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Plus Other Features

Magazine Team

Margaret Rank

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

Enhancing General Levels of Involvement in the Life of the Parish

I would like to thank the people of the parish for their keen interest and willingness to take an active part in the recent deliberations called for by the Holy Father on Walking Together and listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. St Joseph's church community is known for great levels of involvement. One of the points touched upon during the synodal discussions as well as at various forums of the parish Evangelisation Group has been to give an opportunity to the people of the parish to undergo an audit of charisms. In our church, we believe that the Holy Spirit gives all baptised Christians particular graces for their personal benefit as well as for the greater good of all in the parish and beyond. The anchor of the synodal process has been the importance of listening to the promptings of the Spirit from whom we draw particular "charisms of the Holy Spirit." Charisms are primarily given for the benefit of the entire People of God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also explains charisms by describing them as "*a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms*" (CCC 800).

St. Paul explains how each person receives particular charisms that help build up the body of Christ. For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (*Romans 12:4-8*). Here is a short list of some of the charisms: teaching, administration, discernment, knowledge, wisdom, craftsmanship, writing, music, and missionary. These charisms are not always immediately evident and at times differ from a person's natural talents.

Discernment is fundamental in discovering a person's charism(s) and requires both internal and external validation. For example, a

charism is often found when a person experiences interior peace when engaged in an activity related to the charism. Also, the Holy Spirit usually works through other people to validate a person's charism, encouraging them to pursue it, even when that person does not know they are actively trying to discover their charism.

One of the most helpful tools to discern your particular charism is through the *"Called and Gifted"* workshop. The workshop is offered by the St. Catherine of Siena Institute. This can be conducted individually, or through a study group in a parish. However, it is never truly divorced from the guidance of others, as a one-on-one interview with a charism guide is included in the discernment process. However a person discerns their charism, it can be one of the most life-changing events. Confident in the gifts God has given them, a person who knows their charism is ready and equipped to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and serve their particular mission in the body of Christ. It is for this reason that I would like the PAC and other forums in the parish to discuss and find ways we can establish a mechanism for some form of a workshop for the people of the parish to undergo an audit of their charism with the intention of promoting greater involvement in the life of the parish.

Fr Naz

Angelus Prayer

The first of a series of contributions in this edition focusing on the spiritual life of the parish outside the mass and the sacraments. Look out also for the Gospel Share, Angelus and Contemplative groups, and also Thursday's eucharistic adoration. All add to the richness of the parish's spiritual life and all would welcome you if you would like to join them..

During Lockdown the One World Group decided to get together to pray the midday Angelus every Saturday through the medium of Zoom. Subsequently other members of the parish joined us and for the moment the prayer over zoom continues. So Saturdays at 12 midday we recite the Gospel words reminding us of the moment when Our Lady consented to allow God to become man through her. This is often followed by a reflection on the gospel for the day and by prayers for the parish. Anyone else who would like to join us is most welcome. Please contact Francesca Townson: f.townson@btinternet.com.

Report from the PAC

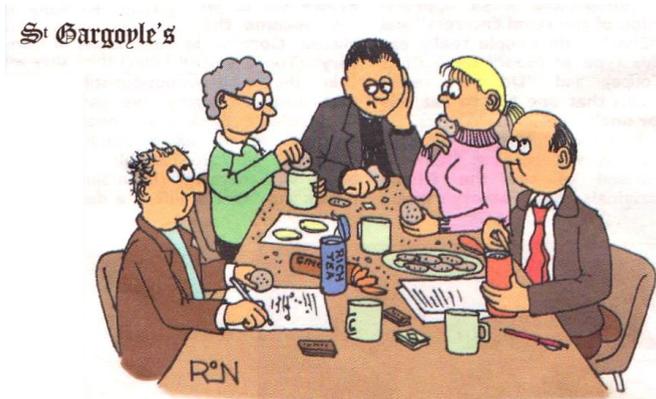
The first PAC meeting of the new term took place on 18th September. This was the first I'd chaired in about six years having not been part of the PAC for a while. We began with a prayer and a welcome. The biggest change I noticed from my last tenure as Chair was that it was much less formal now: we sat together in an arc rather than around a table. The meeting still had structure and purpose but it had a much more collaborative feel to it. We discussed the events of the past few months (over the summer), the connections with the school and what they are doing at the moment, and the parish finances. We have funded some big projects lately including the new boiler. We moved on to talk about the sacramental programme and the upcoming confirmation Mass. The first holy communion programme is flourishing and it was good to hear how parents have a much bigger role in introducing children to elements of the faith as part of that.

It is incredibly helpful to have PAC members who also volunteer with maintenance, finance, liturgy/sacraments, and so on as we can bring all these different elements together under the PAC to join things together. There are a number of maintenance and housekeeping matters on the 'to do' list and these will be worked through. All of this contributes to make our church premises fit for all those that use it – far beyond those that come to Mass. We are a church community and sometimes we can lose focus about the community element. We talked about weekday Mass times, the 'right' age for confirmation, praying for vocations and altar servers. We also discussed car park markings, opening up as a warm space in the winter months, contactless giving, purchasing a defibrillator for the church, and other practical things. Finally we began to talk about the upcoming parish 150th anniversary in 2026 and how we might mark this: more on this in the coming months (and years).

The contributions of each of the PAC members is valued and important. By coming together and pooling our thoughts, ideas, and priorities we can help Fr Naz to lead us on our continuing journey together. At a parish level I am convinced that we are a Synodal church. We are well placed to push outwards from this base into the wider community, as we already do in so many ways, to build bridges, bring Christ into people's lives and to live out the Gospel message.

So we move into Advent and then Christmas, and 2023 beckons. I did propose an outdoor Christmas Eve Mass but sadly this was not met with resounding approval this year so our Christmas Masses and services will be inside the church. I'm sure you'll be relieved to hear that!

