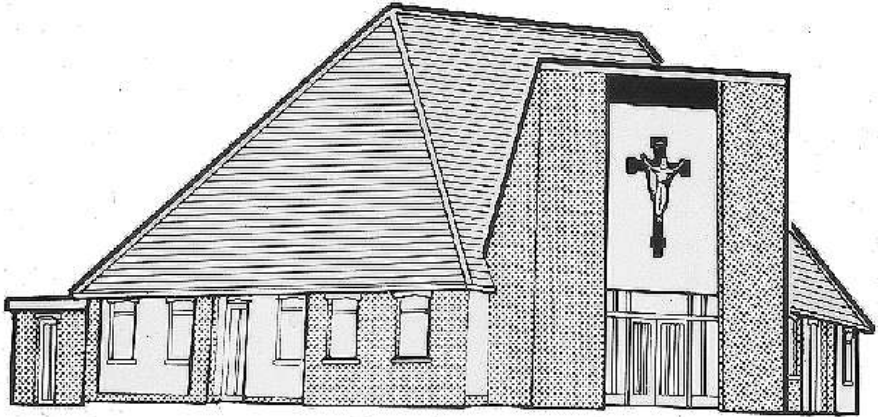


**St. Clare's, Fulwood.**

# **PARISH MAGAZINE**



**SPRING 2014**

## LENT, HERE WE COME

The last time the Magazine hit the parish we were looking forward to Advent and Christmas, much has happened since then and Advent, Christmas and New Year are but distant memories and we strain ever forward with our eyes set on Lent, Easter and what must follow. Already much has happened in the first six weeks of 2014. We started well with a full church on New Year's Day for Mass at noon to dedicate the year to the Lord through the hands of Mary who feast day it was. Our school reopened and we celebrated a 'beginning of term Mass.' We re-started our Journey in Faith group and prepared to commence the First Holy Communion Programme. The *White Flower Collection* was taken to support the work of those who support life from conception to its natural end. The first Baptismal course of the year began (these recur every other month) and the Social Committee came together to plan the Lourdes Prize Bingo which turned out to be a great success raising £500+ for the fund.

Throughout the period our Fabric & Finance and Parish Pastoral Council met giving advice to the Parish Priest and taking various projects forward. We owe all these groups a great vote of thanks.

A Parish Meeting took place on Jan 24<sup>th</sup> with a single item agenda: Proposed New Porch (see elsewhere in this Magazine).

Volunteer new Readers and Eucharistic Ministers were put through their paces prior to being commissioned for the Parish. We have continued our support of the *Preston Food Bank* with a monthly collection of dry goods, bedding & clothing.

The clergy of the parish continue their other 'extra-parochial' duties: Fr D at: RPH, Newman College, Deanery Youth Coordination, Corpus Christi, and Fr L: The Cenacolo Community, The Board of Education, Diocesan Trustees, Editorial Board Catholic Voice, The Cenacolo Trustees.

## SPRING / LENT

Many will already know that Lent takes its name from the fact that there is a 'lengthening' of the daylight hours at this time of year (Spring). The thought of Lent with fasting and penance as the subtitle

can be a daunting prospect but it need not be, indeed, it should not be. For this season is sheer gift; it is a time for getting back in touch with the things of God or for allowing a deeper relationship to blossom. A new diversion for our parish this Lent is the introduction of:

**LENT HOUSE GROUPS:** The hope is that at least 5 parishioners will open their homes 4 times during Lent to accommodate a small group who will reflect on a topic in the book being compiled by the parish clergy. The sessions will last one hour. They will take four 'Ws' as the method: Welcome, Worship, Word & What Next. All will end with a cup of tea. It is hoped that many parishioners will take part in these House Groups. Out of the 40 days of Lent we are suggesting 4 are given over to these groups – not a big thing to ask.

## **FROM THE CONSTITUTION ON THE SACRED LITURGY OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL CHRIST IS PRESENT IN HIS CHURCH**

Christ is always present to his Church, especially in the actions of the liturgy. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister (it is the same Christ who formerly offered himself on the cross that now offers by the ministry of priests) and most of all under the eucharistic species. He is present in the sacraments by his power, in such a way that when someone baptizes, Christ himself baptizes. He is present in his word, for it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Finally, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he himself promised: Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst.

Indeed, in this great work which gives perfect glory to God and brings holiness to men, Christ is always joining in partnership with himself his beloved Bride, the Church, which calls upon its Lord and through him gives worship to the eternal Father.

