

St. Lawrence's Voice

Winter 2018

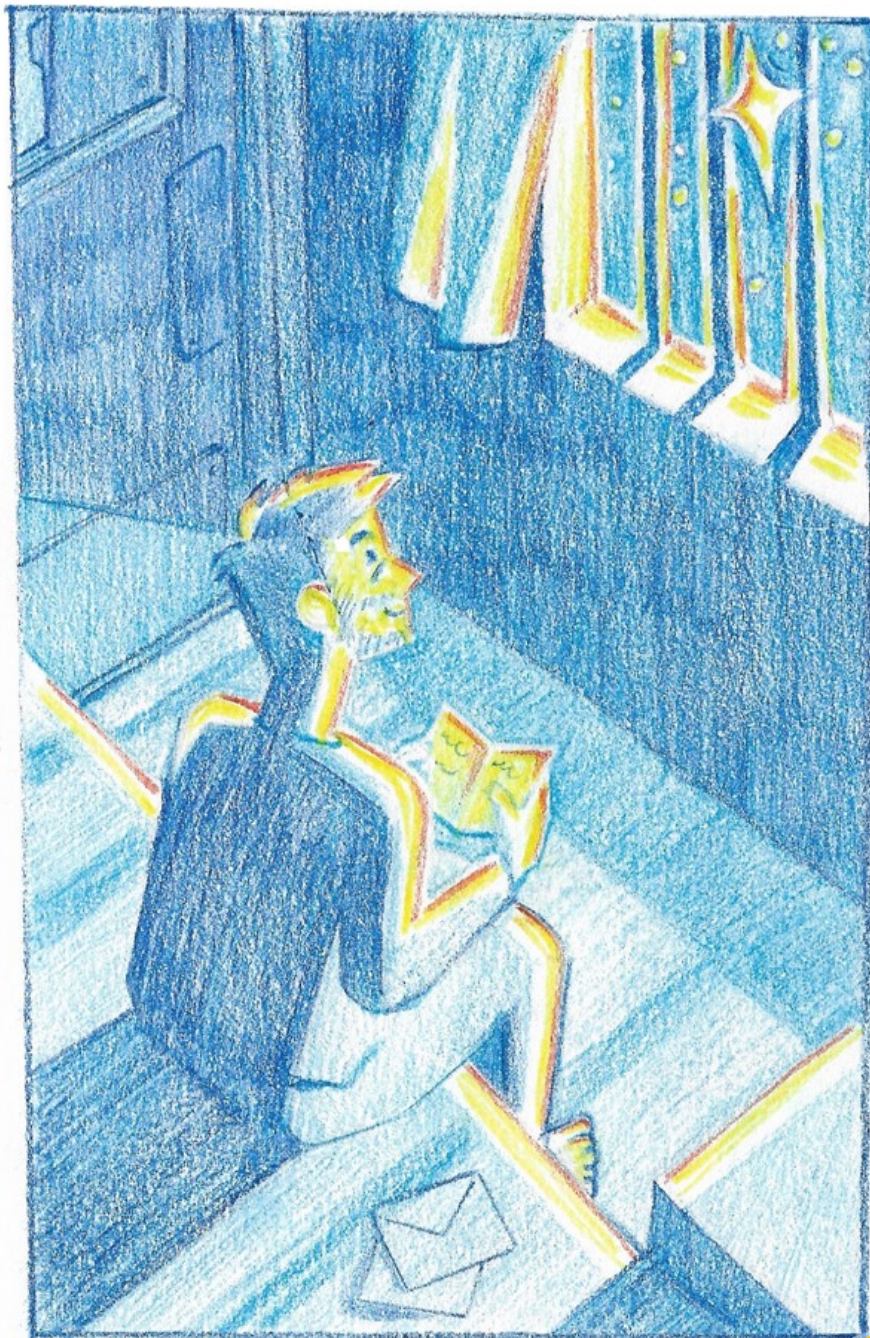
[Issue Date: 16.12.2018]

£1.00

The Light shines in the darkness

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has not overcome it?

EDITORIAL TEAM

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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

**Summer 2019
Deadline: 17th May**

Dear Readers,

With this Winter issue of the 'Voice', we bring 2018 to a close. And speaking of the magazine there will be a few unavoidable changes for 2019: apart from the price increase, instead of the usual four issues we will be bringing out just two - Summer (June) and Winter (December). Certain necessary obligations and commitments have dictated this course of action. Of course, if the position subsequently changes and we are able to increase the frequency, then we certainly will.

What better way to celebrate this beautiful season of hope than to hear and read about people's generosity in caring for and serving others as the Rotary Club (Pg. 8) and the St. Lawrence Charitable Fund (Pg. 36) are doing.

Children seem to have caught this 'sharing' bug, too, generously putting aside their letters to Santa so as to prepare their own unique gifts and messages to those children for whom Christmas is not always the happy time that it should be (Pg. 10).

The season to be jolly tends to be quite the opposite for prisoners but "Linval" in his article on Pg. 29 shows how Advent is a time of hope for all, and that there are no bars on grace.

Our Cover Page illustration was by the talented Henry Potter. His "wizardry" with drawing is evident and you can read more about him on the following page.

Jesus started His ministry with just four disciples, so Fr. Graziano reminded us. We were ten women 'disciples' at our first meeting, with a follow-up planned for early in the New Year (see Pg. 17). We hope to see many more of you women at the next one!

Thank you for your support throughout the year. We are delighted to wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas. May 2019 be filled with peace and promise for us all.

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Joan

**Joan
and
Sheila**



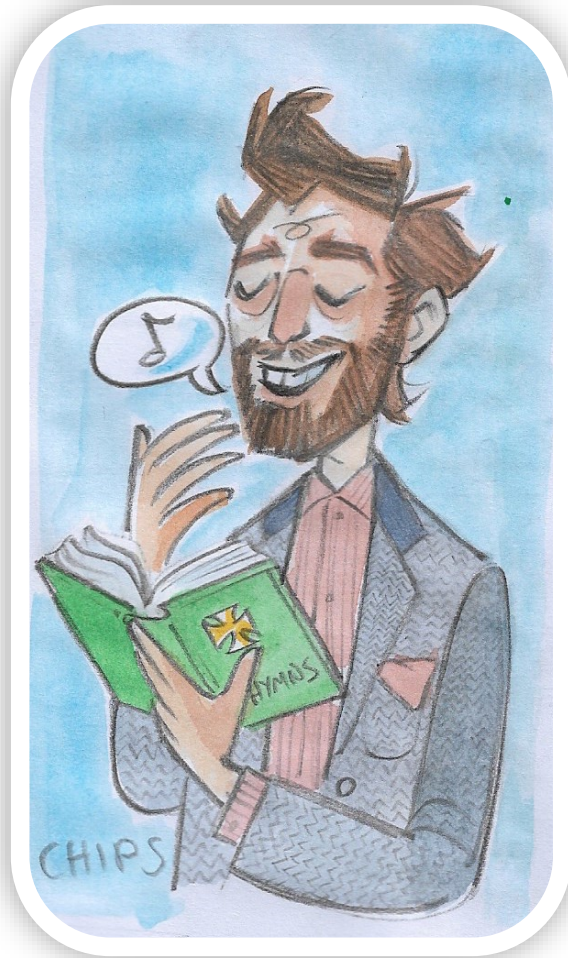
Sheila

Hello! My name is Henry Potter but my pen name is 'Chips'. I studied Illustration at Falmouth University and graduated in 2016.

