



**High culture in Dunstable**

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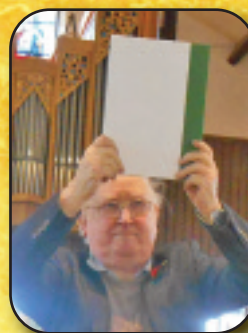
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## A Christmas message from Bishop Peter

In the last days of November, I joined some of our priests and deacons on an Advent Day of Prayer. The sky was blue and the sun shimmered on the frozen grass. It was a wonderful day!

The priest who led the day was from East Lancashire

where I was born. He said that, by the end of November, the wise men from the east would have set out on their travels. He wanted to reflect on their journey and see what lessons we could learn for our journey of faith.

Apparently, in those days, there would have been a number of people, like the wise men, studying the stars, and trying to find out what God's will was for them in their lives.

In their search, the wise men in the Gospel had to leave home and everything that gave them security. Rather than cheque cards, they carried what was valuable currency with them, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

When the star they were following finally stopped over the place where Jesus was born, they fell down on their knees and worshipped him.



They were given the gift of humble faith, and it changed their lives. They offered everything they had relied, the gold, the frankincense and the myrrh, and they returned home a different way.



What about you this Christmas and New Year? Will you be following the usual routine? Or, like the wise men, will you and I be touched deeply by Jesus among us? Perhaps we may not rely on the things of this world so much. Perhaps, in this New Year, our lives will go in a different and happier direction.

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year,

+ Peter  
Bishop of Northampton



Rt Rev Richard Moth, Bishop of the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton welcomed Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and former Bishop of Arundel & Brighton to Arundel Cathedral on Sunday 27 November to celebrate 60 years of priesthood.

Cardinal Cormac was ordained a priest on 28 October 1956 in Rome before returning to the Diocese of Portsmouth to work. In 1971 he was appointed Rector of the English College in Rome from where he was called to become Bishop of Arundel & Brighton on 17 November 1977. He was Bishop of Arundel & Brighton for

nearly 23 years. On 15 November 2000, he was installed as tenth Archbishop of Westminster and made a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II on 21 February 2001. He now lives a busy retirement.

Cardinal Cormac, during his homily, whilst looking back with great affection to his time in the Diocese said that "We should not look backwards, for we are an Advent people, looking forward with hope." He spoke of his continual trust in the Lord who is full of mercy and compassion. He reflected that the Lord was present both in the hopes and joys as well as the griefs and sorrows of life.

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## Belfast

Pope Francis will cross the border to visit Northern Ireland in August 2018, the deputy first minister has said.

Martin McGuinness told journalists: "I've been around a long time and I know how these things work."

He was speaking after Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Enda Kenny broke news of a papal visit to Ireland after meeting the

Pope at the Vatican.

A spokesman for First Minister Arlene Foster said if the Pope visited NI as a head of state, she would meet him.

However, at this stage, the Irish Catholic press office has refused to confirm the visit would take place.

## Jerusalem

The limestone slab where Jesus' body was said to have been laid out after his crucifixion was revealed last month for the first time since at least 1555 AD.

After removing the slab that encased the tomb, scientists were stunned to find the burial shelf intact and a second marble slab with a cross carved into its surface.

The tomb was opened and resealed within 60 hours during work being done at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Now, new images have emerged revealing the restoration work on the stones that cover the outside of the tomb as well as an 18th century shrine known as the 'Edicule'.

## Rome

Police in Rome are investigating the apparent vandalism of the famed Elephant and Obelisk statue designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the Piazza della Minerva near the Pantheon in Rome.

Rome cultural authorities said Monday that vandals overnight broke off the tip of the elephant's left tusk, which authorities recovered at the

foot of the statue. Police were checking video in the area to identify the vandals.

The statue of an elephant carrying an obelisk on its back was commissioned by Pope Alexander VII. It was placed in the square in front of the Santa Maria Sopra Minera Basilica in 1667.

## Washington

More than 1,500 interfaith leaders are calling on Republican members of Congress to reject President-elect Donald Trump's 'Cabinet of Bigotry' that includes Senator Jeff Sessions, Alt-Right leader Steve Bannon, and Lt Gen Michael T Flynn, and to appoint advisers who understand that forging a more tolerant, united and inclusive America is the best way forward.

Prominent Catholic, Protestant, Sikh, Muslim and Jewish faith leaders have endorsed a national petition stating that white supremacy has no place in the West Wing or any other rung of leadership.

"All of our faith traditions teach us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves," the letter states. "After a painful and contentious election, the future of our nation rests in our ability to unite and work collaboratively for the common good of all people. But we cannot coalesce around these ambassadors of hatred, bigotry and intimidation," the letter continues.

## Bootle



Ukip has elected a pro-life Catholic as its new leader. Paul Nuttall, MEP for North West England, gained 62.6 per cent of party members' votes. Nuttall, 39, is a practising Catholic. Last year he told the Tablet: "On moral issues, we, more than any other political party, are more in line with

Catholic thought. Whether it's on gender-choice abortion or same-sex marriage, we are absolutely 100 per cent behind the Catholic Church." Nuttall is a former deputy leader of the party, which he joined in 2004. He was elected as an MEP in 2009.

