



Bishop's Column

Most of us will know that February 11 is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is also, fittingly, the World Day of Prayer for the Sick.

Each year, the Holy Father sends a message out to all of us on this occasion. In his message he first of all reminds us that it was St John Paul II who inaugurated this event 30 years ago. The theme for this year's message is "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Lk 6.36). Standing beside those who suffer on a path of charity."

Pope Francis stresses that, "Mercy is God's name par excellence; God's mercy embraces both fatherhood and motherhood (cf Is 49:15). God cares for us with the strength of a father and the tenderness of a mother. The supreme witness of the Father's merciful love for the sick is his only begotten Son. Jesus showed such great concern for the sick, so much so that he made it paramount in the mission of the apostles, who were sent by the Master to proclaim the Gospel and to heal the sick (cf. Lk 9:2)."

He draws attention to the present pandemic and thanks the care workers of the world for their "service alongside the sick, carried out with love and competence."

He explains that, "Your hands can be a sign of the merciful hands of the Father. Be mindful of the great dignity of your profession."

To read the rest of his message, you will find it on the Vatican website, vatican.va.

On the weekend of February 19 and 20, I ask that you remember our "retired" and sick priests.

Over the last few years there have been a number of our priests who, on reaching the age of 75, have stepped down from pastoral responsibility. Others have had to step down earlier because of ill health.

I am sure that all of us would want to ensure that our priests are looked after and well cared for during their "retirement" and especially when they are sick or in any way debilitated.

In order to ensure that this happens, there will be a special collection for this purpose taken on the weekend of February 19 and 20. Please be as generous as you can.

No sooner is the month of February finished than we begin the season of Lent and our preparation for the celebration of Holy Week and Easter.

Ash Wednesday falls on March 2. As we prepare to live out more authentically our baptismal calling, we should also remember those who will receive the Sacraments of Initiation and enter into full membership of the Church at Easter.

They begin their official journey of Christian Initiation at the Rite of Election on March 6 at St Mary's Cathedral, 3pm. I look forward with real joy to meeting them there.

Yours in blessed hope

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Confirmations take place in York after patient wait

A group of young people and one adult in three York parishes have finally received the Sacrament of Confirmation after initially starting their preparation before the pandemic.

Young adults from Our Lady's, and English Martyrs parishes, together with one young adult from St Margaret Clitherow's, all began their preparation together with their catechists in 2019 and completed it together in December 2021.

The young adults from English Martyrs were confirmed by Father John Bane just before Christmas and the Our Lady's group by Father Tony Lester in January.

Bishop Terry had delegated the parish priests to celebrate the sacrament, as he wasn't available to do so in person given the short notice.

The confirmands all started their preparation before the pandemic, so they've shown great patience and commitment.



Top right: The Our Lady's and St Margaret Clitherow confirmands – photo by Johan Bergström-Allen

Right: The English Martyrs confirmands – photo by Greg McGee



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Helping fight malnutrition this Lent Fast Day

The first Family Fast Day was organised in 1958 in response to a request from a Belgian nun, working with mothers and babies on the Caribbean island of Dominica. Then, mothers starting and, as a result, could not produce milk to feed their new babies.

It's almost as if history is repeating itself as this Lent, we're focusing on how donations from parishes are helping to prevent malnutrition in countries such as Sierra Leone.

By supporting new mothers like Amie with expert advice and training from health clinics, such as the one run by Sister Anthonia, children like Lombeh can grow up big, strong, happy and healthy.

I had the privilege of visiting Sister Anthonia when I went to Sierra Leone in 2013. The following paragraphs are from the notes I made while I was in the country.

"Sister Anthonia is a qualified midwife working in Pendembu kingdom – the poorest

area of Kenema district – who was delighted we had come to visit her.

"I had previously met her at the Pastoral Centre in Kenema where we were staying, when she told me of her work with expectant mothers.

"During the war, Pendembu was one of the first places to be attacked by the rebels, who completely destroyed the convent, clinic and school.

"The experience was so traumatic that the sisters who were there at the time cannot be persuaded to return. Sister Anthonia lives in the convent, which has been refurbished by Caritas Kenema, with Sister Happiness Osiyu and Sister Ruth Nyarko.

"Sister Anthonia said they are desperately in need of funds to rehabilitate the clinic, so they can bring the expectant mothers in from the bush to give birth.

"In spite of the encouraging sign she is standing in front of, little progress has been

made towards this goal. Presently, they use a room in the convent as a place where mothers give birth, but Sister would dearly love to have the clinic returned to use."

It's wonderful to know that Sister Anthonia has survived the Ebola crisis and the clinic has been refurbished as she had hoped. She is now helping to ensure mothers and babies are healthy and well cared for in a safe environment.

Family Fast Day is on Friday March 11. As has been the case for 60 years, Family Fast Day is made possible by parish volunteers sharing Amie's story and organising collections in parishes.

No child should go hungry. Yet, 200m children around the world are currently at risk of malnutrition. The climate crisis, the pandemic and the unequal distribution of food mean extreme hunger is getting worse.

Amid our consumerist society, Pope Francis calls us to live differently – to live simply and with love for our sisters and brothers. He says: "We can choose to cultivate kindness. Those who do so become stars shining in the midst of darkness."

**Carol Cross, Community Participation Coordinator
CAFOD in Middlesbrough**



Mum Amie with Lombeh and Sister Anthonia



Carol met Sister Anthonia Ekong on a visit to Sierra Leone in 2013

BISHOP TERRY'S FEBRUARY ENGAGEMENTS

- 1-2 Attends meeting of the House of Bishops and Bishops Conference, Liverpool
- 3 Attends pre meeting of the Annual School Members 3.30pm
- 8 Attends meeting of the Trustee Board at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough 10.30am
- 9 Attends the Schools Annual Members Meeting at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough All Day
- 15 Attends meeting of the Council of Priests at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough 1.30pm
- 16 Attends meeting of the Friends of the Lady Chapel Committee at the Curial Office, Middlesbrough 11am
- 22 Attends meeting of the Bishop's Council, Middlesbrough 10.30am
- 24 Attends meeting of the Northern Province at Bishop's House, Leeds 10:30am

How you can walk with the poor

Our new Lent challenge is here! Our Walk Against Hunger – challenge yourself to walk 200,000 steps this Lent and help stamp out hunger, one step at a time.

You can walk, skip, hop or stroll your way to

200k. You can boldly go it alone and take it on 5k a day for 40 days, or you can smash the target all at once as a team. Sign up on our website, cafod.org.uk.

If walking isn't your cup of tea, could you

hold a hot cross bun coffee morning after Mass one Sunday in Lent?

And finally, we've written our fast day talk so it can read by a ten-year-old child.

