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Plus Other Features

Magazine Team

Margaret Rank

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Michael Townson

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

Added Responsibilities to Fr Naz's Ministry



Fr Naz's induction as parish priest at Blackmore Park

When my added responsibility as parish priest of the joint parish of Upton and Blackmore was communicated to the people of the parish, a mixture of perceptions, reactions and concerns were expressed. Some people understood it as an actual transfer from Malvern to the joint Severn churches. They said they were sorry to see me go but all the same they wished me well in the new appointment and they even asked when I expected to move. Others saw it as the three churches becoming one entity. But the majority of people understood it as an added responsibility and wondered how this move would impact on St Joseph, Malvern and wondered how I would cope with the run between the three churches. One thing to note is that the different churches of St Joseph's Upton and Our Lady and St Alphonsus, Blackmore exist as one joint parish.

My appointment to the joint parish of Upton and Blackmore follows the retirement of Fr Hugh Sinclair who has served the joint parish for a few years now. The blessing part of this new set-up is that Fr Hugh will continue to live in Upton for his retirement. That is why, on several occasions since the appointment, I have repeatedly pointed out that there is a hidden blessing of team ministry between Fr Hugh, Deacon Sean Duffy and myself. Yet, as much as I cherish team ministry, the new situation will require to be handled with care considering that due attention should be paid to the fact that heavy burdens must not be laid on the shoulders of someone entering the phase of retirement.

Just a few weeks before the appointment came to light the people of the parish of St Joseph's Malvern had an excellent meeting with Canon Brian McGinley, Dean of Worcester and Kidderminster, reflecting on the future of a church with fewer priests. My new appointment is just a confirmation of the effects of fewer priests coming to us. The feature of assigning more than one parish to a priest is common practice at this time of crisis. There is no doubt that the joining of parishes is inevitable at this time, let alone the closing of some.

These actions will certainly cause great discomfort and sadness at the loss of a parish served for decades by "their" priest, a legacy greatly treasured by families. When these things happen, it is no use to remain on the edge, moaning the loss of more autonomy. It is no use to waste words on being left without a resident priest. What has happened between the Severn Valley churches and Malvern Hills is a wakeup call for us all to start reflecting along the lines of Archbishop Longley's vision of the church in our diocese. The archbishop has called everyone to start talking and sharing ideas on a process of working in a different way with far more lay people being personally involved in the ministry of our parishes. The archbishop has proposed four themes which are pillars on which rests the core work of the Archdiocese and its parishes. He is urging us to think of ways of working more collaboratively with laity taking on more. The four themes he urges us on are as follows:

Evangelisation This is the Church's essential mission, and the new evangelisation directs us especially to those groups of the baptised who have lost a living sense of the faith.

Formation Fidelity to the apostolic tradition leads to an emphasis on formation for the laity and for the clergy.

Worship and Sacramental Life That the Sacraments should be celebrated with joy and reverence.

Charity and Social Outreach Charity is the very nature of what it is to be Church. So how can we respond effectively to Jesus's command to feed, clothe and visit 'the least of these'?

Young people and families In our work on the four themes, it is important that young people and families are a particular area of focus for all that we do.

Now that the joint parish of St Joseph Upton and Our Lady and St Alphonsus Blackmore share the same parish priest with St Joseph Malvern, we urgently need to visit the diocesan vision and see how we can take this vision ahead even as both parishes remain as separate entities.

I am aware that accepting change can be difficult and challenging in so many ways. Change will be bound to affect the life and worship of each parish entity. Responsibility for leading two or more parishes means that a priest must divide his time and attention. Mass times are bound to be affected. There is bound to be a loss of some kind to both sides. We need to find ways to develop deeper relationships among all who live in the three churches.

To begin with I shall need answers to these key questions:

Q: What are the strengths and weaknesses of our church community?

Q: What are the perceived losses in the new situation?

Q: What are the gains?

Q: How can we thrive in a new context?

Developing a Positive Attitude

One thing I am sure of is that each of the three churches has its own strong points. We should now focus on the fact that under one parish priest the three churches are bound to be richer. The three churches for me are not there to compete but to share resources. The strongest sentiment I have is to develop an atmosphere of collaboration and

participation among all members of the three churches. I believe that collaborating with the people of the parishes will enable us to achieve the goal of a shared responsibility. I am looking forward to open discussions on desirable preferences for ministry.

Fr Naz

Parish Advisory Council Update – September 2023

We have a Parish Advisory Council and we meet every two months to look at what is happening in the parish and to guide Fr Naz in his decision making. We also look at how we can engage with parishioners, the school, and the wider community to bring Christ into our everyday lives. Here is a flavour for what we discussed in our meeting in September.

Each meeting takes a whistle-stop review of finance matters, maintenance projects, and pastoral ideas and plans. All these areas have separate groups already so the role of the PAC here is an overview one only. As a parish our income is less than our outgoings and we talked about what we can do to bridge the gap. We have a sub-committee already looking at ways to mark our 150th anniversary in 2026 – they will meet to come up with ideas that can be then explored and whittled down as we move towards our 150th anniversary. One idea that we will be taking forward is the refurbishment – cleaning, regilding, removing dents, etc – of church silverware: more on that in the coming months.

We talked about the role of parish administrator. A job specification has been prepared with the help of the PAC and Fr Naz has been helped further in the recruitment to this important role and we should have a new parish administrator very soon. (*See page 8—Ed*) On another practical note we looked at plans to refurbish the McEnnis Room and financial help towards the cost of refurbishing the rather dated (but still functional) church toilets.

We talked about the way we are set up: what does a good PAC look like and do? Our structure has been the same for a long time so reviewing it could yield fruit in terms of borrowing from other parishes or indeed validating what we do and how. This will be an ongoing mission. Several of the PAC will look at this in more detail and report back.

