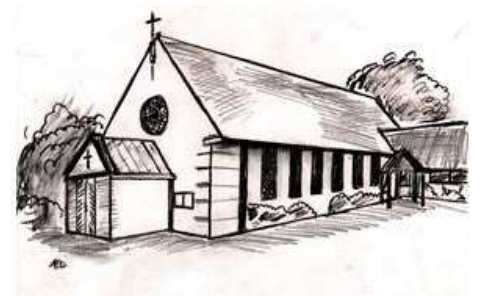


The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, Advent Edition 2019



Wishing you a joyful and peaceful Advent

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ABLAZE Mass

5th Jan
2nd Feb
1st Mar
5th April



3rd May
7th June
5th July
No Aug

1st Sunday of the month

Next Mass:

Sunday **1st** December, **5pm**

@ St Laurence's Church, Milton Road.

A Joyful, lively and upbeat Worship
For Youth and the Young at Heart
With treats to share afterwards



First Holy Communion Inscription at 9.30am Mass
with Fr Johane



Altar Servers, Madeleine and Oliver receiving
their St Stephen's bronze medals

What's New?

What's it all about?

Fr Simon Blakesley

What is all this about a 're-ordering' of the Sanctuary? Hasn't it been re-ordered enough? Naturally, those of you with a long memory will have recollections of how things were before and some may even remember before the Mass was celebrated facing the people. My first impressions of the current arrangement was that it was asymmetrical and in some ways cluttered and somewhat desacralised by the presence of the P.A. equipment, which would, in almost all of the churches I have known, be concealed out of sight

In addition to this, as was readily accepted, the Sanctuary carpet was worn and frayed where it was joined and in need of replacement. Having come from Newmarket which was recently re-ordered by Fr Michael Griffin, I am greatly persuaded of the value of a stone surface for the Sanctuary area, which is infinitely long-lasting and can withstand the ravages of candle wax and the occasional dropped thurible. In a recent Parish meeting I showed some plans that are a basic sketch of how I am proposing to rearrange the main elements of the Sanctuary. In brief, the altar will have a broader pedestal built in brick to match the main brick walls of the church. The Ambo (lectern) will be moved to the left as we look at the Sanctuary, made of the same brick and re-using the stone of the original high altar and credence table which have been languishing outside against the side wall of the church towards the end of the cycle racks. In the official instructions on Sanctuary design we are encouraged to create a resonance/similarity between the table of the Word (Ambo) and table of the Eucharist (Altar).

The cantor/animator will use this same lectern obviating the need for another stand. The tabernacle will be put on a pillar of its own, similar in appearance to the altar and ambo, again re-using the stone of the original high altar. To the right there will be a stone and brick sedilia (group of seats) for priest and deacon. The back of this will be shaped to reflect the bench ends in the church.

In addition to these works the crucifix will be suspended on steel wires directly above the altar and the tapestry hangings will come lower and flank the tabernacle, again bringing the 'Grain of Wheat' Eucharistic imagery to life. The rear wall will be repainted and the brown/maroon and green colour scheme will go to be replaced with a more neutral shade to tone in with the warm yellow/brown shade of the bricks, but quite a bit lighter.

In the body of the church the ceiling will have a thick layer of insulation and then be re-boarded to cover the purlins and the rather dated maroon ceiling tiles, painted in an off-white shade as pure brilliant white is a bit cold visually. The Sanctuary floor will come a bit lower and be reached on both sides by ramps. The confessional will be entered from the narthex and will have a permanent divide with a moveable screen so that the penitent can choose either remaining anonymous or seeing the priest face to face. The votive candle stands will be placed directly under the statues of Our Blessed Lady and the Sacred Heart. We will also modernise the directional lighting to highlight the central elements and allow for the needs of the Easter Vigil.

Some more extensive drawings are being prepared and these will be displayed in the Parish Room as soon as possible. Please do let me know what you think. I can show you photos of other churches, particularly those where I have had a part in the arrangement of the Sanctuary.

Radio Maria England – making a start

Sarah Sykes



On a dark, autumn night, a small group of volunteers arrived at Blackfriars at the invitation of Fr Sam Randall, the priest director of Radio Maria England. We climbed upstairs to a small, unused bedroom on the top floor of the Priory where we found Operations manager, Harry Ngatchu and Adrian, a sound engineer from Romania, waiting for us. In preparation for the launch of this the latest branch of the Radio Maria family, we were here to make a trial recording of the Rosary to test the equipment and, for the recording to maybe be broadcast when the station goes live.

We gathered around a small table, on which were four microphones with a set of headphones each, and practised reading through the rosary prayers in an effort to produce a focused, synchronised praying of the rosary.

With advice from Adrian and the lead from Fr Sam we prayed through a Decade topping and tailing with the Creed, the Fatima Prayer, Hail Holy Queen and the prayer to Archangel Michael. Our recording will be edited and scripture quotes from a separate recording by Fr Sam will be added.

From this small mustard seed, we pray that Radio Maria England will grow and spread the message of Christ to our country.

Features and Opinions

Angels

John Conlon

‘Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat’ goes the nursery rhyme. Yes, it is hard to believe the great Christian feast to celebrate the Saviour’s birth will soon be upon us. One of the traditions in our house is to watch a few favourite films, including Frank Capra’s 1946 classic, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, in which a man is talked out of suicide by his guardian angel, Clarence Odbody.

Most of us probably don’t talk or think about angels, do we? The run-up to Christmas is therefore a good opportunity to take a deeper look at the creatures who will feature heavily on Christmas cards with a religious theme.

There is something rather comforting about being told as a child that you have a guardian angel. My mother taught me the prayer (‘Angel of God, my guardian dear...’) and no doubt I said it each day and night until the cynicism of teenage years kicked in. I did not really turn my mind to angels until four years ago at my father’s requiem Mass when the priest recited the beautiful funeral liturgy prayer, beginning: ‘May the angels lead you into Paradise.’ Further research revealed that, in fact, angels play a significant role in our Catholic faith as well as in Judaism and Islam. Angels need to be taken very seriously indeed.

Belief in angels can be found in antiquity among pagans, Neo-Platonists, Babylonians and Assyrians. Accepting the existence of angels is one of the six articles of faith in Islam. In the Old Testament, angels feature in Psalms and Daniel. In Jacob’s vision they climb up and down the ladder from earth to heaven. An angel found Agar in the wilderness and drew Lot out of Sodom. Daniel received instruction from the archangel, Gabriel.

In the New Testament, angels announce the dawn of redemption to Zachary and Mary, Gabriel tells Our Lady of the coming birth of Jesus and Luke tells us that angels praised the Saviour’s birth. Angels spoke to the first visitors to Jesus’ empty tomb.

Jesus speaks of angels (Matthew 22:30, Luke 20:36) and says they form a bodyguard around him (Matthew 26:53). Our Lord warns us not to harm children with the following words: “For I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father” (Matthew 18:10). St Paul refers to angels in letters to the Colossians and Ephesians.

There are nine orders of angels: Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Our catechism tells us that the existence of non-corporeal beings is a truth of faith. Angels are to be regarded as servants and messengers of God. In the Preface before the Eucharistic Prayer we join the angels and saints to say ‘Holy, holy, holy’. In one of the Eucharistic Prayers the priest says, ‘we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven’. In the liturgical calendar we celebrate the feasts of the archangels and guardian angels. In Byzantine liturgy the Church celebrates St Michael, St Gabriel, St Raphael and guardian angels.

The oldest angel fresco found in Christian art dates from the third century in an Annunciation scene. Wings only started to appear on angels after Constantine in the fourth century. Why wings became associated with angels is probably the subject of another article! Certainly, no wings were mentioned on the angels in the empty tomb.

Finally, of course, there is the fallen angel, Satan, a ‘liar and the father of lies’ (John 8:44). Jesus called him a ‘murderer from the beginning’. It was Satan who had the temerity to try to tempt Jesus away from his mission. Mark and Matthew both mention that Jesus was tended by angels after a vanquished Satan fled.

So, if you happen to watch *It’s a Wonderful Life*, please bear in mind that angels are not merely the stuff of Hollywood fantasy dramas. They are all around us and deserve our attention. Merry Christmas!

St Oscar Romero – Part One

Joe Tucker

The background to this article is that (in Chioma’s house group) we are taking it in turns to present the life of saints who we find inspirational. For me, Oscar Romero was a natural choice since I remember hearing about his death years ago and then more recently hearing that he had been canonised. On reading Monseñor Romero, *Memories in Mosaic* (two copies in the Parish library), it is clear that his life was effectively in two parts, with the ‘famous stuff’ crammed into the final three years. The goal of this article is to summarise his life up to the point he dramatically changed from a conservative archbishop, trusted by the El Salvadoran authorities to turn a blind eye to their atrocities, to a fierce critic of those same authorities, even when it was clear that this would lead to his death.

As a boy, Oscar Romero loved to play 'procession' games and no-one was surprised when he told a visiting bishop that he wanted to be a priest. He started an apprenticeship to be a carpenter then entered the local seminary aged 13. During the 23 years he worked as a parish priest in his home town, he earned a reputation for working long hours and never missing the opportunity to give a homily. He got on well with everyone, from plantation owners to village drunks. To the rich he would say "Love the poor" while to the poor he would say "Love God, you are assured a place in heaven".

He had a rule that everyone who asks receives, which he put into daily practice by collecting donations from the rich then giving a few coins to anyone who came to his door. His strictness and holiness did not endear him to less responsible priests, some of whom tried to discredit him by spreading rumours that he was slightly mad. An example of his attention to detail was memorising Vatican II documents and correcting anyone who misquoted them.

In 1967 he was sent to the capital to work as secretary to the bishops. This involved a huge amount of paperwork relating to the 1968 Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellin, now famous for its development of Liberation Theology from the teachings of Vatican II. At the time, Romero opposed these calls for renewal and gave the impression of being afraid of anything new. However, when progressive priests denounced him in a letter to the diocesan newsletter, he published their criticisms in full, then added a note saying he rejected them. From this grew a reputation for playing hard but fair, a pattern which was to repeat many times in his life.

Romero chose to stay at the seminary run by Jesuits, which led to a close friendship with Fr Rutilio Grande, a leader in the creation of Christian base communities around the country. Fr Rutilio liked to talk about 'Firework Christians' who direct lots of noise towards heaven and have little enthusiasm for the work that needs to be done down on earth. When Romero was made an auxiliary bishop in 1970, the ceremony was attended by 40 busloads from his home town.

1972 saw yet another fraudulent election, followed by widespread protests. The National University in the capital was a centre for political opposition, so the government closed it, an action which Romero publicly approved. Soon afterwards, a group of seminarians accused the Papal Nuncio of behaving more as a politician than as a pastor of the Church, whereupon Romero expelled the Jesuit professors.

Bishop Romero was greatly concerned by deaths and disappearances in his diocese and celebrated memorial Masses in the affected villages, but his sermons were mostly disappointing, with vague condemnations of

'violence' when it was clear that these were government-sponsored murders. However he tried hard to understand the underlying causes of campesino (tenant farmer) unrest (primarily confiscation of communal land and violent suppression of any protests about low pay or appalling work conditions) and is quoted as saying "how is so much injustice possible".

In 1977, he was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador, with the full support of the government, military and business leaders. For everyone campaigning for an end to repression and injustice, this was seen as a huge setback and a triumph for the status quo. Many priests boycotted the ceremony and the few who attended were saying goodbye to the outgoing Archbishop.

Soon afterwards, the military party claimed an implausible landslide victory and the opposition parties occupied the main square in San Salvador, demanding a recount. It was clear that the army was planning to use lethal force to clear the demonstration, so a delegation begged Romero to intervene. To the claim that "in just a few hours they could kill a lot of people" his reply was "I will lift you up to God in my prayers". Over 100 people died on that day.

