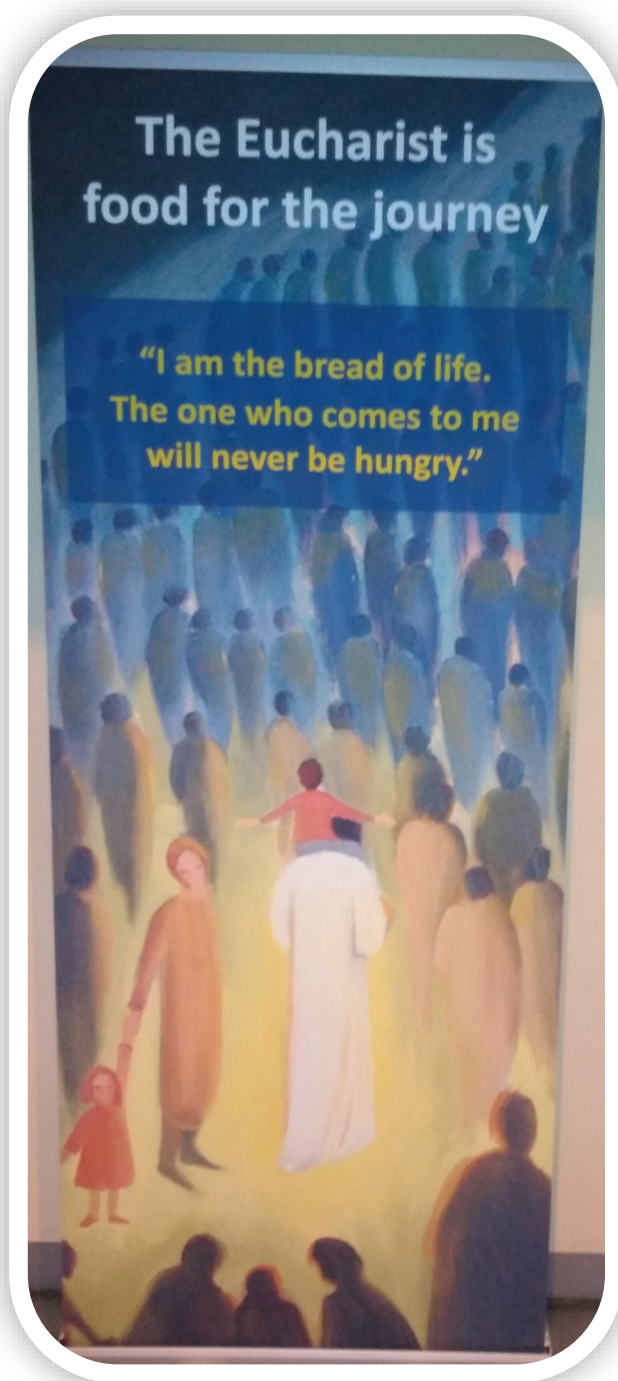


WE ARE ALL PART OF THE 'CIA':
CHURCH IN ACTION!



Weekly Adoration of the
Blessed Sacrament
at St. Lawrence's

Panel on display during Eucharistic Congress
at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ
the King, 7th - 9th September

EDITORIAL TEAM

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sml.33ba@gmail.com

We accept letters by post (c/o Parish Office, 1 Hamilton Road, Sidcup DA15 7HB, marked "The Voice"), or email to either of the abovementioned email addresses. Please include your name, address (postal and email), and telephone contact details.

Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

Without sounding too much like a hippie movement in mentioning our "summer of love", that nevertheless was the context in which the twin-themes of 'life' and 'growing' were highlighted in our last issue (Summer).

*A natural consequence of being gifted with love is that it calls to be **shared** willingly and unreservedly - as Jesus did. His mission in life - and death - was to show us love beyond our human understanding.*

Our Autumn issue therefore is devoted to the cause of discipleship, with the spotlight falling on women. Any talk of 'disciples', however, and it is men who automatically spring to mind, yet Mary Mather in her article on Pg. 34 argues to the contrary with fascinating insight.

Barbara Lukover's 'mission' took her on a pilgrimage back to Lourdes after some 30 years (Pg. 8), while Magdalen Lindon believes her personal "calling" is in child formation through penmanship (Pg. 36). She is the author of children's books which are used in parish catechetical programmes, and her aptly named boy superhero, Will Power, is the conduit for the nuanced messages so important for our children to hear as she shows on Pg. 10.

Liverpool, birthplace of the best-known band in the world, was playing host to the 'rebirth' of an event that took place in England over a century ago: the Eucharistic Congress. Read what the two delegates from St. Lawrence had to say about this significant event on Pg. 26.

*Finally, calling all would-be women disciples: our first meeting is on **23rd November** where we'll discuss what form our 'discipleship' will take (Pg. 17). Please come!*

In the meantime, the deadline for the Winter 2018 issue is: 23rd November.

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Joan



Sheila

A WARM WELCOME!

Whilst Fr. John recuperates after his operation in early July, the keys to the St. Lawrence kingdom have been handed over to Fr. Graziano de Palma (*right*). We, the parishioners of St. Lawrence, accordingly extend the warmest of welcomes to Fr. Graziano ('Fr. G.') and are very happy that he is the new addition to our family.

A warm and genial personality, Fr. G. is introducing touches and changes that are reflective of these traits whilst also exercising his spiritual ministry, which both delights - and surprises. Blessed with a good singing voice, Fr. G. incorporates singing (primarily in Latin) prayerful invocations and incantations throughout the Mass. All of this has the beautiful effect of creating an atmosphere where we feel we are really in the presence of the Lord and desiring of His grace.



However, perhaps the most touching tribute, and a reminder of something which Fr. John himself always emphasised, was that how the greatest gift we could give anyone is to *pray* for them. Hence, before the end of each Mass, Fr. G. suggested to the congregation that we offer up one Hail Mary as our collective prayer for Fr. John's speedy recovery. In that way we have an "instant" rosary, where the weight of our loving prayers and that of Our Lady can't help but get Fr. John quickly back on his feet. A simple act very enthusiastically embraced by all!

Nor are there any arguments when we say that Fr. G. – he's a "G"! – 21st century youth-speak for someone you consider a close friend, basically, **family**.

Want to know a little more about him? Read on...

Fr. Graziano de Palma was born on the 31st July 1976 in Molfetta, a small town near Bari, one of the main cities of Puglia in southern Italy, on the Adriatic Coast. After high school, he moved in 1996 to Rome where he attended the Seminary of Missionaries of Precious Blood and started his priestly formation, studying with the Jesuits at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 1998 he completed his studies in Philosophy, and in 2001 his studies in Theology.

He moved back to the south of Italy for his pastoral experience in Putignano near Bari. There he worked for 5 years serving in a therapeutic community helping drug addicts. In 2004 he was ordained Deacon and then Priest in 2006.

Fr. Graziano was then engaged in many different apostolates, mainly with youth as Spiritual Assistant of AGESCI, the Catholic association of Italian scouting. He was assistant priest in two communities, in Sicily and Bari, where he was also a teacher of religion in a private junior school.

In March 2015, Fr. Graziano arrived at Saint Peter's church, Woolwich, as a student of English. In March 2016, he completed his Degree in Psychology at the University of Bari and is now studying for a master's degree in counselling, in London. Fr. Graziano serves as assistant priest at St Peter's, Chaplain at St Peter's Primary School, Woolwich, and Foundation Governor at Notre Dame Primary School, Shooters Hill.



ST. LAWRENCE'S PARISH NOTICES



CLAIMING FOR CHRIST IN BAPTISM

Olivia Poppy Shaw	12.05.18
Alexandra Simpson	27.05.18
Florence Eleanor Meo	02.06.18
Aaron Nii Barnor	02.06.18
Amaari Nii Barnor	02.06.18
Hector Delgado Gonzalez	16.06.18
Edward Andrew Tuck	16.06.18
Ava Elodie Walsh	23.06.18
Liam John O'Dwyer	24.06.18
Teddy Joseph Hartfield	30.06.18
Harriet Ellis Jones	08.07.18
Joel Nyantakyi-Ameyaw	08.07.18
Jayden Boateng-Ameyaw	08.07.18
Theo Paul Goden	14.07.18
Charlie James Driscoll	15.07.18
Ella Jane Driscoll	15.07.18
Jacob Noah Inchmore	15.07.18
Elizabeth Florence Rogers	22.07.18
Isla Rose Traynor	04.08.18
Teddy Tommy Hayes	04.08.18
Siena Rose Lean	05.08.18
Roman August Lean	05.08.18
Lochlann Julian Foley	11.08.18
Daisy-Belle Stephens	18.08.18
Kimaya Rajput	25.08.18
Theo Adaya Rama	26.08.18

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Andrew
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Ngo-Bitomol Ndenbe

1st September, 2018

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

"For we know that when the tent we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens."

