

The Pilgrim

St Laurence's Parish Magazine, Lent Edition 2024



**“It is time to act,
and in Lent, to
act also means to
pause – to
receive the word
of God”
Pope Francis 2024**



Lent: * Prayer * Fasting * Almsgiving *

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What's New?

Organising our Parish – can you help?

Stephen Warde

'Who is the Church for?' Pope Francis asked the half million gathered for World Youth Day in Lisbon last Summer. Then he gave them the answer and the crowd roared back: "Todos! Todos! Todos!" – Everyone! Everyone! Everyone!

This is what a Synodal Church means: a Church for everyone. But that does not simply mean a place of welcome and support for everyone, though it certainly does mean that. It also means that all of us are called to take part in the life of the Church. To work together to make things happen. To not leave it to other people or our overstretched priests and deacons.

We've been reflecting on this at St Laurence's through our Open Meetings and Synodal process. And we agreed late last year to make changes to how Parish life is managed. The aim is to enable more people to help with running the Parish and to do this in a more organised way. This would be a good thing in itself. But it's also increasingly necessary if we want to continue everything that we already do. Our Open Meetings are great as a venue for discussion, but not so good as a place to organise getting things done. We know that we are too reliant on Fr Simon and a few parishioners for such organisation. We know that we need to do more just to stand still, since the population in the area that we serve is growing rapidly. But we don't just want to 'stand still': we want to be ambitious and do more as a Parish.

So, we are starting a series of teams to take more responsibility for key aspects of Parish life – like faith education, social life, communications, and our buildings. A new Parish Pastoral Council (or PPC) will bring this work together, ensure action is taken, discuss new ideas, and advise the Parish Priest. These teams will not replace existing groups or activities. They aim to fill gaps, to make sure that things get done, and to share the effort.

We've made some good progress. We appealed for people to get involved at Masses during January, and the response has enabled us to start forming the teams during Lent. We aim to organise a pilot meeting of the new PPC around Easter and to have the necessary arrangements in place to be confirmed at our next Open Meeting on 21st May.

But we could do with more volunteers. We're looking for team members prepared to make a commitment to help for one or two years. We intend to refresh the teams and PPC annually. So, while you would be dedicating some time to help our community, this need not be for ever! If you're unsure about joining a team, we'd also like to identify volunteers to help out with occasional events or projects. Anyone (Everyone!) with a little time to give and a willingness to help can join in – whether you have been in the Parish three weeks or three decades.

More details of the different teams are available at <https://saintlaurence.org.uk/ppc/>. If you are interested, get in touch using the email ppc@saintlaurence.org.uk or the other contact details on that web page. **It's not too late.**

Todos! Todos! Todos! This is a Church for and of everyone. Including you.

Diocesan Chrism Mass

Sarah Sykes

Do you know where the oils that we use to celebrate sacraments such as Baptism and Confirmation come from? These oils come from the Holy Land and are blessed for use each year during Lent at the Diocesan Chrism Mass. This year the Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Peter on **Tuesday 26th March at 11.30am** at St John's Cathedral in Norwich. He will be joined by the clergy of the Diocese and invites as many members of the Laity as possible to attend too.

The Chrism Mass is the most important annual Diocesan celebration where the Bishop, clergy, religious and laity gather to celebrate the sacrament.

A well-kept secret....?

Sarah Sykes

There is a well-kept secret at St L's....and that is that Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration has taken place on a regular basis for many years. And more recently, since we moved the Wednesday daily Mass time to its

As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is present body soul and divinity in the Eucharist, and Adoration is very simple to do. You need only kneel or sit quietly before Jesus in the form of a consecrated host displayed in the Monstrance on the altar.

You can just wait quietly in his presence, you can think about his life and redemptive work, you can pray the rosary, you can quietly speak with Jesus in your heart.

- You can also listen to music which draws you closer to Jesus. Just make sure it cannot be heard and does not disturb anyone close by.
- You can read from the Bible or a devotional.
- You can write in your prayer journal.
- You can just sit quietly and pray as the Holy Spirit leads you.

And remember to spend some time just sitting quietly listening with your heart and soul for anything Jesus wants to say to you.

It is traditional that, as you enter and leave the pew, instead of genuflecting, you kneel briefly on both knees as a sign of respect. At the end of the Adoration, Fr Simon prays a shortened form of The Benediction.

Also, during Lent, Adoration is being followed by Stations of the Cross. We are blessed to have the opportunity to pray the Stations twice a week through Lent. The Wednesday session is led by a member of either CAFOD or Justice & Peace parish groups, and the Friday sessions by Fr Simon (also starting at 7pm).

After Lent ends though, Adoration will continue. If you have time on Wednesday evenings for either Mass Adoration or both, it will bless your spiritual life immensely.

Holy Week

Holy week starts with Palm Sunday on 24th March. The palms are blessed and we welcome the Lord with cries of 'Hosanna'.

new evening slot of 6pm, Eucharistic Adoration is taking place immediately afterwards at 6.30pm-7pm.

To take time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, to wait on Jesus on a regular basis fills us up spiritually, almost without us noticing. Spending a quiet half hour in Jesus' presence leaves you feeling refreshed, restored and fortified for the week ahead.

The week culminates with the Triduum – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

Maundy Thursday – celebrates the Last Supper that Jesus spent with his apostles when he celebrated the Passover Feast which instituted the Holy Eucharist. There will be washing of feet ... volunteers will be needed! Mass will start at 7.30pm and will conclude with watching in the Parish Room until 10pm.

Good Friday – commemorates Jesus' Passion from his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane to his arrest, trial, torture and crucifixion. We will venerate the Cross and take Holy Communion. There will be two services, the first starts at 1pm and the second at 3pm.

Holy Saturday – a quiet day as we contemplate Jesus in the tomb and descending to Hell. The Easter Vigil service will take place in the evening at 9pm, the first Mass of Easter celebrating Jesus' resurrection and triumph over death.

Easter Sunday – we celebrate Jesus' resurrection! We rejoice at Christ's victory and Alleluias may be sung again! Masses will be at our usual Sunday Mass times of 8am, 9.30am and 11am.



Features and Opinions

Copernicus

Fr Simon Blakesley

Copernicus had the temerity to suggest that the earth revolves around the sun, not the sun around the earth. He was persecuted for this ‘heresy’. Surely everything revolves around us! The Gospel read on the first Friday of Lent challenges us to our own Copernican revolution.

‘If you are taking your offering to the altar and there remember that you have something against your brother, go and be reconciled with your brother first’. Is that what we have just heard? No! That’s what I mean by a Copernican revolution. ‘If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that **your brother has something against you...** go and be reconciled with [him].’ (Matthew 5:23–24) You see, you are not the centre of this universe. It may be that somebody else has something against you and you have the duty to initiate the reconciliation.

You might say, how can I know how many people have a problem with me? It could be the whole congregation? How could I deal with that reality, it’s impossible, surely? If we are indeed disciples of the Lord and behaving as we should be, then it is unlikely that somebody may have something against us. Still, there may be a number of people who, perhaps over the years, for ages, have had something against us. Therefore, we have the duty to know our own lives, the way in which we have lived and the people who may, indeed, have something against us. We need to have the courage and the confidence to become initiators of that process of reconciliation. Of course it is difficult, to find the opportunities or the right words to open up a conversation.

I recently heard of a retired archbishop who was being taken to a priest’s funeral by a priest who he had simply ignored when he, as a young curate, had raised a safeguarding concern against another priest. As it happened his concerns were more than justified, but it was a few more years than it should have been before the priest was removed from ministry. The Emeritus Archbishop said, as they travelled through beautiful countryside, “You are still angry with me aren’t you...?” and that lanced a build up of anger and frustration that twenty years on he was then able to express, and express his feelings he did. The Emeritus got both barrels. The archbishop himself died a few months later, and the priest was able to grieve for his

former father in God – “...at least we had a chance to be honest with each other...”

Maybe there are situations where we need to have the courage to revisit old hurts and seek reconciliation. At least we can try, and then, whether we are successful or not, we can return and offer our very selves as a gift at the altar.

The Vatican’s Resident Poet – Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça

Miriam Santos Freire

The head of the Vatican’s recently merged department for education and culture (the Dicastery for Culture and Education) is Cardinal José Tolentino Calaça de Mendonça, 58, a native of the Portuguese island of Madeira. He spent his earliest years in Angola (a former Portuguese overseas territory) where his father was a fisherman. He was ordained a priest in 1990, the same year he published his first book of poems, *Os Dias Contados* [Numbered Days]. Cardinal Tolentino became a theologian and university professor; he is also considered one of the most original voices in modern Portuguese literature and recognised as an eminent Catholic intellectual. His work includes poems, essays and plays signed as José Tolentino Mendonça.

As Prefect, Cardinal Tolentino oversees collaboration with bishops worldwide to strengthen Catholic Faith education and doctrinal integrity in schools, while also formulating fundamental principles for Catholic education. Additionally, he promotes the Church’s engagement with culture through dialogue, fostering openness to the Gospel, and facilitates dialogue with individuals seeking encounters with the truth of God, regardless of religious affiliation.

Cardinal Tolentino often integrates literature, poetry, and philosophy into his theological reflections. His messages resonate with the human experience, addressing the challenges, joys, and complexities of life with empathy and understanding. He promotes dialogue and inclusivity, seeking to build bridges between different cultures, religions, and worldviews. His messages often address contemporary issues such as social justice, environmental stewardship, and the quest for meaning and purpose in a rapidly changing world. Cardinal Tolentino has written extensively on themes related to human connection, compassion, and the human experience.

As someone who thrives in the warmth of the sun, I've found this autumn/winter particularly challenging to stay warm. I am most grateful that the days are already longer, the sun has been shining most days, and that the first signs of warmer days to come are on the horizon. This sentiment inspired me to share a poem by Cardinal Tolentino on *Praying Lent* (March 2022) along with my own free translation (kindly improved by Helen and Michael Allan).

