

St Pancras

September 2025



Free (one per household)



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Editor's note:

Thank you to all our contributors for this edition, and also to our proofreaders who carefully check each page before it goes to print.

One thing is missing this time, however: Alex and Jessie's article and quiz. Jessie was very much part of our parish family and will be missed – both in church and in these pages. Hopefully we will see Alex's interesting quizzes and articles again in the near future.

Please remember to submit your articles for the next issue by Sunday 30th November to matilda79r@gmail.com

*Yours,
Tilly Rampley*



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Cover image: Virgin of the Seven Sorrows by Master of the Half Lengths
Antwerp 1530-1560 Renaissance Baroque 16th Century Flemish Belgium

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1 Orwell Place, Ipswich, IP4 1BD

01473- 252595

Not Blemishes

By Father Joseph

A friend of mine was very pleased when he reached the age of thirty-three because, he said, that was the perfect age, and the age we would all be in heaven. Someone asked him, Why so? Because, came back the reply, that was the age of Our Lord when He died for us and rose again to a transformed, glorified, and perfected body. A mildly amused conversation followed: does that mean that whatever our sins in this life, and our age at death, we would revert to the age of thirty-three in heaven, as if our resurrected bodies were pinned to a fixed celestial image, a little like Dorian Gray's picture in the attic in Oscar Wilde's famous story? And what of those who die before the perfect age, would they suddenly shoot forward several years?

And those who have died as infants, do they mature rapidly like a face that changes in a series of time-lapse computer-generated images? But the light-hearted banter had a very serious side to it, and the conversation turned to real theological questions about what our resurrected bodies would be like when, at the end of time, our restored mortal remains would be reunited to our immortal souls. And with this turn in the conversation, funnily enough, we came back to where we started: if our bodies have suffered decline, sickness, ailments, and all manner of physical decay during this life, such as wrinkles, arthritic joints, asthmatic breathing, limps and the like, and are laid to rest in a far from perfect state, then at the general resurrection of the dead will our bodies still suffer from these imperfections?

And if not, to what stage of our earthly life – to what stage of our physical maturity – would our bodies be restored? After all, we are taught by the Church that in heaven we will possess our own bodies glorified, and not some manufactured substitute because the earthly version was too corrupted to be re-used. This, in turn, led to a discussion of the nature of resurrected bodies more generally, and some thoughts about what Catholics in general probably believe about the resurrection of the body. Perhaps we do not hear enough about the nature of life in heaven which, given that that is where we are all hoping to end up,

is a little surprising. As in every other matter to do with our holy religion, if we want to understand the nature of things a bit better then we need to turn to the person of Our Lord Himself. In this case, we need to look at His resurrected and glorified body. The first thing to note is that there is something mysterious about Our Lord's resurrected body on that first Easter day, and not just because He is resurrected – that of course, is mysterious enough – and not just because He can come to stand in the middle of a room where the doors and windows are locked either. Rather, it is worth noting that neither St Mary Magdalene nor the two disciples on the road to Emmaus recognized Him when they first saw Him.

If we had spent most of our waking hours for the last three years in the company of the same person we would probably expect to recognize him after a gap of just three days even if dramatic circumstances meant that we were expecting never to see him again. But, initially, they did not. In the first instance, then, their failure to recognize Him is, in part, connected to their expectations. It is true that neither Mary Magdalene nor the two disciples expected to see Him again, but more pressing than this, their faith was such that they still rested their hopes in His promises on an earthly or material outcome, hopes that, since His death on the Cross, had been dashed.

Utterly lacking in any understanding of the supernatural reality of the resurrection – “For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead,” (Jn 20:9) – their faith was based more on the coming of an earthly messiah than on a heavenly one. Such a failure on their part can be for us very instructive, if we will allow it. What are our expectations of God? How do we see Him? What do we demand that He should do for us? How do we ex-

pect Him to behave in the face of our needs? In these post-resurrection appearances, Our Lord's disciples began to learn the meaning of the words, “For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts,” (Is 55:9). If we limit God's response to our needs to what we think He ought to do then we are, as it were, tying His hands behind His back: we would be limiting the extent of the transformation that He is able to work in us. “And he wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief,” (Mt 13:58). Once the disciples appreciated that Our Lord really had risen bodily from the dead their faith came on in leaps and bounds.

They still did not understand, but there was an astonishing degree of acceptance, as Mary Magdalene tried to cling to Him (Jn 20:17), as St. John peered into the empty tomb and came to believe (Jn 20:8), as the two disciples felt their hearts burn within them (Lk 24:32), as Doubting Thomas knelt before Him and professed his faith in His divinity (Jn 20:28), and as St. Peter rushed towards Him from out of his fishing boat and professed his love for Him (Jn 21:7 & vv.15-17). Suddenly, and especially with the coming of the fire of the Holy Spirit forty days later, there seemed to be no limit to what might be possible, as the stories of conversions in the Acts of the Apostles attest. For His followers, there is no doubt that Our Lord is truly risen.

To help us understand the resurrection of the body a little better, the Church teaches us about the four principal qualities of Our Lord's risen body. First, His body is impassible, which means it is incapable of suffering, pain, or corruption of any kind: ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality,’ (1 Cor 15:53).



Second, Our Lord's resurrected body enjoys the quality of clarity, that is, beauty, glory, splendour: 'Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father,' (Mt 13:43). Third, it enjoys the quality of subtlety or subtilty, by which is meant that His body is assimilated into the soul so as to share the spiritual existence of the soul whilst, at the same time, retaining a real distinction between body and soul: 'It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body,' (1 Cor 15:44), and '[Our Lord Jesus Christ] will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory,' (Phil 3:21). And, finally, Christ's risen body possesses the quality of agility, a quality by which, as with the other qualities, the body becomes a perfect instrument of the glorified soul, but in this case so that it is no longer subject to the physical forces of this world and can pass from place to place as quick as thought: 'It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power,' (1 Cor 15:43).

And perhaps what affects each of us most is that these are the very qualities that our resurrected bodies will share also. Yet, for all these qualities, Christ's risen and glorified body retains the wounds He suffered during the crucifixion, so much so that St. Thomas can place his finger into the holes made by the nails in Christ's hands and feet, and his hand into the side pierced by the soldier's lance (Jn 20:25-27). This episode attests to the physicality of the resurrection, as does Our Lord's eating breakfast in Lk 24 and Jn 21, but what is often overlooked is the fact that Christ's post-resurrection body still displays the wounds inflicted in His pre-resurrection body. Yet if His glorified body has put on incorruptibility, how is it that it still betrays evidence of its former corruptibility? Should not His glorified body be without 'spot or wrinkle... and without blemish,' (Eph 5:27) like His mystical body, the Church? This is no abstract problem.

After all, what will the bodies be like in heaven of those who have been grievously injured, maimed, or disabled in this life? Will they, too, still bear the wounds that they have suffered here? And if so, in what sense can we say that our bodies will have been transformed and glorified? And in what sense will we be able to say, as it says at the very end of the Bible (Apoc 21:4), that God shall have 'wipe[d] away all tears from their eyes, and [that] death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sor-

row... for the former things [will have] passed away'? Nor do these questions relate only to physical wounds. What is to become of those who bear psychological or emotional wounds? Will they carry those into heaven with them? When Doubting Thomas put his finger into the holes made by the nails in Christ's hands and feet, Our Lord did not wince with pain, nor did blood start to spill from the wounds. His resurrected body enjoys the quality of impassibility. In other words, these are no longer raw and blood-stained gashes in His flesh, but scars that mark where the wounds once were. A scar is not a wound. A scar is a wound that has been healed. The distinction is important. But this still begs the question, why did Our Lord choose to retain His scars? There are two parts to the answer.

their glorified bodies in heaven, just as Our Lord's marks will still be visible. But, he adds, 'in those wounds there will be no deformity, only dignity, and the beauty of their valour will shine out, a beauty in the body but not of the body.' In other words, what will shine out will not be the wounds suffered, but scars which will attest to the holiness and virtue of the sufferers in their struggle to cope with and overcome their sufferings. And so it is with us.



By, Paolo Morando detto il Cavazzola 14th Century

First, because God lives in an eternal present, without past or future, which means, among other things, that Christ's sacrifice – not just the fruits, the results, of that sacrifice, but His gift of Himself to the Father on our behalf – is eternal: it lasts forever. The Son of God is eternally giving Himself to the Father on our behalf. Second, the marks eternally imprinted in Christ's glorified body are not imperfections but tokens of wounds, of traumas, that are now healed. What He took into heaven at the moment of His Ascension was not a body riddled with injuries, but a body with scars that signify His victory over the wounds inflicted upon Him. In his book, *City of God*, (XXII, xix) St. Augustine says that the scars of the wounds suffered by the martyrs will still be visible on

Whether our wounds in this life be external or interior, we will bear in heaven no longer these wounds – for our bodies as well as our minds will be healed and transformed and glorified – but scars that will attest to the virtues we have acquired, to the holiness in which we have grown, during our long struggle to overcome our wounds. Like the holes in Christ's hands and feet and side, these scars will not be imperfections or blemishes, says St Augustine, but 'evidences of virtue.' We cannot yet see the evidence of virtue in ourselves or in others, as we and they continue to contend with, and try to overcome, suffering in our daily lives. But, then, blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe (Jn 20:29).