[2 Corinthians 5: 1]

♦ Monica Frances Wells	28.04.2018
♦ Mary Patricia Belcher	11.05.2018
♦ John James McCarthy	27.05.2018
♦ Carlos Asparo	08.06.2018
♦ Norman Storer	04.07.2018
♦ Judith Ann Ballard	19.07.2018
♦ Carole Anne Gibbs	15.08.2018

*"My
command is
this:
Love
each other
as I have
loved you."*

John 15:12

CONVALIDATION

Clare
Witkowska
&
Michael Tuck
21.06.18



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PARISH NOTICEBOARD

What's ^{up} in the parish...

The Marist Way meeting was held on Saturday, 5th May. Sr. Catherine Jones was the speaker.



Thanks to all those who offered to train as Fire Marshals. They were guided through the various procedures by Precision Safety on Thursday, 24th May, in the parish hall.

DAY OF PRAYER, REFLECTION & TRAINING

- For **Ministers of Holy Communion**, this was conducted by Sr. Magdalen Lawler SND, in the St. Lawrence Community Centre (SLCC), on Saturday, 2nd June.
- For **Parish Readers**, Pierpaolo Finaldi of the Centre for Catholic Formation led the session in the Main Hall (with brief practice in the church) on Saturday, 16th June.



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION MASS OF THANKSGIVING Saturday, 30th June

All the 46 children who made their First Holy Communion over two successive weekends in May - the 19th & 26th - received their certificates today.



Sunday, 17th June

20 candidates were confirmed by Bishop Patrick Lynch.



Aid to the
Church in Need

Fund-raising event
Tickets for talks £10

WESTMINSTER EVENT Saturday, 13th October

Begins with Mass at 10.30am in Westminster Cathedral
Talks start in the Cathedral hall just before 12 noon.

Speakers include:

- **Martin Bashir** - BBC's Religious Affairs Correspondent will speak about Christian persecution and religious freedom;
- **Archbishop Angaelos** - on Christianity in Egypt;
- **Sr. Luma Khudher OP** - from Iraq provides updates on the return of Christian families to the Nineveh Plains.

Other guests from the suffering Church expected to join.

Aid to the Church in Need, 12-14 Benhill Avenue, Surrey SM14DA
☎ 020 8642 8668 | www.acnuk.org | acn@acnuk.org

A RAISED 'VOICE'

£1 to Two

As the price of the magazine has remained the same for almost 10 years, sadly, the costs associated with producing it haven't!

With the first issue of 2019 (Spring), the new price will therefore be **£2**.

Start putting aside those pennies...

A HELPING HAND



The Saint Lawrence Charitable Fund (SLCF)

The SLCF held its annual appeal over the weekend of 23rd/24th June, and were very grateful for the tremendous support they received as over **£1,500** was raised. For those who missed the Appeal Weekend, there is still the opportunity to help with this very worthwhile cause by donating through the box at the back of the church.



“**Missio** is the Catholic Church’s official charity for over-seas mission.”

Last year, donations amounted to **£2,227.31**.

The distinctive red boxes can be found at the back of the church, and are to be returned to the Parish Office when full or after six months.

ALZHEIMERS RESEARCH

Parishioner, Anne Goad, took part in a 28km walk on 8th September to raise funds.

Anyone wanting to donate to this worthy cause can do so at:

“**UK.virginmoneygiving.com/team/themusketeers1.**”

MISSIONARY SISTERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES



Sr. Helen and Sr. Ann, representing the **Daughters of Divine Love Congregation (DDL)** - **instantly recognisable by their blue veils** -made an appeal over the weekend of 30th June/1st July. Their mission is a simple, yet powerful one: ***to put divine love into action in the world***, and they do so through health care (hospitals, nursing homes), rehabilitation centres (working with people with mental health problems, disabled people), education, looking after orphans and pastoral care.

The Congregation is looking to expand and to start self-help projects, both for themselves and the under-privileged around them. Their aim, therefore, is to develop funding for these programmes here in the UK, Africa as well as worldwide. However, their immediate need is for help with projects in Nigeria, where they care for the poor and less privileged.

For more information or to make a donation, contact: [DDL Project Office] 70 Kempshott Road, Streatham

Srs. Helen (left) & Ann (right)
Common, London SW16 5LH.



LOURDES REVISITED

By Barbara Lukover



It has been about 30 years since my first visit to Lourdes. Howard, my husband and my two daughters and I had made the trip when we were camping in the Auvergne one holiday. That was the taster: we saw and experienced things fleetingly, vowing to return and 'do' Lourdes properly.

Retirement gave me the opportunity to do this. My very good friend Margaret, who I had the privilege to teach with at Our Lady of the Rosary school for many years, was over the moon when I suggested a pilgrimage to Lourdes together. So the wheels were put in motion.

We arrived on a Wednesday afternoon. Our hotel was well-placed within walking distance of the town centre and the grotto. When having our first meal in town that evening, we remarked to the waitress how quiet Lourdes seemed, "Didn't you know about the Military Pilgrimage taking place this weekend?" she informed us!

That was the end of quiet Lourdes! The next day after breakfast we saw regiments from all parts of the world marching through the narrow streets. The Irish Rangers accompanied by their bagpipes, others from countries like Poland, Britain, Italy and even the Papal Guard were marching in their smart uniforms. The uniform of the Hussars was especially glamorous and everyone wanted a photo taken with them.



What a spectacle! We felt honoured to witness the whole gathering. They showed such respect for each other's regiments. Whilst having coffee in a café, a Polish regiment marched past carrying their standard. All military who were in our café stood up and saluted - *without exception*.



Our own pilgrimage continued with visits to St. Bernadette's house, attending Mass at the cave of Massabielle, visiting the basilicas of the Immaculate Conception and of the Rosary, and so much more. We bathed in the waters, lit candles for our families, friends and deceased and joined in the great Marian torchlight procession on the Esplanade.

The whole experience was more than I ever expected. We ended our visit with one of the most important moments for pilgrims in Lourdes, the Stations of the Cross. They were magnificent with their life-sized cast iron statues set along a winding route up a steep hill amongst the greenery.

A most memorable trip shared with a special friend. May even go back again in the next 30 years!

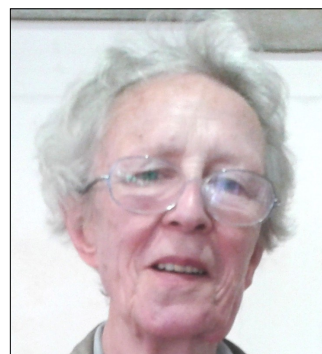


Marg (to the left) and me!



A FAREWELL

By Freda Basley



It was sad to say farewell to Barbara Flanagan at her funeral in February. After winning her battle with cancer in 2017, it seemed unfair that she should die of double pneumonia in the New Year.



I've known Barbara, husband Tony and their daughters Jane, Julie and Mandy, since I came to live here in the 1970s. In 1981, she and I helped co-found *News & Views*, St. Lawrence's parish magazine. Highly qualified in secretarial work, Barbara couldn't wait to get started, with me as editor and, later, artist Jean Peterken illustrating. When publication ceased in 2009, Barbara didn't want the three of us to lose touch and organised a yearly get-together - usually a meal at The Horse & Groom. Jean and I will miss those evenings catching up with each other and remembering old times.

We won't be the only ones to feel the loss of Barbara. She was well known locally, having been associated with WRVS meal deliveries; taking an active part as a committee member of BARNARA retirement club; being an enthusiastic bridge player; and, with Tony, managing the bric-a-brac stall at the parish's Christmas bazaar for several years.

I'm happy to have known her and will keep in touch with her family. May she rest in peace, free from pain and be remembered with love and friendship.



**Barbara Flanagan
1933-2018**



**Barbara with her favourite
film star, Humphrey Bogart!**





CHILDREN'S 'VOICES'



A MESSAGE FOR CHILDREN ABOUT RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

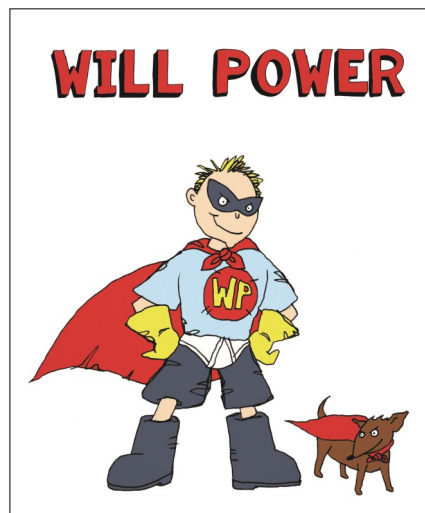
By Magdalen Lindon

This is for the children in St. Lawrence's parish. Some of you received Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion in May this year. Some of you are older and have already made your First Holy Communion, and some of you aren't quite old enough yet but soon will be.

