

*As we slowly come out of lockdown, it is time to take stock of what the experience of the past eighteen months has taught us about ourselves and our faith.. Fr Philip's sermon, printed below, sets us thinking about new beginnings and the importance of Sunday as a symbol of God's gifts to us as Creator and Redeemer. Fr John's reflection on starting his ministry in abnormal times and Andy Gudge's report on the continuing activities of the SVF remind us that, whatever the obstacles, God's work carries on and his servants adapt to circumstances. The Youth Group, too, has managed to keep going by means of Zoom and we are grateful to Alice, Grace and Niamh who put together two inspiring pages for us. Our thanks also to Godfrey, whose splendid improvisations on the organ have brightened up Sunday masses, for his humorous response to our request for his own 'take' on lockdown.*

*"WINDOW" tries to fulfil the promise of its title by looking outwards to the rest of the world as well as inwards upon the parish and we are pleased to be able to print information about Ashadeep, the centre for disabled children in northern India, the project in the Sudan financed by the Jane Smith Fund, and the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza. These items help to put the local inconveniences and deprivations of lockdown into perspective.*

*As always, the magazine could not be produced without the input of many parishioners and we are grateful to all those whose contributions have made this issue possible.*

**Editors**

## **Dies Domini – The Day of the Lord**

There's a lovely moment in Downton Abbey when Matthew Crawley – the heir who would never be – tells the family of the big house that, due to the demands of his job, he would only be able to come and help run the estate at weekends. Lady Grantham, the dowager countess, played by Maggie Smith, looks ever so puzzled and asks, 'What is a weekend'?

That puzzled question reminds us that 'the weekend' – and even the French now speak of 'le weekend' – is a fairly recent invention, coming originally from the mills of the North of England, where factory owners began to give their workers an early finish on Saturday afternoon before their one day off on a Sunday – a finish that got earlier and earlier, so that the working week eventually became Monday to Friday and the weekend Saturday and Sunday.

When I was a child, I just assumed that people went to church – if they did at all on a Sunday – because it was, for most people (even those who worked in shops), a day off – a free day, when you'd have time to do that sort of thing. I didn't realise that it was the other way round – that we had a day off because it was a Sunday – because of what once happened on a Sunday.

In the gospels, we will remember how Jesus often got into trouble with the Pharisees because of what they saw as infringements of the Sabbath

rules. Even healing someone was classified as work – whereas the Sabbath, meaning seventh (Saturday) – was a day of complete rest. By doing this they imitated the pattern of Creation. That just as God had rested on the seventh day at the end of his work of creation, so do we.

Our seven-day week comes from that ancient Jewish tradition of the account of Creation in the Book of Genesis. So on the first day of Creation – the first day of time – God says, 'Let there be light.' There is no longer just darkness and nothingness, but light and dark, day and night. Time began. And in that magnificent poem, the song of creation with which Genesis begins, there are six days of creativity – of activity and work – and then the seventh day of rest. God spent time to contemplate all that he had made, and indeed it was very good. So, each passing week was and is a celebration of the Creator God, the Lord and Giver of Life.

But from the time of the apostles, the Church began to observe not Saturday as the holy day – but Sunday. For the Jews that the apostles and the first Christians were, this was a huge cultural and religious shift – but the reason was simple. At Easter morning Mass, the gospel begins with these words: 'It was very early on the first day of the week, and still dark, when Mary Magdalen went to the tomb.' Sunday was the first day of

creation when God said, 'Let there be light', and Sunday is the day of Christ's resurrection – the first day of the new creation.

There has been a bit of a tendency in recent years for us to talk about *weekend Mass* rather than Sunday Mass – as though Mass was yet another weekend leisure activity to squeeze in with football and a walk in the park. Lady Grantham would be pretty bemused by *weekend Mass* too! We come as Catholics to Sunday Mass because 'It was very early on the first day of the week, and still dark, when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb.'

In many places, including here, the first Mass of Sunday is actually on Saturday evening – which might seem a bit confusing! But this Mass has the specific name of the *Vigil Mass*. This idea of a vigil before a feast day is very ancient – springing from the Church's Jewish roots, which always under-

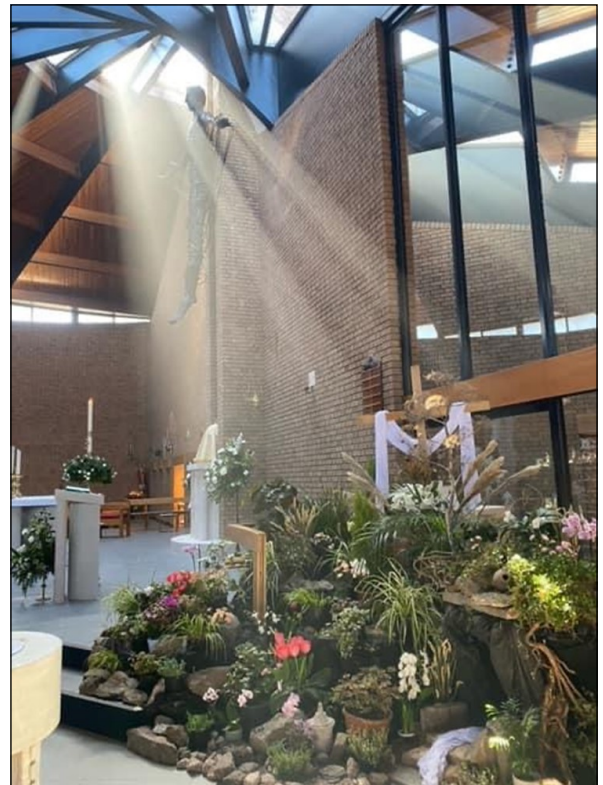
stood the new day to begin, not at dawn, but dusk. We still see that today where Jewish families will meet to eat the Sabbath dinner on Friday night.

