



The Vine

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December 2019
Issue No. 366

Northampton Diocesan News

FREE Every Month

**ROSARY
LINK IN
CORBY**
page 7



**NEW
VOCATIONS
DIRECTOR**
page 6



**SCHOOL
RE LEADS IN
ROME**
page 5

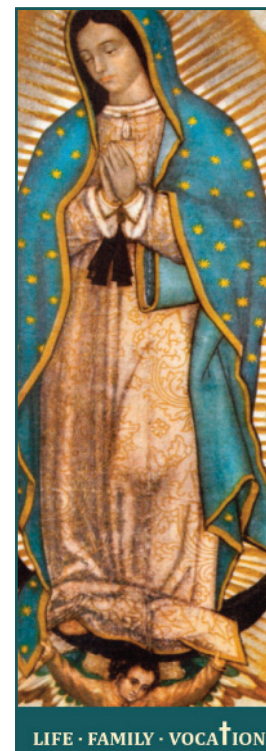


TOWARDS HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

A Mass for victims and survivors of abuse took place recently in St Mary's Catholic Church, Woburn Sands. The Mass is part of an initiative from our Diocesan safeguarding office aimed at building closer relationships with those who have suffered from abuse or those who are close to them.



Volunteer youth ministers gathered for a final time of preparation and development prior to welcoming young people to a brand-new youth group for the St Barnabas cluster of parishes. They were joined by Frs Brendan Seery and Pius Amaoko. Our Diocesan youth office, NYMO led the day with a focus on accompaniment and sustainability.



ALL WELCOME TO THE
FEAST DAY MASS
OF
**OUR LADY OF
GUADALUPE**

THE HOLY CHILD AND ST JOSEPH
SHRINE OF THE MIRACULOUS RELIC IMAGE
BRERETON ROAD
BEDFORD MK40 1HU

12 DECEMBER 2019
7.30PM

PRINCIPAL CELEBRANT:
THE MOST
REVEREND KEVIN McDONALD
ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS OF SOUTHWARK

REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW
AT ST FRANCES CABRINI HALL

'AM I NOT HERE YOUR MOTHER?
OUR LADY'S WORDS TO JUAN DIEGO
1531—MEXICO

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OUR PATRONAL FEAST DAY

On the 8th December at 11.00am Northampton Cathedral will host the patronal Mass of Our lady Immaculate. The many titles of Mary shed light onto different aspects of our Mother and 'Immaculate' is no different. The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception reminds us that Mary, in preparation for being the Mother of Jesus was preserved from original sin from the moment of conception.

Our Lady Immaculate was chosen as a patron for our Cathedral because it was a title officially recognised by Pope Pius IX in 1854 only a few years after the establishment of our Diocese of Northampton in 1850.

The Mass will be live streamed from our Cathedral and can be viewed on our diocesan website.



UPCOMING DIARY DATES FROM ACROSS OUR DIOCESE

2019 DECEMBER

2nd

3rd

4th

5th

6th

7th

7th

10th

12th

14th

17th

2020 JANUARY

25th

31st – 2nd Feb

Please email communications@northamptondiocese.com to include dates from your local area

Rosary Link at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Great Billing
Contact Donna 079 40228227

Rosary Link at Holy Cross, Bedford

Advent Talk by Mgr Kevin McGinnell highlighting the importance of the year of the Word at Northampton Cathedral

Rosary Link at St Andrews, Cippenham

Rosary Link at St Thomas Aquinas, Bletchley

Diocesan Patronal Feast of Our Lady Immaculate at Northampton Cathedral

Visitation of the National Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima to St Phillip and St James, Bedford

