

St. Wilfrid's, Preston



Christmas 2023
Parish magazine



JESUITS

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Welcome to our Parish Magazine for 2023.

Last year we were still coming out of COVID but now we have moved on. Fr. Hugh Duffy SJ has replaced Fr. Paul Fletcher SJ and, like Paul, is helping with Masses and confessions.

The year has also seen the front of the church shrouded in scaffolding for several months. This was primarily to stop water coming in. The renewal of a gutter and some pointing work seem to have been successful. On the wider scene we have recently had the first part of the Synod in Rome. We will be thinking about the implications for our Parish and preparing for the second half next year.

One major event was the death of the chair of our Parish Pastoral Council, Geoff Thompson. He was active in so many areas, both local and national, and is a great loss. May he rest in peace. You can read more about Geoff's life in the following pages. We also remember four other long standing and active parishioners who have died this year: Joan Campbell, Joan Cragg, Margaret Wilson and Pauline Wilding. May they rest in peace. They are remembered after the article sent in by Fr. Denis Blackledge SJ.

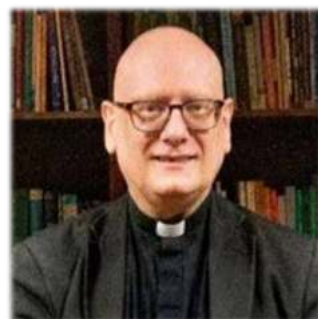
On a joyous note, 2023 marked the fortieth anniversary of Bill Adams being ordained as a Deacon and there is a piece in this magazine shared by his daughter, Theresa.

I hope you enjoy this Christmas publication.

Wishing you every blessing for the New Year.

Chris Pedley SJ

Parish Priest





This year the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem have been cancelled. Understandably, the hostilities in Israel and Palestine do not lend themselves to any form of merrymaking. Thankfully, this was not the case two years ago when, whilst on a short sabbatical break, I was privileged to attend the Midnight Mass in the Nativity Church in Bethlehem (above) and the festive ceremonies surrounding it. At that time the world was just emerging from the Covid pandemic and people were anxious to celebrate life. In Bethlehem they pulled out all the stops.

On Christmas Eve the service in Bethlehem's Franciscan church starts at 10pm. A long series of readings and hymns precede the Midnight Mass and very quickly the benches fill up with worshippers anxious to get a good view.

At the front of the church members of the Palestinian administration, the majority of whom are Muslim, occupy the prime seats, leaving the rest of the capacity crowd to fill up the other benches. The Mass begins at the stroke of midnight as the Patriarch enters the church carrying the statue of baby Jesus (right), which he places on a silver manger at the front of the altar (below).



The Mass itself is accompanied by a choir consisting of local Arab Christians complemented by several Franciscan monks. Following the Patriarch's homily, the Palestinian officials, as a mark of respect, leave the church and swiftly the hovering locals bundle into the vacated benches. It is all very friendly and chaotic.

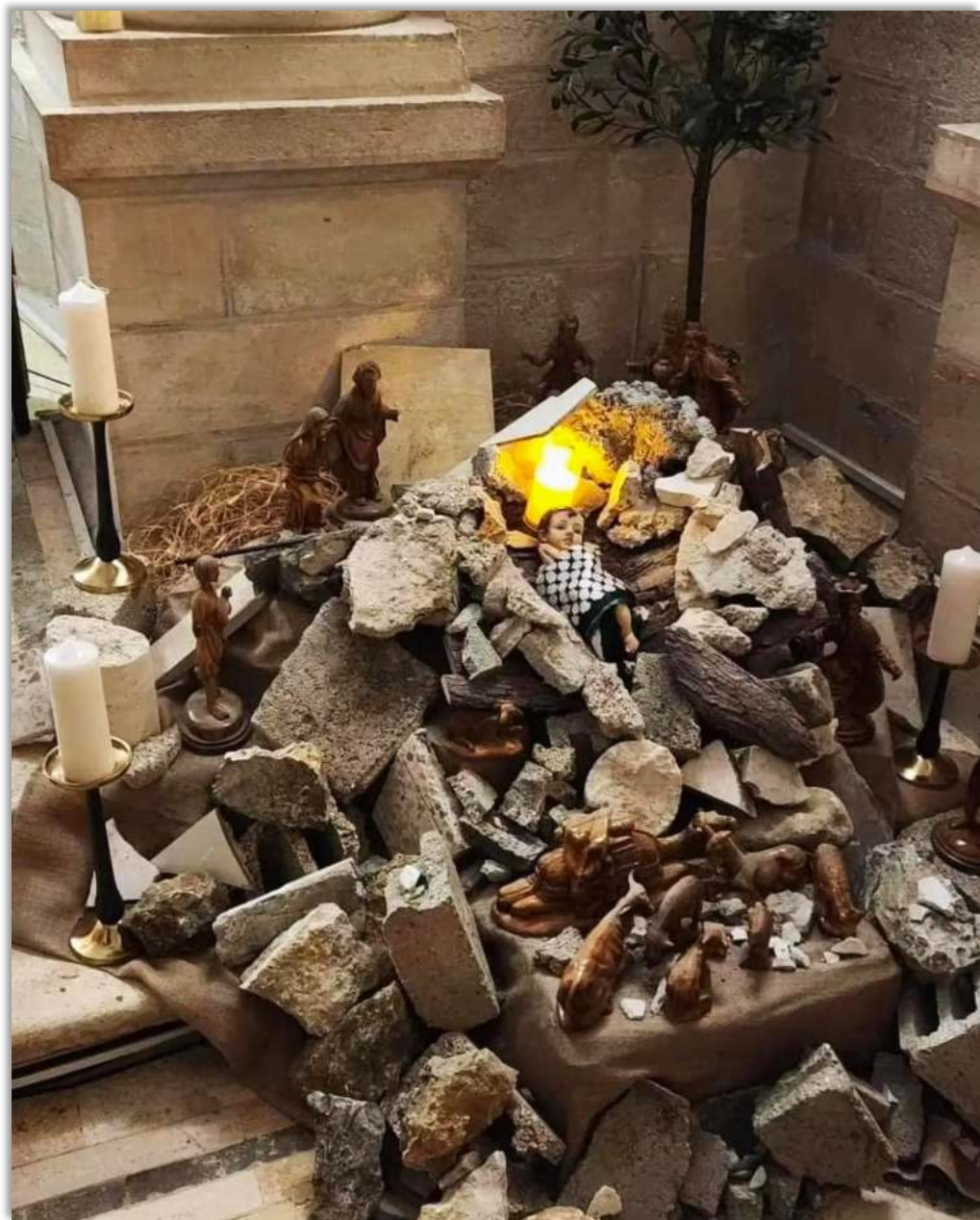
As the Mass ends the statue of Baby Jesus is processed around the church by the Patriarch and then taken into the adjoining ancient Basilica where it is carried into the

crypt under the high altar (below) – the traditional place of Jesus’s birth. En route the crowd jostle to kiss the feet of baby Jesus’s statue and the Patriarch wishes everyone Happy Christmas.



Following the service, which takes more than four hours, the smiling congregation escapes into the cold night, ready to continue the celebrations and, as they pass through a brightly decorated Manger Square, fireworks illuminate the sky. Meanwhile, the local band attempts to keep in tune as they serenade the crowd with a variety of traditional Christmas carols.

*This year's nativity scene in Bethlehem's Lutheran Church.
With thanks to Will McGarvey for this most powerful image.*



Mary, did you know...

By Herma Holt

...that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Blackburn Cathedral (below) is home to a beautiful statue (opposite) of Mary bathing her baby the Infant Jesus. She is about to pour some water into the tub or, has she already done so, and is just about to put the pitcher back on the floor. Her little boy seems to be quite a handful as all children are, especially at that age. He is eager to step out of the tub as if unable to contain his eagerness to carry out the work He came to do. "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" Mary's left hand now restrains him but one day she will not be able to protect him from his destiny. His outstretched arms, resting on her knees, prefigured for me, what was to come on Calvary, thirty three or so years later.

This work, by Josefina Vasconcellos, one of my favourite sculptors, was commissioned by The Blackburn Diocesan Mother's Union as a memorial to their Secretary, Helen Dix.

When you stand before the statue and look straight on, Mary's face shows calm contentment of a young mother involved in an everyday task of caring for her infant. Viewed from the left, she seems to be smiling. Looking at her



face from the right, she wears a sombre expression, an expression of sadness in her heart. I wonder what thoughts went through her mind, especially later in her life when she recalled the words of Simeon, "and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

If you haven't seen the statue, I would urge you to visit Blackburn Cathedral to view it and reflect upon it.



A Ruby Celebration

By Theresa Swan

In June this year Bill Adams celebrated forty years as an ordained Deacon.



After spending time serving at St. Ignatius and St. Maria Goretti parishes in Preston, he served most of his years as an active Deacon at St. Wilfrid's.

Bill was at the heart of St Wilfrid's parish life, attending daily Mass, and also visiting people at home, in hospital and at St. Catherine's Hospice, taking them Holy Communion. He also served as a Catholic Chaplain to HM Prison Preston. The annual pilgrimages he led to Lourdes, often visiting other shrines on the journey through France, were hugely popular,

and he also joined others on pilgrimages to Rome and the Holy Land, on one occasion witnessing snow fall in Jerusalem!

During his frequent visits to St. Catherine's, Bill became aware of many younger people who were receiving treatment for life-limiting illnesses and began to investigate the possibility of a purpose-built children's hospice in this area, to better accommodate the specific needs of children and their families. He was part of the dedicated team who brought the dream to a reality, walking the epic Coast to Coast Walk to raise funds for this amazing project, and Derian House Children's Hospice was born!

Liturgy was always a keen interest of Bill's and for many years he trained altar servers for the big occasions of Christmas and Easter. He also held a traditional service of the Stations of the Cross every Good Friday morning, for over twenty five years, and the church was always packed with people honouring this sacred day.

Bill was able to enjoy facilitating the Sacraments on many happy family occasions too, celebrating his daughter and grandson's weddings, baptising his grandchildren and three great-grandsons!

He has worked with a number of Jesuit Parish Priests and assistants. Throughout the years Bill has been a consistent presence for all who attend St. Wilfrid's. After forty years' service, and long after the required retiring age, Bill reluctantly hung up his dalmatics after an amazing and satisfying role within the Church.

**Congratulations Deacon Bill on your
long and faithful service!**





This summer I made one of the best decisions I've ever had to make, which was to go on the Lancaster Lourdes Pilgrimage. As a youth member on this certain pilgrimage it meant I was signing up to not only have a lovely week in France, but to help out with the elderly and spend a lot of time with Our Lady.

At the start of my journey to get to Lourdes I did an "Easter Fundraiser" at which I organised a raffle and sold some cakes. At this fundraiser I managed to meet a lot of you from the parish as you helped me so much to raise enough to get to Lourdes. One of those who helped me a lot to make this pilgrimage

come true was the late Geoff Thomson, who advised me on setting up my fundraising table, told lots of parishioners about it and was very loving towards me.

As this was my first time going I was not sure about what I was expecting it all to be, a week in France without my parents sounded like a blast but I truly didn't know what it was going to be like. So when I was in Lourdes I spent a lot of time with the elderly helping them get from places in wheelchairs and this soon became an exciting part of my week there. A crucial part of our time at Lourdes was helping the pilgrims get from the hotel to Mass but while doing this not only was I pushing and doing what I had been asked, I was getting to know the pilgrims and they were getting to know me. We learnt each other's names, where we came from and the conversation would carry on from there all about their faith life. If I'm honest it didn't really seem like a difficult task as I enjoyed it because even though I was taking them to Mass, it was knowing we both may be two different generations, but shared the excitement of receiving Jesus in one of the holiest places.

