



**MORE THAN 25 YEARS OF BRINGING THE NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE TOGETHER**

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## Walking in the Footsteps of Saint Gilbert

Saint Gilbert of Sempringham (a very small village in the middle of Lincolnshire) is one of England's lesser-known saints yet his life and work must surely make him one of the most important. His Feast Day falls at the beginning of February but few of those attending Mass on that day will have been fully aware of his work and legacy.

Born in 1083 he was the son of a Knight, but a physical disability meant he could not follow in his father's footsteps. Having trained as a clerk in France he returned home and was ordained priest by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln who immediately offered him a rich position as an Archdeacon. Gilbert had no hesitation in turning the offer down saying that there was "no surer way to perdition"!

He must have been a remarkable man for the times in which he lived because seven pious local women felt able to approach him saying they wished to live devout lives under his direction as their Priest. He had no hesitation in agreeing to this and a simple range of buildings was soon erected against the north wall of his Church in which the women vowed to live lives of charity, obedience, chastity and humility. So began the Gilbertine order, the only completely British monastic order formed during the Middle Ages. It soon expanded to include men, a large Priory was erected to the southwest of the Church and by the time of Gilbert's death there were twelve houses in Lincolnshire and further afield, of which ten were "double houses" of men and women. He is now honoured in our magnificent Lincoln Cathedral with a Shrine on the left side of the Lady Chapel at the East End, the recently restored Shrine to Our Lady being situated on the right side.

Some years ago a Pilgrimage Walk of 43 miles from Sempringham to Lincoln Cathedral was instituted by the Cathedral. I am a keen walker and try to complete a long distance walk for charity each Autumn. I made enquiries and discovered that comparatively few walkers are aware of the St Gilbert Walk and even fewer have completed it in the last few years. So it was that in October last year a group of us



assembled under a leaden sky outside to Church at Sempringham (rebuilt over the years and so sadly not the one known to Gilbert) ready to set out on the St Gilbert Way. My nominated charity was Nomad, a charity for the homeless in Lincoln of which I was a Trustee before it became a part of Lincoln YMCA.

The first stage was a fourteen mile walk to the town of Sleaford and was challenging to put it mildly. There were few signposts and directions in the Guide Book were at times ambiguous. Despite this we had been able to cover nearly ten miles when we were asked to cross a series of very muddy fields with no rights of way shown on our map or

phones leaving us with no choice but to detour around them probably adding around a mile to our journey. Added to this the rain was pouring down. Nevertheless, we ploughed on reaching the shelter of a Garden Centre on the outskirts of Sleaford where we called it a day.

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The monthly paper for the  
Diocese of Nottingham

## Catholic News

**Editor:** Nick Layton

**Editorial Office:** Bellcourt Ltd,  
N2 Blois Meadow Business  
Centre, Steeple Bumpstead,  
Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 7BN

**Telephone:** 01440 730399

email: [cn@cathcom.org](mailto:cn@cathcom.org) or

[davidl@cathcom.org](mailto:davidl@cathcom.org)

**Website:** [www.bellcourtltd.co.uk](http://www.bellcourtltd.co.uk)

**Distribution enquiries:**

Nick Layton

e-mail [nick@cathcom.org](mailto:nick@cathcom.org),  
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# Lent and the SVP

As you read this article, we will be well into Lent and many of you will be around halfway through your self-imposed challenge to mirror Jesus by giving up something for Lent. My parents 'religiously' imposed a 'ban' on something they both enjoyed during Lent which invariably focused on some form of confectionary – usually chocolate! I will be focusing on an alcohol free 7 weeks!

I was interested to listen to my parish priest include in a recent sermon the relevance of the denial of something we enjoy during Lent. This is seen as a sign of sacrifice and to test our self-discipline, believing that this can represent Jesus Christ's sacrifice when he went into the desert to pray and fast for the 40 days before later dying on the cross.



He then went on to say that whilst giving up something is worthwhile, there is more value in giving by doing something rather than not doing something. By this he meant

that Lent is an excellent time to put your faith into action to help others around you who may be in need of support and assistance.



Give with Love

The links with the SVP were clearly obvious, where its mission is to actively seek out those in need and offer whatever support practicable in a spirit of social justice. To borrow clumsily from our other main Christian festival in December, helping people is 'not just for Easter', but Easter would be a good time to start.



The SVP is experiencing an increasing surge in requests for help both at local level through its parish conferences and through direct contact with the Beneficiary Support Team at National Office. Since the Cost-of-Living Crisis began requests for support

have increased exponentially, with 2023 recording an increase of over 200% from the year before.

The SVP is blessed to have an effective fundraising strategy that sources funding from national campaigns, donations and grant applications as well as local fundraising and financial support from generous parishioners for their parish conference. This enables the SVP to continue to be a serious force for good in the current economic climate, able to combine befriending with 'short term' financial assistance to help those in budgetary crisis whilst they get themselves into a more stable situation. This is actually no different to what the SVP has been doing in England and Wales for the last 180 years. This is not a call to arms or an appeal to join the SVP, more a piece to let you, the reader, know what is happening with and through the SVP. After Easter, we will all (probably) go back to enjoying what we gave up during Lent, but people in need will still be out there and SVP members will continue to seek them out and offer assistance.

However, if you do feel that Lent is a good time to give rather than give up, and the SVP appeals to you as a platform to do so, please get in touch with Joe Gasan, SVP Membership Officer for the Nottingham diocese for further information at [joeg@svp.org.uk](mailto:joeg@svp.org.uk)

## FRANKLY SPEAKING



Having nearly reached a certain age, I hope to learn from my past advice as we proceed with Lent this year. "Just do your best" was the comment from one priest and in a 1970 Prayer book a further reflection was "Being a Christian is not easy - it is not meant to be." I suspect we all know that.

