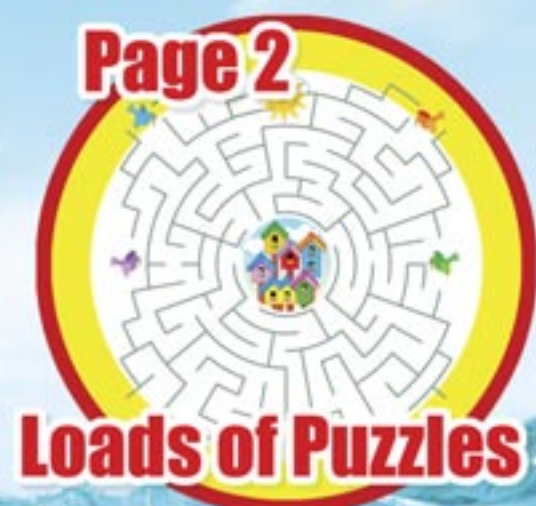


Page 2



Loads of Puzzles



Page 6

Page 4 & 5



Plastics Poster

Day 5: Fish & Birds

Packed full of FUN, PUZZLES and lots to think about!

Parents' Paper Inside

Teachers!
Homework Sheets
Resources
Lesson Plans

All Online

Puzzles

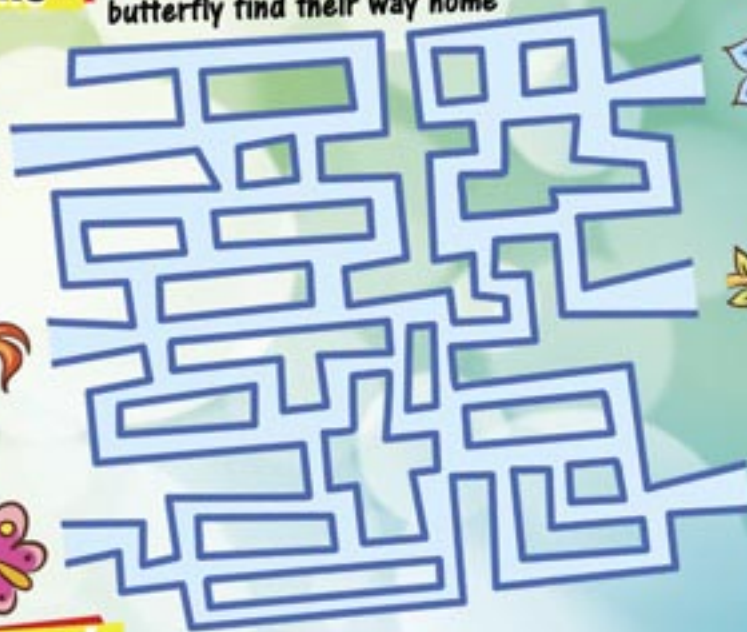
Bird Maze

Help each bird find their way home to the bird houses.



Fly Home

Help the bird, fish and butterfly find their way home



Crossword



Spot 12 Differences



Answers

This way up!

1. Dolphin
2. Octopus
3. Turtle
4. Angelfish
5. Narwhal
6. Seahorse
7. Whale
8. Crab



Creation: Day 5 - Fish & Birds

Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky."

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

The Amazing Birds & Fish are another part of God's Amazing Creation

Unbelievable Fish Facts

Most fish have taste buds all over their body.

Great White Sharks give birth to live babies called pups. Fish use lots of low-pitched sounds to convey messages to each other. They don't have vocal chords so they use other parts of their bodies to make noises, even rattling their bones and gnashing their teeth.

Fish can form schools containing millions of fish. They use their eyes and something called a lateral line to hold their places in the school. The lateral line is a row of pores running along the fish's sides from head to tail. Special hairs in the pores sense changes in water pressure from the movements of other fish.

The fish in the middle of a school control the school. The fish on the outside are guided by those in the middle. Only bony fish can swim in highly coordinated groups.

Starfish and Jellyfish are not fish.

Electric eels and rays have enough electricity to kill a horse.

Sharks are the only fish that have eyelids. The biggest fish in the world is the giant whale shark, which can grow to nearly 60 feet, or the length of two school buses. It weighs over 25 tons and eats mainly plankton. It has over 4,000 teeth, but they are only 3 mm long.

Seahorses are the only fish that swim upright — they are also the slowest fish — so slow they don't look like they are moving.

Unbelievable Bird Facts

Owls cannot swivel their eyes. Instead they move their heads completely around to see straight behind them. Soft fringes on their wings make their flight essentially silent.

Unlike most birds that sing, a woodpecker will drum its beak against a tree. Other woodpeckers can identify it by the sound of the drumming.

The most talkative bird in the world is the African gray parrot. One parrot could say over 800 words.

The bird with the most feathers is the whistling swan, with up to 25,000 feathers.

Coalminers often used canaries to detect poisonous levels of carbon monoxide gas. If the canary passed out, the miners were in danger, too.

The marsh warbler can mimic more than 80 different birds.

Flamingos pair for a lifetime. Some stay with their mates for 50 years or more.

A bird's feathers weigh more than its skeleton.

Arctic terns have the longest annual migration of any bird. They fly 25,000 miles (40,000 m) from the Arctic to the Antarctic and then back again.

The bird with the greatest wingspan of any other bird is the Wandering Albatross at up to 11.8 ft (3.63 m).

PLASTICS IN THE MA

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 8 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the ocean every year.

≈ one truckload every minute

80% of marine plastic waste comes from land-based sources.



Dissolved contaminants from the water can adhere to the surface of microplastics.

Microplastics can be ingested and retained by filter feeders

Although some research suggests that microplastics don't currently

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH THESE EASY STEPS . . .