While I was in Lourdes one of the things that stood out was how, whenever I went through the gates, everything was so beautiful. Everywhere I turned was breathtaking but one of the places which stood out the most was the Grotto (below). The Grotto in which Mary appeared to St. Bernadette. This Grotto was truly spectacular. Touching the walls and seeing people cover themselves in the Holy Water, everything was such a wonderful sight that it will forever stay with me. I have grown up with the story of St. Bernadette, (having been a pupil at St. Bernadette's Primary School and parish in Lancaster before moving to Preston), I knew it was true, but it was always *just a story*. Seeing the place with my own eyes was truly magical. Knowing that people have been healed there, and although everyone was there for different reasons, but, in fact, we were all there looking and praying to Mary made it extra special.

I feel so blessed that my parish of St. Wilfrid's enabled my trip and it was a privilege to pray for you and your intentions in Lourdes. I really continue to thank you for your love and support.



Memories of My Friend Geoff

By Margaret Nelson

I look out of my front room window and still expect to see Geoff's car roll up. He was very proud of his new car acquired for his 60th birthday in May.

I've know Geoff for 23 years since we met on a pilgrimage to Rome. Over the years I was fortunate to go on lots of pilgrimages and trips with Geoff. He organised wonderful visits to England's great cathedrals of York, Durham, Ely, Worcester, etc. where he always arranged for our good friend Fr. Tom to say Mass. His final pilgrimage from English Martyrs was to the Holy Land in 2008 where Geoff fell in love with the country and the people of Palestine, particularly an orphanage in Bethlehem (right). Every year he would go back and help with the planting and harvesting of olives as an international observer and he'd take money for the Argentinian nuns who ran the home for disabled children.



Geoff visiting The Hogar Niño Dios orphanage

Geoff always loved to organise trips. When at English Martyrs, Geoff had a caravan at Silverdale and each year he would invite parishioners to a walk and BBQ. He would also generously lend the caravan to friends - I and my family had several breaks there.

We both joined St. Wilfrid's in 2014 after St. Ignatius Church was closed. Geoff threw himself heartily into parish activities. We took over the newsletter and he was soon cooking at the Tuesday night drop-in. He organised day trips to Hying and longer visits to Barmouth. On the last trip to Barmouth he drove a borrowed minibus and took us out on trips around Wales. He joined the Parish Council, fund raised by doing BBQs and, with the late Joan Cragg, he ran the Bookshop.



Geoff & Margaret at Lake Bala

I was very lucky to go with my friend Pat and Geoff on trips to Holy Island, Hull, Wales and Scotland staying in Airbnb's that he'd got at a knockdown price. We always travelled with a portable BBQ, a picnic table and, much to our amusement, a tablecloth. Before the trips he would always have the car valeted for Pat 'cos she was posh!

Geoff loved to cook and could rustle up a meal or picnic for forty, sixty, a hundred people at the drop of a hat. He also enjoyed eating and so was a perfect dinner companion for our birthday trips to the Bushell Arms when we could all have a drink because he was teetotal.

Geoff was not always easy to get on with; his way was always the only way and that caused friction, but he was an amazing friend, especially when you really needed help. All through Covid he did my shopping at Lidl and in the years since we would go at 8am on Thursday mornings to shop. During Covid, once a week, we would have fish and chips when he would sit in the garden or vestibule, depending on the weather, while I was on the stairs. He also took me on numerous medical appointments and drove me all over the country to visit friends and family. If I needed a light bulb changing, or furniture moving, or a visit to the tip, Geoff was there. I'll miss him and our cuppas together.....

I was not the only recipient of his help and care. Since his untimely death so many people have told me amazing things he did for them. It was a testimony to his great life that so many people attended his funeral. Rest in peace Geoff.



Geoff & I at Holy Child Jesus Convent, Harrogate visiting Sr. Agnes (left) & Sr. Julian (right)

Final Address

By Denis Blackledge SJ

Jesuits are called to be men on the move. They aren't given a "job": they're given a "mission". In other words, they're "sent" somewhere by their Superior to be and do the best they can in some area of pastoral work. They're often known as "contemplatives in action". In other words, as individuals with a deeply intimate relationship with Jesus, men of prayer, who try to live Him out to the best of their ability in their daily lives. Usually, the mission will reflect the specific talents of the individual.

All the above means that a Jesuit will normally have many addresses during his lifetime. During my own sixty-two years as a Jesuit I've lived at about twenty addresses. And I've been privileged to be alongside people in a rich variety of situations, often as a compassionate listener and pastor. This year, when I hit eighty, and was privileged to celebrate my golden jubilee of ordained priesthood, I also got my final mission to my final address!

So I'm now learning how to be a contemplative, not "in action", but "in passion". Let me explain.

My final mission is to let go and let God more than ever before, and aim to become day by day an ever-better friend and lover of Jesus, and to pray daily for the needs of our one world, of which the Church and the Society of Jesus are part. A "golden hour" of prayer first thing in the morning is a good start. And an evening time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for all the loved ones and friends I know who are sick is also a "must".

As a result of a couple of operations in the past three years – a fresh new metal left hip, and a total new metal right knee – my physical ability is lessened. I'm a better swimmer than a walker! So I need a stick when I go out, and I'm slowly learning how to be more dependent on others. I've also had a couple of other medical issues over the past twenty years, and keep the NHS going with my prescription list!

Each day is a bonus, a fresh gift from our Loving Lord. Today is all that matters. Making the most of today is key. Having let go of active ministry doesn't mean becoming a couch potato: fresh stimulus is important. Apart

from the priority of personal prayer, relationships, hobbies, reading, writing, whatever keeps mind and heart alive, are vital aspects. Plus helping local pastors with the odd Mass or confessions in parishes or at school.

What matters more than anything is a vibrant sense of daily gratitude for being alive on the receiving end of so much love and generosity from God and from others around me. The Eucharist is at the heart of my daily living, and a privileged moment of each day. After fifty years of celebrating this awesome sacrament, I hope I've slowly become more like whom I celebrate, namely, Jesus.

“Stuff” doesn't matter any more, and trying to live more simply in one room becomes second nature. I'm blessed to be in a superb home set up by the British Jesuit Province for us Jesuits brothers or priests who need care, and who can be nursed even unto their dying day. So, I'm quite content to be



here for as long as the good Lord wants me to be. Life's far too interesting to die just yet! I just ask the Lord to keep on giving me a good sense of humour and proportion, along with that deepfelt sense of gratitude.

Years ago I remember asking an old priest over ninety to sum up his life in a sentence. He simply said: "It's been an experience of God's great love and blessedness." Now I can say exactly the same.



Thank you to Fr. Denis for this beautifully written piece and, together with the smiling photograph on the previous page, we remember some of our regular parishioners who joined the Lord in 2023.



Joan Cragg who died in May. This photo of her wedding day was sent in by her son, Sean. Joan ran the piety shop from St. Wilfrid's Parish Centre and, through the years, took on various other roles for the parish.



Margaret Wilson who died in September. This photo was taken in the Care Home just a short time before. Latterly, Margaret was the parish representative for counting the Missio red boxes.

Pauline Wilding who died in October this year and was an active member of (the former) St. Mary's Friargate as well as in St. Wilfrid's parish.



Joan Campbell who died in February this year and was the long time lead of the Life Ascending Group, who continue to meet each Thursday morning in the Parish Centre.

Words For God

By ArtforGod

As a boy I always struggled being around others at home and I was mute



The Potter

growing up, that is, I found it easier not to speak because it seemed to cause the least hassle. So, I read or I drew pictures of knights, monsters, war machines and futuristic landscapes in order to escape from the real world. In this drawing I discovered that I was in control and the images did what I wanted them to do and were how I wanted them to be.



Apricity

By the time I was at secondary school I'd had enough of not being able to control my environment, how I felt and continually being afraid. So I learned to physically fight back. At home I could not physically fight but in the world I could and became excellent at fighting back. In so doing I came to the realisation that I could feel safe and all I had to do was to give back to others the fear that they had tried to instil in me. I became the monster and war machines I had drawn. In fact, so efficiently was I feared I became addicted to terrorising others. I no longer had to feel pain even when I was in pain or being punished. I no longer had to bow down to men and women who wanted to exert control over me. I did not care. Like the war machines I was becoming numb. Then I discovered that if I drank alcohol to excess and took out-of-reality drugs I was not only feared by others but I could escape to alien worlds. I was free and the price was only money. Only the cost of the alcohol and drugs. The drugs were cheap and easy to find for a twelve year old boy, and I hammered them, alone.

My interest in art would have been lost then but for school. I still loved to draw the set pieces the Art Teacher gave me, as well as



continuing to draw at home until I was 14 or 15 years old. I left school at 16 and married my saving grace, Sarah. We had a son.

My behaviours and lifestyle never affected my academic capacity and I gained O levels in Art, History, Literature, English Language and Classical Studies. I loved to draw the Greek Gods, Heroes of Legend and historical warriors and, so, found I excelled in these subjects. However, babies come before degrees and learning so I became a bricklayer. Our marriage did not last long due to my drinking and ever increasingly serious drug addiction. I was aggressive and had a capacity for violence in pubs towards anyone I perceived to be taking liberties with either myself or my loved ones.

The drugs took over even more after losing Sarah and my son. I was asked to leave. I became one of the characters in my childhood drawings. The monster I had innocently admired as a child. But God never left me. Not once. Never.



The Conception

After many relationships and five children, prison, psychiatric institutions and degenerating into a homeless, lost, drug addict at age forty four, I died whilst being arrested by the Police. I was revived and taken to the intensive Care Unit. And left there. I begged the Policeman at my bedside not to leave me but, professionally, he had to remove the handcuffs and go.

God has guided me to today. I am fifty five now. My “clean” time has been as bad as my using time. The only time I have really found any peace is at Mass and when I am able to do my art, especially in the Art Therapy weekly sessions. I attend Mass every day. I cannot manage without this time spent in St. Wilfrid’s with God. It’s still hit and miss due to the brain damage from being brought back to life, along with the recognised medical diagnoses of Emotionally Unstable Bipolar Personality Disorder Depression and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I struggle every day and at many times during each day to focus. This is why I find it so helpful when I am in Mass, or cleaning for the church, or gardening for the Foxton Community Centre because I experience moments of peace at these times.

