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### *Plus Other Features*

#### ***Magazine Team***

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

## Waking up to Mission in a Synodal Church

In the last two years or so Archbishop Bernard Longley has put before us his dream about the archdiocese of Birmingham. His dream statement reads: *'Our vision is to be a Catholic Diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour'*.

With this vision there are four priority themes the archbishop is urging us to reflect on: Evangelization, Formation, Liturgy and Worship and Social Outreach. In view of taking the three local churches along the larger diocesan dream, I would like us, as the parishes of St Joseph-Malvern and the joint parish of Upton and Blackmore Park to seriously start reflecting on where we fit in with the diocesan vision. We need to share our hopes and dreams, with great openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to articulate our specific collective parish vision.

This is a complex task calling for continued prayer and discernment. At this moment I wish to inform the faithful of Malvern, Upton, and Blackmore that I have put together a team of 10 people drawn from across the three churches to work with me in engaging our local church communities on a process of discernment of our mission as a local church.

One of the key words in the diocesan vision is the word 'Mission', calling each one of us to become a missionary disciple. We need to ask ourselves in what way can we become a church intent on mission. It is important for us to note that we cannot at all speak of mission in any traditional sense of a being sent by Christ to the unchurched or the unreached. The mission expected of us is not like we, in the church, have a message for the rest out there. In my formation years in the seminary many years ago, it was heavily drilled into us that ***'There is no salvation outside the church'***. With this saying what mattered was for one to be a member of the church. But when I look at the church today, however, I begin to develop mixed feelings about this dictate which was drilled into us in the church. At times I even begin to wonder whether salvation is really in such a church. You may rather tend to be drawn to thinking that there could be so little salvation in the church. Why do I say this? It

is because the belief that there is no salvation outside the church can only create, as it were, disciples who are 'complacent' and 'self-satisfied'. To a certain extent such disciples will tend to think that they already have a ticket to heaven, for which reason they have let themselves fall asleep. The church itself must change if it wishes to be saved. It must go out into the world and become the church for the world. It must join in the suffering of this world, and share people's suffering, becoming partners with them of the suffering of God in the world.

Moreover, in the mission of today there is a new process of 'flowing out', a new cultural environment in which mission will develop with a complex flow line going in the opposite directions. One can hardly speak of mission as a one-way process just as the walking together of a synodal church is not a one-way process anymore. Why is this? In a synodal church, everyone is at the same time sent, but to him who is sent another is at the same time sent to him. In this process the giver becomes the receiver at the same time. One who shares is left at a different place for what is shared to them.

Mission is no longer a matter of fulfilling the simple command to go out to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel where it has not been heard. We ought to be aware that where our parishes are situated most people have already been touched by Christian belief - there are already Christian believers out there.

I would like therefore to invite everyone in the parishes of St Joseph-Malvern, St Joseph-Upton and Our Lady and St Alphonsus-Blackmore Park to fully take part in making an intentional shift from the traditional of being church to a church community that is geared for mission.

*Fr Naz*

*O Christ, our Morning Star  
Splendour of Light Eternal  
Shining with the glory of the rainbow.*

*Come and waken us  
From the greyiness of our apathy  
And renew in us your gift of hope.*

*The Venerable Bede (671—735)*

## PAC Report

Our parish PAC met on 14<sup>th</sup> January. Our meetings are more frequent than they used to be so that we can take actions and agree responsibilities in a more efficient way. Nazz attends the meetings now and kindly takes the minutes. Each meeting starts with a prayer: it is important that we collect our thoughts and ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our dialogue. Our parish is diverse in so many ways and so is the PAC. This means that we get to hear things from a range of perspectives and they are all equally valid. We listen and we talk, and then we do our best to help Fr Naz in leading the parish.

In the January meeting we looked back at Christmas and looked forward to Archbishop Bernard's visit. We talked about the parish sacramental preparation programmes and recognised the contributions made by a small number of parish catechists who give so freely of their time. In terms of liturgy we are doing our best to guide Fr Naz with the necessary changes around Mass times on Sundays to accommodate his new responsibilities at Upton and Blackmore Park. Change can be difficult but it is also necessary. New Mass times will be announced soon with a good amount of notice given to when the changes will take effect.\*

We talked about the important job that some Eucharistic Ministers have in in taking holy communion to those who cannot get to Mass due to ill-health or mobility issues, age or whatever. This is such an important life-line to many and we need more people to help. The request made for people to offer themselves has been positive and Fr Naz is working with a handful of volunteers so that they know what to do and who to visit etc.

A small group of parishioners is working with Fr Naz and is engaged with Divine Renovation to look at ways of growing our parish. We are a vibrant parish and we want to look outwards in encouraging others to come to us. The generous involvement of the laity is central to the success of being a mission-led church and we talked about some of the ways in which we are working and want to work in the future.

We did talk about a few practical matters such as lights, toilet refurbishment works, the floor in the McEnnis Room and the need to replace the single-glazed windows. For a lot of these capital projects we know that there is funding available but many of us (me

included) are time poor and it is therefore difficult to prepare funding bids. If you can help in this regard please do let me know. Several of the PAC are also school governors so there is a good link between the church and the school. We have been delighted to see the success of the tea and toast initiative drawing in school parents to the church on cold mornings.

The work of the PAC complements what the finance committee does, the work of the liturgy and music group, and the parish office. We have oversight of a lot of what goes on in the parish without duplicating or interfering.

It has been warming to see Deacon Sean with us on a few Sundays, as well as Tony Hartley on placement through January as he prepares for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate. It is my pleasure and privilege to be your PAC Chairman. On a personal note, thank you all for your continued prayers, devotions, and good wishes for my 14-year-old nephew Tom who has cancer and is being treated in Leeds. Every day is very hard for him and his whole family. From 120 miles distance there is not a lot we can do that is practical but we can pray. For that I and my whole family are eternally grateful to all of you. Please continue to ask for the intercession of Blessed Carlos Acutis – that Tom recovers from this horrible disease.