It is therefore right to see the liturgy as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, in which through signs addressed to the senses man's sanctification is signified and, in a way proper to each of these signs, made effective, and in which public worship is celebrated in its fullness

by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the head and by his members.

Accordingly, every liturgical celebration, as an activity of Christ the priest and of his body, which is the Church, is a sacred action of a pre-eminent kind. No other action of the Church equals its title to power or its degree of effectiveness.

In the liturgy on earth we are given a foretaste and share in the liturgy of heaven, celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, the goal of our pilgrimage, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, as minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With the whole company of heaven we sing a hymn of praise to the Lord; as we reverence the memory of the saints, we hope to have some part with them, and to share in their fellowship; we wait for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, who is our life, appears, and we appear with him in glory.

By an apostolic tradition taking its origin from the very day of Christ's resurrection, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day, the day that is rightly called the Lord's day. On Sunday the Christian faithful ought to gather together, so that by listening to the word of God and sharing in the Eucharist they may recall the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God who has given them a new birth with a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord's day is therefore the first and greatest festival, one to be set before the loving devotion of the faithful and impressed upon it, so that it may be also a day of joy and of freedom from work. Other celebrations must not take precedence over it, unless they are truly of the greatest importance, since it is the foundation and the kernel of the whole liturgical year.

## **UP-GRADING (EXTENDING) THE CHURCH PORCH**

The Parish Fabric & Finance Group has been considering the church entrance porch for almost 2 years.

Over this period there have been regular items in the bulletin, a previous article in this Magazine, a couple of items on the overhead projection presentation that we do in church from time to time. All of this is to keep the parish apprised of the proposed project. All the feedback to the clergy was positive. So the F & F Group took it to the next stage of instructing

an architect to make some drawings. These were shared with the Parish Pastoral Council and again the feedback was positive. The drawings were pored over and amended and eventually costed by a Quantity Surveyor. These plans were put on display in the porch for information and comment. And then at the end of the Masses on the weekend of 18/19 January the clergy gave another presentation with further information and an invitation to attend an open meeting on Friday Jan 24th at 7pm in the Parish Hall.

But why consider any change to our present porch? Well, to use the common jargon 'it is no longer fit for purpose.' When our predecessors built this church they were financially constrained, and the porch (the smallest they could get away with) is a fine example of this. And also, the needs of the modern parish church congregation have changed over the last 40 years. So it is not just a larger porch that is required, it is a space that can be used in a myriad of ways. Because our parish hall is on busy there is no chance that parishioners after weekday Mass can gather for a cup of tea and fellowship. The new porch would provide that. Because of the paucity of space, those gathering for weddings and funerals are forced to stand outside the church, a new porch would provide a warm welcoming area for them to forgather. At present we are very much strapped for space for our various groups to meet in. Many times there are several parish meetings going on at the same time, a new porch would provide a warm and pleasant venue for one of those meetings. Those are very practical necessities, but there are also another couple of points to bear in mind, one is the first impression that people get on coming into St. Clare's. At present it is of a small, cold cramped, dingy space which is far from welcoming and certainly does not give the impression of an active and alive parish – which we are. So a new porch would make visitors and parishioners alike sense the warmth and vibrancy of the parish. And secondly, it would make a statement about the Catholic Church in Fulwood. As you are aware, Sharoe Green Lane is an enormously busy highway with traffic and pedestrians on their way to the Hospital, Preston College, the local High and Primary Schools, Booths and other places. A new porch would be a visible sign to them that we are alive and kicking and very much open for business. Some of the reasons that we are hoping to extend the porch concern:

1. The creation of a toilet for use by the disabled (The Disability Discrimination Act requires this). Presently we are in breach of the law. Simply to put in a 'disabled toilet' is not an option as there is insufficient space to comply with the legal requirements. As a Church we have a duty and responsibility to the disabled.
2. The availability of a 'baby changing' facility. These days there are many more young families present at Mass (esp 9.30am). There is no comfortable, hygienic place for parents to change a soiled nappy. So they have to resort to the floor in the present lavatory or the floor in the porch. As a Church we should be warm and welcoming to young families and help to address their needs in this way.
3. The creation of enough space for parishioners to mill around and greet each other. The porch is a woefully inadequate place for people to stand around and talk. Before most Masses the clergy and the 'greeters' take up most of the available space!
4. Allowing high enough doors for dignified access for coffins. At present if a family want to show love and respect by carrying their loved one's coffin there is a lack of dignity as they have twice to stoop down to get the coffin through the doors.
5. Ensuring enough space for display of notices, newspapers, periodicals, information, ad hoc items
6. The creation of a friendly, warm, welcoming area as the first impression of our church.