Only recently, our bishops in England reminded us, as we slowly emerge from the traumas of pandemic, that usually our Catholic obligation is to come to the altar on Sunday, and to do our best to re-establish that – for it's the day of the Lord's resurrection. It's great to come on other days too, and a lovely thing if we are able – but, on the approximately 104,000 successive Sundays since the Resurrection, we as Christ's people, grafted members of the Lord's vine, have gathered at his altar to be united with our crucified and risen Lord. This is the day which was made by the Lord. Let us rejoice and be glad. Alleluia.

Fr Philip

## Coming out of Lockdown

We are grateful to Fr Philip for allowing us to print the text of a sermon he gave a few weeks ago in response to the reminder from the bishops about why Sunday is special. As he made a link between our emergence from the traumas of pandemic and Sunday as the day of the Lord's resurrection, my eye was caught by the empty tomb in the Easter Garden at the side of the sanctuary and drawn up to the figure of the Risen Christ towering above us. This set me thinking about the connection and contrast between a possible return to 'normal' life again after so many months of lockdown and the greater promise of 'new' life that was confirmed by Christ's emergence from the tomb on Easter Sunday. This sense of new beginnings was enhanced by the wonderful display of Spring flowers on the sanctuary that bore witness to the life of the natural world that was also being renewed after the darkness of Winter.



When I mentioned to Fr Philip that these thoughts might be a theme for the next issue of "WINDOW", he drew my attention to this wonderfully symbolic photograph on the parish website of light streaming down from the statue of the Risen Christ onto the Cross of Good Friday and the empty tomb in the Easter Garden. \_\_\_\_\_ Editor

## Getting through Lockdown

One thing that many people started doing during the first lockdown, have continued with, and intend to keep doing after lockdown is take a daily walk. \_\_\_\_\_ *Bernard Davis*

### Ramble

You started out on this walk with purpose.  
What purpose? Let the purpose change.  
Lean into the rhythm of your steps,  
as the rhythm becomes gentler  
let the rhythm become more complex.  
Step out of the military march,  
begin to ramble. Replace destination

with every detail around you.  
That butterfly on the elderflower  
deserves more than a passing glance.  
There's a stream around the bend,  
it keeps its own time, will not reach  
the river that conveys it to the sea  
by hurry, it is content to meander.

Sit down on the bank, appreciate the give  
in the cushion made from last years growth,  
watch water dancing in its pebble bed,  
there's a robin bobbing on a branch beside you,  
while marchers pass by regardless, in step  
with the clock you have stepped out of time with.

Rhythms here are subtle,  
intimate and immense,  
like that sound of distant waves  
in the highest branches of trees.  
A whole ocean of awareness  
surrounds you.

Till a beetle  
can be heard  
crackling  
over the  
skeleton  
of a leaf.

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## 'The Caress of God'

Our own forays from home during lockdown have often taken us to Swanhurst Park for a stroll round the lake. During the Winter, it was a sheet of ice, with a few ducks, geese and moorhens but hundreds of sea gulls slithering about on it. Once, there was the unexpected sight of a solitary cormorant. With the coming of Spring, we kept watch on the progress of a pair of moorhens building a nest on the water and sitting on their clutch of eggs.



We also enjoyed the successive explosions of different colours from the clusters of rhododendron bushes. These were minor wonders, but in their small way illustrated the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*:

*"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God."* \_\_\_\_\_ *Editors*

### **Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem and the Holy Land**

Al Ahli Hospital, supported by the Amos Trust, is in the centre of Gaza City and treats over 45,000 patients each year. It is a haven of peace and hope in the middle of one of the world's most troubled areas.

Despite the extreme adversity, the hospital staff and volunteers are committed to serving the community through out-patient and in-patient care, including emergency and ambulance services – and its doors are open to everyone in need.

If you would like to make a donation to the work of the hospital in these distressing times, please go to:

<https://www.amostrust.org/palestine-justice/partners/al-ahli-hospital-gaza/>

## Pray24Brum

Many thanks to all those who supported Pray24-Brum. This was a virtual twenty-four-hour prayer relay, which started at 9.00am on Friday 14 May. Individuals, small groups, and congregations in Birmingham prayed in their own way for the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower the Church. Some of St. Dunstan's and St. Jude's parishioners signed up to pray during one of the designated hourly slots, whilst others joined an online prayer meeting or prayed as individuals for the success of the event.

