

The Catholic VOICE of Lancaster

The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 236 + February 2012

Inside this month:

p5 Fresher's Week, Rag Week, Holy Week?

p13 Old Boys Reunion

p15 Come, Come, Come to the Manger



- Bishop Campbell, the Challenge of the New Evangelisation

2012 and Beyond

Photo: courtesy of Bishop's Blog

Bishop Campbell would really appreciate your written reflections - and positive suggestions - on the tasks which face us in 2012 and beyond.

In his New Year Pastoral Letter Bishop Campbell, looked at a number of hard questions facing the Church in 2012 concerning the sustainability of our parishes and schools and our ability to actively engage with the Pope calls the 'New Evangelisation'.

Bishop Campbell asks the people of the diocese 'to join me in grappling with the two-fold task of planning how our diocese's parishes and schools adapt to these new circumstances and secondly to make ourselves ready to launch into the challenge of the New Evangelisation.'

He goes on to say that 'The Church only exists to evangelise - that means buildings, churches, parishes, schools and colleges are only valuable insofar as they help the Church in that mission of salvation!! How can we as parishes, schools and colleges - as the Diocese - support this sorely needed New Evangelisation?'

Bishop Campbell says that 'in 2012 we will need to address some demanding questions that will grow larger the longer we put them off':

- Is it right or sustainable to expect our Mass-going population of 21,000 to support our schools and colleges in which often the majority of pupils, and sometimes teachers, are not practising Catholics?
- Is it time for us to admit that we can no longer maintain schools that are Catholic in name only?

- Faced with fewer priests and smaller congregations where should our parishes and schools of the future be located?
- What will they look like? and Where should we consolidate and merge with others?

Aware that Pope Benedict has called us to celebrate from October 2012 a special Year of Faith to help us all to appreciate the precious gift of faith, to deepen our relationship with God and strengthen our commitment to sharing that faith with others Bishop Campbell observes 'All of us know someone - a friend, family member, classmate, work colleague or neighbour - who used to be a practising Catholic, but isn't any more. For some who initially heard the incredible proclamation of Christ alive in the Church, the message has become stale. The promises of the Gospel seem empty or unconnected to their busy lives today. So, what is our response? Surely our love and concern for them means that they should be the primary object of our missionary or evangelising efforts, our energy and resources.'

At times, we are tempted to say, 'Forget about all this planning for the future. Let's just keep things as they are and let nature take its course.' That is certainly very tempting because it's comfortable and undemanding, but Our Lord does not call us to be comfortable and concerned about our own self-interest, He calls us to live and love as He lives and loves - to the point of sacrifice!

Write to him at:

The Bishop's Office
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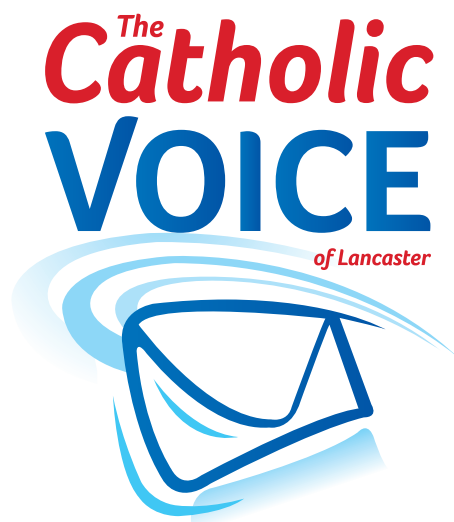
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EDITORIAL

Bishop Campbell's New Year Pastoral Letter asks the Catholics of the Diocese of Lancaster to be realistic and hopeful about the financial, pastoral and manpower challenges facing us over the coming year and beyond.

In response to the Bishop's request for written reflections on the questions he raises here are a few initial thoughts and suggestion from the *Catholic Voice of Lancaster*. His Lordship, Our Bishop sets the challenges facing us within the wider context of the profound spiritual and sociological changes our society has been undergoing since the Second World War:

'We are living through a time of great transition for the Church in which Christianity changes from a religion adhered to by the majority out of social convention to once again being a way of discipleship deliberately chosen by some, but not all; chosen by the faithful out of conviction.'

This transition from adherence to Christianity from social convention to conviction is the key to answering the Bishop's two questions about Catholic schools and how to best engage with the Year of Faith. Bishop Campbell's question about Catholic schools and parishes takes us to the heart of the problems associated with this shift from social convention to conviction:

'Is it right or sustainable to expect our Mass-going population of 21,000 to support our schools and colleges in which often the majority of pupils, and sometimes teachers, are not practising Catholics? Is it time for us to admit that we can no longer maintain schools that are Catholic in name only?'

Bishop Campbell's question about parishes is equally challenging:

'Faced with fewer priests and smaller congregations where should our parishes and schools of the future be located? What will they look like? Where should we consolidate and merge others?'

The stark fact is that of the Diocese's 100,000 Catholics, around 80,000 are lapsed from the practice of the faith. To be honest, the word 'lapsed' is inaccurate for many because it suggests that these 80,000 once practised the faith though regular participation in the Mass. The truth is that the majority of Catholics come from families who for generations have never practised the faith and only have their children baptised, confirmed and make their First Holy Communion out of social convention.

A useful model to understand this is the 'cycle of deprivation' that describes how generations of unemployment lead families into intense poverty and an inability to work entrenched and enabled by the welfare state. In a similar way, the existence of 5 million lapsed Catholics in England and Wales, with only 880,000 practising, reflects the dynamics of a 'cycle of faith deprivation' in which there is a generational impoverishment about the faith and a disinclination to practice entrenched and enabled by our parish sacramental system and Catholic schools.

Simply put, we have created a sacramental and educational system that has created a startling 5 million Catholics who have never practised the faith, never had a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

BY THE WAY...

Life's ever changing scene

Last November a Sister from my Order, the Sisters of Charity, was murdered in India. Why? Because she was striving to get compensation for the local people who were being forced off their land by the coal mine owners. Elsewhere in the world there are signs of green shoots as people seek the Faith. For example home grown religious in Sri Lanka are now spreading the faith in the Philippines.

As I now look out of my second floor window of the Stella Matutina rest home in Ansdell I am constantly reminded of the ever changing scene. From a lifeless tide glistening in the sunshine of a clear blue sky to gale force winds whipping up the waves – no two days are the same, the seasons and nature combining to provide us with the beauty of creation, a reminder

The real problem is that this huge group of nominal Catholics have the social convention of presenting their children for the sacraments but with no intention of raising them in the faith because they themselves have no experience of practising the Faith. Furthermore, baptismal certificates are highly sought after by many as passports into the Catholic schools system. The reality in Lancaster Diocesan schools is: you don't need any baptism because you get in anyway if you want to!

Canon Law states that children should only receive the sacrament of baptism if there is 'a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the catholic religion' (Can. 868).

Maybe when non-practising families present their children for baptism the Diocese's clergy think there is a well-founded hope that the children will be brought up in the catholic religion because they have made contact with the parish and will attend Catholic schools in the future.

The fact that there are now 80,000 non-practising Catholics in the diocese suggests that this hope in the majority of cases was not well founded.

The truth of the matter is, as Bishop O'Donoghue put it so well in *Fit for Mission? Schools*, tens of thousands of children leave the Catholic school system just as lapsed as they were when they entered our schools.

Two of the questions we need to ask of the Diocese's clergy and school Heads and Heads of RE is how many children, and their families, experience conversion to the Faith and are engaged with parish life? How many children from practising families lose their faith while attending their schools?

The *Catholic Voice of Lancaster* has learnt that it is not uncommon for children from practising families to be bullied by other children because they are a such a tiny minority in schools in which the majority of children, and teachers, are either non-practising or non Catholic.

Furthermore, it is common experience that young people are so scarce in the parishes that those who do attend can feel out of place and alien, surrounded as they are by mainly grandparents.