If the parish agrees the need for this project certain steps need to be taken:

1. A Project Group needs to be formed that will deal with all aspects of planning, building, fundraising, commissioning etc.
  2. They will need to gain permission from the diocesan trustees who 'own' all diocesan land. They will require to be convinced that this project is really necessary and of great benefit to the parish.
  3. The trustees will require the parish to raise 'new money' (i.e. not what we already have in the bank) to the tune of at least 75% of the project cost
  4. The Project Group will need to gain Planning Permission from the Local Authority
- The overall cost of the project has been estimated by the Quantity Surveyor to be £150,000!

## THE GREEN THING

In the Superstore, the young cashier suggested to the older woman that she should bring her own grocery bags because plastic bags weren't good for the environment.

The woman apologised and explained, "We didn't have this green thing back in my earlier days."

The assistant responded, "That's our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations."

She was right -- our generation didn't have the green thing in our day.

Back then, we returned milk bottles, soft drink bottles and beer bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the plant to be washed, sterilised and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled. But we didn't have the green thing back in our day.

We walked up stairs because we didn't have a lift or escalator in every store and office building. We walked to the grocers and didn't climb into a 200-horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks. But she was right. We didn't have the green thing in our day.

Back then, we washed the baby's nappies because we didn't have the throw-away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up 2000 watts -- wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back then. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. But that young lady is right. We didn't have the green thing back in our day.

Back then, we had one TV or radio in the house - not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief not a screen the size of a wall. In the kitchen, we blended and stirred by hand because we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the post, we used wadded up old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a gym to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. But she's right. We didn't have the green thing back then.

When we were thirsty we drank from a tap instead of drinking from a plastic bottle of water shipped from the other side of the world. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we

replaced the blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor when the blade got dull. But we didn't have the green thing back then.

Back then, people took the bus and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mums into a 24-hour taxi service. We had one electrical socket in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 kilometres out in space in order to find the nearest fish and chip shop. But we didn't have the green thing back then.

But isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the green thing back then?

## **WHAT IS THE CATENIAN ASSOCIATION?**

The Catenian Association is an international body of proudly Catholic laymen and permanent deacons who meet at least once a month in local groups called Circles, to enjoy each other's company and thereby strengthen their family life through friendship, faith and fun! It is open to practising Catholic laymen from the age of 21 years. Many of the Circles' activities involve the members' wives and families.

The Association has a number of Aims:

To foster deep and long lasting friendships among members and their families;

To provide benevolence of a spiritual, moral and financial nature to members and their families who find themselves in difficulty or need;

To provide support to the Clergy;

To advance the interests of young Catholics and assist them in their choice or pursuit of a career.

The Association is non-political and is not a 'Catholic Action' organisation but it is an organisation for active Catholics. Many members of the Association are involved with their parishes, particularly as Readers and Eucharistic Ministers. Some are governors of Catholic schools or involved with Diocesan education committees. Members are drawn from a wide range of experience. Many have a business or professional background; some are self-employed, while others have a

teaching, health service or other public service background. Some have no formal qualifications.

Although the Association is not principally a fund-raising organisation, many Catenians are involved with Catholic charities and other similar local, national and international charities. The Association has two charities: The Benevolent and Children's Fund for its own members and their dependents, and the Bursary Fund, which gives grants to young Catholics, aged 16 to 24 who are taking part in community-based projects at home and abroad, which have a clear benefit for others as well as for the participant. Applicants for grants from the Bursary Fund do not need to have any connection to a member of the Catenian Association. For more information please contact one of the persons mentioned below. In addition, Presidents of Circles usually raise funds for a nominated charity during their term of office.

There are two Circles which meet close to St. Clare's parish. Preston Circle (14) meets at Preston Golf Club on Fulwood Hall Lane on the 4th Tuesday of each month. Their contact is Tom McAuley (Tel: 788041). Preston & District Circle (144) meets at Bartle Hall on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Their contact is Anthony Donlan (Tel: 713046). Other local Circles meet in Longridge, Garstang, Penwortham, Leyland, Chorley and Lytham.

