

CONTACT



OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
PARISH MAGAZINE
SPRING 2012



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Parishioners

Welcome to this Spring edition of **CONTACT**. It's been a while in coming but I am pleased to say that it's here at last for you to enjoy.

I have tried to provide a wide range of topics and I list below a few of the articles contained in the magazine.

- I was very pleased to receive the transcript of a talk on a Christmas theme by *Fr Francis Preston* on his experiences in Jerusalem as Rector of the Ratisbonne Seminary which I am pleased to include;
- News from the schools of the Parish. I am always very grateful for the contributions they make which are an important part of the magazine.

Contributors:

Clare Duffin of Farnborough Hill, *Lorraine Stewart* from the Salesian College and *Kate Licence* from St Patrick's;

- An invitation from *Anne-Marie Maher-Williams* to attend a series of 3 talks in May about being of service in some small way;
- Once again, an excellent story from *Margaret Tabbener*;
- Thanks to *Bunny Carvalho* and *Sally Hall* for their contributions;
- A message of thanks from CAFOD provided by *Alicia Nolan*;
- On a recent trip to Bruges, Margaret and I visited the Basilica of the Precious Blood and I have included a short history of this famous church and its relic.

My thanks to those parishioners who have contributed to this edition, to *Philip Hanson* who provided the front cover and to *Fr Dan* and my assistants for their invaluable help to bring it all to publication.

May I wish you all a very Happy and Holy Easter.

Robert Eeckelaers, Editor

Experiences in Jerusalem - on a Christmas Theme

by Fr Francis Preston

When Fr Dan invited me to share with you a personal reflection on the privilege I had of spending six Christmases in the Holy Land it was invitation I felt I should accept as a very practical way of saying thank you.

Let me begin by stating something you'll be very aware of: the great majority of Israeli citizens are Jews. But not all of them attend the synagogue regularly. Since Jews do not recognize Jesus Christ as the son of God and since Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus, it is hardly surprising that Christmas is not celebrated as a holiday by the Jewish population of the country. Indeed there are some ultra orthodox Jews who fast on Christmas Day so that Christians may come to understand the error of their ways.

In Israel Christmas Day, except when it falls on a Shabbat, is an ordinary working day – shops and offices open, children attend school as normal. However Jews do celebrate the Jewish feast of Hannukah at about the same time that Christians celebrate Christmas. So some streets are decorated with lights and the lamps on giant menorahs [nine branch candle sticks] situated in prominent places in Jewish Jerusalem are illuminated one by one during the week of the feast.

Christmas is, celebrated by the minority Christian Arab population residing all over Israel, and especially in Bethlehem. It is also celebrated by the many foreign nationals who are Christians and who now play an increasingly a significant role in the life of the Christian population of the Holy Land. Twenty years ago there were 5,000 Filipino workers, today there are an estimated 40,000 Filipinos living and working in Israel. There are also significant groups of Christians from India and Sri Lanka and from Eritrea and Ethiopia. The numbers of Israel's 110,000 native Arab Christians have largely stagnated: They're not shrinking, but neither are they growing, as many young people leave for the West, squeezed by the conflict between Jews and Muslims and party to the general sense of neglect shared by Israel's Arab citizens.

Personal Reflection

During my years in Jerusalem I was based at the Ratisbonne Monastery, a large stone building situated close to the commercial centre of Jerusalem. The monastery was built by a French Jew, Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne, whose life spanned most of the 19th century and who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1842.

Today the Ratisbonne Monastery lies in what is known as west Jerusalem, the Jewish half of the city, about twenty minutes' walk away from the Old City which contains many of the most famous "holy places".

When the work began on building the Ratisbonne Monastery in 1874 the area around the new vocational and agricultural school was surrounded by fields. Pere Marie Alphonse revealed that he had bought this particular plot of land because of an interior locution he had had. During this locution he had been told that the site was the very place where the prophet Isaiah several centuries before, during his confrontation with King Ahaz, had spoken in Yahweh's name these prophetic words: "A virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel."

During my first Christmas in the Holy Land I decided that I would join most of the Community and travel to Bethlehem for the midnight Mass in the church of St Catherine, the Latin Catholic church built parallel to the byzantine Basilica of the Nativity during the last century which is administered by the Franciscan friars who look after most of Catholic holy places in the Holy Land. My first midnight Mass in Bethlehem wasn't the most positive of experiences. The weather that particular Christmas was cold and wet and very windy. Both those of the community attending the Mass and those priests among us who were concelebrating had received our appropriate tickets from the Christian Information centre in early December. We reached Manager Square, next to the Basilica soon after 9.30 p.m. we queued outside in the rain and high winds for another 90 minutes before gaining admission to the Church of St Catherine which was already full. Those of us who were concelebrating after vesting took our places behind the main altar in a church which was dotted with television cameras and sound equipment. The Latin Patriarch, Archbishop Michael Sabbah was principal celebrant. Several visiting bishops and more than fifty priests concelebrated the Mass. Several members of the diplomatic corps including the Consul Generals of France, Belgium, Spain and Italy were also present. Just before the start of mass The Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, his entourage and bodyguards arrived and took their places at the very front of the large congregation.

