



Queen of Thornton

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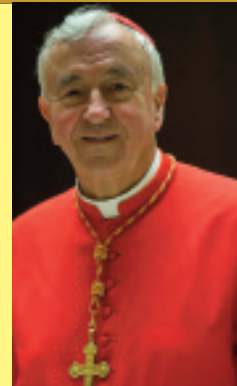
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Thank You, Sisters



Year of Consecrated Life

As part of Pope Francis's dedication of 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life, the Pastoral Area of St Alban held a special Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians, Luton, on the 21st April, to give thanks for the work of the religious sisters in the town. The celebrant was Fr Dariusz Bialowas, the parish priest, and was attended by many of the priests, deacons and parishioners from the local churches. After Fr Dariusz welcomed everyone to the celebration, each of the four religious congregations was invited in turn to come forward and place a lighted candle at the front of the altar: the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, The Sisters of St Clare, The Loreto Sisters and The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. These congregations have served the people of Luton and Dunstable throughout the years, journeying with the people in all aspects of Catholic life.

In his homily during the Mass, Mgr Kevin McGinnell, the dean of the Pastoral Area, reminded those present that by their baptism each of them was being asked by God to live the life He had chosen for them, and live it to the full. For some this would be the religious life. 'The parish needs to see in religious life the example of how we can serve God and others by being that image of God to the world.' Mgr Kevin hoped that the celebration would go some way towards thanking the religious for all they had given to the Pastoral Area and continue to give. We are all asked to share their difficulties and to assist them in whatever way possible.

In the photo, the sisters are (left to right): Sr Jackie Gleeson, Sr Kathleen Moore, Sr Antoinette McGrath, Sr Teresa Harrington, Sr Teresa Aluka and Sr Marie Hayes

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Send news reports, photos and other material to the editor, Fr. Paul Hardy, St. Edward's, Burchard Crescent, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes, MK5 6DX: vine01@btopenworld.com We promise to print your news as soon as we can find space for it.

Material should be e-mailed whenever possible. If this cannot be done for digital pictures they should be sent to us on disc. Send photographs in jpg format as separate attachments, and not embedded in Word documents. Urgent and dated items should reach us by the first Sunday of the month before publication.

A booklet of advice on writing news reports for The Vine is available on request.

Parental permission must be sought before photographs of minors 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 address, which will be omitted by request.

The content of each issue is decided by the editor, Fr. Paul Hardy, email: vine01@btopenworld.com

Views expressed in The Vine are not necessarily those of the editors or of the diocese. The publisher of The Vine, Bellcourt, deals with advertising. Those wishing to place advertisements should telephone 01440 730399. Difficulties with distribution should be referred to Mrs Busby.

Vatican



A Swiss Guard recruit takes his oath during the swearing-in ceremony for 32 new guards at the Vatican May 6. New recruits are sworn in every year May 6, commemorating the date in 1527 when 147 Swiss soldiers died defending the pope during an attack on Rome. (CNS/Paul Haring)

Rome



Pope Francis urged American seminarians to imitate the missionary zeal, Marian devotion, and witness of holiness of Blessed Junipero Serra (1713-84), the Franciscan friar who evangelized California.

The Pontiff, who described Serra as "one of the founding fathers of the United States," made his remarks on May 2 during a Mass at the Pontifical North American College, which was hosting a day of reflection on Serra's life in view of his impending canonization.

"What made Friar Junípero leave his home and country, his family, university chair and Franciscan community in Mallorca to go to the ends of the earth?" Pope Francis asked. "Certainly, it was the desire to proclaim the Gospel ad gentes [to the nations], that heartfelt impulse which seeks to share with those farthest away the gift of encountering Christ: a gift that he had first received and experienced in all its truth and beauty."