BBC Radio Northampton Christmas Carol Service at Northampton Cathedral

Tree of Love Service at Northampton Cathedral, 7.00pm

Rosary Link at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, W'boro

Tree of Love Service at Northampton Cathedral, 7.00pm

Young Adults Brunch at the RE Centre in Luton, LU48JD

Contact fiona@nymo.org

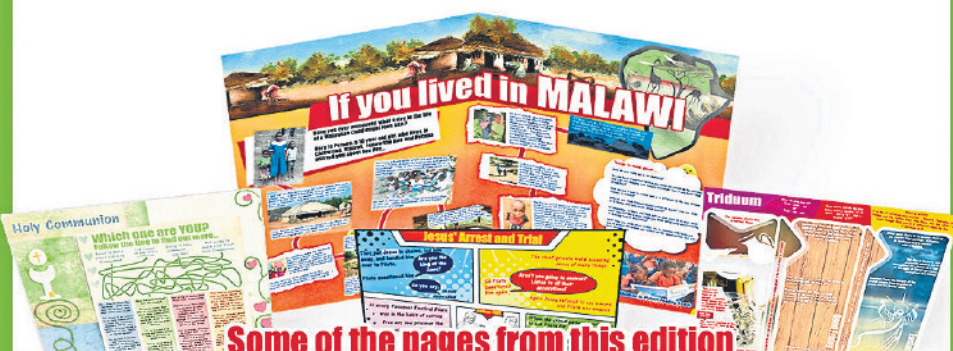
LUX residential weekend for young Catholics of secondary school age. Contact fiona@nymo.org

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Getting into print

Send news reports, photos and other material to the Diocesan Communications Manager and editor Neil Roseman email - communications@northamptondiocese.com. We promise to print your news as soon as we can find space for it. Material should be emailed whenever possible. Send photographs in jpg format, as separate attachments, and not embedded in Word documents. All items should reach us by the first Sunday of the month before publication.

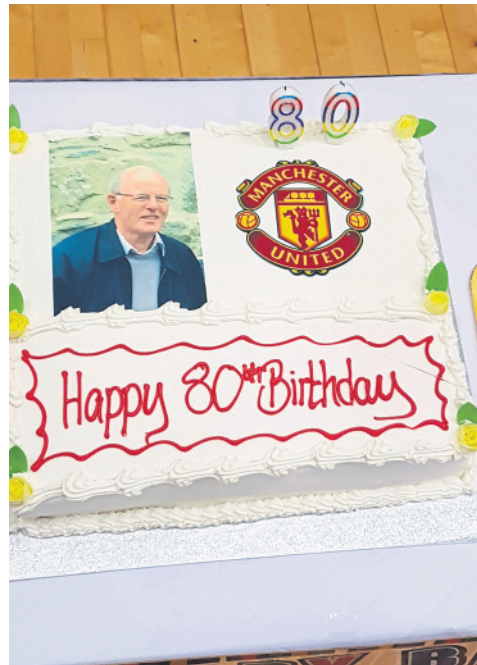
Parental permission must be sought before photographs of children are sent for publication. While we accept unsolicited feature articles, we reserve the right to edit the text or not to publish. Letters for publication must include a name and email address, which will be omitted on request.

The content of each issue is decided by the editor.

Views expressed in The Vine are not necessarily those of the editor or of the diocese. The publisher of The Vine deals with all advertising. To place an advert ring 01440-730399. For difficulties with distribution contact the editor.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY FR. WILLIE!



Fr. Willie Strain (retired PP of High Wycombe) recently celebrated his 80th Birthday in his home parish of Kilmacrenan, Co. Donegal, Ireland. A surprise party and cutting of the cake was held in the parish Church of St. Columba with refreshments afterwards in the local school hall. Fr. Willie retired to his home here in Kilmacrenan with his sister Maura and deceased sister Philomena. Many parishioners and friends gathered for the occasion. Fr. Willie is much loved, and his warm kind personality has been a light for us all. We wish him a very happy birthday and we are blessed to have him living among us.



CLERGY RETREAT

A number of priests and deacons from the Diocese gathered at Douai Abbey, near Newbury in Berkshire, for our annual retreat. This year it was led by Mgr Tony Rogers of the Diocese of East Anglia, currently parish priest of the coastal town of Aldeburgh. His talks covered a number of subjects, including the pressures of modern day ministry, the challenge of LGBTQ issues, and the questions posed by our secularist society. He also invited us to discuss the various issues, and honest opinions were shared. It was good to spend time with fellow priests and deacons in the tranquil setting of the abbey, and also to be fed, or even overfed somewhat! As ever, the last evening was given over to sharing some drinks and nibbles with some of the resident Benedictines. You will see from the photo that we celebrated Mass daily.