I was however somewhat surprised by the recent newspaper article concerning the church and bogus asylum claims. Surely it is the responsibility of the Home Office to decide who can or cannot come to our shores. It is perhaps inevitable that international issues will influence our country in a rapidly changing world. Whilst the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine have dominated the news agenda we should not forget the plight of many who quickly and sadly can get forgotten.

The earthquakes which shattered Turkey/Syria and Afghanistan last year took away many lives and the devastation left

areas with few buildings left. As I write this article there are new concerns coming out of Ethiopia and it seems a huge effort may be needed to prevent famine again. Let us never forget the plight of children and the elderly as the issue of foreign aid comes again under scrutiny. What can we do? I strongly recommend a reading of the CAFOD magazine, Side by Side last winter edition which on its front cover states "No one beyond reach".

Whilst most of us can only observe the continued changes in new technology they are affecting us all in different ways. Again it is children and the elderly who seem particularly vulnerable.

Dependent on whom you call, the difficulty in communicating by what used to be a simple telephone call can be frustrating. Despite this the scam calls and devious fraud activity seems to be thriving with no priority given to stopping this as more bank branches close.

Sadly too, we are all aware of how children can incorporate the wrong and potentially dangerous or worse activity into their young lives.

Well we have the On-Line Safety Bill in Parliament let's hope it achieves some progress.

On the feast of The Presentation of The Lord, Pope Francis gave the homily to a large congregation at Mass in the Vatican. The Pope seemed to recognise the issues facing the world! We were urged to embrace the child Jesus as Simeon had done. Pope Francis also recognised that this was "not easy but God comes in ways we do not expect." This was perhaps a special relevant help for Lent this year.

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# Bestowed the title of Honorary Canon

On December 7th 2023, Fr Paul Newman, The parish Priest of the Parishes of, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Eastwood. Our Lady and St Thomas of Hereford, Ilkeston. St John the Evangelist, Stapleford and also the Chaplain at the Briars, The diocesan youth centre in Crich, was bestowed the title of Honorary Canon by the Bishop of Nottingham, Bishop Patrick McKinney, at St Barnabas Cathedral in Nottingham City Centre.

The title is given to priests who have played a role in the wider life of the diocese. As a largely honorary title, It is usually awarded in recognition of long and dedicated service to the diocese. As Fr Paul has been serving various communities as a priest for 34 years and also currently serves as Episcopal Vicar for clergy, this is a much deserved reward.

The Chapter of Canons is attached to a Cathedral. According to the Statutes of the Chapter there are to be twelve Canons and each is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop. But the Diocesan Bishop may also appoint

Honorary Canons who are not part of the Chapter but may use the title 'Very Reverend Canon' and wear the prescribed canonical dress. Fr Paul was celebrated as an honorary Canon.

Fr Paul's afternoon began with high tea at the cathedral with Bishop Patrick and the Chapter of Canons. Then into the Cathedral where the Bishop led Evening Prayer at the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, during which Fr Paul was installed as Canon Paul. After being installed, Canon Paul was congratulated, firstly by the Bishop and immediately afterwards by his Canon brothers.

Many parishioners from the parishes came along to celebrate this very special day for Canon Paul, including his niece, Carrie and his great nephew, Alfie.

We, at the parishes are extremely proud of this honour that has been bestowed on Canon Paul and all of us lucky enough to know him, know it's thoroughly deserved. Congratulations Canon Paul!



# Award for recognition and commitment

Sister Monica Kelliher Little Company of Mary Sisters was awarded the Benemerenti medal on Sunday 21st January by Bishop Patrick at St Barnabas Cathedral.

This honour has been awarded in recognition of her commitment and dedication for the past 14 years at St Barnabas Cathedral, in the parish, visiting the sick and house bound and at the Queens Medical Centre in Nottingham.

Sr Monica comes from Co Kerry, Ireland, entered the Little Company of Mary in Middlesex and made her Final Profession of Vows in 1973. She qualified as a State Registered Nurse in London, trained in Intensive Care, Palliative care and District Nursing. In harmony with the Little Company of Mary Charism and Foundress Venerable Mary Potter her ministry has been in caring for the suffering, sick and dying in London, Liverpool, Malta and Nottingham.

Congratulations to Sr Monica as she is honoured in this way for her years of ministry.





# A Biblical Wake-Up Call: A Message from Corinthians Echoing in Today's World

In a world rife with political deceit, power struggles, and the heart-breaking consequences of wars. A timeless message from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians serves as a poignant reminder of the transience of our existence and the urgent need for reflection.

The passage from 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 urges readers to recognize the brevity of time and to live with a profound awareness of the impermanence of worldly pursuits. The resonating call to reconsider our priorities is eerily relevant in a modern era marked by political machinations that often lead to suffering, especially among the innocent and vulnerable.

"Brothers: our time is growing short. Those who have wives should live as though they had none, and those who mourn should live as though they had nothing to mourn for; those who are enjoying life should live as

though there were nothing to laugh about; those whose life is buying things should live as though they had nothing of their own; and those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it. I say this because the world as we know it is passing away."

These words, written centuries ago, echo a timeless truth that seems to cut through the complexities of our present-day challenges. In a world where politicians regularly prioritize personal gain over the well-being of their constituents, the biblical admonition to live detached from the material world raises crucial questions about the moral responsibility of those in power.

The passage invites us to ponder the consequences of unchecked political ambitions that lead to wars, the loss of innocent lives, and the tragic separation of

families. It challenges us to question the priorities of leaders who, driven by greed, exploit the very people who entrusted them with their votes.

The admonition to live as though the world is passing away serves as a stark warning against becoming engrossed in the transient pleasures and pursuits that distract us from our shared humanity. It prompts us to ask whether we, as a society, have become too complacent in allowing politicians to manipulate the narrative, to the detriment of the very people they are meant to serve.

In a world where the consequences of political decisions often reverberate across generations, the timeless wisdom of Corinthians urges us to look beyond immediate gains and consider the lasting impact of our collective choices. As we witness the suffering of innocent people,

including children torn from their families, it becomes imperative for individuals and societies alike to reflect on the values that guide our actions and the leaders we choose to follow.