Memory Lane,

By Theresa Cleary

When dear Judy Fell died in June 2023 the parish probably lost the person with the most memories of St Pancras' given that Judy, born in 1937, had lived all her life in Bond Street, just yards from St Pancras' Church to which she had devoted her whole life, beginning at four years old when Canon Peacock asked her to clear up some mess that her altar boy brother had made! My memories are not as extensive as Judy's were, but it's nice to look back and recall a few bits and pieces from days gone by. As I have said in previous articles, my parents' wedding banns were read out in St Pancras' church at the 11am Mass on Sunday 3rd September 1939, the day the Second World War broke out. They were married in St Pancras' on Saturday 30th September 1939 by Canon Peacock who had been parish priest of St Pancras' since 1921.

Mum and Dad had met each other in St Pancras' choir where Mum was a singer and Dad whose work had brought him from London to Ipswich, sang bass and deputised for Auntie Clare Dallastone (Mum's aunt) at the organ when required. Mass times at St Pancras' then were at 8, 9.30 and 11am; there were no evening Masses and the fasting before Holy Communion started from midnight. Mum told me she would go to 8am Mass to receive Holy Communion, then go back to 11 o'clock Mass to sing in the choir. So they began married life and Mum noted with trepidation the upward trend of the age of civilian men eligible for War service. Eventually it reached Dad's age and he was called up but because by then I was on the way he was allowed to stay home until I was born - on 2nd November 1940.

I was baptised at St Pancras' Church on Sunday 10th November 1940. As far as I know, St Pancras' was the first place I ever went to! I was born at 12 Oxford Road where my Granny Mrs Catherine Head (nee Dallastone) and her elder daughter, also Catherine Head, lived. (Mr Head had died young when my mother and her sister and brother were very young children). I was told that Dad and Auntie (his sister in law)

carried me along the Rope Walk for my baptism that Sunday afternoon when Canon Peacock baptised me, Auntie Kitty, as she was known, being my godmother. The baptismal font was the same as the present one but it was in the back corner of the church, the baptistery, roughly where the stairs to the choir loft are now. The stairs then went up right beside the wall where the old confessional/cupboard is now but this meant a sharp turn at the top to reach the door to the choir loft. The confessional then was under the choir loft between where the repository is now and the war memorial on the back wall.



Mr & Mrs Cleary, 9th July 1941 with 8 months old Theresa, back garden of 12 Oxford Road, Ipswich.

A long kneeler where the iron gates are now served as a place to prepare as one waited for Confessional. The curate would occupy that confession while Canon Peacock heard confessions in the present confessional but it was more spacious inside. People waiting for confession there would kneel on the kneeler which formed the side of the stone altar rails, which extended all round the sanctuary. Confession times were on Saturdays: 11 - 12, 3 - 4 and 6 - 8pm. To return to our family, Dad had to leave home on 16th January 1941. For the first few months he was in training in this country and did manage a home visit in July 1941 as photos of us with him in the garden of 12 Oxford Road show. Mum and I had moved in with Granny and Auntie for the duration of the War, and our home, 24 Surbiton Road, was let to a lady from Felixstowe. Felixstowe was out of bounds for nor



mal civilians and there was barbed wire along the beach. Years later I met a lady who volunteered in the WVS so she was allowed into Felixstowe to serve the military personnel tea etc. Eventually Dad was sent abroad and we did not see him for three years and eight months solid until he returned home in summer 1945 and even then he had to go to Belgium until he was demobbed. We have all the letters he sent to Mum during the War and they make a fascinating read. Back at St Pancras' there was a curate called Fr Feeley and he used to visit us at Oxford Road and play with me but I was too young to remember.

I suppose I can remember from about 1945 onwards. We would go to 8am Mass on Sundays and I was given 'a penny for the plate' as my Great Uncle Albert Stoneman (married to the eldest of the eight Dallastones sisters, Helen, known as Auntie Tottie) lifted the collection. Uncle Albert would have cycled in from Sproughton where he and Auntie Tottie ran a shop in the High Street. Talking of cycling, the parish used to run a cycling club. We had the minutes of their meetings as some of the Dallastone took part and Great Auntie Caroline (Auntie Carrie, the second Dallastone sister, who was head of St Pancras' School and retired in 1932) was the secretary. I have given all such things to the parish archives. In the 1940s there were bench rents with people's names attached to the bench in front of where they sat.

The Dallastones occupied a bench near the front on the Gospel side (l h side) near the stone pulpit. Judy Fell's father had penned the names in a beautiful flowing style. One thing I remember very well was the weekly Sunday afternoon event which I attended. There was a class for us children usually taken by Fr Reidy the curate. We would sit in the front two rows on the Gospel side while Father talked to us. One thing he said which stuck in my mind was that you couldn't teach a goldfish to play the piano.

I was just so amused by that, possibly because I had started learning the piano at age six. I was also fascinated by all the buttons on Father's cassock. After the lesson there was Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and a hymn. That's where I first heard and greatly loved to sing Ave Maria O Maiden O Mother, hymn 126 in the Old Westminster hymnal. I can remember being up in the choir loft with my Granny, probably when I was staying with her, who used to play for the 9.30 Mass, and climbing up on the organ stool to change the page in the Old Westminster hymnal to the next hymn needed, after checking it on the hymn board.

Auntie Clare, the main organist, would play for the 11 o'clock Mass with the choir. Incidentally, only three or four people would approach the altar rails for Holy Communion at 11am Mass. I never remember learning the plainsong Missa de Angelis as I just knew it from hearing it so often. My Auntie Kitty also played when needed and when St James' Church was built on Landseer Road she became the organist there for many years. At St Pancras' Edie Price would conduct the choir; she and her husband Joe who served on the altar were also sacristans for many years. George Stalley was another long time server with

Joe Price, and Mr Nick Aylward would be selling the Catholic papers - outside, weather permitting, amongst other duties. I remember the Sacred Heart altar where St Joseph's statue now is. Statues of Our Lady and St Joseph flanked the two sides of the sanctuary and a metal frame could hold a mass of flowers all round Our Lady's statue on her feast days. The Stations of the Cross were the other way round from now and about four of them were on the front of the choir loft at the back of the church. The Lady chapel was painted in lovely flowers and pretty designs and there was a harmonium about where St Padre Pio's statue is now.

present hall is but I only went into it on rare occasions since Mum sent me to St Mary's School as she wanted me to be educated by the nuns. I started there eighty years ago this September. So there we have an old'un's musings about days gone by. What a beautiful parish to have lived in. One last incident to tie up the past and the present: a few weeks ago on the feast of St Bridget Fr Joseph wished a happy feast to those called Brigitte and Birgitt - and we know who he had in mind. Years ago Canon Peacock on the feast of St Clare would wish a happy feast to all those called Clare - obviously aimed at my Great Aunt, Clare Dallastone!



30th September 1939, after Mr & Mrs Cleary's wedding at St. Pancras in the front garden of 12 Oxford Road, Ipswich. Bridesmaid Miss Catherine Head, Best man Mr E. Clarke

At Christmas the crib was at the back where the choir stairs are now and there was an angel whose head nodded when you put money in the collection box there. St Pancras' School stood where the

German-style plum cake (Pflaumenkuchen)

Selected by Tilly Rampley

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup warm milk, 110 degrees F
- 4 tablespoon granulated sugar, divided
- 1 and 1/2 packets of active dry yeast, 10 grams
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 egg, room temperature
- 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon [superfine sugar]
- 1/8 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Zest of 1/2 a lemon
- pinch of salt
- 2 pounds firm, ripe plums, pitted (6-7 plums)
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons apricot jelly
- 1 tablespoon liqueur or brandy + apricot preserve.

Method:

Preheat oven to 200 F then turn it off (later you will know why!). In a stand mixer, combine milk, sugar and yeast; leave 10 minutes until foamy. Add butter, eggs, flour, sugar, vanilla, lemon zest and salt; mix 10 minutes with a dough hook until smooth.

Transfer to a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and let rise in the warm oven for 1 hour, until doubled.



Credit: <https://uk.pinterest.com>

Slice plums into 8 pieces each, toss with 2 tbs sugar and cinnamon, and leave 10 minutes.

Turn dough onto a floured surface, cover 10 minutes. Grease a 9-inch springform pan, line with parchment, preheat oven to 350 °F.

Press dough into pan, arrange plums in a flower pattern, rest 20 minutes, sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake 55-60 minutes until golden. Cool 15 minutes, then remove sides of pan and transfer to a wire rack.

Heat apricot preserves with liqueur, strain, and brush over plums while warm. Serve cooled, with whipped cream if desired.

* This cake is similar to shortcake, topped with sweet plums, perfect for dessert or breakfast!

Getting to know Laura Isaacs

Interview by Jo Shevlin



Tell us one thing about yourself that might surprise your fellow parishioners (this could be an achievement, a talent, an experience):

Apart from being a 43-year young mum of 2, with a diverse background – I am a bit of a Maths geek, was dux of my high school, though I think I’m seriously dumb in so many ways! I also lay claim to making a decent curry, coming from the country with the greatest number of Indians living outside of India.

What do you do as a job?

I am the Head of Finance for a medium sized business in Northeast London. I love my work, and believe anything you do, you can bring meaning to, by the attitude you do it with and how you treat those whom you support in the workplace.

How long have you been a parishioner of St Pancras, and do you have any special memories you’d like to share with us?

