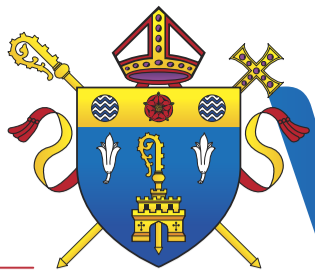


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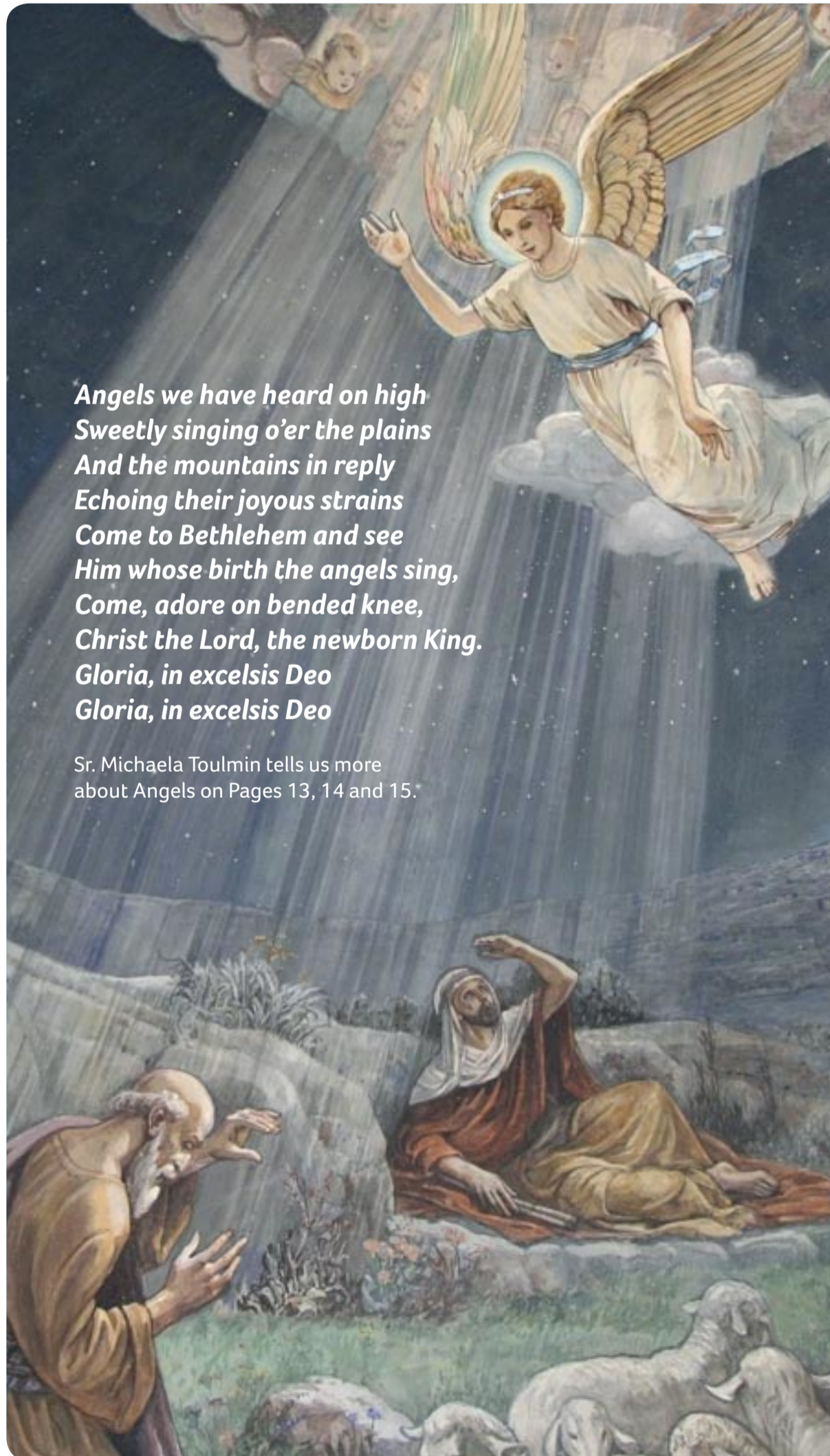
VOICE

of Lancaster

**The Official Newspaper to
the Diocese of Lancaster**

Issue 335 + December '21

INSIDE: p04 Celebrating Creation
p08 Solemn Profession of
Sr. Reina
p13 Angels in Scripture



*Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains
Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing,
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Gloria, in excelsis Deo*

Sr. Michaela Toulmin tells us more
about Angels on Pages 13, 14 and 15.

Everyone at the Catholic Voice wishes you and your families a very happy and holy Christmas. And we thank all those who have contributed in anyway to the publication throughout 2021 and our team of dedicated volunteers who help with the distribution.

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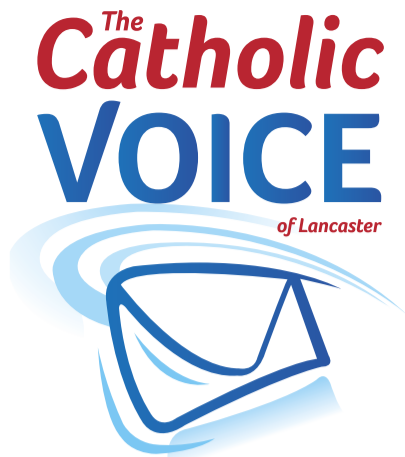
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The Catholic Voice of Lancaster is published on the last Sunday of the month previous to publication date.

The Catholic Voice of Lancaster is published by its owners. The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster, a registered charity, (No. 234331), and is wholly independent of and separate from any previous newspaper published by or on behalf of the diocese.

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DESIGN & LAYOUT:

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01253 730343
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www.hot-creative.co.uk

PUBLISHED BY:

CathCom Ltd. N2 Blois Meadow
Business Centre, Blois Road, Steeple
Bumpstead, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 7BN
020 7112 6710
www.cathcom.org

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EDITORIAL

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION

Fr Jim Burns, (Synod@lancasterdiocese.org.uk), our Diocesan Synod contact updates us on our diocesan plans and provides some thoughts about the Synodal Journey First and foremost, Fr. Jim asks us all to pray for the success of the Synod.

By now the parishes and schools of our Diocese should have received some guidance on how to respond to the call of Pope Francis that we become a synodal Church. For most of us this concept is perhaps not a familiar one but we needn't be anxious about this because it is actually something that has been around from the very beginning of the Church and in some sense needs to be rediscovered.