Pray24Brum was part of *Thy Kingdom Come* initiative. *Birmingham Churches Together* website gave the following background:

*"Since its launch by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2016, Thy Kingdom Come has become a major event in the Christian calendar, with participation by many groups and Churches in the UK – and in 170 countries around the world. Thy Kingdom Come builds on the Biblical passage Acts 1:12-14, which details how, following Jesus' Ascension, the group of 120 disciples*

*prayed constantly for nine days for the coming of the Holy Spirit to enable them to witness to Jesus (Acts 1:8), with the result that when the Holy Spirit was out-poured on the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people were baptised (Acts 2:1-41). Thy Kingdom Come encourages prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower the Church, and that people will come to faith in Christ. This vision remains as relevant as ever in 2021!"*

Also, as part of the *Thy Kingdom Come* novena, eleven of Birmingham's church leaders, including Archbishop Bernard Longley, gave a short video reflection, following the biblical journey from the Ascension of Jesus to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his disciples. Each of the videos focused on one aspect of the Kingdom of God, ending with the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

Blessings and thanks again to everyone who took part; the next Pray24Brum event will be during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 21-22 January 2022. \_\_\_\_\_*Deacon David Fairbotham*

### Parish Social Life

For well over a year now we have all complied with the restrictions resulting from the Covid pandemic. This has of course meant that all of our planned parish social events have had to be cancelled or postponed. However, we have been blessed to have a Church that has remained open so we have still been able to share in the most important things: time with Christ present in the Tabernacle and, for the majority of the lockdown, the opportunity to celebrate daily Holy Mass.

Fellowship has continued, albeit on a socially distanced basis, through stewarding, ticketing, cleaning and flower-arranging, and new friendships have grown through these. Those attending weekday Masses have also enjoyed, once permitted, walking in Kings Heath Park and coffees afterwards, those simplest of things proving to be very special.

Volunteers have started to return to the parish office and governors to visit our parish schools. I so enjoyed my first visit for over a year to St Alban's, where children from each year group shared their understanding, experience and love of worship and prayer.

We have also been able to welcome smaller groups from our parish schools back into Church to celebrate Mass and our Year 3 children to celebrate their sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Homes, schools and the parish all play an important role as catechists of these special young people. Please remember to keep them in your prayers for they, like all of us, are each on their own personal faith journey which will be a lifelong pilgrimage.

As restrictions lift, we hope to resume more social activities, so please look out for these in the newsletter, website and social media. A Live Simply walk/pray/picnic is being planned and the Walsingham pilgrimage has been rescheduled. May we as a parish continue to be a place of welcome and one where we can grow together in faith and though fellowship.

\_\_\_\_\_*Sue Allen*



## News from Ashadeep in India

The weather is very hot now in Uttar Pradesh. We received some rain yesterday, so it has cooled down a little now. The weather will be very hot in June.

The school and the hostels are closed due to the Corona Virus lockdown. Thirty-five orphan children are staying in the hostel. Children who have parents have gone home. By the grace of God, all our children, our sisters, teachers and workers are safe. None of us are affected by Corona so far.

Corona is spreading in the local villages and many poor people are dying. There are no ventilators, oxygen and medicine. So many people are dying without getting medical assistance.

Our teachers are preparing online classes and sending them to our school children. All our school children and teachers are well protected. The schools may re-open only in July, depending on the Corona situation.



[The main entrance to the Ashadeep campus]

The basketball court is ready for use. We shall also get ready a few more shuttle and volleyball grounds for the school children to play. We hope to receive some help to construct a skill training centre (Vocational Training Centre) soon. We wish to train our

disabled boys and girls in electrical, plumbing, motor mechanics and computer courses, so that they will be able to get jobs and earn their own livelihood. Thus they could support their families.



[The chapel on the Ashadeep site, where we attended a joyful Mass on the Sunday of our visit \_\_\_\_\_Editors]

Our Bishop Rt. Rev. Vincent got Corona, but he recovered fast.

We thank you and all our loyal benefactors, who support us with your valuable contribution. May the good Lord bless you all abundantly! We do remember you all in our prayers.

With best wishes,

Fr. Jakson

(Director of Ashadeep, Centre for the Disabled)

[We are very grateful to Fr Jakson for finding the time during May to send us an update on developments in Ashadeep and a report on how the Centre has been coping at this difficult time. We fondly recall our visit to India in 2016 and the wonderful hospitality we received from the priests, nuns, lay staff, and pupils.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Editors]



## MY JOY

There are souls on the earth,  
Who seek vainly for joy,  
But for me it is quite the opposite.  
Joy is to be found in my heart  
And it does not pass away.  
I own it without loss,  
Like a Rose in springtime,  
She smiles on me everyday

Truly I am too happy.  
I always follow my will.  
Could I not be joyful  
Without showing my delight  
My joy is to love pain.  
I smile as I shed tears  
I feel with acceptance  
The thorns mixed with flowers

When the blue sky turns dark,  
And my joy seems to abandon me,  
I love to stay in the shadows  
To hide and to bow down.  
It is the holy will of Jesus  
My only love.  
So, I live without any fear  
As I love the dark as much as the day  
My joy is to stay small.  
So when I fall along the road,  
I can rise so quickly,  
And Jesus takes me by the Hand.  
Then overwhelming him with love  
I tell him that he is everything for me  
And I increase my embrace  
When he yields to my faith.