<p>Ajuda-nos, Senhor, a viver a quaresma que agora começa como um tempo favorável, como uma chamada a renascer. Ajuda-nos a olhar a quaresma como uma primavera interior que desencadeia em nós uma verdadeira revitalização e rompe o oceano gelado que, tantas vezes, é a nossa vida. Ajuda-nos a recordar que um orante não é apenas uma árvore de palavras, mas é também uma árvore de gestos. Que este tempo que principia nos reaproxime de Ti, Senhor. Que Te busquemos com o desejo dos peregrinos, com a urgência dos sedentos, com a humildade dos mendigos. Que soletremos o Teu Nome no silêncio, sentindo que o Teu Nome acende dentro da nossa noite uma luz. Que a oração seja o fio discreto que liga todas as coisas e lhes revela o sentido. Que o jejum, voluntariamente assumido, constitua para nós uma escola de esvaziamento de si para que possamos escutar e acolher aquela plenitude que vem de Ti, Senhor. Que na renúncia e na privação nos abramos à arte do dom, ao artesanato da paz. Ensina-nos a repartir com os necessitados o nosso tempo, a nossa humanidade, os nossos bens, recordando-nos que devemos distribuir gratuitamente o que gratuitamente recebemos. Que esta quaresma, Senhor, nos torne sensíveis à lição de Jesus, assumindo a audácia e a alegria de uma vida vivida segundo o Seu estilo.</p>	<p>Help us, Lord, to live Lent which now begins as a favourable time, as a call to be reborn. Help us to see Lent as an inner spring that triggers in us a true revitalisation and breaks the icy ocean that so often is our life. Help us to remember that a prayerful person is not only a tree of words, but also a tree of gestures. May this time that begins bring us closer to You, Lord. May we seek You with the longing of pilgrims, with the urgency of the thirsty, with the humility of beggars. May we spell out Your Name in silence, feeling that Your Name lights a lamp within our night. May prayer be the discreet thread that connects all things and reveals their meaning. May fasting, willingly undertaken, be for us a school of self-emptying so that we may listen and welcome that fullness that comes from You, Lord. May we, through renunciation and privation, open ourselves to the art of giving, to the craft of peace. Teach us to share with the needy our time, our humanity, our goods, reminding us that we must freely distribute what we have freely received. May this Lent, Lord, make us sensitive to Jesus' lesson, embracing the boldness and joy of a life lived according to His way.</p>
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If you want to delve deeper into Cardinal Tolentino's inspired words, here are some of his works published in English:

- *Hidden Treasure: The Art of Searching Within* (St Paul's, 2014)
- *Our Father who Art on Earth: The Lord's Prayer for Believers and Unbelievers* (Paulist Press, 2009)
- *No Journey Will Be Too Long: Friendship in Christian Life* (Paulist Press, 2015)
- *Religion and Culture in the Process of Global Change: Portuguese Perspectives*, with co-editors Alfredo Teixeira, Alexandre Palma (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Series VIII, Vol. 19, Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2016)
- *Jesus and the Woman: Revealing God's Mercy* (Paulist Press, 2017)
- *Thirst: Our Desire for God, God's Desire for Us* (Paulist Press, 2019), retreat preached before the Pope and the Roman Curia during Lent 2018

On Finding that Lonely Place (Thoughts in Lent)

Fr Bob Eccles

Our Lord once invited his disciples to go away with him to a lonely place where they could be by themselves and rest awhile. It's the single instance in all the Gospels of him laying his plans for something that *never happens!* Where else do we ever hear of him inviting his disciples to join him in an important activity but surprise, surprise, they are thwarted? Think about it! There were so many coming and going and no leisure even to eat, so 'come away with me to a lonely place and rest a while'. But they couldn't, the lonely place was crowded out already, and he had compassion on all those people, seeing they were like sheep without a shepherd, and set himself to teach them at some length and eventually had the Twelve serve a vast picnic – 5,000 men, not counting the women and the children. Some event and everyone went away satisfied body and soul. But those disciples never did get their quiet day.

Finding rest, taking time out, tasting an unaccustomed dish of solitude, putting a distance between myself and others, being furloughed, sent on retreat. Leaving the everyday patterns of meeting and greeting behind me. Sounds alright. I could be ambivalent about doing that. By me of course I as usual mean you. The way the Lord speaks the lonely place is to be sought after and desired, it's very necessary for one's soul's good. As it happens it can be a bit of a test. At Blackfriars we turn gratefully to our quiet place, the chapel, in the early morning when no-one is about, knowing we have to come away and find rest. It's good to be there together, no doubt about that. All you hear is the birdsong in the garden. But isn't it still possible to find ourselves restless and bored and miserable, missing our friends, passing a hard time, even a horrible time? On Facebook there's an old picture of three happy friars in the pub with the caption, 'Just where I'd like to be right now'.

Why do so many not care to look for what disciples are meant to need and eventually enjoy and even revel in, the lonely place? Is it the fault of the materialism and utilitarianism that sets the tone for modern people and leaves them only a pragmatic, one-dimensional view of life, the possessive individualism that so soon leads to boredom and restlessness. Where your treasure is, there also is your heart. Have we really found our treasure? Our true resources in time of silence and solitude?

The lieges were complaining in the Sunday papers, we already made some banana bread and planted some carrot tops and finished the sudoku and we are bored, what are we meant to do next? The market wants to teach us that the only true goods are those which give immediate satisfaction. It's only when we know what we are missing that we realise we have been cheated.

St Thomas Aquinas teaches that charity love includes also love of life in the body, our bodies were created by God and not as the Manichees pretend by some evil principle. So we can serve God with our bodies, and should love them with the charity with which we love God. Loving your body of course means caring about all the treasurable things the body enjoys, fresh air and our sport and dancing and pictures and song and jazz and poetry and the novel and everything that is beautiful, unusual, spare, strange. But the really modern person is a puritan. The puritan has a fear of beauty. Why the white western male is invariably tempted by pornography. For such a one the beauty of a woman's body is reduced to forbidden fruit, a flight from solitude that promises to gratify in the instant but could never satisfy the hearts of beings who are meant to live for ever.

Is this perhaps why in a time of lonely vigil, perhaps grief, we so need to go to contemplatives like Catherine of Siena whose feast day is 29th April, to find what they have to tell us. And she had her sorrows. We can be sure that the people of Siena and Rome and those places never thought of Catherine as fitting easily into the category of those who can enjoy their lonely place, the cloister, enclosed nuns. Hers was a full, overcrowded life, even as a child when she stood up two others vied for her chair. Her adult years were spent rushing from place to place reconciling princes and chivvying reluctant popes, tending the sick and accompanying condemned men to the block. And being at the centre of a group of friends, she had so many friends. She wore herself out actually.

You could have met at least one or two women who had something of her about them, Helen Prejean or Sœur Emmanuelle, Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa, besides your own private list of course. Did anyone suspect the solitary in Catherine, the lay apostle of charity, the activist? She did hanker after the lonely place, we know that. She would have loved a monastic cell, no chance! But she made for herself a figurative space where she could go, like a tired woman, she said, who shuts the door and climbs into bed. She calls this the cell of self-knowledge. That has nothing to do with introspection. It is rather that place where you know yourself as you are known, as you are known to God. In your heart of hearts, Christ your redeemer, friend and brother looks on you with love beyond all telling. What you must learn in the cell of self-knowledge is how dearly *you* are loved. Have you looked for yours?

St Josephine Bakhita and Modern Slavery – I refuse to do nothing!

Simon John

Born in Darfur, Sudan, at about seven years old St Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and forced to walk barefoot about 600 miles. The trauma was so great she forgot her name. She was given the name Bakhita – ‘Lucky’ – by her captors. She was sold and resold five times. She was treated shockingly by some of her ‘owners’.

Her last ‘owner’ took her to Italy and lodged her temporarily in a convent. When the owner wanted to collect her the nuns protected her and a court ruled that her slave status was illegal. She remained with the nuns and was baptised – later becoming a nun herself.

She once said, “If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today”.



She is venerated as a modern African saint, and as a statement against the brutal history of slavery. Pope John Paul II canonised her. She is regarded as the patron saint for victims of modern-day slavery that includes forced labour and many adults and children of both sexes being forced into prostitution. St Josephine Bakhita, pray for us!¹

In January, Caritas East Anglia, in the presence of Bishop Peter Collins, heard from the first members of a new group intending to reduce to Modern Slavery in the Diocese. They intend together with others (already numbering 18), to raise awareness of this ‘scourge on the body of Christ’ as Pope Francis has described it, and reduce it in the Diocese.

Cardinal Archbishop Vincent Nichols said of the victims of this abhorrent crime: “Their fate is not distant from us... Your awareness of this outrageous abuse of our fellow human beings is essential. For with awareness comes a determination to act. We can make modern slavery simply unacceptable.” He outlined several steps, educating communities to open their eyes to the “invisible reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in their midst”.

Bishop Peter and Caritas East Anglia members were told that in 2022, around our Diocese, 746 souls were found enslaved and rescued. Worse still, that figure, was likely to be the tip of the iceberg. That there are an estimated further 4,500 souls left out there in our midst. They are yet unseen by us, their brothers and sisters in Christ. They are still in bondage in our Diocese.

Bishop Peter and others heard that these vulnerable, downtrodden outcasts, society’s underclass, so beloved by Jesus, were reported in local media as being found in our Diocese in many settings. They were found in domestic servitude, forced labour (in factories, food processing, restaurants), forced prostitution, forced shop fraud. They were found in organ harvesting, forced marriage, as children forced to carry drugs, or babies stolen and trafficked. They are there to be found also in care homes looking after our loved ones. They are there to be found on farms including cannabis farms, in waste recycling, and nail bars. They are there to be found in car washes, forced begging; forced benefit fraud. They are there to be found in these places for up to eight years before we detect and report them.

What has this to do with us?

For reasons eloquently explained in the Vatican’s *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*², modern slavery and human trafficking have become embedded in global society. It is everywhere: ‘hidden in plain sight’ in our communities, on our streets in our cities, towns and villages. It is in the footprint of much of the goods we buy, in our kitchens, our wardrobes, our living rooms, and technology.

‘The problem is not in the opposite lane: it involves us. We are not permitted to look elsewhere and declare our ignorance or our innocence.’³

‘All Catholics should proactively engage in making societies more just, respectful and inclusive, eliminating all forms of exploitation.’⁴

Catholics should engage personally at the community level, in every effort to raise awareness and educate youth so as effectively to prevent and combat human trafficking. The work of raising awareness must begin at home, with ourselves, because only in this way will we be able to then make our communities aware, motivating them to commit themselves so that no human being may ever again be a victim of trafficking.⁵

Cardinal Vincent Nichols outlined several steps... educating communities to open their eyes to the ‘invisible reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in their midst’.⁶

‘Everyone has a responsibility in relation to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking’:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/community-safety/modern-slavery>

‘Communities have an important role to play in recognising abuse’, Norfolk Constabulary.

“I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry, ‘Where is your brother?’ (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not pretend and look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. This issue involves everyone!”⁷

A network of more than 2,000 Catholic religious sisters serve on the frontlines of the fight against sex trafficking. Sister Imelda Poole, who serves as the President of (RENATE)⁸ ‘has great hope that younger generations will join their efforts and believes education has a key role to play in empowering the next generation in the fight against human trafficking.’⁹

What then should we do?

The Holy Father told the United Nations that evils like “human trafficking ...cannot be met by ‘solemn commitments’ alone.”¹⁰

There are at least, two interconnected steps that Catholic civil society can, and should, take to address and to fulfil, Pope Francis’ firm intent to act upon the cry of our brothers and sisters:

“The Catholic Church intends to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human beings” says Pope Francis; “she wants to protect them from deception and solicitation; she wants to find them and free them...”¹¹

First to protect (on the demand side), those yet to be enslaved (such as the small cocoa picking children of West Africa). Much of the slavery on the planet today lies in the supply chain of our daily products. Chocolate, seafood, coffee, tea, sugar, clothing, carpets, cosmetics, the minerals in our smart devices, even the gold in a beautiful wedding ring.¹² There is so much many of us can do to become ethical consumers and write to our exploitative suppliers.