We have engaged with St Winifride's Well & Shrine in Holywell, North Wales, to set up a one-day parish pilgrimage there in 2024 as we missed the bathing opening times for 2023.

Fr Naz's role has got bigger as he now has responsibility for St Joseph's in Upton and Our Lady and St Alphonsus in Blackmore Park. We talked about how this will work, the help we can give to Fr Naz and also understand how Fr Naz wants to embrace this new responsibility.

A lot of what I have spoken about here is practical and necessary. As a PAC we are also aware of our collective role to help with evangelisation and the spiritual life of the parish. This is something we are working on also, but I don't have more to say about it right now.

I hope this run down of what went on in the meeting is helpful and that it gives you an insight into how our parish functions. If you would like to raise an issue for the PAC to discuss, or have questions, please get in touch with Fr Naz or Edd Hogan (contact details are on the weekly bulletin). Your PAC members are shown on the noticeboard just inside the main church door.

Please remember to hold our parish and the PAC in your prayers regularly. Fr Naz is our shepherd and we, the PAC, are here to help him in that role however that help is needed. Our common bond is that we have faith in Jesus Christ and that we each are drawn to God and that we use our talents to support the work of the church here in Malvern and more widely.

Edd Hogan
Chair of the PAC

God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If He gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.

Pope Francis



Financial Statement

For the PAC 12/11/23

The parish's bank balance on 31/10/23 was **£181,819.81** with **£200,000** invested in the Archdiocesan Unit Trust scheme.

Office wages have been reduced by **£5817.30** compared to same period 2022. However from Nov 1st we will be employing Mrs Nazzarena Wood as our parish administrator for 12 hours a week.

Thanks to Sundrella Kirby for publicising the 100+ Club and raising the number of £5 /month donations to 105!

Mary Marsh is stepping down as Gift Aid Coordinator and Card Machine Administrator after 3 years+ due to pressure of work. Mary has done a colossal amount of work behind the scenes encouraging parishioners to Gift Aid their donations, processing all the forms, battling with the Archdiocese and transferring all the money into St Joseph's account.

Mary has also organised the use of the card machines which are the way forward as we have less cash in our pockets. She has been very patient with the inevitable teething problems and has quietly transferred all the transactions into the parish account without any fuss! Thank you, Mary, for always being available to sort out problems and always being so cheerful!

Mary is kindly helping Marie-France Hicks to take over looking after the card machines and Sarah Houlston as Gift Aid Coordinator.

We still need two pairs of parishioners to help count the weekly collections. Pat and Peter Fenwick, Simon Mills and Marion Haley along with myself need some help!

Chris Park

Troubled by financial matters? The go-to saint to pray to for aid is St Matthew, the erstwhile tax collector. St Antony, better known for finding lost items, is another possibility as he was an advocate for debtors. And if things are desperate there's always St Jude . . .

Welcome to Nazzarena



In October the parish welcomed Nazzarena Wood as parish administrator. She will be working in the parish office for 12 hours a week. Here Nazzarena tells us a little about herself.

I have lived in Malvern for four years and absolutely love it here. Prior to that I spent a lot of my life in Melbourne in Australia. I am married to Clive and I have one daughter Daniella who lives in Cheltenham and is married to a lovely young man. I love walking the hills and I do love travelling, particularly to Italy as that is where my father came from - just outside of Assisi - and I spent a lot of time in school holidays in Italy and I speak Italian. My mother who has recently died and who I absolutely loved and adored was born in Malta - so I am of a Mediterranean background. I also spend a lot of time in Spain where my brother-in-law now lives. I love the sunshine but I love the changing seasons and particularly love Christmas. I am quite a private person and often come to pray when the church is empty as I enjoy the peace and tranquillity this brings.

We all wish Nazzarena a happy and fulfilling time in her new role.

Return to What? On Evangelisation

In his homily few weeks ago Fr Naz invited the congregation to contemplate the empty seats to the left and right of them and to ask themselves what they were doing to fill those seats again.

This is a totally legitimate question; I am sure we are all aware of people we used to see in church and now no longer meet there, and I wonder whether we talk to them at all.

If we did, we would/should probably get round to asking them why they no longer come to Mass. There are sure to be reasons of family pressure, their children's activities, the pressures of modern life-styles. But are these the real reasons? Is there perhaps a more fundamental question to be asked, one of why the Mass no long speaks to people. St Therese of Lisieux is supposed to have said that if people really understood the Eucharist, they would break down the doors of the church to get to it, but how much of that desire and excitement do we really experience in the Sunday liturgy? For how many people is attendance at Sunday Mass a matter of obligation, duty or force of habit?

One thing is certain; if people stop attending Sunday Mass, it is for a reason, or a number of reasons. It is illusory to think that people are going to start coming back to a practice which they left unless these reasons are addressed, and we take a long, hard look at the way Mass is celebrated and our Faith is explained and presented. Young people are flocking to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. They are turning their backs on traditional forms of religious practice. Why?

Those of us who remain are called to be evangelists; this involves renewing our own faith through prayer, study and the experience of a living community, and then - and only then - going out and talking openly and honestly to those who have either turned away from their religious practice or never knew it in the first place.

We also need to have an honest conversation with each other about changes we would like to see - without of course changing the essential structure of the Eucharist. One way of starting this conversation would be by means of a questionnaire asking three basic questions: 'What really appeals to you about the Sunday liturgy?' 'What do you feel is less appealing?' and 'What realistic changes would you like to see made?'

