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Plus Other Features

Magazine Team

Margaret Rank

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Cathy Showell

whose views are not necessarily the same as those expressed in the magazine.

Put Your Faith into Building Maintenance

Biographies of St Francis report that in the year 1205, and while resting in the near derelict church of St Damiano, Assisi, Francis heard the image of the crucified Christ say to him, *'Francis, don't you see that my house is being destroyed? Go then and rebuild it for me.'* Francis' immediate response was to interpret this quite literally and he consequently set about repairing and rebuilding the derelict church, first with his own bare hands and then with the help of others. From these simple actions, his momentous life of faith began. Whilst not suggesting that the church premises of St Joseph's Malvern are in need of rebuilding by a saint in the making, the simple requirement for direct action to maintain the building fabric of a church remains as relevant today as it was to St Francis on that day in 1205.

The Maintenance Committee at St Joseph's has been taking stock of the state of the church buildings. Investigations have been undertaken, partly because of increasing legislative requirements by the diocese, into the provisions for fire safety, and condition of the service installations, such as the gas, electricity, water, and drainage systems. Risk assessments into the possible presence of asbestos and legionella bacteria have also been required and organised. The findings and recent renewed activity of the Maintenance Committee have identified the need for urgent work in connection with:

- The roof
- The gutters, rainwater pipes, and consequently rotted eaves joinery
- Internal repairs associated with leaks from neglected guttering
- The underground drainage
- The plumbing and water supply
- The electrical installation
- The emergency lighting
- The McEnnis Room floor
- The crumbling state of some retaining walls / safety fencing
- The glazing and handles / locks to the main front door

In addition to the above, a relatively onerous regime of regular safety checking and recording must be set up in respect of the main services and fire safety facilities. There is also the continued responsibility for ensuring that minor day to day repairs are dealt with, the grounds around the church and carpark areas are kept in an acceptable state of repair, including the now rusting ornate ironwork features, and that an on-going programme of redecoration and refurbishment of worn finishes and fittings is attended to. Clearly, there is a significant workload attached to ensuring that the church premises continue to provide the facilities and environment enjoyed by everyone in the parish. Considerable resources in terms of time, effort, expertise, and of course funding, are needed and it should be appreciated that the entire responsibility rests at parish level. There is no one to look after the buildings other than ourselves.

Your current Maintenance Committee members are Zbigniew Twarowski who chairs the committee, Andrzej Kostuch, Edd Hogan, Sue Stubbings, Chris Burger, and Paul Lewis. As parish priest, I am in there to provide the necessary support and to ensure that diocesan requirements are being addressed. Both Sue, and Edd have other church related voluntary roles as well. This leaves a core of only four people able to devote their full voluntary effort to organising and managing maintenance work. Relating back to the analogy of St Francis, the Committee has perhaps made a start '*with their own bare hands*', but the time has come '*for the help of others*'!! This has been made even more urgent by the sad loss of Michael Kelly, who was a stalwart member of the committee and recently undertook so much with his own 'bare hands'.

The Maintenance Committee desperately needs more members to deal with the tasks ahead and help spread the load. Being part of the Maintenance Committee does not require a knowledge or skill in 'DIY' activity and you don't have to be a professional or expert in property maintenance or management. The main tasks centre around identifying areas of concern or where improvements are being requested, establishing priorities, investigating what remedial action is needed, and then organising for the necessary work to be carried out. An interest and willingness to engage with the business of sustaining the church premises for the benefit of all parish members is the only qualification needed. The creation and maintenance of a

welcoming space that not only provides a place of worship but also facilitates and promotes the activities of the parish is clearly in the interest of every parish member. With enough people and an operational plan, the necessary work can be organised and effectively managed. So, why not channel your inner St Francis and get in touch with Fr Naz or the office or any member of the Maintenance Committee mentioned in this article if you think you may be able to assist. As St Francis prayed, *'For it is in giving that we receive'*.
Fr Naz

PAC Report

The PAC met on 13th January with the next meeting being 10th March in line with our intention to meet every two months. The parish is moving at pace in a number of areas and this is down to the skills and time freely given by so many people. Our 150th anniversary planning has begun in earnest, and I would encourage you to contribute your ideas to the anniversary stained glass window project. Other events will be planned for 2026 and the details of these are being worked on.

Working with Al Hood we have redeveloped our parish website and bulletin. Both are really important ways of communicating with the parish and the wider community. The new website and bulletin are designed to be read more easily on tablets or mobile devices. The website also now has tiles on the right-hand side that link straight to our other social media outlets – Facebook, Youtube and X. We're not on Insta... yet... Al has been our webmaster since we first got a website and I am grateful for his support of our online and digital presence. We do however need to look to the future and I am keen to hear from anyone who has IT skills and can work with Al with a view to taking over this important role.

Over the past 18 months our parish prayer group WhatsApp group has seen daily prayer petitions shared. This group is a force for good: connecting prayer requests with those able to offer prayers. We share moments of sadness, angst, and worry but also joy, thanksgiving and happiness. It brings into focus the incredible need for spiritual guidance and strengthens our faith in good times and in difficult times. The prayer life of the parish is important and Fr Naz has been

working with a small group to look at how we can develop this further. The initiation of house groups is one outcome from this and I look forward to hearing how this evolves and grows.

We have identified that we need to build up our volunteer numbers for reading at Mass and also for Eucharistic Ministers. Fr Naz will approach people that he would like to commission as Eucharistic Ministers. If you would like to become a reader, or a welcome steward, please ask me or Fr Naz. Similarly, we always need more altar servers. Linked to this, we are looking for someone to take over the job of preparing and ‘owning’ the rota. Please consider if this is something you can help with either on your own or as part of a pair / trio of coordinators.

The Music & Liturgy committee met recently to plan services through Lent and Easter. We have many gifted musicians who bring our liturgy to life with music. This year we will not have a Children’s Service on Good Friday and will instead promote attending the Churches Together service at the Priory. We are looking at ways of marking this Jubilee Year at the moment and as plans become clearer we will share these.