Romero still believed in the government, largely because the outgoing president was his personal friend. He tried to console Fr Rutilio by saying "since you are all are Jesuits, I don't think anything will happen to you". A few days later, Fr Rutilio's car was sprayed with bullets as he was driving to his birthplace to join celebrations of their feast day. Romero immediately went to the wake and insisted that the Requiem Mass should be held in the Cathedral.

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

At the 'single Mass', the plaza was overflowing with more than 100,000 people as 150 priests concelebrated. Everyone was hoping for a sermon from Archbishop Romero which showed that he understood the significance of Fr Rutilio's death and that the Church was (now) on their side.

To be continued...

Voice of Hope Series

Theme: All things work for our good

Fr Alvan Ibeh SMMM

As we approach the great season of Advent, the season of Joy, I wish to help put you in a good disposition to enjoy this lovely season. Well, the fact is that there are certain truths we find difficult to accept even when it is apparent. One thing is sure in life, no one wants to be uncomfortable. Nobody wants stress. We all want to be comfortable and relaxed. We want things to happen exactly the way we want them to happen. That is the reason why when things begin to happen against our will, we start getting confused and frustrated. Even as Christians, most of the time we believe God is in control when everything is going our way. We are getting good breaks. Business is up. The family is happy. The kids are making good grades. We are in good health, etc. We know God is directing our steps. Life is good.

But here is the raw truth; having faith doesn't exempt us from difficulties. The storms of life come to every person. We get a bad medical report. A friend or close relative betrays us. Business takes a downturn. In the difficult times it's easy to think, 'Where are you? How could you let this happen to me?' But just know that the same God who is in control in the good times is just as in control in the rough times. God will not allow a storm unless He has a divine purpose for it. God never said He would prevent every difficulty, but He did promise He would use every difficulty. That is the reason why we must not grumble or feel low when difficulties rise up against us. When we trust the all-powerful God who always has a perfect plan for us, He will always, through those things, work out something perfect for us. So just be aware that nothing happens unknown to God. If he allows, it is for a reason, in as much as He won't come down to explain things to us. All He wants from us is absolute trust and dependence on Him.

A friend sent me this story and I want to share it with you to help you understand that when we feel that God has abandoned or forgotten us, He is actually up to something. When we are down to nothing, God is up to something. He makes everything work out for our own good.

'One day, a man decided to travel by ship with his friends. While in the middle of their journey, the boat began to sink. Everyone tried to escape by swimming but it was all in vain, all drowned except this man who succeeds in clinging to a floating object. With the effect of the strong winds, this thing brought him very far, to a small island where there were no men or animals, just a few insects. With the sweat of his brow, he managed to build a small box

entirely made of straw. He stayed there for several days eating fruit and began to get used to his new life of suffering. He had already lost all hope of seeing his family again one day. Every night he lit a fire in front of his house to warm himself. One evening, as usual, he lit the fire. He stayed there for a long time until he dozed off. Late in the night, he was awakened by an overwhelming heat: it was his straw hut that had caught fire. He cried, cursing God, shouting, "Oh God, what have I done to you to hurt me so? You separated me from my family to bring me to this deserted island, then you killed all my friends and now you let my hut burn. Why are you so mean? It is better to die because I am tired of living in this suffering!"

'But at dawn, he saw a small boat coming towards him. When the boat landed, he ran straight for the captain and said to him in astonishment, "Captain, how did you get here? No boat can get here unless it gets lost." The Captain replied, "In the night we saw a fire and we thought it was a burning boat, and if we did not arrive immediately it was because the journey was long. God used the fire for us to find you." The man cried, fell on his knees and asked God for forgiveness, and he got into the boat and went home.'

God has many ways to solve our problems. You can lose a job and think that God has left you when He wants to give you a better job. Your friends can leave you, do not believe that the Lord has rejected you; He wants to keep you away from bad company. Do not curse your God even if you suffer, keep faith and hope, He will act.

Do you know that sometimes, to succeed in life you need enemies...? Yes! God can use your perceived enemy to work out something good for you. After all, it was through the perceived enemies of Jesus Christ that God fulfilled His plans for our salvation. It may be hard to accept but it is true. You need people who will mock you, so that you can run to God. A very good example at this point is Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:6-7, 10. The passage says, 'And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat... In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord remembered her'. You see it? She needed her rival to provoke her to seek the face of God and God allowed it to happen. You need people who will try to intimidate you, so that you can be courageous. You need people who will say 'No' so that you can learn how to be independent...I mean how to do it yourself. You need people who will disappoint you so that you can put all your trust in God alone. You need people who will work towards you losing that job, so that you can start your own big business.

You need people who will sell your ‘Joseph’ so that ‘you’ can get to Egypt and be a Prime Minister in a strange land of captivity (Genesis 37–47).

But sometimes, when we are disappointed, we feel very bad and we tend to remain in that spot. Not knowing that the end-point of disappointment is the beginning of your accomplishments. Understand this, ‘every disappointment you once had, came with a blessing!’ However, it is not everyone that partakes in this blessing that I’m talking about.

You cannot see a new open door while you are still putting all your attention, time and energy in trying to force the closed one to open. And again I say, ‘No disappointment can ever come without an attached blessing!’

So, when disappointments come, thank God for it and tell Him to open your eyes to see the new blessing that He has for you! Disappointment is Phase One while accomplishment is Phase Two. I doubt if one can jump the protocols. That is why it is called Breakthrough; something must ‘break’ so that you can go through!

Be encouraged. Stay lifted. This is a Voice of Hope.

The God who speaks

Sue Price (Pastoral Outreach Coordinator, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology)

Many years ago, I had the time and the eyesight to study and work with different textiles and stitches to create various pieces. At the time, there was a particular brand of silk threads on offer that were all the rage. They were gorgeous colours, quite pricey but oh so lovely to have and gaze at. I did buy a pack; it stayed unopened, safely in my sewing box. Every now and then I would get them out, look at them and think, ‘Oh no, they are too expensive to use’. This went on until challenged one day at a workshop. “What on earth is the use of them staying hidden away,” demanded the tutor, “Open the packet! Use them!” I was reminded of this clear instruction at a recent presentation given by Rosalie Moloney, on the use of scripture within our liturgy and tradition. Rosalie, as some of you will recall, was a parishioner at St Laurence’s during her time studying in Cambridge and living at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology. During her presentation Rosalie used a picture of a medieval Bible box, which was beautifully decorated, lovely to behold. It had a chain to keep it securely fastened to the shelf, and a huge lock to keep the Holy Bible safe inside. But as Rosalie pointed out, it is no good keeping the Bible locked away, to be gazed at

loving and admiringly. We need to open the box and open the book.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales has designated 2020 as the year of The God Who Speaks. Everyone is invited to open the Bible and hear what God is saying through His Word. We have got opportunities to do this at Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology. On the 7th December, Antonia Lynn is leading a Quiet Day for Advent, ‘Heart and Mind to Bethlehem, finding ourselves on the journey’. The day is from 11am to 3pm, £15 pay on the day, bring your own lunch. To book please e-mail mbitadm@hermes.cam.ac.uk.

Also Rosalie is delivering a module as part of our Catholic Theology and Practice programme, a learning space for Catholic Women. Her module is called *Jesus’ Ancestresses in Word and Art: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary*. This runs on Thursday afternoons 16th January to 6th February 2020. Cost £170. To apply for this course please e-mail mbitadm@hermes.cam.ac.uk. Both these events promise to be excellent, why come along, you never know, you might just hear the God who speaks.

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

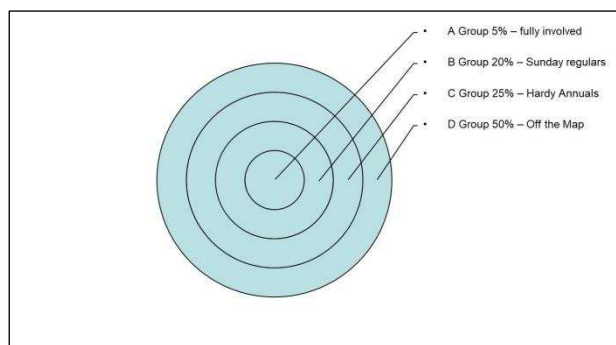
Fr Simon Blakesley

We are still under the influence of the mentality that has prevailed for the first 80 years of the 20th and now into the 21st century: that the parish is, first and foremost, ‘Father’s parish’ i.e. it was defined primarily in relation to the benefice that was entrusted to one priest (and, if a large one, only incidentally to his curates) and primarily to preserve the integrity of his ‘living’.

Following the Second Vatican Council, the development of the people-centred Church was applied to the structures of the local church in a systematic way, but the living reality of a more flexible approach towards pastoral organisation has taken a lot longer to develop.

Gradually the people of the parish have come to understand the concept of the people-centred church and for some it can be a very short hop towards developing the notion of ‘our parish’ and ‘our money’. This, of course, is a caricature, but I fear only just, as the dominant personalities in all our parish communities need little encouragement to ‘map’ their own strong feelings onto the whole of the parish.

Structures vary from parish to parish. A few years ago a pastoral worker gave us a Venn diagram to help us understand the involvement of people in the life of the parish:



- The inner 5% to 10% he called the ‘A’s, and these are the fully committed and involved people who are lay ministers, helpers etc.
- Then there are the ‘B’s (15% to 20%) who are the more or less regular Sunday Mass attendees and contribute regularly to the collection, but often hold back from proactive involvement.
- Then there are the ‘C’s (75%) who are sporadic Christmas and Easter attendees (and many not at all), but nevertheless baptised Catholics.

How does this pattern reflect in St Laurence’s? Do the ‘A’s tend to go to one Mass more than any other, are the ones who go to an 8am Sunday morning Mass mainly the ‘B’s who just want to ‘hear Mass’ and then go home, or is that more the pattern for the evening Mass? Does the style of music or liturgy at different Masses create a focus for particularly strong personalities which is then reflected in their participation in parish representative structures?

I rehearse all of these considerations because these are the personal realities and shared emotional structures that are invariably affected by ‘parish reorganisation’ in its broadest terms. Bishop Michael Evans in his Diocesan Pastoral Plan identified the person who talks about ‘My Mass’ whenever there is talk of rescheduling, and in fact there is evidence that if people cannot go to ‘their Mass’ then they may not go at all (particularly if they are on the ‘B/C’ border as indicated earlier). It is not surprising that in our deliberations in the diocese on parish reorganisation that the fallout in terms of ‘last-straw lapsation’ has been uppermost in many priests’ minds. Some folk are hanging on by their fingernails and we forget this at our peril. However, we have to be able to educate people towards a much more robust sense of belonging and participation that can weather the storms of rescheduling or the closure of small Mass centres and even parish churches, particularly where there has been massive demographic shift.

The main reality we are dealing with is what I would term ‘faith investment’ in a particular building or ‘Mass Community’ as in ‘Well, I’ve always been to the 8am at St. Aelred’s because there’s no singing, and I’m always home by 8.45am, unless some idiot’s blocked me in the car park...’ or ‘My family love the Folk Mass, we’ve always been to it since Fr Billy started it back in 19...’. In some parishes there may be much more fluidity between the different Masses, but, in my experience, people get fairly set in their ways and 90% of any given Mass community will attend that Mass exclusively. In some situations, however, there can develop a dominant Mass community (shall we call it the ‘alpha Mass’?) that tends to provide most of the ‘A’s in parish life. I am sure that it does happen that other Mass communities, especially if they are in a satellite Mass centre, have a strong sense of wanting their voice to be heard, so they make sure they are represented at parish council, finance committee level.