Edd Hogan Chair, PAC



The meeting of the sub-committee (biscuits) went on into the night

The Love Story Continues

Where are we on the Synodal Pathway?

Earlier this year, there was a flurry of activity in parishes across the land as they prepared their submissions for the synodal pathway exercise.

You might remember that the parishes in our cluster - St Joseph's Malvern, Blackmore Park, St Wulstan's and St Joseph's Upton responded with a document in which we were asked for our vision of the Church of the future. This was our response:

“The dream might be for a Church cast in the mould of Vatican II, i.e. a Church of equals engaging positively with the world, a Church of people with an informed deep faith engaging actively with spiritual, theological and liturgical issues, a Church based on vibrant small

groups served by a broader-based ministerial priesthood drawn from all the constituencies within the Church, a Church that shows Jesus the Christ to the world by its life of prayer and commitment.”

In the meantime, the individual dioceses have synthesised the responses from their parishes, and the bishops of England and Wales have prepared a ‘national synthesis’ as their input to the process which will culminate in a synod in Rome in the next two years.

As a parish we have not been asked for our response to either the diocesan or the national synthesis. However, this should not stop us firstly from engaging critically and constructively with these documents and secondly from exploring how to realise our dream at the local level, which is where we live our faith. As the conclusion to the National Synthesis puts it:

“responsibility for conversion ... must be assumed by all in response to the gifts the Spirit has already poured out on all the faithful. The Church is the body of all those who are baptised in Christ and have encountered Him; His mission is ours. Now the synod asks us to make good that truth. The journey calls us out into the deep, into a more active faith stirred by an attentive listening to the Spirit in and through all of the baptised. It asks us to hear and respond without waiting for this or that change or new structure, confident that, in awakening to our co-responsibility, the reforms will follow.”

In other words, there is a job to be done, and the job is to strengthen and deepen our faith, not as an end in itself, but so that we can exercise the “co-responsibility and missionary discipleship to which all the baptised are called”. The purpose of the synodal journey is to “enable the Church more fruitfully to fulfil the mission of evangelisation”. The goal is a “synodal Church in which the faithful assemble, listen and discern”. Such a Church is also “more likely to recognise Christ in the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth”.

A keyword is “co-responsibility”, a turning away from a top-down structure, in which decision-making and initiative are no longer seen as the prerogative of a clergy who do things to the laity rather than with them, a turning away from a structure in which the laity are not required to exercise any responsibility beyond caring for their own personal salvation. The attitude that ‘we will leave it to Father’ is still

widespread, even though Canon Law states that “the Christian faithful have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters that obtain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known.”

Another keyword is “inclusion”; as one submission put it, we are to be bridge-builders rather than castle-defenders, we are not only to reach out to those outside the Church, but also to give full status to those inside the Church, so that those who are excluded by virtue of their gender, their sexual orientation, their marital status are welcomed into the fold and encouraged to play a full part in the life of the Church. The Church’s mission cannot be separated from its interior life.

Many of those who have engaged in the synodal process have expressed a desire for formation in Church teaching, in scripture and in spirituality, because only those with a firm grounding in their faith can fulfil their mission of evangelisation.

Those who drew up the diocesan and national syntheses were often faced with the unenviable task of ‘squaring the circle’, and it must be said that the synodal exercise has been met with a certain amount of cynicism and false expectations; the Catholic Church is not a democratic institution in the accepted sense of the word, and, despite what Vatican II said about the Holy Spirit speaking through all the faithful, clericalism and hierarchical thinking are still rife within it. It was inevitable that the syntheses produced should meet with criticism.

A group of theologians based in Bristol have produced a closely argued critique both of the process and the documents produced (one question they have addressed is that of how representative the documents are). They have issued a statement of fundamental principles which should inform our continuing journey together, and we might well take these principles as a basis for our continued discernment.

In matters of moral theology “The Church has to accept the unruly freedom of the word ... Church teaching should be not rules but ways of thinking, formed in dialogue with all seekers after truth in each age and place.”

In matters of Church authority ‘What touches all must be discussed and approved by all’ as “the magisterium belongs to all the faithful”.

In matters of liturgical ministry, “Every baptised person is clothed, without any distinction, in Christ. All belong to a royal priesthood”.

Given the uniqueness of every human person, “affirming diversity is imperative for attesting the dignity and sanctity of every form of life”.

So where does this leave us at St Joseph’s? If we are to continue our journey together and play our full part as missionary disciples, there are perhaps four issues which we can address:

- How do we address the need for a deeper foundation in our faith?
- How do we become a more inclusive and welcoming community?
- How do we redefine and reclaim liturgical ministry?
- How do we redefine the structures needed for us to support each other and effectively pursue our communal mission of evangelisation?

These could perhaps form the agenda for a series of meetings in Advent and Lent.

Michael Townson

The Rosary

The Rosary is an invitation for us to present our needs to God and to love him more. It is a meditation or reflection on the life of Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother.

After the sacrifice of Holy Mass it is the next most powerful form of prayer and weapon we Catholics have against the powers of evil. It was given directly to us via St Dominic in 1214 from Our Lady herself and she has begged us in countless visitations to pray it regularly - even to this very day in Medjugorje. Examples of its power can be seen in many historical events. You can easily look some up by typing “miracles of the Rosary” on the internet. One such incident was in the

Philippines when several nuns led the rosary as rebel soldiers rolled in on their tanks which were aimed at them as they prayed. Suddenly, the tanks stopped and the soldiers joined in with the protesters to say the rosary.

Some people have no problem saying it but I must confess to having a mind which is constantly darting from one thought to another, and I become easily bored. I was in despair until I hit upon the idea of looking up on my iPad “the Joyful Mysteries with Movie Clips”. There were several to choose from and I soon found I was absorbed by joining in the prayers whilst live action scenes from the mysteries were being shown. I particularly found the Sorrowful Mysteries with excerpts from ‘The Passion of Christ’ by Mel Gibson to be profoundly moving! For some people, just pictures on Youtube can suffice.