The Church has always been conciliar or synodal in the sense that she has always relied upon the discernment of the Holy Spirit and its leaders gathering together to make decisions that affect mission and faith. The very word synod comes from the Greek word meaning the 'walking together' (syn-) on a 'particular way' (-hodos) which is translated into Latin as 'concilium' and into English as 'council' or 'synod'.

One of the earliest times we see the synodal Church in action is in the Acts of the Apostles (15) when the elders of the Church met at the Council of Jerusalem. In the early centuries there were seven Ecumenical Councils which formulated the Creed we now say every Sunday at Mass.

More recently we had the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. It was at the end of this council that Pope Paul VI set up the Synod of Bishops (*Apostolico Sollicitudo*, 15 Sept 1965) and every two years since then Bishops from all over the world have met in Rome to discuss the important issues in the Church. At the time Pope Paul VI did say that this institution could be improved upon with the passing of time.

Pope Francis has now said that it would be good to involve everyone in the synodal journey. He talks about synodality as: all of us journeying together – laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome. In an address in October 2015 on the anniversary of the setting up of the Synod of Bishops he said:

A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening "is more than simply hearing". It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy spirit, the "Spirit of truth", in order to know what he "says to the Churches" (Rev 2:7) ... It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium."

Clearly Pope Francis wants us all to feel that we are synodal together as the People of God. All of us can contribute and take part in this dialogue of listening and speaking. So, the next question we may ask is: How do we go about this properly because we could so easily get it wrong?

In an ad limina visit of American Bishops to Rome when the theme of synods and synodality was raised Pope Francis made it quite clear and explicit that a synod is "not a parliament," and that the synodal process is not simply a matter of canvassing the participants and counting votes. The protagonist of a synod is not any of the delegates to the gathering, but rather the Holy Spirit. In a synod, the point is discerning, not the will of the people, but the will of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit in that context is sovereign, or in the language of Pope Francis, the "protagonist."

Clearly, Pope Francis is not asking us to engage in a democratic process whereby we would be putting doctrine up for a vote. What he means is a conversation among the laity, deacons, priests, religious and bishops for the sake of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit in the tradition of the Church.

So how we go about entering into this journey is to first approach it with the following attitudes: confidence to speak, humility, prudence, openness to conversion and change, avoiding clericalism, avoiding individualism, and with an ability to dream.

As we place the Holy Spirit clearly in the driving seat we should first and foremost begin everything we do with prayer always

asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For this reason we have at our disposal the Synod Prayer: the *Adsumus* (*Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus meaning: we stand before you, Holy Spirit*).

More than just a Survey

Bishop Paul wants us to confidently engage in a simple and prayerful dialogue, respectful of one another, in both listening and speaking. Ideally we should gather first in our parishes, schools and institutions to experience the dialogue before sending in our thoughts and conclusions.

For the purpose of gathering the feedback from our conversations and helping us to collate the information we receive there is an online survey which should already be visible on our diocesan and parish websites. After the 15th December it will become 'live'.

For the synodal process to be meaningful it is important that we give people a chance to dialogue first before turning to the survey. This dialogue can be face-to-face or online – in school discussions or parish meetings, in the various institutions we serve and by our reaching out to those who are on the margins of our communities. It will vary from place to place. For those who do not have access to the internet there is a paper copy of the survey that can be made available.

Between 15th December and 28th February meetings may continue and we will collect the feedback from everyone – individually or in groups. After this date the period of reporting back will close so that we can then collate the information into a report which will be sent to the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales by Palm Sunday. This will end the Diocesan Phase of the Synod.

For those who are organising the gatherings at the local level there are numerous resources available on the official Synod Website:

www.synod.va/en.html

The ten nuclei or themes that we will be discussing are:

- The Journey and who are our companions.
- How we listen more carefully
- How we speak out with boundless confidence
- How we celebrate our faith
- How we work together as clergy and laity
- Dialogue with the world in which we live
- Dialogue with other Christians
- Authority and participation
- How we discern and make decisions
- Forming ourselves in Synodality





Youth Matters

National Youth Sunday

Over the last few weekends we have been visiting parishes around the diocese as part of our National Youth Sunday appeal. It's been great meeting so many people and talking about the important work that we are doing.

As well as the to-be-expected collection, one thing we were trying to encourage people do to for National Youth Sunday was to sign up for the Castlerigg Lottery. That way, people can support us and have a bit of fun into the bargain with a chance of winning! The jackpot is now around £200 and is likely to rise, so if you feel like signing up, head to www.castleriggmanor.co.uk/lottery

Online Groups

We have recently started our online groups up again. RISE is for Year 7 to 9s and OVERFLOW is for young adults aged 18-25. They happen on alternate Tuesday and you can sign up at – www.castleriggmanor.co.uk

Advent Retreat

Our first in-person open retreat since Covid is happening December 10-12th and it's just £65 per person. A great chance to make some friends and explore faith in a fun, relaxed environment. It's open to anyone in Year 10 or above, up to age 25, with different streams for different ages – www.castleriggmanor.co.uk/advent

Altar Servers Retreat

This is a new venture for us and something we are hoping will become quite popular. We are holding a one night retreat for altar servers in the new year. January 15-16th – sign up at – www.castleriggmanor.co.uk

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Celebrating Creation

At the beginning of October the Parish of St Francis, Hill Chapel, Goosnargh, held a special celebration day in church to celebrate the feast day of our patron saint – St Francis of Assisi.

We invited our parishoners to share any item linked to God's creation that was important to them. People responded with great enthusiasm. We had a wide variety of fruit, flowers and local produce on display in addition to heifers, chicks and lambs. They created their own displays within church depicting: favourite views, family trees, animals, farming life, gardening and conservation.

Our church was full of colour, beauty and special memories. Pupils from St Francis school were also involved and provided artwork and poetry for the occasion. Fr John Harvey, OFM came to celebrate the day with us along with our parish priest Fr Sony.

The event provided the ideal opportunity for people to come together and socialise after lockdown. It also enabled people of all ages to appreciate and look at a variety of exhibits that depict the wonderful world in which we live.

It was very well attended by parishoners, families, friends and neighbours and was lovely to see so many people back inside our lovely church.

Mary Doran



Ansdell Catenian Milestones

Recently members of the Lytham St Annes Circle, accompanied by their wives, gathered to celebrate the presentations of a 50-year membership scroll to Brother Adrian Crook and a 40-year scroll to Brother Past Grand President (PGP) Tony Godden. In addition to the Brothers of the LSA Circle there were twenty Brothers from throughout the UK at the meeting to celebrate Adrian's and Tony's milestones.