If there is a dominant Mass community the majority of the ‘A’s will be from this and they will either advertently or inadvertently represent the interests of that Mass. While some Masses may thrive others can wither on the vine and then the necessary pattern of any reorganisation is clear to everyone and hopefully more readily accepted. However, with the current discipline on Bination (saying two Masses a weekday) /Trination (saying three Masses on a Sunday) it is reasonably clear that priests will continue to say three Masses on a Sunday (and here the old chestnut of whether the Saturday anticipatory Mass should or shouldn’t be counted into this looms again...) but the question is whether these are going to be in three different ‘parishes’ or one parish with two Masses and one with one – this presumes that one priest has become the organisational point of reference, or whether a larger structure, a ‘pastoral area’ or similar, should be the primary focus?

In a sense we are dealing with some simple mathematics. If a church must have three Masses to serve the basic need and the plant is adequate then the identity of ‘the parish’ can probably remain clear. But it is where a priest has two Masses in one church and one in another that the structure may be slanted. Although the size of the congregation usually indicates the level of financial support that a Mass Community provides there can be marked differences even within the same geographical area. The folk who turn up to the 8am Mass and go home at 8.35am on the dot whether Mass has finished or not have often put £20 in the plate. People who are not great attendees at parish socials can nevertheless be generous supporters of the parish. We should not dismiss the contribution of this silent majority even though, when promoted to glory, they will probably look to slip out of the angelic chorus well before last verse of the hymn.

The primary question then is whether our canonical structures and presumptions are ‘fit for purpose’ and actually serve the emerging reality with a reducing number of clergy? Do we reconfigure our parishes around what one priest can manage and then expect that priest to be the manager, or is there a better way of establishing a relationship between a number of Mass Communities and a team of priests that would minister to them? If so, what is the optimal number of Mass Communities and how should they be structured to be served by a team of priests and pastoral ministers? Also, we need to future-proof any reorganisation by making sure that changes in schedules are robust and not just ‘tinkering’ so that another change process becomes necessary when there is another slight decrease in priestly numbers in a couple of years’ time.

In dealing with the practicalities of change, we must nevertheless be conscious that our churches are invested with years of prayer and devotions and we should be pleased that years of Eucharistic devotion have fostered a deep sense of being nourished. However, there are times when we need to be born from the wombs of our nurturing when the ages have run their course, and this too is being faithful to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. But in doing so we need to be aware of the feelings and emotions that this will engage and do our best to avoid people’s individual emotional needs being ‘mapped onto’ the broader emotional dynamics of the parish. This needs to be promptly identified and sensitively challenged, and ideally not by the parish priest but by fellow parishioners who can distinguish the emotional strands running through the debate and thus separate the personal from the institutional issues while affirming the validity of both.

The main structure of change within the diocese is the strategic decision-making of the bishop in consultation with the Council of Priests, but in practice there would usually be a consultative process at the parish level, and perhaps more extensively within the deanery too before this stage is reached which needs to be monitored with a ‘paper trail’ if it is to have credibility in the eyes of the people and their ministers.

Gnosticism, Christianity and Modern Politics

James P McQuillan

While the fall of the Western Roman Empire was the most important cultural catastrophe to befall the lands of Europe and North Africa, it is well known that early Christianity was riven by heresies, that of Arius, an attack on the Divine nature of Christ, being the most successful, even to the invading Germans. The instance of Gnosticism is less remembered, and that Aurelius Augustinus (354–430), better known as St

Augustine of Hippo, his North African See, was in early life a Manichean, a form of Gnosticism; his was a spiritual belief rivalling Christianity. Therefore we know much about this heresy, which was described by Adolf von Harnack as ‘Hellenized Christianity’. Gnosticism regarded the universe as the spiritual continuation of God, or as the ‘gradual deterioration of the Godhead’. This notion developed into a belief in two entities equally powerful, the good and the evil. Much doubt arose in Augustine’s belief in original sin, and down to the 16th century, Catholics and the Reformers fought over the figure of this early church father with great intensity.

These wayward impulses remained in the 20th century, when Eric Voegelin (1901–1985), the exiled German Catholic professor of religion and philosophy traced Gnostic notions to the Enlightenment and the emergence of modern politics. In his book, *The New Science of Politics. An Introduction* (1952), Voegelin went back to the Classical past for the roots of modernity, and followed this with his great series, *Order in History*, on the roots of Western civilization. Despite the fall of Rome, the influence of forms of ancient knowledge and practice continued, as the means of life such as agriculture and trade, cultural activities of the state and family, and of course religion and philosophy. Monasticism arose in Egypt and Syria, spreading to the West, especially Italy and Ireland. Such activities overwhelmed previous modes of belief, but Gnosticism lingered on, in for example the Cathar heresy in Southern France; the Dominican order under St Dominic was involved in its eradication. The Protestant Reformation attacked the hierarchical government of Catholicism, replaced Papal authority by local rulers including Henry VIII, and undermined the ancient tradition of rhetoric, that valuable ability of politicians, soldiers, lawyers and then clerics, to provide motivated leadership and judgement.

In the 19th century the revolutionary temper of the French Revolution was continued by Auguste Comte, who modelled his positivist and sociological creed on structures common to the Church in Rome, followed by violent forms of socialism, such as anarchism and communism, motivated by Marx and Engels, to name just a couple of its proponents. The course of the 20th century was disrupted not just by world war, but by violent and successful overturns of political order, first Bolshevik communism in Russia, Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. This last was the main motive for Voegelin’s scholarly activity, and he was almost assassinated by Hitler. By 1990 the Soviet Union collapsed, yet a quasi-capitalist Russia remains and a capitalistic-communistic China imposes a grim grasp over most common forms of freedom outside consumer choice. Across the remaining ‘free’ world, many democratic forces have adopted neo-liberal and even patriarchal tendencies, well represented by

Berlusconi, Trump and Boris Johnson, attempting to punish the mild errors of ‘liberalism’.

Over time, has Christianity attained much? Not really in secular terms, if for instance the list of recent martyrs is examined, since Christians of all sects are fatally attacked more than any other faith community. For Voegelin, Gnosticism in its belief in almost equal forces of good and evil is manifest in the confused moral philosophies of such uncompromised political entities in our modern world. The United States of America has imprisoned many of its poorer people, usually black, and enslaved them for industrial purposes in legal captivity: what about freedom from slavery? The United Kingdom might leave the European Union (EU), with no regard for the welfare of its smaller neighbour, Republic of Ireland, amidst short-term lines of industrial supply: motive – Project Fear. While not the greatest achievement of political order, the EU has supported a free, neutral but poor Republic of Ireland, not to mention Scotland, against the triumphalism of extreme English nationalism. Catholics continue to record their martyrs and eventually canonise them, so we should all be poised to offer up our lives for belief: ‘Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death!’

Cardinal Points – Democracy and Dominion

Ronald Haynes

If someone asks you, ‘Is the Church democratic?’, what would you say? Would it be a quick ‘no’ and be done with it, or would you have to stop and think about it? Hopefully, it will be the second option – stop and think about it – because it is not as simple as it seems. For example, if we turn the question around – is the Church dictatorial, or is it monarchical, or aristocratic, or even oligarchical? All such alternatives seem to result in a resounding answer of ‘no’.

Some years ago an insightful article in the publication *Priests & People* (now *The Pastoral Review*) had an excellent reflection on why the Church is not organised like a pyramid model, headed up by an all-powerful ruler (whether Pharaoh or Pope), with levels of diminishingly powerful underlings, and the base full of people who must follow and support all those above them in the model. Yet the model of leadership in the Church presented by Christ, the Founder of Christianity, especially on Maundy (or Holy) Thursday is one where the leader (the ‘greatest’) serves all the others (and the ‘least’). For those leaders who choose to be bossy, who prefer the top-down, pyramid model of the Church (as opposed to the Founder’s mandate to

serve others), a key question raised is ‘why don’t they do what they were told?’

The article went on to suggest that, instead of a pyramid with its point at the top and base below, the model Christ presented was with the point (the leader) below and supporting all those above. Such a model is unstable and would tip over, suggested the author, if it is static – but when dynamic (e.g. turning like a top) would be stable. For those who like such models, it provides a good visual metaphor to help understand the nature of a living Christian community.

G.K. Chesterton provides a neat formula for this idea, that being bossy is the wrong model, when referring to the Church in his essay, *The Thing: Why I Am A Catholic*: ‘It is the only thing in which the superior cannot be superior; in the sense of supercilious.’ No doubt he had in mind the passages from Jesus in the Gospels, echoed in some Epistles, where we are told that the rulers of the Gentiles ‘lord it over them’ but that it is not to be so with us, and that instead whoever wants to be a leader (or become great) ‘must be your servant’.

Contrary to what some may be led to believe, that leaders of the Church can legitimately take an imperial approach, a ‘my way or the highway’ stance; instead the Church at all levels calls us to engage in comprehensive consultation and co-responsibility.

Our Diocesan policy on Parish Structures for Lay Participation is clear that: ‘No major decisions about the life, worship, mission or property of the parish should be made without adequate opportunities being offered for full and open discussion by the whole parish community... The way of consensus should be sought whenever possible, with ordained ministers and lay faithful working together in partnership... Making decisions together should be the norm for parish life.’ This, of course, is where a Parish Forum plays a key role, but is by no means the end or full extent of what is intended or needed.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his address at the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the Theme: *Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility* asked, ‘To what extent is the pastoral co-responsibility of all, and particularly of the laity, recognized and encouraged?’ He addressed that concern by developing the idea that ‘it is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted’. This, he says, ‘demands a change in mind-set, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as “collaborators” of the clergy but truly recognized as “co-responsible”, for the Church’s being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.’

In the papal apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the beginning of the new millennium) St John Paul II emphasised similar concerns: ‘The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between Pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them a priori in all that is essential, and on the other leading them to pondered agreement ... Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: “Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes”.’

The recently canonised cardinal, St John Henry Newman, found that his writing was at times met with distinct opposition, perhaps largely due to being misunderstood (and no doubt because he was very much ahead of his time!). In a periodical he was editing (*The Rambler*), he faced criticism in response to him writing ‘in the preparation of a dogmatic definition, the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception’. He defended this in a subsequent edition of the same publication indicating that the Church is ‘more happy when she has such enthusiastic partisans about her as are here represented, than when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her divine doctrines and the sympathy of her divine contemplations, and requires from them *fides implicita* [implicit faith] in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition.’

Many of the ideas above are either implicit or complementary to a key Church principle of subsidiarity, whereby the Catechism (#1883) notes that ‘a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.’

Applying this to our lives, the Catechism continues (#1884) to say that ‘God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence.’

Overall, the witness from scripture, Church, and tradition has no room for dominators or tyrants, but would seem to favour something more akin to what we call democracy, certainly by the more general identification of democracy as the belief in freedom and equality between people. Then again, the usual sense of democracy, involving voting and representation has some application, as well, from the

election of popes to voting for religious and parish council representatives, to surveys and consultations which can (and have) occurred at diocesan and global levels (e.g. the questionnaires used to prepare for the 2015 Church synod on the family). If you had to pick between the models which would get your vote?

What does it mean to be human? (3)

Dick Wilson

When the first of these three articles, on ‘What does it mean to be human’, appeared in the Lent issue of the *Pilgrim*, I had the latest issue of *New Scientist* to hand about the end of species and tracing evolution. My second article, in July, glanced at the history, over more than three million years, of various representatives of the genus *homo*, and then over the evolution of our much more recent kind of human, *homo sapiens*. For the present article, I was able to make use of another edition of *New Scientist* (27th July) which, on the very same day as I started to write, plopped through the letterbox. It had an article on the ‘Eight wonders of the human brain’ and a summary of the nature of consciousness and the controversies surrounding it and why consciousness has often been thought of as ‘the hard question’.

If you study or marvel at the animal world, you are likely to be in contact with animals and particularly those that we farm for milk or wool, or that we kill and eat. As with much human endeavour, this is indeed contentious. Can we survive on vegetables alone? We rarely have done so, and instead we slaughter animals for meat. Do we simply detain a sheep in a fold for wool, or simply feed on it, like milk? The same edition carries a picture of a bone about 3-6cm, with five or possibly six neat parallel scratched lines and a line of red pigment in ochre. The bone can be dated to about 100,000 years ago. The bone is considered, without complete certainty, to be Denisovan, so called after the place in Siberia where so much information has been garnered from a single thumb. The members of the genus *homo*, that is Neander humans, *homo sapiens* and Denisovans, are known from their DNA genes to have interbred, but only *sapiens* survived.