*Edd Hogan PAC Chairman*

*\* The new Mass times have indeed been announced. From 7 April Sunday morning Mass will be at 11am at St Joseph's Malvern and 9am at St Joseph's Upton.*

**P**arish Magazines, despite being common in other denominations, for some reason rarely form part of Catholic parish life. Having one, dare we say, is one of St Joseph's distinctive features. But now we are no longer alone in this part of the world because Malvern can boast two Catholic parish magazines. St Wulstan's first one came out just before Christmas and we'd like to welcome it warmly. It's packed with good things and there are still some copies available at the back of St Wulstan's so do pick one up if you find yourself there. (A donation towards printing costs would be appreciated.) Another edition is expected before Easter.

Could be we'll be swapping the odd article . . .

## How are St Joseph's Finances?

At first glance St Joseph's finances appear to be in a good position. We currently have £168,111.41 in the bank and £180,632.98 in the Archdiocesan investment scheme, which makes a total of £348,744.39.

We have these funds because of legacies left by parishioners in the last eight years. Please remember Meg Robinson, Marie Eamer, Margaret Fahy, Beryl Gaunt, Raymond Bree and two other anonymous donors in your prayers. Between them they gifted the parish £704,661.85.

We have donated £92,000 to the Archdiocese and £32,000 to the school from these funds.

Without these legacies parish finances would, over the last eight years, have been running at a loss of £231,917.46.

### WE HAVE SPENT OVER THE LAST 8 YEARS

	£
Church Property	86,712.84
Church Liturgical / Property	40,780.20
Sound System	14,664.20
Gas & Electricity	61,170.77
Water	5,960.72
Staff Wages	126,528.77
Office Internet & Telephone	6,048.30
Office other expenses	14,553.76
Clergy Costs	43,630.94
Supply Clergy	8,936.30
House Domestic	31,436.25

House Property	11,822.53
House Rates	9,540.21
Archdiocesan Parish Levies	128,134.04
Insurance	12,817.50
Bank Charges	2,725.80

## OUR INCOME HAS BEEN

	£
Offertories Gift Aided	236,858.38
Offertories Non-Gift Aided	89,230.52
Gift Aid tax reclaimed	81,242.44
Donations Gift Aided	18,924.56
Donations Non Gift Aided	23,590.71
100+ Club profit	25,582.50
Room Hire	4,915.00
Bank Interest	2,104.81

This year we have a budget which anticipates a loss of £29,380. This is partly due to increased energy costs e.g. January's gas bill was £1,630.49.

The PAC discussed the financial situation at their last meeting and are looking at ways of increasing our income to secure the future of the parish.

Parishioners have in the last year generously donated £15,795.51 to charities.

***Chris Park, Parish Treasurer***

## **Is it Really More Blessed to Give than to Receive?**

Near the close of his words of exhortation to the Ephesus elders recorded by Luke in Acts 20, the apostle Paul reminded them of something Jesus once said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The problem that many have with Paul’s quotation of Jesus, however, is that it nowhere appears in the gospel accounts, or anywhere else in Scripture outside of Acts 20, and we should not forget that Paul never actually met Jesus in person. According to one Bible critic,

“One of the great misquotes of Paul is found in Acts 20:35 where he says: ‘...ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ Nowhere in the New Testament did Jesus make such a statement.”

Now, the fact that there is no record in the canonical Gospels of Jesus having said this, does not mean that He did not say it; there are, for instance accounts in the so-called ‘Gnostic’ or ‘Apocryphal’ Gospels (e.g. the Gospel of Thomas) of sayings by Jesus which do not feature in the Canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

Jesus did, in fact, say quite a good deal about fasting, alms giving and prayer. Much of the Sermon on the Mount is concerned with prayer and alms giving, but always with the cautionary note “Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” (Mt. 6:1) When it comes to almsgiving and fasting, Jesus’ comments are far from straightforward.

So, is it really more blessed to give than to receive?

What are the conditions under which we might feel moved to give? Well, we hope that we would respond to need, either directly or in response to an appeal or request. Here, the motivation can either be internal (we feel the need/obligation to give) or external (we have been asked to give).

The next question, once we have decided to give, is ‘What?’ or ‘How much?’



In our monetarised society, we tend to think of this in terms of cash, but that is a fairly superficial way of looking at things - sometimes it is more useful to give of our time.

What are we actually doing when we give? At one level, giving is an exercise of power. Like the Pharisee - or Bill Gates - we can use it to demonstrate our wealth and superiority; we can decide what or how much we wish to give and to whom, so we remain in control; very often, we will ensure that our giving does not cost us too much.

With these questions, however, we are jumping ahead of ourselves. Before we can really ask what, or how much we should give, we need to enquire into the source of what we are 'giving'.

The ideology of individual achievement is very strong in modern Western society. If we 'make something' of our lives, we are told it is because of our own efforts. Only a moment's reflection is necessary, however, to show that this is a myth. If we see life as a 'race', it is blatantly obvious that we do not all start from the same starting point. Some people start with a 'silver spoon in their mouths', others with a massive handicap - and that before we even start considering our individual strengths and weaknesses. Our upbringing and our family background (assuming we have the good fortune to be born into a functional family) have a massive role to play in what we make of our lives; much of our later 'success' is due to the encouragement and nurturing of our family and friends - things over which we have little or no control. And then there are the individual talents (gifts, charisms) with which we have been endowed - and which we have done nothing to deserve.

It is clear that God's gifts are not distributed evenly or equitably; if we had an issue with God, that could well be it.

So is it just that some people are 'born lucky', and are able to enjoy a greater share of the fruits of God's bounty? There is a profound irony here, in that 'possessions' or 'property' are seen as bestowing 'rights' on their holders - very often the 'right' to exploit those less well-endowed; there is far less talk of the obligations imposed by property - indeed, much of any discussion there is - e.g. about tax - centres around ways of evading or avoiding the few responsibilities that property-owners have.