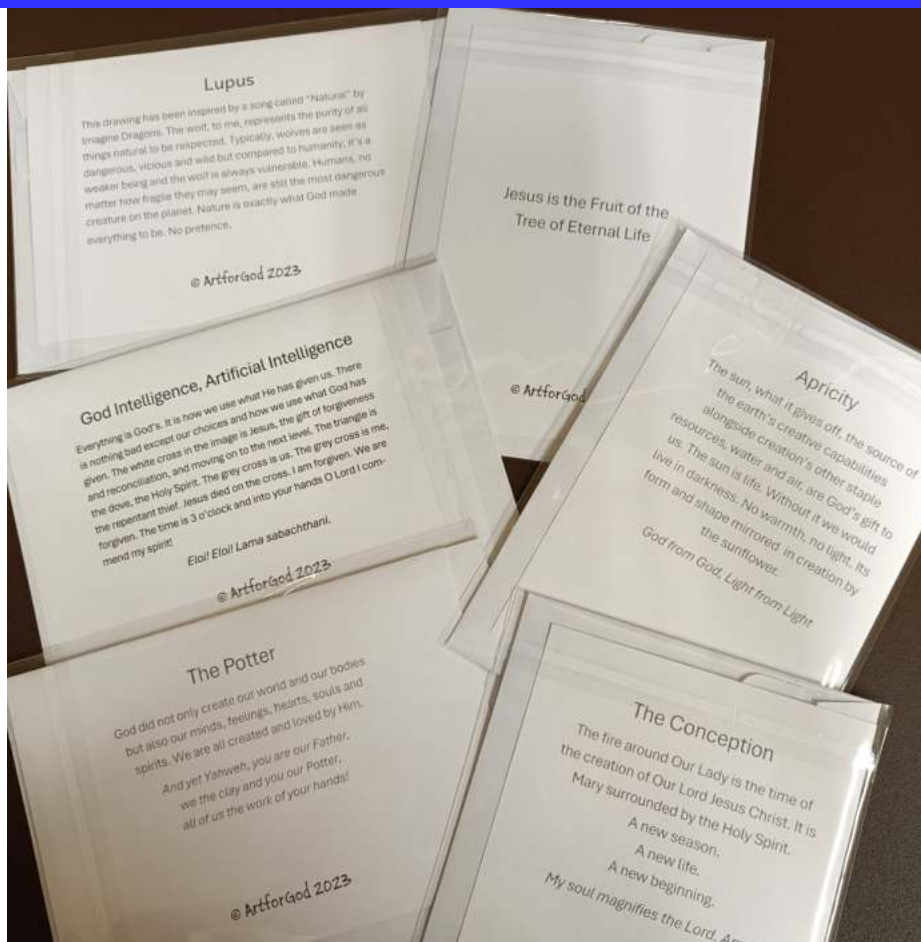
Whether I am drug using or not I have lost everything except for my art and writing. Thanks be to God to whom I run everyday in all circumstances. If it was not for God and people of goodwill I would have gone back to drugs, or hoped for death in some other way, many times, and it's been close over the years. So I say thanks be to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Our Lady, Saints and Angels. Thanks be to St. Wilfrid's, St. Walburge's, The Foxton Centre and the Harris Art Gallery and their staff. I am still alive just by God's grace alone!

Gift &

On sale in St. Wilfrid's



A beautiful new set of modern art cards



Each card is explained with the title and meaning on the reverse

Works by ArtforGod are on show in Unit 6 of the Bus Station with the Foxton/Harris exhibition during December and January.

CAFOD Christmas Update

By Patrick Gardner

How do we prepare for the Lord's coming at Christmas? Before Advent starts, we can be full of good intentions about how, this year more than ever before, we are going to prepare in the best and most appropriate way possible to mark the birth of Jesus. However, the busy-ness of life can sometimes take over and get in the way; shopping, preparation and parties can become our priorities, alongside a to-do list that must be worked through. The shorter days and darker, colder nights can sap our energy. In addition to our immediate focus, devastating events happening throughout the world can shock and sadden our hearts. Sometimes it feels like we have 'failed' before we have even started.

It is helpful to step back and pause in the present moment of our lives and to dwell on the themes of Advent and the build up to Christmas. What do the candles of the Advent wreath represent? We have HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE all building up to the LIGHT OF CHRIST coming into the world at Christmas.

Pope Francis in Advent 2020, during the COVID pandemic said, "We await the dawn, amid the darkness and weariness. The light of day will come. Let us not lose heart!"

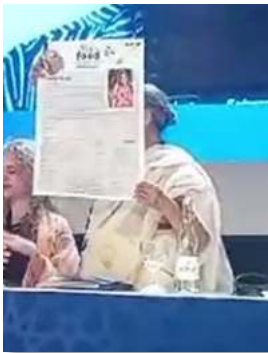
We look to God, then, with urgency this Christmas, that our Church and our world may encounter his peace.

We sadly lost our dear friend Geoff Thompson last month. In addition to being a friend to many of you at St. Wilfrid's parish, as you will know Geoff put 'serving others' at the heart of his faith response. Geoff was one of the wonderful CAFOD parish representatives at St. Wilfrid's. We shall miss him greatly in our CAFOD family. His example to us inspires us to respond to God's calling. It was quite appropriate that Geoff should pass away on All Saints Day. May he rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Last summer, you will remember that Geoff introduced CAFOD's *Fix the Food System* parish campaign to St. Wilfrid's parishioners over the weekend Masses in July. Our focus was on 'seeds', and we were asking parishes to co-sign our giant letter to support small scale farmers in their fight for their rights to

use and share their own seeds to grow food. For generations, small-scale farmers have freely swapped and shared a wide variety of seeds. But new laws supported by the World Bank are being introduced that limit what small farmers can do with their seeds. The giant letter was written by Salina, a small-scale farmer in Bangladesh, to the World Bank calling for the rights of small-scale farmers to be protected. We had a wonderful response from St. Wilfrid's with over 175 parishioners adding their names to the petition to the World Bank.

Over a third of the parishes in England and Wales also supported and signed Salina's letter to the World Bank, and recently we took her message right to



the heart of the World Bank. This picture (left) captures the moment that Farida, who works with Salina's community, handed the letter to the World Bank Global Director for Agriculture and Food, at the bank's annual meetings in Morocco last month. The same day, CAFOD campaigners delivered a thousand *Salina letters* to the World Bank offices in London and four of the group met a senior bank official inside. Our message was heard!

We have all been shocked and saddened by the devastating conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Our local partners are actively responding and providing urgent humanitarian aid to those in need. CAFOD has worked for many years in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory with partners who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular and we join Pope Francis' urgent call for peace and an end to the violence. Please join us in prayer for the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory who have been affected by this devastating conflict. And for our local partners who are working tirelessly to respond. For more information on how you can help, and how CAFOD is responding visit <https://cafod.org.uk>

CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, is the international development agency that reaches out to people around the world who

urgently need our help. Whether it's a local Sister, a doctor or a water engineer, our experts can get specialist help to people, fast, regardless of their religion or culture. We believe that if one of us is hurt, hungry or abandoned, we all are hurt, hungry and abandoned. No one should be beyond the love and support they need to live a dignified life.

CAFOD stands in solidarity with communities around the world by campaigning in the UK to change the policies and practices that keep people living in poverty. Join us and find new ways to put your faith into action.

If you would like to volunteer with CAFOD at St. Wilfrid's and join us in our mission, working alongside your Parish Priest to inspire your parish community, to put an end to poverty and injustice throughout the world, please do contact us at CAFOD Lancaster: email: lancaster@cafod.org.uk or telephone: 07920 565 454.

We are looking ahead to the Jubilee in 2025, with its theme of Pilgrims of Hope. We anticipate that it will be a time of great renewal of faith and of God's justice in our world. Pope Francis has called for 2024 to be a year of prayer in preparation for this Jubilee and we will be writing soon to share the resources which we can offer to support this in your parish.

So, as we sing Carols this Christmas, mindful of our sisters and brothers in great need across the globe, let us raise our voices for peace and hope! St. Teresa of Calcutta reminds us that, "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you."

We wish you all at St. Wilfrid's parish community a wonderful Advent, a joyful Christmas and a blessed 2024.

Thank you for all your generous support and prayers for families across the world.



A prayer for peace, perhaps not just for the Middle East but wherever there is discord be it in our world, in our community, in our home, in our life...

**God of peace, bearer of hope,
we seek your help
for the peoples of the Middle East.**

**Quiet the clamour of war
and guide us towards peace.**

**Where there is hatred and division
sow seeds of calm and openness.**

**Where there is destruction
help us to rebuild.**

**Where children are crying
bring an end to tears.**

**Shelter your peoples and protect them
Guide them and keep them from harm.**

**Show us how to break down the barriers of history and fear
and breathe whispers of hope.**

Amen.

Linda Jones / CAFOD

Catholic Agency for
Overseas Development

CAFOD

Patrick Gardner is the Community Participation Coordinator based at CAFOD in Lancaster and in the next article Patrick invites you now to meet Wilf...

Wilf

By Patrick Gardner



As a puppy Wilfrid (Wilf) began his life in St. Wilfrid's parish in February 2015 and after several trips to Spain he decided he wanted to live there. For one year he lived by the sea in Castro Urdiales, on the Cantabrian coast where he was running on the beach every day. His joy was short-lived, however, as he had to move to Valladolid where he has been for the last five years. He works in an English Academy in the city and also at the Royal English College, where he helps the seminarians get to grips with the propaedeutic year. He often attends the 9.15am Sunday Mass at the Jesuit church in Valladolid and he is friends with many of the university students who provide the music and singing. Wilf usually visits Preston in the summer, and sometimes at Christmas, to visit friends and family. He travels back with his adopted parents and owners, Brendan and Gemma.

As the world started opening up again after the COVID pandemic, I took the opportunity in October last year to take a few weeks off, to leave Preston behind and take my time travelling through France. My aim was to, eventually, walk a small section of the Camino Frances, starting at the small town of St. Jean Pied de Port in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The Camino was something that I had always wanted to try out. After a few days sightseeing in Paris, and a couple or three train journeys later, I finally arrived in St. Jean Pied de Port. The walk over the Pyrenees was a sheer delight and the breathtaking view from the top of the Pyrenees is something I will always remember. Over the next few days, I met and walked with some wonderful people from all corners of the earth; a truly spiritual experience. My Camino 2022 week came to an end as I finally arrived in Pamplona.



The next day I caught the train to the city of Burgos which is where I met up with my brother, Brendan, sister-in-law Gemma, and our canine friend Wilf. We all spent the weekend in Burgos before travelling to Valladolid to meet up with friends joining us from the UK.

Of course, this tale isn't really about my Camino, as the title suggests, it's about Wilf. Just before COVID, Herma, a parishioner at St. Wilfrid's, Preston, wanted to pass on a Christmas present for Wilf. It was kindly passed on to