The Scrolls were presented to Adrian and Tony by the Past GB National President Eddie O'Donnell, who had travelled from his home in West Lothian with his wife Catherine, to conduct the ceremony. Both scrolls should have been presented during the Covid-19 restrictions when Eddie was GB National President.

Adrian Crook

Brother Adrian Crook is a well-known visitor to Catenian Circles in the area. His first visit was from the family home in St Annes, when his mother took him to be born in a Maternity Home at Blackpool!

Adrian has a strong voice, honed as a bingo caller during a summer job on St Annes pier, before starting his working life at BAE Systems, Warton.

Adrian's father introduced him to the Circle, but unfortunately passed away a month before his formal installation into the Lytham St Annes Circle at their

meeting in June 1970. His parents were the Mayor and Mayoress of LSA in 1956-57 and opened the ERNIE Office during their year and were given the second Premium Bond in the UK. *(By the way, the number has never come up!)*

Adrian moved from Warton to Cambridge and then to Holland working for Phillips for 30 years. During his absence he kept his membership alive and attended meetings when on holiday. Adrian retired and left Holland for Lytham St Annes in 2001. He immediately immersed himself in the Catenians, becoming Circle President in 2002 and 2003 and also again in 2015 as well as holding many more posts.

Adrian is a Knight Commander with Star of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and has made numerous Pilgrimages to the Holy Land. During one in 2014, he first met his future wife Susan. They were married in April 2017.

Tony Godden

Brother Tony Godden joined the Maidstone Circle in 1981, moving to Lincoln, then becoming a member of the West Lothian Circle taking a major role, and finally ending up in the LSA Circle.

In 2011, Tony became the Grand President of the world-wide Catenian Association. During his time in this office Tony, accompanied by his wife Kelly, travelled to Australia, the Indian sub-continent, Ireland and Malta. During his time as Grand President Tony and Kelly were away from home for 222 nights, took 46 flights, 22 rail journeys and drove 18,500 miles. During this time to inaugurate new Catenian Circles in Australia and India.

Tony worked in Higher Education, ending up managing a College with 8,500 enrolments and a staff of 300 plus.

After taking early retirement, he became Business Support Manager for a group

of eleven schools. Tony is also a Knight Commander with Star of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Brian Lee

The Catenians are an association of Catholic men who are committed to faith, family and friendship.

The Catenians support the Catholic church, young people and those in need. Long-lasting friendships are developed by meeting once a month and enjoying a varied programme of social events.

For further information on the Catenian Association go to"

www.thecatenians.com

Photo l-r Tony Godden, Eddie O'Donnell, Adrian Crook.



David Pope dip FD MBIFD

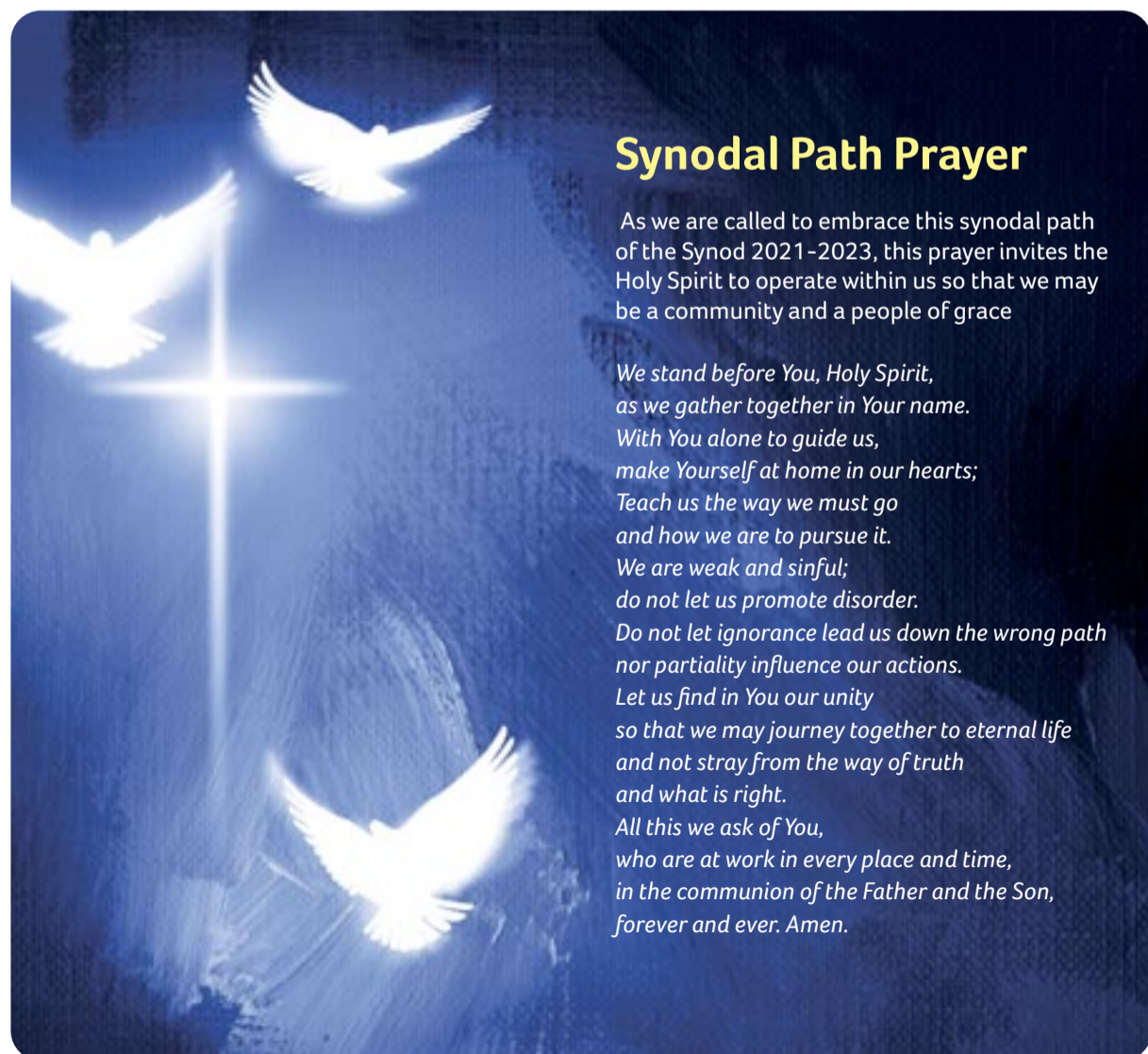
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Synodal Path Prayer

As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

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Catenian Charitable Giving - Province 10

As the various lockdowns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic grew to a close the members of the Catenian Association Provincial Council of Province 10 (which includes the southern half of the Diocese) debated the size of their funds. They came to the conclusion that the monies held were in excess of the likely requirements of the Province and therefore decided to make a donation to charity. Various charities were mentioned but two made it to the top of the list and each was to be given £1,000.