If you are interested in knowing more about the Association, without making a commitment, please contact one of the above members.

## **THROUGH THE REGISTERS**

We send our congratulations to the families of the following who were baptised in the parish recently: Paige Stone, Evie Ives, Emilia Jeffrey, Lucas Bassu, Samuel Alker & Joshua Nuttall. We offer our condolences to the families of Mary Bond, Mark Cartmell, Phylis Abram & Maureen Pike whose funerals have been recently conducted by the parish clergy.

## **AND IT ALL HAPPENED IN A LEATHER SHOP**

Leopold Pfefferberg was a Polish Jew who survived the holocaust. His life was saved by a Catholic businessman called Oscar Schindler. Leopold

Pfefferberg swore that one day, if he lived, he would let the whole world know that Schindler had saved, not just him, but many thousands.

Leopold did survive and eventually went to live in America and opened a leather goods shop in a fashionable and wealthy area of California. He never tired of telling the story of Oscar Schindler to every movie and media type who came into his shop, seemingly to no avail. Finally, in 1980 a writer called Thomas Keneally heard the story while waiting for his purchases to be wrapped and credit card to be processed. Two years later Keneally's book, 'Schindlers List' made publishing history, became a world-wide best-seller and an award winning film. It had taken Leopold 45 years to find the right person who could tell Schindlers story to the world.

In a similar way, Jesus tells us to persevere in proclaiming the Gospel. 'Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News'. The trouble is, we don't travel the whole world. Most of us are stuck in a little corner of it. Well, maybe. But we still have to keep on telling everyone, everyone who will listen, about the One who not only saved lives but gave his life so that everyone might be saved. And persevering in this mission is a key to its success. Because, we simply don't know, in all our retelling of what God has done for us, just who could be the one person who could blow the story wide open and tell the world on our behalf. Very few people have heard of Leopold Pfefferberg, family, friends, a few local people.

For that matter, very few people have heard of me or you. But we have, at all times and in all sorts of ways, to give good testimony, persevere and not lose faith. Because, you see, for all we know, we may have already inspired someone, we may just have told the right person.

Four days before Christmas in 1968, Apollo 8 lifted off from Cape Kennedy carrying astronauts Frank Borman, Bill Anders and Jim Lovell. Apollo lost contact with earth as it went behind the moon, something then unknown and risky. A BILLION people sat glued to their television sets and held their breath, as they waited for the spacecraft to reappear. As it emerged safely, its crew took turns to read a 'Christmas Greeting' to everyone on earth. That reading was the story of creation from the Book of Genesis.

Millions heard, some perhaps for the first time, that God had created the heavens and the earth, and that He found it very, very good. What I'm saying is that somebody, some unknown, unnamed, possibly half-

forgotten person, perhaps way back in the life of each of these astronauts, had put the love of the words of scripture into them. A parent, grandparent, friend, colleague; some teacher whose enthusiasm for the words of scripture had fired a spark that had never been extinguished. Or some priest in some church whose glowing love for God's word had planted a seed in the hearts of three men who had their moment and were able to blow the story wide open. Somewhere the first seed of a wonderful vocation have to be planted in someone's heart.

All the words and all the testimonies we give could just, might just and possibly have yielded 40, 60, or 100 fold. We just don't know.

We may never actually see the fruits of our witness. The candle flame of faith we give to someone else may be passed down the line until someone lights a beacon from it. Saints are made this way. Saints become saints because they take the faith that God, often through others, offers them and they run with it. And they take others with them. And we can be part of that. Jesus says, YOU will be MY witness. You. Me. US. That is the great mystery. We talk of mysteries all the time, wonderful mysteries. And the most marvellous and exciting mystery of all, is that we are living this mystery from moment to moment So let's never grow weary, never be discouraged, never stop telling the story of how this man, Jesus, saved not just you and me, or even thousands, but everyone..

## **FROM THE DIOCESE AND OTHER SOURCES**

**APPOINTMENTS:** Father Peter Hart to be Chair of the Trustees' Finance Committee; Deacon Jim Wood to centre his diaconal ministry upon the Cathedral parish and so withdraw from the Chaplaincy Team at Lancaster University. **RETIREMENTS** Father Bryan Irving & Father Frank Flynn

**PARISH LINKING:** as from 7 January 2014 the Parish of Over Wyre is to be linked with St Mary, Great Eccleston. Father Bernard Partington takes on the pastoral care of St Mary, Great Eccleston.