I expect you prepared well to receive Jesus for the first time, and I am sure it was a happy day. I can just imagine how beautiful you looked on your First Holy Communion Day. I hope that you now want to continue receiving Jesus in this special way for the rest of your life, just as He wants to be with you, too.

Did you know that you have a choice? That is because you have free will, which you use to decide what to do and to make a choice. You can reason things out and then make up your mind and decide what to do: **you can make a choice.**

In the case of deciding whether to receive Holy Communion again, first remember everything that you have been taught about receiving Jesus and what a wonderful gift this is. You were given beautiful books to help you prepare and you can keep looking at them to remind you. This will help you in choosing to receive Jesus again soon. The consequences of your choice are remarkable. I am sure you learnt, for example, that Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never be thirsty. I will raise them to life on the last day. Anyone who eats this Bread will live forever." Isn't that an amazing promise?



Sometimes choosing is difficult however extraordinary the consequences. We would rather be watching television or playing a computer game. The important thing to remember is that we also have **willpower**. It is what helps us decide what to do. It helps us make the right choice, like choosing to receive Jesus in Holy Communion as often as we can.

I have a friend called Will Power. He is a young, super-hero character in a book I've written. You can see a picture of him on this page. I think when he hears that Jesus is the Bread of Life, he will realise the importance of going to Holy Communion as often as he can and decide to receive Jesus at least once a week.

Will Power sometimes finds that temptation gets in the way of decisions he wants to make. He is tempted to make bad choices, like eating too many sweets and making himself sick. He will make a better choice next time if he listens to his conscience and doesn't eat as many sweets.

Recently, Will heard about the **Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament** and is going to join them because crusaders are young heroes, too. Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament meet each month to learn about Jesus and to pray. Will thinks this will help him grow to love Jesus more and make him determined to receive Jesus in Holy Communion as often as he can.

Would you like to see some pictures of Will and his dog that some other children have drawn? Here they are. They look like him, don't they? Why don't you draw a picture of Will as well? How about drawing another picture, but of you this time, receiving Holy Communion?

(Next time I write to you, I will tell you about Will's quest to discover the Ten Commandments and some of the surprising choices he made!)



NB to Parents:

The teaching in this article is based on the book Magdalen has written called "Will Power" and it is available at:

www.willpowerbooks.com or mlindon@willpowerbooks.com

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CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SIDCUP (CTiS)**Forthcoming Events**

Chairman Paul Hurren will lay a wreath on behalf of CTiS at the War Memorial following a Service of Remembrance at St. John's Church on Sunday, 11 November, commencing 10.55am and attended by the Royal British Legion. All welcome.

Vacancy for Catholic Representative on CTiS Committee

At April's AGM, we were unable to find a Catholic Representative for the Committee. If you feel you would like to be involved and attend five meetings per year, culminating in being Chairperson on the third year, please contact: Tom Baker at appledoreman@yahoo.com or Mike Conway at mjc999@hotmail.com.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, 27 September at Emmanuel Church, Hadlow Road, Sidcup, 7.45 for 8 pm.
All are welcome.

Monthly Prayer Meetings – Saturdays, 9am - 9.30am

20 October – New Generation, Birkbeck Road
17 November – Our Lady of the Rosary

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'Voices' that Speak...



A page for you to share all those inspiring moments, which ultimately deepen our relationship with God. The inspiration may come in the form of a particular prayer, picture, thought, what someone said, even mirth-inspiring jokes! - *anything* that makes an impression on you, and which may similarly inspire others. There is a certain joy and fulfilment that comes from wonderment, especially when it is totally unexpected, and gives rise to a generosity and selflessness that cannot be contained. That in itself is a beautiful prayer offering.



The Lord's 'little helper'
and a
"woman" disciple in the
making...

The greatest test of faith is
when you don't get what you
want, but still you are able
to say "Thank you Lord."



Ups and downs in
life are very
important to keep
us going, because
a straight line even
in an ECG means
we are not alive



HOME-ILY

Taking the priest's words home for reflection.

The “priest” in this instance is Pope Francis, and we reproduce below excerpts of his homily delivered on Sunday, 26th August 2018, in Phoenix Park, Dublin, at the Concluding Mass for the World Meeting of Families 2018 taking place in Dublin, Ireland

[Full text of homily can be accessed online at Salt+Light Media from where the excerpts have been downloaded: <http://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed/getpost.php?id=84529>]

“You have the words of eternal life!” (Jn 6:68).

At the end of this World Meeting of Families, we gather as a family around the table of the Lord. We thank God for the many blessings we have received in our families. And we want to commit ourselves to living fully our vocation to be, in the touching words of Saint Therese, “love in the heart of the Church”.

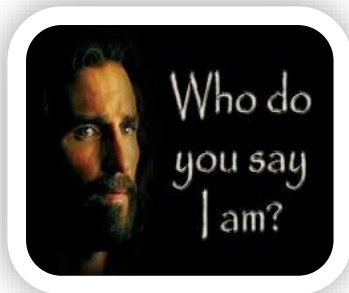
In this precious moment of communion with one another and with the Lord, it is good to pause and consider the source of all the good things we have received. Jesus reveals the origin of these blessings in today's Gospel, when he speaks to his disciples. Many of them were upset, confused or even angry, struggling to accept his “hard sayings”, so contrary to the wisdom of this world. In response, the Lord tells them directly: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (Jn 6:63).

These words, with their promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, are teeming with life for us who accept them in faith. They point to the ultimate source of all the good that we have experienced and celebrated here in these past few days: the Spirit of God, who constantly breathes new life into our world, into our hearts, into our families, into our homes and parishes. Each new day in the life of our families, and each new generation, brings the promise of a new Pentecost, a domestic Pentecost, a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, the Paraclete, whom Jesus sends as our Advocate, our Consoler and indeed our Encourager...

Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, each Christian is sent forth to be a missionary, “a missionary disciple” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120). The Church as a whole is called to “go forth” to bring the words of eternal life to all the peripheries of our world. May our celebration today confirm each of you, parents and grandparents, children and young people, men and women, religious brothers and sisters, contemplatives and missionaries, deacons and priests, to share the joy of the Gospel! Share the Gospel of the family as joy for the world!

As we now prepare to go our separate ways, let us renew our fidelity to the Lord and to the vocation he has given to each of us. Taking up the prayer of Saint Patrick, let each of us repeat with joy: “Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me”. With the joy and strength given by the Holy Spirit, let us say to Him with confidence: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68).”





C. H. R. I. S. T.

Christian Hope Rests In Solidarity Togeth- WEARING TWO - OR MORE - HATS!

From the title you may be forgiven for thinking this is an article featuring Ladies Day at Ascot - it isn't! Rather, it is an **invitation** to the ladies of St. Lawrence (no offence, men!).

From the Pope's call on the previous page to be a missionary disciple, a call similarly emphasised by the recent National Eucharistic Congress and the fact that we're focusing on the importance of female discipleship in this issue, I felt it important - and very necessary - that our 'evangelising' words are matched by *deeds*.

I'm sure I am not unique in my experience of not really knowing people in our parish community (not even their names!), despite regularly attending the same services and parish events.

It was a combination of things, therefore, that got me thinking about connecting more with my fellow parishioners, and especially about starting some kind of women's group here at St. Lawrence. Firstly, by addressing my personal responsibility for "announcing the Good News" and, secondly, by being open to meeting Jesus in whatever guise He presents himself. The latter, for me, seems to be in the residents of a nearby residential home for the elderly, who I try to visit at least once a week. Whilst the staff at the home generally do a good job in looking after their charges, they do not have the resources to offer the kind of personal attention that would see these elderly folk have anything other than the TV for company. Whenever I have visited (usually late morning) some of them have already nodded off in their chairs, or are just sitting in silence. I don't want to paint a gloomy picture but as things stand, whenever I come away I am saddened because the whole atmosphere is, well, *soulless*.

Currently, in my role as co-editor of our parish magazine I have been privileged to meet and be inspired by 'faith-full professional women': women with jobs and careers, those who have retired, as well as those who do not/cannot work for whatever reason - all united by that common denominator of a practising faith. The pool of skills and talents is very deep, indeed, and an extremely valuable resource from which we need - and should be - drawing more, I feel.