To further expand on the importance of the Rosary, I will include some quotes from our modern day Saint, St. Padre Pio.

1. “The Rosary is the ‘weapon for these times’”.
2. “Some people are so foolish that they think they can go through life without the help of the Blessed Mother. Love the Madonna and pray the Rosary, for her Rosary is the weapon against the evils of the world today. All graces given by God pass through the Blessed Mother.”
3. “Go to the Madonna. Love her! Always say the Rosary. Say it well. Say it as often as you can! Be souls of prayer. Never tire of praying, it is what is essential. Prayer shakes the Heart of God, it obtains necessary graces!”

I feel I cannot let these quotations pass without one directly from Our Lady herself at Medjugorje:

“...Today, like never before, I invite you to prayer. Let your prayer be a prayer for peace. Satan is strong and desires to destroy not only human life, but also nature and the planet on which you live. Therefore, dear children, pray that through prayer you can protect yourselves with God’s blessing of peace. God has sent me among you so that I may help you. If you so wish, grasp the Rosary. Even the Rosary alone can work miracles in the world and in your lives. I bless you and I remain with you for as long as it is God’s will...”

The Rosary itself was originally made up of three mysteries, the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious. In 2002 Pope John Paul II introduced the Luminous Mystery which asks us to contemplate Jesus's active life between the Joyful and Sorrowful. These consist of:

1. The Baptism in the River Jordan.
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana.
3. The Proclamation of the Word of God.
4. The Transfiguration.
5. The Last Supper.

Each 'decade' starts with an 'Our Father' followed by ten 'Hail Marys', concluding with one 'Glory Be' and the Fatima Prayer, given by Our Lady herself: "Oh Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of thy Mercy".

Another powerful prayer that can be said on the Rosary beads is the one given by Our Lord to St. Faustina in Poland in the 1940s. It is the "Chaplet of Divine Mercy." It is half the length of the Rosary but is very powerful in bringing upon us the Mercy of God, and Jesus Himself has promised that all souls who say this prayer (even only once) will have Him at their side when they come before the Father on the last Day.

Finally, I would like to inform you that St Joseph's has a Rosary Group after the 12.00 Mass on Mondays, and it is also said in Ledbury at 2.30 on Wednesdays in the Catholic Church. Refreshments afterwards will be available!

If you have any questions, I will try my best to answer them. My email address is 'mtvalfonso@yahoo.co.uk'.

Vicki Alfonso

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, more than £1 million was donated by Bible Society members to provide Bibles to people impacted by the conflict. It was the biggest response to an appeal the Society can ever remember. Queen Elizabeth, who was its Patron, said: "The teachings of Christ have served as my inner light".

Contributed by Pauline Kirton. More on Ukraine on page 26

One World Group - The Journey Continues

The One World Group has continued to work on its dual mission both of raising awareness in the parish of issues of global development and social justice and of generating solidarity with those in need both abroad and at home.

The parish has continued to be generous in its support of OWG projects: an appeal in July raised over £800, and a number of other generous donations together with the legacy from Meg Robinson have meant that it has been possible for us to continue supporting our partners in India and South America and in addition to help local schools to contend with the continuing aftermath of Covid.

In Bolivia, Sister Sylvia is continuing to work with prayer and joy and constant practical help to care for her community in her remote parish in the highlands of Bolivia; the poor quality of health resources in the highlands where she lives and works has inevitably meant that the hardships of the communities have been compounded by the additional burdens of Covid, and she is continually telling us how much our moral, financial and prayer support means.

In regard to Southern India, we continued to receive news about the work of Reaching the Unreached in creating and fostering small villages (extended families really) for children whose families for various reasons can't provide the support needed. We would be happy to pass on the evocative reporting we get every two or three months via their intermediary in the UK, Mo Houlden.

We are holding in reserve support for our parish school's link with their partner school in Tanzania, in the hope that it will soon be possible for that joint enterprise to be reactivated.

Mindful of the needs of refugees, especially in Africa, we are actively exploring ways to support projects run by the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Over the years, the OWG has identified a variety of local charities which the parish has been able to help. This year it became obvious that local schools are struggling to contend with the aftermath of Covid, so we decided to work with four Malvern schools in particular - our parish school and one other primary school and two secondary schools.

The assistance to local schools was linked with the OWG's second event of the year, where we also looked at some of the effects of the Covid pandemic on Africa and our partners in South America and India, the evening being fuelled by wine and cheese. We received valuable input from the two primary schools to which we had already made donations, and are very grateful to the staff who stayed on after what had already been a long and tiring day.

During the last few months we have been fortunate to have been joined in the parish by Nicholas Rogers, the Director of Communications for Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos ("Our Little Brothers and Sisters") a charity caring for poor and vulnerable children across Latin America and the Caribbean. They provide a loving, secure environment for thousands of children, plus education and family support services for thousands more. We used this opportunity to arrange a Parish Supper where we learnt about the work of NPH, and the evening was such a success that we had to turn people away - the first time this has happened for a OWG event! It also raised over £200 for NPH and OWG.

And what next?

The climate emergency is perhaps the gravest danger confronting us at present. It is literally a matter of life and death, and one which affects young people above all. In January there will be a high-tec 'pub quiz' on issues around climate and the environment. Preceding this, on the 17/18 December, the One World Group will be running its biannual appeal for funds to enable it to play its part in the parish mission.

The OWG sees itself as part of a coalition including Christian Aid, Missio and CAFOD and will be actively pursuing avenues of collaboration locally, nationally and internationally.

As always, the OWG welcomes any and all parishioners to its meetings and invites you to play an active role in its work. Contact can be made by email: m.townson1@btinternet.com.