After his election, he said he would press the Government for a "real Brexit", and said he would challenge Labour for working-class support. "I want to replace the Labour Party and make UKIP the patriotic voice of

working people," he told the BBC, adding that the Labour leadership was part of "a North London Islington set".

Earlier this year, Nuttall wrote to the Catholic Herald to express his "shock" at the Royal College of Midwives' support for scrapping all abortion restrictions. In 2010, he spoke at the AGM of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, at which he said it was frightening that a child is safer on the streets than in its mother's womb.

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(vine01@btopenworld.com). We promise to print your news as soon as we can find space for it. Material should be emailed 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.

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# Fish and chips ecumenism

## *A new way of being friends*

Ecumenism is alive and well in our Mid-Beds. deanery. Bishop Peter, Fr. John Danford and Deacon Tony Falcon hosted a fish & chip supper at the end of October for 30 people in Leighton Buzzard in order to hear about all that is going on among the churches there. After the supper the both the Bishop and Mrs Anita Nancollas, who is the Bedfordshire County Ecumenical Officer spoke about ecumenism and its place in church life, and then people were invited to share their own experiences about what was happening in the area. A rich tapestry was unveiled, of clergy meet-

ings, joint walks of witness, ecumenical fêtes, joint newspapers and study sessions, carol services, holiday clubs, and all sorts of shared social actions. It was an opportunity to share ideas and opportunities.

The event was supported by our Diocesan Ecumenical Commission in order to encourage parishes in their working with other churches. The Commission hopes that other areas will take up the idea, which replaces the larger diocesan – wide gatherings that took place until fairly recently.



# Italian fare in Dunstable

The Magna Graecia Flute Choir and Friends gave a concert of Italian Song and Symphony in St. Mary's Catholic Church, Dunstable on Friday. 29th July. In his contribution to the programme Andrew Selous, M.P. said "I am sure the choir will richly reward those lucky enough to hear them." Well they certainly did! The good crowd in the church gave a standing and prolonged ovation at the end of the concert. The mixed programme included religious and operatic pieces. These latter were superbly performed by the soloists, soprano Maria Cucinotta, alto Helen Putterill and tenor Amerigo Marino a professional opera singer who wowed the audience with Puccini's 'Nessun Dorma' and his part in Franck's Panis Angelicus. The 12 members of the Flute Choir, ranging from piccolo to bass flute, gave an excellent performance under the baton of Sebastiana Valentino with the highlight being Rossini's William Tell Overture.

The event was organised by the Dunstable Council of the Knights of St. Columba, with Patrick McDonald and Grand Knight Justin Redmond playing a major part. The special guests were the Mayor, Councillor Peter Hollick and Mayoress Ann Sparrow. Several local businesses sponsored the event and Lom-

bardo's, an Italian food shop, provided food during the day. The money raised by the event goes to two charities, St. Francis Childre's Home in Milton Keynes and the Knoghts' project the Lindalva Centre in Cambodia which provides a safe and loving environment for children to learn in and enjoy.

Parishioners unable to attend heard the group when they sang the morning mass in Latin and Franck's Panis Angelicus and Mozart's Ave Verum.

The choir comes from Calabria in southern Italy and is composed of diploma students and young professionals. The link with this area is Helen Putterill the alto, who is a native of Dunstable and recalls being a pupil at Linden House Nursery. opposite the church, when the new St. Mary's church was being built in 1963. She has lived in Italy for 30 years but returns to Kensworth a nearby village where her mother lives.



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**Picture above: Tony Bishop with Mgr McGinnell**  
**Below: Mr Bishop with the headteachers of the Bedford schools**

## New Executive Principal for Bedford

The St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust were delighted to welcome their new Executive Principal, Tony Bishop, at the start of this academic year.

Mr Bishop recently moved to Bedford from Sheffield, where he worked as a Headteacher of a Catholic secondary school. On Tuesday 11 October, Mr Bishop was welcomed into the community of schools at his Induction Mass, celebrated by Mgr Kevin McGinnell. Families, students and staff gathered to celebrate the occasion at St Gregory's, alongside Directors of the Academies Trust and representatives from the Local Authority.

Mr Bishop said: "I am very happy to be here and working for the students of our Catholic schools in Bedford. The education our schools provide is excellent and I am looking forward to working with staff."



**The Vine wishes all its readers a very happy Christmas.**



# Advent Pastoral Letter

Bishop Peter began his pastoral letter for Advent with a reminder that it is a very busy time. 'Is there any room for God when there is so much to do?' 'I hope there are moments for you to be open to God's loving presence with you now. Our God is the God of tenderness and compassion, the God of mercy who continues to embrace us in his merciful love.

He then turned to remind us of the ways in which Jesus is present. 'The busyness of this time of the year must not distract us from Jesus being with us now. How many of us are open to his presence in our neighbours and in the people around us at Mass? How many of us have heard him speak to us in the readings of the Mass? How many of us will be open to his presence when the bread and wine are consecrated and we receive his body and blood in Holy Communion? He is present too in the priest as he celebrates the Mass.