The Maintenance Committee has been meeting more regularly and I am pleased to see how their skills have been used to keep our estate in good order. A fixed electrical wiring inspection took place recently. As a public building we have to comply with certain regulations (which are also just good practice). The list of jobs is still quite long – we have the floor to fix in the McEnnis Room, and some water tanks to replace in the presbytery. As a parish we are deeply saddened that Michael Kelly has died. He was a wonderful family man and contributed a lot to the maintenance of the church. His lasting legacy is that he undertook the recent refurbishment of the toilets, and he did a first class job. We shall miss him enormously.

The Archdiocese has asked all parishes to have an established PAC and we have offered to help other parishes who are less mature than us in this respect. We will begin to see more cluster and deanery working too but this is quite fluid at the moment and we don’t know what it will mean for us other than to reiterate that we have offered to help where we can.

At the end of the summer our head teacher, Therese Langford, will be retiring. The links between the parish and the school are the strongest I can ever recall and we will miss Therese. Before she goes we will find some fitting way to mark her tenure. The governors are currently working through the process of finding and recruiting a new head teacher for our wonderful school.

Lent and then Easter lie ahead of us. Let us journey together as a parish that is full of life and vitality. There will be laity led Stations of the Cross during Lent: make it part of your own personal Lenten journey to attend at least one of these on a Friday evening.

We have a lively, dynamic, gifted parish community that has a strong heartbeat. This is because so many people all contribute to parish life, often without being seen. Thank you to all of you for your commitment to your parish.

Edd Hogan Chair, PAC. February 2025

New Parish Website

Our existing parish website was made to fit a need, many years ago, and it's been on my mind that it's long past it's "sell by date". One issue is that it's simply old technology, as anyone who uses it on a mobile phone will attest; also, it's on my own server, out there in the Internet, and if I wasn't available, it wouldn't be updatable.

So, I asked Fr Naz and the PAC if I could update it to something more contemporary, owned by the parish, using a mechanism that would allow someone who isn't me to amend it, if that was needed.

They agreed, so I'm currently prototyping our new site at <https://test.stjosephsmalvern.org>, with an eye to "going live" (i.e.redirecting <https://www.stjosephsmalvern.org> to it) on Easter Sunday.

You're all welcome to comment, and several parishioners already have, but the deadline looms! I hope it will become a rejuvenated resource for the parish going forward; I'm not planning a "bells and whistles" site, just one that gives us all the information we need, in a way that's fit for the present day!

Alan Hood rota@hoodie.net

Financial Report

End of February 2025

Bank Account	01/01/25	£140,093.33
	28/02/25	£121,581.99
Reduction		£18,511.34

This continued reduction in our Bank deposits has been due to the following:

Refurbishment of the Gents Toilets	£4916.66
McEnnis Room Lighting	£1469.82
Gas	£709.55
Church Electricity	£760.90
House Electricity	£841.26
Drainage Report	£306.00
New Website	£259.20
Plumbing Leak in Mc Ennis Room	£229.80
Fire Repair	£350.00
Legionella Control	£245.00

Along with general costs of priest's and staff costs etc. the Maintenance Committee is looking into taking action on the parish drains following the report above. Along with possible roof remedial work, electrical upgrades following reports, water system upgrades and Mc Ennis Room flooring and decorating.

So my estimated Bank Reduction for the Year of £30,000 is looking rather short of the mark!

Chris Park Parish Treasurer

Cursillo Experience...not just Cursillo Encounter!

(See the short article in the previous magazine.)

Janet Williams, Mary Carroll and I are now Cursillistas! We have had the great joy of being able to experience our shared Catholic Faith, united in prayer, listening, learning, sharing, caring, supported throughout by warm, approachable lay people and clergy, on a long weekend Cursillo course.

We had been impressed by the brief Cursillo Encounter in September (described in the last issue of the parish magazine) and signed up for more exploration of our faith presented by this loving team, and more about Cursillo. We arrived in Shallowford, near Stafford, slightly apprehensive, but that didn't last long as the same friendly team who had visited St Joseph's were there to greet us in the hall.

We were three of 16 pilgrims, and Helen, Mary's sister, was another. The rest of the group were our tutors and supporters, including several priests who visited just for a few hours each. Among them was Fr Steven whom many in Malvern will remember as he spent some time with us at St Joseph's before his ordination. I personally also had the joy of meeting up again with Br Andrew of the Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers based in Droitwich. I recognised him from the early nineties when he was living in Olton, Solihull, at the Friary, my parish church. Br Andrew was with us for the whole weekend.

Cursillo is the Spanish word for a short course. Yes, there were talks, lectures and activities interspersed by frequent visits to the simple and welcoming chapel for prayer, rosary, reconciliation, meditation and Holy Mass. Yes, we were listening, discussing, contributing our own stories. It was serious stuff, but delivered in a simple, friendly fashion. The weekend was a demanding, and yet a gentle, experience.

There was much interactive learning, and we got to know our study group really well. Very early on, the six members of Santiago Group (as we chose to call ourselves) went into the chapel and were asked to hug one another and tell each other that we loved them. It seemed very alien as we had only just met so all we knew of one another was a name. I reasoned we are all created by God, so we are part of the family of God ... and I enjoy being hugged ... so I personally didn't

find it *too* difficult! By the end of the course, when we knew one another as individuals, a lot of hugging took place!

On two days of the three, after our serious teaching/learning sessions for that day were almost over, we spent a light-hearted twenty minutes or so presenting the posters each group had designed to represent what had been learned that day. The diverse, often hilarious, sketches gave rise to a great deal of fun both visually and orally. Not everyone is a gifted artist but it seems we all had a well-developed sense of humour.