Michael Townson

For more on the OWG's support for local schools, see Viv Fox's report on page 20.

Gospel Share

Gospel Share began some six/seven years ago at the instigation of Michael and Francesca Townson. It is a time for interested parishioners to come together for an hour each week to look at the Readings and Gospel for the coming weekend.

The format has changed little since those early beginnings. The group now meets each Friday evening in the McEnnis Room with Fr Naz.

It is a small, intimate gathering. We take it in turns to lead the evening (not obligatory), starting with a prayer. Different members of the group are asked if they would be willing to read aloud one of the two Readings, Responsorial Psalm, or Gospel. We then have a short time of reflection before sharing (again, no obligation) a sentence or paragraph that the reader has found to be of meaning. Once all wishing to share have done so, we then re-visit our individual passages for further discussion as a group if we so wish.

The aim of the evening is to promote greater understanding by sharing and listening to the thoughts and ideas expressed, in an environment of acceptance in preparation for the weekend celebration of Mass. Emphasis is on increasing awareness through mutual support and is not intended to be a time of bible study or an intellectual get-together.

As indicated above, Gospel Share takes place each Friday evening. It begins at 7.30pm and is open to anyone. It is an opportunity to grow in our faith and to enjoy a sense of community and friendship.

If you are interested and would like to try it out, please speak to Fr Naz or just come along.

Meanwhile, here are one or two thoughts on what we enjoy and gain from our time together...

- Gospel Share helps me to know my God and love my brothers and sisters... in safe loving company... where two or three are gathered in God's name. I live alone so I am able to listen to more than just my own thinking.

- I find that the evenings increase my understanding of the scriptural passages and are a great preparation for the weekend. I am also greatly challenged by the comments of others. There is a great sense of ‘community’ in being together on a regular basis.
- I find the Gospel Share beneficial because it helps me to think more deeply about the coming Sunday readings. Also, if there are any questions or doubts, I am able to raise these, and we discuss them together. The added knowledge and insight I receive at these meetings enriches my Faith.

Chris Burger

Contemplative Prayer Group

As we see, there are various important forms of prayer in our Christian community. The central community prayer of adoration and awe in the Eucharist, the prayer of petition, the prayer of reflection, the combined communal prayer of contemplation and petition in the rosary and there is also a group which meets for the prayer of contemplation.

Come with Me to a Quiet Place by Yourselves Mk 6:31

Here we try to pray without words, symbols, thoughts, or imagination.

Grace fills empty spaces, and so it can only enter where there is a void to receive it. Therefore during this time of prayer, we sit in silence in the presence of God, simply to hear what He wants to say rather than telling Him how we see him. This is a beautiful time in the Presence of the Lord who heals us from within.

Be Still before the Lord Zechariah 2:13

Gradually we notice our attitude towards humanity and the whole of nature becoming gentler, kinder, more loving and inclusive.

We meet on Mondays at 6.30. If any of you would like to see and join us you are most welcome. Contact: Francesca Townson email: f.townson@btinternet.com Tel: 01684892740

A Day for Readers



Dr Caroline Farey

On a November Saturday I was present at a day for readers at St Joseph's led by Dr Caroline Farey. I estimate there were about two dozen parishioners present, most of us experienced readers at Mass. It was a good parish event, informative, socially strengthening for the parish family and offering some additional insight into the responsibility of reading at Mass. It was comfortable and satisfying to see the event at that level.

However, the depth of knowledge of our leader, her analysis of the meaning of liturgy, her explanation of why the detail of language was so important, her use of phrases such as "Christus Totus", the "criteria of Catholic Interpretation" and the "origin of sacrament" left me realising how uneducated I am! I definitely felt (not for the first time in my life) that I really lacked a Catholic Education. Is it too late to start in one's eighties? Where does one begin? Or does one imbibe the spirit of the Catholic Faith without knowing the terminology. I have to hope so!

That said, I'd appreciate more opportunities to learn from Dr Caroline Farey or others working in her field, whilst praying in the meantime that God our loving Father will accept me as I am, an old lady with a lot to learn.

Margaret Allen

Scenes from the Readers' Day



School News

It was lovely to welcome the children back after half term and be finally back in school every day. It was a very busy first week back and as I walked around the school I was impressed by how hard the children have been working and the displays around the school are terrific.

We have welcomed three new members of support staff this half term: Ms Dobson, Mrs Broad and Ms Lormthong.

Miss Knight led the children in their own assembly for All Souls where we thought about all our loved ones, past and present.



We had a Remembrance focus in wrap care and forest school after half term, with the children making poppies and garlands for our displays.



We are so pleased to be able to welcome parents back into school for our Celebration Assemblies on a Friday, when we recognise our Star Learners.

We always have such exciting science lessons! Beech Class have been investigating what happens to our hearts when we exercise.



School Council have planned a Toy Tombola to raise money for CAFOD during Advent. Their idea supports our whole school 'Live Simply' plan, where we aim to plan activities that value living simply and sustainably. We look forward to sharing more of this with the parish as the year goes on, along with our other charitable endeavours including November's Evening of Light, which despite the weather was as successful as last year's - the children enjoyed preparing their lanterns!



What an amazing start we have had!

Therese Langford

Talking to Sue



The RCIA programme was Sue Stubbings' first introduction to St Joseph's parish, when she took part in it with her then fiancé, Mark. That was back in Fr Nicholas's day, some 30 years ago. She liked what she saw, became a Catholic, married Mark and has been a steady and increasingly essential part of the parish ever since.

Back in those early days Sue and Mark soon became very involved with Worldwide Marriage Encounter, having prepared for their own marriage with Liz and Chris Burger. Their involvement was not just at parish level, where for many years there was an active group, but also nationally, culminating in their being the national leadership couple during the pandemic, with all the online organising that involved.

