

The Catholic VOICE *of Lancaster*

The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster
Issue 286 + February 2017

INSIDE: p04 Lourdes 2017
p18 How can I
'offer it up'?



Deacon Daniel with his family following his ordination to the Diaconate by Bishop Campbell last December.

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Congratulations Daniel! Ordained to the Diaconate

Prayer for Vocations

God our Father,
You give us the Sacraments as signs and instruments
of your love and mercy.
Draw from amongst your disciples in the Diocese of Lancaster men
who are willing to generously serve your Church as priests,
to minister to your people and to proclaim the Gospel to all.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen

Our Lady of Lourdes, patroness of our diocese, Pray for us
St John Vianney, patron of priests, Pray for us

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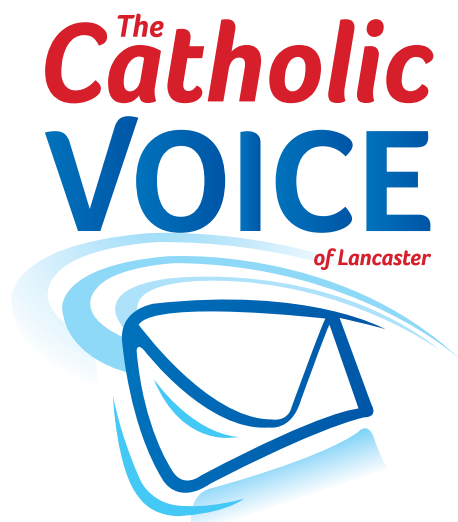
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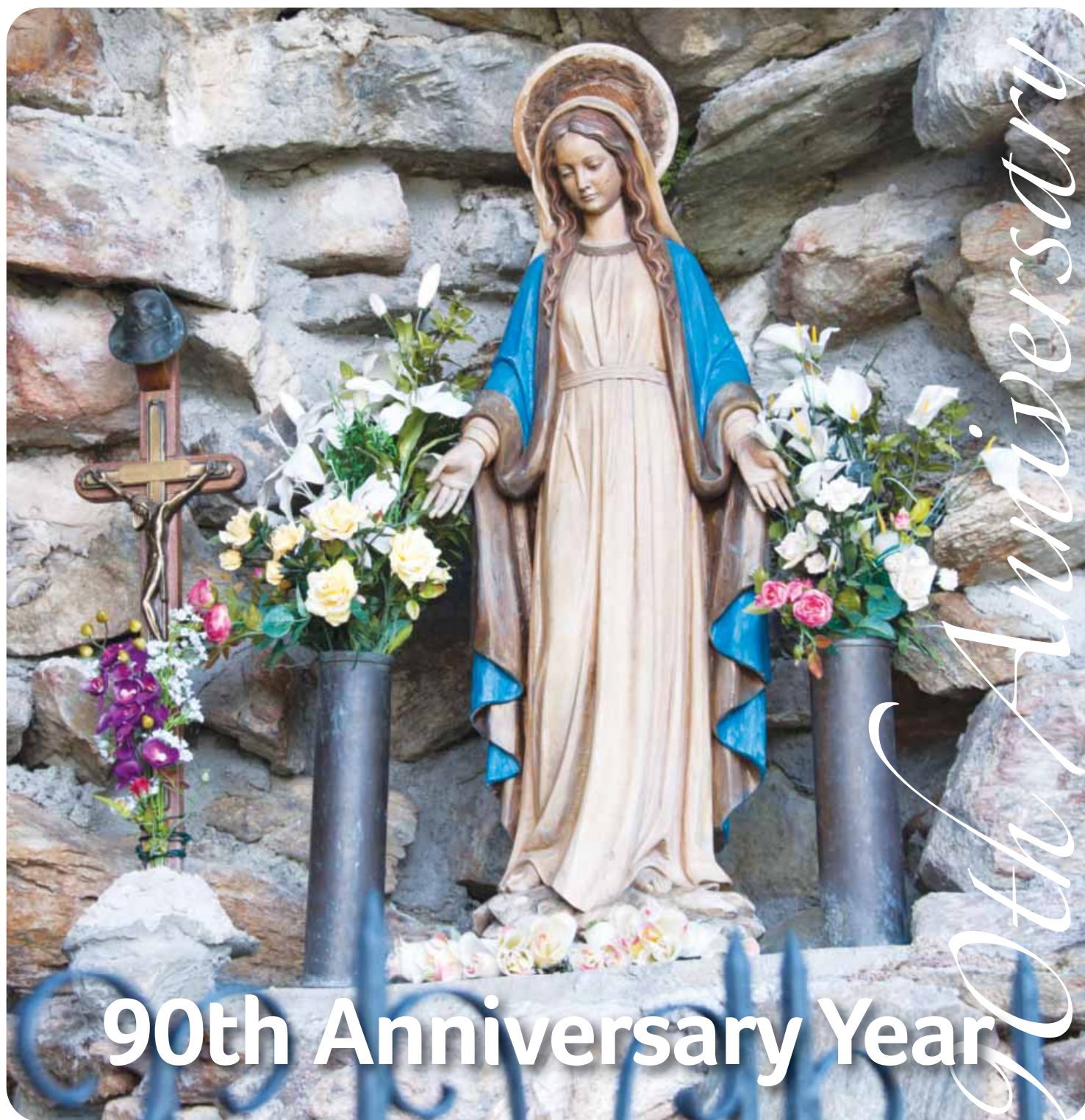
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This year is the 90th Anniversary of the very first Diocese of Lancaster Lourdes Pilgrimage. You are called to come on pilgrimage 21st – 28th July 2017 and become a part of Diocesan history.

COME TO LOURDES IN 2017!

My dear Parishioners,

This year, is the 90th Anniversary of the very first official Lancaster Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes and we want to mark this celebration with a wonderful 2017 pilgrimage - full of grace and numbers!

The theme for the year is: *"The Almighty has done great things for me!"* Indeed, He does great things for us His pilgrims coming to this holy place. Whether you are sick, in mind or body, healthy seeking direction or wanting to give thanks or are able to give service to others, I invite you all to come and share in the Lourdes experience.

In Lourdes, we come in response to an invitation, the invitation of Our Blessed Lady to 'come in Procession', to give praise to Almighty God, to meet the Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, to serve and care for the sick, to go to Confession, to hear the Gospel afresh and to be given fresh heart in making known His Kingdom here on earth.

No matter our story, Mary invites us to come to Lourdes to pray, give thanks and to find our steps along the pilgrim path of serving the Lord. So I invite you to come...come to Lourdes – you will not be disappointed. The Almighty will do great things for you!

As ever in Christ,
+ Michael Campbell OSA, Bishop of Lancaster

Preparations for this celebratory year are already well under way.

Members of the Pilgrimage Planning Committee are working hard to finely plan a fruitful week for all. You will have the opportunity of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Benediction, Rosary, Blessed Sacrament & Marian Processions and more, all delivered in the beautiful surroundings of the Blessed Grotto, Chapels & Basilicas within the Sanctuary of the Domain.

