

St Pancras

December 2025



Free (one per household)



St. Pancras Parish Magazine, December 2025

Also available at <http://www.stpancraschurch.org.uk>



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Editor's note:

As we bring this Christmas edition to a close, I would like to thank all who have contributed to it. Looking ahead, please submit your articles by Sunday, 12th April 2026, to st.pancras.magazine@outlook.com. Early submissions are always helpful, as they allow the magazine to take shape with the attention it requires.

Filly Rampley

St Pancras
December 2025



Cover image: The Nativity — centre panel of the Portinari Altarpiece, Hugo van der Goes, 15th century.

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Sermon on Our Lady, Co-Redemptrix

First preached by Fr Joseph on Sunday, 19th November 2025

“See that you are not led astray.” Lk 21:8

One of the loveliest titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and one that affords us so much hope and joy, is Our Lady, Co-Redemptrix. Through the co-operation of her will, and uniting it to the will of her Divine Son, and by standing at the Foot of the Cross, Our Blessed Lady played a unique role in the redemption of a fallen race. To many, especially to Protestants, this title, Co-Redemptrix, makes no sense, but when I was a schoolteacher I generally followed the rule that if my pupils did not understand a thing it was better to explain it rather than to push the difficulty aside.



By Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 17th Century

So, what does the Catholic Church mean when She says Our Lady is Co-Redemptrix? We must first, of course, understand and be emphatically clear that Our Lord Jesus Christ, and He alone, is our Redeemer and Saviour. It was His sacrifice on Calvary – His oblation, His gift of Himself – to God the Father, on our behalf, that won back for a fallen race the gifts that were forfeited by sin. As it says unambiguously in Sacred Scripture, there is only ‘one mediator [between] God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim 2:5).

In what way, then, can there possibly be a co-redeemer? Certainly, Our Blessed Lady was redeemed, just as we have been redeemed. All of the graces that filled her soul, and all of her merits and virtues, flow from the pierced Heart of her Son as He hung upon the Cross, just as all the graces we receive in the Sacraments flow from that same wounded Heart. That Our Lady is now in heaven is the result of her Son’s redeeming sacrifice on Calvary. She gave birth to Him in the flesh yet, as St Augustine tells us, she was nonetheless born spiritually of Him (*De sancta virgine*, c.6 – P.L. 40, 399). Our Lady is a member of Christ’s Mystical Body just as you and I are

members of Christ’s Mystical Body. By the same token, you and I are called to unite our sufferings to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross, and to conform ourselves to Christ crucified, so that we may, as St Paul says, make up in our own flesh the sufferings that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ (Col 1:24). In other words, we must play our part in our own redemption by co-operating with the work of Christ so that we can receive fully, and benefit from, the gifts that Christ – and Christ alone – won for us from the Father.

Yet there is a difference between the way in which you and I might co-operate with Christ’s sufferings on the one hand, and the way in which the Blessed Virgin co-operated on the other. Our Lady’s co-operation was on an altogether different plane from our co-operation, and was unique, even when compared to the role of the greatest of the saints. We do not say that she has redeemed us as Christ has redeemed us, but we do mean that ‘she has done something for the human race sufficiently similar to what Christ has done to be called by the same name, but yet

something so different that the function of Christ Himself remains unique.’ So what was the manner of Mary’s role? First, Mary’s role was unique because she herself is unique.¹ She alone was preserved free from the stain of sin from the very moment of her conception, and remained untainted by sin throughout her life. Second, her vocation was unique. She alone was called by God to surrender to His will in such a way that the Son of God might assume human nature, and come among us, and be like to us in all things but sin.

Third, Mary’s work was unique. We all play a role in expiating – or making up for – our sins, but Mary had no sins that needed expiation. Her work of co-operation, her conforming herself to Christ, was undertaken solely for others. As her Divine Son suffered for the entire human race, so she, also, suffered for the whole human race, offering her Son to Almighty God in a way that was not dissimilar to Christ’s own offering of Himself to the Father.

¹ *Mary’s Part in Our Redemption* by George Smith, London: Burns & Oates, 1938, revised 1954, p90.

Christ became man to expiate – to make up for – the sins of the human race, and in a similar vein, Our Lady deliberately undertook to become His Mother to be intimately associated with Him in this work and in His sufferings. And in so doing, Mary, uniquely and powerfully, fulfilled the will of God in every particular. Countless saints have taught us of the uniqueness of Mary's role as Co-Redemptrix: St Irenæus, St Augustine, St Jerome, St Leo the Great, St Gregory the Great, St Bernard, St Bernadine, to name but a few, along with innumerable popes, including Leo XIII, St Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII, John Paul II, and many others besides. Rightly do all faithful Catholics acknowledge this uniqueness which goes beyond her role as Mother of Believers, and rightly do we sing that when wicked men blaspheme her, we will love and bless her name!



Advertisement by Rosa Patten

In an article several magazines ago, I wrote about how I make rosaries and how I was very fortunate to be able to show them at a stall at the back of the church on the beautiful feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady last Advent. I was so gladdened by those who visited the stall, and I was inspired to carry on making rosaries. During one Friday coffee morning it was mentioned that I should consider making chaplets too. I must say I didn't realise there were more than 50 different chaplets!

Having considered most of them, I chose a few of these chaplets and these are the ones I decided to start making: The Chaplet for Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the Chaplet of Our Lady Undoer of Knots; the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady Rosary (also known as the Servite Rosary or the Dolores Rosary), and finally the Holy Face chaplet.

I would like to write articles about each of them in future editions of the magazine because they are really beautiful devotions to know about. I have a small Etsy shop so that I can continue making my rosaries, and now my chaplets too.

For more information or to browse Rosa's handmade rosaries and chaplets, visit her Etsy shop:

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/mantillarose>

Mantilla Rose



Above: The Chaplet for Our Lady of Perpetual Succour
Below: the Holy Face chaplet



Poetry by Father Joseph

Hand painted Christmas cards

Of course, each one took longer than I expected,
with holly leaves pricking the outer circle,
and curled into a twisted crown of thorns;
with shocking scarlet berries that rend the harmony
of evergreens, and splash the page
with drops of blood, precursor of the suffering
yet to come. And in the centre, innocence itself,
laid in a manger made of wood, to which,
one day, He will be nailed. Atonement
for a fallen race that cares much more for baubles
than for grace, but which for now, beneath
my paintbrush, must stay veiled.

Viennese Christmas punch

Ingredients (serves 6–8)

500 ml strong black tea (Earl Grey or Assam works well)

500 ml red wine

250 ml orange juice

150 ml dark rum

150 ml plum liqueur or apricot brandy

1 untreated orange, sliced

1 untreated lemon, sliced

2 cinnamon sticks

3 cloves

Sugar to taste (usually 2–4 tablespoons)



Method

Brew the tea and pour it into a large saucepan.

Add the wine, orange juice, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and the sliced orange and lemon.

Warm gently over low heat; do not allow it to boil.

Stir in the rum and plum liqueur (or apricot brandy).

Sweeten to taste and allow the punch to infuse for 10–15 minutes over the lowest heat.

Strain if desired, or serve with a slice of fruit in each glass.

A Cautionary Tale

By Theresa Cleary

It was Tuesday 9th September 2025. I went to the Traditional Latin Mass at St Pancras at 8am and as it was not a collection counting day I did a little shopping on the way home and decided to have a quiet morning mostly sitting at the table reading the papers with the two phones beside me. I was not planning to have my meal until about 5pm. By the afternoon I went upstairs to do a few bits and left the phones downstairs as I was not intending to be very long. I was in the front bedroom near the bay window when I heard the phone ring.

As I turned quickly to go downstairs and answer it I lost my balance partly due to wearing unsuitable sandals and fell heavily onto my left side. Although the floor was carpeted and even covered with a soft mat besides, it was a heavy fall and I knew I had hurt myself possibly badly but hoping perhaps it was just a bruise. I stayed where I was for a while then decided to get up which I did with great difficulty and managed to drag myself onto the armchair by the bay window where I sat for maybe half an hour.

My intention then was to get downstairs but I could not walk unaided so I took hold of the plain chair by the armchair and used it as a Zimmer frame to walk with it across the bedroom to the door and onto the landing, along the landing to the top of the stairs where I had to leave the chair and then hold on to the banister and the handrail by the wall to get down. All this took a very long time and each movement caused me pain. Eventually I reached the bottom of the stairs but I could not breach the gap from there into the living room where the phones were as there was nothing to hold on to.

The bottom of the stairs was just below the inside of the front door and there I stayed sitting on the second from bottom stair. The hours passed by from afternoon to evening to night and then all through

the night. I did not sleep at all. One thought of rescue was the paper boy who was due at 7am. I knew my brother Joe's landline number and I could shout at the paper boy to ask him to ring Joe. Sure enough 7am came, the papers dropped through the letter box and I shouted, 'Paper boy, paper boy!' - and then I saw him through the window beside the door walk away. He had not heard me. Of course these teenagers like to go around wearing earphones listening to music so that would have explained his failure to hear me.

I then hoped perhaps the postman would come or somebody dropping leaflets in the door but no such luck. So Wednesday 10th September wore on. Another worry was that I was due to play the organ for a funeral at St Mary Magdalen's on Thursday 11th September at 11.30am and I had no way of letting anyone know what had happened. I wondered if I could crawl across the hall to the living room but no. I just could not move. Meanwhile the phone was ringing but I could not answer it.

It rang several times and as afternoon turned into evening David Sparrow turned up at the front door and spoke through the letter box! The phone calls were from Doreen Batley who rang David as I was not answering and he came round. It was about 8.15pm. A choir of angels could not have pleased me more! (Fr Joseph commented that he wondered what David would think being compared to a choir of angels!). I could not reach to open the door but luckily David knew my brother Joe and rang him. Joe soon turned up with his key and so my rescue began.

I asked for the phone to be given to me so I could ring Anne Abbott to see if she could play for the funeral. Yes, thank God she could so I let her know what hymns etc they wanted and that was one worry off my shoulders. David is a volunteer with St John Ambulance and he was



pretty sure I had broken my hip. They dialled 999 for an ambulance which came fairly quickly. Joe and his wife helped get me ready for hospital and the paramedics, all ladies, examined which medication I was on before skilfully transferring me outside to the ambulance. Once at the hospital I was Xrayed and told I had broken my hip and would need an operation. It was then into the early hours of Thursday 11th September and they said it would probably be done on Friday 12th as they had several hip operations to do on Thursday.

I was put onto Martlesham ward and sure enough the operation did take place on Friday afternoon 12th September but before that, on Thursday 11th September, Anne Abbott kindly visited me after playing for the funeral and at the same time Fr Joseph came with Holy Communion, and my brother Joe too, so that was lovely. There was also a beautiful card from the folks who had attended the light lunch at St Pancras, it being the second Thursday of the month.

This was the first of many many kindnesses and concern from our good friends at St Pancras. I want to greatly thank you for all the prayers, visits, cards, presents and offers of help for when I came home. What a beautiful caring family we have at St Pancras. Some of you even came out to Aldeburgh hospital to visit me when I was transferred there for rehab. Nor must I forget my kind friends at St Mary Magdalen's and their concerns for me. But to return to Friday 12th September, I was taken into the operating theatre that afternoon - with some trepidation as I had never had surgery in my whole life of nearly eighty-five years.

Continued on page 7

However they were a cheerful crowd and knowing that I was a Catholic, one of the nurses said she had been to St Alban's school. I don't know what happened; I did not feel myself going off to sleep and the next thing I heard was, 'It's all over.' I thought I was dreaming but sure enough the operation had been done and I had not felt a thing. The chap standing near me told me he was not a Catholic but he had married a Catholic girl and Fr Leeder had done the wedding and he was full of praise for Fr Leeder! So that was a nice side to having the operation. I was then on Martlesham ward until Monday 22nd September when I was transferred to Aldeburgh Community Hospital for rehab.