I’ve been a permanent fixture since Lent 2023, and God-willing will remain here for as long as it is His will. There have been so many wonderful moments. Being part of the choir has been incredibly beautiful yet the most challenging of all (not being able to read music). Singing for many of the special Masses is always special to me, the Easter Vigil and Midnight Mass being my favourites - the joy and celebration is so special. One of my biggest joys has been the opportunity to do the flower arrangements. I also love watching members of the Carlos Acutis group playing roles in the Mass, they have been energising to my soul, after a long day of numbers at work.

Tell us one thing about yourself that might surprise your fellow parishioners (this could be an achievement, a talent, an experience):

Apart from being a 43-year young mum of 2, with a diverse background – I am a bit of a Maths geek, was dux of my high school, though I think I’m seriously dumb in so many ways! I also lay claim to making a decent curry, coming from the country with the greatest number of Indians living outside of India.

What are your hobbies/interests?

I am a lover of early morning swims – my favourite place being the warm Indian ocean on the Durban coast. I love flowers and arranging them. And I have previously loved hosting parties where I get to cook for others; I find it hugely satisfying. Having memorable moments with good friends is the most luxurious thing one can do in life.

What is your proudest achievement?

Not sure I’ve reached this yet. I have done all the things I’ve wanted to achieve mainly. But perhaps having made a safe space for my children and me after my divorce, is the thing that I feel the best about.

Tell us about your favourite holiday destination:

My best holidays have been seeing places with locals. To date Beijing has been my favourite one, when my sister lived there. The food is incredible – hotpot and Peking duck were some of my favourites. I had so many different types of experience, including visiting the Great Wall. One day, after lots of walking in the shopping district, I had an amazing experience when I went for a massage given by a blind man – it was agonisingly painful but really helped my aches after all the walking! And I saw some pandas at the Beijing zoo – very cool.

Tell us about the last book you read?

Oh dear – well this is the thing, I am the slowest reader, I take terribly long to take in what I read. I have bought a few recently including two by C.S. Lewis, one being “Reflections on the Psalms”, the other – “Surprised by Joy”. I also enjoyed “The Prophet” by Kahlil Gibran – which is tiny and very flowery in wording but profoundly deep and beautiful. My favourite line in the book is – “And then I shall come to you, a boundless drop to a boundless ocean.”

Who is your favourite Saint and why?

St Padre Pio. When I first read about him (in a Magnificat magazine I think), I thought he was like a ‘rock star saint’! And he has this warmth to him that reminds me of my Grandad.

What is your favourite prayer?

The Suscipe – such beautiful words ...

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

Angels

By Father Joseph

As Catholics we all know about angels. They are mentioned on almost every page of Sacred Scripture. Yet sometimes, perhaps, we do not pay them as much attention as we might which is a shame because they are enormously important members of the supernatural world and have serious jobs to do. For example, did you know that there are nine choirs of Angels? The Seraphim are the highest choir of angels. They attend God's throne in heaven and praise Him singing, 'Holy! Holy! Holy!' They have six wings, two covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two wings they use for flying (see the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament 6:2-3). The Cherubim rank after the Seraphim and they guard God's glory.

In the Old Testament the Cherubim stood in the Temple in Jerusalem to guard the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:18) and today they guard the tabernacles in our churches where the Blessed Sacrament is reposed. The Thrones rank third in the hierarchy of angels. They stand by the throne of God and are living symbols of God's justice and authority. The Dominions are the angels of leadership. They regulate the duties of all the other angels and make known the commands of God. St Paul mentions Thrones and Dominions in his Letter to the Colossians (Col 1:16). The Virtues are the fifth rank of angels.

They are the spirits of motion, and they control the seasons, and the stars and the moon. Even the sun is subject to them. They are in charge of miracles, and they provide courage, grace, and valour. The Powers are warrior angels who fight against evil spirits who try to cause chaos and harm. The Principalities look after and guard places on earth: kingdoms and countries, dioceses (like our diocese of East Anglia) and parishes (like our parish of St Pancras), cities,



By corrado giacinto, 17th Century

towns, and our homes. Virtues, Powers, and Principalities are all mentioned by St Paul (Eph 1:21). The Archangels are the chief, or leading, angels when it comes to carrying God's messages to His people. The Archangels are sent when there is an especially important message to be heard. It was an Archangel (St Gabriel) who carried the message to Our Lady that she would have a Son and His name would be Jesus (Lk 1:26). There are seven Archangels, but we only know the names of three of them: St Michael, St Gabriel, and St Raphael. The Angels are God's messengers, and they serve as our guardians and protectors. They are mentioned again and again throughout the whole Bible. The feast of Sts Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael falls on 29 th September, and the feast of our Guardian Angels falls on 2 nd October.

Carmelite Priory

By Bernie Kavanagh

Pat Ware and I caught the 11:30 coach from Cardinal Park in Ipswich on our way to Oxford via Stansted airport and London coach station. The journey seemed to take around 7 hours; on reaching Oxford, we got a taxi to Boars Hill Carmelite Priory. We arrived in time for tea and were allocated our rooms. After tea, we joined the prayer group and chatted. The next day (Saturday), we had some interesting talks, in the afternoon, we had Mass in the chapel. Saturday evening, we had a talent spot, which this time round I did not join in. Getting up in front of strangers was a bit too nerve-racking for me (maybe rest time!). The next day (Sunday), I prepared my room, we went for breakfast, and then we got a taxi back to the bus station. We arrived a bit early and had a coffee first. The journey home via London and Stansted seemed to be a lot quicker. I would not mind going again sometime in the future, thanks, Pat!



Credit: <https://www.carmelite.uk.net/oxford-priory/>

Editor's note:

The Carmelite Priory and Retreat Centre on Boars Hill, just outside Oxford, is set in 17 acres of woodland with a nice view over the city. With 27 rooms, most of which are on the ground floor, making them easily accessible.

Monday book club

by Brian Price



Our book this time was 'A song for Nagasaki', the story of Takashi Nagai, a Japanese scientist who survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. He died 6 years after the bombing, from the effects of radioactive poisoning, though in his case his researches into X-rays had already made him seriously sick. Nagai was brought up in the Shinto tradition. Shintoism is not easy to define and is sometimes classified not as a religion but as a way of life. It is often defined as a nature religion, which believes nature and the natural world are an embodiment of divinity, sacredness or spiritual power. When Nagai studied at high school he met tutors who had doubts about Shintoism, for example the story about the god who slew an eight-headed monster, though Japanese courtesy meant that those tutors did not openly criticise Shintoism.

By the time that he left high school Nagai was a convinced atheist. He believed that science, with its rock-hard reality, was the way of the future. When he continued his studies at Nagasaki medical university he was irritated by the massive Urakami cathedral; it was a bit much to reject the Shinto gods and then import foreign ones. Nagai did have a faith but it was rooted in science, humanity and Japanese culture. Nagai's atheism began to break down with the death of his mother. Looking into his mother's eyes at the moment of her death convinced him that her spirit would live on after her death, an intuition that did not square with the scientific rationalism in which he had such confidence. He was sufficiently self aware to concede that it might be wishful thinking on his part but also flexible enough to accept that it might be a moment of true enlightenment.

Whatever, there were questions that he needed to ask. Nagai's questioning led him to Pascal's 'Thoughts'. Pascal was a scientist as well as a theologian and as such he appealed to the rational aspect of Nagai's nature. Pascal argued that reason alone is not enough. Reason allows us to understand scientific truths but not higher truths, which can only be seen by 'the eyes of the heart'. 'The heart has reasons that reason

knows nothing of'. Nagai could not accept everything that Pascal wrote, he found him very smug, for one thing, but in a spirit of experimentation he felt that he should give Christian prayer a try. He decided to live as a lodger with a Catholic family, the Moriyami, in the hope of gaining some spiritual insights. Unexpectedly, he found a wife as well because he later married the daughter of the family, Midori. While living with the Moriyami family, Nagai was invited to accompany them to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Midori's father explained to him, 'You can never believe if you don't come to the church and pray'. This chimed perfectly with Pascal's advice that one should get down on one's knees in order to find God.

Nagai's belief in scientific realism and in Japan's 2,000 year destiny were severely shaken by his experiences as a doctor during the war against China in the early 1930s. Science was being used to destroy lives, Japanese soldiers were often brutal and the quick victory promised by the generals proved elusive. So, when he returned to work in the hospital Nagai used his spare time to study the Bible, the catechism and discuss the faith with a priest. In the 1930s, the Militarist faction was coming to dominate Japanese politics and the police were becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity. Nagai's father, whom Nagai respected greatly, was concerned that Nagai's interest in Christianity would damage his promotion prospects. He begged Nagai to think of his responsibility to his family, living and dead, and to give up all idea of becoming a Christian.

Nagai had no desire to offend his father and he thought it might be prudent to delay his baptism until he had secured a promotion which would allow him to do more important research work. In the end, however, he chose to be baptised, in June 1934. The next step was to marry Midori Moriyami. In due course, Midori's charm and the birth of a grandchild were enough to win Nagai's father round. There is a lot in the book about Japan in World War 2 and about the bombing of Nagasaki itself. I do not want to dwell on that part of Na-

gai's story. Nagai himself was at the hospital when the bomb fell and was injured, but not seriously. His children had been sent away to the safety of the countryside. His wife, Midori, was incinerated so that only a few bones remained. So what next for Nagai? He fell victim to radiation sickness and nearly died. When he recovered, in October 1945, he took time to mourn Midori. He followed Eastern tradition by refusing to cut his hair or his beard. Then, back to work. Observing ants and other insects told him that, contrary to predictions, life was still possible after the bomb. He returned to Urakami, the epicentre of the bomb, built a hut from the debris around him and he was joined by his children and Midori's mother.