During the Mass the Patriarch gave a long homily first in Arabic and then in French. At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, President Mahmoud Abbas and his entourage and bodyguards upped and left. At the end of Mass the Patriarch and the other bishops made their way to the Nativity Grotto to pay homage to the new born Christ child there. The rest of us, priests and laity, slowly made our way out of Church and toward the bus station where our coach was waiting for us. It must have been close to 3.30 a.m. before we reached the Ratisbonne.

All in all it was a rather disappointing experience and for the next five years each Christmas Eve I chose to celebrate midnight Mass for one of the two large Filipino communities in Jerusalem either in our own church or the beautiful church of Our Lady of the Rosary just across Independence Park from us. That proved to be a much more positive and uplifting occasion.

For me a much more positive experience was the opportunity to celebrate Mass on Christmas afternoon at the Manger Altar in the Nativity Grotto located below the Basilica. From just after Christmas midnight onwards a Mass is celebrated every thirty minutes at the Manger altar which is literally no more than six feet away from the spot marked by a silver star where according to ancient tradition Jesus was born. For me it was just an amazing experience to celebrate Mass at 3.00 p.m. Christmas afternoon just a few feet away the place where our Saviour was born - the place where Mary laid her new born Son in the manger and to which the shepherds hurried after the good news of Jesus' birth had been announced to them by the angelic host.

Spiritual reflection

After the appearance of the angelic host to the shepherds Luke records how these country men left their flocks, hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

“Manger” is a rather old fashioned, English word that is rarely if ever used in popular speech today. It comes from the French verb, manger, “to eat”. A manger is a trough or box in which food, possibly hay, was placed to provide animals, like horses and cattle, with food and sustenance. In the space of ten short verses Luke’s simple but beautiful account of the Jesus’ birth makes three references to the new born baby “lying” or “being laid” in a manger.

The three fold repetition of this phrase suggests that Luke has something important to tell us. What is it? Some commentators have suggested that the repetition of the word “manger” is very much tied to Luke’s interest in food and meals. In his account of Jesus’ public ministry it is Luke who tells us that Jesus was someone who “eats and drinks with sinners and tax collectors”; someone who accepts invitations to dine with Pharisees, someone who is described by his critics among the scribes and Pharisees as a “glutton and drunkard”. It is Jesus who feeds the five thousand with five loaves and a couple of fishes. It is Jesus who compares the Kingdom of God to a great banquet. For this reason it has been suggested that Jesus’ birth and his being placed in a “manger”, a feeding trough, foreshadows in some way an essential element of his future mission: his task of bringing sustenance to humankind, of feeding our hungry world.

The simple village homes in the Palestine of Jesus’ time often had just one large room which may well have been a small cave or underground grotto that had subsequently been enlarged. This room was where the entire family

cooked, ate, slept and lived. At one end of this room, next to the door, the stable or cattle stall was situated. It was often two or three feet lower than the rest of the main living area or blocked off from it by heavy timbers. Every night during winter the family cow, donkey and a few sheep would be herded in to this domestic stable or cattle stall for protection and safety from thieves. The animals would generate heat to warm that part of the house in which the family were living. Often in the floor of the main living area, adjacent to the cattle stall, one or two feeding troughs, or “mangers” were located. They would have been carved out of the soft stone. If the family cow or the donkey were hungry during the night, they could eat from the manger without disturbing the household. Every morning the animals would be driven outside into the courtyard of the house and the stall would be cleaned up.

It is Luke who records that Jesus was placed in a manger by his parents because there was, as some translations express it rather inaccurately, “no room for them in the inn”. Rather than an “inn”, a more accurate translation of the Greek word Luke uses would be “guest room”. Such a guest room was often found either attached to the main living room at the opposite end to the stable, or built on the roof of the main living area. There was no such guest room available for Mary when she and Joseph reached Bethlehem after the long and exhausting journey from Nazareth. For that reason they may well have found refuge not in a cave but in the large living area of an ordinary villager’s home. And the infant Jesus after his safe delivery may well have been placed by Mary or those attending her in a manger hollowed into the floor and filled with fresh straw.

It is interesting that Luke uses the same Greek word for “guest room” to describe the “upper room” which Jesus hired for his last meal with his disciples on the evening before his death. The same Jesus, who at the very beginning of his earthly life was excluded from a “guest room” in Bethlehem, offers his chosen followers hospitality and a meal in a “guest room” in Jerusalem before his life giving death and resurrection. It is no ordinary meal. As it draws to a close Jesus gives his friends his flesh to eat and his blood to drink under the appearance of bread and wine. And he commands them to continue doing what he has done for them, feeding a hungry world with the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation.

As we celebrate the great feast of Christmas let us thank God for his abiding presence among us, his Chosen people, a presence that is focused particularly in the Eucharist. May the celebration of Christmas deepen our love for Jesus in the Eucharist and renew our determination to bring the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation to our hungry world and especially to the young.

My Lent

Every Lent, I find myself being asked why we Catholics ‘give up’ things. For a long time, I used to be defensive and say it’s not just about giving up, it’s about doing more; more good deeds, more prayer, more almsgiving. And indeed it is.