Many parishioners encountered Sue in the past if they had children making their first communion, as for many years she helped Ruth Hopkins run the First Holy Communion programme, and many meet her today if their children are being confirmed as she runs that programme with Rebecca Surman. Most of us, however, are probably aware of Sue as the person in the background who quietly organises many of the practical aspects of parish life, and it was that side of things I wanted to explore.

It was Fr Pat who gave Sue the title 'Site Manager', which she admits to not being sure about, and laughs when she mentions it. When, however, she starts to list the tasks she does about the place it becomes clear there is indeed a lot of managing going on. She shops, cleans, tidies noticeboards, helps organise parish social events, locks and unlocks the church when needed, checks the water for legionnaire's disease and that the fire alarms are working. Most importantly, she liaises with Fr Naz to see what needs doing.

If you want to book the McEnnis Room for any kind of event or meeting, Sue is the person you need to contact for a booking form, and the easiest way is by email – sue.stjoes@gmail.com. If you need to speak to her in person she is usually on the church premises on Mondays, and is often in and out on other days. Sue has worked as a

Teaching Assistant at St Joseph's school for about the last 15 years and always has the parish keys with her, so if you ever find yourself locked out just go to the school office and ask for Sue. We have her word for it that she doesn't mind.

Asked what the rest of us could do to make her life easier, she stressed the importance of letting her know if we see a problem, preferably by emailing her. Unsurprisingly, it would also help if we all tidied up after ourselves and put furniture back where we found it.

But there is more to Sue's role than checking the availability of loo rolls and rearranging furniture, important though these are. There is a pastoral aspect to what she does. She is continually interacting with parishioners and workmen and strangers who come onto the premises for one reason or another, and often finds herself lending a sympathetic ear as she provides tea and biscuits. She also acts as hostess when Fr Naz is away, seeing that visiting priests are welcomed and fed.

Occasionally her roles in the school and parish overlap, sometimes with amusing results. 'Many of the children in school know I work in church. When they see me out shopping with Mark they are sometimes quite confused. They ask me who the man is, and when I explain he's my husband they are surprised, telling me that they thought that I lived in the presbytery with Fr Naz! Fr Naz thought this was funny as well.'

Flexibility and a good sense of humour are qualities Sue sees as being essential to the job, and even more important to her is the support Mark gives, making her feel the job is a team effort.

What are the best things about her role? Sue has quite a list. She enjoys meeting people, and finds satisfaction in seeing things are tidy and well-ordered. She appreciates the peace and tranquillity of the church, and being able to go in there for a few minutes is 'really special'. Finally she mentions the importance to her of 'hopefully being a good support to Fr Naz'. I suspect Fr Naz would see no need for that qualifying 'hopefully'.

Thank you, Sue, for being a good support to us all.

Margaret Rank

Meet another member of the parish community on page 22

Covid Issues in Local Schools

A Report Given to Churches Together in Malvern by Viv Fox of the One World Group

St Joseph's One World Group annually supports a local project. In the past we have supported Magg's Homeless, Food Bank, Dementia Café and Women's Refuge. This year we decided to support local schools, whose pupils and staff have been affected by the Covid pandemic and lockdown.

It is a national problem, and data has shown six and seven-year-olds were worst affected by learning loss, and taking a long time to catch up. Children are also affected by the influence of the family's income, education and stability. In senior schools, there has been a rise in eating disorders, anxiety and self-harm.

Children have been overwhelmed by things happening in their lives, and many do not have the tools for managing their emotions, and need guidance, a listening ear, reassurance and support, in order to understand what has happened. Families do not want to admit they are struggling. The Ukraine war has increased children's anxieties.

We decided to support two of our local primary schools, St Joseph's and Great Malvern, and our two high schools, The Chase and Dyson Perrins.

The overwhelming need for the children is around emotional and social support. The government eventually provided laptops, tablets and access to the internet, which had initially been of great concern, for poorer children.

Problems upon return to school began in the nursery-aged children, where they had had little or no social interaction, either with family or friends, especially if they were in single parent homes. Their speech has been greatly impaired, masks exacerbating their ability to acquire language. Their behaviour could be poor, because they hadn't had the opportunity to interact with other children, to learn to play or share and communicate with others. Their toilet training had been neglected.

St Joseph's has employed an emotional support worker part-time in order to impart resilience, speech and language, and with our donation

has been able to fund more hours, and buy appropriate visual aids, toys and games to support her work.

Great Malvern primary has allocated staff to oversee the children's needs, using mindfulness and play therapy. There is after school support for some children, as to offer it in school time would deprive them of necessary class work. One child needs support for trauma, related to Covid isolation.

Some parents were unable to offer support with school work to be done at home during lockdown, due to being unable to read themselves, or their lack of technology skills, to chaotic lifestyles and children living a 24 hour day with no routines. Hence upon return to school, these children arrived late, tired and found it hard to settle. Their behaviour had become more challenging, and disengaged from learning.

One school created a safe place, a den, where children could take time out to deal with their emotions. Fidget and comfort toys to help the children focus, and bright cushions, were bought to make the space cosy.

All the schools said how stretched their budgets were, and were grateful for the donations from our church, to buy things that were outside their funding.

One of the high schools was enabled by our gift to increase the hours of their school counsellor/therapist. The additional capacity has reduced waiting times for young people experiencing mental health challenges, increasing the likelihood of intervening before concerns escalate, preventing absence from school, and bridging gaps while young people wait to be seen by other services.

The second high school proposed to ring fence the gift for enrichment opportunities for students. It will enable them to participate in social and enriching activities, where with the added burden of cost-of-living increases, some pupils are unable to participate in school trips.

Both high schools have seen an increase in absenteeism and mental health issues in regard to anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders, as

a direct result of the pandemic. Schools' staff have their own issues following the pandemic. The heads and teachers I met were supportive of each other, but most of all of the wellbeing of their pupils.

Understanding the effects of the pandemic on children's health and care is the first step to making a change.