Then the Bishop touched on some of the themes emerging from our national political life. 'When we leave Mass, do we see Christ in those who are very different from us, the stranger and the refugee? Do we see Christ in the immigrant groups, who contribute so much to our communities? Are we alert to the possibility that people living near us may be trafficked and enslaved? The psalmist writes, 'It is the Lord who protects the stranger' Perhaps that must be done by you and by me. Above all, we must

guard against harbouring any prejudice in our hearts.

Prepare a way for the Lord for yourself in prayer and in the celebration of the sacrament of Penance. Prepare a way for the Lord for others by your patience and your kindness. Then you will see Christ in others, and they will see Christ in you. I am really privileged travelling around the diocese and seeing the goodness in you and the way in which Jesus works in you. I am really privileged in gaining some idea of the impact of the Year of Mercy on our lives, especially on the lives of those of us who think that we are the world's worst. The Lord is with you.

The gift that each of us can prepare for this Christmas is a gift based on God's mercy, the gift of peace in our souls, and the gift of the hope of that peace for others. It is the gift of Christ himself, who has come, who will come again, and is with us now.

With the uncertainties and the fears that can surround us, our security and our happiness is not in everything being bigger and better this Christmas, but in our coming to know Jesus as we prepare for his coming again, and as we prepare to celebrate his birth. May the almighty and merciful God sanctify you by the radiance of Christ's coming and enrich you with his blessing.

**+ Peter  
Bishop of  
Northampton**



## Luton school walks for charity



On Friday 21st October students and staff at Cardinal Newman Catholic School put on their sturdiest walking boots for their long-standing tradition of a 5km sponsored walk around the beautiful countryside of Warden Hills in Luton. Cloudy skies did little to dampen the spirits of the 1450 students and staff who were raising money for charities nominated by students themselves. Every year students donate a large portion of almost six thousand pounds of fundraising to a main charity as well as continually supporting two primary schools in Africa with supplies, buildings and furniture. In 2016 students decided to support The Bedford-

shire and Northamptonshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre. Newman Sixth were also walking to raise money for their trip to Cambodia next year to volunteer and help children.

Headteacher, Mr Joe Richardson, who led the walk said, 'It is a great privilege to see the continued generosity, kindness and community spirit shown by our students towards those much less fortunate than themselves. To see 1450 students walking together is quite a sight, especially one inspired by a call to acts of generosity in this Year of Mercy.'



## 'I never knew Jesus would be so cool'

All students in years 6, 7 and 8 from St Michael's, High Wycombe and St Joseph's, Gerrards Cross, visited a dynamic RE resource called 'GSUS live' to support schools in their RE curriculum. 'GSUS live' is a mobile classroom with a fully functioning multimedia computer suite and provides a stimulating environment for students to explore themes of Forgiveness, Fear and Rejection through reflecting on Jesus' life and teaching. These themes were introduced by following a young person's journey through stimulation of an on-line chat, videos and music. The sessions were run by Wycombe Youth for Christ and local youth leaders. Students

were delighted as the screens appeared from inside their desks and enjoyed watching videos, dancing along to the music (staff included!) and answering the questions. Some exclaimed, "I never knew Jesus could be so cool!" and "that was EPIC!"

We strongly recommend a visit if it appears in your area.

For more information about other events going on at St Michael's, please visit [www.stmichaels.bucks.sch.uk/chaplaincy](http://www.stmichaels.bucks.sch.uk/chaplaincy)



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# Make a New Year's resolution worth keeping!

Have you made your New Year's resolutions yet? Will they be the same as last year - more exercise, less television etc? Why not make volunteering for CAFOD your New Year's resolution? Guaranteed calorie-free and not injurious to your health. In fact, very beneficial as you will be able to deepen your faith, take action and stand in solidarity alongside our brothers and sisters all over the world who are affected by injustice and poverty. By sharing your time, gifts and talents to help others in their hardship you will have a life giving and joyful experience. You may also gain skills and experience when you do activities that are new to you...great for the CV!

There is something for a variety of lifestyles as volunteering can be done :



- In Schools : We need volunteers to go into our Catholic schools to inspire students to act on their sense of justice. You don't have to be a teacher to do this role, only a passion for CAFOD's work and an ability to communicate well with children and young people. All necessary training and resources will be provided.

- In Parishes : we need people to help raise awareness and promote the two Fast Days a year. Even if your parish already has a CAFOD volunteer, we would love more people to be involved so that people

feel supported and can share the work. If you enjoy public speaking, you could give the fast day talk at masses to thank the parish and explain how they have helped in CAFOD's work. If you enjoy organising events and can encourage others, we would love to hear from you too.

- From home : As one of CAFOD's main role is campaigning, we need people to write to their MP three times a year on issues of importance for which we will provide all the information needed. If you have

only 5mins, then signing an online petition and encouraging others to do likewise will be great.