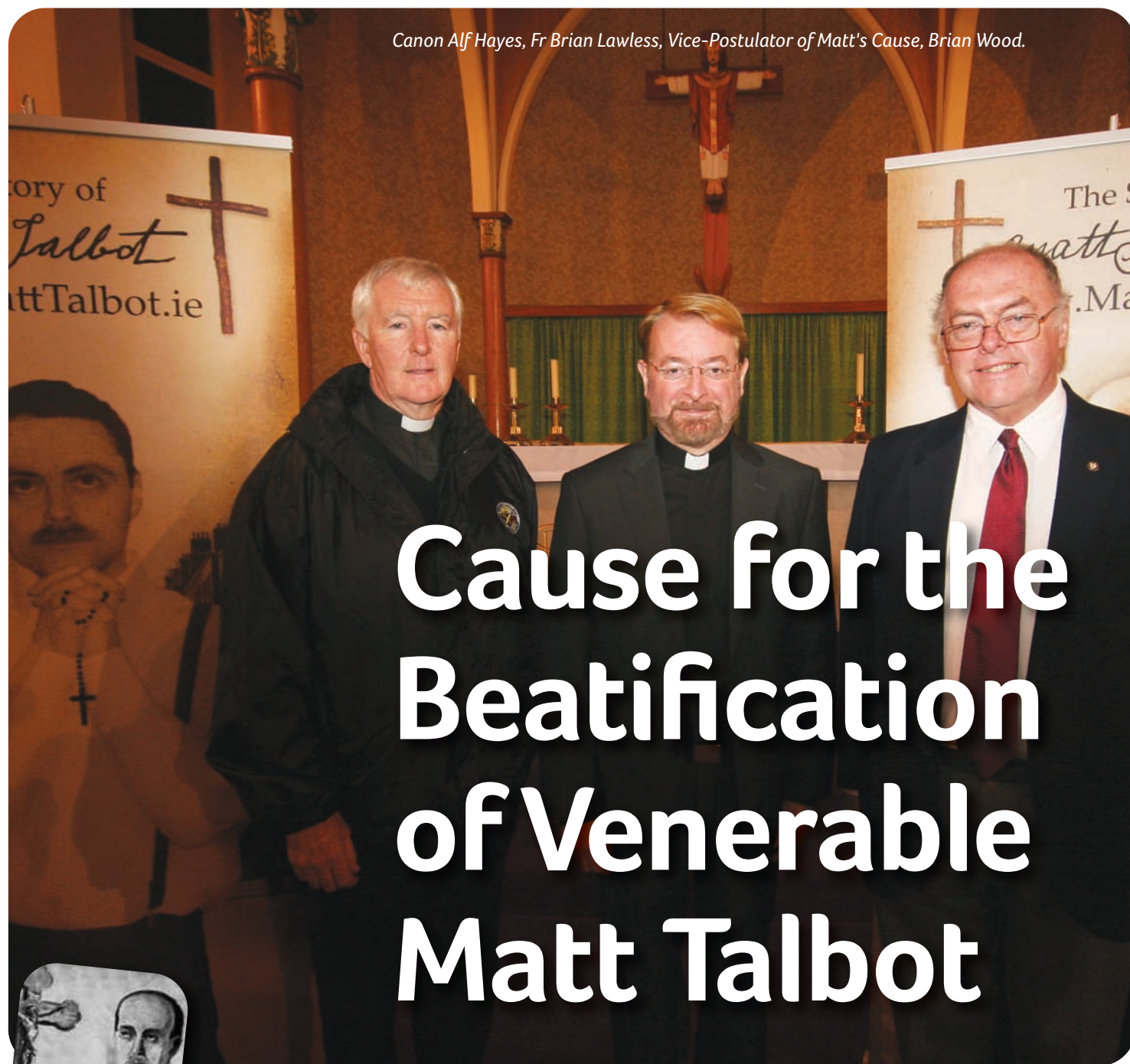
Bishop Campbell is right to ask the question is it just and honest that 21,000 practising Catholics support and maintain schools that are Catholic in name only. If these schools are not powerhouses of the Faith, building up those children who have faith, and encouraging conversion in the rest, what is the point of them? If young people are not an essential part of parish life, what will be the future of the parish?

It's time that the Catholic project of mass education rediscovered its vitality by insisting on a vibrant Catholic ethos in our schools, based on the Four Pillars of the Faith – Creed, Liturgy, Moral Life and prayer, while the connection with the local parishes becomes ever more strengthened, not gradually growing apart. If this doesn't soon show signs of taking hold in our schools maybe it's time that the Catholic project of mass education comes to an end.

to us that God's hand is there constantly whether things are going well or when things are a bit more turbulent. If we truly put our faith in God he will surely guide us. *Sister Mary, Sisters of Charity*



Canon Alf Hayes, Fr Brian Lawless, Vice-Postulator of Matt's Cause, Brian Wood.



Cause for the Beatification of Venerable Matt Talbot

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A very special event took place on Tuesday the 25th of October at St Wulstan's, Fleetwood when Fr Brian Lawless, Vice Postulator for the Cause for the Beatification of Venerable Matt Talbot, came from Dublin to give an illustrated talk about him.

Matt Talbot was from a poor family in Dublin who became an alcoholic by the time he was fourteen years old. When he was twenty eight years old, he experienced a conversion, became teetotal and went on for the rest of his sixty nine years to scale the heights of sanctity by his penances, his asceticism and his complete devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Fr Lawless detailed Matt's life in Dublin and placed in context the spiritual practices carried out by Matt such as his fasting, his prayer and the wearing of penitential chains.


Of special interest was the collection of Matt's relics which Fr Lawless had brought with him, including one of Matt's chains, his rosary, his wooden pillow, his bible, part of his Franciscan Third Order Habit and various documents, including his membership certificate of the Pioneer Association.

With Fr Lawless were Michael and Noeleen Murphy from Drogheda, who accompany him to all his presentations. Michael gave a very moving testimony of his own conversion from alcohol abuse with Matt's help and Noeleen gave a beautiful performance of a song she wrote, inspired by Matt's life and sanctity.

The evening concluded with tea and cakes and the many questions which people had for Fr Brian.

Everyone who attended had a wonderful experience and gained a new knowledge of a man who, God willing, will one day be named a Saint, particularly appropriate for these days when alcohol is so badly abused by some sections of society. *Venerable Matt Talbot, pray for us.*

Brian Wood

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Statue of Matt Talbot in Dublin.

**Being a Young Catholic Today**

Michael Rogerson, 20, Lancaster

Green Hero!

I was invited to go to Lourdes through my local church in 2009 as a Youth helper. This has given me the opportunity to meet other Catholics of my age group who I have made friends with. I have felt isolated at times and found this has given me more confidence. My faith has grown more through meeting young Catholics and I hope to continue in the future.

Michael has been involved in all sorts of things with the Youth Service and even managed to muscle his way to the front of the million-strong crowd in Madrid to be close to the Pope at World Youth Day. His determination has undoubtedly led to him being named 'Volunteer of the Year' by the British Trust for Conservation, the UK's leading practical conservation charity.

The BTCV website explains how Michael has been deaf since birth and has made a 52 mile round-trip to undertake environmental volunteering, developing a new social life, practical skills and new pastimes and passions. He's also now learning to speak after having a cochlear implant and one day hopes to set up a dry stone walling business. BTCV Senior Project Officer Rachel Miller, who nominated Michael, said: "Michael's deafness led him to become isolated and depressed, and made it difficult for him to make friends. Months of unemployment and constant job hunting, with no success, had undermined his confidence and left him feeling helpless and unvalued. His can-do attitude, where there are no barriers, has been an example to us all."



Baby Changes Everything

- Advent at Castlerigg



Advent is always a special season of its own and doing our best to resist the mad dash for Christmas, we tried our best to respect this special season and discover Advent as a time of expectant waiting, hopeful anticipation and cheerful preparation! As part of these preparations, a number of primary schools came up for day retreats and a weekend open retreat was organised for those in Year 10 and above.

Patricia Benson, one of the retreat leaders at Castlerigg, explained how the primary school days sought to understand the great gift of Jesus through the Jesse Tree. "We walked through different stories in the Bible to see how God related to his people through different characters, and as we did so, the children dressed up in the different characters. We then looked at our own family tree and looked at ways in which we could prepare to receive Jesus in our own lives. The children made Advent promises which they then painted onto baubles. We finished our day in the chapel focusing on the greatest story of all when God himself became so small as a baby, facing all the challenges we face. At the end of one of the days I asked the children what they had learnt and one child answered", "Jesus only wants to be our friend."

Throughout the year school groups come for residential retreats at Castlerigg it is always heartening to see many of the young people return to Castlerigg, often on their own, for our open retreats. This is no mean feat as Hollie, aged 14, explained: "I was in the car on my way to Castlerigg and I was singing to music and I was very nervous as I was going to the Advent Retreat on my own

because my friend couldn't make it. We pulled up in the grounds and I started to shake; I was worried about being on my own the whole weekend and not fitting in with everyone. I was shown to my room and three girls from Barrow were already there. At first I didn't think they would like me because they seemed completely different to me, so I went back downstairs, said goodbye to my mum and was playing on the guitar with one of the Castlerigg team. More people arrived and we had a buffet for tea. I sat with the girls that were in my room and they were really nice to me; I got along with them. I can't believe that by the end of the weekend I was hugging all my new friends and said goodbye. The weekend was amazing and I had so much fun and there was nothing to worry about. I didn't even want to leave."

Amy, 15, from Barrow also said that the weekend made a deep impression upon her and changed her whole attitude towards Christmas. She writes, "I was looking forward to my weekend to Castlerigg Manor, for the Advent retreat. I had been earlier in the year and I enjoyed it so much, I jumped at the chance of going again. This amazing experience helped me sit back and relax, away from the Christmas chaos, and remember the real reason of Christmas. I met some inspiring people and made some lovely friends at the Manor, as well as taking part in prayer times, fun games, walking and many other brilliant experiences. I am now properly prepared for Christmas, after the Reconciliation Service and learning about the nativity. I now understand that prayer and candles are much more important than Christmas cards and flashing lights, and I feel fully prepared to welcome Jesus when the Day finally comes."



