

Issue

Nov/Dec2022

Ebook £4.50

E-Subscription £27.99

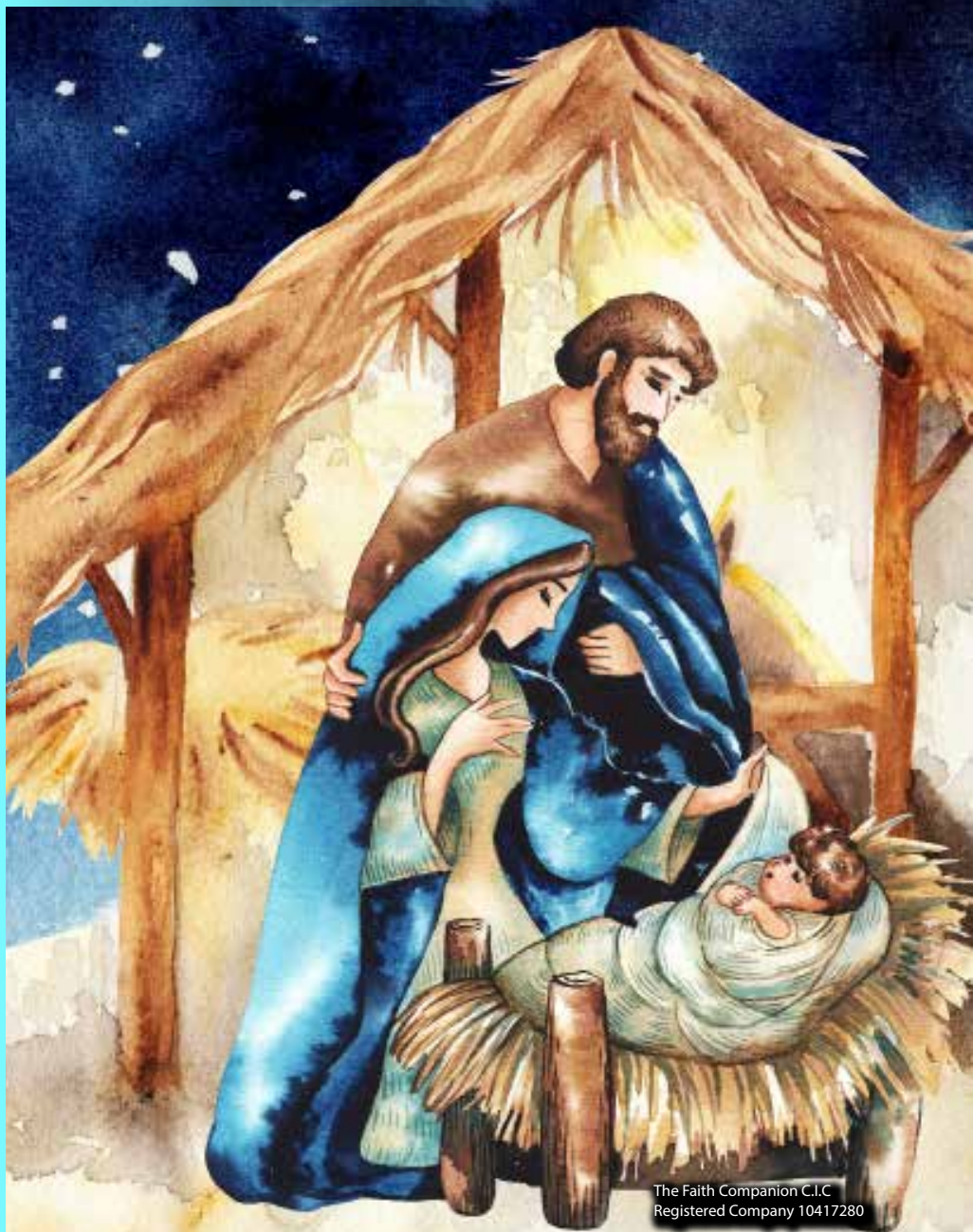
Free Or Donation

THE FAITH COMPANION

ISSN : 2399-8954

A Catholic Perspective

www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk



The Faith Companion C.I.C
Registered Company 10417280



Editor's Corner - By Kathy Bishop

Kathy Bishop is founder and editor-in-chief of The Faith Companion.

Welcome to 'The Faith Companion' November/December 2022 edition. As a Catholic magazine with sadness we acknowledge the death of Queen Elizabeth II, whose lifelong faithfulness we explore in our Devotions section. With the approaching coronation of our new king, King Charles III, Fr Richard Ounsworth OP helps us better understand Divine Kingship and the meaning of a king's anointing, which we will see in the coronation next year. Our saint is St Bernadette of Lourdes, following the 2022 tour of her relics around England, Scotland and Wales. We share Fr Toby Lees OP's homily preached during the relics' visit to St Mary's University, Twickenham, in which he explains why Catholics revere saintly relics and affirms the goodness of the human body. As we approach Christmas Ann Shakespeare shares with us a reflection on the special insight of the shepherds when the angels appeared to them on the night of Christ's birth. She allows us to step into the Jewish context of this scene, which unfolds great meaning for the shepherds of finding a baby in a manger. Some share their life stories and experiences with us, like John Pridmore, a reformed gangster now evangelist. His story shows that with God nothing is impossible, and God can even transform the seemingly unredeemable. Jenny Osterfield shares her powerful experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit where she said "Yes" to Jesus changing her life forever. Our prayer practice in this edition is 'The Jesus Prayer', an ancient prayer mostly used in the Orthodox Church, which enables Jesus to enter into our hearts, the place of true personhood where the image of God resides. 'The Faith Companion' supports CAFOD as they share with us their humble beginnings and latest campaigns. Do consider making a donation and supporting their great work of Faith in Action. We also recommend supporting The John Bradburne Memorial Society, whose work continues the work of the Lay Franciscan mission of John Bradburne at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre. Here we tell of two young men's 600-mile bike ride over the summer to raise funds. In our Q&A section I answer a question on whether Halloween is Catholic and how it relates to All Saints' and All Souls' Days. Finally, in our book review we highly recommend Jenny Osterfield's book, 'Safari into God's Love', her story of faith. This is our rainbow of faith we offer to our readers for November/December 2022. We hope it inspires all who read it.

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year,

Kathy



The Forget-Me-Not flower is known as a symbol of undying love and eternal friendship. However, there is an ancient Christian legend regarding this little flower according to which the Child Jesus, sitting on Mary's lap, told her He wished future generations could see her eyes. He then waved His hands over the ground and the blue forget-me-not flower appeared. Thus, according to legend, this flower represents Mary's eyes and as such will be used by The Faith Companion as its main symbol. Mary is to be at the centre of our vision watching over her children, The Faith Companion's readers.

Contents

Saints And Spiritualities

St Bernadette.....4

Devotion Exchange

Faithfulness.....10

Scripture

The Insights of the Shepherds.....18

Scripture Meditation.....24

Faith Stories

The John Pridmore Story.....26

Graces Received

Baptism in the Holy Spirit.....32

This is Church.....38

Theology Matters

St Bernadette's Relics40

The Anointed king.....46

Faith In Action

CAFOD: Faith In Action.....50

Ride for Leprosy.....56

Considering Prayer

The Jesus Prayer.....60

Q&A

Is Halloween Catholic?.....60

Book Reviews

Safari Into God's Love.....70

Sacred Space: The Prayer book 2023.....72

Crossword76

DISCLAIMER: The opinions and beliefs expressed in our published works are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or beliefs of The Faith Companion or its associates and Editors.

St Bernadette

Dr Roderick Campbell Guion OCDS



Dr Roderick Campbell Guion's OCDS is a Carmelite Secular. He has an MA in Christian Spirituality and a Doctorate in Pastoral Theology. He currently is director on the Master of Theology programme run by the Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland



During September and October this year we were greatly blessed on the UK mainland to be visited by the relics of St Bernadette. This brought to mind my own visit to Lourdes where I went as a helper on a trip organised by the parish of which I was then a member. I had the rather romantic idea that I was going on a pilgrimage, although the reality initially turned out to be somewhat different. Some 36 hours on a bus to the South of

France with the helpers staying awake to watch over our less-able guests proved to be a rough introduction to the work that I, like many, take for granted from the helping professions. It was a learning curve to which I had to surrender. Lourdes is a truly remarkable place that somehow manages to combine a spiritual atmosphere along with receiving thousands of visitors. Strangely it was these crowds of visitors, of which I formed a part, that

really struck me. In our secular times nowhere else, other than in one of our great centres of pilgrimage, can one find oneself amongst so many people, all of whom are brought together by one thing: Faith.

In our secular times nowhere else... can one find oneself amongst so many people, all of whom are brought together by one thing: Faith.

the Lourdes miracles was continually growing, Bernadette took herself off to Nevers, some 500 kilometres away, where she chose to live out the rest of her short life in relative obscurity as a Sister of Charity. Asked one day about the apparitions she is reported to have simply replied,

"The Virgin used me as a broom to remove the dust. When the work is done, the broom is put behind the door again."

Prior to Our Lady's appearances to St Bernadette in 1858, Lourdes, situated in the French Languedoc region, was scarcely known to anyone beyond the region. Since that time and now, with some 70 cures accepted by the Church as miraculous, along with literally thousands of others that have not been officially investigated, it has become one of the most visited centres of pilgrimage in Europe. Here, Our Lady of Lourdes appeared to Bernadette on 18 occasions in what is now known as the Grotto, and Our Lady's image with its characteristic blue sash as described by Bernadette has since become an internationally recognised icon. At the time Bernadette, at her own wish, chose to remain in the shadows, insisting that her role was merely that of a messenger for Our Lady. As if to make this entirely clear, within eight years of the apparitions, and as the reputation of

Few can have any doubt of the importance of Lourdes, but amidst all the ceremony surrounding the recent visit of the relics to the UK some might have been left wondering who exactly was this Bernadette? Marie Bernarde Soubirous was born on 7th January 1844, the eldest of nine children born to her parents, François, a miller and Louise, a laundress. Living in extreme poverty in a simple basement previously used as a jail, Bernadette would contract cholera as a child and suffer from asthma throughout her life. On 11th February 1858 at the age of 14, she was out gathering firewood one day with friends near the grotto of Massabielle when she had her first vision, seeing a dazzling light emanating from the depths of the cave. Her companions saw nothing. She returned to the grotto several times over the following days and on the third visit the 'vision', as yet remain-

ing unidentified, asked her to return every day for a fortnight. Bernadette described the lady she saw as wearing the characteristic white veil and blue sash that we now associate with Our Lady of Lourdes and she noted that she had a yellow rose on each foot.

Not surprisingly, what Bernadette claimed to have seen caused a sensation in the local community, with opinion divided on the reliability of what was being claimed. Initially, the vision did not advance any identity but consistently told Bernadette of the urgent need for people to pray for repentance, adding that a chapel was to be built on the site. The parish priest was not initially sup-

portive; however, on 25th March, during Bernadette's 16th visit, on being continually pressed to identify herself, the Lady simply replied, *"I am the Immaculate Conception."* This may seem insignificant to us, but it certainly was not to the parish priest: the dogma of the Immaculate Conception had only just been stat-

... the vision did not advance any identity but consistently told Bernadette of the urgent need for people to pray for repentance, adding that a chapel was to be built on the site.



ed by Pope Pius IX in the papal bull *'Ineffabilis Deus'*. This name was thus something that Bernadette could never have heard of, so the priest realised that she now had to be taken seriously.

Many miracles occurred during this period. One day the vision asked Bernadette to drink what appeared to be some muddy water, which caused disgust amongst the onlookers as they watched Bernadette obey the instructions. However, the following day a spring of clear water was found to be bubbling from this same spot and in case this was not enough, on 1st March that year, Catherine Latapie, a peasant woman from Loubajac, was washing her hands in this new spring when she experienced a miraculous cure for the paralysed fingers of her hand. The rest, as we might say, has been history.

There were, of course, considerable investigations into the visions, with a genuine worry amongst the Church authorities that although she was well-intentioned Bernadette might have been the victim of an imagined hallucination. She became the centre of endless enquiries and the equivalent of a modern-day media storm. All of those present noted that this simple, uneducated young girl in the face of intense questioning remained calm, resisting being drawn into claiming anything other than what she had seen. She would also resist all attempts to associate herself with the many Rosaries and holy pictures that were proffered by the Faithful. In 1862

the Church confirmed the authenticity of the apparitions, but Bernadette, realising that this constant attention was neither good for her nor what she wanted, moved herself to Nevers. Here she received a basic education and learned to read and write before eventually being admitted to the Sisters of Charity as Sr Marie-Bernard. On the day of her reception into the community Bernadette gave a short account of the events at Lourdes and thereafter it was never mentioned again. It was how she wanted it to be. She became the Assistant Infirmarian, before herself progressively succumbing to the illness that she had carried since childhood. She would maintain to the end of her life that she was bearing her suffering for sinners, adding that *"after all, they are our brothers"*. She died on 16th April 1879 aged 35 and was Canonised on 8th September 1933. It is appropriate that her Canonisation was not for her having been chosen to receive the visions but rather for the way in which she responded to the grace received.

This brings us back therefore to the meaning of pilgrimage. I myself have been on more pilgrimages than I care to admit. In reality, as Chaucer's classic *'The Canterbury Tales'* bears witness, there are many reasons why people set off on pilgrimage, and not all of them sacred. In rare moments of self-honesty I have to ask myself whether my own 'pilgrimages' have been more those of a curious traveller than a genuine penitent, but as my *'New Dictionary of Catholic*

... her Canonisation was not for her having been chosen to receive the visions but rather for the way in which she responded to the grace received.



Spirituality' reminds us, pilgrimage ultimately gives physical form to an inner truth: that the "spiritual journey sits at the heart of human wayfaring".¹ In this sense we might say that every day contains another journey full of opportunities to move closer to the Divine, but only if we ourselves are able to recognise them and be drawn to them.