**FORMER CHAPELS OF EASE:** St Francis, Hambleton will cease to be open for worship as from 11/12 January 2014. St Cuthbert, Flookburgh has ceased to be open for worship as from 30 November/1 December 2013.

WELCOME - THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF MERCY OF ALMA, MICHIGAN (Sister Mary Julian Ekman RSM and Sister Mary Prudence Allen RSM) who have established a foundation, initially at Garstang, in our Diocese and will be working at Lancaster University Chaplaincy assisting Father Paul Embery.

THE BROUGHTON CATHOLIC CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION was founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to help Catholic families who were suffering poverty during a smallpox epidemic in the present North Western Dioceses of Salford, Liverpool, Shrewsbury and Lancaster. The Society today has funds available to help families, but depends on local Parish Priests to identify those in need. Funds have been distributed to charities abroad, but this was not the original purpose of the Society. In these straitened times there are many families who are struggling. Please help the Society identify these families in order that the Broughton's charitable purpose and mission may continue to be fulfilled.

Parish Priests should contact the secretary of the Broughton in the first instance. Any advice from Parish Priests on how the Broughton can better fulfil its mission would be very gratefully received. Please contact Mrs Margaret Jenner (Secretary) on 01257 278915; e: [margaretjenner@lineone.net](mailto:margaretjenner@lineone.net)

### FROM THE PARISH WEBSITE

**THE GUILD OF ST STEPHEN:** Twenty of our altar servers were able to get to the St Stephen's Day Mass to honour their patron saint. It was also a time for enrolling new members and for awarding two silver medals to Nisha & Peter who have been serving for over 10 years. St Stephen's Day. In his homily, Fr Darren, stressed the importance of service and said how vital daily prayer was. The boys and girls renewed their commitment as altar servers. They were given a small cross each as an aide memoir for prayer. At the conclusion of Mass a group photograph was taken.

**THE NEW YEAR FEAST – THEOTOKOS:** About 200 parishioners and others turned out at noon a New Year's Day to seek God's blessing on 2014 and to honour our Blessed Lady whose feast day falls on January 1st. 'Mary, Mother of God. Or in Greek 'Theotokos - God bearer.'

New Year During the Mass, after the homily, the congregation, together with the clergy & servers, knelt and joined in a prayer of consecration of themselves, their families and the parish, to our Lord through our Lady.

Prayer of Consecration.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, as your Son lay dying upon the cross He gave you to be our Mother too. As we gather now to honour you, and seek your prayerful support, we dedicate and consecrate ourselves, our families and our parish to your powerful intercession. We ask that the cloak of your protection be put around us and that you keep us before the throne of your Son in your prayers.

Dear Lady, obtain for us many graces that we may serve our brothers and sisters. And that in all things, God may have the glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**EYES DOWN:** Some people view Bingo as eyewateringly mind numbing but others, as an act of charity. And it was the latter that held sway on Friday evening at St Clare's Parish Hall when many parishioners, young and old, gathered to raise funds for Lourdes.

It was a prize bingo and the prizes were all donated via the 'Unwanted Christmas Gift Appeal!'

The fundraiser is part of the efforts to provide places for some of our young people to go to Lourdes this summer to help care for the sick. In this way the bingo was in direct relationship to our Lord's concern for the sick and his direction in the Sermon on the Mount (cf Mt. 5)

**A LIGHT TO ENLIGHTEN THE GENTILES:** Ordinarily the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas) does not fall on a Sunday but on whichever day the 2nd of February happened to alight upon. However, this year it does fall on a Sunday which enables a larger number than usual to celebrate it.

Candlemas So all the candles to be used in church throughout the coming year were placed in the side-chapel and, at the beginning of Mass, they were blessed and there followed a short procession into church with lighted candles.

It is easy to understand why this feast is sub-titled 'Candlemas.' The Old man Simeon who appears in today's Gospel, takes the infant Christ into his arms and calls him, 'The light to enlighten the Gentiles.' In

other words, God sent his Son not just for the Jewish people but for all who would accept him.

**PART TWO:** In Autumn last year some of our boys & girls embarked upon their journey to Reconciliation which they completed in Advent. And now part two begins with them being enrolled into the First Holy Communion Programme.

This programme will run until First Holy Communions in May. Today the girls & boys and their parents signed the certificates which said that they will do 'their very best' in entering this programme. The clergy, catechists and family have signed the certificate to say that they will do all they can to support the young people at this special time.