Michael Townson

A Day of Renewal

The first “Overflow” day since COVID was arranged back in the summer by CHARIS England and Wales (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service). Members of communities and movements, prayer groups, families and individuals, young and old, gathered at the Bethel Conference Centre in West Bromwich from around the country.

Dr. Maria Heath, one of the organisers, said: “Psalm 33 teaches us about the overflow of the Spirit, moving powerfully when there is deep unity amongst those gathered together to worship God, to praise His name and hear His word. Our hope is that we will grow in our life in the Spirit, during our day of worship and listening to Catholic teaching. May we share the graces we receive, so that they will overflow into the wider Church and the world, as we go back home and share the blessings.”

Two from our parish, Felicity Tutton and I, attended the day, which was given to worship and Catholic teaching and some chat in between! I had not known that the main speaker of the day was Bishop David Oakley. Many years ago, when he was Father David Oakley, he was at a meeting in the Aldwyn Room and the quality and content of the talk he gave us then so impressed me that I wrote to thank him - I still have the postcard he sent in return. I hope to obtain a recording of his teaching this time.

(CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service) was formally established by Pope Francis at the Vatican in 2019 and it has benefitted from his support. He was involved with CCR as a bishop in Argentina, when he served as its spiritual advisor, with the aim of promoting the movement through the Church and to aid the creation of deeper communion between its groups.)

Pauline Kirton

Christian Aid Week... Then and Now



On 15 October the Christian Aid representative for the West Midlands, Batanai Padya, presented Margaret Allen with a well-earned certificate of outstanding service. He introduced himself, telling us he came from Zimbabwe and briefly listing some of the areas in the world helped by Christian Aid, including Fr Naz's Malawi and Israel and Palestine. He said how delighted he was to be in Malvern, the first church he had visited in the West Midlands, to pray with us and to thank Margaret for her long service. Margaret, having been

presented with her certificate by Batanai and a bouquet by Win Crawford, in turn thanked the parish, and Win and Marie France Hicks were welcomed as her successors. Here she looks back on her years with Christian Aid.

St Joe's has a reputation for charitable aid. We have a thriving One World Group devoted to raising money for specific projects in the third world (as well as addressing local needs), and CAFOD is the traditional Catholic means of collecting money to provide for disasters. St Joseph's gives generously to both these charities already, so we keep Christian Aid appeals limited to one week in May each year. We seek money from the pockets of our neighbours as well as our own giving, and keep a low profile for the rest of the year.

I joined the Malvern-wide Christian Aid committee around the turn of the millennium, (so long ago I don't remember exactly when!) and started to organise a Christian Aid Week collection by St Joseph's.

For many years the Malvern Group of Churches (Anglican, Methodist, URC etc,) collected in their own "geographical" parishes and arranged coverage of as much of Malvern as possible. The aspect of my work

that proved most demanding in those early days was liaising with the Christian Aid Representatives of those churches about which roads they would “permit” us to cover! (Our parish stretches across at least a dozen of theirs.) I then tried persuading my volunteer collectors to travel to those areas to deliver, and again a few days later to collect. I want to thank the wonderful band of people who did this year after year. They are too many to list here, but some of them have continued doing the job all the years I have been involved. I’m not sure how long this is exactly, but around 25 years.

Not all front doors were opened by willing givers. Yes! Most householders gave donations, some very generously, but we collectors soon learned either not to knock on certain doors, or to put on invisible protective armour when faced with excuses or downright insults. There was the occasional risk of doorstep unpleasantness, but we concentrated on the knowledge that the vast majority of encounters were positive and productive. Collecting, you understand, is difficult . . . the delivery bit is easy!

Most years we managed to raise many hundreds of pounds. I regret I haven’t kept a record of all the totals but frequently we reached £800 or £900.

Then Covid entered our lives. It has had many negative effects, but I have a positive one to report here. We now have much freer choice in where we deliver, because many (though not all) of the local parishes have withdrawn from collecting house-to-house in Christian Aid Week. This has opened further opportunities for us at St Joseph’s! Firstly, we no longer have to liaise with a dozen churches about where we can visit. Secondly, we now only deliver envelopes. We deliver to the twenty or so homes nearest our own home, asking householders to return the filled envelope to the individual volunteer’s address which is, at most, only twenty doors away. (Contrast this with the full length of a road possibly miles from your home as was common in the pre-Covid era.) The volunteers now simply go for a short “delivery” walk at the start of Christian Aid Week and give any donations they receive to Win Crawford for counting and banking. No calling back to collect!

Thirdly, we have taken a big step and decided to join the computer age. Marie-France Hicks (with the valuable advice and assistance of her husband) has mastered the skill of printing each envelope with its relevant donation address and a Christian Aid QR code. She has also set up a Christian Aid online-giving system which credits St Joseph's with the giving, so we can trace what our joint efforts have raised.

As I retire as Christian Aid Week organiser may I take this opportunity of thanking Win Crawford and Marie-France for taking over responsibility from me? I am most grateful for years of support from dozens of you, my fellow parishioners, who have served the poor of the world by tramping the streets of Malvern the second week in May for donkey's years. Thank you. Thank you.

Margaret Allen

Postscript This year Christian Aid focussed their national appeal on Malawi, so we set the parish a target of raising £1000 to honour our Malawian Parish Priest Fr Naz. We made it! Thank you for your generosity, St Joe's.



Talking to Isabel

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce grew up as one of six children in a devout Catholic family in Happy Valley in the Malvern hills. Isabel remembers as a child that her father opened their home to anyone who needed it whether that was the homeless, those with mental health problems such as schizophrenia or those who just struggled to ‘fit in’ with society. When the local mental health ‘hospital’, St Wulstan’s, closed down many residents came to stay, some came for weeks, some for months and others for years.