It should be clear by now that we do not actually have the right to claim ownership of anything; whatever we regard as ours is in fact a gift; 'all' we can do is share it with others and do our best to redress the imbalances within society. We are after all social beings, and we cannot be 'human' in a vacuum; we are wired to be compassionate, and it is our compassion, our concern for others which lies at the heart of our Christian faith and separates us from the empty values of this world.

So the original question is a non-question. We cannot give what we do not own; in the words of Christina Rossetti, all I can give is my heart - by sharing whatever goods I have received.

*Michael Townson*

## **The Early Years Hub - What is it?**

The Early Years Hub is the pre-school provision at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Malvern

It has three Key Groups

Maple for 2 and 3 year olds

Elm for 3 and 4 year olds for pre-schoolers

Holly for 4 and 5 year old Reception children

The children in Elm and Holly share a large indoor and outdoor area, working together as a Foundation Stage Unit, using the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum developed by the Department of Education. It is organised into seven areas of learning.

The first three Prime areas are

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Communication and Language

Physical Development

These are essential for the children's healthy development and future learning.

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As the children grow, the Prime areas will help them develop skills in four specific areas.

These are

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Art and Design

Other areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum include Religious education where they learn about the Catholic Faith, including celebrations across the year such as Christmas and Easter. The Nativity play is usually a highlight of the Autumn Term, all the children are included which makes for a joyful event, with sometimes the odd unexpected moment! They also learn about other major World religions and their customs.

Physical Development is encouraged in everything we do and there is also a weekly PE lesson and Forest school where the children put on their boots and raincoats if necessary, and go out into the school grounds to explore the environment. This may include den building, looking for flowers or leaves, smelling herbs or harvesting vegetables depending on the season.



*In the Forest School*

Books are at the heart of our curriculum. The children are encouraged to borrow books to read with their families; there are books both in the Hub and the newly refurbished school library. The environment is warm and welcoming and an exciting place for children, parents and educators. In every area, interesting objects



and activities invite closer observation and deeper thinking, allowing the children to test what they know and make sense of what is new.

The children learn alongside each other, play together and help one another, assisted by experienced Early Years practitioners. They can move through the Foundation Stage Curriculum at their own pace.

In order to achieve this we offer

Stimulating and creative play, with a focus on the Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication and Language of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum

Opportunities to develop these skills in the outdoors and indoors

Wrap around care in Breakfast and After school clubs

### **What does a typical day's routine look like?**

8.30-8.40 Arrival and Registration – free play

9.00 Carpet/circle time – phonics

9.30 Free play/continuous provision

11.00 Tidy- up time

Carpet time – Maths / group time

Playground play

11.30 END OF MORNING SESSION

Lunchtime (11.30-12.30 for additional session in Maple & Elm)

## 12.30 START OF AFTERNOON SESSION

1.00 Registration / circle time and worship

1.15 Continuous provision / opportunity for outside play

Tidy-up time

3.00 Singing/story

3.20 Holly home time

3.30 Maple and Elm home time

### **Working with parents**

Working with parents in partnership is important to the approach used by the staff and parental involvement is encouraged. Parents can see the exciting activities their child is doing through Tapestry, our secure online Learning Journal. This is updated with photos and comments in line with the curriculum to build up a record of their child's experience during their time at the Hub.

Funding help is available depending on the age of the child and there is more information in the Early Years Hub prospectus available on the school's website [www.stjoesmalvern.co.uk](http://www.stjoesmalvern.co.uk)

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a visit please contact the school on 01684 573016 or email the school office on [office@stjoesmalvern.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@stjoesmalvern.worcs.sch.uk)

*Chris Park and Maggie Griffiths  
Co-chairs of Governors*



## **How God is in My Life Every Day**

I grew up with two loving parents, my Italian father, and Maltese mum, in a household surrounded by love and God. My mum would always remind me to say my prayers every evening before bed as in the same routine of reminding me to wash my teeth. All very natural and kind. I can hear her reminding me now like it was yesterday. She was a lovely mum. We had a beautiful picture in the hall of the Sacred heart of Jesus and mum would always do the sign of the cross as we left the house.

I have always felt God's presence in my life and always feel looked after, he is always here in everything I do in spirit and in my heart. I went to the most beautiful small Catholic school and having my First Holy Communion and Confirmation are still days I look back on with such happy memories.

When I was very poorly in 1999 and my daughter Daniella was only six years old, I prayed to God to help me get better. He gave me strength. One terrible day when I had my chemotherapy in one arm and a blood transfusion in the other, I felt God's presence by my side and that memory will stay with me forever. I feel privileged to have him in my life.

My latest amazing act of love from God was the job I now have at St Joseph's. My lovely mum died last year and in September I got in touch with Father Naz to arrange my mum's funeral. She was a devout Catholic, so I knew that her funeral had to be held here in Malvern where she had recently moved into a care home. And there it was, the advert. Father Naz was looking for a Parish Administrator. I did smile as our names are the same. Two Nazzs together, one with one z and one with two.

I had the biggest void when my gorgeous mum died and the job I have here at St. Joseph's fills such a void and has helped me to focus on my life without my beautiful mum. I feel mum must have been in cahoots with God and I am forever grateful.

*Nazzarena Wood – Parish Administrator*

## Beyond Narnia

For many people, their first encounter with C.S.Lewis is through the seven books that comprise the Chronicles of Narnia. Very often, that first encounter is also their last, which is a shame because, although the stories of talking beavers, heroic mice, an evil witch and an all-powerful (and frightening!) lion are wonderful, the wider writings of Lewis have so much to offer and to say about God, faith, love and the human condition.