If I have given a flavour of the atmosphere of this Cursillo, and you are thinking that you might enjoy the experience, you'll want to know about Shallowford too. It is an architectural "one off". Long corridors twist and turn their way through the various additions the house has undergone. The chapel is modern, simple and conducive to prayer. The corridors are hung with paintings and artwork. The bedrooms (each with a shower room) are basic yet comfortable. The food, served very simply, is really good, homemade and plentiful.

There is a spacious lounge with easy chairs and a classroom for lectures (and displaying the posters). There are several rooms for the small groups to work in, and there is even a lift to help those, like me, who struggle with steps and stairs.

There was a short break after lunch, and many went to walk in the grounds where they found, each in their own domain, gigantic rabbits, goats, and an alpaca. Peacocks are able to wander and perch freely. I only went outside once. It was jolly cold! I tried to find time for a nap instead.

To conclude I must mention two ceremonies in the chapel which struck me as sacramental. We each went up to light a candle and place it in a chandelier as a symbol of the light of Christ. This was not in a queue. We each went forward as we felt the moment was right. The lights shone through the week. The second occasion was as we were about to begin our Sunday Mass together before leaving for home. Again, we went forward as individuals, one person at a time. Each of us received a simple wooden cross and heard, "Christ is counting on you", to which we replied, "and I on Him". If a sacrament is "an outward sign of inward grace" these occasions were sacraments in the heart for this pilgrim, me.

If I could sum the weekend up in half a dozen words, they would be THE LOVE OF GOD AT WORK.

Definitions.

Cursillo means in Spanish “a short course.”

Within the church it has several definitions. I quote just two of them.

It is a style of life as missionary disciples, living in one's own place one's ordinary life in a special way.

It is a Catholic movement to form leaders who grow through Prayer, Study and Action to evangelise others for Christ.

Cursillistas are those who have attended a Cursillo. What is my mission now?
Margaret Allen

Harvington Hall

I started to volunteer at Harvington Hall in late 2023. Harvington Hall is a beautiful Elizabethan Manor house not far from Kidderminster. The Hall has more extant priest holes, Elizabethan wall paintings and original floorboards than any other house in England. The Hall has been owned by the Archdiocese of Birmingham since 1923 when it was gifted to the Archdiocese to save it from complete ruin. I love the Catholic history of the house, which is evidence of the faith of Catholics who refused to give in to governmental pressure to conform to the state religion.

Harvington Hall was inherited by Humphrey Packington in 1578. He set about re-building the already old medieval manor house into an up-to-date brick house. While this was going on, in 1584, Queen Elizabeth I announced that all Catholic priests must leave the country within 40 days or be accused of treason, and suffer its associated consequences.

Immediately all around the country wealthy Catholics started to build a system of hides in their houses, where priests and all the “massing stuff” could be concealed in the event of a raid. At first hides (called “conveyances”) were built next to chimneys and under garderobes (toilets) but the pursuivants (searchers) got wise to this and began to measure walls inside and out, looking for empty spaces. St Nicholas Owen was a hide builder of extraordinary skill and vision and was able to construct hiding places within the fabric of the buildings, which he disguised by changing walls, doors, floors and stairs so that hides were almost impossible to discover. We have at least two hides at Harvington Hall which are attributed to St. Nicholas Owen. We cannot say for sure as he left no records of his work (for obvious reasons).



Most of my volunteering at Harvington Hall is with the education team. Most Mondays and Tuesdays in term time we have schools visiting. The children do a range of activities; exploring what it was like to be a child in Tudor times, and they are taken on a tour of the house, including a chance to go into one of the hides if they wish. Most of the volunteers wear Tudor dress which we either make ourselves or get others to make. I made mine last summer but now I've caught the bug, I have bought some more wool

cloth to make a different outfit. As volunteers, we are not required to wear costumes, but it adds to the fun for the children.

The Hall is open to the general public from Wednesday to Sunday, and every day in the summer holidays. As well as general opening, there are many events, including a history festival in July and dramatised reenactments of life in Tudor and Stuart times, which get booked up very quickly. This Holy Year, the door to St Mary's church next to the Hall is one of the diocesan Holy Doors. For that reason, in addition to schools coming to explore the Tudor history of the house, Catholic schools are bringing pupils as a pilgrimage. Maybe you can also find time to pay Harvington Hall a visit and go through the Holy Door of St. Mary's church and say a few prayers, reflecting on the courage of those whose faith and courage enabled them to keep the Catholic faith alive in the most challenging of times.

Volunteering at Harvington Hall is one of the great delights of my week and I'd certainly recommend fellow parishioners and their families to pay this beautiful old house a visit.

See <https://www.harvingtonhall.co.uk/>.

Carol Ann Harnett

Happy Birthday, Lynne

Rosaleen (Lynne) Harper born 07.04.1925

Lynne was born in East Kilbride in Scotland but had to stay in hospital for the first few months of her life because she developed tuberculosis. For several months while Lynne was having the TB lumps lanced her mother visited her every evening on her bicycle; there were no antibiotics in those days. She had an elder brother and enjoyed outdoor sports and swimming which her mother encouraged because of the TB. In 1948 in Scotland she married Jim, who was a great support to her throughout their married life.



Lynne on her wedding day

They moved to England in the fifties and returned to Scotland for an operation for two facial cancers done by a top surgeon which were successful. Unfortunately the cancer grew again and the second facial operation was carried out by the same surgeon. Lynne says that she must have been too comfortable in that ward because she ended up in the same ward again after a few weeks with chronic appendicitis. It was here that she found out that although the second facial operation had been a great success in that there was no scarring, a mistake was made by one of the staff and she was not given the electrolysis treatment that the surgeon had asked for and paralysis had set in. Needless to say this was very difficult for Lynne to deal with when she was only in her thirties. After the facial paralysis Lynne was very self-conscious and trained for a job as a typist because she could work out of the public eye. She was very successful and quickly moved out of the typing pool and became a top personal secretary. Jim trained with a medical drug company and he was posted to Worcestershire in the late fifties.

On January 1st 1960 they moved to Malvern. She says, 'Can you imagine a Scot moving house on the 1st of January?' but she says it was the best thing they ever did. They bought their own house and it was here that they met the Grainey family.