But recently my answer has changed because my understanding of these 40 days has changed. I have come to understand in quite a profound way that self-denial, of going without, has become essential to my journey of faith. Let me share with you this small part of my life that has come to enrich me, to bring me closer to God.

If I wore my heart on my sleeve you would see engraved on it *I love latte!* Yes I know it’s silly, but I do. I have a latte, a milky, frothy coffee every day, at the same time, in the morning. It’s a delicious treat for me, especially if there’s a pastry included. ”So what?” you say, “there’s no harm in that”. Well no, it’s certainly not nicotine or alcohol but it *is* a habit, something I feel I have to have.

If we are really honest with ourselves, we all have these habits – a cup of tea at 8am, a chocolate bar in the evening, a cooked breakfast on a Saturday morning. You know the thing. For sure, maybe not a gambling addiction or a drug addiction but an addiction nonetheless.

Lent gives us a wonderful opportunity to put these habits into perspective and to say that we recognise these things are not an essential part of our lives, that they are trivial and do not fulfil us in any spiritual way. Habits can entrap us and have a ridiculously powerful hold over us. Lent allows us to be liberated from the trivia of life. And the rewards are immense. During this time I am a person who prays more (often for strength to keep my promises!), I am more compassionate to the struggles of others and I am able to be more generous with my money and my God-given talents. I am free to be the child of God that I was born to be.

My observance of Lent is how my entire life should be. I need more practice that’s for sure – we all do! But our loving God is with us every step of the way. Ditch the things that don’t matter and make God your habit.



THE HOLY CROSS AND MOST HOLY REDEEMER

OUR IMAGES OF LENT are important for our different forms of spiritual renewal, and are varied. But today's Gospel of Jesus' journey into the desert wilderness is the original image given us by the Church. In this context we see Lent as the way we, as his Church, accompany him on his journey in spirit, so that from the very start he is seen to be with us, and conversing with us in prayer on our own Lenten journey. In this Gospel text we might particularly dwell on the way Jesus overcomes every challenge with the word of God, which he quotes from the Torah or Law of Moses.

Beyond the scene of his own journey into the desert wilderness lies the further imagery of the 40 year journey of the ancient people of God led by Moses out of Egyptian slavery to meet God at Sinai to receive the Law of his covenant. The author of the Gospel of Matthew clearly saw Jesus as a kind of 'second Moses' who had come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. In this image we see ourselves as a Church participating in the greater pilgrimage of the people of God, journeying to renew our own baptismal covenant with God at Easter. This is why the Gospel of the Transfiguration is always on the Second Sunday in Lent, with the command from the numinous cloud to Jesus' closest disciples, 'Listen to him.' In this command Jesus' own words are identified for his disciples as the word of God. So our acceptance of our covenant with God is shown by our acceptance of the Risen Christ as our only Lord and King, reaffirming the promises made at our baptism.

A further image is the old Anglo-Saxon meaning of Lent - Spring, the seasonal renewal, rebirth, and resurrection of the natural world, in which we see ourselves as being called to participate and celebrate sacramentally in spirit to shed the 'old self' and replace it with the new, reshaped by the Holy Spirit given us in our baptism and other sacraments. The gift of the Spirit is itself the new life we are given, reflected in the struggle of new birth and germination in the natural world to burst forth in bud and flower. But even this has the further ultimate image behind it of human life itself as a journey to a promised but dimly perceived city of the eternal kingdom of God. In this picture we see ourselves as forming one stream among the many streams of a great river of humanity seeking God in so many ways, and the meaning of our own remarkable and unique experience of human life.

These images have of course greater or less appeal to us according to our closeness to or alienation from God, which in itself largely depends on outside personal factors like age, health, circumstances, and our own responses to our experience of life, especially to its pains, sufferings and losses.

Message from CAFOD

Dear Father/Dear parish secretary

Thank you very much indeed for all the support you have given us for the recent Fast Day collection.

To ensure your parish's donation qualifies for matched funding from the UK government – we would be very grateful indeed if you could ensure that the donation is accompanied by a note/compliments slip which clearly states that it is for '**CAFOD's Lenten appeal**'. Please note that any additional donations to our Lenten appeal will continue to be matched until **17th May 2012**. We really appreciate the generosity that so many people have shown us across the diocese. Please pass on our thanks to all your parishioners.

We would also appreciate your help in promoting the following event if you could include the ad below into your parish newsletter over the coming weeks:

CAFOD GOLF DAY - As part of CAFOD's 50th year celebrations, a **Golf Day** is being organised at **Royal Winchester Golf Club**, Sarum Road, Winchester SO22 5QE, on **Tuesday 29th May 2012**. The competition is for teams of 4 persons. Please support CAFOD by entering this event. Full details and applications forms can be obtained from CAFOD Portsmouth, 01252 329385 or portsmouth@cafod.org.uk.

Thank you very much for your support.



When your hut's on fire

The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him. Every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect himself from the elements, and to store his few possessions. One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, with smoke rolling up to the sky.

He felt the worst had happened, and everything was lost. He was stunned with disbelief, grief, and anger. He cried out, 'God! How could you do this to me?'