If at times I shed tears,  
It is my joy to keep them hidden.  
O what delight there is in suffering,  
When I can hide them with flowers.  
I want truly to suffer without a word,  
So that Jesus might be consoled.  
My joy is to see him smile,  
When my heart is far away.

My joy is ever to try hard  
To lower my pride.  
It is a heart burning with love  
O repent ceaselessly to Jesus,  
"For you my holy little brother  
I am happy to suffer."  
My only joy on this Earth,  
Is the ability to give you delight.

Long do I wish to live  
Lord if it is your wish.  
To heaven I wish to follow you  
If that is what pleases you  
I am ever consumed with love for my country  
What difference if I live or die  
As long as I love you Jesus  
My delight.



[Our thanks to Shaji George, who passed on to us this poem by St Thérèse of Lisieux (the Little Flower), translated by John Robinson. It expresses an attitude of devotion and humility that is very appropriate to the recent experience of lockdown. \_\_\_\_\_ *Editors*]

# SVP UPDATE

Despite being only able to meet virtually, on Zoom, and being unable to visit our friends at home, as we did in happier times, we seem to have been very busy these last few months.

At Christmas (and yes, I know that seems like a lifetime ago) working with the schools and our friends at Manningford Hall in Druids Heath we supplied no fewer than 134 food hampers – “Christmas Dinner in a Bag” to struggling families and individuals.

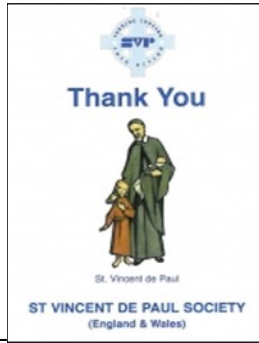
With the benefit of the good-will of our local tradesmen (Mitchell’s, the butchers, and Zeb’s Supermarket), who supplied turkey, potatoes, and carrots at cost price, and a HUGE consignment from Booker’s, we were able to put together hampers containing all necessities for a Christmas dinner – which is like the glory days when our much-missed friend, Pat Shortt led the SVP in this parish. The response from the families was extremely humbling. Below are some pictures of the “Christmas Dinner in a bag” being made up and ready for collection:



Thanks to the generous donations – in both cash and kind – from you good people during Lent, and thanks also to funding from the Gubay Foundation, we’ve been able to support feeding programmes from both our schools and Manningford Hall. Overall, we’ve supported in excess of forty struggling families this way with food and toiletries week in, week out throughout Lent and beyond.

We’ve had referrals from the schools and from SVP National Office seeking our help for, typically, women escaping from violent and abusive relationships, people who have gone from ‘old-fashioned’ benefits to Universal Credit and, as a result, had to go without money for several weeks, people who are vulnerable, chaotic, unlucky ... human, in other words.

Thank God, we’ve been able to help: with a bag of groceries or two; with a bunk bed for the children, or a cooker, or a top-up on the gas/electric card ... or



whatever is needed. And what hits us time and again is the realisation that “there but for the grace of God go I”.

*Of course*, we very occasionally get chancers and outright cheats trying to get money from us. **But**, overwhelmingly, the people we are privileged to help are ordinary, decent people who have just been unlucky; unlucky in terms of their dealings with the State; unlucky in their choice of partner; unlucky in

work, or health, or family. Ordinary, decent, good people to whom bad things have happened.

And, bad things can happen to us all. When they do, the SVP will do what we can – even though it may well only be a little – to help, in the name of St Vincent and remembering what Our Lord told us: “Whatever you do for the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.” And, God willing, we’ll continue, and grow, and do what we can to make things better – and be a living tribute to that great Vincentian and our friend, Pat Shortt, God rest his soul.

We already plan to revive “Fundays and Lunch” at Manningford Hall during the summer holidays ... funding permitting (and if that’s not a hint, I don’t know what is!). When COVID restrictions are fully lifted, we’ll get back to visiting people who are on their own ... or just need to see a friendly face.

A final thought .

In a way I think of the SVP as being like a table, relying on four legs to stay upright and keep your dinner from sliding to the floor in a gravy-sodden mess!

The first leg is, of course, the mercy and love of Almighty God and His blessing on our work. The second is the support of our priests (and our outstanding and tremendously supportive Deacon of course). The third leg is the loyalty, compassion and hard work of the members of our Conference. And the fourth is the support – practical and spiritual – we receive from you, the people of our Parish.

As ever, thank you so much and God bless you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_(President, SS Dunstan & Jude SVP)  
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## Can we have Christian unity without Christian uniformity?