My own trip to Lourdes was, in this sense, no exception and I have admitted above that my reaction for several days was that the whole thing felt more like hard work than a prayerful experience. I have since learned that accounts of spirituality and transformation generally come back to the uncomfortable truth that coming to patiently accept how things are, rather than how we would like them to be, is often the gateway to progress on the inner journey. On the Saturday night whilst at Lourdes I was asked to take charge of a wheelchair to form part of a massive torchlight procession. "Not really my sort of thing", was my initial reaction, but – you've guessed it already – how wrong could I be?! I was quite unprepared for the intense feeling of unity I experienced whilst forming part of this multinational group of some 15,000 pilgrims. Here, despite the many languages that divided us, we were all somehow linked together through the gentle Marian hymns we sang as we processed from the Grotto up to the main church to receive a blessing.

A mystical experience? Well, no, not really, but more like an intense feeling of being very present in that particular moment and nowhere else. But as Thomas Merton also discovered on 18th March 1958 on a street corner in Louisville, Kentucky, maybe this is the unity and presence that we are all called to live by, if only we can be ready to accept it.

REFERENCES

Byrne, R. OCSO. 1993. 'Journey' in "The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality", ed by Michael Downey. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, p. 565.



Faithfulness

by Kathy Bishop OPL



Kathy Bishop is a Lay Dominican and founder and editor in chief of The Faith Companion. She has a BA(Hons) in RE, an MA in Pastoral Theology specializing in Christian Spirituality and is a qualified spiritual director from the London Centre for Spiritual Direction.

When the death of Queen Elizabeth II occurred on 8th September 2022, watching the BBC coverage, and learning about her life lived of faith, the idea of faithfulness came to mind, and I began to realise how important faithfulness is to live out our Catholicism. So, here I will be exploring the importance of faithfulness in living out our faith, day in day out, touching on the example of HM Queen Elizabeth II's life lived in faithfulness. When we commit ourselves to a state of life, whether that be marriage, priestly Ordination, Religious profession, or, in the case of the Queen, at her coronation, this commitment is ongoing and needs to be renewed daily. Commitments of this nature require work. You don't make a commitment and not nurture and protect it and hope it will last a lifetime. A decision to live that commitment happens daily, if not hourly, if not every moment of your life...

When I was Confirmed as a Catholic, I was gifted a greater fullness of the Holy Spirit to help me live my

commitment to living a Catholic life, to adhere to all the Church's Teachings in obedience and to nurture my spiritual life and my relationship with Jesus. It is through practicing our devotions that we express our faith and love for Our Lord and His Church. In journeying on in faithfulness to these devotions God's action works in our souls and we grow in faith as a pure gift from God. We make that commitment over and over again, every time we go to Mass, every time we kneel down to pray and every time we care for our neighbours as Jesus taught us, but it is only by the grace of God that we are able to do so. In fact, the Holy Spirit makes staying committed easy, bringing to mind Matthew 11:28-30 where Jesus says,

"Come to me, all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

(NEHB)



It is worth mentioning that the greatest of all our devotions is the Eucharist, as it says in the 'Catechism':

"The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the

blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch."

(n.1324)

Importantly, our faith and devotions are lived within the context of a relationship with Our Father, who is a loving and forgiving Lord who knows our frail and



THE CROWNING OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH
IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JUNE 2ND, 1953

A TUCK CARD

faulty nature, for He made us. So, our devotions and practicing of our faith should not be as if written in stone. If you are unwell, for example, would a loving Father reprimand you for not attending Mass if it would cause you harm? No, He wouldn't. If your day is so full of giving yourself to others and at day's end you find yourself exhausted, only able to sit in God's presence, not able to converse with Him in prayer, would He mind? No, because He loves you and can see that it was for the love of Him that you sacrificed yourself, giving to others all day long. What is important to God is the intention of your heart. He sees you love Him; He sees you want to be with Him. I am not

saying our devotions, especially attending Holy Mass, are not important; they are vitally important and Sunday observance of Mass is required of us by the Church, but in the context of a real, vibrant relationship with Our Lord we must remember Our Father does not have a heart of stone, but a heart full of love for His children.

The important thing is we must

When we commit
ourselves to a state of life
... this commitment is
ongoing and needs to be
renewed daily.

move towards putting God first in our hearts above all; above your nearest and dearest, your career, social status or money. We have to let go in order to follow Jesus, leaving all behind, sometimes not literally, but figuratively. HM Queen Elizabeth II showed she did this in her first Christmas broadcast before her coronation in 1952:

"Pray for me...that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life."

Apparently, her Christmas speech to all nations of the Commonwealth was one of the only speeches she wrote herself and she used this opportunity time and time again over her 70-year reign to put Christ and her personal faith front and centre. As she said in her Christmas broadcast in December 2000,

"For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life."

Giving time for our relationship with Christ means living with an open, prayerful heart; prayer

being the basis of communication with the Divine. Apparently, Queen Elizabeth spent much time in prayer at the end of the day, throughout her whole life. As much as we can, given our life circumstances, showing up is important; to Mass, to prayer, to helping others, to spending time with God's Word in Scripture. If we order our lives in this way, in my experience our faithfulness becomes easy as graces are gifted to help us. All we have to do is simply open our hearts to receive. Not such a burden then?

Hearing about the life of Queen Elizabeth on her death, three things were highlighted: her sense of duty, service and sacrifice. Queen Elizabeth has been dubbed 'The Servant Queen', as the book released on her 90th birthday in April 2016 shows: 'The Servant Queen and the King She Serves'. In this book, Her Majesty wrote the foreword herself and it is here we learn of her own thoughts of her personal faith and of how she ordered her life so Christ was first in all things.

This attribute of sacrificial service comes from Our Lord Jesus Christ who did not come to be served, but to serve, as it says in Mark 10:45:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,

and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(NIV)

In 2008 the Queen said,

"I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life... He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served."

In his tribute to his mother on her passing King Charles III noted her faithfulness to her duty; whatever she felt like, even if she was feeling under the weather, she turned up. This reminded me of our Catholic priests serving at the altar; however they feel, even unwell, they turn up to say Holy Mass. This is faithfulness and duty. They also sacrifice their normal life to serve their communities, their

Hearing about the life of Queen Elizabeth on her death, three things were highlighted: her sense of duty, service and sacrifice.

loves, wants and wishes sacrificed for the good of the communities they serve. This is sacrificial service, the way of Christ.

In four of her Christmas broadcasts, Queen Elizabeth talked about the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In 1985 she said the story "reminds us of our duty to our neighbour. We should try to follow Christ's clear instruction at the end of that story: 'Go and do thou likewise.'" In 2012 she concluded her Christmas broadcast by praying for her people and inviting a practical, servant-hearted response to Jesus Christ's message of love:

"This is the time of year when we remember that God sent His only son 'to serve, not to be served.' He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer this Christmas Day that His example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others.

"The carol, 'In the Bleak Midwinter', ends by asking a question of all of us who know the Christmas story, of how God gave Himself to us in humble service:

'What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would

bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.'

"The carol gives the answer, 'Yet what I can I give him – give my heart.'"

Reflecting on faithfulness in faith, it is clear that if you remain in close relationship with the Lord, He will give you all you need to live the life He would wish for you. All you have to do is remain open to the action of the Holy Spirit and in all you do to surrender to God's Will. Just by living a life where your heart is open to the Lord, being faithful to your devotions and showing up, all of a sudden, your faith can be transformed; what initially seemed like a chore suddenly becomes a joy and an easy yoke to bear.

All the world watched in awe as queues of people lined up to pay their respects to HM The Queen whilst she lay-in-state at Westminster Hall, London. This was a testament to her duty, carried out sacrificially and selflessly, but I suspect something else was also happening – something spiritual maybe? People likened paying their respects to going on a pilgrimage even! The thought crossed my mind that the life of



Queen Elizabeth II inspired such devotion that some queued for 24 hours to pay their respects, but at the end of the day, although our monarch was clearly a special human being, she was just that, a human being like the rest of us. Looking forward shortly to Christmas, it is the King of Kings who we celebrate coming into our world over 2,000 years ago as Our Saviour and it is this Servant King who made untold sacrifices for us in shedding His Blood and giving His very life. Will people queue up for 24 hours to greet Him this Christmas? Are there miles of queues every time Holy Mass is said to pay respects to the King of Kings who comes



to us truly present in the form of bread and wine? If not, why not? As a Servant Queen, HM Queen Elizabeth II would, I am sure, have seen this dichotomy, as we have seen by the life she lived so well that Christ was first in her life.

All at 'The Faith Companion' thanks HM Queen Elizabeth II for her life of service but most of all for her example of faith. Grant our Queen eternal rest, Oh Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her and may she rest in peace as she reaps the rewards of eternal life for a life lived in faithfulness to Christ. Amen.



Nov/Dec 2022

REFERENCES

- 1 Christian Enquiry Agency. "Queen Elizabeth's Faith". Found at: <https://christianity.org.uk/article/queen-elizabeths-faith> Accessed on 21st September 2022.
- 2 Christian Enquiry Agency. "Queen Elizabeth's Faith". Found at: <https://christianity.org.uk/article/queen-elizabeths-faith> Accessed on 21st September 2022.
- 3 Gutierrez, S. 2022. "Queen Elizabeth Writes About Her Faith". Found at: <https://britishheritage.com/royals/queen-elizabeth-christ> Accessed on 21st September 2022.
- 4 Christian Enquiry Agency. "Queen Elizabeth's Faith". Found at: <https://christianity.org.uk/article/queen-elizabeths-faith> Accessed on 21st September 2022.
- 5 Christian Enquiry Agency. "Queen Elizabeth's Faith". Found at: <https://christianity.org.uk/article/queen-elizabeths-faith> Accessed on 21st September 2022.



Nov/Dec 2022



The Faith Companion Forget-Me-Not Heart Hanging

£4.99

With Heart envelope £5.99

Makes an excellent Christmas gift. To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808

This flower represents Mary's eyes for us. Let her watch over your loved ones this Christmas.

The Special Insight of the Shepherds

by Ann Shakespeare



Ann Shakespeare lives with her husband in rural Lincolnshire and has an all-consuming passion to know Jesus ever more deeply and to share this passion with others through her writings. She is author of *God's Gift of Tremendous Power*, describing God's gifts poured into us through Christ and how modern physics helps to give us "handles" to grasp the spiritual truth of Oneness and Omnipresence. Ann also writes short articles on various themes to inspire and encourage faith in Christ, found on her website: www.annshakespeare.com. Ann's email address is: info@annshakespeare.com

Note from the Editor-in-Chief: This article was originally published on Ann's website, which can be found at <https://www.annshakespeare.com>. We thank Ann for giving 'The Faith Companion' permission to republish it here.¹

"But the angel said to them... 'This very day, in David's town, a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ, the Lord. Let this prove it to you: you will find a baby, wrapped up and lying in a manger.'"

(Luke 2:10-12 JBP)

Please accompany me, in your imagination, to sit alongside the shepherds as they watched over their flocks on the night that Jesus came into the world...

For the shepherds, it was a night just like any other night. Perhaps they were taking it in turns to sleep. Or perhaps they were all awake – every eye required to protect the flock from prowling hyenas, jackals, and wolves.

But then... suddenly... something astounding happened. An angel of the Lord appeared to them; they were terrified!

Then they heard the angel speaking to them. Directly to them. They were the very first people in all the earth to hear the Gospel:

"For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord."

(Luke 2:11 NHEB) Then, the angel went on to talk about a sign that the shepherds would recognise:

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12 NIV)

Another translation of the first part of this verse says,

"And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."



They were the very first people in all the earth to hear the Gospel.

(Luke 2:12 GNT)

Prove in what way?

I must have read and heard this Scripture hundreds of times, but it never occurred to me to ask why the angel explained to the shepherds, so specifically, that seeing a baby wrapped in strips of swaddling cloth, lying in an animal feeding trough, would be proof that they had found the Saviour!

You might already know why, but I didn't! I must confess that I only dis-

covered the answer recently – and was deeply moved by what I saw.

We know from a prophecy in the Book of Micah that the Messiah would come forth from "Bethlehem Ephrathah" (5:2 NIV), which is an agricultural area near Bethlehem. (It is significant to note that 'Ephrathah' means 'fruitful!')

Micah had also prophesied that the Messiah would come to a place called "Migdal Eder", which is located within the same agricultural area of Bethlehem Ephrathah. Translated from the Hebrew, 'Migdal Eder' means 'tower of the flock' (4:8 NHEB).

So, what is a tower of the flock?

And how does it relate to the birth of Jesus?

Before turning to the answers, it is striking to bear in mind that this agricultural area was part of King David's ancestral lands, and that it was David's idea to dedicate the area specifically to raising lambs in preparation for the Passover sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple. (David had nurtured a heartfelt vision for the Temple and this vision was fulfilled through his son, Solomon, some 1,000 years before Jesus was born.)

This carefully tended land of David was characterised by an unusually large number of the aforementioned 'towers of the flock', and the ruins are still there to see today.

These towers are tall, stone-built watchtowers where the shepherds would care for their sheep, and which enabled them to watch over their flocks from high vantage points.

From the moment the lambs were born, the shepherds would examine each one to see if it was in perfect condition, otherwise it would not be acceptable for sacrifice.

According to rabbinic tradition, the lambs that were found to be perfect, and therefore selected for sacrifice, would be watched closely until

the time of the Passover. Then they would be carefully wrapped in strips of cloth to restrain them, and keep them in perfect condition, while they were being transported to Jerusalem.

Some traditions also state that before the final selection was made the sacrificial lambs were actually laid down inside carved-out stone troughs or mangers ('manger' comes from the Latin word 'manducat', meaning to 'eat' or 'chew') so that the lambs could be inspected carefully and safely off the ground.

But, whether or not this latter tradition is true, there is no doubt that the shepherds who heard the angel would immediately have associated the word 'manger' with the raising of the lambs for sacrifice.

All this gives amazing insight into the angel's extraordinary declaration that the shepherds would understand the sign: "And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12 GNT).

For these were the very same shepherds who were raising and

caring for the Passover lambs.

No wonder there seemed to be no hesitation among them. They made haste right away and found Mary and Joseph.

It is hard to imagine, without weeping in worship, the reaction of those shepherds as they drew close to Mary and Joseph and saw an unspeakably awesome sight of overwhelming significance to them:

Lying in one of their feeding troughs,

These towers are tall, stone-built watch towers where the shepherds would care for their sheep...





wrapped in familiar strips of cloth, was not one of their own lambs, destined for sacrifice at Passover.