**COMMISSIONING:** Because of people retiring or moving away, we needed to replenish the numbers of those who exercise the Ministry of Reader in Church and also those who are Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

And so it was that this weekend at all Masses there were commissioned those who had volunteered and been trained for these ministries.

## **TEN WAYS TO DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

**By Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.**

Over the years I've heard from many good people who want a closer relationship with God. But they're stymied by what they perceive as God's silence. What they often mean, without knowing it, is that they'd like God to do something dramatic in their lives; something with a hint of Mt. Sinai that proves his credentials.

But God typically doesn't work that way. He's not in the theater business. God wants to be loved and even in a sense "courted" – which means that we can't be passive partners in the relationship. We need to pursue God as we would the persons we love.

So as we make our way through these last weeks of ordinary time before Lent, here a few steps – in no particular order – that can help us draw closer to God.

**First**, start by listening to him. Faith isn't a 12-step action program. Nor is it an algebra problem that needs to be "solved." It's a love affair. As

with a spouse, the most important thing we can do is to be present and listen. This requires the investment of time and focus. If a spirit of impatience or pretending to listen doesn't work with your spouse, why would it work with God?

**Second**, cultivate silence. We can't listen when our world is filled with noise and toys. C.S. Lewis often said that noise is the music of hell. Our toys – those things we choose to distract us – keep us diverted from focusing on the main questions of life: Why are we here? What does my life mean? Is there a God, and if so, who is he, and what does he ask of me?

**Third**, seek humility. Humility is to the spirit what material poverty is to the senses: the great purifier. Humility is the beginning of sanity. We can't really see – much less love – anyone or anything else when the self is in the way. When we finally, really believe in our own sinfulness and unimportance, many other things become possible: repentance; mercy, patience, forgiveness of others. These virtues are the foundation stones of that other great Christian virtue: justice. No justice is ever possible in a spider's web of mutual anger, recrimination and hurt pride.

**Fourth**, cultivate honesty. Complete honesty is only possible for a humble person. The reason is simple. The most painful but important honesty is telling the truth to ourselves about our own motives and our own actions. The reason honesty is such a powerful magnet is because it's so rare.

Modern life is too often built on the marketing of half-truths and lies about who we are and what we deserve. Many of the lies are well-intentioned and not even very harmful — but they're still lies. Scripture praises the honest woman and man because they're like clean air in a room full of smoke. Honesty allows the mind to breathe and think clearly.

**Fifth**, seek to be holy. Holy does not mean nice or even good, although truly holy people are always good and often – though not always — nice. Holiness means “other than.” It's what Scripture means when it tells us to be “in the world, but not of the world.” And this doesn't just miraculously happen. We need to choose and seek holiness.

God's ways are not our ways. Holiness is the habit of seeking to conform all of our thoughts and actions to God's ways. There's no cookie-cutter model of holiness, just as piety can't be reduced to one particular kind of

prayer or posture. What's important is to love the world because God loves it and sent his Son to redeem it, but not to be captured by its habits and values, which are not godly.

**Sixth**, pray. Prayer is more than just that portion of the day when we advise God about what we need and what he should do. Real prayer is much closer to listening, and it's intimately tied to obedience. God certainly wants to hear what we need and love and fear, because these things are part of our daily lives, and he loves us. But if we're doing the talking, we can't listen. Note too, that we can't really pray without humility. Why? Because prayer requires us to lift up who we are and everything we experience and possess to God. Pride is too heavy to lift.

**Seventh**, read. Scripture is the living Word of God. When we read God's Word, we encounter God himself. But there's more: J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Georges Bernanos and so many others – these were deeply intelligent and powerful writers whose work nourishes the Christian mind and soul, while also inspiring the imagination. Reading also serves another, simpler purpose: It shuts out the noise that distracts us from fertile reflection. We can't read *The Screwtape Letters* and take network television seriously at the same time. And that's a very good thing.

By the way, if you do nothing else in 2014, read Tolkien's wonderful short story, *Leaf by Niggle*. It will take you less than an hour, but it will stay with you for a lifetime. And then read C.S. Lewis' great religious science-fiction trilogy – *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. You'll never look at our world in quite the same way again.

**Eighth**, believe and act. Nobody "earns" faith. It's a free gift from God. But we do need to be willing and ready to receive it. We can discipline ourselves to be prepared. If we sincerely seek truth; if we desire things greater than this life has to offer; and if we leave our hearts open to the possibility of God — then one day we will believe, just as when we choose to love someone more deeply, and turn our hearts sincerely to the task, then sooner or later we usually will.