Other survivors built huts so that Urakami was reborn; there were even plans to build a new university. In November, 1945, there was an open-air Mass for the dead of Nagasaki and Nagai spoke on behalf of the laity. His message that there was a purpose in the destruction of Nagasaki, comparing the victims to a sacred offering to obtain peace, was not well received by some of the mourners. However, their shouted protests did not bother him because he knew from his own experience what they were suffering. Nagai now took to writing. 'The Bells Of Nagasaki', written in 1946 but not published until 1949, was an account of the bombing and its aftermath. The title was inspired by an event in December 1945, when Nagai and some friends dug up a bell from Urakami Cathedral, mounted it on a tripod and rang out the Angelus.

In July 1946, Nagai collapsed and was permanently bedridden until his death in May 1951, at the age of 43. He now devoted himself to writing but there were many visitors, including Helen Keller, the Emperor of Japan and Cardinal Gilroy. Nagai's influence was summed up by a blind leper, who had Nagai's works read to him, 'Here was Nagai who had lost everything, was dying, and was at peace with himself and the world'. Urakami has been titled 'a servant of God'.

Q&A

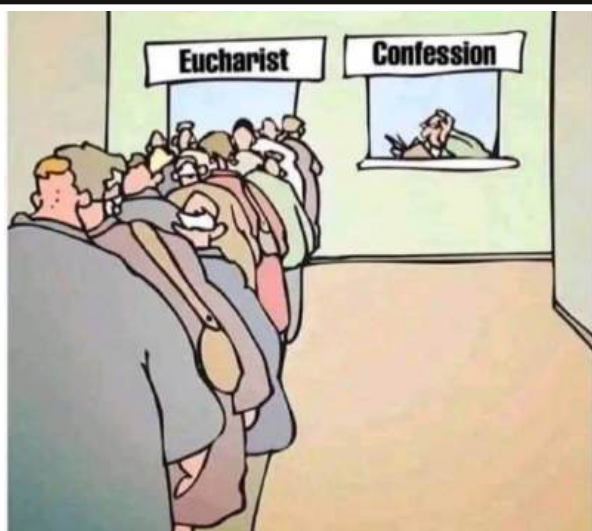
Your questions of the Catholic faith answered by Father Joseph

Q: Why does the Church declare a belief as a dogma? Is it based on the Traditions, if not what forms their basis? I am asking because I can't see how they are explicitly written in Sacred Scriptures

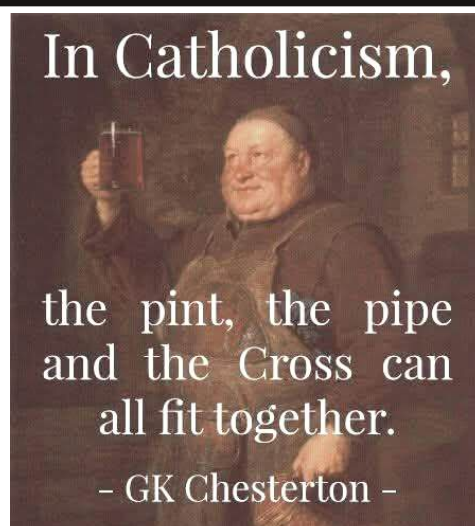
A: Martin Luther, at the time of the Protestant Reformation, declared his belief in sola scriptura, the idea that our Christian faith is based exclusively on what is to be found in Sacred Scripture. However, the Catholic Church has always held that there is one source of revelation (God Himself) and two vehicles or channels by which that revelation comes down to us, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. We have a saying in English that the devil can quote Scripture. In other words, anyone can put any interpretation they like onto the words of the Bible. Our Lord founded the Catholic Church so that we would always know what is the authentic interpretation of Sacred Scripture. The teachings of the Catholic Church, then, are the last word on what constitutes divine revelation. When the Catholic Church solemnly proclaims a teaching that is essential for belief if we are to get to heaven, we refer to this teaching as being de fide, that is, 'of the faith.' Dogmas carry the highest level of Church teaching, and all dogmas are de fide, that is, necessary to be believed for the sake of salvation. Funnily enough, it is in Sacred Scripture that we find evidence for the authenticity of teachings handed down through Sacred Tradition (handed down, that is, by popes, the Councils of the Church, and through the Church's liturgy) when St John writes at the end of his gospel, 'But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written' (Jn 21:25).

Q: When we say we venerate Our Blessed Lady - what does that actually mean? What is the difference between praying the Rosary and Venerating The Blessed Mary Virgin?

A: Catholics have always venerated the Blessed Virgin Mary because she is the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we do so through the prayers we say to her as we seek her guidance, consolation, and intercession. The rosary is one of the most beautiful, and powerful, of all prayers to Our Blessed Lady because it is made up of the words of Sacred Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and meditations on the life, death, and resurrection of her divine Son. In Catholic theology there are three levels of worship: latria (from the Greek latreia, meaning worship) and is the level of worship reserved to God alone; dulia (from the Greek douleia, meaning service or servitude) which refers to the level of veneration we give to the saints; and hyperdulia (from the Greek word huper, meaning above) which is the level of veneration we give to Our Lady, over and above what we give to the saints. This distinction can help us understand that we do indeed venerate Our Lady and the saints (the word venerate comes from a Latin word meaning to revere or adore), and that we pray to them directly, but that we do not give to them the level of worship that is due to God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Credit: Catholic memes



Gardening updates

By Peggy Ayers

Let's start with the successes and to be cheerful. More of these than failures! I decided to grow trom-boncino for the first time ever. These are classed as a gourd but we eat them as you would a courgette. They form into very long and strange shapes, with a very good flavour so I will definitely grow them again. Squashes take up a lot of land, so I grew these up a wigwam of canes which obviously uses less land. I also made a framework for the onion squash (Uchiki Kuri) and the squash called delicata. Again less land used so I was able to grow sweetcorn which I actually managed myself from seed. Last year I failed to grow enough plants and went to a garden centre for some extra. Between the sweetcorn I grew a mix of lettuces which luckily slugs etc., ignore! Courgettes, not as prolific as previous years but still good.

Stringless runner beans (called Polestar) did very well and when I dug up a row of potatoes I grew a second row of runner beans so that there would be more when the first ones finished. Borlotti beans did reasonably well although not as well as last year. My daughter in law who uses the dried beans in winter in casseroles had asked for a second row as well this year but there will still only be the same amount of beans from 2 rows as there were from 1 row last year! Beetroot did very well on the allotment again using successional sowing so that when the first sowing was finished the next was ready. I used the same policy with lettuce and that has been most successful. Leeks, I heard about Bulgarian leeks which grow a lot taller than the Mussleburgh which I normally grow, so I have given them a go, and they certainly do grow taller - 2 to 3 times-.

Asparagus, rhubarb, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, jostaberries. Apples, pears, and plums all did well as did my grandsons' radishes. Purple sprouting broccoli is planted and netted to keep butterflies and birds away. I bought some fake owls and suspended them from poles to also keep these offenders away! One owl was in the jostaberry bush which is very large but on one side of it. I had lots of berries from that side but the pigeons got

the berries on the other side. Obviously I need 2 Owls - one either side. The 3 noticeable failures were peas and climbing French beans also spinach which bolted. I sowed handfuls of sugar snap peas and got 5 plants which supplied enough for one meal. I checked the packet and the seeds were not out of date. The climbing French beans were eaten by slugs and snails so off to the garden centre - again eaten by slugs. More plants from the garden centre! By this time I had found sheep's wool pellets online. When you open the container they really do stink but my goodness they seem to do the job. I placed these pellets round each bean plant and then watered - this formed a sort of mat which the slugs find rough and don't like. I am using these pellets round hostas too.

Eventually the pellets can be incorporated into the soil no need to throw them away. So far I am impressed - let's hope it stays like that. This was also very effective with lettuce at home. Tomatoes started off well in the greenhouse but then they struggled as it became too hot for them in there. The plants are much smaller this year so obviously less fruits. However the tomato plants in the raised beds are amazing as are the ridge cucumbers. I am guessing it is because of the heat that quite a few tomatoes have fallen from the plants before they are quite ripe. However I have them on a tray and on the dining room table and I know they will ripen in due course. Chatting to other allotment holders it is good to know that I am not the only person this is happening to. I have needed to do so much watering this year and was heartily sick of holding a hose. I am therefore trying to think of how to manage this better.

Nothing much I can do about that on the allotment as I already use horticultural membrane where I can which is a weed suppressant and helps to retain moisture. At home I am going to try to have flowers which don't need so much watering. The little bedding begonias are a must for me in the future. A lovely splash of colour and not much water needed. Cosmos: I always have these at home and the allotment as they seed themselves and no bother; they grow in



strange places on the allotment but look lovely and attract pollinators. When I bought my house 33 years ago there was a bed of Japanese anemones and they are still here today. As they have multiplied I have shared them with other people and they are a real delight I read that they were a thug and not to have them Don't believe that! Geraniums, started off really well but then didn't like the heat so were without flowers which was disappointing; however once the weather was cooler they bloomed so not a total failure, personally I think plants do better in the ground than in my many pots situated on membrane covered in bark which I have in order to save weeding. Perhaps the answer is to reduce the number of pots.

