



St Gilbert of Sempringham
Feast day February 4th

Catholic News



**MORE THAN 17 YEARS OF BRINGING THE
NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE TOGETHER**

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St Alban's Parishioners Celebrate Golden Wedding Anniversary



Anna and Alfonso Cuomo from St Alban's Parish, Derby recently celebrated 50 years of marriage. After Sunday Mass Fr Paul Newman led the congratulations and Anna was presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. However, the highlight was their sons presentation to them of a Papal Blessing from Pope Francis to mark the occasion. Anna and Alfonso are founder members of the St Alban's community, and family and friends turned out in number to mark this special moment with them."

by Fran Wickes



Retired priests appeal: *Aitone help boost funds*



On January 4th and for the second year running, St Francis's Church and Fr Martin Sylvester hosted a concert given by Aitone – in aid of the diocesan Retired Priests Appeal. The singers made no charge and split the retiring collection with the appeal.

Aitone is a small consort of singers. The consort has its roots in Long Eaton and is still firmly based in the East Midlands. It's well worth not just supporting but being entertained by.


We heard a series of small pieces of early music mostly from Christmastide but starting at the Annunciation and finishing at Candlemas. They were accompanied by one of the best commentaries I've heard at any concert. Not for you? Well, more people came this year than last year - the best opinion poll you can get.

Its user friendly website <http://www.aitone.org.uk> will tell you about its history and activity. I'm not going to tell you why it's called Aitone - you'll find that on the website.

The consort accepts invitations to perform on the same basis as it did at St Francis. If you want to contact the consort and don't have e-mail access the Appeal Office (01158 882644) will put you in touch.

More news about the Retired Priests Appeal on page 10


*John Curran, Appeal Chairman.
Picture by John Spittle*



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The monthly paper for the
Diocese of Nottingham

**The
Catholic News**

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World without mothers would be inhumane, lacking tenderness, pope says

By Carol Glatz

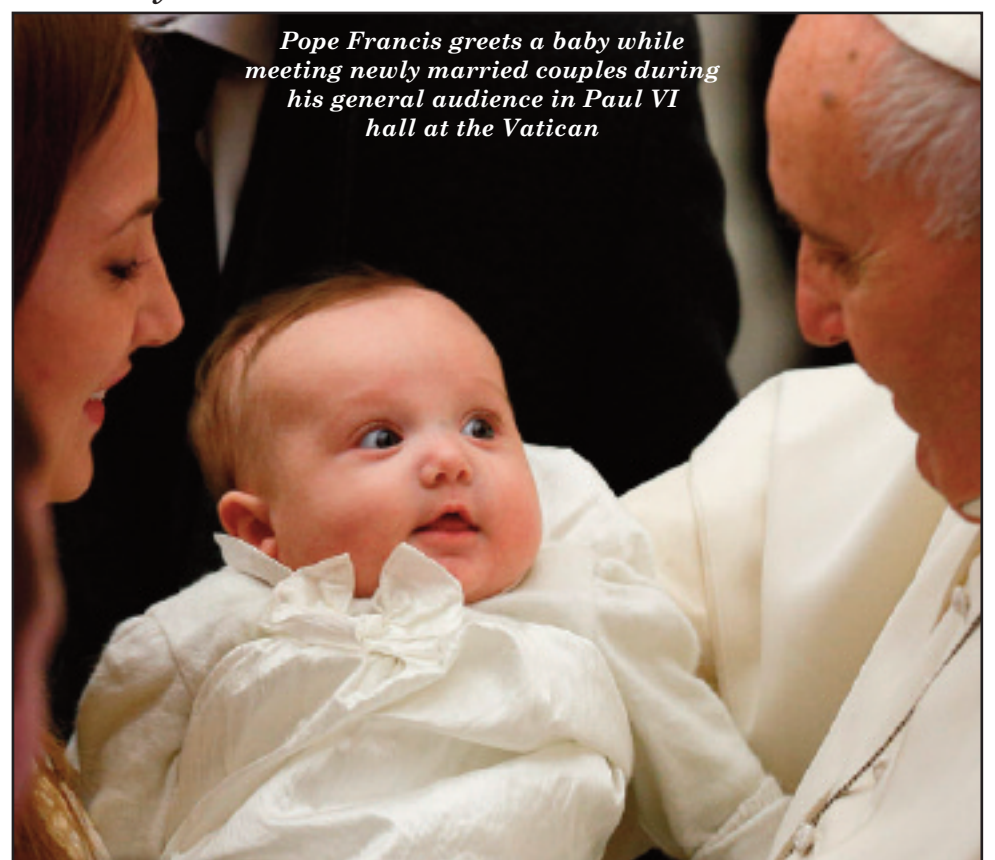
Mothers are indispensable to society and the church, showing the world what it means to generously give oneself for others, to respect life and to display tenderness and moral strength even in times of trouble, Pope Francis said. Speaking to some 4,000 people gathered indoors for his general audience Jan. 7, the pope continued his series of talks about the family, but also gave a second talk about beauty and harmony when he thanked a group of circus performers at the end of the audience.

Tying the theme of the family to the church's celebration of the feast of Mary, Mother of God, Jan. 1, and the Epiphany Jan. 6, the pope looked specifically at Mary's role in the Gospel accounts of Christmas.

"She gives us Jesus, she shows us Jesus, she lets us see Jesus," the pope said.

Even though mothers are often "exalted" with praise and poetry, he said, they often get very little concrete help and appreciation. In fact, he said, "the willingness of mothers to sacrifice themselves for their children is often taken advantage of in order to 'save' on social spending."

"One should better understand their daily struggle to be efficient at work and atten-



Pope Francis greets a baby while meeting newly married couples during his general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican

tive and loving in their family; it is necessary to better understand what they are striving for in order to express the best and most authentic fruits of their liberation," he said.

Pope Francis recalled his own upbringing as one of five children, and spoke of how much work and how many problems, but also how much happiness, come with motherhood.

"Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of selfish individualism," he said.

A world without mothers would be "inhuman," he said, "because mothers always know how to give witness -- even in the worst of times -- to tenderness, dedication and moral strength."

"Being a mother does not mean just bringing a child into the world, but it is also a life choice. What does a mother choose?" he asked. "It is the choice to give life and this is great, this is beautiful."

If societies do not do justice to the contributions and sacrifices of mothers, the church is not always better, he said. "Perhaps mothers, who are ready to make many sacrifices for their children and often also for others" should find greater reception and attention in the church, he said.

It is often the mother who passes on "the deepest sense of religious practice" as she plants and cultivates the seed of faith in a child by sharing prayers and devotional practices, he said. "Without mothers, not only would there be no new people of faith, but the faith would lose a good portion of its simple and profound warmth."

Mothers are the biggest enemies of war, "which kills their children," he said, admitting he has thought many times of those women who receive the dreaded letter notifying them of the loss of their children in their defense of the nation. "Poor women. How much a mother suffers," he said solemnly.

Mothers are martyrs, the pope said quoting

a homily by Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was shot and killed in 1980 as he celebrated Mass.

Presiding over the funeral Mass of a priest who had been assassinated by the country's death squads, the late archbishop had said that giving one's life does not just mean being killed for the faith, it is also offering oneself "in that silence of daily life," bit by bit, "like a mother, who, without fear and with the simplicity of maternal martyrdom, conceives a child in her womb, brings it into the world, nurses it, raises it and lovingly cares" for the child.

At the end of his audience talk, the pope was treated to a short circus show as acrobats and jugglers performed in front of him on stage while a jazz band played "All of Me."

The pope thanked the men, women and children taking part in an international festival in Rome for circus performers and praised them for being "creators of harmony, creators of beauty, who teach the high road of beauty," which is "good for the soul."

But while people today are well-practiced in "the language of the mind, thinking" and "the language of the hands, doing," they need to remember to use "the language of the heart, loving," he said.

"These three languages come together to make up the harmony of the person; and there is the beauty," he said.

God is not only truth, goodness and the master of creation, he is also beauty and "so many times we forget about beauty," the pope said. "Humanity thinks, hears, does, but today it is in such need of beauty."