The eighties were a difficult time for Lynne as several of her family members died and then very suddenly and unexpectedly Jim passed away.

In 1990 Lynne moved to a bungalow in Grit Lane and then to her present flat in 2007. When she was 83 years old she had a big operation for abdominal cancer and later had two hip replacements.

Lynne has not been a stranger to hard times but there were many happy times too. Jim was a member of the Catenians and they both enjoyed the many activities that took place. After Jim's death Lynne has continued to be a part of the Catenian family.

Lynne has been a member of St Joseph's church for nearly 70 years; it has played an important part in her life and she remembers organising dances with Jim while other church members did the catering. She started the flower arranging group after one Christmas without flowers in the church. Apparently they had three large arrangements with smaller ones around the church and said that they "went to town" at Christmas!

She was the treasurer for the Thursday Group for many years and meticulously did their accounts. She was also a member of the Rosary Group.

Jim and Lynne were active members of the Worcestershire Golf club since the 1960s and spent many happy years on the golf course together.



Lynne taking part at a Catenian Ladies' Mad Hatter's Tea Party

Poor health has never been far away but the most distressing for Lynne has been the development of macular degeneration which started about six years ago. The result of this has been that she can no longer drive and feels that she has lost her independence; going blind has made her life so much more difficult.

Lynne feels that in spite of everything she has been very lucky to have lived in Malvern with all the friends that she has made over the years. She has certainly been stoic in the face of adversity and she continues to be independent and active in her 100th year.

We wish her a very happy birthday from all her many friends.

Di Walsh

Meeting Beverly

Hello! I'm Beverly Cherry and you may recognise me as one of the people who leads the Children's Liturgy on Sunday mornings. I started helping with this when my children were small (they are now 15 and 12) and I have continued ever since as I enjoy it so much and love bringing the Word of Our Lord to them. When we leave the mass, we go into the McEnnis Room and I read them a children's version of the Holy Gospel and then we do an activity, usually related to the Gospel, before we come back into mass and show everyone what we've been doing.

The children are often very shy as some of them are quite young this year but they are a pleasure to teach and the materials created for the sessions by Carol Ann are great and easy to use. I usually arrive early at mass to set up the room ready for them and put up the Prayer Table, which you can see in the picture.



Some of you may be interested to know a bit more about me. I was born in London but at two weeks old was the youngest ever passenger on British Airways (at the time) and flew back to Malta where my parents were living. My father is Maltese (now aged 93 and still very active!) while my mother is English and was a nurse in the British Navy, which is how she met my father who was a doctor. We lived in Malta until I was 7 years old when we moved to Denmark where my father joined the World Health Organisation, which is part of the United Nations, and I grew up in an international school learning Danish and making friends with many different nationalities until it was time for me to come back to England to finish my education at boarding school. I loved science and maths and worked hard, eventually gaining a place at Cambridge University to study biological sciences and then a Masters at the University of York, which eventually led me into scientific journalism, and I lived in London for many years working on science magazines, interviewing people, writing articles and sometimes going to the House of Commons to hear about the latest environmental legislation!

I eventually worked my way up to being the editor of one of the Institution of Engineering & Technology (IET) magazines and met my husband, who is an electronics engineer, at around the same time. We were married in 2008 and have two lovely daughters, Isobel and Ellie, a cat called Maddy, a hamster called Pablo and a Giant African land snail called Jerry. I currently work in medical communications, working closely with academic journals like BMJ and The Lancet bringing clarity to the complex and advancing scientific understanding through the publishing of clinical trial results for the benefit of both academic researchers and practising doctors and nurses. I have used my skills for the benefit of the wider community through being a school governor for six years (chair for three of those) and I also write case study stories for a Latin American children's charity when they need them as marketing material.

When I'm not at work, you can find me driving my kids around to their clubs like dance and gymnastics, walking up the Malvern Hills when it's sunny, or reading in my hammock in the garden wrapped in a blanket with a hot cup of tea. I do miss the big, blue skies and warm climate of my home country in Malta but we visit as often as we can to see my parents and always bring back plenty of olive oil and lemons!



Beverly with one of the children, Penny van Ling

School Update



The children of St Joseph's have again taken part in "World Book Day". They are given the opportunity and choice of dressing up as their favourite character and/or bringing in their favourite book to share with their class. As ever the range of outfits was wonderful from both the children and staff and it has certainly fostered their love of reading as we think the pictures below illustrate!



We thought you would be interested to know where we are with our fundraising to further develop our outside space for the children. With grants and general school fundraising we have so far reached £8000, which for two terms is a remarkable achievement. A huge thank you must go to our PTFA, parents, friends and staff. Some companies are coming in to give us quotes as to how best spend the monies raised. The school is continuing to fundraise and the School Council has arranged one final round of cake sales towards this project before the end of term. They take place after school and are always very popular.

Also as part of the Year of the Jubilee the school will be doing a “Big Lent Walk” for CAFOD, in the last week of term, and aim to make it more into a mini pilgrimage. The children will make small crosses from sticks in the school grounds and take them with them on the day, collecting safe and appropriate items to be stuck onto the crosses on the way. They will travel with their prayer partner which they have been assigned for this special Jubilee Year. Their prayer partner is from a different year and they will support each other through this special year.

When they reach St Ann’s Well, there will be prayer and songs followed by a picnic lunch before returning back to school where the children’s crosses will be blessed by Father Naz and displayed.

Families and Parishioners are welcome to join us. The prospective date of Wednesday 9th April has been set aside, weather dependent!

Therese Langford and Maggie Griffiths

Be joyful,

Keep the faith,

Do the little things.

From the final sermon of St David

Hunger

In the Book of Revelation we are introduced to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who symbolise different events that will take place in the end times - Conquest, War, Famine and Death and destruction. Let us concentrate here on the Third Horseman, mounted on a black steed, who predicts that food will become scarce, that prices will spiral but that luxury goods will remain unaffected.