Preston and District Circle 144 were about to hold a Charity BBQ to raise money for Brother President, Shaun Horsfield's, chosen charity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). The BBQ was held in a 'medieval' barn at Houghton Hall Farm. On the day and along with a number of generous donations they raised about £1,700 for the charity in addition to the donation from Provincial Council.

Now the son of the long time Secretary of Westmorland Circle, Brother Paul Bates, came up with a challenge to celebrate Paul's 70th birthday - to run Coast to Coast along Hadrian's Wall over three days. A distance of 94 miles. Paul and

son, Tom, set off from Bowness-on-Solway on the coast west of Carlisle and finished on the beach at North Shields near the entrance to the River Tyne east of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Paul says that day 1 was ok and they covered 36 miles, but he found days 2 and 3 hard despite the fact that he has been running the Cumbrian fells for many years. For the most part of these days they did run but towards the end of the day it was more of a crawl. They were spurred on knowing that the Catenian Association had donated £1,000 for their efforts for their chosen charity Alzheimer's Society. Paul, a retired GP, considers this to be a very relevant charity as dementia has an impact on most families in some way. Father and son enjoyed spending three days running together through beautiful Northumberland, but Paul thinks he will only accept easier challenges in future.

Members of the Association are now meeting face-to-face again and are very relieved that they can now continue to strengthen their family life through friendship and faith - the aims of the Association. For more information about the Association go to:

www.thecatenians.com



When the Salvation Army foodbank in Preston were approached to see what items they were particularly in need of, they said 'just get washing up liquid!'

But Year 7 at Our Lady's Catholic High Preston went a step further, so much so that their collection filled the school minibus with lots of various food stuff etc; as well as plenty of washing up liquid.

Then Our Lady and St Edward's Primary School in Fulwood wanted to donate their Harvest Collection to the same food bank. So, Terry Mattinson, Youth Worker, Fr. Mario-Benedict Ashuieka and Sr Sienrose filled Fr. Mario's car with the proceeds and delivered that to the Salvation Army who were overwhelmed with the generosity.

Well done young people in Preston for this tremendous effort!



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Solemn Profession of Sr. Reina



“Uphold me O Lord, according to your word and I shall live. Let not my hope be in vain”



On Sunday 10th October 2021, we had the joy of celebrating the Solemn Profession of Sr. Reina Kartika. The main celebrant was the Right Reverend Bishop of Lancaster Paul Swarbrick, with other priests also concelebrating. The homily was preached by Fr. Peter Craddy OCSO, our chaplain at our sister house at Brownhill, Gloucester, where Sr. Reina lived for 2 years as part of her monastic formation. All the restrictions imposed by Covid regulations were unable to contain the joy of the day.

In the summer of 2013, Sr. Reina, then Irene, came to Hying to find out whether she was being called to live a monastic life here with our community. She had found us via the internet, visiting our website www.bernardine.org. Living with us for 3 months helped her and us, discern her vocation as a Bernardine. In January 2014, she entered our community of Bernardines Cistercians of Esquermes as a Postulant, became a novice in December 2014 and made her First Vows in October 2016. She chose the name Sr. Reina.

The day was glorious and very bright and about 60 people were able to gather in the Chapel to celebrate with Sr. Reina. She chose John 15 as her Gospel, the text “Remain in my love” was also the theme for the cake decoration! As a junior sister she would have worn a white veil and a cloak. When she made her Solemn profession, she was given a black veil and

a cowl as symbols of this final step. As Sr. Audrey had made her simple Profession at Brownhill 8 days earlier, and she was one of the visitors from Brownhill, we had ‘4 white veils’, 4 juniors in the house just for 2 days! Our Prioress General, Sr. Mary Helen, came to celebrate with us and receive her vows. Traditionally we make the vows of Obedience, Stability and Conversion of life rather than the traditional evangelical vows. The ‘Suscipe’, the raising of hands and voices is very important in the ceremony. Chapter 58 of the Rule of Benedict recommends the use of a certain prayer during the ritual of profession. As is often the case, this prayer is named after its first word in Latin – here Suscipe -- which means ‘receive’. Based on the prayer in Psalm 119, the Sister asks to be upheld by God in prayer. “Uphold me O Lord, according to your word and I shall live. Let not my hope be in vain”. Two things are being asked: that this freely given gift of self to God’s service be acceptable, and that God may respond by fulfilling the sister’s hopes. This is sung request three times, while raising outstretched arms to God -- and the community responds in kind each time. All then bow as the Doxology follows. It is a very moving moment for the community and all present.

It was an occasion of great joy, and we ask your prayers as we continue to support Sr. Reina on her monastic journey and for those sisters still in formation as Bernardines. *Hying Monastery*

Our Lady’s Catholic College
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Aspire not to have more but to be more



Prayer to Our Lady recited by Sr. Reina's at Vespers on the day of her Solemn Profession:

O Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Peace and Queen of Citeaux. On this day of my Solemn Profession, I come to you, asking for your prayers and support as I continue my journey in this monastic life. Help me with your prayers, that I may always truly seek God in prayer and in work, in community life and in the service to our brothers and sisters. Sustain me with your support, that through the vows of stability, conversion of life and obedience which I have promised until death, I may let myself be shaped into the likeness of Christ through his pascal mystery.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, You gave yourself totally to the Father. Teach me that I may learn the fear of the Lord by listening to his words and obeying his will.

Mary, Queen of Peace, In words and in silence, you embrace the humanity of Christ while trusting his Divinity. In this way you dwelt in the peace of Christ. Guide me into that same true peace; the peace which the world cannot give, the peace which helps me to remain in his love and unifies me with all his creations.