In a brief address to German and Polish-speaking groups attending the audience, the pope also greeted a delegation of people who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp and were freed 70 years ago in January.

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Pink and Blue Party

The Catenians of South Leicester recently held a Pink and Blue Party where all men were asked to wear something pink and ladies something blue, Richard and Sheila Brucciani are pictured. They invited students from the Catholic Chaplaincy based at the two universities in Leicester.

However a major incident arose when there was a competition for the best model aeroplane made from a piece of paper. An array of Catenians projected their paper aeroplanes to loop-the-loop and crashed-and-burned to nil effect, a couple got their jalopies to travel 10 yards or so. Imagine their consternation when a visitor submitted his plane supported by several helium balloons borrowed from the

table decoration, he then commence to waft the plane the entire length of the competition flight path.

Things got even worse when one of the university students quickly folded her aeroplane and sent it straight as an arrow down the full designated flight path, image the indignation when the attendees discovered that she was studying aeronautical en-

gineering – the Wright Brothers better look out.

The Leicester Chaplaincy is an apostolate of the Holy Cross Priory in Leicester which is home to a community of Dominican Friars. Fr David Rocks, Catholic Chaplain commented “It was a great evening and an opportunity for us to join in with a large group of Catenian friends who have fun together and also do so much good work in our Parishes”. The Catenians are practising Catholic men who socially meet regularly involving their families; there are six different Catenian groups in Leicestershire, if you would like to find out more contact or text John McDermott on 07528 349 024.



MP opens refurbished building



The ambitions of the St Norbert's Parish Hall committee to reach out to the community of Crowle was celebrated on Friday 28th November 2014 by the opening of the refurbished building by Andrew Percy MP. The committee was aware that the ageing building needed urgent remedial work and was not comfortable for its users, they were also anxious to improve the buildings carbon footprint. In practice this meant renewing the insulation properties of the floor and ceiling by replacing them and providing better lighting and a more efficient heating system.

The ambitions of the Committee were made possible by cash boosts from two funding providers:-

- The first grant of £15,000 was awarded by WREN (Landfill) in 2013.

- The second grant of £15,130.20 was awarded by SSE (Wind farm) in 2014.

The projects completion is seen as complementary to other provision in the town and hopefully will serve surrounding village communities.

Bill Flanagan Chairman of the Committee and project manager at St Norbert's said: “It is fantastic that the funds have been made available and we are very pleased that our project was selected. We are grateful to the funders, Town Council and the numerous community organisations that have supported our applications. We can now offer existing users a warmer and more comfortable environment in which to meet and hopefully this will attract new users from community groups in future”.

Thoughts from Elston Hermitage.....

It has recently been said that the Year of Consecrated Life a global initiative to support religious life will be a forgotten year, however the religious within the Nottingham diocese are working hard to create an awareness of their lives asking that the church will support us by their prayer.

Last month from the hermitage we reflected on the three vows and examined the vow of Poverty, this month we look briefly at that of Chastity. In St. Benedict's rule for his monks he says something strange, he exhorts his monks “to love chastity” Often in our lives we love only what seems attractive to us and chastity in our sex saturated culture may strike as being unattractive, in the same way St. Benedict exhorts his monks to love fasting too, the parallel construction of both these expressions may help us to understand that fasting from food and sexual activity is an ascetic practice. We do not love the struggle of asceticism but what we do love is the glorious virtue's which they produce.

The Vow of Chastity then has been one of the defining factors of religious life from early Christian times along with the other two vows, poverty and obedience. In religious life that of monks, nuns and priests the vow of chastity is also a vow of celibacy, a vow to live without an exclusive or sexual love relationship, the theory being that a primary relationship such as marriage would distract from the strongest possible love of God and neighbour and frees the consecrated person to enhance fully a single and expansive one heartedness for God and service to the church.



However, the vow of chastity is not only to be observed in consecrated life but in single life and in marriage, still being lived as a vow of fidelity and faithfulness to God in our own particular vocation. Chastity then is the virtue of being sexually pure deriving from the latin word ‘castita’

The vow of chastity like those of poverty and obedience take their inspiration from Jesus' life as a single person who remained unmarried. Therefore, not only consecrated persons but all of us are called to be Chaste, however for the consecrated religious and priests following the example of Jesus are called not only to live a chaste life, but also to surrender marriage and family enabling them to follow God more intimately and serve God's people and the church dedicating their whole lives to prayer and service, enabling them to acquire the graces of God which gives the real freedom to love all.

We can see now what St. Benedict in his rule means when he urges us to love chastity. Chastity is a virtue worthy of man, because it lifts us from the animal state to the condition of divinized children of God.

David H.D.N.
Hermit of the

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ROSMINIAN SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Our Congregation was founded by Blessed Antonoi Rosmini in Northern Italy 1832. The first Sisters arrived in Loughborough from Northern Italy in 1843. How did this come about? Some years earlier Ambrose Phillips de Lisle met Fr. Rosmini and it was he who invited the Rosminian Fathers to the Midlands. Friends of Ambrose, Lord & Lady Arundell, wanted to establish a school in Loughborough and Lady Arundell invited the Rosminian Sisters to help bring her plans to fruition.

Very soon the Sisters were able to teach in the schools.

In 1844 the first English postulants arrived and in 1845 Mary Amherst, known later as Mother Mary Agnes who was to become the first Religious Superior of the English communities, entered the Congregation. She was related to the Earl of Shrewsbury who played a significant part in the restoration of the faith in this country. It was Mary's dowry that enabled the Sisters to build Our Lady's Convent, Park Road. It was here that the sisters moved in 1850 from Paget's House. The convent had a boarding school, a school for the poor and an Industrial school for young women.

Gradually, as the number of Sisters con-

tinued to increase, small communities were established in Rugby, Cardiff, Clifton, Bath, Whitwick, Shepshed, London, Bexhill, Isle of White, Brigg, Wisbech, Leicester and Ireland.

In 1955 the first Sisters went to Tanzania to set up a school and a hospital. In recent years a house of formation has been established. There are a number of African young women participating in the formation programmes. Hand in hand with their spiritual formation, they are also being trained for various ministries in education, medical and pastoral care, for example. In recent years a Children's Centre and school have been opened to serve the needs of children who have been orphaned. An African Sister was appointed in 2013 to lead the communities in Tanzania.

We have a mission too in Kerala where we have a House of Formation. Two schools, run by our Indian Sisters, are flourishing. Some Sisters are in Pastoral ministry.

Likewise we have a small community of Sisters in Venezuela who are involved in education and pastoral ministry.

Our spirituality:

Blessed Antonio Rosmini, showed his particular Gospel insight by a synthesis in



what is known as The Maxims of Perfection. In this he states

- we shall trust in our heavenly Father's Providence

- we shall depend on the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

- we are aware of our need for justice, purification, holiness

- we shall be transformed in love.

The whole thrust of our lives will be towards love of neighbour in the will of God. Thus we see the link between our elective state and our contemplative state.

In his Description of the Institute of Charity he asserts that we attend firstly to our

own sanctification without seeking new commitments to our neighbour but take them on at the request/desire of our neighbour. Our service is given with dynamic indifference. We obey, because it is the guide of our love. We allow God to act in us. The way to do this is by letting go of self into the arms of an infinitely loving Father, accepting our own infinite weakness and selflessly discerning the movements of his love.

We let God be God

In our hearts,
In the church,
In the quiet waiting on His will.



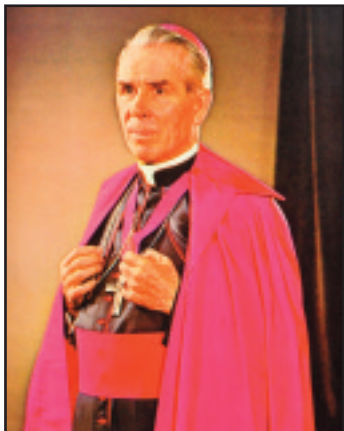
"Love is the
Fulfilment of the Law"

Book Review

Bishop Sheen: Mentor and Friend

By Mgr Hilary C Franco
New Hope Publications

Mgr Franco first met Bishop Fulton J Sheen in 1959. Their friendship lasted until Sheen's death in 1979 and is a testament to Franco's filial devotion to the memory of the Church's greatest communicator at the start of the television age. The book has been made in collaboration with Lisa and Geno Delfino and its style bears the impression of an oral rather than a written account. Franco was somewhat in awe of his mentor but provides telling details of Sheen's personal humility (in the face of much pressure to live within the role of a "celebrity") and his desire to communicate the love of Christ to everyone he encountered. For Sheen, this was the core of his priestly vocation; asked by Franco why he had become a priest he replied simply, "I was called to tell this story. I never tire of telling it...I love my calling."