It would be too simplistic to relate this too literally to modern times, although parallels can be found.

We must not forget that the Earth at present produces enough food to feed all its inhabitants. If this is the case, we must ask ourselves why one in eleven people of the global population (about 700 million) go hungry, while at the same time one in eight of the world's human population are living with obesity. Coming close to home, one in eleven of the population of this country suffer from food poverty - i.e. cannot afford enough to eat - while 64% of adults in England are obese or overweight.

Clearly there is a problem here, which is partly one of distribution; Food - "the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands" - is not being shared equally or fairly. The problem is compounded by the fact that global food supplies are threatened by the climate crisis - but that's a story for another day.

So what is being done to redress the imbalances? As citizens we entrust our politicians with our national wealth and income to fulfil our obligations towards each other and towards the global community. And what has happened? Our Government has set itself a target of increasing so-called defence spending to 2.5% of GDP, while cutting the budget for overseas development from an already paltry 0.5% to 0.3% and considering cuts in Welfare spending. This mirrors the emasculation of USAid by the President of the USA.

Where is the church in all this, and, more specifically, where are we as Christians and People of Faith?

Right from the beginning, feeding the hungry has been a core obligation; as Jesus taught: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink", and Ambrose,

one of the early Church Fathers, wrote: “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him.”

From the beginning of modern Catholic Social Teaching, the relief of hunger has been seen as a primary concern. In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote, “Every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.”. While the Pope recognised a range of rights, *he began with food*.

How well do we know Catholic Social Teaching? Unfortunately it does not seem to be very high on the church’s agenda. When, if at all, have you heard it promoted in a Sunday homily? How often have you been encouraged to deepen your faith and understanding by looking at papal social encyclicals or the documents of the Second Vatican Council? When have we ever had it pointed out to us, that, under Canon Law “The Christian faithful are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources” (Can. 222 §2)?

Deepening our faith through study, reflection and prayer so that it develops and gives us a deeper understanding of what leading a Christian life involves is perhaps the first step we can take, and this can lead us on to encouraging us to good works - perhaps by helping in a food bank or befriending a lonely person - and to more informed and meaningful almsgiving, perhaps by supporting CAFOD or Christian Aid. This second step moves us from individual to communal action, by joining with others to alleviate need and distress, perhaps by greater involvement in organisations such as CAFOD or *Church Action Against Poverty* or *Together for the Common Good*. There is strength in unity, and encouragement in realising that we are not alone in our concerns. We could also become aware of other faith-based organisations which share our concerns - if, for example, you look at the website and mission statement of Islamic Relief, you will find very little which would not sit equally comfortably on a CAFOD website.

If we feel so inclined, we could move outside our bubble and make the Catholic voice heard in the public sphere - by writing to newspapers, posting on social media or bombarding MPs with letters.

I know there is a reluctance in some circles to ‘get involved in politics’, but we are citizens, and as citizens we have rights and obligations. Making our Catholic voice heard in the political sphere is, after all, potentially a powerful means of evangelisation. Let us not forget the models we have, such as Oscar Romero and Helder Camara, who were not afraid to confront injustice, which ultimately is what hunger is.

Michael Townson

House Groups

‘Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.’ *Acts 4; 32-35*

I imagine most Christians have a phrase or a chapter in the Bible that really sticks with them over the course of their faith. This is it for me. This section of Acts Chapter 4 paints such a vivid picture of how we as lay Christians were intended to coexist. Yet, for my own part at least, it is a far cry from how I live. I have my four walls on a plot of land that has clear boundaries, the ownership of which is laid out on a title deed in mine and my husband’s names. Despite having neighbours on either side, we do not have any possessions in common and rarely meet together.

The opportunities to emulate this vision of Christian life in our Western world are few, but we can cultivate glimpses of it within our church communities and one way we can do this is in the setting of a House Group.

My husband, Simon, and I were very blessed to relocate to Malvern from Hampshire last year. In the neighbouring village to where we lived previously, we attended a (CofE) House Group for just over six years.

Our group consisted of nine people of different ages, professions and stages of life. Two of the households within the group took turns to host us each week where we would gather together in the presence of Jesus to

share fellowship, grow in our knowledge of the Bible, challenge one another and pray for each other's needs.

We used study guides to deepen our knowledge of scripture and at times turned to the Jesuit prayer app 'Pray As You Go' to experience a more reflective Lectio Divina-style session.

We also supported one another practically - when there was a new baby, meals were delivered to the family. When one of our members had a significant operation, a rota was made to provide round-the-clock assistance for the first few days. We got stuck in with a house move and digging up an overgrown garden. For many of us living far from family and childhood friends, our House Group became a family of its own.

Having lived in Malvern and been a parishioner of St Joseph's for a year now, it is clear that the church has a strong sense of community which it is active in encouraging and maintaining. Lent and Advent reflections provide a chance to explore biblical themes alongside the opportunity to meet together as a wider parish community to share a meal and connect with one another, but they require a certain amount of planning and expertise to lead. My hope is that, through the introduction of House Groups following a simple framework of Lectio Divina, an opportunity for more regular fellowship will be possible.

My vision, shared with the members of the Leadership Team, is for a network of House Groups throughout the combined parish of St Joseph's Malvern, St Joseph's Upton and Our Lady and St Alphonsus Blackmore.

So far almost 30 individuals from the wider parish have registered their interest in the initiative. Our next steps will be to run some 'taster sessions' to give those interested an idea of what to expect and to establish those parish members who may be willing to host a regular group in their home.

If you are interested in coming along to a taster session but you have not yet registered your interest with me after Mass, then please do send me an email and I will be delighted to add your name to the list—alicekerby@outlook.com

Alice Kerby

A Saint for the IT Age

Charlotte Carver, a parishioner at St Wulstan's, was recently invited by Dom Brendan Thomas, the Abbot of Belmont, to speak on the occasion of the veneration of a relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis at Belmont. After thanking the Abbot, and the friend who had first introduced her to young Carlo's story, she went on to answer the question posed to her by another friend.