Mary, Queen of Citeaux, With your attentive love for the Holy Spirit, you never fail to protect the Cistercian Order. Direct me towards that same Spirit which unites us in the service of love. Intercede for me so that I may always be thankful. Let my whole life repond to the goodness of God. I ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



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a Very Happy Christmas*



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Mass Listings – December 2021 & January 2022

St. Margaret Mary, Scalgate Road, Carlisle

Saturdays at 10.00 am

No Mass on Christmas Day or New Year's Day

Masses resume on 8th January

Shrine Church of St Walburge, Preston

Mondays to Fridays: 8.30 am Low Mass

Saturdays: 8.30 am, Low Mass

Sundays: 10.30 am, Sung Mass

Saturday 25th December, Christmas Day

– Solemn High Mass at 10.30 am

Saturday, 1st January, New Year's Day

– Mass at 11.00 am

Thursday 6th January, Epiphany - Mass at 7.00 am

Shrine of the English Martyrs, Preston

Monday-Saturday: 12 noon, Low Mass

Sundays: 9.00 am, Low Mass

Christmas Eve – Carols at 10.00 pm

followed by Midnight Mass at 10.30 pm

Christmas Day – Low Mass at 9.00 am

Thursday 6th January, Epiphany

– Masses at 12 noon and 6.00 pm

(Please check the website for any variations:
<https://ickspp.org.uk/preston/>)

Our Lady & St Michael, Banklands, Workington

Second Fridays at 7.00 pm

(Please always check with Canon Watson
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St Mary's, Main Street, Hornby

Saturdays at 11.00 am

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travelling: 015242 21246)

No Mass on Christmas Day or New Year's Day

Please check parish website for Masses thereafter as
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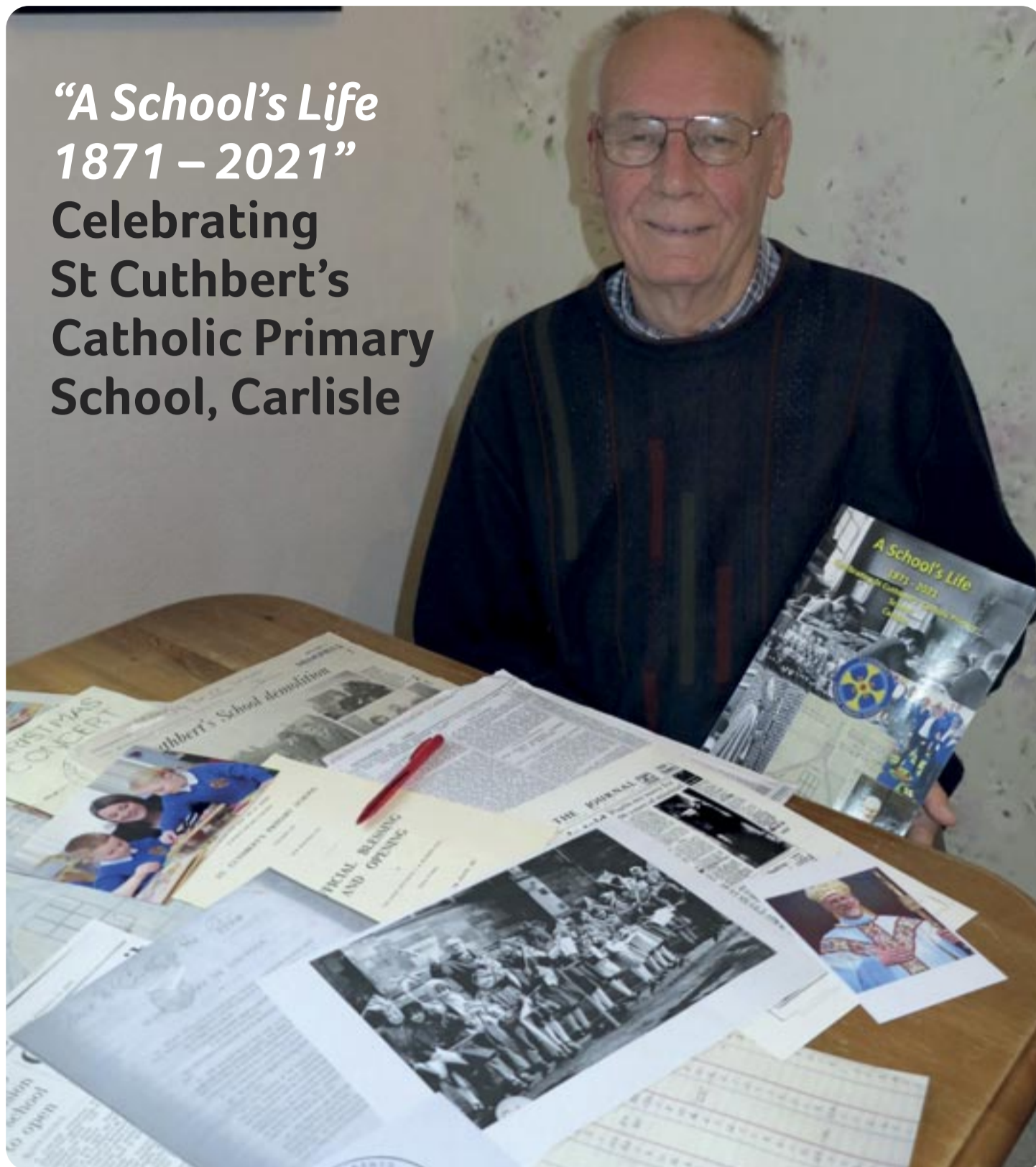
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"A School's Life 1871 – 2021" Celebrating St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Carlisle



A bright late September weekend drew to a close for Bishop Dr. James Chadwick who opened the newly built St Cuthbert's School on Monday 25 September 1871. A new seat of education at the corner of Union St and Myddleton St, Carlisle.

One hundred and fifty years after that happy and memorable evening, the history of this proud School has been documented in 104 pages of words, pictures, drawings, plans, newspaper extracts, and memories of former pupils.

"A School's Life 1871-2021" Celebrating St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Carlisle is a must-read book, not only for those who have been associated with the school, church or historians, but also for those who wish to take a nostalgic look back.

The pages carefully look at the political, social, and economic background that the school has coped with over the past 15 decades. The land was obtained from the Duke of Devonshire with help from Mr Howard following the inspiration of Parish Priest Rev Luke Curry. Upon its opening 250 children were taught by newly qualified 23-year-old Miss Jane Burton in one single large hall which was heated by a coal fire and lit by gas mantles.

As the pages unfold, looking at the formal records shown in its Log Books, highlight fascinating aspects of school life.

Progressively as the 20th Century dawns, we look at some of the lessons that those young children were taught and the enlargement of the school.

The role of the Carlisle's Education Board, subsequently becoming the Education Committee is discussed including the unique electoral system which was used at that time. The Board had a powerful role to play as it developed additional facilities for the children.

The school's managers, from a passive to the current managerial function is discussed in detail, as successive men and women were challenged by change including enlarging the school and debates with government and its bureaucratic officialdom, which at one stage led to near closure of the school particularly when the building fell a little short of the standards which the Inspector wished.