I had practised walking with a Zimmer frame while on Martlesham ward, then when in Aldeburgh hospital they gave me more exercises to do and I was walking more with the frame. They gave me an excellent

gadget - a bit like a stiff dog lead with a loop on the end so I could put my left foot in the loop and get in and out of bed by lifting that leg up or down and then using my frame to walk round to the toilet, thus avoiding having to ask the busy nurses to help me. Shortly before I was due to leave Aldeburgh for home they tried me on stairs in the gym and on the real stairs and I could manage that. You hold on to the rails both sides and put your good leg up first then the bad leg to join it on the same stair. Coming down you put the bad leg down first and the good leg to follow it onto the same stair. As I said earlier on, I do have the handrail against the wall here at home.

We had it put in for when my mother was alive and I am very pleased we kept it in place. Some equipment was delivered to my home and then I was discharged on Monday 6th October. One of the

first things I did was to contact Ipswich HEARS so I now have an alarm button round my neck to alert them should I ever fall again. Along with my gratitude to our wonderful parishioners, I wish to thank Fr Joseph for frequently bringing me Holy Communion in the Ipswich hospital and now at home and Fr David Bagstaff who brought me Holy Communion each of the two weeks I was in Aldeburgh hospital, also Fr Pat my brother and his deacon in training, Paul Gilbert, who also brought me Holy Communion.

My life has changed and it has not been an easy transition from being so independent to being so restricted but we know God allows this for a reason and it is so consoling to know that Our Lord comes to us in Holy Communion to share our pain and for us to share in His Passion which one day will lead us to eternal life.

An Advent activity

By Rosa Patten



As this edition of the St Pancras magazine will be out for December, I wanted to share an Advent activity idea that last year, Maria Giuseppina and I, added to our existing Advent activities (the Jesse tree and moving St Joseph and Our Lady across the room towards a waiting stable). The activity is the Advent Bible verse paperchain activity, and it involved reading a Bible passage every day in Advent and writing the passage's verse, and chapter number on a purple (pink during the third week of Advent for Gaudete) paper chain and adding it to the growing paperchain which we were hanging around our not-decorated Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve the paperchain was complete and then removed to make way for the decorating of the tree ready for the next day. The verses for our activity came from a book called 'Advent in the Home-Activities for Families', however doing a quick internet search, it is easy to find ready verses, for instance TheCatholicKid.com have a printable paper Advent chain activity as do JoyfulCatholicFamilies.com to name a couple.

Miraculous Staircase of Loretto by Maria Giuseppina



For school, I learnt about the Miraculous Staircase of Loretto chapel. Seven nuns built a chapel for their school. It was called the Loretto Chapel. When the chapel was built the nuns noticed that they had no stairs to get up to the choir loft. They asked some men to build the stairs, but the men did not build it because there wasn't room. The nuns prayed a novena to St Joseph to help them to get up to the choir loft. On the last day of the novena a man came to the chapel and asked to build the staircase, but he asked to work in private. He worked day after day. One day he left. The staircase was built. Without nails or glue and no support and it did not fall down. The nuns thought it was St Joseph who had built it and heard their prayer.

Home Retreat

Notes from Saturday 8th November

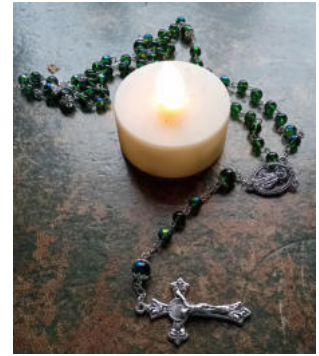
By Rose Palmer

Conceived as a day out of normal life to pause, read, reflect, be under God's gaze. The opportunity of the house to myself for a whole day and evening presented itself and solved my conundrum of finding a Quiet Day or Retreat elsewhere. I had a few weeks to consider how to spend the time and some very good suggestions from Fr Joseph. As a recent returner to Faith – a reconversion, I think it's called these days – I feel I am making up for lost time. There is so much I want to try to understand and to learn about the faith I was baptised in as a child and which has apparently clung tenaciously through periods of acceptance, disenchantment, and rejection – like a tide advancing and withdrawing.

Attending Mass, receiving the Sacraments, observing the beautiful ritual and cycle of Church life – all food for the soul. I have absorbed so much over the past eight months from a breadth of sources – encountering inspiring people in church, listening to podcasts, sermons, reading, reading, reading – that I felt a day of stillness was needed. So, how did my day go? I rose early (I am a morning person, so not a hardship), lit my little candle and said my morning prayers and a decade of the Rosary, sat with my eyes shut for a while. Silence. I walked over to Mass at St Mary's, Woodbridge Road, not – as I would generally be – listening

to a podcast – no screens or ear-phones today. At Mass I thought about and prayed for a family member who we learned had passed away in the early hours of Friday morning. What's that old Jewish joke? How do you make God laugh? Tell Him your plans. My retreat day became a day of sadness and included an emotional telephone call with a broken and traumatised family member. How right, though, to have the time to remember a loved one, no longer suffering, now at peace, to reach out and offer comfort. And in the month when we remember the holy souls. I couldn't have planned that... I kept a candle burning all day for our deceased loved one and drew her into my thoughts and prayers.

For the rest of the day I followed my instincts, went with the flow. I had decided to read the whole of the Acts of the Apostles and "The Creed In Slow Motion" by Martin Kochanski, our next Book Club read which had providentially arrived a few days previously. So I read, pondered, took time to pray and meditate, sometimes with plainchant playing softly in the background. I took myself out for a walk in the park in the afternoon – so beautiful with the autumn colours – mused, let my thoughts wander with my steps – a kind of walking meditation, I guess. More reading back home and then a feeling that it was time to



Photograph supplied by the author

draw the day to a close with a decade of the Rosary and a little reflection. My plan for the evening was to watch an appropriate film and I remembered a priest on YouTube (priests on YouTube – who would have thought!) recommending the film "Arrival". At a simple level this film is about aliens arriving on Earth in pod shaped vessels with a message to impart. A linguistics expert is called in to translate their strange language. At a deep level, the film is about free will, trust, time, communication. A dark vein of sadness runs through it because it's about what it is to be human and bound to die, but that this is not the end of our story.

I don't know if my day of retreat led to any deeper connection or insight, but I'm so glad to have been able to do it. I wanted to make a space for God and to have time to build on the hours and minutes of prayer like layers of spiritual sediment, deepening my relationship slowly, slowly, pausing, listening. A day of quiet in a noisy, clamouring world.

Did you know...

...that the parish magazine offers complimentary advertising space for parishioners' businesses?

Trying to plan ahead!

By Peggy Ayers



I have already drawn up a plan on paper for the allotment next year. Some things such as courgettes and runner beans, also borlotti beans can be grown in the same place year after year. This is a great help when it comes to beanpoles as I just leave them where they are. Potatoes are very different though – I grow them in a different place every year to avoid potato blight. I think it is a three year rotation that is recommended. Every year I plant broad beans either late October or into November. I prefer the variety Aguadulce for overwintering. I soaked them overnight and planted most of them on the allotment the next day.

There were a few left over and I didn't know whether to plant them at home or not; after a few days I noticed they were sprouting so I did plant them at home and they are growing nicely- sadly some bird (don't know which species) is interested in them and has chopped the tops off some but just left them lying on the ground – what a waste! I thought I would try some overwintering peas called Meteor as I had a packet in my seed box. On reading the back the seeds were from 2017 but I thought I might give them a try. No luck so far. I will buy some more next time I am at a garden centre and have another go.

A long long time ago my parents sowed peas in the garden and my brother decided to plant some peas from his pea-shooter; his peas came up but the ones from my parents didn't. That was why I thought I would risk the seeds from 2017. I assume they didn't come up because of their age but someone told me his father always said – plant peas at night so that the pigeons don't see them! I have no plans to do that. I noticed that some sweet pea seeds which had fallen from the plants were already growing and rem-

embered I used to sow them also at this time of year. I planted several at the end of each set of bean poles and they are coming through nicely; I also planted some in pots in the greenhouse and they are romping away; I hope the cold weather will slow them down as I don't want them to get too advanced. Most of the tomato plants have been cleared out of the greenhouse now except for one which has black cherry tomatoes, this particular plant did well in the greenhouse whereas the others didn't. My best tomatoes were grown outside this year; I have a shoebox full of green tomatoes which are ripening slowly but won't last as long as last year's did, when I still had some left after Christmas.



When I cleared the tomato plants out of the pots in the greenhouse I had a few straggly red cabbage plants and also some purple sprouting broccoli plants which I planted in the empty pots; at the moment they are thriving and better than those in the open. My seed catalogue arrived about a month ago and I had a great time looking through it and deciding what to order. My seeds have already arrived through the post and my seed potatoes should arrive late January/early February; on arrival they will be put in cardboard trays from the supermarket and put under my sofa to chit (sprout). It must be about 8 weeks ago or more that I was in a garden centre where they were promoting growing your own new potatoes for Christmas. I tried that several years ago with no success but thought I would give it another try.

Very pleased to say that there are signs of hope so fingers crossed. I have planted them in an old stacker box with holes drilled in the bottom for drainage and as they look promising I have tucked them up in a couple of layers of fleece. Parsnips. Always buy new seeds. Don't be tempted as I have sometimes been, to use left over seed; quite often it doesn't germinate. Also try to plant where there are no stones otherwise the parsnips will then be deformed. I pulled one of mine up recently and to my joy it was perfectly formed although the flavour wasn't as sweet as if I had waited for it to be frosted.

Hopefully frost before Christmas will do the job. On our allotment field there is the main shed where we meet lunch times on Sundays for a chat and compare notes on how we have done and how we have dealt with any problems. Always good to know others have experienced the same problems as you. Yes even Monty Don! I was watching his TV programme and he was saying he only had one cob per sweetcorn plant this year – the same as me so I was in good company. I did seem to remember having two or three cobs per plant previously and had wondered what I had done wrong.



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Quinces, what a bumper crop I had this year. The fruits were so heavy that they dragged the branches down to the ground. Now that they have been harvested the branches have bounced back up again and once more I can see my table and chairs underneath! Luckily I found several people who were pleased to have some quinces; they do smell lovely so I kept some for a while then I made apple and quince jelly. I haven't made jelly for years so I invested in a jelly bag on a stand and it was so easy. Inspired by this success I made several jars of just apple jelly and am intending to pick the crab apples in the front garden and turn them into jelly too. I expected the birds to eat them but they never do!

I think there is still time to catch some herbs either for drying or freezing. Herbs can be frozen in ice cube containers which are quite convenient. Even though it is November as I write this there is still a fair bit of colour in the garden. Most striking are the nerines — very bright pink and eye-catching — also known as Jersey lilies — you can look them up on Google. My pink Autumn crocuses (*Colchicum*) or naked ladies as some call them because they have leaves in the spring but none when they flower in autumn have finished now; however I bought some blue autumn Crocuses from an online gardening firm — 50 for £1. They are in bloom now and looking beautiful.

Again some bird has chopped a few off and left them on the ground! One last thing. My grandson's watermelon was the size of a tennis ball. Perfect inside and out. All of his family had a teaspoon full of the flesh and enjoyed it. He was so proud!



Late have I loved You

A Prayer of Saint Augustine (book 10, chapter 27)

Selected by Lisa de Pasquale



By Claudio Coello, 17th Century

I have learnt to love You late, Beauty at once so ancient and so new!

I have learnt to love You late!

You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself. I searched for You outside myself and, disfigured as I was, I fell upon the lovely things of Your creation.

You were with me, but I was not with You.

The beautiful things of this world kept me far from You and yet, if they had not been in You, they would have had no being at all.

You called me; You cried aloud for me; You broke my barrier of deafness.

You shone upon me; Your radiance enveloped me; You put my blindness to flight.

You shed Your fragrance about me; I drew breath and now I gasp for Your sweet odour. I tasted You, and now I hunger and thirst for You.

You touched me, and I am inflamed with love of Your peace.