As we navigate the challenges of the twenty-first century, the need to uphold the teaching of Christ, first heard in the first century, is becoming increasingly serious and demanding. As the societal sparring of the secular and the spiritual intensifies, the division between them widens; we are in a battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of God's people. Many have an inner desire for faith, but seem incapable of discerning the truth of God from the lies of the Devil. If we are to help lead them to Christ, we need a united Christian mission to best express His love and gift of salvation.

The instruction to seek Christian unity comes from Jesus himself. He prayed for all who hear His word, "*that they may be one*" (John 17:21), so that the world would believe He was sent by God. The Second Vatican Council's 1964 decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* ("Restoration of unity") says that division among Christian communities "*openly contradicts the will of Christ*" and "*the desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit*". Ecumenism is not complicated; it is simply working in harmony with other Christian communities to help bring about God's Kingdom. You will be aware of *Churches Together in Kings Heath* and the excellent work they undertake; please consider how we, as a parish, can give them greater support to promote Christian accord.

Recently a new impetus has been given to the wider cause. In December 2020, with the blessing of Pope Francis, **The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity** issued an ecumenical vademecum (a concise guide) entitled *The Bishop and Christian Unity*. In its preface, canon law is quoted to define the bishop's role in this great mission: "*He is to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and is to foster ecumenism.*" Although the document is offered as an aid to bishops to "*help them better understand and fulfil their ecumenical responsibility*", it must be stressed that such a great responsibility rests on all members of our Church. We all fail the call of Jesus unless we offer our active support for the cause of

ecumenism. The document is extensive, but certainly worth reading in its entirety. For the purposes of this article, I have highlighted a few themes.

The Pontifical Council's document recognises that although it is incomplete, there is real communion between Christian communities. It recognises that these communities "*are endowed with many essential elements Christ wills for his Church*". We must, therefore, deepen the relationship through common witness: as Pope Francis has said, "*walking together, praying together and working together*".

One of the recommendations of the vademecum is that proper structures be in place to assist bishops in promoting the ecumenical teaching of the church. Our Archdiocese has an Ecumenical Commission, of which I am a member, and we are currently refocusing our plans and priorities to reflect the new momentum on ecumenism. Some of the challenges we wish to address are to improve communication about ecumenical events; to promote shared prayer and witness; to encourage and share good practice; and to develop leaders to help Catholic communities cement relationships with other families of Christ.

Are we always open to dialogue and engagement? Although we should always examine our own faithfulness to Christ's teaching, we must not forever be trying to put our own house in order before pursuing the cause of unity. Faults of some kind can be found in all churches, but that is no reason to stop us following God's path together. We must, therefore, start now. When we do, the vademecum calls us to approach ecumenism with "*love of the truth, with charity, and with humility*".

To reassure you, unity is not being pursued at the expense of truths we hold dear. Indeed, the Pontifical Council writes "*on the contrary, the search for unity leads us into a fuller appreciation of God's revealed truth. The bedrock of ecumenical formation, therefore, is that 'the Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand'*". This does not mean we have failed, if



other communities do not accept the truth of all aspects of the faith as we believe them. Ecumenism seeks unity, but uniformity of worship is not necessary to achieve it.

Charity calls us to be understanding and respectful of other churches in the way we represent our teachings, as well as the way we listen to theirs. With humility, we open our hearts to adjust our outlook as we place greater emphasis on what unites us than on what divides us.

Are we called to be ecumenical on specific things? Surprisingly, the answer is no; not specific things, but **all** things. All we believe, all we practice, all we love, has an ecumenical element. If we can share worship, we should; if we do works of charity, we should do it for all; if we are

unable to share the sacraments, we should witness and explain their truth and beauty. Therefore, instead of doing 'ecumenical things' to promote unity, we seek to do all things ecumenically.

In Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken*, faced with a choice of two roads, the traveller chose the road less travelled by, and that made all the difference. Perhaps the well-trodden uniform path, predictable and free of bumps, leads nowhere, whereas the destination of the path less trodden, with its diverse undulations, realises the greatest prize. Unity is not the reward at the end of the road; unity is the gift from God we receive when travelling the road; the prize at journey's end, is the fullness of God's Kingdom.

*Deacon David*

## **Snakes and scorpions – begone!**

If we were to tell you that funds from our parish of St Dunstan and St Jude are currently protecting people from snakes and scorpions, you might find that fanciful. But it is in fact quite true.

Our latest project from the Jane Smith Education Fund has just been completed in Loreto Rumbek, South Sudan. This was the installation of solar panels in the Loreto Graduate Girl Students' Residence to give full-time access to a reliable, clean and economic source of electricity to power electronic devices such as laptops and phones, which the girls use to access the internet for their studies and research.

Solar panels, battery systems, inverters, security lights and support equipment were all provided and installed through the Jane Smith Fund. This enables the school to use the nearly thirteen hours of daylight for power and lighting.

Previously the school was relying on a diesel generator, which was noisy and expensive to maintain so that it could only be used for a few hours each day before being switched off, so depriving the students of electricity and therefore of the means to study.