The curriculum from those early days of learning by rote, lines and lines from Shakespeare, to playing a scene today at Keswick's Theatre by the Lake spans many years. Science lessons started by understanding the Potato, which was brought to the school by the Parish Priest. Girls and boys learned different aspects of science. Music has taken a prominent role, from its opening night concert to morale boosting as the children took to the shelters in 1939 until the present when the children sang before pop stars in Manchester. Needlework,



“
I am delighted to say that with considerable help from, former pupils, parishioners, friends and many books, papers, plans and records, I have been able compile this celebratory book of the 150 years of the school.

” Derek Nash

cooking, as well as the traditional '3Rs' are covered as we move through the years into this electronic age.

The 20-year acrimonious public debate regarding the replacement of the school until it was replaced in 1972, is fully articulated. A debate that was led by the Head Teacher who came to Carlisle in 1954 as the youngest Head in the County, and the first male too. John Letts engaging character, and leadership style read like a whirlwind, including when he saw off a young pupil who had stayed behind to swim for the school. Her parents had moved house and John boarded the train, but before he could get off, he was on the way to Preston. But not until he had become involved in the fascinating incident of a lost shoe! He nurtured two boys who became both FA Cup Winners and England players too.

Fundraising for both the school and charities, including abroad is articulated, and illustrated.

With the new building opened, pupils say good bye, in pictures, to their former 100-year-old class rooms, as life in the current building unfolds too.

The children's health from the early 20th Century including, school meals are discussed, as we move from vaccinations for now forgotten childhood illnesses to the current Covid -19 situation which the school has battled through.

Former pupil memories grace the pages, as they comment on the fond memories of their teachers, and their outdoor visits to The Lakes and Silloth. Misdemeanours and punishments are fondly remembered as was the feared 11+ and School Inspectors.

This book finishes with some interesting appendix too. Bishop Paul Swarbrick, writes in his introduction, *"The result is not simply a history of a school, but the story of a living community, and acknowledgement of those who have contributed to its growth and blossoming"*

'A School's Life 1871-2017' published by P3 Publications ISBN 9 980993 488979 is available from the School, Church or local bookshops £12.50.

For further information please contact either the school or Derek Nash, Bramerton Lodge, Wood St, Carlisle, CA1 2SF.

Unfortunately owing to the stringent Covid -19 Regulations formal celebrations of this important Milestone have been deferred for the time being.

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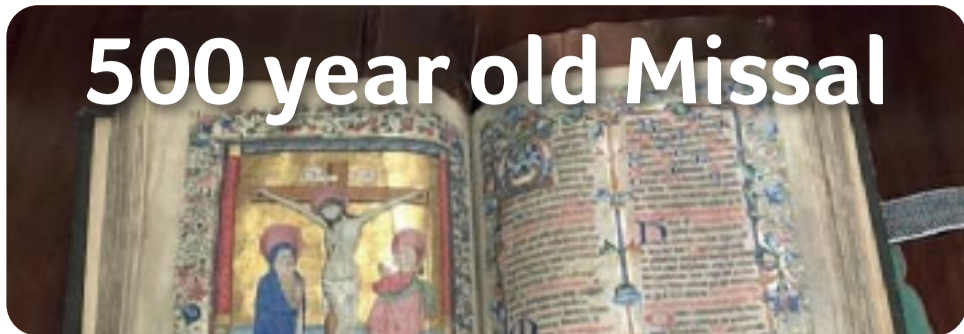
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500 year old Missal



In the last edition of the *Catholic Voice* we said that we would provide a brief history of the 500 year old Missal that Ampleforth returned to the care of the Diocese some months ago.

A detailed history by Dom Justin McCann can be accessed on line at: www.ampleforthjournal.org/V_024.pdf

The Caldbeck Missal is a Sarum Missal that was written in the former, prevailing liturgy of the British Isles. The Missal dates back to at least 1506 and in recent years was kept in the library at Ampleforth. Before this the Missal belonged to the monks who served the Cumbrian area of Warwick Bridge in Carlisle.

The Missal is a large and weighty tome, hand-written with some very ornate illumination, though the the Missal only contains one full page illustration which depicts Calvary. So delicate are the pages it is necessary to wear gloves

when turning the pages.

It is not surprising given the age of the Missal that one or two pages are missing. And in other areas references to the Pope have been erased as instructed by Henry VIII during the Reformation. It is unclear how the Missal survived the burning of all service books as instructed by Edward VI but survive it did. It is thought that the Missal was saved by a local Catholic family at the time who preserved it until it was possible for a Catholic priest to celebrate Mass again.

A lot of the origins of the Missal and its journey through the centuries Dom Justin McCann suggests relies on conjecture and his detailed analysis offers some credible explanations. Readers are encouraged to visit the website above.

The *Catholic Voice* will return with further coverage once the Diocese has decided how best the Missal can be opened up for viewing by clergy and faithful alike.



The Laudato Si Action Platform

Virginia Bell updates us on Laudato Si!

The Laudato Si Action Platform is the work of the Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development, which is a relatively new department of the Holy See (2017), which has the responsibility for “issues regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture”, which “takes place by attending to ... justice, peace and the care of creation.” - Pope Francis

What the Dicastery says is that “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.”

So, what is this Laudato Si Action Platform? What has been gleaned so far is that it appears to be an attempt to get all of us in the Catholic Church, literally everyone, involved in putting Laudato Si, the Pope’s famous Encyclical, into practice. The Pope wants us all to undergo an ‘ecological conversion’, because, he says, “We ... need a new ecological approach, which transforms our way of living in the world, our lifestyles, our relationship with the Earth’s resources and in general the way we look at people and live our life” to respond to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”.

It is a very ambitious programme introduced in October which will last for seven years. It is aimed at ‘families, parishes and dioceses, schools and universities, hospitals, businesses and farms, organisations, groups and movements, religious communities, working together’, which does not leave anyone out. And it is designed to address seven areas for action:

Response to the cry of the Earth: to work toward carbon neutrality through greater use of clean renewable energy and

reduced fossil fuel use; support efforts to protect and promote biodiversity and guarantee water access for all.

Response to the cry of the poor: to defend human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, while giving special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants and children at risk of trafficking and slavery.

Ecological economics: sustainable production, fair trade, ethical consumption and investments, investments in renewable energy, divestment from fossil fuels and limiting any economic activity harmful to the planet or people.