“It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility...”¹³

Secondly, to ‘find them and free them’. This has two very distinct parts.

Civil society’s role here is to find them and report. It happens but nothing like enough. Finding them is not difficult. The skill (or honing of our natural sense that something is wrong) is widely published and easily conveyed. We have the materials. In various past times it was normal to raise the alarm when noticing someone in need. Today perhaps we need to reawaken that spirit.

After the find comes the simple report to such as the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700. If (as is often the case) a suspicion is well-founded, a police raid brings freedom.

Learn the signs and report

If we, who enjoy freedom, do not trouble ourselves to learn what signs to look out for, and report suspicions of modern slavery and human trafficking, no-one will.

While we, the free, continue not to report, are too self-absorbed to report our suspicions, the enslaved remain in place: ignored, powerless, lowly, marginalised, exploited and downtrodden, ‘the dregs of humanity’.¹⁴

Why will victims not report their own enslavement?

Many do not speak the language, from experience in their home country do not trust the police, most do not have access to a phone. All are in real fear of severe harm threatened to them or their loved ones.

This idea that we, the faithful, should engage in perceptive observation is at the heart of the Church’s appeal.

The police keep asking us to report. DCI Alan Page, Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s tactical lead for modern slavery and human trafficking, said:

“Tackling modern slavery is a force priority and while we’re working hard to address it, we can’t do it alone. Increasing information in modern day slavery and human trafficking is key to protecting the vulnerable.”

A new Crimestoppers campaign has been launched to help us spot the signs of human trafficking and modern slavery:

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/news-campaigns/news/2023/may/new-campaign-launched-to-help-you-spot-the-signs-of-human-trafficking-modern-slavery>

Mark Little, (former Diocesan Finance Officer, awarded the MBE for his campaign against modern slavery) and Simon John (retired local solicitor) are looking for young and older volunteers with a heart, to help cut modern slavery in our diocese.

All that means is learning (simply) to spot the signs and safely report them (in the United Kingdom) to the Modern Slavery Helpline. The new group is still looking for young and older volunteers, especially with social media skills. Please e-mail: john_simong@hotmail.com and more information can be found at <https://www.rcdea.org.uk/caritas-east-anglia/modern-slavery>.

No previous knowledge or experience is required, just a wish to end slavery in our diocese. All that is needed is a desire for justice, to set the downtrodden free, to be a voice for the voiceless.

Footnotes

1. Taken from the website of The RC Diocese of East Anglia. CTS publish a booklet *Josephine Bakhita: A Survivor of Human Trafficking*
2. <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/desktop/a4/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>, paras 17–22
3. Pope Francis, *Video Message to the Participants in the International Forum on Modern Slavery*, 7 May 2018
4. <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/desktop/a4/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>, para 31
5. Ibid Para 25
6. <https://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/news/the-struggle-against-human-trafficking-must-focus-on-the-protection-of-the-vulnerable-person-says-cardinal/>
7. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, 211.
8. Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE)
9. <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2021/10/15/meet-the-catholic-nuns-leading-the-fight-against-human-trafficking/>
10. <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/desktop/a4/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf> Preface
11. Ibid. Para 6
12. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/inclusive-practices/articles/addressing-human-trafficking-and>
13. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 29 June 2009, 66.
14. A peer of the Realm

This Bitter Earth Can Be So Cold

Michael Allan

Here the poet Edward Thomas is hungry, cold, and tired, yet he finds food, warmth, and rest under a roof. He hears then the melancholy cry of an owl outside in the night's darkness.

The Owl

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not starved;
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof
Against the North wind; tired, yet so that rest
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,

Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

Thomas wrote this poem in February 1915, when there were many soldiers and poor out in the cold. He was to join them. In April 1917, he lived, fought, and died in the endless mud and rain, lying under the cold stars, in the bloody slaughterhouse of war.

In the beginning of Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, the old king is shown as both tyrannical and foolish, blind to the truth and the lies around him, expecting everyone to bend to him. But after dividing his kingdom between his deceitful daughters Goneril and Regan, and expecting them to look after him, they turn on him, casting him out. He ends up lost in a hell-black night, on a bare, desolate heath, caught in the teeth of a terrible storm, thunder and lightning crashing round him, hammered by the hard, merciless rain, and cold down to his very marrow. Everything has turned against him, darkness is closing in, madness invading him. He has fallen from king to nothing – to just 'a poor, bare, forked animal', like a beast of the field. And he sleeps that night alongside his fellow beasts, some swine, all lying down together on a heap of mouldy straw in a broken hovel. Only now does he recognise and join the suffering of others, the dispossessed of the earth. Eyes opened at last by darkness, he sees now how the world is, and cries out:

'Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.'

(Superflux = superfluous, overflowing, superabundance)

In the Gospel, at the trial of Jesus, Pilate says to the crowd, "Behold your King!", as Jesus, having been flogged by the soldiers, stands there, bleeding and silent, wearing his royal crown of thorns. And when he is crucified, the mocking sign is put above him, 'The

King of the Jews'. A strange kind of king, battered and bloody, on a strange throne of wood and nails.

King Lear has his blind eyes opened at the very last by personal disaster. Jesus has his eyes open from the beginning – he knew what was coming. Like the prophets before him, he could see clearly how the world is. His response, in fidelity to his Father, is to go out and proclaim the good news, 'The Kingdom of God is close at hand!' A strange kind of kingdom, where the first shall be last, and the last first. Where tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners will be feasted.

'Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."' (John 18:37)

'Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news preached to them.' (Luke 7:22)

'For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45)

(The title of this article comes from the song *This Bitter Earth*, written by Clyde Otis, originally sung by Dinah Washington. The complete lyrics of the song are well worth looking up online. They complement beautifully the pieces above.)



A family crosses the flooded streets of Pakistan.
(Creative Commons. Credit: ADB. 2010)

The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane

Mary Walsh



Agony in the Garden, 1590 oil on canvas by El Greco (Public Domain)

This spectacular painting by Dominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) was painted in the 1590s and now hangs in Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, USA.

Dominikos was born in Crete in 1541 and was a Greek painter, sculptor and architect. He studied and trained as a religious icon painter in Crete and then moved to Venice when he was 26. He worked with Tintoretto and Titian and then moved to Toledo, in Spain, where he lived until he died. He was a deeply religious Catholic man with an unwavering faith. He acquired the nickname El Greco, the Greek, maybe because his name was difficult to pronounce or maybe because he always signed his work with Greek letters.

El Greco depicts a tormented Christ who has come to the Garden of Gethsemane, an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, to pray. The only reference to the olive orchard is a small olive sapling beside Jesus. The timing is clear. Jesus is about to be arrested. We can see the soldiers on the right of the picture talking with Judas.

An angel appears in a supernatural light, much brighter than the moonlight, to comfort and strengthen Jesus as He resolves to bravely accept the cup of suffering on behalf of us all.

The painting shows Christ's struggle between His humanity and His divine mission. To emphasise the dilemma and in order to show what is happening simultaneously, but not in the same spot, the artist has placed the sleeping apostles, Peter, James and John, in an oval shaped space on the left underneath the angel, and the soldiers and Judas on a little platform on the

right. The apostles give in to their exhaustion whilst Judas is weak and self-serving as we all can be.

People were shocked by the acid colours of the painting. I love that they give the scene an otherworldliness. They are mesmerizing and create a psychedelic drama on canvas. El Greco's characteristic elongated figure of Christ gives Him a supernatural appearance. Jesus is exhausted and frightened and is praying his wonderful 'Thy will be done'. Christ is about to redeem the world.

Cardinal Points – Probability and Providence

Ronald Haynes

'God does not play dice' is a quintessential quote from Albert Einstein, part of a famous argument with his friend, fellow physicist and Nobel laureate Niels Bohr, concerning some fundamental principles of reality. Bohr, in response, answered, "Einstein, stop telling God what to do." Their debate, with different sides taken since, was over key beliefs about whether the world – at least at the subatomic level – is based on clearly knowable principles or uncertain probabilities.

Everyone knows that Einstein greatly advanced modern physics (including with the relativity principles and the most famous of equations ($E=mc^2$ – mass-energy equivalence)) while maintaining the central classical idea of an ordered and orderly universe. One which is knowable to the dedicated human observer. By contrast, Bohr, along with Heisenberg, Schrödinger, Oppenheimer and other pioneers of quantum mechanics, made use of probability to try to improve our understanding of the uncertain properties at the level of the atom and smaller, into the sub-atomic world. For instance, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle describes pairs of properties of these small particles, such that the more accurately you can determine one value, such as position, the less accurately you can know the value of its paired partner, such as momentum.

Probabilities help us deal with uncertainties, giving us a sense of patterns of physical interactions and the likelihood of the outcomes of those events, and in doing so are a more descriptive approach, rather than an explanatory one. A better understanding of the likelihood of any particular outcome is useful and important. It informs what outcome to expect. However, this is not the same as providing an explanation of why or how that outcome is to be expected. That difference is part of the ongoing debate about the laws of the universe and physical reality.

The classical world view, which Einstein helps expand, includes a fundamental belief that the world, and all in it, including human beings, was made in an ordered way, created in an orderly manner. Given a foundation within a religious context, with a belief in a Divine Creator as the author, the originator and prime mover of all that is, the fundamental idea is that the creatures could make some sense of creation, with humans invited and promised an option to communicate more directly with the Divine Creator. Prayer and revelation provide for direct communication with the Divine. Miracles and other means of God provide direct assistance – the Divine Providence which is experienced by many, whether on a personal level or on a much larger scale.

However uncertain the world may appear to be, the classical belief in a Divine Creator, and beyond that a relationship with a Divine Sustainer – who continues to communicate with us and to sustain our life and assist us in living – is a long-standing experience for so many generations of believers. However, it is no longer a position shared by as many people in the world. Einstein also shared that 'The Lord is subtle but not malicious' suggesting that God would not hide things from us, or fool us, or impede our ability to deeply study and understand the world.

Whatever the position taken on the probability and knowability of the subtle and minute aspects of the sub-atomic world, the unresolved debate parallels one at a macro and wider world level, which affects our view of how we can live our lives and understand our ability to act in a good rather than wicked way. The somewhat similar debates concern whether and to what extent we have free will, whether we can freely choose between different options, and can take responsibility and be held accountable for those choices.

It seems that the overwhelmingly common position in so many of our societies is the belief that we are free. We can choose and take responsibility except, perhaps, to also make allowances for situations in which we do not act so fully freely or choose responsibly (e.g. due to alcohol, drugs, coercion, deception, ignorance, etc.). Even in those seemingly less free cases, it is sometimes argued that we and/or others must still take some responsibility (e.g. someone chose to drink, then drove, and any injuries or damages stem from both of their decisions). Such essential coupling of freedom and responsibility is also the basis of our main understandings of personal accountability and the development of laws which bind a community together.