Sick pilgrims are cared for by our dedicated Medical Team who are supported by Brancardier (*male helpers*) and Youth Volunteers. We have a professional and comprehensive structure, which enables us to take very sick pilgrims. Volunteering to serve our sick is both a rewarding and wonderful experience. We welcome old and new volunteers alike.



To register your interest as a brancardier please email the Chief Brancardier, Sean McMahon – chiefbrancardier@lancasterlourdes.co.uk

To register your interest as a sick pilgrim or Nurse/Doctor/Carer please contact the Chief Nurse, Nikki Wisdom on **07872468743** or email chiefnurse@lancasterlourdes.co.uk

If there is someone sick in your parish or local care home who would benefit from coming on pilgrimage, please encourage him or her to come this year.

To book on the pilgrimage please contact Tangney Tours:
www.tangney-tours.com
Tel: **01732 886666**



Harvest Tea

After the Diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2013, two pilgrims from St Wulstan's & St Edmund's Parish in Fleetwood wanted to help the Palestinian Christians there.

The position of these Christians is particularly precarious as they receive no state aid. There is neither health service nor a state pension.

Indeed, their numbers diminish every year and this is where Christianity was born and where Christ carried out his saving mission.

A willing band of talented and imaginative parishioners was formed and over the last three years a series of afternoon teas has raised £4619 which has been sent to the excellent charity, Friends of the Holy Land.

The latest venture, a Harvest Tea, raised £680 which will be donated to the School of Joy in Bethlehem. *Maria Doherty*



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Getting ready for Lourdes 2017

We are excited to be preparing for the 90th Anniversary Lourdes Pilgrimage this summer. For many years the Youth Section has been an integral part of the Diocesan Pilgrimage, bringing people from all over the Diocese to share in the joys and blessings of Lourdes.

For many of the young people who join the pilgrimage Lourdes is a special experience: faith is renewed and strengthened, and friendships are formed that last a lifetime. One pilgrim from 2016 wrote of his experience:

There was no better way to spend a week of my summer than visiting Lourdes representing the Lancaster youth and assisting the sick and elderly on pilgrimage during The Year of Mercy 2016.

With a chance to work autonomously amongst my peers, there was always a positive, spirited and joyous atmosphere every hour of each day. To be surrounded by such beauty which the Catholic church has created in such a beautiful place, it was a privilege to be under the guidance of the Castlerigg Manor team and to assist the other pilgrims who captured the hearts of all the youth. (Sam, 18)

Young pilgrims join in with all aspects of the diocesan pilgrimage, coming together each day for prayer and the sacraments, as well as social times. They work hard in Lourdes, assisting those who need help to get about; the spirit of Lourdes means that many find this the most rewarding aspect of the pilgrimage. In the months before the pilgrimage we meet up to get to know each other, learn about the

story of Lourdes, practice some of the practicalities, e.g. pushing wheelchairs, and praying for a successful pilgrimage.

In 2017 we are very pleased that we are able to add to our itinerary a day in Nevers, where St Bernadette (to whom Our Lady appeared at Lourdes) spent most of her adult life in a convent.

Today St Bernadette's relics are in the church in Nevers and we will have the opportunity to learn more about her life. The day in Nevers will also ensure we all have time to get to know each other better before entering into the busyness of Lourdes.

The Youth Section departs by coach on Wednesday 19th July 2017, arriving in Nevers on Thursday morning. We spend a

night in a hotel in Nevers before travelling to Lourdes on the Friday morning to join the larger diocesan pilgrimage in the Hotel Eliseo (4*). The following Friday we leave Lourdes by coach, arriving home on Saturday 29th July. The pilgrimage costs £650 per person.

Places have already started to fill up, book online on the Events page at www.castleriggmanor.co.uk, or get in touch team@castleriggmanor.co.uk or phone **017687 72711** for more information.

Places are also available on the flight with the main pilgrimage group for an additional charge.

We'd also be delighted to hear from you if you feel you could sponsor or support our young people to make this pilgrimage.





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South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership (SLEDP) presented a talk by Monsignor Francis Slattery on Interfaith on Thursday 17th November at The Kendal Quaker Friends Meeting House. The talk led to an interesting discussion on interfaith.

The Deputy Mayor of Kendal Councillor Andy Blackman made presentations of books on behalf of SLEDP, to Monsignor Slattery and to Mrs Elizabeth Blaney from the Roman Catholic Church in Windermere who has provided support for Monsignor Slattery's interfaith work.

SLEDP member Jacquetta Gomes gave a short talk on BEWES (Buddhists Engaged with Emergency Services) and Faith and Fire. The interfaith event was followed by a presentation by Hidden Stories an oral history heritage project.

Interfaith Week



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At the beginning of October Year 6 from St Peter's School Lytham went on a special pilgrimage through Lancaster, singing hymns and eventually reaching Lancaster Cathedral. Here we went through the Door of Mercy, receiving a special blessing which we brought back to school to share with the rest of the school. We did this by preparing a worship based on our pilgrimage and this was taken to each class. Cath Kelly, Deputy Head Teacher



Your Letters

Send us your letters:

Write to:

The Editor, 99, Commonsides, Ansdell,
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Email to:

voiceletters@hotmail.co.uk

- 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,

Wars in the Middle East, refugees and migrants fleeing their homes- many drowning in the Med-, corruption at all levels of society and the cult of "self" everywhere; one could be forgiven for thinking that the world was going to hell in a hand cart!

Then one opens up the **Catholic Voice** and reads of the wonderful young people there are- not just from the Diocese but all over the world, who are living out the Christian Faith in lives full of hope for the future. They may not be doing it in a way that many of us "oldies" are familiar with but that doesn't matter, they are the future of the Church and they are making their voices heard. Good for them I say, they are an example to us all!

Chris Crocker, Ansdell

Dear Editor,

It was interesting to read in the November edition of Mr & Mrs Farrell's move to Larmenier Village.

I was also interested to see a large image of St John Bosco and read that Mr & Mrs Farrell are supporters of the Salesian family as I am. St John Bosco is the patron saint of young people. The sad thing is that today apart from the Salesian schools and colleges how many children have heard of the saint.

Don Bosco is needed more than ever today to help our young people in this modern world with so many temptations thrown at them.

St John Bosco pray for our young people.

Ruth Pine, Fleetwood

Dear Editor,

Last September Mrs Marian Nicholson of St Joseph's Wesham celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. Marian has lived through the Pontificates of nine Popes!

Marian has been a parishioner in Kirkham and close by Westby before settling in Wesham for the greater part of her married life. On the eve of her special birthday I was privileged, as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, to take her Holy Communion. I was accompanied by Fr Andrew Broster who presented Marian with a bouquet of flowers, a Papal Blessing and a Rosary personally blessed by Pope Francis, just as we were leaving a courier arrived with a birthday card for Marian from the Queen – a truly special occasion.