The message from Corinthians is a call to awaken from the slumber of indifference and actively participate in shaping a world that reflects compassion, justice, and a genuine concern for the wellbeing of all. It challenges us to question the status quo and demand accountability from those entrusted with the responsibility of governance.

As we navigate the complexities of our present reality, may the timeless words from Corinthians serve as a beacon of reflection. Inspiring individuals and societies to embrace a path that leads to justice, empathy, and a lasting legacy of positive change.

**Paul Opiah**

## From: Elston Hermitage.....



By the time this issue of Catholic News is published we shall be well on our way through the Lenten season. However, in the middle of this season on the 19th March we pause to celebrate the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. At first it might seem somewhat ill-timed to reflect upon this saint during our preparation for Easter, especially since there is no record of him in the Gospels at the time of Jesus' public ministry, Passion and Death - let alone the Resurrection. And so what does the earthly foster Father of Jesus have to teach us about our Lenten pilgrimage and our preparation for Holy Week if he did not witness Christ's Suffering, Death and Resurrection firsthand? However I think there are three ways in which Saint Joseph models for us a plan of preparation for Holy Week.

After Our Lady, Saint Joseph stands as a complete model of trust in God's Providence. Developing this spirit of unconditional trust which is an essential part of the spiritual life, particularly in Lent. Lent is a season when we are called to acknowledge our brokenness and

sinfulness, and trust in God's abundant mercy. Faith first and foremost means trusting that God is Who he says He is, and that leads us to believing in his providential care for us.

St Matthew in his Gospel records Saint Joseph's readiness to fulfill the will of God, trusting that he will make good his promises. Pope Francis reminds us "St Joseph experienced moments of difficulty, but he never loses faith and was able to overcome them in the certainty that God never abandons us" (general audience May 1st 2013) Joseph's radical trust propelled him forward. And so it is for faith like his that we should also pray.

Secondly, Saint Joseph teaches us about the value of silent contemplation, which is an essential aspect of prayer, not only in Lent but throughout the year. There is no recorded words of Joseph in the Gospel, this does not mean he never spoke. No, instead we are able to grasp the profound sense of how the husband of Mary, she "who pondered all things in her heart," also spent time in prayer and silent contemplation.

Saint Joseph must have spent so much time gazing on Jesus as He "grew in grace and wisdom". And so pondering of the meeting of the human and divine we should spend some time this Lent to observe Jesus prayerfully, reading the Gospels and studying the ways in which He spoke and lived. Our lives demand much of our time, with perhaps little time for pondering and contemplation, but surely Saint Joseph was busy in his carpenter's shop, did not either!

In his Apostolic Exhortation, "Redemptoris Custos," St. John Paul II wrote "The Gospels speak to us of what Joseph did. Still they allow us to discover in his actions - shrouded in silence as they are an aura of deep contemplation. Joseph was in daily contact with the 'mystery hidden from ages past', and 'which dwelt under his roof' " And so daily turning our minds to Saint Joseph we can be deeply united with him and our time and work can be joined to his contemplative yet active love.

Finally, we can ask Saint Joseph for his intercession in order to understand better Christ's Passion and Death as we draw closer to Holy Week. Though Saint Joseph was not at the Lord Jesus' side at the Cross, he surely suffered in knowing in advance what his Foster Son was to suffer prophesied by Simeon at the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

As the lenten season draws ever closer to an end, Let us ask Saint Joseph for his



**St Joseph**

intercession, that our prayerful and contemplative gaze upon Christ will this Holy Week draw us intimately close to Our Heavenly Father !

**Fr David + h.d.n. Priest and Hermit**





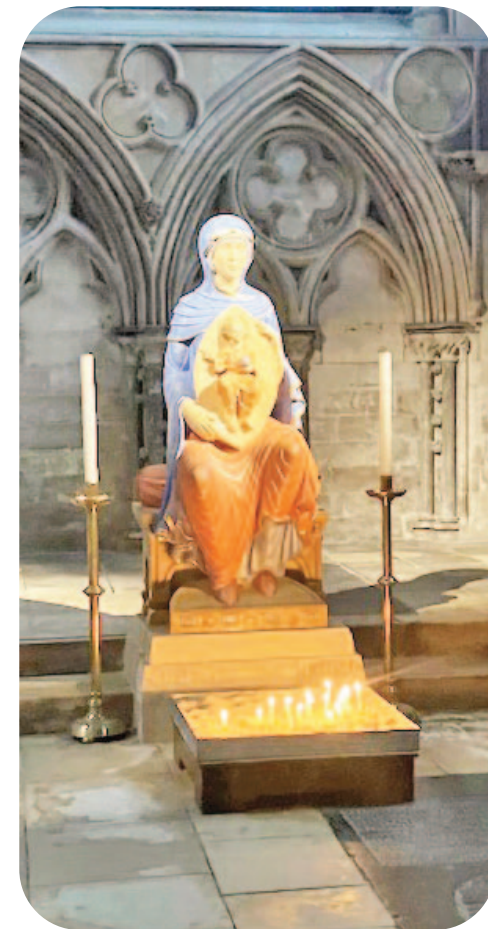
### Continued from page 1

All of us could now understand why this part of the route was rarely walked! I was also extremely grateful to the three friends who had agreed to come along with me that day as on my own I would in all likelihood have still been wandering around completely lost!! I think Lincoln Cathedral need to look at their Guide Book a bit more carefully!

After a delay of two days caused by rain the walk continued. Another friend could join me for this one day. The route was by now well sign posted and we had completed the next twelve mile section by early afternoon when the rain came pelting down again. I was able to walk the rest of the route over one and a half days in better weather on my own, the only problem now being some fields knee deep in mud and on one

occasion completely flooded so that I had to wade through. Sadly although the Guidebook gave a lot of valuable information about the historic Parish Churches in the villages along the route only three of them were open which I thought very sad. The Church in the village of Nocton gave me a surprise as it contained the Mortuary Chapel of the Earl of Ripon, Frederick Robinson. He occupied the office of Prime Minister over a short period in 1827 at a time when there were three Prime Ministers in rapid succession. Somehow that sounds familiar.