Bringing the two together: 1) the obvious need in our society for all kinds of help, and 2) the range of skills we women possess to address those needs, we can make a difference. And it is not just the wider community we can reach out to, but also as one woman to another e.g. if we have concerns over work, family, health etc., we can share this, and benefit from each other's advice and experience. Loosely, this is my vision and the premise on which the group is to be founded; it is just the start of what we can do. And it won't be all work and no play; there will be the fun, social aspect, of course! Not only will we "network" with each other at St. Lawrence but through organising events and the like, hopefully our reach will extend beyond our own parish borders enough to make a connection and inspire other women, too.

I had already spoken to Fr. John about the idea a little while ago and he has given it his blessing! Thus, I am proposing to hold our first meeting on **Friday, 23rd November, at 7.30pm in the Main Hall**, where we can start putting together a workable structure; so, come prepared with *your* agenda-and wear a hat (or, hats) that says something about you. As women, we are no strangers to multitasking and the hat(s)-wearing was one way of high-lighting that. I did say it was going to be fun!

Sheila Pereira



CHILDREN'S MASS

At the 10.00am Mass on Sundays, during school term time, the children are offered a Children's Liturgy. After the first hymn and welcome from Fr. John Diver, the children are invited forward and then proceed out of Mass by the catechists to the St. Lawrence's Community Centre ("SLCC"). Here they can learn about the Gospel stories in ways suited to their age and needs.

7-year-olds and younger

Large upper room in SLCC

(Parents are welcome to attend with pre-school children, if necessary, where they can participate in the Liturgy of the Word with their children.)

All the Catechists are CRB-checked

Parishioners who would like to volunteer as a catechist are always welcome. Please contact Fr. John Diver.



ST. LAWRENCE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH CHURCH DIRECTORY

Presbytery & Parish Office:

1 Hamilton Road, Sidcup, DA15 7HB

Tel: 020 8300 2480

e-mail: stlawrencesidcup@gmail.com

website: www.stlawrenceschurch.org.uk

Deacon: Rev. Peter Varnes

Parish Priest: Fr. John Diver

Secretary: Mrs. Bridget Edwards

SERVICES

Sunday Masses: 6.30pm (Sat Vigil), 8.30, 10.00 & 11.30am

Weekday Masses: Mon-Sat 9.30am

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Wed 10.00am-12 noon & 5.00-7.00pm

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Sat after 9.30am Mass, 11.00am-12 noon,
6.00-6.30pm, and at call.

Benediction: 1st Friday of the month, following half-hour Adoration after 9.30am Mass

Rosary: Sat 9.00am



ST. LAWRENCE'S DIRECTORY

Parish Council Team

(Correspondence with Councillors via the suggestion box in the back of church)

Fr. John Diver	Doris Afreh
Rev. Peter Varnes, Deacon	Fabiola Mestriner
Marie O'Grady-Hills	Derek Ferris
Kevin Dadswell	Mike Crowhurst

MINISTRIES

Sacristan:	Marie Gurhy	
Altar Servers:	Parish Team	
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:	Peter Varnes	
Home Visits for Holy Communion:	Gabrielle Grant	
Welcomers:	Pam Dennis	8309 0439
Readers:	Jill Martin	8302 7263
	Denise Baldwin	8300 4984
Choir & Instrumentalists:	Caron Tragheim	07505 617607
Flowers:	Anne Maxted	8300 1215
Parish Library:	Mary Townsend	8302 1155
The Repository (Missals, cards):	Open after 8.30am & 10.00am Masses (in the hall) on Sundays	

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION CO-ORDINATORS

First Communion:
Confirmation:
Marriage Preparation:
Baptismal Programme:

Please contact the Parish Office for further details
020 8300 2480

Children's Liturgy (age 0 – 7): Wendy Boyle

QUEEN MARY'S HOSPITAL.

RC Chaplain	Fr. John Diver
Holy Communion Coordinator:	John Wilsdon

ST. LAWRENCE'S DIRECTORY (continued)**CHRISTIAN UNITY****Churches Together in
Sidcup (CTiS):**

Mr Mike Conway

8300 8911

SAFEGUARDING CO-ORDINATORS FOR THE PARISH**(for the protection of children & vulnerable adults)**

Mrs.Carolynn Briggs, Mrs. Kathy Rice, Ian Middleton

In emergency please ring: 07504 751239**ORGANISATIONS****100 Club:**

Colin Bradbury

**Deanery Developing World
Group:**

Susan Grace

Marist Way

Tom Baker

07719 338375

Mothers' Prayers:

Heike Varnes

Monday 4.30pm

8300 5074

Parish Magazine Editors:

Joan Coles

8309 5110

Sheila Pereira

8309 5913

St. Lawrence Charitable Fund: Nick Wells**St. Lawrence's Prayer Group**

Tony Regan

8300 6656

SCHOOLS & HEAD TEACHERS**St. Peter Chanel (Primary)**

Mrs. S. Gower, Head Teacher

8302 6029

CTK: St Mary's

(Christ the King College)

8309 4760

Shireen Razey, Associate Principal

YOUTH**Brownies (age 7-10):**

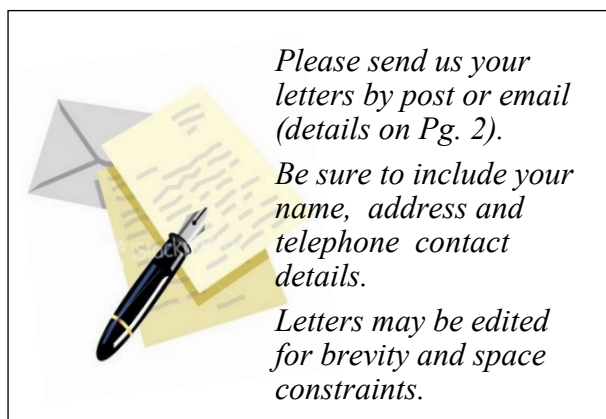
Rebecca Crisp

07833 501196

Guides (age 10-14):

Kate McGranghan

07891 559419



PAX

Thank you [Editors] so much for your kindness in sending us your parish magazine. We have enjoyed reading about the different and colourful activities of the parish.

With our prayers for you and your intentions, and those of the parish before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Yours gratefully in the sacred Heart of Jesus in whom we remain connecting constantly as part of one family.

Mother M. Ines, OSB
Prioress
Tyburn Convent

Editors,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parishioners at St. Lawrence's for the very generous donations totalling **£1145.45** given to Mustard Seed after the Masses at the beginning of June.

The weekend of 8th/9th September marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of Mustard Seed and celebrations included the ordination as priest of a Mustard Seed Brother from Kenya who will be serving Mustard Seed in Zimbabwe, as well as the opening of a new home for homeless, pregnant teenage girls in Jamaica.

Several people told me that they would be interested in helping with the work here and I will be contacting them to arrange a meeting soon. If anyone else would like to get involved, please let me know.

I would also like to thank Ron Davies for organising the fund raising concert on 29th September. Hope to see many of you there!

Peter Mitchell
Mustard Seed Communities UK
T: 01322 556955 Email: peter.mitchell@mustardseed.com



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London E13 8HL

t: 020 7476 1861

Welling

4 Welling Way,
Welling DA16 2RJ

t: 020 8856 7514

THE WOLF WITHOUT

[From America by an Unknown Author]

Shared by Cordelia Rice



“Each of us is on a spiritual journey where we encounter evil and violence in the world and during which we have experiences that have the potential to transform us. There are two* stories of St. Francis, stories you may know very well, that teach us about these aspects of the spiritual journey. I want to tell you a little of what I have learned from these stories...

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO



The first is the story of Francis and the Wolf, a story that appears in many collections of legends about St. Francis, including the *Fioretti* [The Flowers of St. Francis]. Gubbio, a small town about twenty five miles north of Assisi, was plagued by a huge, ferocious wolf that had killed sheep and cattle and, apparently, people. The townsfolk were afraid to venture outside the village walls and tended their fields armed with pitchforks and weapons.

Francis, then about forty years of age, visited Gubbio and went deliberately to meet the wolf. When it attacked him along the road, Francis said: “Come with me, Brother Wolf. In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I order you not to hurt me or anyone else.” The wolf stopped immediately, and sat docile at Francis’ feet.

‘In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I order you not to hurt me or anyone else’

Francis struck a bargain with the wolf: if the wolf would cease hurting and terrifying people, then the people would agree to feed and take care of him. As a sign of agreement the wolf



placed his paw in Francis' hand. For the remaining two years of his life the people of the town gave the wolf food and shelter.

Francis had compassion for both the people of Gubbio and for the wolf. After his encounter with the wolf Francis preached to the people, talking about the nature of evil and about repentance. He told them that God would free them from the 'wolves' of this world and from the fires of hell in the next.