For those using social media, we need your help to share our news and events with your friends and family.

Volunteers are vital to the work of CAFOD and help us to build a world free from poverty and injustice. Pope Benedict puts it very eloquently :

"The activity of Catholic volunteers bears witness to 'the logic of giving', the giving of one's time, abilities, knowledge, and professionalism; in a word, attention to others without expecting a return in this world. By doing so, not only do people do good for others, but they also discover profound happiness, according to the logic of Christ Who gave all of Himself".

So why not make volunteering for CAFOD a New Year's resolution that you can keep? We provide all necessary training, support and resources for the various roles. If you would like to discuss how you can be involved or find out more, please get in touch on 01844 274 723 or [northampton@cafod.org.uk](mailto:northampton@cafod.org.uk) Do what you love and do it for CAFOD! Thank you all for your support in 2016 and wishing you a very Joyful and Blessed New year!

**Deborah Purfield –  
CAFOD Coordinator -  
Northampton Diocese**

## CAFOD Memorial Mass

CAFOD is immensely blessed by the generosity and dedication of our supporters. Sadly, many of our supporters over the years have now passed away. Our Memorial Masses are one way we like to pay tribute to them and mark our appreciation for their years of generosity. It provides an opportunity for volunteers, supporters, parishioners and members

of the wider public to come together and celebrate their lives.

The 2016 Memorial mass for the Northampton Dioceses was held at Sacred Heart, Leighton Buzzard on 6 November and organised by the J&P group.

Fr John Danford invited Bob Garrard



(CAFOD parish contact) to give an introduction about the Memorial Mass. The Book of Remembrance for the Northampton Diocese, in which were names of deceased volunteers and supporters, was then taken up by Jim whose wife Rhona passed away earlier in the year. The book was placed on the altar throughout Mass.

Having the mass at Sacred Heart was particularly poignant as Fr Stephen Reith, a former Parish Priest, is remembered through the CAFOD Candlelight Fund: Throughout his life Fr Steve was passionate about Justice and Peace, equality, helping the poor and less for

tunate, and the work of CAFOD was always very close to his heart. In 1987, he was appointed Parish Priest of Sacred Heart, Leighton Buzzard, where he remained until his retirement in 2002.

Debbie Purfield, CAFOD coordinator for the Northampton Diocese said, "The mass was a wonderful opportunity to pay tribute to the brilliant people who have been at the heart of our work: inspirational volunteers and supporters who found time to offer love, practical support and prayers to the world's most vulnerable communities. They are such an inspiration and we are better because of them."



# Do you love me?



A morning of reflection was held at The RE centre and Holy Ghost church Luton in November to close the year of Mercy by introducing the book *Do You Love Me* (prepared by a working party of the Bishops of England and Wales Spirituality Committee). The morning that was organised by the Diocesan Spirituality Group was well received by the 60 people who attended from around the diocese for this special morning in November.

We were presented with a thought provoking and interesting start from Brian Purfield. Brian who is responsible for adult formation at the Jesuit Centre at Mount Street in London set the scene for the morning. He offered an enlightening talk with some thought provoking slides that reminded us of the ways that God's mercy is manifested in our lives and encouraged us to be open to this occurring in ordinary and in unexpected ways. Reminding us that we

find God in all things, he introduced the *Do You Love Me* book and encouraged us to think of it as a means of developing our relationship with God.

Following a prayer of stillness we were then invited to a time with Prayer Stations in the church based on chapters of *Do You Love Me*? There was also an opportunity to experience adoration in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. The atmosphere was very prayerful and the different stations enabled us to spend time really being spoken to in both our hearts and minds. There was plenty of time to experience all that was on offer before gathering again for Midday prayer. Bishop Peter blessed and distributed copies of the book.

The experience was a very positive one but do not be concerned if you were not with us in November because a similar day is planned to be held in the north of the diocese during lent on 11 March.



## Obituary

### Gethin Abraham-Williams

Gethin Abraham-Williams died peacefully in the early hours of November 27. Gethin was Executive Secretary and Ecumenical Officer to the Milton Keynes Christian Council in its earliest days, which was the precursor to the Moderator. He considered that what he was doing in MK was the most exciting job in local ecumenism in Britain. He refashioned the Milton Keynes Christian Council including the establishment of the Presidency and the Assembly as we have it today, and he was closely involved in the development of the Church of Christ the Cornerstone.

When Gethin came to Milton Keynes in 1981, he brought a range of skills which were ideal for the needs of the churches engaging in the enterprise of ecumenism.

A man who made a wide range of friends easily, and quickly sought out the key individuals in churches and the developing City, he wore his very considerable scholarship lightly. He seemed to have contacts in all the places where the development of the collaborative life of the churches was taking shape. His collaborative style of leadership enabled a wide range of individuals to come together to drive forward the Milton Keynes project with a sense of possibility and excitement, he saw the potential in others and nurtured it.