John Baldwin, Wesham



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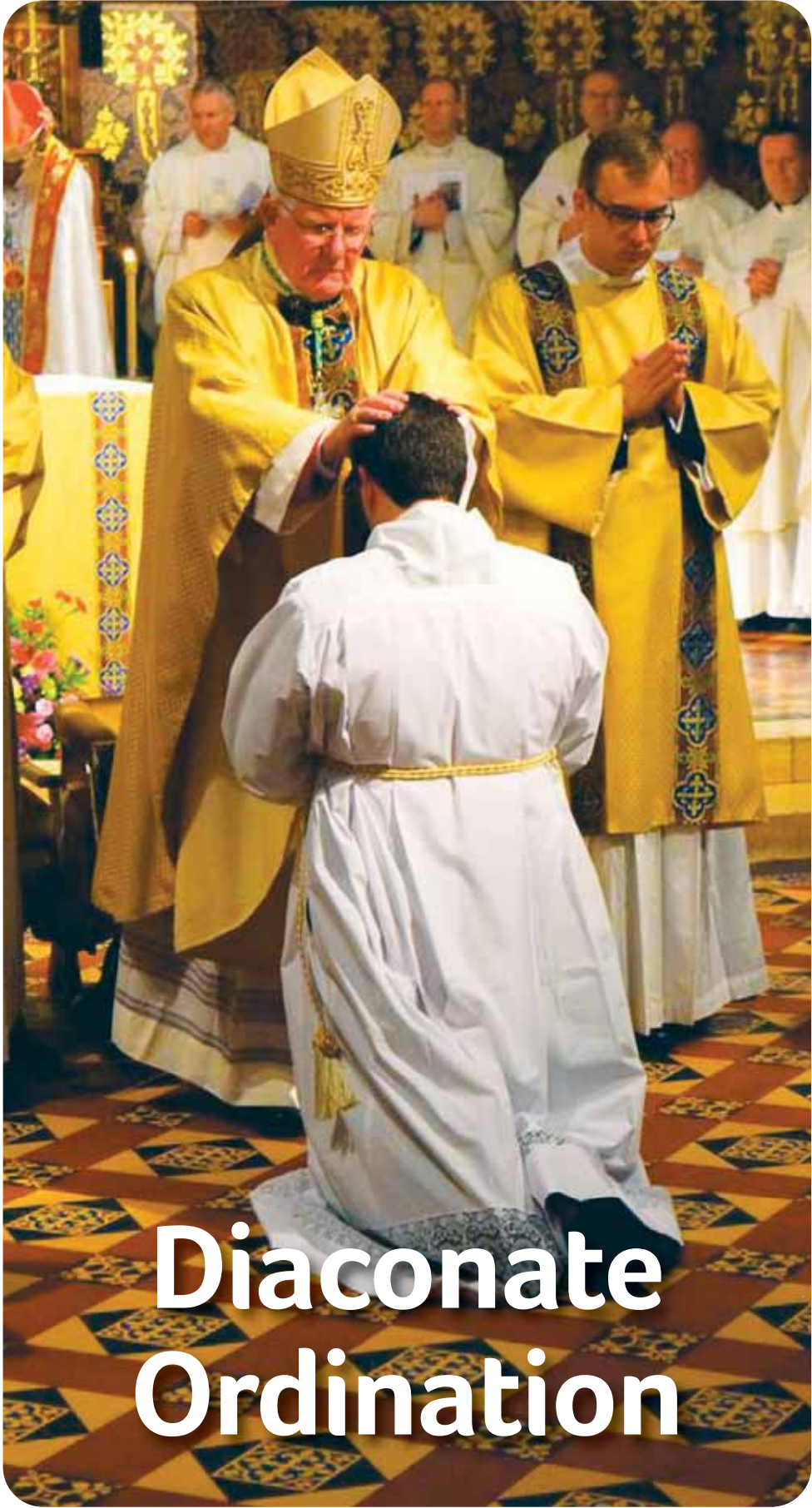
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Diaconate Ordination

The 8th December 2016 saw the ordination to the Diaconate of Daniel Etienne at St. Mary's College, Oscott. The liturgical celebration in the presence of nearly 60 students, Daniel's family from Jersey and some friends from the Diocese marked the culmination of five and a half years of formation in Rome, Oscott and our own Diocese of Lancaster.

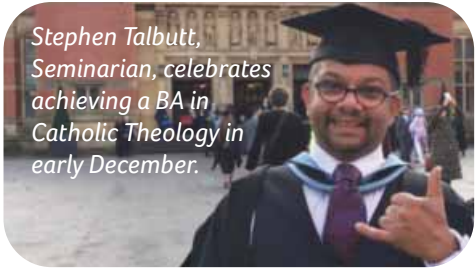
In his Homily Bishop Campbell speaking directly to Daniel said:

"Mary declared herself to be the handmaid of the Lord, and the strong Greek word is noteworthy here, for it means slave or servant-girl. Our Lady was going to be devoted totally to the service of Lord, and of course to his people. Daniel, you will be marked for life as a deacon, like Mary a servant at the disposal of others. In a real sense from now on your life won't be your own. One of the most moving scenes in the gospel is the Last Supper setting, recorded by the Evangelist Luke (Lk 22:24-27). At this most critical moment we find the disciples arguing among themselves as to who was

the greatest (how wide off the mark can you be!). The Lord proceeded to instruct them that in his kingdom true greatness meant being a servant, and added that he stood among them as a diakonos, as one who serves, and we know where his diaconal ministry would lead him."

Daniel's ordination to the Diaconate marks, in his case, the last stage of his formation before his ordination, please God, to the Sacred Priesthood later this year, (Lancaster Cathedral, 1 July, 12:15pm).

Please continue to pray for Daniel and for our other seminarians Stephen, Stuart and Philip and for more vocations to the Priesthood for our Diocese of Lancaster.



Stephen Talbutt, Seminarian, celebrates achieving a BA in Catholic Theology in early December.