"But I wonder if today we are able to respond with the same generosity and courage to the call of God, who invites us to leave everything in order to worship him, to follow him, to rediscover him in the face of the poor, to proclaim him to those who have not known Christ and, therefore, have not experienced the embrace of his mercy," he continued. "Friar Junípero's witness calls upon us to get involved, personally, in the mission to the whole continent, which finds its roots in Evangelii Gaudium [the joy of the Gospel]."

Ordinariate



What is the Ordinariate?

The Ordinariate is now part of the life of the Catholic Church in our country and our diocese. Is it just a group of disaffected Anglicans who don't like women priests? – Or is there more to it than that? Can the Ordinariate be seen as something positive, making a definite contribution not just to the Catholic life, but also to the ecumenical life of the Church? – Is it a positive step forward in the ecumenical journey of the Churches?

Mgr. Keith Newton, who is head of the Ordinariate in England & Wales, will be speaking at St. Augustine's, Heelands, Milton Keynes on 6th June from 10.30 – 1 p.m. looking at Ecumenism and the Ordinariate.

All are invited to the meeting, hosted by the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission

Mothers Prayer

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Please bring your own packed lunch, drinks will be provided.

Contact :

Brenda daCosta 01582 607966.



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NEPAL EARTHQUAKE APPEAL



Millions of people had their lives torn apart by the devastating earthquakes in Nepal.

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In memory of Fr Frank

On Friday, March 13th, two days before the first anniversary of the death of their founding Parish Priest, Fr Frank Calnan SCJ, Bishop Peter joined the congregation of the Sacred Heart Parish, Northampton, to pray for Fr Frank and to dedicate the stained glass windows which have been installed in his memory. Members of Fr Frank's family made the journey from Derbyshire to attend the Mass and dedication, and Fr John Kelly, the Provincial of the Sacred Heart Fathers and Fr Hugh, also of the Congregation, concelebrated the Mass with the Bishop and priests from the Pastoral area. This was followed by a shared supper in the church hall.

The windows were paid for through parishioners' donations and a generous donation from the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom. They were designed, created and installed by Andrew Seddon, a stained glass artist from Bolton, who was tasked to incorporate the key elements of the Christian story whilst ensuring that they were in keeping with the murals within the church. As Bishop Peter noted, they show the important Christian beliefs: the Eucharist, the Resurrection and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, which Fr Frank's life was dedicated to celebrating.



Bishop reflects on vocation

In this year's Pastoral Letter for Good Shepherd Sunday Bishop Peter highlighted each vocation in the church. In the Year of Consecrated Life he began with Re-

ligious.

'At a time when people are searching for meaning in their lives, the religious life is a refreshing and vital witness to the

Gospel understanding of life. The religious sister or brother clearly demonstrates the call to all of us to be one with Jesus. Through a life of prayer and service, utterly dedicated to Christ, with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the religious is a shining witness, a lamp to give light and warmth to all of us who are God's children. With me, give thanks to God for the wonderful contribution of religious to the life and mission of the Diocese, and pray with me that women and men will respond to the call to the religious life to enrich our community of faith.

Secondly, I want to mention the vocation of marriage in the light of the forthcoming Synod on Marriage in Rome. As the new chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life, I have come to realise how little I understand about the vocation of Marriage. It is not only those who have just fallen in love who have a romantic notion of marriage! The Church's teaching on marriage being a life-long commitment is sometimes described as "romantic". I think that is a nice way of saying it is unreal. But the commitment of a man and a woman, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, is the stuff of stability for each other and for their children. The loving and faithful commitment of a husband and wife, a father and mother, provides stability for the nurturing and education of children. Our families give us identity and that all important sense of belonging. How much we need to appreciate and encourage the faithful love of husbands and wives, of parents and grandparents. We pray for you and for those preparing for the vocation of marriage.

Thirdly, I want to refer to those of us called to the single life who play such a fruitful and creative part in the life of the Church and who give a constant witness of faith in their working lives. May the Lord sustain you in your vocation.