Adoption of simple lifestyles: to reduce use of energy and resources, avoid single-use plastics, adopt a more plant-based diet, reduce meat consumption and increase use of public transportation over polluting alternatives.

Ecological education: to redesign curricula around integral ecology, create ecological awareness and action, promote ecological vocation with young people and teachers.

Ecological spirituality: to recover a religious vision of God’s creation, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis and prayers and encourage more time in nature.

Emphasis on community involvement and participatory action around creation care at all levels of society by promoting advocacy and grassroots campaigns.

The email address for any questions about the LS Action Platform: hello@laudatosimovement.org

You can find more about the Platform at laudatosiactionplatform.org/about/ and the goals are at: laudatosiactionplatform.org/laudato-si-goals/

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Angels in Scripture

Back in September on the feast of the Archangels Sr. Michaela Toulmin of Hying Monastery gave the following talk on Angels in Scripture. In this season of Advent and Christmas it seems appropriate to publish what Sr. Michaela had to say:

I've decided to talk about angels in scriptures today for a variety of reasons:

1/ Firstly, today is the 29th September and it's the feast of the Archangels so it's very relevant.

2/ Secondly, my name is the same as one of the Archangels! I'd like to be able to say that my parents named me after St. Michael, but the reality was Mum was a big fan of a TV show in the 60s presented by Amand and Michaela Dennis so I guess I need to be glad I was born a girl then!

3/ I have also always been fascinated with angels since I first started reading the Scriptures mainly because of my name and it is also combined with an interest in old black and white films! I remember a lot of old films where angels seem to appear. Sometimes they take, whether consciously or not the theme from the Hebrews passage where the writer says that sometimes we meet angels and we don't always know it. Or we have many blessings in life, and we don't realise it until a friendly angel comes down and reminds us of all that we have.

Apparently, angels are mentioned at least 108 times in the Old Testament

and 165 times in the New Testament. It will depend on the translation. There is a lot of information available in Scripture to allow us to build a foundation for our knowledge of angelic beings.

The word "angel" actually comes from the Greek word "aggelos", which means "messenger". The Hebrew word mal'ak has the same meaning. Sometimes, the Bible uses these words for human beings:

- ordinary people who carry messages (*Job 1:14; Luke 7:24; 9:52*)
- prophets (*Isaiah 42:19; Malachi 3:1*)
- priests (*Malachi 2:7*)
- church leaders (*Rev 1:20*)
- Sometimes, it speaks figuratively of things or events as "messengers"... the pillar of cloud (*Exodus 14:19*)
- pestilence or plagues (*2 Samuel 24:16-17*)

But it usually describes the whole range of spirits whom God has created, including both good and evil angels, and special categories such as cherubim, seraphim, and the archangel.

We don't know whether every angel carries out the same tasks, or whether some of them specialize in certain areas.

The Bible does speak about classes of angelic beings like cherubim (*Ezekiel 1*) and seraphim (*Isaiah 6*). We also know the names of several archangels: Michael (*Daniel 10:13; Jude 9*), Raphael in the book of Tobit and Gabriel (*Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:19,26*).

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The unnamed angels who appear most often in Scripture carry out a variety of tasks—all designed to serve God...

Worship and praise - This is the main activity portrayed in heaven (*Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4-5*).

Revealing - They serve as messengers to communicate God's will to men and women. They helped reveal the law to Moses (*Acts 7:52-53*), and served as the carriers of much of the material in Daniel, and Revelation. The Annunciation to Mary is just one of many examples throughout salvation history.

Guiding - Angels gave instructions to Joseph about the birth of Jesus, (*Matthew 1-2*), to the women at the tomb, to Philip (*Acts 8:26*), and to Cornelius (*Acts 10:1-8*).

Providing - God has used angels to provide physical needs such as food for Hagar (*Genesis 21:17-20*), Elijah (*1 Kings 19:6*), and Christ after His temptation (*Matthew 4:11*).

Protecting - Keeping God's people out of physical danger, as in the cases of Daniel and the lions, and his three friends in the fiery furnace (*Daniel 3 and 6*).

Delivering - Getting God's people out of danger once they're in it. Angels released the apostles from prison in Acts 5, and repeated the process for Peter in Acts 12.

sent to the Bishop who is struggling with his faith, he tells the young Bishop that sometimes he had walked the streets and looked into the face of an angel and not realised it. He also tells the Bishop that he has prayed for the wrong thing. The Bishop wants to build a cathedral but Dudley challenges him to find out what he really wants! Perhaps like the Bishop, Abraham's faith is wavering. He has been incredibly patient with God, he also done everything God wanted and yet he is still waiting for a son, born of Sarah. God had promised him a Son but he was an old man, and Sarah an old woman so it seems that Sarah and Abraham had taken matters into their own hands and had produced the heir through Hagar instead. Picture the scene then, Abraham sitting down in the heat of the day, perhaps dreaming of things in the past, his own land, his own people, of a time when things were easier. He is rudely interrupted by three visitors but true to his hospitable nature he gets up and sees they are looked after. These three men are in fact messengers of the Lord and the text moves from the word men, to the word, Lord, during the course of the conversation. Not only then do these angels help Abraham with his plans for a son, but they also then save Lot and his family in the next part of the story. Yet, this story also tells us that messengers from God are not all like Cary Grant! The angels are then sent to Sodom and Gomorrah and their message there is only one of destruction and terror.

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Strengthening and encouraging - Angels strengthened Jesus after His temptation (*Matt 4:11*), encouraged the apostles to keep preaching after releasing them from prison (*Acts 5:19-20*), and told Paul that everyone on his ship would survive the impending shipwreck (*Acts 27:23-25*).

Answering prayer - God often uses angels as His means of answering the prayers of His people (*Daniel 9:20-24; 10:10-12; Acts 12:1-17*).

Caring for believers at the moment of death - In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, we read that angels carried the spirit of Lazarus to "Abraham's bosom" when he died (*Luke 16:22*).

These are just a few examples of some of the ways angels appear in Scripture. What I thought I would do then was to focus on stories in the Old Testament which focus on various ways that angels help us in our relationship to God. These three stories I'll try and relate to the old films I mentioned before even it seems the connections are slightly tenuous.

1. Messengers from God – "The Bishop's wife" - Dudley Abraham and oak of Mamre

One of the old films I watched when I was young was a film called "The Bishop's wife". The author of the letter to the Hebrews writes "Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love. Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why, some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it." Cary Grant is

We can try and tame God and his angels, but ultimately the whole Abraham cycle is a call to wake up, remind us that we can make all the plans we want to but God is there with a master plan and ultimately we must learn to let God be God!