The wolf is a symbol of evil and violence - but only a *symbol*. The real wolf was **inside** the people of Gubbio and inside all people who were violent to each other, who hurt one another in their anger, greed, feuds, disputes. It is part of the nature of wolves to act as members of a pack rather than alone. Brother Wolf was, therefore, acting in opposition to his God-given nature. The real crime of people who do evil and are violent is that rather than reveal the image and likeness of God - in which they were created - they show others a distorted image of what God has created.

'...he confronted the wolf rather than wait for it to come to him'

Francis went out to meet the wolf; he confronted the wolf rather than wait for it to come to him. He didn't set out to conquer the wolf; he didn't attack it or make an effort to defend himself. Rather, he chose to embrace the wolf rather

than defeating or overpowering it. He responded in love and in the name of the Lord Jesus.

In Gubbio they tell the story this way - and there is a church, "La Vittorina" (*see right*), said to be on the site of the meeting between Francis and the wolf. During the repairs in 1873, the skull of a wolf was found beneath the flagstones of a chapel dedicated to St. Francis. In nearby towns they will tell you that there was no wolf. Brother Wolf was, in fact, a bandit named 'Lupo', famous for his cruelty and wickedness.



Whether this story is true or not, I see the wolf as a symbol of war and how to end war; of evil and how to end evil; of all that separates us from awareness of the presence of God. It tells us that God will free us from the evil and violence that endangers us if we seek without fear, and confront all in love and in the name of the Lord Jesus."

*NOTE: The second story on "The Leper Within" will be featured in the Winter issue of the magazine.

ADOREMUS

Let us Adore!

Liverpool

Friday, 7th - Sunday, 9th September 2018

‘Parallels’: that was the word that kept recurring in my brain as I prepared to make the journey to Liverpool the day before the Congress, namely parallels between the human and spiritual.

It began with an early morning visit to the nurse to check on my blood test results - all good! Physical healing; parallel: *spiritual healing*. How often do I visit the “doctor” for the latter?

Next: food for the journey. I’m not sure how long my brother thought I was going away for but as he packed my backpack with a delicious salmon and cream cheese roll, as well as other snacks, let’s just say I was well-stocked and wouldn’t go hungry during the two-hour train journey (and beyond)! Food by human hands; parallel: *Eucharist, divine “food”*.

And, finally, the journey itself. I knew I had to make it to Euston station to catch the 1pm train for Liverpool. I must have checked umpteen times that I had the tickets, hotel details as well as all the Congress literature. Oh, and a fully-charged mobile phone as well since I had to coordinate meeting up with my fellow parishioner and delegate, Tony Regan, who was travelling on the same train with me. Unfortunately, for personal reasons, Deacon Peter Varnes who was originally meant to go was unable to do so. The parallel here was a journey as an ordinary traveller, with that of being a *pilgrim* on a *pilgrimage*.



Liverpool, the ‘City of Culture’, certainly lived up to this description with its beautiful world-class architectural buildings, evidence of its trading and maritime history in the docks and warehouses that lined the waterfront along with a buzzing arts and entertainments scene. I didn’t have to go too far to be entertained as our hotel, located at Albert Dock (on the stunning UNESCO World Heritage site) had a permanent exhibition that was entirely devoted to Liverpool’s most famous export, the Beatles, right next to it. There was a constant stream of ‘pilgrims’ from all parts of the world keen that this part of the itinerary should not be overlooked.





Friday morning queue, Echo Arena



Tony Regan on opening day of the Congress

If the Beatles were drawing in the crowds, a similar occurrence was taking place less than 200 yards away at the Echo Arena. On a slightly damp and chilly Friday morning, some 10,000 delegates were queuing to **“gather and reflect on the centrality of Eucharist and particularly to explore the place of Eucharistic Adoration.”**



The stage and delegates in main arena

On first sight of this cavernous enclosure it reminded me of a rock concert venue (not that I've been to many!), and Tony and I seated ourselves at ground level rather than “up in the gods”! The buzz and hum in the arena ceased as soon as the first Keynote Speaker, Canon Mervyn Tower, of Corpus Christi parish in Oxford, took to the stage to deliver his thoughts on the importance of the Scriptures in line with the Eucharist; we need the former to truly deepen our relationship with the latter. I was challenged by this thought because my reading and knowledge of Scripture is basic at best, and woeful at worst. It made sense to have the link between the two and brought to mind when we are told how the Lord ‘feeds’ us: by His *word* and at His *table*. I resolved to read the Song of Songs, the book of Job and Ecclesiastes, as suggested by Canon Tower.

[Continued overleaf]



[Continued from Page 27]

Canon David Oakley of St. Mary's College, Oscott, was the next speaker who invited us to ponder what our favourite model or image of the Church was in the context of the Eucharist being the "source and summit of the Church's life and mission". The popular world view is that the Church is an institution that is dying, passé, consigned to history. Far from it! It is, more importantly, a **sovereign work of God**. And so often when we cry out, "God, where are you?", we don't realise that God comes looking for us - and He intends to find us! As Canon Oakley shared these beautiful truths, the most precious that resonated with me was when he said: "*to receive Jesus in the Eucharist is to receive mercy*", adding "*a heart shaped by the Eucharist will come to know that nothing will be wasted.*"

Sr. Margaret Atkins, who concluded the morning session, looked at the importance of teaching the Eucharist. But to do this she said we needed to create an environment that can make sense of it. Our society today is fast-paced, indifferent, and we need only look at our relationship with eating - a 'fast food' sort of mentality - to see how that might affect our ability to teach and learn the Eucharist authentically. How very true it is, as Sr. Atkins pointed out, that good eating, where thought goes into every element of sourcing and preparing the food which is then shared with others around the table, encourages a kind of *reverence*: one that replaces an attitude of selfish consumption with care and gratitude. Christ is the perfect 'host' in all respects, no less so than when He instituted the Eucharist in the form of a meal. What is even more awe-inspiring is that *our* own flesh and blood are changed by the eating of the Eucharist: ***we become what we eat!*** Dieticians tell us this but it is true of the Church as well.

Receiving Communion at Mass, therefore, is not an end in itself as through it we are given food for the mission, food that will allow us to build Eucharistic communities that in turn will enable us to teach the Eucharist.

Within the space of two-and-a-half hours, the three speakers each shared a wealth of insight into the importance of the Eucharist, and the break for lunch not only gave us a chance to give our brains a bit of a rest but also to satisfy our rumbling stomachs! After lunch, the delegates attended a series of three presentation sessions that they had each signed up for.

Of the three sessions that I attended, the two that I felt would encourage *practical* application for me were: 1) The ministry of the Eucharist in hospitals and prisons, and 2) Teaching children to pray before the Eucharist.



Delegates at a presentation session

There was quite a scrum as the delegates made their way from room to room to attend their designated sessions. As one session ended another began and hence the rooms were emptying and filling up at the same time, causing a bit of a logjam. Seeing the crush of people, I overheard one priest remarking to another: "*If only churches were like this on a Sunday!*" Tried not to laugh too loudly!

First up was Bishop Paul Mason who recounted his experiences as a hospital chaplain in London for 11 years. He joked about how patients were always determined to show him their scars: "gangrene-munching

leeches; golf-sized gall stones” and the like! Normally, we tend to hide our scars - a way of hiding our vulnerabilities perhaps, but in hospitals that does not seem to be the case, said Bishop Mason. Why? Because patients need **solidarity** - suffering is frightening and lonely; when you are in hospital you are facing your own mortality, hence the desire to share the experience. Jesus did the same in sharing His scars but in doing so, His purpose was to offer **hope**: at the end of whatever suffering we are going through, there is always hope. Such an obvious truth but one that I had never considered until described in this way.

Something else that was a revelation to me was the ‘religious’ make-up of prisoners in England and Wales. Currently, there are some 83,000 prisoners being held in over 120 prisons, according to Fr. Paul Douthwaite, a prison chaplain, with the highest number of prisoners - a total of more than 14,500 - considering themselves to be Roman Catholic. Another jaw-dropping fact (for me, certainly) was that the **weekly celebration of Mass is enshrined in prison law**. If hospital patients need hope, then prisoners are not denied this same consolation: “no walls or bars can ever prevent the Lord from being present to his people”, as Fr. Douthwaite so compassionately stated. The hospital and prison scenarios - and, indeed, wherever there is any kind of curtailment of freedom such as in religious persecution - brings home what it must be like to be deprived of what the rest of us tend to take for granted. Perhaps by going to Mass or attending Adoration specifically on behalf of those who can’t will make us cherish and value what we have more than we do.