In 1962 Franco began to work fulltime for Sheen who was head of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Although Sheen's famous TV series, "Life is Worth Living" had ended in 1957 he still had a TV slot, the Fulton Sheen Program, running from 1961-1968. Millions of dollars were annually donated to the Society from Sheen's television audiences, all of which was sent to missionary causes around the world. At 3 pm all the office staff would recite the Rosary with Sheen. Often he and Franco would walk to work "showing the collar" as he put it. The bishop insisted on clerical dress because "for those who see it, the collar is a symbol of the presence of Christ in our everyday world."

On the increasingly controversial annual St Patrick's Day Parade in New York, Sheen told Franco that St Patrick's sanctity lay in his conversion of thousands of Irish people from paganism; "We should pray for all those who are spending this day drinking in the bars. Pray that somehow they find inspiration in the true story of St Patrick's life" he commented.

Franco is discreet about the well-known clash between Sheen and Cardinal Spellman of New York, who was angry that Sheen refused to hand over money to the diocese that had been donated to him specifically for the foreign missions. He merely comments that Sheen seemed "uneasy and burdened" after meetings with Spellman. But he dispels the rumour that Spellman exiled Sheen to the humble diocese of Rochester in 1966. Sheen was weary of being seen as a celebrity priest and longed "to nurture and save souls for Christ on a more personal level."

The three years Sheen spent in Rochester were not happy; the diocese resented the changes that he wanted to introduce, so thwarted them. As Franco indicates in this warm memoir, this also coincided with a time of turmoil in the Church at large when, after Vatican II, many priests abandoned their vocation – and Sheen was the unfortunate recipient of this fall-out.

Francis Phillips

St Mary's Parish and Schools Come Together to Celebrate Advent

On Friday 12th December St Mary's Church in Derby was packed out for the annual joint parish and schools Advent Carol Service. Mr Andy Clare, St Benedict Academy's School Chaplain, led the proceedings which involved a lovely mix of prayers, music, carols and readings. The St Benedict Brass Players opened the service for us with an impressive array of carols. The Filipino Choir sang 'Angels We Have Heard on High' and 'What Child is this?' Our youngest singers were from St Mary's Catholic Primary School, they looked very



smart in their special red choir jumpers and suitably festive in tinsel too! They sang 'Silent Night' and 'Do You Hear What I Hear?' – complete with actions. St Benedict Academy sang the 'Carol of the Bells' beautifully, and the 11am Mass Church Choir got us fully into

the spirit of rejoicing with Piae Cantiones' 'Gaudete!'

The service concluded with a blessing from Fr Tim O'Sullivan, before the congregation enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine in the Parish Centre."

by Fran Wickes

Your help is required



I am trying to find out more information about this photograph. My aunt, Leonora Sheehy, is on the far right in the middle, next to Bishop Brindle. My aunt was educated in England. She was born in 1891 and died in 1977 in Tucson, Arizona. She had one son who died in WWII while in the service of the US Navy. I am her only surviving niece.

If you have any information please email john@bellcourt ltd.co.uk

'So simple, so practical, so adaptable'- Giving hope by giving up

Original article written by Lucy Harrison (CAFOD) and edited by Freda Lambert.



How did a Belgian Nun, a poodle, and the National Board of Catholic Women turn giving up into giving hope? Without Fast Days, CAFOD would not exist today. These times of compassion and generosity have raised over £65 million and changed millions of lives across the world!

So how did it all begin?

Elspeth Orchard was the treasurer of the first two Family Fast Days. In 1986 she wrote an account of the history of the Fast Day which shapes the story you are about to read of a Belgian Nun, a pampered poodle and Catholic women of England and Wales..... Let me take you back... Elizabeth von Strachotinsky, the Austrian representative of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) was present in 1957 when the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) spoke to WUCWO about the extreme situation of hunger and malnutrition in the developing world.

Continued on page 6

Christmas Carols and Secret Santa Dinner

The annual Carol Service and the Secret Santa Dinner which took place on Friday 19 December 2014, was very well attended making it a very enjoyable and successful evening. The evening commenced with a Carol Service in the Church, led by the Good Shepherd Choir under the direction of the very competent Catherine Murphy, interspersed with Scriptural readings with the entire congregation joining in as indicated. Our thanks and appreciation to Mr Robert O'Farrell our organist for that evening.

The evening was now set for a wonderful and festive dinner in the parish centre, under hanging stars and angels, where a hot and cold buffet with mulled wine, mince pies and stollen cake, was on offer. The Santa Grotto was in full swing with Santa (aptly portrayed by Reg Carter: with many a "ho, ho, ho" heard that night!) handing out gifts with the aid of his little helpers. This was a sell out with a total of 300 presents sold. All these gifts were supplied by a benefactor for which we are very grateful. A top prize, a mountain bike, valued at £200 was included. This was won by Abigail

Hurley, daughter in-law of Ron Hurley, a parishioner. Joe Hopkins, Christ The King School Chaplain, was MC for the evening, also helped with light entertainment and games, which involved many of the youngsters. Parishioners were encouraged to purchase a variety of different home-made preserves, chutneys and cranberry sauce products, the stall competently managed by David Staiano. The Social Committee took charge of the bar facility under the direction of Mark Jones. The kitchen duties were carried out methodically by Bernadette Walsh and her team, displaying a wonderful selection of food dishes supplied by a very generous benefactor who also prepared many of the dishes in advance which just required baking



on the night. The mood was festive, people lingered to chat and all went home well satisfied. As all presents and food was donated a very good sum of £1570 was raised towards the parish restoration fund. A big thank you for the inspiration from Canon Philip Ziomek, who encouraged many parishioners to participate building a good community spirit. Certainly to be on the calendar next year! God bless.

Cheryl Broodryk

Entertaining the elderly



Carol singers from the Knights of St. Columba with friends from the Parish of Our Lady of Victories, Market Harborough, entertaining the elderly residents of the town's Willows Nursing Home and afterwards at Lenthall House.

Jim Cooper

FRANKLY SPEAKING

We will hear more of this in the coming months

Near to my home some 56 new "low cost" houses saw building completion at Christmas. On January 3rd I noticed one of the mid-terraced properties had a sign saying "It's a girl", A New Year baby had arrived in a brand new house. I have to admit it gave me a lift for a few hours; I did wonder what sort of country the new little girl would grow up in and also what sort of world our leaders are developing. The joy of the Christmas season was frequently punctuated by national and international news which was not always easy to listen to or understand. Tragic incidents involving aircraft or on the high seas were accompanied by a reminder that persecution on matters of Faith is very much with us in some parts of the world. Pope Francis continues to show compassion in his frequent comments on some world affairs, at Christmas he wrote to persecuted Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq. The Pope clearly does feel for the innocent victims in these nations particularly children and elderly people who are abandoned. A further achievement for Pope Francis was an important role in the future of Cuba and the USA. The high level of diplomacy from the Vatican came to light on December 17th with the historic move to not only establish diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, but to overcome the difficulties of the last 53 years. Those readers old enough to recall

the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 will not forget how close we came to a potential war, the consequences of which we cannot imagine. Yes, we should not be afraid of giving praise where it is due. The Pope in the Caribbean has built bridges he will surely build more. What a pity one of our news channels saw fit to report this "good news" story without mentioning his promotion of reconciliation and peace. In Britain some party politicians could not wait to start the General Election campaign. They seemed to behave like greyhound owners desperate to release their dogs to chase the hare at a race meeting. The "hare" is the other political parties whose policies they want to criticise. During the first week of 2015 the NHS became again the focus of attention notably the performance of Accident and Emergency units. We will hear more of this during these next few months. Sometimes the news will continue to be painful, and no political party can be believed - if it only makes rash promises. Perhaps we all need a deeper understanding of the world's problems and how our Christian Faith can help us. We can start by making all welcome in our churches and by giving a good example to others, especially to our children.