Early the next day, he was awakened by the sound of a ship approaching the island! It had come to rescue him! 'How did you know I was here?' asked the weary man of his rescuers. 'We saw your smoke signal,' they replied.

The Moral of This Story: It's easy to get discouraged when things are going bad, but we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of our pain and suffering.

Remember that the next time your little hut seems to be burning to the ground. It just may be a smoke signal that summons the *Grace of God*.

Thanks to Sally Hall

From: *I Stood Tip-toe*

Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches; little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak;
Or perhaps, to show their black and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)



TO: God.Com

Dear Lord,

Every single evening as I'm lying here in bed,
This tiny little Prayer keeps running through my head:

God bless all my family
Wherever they may be,
Keep them warm
And safe from harm
For they're so close to me.

Now I know that it's unusual
To Bless a motherboard,
But listen just a second
While I explain it to you, Lord.

I know so much about them
By the kindness that they give,
And this little scrap of metal
Takes me in to where they live.

Please take an extra minute
From your duties up above,
To bless those in my address book
That's filled with so much love.

When you update your Heavenly list
On your own Great CD-ROM,
Bless everyone who says this prayer
Sent up to GOD.Com

And God, there is one more thing
I wish that you could do;
Hope you don't mind me asking,
Please bless my computer too.

You see, that little metal box
Holds more than odds and ends;
Inside those small compartments
Rest so many of my friends.

By faith is how I know them
Much the same as you.
We share in what life brings us
And from that our friendships grew.

Wherever else this prayer may reach
To each and every friend,
Bless each e-mail inbox
And each person who hits 'send'.

Amen



THE HOLY CROSS AND MOST HOLY REDEEMER

THE RESURRECTION of Christ cannot be separated from his suffering and death on the cross, which form the climax and centrepiece of all four Gospels. Our liturgical separation of Christ's suffering and death from his Easter resurrection in different celebrations therefore accidentally distorts the whole point of the Gospel accounts. Everything else in each of the Gospels is really no more than a carefully arranged prelude to this event, which is in each Gospel related with much greater care and detail than anything else. The resurrection accounts of Easter Sunday simply form its conclusion, even though all the Gospels except Mark continue with some additional - but noticeably less detailed stories which are told only to underline further its central significance. They correspond more or less exactly with the ancient Jewish Passover paradigm of the Temple communion sacrifice: the offering of the unblemished lamb to God, an offering which is accepted and taken up by God, who in response confers life and blessings on his people. The resurrection, ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit all form the sign of God's acceptance of this final Passover sacrifice.

If we are distracted by negative feelings about ideas of sacrifice, we must remember that a sacrifice is simply a gift which is made holy by being offered to God. Jesus did not in fact offer his death but his whole life to God, culminating in his acceptance of his inevitable death through the evil of human sinfulness. The heart of his sacrifice was his love for us in his love of God. His choice of offering himself in this way enables us all to offer ourselves through him, which is the meaning of our Eucharistic sacrifice - we are together healed and made holy in Christ through our shared Communion of love.

Understanding the ancient Jewish Passover in other words is important for us to understand the meaning of the resurrection - in particular, how we ourselves are called through our baptism and Eucharist to embody Christ's resurrection in ourselves. This is why baptism is identified so closely with Easter. But if the love is not there in us, our participation is illusory, which is why the Church requires us to have the humility to seek the sacrament of reconciliation as the prelude of our baptismal renewal at Easter. We are called as Christians to let the Holy Spirit re-create us together into the living embodiment of Christ's resurrection in our contemporary world. We see in the baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit the holy fire of God accepting the timeless sacrifice of Christ - in which together we are made a part. This is where the liturgy, the theological wisdom it expresses, and the spirituality and love which are its inspiration, all meet in what we celebrate during the coming weeks.

The Basilica of the Holy Blood, Bruges, Belgium

The Basilica of the Precious Blood in Bruges was formerly known as the Chapel of Saint Basil. The chapel itself was built in the first half of the 12th century and was dedicated to Saint Basil the Great whose relics - four vertebrae - had been brought from Caesarea to Bruges in the spring of 1100. The exterior of the lower chapel today reveals nothing of its solid and sober style. The interior however has remained more or less unchanged.



Basilica of the Holy Blood Entrance

The feeble light which enters through the few windows that still give unto the open, creates a singular atmosphere in this dim interior with its thick walls. It may truly be said that this chapel is one of the purest romanesque constructions still to be found in Flanders

The elegant façade of the front portal contains Gothic and Renaissance elements. The stained-glass windows - recent copies of the 15th century originals - represent sovereigns of Flanders. The pulpit, however, has a real artistic value: it is an oak sphere made in 1728 by a Bruges craftsman H. Pulinx. Above the main altar is a crucifix 3 metres high containing a silver tabernacle. The upper chapel was changed into gothic style in the 15th century, and was rebuilt in the 19th century. To the right of the altar is a throne with canopy where the Relic is offered for veneration, especially on Fridays.