He was a skilled worship leader and preacher, welcomed and loved in many of the churches in the city. His editorship of 'Christian Keynes' brought news of local church developments to many,



in a simple and informative style. Many of the distinctive features of Milton Keynes Christianity had their origin in Gethin's study, usually in collaboration with others who shared his vision and enthusiasm. The Mission Partnership, formerly the Christian Council, the Leipzig Link, the Christian Foundation and the building of the Church of Christ the Cornerstone were close to his heart, together with Interfaith issues.

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LISTEN TO THE WORD

King and saviour of all

One of the best loved scenes in the Christmas story is the visit of the wise men to worship the infant Jesus. Only St Matthew's Gospel describes this scene, which is often depicted in art under the title "Adoration of the Magi," and shown on many Christmas cards.

Matthew uses this scene to indicate something about the identity of the Christ-child. He is the promised messianic king of Israel, born in David's home village of Bethlehem. At the same time, he is the Saviour of all nations, to be acknowledged by people from all over the world.

This identification of Jesus already appears in the very first verse of Matthew's Gospel, which introduces Jesus as both "son of David" and "son of Abraham." Both these titles are important in Matthew's presentation of the Christmas story. As a descendant of David, Jesus is Israel's king, fulfilling the long-cherished Jewish hope for a messiah. Hence the adult Jesus will first send his disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is only after many of his own people have ignored his message that the gospel be proclaimed to the rest of the world.

Whereas King Herod the Great had lobbied the Roman senate to be awarded the title "King of the Jews," Jesus is the true Jewish king, without needing any imperial approval. Ironically, the Romans later recognize Jesus' identity, because they post his title on the cross: "King of the Jews." Yet Jesus will redefine the meaning of king-

ship. For him it does not mean sitting in a luxurious palace, commanding flunkies to do his bidding. Instead he sees his role as a shepherd. As "King of the Jews" he will take care of his people, even at the expense of his own life. As good shepherd, he will lay down his life for his sheep.

In the first chapter of his gospel, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the legal (though not biological) son of St Joseph, who himself is also called "son of David." In fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, this child is born of the Davidic line, and he will be called Emmanuel, meaning "God with us."

When the wise men or magi come from the east, they are looking for the newborn king of the Jews. They have seen something in the night sky which they interpret as marking the birth of a new king. In a sense, what they see fulfils Balaam's prophecy that a star will arise out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17). Yet the royal child is not found in Herod's court, but in the small village of Bethlehem.

Later Matthew makes a play on the name of Jesus' adopted hometown of Nazareth. The name sounds like the Hebrew word "netzer," meaning branch or offshoot, which was one of the titles of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1). Matthew finds it appropriate that the messianic offshoot of the Davidic dynasty should live in a town named "offshoot."

Besides being son of David, Jesus is also "son of Abraham." He is the fulfilment of

the divine promise to Abraham that through his offspring all the nations of the world will be blessed. Much later, after the resurrection Jesus tells his followers to go and make disciples of all the nations. His salvation is meant for people of every nation in the world.

In fact, the wise men or magi symbolize all the nations of the world, because as Gentiles they come to adore Christ even when he is a baby. These men who have travelled from distant lands to worship Christ foreshadow people of every land who will come to worship our Saviour.

Yet in his infancy, the newborn Christ is taken away from the land of Israel into Egypt. Together with Mary and Joseph, he himself shares the fate of a refugee, like millions of others all over the world, before and since. We could say that like Abraham, he shares the experience of being a pilgrim, called to venture into new territory in obedience to God's call.

At Christmas we recognize Christ as our King and Saviour. May we be guided by his teaching, so that he may rule over our lives.

Scriptural Notes by Father Jeremy Corley

[For weekly notes on the Sunday scripture readings see: [www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie) ]

Book Review

Chesterton and the Jews

Some might argue that this subject has been done to death. As someone writing from outside Chesterton scholarship but who is aware of his ever-growing reputation for both sanity and sanctity, I would disagree – especially when the research has been covered in such a meticulous way as in this book. Indeed, my only criticism of Ann Farmer's detailed exploration of GKC's views on the subject is that she has mastered so much material it is sometimes hard to retrieve the voice and opinions of Chesterton from among the copious and clamorous voices of his peers.

Subtitled "Friend, Critic, Defender", Farmer develops her case on these three aspects of GKC's life and writings. Behind her book is her conviction that "there is a moral imperative to ask whether Chesterton was anti-Semitic or a candidate for sainthood; a prophet or a pariah." This requires seeing him through the appropriate "historical, sociological and political contexts". It is a large subject to encompass, not least because GCK wrote so prolifically, including Jewish characters in his fiction as well as his journalism, but also because the whole of British intellectual and literary society, - before the War and subsequent horrific rev-

elations of the Holocaust - felt quite at ease in accepting Jewish stereotypes and writing about "the Jewish problem."

Farmer includes in her detailed survey a discussion of the writings of George Bernard Shaw, H G Wells, Hilaire Belloc and others, to show in what ways their writings on the Jews differed from those of GKC. He would have been shocked to be considered an anti-Semite (which he equated racism and toleration of violence against Jews) for writing about Jewish "plutocrats" and their international financial power. As Farmer comments, he "liked all the Jews he met but disliked the "financial Jews" he seldom met."