Across the Diocese our permanent deacons carry out an invaluable ministry in our parishes. Currently seven men are in training for this ministry. I ask your prayers for them, especially for the three who are to be ordained this summer, and for those discerning a call to be a deacon. Finally, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, I turn to our pastors, the priests in our parishes who feed us with God's Word and Sacraments, and guide us in his ways. I want to rejoice with our priests who live out such a wonderfully fulfilling vocation, and thank them for their faithfulness and love. Please pray with me for all our priests, and keep up your prayers for vocations to the Priesthood. Your prayers are very fruitful. There are nine students in the seminary. Two of them, Pius Amoako and Benedetto D'Autilia, will be ordained priests this summer.

You know how much we need priests. So, as you pray, look out for and encourage possible candidates to think about the priesthood. Yes, the harvest is rich, but the labourers are few!

Bishop Peter ended his letter with a call to further prayer. 'Let us pray for vocations with thanks in our hearts for the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. This is the love the Father has lavished on us!'

Peter, Bishop of Northampton

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Knights serve Breakfast

Dunstable Knights of St. Columba hosted a Cheese and Wine Party on April 24th to raise funds for the charity Mary's Meals. Entertainment was provided by the music group Aspect, the lead singers being members of the choir at St. Mary's, and magician Dominic Redmond son of one of the Knights. The evening was a great success

with about 70 in attendance and raised £550.00 for the charity, thanks to sponsorship from local businesses.

Mary's Meals provides breakfasts for schoolchildren in many countries and is the Knights' National Action project for the year.



Queen of Thornton

Each year just before Easter, Thornton College stages a fun morning for its Nursery and Junior pupils. This time around, it had Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as its theme.

It was less a case of 'off with their heads!' and on with the top hats as headmistress Miss Williams transformed herself (very convincingly) into the Queen of Hearts to front a morning filled with arts and crafts and eye-spying around the grounds.

All the Nursery and Junior school children and their families were invited to the event. They enjoyed lots of making and doing in the sports hall all morn-

ing. Decorating heart-shaped biscuits was a tasty option and the children also got the chance to make their own Mad Hatter top hats from circles of foam – set at a jaunty angle they looked really dashing.

They also embarked on a hunt around the school's 25-acre grounds to find 22 wooden red hearts dangling from trees and hidden in the walled garden and around the church. Once they had ticked them all off they were entered into the tombola to win a chocolate Easter egg, handed out by deputy head of Junior school Mrs Wethey, looking as pretty as a picture as Alice.



An inspirational day

More than thirty people attended CAFOD's day of Reflection held on the 18 April at Sacred Heart, Leighton Buzzard. Those who attended were from parishes in Aylesbury, Bourne End, Bedford, Chessham, Flitwick, Luton, Princes Risborough, Winslow and even from outside the diocese - London. Some volunteers baked delicious cakes and there was time before the start of the day to meet and chat to other supporters, some of whom had never attended a CAFOD day before. The opening CAFOD reflection focused on how we feel towards the earth with the effect of Climate change and participants were asked what they can and are doing to help. We were reminded

of how "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good." Brian Purfield of the Mount Street Jesuit Centre, London, gave the input for the day which focused on the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis and on how St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, saw the world in his Canticle of the Creatures. Kath Beavil from Princes Risborough and several other supporters commented, "why have we not heard this before? It is so enlightening and it really makes sense now!" Theresa Short from Leighton Buzzard echoed the feedback from those who attended when she said, "It was a great and inspirational day. I am so glad I came".



Climate Coalition to lobby Parliament

You are invited to the Parliamentary Lobby for action on climate change – 17 June.

On Wednesday 17 June, CAFOD along with partner organisations in The Climate Coalition, would be organising a Parliamentary Lobby for action on climate change.

Everyone is invited to parliament for a day of action, solidarity and celebration of all the things we love. It's the first chance to talk with our newly-elected MPs after May's general election and before crucial international climate negotiations in December 2015.