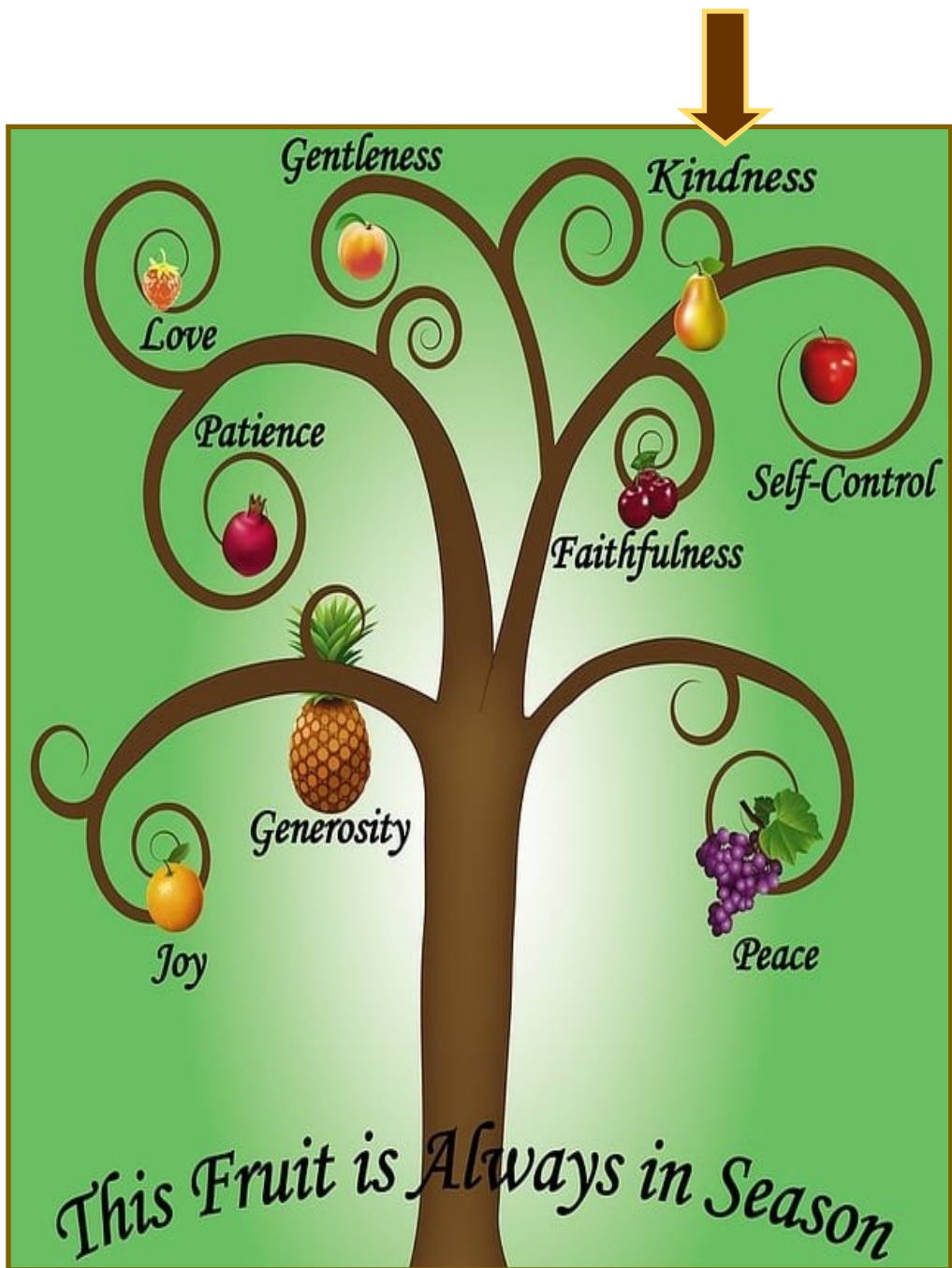


me by Martin and Tricia Douglas. I was to pass it on to Wilf when he returned home for Christmas. However that Christmas, because of the COVID pandemic, Wilf wasn't able to return to the UK, so last year after my Camino, I arranged to unite

Wilf with Herma's Christmas present. It was a lovely, green, friendly monster dog toy (above) and Wilf had hours of fun chewing it. So Wilf sends a big 'thank-you Herma' and sends his love and best wishes to all his friends at St. Wilfrid's parish in Preston.

Before I sign off, I can't help but think of our good and dear friend Geoff Thompson RIP. Last summer I was walking Wilf in Preston and after the walk there was a text message on my phone from Geoff. It said, "Spotted you earlier....being dragged up Garstang Road by Wilf". He wasn't wrong! Wilf was certainly in charge.





Choose Kindness!

By Valiny Rodrigues

Last Christmas Season is one I will not forget anytime soon. After spending Christmas together with extended family, a few of us decided to go on a road trip. We set off, all excited and packed for a few days on the road. Everything went well with the little ones having a good time. On our way back, we decided to stop over at a town for a few hours to rest before finally heading home.

It was dark and raining. There were quite a few heavy vehicles all around and we had to do quite a bit of manoeuvring to overtake them. We found ourselves behind a bus, following it at the same speed. All of a sudden, it swerved to the right and before we knew it, we rammed into a very slow moving trailer in front of us. Our car was completely smashed in the front.

We all came out of the car dazed! The kids were shaken and we all moved to the side of the road. Before we knew it, there was a big crowd around us making sure we were alright. A few said that it was an accident prone area and it was the first time they'd seen an accident where no life was lost! What a miracle!

The hours after were a blur, all I remember is the amazing kindness of people. They went out of the way to ensure we were okay and safe, our baggage was brought out from our car that was in the middle of the road thus putting themselves at a big risk. We were taken to a hotel by two young boys who stopped all they were doing and took us with them to ensure we found a safe place for the night. One of them even came back later in the night to ensure we had checked in and if all were okay, especially the elders with us at the time. It made our whole experience of the frightening ordeal bearable.

It is so easy to look at all that is happening in today's world and be bogged down with it all. It is natural to feel like there is no hope or humanity left; to feel depressed and lonely. That night, our faith in humanity was restored. When we most need it, the innate goodness of people comes through.

This is what Christmas is all about. A new start, and a renewed hope. With it comes the New Year and an anticipation that things will change for the better. And they will!

May the Spirit of Christmas bring you all Peace, Hope and Love!!!

The Touch of Pope Francis

By Jen Murphy

From the 2nd to 4th November the *Called, Transformed and Sent* event organised by Charis (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service), took place in Rome. It was a large-scale event with 3000 people from all around the world attending. It was a privilege to be there to represent CCR England/Lancaster Diocese and Metanoia Community.

I arrived to a stormy, rainy Rome on All Saints Day and hurried off to Mass in St. Maria Maggiore Basilica. There I offered my Mass for all those involved with Metanoia Project, but also asking God to reveal exactly why I was in Rome alone and to be guided on how I could share the experience, that was to come, when I got back home to Preston.

The Thursday was the first day and I arrived at the Church of St. Ignatius of Loyola (right) full of excitement, yet a little anxious to be there alone. I certainly didn't feel alone for long, God surrounded me with friends who were super encouraging and loving. The first day was made up of workshops and the two I choose were Evangelisation and Community. The speakers included Fr. Pat Collins (Ireland) and Mario Capello (Malta), amongst others, who live their lives one hundred percent for the Lord. I was inspired by the questions we were encouraged to ask ourselves about our own parishes! I was left challenged, but excited to be reminded that just like the Church, our parishes exist to evangelise. As Jesus states His mission in Luke 4:18 (The Spirit of the Lord is on me) we must be a parish with a vision for our future. We each must dare to be bold and creative and be Spirit led.

The second and third days saw a change of venue and we were in Paul VI Hall in The Vatican. Even entering the gates left me excited to see inside and I was itching to get through to see what these days would be all about!

The Friday saw a packed hall gathering to hear speakers from all around the world sharing how each of us (and you!) have been called, transformed and sent. We each have been called personally into a relationship with Jesus, His glory transforms us and then we each are sent to evangelise. The day kept me alert, and was alive and humbling, as we each learned to drop our own



agenda of how we'd like to spread the Good News and prayed, receiving confirmation of how God wants us to do it. It is not our will, but God's. It's not how we want to build our kingdom, but only how God wants us to build His Kingdom. It's not about us, only God.

The Saturday saw us meet in a packed hall again and we were led in talks by people passionate in parish evangelism, such as Nicky Gumbel (England) and Fr. Haydon Williams (USA). They each mentioned how our parishes should be like the Book of Acts and the people (us!) must be the disciples. During the afternoon the Papal Preacher, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, shared beautifully how our faith is only joy. 'Jesus Joy' will give us the confidence to proclaim the Good News! He begged us to share with our parishes the fact we must not look back at past days. We must look forward and take the joy into the future. As he dug deeper into his teaching he received a whisper in his ear and humbly stopped mid-sentence saying, "my time has come to an end, The Holy Father has entered," upon which we saw Pope Francis appear, from a side door, assisted by a walking stick. He stopped, looked to the crowd and he lifted his hands and praised the Lord. It was a Spirit filled moment as the whole room erupted in tongues of Spirit filled praise led by our Holy Father. I knew I was in the Throne Room being blessed, encouraged and re-commissioned to speak about Jesus all of my days, to go out, to evangelise!

He then sat down to begin his talk. The message from Pope Francis was the fact we each are called to smile! "A smile," he said, "will lead others into Jesus' loving arms. Our Christian faith is one long smile. So, smile and be glad." He then became sombre and pleaded with us to not let our past attempts at peace destroy us. "War destroys, let's fight for peace," he shouted. We prayed for peace in silence and then he begged Our Lady to protect each of us so that she will always keep us joyful, he insisted. He blessed the crowd and left us to each find our individual purpose for our life of service.

Leaving the stage, we thought he had left the building, but he soon came down into the crowd in his wheelchair. To loud shouts and cheers from a loving crowd he was guided graciously through the hall, stopping at points, beaming from head to toe with his beautiful smile. He stopped in front of me

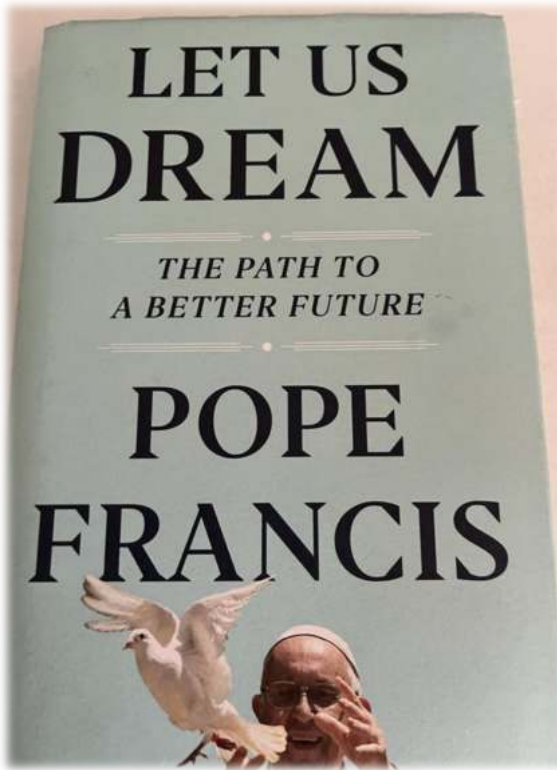
and I managed to see his smile directly towards me and a very quick hand touch (below). What a blessing that was.



My days in Rome were jam packed and I've spent my time since praying and processing all God was saying. I'm so thankful He used me as an instrument to hear His desires and I'm so looking forward to sharing with the people of St. Wilfrid's Parish, Metanoia Community and Lancaster Diocese how we all are so crucial in the renewal of the Church.

Every single one of us is called to build the Church, we are all people of mission! Praise the Lord!

“To come out of this crisis better, we have to see clearly, choose well and act right.: Let’s talk about how. Let us dare to dream.”



In the wake of the covid pandemic Pope Francis encourages us and urges us in his book *Let us Dream -The Path to a Better Future* to reassess our lives and to move forward, not return to the status quo before the pandemic. He divides his book into three parts which reiterate his statement above: Part One – A Time to See; Part Two - A Time to Choose; Part Three - A Time to Act.

Pope Francis’s belief that a crisis can be the catalyst for change, improvement and progress derives from three personal moments of crisis in his life

which changed him dramatically and for the better. He sees the recent crisis of the pandemic as an opportunity for society to *“go to the edges of existence if you want to see the world as it is..You have to make for the margins to find a new future.”* A glimpse of what that new future might look like was witnessed during the pandemic as whole neighbourhoods came out to applaud the selfless actions of the doctors, nurses, and caregivers. They were the antidote to the attitudes of indifference, self-absorption and self-preservation that dominated our society. These unsung heroes showed the way that unites, the way we need to rebuild - on service not self.