USE REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS



CHOOSE REUSABLE PLATES AND METAL CUTLERY

NEV
PLAS
THE



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AVOID PLASTIC STRAWS



DO A #2MINUTEBEACHCLEAN
[HTTPS://BEACHCLEAN.NET/](https://beachclean.net/)



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Reach

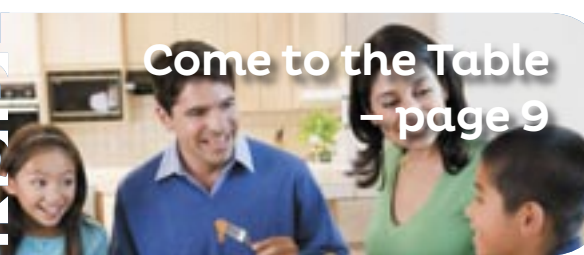
READ IT, LOVE IT, LIVE IT

INSIDE



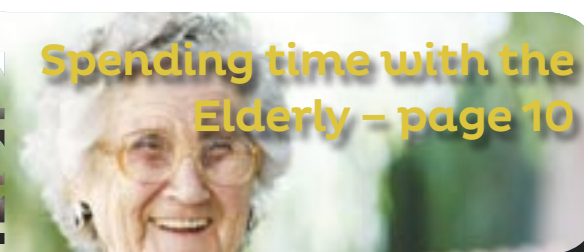
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on Waiting –
page 3

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– page 9

INSIDE



Spending time with the
Elderly – page 10



What are you ...

... waiting for?

Dear Reader

It's lovely to be sending greetings to you at last in this the summer edition! And I hope that we are all able to enjoy some sunshine, rest and relaxation at this time of the year.

This edition of Reach looks at the concept of 'waiting' – something which affects each and every one of us in a variety of different ways. It may be a very common aspect of our lives, but its effects can be profound. Above all, how do we deal with waiting in certain situations?

We've also included some thoughts for the summer – our A-Z guide to the summer season, and we've taken a light-hearted look at the traditional school sports day. When you add this to the continuation of our new series 'Spending time with...' our book reviews and another stunning 'Wonders of nature' piece from Father Mark Skelton, I'm sure you'll agree that this edition is packed with useful information, stories and humour.

So enjoy and have a wonderful summer!

Blessings,

Julia

Editor

Above the Noise of the World

The Lord is whispering to you, Do you hear Him? Above the noise of the world, Above the laughter of your friends, Listen! Open your heart to receive The Word! Open your heart to receive The Lord.

The Lord is waiting for you, In your busy life, He waits patiently every minute, For you to turn to Him, He gave his life to save you, Suffered and died on a cross for you, With total unconditional love for you.

The Lord is walking with you, Every moment He is there, For so long you have not known Him, or felt His presence, But He was and is always with you, Turn to Him now, not just in suffering or Pain, But also in happiness and joy, He waits to share your life,

How He loves you! So much, more than you can ever imagine, Leave the noise of the world behind, Wait for the silence and The Lord.

A follower of Jesus

Contact us

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Pope Francis

Persevere in prayer, remembering that God the Father is waiting to answer his children – even if the result is to change the person, not the circumstance, Pope Francis said at the general audience Wednesday.

How many times have we asked and not obtained – we all experience it – how many times have we knocked and found a closed door? Jesus urges us, in those moments, to insist and not to give up.

Prayer, always transforms reality, always. If things do not change around us, at least we change, change our heart. Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to every man and to every woman who prays.

He promised us: He is not like a father who gives a snake instead of a fish. There is nothing more certain: the desire for happiness that we all carry in our hearts will one day be fulfilled.

We can stay all the time in prayer with that word alone: 'Father.' And to feel that we have a father: not a master or a stepfather. No: a father.

What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish?" he invoked the experience of fathers and grandfathers, when their hungry children and grandchildren ask and cry for food: "You feed him what he asks for, for the good of him.

"With these words Jesus makes us understand that God always answers, that no prayer will remain unheard. Why? Because he is a Father, and he does not forget his children who suffer.

Francis noted how such statements about prayer can cause people distress, because so many prayers seem to get no result and no answer from God.

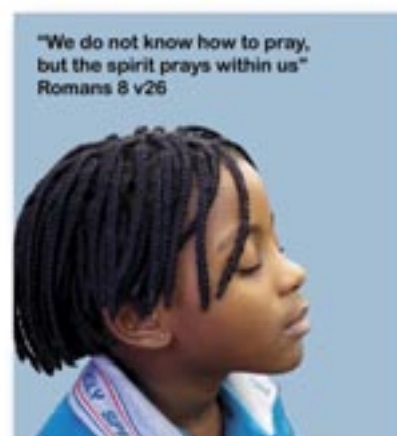
We can be sure that God will answer, the only uncertainty is due to the time, but we do not doubt that He will answer. Maybe we will have to insist for a lifetime, but He will answer.

At the end of prayer, at the end of a time when we are praying, at the end of life: what is there? There is a Father waiting for everything and waiting for everyone with his arms wide open. We look at this Father," he concluded.

– January 2019

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When to wait and when to act?

It's a difficult balance to strike. As people of faith we are told to trust our big decisions to God. Look and listen for the signs and then follow where He leads. But how do you identify the signs? When does indecision and uncertainty stop you from fulfilling the potential that God has envisioned for you?

The apocryphal story of the man on the roof comes to mind. There he is, sitting on the roof in the midst of a massive flood. He is visited three times by people trying to take him to safety and three times he waves them away saying 'It's ok - I'm waiting for God to save me'. When at last he is swept away by the rising waters and gets to heaven,

he asks God why didn't help. At which point God replies - 'I sent you a canoe, a helicopter and a motorboat and you turned them all way - what more could I have done!'

So, what to do? It's worth remembering that God made our personalities and gave us our skills and talents just as much as he made us as people. If you are ambitious for what you can achieve in your life, that ambition will have come from God - using that drive to create the best for your family, your community, your employer and your society benefits everyone. Dream big - He does!

Interpretation of God's will is about

as personal as something can get. What for one person would be a clear sign to act might for others be considered ambiguous. Being presented with an opportunity can be a choice for us to make. God has given us free will and sometimes we need to use it.

Also, recognising the difference between the seriousness of the decision at hand can help. Major, life-affecting decisions will doubtless require thought, prayer and careful consideration. Small, day to day decisions need action of one sort or another. In those situations, putting off a small decision because you're waiting for divine guidance could limit your

ability to make the most of what God has given you.