My birdwatching trip to Estonia in April 2025

By Gerry Elliott

I picked this birdwatching trip as I wanted to see Steller's Eider which is on the red data list. This trip was the hardest birdwatching trip I have ever been on. The weather was not very kind at all. The maximum temperature was 2°C during the day and the highest during the night was -5°C. It snowed every day but that was not the difficult bit. It was the gale-force winds most days. The Baltic Sea is tideless. The white horses were over 1 foot in height on the sea. To get there you take an early flight from London Heathrow to Warsaw and then a flight from there to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. We travelled from Tallinn to a village called Haapsalu.

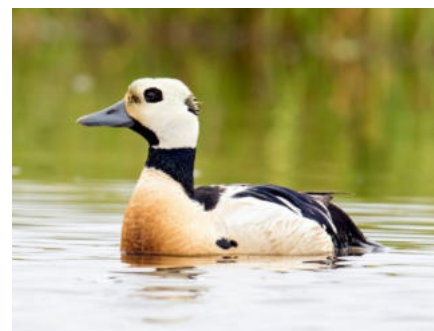
We birdwatched all the way to the village. We saw Bewick's and Whooper Swans, Tundra, White-fronted geese, Smew, White Stork, White-tailed Eagle, Common Crane and Fieldfare. It was a very exciting trip from the airport to the village. Next day, after breakfast, we took a ferry to Soometsa forest. This is part of the Luitemaa Nature Reserve. We went there to look for woodpecker species. Because of the weather conditions we only saw Great spotted and lesser spotted. After lunch we searched for wonderful views of a pygmy owl. After the evening meal we spent a very long time looking for a Ural owl.

It took at least three and a half hours to find the bird. We arrived back at the hotel at 10 pm. On day 3, this was our longest drive of the holiday. We headed to Saaremaa Island. Then drove to the north-west of Estonia. The purpose of this trip was to try and find Steller's Eider. We boarded a ferry. The crossing took 30 minutes. We sea-watched and it was very, very windy. We saw thousands and thousands of common scoter, 1000 velvet scoters, 4 common eiders, 3000 long tailed Ducks, 2000 Scaup ducks and 100 male smew.

After reaching Muhu Island which is connected to Saaremaa Island with a bridge. It was then a 1 ½ hour drive to the main birdwatching site to try and see Steller's Eider. The wind was now gale force. The weather conditions were so bad we could not find the Eider. The only good thing was that we found a Baltic lesser Black backed gull. We returned to the Hotel. It was decided that we would leave the hotel on Day 4 at 6 am. Day 4 we had a very early breakfast and set out to go to Saaremaa's harbour to try and find Steller's Eider. After three hours I caught a glimpse of the eider flying past. I was the only one in the group who saw the eider.

We then went back to the ferry and crossed over to the mainland. The cruise time was 25 minutes. After lunch we drove to Tuuhu Nature Reserve and then to Audru Reserve and Pärnu. We saw lots of geese at this reserve. 100,000 Tundra Bean, 250,000 Barnacle, 300,000 Taiga Bean, 5000 Ruff, 1000 Curlew. I felt very privileged to see one of the great spectacular gatherings of birds. Day 5 we had a breakfast at 7am. We left the hotel at 7.45. We drove to Soometsa forest. The first 2 hours were very productive but the rest of the morning we struggled to find any birds. It was snowing very heavily and very windy.

The afternoon we spent at Audru Reserve. Birding was a little better (only just). We arrived back at the hotel at 4pm. We went for an evening meal in Parmu at 7pm. It was delicious. Day 6 we left to travel to Soometsa Forest. Here we witnessed a Black Grouse Lek. It was very difficult to see the lek because it was snowing. In the forest we saw male Hen Harriers. We also had very good views of White-backed Woodpecker. Also we viewed Eurasian Nutcracker and Northern Shrike. We carried on our journey to Tallinn.



Steller's Eider

At Tallinn we had a tour of this beautiful city. Early afternoon we had lunch and then headed to the airport for the journey back to the United Kingdom. We viewed a few animals. They were Red Fox, Mountain Hare, Roe Deer and Red Deer. It was a wonderful holiday. We saw 119 bird species in total.



Whooper swans



White-tailed Eagle

Art and Prayer

By Pope Benedict XVI, Castel Gandolfo, August 31, 2011

Selected by William Newman - Sanders

Dear brothers and sisters,

In this period I have recalled several times the need for every Christian, in the midst of the many occupations that fill our days, to find time for God and for prayer. The Lord Himself gives us many opportunities to remember Him. Today I would like to reflect briefly on one of these channels that can lead to God and can also be of help in the encounter with Him. It is the way of artistic expression, part of that '*via pulchritudinis*' - the 'way of beauty' - of which I have spoken several times and whose deepest meaning must be recovered by men and women today.

It may have happened on some occasion that you paused before a sculpture, a painting, a few verses of a poem, or a piece of music that you found deeply moving and that gave you a sense of joy - a clear perception, that is - that what you beheld was not only matter, a piece of marble or bronze, a painted canvas, a collection of letters, or an accumulation of sounds, but something greater, something that "speaks," that can touch the heart, communicate a message, and uplift the mind. A work of art is a product of the creative capacity of the human being who, in questioning visible reality, seeks to discover its deep meaning and communicate it through the language of forms, colour, and sound.

Art is able to manifest and make visible the human need to surpass the visible; it expresses the thirst and the quest for the infinite. Indeed, art resembles a door opening to the infinite, to a beauty and a truth that go beyond the daily routine. A work of art can open the eyes of the mind and the heart, impelling us upward. However, some artistic expressions in particular are real highways to God, the supreme Beauty; indeed, they help us to grow in our relationship with Him, in prayer. These are works that were born from faith and

express faith. We can see an example of this when we visit a Gothic cathedral - we are enraptured by the vertical lines that soar skywards and uplift our gaze and our spirit; we feel small yet at the same time long for fullness... Or upon entering a Romanesque church, we are spontaneously prompted to meditate and to pray. We perceive that these splendid buildings contain, as it were, the faith of generations. When we listen to a piece of sacred music that plucks at our heartstrings, our mind expands and turns naturally to God. I remember a concert of music by Johann Sebastian Bach in Munich, conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

At the end of the last passage, one of the Cantatas, I felt - not by reasoning but in the depths of my heart - that what I had heard had communicated truth to me, the truth of the supreme composer, and impelled me to thank God. The Lutheran bishop of Munich was next to me, and I said to him spontaneously: In hearing this one understands: it is true; such strong faith is true, as well as the beauty that irresistibly expresses the presence of God's truth." How many pictures or frescos, the fruits of an artist's faith, in their form, in their colour, in their light, urge us to think of God and foster within us the desire to draw from the source of all beauty?

What Marc Chagall, a great artist, wrote remains profoundly true: that for centuries painters have dipped their paintbrush in that coloured alphabet which is the Bible. Thus, how often artistic expression can bring us to remember God, to help us to pray, or even to convert our hearts! Paul Claudel, a famous French poet, playwright, and diplomat, while he was listening in the Cathedral of Notre Dame to the singing of the Magnificat during Christmas Mass in 1886, he had a



tangible experience of God's presence. He had not entered the church for reasons of faith but rather in order to seek arguments against Christians, but instead God's grace worked actively in his heart. Dear friends, I ask you to rediscover the importance of this path also for prayer, for our living relationship with God. Towns and villages throughout the world contain treasures of art that express faith and beckon to us to return to our relationship with God. May our visits to places filled with art, then, not only be opportunities for cultural enrichment, but may they become above all moments of grace and incentives to strengthen our bond and our dialogue with the Lord so that - in switching from simple external reality to the more profound reality it expresses - we may pause to contemplate the ray of beauty that strikes us to the quick, almost "wounds" us, and invites us to rise toward God.

I end with a prayer from Psalm 27: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and contemplate his temple" (v. 4). Let us hope that the Lord will help us to contemplate his beauty, both in nature and in works of art, so that we, moved by the light that shines from his face, may be a light for our neighbour.

Your questions about the Catholic faith answered by **Father Joseph**



Laura Isaacs asks – What are the origins of the Sacrament of Confirmation, and how do we know that we receive the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation?

At the Last Supper, Our Lord promised to send another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would lead His, Christ's, disciples into all truth: 'The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things' (Jn 14:16,26). As He ascended back into Heaven forty days after His resurrection, Christ commanded His Apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit whom He had previously promised and whom He would send soon (1k 24:49). In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the Holy Spirit was indeed sent down upon the Apostles as they waited and prayed in the same Upper Room where they had had the Last Supper (Acts 2:1-4).



By Pietro Antonio Novelli, 18th Century

Just as the Spirit rested upon the flower (Christ) that rose out of the rod of Jesse (King David), and gave to him the seven gifts of the Spirit – the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and fortitude, knowledge and godliness, and fear of the Lord (Is 11:2-3) – so those followers of Christ who have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them will receive the same Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. And this Sacrament of Confirmation is handed on by the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, from one generation to the next through the laying on of hands (see Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6).

Richard Staines asks – How does the Church have any jurisdiction over the souls of those who have died and passed from this world? And if we do try to gain indulgences for the Holy Souls in Purgatory how can we be sure that we have been successful?

The Catholic Church has jurisdiction over all things that pertain to the sanctification and salvation of souls. This authority rests in the Power of the Keys which comes from Christ's promise to St Peter when He said to Him, 'That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven' (Mt 16:18-19).

Whilst no Pope can have the final say, of course, in who gets into heaven and who does not (only the Judge, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has that) the Church was nonetheless given the power of the keys by Christ, that is, the power to open and close the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven, just as Eliakim was given the power over the gates of the city of Jerusalem here on earth such that, 'I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open' (Is 22:22).



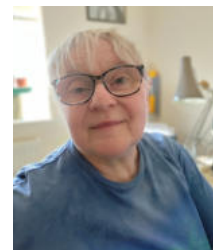
Souls in Purgatory Assisted by Angels
Stanisław Wyspiański, 19th Century.

At one level, the key in Isaiah foreshadows the Cross laid upon the shoulder of the Son of David, Christ Himself, as He carried it to Calvary, died upon it, and by rising from the dead opened the gates of Heaven. At another level, Christ is passing on that authority to His Vicar here on earth, St Peter and his successors, so that the work of sanctification and salvation may continue once Christ has ascended back into Heaven at the end of His public mission on earth. But we can never be sure that any individual soul has benefited from the indulgences we have tried to gain on his behalf. For this reason we must continue to try to gain indulgences and be generous in our efforts to do so throughout the whole year, and not just in November.

Response to Music

Three excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*

by Mim MacMahon



As I write, it is only a few days since some friends and I had the joy of performing in the annual “*Messiah from Scratch*” at the Royal Albert Hall with a choir numbering about 3000. This is the now traditional “big *Messiah*” with which, I’m guessing, most of us are now familiar. And singing in such a staging feels magnificent, even when (like me) you’ve done it more than twenty times before. But these were not the forces for which “*Messiah*” was originally written and scored. The forces which played the first performance at the newly opened Great Music Hall in Fishamble Street, Dublin, on 13th April 1742 consisted of two trumpets, one set of timpani, two oboes, two violins, one viola and basso continuo.

The singers were sixteen boys and sixteen men borrowed from St Patrick’s and Christ Church cathedrals, plus two (rather controversial) lady soloists, Christina Maria Avoglio and Susannah Cibber. In this regard, it is instructive – and rewarding – to go in search of a “small *Messiah*”, one with forces comparable to Handel’s original. YouTube produced a beauty; a performance by the Academy of Ancient Music, with the combined vocal forces of Voces 8 and Apollo 5, all conducted by Barnaby Smith. It took place in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, in December 2019. It’s not complete (they miss out “He Was Despised” – why?) but it is very enjoyable.