For the last three miles I was walking towards Lincoln on a footpath alongside the River Witham. As you enter the City there are wonderful views of the magnificent Cathedral, at one time the tallest building in Europe, standing proud on the hill overlooking the surrounding countryside. I walked the final few hundred yards up into the Cathedral Quarter and presented myself for my Pilgrim's Stamp. They searched high and low before finding it at the bottom of a drawer in the Shop. No one could remember the last time it had been required for the St Gilbert Walk! I felt very happy to have walked in the footsteps of a great and in the best sense Holy man. The icing on the cake was that my walk eventually raised £835.00 in cash and online for Nomad, a charity and cause very close to my heart.



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### News from our friends in Gaza

Our Christian friends report that after five months, there are still about 820 people trapped and sheltering in Gaza's churches. Their daily routine involves coping with fear, fervent prayers, and listening to battery radios. **They have limited access to canned food and one piece of daily bread each.** Many can't get the medications they need. We're directly helping both churches in Gaza by providing money for whatever these trapped people can buy – food and fuel costs 10 or 20 times what it used to, e.g. fuel £12 per litre. As international aid struggles to get through, we need to keep it up until there is a lasting ceasefire.



### Nowhere to go in the West Bank

Meanwhile, in Bethlehem and the rest of the West Bank, mass unemployment has occurred. With all tourism cancelled, **80% of Palestinian Christians have lost their income.** Many Christians in the major cities of the West Bank used to cross every day into Israel to work in construction or agriculture – but now those crossings are closed.

### Take action this Lent to help now

Friends of the Holy Land is registered as a charity in Palestine as well as England & Wales. This means we operate our own office in Bethlehem with two social work staff and a local volunteer committee and we have our own local bank account so can take immediate swift action to help. From your hands today to those in need tomorrow.



Please give today:

**friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/hope**

## Bring Hope & Healing on the journey to Easter

Give today:

**friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/hope**

In Gaza, over 800 Christians are sheltering in churches. Every day involves fear, prayers, and one piece of bread to eat. International aid can't reach them.

In Bethlehem, 80% of Christians have lost their income as tourism has collapsed.

**You can help: Give to the Hope & Healing Fund this Lent.**



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# Raised £800 for the Rainbows Charity



On Saturday, 2nd December 2023 Our Lady Of The Angels parish East Leake held their annual Xmas Fayre in the parish rooms in aid of Rainbows charity. This was organised by the Cameo group (Come and meet each other). The sale continued the next morning after Mass. A variety of stalls offered a wide range of items for sale including a cake stall, books, new clothes, household items and a tombola stall. Tea, coffee and mince pies were served throughout the sale.

The parish children's liturgy group designed a Xmas card for parishioners to sign and make a donation to the Rainbow fund if desired. The total amount raised was £800. The cheque for Rainbows was presented to a representative from the charity on 4th February 2024 at the coffee morning following Mass. The main photo shows members of Cameo who organised the Fayre together with the parish priest Father Michael Williams.

An appeal for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) also took place in the form of the CAFOD COW, designed by Mike Sharpe. People donated

£1 to purchase a draw ticket and the lucky winner received a superb Xmas hamper. This raised £170 for CAFOD.

**Elizabeth Sparkes**



## St Ralph Sherwin Parish Derby says Farewell to Fr Taz



It was with great sadness, but also thankfulness for his mission amongst them, that St Ralph Sherwin Parish said goodbye to Fr Taz Lasola. Fr Taz is returning to the Philippines to continue his ministry there. The Parishioners made him a specially decorated cake and St Mary's Voluntary Academy gave him a card signed by all the children.

**Fran Hazel**





# Scripture Focus

By Fr Jeremy Corley



## The Greatest Sacrifice

At the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, one of the readings tells the story of the near-sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22). This is a strange story. On the one hand, it is inspiring because of Abraham's extreme obedience and the eventual triumph of life over death. On the other hand, it is horrifying because Abraham was ready to sacrifice his own son.

The story raises many questions. Why did Abraham not complain to God when he heard the divine call to sacrifice his son? Why did Isaac not object or run away? What was the reaction of Isaac's mother Sarah, who is not mentioned in the story?

Perhaps the biggest question is this: why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son? Even if the story did not actually end with Isaac's death, it depends on Abraham's willingness to kill his son at the divine command.

This divine call to Abraham did not make sense, even in the biblical narrative. Isaac was Abraham's heir, granted by God to Sarah in her old age to fulfil the promise. Indeed, God had previously promised to make his descendants numerous, but if Isaac died, the chosen line would not continue.

Even more seriously, God is a God of life, who created humanity to flourish rather than to be killed. And God is a God of mercy, who does not wish to see his people perish. Why then did Abraham receive this terrible command from God?

The story begins by telling us that God was testing Abraham. Jewish tradition speaks of the ten trials of Abraham, and this last trial was the most severe test. Presumably God wished to test whether Abraham was obedient just to gain rewards, or whether Abraham would obey God at the greatest personal cost.

In the end, Abraham became our father in faith because he was willing to give up everything, even his dear son, in answer to God's call. And at Easter we recall how God, our heavenly Father, was willing to give up everything, even his own dear Son, in response to the human need for redemption.

Hence we read this profound and moving story at the Easter Vigil as a foreshadowing of Christ's self-sacrifice. As St Paul says, God did not spare his only Son but gave him up to save us all (Romans 8:32).

Thus, we see Isaac as a foreshadowing of Jesus. Isaac, tied to the wood on Mount Moriah, was ready to die but in the end was spared by God. Jesus, nailed to the cross, did something more. Not only was he willing to die but he did actually die, yet he was raised to life on the third day.