As a regular haunter of charity and other second hand bookshops, some time ago I came across a somewhat battered edition of “A Year with C.S.Lewis”, originally published in 2003. The book provides for every day of the year a reading from Lewis’s various works and I have found it a truly inspiring way to start each day. His writing is lucid, thought-provoking and challenging. He confronts difficult subjects head-on, such as why a loving God permits suffering and want, why free will is an essential part of God’s plan for us and the stumbling block often experienced in understanding the divine mystery of the Holy Trinity.

One may not always agree with his views, and some of what he writes can grate with “modern” sensibilities, but I have found him invaluable as a starting point each morning for me to explore my beliefs and my faith in a way that I would not have done if left to my own devices.

To give but one example, here is an extract from the reading for 21 February: “Free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give us free will? Because free will, although it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. The happiness which God designs ... is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight...”

The book is still in print and available new, but second-hand copies are easy to get hold of. We managed to obtain six second-hand copies online, one for each of our daughters.

If you are looking for a meaningful way to start (or even finish!) your day, you could do worse than give C.S.Lewis a try. This book may lead you to the books from which the extracts are taken, or even to revisit Narnia!

*Michael Peden, Malvern Catenians*

## Bringing the Story to Life



On Good Friday, at 10.30am in the morning, the sun was shining and the sky was blue for the 2023 Worcester Passion Play. A lot of time, effort, rehearsal and thought had gone into this production which was being staged in the middle of Worcester. Having Starbucks and Five Guys in the wings was a juxtaposition but having the cathedral as the backdrop made up for this. The cast, drawn from around Worcester, included Canon Brian – a Pharisee, and the Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, who played the part of the thief who didn't show repentance.

Ironically, the previous day Bishop John had been in York with the King for the Royal Maundy service so had gone from being at the King's right hand side one day, to being crucified on the street, alongside Christ the next.

A Passion Play is the traditional retelling of Jesus' passion – from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem right through to the Resurrection. The cast is drawn from the local area and is made up of all kinds of people, none of whom are actors as such. There were a lot of children in this performance too. Care is taken with the script and the costumes. At times it is highly realistic and deeply moving.

The city centre was full – young and old – and everyone listened intently as the passion was played out – the scheming of the religious elders, the thirty pieces of silver, doubting Thomas, the weeping women, Simon of Cyrene being dragged up to help carry the cross, through the pitiful last words of Jesus on the cross. Following the crucifixion there was a sombre mood and the narrator took over briefly. In time Jesus appeared in a brilliant white garment and provided reassurance to Mary Magdalene who then realised who was standing next to her. Jesus then appeared to the disciples and to Thomas, who put his fingers in the holes, just as it is written in John 20:24-29.



After a time surrounded by his disciples, Jesus beckons to Peter to ‘feed my lambs’ and ‘feed my sheep’. Peter accepts this role. With that Jesus walked through the crowd and left the stage. The narrator completed the story with conviction. The last line was delivered – “Search for me, for I am there.” A heartfelt and lasting applause filled the square. It was clear that this Passion Play had made an impact: it brought the story to life.

*Edd Hogan*

*The Passion Play takes place again this year, Good Friday 29 March, 10.30 am in the Cathedral Square.*

## **Our Stations of the Cross**

Sometimes it takes a stranger’s eye to make you see the familiar anew. That was my experience after the Unity Service at St Joseph’s in January, when I found myself chatting to a visitor who was clearly very taken with our Stations of the Cross and was busily photographing every one of them. They are indeed strikingly different from the stations found in most Catholic churches, but chatting to our visitor made me realise that, while aware of their devotional significance, especially at this time of year, I was no longer really seeing them and could no longer properly remember how we acquired them. Weren’t they copies of panels from a medieval door somewhere? Italy probably but maybe Germany? I did remember that Mgr Patrick Kilgarriff, our parish priest from 2004 to 2018, was behind their installation, but very little more. So here for anyone equally forgetful, or new to the parish since 2010, is a little of the history.

There is in fact no requirement for a Catholic church to have Stations of the Cross, though most do. Their origin lies in the ancient pilgrim practice of the Via Dolorosa, following Jesus’s path from Pilate’s house to Calvary, a practice brought to Europe for those unable to travel to Jerusalem by the Franciscans, the custodians of the Holy Places, in the late Middle Ages. These representations of the Way of the Cross were all outdoors and of variable number. Their standardisation into the 14 stations we know and their installation inside churches only dates back to the mid eighteenth century, and

even then the church had to have Franciscan connections. It was only in the mid nineteenth century that all churches were permitted to have them, just nicely in time for their installation in St Joseph's when it was built some 20 years later, in 1876.

As far as I remember those were fairly ordinary Victorian stations, in a fairly ordinary (though much loved) little Victorian church. When the church was extended in 1997 it ceased to be ordinary, and the side walls moved outwards and the roof above the extensions moved downwards. There was no longer room for the original stations, and for a while we had none at all. Then a parishioner, John McGregor, collected appropriate reproductions of Old Masters as a temporary measure, but they were little more than postcard size and difficult to see. When in 2004 Fr Pat, a member of the Archdiocesan Historic Churches Committee and with a keen eye for beautiful churches and their contents, arrived as parish priest he was soon on the lookout for replacements.

Having decided on the grounds of cost against his favourite idea of commissioning an original set from a contemporary artist, he investigated various suppliers here and in Rome, but rejected their wares as either insipid or mostly, in his own words, 'shoddy and second rate'. Then, on a trip to Italy, he saw a relief of the Crucifixion in a shop window in Assisi, and made enquiries. He was told it was one of the stations of the cross made by a local artist, based on some of the panels



*The Crucifixion—as portrayed on the door in Verona on the left  
and the version in St Joseph's on the right*

on the bronze doors of the church of San Zeno Maggiore in Verona, and made of resin treated to look like bronze. The doors date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and may have originated in Hildesheim in Germany. Fr Pat duly commissioned a set of stations from the local artist, of a size to fit on St Joseph's walls. He included a fifteenth station, the Resurrection, which had been added to the familiar fourteen by Pope St John Paul II a decade before, in 2000.