Once a decision is made and your course is set - what then? The right decisions are not always easy but nor are they always the hardest. If you've made a decision having felt that God has directed you, should you hold fast to that course no matter what? If suddenly you feel that perhaps circumstances have changed and what previously seemed so right, now seems less so - don't be afraid to change direction or rethink. As the man on the roof learned, reacting to changing circumstances might just be best after all.



School Sports Day: Love it or Hate it?

A light-hearted look at that energetic annual event...

Sports day: a chance for our children to showcase their sporting prowess, learn important lessons about competition and enjoy a happy, healthy dose of fresh air in the company of friends and parents...

Ask many parents and you will in fact uncover tales of disconsolate children trailing behind the pack in race after race; triumphant parents parading medal-laden offspring around the sports field; sprained limbs and inclement weather. Not to mention, of course, the humiliation of the parents' races!

So, whether your child's strengths lie on or off the running track, and regardless of how much use your own trainers see, here is our parents' guide to surviving sports day:

Don't Take Sports Day Too Seriously!

It is supposed to be fun – for everyone. One mother, whose two children attend a London

day school, recalls her utter bewilderment upon discovering that some of her daughter's classmates had put in hours of work with personal trainers in preparation for the annual cross country race.

"I had no idea it was such a big thing. There was quite a drama when the trained child only came second. I heard talk of wasted money and so on. It might have been funny if it wasn't so ridiculous."

It's the Taking Part...

Of course you should celebrate with your child if they win races, but bear in mind that not everyone in trainers is talented, and do try not to lord it over everyone else. And remember it isn't the Olympics – keep the cheering to a level which won't leave your child cringing in embarrassment!

If your child struggles with sport, or with competition, make sure you praise them for their effort and for taking part.

"I want my son to be fit and active for his health and because it is a way of socialising, but I don't care how he does in comparison to

everyone else," says a parent at a Yorkshire day school. "He isn't naturally sporty and so I make sure he knows I am proud of him."

Be Prepared for the Parents' Race!

While some schools have abandoned the traditional parents' races, most sports days involve parents working up a sweat as well. "Fortunately my children are now old enough to forbid me from joining in, but when they were enthusiastic it was excruciating!" one London day school parent said. "I never had the right footwear and once I fell over! Yet while many parents turn up with inadequate clothing or fitness, there are plenty whose fancy sports kit and elaborate stretching routines suggest far greater levels of preparation..."

A discreet query around the playground elicits plenty of tips for avoiding the humiliation – limps, clingy toddlers or even better: a pregnancy bump.

If all else fails, pack a killer picnic. Plentiful cake and juice will solve most ills. Good luck!

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The ABC's of Summer:

An A to Z Guide to the S



A Is for Adventures

Summer is a time to visit new places, connect with new friends (or reconnect with old ones), and embark on adventures that can range from setting foot in an ocean for the first time to creating an elaborate tree fort in the backyard. What would be your children's adventure of a lifetime?

B Is for Boats

Sailboats, canoes, cruise ships, rafts, fishing boats or even paper boats you launch in your local pond. Nothing says summer like the lovely floating feeling you get when you're on or even looking at a boat. What is your children's favourite kind of boat?



C Is for Camp

Whoever came up with the idea of summer camp was on to something. What better time to make new friends, explore the outdoors, and learn new skills. Do your children prefer day camp or sleep-away camp?

D Is for Diving Board

The cool shock of splashing into a sparkling pool after performing an elegant swan dive (or noisy, splashy cannonball!) is the definition of summer fun.



G Is for Grass

Grass is the bright green coat that softens the earth under our picnic blankets, feeds bunnies and birds, and gives our knees the happiest stains around!

H Is for Hikes

On the surface, a hike is simply a walk you take, but it's also so much more. A hike is an opportunity to climb to new heights, follow beautiful trails, breathe crisp forest air, and journey deep into a living, breathing habitat. When your children are on a hike, do they look up at treetops and birds, or down at plants and bugs?

I Is for Ice-Cream Vans

Few things can get children to break into a run as fast as the sweet musical jingle that says, "The ice-cream van is here!" Even the adults get in on the action!

J Is for Jump Rope

Alone or with friends, jumping or skipping, single-rope or Double Dutch, this game is all your children need on a fresh summer day.

K Is for Kicks

Summer is a time to kick back -- literally! Kicking a ball, setting down your bike's kickstand, or making a splash in the water, use your feet to kick-start some fun! Which 'kicks' do your children prefer?

E Is for Exercise

Whether you and your children prefer a stroll in the woods or on the beach, a hopscotch session on the sidewalk, a game of tag, a somersault contest in the pool, or a simple game of catch, summer is a time to get moving! What is your children's favourite outdoor game?

F Is for Fireworks

It wouldn't be summer without the colourful, sparkly crackle of fireworks lighting up a balmy night's sky. Wherever and whenever you see those happy bursts of colour, you can be sure that summer is in full swing!



Summer Season



L Is for Lightning

It seems like magic when a bolt of electric light flashes across the sky during a summer storm. Find a safe indoor spot and watch lightning put on its spectacular show, and marvel at the power of nature.

M Is for Movies

Summer is blockbuster season for movies! Perhaps your family will enjoy a movie so much you'll see it twice! Grab some popcorn and settle in for summer-movie bliss. What's your children's favourite movie snack?

N Is for Night Sky

Summer nights, warm and clear, are perfect for stargazing. Get your children a guidebook to hunt for constellations or to lie on the grass, looking up, and using their finger to create designs in the cosmos. Either way, gazing up at the night sky is great!

O Is for Ocean

Whether your children are swimmers, seashell hunters, or whale-watchers, the sea is teeming with wonders. Whether they take a cool dip or just stick their toes in, there are endless ways for them to experience the joys of the sea.

P Is for Picnic

We all have to eat, but who wants to sit indoors when the sun is shining and the park is calling? Pack up a delicious family picnic lunch, toss some Frisbees and a deck of cards into the basket, and head out for a

fab afternoon of fresh air and good times. What's your children's favourite picnic food?