Families can help spread message

Is there a young family in your parish who would like to help this Lent?

Children and families speaking on behalf of children and families around the world this year is a powerful act of

solidarity and children love to be involved in helping others.

If you would like to help out by giving the fast day talk in your parish, just get in touch by calling 07779 804253 or emailing ccross@cafod.org.uk.

Join us for diamond jubilee

Our planned celebration for our 60th anniversary on Saturday February 5 has moved online.

The good news is, more people can join us to hear Sister Frances Orchard CJ from the Bar Convent and her sister, Sarah, sharing their memories of the very first Family Fast Days.

Kayode Akintola will join us from Sierra Leone, our chair, Bishop John Arnold, and our director Christine Allen will also be taking part. If you would be interested in joining us, you can sign up at cafod.org.uk.

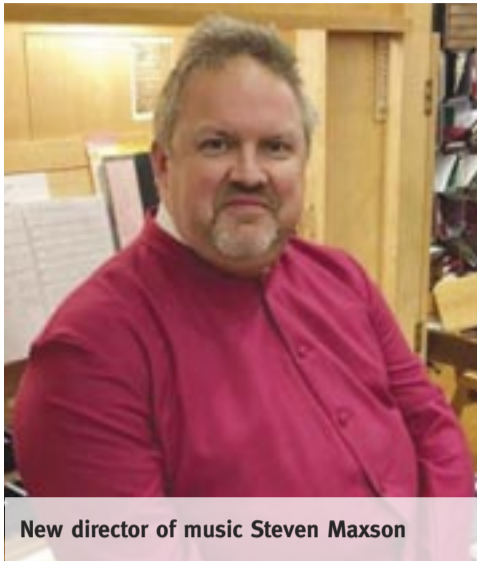
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New director of music Steven Maxson

Welcome to the diocese, Steven!

It is a very great pleasure to have started as the new director of music for both the diocese and St Mary's Cathedral at the start of January.

I began my musical career after university as the assistant organist of Cardiff's Metropolitan Cathedral, also working as director of music in the cathedral's choir school.

Before that, I was the organist of the Oxford Oratory, in my final terms as organ scholar of Keble College at the University of Oxford.

The southern part of our diocese is very familiar to me, having spent the last almost 25 years on the opposite bank of the Humber, working at Grimsby Minster, most recently as the organist and director of music.

I am very much looking forward to getting to know the whole area and the priests, parishes, schools, and congregations, as we continue to build on the excellent work of Tim Harrison in developing our music ministry.

I live in hope that I might be able to complete at least some journeys within the diocese by steam train, renewing my acquaintance with the wonderful North York Moors Railway!

As I write, we have just celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany at the cathedral, as across the diocese, and it was lovely to meet members of the cathedral choir, as we start our work together, too.

This is an exciting time for me to be starting here, as the National Schools Singing Programme rolls out across dioceses throughout the country, with Middlesbrough being among the first to do so.

We have two very talented musicians already working on this in several schools, Janine Busbridge, and David Pisaro, and I very much hope that this will bear fruit for the musical and spiritual life of our schools and parishes.

I am very happy to hear how we can support churches and schools across the diocese. Please don't hesitate to contact me via email at musicdept@rcdmidd.org.uk or by telephone at the cathedral on (01642) 597750.

Introducing our new safeguarding coordinator

My name is Jacqui Drysdale and I'm the newly appointed safeguarding coordinator for the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

Before this, I worked for North Yorkshire Police within the Domestic Abuse Team. I have been involved in safeguarding since 2009, when I worked for the Disclosure and Barring Service in Darlington. I'm married and I have two grown-up children.

I also have a rescue border collie dog and five ex-battery rescue hens who are enjoying life to the full and still produce eggs almost daily.

I enjoy most sport, these days mostly as a spectator, although I did manage to complete the Great North Run last year (no records were broken!). I love all kinds of music and I was a member of a choir in my teens until my early twenties.

I'm delighted to say that I have been made to feel very welcome and supported in my new role and I'm very much looking forward to working together with you all. If you need to speak to me, please don't hesitate to get in touch. You can contact me on 07562935641 or email Jacqui.Drysdale@rcdmidd.org.uk.



Our safeguarding department, Lisa Whelan, Jacqui Drysdale, Mo Hunter and Patti Wiczorek

Please remember in your prayers the following clergy from our diocese whose anniversaries are this month

1	1919	Rt Rev Mgr Canon Gerald Shanahan	Thornaby
1	1937	Rev Edward H Bryan	Pickering
1	1973	Rev Michael Barry	Market Weighton
2	1920	Rt Rev Mgr Provost Charles Dawson	York
2	1982	Rev Francis Gresham OP	York
2	1989	Rt Rev Mgr J Liam Carson	Teesville
3	1912	Very Rev Canon Joseph Dodds	Leyburn
3	1981	Canon Gerard T Rickaby	Guisborough
3	1999	Rev Thomas Burke	Scarborough
3	2018	Rev Thomas Ryan	Caherconlish
5	1978	Very Rev Canon W Hughes	Hull
5	1979	Rev Dan Breen	Scarborough
7	1985	Mgr T Alban Nolan	Billingham
7	1988	Very Rev Canon Robert Carson	Redcar
8	1991	Rev John Shanahan	Knocklong
9	1975	Rev Joseph Bickerstaffe	Connah's Quay
9	2011	Rev Sean O'Donnell	Falcarragh
10	1933	Rev Richard Lewis	York
10	1970	Rev Leonard Cornwall	Hull
12	1947	Rev Thomas Reilly	Skirlaugh
12	1965	Rev Gerard Culkin	Ushaw
14	1897	Very Rev Canon George Brunner	Wycliffe
15	1931	Rev William Kirkham	Ulshaw Bridge
16	1999	Rev John Joseph Ryan	Scorton
17	2003	Rev Francis Daly	Middlesbrough
18	1995	Rev Desmond Cush	Richmond
18	1938	Rev George Kiernan	Thornaby
18	1942	Rev Bernard Wilson	Staithes
23	2015	Very Rev Canon Gerald Cox	Hull
23	2018	Rev Patrick Grant	Thurles
27	1963	Rev Joseph Blake	Hull
27	1900	Rev James Atkinson	Middlesbrough
27	1981	Rev James O'Brien	Staithes
28	1988	Rev John MacDonnell	Middlesbrough



Canon Pat Grant, who passed away in February 2018

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NEWS

Schools invited to enter public speaking contest

The annual Catenian Public Speaking Contest takes place on Sunday April 3 at Trinity Catholic College, Lacy Road, Middlesbrough, TS4 3JW.

Opening at 1pm for refreshments and a briefing meeting for the contestants, the first speaker starts at 2pm and the event concludes at around 4.30pm.