What do I find so attractive about this young saint? But where to begin...?

Well, first of all, that smile! And his cheerfulness. But really, I just love the way Carlo decided to live his life, right from his earliest years as a tiny tot.

Isn't it amazing that young Carlo could never pass a church without asking to go inside. Even as a little lad, he encouraged his parents to lead a different kind of life from the one they were used to living: Antonia and Andrea Acutis admit they only ever went to church for christenings, weddings and funerals. But he was never a Holy Joe – we have this on good authority from Anna, former governess to the twins born later. Incidentally, they weren't born on his birthday, nor the day he died – that's a myth, they have their own birthday!

I'm bowled over by all his accomplishments during his short life, and from such a young age: his IT skills – learning how to code and document his research of well over 120 miracles, having nagged and dragged his parents all over the world to visit so many holy sites.

And then to have the idea and the expertise to build a website to illustrate so many miracles. It's quite amazing how he got it all together, with the Exhibition of Eucharistic Miracles first staged in Rome, the year before he unexpectedly died, aged just 15.

He must surely have been sent by God to be a shining example and friend to us all, and in particular, to the young in this IT age.

With four grandchildren (now 11,12,13 and 14) I am trying to introduce them, by degrees, to the example Carlo has set us all. But I still have to find a way to encourage them to regard him as their friend in Heaven – especially in matters of technology. As a matter of fact, I consult him most days for help with my own online communication skills – and he usually sorts me out!



Personally, I love Italians and keep up with several friends I've known for a very long time - 63 years, in fact! My local church, when I lived in Florence, was Sant' Ambrogio where there have been two Eucharistic Miracles.

My daughter lived in Milan with her Italian husband. They were next door to S. Maria delle Grazie and the da Vinci Last Supper.

Their children (from 18 months and three) attended Istituto/Collegio San Carlo for four years – just across the tram tracks from their apartment. And I believe that was Carlo's very first school for little while, before he was moved closer to home. That's really rather a special thought for a granny! And actually one of my other grandsons was also born at The Portland in London, but 22 years after Carlo!

So, back to the present: what a great age 33 is for "our boy" (as we call him) to be canonised. Blessed Carlo Acutis pray for us and our children, that we may ALL grow closer to Jesus day by day.



Charlotte is organising a pilgrimage to Assisi for a group of parishioners from St Wulstan's and the Malvern Cluster from 25th to 31st May (maximum 12-15 people) and there are still a few spaces available.

You can download the flyer here:

<https://www.jcjourneys.com/mc-assisi>

also the booking form, which enables the deposit to be paid online via a secure link.

Alternatively, if you would prefer this information by email, please don't hesitate to contact

carvercharlotte400@gmail.com or bernadetteeakin@gmail.com

First Reconciliation

The children preparing to make their first Reconciliation (Confession) recently did some practical tasks to help them understand that in Confession, Jesus, through the words of his minister, the priest, completely wipes away their sins and brings them closer to himself.



If you look closely at the photos you can see the children are holding a thread. They were doing an exercise they very much enjoyed where the child held one end of the thread and their parent (standing in for God) the other. The thread was cut when the child thought of something they had done wrong, but was knotted together again when the sin was confessed. With each cut and subsequent knot the thread got shorter and God and the child closer.

The children receiving certificates after their first confession on 15 March



Anniversary Year Update

Although it's still some time until our big anniversary year, 2026, work has already begun on some of the plans.

The idea of creating a new stained glass window has captured the interest of many parishioners, with offers of help and design suggestions coming from all sides. As with any project, there are challenges to overcome, the biggest being the placement of the two "blank" windows, which sit between paired windows. One comment I received expressed concern: "You can't put something between Mary and Bernadette!" Clearly, we'll need to come up with a thoughtful solution. Design ideas are still being finalized, but most focus on themes from our local surroundings—hills and water—as well as historical references to Elgar and the priest holes of the Reformation. There is also a desire to incorporate "something related to the children", reflecting the fact that they are the future of both our parish church and the church in general. Our next step is to engage the services of a stained glass maker - we have made contact with two already.

Two additional creative ideas are in development: an altar cloth put together by the school children and a banner made up of designs from parishioners. Many parishioners expressed a desire for something that represents the entire community, and a banner to be displayed from the organ loft meets that need. Even the youngest child can contribute by adding a hand or footprint using fabric paint.

As part of our plan to create a display of thoughts and memories of St Joseph's Church, we hope that children from the school will have the opportunity to interview parish members - both young and old, newcomers and long-time members - some time during the summer. If you'd be willing to take part in this process or have any thoughts about our plans, please get in touch via our dedicated email address:

150stjosephs@gmail.com

Mary Taylor

'It is a pleasure to me, on looking round the church, to see the care and love that is spent on it . . . Always respond heartily to any appeal your priest makes on behalf of the House of God. Be proud to do your best to make it all you can, for if you love the beauty of God's House now and the place where His glory dwelleth, it will go well with you, dear brethren, here in this life and in the world to come.'

Abbot Hurley of Douai

Preaching at St Joseph's on the occasion of the parish's golden jubilee in 1926.

Helen and the Windows - Part One

St Joseph's parish has always believed in celebrating its big anniversaries, and our upcoming one won't be the first possibly involving windows. Ninety years ago two whole new ones were added to the church, to mark the parish's diamond jubilee. Until then it had windows only on the north side (the left hand side as you face the altar) and must have been quite gloomy, despite the electric light proudly installed ten years earlier to mark the 50th anniversary. The existing windows were in the form of three pairs in the body of the church, plus the ones on the sanctuary, and the two new ones were also pairs. They had only plain glass, and in that they matched the existing windows on the north side. The only stained glass was on the sanctuary, and even that was only added 13 years after the opening of the church. It was however always the intention of Fr Buggins, the parish priest in 1936, that stained glass should be added, and this did of course happen, though not until some years later.

