

together



A VOICE FOR CATHOLIC ANGLICANS

CHRISTMAS 2025

The First Christmas Crib



The geographically small Deanery I served for nearly a decade contains – as I suspect many now do – a vast breadth of today’s Anglican Spectrum, from Calvinist to Anglo-Papalist and all stations in between (though once almost all the parishes had eucharistic vestments, daily Mass, and a Sung Mass each Sunday; alas, no longer!). Wandering around the Deanery offering my colleagues a touch of ruri-decanal Christmas bonhomie, one thing that impressed itself on my mind is (the oddity) that each Church, whatever its style, possesses and displays a Christmas Crib, often from Advent Sunday to the close of the Christmas Season, be that Baptism of the Lord, Candlemass, or even the eve of Lent. This ‘graven image’ of the Christmas tale seems not to offend Protestant sensibilities, and I rather wonder why. Perhaps the sentimentality of the season is able to override the theological controversies of the Reformation.

But it was while leading a pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome for the Holy Year a few weeks back, and being driven past Greccio, that I was reminded that, as it happens, the Crib was not an object of devotion for more than half of Christian history. The story goes

that it is Saint Francis of Assisi who in 1223AD at Greccio gifted the crib to the Christian Church, and his brethren who popularised it.

For Francis Greccio was a place of retreat and contemplation; he had a hermitage there and forged deep relationships with the people who lived in that wild, remote place. Years before, Francis had made pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, remembering his visit to Bethlehem, he decided to re-create for the people of Greccio that place of incarnation he had seen with his own eyes. So he found a baby – no way of knowing if it was a real child or a carved image – hay upon which to lay him, and an ox and an ass to stand beside the manger. Word went out. When the time arrived for Christmas Mass, the folk of Greccio gathered at a cave nearby the village. One of the friars began the Celebration, and Francis preached; his biographer, Thomas of Celano, says Francis ‘stood before the manger ... overcome with love and filled with a wonderful happiness’. For Francis this simple tableau at the Christmas Mass recalled to heart and eye the Saviour who became poor for our sake – a truly human Jesus. Celano puts these words into the mouth of Francis, ‘Out of Greccio is made a new Bethlehem.’ For us too, Bethlehem is laid open as we enter the darkness of the church prepared for the Christmas Feast. Francis knew that using all our human senses we would find solace, hope, and the divine compassion.

Thomas of Celano wrote of the scene: ‘The night is lit up like day, delighting both man and beast. The people arrive, ecstatic at this new mystery of new joy. The forest amplifies the cries, and the boulders echo back the joyful crowd. The brothers sing, giving God due praise, and the whole night abounds with jubilation.’ So too for us as we make pilgrimage in that procession towards the Christmas Altar to receive the Word made Flesh in the broken Bread of the Eucharist, the God made truly human, and light a candle before the image of the Christ Child in the Crib.

[Quotes from Thomas of Celano from ‘The Saint’ Volume I of ‘Francis of Assisi: Early Documents’ pub-lished by New City Press ©1999 Franciscan Institute of St Bonaventure University]

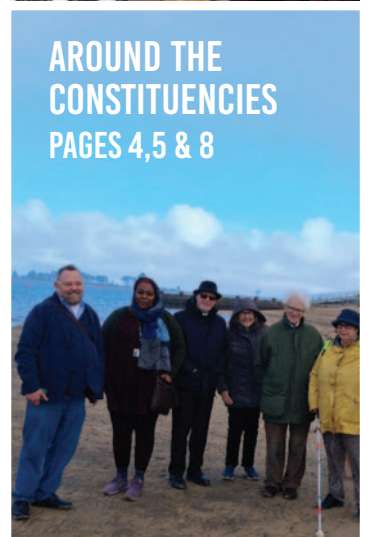
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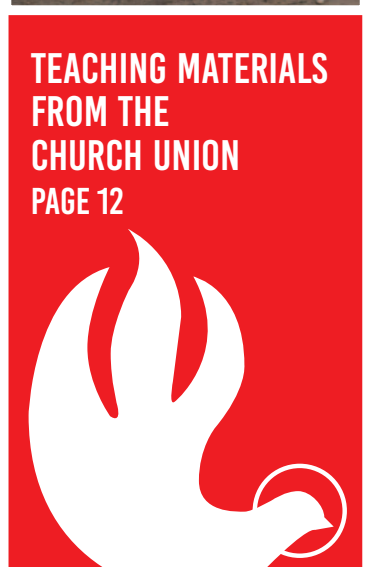
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The First Christmas

The birth of the first baby must be the biggest of excitements in family life - the first son or daughter, the first grandchild, the first of a new generation. And new-born babies - whether the first or not - generate a sense of awe in us. They attract us, and something peculiar seems to happen to adults in the presence of a little child, particularly a child of only a few days. Infants create a sense of mystery, of joy and wonder, of hope and promise.

On Christmas morning - the very first Christmas morning - God is seen in the form of a little baby, and that is for the first time. This small child in the crib draws us, inviting us into his presence, inviting us to come closer, inviting us to catch a glimpse of glory, inviting us to come face to face with God-made-flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. The infant in the crib tells us quite simply how concrete and tangible God has made himself to be.