Next to the upper Chapel is a small museum which contains a six-sided adorned silver box and in particular the marvellous shrine finished after three years working by Jan Crabbe of Bruges in 1617. There the Relic of the Precious Blood - the Blood of Christ – is reserved. The Relic is then kept in the hexagonal Casket during its yearly pilgrimage through the streets of the town. This gold and silver fashioned reliquary, set with many precious stones, constitutes the highlight of the famous procession.

According to a very ancient Bruges tradition it was brought to the town in 1150, after the second crusade, by Count Derrick of Alsace. It was said that, as a reward for his exceptional bravery, it was entrusted unto him by the Patriarch of Jerusalem who in turn entrusted the relic to the citizens of Bruges. Recent research however seems to indicate that the Relic only arrived at Bruges, from Constantinople, at the very beginning of the 13th century. The adoration of the relic also is what the internationally famous Procession of the Holy Blood is all about.

This first rank touristic and folkloristic attraction is held every year in the spring, on Ascension Day, and this since 1291. Each year some 50,000 pilgrims are present to see more than 1800 actors in historical and biblical scenes, and - of course - the bishop of Bruges carrying the



The relic of the Holy Blood

relic through the streets. The Holy Blood of Christ, brought to the Chapel of Saint Basilius by Count Derrick, is still displayed every Friday, before and after the mass, to be venerated by the faithful. In the early 15th century, the Noble Brotherhood of the Holy Blood was founded. Its 31 members have to be citizens of Bruges and "honorable people". The purpose of the Brothers is to safeguard the relic and its veneration. On ceremonial occasions, they wear a black silken tabard on which a pelican is embroidered.

A point to ponder: On Christmas Day 1148, in the Holy Sepulchre and while in the presence of Derrick of Alsace and his wife Sybilla of Anjou, the Templars would indeed have found the Precious Blood of Christ. They poured it respectfully into an octagonal vial and sealed the ends with two golden roses. Sybilla had been infected with leprosy, like some of the Templars that were with her, and was suffering from a heavy fever. But when she held the relic in her hands, she had a vision in which she saw Bruges as "a New Jerusalem of the West"... and she cured miraculously, as did all the lepers surrounding her. Sybilla made a solemn pledge to turn Bruges into this New Jerusalem, a Holy City. This all came to pass just as the masons had finished the Chapel of Saint Basilius.

Legend or fact? Of course, this can be merely a legend but there is no doubt that the Holy Blood did come to Bruges.

The basilica itself has been the center of devotion to the Precious Blood since at least 1255. The church holds a vial purporting to be the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The relic is exposed for veneration every Friday. Each year, on Ascension Thursday a gala procession with the relic wends its way through the quaint streets of this "Venice of the North".

Pious tradition has it that, when Joseph of Arimathea took Christ's body from the Cross, he carefully preserved the blood mixed with water from Christ's side, as well as the blood from his nail wounds and, before dying, passed these precious relics on to his family.

A doubting age may impugn the historicity of the relic, but, against such skeptics, Pierre Aspeslagh has an adequate reply: "As far as the origins of the relic are concerned, there is no proof of their historical authenticity. But one must not lose sight of the main point of the relic: namely, that as a symbol of Christ's ultimate sacrifice it has through the ages inspired and given comfort to millions upon millions of believers."



Adam and Eve

A little girl asked her father, "How did the human race start?"

The father answered, "God made Adam and Eve and they had children, and so all mankind was made."

Two days later the girl asked her mother the same question. The mother answered, "Many years ago there were monkeys from which the human race evolved."

The confused girl returned to her father and said, "Dad, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Mum said they developed from monkeys?"

The father answered, "Well, dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family and your mother told you about hers."

THE UNKNOWN MOTHER

By Margaret Tabbener

Alan returned home with his father about 4'oclock – I remember the time so clearly as if it was important. It wasn't. Mother had died and he had been to the bank with his father to close his mother's account. Mr Anderson was a friend of the family and that rare being nowadays, a bank manager. He'd been at Barclays for years and was facing redundancy, but he did give Alan and his father lots of advice and both of them were relieved that her affairs were straightforward. All monies were going to be placed into my father-in-law's account. My mother in law had been a sweet natured lady and we got on very well. She was not an affectionate woman and Alan had often complained to me about his mother's coldness and couldn't remember ever being hugged and kissed by her. I didn't mind, I too didn't like over gushing kisses every time you met someone but I understood how he felt and I did feel sorry for him, but his father was different – a big man who always greeted you with a tight bear hug.

That day his father didn't hug me but said he had to go and wouldn't be staying for dinner, as planned. Alan seemed very tense and pale and didn't look up as his father left. Alan just sat staring into space and didn't speak. After a while I asked, "What's happened? What did Mr Anderson say?"

"It's not about Tony Anderson. It's my mother. Or not my mother." "You're not making any sense," I said. "She's not my mother." "What are you saying," I said. "There is no sense," he said. "She's not my mother."

He looked distraught. I sat down in front of him. "I don't understand." "I don't understand either and he won't tell me anything – well not yet. All I know is my mother is some friend of the family and not the woman we've just buried."