So the present stained glass does not all date back to the same period, and some has migrated from one side of the church to the other. That was because came the major extension and renovation in the 1990s the walls of the church moved outwards and the windows moved with them. Except that they couldn't, or at least not into the same spots as before, because the new walls were lower. A different arrangement had to be made, and five sets of twin windows became four sets of three. To make the maths work two plain windows had to be added. Probably the architect wasn't thinking of possible anniversary projects nearly 30 years later.

But what of the existing windows, their saints and their donors? Time to call upon a member of that long ago congregation of 1936 when the parish installed its new windows. Helen Mooney was a young teacher at St Joseph's school at the time. No-one who was in this parish at virtually any point in the twentieth century would need reminding who Helen was, but for those who weren't here is a little information. She lived her whole life in the parish apart from a few years away in her twenties, was the headmistress at the school for 20 years and sacristan for over fifty. She was still setting out the priest's vestments a month before she died in 2002 at the age of 95. Loved, feared and admired, she was diminutive in stature but in nothing else. She was also the go-

to authority on St Joseph's church and gave entertaining tours of the church to children from the school, and on one occasion to me.

My tour with her started with the windows on the sanctuary. Suitably enough St Joseph gets pride of place with the three small windows above the reredos depicting scenes from his life. On the left is the angel's visit in a dream, at the top his deathbed, and on the right a domestic scene at Nazareth. This last one Helen found a little puzzling in that it shows an extra child, identity unknown. Suggestions include St John the Baptist (too big an age gap to be likely), the Child Jesus shown at two different ages (seems rather odd) or just a random Nazarene playmate (then why the halo?)

On the other window on the sanctuary are Saints Henry and Bernard. Like the St Joseph windows these date back to the early days of the building, and the choice of Henry and Bernard may owe something to the fact that the priest responsible for the church's foundation was one Fr Henry Bernard Bulbeck.

Like the saints on the reredos both have Benedictine connections. St. Bernard (1090 – 1153), founder of the Cistercians, Doctor of the Church and author of devotional works, can be seen with a book in his hand, and a statue of Our Lady at his feet. The explanation for the statue is that every time he passed it he said, "Ave Maria" and one day the statue greeted him with, "Ave Bernard." Or so, said Helen with a twinkle, we are told.

Next to him is St. Henry (973-1024), Holy Roman Emperor and 'an off with his head sort of king', according to Helen, before he went off to be a monk instead. Asked by the abbot what was the most important duty of a monk he replied to obey, and was promptly told to go back and govern his kingdom, which he did. He is shown with a church for the straightforward reason that he built one, and with a chalice because of a complicated legend involving a flight of little devils, St Lawrence and a chalice with a missing handle. Suffice it to say that making a gift of the chalice had saved Henry from the devils but the handle got lost in the process. "Believe it if you like," Helen used to say.

Margaret Rank

Next time – the windows in the body of the church and their donors

A Promise Kept

I would like to tell you a story of a wish come true on a massive scale. It started in October 2007 when 100 pilgrims from Birmingham Archdiocese led by our then Archbishop Vincent Nichols flew from Birmingham Airport to Tel Aviv on their way to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Two coachloads. They formed wonderful and long lasting friendships and hugely enriching memories of walking together through the streets and scenes of the Holy Land; the crowded steps and pathway of the Via Dolorosa and its 14 chapels providing the 14 stations of the cross; the sombre Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the life changing feelings kneeling at the altar of Calvary and taking part in Mass inside the Holy Sepulchre at 5.30 in the morning; squeezing onto the steps to go down to the place of the Nativity in the Church of that name in Bethlehem; taking care not to knock one's head in the shepherds' caves where 2000 years ago the shepherds set off to make the first visit to the manger; and breathing in the silence and stillness of the shore of the Lake of Galilee, where Jesus recruited his first apostles; all this and so much more fed into the personal data bank of memory.

That is the scene in 2007 as we moved wonderingly from place to place with mouths open and hearts filling. By the time we came to the end of our visit to Bethlehem we had a very clear picture of the suffering of the Christians living in the Holy Land, their desperate financial plight and the love and support that they spread on everything in the Holy Land – on our behalves! The moans and murmuring of 'it isn't fair' didn't come from them, they came from us. And so, when they provided us with an end of visit feast in the town, we were overwhelmed with tender feelings and a desire to do something for them. So it was that Archbishop Vincent on our behalf, said to them, "When I get back to Birmingham, I don't know what I am going to do, but I promise you I will do something".

And so he did. He called a reunion of the pilgrimage to St Chad's and there outlined his vision to link the Christians of this country with the Christians of the Holy Land in thought, prayer, messages and funds. He with the pilgrimage leader Dr Michael Whelan and three other friends from the diocese formed the charity Friends of the Holy Land. They said that whenever anyone went to the Holy Land on pilgrimage, everyone came back saying, "What can I do to help?" – "Well, here is what you can do," they said!

It started with four small pilot groups in December 2009 with nil income, two in Worcestershire, one in Kenilworth and one in Banbury. In the year to 31st March 2024 the people who wanted to do something to help had gathered together £1,685,397 to help! And they had helped with: £145,000 emergency aid to Gaza; £121,000 for emergency medical aid and pharmacy needs; £10,000 every month for families who have nothing; £72,500 to run a school for 91 disabled children; £53,000 to run the first day care centre for widows and elderly women in Bethlehem; £70,000 to help train young people as nurses or with vocational training in Bethlehem or Ramallah; £50,000 to provide 48 water tanks and solar electricity to houses in Bethlehem and Zababdeh – and so on. Then Archbishop Vincent now Cardinal Vincent truly kept his promise.

So, if you can, help please. But most important read about this diminishing group of people suffering in ways that we in England find it difficult to appreciate with our state help. And when you read, think about them and in thinking you will pray for them and so fulfil your wish to do your bit to help!