I like to think I'm an active member of our parish as I'm in the local circle of The Catenians and I sing in the Choir with Sheila Pereira. I'm always keen to help out at St Lawrence's and as I think the 'Voice' is a fantastic magazine, I contacted Sheila and offered a helping hand.

St. Lawrence's is a place that's given me friendship, purpose, an opportunity to use my talents, consoled me when I was low in spirit and inspired me in a great many ways. I'm very grateful to this little community and Sheila for this opportunity.

I greatly enjoyed making this piece. It has energised me to draw more after a particularly dry spell. You can see more of my work on Instagram: @henrychips or contact me on chipsillustration@gmail.com.



A self-portrait

My cover Illustration was inspired by the beginning of St John's Gospel: 'The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it'. It reminds me that even in the bleakest of circumstances, Jesus is still a source of light and hope. Of redemption. That's especially true of those who will be spending this Christmas imprisoned.



ST. LAWRENCE'S PARISH NOTICES

‘CLAIMING FOR CHRIST’ AS WE WELCOME INTO OUR PARISH FAMILY IN BAPTISM



Dulcie Jane Martin	15.09.18
Lotanna Brian Nwankwo	15.09.18
Edith Rose Ivy Rowe	22.09.18

WEDDINGS

Daniel Joseph William *married*
Candice Alexandra Botting 20.10.18



Hayden Duncan Ridsdale *married*
Margaret Anne Quirke 26.10.18

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]

◆ Tracey Ann Katherine Carter	11.08.2018
◆ Mary Manners	27.08.2018
◆ William Patrick Tyndall	29.08.2018
◆ Adelaide Margaret Meeks	02.09.2018
◆ Terence Richard Marchant	06.09.2018
◆ Eileen Mary Baker	13.10.2018
◆ Christopher John Godden Wells	18.10.2018
◆ Marina Philomena Wybrow	09.11.2018
◆ Lydia Mabel Jagger	14.11.2018



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PARISH NOTICEBOARD

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



Charity Concert Cuts the Mustard

The concert held on 29th September was a great success, and raised **£630** for the Mustard Seed Charity.

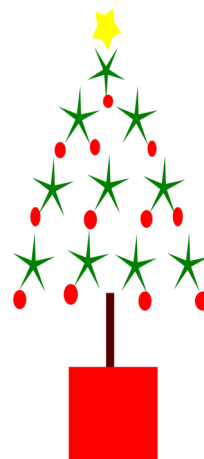
Alzheimer's Walk

Anne Goad raised over **£900** in her 18-mile walk in aid of Alzheimer's. All the support she received is gratefully acknowledged.

DAUGHTERS OF DIVINE LOVE CONGREGATION

Sr. Ann Ugoh wrote to thank Fr. John and the parishioners for their generosity during the mission appeal over the weekend of 30th June/1st July, when an amount of **£1,308.94** was raised.

"We are very grateful and thankful for your generosity and that of your parishioners. May God reward you all abundantly. Be always assured of our prayers," was Sr. Ann's very appreciative response to the parish.



ROTARY CLUB



Quiz held on Saturday, 17th November, at Hurstmere School in aid of Operation Smile (cleft palate operations worldwide).

See article on Page 8 for a more detailed description of the Rotary Club.

ST LAWRENCE CHARITABLE FUND

30th Anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving and Celebration held on 8th December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception). Followed by refreshments and talk in the Community Centre by Sr. Maria McGuinness on the 'Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching' and their implications for us.
(See Page 36)

REMINDERS!

1. New price of the 'Voice' as from 2019 will be £2.
2. Deadline for the Summer 2019 issue is:
17th May.



BEXLEY DEANERY DEVELOPING WORLD GROUP

By Susan Grace

In October the group met to review 2018 and plan for the forthcoming year.

I would like to start by thanking you for your support. We were able to support eight projects, ranging from a village in Bangladesh supporting the Rohingya refugees to vets in Rwanda providing animals for local families, to the Kumi community in Uganda that provides prosthetic limbs for children.

We received a number of projects for consideration for the forthcoming year and, once again, we have selected eight of them. We hope that with your continued support we will be able to fund all eight. The first project we have chosen to support is Fr. Andrew and his parish in Santa Cruz, Bolivia – they are in desperate need of support for the eight communities he ministers to.

The second project in the coming year will be to provide sewing machines to a technical school in Uganda so that the students can learn to sew and then use this skill to provide an income for themselves and their families. The remaining six projects are in Malawi, India, Tanzania, Goa and two further projects in Uganda. Please see future copies of the 'Voice' for our progress in supporting these projects, and please do not forget the box at the back of the church for your donations.

Thank you.

Quiz Night
held on
15th September
to support
various projects
raised **£591.50**

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ROTARY IN SIDCUP

By David Barker & Arthur Maxted

'Service above

The Rotary club of Sidcup is one of 35,000 Clubs worldwide with over 1700 in the UK & Ireland. There are 1.2m members of Rotary worldwide. It is an organisation for both men and women.

Rotary's motto is "Service above Self". The objects of Rotary are to adopt high ethical standards in business, professional, community and personal life, to foster service through friendship and to work for peace, goodwill and international understanding. Rotarians are encouraged to apply a "4-Way Test" as part of their moral code and to ask,

- *is it the truth?*
- *is it fair to all?*
- *does it build friendship and goodwill? and*
- *will it benefit everyone concerned?*

Each club runs its own affairs and as far as the Sidcup Club is concerned, we support projects both locally (including St Lawrence Charitable Fund) and worldwide. One such project was to provide 100 bio digesters for village communities in Rwanda. Bill Gates supported the Rotary project to eradicate polio. Now there are only two/three countries where polio exists and to a significantly lesser extent than it was 15-20 years ago.