Please hold them in your prayers.

Vivienne Fox

The One World Group gave £500 to each of the four schools.

Talking to Carol Ann

Carol Ann Harnett came to the parish a few years ago and has had a positive impact on our work with children and families - she has played a decisive role in our sacramental programmes and children's liturgy and has prepared a series of family activity sheets.

Carol Ann sees her mission in life as passing on the faith and supporting families on their faith journey.

Variety is a hallmark of Carol Ann's life. She was born in Canada, of an English mother and a Dutch father, lived then in Belgium before coming to Britain at the age of seven. Her daughter carries on the international tradition, living in Seville with her Mexican husband.

Her mother was a 'cradle Catholic', her father a convert. She lives an ecumenical marriage with her Anglican husband, a retired Civil Servant. In her faith life she sees herself as being "multilingual"; she loves the Daily Office and some of the traditional Latin prayers. There have been times in her life when she has derived great benefit from the charismatic movement, but it is the Eucharist which is the driving force behind her faith, because "It is there that I meet Jesus".

After leaving school, Carol Ann trained as a primary school teacher, and soon realised that primary school teaching was not her true vocation, but was uncertain what it was that she was being called to.

At a time of crisis in her life, she was reassured that the Lord was with her "wrapping me in a warm orange blanket of love". It was then that she realised that she was being called to a life as a catechist. She had

been involved in catechesis since her marriage, but now she entered professional training in catechesis and religious education at the diocesan Institute at Maryvale. She wrote her dissertation on the formation of catechists, and eventually ran the Maryvale catechesis programme before moving on to running other courses forming catechists.

Carol Ann sees everything she does as a response to the Lord's calling; this can take some time coming, but come it does - He cannot be rushed!

As well as her work in our parish and formerly at Maryvale, Carol Ann is involved with others in helping people to be formed in the faith on the Annunciation Website for Catholic Courses, Resources, and Inspiration, designed to "inspire you in your knowledge, conviction and expression of the Catholic faith" so that we can all become evangelists and work as labourers in the harvest. Carol Ann's message to the parish is a simple one - "Trust in Jesus" and it is her wish that more parishioners would get involved in building up the faith of our young people through catechesis and in the children's liturgy. "It's the most rewarding thing we can do!" she concludes.

Michael Townson

Eucharistic Adoration

'The best and surest way of establishing peace on the face of the earth is through the power of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.' This was one of the many things St John Paul II said when talking about the enormous importance and benefits of Eucharistic Adoration - and peace is something very much needed, lacking and sought after in today's world. We have one day a week of Eucharistic Adoration at St Joseph's, on a Thursday, and just a handful of people who try to keep it going.

So many great saints have spoken about the merits of this form of prayer that it is impossible to ignore the enormous power and change both in ourselves and the world that can come about from this wonderful devotion. St Theresa of Avila said that 'on earth it's impossible to perform a more meritorious act than visiting Jesus often in the Eucharist' and Padre Pio stated 'A thousand years of enjoying human glory is not worth even an hour spent with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament'. Mother Theresa spoke

again and again about Eucharistic Adoration saying; 'Nowhere on earth are you more welcome. Nowhere on earth are you more loved than by Jesus living and truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth'. She was so keen to show the power of this prayer that she even said that if people spent just one hour a week in Adoration then that would stop abortion in the world.

Adoration can change us, it can change our lives, our families and our communities. So many of us have members of our family who have fallen away from the Faith. Many of us have broken families, loved ones and people we know who are sick or suffering in some way, both old and young. This is something we CAN do both for ourselves and for them. Therese of Lisieux asked 'Do you realise that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you and for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart.' St Alphonsus Ligouri told us that 'in one quarter of an hour which you spend before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament you attain more than in all the devotions of the rest of the day' so it really is the most powerful and grace filled form of prayer.

The Eucharist is God's gift of his real self to us and we should be honoured to have his Real Presence with us and to know that he longs to see us and shower us with his grace and blessings. Yet it is hard to fill just a few hours a week and find people who will spend time sitting with the Lord. The Blessed Sacrament cannot be left unattended so we need people who are willing to give even a small amount of time. It can be regular, weekly or just whenever you can. It's wonderful to have people who commit to a certain amount of time each week but there are others who help when they can and don't mind me calling or texting them occasionally when there is a slot that is unfilled or someone away and they just let me know whether they're free or not at that time, and this too is very helpful and allows us to keep this day of Adoration going. So please call, text or email me if you would like to add your name to the list in any capacity you feel able.

Some people are unsure of what they're supposed to actually 'do' in Adoration. It is simply a time to get away from all the noise and many distractions of this world and spend time with Jesus in a very personal way. You can either say your own private prayers, have time to read scripture, or simply enjoy sitting with the Lord, talking, as to a dear friend and maybe listening to what he wants to say to you! Maybe we

should remember that Jesus longs to see us and have us spend time with him as his love for us is so great. He is often, in his humanity, lonely and offended in this world, where so few people make the time to visit him. So my final quote will come from Jesus himself as we remember him pleading in the garden of Gethsemane 'can you not watch one hour with me?'

Emily Vaughan-Spruce

Joined by the War against Ukraine

Our family experiences of hosting and being guests

By Felicity and *Elena*

Hello, I'm Felicity. At Easter I was welcomed into my new church family at St Joe's. Paul, my husband, and I have three adult children, including an extended family in Russia following our middle son's marriage to a lovely Russian young lady last year. Like many, I never believed Russia would start the war against Ukraine.

Following the news, I was reminded of how my mother had been six when WWII began and the impact on her family who lived close to Plymouth's naval dockyard. Growing up, I was told in detail many war stories, and even into my twenties had nightmares of being bombed. I also learnt how some of my family had hosted refugees, whilst others became refugees.