Isabel’s faith has always been central and for many years she was self-employed as a carer for the elderly and housebound. She co-founded and now works full-time for the pro-life organisation March For Life UK as a co-director.

March for Life UK focuses on many issues around abortion. They hold an annual march in London which attracts thousands and they hold other public witnesses as well as training days to help people learn how to talk about abortion in a productive and meaningful way. This year they have also hosted post-abortion awareness days for priests, deacons, bishops and seminarians to learn more about how to become an abortion sensitive parish, and this has been endorsed by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales. More details can be found at marchforlife.co.uk

Isabel highlights the personal importance of the commandment “love thy neighbour as thyself”, explaining that too many within society don’t truly love themselves. They have little self-worth and would therefore have little value for their pre-born neighbours - unborn children. If the only thing giving a pregnant woman a sense of value is her boyfriend or her job and she is possibly going to lose these if she continues her pregnancy, then she will choose what makes her feel loved and valued – the boyfriend or the job. There is a shortage of real love in the world which is in part why we have had over ten million abortions in England and Wales, and between 2021 - 2022 had the highest ever abortion figures, 214,256.

While many claim abortion is a woman’s right Isabel explained that one in every seventeen medical abortions results in the woman ending

up in hospital from complications. She believes that there is the imprint of God in every human being which means human beings at every stage have a right to be treated with the utmost dignity and that abortion dignifies no one, neither the mother nor the child.

Isabel has been praying and offering alternatives outside abortion centres for 20 years and knows hundreds of women who have accepted this help from her and her fellow volunteers. With the onset of a buffer zone around abortion centres, Isabel took to praying silently outside them and has been arrested twice for this. The police interpreted her silent prayer, without leaflets, banners or engaging with anyone, as a protest. The first offence went to court and Isabel was acquitted but rearrested only two weeks later. After six months of investigation no charges were brought but police have recently given Isabel a ticket and told her she will be fined if she returns. Isabel continues to pray there on a weekly basis.

When thinking of the challenges that we face in the 21st century, Isabel sees a great spiritual hunger in society and that many people, even within the Church, express their desire to satisfy that hunger by undertaking social tasks within the community. This is admirable but should not be at the expense of sharing our faith and the Gospel message with the wider community. She also believes that in the attempt to promote equality between the sexes, men have sometimes been stifled.

When asked what the community at St Joseph's could do if they wanted to get involved, Isabel highlighted the power of prayer, particularly Eucharistic Adoration. She said that our prayer is particularly efficacious in front of the Blessed Sacrament and that Jesus has a human heart which is deeply hurt by our ingratitude and disrespect for His precious gift of life. Isabel continued by saying that to say we are pro-life can't just be a tag we give ourselves and that it can be good to ask the question, 'If it became illegal tomorrow to be pro-life, would there be enough evidence to convict me?' Following on from that, anyone interested in holding a pro-life coffee morning (pro-life coffee morning packs can be provided), cake sale or sponsored event to support March for Life UK could get in contact with Isabel at izzyvs@gmail.com

Cathy Showell

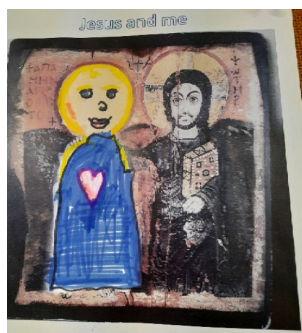
Jesus and Me

Our First Holy Communion children were recently given a picture of Jesus with a space next to it for them to draw themselves. Underneath the picture were the words:

‘This is Jesus and me. My name is ... I am ... years old. I am preparing to meet Jesus in Holy Communion. I go to ... school. I like doing...’

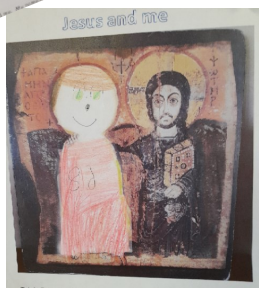
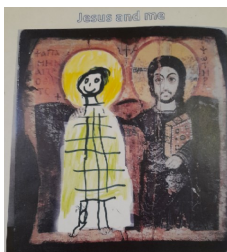
They duly filled in the gaps. And so we meet **Emilja** who is 8, goes to St Joseph’s school and likes doing everything; **James** who is 11, goes to The Chase and enjoys rugby; 10 year old **Dhyan**, a pupil at Great Malvern Parish School whose favourite pastime is football; **Tobias**, 7, who enjoys PE and goes to St Joseph’s; **Alice**, also 7, who goes to Colwall School and likes drawing; 8 year old **Matilda** who is a pupil at St Joseph’s and likes swimming, playing, writing, and helping her Dad to cook; 10 year old **Isaac**, who also goes to St Joseph’s and enjoys football; and **Sofia**, 9 years old, who goes to school in Flyford Flavell and likes singing.

They also drew some amazing pictures of themselves with Jesus which you can see on one of the boards in the McEnnis Room and which we reproduce here.

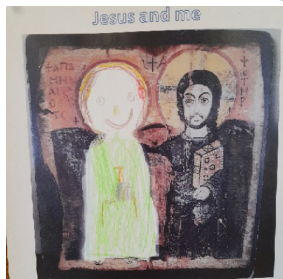


*From left to right,
pictures from
Emilja, Matilda, and
James*





*Clockwise
from above
left, pictures
from Isaac,
Dhyan, Sofia,
Tobias and
Alice*



*The children being enrolled onto the First Holy Communion
programme during the 10 Mass on 8 October*

A Day for Catechists



Just as autumn was beginning, a group of catechists from around the diocese (and one from Denmark) assembled at St. Joseph's for a workshop on becoming more confident in passing on the Good News of salvation to other people. The day began with the usual Saturday morning

Mass celebrated by Fr. Naz, and was followed by two workshops in the morning and a further two in the afternoon. Dr Caroline Farey showed how to use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to show people that our faith has four dimensions: the faith we believe and proclaim which is based on the Creed, the faith we celebrate in the liturgy and the sacraments, the faith we live in Christ by the grace we have received in the first two dimensions, which is based on the Ten Commandments, and Christian prayer, which is based on the Our Father.