From a Christian perspective, this story helps us reflect on Christ's sacrifice, as noted by one of the church fathers (Origen).

In his crucifixion, Christ is foreshadowed by the ram that dies as a sacrifice. Yet in his resurrection, Christ is foreshadowed by Isaac who survives to become the originator of many descendants.

When he heard God's call, Abraham's response was simple obedience: "Here I am." When Christ came to save us, he echoed the words of the psalm: "God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will" (Hebrews 10:7).

As we reflect on Jesus' saving death, we are filled with wonder and gratitude at the depths of divine love. We are amazed by how much the Lord was willing to pay to save us. And we are astonished at the marvellous gift of new life offered to us all in Christ's resurrection.

Abraham and Jesus were both obedient to the end. We can also pray for the grace to say: "God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will."

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**View from the Pew**

By Dr Jay Kettle-Williams

**To be a Pilgrim ...**

My wife and I went on a pilgrimage recently. Nothing dramatic. We drove across country to Canterbury for a weekend at an Airbnb in the middle of town. We'd never visited the Cathedral and fancied visiting what had been the rallying point for so many pilgrims in times past as they prepared for what used to be a trek of 80 days or more, firstly by boat across the Channel and then overland step by step to Santiago de Compostela in Spain's north-western province of Galicia. Santiago marks the culmination of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route at the alleged burial site of the Biblical apostle St. James.

It took us some time to go round and fully appreciate the treasure that is Canterbury Cathedral, compensation in grand part for the £34 we'd had to spend to get in. It always strikes me as arch, a bit 'in for a dig', that today's Catholics pay to enter monumental architecture which earlier Catholics had built and to then have seen taken from them by a certain multi-married monarch. My comment to that effect was indulged by the young girl at the ticket office. The way she smiled convinced me that my comment hadn't been the first she'd heard to that effect.

It was Saturday and we knew we'd be looking for evening Mass. 'Is there a



Catholic Church nearby?' asked my wife. 'St Thomas of Canterbury,' the young girl replied. 'Just 50 yards or so down this road. It has a relic of St Thomas Becket. A finger.'

I was halfway through asking if it was free entrance but my wife was already tugging me away: 'Come on. Leave it there. Don't be such a bore!' But a young female voice chanted cheerily behind me: 'Yes, it's free to get in'. Thankfully wit and humour don't dwell solely in the past.

From the Cathedral we wandered the short distance to St Martin's Church, half a mile or so beyond the city walls.

St Martin - Martin of Tours, also known as Martin the Merciful - had been born in what is present-day Hungary. A Christian convert, he served in the Roman cavalry in Gaul (present-day France) because of which he is presumably often depicted on horseback. He left military service some ten years before being consecrated the third bishop of Tours in 371. He is credited for having used his sword to cut his cloak in two (see inset) to give half to a beggar clad only in rags in deep mid-winter, the beggar being subsequently revealed as Christ Himself. The shrine of St Martin in Tours became an established focal point for pilgrims on the road to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

St Martin's Church in Canterbury dates back to the Roman occupation of Britain and to this day remains the oldest church in continuous use in the English-speaking world; part Roman, part Saxon. It is uncertain whether the construction was first built as a church, a mausoleum or something else. Be that as it may, St Martin's has remained in constant use for Christian worship, prayer and mission ever since Augustine arrived with his companions to re-establish Christianity in the 6th century.

Augustine, a Benedictine monk, had been based in Rome. He arrived in Britain in AD597 with 40 companions, Roman monks and Frankish interpreters being



among his entourage, to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. St Martin's was Augustine's initial base for his mission: 'Here they first began to assemble, to sing the psalms, to pray, to celebrate mass, to preach and to baptize, until the king was converted to the faith and gave them greater freedom to preach and to build and restore churches everywhere'. (Bede's Ecclesiastical History, AD731).

From St Martin's my wife and I made our way back into town, to inside the city walls, to St Thomas of Canterbury, in time for the Vigil Mass. The church, nestling just down the road from the cathedral and undergoing some repairs and renovation, hosted a small, sincere congregation which included on that occasion a leading Catholic parliamentarian and his family.

Our weekend pilgrimage was almost over.

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Texts/References adapted and/or adopted from <http://en.wikipedia.org> under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License 4.0: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>; The National Churches Trust (<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/church/st-martin-canterbury>); Photographs © J L Kettle-Williams: (1) St Martin (Unknown Artist c. 1450-75. Polychrome wood, 118.5 x 94 x 34.5 cm); (2) St Martin's Church, Canterbury

**Dr J L Kettle-Williams is an experienced business communications consultant and wordsmith (tutor, writer, translator).**



# Derby primary schools receives Outstanding grading from Catholic schools' inspectors



St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy has been graded Outstanding in every area by Catholic schools' inspectors.

The school, in Mill Hill Lane, Derby, underwent its Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection, which is the national framework for the inspection of Catholic schools, over two days in December 2023.

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school, Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship were all graded Outstanding.

Inspectors described Headteacher Tracey Churchill as an "inspirational leader" who, supported by staff and governors, motivates the school community to live out its mission statement.

They also said that the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching were evident in the ways in which the school welcomes everyone in a spirit of generous hospitality, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Pupil enjoyment of religious education is marked by a high level of interest, enthusiasm, and engagement and the chaplaincy provision has a significant and

profound impact on the spiritual life of the school, inspectors said.

The report said: "Pupils fully embrace the distinctive Catholic identity of their school. They understand that it encourages them to follow the teachings of Jesus, and that their mission statement 'helps us to work hand in hand with each other'. Pupils exude happiness and confidence and have a well-established sense of belonging to their community. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times."

The school's inclusive nature was highlighted in the report which said: "Staff members go above and beyond expectations in participating and contributing to the Catholic life and mission, helping to create a very strong sense of family, where all are welcome, particularly those who are most vulnerable."