*Frank Goulding
Holy Trinity Parish, Newark*

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Continued from page 5

Elizabeth wanted to address the plight of those who were suffering and also to give thanks for answered prayers and peace in her country. This compassion sparked a Family Fast Day in Austria. "The idea was that every member of the family would make a special act of self denial – father could give up his beer, for example, and the children their sweets, while mother could cook with the cheapest ingredients."

This first Family Fast Day in Austria was a great success – and so the word spread.

Jacqueline Stuyt-Simpson was the UK representative on UCWO and a member of the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW). Jacquie was inspired by this act of generosity and compassion and took the idea she had learned of to her fellow NBCW members. Evelyn White, the chair of NBCW at the time along with Jacquie, Elspeth and the secretary, Norma Warmington, decided that a Fast Day should be organised and promoted throughout parishes in England and Wales. As Elspeth wrote in her account, the idea 'was so simple, so practical, so adaptable'.

Dominica: making the difference

But where could they make the difference? It seemed there was so much need, where could they start? At WUCWO Jacquie had already met Sister Mary Alicia MBE, a dynamic Belgian nun from the Missionary Sisters of St Augustine who was trying to raise money for a project she had founded in Dominica, one of the Caribbean Windward islands. Children were dying from lack of food and this was particularly acute in the parish of Roseau, the capital of Dominica where the project was based. Shockingly, 80 per cent of newborns had died in one year and a home was needed to nurse malnourished children and babies back to health. Plans to build the Infant Jesus Nursing Home began straight away and the first Family Fast Day in England and Wales had its focus. Success!

Jacquie along with Elspeth, Evelyn and Norma, chose the Ember Friday of Lent on 11 March 1960 as the date for Family Fast Day. They had leaflets printed and distributed around the parishes of England and Wales asking people to 'Go without so that others may have.'

The two biggest member organisations of NBCW, Catholic Women's League (CWL) and Union of Catholic Mothers

(UCM) were there to help out in force. The women hoped to raise £500, but actually collected over £6,000! As the donations came in thick and fast, time was spent counting the money on kitchen tables and responding personally to each and every one.

Work began on the building of the Infant Jesus Nursing Home in Dominica. However, to ensure the home had all the necessary life-saving equipment, more money was needed. The decision was unanimous; Family Fast Day would be repeated the following year.

The Fast Day leaflets that were sent out in 1961 communicated a very clear and strong message: Millions of people in the world are hungry. They are hungry largely because the good fruits of the earth are enjoyed by too few and WE are among the few..... There is enough food for all – if only it could be fairly shared. With our donations the HUNGRY CAN BE FED, the IGNORANT CAN BE TAUGHT, and OUR CONCERN WILL REFLECT THE DIVINE COMPASSION, thus meeting the THREE HUNGERS OF THE WORLD, for BREAD, for TRUTH, for GOD.

The language may have changed slightly, but the messages behind the appeal of living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor, continue to motivate the Catholic community today. The difference then, the difference now That year over £32,500 was collected for Fast Day, and the bank asked when the Fast Day would be in the following year so that they could take on extra staff! The money was sent straight to Sister Alicia and ploughed into the hospital. The success of Fast Day even made national news: "The little ex-patriates can be found in most villages of the island, enjoying health and happiness. If the Home had not existed Dominica might have lost the greater part of a thousand young citizens"

In 1962 there were big changes. It became obvious that the generosity of the Catholic community was without limit and there was only so much kitchen table counting that could be done by the women volunteers. At the same time, there was a recognition that many countries throughout the world were in need of support, and permanent staff members would be necessary to address this.

To date over £65 million has been raised through Fast Days alone.

WWI comes to Christ The King!

On the 3rd December 2014 our Year 8 students took part in a cross-curricular day themed around WW1 to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the conflict. The day was a great success and our students learnt plenty and to quote some, "fell in love with history!". The article below explores the different elements of the day and was prepared by students in 8A. If you would like to see what happened please explore the photo gallery on our website.

Our WW1 Day by 8A

Yesterday as part of the WW1 themed day we researched our ancestors who fought in the Great War; the activity was led by Mrs Woollard and Mrs Rollinson, our history teachers. Some of the war veterans we found included Ernest George Morris, George Byrne, Jay McEwan, Frederick Bainbridge and Sheik Suleman – relatives of Millie Morris, Jessica Byrne, Isobelle England, Dylan Bainbridge and Suleman Salim. They all fought and died in the war and we will remember their sacrifice always. We used this information to decorate a poppy, on each petal we included a significant fact about their lives.

In the chapel we took part in a liturgy to remember the soldiers who were brave enough to go out and fight for their country. We took from a bowl the name of a soldier who came from Gedling and fought for us and for peace. We chose readings and created posters and prayers themed around sacrifice, peace and remembrance. We remembered all the young soldiers who gave their lives for our country and prayed for the peo-



ple who are fighting in war today; one way we did this was by placing the poppies we had decorated on the altar during the service. We also remember all of the families and friends who have lost their loved ones in conflict.

With Ms Shields we had a chance to reflect on the war and the impact on the soldiers who fought for us. It was an opportunity to think about the strength and courage it took to serve our country. We began by mind-mapping all the words which came to mind when we saw a poppy such as thankful, sorrow and sadness. We then used these ideas to explore the real meaning of a poem written by a soldier. The poem had been written from the perspective of a soldier who had died during battle, he pleads with those fighting to stay strong and win for their country. We enjoyed the session because it allowed us to explain how we feel about the war in our own words.

With Mr Gallagher we re-enacted the Christmas football match from December 1914. The class was split into a German and English team, we wrote a message for the opposing soldiers and after approaching each other cautiously we swapped messages and played a match. It was difficult to think that these soldiers then went back to fighting soon after.

To help further enhance our understanding of WW1 an expert speaker, Jason King, brought in over 1,000 artefacts recovered from the period such as rifles, helmets and defused bombs. Lots of people were chosen to portray soldiers from the British army and learnt some of the drills soldiers went through. We all had hands-on opportunities with every item in his amazing collection. It was a great way to learn about what really happened during one of the darkest periods in our history and a great way to end what was a great day.

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Countdown to 7th May - Making sense of the promises



by Stephanie MacGillivray
Parliamentary Officer,
Catholic Bishops' Conference and the
Catholic Education Service

In the lead up to what will be one of the closest fought general elections in recent times, education is one of the most hotly debated issues between the four main political parties. It is vital that Catholic voters are informed of each party's policies regarding education in Britain, and how they aim to provide for the next generation. The Conservatives' policies on education reflect their work over the last four years, primarily through proposals to protect the schools budget and continue the Free Schools programme, including placing a 50% cap on all faith-based admissions in new free schools.

Should they win the General Election, the



Conservatives propose investing £18 billion in new schools, so that buildings and facilities match ambitions for the next generation.

The Conservatives aim to ensure teachers in England can spend more time in the classroom and are not overburdened, and also include plans to attract top graduates into the teaching profession, to raise standards across schools, and make it easier for head teachers to restore discipline and to tackle bullying in schools.

The Conservatives suggest that inter-school competition in the form of comparative league tables will drive the raising of standards in schools, whereas Labour argue that a system of collaboration and cooperation between schools will in fact achieve this. Labour propose to end the system of Whitehall oversight over 3500 academies and free schools, and will instead include a light touch curriculum framework and introduce Directors of School Standards (DSS) who will hold responsibility for raising standards, handling failing schools and outlines for new schools. School governors will be given greater support, including sharing best practice, being given better training, and making more use of data dashboards. In line with this, Labour will put in place a proper system for dealing with underachieving schools, including academies, allowing OFSTED to inspect academy chains and enabling academies to move between chains.