Catholic high schools and academies in the dioceses of Lancaster, Hexham and Newcastle and Middlesbrough are invited to register their intention to put forward contestants in the key stage three, key stage four and post-16 age categories by February 11.

Additionally, for the first time, year six pupils will be able to take part through their respective trusts, with each trust invited to forward their chosen contestant.

This event is organised and sponsored by Province 5 of the Catenian Association and the winner of the post-16 contest will be invited to take part in the national contest at the Manchester Conference Centre later in the year.

For more details contact Joe James at jjames9241@aol.com.

Supporters hope HCPT founder will be declared a saint

The founder of a charity that has helped thousands of children and adults with disabilities visit Lourdes on pilgrimage is the subject of a call for testimonials that could lead to his being declared a saint.

Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews and Edinburgh celebrated a Mass at Our Lady of Victories Church, Kensington, to mark the start of a process that it is hoped will lead to the canonisation of Brother Michael Strode.

Cistercian monk Brother Michael died on December 27 2019 at the age of 96.

He is best known to Catholics in the UK and beyond as the founder of HCPT (Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage Trust), the charity that for more than 65 years has organised pilgrimages to Lourdes for people with disabilities.

Richard King, the chairman of the committee for Brother Michael's cause, said: "In his devotion to the care of disabled children and adults, Brother Michael was living out his love of humanity, firmly rooted in his deep spiritual life.

"If the cause succeeds, a modern-day saint would be a tremendous example of love and service for the Catholic Church in Britain."

Born in 1923, Michael Strode became a Catholic in 1945. Trained as a doctor, in 1953 he was appointed to Chailey Heritage, a hospital school for disabled children in

Sussex, where he remained until his retirement in 1988.

He founded the charity now known as HCPT in 1956. He insisted that disabled children be accommodated not in austere hospitals but in small "family" groups in hotels, so they could live their week (a "holiday with Our Lady") with their helpers – an idea that in the 1970s was extended to disabled adults.

Over the years, hundreds of young helpers have learned to give themselves to others and so actively participate in the Church and the wider community. This inspired approach has been copied by many other pilgrimages.

In 1991, Brother Michael joined the island community of Cistercian monks at Caldey. Here he lived a monastic life of prayer until in 2016 his health declined and he spent his last years at Nazareth House, Cardiff.

During his life, Brother Michael would take no credit for the inspiration that he gave to others. Wanting only to bring them closer to God, he always diverted attention away from himself, saying: "It wasn't me at all, it is God working through us." And he would add: "The best person to help us in all this is Our Lady."

The Abbot of Caldey, Father Daniel van Santvoort, said: "As a monk, his existence became a life sacrificed to God, to his brothers, to all his friends and family in a life of silence, prayer, service and dedication.

"This step certainly did not change him, in fact, it was grace at work in him that brought out his unique humanity for everyone to see – the beam of laughter and joy in his eyes, his ability to welcome life in a pure, childlike way, and a great sense of fun that is almost inimitable."

The committee hopes to launch the cause itself in January 2025, shortly after the fifth anniversary of Brother Michael's death.

Enquiries and offers of support, particularly through the provision of a testimony, can be sent to John Flood KSG at secretary@brothermichaelstrode.org.

For more information about Brother Michael and the cause for his canonisation, visit brothermichaelstrode.org.



A member of the congregation at the Mass in Kensington looks at a painting of Brother Michael commissioned by the HCPT from artist Colin Bentley



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Trust's ambitious vision for special needs provision

Breaking down as many barriers to learning as possible is the key to ensuring that all children reach their full potential.

That's the belief of Katie Haycock, trust head of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) at Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust.

A year after taking up the role, Katie is leading an ongoing programme of Code of Practice audits that aims to embed a clear, ambitious and inclusive vision for the delivery of SEND support.

The NPCAT High-Quality Teaching Toolkit has also been rolled out to promote teaching excellence as the first step in responding to learners' needs, and a training programme has also been designed in response to our schools' requirements.

Governors play a vital role in ensuring the right provisions are in place, and sessions have been held to help them support and challenge leaders about the progress and attainment of pupils with SEND.

Katie, who joined NPCAT after five years as a headteacher at the Ofsted-Outstanding Wolviston Primary School, says she is building on the good practice she found already in place within the trust's 27 schools.

"I started out teaching in NPCAT schools and it feels like a family," she said. "My role is to further enhance the provision of specialist help for children and support school leaders, SENDCOs and staff across the trust, as well as being there for parents."

The trust, which is responsible for 9,000 children across Teesside and North Yorkshire,

is aiming to create specialist teams for counselling, educational psychology and speech therapy to support this work.

"A trust should be about collaboration and we're looking at how we can pool resources between schools," said Katie.

"My long-term goal is to have specialist hubs to share best practice and expertise. I'll also be looking at funding streams to support what we need to do.

"Being the SENDCO at Wolviston gave me a deeper understanding of the difficulties pupils and their parents face and there's nothing more rewarding than seeing children make progress.

"It's hard work and you have to celebrate small gains, but we also need to have high aspirations. With high-quality teaching and targeted interventions, it's possible to make a real difference.

"If we act early enough, we can narrow the gap to enable all children to achieve their full potential, so we need to break down as many barriers as possible."

The pandemic has been challenging for all children, but Katie said those with special needs have been especially vulnerable.

"It has been a difficult time for all of us and especially young people, but the effects are heightened for those children with social, emotional and mental health needs," she said.

"They haven't had access to the specialist support that schools are so good at providing or been able to work with some external agencies. Even the wearing of masks can be



Katie Haycock, trust head of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) at NPCAT.

problematic with regards to communication. "Our schools have put in place catch-up strategies for pupils with SEND which have often focused on the core subjects but also provided pastoral, social and emotional support.

"We also need to continue helping schools support parents and carers because having a child with special needs can bring many rewards but it can also be tough and at times very lonely."



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SYNOD

How process can revitalise our parishes

Parish consultations in the synod process are continuing to take shape across the diocese. It's worth thinking a little about Pope Francis' ideas as to what a more synodal Church may look like.

During his visit to Cyprus and Greece, the Holy Father highlighted what he saw as three main characteristics that he hopes will result from this ambitious and exciting process.

When he spoke to the priests and religious in Cyprus, he drew on last year's encyclical

Fratelli Tutti, saying we should see a more fraternal Church in which we discover together what it means to be Catholic and the Church becomes a place of relationships and diversity where all are welcomed. We become a place of unity rather than uniformity.

Secondly, he mentioned that humility will be a characteristic of a synodal Church, that is a Church that listens and learns from within itself and other Christians admitting to mistakes, not assuming that it is the

dominant force.