We shall hear on Christmas morning how Scripture speaks of this. 'Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...' are the opening words of the Letter to the Hebrews. And then St John says clearly 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory...' (1:14). Quite simply, God has spoken. But he has spoken not in any language, he has spoken to us by doing and giving, by being born in time, by coming to us in human form. But more than this - and this is surely quite startling - he has come to us as a vulnerable and dependent infant.

What gift, then, is it that we ask for this Christmas? What grace do we ask for from God? No doubt we shall hear again the message of the angels to the shepherds in the Bethlehem fields: 'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.' Perhaps we should ask to go with them, that we might see this Saviour as they did, that we might come close to him, maybe even touch him? And, by drawing close to Jesus, like the hesitant Thomas on Easter Day, may we hear the encouraging words of the Lord to 'Put out your hand ... do not be faithless, but believing.'

'What good does it do me if Christ was born in Bethlehem once if he is not born again in my heart through faith?' asked Origen, one of the most distinguished of the early Fathers of the Church. Yes, indeed, be born in my heart today!

As you draw close to the infant Jesus whom you see in the crib, may he draw close to you. Born in poverty and simplicity, may he enrich your heart and life with his abiding presence. And when it comes, may the celebration of Christmas rekindle in each one of us our own deep desire for God - to hear, see, and touch him. And to realise afresh in all its mystery the truth of God's loving purposes.

At a time of so many challenges and turmoil in our world, may you know the blessing of God's peace which comes from Christ, the bringer of joy and hope and the promise of life renewed and transformed by his becoming human for us and for all mankind.

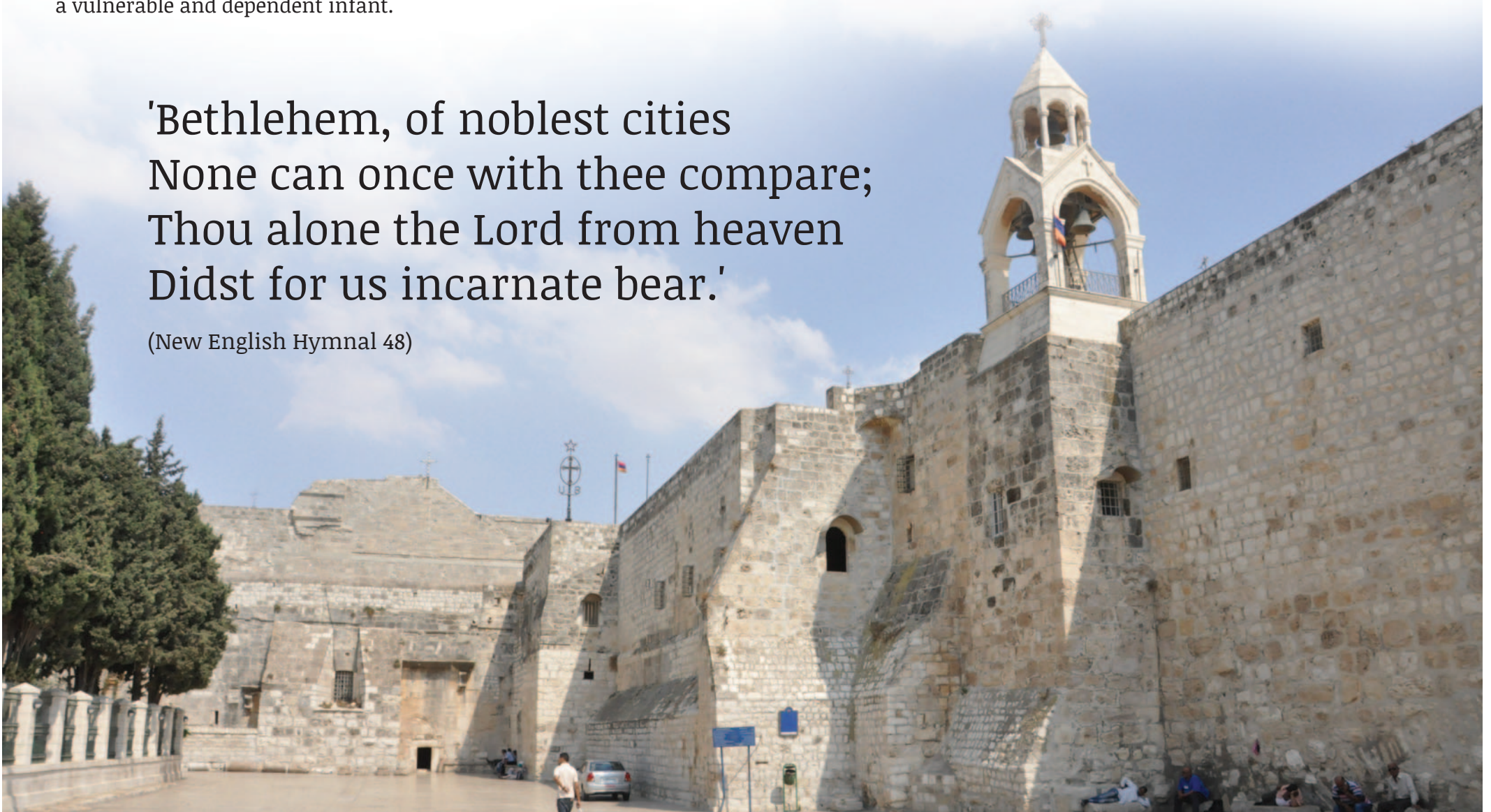


Bishop Roger Jupp

Bishop Roger was Bishop of Popondota in Papua New Guinea, before returning to the UK where he served parishes in the Chichester and Derby Dioceses. He retired in 2018 and continues to serve the Catholic movement in a variety of roles

'Bethlehem, of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from heaven
Didst for us incarnate bear.'