Many of you will know of our annual quiz which a number of parishioners support and which usually raises in excess of £2,000. Our famous Christmas Collection - when Fr. Christmas visits local streets in his sleigh - usually raises in excess of £12,500 for charity each year.

The Sidcup Rotary Club is about to form a satellite club, meeting less frequently and on an informal basis. They will have their own priorities and programme of events, but we hope they will also collaborate with us and support some of the existing projects.



Quiz: 17th November



In 1985 we founded the Rotary Club of Sidcup Educational Trust as a separate charity to celebrate our 50th Anniversary. It provides financial support to the under-25s to promote character development, enable the furtherance of their education, and improve their sporting or musical abilities - plus other projects in which the younger generation are involved

A vital ingredient of Sidcup RC is to enjoy social events which enhance friendships and encourages all members to support community projects and fund-raising events. Members are also asked to help with other worthwhile causes, such as the formation (some years ago now) of the Friends of Queen Mary's Hospital with which a number of Rotarians are still actively involved.



The sort of tent used by ShelterBox (provide worldwide emergency disaster relief) - one of the charities supported by the Rotary Club

Members organise the Bexley Musician of the Year & Bexley Young Enterprise competitions. Help is also given to youth groups such as scout and sea scout groups locally, and to young carers.

Some members include parishioners of St .Lawrence's: Bob Bacon, David Barker, David Dennis, Arthur Maxted, Peter Wilkes, Ray D'Silva & Bill Head-Rapson (husband of a parishioner).



Father Christmas (with "elves"!) on his Christmas Collection

CHILDREN'S 'VOICES'

The birth of a little baby *changed* and *challenged* the world, which is how we come to celebrate the great joy of Christmas and give thanks for this Saviour - an eternal symbol of peace, love and joy.

Drawing on the words of “change” and “challenge”, four children/young adults were invited to make a difference this Christmas by putting aside their letters to Santa (temporarily!) in order to focus on the ‘**Advertising Christmas**’ challenge that was set before them (see below).

So as not to spoil the surprise for the ‘receivers’, details of what the ‘givers’ (who will remain anonymous) came up with will be revealed in the next issue. And, this is a message to the children of our parish, if you have done something similar or would like to, then get in touch and let us know. After all, sharing good cheer, kindness and caring is for a ‘Christmas’ that happens every day - or, should do! Please give us the opportunity to tell everyone what a great bunch you are - get in touch and let us have your thoughts, ideas, feedback, and together we can keep making “**BIG NEWS!**”

In the meantime, a sneak preview on the next page...



'ADVERTISING CHRISTMAS'

CHALLENGE!

Some of the slogans that will greet you on London Underground:

“Just what you want, delivered”
“Live fast, Drink strong”
“Work the Room Without Being In It”
“London – Everyone Welcome”

If you had to “advertise” your thoughts about Christmas and what it really means to you, how would you communicate that message to children and young teen adults, for whom Christmas can be a very difficult and sad time?

Whatever form the ‘message’ takes: for example, a card, something you have baked, any kind of craft work, this will then form a Christmas gift that will be presented to a less fortunate child in our parish, or wherever there is a need.

As the challenge is about communicating, the final gift must contain a message in WORDS as well, so if you bake a batch of biscuits it needs to have a written message as well.

Your budget is: **£12.50**

Deadline: Friday, 23rd November



CHRISTMAS!!!

"Dear Friend,

Have a great Christmas, filled with love and happiness.

Here is a little gift from me to you so you know how special you really are.

I hope you have the best time ever!!!!

Kind regards,"



"Dear Friend,
I want to wish you a Merry Christmas and I hope you enjoy your gift and like it. Remember: great things come in all sizes!



Merry Christmas!



"Dear Friend,

I hope that you are having a great Christmas, and enjoying the festive season. I hope that your gift is also just as enjoyable.

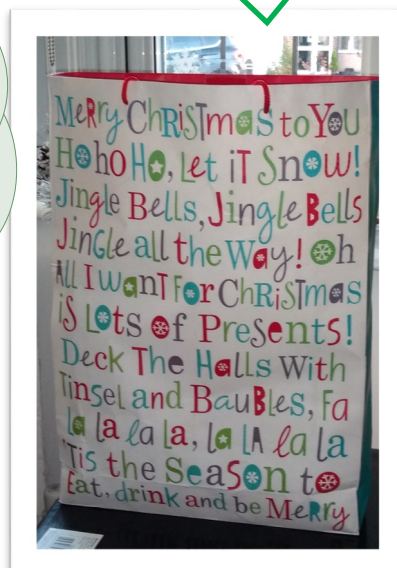
Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!!

Greetings from,
Your Friend"



"Dear Friend,
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
Let this bag bring you some 'small' piece of happiness.

Love, St. Lawrence Santa"



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CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SIDCUP (CTiS)



RECENT EVENTS

At St. John's Remembrance Service, a wreath was laid at Sidcup on behalf of CTiS by Chairman, Paul Hurren.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Civic Carol Service at St. John's on Sunday, 9 December, 4pm. Address by Alex Newens of Sidcup Baptist Church. Our Lady of the Rosary are one of two schools performing. Refreshments afterwards. All welcome.

Because of ongoing building work at Morrisons, carol-singing will take place between McDonald's and British Heart Foundation in the High St. on Saturday, 15 December, 11am-12noon, led by Hilary Brown. All welcome.

Unity Service takes place at Sidcup Baptist Church on Sunday, 20 January 2019, 6.30pm (refreshments from 5.30pm). Resources prepared by Christians from Indonesia. Please come along and support this important event.

MINISTERIAL CHANGES

Stephen Sealy's successor at St. John's is Rev. Cathy Knight-Scott. Avery Hill Fellowship are seeking a replacement for Dave Williams, who recently left the Parish.

NEWS

A team has been formed to assist in the launch of the new CTiS website, which has experienced a few teething troubles. Thanks are due to Phil Culbert from St Lawrence's who has kindly stepped in to represent us on the committee. Please support him in his new role.

DISABLED CHRISTIANS FELLOWSHIP (DCF)

Meet on 2nd Saturday of each month (except Aug & Oct) at Sidcup Baptist Church Hall, Main Road, 2pm – 4.30pm. Refreshments and entertainment provided. Further information from Dave Cole: 020 8300 9998.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 15 January 2019, at Holy Trinity, Lamorbey, 7.45 for 8pm. All welcome.



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‘Voices’ that Speak...