Counter to ideas of freedom are those asserting that either we have no choices, that all is determined in the world (e.g. with laws unchangeable, by us, which we must follow) or perhaps our lives have been predestined by God. Predestination has a long history, in various

forms, with support from ancient ideas about fate and destiny. However, there are many difficulties with this belief. Not least is the deep concern that, if we have no real choices – nor any real consequences for those choices – there is little place for morality.

In a predestined world, someone who believes that they are predestined to go to heaven might easily conclude that they have no reason to behave in a good, moral way, because they will go to heaven no matter what. The exact same idea might well occur to the person who believes that they are predestined to go to hell. Again, their choices have no connected consequences, and so may not be persuasive for people to act justly. That said, we might hope to appeal to the idea that people should not treat others in anything but a good or Godly manner. Removing the concept of freedom and the profound significance of responsibility would seem to make it difficult to motivate all parties to behave in accordance with God's ways and God's will.

Divine Providence, however, is a dynamic alternative to the limitations imposed by a determinist or predestinationist view of the world, and it also implies full respect for human freedom. Instead of setting up the world during Creation and then having no more to do with it, or perhaps producing a disordered or disjointed reality which frustrates our ability to understand the created world or more of its subtle workings, Divine Providence is understood as God's persistent presence in, and ongoing engagement with, the world and all of Creation, including with all of us. This practical belief encompasses the idea that God has never stopped governing the universe, or directing the course of human activities, with clear and beneficial purpose.

These points are well-covered in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in the paragraph about The Creator, under section V. God Carries Out His Plan: Divine Providence, #302¹:

'Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created 'in a state of journeying' (in *statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call 'divine providence' the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection.'

It is worth noting that the use of 'destined' and 'guides' are not intended to be contradictory here, but instead are a kind of mystical approach to how God can accomplish both together, with our own collaboration. These points are touched on in #306:²

'God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of

almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan.'

Concerning this co-operation, St Augustine notably suggested that we: 'Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.' Picking up on related insights, the French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a theologian, philosopher, scientist, and active paleontologist (early to mid-20th century) was able to bring Darwinian ideas of evolutionary changes into a providential framework. His influential writing on the idea of an Omega Point theorised a future in which all of the universe moves toward, spirals even, to a final point of unification.

Teilhard indicates that this Omega Point is Christ, who, we hear from the Bible, will in the end draw all to Himself. [John 12:32] From the beginning 'through Him all things were made' we affirm in the Nicene Creed, while in Revelation [e.g. Revelation 1:8] Christ says "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Combining ideas, from the Alpha (beginning) we have a push to learn and love and improve, and a pull drawing us toward the Omega (the end, for which teleology is a consideration of the end (teleos), or purpose, or aim of anyone or anything).

Similarly, Charles Coulson, a British applied mathematician, theoretical chemist, religious author, and pioneer of quantum theory wrote (*Science and Christian Belief*) about the co-operative relationship between God, science and religion. He writes:

'... on the basis both of its actions and its search for truth, and of its mode of working and its presuppositions, science must be described as an essentially religious activity. However little its followers may recognise this, it is still true that science is 'helping to put a face on God; it is one of the ways in which He is revealed.'

Coulson goes on to add that 'we should agree not only that 'science is a moral enterprise', but that it holds within itself the very stuff of religious experience. And so, since the Order of Physical Nature is one aspect of God showing Himself to His children, what they see and do when they study it is most intimately bound up both with what He is, and what they are.'

To emphasise the point further, Coulson quotes Max Planck, famed scientist and originator of quantum theory, who ends his Scientific Autobiography with these words:

‘Religion and natural science are fighting a joint battle in an incessant, never relaxing crusade against scepticism and against dogmatism, against disbelief and against superstition, and the rallying cry in this crusade has always been, and always will be: “On to God!”’

On a creative and supportive note, with another aspect of this providential interplay in our lives, the Irish philosopher, poet and priest John O’Donohue writes in his book *Eternal Echoes* about the spiritual messengers assisting us throughout our lives:

‘The Christian tradition says that when you were sent here to the earth, a special angel was chosen to accompany your every step, breath, thought and feeling. This is your guardian angel, who is right beside you, as near as your skin The imagination of the tradition understands that your angel has special responsibility for your life, to watch over you and keep a circle of light around you, lest any negativity damage you in any way. Your angel is as ancient as eternity itself and has a memory that is older than the earth. Your angel was there when the eternal artist began to dream you. Your angel is wedded to the dream and possibility of your life, and wishes to keep your life from becoming fixated in any inner prison.’

This key insight, about the help provided by our guardian angel, as a part of the Divine plan, is naturally seen also as part of Divine Providence. In reflecting the Alpha, the beginnings, our angel is also a help in the present, and with assistance improving our aim toward the future, toward the Omega or the end point of unity. How might this work, this angel guarding and providentially guiding us? O’Donohue expands on this, with wonderfully helpful examples:

‘Your angel is aware of the secret life that sleeps in your soul. Without you even knowing it, your angel is always at work for you. It is possible to sense this if you consider for a moment the key thresholds in your life. You may feel that you should contact an old friend or someone you haven’t seen for a while. You set out to do this and you discover that the friend really needs you. The visit could never have been more opportune. There are also the times when someone comes into your mind and the next thing they are at your door or on the phone. This is the secret world of association and inspiration which can never be explained. Artists could never create without the inspiration which the angel brings. It is the gift of the angel to watch over that threshold where your invisible world comes to visible form. Any art, belief or spirituality that lacks inspiration is ultimately dry and mechanical. Something inspired has the surprise, vitality and warmth of the eternal in it’.

Keeping our angels and the Divine Providence in mind, along with freedom and the wonder of the not yet

known, we close with a related prayer, which John O’Donohue shares in the same book (*Eternal Echoes*):

A BLESSING

Blessed be the longing that brought you here and that quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to befriend your eternal longing.

May you enjoy the critical and creative companionship of the question ‘Who am I?’ and may it brighten your longing.

May a secret providence guide your thought and shelter your feeling.

May your mind inhabit your life with the same sureness with which your body belongs to the world. May the sense of something absent enlarge your life. May your soul be as free as the ever-new waves of the sea.

May you succumb to the danger of growth.

May you live in the neighbourhood of wonder.

May you belong to love with the wildness of dance.

May you know that you are ever-embraced in the kind circle of God.

Footnotes

- 1 https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P19.HTM#-AO
- 2 https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P19.HTM#-AV

We are All Philosophers Now

Karen Rodgers

The headmistress stood on a dais in front of the whole school, looking up on the girls from the sixth form who were looking down on her from the gallery with a cool, evaluative gaze. I was in the middle of teaching practice at a well-regarded girls’ grammar school where ‘Something Truly Awful and Unmentionable’ had occurred and a general assembly had been convened to address the issues. The girls had developed the typical outlook of their society and class; rather entitled, materialist and careerist.

The headmistress, neatly turned out in her classy suit and beads, would probably have described herself as enlightened and liberal. She addressed the whole school for some quarter of an hour on the subject of civic principles before coming to the point, albeit rather evasively. She headed towards the conclusion of her homily.

“And this kind of thing” she declared “must never happen again.”

The sixth-formers, who had apparently been rather enjoying the scandal and were curious to see how the head responded, looked down at her with growing scepticism.

“This kind of thing must never happen again because...”

There was a pause, the whole school waited. “Because...” They leaned forward. This was genuinely interesting, the ‘Why not?’ hung in the air.

“Because” she said with a note of increasing desperation, “it’s not... nice.”

The girls around the gallery who had been straining every nerve with keen attention, sagged. The looks of keen attention morphed into disappointment. Apparently, she had nothing interesting to say. Why should they care about ‘nice’?

It has been borne in upon me during many years of working with students that all young people naturally and innately have one thing in common. This is a tendency which all share regardless of their background, ethnicity, philosophy, degree of respect for authority or academic ability and, although it may be dimmed by addictions or struggles, I have never yet seen it entirely extinguished in any of them. Inexorably, and often despite many competing and apparently more compelling distractions, each young person is drawn to try and find out in any situation how things really stand. In other words, they have a profound thirst for the truth. This fascination manifests itself most powerfully and clearly at the start of every new academic year. The first thing any group of students will discern on meeting a teacher is whether he or she can be relied upon to tell it like it is. In other words, whatever their background, outside interests or levels of ability young people as individuals and as a group, regardless of their keenness for a particular subject, are only secondarily interested in the content of a lesson; what they are really looking to learn is whether the person in front of them is a reliable guide in helping them discover how the world really is.

We have a young friend who has taken this thirst for truth to the next level by enrolling in a degree course in Philosophy. After reading a couple of the books she had been recommended as an introduction and finding nothing hopeful in them at all, I wrote a series of three axioms which I think anyone would accept as true and a set of three resulting questions which merit consideration, together with an account of ‘the hope that is within us’. (1 Peter 3:15).

It is not only young people who are searching for answers. Most of my friends and associates are atheists

or agnostics and I have become used to the idea that they will generally be uninterested in or actively hostile to anything related to the Faith. In this context more and more, and to my surprise, I am finding myself precipitated into a conversation about faith and hope. People instinctively know that being ‘nice’ will not save us. The increasingly oppressive dark cloud which is now all around us has a silver lining and that is that people are beginning to open their minds and hearts and to ask searching questions. People are not looking for platitudes; they are looking for truth. They are not looking for niceness, they are looking for hope. They are not looking for ‘lurve’ they are looking for Love.

It is our job as Christians to tell them why no powerful person has the right to exploit anyone weaker than himself, that there is a reason not only simply to exist but to spring out of bed in the morning and to take joy in life. Just as there are no atheists in the trenches, in a context in which war threatens, among those who choose to embrace life while it lasts, there are no absolute materialists. We are all philosophers now. This is harvest time. The harvest is plentiful and we are all called to be labourers. With whom will you share the Good News this week?

ABLAZE MASS



7th April at 5pm

Parish Organisations and Activities

Celebrating CAFOD's 44 Years of Partnership in Cambodia

Jane Crone

In January, Richard Sloman, CAFOD's Country Programme Representative for Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar, met CAFOD supporters from the Cambridge area after the St Laurence's Saturday morning coffee hub.



In 2024, CAFOD will end its work with partners in Cambodia after 44 years. The morning was a celebration of all the good things that have happened during that time and to thank everyone present for their support. The Diocese of East Anglia is linked to the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang in Cambodia and five of our parishes have twinning links with communities there.

Richard started the talk with a quiz, during which we learnt some interesting facts about Cambodia. For example, the temple complex of Angkor Wat is considered by the *Guinness Book of Records* to be the largest religious structure in the world. We also found out that the country's population is around 16.7 million and about 2.5 million live on less than \$1.20 USD per day.

Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia lived under the brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot. During this period, a ruthless genocide took place, killing up to 3 million people. Landmines laid during this time mean that Cambodia has one of the largest populations of amputees in the world; over 64,000 casualties are recorded, and almost half the landmines have not been removed yet. Momentous change has happened over the last 44 years and today Cambodia has one of the fastest growing economies in Asia.