The Academy of Ancient Music uses “period” instruments, gut-stringed violins, “natural” trumpets and so forth. The sound is crisp and clean, the parts much more audible when not submerged in the fuzzy “swoosh” that comes from larger forces. So, the excerpts. My first pick, from Part I, is the recitative “Behold, a virgin shall conceive” followed by the solo and chorus “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion”. The text is taken from the King James translation of the Bible, the famous Isaiah prophecy of the Messiah’s birth. What touched me in this particular performance was the radiance

given out by the young alto soloist, Katie Jeffries-Harris. Her singing is actually joyful. “Say unto the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God’,” she sings and she is beaming. It’s as if she is saying “I’ve got some great news and I can’t wait to share it!” The chorus takes up the message with a sense of excitement that does not at any time degenerate into messiness. The joy is infectious. Part II, from whence my second pick comes, is, of course, the “sad” part. The sorrowful mysteries, if you will. I’ve chosen the chorus “All we like sheep have gone astray”. The words are from the Song of the Suffering Servant, the almost unbearable Isaiah 53: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.”

The injustice stings. Handel paints it in music. Under the voice parts there is a clicking harpsichord that gives the sense of the little clicking hooves of the sheep as they run off in different directions. The voice parts, literally, go all over the place. The sopranos “go astray” with the tenors, the altos with the basses. And switch and switch about. Every time I’ve sung this I’ve had a clear mental image of hundreds of woolly bottoms disappearing every which way. The smaller, more precise rendition of Voces8 and Apollo 5 loses nothing of this shaggy chaos. Until... Until, 16 bars before the end, when the voice parts somehow resolve, and the tempo slows down to *adagio*.

And the mood is completely different. Together, mournfully, tenderly, the chorus moves into a slow, heartbroken chorale “And the Lord hath laid on him, on him, the iniquity of us all.” Now we face the devastating consequences. This is what we have done. Part II, of course, doesn’t end there. It ends with Easter, with the Hallelujah chorus. Some audience members think that’s the end. Er – no. There’s Part III. There’s the remarkable “follow that!” for the soprano of “I know that my Redeemer liveth”, the soul’s response to the Resurrection. And

then – then the words change. Taken mostly from St Paul, they become meditations on what will happen to us as a result of this stupendous event. And so to my third pick, the bass recitative “Behold, I tell you a mystery” followed by the aria “The trumpet shall sound” for bass, solo trumpet, and orchestra. To come clean, this is my favourite aria. It’s really two voices, of course. The bass and the trumpet are singing a duet. In the Albert Hall, the trumpet is at risk of getting obscured by the rest of the instruments, because of the size of the forces involved. On this YouTube video there is no such risk. I’m sorry that I can’t tell you the trumpeter’s name, though I did try to find it out. The bass soloist is Frederick Long.

Their voices call, respond and intertwine wonderfully, proclaiming the general resurrection with dignity and, for a young singer, gravitas – but you still feel that they are enjoying it. What might be fun – if you are as enthusiastic about “*Messiah*” as I am – would be to compare and contrast a “small” and a “large” version, and see how different they feel. And, also, if at any point the size of the forces makes no difference. I’ve sung the “Hallelujah” chorus with three other people, one voice to each part, and it still felt magnificent. So ... take your choice. But try to catch a live “*Messiah*” somewhere, if you can. There is no feeling like it, whether you are a singer or in the audience. And, if you are in the audience, the conductor will invite you to stand for No. 44. Enjoy!

Handel, “*Messiah*” – Voces 8, Apollo 5 and the Academy of Ancient Music, Barnaby Smith:

https://youtu.be/XiBHbadRVBUsi=V1T5z-fRoCuDrSL_c

Handel, “*Messiah*” No 44 “Hallelujah” – The Really Big Chorus, English Festival Orchestra, Brian Kay:

https://youtu.be/b_ZR8rXLaxA?si=L_JC3S89CNgS2DI

Making a joyful noise

Life in St Pancras choir

by Rose Palmer



Unbelievably – to me – I first joined St Pancras choir around thirty years ago. Apart from singing at school many years earlier, I was an utter choir novice. Luckily for me, as a soprano, I generally got the tune which always makes life easier! The other choristers – a small band then, as now – took me under their collective wing and bore with me as I learned the repertoire. Turning out on a Friday evening for practice took a bit of getting used to but as a stay at home mum with a husband working long hours, it became quite a welcome outlet (perhaps I wasn't getting out enough!).

Over the next twenty something years (oh my gosh!) I became familiar with the liturgical seasons as the music cycled round. Singing on a Friday evening in the empty church, the sound echoing around the space, can be a special experience. We have recently revived our former practice of ending with a choir novena and a simple sung *Salve Regina*, *Alma Redemptoris*, or *Regina Coeli*, which draws us back and reminds us why we are singing. Choir membership has ebbed and flowed over the years; I myself took a break and when I returned there was a whole new parish priest who actually allowed more than three hymn verses to be sung! We work hard at learning new plainchant every week. Apart from our Director and Organist, few of us are

musically trained, so it can be a slog, but it's good to aim high – particularly as we are the only Catholic church choir left in Ipswich. During my time with the choir we have produced choral offerings for countless Masses, weddings and funerals. We even performed the *Fauré Requiem* with the support of various individuals co-opted by our Director. (She has a habit of sniffing out potential performers, so “be very very wary” if she finds out you can sing..) The purpose of a church choir is to support the singing of the liturgy. According to the Catechism, sacred music fulfills its task through the beauty of expressive prayer, the unanimous participation of the assembly at dedicated moments, and the solemn character of the celebration.

All three of these link sacred music intimately to the work of Christ in the liturgy and in our hearts. To me this brings to mind standing in the choir loft at the Easter Vigil, hearing the Exultet sung and watching the flame pass from candle to candle, illuminating the dark church. St Augustine is said to have remarked that “He who sings, prays twice”, and so we pray heartily every 11.00 Mass, joining our voices with the “choirs of angels in Heaven”. We trust and pray that St Pancras’ choral tradition will continue long into the future, so if you’re feeling a little musical tug in your heart during Mass, climb those stairs at the back of the church and add your voice to our “joyful noise”.



Parish Magazine Sponsorship

We are very grateful to those who have recently renewed their sponsorship for the parish magazine. Each sponsorship helps to meet the costs of printing and regular publication. Anyone interested in sponsoring the magazine, please contact the church office or speak with Father Joseph.

A New Beginning at Warwick

by Sofia Barcella-Kopuk

I started my university experience this year, at Warwick University, doing a four year joint honours in Spanish and Italian. I was a little nervous as well as excited before joining, not knowing what to expect. But as soon as I arrived, I knew that this uni was for me. Straight away as I was moving in, I met my best friend and flatmate. I quickly got close with three of them and now we do everything together. I love my classes; the professors are all so incredible and full of wisdom, ready to help you with anything they can. I also had the opportunity to join societies during the first two weeks, so I joined Italian, Turkish Women and Catholic Society. I think the society part is incredible as I can keep true to my heritage and roots, as well as my religion, even when away from home, family and my parish. We have a chapel here on campus which is open most days and welcomes anyone from any religion or none. I was so happy when I researched and found a parish church just 15 minutes away from campus, Saint Joseph the Worker.



The services on Sunday morning are so beautiful; a bit different from how Father Joseph does his Mass but it's interesting to me to see how each priest has their own techniques and choices. The thing that shocked me the most but also made me very hopeful was the amazing turnout at the student Mass on Sunday mornings; each week the church is full of students who also want to honour and keep up their faith. I have met lovely people whether it be at the university itself or from church or the many societies open to students. This honestly helped me to settle in and make a thing as hard as leaving home and my family a little easier and just goes to show that although we might be nervous and anticipating when it comes to change, it can also be one of the best things to happen and allow us all to flourish to our full potential.

Traditional central European honey gingerbread cookies

By Sandra Katina

Ingredients:

- 500 grams - plain flour
- 190 grams - icing sugar
- 2 eggs
- 125 grams – honey
- 125 grams – butter or margarine
- 13 grams - mixed spice
- 1 heaped teaspoon – baking soda

Sift the dry ingredients together and mix. Add the rest of the ingredients, which should all be at room temperature. Then, use a stand mixer to knead everything together. Leave it to rest at room temperature, ideally until the next day. When the dough is ready, roll it out to 4–5 mm. (When you're ready to roll, give the board a little sprinkle of flour.

Don't worry if the dough is still a bit sticky – just flour the rolling pin. When you're rolling out your dough, it's best not to add flour to it, as this can sometimes make it a bit dry.) Then, just cut out the shapes with the cookie cutters. Pop them in the oven at 200°F for about 4–5 minutes. If you want your cookies to stay nice and soft, pop them in an airtight tin.



Christmas is nearly here

A poem by Winston Bayross

It's already December,
and Christmas is nearly here.
The autumn leaves have fallen
in the cold chilly air.
Winter is coming;
it's the season of good cheer,
when all mankind does proclaim:
Jesus is born, and is come
to be our Saviour.

There's the holly and the ivy
and the three kings. They saw
and followed the star.
Let's sing all the hymns
and praise The Lord—Emmanuel.
It's good, and there's some
peace on earth.

It's such a wonderful time
of year. The Christmas tree
stands up straight
in the corner of the room.
It's covered in fairy lights,
all greens, reds, yellows
and blues that sparkle
and delight. I can't wait
for evening time
to turn out the light;
it's a beautiful sight!

Opening my presents
on Christmas morn
with such joyful surprise,
and then I'll have another
look at your Christmas card—
it's a pretty good one!

Your message is as ever:
God bless, best wishes
and cheers.



A trip to Rome

By Florence Griggs, age 15

Recently, I was given the chance to go to Rome with a party from St Albans. It was amazing, everywhere you go there's something to see—beautiful churches, huge statues and so much history—but walking into St Peter's basilica was definitely the best. Of course even more special was the papal audience where my school group were given the opportunity to stand on the steps of St Peter's and see Pope Leo up close and even shake his hand. Meeting the Pope was a very unreal experience and definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We also visited the Basilica of St Mary Major and saw the tomb of Pope Francis which was surreal because he was such a notable figure in the church. After seeing his tomb we attended Mass there which felt very special. Overall, the whole trip was a great experience and afterwards has made me see my faith in a different—but good way and made me feel so much more connected to our faith.



Christmas poetry

by Claudia Griggs, age 10

December time now lets make this poem rhyme:
Reindeers on the roofs making a noise stamping their hooves
Christmas has much joy some children ask for a toy
Old St Nick back again here in town without a frown

Mince pies no lies have one bite on Christmas night
Christmas is here, Christmas is here bringing joy throughout the year
Baby Jesus born in hay, laid in a stable far away
Children come out to play you must know it's Christmas day

Gingerbread man getting a tan
New time new year now time to celebrate and cheer
Snowflakes fall in winter time to remember our happy splendour
Leaves have fallen off the tree to signalise it's Christmas time

Santa goes back to his reindeer shack
He sees the elves working hard for next Christmas as they make their new business
Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen
Santa counts his reindeers there's one missin' don't worry it's not Blitzen

There's a shiny red spot in the sky, Santa knows it's Rudolph flying by
Children singing carols the church bells ring Christmas is here now lets sing
Hurry scurry pull the sleigh soon it will be Christmas Day
Bethlehem star far away Jesus our Saviour is born today



CHILDREN'S WORD SEARCH!



ADVENT WORD SEARCH

"Mary said 'yes' to God and traveled to visit her cousin Elizabeth, carrying joy and love in her heart. Along the way, she walked with courage and hope, bringing a little bit of God's light to everyone she met. Can you find all the hidden words in this puzzle that remind us of Mary, her journey, and the special things we can do during Advent? Circle each word you find!"