Deborah Purfield (CAFOD diocesan manager – Northampton) encourages supporters to attend saying, "We are keen to have representatives from every constituency meeting their MPs so please think about coming along and encouraging others to come with you as well". You can register online via the CAFOD website or call 020 7337900.

Even if you cannot come on the day, you can still be involved by making bunting

and writing a message about what it is that you love and what you want to protect from climate change. This can then be taken to the event for you. For further information please go to the CAFOD website.

What's happening on the day: 12.00 noon:

Ecumenical Christian Service
Two ecumenical services to be held simultaneously at St Margaret's in Parliament Square and the Emmanuel Centre in Marsham Street.

1.00pm – 4.00pm: Meeting and lobbying MPs

4.30pm: Speak Up Finale

Rally outside Parliament with inspiring big name speakers. Deborah adds, "Come on Northampton Diocese, together we can show our new government how much we care that climate change is pushing people deeper into poverty. Do join us for a day to remember."

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Rabbits in Great Missenden



Following your article in the March edition of The Vine I would like to extend a big thank you, from the 120 who bought tickets and had a great time and not least the few who either came with their, non Church attending partners, wives and family, who expressed their thanks to us having seen your article in the Vine.

The evening was a success for our Church, Rise Theatre group, and our charity Helpachild having raised just over £490 for scholarships in Africa. This approximates to about 10 children for a year with books and a uniform.

Clive Bird



Widening Circle

The brothers of Chiltern Circle were delighted to welcome their new brother Mathew Nyakuhwa following his enrolment at their Ladies Night on 8th February 2015 at Chartridge Golf Club which has become their venue following the closure of the Bobsleigh Hotel. Mathew who holds dual citizenship (British Zimbabwean) was born in Zimbabwe in 1974 and came to England in 2001. He retrained as a social worker at Bucks New University and graduated with a BSc (Honours) in Professional Social Work in 2007. He is employed by Buckinghamshire County

Council Children's Services as a Practice Improvement Manager and specialises in safeguarding children and in improving their life opportunities.

He has been married for 12 years and lives in Aylesbury with his wife and their five year old son. He is a parishioner at Our Lady of Lourdes in Bedgrove and a Parent School Governor at St Joseph's Catholic Infant School in Aylesbury.

Mathew is photographed with his sponsors (from left to right) Michael Lowry and Steve Turner with President David Holden on his left hand side.

Catenians retreat to Cambridge



Province 14 of the Catenian Association. Spent Provincial President's Weekend at Queens' College, Cambridge in early April. Queens' College is one of the most beautiful of all the Cambridge colleges and is situated on The Backs along the river Cam, close to the his-

toric centre of Cambridge. Founded in 1446, the college was sponsored two years later by Henry VI's wife, Margaret of Anjou, and again in 1465 by Elizabeth Woodville, the wife of Edward IV. Their patronage is the reason for the plural designation, Queens'. The great martyr, Bishop of



Rochester, St. John Fisher, was President of the college from 1505 to 1508. The buildings of the Old and cloister courts have changed little since the 15th century but others have been added since. The myth that the Mathematical Bridge was de-

signed by Newton without nuts and bolts is denied by the college but the story just will not go away.

Kin Wang, President of Province 14, the Catenian Association."