As a psychotherapist working with people bringing historic trauma, I am very aware of how our nervous systems and bodies manifest unprocessed trauma. Hence, seeing Ukrainian people suffering initiated many conversations between Paul, also a trainee psychotherapist, and me. Agreeing that supporting mothers and children seeking safety was of high importance, we decided to offer our small but self-contained annex. During the preparation period, we felt very supported, both practically and in prayer.

On 31st May this year, we welcomed our Ukrainian guests, Elena (mum) (pronounced 'Leana') and Ulyana (daughter aged six) (pronounced 'Oolyana'). Like many coming from Eastern Ukraine, they are Russian speaking...

...Hello, I'm Elena. Some of you will have seen my daughter Ulyana and me at church when Fr Naz gave us a warm welcome. Whilst we don't attend, as our lack of English makes the service a long time for a 6-year-old to sit through, we are grateful for the love, support, prayers and generosity we experience from church members.

We lived in the beautiful city of Kharkov (Kharkiv). Here we worked, enjoyed life, and our daughter attended a wonderful kindergarten. We had lovingly furnished our new housing, which we purchased shortly before the war, and were happy.

February 24th is the day when the life of all Ukrainians was divided into "before" and "after". War broke into our lives, claiming thousands of lives, separating families and at the same time uniting and rallying our nation. The war destroyed the lives and dreams of all Ukrainians, including my family's. Ulyana turned six three days after the war broke out and we spent her birthday underground. She has no friends or party this year.

Our city was the first to come under fire, as it stands on the border with Russia. We watched Russian tanks drive through our streets. And then there were terrible battles for the city. We have been through a lot during this time, including fear, hunger and heavy evacuation. I really don't want to describe it all. Believe me, war is very scary. And I still can't believe we made it through this. One day, after another bombing, I ran out of the house with my daughter without things and documents, and we never returned there.

On that day, we began our difficult journey. We are the family that has really been in the war zone for a long time and needs protection the most. At first, we were looking for it in Ukraine, because most of the country lived an ordinary, calm life, all this horror of war did not reach them. We lived in different places, finally in a village in Western Ukraine, where other mothers and children were sheltering. As women we supported each other to search for sponsors in safe countries.

But thanks to God, circumstances and people, we got to England, to the wonderful family of Paul and Felicity. I have said many times that our arrival here is truly mystical. Life doesn't give you the people you desire, it gives you the people you need...

...Felicity - On Saturday 14th May, Elena and I first met via a Facebook group. I was using it to offer accommodation, she to find a host family. Whilst I had spoken briefly to other Ukrainians, sitting in Priory Park that afternoon watching children playing, I had a deep certainty that soon one of these would be Ulyana. The next day, our Russian daughter-in-law interpreted for us during a video call to translate. On Tuesday, mum applied for their visas, these arrived a week later, and they flew the following Tuesday, so incredibly quickly!

And finally...

My regret, especially given Russia's continued relentless attacks, is that offers of homes for people have now dried up, even though many Ukrainian people are still seeking refuge. It breaks my heart to hear the predictions that countless innocent people will die of cold this coming winter due to power stations being destroyed and resulting lack of gas and electricity.

I therefore take liberty to make another plea, that if you, or anyone you know, is even slightly interested to offer accommodation, either through sponsoring or renting to Ukrainian families, please talk to me. It is a massive commitment not to be taken lightly, but, unlike us, you can choose a much more detached way of being from your guests. There are many people like us ahead in the journey who will support you. Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Council are very helpful too.

..Elena - When I first arrived, I was sure that I would not need these six months and we would return. I didn't believe you when you said that the winter would be terrible in Ukraine. Now I'm watching what's happening, it's just a nightmare, and no one knows when it will end. Before there was faith, but now it is not.



Felicity, Elena and Ulyana
on the beach at Bude

In the next issue Felicity and Elena continue their story

Reflections of a Parish Administrator

Some of the Parish Team

One cannot work in the parish office without being aware of the enormous amount of work being done by many individuals to keep the parish functioning so well. It is a privilege to interact with so many parishioners, their families, priests, clergy and members of the public. Of course, Fr Naz makes it all so enjoyable.

I am always conscious of the legacy of parish administrators before me and with whom I have worked – Ruth, Lindsey, and then Edyta and Sam who have been my job-share partners and whom I miss in the office. The Parish Administrator role is now assigned to one person and is no longer shared.

I started my role job-sharing with Edyta, and at that time Alf used to work all hours to keep the finances in order. Since his retirement we have had Chris and Sam and Mary looking after the accounts, supported by Sundrella who manages the 100+ Club now.

Al is there to support us when we need IT help and he manages our parish website to great effect. Sue is on site on Mondays keeping order in the house and the premises. Parishioners come in to collect communion for the housebound or to prepare for an event or the Sunday masses or to do an odd job. If I am in early enough, I can see the Holy Dusters cleaning the church on our CCTV monitor and I make them a drink. The Parish Magazine team includes the Parish Office in its meetings and will come in to print the magazine. We have a Facebook team which posts updates regularly and the parish office is part of that team.

Covid-19 impacts and beyond

I cannot imagine how we would have got through the Covid-19 lockdown periods without two of us working in the role. Sam had not long started as the new parish administrator, and we had to work out new ways of working and interacting with the parish almost immediately. Sue and Fr Naz were instrumental in helping to work out Covid-19 restrictions and requirements in the church. The installation of Livestreaming cameras made the masses available to share online but it created GDPR and licencing work for us administrators.

Going forward, livestreaming has proved a big asset in helping to share our masses and other services; our parish database, which was built during the lockdown, has become a real asset for communicating with the parish; and we remain in touch with parishioners who cannot come to church.

One of the biggest Covid-19-related tasks we had to manage was the implementation of seating plans for the Easter and Christmas Services. It seems a long time ago now but we worked double our contracted hours during those periods taking booking requests by mail, phone and notes and trying to keep families socially together but distanced from other families. I give thanks that those days are passed, that the church seating is back to normal and we are no longer so isolated and wary of each other.