Instead, bending down over the stone trough, the shepherds would have seen a tiny, vulnerable baby...all swaddled up in the same strips of cloth they would routinely use for their lambs...

They knew. They knew!

This tiny baby was their Saviour – Christ the Lord – whom the angel had announced to them in the splendour of God's glory. This was true! They were not hallucinating! How the shepherds contained themselves is so hard to conceive. I can only imagine that the Holy Spir-

it gave them supernatural strength to go immediately to spread abroad the 'Good News'. And they did!

No wonder they returned "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" (Luke 2:20 NIV).

Oh! Let us join with the shepherds to glorify and praise God for all the things that He has told us in His Word.

The baby arrived that night in the physical feeding trough as our own personal Manna – our true spiritual food – from heaven. He came in order to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice, to remove all sins and every trace of separation between

God and humankind.

He unites us with Godhead and gives us His very self – which is His unfailing Love, for He is Love – as the source of each of our own lives... from right now...into eternity.

How we praise Him!!



The Faith Companion Candle
£9.99

Comes boxed

Makes an excellent
Christmas gift.

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk
or call 01403 754808

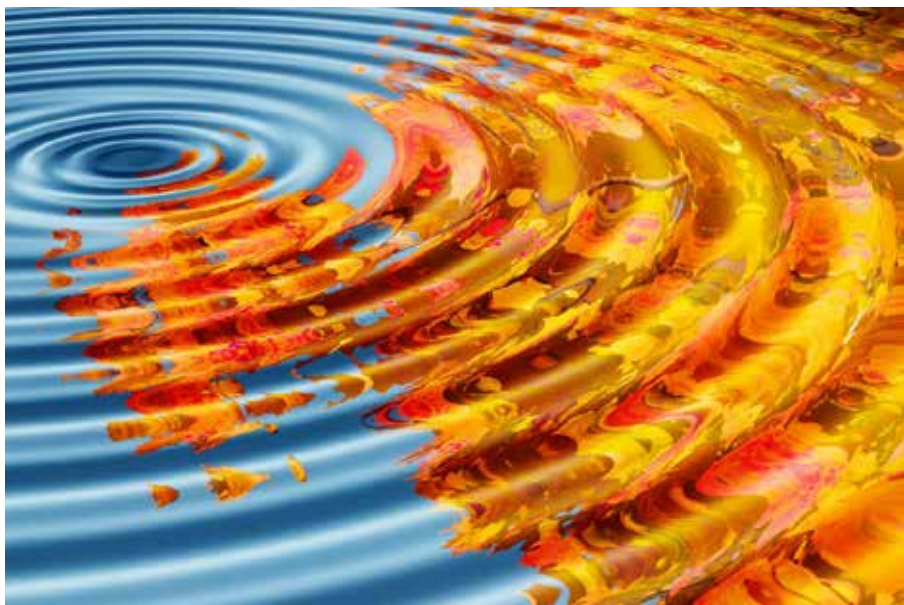
REFERENCES

1 Some of the information in this article regarding the tower of the flock and Migdal Eder is drawn from the writings of the well-regarded Church historian Eusebius (the Bishop of Caesarea in the 4th century).

Biblical Meditation by Teresa O'Driscoll



Teresa O'Driscoll is a writer, presenter of spiritual-development and Christian writers' workshops, and the author of *9 Days to Heaven*, *How to make everlasting meaning of your life* and *Pray Then Listen*, A heart-to-heart with God published in September by Circle Books. See www.teresaodriscoll.co.uk for further details and inspiration.



This is a 3 minute Bible reading and meditation. As well as a Bible, you will need a chair, and a few minutes alone.

Let God bless you this Christmas!

Though Christmas should be a wondrous event for Christians perhaps your joy is somewhat dampened by a testing situation. This could involve any number of problems such as illness, stretched-to-breaking-point finances, or

loneliness. Then there is the turbulence of the world, including the war in Ukraine, which is disturbing many people's peace of mind. Yet, if you are feeling vulnerable, for whatever reason, please remember that you can take your troubles to our Heavenly Father and He will see you through. After that prayer for help, try to put your whole focus onto the real meaning of the season: God becoming man, for our sake.

As Christians, Christ's Birth-

day remains the central point of the celebrations, and it is from there that our spiritual joy springs. A while ago, following a bereavement, I began to dread the arrival of Christmas that year. So, I did what I am suggesting to you: prayed about it. I couldn't face glitz and a fir tree but I did want a crib and candlelight. In place of Christmas songs I chose carols and Midnight Mass. And so on. In the end I did feel blessed by the celebration of Christ's birth. And so I say, from experience, that if you keep your eyes firmly on the nativity you will allow God to touch you with His gracious love.

Also, and in a way – as I do not want to add to your burden – I am sorry to remind you, that, people who know of your faith will be watching how you react to any trying situation. That does not mean that you must appear superhuman. But if you confide you are praying for help, and finding comfort in that, it will explain how you are keeping going despite everything. And, who knows, that may become an encouragement to others... Try this short meditation to think this whole thing over.

1. Sit up straight and close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through the nose. Hold a few seconds. Breathe out through the mouth and as you do so feel the whole of your body relax.

2. Now meditate for a few moments on ways to keep your

focus on Christ this Christmas.

3. Read and meditate on Isaiah 30:18:

"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show you compassion."

4. Now say this prayer – or one of your own – *"Dear Heavenly Father, I long to celebrate the gift of Your Son to the world so please will you help me to do that by blessing me with Your gracious love. In doing so, may I have the courage to share that blessing with others so that You may bless them too, I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."*

5. When you are ready breathe in and out deeply as before. Then open your eyes and have a big stretch.

May the love of Christ fill you with joy this Christmas despite your vulnerability.

For more inspiration please see Teresa's website: <https://www.teresaodriscoll.co.uk>

Email Teresa on: teresa@teresaodriscoll.co.uk

The John Pridmore Story by John Pridmore



John Pridmore is an ex-Gangster who nearly killed a man who failed to pay a debt. After his conversion in 1992, he joined the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and met St. Mother Theresa. They helped him to love again and to use his story to help others. He speaks to students everywhere about a life free from violence and drugs, where they can use their gifts to help each other. John is the author of *From Gangland to Promised Land* highly recommended by The Faith Companion.

I was born in Walthamstow in the East End of London and I was baptised a Catholic, but I was never brought up in any religion. At the age of 10, I came home on a normal night and my parents told me that I had to choose who I wanted to live with because they were getting a divorce. I loved my parents so much, always thought they would be there for me and they were the two people I trusted and loved most in this world, so

this crushed me and I made an unconscious decision inside that I wasn't going to love anymore because I thought that if you don't love, you don't get hurt. My mum ended up having a nervous breakdown and was admitted into a psychiatric hospital and my dad remarried. My step-mum thought the best way to bring up a kid was to beat them senseless each day, which added to my pain. So, that was my upbringing.



By the age of about 13 I started stealing. I suspect I wanted someone to see I was in pain, so it was like a cry for help. I also wanted someone to say that they loved me. However, because my dad was a policeman this just added to the beatings. At the age of 15 I was put into a detention centre, which was like a youth prison. I thought it was better being in there than being at home and so I left home at 15.

At 19 I was in prison again and there was another change in me – the way I dealt with the abuse I suffered as a kid was to turn that abuse into anger. So, I was always fighting. In prison I was put under 23-hour solitary confinement and it was a bit like having a mir-

"What you want out of life in this world you must take, as nobody gives you anything."

ror put in front of me. Because I hated what I saw in that mirror, I seriously thought about taking away God's greatest gift of my own life. God must have been there because I didn't take away my own life. However, I came out of there more bitter and angrier than ever. I thought, "What you want out of life in this world you must take, as nobody gives you anything." Because I liked fighting, I thought I might as well get paid for it. So, I started bouncing.

I started bouncing around the East End and West End clubs in London and I met some guys who seemed to have everything – the best sports cars and the best girls – and when they walked into the club everyone stopped because they were in awe of these people for all the wrong reasons as they were afraid of them, but I wanted that power, I wanted that respect, I wanted that incredible life as it seemed to me, I wanted that money. They seemed to me to have everything. So, I thought that would satisfy me, that that would fulfil me. So, I started working for these people. However, before long I wasn't working for them, I was working with them. These were people who ran most of the organised crime around London at the time.

So, to my shame, I was involved with major drug deals, protection rackets, basically vicious crimes of all sorts. I wouldn't leave home without a gun as I was involved with some of the worst organised crime gangs in London. Now, I wouldn't leave my house without my Rosary. It's amazing how God changes you...

At 27 years old I had everything the world says makes you happy. I had the penthouse, the sports cars and more money than I could ever spend, but inside there was great

"It was in that moment I knew I was worth something."

emptiness because everything I had was based on taking, not giving. I was working in a club that we part-owned in the West End of London, when I ended up hitting this guy with knuckledusters and I truly thought I had killed him. The only reason I hit this guy was to impress an underworld boss who was there. I had to change all the names in my book and he used to be called 'the Bulldog'. You had to be the most violent, the most vicious to keep your reputation. When I hit this guy and truly thought I had killed him, as I drove home that night what scared me the most was that I just didn't care that I had almost killed a man. I think that triggered something inside of me, because I thought,

"How can you become so dead inside that you could kill someone and not even care?"

I sort of examined why I did all the things on the outside, but on the inside, I was taking drugs just to get through another day. I came in on a normal night and I became aware of a voice speaking to me in my heart and I knew



that voice was God and I cried out for another chance. It was like God withdrew Himself from me in this moment and it was terrifying. I had been shot, I had been stabbed, but this was the most terrifying moment of my life. I cried out for another chance, not because I was sorry, but because I didn't want to stay in this desolation. I felt lifted up and then said the first prayer I had ever said:

"Up until now all I have done is taken from you, God. Now I want to give."

As I said that prayer I felt the Holy Spirit, the love of God, come pouring into me. It was in that moment I knew I was worth something, whereas up until that moment I always thought I was worthless.

I ended up going on retreat, as I met a priest who suggested I go, and my mum sent me there. I thought going on retreat was lying on a beach with a Bacardi Breezer, enjoying a nice girl and just chilling. So, when I got there it wasn't quite what I imagined, but I did something there which I never thought I would do: I ended up going to Confession. I think

that Confession changed my life because it was when the priest told me that Christ forgave me that I felt renewed inside and I knew that it was true, that Christ had died for me and I was forgiven. I didn't realise how the sin I had committed was killing me inside, so when I went to Confession it was like I was made whole again. God took that sin and gave me life. As I walked away, I just wanted to dance, I felt so free!

Also, on that retreat I experienced a miracle with the Eucharist where I received infused knowledge that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharist. I knew that the consecrated Host really was Jesus, Our humble God, who comes in the form of bread so that we might draw

life from Him. I knew I would be a Catholic until the day I die.

I ended up leaving that retreat and working with people like Mother Teresa of Kolkata, who taught me so much about how to love and how to give and it is in the giving that we receive, not in the taking. This was in 1997 when she was in the Bronx in New York when she met Princess Diana. She had a massive effect on me. She was someone who was fearless. She said to me one day,

"If we give young people the Truth they always have the choice to choose the Truth, but if we don't give them the Truth they never have the choice."



"Up until now all I have done is taken from you, God. Now I want to give."

So, in the last 15 years I have spoken to about three million young people around the world, really sharing my story, trying to help them know that there is a Go

who loves them, who died for them and who cherishes them. Telling them this is the greatest gift of my life and if someone had told me, perhaps I wouldn't have lived the way I lived and also inflicted pain on others for so many years. And that there are better ways of living than the life I lived. I spoke at World Youth Day to half a million young people in the presence of the then Pope Benedict XVI. It is only when we give that we become happy and fulfilled. For the last few years, I have been involved in a community I set up; it is a community for evangelisation. So, we live together, pray together and work together, but I also spend a lot of time travelling. I have never been so happy, I have never been so fulfilled and I have never been so at peace. So, I think God is very gracious and I am now a full-time evangelist for Him.



Medjugorje
Wooden Rosary

£20.00

Makes an excellent Christmas gift.

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808



Baptism in the Holy Spirit; A Testimony

by Jenny Osterfield



Jenny Osterfield who grew up in Kenya in the 1950s, started her career as a relationship counsellor, also working with CMAC (now Catholic Marriage Care), mental health and social services. A prophetic word from the Lord led her to working with dying patients and their families in bereavement training and spiritual care of the dying. She also represented UK Hospices in setting the National Standards for Care of the Bereaved. Jenny served as Portsmouth Diocese representative for women and led Confirmation and youth groups. With husband Giles she runs a parish prayer group. Now retired Jenny acts as a Spiritual Director and leads the Telephone Prayer Line and Healing Team for Alton Day of Renewal. She and Giles presently lead Way-Finders, a weekly charismatic online prayer meeting.

The day I decided to say "Yes" to Jesus and commit my life into His hands was the day when my life changed forever. Growing up in Kenya in the 1950s I was educated

by Loreto Sisters and Holy Ghost Fathers, also known as White Fathers. In those days the priest celebrated Mass in Latin with his back to the congregation and I recall a great deal



of pomp and ceremony. I know I felt very safe in my early years, wrapped in my Catholic rituals and traditions. However, my teenage years were a different story. I remember hard-hitting sermons about sin and morals so that sin seemed to lurk around every corner of my life. I had a deep fear of sin and damnation, and my spirituality was based more on my fear of punishment than on the love of God. The message of God's incredible love in sending His Son to die on the Cross had not yet penetrated my heart to become a living and personal faith. I felt like the guilty party in a fixed trial, and eventually gave up trying altogether. I married a Catholic and we settled in Hampshire with our two small children. It was our belief in God and our Catholic roots that had brought us together. He was firmly rooted in his faith and traditions, and comfortable with it, but although I had returned to the practice of my faith, mine was still head knowledge, muscular and impersonal. It was friends we met on a holiday to Kenya who first told us about Baptism in the Holy Spirit, sharing how they had found a deep faith in Jesus and how it had radically changed their lives.

... having answered an altar call to commit their lives to Jesus, they had been filled with the Holy Spirit and received a new prayer language.