Blazing Away Again

A second group of Confirmation candidates asks the questions

Although it was a slightly overcast Saturday in May, Confirmandi were once again fired up at 'Blaze 2015', this time from all across the Diocese. 145 young people of secondary-school age arrived at Thornton on coaches with their catechists for the chance to mix with other young people and explore a range of different ideas and topics in preparation for their Confirmation. The key-note speaker, Liam Lynch, certainly challenged the young people listening to

him – he asked them to think seriously about why they were being Confirmed. Was it simply something that their parents wanted or were they taking the Sacrament seriously for themselves? After the key note-talk, young people broke off into smaller groups to take part in numerous workshops exploring the Catholic Faith through a number of different lenses. Fr. Joseph from Princes Risborough led a workshop on prayer, prompting young peo-



ple can
to consider the reasons we pray, and the different approaches and attitudes that apply to our prayer lives before ultimately challenging young people to carve out time



in their routines to spend with God in prayer. Another of the groups learnt some language which led them to think about why the Holy Spirit is depicted with fire. Later young people had the opportunity to go receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before participating at a Mass presided at by Bishop Peter. Young people then had the chance to meet Bishop Peter and they had been preparing questions for him throughout the day. The questions were certainly wide-ranging: Confirmandi wanted to know about Bishop Peter's call

to the priesthood, his crosier and if he had ever been in a fight! Prudence Hill accompanied a group of Confirmandi on the day. "I came with a group from our Pastoral area including St Gregory's parish. I was very impressed with all the people involved and the organisation. I noticed how much more recollected the group was at the Mass compared to the morning. The Holy Spirit was working!"

Stephen Harris



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Congratulations

Cardinal Vincent Nichols issued a statement on the day after the General Election: "I send my congratulations to Prime Minister David Cameron on the result of yesterday's General Election. His new government faces many challenges, not least encouraging and sustaining economic growth and, at the same time, giving particular attention to the needs of the poorest people in our society today."

"The Catholic Church in England and Wales looks forward to working with the newly elected Parliament for the common good of all."

College closes

March 28th saw the final Mass in the college chapel marking the closure of the Endsleigh Mercy Centre, Hull. It was extremely well attended and among the congregation were 13 ex students who trained at Endsleigh from 1962 - 1965. It had been planned to mark the 50th an-

niversary of their graduation with a reunion possibly in June. However plans had to be brought forward at short notice. It was a beautiful service and quite an emotional experience, but one that everybody agreed could not have been missed.



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Busy Biggleswade

The Easter Vigil is the principal feast of the Catholic Church's year. It is the prime occasion for baptisms and receiving adults into the church. This year Ruth Khan was baptised and Mandy Thurland received into the church of St Peter's Biggleswade.

On the following Sundays of the Easter Season, three more people were baptised and a further one received into the church. The photograph shows Ruth Khan and Mandy Thurland with Fr Richard Moroney, their family and sponsors.

Marie and Martin Jnr Ngongo and Nancy were baptised on the 3rd Sunday of Easter and Janette Rafferty received into the church on the Fourth Sunday of Easter.



Poland comes to Slough

Holy Family church in Slough was packed for a Polish custom begun last year. Parish priest, Canon Kevin O'Driscoll blessed Easter baskets, holding food which was to be eaten at a traditional Easter Sunday breakfast.

The highly decorated eggs are a sign of resurrection and new life. The lamb decorated with a flag and cross recalls Christ the Paschal Lamb. The bread reminds us that Christ is the bread of life. Salt represents purification. Horseradish recalls Christ's bitter sacrifice and ham is symbolic of abundance and joy.



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Book Reviews

Deathbed conversions By Karen Edmisten. Our Sunday Visitor.



You only have to link the two words “death” and “faith” to have an instantly readable theme. Karen Edmisten, a convert, raises the question of the extraordinary intervention of grace in seemingly irreligious lives, in this slim volume. As she points out to those who think such a conversion is a cheat, they do not take into account the tragedy of a wasted life that those who experience a last-ditch conversion will experience. Along with their joy at encountering the love of Christ will be painful regret at the graces they have resisted along the way.

Edmisten's book is her gift to her own newfound faith: “I was anti-marriage, anti-child, pro-choice, know-it-all” she admits. From her own experience she can say with feeling that there is no such thing as a simple soul; “Every soul has its unique history and deserves its own story.” In her brief accounts of the lives here, thirteen in all, she makes the interesting observation that all of them, despite their wayward spiritual trajectory, had someone in their lives who was praying for their conversion; we must never give up on those we love.