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Nahel's mother is heartbroken that he is needlessly blind. Cataract surgery to restore sight can take just 45 minutes, but many families in low-income countries cannot afford the £95 for surgery. So their children have no choice but to live in darkness. You can change that with a gift to CBM right now. For a limited time, a kind funding partner has pledged to unlock £4 for every £1 you give. **This means that if you can give £95 for one child's sight saving surgery today, five children could have their sight restored.**


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God bless you,

Rebecca

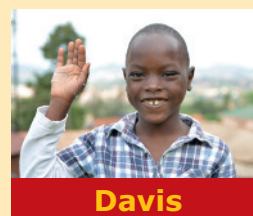
Rebecca Molyneux
Programme Manager, CBM UK

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Blessing



Davis



Shabana



Tawa

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ROME PILGRIMAGE FOR SCHOOL RE LEADERS

The RE Subject Leaders from the primary schools in our Diocese were welcomed to Rome by Fr Kevin McGinnell during the final weekend of October.

The pilgrimage involved many trips to significant churches across the city for example: San Giovanni in Laterano, the Pope's Cathedral; San Luigi ei Francesci, which houses Caravaggio's painting 'The Calling of St Matthew' and San Giorgio in Velabro-Newman's title church as cardinal. Here, Fr Kevin led us in a reflection,

praying that, with God's help, we are guided in our own missions. Fr Kevin was relentless in his commitment to making the most of every moment, ensuring we visited every church on his list - walking in excess of 75km across the weekend.

We celebrated Mass in honour of St John Henry Newman in the College Church of the Venerable English College; a site steeped in history, starting life as a pilgrim Hospice before becoming a seminary. Forty four former students have been martyred and above the altar in the church

hangs the Martyrs' Picture, painted in 1583 by Durante Alberti.

The group had the opportunity to visit the Vatican on several occasions, where we had the privilege of celebrating Mass at the tomb of Pope Saint John XXIII in St Peter's Basilica. Dominique Smith, from The Good Shepherd, Northampton, delivered the prayers on behalf of the school communities of several of our schools to the Pope's police force. We hope that these will have reached Pope Francis to include in his own prayers.

One of the highlights of the whole trip was attending the Angelus with Pope Francis on Sunday, at the end of the Pan-Amazonian Synod. He told us to listen to the voices of the poor and the young, asking us to be conscious of the needs of others before ourselves: a message we

will bring back to our own schools to share with the children, staff and wider community.

This pilgrimage has not only been a spiritually uplifting experience for the Primary RE Subject Leaders, but has also been an opportunity to develop better links across our schools, which, in turn, will further opportunities to share good practice across our Diocese.

We thank Fr Kevin for his determination in being an excellent guide when showing us the city where he studied and worked; Anne-Marie McIntosh, Primary RE Adviser, who masterminded the trip and the Sisters of Maestre Pie Filippini, who gave us a wonderful welcome to Rome and made our stay comfortable. We look forward to sharing all we have learned and experienced with the children, staff and communities in our schools.



A NEW UK CITIZEN FOR HIGH WYCOMBE



Congratulations to Fr Benedetto d'Autilia, who has qualified as a UK resident. Fr Benedetto originates from Sicily and will now hold dual citizenship. He was ordained a priest at St. Aidan's Church in Northampton in 2015. He recently moved to High Wycombe having been assistant priest in Bletchley, Milton Keynes.


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FIRESTARTERS' GATHERING

In 2017, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), Pope Francis told those gathered in Rome for the celebrations that the mission of CCR, as a 'current of grace', is to share the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with all those in the Church. He echoed this in June this year when he established CHARIS, a Public Association of the Church, established to serve CCR across the world. On that same occasion Fr

Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the papal household, said: "Legally, we are his children through baptism, but experientially we become his children thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit that is ongoing in our lives." It's this sense of experience that helps us understand what the Church means by the term, baptism in the Holy Spirit. As the word 'baptism' literally means, we are to be immersed in the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



On 5th October, leaders from CCR across the Diocese gathered in Flitwick to consider this commission that Pope Francis had given us. Each of us reflected on our own lives, and where we had encountered Jesus as a friend, and what difference that had made.

Building on that we spent much of the day in prayer for each other and for the diocese, that all of us - as the people of God in Northampton - would grow ever more open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the difference he wants to make in all our lives; to grow in confidence in the knowledge that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). The question that each of us was left with, as we seek to be obedient to Pope Francis, was how we might share this current of grace, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this Baptism in the Holy Spirit, in our parishes and local communities. Trusting in the Lord, it remains a work in progress, so we continue to pray in hope: Come O Holy Spirit; Jesus we trust in you.

GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

World Gifts are CAFOD's alternative charity gifts that transform lives and support communities to break free from poverty. These virtual gifts are great presents for friends, family, teachers – and most importantly,

make a very real difference to families around the world.