Back home the parish was introduced to the new stations by means of a display of photos in the narthex. Predictably opinions were mixed – as Fr Pat said, personal tastes vary. There was a feeling that they were very dark, but he was able to reassure parishioners that the actual stations would be a gold colour, rather than the weathered dark green in the photos. Also he had been assured by an architect that it would be relatively easy to light each station individually.

There was of course the matter of cost. The stations cost £200 each, and individuals and families were invited to pay for one. The money was provided willingly, and the stations were installed in time for Lent in 2010 and have been in use ever since – though as yet unlit. Fr Pat had hoped for 'strong, thought-provoking images'. I think it could be fairly said that he had succeeded in providing those.

And what of our photographing visitor, Ian Long from the Elim Church? These are the thoughts they provoked in him.

I am an artist by training, so whenever I enter a place of worship, I always look out for the visual imagery celebrating our Christian faith. I love your Stations of the Cross images for several reasons - they are beautifully composed, their colour makes one focus upon each symbolic element of the stage, and their squareness creates an interesting constraint which works well.

I intend to use them on Facebook in the run up to Easter week to help people reflect on the significance of our Lord's loving sacrifice. I am also translating the Bible into a visual version, verse by verse, so I am always on the look out for new ideas and interpretations of the Gospels.

There will of course be Stations of the Cross every Friday throughout Lent, led by different parish groups, when we too can reflect on the significance of what they portray.

*Margaret Rank*

## **“Two Bishop Sunday”**

On Sunday 21 January 2024 the RC parish of St Joseph, Malvern, had the rare privilege of hosting two bishops to two separate events. In the morning the RC Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, celebrated 10 o'clock Mass with us and confirmed four of our young people. In the afternoon the Anglican Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, was preacher at Malvern's annual ecumenical service to mark Church Unity week, which this year was in St Joseph's for the first time. To have bishops of two different communions visit one church on the same day must be a rare co-incidence for any parish. St Joseph's was honoured and delighted and gave all the visitors, including the two bishops, a warm welcome.

The confirmation mass was very well attended and meticulously planned. It was colourful with red vestments, two new orange/red banners symbolising the fire of the Holy Spirit and the lively music of our resident band of musicians who, though playing very diverse instruments, come together under capable direction from the piano keyboard to produce an amazing and inspiring sound. The archbishop spoke warmly, gently and supportively to the candidates, and to us all in the congregation. It was a dignified, and very appropriate, concelebrated Mass.

As the clergy and altar servers were in procession down the aisle after Mass a number of children in school uniform joined them and led them out of the church, across the playground and into St Joseph's school. Archbishop Bernard had been requested to formally open the new Pam Taylor Library at St Joseph's School. I didn't witness this part of the day's ceremonies but am sure the children and the archbishop were happy in one another's company. His Grace clearly enjoys relating to the people around him. Once relieved of his vestments he was soon chatting to parishioners over a coffee in the McEnnis Room, a regular social feature of our Sunday mornings here at St. Joe's.

The afternoon's ecumenical service was scheduled to begin with a cup of tea and slice of cake! Parishioners and visitors began crowding in to the McEnnis Room again mid-afternoon to mingle and get to know one another before the service began. Once in church we filled almost every available seat. I was really conscious of the fact that there were no children. I also noticed the preponderance of grey hair, but the



camaraderie was evident. We are all believers in God who made us and for this act of worship were united. We sang six hymns, some familiar, some new. The chair of Churches Together in Malvern was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced each prayer, reflexion and hymn with clarity and

gentle authority. Clergy and parishioners of 13 different Christian organizations in Malvern had speaking parts. Bishop John Inge was the invigorating preacher, basing his sermon on love for all, citing the parable of the Good Samaritan. The service was designed and written by the churches of Burkina Faso, far away, but became an inspirational experience of unity, here, in Malvern.

As it happens our Archbishop and the Bishop of Worcester are known to be good friends who have organised more than one joint pilgrimage consisting of equal numbers of pilgrims who are Anglican and others who are Roman Catholic. I can't help wondering if they met for lunch.

I don't know about that, but I do know that on "Two Bishop Sunday" our beautiful church was full of Christian love, and I thank God for the people in it and our ability to welcome others. The two bishops can't be with us every day, but we can follow their example and inspiration every day. God be with all of us.

PS. The start of the United Service was spectacular; a spectacle devised by Fr Naz! First an African woman in the congregation processed up the aisle elegantly balancing a clay pot of water on her head. Father then announced that water was important for greeting guests, either for their consumption and/or for cleansing, and proceeded to liberally and enthusiastically "cleans" each member of the congregation. We all got wet!



*Margaret Allen*

## **‘Two Bishop Friday’**

### **Discipleship and Mission of the Laity in the Church Today**

*Organised by the Newman Association at St George's Worcester, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The talk brought together John Inge, Anglican Bishop of Worcester and Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham and was chaired by John Duddington.*

Following the introductions Bishop John was asked to open the event with prayer based on St Wulstan, whose Feast Day was that very day, 15<sup>th</sup> January. In the course of his brief introduction, he offered some significant facts... St Wulstan died on that day in 1059. He was the last Saxon Bishop and committed himself tirelessly to the poor. In this respect his whole ministry was one of service. Cardinal Newman, in whose name the event had been organised, began life as a devout Anglican but completed it as a devout Catholic. As an Anglican he would be critical of aspects of the Catholic Faith, but then, as a Catholic, he would be equally critical of aspects of the Anglican Faith. Bishop John was a great friend of Archbishop Bernard. They had been jointly involved in promoting the Christian faith through such initiatives as leading pilgrimages together. In his early years of ministry, Bishop John had great hopes that both traditions would be brought together and considered it a sin that they should be allowed to exist apart in the way that they were. It was imperative that they worked towards understanding. Only by true listening would this come about. Although now less certain that his dream would be fulfilled in his lifetime, he lived in hope that the Holy Spirit would, one day, bring it to fruition.