Those featured include Kenneth Clark, the art historian, Alexis Carrel, a French scientist, film star John Wayne, Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, the gifted artist of Edwardian decadence. John Wayne was very moved by the death of John Ford, the film-maker of classic Westerns, who was a Catholic and who died “with a rosary in his hands.” Beardsley also died holding a rosary. Of Clark the author writes that “in the end he realised that our yearning for beauty is our yearning for God.” Not all aesthetes make this connection; at some stage in a life of public acclaim and private philandering, Clark was humble enough to be receptive to the grace offered him.

Inevitably, Edmisten can only provide a tantalising introduction to the lives she writes about, but her book could be the spur to those searching in the wrong places for the “beauty and truth” that Clark was to find in the Church.

John Paul II: Man of Prayer. By Clare Anderson and Joanna Bogle. Gracewing. £9.99



Sub-titled “The spiritual life of a saint” this book is not a conventional biography of the late Pope. Rather, it is an exploration of how he was formed and deepened in his spiritual life so as to be given the strength for his amazingly fruitful and apostolic life. The authors provide an insightful account of his early years in Wadowice, Poland, and the influence of his father, widowed when his son was only nine. He provided a loving and inspiring example of an unostentatious yet strong faith, teaching his son a prayer to the Holy Spirit to which the Pope was faithful all his life. It is clear that Karol Wojtyla's faith was caught as well as taught; he recalled in later life often seeing his father on his knees in prayer in the middle of the night.

As a young student in Cracow, the future Pope came under the influence of Jan Tyranowski, a devout layman in his parish, who pointed him towards the mystical writings of St John of the Cross. These writings were to be a formative influence on Wojtyla who later wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Spanish mystic. Tyranowski also gave him the writings of St Louis de Montfort, whose book “True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” was to deepen his understanding of the role of Our Lady and give him his papal motto: Totus Tuus. When he was called to the priesthood and lived in the secret seminary established by the Archbishop of Cracow, Adam Sapieha, the latter's resolute resistance to the Nazi invaders of Poland would have made its own impression; later the Pope kept a photo of Sapieha in his bedroom in the Vatican.

The authors describe the pastoral practice of the young priest, ordained in 1946; “He would spend an hour or more in confession with an individual if he felt this was needed.” When he became a bishop, concerned about the scarcity of priests in his diocese, he promised Our Lady that he would visit on foot all her pilgrimage sites within reach of Cracow “if she sent one seminarian each time”. She did.

The book also touches on the Pope's love for Poland, his robust rejection of Communism and some of his encyclicals. Inevitably, in a brief book, much is left out; nevertheless, it provides an excellent introduction to the spiritual life of a man who literally never stopped praying. Whether in a kayak or on an aeroplane he was perfectly recollected, with an ability to pray “at every time and place.”

Renewal. By Anne Hendershott & Christopher White. Encounter Books.

his book, subtitled “How a generation of faithful priests and bishops is revitalising the Catholic Church” is an important reminder than despite the obvious tribulations the Church is suffering in the secular West, the Holy Spirit has not abandoned her. The authors are encouraged by the election of Pope Francis, now building on the work of his two immediate predecessors, and believe that a renewal is taking place in the priesthood. They point to the steady increase in the number of priestly ordinations taking place throughout the world, including some flourishing dioceses in the US. Despite the attacks on the teachings of the Church, “it appears that the priesthood is once again becoming attractive to young men” they conclude.

The book makes the obvious point that faithfulness and orthodoxy will always contribute to increasing rates of ordination, while heterodoxy has the opposite effect. Dynamic and orthodox bishops, who make vocations to the priesthood and religious life central to their mission, are crucial. The authors quote the Catholic novelist Walker Percy here: “All that is needed is a bearer of the Good News who speaks it with such authenticity that it can penetrate the most exhausted hearing.” I recommend that this book be read with close attention by every bishop and diocesan office in the UK. For too long our hierarchy have accepted the Church's decline in this country, not aware of the vital role in renewal that they are called upon to play.