World Gifts have already helped over 5,000 children to attend literacy classes – opening doors to education and work and has brought 100,000 animals to families – helping to create countless small businesses.

This year, we have new gifts including 'Change a woman's world', 'Help for a Hardworking Hairdresser' and 'Sewing kit' to empower women to work and earn a living for themselves. Could you help transform a woman's world this Christmas?

Some parishes have chosen to buy

gifts collectively and St Augustine's parish in Milton Keynes is one of them. They have started a virtual village and parishioners who want to contribute to a larger gift simply make a donation to towards that gift. They have a wonderful display at the entrance to show what gifts they have bought so far.

Parish volunteer, Oliver Larkin, said, "Fr Francis Higgins (pictured left) got us off to a good start by asking our First Communicants to consider donating some of the money they received as gifts to share with the poorest in the world as part of the offertory on their special day - raising over £1,700! We are still at an early stage and we hope that our village will grow in the weeks and months ahead – especially with a Christmas push for virtual gifts."



ALL CHANGE IN VOCATIONS

Bishop Peter has thanked Canon Mark Floody for his eleven and a half years service as our Diocesan Vocations Director. Fr Andrew Richardson, Parish Priest of St John's and Holy Family in Luton, has been appointed in his place.

Vocations will not be new for Fr Andrew as he is already the President of the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocations. Canon Mark will remain a member of the vocations team. Frs Andy and Mark are pictured left alongside our seminarians, newly ordained and members of the vocations team.

LORD, SEND LABOURERS INTO THE HARVEST!

Jesus gave us a clear way to invoke God's blessing on the call to serve the Church when he told us to pray for it (Luke 10:2)!

Fr Michael Harrison, pictured right, led prayer for vocations with parishioners gathered at Our Lady of Walsingham, Corby, in September. They were one of 8 parishes to unite their Mass, Rosary and Exposition with others in the Diocese as we petition for this great cause. The Rosary Link unites such prayer around our Diocese on a quarterly basis.

Taking Our Lord at His word, The Rosary Link for Vocations was established in December 2004 at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, now our Diocesan Shrine, as a collaboration between Fr Damien Walne and a parishioner from Wellingborough.

The aim was simple: to pray for vocations by offering the Mass and the Rosary with Exposition. This has flourished over the last 15 years so that there has been a yearly average of 30 such gatherings around our Diocese in recent years, some attended by Bishop Peter who has been supportive and also encouraged by so many people across the Diocese who have been united

in this initiative.

As Father Andrew Behrens said at one such gathering at St Gregory's in Northampton, the effort we put in to praying for and nurturing vocations will be told in the results: the more effort and care, the greater the results. Whilst the cause for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life is a specific apostolate, Fr Andrew also reminded us all of our own unique and God given vocation in every walk of life; 'Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings...' Colossians 3:23

We believe that God has indeed heard our prayers and have been delighted that numbers of seminarians have steadily increased and maintained since 2004. We are blessed in this diocese to have many dedicated new priests including most recently Fr David Donaghue.

Fr Damien, our Chaplain, died in March 2015 and undoubtedly continues as an advocate in heaven. The Rosary for Vocations has continued and you are most welcome to join us for any of these local dates (some offering refreshments afterwards!).



- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Mon 2 Dec | Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Great Billing – 6pm (Refreshments) |
| Tues 3 Dec | Holy Cross, Bedford – 9.10am Morning prayer, 9.30am Mass, Rosary, Refreshments |
| Thurs 5 Dec | St Andrew's, Cippenham, 8.30am Exposition, 9am Rosary 9.30am Mass |
| Fri 6 Dec | St Francis of Assisi, Shefford – 9.30am
St Thomas Aquinas – Bletchley 8.30 am
Church of Divine Mercy, Slough – 8pm Rosary, 8.30pm Mass |
| Sat 14 Dec | Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, W'boro - 10.30am |
- For further information contact Donna 07940 228227

ROOTED IN CORBY

Parishioners of all ages in Corby joined together at one of their churches, St John Ogilvie, for an evening of adoration with live praise and worship. The initiative, called Rooted, was born out of a desire to pray particularly for the young people and youth ministry of Corby – knowing that it needs to be 'rooted in Christ' through prayer. It proved to be a blessed evening for all those involved and was supported by NYMO and the Lux worship band 'Three Tents'. One of the young people attending remarked at the end that during the time of prayer it really helped her to realise how many youth activities she's been involved in the last year, how many new friendships have been formed from them and how blessed she has felt because of it. It is hoped the initiative will become a more regular occurrence in 2020.