They described how, having answered an altar call to commit their lives to Jesus, they had been filled with the Holy Spirit and received a new prayer language. They also told us about other signs and wonders, including miraculous healings they had witnessed. I was sceptical of the authenticity of these signs, believing that if such were happening in the Catholic Church, I would have heard about them. When they told me this had taken place in the Cathedral Basilica of the Holy Family in Nairobi – the cathedral where I was confirmed – I was astonished. Their simple shining faith example and changed lives made a deep impression on me. In all the years I had known them, I had never heard either of them mention God, let alone attend a Church service.

I was astonished when shortly after this my mother-in-law told me she had been Baptised in the Holy Spirit. I had always thought of her as a staunch, traditional Catholic. I was curious and accepted her offer to take me to a Day of Renewal in her parish in Aylesbury. It all felt very new and strange, but I was greatly moved by the reverence and joy I witnessed there. The priest explained how Baptism in the Holy Spirit reignites the graces received in the Sacraments and equips us for discipleship and mission. As I watched him lay hands on people for healing, listened to prophecies and sang in tongues, it stirred something deep within my spirit and I hungered to know more.

Shortly afterwards, my husband began attending a Holy Spirit prayer meeting near us and when he told me they were preparing for Baptism in the Holy Spirit I felt a surprising stab of jealousy. I pondered what it would mean for me to wholeheartedly and without reservation commit my life to Jesus. I confess to being afraid of what God might ask me to do. I worried He might ask me to drop my comfortable life to become a missionary. I wondered what sacrifices I would have to make and if I could live up to the commitment. I wasn't sure if I had the courage and strength to follow Him, or to say with all my heart, "Not my will but

YOURS, Lord." I didn't feel worthy, still stuck in the muscular Christianity of my youth. I had not understood that His call is all about grace; if He loves me so passionately that He is willing to die for me, then He will also give me the grace to follow Him.

I was struggling with these thoughts when I had an extraordinary dream. I was trekking through the Kenyan bush, carrying everything I needed for my survival in a heavy rucksack on my back. Suddenly I saw Jesus standing on the other side of a steep ravine. "Just jump!" He said, as He called me to come over to join Him. My heart sank, as I knew I



Jesus showed me that He did not mind that I was unable to give these things up right now; He always wants me just as I am ...

couldn't jump with my heavy rucksack. It contained all my habits and baggage; everything I needed for my comfort and survival. Seeing my hesitation, He said, "It doesn't matter, just bring it with you. I love you as you are!" He pointed to a distant mountain, saying, "Come over here with me and we will journey together to the heights of this mountain. I will help you to discard the contents of your rucksack one by one until it's empty. Trust me, just say 'Yes' and jump. My arms will catch you and never let you go!" It was then that I recognised I had been meandering through my life, relying on my own resources. My rucksack contained all my worldly desires, my hopes and dreams for the future and my habits of sin. Jesus showed me that He did not mind that I was unable to give these things up right now; He always wants me just as I am, warts and all. Through this dream He gave me a revelation of the power of His love that left me yearning and hungry for a personal relationship with Him. I longed to put my hand into His and let Him take me on an adventure into His love and transformation up His Holy mountain, where He prom-

ised to be with me every step of the way, and to carry me over the steep and craggy places.

The next evening, I accompanied my husband to the prayer meeting. I hadn't a clue what to expect but knew that everything within me wanted Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I wanted to say "Yes" and jump over the ravine into the loving arms of Jesus. I was so nervously excited that I could hardly wait to be prayed over. They welcomed me with open arms and accepted my request for prayer without question. As they laid their hands on me and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I committed my life to Jesus, closed my eyes, and mentally jumped over the ravine. His arms of love caught me just as He had promised. Immediately, I was enveloped in a warm blanket of love that reached deeply into the secret places of my soul. I could feel my tears streaming as an extraordinary, powerful, overwhelming love engulfed and consumed me. I heard someone singing but had no awareness that I had been singing in tongues until I was told afterwards. I don't have a singing voice and would rather curl up and die than sing alone to a room full of people, yet my spirit sang out the praises of my Lord that day. I am still in awe when I think how God gave me His gift of tongues in

such a surprising way. Since then, I have come to understand that praying in tongues is really the pouring out of my heart to God in worship, praise, and adoration, in a way that is beyond language. It gives expression to my innermost feelings and longings and is a mode of prayer, rather than a communication. The instant I leapt over the ravine and into the arms of Jesus my life was completely turned on its head. I felt as if my heart was on fire with the burning love of God and everything else in my life seemed to exist in the shadows. It was as if, prior to this moment, I had been spiritually blind, but now I was bathed in a glorious light, and everything was shining in 3D high-definition colour.

My experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit happened this way, but for many people it can be less dramatic, a slow-burning fire within, or a gradual release of joy over time. I have been carrying my rucksack for four decades since then, and, although it is lighter, it is not empty yet. So much has happened in my life. There has been great joy and deep shadows, times when my Lord has seemed so close that my heart has been on fire, but other times when I have trodden wearily through barren spiritual deserts. The religion of my childhood has been replaced by a deeply personal relationship with Our loving Trinitarian God who promised me that day that

Immediately, I was enveloped in a warm blanket of love that reached deeply into the secret places of my soul.

He would never let me go. I have a long way to go before I can discard all my worldly desires and climb, transformed and unfettered, up to the highest places on the mountain. But I am at peace knowing that my Lord is walking with me and holding my hand, which is the only thing in my life that truly matters.



This is Church!

by A Parishioner of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

One Sunday at Mass it was announced that our bishop, Bishop Richard Moth, would be coming to our parish the following Friday evening to preside at Solemn Vespers, where Admission to Candidacy would take place for prospective Deacons, followed by Mass, during which Ministries would be conferred. I suffer from a chronic illness which makes evenings difficult for me, but my interest was piqued at hearing this event was taking place in my parish. It was something I had not experienced before, and it seemed to be another layer of existence of the Church to learn about. Where the Church is concerned, I can never learn enough!

On that Friday I was feeling under the weather and would not normally have wanted to go out in the evening, but something gave me the strength to get ready and go to Church. I took my normal position in the Church and waited, in anticipation, for the liturgical drama to start.

The congregation stood up and the procession appeared, walking with reverence down the aisle, our bishop at its head. I knew something was different, not only because the bishop was there, but because the number of clergy in the procession, and then finally on the altar,

This felt different. It felt special. It looked beautiful.

were many. Some members of the clergy were in clerical dress I had never seen before. This felt different. It felt special. It looked beautiful.

The Solemn Vespers were chanted, setting the scene, during which those to be Admitted into Candidacy were asked to come forward. I knew for these prospective deacons this would be a special moment, as well as for those in the congregation; family, friends and parishioners were there to support them, surrounding them with good will and prayers for their future. It brought back memories of the special moments I experienced whilst being brought into the Church myself many years ago.

Mass followed shortly afterwards, and it was during the singing of hymns, the liturgy, and the Eucharistic Prayers that Our Good Lord opened my eyes just that little bit wider. When we all sang in unison, when prayers were said, when we venerated the Consecrated Host by kneeling, everyone present acted as one. During the singing, because of the sheer num-



ber of clergy present, there was a greater number of male voices, which gave the feeling of strength, fortitude, and a sure foundation. I added my own voice to the throng – and a throng it was!

I felt my spirit lifted in one accord with the throng of voices housing the deep, sure foundation of our clergy, and together we were lifted heavenward as one. In that moment I felt part of something that was very special, that was bigger than myself, bigger than anything on this earth. I heard my inner voice saying, "Now, this is CHURCH! There is something very special going on here." I sensed Mystery.

Now, I had for many years gone to the diocesan Chrism Mass every year, on the Wednesday before the Easter weekend, so I had experience of this kind of liturgy

where clergy of the diocese renew their priestly vows, but never had I experienced seeing our Church in this light. On this occasion God had revealed to me the Church's beauty. I felt it, and, in my heart, I said, "I want to be part of this"; I wanted my heart to join in the cry of the Church to heaven. Now, we all do this at every Mass, but somewhere inside me, at that moment, I felt I wanted to make a greater commitment to be part of the Church, to add my cry in a more permanent way to the cry of the Church, to BE Church. I take this forward in prayer and discernment, but I thank Our Good Lord for helping me to experience something so beautiful that day and that I overcame my difficulties and came to Church that evening. Praise God!

Fr Toby Lees OP Homily During the Visit of the Relics of St Bernadette by Fr Toby Lees OP



Fr Toby Lees OP is a Dominican Priest and Friar based at St Dominic's Priory, London, ministering at the Rosary Shrine. He is also priest director of Radio Maria, and chaplain to Kings College London. Before entering religious life 10 years ago, he was a solicitor in the City for 7 years. He loves walking, especially pilgrimages, fiction, real ale, and is a self-confessed coffee snob.

Note from Editor-in-Chief: Fr Toby Lees OP gave the following homily on Tuesday 6th September 2022, during Mass for the visit of the Relics of St Bernadette to St Mary's University, Twickenham. We thank Fr Toby for giving 'The Faith Companion' permission to publish it here.

My first encounter with the seemingly weird world of Catholics and our veneration of relics was the visit of the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux, another great French woman to visit these shores . . . Now there's a phrase I probably wouldn't have ever used if I weren't Catholic! But being Catholic has opened my eyes to goodness in places I might not have otherwise looked, in the lowly and even the French, and to the horror of my English partisan pride, I have found so much that is good in France! Not least these two inspiring ladies, Thérèse and Bernadette.

I only went to visit the relics of St Thérèse in Westminster Cathedral back in 2009 because a friend

wanted to go and was quite insistent. Little did I know that I would find myself going back the next night of my own volition and be profoundly moved once more.

Anyway, as we got to the Cathedral in the evening, there was a pretty big queue. This was not great, but there was also a kebab van parked up in the Piazza, so the evening definitely wasn't going to be a total disaster. This was Catholicism, to my mind, taking care of body and soul, though not nourishing the body in a way that my mother would approve of!

Anyway, much to my surprise, I found myself somewhat in awe as I approached the reliquary and I prayed for a particular grace, which, although I had no way of knowing it immediately at the time, was granted to me.

Now, was the grace granted by the relics? Was the healing a result of having touched the casket?

... the relics themselves contain no special powers, but they are an affirmation of the goodness of the body ...

Well, no, the relics themselves contain no special powers, but they are an affirmation of the goodness of the body, and they are an affirmation of that desire that all who have loved and lost know, the desire to hold on to something of the person, whilst at the same time having to let go.



St Bernadette is no longer bodily with us, and yet she is not lost to us. We are still in relation with her through prayer, and her earthly remains are not empty of meaning because her body was a vessel of holiness.

It might seem somewhat strange that a Church that preaches about eternal realities, about there being more to life than mere matter and the span of our universe, that a Church which emphasises that we have an immaterial soul, should be the great defender of the body in our time. Yet, in an age which objectifies the body, which idolises the body, which mutilates it, which scorns it, which concentrates all meaning upon the body, which views it as a prison and something to be overcome ... in the face of all these objectifications, the Church insists that the body can be holy, that the body is the Sacrament of the human person, the visible manifestation of the human person made beautiful in the image and likeness of God, the human person called to be a partaker in the Divine nature that itself became embodied in the Person of Jesus.

The body is not incidental to be-



ing human, it is not an obstacle to being human; the body is a gift, and the way by which we give; the body is what makes us distinctively human, the only creatures with an immaterial soul and a bodily existence. The body is something received, given to me, not something to be created and fashioned by me.

It seems to me, then, that the cult of relics is a healthy intuition of this goodness of the body, and it also seems happy providence – or very astute thinking from Fr Peter (not that the two are incompatible) – to have the relics of St Bernadette in this chapel with a Dominican preacher, because the brickwork of this chapel was inspired by the me-

... the Church insists that the body can be holy, that the body is the sacrament of the human person, the visible manifestation of the human person made beautiful in the image and likeness of God...

dieval Cathedral of Albi, that city in the region where St Dominic, and his band of Brothers, first began to preach the goodness of all creation, not just the spiritual, against those Albigensians and Cathars who would argue that the material world was created by an evil, lesser God. The Cathedral of Albi is a mighty sign of the Church, purportedly the largest brick building in the world, and it is good, and it is beautiful.

Yet, when we come before the relics of St Bernadette and pray for her intercession, when we ask this little one who lived in such intimacy with Mary to intercede for us, we see something better and more beautiful. We see those words of the 'Magnificat': "For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48 NLT), we see those words made manifest once more in the life of a small, weak, frail, sickly girl from an unknown town in the shadow of the Pyrenees. We see that it is not brute strength alone which gives the body goodness; not that strength is bad, but we see that it is the heart that matters more and gives the body its fulness of meaning.

In Bernadette, we see someone for whom, at so many points in her life, it would have been easier to give up. There were so many things which came at such great difficulty and cost to her, and yet perhaps the frailty and destitution that would cause so many to look down on or ignore her, without romanticising them were a part of the formation of her saintly strength.

As we laud the example of St Bernadette, as we give thanks to God for the great things He has worked in the lowly, we invert the values of so much of our modern world, in the same way as is so powerfully enacted in Lourdes to this day.

It seems to me that something of the Kingdom of Heaven is already made more manifest there, with the sick and the frail not hidden away, but put at the forefront and loved.

The first time I went to Lourdes and saw this I was moved to tears at the sight of the evening procession and all those thousands in wheelchairs. The suffering of the world not hidden away, which might make us more comfortable but does nothing for the suffering.

I also remember a subsequent occasion when, as one of about 100 Dominicans, I was in the procession with the Blessed Sacrament, and as I walked along with so many of my Brothers and Sisters, so many people smiled. Now, they didn't know me or those around me from Adam, and yet they smiled; and the Blessed Sacrament was still a long way behind out of sight, so it wasn't just my ego – the smiles were for me, and for those around me, and they were from strangers who did not know us, and yet I think back to that day a lot. Those smiles have meant a lot.



We see that it is not brute strength alone which gives the body goodness; not that strength is bad, but we see that it is the heart that matters more and gives the body its fullness of meaning.

and of Bernadette in Adam Simon's book 'Bernadette of Lourdes: Pilgrimage Into the Heart of Jesus':

"In July 1958, le Comte de Bruissard was staying nearby and had the opportunity to meet Bernadette:

'How did she smile, the Lady?' I asked.