(New English Hymnal 48)





The First Christmas without a Loved One

Believe me, Death is not the end'

– recent words of Pope Leo

The loss of a loved-one is always hard; the loss of one's wife of 52 years, is so very hard. Maureen and I met in the March of 1961, at the parish church's Saturday Night Dance. I was 15 and she was the first and only girl I had met, and I was totally out of my depth. We were teenagers in love, but not like it is today. I remember the time clearly. We didn't even kiss for the first three weeks; just held hands talked sweetly and went on evening walks. Marriage came 6 years later, producing two beautiful baby girls.



So, at the age of 73, when the medics told her that she had 'mesothelioma', an asbestos related cancer, dormant in her lungs for 58 years, it was a shock. All due to working in a factory at a time when there were no Health and Safety laws. Hearing the diagnosis was quite devastating. This keen lady gardener, a highly valued Bereavement Counsellor and who once engaged in such sports as judo, road-running and fell walking, and who never smoked, was now condemned to a rapid and painful death. Over a period of a few months, she began to melt away, in my very sight. The chemotherapy treatment almost crippled her. She suffered both audio and visual hallucinations, passing out in the family bathroom, and striking her head heavily on the bathtub. This was followed by a spate of sudden unconsciousness. She at one time fell head-first down our metal-framed spiral staircase. It was a nightmare of a situation. The cancer took over both her body and her mind. She died where just she wished, at home, in bed,



holding my hand. It was precisely 4:12 am on Monday 25th November 2019.

Maureen's funeral took place three weeks later, just before Christmas. This great Christian feast that each year we both celebrated with utmost joy surrounded by



our family, was now full of new emotions. Joy for the birth of Christ our Saviour, and anguish for the loss of my dear lady. It was strange. It was mixed with the pain of permanent loss, mingled with the satisfaction in the knowledge that she was with her Lord and Maker. Many who are newly bereaved have serious problems with celebrating the Christmas after the passing of a loved one. Indeed, some refuse to even cross the threshold of a church again. But this says more about Britain's fading Christian culture, than the grieving persons state of mind. Without having a strong faith at times such as this, we are lost. Faith is so essential to coping with death. Death is not the end. It's a new beginning.

Surprisingly, Maureen's strong faith was what helped me to cope with all this. She

told both me, and our parish priest, just a few days before her death, that she knew exactly where she was going and that we should not worry about her, for she will be safe in the hands of God and tending the flowers in the Gardens of Paradise.

Some six months later, I did eventually grieve with deep heartfelt sorrow. It was when all the cycle of change had settled. A clinician from her very profession helped me through it. The Mary Anne Hospice provided this grief counsellor to assist me and guide me through the valley of the shadow of death. It was then that I feared no evil, for the Lord was with me. His rod and his staff, they comforted me and will do so for ever as I rise to new levels in this continuum called life. Oh yes, I still miss her dearly. The grief never leaves me, but some six years after the event, I have learned to cope. It's six years this very month; so, as this Christmas draws near, I will rejoice and celebrate my wife's birthday into heaven.

When the time comes for you to say goodbye to your loved-one, have a strong faith. God will bless you and strengthen you and all will be well; just give it a little time.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Father Brian, a businessman-turned-priest, has served the whole of his ministry in the Coventry Diocese and now assists in retirement at Saint Mary's, Nuneaton





The First Christmas as a Retired Bishop

Christmas 2024 marked a profound transition in my life—the first I celebrated as a retired bishop. After decades of shepherding congregations, leading liturgies, and walking alongside others in their spiritual journeys, I found myself in a quieter, more contemplative space. The shift was both gentle and jarring, filled with moments of deep gratitude and unexpected longing.

For many years, Christmas was a season of sacred responsibility. From Advent preparations to midnight Mass, my calendar was always filled with pastoral duties. I was immersed in the rhythm of the Church, guiding others through the mystery of the Incarnation. Last year, however, I experienced Christmas from the pew rather than the pulpit. Sitting among the congregation, I felt a mixture of humility and joy. It was a blessing to receive the Word and Sacrament without the weight of leadership, yet I couldn't help but feel a twinge of absence—of not being the one to proclaim, "Unto us a child is born."

The slower pace allowed me to reflect more deeply on the meaning of Christ's birth. Without the demands of scheduling and sermon writing, I found myself drawn into the simplicity of the nativity story. I spent more time in prayer, in silence, and in

reading Scripture—not for preaching, but for personal nourishment. The image of the Christ child, vulnerable and radiant, spoke to me in new ways. I saw in Him not only the Savior of the world but also a gentle invitation to rest, to trust, and to be renewed.