"Oh Alan, how do you know?" "My father dropped the bombshell on the way home. How could he choose that moment? We're driving up Argyle street and I said that Parkinsons was such a terrible illness and how badly my poor mother had suffered and maybe I should get myself checked out. I didn't want to get Parkinsons when I get older, and my father said "you won't get it, at least, not from the woman we've just lost because she's not your mother." I sat and stared at Alan - my mouth must have been wide open with disbelief and horror. And then I blurted out, "If she's not your mother then who is?" "That's what I'd like to know and he's going to tell me but, as he said, in his own time. All these years and I never had a clue. I had to stop the car; I was shaking, actually shaking so hard I couldn't hold the steering wheel but I was on yellow lines and a traffic warden moved us on even though the beastly fellow could see how upset I was. Anyway, my father said he'd see me next

week. He's going away for a few days. I can't believe what's happened but then can I believe him? I suppose I have to. I don't know where he's staying – he said a hotel in Devon. I did ask if my real mother was still alive and living in Devon but he said I deserved to know the whole truth but not yet; he needed sometime alone in the country. He said he had wanted me to know all along but my mother wanted to keep it all a secret from me."

It was two weeks before Alan's father came to see us. He phoned a couple of times but refused to answer any questions. Alan was very angry and frustrated and I tried to calm him. "It's no good to anyone, we just have to wait", I said. "I'm sure your father will explain everything." Alan wasn't so sure, "there's one person missing who could give her side of the story. It's going to be my father's version." "There is nothing we can do until your father is ready to tell us," I said and hoped he returned soon because Alan was becoming very angry with him and his mother. When his father rang to say he was home and began apologising to me, I said, "it's not about me and please would he come around as soon as he felt able because Alan had now become very anxious and I was worried about his health." He came to us the next Sunday afternoon. Nothing was said during dinner but after we had eaten Alan's father handed him a photograph of a pretty young woman. His father took a long time to say anything and Alan just stared at the picture of this strange young woman. I thought he would burst but he managed to hold himself together and let his father talk. Poor Alan, he sat and listened as his father told us both that he and his wife were desperate for a child but it wasn't to be. She went into a deep depression for about a year and during that time his father began an affair with their neighbour and best friend of his mother's – a Gillian Cooper - and Alan was the result. Gillian was married and had two children and to save her marriage, because her husband didn't want a child that was not his, gave up the child to Alan's parents. His father said it was a terrible time and Gillian moved away with her family and they never were in contact again but he had heard recently, that she too had died. We sat in silence and nobody said anything. When his father had finished talking tears were streaming down his face. He turned to Alan and took his hand and said, "You are my son and I have loved you and you should have been told the truth but I was the guilty one and I wanted to protect your mother. I want you to have this" and he held out a small box. Alan took the box and opened it. "It's your mother's wedding ring", said his father and I think you should have it for she loved you as her own son although she didn't always show it and she forgave me. That was six months ago and Alan and his father have been busy tracing his half brother and sister. He found his sister Jane last week and they look almost identical. We have arranged to meet his brother on Sunday. I am a little apprehensive but Alan is very excited so I hope all goes well. After all they are the innocent victims of the past.

The End

GIFTED BY GOD

Discovering and using the gifts we've been given

A SERIES OF 3 TALKS 14th, 21st and 28th MAY 2012, 8pm Our Lady Help of Christians, Farnborough

I am created to do something or
to be something for which
no-one else is created.

I have a place in God's world
which no-one else has.
God knows me and calls me by my name.

God has created me to do Him some definite service:
He has committed some work to me
which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission;
I have a great part in His work.
I am a link in a chain,
a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for nothing.
I shall do good; I shall do His work.
I will trust Him.

(John Henry Newman)

In May 2012, Our Lady Help of Christians will be hosting a series of 3 talks on the gifts God gives each one of us. All parishioners in the Pastoral Area of North East Hampshire are warmly invited to come along.

If you were sitting having a chat with Jesus in a coffee shop and asked him "*How do you think my life is going? What do you want me to do with the rest of it?*" what do you think he would say?

Given that that is not very likely to happen, how do you discern what sort of life you have been called to live? If we think about John Henry Newman's prayer (above)

***"God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me which He has not
committed to another"***

How do we discern what that definite service is? Am I equipped to carry it out? What if I fail?

This series of talks will explore some of these questions and invite each and every participant to think deeply about them and perhaps come up with some answers.

Will you be coming along? There is a place for you.

For more information contact:

Anne-Marie Maher-Williams, Tel: (01252) 511066



The Founding of Stanford University, 1885 Palo Alto, California, USA

You know what they say: "***Never judge a book by it's cover***".

A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston and walked timidly without an appointment into the Harvard University President's outer office. The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard and probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge .

"We'd like to see the president," the man said softly.

"He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped.

"We'll wait," the lady replied.

For hours the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't, and the

secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always regretted.

"Maybe if you see them for a few minutes, they'll leave," she said to him! He sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, and he detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office. The president, stern faced and with dignity, strutted toward the couple.

The lady told him, "We had a son who attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on campus."

The president wasn't touched. He was shocked. "Madam," he said, gruffly, "we can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did, this place would look like a cemetery."