The little shepherdess looked at me with astonishment, then, after a moment of silence she said, 'Sir, you would have to be in heaven to recreate that smile.'

I said, 'Could you not do it for me? I am a doubter and I don't believe in the apparitions.'

The face of the child grew dark and took on a severe expression. 'So, sir, do you think I am a liar?'

I was disarmed. No, Bernadette was not a liar, and I was about to go on my knees to beg forgiveness.

Then she added, 'Since you are a sinner, I am going to recreate the smile of the Virgin.'

Since then I have lost my wife and two daughters, but I do not feel

alone in the world. I live with the smile of the Virgin."

When we smile, we recognise the goodness of something or someone, and you cannot smile without a body.

It's a cliché, but it's true: we live in a very fractured, angry world. I think we live in a world where a lot of people do bad things, not just out of desperation, not out of malice, but because they don't really respect themselves, don't really value themselves. I wonder whether our prison chaplains might recognise some of this in those who have little self-esteem, who have to act hard to try and acquire it and to gain respect, doing violence to themselves and others in the process.

Perhaps it might sound trite, but St Bernadette smiled the smile of the Virgin and it changed a life. When we smile at someone who so often sees anger, or is told they must change now, or be like this or like that, perhaps they might be given a little push along the path of recognition of the truth that another visitor to this chapel, Pope Benedict, spoke, when he said,

"You are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary."

There's a double grace to ask St Bernadette for this evening: the smile born out of the recognition and the recognition born out of the smile.



The Faith Companion Journal

With Forget-Me-Not Logo

£9.99

Makes an excellent Christmas gift.

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808

The Anointed King by Fr Richard Ounsworth OP



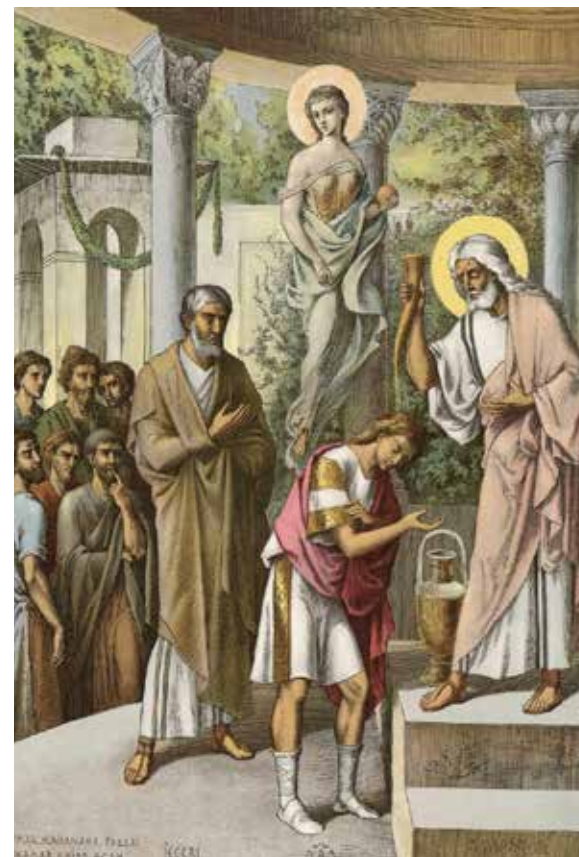
Fr Richard Ounsworth is our current theological advisor who studied theology at Oxford University, where he received his doctorate for his thesis on Joshua Typology in the Letter to the Hebrews. He is lector and tutor in New Testament Studies at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University, but lives at holy Cross Priory, Leicester, where he ministers at the thriving city center parish and at the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

When we think about anointing, the chances are that the phrase that will come into our heads is 'prophet, priest and king'. Certainly, at almost every Baptism I have performed and every Confirmation I have attended, the anointing with Chrism has been explained as originating in the Old Testament Tradition of anointing prophets, priests and kings as a way of investing them with authority, and that each of these three anointed ministries comes to its fulfilment in Christ. Jesus is the ultimate, definitive Prophet, Priest and King, and we are conformed to Him in this threefold ministry by our own sacramental anointing. Now, all of this is fine, and the 'Catechism' affirms it of Christ (n.436),

... anointing is an act of consecration: it sets someone (or something) apart from the ordinary world and associates it with the realm of the sacred...

though not explicitly in regard to the Sacraments; it is actually more a central idea in Lutheran and especially Calvinist theology. But it's worth pointing out two things: firstly, that prophets are very rarely anointed in the Old Testament – the only prophet we are told was anointed was Elisha (1 Kings 19:16, but see also 1 Chronicles 16:22 and Sirach 48:8). More importantly, it is not just people who are anointed: all sorts of other things are anointed too – stones, the Ark of the Covenant, altars, basins and so on. And when it comes to anointing people, although kings are anointed far more often than prophets, it is most strongly associated with priests.

The reason for this seems to be that anointing is an act of consecration: it sets someone (or something) apart from the ordinary world and associates it with the realm of the sacred, with worship and sanctification. When it comes to the anointing of priests, as also of the accoutrements and furnishings of the Temple, this is obvious, but it is true also of kings. So many of the psalms show that the role of the King of Israel is not just one that is Divinely appointed, but also



one that pertains to sacred service. The king, like the priests, has a role to play in uniting God to His People.

When we think, therefore, of Christ's Kingship – as we do at this time of year on the Feast of Christ the King – we should think of how He unites heaven and earth, how He pleads for us before the Father, at whose right hand He is enthroned forever. Just as the priest (and Christ is, of course, also the Great High Priest) stands as an intermediary between God and humanity, simultaneously representing God to His People and His

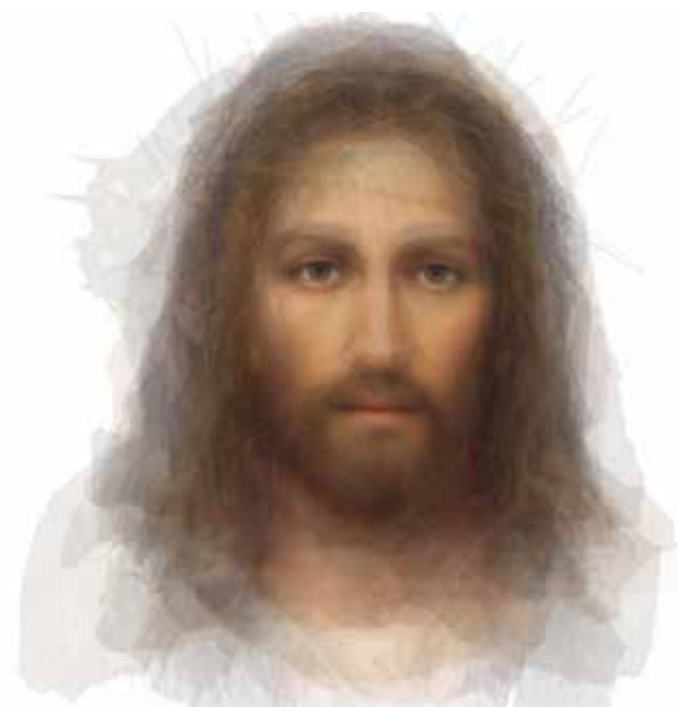
Jesus' eternal Kingship reaches its climax at this moment; as a man anointed for Divine service, it is as He offers His life on the Cross that He fulfills the purpose of that service, to bridge the divide between God and humankind.

People to God, so also as King Jesus shows us the face of God, our supreme judge and the Lord of all creation, and at the same time He is our representative, bringing our humanity in all its frailty and neediness before the Father.

Jesus shares in that frailty, the vulnerability of humankind, from the beginning of His life, as we see the infant King laid in a manger rather than in some royal cradle; but His sharing in our weakness reaches its climax on the Cross, and it is there that the Gospel for this year's Feast of Christ the King takes us. We see Him mocked by the soldiers and the crowd, and by the sign above His head reading, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37 NRSV). At the same time, a man – and he no powerful Roman, no holy priest or prophet, nor a wise man from afar, but a common criminal – recognises who Jesus really is, and asks Jesus to welcome him into His Kingdom: "...today

you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43 NIV) is the response.

Jesus' eternal Kingship reaches its climax at this moment: as a man anointed for Divine service, it is as He offers His life on the Cross that He fulfils the purpose of that service, to bridge the divide between God and humanity. I often explain to people that we should see the death and Resurrection of Christ as two sides of the same coin, but now I want to say something slightly different: they are two sides of the same door. By dying on the Cross and rising to new life Jesus has opened for us the way to the Father – what the Letter to the Hebrews calls "a new and living way" (10:20 NIV).



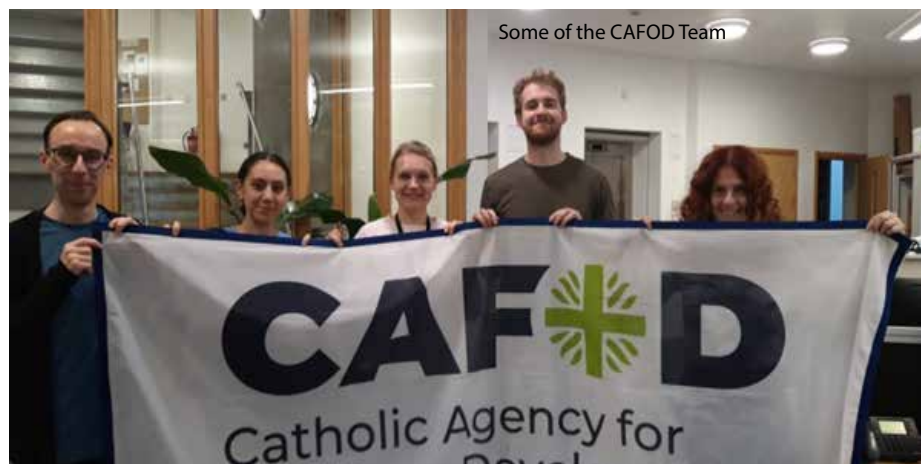
So, to each of us He issues the invitation to ask Him what the Good Thief asked from his cross. He will say to us "you will be with me in paradise" if we place ourselves in the same position as that Good Thief. What does that mean? Firstly, to imitate the Good Thief in recognising our sinfulness: death is a sentence we deserve, and Jesus alone suffered death not for any sin of His own but solely for ours. Secondly, to be like the Good Thief means to be crucified with Christ – to embrace vulnerability; not the weakness of sin but the vulnerability of those who love, because to love is to be open to being hurt. To be crucified with Christ also means, as St Paul often tells us, to put sin to death, to let go of our pride, anger, jealousy, fear... all the things that stop us from loving, stop us from being vulnerable, to let go of our very lives and offer them to God.

When Jesus promises us "you will be with me in paradise", He welcomes us into His Kingdom – that much is clear. But to be welcomed into His Kingdom is to be welcomed into His Kingship. To put it another way, to die and rise again with Christ is to reign with Him. This, in fact, is what St Paul tells St Timothy (2 Timothy 2:12). Yet when St Paul writes this, he is not simply talking about what it will be like to go to heaven, inviting us to imagine ourselves lolling on beautifully padded thrones with nice crowns on. St Paul is talking about the need for endurance, and is telling us about the present as well as the future.

For the truth is that, as Christians anointed into Christ's Kingly ministry at Baptism and Confirmation, we are already kings. In fact, we are the restored humanity, reborn as sons and daughters of the Second Adam, and as such we reclaim in Christ the kingly role for which Adam was created, namely stewardship over the whole of creation. When God created humankind, it was to share in His reign, to be, so to speak, His viceroys in the world, but we rejected that great purpose by disobedience. However, Jesus, the Son of Man (that is, the one true Son and Heir of Adam) has reclaimed that role by His victory over sin and death.

Pontius Pilate proclaimed this – though of course he did not realise what he was saying – when he brought Jesus out to show Him to the crowd arrayed in purple and crowned with thorns: "Ecce homo", "Behold the man" (John 19:5 ESV). Or, we might paraphrase slightly, "this is what a man looks like" – a real and proper man, at last a true heir of Adam, a true Son of Man, a true sharer in God's Kingship. It is for this that Jesus was anointed: not just to be the true heir of Adam but to make us His co-heirs, to anoint us also for kingship, a kingship of loving service. From the moment of our Baptism Jesus, Our Anointed King, has been saying to us "today you will be with me in paradise. Today you will reign with me as kings."

Faith In Action By CAFOD By David Doig



CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, has a humble beginning.

A group of Catholic women came together to organise the first Family Fast Day in 1960.

They were responding to an appeal from the people of Dominica, a Caribbean island, to assist in raising money for a mother and baby clinic.

The Fast Day was a success – raising over £6,000 in total (over £100,000 in today's money) – and two years later the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales registered CAFOD as an official charity.

The Family Fast Day has continued ever since.

Now, over 60 years later, CAFOD is part of a global Church network, Caritas Internationalis, which has a presence in 165 countries, making up one of the largest aid networks in the world.

One of the founding members of CAFOD, Elspeth Orchard, reflected on putting her faith into action:

"We weren't doing anything special we were just doing what we thought we ought to do, remembering that we are all God's children."

Elspeth's words are true today.

We help those in crisis and speak out against injustice by putting our faith into action.

The Influence of St Oscar Romero

An important influence for us all at CAFOD is St Oscar Romero.

Indeed, the name of our London office is named after him.

Deeply affected by the assassination of his friend, the Blessed Rutilio



CAFOD founders, including Jackie Stuyt and Elspeth Orchard, 1960

Grande, St Romero spoke out against the human rights abuses of the military dictatorship in El Salvador.

His radio homilies, outlining the abuses and repressions of the government, were enormously popular in El Salvador, especially as the dictatorship had crushed freedom of the press.

When St Romero's radio station was bombed by paramilitaries, CAFOD assisted in rebuilding it.

And CAFOD staff, partners and supporters campaigned for decades to have St Romero beatified.

We draw inspiration and courage from his life, his strong religious faith, and his intolerance for injustice.

Our Recent Work

Our work spans several decades, so we would need several issues of 'The Faith Companion' to list all of our campaigns, so here are some of the actions we have taken since last year.

The Climate Crisis

We have been at the forefront of climate change activism for decades. We lobbied the British government to set legally binding targets on carbon emissions, which became the Climate Change Act (2008).