Fresher's Week, Rag Week, Holy Week? - How faith and life at University grow together

We can often be left with the impression that faith has no place in the public realm and we are so often bombarded in the media by the secularist intelligentsia (*Dawkins, Grayling, Hitchens, and others*), that of all places we might assume that universities might be the last place where one would find shoots of faith. But our experience at the Youth Service is replete with examples of young people who take courage and live their faith with lively conviction, honest searching and gentle forbearance. In this article, three students Alice Moriarty (*University of East Anglia*), Daniel Cullen (*SOAS*) and Sophie Benson (*University of Lancaster*) share their experiences.

My name is Alice and I'm in my third year at the University of East Anglia. I have always been a Catholic but, before I came to University, going to Mass every Sunday was not a choice: my siblings and I were expected to go. Since coming to University I have made the choice to carry on going to Mass and to get involved with the Catholic Chaplaincy here at UEA. Having made the choice to go makes it feel more special to me and makes me feel more confident in my beliefs.

I am studying Molecular Biology and Genetics which means that every day I am surrounded by Science and Scientists. Many people find it difficult to comprehend that Catholicism and science can come hand in hand and my beliefs are often challenged. I feel, however, that the constant need to defend my faith has only made it stronger. I have made an effort to learn more about Catholicism and to understand better the beliefs. I was told before I started here that everyone finds their place at University and there is always somewhere you will fit in. This is certainly true for me here at UEA where the Catholic Chaplaincy has been an important part of my life at University. In a predominantly secular environment you will always find a friendly face and a willing ear in the chaplaincy and there is a vibrant Catholic community with many people at different stages of their faith. I owe a lot to the Chaplaincy here and, in the hope of giving something back to them, I have taken on the role this year of the President of the Catholic Society here at UEA. In this role I hope I can give other people the same support as I have received during my time here.

My name is Dan and I am now in my third and final year of a degree in History and Economics at SOAS. I am from a Catholic family and have previously been involved with a lot of Diocesan activities, travelling to World Youth Day, Lourdes and Medjugorje over the past few years.

During my first year at university I lived in a large inter-collegiate accommodation block. While my overall experience on leaving home and moving into university accommodation was relatively comfortable, I found that my Catholicism was received with surprise and scepticism. I feel that the idea of Catholicism held by many young people is a caricature entirely ungrounded in truth, and I often found myself defending against this. Issues such as abortion and marriage became a particular point of debate. While my faith did not form a central part of my academic life during my first year of study, I still felt able to express this and never felt any

hostility from others towards it as such. I continued to attend Mass and visited Lourdes and Medjugorje in the summer after my first year.

My experience at my university itself has been an unequivocally positive one. Last year I took the role of the President of our (*fledgling*) Catholic Society, whose events were well received and fully supported by our Union. Being a part of the Society and visiting the University Chaplaincy at Gower Street has helped me to maintain a connection with my faith during my time here. As I have continued on in my studies, I have found great pleasure in being able to delve further in to my faith through the works of writers in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and in my studies I have found a foundation for my own opinions in Catholic social teaching. I must note that my University is renowned for its tolerance, diversity, and multiculturalism, and as such a huge variety of religious practice is welcomed on campus without prejudice or conflict. I am aware that my own university experience has been far removed from the type of student life found elsewhere, which I suspect may well be much more hostile to religious sentiments. What I perceive among my own friendship group is that young people find questions of religion intensely interesting, and are certainly not ignorant of it, but rather are intent on questioning and developing their own faith. For some this has meant increased involvement in church groups, for others this has meant a choice to move away from groups they no longer feel provide what they are looking for. As I near the end of my course, I would now, in truth, describe my relationship with Catholicism as a conflicted one. Ultimately, while at heart my own values will always be informed by my Catholic faith and upbringing, I have found myself increasingly uncomfortable with elements of Church teaching.

Hi, I'm Sophie and I am a first year at Lancaster University. Starting university has to be the most daunting experience of my life so far. However, I can safely say my faith has played a very important role in settling into my new life. Having always been at Catholic schools, although some people weren't practising Catholics, it was not like university where many people have never experienced religion having any part in their lives. Freshers' Week was a little shocking and it's surprising how many times late-night conversations in the pub have turned to 'What do you actually do in Mass?' and the shock when my friends find out I get up at 10am on a Sunday. At first I was unsure whether I wanted people to know if I was Catholic, but to hide my faith would be hiding a really important part of me, having experienced something as amazing this year as World Youth Day I realised it was much more important to be myself and let my new friends know who I really am.

The Catholic Society at university has turned into something I honestly look forward to each week, it has been such a great help to know there is actually a large group around me that share the same beliefs and don't mind talking about their faith. I had to laugh when one of my new friends saw rosary beads in my room and I said I was going on retreat and he assumed therefore I was joining a convent once I'd finished Uni. It's nice now that they understand my beliefs and are genuinely interested in the Church.



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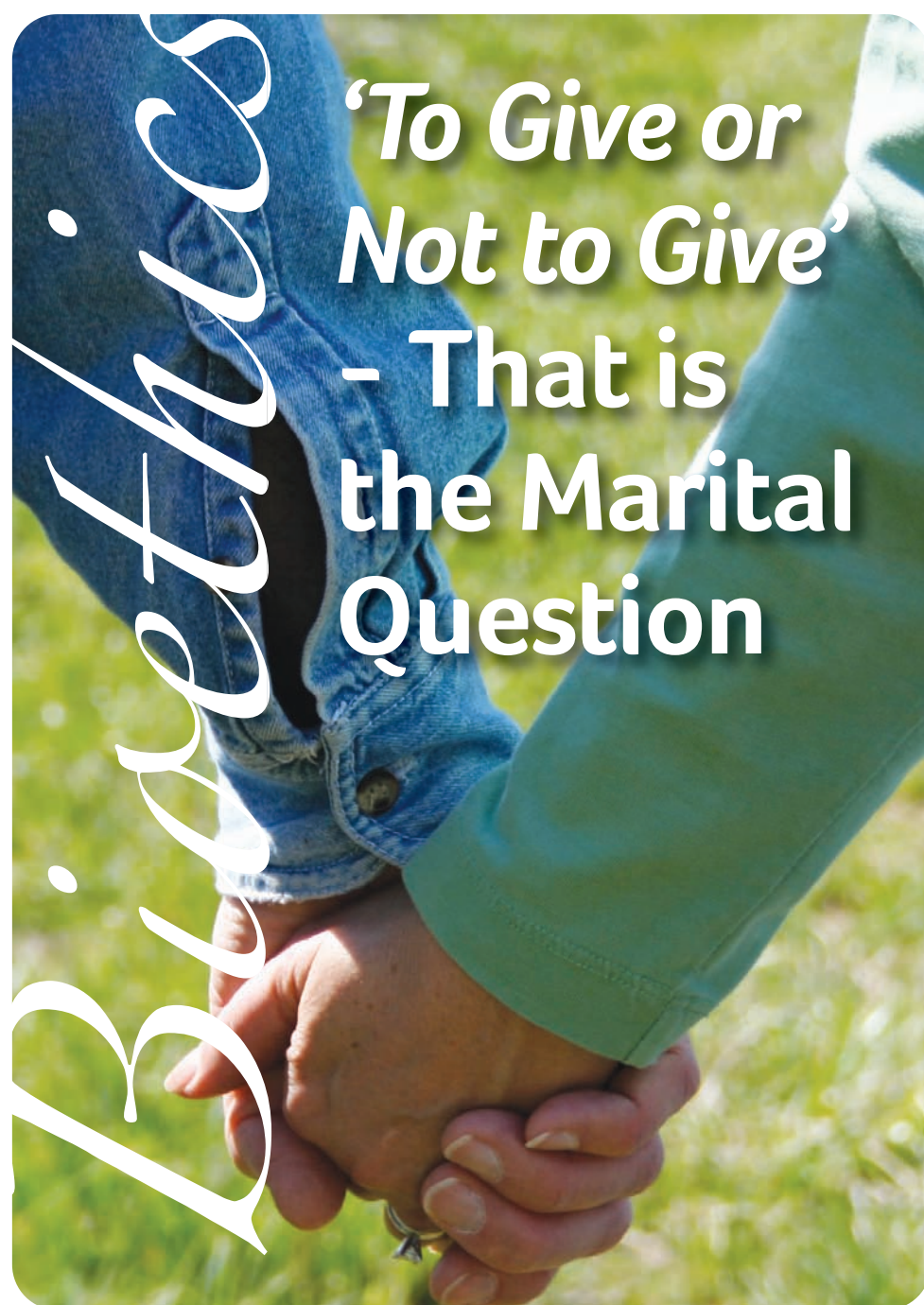
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Fr. Tad Pacholczyk - MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS



In a recent column, David O'Brien, the Associate Director of Religious Education for Lay Ministry in the Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama recounts the story of Agnes and Jake, devout Catholics who conceived and delivered four children during the first 5 years of their marriage.