There is evidence of the first use of fire by early humans holding food over a fire to cook, some 400,000 years ago. But there is evidence from a recent dig in Kenya of the possible use of fire a further 400,000 years ago.

Time and again, archaeology discloses what humans like and do; their behaviours and how they have evolved and taken on their present forms. For example, as shown from the evidence of lice, modern humans

wore clothes 170,000 years ago, which evolved as they travelled into colder climates, about 100,000 years ago. Humans have complex languages, with spoken words and grammar to relate one word to another. Surprising quirks occur, for example when men and women in a family sometimes speak different languages, or the members of a small isolated tribe may have no word for three because they never need to count anything.

I would also comment on the way we cannot speak, respond to and monitor only our own utterances. A philosophy class discusses and will try to explain how we see, hear (and so on) ourselves, but can't describe any way we can do this for someone else. What we do in fact is to act as if sights, tastes and distance judgements and all our other experiences can readily be put to use. Food tastes good, we greatly enjoy music, and don't bump into the furniture. For example, the eyes of the would-be-engine driver who cannot see red and therefore doesn't get the job and has other sight inconveniences. But we, the lucky ones, are no nearer a certainty that what we see is what is also experienced by other people.

On the other hand, in a test some animals made gestures like those of humans who are saying the same thing. An elephant seems to comfort another, and chimps do too. And we can feel with them. This is empathy.

Of course, we don't really know what the elephant and the chimp have by way of feeling and emotion, let alone what is being experienced in their own minds. Descartes said animals were like machines, but I don't think he would these days. Modern neurology is repeatedly producing knowledge about the brain, and we know that about 75% of what goes on in our minds is not consciously perceived. The rest is happening but is not perceived. The question here is about what the mind asks, and how from head to toe, we can direct ourselves, body and mind, to do what we want to do and get on with it. All this survey is asking is, 'What is it like to be human?', and this is what they call the easy question. Such questions are tackled by the work of scientists, as in Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, Mendel's theory showing that genetic matter is carried in discrete units called chromosomes. Crick, Watson and Franklin discovered DNA, and Crick the genetic code made from it. Numerous finds have mapped the brain in detail.

The hard question, if I have it right, is to find how the impersonal experience of the brain and body becomes the subjective experience of being a human being. And this is what we see, hear and feel in our minds. So, it is along these lines that our opening question can be answered.

Family

Petra Tucker

A few weeks ago, Fr Bob gave a sermon exploring the concepts of 'family' and 'home', linking these themes with the Gospel and the fact that a new university term was starting. Hopefully, for the majority of students, the making of a new home is an exciting prospect, even if tinged with apprehension, since their experience of family life has given them the necessary confidence. For others, the idea of making a new home may be full of anxiety, due to a difficult family life experience. Indeed for some, going to university may not be the first time they have left their family. For Catholic students, the chaplaincy provides a place to meet new people and take these steps in a supportive environment.

I remember moving into a rather forbidding nurses' home in Whitechapel in January 1980. Some of my fellow students I am still in touch with. For the four years I was in London, this new family was important to me and helped fill this time with happy memories. The Catholic chaplaincy at Queen Mary College was led by a dynamic Augustinian priest called Fr Tom and I joined this family of young people.

Fr Bob talked about the Israelites being homeless, unwanted, aliens, despised and looked down upon during their decades of travel and exile, ultimately leading to arrival in their 'promised land'.

Family and home are normally about the familiar and comfortable feelings, but we are exhorted by Jesus to welcome the stranger, who by definition is not part of our family. This opens up the debate of what is family? What is home?

This led me to think about two communities I am involved with, where the concept of home and family are stretched or fragmented – homeless people and those in prison. Whilst homeless people have to be constantly alert to physical danger, they are part of a community with its own places and customs. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton recently talked on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs about the two years she lived on the streets. She suffered abuse from people countless times but she talked about others within the homeless community 'watching out' for her, more so than her biological family.

For most of the men I work with in prison, their families are extremely important to them, mothers in particular. Their families may not visit them much, often because of long distances, but they are in regular touch by phone.

Only recently Ray* asked me, when I photographed his work, if I could get an extra print for him to send to his mum. To make a present, the men will design a small textile, usually intricate and beautiful, then create it from leftover fabrics, while chatting about their families as they stitch. One youngish dad, Ian*, told me about the presents he sent out to his son, paid for from his Fine Cell Work earnings. Also, he was part of 'Storybook Dads', a small charity which enables men to read stories which are recorded onto a CD and sent to the family along with the book itself. This is a simple yet important way to maintain a sense of 'family' even if the physicalness of home is another address.

Important though their families on the outside are, prisoners will talk about the 'family' life that they have on their wing. There will be cooking groups where ingredients are bought communally and cooked so that they can share a meal together. Preparing and eating food is one of the most basic ways of being part of a family. This led to a discussion on how to make a meal on a wing where there isn't a kitchen (since the privilege of a kitchen is reserved for prisoners who

have 'enhanced' status). I learnt of elaborate chicken curries that can be cooked in a kettle. Some are even adventurous enough to deep fat fry in a kettle! Risky and dangerous and can get you into trouble.

There are games evenings that the men hold on the wing. They look forward to these as it isn't just about passing time away but also an opportunity to be together as a group. In other words family. The prison cells are organised into wings and each wing is made up of several spurs. At Christmas, New Year and Easter weekends, prisoners are locked up for most of the day and so when they are out on the spur on free association then they greatly look forward to their quizzes and other competitions. Prizes can be won and getting to the top of the tree brings with it some kudos.

I am not suggesting that prison is a happy family community, because the reality is that serving your sentence is extremely hard in whatever kind of prison you are in – there are however times when the men on a spur can call their fellow inmates 'family'.

*Names changed to protect privacy.

Paintings requiring a good home

Ruby Silveira was a long-time parishioner of St Laurence's who died in February 2018 in her nineties. Those who knew her well would be aware that Ruby, along with her other talents and experiences, was a very accomplished life-long artist: landscapes, still life and some portraits mainly in oils but also in other media including watercolour and pastel. Ruby's family left some of her paintings to the Parish for parishioners to enjoy – these are currently in the Parish Office. Just a few examples are shown here, but there are many more to choose from. If anyone would like to browse her pictures and choose one for themselves – please contact the Parish Office.



Parish Activities & Organisations

Library News: More books in our library for you to read and borrow!

Miriam Santos Freire

Following a generous book donation made a few months ago by Lyn and Arn Dekker, St Laurence's library has one more bookcase module, so why don't you come and visit us? We share the space with Children's Liturgy and other activities on the 1st floor. We have a good selection of religious books, CDs and DVDs on Bible Study, Biography, Church Classics, Comparative Religion, Encyclicals, Ethics, Fiction, History, Hymns, Liturgy, Media, New Evangelisation, Poetry, Prayer, Religion and Science, Spirituality, The Church in Conflict, The Church Today, Theology and Vocations.

We are finally creating a catalogue of all our books which will be available on our Parish's website to make the whole process easier, so watch out for updates in the Parish bulletin. Please do drop in any time before / after Mass or whenever the church is open. Just fill in the check-in / check-out notepad available on one of the bookshelves and take your pick! And don't forget to return them so that others may also enjoy them :-)

We would like to thank Gianluca and Pedro for their help with the bookcase.

For any information or if you would like to donate any books to our library, please email Miriam at office@saintlaurence.org.uk.

Happy reading!



SVP Sudan & South Sudan Appeal

Tony King

Following a plan initiated in May 2019 by the Parish SVP, the appeal has continued successfully through the latter part of the year, with the last of six 'second collections' being held on 23th & 24th November.

The appeal has involved the production of information leaflets, flyers, posters and 'word of mouth' dissemination of information about the work of the SVP in both Sudan and South Sudan. We thank Anita Boniface for permission to use a copy of her Sudan article, first published in Vincentian Concern, which was reproduced in the Pilgrim earlier in the year. Thank you also to the church office and Pilgrim staff for their assistance with material production.

Many have contributed to the success of this appeal which has to date raised well over £4,000.

There has been a sustained contribution from the 'Mini Vinnies' in St Laurence's Primary School, as well as the proceeds of a cake sale at the church. Donations were received from the Catholic Women's League, the 'Bring and Buy' sale and members of the Walsingham coach group. Individuals have made separate private donations in different ways and several have also taken advantage of 'gift aid' to boost the value of their contributions.

The mainstay has been the contributions to the six 'second collections' each month, after the Vigil Mass on Saturday and all Sunday Masses. Thanks are due to Fr Simon, Fr Bob and Fr Johane for their support in promoting these collections.

We thank also our visitors. Ruth and Ian Mawdsley (SVP Twinnage officer for Sudan & South Sudan), who 'dropped over' from Wales one weekend in October to express their appreciation and provide insights into the ongoing work of the SVP in the two countries.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank all of you, the parishioners of St Laurence's who support the work of the Society in prayer and deed, continuing to give selflessly with charity in your hearts.

On behalf of the SVP in Sudan & South Sudan we thank you very sincerely for your continued unwavering support.

Further information about the work of the SVP can be found online at www.svp.org.uk

Being a school governor at St Laurence

Mary Jane O’Sullivan

The St Laurence school governing body is a board of 12 people who volunteer to support our Parish school. As governors we work alongside the school leadership team to ensure that the school runs effectively and maintains its strong Catholic ethos. Our governing body has three main functions:

- Ensuring that the school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding the school’s head to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

We do this in a number of ways. Some people bring professional expertise (e.g. financial, legal, human resources). Some make planned visits during the school day to see the school in action and report back to the governing body. We all read reports from the Headteacher, Ofsted, parent & pupil surveys and ask questions of the senior leadership team about what is going well, what the school’s challenges are and what the school is doing to improve. Being a school governor is sometimes described as a “thinking rather than doing” role. Whereas the Head’s role is to manage the school on a day to day basis, the Governing Body acts as a ‘critical friend’ to the Head, supporting and overseeing her management by setting policy and monitoring its implementation. We work together as a team; no individual governor has the authority to act independently of the Governing Body.

The majority of our governors are Catholics, appointed by the Bishop. These are ‘Foundation Governors’ who also have a specific responsibility to protect and enhance the continuing Catholic character of the school. We do this by monitoring the relevant school policies and visiting the school to see the Catholic life of our school in action. Sometimes this is by noticing the way our staff and children interact with each other and live out our school Gospel values when we conduct governor visits. Sometimes it involves visiting during pupil-led assemblies, Advent “Stay and Pray” sessions (where parents are invited to join class prayer in the morning) and, of course, our school Masses.

Joining Our Lady of Walsingham Multi-Academy Catholic Trust

In 2015 the Bishop set out a plan for all the Catholic state schools in the Diocese to work together in Multi-Academy Trusts, of which there are now two in our Diocese and it is envisaged that, when fully developed, they shall each be made up of 11 Catholic schools. Over the last few years, the governors have been

working towards joining Our Lady of Walsingham Trust. This has involved several meetings with senior leaders and Directors from the Trust and the Diocesan Education Service as well as running consultations with staff and parents. We officially joined the Trust on 1 September this year, bringing the Trust up to a total of 6 schools (5 primaries and 1 secondary) across Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Fr Simon is a Director of the Trust, and as our Parish Priest he has a standing invitation to all our Local Governing Body meetings.

What does being a governor involve?