Archbishop Bernard began his talk by explaining that Pope Francis was committed to synodality. Currently the Synod in Rome had reached its half-way stage and it was hoped that, when re-convened, it would further stress the importance of listening to promote understanding of what it means to be a faithful follower in the spirit of Christ.

Archbishop Bernard emphasised that it was through baptism that we are all incorporated into the Body of Christ. In this respect we are all first and foremost part of the laity. As such we are called to make the church present and faithful to everyone. The lives of the faithful can never be passive. We are to be at the forefront of society and involved in the life

of the church. The process of synodality has given fresh impetus to the church. We are all uniquely different. Differences between church traditions have been noted. A commitment to dialogue has been significant.

Bishop John, in his talk, began by saying that synodality and the role of the laity is well known to Anglicans, but that it is not the answer to all problems. The laity have long had input into decision making but the suggestion that ‘clericalism’ is a big problem is not specific to the Roman Catholic church. There is a need to tackle the shift in culture and way of life today and work together to evangelise where possible. Certainly, the value and witness of the laity needs to be seen in terms of their status and worth.

### **Questions/Observations from the floor were invited...**

*How do you see the above in practical terms?*

There is a need to **focus outwards**. The laity needs to be actively involved in the church and to be ‘face to face’ with the world in demonstrating the life of the church. Many are already doing this, for example in Food Banks and as street pastors.

This **‘coming-together in the service of others’** is very important. But there is a reluctance to talk about our faith, evolving from deep cultural roots. In these contexts, **we need to speak confidently about our faith.**

*How long will it take to bring about the ordination of women?*

It is a priority of Pope Francis to look at the place of women in the church. As baptised people, women and men are equal in the eyes of God. There are cultural differences that continue from the past. It is vitally important to appreciate family life as the domestic church. The way that a couple love one another as different individuals is reflected in the life of the church. There is an evolving recognition that administrative structures depend on both men and women. In a recent study it was noted that men represent 47per cent of those engaged in parish service, whilst 53 percent are women.

*When do you think we might expect full unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics?*

Bishop John thought that it was a disgrace that, as baptised people of God, there has not been a greater coming together. He acknowledged

that this would probably not happen in his lifetime. However, the Lord Harris Report showed that there was a shift in consciousness towards the fact that Anglicans and Catholics belong together.

### *How can Unity move forward?*

There are lots of positives. In Worcestershire there are many examples of the churches working together, ministers of different denominations working side by side being one.

It was noted that Covid has had a negative affect on church communities. There has been a two-third to three quarter fall in congregations. A couple of experiments in turning off live streaming did not prove a success. Numbers did not show a significant increase and the sick and housebound were excluded from taking part at least virtually. It was observed that live-stream participation plus church attendees allowed for a greater number of people to experience church services. One positive suggestion was to encourage the setting up of welcoming-back celebrations.

In conclusion, it was thought that continued dialogue between the two churches should be approached in terms of relationship. Listening and understanding differences would build trust and increase understanding.

*Chris Burger*

Chris has faithfully reported the content of the evening. I personally found the evening interesting and worthwhile, and notable for its degree of ecumenical warmth, personified in the evident friendship between the two bishops. I left however with no clearer picture of the role of the laity in the future of the church than I had when I went in, and it would be fair to say there was a degree of exasperation among sections of the audience. ‘How do you see the church in 25 years’ time?’ and ‘Do you think we need a total collapse, after which we could build again?’ were other questions, which elicited only rather vague answers. ‘They haven’t got a plan’ and ‘when are they going to face up to things?’ were comments heard afterwards. Archbishop Bernard said that the laity can never be passive. Clearly the audience at St George’s that evening didn’t want to be.

*Margaret Rank*



## **Prison Service**

I have been asked to write an article about my experience in working in the prison service.

From 2003 – 2018 I served on the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB) of two prisons. The job of the IMB is to ensure that the prison on which it is serving is run on the standard set by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Each board consists of members of the general public drawn from an area of no more than 20 miles radius from the prison, although this is not always possible. Every prison and youth offenders' institute has an IMB. We are appointed by the MoJ on a voluntary basis but can claim travelling expenses from home to prison and in certain cases lack of earnings if a member had to take time out from regular employment.

Every prison is given a category ranging from A to D, A being a maximum high security and D being an open prison. The first prisons I served in were HMP Stocken, which is a men's category C training prison in county Rutland just off the A1, and HMP Long Lartin in the Vale of Evesham, which is a men's maximum high security prison category A and contains some of the most dangerous men in the country.

Each prison is run by a governor. He or she would have senior managers or deputy governors in charge of various parts of the prison. Under them would be junior managers responsible to the deputies for their areas of responsibility.

The average length of sentence of prisoners at HMP Stocken would be three to four years. These prisoners are mostly persistent burglars, thieves, drink and drug offenders, or motoring offences and certain types of domestic abuse.

HMP Long Lartin has prisoners on sentences of at least 15 years and a lot more. These would be serial killers, those who have committed serious sexual crimes, drug dealers, and dangerous thieves.

How does the IMB work? We have the right to enter any part of the prison except prisoners' cells. To do this we can draw keys to get us through any gate or door except those gates controlled centrally. We cannot alter any decisions made in the prison at whatever level. We can enquire why decisions were made and if necessary can ask to see any paperwork involved in making them. On the other hand, we can go above

the main governor to the minister if there is an issue that is not being dealt with satisfactorily and is affecting the running of the prison. Fortunately, in the two prisons I worked in we never had to do this.