Agnes described how Jake, 'wanted to be a good father and husband, and he couldn't see how that could happen if we continued to have more children. In short, he was getting a vasectomy.'

Agnes had a strong Catholic formation, and understood that married couples should not engage in sexual acts that have been intentionally blocked or 'rendered in fecund.' She struggled with Jake's new stance, and dug her heels in.

She wondered how she could possibly be an authentic witness to the Gospel "if within my marriage, I was no longer open to life? How could I minister to other women and encourage them to be bold in their faith if I wasn't living it myself? And what do I teach my children about marriage and sex when their father and I weren't aligned?"

“

If within my marriage, I was no longer open to life? How could I minister to other women and encourage them to be bold in their faith if I wasn't living it myself? And what do I teach my children about marriage and sex when their father and I weren't aligned?

”

She went through an emotional roller-coaster: "At first, I cried. Then I yelled. Then I argued, calmly and intelligently. Then I cried some more. I shared with my husband excerpts from Kippley's *Sex and the Marriage Covenant* and the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. We listened to Christopher West and Scott Hahn in the car." Nonetheless, her husband was unchanging.

As it became clear that Jake would go ahead with the vasectomy notwithstanding her protests, Agnes confronted a question that many serious Catholics have had to contend with in their marriages. She wondered whether it would still be allowable for her to engage in marital relations with her husband after the vasectomy. When one spouse is involved in this so-called 'abuse of matrimony,' the other is placed in an awkward situation. A husband can struggle with a similar problem when his wife refuses to get off the Pill and stop contracepting. While the contracepting spouse is clearly doing something morally wrong, doesn't the non-contracepting spouse also sin by cooperating in an act that the other spouse has made infertile?

Pope Pius XI addressed this issue as far back as 1930, but the clearest teaching of the Church came in a 1997 Vatican document called the *Vademecum for Confessors*. It notes that cooperation in the sin of one's spouse, by continuing to engage in the marital act when the spouse has taken recourse to contraception, can be permissible when 'proportionally grave reasons' exist for doing so, and when one is earnestly 'seeking to help the other spouse to desist from such sinful conduct (patiently, with prayer, charity and dialogue; although not necessarily in that moment, nor on every single occasion).' The *Vademecum* and sound counsellors say that participation in such an act would not be in and of itself immoral on the part of the non-contracepting spouse, but these counsellors would also say that the one trying to lead the Christian life ought not to initiate sexual relations with the contracepting spouse.

Thus, while Agnes would not be obliged to facilitate her husband's sin, she could herself, without sin, engage in marital relations with him if she thought refusal to do so might lead to other sins, such as temptations to infidelity or divorce, as long as she continued to seek and encourage a change of heart and a change of perspective in him.

While Agnes came to understand this point in her head, she hesitated in her heart. After battling with Jake for over a year, she found herself burned out and exhausted. One night, after crying through the night, a sudden and unexpected thunderstorm came through. As she heard the intense raindrops falling, she reflected on how the raindrops were like God's tears. She realised that God, too, is in a kind of broken marriage, a difficult marriage with the humanity he loves. She considered how the Church, while being his spotless mystical bride, has members who are often unfaithful, hurting the Lord and blocking his life-giving love. "And yet," she reflected, "He never holds back. He comes to us, over and over again." Indeed, God continues to give his body to the Church on her altars, ever beckoning us to conversion and perfection.

Agnes decided that for the time being, if her husband sought marital relations, she would consent, while patiently seeking to convince him that his unilateral decision about the vasectomy was a mistake. She hoped to bring him to consider a reversal of the vasectomy. She sought to keep communication on the matter open and active, entrusting this painful trial in their marriage to God: "I lift up our marriage, our intimacy, and our continued conversion to God who knows our hearts."

This Lent, every Catholic church in the Diocese of Lancaster will be open for CONFESSIONS

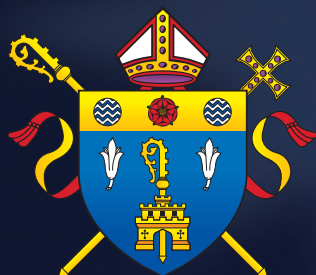


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Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center. See www.ncbcenter.org



Lourdes and the Benson Family



(Below) George and Annie Benson with the Bishop.
(Above) Sarah and Alf.



It was during her first year of nursing in the 1970's and while she was sorting out the crib on ward 14 at Sharoe Green hospital in Preston that the young Annie Boe heard a voice behind her ask is she'd like to go with the sick to Lourdes. The voice belonged to Fr Chappell and Anne didn't need to be asked twice.

The second of nine children, Annie promptly made her way to see Fr Hawkins at English Martyrs parish and thus her long association with Lourdes began.

Anyone who has ever experienced the joy that is Lourdes knows that you always leave with a promise to return and Annie was no exception. She was true to her word and it was on her fifth visit to the shrine of Our Blessed Lady in the company of her mum and little brother Alfred that, unbeknown to her at the time, Annie was to meet the man who would become the love of her life. The young man was George Benson. George who was quiet, caring and loveable, made Annie laugh. Together they looked after the sick and worked together as much as they could in the beautiful surroundings and atmosphere of Lourdes.

That same year they became engaged on 9th December and married the following year on 21st July. Throughout their married life Lourdes has continued to play an important role. Frequent family visits have led to many happy memories for them and their family. Children Michael, Patricia, Catherine and Alfred have all played their part as helpers over the years in Lourdes and young George junior, who made his first Holy Communion in Lourdes, will be doing his bit as a helper

this coming year on the annual diocesan pilgrimage, under the watchful eye of big sister Patricia who works with the youth at Castlerigg Manor.

Young son Alfred, who continues to be a 'carer' at Lourdes, has followed in the family tradition by meeting his bride to be, Sarah, in Lourdes and they plan to marry on February 11 this year, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, at the Cathedral in Lancaster.

Our Lady of Lourdes is the patron saint of the diocese of Lancaster and it is a fitting tribute that Alfred and Sarah should choose to honour Our Blessed Lady for the many blessings bestowed upon them and their families by marrying on this very special day.

Mindful of keeping God as the head of the home and Our Blessed Lady at the heart of the family, prayer has always played an important part in the Benson household. Annie and George feel truly blessed indeed.

Bride to be Sarah said "Lourdes has been one of the biggest influences on my life to date. I met Alfred there, and together we have made many great and close friends there. Visits to Lourdes over the last 8 years have helped me develop and deepen my faith and get through some difficult times. I intended to keep visiting Lourdes and hope that with God's blessing that one day I will take my own children there. I have a lot to thank God and our Lady of Lourdes for; I believe that if I had not visited Lourdes my life would be very different now.

Alf proposed to me in the grotto at midnight

on the 26th July 2010, with a ring he bought in Lourdes, after calling my dad to ask his permission to marry me.

We have been planning and preparing for marriage with the help of Fr. Philip Connor, who will be celebrating our wedding. He has been such a wonderful guide and we feel very prepared for the commitment we are going to make to each other."

Alf recalling some of his happiest moments of visiting Lourdes said "I find this so hard to answer as I have so many great memories of Lourdes and I have so many reasons why I go and continue to go. It struck me how easy it is to make new friends and continue with old ones.

The most moving for me is the torchlight procession, watching or processing but always participating in the Rosary, with many people from all over the world or the Grotto at night or early morning when no one else is about. Seeing how brave the people who are sick and elderly getting to Lourdes some who come every year and the love that so many have in helping and aiding anybody that may need help.

One of my greatest memories of Lourdes will always be the year that my younger brother George made his First Holy Communion at the steps by the Rosary Basilica, all the family together. This was the year I first met Sarah, although it did take a couple of years before we started to go out, I had met the person I was going to marry."

The Catholic Voice wishes Sarah and Alf every blessing on their wedding. Our Lady of Lourdes pray for us. **Jenny Phillips**

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Mass Listings - February 2012

Sunday, February 5th at 6:00pm
Septuagesima Sunday
Our Lady & St. Wilfred, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle

Sunday, February 12th at 12:00pm
Sexagesima Sunday
St. Pius X, Ormsgill, Barrow-in-Furness

Sunday, February 19th at 3:00pm
Quinquagesima Sunday
St. Andrew & Blessed George Haydock, Cottam

Wednesday, February 22nd at 6:00pm
Ash Wednesday
Cathedral Church of St. Peter, Lancaster

Sunday, February 26th at 12:15pm
First Sunday of Lent
Cathedral Church of St. Peter, Lancaster

Sunday, February 26th at 12:30pm
First Sunday of Lent
St. Mary of Furness, Barrow-in-Furness

If travelling long distances, please contact the Diocesan Representative before you set off, as changes do sometimes occur.