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AN OLD CHURCH WITH A VIBRANT COMMUNITY



Last month I was invited to visit Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Aston Le Walls. The priest in charge, Fr James Evans had invited me to see the oldest church in our Diocese. Attending Mass in this small village on the edge of our Diocese, it became clear that the building may be old, but the congregation are vibrant, welcoming and faith filled.

Sacred Heart has had continuous service of a priest for almost 300 years! The church of the Sacred Heart was opened in 1827 and the school room next door four years later. Bishop Amherst, the second Bishop of Northampton consecrated the church in 1859. The church had a facelift in 1982, when marble chippings were added to the exterior. The church was extended in 1991, and therefore closed for several months. At the same time, the gallery was extended to increase capacity and Mass was celebrated at the local Anglican Church. Since 1688, there have been 33 priests resident or connected to the parish.



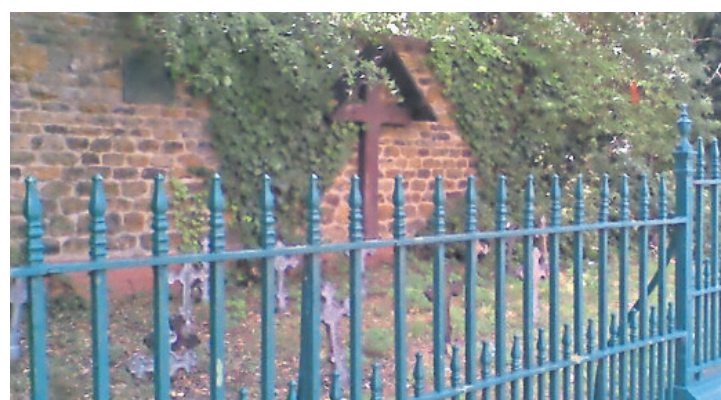
On the day I visited, it was Mission Sunday and Fr James, encouraged the parish to be church of mission, looking outward so that more people can know of the work and love of God. As a visitor, I was welcomed and introduced to many people and invited afterwards for coffee in the old school room. The servers were smartly dressed and clearly very proud to be serving Mass under the guidance of an excellent Master of Ceremonies in this most beautiful building. It was a joy to be part of a church community that smiled at visitors and clearly enjoyed the jokes of their pastor before, during and especially after Mass!



PEACE RESTORED

On a dampish Saturday morning on 12th October, Monsignor Tony McDermott rededicated the restored cemetery of some 80+ Sisters who had lived and taught many generations of pupils of the former convent school(demolished in 1975).

The restoration project was a joint effort by both the local borough council and the Notre Dame 'Old Girls' Association, the latter having worked tirelessly to fund raise and then organise both the event and a splendid reception which followed in the adjoining Friends(Quaker)Meeting House. Among those present at the service were David Laing, Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, the Mayor of Northampton, Cllr Choudary and three Sisters of Notre Dame, English Province. Between 80 to 100 former pupils, some with their spouses also attended.



Following the ceremony, Monsignor Tony, who has now retired as the chaplain to the local Association, was presented with a cheque in recognition of his long service and support. Both Mr Laing and others present were loud in their appreciation of the NDA Association in keeping alive the spirit of the school's dedication to the history of first-class education in Northampton.

JOE WALSH TOURS

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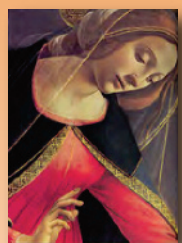
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Ministers of Religion



BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

This year our Diocesan safeguarding commission has been focussed on developing links with victims and survivors of abuse in our Church. It is hoped that these links will be a support for the victims as well as aiding the learning of our Diocese in the best ways of walking with those who have suffered at the hands of those in our communities.

For many years, Bishop Peter has met with victims and survivors both as Bishop and prior to his installation as Bishop. Recently, he has set more time aside in his diary to meet with those affected by abuse, either victims and survivors or their friends and supporters. A victim and survivors advisory group has been set up to guide the commission in their work.