Soon I will receive the seed catalogue from the firm which the Ipswich Allotment Holders Association deals with. This will mean several hours of deciding which seeds to buy although I have baved some of my own, runner beans, borlotti beans, French marigolds, pot marigolds, sweet peas, mirabilis (4 o'clock plant), candy tuft, and many more. Soon I will be planting seeds of cornflowers, larkspur, aquilegia directly into the flower beds ready for next year. Of course some flowers will self seed such as foxgloves, cosmos, love in a mist, poached egg plant, to name just a few and save me the trouble. I have a small plaque which says: 'a Gardener's work is never at an end'. How True that is!



Jo Shevlin writes about Peggy, Our inspirational gardener!

I am jumping in on Peggy's article just to say – because she won't – what an inspirational gardener she is. I had asked Peggy for some advice on enhancing my garden and she was kind enough to invite me round to see hers. What a lovely experience that was – her garden is a delight to the eyes, packed with a variety of flowers and plants of all colours, shapes and sizes! She is very knowledgeable so we are in good hands reading any advice she gives us in these magazine articles!



From the archive



*Sister Michael of the Blessed Trinity
Entered Carmel, Woodbridge July 25th 1925
Clothed 23rd January 1926 Canon Peacock officiating*

Text above reads: Sister Michael of the Blessed Trinity entered Carmel Woodbridge July 25 1925, clothed 23rd January 1926 Canon Peacock officiating.

Our Avian friends

By Paul Shilling

Of all God's faunal creatures, in my personal opinion birds are His greatest creation. The sheer diversity in size, form and colour are incomparable within the animal kingdom. I have had an affection for our feathered friends since childhood, when the YOC (Young Ornithologist Club) was in existence. I have since travelled to many parts of the world to see the infinite variety of species that exist. One of the greatest moments in my life was when I saw my first bird of paradise (Regiannas Bird of Paradise) in Papua New Guinea. This pheasant sized bird with audacious plumage dancing on a branch, feathers splayed in multiple directions. What a moment!

I have witnessed the stupendous avian excellence of my other favourites, the Humming Birds. Collectively, I have spent hours mesmerised at their frenetic activity in the New World. The movement and flashes of colour are a joy to behold. There are so many interesting facts regarding birds. The longest migration is undertaken by the Arctic Tern. They annually travel from their Arctic breeding grounds to the Antarctic and back, covering distances ranging from 44,000 to 59,000 miles per year. This incredible journey allows them to experience almost constant daylight, enjoying both the Arctic summer and the Antarctic summer.

Hummingbird migration distances vary by species and route, with some travelling up to 3,900 miles (6,300 km), such as the Rufous Hummingbird between Alaska and Mexico. Other species, like the ruby-throated hummingbird, make a remarkable non-stop flight of up to 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico. This is incredible when considering their size, requiring frequent stops en route to refuel due to their high metabolism. They also beat their wings up to 70 times a second! The highest-flying bird is the Rüppell's vulture (*Gyps rueppellii*), confirmed by a bird strike incident at an altitude of 37,000 feet over West Africa in 1973. This species possesses a unique form of haemoglobin that binds oxygen efficiently, allowing it to thrive in the extremely thin air at such high altitudes. The largest living bird in the world is the Common Ostrich (*Struthio*

camelus), a flightless bird native to Africa that can stand up to 2.8 meters tall and weigh over 156 kg. It lays the largest eggs of any bird and is the fastest non-flying bird, reaching speeds of up to 70 km/h. The Bee hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) is the world's smallest bird, endemic to Cuba, with males weighing as little as 1.95 grams. It is smaller than a bumblebee and is renowned for its vibrant iridescent plumage.

The wandering albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) has the largest wingspan of any living bird, reaching up to 11.5 feet. Some unconfirmed reports suggest even larger wingspans, possibly exceeding 4 metres. Emperor penguins are nature's true survivors. Antarctica's extreme cold (-40°C and below) are tolerated due to specialised adaptations, including dense plumage and fat layers for insulation, huddling in tightly packed groups to share body heat, and rotating positions within the huddle to equalise exposure.



Their unique feathers, which become colder than the surrounding air, creates a 'cold coat' that paradoxically reduces heat loss to the environment. Penguins form large, tightly packed groups, creating a rotating wave of movement that shifts individuals from the colder outside to the warmer center of the huddle, ensuring equitable heat exposure. To minimise heat loss through their feet, penguins rock back on their heels, raising their toes off the cold ice and resting on their stiff, heatless tail feathers, effectively reducing their surface area in contact with the snow. Birds also have a fascinating connection with religion. Birds are widely featured in religions, symbolising everything from souls and divinity to wisdom and God's care for creation. They appear in



sacred texts and art, such as the dove symbolising the Holy Spirit in Christianity or Garuda serving as Vishnu's mount in Hinduism. Birds also played a role in religious practices like augury in ancient Rome and held specific dietary significance in Jewish law. Symbolic meanings, soul and the divine: Birds can represent the immortal soul, symbolising its freedom and ability to ascend to a higher spiritual realm, a common theme in Judaism and Christianity. Wisdom and Messengers: In Norse mythology, Odin's ravens, Hugin and Munin, gathered information from the world, acting as both his eyes and messengers. Similarly, birds in the Bible are warned against, indicating they can carry messages to kings. God's Care:

The Bible portrays birds as part of God's creation, emphasising that even small birds are still cared for by Him. Purity and Purification: Water birds, like storks, are associated with purification and can symbolise the triumph of good over evil when depicted consuming snakes. Within Christianity, the dove is prominent, symbolising the Holy Spirit, especially during Jesus' baptism. Birds like the finch can represent Christ's Passion, while the peacock signifies immortality. The pelican is a symbol of Christ, often shown piercing its own breast to feed its chicks. Within Judaism, birds can symbolise the soul, with Rashi interpreting Ecclesiastes 10:20 to refer to the soul taking flight to heaven. The dove played a role in Noah's story and can symbolise the Shekinah (God's spirit). The eagle is a powerful symbol in the Torah, with the Israelites carried 'on eagles' wings'.

My own patron saint, Saint Tryphon, represents birds (especially in Russia). He was a gose herder in the third century. Other saints associated with birds are St. Francis of Assisi (patron of all animals, often depicted with birds), St. Milburga (an Anglo-Saxon abbess who had power over wild birds), Saint Gall (or Gallus). He is the patron saint of Switzerland and a variety of birds, including hens and other poultry. His connection to birds stems from a legend where, during an exorcism, the demons possessing a woman flew out of her mouth in the form of blackbirds.

Can you ever imagine a world without birds? The silence (no dawn choruses, although some may be content about that!), the lack of activity at bird tables on estuaries, in fields, within woodlands. For me, the world would be denuded from one of its greatest faunal assets. Global warming has impacted on their habitats, forcing many into extinction or greatly reducing their territories.

St Tryphon, pray for the birds!



My CPW Weekend in Oxford

by Pat Ware

Those of you who live in Ipswich may have already heard of CPW near the College 'your friendly local locksmiths in Ipswich and Felixstowe for over 50 years'. I can recommend some real CPW –these are a group of Catholic People's Weeks (CPW), which have been held for the past 80 years, and in which subjects of interests to us Catholics are put together with jolly times and separate talks for youngsters, also arrangements for babies and under fives to be cared for whilst their parents are meeting in the study groups. CPWs foster faith, intellectual engagement, social interaction, creativity and friendship. These range from weekends to week long holidays. CPWs events aim to nourish faith and build community with a mixture of in person gatherings and online meetings like their regular Wednesday prayers and they are involved in the 2025 Catholic Jubilee theme of Pilgrims of Hope. Other themes explore subjects such as 'The Stories That Shape

Us' and 'Where is God in the Climate Crisis'. Their mission is to revitalise the heart, mind and spirit of people today. There is always a Daily Mass and Morning and Evening Prayers led by the laity and afternoon visits to local interest sites. Also, we often find ourselves learning one or two new hymns which seem appropriate for our meetings. Mostly these Catholic People's Weeks are held where the accommodation is near to Houses of Orders like the Carmelites and Augustinians so that we can meet together with them. This year I went to visit the Carmelite Monastery at Boars Hill near Oxford, where we were celebrating the 80th anniversary of these Weeks. A famous member John Bell had joined us from Iona in the Hebrides where he gave us a talk on 'At Odds with the Culture of Contentment'. He suggested that the Christian Community contributes something 'subversive to society'. Particularly highlighting social justice. Due to the COVID



lockdown, we had been unable to have these CPWs, so we were overdue in celebrating the jubilee. A recent topic was 'Sacred Music at Noddfa' in North Wales in May. I would like to encourage people to sample one of these weeks and you can find a brochure on the Parish Noticeboard. How to find out more: visit the CPW website for details of upcoming events, CPW is also to be found in Independent Catholic News. Please contact Father Joseph or Pat Ware for more information:

Pcware38@gmail.com

<https://catholicpeoplesweeks.org/>

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The miracle of death

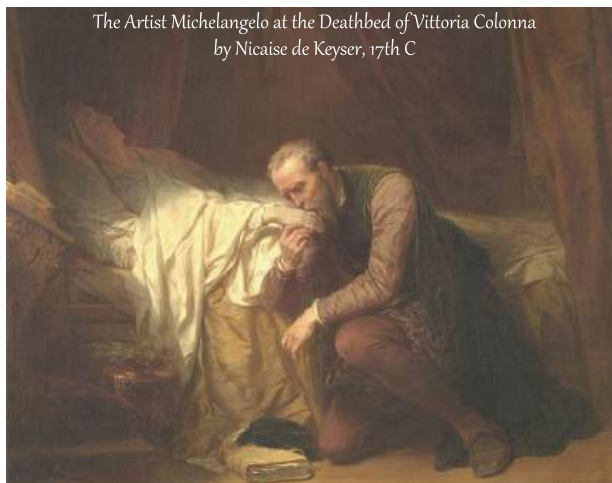
by Dr. Pamela Barcella

To everyone out there saying there is no life after death and that we are just body and no soul, I simply tell them, you must have never witnessed what I call the 'miracle of death'. Let me tell you when I first witnessed it ... Many moons ago I was working as a GP Trainee in a local surgery, just outside Ipswich. Here I met an 80 something years old lady, who never married, and was known in the surgery to be an old cantankerous kind of patient! She lived in one of the local residential homes and the staff could not cope with her and her rudeness and none of my colleagues wanted to visit her – ever!

Hence, as the young trainee, the toll fell on me. And for some strange miracle, she took a shine on me. Perhaps it was my young age, or the fact I was the only female doctor working with 5 male colleagues! Whatever the reason, we hit like house on fire, and a true friendship started. I used to visit her weekly, at times just to have a chat and a cup of tea, at

times to check her over. As the year passed, she started to be unwell, with a bad ischaemic leg. The hospital doctor advised her not to be fit for active treatment, so she was kept at home, to die comfortably. I still home visited her weekly, but by now she was bed bound and not verbal, so I would just sit near her bed and tell her about my day. On my last visit I sat with her for a while, and when the time had come, I said my goodbye and told her I would come back soon to see her. I got up from the chair, I took my medical bag, and I walked to the door. As I was standing on the doorstep, somebody tapped me on my right shoulder. I turned my head to the right. I saw her lying in bed. I looked at her and with that she

took her last breath. I stood there shocked and upset. The room filled with a strange presence. A supernatural silence fell. I knew I wasn't alone in that room, I could literally feel my patient's soul leave the body. She just wanted to say goodbye to me. She wanted me to be with her when her soul departed this Earth. As young as I was, I got so scared and started to shout for help, but by the time the staff arrived all was back to normal and there, on the bed, lied only the empty cage of her body. I am so grateful to her for waiting for me and give me the last farewell. I will never forget her. I will never forget that feeling in that room. That is what I call the 'miracle of death'.



Children's colouring activity



A journey into the Catholic faith

I would rather remain anonymous, as this account is not about me personally but about the journey of conversion. Almost 5 years ago, I felt a sudden and unexpected need to speak to a Catholic priest. I cannot really explain where it came from, only that I knew it was something I had to do! Certain events in my life had been preparing the ground, but it took many years before everything came together and led me to the Catholic Church. I grew up in a non-religious family, though my parents never discouraged us from exploring faith or reading about different religions.

One of my uncles had converted to Catholicism in his early 30s and later became a priest. My dearest friend Patrick also came from a devout Catholic family, although in adulthood he left the faith. We spent countless hours discussing books and articles on religion, mostly by well-known atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris etc. Patrick was convinced by their arguments. Sadly, Patrick died unexpectedly in October 2016, and through many conversations with his brother, we came to the very sad agreement that he had, intentionally and gradually drank himself to death. His body was found by his cleaner at home

a few days after his birthday. I had sent him a birthday present and was surprised not to hear from him, as he always let me know when something arrived. I tried calling, but there was no answer. The following evening, his brother phoned to say that Patrick had died. I was left feeling heartbroken and lost, because we were not only best friends but, as he used to say 'soulmates'. He often said 'whenever you feel low, just look at the sea in Felixstowe and remember that I am just across the water!' – for he was Belgian.

Looking back, I realise that the death of my dearest Patrick could easily have shaken my interest in faith, because I could not understand why it had to happen in that way. Yet, rather than turning me away, it prompted deeper reflection. I began to consider that perhaps his depression had grown from his falling away from the Catholic faith in which he had been raised. Not very long after this, and without having looked for it, a series of videos by Bishop Robert Barron appeared on my YouTube page! His Catholicism series caught my attention, and I found myself watching one episode after another. I then Googled 'Catholic churches in Ipswich' and without hesitation I chose



St. Augustine, by Antonio Rodríguez, 16th C

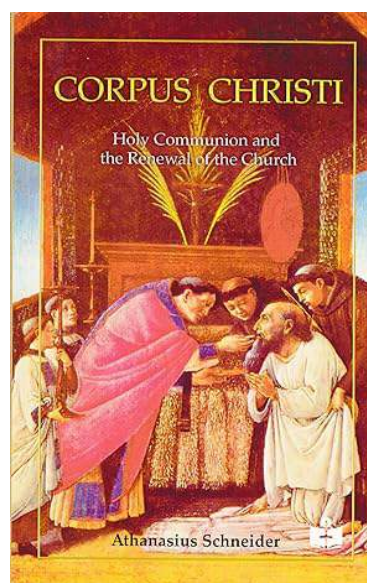
St Pancras, and contacted Father Joseph, booked myself a meeting with him, and from that first conversation onwards, I looked forward to our meetings, and that was the true beginning of my journey into the Church. I am eternally grateful to God not only for bringing me into the Catholic faith, but also for bringing me to St Pancras. I could not have hoped for a better teacher and guide than Father Joseph. He has passed on the Catholic faith in its fullness and tradition with clarity, patience, and kindness.

Although I know pride is not a virtue, I do feel thankful—and in a way proud—that my formation came from him. Whenever I go to Mass, whether here in Britain or abroad, I carry with me the grounding he gave me at St Pancras. Which has made my life for the better.

Book recommendation: 'Corpus Christi: Holy Communion and the renewal of the Church' by Bishop Athanasius Schneider.

by Tilly Rampley

In this book, Bishop Schneider explores the profound significance of the Eucharist in the life of the Catholic Church, arguing that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is essential for the renewal and strengthening of the faith. The book draws on Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, and centuries of Catholic tradition to emphasise the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the benefits of receiving Holy communion with reverence and faith. Bishop Schneider pays particular attention to traditional practices such as kneeling and receiving Communion on the tongue, presenting these not as mere customs but as expressions of true faith and love for Christ in the Eucharist. The book is both instructive and inspiring, offering practical guidance for fostering Eucharistic devotion while presenting a theological and spiritual vision for a Church renewed through a closer union with Christ. He also critiques some contemporary tendencies that, in his view, risk diminishing the reverence due to the Sacrament, highlighting the need for both clergy and laity to cultivate a deeper sense of awe and devotion.



The book was first published in January 2014 by Lumen Fidei Press.

Response to Music,

Finlandia (Opus 26) by Jean Sibelius

By Mim MacMahon

I'm not sure where to begin on this piece. I think I will begin by stating what 'Finlandia' is not. First, it is not, as is often supposed, the national anthem of Finland. And, second, it is not just the beautiful hymn-like section that we all know; there is a good six or seven minutes of other music, into which the hymn tune is set. So, then (you are now asking), what is 'Finlandia'? Well, it's something called a 'tone poem'. That is, it is a piece of instrumental music in one movement, designed to convey a mood, feeling, or narrative. It was composed by Jean Sibelius in 1899 for an event innocently entitled 'The Press Celebrations', as the last piece on the programme 'Finland Awakes'.

If asked, the composer and/or event manager were going to state, blandly, that the music described 'happy feelings at the awakening of Finnish spring'. Very innocuous, and also no sense. But a highly necessary precaution in order to escape the censors. At the time, Finland was 'not an independent nation, but an 'autonomous Grand Duchy' of the Russian Empire, and had been since 1809. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Finland had, despite the Russian yoke, begun to find her voice as a nation, and literature, art and music celebrating Finland's unique character had developed and was flourishing, even under the eyes of the Tsar's authorities.

It was in this atmosphere, and as an active participant in it, that Sibelius composed what was to become, arguably, his best known piece of music. At this point, it would be helpful to listen to 'Finlandia' as a whole. The magic of YouTube yields numerous performances. The first two I came across were as follows: a rousing rendition, with the hymn sung by a chorus, that took place on the Last Night of the Proms in 2017, conducted by a very excitable Sakari Oramo, Finnish and (justly) proud of it. He took it very fast. So fast, in fact, that it was a whole minute shorter than my second choice, basically a video illustration of the work, orchestra uncredited, but showing mouth-watering scenes of snowy pine forests, the Northern Lights, sun-

rise over lakes, and some adorable ducklings and bear cubs. The Finnish spring, in fact. Other versions, including the 'hymn' section alone, are available. What you hear is an introductory growling from brass and timpani. Woodwinds and strings enter in a lyrical mood, becoming graver in lower strings and bassoons. From then on the lyricism is underscored by the distant thunder of the percussion. Then an urgent call from the brass speeds everything up. The growling and rumbling becomes something like a call to arms, with an insistent triangle tinging like an alarm bell. The whole moves swiftly and even more urgently, with increased excitement and anticipation, towards a great resolution... and, suddenly, like sunrise itself, comes the hymn.