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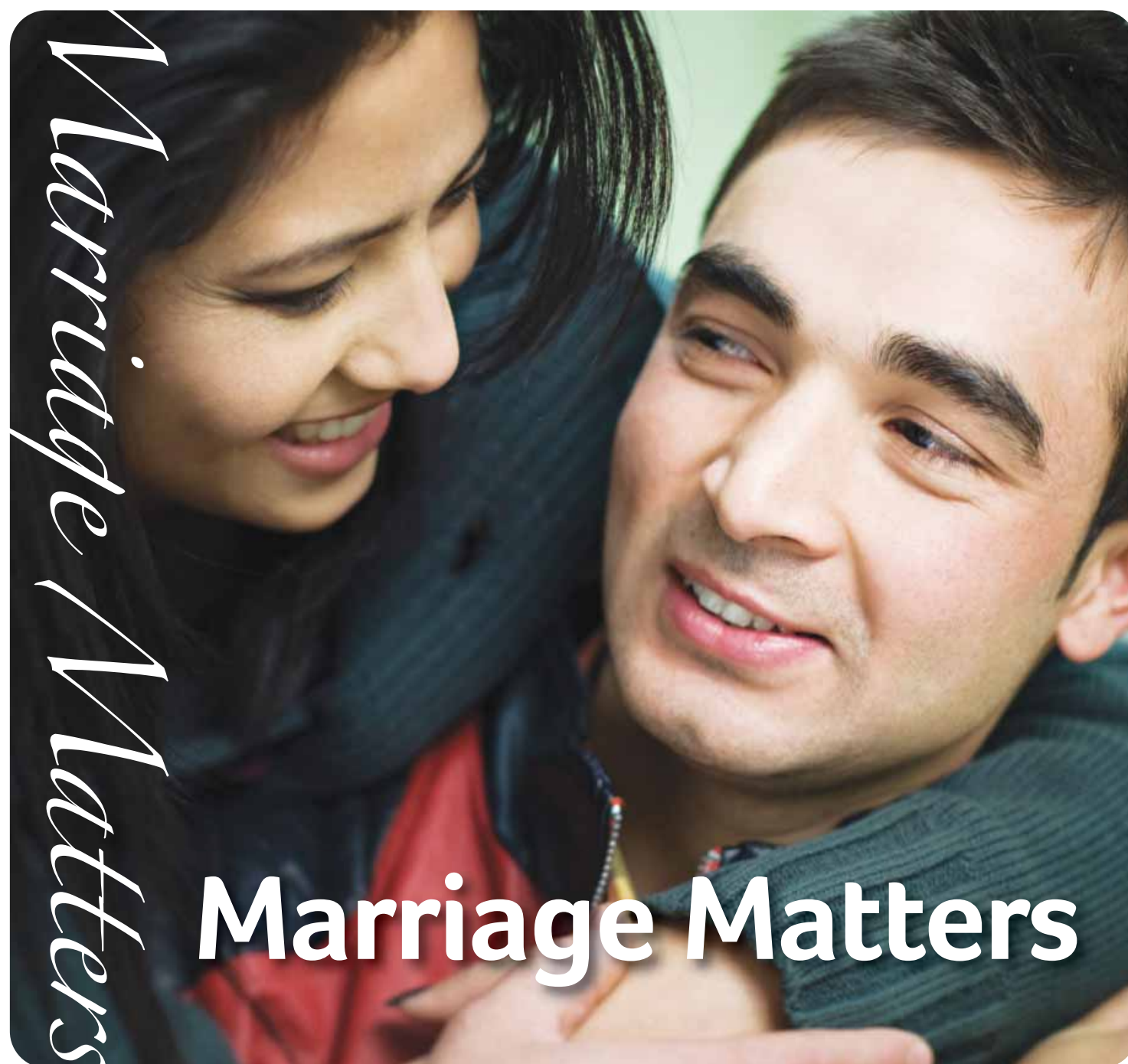
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Marriage Matters

The latest resource for those parishes interested in supporting married couples who attend Mass is now available.

Marriage Matters Year A can now be downloaded free from the following website: www.twoinoneflesh.org.uk. This completes the trilogy of Scripture based reflections on the weekly Mass readings.

Once downloaded, in either PDF or Word doc format, the reflections can easily be inserted in parish newsletters and/or put on any website.

This year's foreword has been written by Archbishop Bernard Longley, who comments: "As we know, the Holy Scriptures feed and nourish our faith and help us to grow in our relationship with God and one another."

It is for this reason that I am immensely grateful to all those involved in *Marriage Matters* who have collaborated on this series of scriptural reflections. I know that these reflections will enable married couples to focus on the richness of God's Word that we hear proclaimed during the Sundays of the Year and to experience the deep joy of God's love expressed through the Sacrament of Marriage."

Brian and Maureen Devine, coordinators of 'Two In One' Flesh, said "We are happy to hear that parishes throughout the country have used the previous editions of *Marriage Matters*. Given the current secular attitudes to marriage, Mass going married couples need all the help and inspiration they can get, that is why our group's work is freely available and easy to use."

Brian & Maureen Devine

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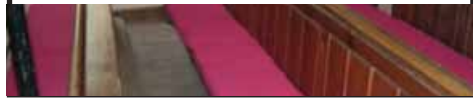
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Voluntary Overseas Program

In March this year I travelled to Kathmandu, Nepal to work with an organisation called Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). Before embarking on this adventure I had to raise £800, all of which goes direct to the charity to allow them to continue to fund their projects in developing countries. I'd like to say a huge thank you to the Catenians Association for their incredible donation of £600, which helped me to absolutely smash my target and raise a grand total of £1476 for VSO!

Let me tell you a little bit about my time in Nepal and the work that this money contributed to.

Nallu, a tiny rural village in the Kathmandu valley, became my home where I lived and worked for 3 months. I stayed with a lovely Nepalese family in a small mud house in the foothills of the Himalayas, with no running water (*but plenty of goats and chickens*)! Nallu, like many areas of Nepal, was badly affected by the 2015 earthquakes, and a large proportion of the population had seen their homes damaged or destroyed. My host family themselves had been sleeping in a metal earthquake shelter since the natural disaster struck.

The community of Nallu relied largely on agriculture and animal husbandry for their income, and so the purpose of my work placement was to help develop sustainable livelihood opportunities for the local people post-earthquake, as well as working in the school and using our budget to benefit the community in whatever way they needed. I worked alongside a local partner organisation to facilitate some great projects in Nallu that I hope the community will continue to benefit from for years to come. We held training sessions in cauliflower and chilli farming to enable the local women's group to expand the growth of their produce to sell at the local markets; we provided goat-rearing training to allow households to farm more efficiently; we organised a disaster risk-reduction session to educate children and adults on how best to minimise risks in the case of future earthquakes; and we hired an engineer to come to the village to teach people how they can use biogas to generate electricity in their homes. In the local school we created a new library and supplied sports equipment, and we held an art competition to raise awareness about environmental issues affecting Nepal.

In rural communities such as Nallu, child marriage persists as

a huge problem, particularly affecting young girls. It leads to a whole host of problems such as children missing out on an education due to dropping out of school, health issues resulting from early pregnancy, domestic abuse, and it perpetuates the cycle of poverty. One of my most worthwhile experiences in Nepal was holding an education awareness day in the local school to combat the prevalence of child marriage, by encouraging families to keep their children in school and to empower the students to pursue an education and follow their dreams. We held workshops on how to write a CV and offered careers advice, and also had a great time playing volleyball and encouraging equal gender participation in sport.

I will take away many amazing memories, but my time in Nepal was certainly not without its challenges. My host family didn't speak a word of English, so we communicated with big hand gestures, the odd Nepali word I'd picked up, but mostly a lot of smiles and awkward laughter! However, when I became sick with a stomach parasite, they couldn't understand why I wasn't eating their daily dal bhat (*lentils and rice*), and believed I'd fallen foul of a 'bad spirit'! They insisted on calling the village witchdoctor to come to my aid, who performed a type of 'exorcism' on me to banish this spirit and make me well again! Whether it was this ritual, or the medicine I got from the hospital, I guess I will never know – but I eventually returned to normal and now look back on the whole thing as a truly authentic rural Nepali experience!

All in all, I spent an amazing, challenging and rewarding 3 months in Nepal. I will always remember the kind spirit and humour of the Nepalese people, and their resilience in the face of the earthquakes is truly something to be admired. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to live and work in such a vibrant country, and I thank the Catenians once again for helping me get there.