The third characteristic mentioned by the Pope is that of being a prophetic Church, one that stands alongside and journeys with those cast to the margins of our societies – the homeless, the refugee, the unemployed, the low paid, the youth, the elderly, frail and sick.

Pope Francis hopes that through the synodal process, we will become a Church with the courage and lived experiences to speak truth

to power and open a widening participation, of all the people of God in the Church.

We have two articles that help us to focus a little on those characteristics outlined by Pope Francis.

We want to hear about the fruits of your parish consultations as we continue on our synodal journey. Please send any articles about your synodal consultations to adultformation@rcdmidd.org.uk.

David Cross, Adult Formation Coordinator

Whitby's new synod talks – 13 centuries later!

Not for the first time, there is a synodal process taking place in Whitby.

Following the example of Anglo-Saxon abbess, St Hilda, the Catholic parish of St Hilda's has begun its part in the synod Pope Francis has invited us all to take part in.

"It's very ambitious," said parish priest Father Pat Keogh. "Pope Francis wants to listen to

what ordinary people think, not just the bishops.

"We are all journeying together, and the pandemic has made us very aware of just how much we need each other."

Whitby was the setting for an important synod in AD 664 that St Hilda hosted as abbess of the double monastery up on the headland.

Although probably best known for determining the date on which Easter is celebrated (the first Sunday after the spring equinox), the Synod of Whitby was more about unifying different ways of living Christianity, Celtic and Roman.

The Celtic Christianity of these parts followed the monastic tradition of St Columba of Iona, St Aidan and St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, and played a significant part in missionary activity both in Britain and among the Germanic tribes of Europe. Roman Christianity was seen to be important for stabilising and unifying the Church as a whole.

Despite people coming from these different traditions, listening to the Holy Spirit, they sought a way forward in their love of God to embrace the unifying reality of the one Church, rather than quarrel about superficialities of their own tradition.

What both synods have in common is the importance of listening and learning from each other's journeys through life and in faith.

"By doing this, we are able to find out from each other where the Holy Spirit is leading us. That is so important," said Father Pat.

In the first synodal meeting at St Hilda's, held



Mary Robinson, Mike Atkinson and Father Pat Keogh took part in the St Hilda's Parish synod meeting

online during December, nearly 40 parishioners took part in a mixture of house groups and "break-out" groups, all linked together by Zoom.

After time spent together in prayer and reflecting on Scripture, they spoke openly and thoughtfully about their individual journeys in faith and in the Church.

"It was a very meaningful evening," added Father Pat. "Only if we listen to people and really hear what they are saying can we give the feedback about the faith of the people in

Whitby today that Pope Francis has asked us for."

It is hoped that in future meetings, as many people as possible, including those who no longer attend Mass, will be able to share their joys and concerns, hopes and fears for the Church with the parish.

It is hoped that the synodal process will be a means of revitalising the faith of the parishioners and promoting new growth in the parish.

Angela Simek



Whitby hosted a major synod in Church history in AD 664 – Photos by Angela Simek

A Letter From Madonna House – A Letter to Priests

Some time ago I wrote a love letter to a group of young priests, and I share it now with you, as an exhortation to support, encourage, pray for our priests. The situation in the Church is daunting, and we must be there for each other!



My brothers, the heart of what I want to say to you is *live in love with God*. If you live from this place of *union* with God – his love coursing through your words and actions – your love for him *filling* everything you do – then your priesthood will be lasting, fruitful and joyous. Only love will keep you faithful, and give the grace to emerge from the temptations in the desert.

Your people can sense authenticity, and it's what will draw them. I love interesting homilies, but I'd take a few stumbling words from a priest who truly knows and loves God, than a slick or erudite homily that doesn't engage me in the depths. If I'm going to Mass with a desperate need to touch God, to find some word of hope and consolation in my suffering, I will find it from someone who has come through a crucible of suffering, and has real faith to offer. Let your words come from a deep authentic relationship with God, which includes times of questioning, doubt and searing seeking – times which cling to faith, not "pat answers".

I've listened to priests who've become disillusioned with the Church, who feel unsupported. Young priests who don't have community from which to draw strength, encouragement and inspiration. Priests who are dying of loneliness, who question their celibate vocation.

My brothers, I don't pass judgement on those who leave the priesthood or who discard their celibacy for human love. Our deepest need is to be seen, known, loved. But celibacy is not an imposition to be endured through gritted teeth. It is an amazing gift that returns us to our first love, binds us to our beloved Lord.

If you don't *know* that God is your *everything*, that you truly cannot live without him, then I beg you to ask him for that conviction. It may come in the form of a powerful experience of his love, or through a growing peace, or a burning thirst for more, or through a searing trial, where your only choice seems to be to leave the priesthood or somehow surrender in faith. He waits for you.

"Desperate times call for desperate measures." You know the poor state of our Church. We need priests who lay down their lives for the Church – but with joy, because they are surrendering in love to Christ, no matter what the price. And the price is high.

So what kind of desperate measures will lead to this life? How about entering the *poustinia*, a place of uncompromising listening to God? Do you have a spiritual director who is not afraid to challenge you when needed? Do you go often to confession? Do you pray every day – and I mean truly pray from the heart? Do you dare to desire that union of love with the Lord? If so, then your priesthood will draw others into that union of love. "May they all be one, Father, as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21)

My brothers, I pray for you. May you know the supreme joy of utter surrender to the love of God, so that his own joy may be in you and your joy be complete (John 15:11)

Cheryl Ann Smith

Reaching out to those who feel excluded

How does the Church need to change to serve all of its people? The basis of the lived synodality that Pope Francis envisages is of the Church as the pilgrim People of God journeying together.

This was expressed in a profound way by the Holy Father in his *Statio Orbis* address in March 2020 when he stood alone in the rain in St Peter's Square and said:...

"We have realised that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying 'We are perishing', so we too have realised that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this."

The global effects of the pandemic and the existential threat of climate change are affecting us all, but especially the poorest and most marginalised among us. Can we help to shape a Church that is more welcoming and inclusive?

Pope Francis reminds us how Jesus strengthened the early Christian community to serve those most in need, like a "field hospital that takes in the weakest people, the infirm... Jesus calls each of us to look after these wounded people, to support them, and to heal them."

One of the best ways to do this is to **listen with compassion** to someone who feels marginalised and excluded. There is something profoundly healing about giving our time and full attention, in whatever way we can, and acknowledging what a person is saying to us. Such compassionate listening can play a major part in beginning the process of healing wounds, and in helping rebuild a person's inherent sense of dignity.



Terry Doyle

Pope Francis is offering us an opportunity to reshape our Church to be much more **inclusive and welcoming**. We all have a part to play in this. We will all know someone who is feeling estranged from the Church. It might be someone who is materially poor or who lacks a sense of self-worth. It might be someone who is feeling lonely, who has been divorced or is in a same-sex relationship and fears that the Church has historically been unsympathetic towards them. It may be a woman who feels that the Church is too patriarchal and dismissive of her views.