In 2021, with Britain as the host of

"We weren't doing anything special we were just doing what we thought we ought to do, remembering that we are all God's children."

COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, we joined with friends and supporters to demand that those most affected by the climate crisis were at the heart of COP26.

We drew our strength from the Holy Father's encyclical, *Laudato si'*, which calls on us to bring the "human family together to protect our common home."¹

Thousands of CAFOD supporters took this up, where they wrote to the Prime Minister, urging the government to put plans in place to rapidly cut greenhouse gas emissions, and to keep temperature rises below 1.5°C level.

Along with our friends at the Climate Coalition, we amassed in Parliament Square in Westminster, where we lobbied the government to show climate leadership.

CAFOD supporters took part in marches around the country, joining the millions of people who took to the streets ahead of COP26 demanding climate action.

Parliament in Your Parish

The Holy Father tells us that unless we as people control political power, it "will not be possible to control damage to the environment."²

As part of our work around COP26, we encouraged our supporters to lobby their own Members of Parliament to discuss the climate crisis.

Parishes met with more than 110 MPs in constituencies throughout England and Wales, where supporters reminded MPs of Pope Francis' message around our common home.

Members of the government attended, and we even got a mention in the House of Commons.

Fix the Food System

Continuing our work from COP26 and knowing that one of the areas of focus at COP27 would be the global food system – the intricate, complex infrastructure that covers everything from agriculture, transport, and public health – we began a campaign to raise awareness of it, and to offer solutions as to how we can fix it.

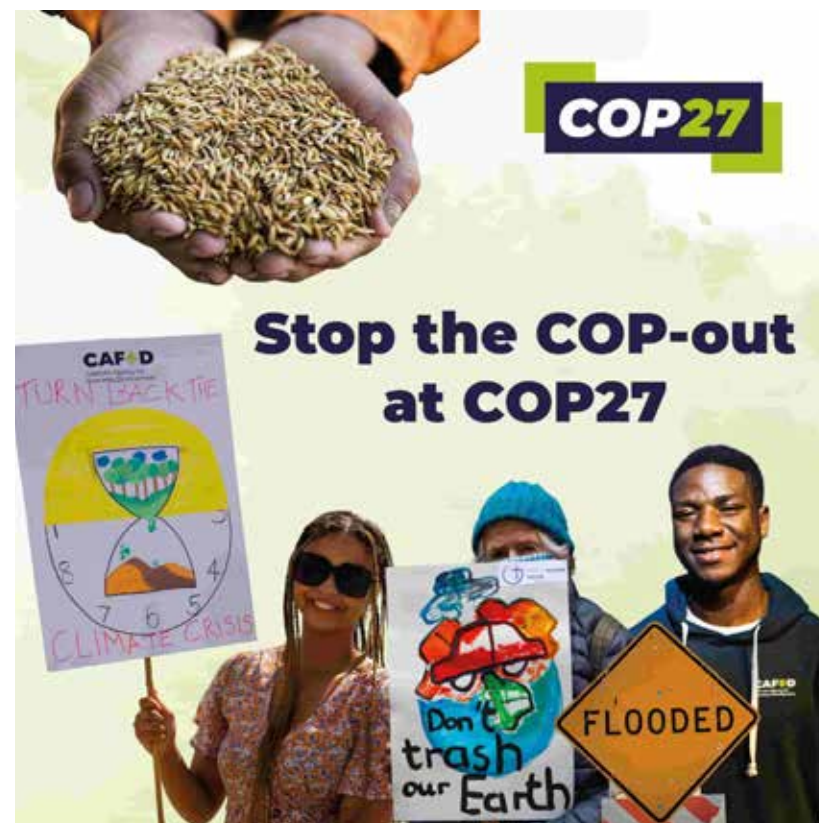
After all, there is enough food to feed everyone in the world, but millions of people still live in poverty.

This demonstrates just how broken the food system is. Events in 2022 reinforced this.

For instance, the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia – both major exporters of key staple crops, such as wheat and sunflower oil – saw massive increases in prices, which has had a knock-on effect around the world.

In the Horn of Africa especially, where there is a reliance on imports from Ukraine and Russia, farmers there have struggled, compounding the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CAFOD supporters took up the



call to fix the food system, with over 10,000 supporters lobbying the government to implement the commitments they made at COP26. Part of this was over 170 parishes in England and Wales running 'Fix the Food System' themed events to raise awareness.

Lastly

These are just some of the activities that CAFOD has been engaged in in the past 18 months.

It does not even begin to cover the phenomenal work of our colleagues around the world, those who work for our partner organisations and have considerable local knowledge and expertise.

The women who founded CAFOD and St Romero have something in common: applying their strong religious faith into action. This is true of our supporters throughout England and Wales, too.

CAFOD supporters raised over £200,000 this year during the



Walk Against Hunger during Lent, our appeal that focused on malnutrition and poverty. It is just one of the many examples of our supporters' incredible work.

Next year we will continue focusing on the global food system and the causes of poverty, as well as on the climate crisis. As the Holy Father states, it cannot be emphasised enough how everything is interconnected.

The smallest acts, when predicated on faith, can be multiplied exponentially.

REFERENCES

1 Pope Francis. 2015. "Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home", 13. Found at: https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25373/182331/file/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf Accessed on 24th October 2022.

2 Pope Francis. 2015. "Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home", 179. Found at: https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25373/182331/file/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf Accessed on 24th

SERVING OUR CATHOLIC CHURCH

EVERYDAY CHRISTIAN MARKETING

Website Design & Hosting - Christian Marketing - Church Live Stream



"You will know them by their fruits..."





FIND OUT MORE:

www.everydaychristianmarketing.co.uk

anthony@everydaychristianmarketing.co.uk

Every Day Christian Marketing is a Limited Company registered in England and Wales
Registration Number: 11372931 The Gate Business Centre
Keppoch St, Roath, Cardiff, S. Wales, UK CF24 3JW

Ride for leprosy by Kate Macpherson



Kate Macpherson is the secretary of The John Bradburne Memorial Society in the UK. A charity set up in honour of its late warden, John Bradburne to support the people living with leprosy and other diseases at Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe. Kate is John Bradburne's great niece and is spearheading his Cause for beatification to become Zimbabwe's first Saint. For more information www.johnbradburne.com. Kate is married to Alex, a secondary school teacher of Philosophy and Theology and has two sons both with special needs who live in Surrey with their many animals.

A charity bicycle ride took place this last August in support of the people living with leprosy at Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe, where John Bradburne (the next potential English saint) cared for them.

Alex Macpherson and John Paynter, teachers based in Surrey and Bristol respectively, are supporters of the John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS) and embarked on a sponsored 600-mile bike ride from Bristol to Liverpool along the Welsh Coast. They raised awareness about leprosy and the support of the people living at Mutemwa.

The JBMS was founded as a charity in 1995 in honour of its late warden, John Bradburne, who spent the last 10 years of his life caring for those living with leprosy in Zimbabwe.

The society continues to support the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, whilst also spreading information about Bradburne's saintly life and prolific poetry writings. The donations JBMS receive go towards the running expenses, salaries of workers, and any additional food and medicine required.

John Bradburne was born in Skirwith in Cumbria on 14th June 1921 and was the son of an Anglican vicar. He served with the Gurkhas and Chindits in the Second World War and after a conversion experience in Malaya, he became a Catholic in 1947.

After many years wandering England, Italy and the Middle East, he finally found his calling as a Lay Franciscan missionary in Zimbabwe



and he devoted the latter part of his life to helping forgotten leprosy patients at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre.

He refused to leave the settlement during the Zimbabwean Civil War and was abducted and shot dead on 5th September 1979.

Since Bradburne's death, the settlement has become a major pilgrimage centre, with thousands gathering for Mass each year on the anniversary of his death.

In 2019, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome formal-

ly began the cause of Bradburne's beatification.

Bradburne is also in *'The Guinness Book of Records'* as the most prolific poet ever, having written in verse throughout his life.

Kate Macpherson said,

"John has been nominated for sainthood because of his amazing, *selfless work at Mutemwa with leprosy patients.*"

She continues,

"John was the pilgrim who eventually found the meaning of his life, not in the solitude he had long searched for, but in living alongside others, and trying his best to achieve justice so that people living with leprosy – amongst the world's most marginalised people of his day, like the migrants and asylum seekers of our world today – could, like us, live enriching and meaningful lives. And praising God as he did."

The Ride for Leprosy started in Bristol on 12th August, where they cycled along the Welsh Coast border finishing in Liverpool on 19th August.

For more details about Bradburne's remarkable life, visit www.johnbradburne.com

Professor David Crystal has compiled an online database of Bradburne's poetry, which can be found at johnbradburnepoems.com

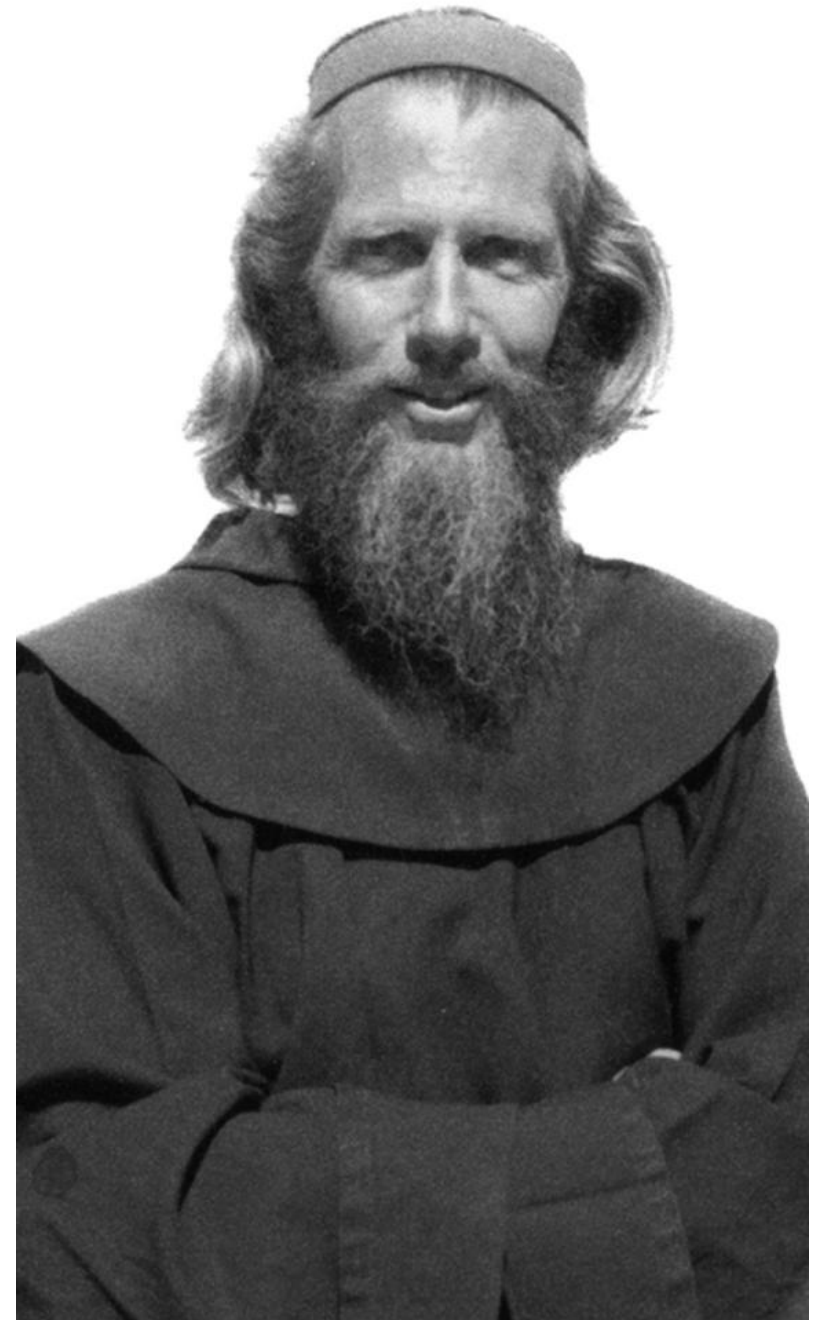
Please donate to Alex and John's Ride for Leprosy by visiting:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/rideforleprosy>

For more information please contact Kate Macpherson by emailing her at: info@johnbradburne.com



John Bradburne



The Jesus Prayer by Kathy Bishop OPL



Kathy Bishop OPL is founder and editor-in-chief of The Faith Companion. She is a Lay Dominican and has a BA(Hons) in RE, an MA in Pastoral Theology specializing in Christian Spirituality. Kathy is also a qualified spiritual director who trained at the London Centre for Spiritual Direction.

The Jesus Prayer is an ancient prayer rooted in the Orthodox Tradition. Its earliest written mention was found in St Diadochos's 'Philokalia', citing reference to the remembrance of the most glorious Name of Jesus. I know from experience that this prayer invokes the Holy Spirit. It is rooted in Scripture and is one of the most ancient of prayers. So, why use this prayer practice today?

Pope Francis again and again urges us to have a personal encounter with Jesus, to get to know Him as a friend and guide. In doing so we can model our Christian life on Him so as to become more Christ-like in how we live and thus more pleasing to Our Father. But how does one do this? Our Pope recently said,

"...to those who, today too, '[wish to see Jesus](#)', to those who are searching for the face of God; to those who received catechesis when they were little and then developed it no further and perhaps have lost their faith; to so many who have not yet encountered Jesus personally...; to all these people we can offer three things: the Gospel, the Crucifix and the witness of our

faith, poor but sincere. The Gospel: there we can encounter Jesus, listen to Him, know Him.

The Crucifix: the sign of the love of Jesus who gave Himself for us. And then a faith that is expressed in simple gestures of fraternal charity. But mainly in the coherence of life, between what we say and what we do. Coherence between our faith and our life, between our words and our actions: Gospel, Crucifix, Witness."¹

What Pope Francis touches on here is that many in our Church have not been gifted with a mature, deep faith brought about by a real encounter with Jesus – not through any fault of their own, perhaps. He suggests three things to help us: the Gospel, the Cross and the witness of faith. Here we will bear witness by sharing an ancient prayer method which can help those who "wish to see Jesus" and therefore encounter Him more deeply, to move towards unity with Him in our lives and to coherence between our faith and our life, our words and our actions.