Fr. Graziano, in his homily introducing the First Sunday of Advent on 2nd December, focused on the symbolism of the various objects and decorations in the church, starting with the most significant - the Advent Wreath. He likened those responsible for the striking floral enhancements at St. Lawrence's as belonging to the "Ministry of Beauty", and an example of their handiwork can be seen below.

The different elements of the wreath were explained as follows.



Wreath: symbolic of advent (coming) of Light into the world

The lighting of 4 candles - one for each Sunday of Advent - together with the liturgical colour of candles: purple for Advent and rose for Gaudete Sunday - symbolise our hope not only in Our Saviour's first coming into the world, but also in His Second Coming as Judge at the end of the world



The circle of evergreen in which the candles are placed represents everlasting life



Nuts and cones are also used to decorate wreaths. These symbolise the resurrection.

Fruits represent the nourishing fruitfulness of the Christian life

HOME - I L Y

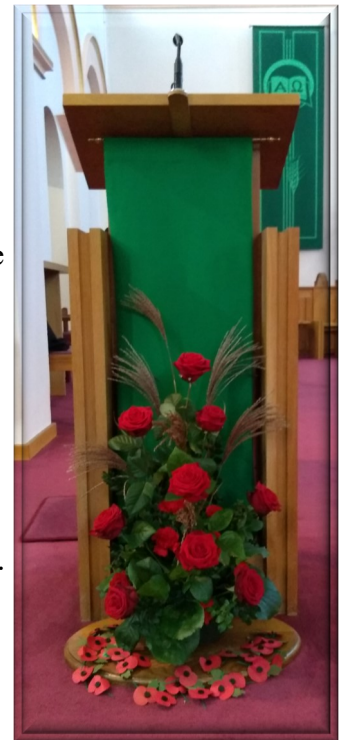
Taking the priest's words home for reflection

Fr. Tomasz, standing in for Fr. Graziano who was on a course, opened his homily with the question: "How have we changed the world?" The question was significant given that we were commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1st World War (1WW) on 11th November and it was Remembrance Sunday.

Fr. Tomasz went on: "For some, 100 years can be a long time. We can ask ourselves today whether the sacrifices that those who were fighting made for us, did they change anything? Did we make this world, this place as well as ourselves, a better place? Did we learn from the lessons given to us 100 years ago? After the 1WW, everybody said this should never ever happen again. Twenty-one years later we had a second world war – worse than the first!"

Fr. Tomasz mentioned that among so many even now, he very often gets asked whether are we heading towards a third. If we are, the feeling is there won't be much left of our world as a result.

Fr. Tomasz drew on the words of Pope John Paul II: "Build a civilisation of life and love, not one of war and death." When we go home to reflect on how we play our part as people of conscience, we sometimes say, 'what can I do?' Fr. Tomasz' reply: "**We can all do something.** There may be many evil people but no-one is *born* evil. Perhaps they have been created by us?"



We Will Remember Them

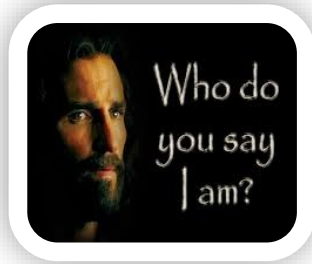
Fr. Tomasz stressed that today was a day not only for reflection but also for making decisions in our lives: to build a better world for ourselves, our children and especially for the next generation. "There is no future without the present" he intoned.

Sometimes when we think about ourselves, we think we can get away with all kinds of behaviour. "Today," Fr. Tomasz reminded us, "God is telling us differently: whatever we see and do behind people's back, we do in front of God." And, he added, "One day all our possessions – everything – will disappear. We need to ask ourselves if we are attached to God as much as we are to the things around us. We need to make sure God is first in our lives and if we do, everything that we need will be granted."

The Mass concluded with a minute's silence in memory of all the dead.

If we honour the dead by keeping the flame of remembrance alive, we prepare with hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace who is the eternal and everlasting Light.





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

Christian Hope Rests In Solidarity Togeth-
er

EXPLORING MISSION & DISCIPLESHIP

By Sheila Pereira (and the Women of St. Lawrence)

The date for the first meeting of our women's group (as reported in the autumn issue) had to be re-scheduled from 23rd November to the following Friday, 30th November, as the main hall was required for the setting up of stalls for the next day's Christmas Fair.

As initiator and organiser of the event, I didn't know what to expect - or whether anyone would turn up! But turn up they did and in terms of a headcount, we were a total of 10 women (including myself). That said, many women very kindly got in touch with me to say that they would have liked to attend but couldn't for various reasons and obligations; however, they were keen to be there for our next meeting. To me, their absence was more than made up by their messages of goodwill and support.

My main reason for wanting to start a woman's group such as this was a challenge I felt myself being called to address. As Christians, we know all about "turning the other cheek" but Christian or not, I felt we shouldn't be *turning the other way*. Oh, I consoled myself that I was doing my bit out there but there was only so much I could do - the scale of need was far beyond my meagre efforts. However, having been privileged to attend the recent Eucharistic Congress in Liverpool in September, I was reminded of the precious significance of the Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration: in attending 'Go Do!' Mass, for example, we are told to "Come" and be fed, both, through God's Word and at His table. At the end we are told to "Go!" but not just 'Go' but "Go - *Do!*" It was this 'doing' command that I couldn't ignore any more.

Whilst Jesus did do a great job on His own, He did need help to spread the Good News and for this He relied on His disciples: men *and* women. However, we never hear of these women despite the very significant role they played. We are the modern-day women disciples and it this aspect of discipleship combined with mission - giving help wherever it is needed - that is the vision and purpose for setting up such a group. May not be unique, perhaps, but it was for me as I've never done anything like this before. In this context, I recalled speaking with someone who was quite unwell and remarked that they should be in bed recovering rather than busy with what they were doing; the reply was, "*I can't - it's my passion.*" It just struck me that to have 'passion' is to *care* and to care deeply. Hence, with our combined heft, I feel, we can be making even more of a difference in our world.