The second workshop, which I led, looked in more detail at the Sign of the Cross, how when we say this beautiful short prayer, we are witnessing with words and gestures that we are united to Christ in Baptism who leads us to His Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Again we reflected that the Sign of the Cross touches on all Four Dimensions of Faith; that it's not just an opening and closing to prayer and the liturgy, but that it proclaims our faith in Christ and also helps us in moments of temptation.

The afternoon began with a practical session looking at how we can help people to appreciate that there are real fruits and graces to be received in the sacraments. And then the final session explored how we can make sure that everything we do and say in the parish community reflects the centrality of Jesus Christ's work of our salvation.

The day concluded with evening prayer in the church, led by Fr. Naz.

Carol Ann Harnett

The Radcamarathon



On 8th October I got up at 5am, put on full academic dress (black suit, dress shirt, black bow tie and commoner's academic gown), jumped on my bike and rode to the Radcliffe Camera in the centre of Oxford. At 5:30 am I started running a Marathon around the Radcliffe Camera to raise money for three different charities. During the next 4 hours 12 minutes and 5 seconds, I circled the Radcliffe Camera more than 220 times.

I was supported by several college friends who took it in turns to cycle or run with me. I ran early in the morning to avoid running into tourists, but by the time I crossed the finish line a small crowd had formed.

Money is still trickling in for the three charities I ran for, but as of this writing the Radcamarathon raised just over £400 for Malvern Community Action, £677 for Homeless Oxfordshire and £1,076.60 (£1,214.65 with Gift Aid) for Wychumvi.

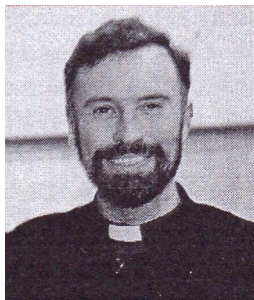
Wychumvi is a charity run by current and former teachers and parents at The Wyche School, Malvern to benefit Gofu Juu School in Tanga, Tanzania. When the charity started in 2008, the goal was to feed orphans at the school who lived on their own in the bush and would sometimes faint during lessons due to hunger. Money was raised to build a proper kitchen at the school and money was donated to feed orphans a cup of ugi each day. This lunchtime offer has grown over the years and now all 1000 students receive a cup of ugi every school day.

A cup of ugi costs £0.05, so the £1,214.65 raised for Gofu Juu will fund 24,293 cups of ugi. That means the 1000 pupils at Gofu Juu will eat lunch for just over a month. I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the parishioners of St Joseph's who so generously supported my Radcamarathon. The money you donated will make a big difference to the children of Gofu Juu.

Alex Craig

From Fr Antony

Dom Antony Hayne, as he then was, was parish priest of St Joseph's from 1980 to 1990 and is remembered very fondly by many who were in the parish at the time. John and Betty Clark are still in touch with him and John recently asked him to write about his Malvern years. Here is his response.



*Fr Antony during his
Malvern days*

During my working life as an English Benedictine monk I had already taught in our Prep School and the Junior department at Douai School, and had moved 'on to the Mission' as we call it, meaning pastoral work on one of our parishes. I had spent time on two parishes as an Assistant Priest but in September 1980 (I think), the Abbot and Archbishop appointed me Parish Priest of our Great Malvern parish. My predecessor was a real English gentleman, much loved by parishioners but perhaps too weary to embrace the ideal changes towards using the gifts of the laity.

I was ready and anxious for the changes recommended. The parish was full of highly competent people and in no time at all we had many groups formed, well-led and hard working. My role was delightful, allowing, taking part and enjoying the fruits of our labours and of course the pastoral work which is the privilege of every priest. I was blessed with individuals who had a real ministry of service, secretarial and admin, care of the sacristies and liturgy, music, variety of prayer forms etc, etc. I'll just mention two names - the president over all of us, Mr George Sayer*, and Pauline Kirton, who gave almost her whole life to the parish as parish secretary for my whole ten years and beyond. I am eternally grateful to each and every person. So many individuals and families became close friends and some still are many years later.

Realistically though life wasn't a 'bed of roses' all the time. There were two communities, run separately, around St Joseph's in Malvern Link and St Edmund's in Great Malvern. It was difficult to get them to work together. The other difficulty was created by the diocese, understandably though. The people were used to using the High School at Lugwardine, Hereford (outside the diocese). The Birmingham Diocese was working to improve their Worcester High Parish Magazine No 92 - Advent 2023

School, Bl. Edward Oldcorne, and told me to be their agent of change. There were parents who may not have forgiven me to this day . . .

My ten years in Malvern were the high point and happiest of my life.

**George Sayer was head of English at Malvern College, a close friend of Tolkien and more particularly of C S Lewis, whose biography he wrote and with whom he regularly walked the length of the Malvern Hills. He was involved in many aspects of parish life.*



The interior of St Joseph's church as it was in Fr Antony's day, before it was extended in 1998. There were four weekend masses in the parish then, two at St Joseph's and two at St Edmund's in Great Malvern. In 1986, probably the year numbers peaked, total weekend mass attendance was recorded as 573 and nearly half of those, according to figures which survive from a few years later, chose to attend the 9.30 mass at St Joseph's, with its distinctive liturgy and music. While a packed church was wonderful, it did bring some problems. The little church only held 170 people in comfort, and about 200 in discomfort. At this time it was being asked to hold up to 230 and couldn't hold them at all. Regular attenders learned to arrive 15 minutes early if they wanted to avoid being one of those left standing at the back. Reaching the front for Communion had to be strictly marshalled by the stewards and even so could involve some unliturgical manoeuvring near the altar steps.