"Oh, no," the lady explained quickly. "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard."

The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress and homespun suit, then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical buildings here at Harvard."

For a moment the lady was silent. The president was pleased. Maybe he could get rid of them now. The lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a university? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded. The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment.

Mr and Mrs Leland Stanford got up and walked away, travelling to Palo Alto, California, where they established the university that bears their name - Stanford University - as a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

A TRUE STORY by Malcolm Forbes

You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who they think can do nothing for them.

'People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did.'

'But people will never forget how you made them feel.'

How very true!



School News

ST. PATRICK'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whitefriars, Avenue Road, Farnborough
Hampshire GU14 7BW Telephone: 0252 542511



The Spring term marks the half way point for the year in school: we can look back at all that's been achieved in the knowledge that there is time left to complete unfinished business. The warmer weather and brighter skies towards the end of term provide a welcome backdrop for one of the busiest times in the school calendar.

St Patrick's can sometimes seem like a kind of travelling time machine. When you walk into a classroom, you never know when or where it might lead you!

In our Reception class, a garden centre greets you and you are lucky to escape without having to buy seeds or admire a new plant. If you had walked into Year One last week, you would have seen a medieval banquet taking place complete with kings, queens and dancing.

You may have heard the sound of distant drums, which was Year Two taking part in an African drumming lesson. In Year Three, Tudors is the new topic for the term, with the children fresh from their visit to Hampton Court. The children in Year Four have been experiencing what it was like for World War Two evacuees and have had a couple of lessons under the tables in life-like Blitz conditions!

You'll find the desks in rows in Year Five - not because Michael Gove is visiting - but because the children are re enacting a Victorian school day. Which brings us to our Year Six children, who are busily writing letters to persuade the government to return the Elgin marbles to Greece.

On top of all this, there have been several extra curricular events this term: the choir have been busy with their record-breaking performance

at the O2; the house captains ran the House Music expertly, won by St Salvatore for the first time; and the children raised over £200 for CAFOD with their blue mufti and river of coins event, which of course will be matched by the government. Our dance club, ably run by Mrs Carty, have surpassed themselves this year with fantastic entries to the Rushmoor Dance Challenge and our football teams continue to be a force to be reckoned with.

We draw our term to a close with our Paschal Performance, led by our Year Three and Year Four children. The blend of acting and singing never fails to bring a fresh perspective to the events of Holy Week and children and adults alike are given an opportunity to respond personally to the message of Easter.

FARNBOROUGH HILL
EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON



... the caring face of academic excellence

Highlights of the Easter Term

The BBC comes to Farnborough Hill: We were delighted to host Radio 4's 'Any Questions?'. The Hall was filled to capacity and the atmosphere was electric as the 8.02pm live broadcast time approached. The programme's chairman, Jonathan Dimbleby, was joined by MPs Eric Pickles and Emily Thornberry and journalists Jonathan Freedland and Cristina Odone. The programme was suitably controversial with questions about Afghanistan, the government's vision beyond the fiscal deficit, the proposal to allow same sex marriage and whether all children leaving school should be able to speak English like a 'native speaker'. A fantastic evening!

Blessing of St Joseph's: We welcomed Bishop Richard Moth to bless and officially open our new St Joseph's Courtyard development in a lovely service attended by many staff, governors and girls. Also blessed was the very beautiful 'School Mosaic' which consists of some 650 ceramic tiles designed and made by each member of our school community. We are indebted to the flair and creativity of our ceramics expert Mrs Goldsmith, who oversaw the creation of this beautiful work of art which represents every individual and their importance to our community as a whole.

Retreat Week: Students from years 7 - 11 took a day off timetable to participate in Retreat Week. Based on the theme 'Called by Name', it was an opportunity to leave the normal school routine and look at God's call in our life, who we are, our own image of ourselves and what it is like growing up in Britain today as a teenager and person of faith. International Christian mime artist Steve Murray was a particular hit and students said it was 'the best retreat ever!'

Rotary Youth Speaks District Winners: Two Farnborough Hill teams competed in the District Rotary Public Speaking: the Seniors (Katherine Patel as Speaker, Lucy Chisnall as Chairman and Lili Khan as Vote of Thanks) and the Intermediates (Sangeeta Rijal as Speaker, Beatrice Cerullo as Chairman and Carys Dally as Vote of Thanks). We were absolutely delighted that the Intermediate team won through to the Regional Finals and Sangeeta, with her speech, 'Mind over Matter', scooped the Best Speaker award too! In the Senior category, Katherine Patel also won the Best Speaker award for her speech, 'Is there any such thing as a perfect parent?' Mrs Winch-Johnson, said "we would love to make it to the national finals, that is our goal."

Young Enterprise: Farnborough Hill took first and second prize in the recent Trade Fair in Farnborough against tough competition. All four of our Young Enterprise companies: Empire, Piccadilly, Cherry on Top and Azure, traded at the fair. Companies also faced rigorous questioning from the judges about their finances, marketing activities and overall management. We were thrilled that Empire took first prize and Piccadilly were runners up. Well done to all the girls!