Tom Rigby of the Catenians said: "In the months prior to going to Nepal Hannah organised a number of fund raising projects in connection with her forthcoming work, one such project was to raise money so she could purchase books, pens and pencils to help towards the children's education in Nepal after arriving there."

Tom continued "Unfortunately Hannah did encounter a number of health problems while out in Nepal and had to take medication for a while after returning home. She has fully recovered now."

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Liturgical and Music Formation

Parishes and schools now have a new resource to call upon for their Liturgical and Musical formation.

Maria Hall has 26 years' experience as a primary teacher and she is also the Organist and Director of Music at St Wilfrid's Church, Preston. Maria first studied Pastoral Liturgy at the National Centre for Liturgy, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland. She was one of the first students to receive a Higher Diploma in Pastoral Liturgy under the guidance of Fr Patrick Jones. She returned to complete a Master's Degree in Theology, specialising in Liturgy. Maria explains why she is taking this big step:

'I want to share my passion for Liturgy with parishes and schools. With an informed understanding of what good Liturgy is, our prayer lives would be transformed. Understanding is the key to being fully immersed in the prayer of the Church and so to a closer relationship with God. It is what Vatican II meant by 'Active Participation.'

I want to reach people with a down to earth approach. I give multimedia presentations and always try to include humour where possible. Liturgists have a good sense of humour!

But the message is serious. 'Liturgy should not be a secret. We need to know what we should be doing and why we are doing it! The liturgical reforms of the 20th Century were immense and we need to keep learning in order to fully benefit from them.'

Maria has been leading school Inset sessions and Parish Courses for many years and has now taken the decision to do it on a full time basis. Her keynote course is 'Source and Summit', a major

3 week parish exploration into the Eucharist. It charts the development from the Early Christian Church to the present day. It also explores the structure of today's Eucharistic Celebration and the role of various parish ministries, addressing practical issues.

She has also led parish formation for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Readers, Musicians, and Altar Servers. Parishes may wish to engage with her in setting up a Bread Baking Ministry!

Using her teaching skills, and time spent as a Leading RE teacher in the Diocese of Salford, Maria is also advising on all aspects of Primary RE and providing faith development for staff.

One course member says: "She has this wonderful knack of making you feel completely at ease with religion, wherever you are on your faith journey. She shares her faith and knowledge with enthusiasm and sensitivity."

A high school chaplain says, "Maria is a real breath of fresh air - engaging, honest, down to earth and inspiring. It is evident that Maria has travelled a long path to reach where she is now, and the Spirit is certainly alive in her!"

Maria hopes to travel to parishes and schools and is happy to discuss individual requirements. You can join in all matters Liturgical on the Facebook group 'Pastoral Liturgy.' More details can be found online at www.mariahall.org or by emailing: info@mariahall.org


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Is There Any Room? - Can we live up to Pope Francis' call to welcome refugees

This was the challenge for all who came to the Women Together in the Diocese of Lancaster Advent day of prayer and reflection at Our Lady and St Edward's Social Centre, Preston. The day was led by Father Hugh Pollock, parish priest in Kendal, who is the Chair of the Diocesan Faith and Justice Commission and co-ordinator for refugees in our diocese.

Aware that for a long time now the media have overwhelmed us with images and statistics depicting what is called 'the current refugee crisis', Father Hugh invited us simply to imagine what life is like for just one person. What is it like to be a mother or grandmother now in besieged Aleppo? You live in a cellar, trying to feed your children and protect them, get medical help, with all former comforts long gone, no support, only dirt, dust, danger and no water. How would we feel and think? What would we hope for? All this happens where people who were once neighbours have become enemies, where you are not wanted, where there is no work, no accommodation. Yet it is precisely to such contemporary experiences that the Gospel accounts of Jesus' early life can speak.

We then explored in detail the account in Matthew's Gospel of the Flight into Egypt. We saw how it relates closely to what is happening in our world today. This is where God has chosen to come and live as a human being in such circumstances. So we need to ask ourselves what God is saying to us now, through this living Word, when we find people living through the same experiences of violence, danger and exile.

In our interconnected and interdependent world, especially in the complexities of global economics, we are, often unknowingly, implicated in what is causing this huge upheaval of peoples and mass migration. Yet we build walls and fences to keep them out. We suffer from what Pope Francis calls the 'globalization of indifference.' So this Christmas the telling of the story of the birth of Jesus, when there was 'no room in the inn,' surely challenges us:

Is our door open or shut?

Mass was celebrated at midday, a memorial Mass for Father Joe Geoghan MHM, who died earlier this year and who had been a wonderful priest liaison for Women Together in the past.

In the afternoon Father Hugh presented us with a wealth of information on refugees and asylum seekers. We learned about the Government's Syrian Resettlement Programme to bring 20,000 to the United Kingdom. We heard about voluntary Community Partnership Schemes and what is happening in a Manchester parish for example, as well as in Preston, Lancaster and Blackpool where local initiatives have been set up.

In the present climate of anti-immigration feeling and racist behaviour, violence perpetrated on innocent individuals even, we have a responsibility to be courageous, to speak out and to act in whatever ways are possible to us on behalf of these brothers and sisters of our 'one single human family' as Pope Francis reminds us. This was the challenge of the day.

Philomena Grimley SHCJ

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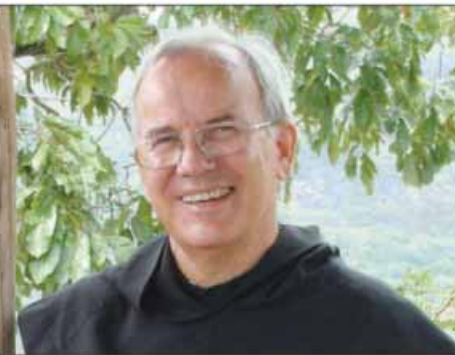


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Papal honours for combined 137 years of service to the Church

As the church organist at St Mary's, Morecambe, Lancashire for the last 70 years, Mrs Winefride ('Win') Ward is used to pulling out all the stops. But on this occasion, it was her church that did so, presenting her with the highest papal recognition for her long service to the parish.

Pope Francis has conferred on Win the *Holy Cross Medal* – the top honour that can be awarded by the Roman Catholic Church to the laity by the papacy. At the same time, her younger sister, Mrs Frances Burton, has also been awarded the *Bene Merenti* medal, ("well-deserving"), for her services to the church choir.

The Holy Cross or *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* ("for the Church and the Pontiff") medal is given for distinguished service. In the Lancaster Diocese, this award is given out only once every two or three years.

The Bishop of Lancaster, Rt Rev Michael Campbell, presented the papal awards to the two sisters on Sunday 16 October during the 10.30am Mass at St Mary's, Morecambe, where Mrs Ward and Mrs Burton have been life-long parishioners. This was followed by a small reception afterwards in the church hall.