Whilst the main objective of the project was to enable the graduate girls to study and do their research without interruption, an added benefit of the solar project was that outdoor security lighting was also provided. Debora, a graduate student at Loreto, says this: *"The street lights also play a big role. They enable us to have good vision of our surroundings at night which protects us from attacks by snakes and scorpions which are plentiful in our area. Insecurity is also a big challenge in our community and the lights help in discouraging intruders from breaking into our rooms or attacking us while outside."*

The Jane Smith Education Fund provides money for capital projects in the poorest overseas countries with a particular emphasis on promoting girls' education. It is funded by parishioners from St Dunstan's and St Jude's, who contribute either by standing order or envelope. Any amount donated regularly, however small, is welcome as every little helps.

If anyone would like more information about the fund, please do not hesitate to contact us on 689 2917.

*Nuala Bielby, Eugene O'Brien, John van Lierop*

## Music During Lockdown

At the start of lockdown, one of the odd things I spotted straight away was a rare sight of Fr Simon practising on the organ. However, as soon as I made my entrance through the double doors, Fr Simon took it as an excuse to head back into the presbytery to enjoy the rest of his day. Nevertheless, it was pure luxury to be able to play on full organ and blast across the church at any time during the day without anyone moaning in the background about the noise. But that luxury was short-lived. In a few weeks' time, the speakers encountered severe interference issues, which only occur during the day, so that we can hear conversations from inside other premises nearby, as well as loud screams and weeping toddlers. With the help of some imagination, it is no different from any Sunday mass.

While public worship has now resumed, the choir's suspension continues. This leaves me as the sole person in charge of music-making during services. For the past year, I have been improvising on hymn tunes during the introit, offertory and communion, then ending mass with a voluntary.

To help with my hymn selection, I use the Catholic calendar, psalms and the gospel reading as guidance. The voluntary itself is also chosen according to the theme of the mass. During festive occasions, it is a privilege to have Martin coming by to sing chants and hymns, lifting the spirit of worship to a whole new level.

Since we are on the subject of abnormality, I would also like to share my experience across the road at All Saints' Church during our church's renovation. Whenever I did my practice session there, there would always be an audience down in the heating ducts by the organ. The tiny rodents always made their presence known by munching on anything that was edible. They would not be a problem for me unless they decided to come out of the ducts and I always told myself to do what I had to do and get out as soon as possible. On one occasion, however, I was locked in the church as I was packing up. In the end, I was lucky enough to have a staff member, who was on his way home, release me after three hours. For your info, this surpasses the previous record for locking me in set by Fr Simon.

In the near future, I hope the choir can get back together, along with the resumption of congregational singing. As well as that, I would like to see new members joining as we make a joint effort to continue the legacy of music-making in the parish. \_\_\_\_\_ *Godfrey Leung*



The teacher in the infant class asked the children to draw a Nativity scene. One child drew a most impressive picture including Mary & Joseph, Baby Jesus in the crib, shepherds, oxen, an ass, three Wise Men ... and an enormously obese man among them.

"That's a lovely picture," the teacher said. "But who's that?" pointing to the rotund chap.

"Round John," replied the child.

"Who?" asked the bewildered teacher.

"You know, Miss," came the reply, "Round John, Virgin, Mother and Child..."

The same child came out of Mass one Sunday and asked his father, "Daddy, what's God's real name?"

"What do you mean?" his father asked.

"Well, when we say the 'Our Father', we say, 'Harold be thy name', but at the end of Mass we say, 'Thanks, Peter God'."

[Our thanks to Deacon David for these gems of innocence.]

## Beginning Ministry During a Pandemic

I recently visited a priest friend, who's been ordained for 25 years. 'I feel so sorry for you and your friends from Seminary, John. I mean, starting your parish ministry in a time like this, it must be so strange.'

On the one hand, he was right, life hasn't been normal for quite a while now. On the other, as my friends and I have noted, we can't really miss what we've never known. As far as we're concerned, ministry during a pandemic is normal. Because it's all we've experienced thus far.

And I certainly can't complain about being bored or underused here at St Dunstan's and St Jude's. It's been heart-warming to see how much has been happening despite the Covid-prevention restrictions. Although I'm assured that evenings are much quieter than they used to be, there's been no shortage of Zoom calls/teams meetings, with groups like the SVP and the Knights of St Columba or appearances at virtual school assemblies and such. When restrictions on home communion visits were imposed, everyone on my list received a weekly phone call, just to assure them that they hadn't been forgotten.

In the worst of the second spike of infections, it seemed that if I wasn't saying a Requiem Mass then I was on the Covid wards, anointing those who were suffering the worst effects of the virus. Mercifully, by May we were able to restart Baptisms. So, after a winter of sending souls to eternity, I could recommence bringing souls into the church.