More Fantastic Examination Results: There was much cause for celebration with the publication of the results of the school's first Extended Project Qualifications (EPQs). Six Sixth Form students, who submitted their projects to AQA early as a 'pilot' group, achieved 3 A*s, 2 As and 1 B grade, which is outstanding. This demanding qualification is designed to develop sophisticated research skills and recognise truly independent study in preparation for university. Our supervising teachers, led by Dr Baker, were praised by AQA for encouraging students to produce 'impressive projects' and the Exam Board have kept those written by Charlotte Heffernan and Francesca Pipkin as examples of excellent practice.

**The staff and students of Farnborough Hill would like to wish you a
Happy Easter**

Our next Open Afternoon is on 4 May 2012 - please telephone 01252 545197



SALESIAN COLLEGE FARNBOROUGH

Salesian College's success continues

In an all boys school from 11 to 16, the achievement of 63% gaining 7 or more A*/A grades each at GCSE last summer is outstanding and bears witness to the benefit of single sex education for boys from 11 to 16 before the opportunity, with its own benefits, of co-education in the Sixth Form at Salesian prior to University. At GCSE, the overall pass rate of 5 A*-C grades was 99%, with all our young men passing in English and Maths at high grades. The percentage of A* and A grades was higher than 2010 with 56% being A*/A and 81% being A*-B overall. The average number of GCSE subjects awarded to each student was 10, with the majority achieving 11 A*-C grades. At A Level, Salesian College also celebrated outstanding results with a pass rate of 98% with 84% of all grades awarded being at A*-C. Students gained places at their chosen Universities with a larger number this year choosing to study subjects such as Engineering and Marine Biology alongside more traditional Humanities and Science courses. As one of the few schools in the area which has students from 11-18 both the GCSE and A Level results are locally and nationally outstanding.

More than just outstanding results!

The academic results complement the College's many successes in the Autumn and Spring Terms which included winning the Geographical Association's Worldwide Quiz for the third year in succession and achieving fourth place in the internationally prestigious Kids' Lit Quiz for avid readers. Two Lower Sixth students took part in the English Speaking Union Debating competition and successfully made it through to the next round. In December, one of the College's Sixth Form Young Enterprise Teams took part in the Rotary Christmas Bazaar and won the trophy for their business knowledge and stand appearance.

New £1.3m Music School

One of the highlights of the Autumn Term was the laying of the Foundation stone for a new £1.3m Music School. This dedicated facility will accommodate music technology, provide individual purpose-built practice rooms, a specialist teaching room, recital hall and auditorium.

The College leads the way at sport

During the Autumn Term and first half of the Spring Term, the College won the U12 and U14 Camberley Rugby Tournaments and the Under 16 ISA National Ruby Sevens Tournament. At the Regional Biathlon Championships, the Year 8

team took first place and Year 11 student Owen Wagstaff was the overall individual winner. At the ISA National Cross Country Championships, the Year 11-13 team dominated the field taking the first three individual places and the overall team event for London West. In swimming, our young men and women were outstanding, winning an amazing 26 Gold medals at the ISA London West Swimming Championships!

160 people walk for Sightsavers

On Sunday 4 December 2011, 160 pupils, parents and staff of Salesian College completed a six mile sponsored walk in aid of the Vision 2020:- The Right to Sight campaign, which targets preventable and curable blindness in developing nations. The programme is run by Standard Chartered Bank to support charities such as Sightsavers International and they match all of the funds pledged to this appeal. It was wonderful to see almost a quarter of all the Year 7s alongside students from all year groups accompanied by family, friends and even pets! The walk followed the Basingstoke canal for much of the route and made a quick detour through Crookham Village and the grounds of Dogmersfield Park.

The sponsorship money is predicted to pass £30,000 in total for the six years of this initiative. The Salesian College donation is the largest non-corporate donation made to this appeal on an annual basis in the country.

Over £3000 raised to help local homeless people

On Monday 16 January, Salesian College presented a cheque for £3,330 to Mrs Caroline Dixon, Youth Aims Manager working in partnership with Step by Step. The money was raised by Sixth Form students at Salesian College who, on 14 December, slept out overnight in the College grounds to raise money for the local charity who help homeless and disadvantaged young people in Aldershot, Farnborough and the local area.

Mrs Dixon said "I am extremely grateful to receive this cheque on behalf of the Charity. This money will be used to educate and train young men and women to help them believe in themselves, engage in activities and enable them to get into college or employment."

Diary Dates

Salesian College is a very successful and highly regarded school which warmly welcomes young people of other faiths. Prospective students and their parents for entry into Year 7 are invited to attend our Open Morning on Saturday 12 May 2012 from 9.15am to 12.30pm. For those students interested in our thriving Co-Educational Sixth Form, you are welcome to visit our new and improved Sixth Form Centre. Visits to the College are always welcome at any time by appointment – Tel 01252 893000. Copies of our prospectus, both for the College and the Co-Educational Sixth Form are available on request. Please visit our website at www.salesiancollege.com for updated information. We look forward to welcoming you to Salesian.

The Lord

bless you and keep you

The Lord

make his face to shine
upon you

The Lord

lift up His countenance
upon you and give you peace