Q Is for Quack

Spend some time with your children at a local pond or lake and greet these pretty waterfowl. If your area allows duck-feeding, bring along some bread to scatter too!



R Is for Roller Coasters

Life is full of ups and downs, and nowhere is that more true than on a soaring roller coaster. On these wild amusement park rides, your heart will race, your hair will blow back, and you'll arrive at the end with nothing on your mind except, "Let's do that again!" Have your children – and you – ever ridden a roller coaster?

S Is for Sand

Children can grab a bucket and spade and wiggle their toes, because it's the season of sand! They can build an awesome castle, bury a willing friend up to his or her neck, or just see how deep they can dig!



T Is for Tent

A tent is more than shelter; it's a special space. In summertime, maybe you and your children can pitch a tent on a camping trip. Or maybe put one up in the backyard. Or even build one out of sofa cushions on a rainy summer day! Have your children ever slept outdoors?

U Is for Underwater

An underwater dunk is refreshing on a hot summer day. If you and your children have a snorkel mask or goggles you can peer into an undersea world of colourful creatures -- or even imagine one if you're in a swimming pool!



V Is for Vegetables

Summer is a perfect time to get your hands dirty in the garden -- plus, you get to eat the fruits of your labours. Tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, beans, and butternut squash are all easy to grow, tasty to eat, and good for your body. Your children will be so excited to eat vegetables when they've grown them! What is the favourite family summer vegetable?

W Is for Watermelon

This vibrant pink snack quenches the thirst and tastes as sweet as candy all at once. Everyone: watch out for those seeds though!

X Is for EXplore

The outdoors are a playground in summertime, and that means your children get to put on their explorer's hats and discover something new every day. Check out the shoreline with them and look for seashells, learn birdcalls, and walk in the woods in search of favourites, or check out a new place on a family holiday.

Y Is for Yellow

From the sparkle of the morning sun to the hum of a bumblebee, to the bright sweetness of lemonade, yellow is definitely a summer colour!

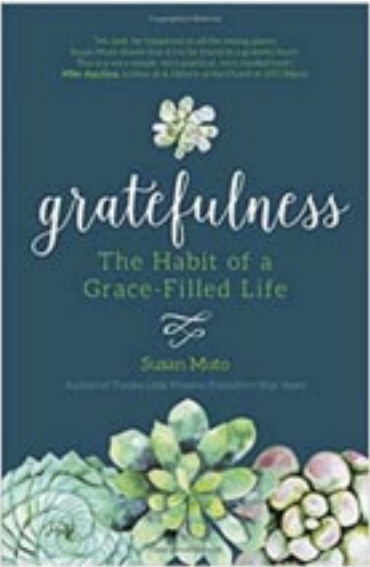
And finally...

Z Is for Zone Out

So many summer activities, so little time! But parents and children: don't forget to do some serious relaxing in between spurts of playing and traveling. So savour the season. You will be back at school before you know it! So, what do you do to relax?



Books for all the family



Gratefulness – Susan Muto

‘GRATEFULNESS NOT A PASSING FAD BUT A GIFT FROM GOD,’ MUTO SAYS

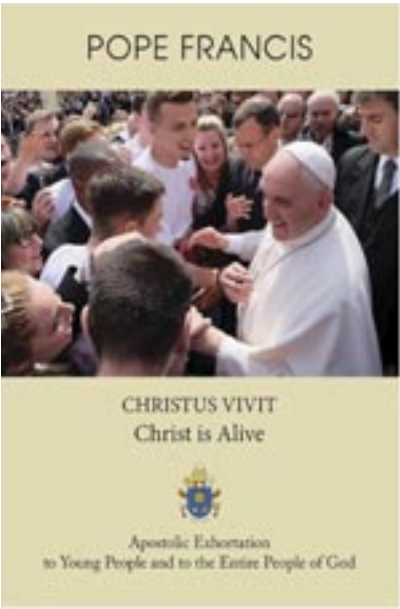
In a consumer-driven world where we’re told we need and deserve more, Susan Muto, executive director of the Epiphany Association, reminds us that gratefulness is a gift from God. In ‘Gratefulness: The Habit of a Grace-Filled Life’, she reveals that grateful living is not another new fad but has been the way of saints and Christian mystics for centuries. In this insightful, inspiring book, Muto explores how life-changing a spirit of gratefulness can be by using both personal and well-known examples of the struggles and rewards of grateful living. She and companions such as Julian of Norwich, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Henri J. M. Nouwen, and Dorothy Day highlight the power of gratitude as a grace from God and walk with us as we learn to practice thankfulness. We start the journey toward gratefulness by embracing gratitude in all circumstances and end it by thankfully accepting the missions God entrusts to each of us. Along the way, we begin to accept God’s grace by understanding the benefits of positivity and dangers of negativity, the redemptive power of prayer, and the lasting fruits of thankfulness. A spirituality of gratitude reminds us that, even without the possessions, luxuries, or leisure time society claims are the most important things in life, God still loves, cares, and knows what’s best for us.



Time travelling with a hamster – Ross Welford

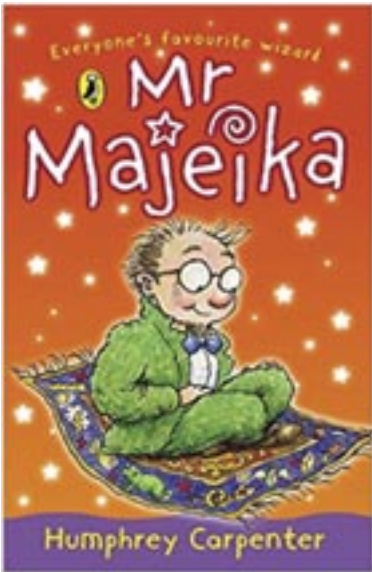
“My Dad died twice. Once when he was thirty nine and again, four years later when he was twelve.” So begins this truly extraordinary debut novel from Ross Welford. It is fundamentally the story about Al (short for Albert – as in Einstein) whose Dad Pye (short for Pythagoras, this is a science loving family) died four years before the story begins. Al is struggling to come to terms with losing his Dad and more recently, acquiring a new Stepfather and Stepsister when he receives a letter on his birthday. His father, a physicist had been experimenting with time-travel and, anticipating his own demise, had made plans for Al to go back in time to prevent the accident that killed him. Very funny and incredibly moving this is a story about many things, among them – grief, physics and the love of a pet hamster. Overwhelmingly though, it’s the story of a boy’s absolute adoration of his father.