In Part Two - A Time to Choose Pope Francis discusses the need to discern, once we have 'seen'. This involves taking time to reflect, to pray, to lead us to dialogue, so *"we can read the sign of the times and opt for a way that does us all good."* Apart from the pandemic, we are facing dramatic changes in the environment, and we know that what was once considered the norm is no longer. It is impossible to return to that 'norm'. However, if we take the time to discern, to choose, this will enable us to *"navigate changing contexts and specific situations as we seek the truth."* A crucial part of this period of discernment is the 'synod experience', where every side has the opportunity to voice its opinions, where each side needs to listen to the other and walk side by side rather than confronting each other.

Following discernment comes action. The pandemic taught us, or reminded us that we share the same destination, that no one is saved alone." Part Three - A Time to Act focuses on the need to include those on the margins to bring about a change for the better in our world. Pope Francis writes, "To embrace the margins is to expand our horizons, for we see more clearly and broadly from the edges of society." This viewpoint will be challenged by the elite, yet received joyously and vociferously by the oppressed and marginalized, but Francis emphasises the need for humility and 'personal austerity', since what he proposes is *"a sober, humble lifestyle dedicated to service"* which is *"worth far more than thousands of followers on social networks."*

Let us Dream is a very short and readable book which every politician, world leader, and indeed anyone who cares about their fellowman should read, and digest these words of Pope Francis, ***"Our greatest power is not in the respect that others have for us, but the service we can offer others."***



My Memories of Christmas in the Philippines

By Jean Wilson-Bagshaw

Christmas in the Philippines is the same as other Christian countries in the world. There is gift giving, church going, and loads of food to share with as many family members as we fit in the house. When I was a child Christmas meant new clothes and shoes. Perhaps, because I was born from a very humble family, my recollections are somewhat limited to receiving gifts from my godparents and having few new clothes and shoes.



Let me give you a brief history of my country. The Philippines with 7,107 islands were conquered by the Spaniards 1565-1898. The Spaniards brought Christianity to the Philippines. The Spaniards in their religious zeal, destroyed the earlier historical records, culture and literature we had. Therefore, much of what is known about pre-Spanish days comes from the records of other countries which were in touch with the islands. Sometimes, I wish I knew more about our ancestors. Then in 1898 the Americans came to the rescue and we fought side by side with them against the Spaniards. In short, we have a lot of mixed influence from the Spaniards and the Americans.

Let me share some unique Philippine Christmas traditions. Formal Christmas celebrations begin on 16th December when we celebrate the coming of Christmas. We practice Catholic devotion by attending a pre-dawn Mass (4am-5am) or Simbang Gabi from 16-24th December. We take pride in completing this 9-days devotion. After the pre-dawn Mass people go for Christmas rice pancakes, or Bibingka, cooked in banana leaves over a charcoal stove topped with desiccated coconut.

Christmas serenading also starts on the 16th December. As a child, I learned

many Christmas songs in order to join my friends to sing along in front of our neighbours' houses. We would sing and expect to be given some coins or candies for wishing them a Happy Christmas. We were allowed to do the carolling from 6-7pm only.

We have unique Christmas decorations called "Parol" or lanterns made of bamboo sticks to form a star (left), covered with colourful paper and adorned with beautiful lights in and around it. We dress our streets and houses with these hanging bright lights of Christmas lanterns.

Traditional Christmas food is prepared on Christmas Eve. We love to adorn our dining table with Christmas hamon, big balls of gouda cheese or queso de bola, embotido or big filipino cylindrical log savoury meatballs wrapped tightly in foil, and all kinds of tropical fruits such as pineapple, young coconuts, sweet green and yellow mangoes.

On Christmas Eve we all attend the midnight Mass, also known as Misa de Gallo, and afterwards we have Noche Buena, the feast before Christmas Day. It is the meal eaten after hearing the midnight Mass to welcome Christmas Day.



On Christmas Day everyone relaxes at home and opens their houses for visiting relatives, friends and neighbours. Thinking about Christmas tradition, I miss my family back home.

May the spirit of Christmas bring you joy and kindness.



Yma o Hyd (Still Here)

By Anne Spooner

Caravan on Anglesey. Surname Parry.

Born in Bridgend.

What's the common denominator?

These are just some of the reasons why a lively, enthusiastic and disparate group of lovely people come together week after week to learn my mother tongue. Welsh. One of the

oldest languages in Europe. A minority language. Described by those who love it as 'the language of heaven.' Henry VIII started the great surge of laws, suppressions and scornful attitudes that have tried to kill it. Yet it survives - proudly, defiantly and beautifully.

Learning it is has its challenges. Someone I met recently asserted: "It's impossible to pronounce Welsh! You don't have enough vowels!" Actually, we have two more than English – w and y. The word 'pwyl' (who) has one consonant and two vowels. In English, why, try, tryst, rhythm and crypt don't have any vowels, so what's the problem?

The 'ch' could be difficult – but we can all say 'Loch Ness,' can't we? Hence 'chwech' (six) is not beyond us. The 'll' isn't easy. Words like Llanelli and Llangollen take some practice. Llandudno looks easier but English speakers get the 'dud' in the middle of the word wrong. It's pronounced 'did', so it sounds like 'Llandidno." Why not spell it with an 'i' then? Because in Welsh 'u' does not sound like 'uh' or 'oo' (thud, tofu) – it sounds like 'i' in 'lid' or sometimes 'ee' in 'see.' 'Canu' (to sing) is 'caneu' not 'canoo' as in 'canoe.' Hang on, 'canoe' doesn't have a double oo – it just sounds as if it does! 'Pump' (five) is pronounced 'pimp' and 'dull' (method) is pronounced 'dill' – with the double ll sound, not as in the herb 'dill'. I wonder why English words like still, fill, bill etc have double ll but don't own up to it in pronunciation?



Sentence syntax, along with words that sound like English words, can puzzle learners. ‘Brian is good’ (subject, verb, adjective) becomes ‘is Brian good’ (verb, subject, adjective) in Welsh. The Welsh for ‘is’ here is ‘mae’ which sounds just like the English word ‘my.’ ‘Mae Brian’ totally confuses my husband. He thinks I’m saying, ‘My Brian,’ as if I own him. He tried to learn Welsh but found it as difficult as I did to learn to play the piano. He gave up when he discovered that the Welsh word for ‘she’ is ‘hi’ – pronounced ‘hee.’ “He is a she?” was his incredulous cry in that particular lesson. (Who knew that Welsh was way ahead of its time?)

I should mention mutations – letters changing at the beginning of words to ease pronunciation. These aren’t exclusive to Welsh. English tends to put them in the middle of words – ‘knife’ becomes ‘knives’ in the plural.

Note that silent ‘k’ at the start of ‘knife.’ What about gnome, gnat, knit, wrath, or ‘c’ sounding like ‘s’ (cell, sell) or pronunciations like though, through, bough, cough? These are the trials of difference and individuality in any language. In Welsh Club we celebrate that individuality. We delight in the lyrical, poetic sounds of Welsh. We’re all ‘of a certain age’ and our brain muscles and memories might impede our progress a little, but boy do we have fun in dysgu Cymraeg!



Find out more about us at www.welshclubpreston.org

The Lure of Lindisfarne

By Dorothy Mapley



To pray for fine weather in anticipation of a visit to Lindisfarne, and for that prayer to be answered, is a blessing indeed. Such was the case when we drove across the causeway one morning from the Northumberland mainland to Holy Island, the nature of the tides enabling us to spend most of the day there. Access to Lindisfarne is only possible when the tide is out, and the warnings must be heeded!

On arrival at the imposing ruin of St. Aidan's Priory (above) we were greeted by the resident ginger tom known as Loki, who, naturally, owned the place. He followed us around quite happily and spent some time in our company before toddling away to find other interests (or perhaps to live up to his name as the Norse god of mischief and chaos). He would certainly have been oblivious to the historical happenings recorded here from the sixth century AD!

There is a saying, *"The visitor goes to the place. The place goes through the pilgrim."* Lindisfarne was an important centre of Celtic Christianity under Saints Aidan, Cuthbert, Eadfrith and Eadbeht (whose histories are dealt with more comprehensively in other works). Originally home to a monastery, then destroyed during the Viking invasion, it was subsequently re-established under the Norman Conquest. The name Holy Island was used in the eleventh century when its Latin name was recorded as 'Insula Sacra'.

St. Aidan came to Northumberland at the invitation of the Northumbrian King Oswald, who was bilingual and, therefore, understood the saint's Irish language. Aidan founded the Priory in 643 AD. Cuthbert was a monk, then Abbot, before becoming Bishop of Lindisfarne from 684-686 AD. Although dissolved in 1536 on the orders of King Henry VIII, the Priory has remained a place of devout pilgrimage. Owing to its close proximity to the Scottish border it was strongly fortified due to the ever-present threat of invasion.

It is hard to believe that this tiny place gave birth to one of England's greatest treasures known as the Lindisfarne Gospels, an illustrated Latin copy of the four New Testament books - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It now resides in London's British Library, though opinion is divided as to whether or not its home should be back in Northumberland.



Lindisfarne Castle (left), which is operated by the National Trust, looks quite small from the outside, but is deceptive, rather like the Tardis in 'Doctor Who', and incor-

porates a hotchpotch of different architectural styles. Well worth the walk up the steep hill! Its lovely walled garden was designed by Gertrude Jekyll and has been restored to its original glory by the National Trust.

The island is well-known for its production of mead, an alcoholic liqueur of fermented honey and water; when monks lived there in mediaeval days it was thought that if the soul was in God's keeping, the body must be fortified with mead. Although the monks are long gone, the mead flourishes in a secret recipe from the family which produces it and is sold at St. Aidan's Winery and throughout the UK. We'll drink to that!

Lindisfarne is special and one of the few places in the country where the sun can be seen rising and setting over water, and where the piping call of the oystercatcher pierces the stillness across the silvery light. Truly, an inspirational island.



St. Aidan

The Servant of God, Pedro Arrupe SJ

By Chris Pedley SJ



Pedro Arrupe was born in 1907, in Bilbao, and after starting medical studies he joined the Jesuits in 1927. In 1938, as a young priest, he was sent to Japan. For a time during the Second World War he was imprisoned by the Japanese but was released and was appointed Novice Master in the Novitiate on outskirts of Hiroshima. He was there on 6th August, 1945 when the atomic bomb fell on the city and he used his medical training to help the victims. He was appointed Provincial Superior of Japan and in 1965 was elected Superior General of

