLES  
 ASHES  
 DESERT  
 DONKEY  
 FASTING  
 GOODFRIDAY  
 JESUS  
 PALMS  
 PASCHAL  
 PURPLE  
 RISEN



**Colour and meditate on The Last Supper**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### East Anglian Celebrate Weekend

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 9am – 9pm

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 9am – 4.30pm

Held at: St. Benedict's School, Beetons Way,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RH

The theme for this year is

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly  
and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your  
God (Micah 6:8)

A weekend to renew your faith through inspiring  
talks and creative liturgy and exciting worship.

You can book by downloading a booking form  
from:

[http://www.celebrateconference.org/weekends/eas  
tanglia/](http://www.celebrateconference.org/weekends/eas<br/>tanglia/)

Adult (22yrs+)	£35
Young Adults (18-22yrs)	£15
Children	£10
Preschool	Free

## REVIEWS

**Rediscover Catholicism. Matthew Kelly**  
ISBN-13: 978-1937509675

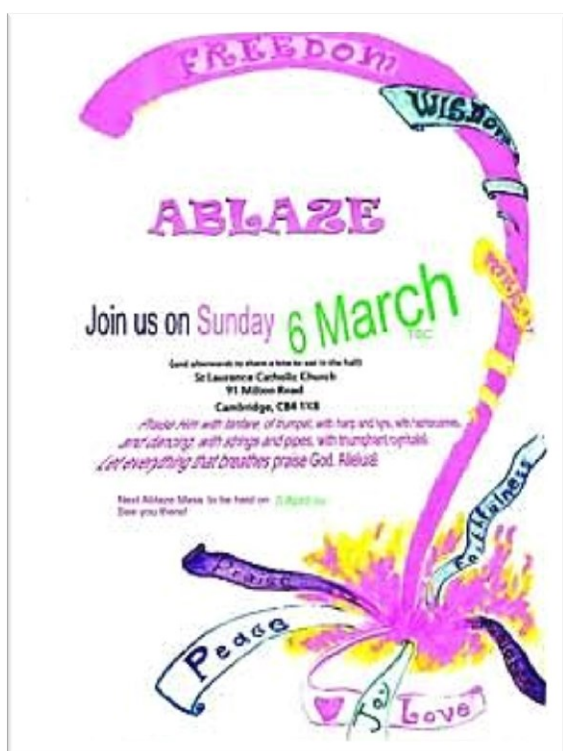
Review by Dick Wilson

This book has had an enormous readership since its first publication in 2002. Matthew Kelly is Australian, but is settled in the United States. He teaches widely there and in many other countries, on the needs and renewal of a Catholic Church which in recent decades has seen spectacular failures and a constant stream of Catholics leaving the Church, for the most part in their teens or in their early working lives. One might add, it is a Church which has failed for many years to replace its priests as they grow old. This phenomenon is less marked in Africa and Asia, which has always had a much smaller number of priests for the number of Catholics they serve.

This is not one of his examples, though it is a feature of the Church in the USA as much as anywhere else. And the context of parts of the book is there, but it is readily transferable to much of the world. His argument is that the Church has failed to respond to attacks on its beliefs and work; that there is nothing wrong that can't be fixed by what is right in Catholicism, such as its immense input into schools, hospitals and other charitable works; that we must individually be part of the solution; and that if the all the Catholics in the USA "stepped up a notch, something incredible would happen." (p.18)

Our society, he claims, is dominated by "individualism", by which he means that every action and purpose is dominated by what benefits us personally; hedonism – the idea that "pleasure is the supreme good"; minimalism – that we do the least necessary in all we undertake. By contrast, we can see in Jesus a disciplined life-style in which we are really loving God and our neighbour and with the character and strength this brings, achieve freedom. We can't pick and choose in Christianity, and our behaviour should demonstrate this. What we are seeking, and gradually achieve through Jesus' example, the knowledge of God and the celebration of Catholic belief and practice – is an active closeness to God – holiness. This is an authentic life, where we do what we say and don't use religion as a cover for something else.

Such a life can take many forms. Recognising the presence of God in everything we do; constantly seeking and being guided by the Holy Spirit, and aiming to become "the best version of yourself", a constant phrase in the book (p. 74). And here we



should note that he never asserts that the Church should simply revert to what it was before Vatican II. The Council, he says, sought to maintain and often bring back “the richness of our Catholic tradition” (p.75). Most of the body of the book is devoted to this: the Church’s expectation from an authentic Christian life; serious notice of the saints, communion with them and knowledge of their lives and their example; systematic regular prayer; Masses that bring us together with God and each other. In all this we can find the true purpose of our lives and be prepared and able to follow the will of God whether it suits us or not.