An important contrast between the parties' policies regarding admissions is that while the Conservatives would continue to place a 0% cap on faith-based admissions, Labour would aim to strengthen the Schools Admission Code but without any interference in the role of Diocesan authorities. The Liberal Democrats would allow schools to set their admissions policy, with local authorities holding responsibility for admissions to all publicly funded schools in their area.

The chief education policy of the Liberal Democrats is to improve schools through an "Investing in Teaching" package, supporting the creation of a Royal College of Teachers and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) entitlement for all teachers.

Responsibility for decisions about any new schools required, and their organizational status, would lie with the democratically-accountable local authority, accompanied

by the general rule that all new schools should be free schools or academies. Local people, when they believe a school is consistently inadequate, would also be able to require the local authority to carry out a review of the school's management. The Liberal Democrats propose that all state-funded schools should teach the same core curriculum including a Personal, Social and Health Education programme (PSHE) containing sex and relationship education, balanced and non-partisan political education, and religious education – but not religious instruction.

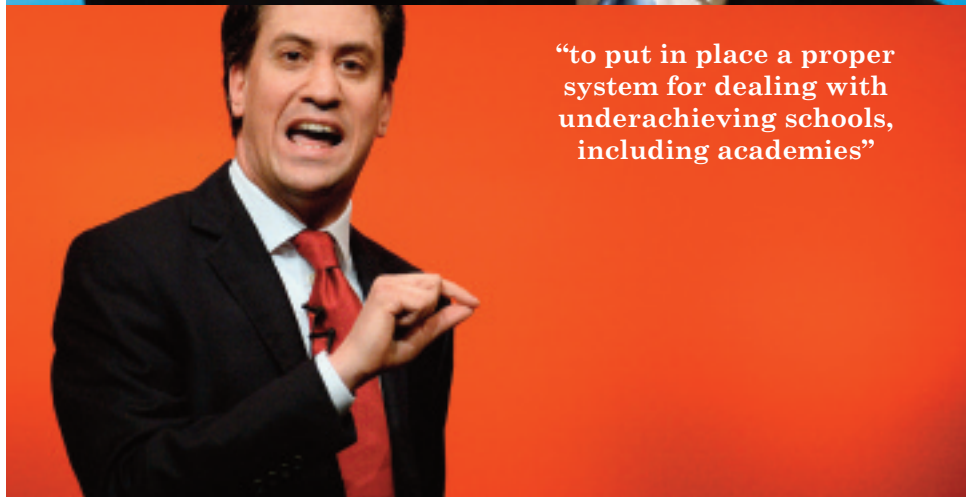
UKIP's clearest education policy is the creation of new grammar schools and technical skills colleges, while also advocating vocational apprenticeships. Nigel Farage recently announced UKIP's aim to have a grammar school in every town. The reduction of bureaucracy in schools and easing the process of sacking bad teachers are additional aims in UKIP's manifesto. A large part of their approach to education argues that immigrants into Britain are taking up places in schools which are needed for British children. To tackle this, UKIP suggest that immigration must be controlled to prioritise local people in local schools, meaning immigrants must fully financially support themselves for five years, including through private education. In February 2014, Pope Francis spoke at the gathering of the Congregation for Catholic Education and addressed the role of Catholic education in today's world. He outlined the importance of the Christian message for all in education (Christians and non-Christians) in contexts strongly marked by cultural and religious pluralism. The Pope spoke about the need for well-qualified educators, rich in humanity, who undergo permanent formation throughout their life in these roles.

Educational institutions have a duty to be a living presence of the Gospel in the world. Teaching is an act of love, and in preparing future generations for life in today's world, it is important for Catholic parents and voters to be aware of the different parties' policies and reflect upon which of these reflect and protect them best in terms of support and provision for the next generation.

"£18 billion in new schools, so that buildings and facilities match ambitions for the next generation."

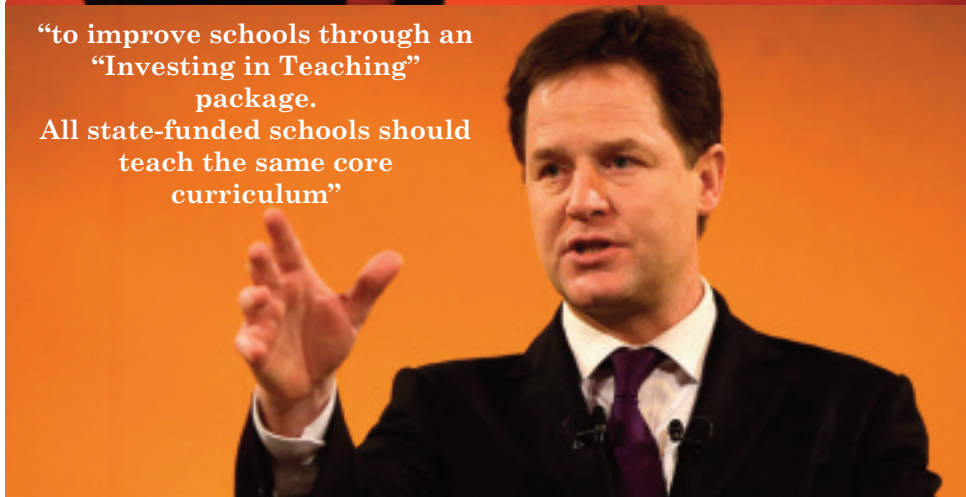


"to put in place a proper system for dealing with underachieving schools, including academies"

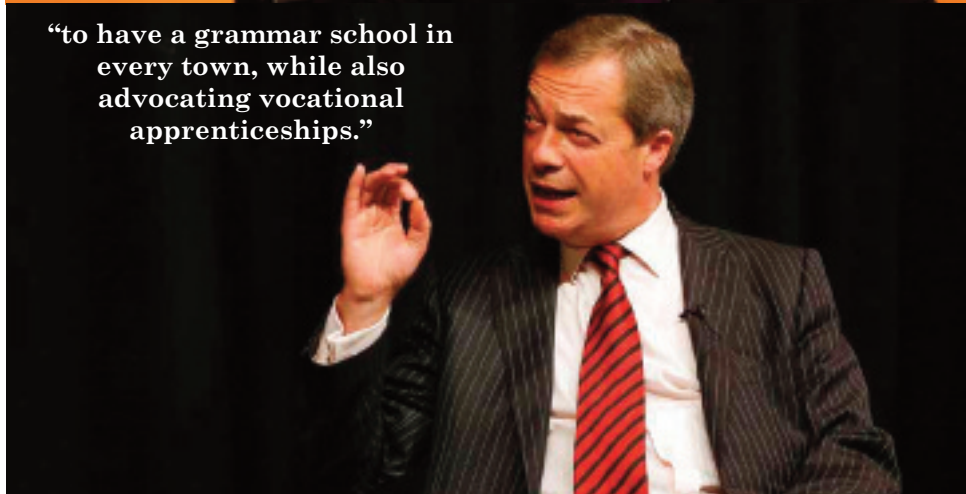


"to improve schools through an 'Investing in Teaching' package.

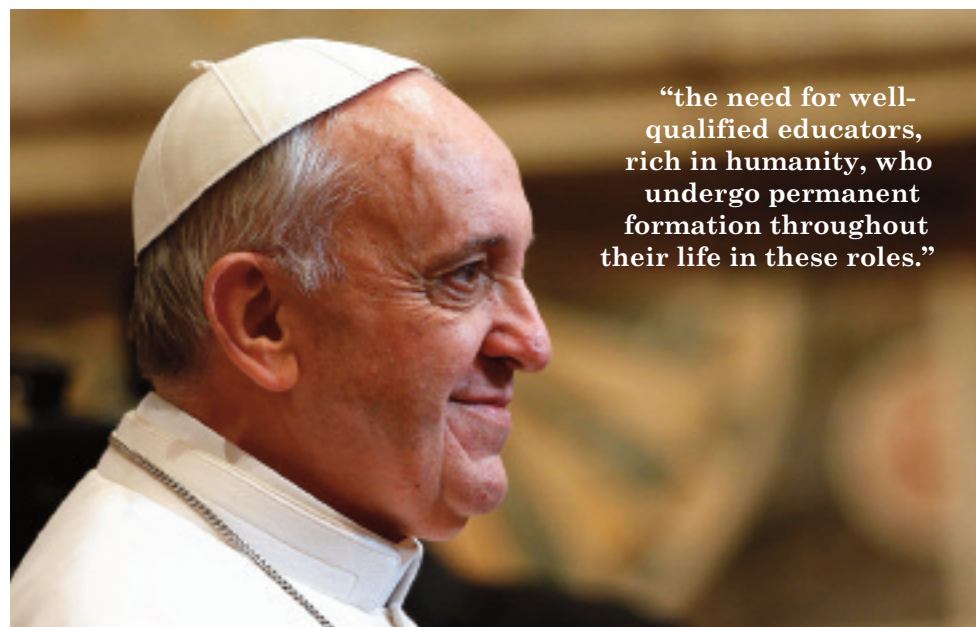
All state-funded schools should teach the same core curriculum"



"to have a grammar school in every town, while also advocating vocational apprenticeships."