Where does the wearing of hats fit in (as the women were invited to do when attending the meeting and as was also publicised in the weekly newsletter)? Well, since we women are no strangers to multi-tasking, hence we wear the "hats" of wife, mother, sister, daughter,

[Continued on Page 26]



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 office: sidcup@rcaos.org.uk

Parish website: www.stlsidcup.org

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:	Angela Ejaife	
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):**

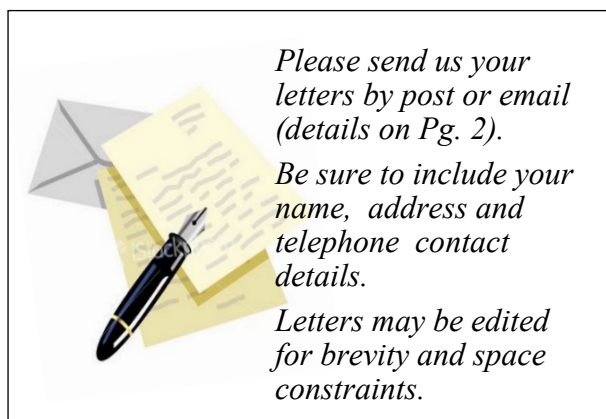
Rebecca Crisp

07833 501196

Guides (age 10-14):

Kate McGranghan

07891 559419



If you wanted any more inspiration to write in, a few styles and slogans to grab your attention which we hope will serve as some encouragement...

With thanks to those who have written in and continue to do so. Keep 'em coming!



Editors,

I wanted to congratulate you on the recent Parish magazine [autumn]: lots of interesting content and so well-presented.

Moreen Hegarty (Mrs.)
Sidcup DA14 6QS

Editors,

Thank you for arranging a copy of the 'Voice' for me (I was away when the last copy was available).

I always find the articles etc. very interesting, informative and thought-provoking.

Bernadette Dowswell (Mrs.)
Swanley BR8 7RY



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The Christmas Fayre was a great success and made £4,750 profit. A donation of £450 was made to Buttle UK (provides financial grants to needy children).

Well done to the organisers,





[Continued from Page 17]

carer, professional working woman, and juggle these as well as a whole host of other ministries as well. Therefore, whilst it is important to address the needs of others we have our own needs, too, which should not be overlooked - another reason for starting a group like this where we can talk and share with each other. [The hat I wore (left) was one knitted by my mother and is a reminder of the kind of woman she is to me: brave, hard-working, caring, clever and determined. I could be describing most women, really!]



The meeting proper began with Fr. Graziano leading us in the beautiful Magnificat prayer where each woman read out the individual lines of that prayer - it felt like a personal testament and affirmation of the great honour bestowed to all women through Our Lady. Then Father proceeded to give a short talk on the importance of women in the Church, mentioning how his own mother was a great influence in his life and how the Church is always referred to as our 'Mother Church'.

After a short PowerPoint presentation that drew together the strands of discipleship with serving the needs of the world, the group was introduced to what our young generation are doing in this regard. I had heard of Millennials, Generation X and Generation Y, but **Generation Z** - or 'GenZee'? - not a clue! Nicole Pereira, 19, explained how as part of their university course students are partnering with an organisation to address the issue of homelessness, particularly among young people. The project involves providing shelter for six months as well as training with the aim of helping these young people acquire the skills that will allow them to have a future - one that does not involve a sleeping bag and a cold, hard pavement.

Bringing the meeting to a close and in preparation for the next meeting, which for practical purposes especially with Christmas round the corner we decided would be in early 2019, we would think about the following:

- a name for our group;
- our motto/purpose (a suggestion: "Returning Love for Love Received");
- when (days/times) and how often to meet;
- "Projects" that we could start working on.

If we come armed with suggestions for the next meeting then we can start executing in a practical way our desire to help in whatever way we can. Of course, we don't have to wait until then i.e. if anyone wants another person's help with anything in the meantime, the hope is that we can just ask each other for it.

Lastly, for a bit of fun we played the 'memory' game: whoever drew the lucky ticket, which was not the sad face, that person had to recite the names of each of the women present in order to win the grand prize of a bottle of wine. **Anne Maxted** (right) obviously has a very good memory and was the winner, correctly identifying each woman by name. Well done, Anne!

So, fellow women disciples, do we have an answer to Christ's question:

WHOM SHALL I SEND?

Look forward to seeing you at the next meeting, details of which will be posted in the newsletter.





Fr. Graziano amid group trying "hats" on for size!

Nicole of 'GenZee' (black hair!) in happy inter-generational exchange



Our *mostly* "hat-ted" group of 10 women disciples [Nicole not in photo as she is taking it out!]



‘Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me’, so Jesus said by way of us recognising Him in people and places that are challenging and which can be uncomfortable. It doesn’t get more challenging than prison as I [Sheila Pereira] found out when I met with a Religious Sister (name withheld to preserve confidentiality), who belongs to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) Order and is a prison chaplain.

Sister has been working for five years in her role as Catholic Chaplain as part of a multi-faith team at Brixton male prison. Her main role is to provide and facilitate:

- ◇ Liturgical celebration i.e. making sure that there is a priest for Mass, the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Baptism and Confirmation;
- ◇ Formation of faith e.g. Bible studies, helping the men grow in their faith;
- ◇ Pastoral care e.g. listening to their struggles, supporting them through bereavement and similar concerns.

According to Sister, the activity that is very highly appreciated is **Catholic Fellowship**, held once a week. This consists of Bible studies, Christian meditation and Bible drama shared in such a dynamic way that makes possible the reflection and meaning of each one’s life stories in the context of the biblical stories. Within this sort of supportive environment, there is also a space for deep sharing and prayer.

“As a team,” Sister says, “we are also supported by volunteers who generously share their time with those who are searching for another chance to begin anew.”

Prison-working doesn’t usually tend to be one’s first choice on the job-search agenda. Why does she do it? Sister’s reply: ***“I love my work and feel that God has called me to this ministry to bring His good news behind bars. I feel very privileged to have been called to this place and to witness to the fact that in the midst of the daily struggles, tension and pain of prison life, transformation is possible.”***

‘I love my work and feel that God has called me to this ministry’

Vocations don’t get better than that.

To witness the sort of transformative power that Sister talks about, here she gets prisoner, Linval, 49, to share his story...



HOPE AT CHRISTMAS

My name is Linval and I am currently a serving prisoner who will be released in the next few weeks. Whilst in prison I have spent the last three Christmases away from my family and friends.

Christmas in prison is a very hard and sad time. On Christmas Day, a great loneliness and sadness flood through me; it's so horrible! Thinking about Christmas, my family opening gifts and the happiness in the home, makes me feel upset. And this happens every year in prison with the same dreaded feeling. It's an emotion that can't be explained; I am in such a dark place and it feels like it will never end.

'I am in such a dark place and it feels like it will never end'

Stuck in the prison wings on Christmas is a day that prisoners want to see pass quickly; when Christmas comes we try to block out everything. Not everyone is interested in Christmas carols at church in prison because life seems to have stopped for us and put on hold until our release. On Christmas Day itself we are locked up in our cells more than usual due to the holiday season - staff have families, too.