In its present form our beautiful church seats some 220 people.

Margaret Rank

The Pope and the Environment

Eight years ago, Pope Francis published his encyclical *Laudato Si. On care for our common home*. The title is taken from St Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun", in which the Saint describes how we humans are related to all our kin in the family tree of Creation.

The canticle has been adapted as a song by the American writer Brian McLaren:

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Sun,
who brings the light of day;
He's beautiful and radiant, like you!
Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon,
Through all her sister stars.
They're luminous and wonderful, like you!

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Wind
And Sister Cloud and Storm.
They bring flowers from Mother Earth for you.
Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Bird;
You gave him wings to fly.
He sings with joy and soars up high for you.

Through Sister Water, Lord, be praised;
She's humble, useful, too.
She's precious, clear and pure, O Lord, like you.
Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Whose beauty glows at night.
He's cheerful, powerful, and strong, like you.

Be praised through all those who forgive,
The patient, kind, and brave,
Enduring suffering, trial, and pain, like you.
Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Death,
Who will embrace all life,
And carry us up to the arms of you....

McLaren comments on the song as follows:

"In this grand vision, we aren't ruling from the heights of a great top-down pyramid or chain of being, generals under King God in

the divine chain of command. In this grand vision, we aren't given by our rank a carte blanche to dominate, oppress, exploit, and exterminate everything below us. No, we aren't at the top of anything; we're simply at the tip, the tip of one small branch of a very huge, verdant tree, and all created things are our grandparents, cousins, and siblings."

Follow-up and commentary:

Now the Pope has issued a follow-up "Apostolic Exhortation" to *Laudato Si'* entitled *Laudate Deum*, in which he gives a sobering reflection on the progress (or rather the lack of it) which we have made in our "care for our common home". The conclusion he draws is, to put it in non-papal language, that we humans have continued to trash the planet. As he addresses us, his "brothers and sisters of our suffering planet" he realises that our efforts hitherto have not been adequate.

For example, he draws our attention to the extreme weather conditions, which he calls "cries of protest on the part of the earth" which are symptoms of "a silent disease that affects everyone" and, one might add, all other creatures (with the possible exception of cockroaches and bed-bugs!)

The Pope goes into many of the scientific arguments showing the seriousness of the climate crisis, which we do not need to rehearse here, as they have been adequately documented elsewhere, although unfortunately too many people are still choosing to close their eyes to them or even actively deny them.

As human beings, we share this planet with the rest of global creation - the very stones and rocks, the rivers, lakes and seas, all plant life, and the fish, the birds, the reptiles and the other mammals. We are, however, not very good at sharing. We think we have a God-given right to deny the right to life of other creatures; we indulge in an economic and technocratic paradigm which regards the rest of creation (including much of humanity) as objects ripe for exploitation.

We live in a world of diminishing resources, the distribution of which is becoming increasingly unequal and unjust, a world in which the Magnificat is being turned on its head, and "the rich are filling themselves with good things and sending the poor away hungry".

The social and political consequences of the climate crisis will not be non-trivial. We already live in a world where millions have been displaced or

are on the move, and the pressures imposed by this will increase as swathes of the earth become uninhabitable.

Underlying the physical, social and economic consequences of the climate crisis are heart-rending acts of injustice being perpetrated against the weakest and most vulnerable on this planet. There is first of all the injustices being meted out by the human community against its fellow non-human inhabitants. Extinction threatens vast numbers of species about which we know little and care less. According to some estimates, species are becoming extinct at least 1,000 times faster than they would without human impacts.

In the human sphere, those who are suffering most from the effects of the climate crisis are those who have done least to cause it. As the Pope puts it, “a low, richer percentage of the planet contaminates more than the poorest 50% of the total world population”.

What is behind all this? The African Bishops pulled no punches when they stated that climate change makes manifest “a tragic and striking example of structural sin.” ‘Structural sin’ is a concept which grew out of liberation theology, and although Pope Francis does not use the actual term, in *Laudato Si* he laments the alienation of humankind from the natural world, in both our intellectual understanding and our everyday lives: “Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational”. This alienation, according to Francis, involves not only the mistreatment of the natural world, but is in a sense the denial of our true being. In other words, it is a denial of our God-given nature, of the goodness which God saw in His Creation. By ill-treating Creation we are turning away from God.

Beneath this over-arching sin of alienation from God are the particular sins of arrogance (putting ourselves above God) and greed (hoarding more of the fruits of Creation than we need).

Underlying this all is a tragic misconception of what it means for us to be created ‘in the image of God’ which denies that God is present in all created beings.

Michael Townson

The Joy of Reading



In the last edition of the magazine we reported on the opening of the school library. Since then it has been admired by friends and parishioners as part of the school's open day in October and is now well and truly part of the school's daily life. And what a friendly and welcoming part it is.

The room itself is a delight. It is not where its predecessor was, but in what was the school's IT room, and which those who have been in the parish for many a long year will remember was once, somewhat improbably, the parish's kitchen. It is now light and bright, with imaginatively stencilled walls and windows, and of course with rows and rows of shelving to house all the wonderful books which are the reason for its existence. Many of the books are new, adding to the best of the original stock, all designed to entice even the most reluctant reader. Every class has a weekly slot when the children visit the library together, and get the chance to take a book back to the classroom, with guidance when appropriate on what to choose. Two librarians per class oversee the lending of the books and back in the classroom time is allotted to read them.