What we ask from governors is:

- Time and interest in the school: typically governors spend between 5 and 10 hours per month on governor duties. Most governors visit the school during the day at least once a year;
- Attendance at 2 Local Governing Body meetings per term;
- Joining a committee of governors which meets once a term (either during the school day or immediately after school) to look in more detail at a particular area of the school’s performance (e.g. children’s learning and progress or financial and premises management);
- Undergoing training provided by the Cambridgeshire School Governance Team;
- Commitment to supporting the school to maintain its Catholic Ethos, academic standards and financial viability;
- Commitment to supporting the school’s strong Safeguarding culture so that every child can feel safe and enjoy learning in school.

Would you be interested in joining us?

Governors are appointed or elected for a 4-year term of office (though some choose to serve more than one term). We are always looking out for new governors. From January 2020 we shall have a vacancy which could be filled either by a Catholic Foundation governor or a non-Catholic governor. We are committed to our local governing body being a group which reflects the diversity of our school and Parish community. We expect non-Catholic governors to be committed to supporting the school’s Catholic ethos.

If you think you might be interested in **volunteering to become a governor**, please contact the school office (01223 712227 or office@stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk) in order to arrange to speak to our Chair of Governors and find out more. Alternatively, please speak to one of us! Between us we are regularly at 6pm, 9.30am and 11am Masses each week. We are: Mary Jane O’Sullivan (Chair), Claire Southgate (Vice Chair), Charlotte Woodford, Harry Roberts, Janet Scally, Chioma Ubajaka, Ursula Lowe, Vicki Worsnop, Adam Rokitnicki, Felix Hearn, Phyllis Maynard (Staff Governor) and Clare Clark (Head).

St Laurence's School

Veronica Harvey

Here are some photos from our current display boards which are based around the lives of the Saints. We were following the story of Blessed John Henry Newman and looked at the Steps to becoming a Saint. We also thought of the words from Pope Francis' Gaudete et Exsultate where he encouraged us all to be Saints next door.



Mini Vinnies

Rachel Chalklin and Felicity Tanvir (Mini Vinnies School Coordinators)

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

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



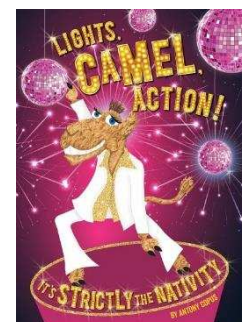
Last term the previous group of Mini Vinnies organised a summer shop and each week throughout the summer sold a variety of items at lunchtimes to raise money for the SVP's Twinnage Project in Sudan and South Sudan. So far, we have raised just under £150 and our mission this term is to at least double our funds as well as raising money for other charities.



Our first fundraising activity this term is taking place this week. As part of our whole school Maths day, the Mini Vinnies has asked children to bring in as many pennies as possible. We are laying them around the school grounds boundary to see how many pennies are needed to trace the perimeter. As well as collecting the pennies the Mini Vinnies are also running an estimation competition for staff and parents.

Next week the Mini Vinnies will be selling hot chocolate drinks to raise money for Children in Need and then throughout December they have decided that they would like to run a Winter shop after school to sell a range of products raising money to support those who are homeless in Cambridge.

Each week the Mini Vinnies renew their pledge to not only support others by fundraising but also through charitable works. Over the past year the Mini Vinnies group have made regular trips to a local residential home for the elderly and we are looking forward to visiting them again this Advent. In addition, the Mini Vinnies are also inviting all our parishioners to join us for the Key Stage 1 Nativity play, 'Lights, Camel, Action – It's strictly the Nativity!', and for afternoon tea after the performance. Please keep the date in your diary – Tuesday 11th December at 2.20pm.



The children are always enthusiastic, coming up with their own ideas on how they can fundraise and do other charitable works.

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

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has been engaging with young people and education since its earliest days. Today the SVP England & Wales is pleased to highlight its continuing strong links with young people, through the development of its 'Mini Vinnies' programme – a ground-breaking Primary Schools initiative, based on good work done in Australia, piloted in the Diocese of Shrewsbury, and which is seen as having, 'the potential to significantly contribute to the future of our Society.' <http://www.minivinnies.org.uk/index.php>

CAFOD's great big thank you and a toast to an amazing New Year!

Serga Collett

Thank you, thank you, thank you! What a terrific year we have had! WE COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU! A heartfelt thank you on behalf of all those people like Mahinur who CAFOD supported after her crops had failed because of climate change and Fabiano who we heard now no longer has to walk three miles for water. You have been extremely generous to both our appeals this year. With your support we have also enjoyed a fabulous Creation celebration in summer with a picnic in the garden and a day of prayer for Creation in September. Our Harvest Produce sale raised over £100 and the sale of unwanted Christmas presents raised £250 for CAFOD with the Fast Day appeals raising just over £1300 and £1500 respectively. This has meant we have managed to raise over £3000 this year to provide long-term aid to equip people in developing countries with the skills, tools and opportunities to live with dignity, support their families and give back to their communities.



Harvest Thanksgiving 2019

I have great pleasure in announcing that we will be launching the 'Hands On Colombia' project in January with a big launch party on 25th January in the evening, with tasty local food and a presentation for you to learn more about the project, so do put the date in your diary. Colombia has suffered greatly from violence, gangs and conflict with over 280,000 killed. The project will work with young people in schools, and women's support groups, to run workshops and equip young people with strong communication skills and other tools, to make peace a reality.

We will once again be holding an unwanted Christmas gift sale early in January, so please keep those gifts you do not want and bring them to church to raise much needed funds for those less fortunate than us.

Of course, CAFOD will remind you throughout the year how to look after this precious world that God has

given to us and we will be renewing our 'Live Simply' award early next year.

Finally, a plea! As you know we are a very active group here in St Laurence's Parish but we could be doing so much more!!! Please consider helping; the more members we have, the less individuals will have to do. Please do consider joining us and help those who are in need overseas. Please contact Serga Collett by emailing collettserga@gmail.com

In heartfelt gratitude, I wish you a very peaceful and 'non-commercial' Christmas and a New Year in which we all reach out the hand of friendship to those less fortunate than ourselves.

CWL – York

Janet Scalley

On 30th August over 300 Catholic Women's League members (and some husbands) assembled in York to celebrate St Margaret Clitherow, our Patron and one of



the best loved English Martyrs. Two carloads of ladies from Cambridge travelled up the day before, so we would have time to look around York.

As it was a pilgrimage to celebrate our Patron, we made a beeline for the Shambles, where she had lived from 1574. It is no longer a butcher's shop, but is now a peaceful and welcoming chapel, where Mass is held every Saturday morning.

After a morning wandering around, we attended a beautiful Mass in St Wilfrid's Catholic Church, with excellent organ accompaniment, followed by a generous afternoon tea in one of the large hotels near York Railway Station.



Before leaving the city, we saw the plaque on the Ouse Bridge, which denoted the place where St Margaret was martyred by laying her on a rock, to break her back and covering her with a board on which they laid stones and rocks until she died. Her only crimes were to shelter priests and hear Mass, and the fact that once caught she refused to plead so her fellow Catholics would not be named and caught.

The Batemans Trust: supporting underprivileged children in India

Becky Sewell

I have been a parishioner at St Laurence's for the last few years. I want to tell you about the work of a small charity called the Batemans Trust, of which I am a trustee.

The Batemans Trust was started over 20 years ago by six agricultural college students who shared a chilly, farm cottage called 'Batemans'. They were inspired by Alex Jacob (Founding Trustee) to provide support to the underprivileged children at St George's School and Orphanage in Chennai, South India where Alex had volunteered in 1994. I met Alex when we were both studying for a PGCE at Homerton in 2002 and became involved with Batemans soon after that. (Alex can be very persuasive!) In 2006, I headed to Chennai to spend a year at St George's with my husband Mike and three children then aged ten, eight and six. We had an amazing year running an after-school programme for the children, helping them not only to get through their exams but also to develop their talents and interests for drama, dance, sports and art.

When The Batemans Trust wanted to expand its work beyond St George's, it joined hands with Monica Augustine. Monica shared the Batemans Trust vision and together we set up The Satkaarya Trust, our sister charity in India.

Today Batemans-Satkaarya run two children's homes, registered with the Chennai Child Welfare Board, to care for children at risk who do not have safe homes of their own. Our local staff provide these children with a loving and nurturing environment in which to grow and develop their own unique talents.

We educate the children in our care either at local schools or in our own 'Open School' – a school for children with special needs and for those who have missed out on education or fail to make progress in mainstream schools. We also run a Life Skills programme that ensures our young people leave us with the practical and emotional tools to care for the health and welfare of themselves and their families. We also provide continued support for our young people at universities and technical colleges.

Batemans-Satkaarya has achieved great results to date; almost all the children in our care successfully complete apprenticeships or higher education and move on to full-time employment.

I spent a wonderful month in Chennai last year training our Open School teachers in phonics and teaching reading. I was overwhelmed by the dedication of the staff who teach and care for the children. They have

created a real home for children who have suffered unimaginable hardships, such as trafficking, neglect and abuse. Despite their harrowing backgrounds, the children are full of exuberance and gratitude. It was very humbling.

Batemans-Satkaarya has exciting plans for the future. We want to build on our success and expand our operation to build a new school and community centre to help many more children (especially girls) from marginalised communities and those with special needs who often miss out on education and risk falling victim to child labour, trafficking, prostitution and a life of poverty.

We achieved our first milestone in February 2018 when, after a successful fundraising campaign, we bought a plot of land in Sendrambakkam, on the outskirts of Chennai.

Our next step is to build a permanent community education and training centre on this site. We wish to create a project that will have a significant impact on the lives of many children and communities and offer the potential for far-reaching improvements to health and education in this part of India. We have already raised over £100,000 of the £280,000 we need.

If anyone at St Laurence's is interested in the work of Batemans-Satkaarya we are always looking for supporters, new trustees (especially anyone with links to South India) and fundraisers to help us in our life-changing work.

Do get in touch if you think you can help or just want to find out more about us at www.batemans.org.uk and rebecca.sewell@batemans.org.uk



Friends of St John's Cathedral, Norwich

Anne Maddocks, life member of the Friends of SJC

I attended the Mass at our Norwich Cathedral for the Friends of the Cathedral followed by a short meeting. Two of our officers have retired: the Chairman and Secretary. On this occasion we had a buffet lunch because the heating was out of order. Bishop Alan gave the Homily and invited us to find a quiet place, make the Sign of the Cross and pray. To help us to pray he gave us four letters: A.C.T.S

A for Adoration

C for Confession

T for Thanksgiving

S for Supplication (pray for wife/husband, grandparents, grandchildren etc)

It was a good day in spite of us not having our usual hot meal. I hope more people will join the Friends. The Bishop is going to write to all the parishes in the Diocese to invite them to see this beautiful Cathedral. It is by far the best in the country, that's for sure. This is mostly due to all the work the Friends have paid for over the last few years. The last task is the altar and chapel to the left of the high altar.

Altar Servers

Terry Taylor-Crush

On Sunday 29th September at 9.30am Mass four altar servers received their St Stephen's bronze medals as they have been serving at Mass for a year or more.

They have each written their thoughts about altar serving.

Alex said:-

I feel proud to help the priest to say the Mass.
I don't like it when the candle feels hot on my face.

Katie wrote:-

Being an altar server connects me more in church than it did before. I can witness what happens in church from behind the altar instead of in front. I like being an altar server because it makes me feel proud to be helping the priest.

It felt really special to be awarded the St Stephen altar server medal. After being awarded this medal it makes me proud to serve God and I hope I can continue in every way possible for the rest of my life.

Gabriel wrote:-

I love having the privilege to serve my Parish at the altar. I believe this brings me closer to God although it is rather stressful remembering where to ring the first bell during Eucharistic prayer.

Anne wrote:-

I like being an altar server because you get to help the priest. Altar serving makes me feel mature. When I serve I feel happy.



Left to right: Alex, Katie, Fr Simon, Gabriel and Anne.