During the last three years in prison, I initially thought that God had turned His back on me but I was so wrong - it was me who was so far away from God. All I could see was darkness. I fell to my knees and screamed out to God because I believed that I was in hell. God answered me and built me up and gave me the strength to recover and lead a clean and productive life. Now my journey is full of hope and many positive doors have opened for me. I have given my life to God; I stick close to God and the Church. I also work in the chapel. With God's grace I am free in spirit and mind. The chains have been broken and today I am full of joy.

To rewind a little bit: my journey of freedom and hope began when I started the 12-step programme with RAPt (Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust) - now the Forward Trust - on 2nd January, 2018. A month after starting the programme, on 18th February my mother passed away in her sleep. I was broken and in shock. Staff and peers on the RAPt programme and in the chapel supported me through the heart-ache but...I was so tempted to turn back to drugs again. Having them offered directly in the palm of my hand didn't help. But a voice in my head kept saying, "you don't have to use again." Although I felt all was lost, I threw the drugs away instead of using them. The RAPt programme had helped me realise that I was at rock bottom and I needed to come up; it taught me that drugs won't do anything positive for me. I couldn't have handled the pain without the support I got.

In 20 days, I will be 12 months clean (from cigarettes, too) and, consistent with my efforts to better my life and help others, which I enjoy, I look forward to my release and giving back to others through work with the homeless that has been set up for me to do. Everything I do is action now - I no longer just talk the talk but I walk the walk, too. I am so grateful for my life and the support I've got around me. Thanks to RAPt and supporters like you who keep their service going, today I am living clean and my journey continues.

[Continued on Page 37]





Photo: copied
from newsletter

REFLECTIONS

It was an article on 'Moral Outrage' in the *Catholic Herald* (April 27 2018) that first introduced me to the writings of Fr. Ron Rolheiser (left). I have since subscribed online to his twice-weekly newsletter and in as much as I'm amazed at his (to me, anyway) uncanny knack of honing in on whatever issue I seemed to be pondering at the time, I am always consoled - and challenged - by his fresh and insightful thinking.

On the next two pages, I've reproduced a selection of Fr. Ron's columns with which I hope you will feel a connection as well as a better understanding of life with all its dilemmas and imponderables.

Sheila Pereira

Who is this Joseph we meet in Scripture?

JOSEPH AND CHRISTMAS

Here is a bit of background, as far as we can reconstruct it. The marriage custom at the time was that a young woman, essentially at the age of puberty, would be given to a man, usually several years her senior, in an arranged marriage by her parents. They would be betrothed, technically married, but would not yet live together or begin sexual relations for several more years. The Jewish law was especially strict as to the couple remaining celibate while in the betrothal period.



Joseph and Mary were at this stage of their relationship, legally married but not yet living together, when Mary became pregnant. Joseph, knowing that the child was not his, had a dilemma: If he wasn't the father, who was?

After receiving revelation in a dream, he agrees to take her home as his wife and to name the child as his own. Partly we understand the significance of that: he spares Mary embarrassment, he names the child as his own, and he provides an accepted physical, social, and religious place for the child to be born and raised. But he does something else that is not so evident: He shows how a person can be a pious believer, deeply faithful to everything within his religious tradition, and yet at the same time be open to a mystery beyond both his human and religious understanding.

What does one do when God breaks into one's life in new, previously unimaginable ways? How does one deal with an impossible conception?

In essence what Joseph teaches us is how to live in loving fidelity to all that we cling to humanly and religiously, even as we are open to a mystery of God that takes us beyond all the categories of our religious practice and imagination.

Isn't that one of the ongoing challenges of Christmas?



Henri Nouwen was once asked: "Are you an optimist?" His reply: "No, not naturally, but that isn't important. I live in hope, not optimism."

ADVENT HOPE

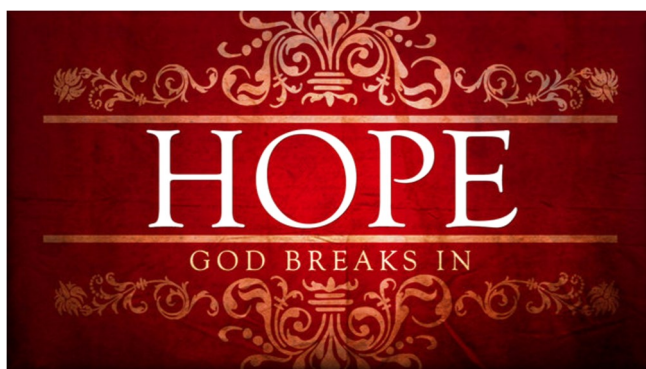
Teilhard de Chardin once said the same thing in different words when he was accused of being overly-idealistic and unrealistic in the face all the negative things one sees in the world. A critic once challenged him: "Suppose we blow up the world with a nuclear bomb, what then happens to your vision of a world coming together in peace?" Teilhard's response lays bare the anatomy of hope: "If we blow up the world by nuclear bombs, that will set things back some millions of years, but eventually what Christ promised will come about, not because I wish it, but because God has promised it and, in the resurrection, God has shown that God is powerful enough to deliver on that promise."

Hope is precisely that, a vision of life that guides itself by God's promise, irrespective of whether the situation looks optimistic or pessimistic at any given time.

Hope is not simple optimism, an irrepressible idealism that will not let itself be defeated by what's negative; nor is it wishful thinking, a fantasy-daydream that someday our ship will come in; nor is it the ability to look the evening news square in the eye and still conclude, realistically, that there are good reasons to believe everything will turn out well.

Hope is not based on whether the evening news is good or bad on a given day. The daily news, as we know, is better on some days and worse on others. If we hope or despair on the basis of whether things seem to be improving or disintegrating in terms of world events, our spirits will go up and down like the stock market. Hope isn't based on CNN, or any other network.

Hope looks at the facts, looks at God's promise, and then, without denying the facts or turning away from the evening news, lives out a vision of life based upon God's promise, trusting that a benevolent, all-powerful God is still in charge of this world and that is more important than whether or not the news looks good or bad on a given night.



Used with permission of the author, Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI. Father Ron currently is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas, and is an award winning author and speaker. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com



Saint Oscar Romero

Bishop and Martyr

Assassinated 24 March 1980



Canonized 14 October 2018

A REPORT ON THE THANKSGIVING MASS
AT ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, SOUTHWARK

By **The St. Lawrence Choristers:**
Jenny, Maggie, Malvina, Marielle, Mary and Moreen

On Saturday, 3rd November, six members of St. Lawrence's choir were privileged to sing at the Thanksgiving Mass for the canonisation of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

We joined many members of the Diocesan choir for a final rehearsal at 10.15am – it could have gone better! However, after a quick coffee break we returned to our seats and under the matchless enthusiasm of Canon Alan McLean we began to sing our Gathering music. Perhaps the words of the first hymn “The Lord hears the cry of the poor” provided the inspiration but there was a definite improvement thereafter.