Win, as she is known to all, started to play the organ at St Mary's on Easter Sunday, 21 April 1946. She finally retired in October 2015, as she approached her 89th birthday, after 69-and-a-half years of almost unbroken service. In fact, except for occasional holidays, the only time Win was unable to play was when each of her five children were born. And it was only when she found herself playing "*The Wedding March*" for the grandchildren of couples whose weddings she had played

for back in the 40s and 50s, that she decided it was time to declare, after an innings which had spanned 8 decades!

At the age of 19, Winefride Duckworth (as she was in those days) was already an accomplished pianist in her own right when she served a six-week apprenticeship during Lent in 1946 under Mr Doyle, the previous organist, who had retired to Morecambe from Blackburn. During those 6 weeks, Mr Doyle gave Win daily lessons on the organ after the 8.15am Mass. Her mother, Veronica, used to stay behind and hand-pump the organ for her, since this was in the days before the organ was electrically operated.

To start her long career, Win learned four hymns and the 'O Salutaris' and the 'Tantum Ergo' – two staple hymns for Benediction in those days. But her repertoire rapidly extended to include the full range from the reflective strains of 'Panis Angelicus' and 'Ave Verum' right through to Widor's majestic 'Toccata' ... and even on one occasion, for a very modern bride, the 'Star Wars' theme as her entrance voluntary.

So what are Win's main memories of these 69 years? Once, she recalls, she found herself playing at the wedding of a couple who had met in the police force. Midway through Mendelssohn's Wedding March, on their way back down the aisle, she transitioned seamlessly into the theme tune from "Z Cars", a popular police drama at the time! But that wasn't the only thing to cause the congregation a wry smile on that occasion; many of the guests, mainly police, had parked in the municipal car park across the road from the church, only to discover at the end of the wedding service that they had all

received parking tickets.

Win was often called upon to play at other churches than her own. Early in her career, she played for her brother's wedding in a church at the other end of town – St Patrick's. Immediately after it finished, she took a taxi back to her own church to play for another wedding. Later that same evening, she went into hospital to have her first baby. Talk about cutting it fine!

As well as playing the organ for about three and a half thousand Sunday Masses, Win has played at more baptisms, first communions, weddings and funerals than she can remember. In addition to making their actual wedding day special, Win has often played the wedding march for couples on their anniversary at the end of daily Mass, and she has regularly struck up "*Happy Birthday*" to recognise landmark birthdays for older members of the congregation.

This occasion was a double family celebration, since Win's sister, Frances Burton received the *Bene Merenti* medal for her 68 years in the choir, during the last 42 of which she served as choirmistress. The *Bene Merenti* Medal is an honour awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for service to the Catholic Church. Frances joined the choir at the age of 11 in 1947 and was choir mistress from 1973 until 2015.

Win and Frances come from a musical family. Their father, James Duckworth, was a cellist in the Hallé Orchestra in the 1920s and their mother, Veronica, sang in early radio programmes from Manchester for the BBC. Veronica also sang in the church choir from 1920. Their older sister,

Teresa, sang for many years with the Sadler's Wells Opera Company.

Canon Dunstan Cooper, their parish priest, nominated both women for these awards, which then required further approval by Bishop Campbell and by the Apostolic Nuncio to the UK, Archbishop Antonio Mennini, with the ultimate approval of Pope Francis himself.

Pope Leo XIII established the Holy Cross medal in 1888 to commemorate his golden anniversary. It was originally bestowed on women and men who aided and promoted the jubilee and by other means helped in making the jubilee and Vatican Exposition successful.

The parish of St Mary's was created in 1895 and is now 121 years old. Win's 69 year reign as organist means she was in that role for more than half of the lifetime of the parish! During these last 69 years, Win has played the organ under four parish priests: Frs Arthur Clayton, Gregory Turner, Harry Holden and now Dunstan Cooper.

The Guinness Book of Records shows the longest tenure as a church pianist / organist is 80 years 188 days, achieved earlier this year by Alice Gurney Eitle (USA), who had played at Union Pisgah United Methodist Church, in Attica, Ohio, USA, since 1935. Wikipedia reveals that the person holding the world record as church organist is a Martha Godwin, 87, who has been consecutively playing the organ at Macedonia United Methodist Church in Southmont County for 73 years.

Does Win hold the record in this country, we wonder?

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This year's Easter story

A whole school 'Mission of Mercy' day held in November at Corpus Christi Catholic High School in Preston was the culmination of a year-long programme of activities planned to mark the Holy Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The usual school timetable was replaced for the day with a retreat programme organised by the school's Chaplain John Griffin. The day began with a whole school liturgy in the sports hall and an introduction to the day led by Franciscan Sister of The Renewal, Sr Faustina, who encouraged pupils to 'Be joyful because today is about the opportunity to meet Jesus; he wants to get to know you and he wants to help you'.

Fr Frankie Mulgrew, one of a thousand priests designated by Pope Francis as 'Missionaries of Mercy' for this Holy Jubilee Year, led a reflection on the theme 'Blessed are the merciful'. Speaking about the 'merciful' Mother Teresa, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati and St Thérèse of Lisieux he told the community of Corpus Christi that 'when you know how much God loves you – it changes you. You never lose your value in God's eyes.' He then encouraged everyone to 'Follow Jesus, be merciful. By being merciful you can set the world on fire!'

Later in the morning pupils were able to choose from a programme of eighteen different workshops. Pupils had been asked to talk to each other during form discussions the previous week to consider which workshops they wanted to take part in. The workshops included: 'Does forgiveness set you free?' (Castlerigg Youth Team); 'Power of Prayer' (John Hesketh); 'How 'cool' is Mercy?' (Fr Liam Finnerty); 'Showing Mercy in Syria and Iraq' (Dr Caroline Hull of Aid to the Church in Need); 'Sacraments of Mercy' (Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal); 'Mad, bad or God?' (Deacon Gavin Landers); and 'Catch more than Pokémon! How to find God's presence in your life' (Fr Matthew Power and Piotr Stanowski).

Following the workshops everyone gathered in the school sports hall, to listen to Sister Catherine Holum, a Franciscan Sister of the Renewal, who spoke about 'My life in your hands'. Sister Catherine initially described her sporting ambitions, especially with her parents being accomplished speed skaters. She became the youngest ever USA Junior Champion Speed Skater and loved her sports. The Olympics beckoned but she confessed that she still felt something was missing in her life.



Always having a strong faith Sister Catherine embarked on a pilgrimage to Fatima and in 2002 she took part in the World Youth Day in Toronto. It was this her experience of World Youth Day that convinced her that there was more to life than sport. After completing a Photography degree at university she joined the Franciscan Community in 2003 and instantly knew that she had found peace and joy. Sister Catherine became a Religious Sister in 2010 and said ‘when I entered I knew I had found home; I now belong to God forever, a bride of Jesus Christ’.

Sister Faustina then gave an explanation of adoration and procession of the Blessed Sacrament and then invited those who wanted to take confession to come into the life of Jesus and receive his mercy.

Accompanied by musicians from Youth 2000, Sister Chiara exquisitely sang to create an ideal atmosphere for personal prayer and reflection.