JOURNEY

ELIZABETH

VISIT

KINDNESS

WAITING

PRAYER



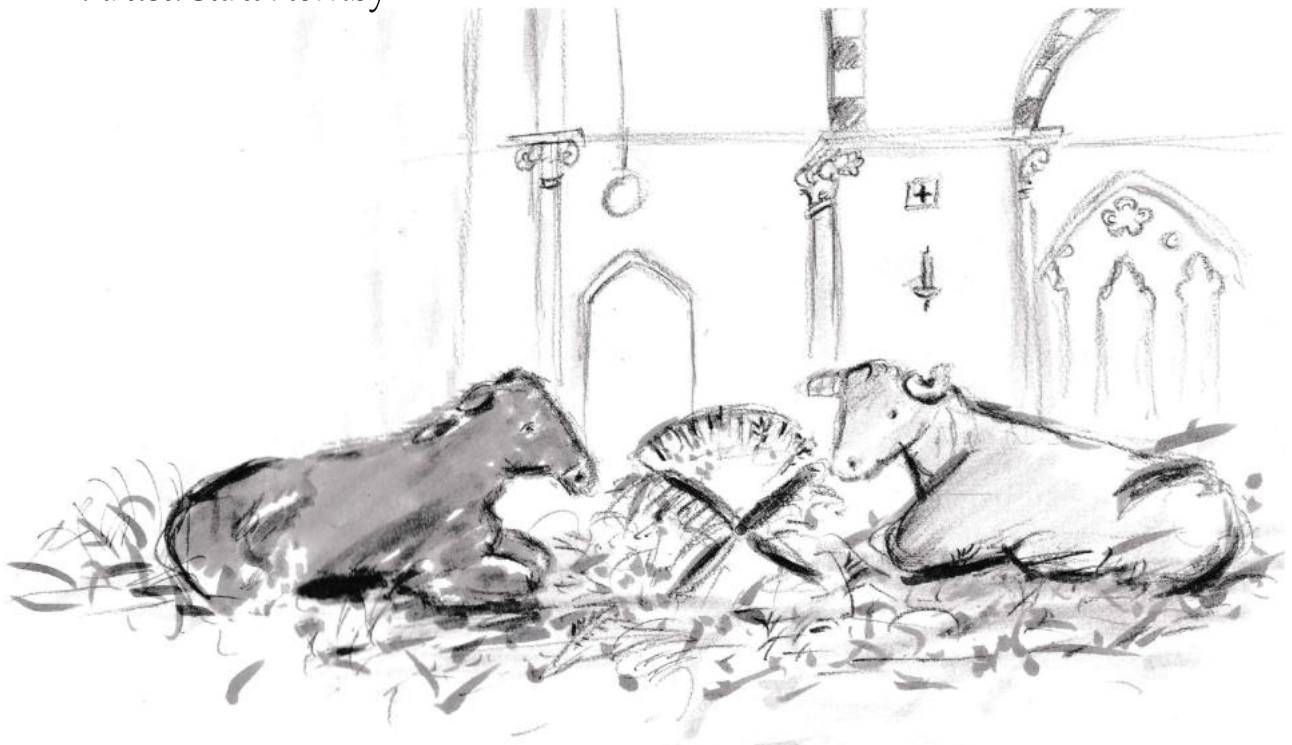
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E	E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H
S	B	O	K	U	N	B	R	T	D
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**"BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN,
AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB"**

Luke 1:42

Source: www.catholicprintablesforkids.com

Artist: Sara Hornby



5th December
Before the empty manger

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: thy holy cities are a wilderness, Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation: our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

We have sinned, and are as an unclean thing, and we all do fade as a leaf: our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away; thou hast hid thy face from us: and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know me and believe me: I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour: and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, my salvation shall not tarry: I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions: fear not for I will save thee: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Plorate, caeli (Isaiah 45:8)

Why do we do that?

By Father Joseph

We all have favourite Christmas customs, often dating from fond memories of childhood, which in turn may date back to customs observed by our parents or even our grandparents in their childhood. Yet many of our happiest recollections of Christmases past centre around traditions that are common to us all, such as decorating Christmas trees, eating hot mince pies, singing carols, and of course giving and receiving presents. Probably we have wondered from time to time where such customs come from.

Who first thought of putting up a tree indoors? Who cooked the first mince pie? Why do we associate the singing of carols with outdoor carolling? And why do pantomimes feature so much at this time of year and not at any other? Many of these traditions date back into the dim and distant past, to the Middle Ages in some cases and even before that in others, but what is most interesting is that they are all directly related to Christ and to our faith as Christians, even though some of them had their origins in pagan customs and were Christianized later. So, let's take a look at some of them.

25th December

First, why do we celebrate Christmas when we do? What's special about 25th December? Was that the day on which Christ was, in fact, born? 25th December was (before the calendar was reformed) the shortest day of the year, and on that day pagans had long made offerings to the sun in the hope that they would not be abandoned at the darkest time of the year. When Christmas came to be celebrated, this shortest day of the year was a natural day on which to worship the Son of God (as opposed to the sun god) who was, as He Himself said, the light of the world (Jn 8:12). Christ brought light into a world darkened by sin, and as a result light has always been a feature of Christmas celebrations.

Before the coming of electricity, people used to have lighted candles on their Christmas trees! Today's health and safety people would not approve, but lights on our trees represent the stars that shone in the night sky over Bethlehem. Today, we use a different calendar, and the shortest day of the year is 21st December. However, the 25th is the day on which it is first possible to detect the slightest lengthening in daylight hours, so the date is still significant: the sun begins to rise, just as the Son of God rises from the darkness of the tomb at Easter.

There is a very old tradition in the Church that the Angel Gabriel visited Our Lady on 25th March to announce the coming birth of Christ, and that it was on 25th March some years later that Christ died on the Cross on that very first Good Friday. In fact, in the Orthodox Churches today, if Good Friday falls on 25th March they keep the feast of the Annunciation first and then observe all the solemnities of Good Friday. That makes for a very long service indeed! But this tradition is so old that it is possible that 25th March really was the actual day on which St Gabriel made his announcement and that, therefore, the Christ Child really was born on 25th December, nine months later. So, keeping Christmas on that day may not be quite the random date that some modern thinkers suppose.

The Christmas Crib

The Christmas crib, with its figures of Our Lady, St Joseph, the Christ Child, the shepherds, and the Wise Men, was not always with us. St Francis of Assisi (c.1181 – 1226) was the first person to put up a crib to try to bring home to people the reality of those events that had happened so long before. But St Francis didn't use little statues: he used real people and real animals. He wanted people to appreciate how hard things had been for the Holy Family, and



how important a role poverty played in the life of Christ and how detachment from material possessions should be a feature of our own life of Christian virtue. Interestingly, there is no mention of an ox and an ass in any of the four Gospels. Instead, it is right at the beginning of the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament that we hear of them: 'The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib.' The very next line explains what the prophet is getting at: 'but Israel has not known me, and my people has not understood' (Is 1:3).

In other words, at least the beasts of the field recognize their Creator and bow down in silent adoration before Him even though human beings might not. And that is what they represent in our cribs today: not some cute image of cosiness but a stark reminder that we, too, should bow and kneel before the God who created us (Ps 94:6), just as the beasts do.

Nativity Plays

Nativity plays – these days usually associated chiefly with primary schools – have been with us for hundreds of years. Peoples of all cultures and eras have enjoyed watching plays at times of festival. The old Mummings plays (from the French word, *momer* meaning 'to mask oneself'), sometimes called Miracle plays when they depicted specifically religious stories, were often performed in Mediæval times around Christmas time as well as during spring and summer festivals too.

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The point of the Miracle plays was to teach stories from the Bible, and from the lives of the saints, to an audience of people who were largely illiterate and couldn't read the stories for themselves. As time went on, the story of Christmas became as popular as the more dramatic stories of St George slaying the dragon, although the story of Herod and the Holy Innocents was every bit as sensational of course.

Carolling

Singing carols outdoors began in the Italian town of Graecia in 1224 when St Francis staged his first crib. Carols were sung as part of the arrangement, and the singers carried on singing as they walked home. And so street carolling began. Sometimes, the vernacular words (compared to the Latin hymns sung in churches) and the lively melodies were deemed unsuitable for church services, and so carols often came to be sung outside, and small groups would make their way around the village in return for some warming refreshment. Today, we still have many Christmas songs that are certainly unsuited to church services, but our traditional carols are now almost all beautiful expositions of the true story of Christ's nativity and its significance for the sanctification and salvation of the world. Incidentally, the word carol comes from the old French carole, which was a kind of dance in a ring accompanied by singing.

Evergreens

The evergreen plants around us symbolize the everlasting life that comes to us from God through His grace. God is living with us even in the darkest times, and His life permeates and penetrates the lifelessness of sin's winter. William Shakespeare, whom some people think may have been a Catholic, may have had this idea at the back of his mind when he wrote that famous opening to the Duke of Gloucester's speech in his play, Richard III: 'Now is the winter of our discontent/Made glorious summer by this sun of York,' except that the sun of York, for us, is the Son of God who brings the glory of God's light to a world

thrown into discontent by sin. Holly, with its prickly leaves, symbolizes Christ's crown of thorns whilst the red berries are like the drops of blood shed by Our Lord on the Cross. By contrast, mistletoe has never been a Christian symbol, being, as it is, a reminder of the legend of the gods Baldr, and Loki, and Hödr, and to this day it is associated with pagan ceremonies and rituals, which is why you do not usually see mistletoe in Catholic church flower arrangements.

The Christmas Tree

Whoever thought of putting a tree indoors! Well, the first Christmas tree is popularly believed to have been set up by Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert in 1840. However, it was Queen Charlotte, the German wife of King George III, who actually first introduced the idea of the Christmas tree into England in 1800. But it is said that the Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, first thought to put candles on a fir tree to remind us of the stars in the night sky over Bethlehem. Hence, the first ever Christmas tree decorations were candles! Yet even before Luther, it was a Catholic saint who truly invented the Christmas tree: St Boniface. Originally from Devon in southwest England, St Boniface travelled to Germany to convert the pagans to Christianity in the eighth century. He discovered that the oak tree was central to some of their ceremonies and, in cutting it down, found an evergreen fir tree nestled in its roots and proclaimed it as a symbol of the everlasting life of the one true God. From then on, the fir tree was associated not only with Christ but especially with the idea of His birth in the darkness of winter.

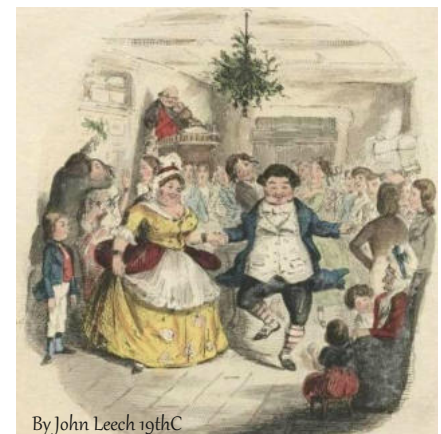
Christmas Pudding and Mince Pies

Although the fruits in Christmas puddings these days are mainly currants, raisins, and sultanas, originally prunes (dried plums) were the main fruit and it was more of a broth, or soup, than the pudding we know and love today. Gradually it came to be served more as a porridge than as a broth, and was eaten alongside the

main course of the meal. Later still, in the eighteenth century, it became sweeter and was used as the pudding, or dessert, at the end of dinner, and came to be served chiefly at Christmas time. But it was the Victorians, helped by Charles Dickens' tale, *A Christmas Carol*, who really brought it to prominence as a Christmas speciality. Similarly, mince pies also went through a period of transformation. Originally a mutton pie, they too came to be sweetened. They started out oval, or cradle shaped, and not round as they are today. This was to remind us of the manger in which Our Lord was laid when He was born. In some places it was the custom to eat mince pies quietly in reverence of the Christ Child, and it was not the done thing to cut mince pies for the same reason! Perhaps the quiet reverence with which they were once eaten is the origin of the silent wish that some people still make when they have their first mince pie of the season. It was also said that you should have one mince pie each day for the twelve days of Christmas to bring you good luck in each of the following twelve months but that each mince pie eaten before Christmas would bring a month's worth of bad luck!

Christmas Presents.

And, finally, why do we give Christmas presents? Well, in part, as a reminder of the gifts that the shepherds and the Three Wise Men gave to Our Lord in Bethlehem, but chiefly as a way to celebrate – and participate in – the gift that God gave to us on that first Christmas morning: the gift of His divine Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Happy Christmas!