'The Jesus Prayer' has many variations, but the most commonly used is:

"Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of God,

Have mercy on me, a sinner."

The idea is that this simple prayer is repeated over and over again, moving deeper and deeper each time until you reach the centre of your soul where a true encounter with the Divine can occur. This is not a magical formula where you say this prayer X number of times and suddenly you achieve union with God or 'see' Jesus. It is a prayer practice in which, with time, discipline and effort, we may begin to see Jesus more clearly. Through knowing Him more dearly we can live more nearly to Him, who loves us beyond all knowing. The early Church Fathers bore witness to the fruits of this prayer practice, which may take years, if not a lifetime, to ripen.

H.E. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of the Eastern Orthodox Church, who sadly died in August this year and whom I had the privilege of meeting once, asks,

"How can we advance from prayer repeated by our lips – from prayer as an external act – to prayer that is part of our inner being, a true union of our mind and heart with the Holy Trinity?

How can we make prayer not merely something that we do, but something that we are? For that is what the world needs: not persons who say prayers from time to time, but persons who are prayer all the time."²

H.E. Metropolitan Kallistos shows us that 'The Jesus Prayer' can help transform us from people who say prayers to people who are prayer. He shows us that the value in 'The Jesus Prayer' lies in its being centred on the Holy Name of Jesus and so practiced faithfully it gives us a sense of the Divine Presence. H.E. Metropolitan Kallistos attaches four strands or elements to this simple prayer, which is summed up in just one sentence: the cry for mercy; the discipline of repetition; the quest for stillness; and veneration of the Holy Name.³

Fr Tschlis, a Greek Orthodox priest, notes St Paul calling us to constant prayer in several places in Scripture; for example, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 he urges the Thessalonian Christian community to "pray without ceasing" (ESV) and di-

It (the Jesus Prayer) is a prayer practice in which, with time, discipline and effort, we may begin to see Jesus more clearly.



H.E. Metropolitan Kalistos Ware

rects the community in Rome to “be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12 ESV). The question that then arises is how can this be possible – to lead a busy life and also pray without ceasing? Fr Tschlis answers this by helping us to see that instead of thinking in terms of a busy life in contrast to a ceaseless life of prayer, he urges us to see that to pray means to live our entire life in the presence of God and so all we do becomes prayer. He quotes Paul Evdokimov:

“Our whole life, every act and gesture, even a smile must become a hymn or adoration, an offering, a prayer. We must become prayer – prayer incarnate.”⁴

It is the discipline of practicing ‘The Jesus Prayer’ that our very selves can

be transformed into living, ceaseless prayer. It doesn’t happen overnight, but if persistently practiced you will gradually notice a difference. I keep coming back to practice this prayer noticing closeness to God’s presence, and a deeper movement inward. As you move deeper and deeper different stages become evident. Theophan the Recluse, a 19th-century Russian spiritual writer, distinguishes three levels within this prayer:

¹Oral prayer, or ‘prayer of the lips’, where we simply recite the words over and over, which Theophan defines as the prayer’s “verbal expression and shape”. At this first stage this level of prayer is still external to us, for “the essence or soul of prayer is within a man’s mind and heart.”

2. Moving more deeply into the prayer, we then reach the level by which we begin to pray without distraction. Theophan remarks that at this point, “...the mind is focused upon the words [of the Prayer] ...speaking them as if they were our own.” So here there is a movement of the mind.

3. Then movement deeper becomes the ‘prayer of the heart’, where prayer is no longer something we do but who we are. Such prayer is a “gift of the Spirit” and perhaps does not require words.⁵

When I practice ‘The Jesus Prayer’ and reach this deeper level I notice a transition from using my breath to guide the rhythm of my prayer to my heartbeat. When I reach this depth, the words seem to disappear into my very soul, and it is my heartbeat that is saying them for me and in the stillness, I listen to my heartbeat that is echoing the words of the prayer. However, we should not be hasty to give up saying the words as the

It is in the discipline of practicing ‘The Jesus Prayer’ that our very selves can be transformed into living, ceaseless prayer.

prayer moves deeper in Stages 1 and 2, even if it is said silently. Somehow, as the prayer moves to a prayer of the heart, the mind and heart become one, which H.E. Metropolitan Kallistos more precisely calls “prayer of the mind in the heart”. He explains that when talking about the heart in Orthodox spiritual writing, feelings and emotions are not the focus, but the spiritual centre of the whole human being is symbolically represented as the focal point of personhood as created in the image of God. He explains that the heart,

“... is thus the ground of our being, the root and source of our inner truth. It includes the emotions, but more significantly it comprises our will, our reason, and also the higher visionary faculty known in Greek as the nous, whereby we apprehend the glory of God.”⁶

He quotes Theophan the Recluse:

“The heart is the innermost self, or spirit. Here are located self-awareness, the conscience, the idea of God and of one’s complete dependence on Him, and all the eternal treasures of the spiritual life.”⁷

However, this prayer also comes with a warning as the deeper reaches of the subconscious also harbours our darkness and past traumas where the enemy can strike, but it also is a place where good-



ness finds a safe space. Goodness and the love of God, which infuses us during this prayer practice, are always stronger than the darkness that co-inhabits our inner lives. In my experience, and in what I have come to understand, repetitions in prayer aid stillness of the mind, allowing the subconscious to come more to the fore. It is here we can

journey deeper into our hearts, the centre of our personhood made in the image of God. I find repetition can induce a state between being asleep and awake, like being in a day-dream, and in my experience, this is the place the Divine can become manifest and can communicate with us, touching our hearts, and the mechanism by which spiritual

transformation occurs. In the Spiritual Homilies of St Macarius, he says,

“Within the heart are unfathomable depths...The heart is Christ’s palace: there Christ the King comes to take His rest, with the angels and the spirits of the saints, and He dwells there, walking within it and placing His Kingdom there.”¹⁰

If you wish to follow Pope Francis’ call for a true encounter with the living, risen Christ I recommend the use of this prayer practice, not just once or twice, but as a way of life. Through it your faith and your life will be transformed and if this is what God wills for you, you will encounter Christ.



REFERENCES

1. Wolf, D. 2015. “Diadochos of Photiki: Early Mention of the ‘Jesus Prayer’, c. AD 450”. Found at: <https://firstthoughtsofgod.com/2015/01/11/diadochos-of-photiki-early-mention-of-the-jesus-prayer-c-ad-450/> Accessed on 7th October 2022.
2. Pope Francis. 2015. “Pope Francis’ Homily on 22.03.15: Angelus, St Peter’s Square”. Found at: <https://www.popefrancishomilies.com/encounter-with-jesus> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
3. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
4. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
5. Tsichlis, S.P. 1985. “The Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-jesus-prayer> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
6. Tsichlis, S.P. 1985. “The Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-jesus-prayer> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
7. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
8. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
9. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.
10. Ware, K. 2021. “How to Pray the Jesus Prayer”. Found at: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/how-to-pray-the-jesus-prayer/> Accessed on 5th October 2022.

Q: Is Halloween Catholic and how is it linked to All Saints' and All Souls' Days?

Answered by Kathy Bishop OPL



Halloween, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are collectively called Allhallowtide and are definitely part of Catholic Tradition as a three-day observance and celebration. All Catholics celebrate All Saints' and All Souls' Days, but due to the secular take on Halloween, which is now predominant, observing this day has become controversial. Perhaps it wouldn't be if there was better understanding of the Christian roots of this celebration. To explore this question let's start by looking at Halloween's origins.

Halloween on 31st October means 'the Eve of All Saints' or in old English, 'All Hallows' Eve'. For Catholics it is the Vigil of All Saints. All Hallows, or All Hallowsmass, means 'the Feast of the Saints' and is celebrated on 1st November. 'Hallow' is

an Old English word for saint and the verb 'to hallow' in Old English meant 'to make holy or sacred, to sanctify, consecrate or to venerate'. We see this word used in 'The Lord's Prayer'

The controversy surrounding Halloween relates to its pagan origins and that somehow the devil and satanic forces are at play. Whilst the true origins of Halloween are not clear many believe underpinning Halloween are pagan roots. These roots are thought to stem from Celtic spirituality found in Britain, Ireland and France around 2,000 years ago. Celtic spirituality divided the year into a light and dark half; spring/summer and autumn/winter. The Celts commemorated the end of summer with a harvest festival called Samhain, so

named after the Celtic Lord of the Dead, the name meaning 'summer's end'. It started at sunset on 31st October and ended at sunset on 1st November, and it was filled with superstition and a fear of evil, with an association with human death. The Druids built bonfires for the sacrifice of crops and animals, during which people danced around the fire. During this night the Celts believed boundaries between the living and the dead became blurred, where ghosts of the dead returned, and fairies, imps and goblins made an appearance, sometimes hiding livestock, destroying crops, or haunting the living. For this reason, the Celts hid their identity from the spirits by wearing costumes.

Halloween on 31st October means 'the Eve of All Saints' or in old English, 'All Hallows' Eve'

After the Romans conquered Britain in 43 AD they brought two pagan festivals with them: Ferālia, held late October to honour the dead; and the Feast of Pomona, the goddess of fruits and trees, which is why apples probably became associated with this time of year and Halloween. These Roman Feasts became blended with the Celtic Samhain and with the spread of Christianity some of these pagan customs remained attached to All Hallows' Eve or Halloween. However, it is clear the Christian Feasts of All Saints' and All Souls' developed independently from any pagan influences: All Saints' Day honours those already in heaven, known and unknown, and on All Souls' Day we pray for those who have died, but are on the way to heaven and currently in purgatory.

However, despite these pagan connections some do not believe Halloween was started on the back of the pagan festivals described above. Pope Gregory III transferred the Feast of All Saints from 13th May to 1st November locally in Rome and Pope Gregory IV then made this Feast universal to the whole Church – but the link between Samhain and All Hallows' Eve happened 1,000 years after All Saints was declared a universal Feast of the Church. So, it is clear that the celebration of All Hallows' Eve is definitely rooted in the Feast of All Saints, which is why Halloween is celebrated by the Catholic Church today.

However, there are cultural flavours to this Feast. Dressing up was thought to have been brought over from France; carving pumpkins came from Ireland; and the English went from door to door begging for 'soul cakes' (also known as soulmass-cakes), with the promise to pray for loved ones who have passed on and this is possibly how trick-or-treating got started. So, in answer to the question, "Is Halloween Catholic?", the answer is yes, as it is all about All Saints' Day. To have a Catholic Halloween, instead of dressing up as ghosts or goblins dress up as saints and angels who battle against the forces of evil on this night to bring to the fore the battle between evil spirits in the world and the good spirits, our communion of saints. That is the real Catholic focus of Halloween.



So let us make Halloween about All Saints' Day by re-enacting the battles we don't see in the spiritual world

So let us make Halloween about All Saints' Day ... by dressing up as saints and angels fighting with evil spirits.

The Feast of All Saints or All Hallows on 1st November is a time of the year when we remember those saintly figures who have made it to heaven. All Souls' Day on 2nd November is the day we pray for those who have died, who are going through the process of purification in purgatory on their way to heaven. For a family activity Rachel Lu suggests that on All Souls' Day we should walk around a cemetery reading the headstones and praying for these souls who perhaps may be in purgatory.

Some call Allhallowtide 'the Death Triad', days which focus on our own mortality,



Image taken from Catholicallyear.com

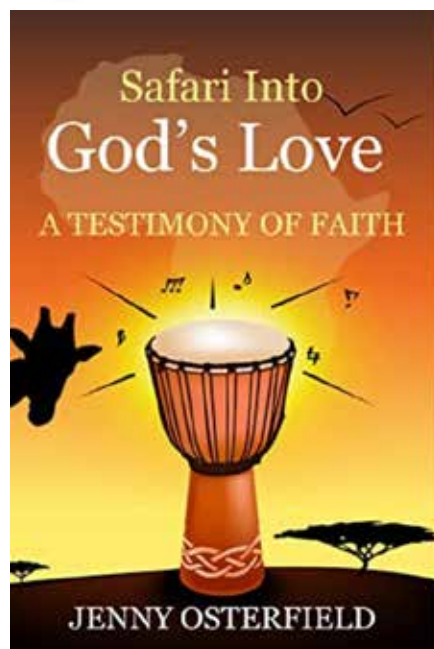
but I say it is more about recognising and commemorating that life exists after death; people don't die but transition from the material world into the spiritual world. We are so used to living within the material world it is easy to forget that beyond the material there is a spiritual world.

So let us make Halloween about All Saints' Day by re-enacting the battles we don't see in the spiritual world, and by dressing up as saints and angels fighting with evil spirits. Instead of trick-or-treating ask for a treat by praying for the dead in your family to help them through purgatory.

Let us remember the dead saints and martyrs we know, but also those we don't. Let us also remember those who have passed who are on pilgrimage to heaven and going through purgatory, especially remembering those who have nobody to pray for them. If seen in this way you can see that Halloween is definitely Catholic, so let us witness to that in our celebrations.

SAFARI INTO GOD'S LOVE: A TESTIMONY OF FAITH'

By JENNY OSTERFIELD



Jenny Osterfield grew up in Kenya, returning to the UK as a young woman. The sights, sounds and spirituality of Africa continued to run in her veins and her soul throughout her life; they run through this spiritual testimony too, written in her seventies as she looks back over a life walked with the Lord over mountains, valleys and tumultuous waters. Jenny uses events from her youth in Kenya to cleverly illustrate what she learns as she travels through life, drawing parallels that reinforce the spiritual points she is making. Her life is one full of both joyful and difficult experiences, but through them all she traces the abundant grace of a loving

God who never lets her go, even in times of doubt. She trains as a counsellor and uses her gifts particularly in supporting the dying and the bereaved and also in the area of spiritual direction. The book also charts the ups and downs of a rich family life, with Jenny and her husband now being grandparents, and the challenges in later life brought by the sudden onset of disability.

Jenny's spirituality is rooted in the Charismatic arm of the Catholic Church and it is from that viewpoint that this book is written. My own experiences with the Charismatic Renewal movement have been a mixed bag and I also suspect that my liturgical preferences are rather more traditional in style than Jenny's, so my initial approach to the book was somewhat guarded. However I was soon disarmed and won over by Jenny's honesty, humility and the warmth of the flame of faith that shines through her every word.