Recommended for age 10+



Christus Vivit 'Christ is Alive!' Pope Francis

Following last October’s Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment’, Veritas is delighted to publish Christus Vivit (Christ is Alive!), Pope Francis’ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation dedicated to young people. The document takes the form of a letter and extends an invitation to young people everywhere to reflect deeply upon the ‘moral and spiritual forces’ at work in their lives and, through the intercession of Mary, share the ‘Gospel of peace and life’ with their peers and with the world.



Mr Majeika – Humphrey Carpenter

Mr Majeika is no ordinary teacher. He arrives one day on a flying carpet, much to the bafflement of the Headteacher and the delight of the pupils! His strategies for controlling unruly pupils involves magic – specifically turning one into a frog – which is fine, until he can’t remember the spell to turn him back. Mr Majeika was written in 1985 and there have been many other books and a television series as testament to its popularity.

Recommended for age 6-7)

Come to the Table



We are at that time of the year when families and parishes will be gathering to accompany our children to their First Holy Communion. I am sure for many of us this evokes strong and fond memories. It is a time for family and for memories. Maybe for others it all seems a bit unfamiliar and mysterious, hopefully this reflection on the sacrament we will be celebrating with our children will situate this wonderful moment in the familiarity of our lives.

The Jewish people know the importance of coming together to dine. Much of their prayer life is situated in the gathering of family, friends and strangers for a meal. To share a great truth about God, Jesus chose the meal to celebrate the gift of himself for his friends and those who love him.

When we come to Mass it reflects what is important in our own homes. There is a structure to the Mass that, when we take time to reflect upon it, is very familiar. When we gather as families we take time to welcome and be welcomed. We (if you're anything like my family) seek

forgiveness for those missed calls and opportunities; we speak and share what is happening in our lives. That is how we begin our celebration of the Mass - with a welcome, a concern for one another's welfare and a moment of regret for those things that have been done or left undone. In the Mass we call this the 'Penitential Rite.' Then we share our story. We tell of those moments of pride and humour. We speak of those happenings and words that have sustained us in the time since we were last together. In the Mass, we call this the liturgy of the Word. Then we share wisdom. We ponder those stories that we have shared and how closely they relate to one another. This is the homily. We share our hopes, dreams and concerns - the prayers of the faithful.

Then we share what we have brought with us. Amongst my family and friends, to save one person the burden of a whole meal, we often each bring something to contribute to our feast. This is the fruit of our hands. In the Mass we call that the 'Preparation of the Gifts.' We ask

that all we are and all we do be blessed and made holy. Then we feast. Around our family table we break bread and share our daily lives. When generations gather old stories are told. Often we repeat those stories whenever we gather - the stories of sacrifice and love that provided and nourished people in hard times. The remembrances of those who have died but whose memories are still fresh. Around our family table life is celebrated and affirmed. Around the Altar this reality is more profound. We remember a love that was sacrificed on a cross, which overwhelmed death with love much stronger than we can imagine and a love that feeds us and nourishes us.

Food is a great moment of gathering. I love food and I love preparing food for my community and friends. A meal is an opportunity for real intimacy and friendship. Jesus was a genius when it came to such gatherings. He was about making people feel that they were the honoured guest at the feast. Each was welcome and

important. Each was a special guest and they deserved the best that love could give.

Bringing those we love to Holy Communion is the greatest gift we can share. Jesus says to each one of us - This is my body, this is my blood - for you. This is all of me for you. What a priceless gift.

At the end of the meal, when our hungers and thirsts have been satisfied, we leave pondering the blessings we have received. Waiting with hope and expectation for the next opportunity to gather around the table and to share of its abundance with those whom we will meet in the meanwhile. When we celebrate Mass together we make the ordinariness of what we do and who we are holy and somehow this can have an effect on our lives and how we are as human beings and as human beings in the complexity of our relationships.

May this joyful time be a blessing to your children and all of your families and may the Mass be as an important part of your lives as the daily bread you share around your family table.

Fr Damian



Spending time with... The elderly

We are all living longer – something unquestionably worth celebrating! However, with increasing separation rates and life expectancy differences between the genders, it is the case that more and more people are living on their own in their later years. 2.2 million people over the age of 75 live alone and for those who are in pretty good health and therefore don't have lots of medical appointments, loneliness is pretty common.

Esther Rantzen's charity 'Silver Line' provides a telephone service whereby volunteers commit to making one telephone call per week. They are paired up with an elderly person somewhere in the country and each week (normally at the same time), they will spend a bit of time chatting on the phone about whatever it is they might have in common (or not, as the case may be!). During the training to become a volunteer, the charity explains that for some people, this is the ONLY contact they have with the outside world in the whole week. It becomes so important to them that occasionally, they dress up – make more of an effort with their appearance, in order to take

the call. The idea that in our increasingly connected world there are people so disconnected that they have a single call a week to look forward to, is pretty upsetting.

It's worth remembering that 30ish years ago, these older people would have had lives pretty similar to our own. Chasing around, juggling bringing up children, work, community involvement, hobbies and general family life – they will have been busy and active and thinking. As time has gone on, age might slow us down (when I compare myself to my 9 year old daughter in terms of energy levels, I don't come off well...). It might take more time to formulate a thought or construct a sentence but the wisdom is worth waiting for. Giving time to hear the views of people who have been alive for so much longer than us is essential if only to give perspective to the situations in which we find ourselves.

We don't always have to agree. It may be the case more often than not that the views of the older generation don't take into account the nature of modern life in all its complexities. But

talking to people who have lived their lives and can look at yours with the benefit of hindsight, why wouldn't you do that?