Family time took on a new richness. In previous years, my presence at home during Christmas was often brief and hurried. This year, I lingered. I listened more, laughed more, and allowed myself to be fully present. Sharing meals, stories, and traditions with loved ones reminded me that ministry continues in the everyday—through kindness, patience, and love.

I also felt the absence of my former clergy and people from Wakefield. Their faces, voices, and stories came to mind often. I missed the warmth of familiar greetings, the joy of seeing children in nativity plays, and the solemn beauty of candlelit services. Yet I was comforted by the knowledge that the Church continues, that others now carry the mantle, and that the Spirit moves through new hands and hearts.

Thorough Christmas, I learned that retirement is not an end, but a new beginning. It is a time to rediscover the essence of faith, to deepen one's relationship



with God, and to embrace the sacredness of rest. I am grateful for the 42 years I served as deacon, priest and bishop, and I am equally grateful for this new season of life—one not marked by titles or tasks, but by grace, reflection, and quiet joy.

Bishop Tony Robinson

Bishop Tony served as a much loved and respected Bishop of Wakefield between 2002 and his retirement in 2024, and served the Catholic constituency widely, generously, and with remarkable cheerfulness



Christmas Blessings
from all at Together
and the Church Union



The Society of Mary

As you tuck in to your Ferrero Rocher this Christmas you may consider that all the best things come in small packages. When considering our financial resources, the Society of Mary is amongst the smallest of the Catholic Societies but, like Bethlehem in Ephrathah - "too little to be among the clans of Judah" - I like to think some great things come from us.

This is certainly true when we look back to our Lourdes Pilgrimage in August. A hundred pilgrims from across England set off from Heathrow and Manchester airports to be pilgrims of hope with our Lady. The weather was a bit wetter than we'd



have liked but this did not dampen our spirits as we journeyed on. We were delighted to have among our group three bishops, twenty priests, three religious and fifteen teenagers (we wouldn't have got a partridge in a pear tree on the plane...). One of the highlights is always the interaction between the teenagers

and the rest of the group, including conversations at meals, serving at Masses, and the reflections the young people write and lead so powerfully for one of the groups walking the Way of the Cross. Our travelling group of musicians offered some stunning music during our liturgies. We were greeted with huge generosity in the places we visited. It was a joy to hear again with St Bernadette those words our Lady spoke to her, building up the Church, calling us to penitence and inviting us to know her better.

Many members of the Society of Mary gather in local wards from Burnley to Bournemouth. We also celebrate together the May Devotion in Kentish Town, London, and the October Devotion which this year was in Blackley, Manchester. Both were glorious occasions with great music, witness through our outdoor processions, inspiring preaching from respectively Bishop Will Hazlewood and Father Daniel Howard, and the reward of blessings for singing the praises of Mary, the Mother of God.

This is all dependent on the work of many volunteers: from youth leaders and musicians in Lourdes, priests and people hosting our Devotions, members of the Executive and General Council. Thank you to



them. All those who give financially to our Society enable us to subsidise heavily the youth who come to Lourdes every other year. We also make grants and this year these have largely been to groups going to Walsingham for residential pilgrimages or the Youth Pilgrimage.

From 14th to 18th September 2026 we plan to visit the seventeenth century Shrine in Kevelaer in North West Germany, new to many of us I suspect. Bookings should be open by the time you receive this.

This Christmas may we find Jesus, held by His Mother and offered to the world.

Father Simon Morris

Chaplain General of the Society of Mary

You can find further information about the Society at societyofmary.weebly.com

Stephen, Bishop of Beverley, writes :

This Advent and Christmas will be my fourth as Bishop of Beverley and mark the beginning of my fourth year as Provincial Episcopal Visitor in the Province of York. Looking forward into this season of expectation and joy I note that my diary is full of visits to parishes and schools, as well as meetings of various kinds which, hopefully, will result in action that will enhance and strengthen the mission of all within the See of Beverley and the wider church in which we are placed. Parishes remain the bedrock of our Christian witness, where Mass is celebrated regularly, if not daily, and where the life of the community is offered to God during the faithful rhythm of daily prayer. I am enormously thankful for all the faithful people who keep our parish churches alive and welcoming, proclaiming the Name of Jesus for the salvation of the world.

Evangelism is a spontaneous response to an encounter with the love of the living God, who we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. hope that through this Season and beyond we will be an evangelistic people not because we have planned special events that will get people through the door, but because the transformational love of God within us will be evident to all whom we encounter. My

hope is that during 2026 is that the initiatives begun during the last few years will continue to take hold and enable the strengthening of our Catholic vocation and witness within the Church of England. The Children, Youth and Family Ministry programme is developing well, with some early positive signs of growth in that area. There are plans too for another Lent Penitential Day to be hosted on the first Saturday in Lent. This will be the third such event where teaching on confession and the Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place, allowing people to become acquainted with, or reacquainted with, this gift the church has to offer. The See of Beverley Festival, set for 18th of July 2026 in York Minister, will be another fabulous opportunity for us to gather together to celebrate Mass, receive teaching and, just as importantly, to encourage one another. The parishes and clergy chapters within the See are generally in good heart and provide me with so much encouragement. Even the small, struggling parish communities, often keeping going without a priest of their own, have so much to offer. As I write this I can think of a handful of them who, despite all the difficulties they encounter on a daily basis, keep the flame of the Gospel alive.