GKC was a committed Zionist (not a popular position among many Jews of his day) because he feared that "in the absence of a homeland to absorb their formidable energies and talents, Jews would direct their loyalties to each other." In other words, could they be trust as British patriots or were they innately "foreign" in their loyalties? Farmer believes there is a case to answer here: GKC did appear to blame Jews "for the worst aspects of capitalism and political chicanery." Farmer also asks why the reputations of

Shaw and Wells haven't suffered from accusations of anti-Semitism, despite their often questionable views on the "Jewish problem", as has Chesterton's. I suspect this might be because they have fallen out of fashion and no-one has ever pushed them forward as candidates for holiness. We rightly demand more from saints – and GKC, for all his human flaws, was a man of great soul and magnanimity. Dying in 1936, he was already aware of Nazi hostility towards the Jews and spoke out passionately in their defence. Farmer doesn't write as an apologist for GKC, but as an honest, thoroughgoing and critical admirer; hers is a book to be recommended.

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The Vine January 2017



# Billing's day of prayer

A small team of parishioners from Billing and the Sacred Heart parish, Northampton got together to prepare a day of prayer to conclude the year of mercy on the 19 November. Felicity, a CAFOD volunteer writes :

We were totally unsure about the number of people who might attend. Lorraine our parish administrator produced a colourful poster and sent it to parishes within our pastoral area. Emails were sent to remind friends and neighbours of our intending Day of prayer and we were blessed with an almost "full house" for this event with 32 participants."

The day began with holy mass for our intentions. After refreshments there were two short talks relating to "How has the year of mercy affected us" and the Pope's encyclical - Laudato Si'. We used CAFOD's study guide for the latter which was so helpful as it invited us to reflect on some of the key themes of Laudato Si' and to explore ways of taking action. The 4 key themes were :

1. Creation is a caress of God. Scripture reveals that God created the world and it is good



2. Climate is a common good. We each have a particular responsibility to protect creation.  
3. A universal family. We are on an earthly pilgrimage together.  
4. We were made for love. We are called to respond in solidarity with our global family and all of creation.

## Discussing Laudato Si'

Each group took one of these themes, discussed and summarised it onto flip chart paper, then presented their aspect to the rest of the company. This worked very well and produced a lively discussion. We stopped for an enjoyable shared lunch and then proceeded to the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour for adoration, prayers and hymns. This enabled us all to meditate and reflect on what we had heard and discussed in the morning. After benediction and a special

blessing from Fr Jerry, I concluded with a prayer from Pope Francis:

"In the silence of the cross, the uproar of weapons cease and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue and peace are spoken. I ask the Lord that we Christians and our brothers and sisters of other religions and every man and women of good will, cry out forcefully; violence and wars are never the way to peace."  
The feeling of the day was very uplifting and refreshing and all felt they benefitted from it."

Well done to Felicity, Fr Jerry and all who organised the day and those who attended it! If you would like to hold such sessions in your parish, please get in touch or visit our website for more prayer resources.

# Bedford Catenians mark 700



On Wednesday 19th October 2016, 62 Brothers and their wives, partners and guests together with 22 visitors from eight different Circles met at the Swan Hotel Bedford, to celebrate the 700th meeting of the Catenians Bedford Circle, 177.

Among the guests and visitors at the meeting were the Provin-

cial President Denis Murphy and the Director of Province 14 John Davis KC\*HS. Bro. John Davis presented Bro. Jim Cunningham with a medal for 50 years service to the Association. He said that Bro. Jim should be proud to have given such long and loyal service and he wished Bro. Jim well for the future

Following the meeting, Bro President, Gerard Duggan, presided at the celebration dinner. The Principal guest was the Rt. Rev. Peter Doyle KC\*HS, the Bishop of Northampton, who gave the main address. Bro Denis Murphy proposed the toast to Bedford Brothers and Bro John Davis replied on behalf of the vis-

itors.

A convivial evening was enjoyed by all and was a perfect demonstration of the tenets of the motto of the Catenians, "Strengthening family life through friendship and faith."

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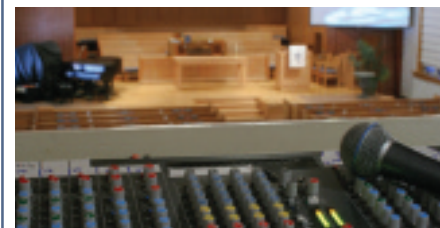
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# The Year of Mercy in Gerrards Cross

The Year of Mercy began last year just as Advent came upon us. We were in the process of moving back into our newly refurbished church complete with new roof and were also celebrating the final weeks of our parish Centenary Year. Bishop Peter nominated St. Joseph's Church to have a Holy Door of

Mercy, which would serve pilgrims in the Southern area of the Diocese. Very few of us were tuned in, but Fr. Michael asked a small group of parishioners to consider how we might plan to prayerfully celebrate the liturgical celebrations for the Jubilee Year of Mercy and how we might welcome pilgrims.