The commission felt that it was important to accompany all those affected by abuse in prayer and therefore, a Mass with a focus on them was developed. It is hoped that the Mass will become an annual date in the diary and that many more members of our communities will come to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

After communion, each person present was invited to light a candle and place it at the foot of the cross as a symbol of Christ the Light of the World and Healer of All. Fr Francis Higgins celebrated the Mass and led those present in the prayer for healing:

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.
Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them
Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.
Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labours.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

*Pictured top: Candles are lit for Christ,
healer of the world.*

*Middle: Inside St. Mary's Catholic Church,
Woburn Sands.*

*Bottom: Bishop Peter with members of the
Diocesan Safeguarding Commission.*

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Say six times a day for nine days.

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

**Feast of the
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Conception of the
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**Monday 9th December 2019
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**Our Lady promised: "The faithful
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**St Anne, mother of Mary Immaculate,
pray for us**

CHILTERN CATENIAN'S SUPPORT NOAHS ARK HOSPICE

Every year the President of Chiltern Catenian Circle choses a charity for which he would like the brothers of the Circle to raise money. During his year as President, Odran Steed asked the brothers of Chiltern Circle to raise money for Noah's Ark Children's Hospice which was in the process of building a new children's hospice on a 7½ acre site in Barnet. This was to be called "The Ark" and was completed a few months ago.

As a result of the generosity of the brothers who supported raffles, made a charity visit to the theatre and gave individual donations, Odran and Margaret Steed were able to visit the newly opened Ark and present a cheque for £3,225 to the charity. The picture shows Odran and Margaret with Rebecca Lowe who is the Corporate and Community Fund Raiser for the hospice.

Noah's Ark Children's Hospice provides support for babies, children and young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions and their families in North and Central London and Hertsmere. It's a home-from-home for seriously unwell children, where they can be children and not just patients.



Their mission is to provide care and support for children and young people from birth who have a life-limiting or life-threatening condition. Their aim is to enable them to live full lives and to achieve their aspirations and to ensure that families are able to live life as fully as possible while their child is still alive and go on to face the future with hope after bereavement.



MONTH OF MISSION

Sr Mae (third from the left) and several parishioners of Holy Cross Church, Bedford prepare prayer scrolls as part of their contribution to the Extraordinary Month of Mission. Each prayer scroll contains the name of a First Holy Communion candidate and a request for prayer for all young people. In turn the young people have prayed for parishioners. The scrolls are to be blessed and distributed at Mass on the final Sunday of October.



**You can use both sets of clues to solve the puzzle: the solutions are the same.
So, if you want to try the CRYPTIC puzzle, for instance, but are unsure, use the QUICK clues to help you work out the solution.**

Similarly, if you try the QUICK clues, use the CRYPTIC clues to help you prove the solution

CRYPTIC Across

- 7 Descendant of Cain church find feeble at first (6)
- 8 Archbishop's grandmother is going after chap with drugs (6)
- 9 Caesar is distinguished put against our lot (8)
- 10 Take back-road from Arctic region and find something fishy (4)
- 11 Noah'sson'sclosingborder(4)
- 13 Sounds upset, look you, one in the Sanhedrin (8)
- 14 Hilly part of London obviously needs elevated access (8)
- 18 Cleric in East Anglia's first to work in Iceland (4)
- 20 Tribe place top Levites in confinement (4)
- 21 In favour of action: words are for a book (8)
- 23 Some signs of a familiar Australia comeback, with backing of support the key (6)
- 24 Does this stress a Mediterranean type? (6)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 Book to ban at university and church (6)
- 2 In Le Mans I almost get to grips with an ancient road rager (4)
- 3 It is a bit theatrical, this article on a Greek wate goddess (6)
- 4 Pursued, but remains virtuous, we're informed (6)
- 5 Get Durer to re-imagine the Danish queen (8)
- 6 Is able to name many lost after classic battle (6)
- 12 Ham, a main reason for David's headquarters being here (8)
- 15 Homes are individual with great cloakrooms (6)
- 16 Beast for the mountain, one Colombia-bound (6)
- 17 Almighty crater after road is all dug up (6)
- 19 Died with atmosphere to a degree upsetting for a