"the need for well-qualified educators, rich in humanity, who undergo permanent formation throughout their life in these roles."



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The Catenian Association-Strengthening family life through friendship and faith

The Catenians help the Arusha Project

The Catenian Derby President, John Lawson, presented bursary cheques to Katie Bennett and Katie Mowles after mass at St. Georges, Derby.

Both Katie Mowles and Katie Bennett are 19 years of age and are former students of St Benedict's school, Derby. They are each taking a gap year before going on to university. They will be travelling to Arusha, Tanzania in January 2015 and will be there for three months. Their main task will be to teach English to a wide variety of children from 4 to 18 years. St. Benedict's has had a connection with Arusha for many years and many students have trodden the same path in the past. To avoid being a financial burden on the project, students are asked to cover their basic costs and so both Katies were especially grateful to the Catenian Association for their generosity.

Kevin Hurst
Publicity Officer,
Derby Catenian Association



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St Gilbert of Sempringham

Icon of St Gilbert of Sempringham at the Good Shepherd Church, Woodthorpe, Nottingham. The icon made by the Shrewsbury based iconographer Sister Petra Clare, depicts the saint surrounded by his first seven women members of the order along with the canons and brothers. Also included on the left are the Cistercian St Bernard and St Malachy (holding the staff), who were supportive to St Gilbert in establishing his Order. On the far right is Pope Eugenius 111 who advised St Gilbert to continue with his own order rather than unite with the Cistercians as St Gilbert had wished at that time



Gilbert was born in 1083 at Sempringham, Lincolnshire the son of Jocelin, a wealthy Norman knight. He was sent to France to study and returned to England to receive the benefices of Sempringham and Tirington from his father. He became a clerk in the household of Bishop Robert Bloet of Lincoln and was ordained by Robert's successor, Alexander. He returned to Sempringham as Lord on the death of his father in 1131. In the same year he began acting as adviser for a group of seven young women living in enclosure with lay sisters and brothers and decided the community should be incorporated into an established religious order. After several new foundations were established, Gilbert went to Citeaux in 1148 to ask the Cistercians to take over the Community. When the Cistercians declined to take on the governing of a group of women, Gilbert, with the approval of Pope Eugene III, continued the Community with the addition of Canons Regular for its spiritual directors and Gilbert as Master General. The Community became known as the Gilbertine Order, the only English religious order originating in the medieval period; it eventually had twenty-six monasteries which continued in existence until King Henry VIII suppressed monasteries in England. Gilbert imposed a strict rule on his Order and became noted for his own austerities and concern for the poor. He was imprisoned in 1165 on a false charge of aiding Thomas of Canterbury during the latter's exile but was exonerated of the charge. He was faced with a revolt of some of his lay brothers when he was ninety, but was sustained by Pope Alexander III. Gilbert resigned his office late in life because of blindness and died at Sempringham. He was canonized in 1202. His feast day is February 4.

Ash Wednesday February 18

The first day of Lent

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Season of Lent. It is a season of penance, reflection, and fasting which prepares us for Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday, through which we attain redemption.

Why we receive the ashes

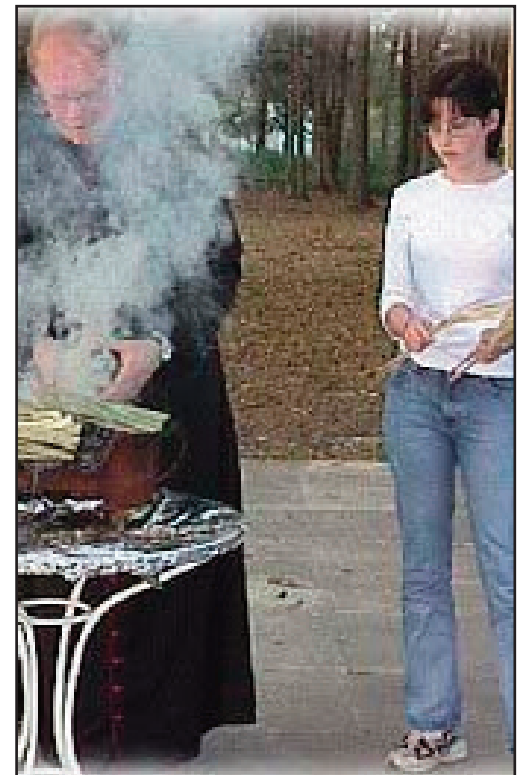
Following the example of the Ninevites, who did penance in sackcloth and ashes, our foreheads are marked with ashes to humble our hearts and reminds us that life passes away on Earth. We remember this when we are told "Remember, Man is dust, and unto dust you shall return."

Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church, and they help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice.

The distribution of ashes comes from a ceremony of ages past. Christians who had committed grave faults performed public penance. On Ash Wednesday, the Bishop blessed the hair shirts which they were to wear during the forty days of penance, and sprinkled over them ashes made from the palms from the previous year. Then, while the faithful recited the Seven Penitential Psalms, the penitents were turned out of the church because of their sins -- just as Adam, the first man, was turned out of Paradise because of his disobedience. The penitents did not enter the church again until Maundy Thursday after having won reconciliation by the toil of forty days' penance and sacramental absolution. Later, all Christians, whether public or secret penitents, came to receive ashes out of devotion. In earlier times, the distribution of ashes was followed by a penitential procession.

The Ashes

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year. The ashes are christened with Holy Water and are scented by exposure to incense. While the ashes symbolize penance and contrition, they are also a reminder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. His Divine mercy is of utmost importance during the season of Lent, and the Church calls on us to seek that mercy during the entire Lenten season with reflection, prayer and penance.



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Catholic Parish in the ^ News

The Divine Infant of Prague

Syston, Leicestershire
Leicestershire's dedication to the
Divine Infant of Prague
by Helen Harwood

The Divine Infant of Prague is perhaps an unusual dedication for a small rural church in England. But why such a dedication? Syston in Leicestershire is a long way from Prague and there appears no obvious connection with the Czech Republic's capital city. The story though is a strange one. One of hard work, faith and an amazing coincidence.

It was in 1611 that German Lutherans first began to build the church of Panna Maria Vitezna, the home of the Infant of Prague statue. Nine years later the church was given to the Carmelite nuns after the Catholic Hapsburg Emperor Ferdinand II won the battle of the White Mountain.

Prazke Jezulatke – the Czech name for the statue of the Divine Infant – was donated to the sisters in 1628 by the Spanish bride of an important Prague family. Situated about half way along the nave of the church on the right hand side is an altar and above that, a glass case houses the small wax statue of the Divine Infant framed in silver and gold. And according to the liturgical season the sisters change the tiny robes to the appropriate colour.

Back in Leicestershire it was as early as 1899 that Father Hendricks first opened a Mass centre in Syston. Father Hendricks had served in several missions and wherever he went he set up a shrine to the Divine Infant of Prague. Not surprisingly, his mass centre had this name.

This though was short lived, for after only 12 months he left for Melton Mowbray, some 10 miles distant. The Mass centre did remain open but only for a further year. With hindsight it would have been interesting to have asked him why the Divine Infant had been so special. Had he perhaps been to Prague as some point as a missionary? It was to be 21 years later that Fr Keating, a Rosminian, began to say Mass one Sunday a month in Syston.