That's the school library, but each class also has its own smaller one, from which books may be borrowed to take home to read, and where the children are involved in choosing which of the available books should be on the shelves. The children also have books read to them by their teacher, so experience in different ways the joy of reading.

Pam Taylor, former chair of the Governors and great enthusiast both for reading and for St Joseph's School, and in whose memory the library is named, would have loved it all.

Margaret Rank

Growing Up in Malawi

Father Naz's recent talk on his early life for The Thursday Group

Fr Naz is the third born but first boy of seven children in his family, which according to their culture placed him as head of the family.

The original name he received, Zarilo, is associated with life, and being the first son his birth was a sign of hope that the family lineage would continue to flourish in and through his posterity. Fr Naz became very ill after his birth and his parents thought that he might die. A White Father missionary brother by the name of **Nazarius** and the local catechist were visiting his village at that time, which gave the catechist a chance to baptise him under the name Nazarius after the missionary brother who held him by the hand as he was being baptised. This left Fr Naz acquiring a second name at such a young age. He subsequently recovered and his parents were convinced that his life was saved by the waters of baptism which was the reason why they decided to become Catholic.

When Fr Naz became a toddler (three to four years old) he, like all other toddlers, grew up in his grandparents' quarters. This practice underlines the concept that growing up entails being weaned from parental sheltered life. His earliest memories are from living with them, especially his grandmother, in the company of cousins. Strictly speaking, what are referred to as cousins are in fact brothers and sisters in his tradition. You have to be very specific if you want to know how many brothers and sisters a certain individual has because all those cousins would number as brothers and sisters and the uncles and aunts would count as proper dads and mothers as well.

Fr Naz grew up in a village which had two distinct camps which were also places of formation and socialisation, one camp for men and young boys called Sangweni or Mphara and one for women and young girls called Kukati. These two camps were places where the young were taught skills for their livelihood as men and women. From a very early stage the community of elders did everything to turn the young boys and girls into well cultured people equipped with responsibilities fit for men and women.

The camps also served as educational places for the children, but the two parallel camps were also open places where all the men and boys on one

hand and all the women and girls on the other shared meals. These camps were open dining spaces which meant that everyone knew where to go to find food and the children did not need to go to their family household for food. In this way there was no distinction between orphaned children and other children in the village - all were supplied with adequate meals in these communal places.

At the time that Fr Naz was growing up there must have been about 20 families (about 100 people in total). At that time, and it is pretty much the same today, women and young girls took charge of kitchen work and the kitchen was almost a no go area for men. Women did not welcome men lingering in the kitchen and a man frequenting the kitchen would be considered stupid. It was, by and large, and still is today, the responsibility of women to cook all the food for the village and forward it to both the men's and women's camps.

You can see that Fr Naz grew up in a culture where men and women did not eat together. Things are no longer the same but even as a grown man and a priest Fr Naz was unable to convince his mother to eat from the same table as himself and she had still not changed her mind at the time of her death in 2008. Of his three sisters only one shares meals from the same table as him but his oldest sister and the youngest one cannot be convinced.

This is the early childhood of Fr Naz. The next issue of the magazine will carry something of his teenage years and the journey of his call to the priesthood.

Di Walsh

From Malvern Catenians

The Catenians have been involved in different aspects of life at St Joseph's School for the last seven years, most recently awarding prizes at the end of the summer term, with the aim of encouraging students to apply their best efforts to their school work. They are also supporting the school's breakfast and after-school clubs and recently organised a vocations week at the school as well as donating a cup presented weekly to the class with the best attendance.

They hope that people, particularly parents, will become more aware of their presence and in addition they are pleased to help with parish life.

They are always warmly welcomed in the school and wish it every success.

Why am I a Catholic?

The reason why I live my life in Jesus within the Catholic Church is because of the amazing ethos and worldview of the Catholic Tradition.

It is so broad, so deep, so rich.

Here I am just going to mention some of the aspects which are so meaningful for me:-

1. Catholicism takes the mystery of the Incarnation very seriously. The whole material universe is the home of the Divine. This is one of the reasons why the Eucharist is at the very centre of my faith; for me it encompasses the whole mystery of the Christ, and in my adoration of the Blessed Sacrament I ponder on the meaning of the whole mystery.

2. We are fascinated by the Crucified One, who hangs on the Cross, true God and true Man. We truly believe what St Paul said when he wrote that 'the Cross is foolishness for those who perish, but for us it is the wisdom and the power of God'.

3. The Church's teaching and absolute belief in the Mystical Body of Christ; all of us still living, and those who have gone before us are one body, with Christ as its Head. St Paul put this teaching at the heart of the Christian Community, and this has become like the DNA of our Catholic tradition, the teaching of the wholeness of that body. Being Church means that we are not fully connected with Christ unless we are connected with each other. Every part of the body is important, and to be rightly connected is more important than being individually 'right'.

Isn't this amazing? Sheer miracle!

4. The teaching on repentance and the belief that we need transformation, a full return to our state of innocence.

5. Of particular importance to me is the mystical tradition, the amazing ancient and modern teachings that above all God is Love.

6. Although our attention is drawn to the Divine, the Church does not forget the teaching of Jesus that the Kingdom of God starts here, which is why there is such a rich body of Catholic Social Teaching which gives practical advice and encouragement on living a life of love. Our belief in God gives these teachings an additional dimension over and above the inspiration provided by purely secular institutions.

These are just a few of the reasons why I remain Catholic.

It almost seems foolish not to want to benefit from so much truth, long-lasting tradition, beauty and wisdom.

Yet so much of it is hidden in plain sight.