One thing that remains a top priority for us all across the land is the discernment and development of vocations – vocations to the diaconate, the priesthood, the Religious life. The Catholic charism has much to offer the Church of England and if it is to do so beyond our generation we must pray for people to hear and answer the call of God upon their lives. This Advent and Christmas, may we all hear afresh the words of the angels, that the Saviour is born among us. May we worship Him with renewed joy and expectation and have the courage to follow Him faithfully.



Church & Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage

It is always so gratifying to be able to reflect on the positive contribution that Church Union continues to make on Catholic life and practice in the Church of England. No wonder we have been given the title as the authentic voice of Catholicism, for we not only provide free of charge and distribute the likes of this newspaper to our parishes, and the highly acclaimed and much sort after Sacramental Leaflets. But we also produce free of charge imaginative Sunday School teaching material that specifically geared towards our parishes, and then there is the extensive grant making process under the auspices of the Pollard Trust, the Tudor Roberts Will Trust, the Oliphant, Jackson Trust and the Father Martin Trust. A society that is not just about the past, but the present and the future. We are delighted to share with you all a report on the recent Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage that the Church Union supported financially. The future of our movement can be guaranteed in these positive financial investments which the Church Union continues to make to enhance Catholic life in the Church of England

This year's Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage was held from the 4th to the 8th of August. 213 young people and 104 adult leaders arrived to put up camp in torrential rain and high winds. However, spirits were not dampened, and the sun came out in time for the evening liturgy at the Shrine, where the young people visited the Holy House, and for the barbeque. It was a lovely feeling of anticipation and excitement on site the first evening and it was good to meet many of the young people as they investigated the activities in the Hub and sampled the chocolate and freshly made popcorn available from the tuck shop.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings, the timetable was the same: Bible study in 2 groups, followed by mass in the big top. The Bible studies were led by various member of the clergy, including Archbishop Rowan Williams and Bishop Luke of Richborough, and by lay people including Rachel Gardner from Youthscape. The volunteer Ministry Team were instrumental in assisting by helping lead small groups and encouraging the young people to lead groups themselves. The theme for this year was the Creed, and sessions focused on both a trinitarian understanding of Christianity and how the Creed can be company, comfort and a model for commitment.

Daily mass brought us all together and featured preaching from a variety of speakers, music from the wonderful CJM and skits/readings from the Ministry Team as well as moments of profound quiet and reverence, especially when sharing communion with the young people. These liturgies are the backbone of the pilgrimage and the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the prayer tent roots all the pilgrimage work in prayer.

Tuesday evening saw a departure from the usual Holy Mile walk. We started, instead, in the Abbey grounds, site of the original Holy House of 1061, and told the story of the Shrine through verse and drama,





Union ingham grimage



poignantly, on the grassed remains of the Holy House itself. Then the pilgrims processed through the village to the Shrine, reciting the rosary, and a beautiful service of Benediction followed. This is always so very special with all the young pilgrims kneeling in front of the Blessed Sacrament and the whole scene candle-lit as dusk fell.

Additional activities in the afternoons included sports, inflatables, dance workshops, Lego workshops, crafts and the chance to hang out in the Hub, meeting new friends, playing the large games and socialising. The Wednesday evening liturgy is always powerful. From a lively start, to people sharing their testimonies, to the offering of healing ministries such as Sprinkling, laying on of hands, anointing and confession in near silence followed by a simple service of compline and benediction, the young people engaged and took full advantage of what was on offer. One anecdote from a group leader was that one of his young pilgrims started to pray the rosary in the tent during this time, and was joined by other young pilgrims – who he did not know – who wanted to share with him in prayer. It was a quiet, prayerful and powerful end to the day.

Following mass on Thursday, all groups took advantage of the local amenities, such as the beach and swimming pools, and left site to explore. In the evening was the disco, along with face painting, crafts and bingo. On Friday morning, we had our final mass at 9:30am to enable our pilgrims to get on the road. Bishop Will Hazlewood commissioned us all to go out and live out the teachings of the creed. Thus ended a successful Youth Pilgrimage.

A final word goes to one of our adult leaders and a young pilgrim: 'The whole event was very well run and always felt safe. The pilgrims we were with thought this year was the best of the three we have made which indicates little if anything was a problem. We enjoyed the company and friendly nature of those around us. Sharing our faith on such a scale is both joyous and important as it allows us to experience the power of togetherness. The bible classes were very well received (our pilgrims are at the older end of the spectrum) and enjoyed with good content and presentation. The whole ministry team and crew were helpful and friendly and a measure of how things were for us is in the reply from our pilgrims to the question "Are we coming back again next year"? we received a resounding yes.'

'[An] awesomely amazing experience. [...] all the great experiences – sharing thoughts and experiences. Telling them about the different parts – everything from mass to the hub. Silent prayer to ping pong!'