When CAFOD began working in Cambodia in 1979, the work focused on supporting the Cambodian people as they sought to rebuild their lives after the terrors of the Khmer Rouge regime. In the 1990s, CAFOD campaigned against landmines and in the early 2000s the country's programme focused on HIV/Aids (Cambodia had one of the highest rates of this outside Africa). During the 2010s, the programme supported the country's poorest people improve livelihoods, adapt to climate change, access clean and safe water and improve sanitation and hygiene.

Richard described two programmes CAFOD has been involved in. KBO was set up in 2016 by the Diocese of Battambang by Bishop Kike. CAFOD began working with them in 2018. KBO provide support to the most vulnerable and poorest people, including children, young people and families. They provide centre and home-based care for children with disabilities, education, livelihood opportunities and basic health support including clinics. CAFOD's main support has been through a programme which aims to support the poorest families to develop sustainable agricultural techniques and to adapt livelihoods in the wake of climate change. The project helps farmers set up self-help groups which meet to discuss and work out solutions to problems together.

KBO also promote a new technique called System of Rice Intensification (SRI) – this is a farming method that increases crop yield while using fewer resources and reducing environmental impact. This process can reduce water use by 50% and decrease seed requirements by 90%. It relies strongly on the use of organic matter and organic fertilisers to improve soil health and fertility. The project to date has enabled around 5,000 people benefit from new techniques.

CAFOD has supported a KBO farm, which demonstrates a wide variety of environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Around 150 farmers each year visit the farm for training on techniques such as SRI, livestock rearing, poultry farming and organic fertiliser production. These farmers return to communities to demonstrate and replicate new techniques.



The project also runs a café which trains vulnerable women in cooking and barista training. The women remain in the café for 3–6 months, receive an officially recognised certificate at the end of the training and many go on to work in hotels and restaurants in the surrounding area. The café uses organic produce, made on a demonstration farm, and has a shop where they sell produce. The café has been running for about 3 years now and is serving around 1000 customers a year, creating an income of up to \$15,000 USD.



Ponlok Khmer is known as the People and Knowledge of Highlanders and is a small charity based in the north of Cambodia near the border with Laos and Thailand. They support the rights of indigenous people in the region. The area has large forests and is home to indigenous communities whose culture and way of life are being destroyed by large scale deforestation from logging companies. Cambodia has the third highest rate of deforestation in the world.



CAFOD has supported a project which aims to support traditional ways of living, improve livelihoods, sustain natural resources and regenerate the environment. Their main activities are developing forest management regulations and traditional ground rules for three villages and building three indigenous peoples' cultural centres. Three community based eco-tourism projects bring people to the cultural centres to watch dancing and singing and they take them to the forest for a homestay during which they eat food grown in the forest.

Twenty-six groups have received training in patrolling the forest focusing on wildlife conservation and natural resource management.

Children's Liturgy at St Laurence's

Leonie Isaacson

Attendance at Children's Liturgy at both Sunday 9.30am and 11am Masses continues to grow and we frequently have over 30 children at each session. As always, it is lovely to see many of the same children returning and we equally love to welcome new children to learn about the Liturgy of the Word and their Faith.



Since the last edition of *The Pilgrim*, a Children's Advent Activity Afternoon was held in the Parish room and was well supported. There was much to keep children entertained, with Advent related craft activities and an Advent hymn to learn. The older children prepared a shadow puppet drama with a performance in the church. Everyone seemed to have a great time and many parents commented how pleased they were that the event had taken place. Encouraged by this, we are planning another activity session, so see the Parish newsletter for more information on the next event.



In the meantime, to keep running Children's Liturgy sessions and activities at both Masses with this level of attendance, we can always do with more volunteers coming forward to help. Sessions are run by two volunteers each session on a rota basis, at either 9.30am or 11am Mass, whichever is your preferred Mass. Guidance and training is provided as well as partnering with a more experienced volunteer. It really is a rewarding experience. Come along and observe a session and see for yourself!

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

My Confirmation Journey

Francois Henniquin

I have found Confirmation to be an opportunity for me to renew and develop my Faith. Being a part of the Parish Confirmation Group at St Laurence's has allowed me to enjoy the company of light-hearted and charismatic people, with whom the tasks of learning, growth and spiritual exercise have proven to be enjoyable and beneficial. It has truly been a privilege to access new ways in which to engage with God and His people.

Owing to the fact that Confirmation is the third and final stage/sacrament before complete initiation into the Catholic Faith, I have been prompted to do my own research about Faith and spend greater time in intimacy with Christ. I have been drawn to the internet outreach of figures such as Bishop Robert Barron (Word on Fire Institute) and Fr Mike Schmitz, as well as to deepen my already burgeoning interest in Philosophy and Theology by immersing myself in the works of contemporary theologians e.g. Joseph Ratzinger, John Paul II and Scott Hahn. From a less academic point of view, setting aside time to pray has brought me great insight and connection with God. The importance of prayer is a message often drawn upon in discussions at Confirmation sessions, and certainly not one to be forgotten.



More recently, I had the great pleasure of attending a weekend-long retreat with other young people from Cambridge. Some great Catholic figures from this Diocese took the time to talk to us about how they were able to engage with Christ, or rather, how Christ was able to engage with them. I will remember Alex from the Ignite team, who spoke about his personal conversion at World Youth Day 2023, Dr Maria Ubiali on the wonder of science leading us to faith and Fr Peter Wagnanski on letting Christ take charge of your life.



I hope that the future sessions and opportunities leading us towards our eventual Confirmation will be times to strive deeper into the Mystery of Christ and His Holy Church. Please keep all the candidates around our Diocese in your prayers, that our hearts may be opened to the saving message of Jesus this Lent.



First Holy Communion Update

Paula Hawkins

The First Holy Communion class have been preparing for, and will be making, their First Reconciliation later this month. The year has gone very quickly. After this, we will only have a few sessions before we see the children make their First Holy Communion. Please keep all of the children and their families in your prayers as they continue their preparation.

Knitting Madonnas?

Mary Watkins

Did you know there is a series of medieval paintings showing Mary and others knitting? Here is one.



Detail from the Buxtehude Madonna by Master Bertram of Minden circa 1390s. (Public domain)

Well, we have a number of our own knitting madonnas here in this Parish and in other local groups of differing religious denominations plus neighbours and friends who all enjoy knitting for Stella Maris. This seems very appropriate as Stella Maris means Star of the Sea and is a traditional title for Our Lady, Mother of God.

Stella Maris is, of course, the official maritime charity of the Catholic Church and the largest ship visiting

network in the world, working with similar charities and open to helping all seafarers regardless of colour, nationality or religious belief. A network of chaplains, ships' visitors and seafarer centres offer friendship, practical help, expert information, advocacy and spiritual support.

One popular way of providing practical help is by knitting hats, balaclavas and mittens. Often seamen arrive in cold weather from warmer countries without adequate clothing and such items are always gratefully received. When you knit a woolly hat or mittens you are doing far more than keeping them warm. You remind them of your love and care. You show them you appreciate that they transport over 90% of our goods. For someone who has been away for months from their home and family working in difficult and often dangerous conditions, this can mean a great deal.

Don't take my word for it! Look at the pictures on the website: <https://stellamaris.org.uk/knitting>

I have great fun meeting the wide range of people who knit and learning where and why they do it. Incidentally, knitting is not just for mothers and women, many men enjoy knitting. Think of diver, Tom Daley, and designer, Kaffe Fassett!

I find people knit for Stella Maris for lots of reasons. "It's a good cause and Great Uncle George used to be a fisherman!" It is something to do whilst watching TV. It is a meditation for some, a time of peace and tranquillity. It makes a break between following a more demanding pattern for the expert knitter. Some enjoy meeting in a group to 'knit and natter' encouraging each other, perhaps taking on differing challenges. Another knitter, less physically mobile these days, is delighted to still contribute in this way.

I really enjoy receiving the finished articles. Although Stella Maris supplies tried and tested patterns, freely available on their website (their hats don't blow off in the wind!), I find a range of beautifully knitted items in wonderfully different combinations of colours being popped through my letterbox! The Indonesian seamen in particular love bright colours! I gather them up and then deliver them to our local chaplain at Felixstowe and Ipswich. He then distributes them when the ships come in and he goes on board.

If you feel able to contribute to this useful work, please do. Details and patterns are available at <https://stellamaris.org.uk/knitting/> along with lots more stories of the varied and important work carried out by staff and volunteers. For more information and delivery of finished items, please contact me at marywatkins999@live.com

St Valentine

Jeanette Milbourn

Who was he, and why is 14th February associated with him and romance, and now St Laurence's?

There are few authenticated documents regarding Valentine. It appears that he was a priest or bishop in Rome during the reign of Claudius II. Images show him wearing a mitre, and holding a crosier and a palm branch. He was revered for restoring the sight of a blind girl and many people were converted as a consequence. It is also said that he married Christians secretly according to the rites of the Church, as this allowed the husbands to evade conscription into the Roman Army. Frank Staff, in his book *The Valentine & Its Origins*, says that Valentine cut out parchment hearts and gave them to the husbands to remind them of their vows and of God's Love. This might be a possible origin for today's use of hearts. Valentine was martyred by Claudius and buried on the Via Flaminia in Rome for refusing to renounce his faith.

His association with courtly love appears during the Middle Ages and his feast day is celebrated in the Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Some scholars accuse Chaucer of instigating the romantic association, while others suggest it was to supersede the pagan feast of Lupercalia, but this has been dismissed by more recent scholars.

Whatever its origins, Paulo and Una have instigated what we hope will become an annual Parish event – a Valentine's meal for couples in our Parish. As 14th February fell on Ash Wednesday this year, the meal was held on Friday 9th February in Milton Road Library. Beautifully decorated tables and a welcoming glass of Prosecco (including a non-alcoholic version) and accompanying canapés greeted us on arrival. This was followed by a three-course meal, the main course cooked by John, Paulo and Una's son, a Michelin starred chef. They even catered for my special diet!

Alongside this was an envelope on each couple's table. It contained a list of questions you had to ask each other to see how well you really knew each other. Some were more difficult to answer, as we didn't know ourselves what the answer was, so how could our partner know? It wasn't a serious thing, but was a good talking point, for us at least. We had a lovely evening and look forward to next year's.

Catholic Women's League

Janet Scally

On the 2nd Friday of every month and every Friday during Lent and Advent we hold a lunch after the 12.30 Mass. All are welcome to join us.

At the 6pm Mass on 21st January, we renewed our commitment to the Catholic Women's League and were delighted to welcome a new member.

On the 2nd Friday we meet at around 11am before the lunch to decide what we're going to prepare for the next month's lunch and also pray for all the people who so urgently need prayers. If you think this would suit you, do join us. Recently, we have been supporting Joanne. We are glad to be able to help one of our own parishioners.