In detail, Kelly gives an account of what he calls “the seven pillars of Catholic spirituality”. Confession, to bring our sins before God. Daily prayer, from simply being with God and only God, and worshipping, thanking God for constantly sustaining us, or being open to what God wants us to do. The Mass – preparing in advance, recording and recalling what came from it and acquiring a sense of wonder. He gives a short commentary on each part of the Mass. A closer acquaintance with the Bible, through a pattern of frequent reading, and learning from it what the Church meant even when actually reading your own Bible was impossible. Observing the pattern of fasting or abstinence the Church sets before us. Reading books to keep the search for holiness alive and the Rosary, a straightforward form of prayer that takes in Mary and the saints.

Kelly concludes with a programme that might apply all this to the whole Church. We need to build and maintain structures in which people can live a Catholic and Christian way of life, and do so while still immersed in the life of the age we were born into. Make friendships within the Church; pray for those who carry the gospel into the world; be prepared to describe and defend your own story; and be in a position to invite others to join you in the Church. He calls for a renewed and courageous leadership, believing that the current leaders are afraid to defend their position.

A great deal has been long Christian practice, needed the more when the Church is losing members. Kelly gives a workable picture of what should be the regular activities of all Christians, worshipping together, praying together and equipping yourself as well as you can to talk about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and God’s Church. And for this we should be grateful.

I dislike a number of extremely sentimental anecdotes and lush sentences. The constant opposition of body and soul, as bad and good, is quite wrong. More generally, I think the “strategy” he outlines for the Church to recover force, conviction and credibility

lacks two things. When Pope Francis gave us the teaching of *Laudato si’*, how we should be looking after the world God has given us, the commitment of all of us is essential. But it is not just a matter of individuals reordering their lives to that end. It needs politics, organisations, sustenance and commerce to reorder themselves for the purpose. And likewise the Church needs church order, clergy, teaching laity, the ordering of work and relationships with the everyday world, that are likewise aimed constantly at building up God’s Church, God’s holy people. And you may ask, is a celibate and male priesthood and a centralised church government that is entirely exercised by the clergy a necessary part of this?

And then it needs truth. You can’t work for the protection of the world, our environment, unless you have the science right. And in Christianity you need the doctrine right. Did Jesus really intend the bond and gift of marriage to end in a lifetime on one’s own when things go wrong? Is preventing conception by a simple manual or chemical means really a sin? Is it really the case that all life has evolved, except for human beings? Are the divisions with other Christian Churches so insuperable? Are these really things we are expected to defend if we are trying to offer the gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection? Is the fall in vocations to the priesthood due to watering down the gospel (p.300) or to the way the priesthood is structured, the loss of its social standing, and things you cannot in all honesty proclaim?

These things, and answers to these questions, are not in *Recovering Catholicism*, but they are needed.

---

## **Amahl and the night visitors - Opera**

### **Review by Nora Darby**

On the evening of 29th November we were awaiting the start of Giancarlo Menotti’s opera performed by Cambridge Youth Opera in St. Laurence’s church.

The acting and singing was wonderful, every word, every note was clearly heard and NO MICROPHONES! It was easy for the audience to follow the story even though – as the programme said – there is no fixed set and few props. The elements needed were created by the cast and production team, a challenge they responded to so well.

They were accompanied on the piano by Ian da Massini.

We were delighted to see the female lead and one of the male leads were taken by Eleanor Edwards and Dominic O’Sullivan, who will be known as St. L parishioners. As are Sophie O’Sullivan, a member of the production team and Julia Caddick, their voice coach.

I think I can safely say a very good evening was had by all including the cast, their enjoyment was clearly to be seen. Congratulations to everyone who was involved.



Eleanor and Dominic

#### COMMENTS FROM CAST & CREW:

“I enjoyed making props for Amahl and then seeing what I had made in the performance, it was satisfying seeing how what I did added to it. It was a great thing to be involved in and everyone was very kind, I would definitely do it again” **Sophie O’S- props**

“Being part of Amahl was a wonderful way of making new friends, singing with old friends and trying out a totally new style of music. I learnt lots and especially enjoyed the performances; a new location meant that they all were equally exciting and unique” **Rosie A-chorus**

“Being a part of the Amahl and the Night Visitors production was both a hugely rewarding and enjoyable experience. I had great fun singing and meeting new people, both younger and older than myself, and it also improved my own singing and performance skills. The atmosphere at each performance was wonderful and I would definitely take part in a production like this again.” **Alice L- chorus**

“Performing in Amahl was absolutely wonderful. Initially I was quite scared about it all- I had never sung in a opera before and I really didn't know what to expect, so getting one of the lead roles was quite daunting! But I enjoyed it all immensely and I feel like I have developed as a singer and a performer, and I have made some great friends from the group. It really was lovely to perform at St Laurence's as well, and to be supported by the church community- I'm sure it will be my first opera of many!” **Eleanor E- "The Mother"**

#### And one from a member of the audience:

Our church is not the easiest place to put on a play. Like most Catholic churches since the sixteenth century it is built in the form of the contemporary baroque theatre – a barn with a stage at one end. I think they influenced each other. But of course the stage is usually full of altar, lecterns and so forth, for its normal purpose. The Director did a great job with the space at the front.