Garden Clean Up

Helena Judd

On 13th July 2019, a small but mighty group of parishioners gathered for a Garden Clean Up at St Laurence. Weeds were pulled, new bushes planted and mighty eyesores were removed. Parishioners of all ages worked alongside in an effort to make the garden nice for the Parish Picnic. Fr Simon lent a hand and also provided delicious sausages to keep the gardeners fuelled for the afternoon. Theodore, the youngest helper at 9 1/2 months old, enjoyed keeping Clare on her toes in the Parish Room whilst members of the youth group helped pluck bay leaves to be sold at another date.



Summary of St Laurence's Parishioners Open Meeting (Forum) 10th October 2019

Chair: Stephen Warde, Minutes: Serga Collett

In attendance: Fr Simon and 18 parishioners

At the start of the meeting Fr Simon told the Forum to be wary of emails sent from his email account as it may have been hacked. There have been several emails professing to be from Fr Simon but not sent by him. If sending an email to Fr Simon please use simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk

It was noted that Wintercomfort will have speakers at Masses on 16th/17th November. [see page 26]

Buildings and grounds

Sanctuary

Fr Simon presented outline plans drawn by Brown and Ralph, based on his concept for re-ordering the Sanctuary. As well as leaving the plans available for inspection after the meeting, he outlined the plans to the Forum. The proposal is to have 2 six-inch stone steps (rather than the current 3 steps) enabling ramp access on either side of the Sanctuary. The Altar and Lectern would be raised on a further step so that these focal points would be just two inches lower than they are currently. The Lectern (which would be used by both priest and cantor) and seats for the Celebrants would swap sides, reducing the amount of furniture in the Sanctuary. The stone could have differentiation of colour on the steps so that they would be clearly visible to people. Father spoke about making the brickwork look more interesting and he suggested a brass cross to decorate the altar front (as at St L school) and have the Alpha and Omega on the Lectern. The Crucifix could be suspended on wires above the altar.

The proposal also reconfigures access to the Sacristy and to the confessional, which will be accessed from the Narthex. The votive candle-stands would be situated underneath the statues. To make the Sanctuary less 'busy', the keyboard would be positioned in front of the pews, this will enable the keyboard player and Cantor to have direct eye contact. The audio equipment would be reduced in size and the wiring housed in a purpose-built cupboard underneath the figure of St Laurence. Father felt that the music group should be part of the congregation.

Catharine Warren asked whether the music group had been consulted and whether the keyboard player will have enough vision of what is happening in church, e.g. when processing into/out. Father explained that he had spoken to Helen and will have further discussions with other members of the music group.

Some discussion took place about the redecoration of the walls, which could be undertaken at the same time. Father felt that a change of colour that blended with

the tone of the wood and the brick would be preferential. He pointed out that the Quinquennial survey in 2015 advised that the church would have to be redecorated within 5 years. This would therefore be due in 2020.

There was a side discussion about heating in the church. The heaters which are quite old are becoming inefficient and also get very hot to the touch. Options would be to put cages around the current ones or to replace with new ones. However, he said the experts felt that the current ones are coming to the end of their life. Newer models are slimmer, have cool skins and blow warm air out.

Sarah Sykes wanted to know whether the projector and the projector screen for the church were still being considered. Father said yes, that the cost would be around £5000 and if anyone was interested in seeing a similar installation – very discreet and folds away against the wall – it can be seen in Newmarket.

The meeting was happy that the outline plans produced so far are heading in the right direction. The next steps are to get more detailed plans drawn up, with costings. These more detailed plans will be made available for all parishioners to review and comment upon, and then discussed at future Open Meetings before progressing them, so that there is an opportunity to discuss and decide upon the detail and options outlined above.

The Roof

The roof has several leaks and there are currently buckets in the church to catch rainwater. Repair is imminent although the go-ahead has not yet been received from the Diocese. Scaffolding will arrive next week and the bike racks will be out of use while the roofing work takes place. Father offered to open his side gate so that cyclists could park their bikes safely. He also showed a selection of finishes for roof tiles, explaining that his preferred tile was the 'Tuscan Olympus double pantile'. The meeting unanimously agreed with his choice.

Parking

Parking was raised and discussed briefly, although (as discussed at the last Forum) we will review more formally at the next meeting, when the scheme will have been running for six months. Father explained that the new system keeps the car park remarkably clear. He pointed out that disabled badge holders still have to put their registration numbers into the system and that the company operating the system will treat Christmas Eve and Christmas Day like a Sunday.

CAFOD

The recent Harvest Fast Day 2019 – raised £1,379.72, this includes the total received via contactless payments which amounted to £268, and £107 raised from the sale of Harvest produce.

On 21st Sept CAFOD had a small AGM followed by Jane Crone, Area Co-ordinator, speaking on the upcoming Harvest Fast Day Appeal and Ruth Flores presenting 'Hands On Magdalena Medio'. Serga explained that she would like the Parish to adopt the 'Hands On Magdalena Medio in Colombia' project for the next year, to replace the Sudan Project once this finishes. This project aims to stop violence and find alternative ways of life for young people by CAFOD going into local schools. It was agreed to adopt this project for the next year (a three year project but to be reviewed annually); collections will be held four times a year. Serga also explained that she would like to get the school, confirmation, communion groups and possibly St Bede's involved.

Liturgy – Advent and Christmas

The Carol Service will be on the 4th Sunday of Advent in the afternoon, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

A Friday evening Penitential service was discussed with requests also for a service in daylight. It was agreed to keep the evening service, but to consider an additional Saturday afternoon service if feasible.

The Children's Mass is to be held on 24th December at 5pm.

Father wishes to continue house Masses during Advent, every Thursday at 7.30pm. It was noted that these Masses often don't meet the aim of connecting parishioners to neighbours they may not know, as they are not usually publicised. It was suggested hosts are given the option to publicise these Masses in the Newsletter (possibly requesting people to get in touch for exact time/venue, in order to help manage numbers).

Catechesis and Youth Activities

Chioma reported that there are now 26 children from the Parish inscribed for First Holy Communion, in addition to the children taking classes via the school. She explained that the cut-off date was November after which no more children would be taken and First Communion would be held in May. Masses for smaller groups over two weekends were popular last year.

Father felt we should address those children and families who don't return after their First Holy Communion and that this was a real challenge. One idea was to get a team together to make house visits. Chioma said that she had had good feedback from some parents from previous years and pointed out that many children are not from this Parish. She said that young people will be encouraged to attend the youth groups.

Helena reported that the 7-11 year-old youth group starts this Friday, although this is flexible and may become a Monday. She requested that the Ablaze in

May on 10th May, be outdoors and include the Crowning of Mary. Father felt that it is difficult to focus the young people's attention outdoors. Helena also asked whether the older group and Confirmation group may construct actual physical Stations of the Cross outside. There was some discussion of this and a request for more clarity on the nature of the Stations and whether they would be temporary or permanent. Temporary was felt to be better.

Finance and Parish Management

James Dore reported that broadly speaking although expenditure is a little up on last year, we are breaking even and that this is as planned. He said that with the help of Finance Committee they are reviewing and taking action to improve some of our processes, especially those around payment to staff and staff contracts. Contactless giving to be discussed with Serga following successful trial of contactless unit for CAFOD.

Updates from Parish Groups

Catharine Warren spoke about the SVP talks at the end of Mass and that this had resulted in 2-3 new members. Sudan collections and donations during the year had raised around £3,800 There will be an SVP Mass of Anointing on 30th November jointly with OLEM at 3pm; SVP will again organise the Giving Tree this Christmas with gifts going to the elderly, CCHP, Wintercomfort and families in need via SVP.

Any other business

Council of Laity: Helena Judd and Christine Knight will attend.

Fr Bob sent a message suggesting renaming the Forum to make the name more representative of its function and perhaps more inviting for parishioners to attend. Various names were discussed with a decision to call it the: ***Parishioners' Open Meeting***.

Mary Jane O'Sullivan announced that there will be a school governor vacancy at St Laurence's School in January.

Fr Simon mentioned the Accompanied Prayer Month which will take place every Thursday in November. Application forms and information available in porch and newsletter.

Proposed dates of 2020 meetings:

Tuesday 28th January

Thursday 23rd April

Tuesday 7th July

Thursday 8th October

Personal Stories

Lourdes 2019

Margaret Plumb

Six members of St Laurence's Parish joined the East Anglia Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Organized by the Catholic Association and led this year by Bishop Alan Hopes, it took place from Friday 23rd to 30th August. Also travelling with the Association were the following Dioceses: Clifton, Southwark, Northampton, Stoneyhurst School (who provided most of the helpers) and The Glanfield Children's Group; as well as doctors, nurses and individuals. Helpers work in the hospital doing, among other things, kitchen duties, supplying teas and coffees, and laundry; or assisting people in wheelchairs (they are known as 'rollers') taking them to the services and anywhere else they would like to go – i.e. lighting candles, going to the Grotto or to the shops. There are no shops in the Domain only the Library which sells religious books etc. They also provide water to those attending the services. Time is made during the Pilgrimage to go through the Grotto.

The Pilgrimage itself starts on the Saturday with a walking tour of the town plus a visit to the Cachot, which is the tiny chamber, a former prison, where St. Bernadette Soubirous and her family lived in the 1850s.

The Gathering Mass was held on the Saturday afternoon in the St Pius X Basilica. In the early evening the Diocese had a party – a good opportunity for everyone to meet friends and get to know one another. On Sunday most attend the International Mass in the St Pius X Basilica. In the evening the Association led the Torch Light Procession.

Masses are held at the Grotto and other Chapels; each Diocese has its own Mass on the free day. The Association leads the Blessed Sacrament Procession one afternoon (this year it was Monday). Everyone is advised not to do everything every day. On the free day there are outings in the afternoon to places like Garvarnie, Bartres, and the Lake of Lourdes.

The Pilgrimage ended with a very happy time at the Glanfield Children's Group Mass, their Chaplain Mgr Tony Rogers retired this year and handed over the Chaplaincy to Deacon Peter Wagnanski.

The 2020 Pilgrimage is from 21st to 28th August – why not join it.

Samuel the Squatter

Sr Pat Robb

Circumstances beyond his control had made Samuel a squatter.

He hated living in a hovel made of black plastic sacks and cardboard and, what was worse, was the fact that it was home too for his little grandson, Ben. But he could see no way out, no hope of getting the necessary money to buy a passport so that he could return to his own country of Zimbabwe.

Many years ago, when he was just 16yrs old, Samuel had left his home in Zimbabwe for this rich and peaceful land, Mozambique, to earn his living as a field worker. It had been hard work, but there were lots of his own countrymen with him and they had a good time. They had a little money in their pockets, a roof over their heads, though not a very good one to be sure, a bit of land to till and a better chance than if they had stayed in their own country. Every year, when things were quiet on the farm, they walked back across the border to Zimbabwe carrying presents for their families: clothes, materials, sugar, soap, things that their families could not afford. They would return with cashew nuts, and little else, though one year Samuel returned with a bride!

Prima settled in well and she and Samuel had four children – three girls and a boy. The girls all married local boys and went off to their respective in-laws, but their son returned to his parents' country.

Sadly, when the civil war started, he was killed. The civil war made the border crossing very difficult between Zimbabwe and Mozambique and eventually the whole area was mined. Prima and Samuel could not go home to see their families.

When Samuel was too old to do much work, the boss let him and the retired migrant workers settle on his land, and so Samuel and Prima made themselves a little home. Another sorrow happened in the family when one of their daughters was divorced by her husband and returned to her elderly parents. And still more trouble was in store, Samuel's boss left Mozambique at the time of Independence and the new owner drove all the retired workers off his land.

After that things went from bad to worse. Prima died and their daughter got tuberculosis, but not before she had presented the world with a son, Ben. The pregnancy and delivery were too much for her and, before the little boy was one year old, she too died, and Samuel was left to cope.