Feelings are fickle. They're often misleading. They're not the substance of our faith. We need to be grateful for our emotions as God's gifts, but we also need to judge them in the light of common sense. Falling in love

is only the first taste of love. Real love is both more beautiful and more demanding than the early days of a romance.

In like manner, a dramatic “road to Damascus” style conversion doesn’t happen to most people, and not even St. Paul stayed on the road very long. Why? Because in revealing himself to Paul, Jesus immediately gave him something to do. We know and more deeply love Jesus Christ by doing what he tells us to do.

In the real world, feelings that endure follow actions that have substance. The more sincere we are in our discipleship, the closer we will come to Jesus Christ. This is why the Emmaus disciples only recognized Jesus in “the breaking of the bread.” Only in acting in and on our faith, does our faith become fully real.

**Ninth**, nobody makes it to heaven alone. We all need friendship and community. A friend of mine who’s been married more than 40 years likes to say that the heart of a good marriage is friendship. Every successful marriage is finally about a deep and particular kind of friendship that involves honesty, intimacy, fidelity, mutual sacrifice, hope and shared beliefs.

Every successful marriage is also a form of community. Even Jesus needed these two things: friendship and community. The Apostles were not simply Christ’s followers; they were also his brothers and friends, people who knew and supported him in an intimate way. All of us as Christians need the same two things. It doesn’t matter whether we’re a religious, layperson, deacon or priest, single or married. Friends are vital. Community is vital. Our friends both express and shape who we are. Good friends sustain us. Bad friends undermine us. And that’s why they’re so decisive to the success or failure of a Christian life.

**Tenth** and finally, nothing is more powerful than the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist in leading us to the God we seek. God makes himself available to us every week in the confessional, and every day in the sacrifice of the Mass. It makes little sense to talk about the “silence of God” when our churches are made silent by our own absence and indifference. We’re the ones with the cold hearts – not God.

He’s never outdone in his generosity. He waits for us in the quiet of the tabernacle. And he loves us and wants to be loved wholeheartedly in return.

If we’re willing to give that love, these steps will lead us to him.

## A LITTLE LIGHT RELIEF

An elderly man was stopped by the police around 2am and was asked where he was going at that time of night. The man replied, "I'm on my way to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body, as well as smoking and staying out late." The officer then asked, "Really? Who's giving that lecture at this time of night?" The man replied, "That would be my wife."

The computer swallowed Grandma,  
Yes, honestly it's true!  
She pressed 'control and 'enter'  
And disappeared from view.

It devoured her completely,  
The thought just makes me squirm.  
She must have caught a virus  
Or been eaten by a worm.

I've searched through the recycle bin  
And files of every kind;  
I've even used the Internet,  
But nothing did I find.

In desperation, I asked Mr. Google  
My searches to refine.  
The reply from him was negative,  
Not a thing was found 'online.'

So, if inside your 'Inbox,'  
My Grandma you should see,  
Please 'Copy, Scan' and 'Paste' her,  
And send her back to me.

If "gh" stands for "p" as in "hiccough", if "ough" stands for "o" as in "dough", if "phth" stands for "t" as in "phthisis", if "eigh" stands for "a" as in "neighbour", if "tte" stands for "t" as in "gazette", if "eau" stand for "o" as in "beau", then the correct way to spell "potato" is:  
ghoughphtheeightteau

## FROM THE ORDO

Ash Wednesday heralds the beginning of the Season of Lent, it is a day when we abstain from meat and reduce our intake of food – fasting. In Lent there are not many feasts but the ones that are celebrated are of the first calibre. And three come in quick succession: St Patrick on March 17<sup>th</sup>, followed by the Patron of the Universal Church: St Joseph the spouse of our Lady and then, on March 25<sup>th</sup> ‘Lady Day’ the Feast of the Annunciation, signalling the beginning of our Salvation.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on April 13<sup>th</sup> and leads us towards the most sacred time, the Easter Triduum. Over three days, Holy Thursday, Good Friday & Holy Saturday, we celebrate one event: the death and resurrection of our Lord.

All this leads to the joyful season of Easter where ‘Alleluia’ is our song. Then we find saints day’s popping up all over: St George, The patron saint of England (and many other places too) St Catherine of Siena, SS Philip & James, Apostles and so on.

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