Synodal listening in Lent

Kay Dodsworth, Roberta Canning

We live in a very secular society, as I suppose the early Christians did, and it is really lovely to be able to talk about our faith freely in a non-judgmental and supportive atmosphere such as we had when we met in the last Faith-sharing meetings.

Lent is a time of renewal and enrichment of Faith and practice which is engaged in by the whole Church. Pope Francis invites all of us to become involved in a time of renewal of the Church by using the Synodal process in our parishes, so employing it in some of our Lenten Faith-sharing seems especially appropriate. Some of you may be very sceptical of the whole Synod process. If you are, do read the introduction to the report from the first session of the Synod which describes the profound impact on the Synod members of listening attentively to one another and seeking to learn from the insights and experience of people with different perspectives. This is the process of listening in the Spirit we are using in our Parish discussions.

Our four sessions in Lent are on Zoom, on Thursday evenings at 8pm and we are using some parts of a Faith development programme called Sycamore and some topics from the document released at the conclusion of the recent Synod as the basis for our Faith-sharing. We are using the Synodal listening process introduced to us by Sr Gemma.

Our first session was exploring 'God, creation and redemption', the second, 'The community of the Church and the Eucharist'. We are not expecting to talk about every aspect of these fundamental and huge areas in two sessions however! It is just very helpful to hear other people's understanding of them, as well as listen to some brief input from Fr Stephen Wang on the Sycamore website, as we try to appreciate and develop our own Faith.

Our third session will be based on the comments on 'Living Ecumenism' in the report on the deliberations of the Synod in Rome. On 25th January, Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, commissioned pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops to 'engage in joint mission and witness and to promote reception of the agreements already reached in theological dialogues between the two traditions.' Bishop Peter was paired with the Bishop of Beverley, Stephen Race, to engage in this ecumenical dialogue. It seems appropriate that we should take a few steps in this direction as well. The fourth will be on 'Growing towards greater unity in the Church', with the focus on understanding what different people find important and enriching in the variety of theological and spiritual traditions in our Church.

Note from the St Vincent de Paul Society

Ciarán Ward

Winter and early Spring continue to be the busiest seasons for the SVP. The issues are not limited to the impact of additional cost pressures on people especially when it is colder during times of elevated energy prices. Shorter days/longer nights remind someone how lonely they are, and many need a visit, a friend or simply a phone call.

Where there is a 'Giving Parish', there is a real source of hope for struggling and lonely people and it is once again wonderful that we can count on the support of parishioners to our members particularly in their kind words, in material and monetary aid, and in some instances, in their time.

Here are some quick snippets of our activities since the last edition:

- Some beneficiaries are known to us for many years but have few family members. As they grow old, sometimes they cannot make their own decisions or manage their own affairs. Recently, our members have been in a position to help with Power of Attorney relationships, which has led on to them becoming Executors

of the wills of two parishioners where there was no family to take on these roles.

- Some beneficiaries with illnesses need our reassurance and need the comfort of a familiar member to help them to hospital appointments or wait with them in A&E.
- Some communities need some extra support with everyday needs – each Wednesday two of our members cook for a community in the winter months of January and February.
- From time to time we get calls from new people and recently we learned of a person with a terminal condition who had no place to go. We are working with social care teams and are helping to furnish a flat (which they provide) with the basics using secondhand stores and charities so they can be comfortable.
- Many people, both new and known to us, who are old or ill, hope for the Blessed Sacrament and we help and support the Parish with its Eucharistic Ministry, or put patients in contact with hospital Chaplaincies.
- Many require visits – just a chat to brighten their day and we go to them.

Once again, I would like to thank our wonderful members and parishioners for their support and have a Blessed Lent!

Past events

Thank you all who supported us with the Giving Tree during Christmas 2023. Your gifts supported 12 families with gift vouchers and hampers, 20 vouchers for the homeless and 70 gift hampers for the elderly, including supporting Meals on Wheels.

Upcoming Events

Events for your diary in 2024:

Event	Date
Senior Citizens Lunch, Parish Room	06-May-24
Walsingham, SVP National Pilgrimage	07-Jul-24
Coton Garden Centre Afternoon Tea	13-Jun-24

Welcome to the SVP

We would like to formally welcome our newest full member, Natalie Ashton, to the SVP Parish Conference!

New members

If you can spare some time, please do contact us or pray for us – there really is no help too small for the SVP, including your prayers.

If you would like to contact us for any reason, please do so below:

- SVP President Ciarán – 07540 842 078 svp@saintlaurence.org.uk
- Any member of SVP that you know

God Bless,

The SVP Members

Summary of Parishioners' Open Meeting

25th January 2024

Present: Fr Simon Blakesley, Deacon Geoff Cook, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (minutes)

Matters Arising

Thanks was given to all those who contributed to the Christmas Liturgies and social events over the last couple of months including the Epiphany party and the mulled wine and mince pies evening.

There was a request that notification of the Carol Service goes into the newsletter for the first weekend of December. This was missed this year.

Pastoral Assistant – Fr Simon reported that the Chief Operating Officer of the Diocese did not think that the position was a Parish priority and from the figures we submitted it appears that we cannot afford the cost. The money must be found from our annual income not our capital. There are many good reasons why we need a PA, which we included in the original proposal, including that we are planning for growth – but unless we can resubmit the proposal showing that we can afford it, the reasons are by the by.

Heating – Jim O'Sullivan reported that the electrical survey has been completed and concluded that our existing power supply was up to the task of supporting the planned new heating system. A new junction box will be installed on the pillar just inside the church. A detailed plan will be forthcoming. We are waiting on formal approval from the Diocese. Jim asked Fr Simon to arrange for the Dean (Mgr Eugene at OLEM) to put his approval in writing and submit it to the Diocese.

Once that has happened, we will need to put down a deposit of £600 and choose the colour of the radiators. Once the deposit is paid the installation will have a six-week lead time.

Foodbank Collection – There was some initial work done on restarting this, but it was not clear how things are progressing. Nora Darby volunteered to follow this up with James Dore.

Parish News and Events

Fr Simon updated the Meeting on the situation with his brother and the Chair offered best wishes on behalf of the Parish.

He reported that the newly established 6pm Mass on Wednesdays was well-attended as well as the half hour Exposition which immediately follows.

A Mothers' Day event is planned for the afternoon of 9th March. There will be craft activities such as candle-making and Taizé music. It will be a great opportunity for mothers, daughters and grandmothers to spend time together.

Arrangements for Lent and Easter

Lenten Activities

The Adult Education and Faith-sharing team plan to run some more Sycamore sessions on Thursday evenings on Zoom. (See article 'Synodal Listening in Lent' on page 20 for more details)

Meditation Evenings recently started and will be ongoing through Lent, organised by Teresa Campbell.

Stations of the Cross will take place on Friday evenings at 7.30pm through Lent. They will be led by Fr Simon, the Ignite Team, the Justice & Peace group and the CAFOD group. It is planned that at least one of these events will be inclusive for those watching online. There will also be the usual Children's Stations of the Cross on Good Friday at 11am.

Jeanette Milbourn reported that CAFOD have produced a set of cards – one for each Station – which include a QR code which links to prayers for that Station on CAFOD's website.

Helena Judd reported that the Stations on 22nd March will be led by the Diocesan Ignite Team and the Confirmation candidates from across the Deanery (OLEM, Sawston, St Philip Howard, Cambourne). There will be several priests available to hear Confession during the Stations for the candidates, their families and parishioners.

Easter Liturgies

Maundy Thursday – 7.30pm

Good Friday – two services – 1pm and 3pm with the Veneration of the Cross combined with Communion.

Easter Vigil – 9pm

Easter Day – normal Sunday Mass times.

Please note that the clocks will go forward on Easter Sunday!

Parish Groups Updates

CAFOD – We hosted the Deanery gathering of CAFOD groups who made plans for the coming Lent Appeal. Family Fast Day is Friday 23rd February. The appeal talks will be given on the weekend of 17th and 18th February with the collection of donations on 24th and 25th. There will be no Big Lent Walk in the Parish this year. Instead, there will be a Bring & Share Lunch after 11am Mass on Palm Sunday, followed by a group walk for those who would like to take part, using the Stations of the Cross walk devised by Gail Osman during the COVID lockdown.

SVP – Ciarán Ward thanked the Parish for its support of the Giving Tree. He reported that 12 families were supported with gifts, vouchers and hampers, 20 vouchers went to the homeless and 70 gifts for local elderly. He also thanked the St Laurence's School Mini Vinnies and the Parish Youth Group for the handmade Christmas cards which were sent out with the gifts, vouchers and hampers. He is also happy to say that a new member has joined the Parish group.

He then reported on the ongoing work of the SVP group, which included two members volunteering as cooks at the Cottenham drop-in centre every Wednesday, and two members who had been made Executors of wills of two parishioners who have recently passed away. A new drop-in centre in Cambridge is starting up at Brownfields in Chesterton and two members plan to attend this on a regular basis. The Sacrament of the Sick will be offered in Sawston parish church soon. Details will be in the newsletter.

Justice and Peace – Ron Haynes reported that a hybrid event will take place on 11th or 12th February with Caritas' 'Do Justice' campaign.

Tech Group – The donation card machine in the porch is now wired up to mains electricity and no longer reliant on battery power. Ron is looking into samples of digital noticeboards with a view to one being mounted outside the church.

Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and Core Teams

Stephen Warde reminded the meeting of the objectives for setting up a PPC and Core Teams – to get more people involved in the work of the parish, to support what we already do, to get things done with clearer responsibilities, to support the Parish Priest.

Ronald Haynes introduced the first draft of the PPC constitution. This will be refined and redrafted during a test period. There is a copy of the constitution on the website. Feedback is welcomed.

Steve summarised some of the main points of the draft constitution suggestions:

Potential PPC members can volunteer or be nominated by others. If we have more nominees than spaces then appointment will be made by the Parish Priest in consultation with the steering group made up of members of the Facilitation and SPAG groups initially, but in the future in consultation with the Parish Priest and PPC.

The PPC needs a minimum of eight members and ideally between 12 and 15 members. The membership term will be 2 years with the first year of the PPC being a probationary year. There will be at least four meetings a year with at least one meeting held as a Parishioners' Open Meeting. In general meetings will be open to attend by any parishioner, but with provision for closed sessions as and when needed.

We talked about how the PPC structure will include Core Teams made up of 3–4 people per team, one of whom will act as the team coordinator. Teams are responsible for getting things done in between PPC meetings along with others interested in helping without being formal team members.

Fr Simon reminded us that Safeguarding must be at the forefront of the planning and instigation of the PPC Parish Office and Staff Support core team. And, that at every annual Open Meeting, Safeguarding should be on the agenda also.

He also suggested that we consider ways to include the young people in the Parish in these plans particularly in the area of Communications and Outreach.

As part of the discussion, Karen Rodgers recommended reading *The Inner Ring* by C. S. Lewis, an essay on the pitfalls of being part of an inner circle or ring. Audio available on [YouTube](#).