He was too old to do manual work so made his way to the nearest big town with Ben at his side. There he

earned a few dollars minding luggage at the bus terminus, but it was not enough to rent a room. With plastic and cardboard, he built a shelter behind the bus terminus. Many other squatters were living there. They tried to do little jobs to get food, but many of them were in a bad state of health. Samuel had looked after Ben very well. It was amazing that, in such conditions and with little money, he had kept the boy so healthy. A local clinic organised a soup kitchen twice a week and that was a bit of a help. It was there that I met Samuel and heard his story.

The rainy season came, and many squatters fell sick. Plans to find them some shelter were afoot, but it was too late for Samuel and Ben. They were found one day, the cardboard of their little hovel a mulch, the plastic torn and useless and the old man trying to protect little Ben from the worst of the elements. Samuel died soon after admission to hospital and Ben a few days later. They were buried in the paupers' plot. No one was at their funeral. Loved by no one it seemed, but how they must have been loved by God. May they Rest in Peace.

My trip to the World Scout Jamboree

Sophie O'Sullivan

This summer I spent three weeks in the USA and Canada attending the World Scout Jamboree. After a year and a half of preparation it was an amazing event that I have many happy memories of. The World Scout Jamboree is the largest gathering of Scouts and Guides, occurring in a different country once every four years, so for those lucky enough to go, it is a once in a lifetime experience.

I went to the 24th World Scout Jamboree, held in West Virginia with 57,000 scouts and guides in attendance. In September 2017 I attended a local selection day and was chosen to go to the Anglia region selection weekend at Pax Lodge, the world Guiding centre in London. I was one of nine Girl Guides selected for the Jamboree, and we were placed in a unit with Scouts from Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Essex. Our unit had five preparation camps with activities ranging from hiking and climbing to First Aid training. On our first camp we decided to name our group 'The Busby Bears' and designed our unit badge. During this year as well as a bit of preparation I also had to fundraise £3,800. The payment system for the Jamboree is such that the cost depends on the country you come from, to make it affordable for everyone. As part of my fundraising I held a cake sale after Mass and a Quiz night which several parishioners attended; thank you to everyone who helped in any way!

With bags packed and ready, we all met early in the morning of 20th July ready for our long journey to

New York, where we arrived after 24 hours travelling, tired but very excited. All 4000 members of the UK contingent were up early next morning and headed into New York where we split into groups and explored for a few hours (in 35°+ temperatures!), taking it all in as best we could. Then we got on a coach and headed off to the Jamboree. After an overnight stop at a University, we arrived at the Summit Bechtel Reserve, a campsite covering 46km², and put up our tents in the pouring rain. The Jamboree started the next day, with a spectacular Opening Ceremony ending in a drone display. We spent ten days at the site doing activities, meeting a huge range of people from all over the world, swapping badges and exploring the beautiful site. Some of the highlights for me were the food houses selling food from a variety of participating countries, and the culture day when activities closed for the day and we all went to visit the camps of different units and experience some of their traditions. Before we knew it, the Jamboree was over with an equally stunning Closing Ceremony after which we packed up and headed off on coaches. The next stop for us was Washington DC, where we spent four days staying at Maryland University, exploring the city and going to a baseball game. Our last stop was Ottawa, where we were staying in a church hall and were paired with a local Canadian Scout troop. In our four days there we had a tour of Ottawa and the Canadian Parliament, met both Canadian Scouts and Scottish Scouts, who were staying nearby, and even had dinner with the Parish Council. It seemed impossible that three weeks had passed already, but soon it was time to pack our bags for the last time and head to the airport.

The Jamboree was such an amazing experience that I have come away from with new friends and new skills, and I am so grateful to everyone who helped me with my preparation, fundraising in any way, or just put up with me talking about it for the past year!



First 100 Days as a Priest

Fr Simon Davies

As I write this, I have been a priest for a little over 100 days, although it already feels a lot longer than that. It is perhaps timely to put down on paper some of my initial reactions. One is only a new priest once, and for a short while at that, and so it is an honour to share some of my rambling thoughts with you.

Most of all, it is quite daunting, not least offering the Holy Mysteries. Celebrating the Mass has an awesome quality to it. I don't really experience any intimidation by being so prominent in the celebration (I was expecting to, given my natural shyness). Rather, one feels a certain joyful weight: the heritage of the ages falls upon my weak shoulders in those moments as I take, break, and give, in the Person of Christ the Head. The words, 'This is My Body' feed back into the soul, and force me to reflect upon what it is that I am really saying. It's not just repeating the words of Jesus; it's not a piece of theatre. It is definitely me saying those words, as well. This raises the bar of what is expected of me personally, not only by my own standards, but by the holy people of God, and of Almighty God Himself. Consequently, it is also interesting to reflect upon what that means for the priest, in relation to his own personal identification with the man Jesus. There's something deeper going on there than one might expect?

In this, as priest, I also experience a profound sense of service to the Mysteries which we celebrate, and at which the priest presides. The people of God have a right to the Mysteries as they have been handed down, and it is not for me to play about with them. As priest, I am not the main act, and nor am I the compere of a production. Everybody is just as valuable as everybody else; the priest, a reader, a server, a quiet member of the congregation, a musician, is no better than anyone else. Each has a different role to play, each contributes something unique both interiorly and exteriorly, and it is not for anyone else to diminish that unique function. The silent and unknown contributions in the quiet hearts of the unknown people at the back are just as important as everything else. As the Eucharistic Prayers themselves point out quite clearly, the participants are not merely those physically present there and then. The whole Church, alive and dead, suffering and triumphant, is present, too; the whole host of mighty angels is present alongside the lowliest sinner, and the most lost soul.

It is also daunting, in undertaking another function of a priest, to teach. It's very tempting to give my own opinions, particularly in preaching. In that, I certainly give myself (it can be no other way if we are to remain authentic), but I must remember to preach reality in the here and now, not creating straw-men, nor giving too

much prominence to my political opinions, but from the heart rather than a book. And at the same time, remain faithful to the Church as a formal representative of her teaching authority.

Not only preaching, but also in teaching – be that in Catechesis to adults or children, or even pastoral advice in the confessional or elsewhere – so too is the priest a servant of something other than himself. He has been given something from above, not least from Almighty God, but also from the Apostles; this is what really makes us Catholic in the strict sense. Anything I do as a priest, I do in relation to and in co-operation with the Apostles. My actual ability to celebrate the Mass comes from Ordination by the Bishop; my ability to hear confessions and to absolve sins comes from the Bishop in the form of a legal permission (which can be rescinded), and likewise to preach, to witness marriage, and such like. I really cannot operate apart from the Apostles generally, and our own Bishop specifically.

Lots of thoughts whirl around the mind of a priest, and in his heart come to that. I have learned very quickly that I need to write things down: diary appointments, notices at Mass, otherwise, bits of information will get lost in the milieu. In Confession, one sometimes has to make important legal decisions in lightning-quick time. And the words that the priest says always seem to have more weight. I have already been in the situation of helping someone to unpick a significant spiritual and pastoral situation which had developed because of a piece of advice given by a priest years ago. He meant well, but it didn't work out. Likewise, I dread to think what will come of some of my words in years to come.

So the priest has to be careful and deliberate, but quick-witted and reactionary; kind and gentle all the time, but firm and confident, too; well-spoken with a clear voice, but not too loud or brash; intelligent but simple; faithful to tradition, but accommodating to circumstances; judging and merciful; full of energy and well-rested, but available all the time; fully devoted to the present moment, and constantly aware of the next thing on the horizon; wise, but humble.

And I love every minute of it!



Creative Writing

The Youth And I

Wally Moscuza

The valiant vessel sailed in the obscure waters
Taking away the glory of the past,
Crying for what he had left behind
For the one that had gone ashore —
 Sweet tears
 Blood tears
 Tears of despair
Laments for a dream that seemed real for
 Truth lit the spark of belief that
Waned in a soft breeze.
I played my part well, I made it clear,
For the image of Paradise was there and
The world was at our feet.
 It all resembled the truth
As the passing notes of an overture...
 There we thought we had life in our own hands.
 Puritanical thought
Aroused by beliefs of eternity —
 Seraphic valley
 Enveloped by dreams
 Raced by time.
We crossed a carpet of hypothesis the youth and I
A vulture on the rim of a silvery rock,
I patiently waited for a sign, a recognition ...
 Green hills in the mist
 Twinkling lights in the sky
 Or were they dead stars
 Lit by human cries?
In the web of a dream I lay doubting, life, existence —
Yet 'I think, therefore I am' says The Philosopher, and
I saw the horizon then lost again in a stormy sky
And wondered if it had gone wild
 Or maybe he was drunk or too tired
 To float in limbo
 Between dream and reality
 For the light has always been there...
Like the Fingers trying to unite Heaven and Earth.



The heart said, that's enough

Mary Gullick

After walking from Calvary, a daughter had contemplated so many aspects of life's chapters with her family, and those who left marks on her soul path.

A backdrop of so many experiences, the happy times – birthdays, family reunions, anniversaries, the seasons changing. For each change, a different experience. Some brought the best – the highs. Now, as she was at her mother's bedside watching doctors and nurses help her through, all she, the daughter, could do – pray, call on her spiritual ancestors and family.

The call was always answered, she isn't coming yet – "Why not?"

"I don't want earache! It's peaceful; I won't get this kind of peace once she is here."

In between bouts of reassurance of telling the mum she will be ok, when she called out for her own mother, her response was simple, "I'm here." It gave her what she needed, comfort at a time when it is needed.

As you have become aware, I am the daughter, who made her own self-awareness journey. I am also the daughter who is able to take responsibility for her own values.

The heart decided that night to say, that's enough, I'm tired, and I need help. I'm glad I was there. If I wasn't what would have happened? Would any of us be seeing a mother and daughter at church?

In our communities, there are mothers and daughters who are torn apart in some way, the heart, it feels pain in so many ways. When do we say – that's enough? When are we accountable?

Pain. It's a message – sensory – that something is wrong, to take action. It is time for hearts to heal; for healing of all kinds – both physical and internal.

I believe in my Faith. Something that has been strengthened throughout my years as a member of St Laurence's and of course the love of my mum and family who remind me it's ok to have an off day, its ok for the heart to be tired and need a break. When we heal our heart and soul, we can do anything. I watched my mum in the grip of death, knowing God's plan is always on course, regardless of chaos. God Bless.

About Wintercomfort

Wintercomfort is a day centre charity for homeless and vulnerably housed people in the city centre of Cambridge. The centre is open seven days a week offering vital welfare for rough sleepers including, cooked breakfast, hot showers and a laundry service. The charity provides learning and development opportunities, alongside employment through their social enterprises Food4Food and Overstream Clean.



Ways to support Wintercomfort:

Donate to Wintercomfort

Why not make an online donation to support our work at www.wintercomfort.org.uk/donate

Fundraise for Wintercomfort

We are always looking for fundraisers and people willing to support us through fundraising, we are reliant of fundraised income to keep our services running.

Host a Cup for Change Coffee event

This is our very simple coffee fundraising campaign, supporting the homeless one –cup at a time!! Simply put the coffee on and invite colleagues and friends to join you, maybe bake a cake or two and ask for donations to support the work of Wintercomfort. Let us know if you are hosting an event by completing our sign up form: wintercomfort.org.uk/coffee

Balls to homelessness Sleepout – Friday 7th February

We are partnering with Cambridge United Community Trust to host a sponsored Sleepout at Cambridge United's stadium on Friday 7th February. The minimum fundraising target is £100. If you would like to participate and support Wintercomfort please sign up here: wintercomfort.org.uk/ballstohomelessness

20 for 2020: Cambridge Half Marathon, 8th March 2020

We have ambitiously got 20 spaces for the Cambridge Half Marathon in 2020; we are looking for willing runners to represent Wintercomfort. The fundraising target per runner is £250. Wintercomfort's Services Manager – Donna-Louise Cobban will be leading our team off the start line. To join our team please sign up: wintercomfort.org.uk/20for2020

Amazon Smile – Don't forget if you shop on Amazon use Smile Amazon, choose Wintercomfort and they'll donate 0.5% of every purchase to Wintercomfort. www.smile.amazon.co.uk

Wintercomfort's Amazon Wish List – We keep an Amazon wish list fully populated with items that we always need to support rough sleepers. It couldn't be easier to support us and the items are delivered directly to us.