We are being encouraged to become a church where *all* are welcome, where we are indeed *all* seen to be in the same boat trying to navigate stormy waters, all journeying together for the Common Good.

So, please be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into becoming a **listening ear, a compassionate friend, a Good Samaritan**, and

to help to welcome anyone who is feeling marginalised and excluded to begin to feel accepted and whole just as they are in the eyes of an all-loving Creator God.

We just have to show a little willingness to extend some comfort and support to anyone we may come across within our own families

and communities. Everybody feels marginalised and wounded to some degree or other. May the Holy Spirit work with us and through us as we journey together towards a truly universal, *all-inclusive* Catholic Church for our times.

Terry Doyle

Synod 2021-2023
For a synodal Church
COMMUNION | PARTICIPATION | MISSION

SYNOD PRAYER

We stand before you, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in your name
With you alone to guide us, make yourself at home in our hearts

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions

Let us find in you our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right

All this we ask of you, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. AMEN

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NEWS

SVP reaches out helping hand

Do you need help or support? The SVP in your parish or our diocese is here to support those in need of any kind.
 As we move on through this pandemic, you may know someone who needs help, or you may find yourself in need, perhaps for the first time in your lives. We can help in many ways...

- By applying for grants from the SVP Hardship Fund
- By providing emergency food parcels, clothing or household goods
- By befriending the lonely or housebound
- By assisting refugees and asylum seekers

with paperwork/applications
 Do reach out to your local conference or ask a priest to get in touch with us for you. Our role is to support you and continue to do so for as long as necessary. You can also get in touch on our website, svp.org.uk, and they will find your nearest conference and put you in contact with a local conference. Use the REQUEST HELP tab.
 Thank you to all who have supported us in any way throughout the pandemic, especially by:

- Volunteering as members or temporary members

- Giving food and other goods to appeals
 - Donating through collections, legacies or individually to our conferences
 - Supporting our Middlesbrough shop – which has met targets this year despite the difficulties and closures
 - Praying with us and for us and our work
- With your help, we have been able to support families, those who are lonely and housebound, the homeless, refugees and prisoners as well as continuing to support our overseas linked conferences in India and South Sudan.

Frances Gilchrist

Tony stands down after four decades

Tony Murphy has stepped down after 40 years as president of St Hilda's SVP Conference.
 Tony has been a stalwart servant to the conference, developing it since its inception at St Patrick's, Whitby, with a handful of members, to a very strong conference at St Hilda's of up to 14 members.
 During his tenure he has made many local contacts who have been very useful for the work of the society.
 He has encouraged visits to people in their own homes and care homes and offered help and assistance to homeless people and rough sleepers.
 Tony has also been involved in other aspects of the SVP's work, including social events for beneficiaries and parish members and helping support asylum seekers.
 The good news is that Tony is only stepping down as president and not retiring as an SVP member, so we will hopefully continue to benefit from his knowledge and work for many years yet.
 Well done Tony – keep up the good work!
 Geoff Hall



Whitby SVP conference member Tony Hodgson (right) thanking Tony Murphy (left) – Photo by Maureen Eves

Women gather for hour of fellowship

Catholic women are invited to share some female communion at an hour of events including mediation via Zoom on the first Saturday of every month at 11am.
 To take part and join the Whats App group – which is run by members of the National Board of Catholic Women in our diocese – text Barbara Cookson on 07796 117704.

Copy Deadline

Copy and photographs for inclusion in the *Catholic Voice* should be sent to: The Editor, Middlesbrough Diocesan Catholic Voice, Curial Offices, 50a The Avenue, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS5 6QT.
 Tel (01642) 850505, email catholicvoice@rcdmidd.org.uk
Deadline Friday February 4 for our March edition.
Where possible please send articles in Word and photographs as jpegs. Please confirm when you send in your photographs that those who appear in them have given their permission for publication.
Correction: An article in December's *Voice* said Bishop Terry had celebrated the first Catholic Mass in Beverley Minster since the Reformation. Bishop Terry had, in fact, celebrated Mass there in 2012, to mark the 50th birthday of St John of Beverley Catholic Primary School.

Caring Mary always put others first

The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Peter Chanel in Hull was packed for the funeral of Mary Clark whose sudden and unexpected death on November 21 had shocked and saddened everyone.

Mary had recently been appointed a trustee of the diocese by Bishop Terry, an honour that reflected the kind of person she was and the immense contribution she had made to the Catholic life of Hull and the diocese.

It was a role that her husband, Tony, had held before his untimely death in 2010.

Mary's life was always lived in the service of others. As a young student at Endsleigh College, she worked as a volunteer for the Catholic Handicapped Fellowship and it was on one of the summer camps at Ampleforth that she met Tony.

In addition to her position of diocesan trustee, she was a trustee of the St Stephen's Pastoral Centre, chair of St Charles Parish council, a governor of St Charles School, a volunteer at the Housebound Day for the elderly and an active member of the Catholic Women's Luncheon Club.

She also prepared children for their First Holy Communion and went on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes several times, caring for a friend who had special needs.

At the funeral, her two sons, Dominic and Matthew, spoke beautifully about their mother, about her great love for her family and how this love extended to her friends and to everyone she met.

She had the special gift of bringing happiness and joy to all, especially to those in need. Those lucky enough to have known her bear ample testimony to this. Mary had a wide circle of friends and a wide range of interests from the East Riding Flower Club to membership of the Hull Irish Association, as well as a passion for cooking.

She also loved a good chat and always put others first.

Bishop Terry wrote a letter to Dominic and Matthew containing this beautiful tribute: "I don't have to tell you how loved and highly respected your mother was right across the Hull area and beyond, as was your dad, too.

"She touched so many lives and hearts in the



Diocese of Middlesbrough trustee Mary Clark touched so many lives

most natural of ways. She truly lived the gospel in every way and was indeed a faithful and true follower of the Lord in all that discipleship entails." May she rest in peace.

Chris Cuthill

Journey through Lent with St Ignatius

The theme for this year's retreat at the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow is "Journey through Lent with St Ignatius of Loyola".

St Ignatius was the Spanish courtier-turned-priest whose adventures 500 years ago provide an example of how personal change and fulfilment is possible, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

Participants can follow the retreat online on their laptop, PC or mobile phone, using the

onlineprayer.net website or the ISC app or by signing up for daily emails.

They will be able to pray daily with Scripture, music, images and episodes from the life of Ignatius.

Participants can also deepen their experiences of the transformative power of Ignatius by sharing the fruits of their prayer and their own faith experiences in weekly groups, either in person or online.