In the original, this is stated twice, first by upper woodwinds, and then by massed strings. In 1941, words were written for this section by Veikko Antero Koskenniemi. (Google him - I did.) Putting 'Finlandia- hymni' into your search engine will give you the lyrics in Finnish, a language of great beauty of sound, but which, written down, tends to look as if it had been invented by J.R.R Tolkien. (It wasn't). The first line translates as 'Finland arise, thy daylight now is dawning' and the rest is in a similar vein. Usefully, the Proms performance gives English subtitles. It is impossible to remain unmoved by 'Finlandia', and, in particular, by the hymn. It has, indeed, been set as a hymn on several occasions, and many of you will know it as 'Be still, my



soul, the Lord is on your side', in which version it appears in our hymn-book. It was this set of words, in a choral arrangement I rashly made thirty years ago, that I was required to give, earlier this year, at the funeral of an old friend. I had wonderful help (from our own Rose Palmer and other worthies) but very poignantly, the bass for whom I had written a solo in the second verse had, himself, since died, and his widow was in the congregation. Another friend gallantly volunteered to sing it. The experience was bittersweet. Feelings that had nothing whatever to do with the struggles of the Finnish nation surged uppermost, and I was in danger of giving way to them, but, as a performer, you simply do not do so. You get through it. In a few weeks, I'll be singing 'Finlandia' again. This time, with the much larger forces of Trianon Music Group, happily obscure in the alto section of the choir. We will be exhorting Finland to arise, praying that the conductor brings us in at section 'I', and that he remembers that the choir copies do not contain the previous 100 bars of music. Terrifying, and I love it. I haven't a drop of Finnish blood, but this music is in my DNA.



On the meaning of dress in worship

By William Rampley (aged 15)

There has been a noticeable change in the way many people dress for church. Casual clothing has become more common, replacing the dignified dress code that once reflected respect and reverence. This shift is not simply about fashion; it raises an important question about how outward signs can express the seriousness of worship. Attending church is not the same as attending school, a sporting event, or a social gathering. It is entering the house of God, joining in prayer, and taking part in Holy Mass, which is a reminder of what Our Lord did for us by going on the cross. Clothing may seem a small matter, yet it can speak volumes. The effort made in appearance shows thought, care, and respect for the occasion.

Tradition has long encouraged a dignified dress code rooted in modesty and simplicity. For both men and women, this means clothing that covers the shoulders, knees, and elbows, kept neat, clean, and appropriate to the solemnity of worship. Garments should be modest, avoiding anything tight, revealing, or designed to attract attention. Such standards are not about fashion labels or expense, but about the spirit in which one comes before God.

What matters most is the intention behind it: to give the best, even in small things. When considered alongside the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross, making an effort in dress is truly a very small offering in return. Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper emphasised that modest dress affirms the sacred character of the human body. He viewed it not as concealment, but as a reverent acknowledgment of the body's dignity. In his philosophical anthropology, modesty is a form of self-respect that reflects the seriousness appropriate to sacred settings. Pope Pius XII also affirmed that immodest clothing undermines moral formation and ecclesial discipline.

He insisted that attire in church must reflect purity and reverence, and that the Church has a duty to uphold standards that safeguard the sanctity of worship. Examples from around the world highlight the importance of this principle. For example, at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, those wearing shorts or sleeveless clothing could be denied entry. In the Philippines, at Quiapo Church in Manila, clear signs remind visitors that revealing or informal dress is not permitted. Such rules underline the value of reverence in sacred spaces.



The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that modesty protects dignity and expresses reverence. Following a dignified dress code for church is one way this becomes visible. It is not about strictness for its own sake, but about recognising that worship is different – set apart from everyday life. Clothing for church, then, should not be seen as a burden but as a quiet act of devotion. If time and thought are given when preparing for work, school, or special events, how much more fitting it is to give thought when preparing to stand before God.

Great Catholic minds

By Tilly Rampley

Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of the radio and winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics, was born to an Italian aristocrat and his Irish Protestant wife. Although baptised a Catholic, he was raised in the Anglican tradition. Before marrying Maria Cristina Bezzi-Scali, he received the sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church, after which he became a devoted Catholic. Another Catholic had a hand in his achievement: Thomas Edison directed Marconi to the experiments of Father Jozef Murgaš, a Slovak priest living in Pennsylvania, who had made important contributions to wireless transmission of the human voice.

In 1931, Marconi established Vatican Radio for Pope Pius XI – the first radio station dedicated to proclaiming the Good News. A year later, he developed a short-wave radio telephone to connect the Vatican with the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, an innovation that can be seen as a forerunner of the mobile phone. Marconi's story, however, is not without shadows. He was a member of the Fascist



Party, and evidence suggests he supported Mussolini's anti-Jewish policies. Yet despite these failings, Marconi remains an example of a scientist whose discoveries were also placed at the service of the Church.

Summer term mothers' group

By Rosa Patten

During the Summer term, we saw the beautiful month of May dedicated to Our Lady, the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June and the Precious Blood of Our Lord in July. We were presented with some lovely activities for the children to do to appreciate each of these three dedications. In May, the children got to do a lovely craft involving impressing an image of the Miraculous Medal onto foil-covered foam.

It was amazing to see these large-sized Miraculous Medals- very impressive! In June the children decorated a paper plate which had the image of Our Lord and the Sacred Heart, the children enjoyed piecing together the image to place on their decorated plates. For the dedication of the Precious Blood in July, the children had an activity where they decorated a paper cut-out chalice with cut-out jewels and embellishments.

We rounded up the year with our summer picnic and due to the weather, we found ourselves in the hall! However, it was a pleasant gathering with a small modest spread and lots of conversations. Now, as we come to the end of the summer break, it will be lovely to see the mothers' group join again in the new term.

Together with Father Joseph and the mothers, the group continues to grow in support, encouragement, and increase in Faith. We talk about things important to every home, mothering, the upbringing of our children and learn more about the faith and spend time together in prayer in the church, led by Father, reciting beautiful litanies and devotions according to the liturgical year.

It has been lovely to see how the group has developed since its start- with regular faces and with those who visit when they are able to (due to work or because of living abroad).



Why do Catholic women wear a veil

By Toni Wasag

Exploring the Biblical and Spiritual roots of a sacred tradition:

The image of a woman quietly veiling herself before entering a church may seem rare today, but it carries a rich tradition grounded in Scripture and centuries of Catholic practice. For many Catholic women, wearing a veil is a profound expression of reverence, modesty, and devotion to God. Biblical foundations, the most direct biblical reference to veiling is found in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: 'Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head... for this reason a woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels.' (1 Corinthians 11:5, 10).

St. Paul presents veiling as a symbol of respect for divine order and sacred authority. His reference to 'the angels' reminds us that the liturgy is a heavenly reality where spiritual beings are present, and proper reverence is due. As sign of modesty and sacredness, the veil is not merely a tradition—it is a sign. Just as sacred objects like the tabernacle or chalice are veiled to denote their holiness, a woman's veil reflects her dignity and the sacredness of the worship space. It becomes an external expression of an internal disposition: humility before God and a heart oriented toward prayer.

Rooted in the Church tradition:

Veiling was practised universally in the early Church and formally codified in the 1917 code of Canon law, which stated: 'Women shall have a covered head and be modestly dressed, especially when they approach the table of the Lord' (Canon 1262 §2). Although the 1983 revision of the Code no longer mandates the practice, it did not abolish or condemn it. Today, veiling is considered a matter of personal devotion rather than obligation, and many women are returning to it with renewed spiritual intention.

Symbol of the Church as the bride:

Catholic theology often portrays the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. Ephesians 5:25–27). In this context, a woman veiling in church becomes a living sign of this reality. Her veil echoes the bridal veil, symbolising the Church's loving submission to Christ and her calling to holiness.

A Personal Devotion:

In a world increasingly focused on self-expression, veiling may seem countercultural. Yet for many Catholic women, this quiet act of devotion speaks volumes. It is a way to visibly center the Mass not on oneself, but on the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. By choosing to veil, women express their desire to be set apart not as less than men, but as sacred participants in the liturgy of Heaven.



By Pierre Mignard, 16th C

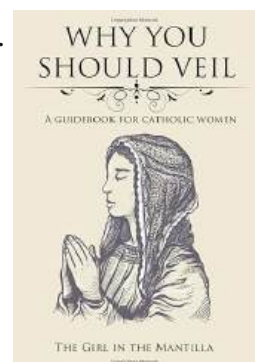
Conclusion:

Wearing a veil is not about legalism or nostalgia; it is about love. For those who embrace it, the veil is a sign of humility, reverence, and the sacred dignity of womanhood in God's plan. As the Blessed Virgin Mary offered her 'yes' to God, veiling becomes a quiet echo of her words: 'Be it done unto me according to your word' (Luke 1:38).



Editor's note: Did you know, a *mantilla* is a very traditional style of veil, with a history stretching back hundreds of years. Originating in Spain, it was already well known in the 17th century, when the great Spanish court painter Velázquez portrayed ladies wearing it in several of his famous works. The *mantilla* gained even greater popularity in the 19th century, thanks to the influence of Queen Isabel III, who helped to promote its use. Traditionally, black veils were worn by married or widowed women, and white veils by unmarried women or young girls. A black veil can also signify secrecy. Worn by women in religious orders, symbolising their commitment and devotion to the faith.