On a weekly basis monitoring would include an inspection of parts of the prison when we would be looking at how well the prison is functioning. Inspections would include the kitchen, its cleanliness, tidiness, the cooking facilities, washing up areas, and drains. If we are in the kitchen just before the food was put into heated trollies prior to them going to the wings where the prisoners live we would taste the food. Long gone are the days when prisoners' diet was watery porridge and a crust of bread. Prisoners' food is of a high standard. It is prepared and cooked by prisoners overseen and helped by a professional cook. There were very few complaints from prisoners about the food they received.

Other areas for inspection used to be education, the gym and its equipment which you would find in gyms outside, medical centre, dentist, the chaplaincy, visits area where prisoners can meet their families, the workshops where prisoners are taught various skills such as painting and decorating, bricklaying, certain computer skills and woodwork. Some of the items made in this shop such as benches and tables are of the highest quality. A lot of these would go to charities. Prisoners make certain small items for their families.

In addition to the weekly rota visits each member of the board would be given two areas of special responsibility. At Long Lartin mine were the chaplaincy and the visits area. We would visit each one monthly and spend more time than on a weekly rota visit.

We used to meet all prisoners on arrival and explain to them who the IMB are and what we do. All prisoners can ask to see us if they have a matter they wish to discuss with us. Some were more complicated than others and required a lot of work on our part to help. Medical and legal problems were beyond our remit and competence.

HMP Long Lartin has a large segregation wing. We see all segregated prisoners once a week. When I did duty in the segregation wing I used to attach myself to the doctor's round to make less work for the staff on duty because we had to see the prisoner with the cell door opened. If I went on my own it would have meant an officer coming with me to open the prisoner's cell door. I held back if a prisoner wanted to

discuss a medical matter with the doctor. If the prisoner wanted to see me I used to go back and talk with him through his closed door. Twice a week an IMB member attends a meeting when prisoners in segregation are interviewed by a board consisting of a chaplain, mental health nurse and an officer on the wing chaired by an assistant governor.

I hope this account gives you an idea of the work I was doing as an IMB member. As I have left the IMB some of the details in this account may have changed.

I want to finish by saying how impressed I was by the hard work and dedication of the prison officers working with prisoners. I used to tell them this when I visited the wings. It's not an easy job and they do it well.

*Roger Watson*

### **Prayer to St Anthony**

*St Anthony, most famous in his lifetime for his preaching, and well known as the finder of lost objects, is also one of the patron saints of prisoners because he organised the abolition of some debtors' prisons and the release of prisoners of war.*

Dear Saint Anthony, I am imprisoned by walls of selfishness, prejudice, suspicion. I am enslaved by human respect and the fear of other people's opinions of me. Saint Anthony, Liberator of Prisoners, tear down my prison walls. Break the chains that hold me captive. Make me free with the freedom Christ has won for me.

**S**everal of our parishioners volunteer with Malvern Hills Food Bank. Here is a snippet from the Food Bank newsletter.

We are sometimes asked how we ensure that our clients are genuinely in need. Thanks to Trussell Trust we have an extremely detailed and efficient system of referral. In almost every case our clients are referred to us by agencies like CAB, councils, schools, housing authorities, social services, medical agencies etc. The clients will have had an interview relating to their situation and be referred on to us. At the same time they will be helped by the agency. Our data base records details of the client's situation plus every visit made to us so we have a clear idea of his or her needs and progress. We also monitor the number of visits to ensure the service is not being taken advantage of, but fortunately this is very rare.

## **Journey to the Priesthood**

*The second talk given by Fr Naz to the Thursday Group about his life in Malawi*

When Naz was about eight years old a black priest came to visit his village. This was a shock because he thought that only white men could become priests. He liked this priest very much, he was very personable and even played games with them. The realisation that Naz could become a priest meant that a seed was planted in his mind. (In fact this priest was to become his mentor when he was first ordained.) Towards the end of Year Four of his primary school the boys of his school were asked if they were interested in attending the preparatory seminary where they could learn to be a priest. After consulting his father Naz registered his name, went for an interview, signed and was accepted to study there. At that time the fees were £1.10.00 a year, which was a lot of money for his father to find, but he was pleased that his son would have a good education.

Naz joined what was a minor seminary in 1969 after he completed his primary school, the first boy in his village to go to a boarding school. Some of his father's friends thought that he was crazy spending all that money on a boy's education. When at this school Naz recalls that he was moved by a hymn that they sang there, "Lord, here I am if you want to use me . . ."

When Naz was 18 years old he changed his mind about the priesthood and tried to leave the school because he had a girlfriend! He spoke to the principal who was very supportive and suggested that he stayed at the seminary to finish his education rather than waste it by leaving, but he need not become a priest. At the end of his time at the seminary during the last year all the boys filled in application forms to go to a major seminary to read philosophy or to university. He loved the idea of studying philosophy and he abandoned his aspirations to study agriculture in a state college.

His girlfriend was the daughter of his father's best friend, but he decided to give her up because she was a hinderance to his studies and he also needed time to think. His father offered great opposition because Naz was the first born and the expectation in their culture was for the first-born male to take responsibility for the rest of the family and to have children. His father tried to have Naz "kicked out" of the seminary by arranging to give a dowry of cows to the girl's family,

which amounted to a commitment to marriage. A son cannot confront his father head on within their culture, they have to use a “go between”, so he told his brother that if Dad paid the dowry Dad must marry the girl himself. His father stepped back to allow him to make up his own mind, but Naz was also getting pressure from the local parish priest who was pushing him into the priesthood. Again, he went through another “go between” to confront the local priest, telling him that it should be his decision, not his father’s or the priest’s.

He went to the major seminary and loved it there. Every year the students had to go on a placement, and his first placement after completing one year in the major seminary was with a Dutch priest who sent him out into a very rural village church on his own for a period of two weeks. The people loved him and demonstrated great appreciation for his desire for the priesthood. The support of these rural people became a great source of inspiration to take his studies to the priesthood seriously. The young Naz experienced the people’s great need for him to become a priest. This need ignited a great passion for the priesthood in Naz. Those two weeks were a peak moment on his journey to becoming a priest. From that moment Naz knew that he was destined to become a priest. He prayed about it a lot and put his energy into his formation programme.