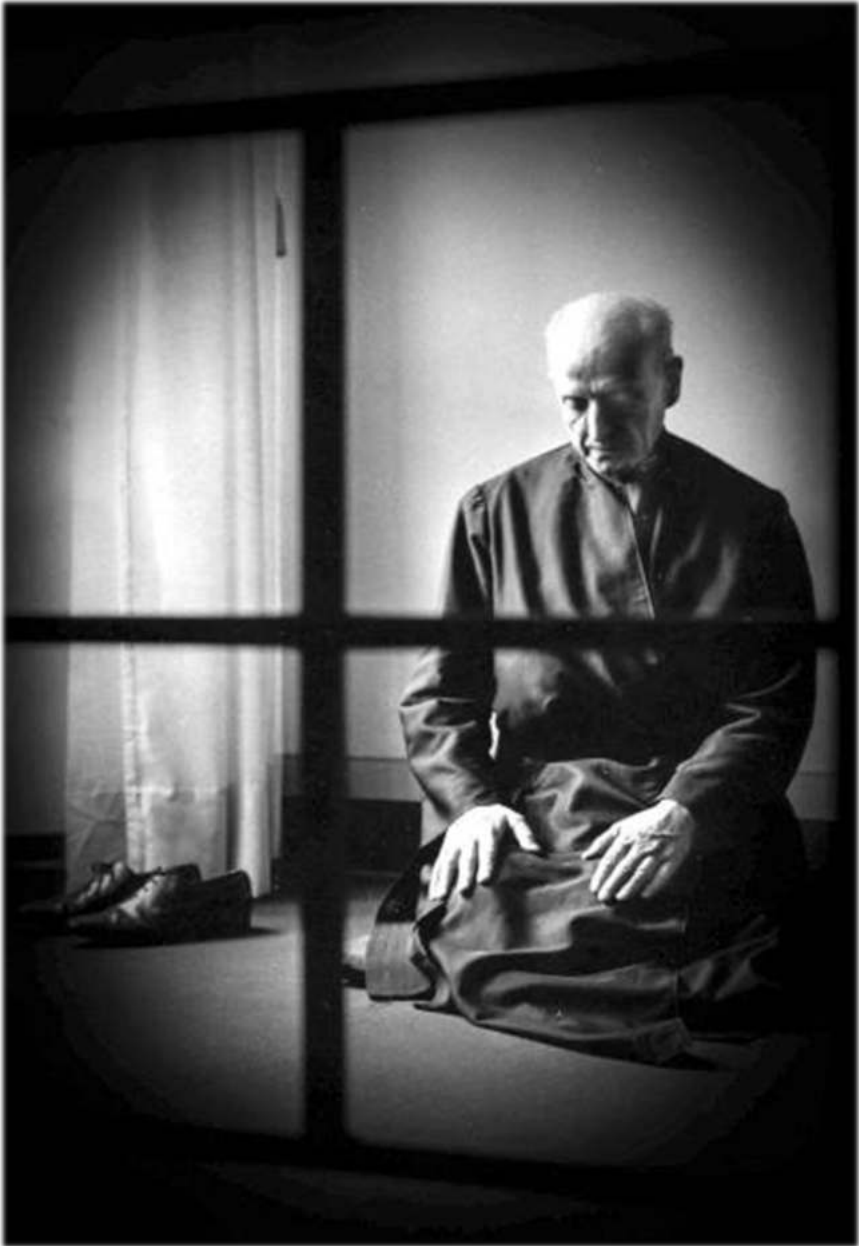
the Society of Jesus, with the task of implementing the results of the Second Vatican Council in the Society. As General he visited England in 1970 and preached in Farm Street Church in London.

This was a time of turmoil in society in general, in the Church and in the Society of Jesus. Pedro Arrupe had to deal with pressures from all sides as he sought to give direction to the Society. He was particularly concerned that those being educated by the Society should be “*men-and-women-for-others*; men and women who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ—for the God-human who lived and died for all the world; men and women who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbours; men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce” (*Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings*, Kevin Burke, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2004, p. 173). One particular initiative for which he will be remembered is his establishment of the Jesuit Refugee Service, which serves refugees around the world, including in this country (see pages 46-47).

In 1981 he suffered a debilitating stroke. Pedro Arrupe resigned when a new General Congregation was called in 1983. He died on 5th February, 1991.

Pedro Arrupe was a man of deep prayer, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, a man of great energy and infectious enthusiasm. A man characterised by a commitment to the service of the poor and of the Church. The cause for his canonisation was started in 2020, bringing with it the title “Servant of God”.

We are now invited to ask his intercession in our own “service of faith and promotion of justice” and to pray for the progress of his cause to beatification and canonisation.



Creating a Welcome for Refugees

By Eileen Cole

During Advent, we're reminded of the Holy Family's search for somewhere to stay for Jesus's birth, and their later flight into Egypt for safety. If it happened to the Son of God, it can happen to anyone. There are many examples in sacred scripture, including Noah and his family who were living happily on their farm when suddenly it was all destroyed. They escape with their lives in a boat but many people around them didn't. Another day, in another place, the father of a family working with a colleague in the fields sees him taken away to who knows where? And mothers of various families – some taken away, some are left. In the light of recent upheavals in the Holy Land we can imagine what the devastation must have been like about forty years after Jesus' death, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the surrounding areas.

There are so many people today who have to flee their homes for fear of violence, death, or starvation, leaving behind most of what they have; sometimes even partners and children, under threat of imprisonment, or torture, or death. They become refugees. If they survive they may never see their homes again. It's hard to imagine what it must be like to leave your home with just what you can take with you and set out on a journey to what you hope might be peace and safety.

JRS Drop In, London



Here in the UK, alongside our work in immigration detention, the Jesuit Refugee Service advocates, serves, and accompanies refugees who are “Appeals Rights Exhausted”. Many of our refugee friends are people who are languishing in limbo as they await a decision on their asylum case. They are banned from working, opening a UK bank account, and unable to access support or secure accommodation, which is especially hard with the winter conditions. With rising prices, our refugee friends often struggle to afford food, so even a decent, hot meal is beyond reach.



Amongst the many services provided by JRS UK is a social drop-in space where refugee

friends can escape some of these challenges, coming together for warmth, hot food, and friendship. It is a space where people can build connections by laughing over shared jokes, supporting each other through mutual struggles, and learning new skills.

By the end of each drop-in, new friendships have always formed, helping people to find hope. As our refugee friend, Getachew, says: “The food is important and delicious, but I would never come just for food. I come for the community. We’re a big family.” The social drop-in is a site of encounter and respect; a great contrast to the world outside, a hostile environment which strips away their agency and sense of self. It is a place where people can relax and be their whole selves and break bread together.

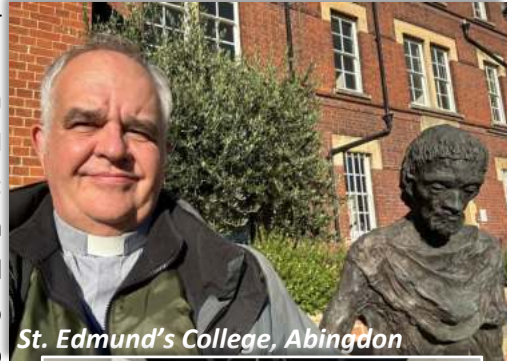
To donate please visit: [Donate to JRS UK | JRS UK](#)

Eileen Cole is the Senior Communications and Development Officer for the Jesuit Refugee Service UK which is based at Hurtado Jesuit Centre, 2 Chandler Street, London, E1W 2QT.

Autumn in Cambridge

By Paul Fletcher SJ

Having left St. Wilfrid's, Preston, on 6th October I was all set ready to depart for my sabbatical with over two months booked into the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI) in Jerusalem. Needless to say, I was really looking forward to the opportunity of experiencing the Holy Land and visiting numerous biblical sites. The next day, 7th October, the terrible Hamas attack totally destroyed all prospects of visiting Israel. I was horrified by the Hamas attack on Israel, their slaughter of innocent people, and their seizure of so many hostages. Stunned. Shocked. Devastated. The subsequent Israeli assault on Gaza did not help matters. My flights were cancelled and the whole sabbatical I had carefully planned and arranged with the PBI had to be abandoned. As I hadn't a plan B, I defaulted to plan C; with the kind generosity of the Dean of St. Edmund's College, I extended my initial ten days in Cambridge to over ten weeks. This enabled me to reflect on the past few years in Preston; do some reading and visit several places of interest which I wouldn't normally have done. Walsingham Priory in autumn has a very different feel from when I go



St. Edmund's College, Abingdon & Chapel



Canterbury Cathedral

annually in May. Walsingham Priory runs Day trips to other places of interest such as Huntingdon, Ely, Norwich and Canterbury which gave me some historic, spiritual input.

Most days within Cambridge I walked the “Backs” along the River Cam, and other days walked Jesus Green (right) which led me to the extensive, flat Midsummer Common (below left) and the array of rowing boathouses along the River Cam (below centre). I’m grateful for this space and time to reconnect and recharge. It’s given me scope to reflect on things and ponder how



best to adapt or adjust for the future. For example, I am trying to draft some suggestions/guidance for the inclusion of Deaf, deafened and Hard of Hearing



people in our liturgies and pastoral services within the Church. Where there is a PA system with associated Induction

Loop for hearing aid users, these need to be switched on and used! We’ve been blessed at St. Wilfrid’s to have the loop extended to cover

the sanctuary which means hearing aid users at the altar (whether priest/ deacon or server) can now clearly hear the Readings and Prayers while ministering on the sanctuary. This is NOT the case in every church as I’m rediscovering! There’s a great deal of ignorance and lack of consideration for others still prevalent in our society. Not everyone appreciates the need for Sign Language and clearer speech or proper enunciation of the Word of God during Mass. Hair swings in the way for lip-readers, especially facial hair (moustaches) obscuring clear visibility of the reader’s lips! The lack of eye-contact often means its not clear one is being addressed or spoken to. So I’m once again grateful to the many different parishioners who made efforts to include me during my six year service at St. Wilfrid’s; especially those few that gallantly tried to respond at Mass in Sign Language. To all of you - a million thanks!

Life Lessons from Bangalore Two Canine Tales



Chase was a special animal, much loved, with fans in Canada, Australia, Dubai, England and in India. Chase wasn't really our dog. He belonged to another family in the neighbourhood but Chase preferred to come to us when he was hungry, when he was tired and in need of a clean space to sleep.

Of course all this came at some cost. Because he was not particular about which dogs he fraternised with, he would sometimes return with some unwanted guests on his body. The house would need to be fumigated and visits to the Vet were both regular and expensive.

Chase was extremely strong and athletic. Even as a young dog he could leap from ground level to the top of the boundary wall, just so that he could have a better view of his surroundings. We have seen how he fought back from numerous injuries and afflictions, bouncing back even stronger.



He was feared by most of the residents who flew by on motorbikes. He would take off in hot pursuit only to see them vanish round the corner. There was one strange relationship between him and a local Hindu poojary (priest) who feared Chase so much that he would do a ninety degree turn if he spotted Chase sitting calmly near our front gate. To delivery boys our house was known as the one with 'that' dog, saving us the trouble of giving delivery companies directions to our home.

Chase had his own red collar and lead. When we took him on walks through the neighbourhood there would be regular altercations with

both street and domestic dogs in that particular area. Similarly, when other dogs came into our street, from behind the safety of the locked gate, Chase would voice his disapproval at their presence in what he felt was his territory.

Chase was often in trouble with my wife, not only because sometimes he arrived in serious need of a wash, he would leave his paw prints where he shouldn't and, he loved making a hole near the hem of her lace curtains and sticking his head through it, wearing the curtain like a scarf or cape (right).

The 25th September was the day when Chase moved on from this world.

He is greatly missed by us and by all his fan club who loved hearing of his exploits with photographs to accompany each message.



Chai By Adrian Stevens



Hutchins Road, in the heart of Bangalore, is where Chai's story began. We were woken up one morning at dawn by the loud wailing of a dog in great distress. My youngest daughter Abigail, a passionate lover of all dogs, went out to investigate and returned with a young dog in her arms, probably abandoned by her previous owners at a tender age of, what we estimate to have been, four months.

Chai's story began on the unforgiving street, where survival was a daily battle against hunger, loneliness, and the harsh elements of an indifferent world but fate had other plans for Chai. In the embrace of our household, Chai found not just shelter but a sanctuary for her wounded soul. She soon embarked on the process of learning to trust, to feel safe, and to embrace the love that surrounded her.

As the seasons changed, so did Chai's life, and soon she became the matriarch of a burgeoning canine family. The unexpected arrival of five precious pups (right) on a July day marked a pivotal moment in Chai's journey. Handsome Max, another rescued pet being brought up by our neighbours, is the main suspect in this change of Chai's life.