2. Allowing God's blessing in our lives – "It's a Matter of Life and Death" Jacob and wrestling with an angel Genesis 32:24-31

David Niven seems to encounter angels a lot in his films. He was the Bishop in the Cary Grant film! He is also in the next one I've chosen to look refer to. He plays a RAF pilot shot down over the English Channel. Before bailing he recites poetry over the radio to June, an American girl positioned in the R.A.F. control tower. Washed ashore, Peter awakes the next morning. His first thought is that he's Heaven, he soon realises his mistake and encounters a girl cycling home; it's June, and naturally, true movie style, it's love at first sight. Only there's been a mix-up. Peter's time was up, he was meant to have been taken to Heaven but because of the bad English weather, he got lost in the fog. A "Conductor" i.e. angel, is sent down to fetch him but Peter refuses to go; after all, he argues, his heart and soul now belong to June. A battle commences between this world and the next which can only be decided in one place: the divine court. Will love conquer? And is it really happening or is it all just in Peter's mind? It's a fascinating film. Peter fights on two fronts on earth and in heaven, he is dying on earth because of a brain tumour and dying in heaven because of

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a decidedly anti-English jury deciding his fate! There is a cost to his happiness in the end because the death of a friend and great sacrifice. I won't spoil the film for you...

Fighting God can leave a lot of bruises and marks, ask Jacob who walked away from God with a limp! The scriptures call us into a personal struggle like Jacob's. And that personal struggle for Jacob involved angels! He wrestled with the angel of Yahweh, and was even wounded in the struggle, from which he limped for the rest of his life. In our personal wrestling match with the mystery of God, in encountering angels, in encountering God's presence, we come to faith and blessing. Jacob has met angels before.

In the first account where Jacob has a dream of YHWH he is in the process of running away from difficulties, he has had to flee after tricking his father and hurting his brother. He is at a very low point and isn't in any way worthy of being singled out. But God doesn't seem to choose the goody goodies all the time for his angels to encounter! It's a passage of hope. Jacob is asleep with a stone for a pillar. He sees a ladder between the earth and heaven with angels of God ascending and descending. That order is quite interesting I think, it starts from below, the angels were ascending, it's the same order in John 1:51 where Jesus refers to the same image to Nathaniel. YHWH takes up his position next to Jacob. It's a reassurance that Jacob is never alone, that we are not never alone, even when we doubt it. The same promises are remade, promise of land and descendants, blessings and curses. Jacob is awestruck, God is in this place. His encounter with angels turns him to worship and praise.

This will help him in his second encounter with angels, this time on the return journey! He is chosen by God to encounter him in the form of an angel of the Lord, broken by him to learn that wrestling with God comes at a price, called by a new name to give up his previous sly lifestyle and chosen to name a new nation and finally he is blessed by God. Called and chosen, blessed and broken this is Jacob's encounter with God through the medium of an angel. He has learnt the most important lesson of all, to see God face to God and learn to worship him with no ifs and buts involved. It is a lesson we are called to learn in our own encounter with God. We can still praise God even when we are wounded and limping because God is there with us.

3. God's healing – *George Bailey "It's a Wonderful Life"* *Book of Tobit – Story of Tobit,* *Sarah and Raphael*

The film opens on Christmas eve, all of the citizens of the small town of Bedford Falls are praying to the heavens to help a person called George Bailey. It's then decided that Clarence, an angel who hasn't earned his wings, is to help George. Before he does this, he is shown the story of George Bailey. George

Bailey grew up in Bedford Falls, a small town where he dreams of leaving it and making his mark on the big world. His family's business is the only thing stands between the people and Mr. Potter, a rich miser who takes pleasure in taking from everybody, without even caring how it affects them. George was all set to leave when his father died and had to take care of the business. George would forever be hindered by his plans to leave and thinks that he is nothing but a failure, he decides to kill himself.

That's when Clarence comes in and tries to convince him that he has made something with his life, and that he had a "Wonderful Life". Clarence shows him a world where George Bailey never existed and life for the people of the town is radically different, people whose lives he'd changed without realising it are very different, sunk in sin and shame. When George realises this, he wants it all to be back to normal, even if it means facing jail and ruin. It may be an old film but the message is very true, it is really is "a wonderful life" and sometimes it takes an "angel", from heaven, or in the shape of a friend and neighbour to make us realise that!

George Bailey is an innocent man whose life appears to have been ruined by an injustice. It reminded me of the book of Tobit because of 2 characters, Tobias and Sarah. Tobias is a good man who helps his fellow citizens and shows respect for the dead. He is a just and wise man, particularly noted for his diligence in attempting to provide proper burials for Israelites who had been slain by Sennacherib, the king, for which the king seized all his property and exiled him. After Sennacherib's death, he was allowed to return to Nineveh, but again buried a dead man who had been murdered on the street. That night, he slept in the open and was blinded by bird droppings that fell in his eyes. This put a strain on his marriage, and ultimately, he prayed for death.

Then you have Sarah, a young woman who prays for death in despair. She has lost seven husbands to the demon of lust who kills every man she marries on their wedding night before the marriage can be consummated. A bit careless you may ask, or even a bit suspicious! God sends the angel Raphael, disguised as a human, to heal Tobit and to free Sarah from the demon. Raphael, in small, simple ways, help both Tobias and Sarah and life becomes better for them again.

The advice is pretty simple throughout the book, trust in God, live a good, pure and honest life and pray to God! The book starts with Tobias praising the Lord,

"And went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel, offering faithfully all his first fruits, and his tithes ..."

And again when things went wrong...

"He continued immovable in the fear of

God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life.."

When everything is put right, and Raphael reveals himself in chapter 12, the advice is the same...

"Bless God, utter his praise before all the living for the favour he has shown you. Bless and extol his name. Proclaim before all people the deeds of God as they deserve, and never tire of giving him thanks."

And chapter 12 ends with

"When they stood up again, he was no longer visible. They praised God with hymns; they thanked him for having performed such wonders; had not an angel of God appeared to them?"

Conclusion

At the end of the day, the purpose of an angel is to lead us to God, they shouldn't be venerated as divine beings or celestial beings in their own light. They lead us to praise of God, the creator of the universe.

Like the angels then, we are called to give praise, to bless the name of the Lord and never tire of giving thanks. Angels are there as signposts of God's glory, as messengers of God, as friendly faces in a hostile world and, as a reminder to thank God for the gift of life, of love, of family and friends, the gift of all that we hold dear.



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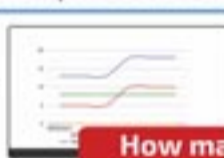
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