By John Leech 19thC



Réewum muuñ yi

A trip to Senegal

By Paul Shilling

You may be rushing to your language translator after reading the title of my piece (or not). It is in Wolof the main language of Senegal. Just under two weeks ago my partner Shirley and I returned from that West African country that is still not on the bucket list of many travellers. That was one of the reasons for choosing that country. To feel like we were on an adventure, like pioneers of old days. Senegal is typical of many West African countries. Incredibly busy, colourful, multicultural and religiously diverse. 80% of the population is Muslim, around 13% Catholic and the rest a mixture of other religions. This includes animism, which in Senegal is a pervasive belief system where spirits are believed to inhabit natural objects, and though often syncretised with Islam, it deeply influences daily life, rituals, and community practices.

It manifests through traditions like wearing protective amulets called gris-gris, consulting traditional healers and spiritual guides for various concerns from illness to success, and respecting sacred natural sites like forests, particularly in southern regions like Casamance. This is an area that Shirley and I visited. The core beliefs are follows: spiritual essence: the core belief is that spirits inhabit natural objects, creatures, and places, such as animals, plants, rocks, and rivers. Two worlds: there is a belief in two connected worlds: the physical world and an invisible world of spirits and deities. Intermediaries: elders, religious leaders (marabouts), and other specialists serve as intermediaries between the human and spiritual worlds. Manifestations in daily life and culture amulets: many Senegalese wear gris-gris, or amulets, for spiritual protection against curses

and evil spirits. Health and well-being: Traditional healers and spiritual leaders are consulted for both physical and mental illnesses, which are sometimes seen as the result of supernatural forces. Rituals and ceremonies: practices include making offerings and performing rituals to ensure good harvests, health, and success, especially around places considered sacred. Sacred natural sites: Specific locations, such as certain trees (like the kapok and tamarind) and sacred forests, are considered spiritual refuges or places where spirits reside. Relationship with other religions syncretism: animist beliefs are not a separate religion but are often blended with the dominant religions of Islam and Christianity in a practice known as African Islam. Coexistence: many Muslims and Christians in Senegal continue to participate in animist rituals and believe in the power of spirits and amulets, even if it is considered superstitious by some.

Official vs. traditional: while Islam is the dominant religion practised by the vast majority, traditional animist beliefs and practices remain influential in many aspects of life, particularly in rural areas. Whilst in the Casamance region we were fortunate enough to meet an animistic king of the Diola people. He co-operates with the government authorities regarding the running of his kingdom and can ask for assistance if any issues that are beyond his remit, like political problems occurred. He is traditionally dressed in red with a tall hat, not a crown. I have included a photo of him, taken after our audience at his village. He was dignified, confident and proud of his people. The bird life was superb at times, both in numbers and quality. One intimate encounter stands out. As I was surveying Gorée Island from a lofty position I felt a sharp scratch at the back of my head. Looking up I saw a Black Kite wheeling away from me at speed. It had successfully dive-bombed me and offered a quick Indian Head Massage! What had I

done to offend it? The slave trade on Gorée Island, and in many other parts of the country, was very prominent in the 19th century. The iniquitous conditions that these poor individuals had to endure before their departure to the new world was utterly abhorrent. One can only imagine the suffering endured. This legacy cannot be forgotten, especially as human slavery is still prominent in so many parts of the world. Yes, poverty exists. Some extreme and heartbreaking. I have prayed for them, those that live in corrugated shacks with few resources and especially the children. Their animated, smiling faces as we passed and frantic waving lifted the spirits.



One wonderful experience was to witness a village tribal dance. Young male tribal members danced with two spirit dancers, one completely clothed in a grass covering. This represents the rite of passage the former have to undertake to become men. The other villagers played loud hypnotic music, the women dressed in resplendent coloured dresses, many with babies strapped to their backs. All authentic (when we had left they were expecting to dance for another five hours!). I managed to visit the cathedral in Dakar, the capital. Unfortunately the Sunday Mass had just ended but I was allowed to enter the Cathedral by displaying my rosary to the guard at the side door (no groups are allowed access), and immerse myself in the sights, sounds and smells of a foreign country.

to briefly integrate into their society. Every day during the holiday, I thanked our blessed Lord for all the blessings I received. It did, however, make me realise just how fortunate I am to have my Catholic faith. To serve such a magnanimous God. To return to my spiritual home at St Pancras.



Book Club Report – September 2025

“The Templars and the Shroud of Christ” by Barbara Frale

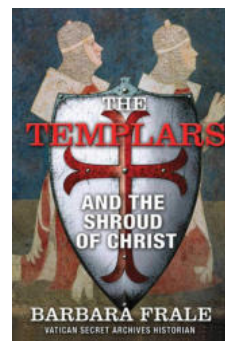
By Mim MacMahon

You’ll have noticed, first of all, that I am not Brian Price, who usually writes this report. Sadly, he wasn’t at Book Club this quarter, so I’m craving your indulgence – you’ve got me instead. Brian, I’ll do my best. The above book was first published in Italian as *I Templari e la sindone di Cristo* in 2009. Barbara Frale (pronounced “Frah-lay”, we assume) is a palaeographer who works at the Vatican secret archive. In the book, she debates some documents referring to a mysterious idol, said to have been venerated by the Templars and used in the citations against them when they were accused of heresy and idolatry.

She hypothesises that the “idol” was actually an image of the dead Christ, having similar characteristics to the Shroud of Turin – and that it could actually have been the Shroud itself. Some issues were experienced with style and language, which we perceived was because the book was translated into American rather than British English; we felt that at points the translation was a rather “clunky” one, with difficulties of style and even some mistakes. Dr Frale’s stated aim is not to discuss whether or not the Shroud of Turin is the actual Shroud of Our Lord. Instead, she says that her object is to study a

possible relationship of the Knights Templar with the artefact that is currently known as the Holy Shroud, and is a mysterious and unique piece, whatever you believe it to be. Discussion was lively, and ranged around topics ranging from the nonsense that has been put out about the Templars over the centuries (Dan Brown, shudder!) to the importance of relics and why the Church permits them to be venerated; and in this regard, the special “aura” that surrounds an object that may, just may, have touched the body of a special individual.

This, of course, is a very difficult area for non-Catholics, but perhaps non-Catholics should consider the “glamour” (for want of a better word) that surrounds dresses worn by Princess Diana, or football shirts “graced” by the persons of Pelé, say, or Cristiano Ronaldo. In that light, the statement “Relics have been imbued with holiness”, made by one Book Club member, suddenly makes sense. Unexpectedly, we also found ourselves discussing, because it was pertinent to the book’s narrative, the ancient heresy known as Catharism or Gnosticism. Google is your friend at this point; but the relevant issue is that the Cathars believed that Our Lord did not exist in any physical



The Templars and the Shroud of Christ —
Barbara Frale, Maverick House, 2011.

form, only a spiritual one, and that therefore the Crucifixion either did not happen to Him at all, or was in some way celestially stage-managed. (Again, Google is your friend.) Obviously this completely counters our belief in the true humanity of the Lord, and importantly, it was rife in Southern France at the point in time in which the Templars are said to have kept, and venerated, their strange object, which may or may not have been the Shroud. And that is why the Shroud would be terribly important. After all, a purely “spirit” being would not need one. Our discussion was much more varied even than this, ranging from aspects of quantum physics (really!) to whether the actual Shroud, the object in Turin that is, shows the marks of coins placed over the figure’s eyes which bear the image, or inscription, of Tiberius Caesar, Roman Emperor at the time when we believe the Crucifixion to have taken place, around AD 30.

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(This one seemed an absolute clincher, but I have since remembered, wouldn't I just, that when I was a child in the 1960s, before decimal coinage in the UK, pennies bearing the head of Queen Victoria, who died in 1901, were still in circulation, and that I saw such pennies with my own eyes because my mother picked them out of the loose change. Just saying.) We also wondered whether there is any other thing in the world that is even remotely like the Shroud. We think it is unique, but do research both the Cloak of Guadalupe and the image of Our Lady of Czestekowa, both of which were mentioned. Again, Google... None of the above does justice to the

discussion that was had around this unusual book, or that proved to be a most stimulating evening. The Book Club is meeting again on Monday, 8th December, when the book discussed will be "The Creed in Slow Motion" by Martin Kochanski. We are very much looking forward to it.



From the archive



LEAVING FOR ROME: Girl Guides of the Ipswich Catholic Company leaving Ipswich Station yesterday on the first stage of their Holy year pilgrimage to Rome.

EIGHT-DAY STAY IN ROME AND AN AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

A party of Girl Guides, members of the 16th Ipswich Catholic Company, some of whom are seen in our picture, left Ipswich for Rome yesterday.

The party of seven Guides, led by Mrs. L. Fitzpatrick (captain) and

Miss B. Chadwick (brown owl), will to-morrow join a company of 500 in London and will then leave for Italy.

They will spend eight days in Rome and will have an audience of the Pope.

On their return they will spend 36 hours in Paris.

Richardson

Chadwick

Holy year pilgrimage, 1950

Reflections from Rome and Nettuno

A happy band of pilgrims made their way from Ipswich to Rome on 22nd September. We hope you will enjoy reading their personal recollections of a blessed pilgrimage.

by Jo Shevlin

It seems a long time ago, now, since Father Joseph asked me to help co-ordinate a parish trip to Rome and Nettuno to visit the statue of Our Lady of Grace that originated in Ipswich. But here we are nine months later with wonderful memories of a special pilgrimage. That said, we were dealt a blow just three weeks before our departure when we learned that Father Joseph wouldn't be able to accompany us. We were so disappointed, for ourselves and for him because this was a trip inspired by him and close to his heart. We would've been like sheep without a shepherd if Father hadn't arranged for Father Henry Whisenant from Withermarsh Green Latin Mass Chaplaincy to step into the breach and lead our pilgrimage. We were blessed by his company, spiritual guidance and knowledge of Rome.

We hit the ground running on the first day, heading off for Mass at the Chiesa dell'Immacolata dei Miracoli. This was the first of many trips running after Father Henry who was always twenty steps ahead of us holding his hat aloft so that we didn't lose him! We did a lot of walking – I was averaging 15,000 steps a day which is a lot for me! One of the highlights for me was the procession on Tuesday into St Peter's Basilica via the Holy Door (we carried the intentions of Father Joseph and our fellow parishioners from St Pancras, as well as all those who had asked us to pray for them). I have visited Rome a few times before but the beauty and grandeur of St Peter's never fails to astound me. We had reserved tickets on-line for the papal audience but they still had to be picked up in person so I told the group I was just nipping across the square to the collection point. Ha!

The last time I had done this was many years ago, and it took a matter of minutes. Not so these days. I nearly fainted when I saw the length

of the queue where I stood in line for 1.5 hours along with hundreds of other pilgrims all asking the same question: "what was the point of the online booking?". I eventually got to the front of the queue but it was a great test of patience! The next day, precious tickets in hand, we made it to the Wednesday papal audience. I defy anyone not to get as excited as a teenager waiting for a boy band to come on stage, when standing in St Peter's Square in expectation of the Pope's arrival and then his tour around the square in the pope-mobile. At the start of every audience, each country is welcomed in their own language. Imagine our delight when the English groups were welcomed and, first out of the hat, we heard the words "Welcome to a group of parishioners from St Pancras Church in Ipswich!"

After the audience, we paid visits to the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (the burial place of St Catherine of Siena and of Fra Angelico) then to the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi where we saw three awesome canvasses by Caravaggio depicting the life of St Matthew. Then it was time for lunch at a super restaurant we found near Trevi Fountain called Osteria del Grillo – highly recommended! Our last full day on Thursday brought another packed schedule and the most important part of our trip – a journey to Nettuno to see the original statue of Our Lady of Ipswich. It was quite amazing to look up at the statue and to think that it once stood in Lady Lane!