In 1939 the Rosminians from nearby Ratcliffe College began to say Mass regularly in the village Assembly Rooms. The arrangement continued until 1943 when

Syston was served by the then new church of St Theresa's at neighbouring Birstall. During the early years of the Second World War, many priests came to say Mass in the Assembly Rooms. However, Father Horgan is credited with building the churches at both Syston and Birstall and indeed many of Syston's older parishioners contributed to the building of St Theresa's. Father Horgan was by all accounts a skilled fundraiser and he wrote many letters to far flung parishes and convents in an

attempt to obtain the money needed for both buildings.

Throughout the war years the Assembly Rooms were used for dances which were attended in part by the American servicemen stationed at nearby East Goscote. The Italian POWs too came from the camp close to Thurmaston village for Mass, although it was unlikely that the latter were able to offer much in the way of financial contributions.

Coincidentally, Father Horgan also had a great personal devotion to the Divine Infant of Prague. And interestingly, he did not appear to have known Father Hendricks' previous dedication of the earlier Mass centre since he never mentioned it to any of the parishioners at that time.

In the 1940's a disastrous fire gutted the Assembly Rooms and during the cleaning up afterwards a broken statue of the Divine Infant of Prague was found amongst the debris.

Fr Horgan was so amazed at this discovery in a secular building that he took it as a sign and decided that this would be the dedication of the new Syston Church: The Divine Infant of Prague.

Much of the material used for the building of the church seems to have been reclaimed from local bomb sites. Today such recycling would be commended but the motives then were more financial.

Later Fr Horgan went to America on one of his many fund raising trips and it seems that whilst there he bought the Stations of the Cross with money given to him by the parishioners. He returned to Syston for the official opening and blessing of the church on the 28th of November 1949 by Bishop Ellis of Nottingham. The Rosminians continued to look after the Parish until Father David Forde was installed as parish priest in 1964 and Syston became an independent parish, separate from nearby Birstall, Rothley and Sileby.

Moreover, in 1964 the Catholic population of the parish was recorded as being just 500. The church in later years has been ex-



'If you want to find the sacred space in your life, then you must want to "walk without blemish."

You will of course fail to live without blemish, but failing is quite different from not even trying.'

tended and refurbished with the addition of two stained glass windows, new altar furniture and a new statue of the Divine Infant for the entrance porch.

Today the parish's Catholic population is 750, still small, but the church is a tribute to the Divine Infant and all those who worked to make it a reality.

The Divine Infant of Prague is widely venerated throughout the world and in Britain at least, a practice seems to have evolved of placing a coin beneath the Divine Infant's statue to ensure the prosperity of the devotees.

For more information visit the parish website at

<http://www.divineinfantofprague.org>



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Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring their prize-winning creation to life

Students who triumphed in a national design competition were given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring their prize-winning creation to life.

Shauna Scott, Airann Richards and Paige Dean, who are all in Year 8 at Saint Benedict Catholic Voluntary Academy in Derby, scooped top spot in the Food Category of the Great British Make-Off.

The brief was to create a product for the cycling market and the students came up with an energy drink called Spa Dew – a sports drink packaged in a cycle-friendly container.

There were 150 entries in the competition, run by the Design and Technology Association, and four category winners who got to perfect their products with the help of top innovators in the field.

As part of their prize, Shauna, Paige, both 12 and Airann, 13, spent a day working with product developer Steve Walpole from UGO Foods in London to refine and create their design concept.

Their design also formed part of a national exhibition run by the Design and Technology Association at the Design Museum in

London – which the girls also visited.

Michelle Smith, Design and Technology teacher at Saint Benedict CVA, said the students had enjoyed the whole experience. She said: "We are extremely proud of the girls who have been fantastic ambassadors for the academy throughout this whole process."

"They really enjoyed going to London to UGO Foods, it was a big adventure for them. Steve Walpole was great, he helped the girls to make two drinks, one which is a pre-cycle drink and one for after cycling. "They thought about what your body needs when cycling, chose the ingredients and did lots of tasting until they were happy. They designed the bottle and label and Steve got the finished product professionally packaged and had the labels printed, they looked amazing. He even said it had the potential to be developed into a product and sold."

Student Shauna said she was thrilled to have won along with her friends.

She said: "It's been the most amazing experience and a really big eye-opener for me and it's broadened my imagination in



terms of what's possible with design. It was really interesting when we went to meet Steve and learnt about how products are made and the process that happens before they hit the supermarket shelves.

"Working with Steve was definitely the best part and tasting all the different fruits. We were very excited to have won but also a bit surprised but we are very proud of our product."

Steve said the girls had done extremely well.

He said: "The winning idea from St Benedict was an on trend idea and they had thought about a range of different drinks

for different reasons. The ingredients and bottles were innovative and well researched."

Kevin Gritton, head teacher at Saint Benedict CVA, congratulated the girls on their achievement.

He said: "Well done to the girls for winning this prestigious national award. I am proud to see our students representing Saint Benedict Academy at the highest level, and from speaking to the girls, I know it was a great experience for all of them. I also had a chance to try the drinks they made, which were delicious."

We Did It!



St Mary's

The sum of £62,200 seemed like a mountain of money to raise. When the Retired Priests Appeal was launched in April 2013, the parishioners of St Mary's and St John Bosco's in

Leicester were quite alarmed at what was being asked of them. But in little over 18 months they reached the target. So how did they do it?

· The material provided by the Appeal Office was clear in its purpose, so people understood the message, and its seriousness.

· This enabled us to make the presentation in a positive way at all the Masses over one weekend.

· Parishioners took the message to heart. "I

hadn't thought before of what happens to priests when they move on, but this

has made me think..." was a typical response.

· The Appeal tapped into a fund of good will – and more than two-thirds of parishioners became involved in one way or another.

· Four-year pledges were considered to be the most important element because small pledges (with Gift Aid) build up to a large sum. A good proportion of parishioners agreed to take this route, and they were encouraged to

pledge only what they were comfortable with, so most pledges were for £5, £10 or £20 per month.

· Follow-up was needed to 'encourage' those who meant to fill in a pledge, never quite got around to it, and then thought that it was too late. The message they were given was that it wasn't too late!

· There were a good number of single gifts, often for three- or four-figure sums.

· Many groups in the parish contributed from their own fundraising: the St John Bosco Social Club, the Camping and Caravan Club, the line dancing group, the UCM. A

sponsored bike ride



St John Bosco

around Rutland Water involved people of all ages and raised more than £900.

· One talented parishioner did a great deal of knitting (Easter egg cosies, toys to raffle at Christmas) and made jars of jam and preserves, and contributed many hundreds of pounds.

· A number of parishioners made regular donations through the envelope scheme, and these too amounted to many hundreds of pounds.

· Four concerts were held, each of which raised about £500.

· We 'took a breather' at intervals – to try to avoid 'donor fatigue'.

· As we neared completion, some parishioners were approached individually and asked if they would increase their pledges to help close the gap that remained, and they responded very generously.

As the New Year dawned, there was great rejoicing among the parishioners, the parish priest Fr Stephan and the parish reps as we realised that we had indeed reached the summit. It had been an exercise in perseverance, pulling together and building brick by brick. A lesson, maybe, in how to achieve the impossible.

Monica O'Connor



Eileen Peterken: Wife to former Derbyshire vicar and priest Peter Peterken, is mourned

Known to generations in this city, Eileen 83, was the ever present wife of Fr Peterken, a nurse, mother to four, grandmother to twelve and great-grandmother to six, neighbour and confidante to many.

Eileen came to St Luke's parish in 1970 with her husband Fr. Peter Peterken and their young family. They had been at the rural parish of Killamarsh in the north of Derby diocese, but having spent most of their ministry in deprived areas it was the parish of St Luke's that called to them.

The poor neighbourhood immediately took the family to their hearts as Eileen would fondly remember the strong community and tell tales of amazing generosity. She would talk of the sisters who were still scared by electricity, and would only ever turn the lights on if their hands were wrapped in a tea towel. Of the families with coats for bedding and no food for the children. But also the kind old man who would push money from his pension through the letterboxes of those who were truly in need. Derby won her over.