Wintercomfort are always in need of the following food items:

Jams	Brown sauce
Chocolate spread	Peanut butter
Coffee	Tea
Soup	Sugar
Tomatoes	Beans
Tomato sauce	Cereal

Wintercomfort are always in need of the following items:

Socks
Thermal Socks
Pants (new please)
Ladies knickers (new please)
Ladies bras
Gloves
Hats
Fleeces
Waterproof trousers
Waterproof jackets
Good quality backpacks
Good quality sleeping bags
Roll mats
Thermarest airbeds (that don't need pumps)
Belts
Nail clippers
Shower gel
Shampoo
Tooth brush + paste
Men and Women's Deodorant
Men's Razors
Shaving Gel (not cream)
Baby/face wipes
Chocolate bars + sweets
Hot chocolate sachets
Mini flask
Torch
Sewing kit
Hand warmers
Notepad and pen
Key rings
Supermarket vouchers
Sim free budget mobile phones (RRP £15)
Dog toys

All donations can be delivered to Wintercomfort everyday between 8.30am – 3pm. Overstream House, Victoria Avenue, Cambridge, CB4 1EG

www.wintercomfort.org.uk
01223 518 140
info@wintercomfort.org.uk

Here is an alternative Advent calendar full of ways to Live Simply in support of our CAFOD award



It is not just the carbon footprint of plastic that affects climate change it is our way of life, what we eat, driving our car, how we shop? Use this Advent calendar to make some climate-friendly changes to your life and plan to continue them through the year.

Dec 1. Ensure that every item you throw away is put in the correct waste bin and wash out recycled items. Try to have your black bin at least ½ the total quantity of your green/blue bin!

Dec 2. Today buy a Fairtrade / Traidcraft item, the producer of the item will have been paid a fair wage for it.

Dec 3. Today buy a locally produced item (check that your food is not produced miles and miles away if there is a more local option, e.g. eggs).

Dec 4. Walk/cycle don't drive if your journey is less than 1–2 miles, it's great for your health.

Dec 5. Today have a vegetarian day, the carbon footprint of producing meat is far greater.

Dec 6. Don't buy that plastic bottle (e.g. coke) but buy it in a can instead and recycle it.

Dec 7. Today buy a re-useable water bottle – don't buy one use drink bottles.

Dec 8. Today buy a soda stream and buy refillable gas bottles (if you have a sweet tooth you can flavour these too).

Dec 9. Today slow down, driving at 50 mph uses 25% less fuel than 70 mph.

Dec 10. Turn your central heating down by 1 degree and put on a jumper.

Dec 11. From today take a shower, not a leisurely bath, to save water.

Dec 12. From today, don't run water wastefully and don't pre-rinse dishes.

Dec 13. Today, and in the future, make sure to re-use your containers – some shops do refills.

Dec 14. Wrap gifts this Christmas in fabric and use a pretty ribbon.

Dec 15. From today refuse plastic carrier bags and don't use fruit/vegetable plastic bags.

Dec 16. Replace your sandwich bags with paper bags or wrap your sandwiches in greaseproof paper. Use only degradable plastic bags in your rubbish bins, dog-poo bags etc.

Dec 17. If you are going Christmas shopping today, check your item's carbon footprint – has it been shipped half way around the world?

Dec 18. Today play a game with your children or with a partner/friend in the supermarket – can they spot locally produced items, e.g. carrots from France or from the UK?

Dec 19. Today buy 'happy' items – free-range eggs, free-range bacon etc, they have greater long-term sustainability.

Dec 20. Make your own: Christmas cake, biscuits, bread.

Dec 21. If you are buying a gift, choose the natural option: wood vs plastics, natural fibres have less environmental impact and will biodegrade whilst synthetic fibre will be in a landfill site for many years to come.

Dec 22. Check your providers, bank, services etc. Co-operative Bank and Ecotricity (gas and electricity) have ethical credentials.

Dec 23. If you are going Christmas shopping today, check your item's carbon footprint – has your item been shipped half way around the world?

Dec 24. Make the effort to make your own sandwiches, soup etc, not only will they be much healthier and tastier but will reduce packaging.

Dec 25. Rejoice a child is born in Bethlehem!



Tailpiece

Sent in by Mary Martin, a widely circulated musing with an added Christian thought.

What money can buy:

- A bed, but not sleep
- Books, but not intelligence
- Food, but not an appetite
- Clothes, but not beauty
- Luxuries, but not taste
- A house, but not a home
- Medicine, but not health
- Amusements, but not happiness
- **A crucifix, but not a Saviour**

'Footprints' with a different spin....

Butt Prints in the Sand

One night I had a wondrous dream,
One set of footprints there was seen;
Saw footprints of my Lord galore,
But mine were not along the shore.

But then did stranger prints appear.
I asked the Lord, "What have we here?
Those prints are large and round and neat,
But Lord, they are too big for feet."

"My child," said He in sombre tone,
"My footprints do you see alone
Where you My promise did believe,
And victories you did receive.

"But when you struggled in My arm,
To live out your own righteous charm,
In your own pow'r you sought to strut,
Well, there I dropped you on your butt."

As Christian daughter, Christian son,
Tis true you have a race to run.
That race is only truly won,
When in My arms the work is done.

When times do come to rise and fight,
To risk the loss, to do the right,
On Christ's strong arms you take your stand,
Or, leave your buttprints in the sand.

No fool like a young fool

Dr Geezer, a very old geezer, became very bored in retirement and decided to open a medical clinic. He put a sign up outside that said: Dr Geezer's clinic. Get your treatment for £500, if not cured, get back £1,000.

Doctor Young, who was positive that this old geezer didn't know anything about medicine thought this would be a great opportunity to get £1,000. So he went to Dr Geezer's clinic.

Dr Young: Dr Geezer, I have lost all taste in my mouth. Can you please help me?

Dr Geezer: Nurse, please bring medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in Dr Young's mouth.

Dr Young: Aaagh!! This is petrol!

Dr Geezer: Congratulations! You've got your taste back. That will be £500.

Dr Young gets annoyed and goes back after a couple of days of trying to work out how to recover his money.

Dr Young: I have lost my memory, I cannot remember anything.

Dr Geezer: Nurse, please bring medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in the patient's mouth.

Dr Young: Oh, no you don't – that is petrol!

Dr Geezer: Congratulations! You've got your memory back. That will be £500.

Dr Young (after having lost £1000) leaves angrily and comes back after several more days.

Dr Young: My eyesight has become weak – I can hardly see anything!!!!

Dr Geezer: Well, I don't have any medicine for that so here's your £1000 back.

[.....giving him a £10 note.]

Dr Young: But this is only £10!

Dr Geezer: Congratulations! You got your vision back! That will be £500.

Moral of story – Just because you're 'Young' doesn't mean that you can outsmart an old 'Geezer'. Remember: Don't annoy old people. We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to tick us off.

Editorial Comment

Many thanks to all who sent in contributions for this edition. Having missed the usual September edition, we have a bumper issue for you this time. Since the July Pilgrim was published, work has started on the church roof and the garden has seen another tidy up or two. Fr Johane has also been working hard in his spare time to clear weeds and ivy from the beds and edges around the car park, which is much appreciated.

Also, Cardinal Newman was canonised on 13th October by Pope Francis. He is the first English person to be made a saint since 17th century and readers might be interested to revisit Dick Wilson's series of three articles on the man which appeared in the Lent, June and September 2017 editions.



Congratulations to Gianluca Savini on being conferred candidacy by the Bishop to start his first year of formation to become a permanent Deacon for the Diocese.

We wish you all a blessed and holy Advent season.

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

The deadline for the next edition is **7 February 2020**
for publication on 7/8 March Lent Edition

The production team:

Editors	Nora Darby and Sarah Sykes
Sub-editors	
What's New?	Alex Dias
Features and Opinions	Carol Williams
Parish Organisations & Activities	Susan O'Brien
Personal Stories & Experiences	Nora Darby
Creative Writing	Alex Dias
Tailpiece	Sarah Sykes
Commissioning Editor	Nora Darby
Cover	Leonie Isaacson
Proofreader	Caroline O'Donnell & Sarah Sykes
Layout (preparation for printing)	Sarah Sykes and Nora Darby

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

Some Regular Events

The Parishioners Open Meeting (formerly the Parish Forum) is where **ALL** parishioners can come together to discuss and debate Parish matters, and decide when and where things need to be done. The Agenda is planned in advance and the meeting is led by the chairman and Parish Priest. It meets every 3 months.

To go on the list to get the agenda in advance and the full minutes after the meeting, email forum@saintlaurence.org.uk

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

The Pilgrim by Email

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

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

Pilgrim on the Web

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

ABLAZE

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

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

Living Faith Kids: 8–11yrs

GIFT (Growing in Faith Together): 11–16yrs and Confirmation candidates of all ages. Please bring £2 for nibbles/materials.

Young Adults: 21yrs+ meet in the Upper Room.

Upcoming Parish Events

SVP Anointing of the Sick Mass	30 Nov 3pm
ABLAZE Youth Mass	1 Dec 5pm
Advent Giving Tree Choose a tag from 1 st Sunday of Advent.	Gifts to be left at church no later than 11am Mass on 3rd Sunday of Advent
Advent Penitential Service	20 Dec 7.30pm
Advent Parish Carol Service	22 Dec 4pm
Christmas Week Masses	
<u>Christmas Eve</u> Children's Mass Carols and readings followed by Midnight Mass	5pm 11.30pm
<u>Christmas Day</u> Both Masses in church	9am 11am
Boxing Day	11am
CWL Lunches	1 st Friday Every Month after 12.30pm Mass
Holy Hour	Every Weds 6-7pm
Living Faith Kids 8-11yrs	Fridays: 6 Dec, 17 Jan, 7 Feb 6-7.30pm
GIFT Youth group 11-16yrs Parish Room	Fridays: 13 Dec, 24 Jan, 14 Feb 6.30-8.30pm
Young Adult Fellowship 21yrs+ Parish Upper Room	Fridays: 6 Dec, 3 Jan, 7 Feb 7.30pm
Bible Study – Book of Genesis, with Fr Bob in the Upper Room	Every Weds 7.30 – 9pm
Soulfood Prayer Group 1 st / 3 rd Tues: St Laurences 2 nd /4 th Tues: OLEM Parish Hall	Every Tuesday 8pm
Parishioners Open Meeting Dates for 2020	Tues 28 Jan Thurs 23 April Tues 7 July Thurs 8 Oct 8pm



Follow St Laurence's on Facebook:

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

ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

91 Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 1XB

Tel/Fax: 01223 704640

Email: office@saintlaurence.org.uk

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

Parish Priest:

Fr Simon Blakesley

07946 390060

simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk

Assistant Priest:

Fr Bob Eccles O.P.

01223 741265

robert.eccles@english.op.org

Deacon:

Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cook

01223 351650

Secretary:

Pat Cook

01223 704640

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07980 467534

treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk

Safeguarding Coordinator:

Petra Tucker

01223 704640 (messages)

safeguarding@saintlaurence.org.uk

Service Times

Saturday 9.30am

6pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am

9.30am (sung) with children's liturgy

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

11am (sung) with children's liturgy

Join us for coffee in the Parish Room afterwards.

Mon - Thurs 9.30am

Wednesday/Friday 12.30pm

Check the weekly newsletter for changes to the above times

St Laurence's School

Head Teacher

Mrs Clare Clark

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