Bishop Peter officially opened the Holy Door at St. Joseph's on 13th December 2015. The Mass was a double celebration as he also ordained Brother Thaddeus as a Deacon in the Carmelite Order. A special noticeboard was designated for the Year of Mercy and a display explaining the Biblical meaning of Jubilee and Holy Doors was mounted. However, it wasn't until the New Year that we could begin in earnest looking for ways of welcoming pilgrims. An online search resulted in finding an excellent resource that had been written by a parishioner and a priest in Westminster Diocese. With their permission, we adapted the booklet to create our own pilgrimage booklet. This was produced in time for Lent called, 'Pilgrimage Through the Holy Door'. It offered a self-guided walk around St. Joseph's Church, as an aid to reflecting on God's Mercy. An invitation was then sent to all parishes in the Southern area of Northampton Diocese inviting individuals and pilgrim groups to make a pilgrimage to our Holy Door.

The pilgrims began to arrive and it was a pleasure for us to 'meet and greet' them. The ladies of our CWL generously committed to providing hospitality and refreshments for each pilgrimage group. The pilgrims just kept on coming, as groups but also as individuals. It was moving to see the faith of the people of God. It has been an awesome experience to witness so many Catholics taking up the invitation and making the pilgrimage through our Church.

During Lent, we responded to the desire of Pope Francis to hold a '24 Hours for the Lord'. Also, a reconciliation service during which the queues for confession were extraordinary. In fact, the queues for Confession were what really marked the Holy Year of Mercy, with a good number of people returning to the sacrament after many years.

*Below: Mass for the closing of the door.  
Right: Fr Michael Spain in the entrance*



Each week, the parish newsletter carried a 'Mercy Box' in which nuggets from Pope Francis and from Sacred Scripture were highlighted. Also covered were very practical ways of engaging with the Works of Mercy.

The Year of Mercy noticeboard too carried simple explanations of the Jubilee Indulgence and suggested ways of living mercy through the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. It was very exciting to rediscover anew the indulgent love of God the Father, who expresses His love for us through His mercy. We learnt in a fresh way how God, through His Church, indulges His people. We can't earn His mercy – it is freely given to us. It is more about BEING than about DOING: Being open to receiving God's mercy; being open to conversion (in the Sacrament of Reconciliation); being open hearted; being aware of and thankful for God's mercy; being ready to show mercy to others; being eager to receive the sacraments of (the Church) reconciliation and Holy Communion; being generous in our hearts, to God, to the Church and to others.

In September, we hosted the Jubilee for Catechists from across the Diocese. (See The Vine November 2016 page 6)

We also produced some simple 'Reflections on Mercy' for people to take to those who are sick and housebound, as it was clear that the Jubilee Indulgence was for everyone, even those who were not physically able to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door.

After an amazing year of graces and blessings, Bishop Peter came to officially close the Door of Mercy on 12th November. He celebrated a joyous Mass with us, with a highlight being the singing of the Magnificat, as we echoed Mary's joyous hymn of praise to God 'for his mercy endures forever.'

Although 'ordinary parish life' has now been resumed, the words of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter 'Misericordia et Misera' dated 20th November 2016 sum up the essence of what this Jubilee Year of Mercy has meant for us.

'We have celebrated an intense Jubilee Year in which we have received the grace of mercy in abundance. Like a gusting but wholesome wind, the Lord's goodness and mercy have swept through the entire world. Because each of us has experienced at length this loving gaze of God, we cannot remain unaffected, for it changes our lives.'





# Ministry in the countryside

- In the United Kingdom people who live in very rural areas can find themselves remote from their church, especially if they don't drive. These days, most will be retirees or commuters, as farmers are increasingly rare. One very rural resident in Devon, seven miles from a Catholic Church, itself served from another eighteen miles away, to supplement what she can access locally attends the National Conference for Rural Catholics. This falls just outside her lambing season. She writes of the: re-invigoration which derives from being with fellow Catholics in a temporary community where our day is shaped by the Offices of the church, and where our social interaction has a rural context. In a parish which no longer has anywhere to meet, the opportunity to share and be stimulated by others, especially when there is something new to learn, is very much appreciated.'
- France is a very large and rural country. Small farms, once cumulatively major employers, have been absorbed into larger groupings to survive. Large farms require massive machinery. This requires a minimum of hands to work; suddenly twenty jobs have been reduced to one or two and the hope of employment or cheap housing draws villagers to towns. This is called 'rural flight'.
- Perhaps you have friends who own a cottage in rural France, bought because cheap, its original owners forced to move in search of employment; some of those friends perhaps lamenting the current difficulty of selling a second French home. On your next holiday in rural France, notice that the village church is usually part of a larger group of rural churches. The nearest Mass on Sunday is several kilometres away. Most villages still have a local bread shop. Other shops are usually long closed. Residents drive to the distant supermarket and think little of it. Usually the pub is no longer open, and the petrol station almost certainly derelict. However, people still look to the Church for a different response.