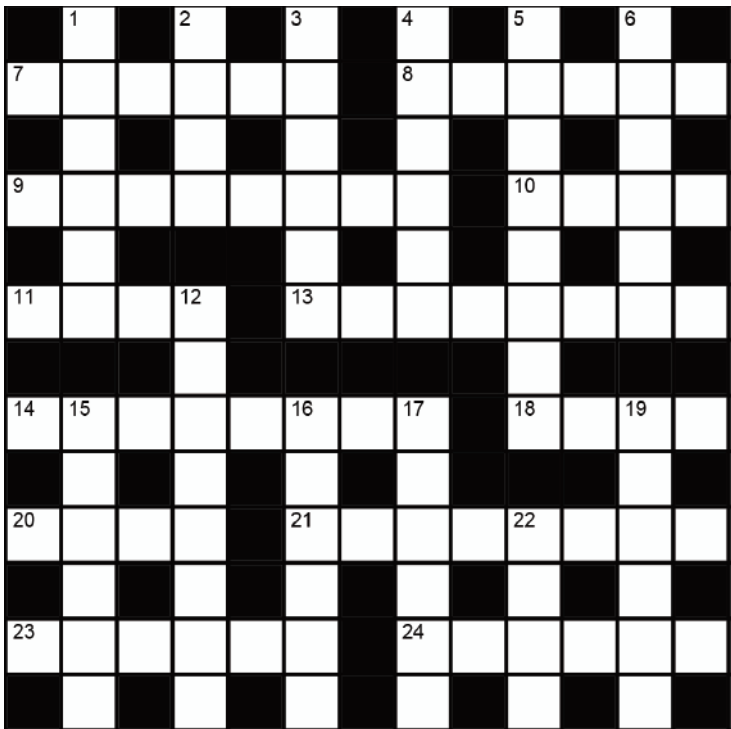
- scribe of Esdras (6) 22 Where David fought Goliath: healthy, but keeled over (4)

QUICK Across

- 7 Descendant of Cain, husband of Adah and Zillah (6)
- 8 Cardinal John -----: Archbishop of Westminster (1963-1975) (6)
- 9 ----- Caesar, first Roman Emperor (27 BC-14 AD) (8)
- 10 Edible scombroid fish (4)
- 11 Son of Noah, ancestor of both Jews and Arabs, and the language group still spoken (4)
- 13 One of the conservative aristocratic Jewish priesthood named possibly after Zadok (8)
- 14 London N6? (8)
- 18 Icelandic books of epic mythological tales and poetry (4)
- 20 Extended family, especially in Scotland (4)
- 21 OT book consisting of adages from various Israelite sages (8)
- 23 Imaginary belt illustrating the progress of heavenly bodies (6)
- 24 Print-type used for emphasis, literary titles, etc (6)

QUICK Down

- 1 Apocryphal book named after Jeremiah's secretary (6)
- 2 Crazy driver, named after the charioteering king of Israel in 2 Kings (4)
- 3 One of the 50 Nereids in Greek myth (6)
- 4 Hounded (6)
- 5 Hamlet'smother(8)
- 6 Great battle of the 2nd Punic War (216 BC), the scene of



- Rome's greatest defeat (6)
- 12 Where in Gilead Jacob saw God's angels before reuniting with Esau (8)
- 15 Homes with domes? (6)
- 16 Andean beast of burden (6)
- 17 One of the principal names by which God is designated in the Hebrew Scriptures (6)
- 19 One of the five who wrote down the visions of Esdras (6)
- 22 Valley where David fought Goliath (4)

SOLUTION

Across: 7 Lamech, 8 Heenan, 9 Augustus, 10 Tuna, 11 Shem, 13 Sadducee, 14 Highgate, 18 Edda, 20 Clan, 21 Proverbs, 23 Zodiac, 24 Italic. **Down:** 1 Baruch, 2 Jehu, 3 Thetis, 4 Chased, 5 Gertrude, 6 Cannae, 12 Mahanaim, 15 Igloos, 16 Alpaca, 17 Elohim, 19 Dabira, 22 Elah.



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Days 1-2. London to Füssen. We meet at our dedicated Departure Office at St Pancras, where we travel by Eurostar to Paris in Standard Premier Class. We continue to Stuttgart by First Class rail where we overnight. Day 2 sees us travel to the picture book village of Füssen on Germany's Romantic Road, where we stay for four nights.

Day 3. The Zugspitze Railway. Today we enjoy an enthralling journey on the Zugspitze Railway (Standard Class) which makes the journey to the summit of Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany. Trawling through pine trees and foothills, the delightful carriages offer breathtaking views of the Zugspitze mountain range. The final leg sees us take a cable car to the very top, where we have free time.