We were privileged to have Mass in the private chapel and then to visit the tomb of St Maria Goretti which is housed in the Basilica. Afterwards, another delightful lunch on the beach right next to the Basilica. And a paddle in the sea! We got back to Rome just in time to visit the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. For me, this was the icing on the cake as I'd never managed to visit on previous trips to Rome. There aren't enough superlatives to describe the beauty and splendour of this Basilica. It takes your breath away. In the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, I knelt in awe at the most beautiful tabernacle I have ever seen. The 8-metre high gold and marble dome held by four bronze angels couldn't be a more fitting dwelling place for Our Blessed Lord. After that, it was time for our last meal in Rome with our wonderful group.

As a thank you for leading our pilgrimage, we presented Father Henry with a statue of St Maria Goretti (he was ordained on her feast day), and I was humbled to receive from the group a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Ipswich as a thank you for organising the trip. I had placed the organisation of this pilgrimage into the hands of Our Lady of Ipswich and she guided us every step of the way. Deo Gratias! On our return to St Pancras, we were delighted to present Father Joseph with a statue of Our Lady of Ipswich to thank him for his inspiration for our pilgrimage and for accompanying us in prayer.



Group photo in front of St Peter's Basilica

By Claire and Jim Convey

Such a joyful pilgrimage to Rome with wonderful people from our parish. It was our first time visiting Rome. The main highlight for Jim and me was getting to meet Pope Leo. Jim was in a wheelchair so we were brought into the Auditorium. Pope Leo came around and he gave us all an Apostolic blessing, and we got to shake hands with him. What a joy and a blessing! Certainly, a moment we will always remember! Getting to walk through the Holy Door in this Jubilee year was a real privilege and being inside St Peter's was truly awesome. Outside in St Peter's Square, on top of the pillars, Father Henry pointed out a statue of St Clare holding the monstrance which she saved from the enemy during an invasion in troubled past times.

The visit to Nettuno to see the original statue of Our Lady of Ipswich was just amazing. We brought everyone at St Pancras to her in our prayers. We also visited the tomb of St Maria Goretti which was in the same Basilica. We also had a lovely visit to the beach while there! Another wonderful highlight was our visit to Santa Maria Maggiore (Our Lady of the Snows). It was wonderful to see part of the original crib of our Lord. A truly beautiful church. We also enjoyed our trip to the Trevi

Fountain and Spanish Steps which were amazing. We would like to thank Father Joseph, and Jo Shevlin for organising this wonderful pilgrimage and Father Henry for leading us so well. Also, a huge thank you to everyone who helped to push Jim in the wheelchair. Precious memories! We are truly grateful.



Pope in Auditorium blessing pilgrims



Claire and Jim paddling in the sea

By Christine McMahon

One of the many highlights of our pilgrimage to Rome was seeing Pope Leo XIV. I was privileged to be given a ringside seat so had a wonderful view of him on the podium. Going through the Holy Door in this Jubilee Year was also very special as was our visit to Nettuno. I enjoyed all the places we visited and I had an amazing time with a wonderful group of pilgrims who were all very kind. Here's a picture of us on our last evening out



From Rosa de Pasquale–Patten

I will always be grateful for being able to go on this pilgrimage. There are so many things that will be impressed in my heart and memory for a long time. The most moving highlights of the pilgrimage itself, were the procession to the Holy Door on Tuesday and then reaching our final place at Nettuno on Thursday, when we saw the beautiful Our Lady of Grace. As we started our procession towards the Holy Door at St Peter's on Tuesday, I held onto my prayers for Father Joseph, my fellow pilgrims, the parishioners at St Pancras, friends, family and myself. And then, on Thursday, when the pilgrimage came to its wonderful ending, it was amazing to place all the prayers and intentions I was carrying into her hands with hope and confidence in her intercession. The pilgrimage for me was complete - I had travelled, carrying these prayers from Ipswich; walked through the Holy Door and had arrived at Nettuno to hand them to Our Lady of Ipswich. It was such a wonderful thing.

Aside from the pilgrimage itself, there were many special moments. Father Henry kindly guided us to several places and I was so happy when we had a chance to visit Santa Maria Maggiore - the very church where I had learnt about the beautiful Lady of Snows from Father Joseph! We saw the relic of the Crib there, which was so special because you could actually see two blocks of wood! At St Peter's Basilica, we were able to visit the tombs and I got to see the tomb of St Peter. And what a joy to see Michelangelo's 'Pietà' - it was so beautiful. We were also fortunate enough to visit St Pancras church as well as going to visit Santa Maria sopra Minerva where we saw a detailed large-sized Presepio, which also included Our Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

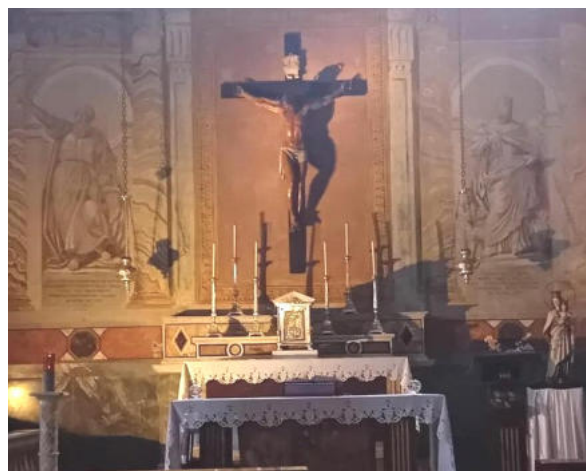


Rosa and Maria Giuseppina in St Peter's Square

We also visited some tourist spots too; we made it up the Spanish Steps and saw the lovely church at the top - Trinità dei Monti - and we also enjoyed going to see the Trevi Fountain. Another highlight without doubt, was during the Papal Audience on the Wednesday (thanks to Jo for organising this), when we shouted with joy as the Pope headed our way as he was driven to St Peter's and we heard St Pancras, Ipswich being mentioned in the announcements with a crowd of thousands! Finally, my special memories of this trip include being in the wonderful company of my fellow pilgrims. I won't forget trying to keep up with Father Henry's walking, as he kindly took us to as many churches as he could and seeing him cross the Roman roads showing no fear! And what a highlight it was to touch Jim's 'blessed' hand which Pope Leo had held at the papal audience! As I mentioned at the start, I will be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to go on this pilgrimage which was an immense privilege.

By Grace Patten

There in the Vatican City, the richness and depth of our faith was palpable. Each day unveiled a new treasure. Entering through the Holy Door into the grandeur of St. Peter's Basilica, the impressive scale of the Pantheon; the captivating work of Michelangelo, Caravaggio, and Bernini and the breathtaking architecture in the Papal Basilica of St. Mary Major. Being surrounded by the tombs and relics of the Saints, and laying eyes on the Holy Father was such a joy! The crowds that gathered from around the globe illustrated the remarkable universality of the Church, igniting within me a renewed spark and vigour for the Faith. All of this was such a blessing, but the moment that resonated with me the most occurred in the simple, hidden away Basilica of our beloved Saint Pancras. I sat in one of the side chapels, gazing up at the figure of Christ nailed to the wooden crucifix, illuminated by flickering candlelight.



Crucifix in St Pancras church

Peace enveloped me like a warm embrace. All of the overwhelming magnificence I had encountered over the past few days pointed me to Him. All of it existed because of Him and for Him. Christ, the Creator of all things; the source of beauty, who is more unfathomably beautiful than beauty itself.

From Maria Giuseppina Patten, age 7

The youngest of St Pancras' pilgrims

I have many favourite parts from my trip to Rome. My first favourite part was seeing the Trevi Fountain because I thought the architecture was really good. My second favourite bit was when I saw a nun in a green habit. I thought this was very interesting because I didn't know there were nuns that wear green habits. I also enjoyed eating an ice-cream and I thought the ice cream tasted *bellissimo* - but I have to say I should have gone for a bigger one! My fourth favourite thing about the trip was that I liked visiting Nettuno, where I enjoyed paddling my feet in the water at the beach and seeing the small river leading into the sea. At the church, I thought seeing St Maria Goretti was breathtaking and I thought the statue of Our Lady of Ipswich was beautiful. My fifth favourite part was when we visited St Peter's, because I found it breathtaking and was left speechless because of all the beautiful gold everywhere, especially up on the ceilings.

I also liked the really lovely paintings, and I was really surprised when I found out that some of the paintings were actually mosaics! I also liked seeing the tombs - seeing St Peter's tomb was beautiful; I have no words to express it. My sixth favourite bit was when we visited the Lady of Snows church, as I really liked the large nativity scene that was there, because it was very detailed and I really liked how tall Jesus looked on the bit where He is rising from the dead. However, I was shocked to see Judas was depicted in the scene too! Another highlight for me was when I saw the Pope and I was happy to see him especially when he drove past in his pope-mobile. I have never seen so many people in all my



life gathered in one place. I also enjoyed the Spanish Steps- it was incredible but tiring climbing the steps as it felt like climbing up a zillion steps! I liked the fountain at the bottom of the Spanish Steps and was really hoping I would fall in when Mummy and I filled our bottle with water! My last highlight of Rome was the convent and seeing the nuns. And I thought the Vatican wall was impressive.



From Lisa de Pasquale

As the plane touched down at Ciampino Airport, I felt a great sense of returning home and a mixture of trepidation and wonderment at what the week ahead would bring. As we got to the convent where we would be staying, I was pleasantly surprised at the simplicity and typical Italian charm of the rooms; a perfect and peaceful home for the next five days. Our days were packed, and wasting no time, we dropped off our belongings and headed for a bite to eat at a local café on the main high street just around the corner from the convent. Slightly refreshed we then headed straight to the city centre and outskirts of Vatican City, a 20 or so minute walk away.

The streets were packed with people as the sun shone brightly in the warm evening. That first evening Fr Henry said the Traditional Latin Mass at the *Chiesa dell'Immacolata dei Miracoli*, a beautiful church in typical Italian ornate style, run by the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. As Mass finished, the heavens opened, and we spent a while waiting outside as taxis were sought to ferry the group to our next destination; supper at the aptly named restaurant *Buona Forchetta*. Thankfully a taxi did finally turn up and most of the group got safely transported to the restaurant which was booked for our first supper in the Eternal City.

The few of us remaining braced the rain and walked to the restaurant. The next day, after morning Mass at the convent we headed to Vatican City for our pilgrimage walk through the Holy Doors at St Peter's Basilica. A pilgrimage which we walked for ourselves, for each member of our group including Father Joseph and for all our St Pancras parishioners, as well as for those we wanted to take with us as we walked through the Holy Door. It was a truly monumental, profound and transformative experience, with a humbling sense of overwhelming awe.



The walk started close to the famous River Tiber which for a budding classicist was an absolutely amazing moment, to be so close to the birthplace of such a significant civilisation. However, this was soon dwarfed when Father Henry mentioned the *Castel Sant'Angelo* which was only a few feet away where St Michael the Archangel actually appeared during 6th century AD. With our prayer leaflets in hand, we began our walk towards the Holy Door as we recited the conditional prayers. Thoroughly moved by the whole experience it was hard to focus and even more so as we entered St Peter's Basilica. Words cannot effectively express the sheer beauty once inside nor can words express the pure Divine Presence one feels inside the Basilica; it is truly breathtaking and overpowering.

Apart from the sheer beauty of the Basilica and the Divine Presence there were key pieces which I fondly remember, firstly the gloriously majestic bronze canopy; the *St Peter's Baldachin* which first captivates the senses to then leads one to the realisation that the resting place of Saint Peter is underneath. I was thoroughly speechless. The second most treasured thing for me was seeing *La Pietà* by Michelangelo, my favourite statue; it really is truly beautiful in real life. In a daze, a small group of us headed to the grotto located underneath the Basilica where numerous tombs of popes are held and also where the Column of Con

stantine is, who incidentally was the son of St Helena, my patron saint. Leaving the Basilica, we then headed to St Pancras Church where the relics of Saint Pancras are housed. Journeying to the church it was here we experienced the first taster of public transport in Rome on the number 916 bus. Feeling slightly fatigued and weary, it was nice to enter the quiet and peaceful church of St Pancras and spend some time with our patronal saint. Day three of our pilgrimage and we were in St Peter's Square once again but this time for the audience with Pope Leo XIV. We got there early as the queues were going to be very long, and we wanted to get a good spot.