Pastoral care was described as outstanding, with a strong focus on adapting the school and its procedures to cater for a variety of concerns. Praise was also given to the religious education delivered by the school.

"Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills within their

religious education. Their progress is consistently good in knowing more and remembering more, with all groups, including those with particular needs, achieving the best possible outcomes from their starting points," inspectors said.

Collective worship was another area that was highlighted and inspectors said: "Pupil participation and engagement in prayer and liturgy is marked by infectious enthusiasm, a deep sense of respect and a clear understanding of its importance in the school's daily life."

Mrs Churchill said: "It is an absolute pleasure to serve children and a community that have a clear respect for our faith. Our school team work so hard to enable our children to be true witnesses and I am delighted that they have received this outcome."

Kevin Gritton, Chief Executive of the St Ralph Sherwin Trust, said: "This is fantastic news for St Joseph's and is very well deserved. It is great to read about all of the wonderful work that is going on at the school in order to provide every child with an excellent Catholic education."

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## The Power of Prayer

Throughout time, God continues to call humankind to become closer to him. God has sent prophets, his son Jesus and Jesus's mother Mary to tell us how much we are loved and how we can draw nearer to God through prayer. Whilst apparitions are unusual, they are reminders of God's love and concern for our welfare.

1830 was a time of revolution and war in Europe and there were also outbreaks of diseases such as Cholera in Paris. Catherine Laboure who grew up in the countryside in France had lost her own mother at a young age and had adopted Our Lady as her mother. At the time of the apparitions she was training to become a Daughter of Charity at the Rue du Bac Convent in Paris. These nuns were dedicated to looking after the sick and the poor and their foundress St Louise de Marillac was an associate of St Vincent de Paul.

About midnight on July 18th 1830, Catherine was woken by a young child whom she recognised as an angel. The angel told her that the Blessed Virgin was waiting for her in the Chapel and led Catherine to the convent chapel which was all lit up 'like at midnight mass'. After a

short time, Mary the Mother of God appeared and sat on an altar chair. The same chair remains in the Covent Chapel to this day.



Catherine explained that she bound up to Mary, knelt on the steps of the altar and laid her hands on Mary's knees. Just imagine! They spoke for hours during which time Mary told Catherine to have trust and not to fear, and that she would receive all the comfort she needed when she knelt at the foot of the altar and poured out her heart to God. Mary also gave

Catherine a mission which was explained to her in further apparitions over the following months.

The 'Miraculous Medal', as it came to be known, came about through Mary's apparition to Catherine on 27th November 1830, when she showed Catherine visions of herself and instructed Catherine as follows, "Have a medal struck on this model. All the people who wear it around their neck will receive great graces. Graces will be plentiful for those who receive it in trust".



**Mary also gave Catherine a prayer that we can say,**

**O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee**

Once this medal had been made and distributed it became known as The

Miraculous Medal through the sheer number of strange and wonderful acts of kindness coming through Our Lady. People who wear it receive many graces and it represents a gesture of the acceptance of Mary's protection and intercession in our lives.

So what happened to Sr Catherine? Well, she spent 47 years living an ordinary life as a Daughter of Charity looking after the elderly. For the most part, only her confessor knew that she was the nun whom Our Lady had appeared to. After her death she became a saint. However, the fact that St Catherine rested her hands on the lap of our Blessed Mother did not make her a saint. She personally worked no miracles, nor did she practice externally heroic charity like other great saints. Neither was she materially poor as were Sr Bernadette and the children of Fatima. St Catherine's sanctity lies in her faithful service looking after the elderly and therefore she is also known as the patron saint of seniors.

If you would like a Miraculous Medal then please contact Sr Barbara Sandy (0208) 9063777 at the Daughters of Charity Provincial House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1RE



# Book Reviews



## ***Sublimitas et Miseria Hominis: On the 4th Centenary of the Birth of Blaise Pascal***

**Pope Francis**

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**ISBN: 9781784697686**

**www.ctsbooks.org**

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter honours Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century scholar. It highlights his contributions to maths, philosophy, and spirituality, urging readers to emulate his charity, truth-seeking, and love. The letter reminds us of life's impermanence and the eternal joy that awaits.



This Apostolic Letter from Pope Francis commemorates the 400th anniversary of the death of Blaise Pascal. A renowned figure from the 17th century, Blaise Pascal made significant contributions to mathematics, philosophy, and spirituality. Pope Francis reflects on Pascal's life and teachings, focusing on his mystical experience, defence of the Jansenists, and emphasis on reason and faith.

This letter emphasises Pascal's deep commitment to charity and love for others, highlighting the importance of these virtues in the Christian faith. Pope Francis encourages readers to follow Pascal's example in seeking truth, embracing conversion, and practising charity. He reminds us that life is transient and that eternal joy awaits those who strive for it.

Overall, this Apostolic Letter serves as a tribute to Blaise Pascal's legacy, offering spiritual guidance and insights into the life of a remarkable thinker, and providing inspiration for the faithful to integrate his teachings into their lives.

"Pascal was concerned to make people realise that "God and truth are inseparable", yet he also knew that belief is possible only by the grace of God, embraced by a heart that is free. Through faith he had personally encountered "the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, not the God of the philosophers and the learned", and had acknowledged Jesus Christ as "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). For this reason... everyone who wishes to persevere in seeking truth – a never-ending task in this life – should listen to Blaise Pascal, a man of prodigious intelligence who insisted that apart from the aspiration to love, no truth is worthwhile." (SMH 11)

## ***How to Overcome Distraction in Prayer***

**Fr Ed Broom**

**£3.95**

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**ISBN: 9781784697655**

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Distraction can be a major hindrance to forming a habit of prayer and a deep prayer life. In this book, Fr Ed Broom offers practical advice on how to overcome distractions so we can speak to God with our whole heart and mind.