Days 4-5. Neuschwanstein and Hohenschwangau Castles. Our excursion today takes us to the glorious Neuschwanstein Castle. This fantastic fortress is a stunning sight, and is famously the inspiration for Disney's 'Sleeping Beauty' castle. We also visit the delightful honey coloured castle of Hohenschwangau in the pretty village of the same name. Day 5 is at leisure to enjoy the charms of the quintessentially Bavarian Füssen.

Day 6. The Oberammergau Passion Play. This morning, we travel to Oberammergau where we check into our hotel. Today is the undisputed highlight of our tour - the Oberammergau Passion Play, and our top tier tickets grant us some of the best seats in the house. This extraordinary once-a-decade event dates back to

the 17th century, and is run by the residents of the villages with a cast and crew of over 2,000. The production covers the Passion of Jesus Christ and is famous for its scale, history and quality. An enormous amount of work goes into each production, which a myriad of fantastic props, costumes and backdrops. The play is split into two three-hour halves, with a two-hour break in which we enjoy a special dinner.

Days 7-8. Nuremberg. Leaving Oberammergau this morning, we travel by rail (Standard Class) to Munich, and continue to Nuremberg, where overnight. On Day 8, we travel in First Class to Frankfurt before connecting with the Eurostar back to London via Paris.



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Scripture Notes

By Fr Jeremy Corley



ISAIAH'S HOPES FOR A SAVIOUR

As the days shorten and we prepare for our celebration of Christmas, the Church gives us the season of Advent to help us get ready for Christ's coming. Although living conditions have greatly changed since Our Lord was born 2000 years ago, our human situation is similar in many ways. Our world is marked by conflict and division, yet we long for all the nations of the world to unite peacefully. Isaiah expresses this hope, which we believe becomes possible with the coming of Christ.

On the First Sunday of Advent (1st December), we hear Isaiah's vision of the Jerusalem temple raised up on a high hill, with all the nations of the world gathering to worship the one true God. From Jerusalem, God's message of love and peace will spread out to the whole world. In this vision, the nations will convert their military weapons into farm implements and will abandon their preparations for war.

We believe that Christ's coming makes possible this transformation from conflict to peace, because he reconciles us

all. We look on the baby lying in the manger, who softens our hearts from violence and points us to our shared humanity that unites us all.

We hear Isaiah's prophecy of a new king on the Second Sunday of Advent (8th December). In today's world of complex problems, we need the wisdom of this descendant of David, this offshoot from the stump of Jesse.

On him will rest God's Spirit, bringing gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and fortitude, knowledge and fear of the Lord. Baby Jesus will grow up to offer us God's wisdom, lived out with fortitude. By dying and rising again, he will enable us to receive the Holy Spirit who will give us these gifts. During Advent we pray for the Holy Spirit to make us new.

The Isaiah reading that we hear on the Third Sunday of Advent (15th December) offers a wonderful vision of the desert blooming with wild flowers and God returning to his people. As a result, the eyes of the blind will be opened,

and the lame will leap like a deer.

In our world of today, many people long for health of mind or body. When Christ came to this earth, he cured the physically blind and the lame. He also healed those blinded from seeing God or from recognizing their neighbour. He restored spiritual strength to those incapacitated by sins committed or hurts received. Our Lord still has the power to heal us today in body, mind or spirit, if we turn to him.

Finally, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent (22nd December), we hear Isaiah's prophecy of a royal baby who will have the name of Emmanuel, "God with us." In the prophet's own time, the people of Jerusalem faced a crisis of leadership. Many longed for a new king to guide them wisely into the way of peace. Isaiah promised that a maiden would give birth to a child, who would be a sign of God's presence with his people. In its original context, the prophecy probably referred to King Hezekiah, who became a wise and strong king for the people of Jerusalem.

But in Matthew's Gospel, the fulfilment of the prophecy goes beyond human expectation, because it is a virgin, Mary herself, who will give birth to the Saviour. Her child will be more than a sign of God's presence with us—he will be God's own Son living on earth. The royal child to be born will be not merely a human like us. He will receive the name Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." Whereas God was with the people of Israel in the Jerusalem temple, he now comes among us in a small baby. As St John reminds us: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

In today's tumultuous world, we long for peace and wisdom, for healing and good leadership. Christ can give us these gifts through his coming among us. Ultimately, he can lead us from the weakness of our earthly lives to the glory of heaven. And so, our Advent prayer is simple: "Come Lord Jesus, come and save us."

[For background notes on the scripture readings see www.tarsus.ie]

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