Cambridge Youth Opera was formed in 2011 to give young people in the Cambridge area the opportunity, entirely free of charge, to experience all the elements that go into staging an opera. The project is led by Caroline Coetzee, Julia Caddick, Ann Taylor and Roger Bond. New members always welcome!  
Contact: [cambridgeyouthopera@gmail.com](mailto:cambridgeyouthopera@gmail.com)  
[www.cambridgeyouthopera.com](http://www.cambridgeyouthopera.com)



## Tailpiece

### I am a Seenager (Senior teenager)

I have everything that I wanted as a teenager, only 60 years later.  
I don't have to go to school or work.  
I get an allowance every month.  
I have my own pad.  
I don't have a curfew.  
I have a driver's license and my own car.  
I have ID that gets me into bars and the whisky store.  
The people I hang around with are not scared of getting pregnant.  
And I don't have acne.  
Life is great.

Brains of older people are slow because they know so much. People do not decline mentally with age, it just takes them longer to recall facts because they have more information in their brains, scientists believe.

Much like a computer struggles as the hard drive gets full, so too, do humans take longer to access information when their brains are full.

Researchers say this slowing down process is not the same as cognitive decline. "The human brain works slower in old age", said Dr. Michael Ramscar, "but only because we have stored more information over time". The brains of older people do not get weak. On the contrary, they simply know more.

Also, older people often go to another room to get something and when they get there, they stand there wondering what they came for. It is NOT a memory problem; it is nature's way of making older people do more exercise.

---

## Songs

The school I was at had a very feeble "school song", which the Headmaster hated, but somehow it was always sung on Speech Day, then forgotten till next year. And there was the Red Flag, "Beneath its shade we'll live and die," to the tune of 'Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum'. I was taught the words in 1966, in the car on the way to a meeting to choose a general election candidate. They chose me! The local Labour party that is, not the electors.

When my wife was working in Botswana in the 1960s, she heard such a song and asked what the words were. They began, "Let's all stand together, like the legs of a cow."

## Murphy's Law

At last, confirmation of 'Murphy's Law' with a wonderful Irish explanation.

Murphy drops some buttered toast on the kitchen floor and it lands butter-side-up.

He looks down in astonishment, for he knows it's a law of the universe that buttered toast always falls butter-down. So he rushes round to the presbytery to fetch Father Flanagan.

He tells the priest that a miracle has occurred in his kitchen. He won't say what it is, but asks Fr. Flanagan to come and see it with his own eyes. He leads Fr. Flanagan into the kitchen and asks him what he sees on the floor.

"Well," says the priest, "it's pretty obvious. Someone has dropped some buttered toast on the floor and then, for some reason, they flipped it over so that the butter was on top."

"No, Father, I dropped it and it landed like that!" exclaimed Murphy.

"Oh my Lord," says Fr. Flanagan, "Dropped toast never falls with the butter side up. It's a mir....Wait...it's not for me to say it's a miracle. I'll have to report this matter to the Bishop and he'll have to deal with it. He'll send some people round; to interview you, take photos, etc."

A thorough investigation is conducted, not only by the archdiocese but by scientists sent over from the Curia in Rome. No expense is spared. There is great excitement in the town as everyone knows that a miracle will bring in much needed tourism revenue.

Then, after 8 long weeks and with great fanfare, the Bishop announces the final ruling.

"It is certain that some kind of an extraordinary event took place in Murphy's kitchen, quite outside the natural laws of the universe. Yet the Holy See must be very cautious before ruling a miracle. All other explanations must be ruled out."

"Unfortunately, in this case, it has been declared 'No Miracle' because they think Murphy may have buttered the toast on the wrong side!"

## Editorial

### The Pilgrim Magazine

#### APOLOGY.

May we send a sincere apology to Virginia Bird who was accidently given an incorrect first name in the previous edition!

**REMINDER.** There are a few changes in “Who does what” within the team. Dick Wilson has retired as General Editor and this position is now shared by Sarah Sykes and Nora Darby. Therefore all contributions should be sent directly to [pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk) not to Dick. He will continue to gather and commission material and will still do some sub-editing.

#### The production team:

##### Editors

Sarah Sykes and Nora Darby

##### Sub-editors

Alex Dias	What’s New?
Alex Dias	Features and Opinions
Carol Williams	Personal Stories and Experiences
Dick Wilson	Parish Organisations & Activities
Sarah Sykes	Youth
Nora Darby	Reviews
Sarah Sykes	Tailpiece
Leonie Isaacson	Cover (contents etc)
Caroline O’Donnell	Proof reader 1
Sarah Sykes and Nora Darby	Layout (preparation for printing)
Dick Wilson	Obtaining and Commissioning materials for publication
Melanie De Souza	Proof reader 2

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

**We thank all who have contributed to this edition and hope to welcome interesting and original material for all sections in forthcoming editions.**

**We would also welcome some new team members,** if you would like to join us either as sub-editors or proof readers please contact the above email address with your name and contact details. Thank you.

**The deadline for the next edition is 6 May 2016**