Suggested that Confirmation candidates who are interested in this aspect of the Parish be invited to put themselves forward.

Steve reported that about 30 expressions of interest had been received following the appeal in January. He outlined a proposed timeline for moving the process forward:

Proposed timeline

Jan	Any further expressions of interest? Identify Core Team coordinators	'Steering group' involvement
Feb	Initial meetings of Core Teams – identify members, other volunteers, PPC rep, initial focus	
Mar	'Pilot' meeting of PPC – update from Teams, agree PPC membership and process	
Apr	Make progress on work of Core Teams	
May	Early May – 'Pilot' PPC meeting Late May (24 th ?) – Open Meeting. Confirm all arrangements.	

He also thanked the Steering Group for the work put in to bring the proposals to the Parish.

AOB

Karen Rodgers reported a Health and Safety risk after water from the hot water boiler in the kitchen nearly scalded someone when the kitchen was very busy. She suggested that a notice telling people to give clear space around the water boiler might be warranted.

She also asked for a vote of thanks to Reece for holding the fort while Fr Simon was away in Australia.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 23rd May 2024 at 7.30pm.



SVP DROP-IN

10–11am every Saturday during the Coffee Hub.

Ask for the SVP volunteer who will be happy to have a chat and offer help and advice.

Personal Stories and Experiences

Going to Auschwitz

Jeanette Milbourn

This was our last day in Krakow. We had come to babysit our granddaughter, who was six-months old at the time, so that her parents could attend a friend's wedding.



Once we knew we were coming to Krakow, I knew I wanted to take the opportunity to go to Auschwitz-Birkenau. To say 'visit' doesn't seem the right word. I still have

difficulty taking in the enormity of what happened here. Before World War II, 25% of the population of Krakow was Jewish. Of the many thousands of people in the Podgórze ghetto, south of Krakow, only 10,000 remained after the war. The main Jewish area of Krakow was, and is, Kazimierz and we had visited there the day before. It felt quite run down, although there seemed to be a lot of places that were only open in the evening.

We had investigated going on our own to Auschwitz, but the nearest train station is Oświęcim (2.5 hours) and then a 30-minute walk but we would have nowhere to leave our rucksacks. In addition, if you arrive after 10am you have to go on the guided tour groups, so we decided that the minibus would be the better option for us. Two things we were told before we left Krakow were one, you need to take food with you (it's a seven-hour day trip and there are no restaurants/cafes at Auschwitz), and two, there is a maximum bag size that you can take in (30 x 20 x 10cm) so rucksacks had to be left on the minibus.

I was slightly apprehensive about going...not sure how I would react to this place and what happened there. It's one thing to see documentaries and films and quite another to experience this place in reality for yourself.

Although most people know that there were Jews here, initially there were Polish prisoners and then Russians. It was in the spring of 1942 that Birkenau became the centre of the Holocaust. It was not a labour camp but focused solely on killing people. Over 1.1 million people were killed here in the space of about two years.

After going through security, our guide took us along the original path up to the notorious *Arbeit macht Frei*

gate. The brick buildings were originally a Polish army barracks and it isn't until you go inside that you begin to realise just what took place here. There is a room full of shoes – 80,000 of them: fashion shoes that would not look out of place today, children's shoes, sandals, platform shoes. They are stacked high the length of the room (about 25m long). You are not allowed to take pictures here as a sign of respect for the dead. Along with human hair (seven tonnes found after the war) there were large numbers of artificial limbs and medical aids including body harnesses and crutches. We were told that the objective was that nothing should be wasted. In another building we were shown the very basic living conditions where people were crammed in, in such large numbers, that their straw mattresses left no space to walk around the room. It was here that the methods used in the gas chambers were perfected. We walked along the narrow corridors in the basement of the building where they tested different techniques. It was here we saw the room where St Maximilian Kolbe was killed. It's a tiny space. It was chilling to see the small bricked-up room where so many people were pushed in that they could only stand until they starved to death.

Birkenau is a huge place in comparison to Auschwitz, but only a short distance away. We entered under a brick archway and walked along the edge of the original railway track. We were literally walking in the footsteps of the dead. Here carriages arrived containing 50–70 people per carriage. They would have been in these carriages for several days with no food, water or toilets. Jews were separated from other prisoners. Here were the large gas chambers which gassed up to 12,000 people per day. You can still smell the charred remains, even though most of the buildings have been destroyed. While we were there, a large group of Orthodox Jewish men and boys arrived, many with Israeli flags around their shoulders. They went up to the remains of the gas chambers and started singing in Hebrew. We assumed that they were singing prayers and hymns for the dead.



In January 1945, Russians liberated the camps and they then used it for German prisoners of war. In 1947, they handed the camp back to the Poles, since when it has been a national memorial.

There is a large black monument at Birkenau which has plaques in 23 languages, which say:

FOR EVER LET THIS PLACE BE A CRY OF DESPAIR AND A
WARNING TO HUMANITY
WHERE THE NAZIS MURDERED ABOUT ONE AND A HALF
MILLION
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN, MAINLY JEWS
FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF EUROPE

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU 1940–1945

A litter picker's guide to Cambridge

Joe Tucker

If you had asked me two years ago for guidance on litter picking in Cambridge, my response would have been short and vague – the Colleges keep their properties spotless and City Council workers try to keep the streets as clean as possible. In addition, you hear about a few individuals who keep their neighbourhoods free from litter.



However, there is another force at work, since the council's Community Engagement team have built up an enthusiastic group of Streets and Open Spaces volunteers, equipped and motivated to pick litter, remove graffiti, sweep leaves and help care for the city's trees. Soon after joining this group, I heard that a fellow volunteer had completed the 2022 one-tonne challenge, which sounded like a great target so of course I signed up for the same challenge in 2023.

If you go out twice a week and fill several bags then 100kg per month is perfectly doable, as long as you learn the knack of finding heavy stuff – my total for January was a respectable 121kg, thanks to a sizeable pile of clothing dumped in the Aldi/Iceland's car park.

Strong bin bags and a basic grabber are provided, together with a high-viz vest and thick gloves. Essential for one-tonne-challengers is a small weighing scale, also provided.

For convenience, I have purchased an extra strong, foldable grabber, which is easy to carry in a bike pannier and can pull heavy bottles from tight spaces. It takes only a moment to 'gown up' when a pile of litter comes into view.

Once your bag is full you leave it next to a council bin, weigh it, then submit a collection request through the website.

The majority of litter is rather light, so you can spend an hour filling a bag with crisp packets, drinks cans and chocolate wrappers only to find that it weighs a paltry 2kg. In the hope of finding hotspots around the city, I posted a request on the Nextdoor app for people to report annoying litter, which led me to out of the way locations such as the A14 underpass behind CRC, High Ditch Rd out of Fen Ditton and Rope Walk near the Beehive Centre, all of which were overflowing with litter.

Midsummer Fair provided a bonanza of discarded bottles (and a hefty total for June) plus I gradually discovered multiple places all around Cambridge which are guaranteed to yield a full bag at any time. The pattern appears to be routes where large numbers of people are passing every day, with the opportunity to throw stuff out the window or drop it into a hedge. To give just two examples, it's clear that a minority of office workers returning from their lunch break at Milton Tesco treat Cowley Rd as an open dustbin, while CRC students are endlessly creative in decorating the Guided Busway with their food wrappings.

I have developed a scoring system which goes like this:

- one point for each piece of litter which is easy to reach
- two points for more challenging items, embedded in a bush or slipped behind a bus shelter
- three points for litter which is reachable only at full stretch, over a high fence or in a deep ditch.

Happily, there are several rewards for all this effort, starting with passers by saying thank-you and stopping for a chat. Then there is the satisfaction of seeing that a spot which you cleaned a week ago is still litter-free. Registered SOS volunteers can claim one Time Credit for each hour of work, up to a maximum of eight per month, which I spend on swimming at Parkside Pool. Finally, you may have noticed that the Council is promoting the LitterLotto scheme – this has motivated me to put cans and bottles into recycling bins instead of my general litter bag (and hence into landfill). So far in 2024, I have made 1800 entries to the LitterLotto weekly jackpot and I can witness that winning is possible!

My journey to Calvary, a personal story

Mary Gullick

When we start our journey it's not a clean, easy one as the public would want you to see it as – all masks aside I am sure we all come every Sunday bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, with high ideals and expectations of a way of life that is brushed to every possible expectation and ideal, yet I ask myself this in 2024, what price is my Cross? What am I paying every step of every day that I walk in Faith hand-in-hand, even in fear, knowing chapter and page is written before I was born – God knows me inside out, and knows my imperfections too, even when I hide away from him and don't want to show how flawed I am, how weak I feel inside and how slow my body has become over time.

It is by taking up my own Cross, by looking at my Cross and going head-to-head with its shape, its angles, what it represents, while having a conversation with God too and asking him to be present, that something becomes even more resilient inside. I hear something inside – a song that I have heard through other channels but it comes through loud and clear: 'Make me a channel of your peace, where there is injury your pardon Lord, where there is doubt let me bring hope, and in dying that we are born to eternal life. Oh Master, grant that I may never seek, so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand and to love as to love with all my soul.' This came through on repeat so strong through the well-heard voice of Sinead O'Connor who, many will know, was a well-known musician in Ireland, who stood up for what she believed however controversial. She also lost a child to suicide and no woman should ever face such a painful sacrifice.

When we look at the Cross what emotions does it stir up? For me it has a mixture of good emotions and deep sorrow, deep sadness of entering the graveyard. Of knowing those I love and care about will be left behind and face years without me. Won't even know who I am. Only a photograph will even be a sentiment that I was even here. How does that make sense? Leaders want my execution to ease their own feelings because they too have been around me – I want to live on. Why should I go through this isolation? This fear? Beyond fears what else arises? Well, it's a victory a completion by death so that a regeneration can be started – a journey for wholeness is here. Death is never the end, it's simply a new beginning. A call for new life to start again. A party in heaven where the 3D has no power over my future.

Yet I have a healing which transmutes every aspect of life, and that healing begins Easter day. My parents made a choice on my behalf, and I now choose with free will, give permission to release the burden of my Cross and heal my own wounds. Just like Christ does through

his own journey, my parents did and won a victory via death. Mine is won when I release the burden. I wish you all a very happy Easter.

Walking on the North Bank of the River Thames

Petra Tucker



I absolutely love London as a capital city. I was fortunate to live and work in the East End in the early 1980s and it gave me a love of London that I still have to this day. For the past few years, when I go to London I walk as much as possible to take in the views, history and day-to-day workings of our capital.

I recently walked, from Kings Cross Station to visit the Chanel exhibition at the V&A, nine miles mostly along the north bank of the Thames. Passing by Ludgate Circus, names like Brides Lane, Brideswell, Pilgrim Street, Blackfriars, Shoe Lane, Stonecutter Street and Carmelite Street, I tried to imagine what these streets were like in medieval times, when religious institutions provided many social services to the poor.