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- Please keep your letters concise (max 300 words),
- Include your full name and address
- Letters should not include any personal criticism or attacks
- The editor reserves the right to:
 - amend or shorten letters or to refuse to publish them (no correspondence to discuss decisions taken will be entered into)
 - publish a response if deemed appropriate

Dear Editor

Running to provide food

The December issue carried an article about Mary's Meals where you asked people to add a donation to their Christmas present list.

My brother, Paul Higginson is running for Mary's Meals in the London Marathon on April 22nd. Paul is a 'local lad', born & bred in Preston, & now living 'down south' with his family. Some readers will remember him from his time at the Catholic College. He has never before done anything quite as ambitious as this, but we're hoping that he is successful in this venture, managing to raise a large amount for the charity.

I am inviting any readers to kindly sponsor him for this worthwhile charity, donations can be made on line at:

<https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/paulhigginson1>

It is generally the poorest children, especially girls, who don't go to school, so providing a proper meal is a great way to get them into the classroom. It costs just £9.40 to provide a child with a meal a day at school for a year. EVERY penny goes to the charity.

Thank you.
Marie Vandome,
Our Lady &
St. Edward's
Preston.



Dear Editor

New Year Resolution

I came across the following quote from Blessed John Henry Newman (1801-1890) given in the Daily Register for the Feast of the Blessed 9 October 2011 by Father Timothy Byerley, Ph.D., a priest of the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, USA. "There never was a time since the apostles' day when the Church was not; and there never was a time but men were to be found who preferred some other way of worship to the Church's way. These two kinds of professed Christians ever have been — Church Christians and Christians not of the Church; and it is remarkable, I say, that while, on the one hand, reverence for sacred things has been a characteristic of Church Christians on the whole, so, want of reverence has been the characteristic on the whole of Christians not of the Church. Whole societies called Christian make it almost a first principle to disown the duty of reverence; and we ourselves, to whom as children of the Church reverence is as a special inheritance, have very little of it, and do not feel the want of it"

This gave me much food for thought for Advent. I have seen at weekday Masses and Vespers in the Cathedral of Lancaster the signs of that spirituality that Newman speaks about especially in the adoption of the revised liturgy: "feelings of awe, majesty, tenderness, reverence, devotedness and other feelings which may especially be called Catholic". The recent move into the revised liturgical form was seamless from my perception, for which all concerned must be congratulated.

I know what my New Year's resolution is. Bob Latin.

Dear Editor

In the December issue of *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster*, Mr Harrison's letter highlighted the apparent inconsistency with which those acting on behalf of the church address moral issues. He cited this as a reason why his children refuse to become catholic. I feel that I should make some comment on the issue of the reluctance of young people in Britain to join or support the faith.

- Catholic children are easily influenced by those without faith and soon shrug off their faith in favour of an easier way of life, which makes them feel more at one with the wider – non-catholic – community. To feel like they fit in better with the culture of the wider community, as portrayed by the media, people neglect or abandon their faith.
- People form uneducated opinions about events, often unaware of the historical, social and political context in which they took place. Their opinions, with a negative view of the church, become fixed for life. Although these events took place long ago, they are very much alive in people's thoughts, even now!
- The role of catholic faith is played down, or not reported. The church does not appear to report to the non-catholic community the many good things done by the faithful. Consequently, people that do not actually have any substantial motivation or interest in discovering the truth conclude that the church does very little. They are left with a negative image, which endures.
- The rigid enforcement of rules appears to be contrary to the teachings of Christ: tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, compassion. This gave and, through memory, still gives the impression of a church that has lost touch with its core values. So many people have been hurt and damaged in this way.
- The discovery of Pedophile priests has damaged trust in the church as an institution for the advancement of Christian moral values, and has highlighted a long history of secrecy and cover-ups. This hypocrisy has done long-lasting damage.
- Young people, generally see the Church's wealth (*money, ornaments, buildings*) as misappropriation of resources that should have been put to better use in to the wider community. Information on where investments are and how and why money is spent, or not spent, needs to be made more widely available and more readily accessible.
- The catholic social teaching is not known. Guidance on birth control is an excellent example. People forget that although the Churches' guidance is free to all who lend an ear, it is intended for those who strive to follow a catholic way of life.
- There is a general consensus amongst young people that the Ten Commandments, although good, are unrealistic demands, not practicable in real life. They believe that if you break one, according to catholic teaching, you go to hell, so if you have broken one, there is no benefit in trying to adhere to them any longer. Damnation for transgression appears contrary to the Christian virtues of compassion and forgiveness.

I could go on, but I hope that I have managed to communicate, in some small way, the problems young people face in accepting Catholicism and point out that there are multiple reasons why young people dismiss the faith.

Yours Sincerely, D.A Long, student via e mail.



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St Joseph's Reopens

• Around the Diocese



Matt Scargill, 17 and Jenny Gornall, 18, place a ribbon on the figure of a young pregnant woman – each ribbon representing another woman dying in childbirth throughout the world while the Global Student Forum was taking place in Liverpool. By the end of the event the figure was covered in ribbons like a funeral shroud.

The crest of Bellerive is a circular emblem. At the top, the word "BELLERIVE" is written in a semi-circle. In the center is a shield with three fleur-de-lis above the letters "FCJ". Above the shield is a bird, possibly an eagle or phoenix. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto "SUAVITER IN MODO FORTITER IN RE".

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The Beauty of Medjugorje

On Thursday 17th Oct I flew from Manchester with a party of 10 people from all over Lancashire, to Croatia and then 3 hours overland to Medjugorje in Bosnia. It was my first visit and so I was not sure what to expect, and vaguely expected it to be a bit like Lourdes.

We arrived and stayed in a small hotel on the end of town run by a local family. On the first day we went to the church of St James for Mass. I did not realise that it would be absolutely packed and found this an unusual experience as we got there 10 mins before and there was not a seat to be had so we all had to stand at the back. There were about 15 priests on the Altar and each day a different priest was asked to be the main celebrant for the Mass.

The day before we came home Fr John Delaney who was leading our group was asked to be the main celebrant and so we got a great place in the choir area to sing, all our group helped with all the readings and chose the hymns. Fr John gave a very beautiful spiritual sermon, to a very packed congregation, we all felt it was a privilege to be there.

Medjugorje is a beautiful place, a small village surrounded by beautiful hills. We walked through the vineyards saying the rosary to get to Rosary hill, and that was a wonderful experience in itself. Rosary Hill

is the smaller of the two hills where we prayed the rosary at each stop, the other larger hill is called Apparition Hill and is much steeper with the stations of the cross all the way up and on the top of the hill is a huge white cross.

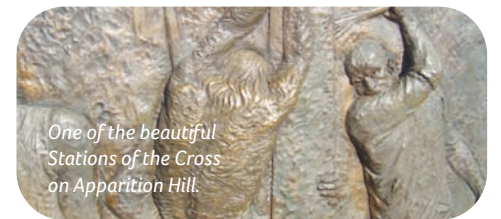


Our party on Rosary hill.

We attended Mass every day in St James church and the church was packed every day with people standing outside. We had a visit to the Cenacolo community and visited Nancy & Patrick who are building a fabulous fairytale castle on the outskirts of Medjugorje as a free place to stay as a retreat center for any priest or brother or sisters. It was a great experience to listen to Nancy's testimony about the power of Medjugorje and how it changed their lives.

Even though most of us were complete strangers to each other, it only took a couple of hours and we were all like a family, we were together as a group for Mass and walking up the hill, but spent a lot of time in twos or threes then coming back at night for our evening meal before going back for late prayers. The love for

Our Lord and Our Lady was the thread that made us feel like a family and the thread that knitted us to other wonderful people we met and got chatting to in the various places we visited. We also went to see one of the Visionaries Ivanka – she was talking in a large room behind the church. When we got there it was absolutely packed and we could only stand at the back, there must have been about 800 people packed into this hall, and through two interpreters, one English and one Italian she gave her testimony, it was very spiritual and very moving, there was such a lot of love in that place and to be with all these different nationalities gave us real hope for the future.



One of the beautiful Stations of the Cross on Apparition Hill.

A lot has been written about Medjugorje, but I would say if you have not been and are wondering, go and experience it yourself. I speak for all the group when I say we all found a lot of love, peace and joy in everything around that place. We felt it was another special place to pray and come closer to Our Lord and Our Lady.

Teresa Smith, Secretary of Cathsoc University of Central Lancashire



Papal Blessing

In July 2011, Pauline Conway retired as Headmistress of St Patrick's School, Workington. There were a number of celebrations and events to express our thanks for 41 years she had devoted to Catholic Education, most of them at St Patrick's.

Getting Primary Education right sets a child up for the rest of his/her life. Many owe Pauline so much, not simply for what she has done, but for the way she has done it. Her lasting influence has not just been to the benefit of the Catholic Community of Workington but has extended to all whose lives she has touched, pupils, families and colleagues. Following Mass at Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Michael, Workington in November, Pauline was presented with a Papal Blessing. It comes with Love and Prayers for a happy retirement.

Paul Briers

And the story continues...