Prayer can be a struggle. Whether it's because of busyness at work or school, the chores and clamour of family life, intrusive worries and anxieties, or ever-present digital distractions. Many of us struggle to form a habit of prayer. Fr Ed Broom is here to help Catholics learn to pray. In this book, he teaches us to recognise the causes of distraction in our lives and gives simple, practical advice on how to overcome them so we can speak to God with our whole heart and mind.

## ***The CTS Sunday Missal 2024***

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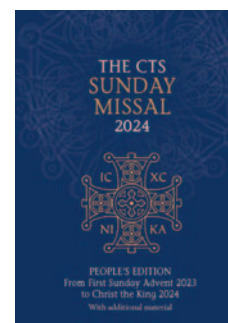
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This is all included in a lightweight paperback volume, making it the perfect Sunday Missal for every Catholic to bring to Mass.



## ***What is Truth?***

**Joshua Madden**

**£3.95**

**CTS Product Code: EX67**

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ordering over the phone**

**ISBN: 9781784697594**

**www.ctsbooks.org**

Intended as an apologetic foundation for anyone attempting to evangelise a postmodern neighbour, this book explains that to share the joy of the Gospel today, men and women must rediscover that it is possible to know objective truth about ourselves and the world around us.



Modern philosophy has limited the understanding of reason, resulting in a radical scepticism concerning our capacity to comprehend reality as it truly is and fostering an atmosphere of nihilism and uncertainty.

In What is Truth?, Joshua Madden presents a compelling case to address these concerns and provide a solid basis for those who wish to spread the Gospel to their postmodern neighbour.

To effectively communicate the Gospel's joy in today's context, Madden suggests that individuals must rediscover the potential to

know objective truths about themselves and the world. Madden concludes that this groundwork, known as the preambula fidei, makes it possible to truly know the living God, who has revealed Himself in Christ.

## ***Stations of the Cross Then and Now***

**By Fr Denis McBride**

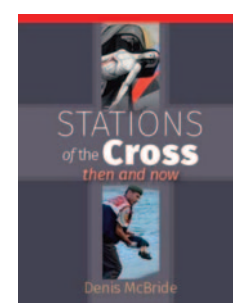
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The way of the cross is not confined to a lonely road in Jerusalem two thousand years ago: it is a busy highway winding through every village, town and city in our modern world. Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R. reflectively guides us along the way of the cross. He contrasts the beauty and solemn simplicity of the more traditional Stations by artist Curd Lessig with modern images that challenge us to link Jesus' story to the struggle of our everyday life. Through its rich array of scripture passages, paintings, poetry, prayers, photographs and reflections, The Stations of the Cross – then and now becomes a companion not only on our Lenten journey but throughout the year: suffering is not limited to one liturgical season. Whether we walk in solitude or with others, this book translates the passion of Jesus into our own life and times.

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# His own Grandfather fled Palestine

In the country that has taken in Palestinian refugees more than any other since 1948, where there are “more Palestinians than in Palestine”, the pain of the ongoing massacre in Gaza is part of everyday life. Caritas Jordan is the country’s largest humanitarian organisation, set up in 1967 following the invasion of Palestine by Israel. It came about following an official request from the (Jordanian) government to the Vatican.

They have 400 employees, 26 centres across Jordan. They help about 200,000 people every year providing all kinds of services; health centres, clinics, activities in schools, psychological support. They believe that it is not a job, but a mission. The mission leads to taking on more responsibility. It is part of belonging to the Church, of being an active Catholic.

The relationship between Caritas Jordan and UNRWA goes way back when Caritas was also present in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. For the Caritas director, halting funding to the Agency by the United States, and ten other countries (eight in Europe, including Italy), is a “senseless” act.

This is very strange, especially coming from Europe, home to countries that have taught the world about the importance of rights, justice. Today, Europe is failing to be what

it has taught the world; it does not have a position of its own, it follows others. In doing so, it betrays its roots.” Even if it were true that 12 UNRWA people did something wrong, the decision (to cut funding) destroys the only hope Palestinians have; they have been suffering injustices for 75 years.

Established in 1949, the agency is the largest humanitarian organisation in Gaza, employing 12,000 people; 150 of them have been killed in Gaza since the start of Israel’s offensive. Although UNRWA, with its 30,000 employees, supports almost six million Palestinians, in the West Bank and Jordan, as well as in other neighbouring countries, it is the two million Gazans who are suffering the worst.

For Wael Suleiman, the situation in Gaza is a priority; everything else in the Middle East “can wait”. “Right now, we have to think about these two million people, not about the others who are at least in countries with a minimum of stability, like ours,” UNRWA is the only channel that can give some hope to people who have been dying for four months. You are taking away even the little you can give. Much more is needed, however.”

Those who work in Gaza also put their lives at risk. Viola al-Amash and Issam Abderrabbo, employees of Caritas Jerusalem,



Wael Suleiman, director of the Catholic Charity Caritas Jordan

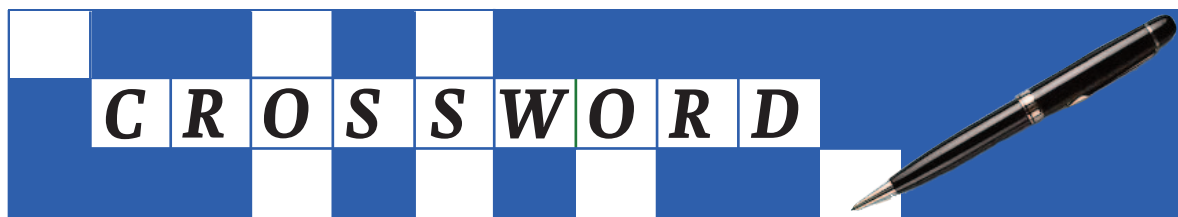
were killed by Israeli troops in recent weeks, along with all their families.

Wael Suleiman’s grandfather fled Palestine in 1948 for Jordan. He made the decision to save his life as the Jewish militia killed any who resisted. He was never allowed back along with over 700,000 who fled the terror. All his relatives who stayed are dead.