This is a personal view, and it would be so lovely to talk about it with others and share our visions of the Church. The treasure is virtually inexhaustible, and it would be so beneficial and good to look at it together in a spirit of community and love. Is anybody interested?

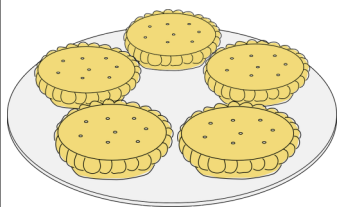
Francesca Townson

Tea and Cake Mondays started before the summer holidays and seem to be appreciated by young, older, and much, much older! And by Fr Naz! Join us if you are passing the church on the second and last Monday of each month. You would be very welcome and your input is valued and looked forward to. It's lovely but don't look at the amount of cake consumed! We don't count calories!

Susan, Fran and the Monday tea and cakers

The tea and cakes have been such a good idea. It definitely adds to the special community feeling that the school and church seem to have. I always look forward to Mondays

Fiona Daniels (mum and parent governor)



I like tea and cake. But I love that the church uses tea and cake to network with school parents as part of the wider Church family. I love that parents have an opportunity to have a friendly chat with members of the church community without strings attached.

Chris Murr (dad)

An Ecumenical Pilgrimage

On October 6th, Roger Watson, Gemma, Allan and I joined a group of 20 Anglicans and 20 RCs, together with Archbishop Bernard Longley, and Bishop John Inge, to go on a weekend Ecumenical pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. It was good to meet up with several fellow travellers, whom we had travelled with to the Holy Land and Rome in past years.

Canterbury is often described as the cradle of Christianity, St Augustine being sent by Pope Gregory as a missionary to England in 597 AD.

We were blessed with glorious sunshine, a superb hotel across the Cathedral Green, and excellent planning for a weekend filled with varied activities, with time to relax and explore, and to enjoy meals together.

Visits to places of special Christian historical interest on Saturday morning began with prayer in the local RC church, then a tour around the Franciscan gardens, hearing about plants and herbs grown for medicinal use. We saw Eastbridge hospital, which provided hospitality for pilgrims after St Thomas Becket's murder.

Mid-day prayer was said in St. Dunstan's church, where the head of St Thomas More is in the vault of the Roper family. On Saturday evening, choral evensong was a musical feast of worship, followed by the celebration of a RC Vigil Mass in the Cathedral Crypt led by Archbishop Bernard.

At dinner we were joined by the Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, who had been chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the first black woman to become a C of E bishop, and who spoke of her journey from Montego Bay to deputising for the Archbishop of Canterbury today. She encouraged us to be confident about our faith.

On Sunday morning, we joined the Cathedral congregation for their Eucharist and Harvest Festival, Bishop John and Archbishop Bernard giving the Final blessing together.

Out of obedience and respect for our individual understanding of the Eucharist we refrained from participating in each others' Holy Communion.

Late on Friday evening, a special highlight for many of us was a very moving candlelight vigil and tour of the empty Cathedral, beginning at the place where Thomas Beckett was cruelly martyred. The Cathedral became a place of pilgrimage and healing.

During the vigil we considered our own reasons for being on pilgrimage in a moving time of reflection and prayer.

Sunday lunchtime, we left Canterbury, travelling to Lambeth Palace in London to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and his wife Caroline. They were very kind with their welcome, hospitality and time. We gathered in the chapel where the Archbishop spoke of his visit to Rome to meet Pope Francis and to pray together with representatives of Christian denominations from all over the world at the start of the Synod. He had travelled on to Armenia, and spoke very movingly of the refugees displaced from Karabakhis, and his conversations around peace and reconciliation. Together we prayed for peace in our world, particularly in the light of violence in Israel and Palestine.

We returned home to Worcester during the evening, at the end of a wonderful weekend, full of prayer, worship and friendship, with joy in our hearts, in being able to be One in our journey of faith with fellow Christians.

We had followed in the steps of others, taking pilgrimage to places inhabited by saints and martyrs, honouring their lives, in the hopes of more understanding and to be inspired for our own journey, stirring us to new depths, reflections and fresh challenges, calling us to walk more intentionally along the path of life.

Vivienne Fox



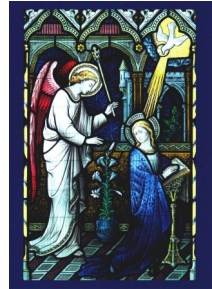
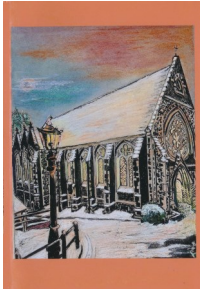
Christmas Cards

Supporting restoration work at St Wulstan's

You probably remember seeing St Wulstan's Christmas cards for sale in the narthex in previous Advents. The good news is that they are available again. Alongside one featuring the Annunciation as depicted in a window in the Lady Chapel at St Wulstan's are two beautiful new cards, 'Snowfall and Sunset in Little Malvern' and a card based on the popular carol 'A partridge in a Pear Tree'.

They are the work of Charlotte Carver, amateur artist and St Wulstan's parishioner. Charlotte points out that the carol represents a different aspect of the Christian faith in each line. 'For example, the ten lords a-leaping symbolise the ten commandments, the four calling birds are the four gospels and the partridge is Jesus'.

Only £5 for a pack of ten of the new cards and £4 for the ones of the Annunciation. Buy your packs early because they are selling rapidly, and support our next door neighbours.



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. Please keep the copy coming and watch the bulletin for the next copy day.

Groan . . Groan . . .

What did the wise men say after they offered up their gifts?
Wait, there's myrrh.

What did Santa say when he stepped into a big puddle?
It must have reindeer.