Chai, once a lone survivor, now became the guardian of new life. It was a test of her newfound resilience and an affirmation of her maternal instincts. Chai's transformation mirrored a spiritual awakening—an allegory of how love, when generously bestowed, can heal wounds and breathe life into the most desolate of hearts. The birthing process, though challenging, became a sacred dance of creation, a reminder of the miracle of life that transcends species. Chai's maternal dedication revealed a profound truth—that motherhood, whether in the human or animal realm, is a sacred calling, a responsibility to nurture and protect the vulnerable. Abigail played midwife assisted by me, while my wife, Maryanne, watched on nervously as this amazing drama unfolded before us.

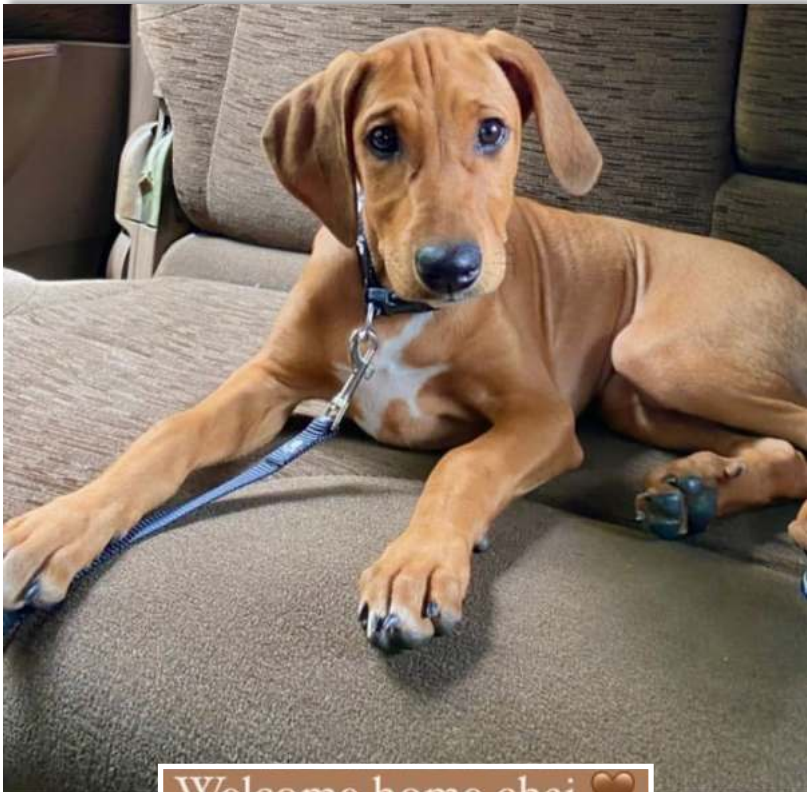
As Chai and her pups thrived under the care of their newfound family, a deeper spiritual resonance emerged. The unconditional love between Chai and her human companions became a living testament to the divine love that permeates all creation. It echoed the Christian tenet of compassion and stewardship, emphasising the responsibility to care for and cherish every living being.

The pups soon acquired names, and new homes, Cabo, Maisie, Kobe (renamed Ossie), Postie (renamed Lilo) and Bailey. As we prepared for the pups to leave home, there was a palpable sense of gratitude. It was as if the divine presence lingered, whispering words of appreciation for the love shared, the lessons learned, and the lives touched. Bailey was adopted by one of Maryanne's colleagues who later discovered that their son had a severe allergic reaction to dogs, confirmed by the Doctors, and so, sadly, Bailey (right) had to be returned to us.



Even though the blue-eyed and handsome Bailey did the social media rounds with a ton of admirers, there were no takers. It appears that Providence would have him stay back with us and I am glad it has worked that way, as Bailey is the timid one and seems most comfortable in the protective care of his mother and the Stevens family.

Chai's journey, though rooted in the earthly realm, carried a spiritual weight—an invitation for introspection and a reminder that love, in all its forms, is a sacred force that binds us together. As Chai basks in the warmth of a loving home, her journey serves as a testament to the transformative power of compassion, the resilience of the spirit, and the ever-present grace that guides us on our earthly pilgrimage.



citizensuk

You may recall the relationship between Preston Citizens and Catholic participation began in 2021 promoted locally by Fr. Peter Randall SJ, then Parish Priest at St. Wilfrid's. It originated from the 25th January 2021 conference on Community Organising & Catholic Social Action, led by Pope Francis's 'Fratelli Tutti.'

*St. Wilfrid's is looking to reinvigorate the connection of the Ignatian charism of serving Christ in the world through our parish, the community of our city of Preston and beyond. So our local **CitizensUK Community Organiser, Davinia Jackson**, invites you to participate...*

I am pleased to be able to share with you that we are now working towards building a county wide Chapter of Lancashire Citizens, of which St. Wilfrid's parish will continue to be a founding and influential partner. This development gives us the opportunity to build a stronger, broad-based organisation and bring a more diverse range of institutions together to work for social justice and the common good. It also aligns with the recent announcement of Lancashire Devolution and will give us the opportunity to ensure that local citizens from across the county are involved in local democracy and that decisions are driven from the community upwards.

A good example of this is the recent development of the Preston Living Wage Action Team. In 2021, Cllr. Matthew Brown agreed to work with CUK

Preston 
citizens

to become a living wage city. After a slow start we now have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of locally accredited employers, including the parish of St. Wilfrid's, who meet monthly and are developing a plan to increase the amount of accredited living wage employers in the city. This has the potential to uplift many local people's income and put money back in their pockets!

Looking forward to 2024, we want to strengthen the relationship between the parish, the members of the congregation and Citizens UK. I will be in the Parish Centre from 11am (after the 10:15 Mass) on Sunday, 14th January as we would like to hear about how we can consider ways in which we can focus on social justice together. If you have previously been involved in the Faith and Justice Group and would like to help shape its future, please do come along.



We are holding an online session on 24th January at 11am which will highlight the relationship between Catholic Social Teaching and Community Organising, with Guest Speakers from other areas in the UK. It will be a fantastic opportunity to learn more about what we do and to ask the questions you want answering! I will send the link over in the New Year and you would all be welcome to join and please do extend this invite to other contacts in your networks at local catholic parishes and schools. Keep an eye on the St. Wilfrid's weekly newsletter for this link.

Please do feel free to contact me if you want to have a chat and find out more about any of the above – my number is 07961291687 or I can be emailed at Davinia.jackson@citizensuk.org

Finally, I would just like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a new year full of peace, happiness, and Social Justice!

In Solidarity, Davinia,

Community Organiser for Citizens UK in Lancashire.

To Create from Nothing

By Chris Lloyd

During WWII the British fleet would anchor in Scapa Flow, Orkney Island, off the north coast of Scotland. To prevent the German U boats reaching the fleet ships were deliberately sunk. These became known as blockships.



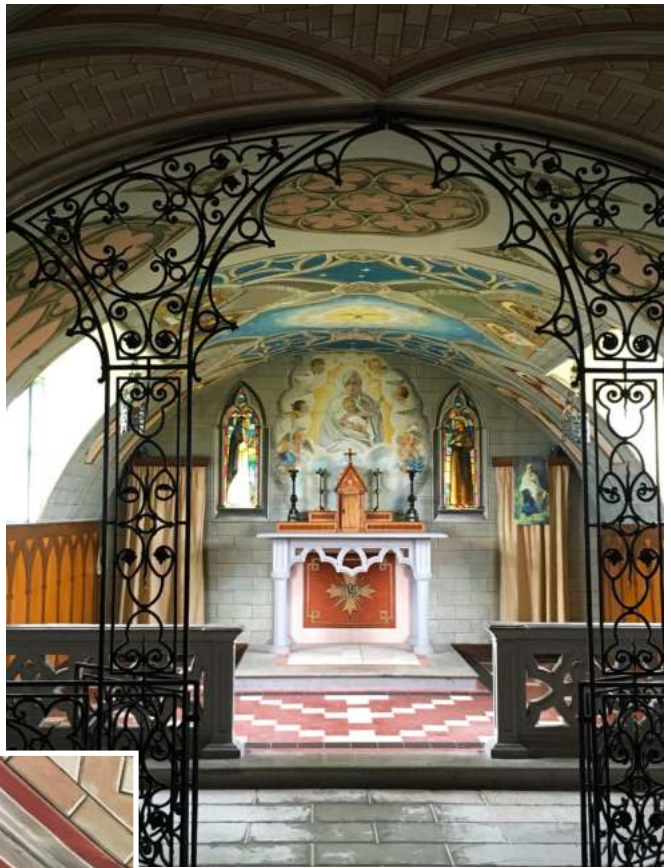
Italian POWs were taken to Orkney to help build the Churchill Barriers, another defensive structure to keep out the U boats. Today the Barriers form a 1.4 mile causeway linking the main island with South Ronaldsway via Burray, Lambs Holm and Glimps

Holm. I first heard about the Churchill Barriers from stories regaled by Fr. Frank Hull SJ RIP when he was posted there with the marines in the latter part of WWII.

During their time on Orkney the Italian POWs had some skilled and highly talented men amongst them, namely Signor Domenico Chiochetti and Signor Giuseppe Palumbi, who got permission to join two Nissan huts to



build a chapel. Domenico was an artist and from memory recreated scenes inside the chapel purely with paint and brush, a magnificent trompe l'oeil. The work is exceptional. What looks like tiles and stonework is Domenico's painting (below left). Giuseppe created the iron work (right). They used whatever materials were to hand, including bully beef tins turned into lanterns. They created



everything both in the interior and on the exterior. Signor Giovanni Pennisi fashioned the head of Christ from concrete (below) with the expression associated with the painting of *Ecce Homo* (Behold the man) after the words of Pontius Pilate.





The altar crafted from scraps of wood. The stained glass & wall are created only with paint.

The original bell in the tower was cardboard for the purposes of the first photograph but the bell now in situ was taken from one of the blockships described earlier.

It was a distinctly bleak, blustery and chilly day in August when I visited but entering the chapel was transporting. In spite of the gloomy interior light, being enveloped by the skill of Domenico was one of those eye widening experiences we occasionally encounter in life. I left with reluctance to move on but hope I may one day visit again, although the whole chapel is becoming increasingly fragile with the passing of time.