Mass began with a greeting and welcome by the Most Rev. Peter Smith, Archbishop of Southwark. The homily was given by Archbishop Bernard Longley who began by saying that saints continue the journey through the church in recognition of years of hard work and prayers.

The road to sainthood is seldom of universal appeal and Oscar Romero was no exception. He was willing to serve God, even to the extent of giving his own life.

Since martyrdom, he has been celebrated throughout the world. Bishop Romero gave voice to the voiceless. He had a deep desire to serve God and spoke out against injustice, knowing it would place him in jeopardy.

*‘He had a deep
desire to serve
God and spoke
out against
injustice’*



In his personal sacrifice he never considered himself worthy to be a saint. He followed Jesus every day encouraging people to *aspire not to have more but to be more*. May the courage of Oscar Romero inspire us to work with integrity for an end to violence and poverty.

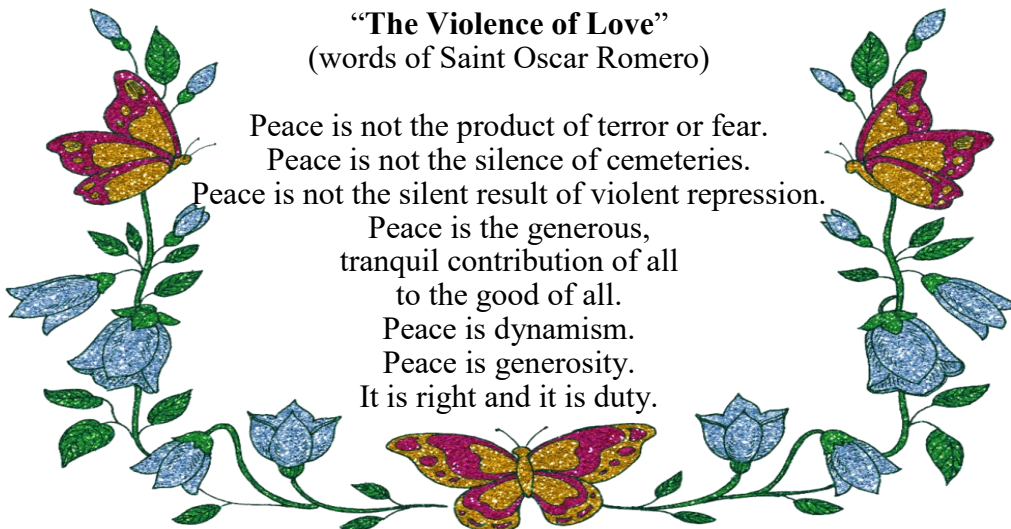
After the blessing of the newly-appointed shrine and our affirmation of commitment to follow in Bishop Romero's footsteps, we concluded the service by raising the roof, singing the powerful 'Laudate', a truly fitting tribute to a remarkable man.



The Romero Cross
(houses relics of
the saint and sits in
the Romero Shrine
at St. George's
Cathedral)

"The Violence of Love"
(words of Saint Oscar Romero)

Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.
Peace is the generous,
tranquil contribution of all
to the good of all.
Peace is dynamism.
Peace is generosity.
It is right and it is duty.



THE LEPER WITHIN

[From America by an Unknown Author]

Shared by Cordelia Rice



In the spring of 1206 or so, when Francis was about twenty-four, he was deep in self-examination and self-searching, seeking for the spiritual path he had to follow. He was growing steadily in his identification with the poor. To every beggar who came to the door of his parents' house he would give money, food and clothes. But he knew it was not enough. His father had given up all hope of ever making a businessman of him and tolerated his melancholy behaviour. Francis was searching, and God was preparing him.

One day, a week or so before he received the message from the Crucifix at San Damiano, he was riding on the road down from Assisi – probably on the horse his father used to transport textiles. He passed near San Lazzaro, the leper house run by the local bishop, when the horse bolted and he was startled by a leper standing on the road.

St. Francis later wrote that at the time he had a particular horror of lepers and would turn aside from the road to avoid looking at them. He was strongly repelled, terrified and nauseated, by their smell and their disfigurement. He couldn't bear to be near them, and his first inclination after this first meeting was to ride past. Yet now, he felt a wave of shame that forced him to turn back, dismount from the horse, and approach the astonished leper.

Lepers were not only social outcasts, they were the most scorned of all human beings. They had to wear distinctive clothing, carry a wooden clapper or a small bell to warn people of their approach; carry water because they could not use public wells or streams; wear gloves because they could not touch any other person or any other thing. They could not live with others, or even walk in the town. With their lumpy, discoloured skin, deformed limbs and sightless eyes they were visible signs of physical decay and death. But even more painful, they were considered by most people to be a symbol of sinfulness and spiritual decay.



With great courage Francis did two things he had never done before: he looked into the face of the leper, then embraced and kissed him!

When Francis looked into the eyes of the leper, he saw a human being, one of the people Jesus had touched and healed, and for whom He had had great compassion. This was someone Christ had lived and died for. The saint knew instantly that God was calling him to reach out to the lepers, care for them, and let himself be changed by them. In hugging and kissing the leper Francis was embracing something within himself that needed to be accepted and loved. For Francis, taking up the way of life he was being led to - the Gospel life, the

way of Jesus - meant that he would become like the leper: an outcast, one living in poverty, one expelled from the community, on the edge of necessity, reviled, hated even, by some. Hugging the leper was the first step in his realisation of how he had to change and grow. It was the first hint of what God was going to do in his life. In the face of the leper, Francis saw Jesus in the person of someone who was to be loved. But he also saw himself - someone else he had come to love.

Setting out on his journey of faith had to begin with an inner journey. It meant accepting all the negative parts of himself and embracing the fear of letting go and 'letting God'. Reaching out to the leper and finding a whole person there, reminded Francis that he needed to become a *whole person* before he could become a *holy person*. He needed to change inside before he could be God's herald outside; he needed to hug the leper inside before he could tame the wolf outside.

This is the true beginning of the 'new life' of Francis - the inner journey before the outer journey. It was a great unconventional, extravagant act, done in the name of God, done in love, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. Almsgiving was a normal, kind act, the sort any person might do. Kissing the leper was a deeply spiritual act; a transforming act.