I walked by Smithfield meat market, still open, although the wholesale market has largely moved to Dagenham together with Billingsgate fish market. These are two of the oldest markets in London having operated for 800 years. From the Embankment you look up to the Inns of Court amidst a web of tiny streets and pubs where lawyers have conducted business for centuries. The bridges I walked by, starting with Blackfriars, were Waterloo, Hungerford, Golden Jubilee, Westminster, Lambeth, Vauxhall, Grosvenor and finally Chelsea.

You can see Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre on the south side, across from the magnificent dome of St Paul's Cathedral then you get a good view of Lambeth Palace and just before Westminster Bridge the rather ugly Scotland Yard looks across to the London Eye.

Poetry Corner

Big Ben is so symbolic of Britishness and tourists throng around the Palace of Westminster taking photos. I lose speed while navigating through the crowd, then I am pushed away from the riverside to get past the Houses of Parliament, guarded by armed police and large metal barriers. This gets me thinking about what is going on in such an enormous building. Whilst the police are mostly friendly, they are totally alert and scanning all the time, supported by a dozen police vans parked nearby, with riot shields over their windscreens. A pinstripe-suited man cycles through one of the entrances, clearly well known to the guards.

When you get back to walking by the river, Millbank is full of large office buildings that look solid if somewhat colourless, one of them the home of MI5, our internal security service. Battersea Power Station stands proud further along on the south side and you can see the MI6 block which is not exactly advertised but Londoners know it well.

The Thames has a life of its own and is central to London's personality. There are tourist boats going in all directions and Uber boats which are part of London Transport. They remind me of the Hoboken Ferry that provides a convenient route from New Jersey to downtown Manhattan. Retired boats are fixed along the edge of the river, operating as floating restaurants or bars, while bright yellow barges carry huge amounts of the capital's rubbish to processing plants.

From Chelsea Bridge I walked up Chelsea Bridge Road onto Sloane Street and then down the Brompton Road to the V&A. This part of the walk for me was about window-shopping and looking into 'the' most expensive clothes shops where there are no prices on the garments and very smart bouncers hover just inside the doors.

After visiting the exhibition, I took the Tube from High Street Kensington to the Embankment, where I had a strong urge to get out and walk some more. By then it was dusk and people were leaving work. I walked to Southwark Bridge to meet Hannah whose office is in Cousin Lane, right next to the bridge. It was a very sunny and very cold day with so much to see, smell and hear. I can never tire of walking in London.

The Sea

Wally Moscuza

A
Stretch
Of land is
Above the sea
The foaming waves
That forcefully break
On land granted by God
Ebbing and flowing on the sand
A sign from the sky it purifies
The sins away from the reach
It justifies innocence and
The weakness of man as
His strength showing
With pride the way
His ambitions to
Possess and
Heal

A
Destiny
Demanding
Collaboration
From man as a token
Of his appreciation
Away it lies on canvas
or a sea shadowed by a sky
Green orange and gray in ever
Fluffy tumultuous waves of
Passion the moods of man
Nature's variations of
Time bashful light a
Courageous fight
Heaven earth
Combining
Love

The Grieving Sea

Nick Corcoran

I walked one day upon the strand
Of the cold grey Northern Sea
While howled the wind that whipped the spray
And drove the waves ashore.
So marvelled I with inland eye
And gasped the salty air
And when I sat to rest the roar
Of each wave spoke to me:

No fish! I heard them say so plain
As each one smote her down
Then washed the shingle up the beach
To drag it back again.

No fish! My unaccustomed ear
Could hear, quite unmistakably.
This can't be so, said I, for I've been told
There's plenty of fish in the sea!

Not any more! The waves did roar
Nor shall be, ever again!
I heard the wave voices clearer now –
They wept, in sorrow and in pain
At so much emptiness and loss
For mankind's meagre gain.

Alas for the little fish that found
Life in my rolling wave!
Ah woe that my deeps without whale song
Are silent as the grave!

Oh where are you, my crabs, my whelks
Oh little creatures mine?
My auks, and terns and guillemots –
The wind shrieked and tore the brine –
Where are my lovely creatures all?
What have you done with them?

The sand among the lyme grass hissed
The pines to the wind did wail
I turned and fled the stinging blast
And deep I felt the shame
As faint beyond the dunes the waves
Forever grieved the same
No fish, no fish, no fish, no fish
No fish, no fish, no fish.

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A Bunched Up Year

Teresa Brett

Christmas is always best.
Waiting time day by day
Near candles and calendars which say
“Not long to go.”

A tree, stable and manger, all wood.
Wood is so good.
I'd have Advent longer if I could.

This year Easter comes thundering in
With little help for the small and inert.
Lent is long and meant to hurt.
It goes on for weeks and seeks

To wring our sorrow out,
Like our prayer.
I like prayer to grow, like hair,
Quietly, gently;
It's enough that it's just there.

Good Friday is great. We kneel and cry
With no chance to fly
Away
Or say
Anything.

The greatest gift: life after death
But no-one here has ever been there.
Lent leads nowhere
Peaceful for me.
A mystery I cannot see
So I must just let it be.....

Tailpiece

Quiz

Mary Walsh

Can you unscramble the letters to find 12 books of the Old Testament?

- 1) see sign G - - - - -
- 2) used ox E - - - - -
- 3) evil is cut L - - - - - - -
- 4) bens rum N - - - - -
- 5) one more duty D - - - - - - - - -
- 6) boj J - -
- 7) mass lp P - - - - -
- 8) be or rsvp P - - - - - - -
- 9) monsoon so golf S - - - - - - - - - - -
- 10) here i jam J - - - - - - -
- 11) least not main L - - - - - - - - - - -
- 12) denial D - - - - -

Can you solve these Dingbats?

1.
Give Give Give Give
&
Get Get Get Get

2.
 Olives
 Olives Olives
 Olives Olives Olives
Olives Olives Olives Olives

3.
Ever Ever Ever Ever & Ever

4.
Sheep Sheep
Sheep Sheep
Sheep
Sheep Sheep

5.
Jump! Run! Go! Stop! Sit!
Follow me! Turn right! Slow down!
Silence! Come in!

6.
Pass
Lamb

7.
Monday Tuesday
Wednesday Thursday
Friday Saturday Sunday
BREAD

<p>Quiz Answers</p> <p>1)Genesis 2)Exodus 3)Leviticus 4)Numbers 5)Deuteronomy 6)Job 7)Psalms 8)Proverbs 9)Song Of Solomon 10)Jeremiah 11)Lamentations 12)Daniel</p> <p>Dingbats Solutions</p> <p>Forget and forget Mount of Olives Forever and ever The Lost Sheep The Ten Commandments The Passover Lamb Daily Bread</p>

Editorial

Nora Darby

A welcome addition to our Parish in June for a six-month stay was Seminarian, Peter Ho. His mission, to learn about parish life. He adapted to 'Life at St Laurence's' and integrated himself into the many activities in and around the Parish. Peter was due to leave and return to Oscott at the end of December but this was extended for a further few weeks as Fr Simon had to leave suddenly for Australia due to the sudden illness of his brother. We would all like to say thank you to Peter for his help holding the fort and for all his work and support of the Parish.

We had an Epiphany party for the first time for a few years. The Ablaze team and Confirmation parents organised pizza and parishioners brought food and drink to share. It was lovely to have a combination of young and older parishioners enjoying themselves and it created a great buzz! We look forward to more social events throughout the year.

The deadline for the next edition is **14 June for publication on **16/17 July****

Wondering where to send your article, photos or drawings? Our email address is below and you will also find it every week on the front page of the Parish newsletter. Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition. **We welcome interesting and original material for all sections in the forthcoming edition. Anything you send should be your own work in your own words and a maximum of 2,000 words.**

The production team:

Editors: Nora Darby, Sarah Sykes

Sub-editors: Carol Williams, Sarah Sykes, Mary Walsh

Commissioning Editor: Nora Darby

Cover: Leonie Isaacson

Proofreaders: Caroline O'Donnell & Miriam Santos Freire

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

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

Some Regular Events

The Parishioners Open Meeting (is where **ALL** parishioners can come together to discuss and debate Parish matters, and decide when and where things need to be done. The Agenda is planned in advance and the meeting is led by the Chairman and Parish Priest. Meetings commence at 7:30pm and are held in the Parish Room with the option to join online via Zoom.

The Zoom link is published in the Newsletter, Keeping-in-Touch email and on the website. You can raise a topic at the meeting but it helps if you send a short note about 10 days before the next meeting to Stephen Warde at

openmeeting@saintlaurence.org.uk .

The Pilgrim by Email

The Pilgrim magazine is available as a paper copy or you can receive a pdf version by email. If you are not already on the distribution list, send a request to pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk

Pilgrim on the Web

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

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

ABLAZE

The St Laurence Youth Mass is known as Ablaze. It is designed to encourage our youth to build their confidence in participating in all aspects of the Mass.

It is held on the first Sunday of the month at 5pm. It is a vibrant and fun Mass. We encourage young Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, budding musicians and singers of all ages, the only requirement is enthusiasm for God. If you are looking for 'perfection' you won't find it here! So, if you fancy it pluck up your courage and join in.

If you are a musician, the Ablaze team would love to hear from you!!

Next Ablaze Mass: 7 April at 5pm

Upcoming Parish Events

Lent Stations of the Cross 1) Led by Justice & Peace & CAFOD. Also online option Zoom details in the parish notice 2) Led by Fr Simon 3) Family Friday Lenten Stations of the Cross & confessions	Wednesdays during Lent 7:05pm Fridays during Lent 7:30pm 22 March 7.30pm
CWL Lent lunches	Fridays after 12.30pm Mass
Chrism Mass St John's Cathedral, Norwich	4 April 11:30am
Holy Week Masses Palm Sunday	8am, 9:30am and 11am
Maundy Thursday 28 March Mass followed by watching until 10pm	7:30pm
Good Friday: 29 March Children's Stations of the Cross <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal • Stations of the Cross 	10:30am 11:00am
Veneration of the Cross with Holy Communion	1pm & 3pm
Easter Vigil 8 April	9pm
Easter Sunday 9 April	8am, 9:30am and 11am
Saturday morning coffee hub Parish room	10-12 After 9:30 Mass
Sunday morning coffee	After 11am Mass
Parishioners Open Meeting	Tues 21 May 7.30pm
First Holy Communion	1,2,8 & 9 June
Confirmation Ceremony	8 July TBC



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

ST LAURENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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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.

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simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk

Deacon:

Rev. Dr Geoffrey Cook
01223 351650

Safeguarding:

Mary Jane & Jim O'Sullivan
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Reece King
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reece.king@saintlaurence.org.uk

Treasurer:

Riq Willitts
07928 502768

treasurer@saintlaurence.org.uk

Service Times

Saturday 9.30am

6:00pm Vigil Mass (sung)

Sunday 8.00am

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

11:00am (sung with Children's Liturgy)

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am

Wed 6:00pm followed by Exposition

Fri 12.30pm

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

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