There is a good little book titled 'Why You Should Veil: A Guidebook for Catholic Women'. In only 31 pages, the author looks at the tradition of women wearing a veil in church, explaining how it serves as a sign of reverence, humility and devotion. Written in a clear and encouraging style, offers both reflections and practical guidance for those who may wish to rediscover this beautiful practice.





More from the archive

St. Pancras' school, 1926



1st. Line: J.Marcantonio, L.Daley, K.Dwyer, J.Thaine,
J.Malloy, M.Dines.
2nd. Line: S.Daley, V.Armes, W.Dwyer, L.Doyle, E.Rowe,
A.Malloy, R.Daley.
3rd. Line: M.Marcantonio. E.Petch, F.Grey, P.Grey,
E.Reeds, M.Dines, J.Alexander, R.Coleman,
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4th. Line: F.Stowe, J.Cappocci, D.Daley.

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140th Anniversary of Knock Shrine

by Colin Patten

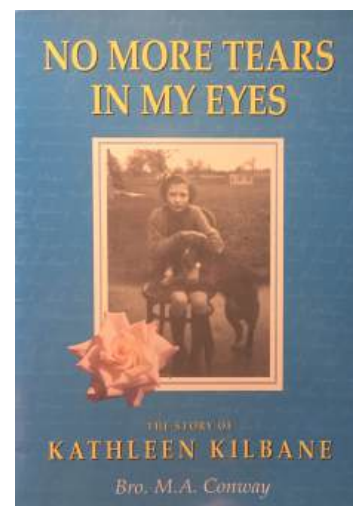
I arrived in Knock village, in the Republic of Ireland to create a detailed model village of Knock as it was at the time of the Apparition of Our Lady in 1879. On the first day there I was passing the Knock Shrine bookshop and had an earnest desire to get hold of a book that I had seen for sale there many years ago; about Kathleen Kilbane who had died of Tuberculosis at the age of thirteen, known as 'The Little Saint' of Achill Island (colloquial term only, she has not yet been canonised). I had often picked it up, mainly because it was set in Achill, and the name Kilbane was one frequently used by my family.

You see, my Grandfather came from the village of Derreens on Achill, not far from Kildownet cemetery where Kathleen is buried. However, I never bought a copy as the content just seemed too sad. Anyway, the bookshop didn't have any copies and they said it was now out of print. My friend who I was staying with said I should try the 'Cloak' charity shop as he thought he could remember seeing one there. I searched through every book they had, which were hundreds, but no luck. Feeling very disheartened, I was at the point of giving up when I saw a small pile of booklets at floor level, without expecting it, there she was, 'No More Tears in My Eyes' right at the bottom. I read it in my bedroom that night, and yes it was a sad story, very sad.

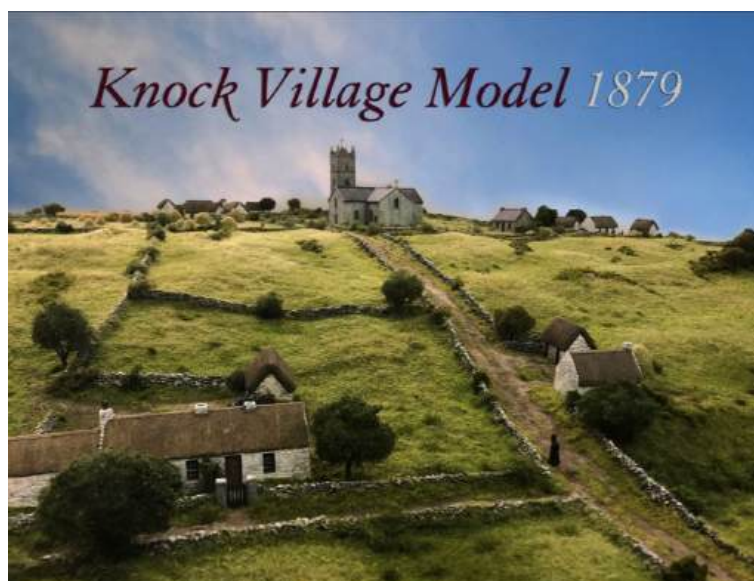
But through it all, through all the suffering this little girl, abandoned and forgotten, patiently endured pain on a level few of us could imagine. Her simplicity of faith and the certainty she had of a better place, spoke profoundly to me. 'Anybody who will hear about me and who will like me, I will help them too. I will help them to be always good'. The next morning I packed Kathleen's book into my work bag and took it to the little workshop behind the folk museum. You see I had developed an easy way of talking to Kathleen as if she were a companion with me on a journey. So, I decided that I would place her image on the wall overlooking the model so that 'my little friend' was there with me, just like any dad taking his daughter to work with him.

I started work around 4am and usually finished around 9pm and during that time I was chatting freely to Kathleen about many things, asking for her prayers when something very difficult needed to be accomplished on the model. I invited her to be part of my family; what's one more when you have 5 daughters on this earth and three children in heaven! Our daily routine went on for over three weeks, the book coming home with me where it sat by my bed with my holy water and rosary and again every morning where Kathleen's countenance looked from above at the model as it took shape.

I remember while working and chatting away that I started to feel a sense of great sadness about Kathleen's poverty, where she had hardly a possession to her name, especially that she had none of the toys or playthings that many of her peers would have taken for granted. I was at the stage where I was populating the model village with miniature people, men, women, children, carts, wagons, sheep, cows etc, even some tiny little rabbits that I had made a burrow for in one of the fields. I imagined how Kathleen would have loved to have been standing here with me right now in person. I could imagine the wonder and the joy she would have experienced as she hunted around the model on the table looking for all the little details.



It was then that I asked her if she would accept the model, personally from me to her as a gift. Yes, the model of Knock Village in the folk museum near the Basilica has an owner, her name is 'Kathleen Kilbane'. It is hers. However, being the generous soul that she is, she doesn't mind sharing it with you. As a side note, there are around 8 families on the Island of Achill that have constituted the majority of the population for hundreds of years, Masterson, Kilbane, Lavelle, Patten and Gallagher are just some. Most of the families have intermarried and are united in kinship through the generations. I know that many Kilbanes and Pattens from the Island had intermarried and I almost felt that myself and Kathleen were part of that kinship.



I tried to find out a bit more about this connection and when I searched Google with 'Patten, Kilbane Achill', up came a result that knocked my socks off, a Lady who was born in Dooega, and had married a Kilbane, also from Dooega in Scotland in 1920. Her name read 'Mary Agnes Patten Kilbane.' The surprise was that one of our daughters in heaven was named Mary Agnes Patten. Simple faith and trust in the certainty that there is a better place is the message that Kathleen gave me and that no amount of suffering on this earth can take that away.

St Pancras was well represented at the unveiling of the model on the 140 year anniversary of the apparition. My wife and four of our daughters made the trip to Co Mayo and we met up with a good friend from the parish Mr Matt Livermore and would you believe it, while I was in the local (only) shop in the village just before the ceremony took place I bumped into Mr and Mrs Convey, also from St Pancras and all of us sat together for the opening. A very blessed day!



Photographs by Colin Patten

Jessie in memorium

by Alex Smith

To all members of the congregation, I am very sorry to say that Jessie passed away from cancer on 14 th July. She had been with me for 13 years and came from appropriately the Brainy Dogs scheme, this is a scheme where dogs with an appropriate temperament were matched with a disabled person, in this case me! Always quick to learn Jessie soon settled in and learned the basics- stealing the biscuit tin came later.

She was well known throughout the town and loved her routine which involved a visit to her favourite places where she would get a treat and a fuss. Jessie became adept at writing, and loved to be part of the congregation with her own special pew. I am of course eternally grateful for the kindness and inclusion she received at St Pancras.



Poetry by Father Joseph

Sunday afternoon

Breezes blow through the open spaces tickling the garden with sounds above in the trees and with leaves that scurry across the paving stones, the remains of a winter flurry long since forgot in the summer's sun. And all that hardens the heart has melted in the sweetened scent of a lawn now mowed and yielding up an elated joy that spins the heart and mind to the dizzying heights of the cirrus clouds that chart the aspirations and the hopes of a soul now upward borne.

Distant bells begin to sing the songs of early evening psalms, and although the passing feet no longer make their way to the pews where countless folk of old once sought the balm for troubled thoughts and knitted brows, still are minds conveyed to a loftier place where may be found an untouched calm that breathes a sigh contented in the hue of heaven's array.

Chants d'Auvergne

The rising heights of mountains now green cloaked, the ancient sun dressed villages that give the lie to the timeless volvic streets that have evoked for me the balm of heavy summer days in late July.

Why settles on my brow this sombre wreath, why does my soul expire this heavy sigh, when shepherd's love is all that rises from beneath the sensual chords to soar above with heart's reply?

Evening meditation

The sound of cars and bikes and laughter muffled, a distance placed between the inner soul and life's unruly whirl that lends the busied mind unruffled calm, a longed-for manumission from the strife.

A veil descending with the vespersed supplications, whispered from a heart's unease, allays diurnal fears and miseries, and sets in place foundations for an inner core to reach, and touch, the sempiternal.