Your parish office

You are always welcome to visit the parish office. If you have not ventured behind the scenes before, it is located in the priest's house. Although I only work part-time, Fr Naz keeps the office running when I am not there so do come and find us.

A Parish Administrator's Day

Tuesday 10.00am The house is quiet as I sign in. I see Chris is in before me working on the parish accounts. Is Fr Naz in this morning? I wonder. I boot up the pc, listen to the phone messages and open a couple of parcel orders which have arrived for the parish - a selection of stationery, Communion wafers, and new copies of the Ordo for the coming year.

(The Ordo book is the Calendar of the Liturgical Year highlighting the five main liturgical Church seasons, showing feasts, solemnities, world days of prayer and themes of intercession and is used in creating the bulletin mass solemnities and feasts each week).

10.10am Time for a chat with Chris who asks for help in locating some of the gas and electricity bills which come via email. This is the day for catching up on emails. As I work only about four or five hours a day, twice a week, the email requests and information can build up by Tuesday. Ah, I have found the bills for Chris.

10.25am The phone rings and a parishioner would like to discuss a funeral. This is one for Fr Naz so I take a message. Is Fr Naz in?

10.30am Mary comes into the office to work on the new parish card machines and we chat between our concentrated efforts.

10.40am Email items for the bulletin have been sifted and I have responded to requests for McEnnis room bookings.

(Room bookings are made by parishioners and non-parishioners and Sue and I keep a diary of the dates and times. Room booking forms are passed to Sue, our site manager, so that she may liaise with those making the booking about access and other requirements).

10.42am Fr Naz has been working in his office and has come to see if Chris or I need anything from him. I have a question about licences for music but he leaves that one to me so I do more investigating on music licensing requirements.

(When streaming our services onto YouTube the parish requires a licence if music is played during the services.)

11 05am Fr Naz asks if we would like a drink and goes off to make teas and coffee for us.

11.06am I head for the narthex as often deliveries of parcels are left there. None today but I pick up the new list of parishioners' wedding anniversaries to enter onto the parish calendar.

11.10am The drinks and biscuits, which are most welcome, are brought in by Fr Naz and we have a quick update on the phone queries.

11.20am My in-tray has a few items to work through today. There are a couple of new families who have completed the Parishioner's Details forms and I spend some time entering them onto the database.

(The database is created and supported by the IT department of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The data is held securely by the Archdiocese and all backups are held in Great Britain.)

11.47am I email the IT department with a query about emailing from the database.

11.51am IT department has responded to my query. I love the fact that the staff there are always supportive and respond so rapidly.

(St Joseph's is one of only a few parishes in the Archdiocese which has embraced the use of the database and used it for holding parishioner's details securely.

During the first Covid-19 Lockdown, while Sam was in the office, I used the time to input all the dozens of Parishioner's Details we had received from the census we had taken a couple of months earlier. Edyta and I had been wondering how and when we would make time to do this. By the time of the lockdown, Edyta had been replaced by Sam as my job-share partner.

Once the details were entered on the database, Sam and I were able to identify different groups of people who would be potentially vulnerable during the lockdown and we were able, with the help of other parishioners, to contact them to see if they needed any help.

One of the outcomes of this work was that we had a list of people without email addresses. For many months Sam hand-delivered bulletins to many of these people. We still have a short list now and they receive the bulletin by post each week.)

12.10pm From the CCTV monitor I see that the postman is delivering our mail so I go and collect it from the letter box. I reflect on the difference our postbag is now from four years ago when we were inundated by post for previous parish priests, advertisements and flyers. At that time Edyta and I began a small project to eliminate as much mail, emails and phone messages, as we could and contacted as many of the senders as possible to have the parish removed from post, email or phone contact, unless we wanted it. It has saved us hours of work since.

12.17pm Following on from our GDPR training last week, I find a short teaching video to watch which has been sent via email from the Archdiocesan Compliance Officer.

12.30pm Chris has left now and I make Fr Naz a cup of tea. Fr Naz talks about the special November mass for those who have died over this last year.

12.36pm I am thinking ahead for what we need to prepare in November, so I print and fold more lists for the November List, and create a blank list for the narthex, for those wishing to pray for the mass for the dead. Off to the narthex again.

12.40pm Sue calls in during her school lunchbreak to discuss Confirmation details with me and we go through the draft confirmation certificates in readiness for the bishop's visit in a couple of weeks.

13.15pm The emails are still coming in and there is a request for printing documents for the children's liturgy which takes a few minutes. I confirm that the printing is done and put the printout in the vesting room ready for collection.

13.30pm A request comes in from the printer provider to ask for the number of copies we have printed or copied in the last months. The bill is based on this number so I go to the copier to extract the figures and send them off.

13.45pm I see that one of the printer toners is getting low, time to order more.

13.55pm Fr Naz has been out to give communion to someone and has returned in time for me to update him on news, requests and queries.

14.15pm Only a couple of things awaiting my attention which will keep until Thursday. I lock up and say goodbye.

*Anne Lewis, Parish Administrator
November 2022*

Groan... groan...

What do you get if you eat decorations? Tinselitis

What do you get if you cross Santa with a duck? A Christmas quacker.

What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar? He got 25 days.

Two young boys were spending the night at their grandparents' house the week before Christmas. At bedtime, the two boys knelt by their beds to say their prayers. The younger one began praying at the top of his voice:

'I pray for a new bicycle... I pray for a new playstation...'

His older brother nudged him and said, 'Why are you shouting? God isn't deaf', to which his little brother replied, 'No, but Grandma is.'

Thank You as always to our wonderful contributors who respond so generously to requests for copy, and the even more wonderful ones who don't wait to be asked. Watch the bulletin for the next copy day.