During his 24 years of service for the Church in Caritas, he has always “dreamt

and worked for peace”, but now, he has changed his mind. “Now I want to work for life because making peace by force only causes the death of children, families.”

“What’s the most important thing?” At this point, leaving is the only possible way to save oneself from the genocide that is unfolding. “Life is a sacred thing. God created us to live, not to die.” That is what his grandfather believed when he chose to flee.



You can use both sets of clues to solve the puzzle: the solutions are the same.

## CRYPTIC Across

- 5 God invites in accountant, about to have tea with the taxman (9)
- 8 Cliff in Edom drinks, backsliding (4)
- 9 With Capone’s acceptance into church official, it’s almost Babylonian (8)
- 10 Old Archbishop of Canterbury could be Brown’s double (7)
- 12 Golden cloud, virtually, is seen to the west of Canaanite city (5)
- 14 He wrote masses; marginally down after book fair (5)
- 15 Song uncle’s preferred to old capital (7)
- 17 Jude Hunt is an alias for David’s Levite (8)
- 18 Other half of Jezebel is primarily as hard and brazen (4)
- 19 16 mostly responsible for this festival? (9)

## CRYPTIC Down

- 1 Get a mug over here for the wine miracle (4)
- 2 Scots chap supporting two accounts leads to a schism (7)
- 3 British king’s framed in the style of an OT monarch (5)
- 4 Sikhs meet here to condemn a drug war (8)
- 6 James’ rule to rewrite the Bible? (9)
- 7 Hours in church after weird icon appears during passage (9)
- 11 Cleric’s in front, ahead of the leading Essene Jew (8)
- 13 Canaanite city’s discovered thanks to an article on a church (7)
- 16 Caucasian Carmelite cleric’s gone missing (5)

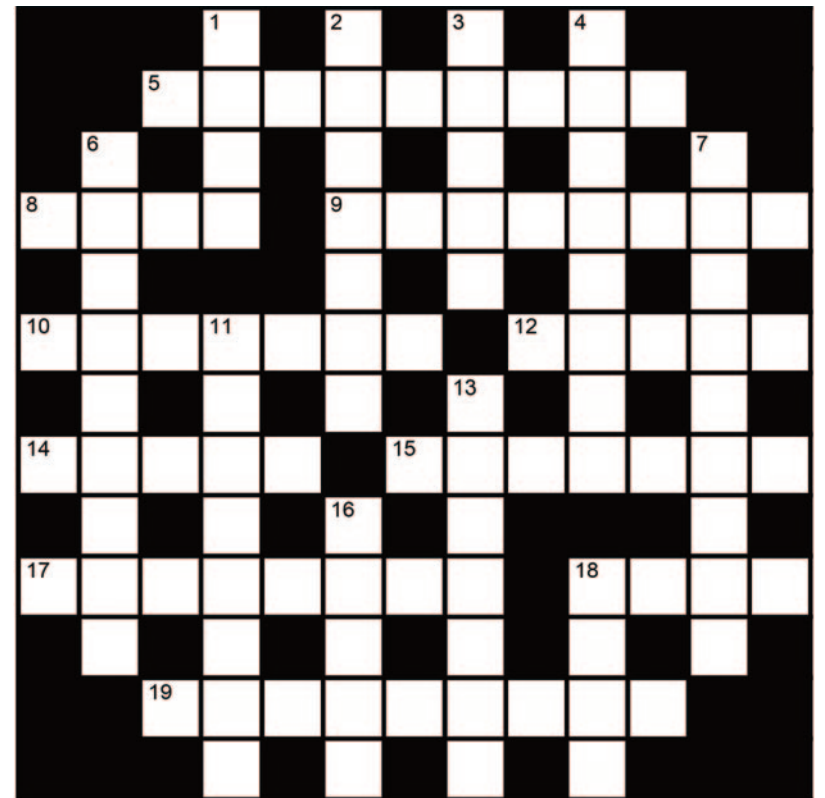
- 18 Blunder losing front part of the church (4)

## QUICK Across

- 5 Jericho ‘sinner’ who, having Jesus to his house, subsequently gave half his property to the poor (9)
- 8 Rocky plateau at the foot of which the Nabataeans carved the city of Petra (4)
- 9 Of people from an ancient part of Babylonia, home to Abraham (8)
- 10 Abbot of Glastonbury, and Archbishop of Canterbury from 959 (7)
- 12 Canaanite city rebuilt by Solomon, along with Megiddo and Gezer (5)
- 14 Composer brothers (Franz) Josef and Michael (5)
- 15 Capital of the biblical Northern Kingdom of Israel (7)
- 17 Levite David appointed as a leader of the Temple music (8)
- 18 Pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (4) 19 Seventh Sunday after Easter (9)

## QUICK Down

- 1 Town in the Bible, the scene of the water-into-wine miracle (4)
- 2 Schism between Rome and the East, 482-519, named after the Patriarch of Constantinople (7)
- 3 Moabite king who hired Balaam to curse Israel (5)
- 4 Place of assembly and worship for Sikhs (8)
- 6 Holy city for Jews, Christians and Muslims (9)
- 7 Conforming to the recognized rules of cathedral clergy (9)



- 11 Member of an ancient Jewish sect denying the resurrection and the existence of angels (8)
- 13 Canaanite city; later one of the cities of the Levites (7)
- 16 Link between Carmelites, Magdalenes, Cistercian Monks, Premonstratensians – and Christmas! (5)
- 18 Angular or round section often found in the western part of a church (4)

## SOLUTION

Across: 5 Zaccaria, 8 Sela, 9 Chaldean, 10 Dunstan, 12 Hazor, 14 Haydn, 15 Samaria, 17 Jeduthun, 18 Ahab, 19 Pentecost. Down: 1 Cana, 2 Acacia, 3 Balak, 4 Gurdwara, 6 Jerusalem, 7 Canonical, 11 Sadducee, 13 Taanach, 16 White, 18 Apse.