That children could be taught to pray before the Eucharist and to involve them in doing so was exciting as it was challenging. I was reminded that it was just as important to include children in this beautiful practice because the Eucharist is at the centre of Catholic life and, crucially, it contains the entire treasure of the Church, Jesus Christ Himself. Given the pressures of modern life, we lament the fragmentation and isolation this very often causes; the loss of any kind of communal activity, not least the praying together as a family. Hence, to be reminded that: “**The most important time for the children and for yourself is silent time with Jesus. You are the role models, if you pray with an open generous heart and show how we can live as Jesus, they will too!**”, was so obvious yet so easily overlooked.

A packed first day with two more to go!

Bishop Robert Barron’s two keynote addresses the following day, Saturday, were electrifying - both in content and delivery. In one he explained the “Mystery of the Mass” and in the other about “Sainthood, Sanctity and what makes us Holy”. Two words he used to sum up the purpose of the Mass: Come! (to be fed), and Go! (once fed, we are tasked with sharing what we have received). Also, in that same spirit of sharing it was very encouraging and inspiring to hear the testimonies of young adults where theirs is an *active* faith, and one which they are

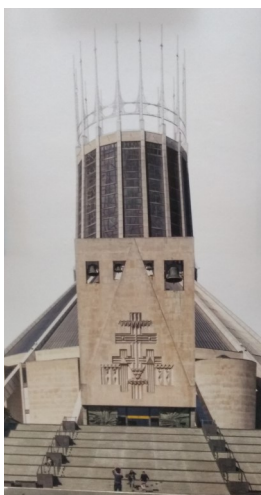


Entries for Adoremus poster competition by schools in Liverpool Archdiocese



‘Parallels’ word that my brain a make the j pool the d gress, nam tween the itual.

It began w ing visit to check on r



intent on keeping alive. The drama that was enacted on stage cleverly portrayed Jesus and His message of love through His crucifixion.

As if the Congress was not chock-full with programmes and events, the Archdiocese of Liverpool had put together a parallel (that word again!) programme: exhibitions, evening sing-alongs, self-guided walking tours, Lectio Divina (divine reading), a gospel concert, and more.

As the Congress had begun in somewhat damp and windy conditions, so it seemed it was to end in the same way. Delegates were invited to participate in one of two Masses - 9.30am or 11.30am - at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, described as being "one of the most architecturally striking, modern symbols of Catholicism in the world." This famous Liverpool landmark was designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd; work began on creating this 'Cathedral-in-the-round'

(emphasising the communal aspect of worship) with its soaring lantern in 1962, and was then consecrated on the Feast of Pentecost in May 1967.

The Cathedral was the perfect setting for the conclusion of a very purposeful pilgrimage. To get into the Cathedral itself meant waiting in a queue that snaked round the corner but once that started moving, we were all accommodated - including scores of clergy - in this iconic building to participate in the *source and summit* of our faith. Cardinal Vincent Nichols was the Celebrant with Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP being the Preacher.

Following a beautiful sung Mass, the whole congregation assembled outside to begin the Eucharistic Procession. Prayers and singing accompanied the Eucharist on its 1km route in which some 5,000 people were expected to take part. The rain



Eucharistic Procession led by Cardinal Nichols

shower did nothing to dampen spirits and by the time the whole procession made its way back to the top of the steps outside the Cathedral for Benediction, the rain had eased off. With the final blessing by Cardinal Nichols it was time to collect our bags and make a pilgrimage of sorts in the other direction - back home!

Reflecting on this experience, I can only express how very grateful I am for the profound opportunity of participating in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and Congress, and especially for the privilege of representing St. Lawrence's at it. In return, I dedicate the *Adoremus* candle that each delegate received as part of their conference pack, to the whole St. Lawrence community as a symbol of our united *Adoremus*. May it be a light to strengthen and encourage us into a deeper union with Our Lord. Furthermore, I couldn't have asked for a better pilgrim to make this journey with than Tony Regan. We shared, discussed, debated and enjoyed a laugh or two!

If the Beatles Story is a 'permanent exhibition', do we desire the same where Adoration and the Eucharist are concerned? Unlike the Beatles exhibition, which is fee-paying, taking part in Adoration and receiving the Eucharist is completely free and without limit. Now, that is a priceless gift and opportunity *without* parallel.

Sheila Pereira

THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

By Tony Regan



The Eucharistic Congress was held in Liverpool on 7th-9th September 2018, and Sheila Pereira and myself were invited to attend as the delegates representing St Lawrence's. We travelled up by train on the day before the Congress began. I was staggered by the number of priests, nuns and other delegates on the train. It seemed that our train had been taken over by Catholics, except for the lady serving refreshments who was a Muslim. I wonder what she was thinking seeing all those clerical collars? Deacon Peter had booked our hotel that turned out to be only 200 yards from the door of the Echo Arena conference centre where the Congress took place. This meant I could have a later breakfast and still arrive on time; thanks, Peter!

So, on Friday morning we turned up, on time, to receive our packs and be ushered into the huge Arena, where I was told there were over 6,000 persons, including Cardinal Nichols, some thirty bishops and hundreds of priests. I felt honoured to be representing all at St Lawrence's and at the same time pretty nervous about what might be expected of me. The format of Congress was a series of talks and workshops - some nine in all - plus various presentations over two days, with Adoration and Benediction on Saturday afternoon, finishing with Solemn High Mass(es) on Sunday morning. I was very tired on the Friday and Saturday evenings - well, brain dead would really be a better description - when I tried to recall what I had heard during the day! Sometimes note-taking was impossible because the lights were dimmed during talks making nodding off really easy...



Altar being prepared for Exposition and Benediction in Echo Arena, concluding Saturday's events

It appeared to me that the Bishops of England and Wales have recognised how we all need to understand and respond to God's fantastic gift of the Holy Eucharist, essential to the life and growth of the Church and each one of us baptised Catholics. They called the Congress to remind us of the gift of the Eucharist that the Church sees as the 'Source and Summit' of its very being.

It is impossible to try and outline meaningfully the enormous input in such a short article, so I have decided to share below the three main things that inspired me most.

Scripture

The Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit are known as "The Word of God". In the Eucharist the bread and wine are transformed by the same Holy Spirit into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus, who is known as the "Word of God" made flesh. This means that the whole

[Continued from Page 31]

of Scripture is somehow compatible with Jesus in the Eucharist. The Scriptures are God's way of teaching us about who He is and about His plan of salvation through His beloved Son, Jesus. Thus, the Old Testament is essential to a proper understanding of the New Testament; it develops for us the faithful love of God for His people and about His plan of salvation through His Son, Jesus – the greatest expression of that love. Only through the Old Testament is the idea of sacrifice developed in relation to the redeeming crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and signified in the Last Supper.

The Real Presence

Before the Congress, I was intellectually confident that Jesus was present in the Eucharist. However, during the Congress that knowledge became more of a reality within me: a growing awareness that the whole of the Godhead, its infinite power, glory, wisdom, compassion, gentleness, love - the list is endless - comes and dwells within me and everyone else. After Communion, or when we come and talk to Jesus in the tabernacle or at Exposition, we somehow mystically become Arks for Jesus in His New Covenant.

The Individuality of the Eucharist

During Mass, I witnessed the miracle of Jesus coming simultaneously to thousands of people in Holy Communion. This mystery became even greater when I realised that He was coming *totally* and *completely* to each one of us - not fragmented so everyone received just a morsel of Him but God in His entirety, complete in all His power, glory and splendour. Also, because He is God He knows everything there is to know about each one of us, warts and all. In Holy Communion, therefore, we can have the most private and intimate meeting imaginable. Here is He, who knows my every secret, problem, fear, pain, hope and desire, alone with me waiting for me to share with Him and listen to what He has to say. Fancy that! God is really alone with me and every other communicant, and all He wants is to share His love and peace with each of us. How can I not see you all, then, as my brothers and sisters also loved unconditionally by God?

My summing up of the what the presentations were trying to show was that the thirty three years of Jesus' earthly life were all too short for our Loving Saviour, whose "delights were to be with the children of men" (Proverbs 8:31). Since to be born for us, to live an arduous life and to suffer and sacrifice Himself for us by a most painful death did not exhaust the love of the Incarnate Son of God. For He even wished to remain among us after His Ascension into heaven by a perpetual miracle which kept alive the mysteries of His earthly life and His sacred Passion and Death. This perpetual miracle Jesus accomplished by:

- instituting through the Last Supper, the Holy Eucharist through which He communicates with us in Holy Communion;
- His constant presence in the tabernacle and especially when He is exposed in the monstrance at Exposition when we can come and talk with, praise and worship Him. What a God we have who shows in such practical ways how much He loves us!