Karl Pillemer is an American Professor who spent decades researching older age before realising one day that he never actually spent any time talking to any old people at all. He changed tack and began interviewing people – asking for their advice on life, love and finding happiness and has now written books sharing this wisdom. On the big questions in life – should I have a central purpose? Will I regret making or not making this decision? The answers are not necessarily what you'd expect. With the benefit of hindsight, what seems so hugely important to us now, seems less so when put into the context of the whole of a life.

And the best thing? This advice is free! Older people need company and younger people of any age can benefit hugely from their wisdom or just the opportunity to take refuge from the frenetic pace of life for a while. There is much to be gained for everyone from spending time with the elderly and your time will always be both

The wonders of nature

– Fr. Mark Skelton



There is nothing more satisfying, garden-wise that is, than growing something from seed or a cutting and watching it develop and mature. Taking cuttings from one plant and watching your original become an army of new beauty is wonderful.

There is also the added joy of being able to share these with friends. Not only do you have a righteous glow as you give something of undoubted beauty to someone else, but there is the added possibility of a reciprocal enrichment as they pass over one of their joys and triumphs. This is also exciting. They may describe and even wax lyrical regarding the ward they are giving into someone else's protection, but until it has been placed, nurtured and flourishes it cannot be absolutely certain that it will 'take'. Nevertheless, when it does... Well, I wouldn't say that there is more rejoicing in Heaven over a cutting that takes, than one that doesn't – but it's still good!

However for every success and joy there are the inevitable knock-

backs. The plantlet ravaged by slugs, the lilies overtaken by strikingly beautiful but evilly voracious lily beetles, the fruit tree whose blossom is stripped by vicious winds before they can be pollinated or the little plant placed in a small space but growing far faster, larger and deeper than you anticipated.

However, this year I have had two specific disasters. Firstly, there were the bulbs bought and lovingly planted in a carefully chosen and prepared location. These were clearly marked to prevent my habitual hazard of spearing them with the fork when I decide to plant something new the next time. So, they were planted on a Saturday afternoon; by Saturday evening they were visited by some slugs who slathered and maraudered their way from under a rock and promptly ate the lot.

(If ever I get to meet the Lord, I have two questions:

a) What happened on the Marie Celeste?

b) Why did You create slugs?)

My second disaster was really my own fault. I bought a lovely scented Clematis from a mail order catalogue. It arrived with a sturdy main stem from which thrust three heavily blossomed branches. Having carefully prepared the hole under my rose arch, I planted it and tenderly tied these offshoots so that they were protected against wind or bad weather. Then I left it to establish itself. Having not been into the garden until the following afternoon, I ventured forth to have a look at how all was going, whilst waiting for my next appointment. Faramir – my pet house rabbit – had evidently decided I had planted it in the wrong place because he had concisely and decisively bitten it off at its base. So now I return to waiting. Will it rejuvenate? Will it survive another rabbit prune?

There are some things in the garden which when eaten, cut, or over enthusiastically pruned are simply gone forever. Bulbs eaten by slugs are a case in point. Yet the joy of gardening is that no matter what disastrous, stupid or careless mistake I commit, it is amazing how often the plant just sulks for a while, then its enforced 'fallow season' sometimes enables it to grow back strengthened and healthier next year.

Disasters can look like disasters, mistakes can seem irrevocable, incorrect decisions can appear the end – yet they often aren't. And if this is true in my garden then how much more so in our own lives, when the main driving force is not our incompetent and impatient carelessness, but the love of the One who took the most disastrous and catastrophic full stop and turned it into nothing more than a comma.



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Beautiful Teacup

There was a couple who took a trip to England to shop in a beautiful antique store to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery, and especially teacups. Spotting an exceptional cup, they asked “May we see that? We’ve never seen a cup quite so beautiful.”

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke, “You don’t understand. I have not always been a teacup. There was a time when I was just a lump of red clay. My master took me and rolled me, pounded and patted me over and over and then when I thought he’d finished, WHAM! I was placed on a spinning wheel and spun around and around and around! It was horrible and I asked him to stop. But the master only nodded and said, quietly, ‘Not yet.’”

“After I had been spun and poked and prodded, he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. Again I shouted for him to stop and for him to let me out but through the glass door I could read his lips as he shook his head from side to side, ‘Not yet.’”

“He took me out of the oven and I began to cool – the relief was wonderful! But then he painted me with horrible smelling paint and put me back into another oven! At this point I wasn’t sure I could make it – it was so hot and I was ready to give up. When he took me out and put me on the shelf to cool completely, he handed me a mirror and said ‘Look at yourself.’ And I did. I said, ‘That’s not me, that couldn’t be me. It’s beautiful. I’m beautiful!’”

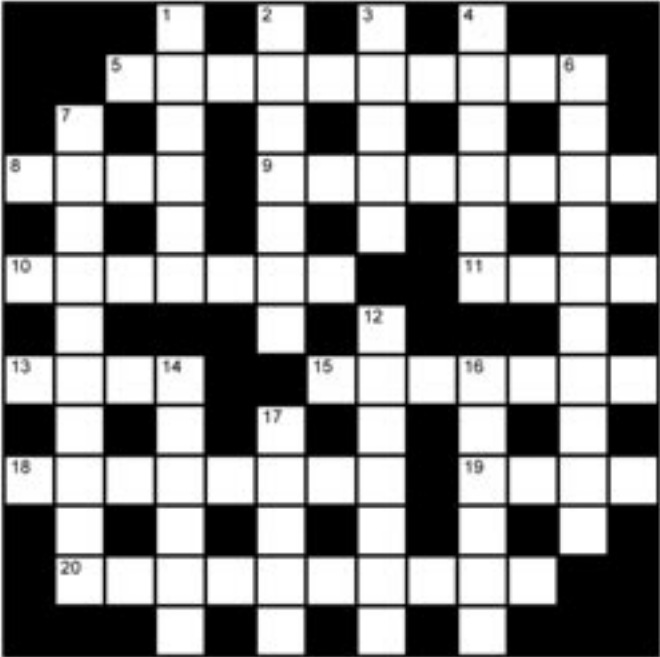
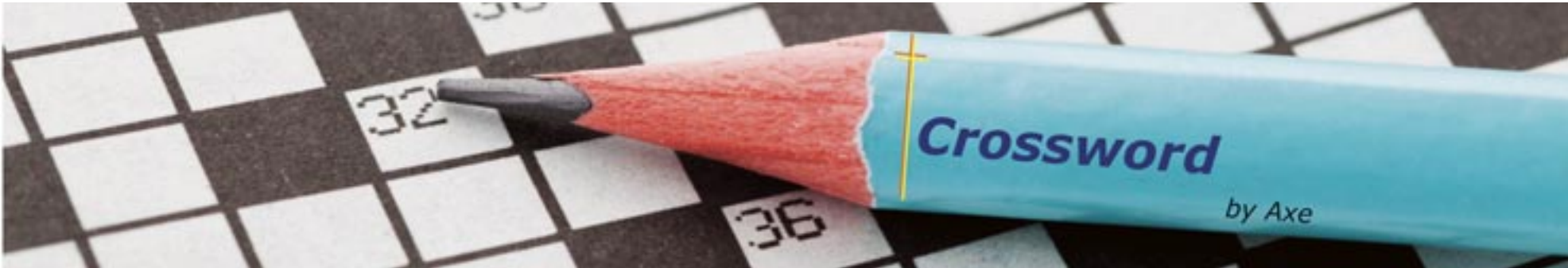