By far the most extraordinary experience came in March. I opened an email from an American friend with whom I'd studied in Rome. 'Hi John, I'm teaching some of my school pupils about the sacrifices that Catholics have made for the sacraments. Would you mind doing a Zoom call to my class and

tell them the stories of the Reformation Martyrs of England and Wales?' So, with dates and times duly co-ordinated, I found myself speaking to the Fifth Graders of St Leo the Great School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Now, of course, life is getting back to normal and we wait with baited breath for the final easing of restrictions. I've been enjoying being able to get out and about a little more, have more involvement in our parish schools, visit a few folks in their houses and discover more of King's Heath and the Maypole as they reopen. But I shan't ever forget the events of the last eighteen months and especially not the strange way in which my ministry began. I'll leave the final words to scripture, for this came to mind whilst writing:

'My friends, consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure.'" (James 1:2-5)

*Fr John*



[Here is a reminder that one of the extraordinary duties undertaken by Fr John early in his time at St Dunstan's, during the most severe period of Covid lockdown, was to say Masses in the side-chapel that were streamed on-line.]

# Youth Page: Youth Group Special

Virtual Youth Group:

Over the last few months, St Dunstan's and Bishop Challoner's Chaplaincy team has led different sessions via zoom to young people. Some of these sessions included...

- Prayer sessions based on Mary the Mother of Jesus
- Fun interactive sessions including Countdown and Disney Quizzes
- Focussed sessions on the Sacred Heart



## Thoughts on Youth Group

Here are some opinions on virtual youth group from the leaders and participants:

*Niamh (Lay Chaplain): Bishop Challoner and Saint Dunstan's Youth Group has been running virtually this year so young people in the parish and school community can still come together and have times of discussions, icebreakers, prayer and activities in a safe environment. It was important to the youth group team that this continued in some form so we are thankful that this could occur and thank you to those who attend weekly for a moment to pause in the week for unapologetic discussion with other young people.*

*We are grateful that we have been able to facilitate youth group online. It has brought about a different avenue of doing interactive activities such as virtual quizzes and whiteboards. We have enjoyed being able to continue to work with young people from the parish and school and look forward to youth group returning to in-person in the future. If you are interested in joining or know of someone who may be interested, email: [staff-chaplains@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk](mailto:staff-chaplains@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk).*

### Youth Page WordSearch

R	E	D	R	C	S	L	O	U	R	D	E	S	R	BIBLE REFLECTION ZOOM SCRIPTURE SACRED HEART PRAYERS JESUS HEAVEN LOURDES MARY
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Grace (Young Leader): I was a bit sceptical about virtual youth group but once it got started, I really enjoyed getting to know the other people in youth group especially in the scavenger hunts. Virtual youth group is a great combination of ice breakers and enhancing faith in God. One of the activities we completed was writing your own prayer in a small group. It was great to learn about the different types of prayer and then to write your own. Also, without virtual youth group I would never have learnt about the sacred heart in the depth that I know it in now.

I often lead icebreakers at youth group and my all-time favourite is a scavenger hunt because you get to learn more about the young people and leaders in the group.



## A few weeks ago, the young people wrote a reflection on Mary and spent the session reflecting on how they could use her example to live in the footsteps of Jesus...

Dear Mary,

We gather here today to reflect on the life and deeds of Mary. We can use Mary's example at the Wedding of Cana to "Do whatever he tells us" (John 2). We can also use this quote to see how Mary, Our Mother, guides us to Our Saviour and has our best interests at heart.

Listen to this scripture and pick out key parts that stand out to you.

John 2:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup>and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."**

**<sup>4</sup>"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."**

**<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."**

In this scripture, Mary was a support to Jesus when he doubted himself. Write down any doubts you have in your life and give them up to Mary to help you overcome.

Mary is always there to talk to, so feel free to give your worries to her in a time of need to help you solve these worries.

Luke 1:26-38

**<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."**

**<sup>29</sup>Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup>You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."**

**<sup>38</sup>"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.**

"Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord", we look on at these words to see your "Yes". You gave up everything at a moment's notice. You inspired many others after you to say yes, for example Bernadette. Give us the strength to say yes like Bernadette did, help us in our uncertainty and confusion. Give us the strength to not be afraid

Can we take a moment to look into the possibility that Mary said "No".

Without, that "yes" Jesus would never have been born. We would have had a world without Christ. Mary was brave, she said "yes" despite the fear that she definitely felt. She was prepared to take on those risks in order to serve God. We too must be prepared to serve God when he calls us.

"Let it be done to me according to your word."



## Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

This year marks the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Henry Vaughan, a Welsh poet who was born a few miles east of Brecon and who spent most of his life in his native county of Breconshire. After three years in Oxford and London in his late teens and early twenties, he was called home by his father at the outbreak of the civil war between Charles I and the puritan Parliament in 1642. In 1645, he served briefly in a royalist troop of horse. Then his world was turned upside down by a series of shocks: in 1646, the king gave himself up to his enemies; in 1648, Henry's much loved younger brother, William, died, probably a casualty of a royalist rising in South Wales; the king was tried and executed in January 1649; the rigorous parliamentary regime imposed upon South Wales forbade the use of the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer and oversaw the wholesale ejection of orthodox clergy; not only his local church at Llansantffraed but all the churches in the vicinity of Vaughan's home remained closed throughout the 1650s. The poetry which he subsequently wrote and published between 1648 and 1655 has a particular resonance in our current situation.