I felt the Holy Spirit was really active over the Congress and among all those present. The whole event was inspiring, and hearing about the Eucharist rejuvenated me and provoked a new awe in the reality of the presence of God.

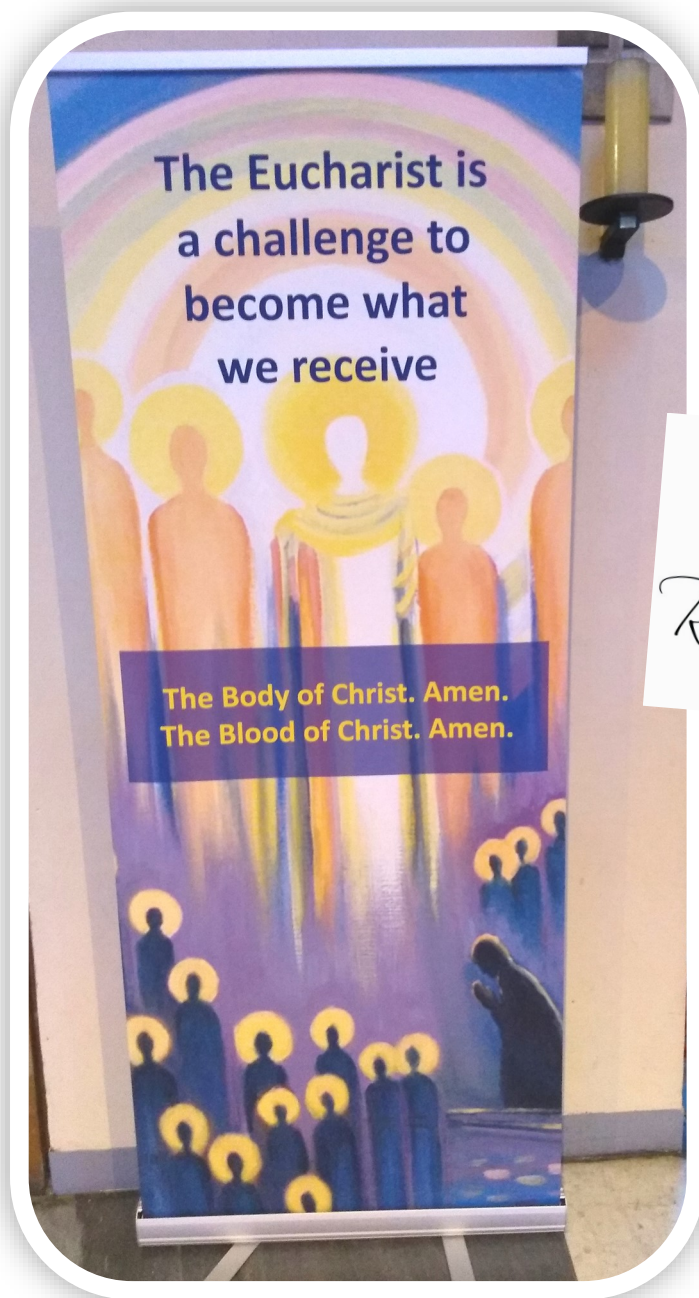
I thoroughly enjoyed the whole event. It was great to be with Sheila, who got me up to speed about the Congress. She was amazing in her zeal and I saw aspects of her talents as reporter, photographer and editor of our parish magazine, St Lawrence's 'Voice'. I can't wait for the next edition!



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH IN SOUTHWARK

Loving God, help us to be open to the freshness of your Spirit. Fill us with enthusiasm for the Good News. Invite us into a deeper relationship with your Son, Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist. Make us more aware of where there is need for new life. Help us to reach out to those who feel lost or abandoned, those who are searching and questioning, those who have walked away from you and those who are eager to know your love. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

Eucharistic Pilgrimage & Congress, 2018



[The full Adoremus 2018 programme can be accessed online at: catholicnews.org.uk]

THE FORGOTTEN WOMEN DISCIPLES

By **Mary Mather**



Jewish culture in the first century was decidedly patriarchal. The daily prayers of Jewish men included this prayer of thanksgiving: "Praised be God that he has not created me a woman." A woman's place was in the home. Generally marrying young, she was almost always under the protection and authority of a man: father, husband or a male relative, if she was a widow. Women were vulnerable without access to property. Any money she earned belonged to her husband. Her husband could divorce her for almost any reason, simply by issuing a writ. Her involvement in religion was marginal, men were required to pray every day, women were not. Worshipping separately in the synagogue, they were not allowed to study the sacred texts, to read aloud or bear witness in a religious court. Rabbi Eliezer, a first-century teacher proclaimed: "rather the word of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman". Seen against this background, Jesus' words and actions totally rejected all the cultural norms of His day.

However, the women who defied their culture to follow Jesus have been largely forgotten. We know about the Marys, for example Mary, Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary the sister of Martha, and probably something about Elizabeth and Anna. However, what about Suzanna, Lois, Eunice, Priscilla, Phoebe, Lydia, Salome, Joanna and Junia? These women must have been included in the New Testament story for a reason and the fact that they are mentioned at all challenges us to find out what we can learn about them.

Luke makes it very clear that, in addition to the 12 apostles, a large group of women also followed Jesus as He travelled through Galilee and Judah teaching, healing, and proclaiming the kingdom of God. *"Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources."* (Luke 8: 1-3) Luke seems to suggest that Jesus received financial support from these women; something he never says about the men. This picture is astounding, given that women at this time were discouraged from even leaving their households.



When Jesus was crucified, the Gospel writers unambiguously state that most of those who remained to the end were women. Maybe the women were just more courageous than the men. Matthew says *"many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."* (Matt 27:55). Mark tells us *"There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem."* (Mark 15:40). In all four Gospel accounts, Jesus appeared first to women and commissioned them to proclaim His resurrection to His male disciples who did not believe the women's story.



What do we know about just three of these women: Joanna (left), Salome (right) and Mary Magdalen (centre), who supported Jesus during his earthly ministry? Joanna is named twice in the New Testament. Firstly, among the women providing financial support to Jesus and secondly among the women who took spices to Jesus' tomb (Luke 24:10). Joanna was the wife of Chuza, steward to Herod Antipas. Her husband was an important

court official and, as his wife, she had social status and probably considerable wealth. We will never know if she left her husband to travel with Jesus. However, her discipleship almost certainly led to a loss of position, prestige and friends. Supporting Jesus was also personally risky. It would have been dangerous to openly support Jesus at court as Herod had already executed John the Baptist. In the Orthodox tradition, on the third Sunday after Easter, Saint Joanna and the other eight women who took myrrh to the tomb, are still celebrated as the "Holy Myrrh-bearers".

Salome, a fascinating woman, is usually overlooked in favour of her more notorious seductive namesake who was responsible for the execution of John the Baptist. She was the wife of Zebedee the fisherman and the mother of the hot-blooded apostles, James and John, nicknamed the "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus. She was one of the women of "means" supporting Jesus on the road, no doubt funded by Zebedee's fishing practice. She appears in Matthew 20.21, when she comes up to Jesus and says to Him: *"Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."* She is bold, outspoken and asks directly for what she wants, like many of the other women who appear in the New Testament. She is present at the crucifixion and at the tomb. Salome also paid a heavy price for her discipleship. Her son James was martyred by Herod, the first disciple to be killed (Acts 12:1-2). Her other son, John, is the "beloved" disciple, the writer of the fourth Gospel, who took Mary into his home after Jesus died.

Mary Magdalene is always listed first in groups of named female disciples and her story has fascinated writers, poets, artists and playwrights for over two thousand years. Her reputation as a prostitute is almost certainly unfounded. Biblical scholars now see her as an independent woman of wealth from the city of Magdala, a thriving fishing village on the Sea of Galilee, whose life was dramatically changed by her encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. She funded the mission of Jesus, stood at the cross with the other women and was the first to meet the Risen Christ. Her overwhelming importance to us is that a woman was the **first** to realise the central tenet of our Christian faith: "He is risen!" In 2016, Pope Francis took the biggest step yet to rehabilitate Mary Magdalene's image, declaring a major feast day in her honour on 22 July. He established the absolute equality of Mary Magdalene with the other apostles, calling her *"the apostle to the apostles"*, something that has never been done before and a point of no return for women in the church.

What do these unknown women tell us today? Given the low status of women, it is astonishing that they defied social convention, left their homes, lived rough on the road, remained faithful to the end and became the first witnesses to the Resurrection. Jesus could have just as easily appeared to Peter or the other disciples cowering behind locked doors. The fact he appeared to Mary and the other women first can only mean that this was a deliberate act on His part. Two millennia later, women as well as men must be recognised as credible witnesses to the Gospel and commissioned to be disciples.