In the afternoon staff, pupils and visitors gathered in the sports hall for Mass. Before Mass began, Sister Faustina encouraged all pupils to participate fully

in the celebration; ‘God will do the rest’, she said. Mass was celebrated by Fr John with many other priests who had provided workshops earlier in the day concelebrating. The decorated sports hall provided a perfect backdrop with its large cross adorned with blue and red ribbons of mercy. The Gospel reading, the Prodigal Son, was read by Fr Pushpa, with bidding prayers read by our Senior Prefects. During his homily Fr Frankie Mulgrew reflected on the Gospel and emphasised that ‘God will never give up on you.’ Concluding his homily Fr Frankie told a very touching story of a young women he met many years ago in deep depression. He committed to continually pray for her. Fr Frankie then described how the young lady met him many years later, completely transformed and full of life, confessing that from the day they had met she had gradually improved in health and wellbeing.

The ‘Mission of Mercy’ day was a unique experience for everyone at Corpus Christi and provided an invaluable opportunity for both staff and pupils to find space during the very busy autumn term, to reflect in a deeper way on the theme of mercy and to grow in faith.

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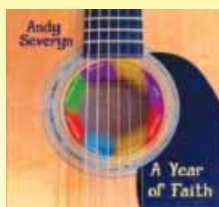


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Christ the King High School - community comes together to celebrate and worship

The school community of Christ the King Catholic High School in Preston came together on November 18th for a joint celebration. Staff, students and governors welcomed Headteachers and pupils from the primary schools of St. Augustine's, St. Teresa's, St. Joseph's and St. Ignatius for a Mass to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King and to recognise the end of the Year of Mercy.

Fr Matthew Power from St. Wilfrid's Church in Preston spoke in his homily about the fantastic diversity of the school and how it is so important in our world today for us to come together as God's family, following the example of Jesus as one who unites and brings people together. This was certainly an occasion which demonstrated how powerful it can

be when a community comes together to recognise and worship the greatness of our "King".

As part of its actions for the Year of Mercy each Tutor Group in the school has been collecting items of food since the start of the school year. It was lovely to see the incredible generosity shown as the items were brought forward as part of the offertory at Mass. Afterwards the goods were distributed to some of the more needy members of the community.

Before the school returned to normal service the students enjoyed an extended break time and the opportunity to support a CAFOD cake sale whilst guests took the time to enjoy refreshments and to reflect upon a wonderful celebration.

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Finding God in the Vacuuming

by Julia Beacroft

I've recently been to Cornwall to visit two dear friends. We had a great 'catch-up' over lunch, bringing each other up to speed about what had been going on in our lives since we had last met. And it wasn't long before I was asked about my 'parish activities'.

Yes, I was still doing catechesis and yes I was still singing and reading, I replied when asked, and then volunteered the information that strangely I was still really enjoying doing the church 'care' or cleaning each week, which I shared with one or two other parishioners. 'It seems a bit odd actually', I mused, 'but pushing the vacuum around the sanctuary area of the church, while enjoying the tranquil atmosphere seems to really do it for me. I'm not sure why. But you can find God in doing the vacuuming, can't you?'

'Of course you can!' I was assured and then inevitably the conversation moved on to other topics. But later I was struck anew by my very own words. What actually happened each Thursday morning, I wondered, as I trundled the Vax over the thick carpet of the sanctuary area of my parish church?

Receptive

I guess there's probably a few things going on. First of all, I'm left to my own devices. I'm not in a hurry, the sound of the vacuum is soothing, the peace and tranquillity of the church is beautiful and I can be at one with my own thoughts. And I believe that at that point God enters into those thoughts. You see, I think that I'm open and receptive to the Lord in that time and place and so in his goodness, he makes himself available to me.

And there's more... Because I'm also reminded of a wonderful vignette which I heard at a conference some time ago. The speaker – a priest – was talking to the delegates about the movement of the Holy Spirit in all our lives. To illustrate his point, he gave an account of his own personal encounter with the Spirit. One Saturday morning, he explained, he was vacuuming under his table, when he underwent one of the most uplifting and beautiful experiences he had ever had.

Julia came closer to God during vacuuming in the peace and tranquillity of her parish church. He felt surrounded by a glow and was overtaken by such intense love and happiness that he was in no doubt as to the cause of it. He had experienced the beauty of the Holy Spirit and he abandoned all thought of anything else but soaking up the sublime wonder of that moment.

Wow Factor

As for myself, I can remember thinking: 'WOW!' when I heard this. I must admit that my story may not have the same 'Wow factor' as Father's had, but I believe nonetheless, that there are certainly parallels to be drawn. God comes to us in many different ways, shapes, voices and thoughts. But unerringly he comes to us in the way that we can most appreciate him and be inexorably drawn towards him. This is because He is God and God works in the most mysterious of ways. Even in vacuuming...

Julia Beacroft is a catechist and pastoral volunteer who lives in Torquay. Her first book 'Sanctifying the Spirit' is now available to buy. Please visit www.sanciobooks.com for more information or order from AMAZON.

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This is a question I used to think and pray about in the years after my conversion. I used to ask people and they'd say 'unite your suffering to those of Christ for the salvation of souls' and I thought this a wonderful idea but had not got a clue HOW to do it! I used to grit my teeth during difficult times and pray 'it's for you Jesus and for souls' and this is a really good prayer but after considerable restraint, I'd burst into an outpouring of my woes, with complaints, to a friend! I realised once again that I had not managed to 'offer it up' and wondered if I was the stuff of a true disciple?

Then one Lent I determined not to tell anyone else when I was suffering from something, (or, usually, someone!). I tried to pray about Our Lord's Passion in the Stations and this did indeed help as some of the inspiring meditations spoke so well about how Jesus came to share every aspect and detail of our own sufferings.

They described how He wants to be 'yoked' to our own cross as we carry it with Him (not just following Him) and how everything we do for others He counts it as for Himself. I read how it greatly consoles Him when He sees our desire, however feeble, to forgive and 'do good' to those who hurt us and how much He wants to enable this desire by His Grace. Above all I went to daily Mass as far as possible, knowing how very much I needed to receive Him,

whole and entire, living now, into my very little soul.

All that, together with the 'morning offering', which a very kind priest taught me, definitely helped me begin to realise that I wasn't 'on my own' in the struggles and in a mysterious way, they were part of Christ's and therefore redemptive for the souls I wanted to pray for. They were my part in 'doing penance' for all that I'd been forgiven too, I understood that. My ordinary daily round as a disciple was greatly helped. However when the time came, as I think it may come to everyone, 'when the rain and the floods came and the winds beat against that house' (Mt 7:25) and the problems were overwhelming and prolonged. I found myself losing trust in Him, believing that perhaps I wasn't 'good enough' for His deliverance. I tried desperately to depend on friends and my own wits instead and when this failed I sank into profound depression.