Earlier this year, bursary cheques were presented to four students from Cardinal Allen Catholic High School, Fleetwood by the Fleetwood Circle of the Catenian Association to support their trip to Lourdes. One of the promises the girls made was that they would come to the after proceedings of a circle meeting and tell the story of their pilgrimage.

It was a wonderful evening, made memorable by the devotion and sincerity of the young women, which was balanced by their fun-loving approach to their duties in helping and supporting the Sick. They were a credit to themselves, their school and their families.



Egg Heads

This year saw the eighth anniversary of the St Kentigern's Deanery Quiz. Over seventy parishioners from eight parishes across Blackpool gathered for the annual evening of fun.

With a wide range of questions and pictures the teams fought it out with a hot pot interlude. After much deliberation and checking the team from St Kentigern's parish, the title holders, were declared the winners by 2 points. A special mention goes to David Gibson from the St Mary's Catholic College Chaplaincy team who scored an extra point for his musical rendition of "Aqua Marina" from Stingray.

It was an excellent evening with a good atmosphere and we look forward to the quiz next year. Thanks to all who organised the event and to the bar staff for their hard work.

Ansdell Showcase



St Joseph's Ansdell was bustling with activity over the weekend of the feast of Christ the King.

With over 30 groups displaying their activities, the

church was a sight to behold. Clearly, the creative juices had been flowing as many of the displays were determined to catch the eye; walking boots and clumps of greenery adorned the Parish Walkers table; laptops were used to show images of both the progress of the parish project in Burkina Faso and the parish website; and live video footage was streamed from the bell tower showing the bells in full swing.

Parishioners were encouraged to stay after each Mass to look at the displays and chat with those running the many different activities. The children enjoyed collecting stickers from different groups to complete a 'passport' which they exchanged for a bar of chocolate. Adults who had their 'passports' filled with stickers had the chance to win a new Sunday Missal at each of the Masses. Fr. John Winstanley, parish priest, said *"it has been a great weekend for the parish, celebrating its gifts and reflecting on how these can be shared with the wider community."*

Just prior to this event the youth of St Joseph's and St Peter's Lytham came together to launch a new Youth group which was formally opened by Scottish International and Blackpool FC full back Stephen Crainey.

Anne Zammit

Students Shine

At the annual Lancaster Training Services awards evening held in November Our Lady's Catholic College Lancaster were at the forefront of proceedings.

Jordan Vare received the 'Morecambe Car Club Ltd Best 1st Year Young Apprentice' floating trophy and a monetary award. Gino Valente received the '1st Year Young Apprentice Runner Up' award. They were both also given glowing recommendations from tutors and employers alike.

Three ex-pupils were also recognised for their outstanding achievements - Jake Anderson got certificates after completing his qualifications in body repair and paint work; Dan Richardson for completing his NVQ2 Apprentice course & Josh Smith was awarded a trophy for 'Best All Round 1st Year Apprentice'. Josh's employer gave him a outstanding report about his work ethic and enthusiasm for learning and the fact he had never once been absent. The report went on to say that Josh was the best apprentice their company had ever had!



Santa & Rudolph(s) Walk the Walk

Five Year 11 boys from Our Lady's Catholic High School in Preston decided to walk the 6 miles to school on a cold wintry morning in festive dress for CAFOD before Christmas.

"Last year we did a sponsored walk for CAFOD and raised £1000. This time we decided we'd do it again and try to beat that target." said Jonathan Bisby, one of the lads.

They'd researched that in parts of Uganda young people walked an average of 6 miles to go to school, so they thought they'd try it - in festive style, to raise awareness of thousands of children around the globe do on a daily basis to complete their education. They told the whole school about their plan and visited every form in the school. They made a guest appearance in the staffroom during the staff briefing to appeal for support and they spoke at their parish churches during Mass to rally support.

A little peckish on the way to school, the reindeers and Santa stopped for a bacon butty along the way and were given donations by complete strangers, even a couple of policemen put their hands in their pockets, not for hand cuffs, but for a little donation to the boys!

"I'm so impressed with these boys: Jonathan, George, Matthew, Sam and John. They've made quite an impact in the school. Here's young leadership in action - and they've done it really well." said Rosa Trelfa from CAFOD Lancaster, *"Not only have they raised awareness of real hardship overseas, but they've demonstrated solidarity with young people across the planet AND they've inspired others to work for a better, fairer world. Thank you. Proud of you!"*

Women in the Gospel

Gossiping women! Well, yes, in the original sense of the word, but perhaps a better description would be **gospel-ing women. This is what Women Together in the Diocese of Lancaster were up to when they met in the Jeanne Jugan Residence of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Preston in November. Their day together was entitled Women in the gospel: learning from our sisters in faith. It was wisely and skilfully led by Sister Pauline Darby of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.**

Sr Pauline began the day by intriguing us with that word gossiping. Originally it signified the godsib or godparent, then midwife, someone who would speak with and encourage a mother in childbirth. Throughout the day we had plenty of opportunity to do this for one another as we responded to the stimulus and the searching questions which Pauline provided.

The first question she posed was: How did you first come to hear about Jesus? It was obvious from our answers that for most of us it was through other people and not the written gospel until much later. This is how faith was and still is transmitted: *"Jesus does not come to us alone; he comes via the reflective faith of the Christian community...We learn about Jesus through those who have life in his name...They become our teachers."* From Jesus and the Gospels: Denis McBride CSSR

So we were invited to see ourselves as women of the gospel now. We then spent time reflecting and praying on that wonderful realisation.

When Sister Pauline asked us to recall some women from the gospel we readily

named them from the stories: Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, the Samaritan woman, the Canaanite woman etc. But the surprise of the day was that instead of focusing on those familiar encounters with Jesus we were invited to look in close detail at Matthew's account of the feeding of the 5,000 which concludes with these words: *"The number of men who ate was about five thousand, not counting the women and children."* Sister Pauline helped us to explore this incident in depth, learning about the intensity of Jesus' compassion and his passion for those who are not counted. We pondered where the baskets came from, what this revealed to us about the Eucharist and how we as women in our parishes and everyday lives are called to live this gospel today.

In the afternoon session we explored another short and often overlooked gospel extract from Luke 8: 1-3 about the women who accompanied Jesus as disciples throughout his public ministry. In small groups we shared how we in turn endeavour to bring the good news of the kingdom of God to others and how they bring it to us.

This summary barely does justice to such a rich day. Our sharing and reflections closed on a very challenging note offered by one of the youngest women present, namely that we may be the only gospel some people ever experience. The day concluded with Mass celebrated by Canon McArdle and offered for Bishop Michael Campbell in thanksgiving for his Fortieth Anniversary of ordination. Everyone who took part in the day remains grateful to the Women Together committee for organising this event and bringing us together on such a key theme.

Sister Philomena Grimley SHCJ

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Lenten Journey

When the pastor of one of Preston's evangelical churches mooted the idea of City-wide Lent groups for Guild Year, Catholics responded enthusiastically. Fr Tom Singleton accepted an invitation to be the main Catholic representative on the organising committee - and then asked me to join him.

What a diverse group - Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Evangelical, but when we sat down to think what the talks might look like, we quickly found a common spirituality and unity of purpose. We chose as our theme the seven "I am" sayings of Jesus - different aspects of his character as the Son of God. We wanted speakers from different Christian backgrounds who could inspire and convey the spirit of Jesus to the listeners.

What started off as planning meetings became a spiritual journey. I was reminded of a saying that you cannot fully understand somebody unless you walk in their shoes. We didn't go as far as swapping spiritual footwear, but journeying together in prayer and openness enriched us all and helped us to see that we all had a common vision for the Guild - to bring faith, hope and love to our City.

The sessions (*Monday nights in Preston Minster*) include worship, a presentation on the "I am" theme for that evening, group discussion and a presentation from one of the Christian groups already serving the City, such as L'Arche and Street Pastors. By having a mix of items in each session, we hope that people will engage with each other and with the Guild vision in a variety of different ways.

I don't think we would have been so bold without the stimulus and challenge of Preston Guild, but I am so glad that we took the risk. Just as Jesus revealed Himself in different ways through the "I am" sayings, so he reveals Himself in our City by the personal example of Christians from many backgrounds. By working together, we will be far more effective in bringing the Christian message to our City.

Terry Mattinson



Guild Reflections

As a Prestonian born and bred, who is also about to take part in my 4th Guild, it is obvious that the changes from 1952 - 2012 are huge. Religious tolerances feature on one side, family structure on another.

In 1952, as a young teenager, myself and some friends led the Catholic Church Procession; we were very proud to do so. My parents watched and cheered; our theme was "The family that prays together stays together."

1972 saw me married with a young family; we actually moved house in Guild Week, but saw many processions and events. There was an Ecumenical Service that year.