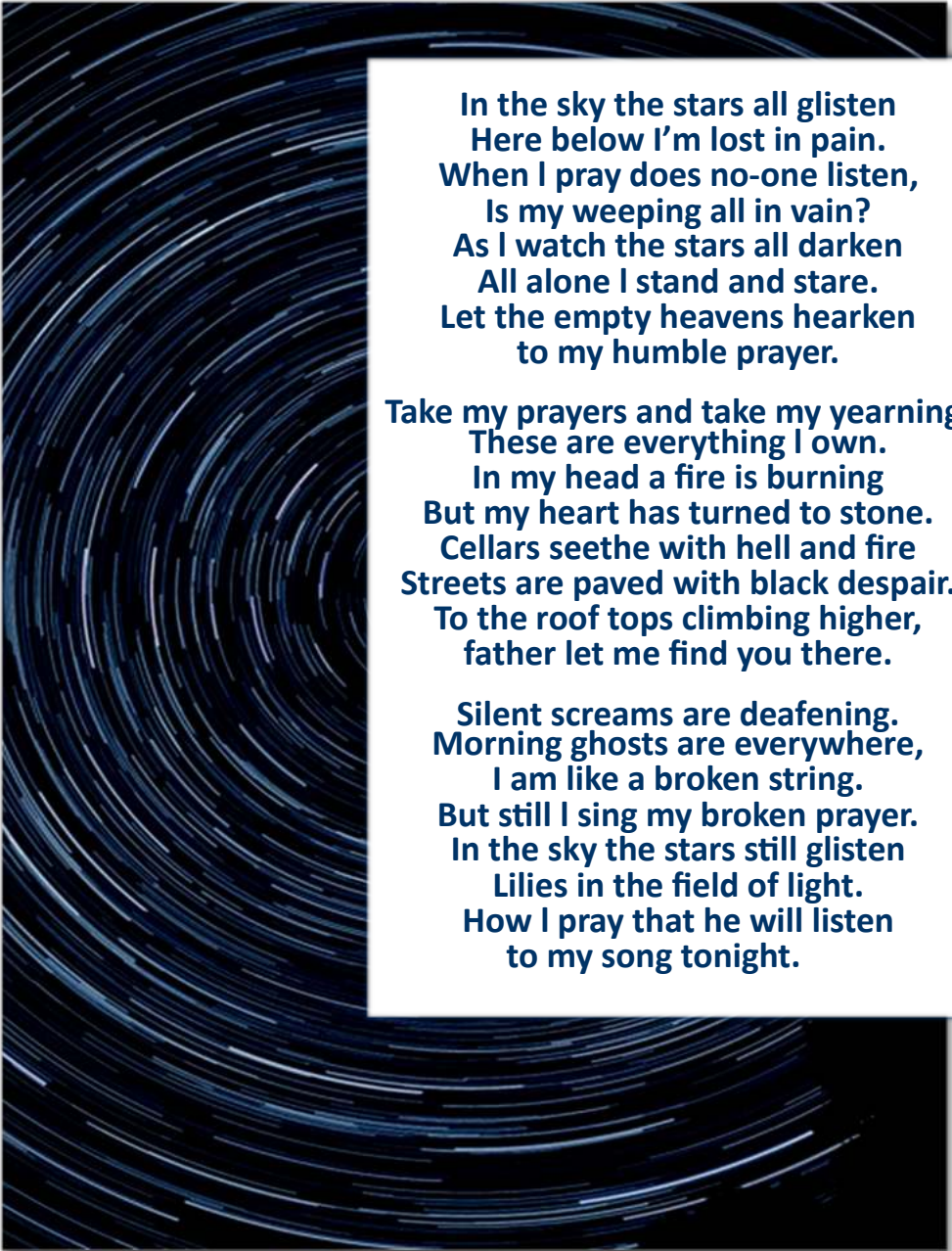
It has undergone some restoration work twice since it was originally completed. Sadly, today, Domenico is no longer alive to be invited back to repair any degradation to his artwork.

More scenes from the barrel ceiling and walls painted by Domenico Chiochetti who stayed on at the end of the war, when the other POWs had left to return home, so he could finish the last remaining pieces of the Chapel.



A Prayer

This beautiful poem is a prayer, written by a 12-year-old Jewish boy, Avraham Sutzkever. It was found in a Polish Ghetto after the war. It could equally be the yearnings of anyone in the world today who is struggling with physical or mental captivity.



In the sky the stars all glisten
Here below I'm lost in pain.
When I pray does no-one listen,
Is my weeping all in vain?
As I watch the stars all darken
All alone I stand and stare.
Let the empty heavens hearken
to my humble prayer.

Take my prayers and take my yearning,
These are everything I own.
In my head a fire is burning
But my heart has turned to stone.
Cellars seethe with hell and fire
Streets are paved with black despair.
To the roof tops climbing higher,
father let me find you there.

Silent screams are deafening.
Morning ghosts are everywhere,
I am like a broken string.
But still I sing my broken prayer.
In the sky the stars still glisten
Lilies in the field of light.
How I pray that he will listen
to my song tonight.

Meditation



Will not
God himself
grant my hope?



The Sight of the Star Filled Them with Delight

By Hugh Duffy SJ

One of my favourite pictures in the National Gallery is *The Adoration of the Kings* by Jan Gossaert (right), painted in the first years of the sixteenth century. Little Jesus, with not a stitch on, sits on his mother's lap, while one of the Magi, like his two companions gorgeously attired, kneels in front of him with hands ready to receive a gold coin from a chalice, though it looks suspiciously like a reference to the gift of Jesus in Holy Communion. This could be interpreted as Jesus, who became poor for our sake, being the giver of the only riches that matter and that those riches can be given only to those who have the humility to seek them.

Of course there are hundreds of depictions of this scene of the Epiphany, and not only in art but also in poetic meditations such as T.S. Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi*. Saint Matthew's brief account can open up to us rich seams for contemplating the Christian mystery. One possible avenue is to compare the different reactions to the Christ child of three different sets of individuals, namely, King Herod, the chief priests and scribes, and the wise men.

Look at Herod. He reigned from 37 to 4 B.C. Never particularly pleasant, he became even worse in his final years, terrified of losing his grip on power and suspicious of anyone who might be a rival, so much so that he murdered his wife, his brother and his three sons. History, even recent history, is littered with such tyrants. For such as these, Christ is a threat and must be destroyed, even if pious religious noises have to be made in the attempt.

What about the priests and scribes? They seem to be indifferent to Christ. They have looked up their books to find where and when he is expected and then thought no more of it. No doubt today they would have googled him, found out a few facts and then passed on to the next mildly interesting thing.

And then the wise men. A long, uncomfortable journey, seeking the truth, knowing their need of something greater than themselves, something to live the rest of their lives for. And finding it in the manger with his mother Mary. Opening their treasures and offering him everything, putting all their gifts,



talents and possessions at his disposal. And returning home by a different route, because all has now been made new.

Hostility, indifference, adoration. Three possible reactions to Christ.

Which do you want yours to be?

The New Year

By Philip McParland

Most of us are usually glad of an opportunity to make a fresh start, to have a new beginning. The reason for this is not just because we are aware of our past mistakes and our failures. It is also, I believe, because we have hopes that have not been realised and dreams that have not been fulfilled.

Each year on the first of January we are offered an opportunity to make a fresh start. New Year's Day invites us to dream, to imagine a better life for ourselves and for our world. The beginning of a new year is a good time to get in touch with our deeper desires, to ask ourselves the question: What is it we really long for?

Someone has said that there is a difference between what we long for and what we settle for. On the threshold of a new year we can focus on the things we long for, rather than on the things we settle for. We may need a bit of reflective time to identify what it is we really long for. We may also need help to name our longings. Some of these suggestions might be useful:

We long to be able to accept ourselves as we are.

We long for reconciliation with members of our families.

We long for someone who will love us unconditionally.

We long to be able to make a difference in the world.

We long to know God in a personal way.

We long for the healing of a hurt we experienced in the past.

What we really long for may or may not be on this list. If it is, let's own it; if it is not, let's try to name what ours might be. If we know what it is we really want we will have a clear focus as we set out on the year ahead.

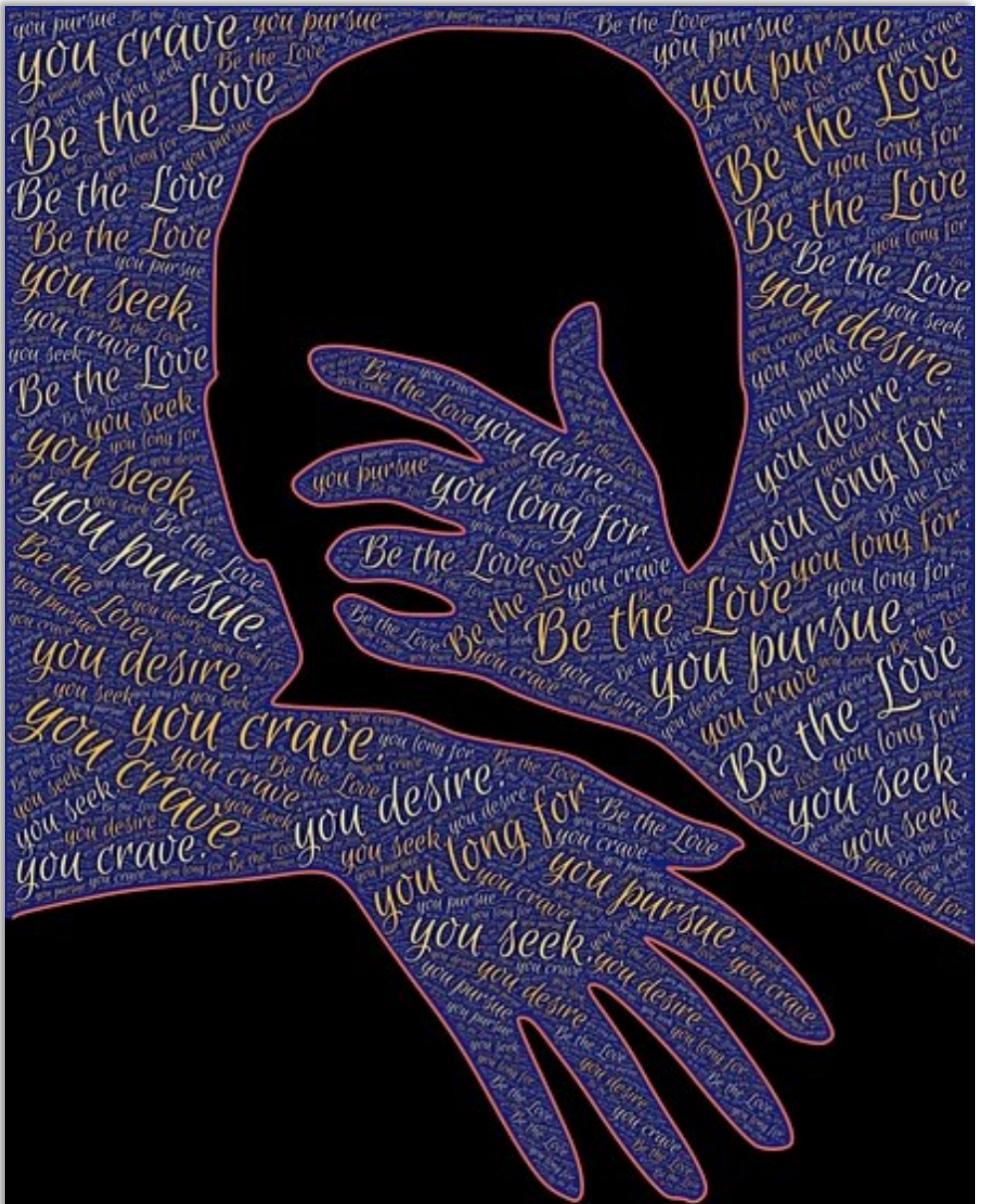
Jesus, whose birth we are celebrating at this time, came among us to help us name and fulfil our deeper longings. He knows what is in our hearts and what is good for us. He wants what we want. As we enter another year let us entrust to Him what it is we most need in our lives.

May the Lord bless and keep you.

**May He let His face shine on you
and be gracious to you.**


May He look upon you with kindness


and give you His peace. *Aaron's Blessing*





Be the love you long for...

Journey planner

From
Preston (Lancs) 

To
Station 

When
Leaving now  

Journeys are at the very heart and essence of Christmas. From the journey over difficult terrain and beset with dangers, which Mary and Joseph made all those years ago, to modern day journeys spanning countries and continents. No less important are the journeys we embark upon when we pick up a photo album, or chat about loved ones who are no longer with us.

Unsurprisingly, the theme of journeys features in festive songs too: *2000 Miles* by The Pretenders and Chris Rea's *Driving Home for Christmas* to name but two.

Whether short or long, may all of our journeys this Christmas be safe and blessed with the essence of the season.