The Guild of the Servants of the Sanctuary

The Guild was formed to raise the spiritual tone of altar servers and to promote a conscientious performance of the duties of altar servers. There are chapters of the Guild in many areas of England and Wales. Chapters meet together for worship and to provide mutual support to fellow servers who in some parishes may serve alone. The Guild is open to both female and male servers. At present the Guild has around 1500 members. Although we are a lay Guild, priests are welcome to become Priest Associates of the Guild and they are a vital support to members. As a Guild we produce a magazine three times a year called 'The Server'. This publication keeps servers in touch with what's going on in the Guild and provides other articles of interest to servers.

The Guild holds two national festivals each year. The Easter Festival is held in London at St. Stephen's Church, Gloucester Road, Kensington, on Easter Saturday, and is followed by our Annual General Meeting. Then for our Autumn Festival, we try and visit different parts of the country, in order for as many Guild Members as possible to have the opportunity of attending. This year we held our Autumn Festival at St. Barnabas in Crewe. The London Area Chapters hold an

Epiphany Festival, to which all servers are invited. The Epiphany Festival will be held on Saturday 10th January at Holy Trinity, Hoxton. There will be a Solemn Mass at 12 noon, followed by lunch in the church hall, then Guild Office, Procession and Benediction at 3.00pm.

The Guild is run by lay people with Michael Andrew as the Secretary General and James Farmer as the Treasurer General. They are supported by Canon Darren Smith as Warden, Fr Jonathan Roberts as Chaplain General and Fr Benjamin Weitzmann as Guild Precentor and a council of members from all areas of the country. The Guild has a Candidates for Ordination Fund, which makes grants for members of the Guild who enter training for ordination. Colin Squires is



the COF Administrator, and he oversees the day to day running of the fund. Fr Jonathan Roberts is the Chaplain for the Candidates for Ordination Fund. The Guild through its Howard Gadd Fund, provides grants to churches who have Guild members to purchase cassocks, albs, and cottas for servers.

If you would like to know more about the Guild, then take a look at our website at www.guildoftheservantsofthesanctuary.co.uk or contact Michael Andrew, Secretary General, on gss.secretarygeneral@gmail.com who will be pleased to help you.

The official 'blurb' about CBS says it 'was founded in 1862 as part of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England. Its aim was to be, first of all, a confraternity (brotherhood) of men and women praying and working for a greater devotion to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.' While that remains absolutely true, it is just a part of what CBS does year on year. The previous page speaks a great deal about the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage, which has become one of the great Catholic 'set pieces' during the year and a work of vital importance in our constituency (no, kids are not 'the future of the church', they are its very real and important present). This year, as last, CBS has been one of the significant funders of the pilgrimage, both in grant-funding the Shrine itself to carry out this brilliant work, but also in providing generous grants via parishes to help subsidise individuals to be able to go on it. It is probably true to say that without CBS's input (along with others, of course!) the pilgrimage would be financially challenged.

That is a big work on a constituency-wide scale. But there are other significant grants made throughout the year to help

CBS



Religious Communities grow in their practice and devotion, pilgrimages to be made or conferences laid on, parishes to renew historic items that surround the worthy celebration of the Eucharist (such as the restoration of banners or frontals), or to allow the introduction of such things as tabernacles or aumbries to facilitate the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

at the heart of our churches, or provide a monstrance, a pyx or vestments. In the last 12 months we have helped parishes which had need of multiple sets of vessels and linens to enable Home Communion in the – increasing – absence of a priest. And such is the scale of applications that sometimes we are just not able in any one particular year to meet all the hopes and expectations with which we are confronted; but we try to make the most of what we have!

If your parish has benefitted from the work of CBS, perhaps you might think about setting up a local Ward of the Confraternity to help stimulate greater devotion to the Lord who comes to us in the fragile gifts of the Eucharist? Not able in your parish? What about joining up with other parishes within striking distance of yours? That's certainly what's being envisaged across a number of Black Country parishes, which on their own might struggle to muster more than a couple of souls. CBS is the oldest devotional society in our Church of England. It's down to us to see how it might grow and prosper in our Church today.



The Pollard Trust

The Pollard Trust was set up under the Wills of the late Father Harry Pollard and his wife Katie; their Wills, which were made in the 1950s, set up a Trust to offer financial support to the unmarried daughters of clergymen over the age of 50 once their father had passed away. I imagine in those days it was more common for spinster daughters to care for their elderly parents and, in so doing, face a lifetime of hardship with little or no support from the State. However, hopefully, in the last 70 or so years things have moved on and so the Trustees applied to the Charity Commission to widen the terms of the Trust so grants can be made to retired clergy and any unmarried dependents. The Trust is administered through the Church Union and an application can be found on their website.

Whilst we are not able to offer grants to help with day to day living expenses, what we can do is help with the provision of items such as carpeting, repairs to property, and furniture including white goods. If you



are aware of anyone who is in need and might be eligible to apply for assistance please ask them to complete (or help them complete) an application form which will be considered at the next meeting of the Trustees - we normally meet 3 times a year. In an emergency we are happy to consider requests for assistance by meeting online. Application forms should be returned with the envelope marked clearly "Pollard Trust" so they can be passed to the right person to be considered.

Yes, we do have funds to make grants, but we can only make those grants if people actually apply for assistance!

Claire Epsom, Chair



St John's Guild Christians Supporting Blind People

St Johns Guild was founded in 1919 by Miss Dorothy Light and Father Christian Waudby who recognised the isolation and loneliness of those who were blind and visually impaired.