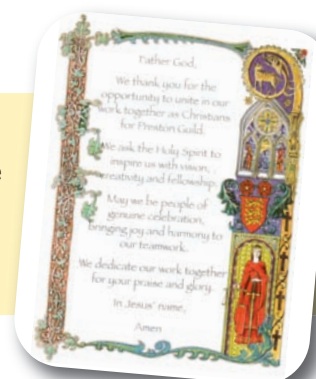
In 1992, a fantastic change (brought about in part by many who have long gone to their spiritual reward) was happening. We had Ecumenical Processions (some of the friends around me were of different denominations). Grandchildren waved excitedly to me from the crowd.

In 2012 as a widow and grandmother of 12 wonderful grandchildren, some grown up, I am just as excited by Guild Year and the Guild, if not more so. Something almost unthinkable is taking place in Preston. Many different denominations right across the board are united in a common purpose. We are determined to work together to support Christian ministries in the city and make this a legacy. The overall theme of our procession is "The Living Christ". We will show how Christ is alive in Preston and how we try to "love our neighbour as ourselves". By working together, Christians can make a difference and make Preston a "beacon" in 2012 and beyond for the whole of Lancashire.

Margaret Thompson, Our Lady and St Edward's Preston

Did you know

The first eye-witness account of a Guild dates from 1682, by which time it was already regarded as a rare historical survival. There have been 26 Guilds for which records survive, held regularly every twenty years apart from a wartime interruption - there was no 1942 Guild.



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Old Boys Reunion

A group of ex junior seminarians and a few of their clergy teachers from Underley Hall in Kirkby Lonsdale held a reunion recently to celebrate 50 years since they all first met.

The organiser, Joe Moxham, thought that it would be good to meet up again after all these years to celebrate the first day they attended Underley Hall in 1963.

"I thought that it might take me a while to track everyone down so allowed myself some time to do this, but with the help of internet search engines, directories, numerous telephone calls, emails and social networking sites the task has been made somewhat easier." said Joe. *"To find one or two people needed a little extra work, taking me to Bulgaria, Italy, Eire and even Australia. Each person I found was firstly very surprised at hearing from me after all these years and secondly after a brief chat, eager to meet up again sooner rather than leaving it until 2013."*

The reunion date was fixed by the people who had the furthest to travel, and they selected Saturday November 12th 2011 for the meeting, but, about 7 or 8 of the attendees decided to make a weekend of the event met up on the Friday night. *"It was wonderful to spend time together after all these years, reminiscing and catching up with each other."* said Dennis Hardiman a Head Teacher who had travelled from Liverpool. Jim Gornall who had travelled from Ballybunion in Eire said *"When Joe contacted me and invited me to the reunion I had no hesitation in making the trip. To meet up with old friends after all this time was fantastic."*

The official meeting was to be at noon on Saturday, in the Red Dragon in Kirkby Lonsdale but on the Saturday morning after breakfast those who had met up on the Friday took a stroll along Ruskin's View and through the fields around the Underley estate, arriving back at the pub in time to meet the rest of their classmates.

Today, Underley Hall School is a specialist residential/day school and Children's Home which caters for both boys and girls aged 8-19 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Joe Moxham had arranged with the current Principal of the School to make a visit and be given a guided tour of the Hall. Four members of the clergy attended the event, Mgr. Frank Slattery, Canon Tom Dakin Fr Alf Parker and Fr Mike Murphy, who was one of the class who started their training in 1963. *"It was great to meet up again after all this time, to renew our acquaintance and reminisce about our time at Underley together. The tour around the Hall brought back many memories for us all."* said Fr Alf Parker.

After the visit to Underley, the group returned to the Red Dragon and enjoyed a meal together and shared each other's memories and renewed their friendships from all those years ago. A celebratory cake decorated with the old school badge

by Joe's wife Karen was ceremoniously cut and enjoyed by all to complete their celebration weekend.

When he originally made contact with his classmates, Joe had asked everyone to send him old photographs, anecdotes and memories of their time at Underley Hall which allowed him to compile a commemorative booklet to mark the event. A copy of the booklet was available to all who attended on the day and to those that unfortunately couldn't make the event, a copy posted to them shortly after. John Eaglesham who had travelled from Milan said *"This weekend has been something special, something which will probably never be repeated on the same scale. It was well worth the effort to make the journey from Italy."*

After breakfast the following morning everyone said their farewells and promised to keep in touch with each other and not leave it another fifty years to meet again.

Canon Provost
Dunstan Cooper VG

Photo courtesy of
Diocesan Website
- Bishop's Office

Bishop Campbell Appoints a New Vicar General

Bishop Michael Campbell OSA has, after consultation with the priests of the Diocese of Lancaster, appointed Canon Dunstan Cooper as a Vicar General of the Diocese. Canon Cooper, who is also Provost of the Cathedral Chapter of Canons, is Parish Priest of the Parish of Good Shepherd and St Mary, Morecambe.

A Vicar General is the principal deputy of the Bishop of a diocese for the exercise of administrative authority. The Vicar General exercises the Bishop's ordinary executive power over the entire diocese and, thus, is the highest official in a diocese after the diocesan Bishop.

In the Catholic Church, a diocesan bishop must appoint at least one Vicar General for his diocese, but may appoint more. Our diocese currently has two – the other being Monsignor Canon Patrick Mulvany VG. The Vicar General, by virtue of the office, is the Bishop's agent in administration, acting as second-in-command for diocesan executive matters (*a priest in a separate office, the judicial vicar, serves a similar role with regard to the exercise of ordinary judicial power of governance in the diocese which is normally exercised in ecclesiastical courts*). Vicars General must be priests, auxiliary Bishops, or coadjutor Bishops. A Vicar General is a local ordinary and, as such, acquires his powers by virtue of office and not by delegation. Priests appointed as Vicars General are freely appointed or removed by the diocesan Bishop, and are appointed for a fixed duration. They lose their office when the term expires, or when the episcopal see falls vacant.



Over the years that I have been a priest there have been so many blessings, God is truly good. He has led me into situations and places that I would never have dreamed of being in; he has brought me into contact with inspirational people, most of whom would never have described themselves in that way. I have had my priesthood shaped by the faith of the people I was sent to serve; ordinary, everyday, run of the mill Catholic parishioners who are inspirational in the way they live out their faith.

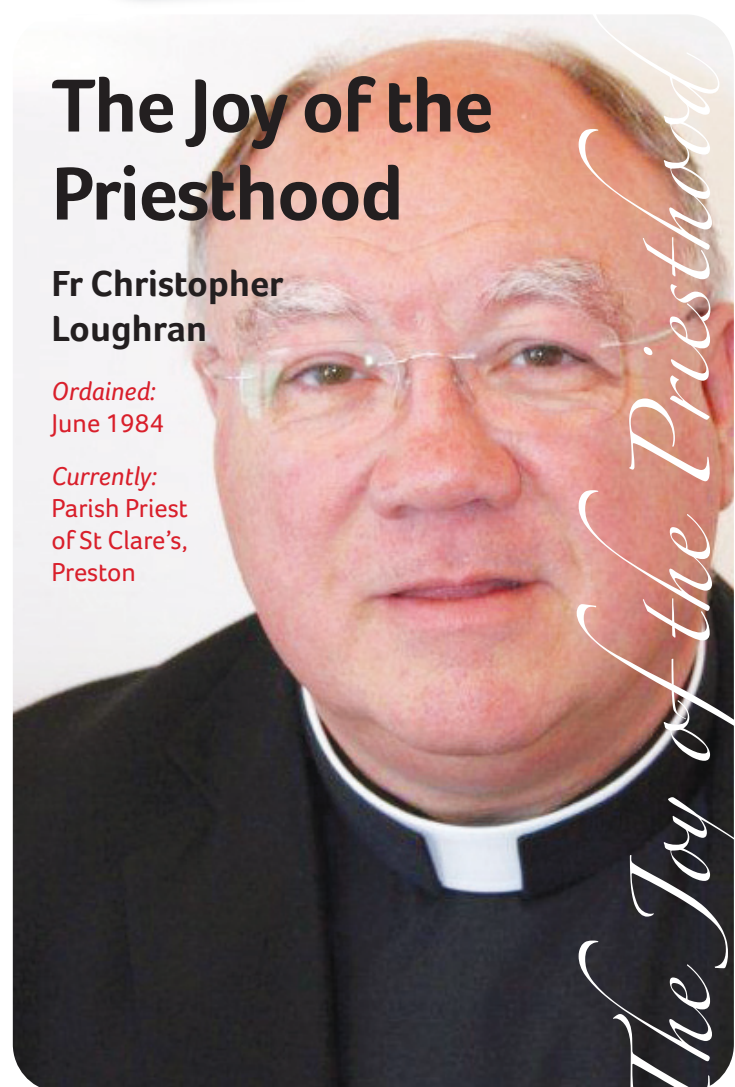
In recent years God has set me to work with a group of young men trying to overcome addictions to drugs or alcohol. This would never have been my choice, and yet, by journeying with these broken men and watching their lives begin once again to take shape, I have learned so much about the love of God. These men whom so many in society reject, are never rejected by the love of God; he is truly the Hound of Heaven pursuing them down the labyrinthine ways, offering them chance after chance to become the men he is calling them to be. The joy (*often tempered with sadness*) of serving these men comes from the close proximity of the heart of God whose loving compassion is helping me on my journey to be the priest that he is calling me to be.