Write a carol

Woodfines Solicitors (who have offices in Bedford, Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Sandy) has launched a national carol competition. It is partnering with the King's Singers, King's College Cambridge, Classic FM and music publishers Edition Peters. The winning carols will be broadcast by Classic FM and published by Edition Peters.

Composers of all ages are invited to submit their carol in one of four categories, one of which gives the opportunity to write for the internationally acclaimed GRAMMY® award winning a cappella ensemble, The King's Singers.

The entries will be judged by Stephen Cleobury CBE (Director of Music, King's

College, Cambridge), John Rutter CBE (composer, conductor and record producer), Christopher Gabbitts (The King's Singers) and Richard Causton (composer and Fellow of King's). The closing date for entries is 31 August 2015 and the winning entrants will be notified by 1 October 2015.

The categories are as follows: A composition for un-auditioned community choir; A composition for a Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass (SATB) choir open to composers under 18A; composition for SATB choir composers - over 18A; composition for The King's Singers.

Entry is open to UK residents only. Woodfines Partner Chris Wingfield is delighted that Woodfines is once again in-

involved in this initiative:

“We first ran this competition in 2012. We had no idea what it would generate but were overwhelmed with the response, with over 300 original compositions being submitted. We are hopeful that it will generate

similar interest this year. The judging panel includes some of the most respected names in choral music and it is an honour to work alongside our partners and judges to deliver this exciting project.”

"Please, thank you and sorry"

"Please, thank you and sorry" are the three words that Pope Francis "would write on the door of every family home" as they are the key to living well and in peace both inside and outside the home. They are simple words, much easier to say than to put into practice, but "they contain great strength: the strength of protecting the home, even through a thousand difficulties and trials; instead, when they are lacking, cracks gradually open up that can even lead it to collapse."

Plaster saints?

LIKE MANY people, I always seem to be in a hurry, rushing and dashing from one task to another. So as to 'beat the clock', I try to squeeze in extra jobs at home before racing out of the front door.

But it's really not the best plan...

A few weeks ago I decided I just had enough time to do a little dusting.

To my dismay, I dropped my figure of Our Lady and one of her hands broke off.

Later the same day, I presented the damaged figure to my husband and suggested he might like to fix it. My son, who likes puns, said, 'You didn't *hand*-le her very carefully, did you Mum?'

SUPER-GLUE

Incredibly, it was only a couple of days later, when walking past the statue of a saint, that I accidentally knocked it off. It fell on the floor and the saint's head snapped off. Unfortunately, my three grown-up children saw me. My son – the wag – immediately piped up: 'You've really developed the clumsy gene at the moment, Mum! Super-glue will never go

out of business while you're around!'

And indeed, my two statues were duly glued back together and if you didn't look too hard and spot the cracks, they looked good as new.

During June, the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul is remembered.

These two titans of the church had a rather shaky start to their journey of faith in Christ, but by the love and grace of our Lord, they became inspirational leaders of the early Church. We, like Peter and Paul are imperfect and our 'cracks' are often evident in our faults and mistakes. But when we follow the path of Christ like Peter and Paul did – and try to become real not 'plaster' saints – then we too, can be sure of the unconditional love and mercy of God.

STRENGTH

And so the next time you see any figures of saints, remember that they, like us, were not always perfect throughout their lives. Our own 'cracks' may be more easy to spot, but the freely available love of God is always there as our help and our strength. It is the glue which holds each one of us together. Unfortunately though, there's no real cure for clumsiness...



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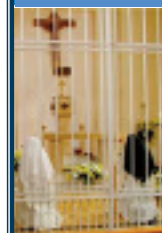
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now and forever.
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