I now see that helplessness of depression, awful as it was, as a time of Grace because I learnt through and through how inadequate I was of myself and how I had only ever let Jesus help me in certain parts of my being, not in the deepest 'mess'. It was then that I met the spiritual director who helped me in a life-changing way, Mons Philip Loftus RIP. (I have described his direction on getting me out of severe clinical depression in detail in an article in the *Catholic Voice* December 2015 edition and

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in a blog) The core of his teaching was how to hand everything over to God and learn to really depend on Him, as a child. He taught this in such an effective and simple way:

Every negative thought, (*often lurking at the bottom of a negative feeling*) was to be symbolically transferred into a pebble. The pebble had to be dropped into a container of water, with the prayer '*may we leave the past to God's mercy, the future to His Providence and may we face the present, trusting in God's Grace*'. The water represents the ocean of God's love and mercy.

The 'we' referred to the people that I chose to pray for that day e.g. the sick, prisoners. I then had to leave that negative thought thus in God's hands...not fish the pebble out again. The effort to do this is our way of drawing Grace, earned by Jesus, down on others. We are in fact '*taking up our cross with Jesus*', who helps us to carry it. We are alone no more! This '*pebbling*' needs repeating however many negative thoughts there are and there are many in the beginning.....

Alongside this, I had the very helpful teaching on prayer and meditation by Fr Matthew McGettrick ODC RIP, which I wrote about in the Crusader last Lent '*Keeping Jesus Company*' and of course, the prayers and wonderful examples of other disciples including good friends. I learnt how to let Jesus into every dot of my being,

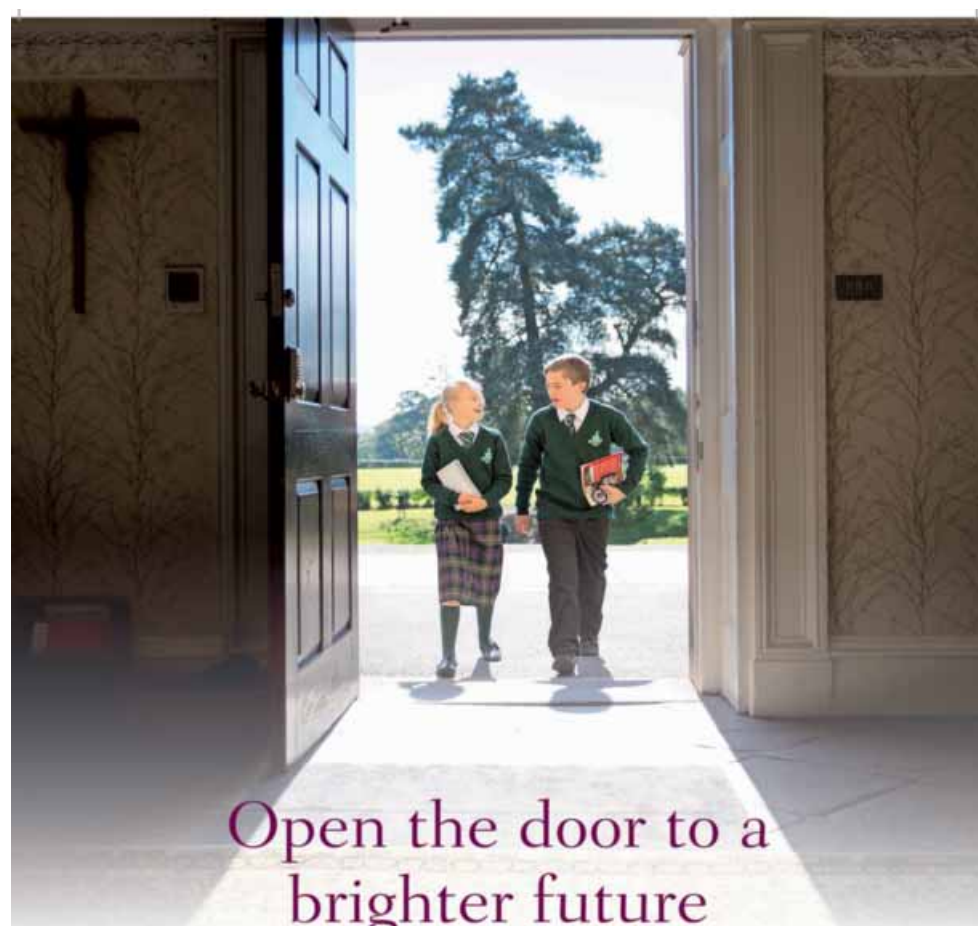
especially areas I was ashamed of and I learnt to take the risk that if we do what we can about something, we can and must leave the outcome, and timing to Him, who sees far more than we do and loves us more than we ever dare imagine.

Now I am learning, not without falls, to '*offer things up*', that is to unite my sufferings to those of Christ for the salvation of souls. This past year I have had considerable physical health problems which have not responded to medicine very well, sometimes they have been misunderstood even by doctors which have caused many sleepless nights. At these times I loved doing the letting go activities.

And yet I can truly say that I have found more peace and even joy when I have been able to '*offer it up*' than I have ever known!

A member of my family, who is not a Catholic, remarked to me recently in her concern, when some new but risky treatment was offered to me, that in my virtually housebound life I must feel my life has no quality and so it is worth the risk. I took this in the spirit she meant it and didn't argue. But the truth is that, while I welcome whatever will restore me to full active life, if God wants, all these months of apparent suffering have been spiritually rich and possibly done more good for others than all my life's activity hitherto!

Pam Aherne



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Blackpool Brains Compete



Congratulations to the team from St John Vianney, Blackpool who won the Annual Deanery Quiz for the second year running. This quiz has been running for 13 years and sees parishes from around the Blackpool Deanery come together on a social level for an evening of fun and friendship. Thank you to the 80+ parishioners, 7 clergy and St Mary's Catholic Academy who took part this year.

Maryport headteacher chosen for key school support role



The headteacher and staff at Our Lady & St Patrick's Catholic Primary school have been selected for a top role supporting schools in challenging circumstances.

Jacqueline Hampson is one of more than 80 headteachers to be appointed to the role of national leader of education (NLE) in the latest recruitment round.

NLEs along with staff in their school – designated a national support school (NSS) – use their success and professionalism to provide additional

leadership capability in other schools.

NLEs are deployed to suit the needs of each school needing support. The type of support provided is flexible and can sometimes involve NLEs becoming executive headteachers. They also have responsibility for developing the next generation of NLEs and national support schools.

Mrs Hampson said, 'For several years now the staff of Our Lady & St Patrick's have provided support for staff in other schools facing challenges. More recently I took on the role of Executive Headteacher of St

Gregory's Catholic Primary school in Workington. Many of the teachers and teaching assistants from Our Lady & St Patrick's have used their skills and expertise to work alongside the staff of St Gregory's and help improve outcomes for the children. It is great that the work of all our staff has been recognised and we have been designated a National Support School.'

Many NLEs/NSSs report improved outcomes at the schools they support.

Roger Pope, Chair of the National College for Teaching and Leadership, said: "It's fantastic that heads like Mrs Hampson

have the passion and ambition to help improve the life chances of young people, not just in their own but in other schools as well.

"The aim of national leaders of education is to drive improvement in underperforming schools. We now have over 1,200 NLEs and we're working to increase this number further to spread educational excellence everywhere."

Successful heads have been invited to attend a formal induction and training event for the role in driving school improvement.

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