New group leaders would be welcome. They

must be confident in facilitating groups and have some knowledge of Ignatian spirituality, although all materials are provided and a training session is available. For more information or to sign up, visit jesuit.org.uk/news/would-you-like-to-lead-a-group-this-lent.

To participate in Lent groups, visit onlineprayer.net, and to sign up for daily emails during Lent and additional resources visit eepurl.com/hRI5a1.

Stella Maris gifts handed over

The Friday Craft Ladies at St Clare's, Middlesbrough, handed over an impressive 102 Christmas gift bags to Stella Maris' Teesport chaplain Deacon Peter Barrigan.

They were collected with help from St Mary's Cathedral and St Francis

parishes and many individual donations.

The gifts were given to the seamen who arrived in the port over the Christmas and New Year season.

From the Archives



40 Years Ago

(From February 1982 Catholic Voice)

His Lordship Bishop Harris performed the consecration ceremony for St Andrew's, Teesville. The most striking and symbolic act during the ceremony was the anointing with the Holy Chrism of the Altar and the four corners of the Church building, with the prayer that "God in his power make them holy, visible signs of the mystery of Christ in his Church."

Relics of the martyrs were sealed into the altar stone and crosses were fixed into the walls to mark the place of anointing. Candles will be lit in front of the crosses every year on the anniversary of the day of Consecration.

100 Years Ago

(From February 1922 Hull Catholic Magazine)

A Mission will be given at St Mary's commencing on the third Sunday of Lent to be conducted by two very able Vincentians from Cork. I understand they are very eloquent preachers, but their eloquence is used in simple language understandable to the people. I ask the people of other Parishes not to come. We have no accommodation for them. Our Church has only 500 sittings. We have to use the side Chapels and Sanctuary, the three passages, the centre of the Nave, the two side aisles, and the space between the seats and the door. By sitting close together in the seats and the use of a number of forms from the Club and Schools and chairs from the house, we are able to accommodate upwards of 1,000, which is not even adequate for our own congregation. I beg the people of other Parishes to go to their own Churches, for I cannot find any room for outsiders.

David Smallwood

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St. Scholastica's Retreat

Job Opportunity:
Warden at St Scholastica's Retreat,
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Following the retirement of our Warden of the past 15 years, the Trustees of St Scholastica's Retreat are looking for an enthusiastic, energetic, caring and experienced person to deliver a range of services to the residents and Board of Management of St Scholastica's Retreat, an almshouse charity providing 36 self-contained residential units for Roman Catholics in financial need who are over the age of 60 years. We are located in the town of Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire. As Warden, you will play a key role in the day-to-day management of the charity as it plans to expand over the next few years. Day-to-day duties will include assisting the Trustees in fulfilling the charitable and spiritual aims of the Trust: in particular, 'to support elderly Catholics to live independently within the community of St Scholastica's Retreat'. To this end, to act as manager and administrator of St Scholastica's Retreat.

As Clerk to the Trustees, to assist the Trustees in strategic planning for the Trust and for St Scholastica's Retreat. Previous experience of working in the charity sector would be an advantage. The role offers a competitive salary, pension, holiday entitlement and accommodation on-site in a three bedroom house.

For further information about the role of Warden and details of how to apply see <https://www.stscholasticas.co.uk/warden-clerk-vacancy>

Further inquiries can be sent to info@stscholasticas.co.uk

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LOURDES

Marie's legacy will continue her good work

A Middlesbrough woman who served as a handmaid for more than half a century has left a legacy in her will to help young helpers go on pilgrimage to Lourdes and carry on her work.

Marie Adams first went to Lourdes in August 1949, when she was 20, along with her long-time friend, Theresa Muir

This was to be the start of a very important part of her life and she attended every year until 2018, after which she was unable to travel due to failing health.

Marie made many friends during these years and loved to support the many social events which the "Lourdes crowd" arranged.

Her late husband, John, was also a Lourdes regular, serving as head brancardier and being awarded the Benemerenti Medal in 2002, shortly before his death after a long struggle with motor neurone disease.

While in Lourdes in the early 2000s, Marie got chatting to a priest from a Welsh pilgrimage and told him her father had been brought up in Pontarddulais near Swansea.

The priest said there was a pilgrim from that area and an introduction was arranged. On meeting Ernie, Marie realised they were from the same family. Ernie's sister, Nanette, contacted Marie and they kept in touch for many years.

After retirement, Marie would spend time at the John Paul Centre, helping in the kitchen and attending Mass regularly.

"Auntie Marie loved Lourdes, it was an extremely important part of her life, and it was a difficult decision for her to make not to attend the last pilgrimage," said Marie's niece, Elizabeth Simpson.

"She went from handmaid through to attending as one of the sick. It was during this latter time that she had help from the

young helpers from the schools in the diocese – and she really appreciated and admired them.

"She also had a lot of fun with them, as I'm sure they did with her. The legacy has been given to help the young helpers to attend Lourdes and help them continue their essential work."

In recent years the St Vincent de Paul Society helped Marie maintain her independence. Members would take her to Mass and the shops.

"I can't speak highly enough of the support they gave her, and I know she appreciated their help and their friendship.

Marie died peacefully in her sleep on February 23 2021.

"She was a wonderful auntie, and we miss her cheeky self and her presence," said Elizabeth.



Marie and John Adams beside the river in Lourdes

Organisers encouraged by helper response

Organisers have been encouraged by the numbers of doctors, nurses, handmaids and brancardiers who have been in touch to say they will be taking part in our annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes this spring.

The pilgrimage has been cancelled for the last two years because of the pandemic, but Bishop Terry will lead this year's pilgrimage, which has been reduced to five days, from Monday May 30 to Friday June 3.

In recent weeks the Lourdes committee has asked hospitalité members to get in touch to say whether they will be available, so they know how many supported pilgrims can take part.

Pilgrimage director Keith Tillotson said the pilgrimage will be as safe as it can possibly be.

"We have a fantastic opportunity to return to Lourdes and we have done everything to ensure the safety of everyone involved," he said.

"Extensive risk assessments have been carried out and Covid protocols are in place.

"There will be a strict, mandatory testing regime and we will continue to follow all government guidance.

"We've been in close contact with the sanctuary authorities and have submitted our plans. A full programme of religious events will be available as normal."

Meetings have been held with Teesside Airport to ensure best practice is followed from the very start of the pilgrimage. All pilgrims must have been fully vaccinated.

"The committee will keep pilgrims informed about all documentation required by the French and UK governments as we approach," Keith added.

"All school groups who are travelling will be on the flight with us rather than on coaches, to keep them safe and Covid-free when we get to the shrine.