Today St John's Guild is in the process of restructuring its work and mission in order to serve a new generation in a new and meaningful way.



However, one of the Guild's most cherished activities is the pilgrimage and retreats programme, which offers grants covering 50% of the cost for blind and visually impaired people (along with a companion) based anywhere within the UK.

An annual Guild Pilgrimage is held in Walsingham, Norfolk where friends of St John's Guild are able to spend time together for spiritual and social activities. For many, it is a long-anticipated return; for others, a



first encounter with the holy atmosphere of 'England's Nazareth' where the truth of the First Christmas – God made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ – is proclaimed centre-stage (the photo shows participants in our recent Walsingham pilgrimage).

The Guild also supports parishes directly through grants for churches, helping them to improve accessibility. Through a number of grants, many churches have benefited from being assisted to install new sound systems and hearing loops, ensuring that worship can be heard clearly – while sight may be impaired, often the gift of being able to hear makes worship and the Gospel live. For those who wish to grow in faith at



home, the Guild helps make resources available in accessible formats. It subsidises Bible Reading Fellowship notes in braille enabling people with sight loss to follow daily readings and reflection. The Guild also



offers help with large-print liturgical materials, allowing fuller participation in services throughout the Christian year.

To learn more about the Guild's work or how to support it, please contact our Company Secretary, Natasha Gittens via info@stjohnsguild.org or by calling 07570025427. We are here to serve!



The Church Union Presidential Address

This year marks the centenary of the Malines Conversations, largely brought about by the first Lord Halifax, perhaps the greatest of our Church Union presidents. A topic increasingly to the fore within the context of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue is 'subsidiarity', a useful definition of which is given in Walking Together on the Way, the 2017 Agreed Statement of ARCIC III:

The principle of subsidiarity.....maintains that decisions should be determined at the lowest appropriate level. Proper authority is supportive authority such that if a local body, or lower-level authority, is in need then the wider body, or higher level authority, will assist.

The ARCIC definition adds a sentence from Pope Francis' 2016 Post-Synodical Exhortation on Love in the Family, where he says:

Each country or region, moreover, can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs.

This concept – decisions taken at the lowest level possible – had a strong advocate in Lord Acton, the distinguished English liberal lay Roman Catholic thinker of the 19th Century. Acton was concerned about subsidiarity in secular matters, while another Englishman writing on subsidiarity was Father Neville Figgis CR; in his 1913 book Churches in the Modern State, Figgis applied the principle of subsidiarity not just to civil society but also to the practice of various churches. For Father Figgis all subsidiary bodies have an inherent authority which does not depend on prior centralist government.

A very prescient scholar, by 1913 Father Figgis was already warning of the future Fascism emerging in Italy, Spain and Germany, and subsidiarity emerged as a major papal concern in 1931 when Pius XI criticised Fascism in his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno. Thirty years later John XXIII returned to the theme in his encyclical Mater et Magistra, defending the autonomy of subsidiary and corporate bodies. While, almost certainly, these two popes were unaware they were building on the thought of someone like Father Neville Figgis, it is notable that both only applied the theme of subsidiarity to civic affairs. Vatican II in its document Gaudium et Spes contained a warning that centralising global finance in well meaning, often beneficial, projects aimed at stimulating much needed development, could result in subjecting local economies to the whims of a centralised world bank. Such a development would undermine the subsidiarity of

individual nations. Adrian Hastings, writing forty years after Vatican II, commented that:

It is noticeable that the Roman authorities have never suggested that the principle should be applied as well to the Catholic Church, whose administration has grown ever more centralised. Like other things, subsidiarity is easier for those in power to preach than to apply.

Was Hastings being completely fair? He could not, of course foretell the developments in subsidiarity under the late Pope Francis. Even at Vatican II, however, it is possible to argue that some seeds were being sown of what later was to follow. For example, the Council's document on the Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium insists on the preservation of the use of Latin, but in almost the next breath recognises that use of the vernacular may often be of great advantage to local churches, and whether this should happen in any local church (and to what extent) should be left to the discretion of local bishops. By the end of Pope Francis' pontificate even the restrictions on the choice of appropriate translations of Scripture were placed in the hands of local bishops' conferences. No longer were the various English-speaking nations required to use the same Biblical texts even if they were adjoining, as is the case regarding England and Scotland.

Pope Francis authorised the informal blessing of those joined in what the Church regarded as irregular unions. Not surprisingly, this led to strong dissent in some parts of the Catholic Church, particularly in an Islamic context. But little





or no attempt came from Rome to compel those who disagreed; local Bishops' Conferences were left free to decide. A similar response came to the German bishops' permission for divorced and remarried couples, under certain conditions, to receive Holy Communion; Pope Francis was accepting of the local church's decision. The increasing acceptance of the principle of subsidiarity within the Roman Catholic Church could easily be substantially more detailed.