Something else happened during this first-placement with the Dutch priest. He was a chain smoker which delighted the youthful Naz because he had just taken on the habit of smoking heavily to assert himself as an adult. The Dutch priest was delighted to have a passionate smoker in his community, and he pushed a lot of cigarettes on him. As it turned out Naz became very ill from intense smoking which is what he needed to be rescued from it. He stopped smoking there and then and has never gone back to it.

Naz spent six years at the seminary and in that time his old girlfriend married a cousin of his and so she still came into the extend Mgungwe family. When Fr Naz was ordained, he spoke about the pressure put upon him by his father, girlfriend and the priest to give a lesson to other young people thinking of becoming priests that becoming a priest means overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of responding to one’s vocation.

His mother was very influential in his life because of her faith and her belief in the power of prayer. In Malawi people go to confession before

mass and at his first mass in his village he saw his mother in the queue coming to him for confession. He was very uncomfortable with the idea of her confessing to him but he had no room to stop her. For her she was not coming to her son but to the priest for confession. That was a hard lesson for Fr Naz to learn.

Fr Naz's first parish was a village where he was for 14 months and he was in his second parish for one year. He then studied in Cork in Ireland for three years during which time he also studied in Canada for a short time.

*Di Walsh*

*Watch out for the final part of Fr Naz's talk, where he describes returning to Malawi and a far from quiet life, in the next edition.*

## **Displacement**

For most of their history, human beings have led a nomadic life-style. It is only with the dawning of agriculture some 10,000 years ago that we have generally switched to a more sedentary way of living - and in fact now there is often discrimination against those who prefer not to 'settle down'.

Notwithstanding this trend, the nomadic tradition still remains; it has been calculated that just over one in thirty people in the world do not live in the country of their birth, and the number rises considerably when we count in those who have moved away from their place or region of birth.

There are a myriad of reasons why people move away from their place of origin. There have been large-scale migratory movements illustrated by the "out of Africa" theory regarding the origins of *Homo sapiens*. According to this well-established hypothesis, the human species, having evolved to its modern form in East Africa some 150,000 years ago, thereafter embarked on populating the entire globe in a stepwise migration process beginning about 70,000–90,000 BC. One of the motives behind this could have been the urge to colonise new areas.

When we look at the movement or displacement of people, we can perhaps distinguish three categories. There is first of all voluntary migration, motivated by the desire for a better life and seen for example in the movement of European colonists seeking their

fortunes in the so-called 'New World'. At the other extreme we have those who have been forcibly displaced, the prime example here being the 12 million Africans shipped across the Atlantic to work as slaves in the American plantations from the 16th to 19th centuries. Of those 12 million, over 1.5 million did not survive the journey, and the average life expectancy of the survivors was only around 10 years. We are having to deal with the double legacy of this as we firstly re-examine our colonial past and secondly as we scrutinise our treatment of the so-called 'Windrush Generation' as the ancestors of the original slaves were brought back across the Atlantic to a new round of menial tasks.

Between these two categories, we have a more disparate grouping of those who have been forcibly displaced by war, persecution, famine, so-called 'natural disasters' and - to an increasing extent - the consequences of climate change.

Just the last 250 years have seen massive forced displacements of populations.

We could start in these islands with the 15,000 Highland Scots who were shipped off to Australia, New Zealand and Canada in the wake of the Highland Clearances, followed by the 1.5 million Irish forced out of their homes by the Great Famine.

After the First World War, about 700,000 Armenians were 'displaced'; at the end of the Second World War there were 65 million displaced people in Europe. The partition of India led to some 14 million people being forced from their homes and communities. The foundation of the state of Israel led to the displacement of 85% of the native Palestinians population, many of whom, and their descendants, are still languishing in refugee camps in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon. Events in Gaza remind us that displacement is not a one-off historical event, but is part of an ongoing historical process. India was partitioned in 1947, but there are still refugees fleeing to Bangladesh 75 years later.

Meanwhile, new sources of conflict and misery are opening up. The recent flare-up of hostilities in Sudan has led to 7.1 million people being forced to flee their homes to other parts of the country, while another million have sought refuge in neighbouring Chad.

We cannot deal with big numbers; millions and hundreds of thousands mean little to us. We need to see things on a human scale, to realise that behind every statistic there is death and disability, families torn apart, homes and livelihoods wrecked, futures and human dignity destroyed. It

is only when we get down to the individual human scale that we can identify with the suffering inflicted. The picture of a dead three-year old on the beach of Lampedusa will affect us more than all the United Nations statistics, shocking though they are.

Few topics are more likely to get people hot under the collar today than 'refugees and asylum seekers'. 'We' are seen as being threatened by invasion by alien hordes endangering our sacred way of life. However, we need to get the figures into perspective; most refugees stay close to home, because they live in the hope of return. Turkey takes more refugees than any other country, and only 10% of the world's refugees are located in the EU, although this number is now being inflated by those fleeing from the war in Ukraine.

It would be good to think that as Christians we are immune from negative thoughts and attitudes about refugees and asylum-seekers, but that is not necessarily the case. We are happy enough to donate to ChristianAid or Cafod, but how do we react when the needy stranger comes knocking on our door? How many of us would follow the householder in Luke:7 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' It is only when we can make the leap of imagination to realise that behind these statistics are parents and grandparents, children and grandchildren, that we can mobilise our humanity and remember that Joseph, Mary and Jesus were refugees, recollecting the words Jesus put in the King's mouth: 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matt. 25:40)

*Michael Townson*

Every migrant has a name, a place and a story, as well as an inalienable right to live in peace and to aspire to a better future for their sons and daughters

*Pope Francis*

**T**hank You as always to our contributors. Please keep the copy coming and watch the bulletin for the next copy date.