"Because we are not away during the weekend, we are hoping that more priests will be able to accompany us to Lourdes as their usual Masses will not be affected."

Early booking is essential, and all money paid to travel agent Tangney Tours is fully guaranteed and refundable.

"We would urge all helpers who haven't already done so to contact their head of department as soon as possible to confirm their attendance," said Keith.

There will be a separate testing regime in place for independent travellers, who may be required to take their own lateral flow test kits.

"Safety is of paramount importance, and we will look at maximum protection and minimum risk for everyone involved," said Keith.



Pilgrimage director Keith Tillotson – Photo courtesy of Lacaze, Lourdes

WHO TO CONTACT...

Supported pilgrims: headofhospitalite@rcdmidd.org.uk

Brancardiers: headbrancardier@rcdmidd.org.uk

Handmaids: headhandmaid@rcdmidd.org.uk

Nurses/doctors: doctor@rcdmidd.org.uk or headnurse@rcdmidd.org.uk

Musicians: thelombards@hotmail.com

Pilgrims: pilgrimagedirector@rcdmidd.org.uk

Alternatively, write to Lourdes Pilgrimage Director, Curial Office, 50a The Avenue, Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

Training day date confirmed

This year's training day will take place at Trinity Catholic College in Middlesbrough on Saturday March 26 from 9.30am.

As usual, the training day is mandatory for all those who wish to help in the Accueil.

Book by visiting eventbrite.co.uk and searching "Middlesbrough Lourdes".

All invited to feast day Mass

All are invited to Mass to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes at St Mary Cathedral, Middlesbrough, on Friday February 11 at 7pm.

The service will be streamed live on the diocese YouTube page for those who are unable to attend in person.

SUPPORTED PILGRIM REGISTRATION FORM

Fill out the form to express an interest in travelling to Lourdes as a supported pilgrim...

MY DETAILS

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Please send to:
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DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES 2022

DATES
Monday May 30-Friday July 3

Minsteracres announces new retreat programme

The team at Minsteracres Retreat Centre in Consett, County Durham, has released its latest programme of events.

“You are a thought of God” is led by Father Ben Lodge CP, a Passionist priest and postulator for the causes of Dominic Barberi and Father Ignatius Spencer and is a preached retreat for religious. It runs from Sunday March 20 at 6pm to the morning of Saturday March 26. There is a suggested donation of £470.

“On a journey with the northern saints” (April 25 to 29, suggested donation £500), led by the team, is an opportunity to spend a week at Minsteracres journeying in the footsteps of the northern saints such as Aidan, Cuthbert, Oswald, Hilde and Bede. Find out more about their spirituality and motivation and visit the iconic places where they lived out their faith. Includes visits to Holy Island, Bamburgh, Durham Cathedral, Heavenfield and other early monastic sites. All travel costs are included.

“Christian life in a new world: meditations on discipleship drawn from the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles” (July 11 to 15, suggested donation £560) is led by Father Donald Senior CP. The experiences of the past three years – such as the pandemic, the

effects of climate change, raging political and social conflicts – have brought profound change to our world.

It is time, Pope Francis has noted, to set out as pilgrims on a new and life-giving journey. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles provided direction to the early Christian community as it, too, entered a new time and a new place. Father Donald Senior CP, a renowned Scripture scholar, will draw on this biblical wellspring to reflect on the possibilities of Christian discipleship now.

“Memory, experience and imagination: Aids to all things being made new” (October 21 to 23, suggested donation £220) is led by Rev John Bell, a member of the Iona Community.

We tend to sift anything new through one or more of the three sieves of memory (what has been), experience (what is) and imagination (what might be). This is true as much for our spiritual and liturgical life as it is for our health and wellbeing.

In his teaching about God’s radical kingdom, Jesus draws on the past, present and imagined future to enable us to be open to the newness which God intends.

For more details, call 01434 673248.



Minsteracres Retreat Centre in Consett

Singing and fun at Music for the Mind

Music for the mind welcomes anyone with memory problems their friends, relatives and carers. They meet every second Monday in the month in St Mary’s Cathedral hall from 2pm to 3.30pm.

Sessions can also be viewed on the Diocese of Middlesbrough YouTube channel, meaning you can watch them as often as you like at a time convenient to you.

They begin with light refreshments for 30 minutes, before singing led by Trish McLean. There is usually dancing and playing percussion instruments, but due to Covid we have had to restrict this to singing only in the main body of the church.

Sessions are free, but donations are welcome.

If anyone is interested in having a friendly information session on Dementia, Dot Fellowes and Chris Tinkler would be happy to give a Dementia Friends awareness session.

Contact Dot 01642 714274 dorothy.fellowes@hotmail.co.uk or Chris on 01642 710179 christine.tinkler@gmail.com.

Environment Corner

To renew the face of the earth

Last month’s Environment Corner concentrated on the *Laudato Si’* Platform – a template to encourage us to discover what each of us can do to build a better future together.

In much of Pope Francis’ writing we hear the phrase “ecological conversion”, which is at the centre of a change of heart and of a realisation of the responsibility we all have to fulfil our role in caring for our common home.

This month I would like to bring together quotes, from different sources, which help us along this path:

“Our life has an impact on our planet through our daily actions, or even just by being. We have reached a period of human history whereby, though our interconnected world even the smallest of our actions has effects far beyond our local community. This is because we are connected to neighbour, nature and planet in an integral ecology making the world our ‘wider community’. You cannot truly love your neighbours without caring for nature and our common home.” – John Paul de Quay, *Journey to 2030*

“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before ... That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of.” – CS Lewis

“The Church’s job is to be the prophetic voice the world needs. Who best to remind our government and the business community of their responsibilities to the future? The Church must give voice to the climate scientists who are the prophets of our day speaking uncomfortable truths to our generation.” – Ruth Jarman, Operation Noah

“We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile.” – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*

Barbara Hungin



Pope Francis – Photo © Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk



You are a thought of God led by Fr Ben Lodge CP

a Passionist priest and Postulator for the Causes of Dominic Barberi and Fr. Ignatius Spencer
This is a preached retreat for Religious. The retreat will start on Sunday 20 March at 6:00pm and finish during the morning of Saturday 26 March.

20 to 26 March, Suggested donation, £470

On a Journey with the Northern Saints, led by the Minsteracres team

Spend a week at Minsteracres journeying in the footsteps of the Northern Saints such as Aidan, Cuthbert, Oswald, Hilde and Bede. Find out more about their spirituality and motivation, and visit the iconic places where they lived out their faith. Includes visits to Holy Island, Bamburgh, Durham Cathedral and Heavenfield and other early monastic sites. All travel costs are included.