Quietly he spoke: ‘I want you to remember, I know it hurt to be rolled and pounded and patted, but had I just left you alone as clay, you’d have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn’t put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn’t done that, you never would have hardened. You would not have had any color in your life. Now you are a finished product. Now you are what I had in mind when I first began with you.’

The moral of this story is this: God knows what He’s doing for each of us. He is the potter, and we are His clay. He will mould us and make us, and expose us to just enough pressures of just the right kinds that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfil His good, pleasing and perfect will.

So when life seems hard, and you are being pounded and patted and pushed almost beyond endurance; when your world seems to be spinning out of control; when you feel like you are in a fiery furnace of trials; when life seems to “stink”, try this....

Brew a cup of your favourite tea in your prettiest teacup, sit down and think on this story and then, have a little talk with the Potter.



Across

5 Order of architecture: amateur sportsman (10)

8 Influential German idealist philosopher (1724–1804) (4)

9 Wife of Aaron (8)

10 Dignitary presiding over a cathedral or college church (7)

11 Ninth letter of the Greek alphabet (4)

13 Family of German (Protestant) church composers (4)

15 Lake of Central Asia now only a quarter of the area it was in 1960 (4,3)

18 Youngest son of Jacob (8)

19 British language officially extinct in 1974 (4)

20 Season immediately preceding Lent (10)

Down

1 ----- -on-Don: Russian city, centre for the resurgence of Cossack nationalism (6)

2 Nickname for New Orleans (3,4)

3 Of or concerning the Greek region which encompasses Athens (5)

4 Father of Sheba who rebelled against David (6)

6 Biblical people whose capital was Petra in modern Jordan (10)

7 Port in Crete where Paul docked on his way to Rome (4,6)

12 In Christianity the union which makes up one Godhead (7)

14 Flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622, beginning the Muslim era (variant spelling) (6)

16 Eleventh letter of the Greek alphabet (6)

17 Stir up, affect (archaic); remove (legal) (5)

SOLUTION

Across: 5 Corinthian, 8 Kant, 9 Elisebeth, 10 Provoost, 11 Iota, 13 Bach, 15 Aral Sea, 18 Benjamin, 19 Marx, 20 Nabataeans, 7 Fair Havens, 12 Trinity, 14 Hejira, 16 Lambda, 17 Amove.

Down: 1 Rostov, 2 Big Easy, 3 Attic, 4 Bichrl, 6 Shroveide.



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PENGUINO



And the Plastic



The bell rang followed by the sound of hundreds of flippers hitting the ice as all the little penguins came rushing out of the classrooms for breaktime. "Calm down" shouted Professor Pingus as the little penguins all pushed past each other to get out first.

They all rushed to the "pool" to dive in and swim around.

The pool was small but unlike a normal pool it was actually just a hole in the ice that led into the Ocean below. They weren't allowed under the ice in case they went out to sea, but they were allowed to jump in and splash around...but not today!

"WHAT" Penguino shouted. When he reached the pool there was a sign saying...

"WHY???"

Pingus came over and said in a serious voice: "It's too dangerous - there's plastic in there".



All the Penguins peered into the water to see what "plastic" was. Bags, bottles and all sorts of rubbish had been swept into the pool from the sea. Most of the penguins took one look at the dirty pool and decided they didn't want to go in, whether they were allowed to or not. But Penguino, being Penguino, spotted an old toy that looked kind of interesting.

"Frostie!", he called to his best friend in a mixture between a shout and a whisper, "Look at that!" he pointed with his flipper at the plastic toy with bits of metal glinting in the water "what do you think it is?". Frostie could feel that Penguino was about to get himself into trouble!



"I don't know Penguino - but I don't think we should go near it!"

"Come on", said Penguino, "where's your sense of fun?".

"It just left", said Frostie in a grumpy voice, knowing this was not looking good!



Flo leaned over - getting the sense that something interesting was about to happen. "What's going on?"

"Nothi..." Frostie tried to say but was immediately interrupted by a very excited Penguino, still trying to whisper, "Look!!! ...Down there! It looks fun! I'm gonna get it!"

Frostie groaned and slapped his forehead in despair.

On the fifth day, God created the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky. But what happens to them when we don't look after the planet that God has given to us to look after?

"Ooooooooh!" the other penguins said, admiring Penguino.

"Pingus said it was dangerous", Frostie said - knowing it wouldn't make a difference now Penguino had an audience.

"What could be dangerous about a toy?? The only dangerous thing around here is Pingus. You distract him Flo and I'll dive in and get it."



Flo grabbed Sparkle's flipper and dragged her across the playground. "FIRST ONE TO REACH PINGUS!" she shouted, and a whole group of penguins ran towards the professor, tried to stop, skidded on the ice - and before Pingus knew what was going on he, and several penguins, were all in a heap on the ice.