As soon as the white pope-mobile appeared there was delighted applause, shouting, banner and flag waving. The joy of seeing Pope Leo was amazing; even I - normally quiet and reserved - was jumping excitedly to try and see him. Day four and our little group headed out of Rome for a special visit to Our Lady! The quiet resort town of Nettuno was a pleasant welcome away from the hustle and bustle of Rome. The Basilica of Our Lady of Graces and Saint Maria Goretti beckoned us. We finally made it, a small group of trusty pilgrims all the way from Ipswich, Our Lady of Graces' hometown, finally came and paid a visit to Our Lady in her eventual home at Nettuno, a moving experience for all.

Heading back to Rome, Father Henry had one last treat and led the group to see the Basilica of *Santa Maria Maggiore*, Our Lady of the Snows, where one August day back in the 4th century AD, Our Lady detailed in the falling snow the footprint of the Basilica she wished to be built there. The interior is truly breathtaking and inside is housed one of the most treasured items for me on our trip, the relic of the Holy Crib.

On this truly blessed pilgrimage, I started with the effects of carrying the heavy load of the worries of this world which I had left behind in Ipswich, to the frequent opportunities to experience minor sufferings during my trip which I could then offer up for the reparation for the sorry state of my soul and of the

purging of sin, to the eventual grace filled blessings which have transformed me into being the better person God wishes me to be. I couldn't be more blessed to have spent it amongst such truly lovely people.

I am eternally grateful to all who made this possible for me to go on this trip and I hope to be able to pass all these blessings in my own little way to all at St Pancras and to all whom I meet each day.



La Pietà by Michelangelo

By Julia Ashenden

Every day of our pilgrimage was filled with highlights, but the one I will talk about is the day we went to Nettuno. The weather was perfect and when we reached the Basilica, we finally saw the medieval statue of Our Lady of Grace, about which we had heard so much and which was indeed the main purpose of our pilgrimage. We were allowed Mass in the priests' private chapel in which was another beautiful statue of Our Lady of Grace, larger than the original one, more recent and similar to the statue that Father Joseph has installed but with a couple of smiling cherubs above.



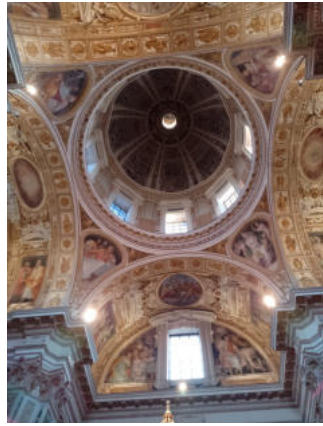
This Basilica also contains the tomb of St Maria Goretti and, for those who do not know it, one could learn of her life and death through some beautifully modelled events from her life, presented in a collection of cabinets. Then it was lunch time and we found a lovely fish restaurant on the beach, right next door to the Basilica. The beach had exceptionally fine and soft sand so some of us went for a paddle from the youngest to the oldest, with Maria Giuseppina leading the way! On our

return to Rome, Father Henry suggested we had just enough time to visit Santa Maria Maggiore which is very near to the station, so we feasted our eyes on its wonderful interior, saw the relic of Christ's crib and the beautiful mosaics on the ceilings. A long and varied day and most fulfilling. The best thing was how we all got along so well. It reminded me of Chaucer's pilgrims ... all from different backgrounds and ages but all with a common purpose!

From Laura Isaacs

This was my first trip to Italy. As a little one, I'd dreamed of retiring there, without having any experience of the place, apart from what I saw on television. On landing in Rome, like any new place I always keep my eyes open to take in as much as I can. I naturally tend to look out for plants and landscapes, and hills are always pleasing to me. The city has all the lovely contouring that I love, the air is moist, a familiar feeling, and when we arrived, very hot. The first plants I noticed were the oleander, with different colours of flowers, which appeared to be past their full bloom.

Next the stone pines, which fascinated me, as they are so tall, and have leaves only on the top, which seemed to be stretching out to the heavens. Also signs of bougainvillea, and other familiar flowering plants which I know from where I was born and raised in South Africa. We were blessed to have Mass each day, said by Father Henry; we were incredibly fortunate how things fell into place, and how much we managed to fit into our visit. My secret desire was to experience and see Our Lady of the Snows, but I'd not mentioned it at all, because I wanted to experience what the group trip brought, and one of the very last things we got a chance to see was this at St Mary Major, and it was beautiful.



Santa Maria Maggiore ceiling mosaics

We got there almost at closing time, which is possibly why we got the chance to go inside. And yes, there are many relics there, stunning mosaic ceilings some dating to the 5th century, but for me the most beautiful part of being there was the music I heard, a beautiful, solemn *Ave Maria*. I feel blessed to have some of these sounds in videos, to bring me back to those moments. On the Wednesday morning, we had an early start, we were to see the Pope, and in the early morning the rain was so heavy. On arrival in Rome, the downpour on our first night had completely ruined my hair, which I had made special for my trip. Beforehand, the papal audience was the part of the pilgrimage I was personally the least enamoured about.

I thought, we were going to have to stand around, possibly in horrible rain to get a glimpse of the Pope. To be honest I was really not interested. My experience on the day, however, was very different from my expectation, in fact, it was my favourite day.

We set off early in warm, pleasant weather and, though there were long queues to get into St Peter's Square, we passed the time happily chatting, getting to know each other, or praying quietly. It was also a delight to see the many nationalities in the queue, some dressed in traditional clothing. The Pope appeared in the pope-mobile. And at this stage, okay, I was star-struck and overjoyed, embarrassingly so. I got very excited by how close he got to us. At the end of the papal audience, we sang the *Pater Noster*, and got a papal blessing, for our objects, ourselves, and a special one for the children and elderly.

After the audience, we had a beautiful light lunch; it was an ember day, but also the feast of Our Lady of Walsingham, so we were allowed to have some gelato afterwards! The group then was able to split up and explore different areas. A few of us decided to see the Trevi Fountain, and the Spanish Steps, each being beautiful experiences in their own right. We had Mass at 6pm that day, followed by dinner at a gorgeous family run restaurant, the food all made by a mother of the family. They gave us the most scrumptious cookies and biscotti. There were so many other wonderful experiences, it truly was an experience of a lifetime.



Editor's note: The marble statue of Our Lady of the Snows, that crowns the main façade of Santa Maria Maggiore was carved in 1743 by the sculptor Pietro Bracci. Bracci, who later completed the monumental Oceanus figure in the Trevi Fountain, was commissioned to create this serene and dignified image of Our Lady for the basilica's newly remodelled façade under Pope Benedict XIV. Set within the central niche of the Loggia of Benedictions, the statue forms an elegant focal point for the basilica dedicated to Our Lady of the Snows.

By Anne Abbott

We were fortunate to have our first Mass at the Church of the Immaculate of the Miracles. After Mass, it actually began to rain – yes, rain in Rome! So we all hurried to our chosen restaurant for a fine Italian pasta dinner. We had arrived in Rome, *O Roma felix*, O happy Rome! The next day, we went to the Vatican to go through the Holy Door, which is opened every 25 years, in order to gain the Indulgence of the Jubilee Year. In St Peter's Square, we could see the Egyptian obelisk, now containing a relic of the True Cross on its summit, which St Peter would have been able to see as he was led to his crucifixion in the old Circus of Nero.

Beginning our processional walk at *Castel Sant'Angelo*, we then entered the Holy Door while saying the indulgenced prayers. Inside the Basilica, we saw the *Pietà* by Michelangelo, the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and the tomb of St Peter underneath the main altar. Such inspiring artwork, side altars and statues everywhere! St Peter's is truly magnificent! Later, we went down to the crypt to see the tombs of the popes, including Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Paul VI and Pope John XXIII. We then hopped on a bus and went to visit St Pancras Church, which was built over the catacomb of St Pancras. It was fascinating to see a statue and paintings of the 4th century martyr who died at Rome in 303/4 and the relic of his head which is kept in the church.



St Pancras statue. Photograph by the author.



After an early breakfast on the Wednesday, we set off on foot to St Peter's Square for the General Audience with Pope Leo XIV. He welcomed all the pilgrims, with a special mention of St Pancras church in Ipswich. After a sung Pater Noster, the Pope blessed everyone and the religious objects we had with us. After the papal audience, we visited the magnificent church of St Louis of France, where we saw paintings of Caravaggio (St Matthew Evangelist, The Calling of St Matthew) and relics of the *Curé d'Ars* and of St John Eudes. We also had time to visit Santa Maria sopra Minerva in all its splendour, seeing the tomb of St Catherine of Siena and the humble tomb of Fra Angelico. In the afternoon, some of us had a look at the Spanish Steps and the Keats, Shelley and Byron house museum. We packed a lot in that day!

But the most important thing was that we enjoyed an Italian ice cream, with the most delicious flavours, in Rome, next to the Trevi fountain! The next day, we visited Nettuno, a town which has its major basilica, the shrine of St Maria Goretti and Our Lady of Grace, on the beach! Here we were able to see the original medieval statue of the "English Lady", looking very much like the Stuflessor copy of our own statue of Our Lady of Grace which has been given a place of honour at St Pancras, Ipswich, since 2023. We had a lovely Mass said by Father Henry in honour of Our Lady of Grace in the private chapel of the Superior at Nettuno.

We prayed for all those at St Pancras in Ipswich, on our pilgrimage to Our Lady of Grace in Nettuno. A break for lunch on the beach gave us a delightful meal on the soft sand with beautiful sunshine and a gentle breeze, blissfully cooler than in Rome! Pilgrims were very happy to have a paddle in the warm sea. Then we went back into the Basilica to say our prayers to Our Lady of Ipswich, prepared in advance by Father Joseph. At the shop, we bought statues of Our Lady of Grace for our return to Ipswich, a great memento to have! On getting back to Rome, we made a wonderful visit to *Santa Maria Maggiore*, Our Lady of the Snows.

There was more magnificence here! The very walls and ceilings were covered with rosary and biblical scenes. There were the remains of the crib from Bethlehem, the huge gilded Sistine tabernacle surrounded by angels. On Friday, we had confessions which would count for the Holy Year indulgence and, after Mass, Father Henry blessed the statues and religious objects we had acquired. We then made our way home, with many thanks to God for a blessed pilgrimage.



St Pancras Church door. Photograph by the author

Two poems in honour of Our Lady of Ipswich, by Simon Ashenden

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Grace, Nettuno

Entering the vast upturned ark
of the brick basilica
one sees immediately
high above and behind the altar, spot lit,
the dear, familiar form, Our Lady of Grace,
Our Lady of Ipswich, sitting,
poised, head gently inclined,
features gracious, smile serene,

nestling the infant Christ in her lap,
right hand supporting, left hand offering the apple;
enthroned, her feet just visible,
once touched in veneration,
now out of reach – though her patient look meets ours:
Our Lady of Grace, pray for us.



Our Lady of Grace

What skilled hands carved from English oak, that noble seated mother figure
with knowing patient gaze with the Holy Child, the apple of her eye?

What hands of pilgrims in their thousands touched those feet at the Lady Lane Shrine
over two-and-a-half centuries of prayer, petition and thanksgiving?

What rough and hateful hands took her down, despoiled the statue, stole the jewels,
removed Our Lady in secret to London to be burned?

What brave sailors' hands fought the storm which took Our Lady to safety,
saved the blessed image from shipwreck, delivered her providentially to Italy?

What grateful hands welcomed her, placed Our Lady in a new shrine,
far from her origins but newly venerated and visited, her rightful status restored?

What pilgrims today, the journey made, with hands pressed in prayer seek her solace?
Our Lady of Grace, pray for us, pray for us!

Pilgrimage Photograph Supplement



The gilded tabernacle of St John Lateran, held aloft by golden angels, standing resplendent at the Basilica's high altar.



The silver Holy Crib reliquary, set within the altar of Santa Maria Maggiore.