25 to 29 April, Suggested donation: £500

Christian life in a new world: meditations on discipleship drawn from the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles led by Fr Donald Senior CP

The experiences of the past three years—the pandemic, the effects of climate change, raging political and social conflicts— have brought profound change to our world. It is time Pope Francis has noted, to set out as pilgrims on a new and life-giving journey. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles provided direction to the early Christian community as it, too, entered a new time and a new place. Fr Donald Senior CP, a renowned Scripture scholar will draw on this biblical wellspring to reflect on the possibilities of Christian discipleship now.

11 to 15 July, Suggested donation: £560

Memory, Experience and Imagination: Aids to all Things Being Made New led by Rev John Bell, a member of the Iona Community

We tend to sift anything new through one or more of the three sieves of memory (what has been), experience (what is) and imagination (what might be). This is true as much for our spiritual and liturgical life as it is for our health and wellbeing. In his teaching about God’s radical kingdom, Jesus draws on the past, present and imagined future to enable us to be open to the newness which God intends.

21 to 23 October, Suggested donation: £220

For information and bookings visit www.minsteracres.org,

Phone: 01434 673248 Email: info@minsteracres.org

Minsteracres Retreat Centre, nr. Consett,
County Durham, DH8 9RT

NEWS

Catholic Charity gave ‘near-record’ aid last year

More than 330 projects across 76 countries were paid out in 2021 by the UK office of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) – one of the best years on record and achieved despite the pandemic.

Projects supported included urgent medical support for Syrian Christian refugee families in Lebanon, subsistence aid for priests, sisters and catechists ministering in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains, and a Church-backed campaign providing emergency Covid help for the poor in Delhi’s slums.

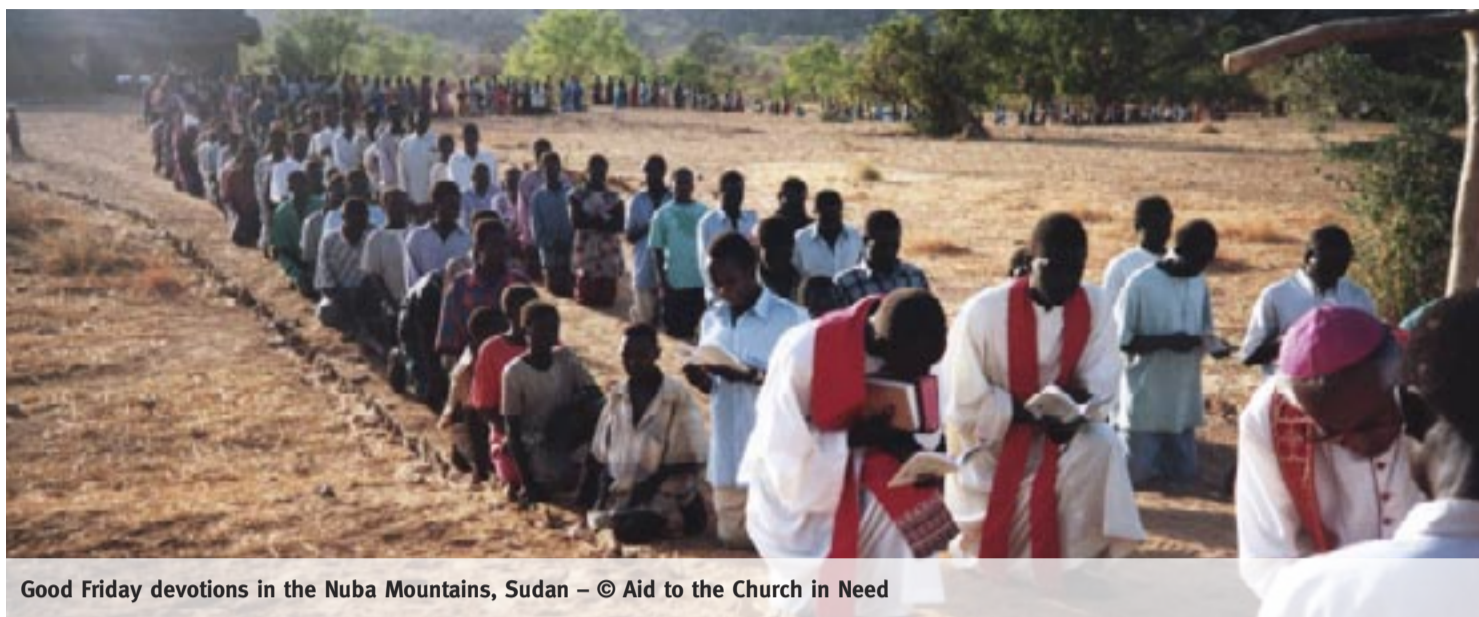
ACN (UK) national director Neville Kyrke-Smith said: “Given the immense challenges our brothers and sisters faced in so many countries last year, I am once again humbled by our benefactors’ love in response to their suffering.

“That we were able to help with a near-record amount of aid in 2021 is a testimony to our benefactors’ compassion for the Church in need.”

The more than £9m in project support provided – the charity’s third-highest annual sum – helped Christians face a number of tough challenges around the world.

“The struggles that the Church is facing as it continues to help the most vulnerable during the pandemic are nothing short of heroic – and we were delighted that part of our aid went to support priests, sisters and lay people who were helping those affected by the coronavirus crisis, including £25,000 for emergency aid in Pakistan’s Islamabad-Rawalpindi Diocese.”

Other Covid-19 help featured a project in Delhi’s slums which included daily food



Good Friday devotions in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan – © Aid to the Church in Need

distribution, free hygiene kits, and the maintenance of two homes for the destitute – as well as medical help for both the poor and priests and Sisters.

Medical care for Church personnel is essential for a subcontinent where hundreds of thousands have fallen ill – and more than 400 priests and sisters have died of coronavirus.

Mr Kyrke-Smith stressed that ACN (UK) had not forgotten long-term priorities, and was still helping Christians in the Middle East suffering from regional conflicts and targeted attacks from extremist groups.

Syrian refugees who fled to Zahle, east Lebanon, received ongoing support including food packages, hygiene kits, rent assistance, fuel, and medical needs.

The UN does not provide these Christian families with any assistance – all international aid is channelled via the Muslim-majority unofficial camps where Christians are afraid to live.

More than £85,000 went to provide help for 166 Church workers in Sudan – including priests, sisters and lay catechists – in seven parishes and a prayer centre in the Nuba Mountains.

Indiscriminate bombing and attacks on civilians occurred in the Nuba Mountains region during the civil war.

Other support provided by the UK office during 2021 included support for seminarians – particularly in Africa, Eastern Europe and the subcontinent, reconstruction of churches across the globe, such as St Joseph’s, Kragujevac, Serbia, and rent support for struggling families including in the Syrian capital Damascus, as well as Mass stipends to support poor priests.

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