Rural areas in the UK have similar problems. What can the Bishop do when faced with an abundance of small scattered churches in villages full of second home-owners, a diminishing number of residents and few available clergy? Two French speakers told a recent National Conference for Rural Catholics how the diocese of Poitiers had organised rural parishes into groups. The motor car allows this to be feasible. Usually, although there may be ten, fifteen, twenty rural churches in a group, clerical isolation is avoided by placing clergy in pairs. Poitiers went further, training teams of lay volunteers to fill catechetical roles, take funerals, and perform other duties. The Church of England has done something similar in many of its rural parishes served by various combinations of clergy. It has produced an interesting report (Released for Mission) on the outcomes.

A Norwegian speaker told a subsequent Conference how his country, not traditionally Catholic, has seen an influx of migrants, the many Catholics among them doubling its Catholic population, mostly to rural areas to fill the jobs unfilled by Norwegians. He outlined a scheme being considered which would place the few clergy strategically (i.e. by need) rather than historically (i.e. by parish boundaries), so that no Catholic in Norway would be more than 50 km (c30 miles) from a Mass; an improvement.

Things are not very different in our own country. Bishops are having to weigh urban staffing against rural staffing, numbers against distance. In February 2017, in Salisbury, the Bishop of Portsmouth will speak to the National Conference for Rural Catholics on 'The Bishops, Rural Parishes and Clergy Numbers'. the full programme contact me: rwhm274@btinternet.com; 01747 870228 or Trellis House, Station Road, Tisbury, SP3 6JR

- **Fr Robert Miller**
- **CBCEW National Rural Officer.**

# A life-changing adventure

## Working together in a divided world

### You know what we did last summer?

VMM International's short-term volunteering programme for 2016/17 is the opportunity to spend three to six weeks in Africa in a placement tailored to suit both the individual applicant and the community they work in.

For three young people who participated in last summer's programme of activities in Uganda, Malawi and Ghana, the experience of international development work proved both unforgettable and key to their own personal growth.

### *This is what they had to say about their "life-changing" adventure:*

#### **Joanne Mulligan, 26, Dublin – teaching assistant in Uganda**

"I jumped at the chance when the short-term volunteering opportunity arose as I had been eager to experience development in Africa first hand. This first trip definitely stirred a desire within me to travel and explore more of Africa while working in development. Uganda is only the beginning!

"The experience was incredible and I'm actually annoyed with myself that I hadn't done something like this sooner. I'd thought about it a few times in college but I'd backed out because I was nervous or scared.

"Yes, there were some tough times but the whole experience was great. I had visions of not being able to eat, yet the food was amazing. I would honestly say to anybody who's thinking about doing it, 'definitely do it'. It honestly was a life-changing experience."

#### **Louise Dobinson, 19, Darlington – teaching assistant in Uganda**



"It's helped me decide what career path I'd like to go down: that I'd like to be a teacher and go into education.

"I'd always wanted to travel and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to learn about a new culture as well as changing the way children learn. I had never been to Africa but everyone was just so friendly and welcoming – the staff at the school, the children, the locals, our hosts. I couldn't have asked to meet better people."

#### **Phoebe Pennington, 19, Liverpool – teaching assistant in Uganda**

"My main reason for volunteering was that I'd been to Africa before, but I wanted to gain more experience and more of an insight. So I volunteered with VMM in two primary schools.

"In one school we facilitated outdoor PE sessions and in the other helped with informal English sessions to boost the children's English. Education is key but it's easy to take for granted. Yet these children, with the most basic education available, appreciated it so much. Education was taken super seriously.

"As I plan to study education and international development at university, this placement gave me a great opportunity to gain first-hand experience of development work in the area of primary education."



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**"Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things."  
- Psalm 119:18**



**"Blessing is 5. If we do nothing, Blessing will be blind for the rest of his life."**

**Dr Aliraki Lisbon, Ophthalmologist at Mengo Hospital, Uganda.**

Dear The Vine Reader,

As a fellow Christian, I wanted to share with you how incredibly powerful it is to witness a child seeing for the first time, after eye surgery.

As I carry out my work with Christian Blind Mission in East Africa, I am constantly moved by the astonishment and wonder on the faces of children when the bandages are removed and they get their first clear look at their smiling loved ones.

Five year old Blessing was born with cataracts. He has been barely able to see. But his doctor said that his sight can be restored through a simple 45-minute procedure.

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frustration and exclusion he could have light, colour and a future filled with opportunity. He could do well at school and find a way out of poverty.

The cataract removal surgery costs £95, but his family can barely afford even basic necessities, so I am turning to you in the hope that you can help.

If you could send a gift of £95 today, you could pay for a child like Blessing's surgery. You could open his eyes to the beauty of God's creation. And we'll send you an update on how Blessing's surgery goes.

God bless you,

*Laura*

Laura Gore  
Programme Manager CBM UK



**Blessing's cataracts mean he has been living in darkness.**



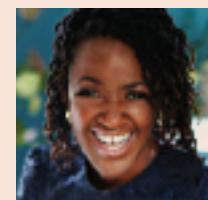
**He can hardly see objects more than 50cm away.**



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**Diane Louise Jordan**



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