The Joy of the Priesthood

Fr Christopher
Loughran

Ordained:
June 1984

Currently:
Parish Priest
of St Clare's,
Preston



Saints
Saints
Saints
Saints

Book Review

"This Saint Will Change Your Life"

It would seem that in this modern age of 'spin', not even a useful reference book on saints is immune from falling prey to the need to pander to the 'little book of....', 'self help' brigade by using a title such as "This Saint will change your life". One sincerely hopes that our saints are not going to suffer the same fate as angels who have been plundered for all they are worth. Is nothing sacred?

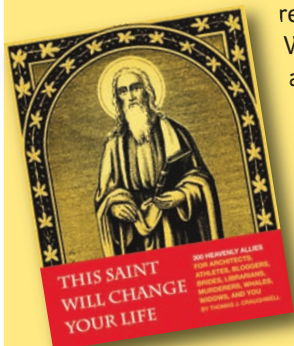
The book, "This Saint will change your Life" promises to deliver a patron saint for all manner of situations, occupations, ailments, crises- you name it, this book/patron saint has it covered. According to the book's blurb: "Your days of worry and frustration are over. Whoever you are, whatever you do, there's a patron saint who wants to help you- specifically you - with your troubles." The book has information on "300 heavenly allies."

I would imagine that most devotees of saints would find this type of promotion patronising, trivialising and demeaning in the extreme. In the Catholic tradition we take the intercession of our saints seriously so attempts to cash in by using such a glib approach does not sit comfortably.

The actual content of the book is informative and boasts the reproduction of 300 antique and vintage holy picture cards which, we are told, were supplied by the Archdiocese of New York. Thomas Craughwell's credentials are impressive. A resident of New York, he has written about saints for The Wall Street Journal and, we are told, has made several appearances on EWTN, the catholic cable network as well as other television channels.

Apart from the saint information, holy pictures and links to architects, bloggers, whales etc., the book offers no practical help in the form of ways to honour the saint or devotional prayers so how "This Saint will change your life" actually purports to do so will probably require a further edition for clarification.

Jenny Phillips



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The 1000 Club is a fundraising incentive in favour of Cardinal Heenan House

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St Valentine (in Latin *Valentinus*) is the name of several martyred saints of ancient Rome. The name derived from valens (worthy, strong, powerful).

The first official St Valentine's Day was declared on the 14th February by Pope Galasius in 496. It is not known for certain whether it was in honour of a third century priest martyred in Rome, the martyred Bishop of Interamna (modern Terni) or another priest who was martyred with his companions in Africa.

Nothing further is known of these latter two St Valentines so it is the priest in Rome who has become the most widely acclaimed of the three. He was buried at the Via Flaminia north of Rome.

The popular customs associated with St Valentine's Day undoubtedly had their origin in a conventional belief in medieval Europe that on February 14th, that is half way through the second month of the year, the birds began to pair. Thus in Chaucer's 'Parliament of Foules' we read:

“
For this was sent on
Seynt Valentyne's day
Whan every foul cometh ther
to choose his mate.
”

For this reason the day was looked upon as specially consecrated to lovers and as a

proper occasion for writing love letters and sending love tokens.

In 270AD Emperor Claudius claimed that married men made poor soldiers and decreed that all marriages of younger citizens should be outlawed. Bishop Valentine however, believed that marriage was part of God's plan and purpose for the world and continued to marry young couples in secret. He was jailed and ultimately beheaded for his betrayal. Legend has it that before his death he befriended the jailer's daughter and before his execution sent her a note signed, 'From your Valentine'. Such is the supposed origin of sending cards on St Valentine's Day.

Celebrations of love on this day are not confined to western culture. In Japan and Korea women give chocolates to their co-workers. In recent times a reciprocal day known as White Day on March 14th has emerged whereby men give white chocolate and marshmallows to those who remembered them on St Valentine's Day. In Korea there is an additional Black Day held on April 14th for less fortunate men who did not receive gifts on St Valentine's Day to gather together and eat jajangmyun, Chinese style black noodles topped with a black sauce.

Saint Valentine has always been held in great honour in Rome where there still exists a catacomb named for him. He is the patron saint of affianced couples, happy marriages, love, bee keepers, plague, epilepsy and against fainting.

Jenny Phillips



Come, Come, Come to the Manger



Austin Friars St Monica's Junior School has held its annual Carol Service during which the Infants brought the Christmas Story to life in their nativity tableau.

The Carol Service which opened with a welcome from the Head of the Junior School, Mrs Willacy, saw the whole of the Junior School come together to celebrate Christmas. Popular carols were sung throughout the service including; 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' and 'Away in a Manger'.

During the service readings were made from children in the Junior School as they told of the birth of Jesus Christ. Each narrative introduced the characters of the nativity with the pre-school children entering first as Angels followed by Mary and Joseph played by Alexa Crooks and

Oliver Spedding. They were followed by the shepherds with their flocks, and the three kings – all of whom are from the School's Kindergarten class.

Once everyone had made their entrance the congregation continued to be told the Christmas story through more readings and also songs that were sung by the Infants. The children proudly led the congregation out at the end of the service before parents and relatives enjoyed mince pies.

Mrs Frances Willacy is the Head of the Junior School, she said: "The Carol Service is an important event in the School year. We remember that God gave us the greatest gift and we remind the children that Christmas Day is the birthday of Jesus. We encourage the children to give the gifts of kindness to each other."

Julie Sutherland



The children from St Peter's Catholic primary school, in Lytham, enjoyed an outdoor nativity in their Woodland Wildlife Area. Year 6 organised the play and helped to build a stable, using natural materials from the wood. They weaved a fence around the stable from sticks and fallen branches and a star was hung in the trees for the shepherds to follow.

On the day of the performance, Bruno the donkey arrived and carried Mary through the wood and up to the stable. All year groups thoroughly enjoyed following the story as it progressed through the woodland.

Katy Seed



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School Returns to 1958 for Spectacular Performance

Pupils and staff at Austin Friars St Monica's School have been transported back to the summer of 1958 for this year's school play – a spectacular performance of Grease.

The popular film and musical, which was originally made in 1978, was performed brilliantly by pupils at the school with individuals from across the school taking on roles. The two leading characters, Sandy and Danny were played by Will Macgregor and Sarah Calvert. Will mastered the 'Danny Zuko' swaggered perfectly and hit the notes perfectly in each of his musical performances. Likewise, Sarah Calvert brilliantly captured the naivety of Sandy and captivated the audience with her solo scenes. Throughout the performance there was a perfect balance of humour which kept the audience entertained throughout. Strong performances from Catherine Barr as Rizzo, Jack Stephenson as Kenicke and Asha Nicholson as Frenchy

were incredible. A last minute panic saw Lizzie Potter, due to play Marty, have to pull out due to illness on the day of the first performance. Stepping into her shoes, Sarah Hughes took on the role flawlessly whilst also taking on her original role of Cha-Cha Digregorio who pulled off some amazing dance moves at the 'school dance'.

Jack Stephenson who played Kenicke is the School's Deputy Head Boy, he said: "The best part of the play was the opening night, simply because we started on a high. The hardest part for me was the dancing as I wouldn't consider myself to be built for dancing. Although it was hard to pick up it was still enjoyable and there were a few giggles on the way. The memories I will take from this are indescribable, I wish I could do it all again!"

Students from all years got involved in the production and equally as important as those acting in the play were those who

worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Students were involved in hair and make up, dance and choreography, stage management, lighting and sound. Enhancing the performance throughout was the live band, which was made up of pupils from across the school as well as music teachers, who introduced each scene and accompanied the singers throughout. The production had many highlights throughout from the fantastic individual acting performances and the captivating singing but one scene in particular stood out for many. The 'Beauty School Drop Out' scene saw guest appearances from some of the teachers led by Mr Barr the Deputy Headmaster who were all dressed as 'Teen Angels' to serenade 'Frenchy' – a big hit with the audience.

Sarah Calvert, who played Sandy is in her final year at the School. She said: "I loved every part of being in Grease, from the earliest rehearsals right through until the

final performance. I will not only be left with amazing memories of the performances themselves, but also hilarious dance rehearsal memories – I think it's fair to say the dancing didn't come naturally to most of us!"

Catherine Barr who played Rizzo said: "Performing in 'Grease' was undoubtedly one of the best things I have done at School. The stress and chaotic running about during all the rehearsals over the past four months was all part and parcel of what turned out to be a fantastic show, and I wouldn't have changed any of it! I have loved every minute of putting together the production and just hope everyone who came to watch it enjoyed it as much as we all did putting it on. Definitely a time in School I'll never forget".

Mr Malcolm Judge is the School's Head of Drama and directed the performance he said simply: "It was the best first night performance since I have been involved in."

Julie Sutherland

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