Frostie was staring with his beak wide open, then he realised that Penguino wasn't standing next to him anymore. He was swimming down to get the toy. Penguino grabbed it with his beak and started to bring it up to the surface. A plastic bag was caught on the toy, and as Penguino did an underwater spin to show off it wrapped itself around him. He couldn't use his flippers and he couldn't see. As he tried to wiggle free he started to go underneath the ice.

As Pingus was getting up he heard Frostie's panicked voice shouting "HELP!"



Pingus came running over and looked into the pool. In between all the bits of rubbish he could see a plastic bag wrapped around something that was thrashing around. "Penguino?" he said to Frostie. "Yes" Frostie admitted. Pingus jumped straight into the water, grabbed Penguino with his flippers and pulled him up to the surface. He dragged him onto the ice, and started unwrapping the plastic bag which wasn't moving any longer.

Penguino rolled out of the bag, and after what seemed like hours, gasped and opened his eyes - and then started crying. Professor Pingus, filled with a mixture of relief and anger shook his head saying "Why Penguino?? Why is it always you???"



"Plastic is dangerous. Do you have any idea how many Penguins and all sorts of animals are killed everyday from plastic in the Ocean?"

Penguino promised himself (not for the first time) that he would think twice before doing something he'd been told not to do. He also wondered why people would let the plastic go into the water in the first place if they knew it was so dangerous to penguins. He looked forlornly at the pool and the 'No Swimming' sign, and with great sadness, went back to his classroom.



GOD TRUSTED US WITH OUR PLANET AND WE SHOULD LOOK AFTER IT!

Bird Feeder Water Bottle

We at Reach are very keen to encourage the recycling of plastic to stop so much of it ending up in our environment. This is a brilliant opportunity to recycle an old bottle and feed the birds.

Here's what you do

1. Make sure your bottle is clean and dry so that the seed keeps for as long as possible
2. Tie the string around the bottle lid leaving a long length to use as a hanging loop
3. With your adult supervising, make 2 holes opposite each other about 2cms from the bottom of the bottle
4. Poke your perch through the holes so that it sticks out about 3cms either side
5. Again with adult supervision, make another small hole 2cms directly above the perch. Now carefully enlarge the holes using scissors or a sharp knife. Be careful not to make the hole too big as otherwise the seed will fall out of it
6. Still with your adult's help, make another perch 3-4cms above the seed holes you've just made but this time, turn the bottle through 90° so that the 2nd perch crosses the 1st one (see the picture opposite). Then make more seed holes 2cms above the new perch
7. Now fill the bottle with seed, hang it in a tree and get ready to watch the birds feeding!

You will need

An adult to help you! This is a simple project but it does involve making holes in a bottle which can be tricky.

A sturdy plastic bottle - any size (although the bigger your bottle, the more bird seed you'll need to put in it)

Some string to make a loop to hang it from the tree

Something to make the perches - wooden skewers/twigs/pencils - they will need to fit through the bottle and stick out either side.

A sharp knife or scissors

A drawing pin, needle or corn on the cob handle - anything with a spike on it to make the first hole



Picture looking down at the top of the bottle showing the twigs sticking out of the sides

You will need

Paper Plates
Sissors
Orange and black pencils or felt-tip pens
Glue

Here's what you do

1. Draw the shape of the Dove's body and wings onto paper plates. We've put them all on one plate as an example - but it might be easier to use a few plates
2. Cut out them out
3. Cut a jagged edge around the bottom of the wings
5. Stick the wings onto either side of the dove's body. Make sure they are facing outwards with the top of the plate facing out.
6. Colour in the beak with the orange felt-tip pen.
7. Make a black dot for the eye
8. You can either cut out a leaf from the leftover bits of the paper plates, or go out and find a leaf and glue it onto the dove's beak.

Paper Plate Dove



Someone once told me, when you get angry, thank God for it.
Whatever it is that's gone wrong -
thank God for it!

They said that it's the LAST thing you want to do - but give it a try.
They said, however angry you are, it will make you feel better.
They said try saying the Glory Be prayer 3 times - just to yourself - you
don't need to hold your hands up as you do it!!

And do you know what? I don't always do it.
I don't always want to do it.
But when I do...it works.

Next Time You're angry

What will you choose to do?

Pray it Away

Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
Is now,
And ever shall be.
Amen

The Transformation

A girl walked into a shop and immediately saw the most amazing glass candle-holder it was colourful and had a silver pattern over the top. She picked it up and said "it's beautiful" and to her amazement it replied:

"Thank you - but I wasn't always this beautiful. I used to just be a pile of sand. People would walk on me and wouldn't even notice me."

In amazement, the girl continued to listen to what the candle-holder had to say: "One day I was gathered up and taken away from the life I knew. I was put into a furnace where it was hotter than anything you can imagine - when I reached 1,700°C I started to melt - imagine that! Eventually, I was taken out and allowed to cool - but I was different. I didn't look like me - I didn't look like anything - I was transparent! But already I felt more together!

"I was rolled in powder to make me change colour. Then I was put back into the fire to melt again - as if that wasn't enough - I was stretched and pulled in different directions.

"Finally, I came out of the heat. I was allowed to cool, but I was exhausted. Suddenly, I realised I wasn't really transparent anymore. Now I had all the colours of the rainbow and I wasn't just

a blob - I WAS A SHAPE! I didn't know what I was - but I was definitely a shape.

"Just when I thought it was over, my maker started to put horrible sticky silver paint on me which smelt terrible. I said to my maker: 'Why do you keep doing horrible things to me?' He smiled and put me in front of a mirror.

"That's not me, that couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful!"

All those times that I thought my maker was being horrible to me - he was actually making me amazing!"

The girl bought the candle-holder and took it home. When she got there it was dark, so she went straight to a cupboard, found a candle and lit it. The candle-holder was terrified - not more flames! But the girl gently put her hand around the candle-holder and placed the candle inside. Suddenly, colours shone around the room. Only then did the candle-holder realise what she made for and she brought light to all those around.

Now the candle-holder was the one transforming everything - with all the wonderful colours!



Parent's Paper Inside