*'Kissing the leper
was a deeply spiritual
act; a transforming
act'*

This moment was so important to Francis that he mentions it in his *Testament*, dictated as he was dying: "When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure, but God himself led me into their company and I had pity on them...They became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me." Before the year was up, he was at San Lazzaro washing the feet of the lepers and bandaging their sores.

The story of St Francis and the leper reminds us that we are each on a spiritual journey. We are called to see others in a new way as unique and Christ-like, but we are also called to accept - and even cherish - the parts of ourselves that we are afraid of, ashamed of. To embrace the leper within means to acknowledge and grow in response to our own weaknesses and fears, pride, insecurity, need to control people and events; our willingness to respond fully to God - the shadow side of our inner selves. Only when we accept all of ourselves, give all of ourselves to God, can we confront the evil in the world and reach out to others in love.

There are wolves out there - violence in Ruanda, Haiti, Bosnia, Syria; the plight of the homeless in Santa Barbara; the misery of the hungry, sick, elderly, lonely and abandoned - and we are to confront these evils that would destroy the human spirit. We are to confront them in love, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. but if we are afraid of the wolf outside, it is because we are afraid of the leper within. We must be engaged in a great balancing act between meeting the wolf out there and embracing the leper within. We will not be able to reach out to others in love and confront evil in the world until we embrace, as St Francis did, the leper within.



ST. LAWRENCE CHARITABLE FUND

By Jeanette Judge

This year on December 8th (Feast of the Immaculate Conception), we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Saint Lawrence Charitable Fund (SLCF). It was in 1988 when a young woman who was homeless asked the parish priest for help. At that time there was not much that he could do. This episode was related at the next parish council meeting and it was agreed that as a Christian community, we should be able to help people when they most needed it. The idea of setting up a Trust to do just that was put to the wider parish. Within months the Charity was registered.

A committee was formed and arranged to meet once a month to discuss cases and finance. The money came from donations and has always been completely separate from the church finances. In the early days the referrals came from individuals, which meant visiting the person concerned to verify their needs and check benefit books and savings etc. This included filling in and signing a detailed form. Now we are so well known in the wider community that our referrals come through Social Services, which means our help is going directly to those who most need it: families suffering from domestic abuse and those with mental health problems as well as others who perhaps have simply made bad choices.

‘Although we apply for grants, because our work is not about projects, we are often refused’

The present committee consists of ten parishioners and we meet once a month to discuss our financial position, report back on cases and present new cases of need. Our finances come from our annual appeal and generous regular donations from parishioners. Although we apply for grants, because our work is not about projects, we are often refused. However, the work continues and is needed more than ever. We deal with around 7 - 10 cases a month at a cost of around £2000.

We plan to celebrate the work done over the last 30 years and to thank you all for your support with three separate events. The first was held on December 8th with the 6.30pm Mass being offered for all involved with the SLCF. This was then followed by cheese and wine in the hall where Sr. Maria McGuinness gave a talk and presentation on Catholic social teaching. On January 26th 2019, we have arranged a concert by the students of Bird College followed by afternoon tea in the hall. During Lent there will be another thought-provoking talk. Please do come along and join us.

[Continued on Page 37]

[Continued from Page 29]

My message is one of hope. If you feel like you have come to a crossroads in life, however dark and lonely your life may seem at that time, there is always hope because Jesus was born, lived and died for us to be able to achieve the promise of freedom and life, gladness and joy.

This is my last Christmas in prison as I will be released four weeks after Christmas. This year I see Christmas in prison in a different light: because I have given my life to God, I now see Christmas as a celebration of the newborn King and my future is hopeful. And with God there is hope for all.

May you find Him now.



[Continued from Page 36]



Sr. Maria McGuinness speaking
at the 6.30pm Mass

The seven principles of
Catholic social teaching:

1. Dignity
2. Solidarity
3. The common good
4. The option for the poor
5. Peace
6. Care for creation
7. The dignity of work and participation

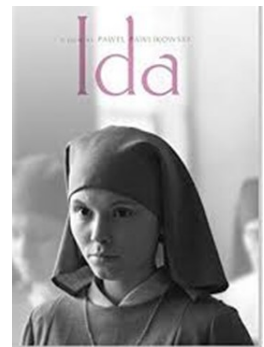
Sr. Maria reminded us that it is not enough to *wish* for justice; instead we are called to work for justice and to act justly.



FILMS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Around 20 years ago various commentators were writing articles about “the end of cinema”, arguing that film-making had reached the limit of what it could achieve. They were quite wrong, as the present century has produced some terrific films, including many on Christian themes.

Two of the very best, to my mind, are **First Reformed**, about a crisis in the life of the minister of a New England church, and **Ida**, a Polish film about a young nun in the 1960s who discovers she is Jewish and her parents died in the Holocaust. Interestingly, both films were shot in what is called Academy ratio, the old 4:3 shaped screen instead of the more usual widescreen; it is very effective in both films.



Martin Scorsese’s film **Silence** is based on a novel recounting the true story of Jesuit missionaries in 17th century Japan. There have been three excellent films which are explicitly present-day versions of the Book of Job: **The Tree of Life**, about a man looking back on a tragic event of his young life in a Texas town; **A Serious Man**, about a Jewish professor who suffers increasing misfortunes; and the terrific Russian film **Leviathan**, about a man who finds himself the victim of a corrupt local mayor.

One of the most acclaimed films of this century was **There Will Be Blood**, about the battle of wills between a ruthless oil prospector and a church minister under whose land is a plentiful oil supply.

Of the several biblical films which have come out this century, by far the most successful was Mel Gibson’s **Passion of the Christ**, stunning to look at but criticised for excessive violence and alleged anti-Semitism. Other biblical films were **Exodus: Gods and Kings**, **Mary Magdalene**, **The Nativity Story**, **Noah**, and **Paul, Apostle of Christ**.

So has it been the end of cinema? Certainly not!



I got a reversible
jacket for
Christmas.
I can't wait to see
how it turns out!



What did Adam
say the day
before Christmas?
It's Christmas,
Eve!

A few Christmas "crackers" to set the mood...

What type of Christmas dessert shouldn't you trust?
Mince spies!

The turkey wasn't hungry at Christmas because he was already stuffed!

Knock knock
Who's there?
Hannah
Hannah who?
Hannah partridge in a pear tree



[Downloaded online
from: pun.me]

What do you call an old
snowman? Water.

What do zombies eat
with their Christmas
dinner? Grave-y



What would you get if
you ate the Christmas
decorations? *Tinselitis*

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