Eileen was born in Surrey in 1931. As a child in the Second World War she vividly remembered the sound and fear of bombs. When she was eighteen Eileen went on a Church trip to Shakespeare's house, it was there she first met twenty-year old Peter. She sidled up to him and started talking, putting him right on a few things. Something she did almost every day for the next 65 years.

They courted until Peter had trained to be a Priest and could "earn a wage to keep a wife." Meanwhile Eileen trained and

worked as a nurse, living and working at a hospital in London. Loving every minute. In 1953 Peter was Ordained, so the now Father Peter married Eileen Cooper, on a rainy day in October. Fr. Peter always saying he never noticed the rain as he only had eyes for his bright wife. To which she would respond by getting the wedding album and showing him the photograph of him holding the biggest black umbrella and a collection of soaked guests.

After a wild curacy on the Isle of Dogs, rolling back the carpets to dance to gramophone records the pair moved with their two young children to British Guyana to become Missionaries in a town called Paramaribo.

When they got there the wooden house that they were to live in had been eaten by termites, so they had to live in the Church for a while. A new house was supposed to be built, soon enough Eileen learnt what the phrase 'manana' meant.

Guyana stayed in Eileen's heart until the end. Happy memories of learning to cook strange dishes, 'owning' a very angry pet monkey, a present from the native tribes who lived in the rain forest and living with the strong community of black workers and the rich, mostly white, plantation owners they worked for.

Sadly England called and they regretfully left the West Indies, returning to Kent and nursing rising to become a Staff Nurse, known affectionately as 'the little she-dragon'.

While at St Luke's Eileen as ever supported her husband in his work, organising

Sunday school, Children's clubs, Mother's Union meetings, Girls Club for teenagers to meet, Young Wives get-togethers, Mother and Baby groups as well as the cleaning for the church and flower arranging.

Eileen lived in St Luke's Vicarage for twenty years, the longest time they had spent anywhere. They stayed through the slum clearance of 1976, which separated many friends when most of the houses were bulldozed and rebuilt. Eileen remained to cook meals for the vagrants that turned up on her door, for visiting Bishops and speakers or as a second Mum to students who had missed the last bus home who needed a warm meal and a place to stay.

It was Eileen who would work with the ladies of the parish to reassure those who were left and grow the area once the building works had finished.

Before retirement the Bishop persuaded them to consider Matlock, just one last job before settling down.

So in 1990 they moved to the hills of Matlock. In 1992 Eileen and Fr. Peterken welcomed the Queen to the church school of St Giles. Eileen was very proud to be introduced to the Queen. It was not the only time they had been in the presence of the Queen however with the pair been invited down to a garden party one summer in the early 1980's.

After five years in the Dales it really was time to retire and back to Derby the couple headed. Retirement was quite the wrong word to use, as with every interregnum Fr



was called to take care of which ever church, Eileen as ever a calming and reassuring presence by his side.

They took care of St Anne's, St Luke's, St Bartholomew's and many other parishes around and about Derby.

In 2009 with so many changes happening within the Church of England the Pope's offer of 'The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham' was something the Peterkens had to consider and in 2011 moved over into the Catholic Church. Immediately making an impact on St George's, Village St, Derby.

Although unusual to have a Priest's Wife, Eileen was taken into the fold, loved and cherished by the Catholic communities of St George's and Holy Spirit. Her faith and devout understanding of God saw Eileen through her life till the very end.

The night before she died, her youngest grandchildren sang her Christmas Carols, she held their hand. Surrounded by her family, Eileen died quietly in her sleep.

The indomitable Eileen will live in the hearts and memories of all who knew her. The practical no-nonsense woman that has headed a now Derbyshire family for 60 years.

Tabitha Peterken

Pastoral Letter of the Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham appointed to be read at all Masses on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 January 2015

Dear friends in Christ,

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord marks the end of the Season of Christmas. Our annual celebration of the Lord's Birth speaks of the power of love and the importance of our families to us. It is at Christmas that we make an effort to send cards to people who are important to us; we buy presents for our families and friends; we decorate our homes, offices and churches; and we can travel large distances to be with the people whom we love most.

Today's Feast reminds us of the beginning of Jesus' mission, and so our thoughts turn to how we are going to live the Christian life in 2015. Jesus, the Redeemer of all people, has given us the sacrament of Baptism so that we can partake in his mission as Prophet, Priest and King. We share in his

prophetic mission by proclaiming his law of love and his Gospel of peace in everything we say and do; his priestly mission by celebrating Mass, receiving the sacraments and living lives of prayer each and every day; and his kingly mission by glorifying the Lord in our lives, serving our brothers and sisters, and by the little acts of kindness which can make our world a much happier place. It is in Baptism that we are given our fundamental vocation as Christians – to be Christ in the world in which we live, 'for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church'. That vocation is lived out in different ways and at different stages of our lives, but it is never lived in isolation. We are all members of parishes, schools and chaplaincies – and, even more importantly, we are all

born into families, 'domestic churches', in which the Christian life is lived, day in, day out.

Our family is not something that happens by chance; like anything else, we need to put effort into our families, otherwise we will drift apart. As husbands, wives, children, parents, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, grandparents and relatives, we are asked to love, nurture and care for each other, especially the most vulnerable members of our families.

At the very heart of this vision of the family is the gift of

marriage; in the sacrament of marriage, God gives Christian husbands and wives the grace which they need to be faithful 'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health', loving and cherishing each other for the whole of their lives. The unity and indissolubility of marriage remind us of God's love for us, a love that is total, unconditional and everlasting; in Christ, God has made 'a new and eternal covenant' with us, and that covenant is reflected in the love of husband and wife. Furthermore, all children are gifts from God, and when a couple welcomes the gift of a child, their love for each other becomes a sign to their children, family and friends of God's creative work.

However, the vocation of marriage is not an easy one, and we all know, and experience in many different

ways the challenges which married couples and their families can face. Next October, Bishops

from throughout the world will meet together with Pope Francis to reflect on the vocation and mission of the family today. To do this properly, the Pope has asked for the help of all members of the Church; at the close of the last assembly of the Synod of Bishops, he said:

Dear brothers and sisters, now we still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families. Discernment is not the sharing of opinions, but reflection upon God's will for us, and seeking to put it into action in our daily lives.

The 'spiritual discernment' which the Pope invites us to make – as individuals, families, parishes and communities – will play an important part in the Church's continuing reading of the Sacred Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition so that she can dis-

cern God's will and proclaim it afresh in each new generation, and so support married couples and families in their vocation; the Church is a hope-filled voice in a world that needs her message more than ever.

To help us, the Bishops of England and Wales have produced a leaflet, *The Call, the Journey and the Mission*, which invites all of us to reflect on the gift of marriage and family life. It is available from your parish today and is downloadable from the diocesan website.

It gives us some prayers, reflections and questions to think about; we can do this alone, with our spouse, within our families, with friends or in our wider community.

Our discernment here in the Diocese of Nottingham and elsewhere will help the Holy Father and his fellow Bishops in their discernment, so that they will have a real awareness from people throughout the world of the joys, hopes, difficulties and sorrow which many feel as they seek to live their marital commitment and support their family. I hope that, during this New Year, we will all be able to reflect on the vocation of marriage and family life, discerning God's will for us, our families and our communities. May the Lord accompany us and guide us in this journey for the glory of his name. With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families for a happy and peaceful New Year.

*Rev Mgr Canon Thomas McGovern
Prot Ap
Diocesan Administrator
of the Diocese of Nottingham
Bishop's House, Nottingham
January 2015*

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Fitness challenge

St Teresa's Primary, Aspley, Nottingham held a fitness challenge to raise awareness of the Ebola Crisis. Each class was given 5 different fitness related challenges to complete, one per day. If they were successful as a class then they could move the runner on the display board one step closer to Africa.

To finish the week, the school came dressed in their own sports clothes for a day of fitness related activities. At the end of the day the whole school gathered together to join in the CAFOD prayer for those affected by the Ebola crisis. Overall £270 was raised for CAFOD.

Picture right: A day of fitness related activities



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