Dr. Mary Mather is a retired consultant paediatrician. She is married to a retired consultant in palliative medicine and has five children.





THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THEIR CALL TO BE DISCIPLES

By **Magdalen Lindon**

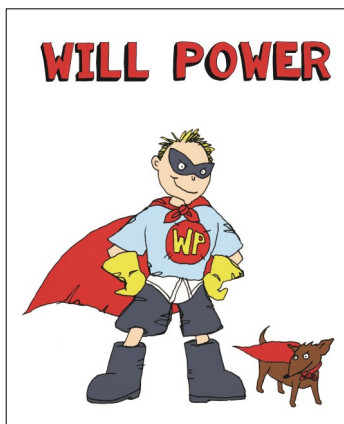


The celebration of the feast of the birth of Our Lady on 8th September is a good opportunity to reflect on the role of women today in their various calls to discipleship, and my own in particular. Our Lady was the first disciple of Jesus. She played an active role as His follower and is a wonderful example. She shows us that we need not underestimate ourselves as women and that women definitely have a role to play.

The word “disciple” connotes actively following: real disciples aren’t passive or complacent. Take Our Lady, for example, who provided Jesus with love and support as a mother then followed Him during His ministry right through to the foot of the Cross. However, she was then able to rejoice with Jesus when He rose from the dead and share in His eternal life. As disciples this is what we aspire to as well.

Like Our Lady, a woman’s role as a disciple begins in the home, first as a child learning and practising the Faith and then as adult, leading an active Christian life. Perhaps, but not necessarily, this is as a mother, but is certainly as someone beloved by the Lord and ready to follow her Christian calling in whatever direction she is prompted by the Holy Spirit.

I have been considering my own role as a disciple. One way was as a catechist when my children were young. I also helped to write our parish catechetical programme as those available at the time were sketchy and lacking in basic instruction. This programme has been used in our parish for many years ever since.



In 2011, we had a Deanery Mission and I was invited to form a house prayer group to pray for its success. After the Mission we continued with the group and ended up meeting regularly for over three years. During one of our discussions about the readings for the week, (we used Wednesday Word), I was suddenly struck by how little children are taught about values, morality and the difference between right and wrong as they reach the age of about seven and start reasoning for themselves. I realised the starting point was learning about free will and willpower. As a result I felt called, compelled even, to write a children’s book on the topic and that was how I came to write “Will Power” (left; see also feature on Page 10). In the book, Will Power is a fun character and an embryonic superhero that children can relate to when learning about making wise choices and sensible decisions.

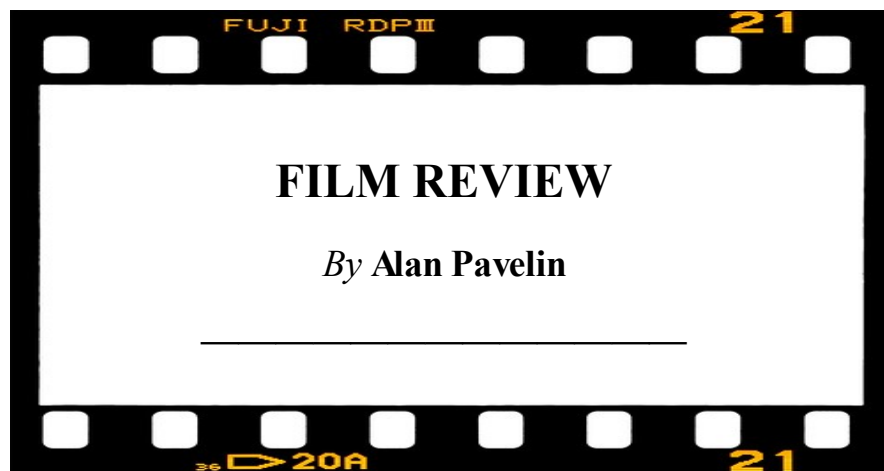
The book was welcomed and used in my parish and further afield. I then received another “call” when our parish catechetical coordinator, Sister Catherine, commissioned me to write about the Ten Commandments. She told me children were making their First Confession without knowing what actually to confess and a resource on the subject was therefore needed. “Will Power and the Ten Commandments” was the result. I wanted other children as well as those in my parish to benefit, and I am pleased to say Redemptorist Publications are publishing the book for me.

I never expected to be writing books when I was retired. I have come to the conclusion that Christians never do retire! However, I was aware that we are all, men and women alike, called to be disciples – our Christian way of life demands it and Pope Francis exhorts us to be so. In being open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, I have rather surprisingly found myself putting pen to paper. I have felt driven to do it and see it as my own small way of spreading the good news of the Gospel and being Jesus’ disciple.

I would now encourage all the women in St. Lawrence’s parish to look at your role as disciples and discern the route the Lord would like you to take, whatever that might be. Indeed, as we remember and give thanks for the birth of Our Lady - this most blessed of women - may *all* women take heart and follow her lead.



Magdalen Spooner is a retired solicitor and lives in south-west London. She is married with four children and an ever increasing number of grandchildren. She writes under the pen name of Magdalen Lindon.

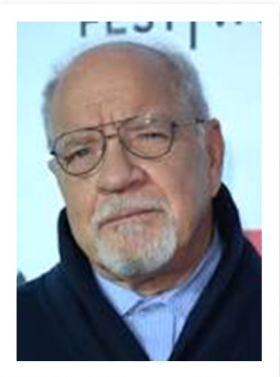


Paul Schrader is a director, screenwriter, and film critic. Following a strict Protestant upbringing, he discovered the joys of cinema and wrote a book called *Transcendental Style in Film*. His films are usually about troubled men who eventually find a kind of redemption.

His latest film, which was released in July, is called *First Reformed*, which shows strong similarities to two classic religious films, *Diary of a Country Priest* (1950) and *Winter Light* (1962). Ethan Hawke plays



a minister preparing to celebrate the 250th anniversary of his church, but is confronted with problems ranging from his own poor health to a parishioner with a suicidal husband.



Paul Schrader

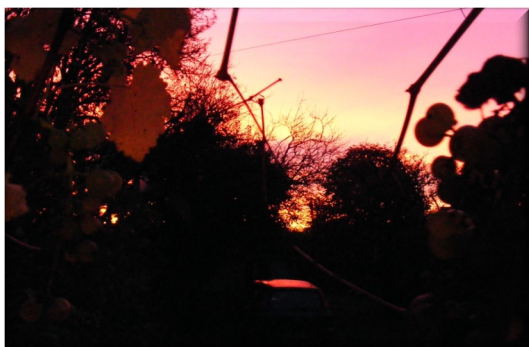
This superb film, in which Hawke is so convincing you forget he's only acting, touches on several important issues, including global warming. It is slow-moving but gripping, one of the best religious films for a long time. The ambiguous ending has proved controversial.



Paul Apostle of Christ was released on DVD in July, having been denied a cinema release. Set in Rome though filmed in Malta, the aged Paul (played by the British actor James Faulkner) is in prison awaiting execution. He is visited by Luke (Jim Cazaviel, who was Jesus in Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*), who writes down all that Paul has to say about his past life and experiences.

A major part of the plot concerns a Roman prison guard whose daughter is seriously ill. Much of what Paul says echoes well-known passages from his letters. A caption at the end tells us that Luke went on to write the Acts of the Apostles.



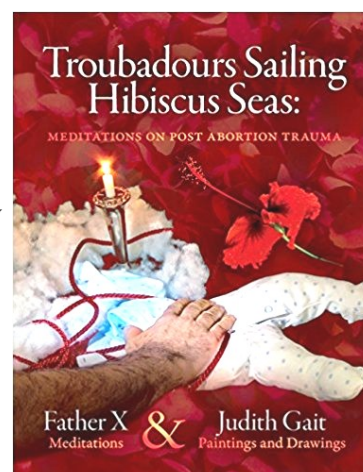


Inspiration Behind "Troubadours Sailing Hibiscus Seas"

By

Judith Gait

It was a cold morning in November and I was rushing to attend Mass. As I opened the front door to leave I was astounded; the dawn sky was a spectacular symphony of colours: yellow ochres, rose pinks, salmon oranges. In all my years of early country mornings I had never seen anything like this! Despite my rush I went up the three flights of stairs to my studio and took down my camera, just hoping to record something of the beauty I was seeing... The result is the opening prayer in "Troubadours Sailing Hibiscus Seas" set against that photo of such a special dawn. The day before I took the photo, I had invited Fr. X to my house to pray a Rosary for his child. I did not know, then, that day we said the Rosary together was the anniversary of his child's abortion.



"Troubadours" available through Judith Gait: gaitlaan@gmail.com (£13.50, inc. postage)

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