Like many of us, Jenny has had her struggles with the Church and its communities and her experiences of spiritual darkness, giving the book and its faith claims a reassuringly relatable dimension. When reading Charismatic testimonies, those of us whose faith experiences are more 'mundane' can become a little defensive or discouraged – why don't I receive visions and words? God deals with each of us differently and in the way that best suits us, hence the wonderful variety of spiritual traditions within the Church. However, what Charismatic writers like Jenny can

both challenge and inspire us with is the depth of their personal relationship with Christ and their joy in the Faith, things we should all aspire to whatever the tradition in which we are rooted.

I warmly recommend this book as a source of inspiration and, above all, encouragement. It is not an academic, theological or literary work – it is written in a chatty style with the odd typo! It is, rather, spiritually insightful and reading it feels like sitting down with a Christian friend over a glass or a cup and sharing in fellowship together. Approach it with open-mindedness and humility and you will learn much and be richly blessed.

Reviewed by Anneli Figura

Anneli has studied theology and spirituality at a variety of levels from CCRS to postgraduate and was involved with parish adult formation for over 20 years. She is now a full time PA to her adult daughter who has a disability. Her particular interests are Carmelite spirituality, ongoing faith formation and the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death. She is now a fully Professed Lay Carmelite.

Review by Anneil Figura



Sanctuary Lip Balm Set

Made from natural beeswax and pure ingredients

Made by Benedictine Monks

£8.99

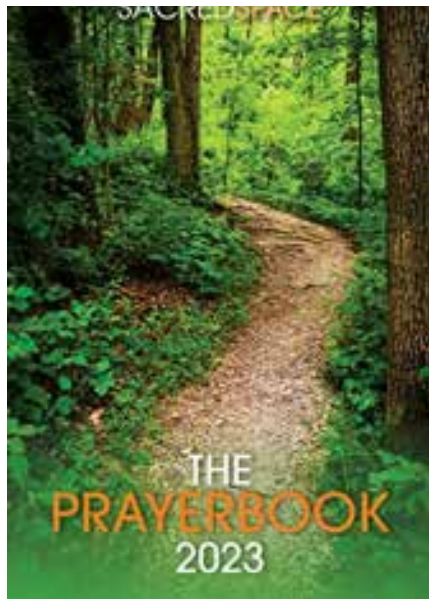
Different varieties of flavours

Makes an excellent Christmas gift.

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808

SACRED SPACE – THE PRAYER BOOK 2023

By the Irish Jesuits



In 1999 an Irish Jesuit called Alan McGuckian had the simple, but at that time radical, idea of bringing daily prayer to the internet. Ever since then Irish Jesuits have worked together to produce this carefully crafted helpful tool, which is now used worldwide, and has been translated into seventeen languages. The contents of the printed edition, first produced in 2004, are taken directly from the Sacred Space internet site. In our age of mobile devices there are still many who prefer to have a printed copy, and the book format has proved particularly useful for prayer groups. Each day of the liturgical year there is a simple suggested format. The suggestion is that each week the user begin by reading a brief passage, offering something to think and

pray about each day of the week. The daily shape of personal prayer begins with awareness of being in the presence of God; then gratitude for the gift of personal freedom; followed by a conscious movement into prayer mode; which is centred on a scripture passage; as the living Word opens up to a conversation with Jesus about the scripture, centring on any chords struck, and helpful for the present moment; and ending with a thanksgiving Glory Be.

The value of this volume is incalculable, as when used daily it will open up fresh avenues and insights, deepen an individual's friendship and love of Jesus, and enable the pray-er to become an ever-better disciple and apostle in her or his ordinary everyday living. If you haven't already, go for it!

Review by Fr Denis Blackledge SJ

Fr Denis Blackledge SJ is a Jesuit Priest based at St Francis Xavier's Church, Liverpool.

Reviewed By Fr Denis-Blackledge SJ



Nov/Dec 2022



Sanctuary Skin Cream and Lip Balm Set

One Skin Cream; Two Lipbalms

Made from natural beeswax and pure ingredients
Hand made by Benedictine Monks

£17.50

Variety of scents
Makes an excellent Christmas gift.

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808

MEET THE TEAM



Kathy Bishop OPL is founder and editor in chief of The Faith Companion. She has a BA(Hons) in RE, an MA in Pastoral Theology specializing in Christian Spirituality and is a qualified spiritual director from the London Centre for Spiritual Direction.



Dr Roderick Campbell Guion Roderick Campbell OCDS is a Carmelite Secular. He has an MA in Christian Spirituality and a Doctorate in Pastoral Theology for a thesis on Transformation in the life of St Elizabeth of the Trinity. He now teaches on the degree programmes run by the Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland.



Richard Ounsworth OP studied theology at Oxford, where he received his doctorate for a thesis on Joshua Typology in the Letter to the Hebrews. He is lector and tutor in New Testament studies at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, but lives at Holy Cross Priory, Leicester, where he ministers at the thriving city-centre parish and at the Leicester Royal Infirmary.



Anthony Evans is the founder and director of Everyday Christian Marketing, a marketing agency assisting the Catholic Church raising awareness of God's kingdom through digital technology. He now has an expanding portfolio with clients in more than 12 dioceses across the UK and many collaborations including ecumenical work in Rome and the USA. Anthony is well-versed in scripture and theology leading prayers and meditations during this journey.



Erica Evans is a director of Everyday Christian marketing and has a BA (Hons) in Fine Art and has been running involved in mixed media crafts for over 20 years. In 2018 Erica experienced a strong conversion when she went to Rome and was received into the Church.

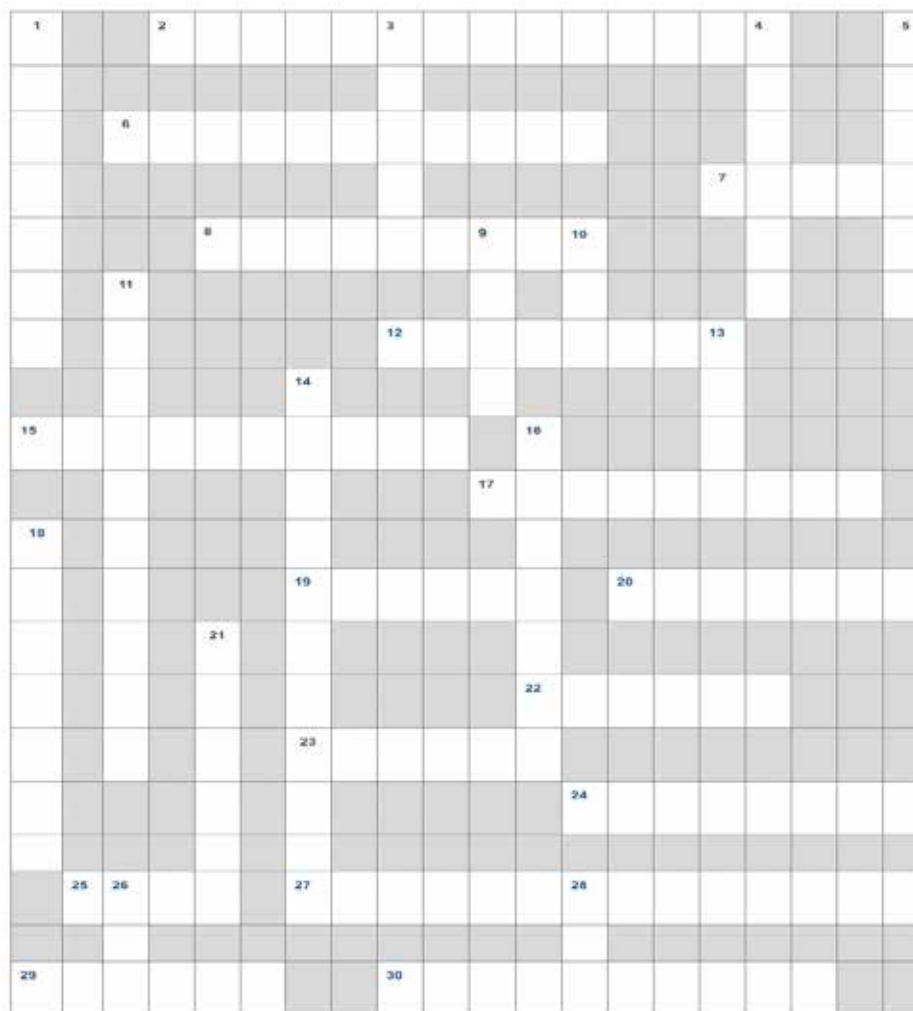


Charlotte Cooke is a proofreader and copy-editor who specialises in working with small businesses and charities. Charlotte is a Cradle Catholic and is a long-standing parishioner of St Edmund's, Calne.

Bernadette Daly is our executive administrator. Bernie helps support Kathy and promotes The Faith Companion across the UK.

Hermion Tavereryran lives in London and is a friend of The Faith Companion. Hermion produces the crossword puzzles and occasionally contributes articles for the magazine.

CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS		CLUES DOWN	
2	The period of Advent celebrates this (6, 2, 6)	1	Name of Saint who introduced the Christmas Crib
6	Advent (before Christmas) and Lent (before Easter) are both periods with a common ideal	3	The cup which we believe was used by Jesus at the last Supper is now known as the Holy
7	Santa's second name	4	The number of days of Christmas celebration according to the popular carol
8	The clothes of John the Baptist were woven from this (5, 4)	5	The kinship of John the Baptist to Jesus
12	Short chant in Christian rituals sung as a refrain	9	The fifth book in the New Testament of the Bible – the of the Apostles
15	The Saint who was a Bishop known for his generosity to the poor (2, 8)	10	Three letters following the name/s of the departed
18	Of the three gifts given by the Wise Men to Jesus, this one (Myrrh) was to symbolise His ...	11	The Prayer of Praise by Mary (in Latin) when she was greeted by Elizabeth
19	Part of the Mass omitted during Advent	12	Good News from the Angels at Christmas
20	Symbols used to signify the Light of Christ during the 5 weeks of Advent	13	In the carol 'The 12 days of Christmas', the fourth day relates to this (4, 7)
21	The ruthless King Herod was a	14	Of the three gifts given by the Wise Men to Jesus, this one (Gold) was to celebrate His
22	The Israelites were rewarded with a land of	15	One of the plagues sent to Egypt which devoured every form of food in their wake
23	Of the three gifts given by the Wise Men to Jesus, this one (Frankincense) was to celebrate His ...	16	Member of sect that wrote the Dead Sea scrolls
24	When the crowds came to Jesus to be healed He touched them and made the blind see and the walk	17	Jesus taught us about needless anxiety when he told us to consider how the birds of the who were far less important than we, were provided for
25	Latin term for the 'Blood of Christ' (7,7)	18	That which distances us from God

2	The advent wreath is shaped this way to signify that with God there is no beginning and no end	3	0
9	Answers are obtained from the C Testaments, the Bible website, the .EWTN channel		
3	The teachings of John the Baptist were on this virtue		
0			

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2022 EDITION ANSWERS

3 C				4 P	A	R	O	U	S	I	A		5 E	X	O	D	U	S		
H				I						X							R	6 C		
A		7 L		E			8 C	R	U	C	I	F	I	X			I	E		
R		U		T						M							A	N		
L		M		Y						I								T		
E		E		9 M				10 D	O	L	O	R	11 S					U		
12 S	Y	N	A	G	O	G	U	E			I			I			13 V	R		
C		G			S					A			G				I	I		
14 A	M	E	N		E					15 K	N	I	G	H	T		A	O		
R		N			16 S	E	V	E	17 N		K			T			18 T	E	N	
19 R	I	T	E	S					U		O						I			
O		I					20 C	O	N	C	L	A	V	E			C			
L		U					A				B						U	21 B		
L		M			22 V	E	R	U	M	D	E	U	M				M	I		
					I		O											R		
23 M	Y	24 S	T	I	C	A	L	B	O	D	Y	O	25 F	C	H	R	I	S	T	
		E			A								O					H		
26 E	U	C	H	A	R	I	S	T					U							
		T											27 P	R	O	D	I	G	A	L

THE FAITH COMPANION



Why not try The Faith Companion Gifts For Christmas Gifts?

From The Faith Companion Candle, Journals, Rosaries and Handmade Benedictine Skin creams and Lip balms.

There is something for everyone!

To Order visit www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk or call 01403 754808



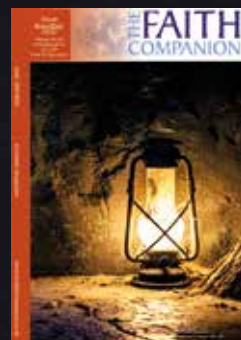
The mission of the Society of the Little Flower is to promote devotion to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Carmelite Nun and Doctor of the Church. Through prayers and donations, friends of St. Thérèse enable Carmelites to continue her "Shower of Roses" in their ministries throughout the world and in their education of young Carmelites.

Carmelite priests, nuns, brothers and sisters serve people in parishes, medical clinics, women's centres, schools, retreat houses, hospitals, catechetical centres, prisons, housing, job and skills development programmes and sacramental celebrations around the world.

*Society of the Little Flower,
Barclays House, 51 Bishopric,
Horsham, RH12 1QJ*

0345 602 9884 (local rate)
ukweb@littleflower.org.uk
www.littleflower.org.uk

Charity No. 1123034



To Order go to website
www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk
or call 01403 754808

Price:
£4.50 per E-copy
£5.50 per back copy order
£27.99 per year digital subscription
Orders to be placed on-line
or call 01403 754808

The Faith Companion
17, White Horse Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 6HW
Registered Company
No 1041728

Vision Statement

The Faith Companion will be a place of encounter for Roman Catholic parishioners of theology, tradition and others' experiences of God. It aims to be an interface between faith and life, creating a space to share deeper understandings of theology, faith, experiences and devotional practices to enhance readers' faith. The aim is to walk in companionship with parishioners on their spiritual journey and nourish the Church for the journey of faith. The Forget-Me-Not flower is used by The Faith Companion as a symbol of Our Lady's eyes. Mary is to be at the centre of this vision watching over The Faith Companion and its readers, her children.

www.thefaithcompanion.co.uk