Jim Quinn

First of all, to journey. The Jubilee motto, “Pilgrims of Hope”, evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land, as recounted in the Book of Exodus . . . It is hard to think of the biblical exodus without also thinking of those of our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

A first call to conversion thus comes from the realization that all of us are pilgrims in this life; each of us is invited to stop and ask how our lives reflect this fact. Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either immobilized by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone? Am I seeking ways to leave behind the occasions of sin and situations that degrade my dignity?

It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or foreigner, to learn how to sympathize with their experiences and in this way discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father. This would be a good “examination of conscience” for all of us wayfarers.

Pope Francis

What Happened to Synodality?

What is it anyway and what are we doing about it?

There is an apocryphal story that when the then Chinese leader Zhou Enlai was asked how he assessed the effects of the French Revolution, he is purported to have replied, 'It is too early to say', a good example of not letting the facts spoil a good story. When we are dealing with the church, an organisation with over two thousand years of history behind it, it is illusory to expect change to happen overnight.

Great hopes were placed on the Second Vatican Council in the mid-sixties, and immediate effects were noticed, but it has taken half a century for some of the deeper effects to work through, and it could be argued that the synodal process initiated by Pope Francis in 2015 would not have happened without the spirit of Vatican II.

The same principle can be applied to that synodal process; it was unrealistic to expect that the closing Synod - which was not closure at all, but just a step on the journey - would immediately result in the ordination of women and the wholesale dismantling of church structures. What it hopefully has done is reset the compass, but as we all know, it takes a large ship a long time to respond to a change of course.

What synodality does mean is that discernment and decision-making are the business of the whole body, not just of the few entrusted with governance. In his landmark October 2015 synod speech, Pope Francis quoted an ancient maxim: *Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* ("what affects everyone should be discussed and approved by all"). And because, as St Benedict notes in his sixth-century rule, God sometimes speaks through the youngest in the community, enabling participation means paying special attention to the timid edges, to the unlikely places, to those outside. This necessarily leads to a recasting of the role of the clergy, in particular revising what one French commentator labelled as the "excessive sacralisation of the person of the priest". In a co-responsible church the Spirit leads us all; the priest and the bishop are in the midst of the people of God, not hovering over them. The important word here is **co-responsible**; if we are to be adult members of the church, we must all be aware of our responsibilities and be prepared to shoulder them. We must leave behind us the days of "pray, pay and obey"; it is no longer necessarily the case that "Father knows best".

This business of consultation and deliberation is not separate from the life of prayer but intrinsic to it. The *habitus* of community decision-making is attentive listening to others, straining for the whispers of the Spirit even in the mouths of people we resent or disagree with. It calls, therefore, for giving time to all, in equal measure, for speaking honestly and boldly but not hammering others with our views, for sitting in peaceful, open silence so that we can hear what words do not always say and can often conceal. Synodality requires us to understand that we do not possess the truth, but that sometimes, when we put aside our emotions and agendas, it possesses us, overflowing the narrow channels of our thinking.

Synodality as participation and prayerful listening are the hallmarks of religious orders' *modus vivendi, operandi, et cogitandi*. It has been used for church elections ever since the apostles asked God to reveal to their hearts who should take the place of Judas. It has been used to transcend problems and conflicts ever since the "Jewish question" threatened to blow apart the early church. Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles relates how, at the Council of Jerusalem, the people, the elders, and the Spirit were all engaged in discerning the new path for the church, announced by St Peter's in those famous words: "It has seemed to the Holy Spirit and to us". It is a process to be found in the deliberations within religious orders and also to be found in other cultures; those who have seen the film *Dancing with Wolves* will remember the portrayal of decision-making processes among Native American tribes.

For reasons of history - the corruption of worldliness, the lure of power, the entanglement with empires - synodality has been squeezed out of the church, leaving its authority structures looking less like what we find in Acts and more like the absolute monarchies and corporate command-and-control structures of the modern world. No one now needs to be told where that got us.

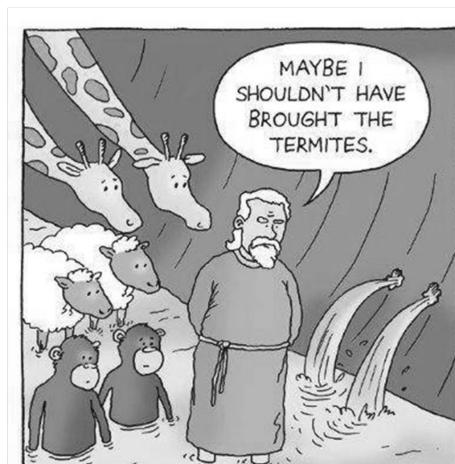
In short, then, synodality is a question of process rather than structure. It is a way of reaching decisions at all levels within the church, and can lead to surprising results, as those of us who have seen the film *Conclave* can testify.

This article has attempted to answer the first two questions in the title. The answer to the third lies in the hands of all of us.

Michael Townson

Staying with the Synod . . . Fr James Martin SJ, an American participant in the synod, shared some lighter moments online. Commenting on the general frugality of the hospitality, he noted an exception. ‘The coffee breaks were excellent. This was probably in view of the fact that we started early and many delegates, who were residing across town, didn’t have time for breakfast. Our snacks included little pizzas, tiny sandwiches, croissants, cookies and pastries of all sorts. “If you want to encourage people to participate in synodality in parishes and dioceses, first you need the Holy Spirit,” one bishop said to me. “Then you need cookies.”’

Staying with Food (but leaving the Synod) . . . Two Catholics lived very good and also very healthy lives. They died and went to Heaven. As they walked along, marvelling at the paradise around them, one turned to the other and said, “Gosh, I never knew Heaven was going to be as good as this!” “Yes,” said the other, “and just think, if we’d eaten more burgers we could have got here 10 years sooner.”



Thank You as always to all our contributors. Your generous willingness to write for us, with or without arm-twisting, is very much appreciated. Please keep the copy coming.

Watch the bulletin for the date of the next copy day.