Denied the fellowship of communal worship and forbidden to travel far from home, he felt isolated and depressed: 'I'm cast/Here under clouds, where storms, and tempests blast/This sullied flower.' He worked through the grief of loss in a series of moving elegies for William, capturing the slow movement of time experienced by the recently bereaved:

Silence, and stealth of days! 'tis now  
Since thou art gone,  
Twelve hundred hours, and not a brow  
But clouds hang on.

He found consolation, as many of us have during the past fifteen months, in the natural world, and especially in the message of hope heard in the dawn chorus:

O joys! Infinite sweetness! with what flowers,  
And shoots of glory, my soul breaks, and buds!  
... Hark! In what rings,  
And *hymning circulations* the quick world  
Awakes, and sings;

The rising winds,  
The falling springs,  
Birds, beasts, all things  
Adore him in their kinds.  
Thus all is hurled

In sacred *hymns*, and *order*, the great *chime*  
And *symphony* of nature. ...

But he also took pleasure and comfort from the morning song of a single bird:

Hither thou com'st: the busy wind all night  
Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing  
Thy pillow was. ...  
And now as fresh and cheerful as the light  
Thy little heart in early hymns doth sing  
Unto that *Providence*, whose unseen arm  
Curbed them\*, and clothed thee well and warm.  
\* i.e. sullen storms

He found hope also in the promise of Easter Sunday, which became a clarion call to others in the same boat as himself:

Thou, whose sad heart, and weeping head lies low,  
Whose cloudy breast cold damps invade,  
Who never feel'st the sun, nor smooth'st thy brow,  
But sitt'st oppressèd in the shade,  
Awake, awake,  
And in his Resurrection partake,  
Who on this day (that thou might'st rise as he)  
Rose up . . .

And looking at the night sky, the message of Easter helped him to come to terms with the losses he had suffered during the dark days of solitude and to press on with his pilgrimage:

God's saints are shining lights: who stays  
Here long must pass  
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways  
As smooth as glass;  
But these all night  
Like candles, shed  
Their beams, and light  
Us into bed.  
They are (indeed) our pillar-fires  
Seen as we go,  
They are that City's shining spires  
We travel to. . . .

The poems of Henry Vaughan have been a constant inspiration during the journey through the 'dark hills' and 'steep ways' of the rugged landscape created by Covid 19. \_\_\_\_\_ Editor

## The Live Simply Award

In November 2019, we had a preliminary meeting in the parish to see if it was possible to go for this CAFOD ward. There was a lot of enthusiasm for it, and a steering group was set up. The award is a way of encouraging parishioners and schools to **live simply, sustainably** and in **solidarity** with those less fortunate. A lot of the ideas come from Pope Francis' encyclicals **Laudato 'si** and **Fratelli Tutti**, so that we can take better care of our world and each other.

To obtain the award we have to show that we are working on projects in the three areas. The aim is not to point the finger at people but to spread encouragement.

We struggled to keep going during Lockdown – virtual zoom meetings are not the same – but we have the three primary schools and Bishop Challoner College involved.

### What's happened so far

- Each institution completed a sustainability review to see what is already happening so we can plan what ideas to pursue next.
- We have produced two newsletters called 'Live Simply - Actions and Update', available on the parish website and church notice board.
- The primary schools have made a video and Bishop Challoner will have one ready for September to publicise the Live Simply message.
- The church and presbytery use electricity from a green supplier.
- St Jude's have an Eco Warriors group.
- St Alban's is taking part in the Living Streets Walk to School initiative.

- St Dunstan's have been donating food to a food bank.

### Ideas we plan to pursue

- St Dunstan's plan to make a prayer garden – see note in parish newsletter asking for help.
- Encourage parishioners to travel sustainably, walk more, car share, make a bicycle park, advertise local bus numbers.

### Our Live Simply Parish Prayer

*Compassionate and loving God, you created the world for us all to share, a world of beauty and plenty. Create in us a desire to live simply, so that our lives may reflect your generosity.*

*Creator God, You gave us responsibility for the earth, a world of riches and delight. Create in us a desire to live sustainably, so that those who follow after us may enjoy the fruits of your creation.*

*God of peace and justice, You give us the capacity to change, to bring about a world that mirrors your wisdom. Create in us a desire to act in solidarity, so that the pillars of injustice crumble and those now crushed are set free.*

*Amen.*

### What could you do to live more sustainably?

Switch to green energy, drive less, eat less meat ... there are so many ways to live up to the Christian obligation to 'care for creation'. Need some inspiration? Lots of ideas here, including some for the lazy!



Deacon Michael Barwick has been spending time at St Dunstan's as part of his training during the recent months of the pandemic lockdown. We have valued his participation in Masses and enjoyed his cheerful presence in conversation afterwards. The prayers of parishioners will be with him on the occasion of his ordination to the priesthood in July and we wish him well in his future ministry.

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