It is apposite, though, to add one further observation. Readers of *The Tablet* may have noticed some while back letters from two retired English RC bishops expressing support for the possibility of ordaining women to the priesthood. Such letters would have been unheard of in earlier years given the strictures of Saint John Paul II or Benedict XVI. What those two bishops also emphasised, however, was that they did not view the decision to ordain women to the priesthood as one to be taken by any local church; on the contrary such a decision might well have to be mandated by a General Council. The great Catholic ecumenist, Cardinal Kasper has also tellingly cautioned that, given the experience of the Anglican Communion,

any unilateralist move towards such ordinations could well lead to schism.

I think there are three lessons we might learn, as members of the Church Union, from reflection on subsidiarity. We can firstly note that subsidiarity is becoming increasingly accepted and practised within the Roman Catholic Church. ARCIC III, *Walking Together*, has the subtitle *Learning to Be the Church – Local, Regional, Universal*. A proper understanding of subsidiarity can be not only useful but also essential in enabling the ecumenical journey to move forward. Secondly, we Catholic Anglicans have to be particularly careful of an 'anything goes' mentality. The pride we Anglicans have taken in the local has arguably led to provincial structures which make us increasingly resemble different denominations rather than a Communion of Churches. There are, too, ecclesial difficulties underlying the Five Principles by which we now seek to live within the Church of England. Such difficulties or 'necessary anomalies' remind us of the consequences of making fundamental changes in church order which lack the consent of the Church Universal.

A final cause for reflection is more parochial, though, important both to members of the Church Union and also to our other Catholic Societies. Many are enthusiastic for the present work to bring our Catholic Societies together as a family under the umbrella of the Society of Saints Wilfrid and Hilda. At the same time our work as individual societies is to be treasured for the particular tasks that each undertakes. There must be a realisation that what each society undertakes, together with how it conducts its internal affairs, reflects upon the Society as a whole. Those exploring how such societies as ours might happily and beneficially be formally linked to the Society are quite aware that such links need to stem from a 'light touch' approach. The Society of Saints Wilfrid and Hilda is wisely seeking, together with the various Catholic societies, to establish an appropriate expression of subsidiarity within our own part of the Catholic Church. We should be keen to play our part.

[This is an edited version of the talk given by The Right Revd Martyn Jarrett ssc as his Presidential Address to the Church Union in October 2025; the full text can be found on the Church Union website]





A Christmas Gift (indeed, an every week gift!)

One of the gifts of the Church Union to our parishes is the Sunday School Programme 'Foundations' which provides easily used, photocopiable material for each week of the 3-Year Lectionary (the Western Rite and Common Worship lectionaries have a wide overlap, save for just a few Sundays over the 156 weeks). We show here the 3 pages – leader's notes and childrens' worksheets – for the last week of Advent this year.

You can download the material from the Church Union website churchunion.co.uk, and just click on the 'Publications' button and look for 'Foundations' where you will find all the instructions and worksheets.



Fourth Sunday of Advent - Choice A

Aim
To learn from Mary the importance of being obedient to God

Today's Readings

OT	Isa 7:10-14
Psalm	Ps 24
NT	Rom 1:1-7
Gospel	Matt 1:18-24

Today's Prayer
Lord Jesus, Light of the world.
Bless Gabriel who brought good news.

Getting Started
You will need a large sheet of paper for...

Begin the session by asking the children...
the heavenly host singing over the stable...
Angels often bring messages from God.

There is a very important message brought...
fact that Jesus is going to be born. This...
There is a visit from a second angel at the...

Today's Teaching

Bible Reading – Matthew 1:18-24
Read the Gospel passage or ask a...
On the fourth Sunday in Advent we think...
enables her to become the Mother of God.

Today, though, we learn about a visit by...
decision.

Mary and Joseph were engaged, but by...
Holy Spirit. Joseph had resolved to dis...
directions.

The Angel explains that the holy Spirit is...
Matthew again refers to the Old Testam...
"The virgin will conceive and give birth...

Today's Activity
You will need an activity sheet for each child, some purple tissue paper, glue, colouring pens and pencils

Today we are creating the fourth section of our Advent Circles

Fill the outer circle with scrunched up purple tissue paper glued on to it.
Colour the letters of the words "Mary Mother of God" on the worksheet and...
section, colour the pictures of Mary, Joseph and the angel, cut them out and...
section.

Make the large section of the Advent Circle for the noticeboard in church.

- ☐ Older children may wish to create a Poster headed "Angels and their me...
visits of angels in the bible and the messages they brought..
- ☒ Younger children can colour the section purple rather than using the tis...
can add little pictures of small angles to make a heavenly host..

Prayer and Worship

For the prayer time in advent, it would be helpful if you have either a sp...
you could have a replica of the Advent Wreath being used in church...
Sunday, and a large central one for Christmas Day. Today you would li...
fourth candles.

Ask the children to be still and quiet, and thank God that Mary said "Yes...
was prepared to care for Mary and the baby.

Allow a period of silence that seems appropriate for your group and th...
the page.

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

Suggested hymns: What do you want of me, Lord?
Hills of the north rejoice.

Bringing it All Together – Taking it to Others

The children can share the fourth circle section and explain that th...
marry with Joseph and the angel John the Baptist.

They can use posters created by the older children headed "Angels a...
ideas on this

They can also read the verse from the worksheet.

Next we will have something to add to the Advent circle for Christm...

Name _____ Age _____

Mary, Mother of God

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel"

together contact details

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